

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

*Shri Chaitanya's Achintya Bhedabheda
The Universal Principle of Harmony*

RADHAMADHAV DAS

[Front Infold of Book Jacket]

This book presents the universal principle of simultaneous oneness and difference in scientific, philosophical and spiritual ways.

The human search for harmony and an all-embracing truth asks for universal unity. At the same time, individuality, freedom of thought and respect for the cosmic diversity are human values that require and celebrate diversity. A most essential question of humanity is therefore: How can unity and diversity exist together without restricting each other? The answer is found in a proper understanding of the phenomenon of unity. Unity means that different living beings and elements are united in a common cause and purpose. This book shows that there already is an underlying unity in the cosmic diversity – we just have to learn how to realize it.

The cosmic unity in diversity is best explained by the principle of simultaneous oneness and difference, in Sanskrit called *Achintya-Bhedabheda*. This principle was first described by Shri Chaitanya, the founder of the Gaudiya Vedanta school of thought. The book *Unity in Diversity* presents this universal principle and shows how it applies to all fields of human action, including science, philosophy and religion. Despite conforming to academic standards, this book is written in simple language, allowing also the common reader to have deeper insights into the principle of simultaneous oneness and difference. A special feature of this book is that it keeps a focus on the practical application of this principle in our daily life, allowing us to actually participate in the unity of the cosmic diversity.

[Back Infold of Book Jacket]

The author, Radhamadhav Das, studied environmental science at the ETH (IT) Zurich and taught at colleges in Switzerland. He studied Vedic science and philosophy in various schools and obtained PhD from Florida Vedic College. He started to compile this book in 2004 after receiving the following instruction from the Director of the Bhaktivedanta Insititute, His Holiness Bhaktisvarup Damodar Maharaj (Dr. T. D. Singh, 1937-2006):

“There is a great need to present the Gaudiya Vedanta principle of simultaneous oneness and difference in a scientific way. This cosmic principle applies to phenomena of both physical and metaphysical dimensions. It is the most promising paradigm to resolve the conceptual problems faced by modern science; it is the pinnacle of philosophy and it expresses the essence of religion. By its universal nature, this principle is able to connect and harmonize different fields of human action like science, philosophy and religion. You know this principle and you have studied science and philosophy. Try to scientifically present this principle for the benefit of humanity.”

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

*Shri Chaitanya's Achintya-Bhedabheda
The Universal Principle of Harmony*

Radhamadhav Das



Florida Vedic College Press

Certified PhD by Florida Vedic College

First published in the year 2012



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License.

All content except content from external sources is offered freely
for reproduction and free distribution if the author and the website
diversityinunison.com are mentioned, and if the author is informed.
For permission to sell this work in any way, please contact the author:

radhamadhavadasa@gmail.com

For updates on new editions and newsletters please subscribe to:

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/unitydiversity

www.diversityinunison.com

www.nectarpot.com

www.sublimereality.com

Synopsis

We live in a time in which the ways we think and act are strongly shaped by modern science, and less by philosophy and religion. The rationalization of education and research is reaching a climax without bringing us closer to a good quality and understanding of life in many aspects. At this point, many people realize the need to again approach philosophy and religion. In leading state of the art fields like in quantum mechanics, scientists express the need to reconsider consciousness. Simultaneously, by becoming less popular than physical science, philosophy and religion are expected to prove that they are scientific and useful. This reciprocal approach brings up the quest for a universal principle that can convey and harmonize the essential goals of all sciences, philosophies and religions. The book *Unity in Diversity* reveals this universal principle.

The universal principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* conveys and harmonizes the essential goals of all sciences, philosophies, religions and other human activities.

This book uncovers the underlying unity of various elements and occupations in life, even of seemingly contradictory ones, by disclosing the all-harmonizing philosophy or principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*¹. This principle teaches that everything in creation is simultaneously one (*abheda*) and different (*bheda*) from the Creator. Śrī Caitanya presented it as the essential conclusion of the Vedic tradition, humanity's most ancient tradition. The living entity is one with the Creator because they are both spiritual; simultaneously there is difference in person, knowledge and power. This book emphasizes the practical use of the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, namely that all people can attain oneness with God's will (unity) as His individual servants (diversity). By such individual unity one is able to realize God and see how ultimately the entire cosmic diversity is in unity. Before entering the central topic, the book explains the urgent need to transcend the limitations of human perception. It carefully presents ways how to realize God and discloses the sublime nature of God in a non-sectarian way. The understanding one gains from this book is all-accommodating and all-harmonizing, and this proves that the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* is truly universal and beyond sectarian bias. Some contributions of this book are as follows:

The principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* harmonizes the different concepts of different disciplines. It enables a harmonious cooperation of material and spiritual sciences. It answers the crucial questions of epistemology (theory of the nature and limits of knowledge) and ontology (theory of the nature of the ultimate reality). It synthesizes the partial approaches of monism (*advaita*) and dualism (*dvaita*) into an integrated whole. It harmonizes exclusive agnosticism (man cannot know complete reality/God at all), exclusive immanence (complete reality/God is inherent and can be independently realized by anyone) and exclusive transcendence (complete reality/God can only be realized after attaining the spiritual realm). It gives evidence that the self is beyond the material body and has a spiritual body, and thus helps to solve problems of bodily misidentification such as racism, sexism, material greed and mental diseases. It reveals the relations of Divine Spirit, human spirit and matter and offers methods to access complete reality. It is most essential for universal welfare, because only the complete can truly satisfy and this principle allows entrance into the complete perception, reality and harmony.

Keywords: Achintya-Bhedabheda (*acintya-bhedābheda*), Chaitanya (Caitanya), unity, diversity, philosophy, science, religion, distinction, non-distinction, perception, consciousness, reconciliation, harmony, empathy, essence, universality, teleosympathy, skeletonism, transcendence, Veda, Vedanta, Vedic science, devotional service, bhakti, prema, self-realization, God-realization, sankirtan, education.

¹ *acintya-bhedābheda* is not restricted to philosophy, science or religion, but encompasses all human disciplines; this is expressed by the term 'universal principle'. Accordingly, this book discloses a universal principle.

² Kṛṣṇa is a Sanskrit name for God. Kṛṣṇa literally means "the One who attracts all because He is the embodiment of

To my spiritual master

H. D. G. Srila Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Goswami Maharaj

President, World Vaishnava Association
President-Acharya, Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math
President & Founder Acharya, GOKUL

and

H. H. Bhakti Svarupa Damodara Maharaj (Dr. T. D. Singh)

Director, Bhaktivedanta Institute
Founding Member, World Vaishnava Association
Founding Member, United Religions Initiative

who first inspired me to compile this book

Acknowledgement

I am most grateful to my spiritual master, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja, for initiating and instructing me in the science of *bhakti*, devotion unto the Supreme Lord. He told me to complete this book, and whatever is of value in it is due to his mercy. I am very grateful to all of his godbrothers and disciples who have helped me with this book. I am also very grateful to H. H. Bhakti Svarūpa Dāmodara Mahārāja for inspiring me to write this book. I am very grateful to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates for establishing the universal principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, and all the teachers who have taught me about this principle. I am deeply indebted to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda for his pure teachings in the Vedic conclusions and for establishing many institutions for the devotional training of humanity. I am very grateful to his dear disciples, grand-disciples and great-grand-disciples, who continue to educate humanity in the science of *bhakti*. I am very grateful for the precious contribution of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, who has translated many Vedic texts into English and who taught their practice in a universally acceptable way. I am also very grateful to his followers, especially those related to New Jagannātha Purī Dhām Switzerland and the Bhaktivedānta Institute. I am very grateful to Dr. Fakir Mohan Dās for teaching me Bhāgavata Science and Culture, Aindra Dāsa for teaching me *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and to Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa, Madana Mohana Dāsa and Matsya Avatāra Dāsa of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavata Vidyāpītham Govardhana for teaching me *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Tattva-sandarbhā* and Sanskrit. I am thanking Prof. Randy I. Stein, President of the Florida Vedic College, for examining the thesis, and Prof. D. N. Tiwari, Head of Department of Philosophy and Religion, BHU, for his scholarly advice and encouragement and for going through the manuscript. I am very grateful to Bhakti Niketan Turyāśramī Mahārāja, Śyāmdās Bābājī Mahārāja, Raseśvara Dāsa, Dīna Anukampana Dāsa, my parents, Rāmatanuja Dāsa, Gopīnī Devī Dāsī and family, Kṛṣṇa Karuṇya Dāsa, Candrika Dāsī, Kālacanda Dāsa, Surendra Tapuriah and Puruṣottama Dāsa for their multi-level support. I am thanking Prof. S. C. Tiwari, Trilokanatha Dāsa, Viśākhā Devī Dāsī, Caru Chandrika Devī Dāsī, Bhadra Devī Dāsī, Urmila Devī Dāsī and Śyāma Dāsa for proofreading and editing. Finally I would like to thank the various authors, artists and photographers and all others who have contributed to this book.





Table of Contents

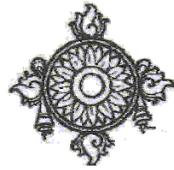
Note: For a table of contents with active links, open bookmarks in your pdf reader.
If you are using Adobe Acrobat Reader or similar, click on this symbol on the left pane:



1. Introduction	11
1.1. The Quest for a Universal Philosophy.....	11
1.2. Definition of Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana.....	13
1.3. Aims of this Book.....	13
1.4. Vedic Science	14
1.5. The Basic Human Misconception.....	15
1.6. Spiritual Perception.....	17
2. Comparison of Vedic and Western Philosophy.....	19
2.1. Primary Philosophy of Aristotle	19
2.2. Self-Realization – The Primary Human Quest According to Socrates.....	22
2.3. Plato’s Allegory of the Cave: The Self Is Spiritual and not the Material Body.....	27
2.4. Changes of Paradigm with the Rise of Western Philosophy.....	37
3. Vedic Epistemology: How We Can Know Truth	42
3.1. Ascending and Descending Method of Approaching Reality	42
3.2. Vedic Epistemology Expounded by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī	42
3.3. Overcoming the Four Faults of Material Sense Perception	43
3.4. Deduction in the Real Sense.....	64
3.5. Śabda, Testimony of Experts, is a Superior Source of Evidence.....	67
3.6. Veda is the Best Source of Knowledge and Evidence	67
3.7. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the Best Source of Veda & the Best Means of Evidence	74
4. Reasons for the Decline of Vedic Science.....	83
5. Vedic Ontology: The Universal God	88
5.1. An Introduction to God.....	88
5.2. Many Names of God Originate From the Names of Lord Kṛṣṇa.....	95
5.3. The Universal Supreme Personality of Godhead.....	98
5.4. The Cosmic Manifestation	107
5.5. The Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān Features of God	109
5.6. The Transcendental Deity Form of God.....	118
5.7. Mādhurya – Divine Sweetness.....	129
5.8. Male and Female Aspects of God	136
6. The Life and Teachings of Śrī Caitanya	146
6.1. Predictions about Śrī Caitanya and His Spiritual Status	146
6.2. The Biography of Śrī Caitanya	149
6.3. Appearance	149
6.4. Pastimes of Scholarship	150
6.5. Accepting a Spiritual Master.....	152
6.6. Pastimes of Sāṅkīrtana and Preaching.....	153

	9
6.7. Accepting the Renounced Order of Sannyāsa.....	156
6.8. Establishing the Universality of Bhakti.....	157
6.9. In the Ecstasy of Love of God.....	161
6.10. Revelation of His Divinity and Acintya-Bhedābheda Nature.....	163
6.11. Arriving in Śrī Jagannātha Purī.....	163
6.12. Delivering Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya.....	164
6.13. Journey to South India, Rāmānanda Rāya & Śrī Caitanya’s Highest Teachings.....	165
6.14. Return to Śrī Jagannātha Purī and Journey to Bengal.....	181
6.15. Pilgrimage to Śrī Vṛndāvana and Discovery of Ancient Holy Sites.....	185
6.16 The Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.....	186
6.17 Turning the Impersonalists into Vaiṣṇavas.....	186
6.18. Final Spiritual Absorption in Śrī Jagannātha Purī.....	187
6.19. Śrī Caitanya’s Continuous Disciplic Succession to Date.....	188
7. The Underlying Unity of all Philosophies.....	190
8. The Underlying Unity of the Individual with the Entire Creation.....	194
9. The Four Main Philosophies and Development of Full-fledged Theism.....	201
9.1. Overview of The Four Main Philosophies.....	201
9.2. Lord Buddha Reestablishes Non-Violence.....	204
9.3. Śāṅkarācārya Reestablishes the Vedas as Authority.....	208
9.4. Madhvācārya Reestablishes Theism.....	210
9.5. Śrī Caitanya Reestablishes Full-fledged Theism; Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana.....	212
10. Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana Advocates Union in Will with God.....	228
11. Quantum Mechanics in the Light of Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana.....	245
11.1. The Renaissance of Consciousness in Science.....	245
11.2. From Uncertainty to Certainty: The Central Quest of Surrender.....	252
11.3. Matter, the Energy Matrix and Mother Durgā.....	255
11.4. The Soul/Body Problem.....	262
11.5. The Mental Trap of Monism.....	267
11.6. Wave-Particle Duality: The Prison of Endless Dismissal and Reformation.....	269
11.7. Energy Quanta and Sthāyi-bhāvas, Fixed Levels of Existence.....	270
11.8. Entanglement, Disentanglement and Transcendental Connection.....	276
11.9. Wave Function Collapse: ‘The World at Your Feet’ vs. God’s Merciful Glance.....	278
12. Universal Brotherhood and the Underlying Unity of all Religions.....	282
13. The Eternality of Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana and Vaiṣṇavism.....	307
14. Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana Described by Śrī Caitanya.....	316
14.1. General Definition.....	316
14.2. Śakti-Pariṇāma, Transformation of God’s Energy.....	320
14.3. God, His Energies and Their Interactions are Acintya, Materially Inconceivable.....	325
14.4. God is Realized Through His Śakti, His Spiritual Energy.....	330
14.5. God’s Personal Form Is the Source of All Variegation.....	336
14.6. How God Remains Untouched by Material Imperfections.....	336
14.7. God Is Beyond Material Time.....	340
14.8. God Has Both Personal And Impersonal Features.....	343
14.9. God Manifests Different Forms to Please Different Devotees.....	344
14.10. Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana Leads to True Equal Vision and Harmony.....	349
14.11. Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana Leads to Perfect Discrimination.....	354

	10
14.12. Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana Described In the Brahma-saṁhitā	361
14.13. Union In Will With God Is the Formula to Success.....	363
14.14. God's Servants are Equally As Opulent as God	364
14.15. God Is Non-Different From His Transcendental Body.....	365
14.16. Further Aspects of Acintya-Bhedābheda.....	366
14.17. Devotees Engage Everything In Bhakti	369
14.18. Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana is the Ultimate Philosophical Principle.....	376
15. Saṅkīrtana; The Universal Process of Self-Realization.....	381
15.1. The Universality of Kīrtana	381
15.2. Saṅkīrtana is Complete Kīrtana	385
15.3. Saṅkīrtana is the Essential Process of Pure Devotion	396
15.4. Śrī Caitanya Exemplified Saṅkīrtana.....	401
15.5. Saṅkīrtana is the Universal and Foremost Process of Self-Realization.....	403
15.6. The Science of Mantra	405
16. The Spiritual Master According to Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana.....	419
17. The Renaissance of a Guiding Faculty of Philosophy	448
18. Review, Summary & Conclusion.....	450
18.1. Review	450
18.2. Summary.....	450
18.3. Conclusion.....	452
Bibliography.....	457
Image References.....	462
Appendix 1. Guide to Sanskrit Pronunciation.....	463
Appendix 2. The Four Classical Vaiṣṇava-Sampradāyas	464
Appendix 3. Extraordinary Departures of Devotees.....	467
Appendix 4. Your Contribution and the Vedic Education System.....	470
Appendix 5. The Golden Chance	471
Glossary & Word Index in Alphabetical Order	473



Practical notes:

This book is composed in a strategic way. Evidence for subjects in later chapters is built up in earlier chapters. If you jump to a later chapter, please keep this in mind and refer to earlier chapters when something is unclear. You can also look up terms in the Glossary, where you will find further information about many words. A smart way of reading is to avoid following cross-references (references to other chapters of the same book) in the first reading and to follow them in a second reading. In this way, there will be a smooth development of information in the first reading and a deeper understanding in the second reading. This book includes Sanskrit terms. Proper Sanskrit pronunciation is enabled by using the system of Roman transliteration explained in Appendix 1. Abbreviations are defined under References. Comments in square brackets ([..]) are by the author. The author may quote certain people and media without agreeing with all their tenets.



1. Introduction

In the year 2004, H. H. Bhakti Svarūpa Dāmodara Mahārāja (Dr. T. D. Singh) asked me to present the teachings of Śrī Caitanya in a scientific way. I started to compile a book about the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, and my spiritual master, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja, instructed me to complete it. May my well-wishers be pleased with my humble attempt to fulfil their instructions, and may people in the search for a higher truth and universal harmony find inspiration in this book.

1.1. The Quest for a Universal Philosophy

The principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* explains the profound and harmonious nature of the universe and the interactions of life, matter and the Creator very scientifically.

The Creator and His interaction with creation can be factually experienced with evidence of not lesser value than what modern science offers. The modern scientists believe in the paradigm that ‘life comes from matter, and hence life can also be detected by material means’. Holding on to this paradigm without being open for other concepts leads to a paradigm paralysis that prevents people from discovering the life-force, because the life-force or soul is spiritual and can only be perceived with spiritual means. There is a difference between soul and mind. While certain mental activities can still be observed materially, the activities of the soul are beyond a material grasp, due to being extremely subtle (*sūkṣmah*, *SB* 6.16.9). The soul and God can only be realized with a spiritual approach.

In order to attain an agreement between the material and the spiritual sciences, it is essential that the common scientists become aware of the value of the spiritual science, and by its practice realize transcendence for themselves. The promotion of this awareness is the essential task of philosophy, which has a mediating position between material and spiritual sciences. Another requirement for an agreement between material and spiritual sciences is that the spiritual scientists must be genuine. Ideally, they have factually realized God and are able to help others realize God. The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* lets the sincere seeker of truth approach transcendence without loss of evidence, evaluation and distinct method.

To attain the conviction to change a cherished paradigm, two strategies are beneficial; the negative approach and the positive approach. In this book, both strategies are employed. It is first shown how limited physical science is and how some of its teachings are incorrect. This serves as impetus for accepting the spiritual approach. Further, it is positively explained how spiritual science can provide all necessary solutions, from theoretical understanding to scientific exploration. Just as common science needs to approach spiritual science in order to progress, spiritual science needs to explain the shortcomings of certain practitioners that have led to a justified rejection from the field of widely accepted sciences. This effort is also made in this book. Finally, *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* is analyzed, discussed and shown to be the all-reconciling essential philosophy and science.

The quest for a universal philosophy or principle has already been mentioned in the abstract. To begin with, we should understand the importance and value of philosophy in general. The first verse of the *Vedānta-sūtra* mentions:

athāto brahma jijñāsā

“Now that you have attained this rare human birth, it is your duty
to inquire about Brahman, the Absolute Truth. Who am I? Who is God?
What is the universe? What is the relationship between us?
Realization of Brahman is the purpose of human life.”

Philosophy literally means ‘love of wisdom’. It is concerned with the basics of human thinking, and is therefore also accepted as the mother of all common sciences (Kunzmann, 1991, pp. 47-51). Unlike other sciences, philosophy is not loyal to any frames of observation, but can observe anything in context to anything. This conceptual independence of philosophy is explained by Aristotle as follows: “Since they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, evidently they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end. (...) So we pursue this [the science of philosophy] as the only free science, for it alone exists for its own sake.” – *Metaphysics*, Part 2 (Stevenson, 1994, p. 4).

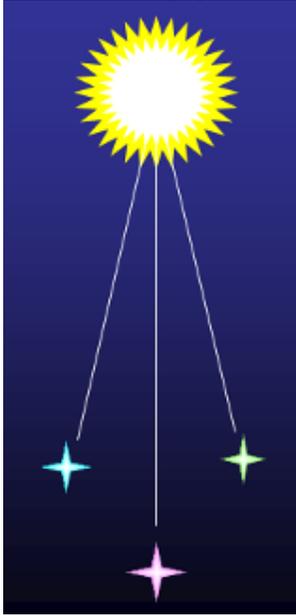
Because philosophy expresses the deeper meanings and motives of actions, any action without concern for philosophy can be called meaningless, and therefore the faculty of philosophy has originally been given a guiding position amongst all sciences. Nonetheless, in modern times, the faculty of philosophy has been expelled from its natural responsible guiding position above the other faculties of education and replaced by a rather utilitarian administration with no or little philosophical horizon. How was this loss of essence-oriented guidance in human education possible?

When the essence gets diluted, it loses its potency. With the increase of the speculative competitive sciences, humanity has produced countless philosophies that were applicable only for a very limited span of time. “One cannot serve many masters”, it is said, and therefore we are frustrated every time the master concept of philosophy is changed, just like people are frustrated with a life full of divorces. The originally one Vedic philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* was split into various philosophies bereft of essential potency. Due to progressive dilution of the one essential universal philosophy, people could no more recognize philosophy as an essential science. Turning away from philosophy, human life became more and more bereft of a deeper meaning and philosophical thinking. But because people are naturally endowed with the propensity for introspection, they must find a way to employ that propensity in a suitable philosophy. Thus the question mentioned in the Synopsis must again be raised:

Is there a universal principle that can convey and harmonize
the essential goals of all philosophies, sciences and religions?

This book explains how the Vedic conclusive principle or philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction of the Creator and His energies, fulfills these requirements.

1.2. Definition of Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana



Synonyms:

acintya—inconceivable by material means;
bheda—distinct; *abheda*—non-distinct; *darśana*—philosophy

Translation:

The philosophy of inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction of the Lord and His expansions and energies.

Definition by Śrī Caitanya:

jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'
kṛṣṇera 'tatasthā-śakti' 'bhedābheda-prakāśa'
sūryāṁśa-kiraṇa, yaiche agni-jvālā-caya
svābhāvika kṛṣṇera tina-prakāra 'śakti' haya

“The original position of the living entities is to be eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa² because they are the Lord’s marginal energy and a manifestation simultaneously one and different from the Lord, like a molecular particle of sunshine or fire. Kṛṣṇa has three varieties of energy.” – Cc 2.20.108-109.

Śrī Caitanya appeared 1486 in Māyāpur, West-Bengal, India. He established the universal philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* and harmonized all seemingly contradictory partial philosophies arising from various traditions. His contemporary associates left written documents, from which literatures like the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and the *Caitanya-bhāgavata* have been compiled. In these literatures, the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is described. The earliest evidence of the exact term ‘*acintya-bhedābheda*’ is found in the *Sarva-saṁvādinī*³ of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī (1511-1596), who was a direct student of Śrī Caitanya and one of the most prominent scholars of India.

The *acintya-bhedābheda* philosophy is the conclusion of the
ancient Vedic wisdom. The practical application of this philosophy is
the universal science of *bhakti*, loving devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

This philosophy is universal because it does not rely on cultural or sectarian circumstances, but establishes that all living entities are parts of the Supreme Lord, and hence their *sanātana-dharma*, inherent eternal nature and occupation, is to serve the Lord. As both the Lord and His potencies are eternal, the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* is timeless and applicable to everything under all circumstances. Its teachings are practically realizable for anyone who is interested.

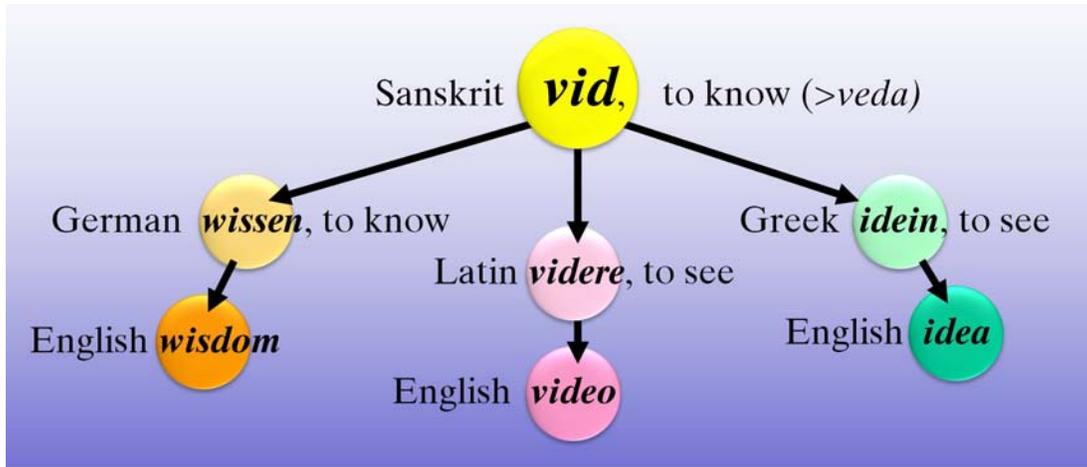
1.3. Aims of this Book

This book discloses Śrī Caitanya’s universal principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, which reveals the original nature of the living entities and the harmonious relation of the entire cosmos to the Supreme Lord. Special emphasis is given to the practical application of this principle, which is realization of the underlying unity of the cosmic diversity. This refers to individual unity of each living entity with the Lord as well as unity between all elements of creation. If by means of this book, even one person experiences more harmony with God and His creation, the purpose of this book is fulfilled.

² Kṛṣṇa is a Sanskrit name for God. Kṛṣṇa literally means “the One who attracts all because He is the embodiment of bliss”. Lord Kṛṣṇa is not a deity of any mundane culture or place, but the universal Lord of all (see Chapter 5).

³ Ss, commentary on *Paramātmā-sandarbhā* 77-78, p. 80. Fully quoted in Chapter 14.3.

1.4. Vedic Science



The term ‘Vedic’ is an adjective derived from the ancient Sanskrit word *veda*, eternal knowledge. The verbal root of the word *veda* is *vid*, to know. The Sanskrit word *vid* is the root word of Latin *videre*, to see, Greek *idein*, to see, Russian *vedat*, to know, German *wissen*, to know, and the English words *wisdom*, *wit*, *video* and *idea* (Williams states the Sanskrit *vid* as the root of *videre*, *wissen* and *wit*. Webster links *video* and *idea* back to *videre* and *wisdom* back to *veda*).

Veda:	Universal eternal knowledge (independent of any particular culture).
The Vedas:	The four Vedas; the <i>R̥g</i> , <i>Sāma</i> , <i>Yajur</i> and <i>Atharva-Veda</i> of the Vedic culture.
Vedic literature:	The Vedas and other scriptures like <i>Vedānta-sūtra</i> , <i>Mahābhārata</i> and <i>Purāṇas</i> .

The term ‘Veda’ means universal eternal knowledge, whereas the term ‘the Vedas’ refers to the four Vedas, the four main Vedic scriptures; the *R̥g*, *Sāma*, *Yajur* and *Atharva-Veda*. The term ‘Vedic literature’ furthermore includes other literature such as the *Vedānta-sūtra*, the *Purāṇas* and the *Mahābhārata* (containing the *Bhagavad-gītā*), which expand on the Vedas while maintaining their conclusive teachings. Veda is all-encompassing universal knowledge and therefore includes spiritual knowledge as well as material knowledge. Vedic science teaches about the spiritual nature of the Absolute and about many common sciences like medicine (Ayurveda), cosmology, mathematics, linguistics, psychology, architecture, philosophy, classical music and arts. Although this is not widely taught in schools, the Vedic science has greatly gifted humanity. The Vedic language, Sanskrit, is not only the world’s oldest language, but also the most scientifically designed language, as attested by NASA scholars. Many words of different languages of humanity root in Sanskrit. The very term ‘man’ comes from Sanskrit *mānuṣa*, human being (Webster). The so called ‘Arabic numerals’ that most people use actually originated from the Vedic culture and came to the West via Arabia. Hence they are also called Hindu-Arabic numerals (Webster). The Pythagorean theorem, the decimal and binary number system, the introduction of zero and the concept of infinity were first discovered in India.

The Vedic science of universal eternal knowledge
belongs to all human beings of all backgrounds.

The various Vedic sciences are accepted as the oldest sciences by many renowned scholars. Veda establishes itself as timeless knowledge beyond worldly time and space and is independent of any particular human race or society. The ancient Vedic scriptures, which can be traced back thousands of years, describe that the Vedic culture and science were once spread over the entire planet earth and then de-evolved into various other cultures. Vedic culture is not only Indian culture – India is merely the land where Vedic culture and science have survived to the greatest extent. The excellency of the conclusive Vedic principle or paradigm of *acintya-bhedābheda* described in this book shall leave no doubt about the genuineness of Vedic science.

1.5. The Basic Human Misconception

Most people think that humanity is on a progressive path due to the progress of physical science. But although some material comforts have increased with the usage of modern utilities, the overall quality of life has not improved, but declined. Crime, suicide, mental and physical abuse, corruption, material greed, drug addiction, mental illness, depression, hopelessness, divorce, abortion and anti-social behavior have increased. Besides the anxieties of the people, nature responds to her careless exploitation and pollution by increasing natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones, floods, landslides, ozone hazards, droughts and epidemics. Since our efforts of progress have brought about a reduction of our life's quality, we should sincerely ask ourselves:

What is the misconception that leads us as seekers
of happiness and progress into the irony of becoming
the cause of our own misery and degradation?



This ironic state of affairs was already recorded over five thousand years ago in the Vedic literature *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.3.18): *karmāṇy ārabhamāṇānām, duḥkha-hatyai sukhāya ca, paśyēt pāka-viparyāsam, mithunī-cāriṇām nṛṇām,*

“(...) The conditioned souls in human society constantly
make material endeavours to eliminate their unhappiness
and increase their pleasure unlimitedly. But one should see
that they inevitably achieve exactly the opposite result.”

Many people and organizations try to cure the diseased planet earth, but still the over-all situation is getting worse. As an analogy, in the case of chronic diseases, allopathic medical care mostly gives only symptomatic relief. It does not remove the root cause that lies deeper in the matrix of the body. The allopathic doctor can be compared to a gardener who only treats the plant above ground level. He is helpful in trimming the plants, just like allopathic surgery is helpful in cases of an acute accident. Yet when the allopathic doctor tries to treat chronic diseases, he is like the superficial gardener who only cuts the undesired weeds above ground level. Such superficial treatment cannot uproot the entire weeds, and they will sprout again and again and bring disease to the plant. The only way to get rid of the weeds entirely is to uproot them. This is called preventive, sustainable or complete treatment. The same consideration is there for healing the diseased planet.

If the living conditions are worsening, although the planet is ‘under treatment’, then it must be understood that the treatment applied is not complete.

Incomplete treatment does not fight the root cause, but merely the effects of the root cause, the symptoms. One who wants to give complete treatment must consider the complete plant and dig deep into the earth. The psychiatrist goes one level deeper than the allopathic doctor. He knows, that often, bodily diseases are caused by subtle mental problems, and hence he provides treatment for both body and mind for a more complete healing. Yet we find that even the psychiatrist cannot give complete relief from many diseases. One consideration people often avoid is that actually the main physical disease is the mortality of the material body. We must be brave and wise enough to face the burning responsibility of going deeper to find the root cause of this disease. Nobody wants to die and everyone is trying to avoid death. However, the healthiest body cannot protect us from death. The root cause of material disease lies deeper than what modern science has access to.

The sincere scientist or any person who is concerned about the actual welfare of humanity will thus muster up the courage to go beyond any limited paradigm and try to discover the spirit soul. To dis-cover means to free from covering. The spirit soul is the actual self of the living entity. That self has been covered by a material body. Their real self being covered, most people believe their external bodily covering to be their self. I have termed this faith ‘skeletonism’. Skeletonism leads to empiricism, accepting the gross senses as most reliable sources of knowledge, as in physical science. However, the true scientist or seeker of truth goes deeper than the bodily platform.

The sincere seeker of truth tries to reach the root cause, the essence of life, at any cost. This includes the agreement to change accustomed paradigms of life. The modern paradigm of life is that life comes from matter and that the material body is the self, whereas Veda establishes that life and matter both come from the spiritual source, God, and that the self is not the material body but the spirit soul. This approach to truth allows much deeper realizations of reality and should be considered by the sincere seeker of truth, at least for an experiment.

One may ask: Why should we believe in a spirit soul that we cannot see? We may similarly ask: Why should we believe that we possess a mind if we cannot see it? The pioneers of psychology were hard-pressed to present evidence for the existence of subtle mental activities beyond the reach of gross instruments. Yet, they have succeeded to such a degree, that nowadays, the existence of the subtle mind is widely accepted. Naturally, the spiritual scientists who go even beyond the subtle mind have more difficulties in giving evidence to an audience who think according to rather gross paradigms. Yet, if they are sincere, they will be able to convince people, just like people have succeeded in establishing psychology as a proper domain for academic study. The subtle body is beyond the reach of gross instruments, yet it can be understood by the subtle instruments of the subtle body; the mind and intelligence. The spiritual self or soul itself is beyond the reach of even the subtle body, what to speak of the gross material senses and instruments.

The spiritual self can only be understood with the help
from the spiritual plane. The spiritual self is beyond the reach of
material intelligence and therefore unknown to the common scientists.

If a materialistic person wants to understand the subtle mind, she has to take help from an authority of the science of the mind such as a psychologist. She must be ready to give up the paradigm of being only a gross body and widen her horizon to a paradigm that includes the mind and mental communication; she cannot demand that the psychologist should make the mind visible to the gross eye. Similarly, the common scientists cannot expect material evidence of Spirit. If they want to explore the spiritual reality, they must go beyond their accustomed material paradigms by taking guidance from an expert in spiritual science.

Just as one can easily discover the existence
of the subtle mind with the guidance of a psychologist,
one can easily realize the spiritual self through
a spiritual expert who has realized it.

To realize something means to actually grasp it, just as we can factually grasp the gross body with our own hand and grasp the existence of the intellect by our intellect. Similarly, to realize the self does not mean to only theoretically understand the self or have blind faith in some conceptions of the self, but to actually experience and grasp the self by the self's own spiritual potency. This is very scientific, just as the exploration of the mind by means of the mind itself is scientific. As long as our spiritual senses remain in a dormant state, we cannot directly experience the spiritual stages of consciousness like the realized transcendentalists. In such a state, we should be careful not to claim that the transcendentalists base their beliefs on blind faith instead of tangible evidences, simply because we lack their vision. If we follow them properly, we can also develop transcendental vision.

A great obstacle to human progress is skeletonism or the faith that 'I am the material body and reality consists of what the material body perceives'. By submitting to skeletonism, one blocks the way to the deeper truth, because the spiritual truth is evident to the spiritual senses and not to the gross senses. The basic human misconception is a misconception of the self, which naturally leads to an increasing crisis of the self.

History has reached a point where science has to change its concepts radically in order to progress further. In fields like quantum mechanics, this need has been clearly expressed by leading scientists, as will be further disclosed in Chapter 11. The consideration of interactive and subjective consciousness has become a necessity, although modern science has tried to establish a system of experiment that forbids transcendental data, i.e. data that transcends the range of material senses and mechanical instruments. The deeper science explores material nature, the more we find that there is a barrier which cannot be crossed by any material means or concept. We must consider using consciousness and transcendental means to detect and utilize consciousness.

1.6. Spiritual Perception

People usually only accept more subtle evidence when they experience it directly as self evident. For example, small children cannot completely understand what it means to fall in love, and even if someone tried to explain it to them, they would simply react with astonishment or disgust. The children must mature and experience the phenomenon themselves; then it will become self-evident. No one will deny the existence of a state of mind called 'fallen in love' after experiencing it, although it is not measurable by technical instruments. It is evident to the subtle body. It can be grasped directly with the mind as it is experienced. Mental maturity is required to understand the subtle material mind – the most sophisticated physical instruments will not do. Likewise, spiritual maturity is required to grasp the spirit soul.

The complete reality, which is primarily spiritual, will not show up
without a spiritual approach. Therefore, all sincere seekers of truth
must become spiritually mature to grasp the complete reality.

No scientist demands that the examiners of his or her hypothesis simply have to believe what he or she proclaims without evidence. Modern scientists often claim that there is no evidence for the existence of a conscious self, a soul, what to speak of a super-conscious omnipotent personal God. Many transcendentalists have tried to prove God's existence on the material platform in order to comply with the standards of modern science, but this is a vain quest.

The very fact that God and the living entities are of a spiritual nature,
which lies completely beyond the reach of material perception,
disqualifies any possible proof on the material platform.
The spiritual nature requires a spiritual approach.

We cannot perceive a bacterium by means of a telescope, and we cannot perceive a distant planet with a microscope. Similarly, we cannot perceive the spiritual nature with any material means (although the *effects* of the spiritual nature may be observed materially). The proper media is required. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains in *Bhagavad-gītā* 18.55 that we can understand Him only through the scope of spiritual love: *bhaktiā mām abhijānāti, yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ, tato mām tattvato jñātvā, viśate tad-anantaram,*

“One can understand Me as I am,
as the Supreme Personality of Godhead,
only by loving devotional service.”

The existence of love is evident to every reasonable scientist from within the heart, yet common science has failed to make the source and original object of love visible by material means. Kṛṣṇa, God, is the ultimate origin and object of love, and He explains that He can only be seen through love itself. Neither God nor love can be seen by physical means and therefore the serious scientists or seekers of truth must equip themselves with a love-scope, if they are really interested in discovering the source of life and love. In the *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.3.8, Brahmā, the engineer of the material universe says: “I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is Śyāmasundara, Kṛṣṇa Himself, with inconceivable innumerable attributes, whom the pure devotees see in their heart of hearts with the eye of devotion tinged with the salve of love.”

The living entity is originally spiritual, and has only been covered up by material designations. Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains this in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.14.26: *yathā yathātmā parimṛjyate 'sau, mat-puṇya-gāthā-śravaṇābhidhānaiḥ, tathā tathā paśyati vastu sūkṣmaṁ, cakṣur yathāivāñjana-samprayuktam,*

“When a diseased eye is treated with medicinal ointment it gradually recovers its power to see. Similarly, as a conscious living entity is cleansed of material contamination (wrong designations and desires) by hearing and chanting the narrations of My glories, the ability to see Me, the absolute Truth, is regained through direct perception of My spiritual form.”

Only by first realizing our true self, the spirit soul, can we discover our true nature and needs and not merely by trying to study the external material body and supplying it with its needs. As the soul is spiritual, he or she requires spiritual food. The material body is not the self but merely a temporary means of transport for the self. The driver gives petrol to the car, but does not drink petrol himself or herself.

People must understand that the body requires
material food and that the self requires spiritual food.

The reason of the overall failure in human progress is that people are trying to feed the soul inappropriate food, just like a driver who thinks that ‘I am this car, hence I must drink petrol’. Modern people are suffering due to their misconception of self and taking wrong food. By identifying the actual nature and food of the soul, the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* can provide humanity with complete welfare.



2. Comparison of Vedic and Western Philosophy

In this chapter, we focus on certain teachings of three of the main founders of western philosophy, Socrates and his successors Plato and Aristotle. The western conception of reality is rooted in the changes of paradigm during their period, and thus a discussion of these changes will enable us to get a good understanding of the links and differences of Vedic and western philosophy.

To be able to properly enter into Vedic philosophy, we have to embrace or at least mentally emulate the Vedic paradigms of life. This is a difficult task as most of us are used to thinking in Western paradigms. In this regard, T. S. Eliot, Nobel Laureate in English literature and a student of Sanskrit and Indian philosophy, wrote: “Their [Indian philosophers] subtleties make most of the great European philosophers look like schoolboys (...) my only hope of really penetrating to the heart of that mystery would lie in forgetting how to think and feel as an American or a European: which, for practical as well as sentimental reasons, I did not wish to do.” (Eliot, 1933, p. 40.)

When we are asked to, even just for an experiment, embrace another paradigm so we can enter a different way of thinking with sufficient empathy, we naturally feel discomfort due to having to set aside the paradigms with which we have become habituated. This is especially the case if we are exposed to a new way of thinking and living very abruptly – the classical example being the phenomenon of culture shock. To enable the reader to have a smooth entry into the Vedic paradigms of life, this chapter presents how important paradigms of Vedic philosophy were not only known, but also taught by the founders of western philosophy.

2.1. Primary Philosophy of Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 BC) gave a practical overview of the primary philosophy that he called *Metaphysika*, which is concerned with the origin and meaning of life:

“Evidently we have to acquire knowledge of the original causes
for we say we know each thing only when we think we recognize its original cause.”
– Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Part 3. (Stevenson, 1994, p. 4.)

This work was divided into three main parts; ontology, theology and universal science. They are now regarded as the proper branches of traditional western metaphysics.

Table 2: The three main themes of primary philosophy

Themes	Central question
1. Ontology: the true self of all beings	Who am I exactly?
2. Theology: the absolute reality or Being	What is the primary object of reality/who is God?
3. Universal science: their relations	What is our relationship?

1. Knowledge of the self and self-realization is the basic science, without which no other science can function adequately. For example, if a person does not know what a cow is and what the cow’s nature is, then it is unlikely that this person will be able to treat a cow properly and discover how to milk the cow simply by chance.

To develop appropriate activities and sciences for humanity,
we must first understand the real self, its nature and necessities,
otherwise all of our activities are useless or not truly beneficial.

Therefore, metaphysics was originally called ‘Queen of science’, taking a leading status superior to physical sciences. Aristotle was not the first to invent this philosophy; eastern traditions have discussed the above mentioned three basic questions since Vedic times, i.e. since over five thousand years. In the ancient Vedic literatures, the above three questions are stated to be primary questions of spiritual inquiry and understanding. The *Vedānta-sūtra* consists of aphorisms revealing the method of understanding Vedic knowledge and it is the concise form of all Vedic knowledge. It begins with the following words: *athāto brahma jijñāsā*, “Now that you have acquired this rare human birth, it is your foremost duty to inquire about the Absolute Truth.”

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī was a royal finance minister and one of the greatest scholars of his time. He addressed Lord Caitanya in the ancient city Vārāṇasī (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.20.100-109, summarized): “I do not know what is beneficial and what is detrimental for me. Nonetheless, in ordinary dealings people consider me a great scholar, and I believe them. Who am I? If I do not know this, how can I be benefited?” Lord Caitanya replied:

*jīvera ‘svarūpa’ haya – kṛṣṇera ‘nitya-dāsa’
kṛṣṇera ‘tatasthā-sakti’ ‘bhedābheda-prakāśa’
sūryāṁśa-kiraṇa, yaiche agni-jvālā-caya
svābhāvika kṛṣṇera tina-prakāra ‘śakti’ haya*



“The original position of the living entities is to be eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa because they are the Lord’s marginal energy and a manifestation simultaneously one and different from the Lord, like a molecular particle of sunshine or fire. Kṛṣṇa has three varieties of energy.”

Śrī Caitanya here discloses *ātma-jñāna*, knowledge of the self. It is worth noting that knowledge of the self is inseparable from knowledge of God and of our relationship with Him, since they are inseparable from each other. The corresponding Sanskrit term is *sambandha-jñāna*⁴, knowledge of our eternal relationship with God. The philosophical background of this relationship is the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, which is expressed in the above verse. Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions that the living entities are His eternal fragmental parts (*mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke*, *Bg* 15.7). As a fragmental part of the Lord, it is the inherent nature of the living entity to serve the Lord, just like the primary

⁴The ancient Sanskrit word *sambandha-jñāna* possesses some interesting etymological reflections in more recent languages: The English word ‘know’ has a remarkable spelling that cannot possibly be a phonetic reproduction of its pronunciation. It is unraveled when one understands its etymological root in Sanskrit *jñāna*, knowledge, via Greek *gnōthis*, to know. Sanskrit *sambandha* (from *sama-bandha*) literally means ‘uniting link’, which is reflected in the German *zusammenbinden*, ‘to bind together’, and English to *sum-up*, and to *bind*.

function of the bodily organs is to serve the body. The organs can only fare well and remain established in their constitutional nature by serving the body. Similarly, the living entities can only attain true welfare and become situated in their constitutional nature by *bhakti*, devotional service to the Supreme Lord. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.3.22 reads:

*etāvān eva loke 'smin
puṁsāṁ dharmah paraḥ smṛtaḥ
bhakti-yogo bhagavati
tan-nāma-grahaṇādibhiḥ*

“The highest *dharma*, inherent nature that sustains the substantial life of the living entity, is *bhakti*, devotional service to the Lord. It begins with the chanting of the holy name of the Lord.”

The eternal inherent nature of the soul is pure *bhakti*, unconditional devotional service to God. The exact scientific term for the eternal inherent original nature of the soul is *sanātana-dharma*. According to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is considered the natural commentary of the *Vedānta*, the conclusion of Veda is that pure *bhakti* is the *sanātana-dharma*. It is essential to understand that we cannot discover the real nature of both the self and material nature without understanding their relationship of service to God, just as we cannot find out the nature and function of a bodily organ if it is analyzed separated from the body. *sambandha-jñāna*, knowledge of our eternal relationship with God, also includes knowledge of Aristotle’s second theme, the absolute Being:

2. God is described in all Vedic scriptures and will be introduced in the fifth chapter.

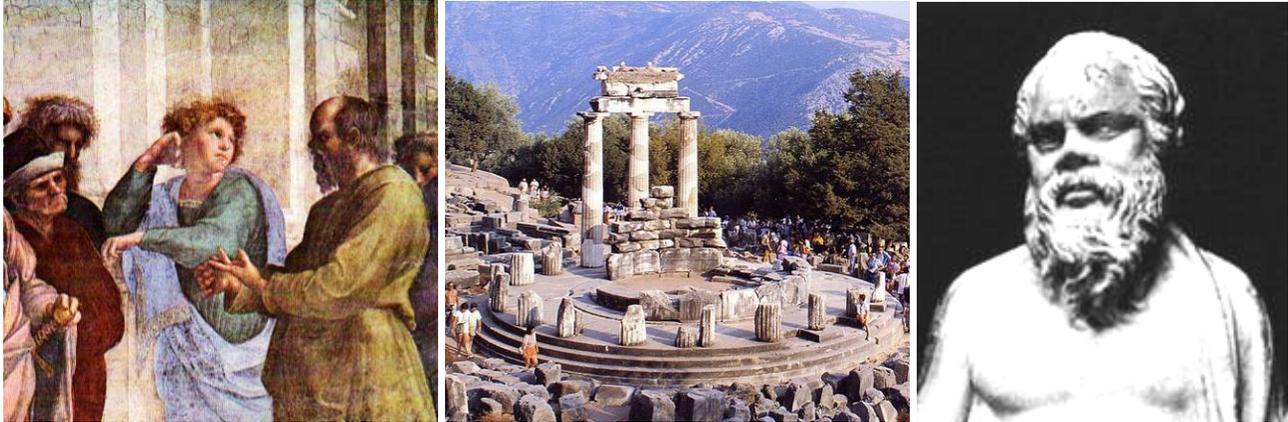
3. Aristotle’s third theme, the relation of the living entities to the Lord, is also included in the above described *sambandha-jñāna*. As all living entities in their original nature serve the Lord, they have a relation of harmonious assistance between each other in their service to the Lord, just like the organs of the body work together in symbiotic cooperation to serve the body. Realization of *sambandha-jñāna* also puts an end to violence and other acts of envy, just as the healthy organs of a body are not inimical towards each other, knowing that their envy would harm the body as well as themselves.

Aristotle’s three themes of primary philosophy, *metaphysika*, are thus all covered by the Vedic *sambandha-jñāna*. Moreover, Vedic science goes further than Aristotle, because it further describes (A) *abhidheya*, the scientific means and devotional practices to actually realize God and our eternal self, and (B) *prayojana*, the ultimate goal of life, to attain *kṛṣṇa-prema*, pure love of God, by which only we can enter the eternal spiritual abode and service of the Lord. *abhidheya* and *prayojana* will be described in later chapters.

The basic questions of western philosophy, from which the modern philosophies and sciences later evolved, are essentially metaphysical. The Vedic science offers not only the theoretical answers to all these questions, but also the science to factually realize the eternal self, God, all cosmic relations and the highest goal of life.

2.2. Self-Realization – The Primary Human Quest According to Socrates

Socrates of Athens (470-399 BC) was the predecessor of Plato and Aristotle. In his *Apology*, Socrates taught that the main motivation of the search after the good is self-realization. He quoted the famous aphorism of the Oracle of Delphi, which was inscribed in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi (Kunzmann, 1991, p. 37):



“Gnothi seauton – Know Thyself!”

This is exactly in the spirit of the ancient Vedic science: *nātaḥ parataro loke, puṁsaḥ svārthavyatikramah, yad-adhy anyasya preyastvam, ātmanaḥ sva-vyatikramāt* “There is no stronger obstruction to one’s self interest than thinking other subject matters to be more pleasing than one’s self-realization.” – *SB* 4.22.32. *vedā brahmātma-viśayās*, “The actual purpose of Vedic literature is self-realization.” – *SB* 11.21.35. Socrates’ method for achieving true perception was *elenchus*, cross examination or logical refutation. By sharp examining questioning he exposed the seeming knowledge of the people to be illusory and made them humble by letting them realize their ignorance. Socrates would argue with people until they reached the point where they admitted they did not actually know anything. In this situation of *aporie*, hopelessness, they became agreeable to learn. Socrates’ own maxim expresses his humble attitude towards material knowledge:

“The more I know – the more I know that I know nothing.”

After realizing our lack of true knowledge, readiness to learn arises and self-realization can begin. If we falsely think that we already know everything, we are unfit to learn. There are no worse students than those who think that they already know everything. First we must become humble by realizing our ignorance. The Vedic education cultivates our natural inherent humility and loving dependance on God and His devotees, in contrast to the modern education that cultivates material pride and virtual independence resulting in collective loneliness. Lucky Luke, for example, a famous modern comic idol, plays the great independent hero, the typical successful westerner; but the final picture in each of his story books always shows him in utter loneliness, singing the same old tune: “I’m a poor lonesome cowboy and a long way from home.”

Although from birth to death, nobody is independent, the modern world preaches virtual independence and false pride instead of humility and loving dependence on God. Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions humility as the first of many elements of knowledge (*amānitvam adambhitvam, Bg* 13.8). Without humility, we cannot properly approach any teacher or spiritual master. Just as we need to learn from teachers in material matters, we must learn from a bona fide teacher or spiritual master in spiritual matters. The true spiritual masters don’t know God by their own speculative imagination, but by descending knowledge coming down from Lord Kṛṣṇa through disciplic succession, and by personal realization through factual revelation of the Supreme Lord. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains that we can understand the truth by learning from those who have themselves seen the

truth and that complete learning requires humble and submissive inquiry and service to such a bona fide spiritual master (*Bg* 4.34, see also Chapter 16). On the path of descending knowledge, the humblest become the richest, as mercy flows downwards, not upwards.

Ancient tradition has it that in the yearly cart festival of Lord Jagannātha in Jagannātha Purī, the King of Purī takes off his royal garments and shoes, dresses in simple clothes, and humbly accepts the service of sweeping the cart and the road in front of Lord Jagannātha's deity's cart before His gigantic street procession (see Chapter 6.14). On the picture we see the present King of Purī, Gajapati Mahārāja Dibyasingha Deb, sweeping the cart of the Lord. King Dibyasingha Deb, who is considered the chief servant of Lord Jagannātha, explained: "My entire kingdom is dedicated to Lord Jagannātha. He is the real Lord, He is the real Mahārāja, the real King, and I am His servant. For the King to perform this sweeping service is very symbolic. It shows the *bhāva* or the real sentiment behind the service; that no service for the Lord is too low to be done."⁵



Being humble does not mean to abandon one's self esteem, but to attain real self esteem, because only by humbly serving the Supreme Lord can we realize our real eternal self. Not knowing our true self, any so-called 'self esteem' is merely an illusion. Further, by serving the Supreme, we will naturally attain supreme qualities, knowledge and happiness – in other words, true wealth and self esteem. It is worth noting that the broom with which the King of Purī serves the Lord has a golden handle; this indicates the Vedic secret that the most humble in the Supreme Lord's service are in fact the richest and therefore the wise invest their energy or wealth (represented by gold) in proper humility. Gold also indicates ornamentation and beauty. The golden broom also expresses the Vedic maxim:

Humility is the ornament of the wise.

An important quality of a spiritual master is humility and pridelessness. A true Guru is a humble servant of his Guru, who in turn is a humble servant of his Guru, etc, up to Lord Kṛṣṇa. A great spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, expressed it as follows: "The highest soul knows himself to be the lowest." (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 196.) This Vedic wisdom of natural humility was also propounded by great thinkers like Plato. William Shakespeare (1564-1616) wrote in his *As You Like It*: "The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool." (Act 5, Scene 1.) Albert Einstein wrote in a letter around 1955: "What I see in nature is a magnificent structure that we can comprehend only very imperfectly, and that must fill a thinking person with a feeling of humility." (Dukas, 1981, p. 39.) We may be proud of possessing so much knowledge, but we cannot answer the simple question: "Who am I?" If one of the most learned scholars of his time, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, humbly submitted himself to the Lord and asked this essential question, then what to speak of the need of the common people to do so? Proper humility is an essential quality according to Vedic science. Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja explained how humility is the quality of great people: The materialistic observer always sees minor material things and relations⁶. If we see minor things, we will feel superior and not humble. But the devotees always see the superior; they always see God's manifestation and servants

⁵ Paraphrased from a video interview published on <http://www.purionline.com>. Link to <http://ibnlive.in.com/videos/>

⁶ Matter is minor to the spirit soul, the observer. The materialist thinks of his surroundings as matter. However, even though he claims to be a materialist, he at least unknowingly prefers to see himself as spiritual, because that is his actual nature. In this way, he always sees himself as superior and therefore as the enjoyer of his material environment.

everywhere, thinking themselves the servant of the Lord's servants. Seeing the superior everywhere, they are by nature genuinely humble. From this we can understand that proper humility is the quality and ornament of those fortunate souls who always see the superior everywhere.

To further elucidate the need of self-realization, you are requested to try the following interview I put together using Socrates' method of *elenchus*, cross examination or logical refutation. Please answer the questions of the modern Socrates. Kindly finalize your answer before reading the next question. It is best if you note your answers down.

Interview to Evaluate True Knowledge

Socrates: Can I ask you a basic question? Who are you?

You:

Socrates: Alright. If I can prove, that you do not know *where* you are, then you should accept your lack of self-knowledge, correct? Then, right now, please take your right index finger, point to the exact place of your self, and describe it in words.

You:

Socrates: Are you hesitating? Or referring to your whole body? Then, if your body loses its teeth or hair, or becomes old, are you not completely yourself anymore? Yes, you still are! Hence you are not the body itself, but you are situated in the body, correct? But where? Obviously, you are bound to your body, and move along with your body. Thus you identify with your body, and think yourself to be male or female and having a certain age. But we have just found that you are not this body! You are *in* the body, but you don't know exactly where!

You may have told me that you are a man or a woman of a certain age. But you are none of that. The terms male and female and age only refer to the external body, which we have just found to be different from the self. "I am 21 years old" is an incorrect statement, because that would mean that I was always 21 years old. "My present body is 21 years old" would be correct. The body changes with age, but the self remains the same. Some cannot agree with this logic and claim that the self undergoes changes. Yet this is not the case. If the self would change, mothers wouldn't recognize their children after a period of separation and every year people would have to retake the driving test, not being the 'old self' anymore.

If you, even after all this evidence, still claim to be the material body in the belief that your self changes, kindly consider the following facts: The cells of the body are constantly aging and dying and being replaced by new cells. The maximal living span of most cells is seven years. In his book *The Human Brain*, Prof. John Pfeiffer notes: "Your body does not contain a single one of the molecules that it contained seven years ago." (Pfeiffer, 1961.) Or let us consider your savings that you deposited in your bank account over seven years ago. According to materialism, you are not the same person who opened that bank account anymore. You can no more claim the money of the now 'dead person' who opened the account. At this point in the argument, anyone accepts to change their philosophy to save their money, because people usually hold money over philosophy. According to science, change of body is a continuous process. Reincarnation is not a myth – it is going on in our body at every moment, and with each breath and bite and action, we are fashioning a new body. There are many ways of explaining how the self is completely aloof from the material body and after understanding only a few of them, any person will be amazed about the fact that most people in the modern times believe in the opposite.

Now, do you understand that most of the people do not actually know the most fundamental things? So now you have the chance to become humble and try what the Oracle of Delphi proposes:

Realize yourself!



It was expected that most people will not be able to correctly answer the above questions. I have made a small survey and interviewed and video-recorded ten professors of various faculties from distinguished universities in India. The first three questions were:

- (1) Where is the Eiffel tower?
- (2) Who are you?⁷
- (3) Please show me the exact place of your self and describe your self in words (the professor is given a pointing vector at this point).

All professors answered the first question correctly (“In Paris”). Nine professors answered the second question by describing their bodily and professional identities, one refused. All professors were visibly startled at the third question, and those who chose to point towards a place only did so after considerable hesitation. Some asked to repeat the question, some smiled embarrassed, and some simply paused. Four professors pointed towards their head, two towards their chest. One professor of a geographical faculty pointed to the earth before him (fourth video still picture). One pointed towards the chair on which she sat (third picture). One professor of physics simply stared at the wooden vector (last picture), and then frankly admitted that he actually does not know who and where he is. Another physics professor refused to answer the second and third questions and said that they were bad questions. He admitted that he did not know who he was and that he did not care who he was. All professors ignored the second part of the third question, to describe their self in words, and after this part was repeated, most still remained silent or admitted that they did not know.

The major observation in this survey was that there is general perplexity with regard to knowledge of the self. India is known to be one of the most spiritual countries and the Vedic teaching that the self is beyond the material body is taught and accepted to the greatest extent in India⁸. If the professors of India are unable to define their self, then with great certainty, the same can be said about the rest of the world, where knowledge of the self is not taught to such an extent. It is evident that there was no congruence between the opinions of the professors. The vector was pointed towards various places, and only after a period of hesitation. Although most answered the second question by referring to their name, profession, bodily age, etc, the third question revealed that they actually don't know their true self. All professors knew where the Eiffel tower was, but not one knew his or her self. This is an alarming finding. Modern education does not teach the most basic knowledge. The ignorance and tabooization of the subject – the person or self – leads to increasing impersonalism that cannot bring happiness to anybody.

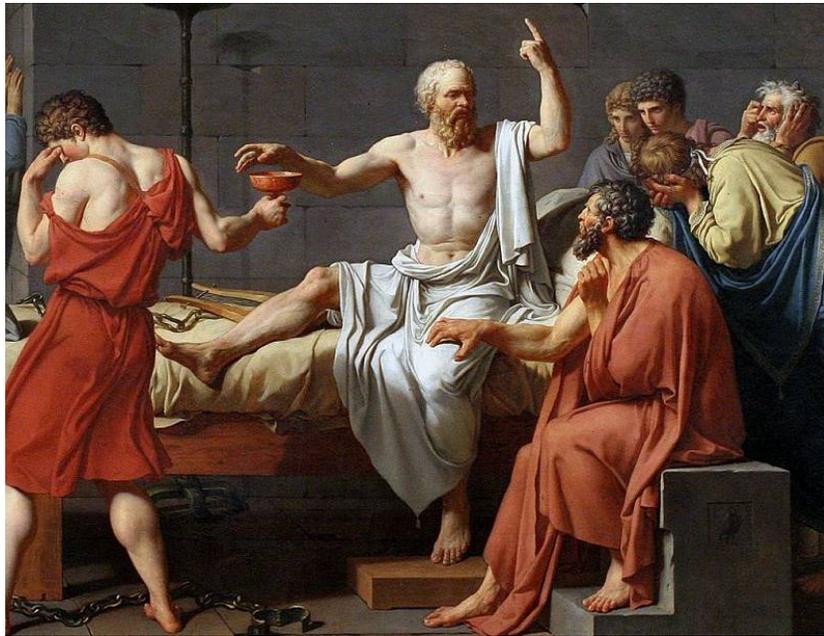
⁷ To avoid that this question is understood to merely ask for formal name, profession, etc, the following prelude was read out before the interview: “Imagine you have to pass on the gist of your knowledge to your best deserving student, without having to conform to any formal or conceptual frame. You are asked to answer the following questions with best possible precision [...]”

⁸ Any answer to questions (2) and (3) containing identification with the material body is not termed false because of disagreement with Veda, but because it can be shown scientifically that the self is not the material body.

How can ignoring the self bring knowledge and happiness to the self and to humanity, which consists of many selfs?

Imagine the following scene: You are at a gathering of friends and notice a young man you have never met before. When the man is about to leave, you inquire: “Do you mind if I ask – I have never seen you here before – where do you come from?” The man answers: “I don’t know.” You then ask him, “Then where are you going?” He answers: “That I also don’t know.” You start to develop doubts and ask: “Can you at least tell me who you are?” The man says: “Well, actually that’s the thing I know the least!” Most people who meet such a man will think that he is mentally retarded – a fool. But actually, as long as we are not self-realized, our situation is very similar: We do not know who we are, where we came from and where we are going. Yet unlike the fool who knows about his ignorance, we are so infatuated by *māyā*, the illusory energy, that we misidentify with our material body and its relations, and thus falsely think we know who we are. Therefore, in plain language, we are not just fools – we are superfools. If we can admit this, we are wise in the sense of Socrates’ maxim “The more I know – the more I know that I know nothing.” However, we are only truly wise if we consequently make sincere efforts to get educated from those who are self-realized.

Socrates was very conscious that the self is not the material body but the immortal soul. When Socrates was sentenced to death, Crito asked him how they should bury him. Socrates calmly drank the cup of poison, giving his striking last instruction:



“First you must catch me – the real me!
Be of good cheer, my dear Crito, bury my body in
any way you like, and say that you are burying my body only!”

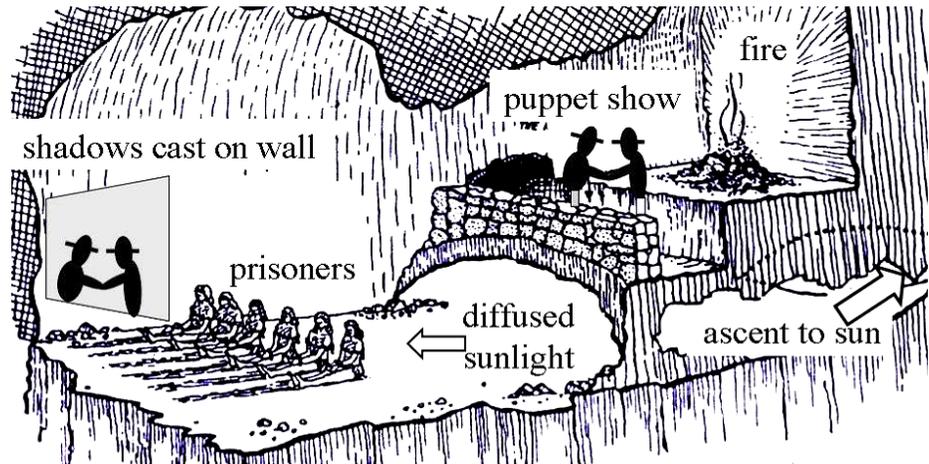
With this statement Socrates not only taught a lesson to Crito, but he instructed all people that the living entity is the eternal spirit soul that leaves the body at the time of death and that it cannot be caught by any material means.

In the so-called weakest hour of life, Socrates proved that he was not at all in anxiety about his body’s death like an ordinary person would be, because he knew that the soul is immortal. This wisdom and its calming effect on the soul was already described in the ancient Vedic literature: “As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change.” – *Bg 2.13*.

2.3. Plato's Allegory of the Cave: The Self Is Spiritual and not the Material Body

Socrates' disciple Plato (427-347 BC) further explained how the spirit soul in the material body is in illusion. In his best known work, the *Republic*, in Book VII, Plato presented his famous allegory of the cave that nicely illustrates this illusion. He concluded:

The sensual world allows no direct perception,
but only perception of shadows of the truth.



Summary: Prisoners are chained in a cave since birth. They are facing a wall, unable to move their chained heads. Behind their backs there is a roadway where men perform a puppet show and behind that roadway there is a fire that projects shadows onto the wall in front of the prisoners. The prisoners are thus accustomed to believe that these shadows are the ultimate reality. Then one prisoner gets released. When he gets up after years of sitting idle, he suffers great pain in his limbs, and the fire's glare hurts his eyes. Reluctant to approach the light, he is forced out into the sun where he suffers further, until his eyes adapt to the light. First he can only recognize shadows, then reflections in water, then objects, and finally the sun. Once he realizes the beauty of the real world of light, he does not want to return to the cave anymore. At that time he is forced to go back into the cave and to join the prisoners. Feeling pity for them, he tries to explain the truth to them, but they think that he has lost his vision when he escaped, and declaring him a traitor, they kill him.

Plato explains the allegory as follows: "The prison house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world." (Plato, 427-347 BC, p. 253.) There are various interpretations of the allegory of the cave. According to Plato the soul originally comes from *Nous*, the divine, and incarnates into a material body due to sensual desires. In order to achieve true perception, we must escape incarnation into a material body. In the body the soul is imprisoned "like a disease." Therefore, Plato compared the material body (*soma*) to the tomb (*sema*) of the soul: "*soma – sema.*" (Kunzmann, 1991, p. 43.) He further states in *Phaedo* 106 E:

"When death attacks a person, the mortal part dies
but the immortal part retreats before death,
and goes away safe and indestructible."

Plato introduces the allegory of the cave by letting Socrates say that it is about education (*paideia*) and miseducation (*apaideusia*). Combining Plato's repeated teaching of the soul as being eternal and apart from the material body, which is like a grave, sickness or prison for the soul, we can conclude that the cave stands for the material body. The material body provides perverted impressions of truth via defective senses. These impressions become what the embodied soul calls

'reality', or Plato calls 'the world of sight'. As the 'world of sight' is unavoidably dictated and manipulated by the imperfect material senses and organs of the material body, the material body is not only an instrument of the soul, but also a limitation, like a prison, that deprives the soul of the experience of the spiritual reality.

The ultimate misunderstanding in this world is therefore the modern teaching of
 "I am the material body and reality consists of what the material body perceives."

I have termed this misconception 'skeletonism'. The Sublime Reality Forum is dedicated to expose the greatest human illusion of skeletonism with various means such as educational programs, petitions and publications. If you want to help people waking up from the skeleton dream to the sublime reality, please join the forum on www.sublimereality.com and support this cause by inviting others to the forum. The Sublime Reality Forum is a platform that does not promote any particular tradition and is thus agreeable for people of all lifestyles and human traditions.

The body is a prison for the spirit soul who "Incarnates due to sensual desires", as Plato mentioned. Thus the chains are material desires. From inside this body prison, one can perceive only shadows of perverted truth. They reflect the illusion arising from the defective senses. According to Plato, the fire represents the sun that projects the shadow show of what an embodied soul calls 'reality' onto the screen of the mind (the wall). The prisoners, who have lost their intelligence due to being bound by material desires, accept whatever their mind is offering them as the final truth. The person who liberates one prisoner represents spiritual intelligence. Both philosophers' advice to escape the body should not be misunderstood to be quitting the body by suicide, as they themselves did not advocate suicide. Rather our consciousness should renounce the *attachments* to the body:

We should discard skeletonism, the misidentification of the self with the material body.

The prisoners ascending to the light should be understood to represent the inner transcendence ("the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world"). The spirit soul neither has the capacity nor the will to become free from the shackles of illusions; help is needed from higher intelligence. That intelligence guides the prisoner to the light, i.e. it grants enlightenment. The prisoner gets liberated, first from the empirical gross body-consciousness of the senses and then from the rational subtle body-consciousness (mind and material misidentification). Being free from the truth-distorting material senses, the soul can now perceive truth directly, as it is, and see the world in its uncontaminated state – first only its shadows and reflections, then its objects, and then its source of light, the sun, and then "the world of knowledge", the actual reality.

Summarized, Plato's wisdom holds that

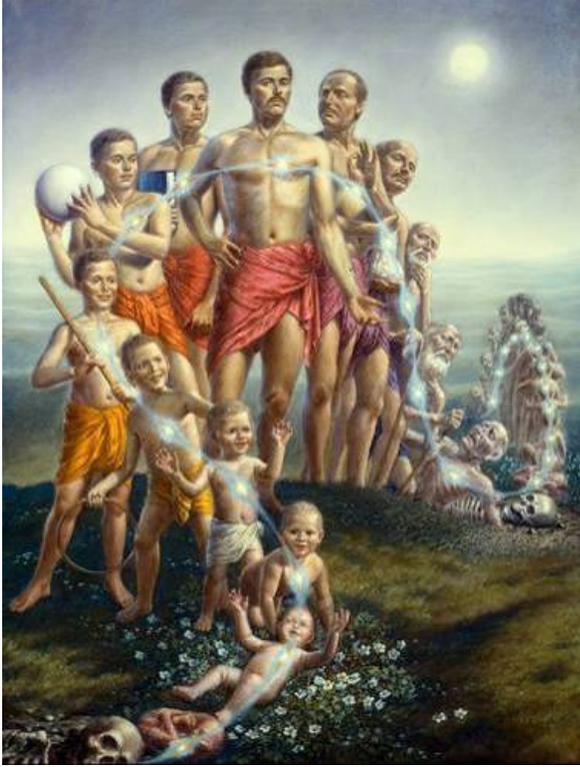
- The wise realize their limited capacity and thus become humble and inquisitive
- The inquiry should primarily be about self-realization
- The self or soul is spiritual, and can practically transcend the material body
- The material body in which the soul is unknowingly engaged is caused by material desires
- The soul's illusion arises from defective senses
- Transcendence is impossible without the help of higher intelligence
- Although transcendence is the only beneficial path, the illusioned soul tries to reject it

Interestingly, Plato’s wisdom is in accordance with ancient Vedic knowledge:

“Humility; pridelessness; (...) accepting the importance of self-realization; and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth – all these I declare to be knowledge (...).” – *Bhagavad-gītā* 13.8.12.

“The truly intelligent know that the material body is different from the self, the soul.” – *SB* 4.20.3.

“That which pervades the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul.” – *Bg* 2.17.



“As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change.” – *Bg* 2.13

“As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones.” – *Bg* 2.22

“The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone’s heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine (the material body), made of the material energy.” – *Bg* 18.61

“The caterpillar transports itself from one leaf to another by capturing one leaf before giving up the other. Similarly, according to previous work, the living entity must capture another body before giving up the present one. This is because the mind is the reservoir of all kinds of material desires.” – *SB* 4.29.76-77.

“Embodied beings, however, are bewildered because of the ignorance which covers their real knowledge.” – *Bg* 5.15.

“When, however, one is enlightened with the knowledge by which nescience is destroyed, then that knowledge reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime.” – *Bg* 5.16.

“People who are determined to engage in external sense gratification due to uncontrolled senses cannot become God-conscious either by instructions from teachers, by own efforts or by combined efforts. They remain in deep ignorance about their actual self interest and goal of life.” – *SB* 7.5.31.

“Kṛṣṇa is compared to sunshine and *māyā* (illusion due to misidentifying with the body) is compared to darkness. Wherever there is sunshine, there cannot be darkness. As soon as one takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the darkness of illusion, the influence of the external energy, will immediately vanish.” – *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.22.31.

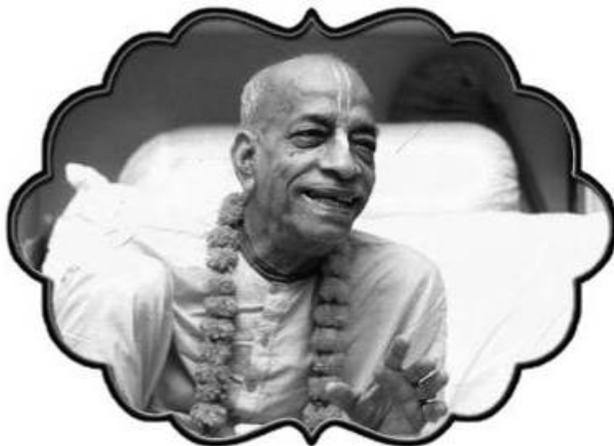
In the Vedic science, knowledge of the spiritual self beyond the material body is considered very basic, whereas in the age of so-called ‘modern civilisation’, people are in ignorance about the very basics of existence, their true self, and are fully captivated by the misconception of skeletonism. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda gave a good illustration of how deep-rooted the illusion of skeletonism is. The following paragraph is paraphrased from two of his lectures⁹:

A son spends all life believing that his father is his material body. Only when the father dies does the son understand that his father was different from the material body. If someone was to tell him: “Why are you crying, he is lying there!” he would say: “No, no, he passed away, he left his body!” So that means the son has never seen the person whom he loved, his father who left his body. What the son actually loved, the real father within the body is a different thing; he is the soul, not the body we can see. But *māyā*, material illusion, is so powerful that the son accepts a mere body, the outward dress, for his father, not considering the spiritual self.

We have never seen any person – only various dresses!

The body is not only dead after death – it is always dead. What makes the body move is the living soul, just like a living driver makes a motorcar run. Without the driver, the car is idle. If the driver is identified with the car and we think that the car is alive, that is illusion. Similarly, if we identify with the material body and think that it is alive, this is illusion. Unlike the animals, human beings possess the capacity and duty to realize that they are beyond the material body. Therefore, the Vedic literature explicitly declares that anybody who identifies with the material body is no better than a cow or an ass (*yasyātma-buddhiḥ kuṇape tri-dhātuke*, *SB* 10.87.30).

Sometimes people think that the devotees of Lord Caitanya are too much ascetic, that they neglect the body, fail to grasp its importance and don’t give it proper respect; but this is not a fact. Unlike the dry renunciants, the devotees engage everything in the service of God – they engage the entire body with all its senses in devotional service and thus spiritualize it. Gratitude and respect for our body are not wrong – provided they are given in the proper perspective of the body being an instrument to serve and approach God. Veda has mostly been misrepresented in the West by monists who claim that the material creation is altogether illusory and that the goal of life is annihilation of individuality and merging into the formless Brahman. The Vaiṣṇava presentation is different: only the *identification* with matter is illusory, but matter can be used in devotional service. The goal of life is to develop pure love of God, which is possible while we are still in the material body. Transcendence is not the annihilation of personality and embodiment but the realization of a transcendental personality and body. In his purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.9.21, Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda explains the attraction of the body in a positive way:



“Everyone loves the body
and wants to protect it
because he is within the body
as the soul, and everyone
loves the soul because the soul is
part and parcel of the Supersoul.
Therefore, everyone is actually
seeking to achieve happiness by
reviving our relationship
with the Supersoul.”

⁹ Given in Vṛndāvana, October 26, and in Hyderabad, November 22, in the year 1972 (*Vb*).

The reason why the Vaiṣṇavas emphatically stress that the material body is different from the self is because misidentification of the self with the body causes so much suffering under the influence of the material energy, *māyā*. This suffering can and should be avoided, and everybody – educators, scientists, philosophers, welfare workers, etc, should join hands in this effort for universal upliftment through self-realization.

A rather sad example of the misery of skeletonism is the story of the ‘King of Pop’, Michael Jackson, a most popular singer and dancer, who passed away after a cardiac arrest at the early age of fifty in 2009. He wrote in his famous song ‘Black or White’: “I’m not going to spend my life being a color. (...) If you’re thinkin’ of being my brother it don’t matter if you’re black or white.” Ironically, he himself obviously suffered severely due to his thinking that he was a black man. He never admitted that he bleached his skin from black to white and claimed it was due to a certain disease, but it is obvious that he underwent multiple facial surgeries to make his nose and lips thinner and pressed his curly hair straight in order to look like a white man. All such and similar pain could be avoided if only the basic teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā* that the self is not the material body were taught in schools.

The teaching of the spiritual self beyond the material body solves the problems of racism (which has led to billions of war, slavery and genocide victims), nationalism, sexism, various psychological and sexual disorders and all other prejudices and problems arising from misidentification with the material body.



Most wars arise from skeletonism – from misidentifying the self with the material body and its place of birth. Without the misidentifications of “I am Russian, I am American, I am Chinese, etc”, there would be no such wars. War is a pathetic manifestation of rage based on bodily misidentification – blind men fighting blind men, so to say. Thousands of people engaged in organizations to prevent war will continue to be a failure in the overall perspective, as long as they only fight the secondary causes of war, instead of eliminating its primary root cause; skeletonism due to ignorance of the real self.

“World military expenditure in 2008 is estimated to have reached \$1.464 trillion [1’464’000’000’000] in current [U.S.] dollars.” (SIPRI, 2009, Chapter 5.) This astronomical sum is beyond imagination; we may try to imagine that every year, over a million millionaires spend all their money in war. Due to misidentifying with the material body, people spend all their energy for illusory investments. Investopedia¹⁰, a Forbes Digital investment company, states: “Americans spend about \$7 billion [7’000’000’000] on cosmetic products each year, according to a 2008 report by the YWCA. (...) Americans spent a little less than \$12 billion on cosmetic procedures in 2008. Of that total, approximately \$7.2 billion was spent on surgical procedures, and \$4.6 billion was spent on nonsurgical procedures. Overall, 92% of these cosmetic procedures were performed on women. (...)”

¹⁰ <http://financialedge.investopedia.com/financial-edge/1009/Cutting-Personal-Care-Costs-Its-A-Beautiful-Thing.aspx>

The average woman spends nearly three years of her life primping and preening [dressing and making up], according to a survey commissioned by the British beauty brand Nephria. (...) Over the course of a lifetime, the average U.S. woman spends nearly \$450,000 on beauty products, treatments and procedures, according to a recent NewsWeek report.¹¹” What is the use of styling up a car (the body) if the driver (the self) inside is in a coma?

Although people identify themselves strongly with the material body, in another sense most people at least unknowingly or indirectly agree that the self is beyond the material body. Since most people believe in life after death, they are in one sense admitting that they are not the material body that faces destruction after death. In a publication of the Cambridge University Press of the year 2006 entitled *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, on pages 453–498, we find a thesis named *The Folk Psychology of Souls* authored by Jesse Bering from the Institute of Cognition and Culture of the Queen’s University Belfast. Its introduction begins with the following words:

“By stating that psychological states survive death, one is committing to a radical form of mind-body dualism [in other words, that what survives, the self, is not the material body]. Yet this radicalism is especially common. In the United States alone, 95% of the population reportedly believes in life after death (Greeley & Hout 1999; Lester et al. 2002). The majority of people from other societies, as well, see death as a transitional event that unbuckles the ethereal self from its body.” (Bering, 2006.)

A few paragraphs later, Bering quotes the findings of a survey in which children were asked about the biological and psychological functioning of a dead mouse: “Kindergartners understood that various biological imperatives no longer applied to the dead mouse. (...) Yet when asked whether the dead mouse was hungry or thirsty, or whether it was thinking or had knowledge, most kindergartners said yes. In other words, young children were cognizant of the fact that the body stops working at death but they viewed the mind as still active. (...) In general, however, kindergartners were more apt to make psychological attributions to the dead mouse than were older children, who were not different from adults in this regard. This is precisely the opposite pattern that one would expect to find if the origins of such beliefs could be traced exclusively to cultural indoctrination. In fact, religious or eschatological-type answers (for example, heaven, God, spirits, etc.) among the youngest children were extraordinarily rare. Thus, a general belief in the continuity of mental states in dead agents seems not something that children acquire as a product of their social–religious upbringing, because increasing exposure to cultural norms would increase rather than attenuate afterlife beliefs in young minds. Instead,

“a natural disposition toward afterlife beliefs is more likely
the default cognitive stance and interacts with various learning channels.”

Bering thus explains that the concept of a life after the death of the material body is actually the natural human default concept that may be changed by external indoctrination. He exposes that this natural concept is still present even in convinced (adult) materialists by quoting a survey (Haidt et al. 2004), in which those who classified themselves as extinctivists¹² refused to sign a contract relinquishing their souls at death to an experimenter¹³.

Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja mentioned in his sermons (paraphrased):

¹¹One should also consider the great amount of suffering caused by testing cosmetic products on animals.

¹²Extinctivists believe that the self is the material body and thus dies at death.

¹³Bering is quoted to support the eternal existence of the soul, but ironically he holds that psychological immortality is an illusory representation, and that spiritual concepts are epiphenomena (mere effects) of material neural processes.

“Actually none considers the self to be the material body.

“As soon as the self leaves the material body at the time of death, none accepts the dead body to be the self, although the body is still existent. If you take a dead body for voting, they will not accept it, but rather arrest you for your misbehavior. If you kill a person, you will be imprisoned, but if you cremate a dead body, none will arrest you. Furthermore, the self desires to be eternal; none wants to die. This indicates that the self is eternal, because if it was mortal, how could it have the desire to live eternally? The self is eternal, but the material body is mortal, and thus it cannot be the self”. Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja also recounts the following incident¹⁴ that shows that the soul does not die at death and that, when not attaining the spiritual realm, he or she reincarnates according to past deeds, even in other species. The people mentioned are known to him.

“More than thirty years ago, in Goalpara, a town in Assam, India, a poor man was in need of a large sum of money for the marriage of his daughter. As he saw no other way, he went to a rich landlord and asked him for financial help. The landlord was happy to receive him and at once gave him the big sum of money that he required. The landlord knew that the poor man would not be able to repay the money and said that he need not return it. Nevertheless the poor man promised that he will repay him. Ten years after his daughter’s marriage, the poor man died. He had never mentioned to anybody that he got money from the landlord, nor did the landlord ever mention it to anyone. After another five years, the late poor man’s son had earned a lot of money. One day he had a dream, in which his father approached him for help: ‘You must save me, please! I borrowed money from the landlord without returning it and have thus taken birth in his house as a dog. Now you have earned money, please pay back the exact sum – then I will be freed from this terrible condition!’ The son was very much perturbed and told the story to his mother. She sent him to the said landlord. The son asked the landlord whether his father had ever borrowed money from him, but the landlord humbly denied it. ‘Is there a dog in your house?’, he then asked the landlord. The landlord called his dog. When the dog saw ‘his’ son, he came running and happily approached him, tears pouring out of his eyes. The landlord was surprised to see this, because usually his dog barks at any unknown person. The poor man’s son then spoke strongly to the landlord: ‘Listen, I know that my father received money from you. I appreciate your kindness, but it is a very urgent matter that I must pay back the exact sum to you – I have come for this purpose only!’ The landlord then accepted the same sum of money. When the poor man’s son returned home, the dog followed him, although he never went away from his master before. The landlord called him back repeatedly, but the dog did not return. After the dog had arrived at his former home, his former wife bathed him with great affection. She then cooked his former favorite meal and served it to him on the best plate. The whole family took their meal together. That night, the dog passed away peacefully.”

In the Vedic culture, reincarnation is accepted as scientific truth. There is even a term for people who clearly remember their past lives: *jātismarā*. Well known *jātismarā* personalities are Jaḍa Bharata (*SB* 5.7-13), Śaṅkhaçūḍa, Tulasī Devī and Nārada Muni. Reincarnation is not only accepted by followers of Vedic culture, Hindus and Buddhists, but also by certain Greek philosophers, the Druids, the Native Americans and the Inuits, and by many other people of various faiths. A poll released by CNN in 1990 estimated that 35% of all Americans believe in reincarnation (Halverson, 1996, p. 160). Certain Christians like the Sethians, certain Judaists like the Hasidim and certain Muslims like the Druzes believe in reincarnation. In *The Republic*, Plato explains that souls who are about to be reborn are choosing their future lives. Western thinkers and prominent people who believed in reincarnation include Socrates, Schopenhauer, Voltaire, Benjamin Franklin, Mark Twain, Leo Tolstoy, Henry Ford, Erwin Schrödinger, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Nietzsche, Albert Schweitzer and Henry David Thoreau. What follows is an example of academic research about reincarnation.

¹⁴ Paraphrased from a video conference held in Kolkata in February 2004. See also Tīrtha 7, 2001, pp. 20-21. In 2011 I interviewed one of the most senior residents of Goalpara, Kiśorī Mohan Dās, and he added further details.



Dr. Ian Stevenson was a Medical Doctor, Biochemist, Professor Emeritus and Head of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia. He is well-known for his extensive research on past life memories. Stevenson devoted more than four decades to this study and had over 3000 cases from all over the world in his files. The most quoted case is Swarnlata, a girl from India. What follows is a summary from Stevenson's book *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (Stevenson, 1974, pp. 67-91).

Swarnlata's memories of her past life began when she was three years old. Swarnlata gave detailed information about her previous identity as Biya Pathak, about her husband and two sons and their home in Katni, over 100 miles from Swarnlata's present home. She told over fifty facts that were verified. Her present and former family had no connection at all. When Swarnlata was ten years old, an interested professor traveled alone to Katni and, merely by the descriptions of Swarnlata, was able to find the house and family of Biya Pathak, who died in 1939, nine years before her reincarnation as Swarnlata. The professor interviewed the Pathak family and was able to verify many of Swarnlata's memories. In 1959, Biya's husband, son, eldest brother and nine townsmen traveled to Chhatarpur, where Swarnlata then lived, to test her memory. They arrived unannounced and did not reveal their identity. The then ten year old Swarnlata immediately recognized her former husband, son and brother and called them by their names and pet names. Her former son tried for 24 hours to mislead her by saying that he was someone else and by having one of the townsmen say that he was her other son – but Swarnlata could not be diverted. Finally, Swarnlata reminded her former husband Sri Pandey that he had purloined 1200 Rupees Biya kept in a box. Sri Pandey admitted to the truth of this private fact that only he and his wife had known. A few weeks later, Swarnlata's father took her to Katni, where she was able to identify people known to Biya from a room full of strangers and reveal other private details correctly. The Pathaks, because of their emulation of western ideas, had not believed in reincarnation and were at first critical of Swarnlata's claims, but they changed their view upon meeting her and fully accepted her as their reborn Biya. Although Swarnlata accepted her new family and eventually married, she always remained in close connection with her former family, the Pathaks [end of summary].

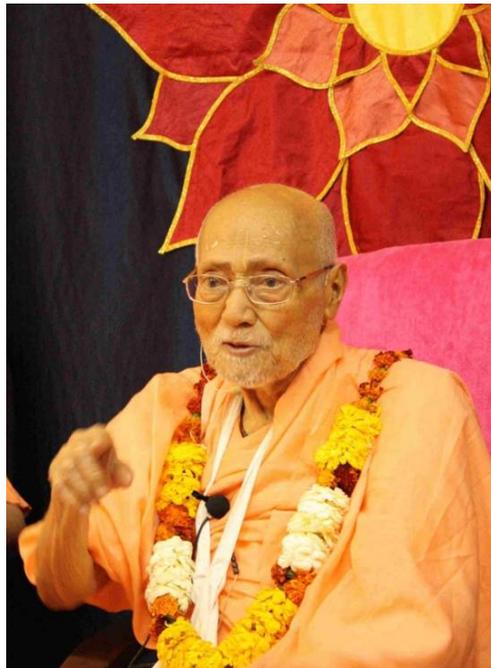
The renewal of the body is a constantly ongoing process and does not only happen after death (see also Chapter 11.6). Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swamī Prabhupāda said to his disciples: "The first lesson in spiritual life is that we are not these bodies but eternal spirit souls. Once you were a child. Now you are a grown man. Where is your childhood body? That body does not exist, but you still exist because you are eternal. The circumstantial body has changed, but you have not changed. (...) The body has changed, but you remember it; therefore you are eternal, although the body is temporary. This proof is very simple. Even a child can understand it." (*Vb. Life Comes From Life*, The Tenth Morning Walk, May 14, 1973.)

Another evidence that the self is not the material body is the failure to control a bodily limb under local anesthesia. If the self was the material body, then it would also be able to feel and control all limbs of the body as long as the self is awake. But the self is beyond the body like a driver is beyond the car, and therefore the self cannot move an arm that is under local anesthesia, just like a driver cannot move a car without petrol. Nevertheless, just as a car needs a driver to run, matter can only act under the guidance of spirit, as matter in itself is lifeless: "As iron has the power to burn when made red-hot in the association of fire, so the body, senses, living force, mind and intelligence, although merely lumps of matter, can function in their activities when infused with a particle of consciousness, the *jīva*, by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As iron cannot burn unless heated

by fire, the bodily senses cannot act unless favored by the Supreme Brahman.” – *SB* 6.16.24. Most situations mentioned in this chapter are very common; as such it can be combined:

Actually everybody has the ability to come to the right conclusion about not being the material body – yet still very few realize and employ this knowledge practically in their life! This shows how much power *māyā*, the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord, has to deceive the living entities.

When intelligent people realize, that although they know that they are not the material body, they are nevertheless again and again bewildered by *māyā*, they at once take shelter of the master of *māyā*, the Supreme Lord, who is the only person who can factually free them from the clutches of *māyā* (see *Bg* 7.14). The ‘first lesson in spiritual life’ of not being the material body is found in all Vedic literatures. Hence it can be understood that long before Socrates and Plato, this knowledge used to be imparted from generation to generation, but then it had become covered by various fallacies of skeletonism. One important point is, that it is not sufficient to explain what the self is *not*; it must be explained what the self actually *is* in its original nature. Here we find the Vedic wisdom to be more elaborate and precise than other traditions: *aham brahmāsmi*, “I am a spirit soul.” – *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.10 (quoted in *Bg*, Introduction). In the *acintya-bhedābheda* philosophy, the spirit soul’s original function is more precisely described: “The original position of the living entities is to be eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa because they are the Lord’s marginal energy and a manifestation simultaneously one and different from the Lord.” – *Cc* 2.20.108-109. This is the teaching of Śrī Caitanya to Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, and my spiritual master, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja, commented on it as follows: “Sanātana’s first question was *āmi ke*,



“Who am I?’ This is the first question which arises in the heart of a person seeking the highest good. If one makes a mistake in assessing one’s true identity, then one will make errors when it comes to determining the ultimate goal of life. If one makes an error in determining the ultimate goal of life, then everything done, every effort made, will simply be wasted.

“All of one’s duties, religious observations and self interest rest upon the proper knowledge of oneself. If one takes the body to be the self, then he considers the maintenance of the body itself to be the goal of life or *prayojana-tattva*, and one’s self interest will be the fulfilment of goals related

to the body; duties will also be considered in terms of these ends, and morality, or the determination of good and bad, will all be determined on the basis of what is good or bad for the body. On the other hand, if someone takes the subtle body [the material mind, material intelligence and false ego] to be the self, then one will consider his personal interests in terms of its development and he will consider it his religious duty to help others to develop in this way. Those who consider the self to be the soul which exists beyond the gross and subtle bodies will consider its development to be their self interest and will consider it their religious duty to help other people to develop spiritually.” (Tirtha 1, 2001.) Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thākura wrote in the sixteenth chapter of *Jaiva-dharma*:

“My good fortune will arise once I sincerely
endeavour to reawaken my spiritual form and identity.”

Some readers might possibly answer the above ‘Interview to Evaluate True Knowledge’ correctly. However, it has been shown that nowadays, even the most ‘learned’ people in our modern ‘civilization’ are no longer aware of even the most basic knowledge. This is shocking and confirms the serious state of deterioration of today’s education – or of whatever is left of what once was education. How is it possible that the essential Vedic science is not known or taught more widely? In this regard, Veda explains that due to the Lord’s material energy of *māyā*, who bewilders the conditioned souls, they cannot understand the factual truth. Yet this *māyā* only has influence over those who are not engaged in pure *bhakti* (loving devotion to the Lord) due to material desires, which are the root of ignorance. Even if we come in contact with Vedic knowledge, it is still very difficult to give up material misconceptions due to the habits that bind our mind as explained in the allegory of the cave. Just like the prisoner in the cave needed to be brought out into the light forcefully by an agent of the world of light, similarly, we need to be guided back into our natural condition of devotion to God by very sincere devotees. We cannot attain it merely by our own endeavour. If we are fortunate enough to be able to appreciate Veda, and if we want to further realize it, then we must at once start to practice *bhakti* very sincerely, otherwise *māyā* will surely distract us towards material concepts. I have personally witnessed many people who were very enthusiastic when they first got to hear about Veda, but who, due to not following practically, soon lost track of this sublime knowledge. *māyā* is very powerful. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* 7.14:

“This *māyā*, divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes
of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have
surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it.”



In 2008, Dr. Allen Hamilton, a Harvard-educated brain surgeon and professor with thirty years of experience in his field, published his first book, *The Scalpel and the Soul*. There is a short video¹⁵ about this book, in which Dr. Hamilton speaks out about “things that medical science say should not be possible.” Hamilton explains that similar strange events occur in hospitals around the country, but doctors are afraid to talk about them, lest they lose credibility. He recounts an operation he had done on a young woman whose blood vessel ruptured at the base of her brain. They put her

on a bypass pump that takes over the functions of the heart and the lungs. Then they slowly cooled her body down and then turned off the pump for 25 minutes, during which the heart and the brain stopped working completely with no blood flowing. During this period, “She is completely dead by every criteria we have”, Dr. Hamilton assures. In this state, the ruptured blood vessel is repaired.

¹⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIfYnuNR3II&feature=player_embedded#!

During the period of the operation there happened to be some private conversations between the staff members. One of the nurses announced that she is getting engaged. After the successful operation and reanimation, Dr. Hamilton visited his patient in recovery. Hamilton recalls: “She starts telling us about this private conversation, but word for word, right down to the jewelry store where they bought the ring! That’s impossible – her brain had absolutely no electrical activity! So the question is; where were these memories made? The idea that a consciousness can exist and make memories independent of the brain is a startling finding.” [end of paraphrase.] There are thousands of people who have had out-of-body experiences. There are even medical reports where patients under full anesthesia were able to witness and correctly disclose incidents that happened in other rooms during the operation.

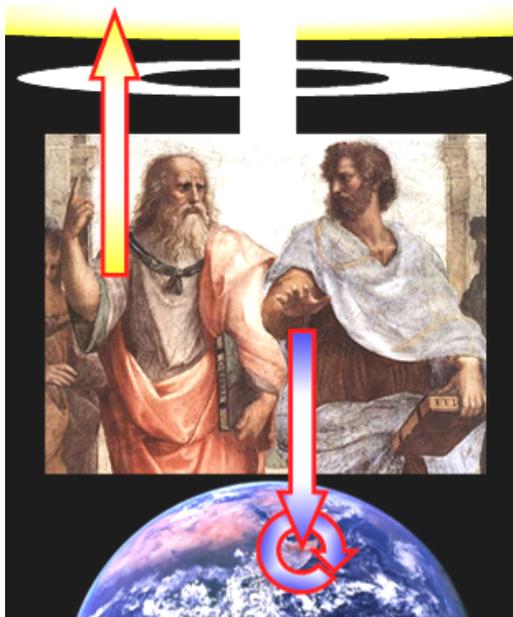
In the narrow concept of skeletonism, it is impossible to explain how people under full anesthesia can witness their own operation and events in other rooms. In order to preserve their paradigm, these events have been blacklisted as paranormal and banished into the chamber of taboos by those who are not prepared to learn the lesson that the self is a spirit soul and not the material body.

Although searching for truth, almost the entire human race is illusioned by skeletonism. What else other than *māyā*, the Lord’s own illusory energy, could bewilder humanity to such an extent? At this point, we can make a very important conclusion:

If some people are free of such *māyā*
and can teach others how to become similarly free,
they must be accepted as specially authorized teachers.

If we scrutinize all human sciences, philosophies and religions, we will find that the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas, the followers of Śrī Caitanya, most scientifically and boldly expose the greatest human fallacy of skeletonism. This is very strong evidence of their authority and authenticity. Even if their lifestyle sometimes appears uncommon, we are thus well advised to at least lend them our ears, if not follow them out of the cave, into the light.

2.4. Changes of Paradigm with the Rise of Western Philosophy



Socrates, Plato and Parmenides have explained that the bodily sense perception is defective and binds us to illusion, and that the way out of illusion is aspiration for the transcendental world under guidance from the transcendental world. However, Plato’s disciple Aristotle did not accept this teaching and changed the paradigm from transcendence to empiricism; he declared material sense perception and material knowledge to be a reliable source of information and propagated the acceptance of induction as scientific (Kunzmann, 1991, pp. 47-51). He has thus given support to the modern viewpoint that it is best to rely on empirical perception and rational thinking rather than on transcendental revelation.

The painting by Raffael¹⁶ depicts this turning point of paradigm in human philosophy: Plato points towards transcendence, while Aristotle points towards

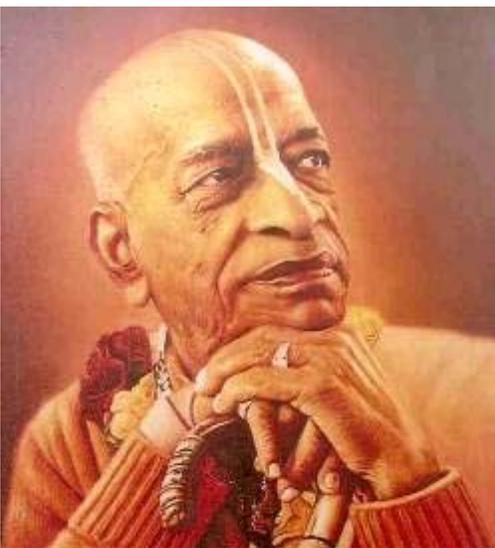
¹⁶ ‘School of Athens’, 1510. Illustrative additives by the author.

the worldly platform. Already before Aristotle, other philosophers have proposed materialism. Pythagoras proposed that the essential nature of reality exists in numeric form, the sophists claimed religion to be an invention of man, and Democritus, who is often seen as the founder of materialism, went as far as stating that the soul consisted of matter. At this point in history we can observe a drift of human self-perception. After the philosophers lost insight into the spiritual nature of the self, the skeletonistic conception of “I am the material body” grew stronger. Socrates followed some Vedic wisdom but did not follow the traditional Vedic science of *paramparā*, disciplic succession. The science of *paramparā* guarantees maintenance of authentic knowledge by an unbroken disciplic succession from the time of revelation of knowledge by the Lord until the present day: *evam paramparā-prāptam*, “This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession.” – *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.2.

Because the Vedic science was revealed by the Lord Himself and passed on unadulterated in various traditional lines of *paramparā*, the Vedic science is free from the distortions of the material senses.

Socrates did not follow any *paramparā*; he merely took some of the Vedic wisdoms and additionally made up his own doctrines. Plato and Aristotle were Socrates’ disciples, and they again manufactured their own philosophies; Aristotle went as far as accepting material sense perception as sufficiently reliable, thus paving the way for acquiring knowledge through mere induction, which is opposed to the traditional Vedic way of spiritual deduction or divine revelation that Socrates and Plato still followed to some extent. As soon as the Vedic knowledge about the delusion of the material senses is ignored or forgotten, material sense perception is accepted as reliable. This is where speculative philosophy and speculative science start, and faith in Vedic philosophy and science is lost. Thereafter, people lose the knowledge of the Lord who created the world and first revealed the Vedic science. Atheistic philosophies and sciences are setbacks for human progress as they deny the very origin of life and knowledge, and put us into the illusion that we are capable of understanding the world independently.

“Acting from within the cores of the hearts of all philosophers who propagate various views, the Lord causes them to forget their own souls while sometimes agreeing and sometimes disagreeing among themselves. Thus He creates within this material world a situation in which they are unable to come to a conclusion.” – *SB* 6.4.31.



Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda comments on this verse as follows: “Non-devotees have different ideas of creation, maintenance and annihilation, and therefore they are called *vādīs* and *prativādīs* – proponents and counter proponents. It is understood from the statement of *Mahābhārata* that there are many *munis*, or speculators: *tarko ‘pratiṣṭhaḥ śrutayo vibhinnā, nāsāv ṛṣir yasya mataṁ na bhinnam*, ‘All speculators must disagree with other speculators; otherwise, why should there be so many opposing parties concerned with ascertaining the supreme cause?’ Philosophy means finding the ultimate cause. As *Vedānta-sūtra* very reasonably says, *athāto brahma jijñāsā*: ‘Human life is meant for understanding the ultimate cause.’ Devotees accept that the ultimate cause is Kṛṣṇa because this conclusion is supported by all Vedic literature and also by Kṛṣṇa Himself, who says, *aham sarvasya prabhavaḥ* [*Bg.*

10.8]: ‘I am the source of everything.’ Devotees have no problem understanding the ultimate cause of everything, but non-devotees must face many opposing elements because everyone who wants to be a prominent philosopher invents their own way. In India there are many groups of philosophers, such as the *dvaita-vādīs*, *advaita-vādīs*, *vaiśeṣikas*, *mīmāṃsakas*, *māyāvādīs* and *svabhāva-vādīs*, and

each of them opposes the others. Similarly, in the western countries there are also many philosophers with different views of creation, life, maintenance and annihilation. Thus it is undoubtedly a fact that there are countless philosophers throughout the world, each of them contradicting the others. Now, one might ask why there are so many philosophers if the ultimate goal of philosophy is one. Undoubtedly the ultimate cause is one – the supreme Brahman. As Arjuna told Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.12): ‘You are the supreme Brahman, the ultimate, the supreme abode and purifier, the Absolute Truth and the eternal divine Person. You are the primal God, transcendental and original, and You are the unborn and all-pervading beauty.’ Non-devotee speculators, however, do not accept an ultimate cause, *sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam* (*Bs* 5.1). Because they are ignorant and bewildered concerning the soul and its activities (...) many controversies arise, and the philosophical speculators can never reach a conclusion (...). This is the reason why there are so many schools of philosophical speculation.”

In this verse (*SB* 6.4.31) it is nicely described how Lord Kṛṣṇa makes those who propagate various views deviating from the Vedic conclusion forget their own nature. Those who speculate on philosophy do not want to accept the universal Vedic conclusion given by disciplic succession (*paramparā*), and hence in order to fulfill their separate desires, Kṛṣṇa makes them forget their eternal nature. Someone in illusion cannot reach a lasting conclusion, and hence the speculators propagate various philosophies without conclusive agreements. This is illustrated in the story of the blind men and the elephant (see Chapter 3.3). A royal minister encouraged several blind men to feel different parts of an elephant and speculate with their limited senses about the nature of an elephant, resulting in differing descriptions of the elephant. Similarly, speculative philosophies and sciences encourage people to try to understand the world independently by their erroneous material senses and mind, resulting in so many different theories about reality.

One may ask, how is it possible to deviate from the Vedic conclusion if there are Vedic literatures that establish the Vedic conclusion? One should understand Kṛṣṇa to be *vedānta-kṛt*, the compiler of the *Vedānta* (*Bg* 15.15), and therefore the above described nature of Kṛṣṇa to delude the speculators also applies to the Vedic literatures: “(...) With the words of the *Vedas* You [Kṛṣṇa] bind the non-devotees like animals, though they be vastly learned scholars.” – *SB* 10.87.27. It is therefore essential to understand that the *Vedas* can only be understood by *bhakti*, devotion to God, just like Kṛṣṇa can only be understood by *bhakti* (*Bg* 18.55).

To a devotee, the *Vedas* act like signposts to the ultimate Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa,
whereas to the non-devotees, the same *Vedas* act like ropes that further
bind them in the material world. Due to these circumstances, various
inconclusive philosophies have been produced by various
interpreters who claim to rely on the *Vedas*.

The conclusive philosophy of the devotees however has always been one: Kṛṣṇa is the source of everything (*aḥam sarvasya prabhavo*, *Bg* 10.8), and therefore by serving Him, all perfections are naturally achieved (*samsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam*, *SB* 1.2.13). Kṛṣṇa simply fulfills the desires of the living entities. He is not partial to anyone, and wishes the best for all:

*samo 'haṁ sarva-bhūteṣu, na me dveṣyo 'sti na priyaḥ
ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā, mayi te teṣu cāpy aham*

“I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all.
But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend,
is in Me, and I am also a friend to him.” – *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.29.

Kṛṣṇa causes the above mentioned philosophers to forget their soul in order to fulfill their desire for establishing separate philosophies, because if they would remember their self and their natural function of serving Kṛṣṇa, then they could not take to any other school besides *bhakti*. It

must be considered that the mentioned philosophers are those “who propagate various views”, and not those who agree with the eternal philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. As soon as we agree with the science of *bhakti* and become devoted to Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa frees us from illusion and grants us eternal knowledge: *teṣāṃ satata-yuktānāṃ, bhajatāṃ priti-pūrvakam, dadāmi buddhi-yogaṃ taṃ, yena mām upayānti te*, “To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” – *Bg* 10.10.

Therefore, the only way a philosopher can reach the ultimate truth is by serving the truth in Person, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

If we neglect the Lord, we will be bewildered by the Lord’s illusory potency, *māyā*. This happens for example by the misconceptions arising in the faulty material senses, mind and intelligence. However, if we serve the Lord, we will be given real intelligence, namely how to attain Him, the Absolute Truth. Philosophers or scientists who realize that the ultimate truth they are searching for is Kṛṣṇa, naturally become devotees.

A genuine philosopher or scientist must sooner or later become a devotee. Albert Einstein mentioned: “I want to know how God created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon, in the spectrum of this or that element. I want to know His thoughts; the rest are details.”
(Calaprice 2000, p. 202.)

When people forget their original identity of being God’s servant, they become covered by various misconceptions and misidentifications. With this bewildered consciousness, they develop various philosophies that cannot reach a final conclusion. Even the *Vedas* seem to support different philosophies. If the *Vedas* are interpreted only partially, then different incoherent philosophies are the results, which make the *Vedas* seem to be contradictory. The reason thereof is explained in the above quoted verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.4.31). Just as the Lord bewilders those who want to live a separate existence from Him, similarly the *Vedas*, who are a manifestation of the Lord, bewilder those who are averse to the service of the Lord and support various philosophies according to different interpretations of different *munis*, speculative philosophers. This is also the reason why nowadays there are countless philosophies and religious practices that contradict each other, although they claim to rely on the *Vedas*.

Adding to this confusion is the modern term ‘Hinduism.’ Hinduism is the world’s oldest living and third largest religion. Just as the Indians are highly regarded for abstaining from colonialism, the Hindus are favored worldwide for their respect towards all religions and abstinence from forceful conversion and crusade. Properly understanding Hinduism however, is a difficult task even for experts, mainly because Hinduism was defined by people foreign to Vedic culture. The term ‘Hinduism’ wrongly puts the practitioners of variant philosophies under the same banner.

The term ‘Hinduism’ is a modern misnomer and cannot be found anywhere in the ancient *Vedas*.
The term ‘Hindu’, which originally simply referred to ‘the people beyond the river Sindhu’, in no way adequately describes any particular religious practice.

Pandit Rajmani Tigunait writes in *Seven Systems of Indian Philosophy*: “When Alexander the Great invaded the subcontinent around 325 B.C.E., he crossed the river Sindhu and renamed it Indus, which was easier for the Greek tongue to pronounce. Alexander’s Macedonian forces subsequently called the land east of this river India. Later, Moslem invaders called the Sindhu river the Hindu river because in their language, Parsee, the Sanskrit sound *s* converts to *h*. Thus, for the

invaders, Sindhu became Hindu, and the land east of that river became known as Hindustan.” (Tigunait, 1983, pp. 4-5.)

The wrong usage of the geographic term ‘Hindu’ to describe a religion has led to vast confusion. Firstly, in reality there is no such thing as a unified Hindu religion. ‘Hinduism’ is more of an umbrella term comprising many different religious schools based on the Vedic traditions. These schools vary greatly. The *dvaitists* conclude that the living entities and the Lord are completely separate, which is the very opposite of the conclusion of the *advaitists*, the school claiming that the living entities are completely one with the Ultimate. Some Hindu schools believe in a Supreme God and advocate transcendence, while others are atheistic and non-transcendental – just the opposite. Still, they are all supposed to be Hindus. This terminology is as inadequate as if someone would claim that all Indians speak ‘Indian’, although they speak over sixty different languages. Secondly, a good number of Hindus today have the idea that Hinduism is restricted to Indians. Therefore, in some temples across India, not only non-Hindus, but also non-Indian Hindus are prohibited from entering, like in the esteemed Jagannātha Temple in Purī. This is clearly a racial, bodily consideration and has nothing to do with spirit. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.15.8 declares that all divisions of generalization such as nationality are the imaginations of persons who are not advanced in knowledge, because these generalizations arise from misidentification with the material body. The reason for a lack of philosophical unity amongst Hindus is the same as it is with all philosophies and religions: different interpretations of the essentially one Veda, universal knowledge.

Lord Caitanya appeared five hundred years ago to clear all this confusion, reconcile all partial philosophies and reestablish the complete original paradigm or principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*. As this universal principle is not a partial interpretation of Veda, but the complete presentation of the conclusion of Veda, it harmonizes all partial philosophies and invites all people to its practice.

The original nature of the soul is to be a servant of the Lord, be the spirit soul in an Indian, American, Balinese, Russian, male or female material body. Veda is universal. Kṛṣṇa means ‘the all-attractive universal Lord’ – He is not the ‘Indian god’. God is not limited to any country. Kṛṣṇa is universally God, and as such Veda is also universal and not restricted in any way. Anybody, or in better words ‘anysoul’ who wants to realize his or her original eternal self can take to *bhakti* and become a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, as it is his or her very essential right to do so. Therefore, the followers of Lord Caitanya make no distinction between a devotee who has taken birth in India and a devotee who has taken birth in Madagascar, and they also make no distinction between devotees who come from various cultural, social, and religious backgrounds.

The Vedic paradigm of divine revelation was still known to some extent to the founders of Western philosophy, but was then gradually lost due to lack of following a genuine disciplic succession, and thus the paradigm for perceiving reality was changed from divine revelation to empirical speculation. Lord Caitanya brought back the original Vedic paradigm; the paradigm of *acintya-bhedābheda*, which scientifically explains the nature and interaction of spirit and matter, and which establishes the need of divine revelation, which will be the topic of the next chapter.



3. Vedic Epistemology: How We Can Know Truth

Before we ask what truth or reality is, we should ask how we can know truth or reality. We thus enter the field of epistemology, the study of the limit of knowledge and the ways of gathering knowledge. This chapter presents the Vedic epistemology, which is most comprehensive in terms of exposing the limits of material sense perception and disclosing ways to overcome these limits.

3.1. Ascending and Descending Method of Approaching Reality

The methods to approach reality used in this book are of two types:

- The speculative, ascending method of knowledge through material observation, argument and reason, called *āroha-panthā*.
- The authoritative, descending method of knowledge leading to complete perception, called *avaroha-panthā*, which relies on divine revelation.

As will be disclosed further in this chapter, the complete reality lies beyond the grasp of material perception and reason, and therefore the ascending method of knowledge cannot reveal the complete reality. The only alternative to perceive the complete reality is the descending method of knowledge. While the ascending method excludes the descending method and its benefits, the descending method is all-inclusive, because spiritual reality includes material reality, being its origin. Ascending methods like material observation, argument and reason are not rejected, but they should be guided by the principles and purposes revealed by the descending science.

3.2. Vedic Epistemology Expounded by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī

Śrī Caitanya revealed that the ultimate reality can only be understood by loving devotion to God, the all-encompassing Ultimate Truth. Nevertheless, Śrī Caitanya was also a most expert *paṇḍita* or scholar in *nyāya*, logic. By logical arguments, He proved the superiority of the science of *bhakti* or spiritual logic over material logic. He turned many great scholars and logicians like Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, the chief scholar in the court of the King of Orissa, into devotees. Śrī Caitanya proved that *bhakti* is not rejection of logic, but mastery of logic.

The historian Dr. Chatterjee stated: “The greatest allurements that they [the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas] have is a fundamentally complete philosophical system. This is what attracts people. Their sacred literature is quite vast, and it does not ask for dogmatic followers. Rather, all questions are answered, using a profound system of *nyāya*, or logic. Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s system of inconceivable distinction and non-distinction [*acintya-bhedābheda*] is a very mature philosophical system, incorporating much of classical Indian philosophy, and synthesizing that which is best from all prior Vaiṣṇava schools.” (Rosen 3, 1992, p. 13.)

Amongst the most popular associates and disciples of Śrī Caitanya were the Six Gosvāmīs of Vrindāvan. One of them, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī (1511-1596 AD) was one of the most prominent *paṇḍitas* of India. He wrote the *Ṣaḍ Sandarbha*, an elaborate six-fold encyclopaedic thesis on the science of *bhakti*, of which the *Tattva-sandarbha* (henceforth *Ts*) deals extensively with Vedic epistemology. He also wrote a commentary on the *Ṣaḍ Sandarbha* called *Sarva-saṁvādinī* (henceforth *Ss*). Śrī Jīva first introduces the main subject of his treatise, namely the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the treatise’s actual goal of realization, namely *kṛṣṇa-prema* or love for Kṛṣṇa (which includes factual realization of God and the real self), and the means to attain this, namely *bhakti-yoga*, devotional service (*Ts* 9). He then explains Vedic epistemology, summarized as follows:

- First we have to establish the right *pramāṇa*, reliable means of evidence.
- Since ordinary people are tainted by the four faults of material sense perception, their means of sensory perception are faulty and inadequate for establishing contact with a reality whose nature is super-sensible and materially inconceivable (*Ts* 9). Śrī Jīva therefore rejects sensory perception as a fully reliable source of complete knowledge. He establishes the following:
 - *śabda*, the testimony of capable authorities, is a superior source of knowledge, because it is free from the faults of direct sense perception (*Ss* 9-10). Yet in order to understand the spiritual reality, we need testimony which comes directly from the spiritual platform.
 - Therefore, the only source of knowledge or evidence can be Veda, because Veda is super-sensible sound, eternally self-manifest, and from Veda have been derived all departments of knowledge, mundane and spiritual since time immemorial (*Ts* 10).
 - The vast *Vedas* are very difficult to understand. They are best understood by the most essential Vedic literature, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which therefore is the best source of transcendental knowledge.

These points will now be explained in detail.

3.3. Overcoming the Four Faults of Material Sense Perception

The four faults of material sense perception, the *bhramādi-doṣa-catustaya*, are as follows (*Ts* 9):

- (1) *bhrama*, confusing one thing for another, for example confusing a tree in the dark to be a man, or confusing the material body to be the self.
- (2) *pramāda*, inattentiveness due to a distracted mind, for example the above mentioned chemist who forgot to actually work.
- (3) *vipralipsa*, the tendency to cheat, for example a salesman who lies about his profit margin to ensure a certain gain or adulterates products like milk with cheaper substitutes.
- (4) *karaṇāpātava*, weakness of the senses, such as the limitation of the human optical and hearing sense to a very limited range of light and sound frequencies.

Further examples:



1a



1b



2



3



4a



4b

(1a) Confusion: Do you see a duck or a rabbit? Or both?

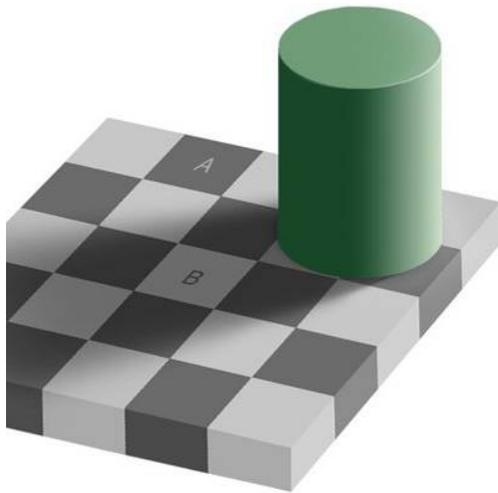
(1b) A mirage in a desert (this example is mentioned for *brahma* in *Jaiva-dharma* 13).

(2) Distraction: A distracted man leaning out of a train does not see the wall approaching.

(3) Cheating: passing notes during a school exam.

(4a) Weak senses: Webster's *New World Dictionary* defines thunder as "the sound that follows a flash of lightning." When we observe a lightning, we hear the thunder only some time later, and take both to be different happenings. Yet 'they' are actually symptoms of the same happening, namely the sudden heating and expansion of air by electrical discharge. The material senses are not able to detect the distortions of reality. We look at the sun and think we see the sun, but actually we see how the sun looked 8 minutes ago, because it takes 8 minutes for the sunlight to travel to the earth. We cannot see the sun as it is right now.

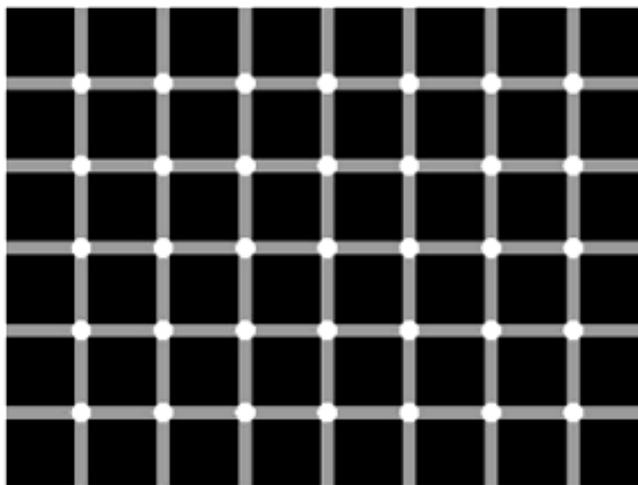
(4b) The straw in the glass of water seems to be broken, but it is actually not.



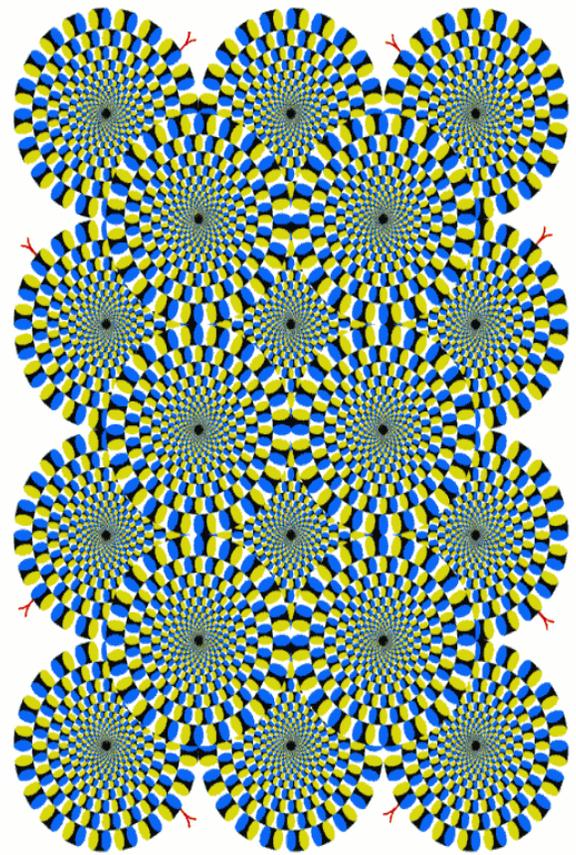
4c



4d



4e



4f

(4c) Which square is brighter, A or B? They have the same color and brightness! In the closeup (4d), they are connected with a rectangle of the same color and brightness. Now, who is brighter, your bodily senses or your self? Obviously, your self. Hence you are beyond the body.

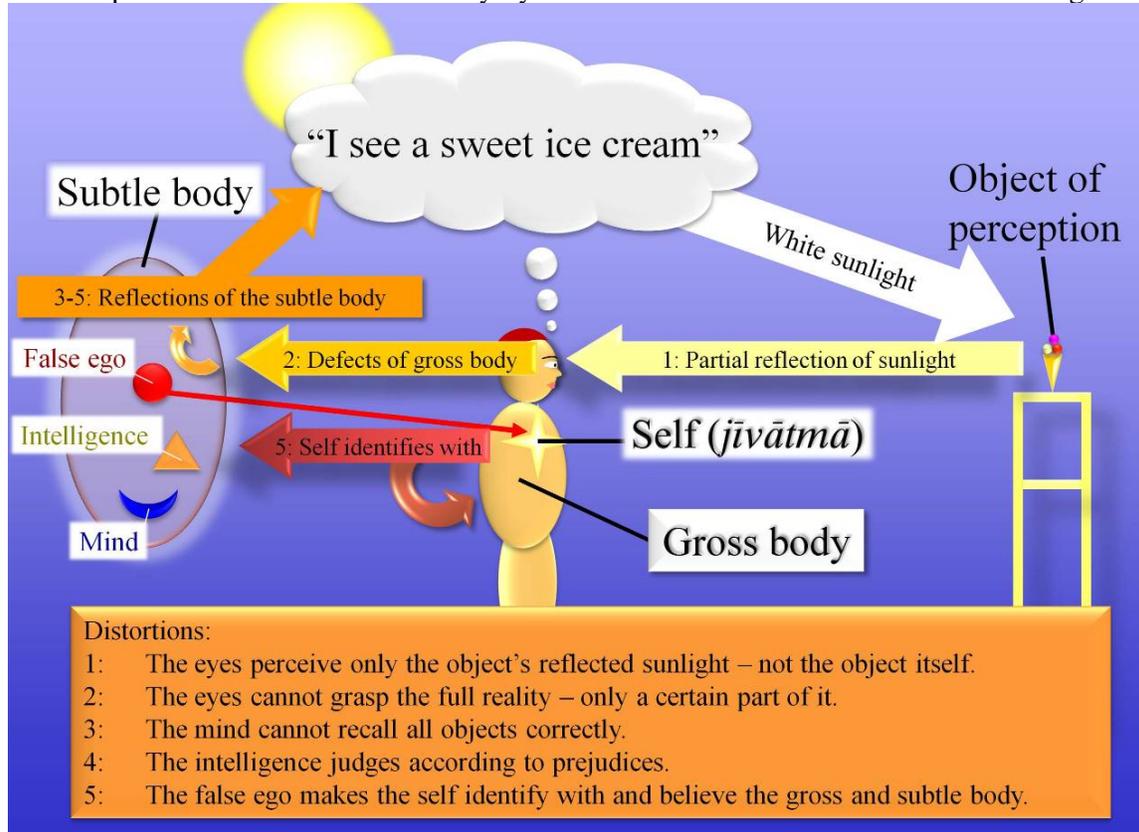
(4e) To get the best effect, zoom in so that the image fills your entire screen. Try to count the black spots at the intersections. Who exactly is fooling you? If you and your body were one, that would mean that you are now fooling yourself. Is that really so?

(4f) Zoom in as before. Watch closely. Move your focus point slowly over the picture. The eyes and brain then create the false impression of turning wheels. Are your senses really your true friends?

Errare humanum est, to err is human. From all the above examples, we can practically understand how our senses are faulty. The sincere seekers of truth are not just fascinated by the wonderful effects of optical illusions, but they are alarmed about the incapability of sensory perception to capture reality undistortedly. They see it as a foremost task to overcome this artificial limitation by finding ways to discover super-sensory means of perception and break through to the complete reality.

The following chart illustrates (A) the interaction of the self, the subtle body, the gross body and the external reality, (B) the impossibility of seeing the external reality as it really is and (C) the chronological order of material perception and distortion of reality.

Chart 1: Perception and distortion of reality by the defective material senses in chronological order



Further comments and analysis of the person's impression of "I see a sweet ice cream":

- (1) Actually none has ever seen an ice cream – only part of its reflected light! This is an example of weak senses. There could be an organ with which we can see the objects themselves.
- (2) The eyes can grasp only one percent of the electromagnetic spectrum. This is another example of weak senses.
- (3) This is an example of confusion. Distortions 1 to 3 expose the 'ice cream' part of the impression to be faulty or uncertain.
- (4) In this example, the intelligence tells the self that the ice cream is sweet and desirable, although it may be salty and spoiled. Hence the 'sweet' part is exposed to be faulty.
- (5) The false ego makes the self think: "I see...", but the self itself does not see; it only identifies with the material body who acts and sees. Hence the 'I see' part is exposed to be faulty.

Finally, nothing remains certain of the above impression "I see a sweet ice cream."

Due to material desires, we are bound to a material body, which we believe to be the self through the instance of the false ego. When we overcome material desires through *bhakti*, these illusions of material perception become clearly exposed, and when we attain pure *bhakti*, our real eternal spiritual self becomes manifest by divine revelation.

Chart 2: The prison of the material body and its instruments of perception



The soul cannot directly access and perceive reality, but is bound to accept information from the bodily instruments that can only reproduce limited and distorted impressions of reality.

We may compare the complete reality with a theater building, and us, the humans, with people in the entry hall who are unable to access the theater hall by being confined in a prison cell – the material body. We can only have an idea of what is happening outside of the body through the help of the messengers of our senses assigned to us without choice, not knowing how capable they are. These messengers of our senses only have access to the entry hall of the theater, where people are talking and eating ice cream. Thus we are deprived of most parts of the play of reality, and the worst part about it is that we don't know this and believe to witness the entire reality, like an ignorant person who bought a ticket for the theater but is happily standing in the entry hall eating ice cream during the entire play. This is our pathetic situation. Furthermore, most people are so much habituated to relying on the messengers of their senses that they have fully surrendered unto them and given up all endeavors to find a way out of the sensual prison to witness the real play.

Having understood the limiting factors of the human system of perception, it is no surprise that Plato compares the material body to a prison (see Chapter 2.3). This is in the line of thought of Vedic science that calls material nature *durgā*, which literally means 'prison, hard to get out'. The demigoddess Durgā Devī is the material nature or energy personified and the shadow version of Lord Kṛṣṇa's spiritual energy (see Chapters 11.3, 14.2). Those people who want to enjoy separate from serving God are shackled to the material world by her with material illusions like skeletonism. Interestingly, the very word 'matter' comes from Latin *māter*, mother, origin (Kluge on the German word for matter, *Materie*), which originates in Sanskrit *mātr*, mother, earth, Durgā Devī (Williams).

All the above explanations are within the grasp of physical science and don't arise from any blind dogma or sentiment. Some people think that the term 'spiritual reality' refers to something imaginary. Yet it actually simply refers to the actual reality covered by material perception. The term 'spiritual' is only added to distinguish from material reality. Actually, the spiritual reality is the complete reality, and material reality is something partially imaginary in terms of it being only a part or a temporary distortion of the eternal reality, just like a dream in relation to the awakened state of consciousness.

If science is to be concerned with trying to explore the true nature of reality, then to limit our conception to the dictates of our faulty senses which distort reality is the most unscientific action we can take. In fact, if we reflect on this matter sincerely, we can understand that true science must go beyond the limits of our senses, i.e. find super-sensible, more direct ways of perception.

“An examination of our rationalistic principle shows that we require more help than our friends offer. We have five senses to pick up the knowledge of the truth. We desire to be endowed with more knowledge. Our thirst is not quenched by the ordinary knowledge deducible from sense perception available from the empirical professors. This impulse leads us to enquire as to how we can have more knowledge than can be had here.” “To try to pursue the inconceivable by the conceptual process is like pounding empty husks of grain, which is sure to have a fruitless ending [SB 10.14.4]. It is therefore one's bounden duty (...) to try to gain experience of the transcendental by the practice of pure devotion.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, pp. 283&490.)

By advocating materially inconceivable transcendental realities, the principle of falsifiability is only violated in a limited sense. If we enter the higher paradigm of transcendental sense perception, then the existence of any proposed spiritual thing can be attested or falsified. Therefore, in a wider sense, the hypotheses of Vedic science are falsifiable. The principle of falsification must be properly applied. This principle is not wrong per se, but the limitation of the means of falsification to material sources of evidence is wrong, because this castrates science by cutting off its transcendental dimensions. Unlike certain dogmatic religions that demand blind faith in something which cannot be perceived by humans, Vedic science awakens the transcendental senses of the soul by which we can factually perceive transcendence. The principle of falsification is emphatically advocated in Vedic literature. In the very beginning, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.1.2) teaches to reject any *kaitava-dharma*, occupation or religion which cannot factually make us realized in transcendence. Vedic science advocates scientific religion or knowledge which is *pratyakṣāvagamam*, understood by direct experience and giving direct experience of transcendence (*Bg* 9.2). This knowledge will gradually be presented in more detail.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) pointed out that human perception is necessarily full of prejudices that hinder any objective perception. He taught that to attain true perception, we should first get rid of the prejudices that arise from various cultural backgrounds, personal inclinations, education, habits, ambivalent language, etc: “Human reason is an uneven mirror, that tends to mix its own nature with that of other things and thus disfigures them.” (Kunzmann, 1991, p. 95.)¹⁷ Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is well known for his *Criticism of Pure Reason*, in which he analyzes the limits of human perception. His main question is “How are synthetic judgments *a priori* [not based on prior experiments] possible?” (Kunzmann, 1991, p. 137.) The English astrophysicist Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington was the first to prove Einstein's Theory of Relativity in 1919. Eddington advocated a philosophical harmony between scientific investigation and spiritual experience, but clearly held that physical science could not prove religious propositions due to its limitations. He illustrated this point with his Infinite Monkey Theorem (Eddington, 1928, p. 72):

¹⁷ Although Bacon understood the need of an undistorted perception, he proposes that the process of induction will solve this problem. Yet, as it has been established throughout this third chapter, induction still relies on the faulty human senses and thus remains in the domain of distorted perception.



“If an army of monkeys were strumming on typewriters, they might write all the books in the British museum.”¹⁸

Another phrase coined by Eddington sheds a critical light on the attitude of the scientist who only accepts things as real if they are observable by physical science: “What my net can’t catch isn’t fish!” (Eddington 2, 1938.) The net refers to the limited means of material observation, which can only grasp ‘gross fish’ or gross matter. Such means cannot capture the entire world, but only a shadow-world: “The frank realisation that physical science is concerned with a world of shadows is one of the most significant of recent advances.” (Eddington, 1928, introduction.) The Nobel Laureate Werner Heisenberg explained in a lecture about physics and philosophy: “All the existing scientific concepts only cover only a very limited part of reality, and the other part that has not yet been understood is infinite. We have to remember that what we observe is not nature herself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning. (...) Whenever we proceed from the known into the unknown we may hope to understand, but we may have to learn at the same time a new meaning of the word ‘understanding’. (...) It will never be possible by pure reason to arrive at some absolute truth.” (Heisenberg 2, 1958.)

“The Absolute has His position apart from all guess work drawn from the material phenomena. The speculative truths are castles built on the mind.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 334.) Various philosophers and scientists have exposed the necessity of transcending the four faults of human sense perception, and it is actually clear that true science must make an effort to go beyond the limits of our material senses and reason¹⁹. Yet, modern science excludes super-sensible approaches to reality. Instead, modern science is inventing new instruments to get a better picture; we equip the messengers of our senses with zoom lenses, microscopes, etc. Yet we are still bound to the senses’ faulty information, and the imperfect instruments cannot overcome this fact. Our faulty senses are themselves causes of our illusion, yet due to our identification with them we are so much attached to them that we do not want to overcome them, like a drinker who cannot give up drinking and invests all his life in his liquid ‘friend’. The following story illustrates the situation of the modern scientist: A fool one morning dropped his key in a dark hallway and could not find it for a long time. He was still looking for it in the evening, and a man who had pity on him started to help him in his search. After many hours of searching the entire hallway they were still unsuccessful. The man asked the fool if he was really sure that he had dropped the key in the hallway on the ground floor

¹⁸ If the amount of typing monkeys would be infinite, then it would theoretically be possible that one of them may type an entire work like Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* by chance. However, if we consider practically possible conditions, chances of such an occurrence are almost zero. Even if the observable universe were filled with monkeys the size of atoms typing from now until the heat death of the universe proclaimed by scientists, the probability that they produce a single instance of *Hamlet* would still be many orders of magnitude less than one in $10^{183,800}$. As Kittel and Kroemer (Nobel Laureate for physics) put it, “The probability of *Hamlet* is therefore zero in any operational sense of an event.” (Kroemer, 1980, p. 53.) These mathematics clearly show that chances for the much more complex universe to have evolved by chance from nothing are practically zero.

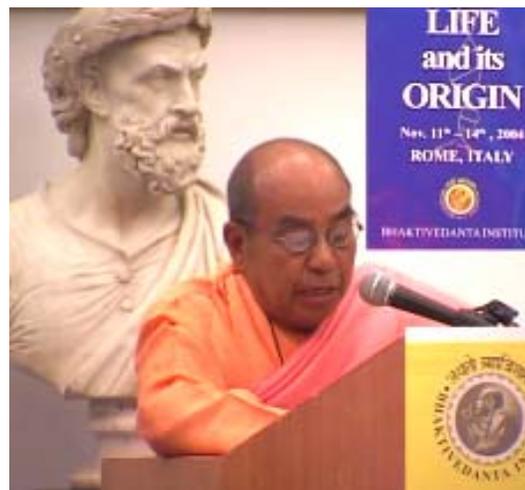
¹⁹ However, from another point of view, the limitation of physical science to material perception is necessary, else it would lose its defined material standpoint. Nevertheless, humanity would be greatly benefited if it were emphatically taught that physical science is a limitation of science per se for a specific purpose, and that those who are interested in a complete science or in science per se must also practice spiritual science.

where they were looking for it. The fool answered: “No, I dropped it in the hallway on the first floor. But there is no light there and so I decided to search here where there is light!”

Similarly, because they seem to have no other place to look for it, the modern scientists are looking for the origin of life in the limited range of matter. Excluding the search for life’s origin beyond the range of material sensory perception is as unreasonable as the fool’s excluding the dark places in the hallway from his search. Just as the fool could easily find the key with the help of a torchlight, the scientists could easily find God and the complete reality with the torchlight of Vedic supersensory science. Yet, unfortunately, they exclude the very means to success from their so-called ‘discovery’. The fool in the story remembers where he lost his key, but the modern scientists don’t remember how their vision of God was lost when the torchlight of transcendental science was lost. Still they claim that the only reasonable place to search is dull matter, without being able to give a single proof that the origin of life is detectable in matter. Just as the fool needs to be helped by a man who brings him a torchlight, the common scientists need to be helped by transcendentalists who bring transcendental knowledge that enables appreciation of transcendence. Therefore, it is most essential that modern science extends its paradigms and allows the light of transcendence to enlighten and widen its horizon of perception. As the inventor Nikola Tesla stated shortly before his passing on:

“The day science begins to study non-physical phenomena, it will make more progress in one decade than in all the previous centuries of its existence²⁰.”

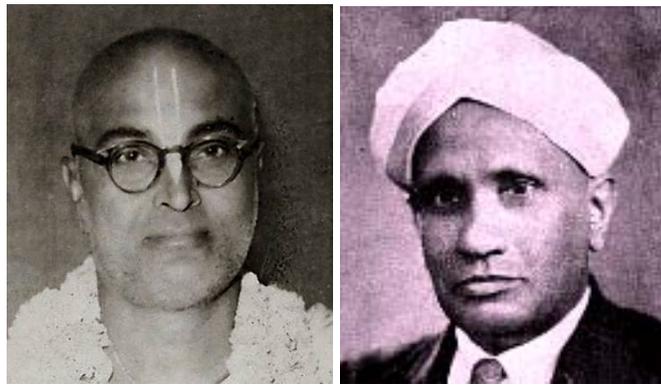
H. H. Bhakti Svarūpa Dāmodara Mahārāja, a Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava Sannyāsī and Doctor of Physical Organic Chemistry, mentioned at the 2nd International Congress on Life and its Origin in Rome in 2004: “Many scholars today express that we need a new science, a new paradigm to understand the deeper meaning of reality. (...) This new science should be a holistic approach in the search of life. (...) A one sided approach would not be able to answer many questions in this vital field of knowledge. (...) The intelligentsia of the world has become more willing to openly discuss spirituality. This is a greatly welcomed development. (...)”



“It seems that science has reached many dead ends in the search for life’s origin, and now scientists are ready to consider that there may be another nature operating behind the scene – behind the backdrop of what we can see. (...) Reality exists also beyond the boundary of empirical observation.” (Damodara 2, 2004.)

²⁰ Quoted from: www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/278.Nikola_Tesla. However, in order to avoid the false conclusion that physical science can advance into the field of transcendence without a change of paradigm, it should be mentioned that if one progresses from material to spiritual science, then one goes beyond certain paradigms of physical science.

In 1930, Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja, on behalf of his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, met Dr. C. V. Rāman in Kolkata to invite him to grace the chairman’s seat in a large religious gathering. Dr. Rāman was Professor of Physics, Nobel Laureate and Knight of the British Empire. He said: “I have no faith in anything that cannot be confirmed by direct sensory experience. I cannot waste my valuable time with imaginary things. I would gladly attend any conference dealing with science or education, but not a religious one. Can you show me God? If you can show Him to me, I will come.” Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja: “If your students were to say to you that they will study your scientific findings only if you can show them the truth of what you have realized through your experiments, what would you say?” Dr. Rāman: “I would make them realize it!” Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja: “Can you make them realized before teaching them?” Dr. Rāman: “No, I would first have to show them the process by which I have come to realize the truth. They would have to follow that process if they want to have the same realization. First they would have to earn their B. Sc. degree, then their M. Sc. Then they would have to study with me for another five years. Then I would be able to make them understand.” Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja: “If that is true for you and your scientific knowledge, then can the sages not say exactly the same thing?”



“Follow their process and see whether you experience God’s existence or not!
You are not able to show the scientific truths you profess to your students until they have adopted your process. Similarly, if you want to experience or understand God, you have to follow the process by which that is accomplished. If it does not happen, then you can deny its value. But how can you deny its value without having experimented?”

Dr. Rāman could not answer. After a few moments of silence he admitted: “I don’t know anything about Kṛṣṇa. If I will come, I will not be able to say anything. It will be better if you invite someone who knows something about these matters.” (summarized from Tirtha 3, 2002, pp. 24-28.) It cannot be stressed enough that Vedic science in no way lacks substantial evidence. Everyone can factually perceive God and the spiritual self if they are successful in Vedic science:

*om tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padaṁ sadā paśyanti sūrayo divīva cakṣur ātatam
tad viprāso vipanyavo jāgrvāmśah samindhate viṣṇor yat paramaṁ padam*

“The realized devotees always behold the Supreme Lord and His spiritual abode, just as the unobstructed eye can see the sun within the sky. Because those praiseworthy devotees who are spiritually awake have realized the supreme reality, they can also reveal it unto others.”
– *Rk-Samhitā* 1.22.20 (quoted in *Cc* 2.20.289, purport).

Śrī Kṛṣṇa explained to Arjuna:

*rāja-vidyā rāja-guhyam, pavitram idam uttamam
pratyakṣāvagamaṁ dharmyam, su-sukham kartum avyayam*



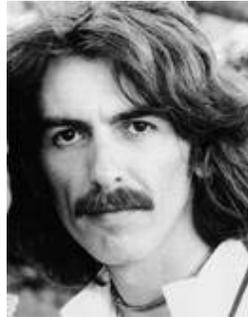
“This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of *dharma* [activities to attain the Supreme]. It is everlasting, and it is joyfully performed.” – *Bg* 9.2.

“In the perfectional stage of *yoga*, the mind is restrained from matter, and the transcendental senses perceive the spiritual self, which is otherwise *atīndriyam*, beyond the perception of material senses. Rejoicing in the ever-blissful self, one becomes completely satisfied, never departs from truth, and knows that there is no greater gain.” – *Bg* 6.20-23.

Only the self-realized transcendentalists can see the spiritual reality – others cannot, though they may try (*Bg* 15.11). If we seriously engage in *bhakti*, the material coverings will be removed from our heart, and then, with pure consciousness, we can directly perceive both the Supreme Lord and our self as transcendental entities, just as we can directly experience the sunshine through normal, healthy vision (*SB* 11.3.40). The question is if we are ready to accept the exact scientific process of realization as given by the *paramparā*, the disciplic succession. This does not differ from the way of realization of modern science, as Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja nicely pointed out to Dr. Rāman. The common scientist thinks in terms of ‘seeing is believing’. Yet any science actually requires faith in and surrender to a certain process of understanding before one can actually comprehend anything. Vedic science does not differ in this regard from any other science. Without faith there cannot be acceptance of a process of realization of any type, and as such, ‘believing is seeing’ also holds truth. Faith in spiritual science is in no way blind or less scientific than faith in modern science, because it also rests on the factual realizations of experts and it also leads to practical realizations. Many scientists think that repeatable scientific experiments are only granted by physical science because they do not know that Vedic science also enables the same.

“Śrī Caitanya declares that there is a perfectly rational method of spiritual education for calling into play the dormant faculties of every soul, that it is only by such awakened activity of the faculties of the soul that the Absolute Truth is approachable for His service, and that results of this method are fully ascertainable by careful observation and experiment.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 329.)

“The pure spiritual knowledge that the Vaiṣṇavas study is actual *vijñāna* – extremely scientific and experiential.” (Bhaktivinoda 1, 1893, Chapter 8.) Anyone who sincerely follows the Vedic process will get the result of realization. Modern science requires strict conditions of experiment, and similarly there are ideal circumstances to realize the Lord. Nevertheless, Vedic science is not restricted to monks who live in temples and keep shaven heads, but practicable by anyone who is sincere about realizing the Lord, because as the Lord’s children, it is everyone’s birthright to realize Him. The secret of success is to follow the prescribed process. George Harrison, the world famous musician and former Beatle, became a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa by accepting Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda as his spiritual guide, who told him to practice *bhakti* while continuing his stage performances to attract people to Kṛṣṇa. Through Harrison’s popular songs about Kṛṣṇa like *My Sweet Lord*, many people were attracted and later became devotees. In 1970, he mentioned about the practical application of Vedic science (Bhaktivedanta 1.):



“If there is a God, I want to see Him.
It is pointless to believe in something without proof,
and Kṛṣṇa-consciousness and meditation are methods where
you can actually obtain God-perception. (...)
The proof of the pudding is in the eating!”

Rene Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, found that all that is left at the far end of material thinking is that ‘I am doubting’. His maxim was *de omnibus est dubitandum*, “everything is to be doubted.” This is true for material perception and thinking, because it is incomplete. Plato similarly found that all skeletonistic knowledge is incomplete and hence real knowledge is to know that “I actually do not know what reality is.” Veda teaches similarly, that as long as we are in the material illusory energy of *māyā*, we cannot know things as they are. I remember when I was in England during an excursion of new Bachelor graduates, and one night, my colleagues and I were



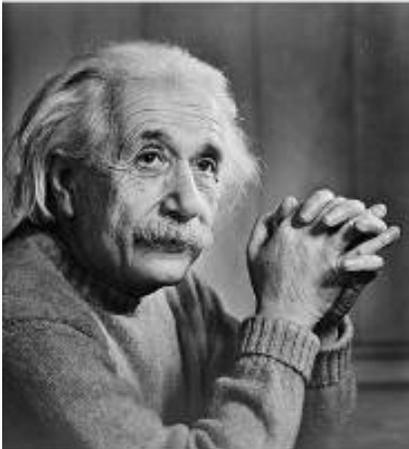
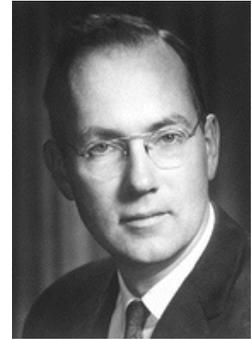
philosophizing on the limits of human perception. I sketched a pencil drawing with all senses arranged around a spark of light (representing the self) in an unusual way, in order to see the human doors of perception without seeing the common outlook of the human body. Then I told my colleagues: “Look, this is our situation; we have these senses, but they are incomplete and cannot grasp the full reality. We have passed the Bachelor of Science and some of us will become teachers, but we do not even know to what degree what we perceive is real. Is there a way out of this situation?” All were wrapped in painful silence for two minutes that seemed like an eternity. There was a scent of embarrassment and fear in the air, as if the floor on which all were

standing had collapsed. Then the drawing was passed back, and the topic was changed. I seemed to have touched on a topic that was ‘too painful to discuss’ – in other words, I had entered the ‘taboo zone’ of physical science, the four faults of material sense perception. This topic is mostly avoided in physical science, because if we consider the limits and faults of human perception (including its extensions through instruments), then we realize that we ultimately have to believe what the faulty senses tell us beyond any guarantee of substantivity. As such, modern science is a type of faith. This fact is admitted by sincere scientists (emphasis added):



“Anyone who has been seriously engaged in scientific work of any kind realizes that over the entrance to the gates of the temple of science are written the words: ‘*Ye must have faith*’. It is a quality which the scientist cannot dispense with.” – Max Planck, German Quantum Physicist, in *Where Is Science Going?* (Planck 2, 1932).

“Science itself requires faith. We do not know if our logic is correct. I do not know if you are there. You do not know if I am here. We may just be imagining all this, you see. I have a faith that the world is what it seems like, and thus I believe you are there. I can’t prove it from any fundamental point of view... Yet I have to accept a certain framework in which to operate. *The idea that ‘religion is faith; science is knowledge’, I think, is quite wrong. It misses the actual basis of science, which is faith. We scientists believe in the existence of the external world and the validity of our logic. We feel quite comfortable about it. Nevertheless, these are acts of faith. We can’t prove them.*” – Charles H. Townes, Nobel Laureate in Physics (Damodara 3, 2004, p. 56).



“Scientific research is based on the idea that everything that takes place is determined by laws of nature (...). However, it must be admitted that our actual knowledge of these laws is only imperfect and fragmentary, so that, *actually, the belief in the existence of basic all-embracing laws in Nature also rests on a sort of faith.*” – Albert Einstein in 1936 (Dukas, 1981, pp. 32-33). “Science can only be created by those who are thoroughly imbued with the aspiration toward truth and understanding. This source of feeling, however, springs from the sphere of religion. To this there also belongs the faith in the possibility that the regulations valid for the world of existence are rational, that is, comprehensible to reason. I cannot conceive of a genuine scientist without that profound faith. The situation may be expressed by an image: science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.” (Einstein, 1939.)

In modern education we are taught that science is not based on faith but on facts – yet in fact science is based on faith in the validity of material perception and material reasoning. Most modern educators propagate secular education (disregarding or even rejecting any form of religious faith) with the argument that education should not be based on faith. But this condition would then also disqualify so-called ‘secular’ faculties like physics, as they are also based on faith. Human beings are by nature limited and not omniscient. Their vision of reality is thus always in some aspects conditioned by faith, and a crusade against faith per se is actually ill will towards human existence. The only healthy approach can be to *accept* faith and embrace the *best* faith. As material perception has been explained in detail to be very limited and faulty, faith in it alone is not very intelligent; it is like having faith in a driver who drinks. The wise person will not submit to a drinking driver but patiently find other ways of transport. Similarly, the wise scientist, conscious of the faulty material senses, will recognize his incapability of capturing the full reality and try to transcend it.

If we recognize our unavoidable incapability of complete perception,
there are only two alternate ways: cultivation of ignorance about it
or inquiry from someone who is expert in transcendence.

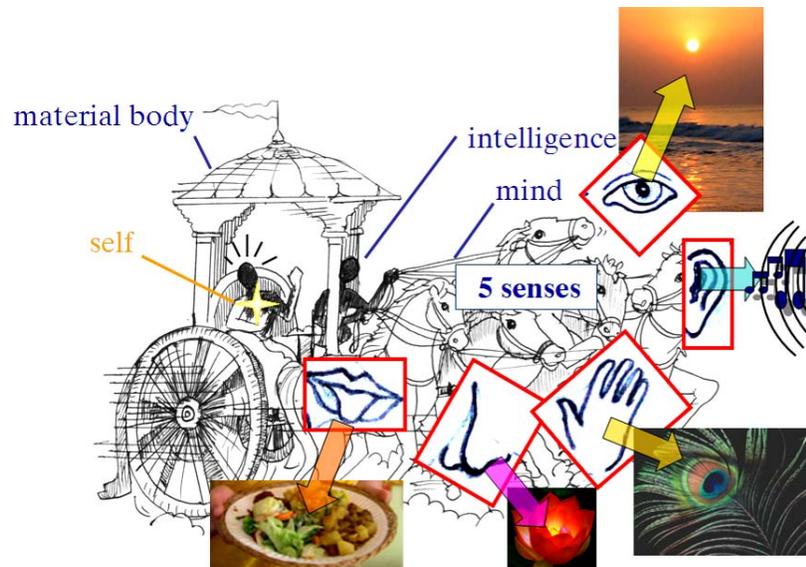
Veda points out the only objects worthy of inquiry: truly transcendental saints, transcendental scriptures and the transcendental Supreme Lord, as will be established in this and following chapters. Accepting the guidance of a true expert is the wisest solution, the practical quintessence of philosophy, just as it is the best solution for a blind man to accept a clear-sighted guide to cross the street. Before continuing with the present topic of the four faults of material sense perception, we shortly venture into some basic teachings of Vedic epistemology, as this will be useful in the following. H. H. Bhakti Svarūpa Dāmodara Mahārāja (Dr. T. D. Singh) explains:

“Consciousness is beyond the mind and the brain.



(...) *indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur, indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ, manasas tu parā buddhir, yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ*, ‘The working senses are superior to dull matter, mind is higher than the senses, intelligence is still higher than the mind, and he [the soul] is even higher than the intelligence.’ – *Bg* 3.42. The interaction of consciousness with intelligence, mind, and senses is described in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (1.3.3–4) where it is compared to a chariot: *ātmānam rathinam viddhi, sarīram ratham eva ca, buddhim tu sārathim viddhi, manaḥ pragraham eva ca, indriyāṇi hayān āhur, viṣayāms teṣu gocarān, ātmendriya-mano-yuktam, bhoktety āhur manīṣiṇaḥ*, ‘The individual is the passenger in the chariot of the material body, and intelligence is the driver. The mind is the driving instrument, and the senses are the horses. The self is thus the enjoyer or sufferer in the association of the mind and senses. So it is understood by great thinkers.’

Figure 1: The Chariot Imagery



The individual consciousness or the life particle [*jīva*] is compared to the passenger because he or she is the chief occupant and thus the enjoyer or sufferer of the journey. The horses represent the senses that always drag the chariot of the human body to the objects of the senses. Intelligence is compared to the driver because the driver employs necessary discrimination for a successful and comfortable journey. The reins are compared to the mind because they are directly connected to the horses (senses) and are guided by the driver (intelligence). An able driver (intelligence) takes control of the reins (mind) connected to the horses (senses) to properly guide the chariot towards its destination by discrimination. In this way the passenger or the soul can reach the desired destination by proper use of all the faculties. On the other hand, if any of the faculties is not controlled and

coordinated properly in the hierarchy, sooner or later there may be an accident.” (Damodara 1, 2004, pp. 18-20.)

Table 1: Hierarchy of ontological elements in the human body

Spiritual elements:	Supersoul (<i>paramātmā</i>) and soul or self (<i>jīva</i>)
Subtle body (<i>sūkṣma-śarīra</i>):	False ego (<i>ahankāra</i>), intelligence (<i>buddhi</i>) and mind (<i>mana</i>)
Gross body (<i>sthūla-śarīra</i>):	Organs related to the senses (hearing, touching, seeing, etc.)

The *paramātmā* and the *ahankāra* are not mentioned in the above chariot imagery and will be described later on. Physical science restricts its paradigms of perception to the gross body. The psychologist further includes the subtle body. Often, elements of the subtle body are wrongly taken to be spiritual due to their subtleness. The spiritual Supersoul and the self can only be perceived by someone who is fully spiritual, in other words a pure devotee.

Table 2: Epistemological categories of material perception as used by physical science

	Passive observation	Active experiment
Subtle body (rational)	Collecting data, remembering	Argumentative reasoning or mental hypothetical speculation including analysis, evaluation, induction, deduction, conclusion
Gross body (empirical)	Sense perception, bodily impression	Physical experiment, bodily expression

Please note that in this book the terms ‘gross’, ‘subtle’ and ‘spiritual’ are used according to the terminology given in this sub-chapter. It is very important to remember that the mind is still material and not spiritual. Due to its subtle nature, we think that the mind is spiritual and/or that we are the mind. Rene Descartes found that *cogito ergo sum*, “I think, therefore I am.” (*Principles of Philosophy* §7, part I.) Vedic science does not subscribe to the Cartesian split of body and mind in a way that they belong to two ontologically different categories which are difficult to connect. Since they are both material, their interaction is materially explainable. This understanding is important to solve the body/mind problem of modern science (see Chapter 11.4). This understanding is also essential to understand that the effort of the sages to free themselves from their material mind, intelligence and false ego does not mean that they want to free themselves entirely from *any* ego and give up individuality altogether. Sages aspire for freedom from the dictates of gross and subtle material coverings so they can discover their real spiritual ego (also called self or soul), and the Supersoul. There is a big ontological gap between the material body and the spiritual self. Their interaction is possible through the agency of the most subtle material element, the *ahankāra* or false ego. When the spirit soul develops material desires due to material association, he or she is first enveloped with false ego, then with material intelligence, mind, and gross body.

The material senses not only prevent complete perception, they also continually drag their owners from one ‘sensation’ to another, distracting us from the actual purpose of life. The eyes want to see nice sights, the ears want to hear nice sounds, the hands want to touch nice shapes, the nose wants to smell nice fragrances, and the tongue wants to taste nice foodstuffs. If we as the self inside the chariot of the material body are not aware of our situation and responsibility, we do not use the driver of our intelligence and the reins of our mind to direct the horses of our senses according to our own needs, and then the uncontrolled horses of our senses take the opportunity to drag our chariot from one sensation to the other beyond our control. The most pathetic thing in this ghostly ride is:

The false ego makes the conditioned soul identify with the irritating senses.
The soul thus falsely thinks that the desires of the senses are the soul’s own desires
and that by serving the desires of the senses the soul will attain fulfillment.

Besides bewildering the soul, the desires of the senses are never satiated; the more we give them, the more they desire, like a fire, which only increases when we pour oil into it. Thus they drag the attention away from our self and self interest ever more forcefully. Most people have already surrendered to their senses to such an extent, that even when they are taught the truth about their situation, they cannot take back control over their senses, like addicts or slaves. The material senses not only prevent complete perception, they also seduce us to acts against our own will. This is evident for example when (the soul inside the body of) a drinker wants to give up drinking (drinking is the desire of the senses, not of the self!). We are confronted with certain sensual demands that often drive us to act against our actual will (this also confirms that the self is not the material body, else the body would not act against the will of the self). As a soul in a material body we are not free to act according to our will but must serve the desires of the material senses, thinking that this is ‘what I want’. Besides depriving us of free will, the material senses often lead to actions hostile to others and the self. To gratify their senses, sensually uncontrolled people are ready to do anything – up to heinous crimes. Often criminals say that they were overcome by some force beyond them and that they themselves did not actually want to commit the crime. In this regard Arjuna asked an important question to Lord Kṛṣṇa: “O descendant of Vṛṣṇi, by what is one impelled to sinful acts, even unwillingly, as if engaged by force?” – *Bg 3.36*. To this Lord Kṛṣṇa answered that the greatest enemy of this world is sensuous lust, which is born from the contact of the senses with material nature and later transformed into wrath (*kāma eṣa krodha eṣa*, *Bg 3.37*). This alien force arises in the subtle body and when it not controlled, it misleads the soul:

*indriyāṇām hi caratām, yan mano 'nuvidhīyate
tad asya harati prajñām, vāyur nāvam ivāmbhasi*



“As a strong wind sweeps away a boat on the water, even one of the roaming senses on which the mind focuses can carry away a man’s intelligence.” – *Bhagavad-gītā 2.67*.

Therefore, sense control is very important for transcendence. *tāni sarvāṇi samīyamya, yukta āsīta mat-parah, vaśe hi yasyendriyāṇi, tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā*, “One who restrains his senses, keeping them under full control, and fixes his consciousness upon Me, is known as a man of steady intelligence.” – *Bg 2.61*. “There are principles to regulate attachment and aversion pertaining to the senses and their objects. One should not come under the control of such attachment and aversion, because they are stumbling blocks on the path of self-realization.” – *Bg 3.34. rāga-dveṣa-vimuktais tu, viśayān indriyaiś caran, ātma-vaśyair vidheyātmā, prasādam adhigacchati*, “But a person free from all attachment and aversion and able to control the senses through regulative principles of freedom can obtain the complete mercy of the Lord.” – *Bg 2.64*. “Life’s desires should never be directed toward sense gratification. One should desire only a healthy life, or self-preservation, since a human being is meant for inquiry about the absolute Truth. Nothing else should be the goal of one’s works.” – *SB 1.2.10*. “The living entity in another type of body like animal or plant body sees only by instinct; he knows only the agreeable and disagreeable sense perceptions of that particular body. But I have a human body in which I can control my senses and understand my destination; therefore I offer my respectful obeisances to the Supreme Lord, by whom I have been blessed with this body and by whose grace I can see Him within and without.” – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.31.19*.

A Vedic saint or highly spiritually advanced person is called *gosvāmī*, which means master (*svāmī*) of the senses (*go*).

If we are not a real *gosvāmī*²¹, we are a *godāsa*, a ‘servant of the senses’, and subject to their four faults of perception, knowingly or unknowingly. Most people in the material world are unknowingly servants of their senses, because, due to skeletonism, they misidentify with them. Even when we know that we are not the body, sense control is difficult because of the senses’ seductive power and our habit to trust them. Therefore, Veda describes ways to control them. The animals are all *godāsa* – they have no choice but to follow the dictate of their senses: They are almost always after eating, sleeping, mating or defending. In springtime, the birds are forcibly engaged in mating and then they are forced to breed. We can observe couples of birds that were unsuccessful in begetting offspring nevertheless constructing a nest and behaving as if there were eggs to be hatched because their senses force them to act in this way. We can also observe untalented birds trying to



construct nests in the most futile places. I once observed a crow trying to balance a branch on a sheltered place that was only half the size of the crow. Trying to build a nest, the crow then sat on the branch, which soon fell to the ground. The crow then again picked it up and placed it back. I have observed this pitiful procedure continuing the whole day, for many weeks. Another example of the pitiful situation of *godāsa* is the dog chasing its own tail. We may think that this is a deliberate and fun game, but after personally witnessing how dogs chase and bark at their own tail in pathetic frustration over not being able to catch it for hours, up to complete exhaustion, we will have feelings of compassion for them. Human beings have the ability to control the senses and inquire about the real

self. As sense control and self-realization distinguish man from the animal, those who are not controlling their senses for self-realization are not actually fit to be called human, and in plain language they are thus called *dvi-pada-pasubhiḥ*, animals on two legs (*SB* 5.9.9).

Adding this up to the matchbox wisdom that holds that “an adult is a person who has stopped growing at both ends and is now growing in the middle”, those who are not cultivating their inner growth by realizing their real spiritual self are neither fit to be called human nor adult in the real sense. Inner, i.e. spiritual growth, requires sense control, else we will always be distracted by the desires of the senses and unable to turn towards the inner essence. A sincere scientist or philosopher must thus inquire: How can the real self be uncovered from these false sensual coverings? Naturally, a sense of renunciation will awaken in someone who has realized the deluding power of the material senses. Renunciation relates especially to *attachment* to material things and less to possessing things. The Greek orator and philosopher Apollonius of Tyana observed around the time of Christ: “In India I found a race of mortals living upon the earth, but not adhering to it. Inhabiting cities, but not being fixed to them, possessing everything but possessed by nothing.” (Gandhi, 1991, p. 17.) Some *yogīs* (ascetic mystics aiming at liberation from material bondage including the dictate of the material senses) try to mechanically control their senses by renunciation and *yogic* exercises. But they cannot fully transcend their material senses, because (A) the actual master of the senses is God²², and (B) the actual positive function of the spiritual senses, namely to serve and honor the Supreme Lord, is ignored. After some strenuous efforts, the *yogīs* thus fall down again into mundane sensuous activities (*SB* 10.2.32). The essential Vedic scripture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (9.4.18-

²¹ The term *gosvāmī* is also used for someone who is in the renounced order of life, and for someone who is a spiritual successor. The renounced order is important to guide people by setting the best practical example. Unfortunately some people call themselves *gosvāmī* simply as a superficial matter of social status without actually being master of their senses. Some also claim that by taking birth in the family of a *gosvāmī*, one automatically becomes a *gosvāmī*, but actually one must be a real *gosvāmī*, a master of the senses, to claim that.

²² One name of Lord Kṛṣṇa is Hṛṣīkeṣa, ‘the Lord of the senses’. There are many pastimes in which Lord Kṛṣṇa has bewildered the greatest *yogīs* with His *māyā*, material illusion.

20) teaches to engage all of our senses in the service of the Supreme Lord and thus transcend them: We should engage our mind in meditating upon Lord Kṛṣṇa, our mouth in glorifying the Lord and relishing His *prasāda* (food that has been offered to God), our hands in serving the devotees, our ears in hearing words about the Lord, our eyes in seeing Kṛṣṇa's deities, temples, and holy places, etc. *Śrī Nārada-Pañcarātra*, quoted in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.12, states:

*sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam
tat-paratvena nirmalam
hṛṣikeṇa hṛṣikeṣa-
sevanam bhaktir ucyate*

“Pure devotional service means engaging all the senses
in purely motivated service of the Lord, the master of all senses.
This is only possible when one is entirely freed from all material designations.”

bhakti is the most beneficial way of sense control. The senses cannot be neglected altogether, since the eternal spirit soul also possesses eternal senses; the senses must be positively engaged and thus purified. In this way, the real self (including the transcendental senses) is awakened, and renunciation of mundane activities becomes natural due to a higher taste (see *Bg* 2.59).

Devotees who continuously engage their senses
in the service of the Lord are the best *gosvāmīs*.

Devotees may be in the renounced order or they may be householders with family; they may be the son or daughter of a *gosvāmī*, or not – if they engage all their senses for the service of the Lord, then they are real *gosvāmīs*. The term *gosvāmī* is used here in this literal sense, not in the social sense of ‘renunciate’ or ‘spiritual successor’. Vedic science teaches that ultimately all should become real *gosvāmīs* in this literal sense. Only a *gosvāmī* or *gosvāminī* in the literal sense is a true renunciate and a true spiritual successor, not just one who merely wears the clothes of a renunciate or merely externally is the successor of a *gosvāmī* without being a *gosvāmī* in the true sense. We must shun pseudo-*gosvāmīs*, hear from true *gosvāmīs* and become true *gosvāmīs* ourselves. Everything else is betrayal of the self. The only alternative to becoming a true *gosvāmī* is to remain *godāsa*, a slave of the senses and their four faults of material perception. Because Vedic science is not being practiced widely in today's world, most people are *godāsa*, mostly unknowingly, and the entire systems of human economy, sociology, culture and education are centered around ‘serving’ and exploiting billions of slaves of their senses.

The common skeletonistic people usually think that liberty means the freedom to gratify one's senses without restriction and that systematic sense control is an act against freedom. But actually, those who serve their alien senses are continuously led away from their real self and from their real interest, and thus unrestricted sense gratification is in fact an act against freedom. Only those who are freed from the false paradigm of skeletonism can understand this important point (to inform people about the illusion of skeletonism we have launched www.sublimereality.com). As illustrated in Figure 1 and Chart 1, the culprit who is responsible for the conditioned soul's misidentification with the gross body is the subtle *ahankāra*, the false ego, which roots in separatist desires. The conditioned soul is *ahankāra-vimūḍhātmā*, bewildered by the false ego (*Bg* 3.27), and thus identifies with the material body, its senses, mind and intelligence, which are all mutable and alien to the self, the *jīvātmā*, or in short *jīva*. Veda teaches how to rediscover the *jīvātmā*. But today's modern culture increasingly teaches to spend our whole life running after the demands of the material senses, thus covering our real identity more and more. Regulative principles that prescribe regular cultural and religious activities, a moderate and healthy vegetarian diet, cleanliness, restricted marital sex or celibacy, non-violence and moral and ethic conducts are scientifically justified, just as cleanliness in a laboratory is justified to achieve good results from

experiments. Such regulative principles are a basic necessity for self-realization. They are not merely artificial policies to ensure moral welfare. If executed while performing *bhakti*, regulative principles are very beneficial strategies to free human kind from the enslavement of the alien forces of the material senses and the terrorist of the false ego. Today's world is in terror of terrorists, but ironically people are assisting the actual terrorist, the *ahankāra*, by increasing material identifications and sense gratification with newer and newer fashions. As long as we are not freed from skeletonism and the sensual and mental commands, we are knowingly or unknowingly hijacked by the most sophisticated terrorists, namely the *ahankāra*, the material intelligence, the material mind and the material senses.

The best weapons against these terrorists are the army of sense control and the peace force of *bhakti*, devotional service: *vihāya kāmān yaḥ sarvān, pumāṁś carati niḥsprhaḥ, nirmamo nirahankāraḥ, sa śāntim adhigacchati*, “A person who has given up all desires for personal sense gratification, who lives free from material desires, who has given up all sense of proprietorship and is devoid of false ego – he alone can attain real peace.” – *Bg 2.71. anarthopāśamaṁ sākṣād, bhakti-yogam adhokṣaje, lokasyājānato vidvāṁś, cakre sāvata-saṁhitām*, “The material miseries of the living entity, which are superfluous, can be directly mitigated by the linking process of devotional service. But the mass of people do not know this, and therefore the learned Vyāsadeva compiled this Vedic literature, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is in relation to the Supreme Truth.” – *SB 1.7.6*. It is the *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal inherent nature of the soul, to be the servant of the Lord (*jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—krṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'*, *Cc 2.20.108-109*).

We cannot but serve – the only choice is whether
we want to serve the perfect desires of the Lord or
the dictations of the *ahankāra*, the terrorist of the false ego.

Regulations for sense control are more and more neglected because people are not being taught why they are beneficial. Thus people falsely think that by asking them to minimize material sense gratification, the devotees deprive them of enjoyment, whereas they are actually the only ones who can bring them back to real health and transcendental enjoyment. *svayam niḥśreyasaṁ vidvān, na vakty ajñāya karma hi, na rāti rogiṇo 'pathyam, vāñchato 'pi bhīṣaktamaḥ*, “A pure devotee who is fully accomplished in the science of devotional service will never instruct an ignorant person to engage in fruitive activities for material enjoyment, not to speak of helping in such activities. Such a devotee is like an experienced physician, who never encourages a patient to eat food injurious to health, even if the patient desires it.” – *SB 6.9.50*. One of the most well-known Vedic commandments is *Bṛhad-āranyaka Upaniṣad 1.3.28* (quoted from *Vb, Śrīla Prabhupāda Slokas*):

*asato mā sad gamah
tamasi mā jyotir gamah
mṛto mā amṛta gamah*

“Do not stay in fleeting illusion; go to the eternal reality!
Do not stay in the darkness of ignorance; go to the light!
Do not remain bound by death; realize your immortal self!”

Since the necessity of transcending the prison of the four faults of material sense perception has been explained, it must be asked: what alternative is there to trust besides the material senses? From the skeletonistic point of view there seems to be no alternative, because the soul in the skeletonistic conception falsely identifies with the material body that is limited to a certain range of perception. But if we have learned the sublime lesson that the self is different from the body and inquire into the true nature of that self, then there is an alternative: The real self, according to the Vedic conclusive philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, is a minute part of the complete whole, whose ultimate manifestation is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Although the self is

eternally quantitatively different from the Lord, it is to a limited extent qualitatively one with Him in terms of their both being spiritual and their being able to unite in will. As the Lord is *sac-cid-ānanda*, eternal, spiritually conscious and entirely blissfull, so is the *jīva*, like a drop of the salty ocean is also salty. As the Lord possesses spiritual senses with which He can perceive everything as it is, so does the uncovered spirit soul.

Returning to our original *sac-cid-ānanda* nature
is the way to attain complete perception.

Vedic science and its essential philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* offer the sublime teaching by which we can come to know our real identity beyond the dictatorship of the *ahankāra*. The quest is to re-cover the *jīva* from the coverings of material consciousness. This can be achieved only when we again take to our original Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The eternal nature of the *jīva* as a servant of the Lord has been explained by Śrī Caitanya (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.20.108-109, see Chapter 1.2). To achieve Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not something that we can achieve on our own strength because our attachment to material designations are impossible to overcome independently. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.14):

*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī
mama māyā duratyayā
mām eva ye prapadyante
māyām etām taranti te*

“This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes
of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who
have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it.”

Here the process of transcendence is given: surrender to the Ultimate Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the possessor of *māyā* and the subduer of *māyā* (*māyā-dhamaṇa*, *SB* 10.14.16). We can attain Him only by His mercy, which is attracted by surrender and loving service. Śrī Kṛṣṇa further says:

*teṣāṃ satata-yuktānāṃ
bhajatāṃ prīti-pūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṃ taṃ
yena mām upayānti te*

“To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love,
I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” – *Bg* 10.10.

This verse makes it clear that understanding of the complete reality is not possible by the ascending way of material knowledge but only by the descending way of knowledge through revelation. Philosophy relating to the complete reality is therefore a question of merciful revelation. This can also be understood from the Vedic term for philosophy, *darśana*. The term *darśana* has been translated as ‘philosophy’ in this book since it stands in relation to the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Other meanings of the term *darśana* are vision and revelation. This explains the definition of the term ‘philosophy’ in Vedic science:

Philosophy in its true sense is the conception of truth
revealed by the perfect Lord, not produced by any mortal
through imperfect mental speculation, scientific research or experimentation.

Prof. Shrinivasachari mentioned: “Indian philosophy as a *darśana* is not merely a systematic view of reality, but an immediate vision or divine insight. It satisfies the highest demands of logical stability and ethical and spiritual satisfaction.” (Shrinivasachari, 1950, p. 274.) Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh

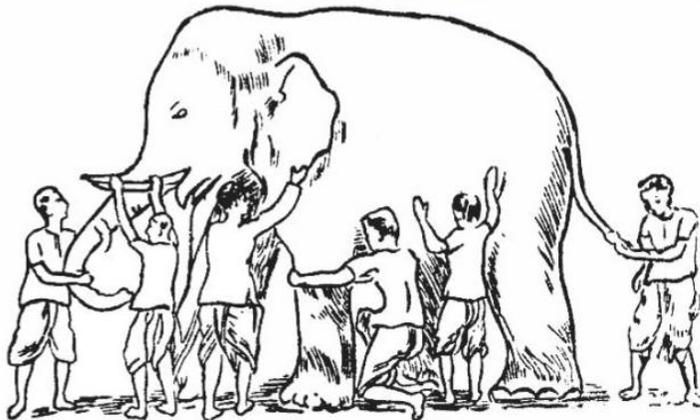
Tirtha Mahārāja explained (Tirtha 7, 2001, p. 70): “A human being is finite. Our intellect is finite. Our mental capacity is finite. Therefore, anything determined by means of human intellect and mental capacity will also be finite. How can we determine the infinite – the cause of ourself or the cause of all things? How? Anything determined by the finite intellect or the finite mental capacity of the finite being will be a mentally concocted thing. That is not reality – it is fictitious. If reality is reality, it must always exist. Reality cannot be manufactured in the intellectual factory of the human being, a conditioned soul. That would be non-reality.

“Reality always exists.
You are not to manufacture it
by means of your limited mental capacity.
Reality is there, and you have to find out how to see that truth!”

“If we wish to know Him by any mundande reference,
that would be like trying to send rays from the retina to the sun.
Just as we receive rays emanating from the self-luminous sun,
so by the mercy of the Supreme Lord, we will be able to know
what He is, and after learning this, we will engage ourselves
for His purpose.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 275.)

The Greek term *philosophia*, ‘love of wisdom’ does not establish the necessity of divine revelation. Most philosophies are man-made. The term *darsana* has likely been used to describe various philosophies, but as explained above, its original meaning ultimately establishes:

The essential *darsana* is super-human and revealed by the Lord Himself, and as such beyond the four faults of material sense perception. Real philosophy, love of wisdom, is to accept the truth as it is without mental speculation. When we discover that the ultimate truth is the Supreme Lord, the necessity of philosophical speculation vanishes, as the Lord Himself has the best vision or *darsana*, and thus the truly wise accept His *darsana* as the ultimate philosophy. For this reason, Lord Caitanya revealed the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*.



The following story²³ shall illustrate the necessity of accepting the Lord’s transcendental vision: A king once asked his minister, who happened to be a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa: “Why are there so many different doctrines about the absolute truth? Is not truth one, not many?” The minister asked him to bring an elephant and six blind men into his court. He made each blind man feel a different part of the elephant and asked them to explain what an elephant is like. The one who felt the elephant’s trunk said that an elephant is just like a snake. The one who felt the elephant’s tusk said: “Oh, an elephant is just like a spear.” The one who felt the elephant’s ear said: “Hmm, an elephant is like a fan.” The

²³ This story has many versions. One is ascribed to Lord Buddha. The presented version is an adaptation by the author.

one who felt the elephant's leg said: "An elephant is just like a pillar." The one who felt the elephant's belly said: "Oh, an elephant is like a boat." The one who felt the elephant's tail said: "An elephant is just like a rope." Seeing all this, the king laughed and praised his minister. The king then said: "From this scenario we can understand, that we, due to our inability to grasp the entire reality, construct different doctrines that only represent a distorted part of the truth. But tell me – is there a way for us to ever understand the complete reality, although we are unable to capture it by ourself? And why have you covered this new big painting over our heads with a cloth? What does it show?" The minister then said to the king: "Who has given you the vision to see the entire elephant? You were laughing because you can see more than the blind men, but have you made your eyes yourself?" Smilingly, he then had the painting uncovered. It showed Lord Kṛṣṇa casting His merciful glance down into the royal court, overlooking one and all. The king offered his obeisances to Lord Kṛṣṇa and presented his minister with precious gifts.

From this story, we can learn that although we are incapable of grasping reality undistortedly and entirely, we can understand reality by being granted vision or insight by the Supreme Lord, who is beyond material condition and dimensions. Often, people who have realized that by material perception, only partial views of the 'elephant of reality' can be seen, but don't know that there is transcendental complete vision, give up all attempts at absolute vision, and they often call those who still try to attain absolute vision dogmatic or sectarian. One of their policies is tolerance of all types of incomplete views – but these conflicting views can neither be reconciled nor add up to the whole. Another policy is escape into a fictitious conception of attributelessness. The first policy may be compared to someone who tries to tolerate or befriend all types of blind men, and the second policy may be compared to a person who claims that the elephant ultimately has no real attributes. Both such persons are lastly another type of blind men who cannot see the elephant. Very few know that they *can* be healed from material blindness, and even fewer succeed in attaining complete vision of reality through the vision of God, the only truly objective vision. Modern science ironically tries to attain objectivity without considering the only objective vision: the Lord's own vision or *darsana*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.29.69 mentions:

sattvaika-niṣṭhe manasi, bhagavat-pārśva-vartini



“Kṛṣṇa consciousness means constantly associating with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in such a mental state that the devotee can observe the cosmic manifestation exactly as the Supreme Personality of Godhead does.”

Only by the light of the Supreme Lord's own transcendental knowledge or insight can we see everything from all angles of vision (*sākṣād bhagavatoktena, guruṇā hariṇā nrpa, viśuddha-jñāna-dīpena, sphuratā viśvato-mukham, SB* 4.28.41). With material vision we cannot even see the complete external reality, but the Supreme Lord sees everything not only externally but also internally – He can directly witness the motives of everyone's hearts by His perfect vision (*SB* 10.38.18). Those who want complete and truly objective vision should thus accept the vision of the Supreme Lord. As the saying of Antoine de Saint-Exupery goes: "Love does not mean gazing at each other – love means looking together in the same direction." This indicates that the focus or target of both, the will of both, must become one. Union or unity in will is most scientifically

advocated by the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. Since the living entities are by nature the eternal parts and servants of the Supreme Lord, it is their duty to comply with the desires of the Supreme Lord, i.e. to give up separate interests and worship Him with all their heart. Then, and then only, they will look in the same direction as God, and thus attain His vision, His *darśana*, and see reality as it is, as God sees it (according to their capacity, which is of course not unlimited like God's, but sufficient for their own needs). They will see how everything is meant to serve His desires in various ways, including their own essential self, and how everything is ultimately in harmony if viewed with the Lord's own *darśana*, i.e. in unity with His will.

This 'vision of everything from all angles of vision' is the only true objectivity. Not knowing this all-harmonizing, perfect *darśana* of the Lord, certain people have put forward destructive proposals such as the extinction of individual existence and attributes in order to overcome their imperfect perception by enforcing a virtual objectivity. The Supreme Lord has therefore kindly revealed His own *darśana*, the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, and His devotees are asking one and all to fully experience it themselves, for then they will attain complete vision of reality through the most objective, descending way of knowledge. The attempts of modern science to attain complete objectivity is surely laudable. Yet ironically, complete objectivity is not achieved by avoiding subjectivity, but by transcending distorted human subjectivity by accepting the vision of the Super-subject or Super-consciousness (Śrī Caitanya), the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*²⁴. It is not that we should blindly accept Śrī Caitanya's vision; rather by understanding it through the scientific practice of *bhakti*, we will naturally be fully convinced of the self-evidence of the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, just as we can be convinced of the self-evident sweetness of honey simply by tasting it.

Hence, sincere philosophers and scientists become devotees and cherish the complete vision of the Lord Himself. The Lord's personal vision or *darśana* is not a man-made doctrine, but the ultimate conception of reality beyond the four faults of material sense perception. Therefore, the term *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*, 'the eternal reality of *acintya-bhedābheda*', is commonly used. As this book is written in a philosophical setting, the term *darśana*, not *tattva*, is used. The term *darśana* allows a very nice understanding of the process of transcending mundane philosophy as described above. As only the Lord is complete, it follows that the only way our own vision can be complete is by accepting His vision or *darśana*. This descending path of complete knowledge is the only alternative to the ascending path of incomplete knowledge. It is the only way to overcome the four faults of material sense perception and attain complete perception through the Lord's own vision. Prof. Sanyal stated in this regard (Sanyal, 1933, Vol II, Chapter 6):



"The relative can never lead, not even as a means, to the Absolute. It involves the fallacy of the major premise. (...) Untruth cannot lead to the Truth. By means of the Truth alone the Truth can be realized. As we do not possess the knowledge of the Truth and have no chance of ever knowing Him with the help of our present limited faculties we are either doomed to the state of eternal ignorance or liable to be enlightened from above by grace. There is no other alternative. (...) It is a matter of willing admission of superior progress on the path of the Eternal, and not a question of enforced servitude. (...) The only real freedom consists in absolute submission to the Truth. (...) The effect of such practical submission to the Absolute is freedom from the limitations of the materialized senses. (...) The act of submission is the key to the spiritual realm. The denial of this is tantamount to ignorance. The refusal to submit to the Truth is the logical equivalent of the slavery of untruth by means of the deluding physical senses."

²⁴ Subjectivity and objectivity are not principles that exclude each other; they are interdependent. Complete objectivity is only achieved by sympathy and empathy with the ultimate Subject. The ultimate Subject is also the ultimate Object, and He creates both countless other subjects and objects.

3.4. Deduction in the Real Sense

The descending path of knowledge is called *avaroha-panthā*. The Sanskrit word *avaroha* is related to *avatāra*, ‘descent’. It is the root-word of the French verb *aval*, to descend. The materialist wants to understand everything by the *āroha-panthā* – by the ascending path of experience, argument and reason – but transcendental matters of the complete reality can only be understood by the *avaroha-panthā*, the process of descending knowledge. Therefore, we should accept the *paramparā* system, the Vedic system of disciplic succession. The best *paramparā* is the one that extends directly from the Supreme Lord (*evam paramparā-prāptam* – Bg 4.2). Accepting a *paramparā* is not sectarian, provided the *paramparā* itself allows access to the actual universal and thus non-sectarian God. Accepting what the Lord Himself says, primarily through a bona fide *paramparā* and revealed non-speculative scriptures, is the practice of the descending path of knowledge.

Within the path of descending knowledge, direct revelation of Veda to the devotee is theoretically possible, but it is (A) often distorted by the four defects of the conditioned soul, (B) extremely difficult to distinguish from the promptings of our own subtle material mind, and most important, (C) it is not advocated as being the most beneficial way by the Supreme Lord Himself, who clearly teaches learning from *paramparā*, also by His own example. The whole point is that the way to achieve the absolute truth, God, is by *bhakti*, by pleasing Him, and He is most pleased if we approach Him through the mercy of His pure devotees, who are very dear to Him, and not merely by our independent efforts (see Chapter 16). Further, the Supreme Lord’s nature (and thus cosmic law) of sympathetic reciprocation limits the realization of truth to the nature of the aspiring devotee’s biased approach, and thus the devotee is incapable of establishing the absolute truth beyond this bias. This can be compared to the measurement problem encountered in quantum mechanics: The behavior of subtle matter depends on the approach of the observer and thus escapes objective grasp.

If the seekers of truth try to exclude bias by avoiding any motive or visualisation, they will have to target the void or indescribable, which they cannot but conceive as an abstract negative formulation of material existence in concepts like *nirvāna*, which are again bias. They thus miss the absolute truth, because, by sympathetic reciprocation, God then manifests a virtual *nirvāna* for them. The conclusion is that the only way to realize the absolute truth is by unconditional submittal to God and His pure devotees. This does not entail blind acceptance of a concrete form of God prior to mature realization; we can pray to God in a universal way to reveal Himself as He truly is, and He will then reveal Himself gradually in reciprocation to our quality of surrender and devotion (see Universal Prayer, Chapter 16). In the beginning, we must therefore not be too much concerned with choosing from different schools but simply surrender to God without prejudice and reservation, and then naturally everything about Him and the proper way to attain Him will be revealed. Sincere devotees, even though in a less essential school, will walk straight into God’s arms, whereas insincere devotees, even if they are in the most essential school, will not recognize God even if He dances right before them. Therefore, it has been said that sincerity is the key to transcendence. Sincerity or thirst for serving and realizing God can be attained from a pure devotee. Hence the necessity of the disciplic succession is again highlighted.

The only alternative to the descending process is the ascending process, whereby one tries to ‘construct’ the absolute truth or God by the limited material senses and reason. But God already is – He is not to be constructed, but to be accepted or welcomed full-heartedly by the practice of *bhakti*. Only by factually and scientifically realizing God will we be able to realize His universal, non-sectarian, and all-reconciling nature. Sometimes *avaroha-panthā* is translated as ‘deduction’, and *aroha-panthā* is translated as ‘induction’ (in philosophical terms). This translation may be adequate for *aroha-panthā*, but for *avaroha-panthā* there must be a further distinction. *avaroha-panthā* may be translated as ‘transcendental deduction’ to avoid mistaking it for material deduction. Material deduction is the deduction of the scientist who has no access to Veda (eternal spiritual truths

revealed by *paramparā*). In comparison to real deduction from Veda, deduction from unauthorized material premises and assumptions can also be called pseudo-deduction, as it is not deduction in the true sense. As material premises, paradigms and assumptions such as, for example, “the earth is a flat disc” are based on earlier speculation and induction from the experiences of the faulty material senses, it can be concluded that:

Deduction from material premises
cannot be called deduction in the true sense.

Deduction is supposed to establish the qualities of the partial, inferior elements from the quality of the superior, complete nature. But if the qualities of the superior, complete nature, i.e. ultimately the qualities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, are unknown to the scientist, he or she can in no way claim to be able to engage in deduction. Therefore, in order to gain true reasoning and reliable deduction, Vedic science stresses primarily the methods of *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*, hearing and repeating the names, qualities, forms and pastimes of the Lord, the adequate source of reasoning and deduction: *śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ* (...), “One who engages in these nine methods [*śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ* etc.] should be understood to be the most learned person, for he has acquired complete knowledge.” – *SB* 7.5.23. The transcendental scientists follows the *avarohapanthā*, and because they deduct directly from Kṛṣṇa, the supermost complete reality, they actually engage in deduction in the true sense, and His deductive conclusions can be accepted as real evidence. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.16.44 mentions that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *pramāṇa-mūlāya*, the basis of all authoritative evidence, and *kavaye sāstra-yonaye*, the author and ultimate source of the revealed scriptures (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.16.44). Veda not only points towards transcendence, but by the execution of Vedic science further enables serious aspirants to attain transcendence, from where only we can see things as they are and start speaking of actual deduction. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda mentioned in this regard that “The Supreme Lord did not ask anybody to confine himself to the shortsighted policy of mere altruism, where mundane relativity proves to be the emperor of the mental and physical empire. He advised right and left, everyone, high and low, not to be sanguine about the temporal acquisitions formed by mundane relativities but to extend their view to the transcendental region wherefrom they can have a comparative estimate and a proper conception of the objects in view.” (Bhaktisiddhānta, 1874-1936, p. 108.)

The common scientists who speculate with faulty senses can be compared to blind gamblers who engage their ‘well-wishing’ friends (the senses) to gamble on their behalf with their money, while the transcendental scientists can be compared to wise investors, who invest their money in reliable trustees (the *paramparā* and non-speculative scriptures). Just as the blind gamblers, forgetting how their last won prize was soon again lost, may sometimes win some money and appear to be successful, the common scientists sometimes fashion a new theory of nature, forgetting that previous theories were soon replaced. As late as 1794, meteorites were still thought to be of volcanic origin. The German physicist and musician Ernst Chladni, who in the said year published a paper in which he proposed that meteorites originate from outer space, was ridiculed for this claim. Sometimes, new discoveries even change complete paradigms of science, such as the paradigm “The earth is a disc, and one can fall down from its edge” was changed into “The earth is a sphere and the center of all planets and the sun”, and today, modern scientists are ‘sure’ that “The earth is a sphere with a pear-like deformation and orbits around the sun.” A few hundred years ago, the scientists laughed about the tribes who did not know that “the earth is a huge plate with oceans and islands, and not just a forest.” Some hundred years later the scientists laughed about the former scientists who proclaimed that the earth is a plate and did not know that the earth is a globe, and so on. Although the pattern of continuously repeated embarrassment is very obvious, most scientists are not giving this pattern much consideration. One may argue that the solution given in this book, the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, could be of the same pattern; yet this is not the case, because the Vedic conclusive philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is not the outcome of faulty speculation, and therefore it has never been embarrassed.

The Vedic conclusion, unlike the so-called ‘progressive’ modern knowledge, is eternally consistent and needs neither change nor addition, only appropriate cultivation. The ever-consistent validity of Veda, in contrast to the inconclusive modern science, is in itself evidence for the authenticity and authority of Veda.

Unlike the ever-consistent Vedic science, speculative science periodically changes its concepts of ‘truth’ into ‘better truths’. The basic logical axiom that ‘truth is one and untruths are many’ makes it clear that the ever-changing paradigms and ‘conclusions’ of modern science are in fact mostly deluding pseudo-truths. “The Vaiṣṇava philosophy has spoken about true wisdom. True wisdom is not the subject to attack from any rival camp like the changeable and fluctuating knowledge of the empiricists; this is the special feature of the Vaiṣṇava philosophy.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 264.) Another example of a failure of a material premise is the medical doctrine of a complete salt-abstinent diet to cure pregnant women from EPH-gestosis, which was applied up to the mid-eighties, when the doctrine suddenly changed back to advising a normal diet and in many cases even a considerable increase of salt intake. Such inpersistent doctrines are the result of unauthorized speculation. Although presented as ‘milestones in progress’, every paradigm shift is in fact an embarrassing proof of the continuous failure of modern science. Just like the gamblers blindly believe the casino owner when told that their loss only indicates forthcoming gain, the people blindly believe the scientists when they say that their change of paradigm is a laudable advancement that brings them closer to truth, although it actually proves the real state of confusion of science. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.5.31 states that, as the blind guided by the blind miss the right path and fall into a ditch, people who put full faith in the deluding material senses accept a similarly deluded person as their leader and fall into a ditch.

The most pathetic aspect of this situation is not that the blind accept another blind as leader but that they follow faithfully from ditch to ditch. Exclusively material life or speculative science is an endless cruise from one embarrassment to the other. Many spiritual scientists or devotees who have faith in the ever unchanging science of God have expressed their astonishment about the faith of the materialists in speculative science, reasoning that it takes much more faith to believe in an obvious failure than in a probable success. Therefore, although the materialists claim to be faithless, their unshakable determination to follow their blind leaders seems to indicate that they ironically have more faith than even many devotees. A sincere scientist will admit that there is no deduction in the real sense without ascertaining the ultimate reality as premise, and will thus accept the *avaroha-panthā*, the scientific path of truly deductive knowledge descending through *paramparā*. Of course, modern science has brought about things that can be useful, such as the X-ray machine or the internet, but modern science is not capable of establishing spiritual reality and overcoming death, and whatever useful things it produces are not truly useful if not used in attaining the complete, transcendental reality. Veda does not condemn material progress, but it establishes that it must be a secondary concern under the guidance of and for the assistance of spiritual progress, the primary human concern. All sincere scientists are praiseworthy, because they are searching for the complete reality, and as such they are at least unknowingly searching for God. If they are genuine, God will gradually reveal Himself to them and they will become devotees. Therefore, this book is not a depreciation of scientists, but rather an ode to the truly sincere scientists. There are only two alternative ways of attaining knowledge to choose from:

<i>avaroha-panthā</i>	<i>aroha-panthā</i>
Descending way of knowledge relying on transcendental deduction and revelation.	Ascending way of knowledge relying on material observation, induction and deduction.
Gives complete knowledge	Excludes spiritual knowledge
Excludes the four faults of material perception	Includes the four faults of material perception
Brings one to the stage of <i>gosvāmī</i> .	Cannot go beyond the stage of <i>godāsa</i> .

3.5. Śabda, Testimony of Experts, is a Superior Source of Evidence



In the previous subchapters, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī’s statement that sensory perception is faulty and inadequate for establishing contact with a reality whose nature is super-sensible (*Ts* 9) has been elaborately explained. Consequently, the question of adequate sources of knowledge arises. Śrī Jīva next establishes that *śabda*²⁵, the testimony of capable and trustworthy experts, is superior to sense perception and inference or induction (*Ss* 9-10). The following example illustrates this. A traveller who feels cold is looking for a fire and sees smoke rising from a mountain top. By means of sense perception and inference the traveller concludes that “there is a fire on that mountain.” The reasoning to prove this hypothesis is “because there is smoke.” The inference of this hypothesis relies on general observances such as “wherever there is smoke there is fire.” Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī then reveals how such inference cannot be accepted as fully reliable. The traveller next meets a local man who descends from the mountains. The local man says: “That smoke is actually coming from a former fire, which has been extinguished by rain. But over on *that* hill, fire can be found.” Following the local man’s *śabda*, or verbal testimony, the traveller arrives at the real fire. This example shows that *śabda* is superior to sense perception and inference.

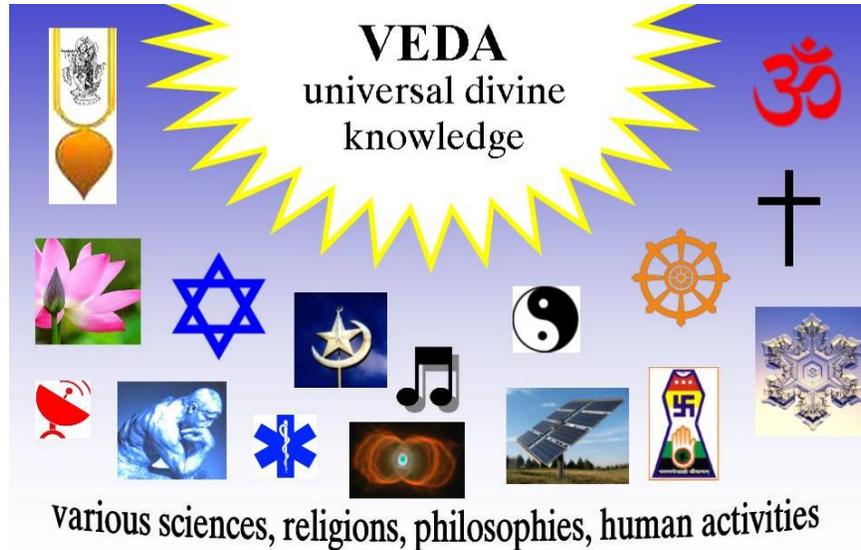
We rely on *śabda* far more than we are aware of. Modern science does not consider this fact a lot. Our basic knowledge comes from the *śabda* of our parents. Another example of *śabda* is the ascertainment of the correct time by relying on a watch attuned to the international standard of Greenwich, like the clock of the Big Ben tower. Hardly anybody rejects the *śabda* of Greenwich and tries to ascertain time by independent means. A person’s identity is taken as real by the evidence of a passport, which relies on a birth certificate granted on the basis of the *śabda* of the parents after birth. The best lawyers give evidence from past judgements of the court and thus establish their cases with *śabda*. When we want to be sure to bake a good cake, we rely on the *śabda* of an expert’s recipe and avoid speculation, just as we don’t like to speculate about orientation when we travel, but prefer to rely on the *śabda* of local people, signposts and maps. When we need to find out the time of arrival of a train, we rely on the *śabda* of the train conductor. Scientists of all fields rely on *śabda* when they take help from conversion tables, maps, dictionaries, books, websites, or when they inquire from experts. Every scientific thesis relies on references – this is *śabda*. By relying on reconfirmed *śabda* of experts, one can avoid mistakes of sensory perception and unnecessary labor by avoiding independent research.

3.6. Veda is the Best Source of Knowledge and Evidence

The next question should be: what is the best testimony of experts or *śabda*? *śabda* is of two types: human testimony and transcendental testimony (*apauruṣeya-śabda*), lit. ‘non-human testimony’. Latter is revealed from transcendence by the descending way of knowledge, either through disciplic succession (orally or through other media) or direct revelation to a pure devotee. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains that *human* testimony of experts, although a good source for material knowledge, is still influenced by the four faults of material sense perception and thus inadequate to inform about

²⁵ *śabda* literally refers to sound, but recorded personal testimony or information of experts is also counted as *śabda*.

complete reality or transcendence. To attain knowledge about transcendence, only *transcendental* testimony or *apauruṣeya-śabda* can be the source of information, because it is the only testimony that is not tainted by the four faults of material sense perception. If we are sincere about realizing the complete reality, which necessitates knowledge of transcendence, then we have no other choice but to search out for sources of transcendental testimony. This is exactly what the sages like Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmi have been doing for thousands of years. Thus, just as we daily accept the testimony of experts in material matters, we will be wise to accept the testimony of realized sages in transcendental concerns. Accepting the testimony of experts in material matters is not an act of naive blind faith but an intelligent strategy conducive to success. Similarly, accepting the testimony and guidance of the transcendental experts is the best policy for the conditioned soul, and it is similarly followed by factual realization of transcendence.



The expert advice of realized sages like Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmi is that we should accept Veda as the best source of *apauruṣeya-śabda*, transcendental knowledge. Before we continue with Śrīla Jīva's further arguments, we should remember, that although the four *Vedas* appear in the Vedic tradition, Veda itself is *universal* transcendental knowledge, and not a phenomena that only occurs in a specific culture, place or sect. Prof. Shrinivasachari mentioned: "The Veda is a body of eternal and objective spiritual truths which are verifiable in personal experience." (Shrinivasachari, 1950, p. 288.) Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda stated in the introduction to the *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*: "The Sanskrit verbal root of *veda* can be interpreted variously, but the purport is finally one. *veda* means knowledge. Any knowledge you accept is *veda*, for the teachings of the *Vedas* are the original knowledge."

Veda literally simply means true or sacred knowledge (Williams). Its verbal root is *vid*, to know. the English words *wisdom*, *wit* and *video* all root in the Sanskrit word *vid* (see Chapter 1.4). Another term for universal Veda is *divya jñānam*, divine knowledge. One may note the direct etymological genesis of 'divine' from *divya* and 'knowledge' from *jñānam* via Greek *gnōthis*. In the spiritual sense, Veda is universal and all-pervading divine knowledge and cristallizes in the heart of sages of all religions and sciences. The basic of all virtuous human attempts is the same, namely upliftment to a higher state of being, ultimately transcendence.



The nectar of omnipresent Veda crystallizes in the heart of a wisdom-thirsty person, just like water that is always present in the air condenses on certain leaves in the form of dew drops, or crystallizes as ice crystals. Just as ice crystals form differently under different circumstances, but show the same essential hexagonal structure, similarly, the various spiritual traditions that crystallize from Veda appear different in reciprocation to circumstances such as mood of worship, culture and locality, but carry the same essential message of Veda of universal upliftment and transcendence. According to the all-encompassing principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, the one Veda appears manifold. Proper knowledge of this universal principle of Veda is essential in order to avoid the misconception that Veda is culturally restricted or sectarian. Veda is super-cultural. For this purpose I have used the universal term ‘Veda’ in the title of this subchapter instead of ‘the Vedas’. The term ‘Veda’ includes the Vedas as well as other manifestation of Veda in other cultures, whereas the term ‘the Vedas’ does not include Veda manifest in other cultures, and thus some could interpret the phrase ‘The Vedas are the best source of knowledge’ as sectarian. When Veda crystallizes, it appears in the garbs of various cultures, such as the Hebrew, Christian, Egyptian or Vedic cultures. It also takes shape as various canons such as the Bible or the four Vedas. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.14.5-8) explains, that (from the one Veda,) the Vedic injunctions manifest in variety to suit the different natures of all different people and leaders of the world, and accordingly, there are different theistic and atheistic philosophies with different traditions and successions. This means that Veda in the most general sense is the archetype knowledge, from which all types of human knowledge manifests, including grossly distorted knowledge. Veda crystallizes in reciprocation to local affinities, and each group of people that follow such a local crystallization will be satisfied with their version of Veda. Some of them will claim that their version is the best or final or even the only version of Veda. This is the scientific explanation of fanaticism and sectarianism. In each culture, only a handful of essentialists recognize the essentially one universal transcendental knowledge, the mother of all cultures, mother Veda. There are many people who theoretically advocate that the essence of all religions is one, but practically it is impossible to reconcile their simultaneous oneness and difference scientifically without knowing the universal principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*. It would therefore be of great global merit if the universal principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* was taught to all people of all cultures. If *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* was taught properly everywhere, there would be a great increase of resolute essentialists and a quantum leap in universal reconciliation.

Let us remember this universal, super-cultural nature of Veda, and that whenever the term ‘Veda’ is used, I refer to this universal Veda, which is manifest in cultural diversity. When I speak of the four Vedas, I systematically use the term ‘the Vedas’. The four Vedas are the *R̥g*, *Sāma*, *Yajur* and *Atharva-Veda*, the most ancient of Vedic literatures. To be correct, it must be mentioned that the Vedas were originally not written down, but remembered and passed on orally. They are therefore called *śruti*, ‘that which is to be heard’ (from a qualified devotee). The Vedas are believed to be eternal. This refers not to their written form but to their form as transcendental sound vibration, *śabda-brahman*. The original Vedic seed vibration is *om*. Vedic tradition explained already thousands of years ago what modern science is now only slowly discovering: manifestation of matter proceeds from subtle sound vibration. Brahmā, the demigod of creation, received the grace of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa for creating the material universe. By contemplation of *om*, the entire cosmic structure was revealed in his heart and manifested as he pronounced the respective sounds. This included the four Vedas, all languages, all the planets and bodies of all creatures, all faculties like art, science, economy, etc. Sometimes modern scientists argue that reliance on Vedic testimony such as Vedic literature is not as scientific as speculative research, but Śrīla Jīva’s establishment of *śabda* as a superior source of knowledge both in material and spiritual

science defeats this claim. Śrī Jīva further establishes (*Ts 10*): *tatas tāni na pramāṇānīty anādi-siddha-sarva-puruṣa-paramparāsu sarva-laukikālukika-jñāna-nidānatvād aprākṛta-vacana-lakṣaṇo veda evāsmākaṁ sarvātīta-sarvāśraya-sarvācintyāścarya-svabhāvaṁ vastu vividiṣatām pramāṇam,*



“In order to give information about reality beyond incomplete material sense perception, about what is materially totally inconceivable, transcendental, and the shelter of everything, material sense perception and material speculation are not suitable means. A transcendental source of *śabda* is needed. For this purpose, the only suitable means is Veda; Veda consists of non-material sound, it is eternally self-manifest, and it is the source of all mundane and spiritual knowledge in all the various schools of thought in human society since time immemorial.”

The common translation of the term *veda* in the above verse is ‘the *Vedas*’; however, I have used the universal term ‘Veda’ for earlier explained reasons. There is no doubt that when Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī wrote ‘*veda*’, he meant ‘the *Vedas*’ as well as ‘Veda’. The Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas advocate the essence of the *Vedas*, which is presented in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, which is best explained by the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, as will be established in the next point by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī.

In the Vedic literature we find instructions for both eternal and temporary occupations, and the instructions for temporary religion or occupation (*naimittika-dharma*, see Chapter 12) are very skillfully linked to the one eternal transcendental religion or occupation, the *sanātana-dharma* of *bhakti*, devotional service. The universal *sanātana-dharma* is the core manifestation of universal Veda and can be found to a smaller or bigger extent in various religions of humanity. When the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas revere the *Vedas* as the best source of knowledge, it must be understood that in doing so they revere the essential core of the *Vedas*, i.e. universal Veda, which is the super-cultural universal transcendental knowledge, everybody’s mother Veda. If seen in this perspective, then the statement ‘The *Vedas* are the best source of knowledge’ cannot be misunderstood to be sectarian or culturally restricted. However, we cannot expect people who are unfamiliar with both Veda and the *Vedas* to understand this subtle point – even many scholars of the *Vedas* are unable to grasp it. However, by properly practicing *bhakti*, the universal character of Veda will be revealed in the heart. Regardless of religion or environment, all those who successfully practice *bhakti* will gradually hear the teachings of mother Veda in everything and thus rise above the sectarian platform.

Before I was attracted to the Vedic culture, specifically the Gauḍīya-Vedānta school of Śrī Caitanya, I carefully explored many different cultures and literatures without bias, and it is my conclusion that Vedic culture and literature offers the most scientific and efficient approach to

universal transcendental knowledge (Veda). However, we should learn Vedic culture very carefully and from a proper teacher, lest we will misunderstand and criticize it, in which case it would be better to peacefully cultivate devotion in another culture. I am well aware that Veda also manifests in cultures that are not considered Vedic. I only advocate Vedic culture and literature because I believe that in the Vedic culture, Veda crystallizes – not exclusively – but most clearly and essentially. With this humble approach we shall now continue to explore Vedic epistemology.

Spiritual *śabda* is called *apauruṣeya-śabda*, literally ‘non-human testimony’, or *śabda-brahma*, transcendental sound originating from the Supreme Lord (*SB* 3.12.48). Veda, *apauruṣeya-śabda* and *śabda-brahma* are different terms of the same phenomena. The *Vedas* are a manifestation of Veda, and not the other way around. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.1.40 mentions: *vedo nārāyaṇaḥ sākṣāt, svayambhūr iti śuśrūma,*

“The *Vedas* are eternally self-manifest and non-different from the Supreme Lord.”

The *Vedas* can be *preserved* by humans, but they are not *conceived* by any human being, and as such they are beyond the four faults of material sense perception. Śrī Caitanya mentioned (*Cc* 1.7.107): *bhrama, pramāda, vipralipsā, karaṇāpāṭava, īśvarera vākye nāhi doṣa ei saba,*

“The four faults of material sense perception, confusion, inattentiveness, cheating and sensory inefficiency do not exist in the transcendental words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

Therefore, and especially because they are spiritual themselves, the *Vedas* are the best standard source of transcendental knowledge, i.e. knowledge of the complete reality. The *śabda-brahma* of Vedic literature enlightens the person who hears it, and therefore the *Vedānta-sūtra* 4.4.22 states *anāvṛtīḥ śabdāt*, “By transcendental sound vibration one becomes liberated from material ignorance and the cycle of birth and death.” (quoted in *SB* 10.87.25, purport.) Being self-manifest, Vedic literature is self-evident and does not rely on any other source of evidence. This self-evident nature of the *Vedas* must not be accepted blindly; it can be scientifically explored by following their instructions and getting the results of actual spiritual realizations (see *Bg* 9.2). It should be understood, that by stating that the *Vedas* are the most suitable source of testimony about the complete reality, material sense perception and inference are not discarded; if they are used in accordance with the *Vedas*, they help us to understand Vedic knowledge and they confirm the supremacy of *śabda-brahma* amongst all evidences, and in this way they are also used in this book.

It may so happen that a group of tourists are searching for the light switch in a pitch-dark corridor of an unknown hotel in order to find the door to the lift that will take them to the rooftop for sight seeing. If there happens to be a wise person amongst them, he will call a staff member who can tell them where the switch is. Unreasonable people, however, will try to find the switch on their own, blindly groping around in the dark at the risk of accidentally activating the fire alarm, getting an electrical shock by touching a cable, or even falling down a staircase. If we compare the ascent to the rooftop to the ascent of knowledge and the staff members to the *śabda-brahma* of self-realized saints and the *Vedas* that can factually lead us to upliftment, the unreasonable members of the group represent those materialists who neglect the guidance of Vedic *śabda-brahma* and proclaim that speculating with the limited material senses is the better way to knowledge. Just as the tourists in the dark corridor suffer due to their speculations, the common scientists and their followers suffer the consequences of their speculation in the darkness of ignorance of true knowledge. This explains why any effort to try to improve life with means other than *śabda-brahma* results in contraproductive reactions, such as, for example, the presently observed increase of physical and mental diseases, environmental pollution, etc. The wise man who consults the staff members represents the wise scientist or seeker of knowledge who consults the *śabda-brahma* of Vedic

science. When the *śabda-brahma*, which is successfully imparted only by a self-realized spiritual master, lightens the dark room of the heart, Veda, or true knowledge, becomes self-evident to the inquisitive wise, just as the nature of the corridor becomes visible and thus self-evident only by the *śabda* of a staff member.

The demigods addressed the Supreme Personality of Godhead as follows: “O Lord, since You are the Supreme Person, the reservoir of unlimited spiritual qualities, the supreme controller, Your unlimited glories are inconceivable to the conditioned souls. Many modern [scientific, philosophical and theological] speculators argue about right and wrong without knowing what is actually right; their judgments are false and inconclusive because they have no authorized evidence with which to gain knowledge of You [the absolute truth]. (...) Furthermore, because of the pollution of their prejudices and obstinate eagerness to arrive at their preassumed speculated conclusion, their theories are incapable of revealing You, who are transcendental to their material separatist conceptions (...).” – *SB* 6.9.36. All experience and knowledge of the scientists, philosophers or theologians who speculate separately from Vedic *śabda-brahma* comes from material sense perception and is thus faulty. The tenth instruction of the *Upadeśāvālī* of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda is: “If we desire to follow an auspicious course in life, then we should disregard the theories of even countless people and hear instructions from a transcendental source.” (Tirtha 8, 2000, p. 100.)

The only alternative to the faulty speculative ascending way of knowledge is the authorized descending way of transcendental knowledge through *śabda-brahma*, which is most clearly revealed in the *Vedas*. Therefore, Śrī Jiva establishes that the best source of complete knowledge are the *Vedas*. One may ask that if the *Vedas* can only be understood by the guidance of self-realized souls, why is Śrī Jiva not establishing self-realized souls as the best source of complete knowledge? The reason of the official superposition of the *Vedas* lies in the fact that the conditioned person cannot properly recognize a self-realized soul without reference to the *Vedas*, which describe the standard of a self-realized spiritual master (see Chapter 16).



Without consulting the *Vedas*, one easily falls victim to an insufficiently qualified teacher or imposter guru who either does not come up to the standard of a spiritual master or does not follow the teachings of the *Vedas* entirely. One who sincerely consults the *Vedas* will be informed that they can only be understood by the help of a self-realized spiritual master and will thus search for a bona fide guide. The *Vedas* can only be approached through Guru, and Guru must be ascertained according to the standards of the *Vedas*, just like the law can only be approached through a lawyer, and the authorized lawyer is approved by the law.

The bona fide spiritual master and the Supreme
Personality of Godhead are both established in the *Vedas*.

God has many forms and expansions that do not contradict each other, but still there is one Supreme Personality of Godhead as the original source. The Supreme Personality of Godhead's

various forms are one in origin and purpose, but different in name, form, attributes and pastimes – this is established by *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* (see Chapters 5.3 & 14.5). Just as we must discriminate between various spiritual masters to be approached, we must discriminate between various forms of God to be approached. Each form of God has His own abode or reality (unless it has no real existence), and the worship of a particular form of God will award the attainment of that particular reality only. It is not that any worship will result in attaining the same reality of existence. If we worship Lord Rāma, we will attain His eternal abode Ayodhyā, if we worship God in the Christian concept we will attain a reality according to that concept, and if we worship Lord Kṛṣṇa, we will attain His eternal abode Goloka Vṛndāvana. Although different forms of God are ultimately one, they are also different according to the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* (see Chapter 5). This necessitates discrimination, and this discrimination is offered in the *Vedas*.

In this connection, in his *Sarva-saṁvādinī*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī mentions the following example (*Ss* 10): Lord Buddha is established as Avatāra or Descent of the Supreme Lord by Vedic literature. However, Vedic literature also mentions that His atheistic teachings were a crafty strategy to bewilder the atheists – not to instruct potential devotees (see Chapter 9.2). By following Buddha’s teachings, which are atheistic and neglect the *Vedas*, we cannot attain God and the eternal reality. Therefore, Vedic literature essentially teaches to honor Lord Buddha as an Avatāra of Lord Kṛṣṇa but to worship only the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Avatārī, the source of all Avatāras (see Chapter 5). In this example it is understood, that it is not sufficient to simply approach even a form of God like Lord Buddha (what to speak of a human person) and simply accept His teachings, but we must in any case take help from the *Vedas* to ascertain if the specific teachings are in line with the ultimate goal of Veda, namely to realize our eternal nature of serving the distinct Supreme Personality of Godhead, ultimately Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Because Vedic literature scientifically establishes which form of God is most worshipable, even Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, who is non-different from the *Vedas* (*Bg* 9.17), teaches to study the *Vedas* under the guidance of a spiritual master by Himself playing the pastime of learning Veda from a Guru to set the example (see Chapter 16). Similarly, Lord Caitanya, who was predicted as the authorized Avatāra of Lord Kṛṣṇa of the present age, played the pastime of hearing Veda from a Guru. Śrī Caitanya said that an Avatāra can only be ascertained by Vedic literature, and true knowledge can only be attained through Vedic literature (*Cc* 2.20.352-353). In the third *sūtra* of the *Vedānta-sūtra*, Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the literary Avatāra of Lord Kṛṣṇa, explains: *śāstra-yonitvāt*, “(The speculations of the logicians are unable to teach us about the Supreme Personality of Godhead) because He may only be known by the revelation of Vedic scriptures.”

One may claim that Vedic literature is not describing factual reality but is merely a tactful invention to support a certain religious system or to ensure social morality and keep up a certain culture, or it is only metaphorical or poetry. Yet there are many ways how we can understand that Vedic literature describes factual reality. Vedic literature includes precise historical descriptions, and there are sites of archeological findings that prove their historicity. Vedic literature is the only literature that very emphatically and scientifically exposes the basic conceptual error of humanity; skeletonism, to misidentify with the material body (see Chapter 2). Based on this fact alone, Vedic literature can be accepted as genuine and outstanding. Vedic literature also offers various predictions that have been proven correct thousands of years after their statement, such as the prediction of the advent of Lord Caitanya (see Chapter 6.1) or Lord Buddha (see Chapter 9.2). Prediction is also accepted as important evidence in modern science: the Cambridge philosopher and theologian William Whewell who coined the terms ‘scientist’ and ‘physicist’, referred to the three tests of hypotheses as being (1) the prediction of phenomena of the same kind as those which the hypothesis was invented to explain, (2) the prediction of facts of a different and novel kind (the consilience of inductions), and (3) the tendency to simplicity and unity.

Besides prediction, Vedic literature also reveals ways to simplicity and unity. This book offers evidence how the essential Vedic philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is able to explain and harmonize all various elements in the cosmic manifestation, thus granting unsurpassed simplicity and unity. Such detailed explanation and universal harmonization as given by Vedic science cannot be found in other sciences and establishes Vedic science not only as genuine but also as excellent. Last but not least, the science of transcendence offered in Vedic literature is repeatable by any sincere student. Anybody who follows the Vedic process properly will achieve the result of factual self- and God-realization, leaving not the slightest doubt about the genuineness of Vedic science and its literature. The official superposition of the *Vedas* should be understood in the collective light of all the various reasons given in this subchapter. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.20.4 states:

*pitṛ-deva-manuṣyānām, vedas cakṣus tavesvara
śreyas tv anupalabdhe 'rthe, sādhya-sādhanayor api*

“The superior and higher plane of reality that is beyond the comprehension of the material senses can only be understood by consulting the *Vedas*, which are the appropriate transcendental eyes and best evidence given by the Supreme Lord to the forefather, demigods and human beings for seeing the transcendental reality and for ascertaining the best temporary benefits of human life, as well as the actual eternal goal of human life and the means to attain the same.”

3.7. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the Best Source of Veda & the Best Means of Evidence



The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is spoken by Śukadeva Gosvāmī, whom all different sages accepted as authority

Śrī Jīva next explains the best approach to Vedic knowledge: The *Vedas* themselves are not directly accessible because they are so vast that it is impossible to study them in one lifetime in present times. Their meaning is difficult to construe, and even sages who comment on them disagree among one another. *śabda-brahma su-durbodham, prāṇendriya-mano-mayam, ananta-pāram gambhīram, durvigāhyam samudra-vat*, “The transcendental sound of the *Vedas* is very difficult to comprehend and manifests on different levels within the *prāṇa* (vital air), senses and mind. This Vedic sound is unlimited, very deep and unfathomable, just like the ocean.” – *SB* 11.21.36. Therefore, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains that the wisest solution is to consider the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*, which are substantially nondifferent from the *Vedas* and who are conclusive in determining their actual meaning (*Ts* 12.1). This is stated in the *Manu-Saṁhitā*: *itihāsa-purāṇābhyām vedam samupabṛṁhayet*,

“One should complete one’s understanding of the *Vedas* with the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*.”

The *Purāṇas* are also called *pañcamo veda*, the fifth *Veda* (*SB* 1.4.20). Yet also in the *Purāṇas* we find seemingly incongruent topics that need to be reconciled by another authority. The *Vedānta-sūtra* of Śrī Vyāsa has this authority, but it contains very esoteric aphorisms which are differently interpreted by different sages (*Ts* 18.2). Śrī Jīva concludes:

The best source of knowledge or means of evidence is the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* of Śrī Vyāsa, because it fits the definition of a *Purāṇa*, has the authority of super-sensible sound, contains the essential ideas of all the *Vedas*, *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*, is faithful to the *Vedānta-sūtra*, and is available in full on earth (*Ts* 18.3).

The setting of the recitation of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is very instructive. King Parikṣit lived only two generations after Lord Kṛṣṇa, when the bad qualities of the age of Kali slowly began to manifest. Under some unfavorable circumstances, the king was cursed to die within seven days. The king humbly accepted it as the Lord's will. He renounced his great empire and approached the Vedic sages in simple clothing. He inquired from them as to what would be the best conduct for someone who is sure to meet death soon. King Parikṣit was an excellent Vedic scientist due to his high quality of proper examination and was therefore called Parikṣit, meaning 'expert examiner'. In the assembly were many sages and philosophers from different schools of thought. They discussed various ways to best prepare for death but could not come to a conclusion. Suddenly Śukadeva Gosvāmī appeared on the scene. He was a Paramahansa, a perfected liberated soul beyond all stages of sainthood and regulations. He was only sixteen years old and wandering about naked without any concern; however, seeing his radiant spiritual effulgence, all the saints, even the most senior ones, at once got up and received him respectfully. Two things are noteworthy here: (A) the sages of different traditions were all beyond sectarianism; they were ready to accept the truth from *any* pure source – even from a saint in the body of a boy, wearing no clothes – and were thus able to learn from Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and (B) the teachings of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as well as the speaker, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, were both completely transcendental and beyond sectarianism, and they were thus well received by sages of all kinds of traditions. As an answer to the questions of King Parikṣit, Śukadeva Gosvāmī spoke the famous *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (see above image). He had earlier heard it from his father Śrīla Vedavyāsa, the literary incarnation of the Supreme Lord.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is revered as holy scripture by millions of people and saints. "The essence of the vast *Vedas* is summarised and compiled in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, making this book the epitome of all evidences." (Bhaktivinoda 1, 1893, Chapter 13.) The *Garuḍa Purāṇa* says, "The meaning of the *Vedānta-sūtra* is present in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The full purport of the *Mahābhārata* is also there. The commentary of the *Brahma-gāyatrī* is also there and fully expanded with all Vedic knowledge. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the supreme *Purāṇa*, and it was conceived by the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His Avatāra as Vyāsadeva." In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, Viṣṇu-khaṇḍa 5.16.31, it is mentioned: *yaḥ paṭhet prasyato nityam ślokaṁ bhāgavatam mune aṣṭādaśa-purāṇānām phalam prāpnoti mānavah*, "Any human being who daily reads with devotion even one verse of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, O sage, will obtain the benefits of studying all eighteen *Purāṇas*." *SB* 12.4.42 states that the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is *samhitām veda-sammitām*, "A transcendental anthology equal in stature to the four *Vedas*." Moreover it is mentioned (*SB* 1.1.3, 1.1.41):

nigama-kalpa-taror galitam phalam

"Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the ripened fruit
of the wish-fulfilling tree of Vedic knowledge."

sarva-vedetihāsānām, saram saram samuddhrtam,
"Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the extracted cream of the cream –
the final essence of all Vedic literature and Vedic histories."

The German author Walther Eidlitz, who traveled to many places in India, wrote: “In numberless Indian houses one can find this book. In many houses the *Bhāgavatam* is the only book. It is a life book, in which people read daily, a ‘Lebensbrot’, a bread of life.” (Eidlitz, 1951, p. 72.) Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had special love for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. When He was still a baby, His relatives conducted the name giving ceremony and placed paddy, books, roasted paddy, money, gold, and silver in front of Him to test His inclinations. Śrī Caitanya at once picked the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from the books and embraced it (*Cb* 1.4.41-55). Thus He established the supremacy of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and disclosed His future pastimes of preaching devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Throughout His earthly presence, Śrī Caitanya relished *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the association of His devotees. He especially took pleasure in hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from Gadādhara Paṇḍita, the Descent of Rādhārāṇī, the topmost Devotee. Śrī Caitanya explained: *kṛṣṇa-tulya bhāgavata – vibhu, sarvāśraya*, “*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is as great as Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord and shelter of everything.” (*Cc* 2.24.318.) *cāri-veda-upaniṣade yata kichu haya, tāra artha lañā vyāsa karilā sañcaya*, “Vyāsadeva collected whatever Vedic conclusions were in the four *Vedas* and 108 *Upaniṣads* and placed them in the aphorisms of the *Vedānta-sūtra*.” (*Cc* 2.25.98.) *yei sūtre yei ṛk-viṣaya-vacana, bhāgavate sei ṛk śloke nibandhana*, “In the *Vedānta-sūtra*, the purport of all Vedic knowledge is explained, and in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the same purport has been explained.” (*Cc* 2.25.99.) *ataeva bhāgavata-sūtrera ‘artha’-rūpa, nija-kṛta sūtrera nija-‘bhāṣya’-svarūpa*, “*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* gives the actual meaning of the *Vedānta-sūtra*. The author of the *Vedānta-sūtra* is Vyāsadeva, and he himself has explained those aphorisms in the form of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.” (*Cc* 2.25.142.) *ataeva bhāgavata karaha vicāra, ihā haite pābe sūtra-srutira artha-sāra*, “Study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* very scrutinizingly. Then you will understand the actual meaning of the *Vedānta-sūtra*.” (*Cc* 2.25.153.) Some people find it improper when the school of *bhakti* established in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is presented as Vedic. However, considering that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is Vyāsadeva’s essential presentation of *Vedānta*, which is accepted as Vedic, it is very reasonable to call the teachings of the *Bhāgavatam* Vedic, and to call the science of *bhakti* of the Vaiṣṇavas established in the *Bhāgavatam* Vedic science. Śrī Caitanya further established:

*kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-svarūpa śrī-bhāgavata
tāte veda-śāstra haite parama mahattva*

“*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the very embodiment of relish of loving service to Kṛṣṇa.
Therefore, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is above all other Vedic literatures.” (*Cc* 2.25.150.)

The last quoted verse is essential. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* stresses exclusively the foremost practice of Veda, *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Most Vedic literatures do not stress *bhakti* and its goal, *prema-bhakti*, and concentrate on other indirect approaches to truth like *karma* (fruitive activities partially offered to the Lord) and *jñāna* (knowledge aimed at *mukti*, liberation). This is because, in the indirect approach, the *jīvas* are given a chance to live out their separatist desires while indirectly progressing towards transcendence, just like a child takes medicine if he is promised a candy (see *SB* 11.3.44, 11.21.23). Yet even if they achieve *mukti*, they are usually again bound: “My dear lotus-eyed Lord, persons who are very proud of becoming one with the Brahman effulgence and thereby consider that they have become liberated are factually in a contaminated consciousness on account of the absence of devotional service unto You. Such persons may rise to a high level of spiritual understanding but on account of the lack of *bhakti*, they generally fall down again into material contamination.” – *SB* 10.2.32. There are different types of *mukti*. If there is no distinction made, *mukti* refers to the most popular and here mentioned liberation from material dualities by merging into the impersonal Brahman (see Chapter 9.5). Yet as the above verse establishes, those who aspire to merge into Brahman are again bound, even if they remain in Brahman for a time which seems to be almost eternal. This is because the *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal inherent nature of the soul is to serve the Lord in a personal individual form

(Cc 2.20.108-109), not impersonal *mukti*. Only by engaging in the *sanātana-dharma* of *bhakti* can our material bondage be overcome permanently, and thus pure *bhakti* is real liberation. Only from the spiritual abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa is there no return to material bondage (Bg 8.16), and Lord Kṛṣṇa can only be attained by *bhakti* (Bg 18.55).

“Śrī Caitanya proved by His deeds that the highest form of service is to be found in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, that its inner meaning had not been properly understood up to His time by anybody, and that it offers what all the scriptures have been endeavouring from eternity unsuccessfully to express.”
(Sanyal, 1933, Vol I, Chapter 1.)

For all above reasons, only that literature which stresses exclusively *bhakti* can be superior, but in order to comply with the inclinations of less advanced people with predominating material tendencies, most Vedic literatures offer a mixture of religious processes and do not clearly point out the superiority of *bhakti*. Yet for the spiritually mature people, there needs to be an essential scripture that rejects all inessential processes, which are also called cheating religious activities. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* possesses this quality:

*dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām
vedyaṁ vāstavam atra vastu śivadam tāpa-trayonmūlanam
śrīmad-bhāgavate mahā-muni-kṛte kiṁ vā parair īśvaraḥ
sadyo hr̥dy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tat-kṣaṇāt*

“Completely rejecting all cheating religious activities which are materially motivated, this *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* propounds the highest truth, which is understandable by those devotees who are fully pure in heart. The highest truth is reality distinguished from illusion for the welfare of all. Such truth uproots the threefold miseries. This beautiful *Bhāgavatam*, compiled by the great sage Vyāsadeva, is sufficient in itself for God realization.” – *SB* 1.1.2.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* advocates the *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal nature and religion of the soul, i.e. *bhakti*, while it rejects all other approaches to the truth as cheating religions. This means that unless *dharma* teaches pure *bhakti* it cannot bring us to the eternal realm and is to be seen as cheating *dharma*. The reason why cheating *dharma* is found throughout Vedic literature is as follows. Pure *bhakti* must be practiced unconditionally and voluntarily – yet conditioned souls are mostly averse to *bhakti*. Therefore, Vedic literature offers them ways of life which can increase material life’s qualities without practicing pure *bhakti*, for example by worshiping certain demigods for economical benefits. Nevertheless, for those who are serious about attaining the Lord, the Lord Himself gives the Vedic conclusion of *bhakti* throughout all Vedic literatures and also warns of the cheating *dharma* contained in the *Vedas*, for example in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, where Lord Kṛṣṇa says: *yām imām puṣpītām vācam, pravadyanty avipaścitaḥ* (...), “Men of small knowledge are very much attached to the flowery words of the *Vedas*, which recommend various fruitive activities for elevation to heavenly planets, resultant good birth, power, and so forth (...).” – *Bg* 2.42-43. *trai-guṇya-viṣayā vedā, nistrai-guṇyo bhavārjuna, nirdvandvo nitya-sattva-stho, niryoga-kṣema ātmavān*, “The *Vedas* deal mainly with the subject of the three modes of material nature. O Arjuna, become transcendental to these three modes. Be free from all dualities and from all anxieties for gain and safety, and be established in the self.” – *Bg* 2.45. *yāvān artha udapāne, sarvataḥ samplutodake, tāvān sarveṣu vedeṣu, brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ*, “All purposes served by a small well can at once be served by a great reservoir of water. Similarly, all the purposes of the *Vedas* can be served to one who knows the purpose behind them.” – *Bg* 2.46. (...) *vedaiḥ ca sarvair aham eva vedyo, vedānta-kṛd veda-vid eva cāham*,

“(…) By all the *Vedas*, I am to be known. Indeed, I am the compiler of *Vedānta*, and I am the knower of the *Vedas*.” – *Bg* 15.15.

*bhaktiyā mām abhijānāti, yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ
tato mām tattvato jñātvā, viśate tad-anantaram*

“One can understand Me as I am, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, only by *bhakti*, devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of Me by such devotion, one can enter into the kingdom of God.” – *Bg* 18.55.

*sarva-dharmān parityajya, mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja
aham tvām sarva-pāpebhyo, mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

“Abandon all varieties of religion [cheating *dharma*] and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.” – *Bg* 18.66.

In these verses the serious aspirant for transcendental reality is clearly advised to transcend the flowery words of the *Vedas* that also contain cheating *dharma* and take to the actual purpose of the *Vedas*, namely to know, serve and surrender to the Lord completely and thus becoming eligible to factually enter the transcendental reality.

Although Kṛṣṇa advises to give up cheating *dharma*,
He advocates the *sanātana-dharma*, which is *bhakti*,
the eternal religion or inherent nature of the soul.

This distinction is very important, and if it is not done, the actual goal of *dharma* cannot be understood. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.13.11-12 states: *ādi-madhyāvasāneṣu, vairāgyākhyāna-saṁyutam, hari-līlā-kathā-vrātā-mṛtānandita-sat-suram, sarva-vedānta-sāraṁ yad, brahmātmaikatva-lakṣaṇam, vastv advitīyaṁ tan-niṣṭhaṁ, kaivalyaika-prayojanam,*

“From beginning to end, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is full of narrations that encourage renunciation of non-eternal activities, as well as nectarean accounts of Lord Hari’s transcendental pastimes, which give devotional ecstasy to the saintly devotees and demigods. This *Bhāgavatam* is the essence of all *Vedānta* philosophy because its subject matter is the Absolute Truth, Brahman, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is in eternal harmony with the spirit souls, and who is the ultimate reality, one without a second. The goal of this literature is exclusive devotional service unto that Supreme Truth.”

One may ask that if most conditioned souls are averse to *bhakti*, and *bhakti* must be practiced voluntarily – how can they ever overcome this gap? This is also answered in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: *satām prasāṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido, bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ, taj-joṣaṇād āśv apavarga-vartmani, śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati*, “When Kṛṣṇa conscious topics, which are both very potent and pleasing to the ears and heart, are heard and discussed in the association of saints, then faith in the Supreme Lord gradually increases, along with attraction and devotion [*bhakti*] to Him.” – *SB* 3.25.25. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura explains: “The *Vedas* are a wish-fulfilling desire tree and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the deliciously ripened fruit of this desire tree. To savour this nectar is impossible in the company of those who do not have any actual taste for it. In fact, one becomes an offender if one tries to do so. The sincere aspirant must find a pure devotee – one who is imbued with *rasa* and thirsty for hearing Kṛṣṇa’s sublime pastimes – and in his association relish the succulent sweetness of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.” (*Jaiva-dharma* 20.) One cannot become the Lord’s devotee without taking shelter of a pure devotee and thus attain his devotional qualities (*SB* 7.5.32), and therefore *SB* 12.10.7 states: *ayaṁ hi paramo lābho, nṛṇāṁ*

sādhu-samāgamah, “Association with saintly devotees is man’s highest achievement.” Śrī Caitanya mentioned that “Unless one is favored by a pure devotee, one cannot attain the platform of devotional service, *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. To say nothing of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, one cannot even be relieved from the bondage of material existence.” “The verdict of all revealed scriptures is that by even a moment’s association with a pure devotee, one can attain all success.” “The root cause of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa is association with advanced devotees. And when one’s love for Kṛṣṇa awakens, the association with devotees becomes the chief element in one’s devotional service.” – *Cc* 2.22.51, 54 & 83.

Although *bhakti* is mentioned in many Vedic literatures, most of them do not reveal it to be the only path to complete transcendence. Therefore, although they *contain* the essence, they are classified as cheating *dharma*, because they do not point out and exclusively promote the essence as the *bhāgavata-dharma* does. Although in many Vedic traditions the four *Vedas* are considered the highest authority, the *Upaniṣads*, which are explanations of the *Vedas*, declare that the four *Vedas* belong to *aparā-vidyā*, inferior material knowledge: *dve vidye veditavya iti, ha sma yad brahma-vido vadanti—parā caivāparā ca. tatrāparā ṛg-vedo yajur-vedaḥ sāma-vedo ‘tharva-vedaḥ śikṣā kalpo vyākaraṇam niruktaṁ chando jyotiṣam iti, atha parā yayā tad akṣaram adhigamyate*, “There are two kinds of educational systems. One deals with transcendental knowledge, *parā-vidyā*, and the other with material knowledge, *aparā-vidyā*. All the *Vedas*—the *Ṛg Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sāma Veda* and *Atharva Veda*, along with their corollaries, known as *śikṣā*, *kalpa*, *vyākaraṇa*, *nirukta*, *chanda* and *jyotiṣa*—belong to the inferior system of material knowledge, *aparā-vidyā*²⁶. By *parā-vidyā* one can understand the *akṣara*—Brahman or the Absolute Truth.” – *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.1.4–5. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī commented on this verse as follows (*Cc* 2.19.17, purport): “As far as Vedic literature is concerned, the *Vedānta-sūtra* is accepted as the *parā-vidyā*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is an explanation of that *parā-vidyā*. Those who aspire for liberation (*mukti* or *mokṣa*) and introduce themselves as *vaidāntika* are also equal to those groups aspiring to improve religion [religion with mundane assets] (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*) and sense gratification (*kāma*). *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa* are called *catur-varga*. They are all within the system of inferior, material knowledge. Any literature giving information about the spiritual world, spiritual life, spiritual identity and the spirit soul is called *parā-vidyā*.

“*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* does not have anything to do with the materialistic way of life; it gives transcendental information to educate people in the superior system of *parā-vidyā*.

“Sanātana Gosvāmī was engaged in discussing the *bhāgavata-vidyā*, which means he discussed transcendental superior knowledge. Those who are *karmīs*, *jñānīs* or *yogīs* are not actually fit to discuss *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Only Vaiṣṇavas, or pure devotees, are fit to discuss that literature. As stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* itself (12.13.18): ‘Although *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is counted among the *Purāṇas*, it is called the spotless *Purāṇa*.’ (...) *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is Śrīla Vyāsadeva’s last, mature contribution, and one should read and hear it in an assembly of realized souls while engaging in devotional service. At such a time one can be liberated from all material bondage. This was the course taken by Sanātana Gosvāmī, who retired from government service [he was a royal finance minister] to study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with learned scholars.” [End of purport.]

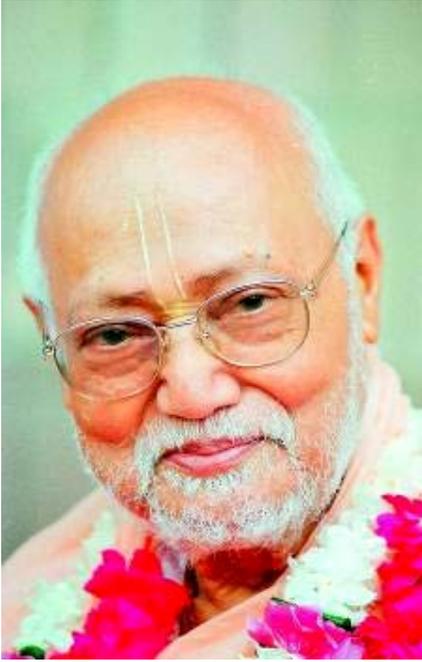
The following is an excerpt from a sermon of my spiritual master, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja, about why and how Śrīla Vedavyāsa conceived the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

²⁶ This means that material motives are prevailing in the four *Vedas*, not that there is complete lack of spiritual notions.

“The only way for living beings to live together peacefully is to develop loving relationships with other living beings, and this is only possible if they know their real identity. Who is the living entity? We should know the answer to this question. As long as we are unaware of this knowledge, what to speak of mutual love for living beings, we will not even be able to understand the definition of *dharma*, human duty. To teach these things, Śrīla Vedavyāsa, who classified the *Vedas*, wrote the *Purāṇas*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhagavad-gītā*, and propagated religion through these scriptures; but in spite of this, he could not attain peace. Then he went to Badarikāśrāma and remembered his Guru, Śrī Nārada Gosvāmī. Nārada Gosvāmī appeared before him and asked about his well-being. Seeing his Guru appear before him all of a sudden, he paid obeisances and said, ‘You know how much I have done for the welfare of the living beings – to give them happiness – but in spite of all this, I am not feeling peace in my mind. Why is this so?’

“Nārada asked, ‘What have you done for giving happiness to the living beings?’ Vedavyāsa said, ‘People of this world always want material enjoyment. They consider happiness to be in the fulfilment of their worldly desires; therefore, I have compiled the *kāma-sāstras* by which their worldly desires can be fulfilled as quickly as possible. People in this world aspire for money so I have compiled the *artha-sāstras*. Apart from this, people of this world want to go to heavenly planets after leaving the body, so I have compiled the *dharma-sāstras* for them. I have endeavoured my best to make human beings achieve whatever they desire. Why am I still not feeling happiness?’ After hearing all this, Nārada Gosvāmī chastized Vedavyāsa as follows: *jugupsitaṁ dharma-kṛte ’nuśāsataḥ, svabhāva-raktasya mahān vyatikramah, yad-vākyato dharma itūtarah sthito, na manyate tasya nivāraṇam janah*, ‘you have done a bad thing because the religion that you have established is unfair. ‘Living beings have a natural propensity towards *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*; this is a kind of disease. By compiling these scriptures, you have increased their disease. By increasing their disease, you have increased their distress and, in return, you are feeling distressed.’ (SB 1.5.15). Then Vedavyāsa said, ‘My lord, I have facilitated *mukti*, impersonal liberation, for the well-being of the living entities.’ Nārada Gosvāmī said, ‘This is all the more devastating, since by giving liberation to the living beings, you have made them forever bereft of the bliss of love of God. By providing them the means to attain liberation, you have only offered them the means to escape from sorrow. You have not provided them happiness; how then can you get happiness?’

“(…) Within this body there is a conscious, cognizant entity by whose presence I am ‘I’ and by whose absence I am ‘not-I.’ That is my actual identity, and it is *sac-cid-ānanda*, meaning I am eternally existing (*sat*), cognizant (*cit*), and blissful (*ānanda*). That entity which is always fully cognizant and blissful is called *ātmā* (soul) in the scriptures. That *ātmā* is not destroyed even when the body is destroyed, as said in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.20): *na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin, nāyam bhūtā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ, ajo nityaḥ śāśvato ’yam purāṇo, na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*. Therefore, *ātmā* requires *ātmā*. That is why Nārada says to Vedavyāsa, ‘The instructions provided by you for *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, according to the desires of the living beings, is about material, perishable objects. By perishable objects living beings will only get sorrow. Indirectly you have given only sorrow to the living beings. That is why you are getting sorrow in return.’ If *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* etc., are sources of misery, what is happiness? The scriptures say that happiness is personified in Kṛṣṇa. As long as you do not glorify Kṛṣṇa, whom the *Gītā* speaks of as the cause of Absolute Brahman; whom Brahṁā calls the Lord of all lords and cause of all causes; from whose marginal potency all living beings have emanated, you, this world and the living entities cannot become happy. Bliss, *ānanda*, has personality. Consciousness has personality. As the atomic conscious being (*jīva*) is infinitesimally blissful, similarly, the infinite Lord is infinitely blissful. Therefore, for atomic *jīvas* to achieve supreme bliss, they have to sing the glories of the infinite conscious entity, Kṛṣṇa. The scriptures say, *yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante yena, jātāni jīvanti yat prayanty abhisam-viśanti tad vijijñāsasva tad brahma*. (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 3.1.1.) This means that the entire universe has emanated from the Lord, is maintained by the Lord and will merge back into Him.



“Suppose my body is a person. A large object, a hand, has come out from this body, and from the hand, one small object, a finger, has come out. Now where has the hand come out from? *From* the body. Where is the hand? *In* the body. How is the hand? Maintained *by* the body. Then what is its duty? To live for the body. In other words, when the hand exists for the body, it remains happy. When it does not exist for the body, it cannot be happy. For example, assume the hand is a conscious entity. If it says that it will not have any relationship with the body and not cooperate with it, and if this hand, becoming separated from my body, befriends all of you people or all the doctors of Chandigarh or of the world, can it remain happy? No! Since this hand is *from* the body, *in* the body and maintained *by* the body, its sole duty is to live for the body. Similarly, living beings have emanated from the Lord, they are maintained by the Lord and their final destination is the Lord only. Therefore, the sole duty of the living entities is to exist for the Lord – only then can they remain happy, otherwise not. In the Lord’s satisfaction lies the living beings’ satisfaction.

“Nārada said further, ‘You have not sung the glories of the supremely blissful Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the cause of all causes. That is why you are unhappy.’ In reply to this, Vedavyāsa said, ‘My lord, I have sung the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Mahābhārata*.’ Nārada said, ‘That glorification will not serve the purpose, since you have done for the purpose of attaining liberation. The objective of glorification of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Mahābhārata* is liberation. Whatever is the objective at the time of *bhajana*, one’s mind will go there. For example, if somebody worships the Lord for money, then at the time of worship, his mind will go towards money. Worship in this state would be called the worship of money and not of the Lord. Suppose that somebody is infected with some disease and he is worshipping the Lord to get relief from that disease. This would then be called the worship of health and not of the Lord. Similarly, worshipping the Lord for liberation would divert the mind towards liberation and that would be called worship of liberation and not of the Lord.’

“Worship of the Lord means worshipping Him for His affection,
i.e., worshipping the Lord only for the Lord. Only this kind of worship
will lead to the association of the Lord and association of bliss. The Lord will
become happy, and through the happiness of the Lord, everybody will become happy.

“Now the question arises: how to worship the Lord? With the intention of answering this question, Nārada Gosvāmī recited four important *ślokas* [verses] to Vedavyāsa, which are known as the *catuḥ-śloki-bhāgavata*. Adhering to these *ślokas*, Vedavyāsa compiled the 18,000 *ślokas* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and achieved absolute peace. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu also propagated this *bhāgavata-dharma*. He taught that by adhering to this *bhāgavata-dharma*, living beings would develop pure love of Godhead and would see their eternal relationship with the Lord and other living entities.” (Tīrtha, 2005, pp. 5-11.) At this point we have reached the conclusion of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the best source of knowledge and evidence to understand the complete reality, both spiritual and material. We can now understand why Vedic literature is not blindly accepted as evidence, but on the basis of profound scientific exploration in accordance with Vedic epistemology, which goes beyond the reach of material sense perception and physical science. *anarthopāśamaṁ sākṣād, bhakti-yogam adhokṣaje, lokasyājānato vidvāṁś, cakre sātva-saṁhitām,*

“The material miseries of the living entity, which are superfluous to him, can be directly mitigated by the linking process of devotional service. But the mass of people do not know this, and therefore the learned Vyāsadeva compiled this Vedic literature, which is in relation to the Supreme Truth.” – *SB* 1.7.6.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is like a drugstore to cure material miseries. Just like we need the help of an expert doctor to benefit from a drugstore, we need the help of a self-realized pure devotee to benefit from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. People often overstep the advice of a doctor and speculate, and thus cannot get cured properly. Similarly, thousands of people read the holy scriptures daily, but fail to recognize the necessity of accepting direct guidance from saints, despite all scriptures establishing it. This is in itself proof that their independent reading is incomplete.

The word *bhāgavata* means both *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the pure devotee, and thus it is enjoined that we should serve both of them, not only the book.

“Lord Caitanya’s private secretary Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī advised all intending visitors who came to see the Lord at Purī to make a study of the *Bhāgavatam* from the person *Bhāgavatam*. The person *Bhāgavatam* is the self-realized bona fide spiritual master through whom only one can understand the lessons of *Bhāgavatam* in order to receive the desired result.” – *SB* 1.3.40, purport by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. It is not sufficient to study the scriptures oneself or hear them from a speaker who has material motives. Service and surrender to the Lord and His pure devotee are more essential, because the Lord is the goal of scripture and the pure devotee has realized both the scripture and the Lord. Therefore, even if we cannot access scripture, if we are devoted to both the Lord and His pure devotee, the imports of the scripture will be revealed to us: *yasya deve parā bhaktir, yathā deve tathā gurau, tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ, prakāsante mahātmanah*, “Only unto those great souls who engage in pure devotion to both the Lord and the bona fide spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.” – *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.23. We must be very cautious to hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* discourses from pure devotees, or more precisely “of liberated Paramahansa Vaiṣṇavas.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 187.) Lord Caitanya personally gave the best example of hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from the Paramahansa Vaiṣṇava Gadādhara Paṇḍita, who is none other than the Descent of Rādhārāṇī, the topmost Devotee.

In accordance with the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas revere the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the standard source of transcendental knowledge. However, it must be said that they hold the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and similar scriptures like the *Caitanya-bhāgavata* on an equal footing because it is essential to understand the personality and teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas compare the *Bhagavad-gītā* to elementary, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to graduate, and the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* to post-graduate education. This precious trilogy of transcendental knowledge is also the most quoted source of evidence in this book. It is not the main effort of this book to establish the outstanding value of Vedic scriptures, as many people will take this as an act of faith. Rather, by disclosing how the essence of the Vedic scriptures, the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, is a most complete and universal philosophy, their authenticity shall become evident according to the principle of judging a tree by its fruits.



4. Reasons for the Decline of Vedic Science



This chapter explains how Vedic science has declined or been covered after the Vedic age. In Vedic literature it is reported that during Vedic times (before 3100 BC, prior to the age of Kali), Vedic science was practiced successfully all over the planet since thousands of years. Humanity was thus united in a common purpose and lived in great spiritual prosperity. Children were taught the Vedic science of self- and God-realization from the beginning of their lives and those who were naturally inclined to *bhakti* were given chance to dedicate their full lives for that purpose. The worship was done with grandeur. In some temples, there was such a great flow of offered ghee (clarified butter) from the altars that they built canals to lead it away. If we visit ancient Vedic temples like the ones in Tanjore or Trichy, we can still find these canals. India is well known for her vast spiritual and cultural heritage, and recently, people also have become aware of the scientific riches of Vedic culture, for example her contributions to mathematics such as the introduction of the system of binary numbers, the decimal system and the concepts of zero and infinity. The Europeans were so eager to find a better route of trade to India that Columbus risked his life to find a shortcut by sailing around the other side of the globe. America was only discovered as a side effect of this intention. When Columbus landed in America in 1492, he thought he was in India, and that the native people were Indians. It is for this reason that the native people are still known as ‘Indians’. Marco Polo wrote about India: “The part of India known as Malabar was the richest and noblest country in the world.” (Polo, 1953, p. 203.) We can understand from historic evidence, that these riches are only remains of an even greater manifestation of the spiritual, cultural, and scientific riches of the original Vedic culture.

As predicted in Vedic literature, after the passing of Lord Kṛṣṇa to the spiritual world around 3100 BC, the age of Kali began, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the last and most degraded of the four ages. As the age of Kali progresses, Veda is lost more and more. This is a still ongoing process. My spiritual master, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja, remembers²⁷, how during his youth in the early nineteen forties, the people in India were still engaged in so many spiritual activities throughout the entire day, much more than today. Commonly, people would daily read and hear Vedic literatures such as the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Mahābhārata* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and chant the Lord’s holy name under the sacred Tulasī tree. The cinema was not a place for sense enjoyment, but people would meet there and enact the Lord’s pastimes, showing great talent. But nowadays, there is an aversion to devotion, and most of the people are after hedonism, thinking that material enjoyment is the chief good [end of transcription].

The German author Walter Eidlitz gives account of his travels in India in the mid-forties before the second world war: “Those movies played in fully occupied cinemas in India (...) are stories about the power and love of the almighty Godhead.” Eidlitz remembers a scene that he witnessed, in which the movie showed a saint chanting the Lord’s name Rāma in great jubilation, and all people on the street joined in and blissfully sang: “Rāma, Rāma!” Eidlitz writes: “But not only the people on the screen sang, but also almost all spectators in the cinema jumped up

²⁷ For example as told in his sermon on January 23rd 2005 in Kolkata.

enthusiastically and sang so loudly, that I thought, the roof will burst: ‘Rāma, Rāma, Rāma!’” (Eidlitz, 1951, p. 56.) Eidlitz writes about the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: “In numberless Indian houses one can find this book. In many houses the *Bhāgavatam* is the only book. It is a life book, in which people read daily, a ‘Lebensbrot’, a bread of life.” (Eidlitz, 1951, p. 72). Today the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is missing in most Indian houses, and the most visited movies are produced by Bollywood, the Indian version of Hollywood. As predicted by Vedic literature, the religiousity of people in India and all over the world gradually diminished in the present age of Kali. Today, most people think that material progress is more important than spiritual progress and thus they think that we are progressing, while we are actually deteriorating. The clearest evidence that humanity is actually deteriorating is our loss of quality of life, although we externally seem to progress. In modern education we are taught that we have progressed rapidly during the last few thousand years. For example the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in the fifteenth century is celebrated as a milestone in history and as the beginning of a communication revolution. The Vedic version however is just the opposite.

Actually the invention of the printing press marks the artificial necessity of humanity to rely on external media because the subtle and spiritual senses by which we can access and remember many levels of reality have become materially covered due to cultural degradation and loss of Vedic science²⁸.

śruti-sāstra (or simply *śruti*), the core Vedic literature, includes the four *Vedas* (*Rg*, *Sāma*, *Yajur* and *Atharva Veda*) and the *Upaniṣads*. *śruti* literally means ‘that which is heard’, because the Vedic scientific process of acquiring knowledge is *śravaṇa*, hearing directly from Vedic authorities, preferably from self-realized saints. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.6.28 explains that knowledge which is heard (*śrutam*) in bona fide disciplic succession, i.e. from self-realized devotees like Nārada Muni who always see the Supreme Lord (*deva-darśanāt*), is called *bhāgavata-dharma*, the transcendental religion that can factually reveal God, is fully scientific (*vijñāna-samyutam*) and *suddham*, free from all material misconceptions.

In Vedic times the *brāhmaṇas* were usually *śruti-dhara*; they could remember everything simply by hearing it once. This brilliant mental capacity, combined with the use of Sanskrit²⁹, the most scientific and unambiguous language, explains how it was possible to pass on Veda unadulterated over thousands of years without the need of any external media. This also explains the absence of written documents of Vedic science before the beginning of the age of Kali around 3100 BC – they were simply not required, as Vedic knowledge was well remembered. Because this was the Vedic standard of life, many *brāhmaṇas* could remember large parts of the *Vedic* literatures. Most of the *Vedic* literatures have never been written down or were lost over time, but their extent is recorded. They would fill a huge library if they were ever printed completely. After the beginning of the Kali-yuga, the *śruti-dharas* became rare. Śrī Caitanya was a perfect *śruti-dhara* (*Cc* 1.16.44). He would amaze even the greatest scholars with His unflinching memory capacity.

²⁸ Despite this being the case, the devotees make good use of the printing press and the internet to spread the message of *bhakti*. However, while being practical in terms of usage of modern equipments, one should not forget that they are actually like stilts for a handicapped person. The only reason that this is mostly forgotten is that nowadays almost all people are handicapped in terms of full human potential, and thus people take their handicaps as the normal human condition and the stilts of the modern equipments as ‘pillars of progress’.

²⁹ “NASA, the most advanced research center in the world for cutting edge technology has discovered that Sanskrit, the world’s oldest spiritual language, is the only unambiguous spoken language on the planet.” From an article on Sanskrit in *Artificial Intelligence Magazine* in Spring 1985, written by NASA researcher Rick Briggs. Sanskrit literally means ‘language brought to formal perfection’. The fact that man’s most sophisticated language is man’s oldest language has puzzled many scholars who believe in a gradual evolution of language. Anybody who studies Sanskrit will be able to witness how this language is the most scientific, developed and unambiguous language. And anybody who analyzes today’s use and development of language can see how language is deteriorating, especially if compared with Sanskrit.

In the present time, people's memory power is decreasing rapidly. We are also faced with various diseases that decrease the memory function. Many of our grandparents could still tell various stories by heart in great detail. Our parents may have read out stories to us from books, and today parents try to download a movie from the internet for their children, but they cannot access the internet provider because they have forgotten the five digit password. Yet even in these modern times we can still find people who practice Vedic science strictly since childhood and have an almost hundred percent memory capacity. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda (1867-1936) had this capacity. He remembered great amounts of Vedic literature and learned English by once reading a large dictionary from cover to cover. Some of his writings are difficult to read even for English scholars, because he uses the most accurate words, many of which are rarely used and thus not well known. There is a newspaper report of a remarkable law case in India. A Vedic priest happened to be the only one who heard a talk between two English men and thus had to appear in court as witness. When he was asked if he had understood anything of their conversation, he answered that he cannot understand their language but he can remember what they had said. He then repeated the whole conversation correctly in proper English, although he did not know the meaning of the words. His testimony was accepted as evidence.

The present state of sciences is actually less developed than the original God-given Vedic science, which used to cover more than today's range of sciences, and further enabled access to the spiritual realm. Similarly, the various philosophies of humanity are less developed than the original God-given philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, as shall become evident in this book. There are many other ways to explain how man is actually deteriorating while thinking he is progressing due to loss of the original Vedic science – yet even if one cannot accept any of them, none can deny that although there seems to be some progress in terms of material comfort, the actual quality of life is continuously decreasing, although all are trying to increase it. This is evident in the increase of criminality, corruption, suicide, mental and physical abuses, material greed, drug addiction, depressions, divorces, desocialisation and natural disasters, to name just a few.

Just like a patient who becomes more sick by taking a certain so-called 'medicine' must question that medicine, we must question the modern so-called 'progress' & its philosophies that actually degrade us, although they try to improve life's quality.

This ironic situation was predicted over five thousand years ago in Vedic literature (see *SB* 11.3.18 quoted in Chapter 1.5). The question that naturally arises here is: How was it possible for the scientifically developed Vedic science to degenerate to the extent that very few people know its real value? History has shown that whenever a great person departs, some disturbance follows. So then what is to be expected after the Supreme Lord departs?

“Those who scientifically understand the past declare that on the very day that Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa departed for the spiritual world, the influence of the dark age of Kali began.” – *SB* 12.2.33.

This may be compared to the dark night after the setting of the sun. The decay of Vedic culture is clearly predicted for Kali-yuga in Vedic literature: “(...) Religion, truthfulness, cleanliness, tolerance, mercy (...) and memory will all diminish day by day because of the powerful influence of the age of Kali.” – *SB* 12.2.1. “A person's spiritual position will be ascertained merely according to external symbols, and on that same basis people will change from one spiritual order to the next (...) And one who is very clever at juggling words will be considered a learned scholar.” – *SB* 12.2.4. “(...) The *Vedas* will be contaminated by speculative interpretations of atheists (...)” – *SB* 12.3.32. This is exactly what started happening. Vedic science that was established to guide all living entities towards transcendence was misused by certain false members of the priestly class for personal material gains. Various Vedic rituals, which are supposed to be an offering to the Lord, were

increasingly misused for material assets. As a result of loss of purity, the priests were unable to give the people full access to transcendence anymore. In this way, Vedic culture gradually degenerated.

After Lord Kṛṣṇa left the material world five thousand years ago, different scholars and philosophers created many different philosophies by interpreting the *Vedas*, and thus Vedic culture became divided. The same pattern was observed in all common religions, who according to the Vedic understanding are all functional extensions of the eternal Vedic religion. It is not astonishing that followers lose their faith in religion when they see their guiding members such as *sannyāsīs*, *brāhmaṇas*, popes, rabbis or priests fall down and commit the very deeds they preach not to do. Although very devoted souls still manage to hold on to the essence of religion, for common people it becomes very difficult to do so under these circumstances. From the subjective perspective, all religions must apologize for the shortcomings of their members and rectify the situations. Without diminishing this fact, the following more objective perspective sheds a different light on this issue.

First of all it must be understood that the material worlds are designed for the rectification of those souls who became averse to the service of the Supreme Lord and try to themselves become lords over others. Such souls are put into *māyā*, the illusory energy of the Lord, so they can live out their unnatural desires until they realize that this only leads to suffering and then return to the service of the Lord. Therefore, it is but natural that in the material world, Vedic science is properly practiced only by very few, and even amongst them there are various gradations.

Just as we should not expect to find many elevated men and
the best quality of life in a prison house, we should not expect many
spiritually elevated souls and good quality of life in the material world,
as the material world is intentionally designed for materially illusioned souls.
Therefore, the fact that Vedic science is not known by everyone and sincerely
practiced only by a few and that there are cases of failures of aspirants
does not lessen its value, but on the contrary adds to its glory
just like the rarity of diamond makes it precious.

Just as we can find voluntary helpers visiting the prison house to benefit the prisoners, we can find spiritually advanced souls living in this material world solely to benefit the conditioned souls and not to pass time here, because this is not a fit place for the spirit soul. The material world is designed to make its inhabitant want to ultimately leave it, and therefore the Vedic injunctions command: *asato mā sad gamah, tamasi mā jyotir gamah, mrto mā amṛta gamah*, “Don’t stay in the temporary illusion of the material platform; go to the eternal reality! Don’t stay in the darkness of ignorance; go to the light of transcendental knowledge! Don’t keep accepting alien identities and mortal bodies; resume your eternal spiritual identity and body by drinking the nectarean live-giving elixir of *bhakti!*” – *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.3.28. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura compares the material world with an inn (Bhaktivinoda 1, 1893, Chapter 8):

“This human life is short. Therefore, like the traveller at the inn,
the living entity must diligently prepare for spiritual realization
during the travels of this limited life span. It is foolish to waste time
trying to improve arrangements at the inn during one’s
short visit, without concern for one’s destination.”

As the material world is deliberately designed to be a place of suffering, it is absurd to try to make a peaceful residence in it, just as it would be absurd to try to build a comfortable place to sleep in a burning house. The living entities in the imperfect material world actually belong to the perfect spiritual world, and thus they are like children of rich parents who have forgotten their home and are roaming around as street beggars. Parents of children who have gone astray will naturally try to convince their children to return back home. A similar notion can be found in the Supreme Lord.

God wants to encourage the conditioned souls to return home to the spiritual world. Therefore, trying to make material life more attractive is actually a disservice to humanity.

This may be hard to accept, but it is the plain truth. It is the mercy of Veda to give us the bitter medicine of truth instead of sugar-coated poison in the form of palatable lies. Rather than giving temporary material comforts, it is the task of Vedic science to open up the ways of transcendence into the perfect eternal reality for the sincere soul. This possibility has been enabled by the Vedic *paramparā*, disciplic succession, since time immemorial, and this makes out the real success and glory of Vedic science. Essentially, Vedic literature does not encourage material enjoyment, but promotes renunciation to attain eternal, spiritual, blissful life. It describes that on the plane of *svarga*, there are heavenly material worlds higher than this planet, where the living entities enjoy immense opulences and live for thousands of years – but their inhabitants are thus not the least inclined to transcend the material cosmos by practicing *bhakti* and are mostly even more forgetful of the Lord than inhabitants of the earth planet. Similarly, there are lower material worlds where there is so much suffering that it again becomes unfavorable for *bhakti*. The earth planet is in the middle and provides an ideal climate for transcendence. Therefore, inhabitants of the lower and upper worlds pray to take birth on the earth planet: “The residents of both the heavenly and the lower planets all desire human birth on the earth planet because this facilitates the achievement of transcendental knowledge and love of Godhead, whereas birth in other bodies do not efficiently provide such opportunities.” – *SB* 11.20.12. “Birth as a human being is the best of all. Even birth among the demigods in the heavenly planets is not as glorious as birth as a human being on this earth. What is the use of the exalted position of a demigod? In the heavenly planets, due to profuse material comforts, there is no possibility of associating with devotees who can bring about transcendence.” – *SB* 5.13.21. As such it must be understood that the lack of full prosperity is not a sign of failure of Vedic science, but a positive impetus to transcend material illusion. “The real object of human life is not to accumulate worldly treasures to be left behind at the termination of a limited existence. The object of all life is to serve Godhead. That civilization is alone real which helps its votaries to attain this one thing needful.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 357.)

The full blossoming of Vedic culture should not be expected
in the material world, just as we should not expect a nice place to live
in a burning house. The full manifestation of Vedic culture
is present in the perfect eternal spiritual world.

Of course the spiritual realm also manifests in the material worlds whenever the Supreme Lord descends there, and the spiritual realm is also present within the hearts of fully self-realized devotees – yet to be born close to the Lord and/or His devotees and furthermore to be able to appreciate them is extremely rarely achieved and never guaranteed like in the spiritual world. Hence transcendence by devotional practices is the wisest path, and therefore the absence of the completely manifest Vedic high standard of life on earth is a well-designed impetus to sincerely complete transcendence. In fact, if Vedic culture had *not* deteriorated after Lord Kṛṣṇa’s departure, this would have indicated a failure of Vedic culture, whose scriptures had foretold its temporary decay after the Lord’s disappearance. Lord Kṛṣṇa declared that He personally descends again and again to reestablish the principles of *dharma* (*Bg* 4.8). Since in the dark age of Kali the principles of the eternal *dharma* need to be reestablished, it can be assumed that the Lord has already made arrangements to do so. Vedic literatures confirm this with the prediction of Śrī Caitanya (see Chapter 6.1), who inaugurated the beginning of *prema-yuga*, the age of love of God, and reestablished the essential *sanātana-dharma* as expressed in His *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*.



5. Vedic Ontology: The Universal God

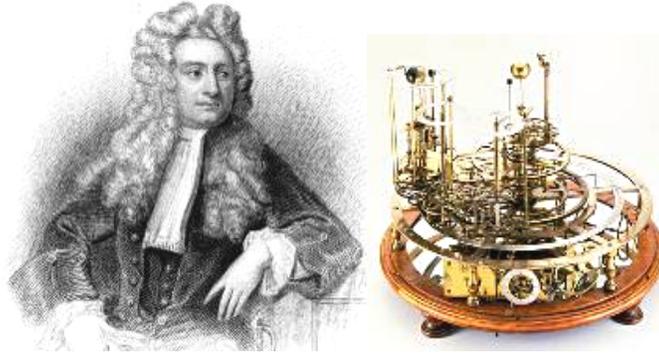
Śrī Caitanya taught that the absolute reality is God, and that the Universal Supreme Personality of Godhead is Lord Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya Mahāprabhu taught that the relation between Lord Kṛṣṇa and His various forms and creations is *acintya-bhedābheda*. Hence to understand the universal principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, we should also understand Lord Kṛṣṇa. When we understand Lord Kṛṣṇa, His various forms, and His *acintya-bhedābheda* nature, we gain an understanding of the universality of God beyond sectarian or cultural designation. We then understand how God is simultaneously one and different from all His forms, and how the seeming contradictions of different philosophical, religious, scientific and cultural concepts are all wonderfully reconciled in harmony.

5.1. An Introduction to God

As mentioned earlier, we cannot bring the transcendental Personality of Godhead into the scope of our sense perception materially. We can only realize God if He reveals Himself, and He does this only if we approach Him spiritually, i.e. for His service alone, and not for the sake of an experiment or material benefit. Therefore, it is impossible to prove God's existence in a way acceptable by those who only believe in material evidence. Only those who are mature enough to break free from such a self-confining doctrine and submit their finite intelligence to the potency and grace of the infinite Intelligence will be able to realize God. Loving dependence on God's grace is the basis of spiritual perception. With a spiritual approach, it is possible to factually realize God without having to wait for after death. Before gaining practical realization, spiritual practices are driven by faith, just like scientists have faith in a new theory before its testification. We shall see in the following paragraphs that faith in God, even before full realization, can be the outcome of sharp reason.

Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) was an English physicist, mathematician, natural philosopher and theologian. He was the first scientist ever to be knighted and is known for having laid the groundwork for most of classical mechanics. He explained universal gravitation and the three laws of motion. Newton was a resolute vegetarian and theist. In his house he had an orrery, a mechanical miniature replica of the solar system with planets moving around the sun according to their specific orbits. According to some sources³⁰, the following story took place in his home. One day, Newton's friend came to him for a visit. He was also a scientist but he did not believe in God. When he saw the orrery, he exclaimed admiringly, "My! What an exquisite thing this is! Who made it?" Paying little attention to him, Newton answered, "Nobody." His friend repeated his question, thinking that he had not been understood. Newton replied in a still more serious tone, "Nobody. What you see just happened to assume the form it now has." His astonished friend said with some heat, "You must think I am a fool! Of course somebody made it, and he is a genius, and I'd like to know who he is." Newton then spoke to his friend in a polite yet firm way: "This thing is but a puny imitation of a much grander system whose laws you know.

³⁰ The first quote (Technolog, October 1957) appears in some books not older than fifty years. It is uncertain if this story is authentic or forged. The next quote from Brewster can be verified (it is also known that Newton spoke out against atheism in his major works). However, even if the first quote was forged, the contained argument remains valid.



“I am not able to convince you that this mere toy is without a design and maker; yet you profess to believe that the great original from which the design is taken has come into being without either Designer or Maker!

“Now tell me by what sort of reasoning do you reach such an incongruous conclusion?” (Technolog, October 1957). Modern schools agree that every small machine has a designer. However, most schools ignore or even deny that the much bigger and complex machine of the universe has a designer. This is against the basic principles of logic. If all simple machines have a designer, then a more complex machine must also have a designer. According to the same logic, if someone claims the solar system came about by chance, this is million times more ridiculous than claiming that its replica came about by chance.

We can also understand the logic of a creator and controller by simple science. Science teaches that according to the law of gravitation, a smaller body like a baseball cannot remain in a certain orbit of a greater body like the earth without correction. It will leave the orbit and travel away into space or fall down to the greater body. Satellites for example need to be corrected from time to time. Sometimes this is not successful and they fall down to earth. According to laws of science, it is practically impossible that so many planets remain on stable orbits since millions of years without a controller. The only explanation science offers for this phenomenon is that ‘by chance’ the sun’s force of gravitation effecting the planets is exactly in such a relation with their centrifugal force, that they result in stable orbits – since millions of years. Chances of this are practically zero, as is understood from the example of having Superman throw a baseball with the exact required speed and direction, so it remains orbiting the earth for millions of years. We must also consider, that there are many other bodies in space that exercise gravitation on planets. The planets would undoubtedly have to be thrown out of orbit without the influence of a Controller³¹.

In his manuscript entitled *A Short Scheme of the True Religion*, Newton states: “Atheism is so senseless & odious to mankind that it never had many professors. Can it be by accident that all birds, beasts & men have their right side & left side alike shaped except in their bowells & just two eyes & no more on either side the face & just two ears on either side the head & a nose with two holes & no more between the eyes & one mouth under the nose & either two fore leggs or two wings or two arms on the sholders & two leggs on the hipps one on either side & no more?

“Whence arises this uniformity in all their outward shapes
but from the counsel & contrivance of an Author?

“Whence is it that the eyes of all sorts of living creatures are transparent to the very bottom & the only transparent members in the body, having on the outside a hard transparent skin, & within transparent juices with a crystalline lens in the middle & a pupil before the lens all of them so truly shaped & fitted for vision, that no artist can mend them? Did blind chance know that there was light

³¹ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.11.13 states that planets and atoms rotate in orbits under God’s direction (see Chapter 11.1).

& what was its refraction & fit the eyes of all creatures after the most curious manner to make use of it? These & such like considerations always have & ever will prevail with mankind to believe that there is a Being who made all things & has all things in His power.” (Brewster, 1850, p. 65.)

Prof. John C. Cotran, Chairman of the Science and Mathematics Division at the University of Minnesota, said: “Evidence from chemistry and other sciences indicates that this beginning [of matter] was not slow and gradual; on the contrary, it was sudden, and the evidence even indicates the approximate time when it occurred. Thus at some rather definite time the material world was created and ever since has been obeying law, not the dictates of chance. Now, the material realm not being able to create itself and its governing laws, the act of creation must have been performed by some nonmaterial agent. The stupendous marvels accomplished in that act show that this agent must possess superlative intelligence, an attribute of mind. But to bring mind into action in the material realm as, for example, in the practice of medicine and the field of parapsychology, the exercise of will is required, and this can be exerted only by a person. Hence our logical and inescapable conclusion is not only that creation occurred but that it was brought about according to the plan and will of a person endowed with supreme intelligence and knowledge (omniscience), and the power to bring it about and keep it running according to plan (omnipotence) always and everywhere throughout the universe (omnipresence). That is to say, we accept unhesitatingly the fact of the existence of ‘the supreme spiritual being, God, the creator and director of the universe.’” (Rosen 3, 1992, p. 243.)

By the application of common sense we can come to the conclusion that God exists as the transcendental Supreme Person: It is evident to any even halfway honest person, that we, with our given material senses, are extremely limited and unable to grasp the entire truth (see Chapter 3.3). This can also be understood from the fact that humanity has manufactured innumerable different and conflicting theories about reality without coming to a universal conclusion. Combining this fact with the axiom that truth is by nature one and not many, it stands clear that the one truth is beyond the reach of the material senses and mind. We can thus come to the first essential conclusion:

“Truth is superior to me and i am inferior to Truth.”

Writing ‘Truth’ in upper case and ‘i’ in lower case for a few lines will help to put things into the right light. If the Truth was not superior to me, then i would be able to grasp Truth – but i am unable to do so independently. Now the next fact that anybody will agree with is that “i am a person.” Nobody wants to be less than a person. Combining this with the established fact that “Truth is superior to me”, we can come to the second and third essential conclusions:

“Truth must also be a person and since Truth is the ultimate reality, Truth must be the Superperson.”

If i am a person, but Truth cannot be a person, then Truth would be less than me. Rather, Truth is not only a person, but the Superperson, the most superior Person – God! Some argue that God cannot be a person because that would make Him limited like a human, but they have neither the faith nor the understanding that God can be a *transcendental* Person with *transcendental* name, form, attributes, associates and pastimes beyond any mundane limitation. Could God not be so – He would not be God, the almighty³². Anybody who has understood that “Truth is superior to me” and is simple-hearted will agree that Truth must be the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although God is not perceivable by material senses, He can reveal Himself out of His own will and mercy to His sincere devotee. If God was easily available and always exposed to everyone’s senses beyond

³² Prof. O. B. L. Kapoor stated: “To describe the absolute as merely *nirviśeṣa* or without quality and attributes is to make Him imperfect by amputating, as it were, the auspicious limbs of His divine personality. Once the absolute, complete, and perfect nature of the Divine Being is recognized, the Advaitin philosophy of impersonalism cannot consistently be maintained.” (Rosen, 1992, p. 247.)

privacy, He would be subservient to everyone. Just like any dignified person, God has the right of not being exposed at all times. Yet, just as exalted persons can make themselves available to a sincere visitor, God can also reveal Himself to the sincere devotee by dint of His inconceivable potency. As anyone can understand that they have feelings of love, that love must be there in the original Superperson in its fullest manifestation.

One may ask: If God has love for all – why is He not revealing Himself to me? The answer is that the lack is on my side. I may think i have love for God or keen interest in God, but the fact that He does not fully reveal Himself to me proves that my love for Him is not pure yet. I either want to know Him in order to know Him or to enjoy Him or for some other personal benefit, but i do not want to know Him exclusively to serve Him. To be honest, i have not yet experienced completely pure love, unconditional service to God. If i had a drop of pure love for God, He would immediately reciprocate, because being the endless reservoir of love who wants to give out pure love to all who actually want pure love, He is only waiting for me to approach Him with pure love. If i do not have pure love, then how can i get it? I can only get it from someone who already has it, from a pure devotee. Let us summarize: According to common sense, God exists eternally as the transcendental Superperson. The only lack is on my side, and the solution is to attain pure love of God from a pure devotee.

The following is from a purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.3.43 by disciples of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda: “The impulse to find the Absolute Truth, the source of all existence, has motivated philosophers, theologians and other intellectuals of various persuasions since time immemorial, and continues to do so today. However, soberly analyzing the ever-increasing plurality of so-called philosophies, religions, paths, ways of life and so on, we find that in almost all cases the ultimate objective is something impersonal or formless. But this idea of an impersonal or formless Absolute Truth has serious logical flaws. According to ordinary rules of logic, a particular effect should directly or indirectly embody the attributes, or nature, of its own cause. Thus that which has no personality or activity could hardly be the source of all personality and all activity. (...) The heat and luminosity of the sun’s rays demonstrate to the satisfaction of any rational person that the sun, the source of the rays, is certainly not a dark, cold globe but rather a reservoir of almost unlimited heat and light. Similarly, the innumerable instances of personality and personal consciousness within creation are more than adequate to demonstrate the existence, somewhere, of an unlimited reservoir of consciousness and personal behavior. In his dialogue *Philebus*, the Greek philosopher Plato argued that just as the material elements in our body are derived from a vast reservoir of material elements existing within the universe, our rational intelligence is also derived from a great cosmic intelligence existing within the universe, and this supreme intelligence is God, the creator. (...) Many leading thinkers cannot understand this and instead deny that the Absolute Truth, the source of our personal consciousness, has consciousness and personality. This is as reasonable as saying that the sun is cold and dark. (...) Unfortunately, in our mechanistic, industrial age we tend to define infinity only in its quantitative sense, and thus we fail to notice that an infinity of personal qualities is a necessary aspect of infinity. In other words,

“God must have infinite beauty, infinite wealth, infinite intelligence,
infinite humor, infinite kindness, infinite anger and so on. Infinite is an absolute,
and if anything we observe in this world is not contained, somehow or other,
within our conception of the Absolute, then that conception is
of something limited and not of the Absolute at all.”

Based on sound reasoning, common sense and spiritual inspiration, millions of people are inspired to embrace theism. However, there are so many different conceptions of God, that rather than to take party with one of them, many prefer to stick to an impersonal or attributeless conception of God, even though they have understood that the Absolute must be personal. These ‘involuntary impersonalists’ thus find themselves in a dilemma situation. Thinking that this is the

best way to avoid party spirit or sectarianism, the distinct personality of God remains a taboo for them. The essentialists however will not agree with taboos that unavoidably exclude parts of reality and thus create ignorance. They will strive to search for the ultimate Essence beyond restrictions and compromises. The classical problem they face is: Every religious group claims ‘their’ God to be the Supreme God, and thus there seems to be insolvable disagreements. According to the all-reconciling philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, all religions are right in this claim in the sense that all forms of the essential original Supreme Personality of Godhead are one (*abheda*) with Him in one way. Yet the variations of the original Godhead are also different (*bheda*) from Him in another way. The question then arises:

What is the quality of the original, essential God?
The answer is that He must be God universally.

He must fulfill all qualities of God under all circumstances. One of God’s qualities is that He is the source of everything, and as such He can reconcile everything in harmony, just as a mother can reconcile her children who have forgotten their brotherhood. This quality of universal reconciliation must also be found in the philosophy of the original God. From the Vedic school of *nyāya* (logic) we learn that *phalena phala-kāraṇam anumīyate*, “You can know things by their fruits.” (Quoted in *Cc* 3.1.91. Jesus Christ said the same in Matthew 7:16.) As a philosophy is one type of fruit or result of a certain culture or science, it is one kind of indication of that culture’s authenticity.

Sectarian, partial or secondary philosophical doctrines cannot harmonize with other opposed doctrines, but as shown throughout this book, *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* can reconcile all other doctrines, and hence it is accepted as non-sectarian, i.e. universal, complete and primary philosophy. This acceptance also gives the original discloser of this philosophy, Lord Caitanya, prime authority. Lord Caitanya revealed Lord Kṛṣṇa to be the original universal all-reconciling fountainhead of all secondary forms of God by establishing the all-reconciling *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, and hence Lord Kṛṣṇa is accepted as the original Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The above conclusion has been drawn philosophically, whereas the traditional Vedic approach (*avaroha-panthā*) relies on personal realization through revelation and on the Vedic scriptures as major evidences, as established in Chapter 3. The Vedic scriptures accept Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Lord Kṛṣṇa said in *Bhagavad-gītā* 10.8:

*aham sarvasya prabhavo, mattah sarvaṁ pravartate
iti matvā bhajante mām, budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ*

“I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds.
Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly
know this engage in My devotional service
and worship Me with all their hearts.”

“Arjuna said: You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead,
the ultimate abode, the purest, the Absolute Truth.
You are the eternal, transcendental, original person,
the unborn, the greatest. All the great sages
such as Nārada, Asita, Devala and Vyāsa
confirm this truth about You,
and now You Yourself are
declaring it to me.” – *Bg* 10.12.



Lord Brahmā, the engineer of the universe, praises Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Brahmā-Saṁhitā*, verses 5.1, 5.30 and 5.33:

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ
sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*



“Kṛṣṇa, who is known as Govinda, is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He possesses an eternal, fully conscious and entirely blissfull, transcendental body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin and He is the prime cause of all causes.”

*advaitam acyutam anādim ananta-rūpam
ādyam purāṇa-puruṣam nava-yauvanaṁ ca
vedeṣu durlabham adurlabham ātma-bhaktau
govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*

“I worship the original Personality of Godhead, Govinda, the Primeval Lord. Although expanded into unlimited forms, He is still the same original. Although He is the oldest, He is always appearing as a fresh youth. Such eternal, blissful, all-knowing forms of the Lord are usually not understood by even the best Vedic scholars, but they are manifest to pure, unalloyed devotees.”

*veṇuṁ kvaṇantam aravinda-dalāyatākṣam-
barhāvataṁsam asitāmbuda-sundarāṅgam
kandarpa-koṭi-kamanīya-viśeṣa-śobhaṁ
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*



“I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is adept
in playing on His flute, with blooming eyes like lotus petals,
with head decked with a peacock’s feather, with the figure of beauty tinged
with the hue of blue clouds, and His unique loveliness charming millions of Cupids.”

Some people claim that the personal aspects of God are inferior to His impersonal form, while others claim that God cannot be personal at all. The main reason for this is that they, seeing the imperfect personalities of the mundane world, cannot imagine the existence of perfect transcendental personalities. Because the empiricists observe that all personalities that they can see are neither immortal, fully wise nor always blissful, they cannot imagine the existence of eternal, all-wise and ever-blissful personalities. They deny the existence of such personalities due to the prejudice that there is nothing beyond the limits of their perception. This prejudice is similarly ridiculous as the speculation of a colorblind person who claims that nature cannot possess color.

Just because the limited conditioned souls cannot conceive or see the transcendental Personality of Godhead, it does not mean that He does not exist, nor that He cannot be a perfect transcendental Person with transcendental attributes. Veda, universal transcendental knowledge, explains, that God is simultaneously personal and impersonal, and that the personal aspect is the original aspect. This will be explained in more detail in Chapter 5.5. If we compare a person and that person’s impersonal website, then none will deny that the person is the origin of the website, and not vice versa. Nobody is so foolish to claim that a person is the outcome of a website, but many ‘respected’ people claim, that the personal form of God is a manifestation of the ultimately impersonal God. Rene Descartes explained that an effect may be less perfect than its cause, but a cause cannot be less perfect than its effect. Nobody wants to have a relationship with a website; all want to have a relationship with a person. Nobody wants to be treated as less than a person, but unfortunately, many think that they can please God by treating Him impersonally.

Only those who give at least as much personal affection to God
as to any other beloved person can welcome Him properly
and thus accommodate His full manifestation.

Prof. Sanyal mentions³³:

“Vaiṣṇavism stands alone among the revealed religions of the world in providing a specific account of the name, form, qualities, activities and the individual personalities of the servitors of Godhead Himself. The silence of the other religions on this subject should not be misunderstood as implying the non-existence of any or all specification in the Absolute. There is also no rational ground for supposing that Godhead is unwilling or unable to disclose His own specific Self and divine paraphernalia to the serving impulse of pure souls.” (Sanyal, 1933, Vol II, Introduction.)

Earlier, we mentioned the principle that the quality of a tree can be judged by its fruits. According to this principle, the unique quality of the tree of Vedic knowledge can be ascertained by knowing the value of its fruits, the most scientific and sophisticated science of God-realization.

5.2. Many Names of God Originate From the Names of Lord Kṛṣṇa

‘Kṛṣṇa’ is a Sanskrit name of God meaning ‘the all-attractive Lord full of bliss’. *kṛṣ* means attracting and *na* means bliss (from *ānanda*, bliss). Lord Kṛṣṇa is all-attractive because He possesses six opulences: *aiśvaryasya samagrasya vīryasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ jñāna-vairāgyayoś caiva saṅṅāṁ bhaga itiṅgana*, “Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is full in six opulences; complete [i.e. eternal and unlimited] strength, fame, wealth, knowledge, beauty, and renunciation.” – *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 6.5.47. More than this however, Kṛṣṇa is all-attractive because He is the reservoir and giver of all relishable relationships, *rasas: raso vai saḥ rasam hy evāyam labdhvānandī bhavati*: “When one understands the Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa, the reservoir of all relishable relationships, one actually becomes *ānandī*, filled with spiritual bliss.” – *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.7.1. As such the name *Kṛṣṇa* explains itself: Lord Kṛṣṇa is all-attractive (*kṛṣ*) because He can give the highest bliss (*na*) of *rasa*, relish of a perfect relationship with the perfect Lord.

The name *Kṛṣṇa* itself establishes the universality of Lord Kṛṣṇa, since being all-attractive is the essential attribute of universality.

There are many nice names of God in various traditions. However, most names of God do not invoke any concrete attributes by a literal meaning in people’s conceptions, and in certain traditions, it is even forbidden to say the names of God or think about the meaning of His name. If we analyse all various names of God without bias, we can conclude that Lord Kṛṣṇa’s direct personal names describe the divine attributes most precisely, completely and universally, and they can therefore be accepted as the most essential and original names of God. It can also be shown as follows how Lord Kṛṣṇa’s names are the etymological roots of most modern names of God.

³³ In his doctoral thesis *Sree Krishna Chaitanya*. Prof. Sanyal was a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, who edited this thesis together with Śrīla Bhaktirākṣaka Śrīdhara Maharāja. After reading this thesis, Dr. Ernst Schulze (later Sadānanda Svāmī) from Germany became the first western disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda.



Kluge, the standard dictionary of etymology of the German language, mentions that the German word for God, **Gott**, stems from Indo-Germanic **gheu**, to pour, which is related to Sanskrit **juhoti**, (he) sacrifices, pours butter into fire, and the Sanskrit ending **-hut**, offering, sacrifice. The name of a Gallic class of priests is *gutuater* (from **ghutu-pater**), father of the pouring offering (Kluge, 2002).

Webster's New World Dictionary mentions how the term **God** is related to German **Gott**, which stems from Gothic **guth**. *guth* is referred to Indo-European **ghau**, to call out to, invoke, which stems from Sanskrit **havate**, (he) calls upon (Webster, 1997).

Whichever interpretation we follow, we end in Sanskrit and in the same meaning, as the following information shall point out. The Supreme Lord says Himself (*Bg* 9.16) that He is the ghee (*ājyam*), the fire and the offering (*hutam*). The ancient Sanskrit word *ājyam* becomes **ghī** in Hindi, (ghee or clarified butter), which points to Kluge's *gheu*. However, another Sanskrit word for ghee is **haviḥ** (*SB* 4.7.45), which points to Webster's *havate*. A Sanskrit name of Lord Kṛṣṇa is *yajña-patiḥ* (*SB* 2.4.20), Lord of the sacrifice, which also points to Kluge's *ghutu-pater*. Another name of Lord Kṛṣṇa is *huta-bhuk*, the enjoyer of the ghee-sacrifice (*SB* 6.19.28), which supports Kluge's *-hut* (compare also *hotra*, sacrificial offering, coming even closer to **Gott**). Finally, everything is reconciled by considering *apauruṣeya-sabda*, transcendental Vedic testimony: In the Vedic sacrifices, the *agni-hotra*, the fire sacrifice is essential, in which ghee is offered into the fire as an offering to Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa to invoke His presence and blessings. Kṛṣṇa likes ghee and cows; He is Gopāla (*SB* 10.16.3), a transcendental cowherd-boy (lit. 'He who maintains the cows') and Govinda (*SB* 1.15.27), the well-wisher of the cows, and He is well known for liking butter very much. This is why ghee is offered to the Lord, who Himself says that He is the ghee (*ājyam*), the fire and the offering (*hutam*) (*Bg* 9.16). (...) *gavyam ājyam haviḥsv aham*, "(...) Of oblations I am ghee and other ingredients obtained from the cow." – *SB* 11.12.18. Further it is mentioned that *tvam kratuḥ tvam haviḥ tvam hutāśaḥ svayam* (...), "The *brāhmaṇas* said: Dear Lord, You are sacrifice personified. You are **haviḥ**, the offering of clarified butter, You are **huta-āśaḥ**, the fire of oblations (...)." – *SB* 4.7.45. Hence all this evidence leads to the conclusion:

The term 'God' originates in the Vedic culture and in its essence means 'Kṛṣṇa, the enjoyer of the ghee offerings.'
Lord Kṛṣṇa is the original possessor of the name 'God'.

Interestingly, many other names of God can be rooted back to names of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the following chart, I have compiled the etymological links of four common names of God to their root names, which are names of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is astonishing that this is not yet known widely.

Chart 1: Original Sanskrit names of Lord Kṛṣṇa and their reflections in more recent languages³⁴

Original Sanskrit names of Lord Kṛṣṇa	<i>huta-bhuk</i> , the enjoyer of the ghee offering (<i>SB</i> 6.19.28).	<i>ādi-devaḥ</i> , the original (<i>ādi</i>) Supreme God (<i>Bg</i> 11.38).	<i>jagat-pitri</i> , Father of the universe. Also <i>pitā</i> (<i>Bg</i> 9.17).	<i>hari</i> (<i>SB</i> 1.2.13), the Lord who steals (<i>harāṇa</i>) all hearts.
Greek		<i>theos</i> , God	<i>pater</i> , father	
Latin		<i>divus</i> , God	<i>pater</i> , Father, Lord	
German	<i>Gott</i> , God, from Indo-Germanic <i>gheu</i> , to pour, and the Sanskrit ending <i>-hut</i> , offering (Kluge).		<i>Vater</i> , father. From Indogermanic <i>pater</i> and Sanskrit <i>pitā</i> (Kluge).	<i>Herr</i> , Lord, mister. Related to ancient Nordic <i>harri</i> , mister (Kluge).
French		<i>Dieux</i> , God	<i>pere</i> , father	
English	<i>God</i> from German <i>Gott</i> (Webster)	<i>Divinity</i>	<i>Father</i> from Sanskrit <i>pitā</i> (Webster)	

Whenever someone is saying ‘Oh my God!’, or addressing the Lord with ‘God’, he is actually calling *huta-bhuk*, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the enjoyer of the ghee offering. Whenever someone is saying ‘Mon Dieux!’, or using the word ‘divine’, he is actually uttering a reflection of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s name *ādi-devaḥ*, the original Supreme God³⁵. In its original sense, ‘theology’ means study of Lord Kṛṣṇa, *ādi-devaḥ*, and ‘theist’ means a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Enthusiasm really means to be pervaded by the spirit of Kṛṣṇa (from Greek *entheos*, enthused by God, from *en*, in, and *theos*, God, from Sanskrit *ādi-devaḥ*, Lord Kṛṣṇa). Whenever someone is praying “Pater noster!”, or “our Father, who art in heaven!” he is actually chanting a reflection of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s name *jagat-pitri*, Father of the universe. And whenever someone is calling out ‘Herrgott!’ (‘Oh my God’ in German), he is actually calling Śrī Hari, Lord Kṛṣṇa. In this way, the originally one universal Lord is reflected in various ways simultaneously, which is a manifestation of His *acintya-bhedābheda* nature and His all-reconciling potency, the *acintya-śakti*. This all adds to the universality of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Vedic culture.

In the English language we find very few names of God and His servants in daily use, and it is difficult to imagine that the name of God appears often in the names of people, places, streets and products. But whoever travels in India and knows the local languages a little will notice that the name of God is found everywhere. People are often named ‘the servant of God’ (for example Kṛṣṇa Dās, Rām Dās), ‘the mercy of God’ (for example Kṛṣṇa Prasād) or ‘the beloved of God’ (for example Kṛṣṇa Vallabh, Viṣṇu Priya). Thousands of places and streets carry the name of God, such as Rishikesh (Hṛṣikeśa, the master of the senses, a name of Lord Kṛṣṇa) Jagannātha Purī (the town of Lord Jagannātha, the Lord of the universe), Kṛṣṇa Nagar (the town of Lord Kṛṣṇa) or Rasvihari Avenue (the avenue of the enjoyer of *rasa*, the relish of loving relationships with His devotees, a name of Lord Kṛṣṇa).

³⁴ This chart is not complete, there are further examples such as (the original) *Person*, from Latin *persona*, which probably roots in Sanskrit *puruṣa*, person (Kluge states that the origin of *persona* is disputed). Lord Kṛṣṇa is *ādi-puruṣa* (*SB* 2.7.15, *Bs* 5.29), the original Person, and *puruṣottama*, the Supreme Person (*Bg* 8.1). Some prefer to address God as Love. The term *love* comes from old English *lufu*, Latin *lubet*, pleases, Sanskrit *lubhyati*, desires (www.etymonline.com). Lord Kṛṣṇa is *paramo lābha* (*SB* 10.80.12), the greatest attainment or object of love, and *prāṇa-vallabha* (*Cc* 1.12.90), the original Lover of everyone’s heart.

³⁵ Another indication that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the original *deva* is as follows: the word *deva* is derived from the *dhātu* (verbal root) *div*, ‘to sport, to play’. So *deva* really means ‘He who sports’. Amongst all forms of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa is known for playing the most sophisticated sports as His main activity, and He is therefore called *prāṇaya-keli-kalā-vilāsam*, “He who always sports in pastimes of divine love” (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.31.), and *deva-deva*, Lord of all *devas* (*Bg* 10.15).

5.3. The Universal Supreme Personality of Godhead

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the source of everything (*Bg* 10.8), the cause of all causes. As Kṛṣṇa is the original potency of all His expansions, the actual essential attraction of each and every thing, soul, or form of God is actually Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, He is called Kṛṣṇa, ‘the all-attractive’. His very name establishes Him as the original universal Essence. Although there are many forms and Avatāras of God, they are all essentially Kṛṣṇa. This is His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*, being simultaneously one and many. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.26 & 28 states: *avatārā hy asaṅkhyeyā, hareḥ sattva-nidher dvijāḥ, yathāvidāsinaḥ kulyāḥ, sarasaḥ syuḥ sahasraśaḥ, (...) ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ pumsaḥ, kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam,*



“O *brāhmaṇas*, the Avatāras of the Lord are innumerable, like rivulets flowing from inexhaustible sources of water.(...) All of the above-mentioned Avatāras [such as Kurma, Narasiṁhadeva, Vāmana, Rāma, Buddha and Kalki] are either plenary portions or portions of the plenary portions of the Lord, but Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead.”

This is also confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (11.50), where Lord Kṛṣṇa's most beautiful form (*saumya-vapu*) is declared to be His original form (*svakaṁ rūpam*). Another indication supporting Kṛṣṇa being the universal fountainhead of all Avatāras is, that in the Vedic literatures, which are themselves emanations of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*Bg* 15.15), His various other forms and Avatāras are described and predicted. One quality of the Absolute is that He must be able to embrace everything else, and Lord Kṛṣṇa's describing and predicting His various other forms is evidence of this quality in Him. Vedic science is the universal science of transcendental knowledge (Veda), and is neither limited to any country nor to any system of philosophy.

Sectarian concepts of God try to isolate a certain aspect of God as the only truth and reject any other aspects of God as untruth on the basis of the misconception that 'God is one, and hence He cannot have various names, forms, qualities and pastimes'. Such sectarian concepts are unjustified limitations of Godhead, who is by nature unlimited and fully perfect.

Prof. Sanyal mentioned: "Fanaticism is due to ignorance of the perfect nature of Kṛṣṇa and of our common relationship with Him." (Sanyal, 1933, Vol II, Chapter 20.) Those who actually know that the nature of God is that He is all-powerful never dare to impose any such limitations upon Him. They dare not try to employ the material arithmetic laws in the process of understanding God. This would be more ridiculous than trying to measure the size of the sun with a ruler. The laws of material logic cease to exist in the spiritual realm. The above described misconception is based on the material concept that 'if something is taken from a complete whole, that complete whole becomes incomplete'. But the Supreme Personality of Godhead, although expanded into unlimited forms, still remains the same complete Original. This divine potency of His is described in the invocation of the *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*:

*om pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idaṁ
pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya
pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate*

"The Personality of Godhead is perfect and complete, and because He is completely perfect, all emanations from Him, such as this phenomenal world, are perfectly equipped as complete wholes. Whatever is produced of the Complete Whole is also complete in itself. Because He is the Complete Whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance."

The Vedic teaching of one universal God who is the origin of all other forms of God is perfectly non-sectarian and all-reconciling. It can be understood with the vision of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura was born in a Muslim family, but was constantly engaged in chanting Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy name, the *māhā-mantra*; *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*. Once he was imprisoned for betraying Islam. When the local Muslim king asked him why he is following Hindu practices, he replied in a sweet voice: "Listen, dear sir. The Supreme Lord of all is one without a second. The Hindus and Moslems differentiate the Lord only by name, but in spiritual vision the Lord is one. This is confirmed in the *Purāṇas* and the *Koran*." – *Caitanya-bhāgavata* 1.16.76-77. Even a common person has many names, duties, qualities and pastimes, so what to speak of God, who can expand Himself unlimitedly. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda mentioned in this regard that "Śrī Rāmacandra and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are not substantially different Objects. They are identical. But as we find in this perverted region that one man considers himself as the father of somebody or the son of somebody or the physician of somebody, similarly in the transcendental realm also we find manifold aspects of the same Absolute." (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 53.)



In this picture series, we see four different faces of the same river – the holy river Gaṅgā (Ganges). From the Himālayas to the midlands of India and all the way to the Bay of Bengal, Gaṅgā is the same river, but manifests different appearances according to different circumstances; different colors, depths, speeds, sounds, tastes, etc. Similarly, God is one person, but according to various circumstances He appears with different names, forms, attributes, pastimes and associates. This *acintya-bhedābheda* nature of God is not at all contradictory, just as it is not contradictory that the same river Gaṅgā can appear in various forms.

If we could ask frogs in the Himālayas to describe the Gaṅgā, they would give a different picture than frogs in Benares or Māyāpur. If frogs from different places would be brought together, they would likely claim that ‘their Gaṅgā’ is not the same Gaṅgā that the others describe, or they may quarrel and claim that only their perception of the river Gaṅgā is correct and all others are wrong. Now if these frogs who are disagreeing due to their partial perspective meet a swan who knows the entire Gaṅgā from source to mouth, then the swan would be able to harmonize their visions by teaching them the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*: The same Gaṅgā manifests in variety. Similarly, due to froggish or partial visions, various people cannot harmonize their perception of God (or truth for the atheists) with other perceptions of God, and this often leads to sectarianism and conflicts. But if they can understand God’s nature of being simultaneously one and many by the help of a swanlike devotee who knows the essential principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, then all their visions can be harmonized scientifically.

The following analysis of the multi-faceted personage of Queen Elizabeth II shall further illustrate the point, that one person playing many roles does not contradict the fact that that person ultimately still is one person³⁶. This understanding is very important in order to understand, that although God has many forms, He is still one person.

³⁶ The Queen was chosen because it was easy to get material about her and she is known to most people.

The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* describes a God who ‘is allowed’ to have the potency to simultaneously manifest in variations. This philosophy does not exclude an ultimately one God like strict polytheism does; nor does it exclude God in variations like strict monotheism does. Rather, it builds the philosophical basis for an entirely comprehensive theism, and is therefore called full-fledged theism³⁷.



One person – many roles. From top left to bottom right, Queen Elisabeth II is depicted in various roles, with various names, dresses, qualities and pastimes: The Queen as “Her Majesty, Elizabeth the Second, Queen of England, Head of the Commonwealth, Supreme Governor of the Church of England”, wearing a royal dress and a crown, sitting on a golden throne. The Queen as “Driver No 230873 second Subaltern Elizabeth Windsor” in an army dress changing a vehicle wheel during WW II in 1945. The Queen receiving a flower garland from a young Kṛṣṇa devotee in London. The Queen in the movie “The Queen.” The Queen as a “holder of an umbrella”, providing shelter to the Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau. The Queen on a postal stamp and as a doll. The Queen represented by the English flag, the official website of British Monarchy and the House of Parliament. Elizabeth as a friend, a wife and as a mother. ‘Lilibet’ (her former pet name) as a child.

Many people don’t know the Queen personally, but through various media. Some know the Queen as political ruler, others as the head of the church, others as personal friend, wife, mother, child, etc. Some approach her to gain fame, others offer her respect out of reverence or gratitude, some approach her to get shelter from the rain and others as a friend, husband, child, or parent.

Although there are many different roles of the Queen,
no one will deny that she still is one and the same person.
Likewise, although there are so many different manifestations
of Godhead, He is nevertheless the same person.

³⁷ Full-fledged theism will be further described in later chapters. A few attempts to synthesize monotheism and polytheism have been made elsewhere as in monopolytheism. However, their synthesis is more than their mutual addition and must further be accepted as *acintya*, materially inconceivable, because classical monotheism and polytheism exclude each other. The concept of *acintya* is only fully admitted in the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Full-fledged theism is the Vedic version of fully developed potentism, the belief in an omnipotent God. Potentism is common amongst all theists, who make out approximately 70 percent of the world population. The focus on potentism is important for realizing God’s essential nature as well as for increasing love and respect amongst all theists. This subject is dealt with on www.Godbrotherhood.com.

Most people don't know God personally. Some experience Him as an impersonal energy, just like many people know the British government, the impersonal representation of the Queen. Some don't know God at all, like some tribal people in a distant place may not know that there is a Queen of England. Some honour God as the Supreme Controller, just like some honour the Queen as the supreme monarch. Some know Him as a personal friend, just like some know the Queen as a friend, and others have yet another relationship with God, just like there are many relationships with the Queen. Some approach God only if they are in trouble, just like those who only relate to the government in times of need. Some approach God for some temporary benefit, just like Monsieur Trudeau approached the Queen for shelter from the rain, and others may ask her for monetary support. Some approach God to glorify His majesty. Some approach God to simply serve Him causelessly, and some also approach God to develop a loving relationship with Him, just as someone may approach Queen Elizabeth to gain her as a friend. All these different forms of God and approaches to Him do not contradict His being one person, just as the many roles of the Queen do not contradict her being one person. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.40.7, Akrūra addresses Lord Kṛṣṇa:

*anye ca samskr̥tātmāno, vidhinābhihitena te
yajanti tvan-mayās tvām vai, bahu-mūrty-eka-mūrtikam*

“Those whose intelligence is purified by following the injunctions
of Vaiṣṇava scriptures absorb their minds in thought of You and worship
You as the one Supreme Lord manifesting in multiple forms.”

It is not that the various forms of God are independent deities, but They are manifestations of the one Supreme Lord, who assumes different forms simultaneously “with wondrous movements just like a theatrical actor” (*divya-gatir yathā natah, SB* 8.18.12). This understanding of the Supreme Lord's *acintya-bhedābheda* nature is very important, lest one commits the error of thinking that God is divisible, as it is advocated by polytheism. Being the one Supreme, God must be one without a second. Yet this does not mean that God cannot assume many roles and forms, as is easily understood by the example of the Queen. Another illustrious analogy is water. The same substance appears in many different forms; as solid ice, snow or hail, as liquid water, as invisible vapor or as visible clouds or fog. Since God is omnipotent, He also possesses the potency to be many, despite simultaneously being one without a second. If we denied God this divine potency, than He would be less than the Queen, less than a chameleon or even less than water, all of which can take on many forms while being one.

Prof. Sanyal wrote about the various forms of God: “These distinctions do not mean that Godhead is a divisible entity. In fact in all these manifestations it is the indivisible and undivided Divinity who appears. The difference is due either to the degree of manifestation or the greater or lesser presentation or reservation of any particular face or faces of the Divinity.” (Sanyal, 1933, Vol. I, Chapter 9.)

One may raise the question: “Which role of the Queen is the main person?” Is it the Queen as a child, because that is her first role? Is it the Queen as the Queen of England, because that is her official role? Or is it the Queen as wife, because that is her most intimate role? In other words, is it that the Queen of England also plays the role of a wife, or is it rather that Elizabeth, the wife of the Duke of Edinburgh also plays the role of the Queen of England? This question can be answered in different ways according to the perspective one chooses to be of importance. If the chosen perspective is that of the husband, then Elisabeth the wife is the main person, whereas if the chosen perspective is that of a common citizen of England, the Queen is the main person. If one considers their subjective perspective, one cannot say that one or the other is incorrect. Similarly, for some, Allah is the original God, for some, Kṛṣṇa is the original God, for some, the impersonal Brahman is the origin of all existence and for some, there is no intelligent origin of life at all.

According to our subjective perspective, our concept of God is one type of reality. The ultimate reality is only known to God Himself.

God's nature of *bhedābheda* is described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.43.17: *mallānām aśanir nṛṇām nara-varaḥ strīṇām smaro mūrtimān* (...), "The various groups of people in the arena regarded Kṛṣṇa in different ways when He entered it with His elder brother. The wrestlers saw Kṛṣṇa as a lightning bolt, the men of Mathurā as the best of males, the women as Cupid in person, the cowherd men as their relative, the impious rulers as a chastiser, His parents as their child, the King of the Bhojas as death, the unintelligent as the Supreme Lord's universal form, the *yogīs* as the Absolute Truth and the Vṛṣṇis as their supreme worshipable deity."

According to their *rasa*, relishment of a certain eternal relationship with God, people see the same Supreme Lord in different ways.

God has the power to manifest Himself in these various forms because He is the embodiment of all varieties of *rasas* (*raso vai saḥ, Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.7.1). Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda mentioned in this regard that "There cannot be any scope to draw distinction between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rāma [i.e. between any personal forms of God] save in the planes of respective *rasas*. We want to appreciate the respective positions of the One Absolute." (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 54.)

The various forms of the Supreme Lord
are one in person, but different in *rasa*.

This is the sublime philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, by which different forms of God, which manifest in reciprocation to different approaches, are harmonized. However, the question still remains if there is one essential form of God. Since all forms of God are one in person and only different in *rasa*, relishment of a certain transcendental relationship, this question can be answered by ascertaining the most essential *rasas*. A common proverb says: "Home is where the heart is." Naturally, the heart is attracted by love, and most attracted by the sweetest of all love. The one Supreme Lord reciprocates with innumerable approaches; atheistic, empiric, religious, etc; yet at heart, He essentially remains with His pure devotees. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.29: *samo 'ham sarva-bhūteṣu, na me dveṣyo 'sti na priyaḥ, ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā, mayi te teṣu cāpy aham,*

"I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all.
But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend,
is in Me, and I am also a friend to him."

Kṛṣṇa's preference for His pure devotees is not in contradiction to His universal equality to all, because He explains that He equally reciprocates with one and all according to their own approaches (*ye yathā mām prapadyante, tāms tathaiva bhajāmy aham, Bg* 4.11). Thus the more our love of God matures, the more Lord Kṛṣṇa manifests in all respects. Rain falls on barren and fertile land alike, but only fertile land produces flowers. God is everywhere, but He manifests fully only where He is welcomed with a pure heart. The real home of God is where His heart is essentially – where He is worshiped to the fullest extent in the sweetest kind of *rasas*. This essential transcendental abode of God is, according to Vedic literature, Goloka Vṛndāvana, the transcendental abode Vṛndāvana, where He is served by His most intimate devotees in one of the four essential *rasas*; close servitude, close friendship, parenthood and consortherhood. Anyone who impartially compares all various aspired relationships with God of various transcendentalists, will find that this type of sophisticated cultivation of various types of *rasas* is exclusively found in the worship of the Vaiṣṇavas, and that the sweetest and most relishable and intimate *rasas* are found in

the worship of the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas, the followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The topic of transcendental relationship with the Supreme Lord is further explained in Chapters 5.7 & 11.7.

According to His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*, Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously present everywhere, and simultaneously He essentially remains in one place, in Vṛndāvana. The closer we come to the sweet mode of worship of Vṛndāvana, the more Vṛndāvana manifests in our heart, and inseparably from Vṛndāvana, the most essential form of God, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of all *rasas*, manifests. We may know the king of Jagannātha Purī from official functions, but only if we know him via his personal friend, will we get to know his real essential personality. Similarly, the essential scientist, philosopher, or devotee, in short, the essentialist, will try to approach the final essence, Godhead, through His intimate devotees. The essentialist knows, that the Final Essence essentially remains with the most exalted essentialists, and therefore he prays to the Supreme Lord like Lord Śiva prayed to God (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.24.44):

*darśanam no didṛkṣūṇām, dehi bhāgavatārcitam
rūpaṁ priyatamaṁ svānām, sarvendriya-guṇāñjanam*



“My Lord, I wish to see the *darśana* or vision of exactly that form of Yours that especially Your dearest devotees worship. Please be merciful upon me and show me that form, for only that form worshiped by Your dearest devotees can perfectly satisfy all the demands of the senses.”

The dearest and most exalted devotees are the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana, who worship the beautiful form of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the above picture, they are relishing the *darśana* of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental form. The *gopīs* will be described in Chapter 6.13. One may argue that if the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* establishes, that according to the various approaches to the Truth, the Truth reveals Itself in various forms, then that establishes that the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* itself is just one of the many possible partial realities and cannot claim to be the ultimate reality. This argument is defeated when one considers that being able to explain and justify other philosophies in harmony with the advocated philosophy does not decrease the value of that philosophy but rather increases it, because the ultimate reality must be all-encompassing and not inimical towards a single fragment of creation. If there would be a single element in creation that is faulty per se, then the Creator would be at fault. Yet the Lord is *puṇyam*, completely perfect, and so is His creation (*Ī*, Invocation). Material consciousness produces disharmonious dualities, in which various philosophies, religions, sciences and cultures cannot be reconciled, whereas spiritual consciousness produces harmonious dualities, in which everything is reconciled. Therefore, by not defeating other philosophies (in terms

of devaluing, because they have their confidential purpose in the Lord's master plan), the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* actually defeats them, and is revealed as the vision of complete perception. This defeat is not painful to anyone, but sweet like the defeat of the quarrelling children by the mother's reconciling embrace.

Mother Veda, especially in her essential form of the mother-philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, has the capacity to embrace all other children-philosophies.



1



2



3



4



5

Besides having countless expansions, Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself also plays many different roles according to the likings of His devotees. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has innumerable roles with various names, ages, dresses, qualities and pastimes: (1) Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, wearing a crown and sitting on a golden throne, being worshiped with opulent offerings. (2) Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Pārtha-sārathi, the charioteer of His soldier friend Arjuna, wearing armour. (3) Kṛṣṇa as Yaśodā-nandana, the child of mother Yaśodā. (4) Kṛṣṇa as Gopāla, the cowherd boy, wearing village clothing and flowers and a peacock-feather in His hair, enjoying a picnic with His friends. (5) Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā-vallabha, the lover of Rādhārāṇī, wearing the charming robes of a lover.

Just as the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* can harmonize all philosophical tendencies, Lord Kṛṣṇa can harmonize and accommodate all different *rasas*, relishes of transcendental relationships with God, as He is the reservoir of all *rasas* (*raso vai saḥ, Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.7.1*).

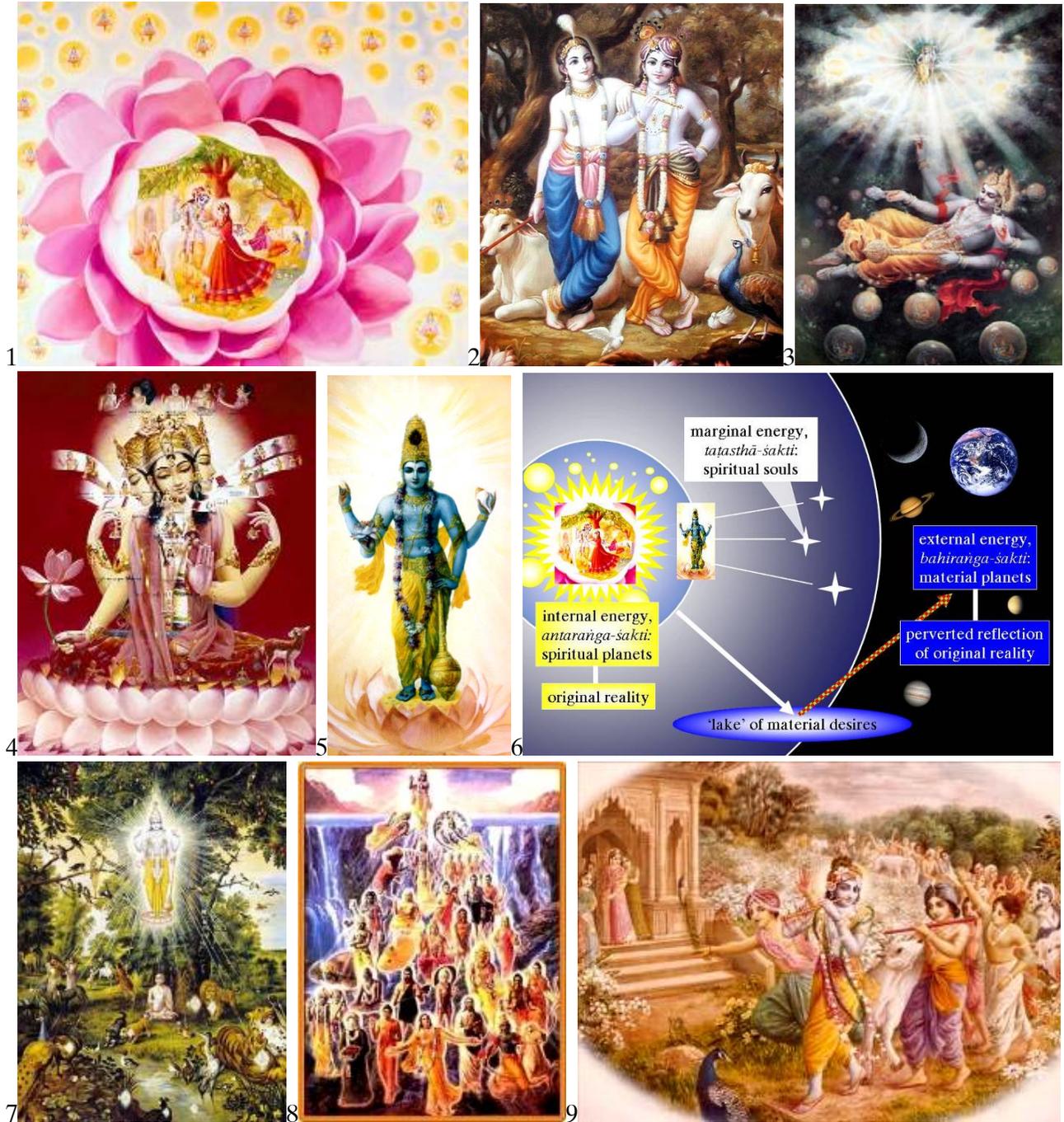
Lord Kṛṣṇa's all-encompassing quality serves as a proof of absolute Divinity, since only the greatest can embrace everything else.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda mentioned in this regard: “What are the salient [outstanding] features of the Absolute and what should be the nomenclature [system of naming] of the Absolute? The Absolute is evidently to welcome all sorts of manifestive nature, instead of lurking merely as the unknown in a region behind our sensuous scope.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 100.) Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja similarly explained that “In the highest Absolute there is room for the accommodation of anything and everything. Otherwise it cannot be Absolute. If there is something outside, it is not Absolute. Absolute One. One accomodates everything.” (Transcribed from his sermon. Śrīdhara 3, 1895-1988.) According to the individual preferences of His devotees, Kṛṣṇa reciprocates with them perfectly. This is His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*, being simultaneously one and many. As it is the sole wish of the devotees to please Kṛṣṇa, similarly, it is the sole wish of Kṛṣṇa to please His devotees. The nature of the spiritual world is that everyone is concerned with the other’s pleasure in the first place, and thus there is perfect harmonious reciprocation and satisfaction for all. As Kṛṣṇa is not bound to any of His manifestations such as time, age and other dimensions, He can choose to remain in whatever relationship eternally and hence His loving dealings are never checked like the relationships in the material world, which are obstructed by time, age, disease, illusion and death.



As Kṛṣṇa has the potency to expand into innumerable forms while still remaining complete, He is not disturbed by His various forms and relations, but He enjoys all of them simultaneously. This wondrous feat of His was for example manifested in His famous *rāsa*-dance, in which Kṛṣṇa expanded into many and danced with many different *gopīs* (cowherd girls) simultaneously, each of them thinking that Kṛṣṇa was dancing only with her. In this way He is able to please all completely.

5.4. The Cosmic Manifestation



Lord Kṛṣṇa's spiritual abode, Goloka Vṛndāvana, is the highest and original abode, where His pastimes with His eternal associates are continuing incessantly since time immemorial. Goloka Vṛndāvana lies in the spiritual world and is surrounded by innumerable other eternal spiritual abodes (picture 1). Śrī Kṛṣṇa possesses innumerable forms (*Brahmā-Saṁhitā* 5.33). His first expansion is His brother Lord Balarāma (picture 2, on His right side). In order to manifest the external material worlds, Lord Balarāma expands into Mahā-Saṅkarṣaṇa, who expands into the four-armed Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, also called Mahā-Viṣṇu (Picture 3), who lies down within the causal ocean (*kāraṇa-jala*). During His sleeping, innumerable universes are generated along with His breathing. Mahā-Viṣṇu expands into Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, who enters each and every created universe. From His navel, a golden lotus grows, and Lord Brahmā (picture 4), the four-headed

designer of the material universe takes birth on that lotus (“from My navel arose the universal lotus, the birthplace of self-born Brahmā.” – *SB* 11.24.11). Lord Brahmā is a *deva*, a demigod, and he creates the material planets and all different types of material bodies, such as plant, animal and human bodies according to Lord Viṣṇu’s will. Lord Brahmā does not create the *jīva*, the living entity, who is spiritual. The material creation is created and again completely annihilated in infinite cycles, each major cycle being as long as Lord Brahmā’s day – 4.32 billion years. According to Vedic calculations, since the last point of creation, 2.3 billion years have passed. A day of Lord Brahmā is divided into 1000 minor cycles called *divya-yugas* (4.32 million years). After every *divya-yuga*, the world is depopulated to a great extent and then repopulated. Lord Viṣṇu further expands into Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu (picture 5), the Paramātmā feature of the Supreme Lord; the Supersoul.

At the time of creation, all the *jīvas*, the spirit souls or living entities, emanate from Mahā-Viṣṇu (*SB* 2.6.42, *Bs* 5.11). At the time of annihilation they again merge into His body, where they rest in a sleepy state without losing their individuality until the next creation. *sa nityo nitya-sambandhaḥ, prakṛtiś ca paraiva sā*, “The same *jīva* is eternal and is for eternity and without a beginning joined to the Supreme Lord by the tie of an eternal kinship.” – *Bs* 5.21. The *jīvas* are manifest as part of the *taṭasthā-śakti* (picture 6), the marginal energy of Kṛṣṇa (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 6.7.61). The *jīvas* are called marginal (bordering) energy, because they are situated between the internal spiritual energy and the external material energy of Kṛṣṇa. Those *jīvas* who follow their original nature of serving Kṛṣṇa enter into the internal energy of Kṛṣṇa, attain Kṛṣṇa’s spiritual abode and an eternal spiritual body. Those *jīvas* who develop separatist desires that go against their eternal nature of *bhakti* enter the external, material energy of Kṛṣṇa, where they are put in *māyā*, the illusion of being independent of Kṛṣṇa. The external energy works in such a way that it covers the *jīva* with false designations such as various material bodies, with which the *jīva* then identifies. Only in *māyā*, the *jīva* is able to forget his or her real nature as an eternal spiritual servant of Kṛṣṇa. Those *jīvas* who tend to the external world due to separatist desires enter into various material bodies created by Lord Brahmā. The demigod Brahmā only creates the external material bodies, whereas the indwelling spirit soul i.e. that which is established as the *jīva* by the Vedic science, the actual eternal living entity, can only be created by Lord Viṣṇu, an expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

To accompany the *jīva* who has fallen into the material world, Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu enters the body of every living being as his eternal well-wisher (*suhṛdam sarva-bhūtānām*, *Bg* 5.29) and witness in the form of Paramātmā: “The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone’s heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy.” – *Bg* 18.61. Paramātmā resides with the *jīva* in the heart region (picture 7). The material world is a creation for the separatist *jīvas* to live out their material desires, and when they realize that their separatism only leads to suffering and then turn to God with devotion, Paramātmā guides them back into the spiritual world through various means like Kṛṣṇa’s Avatāras (picture 8), devotees, scriptures, or by personal instruction from within: “To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” – *Bg* 10.10. Kṛṣṇa descends to the earth planet in various forms, who appear in every *divya-yuga* (4.32 million years), but He appears only once in 1000 *divya-yugas* in His original form of Kṛṣṇa (picture 9). The present *divya-yuga* is one of these very rare and precious *divya-yugas*. Kṛṣṇa’s eternal pastime in the spiritual world is called *aprākṛta-līlā* (picture 1), and His pastime on earth is called *bhauma-līlā* (picture 9). The *bhauma-līlā* took place only 5’000 years ago, a very close event, considering that He appears on earth only every 4.32 billion (4’300’000’000) years. For the average citizens, Kṛṣṇa seems like a mortal man or demigod, because He appears to them wearing a mask that creates the impression that he is human (*SB* 1.1.20), but to His devotees He reveals Himself as the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*Bg* 18.55). His *bhauma-līlā* manifests not only on earth, but in all universes. It is an expansion of His *aprākṛta-līlā*, which continues uninterrupted. This is the mystic power of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who can be simultaneously one and many. This nature of Kṛṣṇa is understood by the vision or philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* through the practice of *bhakti*.

5.5. The Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān Features of God

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.32.26) explains the Lord's nature of *acintya-bhedābheda* in terms of Him appearing in three main features according to different approaches:

*jñāna-mātram param brahma
paramātmēśvaraḥ pumān
drśy-ādibhiḥ pṛthag bhāvair
bhagavān eka iyate*

“Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead alone is complete transcendental knowledge, but according to the different processes of understanding He appears differently, either as impersonal Brahman, as Paramātmā, or as Bhagavān.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously transcendental as Bhagavān, immanent as Paramātmā, and omnipresent as Brahman.

Brahman is the all-pervading impersonal effulgence of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental body: *brahma—āṅga-kānti tānra, nirviśeṣa prakāśe, sūrya yena carma-cakṣe jyotirmāyā bhāse*, “The manifestation of the impersonal Brahman, which is without variety, is the rays of Kṛṣṇa's bodily effulgence. It is exactly like the sun. When the sun is seen by our ordinary eyes, it appears to consist simply of effulgence.” – *Cc* 2.20.159. The same is also expressed in the fifteenth verse of the *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda explains: “Brahman, the impersonal Absolute Truth, is all-pervading, and Paramātmā is locally situated in everyone's heart, but Bhagavān, who is worshipable by the devotees, is the original cause of all causes.” (*SB* 6.9.42, purport). “*Bhagavad-gītā* confirms that Kṛṣṇa, by His Brahman feature, is all-pervading (*mayā tatam idam sarvam, Bg* 9.4), but Brahman depends upon Kṛṣṇa (*brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham, Bg* 14.27). Without Kṛṣṇa, there could be no existence of Brahman or Paramātmā. Therefore, Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the ultimate realization of the Absolute Truth. Although He is present as the Paramātmā in the core of everyone's heart, He is nonetheless one, either as an individual or as the all-pervading Brahman.” (*SB* 7.6.20, purport.) Brahman is experienced as a state of universal eternity, equality and interconnectedness without sufferings by the transcendentalist:

*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā
na śocati na kāṅkṣati
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
mad-bhaktim labhate parām*

“One who is thus transcendently situated at once realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me.” – *Bg* 18.54.

This state of liberation can theoretically be experienced by all transcendentalists of all types of religions or approaches to a higher truth. The impersonal Brahman realization has similarities to the attainment of *nirvāna* or Tao in the Buddhist and Taoist culture respectively. Brahman realization is the first step of realizing the absolute truth, and thus the entrance into sainthood. Actually, those who experience the joys and inspirations of the all-uniting energy that pervades everything are experiencing Kṛṣṇa's impersonal Brahman effulgence, no matter in which confession or external practice they may be. This explains how sainthood is possible in various types of confessions, and refutes the phallacies of sectarian doctrines, which claim that certain saints belong

exclusively to a concept of a certain sect, and not to a Universal Lord. Even natural science, especially quantum physics, is approaching a non-dual conception of nature and draws inspirations from spiritual traditions (see Chapter 11). Since the Brahman realization is the first stage of God-realization, it is not discarded by the devotees, but it should be seen in proper relation to the higher personal forms of God. If it is postulated as the ultimate reality, then people are deprived of developing the highest relation to reality, loving devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Bhagavān.

The Brahman effulgence is compared to the sunlight emanating from the sun, dissipating the darkness of material existence. One who comes out of the dark cave of material existence is overwhelmed and blinded by this bright effulgence, and cannot easily realize that this effulgence emanates from Kṛṣṇa, just as people who have spent their entire life in a dark cave cannot recognize the sun when they are blinded by the sunshine for the first time (see Chapter 2.3, Plato's cave). The monists aim at completely merging with Brahman, taking it to be the supreme manifestation of truth (*Bg* 18. 54, quoted above, describes *experiencing*, not *merging* with Brahman). The monists claim that merging with the impersonal Brahman is eternal liberation, but Veda speaks against this claim. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.2.13 states: *nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām*, “The Supreme Brahman, Godhead, is the fundamental eternal being amongst all eternal beings.” (quoted from *Bg* 2.12, purport.) Lord Kṛṣṇa says that living entities are His *eternal* fragmental parts (*mamaivāṁśo jīvaloke, jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ*, *Bg* 15.7). Although it is possible to enter into the Brahman effulgence for some time like a green bird can enter a green tree, the concept of complete merging with Brahman must be understood as illusory. “The *jīvas* are eternally individuals, so an option such as merging into Brahman is thoroughly impossible for them to attain.” (*Jd* 12.) “Striving for *brahmanīrvāṇa*, merging into Brahman, is not the same as attaining *prema* – it is merely an illusory goal. Actually, impersonal liberation ultimately does not exist, it is present like a flower in the sky – a non-entity – and is a hoax upon the living entity.” (*Jd* 18.)

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.2.32 mentions that those with immature intelligence, not knowing *bhakti*, the actual goal of life, falsely consider themselves liberated by dint of strenuous practices – yet they again fall down into material existence due to lack of *bhakti*. As it is the soul's *sanātana-dharma*, eternal inherent nature, to engage in *bhakti* (*Cc* 2.20.108), the living entity cannot find fulfillment in the impersonal Brahman effulgence where there is complete absence of interpersonal loving dealings and devotional service. Thus he returns to the material dualities (where at least material dealings are possible), because he lacks knowledge of the eternal transcendental world with spiritual dualities and personalities. The path of liberation is not at all secure unless we attain the devotional service of the Lord (*SB* 1.5.12). The advanced devotee prays to the Lord that He may kindly remove the impersonal Brahman effulgence that covers His face and exhibit His transcendental Person to His pure devotee (*Śrī Īsopaniṣad, mantra* 15). Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself says that the all-pervading impersonal Brahman is merely the expansion of His energy (*Bg* 9.4). Paramātmā and Bhagavān are His personal features, but Brahman is impersonal. Therefore, the monists are also called impersonalists. Although those monists who are realized monists are accepted as saintly³⁸, they can only realize the impersonal aspect of the absolute truth, whereas the realized devotees automatically realize Brahman and Paramātmā when they realize Bhagavān, their original cause, just like one automatically gets leaves and branches when one gets the whole tree.

³⁸ There are mainly two types of monists: the *brahmavādīs*, who accept Bhagavān as transcendental, but aspire for Brahman, and the *māyāvādīs*, who claim that Bhagavān is merely a material manifestation of the impersonal ultimate. While the *brahmavādīs* can realize Brahman, the *māyāvādīs*, due to their offensive behavior towards Bhagavān, who is the origin of Brahman, cannot fully realize Brahman, and are thus not accepted as saintly. One should remember that classifications like *brahmavādī* and *māyāvādī* also refer to philosophical tendencies, which can be present in any person to different degrees. If somebody is unwilling to aspire for theism and aspires for Brahman-realization, he is advised to avoid *māyāvāda*. Then he may realize Brahman, and he may also further progress to realize Bhagavān by becoming a devotee, as did for example Śukadeva Gosvāmī or the four Kumāras, who were *brahmavādīs* before (*Cc* 2.24.113).

Paramātmā is the immanent aspect of Kṛṣṇa as the Supersoul, witnessing everything and guiding all *jīvas*:

*īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ
hr̥d-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati
bhrāmāyan sarva-bhūtāni
yantrārūḍhāni māyayā*

“The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone’s heart,
O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities,
who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy.” – *Bg* 18.61.

The guidance of the Supersoul can be indirectly experienced by anyone. Famous scientists, inventors and artists have expressed that their new ideas did not develop from a series of thoughts, but came to them as a sudden flash of inspiration. When we consider to commit a misdeed, we are overcome with a bad conscience. There are many officially reported mysterious warnings of friends or of an inner voice that held people back from entering the empire state building in New York on the eleventh of September 2001. These are all promptings of the Supersoul. This phenomenon has been reported in many other cases of catastrophes, and also in creative arrangements, such as ‘almost impossible coincidences’ that lead to important meetings of philosophers, friends or future parents. During a five weeks holiday in England, my mother once wanted to meet her old friend who worked close to London, but could not trace out her address. The day before her departure she was walking through the streets of London. She saw a poster of an unfamiliar movie and had a strong impulse that ‘this is a brilliant movie and I must see it’, as if someone had told her to. She entered the cinema, although she very rarely goes to cinemas and only with company and recommendation. It was the most boring movie she ever saw, and she wondered just what in the world had lead her to watch it. Suddenly, someone tapped her on her shoulder from behind. It was her old friend that she had tried to locate, and to their astonishment, a similar thing had happened to her; she was spontaneously called into the cinema by an inner voice. My mother recalls other similar incidents of a strong inner guidance. Once, at the age of fourteen, after a usual visit to her grandfather, she sensed a strong certitude that this will be her last visit to him, although there were no signs of his passing away soon. She returned three times from the threshold to embrace her grandfather again and again, who passed away the next day due to a heart attack.

The directing of the Supersoul, who cannot be seen directly by an unrealized person, is the scientific basis of most so-called mysteries. The materialist is astonished at the ‘high rate of happenings in life whose coincidences have a chance of possibility of almost 1 : ∞ [infinity]’, i.e. practically zero. But even this fact that establishes mathematically that life without intelligent guidance has almost no chance of possibility cannot evoke faith in a superior Controller in the staunch materialist, due to being blinded by envious doubts. For those who are averse to their original nature of loving service to God, the thought of the existence of a supreme Controller invokes envy, because they are trying to be masters instead of servants. This envy makes it impossible to realize God (*Bg* 16.18-20), because He can only be realized by *bhakti* (*Bg* 18.55).

The person who indirectly experiences the guidance of the Supersoul believes such guidance to be an arrangement of providence or of an invisible God. But only those who devote themselves to the Supersoul scientifically, i.e. according to the Vedic science, can fully realize the personal four-handed form of Paramātmā (picture 5 & 7), like some *yogīs* who aim at realizing Paramātmā. This is because the Supersoul usually does not appear in forms in which we have no faith in, but in accordance with our chosen approach to God: “In whatever transcendental mellow My devotee worships Me, I reciprocate with him. That is My natural behavior.” – *Cc* 1.4.19. In order to reciprocate with the *jīva*’s inclinations, Paramātmā can take on any form like Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Buddha, Lord Śiva, Lord Jesus, etc. “I make his faith steady so that he can devote himself to that

particular deity.” – *Bg* 7.21. This explains how it is possible that various people with different visions are convinced that they have seen ‘the true God’. As Paramātmā is a manifestation of Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu who in turn is an expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa, it is to be understood that if Paramātmā reveals His form of Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu, it is an ontological upgrade, whereas if Paramātmā reciprocates with the *jīva* in the form of demigods or through other inferior media, it is an ontological downgrade or covering. In fact, Paramātmā can act through any media such as a known or unknown person, a book, nature, etc. The Supersoul is considered the *caitya-guru*, the inner Guru, and because this inner Guru is difficult to understand, if we are very sincere, He appears externally as a bona fide spiritual master, so we can take proper guidance from him (*Cc* 1.1.58, see Chapter 16).

Thus the *acintya-bhedābheda* nature of Lord Kṛṣṇa is explained in terms of His manifesting in various forms, through various deities or media. Paramātmā-realization is the second stage of realizing the absolute truth and the second stage of sainthood. Those who have realized Paramātmā can take instruction from this localized form of God everywhere through everything. Seeing the Supersoul residing next to the soul in the heart of all living entities, it becomes easy to practically, not only theoretically, see and honor God in all, which is the best way to universal peace. However, without realizing that the Supersoul is a manifestation of Bhagavān, the transcendental Supreme Personality of Godhead, there is the danger that we confuse the Supersoul to be our own essential self and thus fall into the trap of monism. *SB* 4.28.40 explains that someone of perfect knowledge knows how to distinguish between the localized individual soul and the all-pervasive Supersoul³⁹.

Bhagavān is the transcendental Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, or Viṣṇu. Bhagavān literally means ‘the one who possesses all opulences’. Like the term ‘Kṛṣṇa’ or ‘Viṣṇu’, ‘Bhagavān’ is not a sectarian designation, but a term to indicate the universal Supreme Personality of Godhead. The term *Bhagavad-gītā* means ‘the song sung by Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa’. The *Bhagavad-gītā* is considered to contain the essence of the Vedic teachings and is well-known all over the world as the Vedic *Bible*, in which God Himself speaks (*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*, “Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa said.” – *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.2). Those people striving mainly for liberation in eternity tend towards the all-pervasive Brahman aspect of Godhead; those striving mainly for perfection through knowledge tend towards the Paramātmā aspect of Godhead; and those striving mainly for transcendental bliss through pure devotion tend towards Bhagavān, the complete and fully transcendental aspect of God (see below chart). Bhagavān is *sac-cid-ānanda* (*sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*), eternal, spiritually conscious and entirely blissful:

*īśvaraḥ parāmaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam,*

“Kṛṣṇa who is known as Govinda is the Supreme Godhead.
He is the primal cause, and He is the very embodiment of eternity,
transcendental knowledge and pure bliss.” – *Brahmā-Saṁhitā* 5.1.

In Brahman and Paramātmā, the three aspects of *sac-cid-ānanda* are not fully developed.

³⁹ The Supersoul is all-pervasive, omniscient and localized, but the individual soul is not all-pervasive and omniscient.

Bhagavān's possessing the fullest manifestation of *sac-cid-ānanda* establishes the form of Bhagavān to be the original, most genuine and most developed of the three main forms of Godhead.

Chart 1: The three aspects of spiritual reality according to the three stages of realization

	<i>sat</i> (eternity)	<i>cit</i> (transcendental wisdom)	<i>ānanda</i> (transcendental bliss)
Brahman- realization, first stage of sainthood. All-pervading eternity.	+ Eternity is experienced, yet only in its impersonal aspect.	+ The wisdom of the eternal Brahman makes one fearless and saintly. But where there is no subject and object, there cannot be full wisdom.	+ Where there is no subject and object, there cannot be complete bliss. The 'bliss of Brahman' still lacks the personal dimension. Complete bliss is only derived from interpersonal transcendental loving relations.
Paramātmā- realization, second stage of sainthood. Immanent knowledge.	++ Eternity is experienced in a more personal way.	++ Paramātmā can give spiritual knowledge from within (He can also give material inspiration, but that does not account for the receiver's saintlyness).	++ Although Paramātmā is personified, He is only internally manifest, and not externally as an easily distinguishable person different from the self with own personality, and thus the personal exchange of love that is the only source of complete <i>ānanda</i> cannot manifest.
Bhagavān- realization, final stage of sainthood. Complete transcendental blissful reality.	+++ Complete eternity is part of true wisdom and bliss (which both must be eternal). Bhagavān is eternality in person.	+++ Complete wisdom, which includes eternity (worldly knowledge is non-eternal and thus not real wisdom) and is part of bliss, is experienced. How to serve Bhagavān is real wisdom, because by serving Him, all ends are served.	+++ Real and complete bliss is <i>premānanda</i> , devotional bliss. It is only experienced in a loving relationship with Bhagavān, who is <i>sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ</i> , eternity, spiritual knowledge and bliss personified. Bliss includes knowledge and eternity, because real bliss must be eternal, and bereft of ignorance. Hence <i>prema</i> for Bhagavān is the only real bliss and guarant for complete knowledge and eternity.

Actually, the spiritual *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* cannot be explained with material language, because in the non-eternal material world, they only exist in a perverted way. One meaning of *sat* is substantiveness, and as such there seems to be *sat* in the material world. But another, inseparable meaning of *sat* is (eternal) endurance. Veda defines substantiveness as eternal: "Whatever has a beginning and an end is unreal. To be accepted as factually existing, something must possess the same quality as pure spirit – eternal, non-decaying existence." – *SB* 12.4.28-29. Material life is non-eternal, and hence its impression of being substantive is an illusion in form of a super-imposition on the eternal spiritual self. Material knowledge is not real knowledge because it does not inform about real eternal life and latest at the time of death it is exposed as useless. Material so-called bliss is not real bliss because it is temporary, and when it ends, it results in suffering.

The hierarchy of the three spiritual aspects of reality are also recognizable in the material world: the primary human necessity or instinct is to survive by all means. In times of war or famine, surviving is prior to wisdom or interpersonal bliss. Only when existence is settled, one invests more energy in knowledge and interpersonal bliss. Even most learned persons cannot understand the mystery of interpersonal bliss as in love relations and are spellbound by it. The proof of the superiority of interpersonal bliss is also evident in today's modern times, in which worldly existence and knowledge seem to be guaranteed for most, but still, most people are mentally unhappy due to

lack of complete interpersonal bliss and thus there is increasing violence and depression. Real bliss, wisdom and eternity can only be found in the spiritual world in a relationship with the actual source and object of bliss, wisdom and eternity; Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The superiority of bliss over wisdom and eternity also establishes that substantiveness and knowledge are evidences that are inferior to bliss. One can theoretically grasp eternity as evidence of real substantiveness, but already complete wisdom goes beyond the imagination of the material mind. Complete wisdom is therefore called *acintya*, materially inconceivable. This, and how the *acintya* can become spiritually conceivable, is expressed by the wisdom of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Real spiritual bliss is furthermore *acintya* to the material mind and can only become evident to a soul who is not covered with material designations. Vedic science gradually uncovers the soul from material designations and then by its inherent nature of *sac-cid-ānanda*, the soul can perceive the *sac-cid-ānanda* nature of reality, i.e. the spiritual reality's self-evident nature can be appreciated by revelation⁴⁰. Because the material senses are faulty, even the best so-called 'evidence' remains doubtful on the material platform, and thus Descartes' "doubt is everything" remains the conclusion of the genuine thinker. On the other hand, spiritual senses are complete and perfect, and thus, when perceived by them, the objects of the transcendental reality don't leave the slightest trace of doubt. Transcendental perception is the only genuine evidence, and once it is achieved, it scientifically establishes all material evidence as minor. Transcendental perception also clearly reveals the grades of evidence of *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*. It is at that point where one realizes that *premānanda*, the bliss of love of God, is the highest possible evidence of reality and far superior to *cit* and *sat*, transcendental wisdom and substantivity, what to speak of material evidences of material wisdom or substantivity.

The soul's inherent desire to live eternally and avoid death indicates the soul's inherent nature of eternity (*sat*), because the *asat* (non-eternal) cannot desire to be *sat*. Similarly, the desire for complete wisdom (*cit*) and bliss (*ānanda*) indicates the inherent nature of *cit* and *ānanda* of the soul. My spiritual master explained this in his discourses. Everybody is looking for the threefold wealth of *sac-cid-ānanda*. The only problem is that the conditioned souls try to find life's wealth without its actual substance, maintainer and object – the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is as ridiculous as the notion to desire sunshine without the sun. The soul is and desires *sac-cid-ānanda* because he comes from Kṛṣṇa, who is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*, the one origin of *sac-cid-ānanda*. The soul is and desires *sac-cid-ānanda* because he is maintained by Kṛṣṇa, who is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*, the essential giver of *sac-cid-ānanda*. The soul is and desires *sac-cid-ānanda* because he is created to please Kṛṣṇa, who is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*, the essential object of *sac-cid-ānanda*. The name 'Kṛṣṇa' means that He is all-attractive because He is the source, giver and object of *sac-cid-ānanda*. The only reason why some people are not directly attracted to Kṛṣṇa is that their real self is covered by *māyā* due to artificial separatist desires. These desires can only be overcome through the association of those who are self-realized, i.e. who don't have separatist desires and are thus in harmony with their real eternal *sac-cid-ānanda* nature of serving the Lord (*Cc* 2.22.51). The above chart establishes that the Bhagavān aspect of God/the absolute reality is the highest, because only in a relationship with Bhagavān can we experience *premānanda*, the highest goal of life and ultimate evidence of reality.

In order to establish the super-excellence of His form as Bhagavān, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself says in *Bhagavad-gītā* 14.27 & 7.24-25: "I am the basis of the impersonal Brahman (...)." "Unintelligent men, who do not know Me perfectly, think that I, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, was impersonal before and have now assumed this personality. Though they may be good scholars in the Vedic literatures, they are practically ignorant of My inconceivable energies and My eternal forms of personality. The reason is that I reserve the power of not being exposed to the

⁴⁰ According to the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, the soul is to some extent one in quality with God; God is *sac-cid-ānanda*, and the soul is *anu-sac-cid-ānanda*; the soul follows the Lord's nature of *sac-cid-ānanda* (see Chapter 14.1).

nondevotees by the mystic curtain of My inner potency, *yoga-māyā*. The unintelligent are therefore unaware of My eternal form, which is never to be vanquished and is unborn.” In contrast to the materialists and monists who ignore or minimize the form of Bhagavān, the devotee is eligible to realize Bhagavān by dint of his devotion: “My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding.” – *Bhagavad-gītā* 11.54.

Although it appears so, Lord Kṛṣṇa is not anthropomorphic (a humanized god) – rather the human form comes closest to the form of God. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is also not of this world – rather the world is of Him, although He simultaneously appears in this world to manifest His pastimes for His devotees. This is possible by dint of His materially inconceivable transcendental potency, as disclosed by Lord Brahmā, the demigod of material creation: “My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa (...), although You are now within this universe, the whole universal creation is within Your transcendental body – a fact You demonstrated by exhibiting the universe within Your abdomen before Your mother Yaśodā [see Chapter 5.7]. You can do this by dint of Your inconceivable potency of *yoga-māyā*. (...) Just as this entire universe, including You, was exhibited within Your abdomen, so it is now manifested here externally in the same exact form. How could such things happen unless arranged by Your inconceivable energy? (...) To persons ignorant of Your actual transcendental position, You appear as part of the material world. (...) You are the one Supreme Soul, the primeval Supreme Personality, the Absolute Truth – self-manifested, endless and beginningless. You are eternal and infallible, perfect and complete, without any rival and free from all material designations.” – *SB* 10.14.16-23.

Of all forms of Bhagavān like Lord Viṣṇu, Lord Rāma, etc., Lord Kṛṣṇa is the only one who possesses the four extra qualities of *mādhurya* (divine sweetness – see Chapter 5.7), and hence the joy one derives from serving Him is called *paramānanda*, the ultimate joy. Since the complete cannot come from the part, but the part comes from the complete, it can be concluded that Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *parama-tattva*, the ultimate truth, from whom all other forms such as Paramātmā and Brahman expand. This is confirmed by Arjuna in *Bhagavad-gītā* 10.12: *param brahma param dhāma* (...), “You, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ultimate abode, the purest, the absolute Truth, the Supreme Brahman. You are the eternal, transcendental, original Person, the unborn, the greatest. All the great sages such as Nārada, Asita, Devala and Vyāsa confirm this truth about You, and now You Yourself are declaring it to me.” The realization of Brahman and Paramātmā is never condemned by the devotee, in fact the realization of Brahman and Paramātmā is included in the realization of Bhagavān, Their original source. Therefore, the devotees point out that:

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the essential object of realization and worship,
because He is the original fountainhead of all forms of God, and in Him
repose all qualities of *mādhurya*, which are the most precious features of God,
and because the essential purpose of creation is a personal loving exchange
between the supremely sweet Lord Kṛṣṇa and His creation.

As such the devotee who attains the sight of Brahman prays to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa (excerpt of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* 16): *vyūha raśmīn samūha tejo yat te rūpaṁ kalyāṇa-tamaṁ tat te paśyāmi*,

“Please remove the rays of Your impersonal Brahman-effulgence
So that I can see Your most auspicious personal form of bliss!”

Bhagavān-realization is the third and highest realization of the absolute truth and the highest stage of sainthood. Realizing Bhagavān means to realize the original Personality of Godhead. This includes His distinct names, forms, qualities and pastimes who are eternally manifest and cannot be changed or attained by speculation. Kṛṣṇa is the original Bhagavān, but He also has other forms of Bhagavān, which are all described in the Vedic literatures. One who realizes his relationship with Bhagavān *directly* interacts with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whereas Paramātmā and Brahman are expansions of Bhagavān.

Godhead can act in all possible ways through His three main manifestations: as Bhagavān, He is uniquely situated in His transcendental abode beyond being disturbed by the various happenings in the vast creation; simultaneously, He is immanent as the personal Paramātmā indwelling countless hearts; and simultaneously, He is omnipresent as His all-pervading impersonal form of Brahman. This is His wonderful nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*. The *Kūrma Purāṇa* states: *asthūlaś cāṇuś caiva, sthūla 'ṇuś caiva sarvataḥ, avarṇaḥ sarvataḥ proktaḥ, śyāmo raktāntalocanaḥ, aiśvarya-yogād bhagavān, viruddhārtho 'bhidhīyate, tathāpi doṣo parame, naivāhārya kathañcana, guṇāviruddhā apy ete, samāhāryāḥ samantataḥ*, “Conflicting qualities are wonderfully adjusted in the personality of the Supreme Lord. He is transcendental without a material form, minutely small or atomic in size, yet He is also corporal and all-pervasive in every respect. Although His body does not have a material complexion, the aura of His body is of a transcendently darkish hue and the scriptures describe the edges of His eyes as reddish. He is endowed with absolute opulence and therefore even contrary characteristics may embellish His personality, but in His personality they are not incriminating imperfections. Though these characteristics are ostensibly opposing, in the personality of the Supreme Lord they shine in divine excellence and are variously employed in His *līlā*, transcendental pastime, by the supreme independent will of the Lord.” (quoted in *Jd* 26.)

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the concentrated personal center of creation – yet this does not mean that He thus becomes limited and cannot simultaneously be present everywhere. In the concise and poetic words of Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja: “Try to see the Center everywhere – the Center is everywhere.” It is not that Lord Kṛṣṇa becomes limited by possessing a body because His body consists of pure spirit; His body is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*, eternally youthful, spiritually conscious and ever-blissful (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.1). His form is all-powerful, beyond all laws and dimensions, and thus unlimited in all respects. This explains seemingly contradictory statements of the Supreme Lord such as “I exist within everything created, and at the same time I am outside of everything.” – *SB* 2.9.35. By dint of His *acintya-śakti*, materially inconceivable spiritual potency, He can simultaneously be localized and all-pervading, personal and impersonal, one and manifold – without contradictions.

Some claim that the absolute Truth is exclusively impersonal, while others claim that He is exclusively personal. Some claim that He is exclusively one, and some claim that He is exclusively manifold. Due to virtual exclusions of certain aspects of the all-inclusive absolute truth, these concepts are all incomplete. Some religions accept that God is both personal and impersonal, one and manifold, but they are unable to explain how He can be so simultaneously and harmoniously, and thus God seems to possess a split personality similar to a mundane patient of schizophrenia. Śrī Caitanya revealed the essential explanation of Veda, which explains how God can be simultaneously personal and impersonal and remain one unified and harmonious entity by dint of His *acintya-śakti*. This glorious reconciliation has been brought by Śrī Caitanya with His *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, while before, there were different conceptions beyond a vision of reconciliation: “The impersonal conception of the Absolute and the personal conception were at loggerheads with each other [in disagreement] and they have both been pacified by Śrī Caitanya’s offering the interpretation of *acintya-bhedābheda*.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 107.)

For many people, the personal form of God with attributes is considered minor to the impersonal, attributeless form of God. Although Lord Kṛṣṇa very clearly explains, as recorded in

the *Bhagavad-gītā*, that His form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the supermost manifestation of God above the Supersoul and Brahman, many commentators of the *Gītā* still misrepresent the Supreme Personality of Godhead as a minor manifestation of Brahman, some even attribute material qualities on Him, or present Him as a mere fictive metaphor to serve their speculations. The Vaiṣṇava scholar Steven Rosen has compared the over 500 different English translations of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and found that “(...) The majority of translators misunderstood the basic teaching of this seminal text – that God is a person, Kṛṣṇa, and that the goal of life is to develop love for Him. Instead, these ‘*Gītās*’ claimed that God is an abstract force, an impersonal entity (...).” (Rosen 2, 2010.) This phenomenon of downgrading Godhead to something impersonal can be observed in people of all backgrounds and has many reasons, some of which are:

- (1) They see how all material forms are conditioned by imperfection, suffering and death, and thus they conclude or prefer that the Absolute is formless. The analogy is the cow who once had to flee from a burning cowshed and thence developed a phobia towards everything that resembles the colors of fire such as tomatoes, the sun, etc.
- (2) They have no information of or faith in the fact that the Supreme Lord can have transcendental personality, qualities and form, all of which are perfect in all respects, eternal and ever-blissful without a tinge of suffering.
- (3) They are not keenly interested in the personal form of God, because they knowingly or unknowingly have too many selfish interests and are disinclined to accept ‘another rival’ in their pursuit of egocentric enjoyment (*bhukti*) or non-dualistic liberation (*mukti*). Sarcastically speaking, the impersonal form of God is ‘very practical’, because ‘it’ does not tell you what to do, you don’t have to serve ‘it’, you don’t have to bow down and surrender to ‘it’, etc. Accepting God as person means that you have to accept Him as *He* is and worship Him as *He* likes. They are not ready for such devotion (*bhakti*), and thus they miss true love and true knowledge⁴¹.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously transcendental as Bhagavān, immanent as Paramātmā, and omnipresent as Brahman. The first verse of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* mentions that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the primeval cause of creation, and that He is directly and indirectly conscious of all His creations and their purposes (*anvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñāḥ*, SB 1.1.1). It is not that Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Himself directly involved in witnessing everyone’s actions like Paramātmā does; Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is exclusively engaged in loving relationships with His devotees, just as the Queen has certain reserved dealings and is not directly engaged in catching pickpockets. Yet still, Bhagavān is indirectly omnipresent by His expanded manifestations of Paramātmā and Brahman, and as soon as a person wants to seriously realize God, Bhagavān gradually reveals Himself unto him, just like the Queen is indirectly represented by the government and other instances, and if someone is recognized by her representations due to his outstanding service, he will ultimately be presented directly to the Queen. And just as a very sincere servant of the government may be invited to meet the Queen even though he never thought of meeting the Queen, similarly, a very sincere seeker of the absolute truth may be introduced to Kṛṣṇa by His mercy, even though the seeker may never have considered Kṛṣṇa to be the absolute truth. This has been practically experienced by sincere seekers of the absolute truth of all fields such as science, welfare or religion.

Through His various forms and energies, Kṛṣṇa can be one and many, transcendently localized, immanent and omnipresent, personal and impersonal simultaneously and all the while remain undisturbed and complete. This can only be understood by *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* through the practice of *bhakti*.

⁴¹ *bhukti*, *mukti* and *bhakti* will be compared thoroughly in Chapter 14.18.

5.6. The Transcendental Deity Form of God



The authentic deity form of God must be distinguished from a concocted idol. The concocted idol has been misused by many people and the transcendental deity has been widely misunderstood. In this subchapter, the proper understanding of both the deity and the concocted idol shall be presented. Before entering into other considerations, it should be noted that a proper understanding of the deity can arise from common sense. Unfortunately, common sense is the most uncommon thing. This is so, because true common sense comes from serving the common essence, God, and this activity of *bhakti* is very rare in this world. No devotee will deny that God is omnipotent – but how much faith do we have in it? If we really believe that God is omnipotent, then the question if He can manifest in a deity form never comes to our mind. Of course He can – else He would not be God!

God is omnipotent. If He desires, He can manifest in matter,
thus spiritualizing it; He can become visible to the material senses,
while remaining hundred percent transcendental.

Anybody who disagrees with this while claiming to believe in God really has no faith in the omnipotence of God, and then what impotent ‘god’ is he believing in? Therefore, those who categorically decry deity worship have no idea of the omnipotent Lord. Although God essentially possesses a transcendental form beyond material vision, He also appears in various spiritual forms that can be seen (*avyakta-cid-vyaktam adhārayad dhariḥ*, SB 8.18.12). This subchapter explains with practical examples how God manifests as deity. First of all, we should understand how matter can be spiritualized. Matter in itself is *acit*, lifeless. The material body is composed of such lifeless matter. Only when a spirit soul, who is *cit*, lively or conscious, enters matter, matter becomes lively. A body without a soul inside (after death) at once starts to decompose, because it is *acit*, lifeless. If we as spirit souls can enliven dead matter, then surely the Supreme Lord can do so in much more sophisticated ways. This is best explained by the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. As matter is *śakti-pariṇāma*, a transformation of God’s potency, it is simultaneously one and different from Him. While we have little control over material nature, God has full control over her, because He is *śaktiman*, the wielder of His potencies. He can observe and manipulate matter from within and without to His likings. He can use a deity as a media of communication or accepting worship, or He can fully enter the deity to reciprocate with His pure devotees, thus fully spiritualizing it. And just as He can be present within a deity when the deity is properly fashioned and worshiped, He can also decide to not be present in a deity when it is improperly fashioned or worshiped.

Besides being omnipotent, God is also omnipresent. This was proven by the young devotee prince Prahāda to His atheist father king Hiranyakaśipu, who became enraged when Prahāda said that God is present everywhere and that He is controlling everyone, even great emperors like him. Hiranyakaśipu challenged his son: “If He is everywhere, then why is He not present before me in this pillar? Because you are speaking so much nonsense, I shall now sever your head from your

body. Now let me see your God come to protect you!” He took up his sword, got up from his throne, and with great anger struck his fist against the pillar. To prove that the statement of His servant Prahāda was true and to protect him from Hiranyakaśipu, the Supreme Lord appeared right from that pillar with a tumultuous sound and exhibited the wonderful form of Nṛsimhadeva. Although Hiranyakaśipu now admitted that the Supreme Lord had appeared, in his envy over His supremacy, he started to attack Lord Nṛsimhadeva to kill Him, and he thus faced death at His hands. This episode is found in the biography of Prahāda Mahārāja in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.8. It shows that God is present everywhere and manifests only by the devotion of His pure devotee⁴². It further shows, that a pure devotee like Prahāda Mahārāja knows God to be even in every pillar – what to speak of a worshiped deity. But just like Hiranyakaśipu, the envious atheist cannot even accept the Supreme Lord when He personally appears in front of him – what to speak of accepting Him in His deity. Only through devotion achieved from a pure devotee can we attain faith in the deity. The pure devotee knows God to be everywhere, especially there where His holy name is sung and His deity is worshiped with love.

However, knowing about the Supreme Lord’s omnipresence
and omnipotence does not mean that we should paint a picture or
form a sculpture according to our own imagination and call it God!

Such an act of human speculation tries to condition the unconditioned Supreme Lord to some mental concoction, and is thus not less blasphemous than claiming that God cannot manifest in the deity at all. We must be careful not to fall into the trap of both extremes, and get to know God scientifically. In the third chapter it has been established how the transcendental reality can become revealed to the conditioned souls, namely through *avaroha-panthā*, the descending way of knowledge relying on transcendental deduction from the complete transcendental reality. The present chapter is an example of how transcendental deduction is practically applied. Before posting a letter, we should write the recipient’s full name and address on it and then place the letter in a letterbox authorized by the post – otherwise we will never get a response. Similarly, if we worship concocted idols and call them God, then God will probably not response to us. However, the *śrīmūrti*, the transcendental deity of the Lord, factually represents God because it is fashioned after His personal form that was visible during His various descents and after the knowledge of authorized scriptures and saints, who possess God-realization. The bona fide *śrīmūrti* is not an anthropomorphization of God (attribution of human characteristics to God) – rather man is built after the image of God. Prof. Shrinivasachari explained: “It is God who moulds the soul in His own image. But this is misunderstood as man making God in his own image.” (Shrinivasachari, 1950, p. 286.)

Dr. Alice Boner was a Swiss painter, sculptor, art historian and Indologist. She spent over fourty years in India, studying and contemplating the principles of composition of various deities. In 1970 she received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Zurich and in 1974 she was awarded the *Padma Bhushan*, the highest award of the Indian Government. In the introduction to her thesis *Principles of Compositions in Hindu Sculpture*, she wrote: “The primary purpose of sacred images is not to give aesthetic enjoyment, but to serve as the focusing points for the spirit. Born in meditation and inner visualization, they should, and that is their ultimate intend, lead back to meditation and to the comprehension of that transcendent reality from which they were born. If they are beautiful, it is because they are true.” (Boner, 1962.)



⁴² One may accept that God can be everywhere, but unless one is a pure devotee, one cannot attract Godhead’s practical manifestation. One is thus unable to realize or help others realize Godhead without guidance of a pure devotee.



The term ‘deity’ originates in Sanskrit *deva*, God, via Latin *deus*, God (Webster). In the language of the devotees, ‘deity’ is used for *śrīmūrti*, the transcendental image of the Lord. God is especially present in the deity that has been worshiped by a pure devotee, just like bees are naturally present where there is nectar. If we worship the transcendental form of the Lord by worshiping a genuinely manifested deity, address God with His proper names, and beg Him to fully manifest, then it is likely that He will reveal Himself fully. The example of a woman in separation grief who starts to decorate a sculpture of her missing husband and offers him flowers through that media, reveals, that this is an act of love in knowledge, not in ignorance. Was her husband to find this out – would he not be pleased by seeing such love, and would he not reward her? Similarly, if God sees us serving His deity because we sincerely miss His full appearance, will He not reciprocate? Or take the example of a fan of a music star. The fan worships her idol by pinning up his posters in her room, although she has never seen him personally, but only heard him on the radio. The radio may be compared to spiritual media like the scriptures and the pure devotees. As long as the media is pure, there is no illusion involved, and then it is possible to worship the right transcendental name, form, attributes and pastimes of the Supreme Lord. Then deity worship is not fictive, but factual, and we will get a clear response in form of revelations, realizations, and other reciprocations, just like we get a response if we submit a letter correctly. Veda asks nobody to follow blindly, but offers scientific ascertainment of transcendental deduction as well as repeatable experiments with factual results of transcendental realization.

Many ancient deities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa were installed by King Vajranābha, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s great-grandson. The Vedic literature is full of exact descriptions of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental body, and the saints confirm that their internal realization of God match the ancient deities and the scriptures’ descriptions. Personalities of great human intellect like the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana engaged in deity worship and propagated it by building many temples. They were supported by the local kings, who studied under them and often had personal exchanges with the deity, considering themselves the deity’s servants. In the modern world, people often laugh at deity worship due to prejudices, but we find that the people of the lands of the rising sun, including their intelligentsia, are most enthusiastic about deity worship. In India, millions of people of all backgrounds daily engage in deity worship. The deity is by law accepted as a real person. Often, the deity’s temple and land are registered under His name and officially His personal possessions. The *R̥g Veda* mentions that a new born child should be given four names, and that one of them should refer to the name of the family deity. This shows that every Vedic family is supposed to worship a deity and name their children after Him. In the Vedic culture, one’s identity, family and services are all joined to the deity. Only a few generations back, deity worship was still practiced in practically every household in India, and thus all people were naturally engaged in the service of God. Every house of prestige used to have opulent deity worship, and this is still evident in the fact that every prestigious old building has an altar room. In the above 360 degree panorama picture we see the inner court of Lachhmi Rani Kunja, the palace of princess Lakṣmī Rāṇī in Vṛndāvana (built around 1820). In this palace, Princess Lakṣmī, who hailed from Punjab, worshiped deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Their altar is situated in the center of the middle wing facing the middle of the court, where They are still being worshiped today. By centralizing deity worship, all people in the house naturally hear and talk about God, remember God, serve God, become a friend of God and dedicate their entire lives for God. If we accept the mercy of the Lord’s deity, our homes and hearts practically become temples of the Lord, and all our activities will be dovetailed to the service of the Lord.



In the above two paintings⁴³, we see the difference between the Supreme Lord's transcendental deity and a concocted idol. The painting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa was fashioned according to the Vedic science of descending knowledge, *avaroha-panthā*, while the painting that should depict God (painted by Michaelangelo in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican) is a product of *āroha-panthā*, the path of ascending human speculation (see Chapter 3.1). The *Bible* correctly states that God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27), but nowhere it is mentioned that God looks like an old man with a long white beard. Still, Michaelangelo and other artists painted God in such a fashion, trying to express that He is the oldest person. The allowance of such speculation is not in line with the humble nature of the path of transcendence, on which God reveals Himself as He really is out of His own potency to a surrendered soul free from speculative tendencies. This becomes evident if we lend our ears and heart to the exact descriptions of the transcendental form of God in the Vedic literature, which are direct manifestations from the transcendental realm free from human speculation, and which match with the direct realizations of many sages. What follows is an extract from *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.33:

“Although Godhead is naturally *ādi-puruṣam*, the original person,
and *purāṇa-puruṣam*, the oldest person, due to His transcendental nature,
He is *acyutam*, without decay, and *nava-yauvanam*, eternally remaining a fresh youth.”

The fact that God is the oldest person does not mean that He must look old and have white hair like an old man. God is not human; He is God. Of course, if He wants to, He can appear as an old man, but the Vedic literature and saints, who are God-realized, tell us that, although being the oldest, God possesses the most beautiful and attracting body of a transcendental ever-fresh youth. This most sublime original nature of God, attained through the descending process of knowledge, defeats every speculation about God of the futile attempts of ascension. It is surely wrong to speculate about the Supreme Lord's form, and therefore the *Bible's* third commandment says: “You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” The injunction is to not worship a *fake* form, a concocted idol of God, or not to worship mundane things as idols. However, it is common sense, that if one knows the *real* form of God (and if one has love for God), then worshiping the real form of God in His deity form is the most natural thing. In fact, rejecting the *real* form of God would be offensive, just as it is offensive to call a friend by name and then slam the door in his face. The *Bible* is not agnostic; by spiritual maturity, it is possible to see God “face to face.” (1 Cor 13:12.) Matthew 5:8 reads: “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” Now the question arises: If you have seen God's beautiful form, what do you do thereafter? Will you not want to remember and worship that form in every possible way, and can that be called sin? If one has adoration for any person, it is natural that one wants to worship that person's form, and in the

⁴³ A bonafide painting of the Supreme Lord can also be worshiped as deity (see *SB* 11.27.12 quoted below).

person's absence, one wants to adore that person's picture or statue. On many people's office desks and in many people's wallets we can find pictures of their family members and friends. In the wax museum of Madame Tussauds, we can see thousands of authentic statues of famous people. Nobody will denounce it if someone makes a genuine statue of the King of Puri and displays it in a museum. However, as soon as someone displays a false figure, claiming that it represents the King of Puri, he will surely face opposition. Similarly, it is objectionable to misrepresent God with a false idol, whereas it is laudable to promote the worship of His genuine deity form.



The visualization of God's form or presence is an essential need of the soul. Paintings of God such as the one in the Sistine chapel by Michaelangelo, despite the Bible injunction not to make an image of God, give sufficient evidence for this actuality. If one would ask Christian children to draw God, many would probably draw an old man with long white hair. Actually, nobody can be truly happy without worshiping the transcendental *form* of the Supreme Lord, who is everybody's real eternal life partner, just as nobody can be happy without at least seeing the *form* of one's friend or spouse.

Therefore, the mood of worship of the catholic Christians, which allows replicas of Jesus Christ and mother Maria, is beneficial for the cultivation of devotion. Since both personalities were manifest to the human eye, correct replicas of them are not a concoction. Masterpieces like the Pietà sculptured by Michaelangelo in the Vatican (see picture) have facilitated devotional inspiration for millions of devotees. Many devotees feel that replicas such as the Pietà are missing in the protestant church, where they are mostly avoided⁴⁴. The protestants are right though to ban concocted idols of God. However, we must be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water, i.e. we should reject *concocted* idols but fulfill the need of the soul of worshiping the Lord's beautiful transcendental form by providing the worship of *bona fide* deities.

In fact, even if we try to avoid the external deity of the Lord,
we cannot avoid to maintain some kind of mental picture of God.

If we address God as Father, this produces a certain mental picture of God and a corresponding relationship with Him. Similarly, any name of God unavoidably produces a mental picture and relationship. Neuroscience found that every heard term affects certain areas of the brain according to the designation which that term has been given before. Words without designation will not be recognized. We are unable to recognize 'o+j#Y8gr^Pi' because we lack a designation for it. We can recognize the term 'God' only because we have given it designations, which are at least a mental picture. The fact that we recognize the term 'God', proves that we have designated the term 'God', otherwise we would not be able to recognize it. Mental pictures of God are unavoidable! According to Vedic literature, a deity can be worshiped in the form of a genuine figure sculptured from stone, wood, metal, clay, sand, jewels, paint, or contemplation by the mind (*SB* 11.27.12). However, if we think of God without knowing His actual form, the concocted designations of the human mind form a false idol, not a deity. As long as our mental pictures, which automatically occur when we think of God, are not identical with the actual transcendental form of God, they are in fact false idols! Those who think of God without knowing His transcendental form are thus unknowingly idolators⁴⁵. Therefore, the conclusion is:

⁴⁴ However, one should consider that churches without pictures are attracting and helpful for those people who have chosen not to accept any pictures for worship (due to not knowing the existence of *genuine* deity worship).

⁴⁵ Even the negation of the personality of God of the atheist, Buddhist or monist is one type of mental idol, and their rejection of God is worship of the negative mental idol.

We can only choose between deity worship or idol worship.
Genuine deity worship is undoubtedly the better choice.

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura wrote: “At first, the form of Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appears in the spiritual consciousness of the devotee and is reflected within his mind⁴⁶. The *śrīmūrti*, the transcendental deity form of the Supreme Lord, is then constructed according to this vision of the devotee, and through the potency of *bhakti*, the Supreme Lord is attracted to manifest His *sac-cid-ānanda* form from within the *śrīmūrti*. When the pure devotee sees the *śrīmūrti* of Bhagavān, that *śrīmūrti* unites with the transcendental form of Bhagavān that the devotee sees within his heart.” (Bhaktivinoda 1, 1893. Chapter 5.) “Those [rare pure devotees] who, seeing the spiritual form of the deity in their soul’s eyes, carry that impression as far as possible to the mind and then frame an emblem for the satisfaction of the material eye for continual study of the higher feeling are by no means idolatrous. While seeing *śrīmūrti*, do not see the image itself but see the spiritual model of the image and you are a pure theist. Idolatry and *śrīmūrti* worship are two different things, but my brethren! you simply confound one with the other out of hastiness. To tell you the truth:

“*Śrīmūrti*-worship is the only true form of worship of the deity,
without which you cannot sufficiently cultivate your religious feelings.

“The world attracts you through your senses and as long as you do not see God in the object of your senses, you live in an awkward position, which scarcely helps you in procuring your spiritual elevation.” (Bhaktivinoda 3, 1896.) The *śrīmūrti* mercifully accepts services even from conditioned souls. If we offer everything such as nice cloths, ornaments, foodstuffs, prayers and worship to the deity, all our activities are spiritualized. By such service, and by enjoying only the sacred remnants of the deity, our heart becomes purified from all material inclinations and thus God will soon manifest therein. Why wait for after death to maybe meet God?

Worshipping the Supreme Lord and His form is our *sanātana-dharma*, eternal inherent nature. We should understand the term ‘worship’ in the way of practical application of deity worship. The deity is treated like a real person; His temple is cleaned nicely, He is woken up in the morning, offered bath, clothes and food. He is offered entertainment like music, and in hot times, He is fanned. Worship of the deity consists of seemingly human activities because the human beings were shaped after the image of God, and not the other way around. Worship of God is nothing abstract, as God is not abstract, but transcendently embodied. Worshipping God by offering Him suitable food is not treating Him like a human – rather offering food (which has not been offered to God first) to a human is worshipping him like a god. It is very important to understand that most services that can be offered to a human are offered to God in the transcendental realm in a pure form and that those services constitute the highest form of worship. Since activities like dressing the deity are actual forms of worship, if someone dresses a doll, then that is also worship, yet it is idol worship, not deity worship. We cannot but worship the Lord’s deity, either in His real form or in His perverted shadow form as idol. Children are naturally inclined to play with or worship dolls. This roots in the soul’s original nature of serving the Lord’s deity, and therefore from childhood, people should engage in real deity worship instead of worshipping various idols like Barbie or Mickey Mouse. Fairy tale and comic figures, dolls and heroes as in computer games are actually idols, a perverted reflection of the deity of the Lord. The common man’s objects of worship like his beloved car and computer, and the common woman’s objects of worship like her closet altar with shoes, cloths and cosmetics, are also idols. In the absolute sense, everything that is not directly used in the Lord’s service is a fetish or idol, and all activities that are not directly aimed at the Lord’s satisfaction are fetishism or idolatry. The only way to overcome idolatry is to worship the Supreme Lord’s transcendental deity. This is nicely visible in the following comparison.

⁴⁶ This refers to God’s manifestation out of His own potency and mercy, not by dint of the devotee’s imagination.

Picture sequence 1: Genuine deity worship and its reflection in material idolatry

<p>(A) Deity worship, original nature Result: eternal benefit and approach to transcendence.</p>	<p>(B) Material idolatry, reflection of (A) Result: no eternal benefit and forgetfulness of transcendence.</p>	
		<p>(A) The decorated deity of the Lord. (B) Shadow idols: A car, money, garments, a prize cup, a diploma, a comic idol, a game idol, film idols, national idols, doll idols, a tv idol, a flag, a shopping temple.</p>
		<p>(A) Devotees offering ghee lamps and fragrant incense to the deity. (B) Smoking man. Fans worshipping their music idols with lights from lighters and mobiles.</p>
		<p>(A) Devotees paying homage to the Lord's deity by enacting the Lord's pastimes. (B) Fans of a pop star and a football team, worshipping performances that are shadow reflections of the Lord's pastimes.</p>
		<p>(A) Devotees giving <i>abhisheka</i> (auspicious bathing ceremony) to the Lord's deity. (B) Man washing his beloved car. A dignitary pours champagne over a new aircraft at an inauguration.</p>
		<p>(A) Devotee decorating the deity. Young devotee decorated for the pleasure of the deity. (B) Girls dressing their dolls. Woman making up.</p>
		<p>(A) Devotees honouring <i>prasāda</i>, the sacred food remnants of the Supreme Lord's deity. (B) People eating in a restaurant.</p>

(A) Deity worship , original nature	(B) Material idolatry , reflection of (A)	
<p>Result: eternal benefit and approach to transcendence.</p>	<p>Result: no eternal benefit and forgetfulness of transcendence.</p>	
		<p>(A) Devotees taking out the deity in the yearly street procession in Puri and Bern. (B) A woman taking her dog for a ride. Football fans riding out their idol.</p>
		<p>(A) The deities have a great variety of outfits and ornaments suiting different seasons and occasions. (B) A woman's collection of over 1'000 pairs of shoes. Diamond jewellery.</p>
		<p>(A) Devotees reciting the scriptures and chanting the God's name on beads. (B) Man reading the news. On the mobile. A boy worships his game idol.</p>
		<p>(A) Devotee serving the lotus feet of the deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa. (B) A family worshipping the feet impressions of the German football team on a raised altar.</p>
		<p>(A) Devotees dancing in the Lord's <i>sankirtana</i>. (B) People dancing at night.</p>
		<p>(A) Pilgrims honoring the holy places of transcendental pastimes of the deity. (B) Children worshipping a national flag that represents a non-eternal material place.</p>

In the above picture sequence we see that the devotees engage in seemingly similar activities like the non-devotees; yet unlike the non-devotees, the devotees derive eternal benefit from such activities, because they are serving the Lord's deity instead of material idols. Children have a natural tendency to play or serve dolls, so much so, that forbidding it can lead to psychological problems. Essentially, children have this tendency because they want to serve the Lord's deity, not because they prepare to serve their own future children. Most children prefer mature dolls like Barbie and Ken from baby dolls. They prefer to assist in the wedding of Barbie and Ken rather than rocking the cradle of a baby doll (which should be prominent if they intended to prepare for mother- and fathership). This tendency is a reflection of the soul's innermost eternal nature (*sanātana-dharma*) and desire to assist in the transcendental pastimes of the ever-youthful divine couple, Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, any human activity is a reflection of the soul's nature and desire to serve the transcendental deity of God. If this original tendency is not allowed to manifest in the form of deity worship, it must manifest in a materially reflected shadow version. This can be serving dolls, being fascinated by material nature or various aspects of her such as the stars, minerals, plants, serving a pet animal, adoring one's car, decorating and adoring one's own body, worshiping non-eternal heroes of movies, music performance, sport, politics and PC games or being attached to non-eternal relations⁴⁷. Actions done in material goodness are the least, and actions in material ignorance are the most perverted reflections of *sanātana-dharma* (see Chart 2 in Chapter 12). Every object of material action is a more or less perverted reflection of the Lord's transcendental deity, an idol or fetish. Astrophysicist Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington for example mentioned: "Proof is the idol before whom the pure mathematician tortures himself." (Eddington, 1928, Chapter 15.)

Ironically, those who do not worship the Supreme Lord's
transcendental deity are idolators and fetishists in the real sense.
Deity worship is the only way to overcome idolatry.

We must first know the Supreme Lord's transcendental name, form, attributes and pastimes from authorized sources, before we can distinguish a fetish or idol from a deity, just as only those who are knowledgeable can ascertain that an image of Mickey Mouse is based on fiction whereas a statue of a historic person is based on reality. When we become pure devotees, we are granted transcendental vision by the Lord's mercy, and by that we can realize how the deity is non-different from the Supreme Lord. The neophyte devotee accepts the deity to be real through empathetic realization, i.e. by empathetically sharing in the vision of realized devotees, and later, in the fully realized stage, cherishes direct experience of the Lord's presence in His deity. The deity starts to reciprocate with the pure devotee's devotion by appearing in dreams or visions, by eating food offerings, by talking directly, by moving around, etc. The deity is non-different from the Supreme Lord and can thus do anything He likes. It depends upon the approach of the devotee, to which extent the deity reveals Himself. The deity is not a fetish or puppet for our sense gratification, or an order supplier to fulfill our material desires. He is our eternal object of loving worship, and only if we treat Him as such will He manifest His true nature to us. The neophyte cannot independently manufacture the needed pure devotional attitude because of being habituated to selfish sense gratification since innumerable births; it must be learned it from a pure devotee. What follows are a few examples of self-manifest deities and astonishing interactions of the deity with devotees.

⁴⁷ One should not think that the devotees fanatically reject all material activities. The advocated point is that the deity should be the center of daily life, then all material actions will naturally be transcended gradually. For example, if a devotee's child is attached to playing with a doll, the parents will not forcibly try to replace the doll with the original deity. By directly or indirectly engaging in daily deity worship, the child will gradually and naturally accept the deity as the prime object of worship, and other things will become secondary or are given up voluntarily. The devotees do not set out on a fanatical crusade against material activities – they simply positively introduce the worship of the Supreme Lord in the form of His transcendental holy name and deity, by which everything naturally falls in its proper place, and people are enabled to approach transcendence very practically.



Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī was an associate of Śrī Caitanya and one of the famous six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. After the disappearance of Śrī Caitanya, he suffered a lot due to separation from the Lord. He had twelve *sālagrāma-silās*, sacred stones from the holy Gaṇḍakī River, but he desired to worship the form of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He remembered how the Lord is all-merciful and how He appeared from a stone pillar as Nṛsimhadeva to His devotee Prahlāda (see beginning of this chapter). He read this pastime in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and prayed to the Lord to please fulfill his desire. The next morning he found that one of the twelve *sālagrāmas* had manifested as Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa, the beautiful deity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa was overcome with joy and started the worship of Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa, which is still continued today in the Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa temple in Vṛndāvana. (Vb, BTG #26-01, 1992).

Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita was a great devotee of Śrī Caitanya and Nityānanda Prabhu, the Descent of Lord Balarāma, the transcendental brother of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Once They visited Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita in his home in Ambikā Kālnā, West Bengal. Before They were going to leave, Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita cried and begged Them to stay longer. Śrī Caitanya revealed that Their transcendental forms were in a nearby Nīma tree. From that tree, Their deities were carved. This is a perfectly bona fide way of deity carving, since the Supreme Lord's form was visible during the same period, and even He Himself had instructed to make His deity. When the deities of Caitanya-Nityānanda were completed, Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita immediately started to worship Them with great love. They physically ate everything he offered Them. Nevertheless, when Śrī Caitanya and Nityānanda Prabhu wanted to leave for sure, Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita tried to hold Them back. Śrī Caitanya calmed him by saying, "Nityānanda and I are directly present in these deities. You can tell either the deities to go, or we can leave. You choose!" Naturally, Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita chose the moving Lords to stay and said that the deities could leave. Right then, Caitanya-Nityānanda stood on the altar, raised Their arms just like the deities, and became wooden deities. At the same time, the former deities jumped off the altar and walked away. When Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita begged Caitanya-Nityānanda to stay, They again raised Their arms and remained motionless, and the deities on the altar walked away. They repeated this pastime seventeen times, after which Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita could no longer distinguish between his Lords and Their deity forms. This pastime verified the statement of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.17.131: 'nāma', 'vigraha', 'svarūpa' – *tina eka-rūpa, tina 'bheda' nāhi, – tina 'cid-ānanda-rūpa'*,

“The Lord's transcendental name, deity form and original personality are all one and the same. No distinction should be made between them, for all of them are absolute and of transcendental, spiritual substance.”

Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita always worshiped his deities with great love. They manifested many wonderful pastimes with him. Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita was poor, but he wanted to decorate his deities with beautiful costly ornaments. To fulfill his desire, his deities one day adorned Themselves lavishly. Later, when Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita saw Them, he was astonished as to where They had gotten these ornaments from. One day, Gaurīdāsa's foremost disciple, Hṛdaya Caitanya Dāsa, organized a huge *saṅkīrtana* festival nearby, and in great joy, the deities of Caitanya-Nityānanda jumped off the altar and joined the devotees in chanting and dancing. Since then, the priests were afraid that the deities may again jump off the altar and run away, and so up to today, they always open the curtains of the altar only in many short intervals. This wonderful pastime is described in *Srī Chaitanya; His Life and Associates* (Tirtha 1, 2001, p. 87), *Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava Samādhis in Vṛndāvana* (Vb, 2003, Chapter 7), and the *Back to Godhead* magazine (Vb, BTG #33-02, 1999).

The following incident is described in *A Life of Devotion* (Dasi, 2002, p. 26), the biography of Śrīla Bhakti Pramode Purī Mahārāja, who appeared on this earth in 1898 and remained physically present for over 101 years. He was engaged in deity worship throughout his life, carrying it out with meticulous care. One time during his youth, in the winter, he forgot to offer a blanket to the deity of Śrī Madana-mohana. On his way home, he started shivering uncontrollably and thought he had contracted malaria. At night he continued shivering although using a heavy blanket – but he had no fever. The next morning, when he went to wake up Śrī Madana-mohana, the main priest chastized him for not putting a blanket on Śrī Madana-mohana. He began to cry and realized why he was shivering so intensely. He took bath, entered the temple, offered a blanket to Śrī Madana-mohana and asked for His forgiveness. The chills in his body left at once.

Events where deities interacted with devotees are not reproducible mechanically – but that does not mean that they cannot be scientifically validated. Scientific validation of the transcendental nature of the deity is offered by the Vedic science. When one becomes a pure devotee, the deity becomes self-evident to one’s re-awakened transcendental senses and starts to reciprocate with one’s pure love. In order to see micro-organisms, we need to look through a microscope, and in order to realize the deity, we need to empathetically see through the vision of a pure devotee or become a pure devotee ourselves. In this sense, realization of the deity is repeatable and scientific. We cannot mechanically reproduce interactions with the deity; for example, we cannot omit to cover a deity with a blanket during winter and expect that we will get chills. God is never obliged by any impurely motivated activity, but He immediately reciprocates to the manifestation of a pure desire to serve Him causelessly. It is essential to realize, that the desire or prayer for His manifestation alone does not attract Him, unless the motivation behind this desire is service to Him. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda used to say concisely:



“Don’t try to see God –
act in such a way that God wants to see you!”

When God sees the sincerity of service of His devotees, the devotees are graced with the potency of God’s merciful glance, by which they attain transcendental vision. Any trace of the challenging and ordering mood of “Show up – then I shall believe” must be replaced by the mood of “However You are, and whatever You do, I will always serve you unconditionally! Due to my impure love, You may not manifest to me fully yet, but I nevertheless embrace Your mercy in form of serving Your holy name and Your transcendental deity, who are non-different from You!” The maturing of pure desire for devotional service must manifest practically, not only in thought or by lip confession. Serving the holy name and serving the transcendental deity of God are essential practical devotional services and indicate sincere devotion to God. They are also crucial tests of devotion. If we say that we want to serve God, but not His holy name, His transcendental deity, attributes, devotees and pastimes – this means that we do not sincerely want to serve God. Serving the deity of God is not merely a test – it is already a part of the goal. This becomes evident when God reveals Himself in the deity to a sincere devotee.

5.7. Mādhurya – Divine Sweetness

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's unique *mādhurya*, divine sweetness, is not found in any other form of God to such intensity. The importance of this quality is often underestimated. The most essential form of God is very confidential and only revealed to mature devotees. The most essential form of God is not His form playing the part of the universal controller like Lord Viṣṇu, but that form which is the sweetest, most pleasurable, all-attractive, all-enjoying form and reservoir of all loving relationships. This is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as established in this chapter. Śrī Caitanya explained the superiority of Lord Kṛṣṇa over Lord Viṣṇu as follows: *kṛṣṇera vilāsa-mūrti—śrī-nārāyaṇa, ataeva lakṣmī-ādyera hare tenha mana*, “Lord Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu is a *vilāsa-mūrti*, a form of pastime, of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is for this reason that He attracts the minds of Lakṣmī Devī and Her followers.” – Cc 2.9.142. While Śrī Caitanya discussed the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa with Venkāṭa Bhaṭṭa, a *brāhmaṇa* in the Rāmānuja *sampradāya* who worshiped Lord Nārāyaṇa, Venkāṭa Bhaṭṭa admitted:

“Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Nārāyaṇa are one and the same, but the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are more relishable due to their sportive nature.” “According to philosophical conclusion, there is *abheda*, non-difference, between the forms of Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa. Yet in consideration of *rasa*, relishment of transcendental relationship, Kṛṣṇa, who is a reservoir of sweet *rasas*, surpasses Nārāyaṇa.” – Cc 2.9.115 & 117.

Lord Viṣṇu always rests on His transcendental bed; He never takes birth and does not manifest earthly pastimes (*bhauma-līlās*) like Lord Kṛṣṇa who plays the pastime of birth similar to a human. From this perspective, one is likely to accept that Viṣṇu is the Supreme God, and that Kṛṣṇa is an Avatāra of Viṣṇu who descends to earth for some time and then again merges with Viṣṇu. Yet, Kṛṣṇa is the actual origin of Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa: *ādya nārāyaṇaḥ*, “Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the first Nārāyaṇa.” – SB 1.9.18. Lord Nārāyaṇa is Lord Kṛṣṇa's expansion (*nārāyaṇo 'ṅgam*, SB 10.14.14), and acquires His creative potency from Kṛṣṇa (SB 11.6.16). Hence Kṛṣṇa is also the origin of all the Avatāras of Viṣṇu: “All of the above-mentioned Avatāras [such as Kurma, Narasiṅghadeva, Vāmana, Rāma, Buddha, Kalki, etc.] are either plenary portions or portions of the plenary portions of the Lord, but Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead.” – SB 1.3.28. In fact, many forms of God such as Lord Buddha are Avatāras of Viṣṇu, but Kṛṣṇa is the original Person (*govindam ādi-puruṣam*, Bs 5.29), and hence the origin of Viṣṇu. In the science of *bhakti* it is explained that Kṛṣṇa's *mādhurya-prakāśa*, manifestation of sweetness, is superior to Viṣṇu's *aiśvarya-prakāśa*, manifestation of opulence. Lord Kṛṣṇa also exhibits *aiśvarya-prakāśa*, for example in Dvāraka and Mathurā, where He is worshiped as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

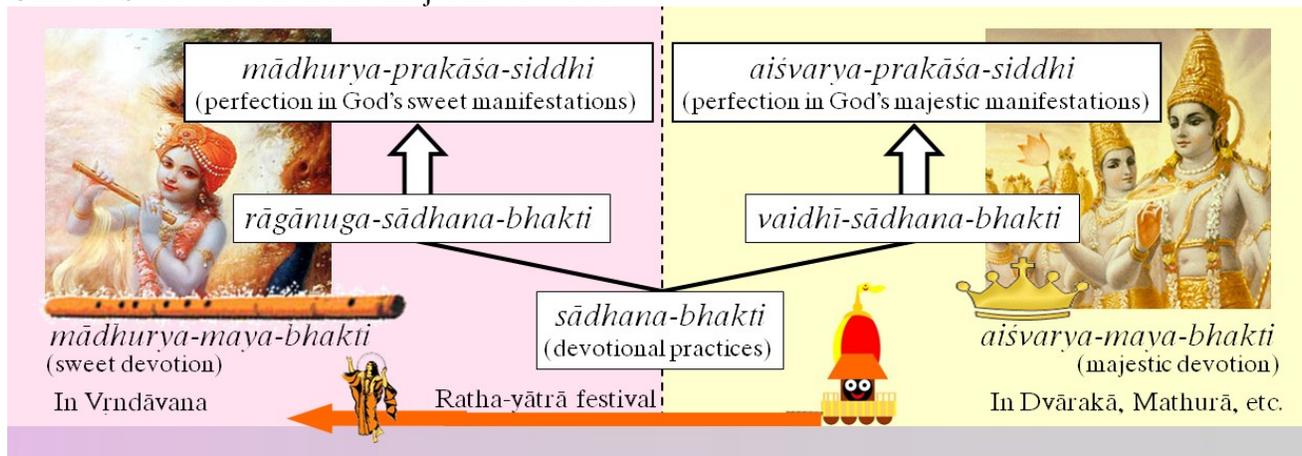
In Vṛndāvana however, His pastimes are exclusively *mādhurya-prakāśa*, and this is unparalleled in any form of God of any culture. This exquisite sweetness makes the worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana absolutely unique and unsurpassed in intensity of *prema-rasa*, the relish of love of God. Kṛṣṇa's sweetness is the only abode of actual opulence (SB 10.44.14). Viṣṇu is always worshiped in reverence as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whereas the devotees of Kṛṣṇa enjoy more intimate relationships in which they are mostly not conscious about Kṛṣṇa's being God. In an intimate relationship like in the one between Mother Yaśodā and Kṛṣṇa, the concept of Kṛṣṇa's being Godhead would disturb the relationship's *mādhurya*, just as it would disturb the relationship between the Queen and her child if the Queen continued wearing her crown at home and insisted on being called ‘Her Majesty’ by her child. As already mentioned, the concept of which form of God is the main form depends on one hand on the perspective of the devotee. On the other hand, one can consider the perspective and likings of God Himself, and accept His view as supreme. This empathetic and selfless perspective of dovetailing to God's likings is taught by the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* and only attainable by *bhakti*. The Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas accept the personal likings of Kṛṣṇa Himself, which He describes in the *Caitanya-caritamrita* 1.4.17, 1.4.19 and 1.4.28:



“The entire universe is filled with the conception of My majesty, but love weakened by that sense of majesty does not satisfy Me. (...) In whatever *rasa*, transcendental mood of worship, My devotee worships Me, I reciprocate. That is My natural behavior. If one cherishes pure sweet loving devotion to Me, thinking of Me as a son, a friend or the beloved, regarding oneself as superior and considering Me equal or even inferior, I become subordinate. (...) Taking such pure devotees with Me, I shall descend and sport in various wonderful ways.”

Kṛṣṇa desires to enjoy loving relationships with His dear devotees beyond the concept of reverence. There are various reasons for this desire, one being the greatest intimacy, which can only be achieved in an atmosphere bereft of reverence. Another reason is that truly unconditional love of God ultimately also has to be beyond the condition of ‘unless You are God, I will not serve You exclusively’. Since God *essentially* does not want to be treated as God in the common majestic sense, and since He derives the most pleasure from intimate relationships, His essential form of Kṛṣṇa in eternal Vṛndāvana, the innermost core of the spiritual world, is not served as majestic God, but as sweetest master, friend, son or lover.

Chart 1: Sweet devotion and majestic devotion



Theism is of two types: sweet and majestic. Majestic devotional service is called *aiśvarya-maya-bhakti*; the corresponding devotional practices of the aspirant are called *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti* and lead to perfection (*siddhi*) in God’s majestic forms and realms (*aiśvarya-prakāśa*). Sweet devotional service is called *mādhurya-maya-bhakti*; the corresponding devotional practices of the

aspirant are called *rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti* and lead to perfection in God’s sweet manifestations (*mādhurya-prakāśa*) in eternal Vṛndāvana (*Cc* 2.22.108-164, *Jd* 20-21). Majestic *vaidhī-bhakti* is driven by obligation and duty as per *vidhi*, scriptural injunctions, whereas sweet *rāgānuga-bhakti* is driven by *lobha*, intense craving or greed to attain the sweetest forms of service by following (*anuga*) the *rāgātmika-bhakti*, the perfected spontaneous loving devotion in sweetness of the residents of eternal Vṛndāvana. “When one hears about the loving devotional sentiments and the intimate dealings of the residents of Vṛndāvana with their beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa and this awakens the desire to fully participate in those pastimes, this is called *lobha*.” – *Jd* 21.

The transition from *vaidhī-bhakti* to *rāgānuga-bhakti* can be anytime because the only qualification or price for *rāgānuga-bhakti* is *lobha*⁴⁸; it is wrong to think that one must first perfect *vaidhī-bhakti*⁴⁹. In fact, if one attains perfection in *vaidhī-bhakti*, one cannot attain Vṛndāvana, because one then assumes an eternal spiritual form (*svarūpa*) in one of the majestic manifestations of God outside Vṛndāvana. To qualify for *rāgānuga-bhakti* one must cultivate *lobha*. This is only possible by at least mentally following a devotee who has *lobha*, because desires develop according to association (*saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmah*, *Bg* 2.62). It is not that *rāgānuga-bhakti* does not follow scriptural injunctions, but it is not driven by them, but by *lobha*. The scriptures say that all perfections are achieved by pleasing Godhead (*saṁsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam*, *SB* 1.2.13), and since God is only fully pleased by sweet worship (*Cc* 1.4.17-28, quoted above), the practice of *rāgānuga-bhakti* is the actual perfect execution of the scriptures. Śrī Caitanya is Godhead Himself teaching how to love Him the best (see Chapter 6), and He appeared with the desire to teach *rāgānuga-bhakti* (*rāga-mārga bhakti loka karite pracāraṇa*, *Cc* 1.4.15) in order to make the whole world dance in the bliss of relishing one of the four sweet *rasas* of eternal Vṛndāvana (*Cc* 1.3.19). When Rāmānanda Rāya presented the development of full-fledged theism (see Chapter 6.13), Śrī Caitanya therefore only accepted as fully agreeable what he spoke starting from the point of *rāgānuga-bhakti* (*Cc* 2.8.70, purport). For experiencing the full-fledged reality, we need to embrace full-fledged theism and its corresponding full-fledged devotional practice of *rāgānuga-bhakti* and full-fledged philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Because God reciprocates with the quality of our approach (*Bg* 4.11), He will only manifest His full-fledged form to us if we worship Him with full-fledged love, service and conception. Śrī Caitanya taught by His own example, that we should externally follow the rules of *vaidhī-bhakti*, while internally progressing to *rāgānuga-bhakti* according to our qualification. He spent His concluding eighteen years in Jagannātha Purī, where He and His devotees yearly celebrated the Ratha-yātrā festival (see Chapter 6.14), which symbolizes the transition from majestic to sweet devotion.

When the devotee attains intense craving to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa beyond the concept of majesty, a wonderful thing happens: Kṛṣṇa’s internal energy of *yoga-māyā* frees the devotee from the concept of His majestic Godhood. She puts the devotee under a divine ‘illusion’ – she covers Kṛṣṇa’s majestic glories (*SB* 10.84.22-23). It must be understood that this divine arrangement of *yoga-māyā* is Kṛṣṇa’s own internal energy who manages the innermost spiritual worlds in order to please Him, and is diametrically opposed to the arrangements of the external material energy of

⁴⁸ *tatra laulyam api mūlyam ekalan*, *Cc* 2.8.70, quoted from Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *Padyāvalī* 14.

⁴⁹ A number of people think that *rāgānuga-bhakti* is *sadya* (the desired stage of perfection and the goal of *sādhana*). But *rāgānuga-bhakti* belongs to the stage of *sādhana*, devotional practices in the non-perfected stage, and is therefore also called *rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti*. The *sadya* of *rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti* is *rāgātmika-bhakti* in sweetness or *mādhurya*, whereas the *sadya* of *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti* is *aiśvarya-maya-bhakti*, devotional service in opulence. The only qualification for *rāgānuga-bhakti* is *lobha*, greed to attain service in eternal Vṛndāvana. However, this requires renunciation of material greed, else it is improper imitation. Therefore: “Persons who are after sense gratification should not try to imitate *rāgānuga* devotional service.” – *Cc* 1.13.42, purport. Neophytes should concentrate on *vaidhī-bhakti*, which is thus sometimes described as an apprenticeship, from which one must progress to the “real *bhakti*, *parā-bhakti*, that is *rāgānugā-bhakti*.” (*Vb*, lecture on *SB* 1.2.33, 12/11/1972). We should not be discouraged to practice *rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti* if we still have some material desires, because this is natural at the stage of *sādhana*. But if we are more interested in sense-gratification than in *bhakti*, we should not imitate *rāgānuga-bhakti*.

mahā-māyā, which puts those *jīvas* who are averse to serving the will of Kṛṣṇa into painful illusion. The influence of *yoga-māyā* on a devotee serving in sweetness is actually the opposite of illusioning, because the ultimate reality is Lord Kṛṣṇa in His *mādhurya-prakāśa*. In fact, *yoga-māyā* is the mystic energy that allows a fully surrendered soul to enter the most intimate circles of reality. Mother Yaśodā, for example, worships Kṛṣṇa as her son, and Kṛṣṇa accepts her as His mother. This parental relationship, *vatsalya-rasa*, makes forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa's Godhood necessary, and this is arranged by *yoga-māyā*.

The following incident is recorded in the biography of Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.8.32-45. One time in His boyhood pastimes, Kṛṣṇa's friends told mother Yaśodā that Kṛṣṇa had eaten dirt, but when Yaśodā asked Kṛṣṇa, He denied it. When mother Yaśodā told Kṛṣṇa to open His mouth, Kṛṣṇa did so. Yaśodā was very surprised – she saw in His mouth all universes, Vṛndāvana, and herself with Kṛṣṇa on her lap. For a short time, Kṛṣṇa exhibited His divine opulences and Yaśodā saw that Kṛṣṇa is God and that all are subordinate to Him. But at the next moment, Lord Kṛṣṇa extended His *yoga-māyā*, by whose influence Yaśodā was again overwhelmed by parental affection. With great motherly love, she again fondled her little son Kṛṣṇa on her lap. Śrī Kṛṣṇa relishes such relationships of sweet love much more than majestic worship. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains in his *Rāga-vartma-candrikā* that the devotees who practice sweet worship are not in ignorance of Kṛṣṇa's divinity, but their sweet mood of worship is so dominant that they do not even have the slightest feelings of awe when seeing some display of His majesty.

When Queen Elizabeth is enjoying intimate relationships with her family and friends, she does not want to be loved because she is the queen of England – Elisabeth wants to be loved simply because she is a lovable person herself. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa wants to be loved because He is a lovable person Himself, and not because He is Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Despite knowing about her majesty, both Elisabeth and her friends forget about it in the fun of cutting jokes among equals in private circles and do not want to be disturbed by reverential moods of external people. Similarly, although sometimes aware of His divinity, in the innermost circle of Goloka, both Kṛṣṇa and His devotees forget His majesty in the bliss of intimate relationships, and only pure devotees in the same mood are allowed to enter there. We should never mistake Kṛṣṇa's forgetfulness by His internal energy in accordance with His will with the forgetfulness of a fallen *jīva* who is put in illusion by the Lord's material energy, just as we should not mistake the Queen's forgetfulness of majesty with the forgetfulness of a patient suffering from the Alzheimer disease.

Just as Elisabeth can anytime resume her role of the Queen, Śrī Kṛṣṇa displays various pastimes in which He displays the opulences of His Godhood, like in the *brahma-vimohana-līlā*, the pastime in which Kṛṣṇa bewildered Brahmā, the engineer of the universe (*SB* 10.13-14). Brahmā was on the platform of reverential service and had thus only realized God's majestic form as Lord Viṣṇu. Once, when Brahmā saw how Śrī Kṛṣṇa was playing with His cowherd friends without awe and reference, he wanted to test Śrī Kṛṣṇa, if He really is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as some claimed. Seeing Kṛṣṇa playing and eating with His friends and being treated as equal or even taking the role of serving His friends, Brahmā developed some doubts in His divine position. Brahmā only knew the majestic form of the Supreme Lord, but could not understand that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord in His sweetest, most intimate form, which is beyond majestic opulence. Lord Viṣṇu wears a golden crown and carries various invincible weapons, but Kṛṣṇa only has a peacock feather and forest flowers stuck in His hair, and He only carries a wooden flute and a herding stick. Brahmā decided to test Kṛṣṇa. Using his mystic power, Brahmā hid all the cowherd boys and calves of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a cave, and returned after a year to see what had happened. To his surprise he saw that Kṛṣṇa was still playing with His friends and calves as usual. Kṛṣṇa responded to Brahmā's trick by expanding Himself into identical copies of all various calves and boys (*SB* 10.13.19).

Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda comments: “Kṛṣṇa thus proved that He is everything, that He can become everything, but that still He is personally different from everything

(*mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni na cāham teṣv avasthitaḥ*, Bg 9.4). This is Kṛṣṇa, who is understood by *acintya-bhedābheda* philosophy. *pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate* (*Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, invocation). Kṛṣṇa is always complete, and although He can create millions of universes, all of them full in all opulences, He remains as opulent as ever, without any change.”

When Kṛṣṇa thus expanded Himself like that, this was a wonderful exhibition of His *acintya-bhedābheda* nature. None could understand this nature of simultaneous distinction and non-distinction besides His brother Balarāma, who addressed Him thus:

“(…) Now I can see that You alone are manifesting Yourself in all varieties of difference. Although one, You are existing in the different forms of the calves and boys (…).” – *SB* 10.13.39.



When Brahmā returned, he saw Kṛṣṇa playing with the boys and calves just as before. Brahmā became bewildered. Checking the boys and calves he had hidden, he found they were indistinguishable from the ones playing with Kṛṣṇa, and he could not understand how this was possible. He wanted to bewilder Kṛṣṇa, but instead he was bewildered himself. Lord Kṛṣṇa then revealed to Brahmā that the boys and calves were identical with Himself by giving Brahmā the vision to see the form of Lord Viṣṇu, whom Brahmā held to be the Ultimate Lord, in all copies of boys and calves and how His sweet form of Kṛṣṇa is the original source of all opulent Viṣṇu forms and of all living beings including Brahmā. To witness this pastime, countless devotees, demigods, all living entities, and even all elements of the cosmic manifestation as well as time personified appeared and worshiped these Viṣṇu forms. Then Lord Kṛṣṇa made everything else disappear, and He again appeared as before. After seeing this, Brahmā paid his full obeisances to Lord Kṛṣṇa and bathed His lotus feet

with tears of joy. Now that his doubt and pride were removed, he joyfully offered beautiful prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa with a faltering voice due to ecstasy: “My dear Lord, You are the only worshipable Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore I offer my humble obeisances and prayers just to please You. O son of the king of the cowherds, Your transcendental body is dark blue like a new cloud, Your garment is brilliant like lightning, and the beauty of Your face is enhanced by Your *guñjā* earrings and the peacock feather on Your head. Wearing garlands of various forest flowers and leaves, and equipped with a herding stick, a buffalo horn and a flute, You stand beautifully with a morsel of food in Your hand.” – *SB* 10.14.1. This pastime teaches mainly three lessons:

- Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the original Viṣṇu and Bhagavān. As Viṣṇu He appears in opulence (*aiśvarya*), and as Kṛṣṇa He simultaneously enjoys very playful and sweet (*mādhurya*) pastimes according to His *acintya-bhedābheda* nature.
- One cannot understand the Lord by independent speculation or a challenging approach, which both lead to confusion. He is understood only by submission and devotion.
- If those who are on the reverential platform of *bhakti* like Brahmā find it hard to understand Lord Kṛṣṇa’s sweet and non-reverential pastimes – what is to speak of those who do not even believe in God? Kṛṣṇa’s sweetness is therefore called *durāpam*, difficult to obtain (*SB* 10.44.14).

The empathetic approach is also very beneficial. If we, for the sake of understanding only, mentally put ourselves in the position of being God and imagine that “all living beings are worshiping me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead”, then this is not very relishable compared to more intimate relationships as between two friends. It can thus be empathetically understood that God prefers to enjoy an existence in intimate relationships, which require non-majestic identities. Naturally, only those who are unconditionally and full-heartedly dedicated to serving God will be allowed to enter His intimate circles. Those who are less dedicated or not dedicated are given different relations in various distances according to the degree of their dedication. This then explains the necessity of various other forms of the original sweet Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa such as the majestic Lord Viṣṇu, and of concepts of an impersonal Absolute. The four approaches described in this chapter, namely understanding Kṛṣṇa’s own declaration of His nature and desire, the analogy of the Queen, the experience of Brahmā and the empathetic approach serve to be able to at least theoretically understand these wonderful sweet features of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the most lovable person. God ultimately is a lovable person beyond the concepts of Godhood, immersed in loving pastimes with His associates, and since such pastimes are all-attractive, He is called ‘Kṛṣṇa’, ‘the all-attractive’.

In the earlier quoted verse of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (1.3.16), Lord Kṛṣṇa establishes His preference of intimate and sweet relationships over relationships in awe and veneration. Therefore, those devotees who want to please God the most, accept His form of *mādhurya*, namely Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as God’s most essential and original form. It is Kṛṣṇa’s prerogative to possess the sweetest of all *mādhurya*, and actually the supreme quality of God is *mādhurya*, not majesty. The *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.11-17) enumerates sixty-four transcendental qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, such as beautiful features of the entire body, being extremely pleasing, ever youthful, a genius, the well-wisher of devotees and possessing a form of eternity, transcendental knowledge and bliss. Lord Viṣṇu only possesses the first sixty of Kṛṣṇa’s qualities, the last four being solely Kṛṣṇa’s monopole:

- (1) *līlā-mādhurya*: Kṛṣṇa is like an ocean filled with the waves of uniquely sweet *līlās* that evoke wonder within everyone (*sarvādbhuta-camatkāra-līlā-kallola-vāridhiḥ*).
- (2) *prema-mādhurya*: Kṛṣṇa is decorated with incomparable *mādhurya-prema*, uniquely sweet love, and He is always surrounded by devotees who are similarly adorned with *mādhurya-prema* (*atulya-madhura-prema-maṇḍita-priya-maṇḍalah*).
- (3) *venu-mādhurya*: Kṛṣṇa attracts the minds of all the three worlds with the uniquely sweet melodious vibration of His flute (*tri-jagan-mānasākārṣi-muralī-kala-kūjitaḥ*).
- (4) *rūpa-mādhurya*: Kṛṣṇa’s uniquely sweet form possesses unparalleled and unsurpassed beauty and opulence and astonishes all moving and non-moving entities (*asamānordhva-rūpa-śrī-vismāpita-carācaḥ*).



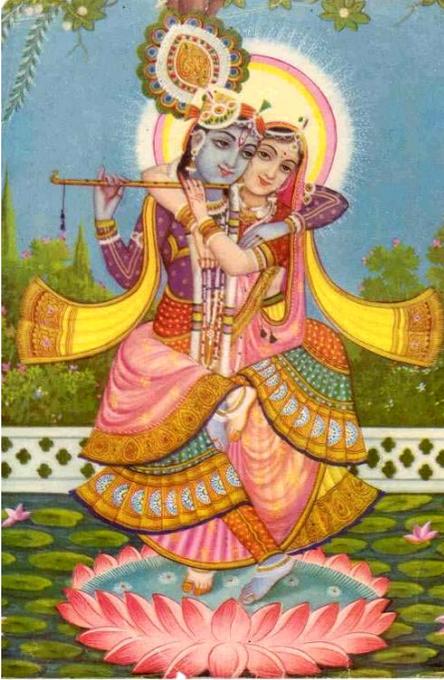
Lord Kṛṣṇa’s unique quality of possessing *prema-mādhurya* includes His relating to His devotees in the sweetest *rasas*, which cannot be found in relationship with any other form of God. The four main *rasas* are *dāsya-rasa*, *sakhya-rasa*, *vātsalya-rasa* and *mādhurya-rasa*, serving Kṛṣṇa as His servant, friend, parent and consort (see above pictures and Chapter 11.7). The historian Dr. Chatterjee stated: “In all of the world’s religious literature, you will not find such an elaborate explanation of God and His relationship with the living beings [as in Vaiṣṇavism]. (...) It is a developed theological science.” (Rosen 3, 1992, p. 16.) Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s unparalleled quality of *prema-*

mādhurya establishes Him as the original fountainhead of all forms of God. This is confirmed in the *Ujjvala-Nīlamanī*, Nāyaka-Bheda 16: “The Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa descends to the material world simply to relish the spiritual concentrated *rasa*. He is not an Avatāra but is the source of all Avatāras, the Avatāri.” (Rūpa 3, 16th century.) In his *Prameya-ratnāvalī* (Baladeva, 18th century) Prameya 1, Text 15, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa quotes the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad* 1.13 to give evidence from *śruti* for Kṛṣṇa’s *mādhurya*: *sat-puṇḍarīka-nayanam, meghābham vaidyutāmbaram, dvi-bhujam mauna-mudrādhyam, vana-mālinam isvaram*, “The Supreme Personality of Godhead appears as splendid as a fresh rain-cloud, and His eyes are as beautiful as lotus flowers. He has two arms and wears garments as yellow as lightning. He is decorated with a garland of forest flowers, and He is full of transcendental knowledge.”

The understanding of the spiritual superiority of Lord Kṛṣṇa in no way classifies the devotees of other forms of God or *devas* as false or even bad – it only explains their relationships in terms of the divine spiritual order. In fact Lord Kṛṣṇa’s expansions like Lord Viṣṇu or Rāma are all complete, yet there are various gradations of completeness: *ei kṛṣṇa—vraje ‘pūrṇatama’ bhagavān, āra saba svarūpa—‘pūrṇatara’ ‘pūrṇa’ nāma*, “Lord Kṛṣṇa is the most complete Supreme Personality of Godhead in Vṛndāvana. Elsewhere all His expansions are either complete or more complete.” – *Cc* 2.20.402. Kṛṣṇa Himself allows His devotee to choose His form of God and even strengthens his choice: “I make his faith steady so that he can devote himself to that particular deity.” – *Bg* 7.21. This proves that there is no trace of mundane envy or hatred in the spiritual hierarchy, but all-encompassing harmony. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains: “I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all. But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him.” – *Bg* 9.29. This general impartiality and simultaneous preference of His devotee is another aspect of His *acintya-bhedābheda* nature that can only be understood by *bhakti*. Kṛṣṇa is the impartial maintainer of all creatures, just like rain that pours down equally on all various terrains. Yet the devotee knows how to appreciate and use the rain of Kṛṣṇa’s mercy most expertly like the lotus that blooms in a water pool, whereas the atheist cannot appreciate Kṛṣṇa’s mercy just like bare rock does not produce lotus flowers despite the rain falling on it.

Another important fact that is to be considered is that Kṛṣṇa wants unalloyed *bhakti*, not conditional service. Therefore, He keeps Himself hidden from those who are not ready to render unalloyed *bhakti* unto Him: “I am not manifest to everyone. For the foolish [those who are averse to *bhakti*] I am covered by My internal potency, and therefore they do not know that I am unborn and infallible.” – *Bg* 7.25. It is thus necessary to become a devotee to understand the Lord and His universal nature beyond any sectarian or cultural designation. By realizing the Supreme Lord’s *acintya-bhedābheda* nature, one can understand how He is simultaneously one and different from all His forms and manifestations, and how His sweet forms are thus not in contradiction to His majestic forms.

5.8. Male and Female Aspects of God



The establishment of God being a transcendental person brings up the question of God's gender. In Chapter 5.5, the impersonal Brahman aspect of the Absolute was described. Since Brahman is attributeless, Brahman also has no gender. However, the highest aspect of the Absolute is the Supreme Personality of Godhead with transcendental attributes. The first important consideration in this regard is that God does not possess material but transcendental gender, because God possesses a transcendental body. As described earlier, God's body is *acintya*, materially inconceivable. It is therefore to no avail to argue about God's gender with material reasoning. However, we can realize it by God's grace, which descends to a fully dedicated devotee in various forms such as revealed scriptures, teachings of pure devotees and personal revelations. The Vedic literatures and saints, who possess God-realization, tell us that God has both female and male aspects⁵⁰. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is the original essence of all of God's male aspects and His female Absolute Counterpart is Rādhārāṇī. Other forms of God like Lakṣmī-Nārayaṇa and Sīta-Rāma also have male and female aspects. God's male and female

aspects are *acintya-bhedābheda*, simultaneously one and different beyond material conception. "Although Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are one in Their identity, They separated Themselves eternally" (Cc 1.1.5, quoted in Chapter 9.5). Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's being simultaneously one and two is marvelously expressed in Their famous *yugala-mūrti*, form as a joined pair, shown in the picture on this page. The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is most adequate to explain how God is simultaneously male and female.

What does transcendental gender mean? A black-skinned visitor once interrupted a class of a Vaiṣṇava Ācārya about Lord Kṛṣṇa and asked excited: "So God is black, right?" Reading his mind, the Ācārya answered: "Yes, but not like you." Kṛṣṇa's colour is not black like a black man, and Rādhā's bodily complexion is not white like a white woman⁵¹. Similarly, Their genders are not like human genders, but transcendental. They are the eternal archetype male and female, of which the mundane male and female are distorted reflections.

Kṛṣṇa is the potent or energetic (*śaktiman*) and Rādhā is His potency or energy (*śakti*). Just as the sun and sunshine are in one sense non-different, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are in one sense non-different. They are of the same spiritual substance and there is no question of potency without the potent and potent without potency. Therefore, the Vedic literature explains that They are non-different (*śakti-śaktimatayor abhedah*, *Vedānta-sūtra*, quoted in Cc 2.6.163, purport). We must develop a fine sense of what male and female means in the transcendental, archetypical conception. Male means the potent or energetic and female means the potency or energy. Since we are tiny parts of God's energy, we belong to the female potency of God. We are part of the *jīva-śakti* that manifests through *śakti-pariṇāma*, transformation of the original *śakti* of Godhead (see Chapter 14.2). Material nature is part of *māyā-śakti* and thus also female. For this reason, people say 'mother earth', 'mother nature' and 'father God'. We are energy, we are not the energetic, the possessor of energy. Whatever we think we possess, at last we must give it up. We are parts of God's energy and thus His possessions and servants.

⁵⁰ Other scriptures also indicate this, but not as explicit. Besides mostly referring to God with male attributes, the *Bible* sometimes describes God as mother and mentions that God made man and woman in His own image (Gen 1:27).

⁵¹ Kṛṣṇa's colour nevertheless reminds people who have His vision of the colour of *syāma*, a blackish blue, like the colour of fresh monsoon clouds. Therefore Kṛṣṇa's colour is sometimes described as black and sometimes as blue.

Service to God, the reservoir of bliss, is extremely blissful. The greatest servant of God, Rādhārāṇī, is the personification of the bliss potency, *hlādinī-śakti*. As will be described later, the indirect or empathetic enjoyment of the servant is much greater than the direct enjoyment of the served. In this *positive* sense, female means serving and male means served. Essentially, there is only one male, only one served or direct enjoyer – Godhead (*govindam ādi-puruṣam*, *Bs* 5.29). All others are His servants, His energies, His females. We may be in a male or female body, but because we are all of God's *śakti*, we are intrinsically females, and service is our core nature. This refers to the archetype female, *śakti* and Her transformations. The archetype male is *śaktiman*, Godhead, the wielder of energies. Energy is intrinsically female and serving, whereas the energetic is intrinsically male and directly enjoying. The servant's enjoyment is empathetic; it lies in the enjoyment of the master.

	<i>śaktiman</i>	<i>śakti</i>	
	potent	potency	
	powerful	power	
	beautiful	beauty	
	possessor	possession	
	intelligent	intelligence	
	wise	wisdom	
	religious	religion	
	renounced	renunciation	
	famous	fame	
	ruler	rule	
	alive	life	
	pure	purity	
	qualified	quality	
	merciful	mercy	
	wealthy	wealth	
	essentialist	essence	
	served	service	
	loved	love	

When generally referring to Godhead, the term 'Bhagavān' is used, meaning 'the possessor of opulences'. The principle of the possessor is male, and thus 'Bhagavān' is used in connection with male aspects of God like Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Bhagavān Śrī Rāma and Bhagavān Śrī Viṣṇu. Therefore, in general terms, Godhead is worshiped as male. However, this does not mean that His female Absolute Counterpart is not as significant as He is. There is no Kṛṣṇa without Rādhā, just as there is no Rādhā without Kṛṣṇa. In fact 'Śrī' means beauty and indicates the female Absolute Counterpart, so if we say "Śrī Kṛṣṇa", Rādhā is included.

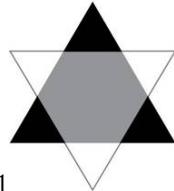
Some may find it inappropriate to call *śakti* the possession of *śaktiman* due to a negative impression of the term 'possession' in the material world, where possessions are exploited. But *śakti* is not possessed or exploited by someone else, because She is the essence of Her possessor *śaktiman*. God possesses Himself. He enjoys His own essence. We should well consider attributes of *śakti* like power, beauty, intelligence, life and love. These 'possessions' of Bhagavān are literally His very life and love, and His priceless ornaments. Just as there is no love without the beloved, there is no beloved without love. Worship of Bhagavān without worship of His Absolute Counterpart is considered incomplete. Both, *śakti* and *śaktiman*, should be worshiped.

If *śakti-śaktiman* is the highest principle, we can expect that this principle is reflected throughout creation. The following examples show, that this is in deed so, even if most people are not aware of it.

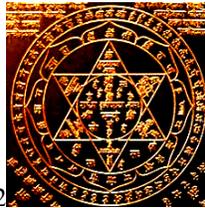


The praying gesture of joining one’s hands and bowing one’s head is found in many different cultures⁵². Above we see praying gestures of people of the world’s largest faiths; Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. People of many other traditions also pray with joint hands. Why do most people pray like this? If we try out this gesture, we can feel peace and devotion. The left represents *śakti* and the right represents *śaktiman*⁵³. The joining of the left hand and the right hand expresses *śakti-śaktiman* in unity, God and His Absolute Counterpart in unity, the Ultimate Unity in Diversity. The deeper meaning of this praying gesture is:

“I pay homage to the highest universal principle,
God and His Absolute Counterpart in unity.”



1



2



3



4



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



14



15



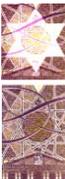
15



16



17



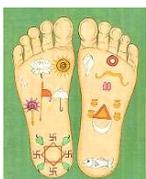
18



19



20



21



22



22



23

⁵² When this gesture is offered to greet people in the Vedic culture, one utters addresses like *namaste*, ‘obeisance to you’. It should be understood that the true followers of Vedic tradition do not worship people as God, but bow down to God present in everyone’s heart as the Supersoul and to all people as being servants of God. It is worth noting that this serving nature is reflected in all people’s gesture of bowing one’s head slightly during greeting, although most are not aware of this. The gravity of this serving nature becomes evident when we try to greet someone while keeping our neck stiff to avoid our head bowing down even a bit. This feels awkward, because it goes against our serving nature.

⁵³ This principle is universal and reflected in different traditions. In most cultures, especially during marriage or drama, the woman takes the left and the man takes the right position. This looks better and feels better, not because of cultural indoctrination, but because it is a universal archetype. Archetypes form cultures, not the other way around.



The most common pictographic form of *śakti-śaktiman* in unity is the *ṣaṭ-koṇa* or hexagram⁵⁴ (see above picture **1**). Before we begin a little excursion into religious symbolism, I would like to mention that it is not my intention to claim that the use of the hexagram always indicates a connection to Vedic culture. The point of presentation here is that the hexagram is simultaneously used in various traditions and thus offers itself as a common symbol. Its meaning of unity of *śakti-śaktiman* or transcendental unity in diversity is a non-sectarian and universal expression with a great potency of reconciliation and unity amongst various traditions. It also opens up deeper insight into the nature of God.

Explanation of above images:

1: In the Vedic use of the *ṣaṭ-koṇa*, *śakti* is represented by the downward pointing triangle and *śaktiman* by the upward pointing triangle⁵⁵. The most ancient description of the *ṣaṭ-koṇa* is found in the fifth chapter of the *Brahma-saṃhitā* (*Bs*, 3000 BC), a hymn to Lord Kṛṣṇa sang by Brahmā, the universal engineer, after his enlightenment. The first verse identifies Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the cause of all causes with an eternal spiritual body. The second verse describes His abode, which has the shape of a gigantic lotus flower whorl. The third verse discloses the following: the geometric structure of that whorl is a *yantra* (metaphysical figure) in the form of a *ṣaṭ-koṇa* (*karnīkāraṃ mahad yantraṃ, ṣaṭ-koṇaṃ vajra-kīlakam*); the sonic aspect (*mantra*) of the *ṣaṭ-koṇa-yantra* is God's holy name; the *ṣaṭ-koṇa* is the abode of both the potency aspect of the Absolute (*prākṛti*, synonym of *śakti*) and the potent aspect of the Absolute (*puruṣa*, synonym of *śaktiman*); They are always in *prema-ānanda*, bliss of divine love. In this third verse, the most ancient meaning of the *ṣaṭ-koṇa* or hexagram is presented, namely the blissful unity of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the harmony between the Divine Moieties, God and His Absolute Counterpart. **2:** The *ṣaṭ-koṇa* is also found in the *kṛṣṇa-yantra*, the *yantra* of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The *ṣaṭ-koṇa* is the basis of many *yantras* of various deities. It is found for example in the *yantra* of Sudarśana, the disc or *cakra* of Lord Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu, which is found on temple tops. **3:** Sudarśana *cakra* on the Rādhā-Mādhava (Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa) temple in Jalandhar, North India. **4:** logo of the Gauḍīya Maṭh, the root organization of most Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava organizations. **5:** Buddhist *vajrayoginī-yantra*. **6:** seal attributed to the Jewish King Salomon. **7:** top of a synagoge. **8:** Jewish hat. **9:** facade of the principal Franciscan Cathedral in Santa Croce, Italy. **10:** Jesus Christ enshrined by a hexagram in a painting in the Saint Nikola Church in Krusevo, Macedonia. **11:** hexagram enshrining the Franciscan Cross. **12:** in the St. Peters Basilica. **13:** minaret of the Arasta Mosque in Prizren. **14:** Roman mosaic. **15:** Celtic design. **16:** Great Seal of the United States. **17:** detail of the US one dollar bill. **18:** detail of the twenty pound bill of Great Britain (hexagram highlighted in upper copy). **19:** cover of the *Leningrad Codex*, the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew *Bible*. **20:** Vedic Guru *yantra*. **21-22:** details of the signs on the sole of the sacred feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. **23:** The sun often appears in the form of a hexagram on pictures. Snowflake sporting the hexagram (snowflakes are by nature hexagonal).

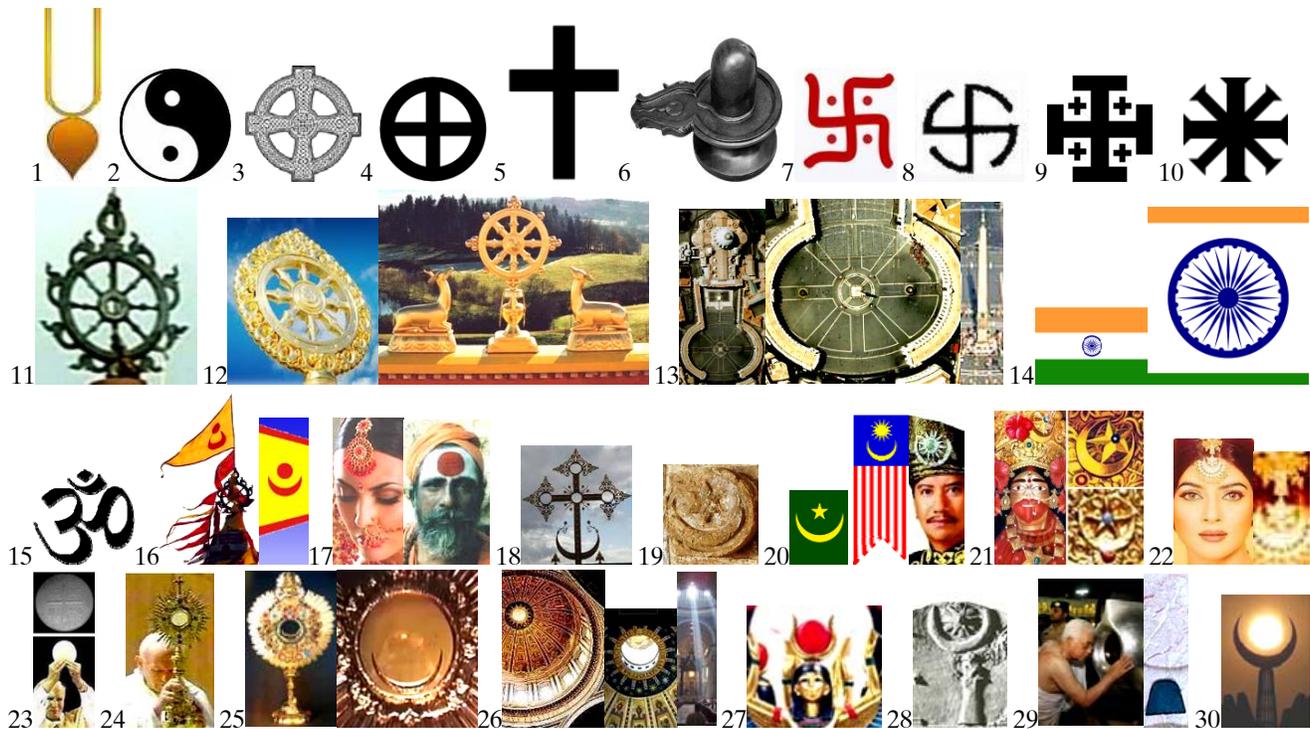
The hexagram is called Magen David in Hebrew and commonly known as Star of David or Seal of Solomon in the Jewish tradition. It is also found in other Abrahamic religions like Christianity and Islam. It is known in Arabic as Khātem Sulaymān, Seal of Solomon. Nowadays, the Star of David is known as the typical symbol of Judaism. However, there is no evidence for an earlier, factual connection of the hexagram with King David. "It is supposed to represent the shape of King David's shield (or perhaps the emblem on it), but there is really no support for that claim in any early rabbinic literature. In fact, the symbol is so rare in early Jewish literature and artwork that art dealers suspect forgery if they find the symbol in early works."⁵⁶ Then what did the hexagram stand for in Judaism before people ascribed a connection to King David? Scholars point out that the hexagram was very prominent in cabbalistic symbolism, in which the Divine has both male and

⁵⁴ A hexagram is a six-pointed star formed by placing one equilateral triangle over another. Unicode: U+2721 [✠].

⁵⁵ In another form of the *ṣaṭ-koṇa*, the triangles point to the left and right respectively [✠].

⁵⁶ www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/star.html

female aspects, like in the Vedic tradition. Since the hexagram is a simple geometric figure, it is possible that it was discovered and used in different cultures independently. However, the use of the hexagram in the Jewish tradition is astoundingly similar to the use of the hexagram in the Vedic tradition. Firstly, when the deeper meaning is expressed, both traditions do not describe the hexagram as homogenous, but as a combination of two equilateral triangles, one pointing up, the other down. The star of David is often depicted as two overlapping triangles, which are further distinguished in colour (see picture 8). Secondly, if we examine the hexagram of the *Leningrad Codex* (picture 18), we see that it is framed by a special octagram⁵⁷ (two overlapping squares). The combination of this octagram with the hexagram inside is not anymore as simple as the hexagram alone – and this structure is exactly the same as in many Vedic *yantras* (see picture 19, *Guru yantra*). The triangles produced by the overlapping squares make out the petals of an 8-petalled lotus (in some *yantras* these petals are curved – see picture 2). We are reminded of the above quoted fifth chapter of the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, where the relation of the lotus and the hexagram is described⁵⁸. Both the hexagram as well as the overlapping squares can be found on Lord Kṛṣṇa’s sacred feet (20-21). From all these practically identical structures we can assume that the hexagram came into the Abrahamic tradition from the Vedic tradition. However, its meaning was mostly lost over due course of time. The *ṣaṭ-koṇa* expresses the unity of *śakti* and *śaktiman*, the unity of God’s diverse complementary aspects. This includes the unity of God and the individual souls, because they are part of *śakti*. If all parts enter unity with God, they also enter unity with each other. The hexagram also expresses the unity of various religions, philosophies, sciences and other occupations, because they are manifestations of the ultimately one *śakti* (see Chapter 12, Chart 2). As such the *ṣaṭ-koṇa* also embodies universal unity, unity in diversity⁵⁹.



⁵⁷ This particular octagram is also very prominent in Islam. It is called ‘Rub el Hizb’ and can be found in the *Quran* as marker for the end of a chapter, on mosques, flags and decorative plates, or as the basic architectural structure, as in the case of the Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur. Certain Christians have identified it as ‘Seal of Melchizedek’.

⁵⁸ The lotus symbolizes purity (even when in muddy water, the lotus always remains pure). When one’s consciousness becomes pure and blossoms like a lotus, the undistorted truth can be perceived in the ‘lotus heart’, the pure heart.

⁵⁹ If the universal principle of unity in diversity and its reflection in symbols is properly taught, it is possible that those people who claim that all mystic symbols are occult will have a change of heart. If people do harm by misusing their hands, then only a foolish king will order that everybody’s hands should be chopped off. Just as we should learn how to properly use our hands, we should learn how to properly use symbols instead of prohibiting them. The less gifted have always stolen and misused things of the more gifted. Therefore, the misuse of religious symbols for occultism and profit does not disqualify them, but rather indicates their value. We should know their transcendental meaning and value.

Many religious or mystic symbols can be explained as expressing *śakti-śaktiman* in unity. **1:** One meaning of the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava tilak mark is as follows. The two vertical lines stand for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are united in *bhakti*, represented by the heart-shaped form resembling a leaf of the sacred Tulasī plant used in the Lord’s worship. **2:** The Taoist yin-yang symbol expresses interconnectedness of different polarities, another aspect of unity in diversity. **3:** Celtic cross **4:** Sun cross **5:** Christian cross. One meaning of the cross symbol is that it expresses the union or unity of two differently aligned lines or polarities. The vertical line is mostly associated with upstriving male attributes similar to *śaktiman*, and the horizontal line with humble female attributes similar to *śakti*. Similarly, the vertical *lingam*⁶⁰ represents *śaktiman* and the horizontally joined *yonī* represents *śakti* (**6**). When the cross starts to spin around its own axis like a galaxy, we arrive at the Vedic *svastika* (**7**). Certain crosses come very close to the *svastika*, like a special Celtic cross (**8**), the Christian baptismal cross (**9**) and the Jerusalem cross (**10**). If more spikes are added to the cross wheel and the outer circle is closed, we arrive at the Vedic *cakra*, like the 3.5 m tall Viṣṇu-cakra or Nīla-cakra on top of the Jagannātha temple (**11**). The flag over that *cakra* sports the *candra-bindu* (16) symbolizing *śakti-śaktiman*, as will be explained below. **12:** The Buddhist *dharma-cakra* on top of Buddhist temples is often depicted with a male deer on one side and a female deer on the other side. They symbolize the complementary principles similar to *śakti-śaktiman*, and in their middle is the *cakra*, their union. **13:** On the St. Peter’s Square in the Vatican there is a gigantic eight-spoked sun wheel. It takes up the entire space of the square (240 meters in width) and has the shape of an ellipse or egg. In its center stands a 25 meters tall Egyptian obelisk from Heliopolis, the “city of the sun”. At specific times, the sun casts the shadow of the obelisk on circular stones on the square, making the St. Peter’s Square one of the world’s largest sun dials. The obelisk symbolizes the vertical, potent axis (*śaktiman*), and the egg-shaped square represents the receptive principle (*śakti*)⁶¹. The wheel of *dharma* or religion is also found on the Indian national flag (**14**).

15: The sacred Vedic syllable Om is held to contain all cosmic principles and to be the root vibration of creation. The Devanagari Om sign is often used as symbol of Hinduism. It consists of (A) three joined curved lines representing (amongst other things) the three material dimensions or the three *guṇas*, material modes of nature, and (B) a dot (*bindu*) above a crescent, together called *candra-bindu* (Unicode: U+0901), representing the fourth transcendental dimension (*turiya*) or the mode of pure goodness (*śuddha-sattva*). The *bindu* indicates a classical point without material dimension, and in this way it represents transcendence. **16:** The *candra-bindu* is the main emblem of the flag on top of the Jagannātha temple in Jagannātha Purī, India. **17:** The *candra-bindu* is also depicted on the Vedic bridal forehead ornament (*māṅg tikka* in Hindi), and men and women of Vedic traditions wear the sacred dot, the *bindu* (*bindī* in Hindi) on their foreheads. The crescent is the symbol of *śakti*⁶², in the present context especially *śakti*’s aspect of consciousness. The complete *śakti* is already included in the *bindu* – hence which *śakti* does the crescent stand for in combination with the *bindu*? In the combination of *candra-bindu* the crescent symbolizes the minute *śakti* or the pure consciousness of the individual living entity contemplating transcendence, similar to the lotus described above. Optically the crescent resembles a (mental) vessel or womb, in which, when free of selfish desires, God crystalizes or takes birth. Both *candra* and *bindu* are transcendental. Thus *candra* indicates *transcendental* consciousness, not the material mind. The *candra-bindu* symbolizes the pure devotee or the pure spirit soul contemplating (service to) the Absolute, the part embracing the complete. **18:** crescent on the Old Church in St. Petersburg below the heart of the cross forming a *bindu*. When we take the *candra-bindu* and replace the *bindu* with a *śaṭ-koṇa*, the symbol looks

⁶⁰ The *lingam* is worshiped mainly by Shaivites. For them, the *lingam* represents Lord Śiva.

⁶¹ A similar symbolism can be found in the binary code. For example ‘01000111 01101111 01100100’ is the word ‘God’ in binary code. In the digital age, everything is reduced to bits and translated into binary code – a sequence of zeros and ones – and everything is produced from a sequence of zeros and ones; music, pictures, videos, books, mails, phone calls, etc. Interestingly, the number zero has an oval or egg-like form, symbolizing *śakti*, and the number one has a pillar-like form, symbolizing *śaktiman*. Thus the binary code consists of symbols of *śakti-śaktiman*.

⁶² Rādhārāṇī, the personified *mūla-śakti* (original energy), wears the crescent on Her forehead as Her crest ornament. Various other personified *śaktis* such as Durgā Devī are also ornamented with the crescent.

like the symbol of Islam, a crescent with a five-pointed star. **19:** Shomroni Hatov Mosaic Museum in Israel. **20:** flags of the Islamic countries Mauritania (cropped) and Malaysia (vertical version) and the crown of the King of Malaysia. **21:** crescent with a five-pointed star on the crowns of tantric deities of Tārā Mā in West-Bengal, India. **22:** Vedic bridal forehead ornament. **23:** When the Pope holds up the sacramental bread or host for viewing and adoration, it looks like the sun. The host represents a piece of bread that was broken by Christ and shared amongst his Apostles. It is unlikely that such a piece of broken bread had the shape of a flat round yellow disc that resembles the sun. Most scholars agree that the Roman Church included pre-Christian sun worship by shaping the host like a sun and by use of other symbolisms. The host is often stamped with a liturgical seal, making the host appear like a sun cross (4). **24:** The host is placed in a monstrance, a device with glass windows for holding and displaying the host. The pope places it respectfully over his head and all devotees also pay their respect to it, bending their knees. **25:** The monstrance shows a sunburst around the host, and the host is held in place by a metal crescent, which is called *luna*, the Latin word for moon. The dome of the St. Peter's Basilica is located at the heart of the Basilica that has the shape of a huge cross. **26:** At the center of the dome is a 16 ray sun wheel, through which the sunshine enters the Basilica, at times creating a sunlight pillar (emphasizing the vertical axis like the obelisk). **27:** Egyptian goddess Isis (often symbolized with the crescent) with sun disk in her headdress. **28:** Neo-Sumerian stele showing the sun entering the moon, discovered in the Sin temple at Ur, Iraq (dated 2100 BC). **29:** Following the example of Prophet Muhammad, Muslim pilgrims kiss the al-Hajr al-Aswad or sacred Black Stone on the eastern cornerstone of the Kaaba. It is enshrined in a womb-shaped silver frame. The second picture shows another piece of the Black Stone at the tomb of Suleyman in Istanbul **30:** Sun photographed 'within' the crescent of a mosque.

The symbolism of the Vatican depicts the union of the sun and the moon. This symbolism has been criticized to be non-Christian or anti-Christian. However, if the symbolism is understood in the transcendental way of *śakti-saktiman* beyond mundane idolatry it can serve as media for the Christian spirit and universal God-consciousness. The *Bible* allegorically says that "God is a sun" (Psalm 84:11), although worship of sun and moon is forbidden in Deuteronomy (4:19). The conclusion is that the *Bible* allows *symbolizing* God with the sun. Mother Mary is often depicted with a crescent. As mentioned, the crescent symbolizes the devoted, mercy-receiving principle. Many Christians see the worship of Mother Mary as the worship of the perfect devotee who conceived and brought forth Christ. The adoration of Mary entails the contemplation that all devotees are called to likewise give birth to God-consciousness in their hearts. Some Christians also venerate the conception that all souls should realize that they are brides of God. These concepts strongly remind of the Vedic concept that all souls are of *śakti*, the female, serving, conceiving potency, and their occupation is to receive the mercy of the potent Godhead (*śaktiman*). This then explains the esoteric significance of male-female symbolism in the Vatican. Although it was adapted from Egyptian and Roman worship, if it is properly contemplated, it can convey the highest principles of theism, advocating the worship of one transcendental God, not mundane deities.

Muslims believe that the Black Stone at the Kaaba (29) is a meteorite from the time of Adam and Eve. Many scholars agree that it is a relic of pre-Islamic worship. The receiving womb⁶³ or *yoni* enshrining the descending astral is a combination that indicates *śakti-saktiman*. Pieces of the Black Stone are found in various places. The piece of Black Stone above the entrance of the tomb of Suleyman in Istanbul (29, second picture) has the shape of a *liṅgam*, the symbol of *śaktiman* (6). In the worship of the *liṅgam*, as well as in other deities' worship of the Vedic tradition, the devotees perform *parikramā*, circumambulation of the deity (see Chapters 11.7, 14.4). The Muslims perform circumambulation only of the Kaaba, which holds the Black Stone, and not of any other mosque. Before touching the Black Stone, the Muslim pilgrims even have to bathe and then dress in two pieces of seamless white cloth in a way that externally makes them almost indistinguishable from

⁶³ The womb-like form of the silver frame is evident. Silver symbolizes the moon, and the moon symbolizes *śakti*. It is possible that the people who made this frame were not even aware of this. 'God's ways are mysterious', it is said.

Vedic *brāhmaṇas* or priests. The symbolism of *śakti-saktiman* is also found in the popular ‘crescent and star/sun’ symbol found on mosques and Islamic flags (20, 30). This symbol is found on the crowns of tantric deities and Vedic bridal forehead ornament (21, 22), both of which are pre-Islamic.

While concluding our little excursion into religious symbolism, it should be remembered that when speaking of *śakti-saktiman*, we contemplate transcendental, not mundane principles. There are parallels between transcendence and the mundane realm, because the latter is the distorted reflection of the former. However, due to the distortion included on part of the mundane, (A) the mundane cannot be equated with the transcendental and (B) it is very dangerous to induce transcendence from the mundane, for example to try to argue about God’s male and female aspects based on mundane conceptions of male and female. How can we have God’s vision with material consciousness? We cannot. We also cannot purify our consciousness ourselves, because that requires transcendental purifiers. We cannot clean dirt with dirt. As explained earlier, we can approach God only through His energy, His mercy (see Chapters 3, 11.4, 16). Since His mercy is personified in His female Counterpart, She is our main object of shelter (*āśraya-vigraha*), while He is our main object of worship (*viśaya-vigraha*).

If we forgo our intrinsic female nature of service then we take on a false archetypically male role of a direct enjoyer, although actually Godhead is the sole direct enjoyer. The material world is designed especially for those souls who have chosen to forgo their intrinsic female serving nature to try to become direct enjoyers or ‘imitationist gods’. All conditioned souls in the material worlds are intrinsic females imitating the archetype male (the Sanskrit term for falsely thinking to be male/direct enjoyer is *puruṣa-abhimāna*). Due to their false archetypically male mood, they try to enjoy the female potencies, namely the *śaktis* of beauty, wealth, intelligence, service, etc. (note that both male and female human are trying to enjoy these *śaktis* and both are thus acting as *śaktiman*, archetype male). Exploitation of nature, animals and people are manifestations of their superimposed male mood. The last thing they want to be reminded of is the actual *śaktiman* or *puruṣa*, possessor of potencies or original male, Godhead, because that would mean the end of their illusory god cruise. It must be understood that conditioned people who seem to enjoy the Lord’s potency are never even touching Her, because She is exclusively the Lord’s consort. The only thing which conditioned people have contact with is the shadow or perverted reflection of the Lord’s spiritual potency, the material potency, Durgā (see Chapters 3.3, 11.3, 14.2). Although beauty, wealth, etc. are found in the material potency or nature, they are non-eternal and include ignorance and suffering, because they are not spiritual, in other words, they are not used for the service of God. The only way that we can experience the original, spiritual manifestation of all potencies is by engaging everything in the service of God.

The motivation of the living entities in the material world is diametrically opposed to that in the spiritual world, where all want to enjoy serving God. In the material world, all want to enjoy their environment, and thus they cannot realize the unsurpassed excellence and bliss of service to God, which is their real inherent nature. Only when they take shelter of God’s mercy potency (*āśraya-vigraha*), can they realize the greatness of *bhakti*. The indirect or empathetic enjoyment of the servant is much greater than the direct enjoyment of the served. However, this is only fully experienced when serving Godhead, who is the original recipient of service.

Being God’s servant is so exalted, that even God Himself wants to relish this position. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who displayed His pastimes on earth 5000 years ago, took on a special form of His own devotee as Śrī Caitanya 500 years ago (see Chapter 6). Śrī Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa absorbed in Rādhā’s mood of service. He is the ultimate proof and teacher of the excellence of *bhakti*, the female potency of devotional service to God. The female divine Potency is in one sense superior to the male Godhead because She experiences more bliss than He does (serving and thus tasting personified sweetness, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is more blissful than being sweetness, see Chapters 6.13 & 10). She is also the power of love of God that enables people to realize God by attracting Him.



In the above paintings we see Rādhā serving Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa serving Rādhā. Although in *tattva*, ontological truth, Rādhā is the servant of Kṛṣṇa, He also takes pleasure in serving Her, and thus sometimes She allows such exceptional pastimes in order to please Him. Love is reciprocal – but that does not mean that the roles should be uniform. Different and distinguished roles are essential stimuli (*uddīpaka*) of love, and it is for this purpose of heightening love that the attributes male and female are linked with different roles like servant and served. That these roles invoke the highest stages of love is evident from the transcendental loving pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa which are unsurpassed in all the worlds (see Chapter 6.13). Their reciprocal love is also visible in the colour of Their clothes: Rādhā likes to wear blue robes, because the blue colour reminds Her of the bodily colour of Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa likes to wear golden robes, because this colour reminds Him of Rādhā's bodily colour. Thus Rādhā is dressed in love for Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa is dressed in love for Rādhā. Rādhā is not inferior to Kṛṣṇa in value. She is even in certain ways superior to Him. As mentioned before, She is Kṛṣṇa's very essence; She is in one sense more essential than Him. To attain God, we first needs Her grace. Hence we say 'Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa', 'Hare Kṛṣṇa' or 'Sita-Rāma', not 'Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā', 'Kṛṣṇa Hare' or 'Rāma-Sita'. This principle is also reflected in idioms like 'ladies and gentlemen' and 'ladies first'. Since the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas ultimately emphasize the female potency of God more than God's male aspect, one may wonder why they mostly use male pronouns (He, Him, His) in connection with God. At this point, three reasons shall be presented:

- (1) Because it would cause misunderstandings to use pronouns like 'She-He'. The human mind cannot properly think of one of God's transcendental genders, what to speak of how God can manifest both genders simultaneously. Using 'She-He' for God would cause the conditioned mind to think that God is androgynous (feminine and male in one body). But God's genders are not mixed or confused. They are fully manifest in separate forms simultaneously.
- (2) Because it raises chances of a proper approach. It is better for neophyte devotees to worship God's male aspect because in this way chances are better that they identify themselves with their own intrinsic female nature of being God's humble servants. If the neophytes, lacking purity of heart, worship primarily the female aspects of God, chances of trying to see God as the object of their direct enjoyment (an archetypically male notion) are higher. Since the living entities are tiny parts of the archetype female potency of God, it is most beneficial for the neophytes to first worship God's male forms. However, the neophytes are encouraged to pray to God's female aspects to bestow mercy and intelligence to properly worship God. Having attained a certain purity, one may worship female aspects of God more.

- (3) Because the female aspect of God is more confidential and thus intentionally veiled. Rādhārāṇī is also known as Sāra Devī, the Goddess of the essence. The essence is secret and kept hidden like a precious treasure. It is only attainable for those who know how to treasure and honor the essence, because it is unwise to ‘cast pearls before the swine’. The female aspect of God is love of God personified. She is exclusively for God’s service and enjoyment, and can only be approached with a pure service attitude. Whoever experiences a drop of it knows that it is the most precious treasure and will never expose it carelessly. Last but not least, whatever is veiled becomes more attractive because its veiling indicates its high value⁶⁴.

The male and female aspects of God should be taught properly for the sake of universal upliftment and reconciliation. In most religions, this topic is either avoided or shrouded in mystery. If we analyze different traditions without bias, we will find that the Gauḍīya school offers not only the most sophisticated revelation of male and female aspects of God, but also teaches most exactly how They are eternally in perfect unity, being simultaneously one and two. This is best explained with the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* of Śrī Caitanya. Knowing that He was Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined, it is not very astonishing that it was Śrī Caitanya who revealed Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s essential nature and unity most expertly to the world. He also taught that Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa can only be served and realized with transcendental love of God, and, as will be described in the fifteenth chapter, that love of God is best achieved by chanting God’s names, especially the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*: *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*. This greatest of *mantras* is composed of names of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and is thus the transcendental sound form of the unity of the male and female aspects of God.



⁶⁴ The wearing of a veil essentially expresses this principle that the original female is the secret essence of life and should not be exposed to all and enjoyed by all. Although in the perverted material world, the veil is often misunderstood, the essential secret of the veil is very esoteric and understood if one properly practices the Vedic culture. The spiritual meaning of wearing a veil is the contemplation that “beyond externalities, we are all brides of God only – we shall not be enjoyed by mundane people.” It is in this mood that many devotees of both genders in different traditions veil part of their heads. If anyone, without fanaticism, wants to wear a veil in the proper understanding, he or she will be respected by virtuous people and may also experience the secrets treasures of the soul’s original femininity. Actually, all people are wearing a veil – underwear. It is so natural that we forget about it. Although the ‘private parts veil’ is compulsory by law, no signboards are needed to enforce it. Cloths distinguish man from the animal. Since the head is also an intimate part of the body, it is natural that some people prefer to veil part of it. In fact, hats or veils for ladies and hats for gents were compulsory for upper class people in Western countries only a few hundred years ago.

6. The Life and Teachings of Śrī Caitanya



In order to understand the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*, we should also know its original exponent, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This chapter presents His life and teachings in connection with the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*.

6.1. Predictions about Śrī Caitanya and His Spiritual Status

In all human sciences, the fulfillment of a prediction of a phenomenon by a genuine predictor is considered an especially reliable evidence for the authenticity of both the predictor and the phenomenon. Albert Einstein for example postulated the theory of relativity, and it was proven by Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington. The Vedic literature predicted the appearance of Śrī Caitanya as a hidden Descent of God, and thousands of years later He appeared as predicted. According to scientific tenets, this supports the authenticity of both the Vedic literature and Śrī Caitanya. The Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas accept Śrī Caitanya as the Supreme Personality of Godhead based on scientific and historical evidence, not by dint of sentimental deification. Śrī Caitanya is predicted as Avatāra, a Descent of the Supreme Lord, in various ancient Vedic scriptures; He occasionally displayed attributes of God; and He revealed His identity directly to His close associates. There is an authorized scientific method how to recognize the specific Avatāra for each period of time. This method is mainly to consult the descriptions and predictions of the Vedic scriptures (*śāstra-vākye*, Cc 2.20.352), or to recognize extraordinary superhuman activities (SB 10.10.34). The fulfillment of Vedic predictions such as the advent of Lord Buddha is described in Chapter 9.2.

The *Vāyu Purāṇa* (quoted in Cc 1.2.22. purport) states: *kalau saṅkīrtanārambhe bhaviṣyāmi śacī-sutaḥ*, “In the age of Kali, when the *sankīrtana* movement is inaugurated, Kṛṣṇa will descend as the divine son of Śacī Devī.”

When the demigods prayed to Lord Kṛṣṇa, requesting Him to descend to the earth, He said, as recorded in the *Atharva Veda* (Tṛtīya-khāṇḍa, Brahma-vibhaga. Quoted from Nārāyaṇa, p. 17): *ito 'ham kṛta-sannyāso 'vatarīṣyāmi sa-guṇo nirvedo niṣkāmo bhū-gīrvāṇas tīra-stho 'lakanandāyaḥ kalau catuḥ-sahasrābdopari pañca-sahasrābhyantare gaura-varṇo dīrghāṅgaḥ sarva-lakṣaṇa-yukta īśvara-prārthito nija-rasāsvado bhakta-rupo miśrākhyo vidīta-yogaḥ,*

“When between four thousand and five thousand years of Kali-yuga have passed (this corresponds to 898-1898 AD), I will descend to the earth in a place by the shore of the river Gaṅgā. I will be a saintly *brāhmaṇa* devotee with long limbs and a golden complexion, and I will be called Miśra (as the son of Śrī Jagannātha Miśra). I will be renounced, free from all desire and advanced in *bhakti-yoga*, and I will accept *sannyāsa*, the order of renunciation. Appearing in the form of My own devotee, I will taste the sweet mellows of devotional service. Only qualified persons will know who I am.”

Ananta-Saṁhitā (quoted in *Cc* 1.2.22, purport) states: *ya eva bhagavān kṛṣṇo, rādhikā-prāṇa-vallabhaḥ, sṛṣṭy ādau sa jagan-nātho, gaura āsīn maheśvari*, “The Supreme Person, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, who is the life of Śrī Rādhārāṇī and is the Lord of the universe in creation, maintenance and annihilation, appears as Gaura, O Maheśvari.” The *Skanda Purāṇa* mentions: *antaḥ kṛṣṇa bahir gaurah, sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārśadaḥ, śacī-garbho samāpyuyam, māyā mānuṣa karmakṛta*, “The Supreme Lord will appear as the child of Śacī Devī. Internally He will be Kṛṣṇa, but externally He will assume a golden complexion. He will be accompanied by His potencies in the form of His companions and He will manifest transcendental pastimes.”

Amongst other evidences from Vedic literature, Śrī Gopinātha Ācārya, a close associate of Lord Caitanya, quoted the following verse from the *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma-stotra* that appears in the world’s largest historical literature, the *Mahābhārata*, Dāna-dharma-parva, Chapter 189: *suvarṇa-varṇo hemāṅgo, varāṅgaś candanāṅgadī, sannyāsa-kṛc chamaḥ sānto, niṣṭhā-sānti-parāyaṇaḥ*, “The Supreme Lord will appear with a golden complexion. Indeed, His entire body will be like molten gold. Sandalwood pulp will be smeared all over His body. He will accept *sannyāsa*, the fourth order of spiritual life. He will be equiposed, peaceful and fixed in devotional service.” (quoted in *Cc* 2.6.104.)

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.5.32 predicted that only the very intelligent (*su-medhasaḥ*) would recognize His glory: *kṛṣṇa-varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārśadam, yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ*, “In the age of Kali, intelligent persons perform *saṅkīrtana* (congregational chanting) to worship the Avatāra who constantly sings the names of Kṛṣṇa. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons and confidential companions.”

The following two verses predicted Lord Caitanya’s being concealed: *itthaṁ nṛ-tīryag-ṛṣi-deva-jhaṣāvātārair, lokān vibhāvayasi haṁsi jagat pratīpān, dharmam mahā-puruṣa pāsi yugānuvṛttam, channaḥ kalau yad abhavas tri-yugo 'tha sa tvam*, “In this way, my Lord, You appear in various Avatāras (...). In the Age of Kali, however, You are *channaḥ*, covered⁶⁵, and therefore You are known as *tri-yuga*, apparently appearing only in three of four yugas.” – *SB* 7.9.38.

Both the *Ādi Purāṇa* and the *Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa* (1.5.47) state: *aham eva dvija-śreṣṭho, nityam pracchanna-vigrahaḥ, bhagavad-bhakta-rūpeṇa, lokam rakṣāmi sarvadā*, “I always protect My devotees in My eternal, covered form as a devotee and the best of *brāhmaṇas*.”

In the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, the Supreme Lord predicts: *aham pūrṇo bhaviṣyāmi yugasandhau viśeṣataḥ, māyāpure navadvipe bhaviṣyāmi śacī-sutaḥ*, “In the first period of Kali-yuga, I will fully manifest Myself as the son of Śacī-devī in Śrī Māyāpura-Navadvīpa.”

Similarly, in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*: *paurṇamāsyām phālgunasya phālgunī-ṛkṣa-yogataḥ, bhaviṣye gaura-rūpeṇa śacī-garbhe purandarāt*, “I will appear as the son of Śacī-devī on a full-moon day in the month of Phālguna (February/March), during the constellation of Phālgunī Uttarā.”⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa mentioned in his commentary on *Tattva-sandarbhā*, that Lord Caitanya is also called covered because He is Śrī Kṛṣṇa covered with the complexion of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. This more confidential meaning will be explained in Chapter 6.13 (see also *Cc* 2.8.268-289).

⁶⁶ Last three verses quoted from Nārāyaṇa, pp. 33-38.

The above predictions – as well as many more that were not included here to keep the text compact – were all fulfilled entirely. Śrī Caitanya appeared as the son of the pious *brāhmaṇas* Śacī Devī and Jagannātha Mīśra, on February 18th 1486 AD, on a full-moon day in the month of Phālguna, in Śrī Māyāpura-Navadvīpa, West-Bengal, India, by the river Gaṅgā’s shore. He was a tall devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa with a golden complexion, and was thus also called Gaura or Gaurāṅga, the One with golden limbs (appropriate Bengali pronunciation: Goura, Gourāṅga). He accepted *sannyāsa* to preach the science of *bhakti-yoga* through the most effective method of self-realization, *saṅkīrtana*, the congregational chanting of God’s names. He did not publicly reveal His actual position of being the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but always kept the position of a humble servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This was because He came as a hidden *bhakta-avatāra* (devotee-Avatāra) in order to relish and teach *prema-bhakti*. This also explains why He was only recognized by a fortunate few, although He is predicted as the Supreme Lord in many Vedic scriptures; by His inconceivable potency, the Lord prevented people from understanding Him. Although He was thus covered from the great masses of people, He revealed His true identity to His associates, for example by manifesting His form of Kṛṣṇa or other forms of God before them. Some people also discovered Him to be an Avatāra of Lord Kṛṣṇa by recognizing His divine attributes, such as His effulgence of light and perfect saintly behavior. Śrī Caitanya is the eternal spiritual Supreme Lord who descends as Avatāra; His earthly pastimes are all completely spiritual and cannot be compared with any material human activity. Although the Lord is eternal and beyond birth (*ajo 'pi*, Bg 4.6), He appears on earth to bestow His mercy on His devotees (*paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām*, Bg 4.8). “Although I am unborn and My transcendental body never deteriorates, and although I am the Lord of all living entities, I still appear in every millennium in My original transcendental form.” – Bg 4.6.

The foolish, or those who are averse to the treasure of *bhakti*, are bereft of this vision because for them God remains covered by His internal potency (*yoga-māyā-samāvṛtaḥ*, Bg 7.25). Only the non-envious devotees can understand the Lord’s nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*, by which He can simultaneously appear on earth and remain ever unborn: *śacī-garbha-sindhau harīnduḥ*, “The Supreme Lord Hari appeared from the womb of Śrīmatī Śacī Devī, as the moon appeared from the ocean.” – Cc 1.4.230. The biography of Lord Kṛṣṇa gives a similar account: “Mother Devakī became beautiful by carrying Kṛṣṇa, the original consciousness for everyone, the cause of all causes, within the core of her heart, just as the east becomes beautiful by carrying the rising moon.” – SB 10.2.18.



The moon seems to appear from the ocean or the east, but actually it is ever existent and shining. Similarly, although the Lord appears on earth only for a certain time, He is ever existent, and His pastimes are ever continuous in the spiritual realm. This will be further elaborated in Chapter 14.8. Only if we know the transcendental nature of the Lord can we understand His spiritual pastimes on earth – else we may take them to be material. When the Lord appears, He appears together with His entire entourage of eternal associates (*sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pāṛśadam*, SB 11.5.32). *ādau prakāṣa karāya mātā-pitā—bhakta-gaṇe, pāche prakāṣa haya janmādika-lilā-krame*, “Before His personal appearance, the Lord causes some of His devotees to appear as His mother, father and intimate associates. He then appears later as if He were taking birth and growing from a baby to a child and gradually into a youth.” – Cc 2.20.379. Therefore, not only the Lord Himself, but also His close associates are not ordinary human beings, but must carefully be understood to be descending from the spiritual realm. If we think that the Lord, His associates and pastimes are material, we cannot understand Him at all. We should humbly study the Lord’s biographies remembering His transcendental status, if possible by hearing from a pure devotee.

6.2. The Biography of Śrī Caitanya

The references for this sixth chapter are mainly from Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī's *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Cc, 1615 AD), Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura's *Śrī Caitanya Bhāgavata* (Cb, 1535 AD), and a summary penned by Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura entitled *Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu: His Life and Precepts* (Bhaktivinode 3, 1896). Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī and Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, two most intimate associates of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, recorded all His transcendental activities in their notebooks (Cc 3.14.7), and based on them, *Caitanya Bhāgavata* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* were later penned. There are various other texts that include biographical information about Śrī Caitanya compiled by His personal associates and their disciples, and they are to a very high extent congruent. Śrī Caitanya appeared fairly recently and thus nobody denies His historic existence.

Just as nobody claims that Śrī Caitanya's Person was invented, nobody can claim that Śrī Caitanya is blindly believed to be the Supreme Lord without scientific evidence from the Vedic scriptures, from self-realized saints in unbroken disciplic successions, and from His transcendental pastimes and philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*.

Śrī Caitanya's biography is divided into two main halves of twenty-four years each. In the first half He played the pastime of a householder devotee and great scholar wearing beautiful clothes and ornaments. In the second half He played the pastime of a *sannyāsī*, an ascetic devotee in the renounced order, keeping a shaven head and simple red ascetic robes, committing Himself completely to devotion to the Lord and preaching *prema-bhakti* for the eternal welfare of all.

6.3. Appearance

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared in Māyāpur in the town of Nadia by the river Gaṅgā's shore just after sunset on the evening of the 23rd Phālguna 1407 Śakābda, answering to the 18th of February, 1486, of the Christian era. On this holy day, the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava calendar started, according to which today is 526 Gaurābda, 526 years after the appearance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (2012 AD). The full moon was eclipsed at the time of His advent, and the people of Nadia of all confessions were then engaged, as usual on such occasions, in bathing in the river Gaṅgā and loudly chanting the holy names of the Lord. In the *Padma Purāṇa*, the Supreme Lord mentions that He especially resides in those places where His devotees glorify and sing His transcendental name, form, qualities and pastimes (*mad-bhaktā yatra gāyanti, tatra tiṣṭhāmi nārada*⁶⁷). Thus when people irrespective of caste and creed all filled the air with the chanting of the Lord's holy names, Śrī Caitanya made His advent on earth, accepting the poor Vedic *brāhmaṇas* Jagannātha Miśra and Śacī Devī as His parents. Both husband and wife manifested a brilliant spiritual effulgence (Cb 1.2.147). Śrī Caitanya's first name as pointed out by His



⁶⁷ *Padma Purāṇa*, Uttara-khaṇḍa 92.21–22, quoted from *Vb*, BB 3.1.3.60.

horoscope was Viśvambhara, the maintainer of the universe, but everybody used to call Him Nimāi since He was born under a sacred Nima tree or Goura because of His golden complexion.

Knowing well that this rare form of the Supreme Lord would appear, already before Śrī Caitanya's advent, the demigods headed by Brahmā took their chance and came daily in the disguise of human beings to offer their gifts and prayers, predict the Lord's glories, worship and loudly chant the Lord's holy names (*Cb* 1.2.148-233). They saw that the child was simultaneously different and non-different (*bhedābheda*) from Lord Kṛṣṇa by their vision of *bhakti*. Only by *bhakti* is the Lord's *acintya-bhedābheda* nature revealed. When Nimāi cried, nothing could pacify Him except the chanting of the Lord's holy names. In this way He often deliberately engaged the neighbourhood in chanting and filled Śacī's house with the names of Kṛṣṇa (*Cb* 1.4.24). During Nimāi's name-giving ceremony, Jagannātha Miśra placed various items such as rice paddy, puffed rice, gold, silver, and books in front of Nimāi in order to ascertain the child's propensities. Nimāi at once grabbed the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from all the books and embraced it tightly (*Cb* 1.4.55). By this He disclosed His devotional inclination and preference of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

6.4. Pastimes of Scholarship



In His eighth year, Nimāi was admitted to the school of Gaṅgādāsa Paṇḍita in Gaṅganagara close by the village of Māyāpur. In two years He became well read in Sanskrit grammar and rhetoric. He read the *smṛti-sāstra* (supplement of the *śruti-sāstra*, the core Vedic literature) in His own study, and the *nyāya-sāstra* (science of logic) in competition with His friends, who were then studying under the celebrated Paṇḍita Raghunātha Śiromaṇi. Caitanya Mahāprabhu was a *śruti-dhara*, i.e. He could remember everything simply by hearing or reading it once (*Cc* 1.16.44). This is of course not the least astounding as He is the Descent of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the very source of remembrance (*Bg* 15.15), and who also played the pastime of a student who could remember all the *Vedas* and their branches simply by hearing them once from His Guru Sāndīpani Muni (*SB* 3.3.2). Śrī Caitanya displayed the highest intelligence and challenged even senior scholars in debate over the scriptures and logic. In friendly quarrels and debates, He would exhibit His logical expertise by explaining certain verses to the satisfaction of all present students. The Lord then said, “now hear Me refute these explanations.” After He refuted each of His own explanations, He then asked, “now who can reestablish these explanations?” Everyone there was struck with wonder as Nimāi said, “now hear Me reestablish those explanations.” Śrī

Gaurāṅga then again reestablished those explanations in such a wonderful way that no one could find any fault. All the senior students then embraced Nimāi in satisfaction (*Cb* 1.8.60-63). At the early age of sixteen, Nimāi Paṇḍita was considered the most important *paṇḍita* of His times, having defeated many senior scholars of various fields. He had His own school and taught many students Sanskrit grammar and the study of the scriptures.

Although the Lord is omniscient, He played the pastime of a great Vedic scholar and accepted a spiritual master. He thus gave the best example and established that *bhakti* is neither blind sentimentalism, nor attainable simply by our own capacity, but achieved by merciful revelation through *paramparā* and execution of the Vedic science. If the unlimited and independent Lord could not simultaneously enjoy the pastime of playing a seemingly dependent devotee, He would not be unlimited – this is one of the many aspects of the Lord’s *acintya-bhedābheda* nature becoming evident in Śrī Caitanya. The fact that the Lord descends to become His own devotee only increases His glories as well as the glories of His devotees. To set the example of a pure devotee, as well as to relish being a devotee, He thus daily engaged in the various practices of the Vedic science such as taking bath in the holy river Gaṅgā, watering the holy Tulasī plant, reciting the names of Hari, worshipping Lord Viṣṇu, honouring the Lord’s *prasāda*, and studying the holy scriptures (*Cb* 1.8.73-75, 1.12.102). Śrī Caitanya was married to Śrī Lakṣmīdevī, the beautiful daughter of Śrī Vallabha Ācārya, a pious *brāhmaṇa* of Navadvīpa. She was in fact non-different from the actual Lakṣmī Devī, the eternal consort of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu (*Cb* 1.10.115).

Śrī Caitanya played the pastime of being an elementary Sanskrit teacher, yet He was feared by all *paṇḍitas* for His ability to defeat any scholar of any field in argument. Keśava Bhaṭṭa was a *mahā-digvijayī paṇḍita*, a scholar who has never met defeat and conquered all directions by his knowledge. He was a staunch devotee of goddess Sarasvatī, the demigoddess of learning. By her inspiration, all literatures appeared on his tongue. His knowledge knew no bounds, and his questions alone were able to silence other scholars, ensuring his victory without the need of discussion. However, he did not teach the essence of the scriptures, *bhakti*, but merely engaged in scholarship to boast about his knowledge. When he arrived in Navadvīpa, the greatest center of learning in India at that time, the local *paṇḍitas* feared their defeat. When he met Śrī Caitanya, he exhibited his scholarship by spontaneously composing prayers to the goddess Gaṅgā in perfect poetical and scriptural harmony. He recited for three hours without a break. All present were baffled at this outpour of learning, but Śrī Caitanya immediately pointed out many faults in his subsequent explicatory verses, thus defeating him. The supposed greatest scholar of his time tried to say something fresh, but found that his entire fund of knowledge seemed empty and insignificant in front of Śrī Caitanya. However, Lord Caitanya never broke the spirit and reputation of the vanquished, and He thus offered to continue with their session anew the next day. Having met defeat by a mere grammar teacher, the humbled *digvijayī* at night prayed to goddess Sarasvatī, thinking that he must have offended her. She appeared to him and told him about her relation to Śrī Caitanya: “O *brāhmaṇa*, although I speak through your tongue, in front of Him I have no power. He is the Supreme Lord, who is situated in everyone’s heart. I am an eternal maidservant at His lotus feet, and I’m embarrassed to appear before Him.” (*Cb* 1.13.130-135.) The next morning, Keśava Bhaṭṭa surrendered himself to Śrī Caitanya, admitting: “You are the Supreme Lord, but You have appeared in Kali-yuga in the form of a *brāhmaṇa*. Who has the power to recognize You?” – *Cb* 1.13.155. Mahāprabhu then instructed him:

“Know without doubt that the goal of knowledge is to fix one’s mind on Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.
The best advice I can give you is that devotional service to the Supreme Lord
is the only substantial truth throughout all the worlds.” – *Cb* 1.13.178-179.

The thus enlightened professor Keśava Bhaṭṭa gave up all vanity of thinking himself a great scholar and became a humble devotee. Although externally playing the simple role of a Sanskrit teacher, Śrī Caitanya exhibited such perfect learning that He was soon known as the greatest savant

of the whole country (Sanyal, 1933, Vol. II, Chapter 23.) Śrī Caitanya's unexcelled erudition in all fields of knowledge including logic proved that He was in no way a sentimental simpleton who used religion to attract followers. He deliberately hid His divine identity and also instructed Keśava Bhaṭṭa not to tell anyone about the revelations of goddess Sarasvatī.

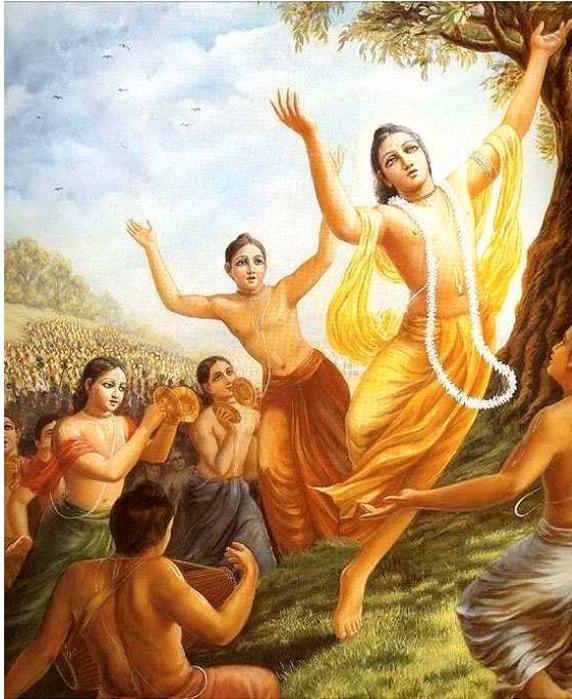
Lord Caitanya also set the best example of a householder, whose duty it is to serve unexpected guests, especially those of higher spiritual orders. He welcomed many guests at His home. Sometimes up to twenty *sannyāsīs* would come unexpectedly. Lakṣmīdevī would cook for them and Śrī Caitanya would serve and entertain them in all respects with great affection. Whenever the Lord met a poor person, He would immediately give him rice, cloth, and money out of compassion. Although He was not in the renounced order of life yet, Lord Caitanya was extremely strict in following the Vedic rules for associating only with one's own wife and avoiding any unnecessary contact with other women: "As soon as He saw a woman coming, He would immediately give her ample room to pass without talking." (*Cb* 1.15.17.) However He always honored and expressed His love to His mother by offering her obeisances at her feet and presenting her gifts (*Cb* 1.14.158). In this way, by proper respect and perfectly appropriate relations, the Lord completely satisfied people of all castes, creeds and genders. Śrī Caitanya gave the best example of a loyal husband in order to teach others. Correspondingly, the dedication of His wife who constantly served Him affectionately was beyond the imagination of the average modern man. When Mahāprabhu once visited East Bengal for a longer period, Lakṣmīdevī could not tolerate separation from her Lord, and so while meditating on His lotus feet she left her replica body and ascended to join Him in His eternal pastimes in the spiritual world (*Cb* 1.14.103). Such is the love of the Lord's eternal associates, that they can never tolerate separation from Him, up to the point of leaving the body merely by willing.

6.5. Accepting a Spiritual Master

So far, Lord Caitanya had not directly revealed His identity as the Supreme Personality of Godhead publicly. He also had not started preaching, but played the role of a scholar. He intentionally only exhibited His preaching pastimes *after* He received initiation from His spiritual master. He thus demonstrated what the Vedic literature propound: Nothing can be achieved without the blessings of a bona fide spiritual master. To set the supreme example for humanity, Lord Caitanya, the original Guru of the entire universe, accepted Śrī Īśvara Purī, a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, as His Guru. At the age of seventeen, Mahāprabhu travelled to Gayā where he privately met Śrī Īśvara Purī and with sweet words asked him for initiation (*Cb* 1.17.105). The Lord said: "I fully surrender Myself unto you. Please glance mercifully on Me, so that I may float in the ocean of love of Kṛṣṇa." – *Cb* 1.17.108-109. When the Lord meditated on the *mantra* given by His Guru, He began to shed tears and call for Kṛṣṇa continuously. Lord Kṛṣṇa personally appeared to Him. Śrī Caitanya's devotional sentiments increased day by day. After His return from Gayā, everybody was astounded to see how He had transformed and was exhibiting symptoms of pure devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa, that before were hidden under His role of professorship. In great humility, the Lord would fall down and catch the feet of the Vaiṣṇava devotees and render menial service to them by folding their cloths and carrying their belongings. In the form of Śrī Caitanya, the Supreme Lord gave up His own position so He could serve Himself and His devotees. When Śrī Caitanya resumed teaching His students, He taught everything in relation to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Absorbed in meditation on Kṛṣṇa, He explained how the Lord's name is present in every scripture, verse and commentary. "The holy names of Kṛṣṇa are the eternal Truth. All scriptures explain Kṛṣṇa and nothing else." (*Cb* 2.1.148.) He explained how the *dhātus* (essential verbal roots in grammar), and further the essence of everything are Kṛṣṇa's names and energies and how all are thus actually attracted to Him alone. He advised His students to spend all of their time meditating upon the lotus feet of the Lord and to always chant His holy name. "Kṛṣṇa is your mother. Kṛṣṇa is your father. Kṛṣṇa is your life and your wealth." – *Cb* 2.1.343. He then apologized that He cannot teach them

any more, because all He hears and sees is Kṛṣṇa and thus He cannot talk of anything else like worldly knowledge anymore. “Do not strive to learn more. Please gather together and chant ‘Kṛṣṇa!’. By Lord Kṛṣṇa’s mercy all the scriptures will be manifest within you all.” (Cb 2.1.393-394.) In this way the Lord’s pastimes of scholarship came to an end and His devotional pastimes of *saṅkīrtana* and preaching began. Having given the best example of a *brāhmaṇa* householder, Śrī Caitanya now exhibited the conduct of the ideal devotee.

6.6. Pastimes of Saṅkīrtana and Preaching



Lord Caitanya opened a school of *saṅkīrtana* in the compound of Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita with His sincere followers. *saṅkīrtana* means to engage in congregational chanting of the Lord’s holy names while playing various musical instruments and dancing as an expression of *prema*, love of God, with the exclusive motive to please the Supreme Lord. Śrī Caitanya engaged in ecstatic *saṅkīrtana* with His associates for many hours daily, often throughout the night, experiencing great spiritual bliss and emotions of love of God. Śrī Caitanya and His associates also led public processions of *saṅkīrtana* through towns and villages, attracting thousands of people who joined in spontaneously. Envious people thought that they were simply engaging in sentimental practices beyond any scientific standing or practical benefit, yet the devotees who participated in the Lord’s *saṅkīrtana* were in fact the greatest philosophers and scientists, as they were practicing the acme of philosophy and science. Many amongst them were great learned scholars like Śrī Caitanya Himself and

they were able to explain their conduct on the basis of Vedic scriptures and scientific logic. The Lord established that *ataeva kali-yuge nāma-yajña sāra, āra kona dharma kaile nāhi haya pāra*, “The essence of all *dharma* [activities and principles to attain the highest truth] in this age of Kali is the sacrifice of chanting the holy names of the Lord. One cannot be delivered by following any other *dharma* [in this age].” (Cb 1.14.139.) Lord Caitanya gave the corresponding scriptural evidence: *harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam, kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*, “In this age of Kali, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means of deliverance is chanting the holy name of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.” (Bṛhan-Nāradya Purāṇa 3.8.126, quoted in Cb 1.14.143.) Śrī Caitanya further concluded:

“*Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*, this verse is called the *mahā-mantra*. It contains sixteen holy names of the Lord composed of thirty-two syllables. If you continually chant this *mahā-mantra*, the seed of love of God will sprout in your heart. Then you will understand the goal of life and the process for achieving it.” (Cb 1.14.145-147.)

By chanting the holy name of the Supreme Lord, one comes to the stage of love of God (SB 11.2.40), which is the actual natural state of life. The replete *mahā-mantra*, the ‘greatest *mantra*’, is given in *Kali-Santarana Upaniṣad* 5-6, where this *mantra* is also declared to be the best method of spiritual upliftment in this age (see Chapter 15.1 ff for details). Lord Caitanya is the *sanātana-*

dharma personified (Cb 1.15.9), and thus He established what real *sanātana-dharma* is: To engage in *bhakti* to the Supreme Lord according to one's inherent nature (*sanātana-dharma*) of being the Lord's eternal servant (Cc 2.20.108). He also gave the best practical means to realize our spiritual nature, the Supreme Lord and our loving relationship with Him, by personally inaugurating the *yuga-dharma*, the essential practice of *dharma* for the present age, which He preached to be *saṅkīrtana* (*yuga-dharma pravartāimu nāma-saṅkīrtana*, Cc 1.3.19).

During this period, the land of Bengal was ruled by Muslim governors. Many of them were peacefully coexisting with the Hindus while others would try to convert them to Islam or suppress them.



The details of the following pastime are described in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 1.17.120-226. Once envious people complained to Chand Kazi, the local magistrate, about the loud *saṅkīrtana*. He went to the devotees, broke a drum and prohibited further *saṅkīrtana* by threatening to disown and convert the disobedient to Islam. Śrī Caitanya told the people to increase the *saṅkīrtana*. He never feared any opposition, because playing the part of the perfect devotee, He had full faith that the Lord will protect His devotees from any danger. He collected thousands of people and at night all fearlessly went towards the Kazi's residence with burning torches,

musical instruments and tumultuous *saṅkīrtana*. All that could be heard was the loud chanting of the Lord's holy names. Śrī Caitanya started the movement of nonviolent civil disobedience a long time before Mahātmā Gandhi. Moreover, He did not do it mainly for nationalistic purposes, but He did it to distribute the highest eternal welfare of *prema-bhakti*. When the procession reached the house of the Kazi, he hid in terror in his house until he was called for a friendly meeting with Lord Caitanya. The two met and Chand Kazi said that he had already ordered everybody not to disturb the *saṅkīrtana*, because in his dream, the Lord had appeared to him in His fearsome half-lion form of Nṛsiṃhadeva and warned him for offending the chanting of His holy name and scratched the Kazi's chest with His sharp fingernails. When he woke he had scars from the scratching. The Kazi displayed the scars and thus all accepted the Lord's warning. Chand Kazi then realized that Śrī Caitanya is the universal Supreme Lord and surrendered himself to His feet. He gave an admonition that none of his dynasty would ever hinder the *saṅkīrtana* movement, and he personally joined the chanting that day and became a great devotee of the Lord. Consequently, up to today, his descendents never opposed *saṅkīrtana*, even during Hindu-Muslim riots. At his *samādhi* (tomb), there is a 500 year old *goloka-campaka* tree, and although its upper part is hollow, it still blossoms. This *samādhi* is still honoured by thousands of devotees of both the Vaiṣṇava and Muslim confession in order to commemorate how the Lord showered Chand Kazi with His mercy and united people of all creeds in *saṅkīrtana*. This pastime is an example of how Śrī Caitanya and His *saṅkīrtana* movement are non-sectarian, super-religious and universal.

Lord Caitanya sent many of His followers to spread the glories of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa throughout the world and predicted, that His name will be preached in every town and village of the globe (Cb 3.4.126). *yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa' upadeśa*, "Whomsoever you meet, instruct him to follow the orders of Lord Kṛṣṇa as they are given in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*." – Cc 2.7.128. Preaching *bhakti* is the greatest act of compassion and welfare, because only *bhakti* can give eternal life, complete wisdom and bliss. The Supreme Lord says that as one shows compassion to others, one will also meet one's own welfare: *kṛtvā dayāṁ ca jiveṣu, dattvā cābhayam ātmavān, mayy ātmānaṁ saha jagad, drakṣyasi ātmani cāpi mām*,

“Showing compassion to all living entities, you will attain self-realization.

“Giving assurance of safety to all, you will perceive your own self as well as all the universes in Me, and Myself in you.” – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.21.31. Because the perverted minds of people are disinclined to *bhakti*, the preachers often undergo hardships to preach to them. The voluntary acceptance of hardship to alleviate the suffering of people in general is *parama-ārādhana*, the greatest method of worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is present in everyone’s heart (*SB* 8.7.44). *ei amṛta anukṣaṇa sādhu mahānta-megha-gaṇa, viśvodyāne kare variṣaṇa, tāte phale amṛta-phala, bhakta khāya nirantara, tāra śeṣe jīye jaga-jana,*

“The great stalwart devotees are like clouds that continuously rain down the nectar of Śrī Caitanya’s and Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in the garden of the universe, bringing the fruit of love of God to blossom. The devotees eat that nectarian fruit to their hearts’ content, and whatever remnants they leave are eaten by the general populace. Thus they live happily.” – *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.25.276.

Here the art of preaching, as taught by Śrī Caitanya, is explained: The general devotees relish the fruit of love of God and the nectarean pastimes of the Lord that they hear from the stalwart devotees or Ācāryas. Having been relished by pure devotees, this fruit becomes even more tasteful (*SB* 1.1.3), and is again relished by the devotees. Then the general populace become happy by eating the remnants of the fully satisfied devotees. Thus real preaching is a natural overflow of the devotional ecstasy of a devotee who relishes the fruit of love of God received from the spiritual master. Without being practically connected to an Ācārya and without relishing love of God and the Lord’s transcendental pastimes, mere mechanical preaching is neither capable of giving transcendental bliss to others nor to inspire the preacher. *ye līlā-amṛta vine, khāya yadi anna-pāne, tabe bhaktera durbala jīvana, yāra eka-bindu-pāne, utphullita tanu-mane, hāse, gāya, karaye nartana,* “People become strong and stout by eating sufficient grains, but the devotee who simply eats ordinary grains but does not taste the transcendental pastimes of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Kṛṣṇa gradually becomes weak and falls down from the transcendental position. However, if one drinks but a drop of the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, one’s body and mind begin to bloom, and one begins to laugh, sing and dance.” – *Cc* 2.25.278. On the other hand, if, by way of premature imitation of certain pure devotees in the highest stages of devotion⁶⁸, one is engaging exclusively in solitary worship without preaching, this is also not approved by the Ācāryas. *bhaktiḥ kṛṣṇe dayā jīveṣv, akunṭha-jñānam ātmani, yadi syād ātmano bhūyād, apavargas tu saṁsṛteḥ,* “If a living entity is advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and is merciful to others, and if his spiritual knowledge of self-realization is perfect, he will immediately attain liberation from the bondage of material existence.” – *SB* 4.29.1b. Purport by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda: “In this verse the words *dayā jīveṣu*, meaning ‘mercy to other living entities’, indicate that a living entity must be merciful to other living entities if he wishes to make progress in self-realization. This means he must preach this knowledge after perfecting himself and understanding his own position as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. Preaching this is showing real mercy to living entities. Other types of humanitarian work may be temporarily beneficial for the body, but because a living entity is spirit soul, ultimately one can show him real mercy only by revealing knowledge of his spiritual existence. As Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, *jīvera 'svarūpa' haya-kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'*, ‘Every living entity is constitutionally a servant of Kṛṣṇa.’ – *Cc* 2.20.108. One should know this fact perfectly and preach it to the mass of people. If one realizes that he is an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa but does not preach it, his realization is imperfect. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda therefore sings, *duṣṭa mana, tumi kisera vaiṣṇava? pratiṣṭhāra tare, nirjanera ghare, tava hari-nāma kevala kaitava:* ‘My dear mind, what kind

⁶⁸ Certain devotees in the highest stage of devotion are engaged exclusively in solicit worship, while other devotees in the highest stage also preach.

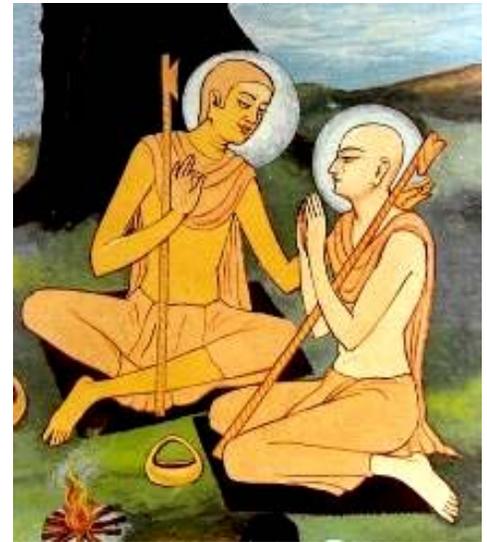
of Vaiṣṇava are you? Simply for false prestige and a material reputation you are chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* in a solitary place.’ (...) One who simply engages in temple worship but does not see to the interests of the mass of people or cannot recognize devotees is called a *kaṇiṣṭha-adhikāri* [materialistic devotee] (*SB* 11.2.47).”

Preaching is a very beneficial devotional practice, but it should be the genuine outflow of our lively internal worship and realization; then it can bring others to the same stage of worship and realization. Therefore, Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda above said preaching “after perfecting himself.” During his stay in the famous Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana, he wrote in his beautiful Bengali poem Vṛndāvane Bhajan, verse 10: (...) *sambandha nā jāni’ yebā ān pathe dhāya, kṛṣṇaprīti nāhi mile br̥thā janma yāya, kṛṣṇa se sambandha ādi bhāla kare bhuja, se sambandha rākhī tumi māyā sāthe yujha*, “Those who do not know *sambandha*, their eternal relationship with Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, traversing their own independent paths, simply waste their lives because they fail to achieve pure love for Kṛṣṇa. First try to well understand your *sambandha*, eternal relationship to Kṛṣṇa, and all its various details! Then, remaining firmly fixed in your transcendental alliance with Him, go and fight the battle against *māyā*, the material illusion.” (Bhaktivedanta 3, 1959, p. 65.) Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself gave the best example of a perfect preacher. He desired to give *prema* to all, but He could not do so unless He took the form of a worshiping devotee. Śrī Kṛṣṇa had to also practice (*ācāra*) *bhakti* and thus became His own devotee in the form of Śrī Caitanya, the Ultimate Ācārya and Pracāraka (preacher). Śrī Caitanya exemplified that preaching is not merely for preaching’s sake, but must be combined with and aimed at personal practice of *bhakti* (see *Cc* 3.4.102&103). He simultaneously fulfilled His universal desire for preaching and His personal desire to taste the transcendental pleasure of devotional service. *jīva nistārīte prabhu bhramilā deṣe-deṣe, āpane āsvādi’ bhakti karilā prakāse*,

“To deliver all fallen souls, the Lord traveled from country to country.
He personally tasted the transcendental pleasure of devotional service,
and He simultaneously spread *bhakti* everywhere.” – *Cc* 2.25.264.

6.7. Accepting the Renounced Order of Sannyāsa

Śrī Caitanya declared that party feelings and sectarianism were the two great enemies of progress and that as long as He continued to be an inhabitant of Nadia belonging to a certain family, His mission would not meet with complete success. At the age of twenty-four, He thus resolved to be a citizen of the world by cutting His connection with His particular family, caste and creed, and with this resolution He embraced the position of a *sannyāsī* at Katwa, under the guidance of Keśava Bhāratī of that town, who said: “You have induced the people to chant the name of Kṛṣṇa, and by inaugurating the movement of *saṅkīrtana*, You have awakened people’s consciousness [*caitanya*]. Therefore, Your name will be Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. Because of You, people will become fortunate.” – *Cb* 2.28.175-176. As a *sannyāsī*, Śrī Caitanya put on nothing but a *kaupīna* (simple undergarment) and a *bahirvāsa* (outer cloth). His head was shaven, and His hands held a *daṇḍa* (hermit’s sacred stick) and a *kamaṇḍalu* (hermit’s sacred water pot). He travelled throughout India on foot and delivered the treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema* to thousands of people.



6.8. Establishing the Universality of Bhakti

Śrī Caitanya did not reject the original caste system, but He rejected the hereditary caste system, according to which one's caste is solely determined by one's taking birth in a certain caste. The hereditary caste system is a perversion of the original socio-spiritual caste system called *varṇāśrama-dharma* (see Glossary), which was established by the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*Bg* 4.13, see below).

Lord Caitanya is called *varṇāśramācāra-pālam*, “The protector of the proper execution of *varṇāśrama-dharma*” (Bhaktivinoda 11, 1892, Verse 17). The original caste system appoints various castes with corresponding spiritual and social duties according to one's actual qualification and inclination. The hereditarians try to justify their doctrine by misinterpreting original verses or by quoting forged verses that were interpolated into ancient scriptures. Unfortunately, such a wrong presentation of *varṇāśrama-dharma* has led most people – Hindus as well as non-Hindus – to doubt or even reject *varṇāśrama-dharma* itself as well as the Vedic scriptures propounding it. If people would only make a little effort and go through the scriptures under proper guidance, they could be saved from committing such a mistake.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that if one shows the symptoms of a certain caste, then one should be classified accordingly, even if one was born in another caste (*yasya yal lakṣaṇam proktaṁ, puṁso varṇābhivyañjakam, yad anyatrāpi dṛśyeta, tat tenaiva vinirdiśet, SB* 7.11.35). The same injunction is given in the *Mahābhārata* (Vana-parva, Chapters 177.20 & 203.11–12. Quoted from *Vb, Cc* 3.16.29). In the *Bhagavad-gīta*, it is never mentioned that castes are determined by birth. Rather, Lord Kṛṣṇa says, *cātur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam, guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśah*, “According to the mental qualities determined by the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me.” (*Bg* 4.13.)

There are many instances in ancient Vedic literature where people born in lower castes were accepted and treated as belonging to a higher caste due to their good qualities. A famous example is the story of Śabarī from the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Book 4, Canto 75). This story is told in more details in Chapter 10. Śabarī belonged to the Śabara forest tribe, who were classified *mleccha*, untouchable outcastes. Śabarī exhibited outstanding devotional qualities, but the local *brahmaṇa* priests in Hāmpi denied her access to the temple due to her low birth. As a reaction to their offense, the water of the temple's pond turned into blood and puss. When Lord Rāma Himself visited Hāmpi, He rejected the invitation of the *brahmaṇas* and instead went to the forest to visit His great devotee Śabarī in her hermitage. Śabarī welcomed Her Lord heartily. She used her two hands as a bowl, and with the water of the tears from her eyes, she washed Lord Rāma's lotus feet. She then went to collect berries and tasted them to test if they were sweet. Although food that has been touched by the mouth is considered impure in the Vedic culture, Lord Rāma accepted the berries from Śabarī's hands with great pleasure, because He enjoyed tasting the pure love of Śabarī. Lord Rāma thus treated her at least like a *brahmaṇa* (who are entitled to offer food to the Lord), whereas He treated the official *brahmaṇas* of Hāmpi almost like outcastes. Lord Kṛṣṇa used the phrase *brahma-bandhu*, “relative of a *brāhmaṇa*,” to describe a person who took birth in the family of a *brāhmaṇa* but is not qualified as a *brāhmaṇa* (*SB* 1.7.35).

Contradicting the original Vedic order, the hereditarians claim that a son of a *brāhmaṇa* automatically inherits the status of a *brāhmaṇa* without having to qualify himself by proper training and acceptance by disciplic succession, and that one can improve one's caste only by rebirth. With the progress of the age of Kali, the perverted system overpowered the original system and thus people lost sight of the necessity of socio-spiritual qualification and upliftment, which is the actual aim of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Thus people mainly respected caste and dress, but did not consider qualification.

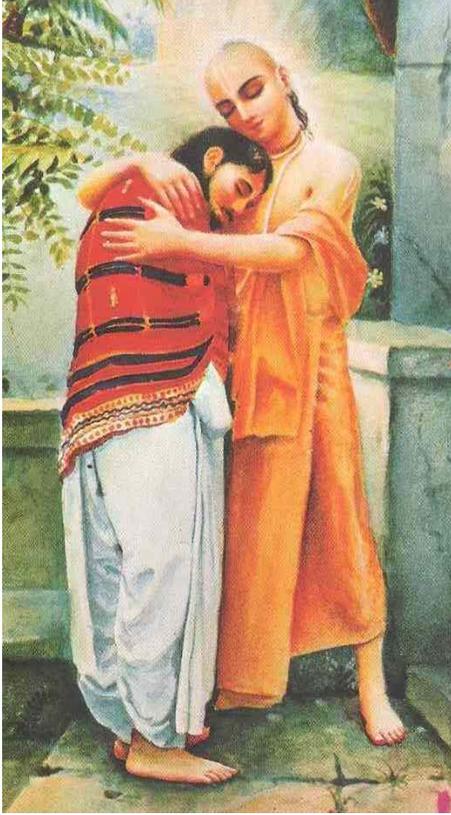
Śrī Caitanya played the role of a *brāhmaṇa* who accepted *sannyāsa* to facilitate people to accept His pure teachings. He reestablished the correct socio-spiritual caste system that treats pure devotees as above all castes.

The original *varṇāśrama-dharma* is declared to be ultimately superficial by Lord Caitanya; He expressed this in His teachings to Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī (*Cc* 2.20). The soul is beyond such temporary designations; the soul's *svarūpa*, original form, is to be a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*Cc* 2.20.108). But a so-called casteless society is also rejected by the Lord, because as long as most people have not yet realized life's actual goal of *prema-bhakti*, by which only one's *svarūpa* is realized, they need to be guided towards that end by the *brāhmaṇas*, who in turn should accept guidance of pure Vaiṣṇava devotees who are above all castes. In this way also the great masses of people who are not usually inclined towards pure *bhakti* are given the chance to gradually approach pure *bhakti* indirectly, despite their lacking affinity (see Chapter 12). In every country there are (1) spiritual leaders and general teachers, (2) administrators and armed forces, (3) merchants and farmers and (4) laborers. These natural organized classes cannot be avoided. The only question is if their members are guided towards the actual goal of life of *kṛṣṇa-prema* by pure devotees (as in *varṇāśrama-dharma*) or not. Another benefit of the original *varṇāśrama-dharma* system is that people live and work harmoniously with mutual responsibility and dedication due to a common higher goal, whereas those people bereft of spiritual guidance develop a spirit of competition and exploitation as in modern social classes.

The Vedic *varṇāśrama-dharma* system is scientifically designed to most efficiently uplift all people to the highest position of a Vaiṣṇava devotee – in whichever external role they may be. This system is like a hospital for curing the disease of materialism. In today's hospitals, most doctors are only doctors in name. To increase their own profit, they prescribe expensive treatments and medicines instead of permanently curing the patients. But that does not mean we should close all hospitals. Instead of only complaining about the incompetence in the hospitals, we should create genuine hospitals with genuine doctors by taking help from the rare genuine doctors. Similarly, we should not reject the beneficial original *varṇāśrama-dharma* system, but only its perversion. Instead of complaining about the incompetent standard of the masses, the original system of *varṇāśrama-dharma* should be reestablished with the help from the rare pure Vaiṣṇava devotees. Rejecting the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system leaves the people to the rule of their materialistic instincts; it leads to a secular world that is inimical to the systematic teaching of the science of devotion and thus obstructs people from attaining their actual eternal welfare, love of God. If the caste system was not beneficial, Lord Kṛṣṇa would not have designed it, and Lord Caitanya, the Supreme Teacher of devotion, would not have taught its perfect application.

“He [Lord Caitanya] was not against caste, nor in favour of it. He was above the caste.” (Sanyal, 1933, Vol. II, Chapter 7.) Yet without possessing the required spiritual maturity, it is only hypocrisy to think oneself to be above *varṇāśrama-dharma* like the Supreme Lord and His pure devotees. If one actually wants to rise above the caste system, one must become a pure devotee. This depends on internal identification and motivations, not external duty or caste. Only by dint of pure *bhakti* can one be truly freed, i.e. internally, not externally, from material misidentifications such as ‘I am a laborer, farmer, lawyer, priest, etc’. Only by identifying with the soul as the eternal servant of the transcendental Lord can one stop identifying with the transitory mundane position, duty and service. A devotee can be engaged in transcendental service but may seem to be engaged in worldly activities. Inner realization of and identification with the factual eternal gender, associates, residence, position and duties of the eternal self as a voluntary servant of the Lord is true castlessness, not to externally decry the caste system while internally identifying with the castes of material gender (‘I am a man/woman’), temporary family (‘I am the son/daughter of XY and XX’), temporary birthplace (‘I am Indian/American, etc), academic positions (‘I am a noble-laurate/illiterate etc’) and material duties (‘I am banker/farmer etc’). Those who artificially try to break free from material designations, religions, etc, are simply caught up in a new designation, the

designation of being anti-designative, against religions, against culture, etc. Only the pure devotees are *sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam* (Brs 1.1.12), entirely freed from all material designations, by dint of their devotion. However, to avoid disturbance, a pure devotee externally follows the caste system but internally does not identify with any material designation and is thus factually beyond all castes. This exalted state cannot be imitated or claimed by birth but must be achieved through proper qualification. By realizing our *acintya-bhedābheda* nature, we can harmonize playing a part in the social system while being fully engaged on the spiritual plane.



Śrī Caitanya accepted and honored devotees of all castes and lifted them to the highest position of a Vaiṣṇava. In the picture on the left we see Him embracing the great devotee Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, who was officially considered outcaste due to having served a Muslim king. Śrī Caitanya openly taught:

“Whether one is a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sannyāsī* or a *sūdra* – he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa.” – Cc 2.8.128.

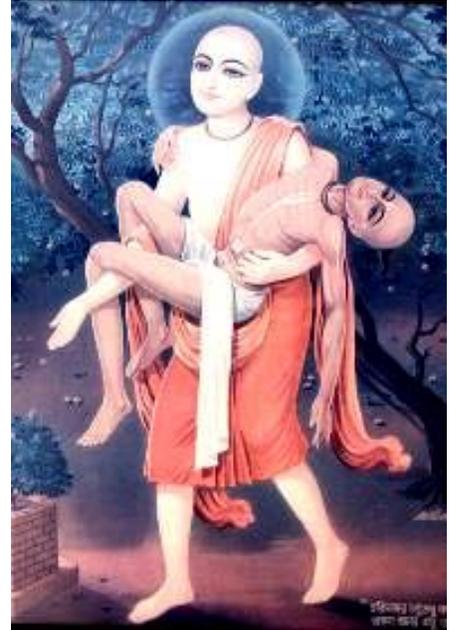
Śrī Caitanya was often criticized for this declaration, but now as *sannyāsī*, more people would listen to Him and accept His explanations using logic and scriptural evidence such as SB 3.33.7 quoted in Cc 2.11.192 that states that although they may be born as outcastes, those who always chant the Lord’s holy name become greater than a *brāhmaṇa* and they are Aryans, honourable devotees, in the true sense. One reason why Śrī Caitanya accepted *sannyāsa* was to convince those who have faith in the perverted caste system of the supremacy of the Vaiṣṇavas, and to give them faith in the original caste system that targets transcendence for all people by being led by the Vaiṣṇavas who are beyond any material designations such as caste.

The Supreme Lord accepted the humble role of a begging *sannyāsī* to preach the glories of His own devotees, and to preach that they are above the *sannyāsīs*, *brāhmaṇas* and other castes. To relish the humble position of a devotee, Śrī Kṛṣṇa externally embraced the caste and obligations of a *sannyāsī*, who is the servant of the Vaiṣṇavas who are beyond caste and obligations. He thus also taught that it is more glorious to desire a position below the Vaiṣṇavas and serve them, as it is more glorious to serve the Lord’s devotees than to serve the Lord directly (see Chapter 16). One may ask that since remaining below the Vaiṣṇavas is the highest, why do certain devotees like the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana still officially take the position of Paramahansa Vaiṣṇavas⁶⁹? We should

⁶⁹ This refers to accepting the dress of a Paramahansa Vaiṣṇava, also called *bābāji-veṣa*, usually white loin cloth. There is a necessity of an official dress of the Paramahansa Vaiṣṇavas (who are actually beyond any designations), because would they not accept an official dress, then the public people would not recognize them as such and commit offence by criticizing their devotional practices that are beyond the regulations of the caste system. Those Paramahansa Vaiṣṇavas who accept the dress of a Paramahansa or *bābāji* do this only in accordance with the will of the Supreme Lord who wants to teach that His devotees hold the highest official position, and to protect the common people from offending them. Unfortunately, nowadays, many of those who wear the robe of a *bābāji* are not actually on the Paramahansa platform, and many take this robe to take material advantage of it. To teach that being a Paramahansa is not a cheap thing, as well as to relish a humble position, many pure devotees who are on the level of Paramahansa do not accept the official dress of a Paramahansa, but externally play the role of one of the castes, serving the Paramahansas. They thus give the perfect example of a *sannyāsī* devotee (as did for example Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura) or a householder devotee (as did for example Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura), etc. One must therefore be very careful not to give honor to dress only, but to honor the true Paramahansa Vaiṣṇava, who can even play the role of an outcaste as did for example Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Lord Caitanya not only honored those Paramahansa Vaiṣṇavas who wear the

understand that they never claim to be Vaiṣṇavas above one and all because real Vaiṣṇavas think themselves to be the most lowly servants of the Lord. They accept this position, not for their own gratification or control over others, but only in accordance with the desire of the Supreme Lord who wants to glorify His own devotees and ascert them the highest position. In one sense, from their perspective, they thus merely play this superior role to please the Lord and never think themselves to be such, and in another sense, from the objective perspective, they do hold this highest position, and therefore they are honored as such by Śrī Caitanya and His followers.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta 3.11 describes a famous pastime in this regard; Śrī Caitanya's public glorification of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura when he departed from this world. Haridāsa Ṭhākura was born as an outcaste Muslim but exhibited most exalted devotional qualities. He chanted three lakhs of holy names daily with great devotion and was awarded the title Nāmācāryā, 'foremost teacher of chanting the holy names'. He was already at an advanced age, when, by his spiritual insight, he could foresee that Śrī Caitanya would soon depart for the spiritual world. He then asked the Lord for permission to depart before Him, because he could not stand even the thought of His separation – such was his love for Him. Lord Caitanya fulfilled his desire. Holding his Lord's lotus feet to his chest and chanting His holy name, Haridāsa Ṭhākura left his body by his own will and joined the Lord in His eternal spiritual abode in his spiritual form. After his passing, Śrī Caitanya, crying incessantly, personally lifted up Haridāsa Ṭhākura's saintly body and began to dance with it, although according to the perverted caste system, his body would be considered untouchable. The Lord then gave Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura *samādhi* (burying the entire body and building a shrine above it; commonly this is the prerogative of the *bābājīs* and *sannyāsīs*, while bodies of other castes are to be cremated). The Lord honoured the traditional caste system by fulfilling the duties of a *brāhmaṇa* and a *sannyāsī*, but He also showed that pure devotees must be given the greatest respect and honour beyond consideration of caste.



official *bābājī* dress, but He honored all Paramahansa Vaiṣṇavas, from the official outcaste Haridāsa Ṭhākura to the official *sannyāsī* Īśvara Purī, whom He accepted as His spiritual master.

6.9. In the Ecstasy of Love of God

Mostly during performing *sankīrtana*, Śrī Caitanya would exhibit symptoms of extraordinary



ecstasy of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, love of God. The *Caitanya-bhāgavata* (henceforth *Cb*) states that He would dance for hours and hours in most wonderful ways. Sometimes He would pirouette in the air, showering everyone with an incessant cascade of tears of love of God. People around Him were completely drenched from the tears that flowed from His eyes like the holy river Gaṅgā. Sometimes He would fall to the ground with such great force that the earth quaked and cracked in many places, but nothing

happened to Him. He often fainted and lay unconscious in a deep state of sacred rapture without breathing for many hours. Sometimes His body became stiff like marble, and at other times soft like butter, extremely heavy or light, unusually tall or small, cold or burning hot. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī states that Śrī Caitanya’s ecstasies were so intense, that at night His devotees locked Him in a secluded room called Gambhīrā behind three bolted doors to protect Him from getting in danger. Still, He sometimes escaped miraculously. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī further reports:

“The joints of His hands and legs would sometimes become separated by eight inches, and they remained connected only by the skin. Sometimes Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s hands, legs and head would all enter within His body, just like the withdrawn limbs of a tortoise [similar to the form of Lord Jagannātha].” – *Cc* 2.2.12-13. “No one has witnessed such bodily changes elsewhere, nor has anyone read of them in the revealed scriptures.” – *Cc* 3.14.81. “Ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa is wonderfully deep. By personally tasting the glorious sweetness of that love, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu showed us its extreme limit.” – *Cc* 3.17.67.

Actually it is quite natural that the most esoteric form of God, Śrī Caitanya, who is Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the mood of Rādhārāṇī, also manifests the most esoteric forms of ecstasy. Such unparalleled manifestations can also be seen as a confirmation of Śrī Caitanya’s highest divinity. Dr. McDaniel explained: “Caitanya (...) exhibited ecstatic symptoms that no one had ever seen before (...) No one could understand what was happening, including His closest companions. But they knew this: He loved Kṛṣṇa. In fact, they understood Him to be Kṛṣṇa in the mood of Rādhā, and so it was quite believable that He would exhibit the highest ecstatic symptoms, even those which had never been seen before.” (Rosen, 1992, p. 288.) Śrī Caitanya never exhibited mystic perfections to attract followers like certain *yogīs* who fly in the air or materialize things like gold for self-aggrandizement. He only manifested wonders that were in direct support of love of God, both internally and externally. Also today, one who is fortunate can witness a pure devotee’s ecstatic symptoms of love of God. These symptoms are never deliberately displayed in public, because the personal relationship with the Lord is the most intimate treasure. Some pseudo devotees sometimes publicly display artificially enacted ecstatic symptoms to attract recognition, but a sincere devotee will know

how to tell what is fake and not waste time with such show-performances. Devotional ecstasies are exclusively for the Lord's pleasure and are thus exhibited only in communion with Him in private seclusion or amongst pure devotees. The fact that whenever an outsider by accident entered His private circle, Śrī Caitanya's ecstasies would at once desist, proves that He is in no way a sentimental exhibitionist.

The greatest wonder that no Avatāra had performed before was that simply by seeing Śrī Caitanya or His devotees, even materialistic people or people of different faiths would start to spontaneously call out Lord Kṛṣṇa's names and attain love of God (Cc 2.18.219). What to speak of people – He even made wild animals such as tigers, deers and elephants dance together in friendship and chant Kṛṣṇa's names when He passed through the forest of Jhārikhaṇḍa (Cc 2.17.1). Even the trees began to shed tears of love in the form of honey and dropped entire branches loaded with fruits and flowers at the lotus feet of the Lord, greeting Him like a friend with various presentations; the Lord embraced them happily in return and made all creatures chant the holy name of the Lord (Cc 2.17.200-206. The trees reacted similarly to Lord Kṛṣṇa, see SB 10.35.8-11). Śrī Caitanya practically united people of all nations, castes, creeds and ages and living entities of all species in the universal *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal inherent activity or religion of love of God. Thus He showed that He is none other than Lord Kṛṣṇa, the actual friend of all living beings, by whose attainment in heart only there will be real peace (*bhoktāraṁ yajñatapasām*, Bg 5.29).



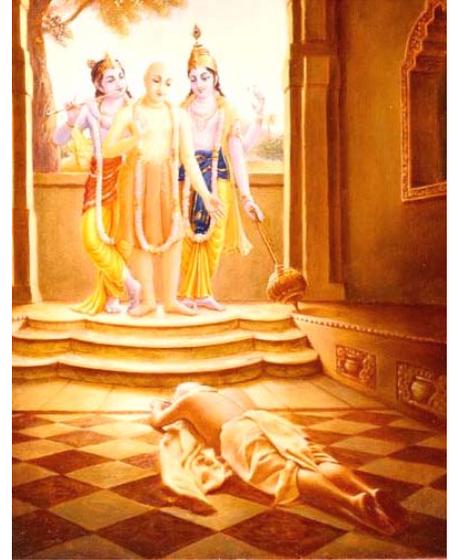
No one can attain love of God and reach the Lord's abode beyond death by flying in the air or materializing gold. But if we attain love of God from a pure devotee of the Lord, then we not only overcome death, but we also enter harmony with all creation and attain the Supreme Lord's eternal company in His loving service. Śrī Caitanya showed that the real perfection of life is neither material wealth, knowledge, cheating religion, mystic perfections or liberation from material bondage bereft of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, but attaining the treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, love of God, and making others attain love of God. He also gave *kṛṣṇa-prema* to criminals and thus delivered them, for example in His famous pastime in which He transformed the two looting drunken brothers Jagāi and Mādhāi who constantly terrorized the citizens into devotees and "pillars of piety", chanting the name of Kṛṣṇa two hundred thousand times daily (Cb 2.15). Other miracles He performed were reawakening a person from death and making him speak on the eternity of life and Vedic philosophy

(Cc 2.25), curing a leper and a saving a cholera patient from death and giving them love of God by embracing them, and manifesting six expansions during dancing (Cc 2.13.52). When Lord Caitanya first lay in full obeisance before Lord Alārnāth, the stone beneath Lord Caitanya melted from His

ecstatic touch (*Vb*, BTG 34.03). The stone slab bearing the impressions of His body can still be seen in the temple of Ālārnāth in Brahmagiri, Orissa (see picture).

6.10. Revelation of His Divinity and Acintya-Bhedābheda Nature

To please His devotees with their individual inclinations, Śrī Caitanya occasionally manifested different forms of God. He thus also confirmed His divinity and that He is the *avatārī*, the source of all Avatāras, the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*Cb* 2.8.87&2.10.268). By exhibiting His original form of Kṛṣṇa and various other forms such as Narasimha, Vāmana or Rāma, He allowed His devotees to practically witness how all the countless forms of the Lord are not different gods, but His own manifestations according to His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*, being simultaneously one and many. Demigods like Lord Brahmā, Śiva and Indra repeatedly appeared to joyfully witness and glorify Śrī Caitanya's pastimes. They declared that they are His eternal servants. Śrī Caitanya is simultaneously the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as well as the Supreme Lord's servant, but because His purpose of appearance is to relish and preach the glories of His own pure devotee, His mood of being Kṛṣṇa's servant mostly covered His divinity. Mostly He disliked being seen as the Supreme Lord. Once He tore up a palm leaf on which Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya had composed verses glorifying Him as the Supreme Lord (*Cc* 2.6.253).



6.11. Arriving in Śrī Jagannātha Purī

Lord Caitanya had a strong desire to go to Purī, a holy town of pilgrimage in Orissa. He was attracted to Lord Jagannātha who resides there in His famous temple. His devotees tried to change His mind because these days it was very dangerous to travel to Purī from Bengal due to wild animals, plunderers and an ongoing war, but He was so determined that He could not be dissuaded. On bare feet, the Lord passed everywhere fearlessly singing Jagannātha's glories.

Generally, Lord Jagannātha is seen in various ways by different people of different traditions. Jagannātha literally means 'Lord of the universe'. As such He possesses the capacity to universally harmonize everything, and therefore He has the largest variety of worshipers in the world. Lord Jagannātha is well known for reciprocating in various ways with different people according to their specific approaches as described in *Bg* 4.11, *ye yathā mām prapadyante*. The devotees of Lord Viṣṇu see and worship Him as Lord Viṣṇu, the devotees of Lord Rāma as Lord Rāma, the Shaivites as Lord Śiva, the Buddhists as Lord Buddha, the Gāṇapatyas as Lord Gaṇeśa, etc. There are Jains, Muslims and Christians who worship Lord Jagannātha as their Lord. However, the system of worship at the Purī temple mainly identifies Lord Jagannātha as Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is evident from the *pūjā-paddhatis*, specific scriptures for the worship of Lord Jagannātha, which recommend meditating on Him as Kṛṣṇa in four different ways at four different times of the day and from the two *mūla-mantras* (root *mantras*) that have been used in His worship in Purī for hundreds of years. One consists of ten and the other of eighteen syllables, and they both address Him as *gopī-jana-vallabha*, 'the lover of the *gopīs*', a name of Kṛṣṇa (Tripathi, 2004, p. 14). The famous *Jagannāthāṣṭakam*, a hymn sung daily for Lord Jagannātha, mainly addresses Lord Jagannātha as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the lover of the *gopīs* and especially as the lover of Rādhārāṇī. This is in line with the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava conception of Lord Jagannātha, which will be further explained in Chapter 6.14.

6.12. Delivering Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya

The following pastime of delivering Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya is described in *Cc* 2.6. When Lord Caitanya arrived in Purī, He immediately ran inside the Jagannātha temple in great ecstasy. He attempted to get on the altar and embrace Jagannātha, but due to devotional ecstasy He fainted. The guards thought Him to be a troublemaker and threatened to beat Him. At that time, Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, the court professor and adviser to the king of Orissa, forbade them to do so and had Śrī Caitanya carried to his residence. Seeing the Lord's symptoms of sacred rapture, he immediately recognized Him as an exalted personality. He examined the Lord as per the Vedic science by observing His breathing, pulse etc. His abdomen was not moving at all, but a fine cotton swab moved slightly before the Lord's nostrils. The *paṇḍita* concluded that the Lord's devotional ecstasy was genuine and of an intensity that has never been observed before. When the Lord regained external consciousness, he thus introduced himself as His servant. Gopinātha Ācārya, Sārvabhauma's brother-in-law, told Sārvabhauma that only because he was so attached to his scholarship and argument, despite vivid evidence, he could not recognize that Śrī Caitanya was the Supreme Lord. He quoted a verse that states that those who receive even a slight trace of the Lord's mercy can understand His greatness, but those who speculate to understand Him are unable to know Him even after years of study (*SB* 10.14.29). He then quoted verses that predict and prove that Śrī Caitanya is the Supreme Lord, but still Sārvabhauma remained doubtful. Sārvabhauma then started to instruct Lord Caitanya in *Vedānta* philosophy, and the Lord humbly listened for seven days. Thereafter Śrī Caitanya explained how Sārvabhauma's interpretations of the verses were distorting their direct meaning due to his following the *māyāvāda* philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya, who is expert in twisting the meanings to support the impersonalistic doctrine (see Chapter 9.3).

Śrī Caitanya proceeded to establish *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* as the uninterpreted direct philosophy of Veda, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the center of all relations of reality, *bhakti* as the *sanātana-dharma* and *prema* as the ultimate goal of life.

He proved that *prema-bhakti* is the perfection of life by explaining the famous *ātmārāma* verse (*SB* 1.7.10) in eighteen different ways and completely defeated Sārvabhauma's impersonalistic interpretations.

Sārvabhauma then realized that Śrī Caitanya was the Supreme Lord and surrendered himself unto His feet. To show him mercy, Lord Caitanya showed him His four-handed Viṣṇu form and then His two-handed form of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*Cc* 2.6.204). Sārvabhauma at once composed one hundred beautiful verses glorifying Śrī Caitanya. They are collected in his book *Suśloka-Śataka*. He became an unalloyed devotee of the Lord and always chanted His holy names. By seeing how this most erudite *māyāvādī* scholar became a Vaiṣṇava, the inhabitants of Purī could



understand that Śrī Caitanya was Lord Kṛṣṇa, and they came to take shelter of Him. Thousands, including Pratāparudra Mahārāja, the king of Orissa, consequently became His dedicated devotees.

6.13. Journey to South India, Rāmānanda Rāya & Śrī Caitanya’s Highest Teachings

Śrī Caitanya then started His journey to South India. He went on foot, accompanied only by one servant. During His journey, He made all people chant the Lord’s holy name and converted entire provinces on His way to Vaiṣṇavism. He met Rāmānanda Rāya on the banks of the river Godāvarī. Rāmānanda Rāya was a most exalted devotee and governor of Vidyānagara, Madras. There, they had a philosophical conversation that outlined the gradual development of theism up to the highest teachings of Lord Caitanya. This pastime is described in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.8. Śrī Caitanya asked Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya to explain the ultimate goal of life according to the revealed scriptures. Rāmānanda Rāya then revealed the gradual development of full-fledged theism. He first replied that one can get *bhakti* by executing one’s duties according to the social orders of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Of all people in the world, some are virtuous and hope to attain the Lord’s favor merely by playing a virtuous role in society. Śrī Caitanya, although He Himself externally followed this system, said that it is external. Rāmānanda Rāya next listed more and more advanced forms of approaching the goal of life, all of which were said to still be external by Śrī Caitanya. Of many virtuous members of society, some engage in *karma-yoga*; they offer the results of their work to Kṛṣṇa, for example by donating for His temple-worship. Better is to come to the point where one gives up all one’s duties in society to rely on and attract the Lord’s assured protection. But this is still conditioned surrender. Still better is to engage in *jñāna-miśrā-bhakti*, devotional service mixed with empirical knowledge. But this is also incomplete surrender due to reliance on one’s own limited endeavours and not yet freed from the concept that Kṛṣṇa can be attained by the independent ascending process. They may attain the impersonal Brahman, but not Kṛṣṇa. Only when Rāmānanda Rāya mentioned *jñāna-sūnyā-bhakti*, pure devotional service without any touch of speculative knowledge (*Cc* 2.8.66), Śrī Caitanya became agreeable, because this is the first requirement to attain transcendence. Starting from this turning point, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s teachings begin. *jñāna-sūnyā-bhakti* means that one must acquire transcendental knowledge directly from the transcendental plane, i.e. through the descending process of knowledge revealed by self-realized devotees who are situated on that plane and connected through disciplic succession, and give up the speculative process of ascending knowledge through the faulty human senses (see Chapter 3). Rāmānanda Rāya quoted Lord Brahmā (*SB* 10.14.3): *jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā namanta eva, jīvanti san-mukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām, sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vān-manobhir, ye prāyaśo 'jīta jīto 'py asi tais tri-lokyā,*

“O my Lord, You are verily unconquerable, yet You become conquered by the pure devotion of those surrendered devotees who are able to give up the unnecessary ascending way of independent knowledge by hearing about You from the mouths of self-realized devotees (*sat-mukharitām*), from whom transcendental knowledge is received aurally (*śruti-gatām*). The pure devotees, situated in any social position, serve You, Your devotees, and the narrations about You with their body, words and mind.”

This is what the term *acintya* in *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* points out: The Supreme Lord’s nature is transcendental and beyond the grasp of the material senses, intellect and sciences. The only way to attain Him is by giving up the path of ascending knowledge and by practicing the descending path of transcendental knowledge under the guidance of self-realized devotees. Starting from here, the door of transcendence is open. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied that this is all right, but he should still speak more on this subject. Rāmānanda Rāya then spoke about *prema-bhakti*, ecstatic love of God. He spoke about *vaidhī-bhakti*, devotion based on faith in Vedic literature and encouraged by rules and regulations, and *rāgānugā-bhakti*, following certain self-realized devotees who are engaged in *rāgātmika-bhakti*, spontaneous devotion that flows out directly from the fully uncovered soul (see Chapter 5.7). Next, Rāmānanda Rāya outlined the four *rasas*, loving relationships with the Lord:

There is *dāsya-prema*, loving devotion in servitude, *sakya-prema*, loving devotion in friendship, *vātsalya-prema*, loving devotion in parenthood, and finally *kāntā-prema*, loving devotion in consorhood, especially *parakīya-prema* or *gopī-prema*, the paramour love of the *gopīs*, the transcendental milkmaids of eternal Vṛndāvana and most intimate servants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Caitanya declared the paramour love of the *gopīs* to be the highest perfection.

Rāmānanda Rāya further explained, that of all devotees in *kāntā-prema* or *mādhurya-rasa*, Rādhārāṇī is the highest *gopī* and most beloved of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and that the highest form of devotion is *mahā-bhava*, Rādhārāṇī's supreme ecstasy of loving service to Kṛṣṇa. The completion of Rāmānanda Rāya's delineation of the development of full-fledged theism was generally reached with the description of the attainment of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, pure love of God, in one of the four main *rasas*. After having heard about the most exalted devotional love of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, Śrī Caitanya asked Rāmānanda Rāya to explain the means by which this goal can be attained. Rāmānanda Rāya said that the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are very confidential; only the *gopīs* have the qualification to appreciate and describe Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's transcendental intimate pastimes (*Cc* 2.8.202); others tend to confuse them with mundane love affairs. Their transcendental relationship can only be understood by a pure devotee who follows in the footsteps of the *gopīs* (*Cc* 2.8.204). "It is only by a person, possessed of pure spiritual knowledge and freedom from any relationship with *māyā*, that those amorous pastimes of Kṛṣṇa can at all be appreciated." – Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda (*Bs* 5.32, purport). "The name-form-qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are all completely transcendental and until this pure transcendental form has not appeared in the heart, till that time one is not qualified to hear such pastimes. Otherwise, the illusory energy will predominate, resulting in the mundane conception of ordinary man-woman relationships." (Purī, 1998, p. 94.) The transcendental pastimes of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are self-effulgent or self-manifest (*sva-prakāśaḥ*, *Cc* 2.8.206). They cannot be seen or brought into the light of vision by an outsider. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is only complete with His internal spiritual potency, personified in Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs*, Her personal expansions.



Therefore, only by taking shelter of the *gopīs*, who are *rasa-jñāh*, experts in the relishment of love of God, can one enter into the transcendental pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa (*Cc* 2.8.206).

The *gopīs* of Lord Kṛṣṇa are not ordinary human milkmaids. The *Padma Purāṇa* states: *gopyas tu śrutayo jñeyā, ṛṣi-jā gopa-kanyakāḥ, deva-kanyās ca rājendra, na mānuṣyāḥ kathañcana*, "It is understood that some of the *gopīs* are personified Vedic literatures, while others are reborn sages, daughters of cowherds, or demigod maidens. But by no means, my dear king, are any of them

ordinary humans.” (quoted in *SB* 10.29.9, purport.) The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.47.25) states that the *gopīs* have established *anuttamā-bhakti*, unexcelled devotion, and that even for great sages, this highest standard is hardly attainable. Among all persons on earth, the *gopīs* alone have fully perfected their lives, for they have achieved unalloyed love for Lord Kṛṣṇa (*SB* 10.47.58). The natural love of God of the *gopīs* is never to be compared to material lust (*Cc* 2.8.215). One who is *anīśvaraḥ*, who has not gained control over his senses, should not even mentally (*manasāpi*) act out the intimate pastimes of Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs*; if he still tries to prematurely imitate those who have full sense control, he will face ruin (*SB* 10.33.30). “Among the *gopīs*, there is not a pinch of desire for sense gratification. Their only desire is to give pleasure to Kṛṣṇa, and this is why they mingle and enjoy with Him.” – *Cc* 2.8.219. *Cc* 3.7.39 states:

“The unalloyed *prema* or love of the *gopīs* and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is without any trace of *kāma*, material lust. The criterion of such transcendental love is that its only purpose is to satisfy Kṛṣṇa.”

Proof of this quality of highest *prema* is that the Supreme Lord who is never attracted by worldly affairs wants to have the company of the *gopīs*, and glorifies them to the highest extent (see *na pāraye 'ham*, *SB* 10.32.22). *nijāṅgam api yā gopyo, mameti samupāsate, tābhyaḥ param na me pārtha, nigūḍha-prema-bhājanam*, “O Arjuna, there are no greater receptacles of deep love for Me than the *gopīs*, who decorate their bodies because they consider them Mine.” (Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Ādi Purāna*, quoted in *Cc* 1.4.184). Most exalted saintly devotees such as Śrī Uddhava and Nārada Muni who shun mundane pleasures, desire to experience the *gopīs*’ transcendental love of God (see *Cc* 2.8.216 and *Padma Purāna* 4.75.25–46). Śrī Uddhava says (*SB* 10.47. 61&63):

āsām aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣām aham syām, vṛndāvane kim api gulma-latauśadhīnām

“Oh, let me be fortunate enough to be one of the bushes, creepers or herbs in Vṛndāvana, because the *gopīs* trample them and bless them with the dust of their lotus feet.”

*vande nanda-vraja-strīnām
pāda-reṇum abhikṣṇaśaḥ
yāsām hari-kathodgītām
punāti bhuvana-trayam*

“I repeatedly offer my respects to the dust from the feet of the women of Nanda Mahārāja’s cowherd village. When these *gopīs* loudly chant the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the vibration purifies the three worlds.”

The glories of the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana are known to followers of all Vedic traditions. People of different schools wear tilak markings made from *gopī-candana*, dry clay from Dvārakā⁷⁰. The *Garga Saṁhitā* (6.15) states that *gopī-candana* manifested from the *gopīs*’ cosmetics; it is more sacred than clay from other holy places and even a sinner who wears *gopī-candana* goes to the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Goloka Vṛndāvana.

The devotee who successfully practices *rāgānugā-bhakti* attains a spiritual body to serve Kṛṣṇa in His spiritual realm Goloka Vṛndāvana (*Cc* 2.8.221-222), and the personified *Vedas* are an example of having perfected this practice. The necessity of a spiritual body explains that actual service to Kṛṣṇa is not executed in a material body – the service of the *gopīs* is therefore transcendental. It also explains, how a soul who is temporarily covered by a material male body can nevertheless worship Kṛṣṇa in the mood of a female devotee if he has such an inclination. Further, it

⁷⁰ Tilak markings are applied to the forehead and eleven places on the upper torso with a paste made from water and clay from a sacred place. Tilak purifies the body and mind, making them temples of the Lord.

also answers the question how we can take shelter of the *gopīs* of the transcendental realm while we are still in the material world; there are self-realized devotees in the material world who have attained their spiritual identity as a *gopī* or another associate of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, the only auspicious activity is association with the devotees of Kṛṣṇa (Cc 2.8.251). Lord Caitanya then showed His very dear devotee Rāmānanda Rāya His own confidential ontological nature (Cc 2.8.268-289). Rāmānanda Rāya saw a most wonderful thing:



He saw how Śrī Caitanya is Śrī Kṛṣṇa covered by and immersed in *rādhā-bhāva*, the transcendental love and emotions of Rādhārāṇī for Kṛṣṇa. In this way Lord Kṛṣṇa is tasting His own sweetness in the role of His own devotee.

Due to accepting Rādhārāṇī's feelings of transcendental love, Śrī Kṛṣṇa also took on Her golden luster, and thus became Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu, the Golden Lord. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, moved by His three internal desires, namely desiring to understand the glory of Rādhārāṇī's unsurpassed love for Him, to Himself taste Her unrivaled relish of His sweetness by dint of Her love, and to experience the unexcelled bliss She derives from that relish, appeared as Śrī Caitanya by immersing Himself in *rādhā-bhāva* (Cc 1.1.6). As such, Śrī Caitanya is Himself the ultimate proof of the exaltedness of Rādhārāṇī's transcendental character and devotion, because He is the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa who covets Rādhārāṇī's exquisite love, taste and bliss. Rāmānanda Rāya witnessed how Śrī Caitanya is inconceivably one and different from both Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī, and he thus realized the Lord's *acintya-bhedābheda* nature. He was able to do so, because he was already in harmony with the teaching of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, i.e. he realized his individual nature as an eternal servant of the Lord while keeping unity with His essential desire. This is explained in Cc 1.10.134, where Śrī Caitanya says that Rāmānanda Rāya is only different in body from Him – in spirit they are one.

Besides the internal reasons, Lord Caitanya's teaching of the supremacy of *gopī-prema* and its distribution are the most essential reasons of His advent.

“You [Śrī Caitanya] have come to taste Your own spiritual bliss, and at the same time You are transforming the whole world by spreading the ecstasy of love of God.” – *Cc* 2.8.280. “We find that He [Śrī Caitanya] has brought home to us the conception of different sorts of transcendental and unalloyed services that can be rendered to the Supreme Absolute Śrī Kṛṣṇa as well as a special feature of service which was hitherto quite unknown to theists [the transcendental paramour love of the *gopīs*]. (...) The conception of theism before His disclosure was confined to reverential and lawful principles only. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya has taught us that we may approach Śrī Kṛṣṇa with our unconditional services in all sorts of aspects. And He has shown us the comparative excellence of the most confidential relationship between Godhead and human souls. (...) So the level of theism that we had reached up to that time was not elevated enough and we were denied service of the Lord in higher aspects, I mean serving Godhead as our closer and more confidential friend, Godhead as our son and Godhead as our consort. Thus we were keeping these relationships with only perishable objects here.” “Unless we have the taste for the diversity of the transcendental activities, we are apt to be caught in the virtues and vices of the world, being intoxicated with the dynamics of mundane existence. (...) It is one’s duty to turn one’s serious consideration to those matters in which the unconditioned souls area actively interested. (...) It is supremely necessary for us to fully connect every activity, to take each simple step and to draw each simple breath with reference to Kṛṣṇa.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, pp. 50 & 426-427.) “This kind of [paramour] love for Kṛṣṇa is eulogised in the *Bhāgavatam*, but no one before Śrī Caitanya recognised it as the highest devotional sentiment.” (Kapoor, 1976, p. 221.) My most revered spiritual master, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja, explained in his sermon in Boston on the 22nd August 2002, that this material world is the perverted reflection of the spiritual world. Originally, all relations are with Kṛṣṇa. If you don’t want to have a blissful eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, you must have non-eternal relations in the material world that always end in separation grief due to being finite. If you don’t want to serve Kṛṣṇa as your eternal master, you will get non-eternal masters; if you don’t want to have Kṛṣṇa as your eternal friend, you will get non-eternal friends; if you don’t want to have Kṛṣṇa as your eternal son, you will get non-eternal children; if you don’t want to have Kṛṣṇa as your eternal husband or lover, you will get non-eternal spouses. As much attachment as we have to non-eternal relations, so much grief we will have to suffer, because all non-eternal relations will be lost [end of paraphrase].

Whatever we retain from being offered to the Lord will only bind us more to the non-eternal world; there is an acute necessity to offer *all* our various feelings and relations to the Lord. Śrī Caitanya kindly opened up the full treasure-house of transcendental *rasas*; He gave one and all access to all varieties of transcendental loving relationships with the Supreme Lord, thus enabling complete transcendence.

Paramour relations are certainly degraded in the material world. Although some people may desire to secretly entertain one or more lovers, they are incapable to do so without creating social disturbances. Yet there is a transcendental paramour relationship that is in harmony with the highest ethics and accepted by the greatest devotees who are personifications of all transcendental morality. Since this delicate topic is often misunderstood, some information is added here to clear any doubt. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda explained the ontological basis of the purity of the transcendental paramour relations of Śrī Kṛṣṇa very concisely (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 485):

“The *gopīs* are the extensions of the ecstatic energy of Kṛṣṇa, and so are exceptionally His own. How can there be illicit connection in their case?”



Lord Kṛṣṇa is *ātma-rataḥ*, enjoying within Himself, and *ātma-ārāmaḥ*, completely self-satisfied (SB 10.30.34). His enjoying with the *gopīs* who are of His own internal energy is therefore described as *yathārbhakaḥ svapratibimba-vibhramaḥ*, just like a boy playing with his own reflection (SB 10.33.16). Kṛṣṇa is never enjoying anything of the external material potency – He exclusively enjoys His own internal potency that manifests in diversity according to His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*. By understanding *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, we can thus understand, that Kṛṣṇa is actually only enjoying His own property, because although His devotees like the *gopīs* are in one sense different from Him (*bheda*), they are in another sense one (*abheda*) with Him as ultimately having their origin in Him and being created for His pleasure. Therefore, the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad* states *kṛṣṇo brahmacārī*⁷¹, Kṛṣṇa is in one sense an eternal celibate, only interested in the spiritual substance, not material sense gratification. Kṛṣṇa is ever-satisfied in His perfect transcendental abode, and has no need to engage in pastimes in the material spheres. Yet

even if Kṛṣṇa would enjoy people of the material world, it would be His right as the original only rightful master and enjoyer of everyone. If someone says that God cannot act in a certain way it means he has not accepted God as the supreme master. “Where Kṛṣṇa is accepted as the only master, *parakīya-prema* cannot become the object of criticism.” (Bhaktivinoda 6, 1886. Chapter 7.7.) One married man once mentioned that he likes everything about Kṛṣṇa, but he cannot understand why Kṛṣṇa is dancing with other men’s wives. A witty devotee replied to him:

“Kṛṣṇa is not dancing with other men’s wives
– you are dancing with His wife!”

When Lord Kṛṣṇa reciprocates with the paramour love of His devotees on earth, this is a manifestation of His greatest mercy in order to attract them to His service. Unlike worldly men, Śrī Kṛṣṇa can dance with thousands of *gopīs* in the famous *rāsa* dance and fully satisfy all of them simultaneously and individually by His personal expansions. As the world’s movies, songs and literatures prove; the unbound and youthful girlfriend-boyfriend relationship is certainly the most attracting relationship – but in most cases it is impossible, not allowed, or frustrated after a short time, and in all cases it is disturbed by old age and disease and taken away by death. This is because the material world is a perversion of the spiritual world, where everything exists in original harmony due to their residents being in harmony with their original nature of exclusive service to the one center – Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If all are serving the supremely attracting center Śrī Kṛṣṇa, then there are no clashes due to self-centered egotism, and all relationships including the paramour relationship can unfold beyond artificial limits. Because Śrī Kṛṣṇa is unlimitedly potent, He can manifest all relationships beyond restriction and dissatisfaction.

⁷¹ Quoted in SB 10.29.19, purport by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura.



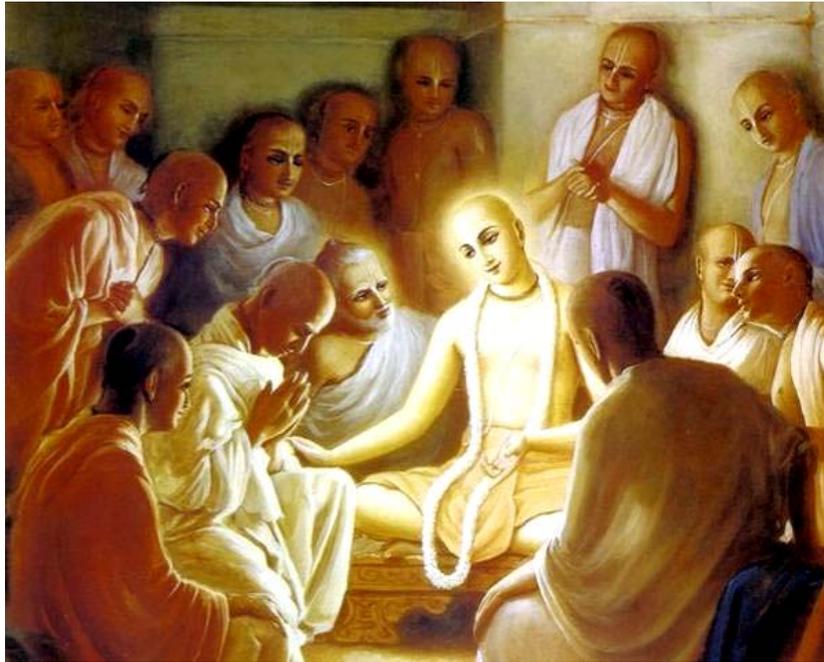
Moral laws apply to conditioned souls,
 but certainly not to the Supreme Autocrat who is above laws.
 Who possesses the audacity to tell God what He should do and not do?
 Those who dare to do so treat God as human, and thus
 their religion is material. God is unlimited –
 Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the proof.

One may ask that if only the purest devotees on the level of the *gopīs* are entitled to appreciate Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's transcendental intimate pastimes (*Cc* 2.8.202) because others tend to confuse them with mundane love affairs, then how are Śrī Caitanya and His associates still able to teach the excellence of *gopī-prema*, the transcendental love of God of the *gopīs*, to the people? The transcendental love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa cannot be fully understood by the conditioned souls, but in order to attain the transcendental realm, they should still be able to properly understand it, lest they will not be attracted or commit offenses. The answer is that Śrī Caitanya and His eternal associates are the perfect solution to this seeming dilemma. It has been explained in this book how Śrī Caitanya harmonized various philosophies in the universal philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* through His *acintya-sakti*, inconceivable internal energy. Similarly, He is Himself the manifest solution to this dilemma by dint of His *acintya-sakti*, as will be developed in the following.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda explains: “Almost all the great religions scrupulously avoid and forbid any examination of this all-important subject [paramour love]. The worship of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are the only exception to this rule. (...) There can be, must be, no moral regulation where there is real morality. Compulsory morality implies the absence of the substantive principle of goodness⁷². (...) Can a policy of repression of a really good principle be sanitary in the long run? (...) The disease is marked, but no effort is made for its cure. But disease cannot be healed by a policy that refuses on principle to contemplate the restoration of healthy activity. The question

⁷² This refers to the ideal and absolute goodness that is only found in the spiritual realm. In that state, the selfishly exploiting tendency found in the material realm is absent due to complete engagement in service of the sole center, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This natural freedom from wickedness allows life without regulations for moral conduct. This state is actually aimed at by regulations for moral conduct. The quoted author does as such not deny the need for moral regulations in mundane society – they are also prescribed by the Vedic science. Yet since the actual aim of real moral is the transcendental state of natural goodness beyond regulations in all affairs, this healthy state of being must be explained and made accessible appropriately.

thus resolves itself into the enquiry, ‘How can the fullest or natural use of the amorous aptitude be secured?’. (...) The positive answer of the whole issue, which is given only by the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, has been accepted and explained by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. That answer elucidated by the teachings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is prevented from being misunderstood by His own illustrative career. Any person who has taken the trouble of reading the accounts of the career of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya penned by His associates and their spiritual successors, must be struck with the total absence of the erotic element in His career⁷³. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya never mixed with women on the footing of sexual intimacy. His conduct is disappointing to those who expect to find a harvest of erotic activities from the fact that He poses as the teacher of the amorous service of Divinity by His own practice. The same characteristic trait is also noticeable in the careers of all bona fide followers of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. (...) The Personality of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is identical with and yet distinct [*bhedābheda*] from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The activities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya are, therefore, also identical with and yet distinct from the amorous pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.



“The activities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya appear in the form that alone is capable of being received by the conditioned soul without any chance of muddling by his conditioned judgement. (...) The perfect chant of the Name of Kṛṣṇa is available to all souls, and it is identical with the amorous service of the spiritual milkmaids of Vraja. This is the sum and substance of the teaching of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

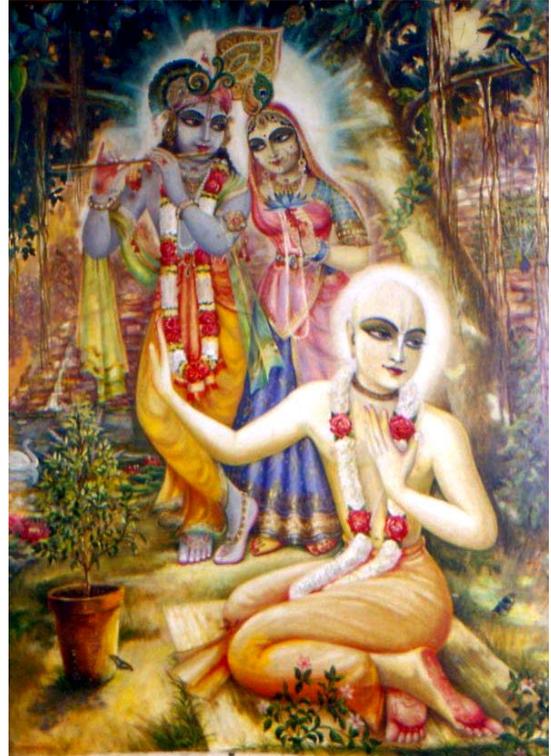
“(...) They [the transcendental pastimes of Śrī Caitanya] come down to this plane for the purpose of showing themselves to us in the only form that is not capable of being misunderstood viz as the activities of self-realized souls. The speciality of the appearance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya consists in this that Divinity Himself and His associates take the initiative for disclosing themselves to us by enabling us to regard them from the point of view that is necessary for such realization.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, pp. 452-461.)

⁷³ Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura explained in his commentary of *Cb* 1.15.30, that the internal reason why Śrī Caitanya never engaged in amorous pastimes like Kṛṣṇa is that He is Kṛṣṇa who is endowed with the devotional mood of service of Rādhārāṇī, whose exclusive object of worship is Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Prof. Sanyal mentioned: “Śrī Caitanya is not Śrī Kṛṣṇa as lover of others, but Śrī Kṛṣṇa as loving Himself. The two roles are wholly different and cannot be confounded with one another” (Sanyal, 1933, Vol. II, Chapter 8.) Further, as the Supreme Teacher, He had to set the extreme example of abstinence of mundane amour to preach proper transcendence.

The divine trick of Śrī Caitanya is that He is Śrī Kṛṣṇa who descends and manifests a pastime without the erotic element, which nevertheless is simultaneously non-different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastime according to His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Śrī Caitanya is Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined – He embodies Their materially incomprehensible union in a more comprehensible form to enable the spiritual aspirants to approach the union of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. This transformation is His unsurpassed mercy; He thus gives the Highest to the lowest.

This merciful transformation may be compared to the transformation of delicious food that cannot be eaten directly by a baby into breast milk by the love of the mother, so that her baby can get the same food in a suitable way. Feeling compassion with Their immature children, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa have kindly transformed into Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In this way, the conditioned souls are able to contemplate the pastimes of the very same Supreme Lord without wrong judgement or sentimental agitation. “No selfish sensualism can enter our consideration of the pastimes of Śrī Gaurāṅga, for He appears as a *sannyāsī* and a devotee.” (Śrīdhara 1, p. 64.) Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifested His transcendental pastimes 5'000 years ago. Since then, many people misunderstood His playful and unbound nature to be human and immoral; others engaged in illicit material imitations or material contemplations due to the presence of the enjoying spirit, and could thus not attain Him. In order to grant His special mercy to one and all, Lord Kṛṣṇa again descended 500 years ago in His most munificent form of Śrī Caitanya.

Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa made Themselves available in the ‘saver version’ of Śrī Caitanya and the holy name. By contemplating Śrī Caitanya's ‘saver’ pastimes and chanting the holy name, one serves the very same Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa who engages in transcendental amorous pastimes, and one can get the actual goal of attaining these very pastimes. “By understanding the teachings and pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one can understand the truth about Kṛṣṇa. By understanding Kṛṣṇa, one can understand the limit of all knowledge described in various revealed scriptures.” – *Cc* 2.25.270. “The magnanimous activity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is identical with His coordinate absolute activity as the amorous Lover of Śrī Rādhikā in Śrī Vṛndāvana. The individual soul has, therefore [because the conditioned soul cannot directly understand Their transcendental amorous love], no access to the realm of the amorous pastimes of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Govinda except by the realization of this identity of relationship between the two distinct *līlās*.” (Sanyal, 1933, Vol. I, Chapter 9.) This realization of simultaneous identity and difference includes a proper understanding of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*.



In the eighteenth chapter of *Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma Māhātmya*, Nityānanda Prabhu speaks to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī: “By first worshiping Gaurāṅga in the mood of *sānta* and *dāsyā*, the neutral and the serving relationship, the devotee attains Kṛṣṇa's service in the other *rasas*. (...) In the association of devotees, one who possesses the qualities beginning with humility will first worship Gaurāṅga in *dāsyā*, or servitude relationship. This *dāsyā-rasa* is the highest mood in the worship of Gaurāṅga⁷⁴.

⁷⁴ Let us consider, that Śrī Caitanya could theoretically have manifested a pastime in which His main eternal consorts in the pastime of Śrī Kṛṣṇa similarly serve Him in consorhood; but they appeared in servitude in His pastime.

(...) When the worship of Gaurāṅga in *dāsyā-rasa* reaches full maturity in the heart of the living entity, *mādhuryā-rasa* naturally develops in his heart. At that time one's worship of Gaurahari qualifies him to worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. Gaurāṅga then drowns the devotee in the nectar of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes, which the devotee enters as he attains Vṛndāvana. The materialist, who is blind to spiritual life, cannot see the deep relationship between Navadvīpa, the holy abode of Śrī Caitanya, and Vṛndāvana, the holy abode of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, which are simultaneously one and different. Know for certain that this same relationship exists between Gaura and Kṛṣṇa, who are also simultaneously one and different." (Bhaktivinoda 5, 1890, p. 80.) Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura, a great Vaiṣṇava Ācārya, wrote in the 4th verse of his *Sāvaraṇa-śrī-gaura-mahimā*, *The Glories of Śrī Gaurāṅga* (from *Prārthanā*): *gaura-prema-rasārṇave, se tarāṅge jebā ḍube, se rādhā-mādhava-antarāṅga*,

“Anyone who dives into the waves of the ocean
of relishment of transcendental love for Lord Gaurāṅga
becomes a confidential devotee of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava.”

This shows one of Śrī Caitanya's many glories of unrivaled magnanimosity. Unfortunately, there are devotees who have not yet recognized this unique opportunity of most efficient transcendence into the highest realms of devotion due to lack of realization of Śrī Caitanya's and the holy name's actual nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*, being simultaneously one and different from Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava (Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa). They prefer to take to imitation or premature contemplation of the intimate pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and thus they, mostly unknowingly, get only the perversion or shadow of the transcendental amorous pastimes, although they could be gotten proper by the mere price of faith in Lord Caitanya and the holy name. “Our direction from Guru-Mahārāja (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda) is: ‘Do not tackle all those fine things of the domain of transcendental love roughly. Stand at a respectable distance and try to view them with the greatest, with the utmost respectful reverence.’ The plane of divine love is very fine, very subtle, very soft and susceptible to such a high degree. So fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Keep this always in your mind. Otherwise, instead of real love, you will acquire something else.” (Śrīdhara 6, 1895-1988, pp. 60-61.)

Vedic moral regulations such as restraint from non-marital sexual relations or celibacy are required in the diseased exploitive material environment to avoid social disturbances and enable upliftment to virtuous conduct. Śrī Caitanya gave the perfect example of a devotee who strictly adhered to these social moral conventions of Vedic culture. Although householder devotees usually have children and give them the chance of becoming devotees, Śrī Caitanya, to set the extreme example, never engaged in sexual affairs even in His period of pastime as a married householder and thus did not have any children. Later, as a renounced *sannyāsī*, He strictly avoided close contact with the opposite gender, although, as the self-satisfied Supreme Lord, He has no actual need for such regulation. He did this to make one thing very clear:

Material amour is to be avoided as far as possible, because
it is the perverted reflection of the original spiritual amour.

“Material lust is the perverted form of spiritual love.” (*Jaiva-dharma* 21.) By following a mirage of an oasis in a desert, one is deluded and finds no real water. It is absurd to continue to follow a mirage and to claim that one is simultaneously looking for reality. One must ascertain and follow exclusively the real oasis, and the perverted appearances. Similarly, it is absurd to claim, that by continuing to follow the mirage of material amour, it is possible to reach the original spiritual amour. Therefore, religions who do not strongly encourage gradual renunciation of material amour and other material attachments are declared as cheating religions by the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.1.2). *svayaṁ niḥśreyasaṁ vidvān, na vakty ajñāya karma hi, na rāti rogiṇo 'pathyaṁ, vāñchato 'pi bhīṣaktamaḥ*, “A pure devotee who is fully accomplished in the science of devotional service will

never instruct an ignorant person to engage in fruitive activities for material enjoyment, what to speak of helping him in such activities. Such a devotee is like an experienced physician, who never encourages a patient to eat food injurious to his health, even if the patient desires it.” – *SB* 6.9.50. Suppose a blind man fell into a well, and, trying to pull himself out, grabs the tail of a poisonous phyton, thinking it to be a rope. A real friend will tell him to leave the phyton at once and hold unto the real rope and pull him out. *Bṛhad-āranyaka Upaniṣad* 1.3.28 commands:

asato mā sad gamah

“Do not stay in material illusion; go to the eternal reality!”

There are also clear instructions for renunciation in other scriptures like the *Bible*: “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15.) “Whoever does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:33.) Jesus asked his people to follow him and give up all mundane attachments: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” One of them asked: “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” Jesus told him: “Follow me, and let the dead [those without spiritual life] bury their own dead.” (Matthew 8:20-22.) These are radical words, and some may find them fanatic. But such instructions are true mercy, because transcendence is by nature radical. One may consider the situation of an embarking ship. An indecisive passenger is standing with one foot on the land and with the other foot on board of the ship. Any sane captain will tell him to step off the land at once, else he will do the splits and drown. There is no compromise on the path of transcendence. A caterpillar cannot remain a caterpillar and simultaneously become a butterfly; his inferior form must be given up. However, renunciation of the lower can only be done fully by a proper understanding, approach and experience of the beneficial higher goal (*param drṣṭvā nivartate*, *Bg* 2.59). “Men who lack knowledge have accepted the perverted material sex life as all in all because they have no information of the actual spiritual form of sex.” (Bhaktivedanta 2, 1980, p. 256.)

To fully recognize the perversion of mundane amour,
one must ascertain the original non-pervorted conception
of transcendental amour in all respects. This original amour is
only given fully by Śrī Caitanya’s school of thought.

Many people appreciate Śrī Caitanya’s *sankīrtana*-movement, but do not understand how many thousands of devotees can voluntarily live as celibates or restrict their sexual activities even in married life. How can they possibly be detached from the so-called ‘greatest pleasure’ of life? Not knowing the answer, many thus refrain from joining this movement. The answer is actually quite simple: The devotees know something better. No one could artificially control him- or herself to such an extent without cherishing something higher.

The devotees’ natural detachment from the perverted form of amour
is in itself proof that they know something better; they have tasted the superior,
kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa, the nectarean relish of loving devotional services to Śrī Kṛṣṇa,
who is the perfect and eternal master, friend, child, husband and lover,
and the reservoir of all perfect delightful loving relationships.

Cupid, the demigod of love, enchants everyone in the material world, but the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa enchants even Cupid. Śrī Caitanya explained to Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī that Cupid has five bewildering sensual arrows, representing attractive sound, touch, form, taste, and fragrance, but Kṛṣṇa is the actual owner of these five arrows; He can thus easily overpower Cupid and attract the minds of His pure devotees, and He is therefore also called Madana-mohana, the enchanter of Cupid (*Cc* 2.21.107). When Lord Brahmā, the engineer of the material universes, saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he

glorified Him, saying that he worships Him, the original Person, whose unique loveliness is charming millions of Cupids (*kandarpa-koṭi-kamaṇiya-viśeṣa-śobhaṁ*, *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.30). Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *manmatha-manmathaḥ*, one who can bewilder the mind of Cupid who bewilders the minds of all ordinary people (*SB* 10.32.2). Although Kṛṣṇa, as His very name reveals, is the all-attractive all-bliss-giving Supreme Person, this can only be fully realized by His pure devotees whose spiritual senses are uncovered and can thus appreciate Śrī Kṛṣṇa's transcendental beauty. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's transcendental beauty cannot be seen by materialists, because they lack the eyes of transcendental love of God. Lord Kṛṣṇa only reveals His all-attractive features to His pure devotees, because He is only interested in relationships with those who truly love Him. Then how is the materialist ever to overcome this gap? The solution is neither to find fault with the science of devotion, nor to become pretender devotees, who pretend that they are fully attracted by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, while they are actually mostly attracted by the Cupid of mundane amour. The only solution is to follow the Vedic science properly. We must constantly beg and gradually be given transcendental love of God from a pure devotee; only then can we ever see the transcendental beauty of Kṛṣṇa and overcome mundane attractions.

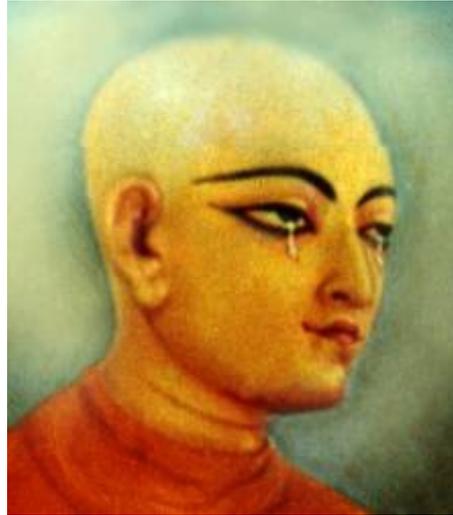
Having experienced the bliss of transcendental love, mundane love naturally becomes tasteless. From the transcendental perspective, mundane love is shown to be tasteless and uncongenial for spiritual progress. We should first empathetically accept this from the holy scriptures and from the mouths of experienced devotees and then gradually realize it ourselves – then there will be no more doubt. We must avoid as far as our material affinity allows, the material amour, which is the perversion of the original transcendental amour and not less dangerous than a misleading mirage. The arrows of the material Cupid are undoubtedly the strongest material shackles that make one forget God at once. Unfortunately, there are some pseudo Vaiṣṇava sects who engage in illicit sexual activities in the name of religion by imitating Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's conjugal pastimes. They are simply running after a mirage and give real devotion to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa a bad name. Śrī Caitanya was purposefully extremely strict concerning contact with the opposite gender to make it clear for all times that transcendental amour is never to be confused with its material perversion.

The more generations we go back in time, the more we can find that there was natural modesty about sexual relations, especially illicit ones. Modern people and psychologists wrongly judge this as a frigid notion due to exaggerated moral dogmas that hinder shameless carnal freedom, and thus they try to do away with sexual modesty. Yet this modesty is not indoctrinated – it is a natural and beneficial protection from the perverted mundane amour. This modesty distinguishes man from the animals who are not ashamed to copulate in front of their peers. Instead of becoming like animals who can neither understand, control nor transcend their sensual urges, people should utilize their natural shyness, restrict their material senses and develop their transcendental senses, by which they can experience transcendence and the pure state of amour. Yet this is a gradual process, and thus one should not jump to artificial renunciation but engage in *bhakti* according to one's present position. When one attains an intense higher taste by dint of proper *bhakti*, one will renounce naturally. Therefore, in the Vedic spiritual-social system of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, most people go through married life before entering renounced orders. This system is not a system of suppression, but of gradual cultivation of spiritual maturity. Proper renunciation is compared to a fully ripe coconut; its flesh is already detached from the shell and does not need to be cut away forcefully like the flesh of a young coconut.

By consulting Veda, we come to understand that so-called carnal 'freedom' actually not only further enslaves the soul in material misidentifications; it also shuts the door to transcendence, which is the only way to real freedom and the original non-perverted form of amour. The negative effect of increasing carnal freedom in modern times can also be observed in increasing materialism (instead of increasing spiritualism, as per the hope of those who falsely belief that carnal love is spiritual), increasing violence, sexual abuses and rapes (instead of a decrease, as per the fallacy that suppressing carnality increases violence, sexual abuse and rape), and last but not least, increasing

depression, loneliness, drug abuse and drug addiction (instead of increasing happiness, as per the misconception that mundane carnality brings happiness). Numberless miseries caused by illicit sex like diseases such as AIDS, syphilis, tripper and hepatitis and the agonies of abortion or ‘unwanted’ children add to the fact, that illicit sex goes against the will of God. God is all-good and all-powerful. It was not difficult for Him to create countless perfectly functioning organisms, climates and universes – surely He could have easily designed the human body in such a way, that man can have sex unrestrictedly and without resulting in pregnancy and diseases. It is common sense, that the fact that God made mundane carnality full of restrictions, embarrassments and troubles shows, that it is not what He wants us to do – else He would have made it trouble-free⁷⁵. On the other hand, devotion to God, the real amour, is neither restricted nor troublesome, but available for all and ever-blissful, because this is what God wants us to do. Everybody can easily take to the chanting of the holy name. Śrī Caitanya taught to chant the holy name offenselessly (Cc 2.24.336) and with a feeling of separation from the Lord, as He Himself exemplified (Cc 2.1.52). Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu expressed in the seventh verse of His *Śikṣāṣṭakam* (see Chapter 15.4):

*yugāyitaṁ nimeṣeṇa,
cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitaṁ
sūnyāyitaṁ jagat sarvaṁ
govinda-virahaṇa me*



“Because of separation from My Lord Govinda,
I consider even a moment a great millennium. Tears flow
from My eyes like torrents of rain, and I see the entire world as void.”

The eight verses of the *Śikṣāṣṭakam* correspond to the various stages of love of God in ascending order, the last two expressing the highest stage of *prema-bhakti*, ecstatic love of God. The seventh verse describes *prema-bhakti* in separation, and the eighth verse describes *prema-bhakti* in union. This makes clear, that we cannot directly approach ecstatic love of God in union; we must pass through love of God in separation. Only those who truly love God unconditionally are eligible for serving Him in union, and true love is tested especially in times of separation. If I truly love someone, then I feel sad in his or her absence. If I am having a good time in the absence of

⁷⁵ This principle also applies to the entire mundane existence. If we believe in an omnipotent God, then it is clear that He could have easily given us disease-free and immortal bodies. To biologists, the exact basis of ageing is unknown, what to speak of its function. When we observe our external and internal nature, everything is trying to live – so what is the function of ageing, disease and death? They are merciful reminders sent by God so we can remember that we do not belong to this “planet of death” (Bg 9.21), where egoism is the center of life. We should go to His abode where life is eternal and full of nectar (*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.3.28), because there, serving God is the center, and by serving the perfect Lord, all purposes are served (*SB* 4.31.14).

Godhead, and if I often completely forget Him – what to speak of missing Him – then I can understand, that even though I may render many services, my love of God is not fully matured. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda comments on the above quoted seventh verse of the *Śikṣāṣṭakam*: “The living entity is *āśrayā-tattva* [an instrument of love of God, not its enjoyer]; for him to fully relish *sambhoga-rasa* [serving God in intimate association] and give it full expression he must take shelter of *vipralambha*, or the mood of love in separation. To propagate and exhibit this truth Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared as Lord Caitanya who is eternally the embodiment and Avatāra of *vipralambha-rasa*. Devotees should discard any notions of endeavoring for *sambhoga-rasa*, since such an attempt will certainly end in failure.” (Caitanya, 1486-1534, pp. 63-64, purport.) Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta* (Vb, BB 1.7.126-128) that only the *rasikas*, experts in tasting *rasa*, can understand the anguish of separation, which is so pleasing that it cannot be described; it is (in one sense) praised as even greater than the happiness of union, because it at last transforms into an ocean of pleasure; it is desirable and considered auspicious because it brings deep remembrance of one’s beloved. The last two quotes should not be misunderstood to mean that the devotee should disregard *sambhoga-rasa* or think that it is minor to *vipralambha-rasa*. In one sense, union is higher, and in another sense, separation is higher. In fact, they are interdependent and cannot be separated from each other. Without having at least an idea of union there cannot be separation, and the desire for union – without which union is impossible – develops and intensifies in separation. According to the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, they are simultaneously one and different. Above statement points out that we should not endeavor to enter intimate association prematurely or based on our own will instead of the will of the Lord, as that would be a disservice. However, anybody, including neophytes, can serve in the mood of separation. Lord Caitanya is non-different from Lord Kṛṣṇa, but He is simultaneously different in the sense that He is more merciful because He gives out the treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema* to one and all. Similarly, service in separation is non-different from service in union, but service in separation – whose Avatāra is Lord Caitanya – is more merciful because unlike serving in union, anyone can serve in separation under all circumstances. Furthermore, serving in separation burns up false desires and qualifies for service in union. The seventh verse of the *Śikṣāṣṭakam* describes service in separation and the eight and concluding verse describes service in union – but we should carefully understand what type of union. The concluding verse describes the highest mood of devotion of the greatest devotee Rādhārāṇī, expressed by Lord Caitanya:

*āśliṣya vā pāda-ratām pinaṣtu mām
adarśanān marma-hatām karotu vā
yathā tathā vā vidadhātu lampaṭo
mat-prāṇa-nāthas tu sa eva nāparaḥ*



“Let Kṛṣṇa tightly embrace this maidservant who has fallen at His lotus feet, or let Him trample Me or break My heart by never being visible to Me. He is a debauchee, after all, and can do whatever He likes, but still He alone is the worshipable Lord of My heart.”

It is important to note that Rādhārāṇī does not pray for union in physical association; She simply confesses her unconditional love for Kṛṣṇa. As such it can be understood that the union expressed in the concluding verse expresses union in will of God, the essential aspiration of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* and full-fledged theism. Śrī Caitanya, in the mood of Rādhārāṇī, expresses unconditional love of God under all circumstances, both in association and separation. This is empathetic union and empathetic happiness or union by dovetailing to God's desires and being happy only when God is enjoying. This empathetic union and empathetic happiness is not dependent on physical association, but prevails both in physical association as well as in separation, whereas the common, external union is only possible in physical association. It is this empathetic union that the devotee should aspire for primarily, not the union of physical association, *sambhoga-rasa*. It is natural that a devotee always desires that the Lordships enjoys in *sambhoga-rasa*, and that the devotee may be allowed to assist in it. But the higher principle should be unity in the Lord's will. The Lord may sometimes desire something other than what the devotee is thinking of. Therefore, although the devotees always desire that the Lord enjoys *sambhoga-rasa*, it is not their own highest principle to attain *sambhoga-rasa*, but to serve the Lord's desire unconditionally.

Our little detour established the purity and excellence of the transcendental love of the *gopīs*, the attainment of the pastimes of this love through the pastimes of Lord Caitanya, the urgency to transcend material amour, and the special kind of union with God the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas aspire for. We now continue with the pastime of Lord Caitanya.

Śrī Caitanya revealed to Rāmānanda Rāya that He is Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa united. Śrī Caitanya's disciples propagated the worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa along with Rādhārāṇī – not alone as it was commonly practiced up to His time⁷⁶. Śrī Caitanya explained how Kṛṣṇa cannot be separated from Rādhārāṇī, who is the essential personification of His own internal potency, and that worship of Kṛṣṇa without worship of His pure devotees, especially of Rādhārāṇī, is incomplete and cannot lead to the highest form of love of God. Although Lord Kṛṣṇa taught devotion to Himself, He only did so theoretically. In order to teach completely and effectively, one must also teach practically, and thus He appeared as Lord Caitanya, His own devotee. This is another explanation why the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas emphasize the worship of Lord Caitanya. Logically, the best teacher is God Himself. But in order to efficiently teach *bhakti*, devotion to God, He has to appear as His own devotee to be able to teach by example.

This most magnificent manifestation of Godhead –
God becoming His own devotee in order to ideally practice and teach
the most sublime varieties of love of God – is exclusively found in Lord Caitanya.

One can come to this conclusion by the proper use of logical argument, as told in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (1.8.14-15): “Logicians say, ‘Unless one gains understanding through logical argumentation, how can one decide upon a worshipable deity?’” The answer is: *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-dayā karaḥa vicāra, vicāra karite citte pābe camatkāra*,

⁷⁶ It was Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, of whom Śrī Caitanya was granddisciple, who first established the worship of both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa (see *Cc* 2.9.289, purport by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura). However, just as Rāmānanda Rāya admitted, that although he was speaking about the highest teachings of devotion, and it was actually Śrī Caitanya who spoke through him (to relish the position of a devotee), similarly, it was actually Śrī Caitanya who started the worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa through Mādhavendra Purī, and then took initiation in his line, in order to relish being a devotee of a most exalted Ācārya, as well as to give the ultimate example for humanity to accept a spiritual master of the highest order coming in disciplic succession. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (1.9.6-11) explains, that Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Himself the tree of transcendental love of Kṛṣṇa, its gardener and also the bestower and enjoyer of its fruits. The seed of that tree first sprouted in Mādhavendra Purī, was further cultivated in the form of Śrī Īśvara Purī, his disciple, and Śrī Caitanya, who took initiation from Śrī Īśvara Purī, is considered the tree's trunk.

“If you are indeed interested in logic and argument,
kindly apply it to the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
Then you will attain the striking realization
that His mercy is unsurpassed.”

The personal thoughts of Lord Kṛṣṇa were as follows: “I shall personally inaugurate the religion of the age – *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, the congregational chanting of the holy name. I shall make the world dance in ecstasy, realizing the four *rasas* of loving devotional service. I shall accept the role of a devotee, and I shall teach devotional service by practicing it Myself.

“Unless one practices *bhakti* himself,
he cannot teach it to others.”

“This conclusion is confirmed throughout the *Gītā* and *Bhāgavatam*. (...) My plenary portions can establish the principles of religion for each age. No one but Me, however, can bestow the kind of loving service performed by the residents of Vraja [eternal Vṛndāvana].’ (...) Thinking thus, the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, descended at Nadia early in the Age of Kali. Thus the lionlike Lord Caitanya has appeared in Navadvīpa.” – *Cc* 1.3.19-30.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is *bhoktā*, the Served or direct Enjoyer, not the servant. In order to become a devotee, He had to first attain the mood of a *bhakta*, a devotee. The highest mood of devotional service is the mood of Rādhārāṇī, and Kṛṣṇa thus entered Rādhārāṇī’s heart and bathed in Her *bhakti*. *ataeva sei bhāva aṅgikāra kari’, sādhipena nija vāñchā gaurāṅga-śrī-hari*, “Therefore, Lord Gaurāṅga, who is Śrī Hari Himself, accepted the sentiments of Rādhā and thus fulfilled His own desires.” – *Cc* 1.4.50. Due to Lord Caitanya being Lord Kṛṣṇa in the mood of His own greatest devotee, Śrī Rādhā, He is able to practically teach pure *bhakti* to others and thus distribute *vraja-prema*, the highest love of God of the residents of Vṛndāvana, to one and all. This is why He is the most magnanimous form of God. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmi thus prayed to Him:

*namo mahā-vadānyāya, kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*



“O most munificent Lord! You are Kṛṣṇa Himself appearing as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. You have assumed the golden effulgence of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and You are widely distributing *kṛṣṇa-prema*, pure love of Kṛṣṇa. We offer our respectful obeisances unto You.” – *Cc* 2.19.53.

Conditioned souls cannot imitate Lord Kṛṣṇa and approach Rādhārāṇī directly, but must get *bhakti* from a self-realized spiritual master. Śrī Caitanya also exemplified this by accepting Śrī Īśvara Purī as His Guru. If there was no necessity of accepting a Guru to realize God, then surely the

Supreme Lord who descends in the form of Lord Caitanya, the Supreme Teacher, would not have played such a pastime. He did so to set the highest example.

The first teaching of Lord Caitanya is to get pure *bhakti* from a self-realized spiritual master.

In accordance with this teaching, the first three of the sixty-four limbs of devotion as enumerated by Śrī Caitanya's very dear associate Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* are: (1) *guru-pādāśraya*, accepting a bona fide spiritual master, (2) *kṛṣṇa-dīkṣādi-sikṣaṇam*, receiving initiation and learning how to practice *bhakti* from him, and (3) *viśrambheṇa guroḥ sevā*, following the instructions of the spiritual master and serving him with firm faith and devotion (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.74. 16th century). These first three limbs of devotion are the most important of all sixty-four limbs (see *Jd* 20). Without practicing this first teaching of Śrī Caitanya, we cannot properly practice His further teachings and realize our eternal relationship with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura summarized the essential teachings of Śrī Caitanya in a nutshell in a verse listing five truths. This verse is from the *Śrī Caitanya-Mañjuṣā*, his commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (quoted from *Vb*, *Śrīla Prabhupāda Śloka*s): *ārādhyo bhagavān vrajesa-tanayas tad-dhāma vṛndāvanam, ramyā kācid upāsanā vraja-vadhū-vargeṇa yā kalpitā, śrīmad-bhāgavatam pramāṇam amalam premā pum-artho mahān, śrī-caitanya-mahāprabhor matam idaṁ tatrādarāḥ na parah,*

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāja, is the highest object of worship for all. His transcendental abode, Vṛndāvana, is similarly worshipable. The highest form of worship is the selfless worship performed by the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the spotless standard of authority to understand God, and pure love of God is the ultimate goal of human life. These statements, for which we have the highest regard, are the verdicts of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.”

6.14. Return to Śrī Jagannātha Purī and Journey to Bengal

During His South India journey, Śrī Caitanya had discussions with Buddhists, Jains and Māyāvādīs in several places and thousands of them thereafter accepted Vaiṣṇavism (see *Cc* 2.7). After two



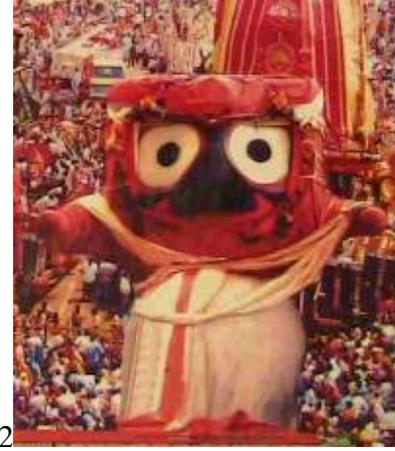
years of touring as far as Cape Comorin, the southernmost tip of the Indian peninsula, He returned to Purī and completed His journey stretching over four thousand miles, all on bare foot. He was now twenty-seven years of age. His fame had spread wide and many devotees from all over India joined Him in Purī, or they came yearly for the Ratha-yātrā, the famous cart festival of Lord Jagannātha. Hundreds of thousands of devotees danced and sang around the beautifully decorated cart of the smiling deity of Lord Jagannātha in many *saṅkīrtana* groups, consisting of

lead-singers, chorus-singers, dancers and musicians. By His *acintya-sakti*, Lord Caitanya manifested Himself in all groups simultaneously, and all devotees were thinking that they are the most fortunate because the Lord is dancing in their group only (*Cc* 2.13.52-53. See above picture on the

left). He thus showed that He is simultaneously one and different (*acintya-bhedābheda*) from Lord Kṛṣṇa who displayed the same miracle in His famous *rāsa*-dance in Vṛndāvana, in which every *gopī* thought that He was dancing with her only (*SB* 10.33.3. See above picture on the right).



1

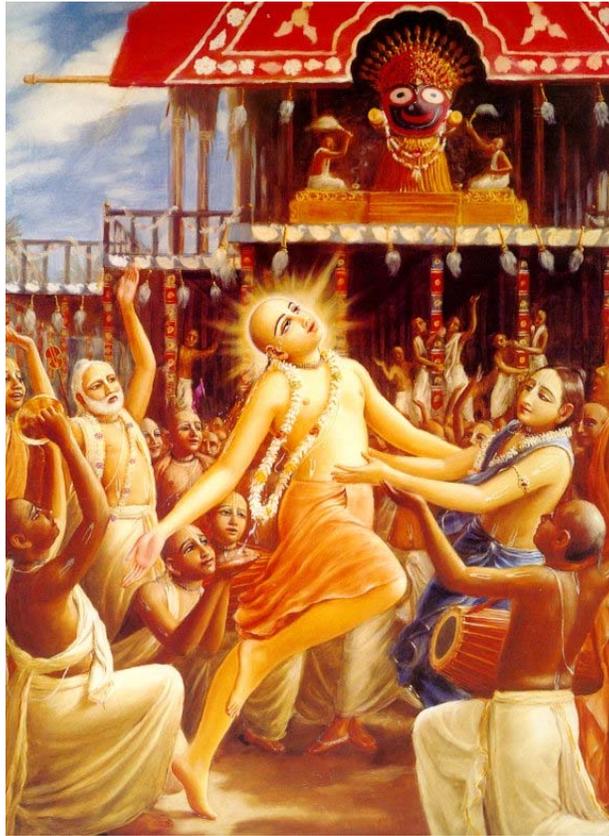


2

Dr. Kinsley of the University of Arizona mentioned: “The last place Caitanya visits before He leaves Puri for His pilgrimage to the south is the Jagannātha temple. He goes there as if to say ‘goodbye’, and He asks Jagannātha permission to go on His lengthy trip. And when He returns after his two year tour of the south – He goes right to the feet of this same Jagannātha deity and offers His prayers. So it really shows Caitanya’s love and devotion for this particular form of Kṛṣṇa.” (Rosen 3, 1992, p. 186.) During His stay in South India, although He was able to visit various deities like Lord Nārāyaṇa, Caitanya Mahāprabhu missed Lord Jagannātha so much that He fashioned deities of Lord Jagannātha, Baladeva and Subhadrā with His own hands. It has already been described that during His worship in Puri, Lord Jagannātha is usually seen as Lord Kṛṣṇa, and that people of different creeds see and worship Him differently. For the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas, Lord Jagannātha is Lord Kṛṣṇa in separation from His consort Rādhārāṇī, absorbed in the ecstasy of remembering Her after He had left Her and Their beloved home Vṛndāvana to come after His duty as king in Dvāraka. When Lord Kṛṣṇa in Dvāraka heard other family members secretly talking about Vṛndāvana and Rādhārāṇī, He became ecstatic and stunned and took the form of Lord Jagannātha with His huge dilated eyes and all His limbs drawn into His body in ecstasy (picture 2). Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa in the separation mood of Rādhārāṇī, empathetically taking the role of Rādhārāṇī longing for Kṛṣṇa (*Cc* 3.14.12-13). The non-difference between Śrī Caitanya and Lord Jagannātha according to His *acintya-bhedābheda* nature is revealed in certain places such as *Caitanya-bhāgavata* 3.2.116: “The Lord meditated on His own form as Jagannātha.” (*āpane jagannātha bhāvena āpane*). *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 3.5.149 states: *tānhā-saha ātmata eka-rūpa hañā, kṛṣṇa eka-tattva-rūpa—dui rūpa hañā*, “Thus Lord Jagannātha and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, although appearing as two, are one because They are both Kṛṣṇa, who is one alone.” Śrī Caitanya appeared under a Nīm tree, and was thus called Nīmāi, and the deity of Lord Jagannātha is exclusively carved from Nīm wood.

On the pretense of the occasion of taking ritual baths in the sacred lakes of Kurukṣetra on the occasion of a solar eclipse, Lord Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* again met in Kurukṣetra after a long time of separation. This is described in the biography of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.82. Although they finally met again, the *gopīs* were not really satisfied. Kṛṣṇa appeared there as the majestic king of Dvāraka with His opulent royal entourage. They could not meet with Him as they used to, serving Him as their personal lover in the sweet atmosphere of Vṛndāvana. In this pathetic situation, their feelings of intense separation reached a climax, because although their object of worship was present before them, they were not able to serve Him to their full satisfaction, and thus they expressed their desire that Kṛṣṇa come back to Vṛndāvana. The Ratha-yātrā festival essentially portrays the *gopīs* pulling back their beloved Kṛṣṇa from Kurukṣetra to Vṛndāvana with the rope of

their desires of transcendental loving services. How the Ratha-yātrā also symbolizes the transition from the majestic to the sweet form of worship is explained in Chapter 5.7. Lord Caitanya also took part in the Ratha-yātrā (pictures 1-2). Every year, around one million people gather in Purī for Lord Jagannātha's Ratha-yātrā, the world's greatest religious cart festival. The deities of Lord Jagannātha, His brother Balarāma and His sister Subhadrā are pulled in three huge wooden carts from His temple (representing Kurukṣetra or Dvāraka⁷⁷) to the Guṇḍicā temple (representing Vṛndāvana according to the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava conception). The devotees pray that their hearts may become pure like Vṛndāvana and that the Lord will thus allow them to pull Him into their hearts with their pure devotion, which is represented by the rope⁷⁸ with which the Lord is pulled to the Guṇḍicā temple, and expressed in continuous *sankīrtana*, congregational chanting of the Lord's names with instrumental accompaniment and joyful dancing. Śrī Caitanya's ecstatic dancing was beyond comparison and astonished everyone. He expressed His devotional mood and vision during the Ratha-yātrā in His own words: *kṛṣṇa lañā vraje yāi*,



“Let Me take Kṛṣṇa and go back to Vṛndāvana!” – Cc 2.1.56.

“Mahāprabhu's vision was that the Jagannātha temple was Kurukṣetra and the Guṇḍicā temple Vṛndāvana.

In the mood of a *gopī*, He began to pull on Jagannātha's chariot, pulling Him back to Vṛndāvana.”

– Tirtha 1, 2001.

⁷⁷ When Lord Jagannātha sits on the throne in His temple, this situation is considered Dvāraka. Every year, He descends from His throne to attend His bathing ceremony, which is considered Kurukṣetra. The situations in the Jagannātha-vallabha-garden and in the Guṇḍicā-temple are considered Vṛndāvana. The Ācāryas have generally called the entire Jagannātha-temple either Kurukṣetra or Dvāraka for a simplified explanation of the Ratha-yātrā.

⁷⁸ This rope is considered sacred because it represents the rope of pure love of God, by which God accepts to be bound in His devotee's heart (*SB* 11.2.55). The pilgrims are careful not to step over it. In a deeper sense, the rope represents *lobha-maya-bhakti*, devotion with the intense yearning for the sweet worship in Vṛndāvana (see Chapter 5.7).

In the Ratha-yātrā, the two main performers are Śrī Jagannātha and Śrī Caitanya: Śrī Jagannātha is Kṛṣṇa in the ecstasy of separation from Rādhārāṇī and remembrance of Rādhārāṇī. He is Kṛṣṇa missing and remembering Rādhārāṇī. In other words, Lord Jagannātha is God missing His greatest devotee. Śrī Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa empathetically assuming the role of Rādhārāṇī when She is in the ecstasy of separation from and remembrance of Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa missing and remembering Himself in the mood of love of Rādhārāṇī. In other words, Śrī Caitanya is God in the role of His own greatest devotee. Although Lord Jagannātha is externally opulently worshiped like Kṛṣṇa as king of Dvāraka, His intimate devotees know Him to be a confidential form of Kṛṣṇa, namely Kṛṣṇa in separation from and remembrance of Rādhārāṇī. The Ratha-yātrā portrays the pull of divine love between the two extreme poles of separation in Kurukṣetra (represented by the Jagannātha temple) and union in Vṛndāvana (represented by the Guṇḍicā temple). In this mood of worship, Jagannātha Purī is the place where these two poles are very close to each other and thus manifest an intense pull of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Separation from the Lord is not less blissful than union with the Lord because separation and union are inconceivably simultaneously distinct and non-distinct according to the Lord's *acintya-bhedābheda* nature. Separation increases the ecstasy of expecting union and is thus supportive for *bhakti*. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.32.20 & 10.47.34, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells the *gopīs*: “The reason I do not immediately reciprocate the affection of living beings even when they worship Me, O *gopīs*, is that I want to intensify their loving devotion. They then become like a poor man who has gained some wealth and then lost it, and who thus becomes so anxious about it that he can think of nothing else.”



“The actual reason why I, the beloved object of your sight, have stayed far away from you is that I wanted to intensify your meditation upon Me and thus draw your minds closer to Me.”

A common proverb says: “Absence makes the heart grow fonder.” Furthermore, just as friendship is tested in difficult times, the quality of love of God is tested in separation. “A friend in need is a friend in deed.” One may further find that a rejected friend who still remains a friend is the best friend. Śrī Kṛṣṇa told the *gopīs* that only those who devotedly serve even those who fail to reciprocate are able to give true friendship (*SB* 10.32.18). True love is unconditional love, love of the person, not of the person's reciprocation or reward. Many of Śrī Caitanya's followers have expressed their emphasis on worship of the Lord in the mood of separation, as this is the most efficient way to attract His mercy. “Serving the Vrajavāsīs [the residents of Vṛndāvana and the pure devotees in the mood of service of Vṛndāvana] who felt great separation from Kṛṣṇa when He left Vraja to reside in Mathurā is our supreme constitutional occupation.” (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda in the ninth instruction of his *Upadeśāvalī*, twenty-four essential instructions. Tirtha 8, 2000, p. 100.) Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura expressed that “Kurukṣetra is the real place of *bhajana* [worship].” (Śrīdhara 1, 1895-1988, Chapter 13.) Śrīla B. R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja comments:

“Why? Service is more valuable according to the intensity of its necessity. (...) When Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī’s necessity reaches its zenith, service to Her becomes extremely valuable. According to its necessity, service is valued. And in Kurukṣetra, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is in the highest necessity because Kṛṣṇa is so close, but Their Vṛndāvana-līlā is impossible. (...) Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura says that in that situation, a drop of service will draw the greatest amount of *prema*, divine love. In the pastimes of Rādhā-Govinda, there are two aspects: *sambhoga*, divine union, and *vipralambha*, divine separation. When Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are very near to each other, but can’t meet intimately, service at that time can draw the greatest gain for the servitors.”

We now continue in the biography of Śrī Caitanya. In His twenty-eighth year, Śrī Caitanya went to Bengal, and wherever He went, thousands of people surrounded Him. When Nawab Hussain Shah, the Muslim king of Bengal, heard of this, he declared: “Such a person, who is followed by so many people without giving them material wealth, must be a prophet. (...) Do not disturb Him out of jealousy. Let Him do His own will wherever He likes.” – *Cc* 2.1.169-170. In Rāmakeli, two great personalities, Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana, joined Śrī Caitanya. Though descended from the lines of Karnātic *brāhmaṇas*, these two brothers turned demi-Moslems by serving king Hussain Shah as prime minister and finance minister respectively. Their names had been changed into Dabira Khāsa and Sākara Mallika, and the king loved them heartily since they were both learned in Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit and were loyal servants of the state. The two gentlemen took shelter of Śrī Caitanya for spiritual help as to how they can return to the Vedic culture. The Lord at once recognized them as His eternal servants and accepted them in His fold (*Cc* 2.1.215-217). He then returned to Śrī Jagannātha Purī.

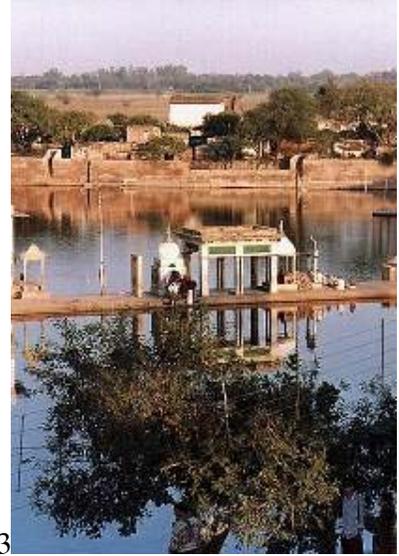
6.15. Pilgrimage to Śrī Vṛndāvana and Discovery of Ancient Holy Sites



1



2



3

Picture 1: Śrī Caitanya discovers the ancient Rādhā-kuṇḍa in a paddy field.

Picture 2: Rādhā-kuṇḍa during a cleaning period in 1987 during which all water was pumped out and the original pond in the middle became visible.

Picture 3: Rādhā-kuṇḍa in the front and Śyāma-kuṇḍa in the back.

For many years, Śrī Caitanya planned to go to Śrī Vṛndāvana, the home of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but He was always diverted by His devotees of Bengal and Orissa who were afraid of losing His association. When He finally set off for Vṛndāvana, they all lamented deeply. He wanted to travel alone, but His devotees convinced Him to take two servants with Him. They walked through dense forest, and the closer they came to Vṛndāvana, the more the Lord’s devotional ecstasy increased. Wherever He looked, He saw Vṛndāvana. In this state He danced and sang Kṛṣṇa’s name with all creatures of the

forest, as described earlier. When He arrived in Vṛndāvana He offered His obeisances to all the holy places of pastime of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Many of them had been covered and lost over thousands of years, such as the holy bathing ponds Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, where Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa used to bathe. Absorbed in contemplation, Śrī Caitanya discovered the original ponds in two paddy fields with His transcendental vision. He took His bath there and sang the glories of these kuṇḍas (Cc 2.18.6). His disciples headed by the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana later excavated the original ancient ponds that were hidden deep beyond the mentioned paddy fields and verified His discovery to the public. During the excavation, ancient deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa were discovered. A temple was constructed for Their worship, which is still continuing today.

6.16 The Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana

After Śrī Caitanya visited Vṛndāvana, He came to Prayāga, and on the way He converted a large number of Muslims to Vaiṣṇavism using arguments supported by the Koran. They were headed by prince Vijalī Khān, and amongst them was a Sufī mystic. All of them were initiated into chanting Lord Kṛṣṇa's name and given new names by Lord Caitanya. They became renunciates and preached Śrī Caitanya's message everywhere (Cc 2.18.163-212). Their descendants are still known as Pāthāna Vaiṣṇavas and the village there is still named after them. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī again met Śrī Caitanya at Allahabad and Benares respectively, where He trained them up in spirituality. These instructions contain the gist of Vedic knowledge, which they and their followers later compiled into elaborate literature. The instruction given to Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī concerning the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* is mentioned in this book in Chapter 14. Having empowered them with all Vedic knowledge, Śrī Caitanya sent them to Vṛndāvana to preach pure devotional service (Cc 1.7.164). There they attracted thousands of followers. The closer circle of *gosvāmīs* following Śrī Caitanya became known as the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

6.17 Turning the Impersonalists into Vaiṣṇavas

While at Benares, the center of the school of impersonalism, Śrī Caitanya once accepted an invitation to a gathering of the learned *māyāvādī sannyāsīs* in the house of a Maratha *brāhmaṇa* (Cc 1.7.55-150, Cc 2.25.5-172). Although Lord Caitanya explained that *māyāvāda* is even inferior to atheism (see Chapters 9-10) and thus strictly avoided its followers, He mercifully made an exception to deliver them tactfully. After His arrival, He took a very humble position by sitting down in the place where all people wash their feet, and thus exemplified His maxim of humility and tolerance (*trṇād api sunīcena*, Cc 1.17.31). All the *sannyāsīs* were attracted by the Lord's radiant bodily effulgence and asked Him to enter their closer circle. They were headed by the most learned leader Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī. He inquired from Śrī Caitanya why He did not concentrate on meditation and study of *Vedānta*, but engaged mainly in chanting and dancing, something for which many considered Him a sentimentalist. The Lord then explained that chanting the Lord's name is the most efficient and scientific way to achieve *kṛṣṇa-prema*, love of God, which is the actual goal of *Vedānta* and not impersonal Brahman realization, as the monists claim. The *sannyāsīs* had believed Him to be ignorant of the purport of *Vedānta*, and He surprised them by pointing out its actual direct meaning according to the theistic philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. He proved that the atheistic, monistic, indirect interpretation of *Vedānta* by Śaṅkarācārya was incorrect. Consequently, they submitted to Śrī Caitanya and admitted that they had been misled by the impersonal commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya. They had wrongly criticized the *saṅkīrtana* movement, and thus they apologized and were forgiven. Śrī Caitanya then instilled spiritual love for Kṛṣṇa into their hearts, which made them give up sectarian feelings. They all accepted the superiority of *bhakti* and joined the universal *saṅkīrtana* movement of Śrī Caitanya. Thousands of other people were similarly attracted.

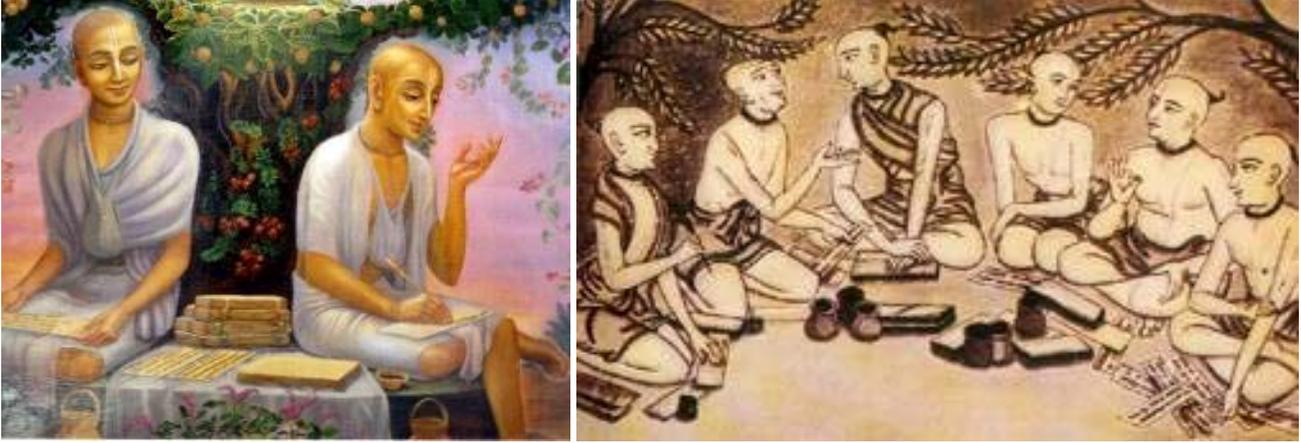
6.18. Final Spiritual Absorption in Śrī Jagannātha Purī



After sending Śrī Sanātana to Vṛndāvana, Mahāprabhu went again to Purī on foot through the jungles with His comrade Balabhadra. From that time, that is, from His 31st year, Mahāprabhu continually lived in Purī in the house of Kāśī Miśra until His disappearance in His forty-eighth year at the time of *saṅkīrtana* in the temple of Toṭā Gopinātha. During these 18 years, His life was one of intense spiritual absorption with His close associates. He was surrounded by numerous followers, all of whom were of the highest order of Vaiṣṇavas and who were distinguished from the common people by their purest character, learning and love of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Svarūpa Dāmodara joined Him from Benares and accepted service as His secretary. No production of any poet or philosopher could be laid before Mahāprabhu unless Svarūpa had passed it as pure and useful. Rāya Rāmānanda was His second closest associate who joined Him in Purī.

Mahāprabhu slept very little. He engaged in devotional practices, held discussions with His intimate associates on spiritual topics, communicated with His missionaries at Vṛndāvana, and instructed those spiritualists who newly came to visit Him. Śrī Caitanya went to see and worship Lord Jagannātha daily in His temple. He honored Jagannātha-*mahāprasāda*, sacred food remnants of Jagannātha, and distributed it to the devotees with great pleasure. In public, He strictly behaved as it is expected for a *sannyāsī*. He only allowed Himself to enter deep spiritual ecstasies in the private circle of His confidential associates. There, He sang and danced in transcendental rapture for the Lord's pleasure, took little care of Himself and oftentimes lost Himself in spiritual beatitude, becoming oblivious to the external world. At these times, He also enjoyed the pastime of completely depending upon the loving care of His devotees. They enriched His various spiritual emotions by singing suitable songs and verses, protected Him from accidents during His deeper absorptions and brought Him back to external consciousness by loudly chanting Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy names. Every year, thousands of devotees would come to visit Him, especially during the Ratha-yātrā festival of Lord Jagannātha. He loved His mother all along and sent her *mahāprasāda* now and then with those who went to Nadia. He was most amiable in nature, and humility was personified in Him. His sweet appearance gave cheer to all who came in contact with Him.

6.19. Śrī Caitanya's Continuous Disciplic Succession to Date



Śrī Caitanya appointed Nityānanda Prabhu as the missionary in charge of Bengal, and sent Him there to preach unalloyed *bhakti* with many other devotees. The closer circle of Gosvamīs who had been sent to Vṛndāvana on missions by Śrī Caitanya became famous as the Six Gosvamīs of Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, the disciple of Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, praised them in his *Ṣaḍ-gosvāmy-aṣṭaka*, verse 2 (quoted from *Cc* 2.23.104, purport): “I offer my respectful obeisances unto the six Gosvāmīs, namely Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, who are very expert in scrutinizingly studying all the revealed scriptures with the aim of establishing eternal principles of *dharma* for the benefit of all human beings. Thus they are honored all over the three worlds, and they are worth taking shelter of because they are absorbed in the mood of the *gopīs* and are engaged in the transcendental loving service of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.”

Śrī Caitanya did not write much Himself; He left only eight written verses, the famous *Śikṣāṣṭakam* (*Cc* 3.20). He ordered some of His disciples to write books on the universal science of *bhakti*, and they and other followers have left an abundance of literature delving into many topics of self-realization and pure devotion in great details. In line with Śrī Caitanya's instructions, the Six Gosvamīs collected the essence of all Vedic literatures and compiled priceless theses and many confidential literatures for the benefit of humanity. They advocated the practical teachings of Śrī Caitanya, especially the chanting the Lord's holy names, with ample scientific grounding in accordance with the Vedic academic standards of evidence and logic. They produced over two hundred works in Sanskrit. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Tattva-sandarbhā* are often quoted in this book. The Six Gosvamīs further discovered, unearthed and restored many holy places of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes that had been obscured by the passage of time or destroyed by fundamentalists. They built many temples like the famous Madana-mohana and Govindajī temple in Vṛndāvana. Along with these intense missionary services, they set the ultimate example of pure devotion in the highest mood of the *gopīs*. They all attained the highest spiritual perfections and had fully realized their eternal spiritual identities (*svarūpa-siddhi*). They were always absorbed in chanting and discussing Lord Kṛṣṇa's transcendental names, forms, qualities, pastimes and associates and they lived very simple and detached, giving up all non-devotional affairs. Their disciples carried on their service and disciplic succession up to date, and therefore Lord Caitanya's own teachings are still being practiced and taught for the benefit of all people.



1



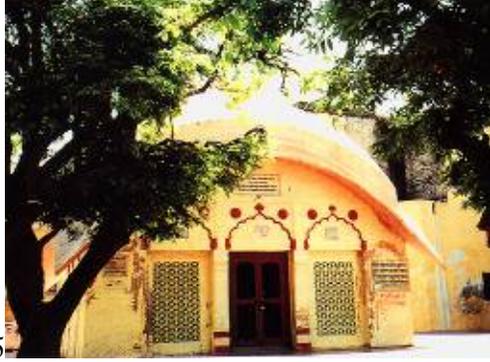
2



3



4



5



6

Due to the effective preaching of Śrī Caitanya and His disciples, the glories and worship of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is nowadays established all over the globe. Śrī Caitanya spread the glories of *kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana* throughout India, and His devotees preached all over the world. “To deliver people in regions throughout the universe who could not meet Him, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally entered the bodies of pure devotees. Thus He empowered them by manifesting in them so much of His own devotion that people in all other countries became devotees simply by seeing them.” – *Cb* 3.2.13-14. There are thousands of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temples around the world, many with daily programs of *saṅkīrtana* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* discourses. In the first picture we see Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in a beautiful dress of flowers offered to Them in Their temple in Bali, Indonesia. In the second picture we see the marvelous Kusuma-Sarovara lake in Vṛndāvana. In the third picture we see the entrance of the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple in Vṛndāvana. In the fourth picture, we see part of a Vedic library of Vedic literature translated into English. In the fifth picture we see the *samādhi* temple of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in Vṛndāvana. In the sixth picture we see the Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Nayanamañī temple in Jagannātha Puri, established on the appearance site of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda (Śrī Jagannātha temple is visible in the back). Śrī Caitanya predicted five hundred years ago (*Cb* 3.4.126): *prthivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma, sarvatra pracāra hoibe mora nāma*

“In all the towns and villages of the world, My name will be broadcasted.”

Today we see that His name is practically chanted and broadcasted all around the globe, even in the most remote places. This was made possible by the efforts of Śrī Caitanya’s followers, who spread the glories of the holy name in all countries of the world. The most prominent disciplic succession from Śrī Caitanya was established by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, who established the Sri Chaitanya Math in Māyāpur in 1918. He also established 64 branches, the Gauḍīya Maths, and sent his preachers all over India and also abroad. Since then, thousands of further centers have been established around the globe by his followers. Most Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava devotees live as householders with their families, while the temple devotees stay engaged in services in various centers, some travelling from one place to another to spread the glories of the holy name.



7. The Underlying Unity of all Philosophies



sarvataḥ sāram ādatte yathā madhu-karo budhaḥ

“A learned person takes the essence of knowledge from all places, just as a bumblebee collects honey from each and every flower.”

– *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.18.2.



“By interaction of My energies different opinions arise. But for those who have fixed their intelligence on Me and have controlled their senses, differences of perception disappear, and consequently the very cause for argument is removed.”

– Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.22.6.

“Wisdom’s first step is to accuse everything. Wisdom’s last step is to harmonize everything.”

– Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, German scientist.



As all living entities are parts and parcels of the all-good God, they are all originally good⁷⁹. It is only due to their being covered by material desires that they sometimes act in a bad way. Therefore, we can find a pure and virtuous motive behind every action and corresponding philosophy⁸⁰, even if the execution turned out to be bad. If the originally good motive is executed bereft of material distortions by becoming harmonized with *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, it is manifested in its pure, beneficial nature. This pure nature of every motive and philosophy plays a specific role in the underlying purpose of universal upliftment. Although externally, different philosophies seem to be conflicting, through the vision of *acintya-bhedābheda*, we can see the underlying unity of all philosophies.

The unique capacity to harmonize all human philosophies points out *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* as the mother of all philosophies.

⁷⁹ See invocation of the *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, *om pūrṇam adaḥ*, quoted in Chapter 5.3.

⁸⁰ The term ‘philosophy’ is used here in a general way, including the philosophies of science, religion, welfare, ecology, economy, politics, etc.

Table 1: Examples of philosophies and their harmonization by *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*.

	+ Essential virtuous motive	× Obstructing misconception	☺ Harmonization by <i>acintya-bhedābheda-darśana</i>
Empiricism	+ The truth should be practically experienced.	“The material body is the true self and can grasp the truth.” ×	The spirit soul is the true self and can experience the absolute Truth, God, practically by <i>bhakti</i> , which attracts His merciful revelation. ☺
Rationalism	+ The truth should be without logical contradictions.	“We can understand the logic of truth by independent efforts of our finite mind.” ×	The spirit soul can understand the infinite God and His infinite logic only when God reveals Himself, being attracted by pure devotion. ☺
Objective science	+ Reality should be understood beyond the prejudices of limited subjective concepts.	“There is no perfect subject with subjective, yet complete perception; but if we form groups of scientists who try to avoid subjective approaches, we can find out more about the objective reality by gradual approximation.” ×	There is a perfect subject; God. God is the only objective observer, as He alone can overview everything without taking a partial subjective perspective like the limited living entities. Objective perception is not possible by many imperfect efforts, but only by seeing the world through God’s vision by His mercy. ☺
Democracy	+ Equal right of decision and free will for all.	“What the majority of people decides is the truth and most beneficial for all.” × This misconception for example leads to ignorance about the fact that death can be overcome; the few people who know this science are not recognized in a system that holds the opinion of the masses higher than that of the few wise.	Only what is in accordance with God’s will is the truth and is most beneficial for all. By following the qualified spiritual authorities, all can manifest their minimal right to attain eternal life and their ultimate right to serve the perfect Lord eternally. In this way, the beneficial manifestation of complete free will is enabled, not by choosing between a few candidates of leaders who can’t give real lasting freedom. ☺
Communism	+ Equal right of wealth for all.	“Material wealth is the ultimate wealth.” × This is wrong, because it is non-eternal.	Spiritual wealth is the ultimate and eternal wealth, and all have equal right for spiritual wealth, for example <i>bhakti</i> and eternal life. ☺
Materialism, Hedonism	+ Wealth and satisfaction of the senses are the goal.	“Material sense gratification is the wealth of the self.” × This is wrong, because it is non-eternal, and when it is lost, it results in suffering.	The gratification of the senses of the Lord automatically leads to a complete spiritual and material satisfaction of the self, just as watering the root of a tree satisfies all parts of the tree (<i>SB</i> 4.31.14). ☺
Anthropology	+ The potentials of humanity should be fully developed.	“Humanity is the centre of the universe.” ×	God is the centre of the universe and the human potentials are only fully developed when people start to engage in <i>bhakti</i> , the essential human potential. ☺

	+ Essential virtuous motive	× Obstructing misconception	☺ Harmonization by <i>acintya-bhedābheda-darśana</i>
Ecology	+ Gratitude and care for mother nature.	“Material nature is man’s ultimate mother.” × This concept holds only true as long as we don’t see beyond material nature.	God is also called <i>dharāṇi-dhara</i> , the maintainer of mother earth. He is the spiritual parent of all life and only if we practically serve both God and mother nature will there be complete harmony. ☺
Universal brotherhood	+ All living entities should realize their brotherhood.	“The brotherhood should itself be its own basis and purpose.” ×	Only if our Father, God, is accepted and worshiped, can we practically realize universal brotherhood, as we are all God’s children. ☺
Peace movements	+ All living entities should live in peace.	“Peace is the absence of war and violence.” × Actual peace must not be defined negatively, but positively.	Real peace is the happy state of the self that manifests when we are all engaged in our inherent original nature of service to God, and service to all by preaching <i>bhakti</i> . Real non-violence means practicing and preaching <i>bhakti</i> , as only this allows all beings to manifest their essential peaceful nature. ☺
Welfare activities	+ All should achieve a good quality of life.	Mostly, spiritual welfare falls short. Since <i>bhakti</i> is the actual food of the soul, the tree of life is thus cut off from the water. ×	Spiritual welfare is the ultimate welfare, and social, political and other welfare activities are only beneficial if they are clearly aimed at attaining and/or promoting spiritual welfare.
Dualism (<i>dvaita, bheda</i>)	+ All should humbly serve God, and not try to proudly imitate Him.	“The living being is eternally separated from God and cannot fully realize Him.” ×	The living being is simultaneously one with and different from God, and can realize and serve Him by devotional service. ☺
Monism, impersonalism, non-dualism (<i>advaita, māyāvāda, abheda</i>)	+ All should realize union with God.	“God and the living beings are ultimately one and the separate existence is illusion. God is ultimately an impersonal energy.” ×	The living being is simultaneously one with and different from the Lord, being His marginal energy. This can be realized by union with the will of God through personal devotional service, not by independent efforts. ☺
Monotheism	+ All should serve the one God.	Some monotheists claim that God can’t have expansions. × This is a contradiction in itself, as God is omnipotent.	God is ultimately one Supreme Person, from whom all emanates. He has complete expansions (like a king also acts as a father), and partial expansions like His personal associates. ☺
Polytheism	+ All should also serve God’s expansions.	“There is no ultimate God, God is many. The <i>devas</i> (demigods) are all God.” ×	There is an ultimate God, and He has expansions. The <i>devas</i> are partial expansions of God and are not the ultimate Godhead. They are to be respected as servants of God, not as God Himself. ☺

The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* harmonizes and reconciles all other philosophies, because it is the essential universal philosophy. The philosophy of welfare is explained in more depth in the next chapter. Empiricism, rationalism and objective science have been analyzed in Chapter 3. Chapter 11 gives examples how *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* can elucidate quests of quantum mechanics, and Chapter 12 discloses how it establishes universal brotherhood and harmonizes all religions. For more elaborate analysis, the four main philosophies that include all other philosophies are shown to be harmonized by the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* in Chapter 9. At this point, let us reflect on the question posed in the beginning of the introduction: Is there a universal principle that can convey and harmonize the essential goals of all sciences, philosophies and religions? The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is the most essential and universal philosophy, suiting all circumstances and occupations of the living beings, because it discovers their eternal essential nature; *bhakti*. It harmonizes all essential goals of other philosophies, because it manifests the individual essential nature of all beings, of which the beneficial aspects of other philosophies are offsprings. Therefore, the *acintya-bhedābheda* is the mother of all philosophies. The mother can harmonize her disagreeable children. Similarly, *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* as the mother of all philosophies has the potency to harmonize all philosophies.



A person who can embrace all that exists
will naturally be accepted as the greatest person.
By the all-encompassing potency of universal harmonization,
acintya-bhedābheda-darśana is established as the paramount philosophy.

All other philosophies are offsprings from this mother of all philosophies. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda mentioned in his purport of *Cb* 3.2.33: “Philosophies like *viśiṣṭādvaita* (specific monism), *śuddha-dvaita* (purified dualism), and *śuddhādvaita* (purified monism) have manifested from portions of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*.” (see Appendix 2.) This is not very astonishing, because *acintya-bhedābheda* was established by Śrī Caitanya, who is the Supreme Lord descending in the mood of His own internal energy or *svarūpa-śakti* (see Chapter 6.13), who is declared to be the mother of all universes (*nityaiva sā jagan-mātā, viṣṇoḥ śrīr anapāyini*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.8.15, quoted in *Cb* 1.14.104, purport). All apparent contradictions can be harmonized in Godhead by dint of His inconceivable energy, the *acintya-śakti*, by which nothing is impossible for Him (*SB* 6.9.36). The wise mother does not kill all her disagreeable children and replace them with agreeable clones of herself. Rather she will teach all her children to cooperate with each other in a manner that brings out the best of each child, allowing it to serve the family according to its unique talents. Similarly, the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* does not condemn all other philosophies entirely – rather it points out their individual essential beneficial motive, and how that motive can optimally be realized by employing it in harmony with the entire creation.



8. The Underlying Unity of the Individual with the Entire Creation

We enter the topic of this chapter by discussing one of the philosophies of Table 1 in the previous chapter, namely welfare activities. Most people engage in welfare activities which are not connected with giving spiritual welfare, because they lack the necessary understanding of *bhakti*.

bhakti is the only way to attain complete welfare, because only by
bhakti can we attain the spiritual reality, where there is absence of any suffering.
Furthermore, *bhakti* is the only original function of the soul, and thus welfare per se.

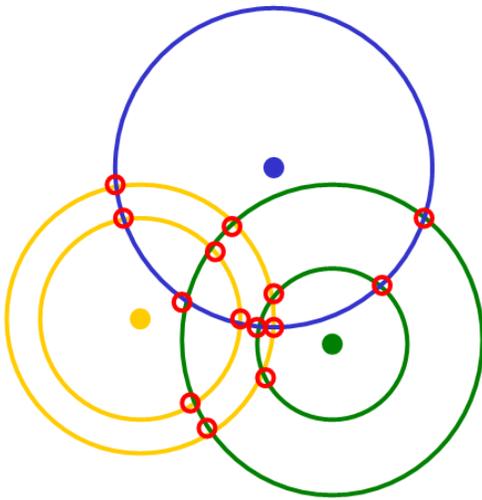
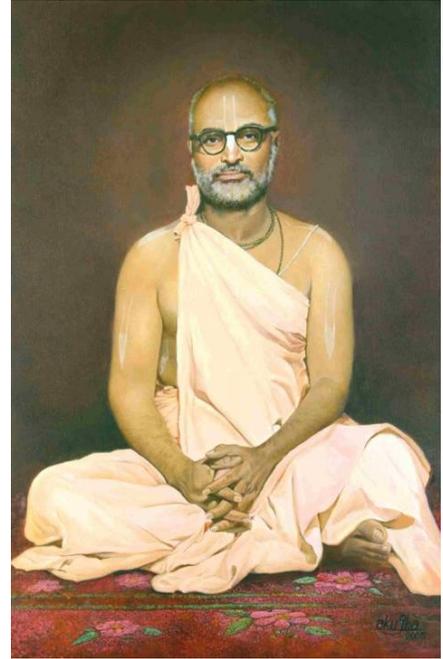
Most materialists falsely believe in the dogma that death, ignorance and sufferings belong to life. This belief is not very astonishing, because material life in fact is non-eternal (*asat*), without complete knowledge (*acit*) and without pure and lasting bliss (*nirānanda*). The materialists thus think that the aspiration for an eternal, fully conscious and ever-blissful spiritual life is illusory, and they think that material welfare ‘to make the best out of the situation’ is more reasonable. But the God- and self-realized saints and the holy scriptures tell us that spiritual life is factually eternal, fully conscious and ever-blissful (*sac-cid-ānanda*, see Chapter 5.5). Therefore, helping others to practically realize the spiritual platform is the only true welfare, because only such spiritual welfare leads to truly wholesome well-being. Material so-called ‘welfare’ seems to help people, but if we expand our vision to a wider perspective over many lives, we find that, like any other material activity, material welfare is (A) *asat*, lost at the time of death and thus neither sustainable nor truly substantial, (B) *acit*, giving only incomplete knowledge and (C) *nirānanda*, giving only imperfect material pleasures and increasing attachment to matter instead of advocating its utilization in the Lord’s service, thus keeping the soul entangled on the material platform of suffering for all time to come.

The thirteenth instruction of the *Upadeśāvalī* of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda is: “Helping to draw conditioned souls away from their perverted attachment to the material energy is the greatest compassion. If even one soul is rescued from *mahā-māyā*’s fortress [the material platform], that compassionate act is infinitely more benevolent than the construction of unlimited hospitals.” (Tīrtha 8, 2000, p. 101.) The *Padma Purāṇa* (1.1.28) states: *yenārcito haris tena tarpitāni jaganty api, rajyanti jantavas tatra jaṅgamāḥ sthāvarā api,*

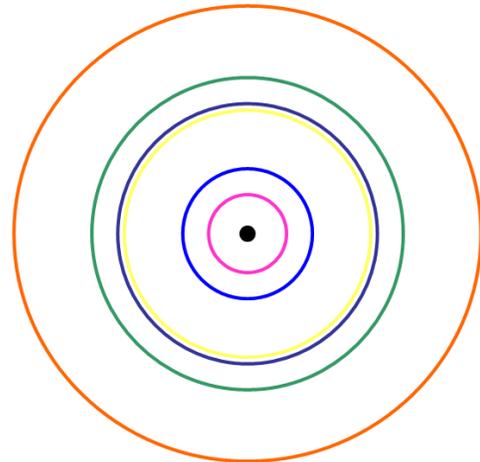
“A person who is engaged in devotional service
in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to be understood
to be doing the best service to the whole world
and to be benefitting everyone in the world.”

When welfare-inclined persons understand *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, they can employ their inclination to give others welfare by combining welfare activities with promoting *bhakti*, and thus manifest their individual character optimally. Similarly, practically every useful activity can be performed as a service to the Lord; cooking, science, working, singing, etc. We just need to do it for the pleasure of the Lord under proper guidance, and/or in combination with promoting *bhakti* to others. Hence all individual inclinations and natures can be optimally used and harmonized with the nature and purpose of the entire creation, namely serving the Lord. If all are focussed on the same purpose, naturally there will be no war of any kind due to a lack of clashing interests. Although all beings are individuals with various likings, in their pure natural state they are all attracted perfectly to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the all-attractive Lord, and thus as soon as they realize their true nature of *bhakti*, they are all united in will.

Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja lucidly explained this point in a lecture given in Hyderabad in 1961: “Pure love or *prema-bhakti* is focused upon the indivisible Personality of the Supreme Lord, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is one without a second. If an individual does not perceive that the totality and oneness of God is at the very centre of his existence, then it is inevitable that love for the body, family, society, province and country will clash with the body, family, society, province and country of others. If one draws many circles with their centres at different points on a page, then depending upon their proximity to one another, there is the possibility that their circumferences might cross and overlap. In this manner, if there are many self-centred sentient beings in the universe, then conflict becomes inevitable. If, on the other hand, the supremacy of that One Center, God, is recognised by all, leaving no room for a second, then the question of contradiction does not arise. If one loves the Whole, then one simultaneously loves all the parts of that Whole. *yasmin tuṣṭe jagat tuṣṭam prīṇite prīṇitam jagat*, by satisfying Kṛṣṇa, the whole universe becomes satisfied, for one who is dear to Kṛṣṇa is dear to the whole universe.” (Mādhava.)



(1)



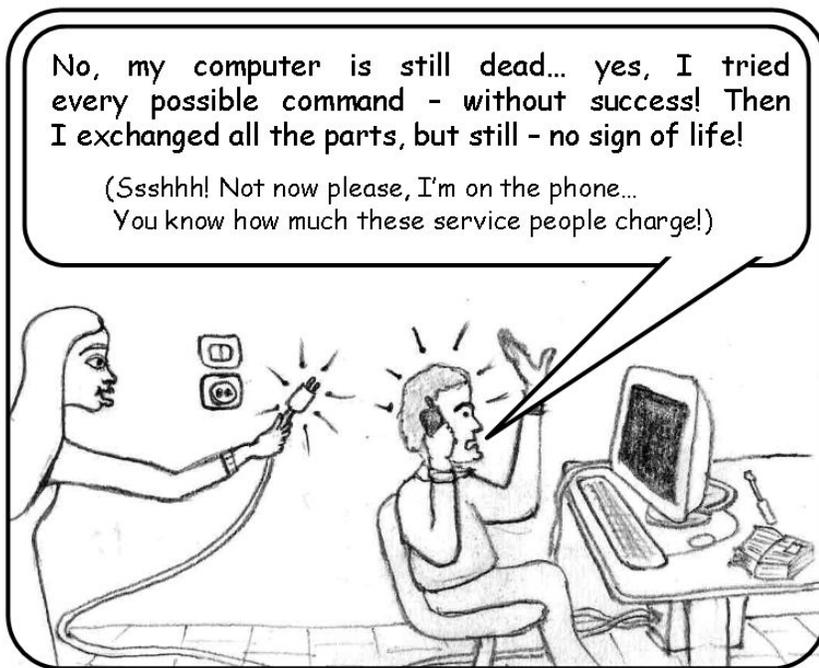
(2)

- (1) The interests of many self-centred beings clash in various places (red circles).
 (2) The interests of many God-centred beings never clash, although the beings are of different natures.

The interests of various self-centred beings inevitably lead to conflicts. “The variety in the transcendental world is fully centralized whereas in the mundane world it is not so and hence productive of weal and woe.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 480.) “*bhayam dvitīyābhiniveśataḥ syād* – the disease is separate interest (*SB* 11.2.37). The deviation from our normal spiritual condition, the development of misconception, is based on the charm – the prospect – of separate interest. That is the root cause of all misunderstanding. The conception of local, provincial interest has caused the difference between a proper conception of reality and misconception. We have gone away from the central conception. From universal consciousness we have come to this provincial plane.” (Śrīdhara 4, 1989, p. 18.)

Even if a large group with one center of interest other than God is formed, the power struggles with others remain. Only when the interest of the non-sectarian universal Lord, who alone embraces all, becomes our centre, are we in harmony with one and all. As long as we claim anything else but God to be the centre, there is illusion and suffering. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda once illustrated the power of *māyā*, the illusory material energy, to one of his disciples by explaining how there are unlimited universes, and he, his disciple, is in just one of them; there are innumerable planets, and he is on just one of them; on this planet, there are thousands of cities, and he is in just one of them; in that city, there are millions of people, and he is only one of them – yet still he thinks that he is the centre of the universe; this is *māyā* [end of paraphrase]⁸¹. In *māyā*, innumerable living beings think they are the centre of the universe and only think of their own selves and needs, and thus there are endless conflicts, whereas actually God is the centre of the universe and the fulfilment of His will is the only worthy object of thought and source of universal welfare. Only when all are God-centred, will their interests not clash. This is because in that state, they are all one in interest due to being one in will with the Lord. Unity in will with the Lord is advocated by the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* as the *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal inherent nature of the soul (see Chapter 10). The Lord is all-benevolent. Therefore, when we are in unity with His will, we attain complete peace: *bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasāṁ, sarva-loka-maheśvaram, suhrdaṁ sarva-bhūtānām, jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati*, “A person in full consciousness of Me, knowing Me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries.” – Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Bg* 5.29. The actual self interest and welfare of man lies in the interest of the Lord:

When one serves the Supreme Lord, the very source of life and joy,
all living beings and their real interests are automatically served,
just like pouring water on the root of a tree energizes
all branches and leaves (*SB* 4.31.14).



The man in the cartoon tried everything to make his PC work – except connecting it with the power source. One may laugh about this, but the situation of the common man is no less pathetic: he tries to get lasting life, knowledge and happiness in every possible way, except by taking full shelter of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ* (*Bs* 5.1), the only source and embodiment of eternal life, complete knowledge and perfect happiness. The man in the cartoon would only have to listen to his wife. Similarly, humanity would only have to follow the pure devotees to be connected to Godhead, getting whom one gets all (*Bg* 6.22), and serving whom one serves all (*SB* 4.31.14).

⁸¹ Source unknown, please contact the author if you know it.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifested a wonderful pastime in this regard, as told in the *Mahābhārata*, the world's largest historic epic. This pastime is also mentioned in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.15.11. Once, the Pāṇḍavas, five brothers who were great devotees of Kṛṣṇa, were in trouble. The sage Durvāsā and his sixty-thousand disciples appeared all of a sudden at their residence. They left again to take bath in the river, expecting to be fed on return. The Pāṇḍavas were living alone in the forest at that time, and they were thus unable to organize so much food within a short time. They were afraid of breaking the customary rules of hospitality and offending Durvāsā Muni and his *brāhmaṇa* disciples. Draupadī thus prayed to Lord Kṛṣṇa for help, and within no time, Kṛṣṇa appeared there and asked for food (of course, the Supreme Lord is never hungry like a worldly man; what He really eats is the love of His devotees, and in this pastime, He ate for their protection, as we shall see). The Pāṇḍavas were happy that Kṛṣṇa suddenly arrived, but they were still anxious, because there was no food prepared or left over. Kṛṣṇa then asked for Draupadī's used cooking pots to be brought to Him. He found a morsel of spinach that was still sticking to a pot and ate it with great pleasure, saying that now He is completely satisfied. The Supreme Lord is interested in love, in quality, not quantity. Kṛṣṇa is the center and root of everything. By serving Him with love, all purposes are automatically served, just like the entire tree is served when watering its roots, and the entire body with all its organs is served when giving food to the stomach (*SB* 4.31.14). Lord Kṛṣṇa once exhibited all universes including all living entities within His transcendental body, when mother Yaśodā looked in His mouth to check what He had eaten (*SB* 10.8.37-39). When Kṛṣṇa is satisfied, all are satisfied. Therefore, at that very moment when Kṛṣṇa was satisfied, the hunger of Durvāsā Muni and all his sixty-thousand disciples at the river at once vanished, and they felt as if they had just eaten a big meal. Now they were afraid of offending the Pāṇḍavas because they would not be able to eat any food, and so they decided to leave the place at once. In this way, Kṛṣṇa saved the Pāṇḍavas from getting into trouble, and simultaneously displayed a wonderful pastime that shows that He is the actual center and root of satisfaction; if He is fed, all are fed; if He is served, all are served, according to His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*. The devotees can realize this by the practice of *bhakti*, through which they become completely satisfied themselves, and through which they can see how the Lord's *acintya-śakti*, materially inconceivable energy, acts wonderfully, like in this pastime.

Not only will *all* be served if we simply serve the Lord – all will also be served *best* by serving the Lord, because being their very Creator and Maintainer, He knows much better than anyone else what they need and like. Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja mentioned in this regard: “The highest life for every part is of the nature of harmony with the Whole. If you have a good cook, why try to cook separately yourself; if you simply assist him according to his directions, your ingredients cooked by his hands will be tasteful to all. So engage yourself with that principle. Whatever ability you have, however small, place it at the disposal of the highest beauty, Love Divine, and it will be distributed; and you will also be inundated with the highest quality and degree of joy and fulfillment. Such a life of devotion has been recommended as the key to our life.” (Śrīdhara 2, 1895-1988, Chapter 4.) In fact the Lord alone knows the individual souls' true essential nature and interests as He Himself has created them. As soon as He reveals the eternal nature of a living being, he is at once attracted to the Lord's service in a specific manner. If we imagine the perfect cook who can serve all tastes, then everybody will like to eat in his house, although they have different tastes.

Kṛṣṇa is the reservoir of all *rasas*, transcendental humors and relationships,
and thus although all people have different affinities, He can attract
all perfectly and unite them in the purpose of His service.

This is the harmonizing power of the Lord
as per *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*.

In the material world, our interest is falsely diverted to our own self instead of the Supreme Lord. Actually, by serving the Lord, our self interest is served best. If we try to directly serve our self, we unavoidably act against our inherent eternal nature (*sanātana-dharma*) of serving the Lord, and thus even if we try to fulfill our seeming self interests by all means, it will result in dissatisfaction. Because the conditioned souls in the material world do not know their actual nature of *bhakti*, they try to satisfy and love their self directly. When love for the self expands or matures, it transforms into love for the family, society, country, planet, universe, and finally into love for the sum-total existence, the Supreme Lord. By only loving one's family, there will be clashes with other families, by only loving one's country, there will be clashes with other countries, etc.

Only love of God embraces all;
love of God is the only impartial welfare.
The Supreme Lord is the actual most dear object of love
for each and every living being. Thus true love for the self, family,
country, etc., must naturally lead to love of God,
the supermost welfare activity.

yathā hi puruṣasyeha, viṣṇoḥ pādopasarpaṇam, yad eṣa sarva-bhūtānām, priya ātmesvaraḥ suhṛt, “The human form of life affords one a chance to return home, back to Godhead. Therefore, every living entity, especially in the human form of life, must engage in devotional service to the lotus feet of Lord Viṣṇu. This devotional service is natural because Lord Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the most beloved, the master of the soul, and the well-wisher of all other living beings.” – *SB* 7.6.2. If we cannot find interest in loving God, then we cannot really love anyone fully. As the saying goes “If you love me, you love my dog”; if one really loves someone, one will also love his dear ones. Then what to speak of loving someone's dearest one, the eternal indwelling best friend, the Supreme Lord? Therefore, If we *really* love anyone, including ourselves, then we naturally arrive at loving God, everyone's best friend, eternal maintainer, protector, source of joy and object of love. As such we could say that if we don't love God, we cannot even love a dog – what to speak of our family or the entire universe. Therefore, although there seem to be so many attempts to increase mutual love on this planet, as long as loving God is not the centre of all actions, any attempt will fail to increase mutual love, because the essential source and receptor of love and existence is disregarded. One may argue that there will always remain some people who are averse to God and as such even those who love God cannot be in harmony with all. In this regard it must be understood that if we love God, we are even in harmony with those who do not seem to love God, because we then perceive everything as part of the perfectly complete whole who reconciles everything in internal harmony, just like the various seemingly opposed philosophies and their followers are harmonized by the Lord's *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* (see Chapters 7-8). As such, although from the external point of view of the materialists there are clashes between the interests of devotees and other groups, internally, the realized devotees have a fully harmonized vision.

From the perspective of the realized devotees,
everything is interlinked in divine internal harmony, because
the Lord graces them with the vision of all underlying purposes
manifesting in individual diversity. By attainment of the Lord's
vision through His mercy, we can realize how our own and everyone's
individual nature is in complete internal harmony with the entire creation.

This is how the Lord's *acintya-bhedābheda* nature reconciles the seemingly opposed states of simultaneous (internal) harmony and (external) disharmony. Just as we can get the best glimpse into the fascinations of biology by studying it under an expert biologist, we can most efficiently realize this universal internal harmony by practicing devotional service to the Supreme Lord under bona fide spiritual guidance. And just as supporting an expert medical doctor to cure ill people is better

than speculating oneself how to cure them as a layman, supporting the realized souls in propagating *bhakti* to realize the universal harmony is the best welfare.

Still, for argument's sake, one may wonder, that if according to *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, all beings are small particles of the Lord and are thus one with the Lord in some parts of His qualities, then how is it that the living entities can be under illusion, as the Lord Himself is beyond illusion? The Lord possesses supreme free will, and that quality is also present in the living entity as minute potency of free will. Just like the drop of water cannot overpower the ocean, the will of the living entity cannot overpower the will of the Lord, because the *jīva* is minor to the Lord in quantity. It is the actual function of the living entity's free will to be surrendered to the Lord. By acting in agreement with the Lord's will, we use our individual nature to serve the Lord according to our natural character. As it is the original nature of the soul to please the Lord, it is also the soul's nature to be in harmony with the Lord's will. Therefore, by depending on the Lord's will, complete harmony is achieved, just like the harmony in a family is achieved by the children's dependence on the will of their well-wishing parents. One may ask that if the function of free will is to act in harmony with the Lord's will, why has the Lord given the living entities free will at all? The Lord's quality of free will is also present in the living entity in a minute form, just as the son is given some free will by the father. The father has the power to go and buy himself a suitable birthday present, yet he is much more pleased if his son gives him a present, although it is bought with the father's own money. What the father enjoys is not the present itself, but the love of his son that includes surrender of free will. Similarly, the Lord is in no need of any empty-hearted or duty-bound mechanical service, but He wants to enjoy our full-hearted voluntary devotion. Therefore, He has given us the potency of free will.

As the son can misuse the money given by his father and not even buy him a gift on his birthday, we can also misuse our God-given free will to try to build up an existence separate from devotion unto the Lord. This ungrateful attitude results in suffering, because we try to act against our inherent eternal nature, our *sanātana-dharma*, of practicing *bhakti*. The Lord grants all beings some amount of free will, and therefore He also manifests different worlds that suit the different inclinations of all beings. The only possible way that He can fulfill the desire of those living entities who develop separatist desires is to put them under illusion about their real nature of being loving devotees, just as for example a fish can only experience being a human on land in an illusory dream. The dreamland of illusion in which those living entities averse to *bhakti* try to fulfill their separate desires is called *devī-dhām*, the abode of Māyā Devī, the illusory potency of the Lord. This *devī-dhām* consists of all material worlds, one of them being the universe we live in. Although possessing some of the Lord's qualities, the living entity is minute and subjected to the influence of *māyā*. This is why the separatist *jīvas* are under illusion. Just as a fish on the dry land must suffer, those living entities who try to fulfill separatist desires that go against their very own nature must suffer. However, as soon as they wish to return to their original nature of devotional service, the Lord frees them from the clutches of *māyā* and reestablishes their original nature. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: "This *māyā*, divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it." – *Bg* 7.14.

It is not that the living entities' individual personalities and qualities are diminished in the spiritual nature, but rather they are manifested in their original spiritual nature. The material nature is a perverted reflection of the spiritual nature. The free will of the living entities in the material world is not fully dedicated to the Lord's will. If we can give up our separate interest, we will regain the original harmony with the Lord's will and thus realize the internal harmony or underlying unity with all creation. Then, our own eternal individual spiritual nature is manifested completely in its original nature bereft of material distortions. *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* gives the understanding of the living entities' true spiritual nature. By that understanding, we can employ our free will to follow our original nature of serving the Lord. Neither by any endeavour separate from *bhakti*, nor by elimination of our individual personality, can we ever achieve harmony.

We can only achieve harmony with the entire creation
if we are in harmony with the heart and centre of everything.
Because the heart and centre of everything is the will of God,
the only way to universal harmony is dedication to His will.
Such dedication also manifests our transcendental nature.
This universal internal harmonization of all individuals
is offered by the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*.



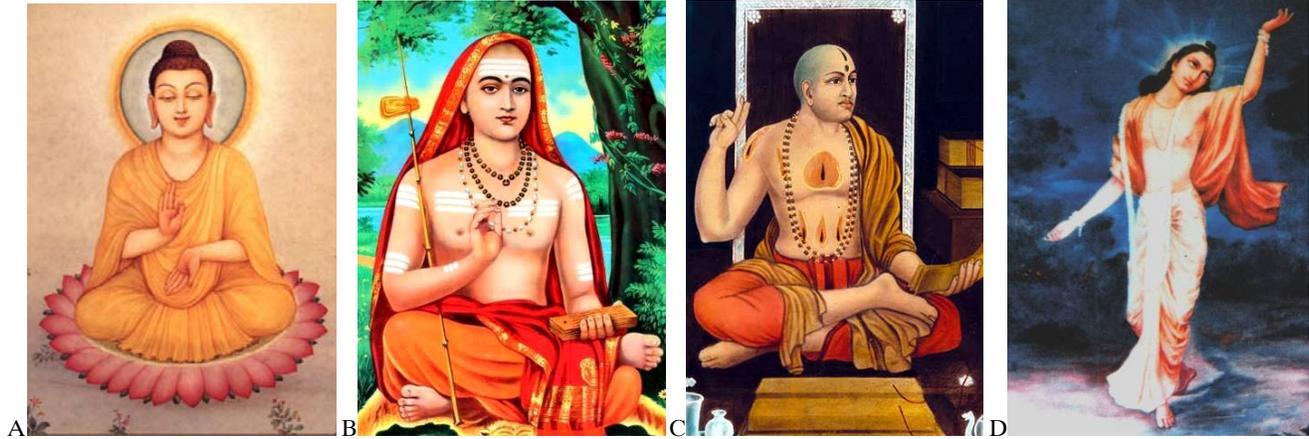
9. The Four Main Philosophies and Development of Full-fledged Theism

This chapter offers a practical four-fold universal categorization of all philosophical tendencies, and shows how the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is able to harmonize all of them in their underlying internal purpose, namely the gradual development of full-fledged theism.

9.1. Overview of The Four Main Philosophies

The four main philosophies are: full-fledged theism, dualistic theism, atheism and monism. These four main philosophies do not primarily refer to the particular four philosophies during their respective historic periods; they primarily stand for the corresponding attitudes towards life that exist in all times. No matter which time-period and culture someone belongs to, everybody lives according to a particular attitude towards life and can accordingly be classified as belonging to one of the four main philosophies. Despite the four main philosophies being ultimately beyond time, their chronological order bears importance, because it reveals very interesting aspects of the gradual development of full-fledged theism if seen in the light of the Lord's intention.

The main exponents of the four main philosophies in chronological order



- (A) **Atheism**, such as the path of non-violence (*ahimsā-dharma*) established by Lord Buddha (563-483 BC). The other three philosophies are theistic.
- (B) ***advaita-darśana***, philosophy of ultimate non-distinction from the Lord promoted especially by Ādi Śaṅkara (788-820 AD) in his *kevalādvaita-darśana*.
- (C) ***dvaita-darśana***, philosophy of eternal distinction from the Lord promoted for example by Śrīla Madhvācārya (1238-1317 AD) in his *suddha-dvaita-darśana*.
- (D) ***acintya-bhedābheda-darśana***, philosophy of inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction from the Lord established by Śrī Caitanya (1486-1534 AD).

Chart 1: The four main philosophies in teleosympathetic order⁸²:

	Aspiration for difference (<i>bheda</i>) from God	Aspiration for union (<i>abheda</i>) with God
1. <i>acintya-bhedābheda</i> (full-fledged theism)	in person	in will
2. <i>dvaita</i> or <i>bheda</i> (dualism, dualistic theism)	in person	partially in will
3. <i>laukika</i> (materialism, atheism)	in will	partially in person
4. <i>advaita</i> or <i>abheda</i> (monism)	nil (considered illusory)	in person

⁸² The term 'teleosympathy' was coined by the author and will be explained on the next page.

The categorization of four main philosophies introduced in this book may be questioned by some people who are familiar with traditional categorizations. The next chapter will explain how this categorization offers a very effective tool for the evaluation of all philosophies. Latest at that point, its value shall be appreciated. The traditional categorization is as follows:

Chart 2 : Philosophies of the classical Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāyas*:

Most prominent propounder	Philosophy
Viṣṇu Svāmī (300 BC)	<i>śuddhādvaita-vāda</i> (purified monism)
Rāmānujācārya (11 th century)	<i>viśiṣṭādvaita-vāda</i> (specific monism)
Madhvācārya (13 th century)	<i>śuddha-dvaita-vāda</i> (purified dualism)
Nimbārkācārya (13 th century)	<i>dvaitādvaita-vāda</i> (monism and dualism)

This categorization is explained in Appendix 2 for the interested reader. The traditional way of presenting *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* is to compare it with each of these classical Vaiṣṇava philosophies and establish that it is their combined essence or synthesis. This has already been done elaborately by various devotees and scholars and is therefore not presented in detail in this book. The focus in this book is on essential motives, practical applications, harmonization and reconciliation of various philosophies on a universally applicable scale; this consideration must also include atheism, monism and *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* as a category. To serve these ends, a different categorization has been chosen.

In the categorization of above Chart 1, full-fledged theism is represented by Śrī Caitanya, dualistic theism is represented by Madhvācārya, atheism is represented by Lord Buddha, and monism is represented by Śāṅkarācārya. This simplification is made in order to summarize all existent philosophies in a concise and illustrative overview with focus on their intended aspirations of relation to God. This categorization also allows a very interesting understanding of the chronological development of the human philosophical tendencies as intended by the Lord. The main difference of this categorization in contrast to others is that it considers how the philosophies' essential asset is in harmony with the *purpose* of creation in the light of the Lord's own desire as expressed by the Lord Himself. This approach is teleological (from Greek *teleos*, 'purpose, goal, end' and *logia*, 'science, theory of'), which means that the mechanism and purpose of anything is understood only from the intention of its creator, and not by separatist speculation. Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura addressed the Supreme Lord in this way: "Unless You inform us, we cannot understand what Your purpose is or what You want to do through whom." – Cc 3.4.90.

The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* goes even further than teleology,
because its target is not merely to know the intention of the Creator
and the purpose of creation, but it further aims at devoting
oneself completely to the Lord's intention and in this way
enter sympathetic unity and harmony with Him and
hence with His entire creation. It can thus be called
teleosympathy, sympathy with the Lord's desire⁸³.

A categorization of these philosophies according to their degree of teleosympathy is not only justified but also necessary for adequate comparison. This categorization is not meant to replace traditional categorizations but to add to them. An essential point of understanding is that all major representatives of the four main philosophies are either Descents of God or incarnations of great devotees, as explained later in this chapter. If we know this, it becomes easier to see the Lord's hidden plan of gradually reinstating full-fledged theism. Only by a teleosympathetic approach can we see the deeper interlinked purposes and ultimate harmony of different philosophies. The

⁸³ Since God defines the end and purpose of life, the term 'teleo' here means the Lord's purpose or desire.

following examples shall illustrate that the teleosympathetic approach to reality is superior to the more superficial morphological approach to reality.

Example one: Two persons, each pushing a trolley, cross paths in a narrow passage in the airport. If we observe such a common scenario, both persons usually watch the movement of the other person's trolley and act accordingly. Only if it is unavoidable, they will look into each other's face, and most rarely, we observe them communicating. This superficial and impersonal behavior that recognizes the external form, but ignores the person behind it, often leads to near-crash situations, which then finally force people to become more personal. The wise person considers the movement of the other trolley, but gives more importance to the bodily expressions of the other trolley pilot and communicates with him or her, thus being able to predict and interact with the other person's intentions better and ensure a smooth crossing. Most people ignore the other person's intentions and only acknowledge the trolley. Similarly, most people only observe the external morphological appearance and movements of the material manifestation, and rarely consider the intention of the Creator and Pilot of the material energy. They are thus often lead to wrong assumptions and difficulties. People in general only approach God for help in difficult times, similar to the above described near-crash situation. The classic example is the public request of the scientists and managers of NASA and American leaders to all people of the world to pray to God for a safe return of the astronauts after an explosion in the Apollo 13 spacecraft on April 11, 1970, which lead to a very dangerous situation. In contrast, wise people are essentialists and never superficial. They contemplate the intentions of the Creator from the very beginning. They further develop sympathy with God's will, and by that they lead a sublime life in harmony with creation.

Example two: A boy and his family visit the boy's uncle. The boy would prefer to play with his friends at home and inquires from his father why they are going to the uncle. His father explains: "Your uncle is my brother and therefore we are relatives. It is natural for relatives to visit each other." By this answer, the boy is not convinced to go and asks the same thing to his mother, who tells him: "My dear son! Your uncle is a very friendly person who always tells interesting stories and sings beautiful songs, and you can also play with his children who know many nice games." After hearing this, the boy is very happy to go to his uncle.

If we only explain our relation to the Lord in terms of origin, then the impetus to practically get to know Him is much less than if we explain the teleosympathetic relation to the Lord, namely that we are created to enter a loving serving relationship with the all-perfect Lord who is the embodiment of all varieties of *rasas*, relishable loving relationships, and that by attaining our eternal loving relationship with Him we become completely blissful (*raso vai sah, rasam hy evāyam labdhvānandī bhavati, Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.7.1*). Teleosympathy is the key to evolution from a relation to God to a relationship with God.

Modern scientists are more concerned with morphological aspects of creation and many even purposely exclude teleological aspects from their research. Nobel Laureate Niels Bohr stated: "In our description of nature the purpose is not to disclose the real essence of phenomena, but only to track down as far as possible relations between the multifold aspects of our experience." (Bohr, 1934, p. 18.) Yet true scientists will not exclude anything from their research because they are interested in the complete reality in all its depth without artificial limitations.

The purpose of creation is part of reality,
and those who artificially try to exclude it
from their research are cultivating ignorance.

In fact the purpose of creation is the very essence of creation, just as the seed is the essence of the tree and contains the entire tree. Without understanding the purpose of creation, it is

impossible to understand creation. A serious scientist will thus consider the teleosympathetic approach to reality. Albert Einstein mentioned: “I want to know how God created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon, in the spectrum of this or that element. I want to know His thoughts; the rest are details.” (Calaprice 2000, p. 202.) After understanding the actual master plan of creation, the sincere scientist will naturally become the Lord’s devotee. The morphological approach is superficial and reveals only minor secondary aspects of reality, while the teleosympathetic approach is profound and reveals the superior primary essential aspects of creation, as will become evident in this chapter.

Although we can find many ideas from the four main philosophies in other philosophies, the four personalities mentioned in above Chart 1 (Buddha, Śāṅkarācārya, Madhvācārya and Śrī Caitanya) are the most important exponents of the corresponding philosophies, and in order to keep this book compact, the other philosophers are not mentioned here. For the same reason, the philosophies of other philosophers are not further analyzed. As it would go beyond the limits of this book to explain in detail how *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* harmonizes each and every single existing philosophy, it shall be explained mainly how it harmonizes the main four philosophies, which include the essence of all other philosophies.

9.2. Lord Buddha Reestablishes Non-Violence

In the fifth chapter, the beginning of Kali-yuga after 3000 BC was described. Vedic science gradually became covered due to misuse and deviations. During that time, people started to increasingly engage in extensive killing of animals, sometimes even sacrificing human beings during the worship of demigods. To prevent further deviations from the Vedic science, Lord Kṛṣṇa thus descended as Lord Buddha (563-483 BC), as predicted in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.3.24): *tataḥ kalau sampravṛtte, sammohāya sura-dviṣām, buddho nāmnāñjana-sutaḥ, kikaṭeṣu bhaviṣyati*, “Then, in the beginning of Kali-yuga, the Lord will appear as Lord Buddha, the son of Añjanā, in the province of Gayā, just for the purpose of deluding those who are envious of the faithful theists.” Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swamī Prabhupāda comments: “*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was composed just prior to the beginning of the age of Kali (about five thousand years ago), and Lord Buddha appeared about twenty-six hundred years ago. Therefore, in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Lord Buddha is aforetold. Such is the authority of this clear scripture.” In this regard, his disciple Stephen Knapp writes: “This verse shows that Lord Buddha was an incarnation of the Supreme Being who would appear in Gayā, a town in central India. Nevertheless, some historians may point out that Buddha, Siddhārtha Gautama, was actually born in Lumbini, Nepal, and that his mother was Queen Mahāmāyā. Therefore, they might feel that this verse is inaccurate. But Siddhārtha became the Buddha after He attained spiritual enlightenment during His meditation under the Bo tree in Gayā. This means that His spiritual realization was His second and most important birth. Furthermore, Siddhārtha’s mother, Queen Mahāmāyā, died several days after Siddhārtha’s birth, leaving Him to be raised by his grandmother, Añjanā. So the prediction in the *Bhāgavatam* is accurate.” (Knapp, 1997, p. 4.)

Many sources explain that there are at least two different Buddhas. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swamī Prabhupāda explains that the verse 2.7.37 of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* predicts another Buddha, who, according to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, appears in a different Kali-yuga (*SB* 2.7.37. purport). The existence of various Buddhas is also supported by the Buddhist scripture *Lāṅkāvatara-Sūtra*, in which Rāvaṇa, the king of Lāṅkā, prays to the ancient Lord Buddha, and to all the Buddhas and Buddhas’ sons who would appear in the future, via this *stāva* (eulogy): *atha ravano lankadhipatih gathagiten anugayati sma, lankavatarasutram vaiḥ purvabuddhanuvarnitam smarami purvakaih buddhairjinaputra-puraskritaih, putrametannigadyate bhagavanapi bhashatam, bhavishyantyanapate kale buddha buddhasutasca ye* (Tīrtha 5). Whichever version we take, Buddha always preached *ahimsā-dharma*, the path of non-violence, and rejected the Vedic literature that

had been misused to justify improper violence. As will be explained in the following, Lord Buddha did this, so that the proper application of Veda could be reestablished in the future. In this light, the distinction between one or many Buddhas is not of central importance in this book and is merely expressed as a matter of completeness. Therefore, in order to concentrate on the wider perspective of *purpose* of appearance, we shall proceed to describe one Buddha. One may doubt that Lord Buddha is an Avatāra, a Descent, of Lord Kṛṣṇa, because Lord Buddha denied the authority of the *Vedas* and the existence of God. We should understand that Lord Buddha's advent is another example of Lord Kṛṣṇa's *acintya-śakti*, inconceivable potency. Its mystery can only be understood by *bhakti*. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swamī Prabhupāda explains in the purport of the above quoted verse (*SB* 1.3.24), that Lord Buddha is a very clever camouflage of Lord Kṛṣṇa who fulfils multiple purposes:

- (1) To stop the killing of animals and propagate *ahimsā*, non-violence.
- (2) To show mercy to the atheists, who are not prepared to accept God.
- (3) To prepare the systematic reestablishment of the the *Vedas* as authority.

(1) *ahimsā* is the first regulative principle of the Vedic science of transcendence (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.19.33-35). In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.21.29, Lord Kṛṣṇa warned that by engaging in violence, for example by killing animals in order to satisfy our senses, we are prevented from being able to understand the confidential Vedic conclusion expressed by Him. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.1.4 explains that hearing and chanting the pleasing vibrations of the names and activities of the Supreme Lord is *bhava-auśadhāt*, the right medicine to counteract the material disease, but people who are *paśu-ghnāt*, killer of animals, cannot appreciate such hearing and chanting. *paśu-ghnāt*, 'killer of animals', alternatively translates as 'killer of the self'. This connection is there because by meat eating, one is prevented from developing *bhakti*, which is actually the only food and life of the self. Also, according to the cosmic law of *karma*, by eating meat we must face being killed ourselves, even if we don't know about this law: "Those unsaintly persons who are ignorant of actual religious principles, yet consider themselves pious, commit violence against innocent animals who are fully trusting them. In their next lives, they will be eaten by the same creatures they have killed before." – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.5.14. The derivation of the word meat (*māmsa*) is explained as follows: *sa mām punar bhakṣayitā, yasya mām sam adāmy aham, iti mām sa-niruktim vai, varṇayanti manīṣiṇaḥ*, "As I eat his flesh (*māmsa*) now, so he (*sa*) will eat me (*mām*) in the future. In this way the wise explain the derivation of the word *māmsa*." (*Sātvata-tantra* 8.13.) The Vedic literature of civic codes, the *Manu-smṛiti* (5.49), states: "Having well considered the origin of flesh foods and the cruelty of fettering and slaying corporeal beings, let us entirely abstain from eating flesh." One who realizes the Supersoul present in all beings cannot possibly harm any living entity: "Such a perfect devotee offers respects to every living entity because he knows that the Supreme Personality of Godhead has entered the body of every living entity as the Supersoul." – *SB* 3.29.34.

Without being merciful towards the Lord's creation, we cannot attract the Lord's mercy, which is the prime necessity to understand reality. During Vedic times, the killing of animals was only allowed for rare sacrifices in which the animal would get a higher body, never for mere sense gratification. Furthermore, devotees of Kṛṣṇa never eat meat because they only accept *prasāda*, the remnants of food offerings to Lord Kṛṣṇa, which are vegetarian because Kṛṣṇa Himself is a vegetarian (*Bg* 9.29). Also, the Vedic science classifies meat eating as a notion of *tama*, ignorance (see Chart 2 in Chapter 12), which degrades human consciousness. Due to the negative influence of the dark age of Kali, the above Vedic injunctions were neglected or misused and violence started increasing. In order to re-establish the basic Vedic principle of *ahimsā*, Lord Buddha clearly forbade His followers to eat meat and thereby become responsible for killing animals, as recorded in the *Lāṅkāvatara-Sūtra* (Suzuki, 1932): "It is untrue that eating meat is permitted if the eater did not kill the animal himself, if he did not order others to kill it or if the meat was not directly meant for him. There may be people in the future who, under the influence of their desire for meat eating, will

produce many sophisticated arguments to justify their meat eating. (...) Nevertheless, meat eating in any form, anywhere and under any circumstance, is forbidden without exception for all times.



“I have never allowed anyone to eat meat,
I do not allow it, and I will never allow it to anyone.”

The Buddhist scripture *Sutta-Nipata*, text 393, advises: “Let him not destroy or cause to be destroyed any life at all, or sanction the acts of those who do so. Let him refrain from even hurting any creature, both those that are strong and those that tremble in the world.” Another Buddhist scripture, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-Sūtra*, states: “The eating of meat suffocates the seed of great compassion.” The strict followers of Lord Buddha were vegetarians and practiced *ahimsā* not only by lips but also with heart and deed⁸⁴. It goes without saying that the principle of *ahimsā* must be applied to all aspects of life. The first step to real human progress is the practical elimination of violence, especially its gross forms like bodily violence, slaughter, animal testing, abortion and destruction of nature. Violence is a manifestation of *tama-guṇa*, the material mode of ignorance, the lowest of all modes (see Chart 3 in Chapter 12). To propagate progress while acting in ignorance, to meditate on higher states of consciousness while degrading one’s consciousness, or to call on God while torturing His children and creation is nothing but hypocrisy and self-deception.

By dint of a strong presence of Vedic culture, India was once the land of non-violence and thus the land of vegetarianism and ecological harmony. Under such circumstances, India’s people were most able to develop spiritually. With the immense increase of violence through slaughter, abortion and destruction of nature, there was a proportional increase of materialism and degeneration of spiritual culture in India. Today, if we visit even most holy places like Vṛndāvana, the home of Lord Kṛṣṇa, we are shocked to see the amount of environmental pollution. The water of the holy river Yamunā consists entirely of sewage and the streets are full of rancid garbage. According to Vedic science, meat eating is prohibited for a serious seeker of truth and explicitly forbidden for strict *brāhmaṇas* (priestly class). But in today’s India, even many *brāhmaṇas* take to eating meat – something which was beyond imagination during Vedic times. Less than fifty years back, most restaurants in India were strictly vegetarian, and all exceptions were declared as ‘NON-VEG’. Today, most restaurants offer meat and not all of them are declared ‘NON-VEG’ anymore.

⁸⁴ Unfortunately, most of today’s so-called ‘Buddhists’ do not follow this most fundamental principle of Lord Buddha. Many ‘Buddhist’ scholars even try to deny that Buddha forbade meat eating. It would be very laudable if the Buddhist leaders like the Dalai Lama followed Lord Buddha’s teachings in toto. If they practiced and propagated vegetarianism, then their advocacy of compassion and peace would be credible and more effective.

However, in some holy places such as the town of Guruvāyur in Kerala, meat eating is still completely prohibited. Outside many restaurants, shops or other localities all over India, we can still find signboards saying 'NON-VEG ITEM NOT ALLOWED INSIDE'. The Supreme Lord has manifested many pastimes of loving exchanges with animals and showed the supreme example as a strict vegetarian, for example in His transcendental forms of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Buddha, and Lord Caitanya (see following pictures 1-3). Saints of various traditions like Saint Francis of Assisi were able to communicate with animals and would never dare to harm them.



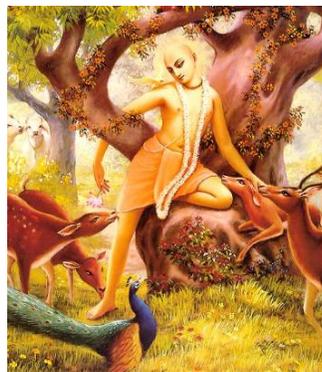
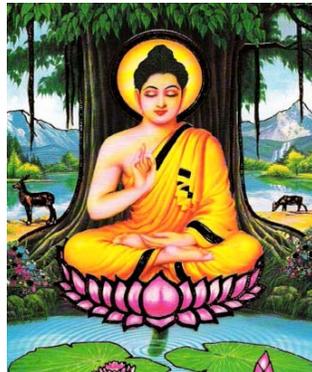
(2) As to the second purpose of Lord Buddha's appearance, to show mercy on the atheists:

Lord Kṛṣṇa kindly indirectly accepted worship of the atheists through His camouflaged form of Buddha Avatāra. This shows not only His expert trickery, but also His limitless mercy.

Lord Buddha rejected the *Vedas* and preached *ahimsā-dharma*, the path of non-violence. By preaching *ahimsā* and atheism, He made thousands of atheistic followers who thus voluntarily offered their homage unto Him. Just like a father wants his children to be happy in his company, the Lord wants His children to be happy in His company. Therefore, even if some people turn away from Him, He tries to bring them back to Him by all means. Lord Buddha's teaching is given here as an example of a philosophy of atheism. The example of Lord Buddha further shows:

Theism cannot be covered unless the Lord Himself allows or initiates it.

In fact many have tried to preach atheism before Lord Buddha, but only when the Lord Himself preached atheism, atheism could conquer theism on a large scale, because the Lord can only be defeated by Himself. The Lord's sublime nature of *acintya-bhedābheda* is such, that He can take contrary positions, defeat His own establishments and later reestablish them. Lord Caitanya also manifested this nature in His pastime of being a great *paṇḍita*, a learned scholar or professor of logic. He was feared by all scholars because He would first challenge them, then defeat their arguments, and later reestablish their arguments as superior again, creating great confusion and embarrassment (see Chapter 6.4). This consideration (as well as the discussed point that God allows freedom of choice described in Chapters 8 and 14.7) also clears the doubt of those who think that if there was an almighty Lord, there would be no atheism. Actually, atheism is nothing but a tiny plaything of the Supreme Lord Himself.



(3) Although Lord Buddha rejected the *Vedas*, He actually paved the way for their reestablishment as authority. In the present times of increasing violence it sometimes happens that the fans in a football match become so violent that the whole stadium has to be emptied and the game is aborted. There are even organized groups called Hooligans whose members go to football matches of their favoured team solely with the aim of starting a violent fight with Hooligans of other teams (last picture). This is a typical sign of the age of Kali. The actual purpose of a game is to experience pleasure by an artful play. This includes reciprocal friendship as a basic principle. When this basic principle is lacking, violence can take over and pervert the purpose of a game. Similarly, if the basic Vedic principles of mutual friendship and mercy vanish, the whole purpose of Vedic culture becomes perverted, and the so-called followers of Vedic culture are then engaged in violence such as killing animals for sense gratification instead of trying to progress spiritually. Because their illusion makes them believe that the *Vedas* support their misdeeds, just as the violent fans think that violence is the purpose of a game, the *Vedas* ironically become a negative stimulus for them. Therefore, Lord Buddha completely rejected the *Vedas*, just as the police sometimes have to abort a game with unreasonable fans. He then reestablished the basic Vedic principle of *ahimsā* in order to again make people ‘fit for the game’, i.e. ready to execute the Vedic science appropriately. The spiritual leaders who followed Lord Buddha continued the proper education of people in the Vedic science. The Supreme Lord’s *acintya-bhedābheda* nature allows Him to act in various seemingly opposed ways, which are in fact harmoniously interlinked. The Vaiṣṇavas know of this all-reconciling power and nature of the Lord, and thus, even though Lord Buddha externally rejected the *Vedas*, they glorify Him when they sing the ninth verse of the *Daśavatāra-stotra* of the Vaiṣṇava saint Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī⁸⁵:

*nindāsī yajña-vidher ahaha śruti-jātaṁ
sadaya-hṛdaya darśita-paśu-ghātaṁ
keśava dhṛta-buddha-sarīra jaya jagadīśa hare*

“O Keśava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari⁸⁶,
who have assumed the form of Buddha! All glories to You!
With your heart full of compassion, You decry animal slaughter
for sense-pleasure under the pretence of executing Vedic injunctions.”

9.3. Śāṅkarācārya Reestablishes the Vedas as Authority

After decreasing the misuse of the *Vedas* by turning thousands of atheists into Buddhists, Lord Kṛṣṇa planned to reestablish the *Vedas* as authority. As recorded in the *Śiva-Purāṇa* (quoted from *Cc* 1.7.110, purport), Śrī Kṛṣṇa instructed Lord Śiva⁸⁷: *dvāparādau yuge bhūtvā, kalayā mānuṣādīṣu, svāgamaiḥ kalpitais tvam ca, janān mad-vimukhān kuru*,

“In Kali-yuga, mislead the people in general by propounding
imaginary meanings from the Vedas to bewilder them.”

In order to execute this instruction, Lord Śiva incarnated as Adi Śāṅkara. This is disclosed in the *Padma-Purāṇa*, where Lord Śiva makes this intimation to his wife Pārvatī: *śṛṇu devī pravakṣyāmi, tāmasāni yathā-kramam* (...), “My dear wife, hear my explanations of how I have spread ignorance through *māyāvāda* philosophy. Simply by hearing it, even an advanced scholar will fall down. In this philosophy, which is certainly very inauspicious for people in general, I have misrepresented the real meaning of the *Vedas*. I have described the *jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā* to be

⁸⁵ From his *Gītā Govinda* quoted in Tirtha 5.

⁸⁶ Keśava and Hari are names of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

⁸⁷ Lord Śiva is a demigod in charge of the cosmic dissolution and a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

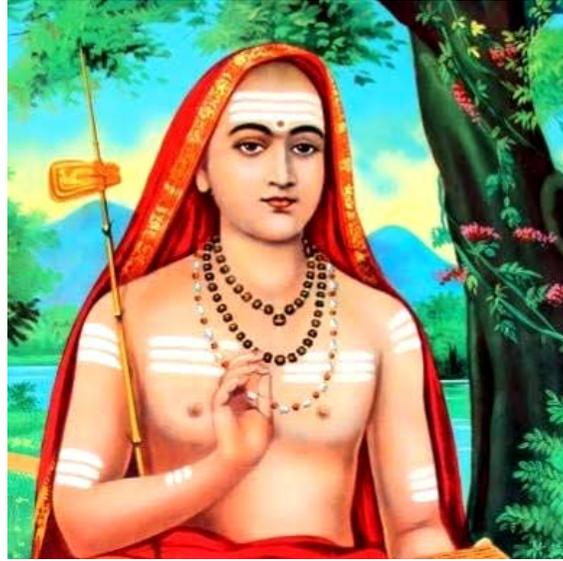
one. (...) In the form of a *brāhmaṇa* in Kali-yuga I teach this illusory *māyāvāda* philosophy. In order to cheat the atheists, I describe Godhead to be without form and without qualities.” – *Padma-Purāṇa* Uttara Khanda 25.7 (*Cc* 1.7.110, purport). Hence, during Kali-yuga, in the 8th century, Lord Śiva incarnated as Adi Śaṅkara to reassert Vedic authority. Adi Śaṅkara appeared as a devotee of Lord Śiva, as indicated by his name Śaṅkara (another name of Lord Śiva) and his wearing *tripundra*, three horizontal lines of ash on the forehead. During that time, Buddhism was spreading all over India. In order to bring those who converted to Buddhism (and had thus re-learned the basic virtue of *ahimsā* and were now again mature for Veda) to again accept Vedic authority, he travelled all over India on foot and debated with countless scholars and spiritual leaders, who became his followers after their defeat. At the tender age of eight, Adi Śaṅkara had mastered many Vedic literatures and accepted *sannyāsa*, the ascetic order of life as a celibate renunciate. He was wandering about the countryside without possessions. After some months he accepted Śrī Govindapada as his spiritual master. Govindapada understood that Adi Śaṅkara is Lord Śiva’s Avatāra and sent him to Benares when he was merely twelve years old in order to turn the tide of atheism. Adi Śaṅkara was successful. He became a great Ācārya with many disciples.

Although the Buddhists and other atheists were not yet ready to accept theism, they were ready to accept the *Vedas* interpreted in the monistic, *advaita*⁸⁸, *abheda*, *nirviśeṣa-vāda*, or *māyāvāda* way of Śaṅkarācārya. His doctrine of *nirviśeṣa-vāda* or impersonalism allowed Śaṅkarācārya to indirectly convince Buddhists and other atheists to accept the *Vedas* as authority – this was his main achievement. He taught that the essential teaching of Veda is that the living entities and Brahman, the impersonal form of the absolute, are one. He interpreted the verse *tat tvam asi* (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.8.7) to mean “You are that [Brahman]”, and the verse *aham brahmāsmi* (*Bṛhad-āranyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.10) to mean “I am Brahman.” The actual meaning of these verses is that the soul is one with Brahman in terms of both being spiritual (eternal and non-material) and not one in person. But Śaṅkarācārya, by giving secondary and twisted meanings, intentionally taught that the soul is completely identical with Brahman, and that the perception of individual existences is a material illusion, referred to as *māyā*. As such he preached *māyāvāda* or *advaita-vāda*, which holds that all is ultimately Brahman. He did this as a necessity of time and circumstance.

The atheists were not ready to practice devotion to God, but they were ready to accept Śaṅkarācārya’s doctrine of ultimately being God, which was presented to them as a merciful trick to reestablish the authority of the *Vedas* that ultimately proclaim theism.

Although in this *māyāvāda-darśana*, Bhagavān is falsely seen as minor to Brahman and even minor to *māyā*, it subtly included the concept of God that was lacking in Lord Buddha’s philosophy. This misrepresentation that bewildered the atheists is to be understood as a manifestation of the Lord’s causeless mercy, because in this way they were able to ultimately take to the essence of Vedic science – Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This can be compared to a mother who finds tricky ways like sugarcoating to make her sick child eat bitter medicine. Lord Śiva himself is a great Vaiṣṇava or devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*vaiṣṇavānām yathā sambhuḥ*, *SB* 12.13.16) and in no way a *māyāvādī* – he simply took on that role to execute the Lord’s order. Therefore, although Śaṅkarācārya externally preached supremacy of *nirviśeṣa-vāda* (impersonalism) over *bhakti*, in his famous last composition before departing from this world he revealed his actual personal preference of *bhakti*, devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is also called Govinda: *bhaja govindam mbhaja govindam, bhaja govindam mūdha-mate, samprāpte sannihite kāle, na hi na hi rakṣati dukṛṇ-karaṇe*,

⁸⁸ *kevalādvaita-vāda*, see Appendix 2.



“You intellectual fools, just worship Govinda,
just worship Govinda, just worship Govinda!
Your grammatical knowledge and word jugglery
will not save you at the time of death!”

For this reason, the Vaiṣṇavas give credit to Śaṅkarācārya: “Śaṅkarācārya is not at fault, for it is under the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead that he has covered the real purport of the *Vedas*.” – Śrī Caitanya in *Cc* 1.7.110. It is also interesting that Śaṅkarācārya admitted the existence of difference between the living entity and the Absolute, for example in the third verse of his *Viṣṇu-ṣatpadi-stotra*: *saty api bhedāpagame nātha! tavāhaṁ na māmakīyas tvam, sāmudro hi tarāṅgaḥ kva ca na samudro na tāraṅgaḥ*, “Oh Lord, although the living entities and the Supreme Brahman are non-different, the living entities are subordinate to You. In other words, their existence is dependent on You. You, however, are never dependent on anyone. Although there is no difference between the ocean and its waves, the existence of the waves is dependent on the ocean. The ocean is never dependent on the waves.” (Quoted in *Cb* 3.3.48.) Furthermore, Śaṅkarācārya “recognises *bhedābheda* while he concludes his commentary on this *sūtra*⁸⁹: *caitayam cāvaśiṣṭam jīveśvarayor yathā agni-visphuliṅ gayor uṣṇam ato bhedābhedaḥ* *āsatvāvagamaḥ*, ‘Just as hotness is common and identical between fire and its sparks, so is the consciousness between *īśvara* and the *jīva*. Hence the individual is a fragment of God through the non-exclusive relation of relative identity and difference.’” (Bhowmick, 2003, pp. 109-110.)

9.4. Madhvācārya Reestablishes Theism

After the extensive preaching of Śaṅkarācārya, Buddhism and other atheistic philosophies were replaced with his *kevalādvaita-darśana*, and the Vedic scriptures were again accepted as genuine authorities. The next task was to enlighten the impersonal monists so they will accept the eternally individual existence of God and the living entities. Amongst others, Śrīla Madhvācārya took this mission to heart and taught *dvaita-darśana*, dualism, as indicated with his famous hand-gesture of extending two fingers representing the dualistic doctrine. His followers recite a *mantra* that addresses him as *śrīmaddvaita-vaiṣṇava-siddhānta-pratiṣṭhāpanācārya*, the Ācārya to establish the theistic doctrine of *dvaita* (Bhaktisiddhanta 2, 1928, p. 99). Later, his *darśana* was classified as *suddha-dvaita*, purified dualism, to distinguish it from other types of *dvaita*.

⁸⁹ *Vedānta-sūtra* 2.3.43: *aṁśo nānā vyapadeśāt*, “The relation between the part and the whole cannot be either absolute identity or absolute difference, but it is identity in difference and difference in identity.”



Śrīla Madhvācārya firmly reestablished the truth of the eternal individual existence of Godhead and the living entities, and stressed the aspect of their distinction in order to make a very clear contrast to the impersonal philosophy of monism. He thus gloriously brought back personal theism, the goal of transcendence, and the practice of *bhakti*.

Śrīla Madhvācārya appeared in the 13th century in South India near Uḍupī as an incarnation of the wind demigod Vāyu. The *Rg Veda* states: *unmadhva ūrmirvananā atiṣṭhadapo vasano mahiṣī vigāhate raja pavitra ratho vājamaruhat sahasra bhṛtir jayati śravo vṛhat*, “(...) O Vāyudeva, you are gloriously present within this world as Madhvācārya, engaged in the service of hearing the scriptures from the mouth of Śrīla Vyāsadeva.” (Bhaktisiddhanta 2, 1928, p. 136.) Madhvācārya was a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He received *brāhmaṇa* initiation at the age of five and accepted *sannyāsa*, the renounced order of life, at the age of twelve. Madhvācārya discovered a deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa after he had helped to rescue people who were in distress at sea. That Bālakṛṣṇa deity was so heavy that thirty strong men could not carry Him. Amazingly, Madhva carried Him alone to Uḍupī, where he constructed a temple for Him. Being an incarnation of the demigod Vāyu, he exhibited his superhuman powers on other occasions such as fighting with a tiger and plunderers. Śrīla Madhvācārya personally met Vyāsadeva, the literal Avatāra of Lord Kṛṣṇa, in Badarikāśrama and received instructions concerning the conclusions of the *Vedas*, *Vedānta-sūtra*, *Mahābhārata*, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and thereafter wrote his own commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, called *Pūrṇaprajña-bhāṣya* (Bhaktisiddhanta 2, 1928, pp. 101-102.) By quoting scriptural evidence and by logical disputes, Madhvācārya established that the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Viṣṇu, the living entities and the material world are all eternal and eternally distinct, even after liberation; that the *jīvas* are Lord Viṣṇu’s eternal servants and that by *bhakti* they can attain His lotus feet, and that this is actual liberation. He travelled thousands of miles on foot to preach *bhakti* in all directions. By converting many *māyāvāda* leaders and Buddhists to *bhakti* and establishing *dvaita-darśana*, he became famous throughout India.

As mentioned earlier, although Śaṅkarācārya was internally a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, his *māyāvāda* philosophy is illusory. The *māyāvādīs* want to merge with Brahman, the impersonal effulgence of Kṛṣṇa; they thus indirectly aspire to become God. In fact, they claim to already be Brahman, and that they only need to be freed of the illusion to be separate from Brahman. “The *māyāvādī* philosopher tries to establish that the living entity is only imaginary and that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is under the influence of *māyā*. Hearing this kind of commentary breaks the

heart and life of a devotee.” – *Cc* 3.2.99. ‘God in illusion’ – this is in itself a contradiction, as God is *māyeśvara*, the master of *māyā*, the illusory energy (*Cc* 3.5.126). In one sense, the *Bible* also establishes monism to be a diabolical deception; Satan seduced Eve to eat from the forbidden fruit by saying: “You will be like God!” (Gen. 3:5.) “An ignorant person cannot understand the Supreme Lord who is without any dependence or illusion. Although always dependent and illusioned, the ignorant person falsely thinks himself the Supreme.” – *SB* 6.12.12. This verse explains the actual illusion or *māyā* of the *māyāvādīs*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: “This *māyā*, divine illusory energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it.” – *Bg* 7.14. The *jīvas* are under Lord Kṛṣṇa’s *māyā* and can only be freed from her by Him, as He is *māyeśvara*, the master of *māyā*. The main fault of monism is, that by claiming everything to be exclusively one with Brahman, the real nature of the *jīva*, namely *bhakti*, to serve God as individuals, is missed. As *bhakti* is the essential nature and the innermost life of all *jīvas*, exclusive monism is actually attempting spiritual suicide. The Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas like Madhvācārya and Rāmānujācārya defeated exclusive monism and protected the eternal existence of *bhakti* on a wide scale. For this, they are celebrated as true life-saviors.

9.5. Śrī Caitanya Reestablishes Full-fledged Theism; Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana

After the renaissance of theism brought about by Madhvācārya and other Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas, the gradual development of theism reached close to its completion. Lord Buddha had eliminated the vices of violence, Śaṅkarācārya had reestablished the law of Vedic authority, and Madhvācārya had cleared the maze of impersonalism. Now the road was clear and ready for the Supreme Lord to appear in His most merciful form, as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and to distribute to one and all that which is ultimately to be achieved by the practice of *bhakti*, namely the treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, pure love of God. Śrī Caitanya appeared in 1486 in West-Bengal. A summary of His biography is offered in Chapter 6.

Śrī Caitanya accepted initiation in Śrīla Madhvācārya’s *sampradāya*. Like previous Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas, He took to the renounced order of *sannyāsa* and travelled throughout India on foot in order to preach the essence of the *Vedas*. As explained in the second chapter, the *Vedas* cannot be understood by empirical and rational approaches. If we want to understand their actual essence, it is not sufficient to study them ourselves. We need someone who can ‘milk’ or extract the essence of the *Vedas* in a digestible form, which is in fact a superhuman task. The only qualified person to do this is Kṛṣṇa, God Himself (*vedānta-kṛd veda-vid eva cāham*, “I am the compiler of *Vedānta*, and I am the knower of the *Vedas*.” – Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bg* 15.15). In the *Gītā-māhātmya* 6 (quoted in *Bhagavad-gītā*, Introduction), He is compared to a cowherd boy who is milking the cow of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and Arjuna is drinking that milk. Being the most qualified person to milk the *Vedas*, Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared as Caitanya Mahāprabhu to extract the concentrated essence of the *Vedas* and establish the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* (*Cc* 2.20.108-109):

*jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'
kṛṣṇera 'taṭasthā-śakti' 'bhedābheda-prakāśa'
sūryāṁśa-kiraṇa, yaiche agni-jvālā-caya
svābhāvika kṛṣṇera tina-prakāra 'śakti' haya,*



“The original position of the living entities is to be eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa because they are the Lord’s marginal energy and a manifestation simultaneously one and different from the Lord, like a molecular particle of sunshine or fire. Kṛṣṇa has three varieties of energy.”

Śrī Caitanya synthesized exclusive difference (*bheda*) and exclusive non-difference (*abheda*) in His *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. “Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavism advocates the middle path of monism in pluralism, identity in difference, unity in diversity. (...) The absolute and the relative, the one and the many, the order and the disorder, the cosmos and the chaos, have their relative roles to play. At the end all are bound together in the all-abiding, all-comprehensive perfect Being who runs as a thread through infinite parts, diverse personalities and interacting relations that constitute the universe as a whole (*mayi sarvaṁ idaṁ protaṁ, sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva, Bg 7.7*). It is the real philosophy of harmony and order since it does not brush aside disorder and disharmony, differences of parts and relations, as mere illusory appearances. (...) It is a philosophy of affirmation and not of negation. (...) This philosophy builds a solid bridge between man and divinity, between the relative and the Absolute, between the part and the whole.” (Bhowmick, 2003, pp. 14-15.)

Śrī Caitanya's *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* is the completion of the gradual development of full-fledged theism that started after the deviation from Veda in the beginning of Kali-yuga.

In the fifteenth chapter of the *Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma Māhātmya*, it is mentioned how Lord Caitanya confidentially appeared to Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya, Śaṅkarācārya and Viṣṇusvāmī⁹⁰ (see Appendix 2). He not only revealed His confidential form to them, but also their own confidential role in the gradual unfolding of full-fledged theism. He told Rāmānujācārya to preach *dāsyā-rasa*, worship of the Supreme Lord in servitude, and instructed Madhvācārya to carefully uproot all the false scriptures of the *māyāvādīs*. They were also told to not yet broadcast Lord Caitanya's upcoming glories, but keep them secret; they would be revealed during His advent (Bhaktivinoda 5, 1890, pp. 65-70). From this it can be understood that the interlinked essential purposes of various philosophies are confidential, and only understood by the graced devotees.

The interlinked purposes and coherent logic behind the various different cultures and religions can only be understood if we perceive the presence and work of the one Supreme Lord's will and potency over all time and circumstances. This is best achieved by understanding *acintya-bhedābheda*, the philosophy that can explain how the same Lord can act in various forms and ways simultaneously.

This philosophy enables those who are ready to give up sectarian envy to understand how all cultures, philosophies, sciences and religions are harmoniously interlinked for a higher universal purpose. Thus it is explained how *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* harmonizes the main four philosophies in one purpose. The four main philosophies are established by the Lord Himself and by His associates in order to give all people the chance to gradually approach the highest goal of human life, love of God, *kṛṣṇa-prema*. As other philosophies are subcategories of these four main philosophies, and as cultures and sciences are manifestations of certain philosophies or world-views, they are all included in this harmonization that allows one to perceive all philosophies and their manifestations in human conduct as part of the Lord's master plan. *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* is the ultimate unfolding of theism, and is therefore called full-fledged theism. It reconciles the seemingly conflicting states of *bheda* (distinction) and *abheda* (indistinction) in harmony.

In order to bring the boat of transcendence back on the proper course and check the wrong exclusive application of *abheda* of the *māyāvāda* philosophy, Madhvācārya strongly emphasized the proper employment of *bheda*, namely distinction from God in person. He felt obliged to neglect the aspect of *abheda* to some extent in order to avoid the application of its wrong exclusive aspect. Many devotee scholars have explained that the final fine-tuning and adjustment was done with the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* of Śrī Caitanya, which harmonized *bheda* and *abheda* by employing their proper aspects, namely distinction in person and union in quality and will. However, it must be understood that although it may appear to be so, the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is not a *new* speculation or synthesis between earlier doctrines as in the speculative inductive process – rather it is the essential direct explanation of Veda that is revealed in the descending process (Chapter 13 deals further with this topic). Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and has no need of philosophical speculation – He can present the essence of Veda straight as it is, because He has the complete and direct *darsana*, vision or philosophy. Therefore, His *darsana* is accepted as complete. However, because He appears in a covered Descent in order to be able to relish and teach the perfect position of a devotee, He does not obviously reveal His Godhood at large, but plays the role of a devotee who ascertains the truth by the Vedic descending process of knowledge, by hearing from self-realized devotees in disciplic succession. As such, if we want to properly understand the revelation (and not the invention) of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*, it is essential to have at least

⁹⁰ One should remember that Śrī Caitanya is an eternal form of Godhead, and not limited to time and space. Therefore, He can also appear to people before and after His physical presence on earth.

some basic understanding of the sublime transcendental Personality of Śrī Caitanya, and for this purpose the sixth chapter is presented to the interested reader with ample scriptural evidence.

The four main philosophies mentioned in this chapter have been explained using the example of their development in a certain historical period by their most prominent propounders. However, we should understand that there are not only various other propounders of these philosophies and their variations in other times, but also that these philosophies exist over all time as potential tendencies within the hearts of people. The actual target of Vedic science is not merely teaching the history of philosophy, but a factual transformation of the heart that allows complete God-realization and self-realization. To achieve this end, it can be helpful to study the illustrious manifestation of the four main philosophies and their harmonization by *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* in historic time. But then we must turn our vision inside and undergo a similar transformation of our own philosophy: We must transform our own mental tendencies and affinities to conform with the highest aspiration, the will of God. This internal harmonization with the actual center of creation, the will of God, is most scientifically advocated and enabled by Śrī Caitanya's philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* and the corresponding science of *bhakti* practiced by Śrī Caitanya's followers, the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas. The development of full-fledged theism is not restricted to a certain time or place. Essentially, it is an internal way of transformation.

The enrollment of full-fledged theism has been described earlier using the example of its development in the eastern world. A similar development was and is taking place in the western world. When religious principles are misused to amass money and power and to justify wars and crusades, then often atheistic counter-forces will reestablish non-violence. This was the case for instance when the corrupted part of the church misused their position to go on crusades to gain power and riches. Thousands of innocent people were brutally tortured and murdered and women were burnt alive. This was followed by rejection of the authority of the church through movements like the enlightenment. Many such counter-movements were atheistic or put more emphasis on social welfare and science than on religion. Secularism gained power. Although secularism and natural science are sometimes regarded as the enemies of religion, in a broader perspective they have a role in the reestablishment of pure religion, similar to Lord Buddha who preached atheism and reestablished non-violence. First, non-violence had to be learnt again, and only then, the authority of the Vedic scriptures were reestablished. Similarly, in the West, compared to times of torture and crusades, non-violence has increased during the rise of secular state systems that emphasize science and social welfare. Unlike a century ago, today, vegetarians are much more respected and not so much ridiculed anymore. After becoming non-violent to a certain degree, people are able to learn transcendental principles.

The West was introduced to Vedic thought when Hindus presented Vedic philosophy in a monistic way, like Swami Vivekananda did in his speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions at Chicago in 1893. Due to such monistic presentations of the Vedic culture, most people gained the wrong idea that the Vedic tradition is essentially monistic. The presence of monism in the West can also be seen in the popularity of Buddhism and New Age movements, which are philosophically close to monism. However, since monism does not hold that the absolute reality consists of a personal God but rather of a state of impersonal oneness (Brahman), this allowed tendentially agnostic or atheistic people to become interested in the Vedic literature. Prominent scientists like Erwin Schrödinger, Werner Heisenberg, Eugene Wigner and David Bohm studied Vedic literature such as the *Vedānta-sūtra*. The unified state of existence has close parallels with the perception of a unified state of matter as proposed by many quantum physicists. Although a unified state of matter exists according to the Vedic literatures, its exclusively non-dualistic interpretation can lead into various philosophical pitfalls (see Chapter 11.5). It is therefore important that people learn the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, which is the conclusion of Veda according to full-fledged theism. Full-fledged theism is taught in the West since approximately hundred years.

The full-fledged theistic science of the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas includes all benefits of previous philosophical achievements and further adds certain essential practices. One of the basic principle of Vedic science is *ahimsā*, non-violence, as it was reestablished by Lord Buddha. *ahimsā* is naturally included in the lifestyle of the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas. They are not only vegetarians, but they further offer all foodstuffs and meals to the Supreme Lord, and only accept His sanctified remnants. Actually, also plants have life, but if they are offered to the Supreme Lord, they benefit from this service and attain a more elevated form of life. The devotees also advance in *bhakti* by offering everything to Lord Kṛṣṇa, instead of having to undergo the reactions of *karma* (worldly action that results in material reactions). *karma* cannot be avoided unless it is transformed into *bhakti*, transcendental action.

Furthermore, actual *ahimsā* or non-violence is not merely the negation of things hostile to the soul. Actual *ahimsā* means helping others to enable the full manifestation of the original nature of the soul, the *sanātana-dharma*, *bhakti*. Therefore, actual non-violence is preaching *bhakti*. A doctor who can fight ten percent of our illnesses may be non-violent in some aspects, but only the doctor who can give us full health is non-violent in the true sense. Similarly, only the pure devotees who are able to give others their real eternal health of *bhakti* are non-violent in the true sense – not those who merely try to fight material violence or engage in mundane welfare. In the same way it is understood, that just as a doctor who does not give out medicine to the needy is violent, any person who knowingly is not giving *bhakti* to others, is violent, as *bhakti* is the actual and only medicine to uproot all material diseases.

Śrīla Bhakti Pramode Purī Mahārāja wrote: “Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura sternly declared that to be miserly in the preaching of devotional service is tantamount to violence against living entities (see purport on Cc 2.12.135).” (Purī, 1998, p. 4.) This, of course, is a high understanding of *ahimsā*. Veda also teaches *ahimsā* in the general sense of non-violence to all living entities. Once people are established in the basic principle of non-violence, they become qualified to study and understand the Vedic teachings. Śaṅkarācārya reestablished the *Vedas* as authority. Śrī Caitanya and His followers not only accept the *Vedas*, but they further practice their essential teachings as expressed in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and scientifically presented by Śrī Caitanya and His philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Śaṅkarācārya only explained the impersonal aspects of Godhead due to the circumstances during his presence. Later, during more favorable circumstances, Madhvācārya and similar theistic Ācāryas reestablished the personal form of God and *bhakti* as the eternal nature of the soul. Śrī Caitanya taught the same, and further, His teachings take His followers to the highest levels of *prema-bhakti*, namely serving the Supreme Lord in the transcendental relationships of close servitude, intimate friendship, parenthood and consorhood. This full-fledged theism, reestablished by Śrī Caitanya, is the most essential and universal philosophy, religion and science, because it directly manifests the essential transcendental nature of the soul. Like Madhvācārya, Śrī Caitanya also taught the practice of *bhakti*. However, He further propagated *kṛṣṇa-prema* as life’s ultimate goal: *bhagavān*—‘*sambandha*’, *bhakti*—‘*abhidheya*’ *haya*, *prema*—‘*prayojana*’, *vede tina-vastu kaya*,

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the main object
of all relationships, acting in devotional service to Him is one’s real
occupation, and the attainment of love of God is the ultimate goal of life. These
three subject matters are described in the Vedic literature.” – Cc 2.26.178.



“Never before was *bhakti* described as both the means and the end. Śrī Caitanya’s characterization of transcendental love as the supreme goal is the most important landmark in the history of philosophy and religion. According to Śrī Caitanya, the center of reality is love, not Godhead. Love is the center not only for the devotee, but also for God. Love governs both. Though Godhead is the embodiment of love itself, He has an ever-growing desire for love. Love is a gravitational force that works at two ends: it draws the devotee to Godhead and Godhead to the devotee.⁹¹”

According to Madhvācārya’s nine truths, truths number 7 and 8, the attainment of Lord Viṣṇu is the sole liberation, *mokṣa* or *mukṭi*, from material illusion (and as such the goal) for the conditioned souls, and pure worship of Viṣṇu is the cause of their liberation (Bhaktisiddhanta 2, 1928, p. 143)⁹². However, according to Śrī Caitanya, the attainment of the highest stage of *bhakti*, *prema-bhakti*, is in itself already the goal and highest liberation. The aspired state is not the attainment of Godhead and *mukṭi*, but pure loving devotional service to God. Although *bhakti* leads to liberation, we should never see *bhakti* as a means to attain liberation, because by doing so, we are deprived from attaining the highest stage of *bhakti*, which is *prema-bhakti*, unalloyed pure loving devotional service to God. *prema-bhakti* is offered exclusively for the pleasure of God, and is thus by nature the goal in itself. Anything that is absolute and transcendental must be from, by, and for itself. Therefore, the fact that *mukṭi* can be achieved by *bhakti*, but *bhakti* can only be achieved by *bhakti*, establishes *bhakti* as supreme. The Supreme Lord can only be understood by *bhakti* (Bg 18.55) and *bhakti* can only be gotten by *bhakti*. This means that only those who practice pure *bhakti* exclusively for the sake of *bhakti* can fully realize God. This very essential teaching was most emphatically taught by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

During His journey through South India, a *tattvavādī* Ācārya of the school of Madhvācārya told Śrī Caitanya, that the attainment of *mukṭi* by proper conduct was the aim of life (Cc 2.9.257). Thereafter Śrī Caitanya defeated the aspiration for *mukṭi* and established *bhakti* as the chief goal of human life. He quoted *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.29.13, where the Lord states that even when being offered, the pure devotees never accept the five types of liberation without service to Him. The *tattvavādī* Ācārya agreed with Śrī Caitanya’s teachings, but said that they will nevertheless continue to follow what Madhvācārya had established as the formula of practice. Śrī Caitanya mentioned at the end of the discussion, that He appreciates one good qualification in their school of thought,

⁹¹ Kapoor 2, 1995. Dr. O. B. L. Kapoor aka Ādikeśava Dāsa, D. Litt. Professor of Indian Philosophy, was a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

⁹² This should be seen in the proper light of the main purpose of the appearance of Madhvācārya, namely to defeat *māyāvāda*, that falsely holds that liberation means merging into the impersonal Brahman, and *bhakti* is a means for that end. Madhvācārya fulfilled this great task and is thus celebrated by all Vaiṣṇavas.

namely that they accept the transcendental form of the Supreme Lord as eternal truth, and not as illusory as the *māyāvādīs* do (*Cc* 2.9.277). The superiority of the aspiration for pure *bhakti* to that of *mukti* is very important to understand. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu established this by quoting the famous *ātmārāma* verse, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.7.10 (quoted in *Cc* 2.6.182, 2.24.5, 2.25.159): *ātmārāmās ca munayo, nirgranthā apy urukrame, kurvanty ahaitukīm bhaktim, ittham-bhūta-guṇo hariḥ,*

“Those sages who are self-satisfied and liberated from all material sufferings are still attracted to the causeless loving service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose transcendental qualities are wonderful.”

Pure *bhakti* starts after the attainment of *mukti*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā, na śocati na kāṅkṣati, samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu, mad-bhaktim labhate parām,*

“One who attains liberation by realizing the Supreme Brahman becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything material. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me.” – *Bg* 18.54.

The Supreme Lord further says: *mat-sevayā pratītam te, sālokyādi-catuṣṭayam, necchanti sevayā pūrṇāḥ, kuto 'nyat kāla-viplutam,*

“My devotees, who are always fully satisfied to be engaged in My loving service, do not have the slightest interest even in the four principles of liberation – however, these are automatically achieved by their service. What then is to be said of other material desires that perish in due course of time?” – *SB* 9.4.67.

Thus it is understood that *mukti* is already included in pure *bhakti*. Even though one attains material liberation by the practice of *bhakti*, “liberation is a mere by-product of *bhakti*.” (Bhaktivinode 1, 1993. *Jaiva-dharma*, Chapter 6.) Many people think that *mukti* is eternal, but it is merely the removal of the material cause of bondage. *mukti* is a non-eternal happening, not an activity, whereas *bhakti* is the eternal activity of the pure soul. *bhakti* can be practiced before, during and after *mukti* is attained. Essentialists strive exclusively for the eternal activity of the soul. As explained, pure *bhakti* (in contrast to mixed *bhakti*) only starts after *mukti*, liberation from material inclinations. *mukti* is the elimination of unwanted material tendencies and their consequences. Before attaining *mukti*, the soul is in an indebted state. When we achieve *mukti*, we are freed from debts – from minus to zero. But only if we engage in *bhakti*, will we gain something positive, will there be a plus. Pure *bhakti* must be practiced with the realization that it is in itself already the goal – else it is not pure, but mixed, or conditioned. Conditioned *bhakti* is done for some ulterior purpose such as material upliftment or liberation, but unmixed, unalloyed, unconditioned, pure *bhakti*, true *bhakti*, is in itself the goal. As expressed in various ways and places in this book, all schools of thought, religious, philosophical, scientific, etc., are ultimately manifestations of the one eternal nature of *bhakti* of the soul, the *sanātana-dharma*. According to the respective stage and nature of material conditioning, people are automatically put into the school of thought that suits them best. Therefore, it is never the intention of the Vaiṣṇavas to find faults with other schools of thought per se; they merely reveal the essence for those who are interested. Madhvācārya’s school has liberation by attainment of God as its goal, and this is the common ground of most religions. Therefore, they all share one category in the present simplified categorization; the category of dualistic theism.

Śrī Caitanya's school of thought of full-fledged theism is the only school that strictly and scientifically advocates exclusively the attainment of love of God as the sole worthy goal of life, being the soul's original eternal nature.

It is thus distinguished from dualistic theism. We should always keep in mind, however, that any categorization actually evaluates people's internal motives, and not the group or school of thought to which they are related externally. For example, some devotees may externally belong to one of the schools of dualistic theism such as Christianity or Islam, but by the practice of *bhakti*, they may internally have attained the stage of pure *bhakti*, which corresponds to full-fledged theism. Or some devotees may externally be associated with the devotees of Śrī Caitanya, but internally still desire liberation or material enjoyment, and thus their *bhakti* corresponds to that of various schools of dualistic theism. We cannot see the internal motives of others. We must frankly judge our own motives. If we externally express our so-called 'love' for others by presenting them fancy gifts while internally expecting profit, then this is not real love; rather it is camouflaged business. The Vedic scriptures declare that there is no real love without pure love of God, who is the actual worthy receiver and reciprocator of pure love. The actual truth of proverbs like "Love is its own reward" cannot be realized in the conditioned material realm, but only in relation to the only worthy objects and reciprocators of pure love, God and His associates. So-called love in material relationships is impure due to a false focus and due to being camouflaged business. An illustrative exposing of pseudo-love or conditioned love is found on popular T-shirts nowadays in the form of the slogan: "I'm Not Paid Enough To Be Nice To You!"

Lord Kṛṣṇa says that so-called 'friends' who show affection for each other only to benefit themselves are actually selfish and not true friends; only those who devotedly serve even those who fail to reciprocate with them are true well-wishers (*SB* 10.32.17-18). In the material world, so-called 'love' is only given when a return is expected. But that is love of return, not love of person, and love of return is not actual love, but business. In business, when profit is not expected anymore, the relationship is dropped. When one's husband or wife cannot satisfy one's expectations anymore, there is disappointment or even divorce. This is business, not love. The term 'conditioned love' is actually in itself contradictory as true love is never conditioned. We may speak in terms of 'conditioned service' as in business. Unconditional service is the sole expression of love. Love of God, *kṛṣṇa-prema*, is expressed in *prema-bhakti*, pure unalloyed loving devotional service. The essential scripture of pure *bhakti*, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, defines pure *bhakti* with the words *nirguṇasya*, free from material motives and qualities, *ahaitukī*, not conditioned by selfish motives, not even liberation, *avyavahitā*, uninterrupted by anything, and *puruṣottame*, done for the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*lakṣaṇaṁ bhakti-yogasya, nirguṇasya hy udāhṛtam, ahaituky avyavahitā, yā bhaktiḥ puruṣottame, SB* 3.29.12). *bhakti* is generally referred to as devotional service that includes all stages of *bhakti*, from mixed stages to the pure stage. Śrī Caitanya stressed the conduct of pure *bhakti* or *prema-bhakti*. This establishes the need to distinguish between *prema-bhakti* and mixed *bhakti*. An aspiring devotee of Śrī Caitanya's school of thought may not yet be on the level of *prema-bhakti*, but unlike practitioners of many other schools, his ultimate goal and permanent focus in all practices is *prema-bhakti*, and thus his chances to reach this ultimate goal are the best.

Since *bhakti* is the means as well as the goal, taking to our eternal nature of *bhakti* is in itself liberation. In the general sense, liberation means cessation of material miseries, but more positively, liberation means that the means and the goal become one, and this is only the case if we practice *bhakti*. Then we are no more doing one thing in order to achieve another thing; there are no more half-hearted actions, but every action is in itself already the goal. This means the cessation of all corruption, selfish business, hypocrisy and compromises⁹³. There is a proverb that goes "Work to

⁹³ There are various material attempts to fight corruption in universities, business and government, but the only solution of corruption is *bhakti*, complete dedication to the only fully common centre, Godhead. Without *bhakti*, every action is aimed at the satisfaction of the self or the various (economic, social, national, etc) parties of one's material relations, but not the complete whole, and thus there will always remain corruption in preference of one party over another.

live – don't live to work!" This may sound good, but there is something better: "Don't work to live – live to live!" We should whatever we do – including working – not in the spirit of material work, in which the action is different from the goal, but do everything in the spirit of permanent fulfillment. This is only possible if all of our activities are fully dedicated to fulfilling the Lord's desire, because by that, we will achieve fulfillment through the Lord's satisfaction in all of our activities. Such fulfillment can be achieved by the practice of *bhakti* with an understanding of the corresponding philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, which aims at an individual and universal harmonization with the Lord's will. Then only, the way and the action become themselves the goal. An example is given in the advice of Lord Kṛṣṇa: "Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform – do that, O son of Kuntī, as an offering to Me." (*Bg* 9.27.) People should act according to their natures for the pleasure of Lord Kṛṣṇa – then whatever they do, be it singing, teaching, studying, working or painting, becomes the goal in itself.

Those who have attained *bhakti* to Lord Kṛṣṇa,
who is also called Mukunda, the bestower of *mukti*,
are not attracted to material activities or *mukti* anymore;
yet they are still attracted to *bhakti*, to serving Lord Kṛṣṇa.
Pure *bhakti*, to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa unconditionally, is the
highest aspiration, even higher than the association of Kṛṣṇa.

This becomes evident in the mood of worship of the *gopīs* as taught by Śrī Caitanya, for example in the fourth and eighth verses of His *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka*, where He states that He only desires unconditional *bhakti* life after life, and that even if Kṛṣṇa does not give His association, He will still remain the Lord of His heart (Caitanya, 1486-1534). Śrī Caitanya, in the mood of the greatest devotee, the *gopī* Rādhārāṇī, proclaims: *kānta-sevā-sukha-pūra, saṅgama haite sumadhura*,

"Service to My beloved Lord is satisfying all desires for happiness
and is even sweeter than direct union with Him." – *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 3.20.60.

The genuineness of their selfless mood of service was proven when the *gopīs* continued to internally serve Kṛṣṇa during times of separation. "(...) the despondency which arises from the feelings of separation for Kṛṣṇa is the best proof of the desire to bring pleasure to His senses." (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, quoted from Tirtha 1, 2001.) A servant may have to leave the physical association of his master in order to serve his master, for example when he goes to the market. If he would renounce his service of going to the market to be able to stay with his master, his master would become hungry and displeased.

Other things are sometimes to be given up for service,
but service is never to be given up – all must be serving service.
This principle establishes the superiority of *bhakti*.

Devotional service to God, *bhakti*, is Lord Kṛṣṇa's internal pleasure potency (*hlādinī-śakti*), and Her essential personification is Rādhārāṇī, the eternal consort of Kṛṣṇa, who is also called Bhakti Devī, the Goddess of *bhakti*, or Sāra Devī, the Goddess of Kṛṣṇa's very essence. Kṛṣṇa's essence is naturally most essential. *hari-bhakti mahā-devyāḥ sarva muktyādi-siddhayaḥ, bhuktyaś-cādbhutas tasya cetika-vādanu-vrahā* (*Brs* 1.1.34, quoted from *Śrī Nārada-Pāñcarātra*),

"Hari-bhakti, Rādhārāṇī, is the Supreme Goddess, and all other
accomplishments, including impersonal liberation, mystic perfections, and
wondrous material pleasures, are handmaids attending Her attentively."

Rādhārāṇī is in one sense superior to Kṛṣṇa, and in stating this, one is not belittling Kṛṣṇa, but rather increasing His glory. If one praises a man's manifestations of his essential energy such as his child, he is more pleased than if one praises him directly, and only if his child is more successful

than him, he is completely happy. In the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava concept of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship in *mādhurya*, sweetness, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's internal potency, Rādhārāṇī, is given preeminence so She can serve Kṛṣṇa without limits. Rādhārāṇī sometimes seems to act against the will of Kṛṣṇa, for example when She becomes sulky due to His transcendental mischief and refuses to meet Him. On the other hand, in the worship of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa in *aiśvarya* (majesty), Lord Nārāyaṇa's potency Lakṣmī is always subordinate and never acts against Her husband's will. Of course we must understand, that Rādhārāṇī only acts 'against' the will of Kṛṣṇa to increase Their transcendental love. Therefore, She actually serves His essential will; yet this requires more freedom than in *aiśvarya*. Approaching the Supreme Lord in *aiśvarya-jñāna*, reverential conception of worship, allows only majestic *śānta-rasa* (neutral relation), majestic *dāsyā-rasa*, (servitor relationship) and majestic *sakhyā-rasa* (friend relationship), as one feels oneself extremely submissive. *mādhurya-jñāna*, the sweet conception of worship that manifests in the service to Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa beyond the opulent majesty of Lord Viṣṇu, allows more familiar and intimate relationships to God due to the subsidence of majesty. These are sweet and intimate *śānta-*, *dāsyā-*, and *sakhyā-rasa*, and further *vatsalyā-rasa* (parent relationship) and *mādhurya-rasa*⁹⁴ (consort relationship).

Only when devotion is allowed to accommodate all *rasas*, delightful loving relationships with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *sanātana-dharma*, the soul's eternal nature, can fully manifest. Theism in this stage is called full-fledged theism⁹⁵. It was Śrī Caitanya, the *pūrṇa-avatāra* or full Avatāra of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who disclosed full-fledged theism, and His followers, the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas further propagated it. The Vaiṣṇava scholar Steven Rosen offers some deeper insights about the term 'Gauḍīya'. The term 'Gauḍīya' refers to the region where Śrī Caitanya imparted His teachings, namely what was then called Gauḍa or Gauḍadeśa. Gauḍadeśa included Kashmir, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Bengal. The capital of Gauḍa was Gauḍapura (now known as Māyāpura), where Śrī Caitanya appeared. Some scholars argue that the term 'Gauḍīya' is not appropriate for a transcendental tradition without material connection, and they prefer terms like 'Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism'. Addressing this objection, other scholars have pointed out that besides the material Gauḍa, there is the spiritual Gauḍa maṇḍala, the 'sacred place' of Śrī Caitanya's pastimes. This conception is reinforced by the etymology of the word 'Gauḍīya', for the primary noun, *gauḍa* (anglicized as *gur*), which literally refers to molasses or sweetness, can be extended to the adjective *gauḍa*, the name of the country associated with Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavism. The speciality of Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavism is that it emphasizes *mādhurya-jñāna*, the sweet conception of worship that manifests in the service to Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in one of the five earlier mentioned *rasas*. "A real Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava, then, is not one who merely lives *in* Gauḍa, but one who lives *for* *gauḍa*: one who lives for the sweetness associated with the love and worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa." (Rosen 3, 1992, p. *iii*.) Śrī Caitanya is celebrated for having made this sweet treasure accessible to the people in general:

*anarpita-carīm cirāt karuṇayāvatīrṇaḥ kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasām sva-bhakti-śriyam
hariḥ purāṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandīpitaḥ
sadā hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ śacī-nandanah*

⁹⁴ *mādhurya-rasa* should not be confused with earlier mentioned *mādhurya-jñāna*. Those who serve in *mādhurya-jñāna*, the sweet conception of worship, can, but must not be situated in *mādhurya-rasa*, consort relationship.

⁹⁵ The term full-fledged theism was often used by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura to define the teaching of Śrī Caitanya. This was told for example by Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja's on July 25th 1983 (Śrīdhara 7). Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura mentions in his *Notes On The Bhāgavata*, Part 2: "The worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only full-fledged, unadulterated function of all souls – the only complete theistic worship. All other forms of worship represent the infinity of gradations of approach towards this complete worship. Pure theism, involving the active reciprocal relationship of the soul with the Divinity, does not begin until there is actual realization of the transcendental personality of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The degree of this realization corresponds to that of the loving aptitude of His worshiper."

“May Lord Caitanya, the transcendental son of Śrīmatī Śacī Devī, become manifest in the innermost chamber of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has appeared in the age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what no Avatāra has ever offered before: The most sublime and radiant mellow of devotional service, the sweet mellow of conjugal love of God.” – Cc 1.1.4.

Śrī Caitanya opened up the treasure house of all varieties of transcendental relationships with Godhead. By the practice of *saṅkīrtana*, the universal process of transcendence in the present age, He aspired to make the whole world dance in spiritual ecstasy, realizing the four relationships⁹⁶ of loving devotional service (Cc 1.3.19). Śrī Caitanya was the first to introduce the worship of Kṛṣṇa along with Rādhārāṇī and the worship in the consort relationship⁹⁷. Prof. Sanyal wrote: “Śrī Madhva did not teach the service of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, which was preached and practiced by Nimāi Paṇḍit [Śrī Caitanya].” (Sanyal, 1933, Vol II, Chapter 23.) Dr. Deadwyler mentioned: “(...) The worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa together (...) will not be found in Madhva’s works. The Madhvides worship Nārāyaṇa, and they generally do not worship Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa either – just Nārāyaṇa alone.” (Rosen 3, 1992, p. 139.) The Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas not only worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa along with His internal potency, Rādhārāṇī, but moreover, Rādhārāṇī is given preeminence so She can serve Kṛṣṇa without limits. In the majestic worship of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Lakṣmī remains subordinate. Śrīla Madhvācārya mentioned in his *Gītā-tatpārya*, Chapter 14, text 5: “The multifarious energies of the Supreme Lord (...) are attracted by Lord Hari and thus under His full control. But Lord Hari is not under their control. Although these energies are unlimitedly inferior to Lord Hari in terms of power, knowledge, bliss, and other qualities, by His mercy they are always free from faults and are endowed with knowledge and bliss.” (Bhaktisiddhanta 2, 1928, p. 156.)

In the general spiritual consideration, the Lord’s energy is always subordinate to the energetic Lord, and thus Madhvācārya’s statement holds true in this perspective of the *tattvavādis*. But there is another consideration, in which the internal potency of the Lord – exclusively in order to be able to serve Him to the fullest extent – becomes more powerful than the Lord. This is the consideration of the transcendental pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa (see Chapter 13, Chart 1 for an explanation of the different considerations). *yoga-māyā*, an expansion of the internal potency, carries out the service to make all arrangements of Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental pastimes beyond His knowledge. *yoga-māyā* is also the potency that puts Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His eternal associates into the divine ‘illusion’ of forgetting His majestic Godhood, omniscience and omnipotence to a great extent, in order for them to be able to enjoy transcendental sweet pastimes beyond the formal limitations of majesty (see Chapter 5.7). The preeminence given to Rādhārāṇī in the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava concept is thus scientifically established and not merely a religious sentiment. Because Kṛṣṇa’s desires are best served by Rādhārāṇī, those who primarily love and serve Rādhārāṇī also satisfy Kṛṣṇa to the greatest extent.

“Caitanya Mahāprabhu revealed *bhāvollasa-rati*, or that state wherein one’s love for Rādhārāṇī supersedes one’s love for Kṛṣṇa⁹⁸.”

⁹⁶ *dāsyā-*, *sakya-*, *vatsalya-*, and *mādhurya-rasa*.

⁹⁷ Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, of whom Śrī Caitanya was granddisciple, had earlier promoted the worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa together as well as devotional service based on conjugal relations (see Cc 2.9.289 resp. Cb 1.9.154, purport by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura). However, just as Rāmānanda Rāya admitted, that although he was speaking about the highest teachings of devotion, it was actually Śrī Caitanya who spoke through him, similarly, it was actually Śrī Caitanya who started the conjugal worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa through Mādhavendra Purī, and then took initiation in his line, in order to relish being a devotee of a most exalted Ācārya, as well as to give the ultimate example for humanity to accept a spiritual master of the highest order coming in the most essential disciplic succession. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (1.9.6-11) explains, that Śrī Caitanya is Himself the tree of transcendental love of Kṛṣṇa, its gardener and also the bestower and enjoyer of its fruits. The seed of that tree first sprouted in Mādhavendra Purī, was further cultivated in the form of Śrī Īśvara Purī, his disciple, and Śrī Caitanya, who took initiation from Śrī Īśvara Purī, is considered the tree’s trunk.

⁹⁸ (Rosen, 2003). Referring to *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 2.5.128 of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī (Rūpa, 16th century, p. 345).

Śrī Caitanya is Himself the best proof of the supremacy of Rādhārāṇī, because He is Kṛṣṇa who covets the position of Rādhārāṇī, having realized Her unparalleled exaltedness (see Cc 1.1.6). Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches the supremacy of Rādhārāṇī in His form of Śrī Caitanya. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 1.4.95 mentions: *jagat-mohana kṛṣṇa, tāñhāra mohinī, ataeva samastera parā ṭhākuraṇī*

“Lord Kṛṣṇa enchants the world,
but Śrī Rādhā enchants even Him.
Therefore, She is the Supreme Goddess of all.”

If one is controlled by anything, one is usually not considered free. But there is one exception; if one is controlled by one’s own will. Everything happens in accordance with the Supreme Lord’s divine will (*tasmād idam daiva-tantram*, SB 1.9.17). The *śakti*, power or energy, dedicated exclusively to executing the Supreme Lord’s divine will, is personified in Rādhārāṇī. Kṛṣṇa’s ultimate intention is to engage in *rasa*, relishable loving relationships (*raso vai saḥ*, *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.7.1), and Rādhārāṇī provides Him with varieties of delightful *rasas*. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa’s being controlled by Rādhārāṇī and Her expansions such as *yoga-māyā* does not indicate His independence; rather it proves His absolute freedom. The superficial onlooker may claim that Kṛṣṇa’s nature of being controlled by the love of Rādhārāṇī shows that He is not the Supreme Lord; but the essentialist who understands the ontological position of Rādhārāṇī as well as above explained law of freedom accepts this nature as a proof of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s ultimate freedom as the Supreme Lord. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself admits: *aham bhakta-parādhīno*, “I am completely under the control of My pure devotees.” – SB 9.4.63. Prof. Sanyal mentions: “Godhead is One but His powers are many and various and He can exercise all those powers in the way that He likes. This distinction between the Will of Godhead and the Power of Godhead, should be clearly grasped. The Will of Godhead constitutes His distinctive and specific personality. It is not delegated. But the Power [*śakti*, ultimately Rādhārāṇī] Who is subordinate to the Will, is capable of delegation by the Will of Godhead. Godhead alone possesses an absolutely independent Will to Whom everything is subordinate. The wills with which other beings are endowed, are more or less limited in their effectiveness; that is to say, they are controlled, as regards their effective exercise in the shape of exerting power, by the Will of Godhead. (...) The tendency is free but its issue is strictly controlled. There is no such gap between the Will [Kṛṣṇa’s personality] and the Power [His energy that serves His will, Rādhārāṇī] to act, in Godhead. In Him alone the two are identical but yet not the same.” (Sanyal, 1933, Vol I, Chapter 9.)

Since everything ultimately happens according to the Lord’s will, it is only possible to completely fulfill our own will by serving the Lord’s will. Only by serving the Lord’s transcendental will, will our own *true* transcendental desires be awakened and fulfilled. We cannot know our own transcendental desires without serving the transcendental Lord, because they only exist in relation to Him. Union with the Lord’s will as advocated by *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* is best achieved by serving the greatest servant of Kṛṣṇa’s will, Rādhārāṇī. Even Kṛṣṇa Himself is best served by fulfilling the desires of Rādhārāṇī, since Rādhārāṇī exists exclusively to bring Kṛṣṇa the greatest joys. “All the desires of Lord Kṛṣṇa rest in Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and She fulfills all His desires.” – Cc 1.93-94 (explaining the verse of the *Bṛhad-gautamīya-tantra* quoted below). Rādhārāṇī’s very name means ‘the Queen of worship of Kṛṣṇa’. *rāṇī* means Queen, and *rādhā* is the brief form of *ārādhika*, female worshiper, from *ārādhana*, worship. We should carefully understand, that by worshiping Rādhārāṇī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not worshiping an ordinary cowherd-girl. “Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is the eternally coupled Divine Pair, Śrī Rādhā being the predominated, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa the predominating aspect, indissolubly joined together, of the complete, active, Absolute Personality.” (Sanyal, 1933, Vol I, Chapter 4.) By worshiping Rādhārāṇī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is actually honoring His very own internal essence, which is non-different from Him, and manifests externally as His Absolute Counterpart and serving potency. For this reason it is very important to understand the Supreme Lord’s *acintya-bhedābheda* nature, how He is simultaneously distinct and non-distinct from Rādhārāṇī and His other energies:

*rādhā kṛṣṇa-praṇaya-vikṛtir hlādinī śaktir asmād
ekātmānāv api bhuvī purā deha-bhedam gatau tau
caitanyākhyam prakāṣam adhunā tad-dvayam caikyam āptam
rādhā-bhāva-dyuti-suvalitam naumi kṛṣṇa-svarūpam*



“Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is Kṛṣṇa’s internal pleasure-giving potency and the embodiment of the transformation of His intimate love. Although Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are one in Their identity, They separated Themselves eternally. Now these two transcendental identities have again united in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. I bow down to Him, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself, adorned with the sentiment and complexion of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.” – *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 1.1.5.

*devī kṛṣṇa-mayī proktā, rādhikā para-devatā
sarva-lakṣmī-may, sarva-kāntiḥ sammohinī parā*

“The transcendental Goddess Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the direct counterpart of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, fulfilling all His desires. She is non-different from Him. She is most worshipable. She is the central figure for all the goddesses of fortune. She possesses all the attractiveness to attract the all-attractive Personality of Godhead. She is the primeval internal potency of the Lord.” – *Bṛhad-gautamīya-tantra*, quoted in *Cc* 1.4.84.

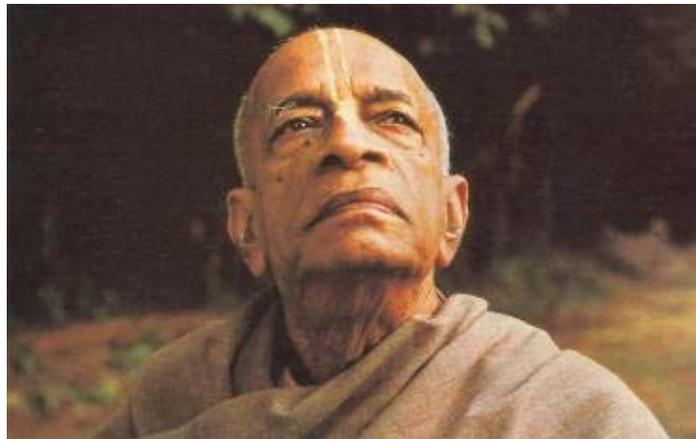
*rādhā—pūrṇa-śakti, kṛṣṇa—pūrṇa-śaktimān
dui vastu bheda nāi, śāstra-paramāṇa
mṛgamada, tāra gandha—yaiche aviccheda
agni, jvālāte—yaiche kabhu nāhi bheda
rādhā-kṛṣṇa aiche sadā eka-i svarūpa
līlā-rasa āsvādite dhare dui-rūpa*

“Śrī Rādhā is the full power or complete energy and Lord Kṛṣṇa is the possessor of full power. The Two are not different, as evidenced by the revealed scriptures. They are indeed the same, just as musk and its scent are inseparable, or as fire and its heat are non-different. Thus Rādhā and Lord Kṛṣṇa are one, yet They have taken two forms to enjoy the mellows of pastimes.” – *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 1.4.96-98.

The transcendental realm is complete in all respects, and every part of it is also complete in itself (see invocation of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*). In the transcendental conception, everything is personal, never impersonal, because nothing can be complete without personality, an essential aspect of reality. The flute of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His ornaments are all His devotees. The ultimate essence of love of God is also a transcendental Person, namely Rādhārāṇī (*mahābhāva-svarūpā śrī-rādhā-thākuraṇī*, Cc 1.4.69). Rādhārāṇī is the ultimate Executress of Kṛṣṇa's will, since it is Kṛṣṇa's essential will to engage in various relationships of transcendental love. Rādhārāṇī personally serves Kṛṣṇa to His fullest satisfaction, and further expands into multiple other personalities and manifestations to serve Kṛṣṇa in an unlimited variety of ways. As such, anyone whose love of God matures, will at one point realize, that the ultimate essence of love of God is personified in Rādhārāṇī. He will then realize, that serving Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of Rādhārāṇī, or simply serving Rādhārāṇī, is above directly serving Kṛṣṇa, because She knows best how to please Kṛṣṇa. If at all one should serve Kṛṣṇa directly, then only by the order of Rādhārāṇī.

Serving Kṛṣṇa with love essentially translates into
serving Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of Rādhārāṇī.

Rādhārāṇī again is not approached and served directly, but through Her own various manifestations, especially Her close associates, Her *gopī* friends. Kṛṣṇa can only be served by transcendental love, and nothing else. Therefore, anyone who wants to truly serve God will ultimately serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa by serving Rādhārāṇī under the guidance of Her associates, who are all transcendental love personified. They are complete parts of the complete transcendental energy, the *pūrṇa-sakti*. Some of these associates and servants of Rādhārāṇī are present on earth as self-realized spiritual masters coming in a bona fide disciplic succession from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. As such, taking shelter of such a Guru is not only the means to attain love for and service to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, but also the goal in itself. These truths are the gist of Vedic science; they must not be believed blindly as may be the case with dogmatic doctrines, but they should be realized scientifically, both internally and externally. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda comments on the above quoted verse (*rādhā kṛṣṇa-praṇaya-vikṛtir hlādinī śaktir asmād*, Cc 1.1.5) as follows: "The two transcendental entities Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are a puzzle presentation to the mundane people. The above description of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa by Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī is a nutshell explanation of the two and it requires a great spiritual talent to understand the mystery of these two Personalities. (...) Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the potent factor and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the internal potency. According to *Vedānta* philosophy there is no difference between the potent and potency and both of them are identical. We cannot differentiate one from the other as much as we can separate fire from heat. Everything in the Absolute is inconceivable in relative [material] existence. In relative cognizance it is very difficult to assimilate this truth of oneness between the Potent and Potency.



“The philosophy of inconceivable oneness and difference
propounded by Lord Caitanya is the only source of
understanding in such intricacy of transcendence.

“Rādhārāṇī is the internal potency of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and She is eternally intensifying the pleasure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Impersonalists cannot understand this without the help of a *mahā-bhāgavata* [topmost] devotee. Rādhā – the very name suggests that She is eternally the topmost Mistress of comforts to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. As such She is the medium of transmitting the living entity’s loving service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In Vṛndāvana, the devotees therefore seek the mercy of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in order to be recognised as a living servitor of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Rādhārāṇī supplies the necessary strength of service for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu approaches the fallen conditioned souls of the iron age [the present Kali-yuga] in Person to deliver the highest principle of transcendental relationship with the Lord.” (Vb, pre-1967. Essays on Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta 1.4.)

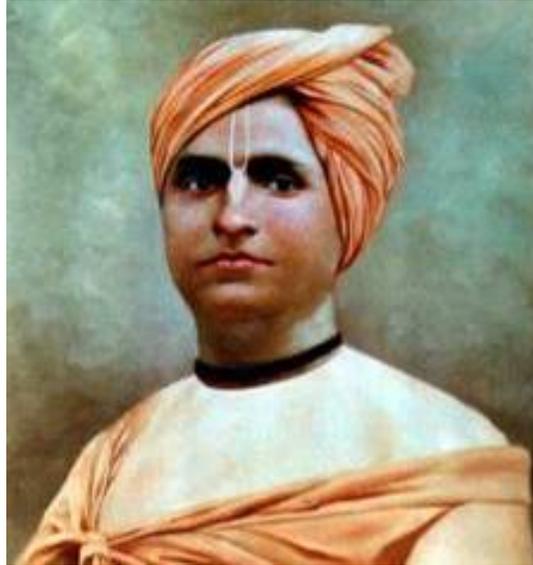
The following paragraphs, which conclude this chapter, are the words of Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja (1895-1988):

“Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that the basis of reality is *acintya-bhedābheda*, bipolarity. Everywhere there is something common and something different. Whatever opposing points you may discuss will have something common, and something different. Nothing is quite the same as anything else. And above all, the infinite is not within your fist. It is inconceivable. The unified and differentiated character of reality is inconceivable; its secret is in the hand of the Supreme. It does not depend upon your whim. Still, that differentiated character of the Absolute will be seen differently according to the subjective relationship we have with Him.

“An example of this is found in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.43.17): *mallānām aśanir nṛṇām nara-varaḥ strīṇām smaro mūrtimān, gopānām sva-jano 'satām kṣīti-bhujām śāstā sva-pitroḥ śisuh, mṛtyur bhoja-pater virād aviduṣām tattvaṁ paraṁ yoginām, vṛṣṇinām para-devateti vidito raṅgam gataḥ sāgrajaḥ*, ‘When Lord Kṛṣṇa, accompanied by Baladeva, entered Kāmsa’s wrestling arena, He appeared to the spectators in different ways. Everyone viewed Him according to their own relationship (*rasa*) with Him. To the wrestlers He appeared as a lightning bolt. To the people in general He appeared as the most beautiful personality. To the ladies, He appeared to be the most attractive young man, Cupid personified, and thus increased their lust. The cowherd men looked upon Kṛṣṇa as their own kinsman coming from the same village of Vṛndāvana. The kings who were present there saw Him as the most powerful ruler. His parents Nanda and Yaśodā saw Him as their most beloved child. Kāmsa, the king of the Bhoja dynasty, saw Him as death personified. The worldly-minded saw Him as the Universal Form; the unintelligent saw Him as incapable, and to the yogīs, He appeared to be the Supersoul. To the members of the Vṛṣṇi dynasty, He appeared to be their most celebrated descendant.’

“When Kṛṣṇa entered the arena, everyone saw Him in their own way. In this way we can understand how He satisfies everyone. When Yaśodā sees Him, she says, ‘My boy!’ But the gopīs see a grown-up – not a child. His friends see Him as one of their playmates. Kṛṣṇa satisfies everyone. Even the animals in Vṛndāvana become ecstatic when they come in connection with Kṛṣṇa.

“*barhāpīḍam naṭa-vara-vapuḥ karṇayoḥ karṇikāram, bibhrad vāsaḥ kanaka-kapīṣam vaijyantīm ca mālām, randhrān veṇor adhara-sudhayāpūrayan gopa-vṛndair, vṛndāraṇyam sva-pada-ramaṇam prāviśad gīta-kīrtiḥ* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.21.5), ‘While the gopīs were describing the sweet vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s flute, they also remembered their pastimes with Him; thus their minds became enchanted, and they were unable to describe completely the beautiful vibrations. While discussing the transcendental vibration, they remembered also how Kṛṣṇa dressed, decorated with a peacock feather on his head, just like a dancing actor, and with blue flowers pushed over his ear. His garment glowed yellow-gold, and he was garlanded with a *vaijyantī* garland made of *tulasī*, *kunda*, *mandāra*, *pārijāta*, and lotus flowers. Dressed in such an attractive way, Kṛṣṇa filled up the holes of His flute with the nectar emanating from his lips. So they remembered Him, entering the forest of Vṛndāvana, whose soil experiences the pleasure of consortherhood upon being embraced by the touch of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.’



“Kṛṣṇa consciousness means full-fledged theism, up to consorthood. All conceptions of fulfillment are found there in their purest and most desirable position.

“This material world, however, is only a shadow, a black imitation of reality. Full-fledged theism means Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In the full-fledged conception of theism, the infinite embraces the whole of the finite. It comes down to completely embrace and welcome the finite. This kind of full-fledged theism is found in Vṛndāvana. There, one negligible part of the finite may find the bliss of the embrace of the whole of the infinite. In Vṛndāvana, not a corner of the finite is left unfulfilled; every particle of sand and every creeper is well-represented there, with complete personality in the loving pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Here in this material world, however, a particle of sand is nothing; it is ignored. But there, everything is well-attended. In Vṛndāvana there is no ignorance.

“No interest of anything is ignored there; everything is harmonized, and therefore the conception of Vṛndāvana in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the highest conception of full-fledged theism.

“*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says, ‘Whenever Kṛṣṇa sets His lotus feet within Vṛndāvana, the earth personified says, ‘My fate is fulfilled, I have achieved my highest fortune.’ In Vṛndāvana, the earth, the very dust, feels the pleasure of the highest type of conjugal love merely by the touch of His lotus feet. Wherever Kṛṣṇa puts His footsteps, the earth’s joy knows no bounds. By His touch, the earth feels the most intense type of ecstasy. In Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa is *mādhurya*, sweetness personified. He is *ānanda*, ecstasy personified. And Kṛṣṇa responds to our own inner demands in every way. The Supreme Center has the peculiar capacity of responding to all our needs and satisfying the thirst of all existence. According to their capacity, rank, and dignity Kṛṣṇa distributes to all souls the juice from the sweet sea of transcendental mellow, *yo yaṁ śraddhā sa eva saḥ*. One can taste the sugar candy sweetness of the Absolute, according to one’s capacity, just as sugar candy is tasted in different ways. For a normal tongue sugar candy is very sweet, but if there is a boil on the tongue even sugar candy is bitter. When a man is working, his manager will see him as a worker; his child will see him as a father, and his wife will see him as a husband. (...) Similarly, Kṛṣṇa appears differently to those who view Him according to their respective *rasa*. In this way, the differentiated character of the Absolute is revealed according to the soul’s subjective qualifications.” (Śrīdhara 4, 1895-1988, pp. 78-82.)



10. Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana Advocates Union in Will with God

This chapter presents the practical goal of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, that all living entities attain union in will with God, in more details.

Chart 1: The four main philosophies and their conception of God.

	Concept of difference (<i>bhedā</i>) from God	Concept of union (<i>abheda</i>) with God.
1. <i>acintya-bhedābheda</i> (full-fledged theism)	The living entity is different from God in person, amount of power and amount of knowledge.	The living entity is one with God in quality, in essential substance. >Full unity in will is possible.
2. <i>dvaita</i> or <i>bhedā</i> (dualism, dualistic theism)	In person, amount of power and amount of knowledge.	The <i>abheda</i> aspect is not fully developed. >No full unity in will.
3. <i>laukika</i> (materialism, atheism)	No concept of God.	No concept of God.
4. <i>advaita</i> or <i>abheda</i> (monism)	Difference is rejected totally and held illusory; 'I am (all, God)'.	In person.

1. The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* holds that the living entity or spirit soul is different from God in being an individual person as well as in quantity, for example in amount of power and knowledge. The living entity is one with God in quality in terms of both essentially being of spiritual and not material substance. We are essentially one with God in quality (not that we share all His qualities in full). Therefore, if our spiritual nature is uncovered from material coverings, we can factually realize God, our own eternal spiritual self and our eternal loving relationship. The uncovered living entity can practically serve God and achieve union or unity in will with Him.
2. The philosophy of *dvaita* is similar to *acintya-bhedābheda* in terms of difference. However, it lacks full understanding of oneness with God in spiritual quality, and therefore, personal and factual realization of (A) God, (B) our eternal self and (C) our relationship with God. Their realization is not encouraged very much during lifetime, but we are taught to rely more on faith and believe that we will realize them after death. This philosophy of dualistic theism is predominant in most world religions. The reason why the aspect of *abheda* or oneness with God is avoided is the justified fear of the perversion of *abheda* by identifying with God as in the *advaita-darśana*. Only if such perverted tendencies are overcome, can the proper employment of oneness with God, namely oneness in spiritual quality and will, be properly incorporated.
3. Materialistic philosophies have no conception of God.
4. Monistic philosophies hold that there is no real difference between the self, other selves and God; if we apparently perceive differences, this is only due to illusion. They hold that the self is actually one with God, i.e. the impersonal Brahman, in all respects.

Chart 2: The four main philosophies in teleosympathetic order.

	Aspiration for distinction (<i>bheda</i>) from God	Aspiration for union (<i>abheda</i>) with God
1. <i>acintya-bhedābheda</i> (full-fledged theism) Proper manifestation of distinction and union	☺☺ <u>in person</u>	☺☺ <u>in essential will</u>
2. <i>dvaita</i> or <i>bheda</i> (dualistic theism) Lack of God's <i>mādhurya</i> , sweet aspects	☺☺ <u>in person</u>	☺ <u>in will</u>
3. <i>laukika</i> (materialism, atheism) Rejects spiritual progress	in will ✕	indirectly in person ✕
4. <i>advaita</i> or <i>abheda</i> (monism) Perverted union and loss of individuality	nil ✕✕	in person ✕✕ (merging)

The above chart shows the four main philosophies in teleosympathetic order. This means that they are arranged according to their degree of teleosympathy, sympathy with the will of God. The smileys [☺] mark the degree of teleosympathy. Underlined aspirations are in agreement with the soul's eternal nature according to Veda; other aspirations and concepts of reality are only possible in *māyā*, under illusion. The [✕]-signs mark the graveness of illusory aspirations. Since distinction from God in person and union in will with God are the soul's *sanātana-dharma*⁹⁹, eternal inherent nature, any aspiration for a different state of existence can only be fulfilled if God allows the soul to live out these desires under the illusions of His *māyā-śakti*, illusory energy.

The *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* is the only philosophy
that employs both states, union and distinction, in their eternal inherent
original nature: union with the Lord's essential will and distinction in person.

1. The full-fledged theists follow the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, because it advocates the Supreme Lord's purpose as expressed by Himself in His most essential Descent of Śrī Caitanya. Full-fledged theists want to keep their difference (*bheda*) in person in order to be able to fulfill the purpose of creation, which is *rasa*, relishable loving relationship with the Lord, and they want to attain union (*abheda*) in will with God. This can be attained by the mercy of the Lord's *acintya-śakti*, His inconceivable energy that grants liberation from material illusion for those engaged in pure *bhakti*. If anyone, of any background – be he a scientist, Muslim, Christian, atheist, artist, etc. – starts to approach the absolute truth in the manner advocated by the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, he or she will realize that the absolute truth is a distinct person, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who essentially wants to be served by everyone in one of the four sweet loving relationships; as one's familiar master, close friend, cherished son or transcendental lover. The full-fledged service of God in sweetness (*mādhurya-prakāśa*) is only manifest in the mood of Vṛndāvana, the transcendental place where Śrī Kṛṣṇa sports. Vṛndāvana is not of this world – it is the highest transcendental abode and conception of reality. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not of India or of any religion of this material world – He is the universal Lord, personified transcendence, who appears together with Vṛndāvana in the heart of any pure devotee.
2. The dualistic theists only differ from the full-fledged theists in the aspect that they hold the reverential worship of God in *aiśvarya*, majestic opulence, higher than the more intimate worship of God in *mādhurya*, sweetness. If we approach the Supreme Lord with a reverential conception (*aiśvarya-jñāna*), we can enter only majestic relationships, and He will thus reveal

⁹⁹ This will be further explained in later paragraphs. Please note that the term 'union' used in this book generally refers to oneness in will or person, but not to personal association like the union of friends. If the latter is referred to, the term 'association' is used. The Lord's personal association is always desired by the devotee, but never the illusory union in person, i.e. trying to become one in person.

only one of His majestic forms such as Lord Viṣṇu to us. Most world religions worship God in *aīśvarya-prakāśa*, describing God with immense opulence and sitting on a throne (Psalm 11.4, Quran 23.116). Full-fledged theism or worship of God in the sweetest relationships has exclusively been offered by Śrī Caitanya and His followers, the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas. Only if we approach God with the sweetest conception of worship (*mādhurya-jñāna*) can we enter the most familiar relationships with Him, and He will thus reveal His full-fledged and sweetest form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to us (see Chapter 5.7). The Supreme Lord said: “The entire universe is filled with the conception of My majesty, but love weakened by that sense of majesty does not satisfy Me.” – Cc 1.3.16. Therefore, the dualistic theists are not yet one with the *essential* desire of God, although they want to always engage in devotion to Him. Nevertheless, they deserve all respect, because they are aspiring for transcendence or already established in transcendence.

3. The materialists want to keep their individual will because of their separate interests. But keeping separate interests is actually the prerogative of God – all living entities should dovetail with the interest of God like organs of a body cooperate for the body’s interest. The materialists keep separate interests and are thus (at least unknowingly) aspiring to achieve the position of God and hence union in person with God. All atheistic doctrines are suitable for those who are not interested in transcendence and in the real nature of life, service to God. By turning away from reality, they take shelter of *māyā*, the illusory potency of the Lord, which unavoidably involves suffering. As long as the materialistic attitude, i.e. independent conceptions and intentions, remains, even demigods such as Lord Brahmā cannot transcend the cycle of material birth and death (*SB* 3.32.12-15), what to speak of ordinary humans.
4. The monists or *māyāvādīs* aspire to relinquish their individual existence, which they hold to be illusory. But by doing so, they actually try to eradicate the very basis of their possibility to relate to the perfect Lord as His loving servant – which is the actual purpose of creation. This is an even worse situation than that of the materialists who still maintain individuality. Furthermore, claiming exclusive indistinction from Brahman, the monists indirectly claim to actually be God in person, which is again worse than the position of the materialists who simply try to behave like God in a more childish manner. And last but not least, the monists claim to be religious, although they actually want to take over God’s unique position. Hence they are more illusioned than the materialists, who at least admit that they are atheists¹⁰⁰. The monists are sometimes counted amongst the theistic groups and given corresponding respect because they accept the worship of God and externally dress and behave like devotees. Yet their objective is to become God themselves and they practice worship only as means to achieve that end. “The monists are atheists in disguise!” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 254.) Their hidden motive of trying to conquer the position of God while claiming to follow the *Vedas* is more harmful to a spiritual seeker than that of the atheists who frankly deny God and the *Vedas*.

In order not to offend anybody, the following must be carefully and humbly mentioned here: The present evaluation is not meant to judge these philosophies as groups or individually existing persons. It applies only to certain tendencies and inclinations, which are all simultaneously existent to various degrees in most people. It is extremely rare to find a devotee whose love of God is truly full-fledged. Even among the dualistic theists it is very rare to find a pure devotee who is fully God-realized. Most devotees still have inclinations of *laukika-darśana* and *māyāvāda-darśana* to some extent. For example, when a devotee is materially distracted and happens to constantly think of something else than the Lord during his prayers, this is a material tendency, and as offensive as if someone calls his friend and then just walks away. Simply joining a devotional group does not make one into a pure devotee immediately.

¹⁰⁰ As a matter of completion it should be mentioned that more illusioned than the *māyāvādīs* are the pseudo-*yogīs* who fancy undifferentiated union with the Supreme Lord. Unlike the monists, they admit the existence of the Lord and of the living entities and therefore *knowingly* try to usurp the seat of Godhead (see Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 17).

Essential is the inner transformation through
the Lord’s merciful inconceivable energy, the *acintya-śakti*.

Since devotion is the soul’s eternal inherent nature, by the Lord’s mercy, devotional inclination may awaken in anyone under any material circumstances. Hence the above classifications are to be understood as pointing towards a certain attitude of consciousness that prevails, and not merely to external identifications through the means of dress, social order, institution, etc. It is the material mind that thinks in classifications, and thus makes classifications necessary in order to discern reality, although this involves prejudice and sectarianism. As long as we are not above the material mind by realizing the spirit soul through engaging in the soul’s true nature of pure *bhakti*, we are bound to think in such polarizing ways. Yet if we learn to distinguish and use our mind in accordance with the Lord’s will, we can spiritualize our mind and transcend the mundane dualities, leaving behind false judgment and offences. Therefore, we should not neglect the mind out of fear of false judgement but engage it in appropriate distinction given by Veda. Hence these classifications are beneficial if the proper guidance of Veda is accepted, and in this light they are given in this book.

Śrī Caitanya gave the best example how we should deal with philosophies opposed to *bhakti* when He met the *māyāvādī sannyāsīs* in Benares. He approached them in a very humble and non-offensive mood, but simultaneously did not compromise with the Vedic conclusions and established full-fledged theism to be the highest path of human conduct in philosophical debates (see Chapter 6.17). Although He boldly preached that the *māyāvāda* concept is even more opposed to *bhakti* than atheism, He often called Himself a *māyāvādī sannyāsī* bereft of any knowledge about *bhakti*, and said that only due to association with pure devotees He was enlightened about *bhakti* (see *Cc* 2.8.124-125). He thus gave the perfect example of humility. If the Supreme Lord happily takes such a humble position – then what is to speak of the necessity for humility of conditioned souls? The Vaiṣṇava attitude of life is to always see good in others while finding faults only with oneself.

“It is good for sincere aspirants to rectify themselves
by condemning or subduing their own evil doings or evil thoughts.
Only then, by their own ideal character, they can warn others in regard to these.
A bona fide *sādhu* cannot have any kind of hostile mentality to anybody
or any living being in this world. He may condemn the evil practices
or doings but he has got no enmity for the persons who are
doing such sinful acts.” (Tirtha 2, 1997.)

It is appropriate and necessary to judge temporary false tendencies – the actual enemy of the world (*Bg* 3.37). But it is inappropriate to judge the eternally perfect spirit souls who are only temporarily covered by false tendencies, thus committing offence to them and their Creator, of whom they are an eternal part (*Bg* 15.7)¹⁰¹. Therefore, if this book contains such judgemental statements as ‘the monists are more illusioned than the materialists’, it must be understood that these statements are not judging any *person* in a sectarian way, but only comparing certain mental *tendencies* that can be found in any person. We should also remember that the gradual development of full-fledged theism explained in Chapter 9 harmonizes all philosophical tendencies in a higher purpose, and as such, from a different perspective, they have their positive function. If seen from the highest platform of full-fledged theism, philosophies such as monism are to be rejected for those who have the capacity to go beyond them, but for others, they can serve as *naimittika-dharma*, a transitional occupation for gradual upliftment¹⁰², as Chapter 12 will explain. Śrī Caitanya’s *acintya-*

¹⁰¹ Another consideration is as follows: “If we attack those proponents [of anti-devotional practices] with hostile mentality, their bad qualities will come to us and we will have a spiritual fall.” (Tirtha 11, 2012, p. 118.)

¹⁰² Although, as above Chart 2 shows, monism is in one sense below materialism, in another sense, it can help to bring atheists to full-fledged theism through the acceptance of scriptural authority and spiritual practices, both of which ultimately reveal the supremacy of full-fledged theism (see Chapter 9.3).

bhedābheda-darsana establishes that reality is materially inconceivable and can only be understood by the Lord's mercy. The Lord is equal to all (*Bg* 9.29), and thus His mercy is available for all. A devotional attitude allows us to accept that mercy, and therefore it is best to cultivate *bhakti*. Still Śrī Caitanya has exhibited His unrestricted mercy by delivering not only devotionally inclined people, but people of all kinds such as materialists and even *māyāvādīs*. He turned them all into devotees.

We shall now proceed to explain why *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal inherent nature of the soul, means union in will with God and individual service to Him, as expressed exclusively by the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. First we turn our attention to the necessity and purpose of individuality or distinction, *bheda*. It is the Lord's will to become many: *tad aikṣata bahu syām prajāyeya*, "When the Supreme Lord wishes to become many He glances over the subordinate manifestation [produced from His energy] and becomes many." – *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.3. The Lord became many, i.e. He manifested the living entities in order to have varieties of relationships; He is called *vihartu-kāmaḥ*, "desiring to enjoy pastimes." (*SB* 10.15.2), and "the reservoir of all *rasas*, transcendental humors and relationships." (*raso vai sa, Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.7.1.) Lord Kṛṣṇa says *nāham ātmānam āsāse, mad-bhaktaiḥ sādhubhir vinā, śriyaṁ cātyantikīm brahman, yeṣāṁ gatir aham parā*, "O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, without the devotees for whom I am the only destination, I do not desire to enjoy My transcendental bliss and My supreme opulences." – *SB* 9.4.64.

The Supreme Lord would easily be capable of performing and enjoying everything Himself, because He is omnipotent. Nevertheless He desires to perform pastimes with others, because this enables the experience of various *rasas*, relishable loving relationships, and by attaining these *rasas*, one derives *ānanda*, transcendental bliss (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.7.1). This explains the necessity and purpose of individuality and distinction, *bheda*.

The organizer of a masked ball usually knows who he has invited; nevertheless he takes pleasure in not knowing the identities of the participants of the masked ball to enjoy different pastimes, and he also does not want to be reminded of his own common identity during the ball, since that would spoil the experience. Although it would be an easy thing to strip everybody in the masked ball of their masks, nobody, not even an innocent child, dares to do so, because that would spoil the whole experience. This way of behavior that is favorable to the harmony of pastime roots in union in will, which naturally includes the respect of individual characters. Similarly, a devotee never dares to devalue the Lord's *līlās* (transcendental pastimes) by claiming that the concept of ultimate exclusive oneness is superior to them. The devotee has realized that compared to being merged into the impersonal Brahman, the various *līlās* are on a higher platform of reality and have a higher grade of union in will. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.28.40 explains that someone with perfect knowledge knows how to distinguish between the localized individual soul and the all-pervasive Supersoul. Unlike the temporary external material forms or bodies that decay and seem to again merge with the earth, the spirit soul is eternal, it can never be destroyed (*Bg* 2.17), and it can never merge with the Absolute due to being eternally separate from the Lord. Simultaneously it is connected to Him in service like an organ of a body: *mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke, jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ*,

"The living entities in this conditioned world
are My eternal fragmental parts." – *Bg* 15.7.

Similarly, the *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* 2.2.13 states: *nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām, eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān*, "The Supreme Lord is eternal and the living beings are eternal. The Supreme Lord is cognizant and the living beings are cognizant. The difference is that the Supreme Lord is supplying all the necessities of life for the many other living entities." (quoted from *Bg* 2.12, purport.) "Striving for *brahma-nirvāṇa*, merging into Brahman, is not the same as attaining *prema* – it is merely an illusory goal. Actually, impersonal liberation ultimately does not exist, it is present like a flower in the sky – a non-entity – and is a hoax upon the living entity." (*Jd* 18.) A devotee

never wants to merge into the Supreme because he understands, that if he acts according to the Lord's will, all is harmonized. In fact it goes against the Lord's will and against the purpose of the variegated creation to try to become one with Him in person. The Supreme Lord said: *naikātmātāṁ me sprhayanti kecin, mat-pāda-sevābhiratā mad-ihāh, ye 'nyonyato bhāgavatāḥ prasajya, sabhājayante mama pauruṣāṇi,*

“The pure devotees never desire to merge with Me in person.
They are always engaged in all types of devotional services
such as serving My lotus feet, and they are endeavoring
to attain My satisfaction and association.
They assemble in order to glorify
My pastimes and activities”
– SB 3.25.34.

The monistic desire to merge into the Supreme is a destructive notion that tries to ignore the Lord's variegated creation that includes our essential individual self. Union, *abheda*, is to be attained in will. This is the constructive, i.e. cooperative approach to life and its Creator, expressed in His own philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Śrī Caitanya explained that it is the original position of the living entities is to be eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa because they are the Lord's marginal energy and a manifestation simultaneously one and different from the Lord (*Cc* 2.20.108-109). “Our eternal condition is that we are absolute infinitesimals [tiny parts of the Absolute's transformed energy], and as such we should dovetail [interlock, adjust to and serve the ends of the other party] with the Absolute Infinity. The function between Him and us is love.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 279.) Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja mentioned (Mādhava):



“Dovetailing all of one's desires with the desires of
Śrī Kṛṣṇa is known as *śuddha-bhakti*, pure devotional service.”

When we recognize that we are a tiny dependent part of a perfect whole, the best policy for universal welfare is serving the ends of that whole. Transcendental love is to serve the desires of the Supreme Lord – and that is the living entities' eternal function and self interest. *etāvān eva loke 'smin, puṁsaḥ svārthaḥ paraḥ smṛtaḥ, ekānta-bhaktir govinde, yat sarvatra tad-ikṣaṇam,* “In this material world, to render service to Govinda, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the cause of all causes, and to see all in relation to Him, is the real self interest and only goal of life.” – SB 7.7.55.

Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda mentions in his purport of *SB* 3.21.31: “Actually, to be one with the Supreme Lord means to be one with the interest of the Lord. Becoming one with the Supreme Lord does not imply becoming as great as the Supreme Lord. It is impossible. The part is never equal to the whole. The living entity is always a minute part. Therefore, his oneness with the Lord is that he is interested in the one interest of the Lord. The Lord wants every living entity to always think about Him, to be His devotee and always worship Him. This is clearly stated in *Bhagavad-gītā: man-manā bhava mad-bhaktaḥ* [Bg 9.34]. (...) This is the will of the Supreme Lord, and devotees should try to fulfill His desire. Since the Lord is unlimited, His desire is also unlimited. There is no stoppage, and therefore the service of the devotee is also unlimited. In the transcendental world there is unlimited competition between the Lord and the servitor. The Lord wants to fulfill His desires unlimitedly, and the devotee also serves Him to fulfill His unlimited desires. There is an unlimited oneness of interest between the Lord and His devotee.” The exalted devotee Rāmānanda Rāya had realized the Lord’s *acintya-bhedābheda* nature. He was able to do so, because he was in harmony with the teaching of the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*, i.e. he realized his individual nature as an eternal servant of the Lord while keeping union in will with Him. This is explained in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 1.10.134, where Lord Caitanya says that Rāmānanda Rāya is only different in body from Him – in spirit they are one (*rāmānanda saha mora deha-bheda mātra*). Union with God is the aim of both *yoga* and religion, which both literally mean relinking¹⁰³. We must scrutinizingly discriminate what type of union is most beneficial, i.e. what type of union is wanted by the intelligent Creator Himself. The process of relinking indicates two individuals who are again linked to each other, not merged with each other. The English term ‘yoke’ comes from Sanskrit *yuga*, yoke (Webster), which has the same root as the word *yoga*, namely the verbal root *yuj*, to join, unite. To yoke clearly means to link in will, for example in a yoke of matrimony – not to merge.

Religion and *yoga* both mean
to relink with the Supreme Lord.

The aim of the relinking process is to remain linked, in the same way as a dial-up program links a computer with the internet provider so we can remain linked with the internet. The aim of *yoga* and religion is clearly *not* to become one with Kṛṣṇa in person or with His impersonal effulgence, just as it is not the aim of a web client to become one with the internet. Somehow or other, Hinduism was mainly represented by monists in the West and as such people generally think that the *Vedas* and the Vedic science of *yoga* proclaims complete union with the Supreme and annihilation of the self. Webster mentions for the term *yoga*: “A mystic and ascetic Hindu discipline by which one seeks to achieve liberation of the self and union with the supreme spirit or universal soul through intense concentration, deep meditation, and practices involving prescribed postures, controlled breathing, etc.” As mentioned before, the term ‘Hindu’ is a modern misnomer (see Chapter 2.4) and is nowhere mentioned in the *Vedas* that explain the science of *yoga*. There are various types of *yoga*. Yogic postures belong to the preliminary yogic practices of the basic *patañjali-yoga*. All types of *yoga* culminate in *bhakti-yoga*, devotional service unto the Supreme Lord, which is the highest of all liberation (*SB* 5.19.20). *vāsudeva-parā vedā* (...) *vāsudeva-parā yogā*, “The ultimate object of knowledge is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead. (...) *yoga* is for realizing Kṛṣṇa.” – *SB* 1.2.28. Kṛṣṇa is *yogyam*, the object of *yoga* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.20.24). All types of *yoga* are described in the *Bhagavad-gītā* by Lord Kṛṣṇa, who establishes *bhakti-yoga* as the highest attainment: *yoginām api sarveṣāṃ, mad-gatenāntarātmanā, śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām, sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*,

¹⁰³ The term religion originates in Latin *religare*, to bind back (Webster).

“Of all *yogīs*, the one with great faith who always abides in Me
in loving thoughts, thinks of Me within himself,
and renders transcendental loving service to Me
– I consider him the most intimately united with Me
in *yoga*, and the highest of all.” – Bg 6.47.

The highest union is union or unity in will, which manifests in the art of *bhakti*. The position of being Kṛṣṇa’s *bhakta*, His devotee, is not a lesser position in quality than that of being God, i.e. *bhokta*, the receptor of *bhakti*. “The servant of the Lord is engaged in the service of the Lord as a servant, friend, father, mother or conjugal lover, all of whom are equally as opulent as the Lord. This is *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*. The master and servant are different yet equal in opulence. This is the meaning of simultaneous difference from the Supreme Lord and oneness with Him.” (Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda in his purport to SB 7.10.9). The father wants his son to get only the best, and similarly, Lord Kṛṣṇa wants all living entities to get only the best. Kṛṣṇa is full of *mādhurya*, spiritual sweetness, which is the best attribute of God. The devotees have the unique position to taste that sweetness of God as they serve Him.



The devotees speak of tasting nectar, not becoming nectar.
Tasting nectar is superior to being nectar, because nectar cannot taste itself.

The living beings in their natural state are eternally tasting Kṛṣṇa’s sweetness as devotees. The proof of the exaltedness of the position of the pure devotee is that Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself desires to become His own devotee in order to taste His sweetness as well as to experience the love of His devotees, especially Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. He thus appears as Śrī Caitanya (see Chapter 6.13). Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the Divine Consort of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is the topmost devotee. She is not a transformation of Kṛṣṇa’s energy like the *jīvas*, but Kṛṣṇa’s own internal pleasure energy, *hlādinī-śakti* in person.

*hlādinīra sāra aṁśa, tāra ‘prema’ nāma
ānanda-cinmaya-rasa, premera ākhyāna
premera parama-sāra, ‘mahābhāva’ jāni
sei mahābhāva-rūpā, rādhā-ṭhākurāṇī*

“The most essential part of Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure potency is love of God, *prema*.
The explanation of love of God is a transcendental relish full of pleasure.
The most essential part of *prema* is *mahābhāva*, greatest devotional ecstasy.
Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is that *mahābhāva* personified.” – Cc 2.8.159-160.

Because Rādhārāṇī is the essential personification of Kṛṣṇa’s internal energy, She is the Supreme Goddess being as good as Kṛṣṇa Himself, and therefore Her pronouns are also written in capital letters. The nature of the *hlādinī-śakti* is to serve Kṛṣṇa, and as such She is the energy of *bhakti*, devotion to the Lord. Therefore, Rādhārāṇī, being the ultimate personification of *bhakti*, is also called Bhakti Devī, the Goddess of *bhakti*.

*hari-bhakti mahā-devyāḥ, sarva muktyādi-siddhayaḥ
bhuktyas-cādbhutas tasya, cetika-vādanu-vrahā*

“Hari-bhakti is the Supreme Goddess,
and all other accomplishments, including impersonal liberation,
mystic perfections, and wondrous material pleasures, are handmaids
attending Her attentively.” – *Brs* 1.1.34, quoted from *Śrī Nārada-Pāñcarātra*.

*devī kṛṣṇa-mayī proktā, rādhikā para-devatā
sarva-lakṣmī-mayī sarva, kāntiḥ sammohinī parā*

“The transcendental Goddess Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī
is the direct counterpart of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She is the central figure
for all the goddesses of fortune. She possesses all attractiveness to attract
the all-attractive Personality of Godhead. She is the primeval internal potency of the Lord.”
– *Bṛhad-Gautamīya-Tantra*, quoted in *Cc* 1.4.83.

Śrī Rādhā never gives up Her individuality, because She always wants to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa; She
always wants to be united with Him in will (*Cc* 1.4.87&93):

*kṛṣṇa-vāñchā-pūrti-rūpa kare ārādhane
ataeva ‘rādhikā’ nāma purāṇe vākhāne*

“Her worship, *ārādhana*, consists of
fulfilling all the desires of Lord Kṛṣṇa.
Therefore, the *Purāṇas* call Her Rādhikā.”



kṛṣṇera sakala vāñchā rādhātei rahe

“All the desires of Lord Kṛṣṇa rest in Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.”

Kṛṣṇa’s flute playing is sweeter than nectar and attracts all living beings to serve Him. It is the source of all inspiration. It inspires Lord Brahmā to create the material universe by revealing divine knowledge in his heart. Kṛṣṇa’s flute playing reveals Kṛṣṇa’s sweet will and desire, and the devotees embrace that music of divine will within their hearts, just like the peacock, who dances gracefully as soon as it hears Kṛṣṇa’s sweet flute playing. Śrī Rādhā’s sharing Kṛṣṇa’s flute with Kṛṣṇa expresses Her union with His sweet will (see above picture, a detail of Their *yugala-mūrti*, combined form, printed in Chapter 5.8). In this famous pose, we can nicely see how Rādhārāṇī gives the best example of teleosympathy, the goal of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*: She serves Kṛṣṇa as His individual (*bheda*) servant in perfect union (*abheda*) with His will. In the *yugala-mūrti*, Rādhā

and Kṛṣṇa are interlocked, and not merged in person or body. They internally and externally interlock or dovetail Themselves perfectly to each other's desires. The corresponding philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* reveals the metaphysics of complete universal harmony. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's union is called *yugala-milana*, union of the Divine Couple. Besides external aspects, the internal aspects of Their union is most essential, namely the perfect unity in desire. The pure love of Their dovetailed hearts is the very archetype of teleosympathy, unity in desire with the essential manifestation of the Ultimate. This refers especially to the love of Rādhārāṇī, because She is Kṛṣṇa's potency of *bhakti*, loving devotional service, and is thus more expert in dovetailing to Her Lord's desires. She is also the origin of the *acintya-śakti*, the energy that can harmonize all polarities and reveal the materially inconceivable. Rādhārāṇī is thus the ultimate teacher of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* and of its aspiration for teleosympathy, unity in will with God.

“The Divine Sportive Potency fills the hearts of Kṛṣṇa's devotees with appropriate spiritual sentiments in conformity with His will.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 484.)

किङ्कर

This individually manifested union in will with the Lord is the essential teaching of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*. Rādhārāṇī is the Goddess of *bhakti*, and Kṛṣṇa can only be attained by *bhakti*. Her position is not understandable with material vision, but in order to enable the conditioned souls to attain Her mercy, Lord Kṛṣṇa took on the mood of Rādhārāṇī and appeared as Śrī Caitanya (see Chapter 6.13). Accepting the role of His own devotee, He taught the highest science of devotion, expressed in the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. God Himself practically taught devotion to the entire world by His own example, accepting the role of a *kiṅkara*, a humble servant of the Lord (Caitanya, 1486-1534. Verse 5). The term *kiṅkara* may be the most concise term to express the practical goal of the academic term ‘teleosympathy’. Teleosympathy, sympathy with the Lord's desires, is the practical aspiration of *acintya-bhedābheda*, the philosophy of full-fledged theism¹⁰⁴. The term *kiṅkara*, depicted above in Devanāgarī script, is a compound of *kim*, ‘what’, ‘whence’, ‘how’, and *kara*, ‘doing’. In contrast to the term *ahankāra* (the false ego of a conditioned soul), which literally means ‘I do’, the term *kiṅkara* expresses the mood of the Lord's dedicated servant who always contemplates: “How shall I do what service, so my Lord will be pleased?”

Kṛṣṇa's flute also represents His unique *mādhurya*, honey-like sweetness, which is not found in any other form of God to this extent (see Chapter 5.7). This explains why the Lord's will is called sweet in the expression “the Lord's own sweet will.” Only the Lord's will is sweet for all universally. Therefore, the only way to experience real sweetness is to embrace the Lord's sweet will by service. Śrī Rādhā expresses this as follows: “(...) Kṛṣṇa is the very life of My life. I keep Him always in My heart and try to please Him by rendering service. That is My constant meditation.” – Cc 3.20.58.

kānta-sevā-sukha-pūra, saṅgama haite sumadhura

“Service to My beloved Lord is the home of happiness and is even sweeter than direct association with Him.” – Cc 3.20.60.

¹⁰⁴ The term *kiṅkara* is explained here in terms of its literal meaning. In general terms, a *kiṅkara* is a servant who will act only upon the order of his master. Higher than the service of such a *kiṅkara* is that of a friend, parent or consort, who serve even when not asked. Due to their humility, the *gopīs*, although serving Kṛṣṇa as consorts, pray to Kṛṣṇa to accept them as a *kiṅkarī*, a maidservant (*bhaja sakhe bhavat-kiṅkarīḥ sma no*, SB 10.31.6). The term *kiṅkara* used as a concise term to express the practical goal of teleosympathy should be understood in this latter sense, or in the literal sense.

Serving the Lord means to fulfill His desires, to be united with Him in will. When the Lord is satisfied, all in His creation automatically get satisfaction, even if there may be temporary separation in terms of personal association. That union in will therefore is even sweeter than direct association with Him, and this is clearly established in this verse. The following verse (also spoken by Śrī Rādhā) defines unconditional service and love (Cc 3.20.52.):

*nā gaṇi āpana-duḥkha, sabe vāñchi tānra sukha,
tānra sukha – āmāra tātparya
more yadi diyā duḥkha, tānra haila mahā-sukha,
sei duḥkha – mora sukha-varya*

“I do not mind My personal distress.
I only wish for the happiness of Kṛṣṇa, for His happiness
is the goal of My life. However, if He feels great happiness in giving
Me distress, that distress is the best of My happiness.”

This verse proves that union in will is more essential than union in association, because under some circumstances, the Lord may be more pleased if there is no external association for some time, and the devotee who in that situation accepts the unpleasant external circumstances and unites internally with the Lord’s will is the best example of selfless love, surrender and service. The spiritual perfected souls are in no way masochists, but the best well-wishers of both the Lord and His creation, which includes their own selves. If it seems that a devotee is suffering externally due to separation from the Lord, it must be understood that if this separation is in accordance with the Lord’s desire, then that very pain becomes the source of unlimited happiness for the devotee. For one who has realized the spiritual reality, dualities per se do not cease to exist, rather they are reconciled in purposeful harmony and both polarities result in happiness by being used in the ever-blissful service of the Lord. In the spiritual concept, there is not a tinge of suffering – all have realized their being part of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*, “The very form of eternity, transcendental knowledge and pure bliss.” (*Brahmā-Saṁhitā* 5.1.) Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura’s 16th song of his work entitled *Śaraṇāgati*, Full Surrender, nicely expounds on the present topic:

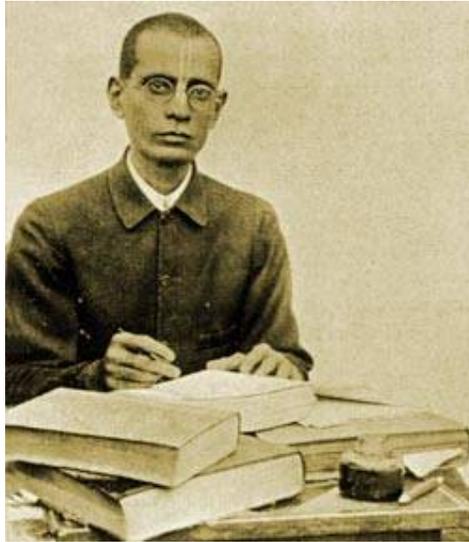
*ātma-nivedana, tuwā pade kori, hoinu parama sukhi
duḥkha dūre gelo, cintā nā rohilo, caudike ānanda dekhi (...)*

“I have become supremely happy by surrendering myself at Your lotus feet. Sorrow has gone far away, and there are no more worries. All I see is joy in the four directions. (...) All the troubles encountered in Your service are the cause of great happiness, for in Your devotional service joy and sorrow are equally great riches, and both destroy the misery of ignorance. (...) Bhaktivinoda sinks deeply into the ocean of pure bliss by engaging in Your service. He devotes all his efforts according to Your wishes while living in Your home.” (Verses 1, 4 and 6.)

These realizations of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura, who is known to be a fully self-realized devotee, are of great value for one who is fortunate enough to try to understand the harmonized spiritual reality from the perspective of a self-realized devotee. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura expressed, that by surrender to the Lord, he became supremely happy.

Surrender to the perfect Lord is not painful
like the surrender of a beaten enemy in war, but
blissful like the devotion of a woman to her lover.

Even troubles in His service become a source of joy. Nobody likes the smell of urin, what to speak of the touch of stool. But when the mother cleanses the diaper full of urin and stool of her child, she feels great bliss, because her child is healthy and she can serve it. There are even dolls for children that can pass urin. In loving service, seeming trouble becomes a source of bliss. Similarly, seeming troubles encountered in the service of the Lord cause great bliss for a pure devotee, who is happy to serve His Lord in all respects. His serving the Lord in times of hardship is a chance to prove his unconditional love. Although in the spiritual conception, there are spiritual dualities, they are not disharmonious and causes of pain like the material dualities encountered in birth and death, marriage and divorce, etc. Spiritual dualities are all causes of bliss. All situations in the Lord's service invoke His remembrance, which destroys ignorance because ignorance roots in forgetting the Lord. A devotee does not surrender to a material master who cannot give him everlasting bliss, but to the Supreme Lord, who is the reservoir of perfect eternal bliss.



“The attitude of submission to the Absolute is neither blind nor slavish nor a gross form of superstition. It is the awakening of the real rational function of which all mental activity is but disloyal, hideous caricature.” (Sanyal, 1933, Vol I, Chapter 4.)

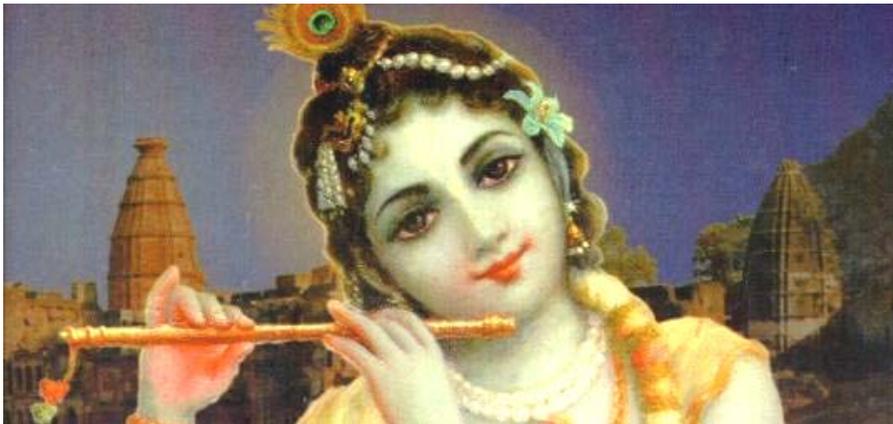
Just as it is the very nature of Rādhārāṇī, the prime personification of Lord Kṛṣṇa's spiritual energy, to be surrendered to Kṛṣṇa, it is actually the original nature of the spirit soul as a tiny serving manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's energy to be surrendered to Him. The conditioned souls must only overcome their perverted state and then surrender will be most natural. It is in this natural pure state of surrender, that Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura devotes all his efforts according to the Lord's wishes. This natural dedication to the Lord's desire is the aim of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. The pure devotee does not desire material upliftment or even liberation like those who leave their homes to engage in severe penances to achieve *mukti* – the pure devotee simply wants to serve in the Lord's home, wherever He may choose to live, life after life.

Selfless dedication to the Lord's will is the soul's *sanātana-dharma*, eternal inherent nature, and when we are engaged in this *sanātana-dharma*, we naturally become blissful, because the servants share in their master's bliss. The devotee's share is not divided as are material shares; the Lord is complete, and all that emanates from Him is also complete (invocation of the *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*). The devotee may externally be deprived of the Lord's personal association, or he may undergo other hardships while engaging in His service, but because he empathetically shares in his Lord's bliss, he is never really unhappy. To give a crude analogy, the tongue as a serving part of the body always feels inclined to taste nice foodstuffs, but in order to serve the whole body, it accepts long periods of fasting to keep the body healthy, and in these times the tongue is united in will with

the body. By being in the first place united with the purpose of the body, the tongue itself stays healthy and gets the best benefit of the periods of tasting foodstuff. Would the tongue seduce the mind to overstep the will and welfare of the body in order to fulfill the tongue's desires and constantly engage in tasting food, the body would soon become sick and thus the tongue itself would suffer from various diseases and bitter medicine. This is the very situation in the material world: the living beings who are parts of the complete Lord are like foolish uncooperative organs of the body who do not know that their purpose is best served by directly serving the purpose of the body. Hence the foolish living beings of this world try to satisfy their senses independently and neglect the actual way of universal satisfaction, the direct satisfaction of the Supreme Lord's sweet desires.

Union with Kṛṣṇa's will is not only the essential approach to God,
but also the easiest approach to God and to universal welfare and harmony.

Although we may not yet be qualified to receive the Lord's personal association and expression of will because we have not yet developed the eyes of *bhakti* with which to see Him, we can still enjoy union in will with the Lord to a great extent by following His instructions as stated in the Vedic scriptures. As the Lord is absolute, He is non-different from His will, and that can be experienced by someone who is united with His will. When we unite with the Lord's will, we not only fulfill our own purpose of life, but we also enter harmony with the entire cosmic creation, and hence it is the easiest and most efficient way of both self-realization and universal welfare. In fact, so-called self-realization and welfare remain an illusion if we are not united with the Lord's will. And last but not least, union with the Lord's will is in itself the eye of *bhakti* with which to see God, as God can only be seen by pure *bhakti* (*bhaktiā mām abhijānāti*, Bg 18.55), and pure *bhakti* is described as *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*, "free from separate motives." (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.11), i.e. to only desire to serve the Lord's desire. Although the we are minute particles of the Lord and cannot understand the Lord's desire on our own strength, by cultivating the inclination to union with the Lord's will, we attract His mercy by which His desire is revealed. Being free from self-centered desires does not mean to lack vibrant life, as is understood by the example of the flute:



Although the flute is empty, it nevertheless sounds.

Actually, the flutist Śrī Kṛṣṇa plays the flute, and the flute simply offers itself as a willing instrument to Him. The word 'vibrant' carries meanings such as 'resonant, vigorous, energetic' (Webster). If we want to be fully vibrant, we should be in resonance with the full energy of life, which comes from *śaktiman*, the wielder of all energy, Lord Kṛṣṇa. If we want to resonate with Kṛṣṇa's energy or vibration, we must be free from disharmonious self-centered vibrations; but giving up self-centered interests to dovetail to the central interest of the entire creation is surely not a loss but rather an all-beneficial gain. In the analogy of the flute, if the flute is not empty, but full of mud, then Kṛṣṇa cannot play on it. If it is empty, however, and offers itself to Him, Kṛṣṇa plays wonderful tunes on it, that attract and benefit all living entities. Similarly, persons whose hearts are full of

selfish desires cannot be used by Lord Kṛṣṇa as His instrument and he cannot become filled with the nectar of His desires. Rather, because their selfish desires will clash with the desires of others, they will face frustration. Only by throwing out all separatist selfish desires from the heart and inviting Lord Kṛṣṇa's sweet will, they will become filled with the pure desires of their own hearts, because Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supersoul, who is the origin, the source of joy and the goal of all souls.

The exclusive dedication to Lord Kṛṣṇa's desires
is neither self-abnegation nor neglect of care for others, but rather
the complete fulfillment of our own and everybody else's actual desires.

Unlike the desires of the conditioned soul that are imperfect and rarely completely fulfilled, "His [the Supreme Lord's] desires are pure, *satyakāma*, and He attains fulfillment of His desires immediately and without obstacle, *satya-saṅkalpa*." (Bhaktivinoda 5, 1890, p. 86.) The Supreme Lord's desires are *satya-saṅkalpa*, fulfilled without obstacle by His personal potency, simply by His sweet will (*SB* 10.37.12). Because His desires are never frustrated, He is eternally fulfilled in all respects (*samāpta-sarvārtham amogha-vāñchitam*, *SB* 10.37.22). Moreover:

Only by rejoicing in the Lord's bliss can we become fully blissful,
because the bliss of a tiny living entity is very limited,
whereas the bliss of the Supreme Lord is unlimited.

The principle of *śunya*, emptiness, which is attractive to many people who try to escape material sufferings, must be employed in the service of God by becoming *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam* (*Brs* 1.1.11), free from material motives, i.e. free from motives other than *bhakti*, as per the example of the flute. The Supreme Lord will only manifest fully in a heart that also welcomes Him fully and is devoid of separate desires. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

"Because My devotees are completely devoid of material desires,
I sit within the cores of their hearts." – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 9.4.63.

Emptiness should not be the goal in itself as for example in certain schools of Buddhism. In fact, only by the grace of God can we become free from separatist desires, not by any independent effort. It is the very nature of a living being to desire. Desireless people are tendentially depressive and suicidal. Advanced Buddhists are not desireless as they may think – they simply desire to become desireless. By imagining that they are desireless, they continuously fulfill their virtually denied, but actually existing desire, and derive some pleasure from this mental loop. Their imaginary pleasure consists of an autosuggestive absence of suffering; thus it is not actual pleasure, but merely the negation of suffering. Actual pleasure must be positive, and thus we must find positive pleasure and positive desires. Desiring pleasures independent from the Lord's pleasure leads to suffering because of clashes with other's interests (see Chapter 8). Therefore, the only wise solution is to desire the Lord's pleasure, become His dedicated instrument, and by that please the Supreme Lord who harmonizes and fulfills the actual desires of all living entities, including ourselves.

Just as it is impossible to take out mud from a flute without replacing it
with something like air, it is impossible to virtually abandon our material desires
– we can only overcome them by replacing them with the Lord's sweet will.

Therefore, the wise will want to always satisfy the Lord's desire. The Lord's desire is most efficiently expressed and revealed by chanting His holy name, *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare* (see Chapter 15). "As the result of service to *śrī nāma*, the holy name, man can get rid of all prejudices and be settled in *kṛṣṇa-kāma-seva*, the service of Kṛṣṇa's desires." (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 162.) For this reason, the wise,

just as the flute of Kṛṣṇa, always chant Kṛṣṇa’s holy name. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.9.16 states that “No one can know the plan of the Lord. Even though great philosophers inquire exhaustively, they are bewildered.” – *SB* 1.9.16. This is especially the case for those who try to know the Lord materially, i.e. not with the exclusive motive of serving Him. However, those who desire to serve the Lord purely are spiritually empowered by the Lord’s internal potency to know Him to such an extent as is required for their service, although no one can know His will completely. The next verse says:

“Accepting the inconceivable plan of the Lord, you must follow it.”

This statement would be contradictory if the term ‘inconceivable’ was absolute, because how can we follow a plan if we are unable to know it? The correct vision and solution is that the Lord and His will are materially inconceivable, but they are revealed to the devotee by the mercy of the Supreme Lord’s spiritual potency. If he turns to his original serving nature, it is possible for the *jīva* to know the Lord and His will to an individually sufficient extent, as the *jīva* is part of the complete whole (*Īsopaniṣad*, invocation). The term *acintya*, inconceivable, in the term *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, refers to the impossibility of conceiving the Lord with the common material senses, yet by *bhakti*, the Lord can be known: *ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi, na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ, sevonmukhe hi jihvādau, svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*, “The material senses cannot perceive Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental name, form, attributes, associates and pastimes. Only when a conditioned soul is awakened to Kṛṣṇa-consciousness by being inclined to and engaged in devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, that begins with using his tongue to chant Kṛṣṇa’s holy name and tasting the sanctified remnants of Kṛṣṇa’s food, his spiritual senses are uncovered, and then Kṛṣṇa by Himself manifests in his perception.” – *Brs* 1.2.234, quoted from the *Padma Purāṇa* and spoken by Śrī Caitanya in *Cc* 2.136. Therefore, the *acintya-bhedābheda* philosophy is not an agnostic doctrine. The spiritual senses of the *jīva* by which the Lord is known and served are covered by material desires and can be awakened by the practice of *bhakti* and the Lord’s mercy. This mercy is especially attracted by attaining union in will with the Lord. Union in will with the Lord also best serves to awaken the spiritual senses, as it is their very nature to serve the Lord’s will. As shown in Chart 2,

acintya-bhedābheda is the only philosophy that aims at
union with the Lord’s will as expressed by the Lord Himself,
and therefore it is the only philosophy that can appropriately
reestablish the full eternal nature of the self, the *sanātana-dharma*.

By understanding *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, we can understand the science of self-realization and *bhakti* and attain the potency to distinguish properly and impartially between the various other philosophies. We are prevented from misjudging or offending their followers by seeing them on the way towards the common ultimate goal by the sublime guidance of Kṛṣṇa.

To give a practical example of the superiority of union in will over union in association, the following story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Book 4, Canto 75) illustrates the proper employment of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. Śabarī was a very pious tribal princess in Nāsika in the present state Mahārāṣṭra who lived during Lord Rāma’s time (Most Hindus rever Lord Rāma is an Avatāra of Lord Kṛṣṇa (see *SB* 1.3.28). When she saw that for her upcoming wedding, many animals were to be slaughtered, she became compassionate, ran away from home and thereafter lived in a forest near Hāmpi in very simple conditions. Śabarī grew up in an outcast family and was therefore not allowed to enter the local temple in Hāmpi where the deity of Lord Rāma was worshiped. But because she had so much devotion for Lord Rāma, she wanted at all cost to render some service to Him. Therefore, every day she secretly cleaned the outer temple compound in the very early morning, when all were sleeping. One day, the priests found out, and as they were very proud of their

privilege, they forbade Śabarī to come to the temple area again. The next day, all the water of the adjacent pond called Pampā-sarovara had turned into blood and puss.

Śabarī returned to her hermitage, and every day she prayed to Lord Rāma, desiring to serve Him directly. She recited His holy name and offered Him flowers from the forest. One day the sage Maṭaṅga Muni passed by. He acknowledged her worship and predicted that Lord Rāma Himself will surely come to her hermitage. From that day on, Śabarī spent day and night simply with cleaning her hermitage and gazing into the direction from where the Lord would appear. Her intense longing was so strong that she even forgot about her daily rituals. In this way, many years passed, and Śabarī became very old, still waiting for the Lord in that forest. One day, Lord Rāma personally came to visit the nearby town, Hāmpi. The priests wanted to take Him to the temple and worship Him there, but Rāma said that He came only to see His devotee Śabarī. The priests were astounded and told Rāma that Śabarī lived in the forest. Lord Rāma went straight there and met Śabarī. She fell at His feet, and as she did not even possess a single pot or bowl, she used her two hands as a bowl, and with the water of the tears from her eyes, she washed Lord Rāma's lotus feet. She then went to collect berries, and to test if they were sweet, she first tasted them herself. Although food that has been touched by the mouth is considered impure in the Vedic culture, Lord Rāma accepted the berries from Śabarī's hands with great pleasure, because He enjoyed tasting the pure love of Śabarī.



Now what does this story have to do with *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*? This story nicely describes two kinds of devotees, namely the neophyte and the advanced devotee, according to their employment of the various aspects of *bheda* and *abheda*. The particular priests in this story are the neophyte devotees who are still inclined towards material concepts to some extent. They judge primarily according to outer classifications like social cast, and they consider that service the best which is physically the closest to the deity. They cannot always see the pure motives of others, because they themselves do not have absolutely pure motives, as they are not primarily contemplating union in will with the Lord. Although they are externally behaving like devotees, their inner concepts are still to some extent like those of the materialist as described in Chart No 2 at the beginning of this chapter. They want to keep their individuality in will because of their separate interests, and they are only interested in external association with God. By keeping separate interests, which in fact is the prerogative of God, they are at least unknowingly aspiring to achieve His position and hence union in person. On the other hand, Śabarī is a very advanced devotee. Śabarī has realized that internal union with the Lord's will is the essential union and therefore she feels pleasure in secretly cleaning the temple's compound, even if no mortal being acknowledges her service. Śabarī knows that she is a servant by nature, and therefore she does not want to artificially take the position of God by trying to keep separate interests. Not desiring anything else besides *bhakti* is considered the highest stage of freedom, and one who does not seek personal rewards can achieve pure *bhakti* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.20.35). Although Śabarī seems to be separated from Lord Rāma externally, she is actually in close association with Him in her heart by her pure love and selfless service, whereas the rather proud and superficial priests of this story are separated from the Lord in their hearts due to separate desires, although outwardly they seem to be close to Him. Therefore, the proper employment of the right aspects of *bheda* and *abheda* is very important, and this is what this chapter is all about.

Individuality is to be contemplated as always remaining
the humble servant, and not trying to imitate the Lord, and
union is to be contemplated as embracing the will of the Lord.

The proof that Śabarī had achieved union with Lord Rāma’s desire is that He was so pleased with the service in her heart, that He personally came to search after her to give her the treasure of His personal association. The personal association with the Lord is always aspired for by the devotee, yet the approach of the neophyte is different from the approach of the advanced devotee.

The neophyte devotee holds the Lord’s association higher than the Lord’s will,
whereas the advanced devotee holds the Lord’s will higher than the Lord’s association.

This is because the neophyte holds his own enjoyment higher than the enjoyment of the Lord, and he aspires for the Lord’s association to enjoy himself in the first place, whereas the advanced devotee holds the enjoyment of the Lord higher than his own enjoyment, and he aspires for the Lord’s association to give *Him* enjoyment in the first place. Only if the Lord desires to associate with the advanced devotee, will the devotee desire it too. But if the Lord does not want to associate with a certain advanced devotee, the devotee never tries to artificially associate with the Lord, because he holds His will and enjoyment higher than His association. The feeling of separation caused by the Lord’s withholding His association becomes a source of transcendental pleasure for the devotee because it kindles the internal union in will, proves the devotee’s unconditional love and increases the expectation for the desired association.

One day, Caitanya Mahāprabhu was departing from Jagannātha Purī for Vṛndāvana by boat. In order to follow Him, His very dear associate Gadādhara Paṇḍita gave up his vow of devotional service in Purī. Gadādhara Paṇḍita is no one other than the personification of *rādhā-bhāva*, the mood of worship of Rādhārāṇī in the pastimes of Lord Caitanya. However, Caitanya Mahāprabhu preferred that he stay loyal to his service, and told him: “If you want My happiness, please return to Nīlācala.” (Cc 2.16.141.) Hearing this, Gadādhara Paṇḍita fainted at once due to feelings of separation. He then resumed his service as desired by the Lord, and by thus pleasing Him, he was united in will with Him in his heart, although externally separated. Such is the love of pure devotees. As long as we have not attained union in will with the Lord because of keeping separate interests, even while having the Lord’s personal association, we will not be able to fully please the Lord, and hence the association stays superficial, of limited benefit or is even counterproductive. This is exemplified by the proud priests who displeased the Lord by offending Śabarī, even though they were externally ‘serving’ Him in close association.

It is essential to be united with the will
of the Lord first, because only then we are qualified
to serve Him favourably in His personal association.

When we immaturely get the association of the Lord and displease Him, we will lose the greatest treasure, just like scientists who are allowed into the laboratory prematurely may spoil the experiment, displeasing their seniors. On the other hand, when we are in external separation from Kṛṣṇa, but united in will within, then that pure *bhakti* will attract Kṛṣṇa, because pure *bhakti* is *śrī-kṛṣṇākarsinī*, “attracting Śrī Kṛṣṇa.” – *Bhakti-rasāmṛtā-sindhu*, Pūrva 1.12. Only when we get Kṛṣṇa’s association in a purified state, can we render pure *bhakti* and attain the highest benefit. Therefore, union in will with God is to be contemplated in the first place. It is the highest human aspiration, and because the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* most emphatically advocates this union, it has thus been established as the most sophisticated philosophy.



11. Quantum Mechanics in the Light of Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana

In this chapter, an understanding of certain phenomena of quantum mechanics will be given in the light of the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Vedic science is not restricted to transcendental matters but includes material knowledge as well. Therefore, Vedic science is able to bring light into common science. Furthermore, because material manifestations are reflections of spiritual manifestations, the former can only be fully understood in relation to the latter. Science advocates an objective approach to reality. Truly objective vision of reality is offered by Śrī Caitanya's principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, because it is an all-including paradigm, a theory of everything.

Quantum mechanics has revolutionized the way modern people see the world. Although many of its findings are officially accepted since almost a century, most people are not educated in this subject. For different reasons it would be beneficial if people would strive to learn some basic quantum physics, and the interested readers can do so easily. To include this knowledge would go beyond the limits of this book.

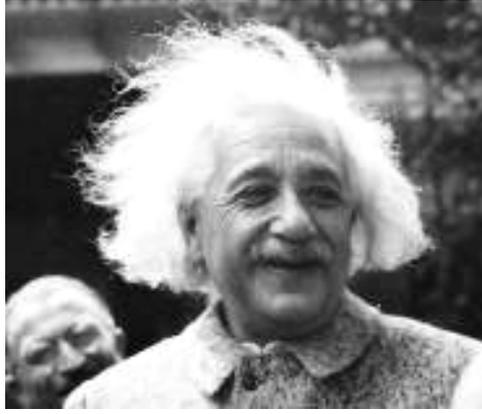
11.1. The Renaissance of Consciousness in Science

During the last few hundred years, humanity has made astonishing inventions and discoveries and entered into matter deeper and deeper. Diving into the ocean leads to reaching the ocean bottom; but the 'ocean of matter' seems to be deeper than our instruments and thoughts can reach. We now realize, that the deeper we dive into this ocean, the more questions instead of answers appear, and the more complicated and inconceivable things get.

This becomes especially evident in quantum mechanics, the science that has probably dived the deepest into matter of all natural sciences. Modern science now claims that the physical universe is not mostly continuous solid matter, as is still commonly thought. It is over 99.99 percent empty space¹⁰⁵ with small bits of matter or atoms. The atoms are not the most fundamental particles, but again consist mostly of empty space with a tiny nucleus in the center and more tiny electrons whirling around at about 600 miles per second. The nucleus consists of various particles that race around at approx. 40'000 miles per second. The atomic particles sometimes behave as waves of abstract possibilities, and sometimes as actual particles, and further, they are sometimes detectable, and sometimes undetectable. The closer we look at matter, the more we find that it is not what we had thought it was – a collection of solid material elements that follow mechanistic laws – but we find that material reality consists of various energy levels and waves of potentials. What we perceive as matter is actually a specific manifestation of subtle energy, and acts according to corresponding subtle laws beyond the gross laws of classical mechanics. These subtle laws also depend on observation and consciousness, and consciousness can thus no longer be ignored by science. Moreover, the belief that consciousness is essential or fundamental is shared by many prominent physicists, as the following quotes show.

In the early twentieth century, Albert Einstein had revolutionized the way we see the world with his theory of relativity. Things are not just made of static matter in the sense of classical Newtonian mechanics – what we perceive as matter is actually a form or expression of subtle dynamic energy evolving in an interdependent space-time continuum. Einstein was also well-known for contemplating spirit:

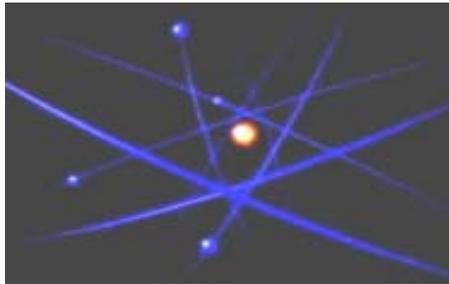
¹⁰⁵ However, according to quantum field theory, the physical vacuum contains fleeting electromagnetic waves and certain particles.



“Every one who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the universe – a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble. In this way the pursuit of science leads to a religious feeling of a special sort.” (Einstein 3, 1936.)

Ernest Rutherford, who, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, is the father of nuclear physics, won the Nobel prize in chemistry in 1908, but performed his major work later in 1911, when he introduced a new model of matter, the Rutherford model or planetary model of the atom, according to which atoms look like tiny planetary systems, with electrons rotating around the nucleus like planets around the sun. What is less known is that this conception was already explained in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.11.13) over 5'000 years ago: *graharkṣa-tārā-cakra-sthaḥ, paramāṅv-ādinā jagat, samvatsarāvasānena, paryety animiṣo vibhuḥ,*

“Influential stars, planets, luminaries and atomic particles all over the universe are rotating in their respective orbits under the direction of the almighty Lord, represented by eternal time.”



Scientists found, that amazingly, in the atom we find the universe reflected. The tiny part is an individual reflection of the complete whole. This principle is expressed by Śrī Caitanya's *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*: The parts and individuals are simultaneously distinct in quantity and non-distinct in quality with the whole, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The closer we look into the part, we shall find the whole, and by knowing the whole, we can understand the part. This principle is also reflected in the material universe in the similarity between microcosm and macrocosm, as it was already explained thousands of years ago by Lord Brahmā: *eko 'py asau racayituṃ jagad-aṅḍa-koṭīm, yac-chaktir asti jagad-aṅḍa-cayā yad-antaḥ, aṅḍāntara-stha-paramāṅu-cayāntara-stham-govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*, “I worship Lord Govinda Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the original Supreme Person, who is eternally one although millions of universes are created by Him. He can do this, because He creates by dint of His potency which is simultaneously different and non-different from Him. All the universes exist in Him and simultaneously He is present in His fullness in every one of the atoms that are scattered throughout the universe.” – *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.35.

Max Planck is considered to be the founder of quantum theory and won the Nobel prize in physics in 1918. He found that energy cannot take on an arbitrary value, but exists only in quantas or packages with a specific whole number value that depends on the frequency of the energy wave. Planck believed that consciousness is the basis of matter. In a speech at Florence in 1944 he declared: “As a man who has devoted his whole life to the most clear-headed science, to the study of matter, I can tell you as a result of my research about atoms this much: There is no matter as such!

“All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind or spirit. This spirit is the origin of all matter. The immortal spirit is the real, true and factual substance of this world, not visible, transient matter!” (Planck, 1944.)



“I regard consciousness as fundamental.
I regard matter as derivative from consciousness.
We cannot avoid consciousness. Everything that we talk about,
everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness.”
(Planck quoted in the Observer, 25 January 1931.)

“Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature.
And that is because, in the last analysis, we ourselves are part of nature
and therefore part of the mystery that we are trying to solve.” (Planck 2, 1932.)

Astrophysicist Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington was the first to prove Albert Einstein’s special theory of relativity. In 1927, he stated (Eddington, 1928, Chapter 13):

“The universe is of the nature of a thought or sensation in a universal Mind.
(...) To put the conclusion crudely – the stuff of the world is mind-stuff.
(...) It is difficult for the matter-of-fact physicist to accept the view that the substratum of everything is of mental character. But no one can deny that mind is the first and most direct thing in our experience, and all else is remote inference – inference either intuitive or deliberate.”

“Recognizing that the physical world is entirely abstract
and without ‘actuality’ apart from its linkage to consciousness,
we restore consciousness to the fundamental position instead of
representing it as an inessential complication occasionally found in
the midst of inorganic nature at a late stage of evolutionary history.”
(Eddington, 1928, p. 332.)

Erwin Schrödinger won the Nobel prize in 1933 for the Schrödinger equation. He is also well-known for his thought experiment, the Schrödinger's cat. He had a life-long interest in *Vedānta* and not only accepted the existence of consciousness, but also proposed the eternity of the mind (Schrödinger, 1969, p. 165):

“Some of you, I am sure, will call this mysticism.
 (...) We may, or so I believe, assert that physical theory in its
 present stage strongly suggests the indestructibility of mind by time.”

Werner Heisenberg was awarded the Nobel prize for his principle of uncertainty in 1932. The process of measuring the position of an electron disturbs the electron's momentum, so that it is not possible to know the values of both the position and the momentum of the electron at the same time; the properties that are not known with precision must be described by probabilities. In India, Heisenberg conversed with Rabindranath Tagore, whose exposition of the Eastern philosophy helped him to understand seemingly contradictory behavior of matter in quantum mechanics. Heisenberg, as well as Wolfgang Pauli, Eugene Wigner, Henry Stapp and other prominent physicists, hold that it is consciousness that causes the wave function of possibilities to collapse into actualities. In his later years, Heisenberg not only acknowledged the existence of consciousness, but also of God or the 'One': “Of course, we all know that our own reality depends on the structure of our consciousness; we can objectify no more than a small part of our world. But even when we try to probe into the subjective realm, we cannot ignore the central order. (...)



“In the final analysis, the central order, or the ‘One’
 as it used to be called and with which we commune in the language
 of religion, must win out.” (Heisenberg, 1971, p. 214.)

“Modern physics has definitely decided in favor of Plato.
 In fact the smallest units of matter are not physical objects in the ordinary sense;
 they are forms, ideas (...).” (The New York Times Book Review, March 8th 1992.)

Niels Bohr discovered the major laws of spectral lines and earned the Nobel prize for physics. In his *Como Paper* of 1927, Bohr explained his complementary principle, that describes matter in a wave-particle duality. On a subtle level, matter does not only behave linear like a localized particle, but also non-linear and multi-local like a wave of possibilities. An experiment can show either the particle-like properties of matter or the wave-like properties, but not both at the same time. This principle, as well as Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty, lead to the assumption that matter will never be fully observable by physical science, at least not in a classical or deterministic way. This indicates a considerable amount of inconceivability, similar to the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*. Bohr studied Vedic literatures such as the *Upaniṣads*. When he was knighted in 1947, Bohr adopted the yin and yang symbol as motif of his family coat of arms, with the inscription *contraria sunt complementa*, “opposites are complementary” – a philosophy that goes along well with *acintya-bhedābheda*. Bohr advocated the existence of consciousness and its exploration. In his own words (Heisenberg, 1971, pp. 88-91):



“We can admittedly find nothing in physics or chemistry that has even a remote bearing on consciousness. Yet all of us know that there is such a thing as consciousness, simply because we have it ourselves. Hence consciousness must be part of nature, or more generally, of reality, which means that, quite apart from the laws of physics and chemistry, as laid down in quantum theory, we must also consider laws of quite a different nature.”

Max Born, a close friend of Albert Einstein, won the Nobel prize in 1954 for his statistical interpretation of the wave function. He said:

“I saw in it [the atom] the key to the deepest secrets of nature, and it revealed to me the greatness of creation and Creator.” (Born, 1957.)

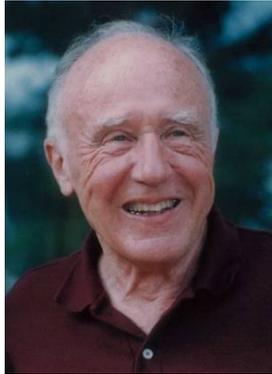
Eugene Wigner, who took interest in the philosophy of the *Vedānta-sūtra*, won the Nobel prize in physics in 1963 for his symmetry principles in quantum mechanics.

“It was not possible to formulate the laws (of quantum theory) in a fully consistent way without reference to consciousness.” (Wigner, 1970.)

David Bohm, who worked closely with Albert Einstein, conceived the theory of non-local hidden variables and the theory of the implicate order. The commonly perceivable manifestations make out the explicate order, which constantly unfolds from its underlying ultimate physical substrate, called the implicate order. The implicate order is hidden and non-local, similar to the Eastern doctrine of *advaita* (see Chapter 9). Another word for *advaita* is *abheda*, which is included in the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Bohm referred to the universe as a ‘holomovement’, invoking an analogy to a hologram, a three-dimensional photograph in which the entire picture is contained in each part. Similar to the hologram, every part of creation contains the entire creation. This reminds of above quoted verse 5.35 of *Brahma-saṁhitā*. Bohm was influenced by Eastern philosophy. He knew the Dalai Lama and had a close relationship with Jiddu Krishnamurti. Bohm considered the existence of a non-physical reality beyond the explicate and implicate order with reference to love, compassion, and similar attributes; he acknowledged transcendence and the dependence of matter on consciousness. In contrast to Western thinking, in which the whole is made out of various parts of matter, Bohm advocated that the physical parts are dependent on the coherent whole, which includes consciousness:

“We have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent ‘elementary parts’ of the world are the fundamental reality, and that the various systems are merely particular contingent forms and arrangements of these parts. Rather, we say that inseparable quantum interconnectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality, and that relatively independent behaving parts are merely particular and contingent forms within this whole.” (Bohm, 1975.) “My main concern has been with understanding the nature of reality in general and of consciousness in particular as a coherent whole.” (Bohm 2, 1980.)

John Wheeler was a theoretical physicist best known for coining the term ‘black hole’ in 1967. In 1979 Wheeler tried to expel parapsychology, calling it a pseudoscience. Wheeler then went through a change of mind. He studied the *Upaniṣads* and came to appreciate Eastern thought. In 1990 he expressed that a non-material source causes the physical world (Wheeler, 1990):



“Every item of the physical world has at bottom
– a very deep bottom, in most instances –
a non material source and explanation.”

“(…) In the quantum principle we’re instructed
that the actual act of making an observation changes
what it is that one looks at. To me, this is a perfectly marvelous
feature of nature. (...) So the old word ‘observer’ simply has to be crossed off
the books, and we must put in the new word ‘participator’. In this way we’ve come to realize
that the universe is a participatory universe.” (q. from Buckley, 1979, pp. 53-54.)

Amit Goswami, a theoretical nuclear physicist professor and member of the University of Oregon Institute for Theoretical Physics since 1968, is well-known for his downward-causation theory, in which he tries to explain with evidence from quantum mechanics and other fields of research, that consciousness is transcendental or non-material and the basis of matter and life. He was inspired by the *advaita* or monistic interpretation of *Vedānta* and termed his philosophy monistic idealism. He is known as a scientist who has the braveness to openly advocate and defend the validity of tabooed phenomena like the existence of God, transcendental consciousness, reincarnation, and the immortality of the soul.



“Quantum physics enables us to see directly that
we can make sense of the world only if we base the world
on consciousness. (...) Consciousness is the ground of being.” (Goswami, 2007.)

Henry Stapp, a leading quantum physicist at the University of California, declared:



“The new physics presents *prima facie* evidence that our human thoughts are linked to nature by non-local connections: What a person chooses to do in one region seems immediately to effect what is true elsewhere in the universe. (...) I believe that most quantum physicists will also agree that our conscious thoughts ought eventually to be understood within science and that when properly understood, our thoughts will be seen to *do* something: They will be efficacious.” (Stapp, 2001.)

“Quantum theory is essentially a rationally coherent theory of the interaction of mind and matter, and it allows our conscious thoughts to play a causally efficacious and necessary role in brain dynamics. It therefore provides a natural basis, created by scientists, for the science of consciousness. (...) In his plenary talk David Hodgson noted that our justice and moral systems are based on the normal ‘folk psychology’ notion of [free will and] personal responsibility for one’s acts. Thus the abandonment of folk psychology, suggested by Patricia Churchland (1986) and others, would undermine the foundation of the social fabric. (...) The quantum theoretical approach to the science of consciousness described here leaves folk psychology essentially intact: It abandons instead, at the foundational level, and on good grounds, folk physics [classical mechanics that dismisses consciousness and thus free will and responsibility].” (Stapp 2, 1996.)

“In that ‘scientific’ vision we human beings were converted from sparks of divine creative power, endowed with free will, to mechanical automata (...). This material picture of human beings erodes not only the religious roots of moral values but the entire notion of personal responsibility (...). This conception of man undermines the foundation of rational moral philosophy, and science is doubly culpable: It not only erodes the foundations of earlier value systems, but also acts to strip man of any vision of himself and his place in the universe that could be the rational basis for an elevated set of values. (...) It is the revised understanding of the nature of human beings, and of the causal role of human consciousness in the unfolding of reality, that is, I believe, the most exciting thing about the new physics (...).” (Stapp 3, 2007, p. 16.)

“Science enters a new phase once it has broken the consciousness barrier, and allows itself to contemplate a description of nature that includes absolute knowledge and mental qualities (...). The basic problem is then to devise a theoretical picture of the totality of nature that includes the material and mental parts as describable features of a unified whole. The Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava ontology could be conceivably useful in this connection. It constitutes a ready-made and reasonably coherent ‘theory of everything.’” (Stapp 4, 1995, p. 41.)

From all the above quotes, it becomes clear that many scientists have not only broken with the ‘taboo’ of consciousness, but they further advocate its exploration, and many even see it as fundamental. As A. N. Mitra, Professor Emeritus of Physics at Delhi University, put it: “You may not like spirituality – but you have to face the experiments.” (Mitra, 2011.) Quantum physicists observe that matter behaves differently depending on how one observes it. Prominent physicists like Heisenberg, Pauli, Schrödinger, Wigner and Stapp believe that it is most likely consciousness that causes the wave function of possibilities to collapse into actualities. The relevance of subjective

consciousness in physics reveals the invalidity of a science that tries to exclude consciousness and subjectivity.

Quantum theory was instrumental to bring about
a renaissance of consciousness and subjectivity in science.

In his lecture on *Physics of Consciousness*, A. N. Mitra figuratively spoke of a “Frankenstein science”. He explained that the inspirations that lead to new discoveries in science mostly did not come from experimentation, but from inspiration in the scientist’s consciousness, and therefore, actually the entire science originates from consciousness. But ironically, science tries to do away with consciousness like Frankenstein’s monster who turned against his own creator (Mitra, 2011). Physical science started off leaving the world of consciousness behind, yet ironically, the deeper the common scientists ventured into matter, the more they were forced by their own observations to acknowledge and explore consciousness and subjectivity. The circle seems to close again.

The traditional or Copenhagen interpretation posits that an observation or measurement causes the wave function of probabilities to collapse into an actual state. Without observation, this does not happen. If the observer was a purely physical entity, such as a Geiger counter, one could write down a bigger wavefunction that described not only the thing being measured but also the observer. That bigger wave function would still not be able to collapse, lacking an observer. This implies that the observer must be non-physical, else collapse would be impossible. This leads to the conclusion that materialism is wrong – and this goes against the mindset of most scientists. From the above quotes we can understand that many scientists in the pioneer times were nevertheless brave enough to point out the need to re-integrate non-physical consciousness. Since then, the tendency to opt for interpretations that allow preservation of materialism is increasing. The most credited of these has been the many-worlds interpretation, despite its sheer absurd claims about reality (people and things branch out with each measurement into different universes in which they continue to exist in different states such as dead or alive). In this book we favor the traditional interpretation, because it allows for the biggest amount of reconciliation both on the material as well as on the spiritual platform, as will be discussed below.

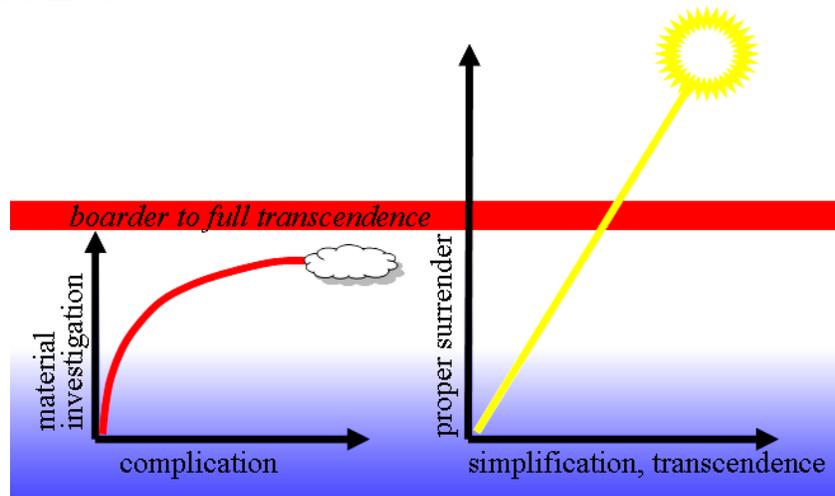
11.2. From Uncertainty to Certainty: The Central Quest of Surrender

Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle and Bohr’s wave-particle duality are examples of theories in quantum physics that indicate that nature may never be grasped and described completely by physical observation, especially not in an objective, deterministic way. Although it seems impossible to ever reach a complete grasp of nature, the scientist is nevertheless driven to continue to explore her more and more. The more subtle nature gets, the more she becomes inconceivable by our gross senses, and the more she refuses to be able to be measured by our gross instruments. Consequently, quantum physicists produce more and more abstract theories full of uncertain possibilities. The founders of these theories often admit not to be able to penetrate them themselves. Nobel Laureate physicist Richard Feynman even stated: “I think I can safely say that nobody understands quantum mechanics.” (Feynman, 1965, Chapter 6.) Foreseeing that more endeavor within the same paradigm will only lead to more confusion, many scientists become open to new paradigms and dimensions of reality.

The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* proposes, that although the underlying nature of the cosmic play is *acintya*, materially inconceivable, it can become revealed by the underlying nature personified, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because the foundation of all being is not just impersonal energy, but personified transcendental energy. One of the major goals of science is simplification, not complication, and the greatest quantum leap of simplification is the step from approaching truth as something impersonal and impotent to approaching truth as the super-

intelligent, omnipotent, transcendental Person¹⁰⁶ (see Chapter 5.1). Suppose we wanted to know in detail how a certain company works on the administrative level – what would be better than making friends with the CEO of that company and have him explain everything from his own point of view? So why not ask God about creation? The fact that there are many conceptions of God and we don't know which one is true is no excuse to stop asking God to reveal Himself as He really is. Just as the sincere common scientist continues his research even under seemingly hopeless conditions, similarly, nothing can stop the sincere spiritual scientist or devotee from his continuous prayer.

Asking the Creator is the most simple approach to truth, but it requires simplicity on our side. Unfortunately, a simple heart is a rare treasure in this age. The material mind whispers: “Who wants to submit to God – let us speculate! Why should He get all the credits – let them honor me and my version of truth!” Our mind first needs to be purified, and this is best done by the process of *sāṅkīrtana*, as explained elaborately in Chapter 15. Only with a purified mind and a simple heart can we approach God. Mitra quotes Goswami: “Since the experimenter’s ‘body’ itself is the field for the purpose, it is necessary that the criterion of purity be extended to this very field – a task not so easy to fulfill.” (Mitra, 2011.) Only with a pure heart can we admit the simple truth; that we are not the omnipotent center of creation but a fully dependent infinitesimal marginal element of creation that can only understand the greatest secrets of life by merciful revelation from God. We must know how to attract the Lord’s mercy. All devotees and devotional scriptures agree on this essential point: The Supreme Lord’s mercy is achieved by proper surrender to Him and His pure devotees. Sadly, this proper surrender goes against the inclination of the materialists, who laugh at surrender, although they constantly surrender to the actually alien faculties of their material mind and material senses, and ultimately to death. By such false surrender, i.e. by mere material investigation, complications increase exponentially, whereas by proper surrender, simplification and transcendence are achieved.



By material investigation into the finer realms of truth, one faces exponentially increasing complications¹⁰⁷.

This rule is especially clearly visible in quantum mechanics, because quantum mechanics deals with subtler spheres of reality. This rule exists because the very basic law of the transcendental reality is exclusive devotional service to God. This law does not allow entrance of even a single thought that is not fully surrendered to the will of God and free from independent motives – what to speak of scientific instruments. The occurring complications deprive the material investigator from

¹⁰⁶ As established in Chapter 5, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is not any man-made or mental god or metaphor or dummy god that only serves certain mental exercises. These pseudo gods can easily be done away by a clear thinker.

¹⁰⁷ Material investigation is the effort of one's own limited sensual and mental capacities to progress in knowledge independent from the mercy of Godhead.

approaching the border of full transcendence. Due to improper surrender to his own mental speculations and material motives, he ends up in an impenetrable cloud of complications. No rocket ship, particle accelerator or genius brain can penetrate that cloud – any effort independent from the mercy of God only makes the cloud darker. In this dense cloud, the material investigator continuously changes from one material paradigm to another and calls it progress, although objectively it is actually a full stall. Subjectively, it is like the dog chasing his own tail and thinking that he is doing great work by creating clouds of dust. The dog chasing his tail usually gets tired from not catching anything substantial despite his full endeavor, and finally surrenders to his master who smiles, brings him home and gives him food. Similarly, the material investigator who comes to his transcendental senses by the precious contact with devotees surrenders to God and a bona fide spiritual master, who bring to completion his surrender. Then only, he is able to break through the border of transcendence and realize the true nature of reality. Sincere science ultimately leads to surrender to God. Spiritual science only differs from physical science in that it starts from the conclusion of physical science. Max Planck expressed this as follows: “Both religion and science require a belief in God. For believers, God is in the beginning, and for physicists He is at the end of all considerations.” (Planck, 1939, p. 184.)

The problem of measurement in quantum mechanics has not been solved, and according to Veda it will never be solved materially, because the very act of measuring or thinking ‘I am the measurer’ is ultimately illusory, especially if one tries to measure the infinite, be it in the macro- or microcosmic world. As evident in quantum mechanics, the very act of devising a scheme of measurement already influences and changes the measured system, thus making truly objective measurement virtually impossible. We can pretend to measure according to our own speculated methods and scales, but in order to arrive at the absolute truth beyond speculation, we neither know what nor how to measure. We measure in seconds and meters, but we don’t know if truth can be measured in this way. Therefore, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī admitted before his spiritual master that he does not know how to inquire about the highest object of life and the process for attaining it, and asked him to kindly explain them to him (*Cc* 2.20.104). Actually, Godhead is the absolute measure. He is ‘das Mass aller Dinge’, a German synonym for ‘quintessence’, literally meaning ‘the measure of all things’. Further, God is the only one who can fully measure the universe from without and within, being the biggest and the smallest, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. God is the sole measurer in the absolute sense. Truth is not to be measured – we are to be measured by Him!

He constantly measures the degree of our sincerity to surrender unto Him, and accordingly rewards us and reveals Himself unto us (*Bg* 4.11). This again leads to the central quest of surrender to God, as illustrated in above graph. God can only be ‘measured’ or bound by transcendental love. He displayed this principle for example in the famous pastime when His mother tried to tie Him to a mortar. No matter how much rope she would bring, it was always short by two fingers. Only when Lord Kṛṣṇa, seeing His mother’s love for Him, out of His mercy willed to be bound, she was finally able to bind Him. The famous lacking two finger lengths of rope stand for God’s mercy and the sincere efforts to lovingly serve God (and thus attract His mercy). These two things are the essential requirements for anybody who wants to grasp the ultimate truth. God or truth personified never submits to any non-devotional attempt to grasp or measure Him, because He is by nature exclusively the object of transcendental love. This makes clear that to think that truth can be measured materially is illusion, *māyā*. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura explains: “*miyate anāya iti māyā* – that which can be measured is called *māyā*.” (Purī, 1998, p. 121.) In other words, matter offers the illusion that it can be measured, and that such measuring will bring knowledge. It seems that quantum scientists are getting an idea of the magic veil of *māyā* when faced with the problem of measurement. The solution to this problem is to surrender to God and to try to serve Him with love, and He will then reveal Himself according to the quality of our surrender. In the concise words of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda:

“Don’t try to see God – act in such a way that God wants to see you!”

11.3. Matter, the Energy Matrix and Mother Durgā

Before beginning various speculations about the unfathomable realm of consciousness, scientists would do well to understand some basic teachings of Veda. Consciousness is the source of matter. Matter is subordinate to life, not vice versa. Seeing consciousness as a mere epiphenomenon of matter is rejected by Veda. Many prominent scientists accept that it is consciousness that causes matter. Erwin Schrödinger stated: “Consciousness is that by which the world first becomes manifest. (...) The world consists of the elements of consciousness.” (Schrödinger, 1958.) But the subtle energy that the quantum scientist analyses is not consciousness; it is still *aparā-prakṛti*, material energy, yet subtle. Certain phases of *aparā-prakṛti* are so subtle that they are very often confused with spiritual energy. *prakṛti*, material nature, is a very complex phenomenon that will only be briefly presented here. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains that He has two main energies: *aparā-prakṛti*, the inferior material energy, and *parā-prakṛti*, the superior energy which is the living entities. Both *prakṛtis* are owned by the Supreme Lord; they are His (*Bg* 7.4-5). The material elements, the material mind, intelligence and false ego belong to God’s material energy (*Bg* 7.4). The living entities, the *jīvas*, are of His superior spiritual energy (*Bg* 7.5).

Material energy is personified as Durgā Devī, who is also called Māyā Devī or simply Devī, the demigoddess of material energy and illusion. Matter is not altogether illusory as the monists or *māyāvādīs* claim; it is real, but binds the living entities in illusion by its bewildering nature called *māyā*. One striking example of the power of *māyā* is that almost all living entities think themselves to be the material body, although it actually has no real connection with the self (see Chapter 2). *aparā-prakṛti*, material energy, being the shadow version of the Lord’s internal spiritual *śakti*, is by nature subordinate to the Supreme Lord’s will and is His eternal servant. She keeps those living entities who want to enjoy separately from the Supreme Lord’s pleasure in material illusion by allowing them to dwell in and misidentify with innumerable material bodies and environments, and she leads those who want to return to their eternal nature of devotional service back to the spiritual realm. Only those who stop regarding material nature and her creation in an exploitive manner will be uplifted by her, and to such persons she may manifest herself in various forms, known as Mā (universal Mother), Devī (universal Goddess), Pārvaṭī, Kālī, Durgā Devī, Māyā Devī (the Supreme Lord’s illusory potency personified) etc. The material universe is called *devī-dhām*, the abode of Māyā Devī, the illusory potency of the Lord. Devī or Kālī Mā is the mother of the material universes and is the shadow counterpart of the spiritual potency of the Supreme Lord, *yoga-māyā*, from whom manifest the spiritual universes.



Interestingly, the ontological link from Devī to matter can also be shown etymologically: the word matter comes from Latin *māter*, mother, origin (Kluge on the German word for matter, *Materie*), which (along with German *Mutter* and English *mother*) originates in Sanskrit *mātṛ*, mother, earth, Durgā Devī (Williams). Material energy consists of the three modes of material nature, *sattva*, *raja* and *tama* (goodness, passion and ignorance), while the spiritual energy is completely transcendent to these and consists of *suddha-sattva*, pure goodness (see Chapter 12, Chart 1). Matter is the mere shadow of a higher reality. This becomes more and more evident to modern scientists. In the words of Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington:

“The frank realization that physical science is concerned with a world of shadows is one of the most significant of recent advances.” (Eddington, 1928, Introduction.)

Since *bhakti*, devotion to the Supreme Lord, is the *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal inherent nature of the living entity, every action of the living entities is either directly or indirectly a manifestation of devotional service. The materialists are worshipping various material things and relations, which are all manifestations of the subtle material energy, and thus the materialists are knowingly or unknowingly worshiping Durgā Devī or Māyā Devī, who is a servant of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. As such the materialist is indirectly worshiping Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the Vedic culture, those with mainly material desires systematically worship Durgā Devī, and in the western culture, they worship Durgā Devī unknowingly. Since the materialist is disinclined to voluntarily worship Lord Kṛṣṇa and His spiritual potency (Rādhārāṇī), He is forced to worship Durgā Devī, the shadow-version of His spiritual potency, in one way or another, because no living being can discard his or her eternal nature of devotion. The material energy is the directress of what we call matter. Material elements form according to specific vibrations of the material energy. The unified form of matter or the principle of material creation is called *mahat-tattva*. The unified form of matter is also expressed by quantum theorists: “All elementary particles are made of the same substance, which we may call energy or universal ‘matter.’” (Heisenberg 3, 1962.) “In the [quantum] vacuum matter is one; and if we don’t see this it’s because we are blinding ourselves to it.” (Bohm 3, 1986, p. 41.) Some physicists like Planck assumed that behind the force that holds all matter together is “(...) a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter.” (Planck, 1944.)

What we usually perceive as matter is a combination of gross particles that form from material energy according to the directions of Durgā Devī. An analogy is the vibrating string of a harp or guitar. A child observing the vibrating string may observe different bodies that change in size, although these phenomena are manifestation of the same string and its specific vibrations. Similarly, with the childish material senses, one observes various individual material bodies, which are in fact manifestations that can be compared to standing waves of the vibrating matrix of the *mahat-tattva*. Scientists are now discovering this unified material energy matrix. Interestingly, just like the term ‘matter’, the term ‘matrix’ has a direct etymological link to Durgā Devī: Late Latin *matrix* means womb, origin (Webster), and is related to Latin *māter*, mother, origin, from Sanskrit *mātr*, mother, earth, Durgā Devī (Williams).

The Supreme Lord explains that matter is real, but that the living entities are not matter; they are spirit souls, who are eternal individuals with the eternal inherent function of devotional service to God. They are of the marginal energy that can either be under the deluding influence of the material energy or under the enlightening guidance of the spiritual energy, in the blissful eternal service of God. Matter is *acit*, without consciousness or life (*SB* 7.3.34), but the conductress of matter is a conscious person, Durgā Devī. Millions of *devas*, demigods, are engaged in guiding the various biological, chemical, atomic and other processes of nature. Just as a human body without the soul inside cannot act and is by definition dead, similarly, matter is by nature *acit*, lifeless, and depends on the vital force of the living entities.

To think that any material body, including the subtle mental bodies, is at any stage alive, is mere illusion, just as it is illusory to think that a hand puppet is alive simply because a hand inside makes it dance. At the end of the human puppet show, the *ātmā*, the life force, leaves the body, just like a puppeteer who pulls out his hand from a hand puppet. No sane man will claim that the puppet died at the end of a puppet show, but when a person leaves the material body, the bewildered people all say that “Person XY died”. This is false in two ways. The first mistake is to mistake the person, the soul, the *ātmā*, for the material body, and falsely think that the soul has died, although the soul merely moved somewhere else. The second mistake is to attribute life to the dead body like a child who attributes life to a puppet in a show. The only business the soul has with matter is that the soul came under the illusory influence of matter. Being of the marginal energy, the soul can also take shelter of the spiritual energy and be reinstated in the soul’s eternal transcendental nature, body and occupation. The soul is simultaneously distinct and non-distinct from God. This cosmic relation is explained by the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*.

The *mahat-tattva*, the unified material principle, is like a matter matrix that manifests innumerable bodies and environments to accommodate the material desires of the living entities. Everything in this matrix is guided by the personified subtle material energy Durgā Devī, who follows the directions of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.44), the universal engineer Brahmā addresses Lord Kṛṣṇa or Govinda with the following prayer: *sṛṣṭi-sthiti-pralaya-sādhana-śaktir ekā, chāyeva yasya bhuvanāni bibharti durgā, icchānurūpam api yasya ca ceṣṭate sā, govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*, “The external potency Māyā who is of the nature of the shadow of the *cit* potency, is worshiped by all people as Durgā, the creating, preserving and destroying agency of this mundane world. I adore the primeval Lord Govinda in accordance with whose will Durgā conducts herself”¹⁰⁸. Here the words *icchānurūpam*, “in accordance with whose will”, are of essential significance. Matter or the material energy matrix, although apparently appearing as such to superficial onlookers, is not an independent, self-determined or random integer!

Matter is conducted after the will of Lord Kṛṣṇa,
and can thus only be truly understood by someone
who is himself one in will with Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The dynamics of matter are directed by a teleosympathetic principle. The nature and movement of any particle or wave is not to be traced out only in its immediate circumstances¹⁰⁹, but only fully grasped if seen in teleosympathetic connection with the omnipresent universal center, the divine will of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Teleosympathy, sympathy or unity with the will of God, is the aim of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. It advocates a transformation of the consciousness of the observer to the goal of dovetailing with the will of God. If this goal is achieved, then the observer will see everything with perfect and complete vision, i.e. in line with the universal master plan, which is the essential logarithm of both the spiritual and material energy matrix, or the subtlest music to which everything dances.

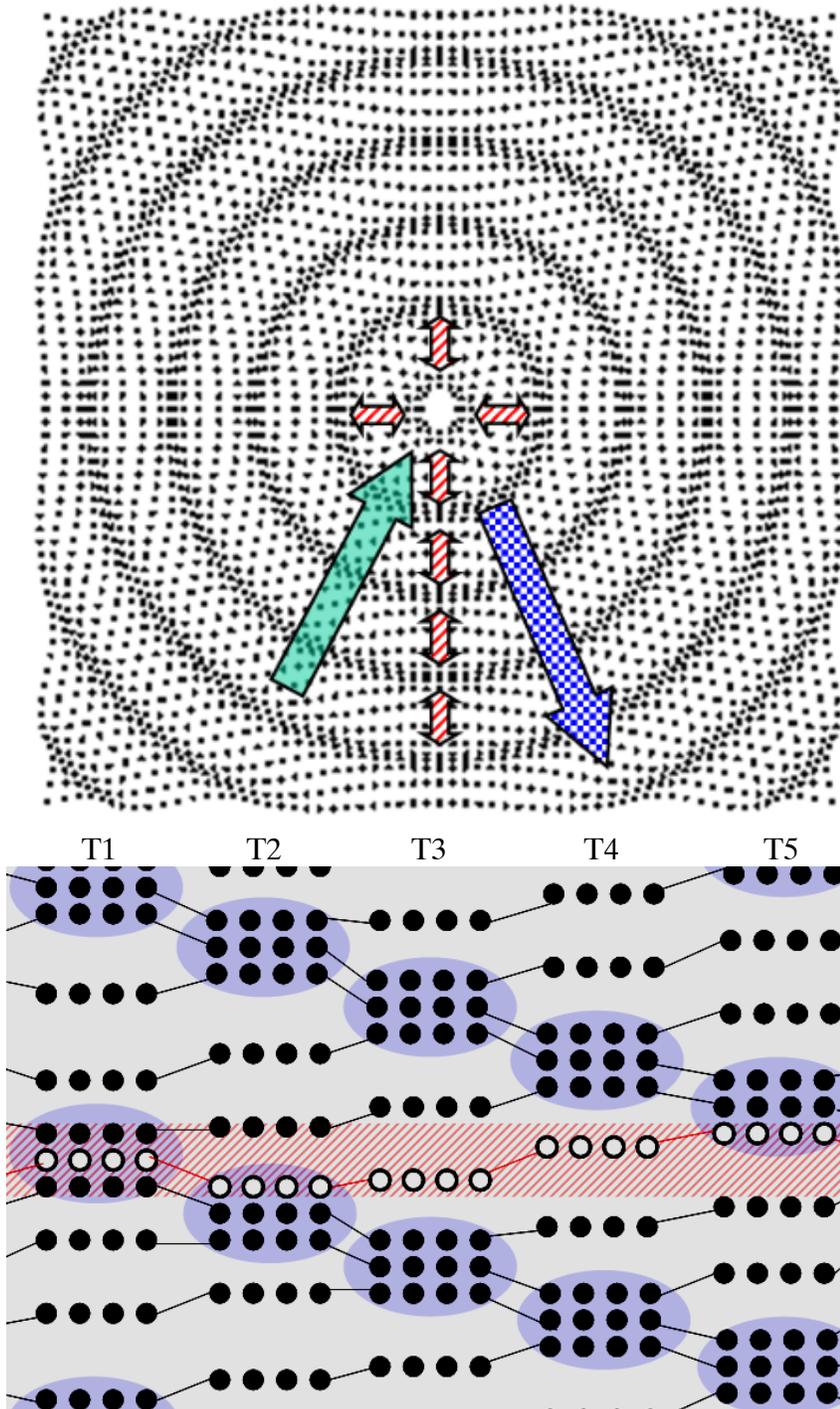
If we observe the phenomenon of classical waves, this may help to understand *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. The following picture is a still picture of a computer animation of a monopole wave. It is recommended that the reader carefully view this animation (free download, 124 KB, from the download section of www.diversityinunison.com). The phenomenon of waves is analyzed in a general way in this section, not with reference to the possibility wave function of particles in quantum theory. In school we learn that a wave does not consist of particles moving from one place to another in the direction of the wave, but of an energy-wave created by oscillating particles that do not move great distances, as will be explained below. However, a significant point here is:

Although we speak of waves of energy, we do not really know
what a wave or what energy is – yet this knowledge is of primary importance.
Its attainment must be recognized as a great necessity of science.



¹⁰⁸ This is also confirmed by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, who explained that there is nothing superior to Him and that matter is His inferior, dependent energy (*Bg 7.4-7.7*).

¹⁰⁹ This is also indicated by the phenomena of non-locality and entanglement in quantum mechanics.



This animation gives the impression of circular waves expanding from the center to the outside (blue tiled arrow). The illustration below shows five different time sequences (T1-T5) of a cut-out of the animation still. The dense groups of particles (marked with blue ellipses) seem to move downwards (respectively outwards) in a wave. But in fact, each particle remains oscillating or swinging up and down (respectively in and out). This is understood by carefully observing one particle in the animation. In the illustration below, we can see that the first particle of the group of white particles does not move down with the wave, but remains oscillating within a small stretch (marked with the dashed red field and the dashed red arrows in the animation-still). When we carefully observe a wave (marked with the blue ellipses), we see that particles are continuously joining in the wave front and leaving in the wave back. We find that although our eyes tend to observe a continuous wave of moving particles, there is no such particle wave. What we see as 'wave' is an optical phenomenon that depends on the synchronized oscillation of particles. We may be tempted to say that it is an energy wave; but then we would have to define what type of energy, and how it can move.

All we can safely say is that the impression of a wave gives evidence of a harmonious synchronism amongst the particles.

We may thus call it the harmony wave, the law wave, or the beauty wave, but we can only speculate about its function and purpose. Instead of choosing the ascending speculative path of knowledge of modern science, we shall now consider the phenomenon of waves according to the descending path of knowledge of Veda:

It is not that the gross particles produce a subtle wave –
it is just the opposite – the subtle waves produce the gross particles!

The material energy is a shadow reflection of the spiritual energy and manifests the material variety through subtle sound waves (described below). These waves decide how the various particles form from subtle energy into matter (= condensed energy) as well as how they behave and move in accordance with the universal enterprise. In an approximating illustration (not to be taken literally – the issue is far more complex), these waves are like the subtlest ‘genetic codes’ that manifest and preserve matter as ‘standing waves’ in the matrix of material energy, and they are like the music to which these particles and the bodies made of particles dance, knowingly or unknowingly. The standing waves are visible as particles and bodies with various individual characters (bodies that include many particles form a new standing wave together). The phenomenon of matter is caused by subtle sound waves, energy in the form of subtle vibration.

If we look more carefully, beyond the superficial waves heading outside, we can observe a general drift towards the center (transparent green arrow). The materially inconceivable pulsing center may be visualized as the will of the Supreme Lord, after whom everything dances, and the particles may be seen as individuals. Their superficial outward movement may be seen as their material expression, leading them away from the center, and their underlying inward movement towards the center may be seen as the *sanātana-dharma*, their inherent drift towards serving the center, the will of God. Let us remember at this point, that the living entities are of the marginal energy of the Lord and can thus take on the qualities of both the material or the spiritual energy of the Lord and experience corresponding realities. If the living entities identify with their material designations and expressions, then they will be distracted from the center of reality and deprived of transcendence. If they identify with their real nature of being eternal servants of God, then only will they be able to follow the underlying essential wave of the *sanātana-dharma* to the center of creation and transcend their material outlook.

The entire material outlook of the material diversity, although consisting of real substance, is illusory because it is not eternal and because it bewilders the soul to identify with it and to believe that its diversity is eternal, while its different bodies are only a temporary manifestation of the same material energy matrix. This can be visualized by the earlier described optical impression of seeming particle waves (in the above animation), which are in reality mere optical impressions produced by harmonious oscillation of particles of a unified particle field. Now let us try another visualization of this animation. This may need some mental practice, but the results will be very helpful. We now visualize all oscillating particles together as the material energy matrix, and the waves as condensed energy that becomes visible as various particles and bodies. The conditioned soul, through the agency of the *ahaṅkāra*, the false ego, identifies with such a wave, which in fact neither has individual substantiality nor any connection to the soul (except that it makes the soul experience certain material impressions according to past *karma* and desires). The previous visualization is easier, because we are habituated to the false paradigm that matter is more substantial than energy, and it is thus easier for us to visualize matter as dots (that seem more substantial) and energy as waves (that seem less substantial). The present visualization is accordingly more difficult, because energy is visualized as a field of dots and matter as waves of condensed energy, but it can help the mind to enter the paradigm that energy is more substantial than matter.

The easier visualization leads to a similar conclusion, because simply by changing the focus, we can visualize how matter is directed by energy (instead of energy being produced by matter). As described earlier, material energy is directed by the will of God. We can thus further visualize how everything in creation dances after the materially invisible will of God, the director of all energy. We may first visualize this in the above animation or in the waves of the sea, and extend it to any phenomenon and manifestation of creation. We must not look for classical waves, but try to see the Supreme Lord’s will and mercy manifesting everywhere at every moment (see *SB* 10.14.8). The universe is created by the will of God (*SB* 7.2.39). By His wish, through His inconceivable energies, He has transformed the material cosmic manifestation (*Cc* 1.7.124). Reality is a combination of *śaktiman* and *śakti*, i.e. the combination of the Lord’s will combined with His internal potency that

fulfills His will. The Supreme Lord's desire is the universal center, and His *śakti* is the potency that creates various realities that are ultimately destined for the Supreme Lord's pleasure. The individuals and elements in creation are in relation to the Absolute according to the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, i.e. they are different in quantity and to a certain extent one in quality; they act individual, yet they possess the potency and essential function of being one in will with God.

The here given visualization of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* by dint of careful analysis of classical energy waves can also be applied to the possibility waves of quantum mechanics and any other phenomenon that involves transfer of energy. The present visualization serves many purposes simultaneously: It discloses *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*; it gives a model of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* that can be applied to any other phenomenon including quantum mechanics, and to close the circle to where we started off; it shows that we don't really know what energy is. Modern physics describes reality as a manifestation of subtle energy, yet scientists don't know what energy really is and how it is controlled. There are many theories, but they all arise from mental speculation and are thus insufficient. Many scientists have expressed that they are not satisfied with the present state of quantum mechanics.

Vedic science teaches that we should accept the version of the Supreme Lord. We should accept *His* vision or *darsana*, the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*. Matter indeed is a manifestation of material energy, and various bodies can be seen as standing waves of the material energy matrix. But material energy is not the final substance, it is merely a distorted reflection of the spiritual energy of the Supreme Lord, and it is completely subordinate to His will. The living entities are not matter, they are of the marginal potency of the Supreme Lord and when they take shelter of the spiritual energy of the Lord, they can realize the ultimate reality beyond the bewildering curtains of *māyā*, the material illusory energy. Veda explains how matter is created from subtle material energy and shaped and transformed by subtle sound vibration. This principle has not yet been sufficiently explored scientifically – there is still a lot of work to be done in this field. There is a lack of scientifically fully accepted evidence¹¹⁰ to prove this principle. Nevertheless, the information in the following four paragraphs are presented as indications of the validity of this principle.



Einstein found that $E = mc^2$. Practically this means that matter or mass (m) is a form of energy (E). Matter is not indestructible as most people still think – it can be transformed into other forms of energy such as heat, motion, electrical or chemical energy. When subatomic particles collide, they can be destroyed and transformed into kinetic energy that is then distributed to nearby particles and/or forms new mass of particles. Quantum mechanics explains that matter manifests from energy – in fact, matter is nothing but a certain state of energy. Some scientists also call this energy vibration. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.85.9 explains that Lord Kṛṣṇa is represented by the sacred first syllable Om¹¹¹, the primeval, non-manifest form of sound, the cause of differentiation of all particular forms, vibrating in the all-pervading ether. Lord Brahmā created the material universe from the seed ingredient Om. The *Bible* mentions: *en arche en ho logos, kai ho logos en pros ton*

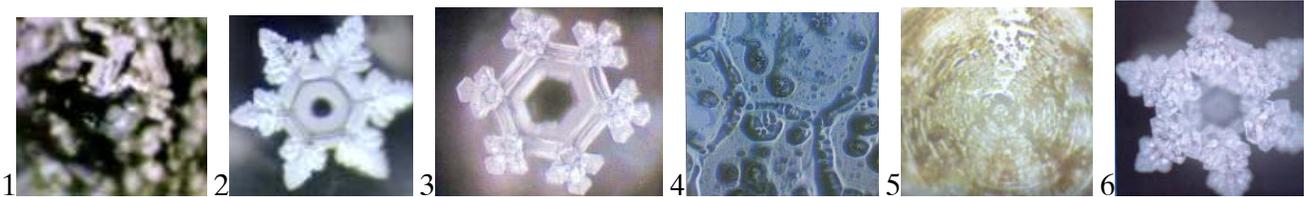
¹¹⁰ The reference here is to evidence accepted by physical science. In the spiritual Vedic science, the quoted transcendental sound vibration of the Vedic literature is accepted as evidence, but we cannot expect common scientists to accept such transcendental evidence without understanding the basic Vedic epistemology explained in Chapter 3.

¹¹¹ With diacritics: *om*. According to the grammar rules of *sandhi* (joining), *a-u-m* becomes *om*.

theon, kai theos en ho logos, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and God was the word.” (John 1:1.) Om is a combination of the three letters *a-u-m*, and is thus pronounced AUM during certain contemplation. Some scholars say that AUM is present in Hebrew Amen¹¹² and Arabic Āmīn (both meaning ‘so be it; truly’) and in the vocal expression of seeking inspiration, ‘Amm..’ (also spelled ‘Hmm..’)¹¹³. The similarity between AUM, Amen and Āmīn is obvious to the ear, and all are used as a powerful positive exclamation of affirmation and consent. Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja explains one meaning of Om as follows: “*omkāra* (...) is the seed of theism. (...) Om means a big Yes. What you are searching for – it is. What your inner heart is hankering after – that is existing¹¹⁴.” (Śrīdhara 2, 1988, Chapter 2, pp. 27-32.) AUM, Amen or Āmīn are all used as auspicious and affirmative sounds at the beginning or end of a phrase, prayer, chapter or book in the Vedic, Hebrew, Christian and Muslim tradition respectively. The *Vedānta* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* both begin with Om, and the most popular *mantra* amongst Buddhists, *om mani padme hum*, begins with Om. The Greek letter Ω (Omega) literally contains Om, is the concluding letter of the alphabet (the O of the byword ‘the A and O’ stands for Omega), and especially its small sign ω looks similar to ॐ, *om* in the classical Devanāgarī script. Hebrew *shalom* means freedom and both words contain Om. The demigod of creation of the ancient Egyptians is called Amen. According to Veda, all in creation comes from Om, and Latin *omnis* means ‘all’, being present in words like omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. This manifold synchronicity or congruence indicates that the sound vibration Om is a super-cultural, universal principle. Creation from sound vibration is considered reasonable by certain scientists.



Above we see particles such as sand or iron dust on a thin platform that vibrates in certain frequencies. We can observe systems that form and move like spinning galaxies (1), planets (2), and different bodies (3), just like we find in the creations of the universe. One may watch the corresponding video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DGPV7SB88c>.



Picture sequence 1: Ice structures of tap water before (1) and after association with the vibration of prayer (2). Water after association with the vibration “Wisdom” (3), “You fool” (4), Heavy-metal music (5). Water from the Rocky mountains (6). © Masaru Emoto.

¹¹² The word ‘Amen’ is also found in languages like Greek, Latin, German and English.

¹¹³ I could not trace out a scholarly source for an etymological or cultural connection between these terms and as such I make no claim of scientific evidence. It is possible, that future research will discover such connections, but it is also possible that different cultures found similar expressions of the same principle individually.

¹¹⁴ Theism – expressed by *om* – is positive, in contrast to atheism, which is pessimistic or negative and cannot satisfy one’s inner thirst (October 4th 1981. See transcription in the Electronic Folio of the Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math).

Dr. Masaru Emoto is known for his photographs of ice crystals¹¹⁵. Water from pure sources develop into symmetric and beautiful crystals, whereas water from polluted places show no development of harmonious structures. Water, even if polluted, develops beautiful crystals after association with prayer and positive words. This association was done by exposing the water samples to sound vibration or written words. These pictures show how matter is shaped through sound and information and how important association with harmonious and positive vibrations is¹¹⁶. They are also a nice illustration for the principle of transformation or entrainment by mental vibration described by Veda. Our own intentions form according to our association (*saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmah*, Bg 2.62); we always attain a nature similar to the nature of our contemplation (*sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitaḥ*, Bg. 8.6); by chanting the transcendental vibration of the holy name of the Supreme Lord, we attain the highest stage of existence, intense love of God (SB 11.2.40).

If we want to transcend the material manifestation to reach its original cause, the best medium is transcendental sound vibration, from which matter was created, and by which matter can be transcended. The *Vedānta-sūtra* 4.4.22 states *anāvṛttiḥ śabdāt*, “By transcendental sound vibration one becomes liberated.” The practical advice of Veda is to engage in *saṅkīrtana*, chanting of the holy name of the Lord, which is the most beneficial and universal process of self-realization for the present age (see Chapter 15). For this reason, Śrī Caitanya started the *saṅkīrtana* movement five-hundred years ago. The Supreme Lord invested all His *śaktis*, energies, into His holy name (Caitanya, 1486-1534. *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam*, Verse 2). Therefore, the best way to understand energy, *śakti*, as well as the controller of energy, *śaktiman*, is to contemplate the holy name; *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*. This holy name is the most powerful transcendental sound vibration (*Kali-Santarana Upaniṣad* 5-6), and is therefore called the *mahā-mantra*, the ‘greatest *mantra*’ (see Chapter 15).

11.4. The Soul/Body Problem

The mind/body problem in quantum mechanics refers to the decision between the premise that the mind is categorically different from the body and the premise that the mind and the body are of the same substance. In the western culture there is no clear distinction between the terms mind and soul, but according to Veda, there is a subtle material mind that is categorically different from the spirit soul, the actual self (see Chapter 3.1). We shall thus use the term ‘soul/body problem’ instead of ‘mind/body problem’ in order to avoid confusion. Soul/body dualism is commonly associated with religion and psychology that usually hold that the soul is different from the body, has free will and survives death. The identification of the self with the body, which I have termed ‘skeletonism’, is commonly associated with physical sciences. The problem that physical science has with soul/body dualism is that the spirit soul escapes the material senses and instruments, and the inclusion of the soul as an entity independent of physical science would thus make science indeterministic and subjective. This problem lead to (A) the Cartesian split of physical sciences dealing only with body and matter and spiritual sciences dealing only with the soul and God, and (B) Skeletonism as a necessity of physical science. Although it was under the conception of skeletonism that physical science has made many discoveries that lead to technical sophistication of humanity, skeletonism ultimately leads to illusion. If all is but matter, then there ultimately is no individual self. This lack of a self is a confidential philosophical reason for why modern science is so hostile to subjectivity – because if there ultimately is no subject, then that cancels out subjectivity. Also, if there is no subject and nothing superior to the material senses and mind, then the search for better sources of knowledge is useless, and one is thus forced to remain submitted to the paradigm of skeletonism.

¹¹⁵ Although Emoto’s work is well-known, it has neither been substantiated nor disproved by other scientists. It would be of value if his experiments were repeated under conditions accepted by the modern scientific community.

¹¹⁶ One may also consider that the verb ‘to form’ is contained in the verb ‘to inform’. The verb ‘to inform’ is derived from Latin *informare*, to shape, form, educate. Information forms. Perceiving is becoming.

Further, if all is but matter, then all is predestined by today's correlation of matter, and then there is no way how we can influence the course of events in life. Skeletonism leads to a materialistic way of life – a life in which there is no individual spiritual self, no free will and no chance to survive the death of the body. To express it dramatically, skeletonism means the living dead. Veda clearly explains how matter is *acit*, lifeless, dead, and the living entity is *cit*, alive, conscious. If the living entity identifies with dead matter, then in blunt language that is mental suicide. If everything is but dull matter without spiritual will-power and soul, then reality is reduced to a lifeless and meaningless random soup – a conception that leads towards lethargy and carelessness. Such a perception of life at least indirectly suggests that we don't have any responsibility, and this could justify any vice¹¹⁷. Further, if we believe that we die at death, then we cannot be motivated for spiritual elevation and service, but rather we will try to enjoy and exploit our environment till our last breath.

On the other hand, the axiom that the soul or self is different from the material body and survives death leads to motivation for spiritual upliftment and service, to responsibility and proper use of free will. With the outlook for material progress, objectivity and determinism, physical sciences have embraced skeletonism, and although this may have lead to certain technical inventions, it has also lead humanity into a spiritual crisis. In quantum mechanics, it becomes clear that the quest for objectivity and determinism cannot be fulfilled on the material platform, because matter interacts with subjective phenomena and exhibits indeterministic characteristics. As the quotes in Chapter 1.1 show, many prominent scientists believe in the existence of a mind or soul which is to some extent different from matter. Because the soul is materially undetectable, anything that has a relation with the soul is termed mystic and thus considered taboo by physical science. Interestingly, some scientists have broken with this taboo and admit that they are now advancing into mysticism. Wolfgang Pauli spoke of “lucid Platonic mysticism” in reference to the laws of quantum mechanics.

One major problem with soul/body dualism is that there seems to be a lack of a link between the realm of matter and spirit. Veda explains that this link or interface is the *ahankāra*, the most subtle material element, the false ego, by which the spirit soul identifies with matter. However, this element is so subtle that it cannot be discovered by material investigation. It is therefore important to acknowledge a cleft between material and spiritual science that can only be overcome by accepting the spiritual paradigm and by the practice of *bhakti*, by which the transcendental truths are revealed through their own potency. The task of trying to include the spiritual science into the physical science or extending physical science to the spiritual realm is impossible, because the spiritual never submits to the material. The task is to accept that physical science, although useful for some things, is only partial, and in order to understand life we must also practice spiritual science. Spiritual and physical sciences must not be intermingled – they should be practiced side by side with an understanding for their respective purposes.

The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* explains that the spiritual reality is *acintya*, materially inconceivable, but it can be revealed by the Supreme Lord's internal potency. Although categorically different (*bheda*), the spirit souls and matter are both different transformations of the same internal potency and thus in one sense also non-different (*abheda*). This explains how relations between the two are possible. Some people say that in order to reach a complete science that includes the material and spiritual sciences, we need to renounce the soul/body dualism, but they don't understand that the thus resulting skeletonism is a purely material concept, and that the material and spiritual sciences cannot be merged because their premises are radically different¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁷ The fact that most people still possess moral and don't just go around looting proves that most people are not entirely under the spell of skeletonism, but to some extent believe in the existence of a spirit soul beyond the material body.

¹¹⁸ Some claim that the renunciation of the material body advocated by transcendental science is against a holistic approach, but they are usually not aware that the transcendental scientists only renounce the misidentification with the

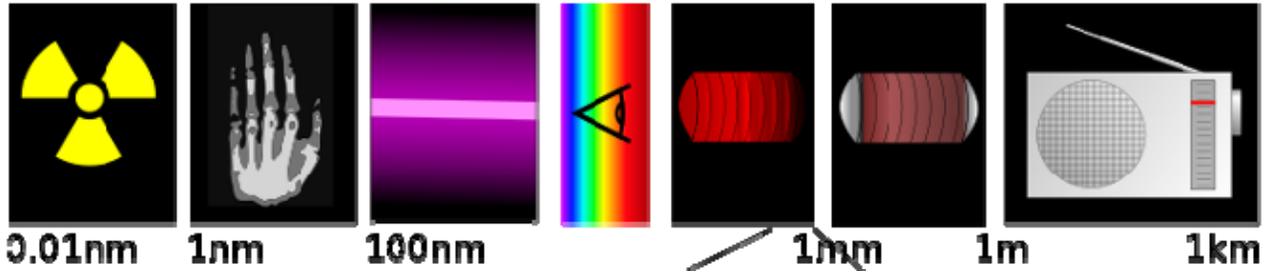
Monism is also not complete because it denies individuality and *rasa*. The truly complete approach is explained by the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, namely that although there are different categories of existence, sciences, etc, they can be harmonized by realizing their common origin and purpose. The solution is not an enforced virtual merging, but a union in quality and will – unity in diversity. The soul/body problem is solved in all respects if we understand the simultaneous difference and oneness of soul and matter according to the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*.

One of the reasons why *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* has not yet been discovered by people in general is that people are mostly taught that Veda ultimately concludes into monism, which is only a partial interpretation. The full-fledged philosophical conception of Veda is expressed in the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, the all-reconciling principle that accommodates both difference and non-difference simultaneously. Interestingly, some quantum theorists have knowingly or unknowingly come close to this principle. Henry Stapp expressed that the quantum ontology creates what he calls a ‘substance-free interactive dualism’. ‘Substance-free’ expresses that the cleft between matter and spirit is filled with consciousness which is not of material substance and thus *acintya*. ‘Interactive’: interaction is only possible where there is a common ground of oneness, *abheda*. ‘Dualism’ means *bheda*. Renowned physicist Freeman Dyson said that “We are small pieces of God’s mental apparatus.” (Dyson, 1988, p. 297.) Henry Margenau, Professor Emeritus of Physics and Natural Philosophy at Yale University, mentioned: “If my conclusions are correct, each individual is part of God or part of the Universal Mind (...) but inflicted with limitations that obscure all but a tiny fraction of its aspects and properties.” (Margenau, 1984, p. 120.) Werner Heisenberg mentioned: “Pauli once spoke of two limiting conceptions, both of which have been extraordinarily fruitful in the history of human thought, although no genuine reality corresponds to them. At one extreme is the idea of an objective world, pursuing its regular course in space and time, independently of any kind of observing subject; this has been the guiding image of modern science. At the other extreme is the idea of a subject, mystically experiencing the unity of the world and no longer confronted by an object or by any objective world; this has been the guiding image of Asian mysticism. Our thinking moves somewhere in the middle, between these two limiting conceptions; we should maintain the tension resulting from these two opposites.” (Heisenberg 4, 1990, p. 811.) Heisenberg correctly found that both objectivity and subjectivity are limited and ask for a synthesis. This is achieved with the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* that harmonizes objectivity and subjectivity in a meaningful interplay by allowing transcendental individuals and unified diversity of creation.

Now let us take a closer look how the transcendental or the non-causal, non-deterministic, non-dual, non-local, non-chronological, can touch and even interact with the mundane or causal, deterministic, dual, local, chronological. In order to understand this intricate issue, we must come from a substance-oriented approach of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* to a teleosympathetic approach of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. The substance-oriented approach explains how different substances relate to each other according to the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*. All substances are simultaneously one and different from the ultimate substance, and this is materially inconceivable. In the consideration of the gross relation we cannot fully harmonize the transcendental and mundane realm; we have to accept that the two realms are simultaneously one and different by dint of the Supreme Lord’s inconceivable potency. This is usually an act of faith, which can only be fully satisfactory when faith reaches a quality where it arises from transcendental realizations, which the common earthling is usually deprived of. However, the consideration of the subtle relation goes straight to the final essence of creation; union in will with God. As explained in different places of this book, the criteria if something is transcendental or mundane, spiritual or material, is not a question of elementary substance or dimensional circumstances, but depends on if something is used in the service to God or not. This means that anything can become transcendental – there is no

material body while still engaging it in the service of Godhead, and that they never dismiss the concept of a body per se, but strive to realize their real transcendental spiritual body, in which only they can serve the Supreme Lord perfectly.

possibility of categorically identifying things as eternally material or spiritual; this depends on the internal affinity of things, which may change in due course of time. It is all about affinity transformation.



A physical analogy to affinity may be seen in frequency and sensibility to certain frequencies. The same harp string, vibrating in different frequencies, produces different sound vibrations, which in turn produce different sensual realms or realities. If its frequency is too high or too low, humans cannot perceive its sound; they can only perceive a limited frequency range. The same thing holds for electromagnetic waves. A different frequency and wavelength of the same principle of electromagnetic waves will result in different realms of phenomenal appearance: Gamma-rays, X-rays, ultra-violet rays, visible light, infrared rays, microwaves and broadcast radio waves. The change of frequency of the same principle results in a transformation of energy which results in a transformation of physical appearance and realms or realities.

Similarly, by a change of affinity, the potency of the Supreme Lord is transformed into various different appearances and realms or realities, some spiritual, some material. The principle of this phenomenon is called *śakti-pariṇāma-vāda*, the theory of energy transformation according to the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava presentation of *Vedānta* (see Chapter 14.2 and Cc 1.7.121, 2.6.170). All forms in creation are composed of the Supreme Lord's *śakti* or energy, and according to that energy's affinity, determination or frequency, it manifests in various realities that we perceive as categorically different (they are actually *acintya-bhedābheda* from the energy). How is energy transformed? By a change of affinity. How is affinity changed? By empathetic attuning to a desired frequency, by resonance or entrainment. For example, if a pessimist empathetically attunes to a realist, or falls in resonance with his affinity or frequency, he will undergo a change of paradigm and perception; no longer will he see the world as utterly hopeless. If we want to transcend the material realm, then the secret of success is to attune to the transcendental affinity, *bhakti*, loving devotion to God. As elaborately explained in Chapter 3, the wise recognize the limitedness of reason and take the help of *śabda*, expert testimony, preferably *apauruṣeya-śabda*, transcendental testimony of transcendental sources such as self-realized sages and Veda, universal transcendental knowledge. Veda establishes that the most efficient way of attuning to the highest possible affinity of *bhakti* is through *saṅkīrtana*, the chanting of the transcendental sound vibration of the Lord's holy names (see Chapter 15).

By attuning to the Supreme Lord's will through *saṅkīrtana*, our affinity is transcended, and so also our energy and entire being. Now, does this mean that we become non-causal, non-deterministic, non-dual, non-local, and non-chronological? Yes and no. The 'yes' is usually understood, but the 'no' is often not, although it is just as essential. 'Yes' means we become non-causal, non-deterministic, non-dual, non-local, and non-chronological internally in terms of *material* conditionings, dualities and dimensions – not altogether! 'No' means we do not give up our *transcendental* relations, individuality and dimensions. This is explained by the principle of unity in diversity. If we want to witness the transcendence of a harp, the quest is not a physical or mental dissolution (the ultimate reduction) of either the physical harp or its mental image, but to simply use that harp to glorify the transcendental Supreme Lord. It is not about reduction (as per the stereotype material academic process) or dissolution (as per the stereotype salvationist process) – these are camouflaged destructive notions. It is about constructive dedication. There is transcendental space and time beyond the conditions of mundane space and time; there is

transcendental individuality, relationship and duality. As long as we are materially conditioned, the transcendental dimensions remain *acintya*, inconceivable, but they are not impossible to hear of because we have the precious treasure of transcendental testimony. We must not renounce this transcendental testimony or ridicule it by interpreting it as merely metaphorical – we must embrace it with a simple heart and become qualified for its factual realization through *sankirtana*.

We can try to theoretically understand the solution of the above mentioned problem of how the transcendental can interact with the mundane. This problem generally arises from the false assumption of absolute discontinuity¹¹⁹. The obvious discontinuity between the two is there in terms of affinity, but not in terms of essential substance. Ultimately, everything emanates from the transcendental Supreme Lord (*Bg* 10.8) and is thus essentially transcendental. But the elements on the material platform generally have a perverted or non-devotional affinity, and are thus in *māyā*, material illusion; they fall prey to material duality and thus suffering. Although the material platform is an illusory perversion of the original spiritual platform, it is not altogether illusory and painful, because it is essentially of the same real and blissful substance, namely the Supreme Lord's transcendental body: "This entire universe, which like a dream is by nature illusory in terms of being temporary, nevertheless appears real, and thus it covers one's consciousness and assails one with repeated miseries¹²⁰. This universe appears real because it is manifested by the potency of illusion emanating from You [Godhead], whose unlimited transcendental forms are full of eternal happiness and knowledge." (*SB* 10.14.22.) It is the affinity for or against the eternal nature (*sanātana-dharma*) of *bhakti*, devotional service to God, that determines what is transcendental and what is mundane. The final *substratus universalis* of all elements in creation is *śakti*, the Supreme Lord's potency. By *śakti-pariṇāma*, transformation of *śakti*, countless different manifestation of energy are produced (see Chapter 14.2). Manifestations of the spiritual energy include the transcendental realm and the *jīvas* or living entities; manifestations of the material energy include gross bodies made of atoms and molecules and subtle bodies (material mind, material intelligence and material ego).

Natural scientists are unable to explain the interaction of mind with matter, what to speak of the interaction of soul with mind and matter. Veda explains that since the *jīvas* and gross and subtle matter are essentially of the same *śakti*, they have a common ground of existence that allows interaction. By regulating the frequency of electromagnetic waves, one can produce either visible light or radio waves. Similarly, by regulating the frequency or affinity of *śakti*, different spiritual and material domains are produced, and thus by a translation of frequency, there can be interaction between various domains. However, since the Supreme Lord is the only *śaktiman*, wielder of *śakti*, He is the only key holder to major transformations and translations. He alone can bring about change in any element's affinity, be it in terms of substantiality (*sat*), knowledge (*cit*) or happiness (*ānanda*). Minute independence is given to the *śaktis* so they can serve the Supreme Lord voluntarily (lest service would be mechanical). The intelligent *śaktis* utilize their minute independence in accordance with the will of the Supreme Lord according to the teleosympathetic principle of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Durgā, the *śakti* who regulates material energy, is *icchānurūpam* – she conducts herself in accordance with the will of God (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.44, quoted in Chapter 11.3). The materially conditioned *jīvas* are extremely limited as long as they misuse their independence by neglecting their actual duty of *bhakti*. But as soon as they engage in their original nature of *bhakti*, they enter accord or unison with *śaktiman*, and then only, they can understand the nature, interaction and purposes of different types of *śaktis*. An understanding of the nature, interaction and purposes of the elements of creation therefore requires a transformation of our own affinity, which can only take place by associating with those who have a transcendental affinity, namely God, His holy name and His pure devotees.

¹¹⁹ And more precisely from the incapability to accept that transcendence is ultimately an omnipotent (!) Person.

¹²⁰ The partial aspect of substantiality and bliss of material nature captures the non-devotee in illusion, whereas the devotee realizes that they arise from the transcendental nature, and is thus not deluded, but inspired for transcendence.

As explained in Chapter 3.3, it is by the instance of the material ego (*ahankāra*), that the spirit soul identifies with the material mind and body. The *ahankāra* is what ties together different categories of the material manifestation such as material mind and matter. It is the subtlest material element and impossible to be seen or overcome by the conditioned soul. The only way to overcome the *ahankāra* is by the grace of God, His holy name and His pure devotees, who are free from *ahankāra*, and established in their true identity (*svarūpa*) in one of the five *rasas*, relishes of transcendental service to God. The paradox of seeming discontinuity can be dissolved theoretically by the vision of *acintya-bhedābheda*, diversity in substantial unity. For a full understanding, practical unity with God is required. This is best achieved through *saṅkīrtana*.

11.5. The Mental Trap of Monism

Many of the scientists who investigate the material energy matrix commit the grave error of mistaking the subtle material energy for consciousness or spiritual energy. Consciousness is spiritual and categorically different from subtle material energy. It is laudable to acknowledge consciousness, but we must be extremely careful to discern between subtle material energy (which includes material mental functions) and consciousness, which is purely spiritual and beyond any material detection. Confusing one for another can be more harmful than denying consciousness, especially in cases where people go as far as calling the material energy matrix ‘God’. Half-truths are more perilous than the obvious untruth, because half-truths are camouflaged untruths, like Trojan horses or wolves in sheep fur. Some academics, like certain quantum theorists, psychologists and many neurologists, laudably acknowledge and explore consciousness, but make the mistake of thinking that consciousness is material and therefore materially detectable. They thus confuse material mental phenomena of the brain with spiritual states of the soul, which are beyond material observation. Due to lack of Veda, revealed transcendental knowledge, they cannot discern between Godhead, His spiritual energy, the material energy, the marginal energy of the living entities, and various subtle material elements such as time and mind, and thus their speculations are erroneous.

One of the greatest problems is the lack of knowledge about the transcendental realm beyond gross and subtle matter, and the lack of the knowledge that the self is an eternal spiritual individual of the transcendental realm, not a material body. If we combine the illusory skeletonistic paradigm of ‘I am the material body’ with the correct finding that all material bodies including the material minds are scientifically seen like standing waves of an energy matrix, then we arrive at the hazardous conclusion that ‘I am the energy matrix’. Unless scientists reject skeletonism, the scientific findings of quantum mechanics and other subtle sciences will thus help to spread the misconception that ‘I am the energy matrix’, which we may call ‘material monism’¹²¹.

The falsity of (exclusive) monism is dealt with in Chapters 5.5, 9.4, 10 and 14.12. This wrong notion is directly or indirectly advocated not only by certain mystics but also by many renowned scientists like Albert Einstein: “A human being is part of the whole, called by us ‘Universe’; a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings (...) as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness (...) a prison for us. (...) Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison.” (quoted in New York Post, November 28, 1972.) “The true value of a human being is determined by the measure and the sense in which he has attained to liberation from the self.”¹²² (Einstein 3, 1956.) Nobel Laureate Erwin Schrödinger

¹²¹ Materialism belongs to the class of monist ontology; it does not acknowledge any other substance other than matter.

¹²² The quotes following Einstein are too exclusive, but Einstein’s quotes could be saved from the notion of non-dualistic materialism by some additional differentiations, namely: The conception of a false material ego in exclusive separation is like a prison, and liberation means to realize that our real ego is to be (as Einstein rightly mentioned) a separated (spiritual) part of the greater whole, and (in addition) simultaneously, we are inseparable from the whole and united in purpose. Of course, because this seems contradictory if one doesn’t know the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, most people are forced to favor either dualism or non-dualism, instead of unity in diversity.

claimed that “Subject and object are only one. The barrier between them (...) does not exist. (...) There is obviously only one alternative, namely the unification of minds or consciousness. Their multiplicity is only apparent, in truth there is only one mind.” (Schrödinger, 1969, pp. 137-139.) Fred Alan Wolf, former professor of physics at San Diego State University, stated: “There is one mind and one mind only. (...) From the one mind, all minds and all experiences are projected. (...) I am all my projections. (...) All is one.” (Wolf, 1986.)

If a distorted conception of God is added to material monism, then we arrive at (spiritual) monism or *māyāvāda*, the most dangerous limit of non-dualism. The monists claim to be religious, but by saying that all is one, they are actually saying that all are God (thus ‘I am God’), it is just a matter of realizing it. Due to lack of knowledge of *transcendental* dualities and lack of service attitude to the transcendental Supreme Lord, they see *all* states of duality as *māyā*, illusory. The monist notion is usually identified with the school of *advaita* and its most eminent propounder Śaṅkarācārya (see Chapter 9.3), who claimed that *tat tvam asi* (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.8.7) means ‘You are non-different from Brahman, the Absolute’, and that any difference is illusory. This notion was incorporated into various other movements like the New Age movement. The New Age spokesperson Shirley MacLaine for example mentioned that “I feel so close to God, so inspired by His Spirit that in a sense I am God. I see the future, plan the universe, save mankind; I am utterly and completely immortal.” (quoted from Zaehner, 1961, p. 91.) “The universe is made up of our own mental images. I and the universe were one.” (MacLaine, 1990, p. 270.)

There are also countless people who claim that they are God or a divine incarnation, Avatāra, etc. However, unlike bona fide Avatāras such as Śrī Caitanya (see Chapter 6.1), they are neither predicted in the scriptures nor can they exhibit any all-convincing proof of their divinity like Śrī Kṛṣṇa did when He lifted the mountain Govardhan. The unverified claims of being a personal form of God are usually ignored or laughed at by the public, but the impersonal ways of the monist who ultimately says the same thing in an indirect formulation are honored by people of various backgrounds, even of science. The physicist Amit Goswami, who claims that God is scientifically proven and calls his philosophy ‘monistic idealism’, mentioned in an interview (emphasis added): “Consciousness is the ultimate creator of the downward causation, the creator of the illusory separateness of object and subject. (...) *This subject-object split is an illusory manifestation. (...) I am one*; for the sake of experience I become two, or many – but it is only an illusory separateness. I am still one, because this separateness is just an imposition on my oneness.”

In these words, Goswami commits to the philosophy of monism or *māyāvāda* that claims that duality is illusory and only oneness is true. After being asked by the moderator what this now practically means for herself – if she can stop worrying about working and simply create money by willing – Goswami makes a first quantum leap back from monism and admits that such attempts failed in practice: “What did the New Agers do? (...) We superimposed on that this new quantum physics dictum ‘*I create my own reality*’ [which would have to hold true if the individual was really identical with everything], and the first thing that people started ‘creating’ were Cadillacs. (...) They meditated that way (...) Very soon it was recognized that Cadillacs was a little hard (...) we can at least create parking spaces. (...) The ordinary exultation of the New Ager also disappeared until he was forced to face the reality that *there really is no freelance* [because the individual is not identical with everything].” A little later, Goswami makes another quantum leap back from monism and admits frankly: “It’s a dance of both the ego and the quantum self. We cannot disregard the individuality completely. This is where spiritual traditions sometimes make a mistake. They think that God is everything. (...) There is no meaning to the individual, so they denigrate the individual movement. *It is both the movement of the individual and the movement of the whole – it cannot be otherwise.*”¹²³ (Goswami, 2007.)

¹²³ Note the final statement’s affinity to *bhedābheda*: individual–*bheda*, whole–*abheda*.

Since everything emanates from God (*Bg* 10.8), it is not wrong to say that God is everything, provided we know the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* that can reconcile this with the fact that He is simultaneously distinct from creation, and that not everything in creation, although being part of God's energy, is the transcendental omnipotent Supreme Personality of Godhead. Lord Kṛṣṇa says: "By Me, in My unmanifested form, this entire universe is pervaded. All beings are in Me, but I am not in them." – *Bg* 9.4. In fact Goswami's error is the monistic belief of exclusive non-distinction to which he commits in the first place, which really dismisses the existence of the individual. However, Goswami backs out from monism in some points: He admits the tumbling of the monistic castles in the sky when it comes to practice and he also admits the importance of individuality. This quote is a typical example of how the claimed monist cannot be exclusively monistic in practice and is forced to compromise his philosophy in various aspects. This Sachverhalt, relation of facts, was demonstrated wonderfully by Śrī Caitanya in His childhood pastimes (see Chapter 14.12) and later in His philosophical expositions of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*. Śrī Caitanya's philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* presents both aspects – distinction and non-distinction – in their proper and harmonious manifestation.

11.6. Wave-Particle Duality: The Prison of Endless Dismissal and Reformation

As long as we identify with the gross and subtle bodies, we are so much captivated by them that we can say we almost are the material body. Let us, only in this subchapter, consider the self the material body, as per skeletonism. We see that matter behaves uncertainly on the subtle level: it fluctuates between states of countless virtual possibilities (waves of possibilities) and states of actual manifestation (particles). Our body, including the subtle mind and intelligence, is made of such matter. This means that our body on a subtle level is in a constant fluctuation between defined and non-defined states. When returning from non-defined state to defined state, matter manifests newly with a new position that depends upon the circumstances that redefine it according to the observer effect. By the external redefining forces of the material environment, we are constantly destroyed and recreated, dismissed and redefined, killed and reincarnated – and this not only according to mystic thought, but also according to modern physics and philosophy. The Greek philosopher Heraclites is known for his maxim *pantha rei*, "everything is in constant flux – all is fleeting." Material flux takes place on a subtle as well as on a gross level. No one can escape the enforced dismissal of one's material properties at death, and according to many spiritual schools, as long as we are not liberated, we are forced to reincarnate in a new body and environment. This material principle of constant dismissal and reformation also happens on the cellular level (cells are constantly dying and being replaced, as observed by biologists) and on the atomic level, as evidenced by quantum physics. In the words of the Nobel Laureate Erwin Schrödinger: "As surely as she [mother earth] will engulf you tomorrow, so surely will she bring you forth anew to new striving and suffering. And not merely 'some day': Now, today, every day she is bringing you forth, not once, but thousands upon thousands of times, just as every day she engulfs you a thousand times over." (Schrödinger 2, 1964, p. 22.) To put it in simple words: If we identify with the material body, we are constantly dismissed and reformed on all levels of existence.

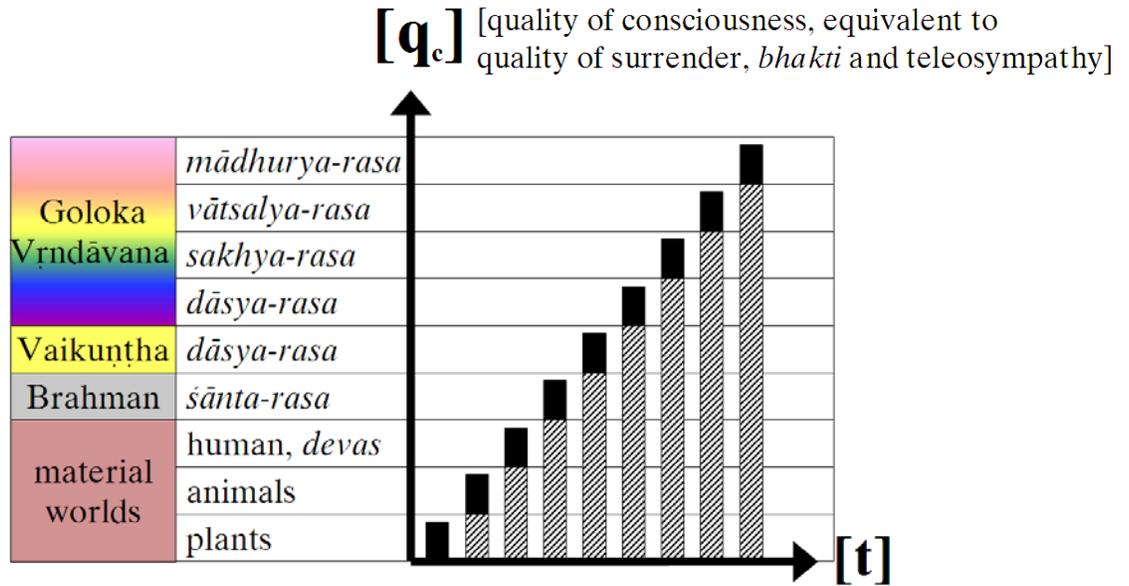
The lesson to be learned or message behind this state of affairs is simple: we are continuously dismissed by the Creator due to our rebellion against Him and against our own nature of service to Him. This dismissal is His mercy on us: He rejects our false egos to enable our re-form-ation, our return to our true identity of fully dedicated devotees. Yet our devotion must be voluntary; we are given free will and choice in order to serve Him lovingly and voluntarily, not like robots. The problem is that we are so much entangled that we don't desire this, and therefore the material energy arranges for the continuity of our illusory existence. We thus think we are the enjoyers, the possessors and the central decision makers, while actually we are simply roaming around in a small cell in the prison of *māyā*. *māyā*'s prison is what I call a true high-tech prison – a prison in which no prisoners are able to get out unless they are fully reformed, because up to that point, they do not

realize that they are imprisoned but think to be at home. This prison requires no guards, because all skeletonists naturally think to be at home in ‘their’ material body, identity, home, society, country, world, mind, intelligence and false ego and cannot realize that these actually make out a multi-layer high-tech prison for those who rebel against their original nature of *bhakti*. The only way out of this high-tech prison is pure desire for *bhakti*, attained from a pure devotee, who is the only truly benevolent reformer. Any mundane so-called ‘reformer’ who cannot give love of God – the one thing required to overcome the material prison – is merely a prison cell reformer. Prison cosmetics is not only futile but also harmful because it makes people more attached to the prison of *māyā*. True reformation, namely the reformation of our *svarūpa*, inherent transcendental identity, is offered by Śrī Caitanya in the form of His *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, which puts things into a more sublime light: We are not the material body, but spirit souls originating in the marginal energy that lies between the spiritual energy and the material energy. By turning towards the spiritual energy, we can reawaken our true spiritual nature of *bhakti*, overcome the material prison of endless dismissal and enter the transcendental realm. The transcendental realm and our *svarūpa* are *sac-cid-ānanda*, eternal, all-wise, and ever-blissful.

11.7. Energy Quanta and Sthāyi-bhāvas, Fixed Levels of Existence

Max Planck found, that energy does not exist arbitrarily, but in packages or quanta with a fixed frequency. As material energy is a transformation of spiritual energy, we can accept a similar principle for the behavior of spiritual energy or soul energy. The scriptures and realized sages confirm that the energy of the soul indeed rests on different fixed levels of consciousness that define a certain state of our whole being, just as various material energy quanta define certain physical appearances of matter. Every living entity is characterized by a certain type of principal vibration or frequency that reflects his present intensity of affinity. That affinity may be seen as his lifestyle, his attitude to life or philosophy of life. On the transcendental platform, there are five permanent affinities or moods of worship called *sthāyi-bhāva*. On the material platform, there are three main fixed categories of consciousness, namely the plant, the animal and the human category. The quality of our consciousness decides which material form or which transcendental *sthāyi-bhāva* we are in. The mind is material and distinguished from the spiritual consciousness by its giving priority to personal motives. The spiritual consciousness gives priority to teleosympathy, serving God’s desires. The increase of quality of spiritual consciousness or intensity of affinity is equal to an increase in quality of surrender, devotional service and teleosympathy. There are five main *rasas*, relishes of relationship with God, and when we are fixed up in one of them, that *rasa* becomes our *sthāyi-bhāva*, permanent affinity or mood of worship of God. According to the Vedic cosmology and ontology, the entire creation is centered around *rasa*, since Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself is the reservoir of all *rasas*, relishable loving relationships (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.7.1). All bodies in creation like atomic particles, molecules, bodies of various species, sub-climates and global climates, all planets and galaxies are created with one objective: to accommodate various *rasas*. For this reason, creation is only understood fully if seen teleosympathetically or in connection with its purpose of giving various *rasas* to God, His devotees and other living entities. Śrīla Bhaktiraṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja explained: “Gold is the mediator between different coins of different nationality. Similarly, *rasa* is the common standard to measure different opinions and different philosophers, ontological conceptions. The *rasa*, *ānandam*¹²⁴, is the common standard of all. No one says ‘I don’t want happiness’. No one says ‘I don’t want to avoid misery’. All are the same there. So, the common standard of measurement is *rasa*; how that *rasa* is developing. Accepting desirable *rasa*, and eliminating undesirable *rasa*. (...) The thief also, when he steals, he gets some pleasure. And another one can give and get pleasure. But there is a qualitative difference between the pleasure of the plunderer and the giver. According to that, the gradation has been awarded.” (Śrīdhara 7. Transcript of his lecture given on January 25th 1982. Paraphrased.)

¹²⁴ *ānandam* means happiness derived from *rasa*, relish of relationships.

Graph 1: Evolution of Consciousness

The evolution of consciousness according to Veda is very complex and only presented here in an abridged form. The point to be presented is that the Vedic science offers a very sophisticated analysis and repeatable exploration of various stages of consciousness. These stages of consciousness attract the accommodation of the soul in corresponding material species or transcendental beings and environments, which can be compared to standing waves of the material or spiritual energy matrix. Similar to the theory of fixed orbits of the electron or the theory of quanta, consciousness remains on fixed levels that define certain beings, until a sufficient increase in quality results in an upgrade to the next level and being. This shall be gradually developed in the following paragraphs.

The above graph shows the idealized evolution of consciousness of a spirit soul, a *jīva*. It is idealized because it shows a continuous ascent, whereas in reality, the *jīva* can ascend and again descend from one life form to the other, and thus always remain in the material worlds. The time variable [t] is not quantified because the ascent of consciousness does not depend primarily on time, but on spiritual progress that arises from spiritual practice and saintly association. Certain upgrades can happen within one life or could take many lifetimes. The difference between the *jīva* in the material and the spiritual world is that in the material world, the *jīva* is covered by a temporary material body, whereas in the spiritual world, the *jīva* is neither materially covered nor conditioned. A *jīva* who has taken birth as a plant due to past *karma* gradually gets upgraded to higher forms of plant life, various stages of animal life, and after thousands of plant and animal lives, attains the rare human birth. Up to the human stage, evolution of consciousness usually happens automatically and very slowly, because the plants and animals are life forms in which the living entity has no chance of intentionally performing spiritual practices. In each stage, the *jīva* burns up a certain range of karmic reactions and is thus upgraded. The evolution of consciousness is not to be confused with the Darwinian evolution of species. Physical science merely examines matter, not the living entity. What Darwin referred to as different species are nothing but various material bodies that serve as vehicles and experience grounds for the *jīvas* according to their *karma*. The theory of spiritual evolution does not deny that natural selection can occur, but points out that the actual evolution is that of the *jīva* inside these species or bodies, which merely serve as temporary sensoramas. Veda explains that all forms or bodies of species (not the *jīvas*) are purposefully and deliberately formed from the material energy by specific sound vibrations by the creator demigod Lord Brahmā after the inspiration and empowerment of the Supreme Lord. These forms or bodies only have life as long as a *jīva* inhabits them, and their sole purpose of existence is to offer the *jīvas* a certain sensorama. The exploration of material evolution is like exploring how bodies of transport like cars and trains

evolved. Much more important and interesting however, is the exploration of the evolution of the passengers, the spirit souls or *jīva*. They are not bound to the material body, but can change from one body to another, just like we can change from a car to a train. The spiritual evolution can only be explored through spiritual science. A complete or holistic science must include both material and spiritual sciences.

The *jīvas* are eternally and entirely spiritual and never material. However, due to their being infinitesimal, they can become covered by the illusory material energy. They become enveloped in a material form or body and identify with it. The degree of material identification and entanglement defines the type of body or in other words the grade of material covering the *jīva* gets. The material covering is determined by the consciousness of the *jīva*. The set of *karma* and material desires acquired in one life of a *jīva* forms a specific consciousness. At the time of death, the departing soul is led to a new body that suits his or her acquired consciousness. A *jīva* who thinks and behaves like a pig will be born as a pig; a *jīva* who develops the consciousness of a *deva* will be born as a *deva*, etc. The *jīva* is given the chance to decide about future birth or even aspire for transcendence. Consciousness is qualified in ascending order in above graph by the variable of its quality [q_c]. The evolutionary progress of individual consciousness is not quantitative, but qualitative¹²⁵. It is equivalent to the person's quality of surrender to God, devotional service and teleosympathy. As explained in Chapter 11, even the atheist is indirectly and unknowingly worshiping the Supreme Lord, for example through being fascinated by manifestations of His material energy, what to speak of a poet who glorifies material nature. In the human life form, the *jīva* has the unique chance to deliberately and scientifically realize and worship the Supreme Lord. According to the quality of our surrender and devotion, we can realize our eternal spiritual self and transcendental loving relationship with the Supreme Lord.

The evolution of consciousness happens in leaps similar to quantum leaps. The leaps of consciousness from plant to animal and from animal to human are evident. The *jīva*'s relationship with God also evolves in leaps. To illustrate this, the leap from servitude to friendship may be compared to a student who develops a friendly relationship with his teacher after graduating. Although becoming friends with his former teacher, the former student, driven by the laws of conduct of the teacher-student relationship, will not dare to address his former teacher in an informal way. At a certain level of friendship however, the former teacher will tell his former student that he should stop calling him 'Sir', and instead call him by his first name. Their relationship evolved in a leap, and all of a sudden, they are on a new level of relationship, just like an atomic particle at once leaps to a higher level of orbit when it has accumulated enough energy.

¹²⁵ This is also indicated by the fact that the more subtle physics becomes, the more physicists are forced to describe phenomena with qualities and less with quantities.

The five main *rasas*: *sānta*, *dāsyā*, *sakhyā*, *vātsalyā* and *mādhuryā*



The various fixed levels of consciousness on the transcendental platform are called *sthāyi-bhāva*. On the threshold of transcendence, the *jīvas* realize the impersonal Brahman effulgence of the Absolute, and some also realize Paramātmā, the Supersoul (see Chapter 5.5). The *jīvas* realize factually, how the entire creation is pervaded by the presence of the divine energy of Brahman, and how all *jīvas* are parts of Brahman. This relish is termed *sāntā-rasa*, the neutral *rasa*, the first of five main *sthāyi-bhāvas*. *sānta* literally means peaceful. At this level, one becomes completely peaceful due to realizing the omnipresence of Brahman and Paramātmā and the eternality of the soul, and one loses all material attachments. “Those who are advocates of *sānta-rasa* attain the region of Brahma-Paramātmā, the seat of eternal peace; those of *dāsyā-rasa* get to Vaikuṅṭha, the spiritual majestic abode of Śrī Nārāyaṇa; those of *sakhyā*, *vātsalyā* and *madhura-rasa* attain Goloka dhāma, Kṛṣṇa’s abode, above Vaikuṅṭha.” – *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.37, purport by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda¹²⁶.

sāntā-rasa remains neutral because it does not include the desire to serve a particular eternal form of God with preference. When such desire awakens, there is another leap of consciousness and one attains *dāsyā-rasa*, the relishment of the relationship of a servant of the Supreme Lord. In the present simplified presentation, this refers to serving Lord Viṣṇu (Śrī Nārāyaṇa) in a majestic way in His abode Vaikuṅṭha. Vaikuṅṭha and Goloka Vṛndāvana are both situated in transcendence, and thus there one can attain a specific *svarūpa*, eternal transcendental identity and form (one is freed from the material mind and attains spiritual consciousness that does not result in a fleeting material form, but in an eternal spiritual form). This is usually achieved after leaving the material body, but some devotees realize their *svarūpa* already on earth. The human form of life gives one the rare chance to contemplate, realize and attain one of the most sublime *rasas* in the transcendental realm. In all transcendental *rasas* there are devotees who eternally remain in that *rasa*, having embraced that particular *rasa* as their *sthāyi-bhāva*, permanent mood of worship, and having achieved their corresponding *svarūpa*, eternal transcendental personage and body. Since the transcendental realm is complete in all respects, the various *rasas* are also complete in themselves and fully satisfying the corresponding devotees. The further increase of intensity of relishment from *dāsyā* to *mādhuryā* is materially inconceivable and described with terms like ‘increasing completeness’.

If further affection and unflinching confidence is added to *dāsyā-rasa*, we arrive at the more intimate level of *sakhyā-rasa*, relishment of the relationship of being the Supreme Lord’s personal friend. Relishment of *sakhyā-rasa* and higher *rasas* necessitate our forgetfulness of the Lord’s divinity in order to serve Him on a more intimate level of equality. This is possible in Goloka Vṛndāvana, in a relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This relationship is less majestic than with Lord Viṣṇu and much sweeter. More intense feelings of protection and compassion are found in the *vātsalyā-rasa*, the relishment of serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa in parenthood, and the intense desire to surrender our entire transcendental being and body to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is found in the *mādhuryā-rasa*, the relishment of the relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa as His lover. “The intensity of affinity is the greatest in the *gopīs* serving their Consort [the *gopīs* serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *mādhuryā-rasa*].” (Bhaktisiddhānta, 1874-1936, p. 112.)

¹²⁶ This abridged description is used in the simplified graph. However, there are also *sānta-rasa* and referential *sakhyā-rasa* in Vaikuṅṭha.

Thus we can see in above graph that an increase of the quality of consciousness or intensity of affinity leads to various levels of *rasas*, indicated with the black peaks of the columns representing the level of quality of consciousness. The level of quality of consciousness, when extending into the transcendental realm, is not measurable or quantifiable with material means, because spiritual dimensions never submit to material senses mechanically. However, the spiritual reality, ultimately the Supreme Personality of Godhead, can become revealed even to a materially conditioned soul if He reveals Himself out of His mercy. Modern scientists, if they are interested in exploring the entire reality, must learn to expand their horizon from the focus on quantity to quality. The question is less how many elements there are, and in which relations they are (this process is never-ending and inconclusive), but what the quality of our own internal attitude and intention is, and what the quality of our relation to the world, the living entities, and God is. By refining the quality of our attitude, we can attain God, and by attaining Him, we attain everything, the complete unquantifiable reality and its full understanding. Human life is a unique chance for the living entity. A human being can deliberately take to spiritual cultivation and transcend the material world. If we miss this rare chance, we may take many births as plants, animals, humans or demigods¹²⁷, but never attain the eternal spiritual worlds.

samsāra, the cycle of material birth, life and death



*bahūnām janmanām ante, jñānavān mām prapadyate,
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti, sa mahātmā su-durlabhaḥ,*

“After many births and deaths, one who is actually in knowledge
surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is.
Such a great soul is very very rare.” – *Bhagavad-gītā* 7.19.

¹²⁷ The demigods are in one sense materially more advanced than humans; in another sense, they are less advantaged than humans, because their sophisticated and extravagant way of life often makes them forget about transcendence, whereas the humans have the best chances for transcendence due to an ideal mixture of negative and positive stimuli. The *devas* are therefore not given an extra category in above graph.

Attaining human birth is very rare, and to actually benefit from the rare chance of human birth by surrendering to God is very, very rare. Since our spiritual progress depends on the quality of our consciousness, the question naturally arises: how can we improve the quality of our consciousness? The Vedic science teaches that this is best done by hearing from pure devotees. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* explains why the transcendental sound coming from the mouths of pure devotees is so effective: *sa uttamaśloka mahan-mukha-cyuto, bhavat-padāmbhoja-sudhā kaṇānilaḥ, smṛtiṁ punar viśmṛta-tattva-vartmanām, kuyoginām no vitaraty alam varaiḥ*, “My dear Lord, You are glorified by selected verses uttered by great devotees. The transcendental vibration from their mouths carries the particles of the saffron dust of Your lotus feet and is like a soothing breeze surcharged with ambrosia, by which the living entity gradually remembers the entire forgotten transcendental truth (the spiritual self, God, and their eternal relationship). My dear Lord, I therefore do not need any other benediction but the opportunity to hear the ambrosial vibration from the mouth of Your pure devotee, that restores the unqualified living entities to their original nature.” – *SB* 4.20.25. Purport by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda: “A pure devotee always engages in the service of the Lord, taking shelter of His lotus feet, and therefore has a direct connection with the saffron mercy-particles that are strewn over the lotus feet of the Lord.”

Simply by proper hearing from pure devotees, we can attain a quality of consciousness similar to theirs, just like in the phenomenon of resonance. The finest particles – beyond the scope of any physicist – are the mercy-particles of the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, and the finest waves are the transcendental vibrations of *saṅkīrtana* from a pure devotee, because they both are part of the mercy-potency, the Supreme Lord’s *acintya-śakti*, the materially inconceivable finest internal potency. These most sublime particles and waves are known to the Vedic scientist since thousands of years – long before the time of quantum mechanics – and it is upon them that everything manifest depends. This precious knowledge can show the direction towards a direct approach to the deepest understandings of reality for quantum mechanics, nuclear science, and any other sciences. The finding of quantum mechanics that what we see as gross matter is actually a manifestation of subtle energy and connected to consciousness can be useful if it is understood and further developed in accordance with Vedic knowledge. The *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* of Śrī Caitanya not only reveals the scientific nature and relations of energy, but also the way to attain a complete understanding of and harmony with all varieties of energy, namely by teleosympathy, sympathy with the will of God, the enjoyer of all kinds of energies. All elements of creation are transformed parts of the Lord’s *śakti*, energy, including the humans. As *śakti* we are to be enjoyed by the Supreme Lord. Any notion against this basic principle of our eternally inherent nature of giving enjoyment to Him will deprive us of the truth in nature. The future of quantum theorists and physicists in general will be bright if they understand energy in this way and help to guide people accordingly.

Another interesting correlation between the atom-model of nuclear physics and the Vedic model of the cosmic creation is as follows: the negative electrons orbit around the positive center, the nucleus, on fixed orbits. This is analogous to the Vedic model, in which the center of the cosmic creation is Lord Kṛṣṇa, the positive, i.e. transcendental male, the possessor of energy, *śaktiman*, and His *śaktis*, energies, the transcendental females, are surrounding and serving Him in various ways. They are compared to honeybees that fly around the lotus flower of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s feet, where they drink the nectar of loving devotional service. The living entities also belong to Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *śaktis*. There is a Vedic custom called *parikramā*, circumambulating one’s object of worship, namely the Supreme Lord and His places of pastimes, His temple compound or the inner shrine of the temple a certain amount of times, making the Lord and His desire the center, and oneself the ‘planet’. This circumambulating, centralizing, and embracing of the Supreme Lord’s desire is a nice practice to contemplate the essence of the Vedic teaching, which, according to the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* of Śrī Caitanya is teleosympathy, sympathy with the Supreme Lord’s desire.

11.8. Entanglement, Disentanglement and Transcendental Connection

Nuclear experiments such as the ones in CERN, the European Center for Nuclear Research in Geneva, have shown that atomic particles, once associated, remain entangled, even if they are separated by great distances. This means that a change in one particle's constitution leads to an immediate similar change in the other particle, although separated from the other particle by a great distance and isolated from any known influence. Today, scientists are forced to consider non-local connections or connections beyond the dimensions of classical physics (see quote of Henry Stapp in Chapter 11.1). Since the plant, animal and human bodies are made of many entangled elements, they are similarly entangled through association. This principle of entanglement is confirmed by Veda¹²⁸. The Vedic literature explains that the body manifests from a certain set of previous deeds (*karma*) and desires (*kāma*). Since deeds root in desires or affinities and desires root in association (*saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmah*, Bg. 2.62), association is very essential, because it is the basis of the entanglement that makes out our entire being¹²⁹.

All living entities are characterized by a certain type of consciousness, vibration or frequency that reflects their present mood. That mood may be seen as their lifestyle, attitude to life or philosophy of life. Veda explains that this mood or dominating desire is achieved by corresponding association with other people, living entities and environments (*Bg 2.62*). This can be compared to the phenomenon of resonance, in which association of certain bodies with another vibrating body invoke a similar frequency of vibration in them. Most people are unaware of the important principle of association-born desires and think that their moods and thoughts are expressions of their own self and own desires. But as long as people are materially situated, their desires are in fact mostly expressions of their *ahankāra*, false ego, which, along with corresponding desires, is manifest from material association. Sometimes we dream of people who, in the awakened state would seem boring to us, such as certain former classmates or business colleagues who we have not seen for decades and never think of them during the day. We dream how we deal with them for example in doing some insignificant homework or business. While in the dream, due to false identification with the relations to these people, we think that what we do is the most important thing in the world, but when we wake up, we realize that our real interest is completely different, and feel that we have acted in a silly way in the dream. Similarly, like in such a silly dream, also in our waking state, our mindset is now shaped according to our association and entanglement with certain people and environments, and by influence of the false ego, we think that the desires arising from our association-born mind are our real desires. In the future, some of our association will change and thus some of 'our' desires, and then we'll look back to our present desires and think that 'Oh, how I have changed!' But the individual spiritual self is changeless and has very specific spiritual desires, yet no material desires at all, for the simple reason that the self is spiritual, not material. The only reason why the spiritual self thinks to have material desires is because of the false ego born from material association. Therefore, we must be most careful and choosy about association. Not for no reason it is said: 'A man is judged by the association he keeps'. Association shapes our desires, and desires shape our *karma*¹³⁰, our actions, which entangle us in certain bodies and environments.

Due to incomplete understanding, some people criticize the doctrine of *karma* to be a vicious circle of endless entanglement that leaves people without hope of deliverance and makes them depend on their own efforts instead of the mercy of God. Although this is true for those who think they are the material body, it is not true for someone who understands the teachings of Veda. Veda

¹²⁸ One may say that this principle supports the teachings of Veda – but it is actually the other way around.

¹²⁹ As explained thoroughly in Chapter 2, the soul is not the material body. But because the soul identifies with it through the agency of the *ahankāra*, the false ego, the soul experiences the world through the material body, and is almost fully conditioned by the material body. As transcendence to the *svarūpa*, the real self, doesn't happen very quickly, we must consider the conditioned state of the spirit soul well and find ways to deal with it properly.

¹³⁰ The westernized term 'karma' is used to express 'destiny brought about by one's own actions' – however the original Sanskrit term *karma* simply means 'action, work'. The result of one's actions is called *karma-phala*.

teaches that the self or soul is beyond the material body and thus beyond karmic entanglement, yet due to the influence of the *ahankāra*, the false ego, the soul cannot let go of the illusion (*māyā*) of misidentifying with material entanglements such as material identities and affinities. The soul is thus bound to the cycle of *saṁsāra*, entanglement in repeated birth, death and sufferings. Although by *karma*, personal fruitive activities, the soul can be uplifted to higher material pleasures, the soul cannot be freed of the cycle of *saṁsāra* by *karma*. For deliverance from *ahankāra*, *māyā* and *saṁsāra*, the soul must depend on liberated personalities, namely God and His God- and self-realized devotees. Godhead Himself assures that although His *māyā* is difficult to overcome, those who have surrendered unto Him can easily cross beyond it (*Bg.* 7.14). This is so because He is the only master of *māyā* (*māyeśvara*, *Cc* 3.5.126). If the conditioned soul does not want to depend on the mercy of God, the soul keeps on being bound up in the web of *māyā*, but as soon as the soul surrenders to God and is willing to be engaged in the soul's own eternal inherent nature of *bhakti*, the soul is liberated from *māyā* and attains the soul's *svarūpa*, eternally liberated transcendental identity. The *svarūpa* of the soul is to be Lord Kṛṣṇa's genuine servant, who shares in Kṛṣṇa's transcendental characteristics of being *sac-cid-ānanda*, immortal, all-wise, and ever-blissful. As long as our *svarūpa* is not attained, we can understand that our desires, moods, thoughts and philosophy of life are mostly the outcome of the *ahankāra*, the false ego. By association with self-realized devotees who vibrate in the mood of pure transcendental devotion to God and have realized their eternal identities, our own original mood of devotion is invoked. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.25.20-24, the Supreme Lord says to Devahūti:

*prasaṅgam ajaram pāsam
ātmanah kavayo viduḥ
sa eva sādhuṣu kṛto
mokṣa-dvāram apāvṛtam*

“Every learned person knows very well that attachment for the material is the greatest entanglement of the spirit soul. But that same attachment, when applied to the self-realized devotees, opens the door of liberation.

“The symptoms of a *sādhu* are tolerance, mercy and friendliness to all living entities. (...) Engaged constantly in chanting and hearing about Me, the *sādhus* do not suffer from material miseries because they are always filled with thoughts of My pastimes and activities. O virtuous lady, these are the qualities of great devotees who are *sarva-saṅga-vivarjitāḥ*, free from all material entanglement. You must seek attachment to such *sādhus*, for this counteracts *saṅga-doṣa*, the pernicious effects of material entanglement.”

The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* advocates teleosympathy, sympathy with the Lord's desires. Due to material desires, the conditioned souls cannot enter teleosympathy directly, but must attain this affinity in the association of *sādhus*. Thus, acceptance of one or many spiritual masters is essential to understand the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, and therefore I have included knowledge of the spiritual master in Chapter 16. The *sādhus* are *nirgranthāḥ*, free from *granthi*, knots of material entanglement (*SB* 1.7.10). Therefore, they are the most capable to manifest our disentanglement. Also, by chanting the holy name, we are freed from material mental entanglement and our *svarūpa* is gradually revealed (see Chapter 15). Only when we have to some extent understood our *svarūpa*, our original spiritual form, can we understand how material entanglement covers the real self like wet grass covers a fire. The principle of entanglement through association is essential to understand the evolution of human existence both in material and spiritual terms. People generally think that we can be changed by mere knowledge. The inventor Nikola Tesla even predicted that information of all people through media like radio will bring world peace. But we have seen that radio, television and internet, although bringing information to the masses, have not brought world peace. This is because knowledge alone is lame – it cannot act without affinity. We may know that killing animals and people is not good – but if we continue to associate

with people who are directly or indirectly killing animals and people, we will be entrained by their bad affinity and act accordingly. Students could learn by reading books themselves. They need a teacher not to read out books to them, but to be entrained by the teacher's affinity, which only gives acting potency and life to knowledge. Of course, the teacher should have the desired affinity, namely the affinity of someone who has realized and practices what he or she teaches.

From nuclear science we learn that atomic particles remain entangled after association, and from Vedic science we learn that this entanglement is guided by the Supersoul who is present within the smallest particles (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.35). Bigger bodies also remain entangled after association, and again, this phenomenon is not mechanical, but guided by the Supersoul, who according to one's desires to worship certain forms, people or demigods, strengthens one's faith in them (see *Bg* 7.21). In Chapter 5.5 I have cited an example how the Supersoul can reunite old friends in seemingly mysterious ways. This happens due to their earlier entanglement through association. It has been explained in this subchapter how the evolution of one's being is mainly determined by entanglement through association. The wisest course is therefore to get fully entangled in the association and service of God and His pure devotees. Then, one's *svarūpa* will manifest and along with it, one's real desires. By associating with self-realized devotees who are transcendently connected (or entangled), we can become materially disentangled and transcendently connected.

11.9. Wave Function Collapse: 'The World at Your Feet' vs. God's Merciful Glance

On the most subtle level, matter can only be described as a wave function of probabilities. The probability wave function collapses into actuality or perceivable matter according to its observation, which must include a non-physical agent (see Chapter 11.1, last paragraph). Some suggestions how this is possible are:

- (1) There is a conscious Controller of matter who interacts with the observer's consciousness.
- (2) Matter itself is conscious and thus able to interact with the observer's consciousness.
- (3) The universe is a creation of the observer's mind and thus dependent on his thoughts.

Veda, eternal universal knowledge, attests the first version; theism. The second, comparatively pantheistic version can be canceled out by understanding how matter is lifeless and dependent on one or many conscious controllers (see Chapter 2). The third comparatively monistic version can be understood to be wrong by the fact that there is unwanted suffering in every conditioned person's life which cannot be avoided by all efforts of mental suggestion. A dream is created by the material mind and can thus be shaped by mere willing during lucid dreaming. Expert lucid dreamers can mentally build themselves castles in their dream, or wake up by mere willing. The fact that even by all mental efforts, such operations are not possible in the awakened state, proves that the material reality is not a product of the observer's mind, but that the observer is subordinate to the cosmic creation as a whole. Ignoring this fact can lead to the perilous monistic misconception that 'I am the Creator'. Other versions have other deficiencies, described in other papers.

If we consider the first version, the version of Veda, then the next question is: who is the controller behind matter who interacts with our approach? He must be someone who can know our thoughts and intentions and control matter on the most subtle levels. From Veda we learn that God witnesses and controls everything from within the living entities' heart as the Supersoul:

*īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām
hrd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati
bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni
yantrārūdhāni māyayā*

“The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone’s heart,
O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities,
who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy.” – *Bg* 18.61.

In the form of the Supersoul, the Supreme Lord knows everyone’s thoughts and is able to interact accordingly (see Chapter 5.5). He is also the source of all creation (*Bg* 10.8) and He is present in His fullness in every one of the atoms (*Bs* 5.35), and can thus control matter according to His will. Matter is a manifestation of God’s material energy, whose personification is the demigoddess Durgā Devī, who conducts herself after His will (*Bs* 5.44). The intricate movements and transformations of matter are directed by millions of *devas*, demigods. All *devas* are servants of Lord Kṛṣṇa and act upon His willing. If we approach reality as mere matter, then we will achieve an impression of reality corresponding to such an approach; if we acknowledge ‘God’, but falsely think that He is under the control of certain material laws, then we will achieve a corresponding image of ‘God’, etc. Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself explained how He interacts with one’s approach to Him: *ye yathā mām prapadyante, tāms tathaiva bhajāmy aham, mama vartmānuvartante, manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ*, “As one surrenders unto Me, I reciprocate accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Prthā.” – *Bg* 4.11. Godhead, the ultimate reality personified, reveals Himself in reciprocation to our level of surrender. He will engage a person who is not surrendered to Him in the fulfillment of that person’s desires and strengthen that person’s beliefs, even if they are not the highest aspirations: *yo yo yām yām tanum bhaktaḥ, śraddhayārcitum icchati, tasya tasyācalām śraddhām, tām eva vidadhāmy aham*, “I am in everyone’s heart as the Supersoul. As soon as one desires to worship some demigod, I make his faith steady so that he can devote himself to that particular deity.” – *Bg* 7.21. Śrī Kṛṣṇa does this although He personally advises His devotee not to worship any demigod (*Bg* 7.23) but only Him, the Supreme Lord (*Bg* 10.8). He acts like this because He has given minute independence to everyone.

If we spend most of our time in observing and being fascinated by matter (we are thus actually unknowingly worshiping the corresponding demigods), thinking that the universe consists only of matter, then Lord Kṛṣṇa will strengthen such a material faith and conception, and we shall accordingly find evidence to support our faith everywhere. In the same way, the capitalist contemplates and thus sees money everywhere, the communist contemplates and thus sees revolution everywhere, the scientist contemplating matter as wave will get according results and the scientist contemplating matter as particle will get according results. This is actually a commonly known principle, as attested for example by the saying “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” The findings of quantum mechanics have shown that the law of conscious reciprocation is also valid in the laboratory of the scientist who so meticulously tries to avoid any subjective interaction, and therefore they may be of value to convince people that matter is guided by conscious beings and ultimately by God. However, those who turn their head away from the sun of truth will not be able to benefit even from the most scientific expositions. God refuses to reveal Himself to the envious, as they would not be able to appreciate Him: *nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya, yoga-māyā-samāvṛtaḥ, mūḍho 'yaṁ nābhijānāti, loko mām ajam avyayam*, “I am never manifest to the foolish [those who reject devotion to God]. For them I am covered by My internal potency, and therefore they do not know that I am unborn and infallible.” – *Bg* 7.25. It is therefore of great importance, that scientists and all other people learn how to approach reality properly. Since the ultimate reality is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, we must learn how to approach Him favorably. This cannot be learnt in the laboratory or by mental exercise. We must get this essential key to reality from a pure devotee, who has this proper attitude and the right vision of reality, the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*.

The common theory that it is consciousness that causes the wave function to collapse into actualities does not yet include the Supreme Consciousness, Godhead, and is thus incomplete. There are doubts about what level of consciousness is required (for example plant, animal or human) and how the cosmos is actualized in the absence of any living entity's consciousness (some physicists go as far as claiming that the moon is not existent if no one looks at it). As mentioned in Chapter 11.4, some people also mistakenly concluded from the theory that human consciousness causes the actualization of matter that "I can create my own reality." All efforts to prove this claim have been frustrated.

The above mentioned problems can be solved if the omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent God, the Supreme Consciousness and Observer, is included. Veda explains that human consciousness has some creative influence on matter, but it is very limited and conditioned by circumstances of the fruits of one's past *karma* and especially by the will of God. Only by His sanction can any actualization take place. In the form of the Supersoul, God is directing the wanderings of all living entities (*Bg* 18.61), and the entire material nature, which is one of His energies, is working under His direction (*Bg* 9.10). The Vedic literature explains that the entire material creation came into being when the Supreme Lord glanced over inert material nature (*ātmā vā idam eka evāgra āsīn nānyat kiñcana miśat sa iṅṣata lokān nu sṛjā iti, Aitareya Upaniṣad* 1.1.1, quoted from *Cc* 2.6.144, purport). *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.24.20 says: *sargaḥ pravartate tāvat, paurvāpyeṇa nityaśaḥ, mahān guṇa-visargārthah, sthity-anto yāvad iṅṣaṇam*, "As long as the Supreme Personality of Godhead continues to glance upon nature, the material world continues to exist, perpetually manifesting through procreation the great and variegated flow of universal creation." *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.26.10 explains, that before creation, matter exists only as *pradhāna*¹³¹, the non-manifested eternal combination of the three modes of nature (see Chapter 12), and when it is actualized or manifested, it is then called *prakṛti*, manifest material nature¹³². These explanations of the genesis of matter from the Vedic tradition is similar to the quantum mechanics theory of the super-positioned state of matter that becomes actualized by observation, and depends on observation to remain actualized.

However, the theistic and the non-theistic explanation of materialization via consciousness are entirely different in approach and effect on human lifestyle. The non-theistic version holds that human consciousness is sufficient for material actualization. This then results in various fallacies, i.e. that we can create our own realities fully independently, a presentation that we may call 'the world at your feet'. Although it is obviously illusory, the general people all like to be told that the world is at their feet. Such notions often include monistic and other self-centered tendencies. By such tendencies, we cannot discover that our fulfillment and vision of the complete reality are achieved only by loving dependence on and service to God. On the other hand, the theistic version explains that nothing can be independently actualized, but that everything depends on the sanction and mercy of God. "Nothing is obtained without the Lord's merciful glance, therefore the *Vedas* enjoin one to worship the Supreme Lord." – *Cb* 1.13.196. The ultimate Observer is the glance of God. It is by the glance of God, that the cosmos was actualized and is still being maintained, and it is also by the merciful glance of God, that somebody can advance in life, become a devotee and realize God and the complete reality. The glances of God are compassionate and full of grace (*SB* 3.28.31). They steal the minds of the devotees (*SB* 10.30.5) and protect their desires (*SB* 10.13.50). With His smiling glances and the sweet song of His flute, Śrī Kṛṣṇa ignites the fire of love of God in His devotee's hearts (*SB* 10.29.35). In Chapter 10 it was explained how the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute carries the will of God, and the same thing can be said about Kṛṣṇa's glances. His will of material creation and spiritual pastimes with His devotees unfold by His mere glance.

¹³¹ The *pradhāna* is different from (A) the earlier mentioned *mahat-tattva*, the unified material principle, in which there already are manifestations and (B) Brahman, in which there are no material modes of nature.

¹³² It was explained in chapter 11.3 that Lord Brahmā creates the universe through transcendental sound vibration. This refers to Lord Brahmā's shaping *prakṛti*, not *pradhāna*. *pradhāna* can only be animated by the Supreme Lord Himself. Lord Brahmā merely plays the role of an employed engineer, not the original creator, animator and actualizer.

The Supreme Lord's glance is personified in the Sudarśana *cakra*¹³³, a large wheel that can be seen on the top of Viṣṇu temples. The first thing one sees from afar when one visits Lord Jagannātha is the Sudarśana disc on His temple. In Jagannātha Purī, Sudarśana is worshipped in a special pillar-like form on the altar along with Lord Jagannātha, Baladeva and Subhadrā. When Lord Jagannātha goes for His yearly car festival, the famous Ratha-yātrā (see Chapter 6.14), Sudarśana is the first to mount the car, followed by Baladeva, Subhadrā and Jagannātha. Sudarśana personifies the merciful glance, the desire and protection of God; Baladeva the spiritual master; Subhadrā the spiritual potency of pure devotion (which is manifest in the Vaiṣṇavas, the devotees of the Lord; Subhadrā Devī is also called Vaiṣṇavī) and Jagannātha the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. From the perspective of the devotees, the sequence of mounting the chariots can be explained as follows: first we should attract the merciful glance of God, Sudarśana. This is best done by teleosympathy, sympathy with His will. Once we sincerely pray to serve God's will (personified in Sudarśana), God happily glances at us and sends His representative, the spiritual master (personified in Baladeva). By the spiritual master's mercy, we can practically dovetail to the will of God and thus attract His spiritual potency, personified in Subhadrā. By the mercy of Subhadrā, we attain pure devotion, by which only we can finally attract Godhead (personified in Lord Jagannātha)¹³⁴.



We can thus again see how teleosympathy is a most fundamental principle in God-realization. Sudarśana is an important key to attain teleosympathy, and teleosympathy is most scientifically advocated by Śrī Caitanya's vision or *darśana* of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Interestingly, Sudarśana literally means 'auspicious vision'; another meaning is 'He who grants *darśana*, vision of the Lord'. These two meanings indicate that if we want to see God, God should first see us, i.e. cast His merciful glance on us. Therefore, we should act in such a way that God wants to see us, i.e. we should worship God with all our love, actions and words. God then casts His merciful glance upon us, and by that glance only can we progress in life and attain transcendental vision. Transcendental vision means to accept God's vision, the vision of *acintya-bhedābheda*, the vision of unity in diversity that advocates unity in will with God. By unity in will with God, His mercy is attracted, and by His mercy only, all perfections can be achieved.



¹³³ "The Sudarśana *cakra* is the glance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead by which He creates the entire material world." (SB 9.5, summary.) Sudarśana is the *icchā-śakti*, the energy of will of the Supreme Lord (see Purī 3, 2010, p. 13).

¹³⁴ To stress the importance of the remembrance of these personalities (in this particular sequence), Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja often quotes the following two verses from the opening of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (1.1.20-21):

*granthera ārambhe kari 'maṅgalācaraṇa', guru, vaiṣṇava, bhagavān, tinera smaraṇa
tinera smaraṇe haya viḡhna-vināśana, anāyāse haya nija vāñchita-pūraṇa*

"In the beginning of this scripture, simply by remembering the spiritual master, the Vaiṣṇavas, and the Personality of Godhead, I have invoked their benedictions. Such remembrance destroys all obstacles and easily fulfills all our desires."

12. Universal Brotherhood and the Underlying Unity of all Religions

Universal brotherhood has always been a big dream of humanity. However, this dream seems to be almost impossible to realize due to the people's different cultures and likings. What makes people brothers and sisters is that they have common parents. By teaching that we are all children of God, religion has the potency to unite us as brothers and sisters. The problem that occurs here is that there are different views of God. As will be presented in this chapter, the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* can harmonize different religions in unity without loss of diversity.

First we should understand the deeper meaning of religion. So far, the term 'religion' was purposely not used much in this book. The reader may ask why I have preferred terms like 'Vedic science' in reference to something that is usually termed religion. The reason is that nowadays the term 'religion' often carries a negative connotation amongst the general populace and is not accepted as a scientific process of self-realization or God-realization¹³⁵. The term 'religion' is perhaps the most misunderstood term of humanity. The misinterpretation of religion has led to numerous adversities. We shall therefore first distinguish between the original understanding and secondary understanding of religion and then harmonize both. The general understanding of religion is "belief in a divine or superhuman power, (...) in any specific system of belief and worship." (Webster.) But religion in its true sense is neither a belief nor a system of belief. The etymological root of the word religion is Latin *religare*, to bind back, composed of *re-*, back, and *ligare*, to bind together (Webster). We find the word *ligare* in terms like ligature, liaison, link and alliance. I would like to propose that *ligare* originates from the Sanskrit verbal root *lī*, which means 'to adhere', 'cling to', 'obtain' (Williams). *lī* is used in religious prayers such as "Let my consciousness, which is like a honeybee, always cling to (*līyatām*) the lotuslike feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu." – Cc 2.6.255. The etymological meaning of 'again binding together' points toward the real understanding of religion:



Religion is the *action* that relinks the soul with God.

In this sense, religion is not just a system of belief, but rather it is the action that re-establishes the soul's eternal relationship with the complete reality, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. True religion is the scientific process of practical God-realization. The etymological meaning of religion corresponds to the Sanskrit word *yoga*. The word *yoga* originates from the verbal root *yuj*, to join, unite. *yuj* is also the origin of the English term 'to yoke', to join together. *yoga* is not simply bodily exercises for good health, nor is the goal of *yoga* to merge into the

¹³⁵ By saying that religion is also a science, we are not watering religion down to something material, but merely saying that it is scientific. There can be a spiritual science that does not have to abide by the empirical rules of natural science. This understanding is important, lest one might think that religion is unscientific.

impersonal Brahman, as the monists claim. The actual goal of *yoga* is to become connected (*yukta*) with God in devotional service. This is confirmed in the Vedic literature: *vāsudeva-parā yogā*, “*yoga* is for realizing Lord Kṛṣṇa.” – *SB* 1.2.28. Lord Kṛṣṇa is *yogyam*, the object of *yoga* (*SB* 11.20.24). The highest *yogī* or practitioner of *yoga* is *yuktatamo*, most intimately connected with God because he has fully dedicated his entire life to Him and renders transcendental loving service to Him with full faith (*Bg* 6.47). The conclusion is that religion or *yoga* means *bhakti-yoga* – rendering devotional service to the Supreme Lord. The goal of true religion is not to believe ourselves liberated by dint of a system of faith, but to factually realize God and our particular service to Him. Since God is transcendental, i.e. beyond material sense perception, this means:

True religion must be transcendental and
enable us to factually realize the transcendental reality.

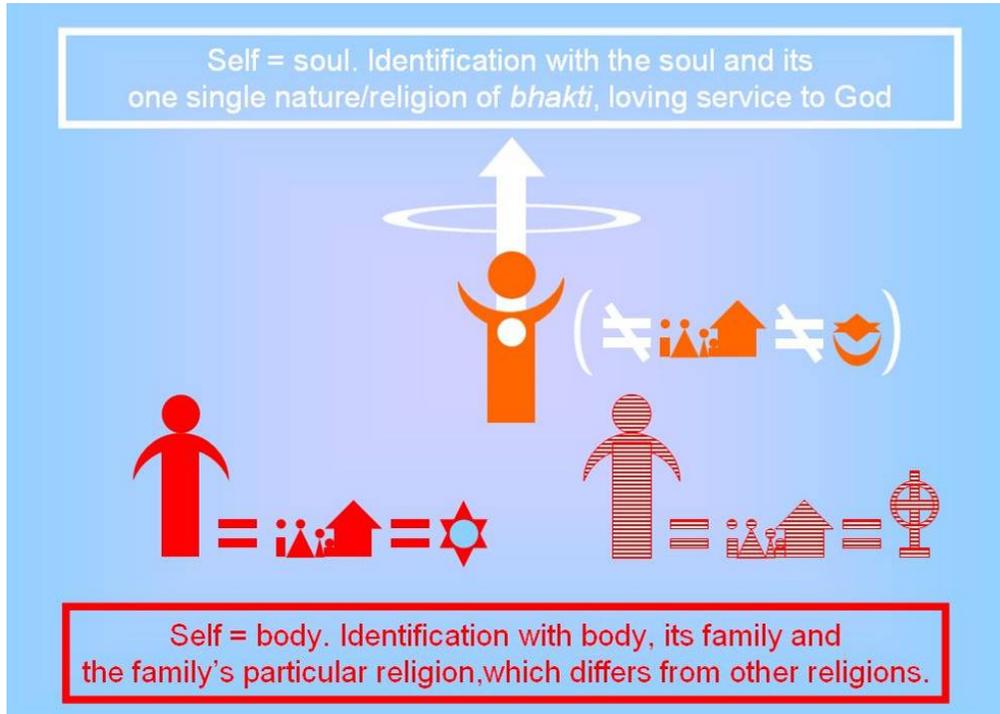
True religion cannot be created in the material realm – it must descend from the transcendental realm and enable us to realize God. God is transcendental, but that does not mean that He is beyond the reach of a sincere devotee. He can reveal Himself to the sincere devotee anytime and anywhere – else He would not be God, the almighty. Accordingly, true religion must cultivate transcendence directly during the stage of practice for anyone who serves God unconditionally. True religion must reveal the entire spectrum of transcendence, namely the Supreme Personality of Godhead, His transcendental name, form, attributes, realm and pastimes, and our own eternal spiritual identity and eternal relationship to God completely.

Any so-called ‘religion’ that claims that transcendence is possible only after death, or only if we submit to a certain institution, is in fact trying to limit the Unlimited. This notion may be caused by various motives such as trying to make an institution the indispensable media of God in order to gain influence, or covering the fact that they themselves and their so-called ‘religion’ cannot bring about immediate transcendence. Although most religions contain transcendental elements, their general practice neither promotes nor enables factual transcendence, and thus they are not religions in the true sense. If anyone promises to give a very hungry man food the next day, he will not be satisfied, but go from place to place until he actually gets food. In the same way, sincere devotees have such an intense yearning to attain God that they will never listen to any uncertain promise, but continuously seek for true religion that can give them realization of God.

Therefore, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.1.2) right from the beginning stresses the need to give up mundane religion or religion that cannot lead to factual God-realization. This advice is meant for those who want to practice the more advanced stages of devotion. Since this doesn’t apply to the general populace, mundane religion also has its justified value, as will be explained later.

All theistic religions believe in an omnipotent God. I have termed this faith ‘potentheism’. Potentheism is not a religion, but the common essential principle of all theistic religions. From potentheism we can deduce other theistic principles like omniscience. Potentheism has the potency to reconcile different views of God (see www.Godbrotherhood.com). One view may be that God is embodied, another that He is not. God, however, can be both, else He would lose His omnipotence. Of course He can also choose not to be in a certain way. He can also appear in one way and have people base their belief and scriptures on that appearance, and then He can appear in another way that contradicts those scriptures. He can also act in ways that transcend human logic; He can simultaneously be one and many, localized and omnipresent, personal and impersonal. He can remain forever beyond our scope, and He can at anytime reveal Himself to us, if He but so pleases. This potency of God to reveal Himself to us anytime is very important to acknowledge, because it establishes the validity and value of transcendental religion – religion that enables us to practically realize God. Thus to attain transcendental religion, it is important that we contemplate potentheism, in other words, we should acknowledge a fully potent God. Besides not allowing full potentheism, another reason for being barred from transcendental religion is skeletonism.

Chart 1: The effect of skeletonism on identification with a certain religion

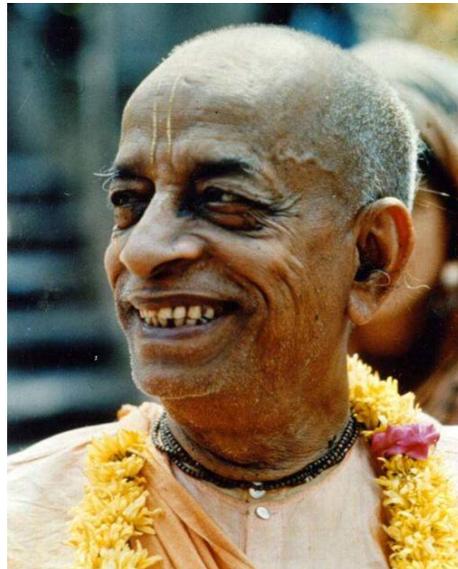


Even if we logically understand the superiority of transcendental religion, we may not be able to give up mundane religion because of skeletonism. Due to identifying with the material body and its relatives, the skeletonists think themselves to automatically be a member of their relatives' culture and religion. In this way, anything that questions their familial belief is rejected without much further thinking. Most people decide to practise a certain religion based on bodily or familial identification rather than by thoroughly examining what the actual best way to attain the absolute truth is. Therefore, even if we put forward the best arguments to promote transcendental religion, we will have great difficulty in convincing those who identify with a certain mundane religion through skeletonism. Ignoring all logic and reason, they continue to defend 'their' religion simply on the basis of bodily identification. So called 'religious wars' are in fact conflicts based on bodily identification and have nothing to do with real religion. For these reasons it is essential to free all people from the illusion of skeletonism – then only will they be able to accept transcendental religion. Only the transcendentalists know, that although their body is related to a particular family and religion, their actual self is not (see above chart). The self or soul is only related to the soul's eternal nature and religion, which is *bhakti*, devotional service to God. Therefore, true religion establishes that *bhakti* is the eternal activity of the soul. The *bhāgavata-dharma* or *sanātana-dharma* fulfils this criteria.

Mundane or transitional religion (*naimittika-dharma*) promises that a minimal amount of religious activities such as attending a meeting once in a week is sufficient in order to attain liberation or paradise, or that we are already liberated once we submit to God or His prophet¹³⁶. But what kind of liberation is mundane religion promising? A liberation that only occurs after death and can thus not be assured while we are alive? Is the almighty God not almighty enough to give us liberation and realization while we are alive? If we really believe in an almighty God, then we must

¹³⁶ In this book, the terms "mundane religion" and "transcendental religion" are not used in a way that classifies any particular faith. They are used in a universal, non-sectarian way, keeping in mind that they both exist to different degrees in most faiths (such as Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, etc.). Similarly, the corresponding Sanskrit terms *naimittika-dharma* and *sanātana-dharma* are used in a universal way. A more elaborate declaration of universality was made in Chapter 3.6 for the term 'Veda'. Since the term 'Veda' is used for universal transcendental knowledge, the same considerations of universality apply to the corresponding universal transcendental practices, occupations or religions.

have full faith that He can do so, and practice a religion that cultivates such an approach. The most basic level of liberation is that we become free from all material desires and misconceptions which cover the self. Consequently, our spiritual self is realized, with which we can constantly perceive and serve God in a way that is at least as real as perceiving and serving a human being. Hence we cannot claim to have attained true liberation if we are not practically God-realized and self-realized. Actual liberation must be factual and requires a practical religion. Śrī Caitanya taught that the vital instruction of the *Vedas* is to strive to attain self-realization without delay – within this very life. Because the human form of life, in which self-realization is possible, is very rare, we should not delay even a moment, but strive for this ultimate perfection immediately (*labdhvā su-durlabham*, *SB* 11.9.29). Śrī Caitanya’s religion of pure *bhakti* enables factual transcendence by the universally accessible process of *saṅkīrtana*, pure chanting of the Lord’s holy name (see Chapter 15). As true religion descends from the transcendental realm, it is completely transcendental and facilitates factual transcendence. This is expressed in the most scientific term for religion; *sanātana-dharma*, the ‘eternal, transcendental engagement of the soul’. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda explains the real meaning of religion in the introduction of his *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, which is the most popular edition of the *Gītā*:



“*sanātana-dharma* does not refer to any sectarian process of religion. It is the eternal function of the eternal living entities in relationship with the eternal Supreme Lord.

“*sanātana-dharma* refers, as stated previously, to the eternal occupation of the living entity. (...) The English word religion is a little different from *sanātana-dharma*. Religion conveys the idea of faith, and faith may change. One may have faith in a particular process, and he may change this faith and adopt another, but *sanātana-dharma* refers to that activity which cannot be changed. For instance, liquidity cannot be taken from water, nor can heat be taken from fire. Similarly, the eternal function of the eternal living entity cannot be taken from the living entity. *sanātana-dharma* is eternally integral with the living entity. (...) That which has neither end nor beginning must not be sectarian, for it cannot be limited by any boundaries. Those belonging to some sectarian faith will wrongly consider that *sanātana-dharma* is also sectarian, but if we go deeply into the matter and consider it in the light of modern science, it is possible for us to see that *sanātana-dharma* is the business of all the people of the world – nay, of all the living entities of the universe.

“Non-*sanātana* religious faith may have some beginning in the annals of human history, but there is no beginning to the history of *sanātana-dharma*, because it remains eternally with the living

entities. Insofar as the living entities are concerned, the authoritative *sāstras* state that the living entity has neither birth nor death. In the *Gītā* it is stated that the living entity is never born and he never dies. He is eternal and indestructible, and he continues to live after the destruction of his temporary material body. In reference to the concept of *sanātana-dharma*, we must try to understand the concept of religion from the Sanskrit root meaning of the word. *dharma* refers to that which is constantly existing with a particular object. We conclude that there is heat and light along with the fire; without heat and light, there is no meaning to the word fire. Similarly, we must discover the essential part of the living being, that part which is his constant companion. That constant companion is his eternal quality, and that eternal quality is his eternal religion.

“When Sanātana Gosvāmī asked Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu about the *svarūpa* of every living being, the Lord replied that the *svarūpa*, or constitutional position, of the living being is the rendering of service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead [Cc 2.20.108]. If we analyze this statement of Lord Caitanya, we can easily see that every living being is constantly engaged in rendering service to another living being. A living being serves other living beings in various capacities. By doing so, the living entity enjoys life. The lower animals serve human beings as servants serve their master. A serves B master, B serves C master, and C serves D master and so on. Under these circumstances, we can see that one friend serves another friend, the mother serves the son, the wife serves the husband, the husband serves the wife and so on. If we go on searching in this spirit, it will be seen that there is no exception in the society of living beings to the activity of service. The politician presents his manifesto for the public to convince them of his capacity for service. The voters therefore give the politician their valuable votes, thinking that he will render valuable service to society. The shopkeeper serves the customer, and the artisan serves the capitalist. The capitalist serves the family, and the family serves the state in the terms of the eternal capacity of the eternal living being. In this way we can see that no living being is exempt from rendering service to other living beings, and therefore we can safely conclude that service is the constant companion of the living being and that the rendering of service is the eternal religion of the living being.

“Yet man professes to belong to a particular type of faith with reference to particular time and circumstance and thus claims to be a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist or an adherent of any other sect. Such designations are non-*sanātana-dharma*. A Hindu may change his faith to become a Muslim, or a Muslim may change his faith to become a Hindu, or a Christian may change his faith and so on. But in all circumstances the change of religious faith does not affect the eternal occupation of rendering service to others. The Hindu, Muslim or Christian in all circumstances is servant of someone. Thus, to profess a particular type of faith is not to profess one’s *sanātana-dharma*. The rendering of service is *sanātana-dharma*¹³⁷. Factually we are related to the Supreme Lord in service. The Supreme Lord is the supreme enjoyer, and we living entities are His servitors. We are created for His enjoyment, and if we participate in that eternal enjoyment with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, we become happy. We cannot become happy otherwise. It is not possible to be happy independently, just as no one part of the body can be happy without cooperating with the stomach [SB 4.31.14]. It is not possible for the living entity to be happy without rendering transcendental loving service unto the Supreme Lord.” (*Bhagavad-gītā*, introduction).

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.6 states: *sa vai pumsām paro dharmo, yato bhaktir adhokṣaje, ahaituky apratihātā, yayātmā suprasīdati*, “The supreme *dharma* for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord.” In his purport, Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda explains:

¹³⁷ *sanātana-dharma* essentially means rendering service to Godhead, not to anybody or anything else. If God is forgotten, *sanātana-dharma* appears in a shadow form, for example in service to objects, nations, non-devotees, etc. However, to render service, either purely or impurely, can never be given up.



“The root meaning of the word *dharmā* is ‘that which sustains one’s existence.’”

The verbal root of the word *dharmā* is *dhṛ*, which means to hold, support, sustain, preserve life (Williams). *dharmā*, religion in the true sense, is not a mere ritualistic duty, dogmatic faith or any other temporary activity; it is the eternal inherent occupation or engagement of the soul. *dharmā* is not only the soul’s essential nature – it is also what sustains the soul’s existence. In short:

dharmā is the life of our life.

Since the Supreme Lord is the source of all existence (*Bg* 10.8), serving Him through *bhakti* is the best *dharmā* or way to sustain our existence, just as watering the root of a tree nourishes the entire tree (*SB* 4.31.14). Therefore, real religion is the universal *sanātana-dharmā*, the soul’s original eternal engagement of *bhakti*, loving devotion to God¹³⁸. It would be of great merit for humanity, if this original, essential meaning of religion would be accepted by one and all. *bhakti* or *sanātana-dharmā* is religion in the highest sense, indistinguishable from life itself. This is explained by Shrivatsa Goswami as follows (*Vb*, BTG #18-09, 1983):

“We can translate the term ‘religion’ as *bhakti*. By religion, I mean the human quest for realization of the Divine. That quest presupposes a relation of man to God. In the religious quest one is, in one manner or another, trying to relate himself to God. That relating to God is itself *bhakti*, and the religious experience itself is *bhakti*. You can call it Hindu *bhakti* or Christian *bhakti* or Islamic *bhakti*. Any religious quest for God is, in essence, *bhakti*. (...) *bhakti* is an eternal human tendency; it is not merely some kind of historical movement arising out of peculiar social and cultural circumstances. Whenever or wherever there have been human beings, there has been *bhakti* in some form or another. *bhakti* is like a river that takes different forms, sometimes widening, sometimes narrowing, and that moves this way and that way at different places and times. (...) There is no clear dichotomy, as there generally is in the Western cultures, between the intellectual/religious sphere and the practical sphere of life. (...) Religion is not a ‘subject’; it is not an academic discipline like physics or chemistry. (...) Everything is religion. Even linguistically, in Indian languages there is no separate word for ‘religion’. Religion is not a separate category. The mode of being is itself religious. Religious conceptions dominate and pervade all dimensions of human life: Family, business, statecraft – everything. The human being is intrinsically religious.”

From the explanations in this chapter we can understand that *bhakti* or *sanātana-dharmā* is the non-sectarian universal essence of all religion. If we ascertain this properly, then it will not lead to sectarian devaluing of secondary religions and occupations. On the contrary, it opens the door to a completely harmonized outlook of all religions and occupations, because one sees how they are all different circumstantial manifestations of the one *sanātana-dharmā*. Thus all living entities are

¹³⁸ Actually the term *dharmā* directly indicates *sanātana-dharmā*, the eternal occupation of the soul. But since the term *dharmā* is often employed for duty or mundane religion, the term *sanātana-dharmā* is used to distinguish eternal from non-eternal *dharmā*.

directly or indirectly serving the same Supreme Personality of Godhead. This internal harmonization is achieved by realizing the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, how the one quintessence is manifest in diversity. As a result we can see how our Lord is present and being worshiped everywhere, either directly or indirectly. “If one goes to someone else’s place of worship one should think, ‘The people are worshipping my Lord, but in a different way.’” (Bhaktivinoda 6, 1886.) All religions are specific manifestations of the one eternal religion of the soul, the *sanātana-dharma*. The Vedic path of upliftment is divided into divisions of step by step approaches to the essential *sanātana-dharma*, each befitting certain natures of material conditioning. These divisions are reflected in various ways in all kinds of religions throughout the world, each revealing a specific way of upliftment suitable for different types of people according to their particular inclinations and attributes. Therefore it would not be wise to forcibly try to drag people away from their particular chosen religious path, as that would hamper their gradual advancement. Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja mentioned in this regard (Mādhava, p. 112):



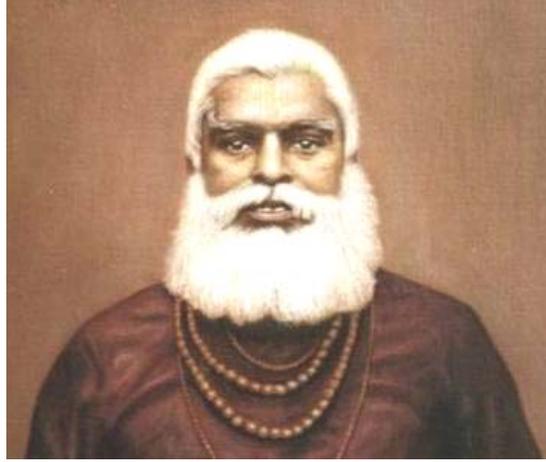
“Want of tolerance makes us sectarian, and that spirit motivates us toward the forcible conversion of others, which brings turmoil and unrest to the world. Religion should give equal scope to all individuals for their respective spiritual development according to their attributes.”

All religions are different approaches to the one eternal nature of the soul, the *sanātana-dharma*. If we see only certain parts of a puzzle, we cannot get the full picture. However, if we see the whole picture, we can recognize any part as an integral element of a single universal principle. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thākura explains the different stages on the Vedic path of spiritual development in the introduction of his *Kṛṣṇa-saṁhita*:

“Engagement in material activities up to the awakening of spiritual activities is called the preliminary stage of God-consciousness. From this preliminary stage up to the *uttama-adhikārī* [highest] stage there are innumerable levels. Inquiring about the truth of the material world is called *śākta-dharma*, because the predominating deity of the material world is goddess Durgā. All behavior and practice instructed in *śākta-dharma* is helpful only in the preliminary stage. Such behavior and practice is meant to bring one closer to spiritual life, and materialistic people may be attracted by this only until they begin to inquire about the Supreme Absolute Truth. *śākta-dharma* is the living entities’ initial spiritual endeavor, and it is extremely essential for people of that level. When the preliminary stage is further strengthened, one attains the next level¹³⁹. One then considers the energy of work and the superiority of heat over dull matter, and one therefore accepts the sun-god [Sūrya-deva], who is the source of heat, as one’s worshipable deity. At that time, *saura-dharma*

¹³⁹ One should consider that spiritual progress is gradual and therefore usually perfection cannot be attained in just one life but may take many lifetimes. This consideration is important in order to see that those who worship God on a certain level for their entire life are nevertheless on the same path of upliftment along with people who follow other paths, rather than seeing them as ‘members of the wrong sect’.

is awakened. Later, when one considers even heat as dull matter and animal consciousness as superior, one attains the third stage, *gāṇapatya-dharma*. In the fourth gross stage, Lord Śiva is worshiped as the pure consciousness of the living entities, and *śaiva-dharma* manifests. In the fifth stage, the consciousness of the living entity worships the supreme transcendental consciousness [Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa], and thus *vaiṣṇava-dharma* is manifest. By nature, there are five types of *paramārthic dharmas*, or spiritual duties, which have been known throughout the world by different names at different times. If one considers all the different *dharmas* that are current in India and abroad, one can see that they certainly fall within these five categories. The religious principles taught by Mohammed and Jesus Christ are similar to the religious principles taught by Vaiṣṇava sects. Buddhism and Jainism are similar to *śaiva-dharma*¹⁴⁰. This is a scientific consideration of truths regarding religious principles.



“Those who consider their own religious principles as real *dharma* and others’ religious principles as irreligion or subreligion are unable to ascertain the truth due to being influenced by prejudice. Actually religious principles followed by people in general are different only due to the different qualifications of the practitioners, but the constitutional religious principles of all living entities are one.

“It is not proper for swanlike persons to reject the religious principles that people in general follow according to their situation. (...) Nonsectarian *vaiṣṇava-dharma* is the living entities’ constitutional, or eternal, religious principle [*sanātana-dharma*].” (Bhaktivinoda 4, 1880, pp. 7-8.)

Vaiṣṇava stalwarts are called Paramahamsas (‘greatest of swans’), swanlike devotees. The quality of swans is that they can extract milk from a mixture of water and milk and drink only the milk. Further, they always remain clean, even if they swim in muddy water. The Vaiṣṇavas are swanlike because they are able to see the ultimate essence, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, everywhere, while remaining undisturbed by unessential elements. Those who understand *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* can see how the Lord’s energies work in various ways concurrently towards the same goal of service to Kṛṣṇa. They are able to properly distinguish between various elements like religions, philosophies, sciences etc; at the same time they have *sama-darsana*, equal vision, in terms of seeing how these elements are all acting in a deeper unity. They are like people who can see back stage of a puppet-show; unlike the general audience, they can see how the puppeteer is making the puppets act in various ways. In other words, the swanlike devotees can see how all is knowingly or unknowingly dancing after the sweet will of the supreme puppeteer Śrī Kṛṣṇa¹⁴¹, and thus they are not bewildered

¹⁴⁰ These classifications are of course not absolute; they are approximations for general comparison. In most religious schools there are elements of at least one of the five mentioned categories. For example, most of those who call themselves Hindus follow a mixture of teachings from many if not all of the five categories.

¹⁴¹ “This world is controlled by the desire of Godhead, just as a puppet dances by the will of a puppeteer.” – SB 10.54.12.

by apparent contradictions between the various elements in creation; their heart ever rejoices in universal harmony, because they see, serve, and relish life's essence everywhere. If more and more people would similarly become swanlike, then universal brotherhood would prevail in humanity.

Śrīla Viśvanāth Cakravārti Ṭhākura gave a nice analogy that explains how the same essential substance is exhibited in different manifestations according to the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*: There are different trees on the bank of the river Yamunā; they all drink the same pure water, but they manifest different fruits according to their respective nature. The mango tree manifests sweet fruits, the tamarind tree manifests sour fruits, and the margosa tree manifests bitter and poisonous fruits. The essentialist, due to seeing how all are existing due to the same vital nutrition, the Yamunā water, knows their common essence. In the same way, due to knowing the common essence of all religions and how it manifests in diversity according to the principle of unity in diversity, the essentialist knows how to harmonize all religions.



Pure light is reflected diversely by different objects. The same pure light, when reflected by the sky, appears blue; when reflected by leaves, appears green; and when reflected by a prism, manifests all colors of a rainbow. Similarly, the one *sanātana-dharma* is reflected in various ways by different people according to their dispositions. When a shock wave wanders through bodies of various substances, it manifests differently, although essentially remaining the same. In a body with only horizontal flexibility, it creates a horizontal wave; in a body with only vertical flexibility, it creates a vertical wave. Similarly, people may convert to a different religion due to change of circumstances, but their essential nature and occupation, the *sanātana-dharma*, remains the same. Conversion is not a change of substance, merely a change of expression of the same substance. The wise are not interested in conversion, but in the essential substance, the *sanātana-dharma*.

The *sanātana-dharma* of *bhakti* is the essence of Veda, universal divine knowledge. This has been established in this book in many ways in unison with the teachings of Lord Caitanya. As mentioned earlier, there are many schools that interpret Veda in different ways, and they have their own scriptures. Just like there are various scriptures within the Vedic traditions that hold different deities to be the supreme deity, similarly, there are numerous scriptures of different religions all over the world with diverse conceptions of the Absolute. One of the good qualities of the Vedic traditions is that their followers can understand that all traditions are manifestations of the one Mother Veda, universal divine knowledge¹⁴². Sages of different Vedic traditions and their followers teach that the various manifestations of the one Mother Veda came into being in order to suit diverse mentalities and conditions of the various kinds of people throughout the world. Because they see all religions as different manifestations of the one Mother Religion, they respect them all; furthermore, they understand their practical value. It would be extremely valuable if followers of all religions could share this understanding. The term 'Veda' means universal divine knowledge beyond external circumstances. Just as God is one, yet manifesting in diversity, so is Veda – knowledge about God. The principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* establishes this most scientifically. If the followers of all religions could understand this universal principle, there would not only be more tolerance of other religions, but moreover respect and appreciation for other religions.

¹⁴² *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.14.5-8) explains, that from the single Veda, the Vedic injunctions manifest in variety to suit different natures of all people of the world, and accordingly, there are different philosophies and traditions.

All scriptures and traditions are like daughters of one Mother Religion, and all forms and concepts of God are like sons of one Father God. Once this principle is realized, despite different views, followers of one particular tradition will respect other traditions as sister traditions, just like despite being of different natures, sisters have natural love for each other, knowing their common mother. Similarly, followers of one particular concept or deity of the one Father God will respect other concepts of God as brother concepts, not as rival concepts. When we realize that all of us along with our beliefs are individual children of the one Mother Religion and one Father God, universal brotherhood is naturally established. It is then no longer merely a sentimental ideology that fails in practice, but it becomes factual reality. For this reality of universal brotherhood to manifest in everyone's heart, it is essential to learn and teach the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, which scientifically establishes how God can simultaneously be one and many. If this understanding lacks a scientific basis, universal brotherhood cannot manifest practically, but will at best remain an ornament of speech.

Energy is manifest in many ways, but ultimately it is one. For example, energy in the form of shock waves manifests differently in various substances. When effecting earth, a shock wave can lead to cracks and even volcanic eruptions. However, although the energy of a shock wave remains the same, it does not have the same effect on water. Similarly, the ultimately one Mother Religion manifests in different cultures in different ways – we cannot expect Her to manifest in all cultures in the same way. Therefore, the essentialists will honor the essentially one Mother Religion everywhere, never decriing any person, religion, culture, science or philosophy. Also, they won't try to enforce the essential practice of the Mother Religion, pure devotion to God or *bhakti* or *sanātana-dharma*, on anyone, as pure devotion can only be achieved by a voluntary transformation of the heart. However, we should not come to the wrong conclusion that the essentialist is not a preacher. If we don't know that *sanātana-dharma* is the Mother Religion, the original and natural engagement of the soul, then we may see it as just one of the many partial religions, and we may see the preacher of *sanātana-dharma* as merely another sectarian preacher. In the following words from the introduction to his book *Art of Sādhana*, Śrīla Bhakti Promode Purī Mahārāja nicely explains how partiality to the universal centre is actually true impartial love for all existence (Purī 2, Introduction):

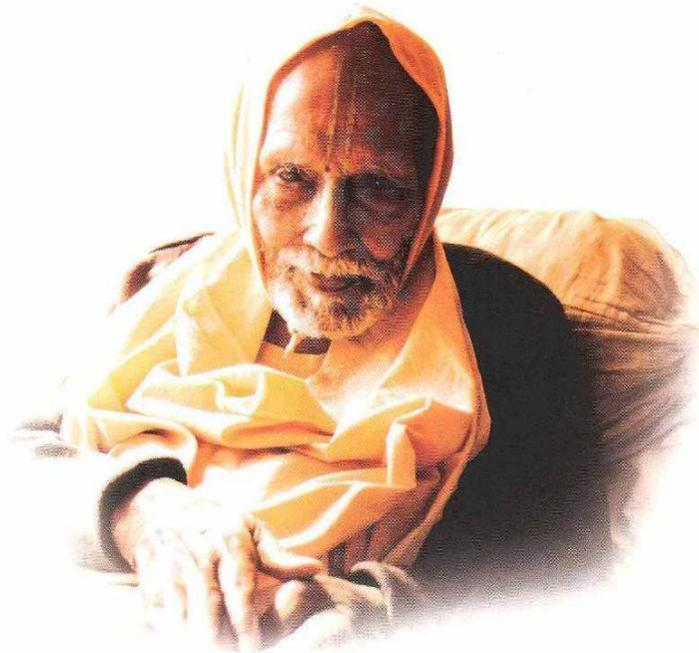
“It has been said that the path of religion is established by God Himself – *dharmam tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam* [SB 6.3.19]. If one has no understanding of this basic principle of spiritual life, no matter how intellectually gifted he may be, his grasp of the truth will be skewed and he will become indifferent to the true, eternal, spiritual religion of the soul [*sanātana-dharma*]. Such persons promote the idea of a secular state where everyone is indifferent to the practice of religion. One should never, however, be indifferent to the true, eternal, spiritual religion.

“The secularist is wrong when he thinks that one who adheres to the supreme truth of spiritual life is affected by a sectarian or ungenerous spirit.

“The Supreme Lord is eternal, true, permanent and everlasting; the living being also has these same qualities. The relationship between them is thus eternal and indissoluble. The Supreme Lord is infinite consciousness. By His omnipotent desire, the atomic conscious particle (the individual living being) is brought into being. Despite this difference – the Lord being infinite and the living being atomic – the aspect of consciousness and spirituality is common to both. Thus the relation of the individual to the Supreme Lord is described as being one of simultaneous oneness and difference. Since it is impossible for one to understand how two things can be simultaneously one and distinct, the Gauḍīya-mahājanas have added the adjective *acintya* or inconceivable to this definition, calling their doctrine *acintya-bhedābheda*. (...) In this world, people have presented many doctrines about spiritual life and religion without an understanding of this basic relation between the individual soul and God. As it is said in the *Bhāgavatam*: ‘Thus, due to their different natures,

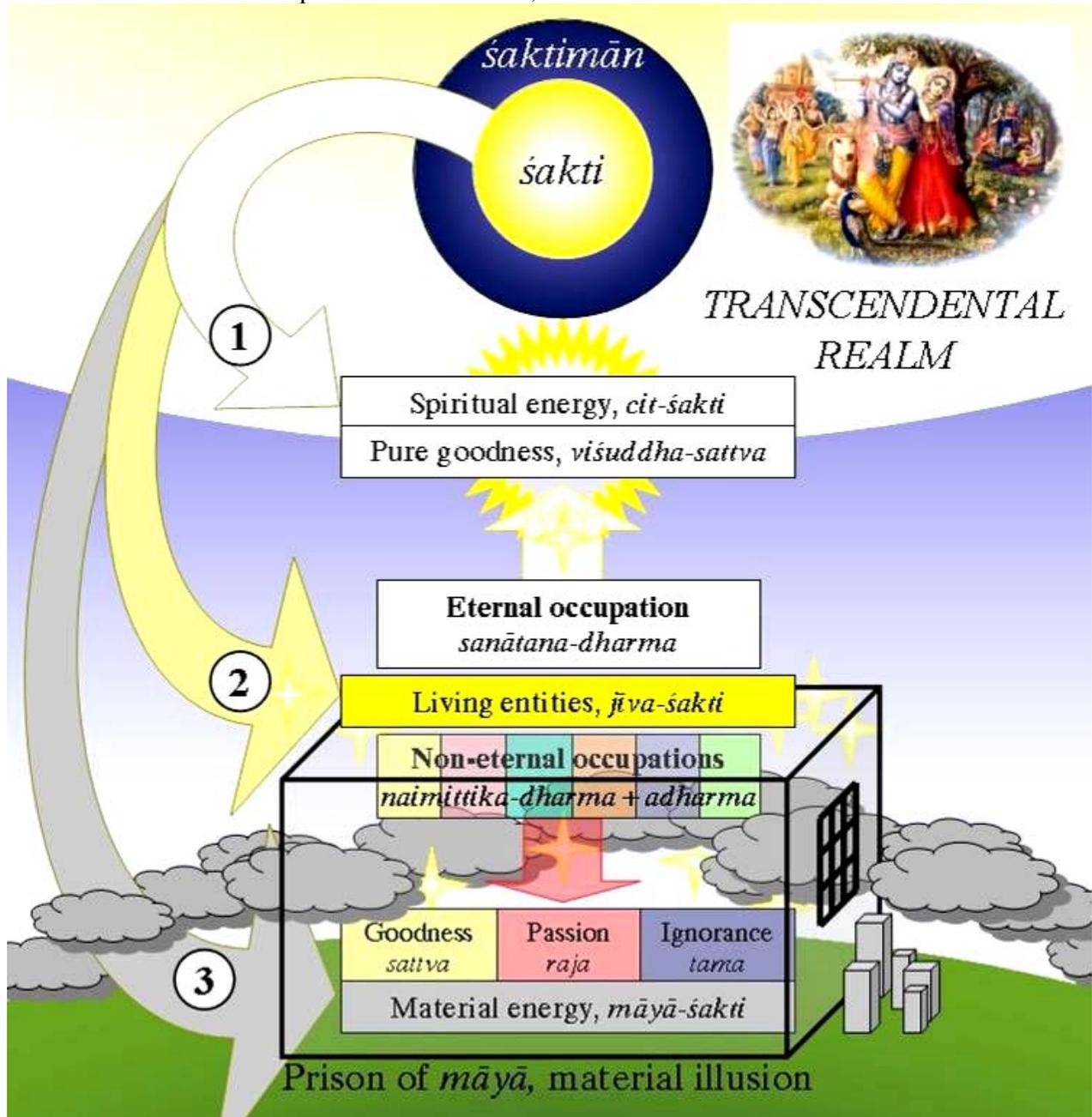
human beings have a variety of different understandings.’ (*evam prakṛti-vaicitryād bhidyante matayo nṛṇām*, SB 11.14.8.)

“Since people are under the influence of the qualities of material nature, namely goodness, passion and ignorance, they differ in their perceptions of reality and thus conflicts inevitably arise between them. Since Mahāprabhu’s religion of transcendental love of God is universal, the secular state should promote it, for under its influence alone can all quarrels and conflicts be eliminated. Mahāprabhu’s religion of transcendental love of God is the unique route to lasting world peace. Only a true saint, fixed in the eternal religion of devotion to the one supreme truth, can harmonize all conflicting points of view and produce lasting peace. Kṛṣṇa is the source of all Avatāras, the complete whole and is all-pervading.



“All apparent contradictions are resolved in Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, the devotee who is exclusively devoted to the Lord is capable of harmonizing all different philosophical positions from his transcendental vantage point. Therefore, when one shows preference to such a devotee, one is in fact following a policy of non-preferential treatment towards any religious denomination.”

We shall now proceed to elaborate on the above mentioned various qualities or modes of material nature that result in different perceptions of reality and occupations such as sciences, philosophies and religions, and how they can ultimately be harmonized in the essential philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*.

Chart 2: Non-eternal occupations¹⁴³ of the soul; their causes and transcendence

The following three paragraphs elaborate on the above chart. According to Śrī Caitanya's philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, the material universe and the living entities are *śakti-pariṇāma*, transformations of the Supreme Lord's potency (see Chapter 13.2). The Supreme Lord is *śaktimān*, the possessor of *śakti*, and *śakti* is the personified internal potency of the Supreme Lord who serves Him in manifold ways. The original *śakti-śaktimān* are Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, God (Kṛṣṇa) and His Absolute Counterpart (Rādhā). The original *śakti* manifests mainly as three types of energies:

- (1) Spiritual energy (*cit-śakti* or *antaraṅga-śakti*)
- (2) Living entities (*jīva-śakti* or *tataṣṭha-śakti*)
- (3) Material energy (*māyā-śakti* or *bahiraṅga-śakti*)

¹⁴³ In this chapter, the term 'engagement' may also be used instead of the term 'occupation'.

The spiritual energy is the pure unalloyed *śakti*. The transcendental realm is manifested entirely from this original *śakti*. The material energy is the perverted transformation of *śakti* and manifests the material universes and all that consists of lifeless matter including various material bodies in which the *jīvas* are encaged. The *jīvas* or the living entities are not lifeless matter – they are purely spiritual. They are a minute part of the Supreme Lord who is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*, the very embodiment of eternality, spiritual consciousness and pure bliss. God is supremely independent. The living entities also possess free will, but it is minute and limited. Thus they are always inferior to the Supreme Lord's spiritual *śakti*, and are therefore in a separate category – the *jīvas*. The *jīvas* are situated between the spiritual energy and the material energy; therefore they are called *tataṣṭha-śakti*, the marginal energy; they can choose to go either way. When they properly utilize their free will, they serve the Supreme Lord under His spiritual energy, and thus become situated in the transcendental realm. When they misuse their free will and desire to enjoy separately, they are hurled down into the material world of *māyā*. To accommodate the living entities' selfish desires, *māyā-śakti*, the perverted form of the Lord's spiritual energy, the energy of material illusion, manifests in various forms and tells the *jīvas*: "Come, possess me, enjoy me, exploit me! The Supreme Lord does not exist – you are the master, and I am your servant!" The whole material creation sings this song of *māyā* in various ways, and the *jīvas* are thus shackled by her. Having forgotten the Supreme Lord and their own spiritual identity and body, the *jīvas* roam around in the prison of *māyā* from one alien body to another, falsely thinking themselves to be the material body and the enjoyers of material nature. Material nature manifests in three modes, by which she shackles the *jīvas* (Bg 14.5). They are goodness, passion and ignorance. According to *karma*, the *jīva* is enamored by different combinations of these three modes.

The different combinations of material modes of nature
result in various non-eternal conditionings and occupations of the living entities.
Therefore, there are so many different religions, sciences, philosophies, cultures, etc.
Although they often seem to contradict each other, these various occupations are all
manifestations of the same *śakti* of the Supreme Lord, who arranges everything
in ultimate harmony and accordance with the Supreme Lord's will.

The *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* explains this scientifically,
thus harmonizing all religions and occupations.

The spiritual realm consists entirely of pure goodness, which, in the material world, is found only in the heart of a pure devotee. Therefore, only when the *jīvas* come in touch with a pure devotee, can they again be situated in pure goodness themselves. Then their eternal occupation, the Mother Religion or *sanātana-dharma* or pure *bhakti*, is re-established. By that they naturally accept the eternal service to God and may even realize the transcendental realm during materially embodied life. Then after leaving the present material body, they go back home, back to Godhead, to the transcendental realm, where they get a perfectly befitting and fulfilling service for all eternity. Because the material modes of nature distort reality, conditioned souls are unable to judge their situation and environment adequately, and must therefore depend on the guidance of pure devotees and the Vedic literatures, both of which are situated in pure goodness. Pure devotees have properly analyzed and explained the various material modes and their functions, giving us an understanding of how the living entities are conditioned in different ways, resulting in various concepts of reality, lifestyles, cultures, religions, sciences, etc. The following chart gives a brief overview.

Chart 3: Different typical inclinations of people according to different material conditionings

	In <i>viśuddha-sattva</i> , pure goodness:	In <i>sattva</i> , material goodness:	In <i>raja</i> , material passion:	In <i>tama</i> , material ignorance:
Occupation	Eternal occupation	Non-eternal occupations		
Religion	Eternal religion (<i>sanātana-dharma</i>)	transitional religions (<i>naimittika-dharma</i>)	transitional religions and irreligion	irreligion (<i>adhama</i>)
Identification	Eternal servant of God beyond mat. body.	Servant of family, society, religion.	Material body and its desires.	No concern or illusion.
Transcendence	Completed	Aspiring for	Desinterested in	Hostile to
Activities	Incessant unconditional service to God.	Care for family, religion, society.	Serving one's sensual desires.	Crime, violence to others and nature.
Attributes	Transcendental to the three material modes, all-virtuous, all-good and all-loving. God- and self-realized.	Virtuous, honest, satisfied, happy, wise, generous, pious. Socially attractive.	Passionate, not always honest. Materially skillful and attractive.	Ignorant, dishonest, rude, unclean, hypocritical, lazy, reckless, violent, passive, dull.
Foodstuffs and eating habits	Only <i>prasāda</i> , remnants of Godhead. If <i>sattvic</i> food is offered properly, it becomes transcendental. Prepared for God's pleasure.	Vegetarian, no eggs. Wholesome, juicy. Fresh vegetables, milk products, fruits, grains, etc. Prepared mainly for a good health.	Vegetarian, yet overly spiced, oiled, and cooked. Prepared for the tongue. Over-eating and other bad habits.	Meat (includes slaughter and starts to rot in the human digestive system), dirty or old food. Prepared in ignorance.
Intoxications	No need for material intoxication – one is always absorbed in the bliss of transcendental service.	No material intoxication, as one wants to remain pure for devotional service.	Caffeine, theine. Rare consumption of Nicotine and Alcohol.	Hard drugs (LSD, Heroine, THC, medical misuse, etc). Frequent use of soft drugs.
Music	<i>kṛṣṇa-kīrtana</i> , music performed exclusively for the pleasure of God. Inspires pure devotion.	Most classical music and certain traditional music. Music that inspires man's virtues.	Most Rock, Pop, Soul, etc falls into this category. Music invoking passion.	Aggressive or hard types of Rock, Punk, Techno, etc. Invokes darkness.
Waking and resting	Similar to <i>sattva</i> . Some need less than 2 hours of rest, but that is neither the goal nor to be imitated.	Raise & bathe before sunrise. "Early to bed and early to rise..." Max. 6-8 hours of sleep.	Raise after sunrise. Random amount and times of rest. Latenights.	Up after midnight. Sleeping in and out and during the day. Over 9 hours of sleep.
Sexual relations	Similar to <i>sattva</i> ; further one's original relationship with God, the perfectly satisfying object of pure love, is realized.	Marriage (with the prospectus of devotion) or monastic life. Both aspire for the original relationship with God.	Love marriage involving material enjoyment. Illicit relations of unmarried people.	Adultery, incest, abortion. Rape and other perversions.
Ruler	The all-good Lord and His eternal associates.	Virtuous leaders guided by pure devotees .	Conditioned mass of people (democracy, communism, etc).	Dictatorship of the ignorant, fascism, anarchy, etc.
Result of life	Liberation in the original eternal loving service to God.	Material upliftment and affinity for transcendence.	Fastens the knot of material greed and attachment.	Material illusion and degradation.

The next few paragraphs elaborate on the above chart. One should consider that most people are influenced by a blend of different modes with varying degrees. This chart lists typical, rather than exclusive inclinations of a specific group. It helps to analyze people's overall tendency and to identify what particular inclination is related with which mode.

In pure goodness, one's main occupation and religion are one; the *sanātana-dharma* of *bhakti*, loving devotional service to God. Besides spiritual practice, one may work for one's sustenance, yet that work is also to be considered *bhakti* if it is done exclusively for pleasing God.

In pure goodness, every action is religious in the pure sense,
i.e. done only for the pleasure of God. Thus every action is in itself already
the eternal goal, and by nature blissful. If we are conditioned by the three modes of
material nature, our occupations are non-eternal and by nature include sufferings.

Non-eternal occupations are of two types: *naimittika-dharma*¹⁴⁴ (mundane, impermanent, circumstantial religions) and *adharmā* (irreligious activities). Thus there are three main categories of *dharma*: (1) *adharmā*, (2) *naimittika-dharma* and (3) *sanātana-dharma*.

1. "All those occupations that deny the existence of Īśvara, the supreme controller, refusing to discuss Him, and that don't accept that the soul is eternal, are *anitya-dharma* [synonym of *adharmā*], contrary *dharma*."
2. All those religions that accept the eternality of both the Supreme Controller and the *jīvas*, but prescribe non-eternal provisional methods for attaining the grace of Īśvara, are *naimittika-dharma*, non-eternal or mundane religion.
3. That religion alone is eternal, *nitya* [synonym of *sanātana*], amongst all religions, which endeavors to attain *kṛṣṇa-dāsyā*, the eternal servitude to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the all-attractive Supreme Personality of Godhead, by means of unalloyed *prema*, love of God." – *Jaiva-dharma* 2.

The more we are conditioned by the mode of ignorance, the more our occupations tend to be *adharmā*, irreligious, contrary to the eternal pure nature of the soul. Besides being devoid of religious guidance, occupations in ignorance often include crime, pollution of the environment and violence such as war and slaughter. If we are conditioned by the mode of *raja* (material passion), we sometimes act irreligiously and at other times religiously, without any commitment. The more we are conditioned by *sattva* (material goodness), the more we follow *naimittika-dharma* (mundane or circumstantial religion) with commitment. Mundane religion is a reflection of the *sanātana-dharma* that adapts to the various cultural inclinations of people according to their circumstances. Religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism are neither entirely *naimittika-dharma* or *sanātana-dharma*, but contain both elements. Mundane religion or *naimittika-dharma* refers to the mundane contents of any faith. In *sattva*, one practices mundane religion for material upliftment, removal of troubles, social prestige and knowledge (due to lack of pure goodness, one cannot yet practise religion in the pure state, namely exclusively for the pleasure of God). Thus the Hindus for example pray for *artha*, wealth, the Christians pray for their daily bread, and the Muslims for attainment of paradise. In *raja*, one practices mundane religion for sense gratification.

In most religions there are teachings of pure eternal devotion, but as long as people are materially conditioned, they are naturally unable to devote themselves to God unconditionally and are thus engaged in mundane religion. Nevertheless, such religious engagement is very helpful, because it increases the chance of coming in touch with a pure devotee, and because it cultivates the mode of *sattva*. The more we are established in *sattva*, the more we feel adoration for pure devotees and the more we want to serve them. By their association we get the chance to be elevated to their state of *visuddha-sattva*, pure goodness. Pure goodness cannot be manifested from the conditioned

¹⁴⁴ The term *naimittika-dharma* should not be confused with the term *naimittika-karma*, occasional obligatory duties.

state of goodness, because it descends from another dimension, the spiritual realm. One can attain pure goodness, which in practice is synonymous with pure devotional service, from a pure devotee, who has received pure devotion through disciplic succession and thus ultimately from the spiritual realm. *Śrī Hari-bhakti-kalpa-latikā* 7.26 states: “Whether devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa is already developed in the heart or not, one should serve the saintly devotees. If devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa is already developed, one will attain service to the saintly devotees. If devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa is not developed in the heart, then by serving the saintly devotees, one will develop devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.” (Bhaktivinode 8, 1895. Ed.) Because people in material goodness at least indirectly aspire for transcendence and want to serve devotees, they have the best chances of transcendence. Those in the mode of passion and ignorance cannot benefit fully from the association of pure devotees due to lack of interest in transcendence. “Passion is better than ignorance, but goodness is best because by goodness one can come to realize the Absolute Truth.” (*tamasas tu rajas tasmāt, sattvaṁ yad brahma-darśanam, SB 1.2.24.*)

Mundane religions carry the important function
of elevating people to the mode of goodness, making them fit
for saintly association and giving them an opportunity to associate
with a pure devotee, who can awaken their state of pure goodness.

Although from the mode of material goodness we have the best opportunity to enter the state of transcendence, we should not think that transcendence depends on material goodness or that it is impossible to transcend the material modes directly from passion and ignorance. The Supreme Lord’s *cit-sakti* is supremely independent, and by Her causeless mercy, She can bring any living entity from any position and establish them into pure goodness, the state of transcendence. By engaging in pure *bhakti*, all are given this opportunity. This is confirmed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (14.26):

*mām ca yo 'vyabhicāreṇa
bhakti-yogena sevate
sa guṇān samatīyaitān
brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*

“One who engages in *bhakti-yoga*, full devotional service,
unfailing in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature
and thus comes to the level of Brahman, God- and self-realization.”

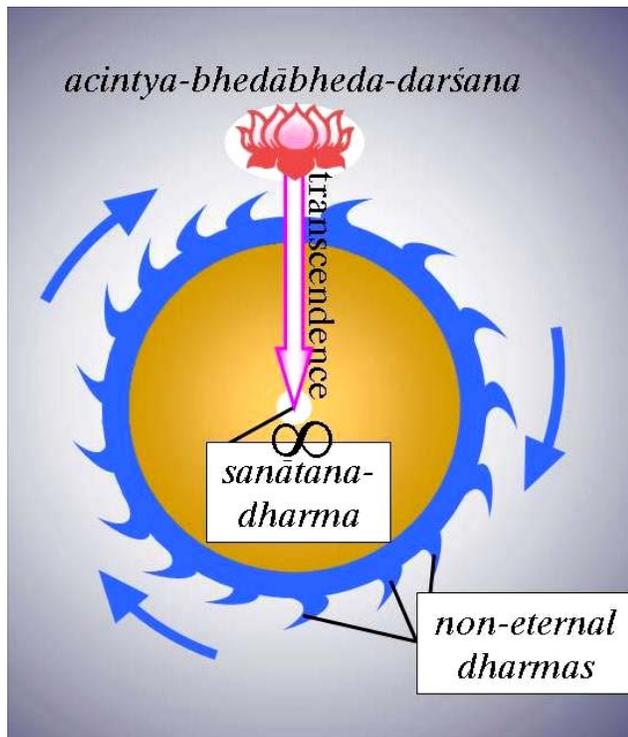
However, as mentioned earlier, people situated in goodness have a much greater tendency to engage in *bhakti*. Rain falls on all types of ground including barren land, but still, flowers cannot grow there. In the same way, the Lord’s mercy and the opportunity to engage in *bhakti* and transcend the material platform is equally available for all, but only those who have affinity for *bhakti* can profit from this mercy and actually become *bhaktas*, devotees. Those in the lower modes of nature lack that affinity to *bhakti*, but their attraction can be greatly increased if they become gradually elevated. Therefore, the systematic elevation to the mode of material goodness is a basic need of society. For this reason, the government should take advice from pure devotees, promote religions that suit the local mind-set of the people and teach that all religions are reflections of the one Mother Religion. As a result, peace will naturally be maintained between followers of different religions. This is best achieved in the Vedic society of *varṇāśrama-dharma* (see Chapter 6.8). In this way, many people can become qualified for saintly association and attain the mode of pure goodness. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.15.25 advises:

*rajas tamaś ca sattvena, sattvaṁ copaśamena ca
etat sarvaṁ gurau bhaktyā, puruṣo hy añjasā jayet*

“One must conquer the modes of passion and ignorance by developing the mode of goodness, and then one must become detached from the mode of material goodness by promoting oneself to the platform of pure goodness. All this is automatically achieved if one sincerely engages in the service of the spiritual master. In this way one can conquer the influence of the modes of material nature.”

For above explained reasons, both the gradual as well as the direct upliftment to the mode of pure goodness are essential needs for humanity. The gradual development is described by Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thākura as follows: “All the springs of our actions should be carefully protected from *tamo-guṇa*, the evil principle, by adopting the *rajo-guṇa* at first, and when that is effected, man should subdue his *rajo-guṇa* by means of the natural *sattva-guṇa*, which is the most powerful of them cultivated. Lust, idleness, wicked deeds and degradation of human nature by intoxicating principles are described as exclusively belonging to *tamo-guṇa*, the evil phase of nature. These are to be checked by marriage, useful work and abstinence from intoxication and trouble to our neighbors and inferior animals. Thus when *rajo-guṇa* has obtained supremacy in the heart, it is our duty to convert that *rajo-guṇa* into *sattva-guṇa*, which is pre-eminently good. That married love, which is first cultivated, must now be sublimated into holy, good and spiritual love i.e. love between soul and soul. Useful work will now be converted into work of love and not of disgust or obligation. Abstinence from wicked work will be made to lose its negative appearance and converted into positive good work. Then we are to look to all living beings in the same light in which we look to ourselves, i.e we must convert our selfishness into all possible disinterested activity towards all around us. Love, charity, good deeds and devotion to God will be our only aim. We then become the servants of God by obeying His high and holy wishes. Here we begin to be *bhaktas* and we are susceptible of further improvement in our spiritual nature, as we have described above.” (Bhaktivinoda 9, 1869, pp. 30-32.) Once situated in pure goodness, one practices exclusively the *sanātana-dharma*.

Illustration 3: The Lotus-Allegory



Temporary mundane occupations are illustrated as an endless series of waves on the ocean of material existence. Making great movements on the surface and travelling all over the world, they seem to determine the outlook of the world; but after a few hundred years, they are usually swallowed by the change of time. Many religions, sciences, philosophies and cultures have spread across the surface of the earth and have again been lost. The only occupation that cannot be changed is the eternal occupation of the soul, the *sanātana-dharma* of *bhakti*. It is the Mother Religion, the center of all *dharmas*, the essence of life itself. Being the eternal center, it is ever changeless and undisturbed by the waves of material time and change. The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is like a lotus emanating the sweet fragrance of *sanātana-dharma*, attracting those rare souls who strive for the eternal nature of the soul; and the lotus stem is the path of transcendence to *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal center and essence of all action.

Practicing exclusively *sanātana-dharma* can also mean, that of any religion, one will heartily contemplate only those instructions that advocate *sanātana-dharma*, the soul's original eternal

occupation of *bhakti*, unalloyed loving devotional service to God. One can find such teachings of pure goodness in all theistic religions. The Vedic literature contains instructions for mundane as well as eternal occupations (*sanātana-dharma*) to suit different people. Since most people are more interested in mundane occupations, most people follow the mundane instructions and corresponding paths of religions. In today's Vedic traditions, such people are also counted amongst the Hindus, although they don't mainly follow the eternal occupations (*sanātana-dharma*) of the Vedic scriptures. Therefore, we cannot equate Hinduism with *sanātana-dharma*. *sanātana-dharma* is not aimed at any mundane benefits, but at attainment and practice of the soul's eternal nature of *bhakti*. In this book, the term *sanātana-dharma* is used strictly in its true, universal sense. Especially in the religion of Śrī Caitanya, *sanātana-dharma* is most scientifically and elaborately presented and practised, and therefore, many people who become situated in pure goodness feel most attracted to the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas, the devotees of Śrī Caitanya. Śrī Caitanya explained that *bhakti*, devotional service (i.e. *sanātana-dharma*), is applicable in any country, for any person, at all times and in all circumstances (*sarva-jana-deśa-kāla-dasāte vyāpti yāra*, Cc 2.25.120). In the next verse Śrī Caitanya established the universality of *bhakti*, i.e. *sanātana-dharma*: '*dharmādi*' viṣaye yaiche e 'cāri' vicāra, sādhana-bhakti-ei cāri vicāra pāra,

“As far as *naimittika-dharma* is concerned, there is consideration of the person, the country, the time and the circumstance. However, in *bhakti*, devotional service, the *sanātana-dharma*, there are no such considerations, because *bhakti* is transcendental to them.”

Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda mentions in his purport: “When we are on the material platform, there are different types of religions – Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and so on. These are instituted for a particular time, a particular country or a particular person. Consequently there are differences. Christian principles are different from Hindu principles, and Hindu principles are different from Muslim and Buddhist principles. These may be considered on the material platform, but when we come to the platform of transcendental devotional service, there are no such considerations. The transcendental service of the Lord is above these principles. The world is anxious for religious unity, and that common platform can be achieved in transcendental devotional service. This is the verdict of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. When one becomes a Vaiṣṇava, he becomes transcendental to all these limited considerations. This is confirmed by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (Bg 14.26, quoted above). (...) Devotional service is open for everyone, regardless of caste, creed, time and country. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is functioning according to this principle.” Although the quality of universality of the *sanātana-dharma* is very attracting, it is not the deciding quality. To be worthy of the designation '*sanātana-dharma*', the crucial quality of any engagement is that it must be exclusively aimed at the pleasure of God and at the attainment of pure love for Him.

In a strict sense, the qualification to be counted as *sanātana-dharma* is exclusive dedication to *prema-bhakti*, pure devotional service to God, and strict rejection of aspiring for both material elevation and liberation. Since only the religion of Śrī Caitanya, the *bhāgavata-dharma*, fulfills this criteria, it is the only religion fully dedicated to *sanātana-dharma*.

Saying this without devaluing other religions is not a sectarian statement, but merely scientific analysis. As presented in Chapters 9-10, all other religions include other aspirations such as material elevation and liberation. However, it would be unjust to say that all other religions are completely bereft of elements of unalloyed devotion that advocate the *sanātana-dharma*. These elements must not only be acknowledged in other religions; rather they should be propagated as their very essence and utilized by the intelligent to unite all religions in the essential quest for their final essence, the *sanātana-dharma*. A very practical way how this end can be achieved is by *saṅkīrtana* (see Chapter 15). Although, if we overlook the elements of unalloyed devotion in most

religions of the world, they are mundane religions, they can nevertheless carry the important function of elevating people to the mode of goodness.

Because people in the lower modes of material nature are not inclined to directly approach the pure devotees and *sanātana-dharma*, they first need to be uplifted to material goodness by some mundane religion. Since people in *tama* are by nature irreligious, they must be educated and obliged by the government or society at large to follow religious principles for their own upliftment. Such obligation also protects others from irreligion. The secular state deprives the people in *tama* of this chance, and leaves all people unprotected from the calls of *māyā* to exploit material nature and forget the Supreme Lord. Although *naimittika-dharma*, mundane religion, is not the goal in itself, it is needed for gradual individually suitable upliftment, and therefore the pure devotees, although they don't advertise *naimittika-dharma*, never devalue it. Let us look at a practical example of how *naimittika-dharma* uplifts people. Meat eating is done in the mode of ignorance and bars one's spiritual progress (see Chapter 9.2). Also, food in the mode of ignorance cannot be offered to God and is thus never accepted by the pure devotees, who only accept remnants of food offered to God. Then, is *sanātana-dharma* sectarian, because it cannot be practiced by those who eat meat? No, because giving up meat eating and other unbeneficial practices is possible for all by gradual upliftment, achieved by following the regulations of *naimittika-dharma*, which is a reflection of the *sanātana-dharma*. The Vedic literature prescribes various engagements of *naimittika-dharma* for various types of people. There are even special Vedic literatures for people in the mode of goodness, passion and ignorance respectively. Meat cannot be offered to God, Lord Viṣṇu or Lord Kṛṣṇa, but it can be offered to the demigoddess Durgā. If one wants to eat meat, one must bring an animal to the Durgā temple, worship Durgā and sacrifice the animal to her according to fixed rituals guided by priests. Similarly, if one wants wealth, carnal pleasures, or material knowledge, one must worship certain demigods. By doing so, one accepts that everything material is only gotten by the mercy of the demigods, who are under the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One indirectly accepts and serves God, and is thus uplifted gradually. By religious regulations, one is also reminded of the non-eternal nature of material activities; they are restricted, and gradually given up.

Not knowing that the different conducts of upliftment prescribed by Vedic literature have purposefully been designed in variegation to suit different human conditionings, biased scholars have misled the world with their claims that Vedic literature is incongruent and full of contradictions. Some have also wrongly accused Vedic literature to be indecent because some Vedic injunctions for people in the lower mode of material conditioning allow meat eating and carnal pleasures. But Vedic literature remains spotless, because these injunctions prescribe worship of demigods for gradual upliftment and are meant for the ultimate purpose of renunciation; Vedic literature never advocates lower conducts (*SB* 11.5.11). Comparatively, a governmental institution that gives drugs to addicted people while gradually freeing them from their addiction never advocates drugs per se. We can thus understand that it is in one sense a virtue of Vedic literature to offer such injunctions to attract the people in the lower modes to transcendence – lest they would never take to it. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.21.23 declares that the material profits included in such injunctions are not *śreyah*, the highest good, but merely enticements for accepting religious practices, like the giving of candy of a loving mother to induce her child to take medicine.

Many scholars have also misled the people by claiming that the Vedic caste system is elitarian, oppressing and excluding the lower classes from transcendence. The existence of special religious injunctions suitable for the lower classes proves that it is most beneficial for all kinds of people if properly employed (cases of oppression are due to misuse). The stereotype modern materialist thinks that people who don't have to follow religious caste systems and are free to do as they please have a better life – but this is just as illusory as thinking that it is fair if we leave the drug addicts to their own decisions. Modern society, instead of freeing people from their enslavement to the dictatorship of their material senses, advertises sensuality, secularism, violence and intoxication. Such indulgence is the food of the modern industry, whose directors and owners are the modern

high class, who, even if unknowingly, are actually elitarian and oppressive. But it is useless to merely blame the modern high class people, who are also instruments and victims of the modern secular society – the entire system must be changed. Various circumstantially suitable religions and their final essence, the *sanātana-dharma* of pure *bhakti*, must be taught simultaneously, harmoniously and systematically for an individually suitable universal upliftment.

When the living entities or spiritual *jīvas* misuse their minute independence by desiring independent enjoyments, they are forced to take birth in the material world, where they face various material associations. According to their material association, they develop further material desires (*saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmaḥ*, *Bg 2.62*). When they act according to these desires, they engage in *karma*, fruitive activities. These activities have karmic reactions, called *karma-phala*, literally ‘fruits of action’. When these fruits ripen, the *jīvas* must reap their reactions, which entangle them in further *karma*, thus binding them in a vicious circle. *karma* in material goodness results in material health, wealth, knowledge, etc, and *karma* in ignorance results in material degradation. However, all karmic reactions result in further *karma* and are unable to free the *jīvas* from the painful karmic cycle of birth and death. Such liberation can only be attained by action in pure goodness, which has no karmic reaction due to being done exclusively for God’s pleasure, and the mode of pure goodness can only be achieved through the association of a pure devotee, not by any independent effort.

The conclusion is that association is the basis of everything.
It is the deciding factor in the negative and positive sense.

Association is the most deciding factor, not knowledge or action, because it is from association that arise new desires and affinities and corresponding knowledge, attachment, action and reaction. For example, books may bring dry knowledge, but the impetus for study, research and application of knowledge comes from association with people who have such impetus. The resonance to such impetus is the essential reason why we still have face-to-face classroom education, although we could simply read books at home or get all knowledge in online tutorials. If one wants to become a vegetarian, information may inspire, but association is more essential. To become a vegetarian, despite all knowledge, is difficult in the association of meat eaters, while it happens naturally in the association of vegetarians, even without much knowledge. All of our qualities, whether good or bad, material or spiritual, can be traced back to corresponding association. We should consider that this refers also to association in all our previous lives. Material association and corresponding attachment cause bondage, and association with pure devotees causes liberation. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.25.20 states: *prasaṅgam ajaram pāsam, ātmanaḥ kavayo viduḥ, sa eva sādhuṣu kṛto, mokṣa-dvāram apāvṛtam*,

“Every learned man knows very well that attachment for the material is the greatest entanglement of the spirit soul. But that same attachment, when applied to the self-realized devotees, opens the door of liberation.”

The above chart gives only a few examples of aspects of human life. All other aspects of human life can be analyzed in a similar manner, and the Vedic literature has elaborated on this. Because of knowing the science of creation, Vedic literature is able to properly analyze all elements of creation and assign them their proper functions. No other science provides such elaborate and precise analysis. This ability further proves that Vedic literature is genuine. The absence of a need of speculative material empiricism and induction due to the capacity of transcendental deduction straight from the source of complete knowledge, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, makes Vedic literature unique. It remains ever-valid, fresh and useful, although it is known to man since thousands of years. From a sincere and unbiased comparative study, the Vedic literature will emerge as the most scientific presentation of reality amongst all scriptures.

One may ask: If the *sanātana-dharma* is our natural occupation, then why are not all people naturally attracted by it? This is so, because the eternal original activity of the soul in pure goodness,

the *sanātana-dharma*, to selflessly serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is exactly opposed to the preferred activities of the materially conditioned souls, who falsely think of themselves as the center, possessor and enjoyer of creation. This is called false ego. The internal, self-caused reason for loosing interest in our original nature of *bhakti* is *anyābhilāṣa*, false desire, arising from false ego. The external reason, which can only hold strong if we are overcome by false ego, is *māyā*, the illusory potency of the Lord, that makes that which is beneficial appear as unbeneficial and that which is unbeneficial appear as beneficial. Especially in the present dark age of Kali, due to predominance of the false egos, materialistic doctrines and materialistic people seem more attractive than *sanātana-dharma* and the devotees, just as the glowworms seem to shine forth more than the moon and stars in a cloudy night.

Due to a perverted taste of conditioned people,
the *sanātana-dharma* appears to them as an unpalatable activity,
although it is the soul's original bliss-giving occupation.

This situation is compared to that of jaundice patients who taste bitterness when eating sugar. Not being able to relish the sweetness of devotional service due to a perverted taste is the main hindrance to accepting the *sanātana-dharma*. The other one is attachment to non-eternal things of the fleeting material world. To illustrate this, Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja told the following story (summarized):

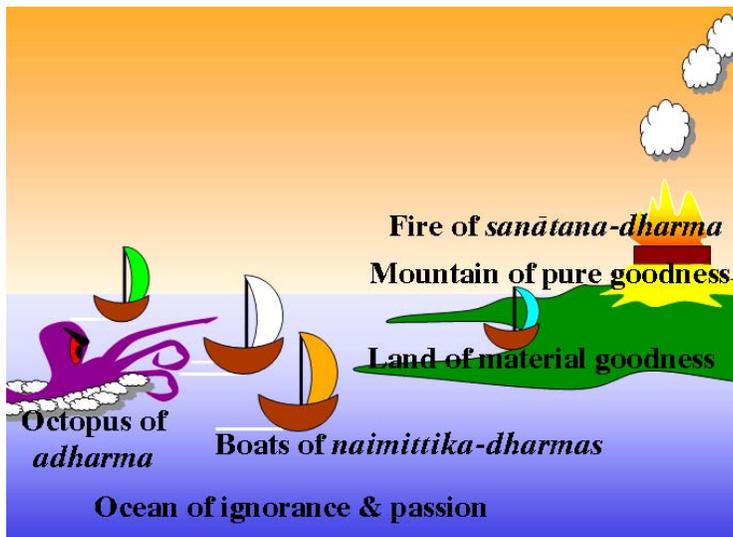
“A few geese were living by a little lake that was really nothing more than a stinking waterhole. They thought themselves quite happy there, eating the plentiful snails, clams, worms and shrimps. One day, they saw a flock of swans flying overhead. The large birds looked so wonderful with their sparkling white wings that the geese began to think that the place where they were heading to must surely be much more beautiful than their waterhole. The swans had been to the sea and were now on their way to Mānasa Sarovara for the summer. One of them saw the geese looking at them so pitifully and felt compassion for them. He came down to land near the geese who were astonished by the swan's beauty. They asked him if he could take them with him to his home. The swan said that he had come precisely for that reason, to take them away from this putrid place. But when he told them to follow him, the poor geese pleaded that they were unable to fly very far. The swan told them to climb on his back and that he would carry them. The geese started to wonder whether they would be able to find the snails, clams, worms and shrimps they were used to eating once they were at Mānasa Sarovara. The swan answered that such disgusting things were not available there and that the swans lived on lotus stems. The geese began to shriek as if with one voice, “Then how will we survive?” They decided not to go at all. The geese's attachments to other things deprived them of living in a very beautiful place. Similarly, our attachment to this perishable body and everything connected with it is an impediment to our joining the Lord. The Lord is all-auspicious and free from any material defects. He is the embodiment of ultimate joy and so is His abode. There is no place there for the despicable aspects of transitory material life. Anyone who is unable to abandon his attachments to things unconnected to the Lord and wishes to hang on to those things is unable to attain Him. The Lord and *māyā* are opposites. Supreme auspiciousness cannot be had unless one is freed from material wants through the association of advanced devotees. *tato duḥsaṅgam utsrjya satsu sajjeta buddhimān, santa evāśya chindanti mano-vyāsaṅgam uktibhiḥ* (SB 11.26.26), an intelligent person should therefore avoid bad company and associate only with devotees. With their realized instructions, such saints can cut through the knots of material attachments.” (Tirtha 1, 2001.)

Those who are *sattvic*, i.e. mainly governed by the material mode of goodness, are able to give up the greatest material impediments by following the four Vedic regulative principles of freedom: No gambling, no intoxication, no illicit sex and no meat eating (see SB 1.17.38). Those dominated by the lower modes are unable to follow these regulative principles of freedom due to false attachment. If they could diverge their attachment to the *sanātana-dharma*, then they could

gradually overcome the lower modes, but how can they be attracted to the *sanātana-dharma* if their taste has become perverted? Out of the causeless mercy of God, who wants all conditioned souls to be freed from *māyā*, the *sanātana-dharma* thus appears in various camouflaged and sugarcoated forms, in the garb of various religions, cultures, philosophies, sciences, etc., that seem more palatable by allowing material pursuits to some extent. Most manifestations of *naimittika-dharma* hold the *sanātana-dharma* of pure *bhakti* in high esteem, and this is one of the greatest benefits of the proper practice of *naimittika-dharma*. Although one may not possess the affinity to directly take to *sanātana-dharma*, one can approach it gradually through a certain *naimittika-dharma*.

The Vedic science aims at an individually most efficient upliftment for all types of conditioned souls to the highest level of pure goodness. Just as different patients must be prescribed different medicines and diets by different doctors, similarly, differently conditioned souls need different religions that prescribe them different modes of worship and different beneficial regulations for their gradual purification. Therefore, Veda offers various scriptures and *dharmas*, religious paths, to suit different types of material conditionings of people according to their mixture of material modes. Some are suitable for those in the mode of pure goodness, others suit those of the mode of material goodness, passion or ignorance respectively, and some suit a specific mixture of these modes. These different Vedic *dharmas* have their reflections into other religions of the world. As explained earlier, all *dharmas* serve to ultimately bring the conditioned souls back to their *sanātana-dharma*, original transcendental nature of *bhakti*, loving devotion to God. As such each religion has its justified existence and is a part of God's materially inconceivable master plan.

The boat-analogy: different values of *naimittika-dharma* according to different situations



Most people cannot cross an ocean by swimming. Similarly, most people cannot overcome the ocean of ignorance and passion without the help of the boats of *naimittika-dharma*, mundane religion. Due to averseness, they usually cannot directly take to *sanātana-dharma* and have to first reach the land of material goodness with the help of the boats of mundane religion¹⁴⁵. From their perspective, mundane religion is thus very essential. However, once they have reached the land, it would become a hindrance to hold on to the boat instead of proceeding to approach the essence, the fire of *sanātana-dharma*.

By climbing unto one of the rescue boats of *naimittika-dharma*, one can overcome the ocean of ignorance and passion, which hosts the fierce octopus of *adharmā*, irreligion. Once one has reached the shore of material goodness, one can climb the mountain of pure goodness and devotion by the guidance of a pure devotee and attain the fire of *sanātana-dharma*¹⁴⁶, the eternal occupation of the soul, by which one is fully purified from all modes of material nature and firmly situated in the bliss of transcendence. To the layman it seems contradictory that Śrī Kṛṣṇa first teaches people to follow religious principles of *naimittika-dharma* and then in His essential instruction says that

¹⁴⁵ As mentioned earlier, this is the usual case. Theoretically, anybody, even those in the mode of ignorance, can directly take to the inherent *sanātana-dharma*, which could additionally be illustrated as a fire burning within all living entities. However, due to intense averseness, those in the lower material modes are usually deprived of the direct approach.

¹⁴⁶ The smoke signals can be seen as the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, indicating the *sanātana-dharma*.

they should ultimately be given up. But if one has learned the sublime Vedic science of transcendence, it is properly understood.

naimittika-dharma is very much needed for the grossly conditioned people, and therefore Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself appears millenium after millenium to establish the various principles of general religion (*dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya, sambhavāmi yuge yuge, Bg 4.8*). General religious principles help people to eradicate sin and accumulate piety. Lord Kṛṣṇa says that those who have acted piously and whose sinful actions are completely eradicated engage themselves in His service with determination (*Bg 7.28*). Many verses say that those who have attained the service of God have acted piously for many lives (e.g. *SB 10.12.11*). This means that *naimittika-dharma* is supportive for attaining the *sanātana-dharma* of *bhakti*, the eternal occupation of devotional service of God.

However, from the perspective of those who have reached the sinless land of material goodness, it would become a hindrance to their further progress to cling to the boat of *naimittika-dharma*. Those who have been saved from drowning by a rescue boat are surely grateful for that boat, but they will not start living on it – they must continue their path on the land. Similarly, the mode of material goodness is not the final stage – it is merely a good basis for reaching the mode of pure goodness and the *sanātana-dharma*. Being in material goodness does not mean that ignorance and passion are absent, but that material goodness dominates and controls the other two. In material goodness, one usually still practices *naimittika-dharma*, but the more one becomes free from passion and ignorance, the more one takes to the *sanātana-dharma*. Ultimately, one must internally give up relying on *naimittika-dharma* and take shelter of *sanātana-dharma*. Therefore, Lord Kṛṣṇa says in His essential instruction of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66): *sarva-dharmān parityajya, mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja, ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo, mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*, “Abandon all varieties of mundane religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.” This instruction is found in the concluding verses of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, while the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* already begins with a declaration of rejecting all materially motivated religion (*dharmaḥ projjhita-kaitavo 'tra, SB 1.1.2*) and then focusses on the *sanātana-dharma*: *sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo, yato bhaktir adhokṣaje, ahaituky apratihātā, yayātmā suprasīdati*, “The supreme *dharma* for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord.” – *SB 1.2.6*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa cannot be attained by mundane religion, only by pure *bhakti* (*Bg 18.55*). As pure *bhakti* is the eternal function of the soul, the *sanātana-dharma*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not say that one should give up *dharma* altogether, but that one should ultimately give up everything else other than *sanātana-dharma*.

Most pure devotees however, although situated in pure goodness, still practice *naimittika-dharma* to some extent in order to give an example for common people. If the leaders would give up *naimittika-dharma* altogether, then the immature people would imitate them, because “Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow.” – *Bg 3.21*. Therefore, to mercifully guide the people, even Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord Himself, although above any duty, still performs prescribed duties (*Bg 3.22*). “For if I ever failed to engage in carefully performing prescribed duties, O Pārtha, certainly all men would follow My path.” – *Bg 3.23*. We must carefully understand that there is a gulf of difference between the external practice of *naimittika-dharma* of the pure devotee, who does this as service for the gradual upliftment of society to the *sanātana-dharma* and is never interested in any mundane benefits, and the practice of *naimittika-dharma* of the general people who are still driven by material desires. Although they both seem to engage in the same practice, the practice of *naimittika-dharma* of the general people remains mundane, whereas the practice of *naimittika-dharma* of the pure devotee becomes transcendental because it is done with the exclusive aim of uplifting others to the transcendental *sanātana-dharma*, and therefore does not indicate disloyalty to *sanātana-dharma*. Those who have grasped the real function of religion don’t commit the mistake to think that an advanced devotee cannot practice *naimittika-dharma*, nor do they criticize any mature devotee for giving up certain practices of *naimittika-dharma*.

There is yet another, more confidential explanation, how *naimittika-dharma* is harmoniously included and reconciled by the pure devotee. In the transcendental realm of Goloka Vṛndāvana, we can also find practice of seemingly *naimittika-dharma*. The devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa are mostly unaware that He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead (see Chapter 5.5). They see Lord Viṣṇu and His Avatāras as the Supreme Lord. In Nandagrāma, the childhood home of Lord Kṛṣṇa, there is a temple of Lord Nṛsimhadeva, whom the parents of Kṛṣṇa, King Nanda and Queen Yaśodā, worship for protection of their beloved son Kṛṣṇa. Every morning, mother Yaśodā touches various parts of His body while chanting *mantras* of Lord Viṣṇu and Nṛsimhadeva for His protection (as mentioned in Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī's *Govinda-līlāmṛta* 5.34-36). When danger arises, Kṛṣṇa's devotees protect Him with various *mantras* of Lord Viṣṇu (*SB* 10.6.22-23). The young *gopīs* are instructed by their elders to worship Sūrya, the sun-god, to get suitable husbands, and thus they worship Sūrya and other demigods like Lord Śiva and goddess Durgā, but with the confidential aim of attaining Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their lover. Although in the material world, religious practices aiming at earthly benefits like material health and love relations are *naimittika-dharma*, the same seemingly mundane religion exists in the transcendental realm Goloka Vṛndāvana in its original, purely transcendental form with Śrī Kṛṣṇa in its center.

If we allow ourselves to empathetically contemplate, in accordance with the Vedic revelations, the perspective of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we can understand, that the way He is worshiped as our lover, son, friend or master and becomes the center of our prayers to Lord Viṣṇu and the *devas*, is more relishable and sweet, than if He would be worshiped as the Supreme Lord in a majestic way such as in Vaikuṅṭhā, the realm of Lord Viṣṇu. Lord Viṣṇu is worshiped as the unborn majestic Supreme Lord, and thus He cannot experience the bliss of having a mother blessing His body with maternal love by invoking names of the Lord, or girls worshiping various demigods with the ambition to attain Him as their lover. *naimittika-dharma* has no place in Vaikuṅṭhā, but it is present in its original pure form in Goloka Vṛndāvana. This is another proof of the supremacy of Goloka Vṛndāvana, the original transcendental reality, where everything is accommodated in sweet harmony, due to its existence in its pure original form. The pure devotees on earth may engage in certain practices of *naimittika-dharma* while contemplating its pure form in Goloka Vṛndāvana, and this is the second reason, why such practice of pure devotees is in no contradiction to their loyalty to *sanātana-dharma*. In the worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, even ambivalence and *adharma* (irreligious activities or sin), are transcended and become relishable elements of excitement, for example when the young married *gopīs* secretly escape from their homes to meet their lover Śrī Kṛṣṇa (who is everyone's real and eternal husband, see Chapter 6.13). This all-encompassing and all-reconciling potential is found exclusively in the worship of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as taught by Their covered Descent Śrī Caitanya. This clearly establishes the eminence of the religion of Śrī Caitanya, the *bhāgavata-dharma*.

Due to being all-encompassing, the eminence of the *bhāgavata-dharma* never brings defame upon other religions and occupations, but rather establishes their ultimate essence, as well as their necessity and purpose in the Supreme Lord's master plan. It is for this reason, that the propagation of the *bhāgavata-dharma* is not only non-sectarian, but also the best way to attain universal brotherhood or harmony between all individual elements in creation. As can be seen in Chart 3, one who is uplifted from a lower to a higher material conditioning will automatically feel inclined to take to the *sanātana-dharma*, just as a child, when becoming mature, automatically prefers a normal bicycle from a children's bicycle. It is senseless and even harmful to force a child to give up a suitably light and small children's bicycle and ride an unsuitably heavy and large bicycle prematurely. Just as a child can benefit from a children's bicycle to prepare for the real ride, mundane religion can be beneficial to prepare humanity for the *sanātana-dharma* of unalloyed devotion to God. It can be harmful to try to convert anyone to *sanātana-dharma* prematurely, especially by way of belittling other religions, because that person may reject religion altogether or become a fanatic follower.

The fire of inter-religious wars is not only burning people's hearts, but also the very tree of religion. The secularists are gladly pouring oil into this fire, because the pain caused by this fire supports their justification of expelling religion. It is very important that all followers of all religions at least externally terminate envy, war and hatred towards other religions, no matter how right they think they are, in order to save Mother Religion from being more and more exiled by the secularists. We only hurt ourselves by going against our religious brothers and sisters, because by doing so, our very mother – Mother Religion – is exiled, and secularism is given a free pass to delude the people. Although being the actual heart of heart of humanity, in most schools, religion is no more taught as a mandatory subject, and this is being regarded as normal by most people. Instead of blaming modern society for this mishap, we would do well in stopping inter-religious hatred and proving to humanity that religion really leads to universal love and peace. Preaching universal love is mere hypocrisy if we maintain hatred towards our religious brothers and sisters.

Before trying to harmonize the world, we should first purify our hearts from envy and then harmonize the inner circle of theists. Then, religion will again become as attractive as it actually is. As an attempt towards this goal, we have founded the Godbrotherhood, which is open for theists of all traditions. Please join us on www.Godbrotherhood.com and inspire others to join too.

People of all religions should unite to bring back our Mother Religion into all schools. Children should be taught that religion is the essence of human life, and those who have no interest in practicing religion should at least be taught to respect religion. The children should learn about all major religions of the world and should specialize in a particular religion of their choice. Parents must not be afraid that this may increase the chance of their children converting to another religion, as the choice of the best suitable religion is to most part determined by the various conditionings of the child's mentality. Rather, they should try to enable their children to choose the religion that most efficiently elevates their consciousness, instead of trying to force a particular religion on them that may not suit them, with the result that they lose interest in religion all together. Love of God can never be enforced. Therefore, even atheism should be tolerated, but it should not be accepted as a reason for not having to learn about religion in school, just as students who don't like math still have to learn math, because it is important for human life.

The full manifestation of the Vedic civilization would not bring an end to any religion, but it would bring an end to inter-religious envy and war by showing how all religions are united in universal brotherhood by their parents, Mother Religion and Father God. This in turn would minimize both sectarianism as well as secularism and enable the promotion of practicing an individually suitable religion in order to most efficiently elevate humanity.

Summarizing this chapter, the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* revealed by Śrī Caitanya offers both the means to perfect discrimination between various religions as well as the means to harmonize them. It facilitates clear distinction between various manifestations of the material and spiritual energies, between different corresponding human conditionings and between different corresponding religions, and it offers complete harmonization by scientifically explaining how all religions are ultimately manifestations of the same potency of the Supreme Lord. It is therefore a very important key to inter-religious harmony and universal brotherhood.



13. The Eternality of Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana and Vaiṣṇavism



Before Caitanya Mahāprabhu, no one was successful in establishing *acintya-bhedābheda* as the essential philosophy, although many have hinted in its direction. Such an establishment can be compared to the discovery of maple syrup, the ‘honey’ of the maple tree. Before the discovery of maple syrup, the maple tree was used mostly as timber. Very few knew how to harvest and process its sap. Nevertheless, the maple tree always contained its essential sap inside, just waiting for it to be discovered. Similarly, before Lord Caitanya, very few knew and practiced the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, the essential sap of the eternal tree of cosmic knowledge (Veda).

acintya-bhedābheda was always the essential philosophy of Veda,
and simply waited to be fully discovered, explained and propagated.

It was never manufactured, just like the sap of the maple tree was never manufactured. Just as artificially manufactured aromas can never compete with natural aromas, similarly, human-made philosophies cannot compete with the natural eternally self-manifest philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, which has sprung from the eternal tree of Veda of the Lord like the sweet sap that springs forth from the maple tree. Since Veda is eternal knowledge, it was never created, but is eternally existent: *asya mahato bhūtasya niśvasitam etad yad ṛg-vedo yajur-vedaḥ sāmavedo 'tharvāṅgirasah*, “The four *Vedas* – namely the *R̥g Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sāma Veda*, and *Atharva Veda* – are all emanations from the breathing of the great Personality of Godhead.” – *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.5.11, quoted in *Bg* 3.15, purport. As the Lord is eternal and His breathing is eternal, so are the *Vedas*, and hence they are never created but *svayam-bhūḥ*, self-born (*SB* 6.1.40). From a local perspective, the sun appears in the morning and disappears in the evening, but actually it is constantly present, and only sometimes revealed and at other times concealed. Similarly, the Lord’s and also the *Veda*’s appearance are to be understood as revelation or discovery of the eternal spiritual substance, and never as creation of something which was not there before.

The *Vedas* manifested from the mouth of Lord Brahmā, the demigod of material creation (*SB* 3.12.35), yet he was not the original creator, but merely a medium: *tene brahma hṛdā ya ādikavaye*, “It is Lord Kṛṣṇa only who first imparted the Vedic knowledge unto the heart of Brahmā, the first living being.” – *SB* 1.1.1. Therefore, Lord Brahmā himself says: *tasyāpi draṣṭur īśasya, kūta-sthasyākḥilātmanah, sṛjyam sṛjāmi sṛṣṭo 'ham, ikṣayaivābhicoditah*, “Inspired by the Supreme Lord only, I discover what is already created by Him under His vision as the all-pervading Supersoul, and I also am created by Him only.” – *SB* 2.5.17. Similarly, from this perspective, the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* was not postulated or synthesized by Śrī Caitanya, but simply uncovered. Nevertheless some use terms like ‘synthesize’ or ‘postulate’ in connection with *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* in various texts, because due to being a complicated affair that can lead to confusion, it is not practical in most circumstances to explain how Veda is apparently created while actually eternally manifest. We must understand in which circumstances of objective and audience something was presented to be able to appreciate different approaches of bona fide scholars and devotees in order not to cause any offense or confusion. In the present circumstance of a detailed book, both approaches can be explained.

There are various types of considerations of reality or approaches to reality, which result in different perceptions and understandings of reality. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the ultimate reality in Person, says that He reveals Himself in reciprocation to and accordance with the approach to Him that one chooses (*ye yathā māṁ prapadyante, tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham, Bg 4.11*).

This does not mean that there are uncountable realities that are created by uncountable considerations by uncountable living entities, without any ultimate reality. It means that the ultimate transcendental reality, which is only perceived with transcendental senses, is reflected in many different ways according to various perceptions. These reflected realities are in as much real as a dream is real – they are not altogether illusory. However, especially if viewed from the transcendental platform, the reflected realities are also as much illusory as a dream is illusory from the perspective of a wake person. There are two main spiritual considerations: the general spiritual consideration and the consideration of divine pastimes (*līlās*). In the consideration of the general spiritual reality, Lord Kṛṣṇa is ever unborn (*aja, Bg 10.3*). But in the consideration of the transcendental *līlās* of the Lord, the Lord enjoys the *līlā* of appearing as the transcendental child of mother Yaśoda or as the transcendental lover of Rādhārāṇī, etc, and He derives greater pleasure from such *līlās* than from neutral general reality. The various appearances of the Lord in different people’s minds according to their different considerations are not contradictory; they are made possible and reconciled by His inconceivable transcendental potency (see *SB 6.9.36*), the *acintya-śakti*, who is also the key to understanding His *acintya-bhedābheda* nature. If we have understood the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, then the different appearances, names, forms, attributes, associates and pastimes of the Lord don’t confuse us anymore, rather we can see their underlying harmony. Furthermore, only by properly understanding the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* are we able to empathetically and objectively understand the reasons of various considerations, opinions and doctrines of different people, cultures, religions, sciences, and so forth.

Chart 1. The three main types of considerations of reality

	1. Material consideration	2. Spiritual consideration	
		General spiritual consideration	Consideration of divine pastimes (<i>līlās</i>)
Level of spiritual maturity	Before spiritual realization.	After realization* of Brahman	After realization* of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Vision of ultimate reality	“There is no God.”	“God is the cause of all causes and an all-pervading energy.”	“Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead (with various forms).”
Vision of rise of <i>acintya-bhedābheda-darśana</i>	“The professor Śrī Caitanya <u>synthesized</u> <i>acintya-bhedābheda-darśana</i> materially.”	“The <u>Avatāra</u> Śrī Caitanya <u>uncovered</u> <i>acintya-bhedābheda-darśana</i> .”	“The <u>Supreme Lord</u> Śrī Caitanya <u>synthesized</u> <i>acintya-bhedābheda-darśana</i> transcendently.”
Type of most cherished relationships	Mundane relationships	No personal relationships ¹⁴⁷	Loving transcendental relationships with God.

*There are two types of realization; (A) empathetic realization or acceptance of spiritual reality through the vision of God-realized souls and Vedic scripture, and (B) personal realization or direct vision of God and the spiritual reality. The fact that personal realization is rarely fully achieved must not frustrate the aspirants or hinder them in their contemplation; by empathetic realization through a genuine spiritual master, they can also take part in higher conceptions of reality and gradually approach personal realization (see Chapter 16).

¹⁴⁷ The general spiritual consideration requires at least the theoretical understanding of Brahman, and in relation to Brahman there is no *rasa*, relish of personal relation. However, that does not mean that when a devotee thinks in terms of the general spiritual consideration, he is deprived of *rasa*, because the devotee is essentially situated in the consideration of divine pastimes and only uses the general spiritual consideration for the sake of discrimination.

By the general spiritual consideration we can understand that *acintya-bhedābheda* is an eternal principle, although in the material consideration it appears to be synthesized. By the consideration of divine pastimes we can further understand that Lord Caitanya took pleasure in synthesizing the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* in a non-material, transcendental way that enhanced His relish of pastime. Although, in the general spiritual consideration, *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* is eternally manifest and only covered and again discovered at some times, in the consideration of the Lord's *līlās*, it is correct to say that Śrī Caitanya synthesized this philosophy – yet He did it transcendently, not materially. Śrī Caitanya relished hearing various verses describing the Supreme Lord from the mouths of His dear devotees. He inquired from them and simultaneously empowered them from within to be mediums to distill and propagate His philosophy. This act served both His internal and external reasons for appearance, namely to relish the position of His own devotee (this includes to reciprocate with His devotees in the position of a devotee) and to preach *bhakti* by giving the perfect example of a devotee who takes the humble position of inquiring from capable authorities. This *bhakti-rasa*, relish of loving transcendental relationships with God, is not to be confused with the relish of mundane relationships, which is the perversion of *bhakti-rasa*. Śrī Caitanya inquired from various pure devotees about the absolute truth, and they admitted that what they spoke was all inspired by Śrī Caitanya Himself. Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya told Lord Caitanya (*Cc* 2.8.121 & 200):

“I do not know anything about this.
I simply vibrate the sound You make me speak.”
“Actually You are speaking through my mouth, and at
the same time You are listening. This is very mysterious.”

Śrī Caitanya is described as an ocean filled with *bhakti-siddhānta*, conclusions of *bhakti* such as the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, and Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya is compared to a devotee cloud that was filled and empowered by that ocean and then again rained down this knowledge, and thus the ocean of Śrī Caitanya became enriched with valuable jewels of *bhakti* (*Cc* 2.8.1).

Just as a father takes pleasure in receiving a birthday present from his son, although the son purchased it with the father's money, the Lord takes pleasure in hearing about *bhakti* from His pure devotees, although that knowledge comes from Himself. One who has never played hide and seek may not understand that there is a deliberate purpose and fun in hiding in this game. He may falsely think “How can these children be so silly and waste their time hiding in dark places, calling it fun?” Similarly, one who does not know the consideration of the Lord's transcendental pastimes may not understand that there is a deliberate purpose in the covering and uncovering of the Vedic conclusive philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. He may falsely think “If there is an omnipotent Lord, why does He hide Himself behind so many different and contradicting philosophies, sciences, religions, beliefs and conceptions? Would it not be better if He simply revealed Himself to everyone's vision?” In answer to this, one should consider that in contrast to the spiritual abode, most people on earth are not really interested to find God; this is the main reason why Kṛṣṇa hides from them by putting them into various jungles and labyrinths of different sciences, philosophies, prejudices, etc. Why should He meet those who do not want to accept and lovingly serve Him as He is? However, it seems that God also does not make it very easy for a soul who actively tries to search Him. Why is this so? Actually, knowledge about Kṛṣṇa is the most confidential knowledge (*rāja-vidyā rāja-guhyam*, *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.2), and this extremely confidential knowledge is only realized in conjunction with devotion (*jñānam parama-guhyam me, yad vijñāna-samanvitam, sarahasyam tad-angam ca, grhāṇa gaditam mayā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.31). Realization of Kṛṣṇa is therefore not like a physical product that can be achieved by mechanically applying certain laws and manipulating nature, but more like a transcendental game of hide and seek, in which everything ultimately depends on the Lord's causeless mercy on a sincere devotee. This unpredictable transcendental game is much more exciting than the most sophisticated experiment that follows mechanic laws. Śrī

Kṛṣṇa does sometimes play hide and seek with His friends in His transcendental abode (*SB* 10.11.59), and the earthly search for God can be seen as a reflection of that original game.

In the above chart, the specific vision of the rise of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* mentioned for both the material consideration and the consideration of transcendental pastimes is that Śrī Caitanya synthesized *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*; but one perception is material (thinking Him to be a human), and the other is spiritual (knowing Him to be the Supreme Lord performing pastimes). In order not to confuse the two and think that the consideration of transcendental pastimes is also material, one must first properly understand and realize the general spiritual consideration. The same applies to understanding the Lord's transcendental pastimes, such as Śrī Kṛṣṇa's playing with His friends. If one does not understand the general spiritual consideration, one cannot enter the consideration of transcendental pastimes and will see Kṛṣṇa in terms of material consideration; one will think that He is a human cowherd boy playing with friends. Only by first realizing the general spiritual consideration and then the consideration of transcendental pastimes can one understand how the eternally manifest philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* was transcendently covered and uncovered. The general decline of Vedic science is explained in Chapter 4, and the reestablishment of the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* is described in Chapter 9. If one takes to the empathetic approach of considering the Lord's own intentions, then the consideration of transcendental pastimes can be understood. However, if this sophisticated consideration is not understood at this moment, one should know that it is not a crucial point of this book, but given as a matter of completeness. The main point to be made here is that the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* or full-fledged theism is *eternally* the essential Vedic philosophy, and it was uncovered and propagated by Lord Caitanya.

What follows is an illustration of the three main types of considerations of reality¹⁴⁸. Let us imagine taking part in a twenty-four hours open air music festival that starts in the evening. The organizer planned the festival in such a way that the main celebrities will enter the stage only the next morning, exactly at sunrise. Prior to that, there will be a gradual increase of prominence of performing artists throughout the night in order to increase the audience's excitement up to the point where the greatest celebrities enter the stage. Most people in the audience will not know about this arrangement, and their feelings of excitement will gradually rise with each announcement. When the greatest celebrities enter, and just then the sun rises, the audience will be overcome with surprise and joy. Others in the audience may know about the organizer's arrangement and will watch everything with the eyes of an insider. They may continuously tell their accompanying friends what is going to happen next, thinking that this is somewhat advantageous. Yet, although actually knowing more than others, due to overstressing the vision of an insider, they are to some extent deprived of the feelings of excitement and surprise. They are usually those who are newly insiders. When they by chance meet a celebrity, they tend to boast about their knowing the organizer and knowing all details of the event; but they don't know how to properly please the celebrity as a person who enjoys the actual excitement of the event. The third type of people from the audience are also insiders, but because they are very experienced insiders such as senior guests of honor, they are not deprived of the excitement of the event, although they know its enrollment well. They can effortlessly cover their vision of an insider and contemplate the vision of a newcomer. They are thus able to ask their friends in actual excitement: "What do you think is going to happen next?" In a similar spirit of exciting appreciation, they know how to please the celebrities, because they are fully one in will with them, as well as with the organizer and the common audience.

¹⁴⁸ Analogies are of course not absolute or all in all perfect, and I would myself be able to point out certain drawbacks which could lead to confusion. One should take the train and not be run over by it. It is improper to reject trains all together only because a few unlucky ones get run over by them sometimes. Similarly, one must know the art of letting the analogy carry one to the goal without getting distracted by its minor imperfections.

Analogous to the above three types of vision of audience, there are three types of visions of reality and its enrollment in time. The vision of mundane onlookers may include excitement, but it also involves illusion in as much as they are not insiders of the spiritual world. They may appreciate certain philosophical or other aspects of the Supreme Lord's pastime, but they can neither recognize Him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, nor can they understand how the enrollment of everything in time is perfectly arranged by the Lord. The junior insiders share the vision of the general spiritual consideration; how actually, everything is perfectly arranged by the all-pervading, all-present Transcendence beyond the rule of time, being but a plaything of Transcendence. They are thus free from any material anxiety and naturally detached. Yet they are deprived of the transcendental excitement of the Lord's *līlās*, transcendental pastimes. The senior insiders are further initiated into the consideration of the Lord's transcendental pastimes. They know that in the spiritual world there are transcendental pastimes with enrollment in transcendental time beyond the unwholesome aspects of material time such as old age and death. They know that when the Supreme Lord descends to the material world, His transcendental pastimes then manifest there too. They know that the life of the Supreme Lord's pure devotee who is internally situated in the Lord's eternal pastimes are also *līlā*, transcendental pastime, which very mercifully becomes accessible to the conditioned souls in all periods of time.

Analogous to the above illustration of the main celebrities entering the stage just at sunrise, the greatest devotees, pastimes, and the most essential philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* appear just at the advent of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and events and philosophies prior to Him are to be seen as a preparation for His advent (see Chapter 9). This is perfectly arranged by the transcendental organizer, the Lord's internal potency. But the outsiders lack this vision. Not knowing the Supreme Lord and His devotees, they take them and their teachings for mundane and part of mundane history. The junior insiders, although appreciating the entire cosmos as a manifestation of Transcendence, are not yet able to properly know the most essential manifestation of Transcendence as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His pure devotees, His eternal associates and their transcendental pastimes. Actually, Brahman is but the impersonal halo of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (see Chapter 5.5). If the junior insiders get the blessings of the senior insiders, namely the Lord's eternal associates, they are gradually initiated into their association and their vision. However, if they are not humble and cannot attract their mercy, they are disqualified from their association, and thus in one sense in an even worse condition than the outsiders, who, although in one sense knowing less than the junior insider, can attract the mercy of the senior insiders by their humility and service. Therefore, the approach to transcendence must be done humbly and with the goal of service, not knowledge. Knowledge is accepted as means. The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* gives perfect knowledge of God, His creation and their relation, not as a goal in itself, but in order to be able to serve God perfectly. The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* advocates union in will with God, which is synonymous with service to Him.

To the superficial outsiders, the gradual development of full-fledged theism and the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* appears like an empirical (and not a transcendental) speculation of doctrines as in the dialectic development of knowledge of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. Yet this would then establish that full-fledged theism is not an eternal principle, but a mental conception that should serve the purpose of explaining reality in the best possible way, or to uphold certain moral standards. But this is not the case. The most essential conception of reality, full-fledged theism, is an eternally essential conception that is fully independent of human conception and of any dimension such as time and space.

Full-fledged theism is the unfiltered vision of reality.

When all material filters of prejudice arising from misidentification and false designations are removed by the Lord's mercy, one is given divine vision, which is actually the only normal vision. This normal, sober, or awake vision is therefore self-evident to the experiencing person, just as the

reality after waking up from a dream is self-evident to the awakening person. People who have awakened from a dream may not be able to convince dreaming people of their realization, for the simple reason, that those people would therefore first have to wake up themselves. Nevertheless, out of compassion, they will try by all means to convince the dreaming people of the superior nature of being awake, and of the essential necessity of waking up. As the dreaming people have accepted their dream as their all in all and final reality or paradigm, the people who try to wake them up are often rejected as enemies who try to destroy their cherished aspirations, which are actually a castle in the sky. The awake people intending to wake up the dreamers are actually the best friends of everyone, but they must be very careful, because their topics are the greatest taboos of the dreamers, although the dreamers may not admit this (in the worst case, the dreamers even kill their actual friend, as illustrated by Plato in his allegory of the cave disclosed in Chapter 2.3). The Vedic literature therefore offers various indirect approaches that allow a gradual awakening.

A difficult point is that unlike waking up someone from sleep, it is not possible to simply at once awaken a spiritually sleeping person, because the waking state consists of a *volunteer* offering of our free will to the eternal service of God, and this can only be achieved with the cooperation of the person to be awakened. Since the illusion of the material dream proposes exactly the opposite, namely to try to misuse our God-given free will to try to enjoy separately from God, this cooperation needs to be cultivated gradually, and in the beginning mostly indirectly. People don't like bitter medicine, and therefore the sugar-coated pill was invented. Similarly, the (actually sweet) healing process of surrender to God that appears bitter to the materially sick is sugarcoated with various materially tinged processes, that appear sweet to the sick (although they are in fact bitter). For the purpose of a gradual approach, the Vedic literature therefore offers indirect approaches for all types of people according to their different capacities. Because most people cannot directly take to the essential approach of full-fledged theism, the classical *Vedas* deal mainly with indirect approaches full of rituals that seem to aim mainly at material upliftment, but because they indirectly address and worship the Supreme, they are gradually uplifting. This is another reason why the essential Vedic teaching of full-fledged theism and its philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* that are purposely hidden and sugarcoated, often seemed to be forgotten and lost.

When these worldly rituals that actually aim at a gradual approach to unalloyed devotion to God are falsely proclaimed to be the goal in themselves, their actual purpose is covered. The Vaiṣṇavas therefore speak out against this spirit and officially establish full-fledged theism as the essence of the *Vedas*. Thinking that full-fledged theism is a diverting invention of the Vaiṣṇavas, some overly orthodox people sometimes accuse the Vaiṣṇavas of being disloyal to the mother of the classical four *Vedas*. The overly orthodox do so, because instead of serving the *Vedas*' actual hidden purpose, they only serve their proposed rituals and formalities. The actual purpose of the *Vedas* is deliberately hidden, for reasons like the earlier mentioned sugarcoating, and the overly orthodox cannot understand this due to their being attached to the external appearances. Actually, the Vaiṣṇavas are the truly orthodox, because they re-discover, preserve and cultivate the essential transcendental purpose of the *Vedas*, without which the *Vedas* would be reduced to mundane activity. Just as some overly or falsely orthodox think that the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas have diverted from the *Vedas*, some empiricists falsely think that the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava conclusion of full-fledged theism is a further progressive development of the classical *Vedas*, which were manufactured by the material human mind. But actually this is not so.

Full-fledged theism is the essential conclusion of eternal Veda, universal transcendental knowledge. Veda and its conclusion are revealed from the transcendental platform independent of any human culture or effort of conception.

The essential universal conclusion of full-fledged theism is established by the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is the natural and essential commentary on the *Vedānta*. *Vedānta* literally means ‘the end of all Veda’, because it deals with the essence of Veda. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is accepted as the essence of the essence of the universal transcendental knowledge of Veda by all essentialists (*sarva-vedetiḥāsānām, sārām sārām samuddhṛtam, SB 1.3.41*). In this book, the term ‘Vedic science’ is used in the understanding of the essential science of Veda – namely pure *bhakti* according to full-fledged theism as practiced by the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas – and not in terms of Vedic rituals in the spirit of the overly orthodox like the *smārtas*. Some Vaiṣṇavas have avoided the usage of terms like ‘Vedic science’ and preferred more precise terms such as ‘Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta’, ‘the conclusion of the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas’, due to possibility of misidentifying terms like Vedic science with the conduct of the *smārtas*. However, in this book, generally the broader term ‘Vedic science’ is used because people can relate to the ancient term ‘Vedic’ as something authoritative, and the term ‘science’ emphasizes that we are presenting something non-sectarian and scientific.



Those who are overly attached to mundane empiricism cannot understand how transcendental principles are beyond the laws of material time and space, and that their revelation on the mundane platform is never a consequence of any preceding material condition, but happens out of the fully independent willing of God. They thus cannot understand how full-fledged theism, which was revealed by Lord Caitanya at a certain historic point, is not the outcome of temporary human speculation, but the eternally existing essential conception of reality. The following analogy may help to clear this point. A clown may tell various stories and act out different scenes, before he comes to the actual most funny point, where the audience breaks out in laughter. Similarly, Veda manifests gradually, and only when Veda’s essential point is revealed, people are fully benefited. The clown performs the same show in every town. In his mind, as well as in the mind of his assisting friends, the point that he will make is clearly known from the very beginning of the show. Similarly, the essentialists or Vedāntists are fully conscious of the actual purpose of God and thus also of Veda in all periods of time, although that purpose may be more manifest externally in certain times and lesser in others. The actual purpose of Veda can only be understood by teleosympathy or in other words by sympathy with the confidential purposes and desires of God, which are revealed through Veda and God’s pure devotees.

Just as the audience as well as the clown derive pleasure from a gradual unfoldment of the clown's joke, similarly, it is a very exciting experience for both the devotees as well as for God to gradually unfold His essential purpose, which for this reason becomes hidden again and again. The Supreme Lord even becomes His own devotee in the form of Śrī Caitanya to relish the gradual development of full-fledged theism, or in other words the unfoldment of His own purpose. This then explains the internal reason for the temporary covering and gradual development of full-fledged theism. The internal reason exists simultaneously with above explained external reason of preaching pure devotion with a gradual approach. The gradual development of full-fledged theism or *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* can only be understood properly if it is seen teleosympathetically, i.e. to be serving the Lord's transcendental internal and external purposes and pastimes. It can then even be explained as a transcendental (in contrast to empirical) dialectic development of knowledge, as one will not commit the error of mistaking it to be a material development based on human speculation.

Only by keeping this in mind can we avoid mistaking Śrī Caitanya's transcendental synthesis for a synthesis made by limited material human intelligence. "In the book '*Śrīman Mahāprabhu Śikṣā*', Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written: '(...) Śrīman Mahāprabhu has synthesized all these different philosophies in the most proper context by taking from Śrī Madhva his concept of the eternal deity form, the concept of different energies of the Lord from Śrī Rāmānuja, from Viṣṇu Swami his concept of the non-duality and worship of the paraphernalia of the Lord and also Śrī Nimbārka's philosophy of oneness and difference was inculcated, all in turn becoming most revelant, with the original underlying principle of instantaneous, inconceivable oneness and difference.'" (Purī, 1998, pp. 66-67.) Very noteworthy is that, although saying that Śrī Caitanya synthesized different philosophies, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explained that *acintya-bhedābheda* is the original underlying principle, and not anything that was at any time invented.

Since *acintya-bhedābheda* is the philosophy of full-fledged theism or full-fledged Vaiṣṇavism, the above explanation also establishes the eternality of Vaiṣṇavism. Non-devotee scholars generally present Vaiṣṇavism as a mere synthesis of the ancient *Vedas* and later scriptures like the *Vedānta*, *Purāṇas* and *Tantras*. Since such a presentation denies the eternality of Vaiṣṇavism, devotees disagree with non-devotee scholars in this point. However, this disagreement is internally overcome by those devotees who have attained teleosympathy, sympathy with the Supreme Lord's underlying purposes, the asset of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. They see how all three considerations mentioned in Chart 1 and their corresponding visions of reality can exist simultaneously, namely how *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* and Vaiṣṇavism can simultaneously appear as a historic development, as an eternal principle, and as a transcendental development. Such devotees understand scientifically how the eternal essence can manifest at any time, and there is thus no logical contradiction if they accept full-fledged Vaiṣṇavism and *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* as eternal principles. For the same reason, there is also no logical contradiction in accepting later scriptures such as the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, which contains the transcendental biography and teachings of Lord Caitanya, as most essential scriptures. At this point we should also remember that Lord Caitanya was correctly predicted as an Avatāra of the Supreme Lord long before His advent, and that His perfect life and teachings of full-fledged theism and the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* gave clear evidence thereof (see Chapter 6). Considering all the presented points, we can understand that the acceptance of full-fledged Vaiṣṇavism and *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* as eternal and most essential by the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas is neither sentimental preference nor blind dogma, but the conclusion of all logic and science.

As explained above, the Supreme Lord's essential philosophy repeatedly becomes covered for the sake of pastime. In fact, even after Śrī Caitanya had Himself widely established *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* as the conclusive philosophy of Veda with thousands of powerful followers, nevertheless, by the Lord's inconceivable arrangements, His teaching was again covered and had to be re-established by later Ācāryas. Although the essential philosophical conclusions were scientifically established and conserved in distinguished literature, especially by the Gosvāmīs of

Vṛndāvana and their disciples, there followed a few dark periods in the history of Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavism due to the disappearance of many self-realized devotees. Many *apa-siddhāntas*, teachings of pseudo sects, cropped up. Their members externally pretended to be Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas but engaged in immoral conduct. People thus lost faith in the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas in general. During the early times of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's life in the late 19th century, Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavism was defamed to such an extent that it took him months of intense research to find even a single copy of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, which is one of the most essential sacred books of the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas. Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja explained¹⁴⁹ that the fact that even though Śrī Caitanya's teachings were conserved in writings of pure devotees, still people could not understand them properly, proves an important matter of fact:

The Supreme Lord and His teachings
can only be understood by a pure devotee, or
by hearing from a present pure devotee. Some people hold
that one can understand the Lord's teaching by reading the books
compiled by pure devotees, but the dark periods prove that this is not sufficient.

There was never a lack of brilliant scholars in India, but without the direct guidance of pure devotees, no one of them was able to understand the scriptures properly – rather they were badly misinterpreted, leading to a demise of true religion. The Supreme Lord therefore again sent His pure devotees like Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, to rediscover, reestablish and cultivate Śrī Caitanya's essential teachings. Śrī Caitanya in this way establishes, that His teachings must be heard and learned directly from physically present self-realized devotees, and He Himself again and again gave the supreme example by hearing directly from self-realized devotees like Rāmānanda Rāya and Gadādhara Paṇḍita. As explained earlier, the covering and rediscovering of the eternal Vedic conclusion is not an indication of deficiency of the Vedic conclusion, but part of the Supreme Lord's transcendental pastime. It would thus theoretically be possible that the Vedic conclusion could become covered again. However, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja mentioned, that Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura made a prediction, that in the future (up to the next cycle of creation), Śrī Caitanya's teachings will never be lost again. May this book be a tiny contribution to the fulfillment of this auspicious prediction.



¹⁴⁹ For example in his sermon given on the 23rd of May 2004 in a video conference.

14. Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana Described by Śrī Caitanya

In this chapter, Śrī Caitanya's teachings about the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* will be described in detail. The more basic knowledge given in previous chapters is necessary to be able to understand the contents of this chapter. The procedure how this chapter was compiled is as follows: The general definition of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* given by Śrī Caitanya in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.20.108-109 serves as the starting point, and we then follow Caitanya Mahāprabhu's elaboration in the further following verses. Whenever it was possible, the verses are explained by quotes from the scriptures and by commentaries of the Ācāryas. The quoted verses in the beginning are part of Śrī Caitanya's instructions to Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī in Vārāṇasī (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.20-24). Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda often asked his disciples to go through this important teaching, and he gave the same advice in the ninth verse of his poem 'Vaiṣṇava ke' (*prabhu sanātane, parama jatane, śikṣā diloyāhā, cinto sei saba, Vb*).

14.1. General Definition

The general definition of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* was given by Śrī Caitanya as follows:

*jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'
kṛṣṇera 'taṭasthā-śakti' 'bhedābheda-prakāśa'
sūryāṁśa-kiraṇa, yaiche agni-jvālā-caya
svābhāvika kṛṣṇera tina-prakāra 'śakti' haya*

“The original position of the living entities is to be eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa because they are the Lord's marginal energy and a manifestation simultaneously one and different from the Lord, like a molecular particle of sunshine or fire. Kṛṣṇa has three varieties of energy.”

– *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.20.108-109.

This verse establishes, that because the *jīva*, the living entity or spirit soul, is the Lord's marginal energy (*taṭasthā-śakti*), it is the *jīva*'s eternal nature to be an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, just as the peripheral organs like the mouth and the hand are servants that provide and break down food for the stomach, the central organ that provides all organs with adequate nutrition. By serving Kṛṣṇa, all is served, just as the whole tree is served by watering its roots (*SB* 4.31.14). Next, this verse establishes that the *jīva* is simultaneously one and different, *bhedābheda*, from the Lord, like a spark of fire is simultaneously one and different from the fire, and that Lord Kṛṣṇa has three varieties of energy. My most revered spiritual master, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja, explained:

“The three chief potencies out of the infinite potencies of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa are (1) *cit-śakti* (internal spiritual potency), (2) *acit-śakti* (external material potency) and (3) *taṭasthā-śakti* (marginal potency). The *jīvas*, i.e., individual conscious units, are the outcome of the marginal potency of the Supreme Lord. As such they have got the eligibility to go either side, i.e., to the spiritual or the material realm. The definition of a *jīva* in the *Nāradya Purāṇa* is ‘After becoming tinged with the three qualities of *māyā* (external deluding potency) – *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ*, the spiritual entities that have emanated from the potency of the Absolute Spiritual Substance and have their existence in the marginal potency – are designated as *jīvas*.’ The *jīvas*, in their real selves, are the eternal servants of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

“In one sense the *jīva*-soul is
 identical with the Supreme Lord
 as potency cannot be separated from the Substance
 or potency cannot be conceived of without the Substance.
 In another sense the *jīva*-soul is distinct from the Supreme Lord
 as it is an atomic part of the potency of the Lord and not the Substance itself.

“Even the summation of all the potencies of the Substance cannot become the Substance. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Infinite Absolute Entity while the *jīvas* are the absolute infinitesimals or spiritual atomic parts of the marginal potency of the Absolute as the particle of the ray of the sun is distinct from the sun itself. So the *jīvas* are simultaneously distinct and non-distinct from the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This is inconceivable. As the real self of the *jīva* is transcendental – beyond the range of mundane mind and intellect – and as *paramātmā* is also transcendental, the relationship between the two is *nirguṇa* or transcendental, i.e. inconceivable. So the relationship between the Absolute Truth and the *jīva* and the world is known as *acintya-bhedābheda*, inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction.” (Tīrtha 2, 1997, p. 3.)

Explaining the above quoted verses (Cc 2.20.108-109), Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes in the first chapter of his *Jaiva-dharma*:

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the *cit-vastu*, wholly and absolutely spiritual entity. When describing Him, many persons use the analogy of the sun: He is the only sun of the spiritual world and the *jīvas* are the innumerable particles of His rays. It would be an inaccurate parallel to compare the *jīva*, an infinitesimal part of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, to a rock – a minute part of a gigantic mountain – since the countless millions of *jīvas* who emanate from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, do not in any way affect or diminish the absolute wholeness of the Lord. Therefore, the Vedic literature compares the Supreme Lord to a fire, and the *jīvas* to its tiny sparks. Actually, no comparison is truly appropriate. Whether the *jīva* is described as a tiny spark of a fire, a minute particle of a sunray, or a speck of gold from a gold mine, none of these comparisons is actually perfect. Nevertheless, if one can overlook the mundane imperfections in these analogies, then the actual truth about the *jīva* will easily crystallize: Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the infinite spiritual substance, while the *jīva* is His infinitesimal part and parcel and therefore also a spiritual substance. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *jīva* are qualitatively the same, being of the same spiritual nature.

“However, the Supreme Lord is *bṛhat-cit-vastu*, the complete, infinite, spiritual entity; whereas, the *jīva* is *anu-cit-vastu*, the infinitesimal spiritual entity, the Lord’s part and parcel. Although they are one in the quality of their spiritual nature and consciousness, this contrast of quantity between the Lord and the *jīva* is a permanent feature of their natures. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the *jīva*’s eternal master and the *jīva* is Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servant. This is their natural constitutional relationship. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme ruler and observer; the *jīva* is the ruled and observed. Kṛṣṇa is independently omnipotent – the Supreme Controller – and the *jīva*’s potency is dependent and controlled. Kṛṣṇa is the complete whole; the *jīva* is a minutely tiny part. With His infinitely superior opulence, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the all-attractive person, who thereby attracts all the *jīvas* to Himself. Thus, it is natural for the *jīva* to be in *kṛṣṇa-dāsyā*, eternal subservience to Kṛṣṇa, and this is the *jīva*’s *sva-bhāva*, intrinsic nature, his *dharma*. (...) From this analysis, we can conclude that the *jīva* is the *bhedābheda-prakāśa* manifestation of Bhagavān, simultaneously one with and different from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The *jīva* may be subject to the domination of *māyā*, while the Supreme Lord is eternally the controller of *māyā*—herein dwells an eternal difference between the *jīva* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The *jīva* is one of the Supreme Lord’s divine energies; thus, the *jīva*’s constitutional nature is spiritual, just as the Supreme Godhead is intrinsically spiritual. In this respect, the *jīva* and the Supreme Lord are non-different. However, the *jīva* and the Supreme Lord are simultaneously non-different and different, and the concept of eternal difference may be seen to predominate.”

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura mentions further in the fourteenth chapter:

“On the basis of his spiritual nature and qualities, the *jīva* is eternally non-different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but on the grounds of his spiritual identity, the *jīva* is eternally distinct from Kṛṣṇa. Their oneness is eternal and their distinction is also eternal, and the aspect of eternal distinction between them is pre-eminent and conspicuous.” (Bhaktivinoda 1, 1893, Chapter 14.)

If the *jīva* would be completely identical with the Lord, then there would be neither necessity nor possibility of service to the Lord, as service or loving exchanges require two parties. Would the *jīva* be completely different from the Lord, then there would also be no possibility of service to Him, because service requires some similarity and closeness. The servant needs a certain proximity to and understanding of the Lord and of His nature and needs to serve Him properly, just as for proper service, the hand needs a certain proximity to the mouth, and the brain needs to know what food the stomach needs. In the next verse, Śrī Caitanya quotes *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.22.53: *eka-deśa-sthitasyāgner, jyotsnā vistāriṇī yathā, parasya brahmaṇaḥ śaktis, tathedaṁ akhilaṁ jagat,*

“Just as the illumination of a fire, which is situated in one place,
is spread all over, the energies of the Supreme Lord,
Parabrahman, are spread all over this universe,
although the Lord is situated in one place.”

This verse further describes the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*: The Supreme Lord is situated in one place in His eternal abode, and as such *bheda*, distinct, from His energies that are spread all over the universe, just as the light of a fire that reaches a distant place does not burn that place like the fire would. The Lord’s various transformed energies such as the living entities are also distinct from Him in terms of quantitative expansion and overall power; they are minute, limited in space, dependent, and under control of the Lord’s energies, while the Lord is all-encompassing, all-penetrating, independent, and *śaktiman*, the master of His energies (see *Cc* 2.6.162). Yet simultaneously, the Supreme Lord is also *abheda*, non-distinct, from His energies: They cannot be conceived of without His sanction, and their existence is fully dependent on Him, just as a spark from a fire is dependent on the fire. In regard to the *jīvas*, His energy of the living entities, they are to some extent qualitatively one with the Lord: They are both spiritual, just as the spark is burning like the fire. The Lord is *sac-cid-ānanda*, eternal, spiritually conscious and fully blissful, and the *jīvas* in their original spiritual nature are *anu-sac-cid-ānanda*, they follow the Lord’s nature of *sac-cid-ānanda*. The Lord’s relation to His energies of simultaneous *bheda* and *abheda* seems irrational and ambiguous if seen materially; thus it is called *acintya-bhedābheda*, materially inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction.

The *acintya-bhedābheda* relation between the Supreme Lord and His energies such as the living entities is described throughout the Vedic literature. *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* states¹⁵⁰: *eko vaśī sarvabhūtāntarātma, ekaṁ rūpaṁ bahudhā yaḥ karoti, tam ātmasthaṁ ye’ nupaśyanti dhīras teṣāṁ sukhaṁ śāsvataṁ netareṣāṁ. (...) nityo nityānāṁ cetanaś cetanānāṁ, eko bahūnāṁ yo vidadhāti kāmān,*

“Although His form is one, the Supersoul, who is the indwelling witness and controller of all living beings, is manifest in innumerable ways. The wise who can see that Supreme Soul within their heart become peaceful and enjoy transcendental bliss. (...) The Supreme Lord is eternal and the living beings are eternal. The Supreme Lord is cognizant and the living beings are cognizant. The difference is that the Supreme Lord maintains many other living entities, who are being maintained by Him.”

¹⁵⁰ 2.2.12&14. Quoted from *Śrī Gauḍīya Kaṅṭhahāra* (Bhaktigunakar, 1926, p. 191) and *Bg* 2.12, purport.

In the *Gopāla-tāpany Upaniṣad* 1.21 (quoted in *Jd* 13), we read: *eko vaṣī sarva-gaḥ kṛṣṇa īdyah, eko 'pi san bahudhā yo 'vabhāti,*

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only Supreme Personality who can bring every being under His sway. He is the Absolute Brahman, omnipresent and without a second, and the divine object of worship of everyone. Although He is singular, yet by the power of His inconceivable potency He manifests Himself in a myriad of forms and thus performs unlimited variegated pastimes.”

In the *Padma Purāṇa* (quoted from *Āmnāya-sūtra* 9. Bhaktivinoda 7, 1890) it is said: *acintyayaiva śaktyaiva, eko 'vayava-varjitaḥ, ātmānam bahudhā kṛtvā, krīdate yoga-sampadā,*

“With the help of His inconceivable mystic potency, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has no material body, becomes many and enjoys various pastimes.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.35 states: *yathā mahānti bhūtāni, bhūteṣūccāvaceṣv anu, praviṣṭāny apraviṣṭāni, tathā teṣu na teṣv aham,*

“O Brahmā, please know that the universal elements enter into the cosmos and at the same time do not enter into the cosmos; similarly, I Myself also exist within everything created, and at the same time I am outside of everything.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.33.3 mentions: *sa eva viśvasya bhavān vidhatte, guṇa-pravāheṇa vibhakta-iryah sargādy aniho 'vitathābhisandhir, ātmeśvaro 'tarkya-sahasra-śaktiḥ,*

“My dear Lord, although personally You have nothing material to do, You have distributed Your energies in the interactions of the material modes of nature, and for that reason the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the cosmic manifestation take place. My dear Lord, You are self-determined and are the Supreme Personality of Godhead for all living entities. For them You created this material manifestation, and although You are one, Your diverse energies can act multifariously. This is inconceivable to us.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.9.7 explains: *ekas tvam eva bhagavann idam ātma-śaktyā, māyākhyayoru-guṇayā mahad-ādy-aśeṣam, sṛṣṭvānuviśya puruṣas tad-asad-guṇeṣu, nāneva dāruṣu vibhāvasuvad vibhāsi,*

“My Lord, You are the Supreme One, but by Your different energies You appear differently in the spiritual and material worlds. You create the total energy of the material world by Your external potency, and after creation You enter within the material world as the Supersoul. You are the Supreme Person, and through the temporary modes of material nature You create varieties of manifestation, just as fire, entering into wood of different shapes, burns brilliantly in different varieties.”

The *Brahma-tarka*¹⁵¹ of Śrīla Vedavyāsa states: *viśeṣaya viśiṣṭasyā pybhedastad eva tu, sarvām acintya śakti tvad yujyate parameśvare, tacchaktyaiḥ eva tu jīveṣu cid rūpa prakṛta vapi, bhedābhedau tad-anytra hyubhayor api darśanat,*

¹⁵¹ Quoted from (Purī, 1998, pp. 62-63). The *Brahma-tarka* was known to and cited by Madhvācārya. “Even though Madhvācārya’s philosophy was stolidly based on the principle of pure duality, there is proof that he was favorable to the

“By the inconceivable potency of the Lord, the particular transcendental supreme object is non-different from its attributes. The potency of the Supreme Lord is the living entity and the material nature is a reflection of the spiritual energy. There are indeed both similarities and differences (*bhedābheda*) between the Supreme Lord and the living entity, also between the spiritual potency and material nature, all of which are *acintya*, inconceivable.”

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, verses 7.12 and 9.4-5, the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *ye caiva sāttvikā bhāvā, rājasās tāmasās ca ye, matta eveti tām viddhi, na tv ahaṁ teṣu te mayi. (...) mayā tatam idam sarvaṁ, jagad avyakta-mūrtinā, mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni, na cāhaṁ teṣv avasthitaḥ. na ca mat-sthāni bhūtāni, paśya me yogam aiśvaram, bhūta-bhṛn na ca bhūta-stho, mamātmā bhūta-bhāvanah,*

“Know that all states of being – be they of goodness, passion or ignorance – are manifested by My energy. I am, in one sense, everything, but I am independent. I am not under the modes of material nature, for they, on the contrary, are within Me. (...) By Me, in My unmanifested form, this entire universe is pervaded. All beings are in Me, but I am not in them. And yet everything that is created does not rest in Me. Behold My mystic opulence! Although I am the maintainer of all living entities and although I am everywhere, I am not a part of this cosmic manifestation, for My Self is the very source of creation.”

14.2. Śakti-Pariṇāma, Transformation of God’s Energy

In the next verse, Śrī Caitanya says:

*kṛṣṇera svābhāvika tina-śakti-pariṇati
cic-chakti, jīva-śakti, āra māyā-śakti*

“Lord Kṛṣṇa naturally has three energetic transformations, and these are known as the internal spiritual potency (*cit-śakti* or *antaraṅga-śakti*), the marginal living entity potency (*jīva-śakti* or *taṭasthā-śakti*) and the external illusory potency (*acit-śakti*, *māyā-śakti* or *bahiraṅga-śakti*).” – Cc 2.20.111.

This verse explains how the various potencies or energies of the Lord are produced, namely through *śakti-pariṇāma*, transformations of His energies. Śrī Caitanya explains that

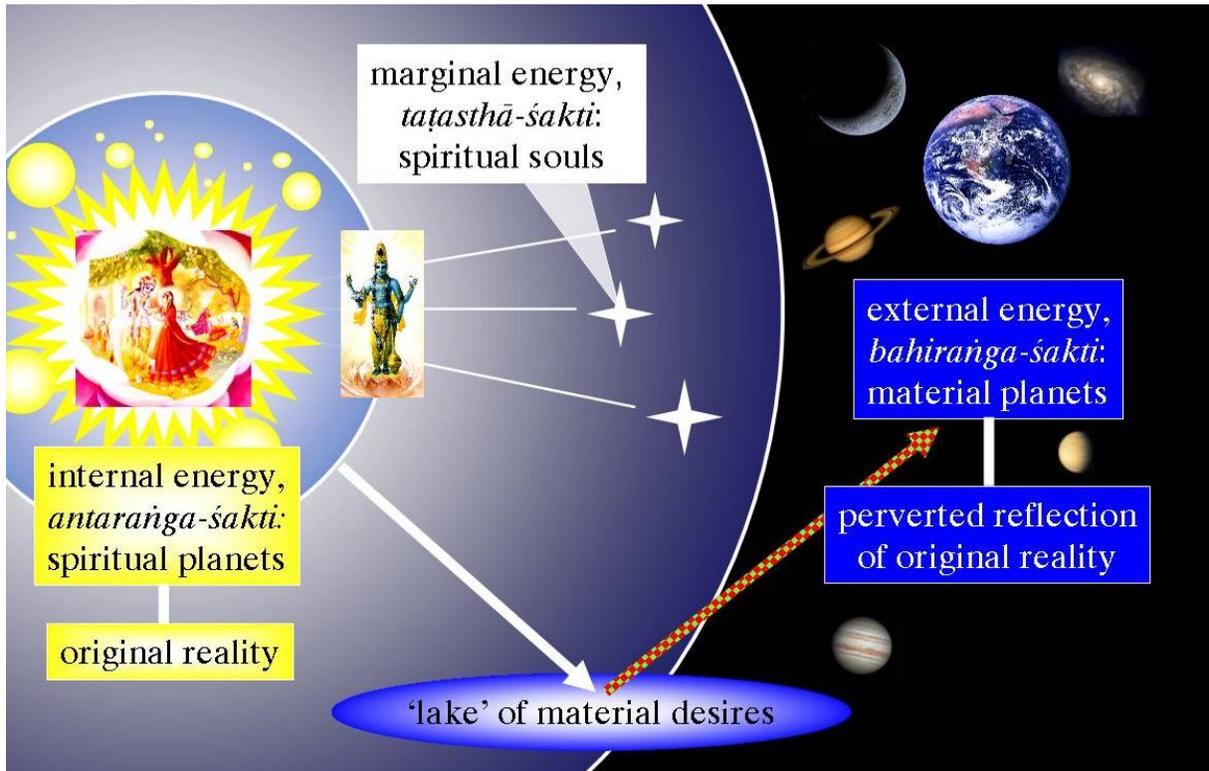
*‘pariṇāma-vāda’ – vyāsa-sūtrera sammata
acintya-śakti īśvara jagad-rūpe pariṇata*

“The *Vedānta-sūtra* aims at establishing that the cosmic manifestation has come into being by the transformation of the inconceivable potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” – Cc 2.6.170.

Thus He postulated *śakti-pariṇāma-vāda*, the theory of the transformation of the Lord’s energy. This theory explains the unfolding of the Lord’s nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*. “*acintya-bhedābheda* philosophy maintains the same standpoint of difference as Madhva’s *siddhānta* on the five-fold relationship of God to soul, soul to matter, matter to matter, matter to God and soul to soul. But *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* further teaches the doctrine of *śakti-pariṇāma-vāda*, in which the origin of this five-fold differentiation is traced to the Lord’s transcendental play with His *śakti* or

principle of inconceivable oneness and differences, *acintya-bhedābheda*, which can be validated by his positive writings in certain places. There can be no doubt that at least he accepted this above principle *acintya-bhedābheda* within his mind.” (Purī, 1998, pp. 62-63.)

energy. Because the souls and matter emanate from the Lord, they are one in Him as His energy yet simultaneously distinct from Him and one another. The oneness and difference of this five-fold relationship is termed *acintya* or inconceivable.” (*Vb*, Glossary).



In the above Chart we see how the original reality of creation lies in the inner circles of the Lord’s spiritual realms, that manifest from His internal energy (see Chapter 5.4 for details). One transformation of the Lord’s energy is the marginal energy, *taṭasthā-śakti* or *jīva-śakti*, the *jīvas* or spirit souls, and another transformation is the external energy, that manifests the material realms. Some *jīvas* develop material desires, i.e. they artificially try to enjoy separately from loving service to the Lord. In order to fulfill this desire, the Lord manifests the material planets from His external energy. The material realm is the perverted reflection of the original reality – the spiritual realm. Figuratively, the spiritual reality, when reflected on the ‘lake of material desires’ of the separatist *jīvas*’ consciousness, results in a perverted reflection – the material realm. Due to this perversion that is caused by the *jīvas*’ selfish desires and produced by *māyā*, the Lord’s illusory external material energy, the *jīvas* falsely think to be the immortal masters of their whereabouts, while they actually are deluded and bound by matter, birth, disease, old age and death; they think to be the possessor and enjoyer of bodily relations and material possessions although they are actually not, etc. Although the *jīvas* are one with the Lord in terms of both being spiritual, it is possible for the *jīvas* to become illusioned by the Lord’s *māyā*, because unlike the unlimited Lord, the *jīvas* are limited and extremely small (*sūkṣmah*, *SB* 6.16.9). Only when they are graced by divine knowledge descending through the Lord’s internal potency, they are able to realize their illusion and again turn towards their original nature of *bhakti*, which enables them to return to the original reality beyond illusion; the original reality of a life eternal, spiritually conscious and entirely blissfull; *sac-cid-ānanda*.

*vyāsera sūtrete kahe ‘parināma’-vāda
‘vyāsa bhrānta’—bali’ tāra uṭhāila vivāda*

“In his *Vedānta-sūtra* Śrīla Vyāsadeva has described that everything is but a transformation of the energy of the Lord. Śaṅkarācārya, however, has misled the world by commenting that Vyāsadeva was mistaken. Thus he has raised great opposition to theism throughout the entire world.” – *Cc* 1.7.212.

In his purport to this verse, Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda writes: “Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains, ‘In the *Vedānta-sūtra* of Śrīla Vyāsadeva it is definitely stated that all cosmic manifestations result from transformations of various energies of the Lord. Śaṅkarācārya, however, not accepting the energy of the Lord, thinks that [accepting *śakti-pariṇāma-vāda* would mean that] it is the Lord who is transformed [*pariṇāma-vāde īśvara hayena vikārī, eta kahi* ‘vivarta’-*vāda sthāpanā ye kari*, ‘According to Śaṅkarācārya, by accepting the theory of the transformation of the energy of the Lord, one creates an illusion by indirectly accepting that the Absolute Truth is transformed.’ – *Cc* 1.7.122.]. He has taken many clear statements from the Vedic literature and twisted them to try to prove that if the Lord, or the Absolute Truth, were transformed, His oneness would be disturbed. Thus he has accused Śrīla Vyāsadeva of being mistaken. In developing his philosophy of monism, therefore, he has established *vivarta-vāda*, or the *māyāvāda* theory of illusion.’ (...) A person can create many things by the transformation of his energy.

“For example, a businessman transforms his energy by establishing many big factories or business organizations, yet he remains a person although his energy has been transformed into these many factories or business concerns.

“The Māyāvādī philosophers do not understand this simple fact. (...) Not believing in the fact that the energy of the Absolute Truth is transformed, Śaṅkarācārya has propounded his theory of illusion. This theory states that although the Absolute Truth is never transformed, we think that it is transformed, which is an illusion. Śaṅkarācārya does not believe in the transformation of the energy of the Absolute Truth, for he claims that everything is one and that the living entity is therefore also one with the Supreme. This is the *māyāvāda* theory. Śrīla Vyāsadeva has explained that the Absolute Truth is a person who has different potencies. Merely by His desire that there be creation and by His glance (*sa aikṣata*), He created this material world (*sa asṛjata*). After creation, He remains the same person: He is not transformed into everything. One should accept that the Lord has inconceivable energies and that it is by His order and will that varieties of manifestations have come into existence. In the Vedic literature it is said, *sa-tattvato ’nyathā-buddhir vikāra ity udāhṛtaḥ*. This *mantra* indicates that from one fact another fact is generated. For example, a father is one fact, and a son generated from the father is a second fact. Thus both of them are truths, although one is generated from the other. This generation of a second, independent truth from a first truth is called *vikāra*, or transformation resulting in a by-product. The Supreme Brahman is the Absolute Truth, and the energies that have emanated from Him and are existing separately, such as the living entities and the cosmic manifestation, are also truths. This is an example of transformation, which is called *vikāra* or *pariṇāma*. To give another example of *vikāra*, milk is a truth, but the same milk may be transformed into yogurt. Thus yogurt is a transformation of milk, although the ingredients of yogurt and milk are the same. (...)

“It is to be concluded that the entire cosmic manifestation is a transformation of the energy of the Supreme Lord, not of the Supreme Lord or Absolute Truth Himself, who always remains the same.

“(...) This is also confirmed in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (3.1): *yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante yena jātāni jīvanti yat prayanty abhisamviśanti*, ‘The entire cosmic manifestation emanates from the Absolute Truth, rests upon the Absolute Truth and after annihilation again reenters the body of the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.’ In this verse it is indicated that Brahman, the Absolute Truth, is the original cause and that the living entities and the cosmic manifestation are

effects of this cause. The cause being a fact, the effects are also factual. They are not illusion [as Śāṅkarācārya claims].”

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains: “This material world is not false, it is factual – by Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s will. However, it is the materially conditioned *jīva*’s concepts of ‘me’ and ‘mine’ that are false and illusory. (...) The *māyāvādī* speculators wrongly claim that this world is an illusion (...)” (Bhaktivinoda 1, 1893. *Jaiva-dharma*, Chapter 7.)

Giving scriptural evidence and the analogy of the businessman who transforms his energy by establishing many factories and organizations while still remaining the same person, Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has nicely explained, how it is possible for Kṛṣṇa to have various (*bheda*) transformations of His energies while still remaining the same (*abheda*) Person. This is also confirmed in the introduction of the *Śrī Īsopaniṣad: pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya, pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate*, “Because the Personality of Godhead is the Complete Whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance.” The transformation of the Lord’s energy is also indicated in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.1.7, quoted in *Cc* 2.6.172, purport): *yathorna-nābhiḥ sṛjate gṛhṇate ca*, “The Lord creates and destroys the cosmic manifestation as a spider creates a web and draws it back within itself.”



In the above Chart, we see the discussed main three energies of Kṛṣṇa: Rādhārāṇī is the essential Personification of Kṛṣṇa’s internal energy, Durgā is the personification of Kṛṣṇa’s external energy (the perversion or shadow of the internal energy), and the *jīvas* are situated between them in a marginal position. As explained, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not affected by the transformations of His extended energies and is eternally engaged in loving relationships with His dearest devotees. The *jīvas* can either serve the internal energy by *bhakti* and attain complete spiritual harmony, or try to enjoy independently from *bhakti* and thus become captured in the high-tech fortresses of Durgā, consisting of countless illusory material bodies and environments. There, by Durgā’s illusory energy, *māyā*, one misidentifies with these alien bodies and environments life after life, thinking to be a man or woman, dog or pig, microbe or grass, and thinks that one is enjoying, while actually one unknowingly is a slave of some alien senses that belong to Durgā. In this way, the *jīvas* are indirectly serving Kṛṣṇa by unknowingly serving the shadow of His energy. As it is the *jīvas*’ eternal nature, *svarūpa* or *sanātana-dharma*, to be a servant of Kṛṣṇa (*Cc* 2.20.108), they cannot but serve Kṛṣṇa.

dharma also means ‘that which upholds existence’ and ‘that which cannot be separated from something’; as such it is practically impossible for the *jīvas* to give up their *sanātana-dharma* – else they would cease to exist, and this is again impossible, because they are by nature eternal and part of Kṛṣṇa (*Bg* 15.7). Thus they either serve Kṛṣṇa willingly and attain harmony with Him and with their own nature and the entire creation, or they try to rebel against their original serving nature by trying to enjoy nature independently and are thus forced to serve Kṛṣṇa in a most awkward, unnatural, perverted, indirect, involuntary and ignorant manner.

ajām ekām lohita-śukla-kṛṣṇām, vahvīḥ prajāḥ sṛjamānām svarūpāḥ, ajo hy eko juṣamāno’ nuṣete, jahaty enām bhukta-bhogām ajo’nyah, “The *prakṛti*-potency is the mother of much progeny – the three modes of material nature, and therefrom the twenty-four material elements. She is *svarūpāḥ*, the energy of the Supreme Lord. She is being served and worshiped by another unborn personality, the conditioned *jīva*, who in his ignorance considers himself the *puruṣa*, enjoyer, of her, *prakṛti*, the material nature. Another unborn *puruṣa*, the *jīva* situated in knowledge, renounces this false attempt to enjoy her and thus attains liberation.” – *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 4.5, quoted in *Daśa-mūla-tattva* 4 (Bhaktivinoda 10, 1892). Renouncing their perverted nature to enjoy the Lord’s energies is impossible for the conditioned *jīvas* in their perverted state without the help of Kṛṣṇa’s internal energy, who engages them in their original nature or *sanātana-dharma*. Only if they take shelter of Kṛṣṇa through His internal energy, can they overcome the deluding material energy (*Bg* 7.14 & 9.13).

Śrī Caitanya manifested a pastime, in which He revealed various forms of His *śaktis* or energies. He and His associates performed a dramatization of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in the house of Śrī Candrasekhara Ācārya (*Cc* 1.17.241). As the workings of His various *śaktis* are a confidential topic that can bewilder all except the devotees who are protected by the Lord’s special grace, the performance was put up in a private circle of devotees. “When the members of the audience saw Mahāprabhu, each saw Him according to His or Her own mood: Some as Kamala, some as Lakṣmī, others as Sītā and yet others as *mahā-māyā*. (...) In the guise of playing the roles of all the different female divinities, Mahāprabhu revealed His divine energies and taught the proper respect due to each one of them.” (Tīrtha 1, 2001, summarized from *Cb* 1.18.) In this pastime, the Supreme Lord manifested His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda* in connection to His various energies; He possesses various internal and external energies, and they are revealed according to the mood of the devotee.

All of The Lord’s energies are essentially in perfect harmony
due to being subordinate to His will; therefore it is not at all wise
to decry any of His energies, be they manifest as His devotees
or as His deluding material energy.

Śrī Caitanya taught how to respect each one of His energies properly according to their nature; both internal and external *śaktis* are *bhedābheda* from Him and subordinate to Him as He is *śaktiman*, the possessor of *śakti*. His internal energies are non-different from His own spiritual substance (they are merely different in mood) and more intimately connected to Him, whereas the external energies are transformed energies, *śakti-pariṇāma* – they cannot be seen as non-different from His spiritual substance, and they are serving Him without intimacy from a far distance. Thus although the devotees pay respect to Durgā in terms of her being the Lord’s servant, they never worship her as the Supreme. Rādhārāṇī, Sītā, Lakṣmī, etc, however, are worshiped as Supreme, due to Their being non-different from the Lord’s spiritual substance, and thus Their pronouns are written in capital letters. This shows that a proper understanding of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* is necessary to not confuse the various energies of the Lord in order to give them the proper respect, so that they and the Lord may be pleased with our worship.

The materialists are worshiping Kṛṣṇa unknowingly by worshiping material nature, be it in the form of bodies, money, landscapes, cars, etc. Due to being engrossed in the desire to exploit

Kṛṣṇa’s energies instead of serving them, Durgā allows them to live out these desires to some extent, but they have to undergo endless illusion and sufferings. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura mentions in his *Śrī Harināma Cintāmaṇi*: “Māyā Devī punishes the wayward *jīvas* who drift away from serving Lord Kṛṣṇa. (...) Yet Māyā Devī rewards those who chant the holy name; she helps them cross over the ocean of material nescience. Māyā Devī is known and worshiped in the forms of Durgā, Kālī, etc. The superior spiritual energy is Lord Kṛṣṇa’s original and primeval energy; *māyā* is its shadow. Her intention is to rectify the erring *jīvas* who fall away and bring them back to Kṛṣṇa-consciousness; this is her prime duty to the Lord.” (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 60.) Thus Durgā, although deluding the separatist *jīva*, helps the *jīva* who wants to return to *bhakti* and chants the holy name. Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s devotees respect her for that service; they don’t worship her for any material gains like the *sāktas*, the devotees of Durgā. Although worshipping demigods for material gains is shun by the devotees, they don’t criticize those who worship demigods, because demigod-worship is recommended in the *Vedas* for those who cannot yet take to the direct path of *bhakti*; for them, worshipping Kṛṣṇa indirectly through the demigods is a gradual approach to *bhakti* and the better alternative to the path of blind materialists who are unaware that they are unknowingly worshipping demigods by adoring and serving material things that are under the charge of demigods.

Everything in creation is a manifestation of the Lord’s energies and their transformations, (*śakti-pariṇāma*). What is the purpose of variegated creation? The Supreme Lord is the original enjoyer (*govindam ādi-puruṣam*, *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.52, *bhoktāraṁ*, *Bg* 5.29), and He created the universal diversity for His enjoyment. It is said; “variety is the mother of enjoyment.” We should understand that everything in creation is primarily meant for the Supreme Lord’s enjoyment, (as it is *His śakti-pariṇāma*, the transformation of *His* own energy) – then we can attain peace (see *Bg* 5.29). If we utilize everything primarily in the service of the Lord, then we nourish the center or root of creation, and then automatically, everything else in creation will be nourished, just like all branches and leaves of a tree are automatically nourished simply by watering the root of the tree (see *SB* 4.31.14). *śakti-pariṇāma-vāda* discloses, how everything in creation including the living entities are *śakti-pariṇāma*, a transformation of the Supreme Lord’s energies, and as such *bhedābheda*, simultaneously distinct and non-distinct from Him. This explains, how everything in creation is essentially *from* the Lord, *by* the Lord and *for* the Lord. Therefore, everything in creation should primarily serve the pleasures of God through pure *bhakti*, then all will be benefited most. It is not about any duty service once in a while, but about treating everything and everyone as being of God, maintained by God, and existing for God. This means that ultimately everything will be recognised only in its connection to God and everything will be engaged only in service to God.

14.3. God, His Energies and Their Interactions are Acintya, Materially Inconceivable

In the next verse (*Cc* 2.20.112), Śrī Caitanya quotes *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 6.7.61: *viṣṇu-saktiḥ parā proktā, kṣetra-jñākhyā tathā parā, avidyā-karma-saṁjñānyā, tṛtīyā śaktir isyate*, “Originally, Kṛṣṇa’s energy is spiritual, and the energy known as the living entity is also spiritual. However, there is another energy, called illusion, which consists of fruitive activity. That is the Lord’s third potency.” The next verse quotes *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.3.2: *śaktayah sarva-bhāvānām, acintya-jñāna-gocarāḥ, yato 'to brahmaṇas tās tu, sargādyā bhāva-śaktayah, bhavanti tapatām śreṣṭha, pāvakasya yathoṣṇatā*,

“All the different creative *śaktis*, energies, exist simultaneously in the Supreme Absolute Truth. This is *acintya-jñāna-gocarāḥ*, inconceivable by mundane knowledge. These inconceivable energies act in the process of creation, maintenance and annihilation. O chief of the ascetics, just as there are two energies possessed by fire – namely heat and light – these different materially inconceivable creative energies are the natural characteristics of the Absolute Truth.”

Here the Lord establishes that the various energies of the Lord and their interactions are materially inconceivable. It should be understood that the term *acintya* in the term *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* means *materially* inconceivable, not altogether inconceivable. The Supreme Lord possesses *acintya-śakti*, materially inconceivable transcendental potencies, by which He can harmonize and accommodate seemingly contradictory manifestations, and by which He can reveal Himself even to the conditioned souls. As explained earlier in Chapter 3.2, by advocating materially inconceivable transcendental realities, the principle of falsifiability proposed by Carl Popper is only violated in a limited sense. If one enters the higher paradigm of transcendental sense perception, then any proposed matter of fact can be attested or falsified. The fault is not the principle of falsification per se, but the limitation of the means of falsification to material sources of evidence. Unlike certain dogmatic religions that demand faith in something which cannot be perceived at all, the Vedic science awakens the transcendental senses of the soul by which one can factually perceive transcendence. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, the contemporary associate of Śrī Caitanya, has disclosed the philosophy of Śrī Caitanya in his *Ṣaḍ Sandarbha*, an elaborate six-folded encyclopaedic thesis. In his *Bhāgavata-sandarbha* (16), he mentioned:

*ekam eva tat parama-tattvaṃ svābhāvīkācintya-śaktiā
sarvadaiva svarūpa-tad-rūpa-vaibhava-jīva pradhāna-rūpeṇa
caturdhāvatiṣṭhate sūryāntar-maṇḍala-stha-teja iva
maṇḍala-tad-bahir-gata-raśmi-tat-praticchavi-rūpeṇa
durghaṭa-ghaṭa-katvaṃ hyacintyatvam*

“The Absolute Truth is one. His natural characteristic is that He has inconceivable potency (*acintya-śakti*), by which He is eternally present in four forms: His original personal form (*svarūpa*), the expansions of His divine form (*tad-rūpa-vaibhava*), the living entities (*jīvas*), and the sum total of material ingredients (*pradhāna*). (...) There seems to be a contradiction in this matter between the Lord being one eternal Absolute Truth and His simultaneously possessing multifold potencies; His simultaneously being localized and all-pervading, personal and impersonal. To that it is said that *acintya* means beyond the bounds of human intellect. An event which is extremely rare or unlikely, even physically impossible, is inconceivable. For the Supreme Lord, however, nothing is impossible for He has inconceivable power (*acintya-śakti*)¹⁵².”

In his *Sarva-saṁvādinī* commentary of his *Paramātmā-sandarbha* (77-78), Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī wrote (this is the oldest source we know containing the exact term ‘*acintya-bhedābheda*’):

*apare tu, ‘tarkāpratiṣṭhānāt’ iti nyāyena bhede’py abhede’pi
nirmalyāda-doṣa-santati-darśanena bhinnatayā cintayitum aśakyatvād abhedam
sādhayantas tadvad abhinnatayāpi cintayitum aśakyatvād bhedaṃ api
sādhayanto’cintya-bhedābheda-vādam svikurvanti
tatra bādara-paurāṇika-śaivānām mate bhedābhedaḥ, bhāskara-mate ca
māyāvādinām tatra bhedāṁso vyāvahārika eva prāṭitiko vā
gautama-kaṇāda-jaimini-kapila-patañjali-mate tu bheda eva
śrī-rāmānuja-madhvacārya-mate cety api sārvaṭrikī prasiddhiḥ
sva-mate tv acintya-bhedābhedaḥ evācintya-śaktimayatvād iti*

“In accordance with the verse *tarkāpratiṣṭhānāt* (*Vedānta-sūtra* 2.1.11), other disciplic successions of Vedāntists admit, that boundless dissertations and theses can never be established as truth through any amount of argument. Still, they think that the principle of oneness and difference existing together in the same place transgresses the boundaries of reality. They take it that this is a symptom of the fault of neglecting the nature of universality – that is, that if difference is true, then it must be true universally (thus excluding oneness), and if oneness is true then it must be true

¹⁵² Translations for this and the following quote are adapted from *Śrī Gauḍiya Kaṇṭhahāra* (Bhaktigunakar, 1926, pp. 192-195).

universally (thus excluding difference). Following this faulty logic they therefore think that these two – difference and non-difference – cannot independently coexist. There cannot be both duality and oneness, they reason; one of these doctrines must have supremacy over the other. Those who think it is one, find that their attempts to practice the doctrine of oneness are impossible. In the same way, those who attempt to practice a doctrine of absolute difference will find their position untenable. In this way, both the practitioners of absolute oneness and the practitioners of absolute duality will be unable to realize their philosophy. Therefore:

“In light of the difficulties of trying to realize
oneness without distinction or distinction without oneness,
the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* or inconceivable simultaneous
oneness and distinction, has been accepted as the highest harmonizing principle.

“The true opinion of the sage Bādaśa and the *Purāṇas* is *bhedābheda-vāda*, the doctrine of simultaneous oneness and difference. Even the followers of Śiva sometimes accept this. For example, the commentator Bhāskara accepts *bhedābheda-vāda* in the idea that there is a difference between the articles offered to the deity and the deity Himself. In the opinion of the *māyāvādīs*, the branches of difference are merely *vyavahārika*, mundane or apparent. Gautama, Kaṇāda, Jaimini, Kapila, and Patañjali admit the existence of distinction. In the opinions of Rāmānujācārya and Madhvācārya, this principle reaches a higher level of perfection. Rāmānuja’s *viśiṣṭādvaita* philosophy supports difference and non-difference, and Madhva’s *śuddhādvaita* philosophy supports the principle of difference. The Supreme Lord has inconceivable potency and He supports the conclusion of *acintya-bhedābheda*. This is our conclusion.” (Ss, 1511-1596 AD, p. 80.)

In *Philosophy of Bhedābheda*, Prof. Srinivasachari shows how the principle of *bhedābheda* is found in the *Vedānta-sūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsadeva, in the philosophy of Bhāskara, Yādavaprakāśa, Udananācārya, Nimbārka, and in Western philosophies like that of Fichte (Srinivasachari, 1950). Dr. Dasgupta writes in *History of Indian Philosophy*: “The *bhedābheda* interpretation is in all probably earlier than the monistic interpretation introduced by Śaṅkara. The *Bhagavad-gītā* which is regarded as the essence of the *Upaniṣads*, the older *Purāṇas* and the *Pañcarātna*, dealt with in this volume, are more or less in the line of *bhedābheda*, in fact the origin of this theory may be traced to the *Puruṣa-sūkta* of the *Rg Veda*.” (Dasgupta, 1940, pp. 105-106.)

Śrī Caitanya was not the first one to advocate *bhedābheda*, simultaneous difference and non-difference – yet He was the first one who presented it without logical frailties by plainly admitting that it is *acintya*, materially inconceivable. On the material platform it cannot be explained how things can be simultaneously different and non-different. Therefore, if one holds that *bhedābheda* is materially conceivable, one faces logical frailties that disqualify *bhedābheda* from being scientific. If one holds that *bhedābheda* is not only materially, but also spiritually inconceivable, one advocates agnosticism, which allows no conception of transcendence. Śrī Caitanya explained how the principle of *bhedābheda* can be logically consistent as well as transcendental: by being *acintya*, materially inconceivable, yet spiritually conceivable (by revelation of God). Especially how various different *śaktis*, energies, can act in various ways simultaneously and harmoniously is materially inconceivable. This is nicely explained by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in the fourteenth chapter of his *Jaiva-dharma*: “The individual points of this subject of *śakti* can be separately contemplated on, but as a whole, concerning their esoteric interrelationships and subtle juxtapositions, the *śakti* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is quite inconceivable to the human intellect. On this material plane, conflicting and contradictory natures cannot coexist in one place or in one person because such contrasting natures mutually destroy one another.

“However, the *śakti* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is so inconceivable that
the seemingly contrary emotions, nature, and qualities of the
spiritual world eternally coexist harmoniously in pristine splendour.

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously personal with a beautiful form and impersonal with an awe-inspiring presence; both all-pervasive and embodied; inactive and dynamically creative; unborn and born of His parents, Devakī and Vasudeva, and Yaśodā and Nanda; the Supreme Godhead, worshiped by all, and yet a simple cowherd boy; omniscient and yet descending as Avatāra who manifests human-like emotions; with form and qualities, yet also formless and unqualified; beyond sense perception and yet the personification of *rasa*; unlimited and yet limited by performing His pastimes of Avatāras; unattainable and far away, yet very near in the heart of everyone; immutable and unconcerned, yet filled with consternation at the anger of the *gopīs*. There are innumerable examples of how these apparently conflicting emotions sustain as well as accelerate the transcendental pastimes of the Lord, be it in regard to the personality of the Lord, His abode, His associates, or paraphernalia. The eternal harmony of these opposing aspects indicates the inconceivable status of His *śakti*.”

Evidence from the *Vedas* is given in *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 3.79: *apāṇipādo javano grahītā paśyaty acakṣuḥ sa śṛnoty akarnaḥ, sa vetti vedyam na ca tasyāsti vettā tam āhur agryam puruṣam mahāntam*, “Although the Supreme Lord is without material hands and legs, He is always in motion and always receives every offering as He possesses a transcendental body with limbs. He can see without eyes and hear without ears of matter as His senses and organs are entirely spiritual. He is the sole witness of every activity and the knower of all that is to be known, but no one knows Him or can judge Him as He is materially. The limited intellect of man cannot comprehend that He is a perfect spiritual body composed of supramundane senses. Those who know the Absolute Truth, glorify Him as the most magnanimous and the fountainhead of all causes.”

How all contradictions are reconciled in Śrī Kṛṣṇa by dint of His inconceivable energies beyond the scope of material perception is explained in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.9.36, where the demigods addressed the Supreme Lord as follows: *na hi virodha ubhayaṁ bhagavaty aparimita-guṇa-gaṇa īśvare 'navagāhya-māhātmye, 'rvācīna-vikalpa-vitarka-vicāra-pramāṇābhāsa-kutarka-sāstra-kalilāntaḥkaraṇāśraya-duravagraha-vādinām, vivādānavasara uparata-samasta-māyāmaye kevala evātma-māyām antardhāya ko nv artho durghaṭa iva bhavati svarūpa-dvayābhāvāt*,

“O Supreme Personality of Godhead, all contradictions can be reconciled in You by dint of Your inconceivable energies.

“O Lord, since You are the Supreme Person, the reservoir of unlimited spiritual qualities, the supreme controller, Your unlimited glories are materially inconceivable to the conditioned souls. Many modern [scientific, philosophical and theological] speculators argue about right and wrong without knowing what is actually right. Their arguments are always faulty and their judgments inconclusive because they have no authorized evidence with which to gain knowledge of You. (...) Furthermore, because of the pollution of their prejudices and obstinate eagerness to arrive at their preassumed speculated conclusion, their theories are incapable of revealing You, who are transcendental to their material separatist conceptions. You are one without a second, and therefore in You contradictions like doing and not doing, happiness and distress, are not contradictory. Your potency is so great that it can do and undo anything as You like.

“With the help of that potency, what is impossible for You?
Since there is no duality in Your constitutional position,
You can do everything by the influence of Your energy.”

The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is not material like man-made philosophies, but spiritual, due to being established by the Supreme Lord Himself. It is thus beyond material faults. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura mentioned in the fourth part of his *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta* (Bhaktivinoda 6, 1886, p. 25): “According to Lord Caitanya’s doctrine, the *jīva*’s simultaneous identity and difference from the Lord, and the world’s simultaneous difference and identity with the

Lord are both established as truth. Since this cannot be adjusted by limited human reasoning, this eternal difference and non-difference is called *acintya* or [materially] inconceivable.

“Though it is inconceivable, logic and reasoning are not dissatisfied,
for it is reasonable that God can have inconceivable power.”

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura further mentioned: “The co-existence of mutually opposite qualities is not found in the material world (...). Because of this, the worldly bonded human beings cannot clearly understand the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Then how will they ever be able to understand the elegance of this principle? (...) During their progress in spiritual cultivation, when they attain the unalloyed state of their own self, they will be able to clearly realise the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*.” (Bhaktivinoda 7, 1890, pp. 58-59.)

Shrivatsa Goswami stated: “*acintya-bhedābheda* may be inconceivable, but it is not irrational. It is supra-rational. And even then, it is only supra-rational on a certain level, to the limited mindset of a particular people – to their standard of rationality.” (Rosen, 1992, p. 254.) Just like microorganisms cannot be seen by the blunt eye, but only through a microscope, similarly, the Supreme Lord and His spiritual manifestations need a spiritual approach: *ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi, na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ, sevonmukhe hi jihvādau, svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*, “The material senses cannot perceive Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental name, form, attributes, associates and pastimes. Only when a conditioned soul is awakened to Kṛṣṇa consciousness by being inclined to and engaged in devotional service of Kṛṣṇa, that begins with using his tongue to chant the Lord’s holy name and taste the sanctified remnants of the Lord’s food, his spiritual senses are uncovered, and then Kṛṣṇa by Himself manifests in his perception.” – *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.234, spoken by Śrī Caitanya in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.136. Devahūti addressed the Supreme Lord: “Although You are one, Your diverse energies can act multifariously. For us, this is inconceivable through material mental argumentation (*tarkya-sahasra-śaktiḥ*).” – *SB* 3.33.3. Every common man has some secret or intimate actions and intentions, that no others or only few can know.

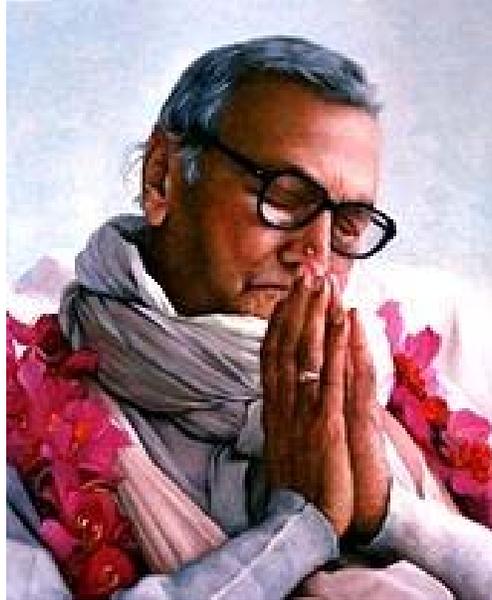
Could the Supreme Lord and His intentions be independently understood
by anyone without His sanction, then He would not be the unlimited
Supreme Lord – thus He naturally is materially inconceivable.

Therefore, the Lord reveals confidential topics only to His pure devotees in intimate circles, such as in the revelations in the house of Śrī Candrasekhara Ācārya mentioned earlier. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda stated in this regard (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 233):

“Godhead is He, who has reserved the absolute right
of not being exposed to present human senses.”

Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja explained: “Everything depends on the sweet will of the Absolute. Everything is designed and destined by Him. Everything is in His hands. The absolute center is by Himself and for Himself. He alone knows the purpose of everything. No one else. He alone knows His ways; no one else can know His ways. We may know only as much as He wants us to know. And that also can change by His sweet will. So He is completely free, an autocrat. And that Supreme Autocrat can be captured only by love, not by knowledge. His ways are uncertain. How will our knowledge help us to understand Him? Knowledge may be useful in understanding a thing if it follows a fixed law and has a fixed nature. But the Absolute is an autocrat; at any moment He can change all the laws. Then how shall we know the infinite? In trying to understand the Absolute Truth, all our previous experience becomes null and void. At every second He can show us a new color. No degree of knowledge can make any clear statement of truth about God. Knowledge is futile in regard to the infinite. First He is moving in one way, then another. On what basis will we make our calculation? His position is always changing by His sweet will. His heart can be captured

only by surrender. Through surrender alone we may please Him. And if He likes, He may make Himself known to us, but even then we may only know that portion of His personality, only that much about Him, that He cares to reveal to us.



“The designer of reality is an autocrat;
He is above law. We must consider this carefully.

“He who is designing this universe is above law; He is not under the jurisdiction of any law; He does not have any fixed nature. At any time, He may change His position according to His sweet will. And whatever He wills, that must come about.” (Śrīdhara 4, 1989, pp. 93-94.)

14.4. God is Realized Through His Śakti, His Spiritual Energy.

Śrī Caitanya established that God and the spiritual realm make out most of creation and are materially inconceivable. This means that the doctrines of rationalism and empiricism, which give their adherents the impression that most of or the entire creation is materially conceivable, are false. However, the agnostics, who say that transcendence can never be perceived, are also wrong. There are two main types of agnostics: the materialists and the exclusive monists. Due to skeletonism, the materialists think that the self is eternally limited to sensual perception and thus anything beyond material perception can never be perceived. The exclusive monists believe that oneness is the only absolute truth and dualities are mere illusion. To avoid facing the contradiction of ‘the Absolute being in illusion’, they try to escape by labeling illusion *anirvacanīyam*, indescribable. The practical impacts of something imperceivable and something indescribable are the same: one remains in eternal ignorance or darkness about it. We thus find that both extremes – extreme dualism and extreme monism – postulate realms of eternal darkness.

The only philosophy that allows the Absolute Truth to unlimitedly shine by His own power, energy or potency, is *acintya-bhedābheda*, unity in diversity. This philosophy sets no limits to the Absolute by telling Him where He is ‘allowed to shine’ and where not. This philosophy, on the other hand, does not allow us to keep darkness in our hearts. It commands us to admit both our limitation and God’s unlimitedness or omnipotence fully, and to do the only thing helpful to overcome our ignorance: surrender unto Him, the ever-effulgent. If He wants, He can reveal to us what we think to be imperceivable and describe what we think to be indescribable – else He would not be the

Almighty. By His omnipotence He can do so, and He can also empower His devotees to describe and reveal transcendence.

In a sermon given in Bangalore on the 25th of September 2004, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja recounted how Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja explained this point during a speech delivered to the Rotary Club of Mumbai, in which he mentioned that the Supreme Lord is the absolute complete infinite reality, and that nobody can know Him by his own endeavour. If anyone could attain the Supreme Lord by his own endeavour, the Supreme Lord would lose His position; the Infinite would become finite. After the speech, an attentive guest asked him, why he has renounced his family life and taken to the ascetic order if he cannot get the Supreme Lord. Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja answered that because he was given a limited time to speak, he could only present one side of the subject. He was given some more time, and thus he presented the other side as well: The Supreme Lord would lose His position if we could know Him by our own capacity – but on the other hand, if He would not have the power to make Himself known to others, then He would also become finite. By His potency of grace we can know Him. Grace will descend to a completely surrendered soul [end of paraphrase].

If one tries to limit God’s omnipotence, one denies God; one creates and worships a fake idol in the mind, and thus one is barred from realizing the unlimited Lord. True omnipotence includes the power to accommodate and harmonize seemingly contradictory elements. Prof. O. B. L. Kapoor mentioned: “It is the application of the law of contradiction that is mainly responsible for our crippled notion of the infinite. The infinite, by virtue of its inconceivable potency (*acintya-sakti*), in a sense transcends even the law of contradiction. The very infinitude of the infinite consists in its transcendence of this law and harmonious blending within itself of contradictory notions or qualities, while the very finitude of the finite consists in its subjection to it.” (Rosen, 1992, p. 246.) The *Mundaka Upaniṣad* (verse 3.2.3, quoted from *SB* 10.13.54, purport) establishes that the Lord is materially inconceivable yet achievable through His favor: *nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo, na medhayā na bahunā śrutena, yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas, tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūm svām,*

“The Supreme Lord is not obtained by expert material argumentation,
by vast material intelligence, or merely by hearing many scriptures.
He is obtained only by one whom He Himself chooses to favor.
To such a person, He reveals His own true, personal form.”



God can neither be understood without His sanction,
nor is it impossible to know God if He desires to reveal Himself.
There are no limits for Him who is omnipotent.
There is no limited edition of God.
There is no crippled God.
God is omnipotent.
God is unlimited.
God is perfect.

It shall now be disclosed how the indispensable favor or mercy-potency of the Lord can be attained in the light of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*. In the next two paragraphs, following etymologically related terms are shown underlined: *acintya* is the negation of *cintya*, conceivable. *cintya* is an adjective derived from the *dhātu* (verbal root) *cit*, to perceive, conceive, be conscious, consider, think. Other derivatives of the *dhātu cit* are *cit*, spirit, intellect; *citta*, intelligence, reason, thought; *cintā*, thought, contemplation, consideration; *cetah*, *cetana* and *caitanya*, consciousness, intelligence, universal Spirit; *cinmaya*, transcendental, consisting of pure thought and spirit.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa *Caitanya* is the Supreme Personality of Godhead appearing as His own devotee to teach a perfect life of complete devotion to God. One meaning of His name is “The One who awakens people’s consciousness, *caitanya*, and makes them Kṛṣṇa-conscious, by inducing them to chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.” (*Cb* 2.28.175-176). He explained that The Supreme Lord, His energies, and their interrelations are *acintya*, materially inconceivable, especially in terms of fully grasping all their subtleties and how seeming contradictory elements in creation are harmonized in the non-dual, yet variegated complete whole. The human mind (not the soul) is material and therefore *acetana*, of incomplete knowledge. The mind is startled when trying to grasp this unified whole, and the innumerable theories arising from mental speculation only further entangle it in an endless web of confusion. Having realized their unavoidably partial and thus incomplete consciousness, the wise naturally surrender to the personified Complete Universal Consciousness, Śrī Kṛṣṇa *Caitanya*, and attain complete vision. The complete vision or *darsana* is the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* of the Complete Consciousness Himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa *Caitanya*. He taught how the *acintya* can become spiritually revealed: Not by speculation, but by surrender to the *cit-śakti*, the spiritual energy of the Lord. By begging and achieving the mercy of the *cit-śakti*, the *acintya* becomes spiritually revealed. The *acetana*, the dull material coverings, are removed, and one discovers the *cetana*, the spiritual consciousness. The supreme teacher of this begging process is Śrī Kṛṣṇa *Caitanya*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the garb of a begging *sannyāsī*, begging the mercy of Rādhārāṇī. Śrī Kṛṣṇa *Caitanya* is the selfsame Lord Kṛṣṇa who fully surrendered to the *cit-śakti*, His own internal spiritual potency, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. God Himself depends on His internal spiritual potency to realize Himself – then what to speak of others who want to realize God! However, since Rādhārāṇī is the Absolute Counterpart of Kṛṣṇa and only together They are God in toto, Rādhārāṇī is not only the means but also the goal of devotion for the mature devotee. Therefore, one of the highest teachings of full-fledged theism is to beg the mercy of Rādhārāṇī to attain the service of Kṛṣṇa and to beg the mercy of Kṛṣṇa to attain the service of Rādhārāṇī. The most sublime expression of this begging is the addressing of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa by chanting Their holy name:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

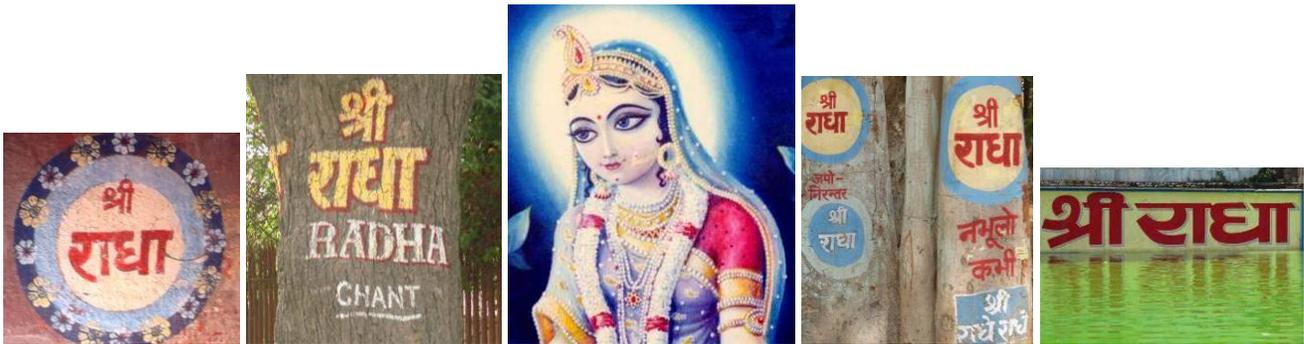
The holy name is called *cintāmani* (*Padma Purāṇa*, quoted in Chapter 15.2), a transcendental wish-fulfilling gem. Śrī *Caitanya* chanted the holy name incessantly, and taught how all perfections can thus be achieved. The first verse of His eight essential instructions, the *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka*, reads: *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam* (...), “The complete chanting of the holy name cleanses the mirror of one’s consciousness (*cetah*).” This is possible, because the Supreme Lord has invested the holy name with all His *śaktis* (*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis*, second verse of *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka*), especially His *cit-śakti*, who has the power to awaken the seemingly *acetana* to their original state of *cetana*, to make the conditioned souls Kṛṣṇa-conscious. Then, one will perceive Kṛṣṇa’s *cit-śakti* acting everywhere, and thus everything becomes *cinmaya*, transcendently enlightened and blissful.

Śrī *Caitanya* practically taught us how to surrender to and realize Śrī Kṛṣṇa: Through Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the personified transcendental devotional energy of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *bhaktiyā labhyas*, attainable by unalloyed devotion (*Bg* 8.22). Just as one can only see the sun through the help of the sun’s rays, one can only realize God through the help of His transcendental energy, which is personified in Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. The Ācāryas or bona fide Gurus have taught us how to

surrender to both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa: through Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya or Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu, who is Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa combined. The Supreme Lord Himself as well as the Vedic literature and the Ācāryas are teaching practically, that surrender to the Supreme Lord is only possible by surrender to a bona fide Guru, who is a manifestation of the Lord's *cit-śakti*. Therefore, the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas worship the undivided Absolute Truth as Śrī-Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga-Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. This sublime scientific approach to the complete Absolute Truth is advocated by the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* of Śrī Caitanya, the Supreme Lord's very own vision, attaining which, the materially inconceivable becomes revealed.

The indirect approach is more important than the direct approach, because His energy is easier approachable by the living entity, and it is through His energy only, that one attains knowledge of Him, love for Him and service to Him in full.

Therefore, the indirect approach is actually the quickest approach. There is a Vedic custom called *parikramā*, circumambulating the Lord's altar and His places of pastimes. It is a common Vaiṣṇava custom to daily circumambulate the Lord's altar, which also houses the sacred Tulasī plant, or at least Tulasī. This giving first priority to Tulasī is very significant. The greatest servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa is Rādhārāṇī, and one of Rādhārāṇī's expansions is Tulasī Devī, a transcendental personality who is present on earth in the form of the sacred Tulasī plant. Tulasī is indispensable in many forms of worship of the Lord's deity. She can grant devotees pure *bhakti* and protect them from threats to *bhakti*. The Tulasī plant is therefore found in every Vaiṣṇava's home and temple, and most Vaiṣṇavas wear necklaces of Tulasī wood. One can approach the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa only through His spiritual energy, whose ultimate manifestation is Rādhārāṇī. But His spiritual energy is not only the means to attain Him – service to Her is in itself the goal; He can only be pleased if one serves Her, because Rādhārāṇī is the prime servitor of His desire. Circumambulating or centralizing the servitors of the Supreme Lord's desire expresses the essence of the Vedic teaching, which, according to the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* of Śrī Caitanya is teleosympathy, sympathy with the Lord's desire. This giving priority to the service of *bhakti-śakti*, the energy of devotion to the Supreme Lord, is the essence of the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava philosophy.



If one understands this essential secret, it is not very astonishing, that in Vṛndāvana, the holy place of pastimes of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the most common and preferred vocal exclamation and address is not the otherwise well-known “Jaya Śrī Kṛṣṇa!” (‘all glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa’), but “Rādhē!”, the vocative of ‘Rādhā’. In Vṛndāvana, people of all faiths greet each other with “Rādhē!”, and one can see the holy name of Rādhā painted everywhere; on people's foreheads and upper body, on walls, gates, cars and trees (see above images).

Since the absolute reality, the Supreme Lord, can only be approached indirectly through His transcendental energy, the indirect approach is actually the most direct approach to reality. Physical science has paralyzed herself by submitting to restriction to the direct independent approach to creation. Science will benefit greatly by breaking free from such shackles and allowing herself to take to the indirect approach by merciful guidance of the spiritual energy of the Supreme Lord. In

the first verse of the *catuḥ-slokī*, the four essential verses of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Lord Kṛṣṇa advises: *etāvad eva jijñāsyam, tattva-jijñāsunātmanah, anvaya-vyatirekābhyām, yat syāt sarvatra sarvadā*, “A person who is searching after the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, must certainly search for it up to this, in all circumstances, in all space and time, and both directly and indirectly.” – *SB* 2.9.36. Directly (*anvaya*) means to search for the Lord as *sākṣād bhagavān*, the direct Supreme Personality of Godhead, and indirectly (*vyatirekābhyām*) means to recognize the Lord by His various *śaktis*, energies, who are *acintya-bhedābheda*, inconceivably simultaneously distinct and indistinct from Him. This includes to take shelter of a bona fide Guru, who is the transparent media of Kṛṣṇa’s spiritual *śakti*, and as such *sākṣād-hari*, non-different from Him in purpose and quality (see Chapter 16). Just as one cannot see the sun without taking help from the sun’s rays, one cannot attain God without the help of His transcendental *śakti*, who most efficiently manifests in a bona fide Guru. Thus in order to attain God- and self-realization, it is implicit that one should take shelter of both *śakti* and *śaktiman*. In other words, one must take shelter of both the spiritual energy (Rādhārāṇī and especially Her essential manifestation of the spiritual master), and the energetic (Śrī Kṛṣṇa). This is established in the following verses: *yasya deve parā bhaktir, yathā deve tathā gurau, tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ, prakāśante mahātmanah*,

“Unto those great souls who serve both the Lord and the spiritual master with full surrender and devotion, all the imports of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed.” – *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.23.

In the *Nārāyaṇādhyātma* it is stated (quoted in *Cb* 1.3.52, purport): *nityāvyakto ‘pi bhagavān, iksyate nija-śaktiḥ, tāmṛte paramātmānam, kaḥ paśyatāmītam prabhum,*

“The Lord, though He is eternally unmanifested to the material senses, is visible by His own *śakti*, spiritual energy. Without the assistance of His energy, who can see the immeasurable Lord, the Supersoul?”

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.13.1 (quoted in *Cb* 1.16.11, purport) states: *śyāmāc cavalam prapadye, śavalāc chyāmam prapadye, vidhūya pāpamdhūtvā śarīram kṛtam kṛtāmā brahma-lokam-abhisambhavāmīti,*

“For receiving the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, I surrender unto His energy, Rādhā, and for receiving the mercy of His energy, Rādhā, I surrender unto Kṛṣṇa. By worshiping Them, practitioners become freed from all sinful reactions and, being fully satisfied, they go to the eternal abode of the Lord.”

Therefore, Śrī Caitanya and His followers stress the worship of Kṛṣṇa along with Rādhārāṇī, who is the ultimate Personification of Kṛṣṇa’s internal *śakti*, as well as surrender to a bona fide Guru, who is the intimate servant of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the *viśaya-vidyā*, the object of *prema*, love of God, and Rādhārāṇī and the spiritual master are *āśraya-vidyā*, the abode of *prema*. Other meanings of *āśraya-vidyā* are ‘most surrendered to the Supreme Lord’ and ‘most worthy person to take shelter of’. Kṛṣṇa can only be approached, realized and served by *prema*, i.e. by one who is himself *āśraya-vidyā*, an abode of *prema*, a pure devotee. “The *jīva* must never arrogate to have inherited the unique position of an *āśraya-vidyā*, or the eternal supportive emblem of the Lord’s spiritual love. Even thinking about it will make him egoistic. The uncontaminated state of these pure *jīvas*’ existence in the spiritual world is to remain always subservient to the real *āśraya-vidyā*, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.” (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda in his purport of the eight verse of the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*. Caitanya, 1486-1534, p. 75.) Kṛṣṇa is only attained by surrender to Rādhārāṇī. True surrender to Rādhārāṇī is surrender to a bona fide spiritual master, through whom the *jīva* is able to serve Rādhārāṇī. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda gave his final instruction before passing into the Supreme Lord’s eternal pastimes (Purī, 1998, p. 2. Translated from the original in Bengali):



“All of you, with the sole objective of satisfying the transcendental senses of the undivided Supreme Absolute Truth, Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, should cooperate with one another in obedience to the *āśraya-vigraha*, the most surrendered Absolute Counterpart of the Supreme Lord. That *āśraya-vigraha* is Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Her most beloved associate, the spiritual master.”

To understand Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is extremely difficult for the conditioned soul. Śrī Caitanya or Lord Gaurāṅga is Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa combined, *śakti* and *śaktiman* together – as such He mercifully makes it easier for those who worship Him to serve both Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa simultaneously. The true Guru is a *gaura-bhakta*, a pure devotee of Lord Gaurāṅga. Lord Gaurāṅga and His associates appeared only five-hundred years ago to give the *jīvas* understanding of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and love for Them.

We shall now catch up with the thread started in the first paragraph of this subchapter. In the next verses Śrī Caitanya explained the spiritual nature of the spirit soul and how it came under the material illusory energy by forgetting the Supreme Lord. *Cc* 2.20.120 records that Śrī Caitanya then established how the covered soul can again be uncovered from material illusion, *māyā*, i.e. how the above discussed favor of the Lord manifests to the living entities: *sādhu-sāstra-kṛpāya yadi kṛṣṇonmukha haya, sei jīva nistare, māyā tāhāre chāḍaya,*

“If the conditioned soul becomes Kṛṣṇa conscious by the mercy of a Guru and other saintly persons who voluntarily preach scriptural injunctions and help him to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, the conditioned soul is liberated from the clutches of *māyā*, who gives him up.”

“The forgetful conditioned soul is educated by Kṛṣṇa through the Vedic literatures, the realized spiritual master and the Supersoul. Through these, he can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead as He is, and he can understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa is his eternal master and deliverer from the clutches of *māyā*. In this way one can acquire real knowledge of his conditioned life and can come to understand how to attain liberation.” – *Cc* 2.20.123.

14.5. God's Personal Form Is the Source of All Variegation

Then Śrī Caitanya proceeds to explain, how, although the material and spiritual creation is full of variegation, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the source of everything. “The transcendental form of Lord Kṛṣṇa is unlimited and also has unlimited opulence. He possesses the internal potency [*cit-śakti*], external potency [*māyā-śakti*] and marginal potency [*jīva-śakti*]. The material and the spiritual world are transformations of Kṛṣṇa's external and internal potencies respectively. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa is the original source of both the material and the spiritual manifestations.” – *Cc* 2.20.149&150. *īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ, sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ, anādir ādir govindaḥ, sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*, “Kṛṣṇa, who is known as Govinda, is the supreme controller. He has an eternal, spiritually conscious and entirely blissful body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin, for He is the prime cause of all causes.” – *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.1, quoted in *Cc* 2.20.154. Śrī Caitanya then quotes *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.28 (quoted in *Cc* 2.20.156): *ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ puṁśaḥ, kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*,

“All Avatāras of Godhead are either plenary portions or parts of the plenary portions of Lord Kṛṣṇa. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.”

atha vā bahunaitena, kiṁ jñātena tavārjuna, viṣṭabhyāham idaṁ kṛtsnam, ekāṁśena sthito jagat, “But what need is there, Arjuna, for all this detailed knowledge? With a single fragment of Myself I pervade and support this entire universe.” – Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bg* 10.2, quoted in *Cc* 2.20.163. This verse establishes, that because Lord Kṛṣṇa is the source and maintainer of all existence, there is actually no need of so much detailed knowledge; one who is wise worships Lord Kṛṣṇa and is thus practicing the end and essence of all knowledge. Nevertheless, Śrī Caitanya then starts to elaborate on how Śrī Kṛṣṇa expands into other forms and expansions of God and how His energies transform into various elements of creation, in order to establish the essential Vedic philosophy scientifically and to benefit those who need further explanations to strengthen their faith in devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The interested readers may read these instructions of Śrī Caitanya to Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.20. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda often asked his disciples to go through this important teaching, for example in the ninth verse of his poem *Duṣṭa-Mana (prabhu sanātane, parama jatane, śikṣā diloyāhā, cinto sei saba*, quoted from *Vb*).

14.6. How God Remains Untouched by Material Imperfections

Next, Śrī Caitanya explains how God can be the source of the conditioned souls while remaining unconditioned: *svāṅga-viśeṣābhāsa-rūpe prakṛti-sparśana, jīva-rūpa 'bija' tāte kailā samarpaṇa*,

“To impregnate with the seeds of the living entities, the Lord Himself does not directly touch the material energy, but He glances over her by His specific functional shadowy expansion, and thus the living entities are impregnated into material nature.” – *Cc* 2.20.273.

prakṛti-sahite tānra ubhaya sambandha, tathāpi prakṛti-saha nāhi sparśa-gandha, “Although He is thus connected with the material energy in two ways [the Lord is the support and shelter of material creation], He does not have the slightest contact with it.” – *Cc* 1.5.86. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhāgavad-gītā* 9.4: *mayā tatam idaṁ sarvaṁ, jagad avyakta-mūrtinā, mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni, na cāhaṁ teṣv avasthitah*,

“By Me, in My unmanifested form, this entire universe is pervaded. All beings are in Me, but I am not in them.”

Purport by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda: “(...) Here it is said that although He is all-pervading, everywhere present, He is not conceivable by the material senses. This is indicated here by the word *avyakta-mūrtinā*. But actually, although we cannot see Him, everything is resting in Him. (...) The entire material cosmic manifestation is only a combination of His two different energies—the superior, spiritual energy and the inferior, material energy. Just as the sunshine is spread all over the universe, the energy of the Lord is spread all over the creation, and everything is resting in that energy. Yet one should not conclude that because He is spread all over He has lost His personal existence. To refute such an argument the Lord says, ‘I am everywhere, and everything is in Me, but still I am aloof.’ For example, a king heads a government which is but the manifestation of the king’s energy; the different governmental departments are nothing but the energies of the king, and each department is resting on the king’s power. But still one cannot expect the king to be present in every department personally. That is a crude example. Similarly, all the manifestations that we see and everything that exists, both in this material world and in the spiritual world, are resting on the energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The creation takes place by the diffusion of His different energies, and, as stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *viṣṭabhyāham idam kṛtsnam* [Bg 10.42]: He is everywhere present by His personal representation, the diffusion of His different energies.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.11.38 mentions: *etad īsanam īsasya, prakṛti-stho ’pi tad-guṇaih, na yujyate sadātma-sthair, yathā buddhis tad-āśrayā,*

“This is the divinity of the Supreme Lord: Although situated within the material nature, He is never affected by the modes of nature. Similarly, those who have surrendered to Him and have fixed their intelligence upon Him are not influenced by the modes of nature.”

In this regard, the Ācāryas have given the analogy of the prison director, who himself is not a prisoner. Like the prison director, his employees are also free. The above mentioned specific functional shadowy expansion (*Cc* 2.20.273) as well as the *jīvas* and matter themselves are *śakti-pariṇāma*, transformations of Kṛṣṇa’s energies, as described earlier in this chapter. Just as curd is a transformation of milk, and as such *bhedābheda*, simultaneously distinct and non-distinct from milk (*Cc* 2.20.309), the transformations of the Lord’s energies such as the material universes are simultaneously distinct and non-distinct from the Lord¹⁵³. This explains how the material creation can contain illusory elements, although it comes from the Supreme Lord who is ever free from illusion.

The *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* is the only scientifically satisfying solution to the problem of evil or imperfection.

In other words, *acintya-bhedābheda* is the only philosophy that is able to scientifically answer the question, “How can there be evil or imperfection in the creation of a perfect God?” Non-transcendental doctrines, i.e. doctrines that do not reproduce the actual transcendental reality by the scientific process of descension, offer no satisfying solution to this problem. Most theistic doctrines explain the phenomenon of evil with a dualistic principle, according to which God is only transcendent but not immanent. Although a God who is completely aloof of material creation can thus be declared free of evil, this exclusively dualistic principle deprives God of His omnipotence in

¹⁵³ However, one should not think that the Supreme Lord Himself changes into the material world like milk changes into curd. It is only His energy that is transformed. The analogy in this regard is the spider that brings forth its web from its inside without being affected: *yathorṇa-nābhiḥ srjate grhnate ca*, “The Lord creates and destroys the cosmic manifestation as a spider creates a web and draws it back within itself.” – *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.1.7, quoted in *Cc* 2.6.172, purport. See also *SB* 4.6.43. One should understand that material arithmetics do not apply to the transcendental Supreme Lord, and that it cannot be said that if something is taken from Him such as His energy, He becomes less or incomplete. The complete remains complete even if complete units such as all universes emanate from Him (*pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvasiṣyate – Ī*, invocation). This is possible by Godhead’s inconceivable spiritual potency.

terms of immanence. On the other hand, although ‘solving’ the problem of evil by denying the existence of dualities such as good and bad, the exclusively monistic principle deprives the absolute truth of dualistic and personal aspects. The absolute must be absolute in all respects; it must therefore be able to possess perfect transcendental personality, form and diversity, and it must be both transcendental and immanent while remaining unaffected by mundane evil. In the words of Prof. Kapoor: “It is only the *acintya-śakti* of God that can reconcile transcendence with immanence in such a manner that His purity remains unaffected by His relation with the phenomenal world.” (Kapoor, 1976, p. 158.) The dualistic doctrine is unable to reconcile the existence of sin with an omnipotent God, and the monistic doctrine tries to deny the existence of sin. Therefore, both doctrines are illusory. Only the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* can explain the phenomenon of sin in an all-inclusive manner without having to deprive God of His omnipotence and without denying the existence of dualities like good and bad.

Now before we get a little more technical, let us have a general discussion of the problem of evil. It goes against all moral to justify *doing* evil – but can the *existence* of evil be justified? Would we not have any free will, then there would be no question of loving devotional service; it would be mechanical service like that of lifeless robots. Free will must include the possibility of turning away from our eternal nature of loving service to the Lord, and some unfortunate souls have chosen this alternative. As the Lord always tries to come after the desires of His servants, He creates the material universes in which the separatist souls can live out their desires until they realize that this only results in suffering and return to their eternal nature of serving their perfect Lord. The material or separatist situation is only possible if the living entities are under illusion and forgetfulness about their real eternal nature of being the servant of the Lord, and therefore the conditioned souls are put under the Lord’s illusory energy of *māyā*. In *māyā*, the conditioned souls cannot recognize God, the object of perfect action (devotional service) and thus they engage in various imperfect or ‘bad’ or ‘evil’ activities. Would the material world not be full of imperfection and thus suffering, then that would be illogical, since as a perversion of the perfect world, it must be imperfect by nature. Therefore, the bad elements of the material world in one sense make it complete, although in God and His eternal realm, there are no disharmonious elements.

Furthermore, would there be no bad elements in the material world, then the impetus to give up the separatist attitude and return to our eternal nature of a perfect servant of the perfect Lord would be diminished (see also Chapter 4). As such, the bad elements in the material world should be seen as the Lord’s mercy, not as His condemnation, just as the loving father’s pulling the disobeying son’s ear must be understood as an action of love to save him from further sufferings. The most quoted argument for atheism is the problem of evil: “How can there be evil in the creation of an all-good God? If God existed, He would not simply watch as people suffer. He would not have created suffering in the first place.” Even as theists, most of us undergo a phase in which we internally blame God: “How can You let people suffer? Do you have no heart?” Then, as our surrender matures, we realize how God truly is ever-compassionate, and we feel humbled for having blamed Him to be just the opposite. This further increases our surrender and devotion.

It naturally appears completely wrong to most people to say that sufferings like having to helplessly watch one’s child die of cancer are the Lord’s mercy, because we neither have a scope of God nor of what life truly is. I have served in a children’s hospital and would never want to play down the agony of losing one’s beloved child, but we should try to understand that the much greater tragedy is that we have lost our relationship with God, who is the soul’s original and eternal most beloved everything¹⁵⁴. The soul is not the material body as per the fallacy of skeletonism. Our compassion should be directed to the soul, not the illusory covering. Say, for example, a soul experienced dying from cancer and then proceeded closer to God (not that this is a rule). This would

¹⁵⁴ Some may say that we are related to God in abstract ways. But we are talking about losing the original full-fledged relationship with God, which is not abstract; it is more tangible, personal and attractive than any human relationship.

be a much better situation than proceeding further away from God after a so called ‘happy’ material experience and dying ‘in peace’. The actual welfare of the soul can only be found in a loving relationship with God. All exclusively skeletonistic relations are mere distractions. When waking up to the spiritual reality, material sufferings vanish like a nightmare vanishes after waking up. Furthermore, one realizes the priceless value of God, one’s actual object of all loving relationships. One would then be ready to go through any imaginable material suffering without hesitation if that would be the price for attaining Him. Such a price would appear like peanuts, because one has realized that separation from Him is the greatest, most intolerable pain. If we would get even a glimpse of God’s most charming nature, we would be so much attracted to Him that all mundane relations would become insignificant in comparison. We would recognize that the actual sin is to forget God even for a minute.

The actual sin is not the stereotype sin such as lying or murder,
but the turning away from our eternal nature of service to God.

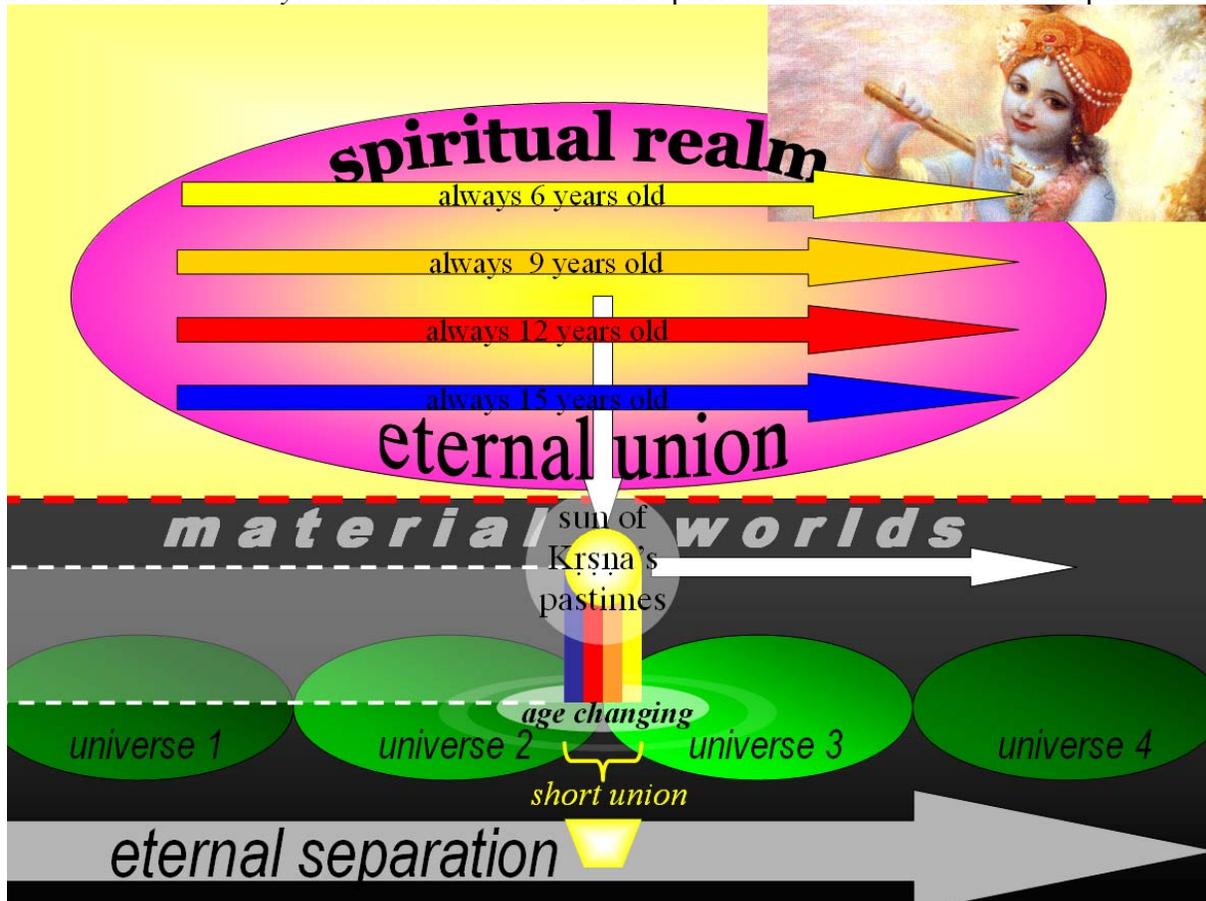
The stereotype sins are mere reflections of this actual root sin. The root sin creates the necessity of illusion, and thus wrong action and suffering. As that actual root sin is a necessary alternative to voluntary devotional service, it is a part of the perfect creation of the Lord. This does not mean that the act of sinning is good, although the existence of sin as part of the Lord’s creation has a perfect purpose, just as the son’s disobeying the father and taking drugs is bad, although the son’s being given free will (and as such the possibility of disobedience) is good, else he would be a slave. Therefore, it is necessary that a sinner repents and stops sinning by taking help from God and His pure devotees. In the absolute sense, there is no imperfection in the Lord’s creation, but as long as one is in *māyā*, material illusion, due to keeping a separatist attitude, one is forced to exist in conditions that include the impressions of imperfection such as disharmony, evil and sufferings. Only if one attains spiritual consciousness, true service attitude, can one understand how in the absolute sense, everything is in perfect harmony and there is not a tinge of imperfection. Once the veil of *māyā* is lifted by the Supreme Lord’s grace, one realizes how He and His creation are ever situated in complete harmony.

To enter the technical details of the present topic, we continue in the biography of Lord Caitanya. Śrī Caitanya next quotes *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.45 to explain the nature of the Lord’s earlier mentioned specific functional shadowy expansion for material creation: *kṣīraṁ yathā dadhi vikāra-viśeṣa-yogāt, sañjāyate na tu tataḥ pṛthag asti hetoḥ, yaḥ śambhutām api tathā samupaiti kāryād, govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*, “Milk changes into yogurt when mixed with a yogurt culture, but actually it is constitutionally nothing but milk. Similarly, Govinda, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, assumes the form of Lord Śiva [Śambhu] for the special purpose of material transactions. I offer my obeisances at His lotus feet.” – *Cc* 20.310. For the purpose of material creation, Lord Kṛṣṇa (in His expansion of Mahā-Viṣṇu) glances over matter by casting His glance in the shape of His time energy (*Bs* 5.7). Śambhu, a form of Lord Śiva, is the masculine instrument or emblem of the Supreme Lord for mundane procreation (*Bs* 5.8). Mahā-Viṣṇu, the Lord of the world, is manifest in Śambhu by His subjective portion in the form of His glance (*Bs* 5.10). Although Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original cause of material creation, He is not the direct cause of material creation; this function is carried out by Śambhu. Neither did Kṛṣṇa Himself create the material world full of shortcomings, nor can one make Him responsible for any seeming mistake or accident on earth, since the material creation is caused by the necessity of an illusory world for those souls who try to live without service to the perfect Lord. Śrī Caitanya next quotes a verse confirming that Śrī Kṛṣṇa always remains transcendental: *harir hi nirguṇaḥ sāksāt, puruṣaḥ prakṛteḥ paraḥ, sa sarva-dṛg upadraṣṭā, tam bhajan nirguṇo bhavet*, “Śrī Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is situated beyond the range of material nature; therefore He is the supreme transcendental Person. He can see everything inside and outside; therefore He is the supreme overseer of all living entities. If someone takes shelter at His lotus feet and worships Him, he also attains a transcendental position.” – *SB* 10.88.5, quoted in *Cc* 2.20.313.

14.7. God Is Beyond Material Time

Next, Śrī Caitanya explains the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* in terms of time, i.e. how Lord Kṛṣṇa can exist simultaneously in various places, and how His *līlās*, transcendental pastimes, are enrolled: “Just as there is an orbit of the sun, there is an orbit of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes (...). Kṛṣṇa moves with His pastimes through all the universes, one after another.” – *Cc* 2.20.391¹⁵⁵. “Since all of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes are taking place continuously, at every moment some pastime is existing in one universe or another. Consequently these pastimes are called eternal by the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas*.” – *Cc* 2.20.395. “The eternal pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are continuously taking place in the original Goloka Vṛndāvana planet. These same pastimes are gradually manifested within the material world, in each and every *brahmāṇḍa* [universe].” – *Cc* 2.20.398. In his purport to this verse, Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda writes: “Although the sun appears to rise and set, it is continuously shining somewhere on the earth. Similarly, although Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes seem to appear and disappear, they are continuously existing in one *brahmāṇḍa* or another. Thus all of Kṛṣṇa’s *līlās* are present simultaneously throughout the innumerable universes. (...) Although the Lord is appearing constantly in the material universes, His pastimes are eternally present in the original Goloka Vṛndāvana. Therefore, these pastimes are called *nitya-līlā* (eternally ongoing pastimes).”

Chart 1: The Lord’s *acintya-bhedābheda* nature in the spiritual and material time conceptions



The spiritual realm refers to Goloka Vṛndāvana, where the eternal pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are continuously taking place (*Cc* 2.20.398). In Goloka, everything is manifest in its original state of perfect harmony. There, Śrī Kṛṣṇa perfectly reciprocates with His pure devotees eternally engages with them in innumerable *līlās*, transcendental pastimes. According to His nature of *acintya-*

¹⁵⁵ There is material time and spiritual time. By material time, all things must pass in the material world. Although everything in the spiritual world is eternal, there is spiritual time for the sake of enjoying various daily pastimes.

bhedābheda, with those who prefer Him in His age of six, He eternally remains six, with those who prefer Him in His age of nine, He eternally remains nine, etc. This counts for all His various ages. How He can be one and many simultaneously is materially inconceivable, *acintya*. It is possible by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's materially inconceivable spiritual energy, the *acintya-śakti*, who arranges all His eternal *līlās* in harmony. "These same pastimes [of Goloka] are gradually manifested within the material world." – *Cc* 2.20.398. As in the material world, the time conception is different than in the spiritual world, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's earthly *līlās* also appear different, although they are eternally the same as in Goloka. On the earth, He seems to take birth, undergo various ages and again leave for another universe or to Goloka. The analogy of the sun given by Śrī Caitanya helps to understand the following phenomenon:

Even though on earth it seems that Kṛṣṇa undergoes a gradual development of aging and as such there also seems to be a beginning and an end to His pastimes, actually, in every instance of His divine pastimes manifest on earth, the particular pastime manifest at that very moment is descending from the corresponding particular pastime that is eternally manifest in Goloka, just like rays of the permanent sun touch a place on earth for a short while.

"Just as there is an orbit of the sun, there is an orbit of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes (...). Kṛṣṇa moves with His pastimes through all the universes, one after another." – *Cc* 220.391. From the earthly perspective, we observe the sun moving in a certain orbit and appearing different during different times; we say 'the morning sun', 'the midday sun' and 'the evening sun', and we say 'the sun is rising', 'the sun is setting'. But in reality, it is always the same sun, and that sun neither changes, nor does it rise or set; when it seems to set in one place, it is rising and shining in other places. Similarly, from the earthly perspective, we observe Kṛṣṇa in different ages, and He seems to appear and disappear, yet in the absolute perspective, Kṛṣṇa never changes, ages, appears or disappears. He is eternally manifest in Goloka in all varieties and various pastimes simultaneously according to His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*. In order to attract Kṛṣṇa's devotees, these eternal pastimes also manifest in one material universe after another just like the sun 'appears' in one place after another. Furthermore, Kṛṣṇa is always in the heart of His pure devotees (*SB* 9.4.68), and as such also Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are permanently manifest in the heart of His pure devotees; they can factually perceive Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes even today in Vṛndāvana or any other place.

Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes are eternally manifest in Goloka,
in the material universes and in the heart of His pure devotees.

Although Kṛṣṇa's *līlās* are always present in one or the other universe, He is mostly absent in a particular material world, because He appears only once in a cycle of material creation, i.e. only every 8.6 billion years. Therefore, the conditioned souls in the material worlds are in almost eternal separation from their Lord, and this is the actual reason for the sad face of the earth with all its symptoms reflecting in nature and human society. Just as a crying child can only be given relief by bringing it to its mother, the only solution for real peace is to attain eternal union with the Supreme Lord in His spiritual realm. The *Bṛhad-āranyaka Upaniṣad* (1.3.28) therefore commands:

asato mā sad gamah

"Do not stay in illusion;
go to the eternal reality!"

Chart 2: The position of the living entities in the spiritual and material time conceptions

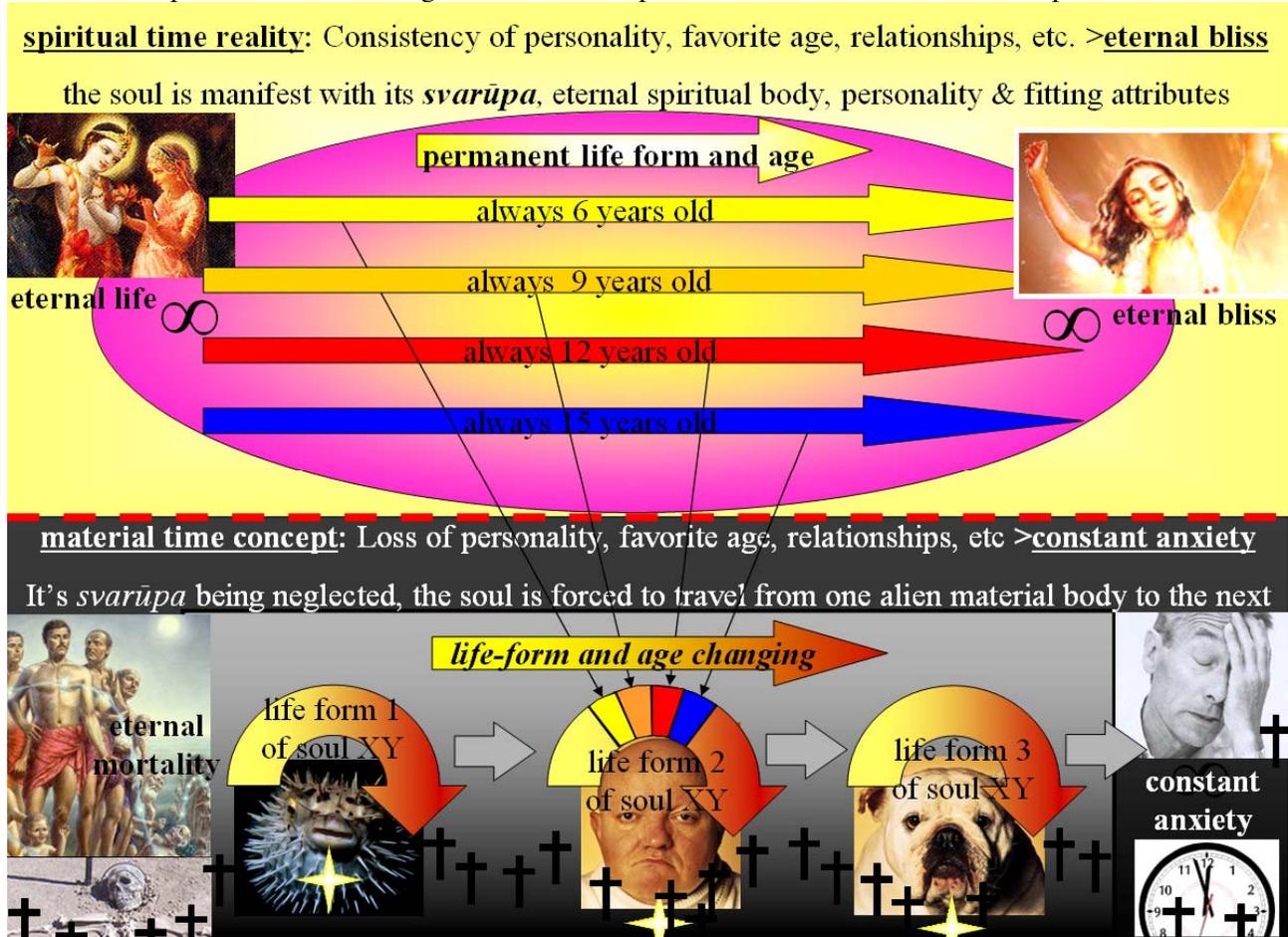


Chart 2 illustrates the position of the living entities in the spiritual and material time conceptions in order to explain how these two conceptions can exist simultaneously without contradiction. The misidentification of the conditioned soul with his temporary material body under the influence of the material illusory energy of *māyā* has been elaborately explained in Chapter 2 . The influence of the illusory energy of *māyā* results in the impression of the illusory material concept. Every soul can attain his or her *svarūpa*, original eternal spiritual name, form, character and perfect relationship with the Supreme Lord. Those living entities in the spiritual realm who have never come in contact with matter are eternally established in their respective *svarūpas*, while those who came under the control of matter can discover their *svarūpa* through practice of *bhakti* under the guidance of a self-realized spiritual master. Those who are self-realized, i.e. established in their *svarūpa*, not only return to the spiritual realm after leaving behind the material body, but can already serve the Supreme Lord internally in their perfected spiritual form while still present in the material realm. Those who are situated in the spiritual realm like Goloka Vṛndāvana due to being in harmony with their eternal nature of pure devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa have a permanent life-form and age that perfectly match their individual natures. Their preferred age of Kṛṣṇa, their own preferred age, as well as their preferred delightful relationship with Kṛṣṇa are all eternally established in consistency. This does not mean that they are always engaged in the same activity that then becomes boring. Neither is it boring if Kṛṣṇa always remains in the same age, because He always remains in the age of His devotee's preference. Further, just as there is only one sun, but this sun never appears the same; sometimes it appears white, pink, orange, red, shining through fog, rain, or clouds, in different times and seasons etc; similarly, according to His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*, the same Kṛṣṇa appears in unlimited varieties with unlimited pastimes for the pleasure of His devotees. The perfected souls are ever engaged in various pastimes that never become stale but constantly increase in variagated delightfulness, and during these pastimes, they always remain in their most cherished

form, age, character and association. Thus they are serving their perfect Lord in never-ending bliss, whereas the conditioned souls who are entrapped in the material realm due to neglect of their eternal nature of devotion to the Supreme Lord are perpetually born in various species of life such as plants, animals or humans and undergo different ages. These material life-forms and changing ages are all alien to the inhabiting spirit soul like masks or vehicles, and can thus never give lasting satisfaction to the ‘misplaced passenger’. Nevertheless, due to the influence of the deluding energy of *māyā*, the conditioned soul tries to identify with such ‘vehicles with a dead-line’. These outer coverings change due to aging, disease and death, and thus although the conditioned souls try to find a permanent identity in the material body, they are never allowed to do so but forced to move from one body to another, like unwanted refugees are pushed around from one country to another. Additionally to the fear of loss of one’s own body comes the fear of loss of relations to other conditioned souls; in the material world, one’s relationships are unavoidably destroyed by death.

This pathetic situation of trying to find permanent shelter in ever-changing and mortal alien bodies and in relationships with a dead-end results in constant anxiety. No material counteraction can solve this problem; they are like cosmetics for a dead body. The only solution is to surrender to the doctor of a genuine spiritual master who can give actual health, pure love of God, and to then be reinstated in our *svarūpa*, our original eternal spiritual nature, by the Lord’s favor.

14.8. God Has Both Personal And Impersonal Features

In His teaching to Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, the court professor and adviser of the king of Orissa, Śrī Caitanya taught that the Supreme Lord is simultaneously personal and impersonal according to His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*, and completely defeated Sārvabhauma’s exclusive impersonalistic interpretations of Veda. “Wherever there is an impersonal description in the *Vedas*, the *Vedas* merely mean to establish that everything belonging to the Supreme Personality of Godhead is transcendental and free of mundane characteristics [not that He is altogether impersonal]. (...)” – *Cc* 2.6.141.

“The Supreme Lord is understood in two features – impersonal and personal.
If one considers the Supreme Personality of Godhead in both features,
he can actually understand the Absolute Truth.
The personal understanding is stronger because
we see that everything is full of variety. No one can
see anything that is not full of variety.” – *Cc* 2.6.142.

“On account of His *acintya-śakti*, the Supreme Lord is simultaneously and eternally both personal and impersonal. If only His impersonal aspect is acknowledged, His supreme status and absolute completeness is diminished.” – *Jd* 18.

“The word ‘Brahman’ indicates the complete Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That is the verdict of all Vedic literature.” – *Cc* 2.6.147. *apāṇi-pādo javano grahītā, paśyaty acakṣuḥ sa śrṇoty akarṇaḥ, sa vetti vedyam na ca tasya vettā, tam āhur agryam puruṣam purānam,*

“He has no material feet or hands, yet He is the swiftest runner and grasps all offerings at once. Though without material eyes or ears, He sees and hears. Nobody knows Him, yet He is the ultimate knower and the object of all knowledge. Sages describe Him as the supreme, original Personality of Godhead.” – *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 3.18, quoted in *Cc* 2.6.141, purport.

“The Vedic ‘*apāṇi-pāda*’ *mantra* rejects material hands and legs of the Supreme Lord, yet it states that the Lord goes very fast and accepts everything offered to Him [with His non-material, transcendental senses – they are not denied. This is mentioned by many verses of the Vedic literature, such as *SB* 3.24.31: *tāny eva te 'bhirūpāṇi, rūpāṇi bhagavaṁs tava, yāni yāni ca rocante, sva-janānām arūpiṇaḥ*, ‘My dear Lord, although You are *arūpiṇaḥ*, without material form, You have Your own innumerable spiritual forms (*rūpāṇi*), which are pleasing to Your devotees’]. All these *mantras* confirm that the Absolute Truth is personal, but the *māyāvādīs*, throwing away the direct meaning, interpret the Absolute Truth as only impersonal. Are you describing as formless that Supreme Personality of Godhead whose transcendental form is complete with six transcendental opulences? The Supreme Personality of Godhead has three primary potencies. Are you trying to prove that He has no potencies?” – *Cc* 2.6.150-153. *viṣṇu-śaktiḥ parā proktā, kṣetra-jñākhyā tathā parā, avidyā-karma-samjñānyā, trītiyā śaktir iṣyate*, “The internal potency [*cit-śakti* or *antarāṅga-śakti*] of the Supreme Lord, Viṣṇu, is spiritual, as verified by the *sāstras*. There is another spiritual potency, known as *kṣetra-jña*, or the living entity [*jīva-śakti* or *taṭasthā-śakti*]. The third potency, which is known as nescience [*māyā-śakti* or *bahiraṅga-śakti*], makes the living entity godless and fills him with fruitive activity.” – *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 6.7.61–63. After hearing all this Vedic evidence from Śrī Caitanya, Sārvabhauma became an unalloyed devotee of the Lord.

14.9. God Manifests Different Forms to Please Different Devotees

It is not only important to understand how God is one and how He is many, but also for what purpose He is so. In His teachings to Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa, Śrī Caitanya first explained aspects of differences (*bheda*) and then aspects of *abheda* (non-difference) between different forms of God, leading to an ultimate reconciliation in *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. “Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Nārāyaṇa are one and the same, but the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are more relishable due to their sportive nature.” “According to philosophical conclusion, there is *abheda*, non-difference, between the forms of Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa. Yet in consideration of *rasa*, Kṛṣṇa, who is a reservoir of *rasas*, surpasses Nārāyaṇa.” – *Cc* 2.9.115 & 117.

Although Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa are *abheda*, one in spiritual substance,
They simultaneously are *bheda*, different, in terms of *rasa*,
transcendental loving relationships with Their devotees.

This relation applies to all direct forms of God. They are all one in spiritual substance, and hence it is not wrong to say that They are non-different. However, simultaneously, They are different in *rasa*, and thus it is also not wrong to say that They are different. The conclusion is that one should know in which aspects They are one, in which aspects They are different, and for which purpose They manifest in such a way. Śrī Caitanya explained (*Cc* 2.9.155): *eka īśvara—bhaktera dhyāna-anurūpa, eka-i vigrahe kare nānākāra rūpa*,

“The transcendental forms of God are one in spiritual substance. According to the contemplation of His devotees, God manifests in different forms.”

sarvatra prakāśa tāṅra—bhakte sukha dite

“The Lord is situated in all the universes in different forms just to please His devotees.” (*Cc* 2.20.169.)

Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.7.1 (quoted from *Jd* 14) states:

*yadvaitat raso vai saḥ
rasam hy evāyaṁ labdhvānandī bhāvati
ko hy evānyāt kaḥ prānyāt
yad eṣa ākāśa ānando na syāt
eṣa hy evānandayati*



“The purpose of life
is to enter a loving relationship with the perfect Lord
who is the embodiment of all varieties of *rasas*, relishes of transcendental relationships.
Only by attaining one’s transcendental relationship with Him can one become truly blissful.
Who could breathe without the Lord giving breath? Who could be happy
without the Lord giving happiness? It is He
who gives transcendental bliss.”

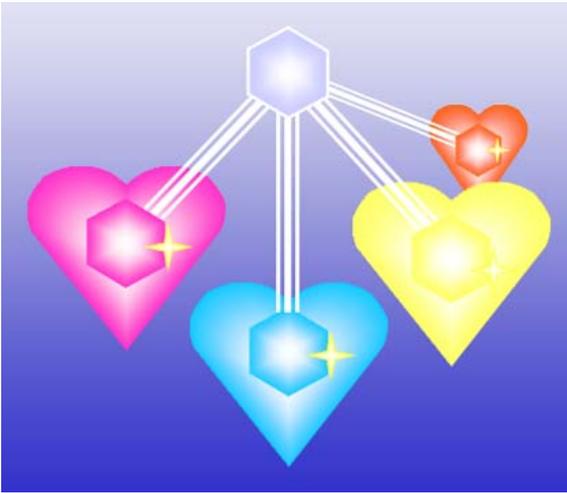
The relation between God and His various forms is *acintya-bhedābheda*. This is substantiated in the Vedic literature. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda quotes the following two verses in his purport of *Caitanya-bhāgavata* 1.3.52: *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad* 1.21: *eko 'pi san bahudhā yo 'vabhāti,*

“Although Lord Viṣṇu is one,
He manifests in many forms.”

In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa: ekāneka-svarūpāya*, “Lord Viṣṇu is one as well as many.” Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda mentions in his purport of *Bg* 4.9: “In the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.33) it is stated that the Lord has many, many forms and incarnations: *advaitam acyutam anādim ananta-rūpam*. Although there are many transcendental forms of the Lord, they are still one and the same Supreme Personality of Godhead. One has to understand this fact with conviction, although it is incomprehensible to mundane scholars and empirical philosophers. As stated in the *Vedas (Puruṣa-bodhinī Upaniṣad)*: *eko devo nitya-līlānurakto, bhakta-vyāpī hṛdy antar-ātmā,*

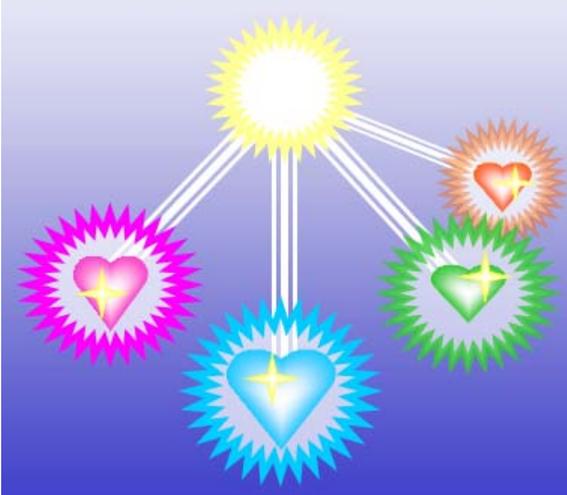
“The one Supreme Personality of Godhead is eternally engaged in many,
many transcendental forms in relationships with His unalloyed devotees.”

Śrī Caitanya then quotes a suitable analogy from the *Śrī Nārada-pañcarātra: maṅḍir yathā vibhāgena, nīla-pītādibhir yutaḥ, rūpa-bhedam avāpnoti, dhyāna-bhedāt tathācyutaḥ* (*Cc* 2.9.156),

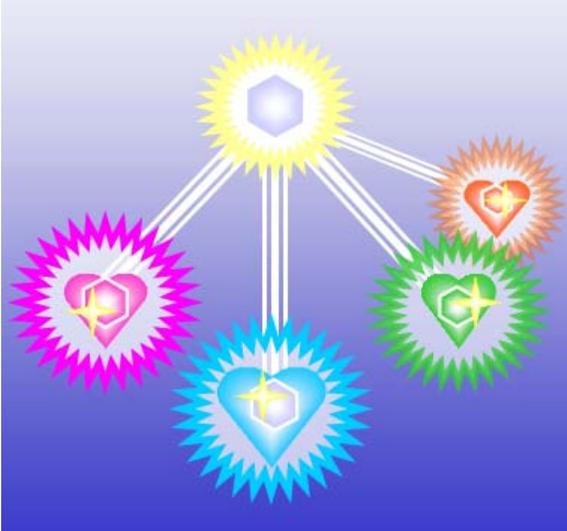


“When the *vaidūrya* jewel is joined with objects of other colors such as blue, yellow, etc, it accordingly appears in various colors. Similarly, according to the various moods of contemplation of the devotees, the one Supreme Lord appears in various forms, although He is essentially one.”

1st illustration: The *vaidūrya* jewel is in the (raised) center. The objects that are joined to the jewel are heart-shaped, because they represent the various moods of worship. When joined to them, the jewel shows their corresponding colors. This analogy nicely illustrates the *acintya-bhedābheda* nature of the Supreme Lord in terms of His manifesting differently to different devotees. This explains how Lord Kṛṣṇa can be the one original Godhead behind many different forms and conceptions of God of different devotees, even of different traditions.



2nd illustration: Just as God is essentially one, namely Śrī Kṛṣṇa, ‘The All-attractive’, similarly, love of God is essentially one, namely the energy of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, ‘The Queen of Worship’, love of God personified. This *bhakti-sakti*, potency of devotion, manifests in the heart of different devotees in different *bhāvas* (transcendental devotional sentiments and expressions) according to their individual *sthāyi-bhāva*, permanent devotional inclination and mood of worship. This phenomenon is illustrated by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in the twenty-sixth chapter of his *Jaiva-dharma* with the analogy of the uncolored sunshine that manifests many different colors of light when passing through different varieties of quartz crystals (see second illustration. The crystals are heart-shaped because they represent various *sthāyi-bhāvas*).



The 3rd illustration combines the illumination of various types of moods of worship by Rādhārāṇī with the manifestations of Godhead in the hearts of His devotees. According to the devotees’ individual affinities, the potency of devotion manifests in different *bhāvas* in different devotees. Lord Kṛṣṇa is attracted by these *bhāvas* and manifests in different forms to perfectly suit them.

By hearing the all-reconciling teachings of Mahāprabhu, Venkaṭa Bhaṭṭa was pacified and expressed that he is very glad, that by Śrī Caitanya’s mercy, he could now understand that devotional service unto Lord Kṛṣṇa is the supreme form of worship (*Cc* 2.9.162). One should learn from this exemplary behavior of Śrī Caitanya in His preaching. Although He boldly established the truth, He nevertheless never hurt anyone’s feelings. The term *guru* also means ‘heavy’. A Guru or *sādhu* can be stern as a thunderbolt, but his heart is always soft like a rose. Śrī Caitanya noticed that although Venkaṭa Bhaṭṭa was glad to understand the solid truth, his feelings were somewhat hurt,

and so Śrī Caitanya consoled him by explaining how there is not only *bheda*, distinction, but also *abheda*, indistinction, between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Nārāyaṇa. Śrī Caitanya made it clear, that it is offensive to differentiate between the forms of the Lord (*īśvaratve bheda mānile*). As He had just previously established that there is *bheda*, distinction, between the Lord's forms, this seems like a contradictory statement. It can be harmonized if one understands the proper employment of the two aspects of *bheda* and *abheda* according to *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. Distinction exists between the various forms of the Lord only in terms of *rasa*, and *rasa* is dependent on the mood of worship of the devotee.

It is offensive to see differences in spiritual substance between various forms of the Lord and claim that one form of the Lord such as Lord Viṣṇu is incomplete. “Lord Kṛṣṇa is the most complete Supreme Personality of Godhead in Vṛndāvana. Elsewhere all His expansions are either complete or more complete.” – Cc 2.20.402. Since conditioned souls usually cannot imagine variations of completeness because that surmounts the dimensions of mundane arithmetics, if they are not humble, they can fall into the trap of thinking that only Lord Kṛṣṇa is complete, and other forms of Godhead such as Lord Viṣṇu or Lord Rāma are incomplete. Sometimes one can thus see neophyte devotees decrying devotees of other forms of God, instead of honoring them. Such offensive thinking is condemned by Śrī Caitanya and the Ācāryas. To avoid falling into such traps, it is important to properly understand *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. God by nature reciprocates to the nature of various approaches of His devotees (*ye yathā mām prapadyante, tāms tathaiva bhajāmy aham*, Bg 4.11). He assumes various transcendental forms according to the desires of His devotees (*svacchandopātta-dehāya*, SB 10.27.11). In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 1.4.19, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

*āmāke ta' ye ye bhakta bhaje yei bhāve,
tāre se se bhāve bhaji – e mora svabhāve,*



“In whatever *rasa* My devotee worships Me,
I reciprocate with him. That is My natural behavior.”

Lord Brahmā prays to Śrī Kṛṣṇa: *tvam bhakti-yoga-paribhāvita-hṛt-saroja, āsse śrutekṣita-patho nanu nātha puṁsām, yad-yad-dhiyā ta urugāya vibhāvayanti, tat-tad-vapuḥ pranayase sad-anugrahāya*, “O my Lord, Your devotees can see You through the ears by the devotional process of hearing from pure devotees, and thus their hearts become cleansed, and You take Your seat there. You are so merciful to Your devotees that You manifest Yourself in the particular eternal form of

transcendence in which they always think of You.” – *SB* 3.9.11. According to His transcendental nature of being simultaneously one and many, The same Supreme Lord appears with an unlimited multitude of names, forms, attributes, associates and pastimes in accordance with the devotee’s mood of worship. As explained in Chapter 5.3, this is no contradiction to His being one person, and as such no contradiction to the essence of monotheism, just as it is no contradiction that the king of Puri can also engage in the role of a devotee, a father or a friend. Śrīla Bhakti Pradīp Tīrtha Mahārāja mentioned in this regard:



“The subjective entity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not liable to any transformation. His different forms are, therefore, different aspects of the one form manifesting themselves to the different aptitudes of His servitors.”
(Tīrtha B. P., 1942, pp. 167-168.)

“Those whose intelligence is purified by following the injunctions of Vaiṣṇava scriptures absorb their minds in thought of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and worship Him as the one Supreme Lord manifesting in multiple forms.”
(*bahu-mūrty-eka-mūrtikam*,
SB 10.40.7.)

When Kṛṣṇa’s devotees honor various other forms of God like Viṣṇu or Rāma by paying Them respects, then it must be understood that they are never engaged in any polytheistic worship, but they glorify their one Lord Kṛṣṇa appearing in different roles, just as a mother takes pleasure in watching her child playing a certain role in a drama. Similarly, when the devotees glorify certain deeds of demigods like Lord Śiva, they only do so in connection to Kṛṣṇa – they never worship demigods independently – just as a mother likes to befriend the friends of her son, but she is primarily interested in the relationship with her child.

From outside, the observer cannot easily differentiate between the full-fledged theistic worship of the Vaiṣṇavas and the conduct of worship of the polytheists; but internally, there is a great difference.

Śrī Caitanya gave the analogy of the *vaidūrya* jewel (see verse and illustration above). The polytheists can be compared to laymen who cannot recognize how the *vaidūrya* jewel takes on different colors; they thus think that there are different jewels, and they honor them as such, whereas the devotee who knows the Lord’s nature of *acintya-bhedābheda* can be compared to an expert jeweler who knows the true nature of the *vaidūrya* jewel.

14.10. Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana Leads to True Equal Vision and Harmony

True equal vision is attained by the vision of *acintya-bhedābheda*. This does not necessarily mean to *directly* see all as Kṛṣṇa or all as *directly* serving Kṛṣṇa, but to see everything in ontological and teleosympathetic connection with Kṛṣṇa, i.e. everything being a part of His energies and everything serving Him by directly or indirectly serving His purposes or expanded energies. Although some devotees may not have reached the highest stage of God-realization yet, in which they practically see God's personal form everywhere, they can still see God's presence in everything by seeing everything as a manifestation of His all-good divine will, and thus achieve harmony with the entire creation. In this regard, the following story was told by Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja in Eugene, France, on the 16th of August 2002. It is summarized here from a recorded lecture and from the same story mentioned in *Droplets of Nectar* (Tirtha 10, 2009):

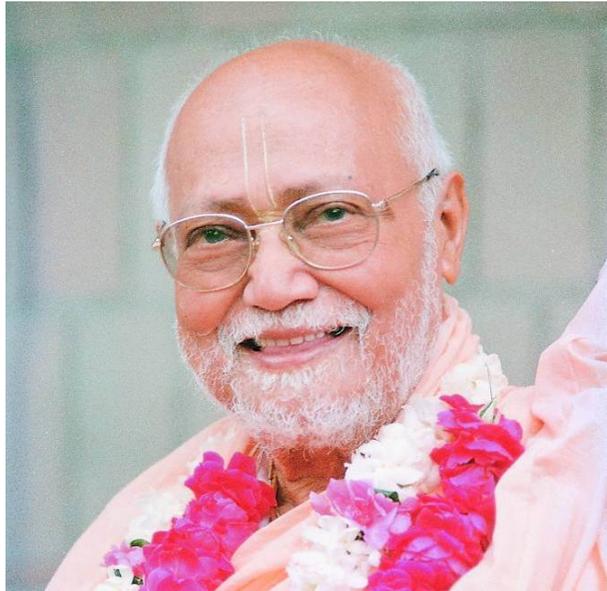
“There was a king in India, and his prime minister was a great devotee. Whenever any person came to the prime minister and wanted a solution to his problems, he advised him: ‘You see, you are perturbed by only seeing your loss. You do not know what you did in the past. You have no knowledge what will be in the future. Now you have got this loss by the will of the Supreme Lord. By the grace of the all-good Supreme Lord, the loss is very little – it should have been much more. Whatever is done by the will of Supreme Lord is all for the best – don't be disheartened!’ Whenever any person went to him, he pacified him and give solace in this way. Once, the king went hunting in the forest with many soldiers. All soldiers were scattered around, and the king moved about alone with the prime minister. The emperor saw a beast and shot an arrow. By mistake, the arrow cut his finger, and it started bleeding profusely. When he was thus lamenting, the prime minister said: ‘I know some healing herbs, there is nothing to be worried.’ He brought some herbs and gave relief to the king. The king was still repenting: ‘It is my duty to fight. My finger, which is vital for archery, is cut – it is a great loss!’ His minister said: ‘Why you are repenting? You don't know what you did in the past. You don't know what will be in the future. You have been saved from a greater loss – your life has been saved! Whatever is done by the will of the all-good Supreme Lord is for the benefit of all – you should not be worried!’

“Now the king became enraged: ‘What are you saying? My finger is cut – so much blood is there, I'm in so much pain, and you are saying whatever is done by the will of the Lord is for my benefit? If He would have done it to you – would you say the same thing?’ Calmly, the minister replied: ‘It is applicable to all, you should not mourn for this. Whatever is done by the Supreme Lord is for the benefit of all.’ The king thought: ‘So now this minister has become a great devotee – I shall teach him a lesson!’ He noticed a thicket at a distance that covered a dry well. When they approached that spot, the king gave a severe push to the prime minister, and he fell down into the dry well. There were a lot of bushes and thickets and so he was not hurt, but without help, it would be impossible to get out. Then the king said derisively: ‘Whatever is done is for the benefit of all. You have fallen in this well – it is for your benefit!’ The minister said: ‘Without the will of the all-good Supreme Lord you could not have pushed me. You have pushed me only by His will. So it is for my benefit. I do not know what I did in the past and what expects me in the future. I may die here, but whatever happens by the will of the all-good Supreme Lord is all-good – trust me!’ The king shouted: ‘Where is your God? I am here – if I leave this place, will He rescue you? Give up your doggedness!’ The minister replied peacefully: ‘If God will not rescue me, you cannot rescue me. *rakhe hari mare ke – mare hari rakhe ke*; if God protects someone, nobody can kill him – if God wants to kill someone, nobody can protect him.’

The king remained angry: ‘Ah, you will not give up your doggedness. Then stay here alone and die!’ Saying this, the king left that place. In that forest, there was a gang of dacoits. These dacoits worshiped goddess Kālī by sacrificing beasts and even human beings for the fulfillment of their desires. They had just been successful in a robbery and have thus given word to her that they shall sacrifice a man to her. They brought a priest and went searching for a suitable man in one of

the nearby villages. Suddenly, they saw the king walking in the forest, and gladly they said to each other: ‘Oh, now we need not go to a village or town to abduct a person. Goddess Kālī must be satisfied, because she has sent a nice man to us!’ The dacoits captured and fastened the king in a surprise attack. They brought him to their priest who took the king for a ritual bath. Then he was decorated and his head was fixed in a wooden fork. The king saw his end approaching quickly. Suddenly the priest noticed his bleeding finger. He called the dacoits and scolded them: ‘If a wounded beast is sacrificed, then the result will be just the reverse! Go and search again, and be more careful this time!’ The dacoits unfastened the king and gave him a kick, shouting, ‘Get lost! You have spoiled our time!’

“The king returned to his capital. He was thinking that what his minister had said was correct. ‘If I would have had no injury, then I would have been killed. I have done a very wrong thing. I have pushed him down into the well.’ Immediately he sent his soldiers to bring him. When the soldiers arrived at the well, the prime minister was peacefully chanting the holy name of the Supreme Lord; *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*. He was taken out and brought to the king. The king fell down at his feet. ‘Whatever you have said is correct! I have committed an offense to you by pushing you down into the well! The dacoits were just about to sacrifice me, when they saw that my finger is oozing blood. Then they didn’t kill me – I was thus rescued!’ His minister said: ‘Don’t worry – it’s alright! We don’t know what we did in the past and we don’t know what we will do in the future – therefore we cannot see the adjustment. Actually, you have also rescued me by the Lord’s grace!’ ‘How is that?’, the king asked surprised. The prime minister said: ‘You pushed me down into that well. If I would have been with you, those dacoits would have sacrificed me. By pushing me down into the well, you have saved my life!’



“We must never be disheartened;
everything happens by the will of the Lord, and
all that is done by the will of the all-good Lord is for the benefit of all!”

“*tat te 'nukampāṁ su-samīkṣamāṇo* (SB 10.14.8), if you can see His Grace in every circumstance, then you can attain Him. If you are disturbed then you cannot (...).

We are reaping the fruits of our own actions, so we should
not blame others for our misfortune!

As you sow, so shall you reap.”

(Tirtha 10, 2009.)

Proper *sama-darsana*, equal vision, i.e. the *darsana* of *acintya-bhedābheda*, means to envision how all individual elements of creation are harmonized with the all-good Supreme Lord's divine will. By relishing this *darsana*, the devotees constantly live in a state of universal harmony. If they encounter any sufferings, they never blame others who are involved, because they know that the others are not the causes, but only instrumental; the only causes of suffering are one's own previous misdeeds. Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja mentioned in this regard: "We shall try to read the environment that it is all sympathetic; the environment is always sympathetic to my inner goodness. It is necessary for me, for my real progress it is particularly necessary. So there is no error or any apathy on the outside, which is controlled by Kṛṣṇa. Never finding fault with the circumstance, that is bar to progress. I am in the midst of sympathy and benevolence, generosity, but what is bad, the poison, is within me. *tat te 'nukampām su-samīkṣamāṇo* (SB 10.14.8) (...).

"Whatever comes to me from outside,
that is nothing but *anukampā*, *dayā*,
grace of the Lord. It is difficult but still
this is the key to success in one's life."
(Śrīdhara 6, 1895-1988, pp. 60-61.)

God is all-good and never wants to bring suffering to anyone. Negative reactions are like the loving rectification of a father; they come in a very mild form and are for our upliftment. By not blaming others and rectifying themselves, the devotees become free from offenses and are thus able to chant the pure holy name. Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja often explains the teaching not to blame others for our own sufferings by the example of the biography of the saint Dhruva, told in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.8-12). The young prince Dhruva was warned by his mother as well as by his Guru, Nārada Muni, that if he wants to be successful in his worship of Lord Hari, then he must not commit the Himālayan blunder to blame others for his own sufferings. He should wipe out all feelings of hatred towards his stepmother and anybody else who may seem to have caused him suffering because they are not the causes, but only instrumental in his sufferings, which were caused by his own *karma*. Any sentiment of enmity towards others would only result in further sufferings and bad *karma*. Dhruva thereupon cleared his heart from all hostile feelings and was thus successful in his worship. He became a great king, and by pleasing Lord Hari, Dhruva brought auspiciousness to all people in his kingdom. Dhruva finally achieved the eternal abode of the Supreme Lord. Śrī Caitanya used to hear the biography of Dhruva hundreds of times from His intimate associate Gadādhara Paṇḍita in His final pastimes in Jagannātha Purī:

"In this way, the Lord happily spent His days hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from Gadādhara. Whenever Gadādhara would recite the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the Lord would manifest various symptoms of ecstatic love of God. The Lord heard the stories of Dhruva and Prahlād hundreds of times, all the while paying full attention." – *Caitanya-bhāgavata* 3.10.32-34.

Śrī Caitanya came to give the highest love of God, *unnatojjvala-rasa*, the most elated relish of transcendental relationship with God, the conjugal relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*Cc* 1.1.4). Nevertheless He enthusiastically heard the biographies of Dhruva and Prahlāda, although Dhruva and Prahlāda are steeped in other relationships to the Supreme Lord. Any transcendental story told by a pure devotee is completely transcendental and non-different from the highest topics according to *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*. This was proven by Śrī Caitanya's ecstatic symptoms while hearing the same biographies of Dhruva and Prahlāda for hundreds of times. They are relishable by the highest devotees and never become stale, but remain ever-fresh. We should also consider that there must be some special significance why Śrī Caitanya, the supreme teacher, gave the example of hearing the biographies of Dhruva and Prahlāda again and again. One important significance is, that although Dhruva and Prahlāda were both given severe pain by other people, they did not blame others for their own sufferings and thus their worship of God was successful. The importance of

worship with humility and tolerance and giving respect to others is stressed by Śrī Caitanya in the famous third verse of His *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam* (Caitanya, 1486-1534. Quoted in Cc 1.17.31):

*trṇād api sunīcena, taror api sahiṣṇunā,
amāninā mānadena, kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ,*

“One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor but is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord.”

Giving special emphasis on the importance of this verse, the author of the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, advises (Cc 1.17.32-33): *ūrdhva-bāhu kari’ kahoṇi, śuna, sarva-loka, nāma-sūtre gānṭhi’ para kaṇṭhe ei śloka. prabhu-ājñāya kara ei śloka ācaraṇa, avaśya pāibe tabe śrī-kṛṣṇa-caraṇa,*

“Raising my hands, I declare: Everyone please hear me!
String this verse on the thread of the holy name and wear it on your neck
for continuous remembrance. If one strictly follows the order of this verse given
by Śrī Caitanya, certainly he will achieve the ultimate goal of life, the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

Harmony with God and with all living entities, including oneself, is only possible by a complete reconciliation of the seeming insolvable conflicts. Avoiding to blame and retaliate people that bring sufferings may be possible to a limited extent by preaching morals expressed in sayings such as “to err is human, to forgive is divine”, “treat others in the same way that you would like to be treated”, “don’t grieve over the thorns of the rose bush – be happy that the thorn bush carries roses”, etc. But they don’t answer the questions “why would the almighty and all-good Godhead allow such sufferings of innocent people, animals and other living entities?” and “how in all the world is there justice behind these injustices? And if there is no actual justice, why should I at all endeavor to be just myself?” These questions have always been a great challenge to those religions that don’t possess precise knowledge of the eternal nature of the self and the cosmic law of *karma* and rebirth. The law of *karma* is actually quite simple. As you sow, so shall you reap. Every action has a corresponding reaction; this is evident in any field of knowledge. But how can the sufferings of seemingly innocent people be explained as karmic reaction? Here, we must take rebirth into account. The eternal nature of the soul and the process of rebirth have been explained in the second chapter according to Vedic science. One should think: “I do not know what I have done in previous lives. Since God is all-good by nature, whenever I face sufferings, I must understand, that logically, I must have caused that suffering myself before.” Nobody suffers unjustly – that would wipe out the possibility of the existence of an all-good God and of any absolute justice at all. Without the knowledge of the basic laws of *karma* and corresponding reactions and rebirth, the soul is knowingly or unknowingly left in doubts about the existence of an all-good God and a supreme justice, and in this way, there can impossibly be a complete reconciliation.

The basic Vedic teachings of the eternality of the soul and the laws of *karma* and rebirth are the only way to lead to a complete universal and individual reconciliation. Others are not to be blamed – one should rectify oneself. Most people want to change the world and make it suitable to their own ideas, and thus there are never-ending clashes. One should rectify oneself with the help of God and His pure devotees. By doing so perfectly, one can also inspire others to do the same, and then there will be harmony. By realizing that all sufferings root in one’s own corruption, one will not only be inspired to rectify oneself, but one will also be able to harmonize oneself with the entire creation. All one’s former so-called enemies will at once cease to be enemies, all one’s grudge and enmity will be erased, and this not just by some moral autosuggestion, but by factual realization of the actual perfection of God and His entire creation. No more will one need to try hard to forgive others, because knowing that they are not the causes of one’s suffering, one never takes offense, and

so there's nothing to be forgiven from one's own side. In other words, one has already forgiven all for all times. Further, one will always beg others to kindly forgive one's offenses to them, knowing that one has offended countless beings in countless births beyond one's remembrance. In this way, Veda reveals the scientific background of true humility. Only such genuine, deeply realized humility, not any superficial imitation or autosuggestion, can lead to a complete universal reconciliation and harmony.

Everything that happens is ultimately a manifestation of the perfect justice and good-will of God. As long as this realization does not take birth in the heart, one continues to knowingly or unknowingly reject the almighty God, because one preassumes that there is injustice which 'god cannot prevent, in other words, as God is per definition almighty, God does not exist. My most revered spiritual master, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja, mentioned in a recorded video conference on the 27th of April 2004 in Kolkata: "Everything depends upon the will of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. You cannot do anything without His approval. If anybody says that a leaf of a tree can move without the approval of the Supreme Lord, then the Supreme Lord will lose His absolute position." Since the Supreme Lord is omnipotent, everything ultimately happens by the will of the Supreme Lord. It cannot but be so – but before we have properly realized how it is so harmoniously, we must be careful not to misuse this matter of fact. Not that we can neglect our duties out of laziness, do whatever we like and then call it the will of God. Realizing everything as ultimately being in accordance with the will of God neither means that we can become ruthless moral transgressors nor that we need not stand up against criminal tendencies of others. There is no injustice on behalf of God – but there can be injustice on behalf of the materially illusioned conditioned souls. This is possible because God has given them independent will that can be misused. If there was no free will, there would be no question of genuine service (it would be mechanical), and if free will could not be misused, then there would be no free will. In the spiritual worlds, which make out three fourth of creation, our free will is used for serving God. The material worlds make out one fourth of creation and are purposely designed for those who have decided to misuse their free will for non-devotional activities. This misuse is the actual injustice, the actual sin. In order to uphold the existence of genuine love and thus free will and the choice of misusing it, there must be a place for this misuse. This place is the material world, which was designed to serve as a drama stage of selfish and unjust actions. One should carefully understand:

God sanctions our free will, and thus we could misuse it –
but He never agrees with nor sanctions any misuse of free will!

God enables us to misuse our free will because He upholds the principle of free will, but that does not mean that He agrees with its misuse. From all of the relations described here, one can understand, that the material world is not a fit place for the soul who desires real freedom, justice and truth, because it is purposely designed to accommodate all kinds of corruptions. Because the all-good Supreme Lord wants the corrupted souls of the material world to quickly come back to their eternal home in the spiritual world, as soon as someone fully confesses his corruption and sincerely begs the Lord for forgiveness and upliftment, the Lord will surely arrange for his liberation. "God appears in the truly repenting heart." (*ātapyamāna-hṛdaye 'vasitam*, SB 3.31.13.) Such full confession and true repentance is only possible if it is free from any tendency to blame others, in other words, in true humility that arises from the realization of the perfection of God and His creation. This realization must include the basic understanding of the eternal nature of the soul and the cosmic laws of *karma* and rebirth, which are only presented in a completely scientific way by the Vedic science. Further, one needs to know how to attract the mercy of the Lord to overcome material illusion and attain spiritual vision. This is best explained by the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* of Śrī Caitanya, that teaches that universal harmony is *acintya*, materially inconceivable, and only attainable by attracting the mercy of the *acintya-sakti*, the spiritual potency or mercy-potency of the Supreme Lord, that manifests as His pure devotees. The Lord's mercy is attracted by being in unity (*abheda*) with His will as His distinct individual (*abheda*), genuine servant. This is

most efficiently achieved by chanting the Lord’s holy name, in which He has invested all His various *acintya-śaktis*: *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*. Having attained the mercy of His *acintya-śakti*, one will realize how the entire creation is in harmony by being one (*abheda*) in will with God, while remaining variegated (*bheda*) to serve Him in many ways, and how His *acintya-śakti* is able to reconcile all seeming contradictions in universal harmony.

14.11. Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana Leads to Perfect Discrimination

The *sama-darśana*, equal vision, that Śrī Caitanya taught to Venkṛṣṇa Bhaṭṭa is not to be confounded with the equal vision of an ignorant who is incapable of discriminating or that of a monist or *māyāvādī* who tries to artificially eliminate individuality. The devotees are actually the only ones who can truly distinguish between various elements of creation, because they see the eternal spiritual nature of all elements and their purpose in the Lord’s master plan. True religion never asks anyone to turn off their brains and follow blindly, but to use their brains individually in unity with the Lord’s own intention and science. The term ‘science’ comes from Latin *scire*, to distinguish, from the Indo-European base *skei-*, to cut, separate (Webster). Gothic *skeida* comes from Sanskrit *chid*, both meaning ‘to cut, divide, separate’ (Williams). Science necessitates discrimination. “Cut off the subtle material covering of the soul with the sharpened ax of transcendental knowledge!” (*SB* 11.12.24.) Jesus Christ said that he came to bring a sword, not peace (Matthew 10:34), and his devotees have explained that this refers to the sword of discrimination, especially in terms of avoiding association of people who envy God, even if they are close members. Spiritual seekers must possess sober discrimination, because the path of spiritual realization is sharp like a razor’s edge (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.3.14, quoted below). They should not nod their head at every human notion and submit to every proposed god in order to try to enjoy pseudo peace through virtual non-distinction.

Śrī Caitanya explained that it is offensive to see differences in spiritual substance in the Lord’s various personal forms – yet simultaneously He declared that it is offensive to equate the Supreme Lord with the demigods, who are not His personal expansions: *yas tu nārāyaṇam devaṁ brahma-rudrādi-daivataiḥ, samatvenaiva vikṣeta sa pāṣaṇḍī bhaved sadā*, “One who considers the great demigods such as Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva equal to the Supreme Personality of Godhead is an offender.” – *Padma Purāṇa*, quoted by Śrī Caitanya in *Cc* 2.18.116, also quoted in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 1.117 (Sanātana, 16th century, p. 22). The discrimination of the devotees is in no contradiction to their seeing everything with equal vision.



The devotees simultaneously have the best power of discrimination as well as the best power of harmonization due to their understanding of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*.

It is therefore not a contradiction, that in His teachings to Venkāṭa Bhaṭṭa, Caitanya Mahāprabhu first discriminated between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Viṣṇu, and then explained Their indifference; rather this shows His greatness. He has properly established both Their aspects of *bheda* and *abheda* in their full manifestation, and He has done it in such a sympathetic way that Venkāṭa Bhaṭṭa became a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa without feeling hurt. One must properly distinguish even amongst various forms of God and amongst various types of devotees – what to speak of distinction between devotional and non-devotional elements. “The *madhyama*- [medium] Vaiṣṇava stage marks the beginning of pure Vaiṣṇavism. He is required to distinguish the Vaiṣṇava from the non-Vaiṣṇava; serving the pure Vaiṣṇava is his necessity. If he neglects to differentiate among the grades of Vaiṣṇavas then he stands to commit *vaiṣṇava-aparādha* [offense to Vaiṣṇavas]. He has to continuously evaluate the Vaiṣṇavas and serve the pure Vaiṣṇava.” (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 36.) This necessity to distinguish between different grades of Vaiṣṇavas applies to both others as well as to oneself. *sama-darśana*, equal vision, must be practiced according to one’s own level of spiritual progress, not in blind imitation of a perfected devotee.

There are three general grades of devotees (see *SB* 11.2.46-48, *Cc* 2.22.64-74): neophyte (*kanīṣṭha*), advanced or intermediate (*madhyama*), and perfected (*uttama*). The neophyte devotees have basic faith in God and spiritual cultivation but lack proper discrimination, scriptural understanding and realization and do not know how to behave properly with different people. The advanced devotees have firm faith in God and spiritual cultivation, possess basic scriptural understanding and spiritual realizations, and are able to discriminate and behave properly with different people. They serve and learn from the perfected devotees, make friendship with the advanced devotee, show mercy to the neophyte devotees and general people, and disregard those who are envious of God. The perfected devotees possess complete faith in, total realization of, full surrender to and unconditional love for God. They have perfect and practical scriptural understanding. Due to factually, not only theoretically, perceiving God’s presence everywhere, they are unable to offend anybody and because they are fully surrendered, they are completely protected from bad influences. Therefore, they don’t need to distinguish between various people and treat all equally as essentially perfect devotees of God. However, perfected devotees who act as preachers, out of their mercy, in order to be able to teach proper distinction, maintain equal vision internally but act as if they distinguish externally like intermediate devotees.

Being taught by an ideal Ācārya, the neophytes quickly become advanced devotees, and the advanced devotees are able to progress smoothly due to perfect discrimination and behavior, namely to learn from the perfected devotees, make friendship with equals, encourage the newcomers and avoid the envious. Equal vision must be practiced not in terms of forcibly, externally, and indifferently trying to treat all exactly in the same way, but in equal reciprocation with the other’s quality of devotion. Since all are essentially servants of God, the quality of our love should be the same for all, but the extent of our reciprocation to a particular person should be proportionate to his or her quality of devotion to God. Another point of discrimination is that devotees are of different types of personal inclinations to God, and that it is essential to search out the company of those devotees who are of an inclination similar to ours. Further, a certain devotee may be a qualified teacher, but for some reason, he or she may not treat one with affection, and this would hinder the learning progress. Therefore, according to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, the direct associate of Śrī Caitanya, one of the five most essential limbs of *bhakti* is the following conduct (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.91, 15th century, quoted in *Cc* 2.22.131): *sajatiyāṣye snigdhe sādhanu saṅgaḥ svato vare*



“One should associate with those devotees
who are endowed with a similar type of inclination for the Lord,
who treat one with affection, and who are more advanced than oneself.”

Proper distinction is needed for the progressive devotee. The complete *sama-darśana*, equal vision, of the perfected *uttama*-devotee cannot be imitated – else one will face degress. Proper education and distinction is required, while simultaneously one should remember how everything in creation is one with the Lord’s desire and thus essentially harmonized. In this way, one can internally respect all living entities, even if one needs to externally avoid some, who, relative to oneself, play an antagonistic role in the ultimately harmonious cosmic play. The existence of *bheda*, distinction, in creation, creates the necessity of discrimination. If discrimination is ignored, *bheda*, and as such part of reality is ignored. Therefore, minute discrimination in its proper form is advocated throughout all Vedic literature. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.3.14 commands: *uttiṣṭha jāgrata, prāpya varān nibodhat, kṣurasya dhārā nisitā duratyayā, durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti,*

“Wake up! Rise!

Having attained this rare form of human life

that is fit for self-realization, don’t sleep in ignorance!

The path of spiritual realization is sharp like a razor’s edge.

It is only possible to traverse it if you are given proper discrimination
by learned transcendentalists who always sing the praises of the Supreme Lord.”

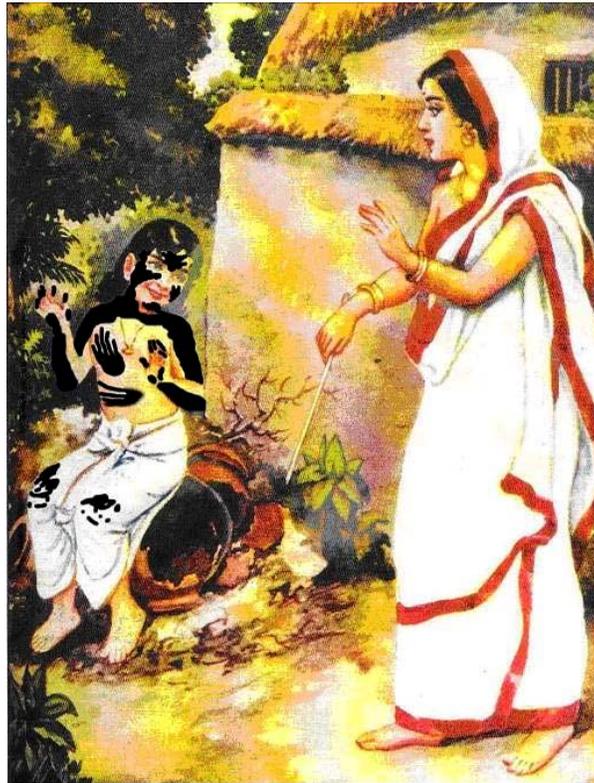
The second verse of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* declares: *dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarānām satām, vedyam vāstavam atra vastu śivadam tāpa-trayonmūlanam, śrīmad-bhāgavate mahā-muni-kṛte kim vā parair īśvaraḥ, sadyo hr̥dy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śūsṛṣubhis tat-kṣaṇāt,*

“Completely rejecting all cheating religious activities, namely those that are materially motivated, this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* propounds the highest truth, which is understandable by those devotees who are fully pure in heart. The highest truth is reality distinguished from illusion for the welfare of all. Such truth uproots the threefold miseries. This beautiful *Bhāgavatam*, compiled by the great sage Vyāsadeva, is sufficient in itself for God realization.”

The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 1.2.117 explains how proper discrimination leads to attachment to Śrī Kṛṣṇa: *siddhānta baliyā citte nā kara alasa, ihā ha-ite kṛṣṇe lāge sudṛḍha mānasa,*

“One should not be lazy to engage in discussions and minute considerations
of philosophical conclusions, considering them controversial,
for such discussions strengthen the mind, which thus
becomes firmly attached to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

In His boyhood, Śrī Caitanya manifested a wonderful pastime in connection to proper discrimination according to the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. It is found in His biography in *Caitanya-bhāgavata* 1.7 and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 1.14.73-75. Nimāi (Śrī Caitanya’s boyhood name) played the pastime of being an excellent student who was very dedicated to studying the scriptures, even neglecting playing with His friends. His mother Śacī and other relatives were happy about this, but His father, Jagannātha Miśra, began to worry. Nimāi’s elder brother, Śrī Viśvarūpa, had studied all the scriptures, and after understanding the temporary nature of the material world, he renounced his family and home, became a *sannyāsī* and fully devoted himself to the Supreme Lord’s service. Jagannātha Miśra feared that his beloved Nimāi would similarly leave home after reading Vedic literature. He decided to keep Nimāi away from studying (in Vedic society, studying necessarily includes studying the holy Vedic scriptures). He told his wife Śacī, who was worried about how Nimāi will survive and maintain others if He remains a fool: “Education, birth, and other qualities are only superficial; Kṛṣṇa alone is the maintainer and strength of all.” – *Cb* 1.7.133. Nimāi was disappointed to give up His scholastic pursuits, and He began to enact various pastimes of childhood mischief. Once He sat down on old rejected pots that had been used for preparing offerings for Lord Viṣṇu, and smeared His body with their soot, so that His golden effulgence was covered. When mother Śacī saw Nimāi in that condition, she said, “My dear son, this is not a proper place to sit. These are rejected pots, and if one touches them he must take bath. Haven’t You understood this by now?” The Lord replied:



“You don’t allow Me to study, so how will I know the difference between good and bad or a fool and a *brāhmaṇa*?”

murkha āmi, nā jāniye bhāla-manda-sthāna, sarvatra āmāra ‘eka’ advitīya-jñāna, “I am a fool, so I don’t know which place is good and which is bad. Therefore, I consider all places equal according to my concept of *advitīya-jñāna*, ultimate non-duality.” – *Cb* 1.7.170. Here, Lord Caitanya teaches, that proper education and distinction (*bheda*) is required, and exclusive *advaita*, non-distinction, is foolish. Although in certain aspects of the ultimate reality there is non-distinction, simultaneously, in other aspects there is also distinction between its elements; trying to artificially neglect these differences like the *advaitists*, *māyāvādīs* or monists, cannot lead to getting the full

picture of reality. Although the monists claim that everything is exclusively one, they are forced to discriminate between clean and dirty places to sit, healthy and unhealthy food to eat, etc, and thus they cannot actually practice their virtual philosophy. Once one *māyāvādī* was preaching his philosophy of exclusive oneness in the presence of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda and his disciples in a train from Kolkata to Jagannātha Purī. Śrīla Prabhupāda asked his disciples to feed the *māyāvādī* some mangos that had become rotten on the way, since according to *māyāvāda*, there is no difference between good and rotten mangos. After having eaten four rotten mangos, the *māyāvādīs* fell at Śrīla Prabhupāda's feet and swore he'd never preach exclusive oneness again.

Śrī Caitanya, by sitting in a place that is considered unclean and preaching about ultimate non-duality, exposed the pathetic picture of a monist who would try to live up to his philosophy in practice. Śrī Caitanya clearly pointed out the necessity of distinction and a healthy moral. In all religions we find that God and His devotees have moral and care for the upliftment of the people. This requires proper discrimination and ethics; sincere devotees never tell people to simply do as they like. One of the most harmful aspects of monism or non-dualism is that it virtually wipes out morals and ethics. If all is but one, then it does not really matter what I do – when I steal from others, I actually take from myself; when I kill others, I merely change some minor aspects of my self; it does not matter if I worship nature or ghosts or cars or God, because they are all me; et cetera. If we scrutinizingly analyze the underlying motives of a person who takes to monism, then behind the facade of 'peaceful oneness' we often find a 'complacent oneness' – a virtual oneness that justifies practically everything from laziness and cowardice to crimes. Our drawbacks and vices of being too lazy to distinguish, being too fearful of confrontation with others and being judged and categorized by others due to our discrimination, being too cowardly to take and defend a position, being too selfish and addicted to give up certain immoral conducts – all these drawbacks can be hidden behind the 'peaceful' mask of monism. This Sachverhalt, relation of facts, is mostly unknown to people who talk about monism. It is not so obvious in schools of monism that call upon Veda because they keep up moral values, but it can be seen clearly when monism is incorporated in freestyle schools such as the new age movement. We need not go into any particular detail of practice, since virtually anything is potentially justifiable with freestyle monism. The reason why big scandals are limited is because fortunately, the general public still has a sense of moral. Moral and ethics require clear discrimination and the acknowledgement of duality. The principle of unity in diversity allows both duality and union in their most beneficial aspects. Śrī Caitanya taught this principle with the greatest expertise. We continue in His biography:

When mother Śacī called Nimāi to take bath, He replied stubbornly, "If you don't allow Me to study, then I won't leave this place." Mother Śacī then pulled Him down by force and brought Him to the river Gaṅgā, where both took bath. After this, Nimāi's parents decided to allow Him to continue His studies, which He did with joy. In this pastime, Śrī Caitanya not only taught the proper application of distinction (*bheda*), but also of oneness (*abheda*), as He is the original revelator of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*. When Śrī Caitanya was scolded by mother Śacī for sitting on what people consider dirty pots, He replied to her: "My dear mother, you are very childish. I am never in an impure place. In fact these pots are not at all contaminated, because you have used them to cook for Lord Viṣṇu. Indeed, simply by the touch of His cooking pots other places become purified." – *Cb* 1.7.173-178. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura mentions in his purports that unlike the *smārtas*, the Vaiṣṇavas accept the remnants of the Lord as pure. He quotes the *Padma Purāna: naivedyam jagadīśasya, anna-pānādikam ca yat, brahmavan-nirvikāram hi, yathā viṣṇus tathaiḥ tat*, "Those foodstuffs and beverages that are offered to Viṣṇu are transcendental, incorruptible, and nondifferent from Viṣṇu."

Some years earlier, Nimāi, instead of eating His meal, began to eat dirt, similar to the pastime He performed as Śrī Kṛṣṇa (see *SB* 10.8.32-45, summarized in Chapter 5.7). Mother Śacī snatched the dirt from His hands and inquired why He was eating it. Nimāi replied: "Why are you angry? You have already given Me dirt to eat. What is My fault? Fused rice, sweetmeats and all

other eatables are but transformations of dirt. This is dirt, that is dirt. Please consider. What is the difference between them?” Astonished that her child was speaking *māyāvāda* philosophy, mother Śacī replied, “Who has taught You this philosophical speculation that justifies eating dirt?”



“My dear boy, if we eat earth transformed into grain, our body is nourished, and it becomes strong. But if we eat dirt in its crude state, the body becomes diseased instead of nourished, and thus it is destroyed.”

The Lord replied to His mother, “Why did you conceal self-realization by not teaching Me this practical philosophy in the beginning? Now that I can understand this philosophy, no more shall I eat dirt. Whenever I am hungry I shall suck your breast and drink your breast milk.” This pastime is recorded in Śrī Caitanya’s biography in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 1.14.24-36. In this wonderful pastime, Lord Caitanya teaches the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* through His mother. He Himself takes the role of a preacher of the *māyāvāda* philosophy and then exposes it as faulty. The *māyāvādīs* claim that everything is one, but they nevertheless prefer to eat ripe than rotten mangos, not to speak of dirt. Similar to the pastime described earlier in which Nimāi sat on dirty pots while preaching *māyāvāda*, Nimāi exposed the silliness of a *māyāvādī* who practically employs his philosophy by eating dirt and trying to justify it through monistic speculation. He then established the proper Vedic philosophical conclusion of *acintya-bhedābheda* through the mouth of His mother. Although everything is a transformation of the Lord’s energy and thus in one sense non-different (*abheda*), in another sense, those products of transformation are also different (*bheda*) from each other and from the Lord’s energy. To lead a sane way of life and achieve the essential philosophical understanding, one must accept both aspects, distinction and non-distinction, in the proper way. This is possible by the sublime philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*.

Sometimes people ask that if *bhakti* is the goal of life, why should one spend so much energy in trying to understand the philosophical aspects of *bhakti* – why not ‘just practice *bhakti*’? The answer is that although material speculative philosophy is useless to advance on the path of *bhakti*, the descending philosophy of *bhakti* is in itself spiritual and beneficial for devotional progress. Therefore, it is said that a sincere student of *bhakti* should not neglect the discussion of *siddhānta* (philosophical conclusions), for such discussions make the mind strong and attached to Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*siddhānta baliyā citte nā kara alasa*, *Cc* 1.2.117). By *siddhānta* one can know the glories of the Lord in a properly manner, and only by knowing His glories can one become firmly attached to Him (*Cc* 1.2.118). The approach to philosophy of the devotee is completely different from that of the *jñānī*, the empirical philosopher, who is not interested in *bhakti*, but only in knowledge and liberation. “Since a devotee also engages in philosophical research to understand the Supreme Person as He is, his activities may thus appear to be like those of a mental speculator, but actually he is trying to

understand the spiritual nature and transcendental activities.” *SB* 3.27.23, purport by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda.

The devotee hears and chants about the Lord and His nature and philosophy in order to glorify and please Him as an offering of devotion, which is in itself already the relishable goal, not for any secondary benefit. In the famous *ātmārāmā*-verse (*SB* 1.7.10, quoted in Chapter 9.5), Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī, the speaker of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, gives answer to the question why Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī, a fully liberated and self-realized soul, nevertheless took the trouble to go through the vast literature *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī explained that even the self-satisfied liberated souls (*ātmārāmā*) desire to render unalloyed devotional service to the Supreme Lord, because He possesses transcendental qualities that can attract everyone. This proves that *bhakti* is superior to *jñāna*, mere empirical knowledge, and that hearing and chanting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, that naturally includes essential philosophy and *siddhānta*, is in itself a transcendental activity if done under the guidance of pure devotees.

The philosophical conclusion of devotional service is called *bhakti-siddhānta* or *bhakti-vedānta*, and great Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas like Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda were given these names to honor their devotional qualities. To the novice, *bhakti-siddhānta* is revealed through the scriptures and the pure devotees and realized by the practice of *bhakti*. *bhakti-siddhānta* nourishes *bhakti*, because *bhakti* needs to be practiced in a proper mood or concept. This proper concept is expressed in *bhakti-siddhānta*, the philosophical conclusion of *bhakti*, that establishes the purpose and proper mood of practicing *bhakti*. As such *bhakti* and *bhakti-siddhānta* go hand in hand and cannot be excluded from each other. The essential *bhakti-siddhānta* of *acintya-bhedābheda* establishes that in the ultimate reality there is not only *abheda*, non-distinction, but also *bheda*, distinction, and philosophical discussions are essential to distinguish reality. One quality of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is that it rejects all cheating *dharmas* and establishes the actual substantial object of knowledge by distinguishing reality from illusion for the welfare of all (*SB* 1.1.2, quoted below).

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura mentioned in this regard that after discarding all philosophies that do not make out the Vedic conclusion, one should adopt the ultimate principle identical with the doctrine of *acintya-bhedābheda*, and that “this makes one eligible for being a true devotee.” (Bhaktisiddhānta, 1874-1936, p. 151.) A devotee distinguishes in order to honor, relate to and engage the multifarious elements of the Lord’s creation properly and thus achieve harmony of individual elements, instead of trying to ignore or annihilate distinction by trying to virtually enforce complete *abheda* like the monists. In simple words; those who actually love the Lord will want to know all distinct details of the Lord’s personal character – especially what He Himself desires most – in order to serve Him perfectly. This knowledge is established by *bhakti-siddhānta*. Just as a loving mother will distinguish between less and more suitable food for her children by consulting an expert’s advice, the pure devotee distinguishes between less and more suitable moods of devotion to the Lord according to the Lord’s personal nature expressed in *bhakti-siddhānta*. Without understanding *bhakti-siddhānta*, one may wear a devotional dress, but have an unfavorable mood or concept of the Lord, and as the Lord is *bhāva-grāhī* (*Cb* 1.11.108), the One who accepts the mood of His devotees more than external circumstances, that will not be very beneficial. *bhakti-siddhānta* is not dry philosophy but philosophical conclusion of practical devotional service.



Reality is variegated because Lord Kṛṣṇa created it purposely in that way – thus artificially trying to avoid distinguishing between various elements of creation and to virtually manufacture a monotonous impersonal reality deprived of individuality does not serve the purpose of creation. The task is not to alter the Lord’s creation, but to become Kṛṣṇa-conscious and thus able to recognize how all variegatedness is united in perfect harmony like a big orchestra – to realize the cosmic orchestra of unity in diversity. A good orchestra creates pleasing symphony, not boring monotony. If individuals unite in the central will, they enter universal harmony. This is expressed by Śrī Caitanya’s *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja mentioned: “Different sounds tuned to one – that is harmony. Different instruments, different tones (...) connected with one and (...) giving some sweet and soothing feeling or sentiment; that is harmony.” (Transcribed from one of his sermons. Śrīdhara 3, 1895-1988.)

The title of this book is ‘Unity in Diversity’. The quest of universal harmony is unity in diversity, which is most scientifically disclosed by the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. To attain harmony, both, individuality and distinction, are necessary, just like the harmony of an orchestra depends on distinctly tuned individual instruments played in unison. Therefore, before the concert, the conductor points out disharmonious elements and accepts only instruments that are in exact tune. Similarly, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the Vedic literature of *bhakti-siddhānta*, in the very beginning right after the introductory verse clearly cuts off all paths of knowledge and human conduct bereft of pure *bhakti* and proclaims the need of proper distinction: *dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra (...)*, “Completely rejecting all religious activities which are materially motivated, this *Bhāgavata Purāna* propounds the highest truth, which is understandable by those devotees who are fully pure in heart. The highest truth is reality distinguished from illusion for the welfare of all (...).” – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.2. *bhakti-siddhānta* is not a materially speculated conclusion, but it is the spiritual reality expressed in philosophical conclusion and passed down by the Lord Himself through *paramparā* (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.2). It is revealed to those who are very dear devotees of the Lord (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.3). A pure devotee has already realized the Lord, and thus there seems to be an insurmountable gap for the neophyte devotees; however, they can overcome this gap by receiving *bhakti* from a pure devotee. Therefore, *bhakti-siddhānta* must be heard from a spiritual master and cannot be assimilated by our own efforts. Dedication, inquiry and service to a self-realized spiritual master in *paramparā* is required to understand *bhakti-siddhānta* (see *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.34). If one has received *bhakti-siddhānta* from a pure devotee, then perfect discrimination according to *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* is possible.

14.12. Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana Described In the Brahma-saṁhitā

We now continue in Śrī Caitanya’s biography, when He was touring South India. On the banks of the river Payasvinī, in the temple of Ādi-keśava in the Trivandrum district, He was very happy when He discovered a copy of the fifth chapter of the *Brahma-saṁhitā* spoken by Lord Brahmā. Since all spiritual conclusions are briefly presented in the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, it is essential among all the Vaiṣṇava literatures (*Cc* 2.9.237-241). There are supposed to be hundred chapters in the *Brahma-*

saṁhitā, but the fifth is the only chapter that is known to date. Śrī Caitanya’s devotees enthusiastically made further copies, and thus it was well preserved and spread in the Vaiṣṇava community. The *Brahma-saṁhitā* was spoken to Lord Kṛṣṇa by Brahmā after his enlightenment. A collection of its verses shall be presented here to enrich our understanding of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*.

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ, sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ,
anādir ādir govindaḥ, sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam,*

“Kṛṣṇa who is known as Govinda is the Supreme Godhead.
He has an eternal, spiritually conscious and entirely blissfull transcendental body.
He is the origin of all. He has no other origin and He is the prime cause of all causes.” – *Bs* 5.1.

*evaṁ jyotir-mayo devaḥ, sad-ānandaḥ parāt paraḥ,
ātmārāmasya tasyāsti, prakṛtyā na samāgamah,*

“The Lord of Gokula is the transcendental Supreme Godhead,
the own Self of eternal ecstasies. He is the superior of all superiors
and is busily engaged in the enjoyments of the transcendental realm
and has no association with His mundane potency.” – *Bs* 5.6.

Here the transcendental nature of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is established. Although He is the cause of all causes, He nevertheless has no association with His mundane potency. How this is possible has been explained by Śrī Caitanya in *Cc* 1.5.86 and the there following verses, quoted in Chapter 14.6, where also verses 5.45, 5.7, 5.8, and 5.46 of the *Brahma-saṁhitā* are mentioned. *ātmārāmasya* means that Kṛṣṇa is engaged in enjoyments of the transcendental realm, which emanates from Himself; in other words, He only enjoys aspects and transformations of Himself, not other’s properties or other men’s wives. *ātmārāma* means to take pleasure only from the self, to be satisfied within one’s self, and not being dependent on or interested in any gratification through things other than one’s self. There is no distinction between Kṛṣṇa and His internal potency that manifests as Rādhārāṇī and Her confidantes, the *gopīs* (see below quoted verses *Bs* 5.35&37). Therefore, their transcendental pastimes of paramour love is free from any illicitness as in the mundane paramour affairs. “The *gopīs* are the extensions of the ecstatic energy of Kṛṣṇa, and so are exceptionally His own. How can there be illicit connection in their case?” (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in his purport to *Bs* 5.37, quoted below.)

Mahā-Viṣṇu is the source of thousands of thousands of Avatāras and the creator of thousands of thousands of individual souls (*Bs* 5.11.) The living entity is eternal and is for eternity and without a beginning joined to the Supreme Lord by the tie of an eternal kinship. He is transcendental spiritual potency (*Bs* 5.21). These verses also support the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*: the great variety of individual souls comes from the one Supreme Lord. They are different, *bheda*, in number and person, and one, *abheda*, in both being of spiritual substance. Brahmā was inspired to create, but could only see darkness in every direction (*Bs* 5.23). Thereupon, the goddess of learning, Sarasvatī, revealed to Brahmā the 16 syllable *kṛṣṇa-mantra* containing the *kāma-bīja* [the essential desire-seed-syllable *klīm*. The entire *mantra* is confidential and must be received from a bona fide spiritual master in order to be effective], telling him that this *mantra* will assuredly fulfill his heart’s desire (*Bs* 5.24-25). Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura comments on this verse that this *kṛṣṇa-mantra* gives an unalloyed devotee the fruition of his heart’s desire, i.e. love of Kṛṣṇa. The devotee who has a devotional aptitude mixed with material desires gets his material desires fulfilled too from the perverted reflection of the *kṛṣṇa-mantra*. As Brahmā was a mixed devotee, the *kṛṣṇa-mantra* fulfilled both his temporary desire (for creation) and his eternal spiritual desires.

14.13. Union In Will With God Is the Formula to Success

Brahmā, being desirous of satisfying Govinda, engaged in austerity by chanting the *kṛṣṇa-mantra*, contemplating the nature of the transcendental land of Kṛṣṇa, Goloka Vṛndāvana (*Bs* 5.26). In this verse, the words *prīṇan govindam*, “being desirous of satisfying Govinda”, indicate the spiritual teleosympathetic inclination of Brahmā, which was further developed by his chanting the *kṛṣṇa-mantra*. This aptitude towards union in will with the Lord is the target of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*. Then the personified sacred *gāyatrī-mantra*, the mother of the *Vedas*, manifested from the divine sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute, entered into the ears of Brahmā, who was thus enlightened and attained the status of the twice-born (*dvija*, the status of a *brāhmaṇa*-priest), having been initiated by the Supreme Primal Preceptor (*ādi-guruṇā*), Godhead Himself (*Bs* 5.27). *dvija* means twice-born in terms of the second or actual birth of the self by realization of the particular individual nature of one’s eternal spiritual self through *mantra* contemplation.

Those official *brāhmaṇas* who have not yet attained this state of realization are as such not *dvija* in the true sense, whereas anyone who has attained spiritual birth is a real *brāhmaṇa* and Guru, be he in whatsoever official position. *ādi-guruṇā* indicates that Kṛṣṇa is the original Guru. He initiated Brahmā, who further passed down this Veda through the disciplic succession. If one thus gets initiated by a Guru (a pure devotee who *practically* is *dvija*, self-realized) of a bona fide disciplic succession, one can get in touch with the Supreme Lord through the channel of the pure devotee and the *mantra*. Enlightened by the recollection of that *kāma-gāyatrī-mantra*, embodying the three *Vedas*, Brahmā became acquainted with the expanse of the ocean of truth. Then he worshiped Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the essence of all *Vedas*, with this hymn (*Bs* 5.28).

Brahmā’s spiritual inclination to satisfy Govinda is essential in his success of self- and God-realization. The transition from material to spiritual desires is attained by the association of pure devotees¹⁵⁶ who have only spiritual desires, and by contemplation of the *mantra* that kindles the uncovering of spiritual desires. Having attained self- and God-realization, Brahmā begins to glorify Lord Kṛṣṇa: *cintāmaṇi-prakara-sadmasu kalpa-vṛkṣa-lakṣāvṛteṣu surabhir abhipālayantam, lakṣmī-sahasra-sata-sambhrama-sevyamānam, govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*, “I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, the first Progenitor who is tending the cows, yielding all desire, in abodes built with spiritual gems, surrounded by millions of purpose trees, always served with great reverence and affection by hundreds of thousands of *lakṣmīs* or *gopīs*.” – *Bs* 5.29. Kṛṣṇa yields all desires, but if He is truly merciful, He yields only the true spiritual desires of the eternal spirit souls, not their selfish perversions in the material realm. The self in its original state only desires to serve the all-attractive Lord Kṛṣṇa, and when Kṛṣṇa gives one full chance for serving Him, He truly fulfills all one’s desires.



As per the transcendental principle of teleosympathy,
all souls in the spiritual realm only desire to serve Kṛṣṇa, and
thus there are no clashes of interest, but only blissful harmony.
Therefore, individual union with the sweet purpose of Kṛṣṇa
as advocated by *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*
leads to universal harmony.

¹⁵⁶ *saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmaḥ*, one’s desires develop according to association, *Bg* 2.62. *yasya yat saṅgatiḥ puṁso, mañivat syāt sa tad guṇaḥ, svakularddhyai tato dhimān, svayūthāny eva samśrayet*, “As the qualities of a nearby object are reflected in a crystal, one similarly takes on the qualities of a person with whom he associates. Therefore, in order to increase one’s devotional sentiment in his own line, a wise person should take shelter of those who have the same temperament. One should be particularly careful in this regard.” – *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* 8.51 (a compilation of verses extracted from the *Purāṇas*). *kṛṣṇa-bhakti-janma-mūla haya ‘sādhu-saṅga’, kṛṣṇa-prema janme, teṅho punaḥ mukhya aṅga*, “The root cause of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa is association with pure devotees. Even when one’s dormant love for Kṛṣṇa awakens, association with devotees is still most essential” – *Cc* 2.22.83.

14.14. God's Servants are Equally As Opulent as God

Veṇuṁ kvaṇantam aravinda-dalāyatākṣam-barhāvataṁsam asitāmbuda-sundarāṅgam, kandarpa-koṭi-kamanīya-viśeṣa-sobham, govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi, “I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is adept in playing on His flute, with blooming eyes like lotus petals with head decked with peacock's feather, with the figure of beauty tinged with the hue of blue clouds, and His unique loveliness charming millions of Cupids.” – *Bs* 5.30. The beauty and loveliness of Kṛṣṇa is far more enchanting than that of Cupid multiplied a millionfold. This can only be realized with eyes of love of God (described in a following verse, *Bs* 5.38). The attraction to and love for Kṛṣṇa is natural and spontaneous, as soon as the real self gets uncovered. According to Kṛṣṇa's nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*, He can attract unlimited numbers of souls perfectly according to their individually spiritual inclinations, while remaining one person. The servants of Kṛṣṇa are not in a lesser position than Kṛṣṇa Himself like servants of material masters are inferior: *vimuñcati yadā kāmān, mānavo manasi sthītān, tarhy eva puṇḍarikākṣa, bhagavattvāya kalpate*,

“O my Lord, when a human being is able to give up all the material desires in his mind, he becomes eligible to possess wealth and opulence like Yours.” – *SB* 7.10.9.

Purport by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda: “(...) Śrīdhara Svāmī comments, *bhagavattvāya bhagavat-samān aiśvarya*. *bhagavattva*, becoming as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, does not mean becoming one with Him or equal to Him, although in the spiritual world the servant is equally as opulent as the master.



“The servant of the Lord is engaged in the service of the Lord as a servant, friend, father, mother or conjugal lover, all of whom are equally as opulent as the Lord.
This is *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*.

“The master and servant are different yet equal in opulence. This is the meaning of simultaneous difference from the Supreme Lord and oneness with Him.” It is essential to note, that desiring equal opulences like God is never the direct aspiration of a devotee; such a desire is not cultivated by the devotee because it hinders pure *bhakti*, which is unconditioned. However, by practicing pure *bhakti*, the devotees' pure self gradually manifests in the transcendental abode of God, and they automatically achieve divine opulences. The formula for the achievement of the transcendental abode is not the desire to enjoy there, but the desire to serve the only primary Enjoyer, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, causelessly, without selfish desires. This is explicitly expressed by the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* that advocates teleosympathy, sympathy with

the Supreme Lord's desire. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.29.34 states in this regard: *martyo yadā tyakta-samasta-karmā, niveditātmā vicikīrṣito me, tadāmṛtatvaṁ pratipadyamāno, mayātma-bhūyāya ca kalpate vai*, “When a mortal person gives up all *karma*, activities governed by a selfish desire, and offers his very self to My direction, eagerly desiring to render service unto Me, achieves liberation from birth and death and is promoted to the status of sharing My own opulences.” Furthermore, Kṛṣṇa's servants have the unique position of serving and relishing Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of all beauty and loveliness. This position is so delightful that Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself desires it. The ultimate proof of the devotee's exalted position is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is no one else but Śrī Kṛṣṇa appearing as His own Devotee to relish serving and tasting Himself.

14.15. God Is Non-Different From His Transcendental Body

The next two verses of the *Brahma-saṁhitā* quoted by Śrī Caitanya say:

*ālola-candraka-lasad-vanamālya-varṁśi-
ratnāṅgadaṁ praṇaya-keli-kalā-vilāsam
śyāmam tri-bhaṅga-lalitam niyata-prakāśam
govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*

*aṅgāni yasya sakalendriya-vṛtti-manti
paśyanti pānti kalayanti ciraṁ jaganti
ānanda-cinmaya-sad-ujjvala-ṅgrahasya
govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*

“I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, round whose neck is swinging a garland of flowers beautified with the moon-locket, whose two hands are adorned with the flute and jeweled ornaments, who always revels in pastimes of love, whose graceful threefold-bending form of Śyāmasundara is eternally manifest. I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, whose transcendental form is full of transcendental bliss, truth, and pure eternal substance and is thus full of the most dazzling splendor. Each of the limbs of that transcendental figure possesses in Himself, the full-fledged functions of all the organs, and eternally sees, maintains and manifests the infinite universes, both spiritual and mundane.” – *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.31-32.

Here, the Lord's *acintya-bhedābheda* nature is further described. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura mentions in his purport: “The unwholesomeness of matter is its defect; but in the spirit there is variegatedness which is free from any fault or contamination. The soul and the body of Kṛṣṇa are identical¹⁵⁷, whereas the body and soul of fallen creatures are not so. In the spiritual sphere there is no such difference as that between the body and soul, between the limbs and their proprietor, between the attributes and the object possessing them, of this world. But such difference really exists in the case of conditioned souls.

“Limbed though Kṛṣṇa is, His every limb is the whole entity [each limb is *acintya-bhedābheda*, inconceivably simultaneously one and different from Him]. He performs all varieties of divine spiritual functions with every one of His limbs. Hence He is an indivisible whole and a perfect transcendental entity.

“Both *jīva*-soul and Kṛṣṇa are transcendental. So they belong to the same category [*abheda*]. But they differ [*bheda*] in this that the transcendental attributes exist in the *jīva*-soul in

¹⁵⁷ The *Kūrma Purāṇa* states: *deha-dehi-vibhedo 'yam neṣvare vidyate kvacit*, “There is no difference between body and soul in the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” – *Bg* 9.34, purport.

infinitesimally small degrees, whereas in Kṛṣṇa they are found in their fullest perfection. Those attributes manifest themselves in their proper infinitesimality only when the *jīva*-soul attains his unadulterated spiritual status. The *jīva*-soul attains the nearest approach to the absolute identity only when the spiritual force of ecstatic energy appears in him by the grace of Kṛṣṇa.” In this regard, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.8 (quoted from *Jd* 14) states:

*na tasya kāryam karam ca vidyate
na tat-samaś cābhyadhikaś ca dṛśyate
parāsyā śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate
svābhāvīkī jñāna-bala-kriyā ca*

“The Supreme Lord never requires the assistance of material senses to accomplish His works. He possesses neither a material body, nor material senses. His body is one hundred percent spiritual; therefore, His physical presence is not limited as that of a material body. He is omnipresent, His beautiful spiritual form is present everywhere within the creation; simultaneously, He is in His own abode, Goloka Vṛndāvana. Nothing or no one is either equal to, or greater than He is; He is replete with *acintya-śakti* (also called *para-śakti*), inconceivable potency. Although His inherent, internal *acintya-śakti* is one, she is nevertheless manifest in manifold magnificence as *jñāna*, also known as *cit* and *saṁvit*, the potency of cognisance; *bala*, also known as *sat* and *sandhinī*, the potency of power; and *kriyā*, also known as *ānanda* and *hlādinī*, the potency to perform dynamic variegated activities.”

14.16. Further Aspects of Acintya-Bhedābheda

Advaitam acyutam anādim ananta-rūpam, ādyam purāṇa-puruṣam nava-yauvanam ca, vedeṣu durlabham adurlabham ātma-bhaktau, govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi, “I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is inaccessible to the *Vedas*, but obtainable by pure unalloyed devotion of the soul, who is without a second, who is not subject to decay, is without a beginning, whose form is endless, who is the beginning, and the eternal *puruṣa*; yet He is a person possessing the beauty of blooming youth.” – *Bs* 5.33.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains: “*advaita* [syn. *abheda*] means ‘indivisible truth who is knowledge absolute’. Brahman, the infinite, emanates from Him as His effulgence and God-immanent (Paramātmā) as His constituent; but nevertheless He remains one and indivisible. *acyuta* means that though myriads of Avatāras emanate from Him as subjective portions and millions of *jīvas* as separated spiritual particles, still He remains intact as the undivided whole of fullest perfection. Though He indulges in exhibiting the pastimes of births, etc., still He is without a beginning. Though He disappears after the pastimes of His appearance, still He is eternal. Though without origin, yet He is with an origin in His pastime of appearance; and although eternal in essence, He is still a person in the full bloom of youth.

“The sum and substance of it is that though He possesses diverse
and apparently mutually contradictory qualities, still they
are in universal harmonious concordance by dint
of His unthinkable potency.

“This is what is meant by *cid-dharma* [syn. *sanātana-dharma*], transcendental nature, as distinguished from the material. His graceful threefold-bending form with flute in hand, possesses eternal blooming youth and is above all unwholesomeness that is to be found in limited time and space. In the transcendental realm there is no past and future but only the unalloyed and immutable

present time. In the transcendental sphere there is no distinction between the object and its qualities and no such identity as is found in the limited mundane region.

“Hence those qualities that seem to be apparently contradictory in the light of mundane conception limited by time and space, exist in agreeable and dainty concordance in the spiritual realm.”

Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda also quotes the above verse from the *Brahma-saṁhitā* in his purport to verse 10.13.19 of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, where it is described how Lord Kṛṣṇa expanded Himself into many calves and boys simultaneously: “As stated in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.33: *advaitam acyutam anādim ananta-rūpam, ādyam purāṇa-puruṣam nava-yauvanam ca*, Kṛṣṇa, *param brahma*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is *ādyam*, the beginning of everything; He is *ādi-puruṣam*, the ever-youthful original person. He can expand Himself in more forms than one can imagine, yet He does not fall down from His original form as Kṛṣṇa; therefore He is called Acyuta [infallible, invincible]. (...) Kṛṣṇa thus proved that He is everything, that He can become everything, but that still He is personally different from everything (*mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni na cāham teṣv avasthitaḥ* – Bg. 9.4). This is Kṛṣṇa, who is understood by *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* philosophy. *pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate*: [Śrī Īsopaniṣad, invocation] Kṛṣṇa is always complete, and although He can create millions of universes, all of them full in all opulences, He remains as opulent as ever, without any change (*advaitam*).”



eko 'py asau racayitum jagad-aṇḍa-koṭim, yac-chaktir asti jagad-aṇḍa-cayā yad-antaḥ, aṇḍāntara-stha-paramāṇu-cayāntara-stham-govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi,

“He is an undifferentiated entity as there is no distinction between [His] potency and the possessor [Himself] thereof [their relation is *acintya-bhedābheda*]. In His work of creation of millions of worlds, His potency remains inseparable. All the universes exist in Him and He is present in His fullness in every one of the atoms that are scattered throughout the universe, at one and the same time. Such is the primeval Lord whom I adore.” – *Bs* 5.35.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura mentions in his purport: “Kṛṣṇa is the highest of all entities. In Him is an entity which is termed *cit* (spiritual) which is distinct from the principle of limitation. By His inconceivable power [*acintya-śakti*], He can at will create numberless universes. All the mundane universes owe their origin to the transformation of His external potency. Again His abode is beyond human conception; since all worlds, limited and spiritual (*cit*) exist in Him and He resides simultaneously in His fullness and entirety in all the atoms in all the worlds. (...) This argument favors the doctrine of simultaneous inconceivable distinction and nondistinction.”

“I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, residing in His own realm, Goloka, with Rādhā, resembling His own spiritual figure, the embodiment of the ecstatic potency possessed of the sixty-four artistic activities, in the company of Her confidantes [*sakhīs*], embodiments of the extensions of Her bodily form, permeated and vitalized by His ever-blissful spiritual *rasa*.” – *Bs* 5.37. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura writes in his purport: “Although the Lord Absolute and His potency are one and the self-same existence [*abheda*], still They exist eternally as separate [*bheda*] entities, as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. (...)”



“The divine sportive potency fills the hearts of His devotees with appropriate spiritual sentiments in conformity with His will.”

Here, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains, how the intimate devotees attain union or unity in will with Kṛṣṇa, which is the target of the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*: Their heart is filled with appropriate spiritual sentiments in conformity with the will of Kṛṣṇa by the internal pleasure-potency of Kṛṣṇa, the *hlādinī-śakti*, *antaraṅga-śakti* or *acintya-śakti*, whose ultimate Personification is Rādhārāṇī. Kṛṣṇa Himself says to Arjuna in the *Ādi Purāna*: *man-māhātmyam mat-saparyām, mac-chraddhām man-mano-gatam, jānanti gopikāḥ pārtha, nānye jānanti tattvataḥ*,

“O Pārtha, the *gopīs* know My greatness, My loving service, respect for Me, and the intention of My mind (*manaḥ-gatam*). Others cannot really know these.” – Cc 1.4.213.

The internal potency descends to the conditioned soul who aspires for Kṛṣṇa’s service through the heart of the spiritual master in form of the holy name. Kṛṣṇa invested all His transcendental potencies into the holy name (*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktiḥ*, Śrī Caitanya in His *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka*. Caitanya, 1486-1534. Verse two). In the present age, the Lord is primarily present in His holy name (*kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra*, Cc 1.17.22), the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*; *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*.

premāñjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena, santaḥ sadaiva hṛdayeṣu vilokayanti, yaṁ śyāmasundaram acintya-guṇa-svarūpaṁ, govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi,

“I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is Śyāmasundara, Kṛṣṇa Himself with inconceivable innumerable attributes, whom the pure devotees see in their heart of hearts with the eye of devotion tinged with the salve of love.” – Bs 5.38.

Here, love of God is compared with *premāñjana*, a ‘salve of love of God’, that enables the eye of devotional service (*bhakti*) to invoke the vision of Kṛṣṇa in the devotee’s purified heart. One must not think that these eyes are like material eyes. As the conditioned soul cannot imagine

spiritual eyes, this analogy is given here. Actually, the Lord's vision can only be gotten by His mercy that is attracted by the practice of *prema-bhakti*, which in turn can only be gotten from a devotee who has *prema-bhakti*. All humans have hearts, but due to the coverings of separatist motives, most don't feel attracted to Kṛṣṇa. Attraction to Kṛṣṇa is only achieved by the practice of *bhakti*, by which the self's natural inclination to Kṛṣṇa is uncovered. In the cleansing stage of devotional service, in which one still serves under certain conditions and personal motives, one cannot yet directly perceive Kṛṣṇa; this is only possible with *prema*, transcendental unconditional love of God. Therefore, the distinction of *bhakti* and *prema* is made in this verse.

A devotee with *prema* has only one desire: To serve Kṛṣṇa's desires. By this attainment of union in will of God, as advocated by the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, the devotee transcends all mundane dualities and is able to see how the Supreme Lord and His materially inconceivable attributes (*acintya-guṇa*) and creations are reconciled in perfect harmony. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura mentions in his purport to this verse that "The form Śyāma [a name of Kṛṣṇa meaning dark-blue] is not the blue color visible in the mundane world but is the transcendental variegated color affording eternal bliss, and is not visible to the mortal eye. (...) The eye of devotion is nothing but the eye of the pure unalloyed spiritual self of the *jīva*. The form of Kṛṣṇa is visible to that eye in proportion to its purification by the practice of devotion. When the devotion of the neophyte reaches the stage of *bhāva-bhakti* [stage prior to *prema-bhakti*], the pure eye of that devotee is tinged with the salve of love [*prema*] by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, which enables him to see Kṛṣṇa face to face."

14.17. Devotees Engage Everything In Bhakti

"I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who manifested Himself personally as Kṛṣṇa and the different Avatāras in the world in the forms of Rāma, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, etc., as His subjective portions. I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, whose effulgence is the source of the nondifferentiated Brahman mentioned in the *Upaniṣads*, being differentiated from the infinity of glories of the mundane universe appears as the indivisible, infinite, limitless, truth." – *Bs* 5.39-40. "(...) I adore the primeval Lord Govinda in accordance with whose will Durgā [the personified external material potency of the Lord] conducts herself." – *Bs* 5.44.

In the verse 5.44 the word *icchānurūpam*, 'in accordance with the Lord's will', is noteworthy, since teleosympathy or union with the Lord's will is the target of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. Not only the spiritual energy, but also the material energy serves Kṛṣṇa in accordance with His will. The word *durgā* also means prison or fort. The material realm is a place of correction and suffering for the living entities with separatist motives, and the duty of Durgā in accordance with Kṛṣṇa's will is to allow those souls a certain amount of separatist illusion apart from serving Kṛṣṇa and to gradually let them realize their ignorance. By good fortune, they turn to self-realized devotees who reawaken their natural aptitude for the loving service of Kṛṣṇa and are then reinstated into His spiritual energy.

A devotee who has attained the vision of *acintya-bhedābheda*, i.e. who sees how all variety of creation, including the material world with its seeming¹⁵⁸ imperfections, are all smoothly running in unified harmony with the all-good will of Lord Kṛṣṇa, is himself always in harmony with the entire creation.

¹⁵⁸ The material world is incongenial for existence because it is the place of unavoidable material suffering (due to separation from Kṛṣṇa). But because these sufferings give impetus to transcend the material world, they and the material world are not imperfect in terms of being a 'mistake of God' – God is faultless, and so is His creation.

“I adore the primeval Lord Govinda from whom the separated subjective portion Brahmā receives his power for the regulation of the mundane world, just as the sun manifests some portion of his own light in all the effulgent gems that bear the names of *sūryakānta*, etc.” – *Bs* 5.49.

Here Brahmā glorifies Lord Govinda from whom he receives his power. The analogy of the sun is used in a related context by Śrī Caitanya in His verse that defines His *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*: “The original position of the living entities is to be eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa because they are the Lord’s marginal energy and a manifestation simultaneously one and different from the Lord, like a molecular particle of sunshine or fire. Kṛṣṇa has three varieties of energy.” – *Cc* 2.20.108-109.

yam krodha-kāma-sahaja-praṇayādi-bhīti, vātsalya-moha-guru-gaurava-sevya-bhāvaiḥ, sañcintya tasya sadrśīm tanum āpur ete, govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi, “I adore the primeval Lord Govinda, the meditators of whom, by meditating upon Him under the sway of wrath¹⁵⁹, amorous passion, natural friendly love, fear, parental affection, delusion, reverence and willing service, attain to bodily forms befitting the nature of their contemplation.” – *Bs* 5.55.

Here Lord Brahmā glorifies Lord Govinda, who gives those who meditate upon Him bodily forms that correspond to the nature of their contemplation. “In whatever transcendental humor, *rasa*, My devotee worships Me, I reciprocate with him. That is My natural behavior.” – Śrī Caitanya in *Cc* 1.4.19. According to His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*, the Supreme Lord can appear to different devotees in different forms, although remaining the same person. Furthermore, He also gives His devotees perfect spiritual bodies that suit their individual mode of worship.

“On hearing these hymns containing the essence of the truth, the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa said to Brahmā, ‘Brahmā, if you experience the inclination to create offspring by being endowed with the real knowledge of the glory of Godhead, listen, My beloved, from Me to this science set forth in the following five verses.’” – *Bs* 5.57. Purport by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura: “The Supreme Lord became propitious when Brahmā with great eagerness chanted the names, ‘Kṛṣṇa’ and ‘Govinda’ expressive of the form, attribute and pastimes. Brahmā was actuated by the desire for mundane creation.

“Kṛṣṇa then said to Brahmā how pure unalloyed devotion can be practiced by souls engaged in worldly occupations by combining the same with the desire for carrying out the behest direction, order, precept, injunction of the Supreme Lord.”

Bs 5.58-61: “When the pure spiritual experience is excited by means of cognition and service [*bhakti*], superexcellent unalloyed devotion characterized by love for God is awakened towards Kṛṣṇa, the Beloved of all souls. The highest devotion is attained by slow degrees by the method of constant endeavor for self-realization with the help of scriptural evidence, theistic conduct and perseverance in practice. These preliminary practices of devotion [*sādhana-bhakti*] are conducive to the realization of loving devotion [*prema-bhakti*]—than whom there is no superior well-being, who goes hand in hand with the attainment of the exclusive state of supreme bliss and who can lead to Myself. Abandoning all meritorious performances serve Me with faith. The realization will correspond to the nature of one’s faith. The people of the world act ceaselessly in pursuance of some [mundane] ideal.

“By meditating on Me by means of those deeds one will obtain devotion characterized by love in the shape of the supreme service [*prema-bhakti*].”

¹⁵⁹ Wrath, fear and delusion are not devotion in the strict sense of term, because they are hostile to Kṛṣṇa. They are listed in this verse because they fit into the here described category of contemplators that have *rāga*, feelings for Kṛṣṇa out of a natural tendency, in contrast to those who practice devotion by regulated schemes without *rāga*.

Here the path of *bhakti-yoga* is described according to its principle of *yukta-vairagya*, transcendence by engagement in service. The atheists or separatist sense enjoyers try to exploit material nature and are ultimately frustrated without eternal benefit. The dry renunciators try to externally renounce material attachments, but they cannot overcome the subtle internal attachments due to lack of a higher positive spiritual attachment. The monists try to ignore and flee material duality by trying to merge into a virtual state of non-duality, but because the *jīvas* are by nature eternal individuals, they fail in the long run and return to material life. Only the devotee, who neither independently exploits, condemns nor misinterpretes a single particle of creation, but uses everything in connection and service to Kṛṣṇa, can transcend *māyā*, the illusory material energy of Kṛṣṇa, because Kṛṣṇa Himself, the only master of *māyā*, frees Him (*Bg* 7.14). Only the devotees are naturally detached from material enjoyment, because they relish the superior taste of the spiritual (*Bg* 2.59). Although the devotees want to transcend material illusion and return to the spiritual home, by understanding *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, they know that also the material creation is a part of the Lord's transformed energy, and the actual illusion or fault is not in creation, but in their own false attitude of exploitation and artificial renunciation instead of service. They perfectly understand, that all in creation is to serve the will of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and as soon as everything is seen and used in that essential context, even seemingly material things and activities can become transformed into spiritual means of transcendence which no more leading to illusion.

While the materialist gets shackled by the material duality (material *bheda*) and the monist endlessly tries to escape material duality by aspiring an illusory state of exclusive oneness (illusory *abheda*), the highest devotee perfectly follows *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* and is thus constantly liberated by embracing the real, transcendental states of *bheda* and *abheda*, namely *bheda* in terms of transcendental duality and individuality for serving God, and *abheda* in terms of union in quality and will by engaging everything in devotional service.

The timeless transcendental knowledge of Veda explains,
that like a pendulum, the conditioned soul continuously swings to-and-fro
from the dualistic pole of material conception to its non-dualistic pole, and that
the only solution to grasp the complete reality is transcendence into the spiritual realm
of harmonized original polarities, best expressed in the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*.

The common man is engaged in *bhukti*, trying to enjoy the material polarities, and feels blindly happy in the world of duality, exclusive material *bheda*, although it is not unified and full of sufferings. The stereotype¹⁶⁰ irreligious sense enjoyers are shackled by the dictates of their lusty senses and the preaching of the commercial industry that make them further blind for their actual slavery and torments. The stereotype religious¹⁶¹ sense enjoyers is also dedicated to their material senses, but they follow some religious practices to increase their *bhukti* (they are advantaged because unlike commercial industry, religion is spiritually uplifting and teaches that *bhukti* is ultimately futile). Be they religious or not, the sense enjoyers are ultimately frustrated in their attempt due to never-achieved satisfaction, disease, old age and death. They then realize the non-eternal, illusory nature of material activities and want to renounce them and aspire for *mukti*, liberation in a unified, non-dualistic state of existence or exclusive *abheda*. The stereotype irreligious liberationist is the modern scientist who tends towards a non-dual abstraction of reality that ultimately includes the renunciation of subjective personality or at least of individual personality. The stereotype religious liberationist is the religious person who engages in religious practices with the aim of impersonal liberation from the material polarities by way of merging into the non-dualistic impersonal energy, which is called Brahman in the Vedic culture, *nirvāṇa* in the

¹⁶⁰ Stereotypes help to understand polarities; however, one should consider, that they are idealistic, and that in reality, there are many variations of such stereotypes, and that people usually have a blend of tendencies.

¹⁶¹ Religion in this paragraph refers to *naimittika-dharma*, mundane religion, not *sanātana-dharma*, eternal religion. See Chapter 12.

Buddhist culture and Tao in Taoism (these concepts of course vary, but compared to material dualism and theistic *acintya-bhedābheda*, they can be seen as one category).

The non-devotee liberationists or renunciates are sometimes called dry renunciates because they miss *prema-rasa*, the nectarean juice of love of God, the positive aspiration of the devotees. Be they religious or not, all liberationists or dry renunciates are destined to fail in their attempt of *mukti*, because the imperishable soul by nature seeks *personal* bliss, which requires polarities for interpersonal exchanges of love, and the soul seeks individual experience, which is extinct in the conception of non-dualism or monism. They thus again swing back to the other pole of *bhukti*, trying to enjoy the material polarities. If we observe a conditioned soul over one or many lifetimes, we can observe a fluctuation of *bhukti-mukti-bhukti-mukti* etc. Material life is an ambivalent zigzag-course between the two poles of frustrated *bhukti* and frustrated *mukti*, and what is perceived as so-called ‘happiness’ is illusory enjoyment of *bhukti* and *mukti* by means of ignoring their ultimate frustration.

One may say that if the soul needs both *bheda* (individuality) and *abheda* (unity), then a balance of the two should be aspired, and call it *bhedābheda*. However, since material *bheda* and material *abheda* are not allowing lasting satisfaction at any stage, a balance of the two is still inharmonious and can also not be the goal. The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* clearly does not aim at a balance of the material versions of *bheda* and *abheda*, and this is expressed by the term *acintya*. *acintya*, meaning materially inconceivable, also indicates the solution, namely the harmonization of *bheda* and *abheda* by dint of the Supreme Lord’s *acintya-śakti*, materially inconceivable spiritual energy, also called *bhakti-śakti*, the energy of devotional service to the Supreme Lord. By *bhakti*, everything is used and seen in its actual inherent purpose and occupation (*sanātana-dharma*), namely in relation and service to God. *bheda* or individuality and dualities are only inharmonious if they are not dedicated to God by *bhakti*. If all is recognized and used in its original relation to God, all is at once harmonized. The aspect of *bheda* is transcended when we realize how individuals and variegation are necessary to give the Supreme Lord the pleasure of relishing various *rasas*, relishes of relationships and personal experiences. *bhukti*, the tendency of enjoyment, is not to be abolished; we must realize that we are not the *primary* enjoyers, but God is, and we (who also naturally long for *bhukti*) can only truly enjoy through His enjoyment, i.e. indirectly, through *bhakti*. Similarly, the aspect of *abheda*, unity, is transcended by *bhakti* only. The actual unity of creation is not a merging of identities that virtually destroys individuality and experience, but it is an all-harmonizing teleosympathetic unity, i.e. the unity of all individuals and varieties in the central purpose of serving the universal centre, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *vairāgya*, renunciation of material enjoyment, only makes sense if it leads to the positive state of *bhakti*. The devotees speak of *yukta-vairāgya*, ‘yoked renunciation’, meaning that real renunciation is not the renunciation of the activity of enjoyment, but the offering of that enjoyment to the actual primary Enjoyer, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and that activities or things are only to be renounced if they cannot be offered to God. The conclusion of Veda is that both *bhukti* and *mukti* are to be given up for *bhakti*, which includes the proper aspects of *bhukti* and *mukti*.

The solution is neither a balance of material or spiritual *bheda* and *abheda*, but the fully accommodating and harmonious marriage of the spiritual aspects of *bheda* and *abheda*, allowing their complete unfoldment in reciprocal complementation. This materially inconceivable marriage can only be accomplished by the Lord’s *acintya-śakti*, or *bhakti-śakti*.¹⁶²

Although the dualities that are produced by matter involve suffering, duality as well as non-duality are eternally existent in transcendence in their original, pure and blissful form. Any

¹⁶² The term ‘marriage’ was already used in the description of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* by Prof. Kapoor: “*acintya* signifies the marriage of the opposite concepts of ‘difference’ and ‘non-difference’ leading to a higher and fuller unity.” (Kapoor, 1976, p. 157.)

exclusively non-dualistic notion, be it materialistic, scientific, Hinduistic, Buddhistic, etc, misses the original form of duality due to lack of proper surrender and transcendence, and is merely an escape into a virtual state of imaginary unity. It seems like a solution, but it is merely the other side of the same coin of artificial ‘emancipation’ from the original function of the soul, devotion to God. The ultimate reality is a perfect state of harmony between the original forms of duality and non-duality, and can be realized only by proper surrender. This is expressed in Śrī Caitanya’s *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*, the sublime philosophy of materially inconceivable simultaneous duality and non-duality. Those who accept this vision of the only person who can see the entire reality as it is – the Supreme Personality of Godhead – can see reality as it is.

The independent sense enjoyer tries to unrightfully enjoy the property of Lord Kṛṣṇa and is thus ultimately frustrated. The dry renunciate or liberationist tries to renounce material things like ‘his’ house and ‘his’ family that actually belong to Kṛṣṇa, not to him; as such his renunciation is illusory. Rather we should realize, that we have borrowed or stolen these things from Kṛṣṇa and should simply return them to Him by engaging them in His service. The monist thinks that Kṛṣṇa’s form and His variegated creation are illusory, and thus his renunciation is actually blasphemous. Real renunciation means to renounce the false ego of being anything else but Kṛṣṇa’s servant. One’s only possession and duty is to serve Kṛṣṇa and engage all of Kṛṣṇa’s creation in Kṛṣṇa’s service. This *yukta-vairagya* is real renunciation. Sometimes, when the mundane layman who lacks this knowledge, sees how the devotees seem to be engaged in the same activities as he is, he cannot understand how they are superior to the dry renunciates and monists, who externally seem to be more renounced than the devotees.

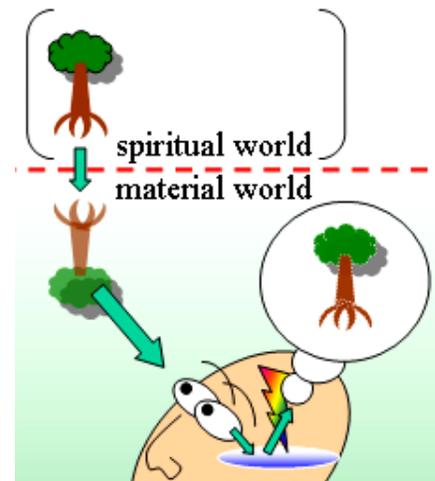
The devotees rise and take bath in the morning to attain Kṛṣṇa’s auspicious morning worship ceremony (*maṅgala-ārati*) and chant His holy name, not in order to go to work (although many do go to work later). They cook delicious meals and offer them to Kṛṣṇa on His altar, and then they relish His sacred remnants (*prasāda*) together. They then engage in various services or go to work for Kṛṣṇa, not for anything or anyone else, and they continuously contemplate His transcendental names, forms, attributes, associates and pastimes while performing any activity. They maintain temples, communities, houses and families solely for Kṛṣṇa’s service. In the evening they come together and hear and discuss about Kṛṣṇa’s adventures from the scriptures, sing and dance for Kṛṣṇa in His *saṅkīrtana*, and serve and relish His *prasāda*. At night they take rest to be fit the next day for Kṛṣṇa’s service. In this way, every activity in the life of a devotee is dovetailed to transcendental harmony; the will of God. *na yujyamānāyā bhaktyā, bhagavaty akhilātmani, sadṛśo 'sti śivaḥ panthā, yoginām brahma-siddhaye*, “Perfection in self-realization cannot be attained by any kind of *yogī* and procedures unless they are used in and dovetailed to the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, i.e. to serve His pleasures. This is the only auspicious path.” – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.25.19. “Pure devotees are not desirous of any material enjoyment, nor are they averse to it. They completely dovetail their desires with the desires of the Lord and perform nothing on their personal account.” – *SB* 3.9.12, purport by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Just as Lord Brahmā is thus advised by Lord Kṛṣṇa to engage in material creation in order to fulfill the Lord’s desire, the most auspicious path is to try to dovetail any activity with the Lord’s desire. By doing so, instead of being further attached to material activities, we become detached from them, and by trying to dovetail to the Lord’s desire, we gradually discover the Lord’s essential internal desires, namely that He wants to have transcendental loving relationships with His dear devotees, and how this applies in our own life. As our material coverings are removed, our transcendental spiritual self is uncovered, which is by nature in complete unity in will with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which is the goal of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*.

Chart 1: the three main human affinities; *bhukti*, *mukti* and *bhakti*, and their corresponding realities



The next three paragraphs explain all terms in above chart, so please keep an eye on it. The most common affinity for *bhukti*, selfish material enjoyment, results in a perception of reality that is very illusory and limited to the material realm. The material realm is described in the Vedic literature as *saṁsāra-dāva-analaḥ*, the forest fire of repeated birth, illusion, suffering and death. Due to the illusory power of *māyā*, people striving for *bhukti* are not aware of their actual situation. They don't know that the forms in the material world, including their own material bodies, are merely perverted reflections of the real forms in the transcendental realm, and thus they develop the habit to take them for real and to take shelter in them, although such shelter is false, leading only from death to death. By dint of this filter¹⁶³ of false habit, things seem to appear as real, because they are double-perverted, as shown in the illustration: The first perversion is between the spritual and the material world, and the second perversion is the mental filter. Thus *māyā* is actually in our mind, and if the root of *māyā*, the tendency for *bhukti*, selfish enjoyment, is uprooted, then the veil of *māyā* is lifted, and we see things as they are, namely the material forms as perversions and the spritual forms as real. It is for this reason, that Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* 15.1-4 that one must cut down the strongly rooted perverted tree with the weapon of detachment and surrender to *ādyam puruṣam*, the original Supreme Personality of Godhead, from whom everything is extended.



¹⁶³ This filter can be compared to the filter in the human brain that again turns around the picture that arrives upside-down from the eyes. The lenses of the eyes, just like the lenses of a camera, turn the picture upside down. We actually see everything upside-down, and thus develop a mental filter. Experiments with people wearing reversing glasses over a long time have shown, that that filter was overcome, and taking off the glasses, they saw everything upside-down.

After being frustrated in his attempt to enjoy *jaḍa-guṇa*, material attributes, the living entity usually strives for liberation from material sufferings, namely *nirvāna*, *mukti*, *mokṣa*, etc. *nirvāna* literally means without (*nir*) forest (*vāṇa*), referring to the extinction of the forest fire of *saṁsāra*, material existence¹⁶⁴. For one of the above mentioned reasons, the liberationists cannot accept the superiority of God as a transcendental person. Being disgusted with *virūpa*, the perverted forms of existence, they flee to a virtual place that is *arūpa*, formless. Such a mental construct gives the monist, Buddhist, non-dualistic scientist or any other aspirant of non-dualism a feeling of peace due to lack of negativity. Yet because there is nothing positive, the formless can neither give shelter nor pleasure to the ever-pleasure-seeking soul, and thus after some time, the soul abandons the non-dual virtuality and again enters the forest fire of material existence, where there is at least some sense of positive variegation, person, form and pleasure. This never-ending up and down trip is illustrated with the red circle. The creeper reflects the soul seeking to embrace pure love. Material love is impure like poisoned food; thence the blackish leaves of the creeper. In formlessness, there is no love and shelter at all, and thus the creeper dries out and returns to the material platform.

However, if by dint of accumulation of piety, we come in contact with devotees, we can hear about the superiority of the transcendental person, form, abode and qualities of God, and furthermore, we can attain the priceless treasure of affinity for *bhakti*, loving devotional service to God, by which only the complete reality is revealed, including transcendence. We need not await the time after death to realize God's transcendental name, form, attributes and pastimes – we can and should realize them as much as possible in this very life, and this is most efficiently achieved by *sankīrtana*, complete chanting of the Lord's holy names, especially the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-mantra, *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare* (see Chapter 15). The abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa is Goloka Vṛndāvana situated in transcendence, the beautiful *vana* or forest of Vṛndā¹⁶⁵, the non-perverted origin of all in existence, where everything is accommodated in its pure form. All forms in Vṛndāvana including our own *svarūpa*, real form, are *sac-cid-ānanda*, ever-fresh, all-wise and entirely blissful. The holy name of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa descends from that transcendental realm; it is therefore in itself itself transcendental and can provide real shelter to the creeper of the soul. If chanted properly, the holy name takes the creeper across the impersonal non-dual platform of liberation to the place of real liberation, eternal service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. There, the soul creeper blossoms in its *svarūpa* and attains real and everlasting shelter at the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

¹⁶⁴ I have used the term *nirvāṇa* instead of 'Brahman' for two reasons: It allows a nice illustration of two forests and their virtual annihilation, and it is more explicitly negative compared to 'Brahman', which the devotees, unlike the monists, are able to realize as the impersonal effulgence of Godhead.

¹⁶⁵ The classical Vedic *varṇāśrama-dharma* society (see Glossary) is designed in such a way, that it serves *bhakti*, and that those householders who are inclined to *bhakti* are enabled to take to the order of *vānaprastha* in the second half of their life. *vānaprastha* means to gradually retire from family life and spend most of one's time with devotional activities. *vānaprastha* literally means 'one who has gone (*prastha*) to the forest (*vana*)'. During Vedic times the *vānaprasthas* would retire to the forest where they can worship the Supreme Lord without disturbance. Nowadays the *vānaprasthas* usually stay in monasteries or temples, together with the *sannyāsis* and *brahmacāris*. The actual confidential meaning of *vānaprastha* is to enter the *vana* of Vṛndāvana on earth, either fully or mentally, and to prepare for returning to Goloka Vṛndāvana (see Glossary). This should be the aspiration of every intelligent follower of Vedic culture.

14.18. Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana is the Ultimate Philosophical Principle

We have reached the end of the presented verses of the *Brahma-saṁhitā* in the biography of Śrī Caitanya. In the concluding purport of the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa says to Brahmā:

“By discarding all these speculations [such as monism],
you and your bona fide community should adopt the ultimate
principle identical with the doctrine of *acintya-bhedābheda*.
This will make you eligible for being a true devotee.

“The basic principle is that this animate world is made up of *jīvas* and the inanimate world is constituted of matter. Of these all the *jīvas* have been manifested by My supreme (*parā*) potency and this phenomenal world has been manifested by My secondary (*aparā*) potency. I am the cause of all causes. In other words, I regulate all of them by the power of My will although I am not a different entity from the marginal and material (*taṭasthā* and *acit*) potencies. By the transformation of those distinct potencies *pradhāna* (substantive material principle), *prakṛti* (material cause) and *puruṣa* (efficient cause) have been produced. Hence although as regards the subjective nature of all potency I am *pradhāna*, *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, yet as the possessor of power I am eternally distinct from all those potencies. This simultaneous distinction and nondifference has also sprung from My inconceivable power.

“So let the attainment of love for Kṛṣṇa by the practice of pure devotion through the knowledge of their mutual true relationship that subsists between the *jīva*, the *jaḍa* (matter) and Kṛṣṇa based on the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*, inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-difference, be My instruction for being handed down in the order of spiritual preceptual succession in your community, the Śrī Brahma-sampradāya.”

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, in his *Śrīman Mahāprabhu Śikṣā (Lessons Given by Śrīman Mahāprabhu)*, denotes ten basic philosophical truths (*daśa-mūla-tattva*) as taught by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The ninth truth establishes the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* as follows:

*hareḥ śakteḥ sarvaṁ cid-acid akhilaṁ syāt pariṇatīḥ
vivartaṁ no satyaṁ śrutim iti viruddhaṁ kali-malam
harer bhedābhedau śruti-vihita-tattvaṁ suvimalaṁ
tataḥ premnaḥ siddhir bhavati nitarāṁ nitya-viṣaye*

“Everything in creation, both spiritual and material, should be understood to be a transformation of the *śakti*, energy, of Śrī Hari. The impersonal philosophy of illusion (*vivarta*) is not factual; it is an impurity produced by the personified age of quarrel (Kali) and contrary to the Vedic conclusion. The spotless truth established by the *Vedas* is that everything is *bhedābheda*, simultaneously distinct and non-distinct from Śrī Hari. Therefore, perfection of love of God manifests completely when one accepts this principle as eternal and all-encompassing.”

In the ninth chapter, he explains: “The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is the pure essence of Veda supported by the entire Vedic literature. It is the natural self-perfected goal of the *jīva* and fully subscribed to by the self-realized transcendental saintly souls.” (Bhaktivinoda 10, 1892.) In *Śrī Bhaktyāloka*, in the eight chapter, he writes: “Lord Kṛṣṇa and all other things are connected by a relationship of *acintya-bhedābheda*, inconceivably simultaneous oneness and difference. That is why the *Vedas* have many statements supporting oneness and many supporting difference. In the

conclusions of those ignorant of the truth, only a portion of the *Vedas* are accepted. In the conclusions of the knowers of the truth, the purport of all the *Vedas* is accepted. (...) Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Absolute Truth. That Absolute Truth possesses all energies. Although the living entities and the material world are manifested by His energies, still He remains without a second. The ingredients are constitutionally nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa; but in the material creation, everything other than Kṛṣṇa is a transformation of His energy and therefore eternally separate from Him. This eternal oneness and difference is naturally inconceivable because it is beyond the range of the living entity's material intelligence.

“When the living entity's spiritual intelligence is awakened, pure knowledge of the inconceivable oneness and difference is aroused.” (Vb.)

In the eighteenth chapter of *Jaiva-dharma*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura establishes the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* as most essential with evidence from the *Vedas*:



“The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference, is the true pure essence of the Vedic truth. The practice of this philosophy elevates a person to the perfection of developing divine transcendental love for the Eternal Absolute Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

“(…) The *Vedas* are immensely voluminous. Their exact essence can only be extracted by scrutinizing every single *śloka* [verse] from each of the *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇas*, and so on. Isolated and out-of-context statements cannot present a clear picture, but rather distort the real meaning. Ultimately, therefore, Śrī Caitanya tooth-combed the entire Vedic literature and formulated His most sublime transcendental teachings, presenting the most elevated philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, that the *jīva* and matter are simultaneously one with and distinct from the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari. (...) First of all, here is a collection of *ślokas* from the *Vedas* describing the *abheda*, inherent similarity, between the Supreme Lord and His *śakti*. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.1 states:

sarvaṁ khalv idam brahma

“Everything, both matter and spirit, is non-different from the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is the Supreme Brahman.”

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura writes in his purport to *Caitanya-bhāgavata* 1.14.104: “In his commentary on *Brahma-sūtra* (2.3.10), Śrī Madhvācārya quotes the following verse from the *Bhāgavata-tantra*:

*śakti-śaktimatoś cāpi, na vibhedaḥ kathañcana
avibhinnāpi svecchādi-bhedair api vibhāvyate*

‘There is no actual difference between *śakti*, the energy, and *śaktiman*, the energetic or the Supreme Lord, but sometimes out of His own sweet will they appear different.’

The *Viṣṇu-saṁhitā* says:

śakti-śaktimatoś cāpi na bhedaḥ kaścīd iṣyate

‘There is certainly no difference between the energy and the energetic.’”

The same is expressed in the *Vedānta-sūtra*: *śakti-śaktimatayor abhedaḥ* (quoted in *Jd* 14). In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 3.7.16 it is said:

*kaṭaka-mukuta-karṇikādi-bhedaiḥ
kanakam abhedam apīṣyate yathaikam
sura-paśu-manujādi-kalpanābhir
harir akhilābhir udīryate tathaikaḥ*

“As golden bracelets, crowns, earrings, and other golden ornaments are all one because they are all made of gold, so all demigods, men, and animals are one with Lord because they are all made of Lord Hari’s potencies.”

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura continues: “Next is a compilation of verses from the scriptures delineating the characteristic distinction between Īśvara [the Supreme Lord] and His *śakti*: (...) In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.1.2 it is mentioned:

*satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma
yo veda nihitaṁ guhāyāṁ parame vyoman
so ’śnute sarvān kāmān saha brahmaṇā vipasciteti*

‘The Supreme Absolute Brahman is the embodiment of eternity and spirituality and He is transcendental to the purview of material time, place and senses. One who has realized the truth that the Supreme Brahman is simultaneously situated in the spiritual sky and in the heart of the *jīva*, is sublimely connected with the Supersoul in a loving relationship, which fulfils all the spiritual desires of the *jīva*.’

The *Kathā Upaniṣad* 2.2.13 states:

nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām

‘He, the Supreme Brahman, is the fundamental eternal being amongst all eternal beings.’” (*Jd* 18.)

The following two verses also express the existence of *bheda*:

*bhūtendriyāntaḥ-karaṇāt
pradhānāj jīva-samjñitāt
ātmā tathā pṛthag draṣṭā
bhagavān brahma-samjñitaḥ*

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is known as Parambrahma, is the seer. He is different from the *jīva* soul, or individual living entity, who is combined with the senses, the five elements and consciousness.”
– *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.28.41.

*mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke
jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ*

“The living entities are eternally My fragmental parts.”
– *Bhagavad-gītā* 15.7.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura continues: “Every part of the *Vedas* is totally perfect – no single portion can be discarded as non-essential. The eternal oneness is as much a timeless and eternal principle as the inherent duality. These two eternal principles coexist simultaneously and are unequivocally upheld in the scriptures—even though this principle of simultaneous oneness and difference is materially inconceivable and therefore outside the range of the human mental faculty. Any extended debate about this subject would certainly fall into a bottomless pit, leading to confusion and uncertainty. Whatever is stated in the *Vedas* is the absolute truth. As human intelligence is limited, we should not whimsically reject the conclusions of the *Vedas* [see Chapter 3]. Hence, the Vedic scriptures warn us in the *Kathā Upaniṣad*, 1.2.9:

naiṣa tarkeṇa matir apaneyā,

‘O Naciketa! Now that you have attained the transcendental consciousness of Self-knowledge – do not squander it through dry empirical debates.’

“(…) The *acintya-bhedābheda* principle is perfect and flawless and unconditionally supported in the *Vedas*. As the *jīva* searches for the *prayojana*, the ultimate perfection and prime necessity of human existence, the *acintya-bhedābheda* principle stands firm as the only actual philosophy of the absolute truth in the highest realms of human aspiration.

“When the *jīva* has acknowledged and understood this paramount principle he will doubtlessly realize that dualism [not only non-dualism] presents an eternal aspect in the relationship between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His *śaktis*. Without this realization, the *jīva* cannot attain the *prayojana* of human existence, which is *kṛṣṇa-prema*. (...) The *Vedas* declare in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 3.1.4: *prāṇo hy eṣa sarva-bhūtair vibhāti, vijānan vidvān bhavate nāti-vādī, ātma-kriḍa ātma-ratiḥ kriyāvān, eṣa brahma-vidān variṣṭhaḥ*, ‘He who is the Supreme amongst all living entities and is present in every being is realized as the Supreme Personality of Godhead by the learned sages through the science of loving devotional service. Such sages become liberated in this life and are fully engaged in glorifying the wonderful qualities of the Supreme Lord, knowing all other topics to be inferior. These sages pass their time engrossed in loving devotional exchanges with the Lord and are constantly relishing the amorous pastimes of the Lord. Such sages are the most exalted amongst all Brahman-realized souls.’

“(…) The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.7.1 plainly states that *prema* is the prime human necessity, above all other contingencies:

*yadvaitat raso vai saḥ
rasam hy evāyam labdhvānandī bhāvati
ko hy evānyāt kaḥ prāṇyāt
yad eṣa ākāśa ānando na syāt
eṣa hy evānandayati*

‘Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of all varieties of *rasas*, relishes of transcendental blissful relationships and the reservoir of all pleasure. Having derived ecstasy from Him, the individual souls become blissful. For, who indeed could breathe, who indeed could be alive, if this blissful Lord were not present within the heart of all souls. It is He alone who bestows ecstasy.’

“(…) The only way that the *prayojana*, the ultimate perfection and prime necessity of human existence, can be accomplished is through *bhakti*. The pinnacle of *bhakti* is *prema*, which is eternal. The *jīva* is eternal, Kṛṣṇa is eternal, and the distinction between the *jīva* and Kṛṣṇa is also eternal¹⁶⁶. Therefore, to acknowledge the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* is to accept that *prema* is eternal. Otherwise, the *prayojana* of the *jīva* will be tainted with impermanence, thus destroying its very basis. Therefore, the scriptures firmly support the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*. All other philosophies are either derivatives of or deviants from this truth.” (Bhaktivinoda 1, 1893. Chapter 18.)



¹⁶⁶ *prema*, the eternal exchange of transcendental love between God and the devotees, is only possible if there is eternal duality in terms of individuality.

15. Saṅkīrtana; The Universal Process of Self-Realization

The most efficient and universal process of self-realization, *saṅkīrtana*, the complete and congregational chanting of the Lord's holy names, will be explained in this chapter according to Śrī Caitanya's *acintya-bhedābheda* philosophy. *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* can only be fully understood by attaining *kṛṣṇa-prema*, pure love of God, and *kṛṣṇa-prema* is most efficiently achieved by *saṅkīrtana* under the guidance of pure devotees. This explains the necessity of a proper understanding and practice of *saṅkīrtana* if we want to fully realize *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*.

15.1. The Universality of Kīrtana

Kīrtana, the chanting of the Lord's holy names, is accepted as a very beneficial process of self- and God-realization in practically all spiritual traditions:

nāmaiva parama muktir nāmaiva parama gatih, nāmaiva parama sāntir nāmaiva parama sthitiḥ, nāmaiva parama bhaktir nāmaiva parama matiḥ, nāmaiva parama pritiḥ nāmaiva parama smṛtiḥ, nāmaiva karanam jantor nāmaiva prabhur eva ca, nāmaiva paramārādhyam nāmaiva paramo guruḥ, “Chanting the Lord's holy name is the highest path to liberation, peace and eternal life. It is the pinnacle of devotion, the heart's joyous proclivity and attraction and the best form of remembrance of the Supreme Lord. The holy name has appeared solely for the benefit of the living entities as their Lord and master, their supreme worshipable object and their spiritual guide and mentor.” – From the Vedic literature *Ādi Purāṇa* (*Vb, Prema Vivarta* 20).

“There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him; For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” – Saint Paul in the *Bible*, Romans 10:12-13.

“All glories to *śrī kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*, the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa! As soon as one begins this process of chanting, the mind becomes purified, one is freed from material anxieties and attains spiritual fortune. *śrī kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana* is the life and soul of complete knowledge and increases the ocean of bliss, allowing one to taste nectar at every step. O my Lord, You have expanded Yourself into innumerable names, in which You have invested all Your potencies! There are no hard rules for recalling them.” – Excerpts from the first and second verse of Śrī Caitanya's *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, *Cc* 3.20.17.

“The most beautiful names belong to God, so call on Him by them.” – Koran 7.180.

“Hollowed be Thy name!” – Jesus Christ, *Bible*, Matth. 6.9.

“Praised be the name of the Lord, the Almighty!” – Prophet Muhammad, Koran 87.2.

“From sunrise ‘till sundown – praised be the name of the Lord!” – King David, *Bible*, Psalm 113.3.

“All who sincerely call upon My name will come to Me after death, and I will take them to paradise.” – *Buddhist Sūtras*, Vow of Amida Buddha 18 (*Vb, BTG, #10-10, 1975*).

“Devotional service, beginning with the chanting of the holy name of the Lord, is the ultimate religious principle for the living entity in human society.” – from the Vedic literature *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.3.22.

“In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy the only means of deliverance is chanting the holy name of the Lord. There is no other way.” – from the Vedic literature *Bṛhan-Nāradya Purāṇa* 3.8.126, quoted in *Caitanya-bhāgavata* 1.14.143.



In the above pictures we see prayer beads used for chanting the Lord's holy names in different traditions. From left to right: Vedic prayer beads (*japa-māla*), a *japa-māla* kept in a bead bag, Sikh prayer beads, Buddhist prayer beads, Christian prayer beads (rosary), Islamic prayer beads (Tasbih). Followers of the Vedic tradition use a *japa-māla* with 108 beads, representing the 108 *Upaniṣads* and the 108 most prominent *gopīs* of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The Sikh and Buddhists follow the Vedic tradition, but may have different explanations of the number 108. Many Christians use a rosary with 54 (half of 108) plus 5 extra beads. The Tasbih of the Muslims has 99 beads. The Lord's holy name can also be chanted without keeping count on prayer beads. There are different ways of chanting the Lord's holy name in different traditions, but the chanting of the Lord's holy name or *kīrtana* is common in all religions.

Many people try to find ways to unite different religions and spiritual traditions in harmony. This is a very difficult task, as their doctrines cannot easily be reconciled. There have been various efforts to externally merge all religions into one, for example by building a place of worship that combines a church, mosque, temple, synagogue, etc., but these compromises don't satisfy most people. Trying to merge different existing philosophies into one virtual common philosophy does not fulfill the demands of individual inclinations and tastes, and simply produces another doctrine that needs to be reconciled. Veda teaches that each religion or tradition is in itself justified and necessary to add to a complete plan of transcendence as per the Lord's will (see Chapter 12), and that all people find their way according to their inclinations and desires. As everything comes from the complete Lord, everything in creation such as various religions is part of a complete whole (see invocation of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*), even though it may seem to clash with other elements in some points. In Chapter 9 it has been explained how all philosophies can be harmonized in purpose by understanding their function in the master plan of the Supreme Lord. In this subchapter it shall be explained how they can also find a practical way of unity, namely by *kīrtana*. In every spiritual tradition people aim at a higher purpose and this higher purpose is glorified. Most traditions have accepted that God exists and thus they invoke Him by calling, singing and contemplating His various names. This is *kīrtana*.

Śrī Caitanya taught that under the banner of *kīrtana*, all people can unite practically.



“The religion preached by Mahāprabhu is universal and not exclusive.
 (...) The principle of *kīrtana* invites as the future church of the world all classes
 of men without distinction of caste or clan to the highest cultivation of the Spirit.”

(Bhaktivinoda 3, 1896, p. 40.)

This does not mean that any temple, mosque or church needs to be closed. What needs to be erased is the sectarian spirit in the heart of all people. All should realize that every particular religion is a specific manifestation of the one universal eternal religion of the soul, the *sanātana-dharma*, love of God. All should engage in individual, yet universally harmonized *kīrtana*, i.e. all should glorify the Supreme Lord in a way that suits their inclinations, while realizing that *kīrtana* is in itself the universal church that manifests in variety to suit various tastes and inclinations. When the heart is thus purified from envy towards others by being able to harmonize various manifestations of the one Supreme Spirit, one will be able to appreciate the Lord’s manifestation in which He compassionately gifted the world with the universal religion of *kīrtana*; Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Knowing that He is the Universal Lord who is able to harmonize all, not by uniform and exclusive fascism, but by establishing the manifold nature’s universal essence, they will be glad to proclaim what Mahāprabhu Himself predicted: *pr̥thivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma, sarvatra pracāra hoibe mora nāma*, “In all the towns and villages of the world, My name will be broadcasted.” – *Caitanya-bhāgavata* 3.4.126.

“To utilize the tongue in the glorification of the name, beauty, qualities and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the simplest definition of *kīrtana*, chanting. Some of the different forms of *kīrtana* are discussing topics of Kṛṣṇa-consciousness; chanting *kṛṣṇa-nāma*; reading aloud the scriptures to others; singing devotional songs; speaking to attract the mind of the people to Śrī Kṛṣṇa; speaking with humility to the Lord; *vijñapti*, revealing one’s mind to the Lord; chanting *bhajans* [more specific devotional songs, usually with instrumental accompany] in glorification of the Lord; and offering prayers to the Lord. *kīrtana* has been described as the most important of the nine limbs of *bhakti*. This is especially true in Kali-yuga [the present age]. There are repeated references in the scriptures stating that *kīrtana* brings the greatest benefit to humanity.” – *Jaiva-dharma* 19. If *kīrtana* is done very scientifically according to revealed knowledge and in the association of pure devotees, it becomes *saṅkīrtana*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī defines *saṅkīrtana* in his *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, text 269, as *bahubhir militvā kīrtanam tad eva saṅkīrtanam*, “*saṅkīrtana* means the glorification of the Lord by many people together.” *saṅkīrtana* reveals the *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal nature and function of the soul, the universal religion of the soul, i.e. that the soul is an eternal servant of God, being simultaneously one and different from God as per His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*.

Although the present age of Kali has been predicted by the Vedic literature to be an ocean of faults due to quarrel and hypocrisy, the age of Kali has also been glorified because it carries the

great advantage that simply by the process of *saṅkīrtana*, people can attain transcendence (see *SB* 12.3.51). As such it can be understood that although externally there are presently many clashes between various spiritual traditions, they can all be united by the process of *saṅkīrtana*. Although all religions and spiritual traditions describe certain ways of *kīrtana*, it is only in the *saṅkīrtana*-movement of Lord Caitanya that we find *kīrtana* brought to scientific perfection, to ‘*saṅkīrtana*’, and only in this movement, *saṅkīrtana* is emphatically revealed to be the most beneficial method of transcendence as well as the only method that can unite all religions practically. Actually, in many places the Vedic literature reveals that *saṅkīrtana* is the most beneficial method of transcendence (see above verse collection), but only Śrī Caitanya was able to establish this practically by inaugurating the *saṅkīrtana*-movement. What to speak of scriptural injunctions – even in terms of common sense it can be understood that to sincerely call God by His name is the easiest way to attain Him. The conditioned souls are too limited to attain God by their own efforts, but God is ready to lift any soul up into His fold if he or she but sincerely calls upon Him, just like any mother cannot but lift up her helpless child that sincerely calls out to her. Despite that the method of *saṅkīrtana* is accessible to any seriously inquiring person like an open secret, by the Lord’s arrangement, it has not been practiced and widely propagated as the essential *dharma* or universal method of transcendence before Śrī Caitanya.

Śrī Caitanya is accredited for having established *saṅkīrtana*
to be the universal and most effective process of transcendence.

He said in His own words: *ataeva kali-yuge nāma-yajña sāra, āra kona dharma kaile nāhi haya pāra*, “The essence of all *dharma* [activities and principles to attain the highest truth] in this age of Kali is the sacrifice of chanting the holy names of the Lord. One cannot be delivered by following any other *dharma* in this age.” – *Cb* 1.14.139. Lord Caitanya gave the corresponding scriptural evidence: *harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam, kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*, “In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the age of Kali, the only means of deliverance is chanting the holy name of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.” (*Bṛhan-Nāradya Purāṇa* 3.8.126, quoted in *Cb* 1.14.143.) Śrī Caitanya further concluded (*Cb* 1.14.145-147):



*“Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.*

“This verse is called the *mahā-mantra*. It contains sixteen holy names of the Lord composed of thirty-two syllables. If you continually chant this *mahā-mantra*, the seed of love of God will sprout in your heart. Then you will understand the goal of life and the process for achieving it.”

‘*śreṣṭha upāśya—yugala ‘rādhā-kṛṣṇa’ nāma*’, “The chief worshipable object is the holy name of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.” – Cc 2.8.256. By chanting the holy name of the Supreme Lord, one comes to the stage of love of God (SB 11.2.40), which is the actual natural state of life, or eternal inherent universal religion of the soul, the *sanātana-dharma*. The replete *mahā-mantra*, the ‘greatest *mantra*’, is given in the *Kali-Santarana Upaniṣad* 5-6: *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa, kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma, rāma rāma hare hare, iti ṣoḍaśakam nāmnām, kalikalmaṣa-nāsanām, nātaḥ parataropāyah, sarva-vedeṣu dṛśyate, “Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare*. After searching through all the Vedic literature, one cannot find a method of transcendence more sublime for this age than the chanting of these sixteen names.” Lord Caitanya is the *sanātana-dharma* personified (Cb 1.15.9), and thus He established what real *sanātana-dharma*, eternal universal religion, is: to engage in *bhakti* to the Supreme Lord according to our eternal inherent nature (*sanātana-dharma*) of being the Lord’s servant (Cc 2.20.108). He also gave the best practical means to realize our spiritual nature, the Supreme Lord and our loving relationship to Him, by personally inaugurating the *yuga-dharma*, the essential universal religion of the present age, which He taught to be *saṅkīrtana* (*yuga-dharma pravartāimu nāma-saṅkīrtana*, Cc 1.3.19), especially of the *mahā-mantra*.

Long time before the advent of Śrī Caitanya, the Śrī Caitanya Upaniṣad¹⁶⁷ predicted Lord Kṛṣṇa’s descent in Kali-yuga as His own devotee and preacher Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who would bring transcendental happiness to all by chanting His own holy name (verses 5-9). *Sa eva mūla-mantram japati harir iti kṛṣṇa iti rāma iti*, “The Supreme Lord will chant a *mantra* consisting of the names Hari, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma.” (verse 11.) *Mantra guhyaḥ paramo bhakti-vedyah*, “This *mahā-mantra* is the most confidential and best of all *mantras*. Although it is very difficult to understand this *mahā-mantra*, it can be understood when one engages in *bhakti*.” (verse 13.) *Nāmāny aṣṭāv aṣṭa ca śobhanāni, tāni nityam ye japanti dhīrās te vai māyām atitaranti, nānyaḥ paramam mantram parama-rahasyam nityam āvartayati*, “Those who seriously desire to make progress in spiritual life continually chant these sixteen splendid names of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and in this way they cross beyond the bondage of continued material existence. There is no better *mantra* besides the *mahā-mantra*, and its chanting is the most confidential of all secrets.” (verse 14.)

15.2. Saṅkīrtana is Complete Kīrtana

Love of God, *prema-bhakti*, can most efficiently be attained by *complete* or perfected *kīrtana*, i.e. *saṅkīrtana*. *saṅkīrtana* means congregational *kīrtana* or “complete *kīrtana*”, as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura mentions in his purport of the first verse of the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* (Caitanya, 1486-1534, p. 13). The Sanskrit word *saṅkīrtana* is composed of *sam* and *kīrtana*, *sam* meaning *samyac*, complete, united, in one direction, proper, pleasant (Williams). Complete *kīrtana* in this regard refers to offenseless *kīrtana* being done without any material misconceptions or material motives, but solely for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord, thus revealing His actual transcendental name, form, attributes, associates and pastimes. In the highest sense, complete means with completely matured love of God, i.e. with *bhakti* at the fully ecstatic stage of *prema*. The *Śrī Hari-bhakti-kalpalatikā* 4.2. states: *harer nāmnām guṇānañca gānam kīrtanamucyate, tacca prema rasāmodaiḥ kṛtam saṅkīrtanam smṛtam*, “To sing the transcendental names and qualities of Śrī Hari is called *kīrtana*. When this *kīrtana* is performed while relishing the pleasure of *prema-rasa*, the relish of ecstatic love of God [due to having accomplished the stage of *prema*, not imitatively], it is called *saṅkīrtana*.” (pub. Bhaktivinoda 8, 1895.)

This perfection of *kīrtana* is only achieved in the association of perfected devotees who are engaged in *saṅkīrtana*, perfected *kīrtana*: “This *nāma* [the holy name] should come to you from a transcendental source, and not from any mundane source.” “The chanting of the holy name without

¹⁶⁷ quoted in Śacīnandana, 1999, pp. 226-232.

offence, that is in the company of self-realized souls and by the method followed by them.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, pp. 437&461.) Factual self- and God-realization is a very high and rare state of Kṛṣṇa-consciousness; it is the essential quality of a spiritual master (see Chapter 16). Praying to the Lord for guidance, we should seek out such rare souls carefully and engage in *saṅkīrtana* with them. *saṅkīrtana* is often generally translated as ‘congregational chanting of the Lord’s holy names’, and we must keep in mind that for the above reasons, ‘congregational’ refers especially to the association of self-realized pure devotees. ‘*sādhu-kṛpā*’-‘*nāma*’ *vinā* ‘*prema*’ *nā janmaya*, “Without the mercy of a pure devotee and without the chanting of the holy name of the Lord, pure love of God cannot manifest.” – *Cc* 3.3.266. *anusāṅkīrtanam*, following the pure devotees’ recapitulation of the glorification of the Lord’s transcendental names, forms, qualities, associates and pastimes, is the most effective means of self-realization and devotion (see *SB* 8.23.16, *SB* 10.14.3, *Cc* 3.4.70-71). *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 3.1.101 states:

kṛṣṇa-nāmera mahimā sāstra-sādhu-mukhe jāni
nāmera mādhuri aiche kāhān nāhi śuni

“One has to learn about the beauty and transcendental position
of the holy name of the Lord by hearing the revealed scriptures from the mouths
of pure devotees. Nowhere else can we hear of the sweetness of the Lord’s holy name.”

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* explains why the transcendental sound coming from the mouths of pure devotees is so effective: *sa uttamaśloka mahan-mukha-cyuto, bhavat-padāmbhoja-sudhā kaṇānilaḥ, smṛtiṁ punar viśmṛta-tattva-vartmanām, kuyoginām no vitaraty alaṁ varaiḥ*, “My dear Lord, You are glorified by selected verses uttered by great devotees. The transcendental vibration from their mouths carries the aroma of the saffron dust of Your lotus feet and is like a soothing breeze surcharged with ambrosia, by which the living entity gradually remembers the entire forgotten transcendental truth (his spiritual self, God, and their eternal relationship). My dear Lord, I therefore do not need any other benediction but the opportunity to hear the ambrosial vibration from the mouth of Your pure devotee, that restores the unqualified living entities to their original nature.” – *SB* 4.20.25. Purport by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda: “A pure devotee always engages in the service of the Lord, taking shelter of His lotus feet, and therefore he has a direct connection with the saffron mercy-particles that are strewn over the lotus feet of the Lord. Although when a pure devotee speaks, the articulation of his voice may resemble the sound of this material sky, the voice is spiritually very powerful because it touches the particles of saffron dust on the lotus feet of the Lord. As soon as a sleeping living entity hears the powerful voice emanating from the mouth of a pure devotee, he immediately remembers his eternal relationship with the Lord, although up until that moment he had forgotten everything.”

“Even if one calls out the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya with seeming affection, if that relationship [with Him] is not established in his heart, he simply remains in the material realm.” (Bhaktivinoda 5, 1890, p. 79.) It is therefore essential to chant the holy name with knowledge of one’s *sambandha*, transcendental relationship to the Supreme Lord, which is only revealed by His pure devotee. The pure devotee has fully realized the Supreme Lord and his *sambandha* with Him, both of which manifest in his heart. Therefore, when the pure devotee chants, his chanting is surcharged with ambrosia that can reveal the *sambandha* of the listener. “If by some great fortune one receives the association of a devotee, that relationship, or *sambandha*, with Śrī Caitanya will be established.” (Bhaktivinoda 5, 1890, p. 79.) As the above verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* explains, this *sambandha* is remembered by hearing transcendental sound from the mouth of pure devotees. Mahārāja Pṛthu therefore prays to the Lord (*SB* 4.20.25):

“My dear Lord, I therefore do not need any other benediction
but the opportunity to hear from the mouth of Your pure devotee.”

Consequently, we should engage in *saṅkīrtana* with pure devotees; if this is not possible, then we should engage in *saṅkīrtana* with very sincere devotees, but certainly not with materialists or pseudo devotees. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda explains: “Unless one is personally a realized soul in the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, a neophyte should not approach him to hear about the Lord, for this is strictly forbidden by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, who quotes from the *Padma Purāṇa* (...).” (*SB* 10.1.4., purport.) Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, the devoted direct associate of Śrī Caitanya, quotes the *Padma Purāṇa* in his *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*:

*avaiṣṇava-mukhodgīrṇam
pūtam hari-kathāmṛtam
śravaṇam naiva kartavyam
sarpochhiṣtam yathā payah*

“One should not hear anything about Kṛṣṇa from a non-Vaiṣṇava, one who is not a pure devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Milk touched by the lips of a serpent has poisonous effects; similarly, talks about Kṛṣṇa given by a non-Vaiṣṇava are also poisonous.”

According to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, who is also the devoted direct associate of Śrī Caitanya, one of the five most essential limbs of *bhakti* is: *śrīmad-bhāgavatārthānāmā-svādo rasikaiḥ saha*, “One should hear the recitation and the deeper meanings of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the company of *rasikā-bhaktas*, i.e. self-realized devotees who have expertly mastered the science of *rasa*, relishing transcendental loving relations with Śrī Kṛṣṇa.” (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.91. 15th century. Quoted in *Cc* 2.22.131.) Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura explains: “To savour this nectar is impossible in the company of those who do not have any actual taste for it. In fact, one becomes an offender, if one tries to do so. The sincere aspirant must find a pure devotee – one who is imbued with *rasa* and thirsty for hearing Kṛṣṇa’s sublime pastimes – and in his association relish the succulent sweetness of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.” (*Jaiva-dharma* 20.) “A person cannot purely chant the holy name in the company of non-devotees. The sound and the syllables may be uttered, but that is not real chanting.” (*Jaiva-dharma* 25, quoted from Śrīla Jagadānanda Paṇḍita’s *Prema-Vivarta*.)

Explaining the opposite effect of the *saṅkīrtana* of pure devotees and of the pseudo *kīrtana* of pseudo devotees, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura states that “So long as we keep away from joining the *kīrtana* conducted by those who hold perfect *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*, *māyā* will be deluding us in various ways. If we join the *kīrtana* of such people who are not anxious for their own true well-being, who hood-wink [deceive] themselves, then no well-being will be attained by us. There will be no *saṅkīrtana* if we follow such people who have imitatively decorated their bodies with beads and marks of a Vaiṣṇava without receiving instructions from true Vaiṣṇavas, and shout out some names appearing like God’s names only in external sound.” (Bhaktisiddhānta, 1874-1936, p. 182.) Thus for one who is sincere about *bhakti*, it is imperative to shun pseudo *kīrtana* and always desire to join the *saṅkīrtana* of pure devotees. Śrīla Jagadānanda Paṇḍita writes in his *Prema-vivarta* 6.13: *sādhu-saṅge kṛṣṇa-nāma’—ei-mātra cāi, saṁsāra jinite āra kona vastu nāi*, “The only desirable goal is to chant Kṛṣṇa’s holy name in the association of pure and saintly devotees. This is the best and only way to conquer nescience.” (Jagadānanda, 16th century, p. 16.) Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī mentions in the eight verse of his *Upadeśāmṛta*, that the essence of all advice is to gradually engage our tongue and mind by constant immersion in *saṅkīrtana*, remembering the Supreme Lord’s transcendental name, form, attributes and pastimes, following in the footsteps of pure devotees who are deeply attached to serving Lord Kṛṣṇa in the transcendental abode of Vṛndāvana (Rūpa 2, 16th century, p. 42).

Śrī Caitanya Himself exemplified that *saṅkīrtana* – although being a universal method – is not a process that is whimsically done, but should be scientifically executed according to the instructions of perfected devotees, just as a PhD degree cannot be manufactured whimsically but

must be attained by dedicated learning from qualified authorities. To set the example, Śrī Caitanya accepted a Guru and thus followed the Vedic science that tells that we must first, just as in any material faculty, surrender to qualified authorities, namely a pure devotee coming in *paramparā*, bona fide disciplic succession, and accept him as our spiritual master. The necessity of a Guru and the incapability of a conditioned soul to attain the highest stages of love of God without learning from a pure devotee is further explained in the next chapter. Due to his inherent pure love of God being in a coma-like state, a conditioned soul cannot approach Kṛṣṇa directly. When Kṛṣṇa sees that someone is very eager to attain Him, He sends His pure devotee, His representative, a bona fide spiritual master, who can give (i.e. re-awaken) the treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, love of God, as well as *sambandha*, a specific relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, it is said that the fruit of all piety is to get a true Guru, because we get Kṛṣṇa through Guru. By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa we get Guru and by the mercy of Guru we get Kṛṣṇa. More precisely, the goal of *bhakti* is not to get Kṛṣṇa, but to serve Him with love, i.e. to get *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Where there is *kṛṣṇa-prema*, naturally Kṛṣṇa is there.

Guru gives both *kṛṣṇa-prema* and Kṛṣṇa in the form
of His holy name, who is non-different from Him.

The *Padma Purāṇa* states:

*nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇas
caitanya-rasa-igrahaḥ
pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-mukto
'bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ*

“The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is like a transcendental wish-fulfilling gem,
for it is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the reservoir of all relishable transcendental relationships.
Kṛṣṇa’s name is complete, never contaminated by and ever liberated from material qualities.
This is because the name of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa Himself are identical.”

Kṛṣṇa’s name is non-different from Kṛṣṇa and *kṛṣṇa-prema*;
it is like a seed that contains the entire tree in its essential potency.
When chanting Kṛṣṇa’s name, our consciousness is purified from material
coverings and our natural love of God is uncovered, by which Kṛṣṇa is attracted
and thus gradually appears to His devotee with His transcendental form, attributes,
associates and pastimes, just like a gigantic tree unfolds from a little seed.

The holy name is called *cintāmaṇi*, a transcendental wish-fulfilling gem, because it does not only have the power to fulfill fleeting desires of the material world, but it especially reveals and fulfills the forgotten eternal desires of the soul. These are only realized in a particular service relation to God, the actual object of desire. Our actual desires are only fulfilled by serving God’s desires. Therefore, only by teleosympathy, by individually dovetailing to God’s desires, will we find true fulfillment of our own desires and become *cinmaya*, transcendently blissful. This science of teleosympathy is promoted by the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* and most efficiently carried out by *saṅkīrtana*.

Kṛṣṇa’s name and Kṛṣṇa are *acintya-bhedābheda*, inconceivably simultaneously distinct and non-distinct. Kṛṣṇa has a very elevated standard of worship and does not grant His personal presence always, whereas Kṛṣṇa’s name can always be chanted under all circumstances. Therefore, it is said that Kṛṣṇa’s name is even more merciful than Kṛṣṇa. This is an aspect of *bheda*, distinction, while an aspect of *abheda* is for example that Kṛṣṇa is *advaya-jñāna*, the undividable Absolute Truth (*SB* 1.2.11), and as such non-distinct from His name. The fourth instruction of the *Upadeśāvalī*, Twenty-four Essential Instructions, of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is: “The acceptance of Śrī Harināma and direct realization of Bhagavān are one and the same.” (Tirtha

8, 2000, p. 99.) Of course, this refers to pure, i.e. offenseless chanting. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura explains in his *Śrī Harināma Cintāmaṇi*, that the denial of the nature of Kṛṣṇa's name of being non-distinct from Him is *tattva-vyavadhāna*, a disruption in the philosophical conclusions, and a serious offense (see ten offenses listed below, number two), and that with this misconception it is impossible to attain *kṛṣṇa-prema* from chanting (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 17). This makes clear that there is a great necessity to understand the Lord's nature of *acintya-bhedābheda* in relation with His holy name. "The name Kṛṣṇa is identical with the possessor of the name (...). Yet the two are also inconceivably distinct from one another. It is necessary to be able to realise the true nature of this inconceivable simultaneous difference and non-difference." (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 59.)

As the above quoted verse from the *Padma Purāna* mentions, the holy name is *caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ*, "The reservoir of all relishable transcendental relationships, *rasas*." The holy name contains the secret of Lord Kṛṣṇa's intimate desire; to engage in various *rasas* with all living entities. This is the actual reason of creation, and the goal of life, for if and only if we attain the priceless treasure of *rasa*, can we become truly happy (*raso vai saḥ, rasam hy evāyaṁ labdhvānandī bhavati, Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.7.1*). The goal of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is to attain individual union or unity in will with Lord Kṛṣṇa, and His desire is expressed in the holy name. By chanting Śrī Kṛṣṇa's holy name, we can attain individual unity in will with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. "The glories [and holy name] of the Lord as chanted by the Vaiṣṇava (...) are as substantial as the Lord Himself, and thus while glorifying the Lord the devotee becomes one with Him in transcendental interest, although he remains eternally a transcendental servitor. This simultaneously one and different position of the devotee makes him eternally purified, and thus his life becomes a complete success." – *SB 3.6.36*, purport by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

The holy name being the reservoir of all *rasas* as described in above quoted verse from the *Padma Purāna* does not refer to *any* name of God, but only to His primary names, like those addressed in the most powerful *mantra*, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*: *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. Śrī Harināma Cintāmaṇi* (2.38-42) states: "*mukhya-nāma*, the principal names of Lord Kṛṣṇa describe His transcendental pastimes and contain all of the Lord's spiritual excellences. They are, for example: Govinda [the transcendental cowherd], Gopāla, Rāma, Śrī Nandanandana [the transcendental son of Nanda], Rādhānātha [the Lord of Rādhārāṇī], Hari (...), and so on. (...) His *gaṇa-nāma*, secondary names are for example Creator, Supersoul, Brahman, maintainer and annihilator of the world etc¹⁶⁸. (...)

"The chanting of the secondary names of the Lord will succeed in giving one piety and liberation. However, the most perfect result of chanting the Lord's names – *kṛṣṇa-prema*, love of God – is to be attained exclusively by those saintly souls who invoke the principal names of Kṛṣṇa." (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, pp. 15-16.)

This does not mean that chanting secondary names of God cannot evoke affection for God; the term *kṛṣṇa-prema*, love of God, refers explicitly to the highest stages of devotion to God. *kṛṣṇa-prema* also means to love God in one of the four loving relationships; familiar servitude, close friendship, parenthood or consortherhood. This means that we must accept the Lord's principal transcendental name, form, attributes and pastimes in order to be able to serve and love Him truly. A familiar servant needs to know his master's actual name, so he can address Him properly; a close friend needs to know his friend's character, so he can play with Him properly, etc.

If we have actual love for someone, we will want to know the name, form, attributes and pastimes of the beloved person and our relationship with that person. We cannot point to a person at a distance and claim: "Look, there is my best friend!", when we don't even know that person's name. Even employees know the name of their superior, what to speak of friends, parents or lovers

¹⁶⁸ "We also might add names like Allah or God" (Śācinandana, 1999, p. 36).

not knowing the name, form, attributes and pastimes of their object of love. Although this makes perfect sense, many people think that love of God must not be more personal than talking to an unknown person, almost like talking to a wall. Many think it is sufficient to call God simply ‘God’ or ‘highest spirit’, or ‘love’, or ‘Brahman’, or ‘Lord’, etc. But if we are truly sincere about loving a person will never be satisfied with any impersonal or indistinct relationship; we must at all cost know that person’s name, form, attributes and pastimes. The same thing can be said about a sincere devotee in relation to God.

Someone who is sincere about loving God
must at all costs strive to know His transcendental
name, form, attributes, associates and pastimes.

The impersonal concept of God has been established as minor to the Supreme Personality of Godhead throughout this book. As long as we are not sincerely interested in serving God, the impersonal concept of God remains more attractive. So long, the unspoken ‘problem’ with the Lord having certain transcendental names, forms, attributes and pastimes is, that by acknowledging them, we are obliged to chant these names, worship that form, glorify these qualities, serve these associates and enter these pastimes – while we prefer to hear our own or related names, serve our own body or related bodies, glorify our own or related qualities, and engage in our own or related pastimes. God is preferred to remain the unknown assistant in our own pastimes, the invisible order-supplier, who is satisfied with a prayer now and then. This can be compared to the attitude of the modern western youngster who lives separate from the parents. They are not to visit him in his private flat too often, only sometimes to give him money and receive some friendly words in exchange. The Vedic family in which the parents are lovingly and personally served at home is out of trend – the new fashion is the western ‘freedom’ of individual sense gratification and impersonal old people’s homes.

It is of course better to chant the secondary names of God than to not chant at all, and thus the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava devotees have always honored and encouraged people of all religions in the chanting of all names of God. The universality of chanting the Lord’s names has been explained in Chapter 15.1. However, if we want to progress to the higher stages of devotion, we are advised to take to the primary names of the Lord. If we approach the king of Purī, we will first address him as ‘Your Majesty’, and then, as we become friends, we will get to know his personally preferred private names and we will then address him by these private names. But if we don’t know that the king of Purī also has a private identity and life, we will not be able to develop interest in, what to speak of developing love for the essential person who plays the role of the king of Purī. We will continue to address the king of Purī as ‘Your Majesty’, and we will not be able to enter his personal circles. But if we know a personal friend of the king of Purī, by his mercy, we can get to know the actual person who plays the role of the king of Purī. Similarly, if we chant only the secondary names of God, addressing Him as Creator, universal Father, Supersoul, all-pervading loving Energy, etc, we cannot get to know God’s real essential primary Personality beyond His secondary roles, and thus we cannot really love Him fully; we need to be introduced to His primary name, form, attributes, associates and pastimes by an intimate devotee who already knows Him.

As we progress in devotion, we become very much attached to chanting a particular name of God (*sva-priya-nāma-kīrtiyā jātānurāgo*, SB 11.2.40). If we develop taste for the Lord’s primary names, form, attributes and pastimes, this is a sign of our coming closer to Him. The superiority of the Lord’s primary names can for example be understood from the fact that the devotees who chant Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s primary names purely show the greatest practical enthusiasm and taste in chanting. They chant for hours and hours daily and never get tired of chanting – their taste for chanting even increases with chanting. The same intensity of enthusiasm, dedication and taste for chanting is not observed amongst people who chant “God, God, God” or other secondary names of God. Nevertheless, the name ‘God’ is also spiritual, and its chanting is spiritually beneficial, unlike the

chanting of material names, such as ‘screwdriver’. If we make an experiment, we can practically experience a gradual ascension of taste when chanting for each five minutes (A) “screwdriver, screwdriver, screwdriver”, (B) “God, God, God” and (C) “*Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.*”

It is essential to understand that the holy name, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, is composed only of primary names of Godhead, not of secondary names. These primary names have the potency to awaken transcendental love of God. But, as mentioned earlier, the transcendental holy name is not material sound and must be heard and received from and chanted under the guidance of a person who is himself non-material, i.e. a transcendently situated pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. If the holy name is chanted impurely, this is called *nāmābhāsa*, a dim reflection of the holy name, or *nāmāparādha*, offensive chanting.

Whenever we hear the astounding glories of the holy name,
we must remember carefully that this refers to the undistorted pure holy name,
śuddha-nāma, who appears as such only from the heart of a pure devotee.

The following short episode of the life of king Akbar (1556–1605), the Mogul emperor of Dehli, nicely illustrates this point. It is summarized from a sermon of my spiritual master Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja given on the ninth of August 2002 on his tour in the USA.

“King Akbar was a pious king. Although he was a Mogul emperor, he used to respect both Hindu *sādhus* and Muslim Fakirs. He wanted to serve all *sādhus*, saintly persons. In his court and kingdom, Hindus and Muslims lived together harmoniously¹⁶⁹. During his time, there was a great singer, Khan Sen, who would literally make even the clouds cry. Often when he sang, clouds formed and it started raining. One day Khan Sen asked king Akbar: ‘I have not seen my Gurudeva for a long time – I would like to take leave to meet him.’ Akbar inquired about his Gurudeva, and when Khan Sen replied that his Gurudeva was Haridāsa Gosvāmī from Nidhuvana in Vṛndāvana, a God- and self-realized soul, Akbar desired to follow him. Since Haridāsa Gosvāmī would refuse to meet any person engaged in mundane matters, king Akbar took off his royal dress, wore simple Vedic clothings and followed Khan Sen on foot, all the way to Vṛndāvana. King Akbar was such a devotee.

“When the two arrived, Haridāsa Gosvāmī was absorbed in performing *kīrtana* with ecstatic feeling, weeping in transcendental bliss before the deity of Bānke-bihārī Kṛṣṇa. Khan Sen and king Akbar did not have the courage to disturb him. They simply sat at a distance and listened, and both also started to cry, moved by transcendental emotions. They were unable to speak and didn’t know how time passed by. At night, Haridāsa Gosvāmī went into a cave, and the two returned to Hastināpura, Dehli. Akbar told Khan Sen: ‘I have met many *sādhus*, but I have never seen such a *sādhu*, and I have never heard this sort of *kīrtana* with ecstatic feelings of love of God before – it is still ringing in my ears! Now I have attained at least some knowledge that there is some sublime transcendental realm, and thus I think my life successful.’ Upon returning to court, he told his people of his experience, and all wanted to hear the *kīrtana* of Haridāsa Gosvāmī. Akbar asked Khan Sen to sing the *kīrtana* of his Gurudeva, and he sang it very sweetly. All court members were very pleased, but Akbar was annoyed. He told Khan Sen: ‘Your singing is sweet to hear, but I am not getting that transcendental happiness I experienced when your Gurudeva was singing the same *kīrtana*. What is the difference?’ Khan Sen replied: ‘The difference is that my Gurudeva was doing *kīrtana* for the satisfaction of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and I am doing it for the court members. My Gurudeva didn’t require any listeners besides the Lord. He knew that Lord Kṛṣṇa is hearing, and if He is pleased, all will be pleased.

¹⁶⁹ Unlike his tyrannic grandson Aurangzeb who destroyed many Vedic temples and built mosques over them, king Akbar even donated for Vedic temples, such as the Govindaji temple in Vṛndāvana that was built in 1590 by his general Man Singh, who was in favor of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, the disciple of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

“If you do *kīrtana* with the mundane ego of trying to satisfy the conditioned souls, the target and thoughts are different – you will not get the same transcendental bliss.”

Real *kīrtana*, pure chanting of the holy name, only descends from the heart of a pure devotee. None can imitate that *kīrtana*, not even the greatest singer. All mundane expertise fails in this attempt. Khan Sen was a great singer and his songs pleased even the demigods who would produce rain. But because he was not exclusively devoted to God, his *kīrtana* was not true *kīrtana*, and could not arouse love of God in others as did the *kīrtana* of his Gurudeva, a pure devotee.

Another story that Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja recounted in this regard is how one Sannyāsi, Bhakti Prasād Āśrama Mahārāja, joined the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava movement in his boyhood. He was eleven years of age, when Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda by chance met him on his way. Śrīla Prabhupāda was travelling in Sarbhog, Assam, on the rear end of a bullock cart, when the local boy was attracted by his effulgent appearance and ran up to him. Both were unknown to each other. Śrīla Prabhupāda only spoke a few friendly words in general, such as inquiring about the boy’s home and schooling – nothing of spiritual content, it seemed. Upon returning home, the boy told his parents, who were respected *brāhmaṇas*, that he had met a saint, and that he will renounce his home to follow him and devote his life to his teachings. His parents told him that they are *brāhmaṇas* and can give all spiritual teachings, and that he will one day become the family Guru. They tried their best to hold the boy back, but after some time he escaped and tried to find Śrīla Prabhupāda, who had passed away by that time. When he met Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja, the disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, he recognized the same saintly characteristics in him and accepted him as his spiritual master. He accepted formal initiation and was later granted Sannyāsa, the renounced order of life, receiving the name Bhakti Prasād Āśrama Mahārāja.

The remarkable teaching of this story is, that although the boy hailed from an educated and religious family, in which he was taught the teachings of Veda, it was only after listening to the words of a true saint, that the urge to fully dedicate himself to God was aroused. On the external level, Śrīla Prabhupāda did not even say anything of spiritual content. But because he was always spiritually connected, anything he said was saturated with transcendental vibration, and alone the transcendental vibration radiating from him was enough to transform the boy’s heart. This shows, that true spiritual upliftment is not achieved by knowing all teachings and *mantras* of Veda, but by being touched by the transcendental sound vibration coming from the lips of a pure devotee. The holy name is like a seed that contains the entire transcendental reality, but this seed can only sprout if it is planted into the heart by a pure devotee. It is therefore essential to hear and receive the holy name from a pure devotee.



During the spiritual initiation, one receives the holy name of the Lord, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, from the spiritual master. Usually one also receives a *japa-mālā*, a rosary with 108 beads for counting a minimum number of names to be chanted daily. Śrī Caitanya also accepted a spiritual master who was a pure devotee and who came in a bona fide *paramparā*. Śrī Caitanya only started to preach *saṅkīrtana* after He had received the holy name from His Guru. It is important to receive the holy name from a bona fide disciplic succession and from a pure devotee, because this is most conducive to bring us to the desired stage of love of God. Therefore, to give the perfect example, Lord Caitanya Himself played the pastime of accepting a Guru. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda mentioned in his purport to *SB* 10.2.18:

“Unless one is initiated by the right person,
who always carries within his heart the Supreme Personality of Godhead,
one cannot acquire the power to carry the Supreme Godhead
within the core of one’s own heart.”

If we want to get a good internet connection, we must make sure that (A) the connection is bona fide, i.e. that it actually connects us to the real internet and (B) that the provider is fully capable of transmitting unadulterated data. Similarly, if we want to establish a lasting connection and relationship with the Supreme Lord, we should make sure that (A) the connection, the *paramparā*, the disciplic succession, is bona fide, i.e. that it actually goes back to the Supreme Lord and (B) that the initiating spiritual master is a pure devotee, i.e. that he is able to be a lucid medium for the holy name by himself being devoid of material motives. These conditions are mentioned in the *Padma Purāṇa: sampradāya-vihīnā ye, mantrās te niṣphalā mataḥ*,

“Unless you are initiated by a bona fide spiritual master
in the disciplic succession, the *mantra* that you might
have received will not bring the desired result.”

When Lord Kṛṣṇa displayed His pastimes on earth, He also accepted a Guru to set the example, although He is the Supreme Lord. Lord Kṛṣṇa also said that the science of God-realization was first taught by Him and then passed down by the scientific system of *paramparā* (*Bg* 4.1-2). As such the system of disciplic succession is not a human speculation, but established by the Lord Himself.

The only reason why some people are unsuccessful in chanting the holy name is that they don’t properly follow the science of *saṅkīrtana* as given by the Vedic literature and the bona fide disciplic succession. If we put ice near to fire, the ice must melt. Similarly, if we chant the real holy name, our heart must melt; our material misconceptions must be dissolved and our eternal spiritual identity in a loving relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa must be revealed, else we can understand that we are chanting offensively. There are offenses to be considered while chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*; if our heart does not change and tears do not flow from our eyes as we chant the holy name, we can understand that this is due to our offenses at the lotus feet of the Lord’s holy name (*Cc* 1.8.24-25). *niraparādhe nāma laile pāya prema-dhana*,

“If one chants the holy name, avoiding the ten kinds of offenses,
one very easily obtains the most valuable love of God.” – *Cc* 3.4.71.

We must carefully avoid the ten *nāmāparādhas*, offenses against the holy name¹⁷⁰:

1. *satām nindā nāmnaḥ paramam aparādham vitanute, yataḥ khyātim yātām katham u sahate tad-vigarhām*, to blaspheme the pure devotees who are preaching the glories of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is the worst offense (*paramam aparādham*) at the lotus feet of the holy name.
2. *śivasya śrī-viṣṇor ya iha guṇa-nāmādi-sakalām, dhiyā bhinnam paśyetaḥ khalu hari-nāmā-hita-karah*, it is offensive to try to distinguish between the Supreme Lord and His transcendental name, form, attributes and pastimes, thinking them to be material. Similarly, to think that the names of demigods such as Lord Śiva are equal to or independent from the name of Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa is also blasphemous.
3. *guror avajñā*, to consider the initiating or instructing spiritual masters who grant the treasure of the holy name and help in His unfolding to be ordinary human beings and not transcendental, and therefore to disregard or envy their exalted positions, and to disobey their orders.
4. *śruti-śāstra-nindanam*, to blaspheme Vedic literature that reveal the glories of the holy name.
5. *artha-vādaḥ*, to manufacture some interpretation on the holy name or to think that the descriptions of His glories are exaggerations (see *Cc* 1.17.72-74).
6. *hari-nāmni kalpanam*, to consider the glories of the holy name to be imaginary or fictitious.
7. *nāmno balād yasya hi pāpa-buddhir*, to commit sinful activities on the strength of the holy name.
8. *dharma-vrata-tyāga-hutādi-sarva-śubha-kriyā-sāmyam api pramādaḥ*, to consider the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* to be a pious activity (*śubha-karma*, i.e. ritualistic pious activities, vows, penances, sacrifices, etc for mundane benefits). It is also offensive to be inattentive (*pramādaḥ*) while chanting.
9. *āsraddadhāne vimukhe 'py aśṛṇvati yaś copadesaḥ śiva-nāmāparādhaḥ*, to instruct the faithless about the glories of the holy name.
10. *śrutvāpi nāma-māhātmyam yaḥ prīti-rahito 'dhāmaḥ, aham-mamādi-paramo nāmni so 'py aparādha-kṛt*, to have heard the glories of the transcendental holy name but nevertheless retaining a materialistic concept of life, thinking 'I am this body and everything belonging to this body is mine' and not developing love for the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.

“The chanting of the holy name without offence, that is in the company of self-realized souls and by the method followed by them.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 461.) One naturally and easily becomes a vegetarian in the company of happy vegetarians, but it is very difficult to avoid eating meat in the company of meat eaters. Similarly, attaining the stage of offenseless chanting is almost impossible in the association of non-devotees or offensive chanters, whereas it naturally develops in the association of pure devotees who chant offenselessly. The perfection of *kīrtana* into *sankīrtana*, complete *kīrtana*, through the guidance of pure devotees is mentioned in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.25.25, that states that if *kīrtana* is performed by pure devotees (*satām prasāṅgān*), it is most pleasing to the heart, and that by hearing and chanting of such *kīrtana*, one is liberated gradually from material concepts, attains firm faith, attraction, and *bhakti* for the Supreme Lord. Therefore, “A devotee must seek the association of pure devotees who chant the holy name offenselessly, and should be very alert against committing offenses.” (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 70.)

“Full spiritual benefit is not acquired simply by avoiding the ten *nāmāparādhas*. These ten offenses have their distinctive features; in being warned to avoid them, one is actually being ordered to positively implement the specific saintly qualities that render these *nāmāparādhas* impossible.” (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 90.) The positive implementation is given in the form of the ten commitments for pure chanting as follows:

¹⁷⁰ The here mentioned sequence follows the original verses of the *Padma Purāṇa*, Brahma-khaṇḍa 25.15-18, quoted in Mādhava, pp. 73-80. See also *Cc* 1.8.24 purport, *Śrī Harināma Cintāmaṇi*, Chapter 4, Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 19 and Śacīnandana, 1999, pp. 245-246.

(1) Know the pure devotees to be transcendental, always associate with them, lovingly serve and glorify them. (2) Realize how Lord Kṛṣṇa, His form, attributes, associates and pastimes that manifest from the holy name are completely transcendental and non-different from the holy name, and worship the names of God as supreme. (3) Receive spiritual initiation into chanting from a bona fide spiritual master, know him to be transcendental, follow and serve him with love. (4) Hear the literatures that glorify the holy name with great respect and comprehend their preeminence. (5) Accept explanations of the holy name only from a bona fide spiritual master. (6) Know the glories of the holy name to be factual by realization. (7) Root out and destroy the desire for sinning by ardent practice of *bhakti*. (8) Treasure chanting as the highest transcendental activity, give up all ritualistic pious activities and chant with full attention. (9) Instruct (only) the faithful about the glories of the holy name. (10) Give up all material attachments by developing love for the chanting of the holy name.

Sometimes inattentive chanting is not listed among the ten offenses against the holy name, because it appears at the end of the eight offense, but it should be given full attention. *Śrī Harināma Cintāmaṇi* states: “Inattention in chanting is *nāmāparādha*. One may carefully avoid all other *nāmāparādhas*, yet still not experience the ecstasy of the pure name. This is an indication of another type of *nāmāparādha* known as *pramāda*, which restricts the natural growth of pure devotion. Inattentiveness and negligence are synonymous. Negligent chanting is the root cause of all obstructive habits (*pramāda anavadhāna ei mūla artha, ihā haite ghaṭe prabhu sakala anartha*, verse 12.6). (...) Distraction in chanting produces a type of illusion, causing serious offenses against the holy name that are very difficult to overcome.” (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, pp. 81-83.) The root cause of ignorance and sufferings is aversion to the Supreme Lord. In the present age of Kali, the Supreme Lord is present primarily in His Descent as the holy name (*kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra, Cc 1.17.22*). Thus negligence of the holy name can be understood to be the root of all ignorance, obstructive habits and sufferings. One may express it in an indirect way:

If you don't want to realize that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment
of bliss, your only real and best master, friend, child or lover, then don't
chant the holy name incessantly, attentively and from the core of the heart!

You may practice all other limbs of devotion, but when it comes to chanting the holy name, make sure you chant distractedly and as little as possible! Then your *kīrtana* will never become *saṅkīrtana*, complete *kīrtana*. Constant and dedicated, i.e. complete chanting is very dangerous if we want to remain on the material platform. By actual *saṅkīrtana*, we are transferred from the material to the transcendental platform and become eternal servants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of all relishable loving relationships. One who, by the precious association of pure devotees, has developed sound knowledge and appreciation for chanting, will naturally chant continuously and attentively and will thus be protected from offenses. “Devotees who have taken complete shelter of chanting the pure name are never prone to commit any of the ten *nāmāparādhas*. The holy name itself protects the pure devotees who have surrendered themselves to the pure name.” (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 70.)

Chanting the holy name is the best remedy to cure the disease of averseness to Lord Kṛṣṇa and His holy name. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, the direct disciple of Śrī Caitanya, wrote in his *Upadeśāmṛta* (*Vb*, Nectar of Instruction, verses 7-8):

*syāt kṛṣṇa-nāma-caritādi-sitāpy avidyā-
pītopatapta-rasanasya na rocikā nu
kīntv ādarād anudinam khalu saiva juṣṭā
svādvī kramād bhavati tad-gada-mūla-hantrī*

“The holy name, character, form and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are transcendently sweet like sugar candy. It is wonderful, that although the tongue of one afflicted by the jaundice of *avidyā* (ignorance) cannot appreciate the sweet taste of such transcendental candies, simply by carefully chanting these sweet names throughout every day, a natural relish awakens within his tongue, and his disease is gradually destroyed at the root, just like by eating seemingly bitter sugar candy repeatedly, jaundice is cured, and sugar candy again appears sweet.”

*tan-nāma-rūpa-caritādi-sukīrtanānu-
smṛtyoḥ krameṇa rasanā-manasī niyojya
tiṣṭhan vraje tad-anurāgi janānugāmī
kālam nayed akhilam ity upadeśa-sāram*

“The essence of all instruction is that one should utilize all of one’s time in nicely chanting and remembering the Lord’s transcendental name, form, qualities and pastimes, thus gradually engaging one’s tongue and mind. In this way one should mentally reside in Goloka Vṛndāvana and follow in the footsteps of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s beloved eternal devotees who are steeped in inherent transcendental attachment to serving Him.”

*nāmāparādha-yuktānām, nāmāny eva haranty agham
aviśrānti-prayuktāni, tāny evārtha-karāṇi ca*

“Even if in the beginning one chants the holy name with offenses, one will become free from such offenses by chanting constantly.” – *Padma Purāṇa*, quoted in *SB* 6.3.24, purport.

*tasmāt saṅkīrtanam viṣṇor, jagan-maṅgalam aṁhasām
mahatām api kauravya, viddhy aikāntika-niṣkṛtam*

“My dear King, please try to understand that the chanting of the holy name of the Lord is able to uproot even the reactions of the greatest sins. Therefore, the chanting of the *saṅkīrtana* movement is the most auspicious activity in the entire universe.” – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.3.31.

15.3. Saṅkīrtana is the Essential Process of Pure Devotion

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.23 describes the nine processes of pure devotional service starting with *śravaṇam*, hearing, *kīrtana*, chanting, and *smaraṇam*, remembering. Because the root-cause of ignorance and suffering is forgetfulness of the Supreme Lord, remembrance of the Supreme Lord is the essential devotional activity from which all other devotional processes develop according to one’s individual inclination. Further, without remembrance, i.e. with an absent mind that runs after other things, any activity that externally looks devotional is not really *bhakti*, and as such won’t yield the results of devotional practice. One who has not yet developed complete remembrance of the Lord must thus make sure to attain it. For all these reasons, the *Padma Purāṇa* Uttara-kāṇḍa 42.103 and the *Nārada-pañcarātra* 4.2.23 (quoted from *Jd* 19) advise:

*smartavyaḥ satatam viṣṇur, vismartavyo na jātucit
sarve vidhi-niṣedhāḥ syur, etayor eva kiṅkarāḥ*

“Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa should always be remembered and never forgotten at any time. All the rules and prohibitions mentioned in the scriptures should be the servants of these two principles.”



To attain complete remembrance, the scientific process is to engage in complete *śravaṇam*, hearing, and *kīrtana*, chanting. “Proper *śravaṇa*, hearing, is accomplished through the medium of *kīrtana*, and this will give one the good opportunity to practice *smaraṇa*, remembrance.” (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura, instruction twenty of the *Upadeśāvalī*, twenty-four essential instructions. Tīrtha 8, 2000, p. 102.) Those practitioners who are not under proper guidance sometimes try to artificially attain *smaraṇam* without following this scientific process, and thus they fail to progress to the stage of complete *smaraṇam*. Remembrance of the Supreme Lord by our own effort and imagination of the material mind remains on the material platform and is not actual *smaraṇam*, just as we cannot issue flight tickets ourselves. Just as flight tickets must be issued by a proper source, the complete remembrance of the Lord is only possible if it is granted by the Supreme Lord Himself through descendance in disciplic succession, i.e. through the transparent medium of a self-realized spiritual master.

Complete *smaraṇam* is attained by complete *śravaṇam* and complete *kīrtana*, the first two mentioned of the nine processes of *bhakti*. First we need to hear completely, i.e. from a self-realized spiritual master and with a service attitude. *SB* 10.14.3 states that Lord Kṛṣṇa can be attained through hearing about Śrī Kṛṣṇa from the mouth of pure devotees (*sat-mukharitām*). Only after having heard from a pure source can we chant in the right conception. *kīrtana* is not merely a repetition of words according to our own concepts – rather it is a “recapitulation of instructions as heard from true devotees.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 194.) From complete hearing and chanting, the mind is cleansed from material distortions, and thereafter complete *smaraṇam*, remembrance, arises naturally. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.20.25) explains why the transcendental sound coming from the mouths of pure devotees is so effective: Because it carries with it the transcendental aroma of the merciful saffron-particles of the Supreme Lord’s lotus feet. This transcendental sound-vibration is so powerful, that by hearing it, the forgetful living entity gradually remembers the transcendental truth (his spiritual self, God, and their eternal relationship). Mahārāja Pṛthu therefore prays to the Lord: “My dear Lord, I therefore do not need any other benediction but the opportunity to hear from the mouth of Your pure devotee.” – *SB* 4.20.25.

As the self or soul is actually *cit*, transcendently conscious, in the soul’s natural state, the soul always remembers the complete reality. *smaraṇam* is not something that is to be forcibly practiced or imposed on the self. As it is already included in the original spiritual nature of the self, the self simply needs to be uncovered or cleansed from the various coverings of material misconceptions through proper hearing and chanting, and then *smaraṇam* arises naturally. This can be compared to anamnesis, the procedure to reverse amnesia. The most important technique of anamnesis is to expose the amnesia patient to his previous environments, roles, activities, likings, etc; then by perfect resonance, these stimuli reawaken the entire memory, that was not actually lost, but merely in a coma state. Similarly, all conditioned souls are suffering from amnesia in terms of their original spiritual identity. Their inherent remembrance of the original transcendental reality can be reawakened from the coma state by the anamnesis of inquiring, hearing and chanting about the transcendental realm.

*ghano yadārka-prabhavo vidīryate
cakṣuḥ svarūpaṁ ravim ikṣate tadā
yadā hy ahankāra upādhir ātmano
jijñāsayā naśyati tarhy anusmaret*

“When the cloud originally produced from the sun is torn apart, the eye can see the actual form of the sun. Similarly, when the spirit soul destroys his material covering of false identifications by inquiring into the transcendental science, he regains his original spiritual remembrance.” – *SB* 12.4.33.

*nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema ‘sādhya’ kabhu naya
śravaṇādi-suddha-citte karaye udaya*

“Pure love for God, *kṛṣṇa-prema*, [and thus also *smaraṇam*, since *smaraṇam* is natural in the purified stage of *prema*], is eternally established in the hearts of the living entities. It is not something to be gained from another source. When the heart is purified by hearing and chanting, this love [and thus remembrance] naturally awakens.” – *Cc* 2.22.107.

Śrī Caitanya begins His only personally written eight verses, the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, with *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*, “*saṅkīrtana* cleanses the mirror of the heart.” (Caitanya, 1486-1534), and thus establishes the best process to uncover the self. Once the real self is completely uncovered, *smaraṇam* is naturally present, just as the sun is naturally present when clouds are absent.

dhyāna, applying the mind at length to contemplate particular forms or qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is one of the five types of *smaraṇam*. *dhyāna* was the recommended process to achieve the goal of human life for Satya-yuga, the first of the four ages. But in the present Kali-yuga, the recommended process is only *saṅkīrtana* (*kalau saṅkīrtya keśavam – Padma Purāna Uttara-khaṇḍa* 72.25, quoted in *Cc* 2.20.345). The age of Kali does not permit complete *dhyāna* or *smaraṇam* independent from *saṅkīrtana*, because of the degraded conditions of human consciousness. However, this is not a factual disadvantage, because the process of *saṅkīrtana* is the most effective and universally practicable process of self-realization, and it enables complete *smaraṇam*. By chanting the holy name of the Lord, we come to the stage of love of God (*SB* 11.2.40). The degraded conditions of the age of Kali induce the sincere soul to admit his disqualification to attain the Lord by his own efforts and take exclusive shelter of the Lord’s holy name and His pure devotees who are engaged in chanting the pure name. The pitiable human consciousness in the present age is actually conducive for the necessary mood of surrender, just as a seriously weakened person will willingly submit himself to a doctor instead of trying to attain health independently. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.5.23 lists the nine processes of pure devotional service, and the next verse says *iti pumsārpitā viṣṇau*, that these processes must be executed as an offering to Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa. This means that there must be some preliminary surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa, and then only the nine processes of pure devotion will yield their result and enable complete surrender, *ātma-nivedanam*, the ninth process of pure devotion.

For all the above mentioned reasons, Śrī Caitanya clearly established that *tāra madhye sarva-śreṣṭha nāma-saṅkīrtana, niraparādhe nāma laile pāya prema-dhana*, “Of the nine essential processes of devotional service, the most important is to always chant the holy name of the Lord. If one does so, avoiding the ten kinds of offenses, one very easily obtains the most valuable love of God.” “One can complete the nine processes of devotional service simply by chanting the holy name.” – *Cc* 3.4.71 & 2.15.107. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī states in his *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, verse 273: *yadyapy anyā bhaktiḥ kalau kartavyā, tada tat [kīrtanākhyā-bhakti] samyogenaiva*, “Although other processes of devotional service should be performed in Kali-yuga, they must all be accompanied by *kīrtana*.” Although the age of Kali is an ocean of faults, it has one good quality: Simply by chanting Kṛṣṇa’s holy name, one can attain the transcendental realm (*SB* 12.3.51). *SB* 11.5.32 states that in the age of Kali, intelligent persons perform *saṅkīrtana*.

Another point of consideration that speaks for the practice of chanting the Lord’s holy name is that it most efficiently fosters the essential mood of complete surrender and intense craving to

attain the Lord's causeless mercy. Without this mood, we cannot attain *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains that the Lord is the Supreme Autocrat – He cannot be known by any of our independent efforts. The only way to attain the Lord is by His causeless mercy and revelation out of His own sweet will. “We should show our aptitude for craving His mercy. This is *bhakti* or devotion.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, pp. 412-413.) Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī mentions: *kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvitā matiḥ, kṛiyatām yadi kuto 'pi labhyate, tatra laulyam api mūlyam ekalam, janma-koṭi-sukṛtair na labhyate*, “Absorption in the mellow of pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa cannot be had even by pious activity in hundreds and thousands of lives. It can be attained only by paying one price – that is, intense greed to obtain it. If it is available somewhere, one must purchase it without delay. That is real intelligence.” – *Padyāvalī* 13-14, quoted in *Cc* 2.8.70. To sincerely call the Lord by chanting His name expresses this *laulyam* or greed to obtain His actual mercy – absorption in the mellow of pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa. The twenty-first instruction of the *Upadeśāvalī* (twenty-four essential instructions) of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda is “We should understand that the loud calling out of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's names is *bhakti*.” (Tīrtha 8, 2000, p. 102.)

Chanting expresses submission and acceptance of transcendental dependance. Chanting is not a call for assistance or business in mundane matters or for liberation from material sufferings, but an unconditional offering of oneself in transcendental humble service. Pure chanting indicates mature humility, as humility is the essential prerequisite for constant chanting (see Caitanya, *Śikṣāṣṭaka* 3). The incorrect mood of expecting the Supreme to become obliged by one's independent efforts of labour, knowledge or renunciation is discarded to the greatest extent in chanting compared to other devotional activities. The labour-minded devotee is easily convinced that we can attain God by building many temples, selling many books, etc – but what work can someone take credit for who merely chants all day? The knowledge-minded devotee is easily convinced that we can attain God by knowing everything about Him – but what can someone know of God who merely chants all day? The renunciation-minded devotee is easily convinced that we can attain God by acts of renunciation such as silence vows – but how can someone be renounced who chants all day? After all, the world praises those who do great works, are learned or renounced – but who will praise someone who merely chants all day, similar to a drunkard?

If we become dedicated chanters of the Lord's holy name, we are most efficiently lead to give up the vanity to take credit or pride and praise for our own efforts, by which the practitioners of conditioned devotion try to oblige God¹⁷¹. God is unconditioned – and thus requires an unconditioned approach. Chanting is the best catalyzer of such an unconditioned approach. Chanting also means to express our own incapability to independently attain the Lord and our complete submission to the Lord's will and power. If this mood of submission and desire to serve only *His* ends lack, any devotional performance is not real *bhakti*; therefore it is advised to perform all other limbs of *bhakti* in conjuncture with constant chanting. As such the affinity to chanting is also a type of proof of quality of other devotional practices; if they are done together with enthusiastic chanting, the mood most likely is correct – if they are done without chanting or with mechanical chanting, then the mood is probably conditioned. *saṅkīrtana* is the indication of a devotional mood as well as the corrector, as it is cleansing the heart from all impurities (*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*, Caitanya, *Śikṣāṣṭaka* 1).

¹⁷¹ It should not be misconcluded that building temples, becoming a scholar of *bhakti* or becoming a very renounced devotee means conditioned devotion – these activities can also be done with pure devotion. The point to be made here is that chanting generally as well as essentially has the most power to manifest unconditioned devotion. That does not lessen other devotional activities' potency. In fact, although chanting is most effective, due to the conditioned souls not being essentialists, they mostly cannot engage mainly in chanting, and artificially trying to imitate an essentialist and engage mainly in chanting would be contraproductive at this stage. It is best if everyone is engaged properly and individually according to his material conditioning by guidance of pure devotees, while all activities should be accompanied with chanting. If one is properly engaged according to one's situation, chanting will be attractive and inspiring the devotee in his services, and gradually he will become a true essentialist, not an imitationist.

Śrī Caitanya revealed a beautiful pastime in which the heart-cleansing nature of *saṅkīrtana* is depicted; the Guṇḍicā-mandira-marjana-līlā, the pastime of cleansing the Guṇḍicā temple. As told in Chapter 6.14, the Guṇḍicā temple represents Śrī Vṛndāvana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's preferred place of pastimes and most essential abode. It also stands for the pure devotee's heart or transcendental mind, which is non-different from Vṛndāvana. Śrī Caitanya said (Cc 2.13.137): "Because My transcendental mind is never separated from Vṛndāvana, I consider My mind and Vṛndāvana to be one." This state of union in will as advocated by the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is the cherished state of consciousness for all devotees, as in such a state, the Lord will manifest in the heart. Śrī Caitanya revealed the pastime of cleansing the Guṇḍicā temple to instruct the devotees how to attain this Vṛndāvana-consciousness. Before Lord Jagannātha is pulled from His main temple to the Guṇḍicā temple, the devotees engage in the pastime of cleansing the Guṇḍicā temple, as described in Cc 2.12. Śrī Caitanya took all His associates to the Guṇḍicā temple, and they were given hundred new brooms and hundred new waterpots. They first broomed the entire temple, including the ceiling. They were in great bliss due to expecting Lord Jagannātha to arrive there, and while they cleansed, they constantly chanted Śrī Kṛṣṇa's holy name. Śrī Caitanya felt such great feelings of expectation for the Lord that He shed tears of love of God. With these very tears, He cleansed the temple, all the while chanting *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*. The devotees dusted the entire temple twice, and then they washed the whole temple with water from the waterpots. Śrī Caitanya mopped the rooms with His own garment and polished the throne of the Lord. When the temple was finally cleansed, it was so pure that one had the impression that it was the Lord's very own transcendental mind. Then all devotees gathered and performed beautiful *saṅkīrtana* with joyful dancing. Only after the cleansing pastime, the pastime of pulling the Lord into the Guṇḍicā temple on carts, the Ratha-yātrā, is conducted.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda explained, that by performing this pastime, Lord Caitanya instructed, that one who desires to seat the Lord in his heart should first wash the heart from all dirt and make it pleasant, peaceful and shining with devotion; if any dirt of non-devotional desires remains in the heart, the Lord cannot be seated there¹⁷². The temple of the mind should only house desires in unity with the will of the Lord, as per the tenet of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. The cleansing of the temple of the heart is most efficiently done by *saṅkīrtana*. Chanting means calling the Lord, crying for the Lord in great expectation and separation. Such chanting very quickly cleanses the heart and attracts the Lord, just like the heartily crying of a child at once attracts its mother. *saṅkīrtana* must be practiced very heartily and sincerely; then the holy name and the tears of love of God will cleanse the heart from all impurities. Śrī Caitanya begins His eight essential instructions, the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, with *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*, "*saṅkīrtana* cleanses the mirror of the heart." (Caitanya, 1486-1534.) "Just as a face is reflected in a clear mirror, Lord Śrī Hari personally manifests in the heart of anyone who has become purified by hearing and chanting His names and qualities." (*Śrī Hari-bhakti-kalpa-latikā* 5.60. Ed Bhaktivinoda 8, 1895.) "Although Kali-yuga is an ocean of faults, there is still one good quality about this age: Simply by *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*, one can become free from material impurities and be promoted to the transcendental realm." – *SB* 12.3.51.

The major impurity of the heart is *anyābhilāṣa*, to desire something else than serving the Lord's desires. One of the main attributes of pure *bhakti* is that it is *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*, free from *anyābhilāṣa* (*Brs* 1.1.11). It is explained throughout this book that the aim of Śrī Caitanya's philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is to attain union in will with the Lord. Desiring to serve the Lord's most cherished desires is actual Vṛndāvana-consciousness, and this is best achieved by *saṅkīrtana*. The Lord, His philosophy, nature, etc. are all *acintya*, materially inconceivable; no one can conceive them by independent efforts. By dependance on the Lord who makes Himself easily available in the form of His holy name, by *saṅkīrtana*, the Lord will be revealed by His own

¹⁷² Paraphrased from a lecture given by Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja on July 2nd 2011 in Agartala, India.

transcendental internal potency, the *acintya-śakti* or *hlādinī-śakti*. By chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*, as advised by Lord Caitanya Himself, we invoke both the Supreme Lord (Kṛṣṇa) and His internal mercy potency personified (Hare, Rādhārāṇī). We can attain the Lord only through His own internal potency and Her manifestations in the form of Her pure devotees. We cannot reveal the sun at night with a candle – the sun is revealed by its own rays. We cannot discover the Lord ourselves, but the holy name received from a pure devotee can clear away all ignorance from our heart and then the Lord can fully manifest there, just as the sun at dawn first dispells the darkness of the night, and then rises in its full glory. Therefore: “In the age of Kali, intelligent persons perform *saṅkīrtana*.” (SB 11.5.32.)

15.4. Śrī Caitanya Exemplified Saṅkīrtana

Śrī Caitanya set the best example Himself by constantly engaging in *saṅkīrtana* in the association of other pure devotees. He chanted the holy name on a *māla* (rosary), He only spoke about topics related to Kṛṣṇa, and He led public processions of *saṅkīrtana* through towns and villages, attracting thousands of people to join spontaneously. *Kali-yuge yuga-dharma—nāmera pracāra, tathi lāgi’ pīta-varṇa caitanyāvatāra*, “The religious practice for the Age of Kali is to broadcast the glories of the holy name. Only for this purpose has the Lord, with a yellow complexion, descended as Lord Caitanya.” – Cc 1.3.40. Śrī Caitanya’s only personally written verses are the famous eight verses of His *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, that He imbued with the essence of all Vedic literature. The *Śikṣāṣṭaka* glorifies and describes *saṅkīrtana*, the best conditions for *saṅkīrtana* and the highest mood of pure devotion that can be attained by *saṅkīrtana*. The further interested reader may refer to the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* with commentaries of the Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas (Caitanya, 16th century. Also quoted in Cc 3.20.12-47).



Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

1. “Let there be all victory for *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*, the chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which can cleanse the mirror of the heart and stop the miseries of the blazing fire of material afflictions. That chanting is the waxing moon that spreads the white lotus of good fortune for all living entities. It is the life and soul of all education and realization of the eternal self. The chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa expands the blissful ocean of transcendental life, enables one to taste full nectar at every step and immerses everyone into their original nature of love of God.”

2. “My Lord, You have many names, in which You have invested all Your potencies. There are no hard and fast rules for remembering them. My dear Lord, although You are so merciful that You have made Yourself so easily available, I am so unfortunate that I still have no attraction for chanting Your holy name.”

3. “One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor but is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord.”
4. “O Lord of the universe, I do not desire material wealth, materialistic followers, a beautiful wife or fruitive activities described in flowery language. All I want, life after life, is unmotivated devotional service to You!”
5. “O My Lord, O Kṛṣṇa, son of Mahārāja Nanda, I am Your eternal servant, but because of My own fruitive acts I have fallen into this horrible ocean of nescience. Now please be causelessly merciful to Me. Consider Me a particle of dust at Your lotus feet.”
6. “My dear Lord, when will My eyes be beautified by filling with tears that constantly glide down as I chant Your holy name? When will My voice falter and all the hairs on My body stand erect in transcendental happiness as I chant Your holy name?”
7. “Because of separation from My Lord Govinda, I consider even a moment a great millennium. Tears flow from My eyes like torrents of rain, and I see the entire world as void.”
8. (Speaking in the most exalted mood of devotion of Rādhārāṇī) “Let Kṛṣṇa tightly embrace this maidservant who has fallen at His lotus feet, or let Him trample Me or break My heart by never being visible to Me. He is a debauchee, after all, and can do whatever He likes, but still He alone, and no one else, is the worshipable Lord of My heart.”

In the first verse, the Lord glorifies *saṅkīrtana* for giving seven beneficial attainments. In the second verse, to set the example for the conditioned souls, He laments that He lacks attraction to chanting. The third verse describes the mood that is beneficial for chanting. In the fourth verse, Śrī Caitanya prays for unconditional service. In the fifth verse He takes shelter at the Lord’s lotus feet. In the sixth verse, He prays to chant the holy name with symptoms of ecstasy that manifest from love of God. The seventh verse describes His feelings of separation from the Lord. In the eighth verse, Śrī Caitanya speaks in the mood of Rādhārāṇī about the highest stage of love of God. These eight verses also reflect different stages of devotional service in ascending order. The pure unconditioned devotion of the *gopīs*, even in separation, is the highest stage of love of God.

From this *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, it is evident that Lord Caitanya emphasized the process of *saṅkīrtana* and the contemplation of the most exalted form of love of God of the *gopīs* in His essential instruction. As described earlier in this chapter, He also presented evidence from Vedic literature. He quoted *SB* 11.5.32 (in His instruction to Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī in *Cc* 2.20.342). This verse predicted that in the present age of Kali, intelligent persons will perform *saṅkīrtana* to worship the Supreme Lord’s Avatāra who constantly sings the names of Kṛṣṇa; although His complexion is not blackish, He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. This verse clearly points out Śrī Caitanya, who is always engaged in *kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*, in congregational chanting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s names, who has a golden complexion, and who is the Avatāra of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the sixth chapter, scriptural evidence has been given that Lord Caitanya is the Supreme Lord and the essential Avatāra of the present age, and that He established that the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the supermost scripture (see Chapter 3.7 for Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī’s establishment of evidence in this regard). Both Śrī Caitanya and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* establish that *saṅkīrtana* is the essential and universal process of self- and God-realization. By chanting the holy name of the Supreme Lord, one comes to the stage of love of God (*SB* 11.2.40), which is the actual natural state of life, or the eternal inherent universal religion of the soul, the *sanātana-dharma*. Śrī Caitanya gave the holy name to one and all. He gave love of God through *saṅkīrtana*: “If you continually chant this *mahā-mantra*, the seed of love of God will sprout in your heart. Then you will understand the goal of life and the process for achieving it.” (*Cb* 1.14.145-147.)

Caitanya-caritāmṛta 3.3.264-265 states: *lakṣmī-ādi kari' kṛṣṇa-preme lubdha hañā, nāma-prema āsvādilā manuṣye janmiyā. anyera kā kathā, āpane vrajendra-nandana, avatari' karena prema-rasa āsvādana*, “The goddess of fortune and other great personalities, greedy for love of God, descended in the form of human beings [participating in the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya] to taste *nāma-prema*, love of God attained by chanting His holy name, as well as love for His holy name.

What to speak of others, even Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself
personally descends to taste the nectar of love of God
in the form of the chanting His own names.”

15.5. Saṅkīrtana is the Universal and Foremost Process of Self-Realization

“The concluding verse of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says, *nāma-saṅkīrtanaṁ yasya, sarva-pāpa-praṇāsanam, praṇāmo duḥkha-sāmanas, taṁ namāmi harim param*, ‘Kṛṣṇa’s holy name can relieve us from all undesirable sinfulness, all filthy characteristics, and all miseries. Let us all bow down to Him.’ [...] The last word in the *Bhāgavatam* is *nāma-saṅkīrtana*.” (Śrīdhara 1, p. 153.)

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.5.37 it is stated: *na hy ataḥ paramo lābho, dehinām bhrāmyatām iha, yato vindeta paramām, sāntim naśyati saṁsṛtiḥ*,

“There is no higher possible gain for embodied souls forced to wander
throughout the material world than the Supreme Lord’s *saṅkīrtana* movement,
by which one can attain the supreme peace and free oneself
from the cycle of repeated birth and death.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.3.22 states: *etāvān eva loke 'smin, puṁsām dharmāḥ paraḥ smṛtaḥ, bhakti-yogo bhagavati, ta-nāma-grahaṇādibhiḥ*,

“The highest *dharma*, inherent nature and occupation that sustains the substantial life
of the living entity, is *bhakti*, devotional service to the Supreme Lord.
It begins with the chanting of the holy name of the Lord.”

The eternal inherent nature of the soul is pure *bhakti*, unconditioned devotional service to God. The exact scientific term for the eternal inherent original nature of the soul is *sanātana-dharma*. The conclusion of Veda is that pure *bhakti* is the *sanātana-dharma*, and that this original nature of the soul is most efficiently developed by *saṅkīrtana*. One may ask, that if pure *bhakti* is the inherent nature of the soul, why do we at all have to perform *bhakti-sādhana*, regulative processes, to develop and perfect *bhakti*? The answer is that “*bhakti-sādhana* is the name given to the method of evoking this eternally perfect mood of pure *bhakti* from within the heart.” (Jd 19.) *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.22.107 reads: *nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema 'sādhyā' kabhu naya, śravaṇādi-śuddha-citte karaye udaya*,

“Pure love for Kṛṣṇa is eternally established as the inherent nature of the soul.
It is not something that is to be gained from another source.
When the heart is purified by hearing and chanting,
this love naturally awakens.”

Therefore *bhakti-sādhana*, the processes to develop pure *bhakti*, is never an import of new elements into the heart, but it is the awakening and unfolding of the eternally present pure love of God in the heart, that only has become dormant and covered due to material circumstances. This awakening of the real self is best achieved by *saṅkīrtana*, the pure chanting of the holy name, *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*.

After the basic awakening, i.e. becoming aware of one’s general eternal nature as a servant of the Supreme Lord, there are further, more sublime achievements by the process of *saṅkīrtana*. As explained by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, every souls have their own individual *rasa*, spiritual taste, mood or preference of relationship with the Supreme Lord, and if they continue to serve the Lord in that mood, they attain a spiritual body to serve Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual realm (Cc 2.8.222). The *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, which is widely accepted as the standard scripture of the science of *bhakti*, mentions five main *rasas*: *śānta-rasa*, neutrality towards the Lord, *dāsyā-rasa*, servitude towards the Lord, *sakhya-rasa*, friendship with the Lord, *vātsalya-rasa*, parental affection towards the Lord, and *mādhurya-rasa*, consorhood with the Lord. Whatever *rasa* one is situated in, one will feel that it is the most excellent (Cc 1.4.43). As such each *rasa* is complete and perfect, yet there still is some ascent in completeness from *śānta* up to *mādhurya*. *mādhurya-rasa* includes the aspects of all other *rasas*, *vātsalya-rasa* includes the aspects of all other *rasas* except *mādhurya*, etc (Cc 3.8.85).

According to natural individual inclination, the soul originally is in an eternally relishable loving relationship, *rasa*, with the Lord, but many religions don’t go beyond the neutral relation to God. Only the eternal religion of *sanātana-dharma* in the manner revealed by Śrī Caitanya allows a detailed understanding of the various *rasas* and realization of our own eternal *rasa* with the Lord. The reestablishment in our eternal *rasa* with the Lord is called *svarūpa-siddhi*. The best process for attaining this *svarūpa-siddhi* is *saṅkīrtana*. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 1.3.19, Śrī Caitanya declares: *yuga-dharma pravartāmu nāma-saṅkīrtana, cāri bhāva-bhakti diyā nācāmu bhuvana*,

“I shall personally inaugurate the religion of the age – *nāma-saṅkīrtana*,
the congregational chanting of the holy name. I shall make the world dance
in ecstasy, realizing the four *rasas* of loving devotional service¹⁷³.”

Performing *saṅkīrtana* is the best way to realize our *rasa* with the Lord, because no matter which *rasa* we feel attracted to, the holy name is able to evoke its resonance. Therefore, *saṅkīrtana* is the universal method of self-realization up to the highest stage. Just as Kṛṣṇa is able to perfectly reciprocate with all His devotees and their individual natures, His holy name is able to perfectly reciprocate with all different devotees and manifest their individual *rasas*. This is possible due to His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*, being inconceivably simultaneously one Person while possessing various attributes and manifestations. *svarūpa-siddhi*, the reestablishment in our *rasa*, and the attainment of *prema*, love of God, are the highest achievements of religion or God-realization, and they are most efficiently attained by the scientific process of *saṅkīrtana* given by Śrī Caitanya: “May the Supreme Lord who is known as the son of Śrīmatī Śacī Devī be transcendently situated in the innermost chambers of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has appeared in the age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what no Avatāra has ever offered before: The most sublime and radiant mellow of devotional service, the mellow of conjugal love [*mādhurya-rasa*].” – Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in his *Vidagdha-Mādhava* 1.2, quoted in Cc 1.1.4. As explained in the previous verse, Śrī Caitanya gave the treasure of various *rasas* through *saṅkīrtana*. In the present verse, it is further expressed that no one had ever offered the treasure of *mādhurya-rasa* before.

saṅkīrtana is not only the most universal, but also the foremost
process of self- and God-realization, because it leads us to the highest possible
goal of life, *kṛṣṇa-prema* in the realized stage, manifesting all *rasas*
including *mādhurya-rasa* according to our inclination.

¹⁷³ Śrī Caitanya discarded *śānta-rasa*, because He ascribed it to relations with the impersonal Brahman and the Supersoul, not with the actual object of worship, Śrī Kṛṣṇa (vide *Bhaktisiddhanta*, p. 447). However, some Gosvāmīs also used the term *śānta-rasa* for the *rasa* of the trees, the flute, etc with Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana (Śrī Caitanya used the term *dāsyā-rasa* for them). So according to the use of terminology, one arrives at either four or five main *rasas*.

It has been expressed throughout this book, that the practical target of Śrī Caitanya’s *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* is to attain individual union in will with the Lord, by which all ends will be served universally. The Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the reservoir of all *rasas*, relishable transcendental relationships (*raso vai saḥ*, *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.7.1). He has created innumerable individual living entities to have various *rasas* with them, to engage with them in various pastimes, since He is known as *vihartu-kāmaḥ*, “desiring to enjoy pastimes” (*SB* 10.15.2). We can understand the Lord’s sweet desires by chanting His names:

“As the result of service to Śrī Nāma [the holy name of Kṛṣṇa], man can get rid of all prejudices and be settled in the service of Kṛṣṇa’s desires, *kṛṣṇa-kāma-seva*”
(Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 162.)

By serving Kṛṣṇa’s desires, we attain union in will with the Supreme Lord, the center and heart of the entire creation, and by serving the desires of the heart of creation, all peripheral individuals are universally and best served. Thus it is explained how *saṅkīrtana* is the practical way to achieve the target of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, union with the sweet purpose of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental names are the expression of Their sweet will, i.e. to engage in various pleasing pastimes. Rādhārāṇī is always chanting Kṛṣṇa’s name as an expression of Her desire to serve Him in various ways, and Kṛṣṇa similarly calls Rādhārāṇī’s name, desiring to meet Her.

Also by playing on His flute, Kṛṣṇa is invoking Rādhārāṇī’s holy name to attract Her. Kṛṣṇa’s flute is also calling all the servants of Kṛṣṇa to come and serve Him in various pleasing pastimes. *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.27 states that Kṛṣṇa’s flute-song assumed the form of the sacred Gāyatrī-mantra, entered Brahmā’s ears and thus initiated the creator of the material universes into divine knowledge. Brahmā chanted the Gāyatrī and then realized how to create the universes after the Lord’s desire. By chanting the Lord’s holy name, we can realize His universal, individual and personal desires according to our spiritual matureness and inclination. The Lord universally desires the welfare of all; He has individual desires with each living entity; and He has personal desires that are only known to His intimate devotees. The Lord’s sweet desires as well as the ways of their fulfillment are realized by *saṅkīrtana*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has explained in his *Krama-sandarbha* in a purport of *SB* 7.5.18 how from the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, all transcendental aspects of the Lord unfold gradually, His transcendental form, attributes, associates and pastimes. *Śrī Harināma-Cintāmaṇi* mentions (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 15):

“Of the four characteristic features (name, form, qualities and activities), the Lord’s holy name is the original, because it awards cognition of the other three. Therefore chanting the holy name is the prime religious activity of a Vaiṣṇava.”

First, purification of the mind by chanting of the holy name is required; then in the purified mind, Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental form manifests. From the full awakening of His form, His attributes awaken, and after their full wakening, His associates awaken. After the full awakening of His associates, His pastimes awaken in the pure heart (vide Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 185). “Of all the instructions given in the entire Vedic scriptures, the direction to chant the holy name is the foremost.” (*Jaiva-dharma* 24.)

15.6. The Science of Mantra

“In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself confirms that the best form of *yoga* is *bhakti-yoga*, the spiritual path of uniting the soul with the Supreme Lord through transcendental love. It can be practiced by everyone, without consideration of age or health. (...) One of the foremost practices of *bhakti-yoga* is to purify the mind and consciousness through transcendental sound, by the use of

sacred *mantras*. These *mantras* are sung and meditated upon throughout the day. The most important of these *mantras* is called the *mahā-mantra* or great *mantra*. This *mantra* is revered and used in practice by millions of transcendentalists worldwide: *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*. If you feel inspired, you can start chanting this *mantra*, either aloud or in the mind.” (Tirtha 9, p. 49.)

Chanting the holy name is not a mechanical process of elevation by dint of our own effort and strength; it is an expression of the offering of our entire self in the transcendental service of the Lord. Only the Supreme Lord and His holy name can elevate one to the highest transcendental platform by His independent desire and power. This has been explained earlier, and in this subchapter it shall be explained how the *mantra*, the scientific combination of sacred syllables for the uncovering of spiritual consciousness, works practically in relation to the soul, the subtle body and the gross body. Although it is said that the Lord is *mantra-tattva-liṅgāya*, understood in truth by chanting *mantras* (SB 5.18.35), we should not forget that the holy name of the Lord is supremely independent and does not have to follow any law of nature; He cannot be obliged to function by any procedure or person. It shall be described how the *mantra* generally works in order to explain the scientific effect of the chanting of the holy name – nevertheless we must keep in mind that the *mantra* is not a lifeless machine to be utilized to serve our own enterprise; it is the *mantra* that is to be served; only then will the *mantra* unfold its full potencies. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda wrote: “Lord Caitanya never tried to be the master of the holy name; rather He taught us how to be servants of the holy name.” (Cc 1.7.95–96, purport.) The *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.234, quoted from the *Padma Purāṇa*, spoken by Śrī Caitanya in Cc 2.136) mentions:

*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi
na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau
svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*

“The material senses cannot perceive Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental name, form, attributes, associates and pastimes. Only when a conditioned soul is awakened to Kṛṣṇa-consciousness by being inclined to and engaged in devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, which begins with using his tongue to chant Kṛṣṇa’s holy name and taste the sanctified remnants of Kṛṣṇa’s food, are his spiritual senses uncovered, and then Śrī Kṛṣṇa by Himself manifests in his perception.”

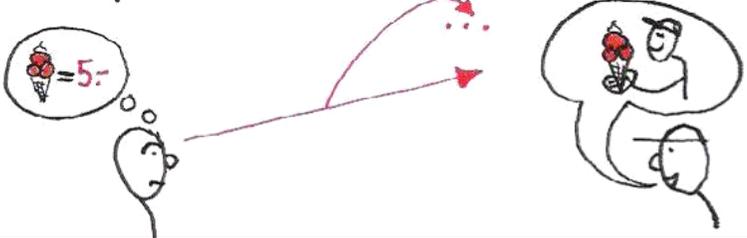
Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.11:

*ye yathā mām prapadyante
tāms tathaiva bhajāmy aham*

“As one devotes oneself to Me, I reward them accordingly.”

Whether the spiritual *mantra* reveals its full potency or not also depends on our mood of approach. What to speak of spirit, this principle even applies to interactions with matter. In quantum physics, scientists have found that the result of the experiments also depends on the subjective approach of the scientist, and that it is impossible to try to artificially enforce a merely objective science that ignores the subject, the self, which is also part of the experiment. In commercial circles, people have found that the subjective personal mood of approach to the customer is far more important than it has been believed so far by the architects of a more and more mechanized and impersonal industry. This is evident for example in the trend to have employees attend communication seminars. An essential lesson in these seminars is the lesson of empathy, which allows a gradual transition into the present topic of the science of *mantra*:

Chart 1: Various types of meditation in comparison to empathetic contemplation

<p>1. Distracted selfish meditation</p> <p>One does not consider the message of the speaker, but thinks about different things.</p> <p>> <u>no message received</u></p>	
<p>2. Motivated interactive meditation</p> <p>One thinks about the message of the speaker only in relation to one's own motivations and profits</p> <p>> <u>only partial message received</u></p>	
<p>3. Associative, analyzing, judging meditation</p> <p>One associates personal thoughts with the message or analyzes and judges the speaker according to one's prejudices</p> <p>> <u>distorted message received</u></p>	
<p>4. Empathetic contemplation</p> <p>One draws back from one's own position and heartily contemplates the speaker's position, feelings, purposes and message.</p> <p>> <u>complete message received.</u></p> <p>This includes the actual purposes of the message for the speaker, the listener and all others.</p>	

In the example given here, the listener (left) had previously asked the speaker (right) what he is doing, and he answered with “I was just going to go for an ice cream.” According to different attitudes of the listener, he will get different meanings:

1. If the listener is actually not interested at all in the speaker's message and simply inquired as a matter of formality, he will not really hear the speaker's message but think about different things, such as his personal plans. This type of listening is analogous to distracted meditation or chanting. Although we chant the Lord's holy name, our mind races after other things due to lack of affinity.

2. If the listener is selfishly motivated, he may think, “Oh, he's going for an ice cream, let me take my chance and get my share in it!” He is not considering the speaker's actual situation and intention; the speaker may want to go with someone else. This type of listening is analogous to motivated meditation, for example motivated chanting, in which we think of how the Lord's holy name fulfills our personal material desires or releases us from material distress.

3. If the listener is in an associative, analyzing or judging mood, he may think “Oh, he will need such and such amount of money to buy an ice cream. It is not wise to waste money on unhealthy sweets.” He is connecting everything with his own world of thoughts, but not considering the

speaker's own intention (the speaker may actually want to have a talk with the listener and he may thus have spontaneously decided to invite him for an ice cream). This is analogous to associative meditation or chanting, in which we associate our own thoughts with the object of meditation. We may for example think about how the holy name acts differently on various chanters, how He is mentioned in a certain scripture, etc. Although the meditated associations may be spiritual topics, the holy name Himself may not want us to think about these things or jump from one topic to another – He may want to reveal a certain other thing, message, pastime, service, etc.

4. Only if the listener approaches the speaker with empathy, is he able to get the actual and full message. The empathetic listener will contemplate the exact words of the speaker and try to understand them from the speaker's own position. He will think "What does he intend while or in saying this? Is he just speaking formally or friendly, would he like me to join him or not?" This is analogous to empathetic contemplation or chanting, in which we draw back from our own position and ways of thinking to empathetically understand the Lord's own position, thinking, willing and feeling, in order to serve Him most favorably. This is the approach of the devotees who have a serving attitude and think of themselves as a humble servant of the Lord's desires, as a *kiṅkara*. *kiṅkara* literally translates to 'what (shall I) do?', i.e. 'How can I serve You? What do You want me to do?'. The mood of a *kiṅkara*, who knows that if God is pleased, all are pleased, is in contrast to the non-devotee who is under the influence of his material false ego, *ahaṅkāra*. *ahaṅkāra* literally translates as 'I am the doer', i.e. 'let me do this or that, think or meditate in this or that way; I like to do this or that, let me do it, then the Lord shall be pleased; etc'. Thus in order to give way for the Supreme Truth to manifest Itself, the empathetic contemplator pulls back from his or her own meditations, opinions, prejudices, etc: *yasyāmatam tasya matam, matam yasya na veda saḥ, avijñātam vijñātam, vijñātam avijñātam*, "Whoever denies having any opinion of his own about the Supreme Truth is correct in his opinion, whereas one who has his own opinion about the Supreme does not know Him. He is unknown to those who claim to know Him, and can only be known by those who do not claim to know Him." – *Kena Upaniṣad* 2.3. Only the humble and dedicated mood of a *kiṅkara* allows the true unfolding of the holy name according to the Lord's own personal thoughts, desires and feelings. This serving mood of aspiring union in will is the target of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*.

Unlike worldly talk, the *mantra* can reveal the complete reality of transcendence. Yet, as mentioned earlier, it also depends on a proper approach. In order to get the actual message of a speaker, we need to draw back from personal designations and a judging mentality within our mind, and we must cultivate the same mental purity for the *mantra* to unfold completely. The mind is the storage place of all material misconceptions and material desires accumulated in countless lives. "The mind is the root of all evils (...). The mind is not a dutiful agent of the soul. It always tries to injure the interests of the soul." (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 238.) Because the mind is very subtle, it not only presents itself as our friend, but also as our very self, while it is in fact the enemy of the self, blinding it with illusion. Due to our befriending and identifying with the mind, it is next to impossible to control it with our own efforts. Fortunately, the *mantra* descends to help us. The Sanskrit word *mantra* is composed of *man* and *tra*, from *manaḥ*, mind¹⁷⁴, and *trāyate*, to deliver. The purpose of a *mantra* is to deliver or uncover the chanter's spiritual self from the material mind, so that he may properly serve and factually perceive the transcendental truth, the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa and His transcendental pastimes are called *manoharāḥ*, very attracting, literally 'stealing one's mind' (*SB* 1.5.26), and Kṛṣṇa is often called Hari, 'He who removes all inauspiciousness and steals the hearts of His devotees'. People who see the enthusiasm of Kṛṣṇa's devotees in chanting the holy name in the streets for many hours often cannot understand how they can be so much attracted to Kṛṣṇa's name, and thus they sometimes say that they are probably brainwashed. In fact, the devotees are more than brainwashed, but in a good sense. The brain is part of the gross body, which is completely alien to the real self. By the power of the holy name, the devotees are cleansed from false identifications with both the gross and the subtle bodies, thus setting the soul free.

¹⁷⁴ The words 'mind' and 'mentality' root in Latin *mens* and Greek *menos*, from Sanskrit *manaḥ*.

It is to be noted carefully that Kṛṣṇa in the form of His holy name removes only the material mind, not the spiritual self with its transcendental mind – it is the spiritual self that actually becomes uncovered by removing the alien material mind, and it is that spiritual self only, not the material mind, that Kṛṣṇa enchants, and thus ‘steals one’s heart’. The mind that the conditioned soul usually misidentifies with is in fact part of the Lord’s material energy (*Bg* 7.4), and covers the true self that is part of the Lord’s spiritual energy (*Bg* 7.5). So in order to be enchanted by Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual self must be uncovered from the material mind and its *mano-dharma* (*Cc* 3.4.176), mental speculations of what is good and bad. Then only can we appreciate, perceive and serve Kṛṣṇa fully, and that in itself is the *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal nature and activity or religion of the self. “When the mind stops functioning on the material platform by regular spiritual practice, one understands the Supreme Soul and desists from material endeavor.” – *SB* 12.7.21. *mantras*, especially if sung in *saṅkīrtana*, free the spiritual self from *manaḥ* and *mano-dharma*, and reveal the *sanātana-dharma*. This is expressed in the first verse of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s *Śikṣāṣṭaka* (*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*, Caitanya, 1486-1534).

Likewise, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: “When a diseased eye is treated with medicinal ointment it gradually recovers its power to see. Similarly, as the living entities cleanse themselves of material contamination *by hearing and chanting My holy name and glories, they regain their ability to see Me*, the Absolute Truth, in My subtle spiritual form. The mind of one meditating upon the objects of sense gratification is certainly entangled in such objects, but if one constantly remembers Me, then the mind becomes absorbed in Me. Therefore, one should reject all *mano-dharma*, material processes of elevation, which are illusory mental creations, and should completely absorb one’s mind in Me. By constantly thinking of Me [through the proper method of unfolding from the holy name], one becomes purified.” – *SB* 11.14.26-28, emphasis added.

“In such a transcendental state [of liberation, i.e. complete surrender to the Supreme Lord] *there is no need of artificial control of the mind, mental speculation or meditation*, as performed by the *jñānīs* and *yogīs*. One gives up such processes, as the heavenly king, Indra, forgoes the trouble to dig a well.” – *SB* 2.7.48, emphasis added. Here, Lord Brahmā explains that artificial mental endeavors are given up by an advanced devotee. This is so, because the devotee is already connected with the pure holy name, from whom there is automatically mind control, and automatically, the *real* transcendental form, attributes, associates and pastimes of the Lord manifest in the heart of the devotee without his need of independent endeavor, just like Indra, who is in charge of all the rainfall, has no need to separately dig a well.

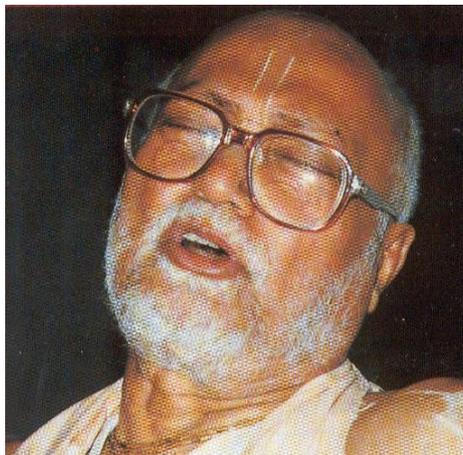


In the English language there is no distinction between material meditation of the mind and spiritual meditation of the spirit soul, because the two are falsely taken to be identical. In order to distinguish the two, I have chosen to use the terms ‘meditation’ and ‘contemplation’ in this subchapter, although this is not a fully satisfying solution. Actually, the activities of the spirit soul can only be understood fully when we have uncovered our soul from all material misconceptions. To meditate means to reflect, study, plan, think deeply, from Latin *meditari*, to think (Webster), and *metiri*, to measure (Kluge). This definition indicates the activities of the material mind that offers the meditator a storehouse of previous material experiences, in which the object of meditation is then reflected and with which it is associated, compared, measured and judged. Actually, Truth

Personified cannot be measured – it is only in material illusion that we think that we can approach truth by measuring. Physical science is busy in measuring the universe in every nook and corner. Matter is a manifestation of the Lord’s illusory potency, *māyā*. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thākura quotes: “*miyate anāya iti māyā* – that which can be measured is called *māyā*.” (Purī, 1998, p. 121.) In other words, matter offers the illusion that it can be measured, and that such measuring will bring knowledge. As long as the living entity is not freed from the material mind, which by nature measures everything against its previous impressions, any effort of meditation will remain material, and thus nothing very special. In fact, the conditioned souls constantly meditate, be they awake or dreaming: Sometimes they meditates about a carrier, sometimes about money, music or food. In contrast to meditation, to contemplate means to behold, observe, witness, consider, embrace, immerse in spiritual truths (from Latin *contemplatus*, pp. of *contemplari*, to gaze attentively, observe). This definition comes closer to transcendental contemplation, in which the filter of the material mind is excluded, and the object of contemplation is thus received undistortedly.

meditating	contemplating
thinking about something with one’s mind	considering something without mental interference
reflecting something in one’s own experiences	beholding something undistortedly
studying something with one’s mental factor	witnessing something without material analyzation
planning how to use the object	contemplating the object’s own ends and intentions
analyzing, interpreting, judging	accepting, embracing, perceiving

In this regard, my most revered spiritual master, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja, mentioned in two video-conferences held on August 13th and May 14th 2005 (summarized): “Our Mahāprabhu said that if you think about Kṛṣṇa by your own mind, if you think that His transcendental name, form, attributes, associates and pastimes are like things that you have experienced in this world, then ultimately you will be a loser. Simply chant Harināma, the holy name received from a *śuddha-bhakta*, a pure devotee.



“First will come Harināma, then your mind will be purified.
Then the real (!) – the *transcendental* form of the Lord will appear.

“Therefore, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda gave emphasis on Harināma without ten-fold offenses. Once the *true* form of the Lord will be manifested in your heart, it will be most attractive; even a mere scent of it will destroy your connection with this world¹⁷⁵! By mental

¹⁷⁵ Liberation from material attachments is the practical proof of the appearance of the real form of God. Material detachment is not the goal of *bhakti*. But a conditioned soul cannot easily distinguish between a mental picture and the transcendental form of the Lord, or between sentimental feelings and transcendental feelings, yet he can easily recognize if he becomes materially detached or not. Therefore, material detachment is accepted as the most reliable indication of one’s feelings and inspirations being transcendental. “Devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be

thinking, you may have some sort of concentration, but that may not be actual. Ācāryas like Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura have encouraged *sādhakas* (practitioners) to also think about *līlās*, pastimes, but Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda gave a warning; if you think that your mental pictures are equal to Vraja-dhāma, the transcendental abode of Kṛṣṇa, then you will be a loser.

“Reality, if it is really eternally existing,
is already there, nobody is to produce it –
you have to find out the way to see the truth!
You are to realize the truth – not to produce it!

“If you want to know Kṛṣṇa with a challenging mood, you will ultimately be frustrated. You have to submit to Him unconditionally, then He will reveal Himself. He will descend to you. By His grace you can understand. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī wrote in his commentary of the biography of Prahlāda Mahārāja mentioned in the seventh canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

“First you will have contact with Kṛṣṇa’s holy name.
This transcendental sound is our first touch, first contact.
Unless you get this first contact from a Sad-Guru,
you have not started anything about spiritual life.

“You have to get this first contact through preceptorial channel (disciple succession); there is no other way. Nobody on earth can give it. It comes from the Supreme Lord through preceptorial channel. The meaning of the *mantra* will be manifested as per degree of your submission. First His Name will come, not His *līlā*, pastime. You have to utter the Name! There is necessity of purifying your heart, your mind. The form is finer than the name. If the mind is not purified, then the real form will not be revealed.”

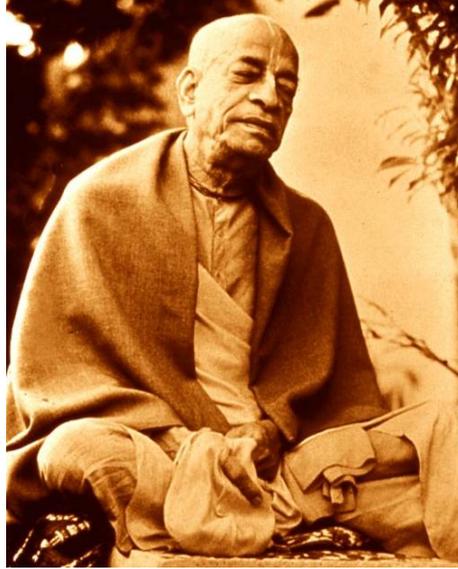
Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja further explains: “It is relevant to go through Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī’s commentary of the verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Prahlāda-caritra, 7th canto, 5th chapter, 18th verse, and the *Krama Sandarbha tikā* (commentary): The finest and purest is the *līlā*, the pastime: *prathamam nāmaṇ śravaṇam antaḥkaraṇa-suddhy-artham apekṣyam. suddhe cāntaḥkaraṇe rūpa-śravaṇena tad-udaya-yogyatā bhavati. samyag-udite ca rūpe guṇānām sphurānām sampadyate. sampanne ca guṇānām sphurane parikara-vaiśiṣṭyena tad-vaiśiṣṭyam sampadyate. tatas teṣu nāma-rūpa-guṇa-parikareṣu samyak sphuriteṣu līlānām sphuraṇam suṣṭu bhavati.* First start hearing the holy name from a bona fide devotee, because for the revelation of the holy name [this includes Lord Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental form, attributes, etc], purification of the heart is essential. After that, the transcendental form, attributes etc will gradually be revealed.

“After doing Harinām properly without offences,
the transcendental form, finer than the name, will be revealed
in the pure heart, after that the transcendental attributes, transcendental
associates and ultimately the finest *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa will be revealed successively.¹⁷⁶”

performed blindly due to material emotion or mental concoction. [...] We can understand about the Absolute Truth by evolving transcendental knowledge, and the result of such transcendental knowledge will be manifested by renunciation. That renunciation is not temporary or artificial, but is very strong. It is said that development of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is exhibited by proportionate material detachment, or *vairāgya*. If one does not separate himself from material enjoyment, it is to be understood that he is not advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Renunciation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so strong that it cannot be deviated by any attractive illusion.” – *SB* 3.27.22, purport by Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda. *vāsudeve bhagavati, bhaktim udvahatām nṛṇām, jñāna-vairāgya-viryānām, na hi kaścid vyapāśrayah*, “Persons engaged in devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa naturally possess the strength of perfect knowledge and detachment from this material world. Therefore, such devotees are not interested in any material affair.” – *SB* 6.17.31.

¹⁷⁶ *Śrī Caitanya Vāṇī Magazine*, 2nd October 2005, pp. 179-180.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda stated: *kīrtana prabhāve smarana haibe*, “Remembrance of Bhagavān comes from constant chanting of the holy name.” (Tirtha 7, 2001, p. 142.) Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda mentioned: “In this age, hearing is more important than thinking because one’s thinking may be disturbed by mental agitation, but if one concentrates on hearing, he will be forced to associate with the sound vibration of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa and the sound vibration ‘Kṛṣṇa’ are nondifferent, so if one loudly vibrates Hare Kṛṣṇa, he will be able to think of Kṛṣṇa immediately.



“This process of chanting is the best process of self-realization in this age; therefore Lord Caitanya preached it so nicely for the benefit of all humanity.”

“One should not artificially try to see the form of the Lord while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, but when the chanting is performed offenselessly the Lord will automatically reveal Himself to the view of the chanter. The chanter, therefore, has to concentrate on hearing the vibration, and without extra endeavor on his part, the Lord will automatically appear.” (Purports of *SB* 3.24.35 and *SB* 4.8.53.) It can be beneficial for concentration to think about *līlās* while chanting, but if we believe that the thinking produced of our material mind is already the factual transcendental reality that unfolded from the seed of the holy name, then that becomes an impediment to the revelation of the actual reality, which can only unfold from itself, i.e. from the pure holy name by His causeless mercy to a surrendered soul.

A gardener who planted apple tree seeds may – to motivate himself – look at an oil-painting of an apple tree with ripe apples. But if he thinks that the oil-painting is real and has come from apple tree seeds, and tries to eat it, he will not get any real taste from it, and may even lose faith in apple tree seeds. If we want to eat real fruits, then we need to humbly and patiently surrender to the proper process of cultivating them from their seeds. Similarly, if we want to taste *prema-phala*, the transcendental fruit of love of God, and see the Lord’s transcendental form and pastimes, all of which were distributed by Śrī Caitanya (*Cc* 1.9.27) in the seed-form of the holy name, then we must humbly surrender to the seed of the holy name and to the proper process of cultivation given by Śrī Caitanya, namely hearing and chanting: *māli hañā kare sei bīja āropaṇa, śravaṇa-kīrtana-jale karaye secana*, “When a person receives the seed of devotional service, he should take care of it by becoming a gardener and sowing the seed in his heart. If he waters the seed gradually by the process of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* [hearing and chanting], the seed will begin to sprout.” – *Cc* 2.19.152.

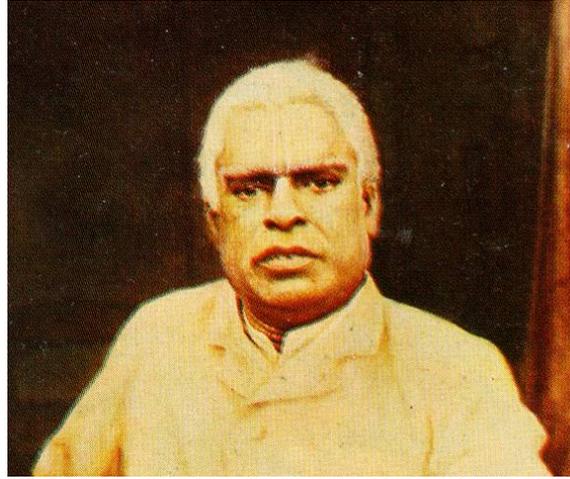
Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda mentioned in the foreword of *Vaiṣṇavism – Real and Apparent*: “An iron ball and the fire are two distinctly different things; but when the former is kept in an intimate touch with the latter, the former plays the role of the latter by radiating

heat and light and burning other things, so the material mind, though in reality purely matter and devoid of life and its attendant energy, having been closely in touch with the spiritual mind from eternity, exhibits its borrowed activity like an elephant run amuck, uncontrolled by the driver (...). Like a dwarf lifting up his hands to catch the moon it sometimes tries to taste the succulent pastimes of the Supreme Lord in His blissful abode with its passionate senses, identifying the perverted reflection with the real object. (...) Its utterance, however sweet and sound, its meditation, however deep, long and undisturbed, though apparently true have no reality and are ever subject to change and destruction. Sometimes it imitates the activities of the spiritual mind and picks its own pocket.” (Bhaktisiddhanta 3, 1926.)

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda wrote in his purport of the fifth *śloka* of the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*: “After *anartha-nivṛtti* [cessation of bad habits] comes *nairantarya*, or an undeviating steadiness in serving; followed by *svecchā-pūrvika*, or voluntary invocation of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in meditation and thereby developing spontaneous taste. The next stage is *svārasikī*, or the spontaneous manifestation of Kṛṣṇa’s unmanifested pastimes without voluntarily desiring it. Only after these three stages, comes the final perfection, that of *kṛṣṇa-prema*.” (Caitanya, 1486-1534, p. 50.) The invocation of Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental pastimes is thus recommended for the stages after *anartha-nivṛtti* and *nairantarya*, where it will be done unforcefully or voluntarily, and ultimately unintentionally, as their real nature is self-manifest. *nairantarya* or *niṣṭhā-bhajana* is equivalent with the realization of the teachings of the third verse of the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, describing the qualifications to be able to always chant the holy name, namely utmost humility, tolerance, and not expecting any respect while giving respect to all. The fourth verse is equivalent with the stage of *ruçih*, worship with taste, and the fifth verse corresponds to *āsakti*, firm attachment. As the transcendental pastimes of the Supreme Lord are non-different from Him and share His nature of being self-manifest, any invocation by personal efforts, although beneficial, are not yet the genuine reality. This understanding requires mature humility and dependence on the causeless mercy of the Lord. Only by His causeless mercy will the transcendental pastimes manifest by themselves.

When Lord Kṛṣṇa instructed Brahmājī how to contemplate His transcendental form, attributes, and pastimes, just before revealing to him the *catuḥ-śloki*, the four essential verses of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, He said: *yāvān ahaṁ yathā-bhāvo, yad-rūpa-guṇa-karmakaḥ, tathāiva tattva-vijñānam, astu te mad-anugrahāt*, “All of Me, namely My actual transcendental form, attributes and pastimes – let all be awakened within you by factual realization, out of My causeless mercy.” – *SB* 2.9.32. Śrī Kṛṣṇa here revealed *avaroha-panthā*, the descending path of *vijñānam*, real transcendental science that can grant factual realization of the highest reality. Those fortunate souls who take to the *avaroha-panthā* have realized that the ascending way of knowledge is imperfect and depend on the mercy of the Supreme Lord. Only by the causeless mercy (*mad-anugrahāt*) of the Lord, who is present in this age as His holy name (*Cc* 1.17.22), and not merely by one’s own mental efforts, will the Lord’s transcendental form, attributes, associates and pastimes manifest to a surrendered soul. After the attainment of God- and self-realization by depending on the Lord’s mercy, Brahmājī prayed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa: “My Lord, if one is favored by even a slight trace of the mercy of Your lotus feet, he can understand the greatness of Your personality. But those who speculate to understand the truth are unable to know You, the Absolute Truth, even though they continue to speculate for many years. My dear Lord, I therefore pray for the greatest fortune, namely that in this life as Lord Brahmā or in another life, wherever I take my birth, I may be counted as one of Your devotees. I pray that wherever I may be, even among the animal species, I can engage in devotional service to Your lotus feet.” – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.14.29-30.

Personal efforts are needed, but they can only bear fruits if the essential mood of humble surrender to the holy name is predominant. Therefore, Śrī Caitanya explained that the scientific process of success in chanting the holy name is to do it in a state of utmost humility (*trṇād api sunīcena taror iva sahiṣṇunā*, third verse of the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*. Caitanya, 1486-1534, p. 33). Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thākura stated concisely:



“Those who attempt to take up devotional service on the merits of their individual intelligence and mental expertise will find that all their endeavors are fruitless. Lord Kṛṣṇa’s mercy is the prime cause of success in all work.” (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 85.)

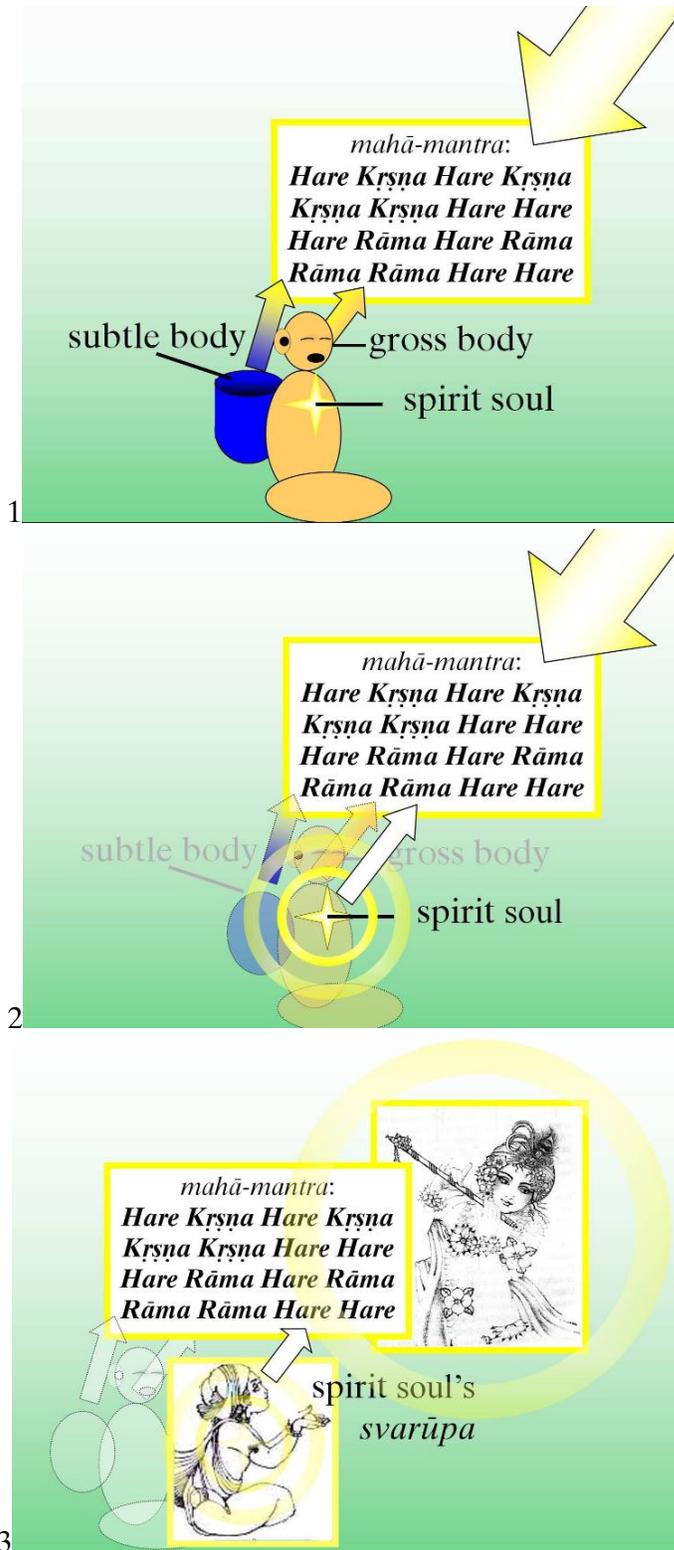
The sunflower cannot dissipate the darkness of the night; she must patiently await the rising of the sun, and then she must simply surrender unto him, i.e. turn its face towards the sun. “Turn towards the sun – then all shadows will fall behind you!” (German proverb.) The only thing we need to do is turn towards the sun of the holy name that rises from the heart of a pure devotee by receiving and chanting the holy name faithfully. *Śrī Harināma Cintāmaṇi* states: “The only prerequisite for chanting the holy name is faith. One who takes shelter of the holy name with unflinching faith will attain all perfection.” (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 18.)

Conditioned souls cannot independently manufacture spiritual contemplation, in which the material mind is excluded, because they are so much attached to their mind and its experiences since millions of births – even more than to the gross body. It is already difficult for most to ignore the gross body and concentrate on something with the mind, i.e. one’s subtle body. But to also leave the subtle body behind is impossible without help descending from the spiritual platform. This help descends in the form of *mantra*, which literally means ‘that which liberates the mind’. One may ask, that since the *mantra* or the holy name must be chanted by the pure spiritual self uncovered from the material mind and senses in order to fully reveal itself, how is this gap to be overcome?

The holy name is Himself the means and the ends.
He first helps us to attain the pure state of chanting by removing
all material filters and then unfolds the entire spiritual reality,
including our eternal identity and relation to God.

As such, even if we can hardly concentrate while chanting, or if we take help from certain meditations to concentrate, we must not be frustrated; the holy name will Himself take charge of our shortcomings if we fully surrender unto Him. The final instruction of the *Upadeśāvalī* (twenty-four essential instructions) of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda is “If mundane thoughts arise while chanting Harināma, one should not become discouraged. A secondary consequence of chanting Harināma is that these useless mundane thoughts will gradually dissipate; therefore one should not worry about this. By devoting one’s mind, body and words to serving Śrī Nāma and continuing to chant with great persistence, Śrī Nāma Prabhu will grant one *darśana* [vision] of His supremely auspicious transcendental form. And by continuing to chant until one’s *anarthas* [obstructive habits] are fully eradicated, realization of His form, qualities and pastimes will automatically arise by the power of Śrī Nāma.” (Tirtha 8, 2000, p. 102.)

Figures 1 to 3: The *mantra* uncovers the spiritual self from the material bodies



(1) First one engages the gross and subtle bodies in chanting (the subtle body is illustrated by a bag of collected impressions, experiences and identifications). One still identifies with them to a great extent and has no clear idea of the actual self.

(2) Then, gradually, as the *mantra* enters the ears and the heart, it uncovers the spiritual self from material coverings, and one identifies less with the gross and subtle bodies.

(3) Finally, the individual original eternal spiritual self reawakens fully by the mercy of the holy name. Now, with one's spiritual senses, one can serve and see Kṛṣṇa, who manifests from His holy name, everywhere. Kṛṣṇa's being non-different from His name is evident in this stage, and one fully understands His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*. Although externally still residing in the material body, all one's identifications with it are overcome, and one serves Kṛṣṇa internally in one's *svarūpa*¹⁷⁷, eternal spiritual form (in the illustration as a *sakha*, a friend of Kṛṣṇa. There are innumerable different *svarūpas* that perfectly suit one's individual self). "When you are free from the conception of gross and subtle bodies and when your senses are free from all influences of the modes of material nature, you will realize your pure form in My association. At that time you will be situated in pure consciousness." – Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *SB* 3.9.33.

¹⁷⁷ The attainment of one's *svarūpa* while still in a material body is rare and only achieved by very advanced devotees. More common is the achievement of one's *svarūpa* after death. This happens for example if one chants the pure holy name and remembers the Supreme Lord at the time of death, like Ajāmila who thus attained his *svarūpa* (*sadyaḥ svarūpam jagrhe*, *SB* 6.2.43). Non-devotees usually remember material things and relations at the time of death and return to one of the many material bodies, either plant, animal or human, according to their previous *karma*.

Now one may ask, that if the holy name has the power to uncover the soul from its material coverings, why should we at all make an effort to chant in the right conception, although we are still very limited – why not just chant, trusting in the holy name’s potency?

If we have such strong faith and chant incessantly, this is surely desired; *Śrī Harināma Cintāmaṇi* states: “The only prerequisite for chanting the holy name is faith. One who takes shelter of the holy name with unflinching faith will attain all perfection.” (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 18.) Yet usually, in the beginning, a devotee does not have this strong faith, as it is in itself an attribute of an advanced devotee. In fact, those who chant with firm faith in the holy name are never negligent to always try their very best in chanting, since they know that the holy name is non-different from the Supreme Lord. Therefore, under all circumstance, we should try to chant as good and often as our conditioned nature allows, and simultaneously depend on the causeless mercy of the holy name. As mentioned earlier, the holy name is supremely independent. He cannot be obliged materially, but He can bestow His full mercy anytime on anyone by His sweet will. “My devotee actually becomes self-realized by My unlimited causeless mercy.” – *SB 3.27.28*.

We should not think, that our imperfect efforts
will oblige the Lord. Still, we should try to attract
the Lord’s mercy by trying to chant as good as possible.

As the material conditionings are very individual, it is the duty of one’s spiritual master to give individual instructions as to how pure chanting can be achieved. Generally, one should chant offenselessly and in a humble serving attitude, as mentioned earlier. The *Padma Purāṇa* states: *ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi, na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ, sevonmukhe hi jihvādau, svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*, “The material senses cannot perceive Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental name, form, attributes, associates and pastimes. Only when a conditioned soul is awakened to Kṛṣṇa consciousness by being inclined to and engaged in devotional service of Kṛṣṇa, which begins with using his tongue to chant the Lord’s holy name and taste the sanctified remnants of the Lord’s food, his spiritual senses are uncovered, and then Kṛṣṇa by Himself manifests in his perception.” (quoted by Śrī Caitanya in *Cc 2.17.136*, also quoted in *Brs 1.2.234*.) In *Cc 2.17.134*, Śrī Caitanya uses the term *sva-prakāśa*, self-manifest, to explain that the term *svayam* in above verse refers to Kṛṣṇa manifesting by His own will and potency, not as a result of any mechanical procedure. Therefore, we must give up all vain efforts to purchase the Lord like a merchant, measure Him like a scientist, manufacture Him like a speculative philosopher or oblige Him like a renouncer. We must become humble devotees who depend upon the Lord’s own sweet will and serve Him unconditionally. Devotion naturally involves an empathetic approach, i.e. the approach of a servant, a *kinikara*, who always contemplates the personal desires of the Lord and draws back from his or her own conditions, mental speculations and material designations of the gross and subtle body: *sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam, tat-paratvena nirmalam, hr̥ṣīkeṇa hr̥ṣīkeṣa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate*, “Pure devotional service means engaging one’s senses in the service of the Lord, the master of all senses. This should be done entirely free from all material designations and motives.” – *Nārada-pañcarātra*, quoted by Śrī Caitanya in *Cc 2.19.170*, also quoted in *Brs 1.1.12*.

As explained in Chapter 15.3, *dhyāna*, meditation, was the recommended process to achieve the goal of human life for Satya-yuga, the first of the four ages. But in the present Kali-yuga, the recommended process is only *saṅkīrtana* (*kalau saṅkīrtya keśavam – Padma Purāṇa*, Uttara-khaṇḍa, 42.25). The following verses explain the yogic process of *dhyāna*, as it was practiced in Satya-yuga: “With devotion steeped in love and affection, the *yogī* should meditate [*dhyāyet*] within the core of his heart upon the laughter of Lord Viṣṇu. (...) By following this course, the *yogī* gradually develops pure love [*bhāva*] for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari. In the course of his progress in devotional service, the hairs on his body stand erect through excessive joy, and he is constantly bathed in a stream of tears occasioned by intense love. Gradually, even the mind, which he used as a

means to attract the Lord, as one attracts a fish to a hook, withdraws from material activity.” – *SB* 3.28.33-34. Purport by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda:

“Here it is clearly mentioned that meditation, which is an action of the mind, is not the perfect stage of *samādhi*, or absorption.

“(…) When the mind forcibly is engaged upon the form of the Lord, this is called *nirbīja-yoga*, or lifeless yoga, for the *yogī* does not automatically engage in the personal service of the Lord. But when he is constantly thinking of the Lord, that is called *sabīja-yoga*, or living *yoga*. One has to be promoted to the platform of living *yoga*.”

Artificial meditation is called lifeless *yoga*, because it is not natural like the constant flow of transcendental inspirations of the pure devotee arising directly from the internal spiritual potency of the Lord, who is the actual life of spiritual existence. Lord Kṛṣṇa has invested His holy name with all His spiritual potencies (*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktiḥ*, *Śikṣāṣṭaka*. Caitanya, 1486-1534, verse two), and thus the great saints simply surrender to the Lord’s internal potency (*Bg* 9.13) in the form of the holy name, who was most mercifully distributed to one and all by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

In the above quoted verses (*SB* 3.28.33-34), through *dhyāna*, the *yogī* attains the stage of *bhāva*, ecstatic love for God, and then his mind is delivered. By chanting the holy name, the same stage of *bhāva* can be attained, and as mentioned earlier, the holy name’s very nature is to deliver the mind. The word *mantra* literally means ‘delivering the mind’. The stage of *bhāva* through chanting is described by Śrī Caitanya in the sixth verse of His *Śikṣāṣṭaka*: “My dear Lord, when will My eyes be beautified by filling with tears that constantly glide down as I chant Your holy name? When will My voice falter and all the hairs on My body stand erect in transcendental happiness as I chant Your holy name?” (Caitanya, 1486-1534.) Śrī Caitanya taught that we should be eager to attain ecstatic love for God simply by chanting. If we feel no *bhāva*, or not even some relish by chanting the Lord’s name, we should understand, that our mental inspirations of the Lord’s form, attributes and pastimes and our feelings for the Lord are still mixed with material qualities and thus not fully substantial and reliable¹⁷⁸.

“When the mind is thus completely freed from all material contamination and detached from material objectives, it is just like the flame of a lamp. At that time the mind is actually dovetailed with that of the Supreme Lord and is experienced as one with Him because it is freed from the interactive flow of the material qualities.” – *SB* 3.28.35. Purport by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda: “After hearing *Bhagavad-gītā* from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Arjuna dovetailed his mind with Kṛṣṇa’s desire. This is called oneness [oneness in desire, or teleosympathy, as advocated by the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*]. This oneness, however, did not cause Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa to lose their individualities [as the *māyāvādīs* falsely conclude]. (...) The mind at that time does not act separately, nor does it act without inspiration to fulfill the desire of the Lord. (...) When

¹⁷⁸ This is one type of evaluation; however, Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thākura explains in his *Jaiva-dharma*, Chapter 22, that it is very difficult to distinguish between real *bhāva* and *bhāvābhāsa*, ingenuine shadow versions of *bhāva*, such as ecstatic feelings of one who chants in expectation of *mukti*, material liberation, instead of *bhakti*. Thus the absence of *bhāva* is an indication for prematureness, whereas the proper ascertainment of matureness is liberation from material attachments. “Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura [...] remarks that sometimes a *mahā-bhāgavata*, or very advanced devotee, does not manifest such transcendental symptoms as tears in the eyes, whereas sometimes a *kañiṣṭha-adhikārī*, a neophyte devotee, displays them artificially. This does not mean, however, that the neophyte is more advanced than the *mahā-bhāgavata* devotee. The test of the real change of heart that takes place when one chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is that one becomes detached from material enjoyment. This is the real change. *bhaktiḥ paretānubhavo viraktīr anyatra ca* (*SB* 11.2.42). If one is actually advancing in spiritual life, he must become very much detached from material enjoyment.” – *Cc* 1.8.25, purport. “Only that person who has become completely free from the desire for money, sex and name and fame can be considered a pure Vaiṣṇava devotee.” (*Vb. Bhaktisiddhānta, Vaiṣṇava Ke*, verse 11.)

the mind stops functioning on the material platform, it is conserved in the activities of the Supreme Lord.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.4.26 states that only after the material vision of the material mind and its remembrances of material names and forms have been vanquished, one comes to the stage of trance, in which the Supreme Lord’s own transcendental form is revealed. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda mentions in his purport: “As described here, one attains the ultimate realization of the Personality of Godhead when one gives up the activities of the mind – thinking, feeling and willing – or, in other words, when mental speculation stops.”

As mentioned earlier, we are not capable of freeing ourselves from the material mind by our own efforts, but by chanting the holy name, we are gradually freed from service to the material mind and we rejoice in serving the transcendental mind, i.e. serving the Lord’s desires. Union (*abheda*) in desire with the Supreme Lord of various (*bheda*) individuals is advocated by the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*. In this pure state of devotion, the Lord’s transcendental form, attributes, associates and pastimes manifest naturally from chanting the holy name without artificial endeavor, and our heart is incessantly immersed in them. Unlike most meditations, this immersion is the selfless contemplation or true *samādhi* (complete absorption in transcendence), which is characterized by cessation of the activities of the material mind and unity with the Lord’s desires. Universal harmony or unity in diversity is most efficiently realized by chanting the Lord’s holy name, and the science of chanting is therefore explained in this book. Another word for unity is unison. The word ‘unison’ includes the word ‘sound’. The word ‘unison’ means ‘harmonious agreement, accord of sound’, from Latin *uni*, one, and *sonus*, sound (from Sanskrit *svan*, to sound). One may also note that the adjective ‘sound’ as in “she has a sound personality” carries meanings like whole, healthy and honest. To become sound, completely healthy and whole, to enter the unison of the cosmic diversity, we should enter unison with transcendental sound, descending in the form of the Lord’s names. The most powerful transcendental sound formula or *mantra* is the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*;

*Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.*



16. The Spiritual Master According to Acintya-Bhedābheda-Darśana



ācāryavān puruṣo veda,

“One who follows the spiritual master knows things as they are.”
– *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.14.2.

*tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet
samt-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham,*

“To learn the transcendental science, one must humbly approach a spiritual master who has heard the *Vedas* in disciplic succession and is firmly devoted to the Absolute Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.” – *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.12.

*tad viddhi pranipātena, paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānam, jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

“Try to understand the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.”
– Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.34.

*tasmād gurum prapadyeta, jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam
śābde pare ca niṣṇātam, brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam*

“Any person who is inquisitive about the highest good must inquire from a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of a spiritual master is that he has realized the conclusions of the Vedic scriptures by deliberation and is able to convince others of these conclusions, and that he has factually realized the Supreme Lord. He is naturally detached from material affairs.” – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.3.21.

*sa vai priyatamaś cātmā, yato na bhayam aṅv api
itī veda sa vai vidvān, yo vidvān sa gurur hariḥ,*

“One who is actually educated, i.e. one who practically knows that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the Supersoul and dearest friend of everyone, and who is thus without the slightest trace of fear, is a bona fide spiritual master, a representative of Kṛṣṇa, and is therefore not different from Kṛṣṇa.” – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.29.51.

*ācāryam mām vijānīyān, navamanyeta karhicit
na martya-buddhyāsūyeta, sarva-deva-mayo guruḥ,*

“One should know the Ācārya or Guru as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods.” – Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.17.27.

Accepting the guidance of a spiritual master is the most natural thing in the Vedic culture. Some people have little regard for accepting a spiritual master, although accepting masters is also the most natural thing in common human life: The first guru or teacher is our mother, without whose guidance any child is lost. The most efficient way to acquire teachings in any path of knowledge, is to accept that path's capable authorities and learn the teachings directly from them. When we take an airplane, we surrender our passport, time and money to the airline authorities and put our lives in the hands of the flight captain. We accept school masters, show masters, dance masters, web masters and many other masters. My most revered spiritual master, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja wrote: "We find in this world that all of us accept authorities or experts in all matters.

"When we are acknowledging a master in every sphere of life,
it is absurd to say that we do not require the help of a Guru
to know God, who is beyond human comprehension.

"Those who say this are really not serious about knowing God." (Tīrtha 4, 2005.) Actually it is only common sense to accept a spiritual master, or at least to accept instructions of a spiritual master, if one is serious about God-realization. It is evident that conditioned souls cannot have complete realization of God by their own efforts, just as it is impossible for most people to get an audience with the Queen of England by their own efforts. Someone who is actually very keen to meet the Queen must reach the conclusion that the most efficient way is to make friends with those who are close to her and try to meet her through their connection. Similarly, those who sincerely want to approach and realize God as far as possible, will make friends with those who have realized God and endeavor to attain God through their connection. *anādy-avidyā-yuktasya, puruṣasyātma-vedanam, svato na sambhavād anyas, tattva-jñō jñāna-do bhavet,*

"Because a person who has been covered by ignorance since time immemorial
is not capable of effecting God-realization and self-realization by his own ability,
it is essential that there be another personality who is in factual knowledge of
the Absolute Truth and can impart this knowledge to him." – SB 11.22.10.

Conditioned souls cannot approach God directly, because they lack the eyes to see God, namely the eyes of love of God, *prema-bhakti*. Lord Kṛṣṇa says that one can understand Him only by *bhakti* (Bg 18.55). *prema-bhakti* cannot be manufactured or attained by separate efforts because only *bhakti* gives birth to *bhakti* (*bhaktiṅ sañjātayā bhaktiṅ, SB 11.3.31*). If *bhakti* could be produced by a material element it would not be transcendental. Therefore one must attain *prema-bhakti* from someone who already possesses it, i.e. a self-realized spiritual master. Śrī Caitanya also exemplified this by accepting Śrī Īśvara Purī as His Guru. If there was no necessity of accepting a Guru to realize God, then surely the Supreme Lord who descends in the form of Lord Caitanya, the Supreme Guru, would not have played the pastime of accepting a Guru (see Chapter 6.5). He did so to set the highest example.

The first teaching of Lord Caitanya is to obtain
pure *bhakti* by accepting a self-realized spiritual master.

In accordance with this teaching, the first three of the sixty-four limbs of devotion as enumerated by Śrī Caitanya's very dear associate Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmi in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* are: (1) *guru-pādāśraya*, accepting a bona fide spiritual master, (2) *kṛṣṇa-dīkṣādi-sikṣaṇam*, receiving initiation and learning how to practice *bhakti* from him, and (3) *viśrambheṇa guroḥ sevā*, following the instructions of the spiritual master and serving him with firm faith and devotion (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.74. 16th century). These first three limbs of devotion are the most important of all sixty-four limbs (see *Jaiva-dharma*, Chapter 20). Without practicing the first teaching of Śrī Caitanya – to faithfully accept, learn from, follow, and serve a bona fide Guru – we cannot properly practice Śrī Caitanya's further teachings and gain deeper realizations of our eternal relationship

with God. All bona fide spiritual masters have themselves accepted a spiritual master, and in this way the disciplic succession, *paramparā*, connects a new disciple to the Supreme Lord. In this regard we should note that whenever we speak of ‘Guru’ (written in capital letters), we mean a bona fide Guru, i.e. one who has practically realized God. The qualities of a bonafide Guru will be described in later paragraphs.

In the Vedic science, the Guru or spiritual master plays an equally important role as the Supreme Lord. This is sometimes misunderstood or misinterpreted due to philosophical incorrectness. However, if we see the spiritual master in the light of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, his real nature is understood and we can serve and benefit from him ideally¹⁷⁹.

We should very carefully understand *how* Guru is one with Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda explains the above quoted verse *SB* 4.29.51 by citing a previous Ācārya: “Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says: *sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-sāstrair uktas tathā bhāvya eva sadbhiḥ* [*Śrī Gurv-aṣṭaka* 7]. The spiritual master is described in every scripture as the representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

“The spiritual master is accepted as identical with the Supreme Personality of Godhead because he is the most confidential servant of the Lord.”

This means that Guru and Kṛṣṇa are one in will. One who is completely one in will with the spiritual Lord is spiritual himself, and therefore Guru is completely spiritual and one with God in quality. While the conditioned soul has accepted alien material concepts due to material desires, the pure devotee remains in his original spiritual position due to being one in desire with the Lord. It is the Lord’s desire to have loving relationships with the living entities, and Guru is one who fully satisfies this desire of the Lord by himself being a confidential servant of the Lord, and also by making others His servants. The term *priya* in the above quoted *Gurv-aṣṭaka* verse literally means ‘dear’. Guru is *kṛṣṇa-priya*; he is very dear to Kṛṣṇa, because he is one in will with Him; he fulfils His desires. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda mentions: “The real Vedic philosophy is *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*, which establishes everything to be simultaneously one with and different from the Personality of Godhead. Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī confirms that this is the real position of a bona fide spiritual master and says that one should always think of the spiritual master in terms of his intimate relationship with Mukunda (Śrī Kṛṣṇa). Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, in his *Bhakti-sandarbhā* (213), has clearly explained that a pure devotee’s observation of the spiritual master and Lord Śiva as being one with the Personality of Godhead exists in terms of their being very dear to the Lord, not identical with Him in all respects. Following in the footsteps of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, later Ācāryas like Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura have confirmed the same truths. In his prayers to the spiritual master, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura confirms that all the revealed scriptures accept the spiritual master to be identical with the Personality of Godhead because he is a very dear and confidential servant of the Lord.” – *Cc* 1.1.46, purport.

One must be very careful not to misconclude that Guru is one *in person* with Kṛṣṇa. His being one or non-different from Kṛṣṇa refers to the aspect of union or unity *in will and quality*. Yet, simultaneously, there is difference in person, and that is not a contradiction. In fact if someone is one with the Lord’s will, then he must advocate difference in person as it is the Lord’s will to have relationships with various individuals. As such, when it is said that “Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of the spiritual master delivers His devotees” (*Cc* 1.1.45), then one must understand Guru as an individual representative or agent who delivers people on the behalf of Kṛṣṇa, not that he is Kṛṣṇa Himself personally appearing in a different form. Sometimes people advocate some person or themselves as

¹⁷⁹ The use of mainly male pronouns for Guru does not mean that there cannot be female Gurus. Although there are less female Gurus than male Gurus, some female Gurus like Śrīmatī Jāhnavā-devī and Śrīmatī Gaṅgā-mātā were very influential and had many great disciples.

Guru in terms of being one with the Lord in person, but this misconception is against the Vedic teachings. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thakura mentions in his *Śrī Harināma Cintāmaṇi* (Bhaktivinode 2, 1900, p. 51): “The *dikṣā-guru* and the *sikṣā-guru* are both intimate servitors of Lord Kṛṣṇa. (...)

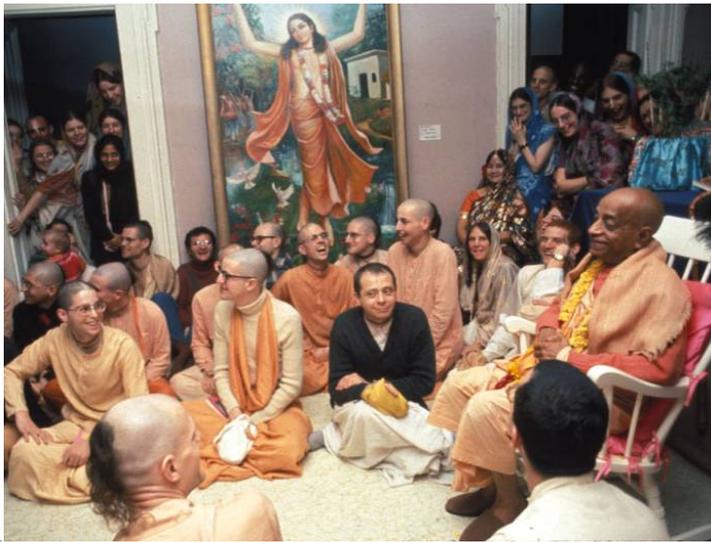
“One must never consider the spiritual master to be the Supreme Lord; this is *māyāvāda* philosophy, not in line with the pure Vaiṣṇava conclusions.”

A real Guru always takes the position of a humble servant of God. As the Guru is simultaneously one and different from the Supreme Lord, some write the term ‘Guru’ with initial capital letters, others without; there is no discrepancy here. But the Lord’s names like ‘Lord Kṛṣṇa’ should always be written with initial capital letters. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda explains the *acintya-bhedābheda* nature of the spiritual master in his Anubhāṣya commentary on *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* 3.2.33. as follows: “The Guru and Vaiṣṇavas are full of Kṛṣṇa’s potencies. There is no difference between the energy and the energetic. Yet the energy can never be identified as the energetic.” Non-difference (*abheda*) refers to Guru being one in quality and will with Kṛṣṇa and being full of His potencies, just like a sunray is full of the sun’s potencies and one with the illuminating quality of the sun. However, just as the sunray cannot be considered identical with the sun, Guru cannot be considered identical with Kṛṣṇa as a person – they are separate (*bheda*) individuals.

Guru is a representative of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Guru is one in will with Him by being surcharged with His potencies.

This is the sublime teaching of Śrī Caitanya’s *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*.



1



2

Picture 1: A spiritual master with his disciples

Picture 2: To set the perfect example, Lord Kṛṣṇa (in the middle) accepted Sāndipani Muni as Guru, although Lord Kṛṣṇa is Himself the original Guru.

Three categories of Gurus are dealt with in this chapter:

- (1) *dikṣā-guru*: Initiating Guru. Gives connection to Kṛṣṇa in form of a *mantra*.
One can only have one *dikṣā-guru*.
- (2) *sikṣā-guru*: Instructing Guru. Gives spiritual guidance. One can have many *sikṣā-gurus*. Usually one’s *dikṣā-guru* is one’s most important *sikṣā-guru*.
- (3) *guru-śakti*: Guru-energy. Guru as principle: Kṛṣṇa’s *guru-śakti* can work through anything and anyone to guide someone.

(1) The *dikṣā-guru* is a self- and God-realized person who gives spiritual initiation according to the teachings of Veda. The *Viṣṇu-yāmala* defines *dikṣā* as the process that bestows *divya-jñāna*, divine knowledge (*dī*) and destroys (*kṣā*) sinful desires (quoted in *Cc* 2.15.108, purport). The *dikṣā-guru* gives the disciple a connection to Lord Kṛṣṇa in form of a *mantra*, a transcendental sound formula, which enables realization of God when uttered under proper guidance. The *dikṣā-guru* can only be one person, and should be chosen very carefully. Usually, the *dikṣā-guru* is also one's most important *sikṣā-guru* or instructing spiritual master.

(2) The *sikṣā-guru* can be more than one. According to circumstances, one's *dikṣā-guru* may send one to another *sikṣā-guru* for specific instructions, and when one's *dikṣā-guru* is not physically present anymore, one is usually advised to take instructions from a qualified *sikṣā-guru*. "Both Gurus [*dikṣā- and sikṣā-gurus*] have to be respected equally. This is the key to spiritual success. (...) The *dikṣā-guru* is one but *sikṣā-guru* can be many. In fact all the pure Vaiṣṇava devotees are *sikṣā-guru*; both the *dikṣā-guru* and the many *sikṣā-gurus* are to be equally respected." (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 50.)

The qualifications of a Guru or saintly person are given in the Vedic literature. He must be:

- Learned in the Vedic literature (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.12, quoted above)
- Firmly devoted to the Absolute Truth (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.12)
- Possessing factual realization of the Supreme Lord (*SB* 11.3.21, quoted above)
- Able to convince others of the Vedic conclusions (*SB* 11.3.21)
- Coming in *paramparā*, a bona fide disciplic succession (*Bg* 4.2, *Padma Purāṇa*¹⁸⁰)
- With controlled senses and free from material desires (*kāmair ahata-dhīr dānto*, *SB* 11.11.30)
- Able to deliver his dependants from the path of repeated birth and death (*SB* 5.5.18)

Example of a bona fide disciplic succession (Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya-paramparā):

1. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya 2. Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara 3. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī 4. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī 5. Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura 6. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura 7. Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa 8. Śrīla Jagannātha Dāsa Bābāji Mahārāja 9. Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura 10. Śrīla Gaurakīśora Dāsa Bābāji Mahārāja 11. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda 12. Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja 13. Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja (Tirtha 2, 1997, p. 32).

The Supreme Lord Himself in His transcendental forms of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Caitanya, Lord Rāma, and many others, all accepted a Guru, although He is Himself the Supreme Lord. Lord Kṛṣṇa did this in all His forms to give the perfect example for the common populace. "Whatever action a great personality performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues." – Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bg* 3.21. Had Lord Kṛṣṇa not accepted a Guru Himself, the people would have been misled. Lord Kṛṣṇa also said that the science of God-realization was first personally taught by Him and then passed on in the scientific system of *paramparā* (*Bg* 4.1-2). As such the system of disciplic succession is not a human speculation, but established by the Lord Himself, and therefore transcendental. Being a spiritual master is not an easy thing and requires the highest saintly qualifications. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa instructs His devotee Uddhava about the exalted character of a saintly person or Guru:

¹⁸⁰ *sampradāya-vihīnā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ*, "dikṣā-mantras which are not bestowed by a bona fide spiritual master from one of these Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* are ineffective." – *Padma Purāṇa*, quoted in *SB* 6.3.20, purport.

śrī-bhagavān uvāca
kṛpālor akṛta-drohas, titikṣuḥ sarva-dehinām
satya-sāro 'navadyātmā, samah sarvopakāraḥ
kāmair ahata-dhīr dānto, mṛduḥ śucir akiñcanaḥ
anīho mita-bhuk śāntaḥ, sthīro mac-charaṇo munih
apramatto gabhīrātmā, dhṛtimāñ jita-śaḍ-guṇaḥ
amānī māna-daḥ kalyo, maitraḥ kāruṇikaḥ kaviḥ
ājñāyaivam guṇān doṣān, mayādiṣṭān api svakān
dharmān santyajya yaḥ sarvān, mām bhajeta sa tu sattamaḥ,

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: O Uddhava, a saintly person is merciful and never injures others. Even if others are aggressive he is tolerant and forgiving toward all living entities. His strength and meaning in life come from the truth itself, he is free from all envy and jealousy, and his mind is equal in material happiness and distress. Thus, he dedicates his time to work for the welfare of all others. His intelligence is never bewildered by material desires, and he has controlled his senses. His behavior is always pleasing, never harsh and always exemplary, and he is free from possessiveness. He never endeavors in ordinary, worldly activities, and he strictly controls his eating. He therefore always remains peaceful and steady. A saintly person is thoughtful and accepts Me as his only shelter. Such a person is very cautious in the execution of his duties and is never subject to superficial transformations, because he is steady and noble, even in a distressing situation. He has conquered over the six material qualities – namely hunger, thirst, lamentation, illusion, old age and death. He is free from all desire for prestige and offers honor to others. He is expert in reviving the Kṛṣṇa consciousness of others and therefore never cheats anyone. Rather, he is a well-wishing friend to all, being most merciful. Such a saintly person must be considered the most learned of men. He perfectly understands that the ordinary religious duties prescribed by Me in various Vedic scriptures possess favorable qualities that purify the performer, and he knows that neglect of such duties constitutes a discrepancy in one's life. Having taken complete shelter at My lotus feet, however, a saintly person ultimately renounces such ordinary religious duties and worships Me alone. He is thus considered to be the best among all living entities.” – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.11.29-32.

A bona fide spiritual master, a pure devotee of the Supreme Lord, is very rare. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.14.3-5 mentions: “In the entire material world, there are uncountable living entities. Amongst all these living entities, very few are human beings, and among them, very few are interested in following *śreyah*, the religious path that brings eternal benefit, as opposed to *preyah*, the path of immediate sense-gratification without eternal benefit. Out of many religious people aspiring for *śreyah*, only a few desire actual liberation from the material world. Among many thousands of them, only one may actually achieve liberation, i.e. become internally free from material misidentification with and attachment to the material body and its seeming temporary relations such as society, country, family etc. Among thousands of liberated persons, one who can understand the true meaning of liberation is very rare. Among millions who are thus perfectly liberated, one may be a devotee of the Supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa, or Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Such devotees, whose hearts are completely peaceful, are extremely rare.” Again, among many devotees, one who is a pure devotee with fully manifest *ananya-bhakti*, exclusive unconditional devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is very rare. And again, among many pure devotees, it is very rare to find one who possesses factual realization of the Supreme Lord, and is able to make others become devotees and deliver them from the cycle of repeated birth and death. Such a compassionate God-realized pure devotee, who is fit to be a spiritual master, is extremely rare.

However, that does not mean that we should be discouraged. Rather, this fact should encourage us to make much more efforts to attain such a spiritual master. If someone has a deadly disease that can only be cured by a specialist doctor who is very difficult to find, will he thus be discouraged in his pursuit of that doctor? No, with full vigour he will strive all the more to find such an expert doctor. Similarly, we all carry the disease of material misidentifications and attachments, by which we are forced to suffer and die against our will. Knowledge of the fact that a bona fide spiritual master who can cure us from this disease is very rare should only make us more enthusiastic about attaining his shelter. It may be impossible for us – but nothing is impossible for God.

(3) *guru-śakti* is Lord Kṛṣṇa’s own energy working through various media. When we are very eager to get to know the Lord, He, who is situated in everyone’s heart as the Supersoul, makes arrangements for our spiritual education through various external means, since we cannot yet directly perceive the Supersoul. When we are spiritually mature enough, Lord Kṛṣṇa makes us meet our spiritual master (*dīkṣā-guru/sikṣā-guru*), who is the manifestation of *guru-śakti*.

guru-śakti is spiritual and as such very subtle and difficult
to distinguish from the mind’s promptings and the senses’ desires.
Veda thus advises to take shelter of a self- and God-realized spiritual master.

The spiritual master can give adequate individual instructions and protect from the false gurus of the material mind and senses (which are *not* the self, see Chapter 3.1). Nevertheless, the understanding of *guru-śakti* is important for comprehending the nature of the spiritual master, and as such it is described here. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.7-9), a renounced monk describes many Gurus who have assisted him on his spiritual journey. He learned tolerance from the earth, dedication to others from the mountain, detachment from the wind, purity and gentleness from water, austerity and destruction of the impure from fire, indivisibility from the sun, taking the essence from everywhere from the honeybee, aversion to material attractions from the bad example of the deer who is caught by the sweet music of the hunter’s horn, and disinclination to sexual entanglement from a prostitute who laments that she dedicated her life to transitory men while neglecting the real eternal husband – the Supreme Lord. These are examples of the Lord’s *guru-śakti* acting through various media. We should note that the renounced monk who received the Lord’s teachings in this particular way is an advanced spiritualist who wanders about the earth without any material concerns, trusting fully in the Lord’s maintenance by dint of his realizations. As a spiritual newcomer, one cannot imitate him. As long as one is not sufficiently purified from material designations and desires, one will be more inspired to enjoy the earth, water, fire and prostitute than to learn from them how to renounce the material world and attain the Supreme Lord, and thus it is the best to accept guidance from a bona fide spiritual master.

Figure 1: Etymological reflection of the word *guru*



The Sanskrit word *guru* generally means spiritual master. “*Gu* means darkness of ignorance and *ru* means that which dissipates such darkness, or in other words, one who takes away the dense darkness of ignorance by giving transcendental knowledge to the disciple is called Guru.” (Purī, 1998, p. 19.) *guru* also translates as heavy, weighty, valuable (Williams). Guru is heavy in the sense that he is full of

realized knowledge and thus unshakeable: “He is ‘Guru’ or the heaviest object, because his position is not shifting.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 238.) He is very serious or grave in ascertaining the

truth and he is very valuable because he carries the treasure of *prema*, love of God, by which one can attain God, the Absolute Truth. The meaning of heaviness in the Sanskrit term *guru* is reflected in Latin *gravis*, French *grave* and English *gravitation*. The earth is weighty, it possesses gravity, and therefore it emanates the gravitation force, by which it attracts other objects. Similarly, Lord Kṛṣṇa is the most weighty because He is *pūrṇam* (*Īsopaniṣad*, invocation), He is completely full of all perfections like knowledge and bliss: *raso vai saḥ, rasam hy evāyaṁ labdhvānandī bhavati*: “When one attains the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, the reservoir of all pleasing transcendental relationships, he becomes actually blissful.” – *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.7.1. Therefore, He is *ādi-guru*, the original Guru, or in other words, the most weighty or complete of all. He also is *ādi-guru* because He instructed Lord Brahmā, the first living creature within the universe (*brahma hr̥dā ya ādi-kavaye*, *SB* 1.1.1), who then passed on these teachings. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the root of the *paramparā*, the disciplic succession of Gurus. Rādhārāṇī is non-different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, being His internal pleasure-potency personified who teaches everyone how to serve Kṛṣṇa. Considering this, She is the actual *ādi-guru*, especially of those who serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa in an intimate circle.

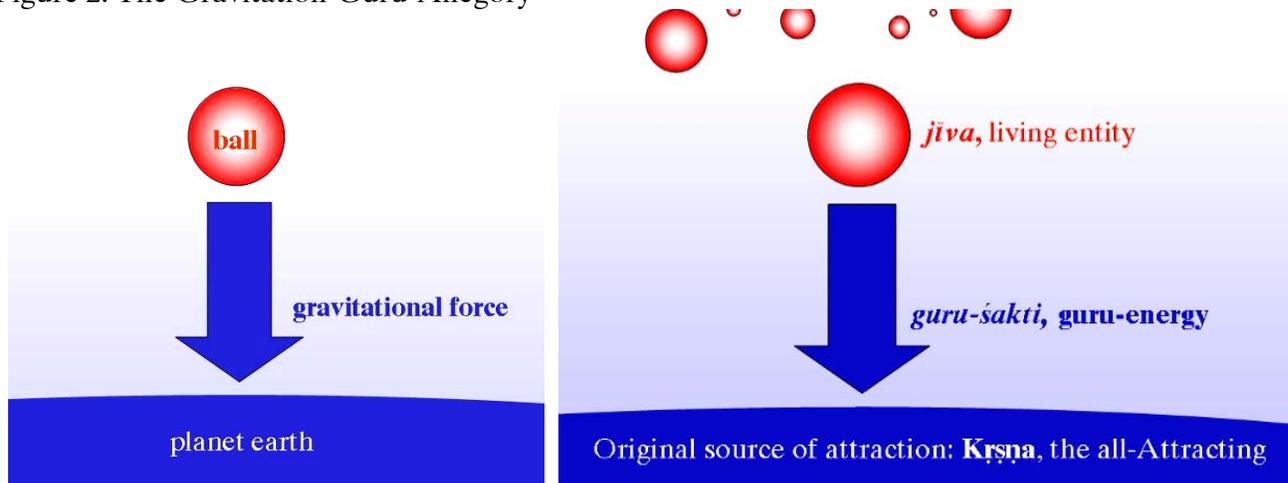
In another sense, the source of *guru-sakti* is Lord Kṛṣṇa’s first expansion Lord Balarāma (see Chapter 5.4), who also serves and teaches how to serve Kṛṣṇa. The word *bala* means spiritual strength. By Lord Balarāma’s power only, by *guru-sakti* only, can we attain Kṛṣṇa. The word *rāma* means source of joy and giver of joy. Balarāma or Guru is full of joy because He directly serves the reservoir of pleasure, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and He gives others joy by introducing them into the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Another name of Balarāma is Saṅkarṣaṇa, which means all-attractive, just like the name Kṛṣṇa. Both names are related to the verbal root *kṛs*, to attract, to pull. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the all-attractive in terms of being the source of attraction, and Guru is the all-attractive in terms of being the attracting force of Kṛṣṇa, just like the earth is the source of attraction and gravitation is the force of attraction¹⁸¹. The earth emanates the gravitation force due to its gravity. Similarly,

Lord Kṛṣṇa emanates a force of attraction due to His
perfect completeness, and therefore He is called *Kṛṣṇa*, all-attractive.
This force is Kṛṣṇa’s *guru-sakti*, the energy or force of the spiritual master or Guru.

The *guru-sakti* is the essential force of all bona fide Gurus. The bona fide spiritual masters are media or instruments of Kṛṣṇa’s *guru-sakti*. This means that they are fully one with the Lord’s desire and thus His *guru-sakti* can act fully through them. As such although they are different in person from Kṛṣṇa, they don’t act independently but in full accordance with and under the direct guidance of His *guru-sakti*. They have thus perfected teleosympathy according to their eternal nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*, being simultaneously one and different from Lord Kṛṣṇa (see Chapter 9). The function of Guru is to establish the Absolute Truth, i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa, the all-attractive Lord. Hence it is the function of Guru to reveal the all-attractive nature of Lord Kṛṣṇa, i.e. it is the function of Guru to attract others to Kṛṣṇa, just as it is the function of the earth’s gravitational force to attract everything to the earth. The well-known principle of gravitation offers itself as an allegory for the lesser known principle of Guru, the bona fide spiritual master.

¹⁸¹ According to the Vedic science, the force of gravitation is ultimately maintained by Saṅkarṣaṇa. “Śeṣa [syn. Saṅkarṣaṇa], is the source of the power which sustains all the planets in their different positions. Materially this sustaining power is known as the law of gravitation, but actually it is a display of the potency of Saṅkarṣaṇa.” (Bhaktivedanta 1.)

Figure 2: The Gravitation-Guru-Allegory

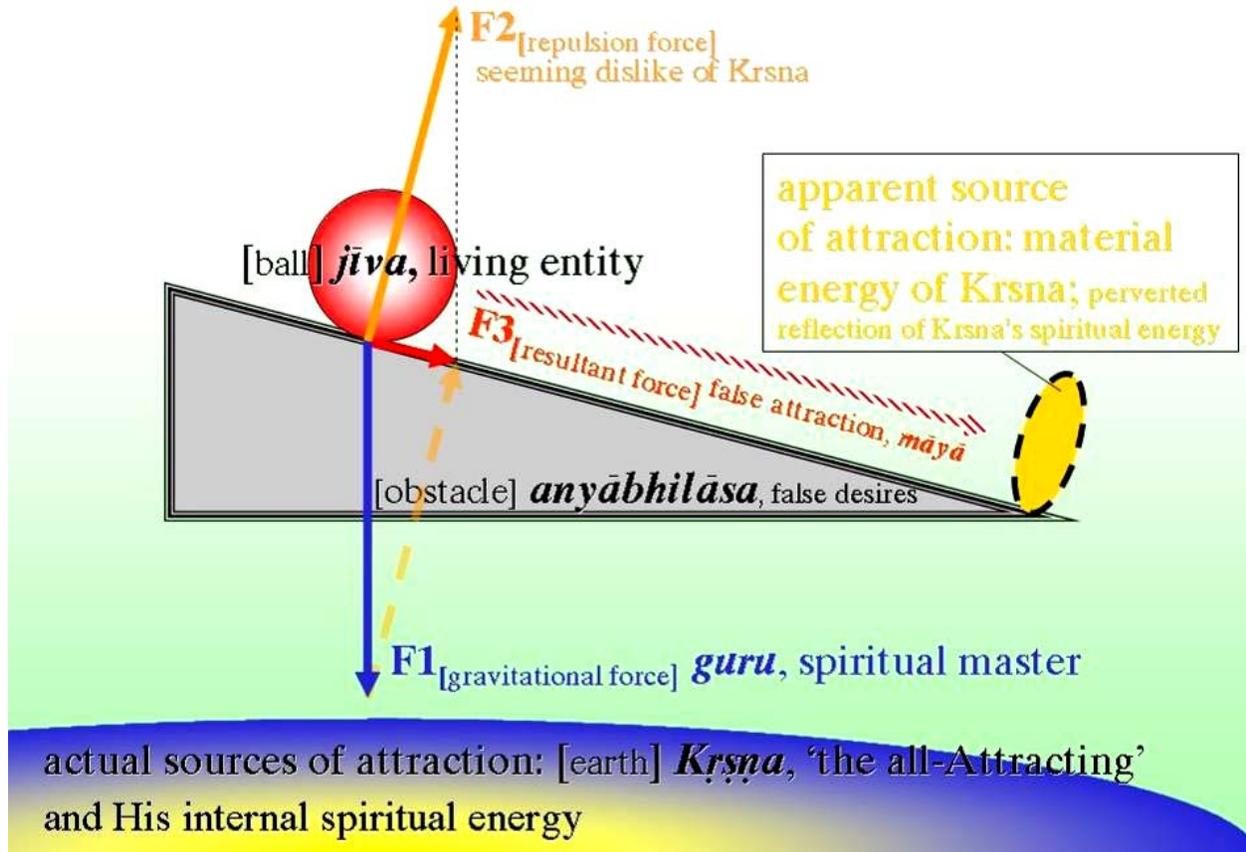


The planet earth attracts objects through its gravitational force. Similarly, Lord Kṛṣṇa attracts the *jīvas* through His *guru-śakti*, His energy which manifests as the spiritual master. The earth's gravitation attracts all objects – yet although Lord Kṛṣṇa is called the all-attractive, He does not seem to attract all people equally, i.e. we find that most people don't seem to be attracted by Him directly or through a spiritual master. Before we continue, we shall resolve this seeming contradiction in the following eight paragraphs.

First of all we should remember that the Absolute Reality only reveals Himself when approached with pure motives, i.e. spiritual motives or *bhakti* (Bg 18.55). Secondly, we should understand how Lord Kṛṣṇa also attracts those people with non-devotional attitudes, but indirectly, unapparently. The sum and substance of Śrī Caitanya's *acintya-bhedābheda* philosophy is to attain union in desire with the Lord by realizing our inherent eternal individual nature as His servant. This realization involves attaining *sevābhilāṣa* from a Guru. *sevābhilāṣa* means pure desire for service to God. By *sevābhilāṣa*, the purpose of creation is fulfilled and the Lord reveals Himself.

In the spiritual realm, everything is manifest in its original spiritual nature, and thus all creatures naturally have a serving attitude towards Lord Kṛṣṇa who fully attracts everyone perfectly and naturally. Contrarily, the material world is a place designed for those living entities with *anyābhilāṣa*, separatist or unnatural desire. Due to *anyābhilāṣa* the living entities seem to be attracted by things other than Kṛṣṇa, and that semblance itself is called *māyā*, 'that which is not', or illusion. The material world is manifested from the *bahirāṅga-śakti*, the external energy of the Lord, which is a perverted reflection of the Lord's *antarāṅga-śakti*, internal spiritual *śakti*. The external energy is real in itself as being a transformation of the Lord's energy, but it is non-eternal, *asat*, and as such it is sometimes described as being unreal in terms of its non-permanent character. Yet it is not all together *māyā*, illusion, as the *māyāvādi* philosophers proclaim. The actual *māyā*, material illusion, lies in the attitude of the *jīvas* who have *anyābhilāṣa* and are thus falsely attracted to the material instead of the spiritual energy of the Lord. Yet even if they are attracted to the material energy, they are still indirectly attracted to the all-attractive Lord Kṛṣṇa because everything is His manifestation. This shall be illustrated in the following figure which uses the laws of physics to explain the position of Kṛṣṇa's spiritual and material energies and their relation to the living entity with *anyābhilāṣa*, separatist desires.

Figure 3: Kṛṣṇa attracts the *jīva* indirectly via His material energy



The above figure illustrates two main points:

- A) The *jīva* is not directly attracted to Kṛṣṇa due to his *anyābhilāṣa*.
- B) The *jīva* with *anyābhilāṣa* is indirectly although mostly unknowingly attracted to Kṛṣṇa.

Both points are essential for the understanding how the seeming impression that Kṛṣṇa does not attract all beings equally through Guru is resolved.

Summary: The living entity who seems to be more attracted by the material energy is compared to a traveler or a ball on a steep slope (representing *anyābhilāṣa*), which (A) keeps the ball from being attracted straight to the earth (representing Kṛṣṇa) and (B) causes a resulting force (representing *māyā*) that makes the ball move towards another goal (representing material energy), which falsely seems to be the source of attraction. As the material energy is Kṛṣṇa's spiritual energy that is reflected on the *jīva's anyābhilāṣa*, the *jīva* in the material world is indirectly and mostly unknowingly attracted to Kṛṣṇa.

The gravitational force represents the *guru-śakti* of Kṛṣṇa and the earth stands for Kṛṣṇa as in the preceding allegory. According to the laws of physics we can calculate the repulsion force produced by an obstacle such as a slope and the resultant force by using vector-geometry: The addition of $F1 + F2 = F3$ is done geometrically by first moving the ball according to $F1$ and then from that position according to $F2$ (dashed orange vector). However, we can understand the points made without knowing vector-geometry. *Guru*, Kṛṣṇa's attraction-force ($F1$) is obstructed from directly attracting the *jīva* by the obstacle of *anyābhilāṣa*, false desires. *anyābhilāṣa* distorts the *jīva's* gravitation towards Kṛṣṇa and produces a repulsion-force ($F2$). This repulsion force adds up with the natural attraction ($F1$) to a false attraction ($F3$), *māyā*, 'that which is not', or illusion. This *māyā* is the seeming attraction towards the material energy. *anyābhilāṣa* are false desires that arise in the material mind and are falsely taken to be our own beneficial desires. They arise due to unbeneficial

material association. A man who daily sees or hears advertisements to drink liquor or who associates with people fond of liquor will one day encounter the desire to drink liquor arising in his mind, and he will falsely identify with that desire, thinking that he himself wants to drink liquor, and he will thus start to drink liquor. Even when he becomes addicted to liquor or somehow realizes that liquor is unbeneficial, due to the deluding power of *māyā*, he still cannot recognize that the *anyābhilāṣa* in his mind is an alien force. *anyābhilāṣa* is the false guru. Prof. Sanyal explains, “A person who places himself under the guidance of the reasoning faculty (...) thereby gives the direction of himself to the pseudo guru.” (Sanyal, 1933, Vol I, Chapter 3.) Due to falsely identifying with the material mind and its *anyābhilāṣa*, we cannot recognize this false guru. We thus think that we have no guru and can act independently. But actually it is not possible that anyone ever be devoid of following a guru.

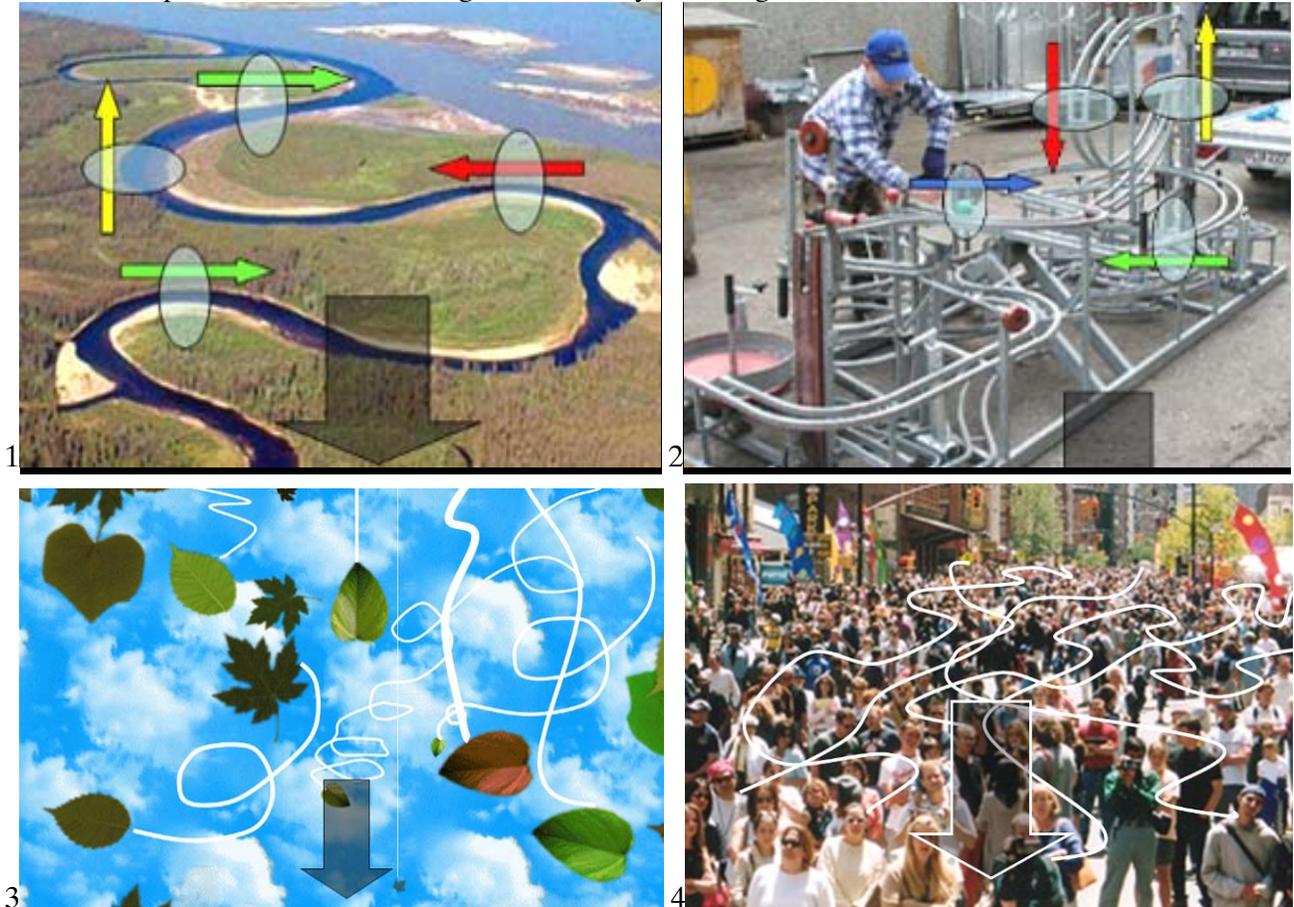
As the soul is by nature a servant of Kṛṣṇa,
the original Guru, the soul is by nature always under a Guru.

In the spiritual, cooperative consciousness, the soul accepts a Guru who is a representative of Kṛṣṇa. In the material, rebellious consciousness, the soul accepts either an external cheating guru or is unknowingly abiding by the orders of the false inner guru of *anyābhilāṣa*. If we are wise, we accept a real Guru, a Sad-Guru, who is a fully self-realized representative of Lord Kṛṣṇa and can deliver us from all pseudo gurus. The false guru preaches that we shall find happiness independently in the impermanent material world, whereas the real Guru teaches that we shall find happiness only in the eternal service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as that this is our eternal nature. The material energy only possesses some attractiveness due to being Kṛṣṇa’s reflection. As such there is material happiness, but due to its perverted nature it unavoidably ends in suffering because it is non-eternal and not complete. If the incomplete perverted material energy has such a strong attraction that it bewilders everybody – then what to speak of Kṛṣṇa’s complete spiritual energy, the original reality? It is only due to *anyābhilāṣa* that the *jīva* cannot appreciate the spiritual energy of Kṛṣṇa.

Once our *anyābhilāṣa* is removed, we are at once
fully attracted towards Kṛṣṇa via His *guru-śakti*.

We then begin to realize, that in reality, everything is constantly being attracted towards Kṛṣṇa by His *guru-śakti*, and this attraction is the sole reason for any motivation of any existing action. The one Lord Kṛṣṇa acts through His various energies in different wonderful ways according to His *acintya bhedābheda* nature.

Picture sequence 1: One attracting force – many resulting directions of movement



The examples in above picture sequence illustrate how various actions are caused by one unseen force. It is most impactful if we observe these phenomena in action; but mental appreciation is also effective. If we follow the directional flow of a winding river (picture 1), we will find that at various points the river flows in different – sometimes even opposing – directions. Yet the sole cause of all these different directional flows is the gravitational force, which pulls in one ultimate direction, but is diverted here and there in different directions, due to the shape and undulation of the earth's surface.

We say ‘the river flows’ – yet actually the water of the river is simply being attracted by the gravitation of the earth. Similarly, we see so many different actions in the lives of various people with seemingly different or opposed motives – but actually the only force of motivation is Kṛṣṇa's attraction force, His *guru-sakti*. All actions are interlinked in purpose like the flow of a many-branched winding river that ultimately moves towards the sea.

In the example of a marble run (picture 2), the marble or ball during a looping (yellow arrow) sometimes even moves opposite to its moving force, the gravitational force. Similarly, even the staunch atheist is simply a puppet in the hands of Kṛṣṇa who moves all and everything by dint of His multifarious energies and who is the actual source of attraction and impetus for *any* existent action in life: *yathā dārumayī nārī, yathā patramayo mṛgaḥ, evaṁ bhūtāni maghavann, īśa-tantrāṇi viddhi bhoh*, “O King Indra, as a wooden doll (...) cannot move or dance independently, but depends fully on the person who handles it, all of us dance according to the desire of the supreme controller, the Personality of Godhead. No one is independent.” – *SB* 6.12.10. *mama*

vartmānuvartante, manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ, “Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Prthā.”

The impossibility to materially conceive of this divine conduct is described in *Cc* 1.4.86: “My dear Lord, as You cause one to dance, he dances accordingly, but how he dances and who is causing him to dance he does not know.” Yet by the revelation of the Lord’s *acintya-bhedābheda* nature via His mercy that manifests in the form of Guru, we can get the spiritual vision that enables us to perceive the Lord’s hand in everything. When we observe falling leaves on a windless day (picture 3), we can see how they approach the earth in unlimited individual unique ways – yet their only force of attraction is gravitation, which is caused by Lord Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, if we watch various people on a busy street (picture 4), we observe that they all take individual courses. Nevertheless, the essential source of attraction that governs any human activity is exclusively Kṛṣṇa, the all-attractive Lord. This is how the confidential vision of *acintya bhedābheda* can enable us to realize how everything is moved by and running towards the same end – the all-attractive Lord Kṛṣṇa. This vision allows a complete reconciliation and unification of all existing activities – even seemingly opposed ones – in an essential universal purpose. The vision of *acintya-bhedābheda* is a wholesome vision of unity.

Due to *anyābhilāṣa*, we become covered by *māyā*, illusion, and confuse the effect for the cause, the done for the doer; we think the river to be flowing, the ball to be rolling and people to be doing things independently – we cannot realize that the river is made flow, the ball is made roll and people are made to act in certain ways by the Lord’s inconceivable energies. The instance that is created by *māyā* to make us think to be the material body and the doer is the false ego, the *ahaṅkāra*, literally ‘I am the doer’ (see Chapter 3.1). *prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni, guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ, ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā, kartāham iti manyate*, “The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of the illusory material nature.” – *Bg* 3.27. Only those who are freed from *anyābhilāṣa* by recovering their *sevābhilāṣa*, original service attitude, can escape the illusory energy by taking shelter of the Lord’s spiritual energy and thus see things as they are. They see how everything is done by the sole Doer, Lord Kṛṣṇa. When we become Kṛṣṇa-conscious, we can factually realize this, and not only theoretically see Kṛṣṇa and His *śakti* everywhere. Kṛṣṇa Himself explains: “A true *yogī* observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized person sees Me, the Supreme Lord, everywhere.” – *Bg* 6.29. By realizing the one Lord and His *guru-śakti* in various manifestations through the practice of *bhakti* (*Bg* 18.55), the vision or *darśana* of *acintya-bhedābheda* is attained. *Yo mām paśyati sarvatra, sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati, tasyāhaṁ na pranaśyāmi, sa ca me na pranaśyati*,

“For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me,
I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me.” – *Bhagavad-gītā* 6.30.

As such the doubt which was raised in the discussion of the above Gravitation-Allegory is now removed: Kṛṣṇa’s nature of being all-attractive and the function of Guru to exercise this attraction acts on one and all in creation, but due to *anyābhilāṣa*, this source of attraction is not recognized and instead the material nature seems to be the source of attraction. The more we become Kṛṣṇa-conscious and free from *anyābhilāṣa*, the more we realize how Kṛṣṇa attracts us through *guru-śakti* at every step in life, and as such the entire world becomes the stage-play of Guru and Kṛṣṇa. By the practice of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, one can factually observe Kṛṣṇa’s *guru-śakti* acting through everything, such as a river or falling leaves. These are simple examples given here; a successful disciple will be able to realize how *guru-śakti* acts in far more sublime phenomena beyond the grasp of material intellect and words.

“Śrī Gurudeva is present in every object as the supporting principle. (...) Every enlightened person is privileged to have a sight of Śrī Gurudeva in accordance with his particular mode of judgement. Śrī Gurudeva is that real

Entity who thus reveals Himself in the view of enlightened souls in a variety of ways.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, pp. 208 & 210.)

Thus the *acintya-bhedābheda* nature of *guru-śakti* is explained; how this one energy can simultaneously act in various ways through various media. As Lord Kṛṣṇa is the universal center of attraction, and as *guru-śakti* is the universal force of attraction, Kṛṣṇa attracts everyone equally through any media – it is merely a question of our affinity towards the Lord and of the Lord’s mercy that we can realize this. We don’t need to be born in a devotional family or have extent knowledge about Vedic science to realize the universal Lord Kṛṣṇa and His *guru-śakti*. What counts is our sincere yearning to realize the Absolute Truth beyond any prejudice or condition.

In Lord Kṛṣṇa’s *guru-śakti* we can find the one universal force that attracts all people through various sciences, philosophies, religions, etc.

If one cannot yet accept that the essence of Vedic science is humanity’s eternal original science, one can stick to the neutral approach. One can be open to everything such as various philosophies, but stay loyal only to the essential attracting force behind these things, trying to find the primary source of that attraction; the ultimate reality, the Fountainhead or Divinity. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda offers such an approach in what we may call the Universal Prayer: “We should be sending our prayers to the Fountainhead. (...) The prayer should be to this effect: ‘I know not what You are, what sort of colour etc. You have, I pray to know how I am to approach You’. He will then send things here which will show us His perfect form by rejecting all sorts of deluding features.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1874-1936, p. 343.) One can formulate this prayer in all languages and in poetry.

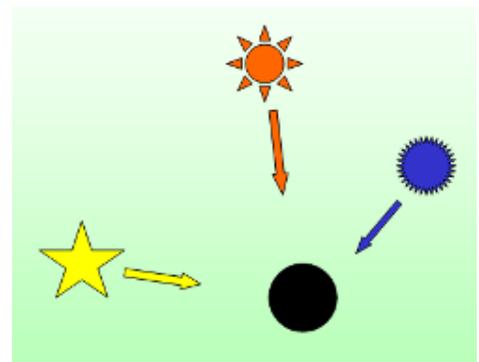
Oh Lord! I don’t know You ’cos I’m blind to see,
But, allmighty You, can reveal Yourself to me.

Oh Lord, please show me how I should approach Thee,
So You will reveal Your true Self unto me.

I want Your true Self whatever the price may be,
I’m devoted to You unconditionally.

Lord Kṛṣṇa assures that He will reveal Himself to His devotee: *teṣāṃ satata-yuktānāṃ, bhajatāṃ prīti-pūrvakam, dadāmi buddhi-yogaṃ taṃ, yena mām upayānti te*, “To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” *Bhagavad-gītā* 10.10.

The neutral approach to the Fountainhead can be compared with someone who tries to find a strong magnet with the help of a compass. He will be able to find the magnet by ascertaining the centers of attraction in various places. The extended lines of the direction of attraction shown by the compass in various places will all meet in the location of the magnet (see illustration). Similarly, in any culture, philosophy, science, art, religion, or in anything in creation, there is some attraction, and thus various people are attracted to it individually. However, only few people try to find the common center of *all* attractions, and even fewer will do so with the help of the inner compass – the *caitya-guru*, the spiritual master within. A layman who does not know the laws of attraction and observes the compass pointing to different directions in different places is likely to conclude that there are different sources of attraction in all different places. Similarly, because Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s attracting force of Guru acts in various ways in various



“Those in this world who understand Lord Kṛṣṇa as He is see all things, whether stationary or moving, as manifest forms of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such enlightened persons recognize no reality apart from Him.”
– *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.14.56.

Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda comments on this verse as follows: “Without being an expansion of Kṛṣṇa, nothing can be attractive. Whatever is attractive within the cosmic manifestation is due to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is therefore the reservoir of all pleasure. The active principle of everything is Kṛṣṇa, and highly elevated transcendentalists see everything in connection with Him.” Lord Kṛṣṇa is *vastutaḥ* (*SB* 5.18.5), the active principle or original essential substance, and He is also *śaktiman*, the original fountainhead of all energies. Therefore, anything in existence ultimately has its roots in Him, and any action or force is ultimately due to Him. Therefore, the God-realized persons see Lord Kṛṣṇa in everything. In order to clearly see the motor within a car, eyes and a torchlight are needed – yet material eyes are inadequate means to see the spiritual form of the Lord in all things, because He is Adhokṣaja, the Lord who cannot be seen by material vision, but merely by *bhakti* (*Bg* 18.55). If we had truly developed *bhakti*, we could factually see the Lord everywhere. For those who have not fully developed *bhakti*, the best way is to approach someone who has fully developed it and try to share in his vision: “Those who have received the clear vision of knowledge from the sunlike spiritual master can see You in this way, as the very Soul of all souls, the Supersoul of everyone’s own self. Thus understanding Your original Personality, they are able to cross over the ocean of illusory material existence.” – *SB* 10.14.24. Guru is like a spiritual sun that can reveal the Lord in everything.

If we understand the Lord’s wonderful *acintya-bhedābheda* nature,
we can see how He can simultaneously act and inspire through
any medium in many ways, although He remains unchanged.

A prime minister can access and act through various states, institutions and delegates without restrictions, but a normal citizen or even a delegate cannot do the same. Similarly, Lord Kṛṣṇa attracts people through teachings and people of various sciences, philosophies and religions. This further proves that He is above all of them, super-scientific, super-cultural and super-religious. His all-pervading omnipotence and attracting power in everything proves His universal Lordship and His *acintya-bhedābheda* nature. Should Śrī Kṛṣṇa be less than the Supreme Universal Lord, then He would be obstructed from attracting people through other media superior to Him, just as a citizen is obstructed from attracting money through the government. Śrī Kṛṣṇa therefore deservedly declares: *ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo, mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate, iti matvā bhajante mām, budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ*, “I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.” – *Bg* 10.8.

When we become more and more acquainted with the universal attraction force of *guru-śakti*, we will naturally desire to meet our spiritual master, who is the best media for *guru-śakti* and who is its very manifestation. Although radio waves are present everywhere, we cannot perceive them due to their being very subtle, but by the help of a radio tuner, we can not only capture but also understand them. Similarly, the Supreme Truth Lord Kṛṣṇa exists outside and inside of all living beings, and because He is spiritual, He is beyond the power of the material senses to see or to know (*bahir antaś ca bhūtānām, acaraṁ caram eva ca, sūkṣmatvāt tad avijñeyam*, *Bg* 13.16). But by the help of the spiritual master, we can learn how to realize the Lord and understand His purpose. By the mercy of Guru, we can perceive the seeming imperceptible Lord who is the root of all attraction. When we meets our spiritual master, we will feel attracted to him from within, because he is the embodiment of *guru-śakti*, which is the essential attraction of life, and because he is the personal associate of the all-attractive Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa within our own heart. Those who are serious about realizing the Supreme Lord and His *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* must accept the

process by which they can factually and individually realize Him, namely to accept the spiritual guidance of a spiritual master. Therefore, this topic is of great importance in this book.

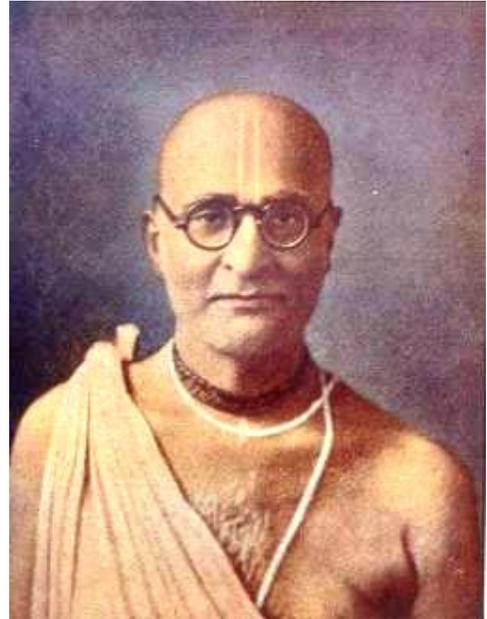
If we remembers the description of Lord Kṛṣṇa as Paramātmā, the Supersoul (see Chapter 5.5), we will find that it matches the description of the Lord's *guru-śakti*. In fact the Supersoul is the *caitya-guru*, the inner Guru. Yet as described in Chapter 5.5, it is very difficult to directly experience the Supersoul, and thus Kṛṣṇa appears as the spiritual master, so we can directly interact with and serve the Supersoul: *jīve sāksāt nāhi tâte guru caitya-rūpe, śikṣā-guru haya kṛṣṇa-mahānta-svarūpe*, "Since one cannot directly experience the Guru as the Supersoul [*caitya-guru*], Kṛṣṇa appears as the *śikṣā-guru* in the form of a highly advanced Vaiṣṇava [*mahānta-guru*]." – Cc 1.1.58. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda mentioned in this connection (*Vb*, EJ 2): "Both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master help the sincere soul. The spiritual master is the external manifestation of God, who is situated in everyone's heart as Supersoul. For one who is very serious about understanding the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Supersoul immediately renders assistance by directing him to a bona fide spiritual master. In this way the spiritual candidate is helped from within and without." He further mentions (TLK 13): "Therefore, Caitanya Mahāprabhu says (Cc 2.19.151), *guru-kṛṣṇa-kṛpāya pāya bhakti-latā-bija*,

‘By the grace of Kṛṣṇa, one gets a bona fide Guru,
and by the grace of the bona fide Guru, one gets Kṛṣṇa.’”

The following three excerpts are from the booklet *How To Find Guru* (Gopal Jiu, 2004).

1. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda:

The Supreme Lord acts as Guru in two ways: as the *caitya-guru* within the heart, and externally as the *mahānta-guru*, or pure devotee. If I am sincere, then the Lord reveals the *mahānta-guru* to me. We can go to a thousand different people with a petition in hand, but until our application is approved by the one person who can approve it, we get nowhere. The Supreme Lord is that person. Why He does or does not approve our request is something we cannot fathom. He is not a field laborer working in our personal garden. We have to be patient and wait. In the meantime, we should prepare ourselves by cultivating a service attitude and trying to eliminate extraneous desires. If we pray sincerely for the Lord's blessing, then He will graciously bless us. Through His grace we will find a bona fide spiritual master. *kṛṣṇa yadi kṛpā kare kona bhāgyavāne, guru-antaryāmi-rūpe śikhāya āpane*, "When Kṛṣṇa decides to be kind to some fortunate soul, then He personally directs that person from within as the Supersoul and from without as the spiritual master." – Cc 2.22.47.



Question: Who is the genuine Guru and how can we find him?

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda: The road to auspiciousness begins with taking shelter of a bona fide spiritual master. In accordance with God's plan, everyone on this earth finds a teacher that meets his or her particular needs and qualifications (...) If we are fortunate, if we truly seek out a genuine Guru with complete sincerity and persistence, and if we pray feelingly to the Lord to encounter such a spiritual master, then the Lord will surely lead us in this lifetime to a genuine Guru by taking shelter of whom we will be able to attain the greatest blessings. *brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva, guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bija*, "In the course of wandering through Brahmā's universal creation, some fortunate soul may receive the seed of the

creeper of devotion. This happens by the grace of the Guru and Kṛṣṇa.” – *Cc* 2.19.151. *kṛṣṇa yadi kṛpā kare kona bhāgyavāne, guru-antaryāmi-rūpe śikhāya āpane*, “If Kṛṣṇa is merciful to a particularly fortunate soul, then He comes Himself to teach him, either externally as the spiritual master or from within as the Supersoul.” – *Cc* 2.22.47. *guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana sāstrera pramāṇe, guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā karena bhakta-gaṇe*, “According to the revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is the manifestation of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa comes in the form of the Guru to show His mercy to the devotees.” – *Cc* 1.1.45.



2. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda: The best friend is the spiritual master because he saves one from the blazing fire of confusion.

O’Grady: The problem is to find this spiritual master.

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda: No, there is no problem. (...) God is not far away. God is within your heart. So if you are sincere, then God will give you a spiritual master. (...) Therefore, God is called *caitya-guru*, the spiritual master within the heart. And the physical spiritual master is God’s mercy. If God sees that you are sincere, He will give you a Guru who can give you protection. He will help you from within and without, without in the physical form of spiritual master, and within as the spiritual master within the heart. That is stated, *īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ hṛd-deśe ‘rjuna tiṣṭhati, bhrāmāyān sarva-bhūtāni yantrārūdhāni māyayā*, “The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone’s heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy.” – *Bg* 18.61. (...) First of all we must be eager to again revive our God consciousness. Then God will give us the spiritual master (*Vb*. 1974 conversations).

3. Devotee: How does one recognize a *sādhū* [a pure devotee]?

Śrīla Goura Govinda Mahārāja: Cry before Kṛṣṇa. Only He can help you to find a *sādhū*. You can’t recognize a *sādhū*. You have no vision to see the *sādhū*. If you try by yourself to recognize *sādhū*, then you will be cheated. If you are serious, then cry before Him. “O Kṛṣṇa! I am your servant!” (...) When you cry like that, Kṛṣṇa is there in your heart as Paramātmā. He will say, “Oh, now he is crying for Me.” Then He makes an arrangement. This is the proper way. If by your own effort you try to recognize a *sādhū*, you will be cheated. You can’t see a *sādhū*. You have no vision at all. You



see only all outward, external things. You can’t see the real thing. There are many persons who are only outwardly *sādhū*s. You will be enchanted by their external activities: “Oh, he is a great *sādhū*! Yes, he is producing gold¹⁸²!” You will be cheated. (...) A real *sādhū* is one who is completely absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, day and night, twenty-four hours. He has gotten Kṛṣṇa. He is with Kṛṣṇa. He can give you Kṛṣṇa. You can’t see him. You have no vision. You can only cry for Kṛṣṇa from the core of your heart. This is not an external cry. It is internal. Then Kṛṣṇa, who is in your heart, will see that you are crying and He will help you. He will make arrangement for you to meet such a *sādhū*. That is the arrangement of Kṛṣṇa. When you meet such a person you will feel some spontaneous attraction from the core of your heart. That attraction is the proof. Devotee:

To meet a *sādhū* is so rare. How can one get the opportunity?

Śrīla Goura Govinda Mahārāja: It’s a fact that it is rare, but if you are really crying for it then Kṛṣṇa can make an arrangement. It is impossible for you, but nothing is impossible for Kṛṣṇa. (...) Your

¹⁸² Some *yogīs* show off their mystical powers by manifesting gold, fruits, etc. to attract followers.

motto is, “Seeing is believing.” You cannot see, so you cannot believe. Because you are a conditioned soul, your vision is defective. You cannot see a *sādhu*. Kṛṣṇa is there, can you see Him? No, you cannot, because you are not endowed with proper vision. First develop the proper vision, and then you can see Kṛṣṇa. Then you can see how a *sādhu* is there. It is not a fact that *sādhus* are not present. (...) Devotee: So we have to associate with a living *sādhu*? Śrīla Goura Govinda Mahārāja: Definitely. There is always one there. But he is not a cheap person. Such a person is very rare. If you can get his mercy then you can see him. Otherwise, by your own effort and perception, you cannot see him. No, no, no. You always think that you are *draṣṭā*, the seer, and that the *sādhu* is *drṣṭa*, the one to be seen. (...) But it is just the reverse.

You are to be seen and they are the seers! Think this over very deeply!

Devotee: How are we seen by *sādhu*? By our service?

Śrīla Goura Govinda Mahārāja: Yes. The *sādhu* is the seer. If he showers his mercy upon you, he sees you. If you receive that merciful glance then you are very fortunate. (...) Guru is the manifestation of the Supersoul, *caitya-guru* in the heart. He manifests a body and appears. He knows your heart.



Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja explained: “It is essential to take shelter of a bona fide Guru – a bona fide spiritual doctor. An experienced doctor is capable of treating the patient, but a mere doctor in name, without experience, cannot treat the patient. So-called *gurus*, so-called *sādhus*, cannot have the capacity to treat the disease of the enslaved *jīvas*, embodied souls. Mahādeva’s instruction to Pārvatī is mentioned in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*: *guravo bahavaḥ śanti, śiṣya-vittāpahārakāḥ, durlabhaḥ sad-gurur devī, śiṣya-santāpa hārahakāḥ*, ‘There may be many so-called gurus in this world to squeeze money from disciples, but a bona fide Guru who can remove the drawbacks and sufferings of disciples is very rare.’ If we want quality, we cannot get quantity. If we are keen to increase quantity, we shall have to sacrifice quality. Who is the bona fide Guru? What are the characteristics of a bona fide Guru? Prabuddha Muni’s instructions in regard to this: *tasmād gurum prapadyeta, jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam, sābde pare ca niṣṇātām, brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam*, ‘Therefore, enquire from Gurudeva about the best eternal welfare with complete submission to him. A

bona fide Guru is endowed with two special qualities: (1) He is well-versed in the authentic scriptures and (2) he has practical realization of Divinity. For him the mundane world holds no charm.’ – *SB* 11.3.21. (...) Only by theoretical knowledge of the scriptures, without having practical realization, the spiritual guide cannot give proper advice and direction in accordance with the eligibility of the disciple. By the instruction of a Guru possessing the quality of practical realization, the disciple can acquire actual spiritual progress. A disciple can have the capacity to comprehend the scriptural knowledge of Gurudeva by hearing from him; but how can a disciple understand whether Gurudeva has got realization of Divinity or not? The Supreme Lord is the Transcendental Reality; His Absolute Counterpart Gurudeva is also transcendental. Therefore, a neophyte votary cannot understand Gurudeva’s realization of Divinity by his own endeavour. There are two aspects of the Supreme Lord and His Absolute Counterpart Gurudeva – (1) the morphological aspect and (2) the ontological aspect. By their mind, intellect and sense-organs, the conditioned souls can only grasp the morphological, i.e. the external aspect of the thing – the thing as it appears – and not the thing as it is. The thing as it is can be realized only by the grace of Transcendental Realities, through complete unconditional surrender. As for example the self-luminous sun can only be known by its own light and not by the help of other lights. We cannot see the sun at night with the help of other lights, but when the sun rises, by accepting the grace of the sun – its light – we can see the sun and all

things of this world in the proper perspective. The Supreme Lord and His Absolute Counterpart Gurudeva are self-effulgent. In his commentary, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has given the bona fide neophyte aspirants a clue to recognize Guru by one external quality: a bona fide Guru is not subdued by passions – anger, greed etc. Of course, a realized soul can use the passions for the service of the Supreme Lord and for the eternal benefit of conditioned souls, but He can never be subjugated by them.” (Tīrtha 4, 2005.)

The following is summarized from Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja’s video conferences: “Kṛṣṇa Himself, although He is the cause of all causes, played the pastime of accepting a Guru. Rāmacandra Himself played the pastime of accepting a Guru. Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu Himself played the pastime of accepting a Guru. Why? To teach us, that without Guru you cannot get complete realization and love of God. It is essential – but it is very rare to get a bona fide Guru. It is said; *śrotriyam brahma-niṣṭham*, Guru should be *śrotriyam* and *brahma-niṣṭham*. Not only *śrotriyam*, well-versed in the *Vedas* and other allied scriptures and having gotten the *mantra* through preceptorial channel. That is not the only qualification.

“The main qualification is: He should have realization of the Absolute Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Practical realization, not theoretical!

“*brahma-niṣṭham*, his mind should be fixed on *brahma*, *parabrahma*, Kṛṣṇa. Then He is Sad-Guru. You’ll find instance of this in the biography of Prahlāda Mahārāja. His father, King Hiranyakaśipu, asked him: ‘Tell me – what is *sādhu*¹⁸³?’ According to Hiranyakaśipu’s knowledge, Ṣaṅḍa and Amarka, Prahlāda’s school teachers, were his gurus, and Hiranyakaśipu wanted to hear about them. Prahlāda understood that desire of his father. But Ṣaṅḍa and Amarka only taught him politics, which is not the best (*sādhu*) or essential teaching of a *sādhu*. (...) Although he respected them, when his father asked him what *sādhu* is in front of the assembly in court, he didn’t mention Ṣaṅḍa and Amarka, otherwise people would have misunderstood what true *sādhu* was. Prahlāda thought: ‘I shall speak what I have heard from Nārada Muni – he knows what *sādhu*, the best, is.’ And so he said: ‘Worship of Viṣṇu and renunciation of non-eternal things is *sādhu*, the best!’ Ṣaṅḍa and Amarka were one type of guru; they were *śrotriyam*, well-versed in the *Vedas*, but they could not understand the implication of their meaning. You have to go to a *suddha-bhakta*, a pure devotee who has got pure love for Kṛṣṇa. That is essential – practical knowledge should be there. *tad viddhi pranipātena, paripraśnena sevayā, upadekṣyanti te jñānam, jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*, ‘Just try to learn the Absolute Truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the Absolute Truth.’ – Bg 4.34. He should have practical realization! Otherwise how can he help? So-called gurus are many, but actual Guru is very rare. You should get the real seed of devotion – or else it will be a lifeless seed.” (June 6th 2004.) “All souls have natural love for Kṛṣṇa, but due to contact with the illusory energy, the soul is enveloped with impurities. The awakened soul will awaken in others the eternal causeless devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That is the only way! No enslaved *jīva* can awaken another *jīva*. If all are sleeping – where is the question of one awakening the others? One person who is awake can awaken many other persons. For that reason, we require bona fide *sādhus*, whose life is actually dedicated to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (...) If you accompany them, then your eternal nature will be revealed and manifested.” (March 5th 2005.)

Keeping false material non-eternal designations (*upādhis*) of “I am a man/woman, I am of such and such family and country, I am learned in this or that field” and trying to similarly measure Kṛṣṇa and Guru according to such judgments, all this stands in the way of complete surrender and admittance into the eternal realm of surrendered blissful souls. In front of Kṛṣṇa and His transcendental names, forms, qualities, associates, abodes and pastimes; in front of our true and only

¹⁸³ *sādhu* can mean both ‘the best’ or ‘saintly person, Guru’. Hiranyakaśipu wanted to hear about the best of what Prahlāda had learned in school; but Prahlāda took the chance to instruct the public about true *sādhu*, actual Guru and actual best teaching; worship of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.

eternal Partner, associates and abode, we must not keep up our non-eternal designations of material name, gender, qualities, family members, associates and experiences. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī quotes a verse from the *Nārada-pañcarātra* that defines pure devotion as completely free from *upādhis*, material designations, and rendered with all senses solely for the pleasure of the Lord, the master of all senses (*sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam, tat-paratvena nirmalam, hr̥ṣīkeṇa hr̥ṣīkeśa, sevnam bhaktir ucyate*, quoted in *Brs* 1.1.12). Guru and Kṛṣṇa cannot be measured or detected with our material conception. They cannot be seen directly, independently; They are *acintya*, materially inconceivable; They are the actual Seers – They are to see us, our sincerity, surrender and devotion. Then, by being pleased, They reveal Themselves in our heart, and then only can They be seen indirectly, by Their mercy. They are not to be measured – They are the Final Dimension and the Measurers – They are to measure us. It is not that They can be reached merely by our own efforts – They must reveal Themselves to us out of Their own will and mercy. Could They be attained materially, then that would indicate that They are not spiritual. “In the presence of the sun there is nothing to be revealed by the light of a glow-worm. Similarly, there is nothing for me to make known in Your presence, for You are the omniscient Supersoul.” – *SB* 6.16.46. It is not that in the dark night of our ignorance we can hold up our tiny glowworms of material brains and expect to trace out the sun of Guru and Kṛṣṇa – the transcendental sun of Guru and Kṛṣṇa will appear by His own sweet will, potency and mercy. We can only pray to Guru and Kṛṣṇa and try to attract Their mercy by our sincere desire and conduct. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda often said:

“Don’t try to see God –
act in such a way that God wants to see you!”

Those who think that a true Guru must be evident to their material senses are completely wrong. Transcendence never submits to matter by law. Transcendence only reveals Her- and Himself out of mercy to a truly inquisitive, humble aspirant of the service of Transcendence. “Ordinary men cannot understand the devotees – only other devotees can understand them.” – *Sātvata-tantra* 4.75. Most people were unable to recognize even the Supreme Personality of Godhead when He appeared as Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Lord Kṛṣṇa. Most people also did not recognize Their eternal associates. It is thus not the least baffling that the true Guru is not recognized by most. The scriptures describe Guru’s qualities, but if we try to ascertain a qualified Guru with material vision – if we lack the essential internal humble spirit of devotion and strong desire to serve – we will be cheated. Whereas if we are unable to search externally, but internally cry longingly for Guru with the sole aim to become qualified to serve the Lord, then the Lord will send a bona fide Guru to wherever we may be, be it a prison or on the North Pole. This is so, because actually Lord Kṛṣṇa is more eager to have the living beings with Him than they are to be with Him. He created the living beings for having loving relationships with them, yet real love includes freedom of will and surrender of free will. As such it must be understood with firm faith, that as soon as we whole-heartedly desire to return to the service of the Lord, He at once will make all arrangements and send Guru to us, just like a mother will make all arrangements for the return of her child who ran away and then decided to return.

One may argue that if we cannot see Guru, why should we cry for him? In this regard, we should remember that Guru can only be recognized by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, not by material eyes. Actually, one who is serious about attracting the Lord’s mercy by which His pure devotee or Guru is revealed will not waste a second with arguments, just as a child who has lost vision of his mother will not waste time with arguments, but will at once start to cry.

If the child cannot see its mother,
 this only makes it cry the more.
 Similarly, if we cannot see God and Guru,
 we should not pray less, but all the more.

The prayer or cry that will attract the Lord's mercy is not a cry for material benefits, but an inner cry to return to our real nature of eternal service to the Lord and His devotees. This crying is most efficiently expressed in *sañkīrtana* (see Chapter 15). The holy name as well as the impetus to chant arise in our heart when we come in touch with a pure devotee, as Śrī Caitanya stated (*Cc* 2.16.74): *yāñhāra darśane mukhe āise kṛṣṇa-nāma, tāñhāre jāñiha tumi 'vaiṣṇava-pradhāna'*,

“A first-class Vaiṣṇava is he whose very presence
 makes others chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.”

Here the Lord Himself gives us another important hint as to how to know if someone is qualified to be a spiritual master; by his association we will be inspired to chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, i.e. our yearning for Guru and Kṛṣṇa will develop. The vision by which to see a *sādhu*, a Guru, is given by Kṛṣṇa to one who has a sincere service attitude and a strong yearning to attain the Lord's mercy. Usually, people lack this affinity. Yet, if we are truly desirous of attaining it, then it is common sense that we should get this service attitude from those who have it; by associating with sincere devotees, by inquiring and hearing from them and by serving them. Desires develop according to association (*sañgāt sañjāyate kāmahaḥ*, *Bg* 2.62). A man is known by the company he keeps. *vaiṣṇava dehete thāke śrī-kṛṣṇera śakti, sei deha sparṣe anye haya kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, “The Vaiṣṇava or pure devotee is an abode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's potencies. By coming in touch with him, one receives *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*.” – *Śrī Harināma Cintāmañi* 4.52 (Bhaktivinoda 2, 1900, p. 33). *prasañgam ajaram pāsam, ātmanaḥ kavayo viduḥ, sa eva sādhuṣu kṛto, mokṣa-dvāram apāvṛtam*, “Every learned man knows very well that attachment for the material through material association is the greatest entanglement of the spirit soul. But that same attachment, when applied to the self-realized devotees, achieved by associating with them, opens the door of liberation.” – *SB* 3.25.20. *susrūṣoḥ śraddadhānasya, vāsudeva-kathā-ruciḥ, syān mahat-sevayā viprah, puñya-tīrtha-niṣevanāt*, “O twice-born sages, by serving those devotees who are completely freed from all vice, great service is done. By such service, one gains affinity for hearing the messages of Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa].” – *SB* 1.2.16. *yasya yat-sañgatiḥ puñso mañivat syāt sa tad-guṇaḥ, sva-kularddhye tato dhīmān sva-yuthāny eva samśrayet*, “As the qualities of a nearby object are reflected in a crystal, one similarly takes on the qualities of a person with whom he associates. Therefore, in order to increase one's devotion, a wise person should associate with pure devotees.” – *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* 8.51 quoted in *Jaiva-dharma* 20. “Hearing or associating with devotees is the most important function for self-realization.” – *SB* 3.25.27, purport by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

If we full-heartedly pray to Kṛṣṇa, then Kṛṣṇa will reveal to us which devotees have love for Guru, and He will arrange for perfect opportunities to learn from them. By cultivating our own yearning for a true Guru in such favorable association, we will become very sincere about attaining Sad-Guru, and then Kṛṣṇa will finally reveal who our Guru is, and by Guru's grace, we will attain Kṛṣṇa. We will realize, that this seemingly indirect first approach to Guru through those who have love for Guru is actually the quickest way, just as it is the quickest way to approach Kṛṣṇa through Guru. The following analogy shall illustrate how the indirect approach to Kṛṣṇa through Guru is actually the most efficient approach. Those who have been to the ancient rainforest know that it is so dense, that at ground level there is very little light. The tribal people of the rainforest are rarely exposed to the sun, and many of them like the Penan of Borneo thus have very fair skin. The many clouds over the rainforest also shield off the sunlight.

The moon analogy: attaining personal vision through empathetic vision



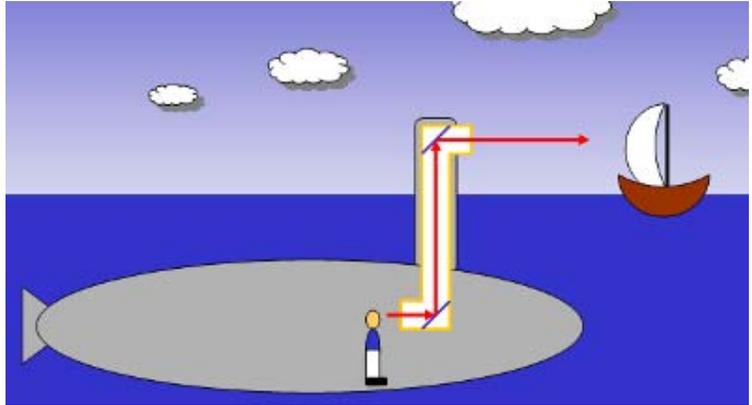
For the sake of illustration, let us imagine that there exists such a tribe that has never seen the moon due to these circumstances. One day, a scientist from outside who visited them, to try to impress them, made a painting of the moon, and told them that this was the moon. After he had left, the tribals declared all people from outside the forest to be mad, because they believe in a moon, a 'night sun', although the sun only shines at day. They kept the painting of the moon, and whenever they looked at it, they would laugh about 'these mad men who believe in a night sun'. One cloudless full-moon night, a visitor from outside sat in a spot where the moon shone through a gap in the clouds and the branches of the trees, and his face lit up with amazement and with the light of the moon. Two tribal men saw him, and from his face, they could tell that he was witnessing something extraordinary. They asked him: "What do you see, what do you see?" The visitor then pointed at the moon and said "I'm looking at the moon!" But, looking towards the same direction, the two tribal men could not see the moon, because they were in a different position at which branches were obstructing their vision. "We cannot see any moon. Don't you know that the moon does not exist?" After the visitor further insisted on seeing the moon, one of the two tribal men became annoyed, called the visitor a mad man and left. The other tribal man, who was more intelligent, could see that the visitor's face was lit in a special light, and he had some faith in the visitor's words. He thought that the visitor must be seeing something that he himself could not see. He addressed the visitor softly: "Please show me what you see. I cannot see it, what shall I do?" The visitor thereupon called him closer, and pointed through the gap in the branches. Moving closer, the tribal man suddenly also saw the full-moon, and his face also lit up.

Similar to the moon, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is present to those fortunate souls who are in the position of seeing Him. The tribals represent gross materialists. The dense jungle represents the jungle of material life with all its misidentifications and misconcepts that cover the true spiritual self and its vision, and the clouds represent the covering of the living entities' vision of God. We can only have the vision of God, when, by His mercy, we are able to see through both layers of jungle and clouds. The scientist represents a preacher who is not taken serious by materialistic people, and the painting

of the moon represents the reproduced holy scriptures, which, although not imaginary, are taken as such by the ignorants. The visitor who pointed out the moon represents the spiritual master. The tribal man who developed faith in him represents the intelligent or graced materialist who develops faith in the spiritual master and the holy scriptures by empathetic vision, i.e. by seeing the light of love of God being reflected in the spiritual master's face, and moreover by empathetically trying to attain his position of vision.

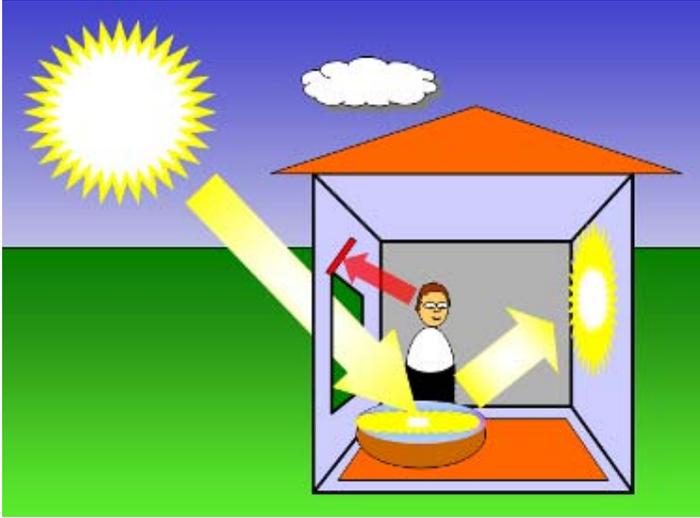
Empathetic vision of Śrī Kṛṣṇa means, that we similarly develop faith in the spiritual master's words by appreciating the light of the Lord reflected in the master's sublime character, enthusiasm, wisdom and behavior. The powerful effect of seeing those who are God-realized is described in *Caitanya-bhāgavata* 1.12.283: "One can become free from material bondage simply by seeing the fortunate souls whose hearts have been touched by the blissful existence of the Supreme Lord."

The best way of empathetic vision would be if we could directly take part in God's perception of the spiritual master, like the presiding demigods of the senses: "We eleven presiding deities of the various senses, headed by Lord Śiva, are most fortunate, because the senses of these pure devotees of Vṛndāvana are the cups through which we repeatedly drink the nectarean beverage of the honey of Your lotus feet." – Lord Brahmā to Lord Kṛṣṇa in *SB* 10.14.33. We may not be able to have such direct insight as the demigods, but by hearing from the spiritual master and appreciating his realizations of devotion, we can empathetically share in his vision. This empathetic vision through *śabda*¹⁸⁴, testimony of experts, is not less scientific than the empathetic vision of a science student who empathetically shares in the vision of his professor by hearing from him about his experiments. Another example of empathetic vision is the vision of people who hear the news of a radio station via the *śabda* of a correspondent stationed in a foreign country; or the vision of the captain of a submerged submarine who sees what is happening on the surface of the water with the help of the *śabda* of a periscope (see illustration). Thus the God-realized spiritual master is like a transcendental professor who shares his exalted realizations with his students; he is like a correspondent from the spiritual realm. The pure mirror of his heart is like a transcendental periscope that is mercifully situated both in the spiritual realm as well as in the material realm, to benefit the conditioned souls who take shelter of him.



the nectarean beverage of the honey of Your lotus feet." – Lord Brahmā to Lord Kṛṣṇa in *SB* 10.14.33. We may not be able to have such direct insight as the demigods, but by hearing from the spiritual master and appreciating his realizations of devotion, we can empathetically share in his vision. This empathetic vision through *śabda*¹⁸⁴, testimony of experts, is not less scientific than the empathetic vision of a science student who empathetically shares in the vision of his professor by hearing from him about his experiments. Another example of empathetic vision is the vision of people who hear the news of a radio station via the *śabda* of a correspondent stationed in a foreign country; or the vision of the captain of a submerged submarine who sees what is happening on the surface of the water with the help of the *śabda* of a periscope (see illustration). Thus the God-realized spiritual master is like a transcendental professor who shares his exalted realizations with his students; he is like a correspondent from the spiritual realm. The pure mirror of his heart is like a transcendental periscope that is mercifully situated both in the spiritual realm as well as in the material realm, to benefit the conditioned souls who take shelter of him.

¹⁸⁴ *śabda* has been established as a source of knowledge superior to personal evaluation by Śrī Jīva in Chapter 3.5.



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.27.12 mentions: *yathā jala-stha ābhāsaḥ, sthala-sthenāvadṛśyate, svābhāsenā tathā sūryo, jala-sthena divi sthitaḥ*, “The presence of the Supreme Lord can be realized just as the sun is realized either as a reflection on water or as a second reflection on the wall of a room. Although being reflected on the wall and on water, the sun itself is permanently situated in the sky.” In the illustration, the man in the house is unable to see the sun directly, but he can see the sun’s various reflections. Similarly, due to material coverings, we may not yet be able to see the Supreme Lord directly, but we can nevertheless appreciate the workings of

His various energies and their further reflections. We can for example appreciate the wonderful way in which everything in material nature is well-designed and organized through His energies.

Unlike the material energies of the Lord that are perceptible to some extent, His spiritual energies cannot directly be perceived by a conditioned soul. The easiest way to get a glimpse into the Supreme Lord’s spiritual energies is by hearing *śabda-brahma*, transcendental testimony of the Vedic literature and self-realized saints. The Supreme Lord is reflected in the pure mirror of the spiritual master’s heart, and although we may not be able to see that reflection, we can appreciate the Lord’s further reflections into *śabda-brahma* spoken by the spiritual master, and in his pure devotion and way of living. By empathetic contemplation, we can to some extent share in the spiritual master’s devotional realizations and divine vision.

Simultaneously, we should approach Guru and Kṛṣṇa practically (just like the tribal who approached the visitor); we should not only mentally appreciate Guru’s vision, but also start to *practically* move closer to the spiritual master, i.e. we should start to practice *bhakti* ourselves, and by that, the obstacles that hinder our vision (represented by the branches and the clouds in the moon analogy) slowly disappear; or we are at least able to peak through them to some extent by the Guru’s mercy. It is noteworthy that the spiritual master is even more merciful than the Supreme Lord: The Supreme Lord waits until we are interested in Him before He showers His mercy on us, whereas the spiritual master kindly calls even those who are in ignorance close to the Lord. This is because the Lord wants to be approached through His devotee, as mentioned earlier. Moving closer to the pure devotee or Guru does not mean to merely imitate him externally, i.e. to stay in the same place and wear the same cloths as him. Moving closer to Guru includes a complete internal transformation of the heart. It involves becoming purified from the various coverings of material misidentifications and false desires through the practice of *bhakti*, especially the chanting of the holy name given by the spiritual master, and through his holy association. The pure devotee, like no one else, has a pure affinity to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and in his association our own affinity to serve Kṛṣṇa can be enkindled, just as iron becomes magnetic in the association of a strong magnet. By taking full shelter of, humbly inquiring from, and rendering favorable service to the spiritual master, we can attract his mercy by which our material coverings are removed. Thus we attain love of God. By love of God only can we serve and realize the Supreme Lord.

God-realization finally leads to complete faith arising from direct experience. At this stage, no doubter will be able to dissuade us from our realizations, as they are evident to the pure spiritual

self. Such direct evidence is more substantive than any evidence we can possibly acquire in the material realm.

Thus we can distinguish between three types of faith:

- (1) Blind faith or dogmatic faith that follows materialistic science, non-transcendental religion or unrealized devotees who cannot give practical God-realization.
- (2) Empathetic faith by empathetic vision through the media of a realized Guru.
- (3) Direct faith stemming from personal realization.

Summarizing, there are two crucial points: association of a Guru, i.e. a God- and self-realized devotee, and proper practical behavior with him, which includes sincere practice of *bhakti*. Then only can we gradually attain the auspicious vision of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa can only be realized by *bhakti*, loving devotion (*Bg* 18.55). Yet, “Unless there is realization of the transcendental form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, there is no question of love of God.” (Bhaktivedanta 2, 1980, p. 245.) *bhakti* cannot be manufactured; it can only be received from the Supreme Lord Himself, yet He is only attainable by *bhakti*. This appears to be a paradoxical situation. How can it be overcome? We must be given eyes of love of God from a spiritual master, who possesses love of God. The man in the analogy can ascertain that he does not see the moon, yet his friends can see the moon. Similarly, if we are simple-hearted, we can attest that we do not see Kṛṣṇa; but the pure devotee sees Him both externally and internally. Thus, in the pure devotee’s association, we can have the association of Kṛṣṇa, despite not yet being completely qualified. Further, the pure devotee can give us eyes of love of God. This – not material gains – is the real mercy of the pure devotee or Guru.

Before giving sermons, devotees usually chant this *mantra* (*Gautamīya-tantra*, quoted from *SB* 1.8.18, purport):

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya
jñānāñjana-śalākayā
cakṣur unmīlitam yena
tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master,
who, with the torchlight of knowledge has opened my eyes,
which were blinded by the darkness of ignorance.”

To cite an example, Sañjaya was given divine vision by his spiritual master, Śrīla Vedavyāsa. By dint of this inner vision, Sañjaya told the blind king Dhṛtarāṣṭra of all the events happening at the same time at a distance on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. In this way, Sañjaya narrated the contents of the entire *Bhagavad-gītā*. Then Sañjaya said: (*Bhagavad-gītā* 18.75): *vyāsa-prasādāc chrutavān, etad guhyam aham param, yogam yogesvarāt kṛṣṇāt, sāksāt kathayataḥ svayam,*



“By the mercy of Vyāsa, I have heard these most confidential talks directly from the master of all mysticism, Kṛṣṇa, who was speaking personally to Arjuna.”

Sañjaya declares that his perception of Kṛṣṇa was *sākṣāt*, direct, although he was physically absent. The usage of the term *sākṣāt* makes clear, that unlike the partial material transmission through telephone or video conference, the spiritual revelation of Kṛṣṇa through Guru is non-distorted and thus direct. This is so, because, as per the goal advocated by the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, the spiritual master is cent percent one in will with Lord Kṛṣṇa, although playing the part of an individual instrument. By uniting in will with his Guru, who is one in will with Lord Kṛṣṇa, a sincere disciple like Sañjaya can attain union with Lord Kṛṣṇa. This shows how a sincere devotee of Kṛṣṇa is never separated from Him due to his inner vision through his union in will with Kṛṣṇa as advocated by the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*.

King Dhṛtarāṣṭra was not God-realized, and further he was blind; yet he was able to have empathetic vision of Kṛṣṇa by hearing *śabda* from Sañjaya. This is the art of Vedic science. This art of successful transcendental science is indicated in the very first verse of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, where Dhṛtarāṣṭra inquires from Sañjaya (*dharma-kṣetre kuru-kṣetre, Bg 1.1*). Inquiry from God-realized devotees is the first step towards transcendence. Such pure devotees have themselves received this realization from spiritual masters, not by their own efforts.

In this way, the disciplic succession with its bona fide representatives can enable us to overcome the seemingly insolvable task of realizing Lord Kṛṣṇa by granting first empathetic and then direct vision of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The only reasonable and auspicious path in this material world is to engage in one’s real inherent nature of *bhakti*, one’s *sanātana-dharma*. As explained earlier, most conditioned souls are averse to *bhakti* due to *anyābhilāṣa*, separatist desires; yet *bhakti* must be practiced voluntarily in order to realize Kṛṣṇa. This gap can only be overcome with the help of a self- and God-realized saint, a bona fide Guru, by whose association and guidance we can attain *bhakti*. Actually Kṛṣṇa is present everywhere and in every heart as the Supersoul (*Bg 15.15*), but due to separatist desires we cannot see Him. Hence the necessity of Guru is understood: *jīve sākṣāt nāhi tāte guru caitya-rūpe, śikṣā-guru haya kṛṣṇa mahānta-svarūpe*, “Since one cannot visually

experience the presence of the Supersoul, He appears before us as a liberated devotee. Such a spiritual master is none other than Kṛṣṇa Himself.” – *Cc* 1.1.58. *īśvara-svarūpa bhakta tānra adhiṣṭhāna, bhaktera hṛdaye kṛṣṇera satata viśrāma*, “A pure devotee constantly engaged in the loving service of the Lord is identical with the Lord, who is always seated in his heart.” – *Cc* 1.1.61. *bhavad-vidhā bhāgavatās, tīrtha-bhūtāḥ svayaṁ vibho, tīrthī-kurvanti tīrthāni, svāntaḥ-sthena gadābhṛtā*, “Pure devotees like you are verily all holy places personified, because you carry the Personality of Godhead within your heart and thus you turn all places into places of pilgrimage.” – *SB* 1.13.10.

Guru is one in will with Kṛṣṇa, as explained earlier in this chapter. Kṛṣṇa wants pure *bhakti*, and Guru has pure *bhakti*. Due to Guru’s pure *bhakti*, Kṛṣṇa is always present in his heart, and thus wherever there is Guru, there is also Kṛṣṇa, who Himself says: *sādhavo hṛdayaṁ mahyaṁ, sādhuṅāṁ hṛdayaṁ tv aham, mad-anyaṭ te na jānanti, nāhaṁ tebhyo manāg api*, “The pure devotee is always within the core of My heart, and I am always in the heart of the pure devotee. My devotees do not know anything else but Me, and I do not know anyone else but them.” – *SB* 9.4.68. This verse also explains another point: Kṛṣṇa recognizes only saints as truly His. To get the favor of a saint or Guru is very valuable, because then Kṛṣṇa also recognizes us through the saint’s association. Kṛṣṇa wants to be approached via Guru because He wants to give His pure devotees all credits. Therefore, He reveals Himself via the transparent media of Guru, who carries Kṛṣṇa in his heart.

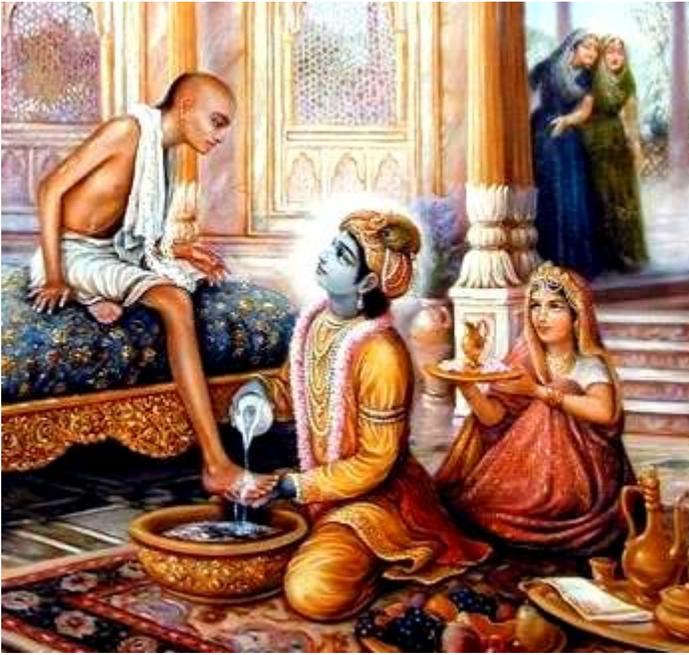
Guru and Kṛṣṇa are one in association, desire and quality,
but two in person according to the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*.
Because Guru is one in desire with Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa is always in the
heart of Guru, and Guru is always in the heart of Kṛṣṇa.

Guru is as worshipable as Kṛṣṇa because Kṛṣṇa is always in his heart, and because he is one in will and quality with Kṛṣṇa. It has been explained how the spiritual master as a person is different from Kṛṣṇa, but because he is one in will with Him, Kṛṣṇa and His *guru-sakti* always give him full association and guidance. The Supreme Lord mentioned: “You should accept a highly elevated Paramahansa, a self-realized spiritual master. In this way, you should place your faith and love in Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (*haṁse gurau mayi bhaktyānuvṛtyā*, *SB* 5.5.10). In fact the worship of Guru is direct worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa, because by worshiping Kṛṣṇa’s pure devotee, we please Kṛṣṇa directly and to the highest degree because His devotees are more dear to Him than even His own self. Lord Kṛṣṇa says to His devotee Uddhava: *na tathā me priyatama, ātma-yonir na saṅkaraḥ, na ca saṅkaraṣaṇo na śrīr, naivātmā ca yathā bhavān*, “My dear Uddhava, neither Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, Lord Saṅkaraṣaṇa, the goddess of fortune nor indeed My own self is as dear to Me as you are.” – *SB* 11.14.15. Just as a mother is more pleased if we please her child than if we please her directly, similarly the Lord is most pleased if we serve His devotees. Thus serving the Lord’s devotees is the most efficient way to attract the Lord’s mercy and attain all perfection. This is nicely described in the following verses: *mad-bhakta-pūjābhyadhikā, sarva-bhūteṣu man-matiḥ*,

“Worshiping My devotees is better than worshiping Me.”
– Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.19.21.

ye me bhakta-janāḥ pārtha, na me bhaktās ca te janāḥ, mad-bhaktānāṁ ca ye bhaktās, te me bhakta-tamā matāḥ, “My dear Pārtha, one who claims to be My devotee is not truly My devotee. Only the person who says that he is the devotee of My devotees is actually My devotee.” – Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Ādi Purāna*, quoted in *Cc* 2.11.28. *arcayitvā tu govindam, tadiyaṁ nārcayet tu yaḥ, na sa bhāgavato jñeyāḥ, kevalaṁ dāmbhikaḥ smṛtaḥ*, “One who performs worship of Lord Govinda but fails to worship His devotees should be understood to be not a devotee of the Lord but simply a victim of false pride.” – *Padma Purāna*. *yasya deve parā bhaktir, yathā deve tathā gurau, tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ, prakāśante mahātmanah*, “Only unto those great souls who engage in pure

devotion to both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.” – *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.23.



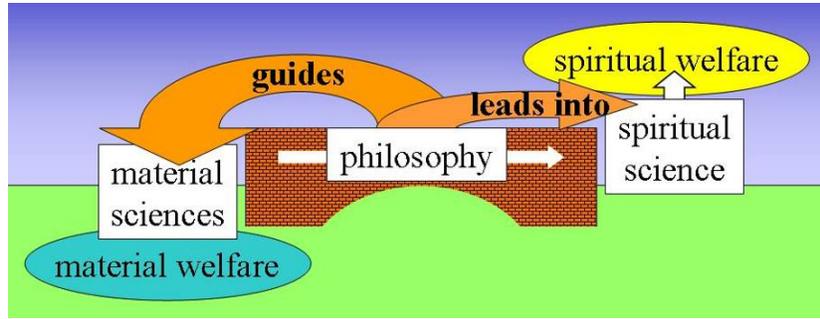
In this picture we see Lord Kṛṣṇa serving and worshiping His dear friend and devotee Sudāmā who came to Him for a spontaneous visit (see *SB* 10.80). Sudāmā had come a long way on foot and thus Lord Kṛṣṇa washed his feet, as it is custom in the Vedic culture. Kṛṣṇa’s wife assisted Him in worshiping Sudāmā, although the ultimate object of worship, Lord Kṛṣṇa, is her husband. They anointed him with various fragrant pastes, worshiped him with aromatic incense and lamps, gave him various gifts, welcomed him with pleasing words and fanned him with a hand fan. Just as Kṛṣṇa’s wife pleases Lord Kṛṣṇa by serving His devotee, similarly, the worship of the Lord’s pure devotee by other devotees is not at all a deviation from the path of exclusive devotion to the Lord, but is actually an essential part of its fulfilment. Since worship of the Lord’s

pure devotees pleases the Lord more than worship of Himself, if we are truly wise, we engage with great enthusiasm in the service of the Lord’s pure devotees, especially of our spiritual master. It has been explained in this chapter how the spiritual master is very dear to the Lord because he has no other desire than to serve the Lord’s desires. He is one in desire with the Lord, and it is this perfection of union in will with the Lord, which is advocated scientifically by Lord Caitanya’s philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. The nature of the spiritual master and the necessity of accepting and serving him has thus been explained in the light of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. Since the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* advocates union in will with God, it should be learned from a spiritual master or Ācārya who has himself perfected union in will with God.

“The essential principle of Vaiṣṇavism is that howsoever great a scholar and intellectual giant a man may be, he will not be able to appreciate even the easiest points of the Vaiṣṇava philosophy until and unless he has entirely surrendered himself to an Ācārya whose character is the embodiment of the Vaiṣṇava philosophy.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1929, p. 259.)



17. The Renaissance of a Guiding Faculty of Philosophy

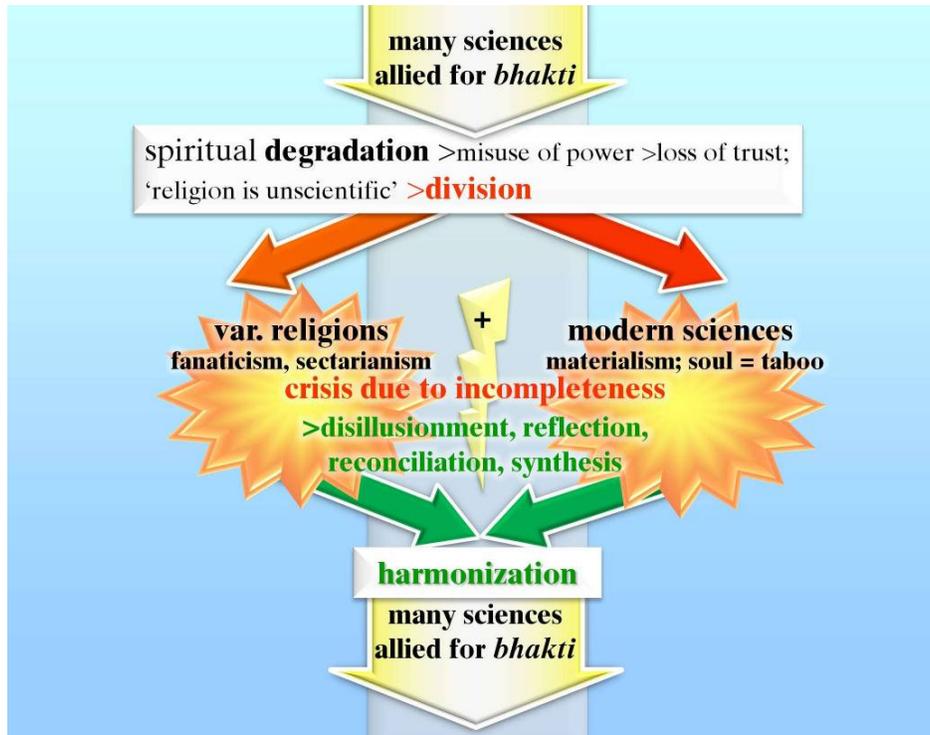


The quest of this book is the quest for a universal philosophy. Philosophy is concerned with the basics of humanity’s thinking. It therefore used to be accepted as mother of all physical sciences and was originally given a guiding position amongst all physical sciences, from which it was split off in modern times. Before William Whewell coined the term ‘scientist’, scientists were usually known as ‘natural philosophers’. “True science is philosophical.” (Born, 1957. Nobel Laureate in physics.) The title ‘PhD’ is the abbreviation of Latin *philosophiae doctor*, teacher of philosophy – yet how many of those who hold a doctor title nowadays know philosophy well? In this chapter, we shall examine how the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* can bring back the faculty of philosophy to its original position of guiding all other physical sciences – how it can bring about a philosophical renaissance.

The reason for the decay of philosophy has been explained thoroughly in the fourth and thirteenth chapter. In short, before the rise of western philosophies, the faculty of philosophy was still closely related to a genuine faculty of spirit or transcendence, and thus formed a valuable bridge from material to spiritual sciences. During Socrates’ and Plato’s time, self-realization was still regarded as the goal of philosophy, and it was one of the primary functions of philosophy to remind humanity that the self is spiritual, and that it is not the material body. Due to neglect of the connection with its spiritual roots, true philosophy became more and more diluted and covered by various fallacies such as skeletonism. This is also due to the loss of purity and potency of the spiritual traditions worldwide. It has been explained in Chapter 13 how the covering of the essential philosophy is part of the Lord’s master plan and predicted in the Vedic literature. Śrī Caitanya appeared five-hundred years ago to commence a renaissance of essential religion and philosophy. He established the universal philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, which advocates practical God- and self-realization, made possible by the practice of pure *bhakti*. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions various elements of actual knowledge such as humility, nonviolence, approaching a bona fide spiritual master, constant and unalloyed devotion to Him and philosophy that explores the Absolute Truth. He says that only the philosophy that explores the Absolute Truth can be declared to be actual knowledge (*tattva-jñānārtha-darśanam, etaj jñānam iti proktam, Bg 13.12*), and that “True knowledge leads to understanding the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (*jñānam tad brahma-darśanam, SB 3.32.31*.) It is not the primary purpose of philosophy to find ways of increasing material wealth, health, social welfare, etc; there are enough sciences that are engaged in these affairs. The primary business of philosophy is to show people the way to a higher truth, i.e. the spiritual reality, and how every part of creation and various sciences can serve that essential end. It is the business of philosophy to bring the light of truth unto the stage of life, not to decorate the stage and quarrel with the actors and other people of the theatre. If the faculty of philosophy neglects this duty, then the stage will remain in darkness, and all others will not be benefited, even if they sacrifice their lives for whatever partial science they are engaged in.

If the faculty of philosophy again takes up its actual duty of advocating the realization of the Absolute Truth, then it will naturally again be accepted as the wise guide over all physical sciences as it was before.

This can be possible if the faculty of philosophy advocates the universal philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. It can then again take its original place of functioning as bridge between the physical sciences and the spiritual sciences. At least, the universal philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* should be taught in schools and universities in the proper light, i.e. not as a sectarian doctrine, but as a universal philosophy of self-realization. In this way, those who are inclined towards this very efficient way of transcendence will be given a chance.



Building a bridge between physical sciences and the spiritual sciences of *bhakti*, philosophy can take an important position in harmonizing the divided or divorced sciences. During Vedic times, material, social, spiritual and all other sciences were harmoniously allied and united in the higher purpose of *bhakti*. Due to degradation of both the general people and the spiritual leaders, people lost faith in spiritual philosophy and practices. Religion was declared unscientific and in the secular state, various religions were split off from modern sciences. Since then, religions are going through crisis due to fanaticism and sectarianism and modern sciences are going through crisis due to lack of essential spiritual substance by declaring the soul to be taboo. After a time of disillusionment and reflection, there can be a reconciliation and synthesis of the two divided poles into a harmonious cooperation of all sciences dedicated to the cultivation of *bhakti* under the guidance of capable spiritual leaders and the universal all-harmonizing philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. The faculty of philosophy can play an important role in this process of harmonization that can lead to a philosophical renaissance, enabling people to attain true wisdom. The goal is not to merge faculties like religion and science, but the harmonious reciprocal complementation and cooperation of all faculties towards the goal of transcendence. This reconciliation of all children faculties can be brought about by the all-encompassing mother philosophy, *acintya-bhedābheda*, who advocates unity in diversity.



18. Review, Summary & Conclusion

18.1. Review

Eight years of enriching research, study and contemplation for this book have passed. One may wonder why this book became so multi-faceted. This is best explained – how could it be otherwise – with the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. The transcendental reality is *advaya-jñāna*, the undivisible complete whole (*SB* 1.2.11). It is not possible to study only a part of it without considering the complete whole; as soon as we examine a segment of the undivisible complete whole, we unavoidably get in touch with the entire whole. As such it is not possible to examine only the *philosophy* of the complete whole – if we try to do so, we naturally end up in exploring the entire transcendental reality, its transcendental science, culture, religion, etc, and such an understanding will turn out to be indispensable. Considering the importance of diversity in this book, we will find that despite covering many topics, this book is very concise and keeps a sharp focus on the central subject. In order to present this book in a way that suits the modern science-oriented spirit of humanity, I tried to make sure that the reader is able to clear all doubts about the scientific nature of Veda, especially in Chapters 1-3 and 11. Accordingly, the chosen language is rather scientific than poetic. This language may not suit the minds of many people; however, this text can easily be presented in another volume that does not need to conform to academic standards. If there is anything of value in this book, it is solely because of the blessings of my well-wishers, whose instructions I am trying to follow to their satisfaction.

18.2. Summary

The central hypothesis that *acintya-bhedābheda* is a universal principle that can convey and harmonize the essential assets of all sciences, philosophies and religions is verified and substantiated in many ways. Chapters 1-3 mainly deal with Vedic epistemology that builds the basis for accepting Veda as scientific evidence (Veda is defined as transcendental knowledge beyond ethic designations). The philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* relies on the evidence of Veda. Therefore, verifying *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* necessitates verifying Veda as scientific evidence. I have coined the term ‘skeletonism’ to term the misidentification of the self with the material body and the thus resulting faith in human perception and reason as reliable evidences. This faith is revealed to be false if it is exclusive, because the human senses and mind are often unreliable and even illusioning. The most striking proof for this matter of fact is that although humans believe to possess so much knowledge, they don’t know the most basic thing – their self. They misidentify with the material body that is completely alien to the real self. Various evidence from material and spiritual science that prove that the self is not the material body are offered. It is shown that this knowledge was taught by the Vedic science since thousands of years and was also known to founders of the western philosophies like Socrates and Plato. The exposing of the grave human error of skeletonism serves various ends:

- The realization of our being illusioned and dependent on the help of disillusioned persons.
- The awakening of humility, by which we agree to learn from capable authority.
- The realization that if despite all efforts to understand reality, humanity is in total illusion about the very basis of existence, then there must be a superior power of bewilderment.
- The understanding that those rare persons who – despite this powerful bewilderment – are able to dispell such illusion and establish truth must be authoritative.
- The attainment of agreeance to change the faulty paradigm of skeletonism or in other words the cure from the material paradigm paralysis that keeps people away from progress.
- The effort to approach and learn from people who are free from material illusion and can teach how to factually and scientifically attain transcendental perception.

Since skeletonism also includes the fallacy that ‘I am mortal; life ends with death’, liberation from skeletonism also leads to the realization that life is eternal. This leads to more spiritual development and less material exploitation and entanglement. We realize that the actual quest of life is not the development of fleeting health and wealth, but mainly to overcome the actual problem of material life, namely mortality, by attaining our *svarūpa*, immortal spiritual form of existence. This positive approach to transcendence is given in later chapters in this book, as most people cannot directly take to it due to lack of faith. The negative approach is helpful to renounce false ideas and gain faith in transcendence. It is made clear, that it is useless to try to understand the world with imperfect and distorting senses, and that we first need to attain a way of experiencing reality undistortedly and directly. This is only possible through supersensual or transcendental perception, which is not attainable by independent efforts, but only by merciful revelation of universal transcendental knowledge, Veda. The most reliable standard sources of Veda are explained to be the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. However, the reader is not asked to accept these scriptures merely on faith, but by practically understanding the supremacy of their essential philosophy, the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, which is presented in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 explains how the decline of the Vedic science does not lessen the value of Veda, but is a necessary element of creation. Chapter 5 describes the Vedic ontology, according to which the absolute truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This however is neither an ethically designated nor sectarian concept, but an all-encompassing principle due to the wonderful nature of *acintya-bhedābheda* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is simultaneously one and many, same and variegated, personal and impersonal, localized and all-pervading, immanent and transcendental, subjective and objective. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the all-reconciling origin of all forms of God, and this is also demonstrated by showing how most common names of God are originally names of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The principle of *acintya-bhedābheda* is not advocating polytheism but rather full-fledged theism. This is explained philosophically and with analogies such as the Queen who is one person playing many roles and the same river who appears in various forms. Different forms of God are one in person, but different in *rasa*, relish of relationship with others. Chapter 5.5 explains how the three aspects of Godhead, namely the all-witnessing Supersoul, the all-pervading impersonal Brahman and the transcendently localized Godhead can harmonize even seemingly contradictory concepts of God of various religions, and it establishes the personal aspect of God as supreme.

Chapter 6 describes the biography and essential teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the original expounder of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*. Chapter 7 explains how *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* harmonizes all philosophies by representing their positive essence while avoiding their shortcomings. Chapter 8 gives account of how the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* can harmonize the individual person with the entire creation. Chapter 9 offers a unique and very helpful categorization of all philosophies into four main philosophies in teleosympathetic order, that is, according to their amount of being in unity with the Supreme Lord’s desire. This chapter shows how *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* is able to harmonize all other philosophies in their underlying essential purpose, the gradual development of full-fledged theism, and how *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* is the paramount philosophy according to the teleosympathetic order. Chapter 10 explains how *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* advocates union in will of individuals. Chapter 11 explains quantum mechanics in the light of *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* to give a practical example in modern science. It gives account of how consciousness is again taken into consideration by science; it compares Heisenberg’s principle of uncertainty with the Vedic principle of *acintya* and it distinguishes between gross matter, subtle matter (such as the mind) and the spiritual substance (such as the self and the spiritual energy). It points out the danger of confusing subtle matter with spirit, gives a solution to the soul/body problem and elucidates the phenomenon of entanglement from the Vedic perspective.

Chapter 12 explains how *acintya-bhedābheda* harmonizes all religions by showing how the universal *sanātana-dharma*, the eternal occupation of the soul, is the common essence of all religions. It shows how the eternal occupation of the soul is *bhakti*, devotional service to God. It explains how various occupations and religions are the manifestation of the same potency of the Supreme Lord and can thus be scientifically harmonized by the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*. By teleosympathy, sympathy for the will and purpose of God, we see how everything in His creation has its place and purpose. Although knowing the essence of *sanātana-dharma*, the essentialist thus never deprecates other occupations and religions, but sees all diversity in ultimately harmonious unity. Chapter 13 establishes how *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* and Vaiṣṇavism are eternal although they seem to have developed historically.

Chapter 14 goes into detailed explanations of various aspects of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* according to the teachings of Śrī Caitanya. It explains how God and His transcendental realm are *acintya*, materially inconceivable, but can be revealed and realized by the mercy of the Supreme Lord's spiritual potency. It describes how God is the source of all variegation, how He appears in various forms in reciprocation to the inclinations of His devotees, how He remains untouched by material imperfections and how He is simultaneously personal and impersonal. It explains how *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* leads to true equal vision, harmony, perfect discrimination and union in will with God. It explains how *acintya-bhedābheda* is the ultimate principle of philosophy. Chapter 15 gives account of *saṅkīrtana*, the most universal and most efficient way to practically realize God and transcendence. Chapter 16 elucidates the spiritual master in the light of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*, and Chapter 17 explains how philosophy can again become a guiding academic faculty.

18.3. Conclusion

There are two main ways of evidence offered in this book: the theoretical way of logic, and the practical way of devotion. The practical devotional way is for those people who are spiritually faithful, and the theoretical way is for those people searching for truth who don't yet possess enough faith to perform devotional practices. The spiritually faithful already possess some preliminary faith in God and devotion. They are not too much doubtful towards the devotees and are ready to try to practice the Vedic science under their guidance. They start chanting the holy name in the proper way and thus their consciousness is purified and they quickly attain practical God-and self-realization, upon which all remaining doubts are dispelled and they are established in firm faith stemming from personal realization.

The less faithful do not possess enough commitment to devotional practice. They are unable to properly perform *bhakti* and they are thus deprived from actual realization, which is only attained by practicing pure *bhakti*. However, if they are inquisitive about the absolute truth, they can still tread the indirect negative way by theoretically accepting that the Vedic science must be authentic, for instance because it is the only science that systematically and consequently exposes various basic human fallacies such as skeletonism. Skeletonism and other fallacies are found to a smaller or greater extent in almost all human schools of thought, and by cancelling these schools out one by one, ultimately only the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* remains. The inquisitive people are moved by such a negative approach to question various wrong paradigms, and come into the association of devotees with the hope of liberation from material illusion and suffering by practicing motivated *bhakti*. In the association of devotees, their striving for knowledge and liberation is transformed into devotion, and thus they can take to pure unmotivated *bhakti*, by which they are fully purified and attain God-and self-realization.

(A) Practical way of evidence for the validity of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*:

Preliminary faith in God >>Agreeance to practice *bhakti* under the guidance of a pure devotee >>Purification of mind and realization of God and His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda* (>>Firm faith from realization).

(B) Theoretical way of evidence for the validity of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*:

Inquisitiveness about the absolute truth >>Consideration of the Vedic teachings >>Finding that at least their exposition of various human fallacies such as skeletonism is true >>Inquiry from devotees and scriptures >>Attainment of logical understanding of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* >>Attainment of faith in God [>>continue above at (A)].

Since the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* is the essence of Veda, it is established as foremost philosophy by logically establishing that the Vedic science is the foremost science of humanity. This can be done by recalling that only the Vedic science simultaneously offers:

- A complete science of the self that clearly distinguishes the actual self or spirit soul from the material subtle body (mind, intelligence and false ego) and gross body.
- A plain exposition of the fallacy of skeletonism by a complete epistemology.
- A very strong declaration that the actual human quest is self-realization and to overcome death by transcending the mundane existence, not to invest in a sure loss by trying to sophisticate mundane life and its relations that are all lost at the time of death.
- A complete ontology that explains how God can be simultaneously one and many, impersonal and personal, etc., according to His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*.
- A complete philosophy; *acintya-bhedābheda*, which is able to explain the relations between God, the living entities and matter scientifically without contradictions and logical gaps, and which can harmonize seemingly contradictory doctrines even of different faculties.
- A complete science of transcendence that allows one and all to factually realize God, our transcendental self and their eternal relationship.

Other schools may offer one of the above items, but not as sophisticated and clear as the Vedic science does, and no school presents all of them together.

>>Therefore, the Vedic science is accepted as foremost science, and its corresponding philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda* as foremost philosophy.

But even though it can be scientifically proven that Vedic science is the foremost science, the Vedic science cannot be widely established as such *mechanically*, because it is by nature secret (*Bg* 9.2). It can by nature only be revealed to, understood by and realized by those who are inclined towards serving God (see *Bg* 4.3, 8.22, 18.55, *Brs* 1.2.234). This is so because God refuses to be exposed to the envious (*Bg* 7.25, 18.67). Even the most sophisticated and logically undefeatable presentation of Veda read by the most intelligent people will be misunderstood if they lack *bhakti*, whereas an illiterate who hears a few sentences about Veda with devotion will at once understand and employ it. We should therefore not only be concerned about an academic presentation of Veda, but we should especially make sure that the presentation is in line with the conclusions of pure devotion, and that the listeners listen with as much devotion as possible. I have presented evidence from Vedic literature that affinities such as devotion or material desires develop in corresponding associations and I have explained that phenomena like entanglement in quantum mechanics confirm this principle. The practical conclusion is that the realization of the essential nature of reality (described by the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*) depends on association with, service to and mercy of God and His pure devotees.

What follows is an academic justification of this book/thesis.

Original contributions:

- The contributions mentioned in the synopsis.
- A presentation of *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana* that emphasizes its essential maxim, namely unity in diversity or individual union in desire with God. The term ‘teleosympathy’ was coined to provide an academic term for this maxim. It is shown throughout this thesis how teleosympathy is the key to the deepest understanding of reality, because the ultimate substance and creator of reality, the Supreme Lord, only reveals Himself to one who approaches Him with teleosympathy or the desire to dovetail to His desires. One proof of the hypothesis that teleosympathy leads to a complete understanding of reality is that the teleosympathetic devotees are able to understand the confidential over-all purposes of all partial philosophies, sciences, religions and other conceptions and harmonize them in a higher purpose (see Chapters 7-12).
- A universal philosophy which is simultaneously distinguished and non-sectarian due to its all-encompassing nature; a precious chance for humanity to approach universal harmony.
- A scientific exposition of the misconception of skeletonism.
- An explanation of the universality of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Vedic science, not with dogmatic jargon but with lucid logic. Unique contributions in this regard are for example the demonstration that most names of God are names of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the interpretation of Plato’s cave and of phenomena of quantum mechanics.

Practical applications:

- Universal reconciliation of various conceptions within a certain faculty as well as with conceptions of other faculties (for example the reconciliation of different religions amongst each other as well as the reconciliation of religious with scientific or other conceptions).
- Promotion of inspiration, development and harmonization for all human disciplines by revealing their essential universal target and purpose.
- Disillusionment and freeing humanity of the misconception of skeletonism and the connected problems such as material selfishness, greed, war, racism, sexism etc (see Chapter 2.3).
- Practical God- and self-realization individually suiting our specific nature and environment.

Simplification:

Instead of approaching reality as an impersonal soup of dead matter, the philosophy presented in this thesis allows approaching reality as a supremely intelligent and omnipotent Person and His manifestations. This personal and teleologic approach allows us to inquire directly from the Creator about the nature and purpose of creation instead of manufacturing many incomplete mental speculations. Asking the Creator is the most simple approach to truth, and it only requires simplicity of the heart. It is the only way to true objectivity, as only God can see the entire creation from all angles and with complete knowledge (see Chapters 3.3, 11.2). The culmination of scientific simplification is the empathetic contemplation of God’s own vision or *darsana*. God’s own *darsana*, vision/philosophy, is the *acintya-bhedābheda-darsana*, as disclosed by Śrī Caitanya. The acceptance of this *darsana* is not done blindly but by practical realization of its validity. The next step of simplification is the step from teleology, knowing God’s purposes, to teleosympathy, serving God’s purposes.

Prediction:

This thesis predicts that humanity can find universal harmony without loss of individuality by embracing *acintya-bhedābheda* as the central paradigm, provided that people are guided by pure devotees. Appendix 4 explains how we can best take to the guidance of a pure devotee.

At this point, I would like to explain the book's cover design, which can only be fully understood after having assimilated all contents of the book. A prominent element of the cover design is the beam of white light that is refracted into all colors of the rainbow. This reminds us of science and thus indicates that the contents of the book are presented in a scientific way; in other words, they do not lack sound logic and evidence. However, more important is, that this refraction represents the principle that all the diversity we see in creation originally emanates from the one, non-dual, absolute reality. The various colors are simultaneously one with and different from the pure white light; similarly, the various elements and living beings are simultaneously one with and different from the non-dual, absolute original reality, as per the principle of *acintya-bhedābheda*.

The hexagram within the blue diamond is unexposed, because most people would wrongly see it as a symbol limited to a certain tradition. The hexagram is a particular *yantra* (geometric representation of a universal archetype) that expresses the unity of the cosmic dualities and thus universal harmony. The most profound meaning of the hexagram is the union of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, as disclosed in Chapter 5.8. If we look carefully, we can also see an octagram as the blueprint of the lily or lotus flower that represents the purified consciousness of the living entity. Rādhārāṇī wears a tilak marking with an eight-petalled lotus flower on Her forehead. The eight petals also represent the eight primary *sakhīs* or confidants of Rādhārāṇī, who are grouped around their center, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa (represented by the hexagram), making out number nine, the complete number. Only by the mercy of such pure devotees of God, who are present on earth as spiritual masters, can we realize God. Therefore, we should always behold their vision on the lotus flower of our heart. The octagram consists of two squares layed over each other. The square represents the earth or the field of action (its four sides indicate the four directions, or the four dimensions including time), and the octagram represents a blueprint of a perfect arrangement of different fields of actions that enable the cristallization of the ultimate archetype of nature; in other words, an attractive place of pastime for Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, namely Vṛndāvana (the metaphysical structure of Vṛndāvana resembles a lotus flower; see *Bs* 5.2). The purified heart is non-different from Vṛndāvana and thus called 'lotus heart'.

The main activity of pure consciousness is to always embrace the desires of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa – to cultivate teleosympathy, unity with God's will, the practical goal of the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*. This is symbolized by the lotus embracing the blue lustre of the diamond, representing the beautiful blue color of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which expresses His desire to engage in loving relationships with His devotees. Lord Kṛṣṇa's body is often compared to a dazzling blue sapphire. Defeating the wealth of all earthly diamonds, the lustre of this sapphire is the ultimate wealth in existence.

The frame of the cover design indicates divine vision. It consists of a palace window through which God is observing the cosmic play. Only if, by God's grace, we can observe the cosmic creation through His vision and with the knowledge of His desires, can we understand reality in all its depths. This vision is the vision of *acintya-bhedābheda*, God's vision as expressed by Himself during His advent as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The film strip represents the film of earthly life, in which we seem to play a part similar to Truman in the film 'The Truman Show'. When our heart becomes purified, we realize that we actually belong to the transcendental reality and rise above the muddy pond of material existence, just as the beautiful lotus grows out of the muddy pond. We can then behold the cosmic play with the confidential vision of its Director. With such vision, we can see how even seemingly disharmonious elements in creation are ultimately in harmony. This is symbolized by the smiling children of different cultures forming a hexagram, and by all the diverse elements of creation on the filmstrip being a projection from one higher harmonious reality.

Finally, the transcendental moon that makes the lotus of our pure consciousness blossom is the moon of the holy name of God, especially the Hare-Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, which is visible in Devanāgarī script as rays of the moon, if we look very carefully. The cover design should thus ultimately inspire us to embrace the moon-rays of the Lord's holy name, which will bring the flower of our consciousness to full blossom, enabling the Lord and all His glories to manifest therein.

My spiritual master told me to complete this book for my own purification through the remembrance and repetition of the Vedic teachings handed down in disciplic succession. Thus I would like to close with the words of the compiler of the priceless *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī (*Cc* 1.9.5):

*esaba-prasāde likhi caitanya-lilā-guṇa,
jāni vā nā jāni, kari āpana-śodhana,*

“It is by the mercy of all Vaiṣṇava devotees
and spiritual masters that I attempt to write about
the transcendental pastimes and qualities of Lord Caitanya.
Whether I know or know not, it is for self purification that I am writing.”



Bibliography

Note: In this book, quotes in the language of the original source are identical with the source. The translations into English may vary, as sometimes a specific formulation was more beneficial in the present context. If sentences with reference are not in quotes, they are usually paraphrased. In order to simplify the research of the readers, titles mentioned in this bibliography are spelled as in the original title. Accordingly, they are sometimes spelled without diacritic symbols.

Abbreviations and details of often quoted literature and media:

- Bg:** *Bhagavad-gītā*. The essential Vedic teachings in 700 verses spoken by Lord Kṛṣṇa (ca 3'000 BC). Quotes are taken from *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (1972), the worlds most renown, translated and sold edition of the *Gītā*. Sanskrit verses, English translation and commentary. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust¹⁸⁵.
- Brs:** *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī (1542). The standard thesis on the science of devotional service by the direct associate and disciple of Śrī Caitanya. Sanskrit in Bengali script. Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, Mayapur (2001).
- Bs:** *Brahma-saṁhitā*. Hymns of the demigod Brahmā in glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa (ca 3'000 BC). Translation and commentaries by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda (1972). Sanskrit verses, English translation and commentary. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
- Cb:** *Caitanya-bhāgavata*. Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura (ca 1550). A biography and collection of teachings of Śrī Caitanya from diaries and notes of His personal associates. With the Gaudīya-bhāṣya commentaries by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda. Bengali verses and English translation. Translated by Bhūmipati Dāsa, edited and published by Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi Dāsa (1998). Vrajraj Press.
- Cc:** *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī (1615). A biography and collection of teachings of Śrī Caitanya. Bengali verses and English translation. Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (1968). Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
- Jd:** *Jaiva-dharma*. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (1896). A narrative treatise on the eternal function or religion of the soul that covers the essential philosophical aspects and spiritual practises of the Gaudīya-Vaiṣṇavas. English translation and commentary. Translated by Sarvabhavana Dasa (2004). Brihat Mridanga Press SKCBT, India.
- SB:** *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The natural commentation on the *Vedānta-sūtra* compiled by the author of the *Vedānta-sūtra* himself, Śrīla Vyāsadeva (ca 3'000 BC). Translated by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (1962). Sanskrit verses, English translation and commentary. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
- Ss:** *Sarva-saṁvādinī*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī (1511-1596 AD). His own commentary on his *Ṣaḍ Sandarbhas* (in Sanskrit). Edited in Bengali script by Puridās Mahāśay (1953). Śrī Haridās Publications, Kolkata. Available in romanized script as appendix to the *Ṣaḍ Sandarbhas* on www.granthamandira.com.
- Ts:** *Tattva-sandarbha*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī (1511-1596 AD). The first book of the *Ṣaḍ Sandarbhas*, an elaborate six-folded encyclopaedic thesis on the science of *bhakti*. Translation and commentaries by Satya Nārāyaṇa Dāsa (1995). Jīva Institute for Vaiṣṇava Studies, Vṛndāvana.
- Ī:** *Īsopaniṣad*. One of the main *Upaniṣads*, most ancient Vedic scriptures, older than 5'000 years. Translated by Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (1969). Sanskrit verses, English translation and commentary. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust Mumbai.
- Vb:** *Bhaktivedanta Vedabase*. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (2003). A browseable electronic library of hundreds of Vedic literatures, magazines and biographies. This very practical tool is available on DVD. Many texts are freely accessible on www.vedabase.com.
- Bering, Jesse M. (2006). *The Folk Psychology of Souls*. Published in Behavioral and Brain Sciences. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁸⁵ Selected artwork and quoted text from *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* and *Bhaktivedanta Vedabase* © The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International, Inc. www.Krishna.com. Used with permission.

- Bhaktigunakar, Atendriya (1926). *Śrī Gauḍīya Kaṅṭhahāra*, A Necklace of Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava Verses. Bengali script. Sree Chaitanya Math, Mayapur. Quotes are from the edition with English translation published by Rasbihari Lal & Sons (2005), Vrindaban.
- Bhaktisiddhanta, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda (1874-1936). *Shri Chaitanya's Teachings*. 4th ed. (1999). Edited by Srila Bhakti Vilas Tirtha Maharaj (1967). Sree Gaudiya Math, Chennai.
- Bhaktisiddhanta 2, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda (1928). *The Life and Teachings of the Four Acāryas*. Compiled from his essays in the Gauḍīya Magazine No 2 of 1927 to No 33 of 1928. Translated by Bhūmipati Dāsa (2007). Jai Nitāi Press Vṛndāvana.
- Bhaktisiddhanta 3, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda (1926). *Vaishnavism – Real and Apparent*.
- Bhaktivedanta 1, Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (1970). *Kṛṣṇa, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
- Bhaktivedanta 2, Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (1980). *The Teachings of Lord Caitanya*. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
- Bhaktivedanta 3, Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (1959). *Vṛndāvane Bhajan*, Confidential Worship in Vṛndāvana. Translated by Jayapataka Swami (2007). Ibid.
- Bhaktivinoda 1, Thakura (1893). *Jaiva-dharma*, the Essential Function of the Soul. Translated by Sarvabhavana Dasa (2004). Brihat Mridanga Press SKCBT, India.
- Bhaktivinoda 2, Thakura (1900). *Śrī Harināma Cintāmaṇi*, The Beautiful Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Holy Name. Translated by Sarvabhavana Dasa (2003). Rasbihari Lal & Sons, Vrindaban, India.
- Bhaktivinoda 3, Thakura (1896). *Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu: His Life and Precepts* (the introduction of *Śrī Gaurāṅga-līlā-smaraṇa-maṅgala-stotram*). Sree Chaitanya Math, Mayapur (2002).
- Bhaktivinoda 4, Thakura (1880). *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā*. A Treatise on Lord Kṛṣṇa. Translated by Bhūmipati Dāsa (1998). Vrajraj Press c/o ISKCON Vṛndāvana, India.
- Bhaktivinoda 5, Thakura (1890). *Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma Māhātmya*. The Glories of the Holy Land of Navadvīpa. Translated by Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi Dāsa (1994). Vrajraj Press. Ibid.
- Bhaktivinoda 6, Thakura (1886). *Śrī Caitanya-sikṣāmṛta*. The Nectar of Śrī Caitanya's Instructions. Translated by Bhānu Swami (date not mentioned). Vṛndāvana Institute for higher Education.
- Bhaktivinoda 7, Thakura (1890). *Tattva Viveka, Tattva Sūtra & Āmnāya Sūtra* (in one volume). Three treatises summarizing the philosophical conclusions of the most essential revealed scriptures. Translated by Narasimha Brahmācārī (1971). Sree Gaudiya Math, Madras.
- Bhaktivinoda 8, Thakura, editor and publisher (1895). *Śrī Hari-bhakti-kalpa-latikā*, The Desire-Creeper of Devotion to Lord Hari. Sanskrit quoted from a publication with English translation by Īśvara Dāsa (2003, Vb).
- Bhaktivinoda 9, Thakura (1869). *The Bhagavat*. Gaudiya Mission, Baghbazar, Calcutta (1982).
- Bhaktivinoda 10, Thakura (1892). *Śrīman Mahāprabhu Śikṣā*. Includes *Daśa-mūla-niryāsa*.
- Bhaktivinoda 11, Thakura (1892). *Śrī Gaurāṅga-līlā-smaraṇa-maṅgala-stotram*.
<http://www.salagram.net/Gauranga-Lila-Smarana-Mangala-Stotram.html>.
- Bhowmick, Shukdeb (2003). *The Theory of Acintya-bhedābheda*. Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata.
- Bohm, David (1975). *On the Intuitive Understanding of Nonlocality as Implied by Quantum Theory*. Foundations of Physics Vol 5.
- Bohm 2, David (1980). *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- Bohm 3, David. Quoted in Renée Weber (1986). *Dialogues with Scientists and Sages*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, New York.
- Bohr, Niels (1934). *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature*. Cambridge University Press.
- Born, Irene (translator, 1971). *The Born-Einstein Letters*. Walker and Company, New York.
- Brewster, Sir David (1850). *Memoirs of the Life, Writings and Discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton*. Edinburgh (also published by Keynes, Ms. 1975. Cambridge University Press).
- BTG, *Back to Godhead Magazine* (since 1944). Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
- Buckley, Paul and F. David Peat (1979). *Conversations in Physics and Biology*. University of Toronto Press.

- Boner, Alice (1962). *Principles of Compositions in Hindu Sculpture*. Motilal Banarsidass (1990), New Delhi. First edition: Leiden, Brill, 1962.
- Born, Max (1957). *The Atomic Age: Scientists in National and World Affairs*. Article from the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Morton Grodzins (editor). Basic Books, New York (1963).
- Caitanya, Śrī (1486-1534). *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka*. Eight Essential Instructions. Translated by Sarvabhavana Dasa (2003). Rasbihari Lal & Sons, Vrindaban, India.
- Calaprice, Alice (2000). *The Expanded Quotable Einstein*. Princeton University Press.
- Damodara 1, Bhakti Svarupa Damodara Swami (2004), *Vedanta and Science Series – Life and Origin of the Universe*. Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata.
- Damodara 2, Bhakti Svarupa Damodara Swami (2004), transcribed from the DVD 2nd *International Congress on Life and its Origin*, Rome, 2004. Ibid.
- Damodara 3, Bhakti Svarupa Damodara Swami (2005), *Essays on Science and Religion*. Ibid.
- Dasgupta, S. N. (1940). *History of Indian Philosophy*. Vol. 3. Cambridge.
- Dasi, Devamayi (2002). *A Life of Devotion – the Holy Biography of Om Vishnupad Srila Bhakti Pramod Puri Goswami Maharaj*. Nine Islands Press, Berkeley, USA.
- Dukas, Helen (1981). *Albert Einstein the Human Side*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
- Dyson, Freeman (1988). *Infinite in All Directions*. Harper and Row, New York.
- Eddington, Arthur Stanley (1928). *The Nature of the Physical World*. Published versions of his Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of Edinburgh in 1927. Mac Millan, New York.
- Eddington 2, Arthur Stanley (1938). *Philosophy of Physical Science*. Cambridge University Press.
- Eliot, T. S. (1933). *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy*. Faber, London.
- Eidlitz, Walther (1951). *Bhakta. Eine Indische Odysee*. Vrinda, Vṛndāvana. First published by Claassen, Hamburg.
- Einstein, Albert (1939). *Science, Philosophy, and Religion, a Symposium*. Published by the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in Their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life, Inc., New York (1941).
- Einstein 2, Albert (1938). *The Evolution of Physics*. Co-written with Leopold Infeld.
- Einstein 3, Albert (1956). Quoted from *The World As I See It*. Quality Paperback Books (1990), New York.
- Gandhi, Kishor (1991). *The Transition to a Global Society*. Allied Publishers.
- Feynman, Richard (1965). *The Character of Physical Law*. Modern Library, New York.
- Gopal Jiu (2004). *How To Find Guru*. Gopal Jiu Publications. www.gopaljiu.org.
- Goswami, Amit (2007). <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s42mrdhKwRA>. Uploaded in 2007.
- Greeley, A. M. & Hout, M. (1999). *Americans' Increasing Belief in Life After Death*. American Sociological Review 64:813–35.
- Hadamard, J. (1949). *The Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field*. Princeton University Press.
- Haidt, J., Bjoerklund, F. & Murphy, S. (2004). *Moral Dumbfounding: When Intuition Finds no Reason*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Virginia.
- Halverson, Dean (1996). *The Compact Guide to World Religions*. Intern. Students Inc, Colorado.
- Heisenberg, Werner (1971). *Physics and Beyond*. A.J. Pomerans, trans. Harper & Row, New York.
- Heisenberg 2, Werner (1958). *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science*. Lectures delivered at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, Winter 1955-56.
- Heisenberg 3, Werner (1962). *Physics and Philosophy*. Harper & Row/Penguin Books, New York.
- Heisenberg 4, Werner (1990). *Across the Frontiers*. Harpers and Row, New York.
- IPC, *Indian Philosophy & Culture Quarterly*. Institute of Oriental Philosophy, Vṛndāvana.
- Jagadānanda, Paṇḍita (16th century). *Śrī Prema-vivarta*, the Winding Ways of Love of God. Sanskrit in Bengali script. Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, Mayapur (2005).
- Knapp, Stephen (1997). *The Vedic Prophecies: A New Look into the Future*. Baker & Taylor Book Distributors.
- Kapoor, O.B.L (1976). *The Philosophy and Religion of Śrī Caitanya*. Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Kapoor 2, O.B.L (1995). *Sri Caitanya and Raganuga Bhakti*. Vaishnava Book Trust.

- Kluge, Friedrich (24th edition 2002, first edition 1883). *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* (Etymological Dictionary of the German Language). Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.
- Kroemer, Herbert, & Charles Kittel (1980). *Thermal Physics*. W. H. Freeman Company, New York.
- Kuhn, Thomas (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 2nd ed. University of Chicago Press.
- Kunzmann, Peter (1991). *Dtv-Atlas Philosophie*. Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Mādhava, Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja. *Pearls of Devotion*. Mandala Publishing.
- MacLaine, Shirley (1990). *Going Within*. Bantam Books, New York.
- Margenau, Henry (1984). *The Miracle of Existence*. Ox Bow Press, Woodbridge, CT.
- Mitra, A. N. (2011). *Physics of Consciousness*. Lecture given in Gauhati University on 21st February.
- Nārāyaṇa, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (2011). *Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu – The Original Form of Godhead*. Gaudiya Vedanta Publications.
- Pfeiffer, John (1961). *The Human Brain*. Harper, New York.
- Planck, Max (1944). *Das Wesen der Materie* (The Nature of Matter). Speech at Florence, Italy. From Archiv zur Geschichte der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, Abt. Va, Rep. 11 Planck, Nr. 1797.
- Planck 2, Max, James Murphy, (1932). *Where is Science Going?* Norton Publishers, New York.
- Planck 3, Max (1937). *Religion and Natural Science*, a lecture given in 1937. Translated by F. Gaynor, published in *Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers* (1949). New York.
- Plato, (427-347 B.C.). *The Republic*. Translation by Benjamin Jowett (1991). Vintage Books, Toronto.
- Polo, Marco. *The Travels of Marco Polo*. Edited by Manuel Komroff (1953). Livright Publications.
- Purī, Śrīla Bhakti Pramode Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja (1998). *Essence of Devotion* (Bhakti Siddhanta Sar). Sri Gopinath Gaudiya Math, Mayapur.
- Purī 2, Śrīla Bhakti Pramode Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. *Art of Sadhana*. Sri Gopinath Gaudiya Math, Mayapur. Mandala Publishing.
- Purī 3, Śrīla Bhakti Pramode Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja (2010). *Bhagavat Dharma*. Puri Edition. Ibid.
- Rosen, Stephen (2003). *The Six Goswamis of Vṛndāvana*. Folk Books, Brooklyn, New York.
- Rosen 2, Stephen (2010). *A Vaishnava Response to Advaita Vedanta*.
<http://starseeds.net/profiles/blogs/its-all-one-amp-two>.
- Rosen 3, Stephen (1992). *Vaiṣṇavism: Contemporary Scholars Discuss the Gaudiya Tradition*. Folk Books, New York.
- Rūpa-Vilāsa, Dāsa (2003). *Seventh Goswami. Biography of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thākura* (1838-1914).
- Rūpa, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī (16th century). *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, the Ocean of the Nectar of Devotional Flavors. Sanskrit in Bengali script. Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, Mayapur (2001).
- Rūpa 2, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī (16th century). *Upadeśāmṛta*, the Nectar of Instruction. Sanskrit in Bengali script. Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, Mayapur (2002).
- Rūpa 3, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī (16th century). *Ujjvala-Nilamaṇi*.
- Śacīnandana, Swami (1999). *The Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name*. Gayatri Publishers, Schöna.
- Sanātana, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī (16th century). *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, the Activities of Devotional Service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Sanskrit in Bengali script. Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, Mayapur (2000).
- Sanyal, Prof. Nisikanta Sanyal (1933). *Sree Krishna Chaitanya*. Two volumes . Sree Gaudiya Math, Madras.
- Schrödinger, Erwin (1969). *What Is Life?* Cambridge University Press, London.
- Schrödinger 2, Erwin (1983). *My View of the World*. Ox Bow Press, Woodbridge, CT. Original English publication: Cambridge University Press (1964).
- Secaucus (1999). *Albert Einstein, The World as I See It*. The Citadel Press, New Jersey.
- Shrinivasachari, P. N. (1950). *The Philosophy of Bhedābheda*. The Adyar Library Series No. 74. SIPRI, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *2009 Year Book on Armaments, Disarmament and International Security for 2008*. www.sipri.org/yearbook/2009/05.
- Śrīdhara 1, Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja (1895-1988). *The Golden Volcano*. Compiled from his discourses. Published by Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math, Navadwip.
- Śrīdhara 2, Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja (1895-1988). *Sermons of the Guardian of Devotion* Volume One. Compiled from his discourses. Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math (1988).

- Śrīdhara 3, Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja (1895-1988). *Absolute Harmony*. DVD. Published by Mandala Media (date not mentioned).
- Śrīdhara 4, Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja (1895-1988). *Subjective Evolution of Consciousness*. Compiled from his discourses. Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math, Navadwip(1989).
- Śrīdhara 5, Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja (1895-1988). *Loving Search for the Lost Servant*. Compiled from his discourses. Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math, Navadwip (2007).
- Śrīdhara 6, Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja (1895-1988). *Divine Revelations*. Compiled from his discourses. Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math, Navadwip (2009).
- Śrīdhara 7, Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja (1895-1988). Electronic archive of books and lectures for the software *Folio Views* (pre 2005, date not mentioned). Ibid.
- Stapp, Henry (2001). *Harnessing Science and Religion*. Research News and Opportunities in Science and Religion, vol I, no. 6. <http://www.princeton.edu/~pear/pdfs/Explore-Intro.pdf>.
- Stapp 2, Henry (1996). *Science of Consciousness and the Hard Problem*. Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, University of California.
- Stapp 3, Henry (2007). *Mindful Universe*. Springer.
- Stapp 4, Henry (1995). *Report On The Gaudiya Vaishnava Vedanta Form Of Vedic Ontology*. Bhaktivedanta Institute, San Francisco.
- Stevenson, Daniel C. (1994). *Metaphysics by Aristotle*. Web Atomics. <http://classics.mit.edu//Aristotle/metaphysics.html>
- Stevenson, Ian (1974). *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. 2nd rev. ed. University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville.
- Suzuki, D. T. (translator). *Lankāvatara-Sūtra*. Routledge, London (1932).
- Technolog, *The Minnesota Technolog*, the student engineering journal of the University of Minnesota Institute of Technology, USA.
- Tigunait, Rajmani (1983). *Seven Systems of Indian Philosophy*. Honesdale, Pennsylvania.
- Tīrtha 1, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja (2001). *Sri Chaitanya; His Life and Associates*. Mandala Publishing.
- Tīrtha 2, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja (1997). *Affectionately Yours*. Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, Kolkata. www.sreecgmth.org.
- Tīrtha 3, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja (2002). *The Holy Life of Srila Bhakti Dayita Madhava Gosvami Maharaj*. Ibid.
- Tīrtha 4, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja (2005). *Guru Tattva*. Ontologically Who is Guru. A series published in *Sree Chaitanya Bani Magazine*. Editions August-September 2005. Ibid.
- Tīrtha 5, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja. *Dasavatara*. Ten Manifestations of God. Ibid.
- Tīrtha 7, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja (2001). *A Taste of Transcendence*. Ibid.
- Tīrtha 8, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja (2000). *Suddha Bhakti*. Path of Pure Devotion. Ibid.
- Tīrtha 9, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja. *Philosophy of Love*. Ibid.
- Tīrtha 10, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja (2009). *Droplets of Nectar*. Ibid.
- Tīrtha 11, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja (2012). *Affectionately Yours – Divine Letters*. Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, Kolkata. www.sreecgmth.org.
- Tīrtha B. P., Śrīla Bhakti Pradīp Tīrtha Mahārāja (1942, quoted from 1999-edition). *The Teachings & Philosophy of Lord Chaitanya*. Collected lectures. Gaudiya Mission, Baghbazar, Calcutta.
- Tripathi, Gaya Charan (2004). *Communication with God*. Aryan Books International, New Dehli.
- Webster's New World Dictionary & Thesaurus (1997). Macmillan Publishers.
- Wheeler, John A (1990). *Information, Physics, Quantum: The Search for Links*. Complexity, Entropy, and the Physics of Information. Addison-Wesley, California.
- Wigner, Eugene (1970). *Symmetries and Reflections: Scientific Essays*. MIT Press.
- Williams, Monier (1997). *A Sanskrit Dictionary*. Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi. References are taken from the corresponding software version 1.5 Beta by Louis Bontes (2001).
- Wolf, Fred Allen (1986). *Star Wave*. Collier-Macmillan, New York.
- Zaehner, R.C. (1961). *Mysticism; Sacred and Profane*. Oxford University Press, London.

Image References

Book cover and jacket design by Radhamadhav Das (concept and design) and Saarup Gayen (design). Unlisted images: Internet or unknown sources. Design of all charts and illustrations except Plato's cave by Radhamadhav Das.

- Chapter 2.1: Painting of Śrī Caitanya © Taralākṣī Devī Dāsī. www.syamart.com.
 Chapter 2.2: Photograph of the King of Purī sweeping the cart of Lord Jagannātha © Bhakta Charles.
 Chapter 2.3: Painting of the journey of the soul by Parikṣit Dāsa. © Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT).
 Photograph of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda © Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
 Photograph of Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja by Radhamadhav Das.
 Painting of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda by Dhruva Dāsa. © Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
 Chapter 3.3: Painting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna by Parikṣit Dāsa. © Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
 Two other paintings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa © Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
 Chapter 3.6: Painting of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī © Rādhā-Damodar Temple, Vṛndāvan, Uttar Pradesh, India.
 Painting of Śrīla Vyāsadeva by Yadurāṇī Dāsī. © Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
 Chapter 3.7: Painting of Śukadeva Gosvāmī speaking Bhāgavatam by Muralīdhara Dāsa. © BBT.
 Photograph of Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Mahārāja © Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math.
 Chapter 5.1: All three paintings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa. © BBT.
 Chapter 5.2: Painting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa eating butter by Parikṣit Dāsa. © BBT.
 Painting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with cows by B. G. Sharma.
 Chapter 5.3: Painting of God's Avatāras by Parikṣit Dāsa. © BBT.
 Painting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with *gopīs* © Añjana Dāsa. www.artanjana.jimdo.com.
 Painting series: 1: Muralīdhara Dāsa. © BBT. 2-4: Unknown artists. 5: B. G. Sharma.
 Painting of Rasa Dance: © BBT.
 Chapter 5.4: Painting series: 1: Various artists. © BBT. 2: Muralīdhara Dāsa. © BBT. 3, 4, 5, 9: Yadurāṇī Dāsī. © BBT.
 6: Radhamadhav Das, see Chapter 14.2. 8: Parikṣit Dāsa. © BBT.
 Chapter 5.7: Painting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with expansions © BBT.
 Painting series of the five main *rasas*:
 2: Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa. © BBT. 4: © Añjana Dāsa. www.artanjana.jimdo.com.
 Chapter 5.8: Painting of Śrī Rādhā offering a flower-garland to Śrī Kṛṣṇa © BBT.
 Chapter 6: Portrait of Śrī Caitanya taken from the last image of Chapter 6.13. © BBT.
 Chapter 6.3: Photograph of Yogapīṭha in Māyāpur by Radhamadhav Das.
 Chapter 6.6: Painting of Śrī Caitanya performing Saṅkīrtana by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa. © BBT.
 Painting of Śrī Caitanya with Chand Kazi by Yadurāṇī Dāsī. © BBT.
 Chapter 6.8: Painting of Śrī Caitanya embracing Sanātana Gosvāmī by Muralīdhara Dāsa. © BBT.
 Chapter 6.9: Painting of Śrī Caitanya in the forest of Jhārikhaṇḍa by Hari Dāsa and Yadurāṇī Dāsī. © BBT.
 Chapter 6.10: Painting of Śrī Caitanya revealing His various forms by Muralīdhara Dāsa. © BBT.
 Chapter 6.13: Painting of Śrī Caitanya revealing His forms of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. © BBT.
 Painting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa seeing His own reflection by Praśānta Dāsa. © BBT.
 Painting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa on a boat with the *gopīs* by Dhṛti Dāsī and Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa. © BBT.
 Painting of Śrī Caitanya's reunion with His devotees by Muralīdhara Dāsa. © BBT.
 Painting of Śrī Caitanya and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa © Añjana Devī Dāsī.
 Painting of portrait of Śrī Caitanya crying by Ramin Ray, West Bengal, India.
 Painting of Saṅkīrtana of Śrī Caitanya and associates by Parikṣit Dāsa. © BBT.
 Chapter 6.14: Painting of Śrī Caitanya dancing during Ratha-yātrā by Parikṣit Dāsa. © BBT.
 Painting of Rādhārāṇī in separation © Syāmarāṇī Dāsī. www.bhaktiart.net.
 Chapter 8: Painting of Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja © Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math.
 Cartoon by Radhamadhav Das.
 Chapter 9.5: Painting of Śrī Caitanya leading Saṅkīrtana © BBT.
 Photograph of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda © BBT.
 Photograph of Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja © Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math.
 Chapter 10: Photograph of Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja © Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math.
 Chapter 11.7: Painting of cycle of material birth, life and death by Yadurāṇī Dāsī. © BBT.
 Chapter 12: Photograph of Śrīla Bhakti Promode Purī Mahārāja © Sri Gopinath Gaudiya Math.
 Chapter 13: Photographs of Clown Dimitri © Yves Burdet. www.photogare.ch.
 Chapter 14.11: Painting of Maitreya and Vidura by Yadurāṇī Dāsī. © BBT.
 Painting of Nīmāi with Mother Sacī by Parikṣit Dāsa. © BBT.
 Chapter 14.14: Painting of Śrī Kṛṣṇa returning home by Muralīdhara Dāsa. © BBT.
 Chapter 14.16: Painting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa seated on a sofa © Añjana Dāsa. www.artanjana.jimdo.com.
 Chapter 14.16: Painting of Lord Caitanya's Saṅkīrtan by Muralīdhara Dāsa. © BBT.
 Chapter 16: Painting of Lord Kṛṣṇa with His Guru Sāndīpani Muni by Ācārya Dāsa. © BBT.
 Painting of Lord Kṛṣṇa Lord Kṛṣṇa welcoming His friend Sudāmā by Dhruva Dāsa. © BBT.
 Appendix 2: Photographs by Radhamadhav Das.

Appendix 1. Guide to Sanskrit Pronunciation

The Sanskrit script, unlike most other scripts, uses a phonetic system. This means that each syllable produced by the speaking organs is strictly represented by only one single letter or a certain combination of letters. For example the letter *i* is always pronounced like the *i* in *pin*, and the letter *e* always like the *e* in *they*. As such the Sanskrit script ensures accurate sound reproduction without ambiguity. The English script for instance is non-phonetic and thus ambiguous. The *i* in *pin* sounds like the *e* in *depart*, but is different from the *i* in *pine*, *wide*, etc. The English language hence requires a pronunciation guide, unlike Sanskrit that can be spoken straight from the script without fearing mispronunciation (this fear has been detected to be a learning obstacle for many students). The system of transliteration with the help of diacritics (diacritical symbols) allows lossless romanization of Sanskrit scripts. The scheme followed in this book is the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST), the most popular one. It uses only small letters. To facilitate distinction, Sanskrit terms are written in italic script.

Vowels: Long vowels are twice as long as short ones. *a* is pronounced like the *u* in *but*, long *ā* like the *a* in *far*, and *i* like the *i* in *pin*. Long *ī* is pronounced as in *pique*, *u* as in *pull*, and long *ū* as in *rule*. *r̥* is pronounced like the *ri* in *rim*. *e* is pronounced as in *they*, *ai* as in *aisle*, *o* as in *go*, and *au* as in *how* (latter four vowels are always long). The anusvāra (*ṁ*) is a pure nasal and pronounced like the *n* in the French word *bon*, and visarga (*ḥ*), which is a strong aspirate, is pronounced as a final *h* sound. Thus *aḥ* is pronounced like *aha*, and *iḥ* like *ihi*.

Consonants: The guttural consonants—*k*, *kh*, *g*, *gh*, and *ṅ*—are pronounced from the throat in much the same manner as in English. *k* is pronounced as in *kite*, *kh* as in *Eckhart*, *g* as in *give*, *gh* as in *dig hard*, and *ṅ* as in *sing*. The palatal consonants—*c*, *ch*, *j*, *jh*, and *ñ*—are pronounced from the palate with the middle of the tongue. *c* is pronounced as in *chair*, *ch* as in *staunch heart*, *j* as in *joy*, *jh* as in *hedgehog*, and *ñ* as in *canyon*. The cerebral consonants—*ṭ*, *ṭh*, *ḍ*, *ḍh*, and *ṇ*—are pronounced with the tip of the tongue turned up and drawn back against the dome of the palate. *ṭ* is pronounced as in *tub*, *ṭh* as in *light heart*, *ḍ* as in *dove*, *ḍh* as in *red-hot*, and *ṇ* as in *nut*. The dental consonants—*t*, *th*, *d*, *dh*, and *n*—are pronounced in the same manner as the cerebrals but with the forepart of the tongue against the teeth. The labial consonants—*p*, *ph*, *b*, *bh*, and *m*—are pronounced with the lips. *p* is pronounced as in *pine*, *ph* as in *uphill*, *b* as in *bird*, *bh* as in *rub hard*, and *m* as in *mother*. The semivowels—*y*, *r*, *l*, and *v*—are pronounced as in *yes*, *run*, *light*, and *vine* respectively. The sibilants produce a hissing sound: *ś* is pronounced as in *sharp* (light sound), *ṣ* as in *push* (but with tongue pulled back and heavier), and *s* as in *sun*. The aspirate *h* is pronounced as in *home*.

Appendix 2. The Four Classical Vaiṣṇava-Sampradāyas



Table 1: Philosophies of the most prominent Ācāryas of the four classical Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāyas*:

Ācārya	Philosophy	Disciplic succession	<i>Vedānta</i> -commentary
Viṣṇu Svāmī ¹⁸⁶ (300 BC)	<i>śuddhādvaita-vāda</i> (purified monism)	Rudra- <i>sampradāya</i>	<i>Sarvajña-bhāṣya</i>
Rāmānujācārya (11 th century)	<i>viśiṣṭādvaita-vāda</i> (specific monism)	Śrī- <i>sampradāya</i>	<i>Śrī-bhāṣya</i>
Madhvācārya (13 th century)	<i>śuddha-dvaita-vāda</i> (purified dualism)	Brahma- <i>sampradāya</i>	<i>Pūrṇaprajña-bhāṣya</i>
Nimbārkācārya (13 th century)	<i>dvaitādvaita-vāda</i> ¹⁸⁷ (monism and dualism)	Kumāra- <i>sampradāya</i>	<i>Pārijāta-saurabha-bhāṣya</i>

The quintessence of above philosophies:

Śrī Caitanya (16 th century)	<i>acintya-bhedābheda- vāda</i>	Brahma-Madhva- Gauḍīya- <i>sampradāya</i>	<i>Govinda-bhāṣya</i> by Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa
--	-------------------------------------	--	---

The two major impersonal successions:

Buddha (500 BC)	<i>śunya-vāda</i> (emptiness)	various Buddhist schools	nil (Buddha rejected the <i>Vedas</i>)
Śaṅkarācārya (8-9 th century)	<i>kevalādvaita-vāda</i> (exclusive monism)	Śaṅkara- <i>sampradāya</i> (<i>māyāvādis</i> , monists)	<i>Śārīraka-bhāṣya</i>

There are mainly two opposed philosophical parties that confess fidelity to the *Vedas*; the theistic Vaiṣṇavas, who accept the Supreme Personality of Godhead as ever-existent¹⁸⁸, and the atheistic impersonalists. The Buddhists and common materialists do not accept the existence of God. The *māyāvādis* claim that the Lord's form is not eternal; they thus indirectly reject God as a perfect

¹⁸⁶ The here mentioned Viṣṇu Svāmī is Ādi Viṣṇu Svāmī. There are two more Viṣṇu Svāmīs of the same *sampradāya*; Rāja Gopāla Viṣṇu Svāmī appeared around the 8th century, and Āndhrā Viṣṇu Svāmī in the 14th century. The here chosen chronological sequence in the categorization is based on a purport of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda: “[...] When Śrī Viṣṇu Svāmī, one of the four Ācāryas of the Vaiṣṇava cult, presented his thesis on the subject matter of *śuddhādvaita-vāda*, immediately the *māyāvādis* took advantage of this philosophy and tried to establish their *advaita-vāda* or *kevalādvaita-vāda*. To defeat this *kevalādvaita-vāda*, Śrī Rāmānujācārya presented his philosophy as *viśiṣṭādvaita-vāda*, and Śrī Madhvācārya presented his philosophy of *tattva-vāda* [*śuddha-dvaita-vāda*], both of which are stumbling blocks to the *māyāvādis* because they defeat their philosophy in scrupulous detail.” – Cc 1.7.110, purport. “Viṣṇu Svāmī was the first of the Ācāryas to appear [...]” (Bhaktisiddhanta 2, 1928, p. 17.)

¹⁸⁷ To distinguish *dvaitādvaita* from *acintya-bhedābheda*, it is called *cintya-dvaitādvaita* (Bhaktisiddhanta 2, 1928, p. 39).

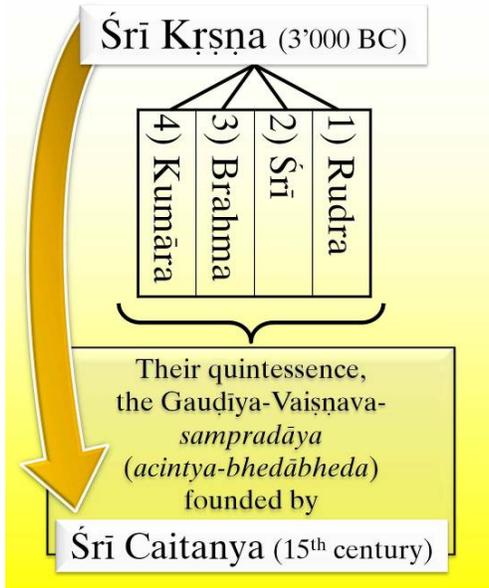
¹⁸⁸ In a broader sense, Vaiṣṇavism is a universal principle of theism and includes all theists such as Christians, Muslims, etc. “The supporters of *saviśeṣa-vāda*, the doctrine of eternity of personal Godhead, are known as Vaiṣṇavas or theists. We shall call any person or country and any era Vaiṣṇava or theist to the same extent that this *saviśeṣa-vāda* is found in them. We think that the noble Jesus propagated *saviśeṣa-vāda* as the Ācāryas Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī, Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Madhva, Śrī Nimbārka etc, did in India.” (Bhaktisiddhanta, 1929, p. 254.)

person and are therefore also counted amongst the atheists. We should remember that most Hindus nowadays do not strictly follow exclusively one specific *sampradāya* and a corresponding philosophy, but are associated with a mixture of various practices (see definition of Hinduism in Chapter 2.4). The original Vedic teaching does not categorize by geographical identifications, but by various distinct moods and maturities of worship that manifest in certain *sampradāyas* and philosophical conclusions. Vedic injunctions such as the below quoted *sampradāya-vihinā te* point out the necessity of taking shelter of one of the four authorized Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāyas* that can grant successful transcendence. The term *sampradāya* does not mean ‘sectarian organization’, as some people are thinking. “The etymological meaning of *sampradāya* is: ‘the exact method adopted through which eternal knowledge is bestowed properly and entirely’. (...) The real significance of the word has been closely indicated in the renowned dictionary *Amarakośa – Amaraṭha Candrika*, published by the Sanskrit Book Store, Kolkata, as follows: ‘Authentic transcendental scriptural instruction through preceptorial succession is designated as *āmnāya* or *sampradāya*.’” (Tirtha, 2010.)

The Vaiṣṇavas do not deny the existence of non-distinction in creation in certain aspects, but they also do not deny the existence of distinction in creation, especially in terms of the individual existence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, and the living entities, the *jīvas*. Therefore, the Vaiṣṇava versions of *advaita-darśana* like *suddhādvaita-darśana* or *viśiṣṭādvaita-darśana*, are not advocating exclusive monism or *kevalādvaita-darśana*, but merely give emphasis on non-distinction while also agreeing with distinction. On the other hand, the *māyāvādis* advocate exclusive non-distinction or monism. They do not accept the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the living entities as real – they claim that they are products of *māyā*, and that liberation means to overcome this illusory duality and realize ultimate oneness in Brahman. By denying the existence of duality, the doctrine of *māyāvāda* eridicates the possibility of eternal *bhakti*, since there must be different parties for loving devotional relationships. Therefore, *māyāvāda* is opposed to the Vaiṣṇava-doctrines, which hold that the Supreme Lord, the living entities and their relationship of *bhakti* are eternal. To establish that the Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāyas* are accepted by the Vedic literature, Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa quotes the *Padma Purāṇa* in the fifth verse of his *Prameya-ratnāvalī*: *sampradāya-vihinā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ, ataḥ kalau bhaviṣyanti catvāraḥ sampradāyinaḥ, śrī-brahma-rudra-sanakā vaiṣṇavaḥ kṣīti-pāvanāḥ, catvāras te kalau bhāvyaḥ hy utkale puruṣottamāt*. The commonly given meaning translates as follows:

“Unless one is initiated by a bona fide spiritual master in the disciplic succession, the *mantra* he might have received is without any effect. For this reason four Vaiṣṇava disciplic successions, inaugurated by Lakṣmī Devī, Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, and the four Kumāras, will appear (*bhavyaḥ*) in Orissa (*utkale*) in the holy place of Jagannātha Purī (*puruṣottamāt*), and purify the entire earth during the age of Kali.”

As the mentioned successions did not primarily appear in Orissa, some have explained that the term *bhavyaḥ* means that they will have their monasteries in Orissa. However, Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa pointed out that the real meaning is that all four *sampradāyas* together, i.e. their quintessence, will appear from the Supreme Lord (*puruṣottamāt*), and when He will appear in Kali-yuga, He will live in Jagannātha Purī as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Himself distribute the essential conclusion, the *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*; thus the Gauḍīya lineage is not a fifth *sampradāya* but the essence of the four, and so is the Gauḍīya philosophy (*Vb*, BTG #25-02, 1991). “Although these four *sampradāyas* had their own *mathas* at Jagannātha Purī, and from there propagated the eternal religion of service to the Supreme Lord in human society, it was Lord Gaurasundara who widely distributed their essential conclusions.” (Bhaktisiddhanta 2, 1928, p. 16.)



The spiritual leaders before Śrī Caitanya were only paving the way for Him, as only the Supreme Lord Himself can make His own essence available to the people. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, being the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the root of the four bona fide Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāyas*. That same Supreme Lord again appeared in the 15th century as Śrī Caitanya to establish the quintessence of the four *sampradāyas*, the universal philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, and founded the essential Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāya*.

“According to Vedavyāsa, *hy utkale puruṣottamāt*, the pure message of the Vaiṣṇava religion would spread from Jagannātha Purī. In order to honor this prediction, Sarasvatī Prabhupāda established the Śrī Purushottam Math at Bhakti Kutī in Jagannātha Purī on June 9, 1922, installing a deity of Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu.” (Tīrtha 1, 2001.) Earlier, on March 7, 1918, in the first Śrī Caitanya Math in Māyāpur, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda consecrated deities

of the prominent Ācāryas of the four classical Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāyas* in each of the four corners of the temple, and in the middle, their celebrated quintessence, deities of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Rādhā-Govinda (Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa). A similarly designed temple with deities of the four prominent Ācāryas of the four classical Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāyas* was established by Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja in Śrī Jagannātha Purī at the holy appearance site of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda (see above pictures and picture 6 in Chapter 6.19). It was exactly at this place, where, more than hundred years ago, the cart of Lord Jagannātha stopped and was unable to be moved with all efforts for three days, until Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, who was then a baby, was brought in front of the Lord. A garland fell from Lord Jagannātha on the baby as a blessing. After this, the cart could be moved again. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda became a great Ācārya and established 64 Maths all over India from where Śrī Caitanya’s teachings are still being taught. With thousands of centers worldwide, his disciples and their further generations of disciples are to date carrying out the most extensive preaching of Vedic theism, and all this is taking place under the banner of Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavism. Thus the universal school of Śrī Caitanya and His *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* has grown into the largest school of Vedic theism.

Those who cannot accept the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāya* as the quintessence of the four authorized Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāyas* can nevertheless accept the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas as belonging to one of the four authorized Vaiṣṇava successions, since Śrī Caitanya was Himself initiated by Śrī Īśvara Purī who belonged to the Brahma-*sampradāya* in the line of Madhvācārya. Therefore, the full term of the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāya* is Śrī Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya-*sampradāya*. Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa has listed Śrī Caitanya’s entire lineage in the seventh verse of his *Prameya-ratnāvalī*. He has also compiled his own commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, the *Govinda-bhāṣya*, because the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas were criticized for lacking their own *Vedānta-sūtra* commentary (unlike many other schools, the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas accept the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the natural and eternally sufficient commentary of the *Vedānta-sūtra* by the author, Śrīla Vedavyāsa himself).

The above cited verse of the *Padma-Purāṇa* justifies the traditional categorization of the four classical Vaiṣṇava-philosophies. The more common approach to explain *acintya-bhedābheda-darśana* is to compare it with each of these four philosophies and establish that it is their combined essence or synthesis. This has already been done elaborately by various devotees and scholars, and is therefore not repeated extensively in this book. It is very difficult for the layman to understand even the basic teachings of and differences between various subcategories of Vaiṣṇava philosophies. Yet we can easily grasp the distinction between the four main categories of philosophy presented in chapter nine by understanding their essential motive, and how they relate to each other in the Lord’s overall plan of unfolding full-fledged theism.

Appendix 3. Extraordinary Departures of Devotees

This Appendix gives account of extraordinary departures of devotees. A spiritually auspicious departure is not to be mistaken as the goal of life; it is a side-effect of the practice of devotion to God, which is the actual goal of life. These incidents are recounted here in order to give account of successful transcendence by practicing the science of *bhakti*.



Kṛṣṇa Lāl Deb Nāth from Agartala, India, left his body in 2002 in a completely healthy condition. During a very auspicious moment, namely during the yearly festival of his family deities, after the first morning ceremony (*maṅgala-ārati*), in midst of the beginning of a twenty-four hours congregational chanting of the Lord's holy name (*aṣṭa-prahara-kīrtana*), Kṛṣṇa Lāl Deb Nāth spontaneously raised his arms in the air, loudly chanted "Goura Hari! Goura Hari! Goura Hari!"¹⁸⁹ and left his body out of his own will (*svad-ichhay deha-tyāg*), due to feelings of separation from the Supreme Lord (*viraha-betha*). He was a sincere devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa and very dear to Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja, who is the present President-Ācārya of the Sree Chaitanya Gauḍīya Math and the spiritual master of his son, the *sannyāsī* Pujyapada Bhakti Prakāś Tatpar Mahārāja. On the day when his father left his body, Tatpar Mahārāja was not present because he was serving his Guru in a temple many miles away. Somehow, the news of his father's

disappearance reached him, but not his Guru. When his Guru, Śrīla Tīrtha Mahārāja, noticed some changes in Tatpar Mahārāja's mood, he asked him if there was anything disturbing him, but because Tatpar Mahārāja at that time did not want to disturb him, he said that he is alright. Then, without having been informed by anyone (but the Lord in his heart), Śrīla Tīrtha Mahārāja said to him: "Goura Hari! Goura Hari! Goura Hari!"¹⁹⁰

It is noteworthy that in Vedic countries, the practice of willingly giving up one's material body during an auspicious moment and/or out of separation from the Supreme Lord is not a very uncommon thing as it would be in the West, and therefore in such countries there exist various precise terms for leaving the material body. For example, in the Bengali language, people who are spiritually educated do not say 'XY died', but 'XY gave up his body' (*XY deha tyāg korechen*). In English, in contrast to the destructive term 'dying', the terms 'passing away', 'passing on', and 'departing' express the continuity of the soul. In the Vedic understanding one is aware to eternally be a spirit soul beyond the material body, and as such the self never gets touched by sickness, old age and death. To say 'person XY died' is actually dishonoring the dignity of the eternal soul as an eternal particle and servant of the Supreme Lord.

¹⁸⁹ 'Goura Hari' is a name of Lord Caitanya, meaning the golden Hari, the golden Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that whoever quits his body while remembering Him alone at once attains Him without doubt (*Bg 8.5*). Chanting the Supreme Lord's holy name is the easiest way to remember Him, and therefore it is recommended to always chant His holy name, especially at the time of death. Chanting the Lord's name at the time of leaving the body is taken as sign that that person will attain the Supreme Lord.

¹⁹⁰ From an interview with Pujyapada Bhakti Prakāś Tatpar Mahārāja taken by the author in February 2010 in Kolkata.

Dr. Fakir Mohan Dās, a senior Vaiṣṇava and Professor Emeritus of Utkal University, faced death during a heart attack. He remembers¹⁹¹: “When I observed my body lying on the floor beyond control and the symptoms of death approaching, I at once started to chant the holy name, *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*. I thought that now Kṛṣṇa will take me, but He brought me back. I have not completed certain services here.” His doctor recalled: “Dr. Fakir Mohan Dās was without any sign of external consciousness. The cardiograph clearly showed eight strokes, one after the other. No patient has survived that before. But to my surprise, he came back. And the most wonderful thing was, that during the entire time, his lips were clearly moving, indicating that he was internally chanting! Modern science cannot explain this. Even the fingers of his right hand were moving, as if counting the holy names on prayer beads.”



Sometimes devotees with a non-Vedic or non-Indian background are discouraged by their previous conditions. In the Western society, one cannot hear of people overcoming death to such an extent as in the Vedic society, and thus some of them may think that they are unqualified to attain self-realization and overcome death in this life. Also, some people with pious births in Vedic families, falsely claim, that people of other births are less qualified in this matter and need to first take birth in India in a Vedic family. We should remember that great stalwart devotees like Nāmācaryā Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura who appeared from a Muslim father proof this claim to be false (see Chapter 6.8). The *Caitanya-bhāgavata* (1.2.46-52) explains that Lord Caitanya ordered His personal devotees to appear in impious places and families (*śocya-deśe, śocya-kule*) in all countries (*sarva-deśe*) to deliver all the people. My spiritual master, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Mahārāja, who comes from a Vedic and Indian background, explained on the first of March 2010 in Māyāpura, that in the present special Kali-yuga¹⁹², Śrī Caitanya’s teachings of *bhakti* will spread everywhere and thus there can be pure devotees outside of India, even higher than those in India. What counts is that they have an internal relationship with pure devotees. It is possible that in India, the Vedic science becomes lost, and outside, there may still be pure devotees [end of paraphrase]. Devotees with a non-Vedic or non-Indian background must not be disheartened; anybody can reach the highest level of spiritual realization through the mercy of pure devotees. The following excerpt of the biography of Rām Dās¹⁹³ shall shed further light on this subtopic, as well as on the present topic of overcoming the illusion of death and self-realization.

Rām Dās was brought up in the USA as an Afro-American with a difficult background. His grandfather was an African slave who became an alcoholic after being freed and Rām Dās’ mother died when he was a small child. Rām Dās’ father, although kind, was hard on him, and he faced difficult times throughout his youth and then as a draftee in the army during the Vietnam war. Despite these difficulties, he remained an extremely friendly and well-behaved person. A few years after Rām Dās joined the devotees in the Lord’s temple in ISKCON Los Angeles, he became the head priest due to his outstanding qualities. This was his cherished service for twenty years. Although he was busy managing the service of a hundred devotees, he would still do a lot of services like cooking for the deities himself. When he retired, he had to be replaced with many devotees, and even they together could hardly keep up. Although he served the Lord on the altar, his motto was that the best way to serve the Lord is to serve His devotees, and so he would always help the devotees in whichever way he could. Many people, from common men to renown Swamis, went to meet him for inspiration and advise, and his room was always open for all. When the persons who

¹⁹¹ From a discourse of Dr. Fakir Mohan Dās in the year 2008.

¹⁹² The present age, the Kali-yuga, is a special Kali-yuga, because Lord Caitanya who gives the complete Vedic understanding and full-fledged love of God, only appears every 994th Kali-yuga, i.e. only once in 4.32 billion years.

¹⁹³ Summarized from an interview with Kṛṣṇa Kumārī Devī Dāsī, the devoted wife of Rām Dās, recorded by the author in Kṛṣṇa-Kathā Garden of Gratitude, Vṛndāvana, in December 2006.

had given him initiation, one after another, had problems, he struggled with doubts, but he could not be discouraged, keeping his faith on Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Due to overworking, he developed a heart problem. He had several heart attacks and was forced to retire. Although physically he could not serve as much as before, he continued his service to the Lord mentally after retiring to Vṛndāvana. Rām Dās was often graced with direct internal revelations and instructions from great personalities of the spiritual world, and by their guidance discovered and restaurated an ancient place of worship in the holy land of Vṛndāvana, where he passed his final years. One day, these personalities were so much satisfied with Rām Dās' service, that they offered him to fulfill any of his wishes. He asked for a few things, of which the following are of importance in the present context: "When I leave my body, I want to be in Vṛndāvana, preferably on Dvādaśī (the auspicious twelfth day after the full or new moon), I want to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa as I leave, I want to look at the picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda¹⁹⁴, hold his lotus feet on my heart and hear his chanting [...]." His wife begged him to wish to get better. But Rām Dās was completely detached because he knew that staying alive for another few years is not the goal of life, but to attain the eternal blissful service of Kṛṣṇa. He replied: "What's the matter? This is getting better! I also wished, that as soon as I'm leaving my body, I'm going to join Śrīla Prabhupāda in the eternal service to Lord Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world!"



Lord Kṛṣṇa fulfilled all of Rām Dās' desires – the very next day, on the eight December 2000. It was Dvādaśī, and the appearance day of the saint Nārada Muni. Rām Dās was sixtyone years of age. Without having been asked, a devotee brought a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda. At night, Rām Dās calmly told his wife "It is happening", and that she must not worry but could go to bed. Of course she stayed with him. She played a recording of Śrīla Prabhupāda chanting the holy name. Having served as a nurse who saw many people leave their body, she has never witnessed

anyone who was able to keep up full consciousness up to the last moment like Rām Dās; usually they lose consciousness long before the soul departs or become unable to speak. Rām Dās described to his wife the different stages of leaving the body as he was witnessing them. He turned to Śrīla Prabhupāda's picture, and just as his soul was coming out, he said "Kṛṣṇa!" and left a smile on the face of his previous body. As God was happy to have Rām Dās' soul back with Him, the room was surcharged with spiritual ecstasy, so much so, that his wife was unable to cry or be said, but felt immense bliss and started loudly singing *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*.

During the cremation of Rām Dās' body, the flames shot out unusually high. A flock of white swans flew around the flames thrice and then flew towards a temple. An unknown priest from Keśī Ghāt arrived to offer *prasāda*. He was spontaneously inspired during his worship to bring *prasāda* for some saintly person who had left the body. According to local custom, these are all extraordinary auspicious and rare signs of saintliness. A Vrajavāsī, a resident of Vṛndāvana, offered to freely conduct a special ritual, during which he was able to ascertain that Rām Dās had attained the spiritual world. The Vrajavāsī and his family members and all who were present offered their obeisances to the ashes of Rām Dās, who had attained the highest goal of life, the eternal service of Lord Kṛṣṇa. For many days after his departure, devotees from all over the world reported dreams of Rām Dās urging them to keep up their chanting and service. He told one devotee: "You will never believe how wonderful it is here! Don't give up! Just keep chanting!"

¹⁹⁴ 'Śrīla Prabhupāda' here refers to Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Appendix 4. The Vedic Education System and Your Contribution

This ebook is offered without charge because I am trying to follow the Vedic education system. If you heartily want to contribute, I am happy that the service reciprocation cycle can be completed, as explained below. You can find a link to contribute on www.diversityinunison.com. I don't consider myself a teacher but the humble servant of my teachers. Donations will be used for educating people in the teachings of Śrī Caitanya.

The Vedic education system is different from the western education system. Western education has more or less been reduced to an institution to supply the money-oriented industries with suitable manpower. Long past are the times when philosophy and religion were the central faculties of academia. Vedic education is not directed by money-minded people, but by the *brāhmaṇas*, the teachers and priests of society, who are by nature and rule neither engaged in business like the *vaiśyas*, nor in governing like the *kṣatriyas*, in order to protect their spiritual purity from possessiveness, corruption and politics. If the *brāhmaṇas*, the teachers of society, remain pure, the entire society can maintain purity. Their sole duty is to engage in spiritual study, worship, meditation, God-realization and education. Their spirit of teaching is the highest we can find in human society. Being teachers by nature, they live what they teach in every aspect of their life and teach others for its own sake, not for making an earning. Being of a spiritual nature, Veda cannot be paid for materially – it descends from the transcendental platform to those who are pure-hearted and thirsty for it, for the sole price of faith. Śrīla Bhakti Pramode Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja wrote: “Devotional books are *śabda-brahma*, the Supreme Lord in the form of sound. (...) Neither the Deities, nor the books are anyone's personal property. (...) It is a great offense to turn scripture into merchandise to earn a living.” (Dasi, 2002, pp. 158-161.)

We should not donate to our teachers in the spirit of paying, but in the spirit of gratitude and affection. Those who actually receive the treasure of Veda are naturally grateful with heart and deed; they are eager to contribute to the livelihood of their teachers and to serve them personally. In the Vedic education system, the students get pleasure from serving their teachers. They serve and study with great enthusiasm to please their teachers, not for their own ends. If they would have to choose from serving or studying, they would choose serving without hesitation. There are many instances where students who ‘only’ served their teachers have automatically achieved perfect knowledge, which cannot be attained by all efforts of study. “Only unto those who serve both the Lord and Guru are all the imports of Veda automatically revealed.” – *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.23. Many learned scholars failed in understanding Veda because they neglected service (which is in itself the actual goal of Veda!). Intelligent students are very eager to serve their teachers, not only with money, but also with personal services, and many thus choose to live close to them. Teachers and students enjoy a very personal relationship full of reciprocal affection, of which the learning process is just a side effect. The Vedic learning process is very effective because it is not based on duty, but on a voluntary relationship between teacher and student laden with mutual care, affection and service. This relationship is so attracting that even Lord Kṛṣṇa, ‘the All-attracting Lord’, accepted the saintly *brāhmaṇa* Sāṅdīpani Muni as His Guru and served him with love.

The Vedic education includes all disciplines known to humanity, and they are all focussed on the central human quest of transcendence through spiritual education and devotional service. Due to lack of this essential human spirit of voluntary service and transcendence, teaching and learning in the modern education system have degenerated to a dry duty or troublesome burden bereft of any spiritual outlook. The mutual care, affection and service cycle between teachers and students is broken in a system that enforces paid teachers on students, leading to increasing hate and violence. The maximum amount of gratitude and learning effort can only manifest when the students are free to choose and serve their teachers and are brought up in a society in which they are encouraged to serve their teachers with care and affection.

Appendix 5. The Golden Chance

This Appendix encourages us to not only theoretically accept, but also practice the teachings of Lord Caitanya, and informs us how to practically take to the guidance of a pure devotee. The Vedic literature states that the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa appears in each universe only once in a cycle of material creation, i.e. only every 8.6 billion (8'600'000'000) years¹⁹⁵. However, He does not give *kṛṣṇa-prema*, fully blossomed love of God; that can only be achieved from Śrī Caitanya, the Golden Avatāra, the most munificent form of God (see Chapter 6.13). Śrī Caitanya also only appears every 8.6 billion years, around 4'500 years after Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and He distributes *kṛṣṇa-prema* to one and all by the simple procedure of *saṅkīrtana*. The age of *prema*, the *prema-yuga*, lasts for only 10'000 years, after which the teachings of Śrī Caitanya are again forgotten. We have taken birth only 500 years after the advent of Śrī Caitanya – so close! The precious chance of being born within this span of time in which the teachings of Śrī Caitanya are taught is very small; around 1:20'000'000. Not only that, we have been born in this time as human beings, who are able to take to spiritual upliftment by our own decision – chances of which are unthinkably small, considering the much greater amount of other species, especially countless insects and microbes. Multiplying these two rates of chance, we arrive at a rate of possibility close to zero. Having achieved this most rare and precious golden chance, we should not waste a second of time and start to seriously practice the teachings of the Golden Avatāra Śrī Caitanya at once. We may die any moment – why postpone? This golden chance is too rare and precious to be wasted.

If we won the jackpot of the national lottery, and all we would have to do is to take off from our usual duties for a week and collect our money from a certain place at a great distance – we would not hesitate a second to leave at once, in whatever busy circumstances we may be. But if we are asked to receive the treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, which is worth more than all the money in the world, from a pure devotee, simply for the price of faith, and chant God's holy name for some time daily, without even having to go anywhere, then we say “Oh, this is not possible right now, I'm very busy.” This is a blunt lie. We always have time, as the example of collecting the jackpot shows. The only problem is, that although it deserves the first priority, we give devotion to God a priority below reading the newspaper or similar common habits for which we daily find time. We would not hesitate to renounce our usual duties to collect the jackpot because we have understood the value of money. Then why is it that we hesitate to spare some time to chant the Lord's holy name and achieve the greatest treasure, love of God, and as a side effect, eternal life full of wisdom and transcendental bliss? Because we have not understood the value of love of God! This blindness for the highest value of love of God roots in prejudices, misidentifications and unbeneficial desires that we have accumulated in millions of births with material association, resulting in giving priority to material activities. If we now take to the spiritual association of a pure devotee, we can learn how to appreciate the teachings of Śrī Caitanya and give them their deserved priority.

This book may help us to begin to appreciate *bhakti*, but without the proper association, it is quite impossible to properly practice *bhakti*, especially in the present age of Kali in which the mind is extremely unsteady. Good habits and desires only take shape in the proper association. If we don't want to miss the golden chance of getting the treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema* from the Golden Avatāra Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, we must at once take shelter of His pure devotee, who will gladly bestow this treasure upon us. Merely reading books or lip confession will not do – to attain *kṛṣṇa-prema* means to practically undergo a complete transformation in which we achieve our eternal spiritual identity after successful practice of the science of *bhakti*. By taking birth as a human being who comes in contact with the teachings of Śrī Caitanya, we have already won the golden jackpot; all we have to do is collect the treasure. We should at once take our chance!

¹⁹⁵ Other forms of Godhead appear at other times – yet as explained in Chapter 5.7, the sweetest and most sophisticated relations with Godhead are found in relation to Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

The most effective way for self-realization is personal association with a pure devotee¹⁹⁶. If you are somehow not in the position to personally take to the association of a pure devotee, you can do it via phone, video conference, letters or email. If you are uncertain about who is a pure devotee (see Chapter 16), the advanced devotees can help you to find one, and if you still have doubts, then chanting the holy name attentively and from the core of the heart will definitely lead you to a pure devotee, from whom you can receive initiation into pure chanting and the priceless treasure of *kr̥ṣṇa-prema*, pure love of God. God is realized through the mercy of His pure devotee, and the pure devotee is realized through the mercy of God, who is most mercifully present in His form of the holy name (see Chapter 15). Everything and everyone comes from God, is maintained by God and is meant for God (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 3.1). For one who sincerely wants to attain God, God will naturally and surely make all arrangements, since He is only waiting for our consent. One who is sincerely engaged in transcendental activities will never be deceived (*Bg* 6.10). All powers are with God, but He does not enforce Himself, because He wants volunteer service, unconditional love. If we make the first step of surrender, He will gradually free us from material coverings. Overcoming material illusion is impossible for us, but it's a child's play for Him. However, our consent, our sincere desire to serve Him is required. God is not a miser; He is all-benevolent and ever-ready; we must simply give up our miserliness and surrender to Him – then He will shower eternal benedictions upon us. The Supreme Lord Himself gives the intelligence how to attain Him to those who incessantly worship Him with love (*Bg* 10.10).

In this book it has been explained how the highest aspiration of devotion was given by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His followers, the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas. If you are interested in practicing the path of pure devotion as given by Mahāprabhu, there are many institutions that welcome you. However, if you are more attracted to other paths of devotion of other schools or religions, then you can also practice devotion in such a school. Just try to be a sincere devotee and devote some time daily to chanting the name of God, as chanting is the most efficient way of God- and self-realization (see Chapter 15). The following list of Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava institutions in alphabetical order can still be expanded. If you want to search online you can use keywords like Gaudiya, Vaishnava, Chaitanya, Krishna and Sankirtan. For inquiries, feedback and corrections please contact the author via email: radhamadhavadasa@gmail.com. You can also visit www.nectarpot.com.

All India Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math
 Gaudiya Vaishnava Association
 Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti
 GOKUL, Global Organization of Krishnachaitanya's Universal Love
 IPBYS, International Pure Bhakti Yoga Society
 ISKCON, International Society for Krishna Consciousness
 Sree Gaudiya Mission
 Sri Caitanya Sanga
 Sri Chaitanya Math
 Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math
 Sri Gopinath Gaudiya Math
 Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mission
 Sri Narasingha Chaitanya Math
 VRINDA, Vrindavan Institute for Vaishnava Culture and Studies
 WVA, World Vaishnava Association

¹⁹⁶ Associating with pure devotees does not primarily mean physical association, but to follow their teachings, and thus associate with their heart. Still, physical association is very important for inspiration and individual instruction.

Glossary & Word Index in Alphabetical Order

Note: Non-English terms are in Sanskrit if not declared otherwise.

English terms found in the table of contents are not listed again in this glossary.

To search for a word in a soft copy or ebook, enter the word in the search tool (usually Ctrl + F).

abhidheya—devotional practices that enable factual God- and self-realization and the attainment of *prayojana*, the highest goal of life, *kṛṣṇa-prema*, pure love of God. See Chapters 2.1, 9.5.

ācārya—spiritual master who teaches by his own example. See *guru*. See Chapter 16.

abheda—non-dual; indistinct; one. See *advaita*, monism.

acintya—inconceivable. Due to being governed by spiritual laws, reality is ultimately materially inconceivable. It can only be conceived by spiritual revelation. See Chapters 11.2, 14.3.

acintya-bhedābheda-darśana—universal Vedic philosophy of inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction of the Supreme Lord and His expansions and energies. *darśana* means philosophy, vision, perception (Williams). See *acintya*, *bheda*, *abheda*, *darśana*.

acintya-bhedābheda-siddhanta—*ibid.* *siddhanta* means ultimate conclusion and indicates that the philosophy of *acintya bhedābheda* is the final conclusion of Veda, true knowledge.

acintya-bhedābheda-tattva—*ibid.* *tattva* means substantial reality and indicates the ultimate reality that is obtained by the philosophy or vision of *acintya-bhedābheda*.

acintya-bhedābheda-vāda—*ibid.* *vāda* means doctrine, thesis, agreement (Williams). In this term, *vāda* stresses the point of various people agreeing with a certain doctrine.

acintya-śakti—materially inconceivable energy of the Supreme Lord by which His *acintya-bhedābheda* nature is harmonized and revealed to His devotees. See Chapter 14.4.

advaita-vāda—philosophy of absolute indistinction of the ultimate reality taught mainly by Śaṅkarācārya. Also called *>abheda*, *māyāvāda*, impersonalism or monism. See Chapters 9.3-4, 10, 11.5, 14.12.

ahankāra—false ego, by which the soul misidentifies with the material body. See Chapter 2.2.

aiśvarya—opulence, supremacy, superhuman powers.

aiśvarya-jñāna—reverential conception of God according to *>aiśvarya-prakāśa*.

aiśvarya-prakāśa—lit. ‘opulent manifestation’. God has two *prakāśa*, manifestations; *aiśvarya*, opulent, and *>mādhurya*, sweet. See Chapter 5.7.

ānanda—transcendentally blissful. See Chapter 5.5.

anyābhilāṣa—lit. ‘other desires’. False desires, referring to desires other than *bhakti*. See Chapter 16.

aprākṛta—spiritual, or antimaterial, transcendental to material nature.

ārya—lit. ‘excellent, wise, noble, honourable’. Essentially: one who follows the eternal nature of the soul, the *>sanātana-dharma*. *ārya* is the root of German *Ehre*, honor (Williams). Webster mentions a relation *aristos*, the Greek word for ‘best’. See Aryan. See Chapter 6.8.

Aryan—English term for *>ārya*. “Aryan has no validity as an ethnological term, but it has been so used, notoriously by the Nazis.” (Webster). See Chapter 6.8.

āśrama—spiritual order. There are four *āśramas* according to the *>varṇāśrama-dharma* society: (1) *brahmacārya*—student order. Characterized by service to one’s Guru and celibacy. (2) *grhastha*—married order. (3) *vānaprastha*—retired order. Retired from family, concentration on self-realization. (4) *sannyāsa*—fully renounced order. Full dedication to practicing and preaching pure *bhakti*.

ātmā—self, soul. Also called *jīvātma*. See *jīva*.

avaroha-panthā—the process of knowledge descending through *>paramparā*. See Chapter 3.1.

avatāra—Descent of the unconditioned Supreme Lord in His own spiritual body (*Bg* 4.6). Not to be confused with the term ‘incarnation’ that refers to the endowment of a *jīva* with a material human body (Webster) or animal or plant body. The Supreme Lord is purely spiritual and never accepts a material body, although this may seem so to the layman. There are innumerable Avatāras of the Supreme Lord (*SB* 1.3.26). See Chapters 5.3, 6.3, 14.5.

bābāji—devotee in the renounced order beyond *>sannyāsa*; traditional order for a *>Paramahansa*. The traditional *bābāji* dress consists of two pieces of white loin cloth. Unlike the *sannyāsīs*,

- the *bābājīs* are beyond the rules of *>varṇāśrama-dharma*. They usually live in austere seclusion, chanting and meditating on the eternal pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. See Chapter 6.8.
- bahirāṅga-śakti*—external material energy of the Supreme Lord. See *śakti*.
- bhagavān*—Supreme Personality of Godhead, the possessor (*vān*) of six opulences (*bhaga*) in unlimited fullness: wealth (*aiśvarya*), strength (*vīrya*), fame (*yaśaḥ*), beauty (*śriyaḥ*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and renunciation (*vairāgya*). See Kṛṣṇa. See Chapter 5.
- bhāgavata-dharma*—science of devotional service to the Supreme Lord (Bhagavān in Sanskrit); the religious principles enunciated by the Lord; the eternal inherent nature and function of the living being. See *sanātana-dharma*. See Chapter 12.
- bhāva-bhakti*—spontaneous *bhakti* resulting from tasting *>rasa*. See *prema-bhakti*.
- bhajana*—worship. From the verbal root *bhaj*, to worship, serve.
- bhakta*—devotee of the Lord; one who performs *>bhakti*, devotional service.
- bhakti*—devotional service to the Supreme Lord. *bhakti* is the *>sanātana-dharma*, eternal inherent nature and function of the living being. From the verbal root *bhaj*, to worship, serve. *sādhana-bhakti* is regulated practice of *bhakti* and *bhāva-bhakti* is *bhakti* spontaneously arising from inspiration by one’s inherent *>kṛṣṇa-prema*, love of God, that can be awakened by *sādhana-bhakti*. *prema-bhakti* is the perfectional stage of *bhāva-bhakti*. See also *prema*.
- bhakti-yoga*—system of cultivation of *>bhakti* or pure devotional service, which is untinged by self-centered sense gratification and philosophical speculation; the highest system of *>yoga*.
- Bhārata-varṣa—literally ‘the land of king Bharata’; proper term for India. The non-Vedic term ‘India’ was derived from the river Sindhu, just like the term *>Hinduism*.
- bheda*—difference, distinction, division. See *dvaita*, dualism.
- bhukti*—material sense gratification. See Chapter 14.18.
- brahma*—syn. *>Brahman*. It is better to use ‘Brahman’ to avoid confusion with *>brahmā*.
- Brahmā, *brahmā*—Lord Brahmā, demigod in charge of universal creation. See Chapters 5.4-5, 14.13.
- brahmacārī*—literally ‘one who searches Brahman’. See *āśrama*, *varṇāśrama-dharma*.
- Brahman—English term for *>brahma*. Not to be confounded with *>Brahmā* or *>brāhmaṇa*. The impersonal, all-pervasive aspect & effulgence of the Supreme Lord. See Chapter 5.5.
- brāhmaṇa*—priest; teacher; member of the priestly class. See *varṇā*, *varṇāśrama-dharma*.
- Buddha—see Chapters 9, 10, especially Chapter 9.2.
- Caitanya Mahāprabhu—Descent of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the aspect of His own devotee. See Chapter 6.
- caitya-guru*—the Supersoul, the expansion of Kṛṣṇa who is seated as the spiritual master within the heart of every living being. See Chapter 16.
- cit*—alive, conscious, wise; the individual living beings; unlimited knowledge. See Chapter 5.5.
- cit-śakti*—enlightening knowledge potency of the Supreme Lord. See *śakti*. See Chapter 14.4.
- contemplate—to behold, observe, consider, embrace, immersion in certain truths. See Chapter 15.6.
- darśana*—vision, philosophy, contemplation, perception, understanding. The act of seeing and/or being seen by the *>deity* in the temple or a spiritually advanced person. See Chapter 3.3.
- deity—English term used by devotees for the *śrīmūrti*, the genuine transcendental image of the Supreme Lord. See Chapter 5.7.
- demigod—*>deva*.
- deva*—demigod; universal controller and residents of the higher planets. *devas* are *>jīvas* whom God empowers to partially represent Him in the management of the universe. There are thirty-three million *devas*. See Chapter 11.3.
- dharma*—religious principles; activities to attain the Absolute Truth; one’s natural original eternal inherent occupation or engagement; the capacity to render service, which is the essential original quality of a living being. Derived from the verbal root *dhṛ*, to sustain, support. *dharma* actually means ‘that which sustains existence’. Therefore, unlike the term ‘religion’, *dharma* can not be separated from life. See Chapter 12.
- Durgā—lit. ‘difficult to escape, prison (of *>māyā*)’; demigoddess presiding over material nature. Durgā envelops the conditioned souls in *māyā*. They thus identify themselves with their material bodies and think to be enjoyers and controllers of the mundane creation. Durgā Devī is the consort of Lord *>Śiva*. See *Māyā Devī*. See Chapters 3.3, 11.3, 14.2.

dīkṣā-guru—initiating spiritual master. See Chapter 16.

dvaita—duality, dualism. Syn. *bheda*; a system of *Vedānta* by Madhvācārya. See Chapter 9.4.

dvaitādvaita-vāda—*Vedānta* philosophy taught by Nimbarkācārya. See Appendix 2.

education: See Chapter 16 and Appendix 2.

empathy—temporary mental projection of one’s self into the personality and position of another in order to understand the other person better; ability to share in another’s experiences, emotions and thoughts. See Chapters 5.5, 6.14, 13, 15.6, 16.

epistemology—theory of the nature, sources, and limits of knowledge. See Chapter 3.

etymology—theory of the origin and development of words. See Chapters 1.4, 5.2.

false ego—English translation of >*ahankāra*. Distinct from the real self, the spirit soul, the >*jīva*.

full-fledged theism—theism in its fullest development; >Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavism. Theism with the highest grade of >teleosympathy, desire to serve the personal desires of God, and thus the highest potential of complete revelation of the transcendental reality, because God reveals Himself in reciprocation to one’s surrender (*Bg* 4.11). See Chapters 6.13, 9-10, 13.

Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava (Bengali; say ‘Gouḍīya’)—a >Vaiṣṇava who follows the pure teachings of Lord Caitanya. For an explication of the term ‘Gauḍīya’ see Chapter 9.5.

Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavism—the >full-fledged theism of the >Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas.

Gaura (say ‘Goura’)—lit. ‘of fair complexion’. Also Gaura-Hari. A name of Śrī >Caitanya who is Lord Kṛṣṇa (Hari) who accepted the golden (*gaura*) complexion and mood of Śrī Rādhārāṇī.

Gaurāṅga (say ‘Gourāṅga’ for Bengali pronunciation) —lit. ‘the One with golden limbs’; name of Śrī >Caitanya. See Gaura.

God, Godhead—see Chapter 5. The term ‘God’ comes from Sanskrit *huta-bhuk*, a name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (see Chapter 5.2). God is realized in three main manifestations (see Chapter 5.5).

Goloka, Goloka Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa-loka—the transcendental abode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. See Chapters 2.4, 5.3-5, 6.14-16, 14.8. Goloka is manifest on earth as Gokula.

gopa—literally ‘protector (*pālaka*) of the cows (*go*)’. Cowherd, cowherd-boy. Syn. *gopāla*.

gopī—cowherd girl, milkmaid. The *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana are the greatest devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and >Rādhārāṇī is the foremost among the *gopīs*. See Chapter 6.13-14, 9.5.

gosvāmī—literally ‘master of the senses’ (*go*—senses + *svāmī*—master); one who has full sense-control; the title of a person in the renounced order of life, *sannyāsa*. See Chapter 3.3.

grhastā—householder devotee, usually married. See *āśrama*, *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

gross body—Material body except the >subtle body. See Chapter 3.2.

guṇa—quality, mode of nature. There are 3 modes of material nature: *tama*, ignorance, *raja*, passion, and *sattva*, goodness. Transcendence is called *nirguṇa*, without material qualities – however transcendence has transcendental qualities of *śuddha-sattva*, pure goodness. See Chapter 12.

Guru—lit. ‘heavy (of spiritual knowledge)’; spiritual master. See Chapter 16.

guru-śakti—God’s own spiritual energy working through various media. See Chapter 16.

Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*—the greatest *mantra*; *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*. See Chapter 15.

Hari—Supreme Lord, who takes away (*hara*) all obstacles to spiritual progress.

hexagram—six-pointed star, *ṣaṭ-koṇa*. See Chapter 5.8.

Hinduism—non-Vedic term that describes all people following the *Vedas* as practicing one religion, Hinduism. Actually there are hundreds of very different schools relying on the *Vedas*. Invading armies called the lands beyond the Sindhu river ‘Hindustan’ and the people who lived there ‘Hindus’. The proper term for Vedic religion is >*sanātana-dharma*, and the proper term for India is >Bhārata-varṣa. See Chapter 2.4.

hlādinī-śakti—Lord Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental internal pleasure potency. The highest manifestation of *hlādinī-śakti* is >Rādhārāṇī. See *cit-śakti*, *śakti*.

holy name—>Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. See Chapter 15.

Jagannātha—lit. ‘Lord of the universe’; name of the Supreme Lord, and a particular >deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is worshiped since many centuries in Jagannātha Purī. See Chapter 6.14.

japa—soft recitation of Kṛṣṇa’s holy name as a private meditation or with the aid of a >*japa-mālā*.

japa-mālā—rosary, string of 108 beads usually made from >Tulasī wood used for >*japa*.

jīva, jīvātmā—living entity, spirit soul, the eternal spiritual self beyond the gross and subtle material bodies (though occasionally situated in a material body). The term ‘living entity’ is sometimes confused with the combination of spirit soul and subtle and gross body, and the term ‘self’ is often mixed up with the >subtle body. The term *jīva* can be used for proper distinction. There are *baddha-jīvas*, materially conditioned souls, and *mukta-jīvas*, liberated *jīvas*, who have attained realization of their *svarūpa*. See *svarūpa*.

jīva-śakti—energy of the *jīvas*, who are in a marginal position between the spiritual and material energy and can thus be under the shelter/spell of either the two. See *śakti*. See Chapter 14.2.

jñāna—knowledge. A *jñānī* is one who practices >*jñāna-yoga*. In Vedic terminology, there is *jñāna* and *vijñāna*, superior knowledge. *jñāna* is knowledge of the self as not the material body, whereas *vijñāna* is knowledge of the self’s relationship to God. See *jñāna-yoga*.

jñāna-yoga—see *yoga*.

Kali-yuga—present age of quarrel and hypocrisy. The fourth and last age in a cycle of creation. See Chapters 4, 6.1, 9.2, 15.

Kālī—demigoddess >Durgā. Not to be confused with the Kali of >Kali-yuga.

karma—lit. ‘action’; material action that brings a binding reaction such as >reincarnation. *karma* can be overcome by the mercy of God. See Chapters 6.13, 11.7-8, 12, 14.11.

karma-yoga—path of God-realization through dedicating the fruits of one’s work to God.

kevalādvaita-vāda—exclusive monism. Taught by Śaṅkarācārya. See Appendix 2.

kin̄kara—humble servant, attendant. Lit. ‘what do’. See Chapters 10, 15.6.

kīrtana—glorification of God. Narrating or singing His glories and names. See Chapter 15.

Kṛṣṇa—lit. ‘the All-attractive’; name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, referring especially to His original form of the lover of Rādhārāṇī in >Goloka Vṛndāvana. See Chapter 5.

kṛṣṇa-bhakti—devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa, devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

kṛṣṇa-prema—pure love of God, love of Kṛṣṇa.

kṣatriya—member of the governing, protecting class. See *varṇā, varṇāśrama-dharma*.

laukika—ordinary, mundane, material.

līlā—transcendental pastime or activity performed by God or His devotees. See Chapters 5, 13, 14.8.

mādhurya—sweetness, loveliness, exquisite beauty, charm (Williams).

mādhurya-jñāna—sweet conception of God according to His >*mādhurya-prakāśa*.

mādhurya-līlā—Lord Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes of conjugal love with His eternal associates.

mādhurya-prakāśa—lit. ‘sweet manifestation’. God has two *prakāśa*, manifestations; >*aiśvarya*, opulent, and *mādhurya*, sweet. See Chapter 5.5.

mādhurya-rasa—transcendental conjugal relationship with the Supreme Lord. See *rasa*.

mahā-mantra—>Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. See Chapter 15.

Mahāprabhu—lit. ‘Supreme Master’; Lord >Caitanya. See Chapter 6.

Mahārāja—lit. ‘great lord’; address for a renounced person like a >*sannyāsī* or >*bābājī*.

mantra—literally ‘that which frees the mind’ (*manas*, mind + *trayate*, deliverance); a pure sound vibration when received from a proper source and continuously contemplated, delivers the mind from its material inclinations and illusion. See Chapter 15.

māyā—literally ‘that which is not’; illusion. See *māyā-śakti*, Māyā Devī.

Māyā Devī—personification of >*māyā-śakti*. See Durgā, Śiva. See Chapters 11.3, 14.2.

māyā-śakti—material energy of Kṛṣṇa which deludes the living entity into forgetfulness of God.

māyāvāda—impersonal philosophy most successfully propounded by Śaṅkarācārya, which proposes the unqualified oneness of God and the living entities and the nonreality of manifest nature, personality, *bhakti*, and individuality. See Chapters 9.3-4, 10, 11.5, 14.12.

monism—syn. >*māyāvāda*. From Greek *monos*, single. The doctrine of impersonal oneness.

mukti—liberation of a conditioned soul from material consciousness and bondage. For liberationists, *mukti* is the goal, and *karma, jñāna* and *bhakti* are only means, but for pure devotees, eternal devotional service in pure love of God is the goal and actual liberation, and *mukti* is only a side-effect of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. See Chapters 3.7, 9.5, 10.

naimittika-dharma—mundane, circumstantial, temporary occupation and religion. See Chapter 12.

Nārāyaṇa—name of Lord >Viṣṇu.

ontology—study of the essential nature of being, reality, or ultimate substance. See Chapter 5.

paṇḍita—scholar, professor.

paradigm paralysis—the mental inertness of adherents of a certain paradigm that hinders them to change the paradigm if required. See Chapters 1, 2.3-4, 3.1, 3.4, 11.1.

Paramahansa—lit. ‘greatest of swans’; title for a self-realized >Vaiṣṇava who is able to take the essence from everywhere like the swan that can extract milk from a mixture of milk and water. The traditional dress of a Paramahansa is that of a >*bābāji*. See Chapter 6.8.

Paramātmā—Supersoul. Localized expansion of God residing in everyone’s heart. See Chapter 5.5.

paramparā—Vedic disciplic succession of God-realized spiritual masters. See Chapters 3.1, 16.

prakṛti—material nature, energy of the Supreme. Lit. ‘that which is predominated’. *aparā-prakṛti* is the inferior material nature, and *parā-prakṛti* is the superior spiritual nature, the >*jīvas*. Both are predominated over by Godhead. See *māyā-śakti*, *śakti*. See Chapters 11.3, 14.2.

prasāda—remnants of God, usually food that was prepared for Kṛṣṇa and offered to His deity with *bhakti*. *prasāda* is *karma*-free and spiritually uplifting.

prajohana—highest goal of life, attained by >*abhideya*. Śrī Caitanya explained that the only *prajohana* is *kṛṣṇa-prema*, fully matured love of God. See Chapters 2.1-2, 9.5, 14.19.

prema—pure unconditional love of God, the highest stage of devotion, also called *kṛṣṇa-prema*. See *prema-bhakti*. See Chapters 5.5, 5.7, 6.6-9, 6.17, 9.5, 10, 14.4, 14.17-18.

prema-bhakti—devotional service in pure love of God. The two main stages of *bhakti* are *sādhana-bhakti* (regulative *bhakti*) and *bhāva-bhakti* (spontaneous *bhakti* resulting from tasting >*rasa*). *prema-bhakti* is the matured stage of *bhāva-bhakti*. See *prema*, *rasa*.

prema-rasa—>*rasa*, relish, flavor, juice, of >*prema*, love of God.

Rādhārāṇī—lit. ‘Queen of Devotion’; Lord Kṛṣṇa’s most intimate consort; the personification of the internal pleasure potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa (>*hlādinī-śakti*); the greatest of all devotees and the Absolute Counterpart of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are *advaya-jñāna*, the undividable absolute truth. See Chapters 6.13-14, 9.5, 10, 14.2, 14.4.

rasa—lit. ‘juice, taste, flavor’; relish of a particular transcendental relationship with the Lord; specific type and mood of relationship with the Lord. In the latter sense, there are five main *rasas*: *sānta-rasa*, neutral relationship; *dāsyā-rasa*, relationship as a servant; *sakhya-rasa*, relationship as a friend; *vātsalyā-rasa*, relationship as parent; and *mādhuryā-rasa*, relationship as conjugal lover of the Lord. See Chapters 5.3, 5.5-6, 6.13, 9.5, 10, 11.7, 14.6, 14.10, 14.17.

Rāsa dance—Lord Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental pleasure dance with the >*gopīs* of Vṛndāvana.

rāsa-līlā—>Rāsa dance, *līlā*.

rāga (1)—lit. ‘intense passion, desire, attachment’; intense transcendental attachment to and thirst for service in ecstatic love of God, specifically in His >*mādhuryā-prakāśa*. See Chapter 5.5.

(2)—musical harmony, melody; particular order of melody that excites a corresponding mental state. Scriptural verses, songs and >*mantras* are often chanted in certain *rāgas*.

rāga-bhakti—devotional service in transcendental rapture. See *rāga*.

rāgānuga-bhakti—devotional service following the spontaneous loving service of the pure devotees, the eternal associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. See Chapter 5.7.

rāgātmika-bhakti—spontaneous *bhakti* of the eternal associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana according to their >*rasa*, transcendental relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. See Chapter 5.7.

reincarnation—rebirth in another body after death due to material >*karma*. See Chapters 2.2-3.

śabda—sound, testimony of experts. *apauruṣeya-śabda* or *śabda-brahman* is transcendental sound. See Chapters 3.5-6.

śabda-brahman—transcendental sound vibration. See Chapter 3.6.

śabda-pramāṇa—evidence of transcendental sound, especially of the *Vedas*. See *śabda*.

sac-cid-ānanda—eternal, spiritually conscious and entirely blissful. See Chapter 5.5.

sādhana—the engagement in various regulated practices of devotional service that lead to perfection of devotional service, namely *kṛṣṇa-prema*, love of God. See *bhakti*.

sādhana-bhakti—practicing regulated *bhakti* to develop natural love for Kṛṣṇa. See *prema-bhakti*.

sādhu—saintly person or Kṛṣṇa-conscious devotee, or Vaiṣṇava. See Guru. See Chapter 16.

sādhu-saṅga—association of saintly persons. See Chapters 3.7, 11.8, 12, 14.2, 15.2, 16.

- śakti*—energy or potency of the Supreme Lord. There are three main energies of the Lord: His internal spiritual energy, *antaraṅga-śakti* (also called *>hlādinī-śakti*), His external material energy, *bahiraṅga-śakti* (also called *>māyā-śakti*), and His marginal energy, *taṭasthā-śakti* (also called *>jīva-śakti*). See Chapters 14.2, 14.4, 12, 5.8.
- śaktiman*—lit. wielder of *>śakti*; name of God. *śaktiman* is potent; *śakti* is potency. See Chapter 5.8.
- śakti-pariṇāma*—transformation of energy. *śakti-pariṇāma-vāda* is the doctrine that explains how variety in creation is produced from the transformation of the Supreme Lord's energy (according to His nature of *acintya-bhedābheda*) and thus does not contradict that the Lord is ever-same and untouched. See Chapters 11.4, 14.2, 14.7.
- sambandha*—transcendental relationship with the Supreme Lord. See Chapters 2.1, 9.5, 15.2.
- sambandha-jñāna*—knowledge of one's *sambandha*. This includes the knowledge of Lord Kṛṣṇa and one's *>svarūpa*, transcendental identity and form. See *rasa, svarūpa*. See Chapter 2.1.
- saṁskṛta*—lit. 'brought to formal perfection'; oldest language in the world; former official language of India. The English term is 'Sanskrit'. The *Vedas* are written in Sanskrit. See Appendix 1.
- sanātana-dharma*—literally 'the eternal activity of the soul'; eternal occupation, engagement or religion of the living being, namely to render service to the Supreme Lord. Syn. *>bhāgavata-dharma*. See Chapters 2.4, 3.7, 10, 12.
- saṅkīrtana*—lit. 'complete *kīrtana*'; *kīrtana* in the association of pure devotees; *kīrtana* with fully developed *>sambandha*, transcendental relationship with the Supreme Lord; *kīrtana* free from offenses. See *kīrtana, yuga-dharma*. See Chapter 15.
- sannyāsa*—renounced order of life free from family relationships. See *āśrama, varṇāśrama-dharma*.
- sannyāsī*—ascetic in the renounced order of *>sannyāsa*, wearing saffron colored cloth and carrying the *sannyāsa-daṇḍa*, sacred staff. *sannyāsīs* constantly travel and preach all over the world.
- Sanskrit—English term for *saṁskṛta*. See *saṁskṛta*.
- śāstra*—revealed scriptures; *>Vedic literature*. See Chapter 3.
- sat*—true, substantial, eternal. See Chapter 5.5.
- ṣaṭ-koṇa*—see hexagram. See Chapter 5.8.
- siddhānta*—essential philosophical conclusion. See *acintya-bhedābheda-siddhānta*.
- śikṣā-guru*—instructing spiritual master. See Chapter 16.
- Śiva—one of the most important *>devas*. Lord Śiva is in charge of the universal dissolution and he is the husband of Pārvatī Devī, who is non-different from Māyā Devī, Durgā Devī, Kālī, etc.
- skeletonism—conception of 'I am the material body and reality consists of what the material body perceives'. Coined by the author. See Chapters 2-3, 11.4 and www.sublimereality.com.
- śloka*—verse.
- smārta*—follower of the *Vedas* who is overly attached to mundane elevation and salvation (*>mukti*), missing the essence of the Vedic science, the performance of *>bhakti* to attain *>kṛṣṇa-prema*.
- smṛti-śāstra*—supplement of the *>śruti-śāstra*. Section of the Vedic scriptures including the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*. See Chapter 3.
- śravaṇam*—hearing from an authorized source. The first of the 9 limbs of *bhakti*. See Chapter 15.
- śruti*—knowledge via hearing; syn. *>śruti-śāstra*.
- śruti-śāstra*—the core Vedic literature including the four *Vedas* (*R̥g, Sāma, Yajur* and *Atharva*) and the *Upaniṣads*. See *śāstra, śruti*.
- sthāyi-bhāva*—permanent mood of worship in a particular *>rasa*; that *rasa* which always dominates in the heart of a particular devotee. See Chapter 11.8.
- subtle body—Material mind, intelligence and false ego beyond the *>gross body*. See Chapter 3.2.
- Sudarśana—lit. 'auspicious vision'; name of the wheel (*cakra*) of Lord Viṣṇu. Decorates the tops of Viṣṇu temples. Sudarśana personifies the merciful glance, the desire and protection of God. See Chapters 5.8, 11.8.
- suddha-sattva*—mode of pure goodness beyond the three material modes of nature called *>guṇas*.
- sūdra*—member of the laborer class. See *varṇā, varṇāśrama-dharma*.
- Supersoul—English term for *>Paramātmā*.
- svarūpa*—lit. 'one's own form'; one's individual spiritual form that lies dormant under material coverings; one's eternal relationship with God in one of the *>rasas*. The *svarūpa* includes

one's transcendental name, form, attributes and services to God. The general *svarūpa* of all living entities is to be engaged in *bhakti*, service to God, which is the >*sanātana-dharma*, the original eternal engagement of the self. See Chapters 2.2, 11.7-8, 14.7, 15.5-6.

svarūpa-siddhi—perfection of realizing one's >*svarūpa*.

symbolism—the essence of symbolism, to express eternal archetypes, is explained in Chapter 5.8.

teleology—study of final causes; premise that natural phenomena are determined not only by mechanical causes but by an overall purpose and design; study of evidence for this premise.

From Greek *teleos*, 'purpose, goal, end' and *logia*, 'science, theory of'. See Chapters 9.1, 10.

teleosympathy—term coined by the author to express the essential maxim of >*acintya-bhedābheda-darśana*, namely individual union with the will of God by serving God's various desires. This union in will is the hallmark of unalloyed devotional service. See Chapters 9.1, 10, 14.14.

tilak—tilak markings are applied to twelve places of the upper body with a paste made from sacred clay and water, making the body a temple of the Lord. See Chapters 5.8, 6.13, 18.3.

transcendence—to go beyond the limits of, surpass (usually the material senses); the spiritual realm.

Tulasī—plant held sacred by the Vaiṣṇavas; a spiritual personality. Tulasī leaves and buds are offered to the deity. Tulasī wood is worn as necklace and used for the beads of the >*japa-mālā*. Tulasī is favorable for devotion and protects devotees. See Chapters 6.4, 14.14.

unison—complete agreement; concord; harmony (Webster). E. g. var. instruments played in unison.

vaidhī-bhakti—*bhakti* guided by scriptural regulations. See Chapter 5.7.

Vaiṣṇava—devotee of the Supreme Lord, >Viṣṇu, or >Kṛṣṇa; in a broader sense any theist who supports *saviśeṣa-vāda*, the doctrine of eternity of personal Godhead (see App. 2, footnotes); in the highest sense a >Paramahansa, who is completely established on the transcendental platform beyond any worldly designations like class. See Vaiṣṇavism.

Vaiṣṇavism—the science and school of >*bhakti-yoga*, devotional service to Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.

vaiśya—member of the mercantile or agricultural class. See *varṇā*, *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

vānaprastha—retired devotee. See *āśrama*, *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

varṇa—social order. There are four *varṇas* according to the >*varṇāśrama-dharma* society: (1)

brāhmaṇa—member of the intellectual, priestly class, wise in Vedic knowledge, fixed in goodness and knowledgeable of Brahman, the Absolute Truth. (2) *kṣatriya*—administrator, governor, protector, warrior, inclined to protect and lead others and ready to fight. (3)

vaiśya—member of the mercantile or agricultural class. (4) *śūdra*—member of the laborer class.

varṇāśrama-dharma—Vedic system of four >*varṇas*, social orders, and four >*āśramas*, spiritual orders, designed by Lord Kṛṣṇa (*Bg* 4.13) for a most efficient gradual upliftment of all people to the highest position of a Vaiṣṇava devotee who is beyond any caste. Unlike the perverted hereditary caste system, the original caste system distinguishes not in regards to birth but one's actual qualifications and inclinations according to one's modes of nature (>*guṇas*), which can be changed without having to be reborn. See Chapter 6.8.

Veda—universal eternal knowledge (not only found in the >*Vedas*). See Chapters 1.4, 3.6.

vedānta—lit. 'end of all spiritual knowledge'; conclusion of Vedic philosophy; philosophy of the >*Vedānta-sūtra* of Śrīla Vyāsadeva. See Chapters 1.4, 2.1, 3.7, 6.17, Appendix 2.

Vedānta-sūtra—the *sūtras* (aphorisms expressing knowledge very succinctly) of >*Vedānta*.

Vedas—the four *Vedas* (*R̥g*, *Sāma*, *Atharva*, *Yajur*) and the 108 *Upaniṣads*. >Veda. See Chapter 3.

Vedic literature—the four >*Vedas* and literature in line with >Veda, for example *Brahma-saṁhitā*, *Vedānta-sūtra*, *Purāṇas*, *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Caitanya-bhāgavata*.

vidhī-bhakti—syn. >*vaidhī-bhakti*.

vipralambha—syn. >*viraha*.

viraha—separation from the Supreme Lord. See Chapters 6.13-14, 15.3-4.

Viṣṇu—name of God, lit. 'the All-pervading'. A four-armed plenary expansion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī >Kṛṣṇa. Viṣṇu supervises the maintenance of the universe and enters into the universe before creation. See Chapters 5.4-5, 9.4-5, 14.7, 14.10.

Vṛndāvana—sacred forest of Vṛndā, where Lord >Kṛṣṇa displayed His transcendental pastimes 5'000 years ago. The earthly Vṛndāvana is non-different from the transcendental >Goloka Vṛndāvana. However, its transcendental aspects can only be seen by transcendental vision.

yantra—graphic representation of a certain deity or truth; metaphysical figure. See Chapter 5.8.

yoga—lit. ‘connection’; discipline for linking one’s consciousness with God. The three main paths of *yoga* are: (1) *karma-yoga*, spiritual upliftment through dedicating the fruits of one’s work to God, (2) *jñāna-yoga*, approaching the Supreme by the cultivation of speculative knowledge, and (3) *>bhakti-yoga*, God-realization through devotional service to Godhead.

yoga-māyā—internal spiritual energy of the Supreme Lord, to which the external energy, *mahā-māyā*, is subordinate. *yoga-māyā* hides the Lord from non-devotees, arranges the transcendental *>līlās* and inspires the devotees. See *cit-śakti*. See Chapter 5.7.

yogī—practitioner of *>yoga*; ascetic mystic with the aim of mystic perfections and/or *>mukti*.

yuga-dharma—the most beneficial engagement or religion for a certain age. Presently the *yuga-dharma* is *>sankīrtana*.