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## The Duties Of A Sadhaka



### Features

ACTIVITIES OF MAHARAJA AGNIDHRA  
Sukadeva Goswami

PURE DEVOTEE NEVER WANTS  
TO SEE THE LORD UNNECESSARILY  
*His Divine Grace*  
A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

THE DUTIES OF A SĀDHAKA  
Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

HOW CAN ONE ACHIEVE  
DEVOTIONAL SERVICE?  
Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura

PURE BHAKTI IS THE  
ONLY MEANS TO PERFECTION  
Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura

## ACTIVITIES OF MAHARAJA AGNIDHRA

### Sukadeva Goswami

When Maharaja Priyavrata went away for solitary spiritual practice, his son Agnidhra became the ruler of Jambudvipa, in accordance with his instructions. Agnidhra maintained its residents with the same affection a father feels for his sons. Once Maharaja Agnidhra desired to have a son. For this reason, he went to a cave of Mandara Mountain to practice austerity. Understanding his desire, Lord Brahma sent a celestial woman named Purvacitti to Agnidhra's hermitage. Dressing very attractively, she presented herself before him displaying her various feminine charms. Maharaja Agnidhra naturally became attracted. Her actions, expressions, smile, sweet words and eye movements were fascinating to him. Agnidhra was expert in flattery. Thus he attracted the celestial lady, who was pleased to accept him as her husband because of his mellifluous words. She enjoyed royal happiness with Agnidhra for many years and then returned to her abode in the heavenly planets. In her womb Agnidhra begot nine sons-Nabhi, Kimpurusa, Harivara, Ilavrita, Ramyaka, Hiranmaya, Kuru, Bhadrasva and Ketumala. He gave them nine islands which were named after them. Agnidhra, however, his senses unsatisfied, was always thinking of his celestial wife, and therefore in his next life he was born on the celestial planet where she resided. After the death of Agnidhra, his nine sons married nine daughters of Meru named Merudevi, Pratirupa, Ugradamstri, Lata, Ramya, Syama, Nari, Bhadra and Devaviti.

Maharaja Nabhi, the son of Agnidhra, wished to have sons, and therefore he very attentively began to offer prayers to and worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Vishnu, the master and enjoyer of all sacrifices. Maharaja Nabhi's wife, Merudevi, who had not given birth at that time, also worshiped Lord Vishnu along with her husband. In the performance of a sacrifice, there are seven established means to obtain the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead: (1) by sacrificing valuable things or eatables, (2) by acting in terms of place, (3) by acting in terms of time, (4) by offering hymns, (5) by engaging a qualified priest, (6) by offering gifts to the priests and (7) by observing the regulative principles. However, one cannot always obtain the Supreme Lord through these paraphernalia. Nonetheless, the Lord is affectionate to His devotee. Therefore when Maharaja Nabhi, who was a devotee, worshiped and offered prayers to the Lord with great faith, devotion and a pure uncontaminated mind, superficially performing the *yajña* in the



line of *pravargya*, the kind Supreme Personality of Godhead, due to His affection for His devotees, appeared before King Nabhi in His unconquerable and captivating form with four hands. In this way, to fulfill the desire of His devotee, the Supreme Personality of Godhead manifested Himself before him in His beautiful form, which always pleases the mind and eyes of the devotees. Lord Vishnu appeared before King Nabhi with four arms. He was very bright, and He appeared to be the best of all great personalities. On the lower part of His body, He wore a yellow silken garment. On His chest was the mark of *srivatsa*, the symbol of beauty. He carried a conchshell, lotus flower, disc and club, and He wore a garland of forest flowers and the *kaustubha* gem. He was beautifully decorated with a helmet, earrings, bangles, belt, pearl necklace, armlets, ankle bells and other bodily ornaments bedecked with radiant jewels. Seeing the Lord present before them, King Nabhi, his priests and associates felt just like poor people who have suddenly attained great riches. They received the Lord by respectfully bowing their heads and offering Him things in worship.

**The priests began to offer prayers to the Lord, saying:** O most worshipable one, we are simply Your servants. Although You are full in Yourself, out of Your causeless mercy, please accept a little service from us, Your eternal servants. We are barely aware of Your transcendental form, but we can simply offer our respectful obeisance again and again, as instructed by the Vedic literatures and authorized *ācāryas*. Materialistic living

entities are very much attracted to the modes of material nature, and therefore they are never perfect. But You O Lord, are beyond the scope of all material conceptions. Your name, form and qualities are all transcendental and beyond the realm of experimental knowledge. Indeed, who can conceive Your glories? In the material world we can perceive only material names and qualities and therefore we have no power other than to offer our respectful obeisance and prayers unto You, the transcendental personality. The glorification of Your auspicious transcendental qualities will wipe out the sins of all mankind. That is the most auspicious activity for us, and we can thus partially understand Your supernatural position. O Supreme Lord, You are full in every respect. You are certainly very satisfied when Your devotees offer You prayers with faltering voices and in ecstasy bring You tulasi leaves, water, twigs bearing new leaves, and newly grown grass. This surely makes You satisfied.

We have begun Your worship with various paraphernalia and have offered sacrifices unto You, but we think that there is no need for so many pompous arrangements to please Your Lordship. All of life's goals and opulence are directly, self-sufficiently, unceasingly and unlimitedly increasing in You at every moment. Indeed, You are unlimited enjoyment and blissful existence itself. As far as we are concerned, O Lord, we are always after material enjoyment. You do not need all these sacrificial arrangements, but they are meant for us so that we may be blessed by Your Lordship. All these sacrifices are performed for our fruitive results, and they are not actually needed by You.

*tad yathā bāliśānām svayam ātmānah  
śreyah param aviduṣām parama-parama-  
puruṣa prakarṣa-karuṇāyā sva-mahimānam  
cāpavargākhyam upakalpayisyān svayam  
nāpacita evetaravad ihopalakṣitāḥ.*

O Lord of lords, we are completely ignorant of the execution of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*, the process of liberation, because we do not actually know the goal of life. You have appeared personally before us like a person soliciting worship, but You are present here just so we can see You. Out of Your abundant and causeless mercy, You have come in order to serve our purpose, our interest, and give us the benefit of Your personal glory called *apavarga*, liberation. You came, even though we have not properly worshiped You due to our ignorance.

O most worshipable of all, You are the best of all benefactors, and Your appearance at saintly King Nabhi's sacrificial arena is meant for our



benediction. By being present before us, You have bestowed upon us the most valuable benediction.

Dear Lord, all the great sages who are pensive and greatly pious incessantly recount Your spiritual qualities. These sages have already burned all the contamination in their hearts by the fire of knowledge, strengthened their detachment from the material world. Thus they have attained Your qualities and are self-satisfied. Yet even for those who feel spiritual bliss in chanting Your attributes, Your personal presence is very rare. Dear Lord, at the time of death we may not be able to remember Your name, form and qualities due to stumbling, hunger, falling down, yawning or being in a miserable diseased condition because of high fever. We therefore pray unto You, O Lord, for You are very affectionate to Your devotees. Please help us remember You and utter Your holy names, attributes and activities, which can dispel all the reactions of our sinful lives.

Dear Lord, here is the great King Nabhi, whose ultimate goal in life is to have a son like You. Your Lordship, his position is like that of a person approaching a very rich man and begging for a little grain. Maharaja Nabhi is so desirous of having a son that he is worshiping You, although You can offer him any exalted position, including elevation to the heavenly planets or liberation back to Godhead.

*ko vā iha te 'parājito 'parājitayā māyayānavasita-  
padavyānāvṛta-matir viṣaya-viṣa-rayānāvṛta-  
prakṛtir anūpāsita-mahac-caranah.*

Dear Lord, unless one worships the lotus feet of great devotees, one will be conquered by the illusory energy, and his intelligence will be bewildered. Indeed, who has not been carried away by the waves of material enjoyment, which are like poison? Your illusory energy is unconquerable. No one can see the path of this material energy or tell how it is working.

O Lord, You perform many wonderful activities. Our only aim in performing this great sacrifice was to acquire a son; therefore our intelligence is not very sharp. We are not experienced in ascertaining life's true goal. By inviting You to this negligible sacrifice for some material motive, we have certainly committed a great offense at Your lotus feet. Therefore, O Lord of lords, please excuse our offense by Your causeless mercy and equanimity of mind.

**Sri Sukadeva Goswami said:** The priests, who were worshiped even by King Nabhi, the Emperor of *Bhārata-varṣa*, offered prayers in prose - not poetry, and bowed down at the Lord's lotus feet. The Lord of lords, the ruler of the demigods, was very pleased with them, and He began to speak as follows.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
aho batāham rṣayo bhavadbhir avitatha-gīrbhir  
varam asulabham abhiyācito yad amusyatma-jō  
māyā sadrśo bhūyād iti mama-ham evābhīrūpah  
kaivalyād athāpi brahma-vādo na mṛṣā bhavitum  
arhati mamaiva hi mukham yad dvija-deva-  
kulam.*

**The Supreme Personality of Godhead replied:** O great sages, I am certainly pleased with your prayers. You are all very truthful. You have prayed for the benediction of a son like Me for King Nabhi, but this is very difficult to obtain. Since I am the Supreme Person without a second and since no one is equal to Me, it is not possible to find another personality like Me. Moreover, since you are all qualified *brāhmaṇas*, your words should not prove untrue. I consider the *brāhmaṇas* who are well qualified with brahminical qualities to be like My mouth.

*tata āgnīdhriye 'mśa-kalayāvatarisyāmy ātmā-  
tulyam anupalabhamānah.*

Since I cannot find anyone equal to Me, I shall personally expand Myself into a plenary portion and appear in the womb of Merudevi, the wife of Maharaja Nabhi, the son of Agnidhra.

**Sukadeva Goswami continued:** After saying

nityam bhāgavata-sevayā

this, the Lord disappeared. The wife of King Nabhi, Queen Merudevi, was sitting by the side of her husband, and consequently she could hear everything the Supreme Lord had spoken. O Vishnudatta, Pariksit Maharaja, the Supreme Personality of Godhead was pleased by the great sages at that sacrifice. Thus the Lord decided to personally exhibit the method of executing religious principles and to also fulfill Maharaja Nabhi's desire. For these reasons, He appeared as the son of Merudevi in His original spiritual form, which is above the modes of material nature.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (BhāgavataPurāṇa) » Canto 5: The Creative Impetus » Chapter 2: The Activities of Maharaja Āgnidhra(Summary) & Chapter 3: Rṣabhadeva's Appearance in the Womb of Merudevi, the Wife of King Nābhi » Verses: 1-20.

**PURE DEVOTEE NEVER WANTS  
TO SEE THE LORD UNNECESSARILY  
*His Divine Grace*  
A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.**

Maharaja Nabhi was inclined to perform great sacrifices to beget a son. Though the son may be as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, such a material desire—be it great or insignificant—is brought about by the influence of *māyā*. A devotee does not desire anything for sense gratification. Devotion is therefore explained as devoid of material desires (*anyābhilāsītā-śūnya*). Everyone is subject to the influence of *māyā* and entangled in all kinds of material desire; and Maharaja Nabhi was no exception. Freedom from *māyā*'s influence is only possible when one engages in the service of the great devotees (*mahac-carana-sevā*). Without worshiping the lotus feet of a great devotee, one cannot be freed from the influence of *māyā*. Srla Narottama dasa Thakura therefore says, *chādiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra pāyeche kebā*: "Who has been freed from *māyā*'s clutches without serving the lotus feet of a Vaishnava?" *Māyā* is *aparājita* (undefeatable), and her influence is also *aparājita*.

The priests were also unhappy to have called the Supreme Lord from Vaikuntha for such an insignificant reason. A pure devotee never wants to see the Lord unnecessarily. The Lord is engaged in various activities, and the pure devotee does not want to see Him whimsically, for his own sense gratification. The pure devotee simply depends on the Lord's mercy, and when the Lord is pleased with him, he can see Him face to face. The Lord is unseen even by demigods like Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva. By calling on the Supreme Lord, the priests of Nabhi Maharaja proved themselves unintelligent; nonetheless, the Lord came because of His causeless mercy. All of them therefore wanted to be excused by the Lord.



Worship of the Supreme Lord for material gain is not approved in the scriptures. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.16):

*catur-vidhā bhajante māmjanāḥ sukrtino 'rjuna  
ārto jijñāsur arthaṛthījñānī ca bharatarṣabha*

"O best among the Bharatas [Arjuna], four kinds of pious men render devotional service unto Me—one who desires wealth, the inquisitive, the distressed, and one who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute."

Initiation into *bhakti* begins when one is in a distressed condition, in need of money, when one is inquisitive, or when one wants to understand the Absolute Truth. Nonetheless, people who approach the Supreme Lord in this way are not actually devotees. They are accepted as pious (*sukrtinah*) due to their approaching the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Unaware of the various activities and engagements of the Lord, such people unnecessarily disturb Him for material gain. However, the Lord is so kind that even though disturbed, He fulfills the desires of such people. The pure devotee is *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnya*; he has no motive behind his worship. He is not conducted by the influence of *māyā* in the form of *karma* or *jñāna*. The pure devotee is always prepared to execute the order of the Lord without personal consideration. The *rvijah*, the priests at the sacrifice, knew very well the distinction between *karma* and *bhakti*, and because they considered themselves under the influence of *karma*, fruitive activity, they begged the Lord's pardon. They knew that the Lord had been requested to come for some insignificant reason.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 5: The Creative Impetus » Chapter 3: Rṣabhadeva's Appearance in the Womb of Merudevi, the Wife of King Nābhi » Verses: 14 and 15.

## THE DUTIES OF A SĀDHAKA

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

As fortunate persons wish to follow the characteristics of the devotional service performed by *sādhus*, they similarly desire to know the nature of their duty. Unfortunate, proud persons act in just the opposite manner. As they search for paths that are different from the *sādhus'*, they neglect the *sādhus'* determined conclusions and instead heed their own. They do not care to preach the teachings of Mahaprabhu, rather they preach contradictory doctrines. They cannot imagine how much misfortune they are creating by this. Those who are simple-hearted endeavor to properly learn the teachings of the Lord from Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta. The Lord's teachings are our life and

soul. *Sad-dharma* lies in these teachings alone. A bona fide *sādhaka* tries to properly understand *sad-dharma*. If he cannot understand on his own, then he prays at the feet of his *siksa-guru* and learns from him. Those who have this kind of determination to know *sad-dharma* quickly achieve their desired goal. The *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.1.9) says:

*anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam  
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-śīlanām bhaktir uttamā*

"One should render transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord Krishna favorably and without desire for material gain through fruitive activities or philosophical speculation. That is called pure devotional service."

As long as this pure devotional symptom, in the form of understanding *sad-dharma*, has not clearly manifest in the heart of an inquisitive person, he remains covered with darkness and cannot understand pure devotional service. If one depends on his own speculation, then unalloyed devotional service will not manifest in his heart. We often meet many so-called *panditas* who think they have understood the constitution of *bhakti* by their knowledge and intelligence. Some of them have concluded that devotional service mixed with *jñāna* is pure *bhakti*, and some have concluded that devotional service mixed with *karma* is pure *bhakti*. They are so proud that if they hear the teachings of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, they say, "Everyone can make their own conclusion. What is the need for accepting the conclusion of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*?" Such people will never come in touch with *sad-dharma* because they have no genuine desire to know it. As a result of performing their own concocted process of devotional service, they can never relish pure devotion.

It is the duty of a *sādhaka* to give up personal enjoyment for the sake of Krishna. Sense gratification is material enjoyment. Dovetailing one's desire for sense gratification in the service of Krishna is known as renunciation of enjoyment. When one converts his desire for enjoyment into accepting what is favorable for devotional service, thus giving up the spirit of enjoyment and accepting everything as *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*, it is called renunciation of enjoyment.

To reside in a holy place related to Krishna is also an aspect of *sādhana*. If one resides in Sri Dwarka, Sri Mathura, on the bank of the Ganges, or at any place of the Lord's pastimes, he naturally remembers Krishna. What greater gain can there be than this?

At every stage of life one should accept only as much material necessities as are needed for the practice of devotional service. By desiring more



than what is needed, *bhakti* will disappear. However, if material necessities are not accepted according to one's need, then the practice of devotional service will also be hampered.

One should carefully respect *śrī hari-vāsara*, *Ekādaśī*. By observing *Ekādaśī*, the supporting principles of devotional service are simultaneously practiced. Thus the *sādhana* becomes continuous by giving up all enjoyment while observing *Ekādaśī* once every fortnight.

All sinful reactions will be diminished if one worships and meditates on the earth, banyan trees, tulasi, cows, *brāhmaṇas*, and Vaisnavas. In this world, these objects are auspicious, hence by serving them, one can please Krishna.

Therefore those who are aspiring for devotional service should first take shelter of *Śrī Guru*, take initiation and instruction from him, and serve him. They should also follow the behavior of the *sādhus* and learn devotional service through their teachings. In order to make one's life Krishna conscious, one should reside in a sacred place related to Krishna and give up sense gratification for the service of Krishna. In one's ordinary dealings one should only accept the wealth that is necessary to favorably maintain Krishna's service. To practice devotional service one should observe fast days like *Ekādaśī* and *Janmāṣṭami*. One should respect banyan trees which stay in this world which is one of the Lord's opulence.

These ten limbs of devotional service are the preliminary activities for worshiping the Lord. Without performing these ten limbs, attaining devotional service and Krishna is very difficult. And the following ten rules must be rejected, otherwise one cannot be fixed in the practice of devotional service.

One should not associate with persons who are averse to the Lord's service. Undoubtedly, one will have to meet such people in his ordinary dealings, but one should not extend his dealings with them once the work is finished. Those who have not had loving devotion to Krishna awakened in their hearts are always proud of remaining under the shelter of *jñāna* and *karma*. Therefore, they are called *bhagavad-bahirmukha*, averse to Krishna. Those who worship many gods, those who are Mayavadis and thirsty for impersonal *jñāna*, and those atheists who defy Vedic literature are all *bhagavad-bahirmukha*, averse to Krishna.

One should not accept a person whose faith in pure devotional service has not developed as a disciple. Otherwise the disciplic succession of pure devotional service will be polluted. One should give up the endeavor for starting big projects, because it diminishes one's devotion to Krishna.

One should not read or explain various types of

nityam bhāgavata-sevayā

books, except those which lead to the advancement of devotional service. One should only discuss those scriptures where devotional service is instructed and explained, such as the *Vedas*, *smṛtis*, *Purāṇas*, *Pañcarātra*, and the writings of the *mahājanas*. Any books other than these can provide only useless arguments.

The necessity for food and clothing always remains both in household life or in renounced life. Therefore there is a need of generosity in such dealings. According to the *Padma Purāṇa*:

*alabdhe vā vināste vābhakṣyācchādana-sādhane  
aviklava-matir bhūtvāharim eva dhiyā smaret*

"One who is taking shelter of the holy name should remain undisturbed even if food and clothing are not easily obtained, or if they are obtained but then lost. Giving up all material attachments, he should take complete shelter of Lord Govinda."

The purport is that whether a *sādhaka* stays at home or in the forest, he will have to endeavor for food and clothing. A householder should obtain his food and clothing through agriculture, business, protecting the citizens, or by serving others. A renunciate should obtain those items by begging. Whilst doing so, a devotee should not be agitated if food and clothing are not obtained or if they are obtained and then lost. At all times, he should peacefully remember Krishna.

Ordinary householders lament if they lose their wife, children, etc. But a practitioner of devotional service should not lament for a long time. He should quickly give up lamentation and instead cultivate Krishna consciousness. A renunciate should not lament if he does not possess a quilt, a waterpot, or other basic items. Nor should he lament if these things are stolen by man or animal. The practicing Vaisnava should give up all urges like lamentation and anger. Otherwise there will be obstacles in his constant remembrance of Krishna. It is explained in the *Padma Purāṇa*:

*śokāmarṣādibhir bhāvairākrāntarī yasya mānasam  
katham tasya mukundasyaphūrttiḥ sambhāvanā bhavet*

"How can Mukunda, whose smile is beautiful like a pearl- white lotus flower, manifest in a mind that is overwhelmed with emotions such as lamentation, sorrow, etc?"

— *Śrī Bhaktiyōloka - The Six Faults and Qualities of Bhakti* » Six Qualities that Enhance Bhakti » Tat-tat-karma-pravartana - Various activities favorable for devotional service » Writings of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thākura.



## How CAN ONE ACHIEVE DEVOTIONAL SERVICE?

*Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura*

### Is it favourable to devotion to give up material enjoyment (*karma*) and renunciation (*jñāna*)?

Mahaprabhu instructed us to give up both material enjoyment and dry renunciation. Material enjoyment is defined as accepting mundane form, taste, smell, sound, and touch through our eyes, tongue, nose, ears, and skin as pleasurable. Although there is some apparent momentary happiness in material enjoyment, we later discover that sense gratification comes with more distress than happiness. That's why renunciation is more glorious than enjoyment. Renunciation or detachment, is good, but if in the process of detachment we also renounce the Supreme Lord, then such renunciation is simply another form of material enjoyment. The conception of those who consider the material world false or as worthless as the stool of a crow is defective, because that conception denies the omnipotent Lord's energies. The material world is factual, although everything in it is temporary. This is the conclusion of those who are thoroughly conversant with *Vedānta*.

Just as material enjoyment does not allow one to understand the relationship between the Supreme Lord and the visible objects because he deceitfully sees himself as the enjoyer, renunciation does not give one the opportunity to understand that everything in this world is meant for the Lord's service. Thus he disrespects objects related to the Supreme Lord.

Material objects are this world's opulence. Objects that have form, taste, and so on, are the goal of the senses. The senses will never become averse to their objects; nor will they ever retire from pursuing them. Although certain renunciants sometimes dress themselves as if they were controlling their external senses; their mind, the king of senses, remains absorbed in material enjoyment even without their knowledge. Moreover, if in order to become renounced someone tries to destroy his senses, which are the gateways through which he accepts material enjoyment, the affliction he suffers due to separation from his senses will hurt him immensely before he is able to attain true renunciation.

Vaisnavas know that material objects are neither to be enjoyed nor to be rejected. Rather, they are to be used to give pleasure to the Supreme Lord. That is, they are ingredients for His service. Remaining detached from material enjoyment and accepting only what is required to keep body and soul together, devotees always act as the Lord's menial servants. *Karma* and *jñāna* are not the

soul's constitutional propensity. The souls' natural propensity is devotional service.

Liberated souls are fully absorbed in the service of their worshipable Lord in Vaikuntha. If one wishes to become liberated from his conditioned state, he must not try to engage God in supplying him sense objects for his pleasure, nor should he reject sense objects simply to be renounced. Rather, he should accept those objects that are favorable for His service and reject only those that are unfavorable.

### How do we achieve devotional service?

Devotional service can be attained only in the association of devotees. A living entity becomes fortunate when his desire to wander throughout the universe is extinguished. Then, when by the strength of the *gurus* mercy, his constitutional propensity is revived, he attains the seed of devotional service. There is no difference between Krishna's mercy and the *gurus* mercy. The word *prasāda* means "the Lord's mercy." Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu states, *brahmānda bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva, guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-lata-bija*: "According to their *karma*, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe. Some of them are elevated to the upper planetary systems, and some descend to the lower planetary systems. Out of many millions of such wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master. This is the grace of Krishna. By the mercy of both Krishna and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service."

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 19.151*)

Devotional service is defined as a desire to serve the Lord as His menial servant, for His pleasure alone. Serving for our pleasure is not devotion. When the *guru* sows the seed of devotion in our heart, we have to nourish it with hearing and chanting. "I am a servant and my duty is to serve": when we become established in this conviction, we are gardeners. If after receiving the seed of *bhakti* from *guru*—the seed that Lord Krishna in the form of *guru* awarded us out of His causeless mercy—we fail to engage in Krishna's service but rather become indifferent, we will find ourselves in trouble.

Hearing and chanting about the Lord is like water for the creeper of devotion. Persons who have taken complete shelter at the spiritual master's lotus feet are like gardeners. It is essential to nourish and safeguard the devotional creeper by faithfully engaging in the Lord's service. Otherwise, we will face various difficulties.

Impediments on the devotional path are removed by the strength of the *gurus* mercy. Once they are



removed we will make quick progress. Therefore, we should hear about the Lord from the spiritual master and the saints and study the devotional literature under their guidance. "Hearing" includes studying that literature. If we become distracted from our *gurus* feet for even a moment, it is inevitable that we will become degraded. Our only duty is to always serve the guru with love and devotion and to associate with saintly persons.

—*AmṛtaVāñi: Nectar of Instructions of Immorality by Srila Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Compiled by Śrīpāda Bhakti Mayukha Bhāgavat Mahāraja. Adapted and Published by Īśvaradāsa Translated from Bengali by Bhumipatiḍāsa.*

### PURE BHAKTI IS THE ONLY MEANS TO PERFECTION

*Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura*

Bhakti is the only means to attain complete perfection. To abandon this path and accept voluntary hardships in pursuit of empirical knowledge is as futile as beating the empty husks of wheat. As the *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.4) describes in the following verse, one gains nothing from it but useless toil.

*śreyah-srtim bhaktim udasya te vibho  
kliṣyanti ye kevala-bodha-labdhaye  
teṣām asau kleśala eva śisyate  
nānyad yathā sthūla-tuṣṭavaghātinām*

My dear Lord, devotional service unto You is the best path for self-realization. If someone gives up that path and engages in the cultivation of speculative knowledge, he will simply undergo a troublesome process and will not achieve his desired result. As a person who beats an empty husk of wheat cannot get grain, one who simply speculates cannot achieve self-realization. His only gain is trouble.

The *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.17) states, *kovārtha āpto' bhajatām svadharmataḥ* — that if a man gives up his occupational duties to serve the Supreme Lord, Hari, and in the process accidentally falls down before attaining perfection, then still there is no loss by his having abandoned his occupational duties. Again the *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.5) describes that many *yogis* in the past tried to attain the Lord's lotus feet by their own endeavors; they offered the results of yogic practices the Lord and, because of it, became eligible to hear about transcendental glories. Hearing those transcendental topics an rendering devotional service made them self-realized, and thus achieved the supreme destination.

These scriptural evidences clearly indicate that for the *yogis*, *jñānis*, and *karmis* to become successful

nityam bhāgavata-sevayā

in their individual paths, their engagement in devotional service is imperative. Whereas to attain perfection the path of *bhakti* which results in spontaneous love of Godhead *prema*, there is no need of *yoga*, *jñāna* and *karma*, or any other process. The scripture *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam*. (11.20.31) states that the cultivation of knowledge renunciation are not conducive to the path of *bhakti*, and that one who has left all other types of religion and is solely surrendered unto Krishna is the best of all saintly souls. From these instructions we understand that there is no question of *bhakti* ever being dependent on anything extraneous. In fact, all other processes like *yoga*, *jñāna* and *karma* are able to offer the practitioner the desired results only with the help of *bhakti*. Thus Bhakti-devi, instead of being dependent on the other processes, in turn lends her potency to them so that these other processes are able to give the desired results. Bhakti-devi on her own can offer same results. Hence the *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.20.32-33) states,

"Everything that can be achieved by fruitive activities, penance, knowledge, detachment, mystic yoga charity, religious duties, and all other means of perfecting life is easily achieved by devotees through loving service to Me."

Besides, what is the use of acquiring such results without bhakti? Therefore the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* (3.11-12) declares:

*bhagavad-bhakti-hīnasya jātiḥ śāstraṁ japaḥ tapaḥ  
aprāṇasyaiva dehasya maṇḍanām loka-rañjanam*

A person's noble birth, studying the Vedas, chanting *mantras* performing penances, and so on are an worthless if he is bereft of devotion, or *bhakti*. Just like the decorations of a dead body.

— Taken from *Sri Madhurya-Kadambini* by Srila Vishvanatha Cakravarti Thakura. Translated by Sarvabhavana dasa.

!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

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# Bhāgavata Vidyalaya

- A weekly program mainly led by the congregational leaders for their congregation members.
- A three-hour session which includes Kirtan, Reading, Lecture and Question/Answers.
- In each session one chapter of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam will be covered.
- A maximum of 15 students per session is advised.
- A program will be conducted by two to three teachers.
- Students Handbook and Appropriate Teachers notes will be provided.
- There will be a Bhāgavata Festival after completion of each level.
- Students will be encouraged for writing articles and giving lectures.
- This program is free of cost.

# Bhāgavata Carcā

- Bhāgavata Carcā – A one year program for beginners in Krishna Consciousness
- Bhagavata Carcā sessions will include few selected topics from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which will be discussed over 52 weeks.
- During each session 15-20 verses of a topic will be discussed.
- Leaders/Teachers/Preachers will cover these topics over a span of 52 weeks. A minimum of two devotees should conduct this program.
- Students guide will be provided.
- 15-20 devotees per batch is recommended.
- Beginners will be gradually encouraged to reach 16 rounds after the completion of the above program.

# Bhāgavata

Teacher Training Course

Bhāgavata Teacher Training course is a comprehensive training program for devotees who wish to present lectures and seminars on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Course includes:

- Various ways of studying Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.
- How to make personal notes for giving classes.
- How to present class on one verse.
- How to present 3/5/7 day seminars on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.
- For Bhāgavata Vidyālaya teachers: How to summarize a Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam chapter.

# Bhāgavata

Self Study Course

Despite knowing about the glories of hearing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, we still find it difficult to make it a part of our everyday life. We have come across many devotees who fear to even start reading Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam just thinking about its vastness. We have a solution by which you can make Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam your life spending just 30 minutes of your day.

# Bhāgavata

Mahotsava

- Bhāgavata Mahotsava is a festival of hearing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.
- This festival can be organized for 3/4/5/7 days anywhere in the world.
- Selected speakers will speak exclusively on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam throughout the day.
- NBS Team is available for facilitating this festival.
- Please visit our website for more details.