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WHAT PRAHLADA LEARNED IN THE WOMB

Srila Narada Muni

Narada Muni said: Although Prahlada Maharaja was born in a family of *asuras*, he was the greatest of all devotees. Having been thus questioned by his class friends, the sons of the asuras, he remembered my words and replied to his friends as follows.

Prahlada Maharaja said: When my father, Hiranyakashipu, went to Mandaracala Mountain to execute severe austerities, the demigods headed by King Indra, taking advantage of his absence attempted to overpower the demons by aggressively attacking them. “Alas, as a serpent is eaten by small ants, so the troublesome Hiranyakashipu, who always inflicted miseries upon all types of people, has now been defeated by the reactions of his own sinful activities.” Saying this, the demigods, headed by King Indra, arranged to fight the demons. When the leaders of the demons, who were being killed one

after another, saw the unprecedented exertion of the demigods in fighting, they began to flee, scattering in all directions. Simply to protect their lives, they hastily fled from their homes, wives, children, animals and household paraphernalia. Paying no heed to all these, the demons simply fled. The victorious demigods plundered the palace of Hiranyakashipu, the King of the demons, and destroyed everything within it. Then Indra, King of heaven, arrested my mother, the Queen. As she was being led away, crying in fear like a kurari bird captured by a vulture, the great sage Narada, who at that time was without engagement, appeared and witnessed everything.

Narada Muni said: O Indra, King of the demigods, this woman is certainly sinless. You should not drag her off in this merciless way. O greatly fortunate one, this chaste woman is the wife of another. You must immediately release her.

King Indra said: In the womb of this woman, the wife of the demon Hiranyakashipu, is the seed of that great demon. Therefore, let her



remain in our custody until her child is delivered, and then we shall release her.

Narada Muni replied: The child within this woman's womb is faultless and sinless. Indeed, he is a great devotee, a powerful servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore, you will not be able to kill him. When the great saint Narada Muni had thus spoken, King Indra, showing deference to Narada's words, immediately released my mother. Because of my being a devotee of the Lord, all the demigods circumambulated her. Then they returned to their celestial kingdom.

Prahlada Maharaja continued: The great saint Narada Muni brought my mother to his *āśrama* and assured her of all protection, saying, "My dear child, please remain at my *āśrama* until the arrival of your husband." Accepting the instructions of *Devaṁṣi* Narada, my mother stayed in his care, without fear from any direction. She peacefully resided there for the time that my father, the King of the Daityas, was still engaged in his severe austerities. My mother, being pregnant, desired the safety of her embryo and desired to give birth after her husband's arrival. Thus she stayed at Narada Muni's *āśrama*, where she rendered service unto Narada Muni with great devotion.

Narada Muni delivered his instructions both to me, who was within the womb, and to my mother, who was engaged in rendering him service. Because he is naturally extremely kind to the fallen souls, being in a transcendental position, he gave instructions on religion and transcendental knowledge. These instructions were free from all material contamination. Because of the long duration of time that has passed and because of her being a woman and therefore less intelligent, my mother has forgotten all those instructions; but the great sage Narada blessed me, and therefore I could not forget them. Prahlada Maharaja continued: My dear friends, if you can place your faith in my words, simply by that faith you can also understand transcendental knowledge, just like me, although you are small children. Similarly, a woman can also understand transcendental knowledge and know what is spirit and what is matter. Just as the fruit and flowers of a tree in due course of time undergo six changes - birth, existence, growth, transformation, dwindling and

then death – similarly the material body, which is obtained by the spirit soul under different circumstances, undergoes commensurate changes. However, there are no such changes for the spirit soul.

The word "*ātma*" refers to the Supreme Lord or to the living entities. Both of them are spiritual, free from birth and death, free from deterioration and free from material contamination. They are individual, they are the knowers of the external body, and they are the foundation or shelter of everything. They are free from material change, they are self-illuminated, they are the cause of all causes, and they are all-pervading. They have nothing to do with the material body, and therefore they are always uncovered. With these transcendental qualities, one who is actually learned must give up the illusory conception of life, in which one thinks, "I am this material body, and everything in relationship with this body is mine."

An expert geologist can understand where there is gold and by various processes can extract it from the gold ore. Similarly, a spiritually advanced person can understand how the spiritual particle exists within the body, and thus by cultivating spiritual knowledge he can attain perfection in spiritual life. However, as one who is not expert cannot understand where there is gold, a foolish person who has not cultivated spiritual knowledge cannot understand how the spirit exists within the body.

— *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 7: The Science of God » CHAPTER SEVEN Verses: 1-21, Translations.*

UNDERSTAND SPIRITUAL TRUTH THROUGH THE *PARAMPARĀ* SYSTEM

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhakti Vedānta Swami

There have been many instances in which demons or non-devotees have attempted to kill a devotee, but they have never been able to destroy a great devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Lord promises in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.31), *kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ prañaśyati*. This is a declaration by the Supreme Personality of Godhead that His devotee cannot be killed by demons. Prahlada Maharaja is the vivid example of the truth of this promise. Narada Muni told the King of heaven, "It would be impossible for you to kill the child, even though

you are demigods, and certainly it would be impossible for others."

Although King Indra and the other demigods are exalted personalities, they were so obedient to Narada Muni that King Indra immediately accepted Narada Muni's words concerning Prahlada Maharaja. This is called understanding by the *paramparā* system. Indra and the demigods did not know that a great devotee was in the womb of Kayadhu, the wife of Hiranyakashipu, but they accepted the authoritative statements of Narada Muni and immediately offered their respects to the devotee by circumambulating the woman in whose womb he was living. To understand God and the devotee by the *paramparā* system is the process of knowledge. There is no need to speculate about God and His devotee. One should accept the statements of a bona fide devotee and thus try to understand.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 7: The Science of God » CHAPTER SEVEN Verses: 10 and 11, Purport.*

THE BRAHMĀ-SAMPRADĀYA IS THE MAINTAINER OF THE VEDIC RELIGION

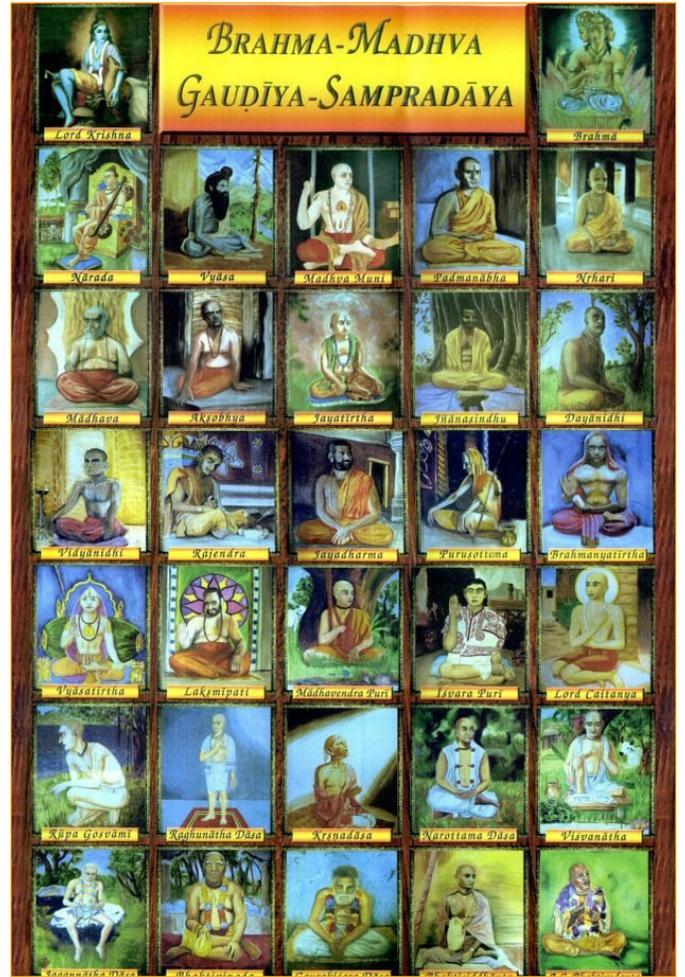
Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

The writings of the Goswamis and the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, for example, are called *anuvyakhayas*. Thus, the *Veda*, *Purāṇas*, *Ithihāsas*, *Upaniṣads*, *ślokas*, *sūtras*, and *acāryas'* purports are all *āmnāya*, Vedic literature. The Vedic literature has been duly glorified throughout the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* e.g. (SB 11.14.3, 4, 7, 8):

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca
kālena naṣṭā pralaye
vāṅīyaṁ Veda-saṁjñitā
mayādau brahmaṇe proktā
dharmo yasyāṁ mad-ātmakaḥ*

*tena proktā sva-putrāya
manave pūrva-jāya sā
tato bhṛgu-ādayo 'grhṇan
sapta brahma-maharṣayaḥ*

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: By the influence of time, the transcendental sound of the Vedic knowledge was lost at the time of annihilation. Therefore, when the subsequent creation took place, I spoke the Vedic Bhāgavata Mahāvidyālaya



knowledge to Brahma because I, Myself, am the religious principles as enunciated in the Veda."

Lord Brahma spoke this Vedic knowledge to his eldest son Manu, and the seven great sages headed by Bhṛgu Muni then accepted the same knowledge from Manu.

All of the many universal species, along with their respective leaders, appeared with different natures and desires generated from the three modes of material nature. Therefore, because of the different characteristics of the living entities within the universe, there are a great many Vedic rituals, *mantras* and rewards.

Thus, due to the great variety of desires and natures among human beings, there are many different theistic philosophies of life, which are handed down through tradition, custom and disciplic succession. On the other hand, other teachers directly support atheistic viewpoints.

The Brahmā-sampradāya is the maintainer of the Vedic religion

From this statement, we can clearly understand that the disciplic succession called the *Brahmā-sampradāya* has been flowing down

to the present time from the very dawn of creation. The feature of this *sampradāya* is that the unadulterated knowledge of the *Veda* has been handed down in an unbroken chain of spiritual preceptors and has thus sustained religious principles—devotion to the Supreme Lord. This unadulterated knowledge is *āmnāya*. Those persons who do not accept the bona-fide nature of the *Brahmā-sampradāya* (disciplic succession) cannot be inspired to put faith in the evidences of the scriptures. Brahma, the creator of the universe, is a disciple of the Lord of the spiritual sky. Persons who do not accept this are referred to in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* as teachers of atheistic viewpoints.

Furthermore, those who accept the *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya sampradāya* from Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, but secretly deny the self-perfected process of *guru-paramparā*, (disciplic succession), are certainly no better than the common followers of Kali-yuga—the age of degradation. In truth, only the most fortunate of souls recognise the unadulterated *Vedic* knowledge flowing down to us through an unbroken chain of spiritual masters as the best of all evidences. This is Sri Chaitanya's first lesson.

Srila Jiva Goswami writes in the *Tattva-sandar-bha* (verses 9, 10):

*athāivam śūcitānām śrī-
kṛṣṇa-vācya-vācakatā-lakṣaṇa-
sambandha-tad-bhajana-lakṣa-
na-vihaya-tat-prema-lakṣaṇa-
prayojanākhyānām arthānām
nirṇayāya pramāṇam tāvad
vinirṇīyatetatra puruṣasya bh-
ramādi-doṣa-catuṣṭayatvāt sutarām
acintyālaukika-vastu-sparśāyo-
gyatvāc ca tat-pratyakṣādinyāpi
sadoṣāni tatas tāni na pramāṇānīty
anādi-siddha-sarva-puruṣa
paramparāsu sarvalaukikālauki-
ka-jñāna-nidānatvād aprākṛta-
vacana-lakṣaṇo Vēda
evāsmākaṁ sarvātīta-sarvāśraya-
sarvācintyaścarya-svabhāvaṁ vas-
tu vividiṣatām pramāṇam*

"The following evidences are presented to ascertain the symptoms of: *sambandha*, relation-

ship with Krishna as the central figure; *abhidheya*, the direct process of achieving Him—devotional service; and *prayojana*, the indispensable necessity—love of Krishna, *kṛṣṇa-prema*. By nature and construction, human beings are controlled by four inherent shortcomings—illusion, mistakes, cheating, and falsehood. This limits them from experiencing the inconceivable and extraordinary transcendental phenomena. The methods of knowledge they have access to and offer, such as direct sensual perceptions and subsequent theorization, are automatically faulty. Thus, direct perceptions (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*) cannot be included as perfectly authentic evidences. Thus, for the scientifically minded seekers of the truth, the only substantive source of evidence is the *Veda* because it has been transmitted, since time immemorial, through an unbroken chain of self-realised and eternally perfected spiritual masters who are the repositories of both material and spiritual knowledge. Their words are supra mundane and transcendental to mundane scrutiny, providing shelter to all seekers, and their knowledge possesses an inconceivably extraordinary nature and influence."

After establishing the substantive proofs of the *Veda* as the singular source of evidence, Srila Jiva Goswami ascertains that the *Purāṇas* uphold the *Vedic* religious principles—and that the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is the best source of evidence. The arguments he uses to assert the pre-eminence of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* lend support to the writings of the spiritual preceptors who are the authorities on spiritual conclusions—masters such as Brahma, Nārada, Vyasa, Sukadeva Goswami, Vijayadhvaja, Brahmātīrtha, Vyasātīrtha, Sri Madhvacarya and so on. All the statements regarding these points clearly establish that the disciplic line, beginning with Brahma, is, for the servitors of Sri Krishna Chaitanya, the bona-fide disciplic succession, (*guru-paramparā*). Sri Kavi Karnapura supports this view by reiterating the *guru-paramparā* in his book *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpika*. The commentator on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, Sri Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana has fixed and authenticated this disciplic succession. Those who deny this disciplic succession are indeed inimical to the followers of Sri Krishna Chaitanya.

—*Daśa-mūla-tattva, Chapter Two - The Veda—The Perfect Proof, Āmnāya Translated by Sarvabhāvanadāsa.*

**TAKING GUIDANCE FROM AUTHENTIC &
RASIKA VAISHNAVAS**
Srila Santana Goswami

Those who have not yet realized their natural attraction toward Krishna cannot understand the ecstasy of separation from the Lord. They should not vainly pretend to be expert in things to which they have no real access. Rather, they should instead take guidance from the authentic *rasika bhaktas* in the line of *Vaisnava paramparā*. Thus they will gradually become fit for understanding the subtleties of devotion. Faithful hearing and service are what is required here.

Still, the material mind is demanding, so following material logic neophytes may ask, “Doesn’t excessive misery normally result in either delusion or death? Why should unlimited joy arise from the misery of separation from Kṛṣṇa experienced by His great devotees and associates? Granted, the laws of nature dictate that pleasure is generally followed by pain, and pain by pleasure. But this doesn’t mean that pain literally becomes pleasure and vice versa; it simply means that circumstances in this world are always changing, so that neither pleasure nor pain can long continue without being replaced by the other. To say that some kind of suffering matures into the highest ecstasy is unreasonable.”

In answer to such demands to justify *viraha-bhāva* (the ecstasy of separation) by logic, the personal experience of pure devotees may be offered as definite evidence. Pure devotees do indeed enjoy ecstasy in separation. And since no other cause for this ecstasy can be ascertained, the cause must be their intense experience of what appears from the outside to be suffering.

To help newcomers to the devotional process understand *viraha-bhāva*, Krishna speaks the current verse, comparing the ecstasy of *viraha-bhāva* to the pleasurable sensation of relief from pain, a relief with which everyone is familiar. A person may struggle to achieve some object of satisfaction, and though his struggle may be painful, when he achieves his object the pain turns into joy. The ecstatic distress of *viraha-bhāva* may appear similar to the pleasure that follows pain, but as expressed here by the phrase *sampanna-vat* (“as if experiencing”), this is only the external appearance. In reality the ecstasy of



plete satisfaction, in which one never feels any insufficiency. That ecstasy may be compared to the pleasure of gratification after deprivation, but actually it is much more sublime. The mind of an ordinary person is relieved when he can rejoin those he loves and again gratify his senses, but a pure devotee’s greatest ecstasy arises from serving and remembering Krishna in separation.

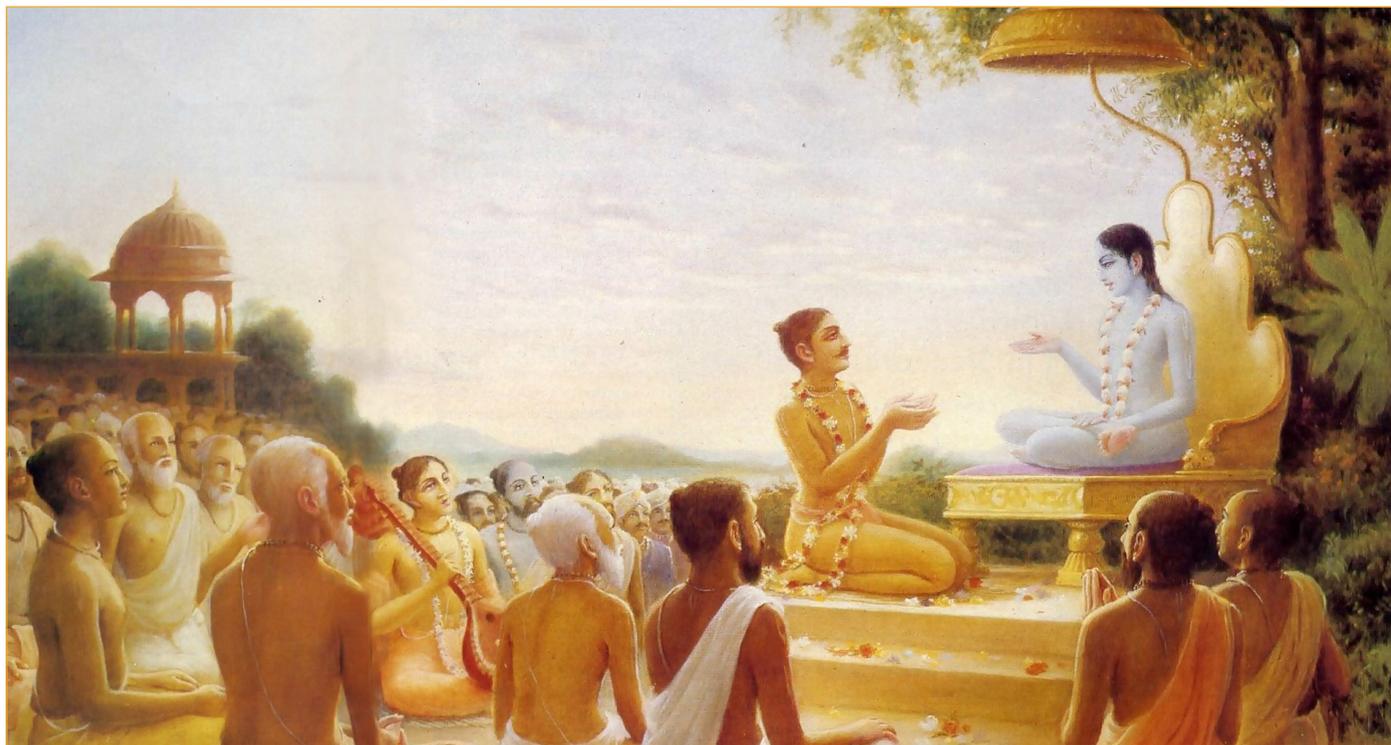
—1.7.127, *Śrī Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta* of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, Volume One. Translated by Gopīparānadhana Dāsa. Copyright BhaktiVedanta Book Trust, ©2008-2013.

FROM WHOM SHOULD WE HEAR ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanata Saraswati Thakura

We should hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from exalted spiritual masters and pure devotees who are fixed at their respective spiritual masters’ lotus feet. We cannot achieve auspiciousness if we hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from those who are not themselves *Bhāgavatas*.

A person with loose character, who is always hankers for sense gratification, and who is only interested in accumulating wealth and fame, can never recite *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In fact, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* does not manifest in his mouth. Such a person simply gratifies his senses



on the pretext of reciting the *Bhāgavatam*. Thus he cheats himself and others. Rather than hearing from such an impersonator, we should hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from a spiritual master who is constantly engaged in worshipping Hari. Similarly we may successfully hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from a pure Vaisnava whom the spiritual master recommends. Then we can attain auspiciousness and devotional service to the Lord.

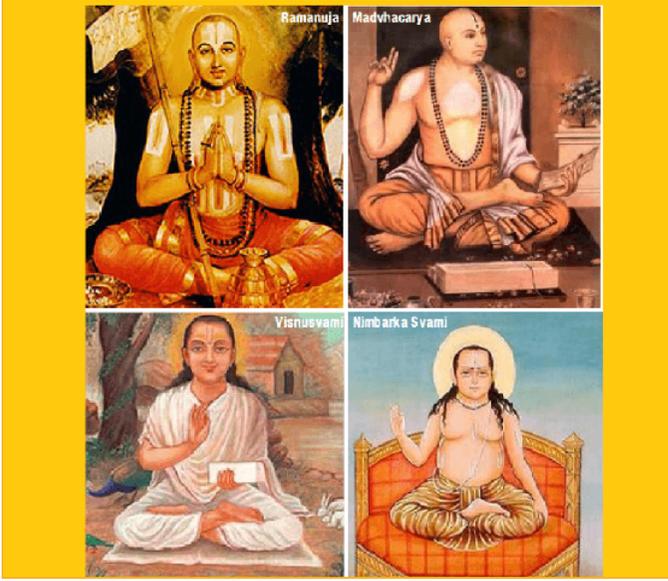
Only those who have accepted *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as their life and soul actually recite it. They also perfectly serve the Lord, and purely chant Lord Hari's holy name. We should associate with such devotees and offer everything we have to them. Because such devotees do not engage in sense gratification they do not deceive themselves or others on the pretext of serving the Lord. They also do not endeavour to accumulate mundane fame by giving up objects meant for the Lord's service, thinking them material like the pseudo renunciants do.

The pre-requisite qualification of a person from whom I should hear and with whom I should associate is that he must be a follower of the disciplic succession. The saintly person and the spiritual master never accept the path of sense gratification. They follow the path of disciplic succession. The teaching that we should lead a life of devotion has been received by the followers of our disciplic succession from their respective

predecessor *ācāryas* and, in turn, they have taught it to others. Our *ācāryas* neither speculate nor concoct. People often accept spiritual masters or associate with saints to fulfill some self-interest and not for their ultimate benefit. Nowadays it is fashionable to accept a spiritual master, just as it is commonplace to keep a personal barber or washerman. Associating with *sādhus* and hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā* from them has become a trend too. How will we benefit by such shallow activities? Is it possible to attain good if we do not hear from qualified teachers? Those who want real benefit should be careful about their association. Do not bring about your ruination by hearing *hari-kathā* from so-called *sādhus*.

When by good fortune and the mercy of the Lord we attain the association of a real devotee, we should hear from him submissively and with faith. It is our duty to engage every moment of our lives in the worship of Hari without wasting even a second on other activities. We should be anxious to associate with *sādhus*. We can carry on the mundane duties of life in any form of life, but to worship Krishna in the association of a bona fide spiritual master is possible only in the human form.

—*Amṛta Vāṇī: Nectar of Instructions of Immortality Compiled instructions of His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda Adapted and Published by Īṣvaradāsa, Touchstone Media.*



THE ORIGIN OF THE NAMES OF THE FOUR SAMPRADĀYAS

Sri Narahari Chakravarti Thakura

“These four *sampradāyas* are the authorities on the science of bhakti. I will now describe briefly how the *sampradāyas* were named.

“Sri Krishna Chaitanya is like a desire tree, and in the form of Narayana, He is the original guru of the four *sampradāyas*. *Śrī* is the beloved of Narayana. She is His disciple as well. Her wonderful activities are elaborately described in all the *śāstras*. *Śrī* is another name of Laksmi. Her disciplic succession has unlimited branches and sub-branches. Who can write them all? In Her *sampradāya*, Ramanuja became the *ācārya* and from His time the *sampradāya* was called the *Rāmānuja-sampradāya*. Previously He was known as Laksmnacarya, then later everyone called Him Ramanujacarya. He is the author of the *Rāmānuja-bhasya*. The branches and sub-branches of His disciplic succession filled the whole world.

“O Srinivasa, please hear now about the Madhva-*sampradāya*. The merciful Lord Brahma was the disciple of Lord Narayana. His disciples and grand-disciples spread throughout the world. In his *sampradāya*, Sri Madhva became a disciple. His first work was to write a commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*, and for this reason he was known as Madhvacharya and the *sampradāya* became known as the *Madhvācārya-sampradāya*.

Lord Narayana also has the merciful Rudra as His disciple. There is no end to his disciples and

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

grand-disciples. Visnusvami became a disciple in this line and he became mad in ecstatic devotional love along with his disciple. Visnusvami was very influential and a learned scholar of all the scriptures. From him the disciplic succession was known as the *Viṣṇusvāmī-sampradāya*.

“Hear now Srinivasa, about the *Sanaka-sampradāya*. From Narayana appeared the *Haṅsa-avatāra*. His disciples were the four Kumaras headed by Sanaka Kumara. Their disciples and grand-disciples cannot be counted. In this line Nimbāditya became a disciple. From him it is known as the *Nimbāditya-sampradāya* [known also as *Nimbarka-sampradāya*]. The influence of Nimbarka was very wonderful. His disciples and grand-disciples filled the world.

“The *Śrī*, *Brahmā*, *Rudra*, and *Sanakasampradāyas* spread their influence by dividing into other *sampradāyas*. In the *Rāmānuja-sampradāya*, Sri Ramanandacarya was highly respected. He had many disciples and grand-disciples. Therefore his branch of the disciplic succession is known as the *Rāmānanda-sampradāya*. Similarly Sri Vallabhacharya appeared in the *Viṣṇusvāmī-sampradāya*. He wrote a commentary named Anubhasya, which is highly respected. His disciplic succession is known as the *Vallabhi-sampradāya*.

—Bhakti-ratnākara—Śrīla Narahari Chakravarti Thakura Published by
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!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

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