

ŚIKṢĀṢṬAKAM

THE INCONCEIVABLE BEHAVIOR OF LORD SRI CHAITANYA MAHAPRABHU

Srila Krishna Das Kaviraj Goswami

LORD CHAITANYA'S MISSION

*His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Prabhupada*

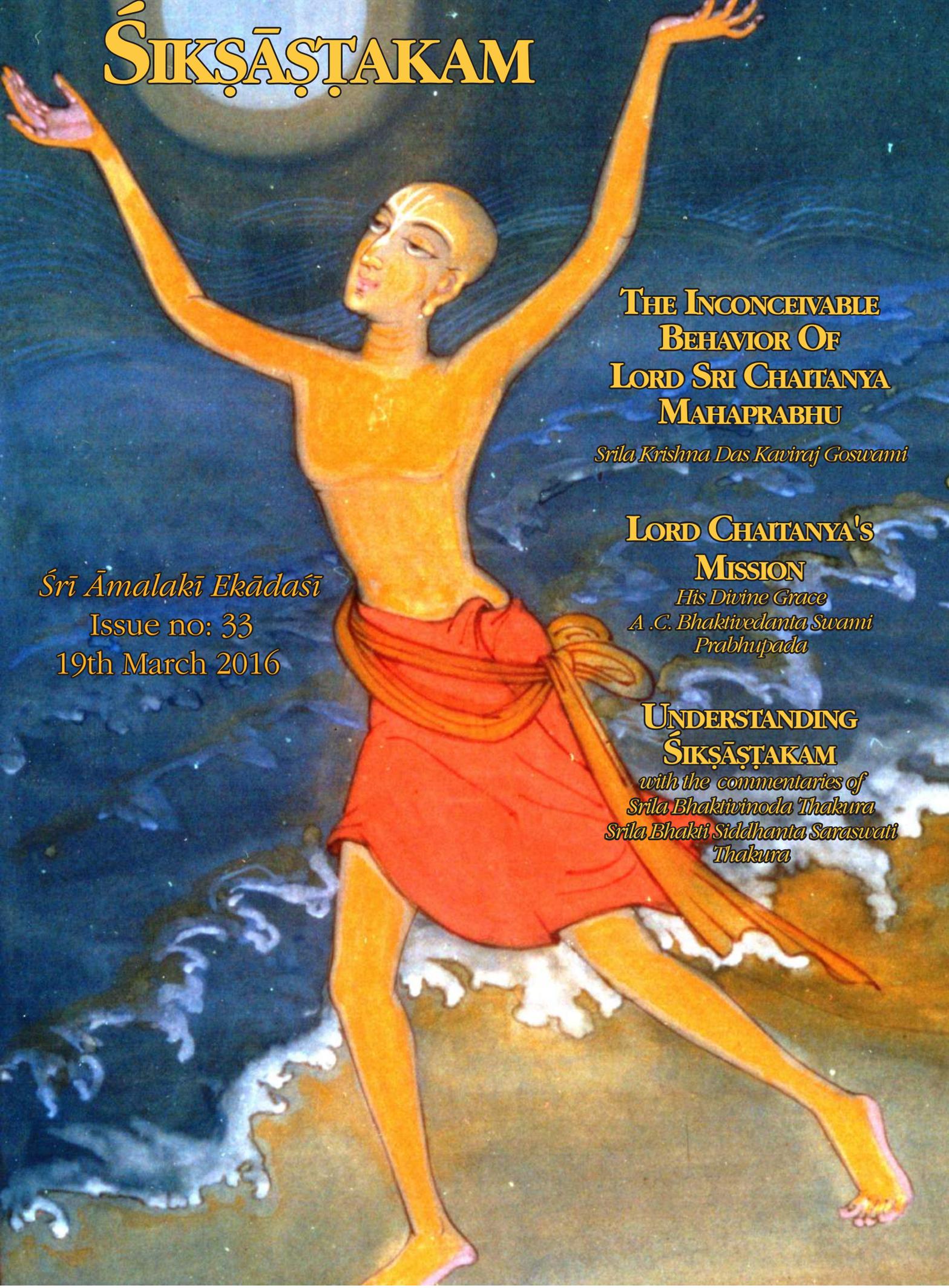
UNDERSTANDING ŚIKṢĀṢṬAKAM

*with the commentaries of
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One full moon night in the month of *Vaiśākha* [April-May], Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, along with His devotees, entered one of the nicest gardens, called Jagannatha-vallabha. In the garden were fully blossomed trees and creepers exactly like those in Vrindavana. Bumblebees and birds like the *śuka*, *sāri* and *pika* talked with one another. A mild breeze was blowing, carrying the fragrance of aromatic flowers. The breeze had become a guru and was teaching all the trees and creepers how to dance. Brightly illuminated by the full moon, the trees and creepers glittered in the light.

The six seasons, especially spring, seemed present there. Seeing the garden, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu the Supreme Personality of Godhead, was very happy. In this atmosphere, the Lord had His associates sing the verse from the *Gīta-govinda* beginning with the words "*lalita-lavaṅga-latā*" as He danced and wandered about with them. As He thus wandered around every tree and creeper, He came beneath an *aśoka* tree and suddenly saw Lord Krishna. When He saw Krishna, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, began running very swiftly, but Krishna smiled and disappeared. Having gotten Krishna and then lost Him, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu fell to the ground unconscious. The entire garden was filled with the scent of Lord Sri Krishna's transcendental body. When Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu smelled it, He fell unconscious at once. But the scent of Krishna's body incessantly entered His nostrils, and the Lord became mad to relish it.

Srimati Radharani once spoke a verse to Her gopi friends describing how She hankers for the transcendental scent of Krishna's body. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu recited that same verse and made its meaning clear.

*kuraṅga-mada-jid-vapuḥ-parimalormi-kṛṣṭāṅganah
svakāṅga-nalināṣṭake śaśi-yutābja-gandha-prathah
madenduwara-candanāguru-sugandhi-carcārcitah
sa me madana-mohanah sakhi tamoti nāsā-sṛḥām*

"The scent of Krishna's transcendental body surpasses the aroma of musk and attracts the minds of all women. The eight lotuslike parts of His body distribute the fragrance of lotuses mixed with that of camphor. His body is anointed with aromatic substances like musk, camphor, sandalwood and aguru. O My dear friend, that Personality of Godhead, also known as the

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

enchanter of Cupid, always increases the desire of My nostrils."

"The scent of Krishna's body surpasses the fragrances of musk and the bluish lotus flower. Spreading throughout the fourteen worlds, it attracts everyone and makes the eyes of all women blind. My dear friend, the scent of Krishna's body enchants the entire world. It especially enters the nostrils of women and remains seated there. Thus it captures them and forcibly brings them to Krishna. Krishna's eyes, navel and face, hands and feet are like eight lotus flowers on His body. From those eight lotuses emanates a fragrance like a mixture of camphor and lotus. That is the scent associated with His body. When sandalwood pulp is mixed with aguru, *kunkuma*, musk and camphor and spread on Krishna's body, it combines with Krishna's own original bodily perfume and seems to cover it. The scent of Krishna's transcendental body is so attractive that it enchants the bodies and minds of all women. It bewilders their nostrils, loosens their belts and hair, and makes them madwomen. All the women of the world come under its influence, and therefore the scent of Krishna's body is like a plunderer. Falling completely under its influence, the nostrils yearn for it continuously, although sometimes they obtain it and sometimes not. When they do they drink their fill, though they still want more and more, but if they don't, out of thirst they die. The dramatic actor Madana-mohana has opened a shop of scents that attract the women of the world to be His customers. He delivers the scents freely, but they make the women all so blind they cannot find the path returning home."

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu His mind thus stolen by the scent of Krishna's body, ran here and there like a bumblebee. He ran to the trees and plants, hoping that Lord Krishna would appear, but instead He found only that scent. Both Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Raya sang to the Lord, who danced and enjoyed happiness until the morning arrived. Then the Lord's two associates devised a plan to bring Him to external consciousness.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu then bathed and went to see Lord Jagannatha. The pastimes of Lord Krishna are uncommonly full of transcendental potency. It is a characteristic of such pastimes that they do not fall within the jurisdiction of experimental logic and arguments. When transcendental love of Krishna awakens in someone's heart, even a learned scholar cannot comprehend His activities. The activities and symptoms of that exalted personality in whose heart love of Godhead has awakened cannot be understood even by the most learned scholar.

The activities of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu are



undoubtedly uncommon, especially His talking like a madman. Therefore, one who hears of these pastimes should not put forward mundane arguments. He should simply hear the pastimes with full faith. The evidence of the truth of these talks is found in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. There, in the section of the Tenth Canto known as the *Bhramara-gīta*, "The Song to the Bumblebee," Srimati Radharani speaks insanely in ecstatic love for Krishna. The songs of the queens at Dvaraka, which are mentioned at the end of the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, have a very special meaning. They are not understood even by the most learned scholars. If one becomes a servant of the servants of Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and Lord Nityānanda Prabhu and is favored by Them, he can believe in all these discourses.

Residing at Jagannātha Puri [Nilacala], Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu was continuously overwhelmed, night and day, by separation from Krishna. He passed His nights tasting the meaning of the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers in the company of Svarūpa Damodara Goswami and Ramananda Raya. Sometimes He recited verses from Jayadeva Goswami's *Gīta-govinda*, from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, from Sri Ramananda Raya's *Jagannātha-vallabha-nāṭaka* or from Sri Bilvamangala Thakura's *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*. He relished the symptoms of various transcendental emotions, such as jubilation, lamentation, anger, humility, anxiety, grief, eagerness and satisfaction. He would recite His own verses, expressing their meanings and emotions, and thus enjoy tasting them with these two friends. Sometimes the Lord would be absorbed in a particular emotion and would stay awake all night reciting related verses and relishing their taste.

Just try to hear these topics with faith, for there is great pleasure even in hearing them. That hearing will destroy all miseries pertaining to the body, mind and other living entities, and the unhappiness of false arguments as well. *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is ever-increasingly fresh. For one who hears it again and again, the heart and ear become pacified.

—*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* » *Antya-līlā* » Chapter 19 : *The Inconceivable Behavior of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu* » Verses: 78-110 ॐ

LORD CHAITANYA'S MISSION

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Lord Chaitanya Mahāprabhu instructed His disciples to write books on the Science of Krishna, a task which those who follow Him have continued to carry out down to the present day. The elaborations and expositions on the philosophy taught by Lord Chaitanya are in fact most voluminous, exacting and consistent due to the system of disciplic succession. Although Lord Chaitanya was widely renowned as a scholar in His youth, He left only eight verses, called *Śikṣāṣṭaka*. These eight verses clearly reveal His mission and precepts.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Thakur says in this connection: "O living entities, simply engage yourselves in Krishna consciousness. This is the message of Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu." Lord Chaitanya preached this cult, instructing the philosophy of Krishna consciousness in His eight verses, or *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, and He said, *ihā haite sarva-siddhi haibe sabāra*: "By chanting the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*, one will get



all perfection in life.”

—*Caitanya-caritāmṛita* » *Ādi-līlā* » Chapter 8: *The Author Receives the Orders of Krishna and Guru* » Verse:12 and Introduction to Teachings of Lord Chaitanya

UNDERSTANDING ŚIKṢĀṢṬAKAM

with the commenatries of

Srila Bhaktivinod Thakura and

Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakura

Verse 1

*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam
bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpanam
śreyah-kairava-candrikā-
vitaranam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-varḍhanam
prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsūdanam
sarvātma-snapanam param
vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*

The verse beginning with *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam* describes the original transcendental nature of the jiva. As Srila Jiva Goswami has explained, the jiva is a part and parcel of the Supreme Absolute Truth who is the Supreme Energetic, the total aggregate of all jivas “Like a ray of the sun, the jiva is of the same spiritual nature as the Supreme, but infinitesimal in size. Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana has analyzed Godhead as the infinite Supreme Lord, and the jiva as His infinitesimal part. All the transcendental qualities are eternally present in perfect fullness in the Supreme Lord. His pure ego is manifest as both the Absolute knowledge and the knower. Similarly, the jiva is also in possession of transcendental knowledge and pure ego (though in partial degree). This is logical because qualities such as heat and light present in the sun are also present in the sun's rays.

It is therefore clear that the jiva is infinitesimal, possessing; a transcendental nature of pure ego, pure soul, and pure form. But when he turns away from God and contemplates enjoying material energy, his pure nature becomes contaminated by nescience. It is for this reason that the soul has been compared to a mirror. Just as it is impossible to see one's face in a dusty mirror, it is similarly impossible to see the real self the mirror of consciousness if it is covered by the dust of ignorance. When if one begins to render loving devotionl service particularly hearing and chanting the sacred names and pastimes of the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna directly under the control of His *hlādinī* (spiritual pleasure) potency, eradicates the material

nityam bhāgavata-sevayā

contamination or nescience completely. The jiva's pure consciousness, which is a function of his pure ego manifests itself and he sees the Supreme Lord, *jīva prakṛti* (nature), *kālā*(time), and *karmā*(action and reaction), all five fundamental principles of existence reflected on the mirror of his pure ego with absolute clarity. So in the mirror of his pure consciousness he sees the reflection of his original identity without any distortion. This helps him to know his true religion and inherent nature as an eternal servant of the Lord. When one becomes really expert in serving the Lord, then his propensity to enjoy material life is converted into a loving devotional mood of service.

The purport of the word *bhāva* is that jiva is being subjected to take repeated births in this world, a continuous cycle of birth and death called *mahā-dāvāgni*, or blazing fire, a raging conflagration that cannot be extinguished by any means other than the congregational chanting of Krishna's holy name.

A question may arise at this point: when one is enlightened about his *sva-dharma*, or eternal intrinsic nature and duty, does he then cease to chant Krishna's holy name? The answer is no, this never occurs. chanting God's name is the soul's *sva-dharma*. The phase *śreyah-kairava-candrika-vitaranam*, which describes the holy name, specifically conveys the sense eternal activity of the spirit soul in his original spiritual condition.

The jivas who are enslaved by maya prefer to remain in that condition to enjoy material life, and that desire literally binds them to the cycle of birth and death. This is the root cause of their threefold miseries. But the spirit soul reaps the greatest benefit when he becomes disgusted with material enjoyment, and re-dedicates his time and energy to Lord Krishna's loving service. This benediction is compared with the flowering of a cluster of pristine white lotuses. For just as the moon's soothing rays cause the white lotuses to blossom, the rays of the mellow taste of chanting the holy name resuscitate the languishing petals of the lotus of benediction for the jiva.

A pertinent query at this juncture would be: at what stage does a person who has attained the level of pure devotion acquire his pure spiritual identity—his *sva-dharma*? Lord Chaitanya replies by saying *vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam*, “the life of all transcendental knowledge”. The Supreme Lord's *śakti* has two aspects: *vidyā*, or knowledge, and *avidyā*, or ignorance. Yogamaya, Sri Krishna's *svarūpa-śakti* or internal spiritual potency, is called *vidyā* whereas His external energy mahamaya is *avidyā*. And it is this latter that creates the material universe and covers the soul's *svarūpa*. When the first rays of pure devotion finally appear on the horizon



of the *sādhaka's* heart by his sincerely following the process of hearing and chanting, then gradually bhakti-devi, or the goddess of pure devotional process, the eradicator of all unwanted material desires detrimental to the Lord's service, eclipses the *avidyā* potency. By suffusing the soul with spiritual knowledge, She destroys both the gross and subtle coverings of the soul. Simultaneously, the jiva's original spiritual form becomes manifest, to the extent that he receives the form of a gopi, for example, if his spiritual proclivity is steeped in the conjugal mood. Thus it stands proven that Krishna's name is the life and soul of all transcendental knowledge, *vidyā-vadhū-jivanam*. *Svarūpa-śakti* has therefore often been described as Krishna's wife. The Sanskrit word *vadhū* means wife.

The gross and subtle material bodies of the jiva being completely destroyed, the infinitesimal soul regains his original pristine purity. Although the jiva is *anu*, or minutely small, his spiritual happiness is not minute. To remove this misapprehension, Lord Chaitanya adds *anandambudhi-varadhanam*, "an ever-increasing ocean of bliss". In other words, the holy name of the Lord endlessly expands the spiritual bliss inherent to the soul, by leaps and bounds. He thus becomes eternally fixed in one of the spiritual mellows, namely *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, or *mādhurya* (servitorship, friendship, parenthood and conjugal love) Established in his eternal spiritual mellow, he begins to relish limitless nectar at every stage of his transcendental relationship and exchanges of extraordinary loving emotions with the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Lord Krishna's enchanting beauty, His divine qualities and His sublime pastimes are ever-ecstatic and eternal. Inebriated with divine *prema*, the pure jiva continuously drinks that sweet nectar, but still the Lord's captivating beauty remains ever-fresh and ambrosial, relished in endlessly unique and novel ways.

In this stage one final question may still arise: is this happiness self-motivated, and thus contrary to the principles of pure spiritual love? If so, how can the jiva's happiness be called unalloyed and spiritual? To allay any such confusion or doubt, Lord Chaitanya uses the expression *sarvatma-snapanam*: the bliss of Krishna consciousness is completely pure, wholly free from any desire for self-satisfaction. That is to say, in the natural course of pure devotional service, one attains the form of a maidservant of Srimati Radharani, who embodies the zenith of *mahābhāva*, or unsurpassable heights of exultations; and in Her service the jiva participates in conjugal pastimes with the Lord and experiences unlimited ecstatic bliss. This sublime mood is therefore untainted by even the slightest tinge of selfish lust or self-indulgent craving. This phrase also indicates that neither the contamination of *sayujya-mukti*, i.e. the

desire to merge with the Lord, nor the impurity of self gratification, can contaminate the heart of the jiva in this state of perfect bliss.

May the chanting of the holy name of Krishna be ever-victorious, for it is adorned with seven transcendental qualities, It is the embodiment of eternity, it is knowledge, and it is the highest bliss, steeped in the wonderful and variegated amorous pastimes of Sri Sri Radha Krishna.

Seven transcendental qualities of holynome

One's knowledge of any mundane subject matter is bound to be incomplete, because the subject itself is incomplete. In the spiritual world, however, Lord Krishna is the ultimate subject, and being transcendental, this plane remains forever untouched by material nature. By thus discussing transcendental subject matter, or Sri Krishna, one achieves supra-mundane perfection. Seven of these perfections, specially related to chanting Lord Krishna's holy name are mentioned in this verse.

1) Cleanses the mirror of the heart: Chanting Lord Krishna's name cleanses the mirror of the conditioned soul's polluted heart, which is wholly covered by three contaminations, namely material desires, the enjoying spirit, and ungodly atheistic activities. The most effective process to cleanse the jiva's heart of all these impurities is chanting Lord Krishna's name. These treacherous contaminations, cover the mirror of consciousness and cause the jiva to reject his true nature. Krishna's name alone can free the consciousness of these aberrations. Thus by constantly chanting, taking complete shelter of the holy name, the jiva gradually perceives the reflection of his original form as the servant of Lord Krishna in the mirror of his consciousness.

2) Protects the devotee from material existence: This material existence appears to be sweet and pleasurable, but in reality it is like a forest-fire, which can burn the entire forest to ashes. Non-devotees who have no faith in Lord Krishna have to constantly tolerate the searing burning pain of this forest-fire. On the other hand, when Lord Krishna's name is perfectly chanted, the chanters are protected from these scorching flames, even though they are in the midst of the forest of the material world.

3) The holy name gives the highest benediction: Whole hearted chanting of Lord Krishna's holy name is the highest goodness and munificence. *Sreyah* means 'benediction', *kairava* means 'white lilies', and *candrika* are the rays of the moon. By the illuminating rays of the rising moon, the white lily's beauty is highlighted. Similarly, the chanting of Krishna's name brings out the best in man and enlightens the darkened universe showering it with divine benediction. Human society cannot truly benefit from fruitive activities or speculative



knowledge, but by chanting Krishna's name, all will be blessed with greatest benefit.

4) The source of all transcendental knowledge:

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* mentions two types of knowledge: material and transcendental. Chanting of Lord Krishna's holy name is indirectly the fountainhead of all material knowledge. However, it is directly the life and soul of transcendental, or supra-mundane knowledge. Chanting induces the jiva to break the shackles of false ego and false prestige—a product of material knowledge, and elevates him to understand his eternal relationship with the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna. The ultimate focus of real transcendental knowledge, therefore, is chanting Krishna's holy name.

5) Expands the ocean of bliss: Chanting the holy name expands the boundless ocean of transcendental bliss, and enables one to fully relish the sweetest nectar at every moment. Nothing less than a vast expanse of water is called an ocean. Therefore the unlimited bliss attained through chanting the holy names has been rightly compared to an ocean. This transcendental experience is untouched by imperfections, complete and everlasting. In the mundane realm, the body and mind, and above them the soul, not only become purified by Krishna's name, but gradually and inevitably embalmed by its cooling tenderness. The potency of the holy name is so great that by its touch, even the spiritual objects take on its unprecedented qualities.

6) Cures the disease of material existence: The spirit soul under the material conception of life is overwhelmed by subtle and gross contaminations. These material afflictions can at once be cured by chanting the holy name. When the soul is released from his material designations, he becomes eager to reach the transcendental realm, where he engages in devotional service under the cooling shade of Lord Krishna's lotus feet.

7) The essential ingredient in all devotional service: Srila Jiva Goswami writes in the *Bhakti-sandarbhā* [273], and in the *Krama-sandarbhā*:

*ata eva yadyapyanya bhaktih kalau kartavya
tada kīrtanakhya-bhakti-samyogenaiva*

This means that in Kali-yuga the practice of the eight limbs of devotional service, must be performed in conjunction with chanting the holy names of Krishna.

Verse: 2

*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktiḥ
tatrārpitā nīyamitāḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ
etādṛṣi tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam iḍṣam ihājani nānurāgaḥ*

“O Lord, out of Your causeless mercy You have manifested Your innumerable names and empowered Them with Your own transcendental potencies. You have not imposed rigid rules for chanting and remembering these names, nor laid down conditions barring anyone from chanting or remembering Your name even during eating, reclining, or sleeping. But I am so wretched that I am not attracted to Your names.”

The chanting of Lord Krishna's holy name is represented in four aspects: name, form, quality and pastime. Lord Krishna's holy name is the seed of all joy; for the holy name and the possessor of the name are non-different. In all respects, chanting the holy name is most beneficial for everyone and all. Therefore, the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna Chaitanya Himself reveals all the super-excellent attributes of the holy name. In order to evoke everyone's sincere faith in the holy name, Lord Chaitanya prays: “O Lord! O Most Munificent One! Being compassionate upon seeing the destitute situation of the conditioned souls, of Your own accord You have manifested Your holy name, which is non-different from Yourself. Your holy names are of two types: principal and secondary. Hari, Krishna, Govinda, Acyuta, Rama, Ananta, Visnu, etc., are Your principal names; while Brahma, Supersoul, Supreme Controller, Maintainer, Creator, Mahendra, etc., are Your secondary names.

You have invested all Your spiritual potencies and transcendental qualities to the absolute degree in Your principal names, a fact that is substantiated by innumerable scriptural statements, like these from the Vedas: “My Lord, it is possible for one to be immediately cleansed from all material contaminations just by seeing You. What to speak of beholding You in person, merely by hearing Your Lordship's holy name but once, even *caṇḍālas*, the lowest of men, are freed from material contaminations.

“The amount of time that a *dvija-brāhmaṇa* spends in studying and reciting Vedic *mantras*, if utilized in chanting the Lord's name, even indirectly, would yield more benefit. Of this there is no doubt. One who chants these two syllables 'Ha' and 'ri' has already mastered the four Vedas: *Rg*, *Yajur*, *Sāma*, and *Atharva*. One is therefore advised, not to spend time studying the Vedas; he should simply chant the name of Govinda continuously.

And from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* : “O King, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of great spiritual authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all, including those who are desirous solely of material enjoyment, those who are totally free from all material enjoyments, and also those who are self-satisfied by dint of transcendental knowledge.”



“O Lord Vishnu Your holy name is fully spiritual, and it is self-manifested. If one chants the holy name knowing only a little of its vast glories, he gradually acquires perfect understanding of the subject. Lord Brahma, the first to propagate the transcendental sound *om*, the mere utterance of which liberates one from the dreadful dilemma of death and nescience. Hence the vibration *om* is also known as *taraka brahma*.”

“Any person who vibrates the holy name Hari just once without offence immediately becomes resolved to serve the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord unconditionally, and strives for liberation.”

“Certainly that heart is steel-framed which, in spite of one's chanting the holy name of the Lord with concentration, does not change when ecstasy takes place, tears fill the eyes and the hairs of the body stand on end.”

“O venerable Bhṛigu, the holy name of Krishna is sweeter than the sweetest honey, the most beneficial activity among all auspicious deeds. It is the eternal and mature transcendental fruit of the Vedic desire-fulfilling tree. Any person who utters this holy name but once, whether sincerely or casually, but without offenses, is instantaneously liberated.”

“O Arjuna! Truly I say unto you that anyone who chants My name, being devoted to Me, has certainly purchased Me. I become his property, fully dependent upon him.”

“Lord Krishna's holy name is like a touchstone gem, capable of fulfilling all desires. His name is directly the Lord Himself, and therefore non-different from Him. It is the complete whole, transcendental and eternally liberated, because Lord Krishna and His holy name are the same in principle.”

“No one can understand the transcendental nature of the name, form, quality and pastimes of Sri Krishna through his materially contaminated senses. Only when one becomes spiritually saturated by transcendental service to the Lord are the transcendental names, form, quality and pastimes of the Lord revealed to him.”

We can easily understand from these statements of different revealed scriptures that the holy name is endowed with unlimited spiritual potencies. Practice of *karma*, *jñāna* and *yoga* always bound by specific rules and restrictions, and by the factors of time, place and circumstance. But in chanting and remembering the Lord's name there is no such consideration. This indeed is an example of the Lord's fathomless mercy.

When the jīva strives for insignificant and evanescent material results, he finds himself grappling with the stringent laws of nature and the inexorable influence of time. But for one who chants the holy names, the Supreme Lord removes all insurmountable obstacles

by His causeless mercy. In the *Caitanya-Bhāgavata* [CB *Madhya-khaṇḍa* 28.28] we find this statement: “Always remember to chant the holy name, whether sleeping, eating or waking.” Again in *Caitanya-Bhāgavata* [CB *Madhya-khaṇḍa* 23.78]: “There are no hard and fast rules for chanting, so chant always.” This same instruction is repeated in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* [Antya 20.18]: “Regardless of time or place, one who chants the holy name, even while eating or sleeping, attains all perfection.”

Verse: 3

*ṭṛṇād api su-nīcena
taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā māna-dena
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 yet is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord.”

The devotee who chants the holy name offenselessly is adorned with four very special qualities: a natural meekness and humility because of his complete detachment from matter, a pure compassion unencumbered by envy, a spotless heart free from mundane false prestige, and a respectful attitude towards everyone.

Humbler than a blade of grass

“The misery stemming from poverty, disease, calamity, old age, etc., and happiness due to wealth, health, beauty, education, etc., are all *prārabdha* karmic reactions which I shall inevitably have to experience. Loss and gain, birth and death, suffering and joy are in no way connected to spiritual life rather they are wholly mundane, thus inconsequential to my real life. I will therefore approach the Lord with utmost humility and pray, 'O Krishna, O Govinda, O Lord of my heart, when will I be engaged in Your divine service? Kindly be merciful upon this lowly creature and quickly accept me as Your servitor.' In this mood I shall either enter the forest or remain home, and living frugally, I shall somehow sustain my life. Although grass is matter, it's ego is natural and proportionate to it, whereas my false ego, made up of my gross and subtle bodies, is utterly illusory because it is not connected to my original spiritual self. It is only proper, therefore, that I become more humble than a blade of grass.”

More tolerant than a tree

Now to explain the real purport of *taror api sahiṣṇunā*—'more tolerant than a tree'. The tree is



considered tolerant because it never neglects to offer its cooling shade and succulent fruits, even to the wood-cutter who is going to cut it down. The devotee of Lord Krishna is kinder still because he is compassionate to every living entity, whether friend or foe, desiring only their highest welfare. One who chants offenselessly is overwhelmed with thoughts of others' well-being. Thus the second special quality; compassion without envy is being described. He thinks, "O Lord, my friends and companions and all living entities are so unfortunate. How can they develop love and attraction for chanting Your all-auspicious names? They are sopped down in the quagmire of family attachment, wealth, property, successes, failures, loss and profit, joys and sorrows, birth and death, etc., all because they are blinded by *maya*. There is not the slightest indication that they are disgusted with a futile material existence filled with *anarthas*, or unwanted things. They are slowly strangling on the rope of unlimited desires for mundane sense gratification, all the while busying themselves in vacuous pursuits of fruitive action that promise them divine pleasures, and of empirical knowledge, that tantalize them with the promise of liberation. How can these persons become attracted to self-realization?" Praying to the Lord in this way, the devotee's heart is flooded with spiritual emotions, and he begins to sing loudly,

*harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

"In the age of Kali there is no other way, there is no other way, there is no other way than chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name of the Lord Hari."

Freedom from false prestige

The word *amani* describes the third quality of the devotee who chants offenselessly—a spotless heart free from false ego and false prestige. He who in spite of having every reason to be proud, demonstrates tolerance, humility, and a spotless heart is a fit candidate to chant purely. A devotee of Krishna, whether he is a *brāhmaṇa* living in the house, must subdue the pride of being a *brāhmaṇa*, and if he is living a renounced life in the forest, must conquer the supercilious attitude careful to avoid becoming proud of being a *brāhmaṇa*, of being a renunciant. He should simply concentrate on the lotus feet of Krishna and chant His holy name.

Offering all respect to others

Next, the word *manada* means to offer all respect to others. This is the fourth symptom of the devotee who chants without offenses. He understands that all living entities are eternal servants of Lord Krishna, so he is never envious of anyone. He pleases everyone with

sweet and sincere words, and his exemplary life brings benediction to the whole world. In this world, he offers his respect to distinguished personalities and learned *brāhmaṇas*, and to Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva and other demigods he offers his obeisances with utmost humility, praying to them to increase his devotion to Lord Krishna. To elevated Vaishnavas and pure devotees, he offers his services with heart and soul.

Chanting the holy name adorned with these four blessed qualities is the highest success of human life. This is the message of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu the most magnanimous incarnation and savior of the fallen souls of Kali-yuga. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* [Antya 20.22-26] it is stated: "These are the symptoms of one who chants the Hare Krishna *mahā-mantra*. Although he is very exalted, he thinks himself lower than the grass on the ground, and like a tree he tolerates everything. When a tree is cut down, it does not protest, and even when drying up, it does not ask anyone for water. It yields up its fruits, flowers and whatever else it possesses to anyone and everyone, tolerating scorching heat and torrents of rain, yet giving shelter to all. Although a Vaishnava is the most exalted person, he is prideless and gives all respect to everyone, knowing everyone to be the residence of Krishna. If one chants the holy name of Lord Krishna in this manner, he will certainly awaken his dormant love for Krishna's lotus feet."

Verse: 4

*na dhamāṁ na jamaṁ na sundarīṁ
kavitāṁ vā jagadīśa kāmāye
mama janmani jamaṁśvare
bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī twayi*

"O Lord of the Universe! I have no desire for material wealth, following, or beautiful poetry. You are the object of My worship and devotional love, life after life; I only pray that I may have unconditional love and devotion at Your lotus feet."

It is imperative that in the very beginning, the sincere *sādhaka* attentively hear his guru chanting the holy name, and thereafter himself chant the holy name free from all *nāmāparādha*. The process of chanting guarantees that the four qualities described in the previous verse will gradually blossom in his heart. Conversely, if the *sādhaka's* attachment to sensual pleasure is not severed, then his original spiritual identity does not become manifest, in which case *bhakti*, which is the intrinsic flavor of the Lord's *hladini* potency, cannot be transformed into *bhāva*, or amorous spiritual mellows.

Sādhana-bhakti means the process of chanting, and the pure form of *sādhana-bhakti* is clearly indicated



in the phrase *na dhanam na janam*. The principal symptom of bhakti is loving devotional service to Lord Krishna; the secondary symptom is freedom from all desires (*anyabhilasita śunyam*) outside of the path of *bhakti*, which is untainted by *karma* and *jñāna*. As long as loving devotion to Krishna (*amukulyena kṣṇānusīlanam*) is encumbered by desires for *karma*, *jñāna yoga*, the highest stage of loving devotional service, or *uttama-bhakti*, will not manifest; it remains as a mere shadow of devotion, or *bhakti-abhasa*.

The instructions in this verse are meant to dissipate this very shadow *bhakti*. “O Lord, I do not hanker for wealth (*dhanam*), a following (*janam*), or beautiful verses (*sundarim kavitam*).” Here *sundarim kavitam* refers to the religious principles of the Vedas, *dhanam* refers to wealth, and *janam* means wife, children, relatives, etc.: “I do not merely abhor sense gratification derived through religiosity, wealth and lust, but I am appalled at the idea of temporary *mukti*, or liberation, from the cycle of birth and death. I refuse to be enticed by these four Vedic goals (*dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa*), but want only to render service at Your lotus feet.”

King Kulasekhar's prayer captures this mood:

“O my Supreme Lord, I do not want to accumulate heaps of piety by performing sacrifices and executing prescribed duties as recommended in the scriptures, nor do I want great opulence and sense gratification. Whatever reactions I am destined to suffer for my past misdeeds, let them come. What I cherish is the hope that my deep devotion to Your lotus feet may remain undeviating in its firmness, birth after birth.”

The soul's struggle to triumph over repeated birth and death and other material miseries is beyond him, for such victory depends entirely upon the Supreme Lord's will. Yet, all miseries automatically cease when, by the Lord's desire, one is rescued from the cycle of birth and death. Therefore, what is the efficacy of a gross materialistic prayer that is contradictory to the precepts of pure devotion? Lord Chaitanya's prayer is this: “Until such time as the cycle of birth and death is brought to an end by the grace of God, let Me have unconditional devotion to His lotus feet life after life, regardless of what My material situation may be.”

In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* [Antya-lila 20.27, 28, 30], it is said: “As Lord Chaitanya spoke in this way, His humility increased and praying to Krishna that He might discharge pure devotional service. Wherever there is a relationship of love of Godhead, it's natural symptom is that the devotee does not think himself a devotee. Instead, he always thinks that he has not even a drop of love for Krishna. [Lord Chaitanya prayed,] 'My dear Lord Krishna, I do not want material wealth from You, nor do

I want followers, a beautiful wife or the results of fruitive activities. I only pray that by Your causeless mercy, You give Me pure devotional service unto You, life after life.’”

Verse: 5

*ayi nanda-tanuja kiṅkarami
patitaṁ māṁ viṣame bhavāmbudhau
kṛpayā tava pāda-paṅkaja-
sthita-dhūli-saḍṣaṅ vicintaya*

“O My Lord, O Krishna, son of Maharaja Nanda, I am Your eternal servant, but because of My own fruitive acts, I have fallen in this horrible ocean of nescience. Now please be causelessly merciful to Me. Consider Me a particle of dust at Your lotus feet.”

Is it proper for a *sādhaka* who has taken shelter of the holy name to discuss the miseries of material life he has to experience? To dissipate this doubt, Lord Chaitanya has composed this verse, the essence of which is as follows: “O Lord Krishna, O son of Nanda Maharaja, I am Your eternal servant, but as a result of my previous activities I have now fallen into this terrible ocean of material existence. Lust, greed, anger, envy, etc., are my adversaries, waiting in the waters like big fish to swallow me up. The boisterous waves of wasted hopes and anxieties are tossing me here and there, making my life miserable. Lashing gales of bad association add further suffering. In this condition, therefore, I see You alone as my succor. Occasionally a small bunch of weeds can be seen floating—these are the weeds of *karma, jñāna, yoga*, austerity, etc. But has anyone ever crossed the mighty ocean of nescience with the help of such paltry flotsam? In trying to swim across this ocean, some have reached out to grab these weeds for support, but unfortunately everything, including the person himself, sinks like dead weights. Factually, I can see that there is no other hope for shelter except Your unlimited mercy.

“The sturdy boat of Your holy name is the only means of crossing over this dangerous ocean of material existence. Considering all these facts with a level head, I begged for the invincible boat of Your holy name from my guru, which he gave me by his causeless mercy. O Lord, You are the renowned protector of Your devotees, who are souls surrendered to Your lotus feet. Therefore please accept this homeless destitute, cleanse me of all my faults, and consider me as a particle of dust at Your lotus feet.”

The message of this verse is that those who are on the path of *bhakti* should completely discard desires for sense enjoyment and liberation. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* [Antya-lila 20.31, 33-34] it is said: “In great humility, considering Himself a conditioned soul of the material world, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu again



expressed His desire to be blessed with service to the Lord. 'I am Your eternal servant, but I forgot Your Lordship. Now I have fallen in the ocean of nescience and have been conditioned by the external energy. Be causelessly merciful to Me by giving Me a place with the particles of dust at Your lotus feet so that I may engage in the service of Your Lordship as Your eternal servant.'

Verse 6

*nayanam galad-aśru-dhārayā
vadanam gadgada-ruddhayā girā
pulakair nicitam vapuḥ kadā,
tava nāma-grahaṇe bhaviṣyati*

"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?"

The previous five verses have examined the following topics: Spiritual life begins with *śraddhā*, or sincere faith, followed by *sādhū-saṅga*, the ninefold process of devotional service starting with hearing, chanting, remembering, and so on. The next topic was the science of self-realization, which destroys ignorance and all unwanted impediments. In due course *nistha* (steadiness), *ruci* (taste), *asakti* (attachment), and *bhāva* (spiritual emotions) were also highlighted. It has thus been shown how with the assistance of pure *bhakti*, which is the essence of the Lord's *hladini-śakti*, the living entity regains, his *svarūpa*, or original spiritual form, by a gradual process. By the time the jiva reaches the stage of *bhāva*, his pure devotional service has reached its pinnacle because it has become a continuous and unbroken process. *Bhāva* is often referred to as *rati*, or attraction, and it is described as the bud that later flowers into full bloom as *prema-bhakti*, or pure loving devotion. Of chanting, hearing and the other limbs of devotional service, begun in the stage of *sādhana-bhakti*, chanting Krishna's name especially becomes intensified in the stage of *bhāva*.

Nine symptoms of bhāva

This particular spiritual platform is marked by nine symptoms: 1) The devotee is tolerant and unperturbed even when faced with a very distressing situation. 2) He is averse to wasting time, and 3) utilizes all his time in the Lord's service. 4) He is prideless, and 5) has complete conviction that he will attain the Lord's lotus feet. 6) Extremely eager and anxious to attain perfection, he has acquired a taste for chanting the holy name and 7) a strong attachment for hearing and speaking about the pastimes and attributes of Lord Krishna, 8) He has no interest in anything that has no direct link to Krishna, and

nityam bhāgavata-sevayā

9) has developed love for the places of Lord Krishna's pastimes. Scripture says that one who has developed these symptoms is on the threshold of entering the stage of full *bhāva*.

Ecstatic symptoms of bhāva-bhakti

When *sādhana-bhakti* is suffused with *ruci*, or the intense desire to attain the Lord's lotus feet, which softens and melts the heart, it is called *bhāva-bhakti*. The spiritual emotions of *bhāva* are both the rays of the sun of *prema* and the rays of the sun of Krishna unmatched beauty, which embodies pure transcendence. The conclusion is that *bhāva-bhakti*, or *rati*, is *prema*, love, of God, in its budding stage. In this stage the *asta-sattvika-vikara*, or eight ecstatic symptoms, such as crying, goosebumps, etc., begin to manifest slightly on this person. So when the devotee meditates on the Lord's lotus feet, his heart melts, and tears stream from his eyes spontaneously and profusely. Descriptions found in the *Tantras* and *Purāṇas* state that these ecstatic symptoms make a shy but firm beginning in the stage of *bhāva*, and later they deepen and intensify in *prema*. Activities accompanying and correlating these ecstatic emotions of the heart are known as *anubhāva*. They include dancing, rolling on the ground, singing, loud outbursts, bodily spasms, prolonged yawning, long sighs, seeking solitude, drooling saliva, uproarious laughter, swooning, hiccupping, and so on.

Eight primary ecstatic symptoms

There are eight primary ecstatic symptoms, or the *asta-sattvika-vikara*: paralysis, perspiration, goosebumps, pallor, loss of voice, trembling, weeping and swooning. Dancing, singing, crying, goosebumps, and loss of voice are particularly prominent in the stage of *bhāva*, and in this verse, the supreme teacher Lord Sri Chaitanya gives them special mention. He prays, "O Krishna, O son of Maharaja Nanda, when will My eyes be decorated with tears of love when I chant Your holy name? When will My voice choke up with ecstatic emotions? When will My body be filled with horripilation? O Lord, be merciful, that these ecstatic symptoms may decorate My body when I chant Your names!"

In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* [Antya-līla 20.37], Lord Chaitanya says: "Without love of Godhead, My life is useless. Therefore I pray that You accept Me as Your servant and give Me the salary of ecstatic love of God."

Verse: 7

*yugāyitam nimeṣeṇa cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitam
śūnyāyitam jagat sarvaṁ govinda-virahaṇa me*

"My Lord Govinda, because of separation from You, 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.”

When *rati-bhakti* reaches the state of *sthayi-bhāva*, or constancy in spiritual emotions, then in mixing together with the other four *bhāvas*—*vibhāva*, *anubhāva*, *sāttvika* and *vyabhicāri*—it becomes transformed into *bhakti-rasa*, or the sweet mellow of devotional service. In this stage, the ecstatic symptoms of *anubhāva* and *sāttvika-vikāra* find their full expression. Sri Rupa Goswami, in describing *prema*, writes in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

“*Bhāva-bhakti* which, from its very first stages, so excessively affects the heart that it melts and becomes a sublime salve of love, bringing the highest feelings of divine bliss within easy reach, and generates an intense desire for Krishna. The fully perfected souls term this over-vaulting ecstasy as *prema*.”

From this statement it is obvious that extreme attraction, deep affection, and spontaneous dedication to Lord Krishna is synonymous with *prema*, love of God.

Rasa—ecstatic relationship with Krishna

The relationship between the *viṣaya*, or object of love (Krishna), and the *āśraya*, or the abode of that love (the devotee), is exchanged through five principal *rasas*, or mellows namely, neutral, servitor, friendly, parental and conjugal. When the relationship is cursory, there are seven subsidiary mellows: laughter, wonder, pity, chivalry, anger, fear and ghastliness. Of the principal *rasas*, the conjugal or *mādhurya-rasa* is the most excellent. As *mādhurya-rasa* increases in intensity it becomes *prema*, *praṇaya*, *māna*, *sneha*, *rāga*, *anurāga*, *bhava* and *mahā-bhāva*, manifesting different features and excellences of divine love one after another.

Development of rasa

Śānta-rasa, or neutral love of Godhead, is marked by excessive exultation. Attachment to *brahman* is quintessential in *śānta-rasa*, coupled with an air of disregard and unconcern for everything and all other *rasas*. With the increase of *mamatā*, or affection, this attraction deepens and is then known as *dāsyā-rasa*, or love in servitorship. In awe and reverential worship, there is a lack of *praṇaya*. But such *praṇaya* ecstasy, in a mature state turns mischievous and introduces a crooked mood which, due to a plethora of affection, is very unusual in texture. This is known as *māna*. The mood of *māna* becomes active when the devotee expresses loving resentment. Even the Supreme Lord, desires to relish this particular emotional exchange, and especially enjoys the mood of reconciliation with His devotee that follows resentment.

The super-abundance of love that completely melts the heart to a state of unimaginable liquidity is known

as *sneha*, which is indicated by profuse, unchecked tears. It is in this stage that the devotee's yearning to see Krishna never admits fulfillment. Although Krishna is admittedly the master of everyone and everything, in *vatsalya-rasa* or parental love, the devotee anxiously hopes that no harm befall Him. These are the peculiar symptoms of the mellow of parental love.

Sneha supplemented by intense craving becomes *rāga*, and in this stage of pure love, even a moment's separation from the beloved is unbearable, while in union, even extreme grief feels exhilarating. *Rāga* is disposed in such a manner that the object of worship is made to appreciate His own ever-fresh, perennial form. This ever-new *rāga* transforms itself into *anurāga*, where the sense of lover and beloved enrapturing each other into the state of complete compliance increases. In the rapture of *anurāga*, there are longings to be born as animals and other lower species that have a direct connection with Krishna. This is known as *prema-vaicitra*, or varied love. Even in separation, Krishna begins to manifest Himself as only the lover knows and loves Him, giving the lover excessive bliss.

Mahā-bhāva—the last word in ecstasy

When *anurāga* is filled with unsurpassable and matchless magnificence of love, reaching the plateau of madness, it becomes *mahā-bhāva*. In this stage, even the blinking of an eyelid veiling the view of the beloved for less than a moment, becomes intolerable, and seconds stretch to eons. Separation for even a moment seems to expand to timeless eternity. In *mahā-bhāva*, both in union and in separation, all the symptoms of *sāttvika-bhāva* and *sancari-bhāva* find their fullest expression. In this verse, Lord Chaitanya has very succinctly given us, like an ocean bottled in a pitcher, a synopsis of the elaborate dissertation on the different gradations of the most sublime loving relationship with the Supreme Lord, as found in the *Prīti-sandarbhā* by Sri Jiva Gosvami.

Deep feelings of separation

The word *yugāyitam* is simple and direct. The phrase *govinda-virahaṇa* expresses deep feelings of separation. Self-realized *rasika* devotees have divided *vīpralambha*, or the mood of separation, into *purva-rāga*, *māna*, *pravāsa*, and so on. Yet the recondite import lodged deep within this verse composed by Lord Chaitanya is that the devotee living in this world need only relish the separation of *purva-rāga*. The scriptures also say that the mood of *viraha*, or separation, has ten attendant conditions: pondering, sleeplessness, perturbation, emaciation, pallor, incoherent speech, being stricken, madness, delusion, and death (or unconsciousness).

In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* [Antya-līla 20.40-41] Lord



Chaitanya says, “In My agitation a day never ends, for every moment seems like a millennium. Pouring incessant tears, My eyes are like clouds in the rainy season. The three worlds have become void because of separation from Govinda. I feel as if I were burning alive in a slow fire.”

Verse: 8

*āśliṣya vā pāda-ratān̄ pīnaṣṭu mām
adarsanān̄ marma-hatān̄ karotu vā
yathā tathā vā vidadhātu lampāṭo
mat-prāṇa-nāthas tu sa eva nāparaḥ*

“I am simply a lowly maidservant to the gopis, who are absorbed in serving My Lord's lotus feet. He may embrace Me, He may exploit Me, or He may break My heart by not appearing before Me. He is a libertine, ravishing the gopi damsels with His lusty desires. Let His will triumph. Yet, in spite of everything, He is the beloved Lord of My heart, nothing less, nothing more. Lord Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, fully independent. Obeying His wishes is My only religion. I am not independent, or so whimsical that I can recoil from this service attitude and go against His will.”

This verse describes the consciousness of the jiva who reaches the sublime platform of *kṣṇa-prema*. “That Supreme adulterer, that libertine Krishna, may bestow upon me, a servant who is totally surrendered to His lotus feet, endless bliss by forcing me into excruciating depths of despair by not being present before me. He may do anything He wishes with me, even to the extent

that He enjoy the company of another beloved gopi in my presence. Yet He will remain always the Lord of my heart. For me there will never be any other.”

Complete surrender to the Lord

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [11.29.34] we find other examples of such fully surrendered souls and their unique position: “When the mortal beings decide to relinquish all fruitive activities and their results, and fully surrender unto Me, I reciprocate by giving them the nectar of immortality, elevating them to become My eternal associates.”

The conclusion is that on the platform of *prema*, Krishna becomes the life, the soul, and the greatest treasure of the devotee. In this stage the sublime exchanges of love between the devotee and the Lord, due to their natural attraction for each other, flowers into full bloom.

Sri Prahlada Maharaja says in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [7.5.14]:

“Just as pieces of iron rush of their own volition to the magnet, similarly, by the independent will of the Supreme Lord, my heart and mind have shaken off their enthrallment to material life and are forcibly being drawn to the magnet of His lotus feet.”

Prema is the only result of Bhakti

This statement establishes the principle of an inherent and eternal relationship between the infinitesimal jiva and the infinite Supreme Lord. This relationship becomes obscured however when the spirit soul turns away from Krishna. But when by good fortune the jiva's consciousness becomes purified, then the eternally mutual relationship between the Lord and the jiva is rejuvenated; just as a clean and shiny piece of iron is



most efficiently magnetic prone. Purification is thus necessary in order to manifest their inherent and eternal relationship; other than this the process of purification has no real function. Therefore the purified jivas who are *sādhakas* of the *prema-dharma*, or the path of loving devotional service to the Supreme Lord, should realize that this path is highly allergic to all other results, save and except *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

Lord Krishna Himself substantiates this truth in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [10.32.22]:

“My dear gopis, you have severed all family bindings for My sake. Such an achievement is very rare, even for great philosophers and yogis. Our meetings with each other are completely pure and unblemished. If I wanted to repay the debt that I have incurred by your love, devotion, service and renunciation, even with My immortal body for all eternity, I would be unable. I am obligated to you life after life. You may succeed in acquitting Me of this debt by your gentle and divine demeanor—nay, your sublime love; but I will always remain indebted to you.”

From the Lord's own statement it is clear that in order to please and attract Him, one must love and satisfy His devotees. (Since Krishna feels that He cannot repay the debt He owes His pure devotees, such as the gopis, on account of His default He becomes their property eternally. Therefore although Krishna is the independent Personality of Godhead, He considers Himself a subject to the permission of His devotees, even in the matter of awarding His mercy and bestowing His association. Thus Krishna is approachable only through the mercy of the pure devotees who have already purchased Him with their love.

Separation from the Lord is exultation

Though the phrase *marma-hatām*, 'deeply afflicted in the heart', has been used in this verse, in truth the devotee feels not grief, but exultation.

To emphasize this point, Sri Krishna says in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [10.32.21]:

“O beloved gopis, there is no doubt that for My sake you have disregarded social taboos, Vedic injunctions, even cut yourselves off from your relatives and family members. Your meditation on Me has been single-minded, not thinking at all of your beauty or your nuptial bliss. In order to increase your love for Me I disappeared from your sight. Please do not blame Me for this act of love, because you are as extremely dear to Me as I am to you.”

Another important point in this verse is that, though it speaks of 'giving Me bliss by Your loving embrace', there is no trace of selfish pleasure. In fact, the only thought here is of loving Krishna and giving Him pleasure. Such a statement is therefore very much in conformity with

the true emotions of pure love.

The preeminence of Sri Śikṣāṣṭaka

Let's now discuss in brief the preeminence of these eight verses known as *Śikṣāṣṭaka*. Just how glorious is Srimati Radharani as the personification of Sri Krishna's internal spiritual potency, and how glorious is Her magnificent love? Krishna also desires to know how She alone fully relishes the wonderful qualities in Him, and the happiness She feels when She realizes the sweetness of His love. Longing to fulfil these desires, the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna, in His eternal form of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu the Absolute Divinity of *audārya*, or magnanimity, performs manifold pastimes and savors the loving moods in an exclusive section of Goloka known as Sri Navadvipa-dhama, the highest realm of the Vaikuntha planets and the playground of the Supreme Lord.

The descent of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

Adorned with the ecstatic sentiments and lustrous complexion of Srimati Radharani, Lord Sri Krishna as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appears on this earth once in a day of Lord Brahma. His most recent descent to the mortal plane occurred in the year 1486 of the Christian era in the West Bengal district of Nadia, in the town of Navadvipa, situated on a river bank purified by the waters of the Mother Ganga. This abode is non different from Vrndavana. The time of His appearance is recorded as a full lunar eclipse on the full-moon night in the month of *Phālguna* (February-March).

Lord Chaitanya's early life

The whole town of Navadvipa was reverberating with the sounds of God's names being chanted, as was the custom during an eclipse. His father was Pandita Jagannatha Misra, and His mother was Srimati Sachidevi. The Lord's childhood was filled with childlike mischievousness and miraculous adventures. His boyhood days were spent in studies. His marriage in youth was a perfect example of upholding Vedic culture, as was His household life. Thereafter He went to Gaya and accepted spiritual initiation in the ten-syllable Gopala mantra from Sripad Ishvara Puri, a great servant of the Lord and torch-bearer of the disciplic succession coming down from Lord Brahma to Madhvacharya. The Lord's wish was to teach the living entities their duty of taking shelter of a self-realized spiritual master, as instructed by the scriptures.

Initiation into love of God

After His return from Gaya He performed congregational chanting of the holy name with His associates and devotees, and inundated all Bengal with the nectarean river that had its source in these ecstatic *kīrtanas*. It was during this time that He flooded Bengal with the nectar of the holy name of God, while



propagating the message of devotional service to the Supreme Lord. At age twenty-four, He received *sannyāsa* initiation from Sripad Kesava Bharati of the Sankara-sampradaya and forever severed all links with home and family life. The next six years found Him journeying on pilgrimage throughout Bengal, Odisha, South India, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh (Mathura, Vrindavana, Prayaga, Kashi), and Bihar (Kaukai, Natshala, Rajmahal). In His travels, He blessed millions of conditioned souls by giving them the highest transcendental pleasure of the holy name and by propagating the science of pure devotion. He refuted all philosophical speculations and conclusions that contradicted the statements of authorized scriptures, and firmly established the unique supra-mundane principle of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*, which He Himself delineated for the first time, and which is the quintessence of the teachings of all four schools of Vaishnava philosophy.

Lord Chaitanya's final pastimes

For the next eighteen years He remained in Jagannatha Puri, where He fulfilled His spiritual desires and relished them in the company of His intimate associates, enjoying the nectar of love of Godhead. He sent self-realized and empowered preachers from among His followers everywhere, to propagate the path of pure devotional service to the Supreme Lord. In this way He inundated all India in the waves of *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

While this was taking place, He was busy grooming many of His intimate associates, like Sri Svarupa-damodara, Sri Ramananda Raya, Sri Prabhodananda Saraswati, Sri Rupa Goswami, Sri Sanatana Goswami, Sri Raghunatha dasa Goswami, Sri Gopala Bhatta Goswami, Sri Jiva Goswami, Sri Kavi Karnapura, and others, to write voluminous books revealing the recondite meaning of His teachings. For this purpose He impregnated their hearts with His divine potency. These selfsame teachings He compressed into the eight *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers, reaching out to and instructing all levels of devotees. Many times the Lord would immerse Himself in the *rasa*, or ambrosia, of these eight verses, tasting their esoteric conclusions in the association of Srila Svarupa-damodara and Sri Ramananda Raya. Later the verses were discussed in important scriptures like *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

Teachings of Lord Chaitanya

The Supreme Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu on the one hand, taught by His own example how to lead an ideal householder life, enacting transcendental pastime of a householder. On the other hand, He also taught the renunciants and *sannyāsīs* how to uphold the highest standards of devotion and detachment by His own exemplary behavior. These super excellent teachings

nityam bhāgavata-sevayā

are all contained in the eight verses.

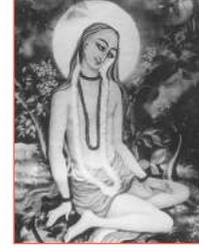
The *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers are the essence of all Vedic scriptures for the *rasika-bhakta*, or the pure devotees who relish *rasas*. These prayers, having emanated from the lips of the Supreme Lord Himself, are indeed the Absolute Truth. Hence, they should be read, recited and worshipped daily by sincere and fortunate souls. These prayers should be their constant companion, learnt and taken to heart.

Benediction for those who read Sri Śikṣāṣṭaka

Those surrendered souls who read the Sri *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers, which are the nectarean words flowing from the mouth of the Supreme Lord Gauranga, with devotion, will certainly be attracted to the honey from Lord Chaitanya's lotus feet, and like intoxicated bees, plunge into the lily-filled lake of *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

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Translated by Sarvabhavama dasa ॐ



!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

Nityam Bhagavata-sevaya

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Dedicated to

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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Our upcoming project:

Bhagavata Vidyalaya

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