TEACHINGS AT ISKCON CHOWPATTY

PEARLS OF DEVOTION

Three Class Talks on Divine Love, Unity, and Surrender

Talks By

HIS HOLINESS

Srila Radhanath Swami Maharaj

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PEARLS OF DEVOTION

Three Class Talks on Divine Love, Unity, and Surrender

Compiled from class notes taken at

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Speaker

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This compilation is offered with gratitude as personal notes of two class talks, for private study and reflection.

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CHAPTER 1

The Treasure House of Divine Love

Gaura-lila Special Class — 3rd March, 2026

Why Lord Chaitanya Came

Lord Chaitanya specially descended to bring us together in the spirit of loving service to the Supreme Lord and to one another, through the chanting of the holy names of Radharani and Krishna. Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita describes that Lord Chaitanya came from the spiritual world to break open the treasure chest of prema — the ecstatic love of Godhead.

Kaviraja Goswami explains that when Radha and Krishna appeared in this world, They tasted this love of God and revealed it, yet only the most intimate and advanced personalities could truly enter into it. On the spiritual platform, everything remains utterly inconceivable to anyone bound by material ego.

Jnana and Vijnana — Theory and Realization

With our intellect, our studies, our austerities, and whatever spiritual practices we may follow, the reality of the spiritual world still remains inconceivable to us. Actual understanding means to realize and to be there — this is the difference between jnana and vijnana. Jnana is like reading the label on a medicine; vijnana is tasting it and being nourished by it. A doctor may list every ingredient in a medicine, but theory alone does not cure — we must experience it, we must taste it.

This is the heart of achintya, the inconceivable: it can only be understood when the inconceivable Himself reveals His inconceivability to us, who are so inconceivably limited. Spiritual truths of the spiritual world can only be understood when they are revealed to us.

> *If Krishna is inconceivable and cannot reveal the inconceivable to finite living beings, then He is not truly inconceivable at all.*

Krishna says in the Bhagavad-gita that this material energy, daivi hy esha guna-mayi, is very difficult to overcome — but one who takes shelter and surrenders, to that soul Krishna reveals Himself and grants liberation. When it feels impossible to understand what is eternal and spiritual, the simplest illusion is to conclude that nothing exists beyond what we can see. But Lord Chaitanya has come to reveal to us the innermost recesses of spiritual realization.

Breaking Open the Treasure Chest

The pastimes of Radha and Krishna are locked within a treasure case, and Lord Chaitanya and His associates broke open this treasure house of love of God. Through hearing and chanting the holy names of Krishna, they tasted the sweetness of unlimited spiritual happiness together — and distributed it freely to anyone and everyone who was willing to accept it, without considering who was fit or unfit, or which time was auspicious or inauspicious.

The world today is marked by deep divisions — fear, paranoia, and violence born from these divisions. Unless we are completely purified of material influence, even as devotees, even as a spiritual movement, we too will be affected. Kali-yuga is ever progressing.

Maharaj gave a simple example: after some months, the monsoon will bring torrential rain to Mumbai. Standing at Shivaji Park, the rain does not spare a devotee simply because he is a devotee, or because he knows the Bhagavad-gita by heart, or chants sixteen rounds daily. It falls on everyone. What matters is how we take shelter of the Lord so as not to be affected by it.

The Two Symptoms of Kali-yuga

Kali-yuga is specially defined by two symptoms: quarrel and hypocrisy. Why is quarrel emphasized so strongly? Because this propensity runs so deep that it creates illusion, suffering, and bondage. How often do we quarrel even within our own minds? We quarrel with our families, our friends, our races, our nations, and our religions — this propensity for quarrel is so pervasive that it creates immense division.

Srila Prabhupada once said that when leaders come together each year, they should discuss unity in diversity — because this is the very heart of Lord Chaitanya's teachings.

Namo Maha-vadanyaya — The Most Magnanimous Incarnation

namo mahā-vadanyāya kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te

"I offer my respects to the most magnanimous incarnation, Sri Krishna Chaitanya, who is Krishna Himself, freely distributing love of Krishna." — Sri Rupa Goswami

Krishna has come in many incarnations, but Lord Chaitanya is the most magnanimous of all, for He freely gives what no other incarnation has given so openly — pure love of Krishna, along with the understanding and realization needed to enter the eternal spiritual realm.

Achintya-bheda-abheda-tattva — Inconceivable Oneness and Difference

Among the acharyas through the ages, each has taught a defining philosophical theme — monism, dualism, and so on. Lord Chaitanya's philosophy is named achintya-bheda-abheda-tattva: the truth of inconceivable, simultaneous oneness and difference.

Oneness is the heart of everything. In Srimad-Bhagavatam there is a profound verse which, if deeply understood, could resolve every problem of material existence: the one Supreme Absolute Truth, advaya, eternally manifests with three features — Brahman, Paramatma, and Bhagavan.

The Frog in the Well

Srila Prabhupada gave the example of a small frog born and living within a well, for whom the length and breadth of that well is the entirety of reality. When another frog jumps in and says, "I have seen the Pacific Ocean," the well-frog asks, "Is there as much water there as in this well?" The visiting frog replies, "Much, much more." But try as he might to explain the vastness of the ocean, the well-frog cannot conceive of it, simply because he has never experienced anything beyond his well.

So it is when we speak of the infinite diversity of the spiritual realm — it is very difficult to understand unless it is revealed to us. This is why the great scriptures and saints have shown us the map of what exists and what could be, so that with faith and shraddha, we may come to actual realization.

Sixty Days on the Banks of the Ganges

At Prayag, on the banks of the Ganges, Mahaprabhu spent two months — sixty days, every day, throughout the day — giving complete spiritual instruction to Sanatana Goswami. Lord Chaitanya wanted Rupa Goswami and all the Goswamis to carry these teachings to the entire world — the one Bhagavan, the one Absolute Truth, along with the many avataras, their divisions, and the many Vaikuntha planets that exist even within the spiritual world beyond material existence.

Lord Chaitanya revealed His own beautiful form as Krishna, as He did for Kolavecha Sridhara, and revealed Himself as Lord Ramachandra to Murari Gupta. In this way, all the devotees came to celebrate unity in diversity.

Shakti — Unity in Diversity, Divine and Material

Unity in diversity pervades both the spiritual and material worlds through the Lord's shaktis — His energy, His feminine aspect. With Krishna there is Radha; with Narayana there is Lakshmi. Shiva and Vishnu are one, yet simultaneously different. What, then, is this oneness — and can it be understood merely by saying superficially that they are one, without grasping how they are also different?

According to the scriptures and the saints, this difference is not temporary — it is eternal, and yet simultaneously one. This is what is called achintya, the inconceivable.

parāsya śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate

"The energy of the Supreme is manifested in various ways."

The Supreme Truth has multifarious energies — internal spiritual energy, external material energy, and marginal energy. Material energy is sometimes manifest and sometimes unmanifest, but the energies themselves are one, expressed across different times and places in different ways. Diversity within oneness is supreme; its origin is ananda-mayo 'bhyasat — the one Supreme Truth eternally becomes two.

Why One Becomes Two — The Origin of All Pleasure

Why is the one eternally two, and the two eternally one? For the pleasure of the Supreme, who is always experiencing pleasure. Everyone in this world is seeking pleasure — even everyone in this room appreciates the air conditioner because it gives pleasure! But a devotee seeks pleasure in the Lord's service, without giving up the search for pleasure itself.

Even a yogi performing severe tapasya seeks pleasure — the pleasure of liberation or of supernatural powers. The living entity is simultaneously one with God, yet unique — we are part and parcel of the Supreme Truth, like rays of the sun in relation to the sun itself. And like the Supreme, we too seek pleasure. What, then, is the ultimate and highest pleasure?

> *The origin of all pleasure is the one Supreme who becomes two, to enjoy that pleasure with Himself and Herself — and that pleasure is prema, the highest love of Godhead.*

This is the ecstasy of love exchanged between Sri Radha and Krishna — the origin of all pleasure and its complete fullness. Everything emanates from that one Supreme, and therefore all of us are seeking pleasure, because we too are emanations of that same one Supreme. Frustrated love can cause us the greatest pain; fulfilled love can give us the greatest happiness.

Hate the Disease, Love the Diseased

Unity in diversity is seen most beautifully in how elevated souls love. Jagai and Madhai are the greatest example — whatever they did in their lives seemed only to invite condemnation, yet Lord Chaitanya and Nityananda Prabhu saw the spiritual potential within them. We may condemn the sin, but we must love the sinner. Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to teach us how to see the spiritual presence within all beings, and to awaken that love of the soul in the spirit of unity in diversity.

Gurus in Unity and Diversity

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura taught that guru is one — Krishna Himself speaks the Bhagavad-gita, and God is the original guru. Yet this one Supreme Lord reveals Himself through different gurus across history, each with a special uniqueness of their own.

Bhaktivinode Thakura descended from the spiritual world of Goloka along with his wife Bhagavati; they had ten children, and he worked within the British government. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, though a staunch brahmachari and sannyasi, accepted Bhaktivinode Thakura, a grihastha, as his guru.

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura was himself a great scholar of invaluable memory, and he accepted as his own guru Gaurakishora Dasa Babaji Maharaja, who lived among the latrines so as not to be disturbed by materialistic people who, recognizing his greatness, would constantly seek his blessings. Though these two gurus held the highest respect for one another, they were remarkably different — it was never a case of one saying, "You are in maya because you sit near a toilet," or the other saying, "You are in maya because you associate with people more polluted than any toilet."

Both taught the same essential message, yet in very different ways. Gaurakishora Dasa Babaji once told Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati that if he went to Kolkata, he would go to hell. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati went anyway — and Gaurakishora Dasa Babaji was overjoyed, for he had gone there to help people who genuinely wanted help.

Gaurakishora Dasa Babaji would say of himself that he was a fool, unqualified, and that he should simply chant the holy names of the Lord. Through his deep humility and mutual respect, these great souls opened their hearts to one another, and Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu transformed them both in the understanding that prema-bhakti is the highest form of liberation. Even in this transformation, there was never any compromise — only kindness and heartfelt concern for one another as children of Krishna.

CHAPTER 2

One Man, One Mantra, Thousands Liberated

Sri Sri Lakshmi Narayana Festival Class — 23rd March, 2026

A Century of Worship on This Sacred Ground

The temple of Lakshmi Narayana was established almost one hundred years ago; sixty years later, Radha Gopinath appeared in the very temple where we now sit. A century ago, when this temple was built, the Lord — who knows the past, present, and future — already understood that we would gather here today to celebrate.

vedāhaṁ samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna / bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni māṁ tu veda na kaścana

"I know everything that has happened in the past, all that is happening in the present, and all things that are yet to come. I also know every living being, but no one knows Me." — Bhagavad-gita

This is the very heart of the Bhagavad-gita. To know God in truth is to become aware that God knows — ishvara sarva-bhutanam — Krishna is the heart of every living being, and this universal principle of dharma runs through the eternal soul, the living force within us across every stage of body and mind, as part and parcel of God.

The Eternal Soul and the Journey After Death

na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin

"For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time." — Bhagavad-gita

For the jiva, there is no birth and no death. The body is merely a dress for the eternal soul. It is inevitable that a body takes birth, grows, is maintained for a time, produces offspring, grows old, and dwindles — and inevitably the body separates from the soul in what we call death. In truth, the soul simply changes into another form. According to our actions, our words, and our thoughts, we shape the destination of the soul after it leaves the body. The very purpose of human intelligence is to guide us toward true happiness, both in this life and beyond it — we are on a journey in an auspicious direction.

The Intimate Friend Within the Heart

man-manā bhava mad-bhakto

"Always think of Me and become My devotee." — Bhagavad-gita

Krishna says that if we are absorbed in Him, sincerely taking shelter in pleasing Him, then we attain Him without fail — for Krishna resides within our own heart, suhrdam sarva-bhutanam, the intimate, loving well-wisher of every living being. To the extent that we recognize God within our own heart, we come to recognize, appreciate, and love Krishna within the hearts of every living being — in trees, plants, birds, and all human beings. Indeed, the true testimony of one who is close to God, vidya-vinaya-sampanne, is that they see the presence of God within all living beings.

> *The more we know God, the more we love God — and the more we love Krishna, the more we naturally dedicate our lives to becoming instruments of His love, expressed through compassion, which is the greatest need in the world today.*

Divided by Ahankara, United in Service

We have so many reasons to be divided, so many reasons to be partial, according to our ahankara — our false ego. Yet real enlightenment lies in finding true happiness in loving service to the Supreme. In this world, this realization is expressed and gained by remaining absorbed in remembering God and living in a way that pleases Krishna. Nothing pleases Him more than being absorbed in love, honor, respect, and compassion toward others — this is sanatana-dharma, the eternal jaiva-dharma of the soul.

Every Temple, an Orphanage for the Soul

To help the fallen soul who has forgotten this eternal relationship, the Lord manifests through various incarnations — Lord Varahadeva, Nrsimhadeva, Ramachandra, Lord Krishna, and many others — revealing Himself so that we may have a personal relationship with Him in the form of the deity, or archa-murti.

Almost one hundred years ago, the deities of Lakshmi Narayana were worshipped on this very property, and originally this building was an orphanage, known as LNHO. According to Vedic shastra, aham bija-prada pitha — "I am the eternal mother and father of all living beings." From the spiritual point of view, when we become separated from awareness of God's love for us, and from our own natural love for God, we lose the reciprocation of that love — and in that sense, we become spiritual orphans.

Krishna, ever merciful, kind, and compassionate, comes in the form of the deity in the temple precisely so that we may recognize that our true mother, father, friend, and beloved is always with us. As we learn to serve, to be attracted, and to become absorbed in Him, we gradually realize, by God's

grace, that God is within our own heart and knows all — past, present, and future, including everything we have done in this life and in lives before.

The Lord within our heart never leaves us; as Paramatma, He remains ever eager and ready to forgive us, to enlighten us, and to liberate us — and the ultimate liberation is for Him to reveal Himself to us fully. Every temple, more or less, is an orphanage where the Lord comes — Srila Prabhupada used the term "back to Godhead" — so that these orphans may find the way back to the eternal spiritual truth, our real home.

Satsanga — The Rarest of All Gifts

durlabha mānava-janma sat-saṅge

Human birth is a rare gift, but the rarest of all gifts is the association of saintly devotees.

Human life itself is such a rare gift, but the rarest gift of all is satsanga — the association of those who are truly, honestly, and sincerely trying to live in the service of the Supreme Lord, helping one another walk the path of dharma.

What Do You Have Left to Renounce?

Srila Prabhupada would often observe that people follow different paths at different levels of dharma. Some live piously in order to enjoy the things of this world — yet no matter how pious or enjoyable one's life, old age, disease, and death remain inevitable for everyone. Others renounce everything in this world, striving to make all desires void, believing that nothing is theirs and therefore nothing need be done, save meditation.

sarva-loka-maheśvaram

"Everything belongs to the Supreme Lord, the Lord of all worlds." — Bhagavad-gita

But Krishna says that everything in this world is already God's property — so Srila Prabhupada would ask, if everything already belongs to Krishna, then what exactly do you have left to renounce? One might say, "I will give up my possessions," but if these were never truly your own possessions, how great an achievement is it to give up what already belonged to someone else?

If one takes food from another's plate and gives it to someone else, saying, "Look, I am giving," certainly the recipient benefits — but only because it has become maha-prasad through that transfer, not truly because of one's own giving. The benefit comes from that recognition, not from the act of giving as if it were one's own.

True dharma, true bhakti, lies in recognizing that everything belongs to Krishna, and in utilizing everything in a way that pleases Krishna — in a spirit of devotion, compassion, and genuine seva, or service. To claim God's property as our own, and then to renounce something we never truly had, is incomplete. Complete dharma is achieved when we strive to use whatever God gives us in harmony with Krishna's pleasure.

sarva-dharmān parityajya māṁ ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja

"Abandon all varieties of dharma and simply surrender unto Me." — Bhagavad-gita, the concluding instruction

This is the conclusion of the Bhagavad-gita — abandon every variety of dharma built on enjoying or renouncing, and simply take shelter of the Lord. Surrender does not mean merely giving something up; surrender means living in harmony with the Lord's love and compassion within this world.

Krishna in the Form of Sound

harer nāma eva kevalam

"In this age, simply the holy name of Hari is sufficient for liberation."

Krishna appears within the sound vibration of His holy names. In this age of Kali, marked by so much division, quarrel, and anxiety, the names of God and the names of Hari cleanse and purify us, giving us the very happiness we are all seeking, anandam buddhi-vardhanam.

kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra

"In the age of Kali, Krishna descends in the form of His holy name."

Just as Lakshmi Narayana appeared here a hundred years ago, and Radha Gopinath appeared almost forty years ago, and the same Lord is worshipped in Srirangam, Tirupati, and Badrinath, that same Lord remains accessible in every moment, in any place, to anyone sincere in approaching Him through the beautiful avatara of the holy name.

Through the Hearts of the Acharyas

mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthaḥ

"That path is the true path which has been walked by great, self-realized souls."

We may read the shastras again and again, but to reach a true conclusion about how God resides within the holy name and the deity form, and what the Lord actually teaches us in the scriptures, we need acharyas — teachers through whose hearts Krishna speaks. Today marks the appearance day of one such great acharya, Ramanujacharya, whose life offers this festival its central story.

Ramanujacharya and His Gurus

Ramanujacharya's guru was Yamunacharya, but Yamunacharya left this world before Ramanujacharya could receive a formal relationship with him. Even so, Ramanujacharya received siksha and inspiration from him, held complete faith in his guru, and dedicated his entire life to Yamunacharya's service. He later received formal initiation from Yamunacharya's disciple, Mahapurna.

Ramanujacharya came from Kanchipuram to Srirangam and studied there under Mahapurna as a student. Mahapurna understood that although he was Ramanujacharya's teacher, Ramanujacharya was destined for the role of acharya himself — and he embraced this role gracefully. Even so, though Ramanujacharya was a sannyasi and Mahapurna a grihastha, Ramanuja continued to serve him faithfully, in the true spirit of devotion and of being the servant of the servant.

The Secret Mantra of Ghoshthipurna

Mahapurna told Ramanuja that he had gone so deep into the understanding of bhakti that he should learn a particular mantra from Ghoshthipurna, a godbrother of his guru who lived in a nearby village and held the understanding of that sacred mantra.

Ramanuja approached Ghoshthipurna to be instructed in this mantra. Ghoshthipurna, after deep reflection, said that he had never given this mantra to anyone — it was so pure that no one with material desires could even understand it, let alone properly chant or meditate upon it. He said that he could see Ramanuja was the only person fit to receive it, and explained that this mantra is the very name of the Lord, non-different from Narayana Himself, purifying the mind and heart — and that it would be an offense to God for anyone impure to recite it. He instructed Ramanuja never to repeat it to anyone, warning that to do so would send him to hell.

Ramanuja heard the mantra, bowed to his guru, and received both the mantra and its explanation. As he journeyed back to Srirangam, chanting the mantra, he began to feel the ecstasy of love of God — and a natural symptom of that ecstasy was compassion for all beings. He thought, how can I be happy while everyone else suffers? Walking on with tears in his heart, he saw people, pious and impious alike, disconnected from the eternal happiness of the soul, inevitably destined to suffer.

Om Namo Narayanaya — From the Temple Rooftop

Ramanuja called out to everyone, saying he wished to freely give the most precious jewel. Word spread quickly, and he invited people to gather at the temple of Lord Vishnu. Within minutes,

thousands upon thousands had assembled. Moved by so much love for the Lord, Ramanuja climbed to the very top of the temple so that everyone could see and hear him. Simply by seeing him, the people were transformed, for he began by telling them, with utter sincerity, that they were more dear to him than his own life — and they believed him completely.

> *When we associate with a sincere devotee of the Lord, a sadhu who is truly vancha-kalpatarubhyascha, they awaken faith in God's mercy simply by flowing through their teachings — telling us we are more dear to them than their very life, and promising us the most precious of all wealth.*

Everyone cheered, eager to receive this wealth. Ramanuja then declared that this treasure was the Lord's holy name, and asked them to repeat after him. With a thunderous voice and deep sincerity, he called out the mantra — om namo narayanaya — and the crowd cried it back with such force that it seemed to fill the whole world. Their faces lit with the joy of this connection to Krishna, and they understood that they had just received the highest wealth, one that would inevitably carry them to Vaikuntha.

paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate

"One who has experienced the higher, superior taste naturally loses attachment to lower, material things." — Bhagavad-gita

Dhruva's Darshan

oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya

The mantra by which Dhruva Maharaja became purified enough to receive the Lord's direct darshan.

Simply by chanting this mantra, Dhruva became so purified that Lord Narayana revealed Himself within his heart. Such was his absorption and samadhi that when the beautiful form of the Lord within his heart disappeared, he opened his eyes to find the very same Lord standing before him. Lord Narayana asked him to request whatever he wished — and Dhruva asked only to serve as the servant of the servant. The greatest of all wealth is pure devotion, and pure devotion culminates in the darshan of the Supreme Lord — a treasure more precious than all prestige, power, and control over the entire universe, for it alone awakens true love.

"If Thousands Go to Vaikuntha, Let Me Go to Hell"

Ramanuja humbly told his guru that the secret of the mantra is that anyone who chants it attains Vaikuntha — and if these many thousands of people would reach Vaikuntha by chanting it, then it would be a small thing indeed if he himself were sent to hell for having shared it. Hearing this, Ghoshthipurna was completely transformed, tears of joy in his eyes, and embraced Ramanuja,

declaring that he had never met anyone so dear to Lord Narayana. From that day, Ghoshthipurna accepted Ramanuja as his own guru and became his disciple.

Ramanuja, in turn, said that whatever he had given to the people was entirely because of his guru's mercy — for it was Ghoshthipurna who had delivered thousands upon thousands by entrusting him with the mantra, and he was merely sharing that mercy, love, and compassion onward.

Willing to Endure for the Sake of Others

There is nothing in this world more pleasing to the Lord than a willingness to accept inconvenience out of compassion for others. Srimad-Bhagavatam recounts how Lord Shiva, out of compassion, drank the ocean of poison — for there is no service more pleasing to the Lord than the willingness to endure difficulty for the sake of others.

On this day of Ramanujacharya's appearance, we remember his history, his biography, his devotion, and his compassion. Our beloved Srila Prabhupada stands in that same lineage of pure compassion, an expression of love for Krishna, through which we too have received the holy names of the Lord.

kaler doṣa-nidhe rājan

"O King, although the age of Kali is an ocean of faults, there is still one great benediction: simply by chanting the holy name of Hari, one can become free from material bondage and attain the supreme destination." — Srimad-Bhagavatam

Hare Krishna

CHAPTER 3

Even the Great Souls Get Confused, But They Never Quit

Morning Bhagavatam Class — 29th March, 2026

Sixty Years of an Unbroken Tradition

Maharaj began by expressing his gratitude to be gathered together according to the tradition Srila Prabhupada established sixty years ago, in 1966 — the Sunday feast lecture. The class was taken from Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.13.50, where Svayambhuva Manu prays to Lord Brahma, his father and guru, asking how to serve and please the Supreme Lord, upon learning that the earth was lying submerged within the Garbhodaka Ocean.

Seeing this, Svayambhuva Manu appealed to Brahma to help all the living beings residing upon mother earth.

When Even Brahma Feels Perplexed

Brahma, the most powerful person in the entire universe, observed the situation and sought a solution — and this was no theoretical exercise, for his own father, his children, and mother earth herself were in a desperate situation. Srila Prabhupada notes in his purport that sometimes even great devotees, even the confidential servitors of the Lord, become perplexed about how to execute their prescribed duties — but they are never discouraged, because they have faith in the ultimate protection and supreme will of the Lord.

> *Our happiness, our hope, and our destiny are not determined by what happens to us, or by what others do — but by how we respond.*

This is very much the heart of the Bhagavad-gita: how to take shelter of the Lord. Krishna says, daivi hy esha guna-mayi — the material world is a difficult place for all of us, and the world itself does not change. If we respond in the modes of ignorance, goodness, or passion in ways that only assure ourselves of continued karma and suffering, that is one path. But by taking shelter of the Lord, we gain not only freedom from the pains of material existence, but the supreme happiness of the soul.

The Ascending Dimensions of Ecstatic Love

Srimad-Bhagavatam explains that the happiness of the soul is the highest dimension of ecstatic love for the Supreme Lord — rising all the way to the ecstatic love of the residents of Vraja, of Sri Radha

and Sri Krishna in Goloka Vrindavan. At each of these levels of love for Krishna, Krishna does not merely tell us what to do — through His devotees, He shows us how.

It is a tendency of the human mind that when something is difficult, we assume it cannot be done. But Krishna, in his kindness, places his devotees — those he trusts, and who trust him completely — into situations far more difficult than anything we ourselves face, precisely to show us that they never give up.

Srila Prabhupada explains in his purport how Krishna reaches the limits of the unlimited — material existence is limited, but Krishna's glories are unlimited. The jiva is limited, and Paramatma is unlimited, yet the unlimited power of Paramatma allows the unlimited to become known even to the limited. In this way, the limited comes to realize the unlimited. Brahmaji is not merely a guru but the very first guru of the parampara — the most powerful being in existence — and yet even he felt helpless and perplexed, though never discouraged.

Bhajare Sri Nanda-nandana

Brahmaji meditated upon the Supreme Lord Vishnu. The poet Govinda Dasa prays in this spirit: my dear mind, please worship Nanda-nandana, for by taking shelter of His lotus feet, one becomes fearless.

When the eternal soul identifies with the temporary material body, in this world of endless change, fear becomes inevitable — sometimes lying dormant, but ever pervading material existence. Different people, according to their different natures and experiences, respond to this fear in different ways. But for a devotee, this fear can be a positive blessing, awakening the intensity of one's need to take shelter of the Lord — and in that sense, it is no longer merely material fear.

Brahmaji was perplexed, for the solution lay beyond even his own vast capacity to determine independently — yet he knew that the solution to any problem lies in taking shelter of the Lord, and so he meditated upon Vishnu.

Mother Earth, and the Bond of Motherhood

Brahmaji had the darshan of Varahadeva, as did all the devatas, and in their prayers they proclaimed that the earth is the Lord's wife, and He is her husband — our very existence rests upon this motherly and fatherly relationship. Just as a mother directly nourishes her child with the potency of the father, the whole body develops within the mother's womb, and continues to be nourished by

her outside it. To honor the mother, and the very principle of motherhood, is an inseparable truth of dharma, inseparable from understanding the relationship between mother and father.

ahaṁ bīja-pradaḥ pitā

"I am the seed-giving father of all living beings, who are born of nature, the mother."

All living beings are born of nature, and the Lord is the seed-giving father. In the same way, mother earth is the Lord's wife, and she later appeared as Sita, daughter of the earth and eternal consort of Lord Ramachandra.

In Krishna's leela, mother earth took the form of mother cow and prayed to Brahmaji to protect her children. This story is spoken by Maitreya Rishi to Vidura, who heard these instructions while on a great pilgrimage, wandering in the aftermath of the injustice inflicted upon him.

Vidura — Disqualified by Birth, Never by Devotion

When we hear the story of Vidura, we may appreciate it intellectually, but these stories must be taken personally. Vidura lost everything and was insulted — and the insult came from his own nephew, raised together with him in the same household. Vidura was a great devotee, yet he tolerated so much out of pure affection and in accordance with the will of the Lord — remaining a faithful minister and servant of Dhritarashtra despite his many mistakes, even as harsh words from Duryodhana struck his heart like flaming arrows.

Vidura was perfectly and extraordinarily qualified, yet disqualified in the eyes of society because of his mother's caste. Still, he gave his life in honor of the king's mission, with loyalty and faith, never betraying his devotion or compromising dharma even amid such degrading circumstances. Duryodhana once told him, "I permit you only to take your breath."

The Reciprocal Love of the Ramayana

How devotees take shelter of the Lord is the very theme of the Ramayana — a reciprocal relationship of love between the Lord and His devotees.

sarva-dharmān parityajya

"Abandon all varieties of dharma and simply surrender unto Me." — Bhagavad-gita

According to Hanumanji's own account of surrender, the Lord confessed to him, "I am living in this forest, and I have nothing to give you in return, and yet you have abandoned everything, your very life, to serve and please me — and all I have to give you in return is Myself." Hanumanji soon says that Lord Varaha did the very same.

How Hanuman Crossed the Ocean

Brahmaji prayed to Krishna to come as Varahadeva, and Hanuman, in the spirit of being the servant of the servant of Lord Rama, received the order from Sugriva to find Sita. Rama gave him the ring, knowing Hanuman could find her, and under Sugriva's instruction, Hanuman embarked on the mission along with so many others. There is a beautiful parallel in how he crossed the ocean, just as Varaha once leapt into the ocean.

An ocean signifies something without limits, vast beyond our own capacities — and just as Varaha searched that boundless ocean to find mother earth, the Lord's consort, so too did Hanuman leap across the ocean, searching the island again and again until he found Sita Devi, the consort of the Lord. As the Lord's representative — one who has abandoned all varieties of religion — what, then, does surrender truly mean?

> *The example of Hanuman shows that surrender means to please the Lord and serve Him in whatever way brings Him pleasure.*

Srila Prabhupada said that nothing remains unachieved when the Supreme Lord is pleased with someone — through such transcendental achievement, one comes to understand that everything else is insignificant. This is the consciousness taught to us by all these great devotees.

Sam Siddhir Hari-toshanam — The Only True Goal

sāṁ siddhir hari-toṣaṇam

"The perfection of life is measured by the extent to which one has satisfied the Supreme Lord."

The only true pleasure of the soul, and the only real goal of life, is the perfection found in pleasing the Lord — and one who achieves this understands that everything else is insignificant. Lord Chaitanya says, na dhanam na janam — I only want to serve you and please you, and everything else is insignificant. The greatest goal of life is to love God, and to love God means to offer body, mind, and soul entirely to please Him.

jīvera 'svarūpa' haya, kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'

"It is the constitutional position of the living entity to be an eternal servant of Krishna."

The spiritual soul is eternally the servant of Krishna — this is the fundamental truth of our relationship with the material world. We are spiritual by nature, part and parcel of the Lord, and our only true happiness and true reality lies in pleasing Him. To live according to our true nature is seva, and seva means placing the value of pleasing the Lord through loving service above everything else.

One who pleases the Lord in this way sees everything else as insignificant — this is the consciousness of Hanumanji.

Dashrath and Rama — Mutual Surrender

We may also meditate on Dashrath Maharaj. Lord Rama, protecting the honor of his father, was willing to give up everything for him — sarva-dharman parityajya — Lord Rama was willing to do this for the sake of his devotee. Lord Rama renounced his kingdom, his role, his family, and his wife, giving up everything for the devotee Dashrath. And Dashrath, in turn, surrendered to Lord Rama, simply remembering and chanting his name until he gave up his life. Lord Rama abandoned everything for Dashrath, and Dashrath abandoned his life for Rama — and ultimately, even in the pain of separation from Lord Rama, Dashrath achieved an eternal embrace in the Lord's eternal abode.

The Rare Gift of Human Life, and the Value of Association

How rare and fortunate it is to attain the human form of life — and the true value of human life lies in how we understand the goal of life. The true goal and happiness is to please Krishna, and in order to live in this world amid its obstacles, temptations, and distractions, it is essential to have the association of devotees, in whose company we can hear and chant.

Human life is exceedingly rare, and its most valuable gift is the grace of Krishna that allows us to associate with His devotees. By hearing beautiful narrations in their company, we develop the values needed to understand life's true purpose, and we learn to navigate the endless distractions of material existence.

The Train and the Seat

When we board a train to reach our destination, what truly matters is not which seat we occupy but that we are moving toward our destination. Srila Prabhupada said that human life is exactly like this — a train meant to carry us to the destination of pure happiness through pleasing the Lord.

But unfortunately, when we forget the purpose of the train, people begin fighting over seats — sometimes so fiercely that they destroy one another, and this is how the world so often behaves, people fighting endlessly over a seat, hurting and even killing one another, and in the end failing to reach the destination at all.

In reality, eternal life is vast, and human life is but a small piece of it — even in Kali-yuga, people live perhaps a hundred years, as does even a queen, yet in old age there is usually no one left around them.

> *Sukadeva Goswami says that a single moment of full consciousness — pleasing Krishna, serving Krishna, loving Krishna — is worth far more than a long, long life without Him.*

The soul is eternal, material nature is eternal in its existence, and spiritual nature is eternal — eternality itself is reality. Yet within material nature, everything is constantly changing. So we have attained this human form of life, though the soul sometimes has to pass through 8,400,000 species to reach it. In these thousand opportunities of human life, we must find the association of devotees who can show us where this train is truly destined to go.

Beyond the Fight for the Seat

We should not implicate ourselves in the fighting that goes on around us — over property, over control of people and possessions and circumstance — because, as individuals, differences of interest are inevitable, and the survival instinct is powerful wherever there is life in creation. Yet human life is very special, because, as Srila Prabhupada explains, Krishna performs His pastimes in this world and leaves behind the narrations of those pastimes, which are non-different from the Lord Himself.

Long ago, Varahadeva appeared in His avatara, and today, through these narrations, that same exact potency, power, and presence of the Lord remains present in the form of these stories. Srila Prabhupada said that the narrations of the Supreme Lord's activities are a constant flow of nectar.

> *Before we know how to truly live, we must know why to live — and before we understand why to live, we must first know for whom to live.*

This is the importance of absorbing ourselves in hearing the teachings of the pastimes and glories of the Supreme Lord. The value of the train is not which seat we occupy, or who competes for it, but whether we remain aboard in such a way that we reach our destination.

A Flower Petal Offered With Love

Sam siddhir hari-toshanam — whatever our occupation, whatever ashram we belong to, the true goal of life is to develop a taste for hearing and chanting the glories of the Lord, for serving Him and pleasing Him, because nothing else holds comparable value. To the extent we develop a taste for pleasing Krishna, to that same extent, all distractions and temptations become insignificant —

because the happiness found in pleasing Krishna is so supremely and limitlessly significant, param drishtva nivartate.

When these seemingly insignificant things of the world are seen in relationship to Krishna, and engaged for the purpose of pleasing Him, they cease to be insignificant. This material world, enjoyed on any level, is itself insignificant — but when we see it as Krishna's energy and Krishna's nature, and utilize our intelligence and abilities for His pleasure through loving service, Krishna sees that offering as limitlessly significant.

To the world, what is a single flower petal? Yet when it is offered with love and devotion to please Radha Gopinath, Krishna sees that petal as possessing unlimited value, because it was offered in love by a devotee — and He never forgets it. Any sincere act of devotion, in the eyes of God, is eternal.

The Newness of a Story Everyone Already Knows

A professor from Harvard University once remarked that the stories of Rama belong to every single person in India — we all know these stories, having been born and raised hearing them. But how unique and special it is to hear them again from the perspective of devotional service. The stories we already know, yet their devotional meaning gives them a freshness and newness we had not perceived before.

For Shabari, nothing was significant except pleasing the Lord. She offered only humble, material things, yet the love with which she offered them to Lord Rama held such profound significance.

What Rama Took With Him From Lanka

After Lord Ramachandra conquered Ravana, Sri Lanka stood as the most opulent city in the world — for Ravana, in his power, had stolen the wealth of Kubera and conquered the wealth of Indra from the heavens. Yet after this conquest, amid all these beautiful, opulent, and majestic palaces and gardens now his for the taking, what did Rama actually take with him? Only his wife, Sita. Everything else he gave to Ravana's brother, Vibhishana, a devotee who took no personal enjoyment from all of Lanka's riches — yet found far greater enjoyment in the humble fruits once offered by Shabari.

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

These notes are humbly compiled for personal study and reflection,
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