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## THE DEITY, THE WORSHIP AND THE WORSHIPPER

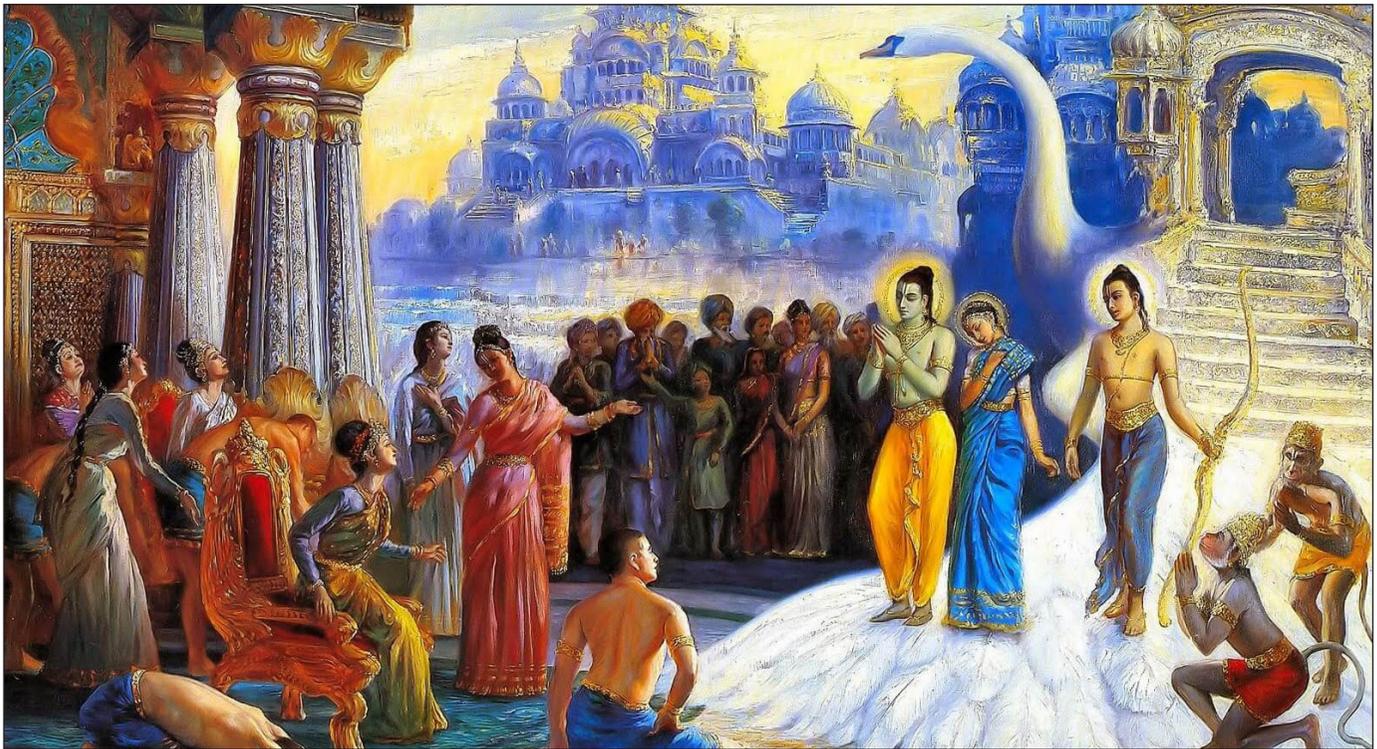
THE PASTIMES OF THE  
SUPREME LORD, RAMCHANDRA  
*Srila Sukadeva Goswami*

WHEN WAS THE RĀMĀYANA COMPOSED?  
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A WARNING BY SUKADEVA GOSVAMI  
*His Divine Grace*  
*A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*

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AND THE WORSHIPPER  
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THE PASTIMES OF THE  
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**Sukadeva Goswami said:** The son of Maharaja Khatvanga was Dirghabahu, and his son was the celebrated Maharaja Raghu. From Maharaja Raghu came Aja, and from Aja was born the great personality Maharaja Dasaratha. Being prayed for by the demigods, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Absolute Truth Himself, directly appeared with His expansion and expansions of the expansion. Their holy names were Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrugna. These celebrated incarnations thus appeared in four forms as the sons of Maharaja Dasaratha.

O King Pariksit, the transcendental activities of Lord Ramchandra have been described by great saintly persons who have seen the truth. Because you have heard again and again about Lord Ramchandra, the husband of mother Sita, I shall describe these activities only in brief. Please listen.

To keep the promise of His father intact, Lord Ramchandra immediately gave up the position of king and, accompanied by His wife, mother Sita, wandered from one forest to another on His lotus feet, which were so delicate that they were unable to bear even the touch of Sita's palms. The Lord was also accompanied by Hanuman [or by

another monkey, Sugriva], king of the monkeys, and by His own younger brother Lord Lakshmana, both of whom gave Him relief from the fatigue of wandering in the forest. Having cut off the nose and ears of Surpanakha, thus disfiguring her, the Lord was separated from mother Sita. He therefore became angry, moving His eyebrows and thus frightening the ocean, who then allowed the Lord to construct a bridge to cross the ocean. Subsequently, the Lord entered the kingdom of Ravana to kill him, like a fire devouring a forest. May that Supreme Lord, Ramchandra, give us all protection.

In the arena of the sacrifice performed by Visvamitra, Lord Ramchandra, the King of Ayodhya, killed many demons, *Rākṣasas* and uncivilized men who wandered at night in the mode of darkness. May Lord Ramchandra, who killed these demons in the presence of Lakshmana, be kind enough to give us protection. O King, the pastimes of Lord Ramchandra were wonderful, like those of a baby elephant. In the assembly where mother Sita was to choose her husband, in the midst of the heroes of this world, He broke the bow belonging to Lord Siva. This bow was so heavy that it was carried by three hundred men, but Lord Ramchandra bent and strung it and broke it in the middle, just as a baby elephant breaks a stick of sugarcane. Thus the Lord achieved the hand of mother Sita, who was

equally as endowed with transcendental qualities of form, beauty, behavior, age and nature. Indeed, she was the goddess of fortune who constantly rests on the chest of the Lord. While returning from Sita's home after gaining her at the assembly of competitors, Lord Ramchandra met Parasurama. Although Parasurama was very proud, having rid the earth of the royal order twenty-one times, he was defeated by the Lord, who appeared to be a *kṣatriya* of the royal order. Carrying out the order of His father, who was bound by a promise to his wife, Lord Ramchandra left behind His kingdom, opulence, friends, well-wishers, residence and everything else, just as a liberated soul gives up his life, and went to the forest with Sita. While wandering in the forest, where He accepted a life of hardship, carrying His invincible bow and arrows in His hand, Lord Ramchandra deformed Ravana's sister, who was polluted with lusty desires, by cutting off her nose and ears. He also killed her fourteen thousand *Rākṣasa* friends, headed by Khara, Trisira and Dusana. O King Pariksit, when Ravana, who had ten heads on his shoulders, heard about the beautiful and attractive features of Sita, his mind was agitated by lusty desires, and he went to kidnap her. To distract Lord Ramchandra from His *āśrama*, Ravana sent Marica in the form of a golden deer, and when Lord Ramchandra saw that wonderful deer, He left His residence and followed it and finally killed it with a sharp arrow, just as Lord Siva killed Daksa. When Ramchandra entered the forest and Laksmāna was also absent, the worst of the *Rākṣasas*, Ravana, kidnapped Sitadevi, the daughter of the King of Videha, just as a tiger seizes unprotected sheep when the shepherd is absent. Then Lord Ramchandra wandered in the forest with His brother Laksmāna as if very much dis-tressed due to separation from His wife. Thus He showed by His personal example the condition of a person attached to women. Lord Ramchandra, whose lotus feet are worshiped by Lord Brahma and Lord Siva, had assumed the form of a human being. Thus He performed the funeral ceremony of Jatayu, who was killed by Ravana. The Lord then killed the demon named Kabandha, and after making friends with the monkey chiefs, killing Vali and arranging for the deliverance of mother Sita, He went to the beach of the ocean. After reaching the beach, Lord Ramchandra fasted for three days, awaiting the arrival of the ocean personified. When

the ocean did not come, the Lord exhibited His pastimes of anger, and simply by His glancing over the ocean, all the living entities within it, including the crocodiles and sharks, were agitated by fear. Then the personified ocean fearfully approached Lord Ramchandra, taking all paraphernalia to worship Him. Falling at the Lord's lotus feet, the personified ocean spoke as follows. O all-pervading Supreme Person, we are dull-minded and did not understand who You are, but now we understand that You are the Supreme Person, the master of the entire universe, the unchanging and original Personality of Godhead. The demigods are infatuated with the mode of goodness, the *Prajāpatīs* with the mode of passion, and the lord of ghosts with the mode of ignorance, but You are the master of all these qualities. My Lord, You may use my water as You like. Indeed, You may cross it and go to the abode of Ravana, who is the great source of disturbance and crying for the three worlds. He is the son of Visrava, but is condemned like urine. Please go kill him and thus regain Your wife, Sitadevi. O great hero, although my water presents no impediment to Your going to Lanka, please construct a bridge over it to spread Your transcendental fame. Upon seeing this wonderfully uncommon deed of Your Lordship, all the great heroes and kings in the future will glorify You.

**Sukadeva Gosvami said:** After constructing a bridge over the ocean by throwing into the water the peaks of mountains whose trees and other vegetation had been shaken by the hands of great monkeys, Lord Ramchandra went to Lanka to release Sitadevi from the clutches of Ravana. With the direction and help of Vibhisana, Ravana's brother, the Lord, along with the monkey soldiers, headed by Sugriva, Nila and Hanuman, entered Ravana's kingdom, Lanka, which had previously been burnt by Hanuman. After entering Lanka, the monkey soldiers, led by chiefs like Sugriva, Nila and Hanuman, occupied all the sporting houses, granaries, treasuries, palace doorways, city gates, assembly houses, palace frontages and even the resting houses of the pigeons. When the city's crossroads, platforms, flags and golden waterpots on its domes were all destroyed, the entire city of Lanka appeared like a river disturbed by a herd of elephants. When Ravana, the master of the *Rākṣasas*, saw the disturbances created by

the monkey soldiers, he called for Nikumbha, Kumbha, Dhumraksa, Durmukha, Surantaka, Narantaka and other *Rākṣasas* and also his son Indrajit. Thereafter he called for Prahasta, Atikaya, Vikampana and finally Kumbhakarna. Then he induced all his followers to fight against the enemies. Lord Ramchandra, surrounded by Laksmāna and monkey soldiers like Sugriva, Hanuman, Gandhamada, Nila, Angada, Jambavan and Panasa, attacked the soldiers of the *Rākṣasas*, who were fully equipped with various invincible weapons like swords, lances, bows, *prāsas*, *ṛṣṭis*, *śakti* arrows, *khadḡas* and *tomaras*. Angada and the other commanders of the soldiers of Ramchandra faced the elephants, infantry, horses and chariots of the enemy and hurled against them big trees, mountain peaks, clubs and arrows. Thus the soldiers of Lord Ramchandra killed Ravana's soldiers, who had lost all good fortune because Ravana had been condemned by the anger of mother Sita.

Thereafter, when Ravana, the king of the *Rākṣasas*, observed that his soldiers had been lost, he was extremely angry. Thus he mounted his airplane, which was decorated with flowers, and proceeded toward Lord Ramchandra, who sat on the effulgent chariot brought by Matali, the chariot driver of Indra. Then Ravana struck Lord Ramchandra with sharp arrows. Lord Ramchandra said to Ravana: You are the most abominable of the man-eaters. Indeed, you are like their stool. You resemble a dog, for as a dog steals eatables from the kitchen in the absence of the householder, in My absence you kidnapped My wife, Sitadevi. Therefore as Yamaraja punishes sinful men, I shall also punish you. You are most abominable, sinful and shameless. Today, therefore, I, whose attempt never fails, shall punish you. After thus rebuking Ravana, Lord Ramchandra fixed an arrow to His bow, aimed at Ravana, and released the arrow, which pierced Ravana's heart like a thunderbolt. Upon seeing this, Ravana's followers raised a tumultuous sound, crying, "Alas! Alas! What has happened? What has happened?" as Ravana, vomiting blood from his ten mouths, fell from his airplane, just as a pious man falls to earth from the heavenly planets when the results of his pious activities are exhausted.

Thereafter, all the women whose husbands had fallen in the battle, headed by Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, came out of Lanka. Continuously crying, they approached the dead bodies of Ravana and the other *Rākṣasas*. Striking their breasts in affliction because their husbands had been killed by the arrows of Laksmāna, the women embraced their respective husbands and cried piteously in voices appealing to everyone. O my lord, O master! You epitomized trouble for others, and therefore you were called Ravana. But now that you have been defeated, we also are defeated, for without you the state of Lanka has been conquered by the enemy. To whom will it go for shelter? O greatly fortunate one, you came under the influence of lusty desires, and therefore you could not understand the influence of mother Sita. Now, because of her curse, you have been reduced to this state, having been killed by Lord Ramchandra. O pleasure of the *Rākṣasa* dynasty, because of you the state of Lanka and also we ourselves now have no protector. By your deeds you have made your body fit to be eaten by vultures and your soul fit to go to hell.

**Sri Sukadeva Gosvami said:** Vibhisana, the pious brother of Ravana and devotee of Lord Ramchandra, received approval from Lord Ramchandra, the King of Kosala. Then he performed the prescribed funeral ceremonies for his family members to save them from the path to hell. Thereafter, Lord Ramchandra found Sitadevi sitting in a small cottage beneath the tree named Simsapa in a forest of Asoka trees. She was lean and thin, being aggrieved because of separation from Him. Seeing His wife in that condition, Lord Ramchandra was very compassionate. When Ramchandra came before her, she was exceedingly happy to see her beloved, and her lotuslike mouth showed her joy. After giving Vibhisana the power to rule the *Rākṣasa* population of Lanka for the duration of one *kalpa*, Lord Ramchandra, the Supreme Personality of Godhead [*Bhagavān*], placed Sitadevi on an airplane decorated with flowers and then got on the plane Himself. The period for His living in the forest having ended, the Lord returned to Ayodhya, accompanied by Hanuman, Sugriva and His brother Laksmāna. When Lord Ramchandra returned to His capital, Ayodhya, He was greeted on the road by

the princely order, who showered His body with beautiful, fragrant flowers, while great personalities like Lord Brahma and other demigods glorified the activities of the Lord in great jubilation.

Upon reaching Ayodhya, Lord Ramchandra heard that in His absence His brother Bharata was eating barley cooked in the urine of a cow, covering His body with the bark of trees, wearing matted locks of hair, and lying on a mattress of *kuśa*. The most merciful Lord very much lamented this. When Lord Bharata understood that Lord Ramchandra was returning to the capital, Ayodhya, He immediately took upon His own head Lord Ramchandra's wooden shoes and came out from His camp at Nandigrama. Lord Bharata was accompanied by ministers, priests and other respectable citizens, by professional musicians vibrating pleasing musical sounds, and by learned *brāhmaṇas* loudly chanting Vedic hymns. Following in the procession were chariots drawn by beautiful horses with harnesses of golden rope. These chariots were decorated by flags with golden embroidery and by other flags of various sizes and patterns. There were soldiers bedecked with golden armor, servants bearing betel nut, and many well-known and beautiful prostitutes. Many servants followed on foot, bearing an umbrella, whisks, different grades of precious jewels, and other paraphernalia befitting a royal reception. Accompanied in this way, Lord Bharata, His heart softened in ecstasy and His eyes full of tears, approached Lord Ramchandra and fell at His lotus feet with great ecstatic love. After offering the wooden shoes before Lord Ramchandra, Lord Bharata stood with folded hands, His eyes full of tears, and Lord Ramchandra bathed Bharata with tears while embracing Him with both arms for a long time. Accompanied by mother Sita and Laksmana, Lord Ramchandra then offered His respectful obeisances unto the learned *brāhmaṇas* and the elderly persons in the family, and all the citizens of Ayodhya offered their respectful obeisances unto the Lord. The citizens of Ayodhya, upon seeing their King return after a long absence, offered Him flower garlands, waved their upper cloths, and danced in great jubilation. O King, Lord Bharata carried Lord Ramchandra's wooden shoes, Sugriva and Vibhisana carried a whisk and an excellent fan, Hanuman carried a white umbrella, Satrughna carried a bow and two

quivers, and Sitadevi carried a waterpot filled with water from holy places. Angada carried a sword, and Jambavan, King of the *Rkṣas*, carried a golden shield. O King Parikṣit, as the Lord sat on His airplane of flowers, with women offering Him prayers and reciters chanting about His characteristics, He appeared like the moon with the stars and planets. Thereafter, having been welcomed by His brother Bharata, Lord Ramchandra entered the city of Ayodhya in the midst of a festival. When He entered the palace, He offered obeisances to all the mothers, including Kaikeyi and the other wives of Maharaja Dasaratha, and especially His own mother, Kausalya. He also offered obeisances to the spiritual preceptors, such as Vasistha. Friends of His own age and younger friends worshiped Him, and He returned their respectful obeisances, as did Laksmana and mother Sita. In this way they all entered the palace.

Upon seeing their sons, the mothers of Rama, Laksmana, Bharata and Satrughna immediately arose, like unconscious bodies returning to consciousness. The mothers placed their sons on their laps and bathed Them with tears, thus relieving themselves of the grief of long separation. The family priest or spiritual master, Vasistha, had Lord Ramchandra cleanly shaved, freeing Him from His matted locks of hair. Then, with the cooperation of the elderly members of the family, he performed the bathing ceremony [*abhiṣeka*] for Lord Ramchandra with the water of the four seas and with other substances, just as it was performed for King Indra. Lord Ramchandra, fully bathed and His head clean-shaven, dressed Himself very nicely and was decorated with a garland and ornaments. Thus He shone brightly, surrounded by His brothers and wife, who were similarly dressed and ornamented. Being pleased by the full surrender and submission of Lord Bharata, Lord Ramchandra then accepted the throne of the state. He cared for the citizens exactly like a father, and the citizens, being fully engaged in their occupational duties of *varṇa* and *āśrama*, accepted Him as their father. Lord Ramchandra became King during *Tretā-yuga*, but because of His good government, the age was like *Satya-yuga*. Everyone was religious and completely happy. O Maharaja Parikṣit, best of the Bharata dynasty, during the reign of Lord Ramchandra the forests, the rivers, the hills and mountains, the

states, the seven islands and the seven seas were all favorable in supplying the necessities of life for all living beings. When Lord Ramchandra, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, was the King of this world, all bodily and mental suffering, disease, old age, bereavement, lamentation, distress, fear and fatigue were completely absent. There was even no death for those who did not want it. Lord Ramchandra took a vow to accept only one wife and have no connection with any other women. He was a saintly king, and everything in His character was good, untinged by qualities like anger. He taught good behavior for everyone, especially for householders, in terms of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Thus He taught the general public by His personal activities. Mother Sita was very submissive, faithful, shy and chaste, always understanding the attitude of her husband. Thus by her character and her love and service she completely attracted the mind of the Lord.

- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 9: Liberation » Chapter Ten » Verses: 1-55 » Translations by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

**A WARNING BY SUKADEVA GOSVAMI**  
His Divine Grace  
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Modern *Rākṣasas*, posing as educationally advanced merely because they have doctorates, have tried to prove that Lord Ramchandra is not the Supreme Personality of Godhead but an ordinary person. But those who are learned and spiritually advanced will never accept such notions; they will accept the descriptions of Lord Ramchandra and His activities only as presented by *tattva-darśīs*, those who know the Absolute Truth. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.34) the Supreme Personality of Godhead advises:

*tad viddhi pranīpātena  
paripraśnena sevayā  
upadeksyanti te jñānaṁ  
jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

"Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen

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the truth." Unless one is *tattva-darśī*, in complete knowledge of the Absolute Truth, one cannot describe the activities of the Personality of Godhead. Therefore although there are many so-called *Rāmāyaṇas*, or histories of Lord Ramchandra's activities, some of them are not actually authoritative. Sometimes Lord Ramchandra's activities are described in terms of one's own imaginations, speculations or material sentiments. But the characteristics of Lord Ramchandra should not be handled as something imaginary. While describing the history of Lord Ramchandra, Sukadeva Gosvami told Maharaja Parikṣit, "You have already heard about the activities of Lord Ramchandra." Apparently, therefore, five thousand years ago there were many *Rāmāyaṇas*, or histories of Lord Ramchandra's activities, and there are many still. But we must select only those books written by *tattva-darśīs* (*jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ* [Bg. 4.34]), not the books of so-called scholars who claim knowledge only on the basis of a doctorate. This is a warning by Sukadeva Gosvami. *Ṛṣibhis tattva-darśibhiḥ*. Although the *Rāmāyaṇa* composed by Valmiki is a huge literature, the same activities are summarized here by Sukadeva Gosvami in a few verses.

- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 9: Liberation » Chapter Ten » Verse:3 » Purport by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

**WHEN WAS THE RĀMĀYAṆA COMPOSED?**  
Sṛla Bhaktivinoda Thakura

Although the *Rāmāyaṇa* is considered poetry, it is also history. Valmiki Rsi, who was a contemporary of Ramchandra, wrote it. We do not feel that Valmiki alone wrote the current *Rāmāyaṇa*. By considering the conversation between Narada and Valmiki, and the recitation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Ramchandra's assembly by Lava and Kusa, it is understood that Valmiki composed many of the verses glorifying the character of Ramchandra in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but after some time another scholar elaborated on Valmiki's work. I think that the present day *Rāmāyaṇa* was completed after the composition of the *Mahābhārata*, because, while chastising Jabali, Ramchandra accuses him of being polluted by the *Śakya* philosophy. I believe that the present day *Rāmāyaṇa* was written around 500 B.C.

- (Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā introduction)- (Brahmā-saṁhitā 5.10 purport)

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THE DEITY, THE WORSHIP,  
AND THE WORSHIPER

*Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura*

The Absolute Truth manifests in five ways: as *parā tattva*, *vyūha*, *vaibhava*, *antaryāmī*, and *arcā*. Each of these is the worshipable Lord. Apart from these manifestations, everything and everyone else is in the servant category. The Lord accepts offerings from His servants, and each of these five manifestations of the Lord reciprocates with His own servants. There is no meaning to being dominant if there is no servant to dominate. Therefore each manifestation of the Absolute Truth has His own servants.

When one begins Deity worship, one uses particular ingredients. Then one worships the Supersoul in the mind. Then, one worships the Lord's *vaibhava* incarnations. For example, one may worship Lord Rama. Sri Rama appeared with His servants, especially Hanuman and Sugriva. One should worship the *vaibhava* incarnations only as They appear before Their servants. After worshiping the *vaibhava* manifestation, one worships the *vyūhas*. There are four *vyūhas*, namely Vasudeva, Sankarsana, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha. Ultimately one comes to the worship of the *parā-tattva*, Krishna. To climb from the bottom of a hill to the top, we must go uphill step by step. In our journey toward *parā-tattva* Krishna, we will find that worshiping the *arcā* will help us. Therefore *śāstra* states:

*yena janma-śataih pūrvam, Vasudevah samārcita  
tan-mukhe hari-nāmāni, sadā tiśṭhanti bhārata*

O descendant of Bharata, the holy names of Lord Visnu are always vibrating in the mouth of one who has previously worshiped Vasudeva perfectly for hundreds of lifetimes.

Immanent, pure, unalloyed conscience is called *antaryāmī* or *caitya-guru*, the Supersoul. The *antaryāmī* is an internal entity. Because we have forgotten Krishna, we have come to this material world, far from our eternal home. We are meant to return. The first aid on our journey is Deity worship, then awareness of and focus on the *antaryāmī*, then worship of the *vaibhava* incarnations, then worship of the *vyūha* forms, and finally, full consciousness of the *parā-tattva*.

Even after worshiping the Supreme Lord for many births a materialist cannot make the kind of advancement made by those who associate directly with *guru* and the *Vaiṣṇavas*, hearing *hari-kathā* from them. The fortune we receive by faithfully hearing about Krishna from the most merciful spiritual master and the *Vaiṣṇavas* cannot be achieved even if the Deity form mercifully reveals Himself to us.

The Supersoul does not always speak to us directly. *Śāstra* states:

*śikṣā-guruke ta' jāni kṛṣṇera svarūpa,  
antaryāmī, bhakta-śreṣṭha ei dui rūpa*

One should know the instructing spiritual master to be the Personality of Krishna. Lord Krishna manifests Himself as the Supersoul and as the greatest devotee of the Lord. (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* *Ādi* 1.47)

*jīve sākṣāt nāhi tāte guru caitya-rūpe,  
śikṣā-guru haya kṛṣṇa-mahānta-svarūpe*

Since one cannot visually experience the presence of the Supersoul, He appears before us as a liberated devotee. Such a spiritual master is none other than Krishna Himself. (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* *Ādi* 1.58)

*antaryāmī īśvarera ei rīti haye,  
bāhire nā kahe, vastu prakāṣe hṛdaye*

The Supersoul within everyone's heart speaks not externally but from within. He instructs the devotees in all respects, and that is His way of instruction. (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* *Madhya* 6.83)

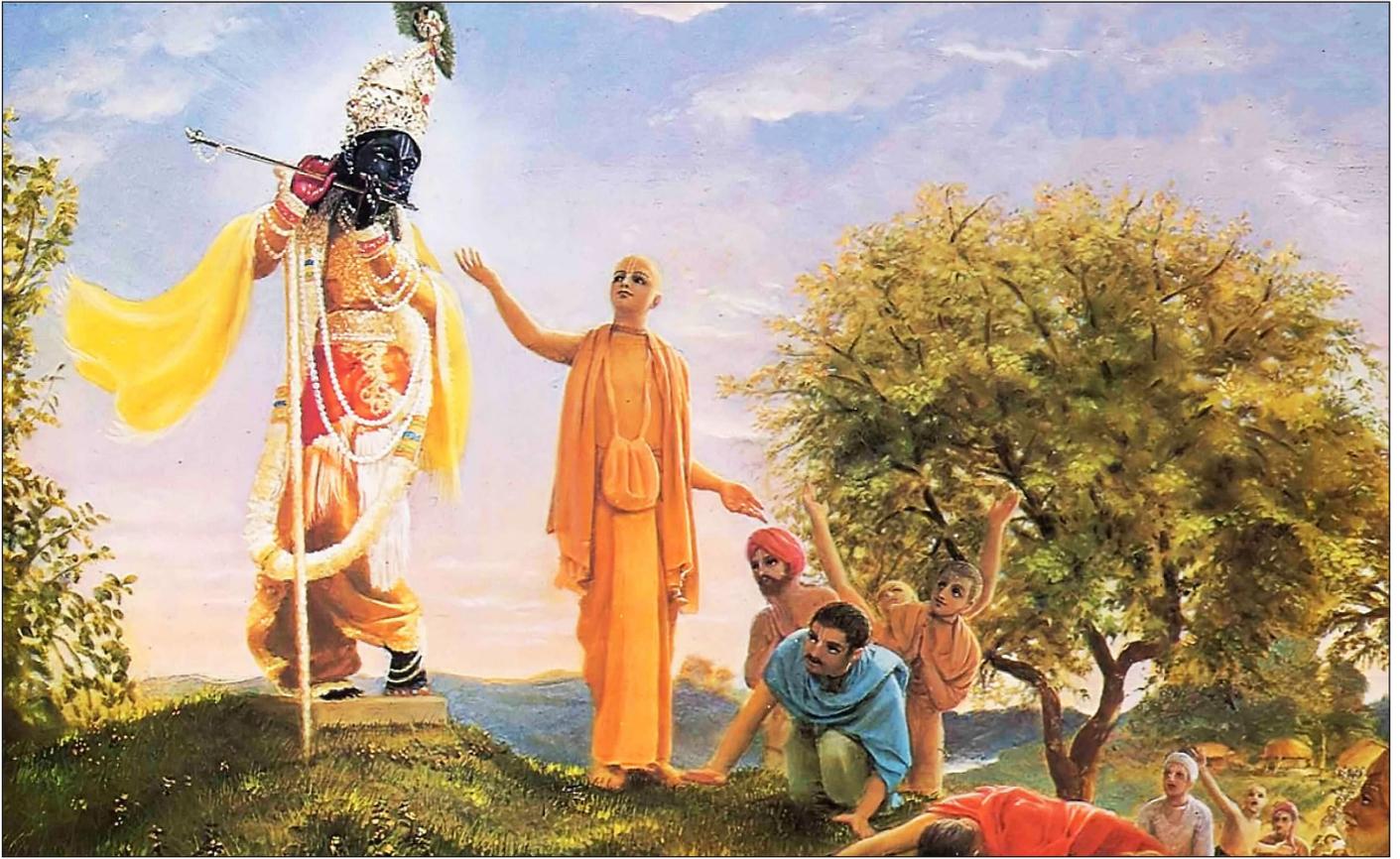
The *vaibhava* incarnations like Sri Rama speak with, instruct, and guide the *jīvas*, ascertaining what is for their benefit and what is not. The *vyūhas*' activities are of a different nature.

The supreme Absolute Truth, *parā-tattva*, manifests in four ways, but one can only understand this science by the Lord's mercy. *Śāstra* states:

*īśvarera kṛpā-leśa haya ta' yāhāre  
sei ta' īśvara-tattva jānibāre pare*

If one receives but a tiny bit of the Lord's favor by dint of devotional service, he can understand

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the nature of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.  
(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 6.83*)

We think that the Lord's Deity is inanimate; but He is not a product of matter. He is *sat-cit-ānanda*. Sri Gaurangadeva said:

*īśvarera śrī-vigraha sac-cid-ānandākāra,  
se-vigrahe kaha sattva-guṇera vikāra*

The transcendental form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is complete in eternity, cognizance, and bliss. However, you describe this transcendental form as a product of material goodness.  
(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 6.166*)

*śrī-vigraha ye nā māne, sei ta' pāśaṅḍī,  
adāśya aspāśya, sei haya yama-daṅḍī*

One who does not accept the transcendental form of the Lord is certainly an agnostic. Such a person should be neither seen nor touched. Indeed, he is subject to be punished by Yamaraja. (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 6.167*)

Elsewhere in *Śāstra* it is stated:

*pratimā naha tumi sākṣāt vrajendra-nandana  
vipra lāgi' kara tumi akārya-karaṇa*

My dear Lord, You are not a statue; You are directly the son of Maharaja Nanda. Now, for the sake of the old *brāhmaṇa*, You can do something You have never done before. (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 5.96*)

The spiritual master helps us as the intermediary so that there will be a guide between the Deity, the worship, and the worshiper. Otherwise, if the worshiper is not self-realized or if he lacks knowledge of the Deity form, his worship will turn into the idol worship of children. We do not need idol worship; we have a great need to worship the Lord.

The Deity is defined as that form that is offered worship. The Deity is nondifferent from the Lord. For our benefit the Supreme Lord manifests in the Deity. Ordinary people think the Deity only an idol because He cannot walk and cannot take initiative. This is their illusion. If they learn to associate with pure devotees, their illusion can be removed.

Cultivation of the Absolute Truth depends heavily on hearing and chanting. That is why the *śāstra* states:

*brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva,  
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja  
māli hañā kare sei bīja āropana,  
śravaṇa-kīrtana-jale karaye secana*

Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Krishna. By the mercy of both Krishna and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service.

When a person receives the seed of devotional service, he should take care of it by becoming a gardener and sowing the seed in his heart. If he waters the seed gradually by the process of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* [hearing and chanting], the seed will begin to sprout. (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya* 19.151-152)

It used to be that when the spiritual master glorified Krishna everyone listened. Nowadays it is just the opposite. Professional reciters sit on their *guru's āsanas* to glorify Krishna without ever having become disciples. A real disciple should first learn what understanding his spiritual master has and how he worships Krishna. It is stated:

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya, jñānāñjana-śalākayā  
cakṣur unmlitaṁ yenam tasmai śrī-gurave  
namaḥ*

I was born in the darkest ignorance, and my spiritual master opened my eyes with the torch of knowledge. I offer my respectful obeisances unto him.

When the cataract of our material eyes is removed, we are free from foreign conception. Don't think that pretense when approaching a spiritual master will give you perfection. It would be foolish to think that you have gained a coconut just because you are standing under a coconut tree. You have to climb the tree, pick the coconut from the treetop, and break its shell. Then only can you take advantage of the coconut and drink its water.

You should also not think that performing *bhajan* under the guidance of *guru* and the *Vaiṣṇavas* and practicing mystic *yoga* are synonymous. If devotion is absent from a process, it is useless. If



we simply live comfortably while studying *Vedānta* and logic, we will not make advancement. Even if we become geniuses in logic and *Vedānta*, we will not go to Vaikuntha. The only path to spiritual fortune is to perform *hari-bhajana* while in the shelter of a bona fide *guru's* lotus feet.

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!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

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