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## LORD CHAITANYAS MEETING WITH RAMANANDA RAYA (PART-1)

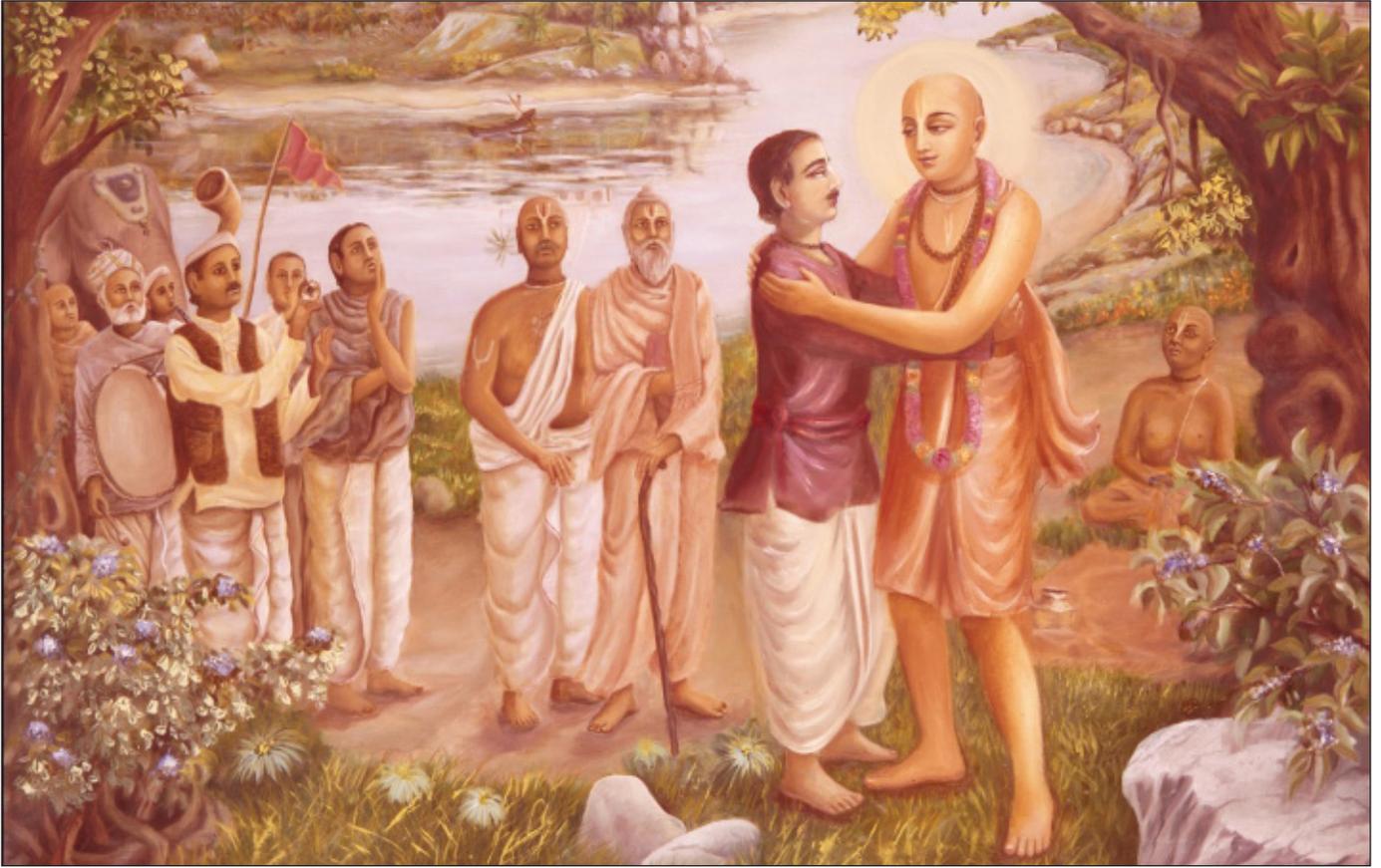
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### MEETING OF LORD CHAITANYA AND RAMANANDA RAYA

*Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura*

After visiting the temple of Jiyada narsimha in South India, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu went to the banks of the river Godavari, to a place known as Vidyanaagara. When Srila Ramananda Raya went there to bathe in the sacred waters, they unexpectedly met. After introducing himself, Sri Ramananda Raya invited Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to stay in the village for some time. Honoring his request, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu lodged there in the home of some Vedic *brāhmaṇas*. Every evening, Śrīla Ramananda Raya would come to see Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Ramananda Raya, put aside his official dress and offered the Lord respectful obeisance. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu inquired from him about the process of worship and its goal. He also asked him to recite verses from the Vedic literature to support his assertions.

First of all, Srila Ramananda Raya enunciated the system of the *varṇāśrama* institution. He recited various verses about *karmārpaṇa*, stating that everything should be dedicated to the Lord. He then spoke of detached action, knowledge mixed with devotional service, and finally the spontaneous loving service of the Lord. When He heard Srila Ramananda Raya recite some verses to support it, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu accepted the principle of pure devotional service devoid of all kinds of speculation. After this, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu asked Ramananda Raya to elaborate on the higher platform of devotional service. Then Srila Ramananda Raya explained unalloyed devotional service, love of Godhead, and serving the Lord in the moods of pure servitude, fraternity and parental love.

— *Śrī Chaitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya lila, Chapter 8 summary, Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura.*

## WHY DID LORD CHAITANYA TAKE INSTRUCTIONS FROM RAMANANDA RAYA?

*His Divine Grace*

*A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*

Sri Ramananda Raya externally appeared to be a *gṛhastha* (householder) who was under the influence of the external, material energy. He did not appear as a self-controlled and renounced *brahmacārī*, *vānaprastha* or *sannyāsī*. *Gṛhasthas* who are under the influence of the external energy enter household life for the purpose of sense enjoyment. However, a transcendently situated Vaisnava is not subjected to the influence of the senses and mastery by the six kinds of bodily changes (birth, growth, maintenance, reproduction, decay & death), even when he plays the part of a *gṛhastha*. Thus although Sri Ramananda Raya acted as a *gṛhastha* and was accepted as an ordinary pounds, shillings and pence man, he was always absorbed in the transcendental pastimes of Lord Krishna. Therefore his mind was absolutely spiritually situated as he was interested only in the subjects of Krishna and Krishna consciousness.

Generally priests and renunciants (*brāhmaṇas* and *sannyāsīs*) are very proud of their spiritual positions. Therefore, to cut down their false pride, Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu preached Krishna consciousness through Ramananda Raya, who was neither a member of the renounced order nor a born *brāhmaṇa*. Indeed, Sri Ramananda Raya was a *gṛhastha* belonging to the lowest *śūdra* class, yet Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu arranged for him to be the master who taught Pradyumna Mishra, a highly qualified *brāhmaṇa* born in a *brāhmaṇa* lineage. Even Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu Himself, although belonging to the renounced order, took instruction from Sri Ramananda Raya. In this way Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu exhibited His opulence through Sri Ramananda Raya. That is the special significance of this incident.

According to Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's philosophy, *yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya*: anyone who knows the science of Krishna can become a spiritual master, without reference to whether or not he is a *brāhmaṇa* or *sannyāsī*. Ordinary people cannot understand the essence of *śāstra*, nor can they understand the pure character, behaviour and abilities of strict followers of Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's principles. The Krishna consciousness movement is creating pure, exalted Vaisnavas even from those born in families considered lower than those of *śūdras*. This is proof that a Vaisnava may appear in any family, as confirmed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.4.18):

*kirāta-hūṇāndhra-pulinda-pulkaśā  
ābhīra-śumbhā yavanāḥ khasādayaḥ  
ye 'nye ca pāpā yad-apāśrayāśrayāḥ  
śudhyanti tasmai prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ*

”Kiratas, Hunas, Andhras, Pulindas, Pulkashas, Abhiras, Shumbhas, Yavanas and members of the Khasa races are all outcaste of Vedic society. Yet they, and even others addicted to sinful acts, can be purified by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord. This is due to His being the supreme power. I beg to offer my respectful obeisance unto Him.”

By the grace of the Supreme Lord Visnu, anyone can be completely purified and become a preacher of Krishna consciousness and the spiritual master of the entire world. This principle is accepted in all Vedic literature. Evidence can be quoted from authoritative *śāstras* showing how a lowborn person can become the spiritual master of the entire world. Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is to be considered the most munificent personality, for He distributes the real essence of the Vedic *śāstras* to anyone who becomes qualified simply by becoming His sincere servant.

— *Śrī Chaitanya-caritāmṛta » Antya līla » Chapter 5: How Pradyumna mishra received the instructions of Ramananda Raya» 80 & 84, Purport.*



## PERFECTION OF DEVOTIONAL SERVICE

*Srila Krishnadas Kaviraja Goswami*

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu then requested Sri Ramananda Raya, “Kindly recite a verse from the revealed scriptures concerning the ultimate goal of life.”

Ramananda replied,

*varṇāśramācāra-vatā  
puruṣeṇa paraḥ pumān  
viṣṇur ārādhyate panthā  
nānyat tat-toṣa-kāraṇam*

“If one executes the prescribed duties of his social position, he awakens his original Krishna consciousness. “The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Visnu, is worshiped by the proper execution of prescribed duties in the system of *varṇa* and *āśrama*. There is no other way to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One must be situated in the institution of the four *varṇas* and *āśramas*.” (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 3.8.9)

The Lord replied, “This is external. You had better tell Me of some other means.”

Ramananda replied, “To offer the results of one’s activities to Krishna is the essence of all perfection.”

*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi  
yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat  
yat tapasyasi kaunteya  
tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam*

“My dear son of Kunti, whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give in charity, and whatever austerities you perform, all the results of such activities should be offered to Me, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (*Bhagavad-Bhagavad-gītā* 9: 27)

“This is also external,” Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said. “Please proceed and speak further on the original topic.”

Bhāgavata Mahāvidyālaya

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

Ramananda Raya replied, “To give up one’s occupational duties in the *varṇāśrama* system is the essence of perfection.” “Occupational duties are described in the religious scriptures. If one analyzes them, he can fully understand their qualities and faults and then give them up completely to render service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such a person is considered a first-class man.”

“As stated in scripture (*Bhagavad-Bhagavad-gītā* 18.66),

*sarva-dharmān parityajya  
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja  
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo  
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

“After giving up all kinds of religious and occupational duties, if you come to Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and take shelter, I will give you protection from all of life’s sinful reactions. Do not worry.”

After hearing Sri Ramananda Raya speak in this way, Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu again rejected his statement and said, “Please tell me something deeper.”

Ramananda Raya then replied, “Devotional service mixed with empiric knowledge is the essence of perfection.” “According to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, ‘One who is thus transcendently situated at once realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me.’” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 18. 54)

After hearing this, the Lord, as usual, rejected it, considering it to be external devotional service. He again asked Sri Ramananda Raya to speak further, and Sri Ramananda Raya replied, “Pure devotional service without any touch of speculative knowledge is the essence of perfection.”

*jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā namanta eva  
jīvanti san-mukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām  
sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vāñ-manobhir  
ye prāyaśo jīta jito py asi tais tri-lokyām*

“Lord Brahma said, ‘My dear Lord, those devotees who have thrown away the impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth and have therefore abandoned discussing empiric philosophical truths should hear from self-realized devotees about Your holy name, form, pastimes and qualities. They should completely follow the principles of devotional service and remain free from illicit sex, gambling, intoxication and animal slaughter. Surrendering themselves fully with body, words and mind, they can live in any āśrama or social status. Indeed, You are conquered by such persons, although You are always unconquerable.’” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.10.14.3)

At this point, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu replied, “This is all right, but I think there is still more you can speak on the subject.”

Ramananda Raya then replied, “Ecstatic love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the essence of all perfection.” ‘As long as there is hunger and thirst within the stomach, varieties of food and drink make one feel very happy. Similarly, when the Lord is worshiped with pure love, the various activities performed in the course of that worship awaken transcendental bliss in the heart of the devotee.’ (*Padyāvalī* 13)

“Pure devotional service in Krishna consciousness cannot be had even by pious activity in hundreds and thousands of lives. It can be attained only by paying one price—that is, intense greed to obtain it. If it is available somewhere, one must purchase it without delay.” (*Padyāvalī* 14)

Hearing up to the point of spontaneous love, the Lord said, “This is all right, but if you know more, please tell Me.”

In reply, Sri Ramananda Raya said, “Spontaneous loving service in servitude—as exchanged by master and servant—is

the highest perfection.

‘A man becomes purified simply by hearing the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose lotus feet create the holy places of pilgrimage. Therefore what remains to be attained by those who have become His servants?’ (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 9.5.16)

“Through serving You constantly, one is freed from all material desires and is completely pacified. When shall I engage as Your permanent eternal servant and always feel joyful to have such a perfect master?” (*Stotra-ratna* 43)

Hearing this from Sri Ramananda Raya, the Lord again requested him to go a step further. In reply, Sri Ramananda Raya said, “Loving service to Krishna rendered in fraternity is the highest perfection.

*ittham satām brahma-sukhānubhūtyā  
dāsyam gatānām para-daivatena  
māyāśritānām nara-dārakeṇa  
sārdham vijahruḥ kṛta-puṇya-puñjāḥ*

“There are those pursuing the self-realization of appreciating the Brahman effulgence of the Lord, Others are engaged in devotional service accepting the Supreme Personality of Godhead as their master. Then again some remain under the clutches of Maya, thinking the Lord an ordinary person. None of these can understand that certain exalted personalities, after accumulating volumes of pious activities, are now playing with the Lord as cowherd boys in the mellow of friendship.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.12.11)

The Lord said, “This statement is very good, but please proceed even further.”

Ramananda Raya then replied, “Loving service to the Lord in the parental relationship is the highest perfectional stage.”

Ramananda Raya continued,



*nandaḥ kim akarod brahman  
śreya evaṁ mahodayam  
yaśodā vā mahā-bhāgā  
papau yasyāḥ stanaiḥ hariḥ*

“O *brāhmaṇa*, what pious activities did Nanda Maharaja perform by which he received the Supreme Personality of Godhead Krishna as his son? And what pious activities did mother Yashoda perform that made the Absolute Supreme Personality of Godhead Krishna call her “Mother” and drink her breast milk?” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.8.46)

“The favor mother Yashoda obtained from Sri Krishna, the bestower of liberation, was never obtained even by Lord Brahma or Lord Shiva, nor even by the goddess of fortune, who always remains on the chest of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Visnu.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.9.20)

The Lord said, “Your statements are certainly getting better and better one after the other, but surpassing all of them is another transcendental mellow, and you can speak of that as the most sublime.”

Sri Ramananda Raya then replied, “Conjugal attachment for Krishna is the topmost position in love of Godhead.

*nāyam śriyo 'nga u nitānta-rateḥ prasādaḥ  
sva-yoṣitām nalina-gandha-rucām kuto 'nyāḥ  
rāsotsave 'sya bhujā-daṇḍa-grhīta-kaṇṭha-  
labdhāśiṣām ya udaḡād vraja-sundariṇām*

“When Lord Sri Krishna was dancing with the gopis in the *rāsa-līlā*, the gopis were embraced around the neck by the Lord’s arms. This transcendental favor was never bestowed upon the goddess of fortune or the other consorts in the spiritual world. Nor was such a thing ever imagined by the most beautiful girls in the heavenly planets, girls whose bodily luster and aroma resemble the beauty and fragrance of lotus flowers. What then can be said of worldly women, who may be very, very beautiful

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according to the material estimation?” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.47.60)

“Suddenly, due to the gopis feelings of separation, Lord Krishna appeared among them dressed in yellow garments and wearing a flower garland. His lotus face was smiling, and He was directly attracting the mind of Cupid.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.32. 2)

“There are various means and processes by which one may attain the favor of Lord Krishna. All those transcendental processes will be studied from the viewpoint of comparative importance. It is true that whatever relationship a particular devotee has with the Lord is the best for him; still, when we impartially study all the different modes of dealing, we can understand that there are higher and lower degrees of intimacy.

“Increasing love is experienced in various tastes, one above another. But that love which has the highest taste in the gradual succession of spiritual longings manifests itself in the form of conjugal love. There is a gradual order of improvement in transcendental mellows from the initial ones to the later ones. In each subsequent mellow the qualities of the previous mellows are manifested, counting from two, then three, and up to the point of five complete qualities.

“As the qualities increase, so the taste also increases in each and every mellow. Therefore the qualities found in *śānta-rasa*, *dāsyā-rasa*, *sakhya-rasa* and *vātsalya-rasa* are all manifested in conjugal love [*mādhurya-rasa*]. “The qualities in the material elements—sky, air, fire, water and earth—increase one after another by a gradual process of one, two and three, and at the last stage, in the element earth, all five qualities are completely visible. “Complete attainment of the lotus feet of Lord Krishna is made possible by love of Godhead, specifically *mādhurya-rasa*, or conjugal love. Lord Krishna is indeed captivated by this standard of love. This is stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.



*mayi bhaktir hi bhūtānām  
amṛtatvāya kalpate  
diṣṭyā yad āsīn mat-sneho  
bhavatīnām mad-āpanaḥ*

“Lord Krishna told the gopis, ‘The means of attaining My favor is loving service unto Me, and fortunately you are all thus engaged. Those living beings who render service unto Me are eligible to be transferred to the spiritual world and attain eternal life with knowledge and bliss.’ (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 18.82.44)

“Lord Krishna has made a firm promise for all time. If one renders service unto Him, Krishna correspondingly gives him an equal amount of success in devotional service to the Lord. ‘As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Pṛthā.’ (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.11)

“The Lord admits His inability to reciprocate the devotional service in the *mādhurya-rasa* and therefore He remains indebted to such devotees.

*na pārāye 'ham niravadya-samyujām  
sva-sādhu-kṛtyam vibudhāyuṣāpi vaḥ  
yā mābhajan durjara-geha-śṛṅkhalāḥ  
samvṛścyā tad vaḥ pratiyātu sādhunā*

“When the gopis were overwhelmed with dissatisfaction due to Lord Krishna’s absence from the *rāsa-līlā*, Krishna returned to them and told them, ‘My dear gopis, our meeting is certainly free of all material contamination. I must admit that in many lives it would be impossible for Me to repay My debt to you because you have cut off the bondage of family life just to search for Me. Consequently I am unable to repay you. Therefore please be satisfied with your honest activities in this regard.’ (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 10.32.22)

“Although Krishna’s unparalleled beauty is the topmost sweetness experienced by love of Godhead, His sweetness increases unlimitedly when He is in the company

of the gopis. Consequently Krishna’s exchange of love with the gopis is the topmost perfection of love of Godhead.

‘Although the son of Devaki, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the reservoir of all kinds of beauty, when He is among the gopīs He nonetheless becomes more beautiful, for He resembles an sapphire surrounded by gold and other jewels.’ (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 10.33.6).

— Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita, Madhya Lila, Chapter 8: Talks between Lord Chaitanya and Ramananda Raya, Verses: 57–95.

### THE MOST BRILLIANT GEM AMONGST THE DEVOTEES

*Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura*

Lord Krishna's three abodes—Dvaraka, Mathura, and Vrindavana differ from each other according to how much the Lord manifests His *nara-līlā*—His earthly, human-like pastimes—and to what degree of intensity sweetness (*mādhurya*) is manifest. Lord Krishna's *nara-līlā* is of two varieties: *prakata* (manifest) and *aprakata* (unmanifest). Performing endless pastimes with His intimate associates, Lord Krishna reveals all the varied moods of different human ages—*balya* (childhood), *pauganda* (boyhood), *kaisora* (puberty), and *vilasa* (mature amorous love). When these eternal pastimes are withdrawn from the material world they are known as *aprakata-līlā*. However, when these same pastimes of the Lord and His associates are manifest in the mundane plane they are described as *prakata-līlā*.

Lord Krishna travels between His different abodes such as Mathura, Vrindavan, and Dvaraka only in His *prakata-līlā*. When the Lord travels we can therefore understand His activities are *prakata-līlā*. Krishna's arrivals and departures from the different abodes do not occur in His *aprakata-līlā*. The entire *prakata-līlā* such as His *janma-līlā* (birth) and *mausala-līlā* (the fratricidal conflict that destroyed Yadu dynasty) are seen in the innumerable universes in an arranged sequence. In each of these



universes exist a Vrindavan, Mathura, and Dvaraka visible to the residents of those planets. The Lord's pastimes may be compared to the sun: The sun is seen during the day in a specific place and time every year, while it yet remains invisible in other places. Similarly, the Supreme Lord, Krishna, while remaining in His own abode, Vrindavan, reveals His original form and His complete pastimes in one particular universe. However, out of His sweet will, Krishna desires to shroud it in other universes.

In *prakata-līlā*, the Lord's boyhood pastimes, for example, are continuous and transcendental, enacted in His original form. But the pastime of His departure and that of liberating the captured princesses are like illusions conjured by magic. We must understand that the reason for exhibiting these two *kṛttim-līlā* ("make believe" pastimes) is to hide the truth that His pastimes are eternal. In Krishna's *prakata-līlā* some of His associates, by His will, do see gem studded Vrindavan *dhāma* in all its sublime splendour, but others, also by His will, are not granted that vision.

It is worth noting that some very advanced devotees are able to directly view the Lord's pastimes even after He has concluded His *prakata-līlā*. This is because of their profound devotional involvement, their intense spiritual eagerness, and the divine wishes of the Lord.

In this way, it is established that of all the forms and manifestations of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the form of Lord Sri Krishna, son of Nanda Maharaja, is paramount. Similarly, amongst His many abodes Gokula, Vrindavan, is the topmost. Lord Krishna's superlative excellences of *prema-mādhurya* (divine conjugal love), *līlā-mādhurya* (transcendental pastimes), *venu-mādhurya* (expertise in playing the flute), and *śrī vigraha-mādhurya* (matchless beauty) solely exist in Vrindavan *dhāma*.

The Lord's devotees like Markendeya,

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

Ambarisa, Vasu, Vyasa, Vibhisana, Pundarika, Bali, Uddhava, Dalbhya, Parasara, Bhisma, and Narada are pure devotees in the true sense. Just as the Supreme Personality of Godhead must be served and worshipped, similarly, His devotees should be served and worshipped, otherwise one commits grave offences.

However, not all pure devotees are on the same level—there are different gradations of intimacy to the Lord. Prahlada Maharaja is considered the best of the devotees who have achieved complete purity. The Pandavas are superior to Prahlada; some of the Yadavas are superior to the Pandavas, and Uddhava is the best of the Yadavas. Superior to Uddhava are the damsels of Vraja Vṛndāvana, and Srimati Radhika is the most brilliant gem amongst them.

— Śrī Bhāgavatamṛta-Kāna - Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī  
Thākura, translated by Sarvabhāvana dāsa.



!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

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# Bhāgavata

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