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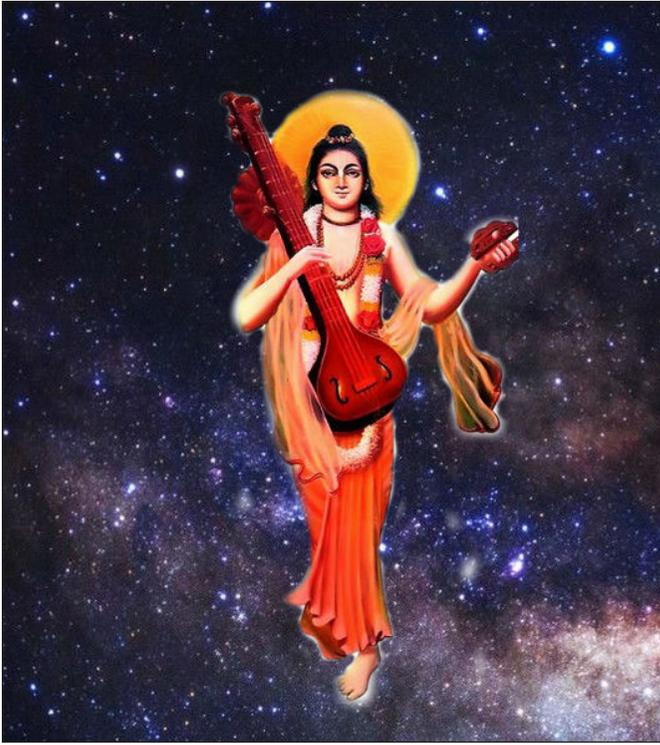
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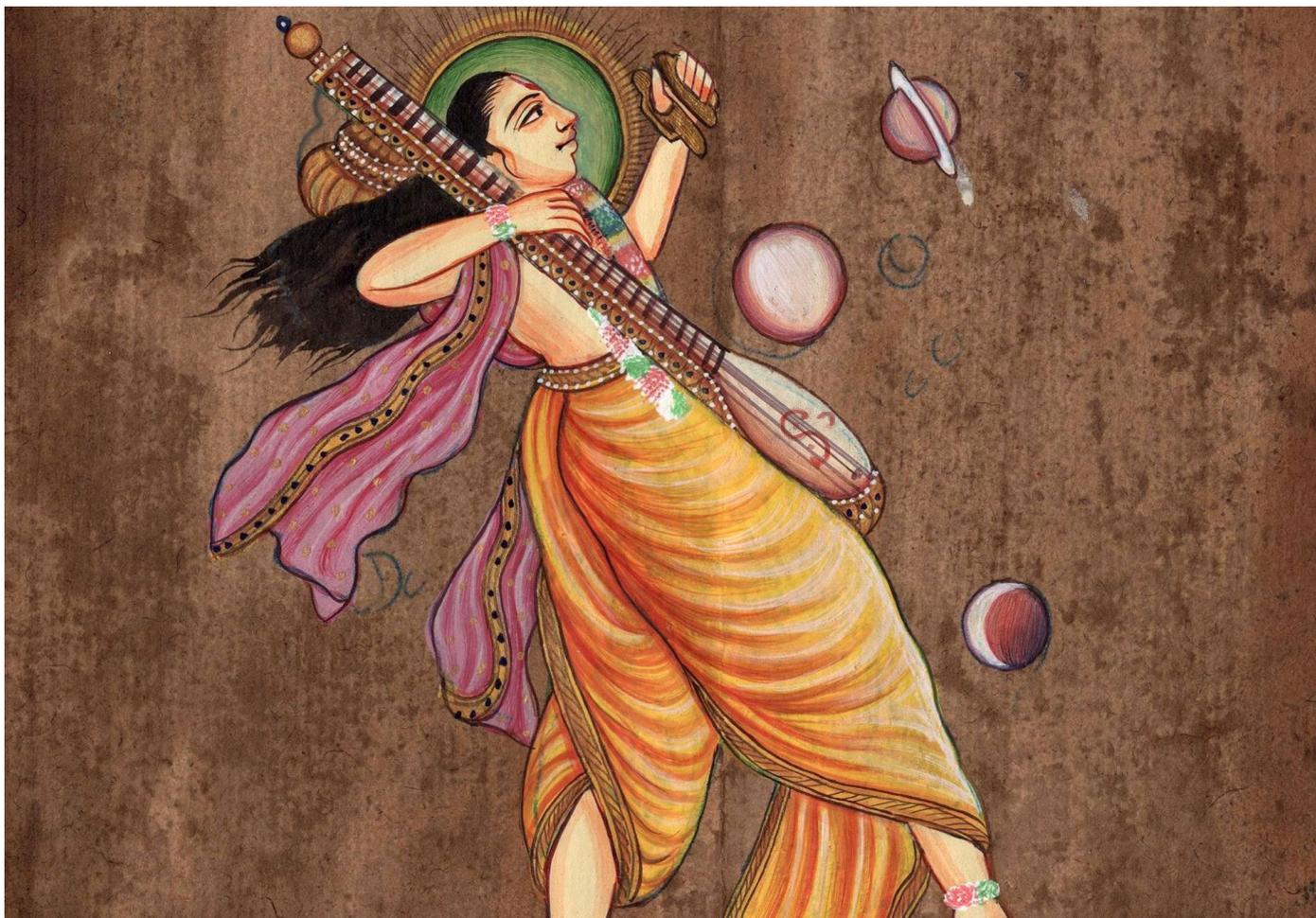
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THE VEDIC RITUALISTIC CEREMONIES
Sriḷa Narada Muni

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, is the master of all living entities and of material nature. His lotus feet are sought out and worshiped by great saintly persons like Vyasadeva. Nevertheless, there are fools who consider Lord Krishna an ordinary human being. Ritualistic ceremonies, regulative principles, austerities and the practice of *yoga* are all meant to control the senses and mind, but even after one is able to control the senses and mind, if he does not come to the point of meditation upon the Supreme Lord, all such activities are simply frustrating labour. As professional activities or business profits cannot help one in spiritual advancement but are a source of material entanglement, the *Vedic* ritualistic ceremonies cannot help anyone who is not a devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One who desires to conquer the mind must leave the company of his family and live in a solitary place, free from spiritually corrupting association. To keep body and soul together, he should beg for only as much as he needs, i.e. the bare necessities of life. My dear King, in a sacred and holy place of pilgrimage the seeker should select a place in which to perform *yoga*. The place must be level and neither too elevated or sunken. There one should sit very comfortably, being steady in Bhāgavata Mahāvīdyālaya

mind and equipoised, keeping his body straight, and thus begin chanting the *Vedic prāṇava* (*omkāra*). While continuously staring at the tip of the nose, a learned *yogī* practices the breathing exercises through the technical means known as *pūraka*, *kumbhaka* and *recaka*, controlling inhalation and exhalation and then stopping them both. In this way the *yogī* restricts his mind from material attachments and gives up all mental desires. As soon as the mind, being defeated by material sensory desires, drifts toward thoughts of sense gratification, the *yogī* should immediately bring it back and arrest it within the core of his heart. When the *yogī* regularly practices in this way, in a short time his heart becomes fixed and free from agitation, like a fire without visible flames or smoke. When one's consciousness is uncontaminated by material sensory desires, it becomes calm and peaceful in all activities, for one is now situated in eternal blissful life. Once situated on that platform, one does not return to materialistic activities. One who accepts the *sannyāsa* order gives up the three principles of materialistic activities in which one indulges in the field of household life namely religion, economic development and sense gratification. One who first accepts *sannyāsa* but then returns to such materialistic activities is to be called a *vāntāsi*, one who eats his own vomit. He is indeed a shameless person. *Sannyāsīs* who first consider that the body is subject to death, when it will be transformed into stool, worms or ashes, but who again give importance to the body and glorify it as the self, are to be considered the greatest rascals. It is abominable for a person living in the *gṛhastha-āśrama* to give up the regulative principles, for a *brahmacārī* not to follow the vows of *brahmacarya* while living under the care of the guru, for a *vānaprastha* to live in the village and engage in social activities, or for a *sannyāsī* to be addicted to sense gratification. One who acts in this way is to be considered the lowest renegade. Such a pretender is bewildered by the external energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and one should either reject him from any position, or, taking compassion upon him, teach him, if possible, to resume his original position. Human life is meant for understanding the self and the Supreme Self, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, both of whom are transcendently situated. If both of



them can be understood when one is purified by advanced knowledge, for what reason and for whom does a foolish, greedy person maintain the body simply for bestial sense gratification? Transcendentalists who are advanced in knowledge compare the body, which is made by the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to a war chariot. The senses are like the horses; the mind, the master of the senses, is like the reins; the objects of the senses are the destinations; intelligence is the chariot driver; and consciousness, which spreads throughout the body, is the cause of bondage in this material world. The ten kinds of air acting within the body are compared to the spokes of the chariot's wheels, and the top and bottom of the wheel itself are called religion and irreligion. The living entity in the bodily concept of life is the owner of the chariot. The Vedic mantra *praṇava* is the bow, the pure living entity himself is the arrow, and the target is the Supreme Being. In the conditioned stage of life, one's conceptions are sometimes polluted by the modes of passion and ignorance, which are exhibited by attachment, hostility, greed, lamentation, illusion, fear, madness, false

prestige, insults, fault-finding, deception, envy, intolerance, passion, bewilderment, hunger and sleep. All of these are enemies. Sometimes one's conceptions are also polluted by the mode of goodness. As long as one has to accept a material body, with its different parts and paraphernalia, which are not fully under one's control, one must have firm adherence to the lotus feet of his superiors, namely his spiritual master and the spiritual master's predecessors. By their mercy, one can sharpen the sword of knowledge, and with the power of the Supreme Personality of Godhead's mercy one must then conquer the enemies mentioned above. In this way, the devotee should be able to merge into his own transcendental bliss, and then he may give up his body and resume his spiritual identity. Otherwise, if one does not take shelter of Acyuta and Baladeva, (Krishna and Balarama) then the senses, acting as the horses, and the intelligence, acting as the driver, both being prone to material contamination, inattentively bring the body, which acts as the chariot, to the path of sense gratification. When one is thus attracted again by the rousing desires for material



enjoyment viz eating, sleeping and mating, and the horses and chariot driver are thrown into the blinding dark well of material existence. Thus one is again put into a dangerous and ghastly situation of continual birth and death. According to the Vedas, there are two kinds of activities; *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*. *Pravṛtti* activities involve raising oneself from a lower to a higher condition of materialistic life, whereas *nivṛtti* means the cessation of material desire. Through the activities of *pravṛtti* one suffers from material entanglement, but by *nivṛtti* activities one is purified and becomes fit to enjoy eternal, blissful life. The ritualistic ceremonies and sacrifices known as *agni-hotra-yajña*, *darśa-yajña*, *pūrṇamāsa-yajña*, *cāturmāsya-yajña*, *paśu-yajña* and *soma-yajña* are all symptomised by the killing of animals and the burning of many valuables, especially food grains, all of which is done simply for the fulfillment of material desires. Performing such sacrifices, worshiping Vaisvadeva, and performing the ceremony of *Baliharaṇa*, which all supposedly constitute the goal of life, as well as constructing temples for demigods, building resting houses and gardens, digging wells for the distribution of water, establishing booths for the free distribution of food, and performing activities for public welfare these are all symptomised by attachment to material desires. My dear King Yudhisthira, when oblations of *ghee* and food grains like barley and sesame are offered in sacrifice, they turn into celestial smoke, which carries one to successively higher planetary systems like the kingdoms of *Dhūma*, *Rātri*, *Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa*, *Da-kṣiṇaṁ* and ultimately the moon. Then, however, the performers of sacrifice descend again to earth to become herbs, creepers, vegetables and food grains. These are eaten by different living entities and turned to semen, which is injected into female

bodies. Thus one takes birth again and again. This is the sole result of performing such supposedly auspicious sacrifices. A twice-born *brāhmaṇa* [known as a *dvija*] gains his life by the grace of his parents through the process of purification known as *garbhādhāna*. There are also other processes of purification, until the end of life, when the funeral ceremony [*antyeṣṭi-kriyā*] is performed. Thus, by gradual purification, a qualified *brāhmaṇa* becomes uninterested in materialistic activities and sacrifices, but he offers the sensual sacrifices, in full knowledge, into the working senses, which are illuminated by the fire of knowledge. Characteristically the mind is always agitated by waves of acceptance and rejection. Therefore all the activities of the senses should be offered into the mind, which should be offered into one's words. Then one's words should be offered into the aggregate of all letters, which should be offered into the concise form *omkāra*. *Omkāra* itself should be offered into the point *bindu*; *bindu* itself into the vibration of sound, and that vibration into the life air. Then the living entity, who is all that remains, should be placed in *Brahman*, the Supreme. This is the process of sacrifice. On his path of ascent, the progressive living entity enters the different worlds of fire, the sun, the daytime, the end of the day, the bright fortnight, the full moon, and the passing of the sun in the north, along with their presiding demigods. When he enters *Brahmaloka*, he enjoys life for many millions of years, and finally his material designation comes to an end. He then comes to a subtle designation, from which he attains the causal designation, witnessing all previous states. Upon the annihilation of this causal state, he attains his pure state, in which he identifies with the Supersoul. In this way the living entity becomes transcendental. This gradual process of elevation for self-realization is meant for those who are truly aware of the Absolute Truth. After repeated birth on this path, which is known as *deva-yāna*, one attains these consecutive stages. One who is completely free from all material desires, being situated in the self, need not traverse the path of repeated birth and death. Even though situated in a material body, one who is fully aware of the paths known as *pitṛ-yāna* and *deva-yāna*, and who thus opens his eyes in terms of Vedic knowledge, is never bewildered in this material world. He who

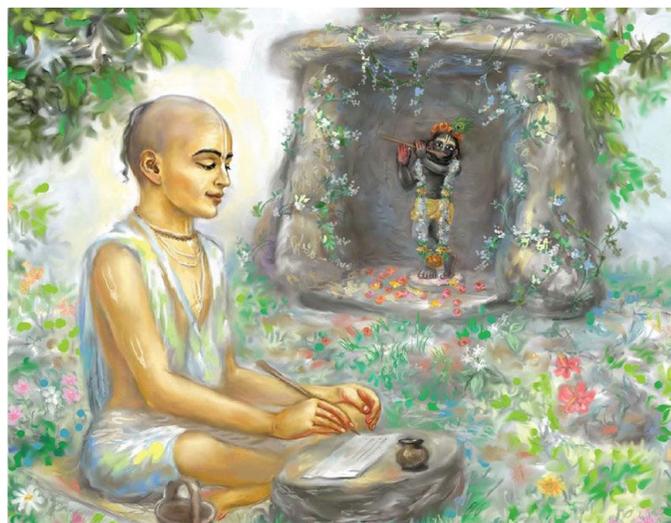
exists internally and externally, at the beginning and end of everything and of all living beings, as that which is enjoyable and as the enjoyer of everything, superior and inferior, is the Supreme Truth. He always exists as knowledge and the object of knowledge, as expression and the object of understanding, as darkness and as light. Thus He, the Supreme Lord, is everything. Although one may consider the reflection of the sun from a mirror to be false, it has its factual existence. Accordingly, to prove by speculative knowledge that there is no reality of this world would be extremely difficult. In this world there are five elements namely earth, water, fire, air and ether, but the body is not a reflection of them, nor a combination or transformation of them. Because the body and its ingredients are neither distinct nor amalgamated, all such theories are insubstantial. Due to the fact that the body is formed of the five elements, it cannot exist without the subtle sense objects. Therefore, since the body is temporary, the sense objects are also naturally temporary. When a substance and its parts are separated, the acceptance of similarity between one and the other is called illusion. While dreaming, one creates a separation between the existences called wakefulness and sleep. It is for people in such a dream-like state of mind that the regulative principles of the scriptures, consisting of injunctions and prohibitions, are thoroughly recommended.

— Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (BhāgavataPurāṇa) > Canto 7: The Science of God > Chapter Fifteen > Verses: 27-61.

INITIATION INTO THE VEDIC RITUALS

Srila Sanatana Goswami

Twice-born *brāhmaṇas*, initiated into the Vedic rituals, are expected to perform certain regular sacrifices as a matter of duty. For example they are obligated to perform sacrifices like the *Agnihotrayajña*, which must be done twice every day, at sunrise and sunset. Such *brāhmaṇas* may also be obliged to execute other rituals because of special circumstances in their lives, when, for example, they must perform the *śrāddha* memorial on the anniversary of an elder's death. Besides these obligatory regular (*nitya*) and occasional (*naimittika*) duties, a *brāhmaṇa* may also elect to undertake certain sacrifices and vows, called *kāmya* rituals, to fulfill personal ambitions. Thus there are three



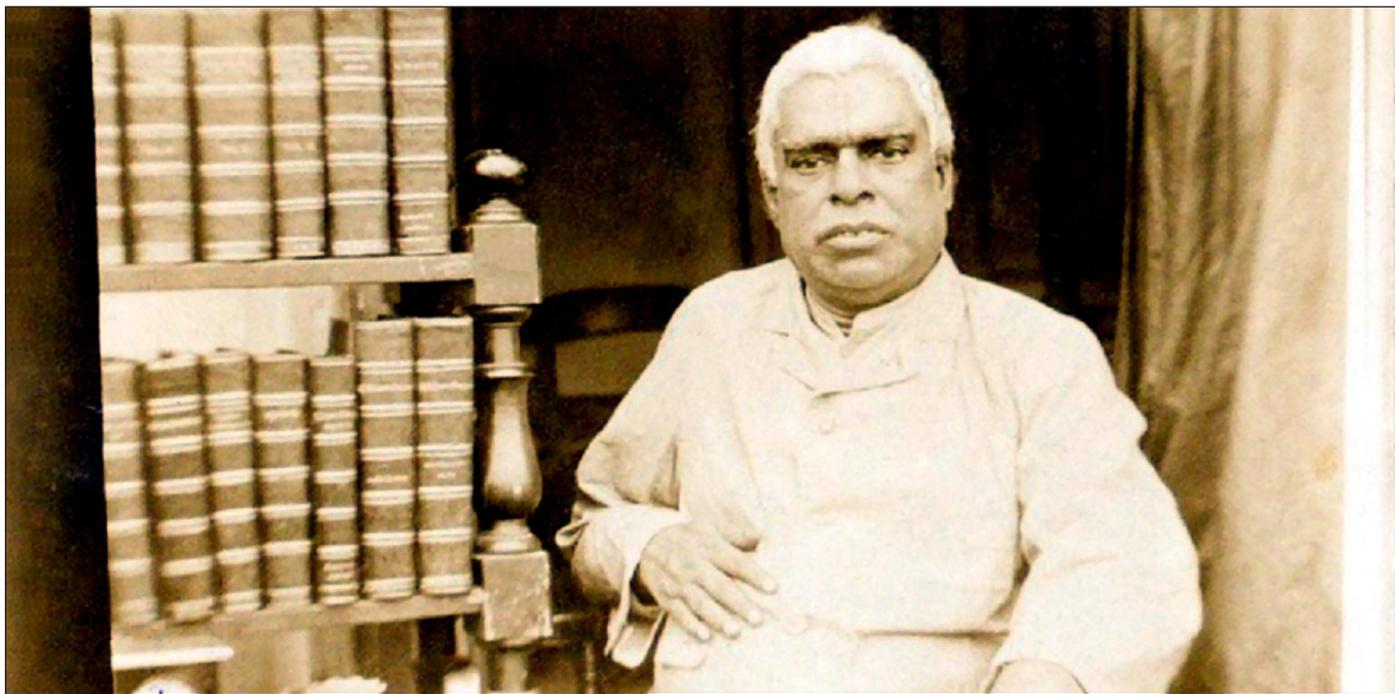
kinds of duties for Vedic *brāhmaṇas*. The *brāhmaṇa* from Pragjyotisa-pura may also have heard the local pandits of Ganga-sagara glorify the principles of dharma thus: *ācāra-prabhavo dharmo dharmasya prabhur acyutaḥ* “Dharma arises from proper behaviour, and the Lord of dharma is the infallible Personality of Godhead.” *sad-ācāravatā pumsā jitau lokāv ubhāv api* “A person who possesses good behaviour has conquered both this world and the next.” These *brāhmaṇas* of that place may have also glorified heaven as the fruit of dharma with such words as these: *yan na duḥkkena sambhinnaṁ na ca grastam anantaram abhilāsopanītaṁ ca sukhaṁ tat svar* “The happiness of the residents of heaven is untainted, never consumed by misery, and it comes to them just as they desire. .” (Vādārtha of Gadadhara Bhatta),

— Commentary of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī on Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, Volume Two, text 42, BBT, translated by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa

FAITH IN FRUITIVE RITUALS

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

People who have faith in fruitive rituals are not actually devotees of the Lord. They are simply non-devotee fruitive workers. If anyone performs his regulated work (*karma*) in order to achieve the mercy of Krishna, then that *karma* is called *bhakti*. However, the *karma* which yields mundane results or material knowledge maintains one's adversity to the Lord. Fruitive workers (*karmīs*) do not single-pointedly search for the mercy of Krishna. Although they respect Krishna, their main purpose is to attain some kind of material benefit from Him. Thus karma is nothing but selfish activities, and therefore *karmīs* are also called non-devotees. Yogīs



sometimes search for liberation, the fruit of *jñāna*, and sometimes they search for mystic perfection (*vibhūti*), the fruit of *karma*. Hence, they too, are known as non-devotees. Due to a lack of full surrender, worshipers of the demigods are also called non-devotees. Similarly, those who are attached to discussing dry logic are also adverse to the Lord. And what to speak of those who conclude that the Lord is only a figment of the imagination? The people who are inordinately attached to sense gratification and thus have no opportunity to remember the Lord are also counted among the non-devotees. If one associates with any of these non-devotees, then in a very short time, one's intelligence is polluted and one's heart is overcome by their propensities. If anyone truly desires to attain pure devotional service, then he should carefully give up the association of all varieties of non-devotees.

— *SajjanaTosani* 11/11

THE ACTUAL FACT

His Divine Grace

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

It may be argued that a person can achieve the ultimate goal of life—realization of the Supersoul—by practicing the *yoga* system and ritualistic performances according to the Vedic principles, even without staunch devotion to the spiritual master. The actual fact, however, is that by practicing *yoga* one must come to the platform of meditating upon

the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As stated in the scriptures, *dhyānāvasthita-tad-gatena manasā paśyanti yaṁ yoginaḥ*: [SB 12.13.1] the meditating yogi achieves the perfection of their *yoga* practice when they can directly see the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By the various *yogic* procedures one may come to the point of controlling the senses, but simply controlling the senses does not bring one to a substantial conclusion. However, by staunch faith in the spiritual master and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one not only controls the senses but also realizes the Supreme Lord. *yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*. "Unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master, all the imports of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed." (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.23) It is further stated, (*Bhāg* 10:80:33,34) *tuṣyeyam sarva-bhūtāt-mā guru-śuśrūṣayā, taranty aṅjo bhavārṇavam*. Simply by rendering service to the spiritual master, one crosses the ocean of nescience and returns home, back to Godhead. Thus he gradually comes to see the Supreme Lord face to face and relishes constant personal association with the Lord. Thus it is understood that the ultimate goal of *yoga* is to come in contact with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Unless this point is achieved, one's so-called *yoga* practice is simply fruitless labour.

— *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) > Canto 7: The Science of God
Chapter Fifteen > Verses: 28, Purport.



SĀDHANA-BHAKTI AND SĀDHANA-KRIYĀ
Sri la Bhaktisiddhanata Saraswati Thakura

That which is known as *sādhana-kriyā* (regular ritualistic practices, is not performed by the soul, but rather it is executed from the platform of the mind, which is the reflection of the soul. There is thus a significant difference between pure devotional service, (*sādhana-bhakti*) and the ritualistic pious activities one performs under the name of *sādhana-kriyā*. These ritualistic activities may eventually eradicate aversion to Lord Hari in due course of time. Moreover, among the activities of *sādhana-kriyā* are the limbs of *bhakti* which begin the process of destroying obstacles to the path of pure devotion. When these obstacles are completely destroyed, pure devotional service in the practice state, (*sādhana-bhakti*), automatically manifests. *Sādhana kriyā* is not enacted from the platform of the soul, whereas *sādhana-bhakti* is eternally effective in the purely spiritual state. This is because the constitutional propensity of the soul is to perform devotional service. In general, *sādhana* is meant to help one control the mind. When the mind's material propensities are checked, the soul's natural tendency can properly manifest. As *sādhana-bhakti* manifests in a soul, that soul gradually surpasses the platform of *bhāva* (spiritual emotion) and ultimately attains *prema*, love of God. *Bhāva-bhakti* and *prema-bhakti* are the progressively matured platforms of *sādhana-bhakti*, compared to a maturing mango which develops through the stages of un-ripened, half-ripened, and

fully ripened. *Sādhana-kriyā* is something categorically different to *sādhana-bhakti*. Due to the general populace not people understanding the difference between *sādhana-bhakti* and *sādhana-kriyā*, there are multiple disturbances created in society.

— AmṛtaVāṇī: Nectar of Instructions of Immortality His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura Prabhupāda Adapted and Published by Touchstone Media.



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