

"The Nectar of Discrimination"

A Treastise on the Three Modes of Material Nature

by Kundali dasa, 1994

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na hy adbhutam tvac-caranabja-renubhir hatamhaso bhaktir adhokshaje 'mala mauhurtikad yasya
samagamac ca me dustarka-mulo 'pahato 'vivekah

It is not at all wonderful that simply by being covered by the dust of your lotus feet, one immediately attains the platform of pure devotional service to Adhokshaja, which is not available even to great demigods like Brahma. By associating with you just for a moment, I am now freed from all argument, false prestige and lack of discrimination, which are the roots of entanglement in the material world. Now I am free from all these problems. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 5.13.22)

Dedication

To my eternal spiritual master, Om Vishnupada Paramahansa Parivrajakacarya Ashtotara-sata

Sri Srimad A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and to all those great souls of the past, present, and future,

who represent the parampara with unflinching integrity. In any condition of life I aspire to follow in their mighty footsteps.

Acknowledgements

This book was years in the making and many people contributed to the effort. Some gave me money to print it. Some gave me experience with the modes of nature in one way or another. Some gave me moral support. Others gave me the opportunity to refine my understanding by discussing the modes from different angles of vision. It is simply not possible to credit them all by name in this space. In terms of recent inspiration, I have mentioned a few names in the Introduction. Besides those persons I want to mention just a few of the major influences in this effort. Of course topping the list is Srila Prabhupada, his books and teachings form the bones and flesh of this book. He encouraged us to study the philosophy and then express it in our own words.

While the whole concept of this book is based on Prabhupada's teachings, I want to make a blanket acknowledgement here that a number of the points made in this book were inspired by two books of M. Scott Peck's, *The Road Less Travelled* and *The Different Drum*. Bhakta Candrasekharan whose compilation of the *Interactions of the Three Modes of Material Nature*, based on the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, has been extremely useful as a ready reference on the three modes of nature. Another helpful person was Krishna-mayi Devi Dasi. She gave me the original dialogues that appear in Appendix B. These I altered to suit my needs. Kurma-rupa prabhu, who has been an exemplary Vaishnava and a reliable friend, read the manuscript and gave me many useful suggestions for improving the book. He also edited and typeset it. Mahamaya Devi Dasi very kindly came to my rescue for badly needed proof-reading. Bhaktin Tulasi did the drawings and Bhaktin Rachel did the Index. A big, hearty thank you to all who helped directly or indirectly to make this book happen. Hare Krishna.

Foreword

A Malaysian couple bought some of Srila Prabhupada's books and started practicing Krishna consciousness at home. Soon thereafter the husband approached the devotees and announced his plan to dedicate his family fully to Krishna's service. His two sons will go to gurukula in Vrindavana. His wife and daughter will move to New Zealand so the girl can attend school and his wife will assist in the kitchen and puja department. He will stay behind expanding his successful business, cover his family expenses, pay off the mortgage on the house, and donate the rest of his earnings to the temple. Every Gaura Purnima the family will reunite in Mayapura. In this way their material life will come to an end.

It was a festive occasion and marveling at his surprising overnight advancement, the devotees endorsed his proposal. After a touching farewell at the airport, the boys were off to India, his wife and daughter to New Zealand, and he hurried home into the arms of his young and passionate mistress.

The whole thing was a hoax. He simply feigned spiritual progress so he could dump his wife and family. But why did they mistake this devious shirk of responsibility as renunciation? Because they did not discriminate according to the modes of material nature. Let us analyze this event.

Krishna explains there are three types of renunciation. One person renounces his prescribed duties because of illusion—he acts in ignorance. Another renounces them because they are troublesome—he acts in passion. These two avoid responsibility owing to foolishness and selfishness respectively. The third renouncer, unlike the former two, does not shirk his prescribed duties. So what does he renounce? He renounces attachment to the results of his prescribed duty—he acts in the mode of goodness.

So how can we tell whose whom? Krishna says, "Everyone is forced to act helplessly according to the qualities he has acquired from the modes of material nature..." We can determine one's qualities and thus the results of his actions, by examining his motivation, association, activity, cleanliness (or lack of it), food, etc. and classify them according to the modes of nature. If we do this accurately then any conditioned soul's behavior can be predicted.

Our hero's associates were all materialistic businessmen (passion). His main activity was expanding his business (passion). Even his overnight "advancement" had an element of passionate haste in it. With these symptoms what can we understand? Krishna explains that a person influenced by passion is attached to the fruits of his work and desires to enjoy them. He is "greedy, always envious, impure, moved by joy and sorrow..." Not only that, but our hero wanted to increase his passionate activities. What symptoms result from such an increase? "Great attachment, fruitive activity, intense endeavor, uncontrollable desire and hankering..." It is safe to deduce that while under the influence of the mode of passion one cannot live separated from his wife practicing celibacy, or give up any substantial portion of his hard-earned wealth.

So, we should not be surprised that this man dumped his pious family in the name of spiritual life. The only thing he renounced was his responsibility and even a beginning student of the modes of nature could have deduced that from the very start—just by seeing the symptoms.

From this brief example it is not hard to imagine the immense practical value a thorough understanding of the modes of nature can have for a devotee. It is vital. It is a key that unlocks the door to liberation. This key has been forged by Krishna, and honed and polished by Srila

Prabhupada. Now Kundali prabhu is giving us sound encouragement to use this key by offering this lucid, thoughtful, and practical book on discriminating in terms of the modes of nature. To take advantage of it, however, we will have to cultivate the mode of goodness, "which is purer than the others" and "which is illuminating and frees one from all sinful reactions." Further, "it awakens one to self-realization."

Kurma-rupa Dasa

tad-vag-visargo janatagha-viplavo yasmin prati-slokaṁ abaddhavyatī api namany anantasya yaso
'nkitāni yat srinvanti gayanti grinanti sadhavaḥ

On the other hand, that literature which is full of descriptions of the transcendental glories of the name, fame, forms, pastimes, etc. of the unlimited Supreme Lord is a different creation, full of transcendental words directed toward bringing about a revolution in the impious lives of this world's misdirected civilization. Such transcendental literatures, even though imperfectly composed, are heard, sung and accepted by purified men who are thoroughly honest. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.5.11)

Introduction

om ajnāna-timirandhasya jñānanjāna-salakaya cakṣur unmilitam yena 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.

mukam karoti vacalam pūṅgavaṁ laṅghayat girim yat-kṛpā tam ahaṁ vande śrī-gurum dina tarinam

I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, the deliverer of the fallen souls, whose mercy turns the dumb into eloquent speakers, and enables the lame to cross mountains.

śrī-caitanya-māno-'bhishtam sthāpitam yena bhū-tale svayam rūpaḥ kāda mahyam dadati svapadāntikam

When will Śrī Rupa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, who has established within this material world the mission to fulfill the desire of Lord Caitanya, give me shelter under his lotus feet?

śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadadhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhaktā-vrinda

I offer my obeisances to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Prabhu Nityānanda, Śrī Advaita, Gadadhara, Śrīvāsa and all others in the line of devotion.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

ahaṁ hare tava padaika-mūla- dasanudāso bhavitasmi bhūyah manah smaretasu-pater guṇams te grīṇitā vak karma karotu krayaḥ

O my Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, will I again be able to be a servant of Your eternal servants who find shelter only at Your lotus feet? O Lord of my life, may I again become their servant so that my mind may always think of Your transcendental attributes, my words always glorify those attributes, and my body always engage in the loving service of Your Lordship? (Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.11.24)

na naka-prishtham na ca parameshthyam na sarva-bhaumam na rasadhipatyam na yoga-siddhir
apunar-bhavam va samanjas tva virahayya kankshe

O my Lord, source of all opportunities, I do not desire to enjoy in Dhruvaloka, the heavenly planets or the planet where Lord Brahma resides, nor do I want to be the supreme ruler of all the earthly planets or the lower planetary systems. I do not desire to be master of the powers of mystic yoga, nor do I want liberation if I have to give up Your lotus feet. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.11.25)

ajata-paksha iva mataram khagah stanyam yatha vatsatarah kshudh-artah priyam priyeva vyushitam
vishanna mano 'ravindaksha didrikshate tvam

O lotus-eyed Lord, as baby birds that have not yet developed their wings always look for their mother to return and feed them, as small calves tied with ropes await anxiously the time of milking, when they will be allowed to drink the milk of their mothers, or as a morose wife whose husband is away from home always longs for him to return and satisfy her in all respects, I always yearn for the opportunity to render direct service unto You. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.11.26)

mamottamasloka janeshu sakhyam samsara-cakre bhramatah sva-karmabhih tvan-mayayatmatmaja-
dara-geheshv asakta-cittasya na natha bhuyat

O my Lord, my master, I am wandering throughout this material world as a result of my fruitive activities. Therefore I simply seek friendship in the association of Your pious and enlightened devotees. My attachment to my body, wife, children and home is continuing by the spell of Your external energy, but I wish to be attached to them no longer. Let my mind, my consciousness and everything I have be attached only to You. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.11.27)

Dear Reader,

Hare Krishna. Please accept my humble obeisances in the dust at your feet. All glory to Srila Prabhupada.

This book is the fruit of a seminar on the three modes of nature that I taught in our centers in India, Europe, Australia, and Malaysia. Young and old devotees alike have expressed appreciation for it. Because of this unanimously positive response, and because I have pooled my experience from about twenty seminars into this book, I am confident that you will get value for the time spent reading this volume.

You must understand, however, that there is much more here than the gist of my seminar on the three modes of nature. This book is the fruit of my own long and bitter struggle with the modes themselves. Originally I intended to write a detailed confession of that struggle—the deviations,

transgressions, everything. My idea was that because I advocate the practice of integrity in this book, I should set the pace by including a confession as the introduction to this volume.

The inspiration to take this approach came from a book I read on community development by M. Scott Peck. In this book, *The Different Drum*, the author pointed out that one of the problems we face in our western culture of rugged individualism is that people are afraid to be vulnerable. So true. In the West it's taboo to reveal any imperfection in oneself. Imperfection is equated with weakness. And to show weakness means someone may exploit me. Hence we feel it necessary to hide our weaknesses and failures. Worse, we feel obliged to come off as supermen and superwomen.

The practice of rugged individualism is a hindrance to the development of true community. A major hindrance. Sad to say, we have brought this bit of cultural baggage into ISKCON. One is acutely aware that this is the unspoken rule in our society. Everyone fears that he will be trampled under if his weakness is exposed. Therefore, we put on an armor-plated exterior. We make a show of having it all together in devotional life. This causes many of us to come off as something we are not—supervaiṣṇava and supervaiṣṇavi. And so, despite the self-evident warts and blemishes that everyone can see, some of us have genuinely bought into this concept wholesale.

This mixing rugged individualism with spiritual life has not helped us—neither as individuals nor as a community. Rather it steadily threatens to undermine the integrity of our society. Unfortunately not all of us are ready to face this fact, but those of us who are should simply forge ahead and set the pace for others. After all, we may never get a consensus. Still, we have to do what's good for all. Right now, some may have vested interest in keeping the status quo, thinking, "What's good for me is good for ISKCON." Some think the other way around, "What's good for ISKCON is good for me."

The dynamic of being eager to preserve the status quo is an ever-present threat in any institution. I expect better from ISKCON, however, because our society is meant to be cut from different cloth owing to the wealth of transcendental knowledge received in parampara. The false ego platform of rugged individualism is a symptom of the mode of passion and ISKCON is meant to be an institution above the modes, but to the degree that we are contaminated by the modes of nature, to that extent the modes will have influence in ISKCON. Our ISKCON can never be all that it can be unless we give up our association with the lower modes of nature.

As the book on community development pointed out, the posture of rugged individualism is a ridiculous attitude because the reality is that in a community everyone has problems. Big ones, little ones. We all have imperfections, neuroses, sins, failures. The list is long. To attempt to hide them is to live a lie, to be a hypocrite. This is the opposite of integrity.

I'm not supposed to admit this in print, but it is a fact that this is the quality of life in our Krishna consciousness movement. Some unwritten code somewhere states that praise is the only admissible thing to say in a public forum about our society. Never let it be shown that we are less than perfect unless you want to be cast in the role of fault-finder, critic, the enemy or some such. This only goes to show how false is the practice of rugged individualism. If we must be hypocritical about our individual selves, naturally we will be in denial about our collective self as well.

But if non-Vaiṣṇavas can recognize that living a lie is self-defeating, as the author of *The Different Drum* has, so should we. After all, devotees of Krishna are supposed to be models of the highest integrity. Instead of living by the one-upmanship dictum that "I'm okay, but you're not okay," we

should come onto the platform of integrity, which is "I'm not okay, you're not okay, but that's okay, because by Krishna consciousness we'll both be okay."

For a nutshell description of what it means to be an individual of integrity, I quote from *The Different Drum*, a book well worth reading for its many enlightening points on awakening community consciousness:

One of the things a calling to be an individual of integrity means is a calling to speak out, to be outspoken. We are called to overcome the psychology of helplessness, of reticence. If we see a lie, we are called to name it a lie. If we see insanity, we are called to name it as such. If you are a preacher, you are called to preach the gospel, no matter how unpalatable it may be to your congregation. Don't avoid the subject of the arms race at a party just because it might be divisive. Yes, there are some who may find it upsetting, but perhaps they need to be upset. There are others who will respond to your outspokenness with gratitude for that leadership that gives them the courage to speak out about it.

This point about "a calling to speak out, to be outspoken" is an important one. We often fail to appreciate that this is an important aspect of humility and of honesty. Humility has many guises. Being sheep-like meek is but one aspect of humility. Plain, straightforward honesty (integrity) is another aspect of humility, equal

in weight to the calling to be meek. Of course a Vaishnava is meek and humble about matters pertaining to himself, if he is attacked or wronged, but as far as ill-treatment of others and questions of truth and falsity, right and wrong, he is not passive. That's part of his basic integrity and character. All Peck's other points about integrity are readily recognizable as Krishna conscious.

Vulnerability is part and parcel of being a man of integrity. A devotee is vulnerable, open, and therefore surrendered to and dependent on the Lord. This is a feeling a Vaishnava can never have too much of. And because he is fully dependent on the Lord, he is fearless. A devotee should seek ways to experience this sense of utter dependency, which leads to fearlessness, which is a far cry from the I-got-it-all-together bravado of the rugged individualist, which is ego-centered even if it has taken on Vaishnava dress. I believe that practicing openness or vulnerability is a way, a very good way, to increase one's dependency on Krishna.

With this conviction, I wanted to set the pace for all my readers by doing a full on confession thus making myself vulnerable to all. I wanted to lay my life open before the world and by so doing unburden myself of any residual feelings of guilt and so on. This is important because when one is encumbered with guilt he has to do things even unconsciously to expiate the guilt and salve his conscience. This becomes an encumbrance to his spiritual life and to his preaching. The best countermeasure is the practice of vulnerability. Therefore, I thought to clear the air by confession.

So I set about writing a full confession. It was quite a long chronicle. After about a week at it, I opted for a different approach: not so many details. I had had a few important realizations. For one thing to do a proper job of it would require a separate volume.

More significant was that I realized I have no right to drag the mind of my reader through the muck of my degraded life to such an extent. My primary purpose in writing is for self-purification, but I also seek to elevate my readers consciousness, not rake them through the same muck that I've had to wallow in. A detailed confession, however, would only bring them into sustained association with the lower modes. Maybe that's why confession is not a formal part of our Vaishnava tradition, not enough krishna-katha.

Yes, a full confession would make juicy gossip for those so inclined, but I doubt it would be of much benefit to other readers. And anyway it is not service to engage others in gossip. At the same time there's no denying that my stating things in more general terms makes it more fun for my detractors; they can flesh out my story to fit their preference.

No doubt some will think the story of my struggles with the modes of nature disqualifies me from having the right to preach strongly. Some may even say my failings disqualify me from writing this book or from preaching Krishna consciousness at all. I doubt Srila Prabhupada would agree, and the truth is my experiences and the lessons learnt from them have inspired me to preach with vigor. I know from raw experience the things of which I speak.

As for my confession, as indicated earlier, I think it appropriate to give just a synopsis. That will serve my purpose of practicing vulnerability: It is a fact that since coming to the Krishna consciousness movement in August 1973, the week of my twentieth birthday, I have performed more sinful activities than in the years prior to joining to the movement. I am deeply ashamed of this personal failure. Despite my studying and preaching the philosophy, and despite my best efforts to follow Srila Prabhupada's advice to cram his purports, I could not disentangle myself from the modes of nature.

But I did not realize that was the problem. I thought I was sincere and therefore automatically on the transcendental platform. I thought the modes of nature had nothing to do with me. Okay, maybe occasionally they did, but nothing really serious.

But the inner positive taste of Krishna consciousness was not there, or it came and went. Besides that, I was in victim consciousness—I thought providence and so many external factors seemed aligned against me; they conspired to victimize me and held me back from realizing the transcendental bounty I deserved. It never occurred to me that I was wrongly applying the process. I never realized I was firmly in the grip of the modes of nature. After all, I had often heard in classes: "Devotees are transcendental." I thought, "I am a devotee and therefore, transcendental." I believed it and preached it. And because of this assumption, when I read Srila Prabhupada's books, being myself in the clutches of the modes, I consistently missed the fact that one must first rise to the platform of goodness.

For years I struggled to become Krishna conscious. Sometimes I was up, and sometimes I was down. Then in 1987, following a car accident, which aggravated a back and neck problem, I went into a new and unprecedented downward spiral. Owing to my physical condition, the dullness brought on by prescribed pain-killers, the financial burden of therapy, the stress of maintaining my family, and my failing marriage, I became seriously depressed. My life started to fall apart. By the fall of 1988, for the first time, I stopped chanting my rounds regularly. I was deeply confused. "How," I often wondered, "did I end up in this condition when I know in my heart that all I really wanted in life was to practice Krishna consciousness?"

I hit the bottom of my downward spiral in November of 1990 when I separated from my wife and two children. I started chanting my rounds again that month. I would like to say that I never again failed in this vow, but it happened again in 1991 while I was in Taiwan studying tai chi, which was helping me to cope with the stress on my back and neck. During those six months I went into a second downward spiral. This time I was aided by bad association in Taipei. I broke two of the regulative principles: I took intoxicants and I had an illicit sexual relationship.

Beginning from spring of 1987, when I had the car accident and my life started coming apart, I developed the habit of praying every morning to Srila Prabhupada to let me face whatever was in store for me but let me somehow achieve full surrender in this life. I kept up this daily prayer throughout the intervening years. I think it saved me.

One day I was lying on the floor when suddenly I felt a sharp pain in my chest. It was indescribably painful. I was jerked into a half-upright position and I just stayed there. I could not move a muscle. It felt like a giant hand had reached into my chest, grabbed my heart, and squeezed. Pain overwhelmed my whole body. "This is it," I thought. I tried to chant. I could not. I could not work my jaw. I could not even gasp. I chanted within my mind.

I then heard a voice say, "Just like that, it can all be over." Whether it was a voice or my own thought I can't say.

Then as suddenly as it came, the pain left. I fell back to the floor, crumpled like some boneless thing. The whole thing lasted no more than 90 seconds, maybe even less, but it had felt like an eternity. Thinking it over, I understood I had received a warning. This was the answer to my daily prayer. I resolved to quit my tai chi studies and resume full-time service to Srila Prabhupada come what may.

My plan was to first make a pilgrimage to India, then return to the USA, where I would try and work out my family difficulties. It seemed like a good plan, but Srila Prabhupada had another one for me.

In the background of the events which occurred during the period I was not chanting, I never lost faith in Srila Prabhupada or in the process of Krishna consciousness. I doubted my sincerity a lot, but I never gave up Krishna consciousness as the goal of my life. In Taiwan I was not chanting regularly, but I began paying attention to the modes of nature. It started one night when the friends I had made in Taipei took me to a disco. Formerly I was never a disco goer. I loathed dancing and party-going. I had only done this because of association. The whole time that first night I felt out of place.

All night I observed the people and was appreciating how the modes of nature were actually running the show. After that I went a number of times, swept along by my associates. Sometimes I got carried away by the modes into the disco spirit. Mostly I hung back and observed.

I developed the habit of stepping back from myself and observing things in terms of the modes of material nature. From this practice I became convinced that I had not paid enough attention to this part of the philosophy. Formerly I believed the three modes of nature had little or no relevance to my practice of Krishna consciousness. Now it occurred to me that if one developed a thorough knowledge of the modes of nature he could purposely make all decisions on that basis. Life in Krishna consciousness would make a lot more sense. I could appreciate that the modes of nature are not abstractions. In fact, a grasp of them gives one tools for dealing with the material energy.

I read the Fourteenth Chapter of the Gita and my suspicions were confirmed. Now that chapter spoke to me in ways I had never perceived before. In the very first purport Srila Prabhupada listed four things to be learnt about the modes of material nature—what they are, how they act, how they bind, and how they give liberation. For the first time "how they give liberation" caught my interest. In previous readings that phrase had never even registered.

Also, he said that this knowledge was "far, far superior" to all Krishna had thus far explained. This last point had never registered either, even though I had read the same chapter at least 20 times before. Then I realized that in hundreds of classes I had never heard anyone speak on this point—how the modes give liberation. I began mulling this point over from time to time.

Once I got to Vrindavana my life took a dramatic turn. I resumed my regulated spiritual life and became more and more enlivened. I repeatedly prayed to Srila Prabhupada for a sign as to what I should do for service. Though I was in contact with my wife there were no positive signs that my family situation could be worked out. Then a service opportunity came along that was difficult to ignore, a chance to collaborate with Satya Narayana prabhu on the translation and commentary of the sat-sandarbhas. God brothers encouraged me, saying that this service was perfectly suited for me.

As far as my interest in the modes of nature, I had a number of conversations on this topic with a devotee called Caitanya-priya. Our discussions enlivened us and he agreed that we do not study this aspect of the philosophy sufficiently in ISKCON. Right about the same time Bhakta Candrasekaran in Malaysia sent me a booklet he had put together with all the information on the modes of nature in the Bhagavad-gita. Having this on hand inspired me. I decided to teach about and emphasize the modes in my preaching.

Soon after this, I visited Berlin and while there offered to teach a seminar to the devotees in order to deepen my study of the three modes. That went very, very well, for me and for the devotees. Their appreciative response was most encouraging. Subsequently I got requests to teach it in other temples. It gives me great satisfaction therefore, to offer this book to the worldwide community of Vaishnavas as the ripened fruit of my experience.

I still practice stepping out of myself and observing the modes interacting, even among devotees. It is a most edifying experience. I recommend it highly. I also choose my association on the basis of the modes I see influencing people and that too has been very, very rewarding. Life in Krishna consciousness has been better than ever for it.

One important point I want to address is this: in a few places I analyze situations and events in our society in terms of the three modes of nature. I do this to highlight the need to bring knowledge of the modes down to the practical level and routinely use it to discriminate. My purpose is solely to educate. Some will undoubtedly take it as criticism. Yes, it is in some cases. I can't help it. I have high expectations for our society. I assume that all members of ISKCON have similar expectations. I could easily criticize the karmis, but I don't see much value in that for the long run. I believe that we have everything required to improve our performance as a community of saintly persons and therefore, it is in our interest to be self-critical. As the saying goes, the only person one can really change is himself.

Another consideration in this connection is the advice of Kaviraja Gosvami who gave some guidelines regarding controversy in Chapter Two of the Adi-lila (2.117):

siddhanta baliya citte na kara alasa iha ha-ite krishne lage sudridha manasa

A sincere student should not neglect the discussion of such conclusions, considering them controversial, for such discussions strengthen the mind. Thus one's mind becomes attached to Sri Krishna.

In the purport Srila Prabhupada writes:

One should be particularly careful to understand the truth about Krishna. If because of laziness one does not come to know Krishna conclusively, one will be misguided about the cult of devotion, like those who declare themselves advanced devotees and imitate the transcendental symptoms sometimes observed in liberated souls. Although the use of thoughts and arguments is a most suitable process for inducing an uninitiated person to become a devotee, neophytes in devotional service must always alertly understand Krishna through the vision of the revealed scriptures, the bona fide devotees and the spiritual master...

From the teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu to Sanatana Gosvami we learn (Cc. Madhya 22.65):

shastra-yuktye sunipuna, dridha-sraddha yanra 'uttama-adhikari' sei taraye samsara

"A person who is expert in understanding the conclusion of the revealed scriptures and who fully surrenders to the cause of the Lord is actually able to deliver others from the clutches of material existence. . . ."

Imitation devotees, who wish to advertise themselves as elevated Vaishnavas and who therefore imitate the previous acaryas but do not follow them in principle, are condemned in the words of Srīmad- Bhagavatam as stone-hearted. Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura has commented on their stone-hearted condition as follows: bahir asru-pulakayoh sator api yad dhridayam na vikriyeta tad asma-saram iti kanishthadhikarinam eva asru-pulakadi-mattve 'pi asma-sara-hridayataya nindaisha. "Those who shed tears by practice but whose hearts have not changed are to be known as stone-hearted devotees of the lowest grade. Their imitation crying, induced by artificial practice, is always condemned." The desired change of heart referred to above is visible in reluctance to do anything not congenial to the devotional way. To create such a change of heart, conclusive discussion about Sri Krishna and His potencies is absolutely necessary. False devotees may think that simply shedding tears will lead one to the transcendental plane, even if one has not had a factual change in heart, but such a practice is useless if there is no transcendental realization. False devotees, lacking the conclusion of transcendental knowledge, think that artificially shedding tears will deliver them. Similarly, other false devotees think that studying books of the previous acaryas is unadvisable, like studying dry empiric philosophies. But Srila Jiva Gosvami, following the previous acaryas, has inculcated the conclusions of the scriptures in the six theses called the SHat-sandarbhas. False devotees who have very little knowledge of such conclusions fail to achieve pure devotion for want of zeal in accepting the favorable directions for devotional service given by self-realized devotees. Such false devotees are like impersonalists, who also consider devotional service no better than ordinary fruitive actions.

Still, I expect my view may not get empathy from some quarters. For that I simply beg the community of Vaishnavas to tolerate my differing outlook and values. One consolation I can offer is while some may disapprove of what I have included here for analysis, it's nothing compared to what I left out. In my twenty-one years of affiliation with the movement I have seen, heard, and done a lot of things that makes excellent material for analysis in a work such as this. What's here is but a few threads out of the whole cloth.

A great source of inspiration while I was doing this book was my daily reading of Hari Sauri prabhu's second volume of his Transcendental Diary. Simply wonderful. He deserves a medal for this service. No devotee should go without reading his transcendental diary, so nicely prepared, with the transcendental integrity of Srila Prabhupada shining right through. It was more relishable when read aloud to others. I take his feet on my head for so kindly giving the world and posterity this extraordinary relish of Prabhupada smarana.

Another source of inspiration was Satsvarupa Goswami. His sustained practice at being vulnerable in his books are wonderful examples for me; indeed an example for all of us. I can't help but be inspired by anyone in our society who has the courage to refuse to be something he is not. The pressure to be supervaishnava is immense. I hope someday he gains wider appreciation among his peers for his contribution. That will be a positive sign for the whole society. It will mean the fortifications of rugged individualism are being dismantled. That will be good for us individually, collectively, and for the entire world.

Also worthy of mention and thanks is my estranged wife. While it is a fact that owing to the interaction of the modes of nature we both have bitter memories from our years of marriage, I feel indebted to her nonetheless and want to express my thanks for all the life-lessons I learnt in her association. Unfortunately, because of the power of the modes of nature, I am only appreciating and learning those lessons in hindsight, but better late than never. I was by no means a model Krishna conscious husband and therefore not the best association for her. I deeply regret my failing.

On the other hand, inasmuch as that experience has contributed to my present unflinching resolve to make a success of my human form of life, I can recognize that it was all in fact the mercy of Krishna upon me. Krishna has a million techniques for shredding the false ego of conditioned souls who want to come to Him. The technique He used on me was pulling the carpet from under my conception of a happy Krishna conscious family life. For that I am ever in His debt.

Finally, I want to express my indebtedness to all the devotees who gave me the chance to engage in devotional service by discussing the three modes of nature with them. It is wonderfully purifying to worship Krishna with one's intelligence in the association of devotees. My appreciation goes out to all of you for this blessing. I hope to continue getting your blessings and well-wishes. My only aim in life is to attain victory over the three modes of nature and thus be eternally fixed in pure devotional service to Srila Prabhupada. I want to please him by preaching Krishna consciousness without compromise. I pray that Lord Krishna will confer His blessings on all my readers that they will also be inspired towards this singular purpose. Hare Krishna.

All glory to Sri-Sri Guru and Gauranga

Yogini Ekadasi

July 4, 1994

Bhaktivedanta Village, France

tathapi sangah parivarjaniyo guneshu maya-raciteshu tavat mad-bhakti-yogena dridhena yavad rajo
nirasyeta manah-kashayah

Nevertheless, until by firmly practicing devotional service to Me one has eliminated from his mind all contamination of material passion, one must carefully avoid associating with the material modes, which are produced by My illusory energy. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.28.27)

CHAPTER ONE

Why Study The Three Modes?

In the Bhagavad-gita (14.1), referring to the three modes of nature, the Supreme Lord said:

param bhuyah pravakshami jnananam jnam uttamam yaj jnatva munayah sarve param
siddhim ito gatah

Again I shall declare to you this supreme wisdom, the best of all knowledge, knowing which all the sages have attained the supreme perfection.

Srila Prabhupada makes some compelling statements in the purport:

In the Thirteenth Chapter, it was clearly explained that by humbly developing knowledge one may possibly be freed from material entanglement. It has also been explained that it is due to association with the modes of nature that the living entity is entangled in this material world. Now, in this chapter, the Supreme Personality explains what those modes of nature are, how they act, how they bind and how they give liberation. The knowledge explained in this chapter is proclaimed by the Supreme Lord to be superior to the knowledge given so far in other chapters. By understanding this knowledge, various great sages attained perfection and transferred to the spiritual world. The Lord now explains the same knowledge in a better way. This knowledge is far, far superior to all other processes of knowledge thus far explained, and knowing this many attained perfection. Thus it is expected that one who understands this Fourteenth Chapter will attain perfection.

Here Srila Prabhupada says the Fourteenth Chapter teaches four things about the three modes of nature—what they are, how they act, how they bind, and how they give liberation. Of these, the fourth item—how they give liberation—is rarely discussed, if at all. In twenty years, I have heard many classes discussing the three modes of nature, but I never once heard a word on how they give liberation. In discussing the three modes with many devotee audiences I often asked if they have ever heard a class emphasizing how the modes give liberation, but I never got an affirmative response. Usually the other three items are the entire focus. This is an interesting phenomenon because as transcendentalists, this item is clearly the one of most interest to us.

The lack of emphasis on how the modes give liberation makes me wonder how well we have grasped the philosophy. It demonstrates the potency of the modes of nature. They have kept us from emphasizing what Krishna considers "the supreme wisdom." How can we expect to have a correct understanding of the affairs of Radha-Krishna without a proper understanding of the modes of nature? How can we progress to higher math without understanding basic math?

Unwanted Creepers

Without a clear understanding of the modes of nature it is difficult to distinguish between pure and mixed devotional service. Can we afford not to make this distinction? The answer is "No." Mixed devotional service is so complex; it is a virtual minefield one must cross to get to pure devotional service. The more one knows its symptoms, the better his chances of avoiding it. The shastra says that we must be free of all contamination of the modes of nature, that is to say, all stages of mixed devotional service, in order to be eligible for understanding the postgraduate phase of the Vaishnava philosophy—Krishna's intimate pastimes with the gopis. In the Caitanya-caritamrita, while describing upasakha, the unwanted creepers that grow along with the bhakti-lata creeper, Sri Caitanya told Srila Rupa Gosvami (Cc.Madhya 19.160):

seka-jala pana upasakha badi' yaya stabdha hana mula-shakha badite na paya

If one does not distinguish between the bhakti-lata creeper and the other creepers, the sprinkling of water is misused because the other creepers are nourished while the bhakti-lata creeper is curtailed.

Two verses earlier the Lord said that the varieties of these unwanted creepers are asankhya, unlimited. Then in Text 159 the Lord gives a sampling of the kinds of unwanted creepers that crop up:

‘nishiddhacara’, ‘kutinati’ ‘jiva-himsana’ ‘labha’, ‘puja’, ‘pratishtadi’ yata upasakha-gana

Some unnecessary creepers that grow with the bhakti creeper are the creepers of behavior unacceptable for those trying to attain perfection, diplomatic behavior, animal killing, mundane profiteering, mundane adoration, and mundane importance. All these are unwanted creepers.

In the purport Srila Prabhupada makes this important point:

All these obstructions have been described in the verse as unwanted creepers. They simply present obstacles for the real creeper, bhakti-lata-bija. One should be very careful to avoid all these unwanted things. Sometimes these unwanted creepers look exactly like the bhakti-lata creeper. They appear to be of the same size and the same species, when they are packed together with the bhakti-lata creeper, but in spite of this, the creepers are called upasakha. A pure devotee can distinguish between the bhakti-lata creeper and a mundane creeper, and he is very alert to distinguish them and keep them separate.

These "mundane creepers" indicate mixed devotional service. Because mixed devotional service can have all the trappings of pure devotional service one has to be ultra-careful. But ultra-careful means that he or she must know what is a weed and what is a creeper. Without knowing this, how can one have the confidence to uproot one and not the other? The fact that such creepers may be "the same size and appear to be the same species" only makes the task more demanding. It means one's power of discrimination must be honed to its finest.

Later on we will see where Srila Prabhupada discusses how the modes of nature mix with the nine processes of devotional service to give us umpteen varieties of mixed devotional service. Actually,

in spite of what you may have heard to the contrary, the mode of goodness plays an integral part in attaining perfection in Krishna consciousness. This point is sprinkled all over Prabhupada's books and lectures (see Appendix B), however, due to reading in the wrong mode this nugget of the philosophy eludes many of us. We all know it, in some remote way, but it's far more important than we realize. It means that despite years of practicing transcendental life, the modes have been active among us. Up to now we have largely been their victims. This book is about how to turn this situation around, how to stop being a victim and become a victor.

My goal is to inspire you to use knowledge of the three modes to achieve the very thing we all joined the Krishna consciousness movement for—to attain the state of transcendental goodness, and love of God.

I don't believe that Srila Prabhupada is overstating the case when he says, "This knowledge is far, far, superior to all other processes of knowledge thus far explained... Thus it is expected that one who understands this Fourteenth Chapter will attain perfection." Since there is no other reason to pursue Krishna consciousness than to gain perfection, it behooves us to sit up and play close attention to this supreme wisdom of Krishna's teachings.

This Is No Exaggeration

But the question comes, "How could this knowledge be far, far superior to other processes of knowledge? What about the Ninth Chapter, The Most Confidential Knowledge? Or the Tenth, where Krishna explains knowledge of the Absolute. Or the Twelfth in which He explains devotional service, which is the whole point of the Gita? How is knowledge of the three modes of nature considered superior to all that went before?"

The answer is that without proper understanding and application of this knowledge these other stages of spiritual realization, although admittedly higher, will not be attained. One cannot aspire for a degree in calculus without having basic skills in arithmetic. Hence, because knowledge of the three modes of material nature is so vital to our progress, it is called *jnananam uttamam*, the supreme wisdom. It is not the end, but it is the essential means to the end.

For example, if you are in a flood, you need to get to high ground. You decide to climb to the roof of your house and the ladder is the only means to get there. The role of the ladder becomes vital. It's the gateway to liberation, the rooftop. The ladder is not an end in itself. The roof is your goal—but without the ladder your hopes are sunk.

Similarly, while *prema-bhakti* is our goal, knowledge of the three modes of nature is vital just like the ladder. That's why Krishna says *jnananam jnanam uttamam*—this knowledge is the supreme wisdom.

Hence a thorough understanding of all four topics, with particular emphasis on how the modes give liberation, is favorable in one's discharge of spiritual life. Again, Krishna says, "All the sages attained perfection by this method." This is no exaggeration. That's why Prabhupada writes, "Thus it is expected that one who understands this Fourteenth Chapter will attain perfection."

Responsibility

The point is that by such clear knowledge one can choose how he wants to live. One can live his spiritual life deliberately. Rather than living in a reactive mode of life, one can be pro-active and

live as a victor. By knowing what his choices are at every moment and by accepting squarely the responsibility for making the optimum choice one lives life deliberately, purposefully, from moment to moment. Such a person is sure to progress towards perfection.

The key word here is responsibility. Conditioned souls are lazy. They have an inborn tendency not to accept responsibility. Specifically there is a tendency in the conditioned soul not to accept responsibility for his spiritual growth, for improving himself. A person may be busy, busy, busy, doing so many tasks, putting in a 70-hour week, but if by doing so he avoids the work of improving himself, of refining his character, he is lazy.

One symptom of such a person is that when he succeeds at something he thinks, "I did it." But when he fails he thinks, "Someone did it to me. I am a victim." This mindset will not make anyone successful on the path of perfection. One way to determine whether you have taken responsibility for your life or not is to take inventory. If you find that you blame someone else for your failings or setbacks, you are not yet a responsible person. You are not a responsible person until you can say to yourself, "I am cent-percent responsible for who I am and all I have done in my life up to today and it is my choice what I will make of my life from this day on," and mean it. Once you have accepted responsibility like this, you are ready to move away from being a victim. You are ready to be a success in life, even if by all other counts you fail.

This kind of thinking isn't an artificial imposition. It's not a psychological trip. It's reality. You alone are responsible for all you are and where you are in life. What you have made of your life and your karma is entirely your doing and what you make of your future is also a matter of your choice. In the end, you cannot blame your parents, your kids, your spouse, your teachers, your guru, your temple president, the GBC, or anyone else for the outcome of your life. You will stand or fall solely on your merits or lack of them. No one will take the stand and be judged in your place. Either you took advantage of the human form of life or you blew it. In that case better luck next life.

But next life you can get caught up in the same useless "I-am-a-victim" trip again under the spell of the mode of nature. It can be tricky. How many lifetimes are you prepared to go on like this? Until you accept full responsibility for what you make of your life and take a stand you can take birth over and over and do the same useless program of laying blame elsewhere for lifetimes. What's the use? Why not shake off all this ignorance in this life, tighten your belt and face the music? Make a decision that no matter what, I am going to mold my life to Krishna consciousness. This is success thinking in spiritual life.

Such success goes only to those who accept full responsibility and who make a firm, non-negotiable, non-retractable decision to do whatever it takes to become Krishna conscious. Starting today. Starting this minute. That willingness to do whatever it takes includes understanding clearly what is mixed devotional service and what is pure devotional service and having the willingness to do the work of discriminating between the two. That means one must have more competence in understanding the modes of material nature than mere ability to explain it in a Sunday Feast lecture.

Living deliberately, knowingly, using the modes of nature as a God-given tool for dealing with material reality is superior to relying on the mind and senses and one's feelings as the basis for decisions.

Be a Victor Not a Victim

By study of this knowledge, and by putting it into practice, one can see the enormous difference between a pro-active and a reactive life. To be reactive is to have no knowledge—or less than a working knowledge—of all four aspects of the modes of nature, especially of how they give liberation. To be pro-active, on the other hand, is to use this knowledge to one's full advantage. That is, instead of living at the hands of material nature as a victim, you can opt to be a victor. Therefore, Krishna exhorts Arjuna, *nistrai-gunyo bhavarjuna*, "Be victorious, rise above these modes of nature." But this is not a matter of blindly throwing oneself at transcendence. Rather, rising above the modes is a systematic, deliberate process, a science.

Another important consideration is the utility of this knowledge for preaching. My experience is that it is very effective to preach about the modes of nature to nondevotees. I have given the seminar to audiences of nondevotees with telling effect, for this is a highly accessible and verifiable aspect of the Krishna consciousness philosophy. The symptoms of the various modes are not abstractions. When well-presented it is convincing because people can readily apply this knowledge and see the result. An observant person can easily appreciate the modes by seeing how they act on people and on himself. Once a person has a fair grasp of the three modes, or their symptoms, he or she can go to any public thoroughfare, such as a mall or a major downtown street corner, a disco, and see the modes of nature interact and get instant verification of Krishna's teachings.

And preaching about the modes brings pressure to bear on me to keep myself always in the highest mode. Preaching about it confers responsibility on me to keep my act together and alerts me more and more to their influence from within and without. The more this awareness is increased, the more deliberately I can live my spiritual life. By this very process sages in the past achieved perfection. All I have to do is follow in their footsteps.

Praying at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada that I will rid my heart of all varieties of mixed devotional service I, Kundali Dasa, write this analytical treatise on the three modes of nature.

gunan etan atitya trin dehi deha-samudbhavan janma-mrityu-jara-duhkhair vimukto 'mritam asnute

When the embodied being is able to transcend these three modes associated with the material body, he can become free from birth, death, old age and their distresses and can enjoy nectar even in this life. (Bhagavad-gita 14.20)

CHAPTER TWO

What are the Modes of Nature?

In the course of discussing the three modes of nature I found many are mystified by the question, "What are the modes of nature?" People ask, "Are they a substance or the qualities? Are they an energy of Krishna? What exactly are they?" They think the matter more complicated than Krishna's explanation in Bhagavad-gita—that material nature consist of three modes, goodness, passion, and ignorance and these three are ever vying for dominance over the conditioned souls.

The workings of the modes are intricate and complicated, no doubt, but the basic idea of what they are is not complicated or difficult to grasp. By classifying material nature into three categories, each with with specific symptoms, the Lord gives conditioned souls a means of interacting with material nature in according to the specific result they are seeking. One just has to act in terms of a particular mode to get that result. It means one no longer lives an accidental life. Specific actions in specific modes of nature yield specific results. These results come whether the action is done knowingly or unknowingly, but there is an obvious advantage to one who knows—he can choose those actions that are in his self-interest.

Krishna says:

sattvam rajas tama iti gunah prakriti-sambhavah nibadhnanti maha-baho dehe dehinam
avyayam

Material nature consists of three modes—goodness, passion, and ignorance. When the eternal living entity comes in contact with nature, O might-armed Arjuna, he becomes conditioned by these modes. (Bg. 14.5)

From this verse it is clear that the three modes of nature are nothing but a way of classifying material nature itself. Just as Krishna's internal potency is broken down into three divisions or qualities—hladini, sandhini, and samvit—but are all the internal energy, so the external energy is broken down into sattva -guna, rajo-guna, and tamo-guna. And just like the interactions of the three spiritual energies are responsible for conducting all the affairs of the spiritual world, so the interactions of the three material modes conduct all the affairs of the material energy.

This breakdown allows us to make specific choices in terms of what is in our best interest. Being ignorant of the modes of nature, most people don't realize that their activities cause them to develop specific qualities and results. They live for sense gratification and that's that. But one who knows about the symptoms of the various modes is in a position to choose to associate or disassociate with a particular mode either to uplift himself or become degraded.

For instance, if you determine that the qualities in the mode of goodness are in line with your overall goal in life, pure Krishna consciousness, then you can choose to practice those symptoms or qualities that are in the mode of goodness, systematically improve your lot and say good-bye to guesswork and whimsy. This is a most useful tool for one determined to improve his character and eager to progress in spiritual life. One who wants to put this knowledge to optimal use will conduct all his affairs on this basis.

For instance, the Lord says that action in the mode of goodness results in purification. In contrast, action in the mode of passion results in misery, and action in the mode of ignorance results in foolishness. So, depending on which outcome I want, I can choose my course of action. I can choose my association on that basis as well.

Ignorance Is No Excuse

On the other hand, one who is ignorant of how the modes work, or is too lazy to apply this knowledge, is under their unshakable grasp. False egoism makes him believe he is the master of his destiny, but he has no choice. He cannot live life deliberately, confident that his choices are in his best interest. The modes of nature influence his actions from one moment to the next. Krishna describes him as a *vimudha*, a first-class fool, because he thinks he is "the doer of activities that are in fact carried out by material nature." Such a *mudha* is obliged to live out his life as a victim, tossed here and there by the modes, like a man in a dinghy on the open sea with no oars. Since he cannot make choices on the basis of his self-interest; he makes his choices on the basis of sense gratification, which makes him no better than an animal. He is manipulated by the modes of nature.

But he who takes full responsibility to act on this knowledge for his betterment can live in this world with confidence. His confidence stems not from false ego, but from knowledge and faith in Krishna's instructions. And he sees practically that what he does is ultimately beneficial for him. This illustrates the value of having a clear understanding of the modes of nature. One who accepts Krishna's authority knows immediately that acting in the mode of goodness is the only intelligent choice. When done in conjunction with the practice of Krishna consciousness, it naturally leads to liberation, for Krishna says action in the mode of goodness is purifying. Thus by constant practice, gradually one attains steadiness in the mode of goodness. This in turn becomes the jumping-off point to pure goodness, liberation in Krishna consciousness, which is the ultimate purpose of Krishna's teachings.

On this point about having choice, it means we are responsible for our choices whether the choices are made deliberately or accidentally. Not choosing is also a choice. You are responsible anyway.

"Okay, but what if I didn't know I had a choice? It is unfair if these modes are forced on me and I know nothing about them." Srila Prabhupada says that we are still responsible. Ignorance is no excuse. A child is ignorant that fire is hot, but fire equally burns the child or the adult in knowledge. In the same way, the laws of nature act impartially. It is not a question of fair or unfair. It is a question of whether one will accept responsibility and do the right thing or bury one's head in the modes and hope for the best. That is a choice you are responsible for.

Another version of neglecting responsibility is to throw all cares to the wind and simply hope for Krishna's mercy. I deal with this at length in later chapters.

Putting This Knowledge To Work

Though they bind us, the three modes of nature are our tools for dealing with the material energy. We can make them work to our advantage. Ultimately, just as one can use a thorn to remove another thorn, we can attain liberation by this knowledge. Gradually, one becomes expert. Just like an experienced sailor can interpret all the symptoms and signs in his environment—cloud formations, the behavior of the sea, the birds, the stars, the sun—and get useful information, similarly, one who is conversant with the symptoms of the modes of nature can readily recognize the various influences prevailing on him from within and without. This enables him to make deliberate choices in terms of what goals he has set out to accomplish in his lifetime. And since nothing within the compass of material existence is free of the influence of the modes of nature, this knowledge applies to any and all circumstances. In Bhagavad-gita (18.40) the Lord said:

na tad asti prithivyam va divi deveshu va punah sattvam prakriti-jair muktam yad ebhish syat
tribhir gunaih

There is no being existing, either here or among the demigods in the higher planetary systems, which is freed from these three modes born of material nature.

And in the Srimad-Bhagavatam He said to Uddhava (11.25.30-31):

dravyam desah phalam kalo jnanam karma ca karakah sraddhavasthakritir nishtha trai-gunyah
sarva eva hi sarve guna-maya bhavah purushavyakta-dhishthitah drishtam srutam anudhyatam
buddhya va purusharshabha

Therefore material substance, place, result of activity, time, knowledge, work, the performer of work, faith, state of consciousness, species of life and destination after death are all based on the three modes of material nature. O best of human beings, all states of material being are related to the interaction of the enjoying soul and material nature. Whether seen, heard of or only conceived within the mind, they are without exception constituted of the modes of nature.

Indeed there is nothing within the material world that cannot be analyzed on the basis of the three modes of nature by checking the symptoms. One should therefore exercise his discriminatory power on the basis of this knowledge. Srila Prabhupada stressed this point in a lecture in Hawaii in 1974:

By the symptoms. The symptoms are also mentioned. The sattva-guna means brahmana. Sattva-guna is brahmana. Their symptoms are mentioned in the Bhagavad-gita. Everything is there, characteristic. You have to test it. Just like in chemistry there is analytical study, whether it is pure or not. So every chemical has got characteristics, its color, its formation, its taste, so many things. Those who are chemists, they know how to test. So when the characteristic and the test of the chemical is found, "Yes, it is according to the standard," then it is accepted as a pure chemical, and it can be used for the purpose.

We are meant to know the symptoms of the modes of nature and analyze all our experiences in these terms until it becomes second nature to us. Then we are in the most discriminating and best position in the material world. We don't have to be whimsical or sentimental about anything. Someone may say, "But there are people who are above the modes and it is offensive to subject them to such scrutiny." That is not a fact. Even a transcendently situated person has symptoms—transcendental symptoms. Krishna describes them in the Second, Twelfth, and Fourteenth Chapters

of Bhagavad-gita, and in other places as well. So, if someone fits those symptoms then there is no problem. These points will be discussed in greater detail later on in this book.

Srila Prabhupada explains in many places that the three modes never occur individually. They are always combined. When we speak of a person or thing as being in a particular mode, we mean that the particular mode is dominant, but it is never alone. In reality there is no pure ignorance, or pure passion or pure material goodness. Pure goodness is suddha-sattva; it exists only on the transcendental plane.

Three Features of The Modes

It is said that the modes of nature bind us to the material world. It is also said that by combining and recombining, these three modes produce the seemingly endless variety of sense objects, bodily forms, and so on, that we find in the material world. It is further said that the modes are all-pervading within the material nature. Various examples are given in the shastras, and by devotees, to illustrate how the modes of nature fulfill three functions—binding the conditioned souls, producing varieties, and being all-pervasive. The modes are called gunas, which means ropes. Just as a rope is made by braiding three strands of hemp into one, so the three modes combine to make a powerful binding agent which entraps the conditioned soul and binds him firmly to the wheel of repeated birth and death.

How the same three modes combine to create the varieties of sense objects that allure the conditioned souls is illustrated by the example of the three colors—blue (tamas), red (rajas), and yellow (sattva). Expert artists know how to combine these colors in varying combinations to produce any other color in the spectrum, for all other colors are permutations of these basic three colors. Three times three gives nine. Then nine times nine gives eighty-one. Then eighty-one times eighty-one...and so on. In this way, we have an almost endless variety of colors. Similarly, the three modes combine, and recombine, and again recombine to produce the seemingly endless varieties of objects, species of life, bodily features, plants, flowers, fruits, and so on.

How the modes are all-pervading is illustrated by the example of the threads in a piece of cloth. To create a piece of cloth, threads are woven lengthwise and crosswise. The cloth is made of hundreds of strands of such threads going in both directions. Thus the threads pervade the entire cloth. Imagine a living being so minute that it lived in the universe of that piece of cloth. Everywhere it would experience the threads.

Similarly, the modes of goodness, passion, and ignorance are threaded lengthwise and crosswise throughout the universe. There is no place in all material existence free of their influence. And so Krishna says that within the material energy, everything, "whether seen, heard, or merely conceived within the mind, is all constituted of the modes of nature." There are no exceptions.

Something Exceptional

In Bhagavad-gita the Lord gives nineteen items and their symptoms according to whether they are in goodness, passion or ignorance. Thus we have descriptions of charity in terms of goodness, passion, and ignorance. Similarly we have religion, food, renunciation, and so on all defined in terms of various symptoms in the various modes. One must study these definitions and become conversant with them. He must have this knowledge at his fingertips, so he can diagnose at a moment's notice which mode is present in any given circumstance. This is the practical utility of such knowledge.

The analysis can be very subtle. For example, it's not unusual to hear speakers of the philosophy say that classical music is in the mode of goodness and that those who study philosophy and who base their lives on ethical and moral principles are in the mode of goodness. Devotees base this understanding on statements by Srila Prabhupada in his Gita purports to the effect that the philosopher, scientists, and poets are generally in the mode of goodness. But when you go more deeply into an understanding of the modes of nature you realize that Srila Prabhupada is talking about the exceptional philosopher, the exceptional scientist, or exceptional poet. The majority come under the mode of passion. In the First Canto Srila Prabhupada wrote:

The uncivilized state of life, or the life of the lower animals, is controlled by the mode of tamas. The civilized life of man, with a passion for various types of material benefits, is the stage of rajas. The rajas stage of life gives a slight clue to the realization of the Absolute Truth in the forms of fine sentiments in philosophy, art and culture with moral and ethical principles, but the mode of sattva is a still higher stage of material quality, which actually helps one in realizing the Absolute Truth. (Bhag. 1.2.24, Purport)

It is not that Prabhupada is contradicting his statements in the Bhagavad-gita about the philosopher, scientist and poet being in the mode of goodness. Rather, it is to be understood that generally these kinds of persons come in the mode of passion and it is the exceptional one that falls in the mode of goodness. How does one arrive at this conclusion? Because the philosopher, scientist, and poet are generally doing these things for selfish interest, seeking profit, adoration, distinction, gross sense gratification and so on. These motives indicate the mode of passion.

From this it is clear that the mode of goodness is something exceptional, something very rare—something almost non-existent in this fallen age. At present our understanding, conception, and appreciation of the mode of goodness is very meager. Passion and ignorance have won the day. Later, when we focus on the symptoms of the mode of goodness, it will be quite clear that attaining goodness is a major undertaking for anyone in the human form of life. The mode of goodness is such an achievement in this age it is inconceivable that one can attain a predominance of it without a spiritual master.

Difficult it may be, but not impossible. Indeed, achieving goodness is an unavoidable step if we are determined to follow the teachings of Krishna consciousness all the way to its ultimate conclusion. This has to be understood—that sattva-guna is a forward step in the progressive march towards krishna-prema. It's not an obstacle. In fact it is required. The Bhagavatam states *sattvam yad brahma darsanam*, by goodness one can realize the Absolute Truth. The present conception that the mode of goodness is more or less irrelevant and one can vault past it and be immediately situated on the transcendental platform is based on blind faith, not on a scientific understanding of our philosophy. Neither is it supported by practical experience. If it was such a simple matter, and transcendence was easily accessible, then why have we had such a high failure rate since 1966 up to now? It simply does not add up.

The Danger of The Mode of Goodness

But what about in Bhagavad-gita where Prabhupada says that we can become ensnared in the contentment that comes along with the mode of goodness? Yes, that danger is there, but that does not mean that achieving goodness is meaningless, unnecessary, or irrelevant. By eating one may get sick, but people eat anyway. Yes, there is danger that one may get sick, but to stop eating is also bad news. One cannot avoid eating. The solution is not to stop eating, but to eat properly. Similarly, a

candidate for Krishna consciousness, love of God, cannot avoid attaining the mode of goodness. Many, many scriptural quotes and statements by Srila Prabhupada attest to this fact.

Suppose you board a plane in London bound for Delhi with a stopover in Rome. When the plane stops in Rome, you have the option to get off and stay in Italy or stay on the plane and go on to Delhi. If you get off in Rome, that is a mistake, but it does not mean you were wrong to fly to Rome. In fact going to Rome was unavoidable. No fault there. Deplaning in Rome, that's a mistake. Similarly, a practitioner of Krishna consciousness is bound for pure goodness, suddha-sattva, with a stopover in the mode of goodness on the way. If one gets off at that point, that's his mistake, but it does not mean he should never have developed the mode of goodness. In light of our experience since 1966, it's foolhardy to think that we can simply throw ourselves at transcendence and not bother about the details of how the process gets us there.

I must point out that the warnings about the dangers of being content in the mode of goodness are actually intended for the karma-kandis, who readily appreciate that being in goodness is superior in terms of the future karmic reactions and thus become attached. They may have no conception of going beyond mundane goodness to full spiritual existence in unalloyed goodness. A Vaishnava must know the distinction between the mode of goodness and pure goodness; then he will not opt for the lesser of the two.

Trying to jump over goodness and head straight to transcendence is not supported in the shastra. Krishna describes that the process of devotional service means one should first become fixed in the mode of goodness and then work to achieve pure goodness, suddha-sattva. Why is this not stressed more in our preaching? Chalk it up to the power of the modes of nature. The mistake of thinking that one can jump over goodness has been made since the inception of our movement and the record shows that the result has not been all that wonderful. ISKCON has an alarming turnover rate. I find it hard to ignore this fact. If transcendence was that easy, that accessible, why such a high failure rate?

Therefore, those who appreciate that discretion is the better part of valor, and who want to optimize their chances of survival on this path, will cultivate goodness for realizing the Absolute Truth. Such a determined person sets his sights on attaining transcendence by way of the bhagavata-marga and is not in danger of being entrapped by the mode of goodness. Danger exists only for those who opt to stay in sattva-guna.

Following the recommendation of shastra, I advocate one achieve goodness as a means to an end, and not as an end in itself. A candidate for pure transcendence must keep his priorities in order. He must be determined to go beyond goodness. By regularly hearing Srimad-Bhagavatam he will accomplish this. By hearing the Bhagavatam one is constantly reminded that he has to transit the mode of goodness and ultimately attain pure goodness; but the jumping off point is the mode of goodness. The eternal plane of transcendence is not usually accessible directly from the modes of passion and ignorance. There may be exceptions to this general rule, but this book is not concerned with the exceptions.

Accept What's Favorable

Going back to the airport example, we can understand the utility of the mode of goodness as a departure point for achieving transcendence. If you want to fly from London to Delhi, you can't fly from just anywhere. You have to go to the airport. That is a favorable departure point. The airport is not your goal; you can't just move to the airport and take up residence there. That would never land

you in Delhi. You need to go to the airport in order to achieve your destination. The mode of goodness serves a similar purpose. Every person who is sincere to reach perfection in Krishna consciousness must first set his sights on being steady in the mode of goodness, by practicing those things that are situated in the mode of goodness. Then, by becoming progressively more purified by the mode of goodness and by not being attached to that mode he can advance to the next stage, pure goodness.

This progression is clearly outlined in the First Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, yet somehow, when we come to the practical application of the science of Krishna consciousness many are unaware that this is the method. Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.2.17-21) describes the progression thus:

srinvatam sva-kathah krishnah punya-sravana-kirtanah hridy antah-stho hy abhadrani vidhunoti
suhrit satam nashta-prayeshv abhadreshu nityam bhagavata-sevaya bhagavatya uttama-sloke
bhaktir bhavati naishthiki tada rajas-tamo-bhavah kama-lobhadayas ca ye ceta etair anaviddham
sthitam sattve prasidati evam prasanna-manaso bhagavad-bhakti-yogatah bhagavat-tattva-
vijñanam mukta-sangasya jayate bhidyate hridaya-granthis chidyante sarva-samsayah kshiyante
casya karmani drishta evatmanisvare

Sri Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Paramatma [Supersoul] in everyone's heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who relishes His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted. By regularly hearing the Bhagavatam and rendering service unto the pure devotee, all that is troublesome to the heart is practically destroyed, and loving service unto the glorious Lord, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact. At the time loving service is established in the heart, the modes of passion [rajas] and ignorance [tamas], and lust and desire [kama] disappear from the heart. Then the devotee is established in goodness and he becomes happy. Thus established in the mode of goodness, the man rejuvenated by loving service to the Lord gains liberation from material association [mukti] and comes to know scientifically of the Personality of Godhead. Thus the knots of the heart and all misgivings are cut to pieces. The chain of fruitive actions [karma] is terminated when one sees the self as master.

Srila Prabhupada stressed over and over that Krishna consciousness is a science. The systematic cultivation of goodness is an integral part of the science.

Praying at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada that I will rid my heart of all varieties of mixed devotional service I, Kundali Dasa, write this analytical treatise on the three modes of nature.

yat tad agre visham iva pariname 'mritopamam tat sukham sattvikam proktam mtma-buddhi-
prasmada-jam

That which in the beginning may be just like poison but at the end is just like nectar and which awakens one to self-realization is said to be happiness in the mode of goodness. (Bhagavad-gita 18.37)

CHAPTER THREE

Which Mode Is Preferred?

In the previous chapter I mentioned that in Bhagavad-gita Lord Krishna defines nineteen categories in terms of their various symptoms in the different modes. These categories are: conditioning, symptoms, social order (varna), next life, abode, results of action, development of a particular mode, worship or faith, food, sacrifice, austerity, charity, renunciation, knowledge, action, the worker, understanding, determination, and happiness. One should study these and be conversant with their various symptoms. The modes are all-pervading, we cannot avoid them. If we are to use this knowledge to our advantage it should be at our fingertips.

Judge By The Results

But even before doing such an in-depth study, one can immediately determine which mode is most desirable by comparing the results of action in each mode as described by the Lord. This puts everything in perspective from the onset. By this yardstick one knows immediately in which direction he should move and can set his determination accordingly. Krishna says:

karmanah sukritasyahuh sattvikam nirmalam phalam rajasas tu phalam duhkham ajnanam
tamasah phalam

By acting in the mode of goodness one becomes purified. Works done in the mode of passion result in distress, and actions done in the mode of ignorance result in foolishness. (Bg. 14.16)

With this verse Krishna leaves no room for doubt that the mode of goodness is more desirable than passion and ignorance. Of course the name goodness is a clue, but with this verse it is crystal clear. This is the opinion of the Supreme Lord: Acting in the mode of goodness is in our best interest because it purifies us. Action done in the mode of passion brings misery to the performer. Action in the mode of ignorance results in foolishness.

Take, for example, a drunk. Normally the fellow would never vomit all over himself, nor talk out loud to no one in particular in a public thoroughfare, nor sing at the top of his voice in the street at 3:00 a.m., but under the influence of alcohol he does all these things. He makes a complete fool of himself and thinks nothing of it. A cab driver told me that he took a drunk Navy officer home once and the man paid him a hundred dollars on a ten dollar fare. And when he was looking at the money, stunned, trying to decide whether he should take it or not, the drunk Navy man, thinking the cabbie not happy with the hundred, gave him another hundred. It's a safe bet that the next day when the Navy man sobered up he regretted his foolishness executed under the influence of the mode of ignorance the previous night.

Sometimes it appears that an action gives a result other than what Krishna prescribed. That is the trick of maya. Don't be fooled by the short-ranged outcome. Krishna knows well the human tendency to see things in terms of the short-range result, therefore he makes the point again in another way, a striking way, when He defines happiness according to the modes of nature. After all, happiness we universally agree is desirable for everyone. So the Lord explains:

yad agre canubandhe ca sukham mohanam atmanah nidralasya-pramadotham tat tamasam udahritam

That happiness which is blind to self-realization, which is delusion from beginning to end and which arises from sleep, laziness and illusion is said to be of the nature of ignorance. (Bg. 18.39)

vishayendriya-samyogad yat tad agre ‘mr̥topamam pariname visham iva tat sukham rajasam smritam

That happiness which is derived from contact of the senses with their objects and which appears like nectar at first but poison at the end is said to be of the nature of passion. (Bg. 18.38)

ya tad agre visham iva pariname ‘mr̥itopamam tat sukham sattvikam proktam atma-buddhi-prasada-jam

That which in the beginning may be like poison but at the end is just like nectar and which awakens one to self-realization is said to be happiness in the mode of goodness. (B.g. 18.37)

Even materialists agree with Krishna’s definition of happiness in the mode of goodness. Modern psychology recognizes that people develop many dysfunctional traits as a result of the instant gratification so prevalent in today’s society (happiness in the mode of passion). Psychologists endorse the concept of delayed gratification (happiness in the mode of goodness). In practical terms this means that the things which are in one’s best interest take time to give results. Hence, to consider what the long-range outcome of my actions will be is a sign of intelligence; it requires applying one’s power of discrimination. That is a symptom of the mode of goodness. Actions performed in the mode of passion bring misery—every time. But they have the unique quality that makes one think they offer the quick fix of instant happiness. Later the long range effect kicks in and the promised happiness evaporates into nothingness.

And, as if that isn’t bad enough, misery follows. First one is frustrated, then angry. One reaps the opposite result from what he was seeking. But maya is so clever that often one does not connect the original act with its bitter fruits. All this naturally leads to frustration and anger. On the other hand, happiness in the mode of goodness "awakens one to self-realization."

But Devotees Are Above The Modes

"But," someone says, "a devotee is above the modes of nature. His actions are not in goodness, or passion, or ignorance. A devotee’s actions are transcendental." This is a popular myth in ISKCON—that by virtue of his tilaka, his neckbeads, his dress, his having a temple address, and his performing devotional service, a member of our society is a transcendently situated person. We assume this in spite of all evidence to the contrary and without considering whether or not one is on the platform of mixed devotional service. He may not display the qualities of being equipoised,

clean, detached from politics and intrigue, detached from the fruits of his activities, and so on, but we consider he is still transcendently situated, anarthas and all.

Actually, devotee means a pure devotee. To the degree that one is not yet fixed in pure devotional service one must be under the grip of the illusory potency. A pure devotee is one whose every thought, word, and deed is for Krishna's pleasure alone. Such a devotee is above the modes in every respect. Nevertheless, although his consciousness is pure and transcendental, he still displays the symptoms of goodness on this visible plane. In the meantime, all other devotees are advised to continue cultivating the mode of goodness until their consciousness is completely rid of all material contamination. This is confirmed in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.13.6):

sattvikany eva seveta puman sattva-vivriḍḍhaye tato dharmaḥ tato jñānam yavat smṛitir
apohanam

Until one revives one's direct knowledge of the spirit soul and drives away the illusory identification with the material body and mind caused by the three modes of material nature, one must cultivate those things in the mode of goodness. By increasing the mode of goodness, one automatically can understand and practice religious principles, and by such practice transcendental knowledge is awakened.

That means we cannot assume that just because we wear tilaka and dress a certain way we are transcendently situated, and thus free to do whatever we like and expect no consequences. On the basis of this fallacy many foolish actions are performed by ostensibly saintly persons. The falseness of it is a self-evident truth. It is not that "I am a devotee, therefore everything I do is transcendental, free from any reaction." This is the completely wrong mentality. It is not that because one has taken to Krishna consciousness that whatever one does is transcendental and absolute, and beyond the modes of nature. I have heard this over and over even though it is so obvious that this is not at all the case. This is a mistake often made by devotees many years in the process; and it is not a small mistake.

It is not that because I wear tilaka and neckbeads everything I do is transcendental. No. The actual situation is that because I only do what is transcendental, I am a devotee. That is to say, all my actions are sanctioned by the shastra. Such a person, and only such a person, is a transcendently situated devotee of the Lord.

In the meantime, despite the tilaka and neckbeads and japa-mala, etc., if I perform actions in the mode of passion I will reap the fruits of passionate action—misery, pain, and grief. Every time. No question about it. If I perform action in the mode of ignorance, I will reap foolishness. No question about it. This is the science.

Likewise, if I perform actions in the modes of goodness, I will be cleansed and gradually elevated to the stage where I can give up even the mode of goodness and be fixed in transcendence, providing that is my desire.

Why should it be any other way? Why should material nature have a different set of rules for people in ISKCON and for those outside ISKCON? She has no such double standard. Our actions in the various modes will most assuredly bring the result Krishna describes no matter where we are situated. How could it be any other way? And we should note that it matters not whether we act in passion individually or collectively. That is to say, just as an individual cannot act in the mode of

passion with impunity, similarly a whole society, such as ours, cannot act in the mode of passion with impunity. This is the scientific philosophy of Krishna consciousness. A devotee's business is not to be influenced by the mode of passion under any excuse. A devotee's business is to be in the mode of goodness or to be in pure goodness. A proper Vaishnava must have nothing to do with the lower modes of nature.

Nevertheless, I have experienced that many devotees have doubts about the above analysis because they believe we are transcendental to the modes, because "Prabhupada said." They cite Bhagavad-gita (14.26):

mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena bhakti-yogena sevate sa gunan samatityaitan brahma-bhuyaya kalpate

One who engages in full devotional service, who does not fall down in any circumstance, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman.

A lot can be said in response to this. Krishna says, "full devotional service." That is to say, pure devotional service. It is not that any quantity and any quality of devotional service automatically vaults us onto the transcendental plane. Not just any old devotional service will do; it must be pure devotional service. It must be service that is ahaituki and apratihata to qualify as vyabhicarena bhakti. Only such devotional service is beyond the modes.

Symptoms of One Above The Modes

Now we come to a very important point. A person who is above the modes of nature has symptoms. Do I know these symptoms? Do I have them? Do I look for them in others, or do I just go with popular opinion? Quite often I have experienced that people, in spite of so many symptoms given in Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam, still engage in guesswork.

Five verses before the mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena verse, Arjuna asked Krishna, "My dear Lord, by what symptoms is one known who is transcendental to the three modes? What is his behavior? And how does he transcend the modes of nature?" Krishna replied (Bg. 14.22-25):

prakasam ca pravrittim ca moham eva ca pandava na dveshti sampravrittani na nivrittani kankshati udasina-vad asino gunair yo na vicalyate guna vartanta ity evam yo 'vatishtathi nengate sama-duhkha-sukhah sva-sthah sama-loshtasma-kancanah tulya-priyapriyo dhiras tulya-nindatma-samstutih manapamanayos tulyas tulyo mitrari-paksayoh sarvarambha-parityagi guriatitah sa ucyate

O son of Pandu, he who does not hate illumination, attachment and delusion when they are present or long for them when they disappear; who is unwavering and undisturbed through all these reactions of the material qualities, remaining neutral and transcendental, knowing that the modes alone are active; who is situated in the self and regards alike happiness and distress; who looks upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; who is equal toward the desirable and the undesirable; who is steady, situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor; who treats alike both friend and enemy; and who has renounced all material activities—such a person is said to have transcended the modes of nature.

The import is that such a person is the one spoken about in the mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena verse. One who has these symptoms plus engages in unfailing service to Krishna, is beyond the modes of nature. Unless these symptoms are present, we need not be in confusion as to what the actual situation is with regard to oneself or to anyone else. This is a foolproof approach. One has to know and apply this science.

As far as what Srila Prabhupada said, sometimes he praised his disciples as great transcendentalists to encourage us. At such times he would be lavish in his praise, but that does not mean that we do not take an objective stance and look at where we are in relation to the process. Prabhupada said that all his disciples are pure devotees. Does that mean we are all qualified to join krishna-lila, because "Prabhupada said"? Obviously to become giddy with Prabhupada's praise would be wishful thinking on our part. Srila Prabhupada said many nice things about his disciples, but he also said that he wanted to institute varnasrama because we were not able to come quickly to the Vaishnava platform. Why not cite that statement from Srila Prabhupada?

One time when a disciple suggested to Srila Prabhupada that we become Krishna conscious in order to solve a certain problematic situation, Srila Prabhupada declared his suggestion "another impractical proposal," indicating that becoming Krishna conscious is not such a simple thing. In his purports he gives details of the process and he describes the ideal, model Vaishnava, and when we compare that with the symptoms of the majority of devotees in our society, we can see that we fall way short of the mark. Now, we should not lower the mark. We should apply ourselves with greater determination to reach the mark.

The simple fact is that the mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena verse applies to one who is fixed in undeviating devotional service, a pure devotee.

The Better Part of Valor

Sometimes a devotee is tempted to think, again on the strength of the mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena verse, "I am a devotee. That means I am transcendently situated; hence it is okay for me to use the modes of nature in Krishna's service. Hence I don't have to worry about any negative results, such as misery or foolishness. That applies only to materialists. I am a devotee; material nature cannot touch me."

This kind of thinking means that material nature has already touched him. This mentality is false egoism. Actually, a devotee is humble before the power of maya. He does not play foolish games and take foolish risks to tempt fate and put his spiritual life in jeopardy. He never thinks "Now that I have so much knowledge and experience, I can do as I like with maya and I will not be held accountable. Maya cannot touch me." Bravado is not the natural outcome of having knowledge; rather the outcome is humility—"I am very vulnerable here in the material world; let me remain under the safe shelter of Krishna's protection. Let me not take foolish risks."

When one thinks "Maya cannot touch me," actually she already has. Krishna says that His daivi maya is duratyaya, insurmountable. So coming to mature or realized knowledge means to appreciate that Maya is not to be trifled with. She is Krishna's devotee and expert in her service. Prabhupada said that her service is to make sure that "No nonsense goes to the spiritual world to disturb Krishna's pastimes." So in his dealings with the material nature a devotee's motto should be "discretion is the better part of valor." He is not attracted by bravado and vain glory. Those qualities are already the mode of passion, and a devotee eschews association with the mode of passion.

Krishna intends us to progress to the mode of goodness, and from there progress to pure, transcendental goodness. But some of us, mistaking our passion for glory as enthusiasm for devotional service, are of the opinion that this understanding is bogus. The real thing, they say, is to join the sankirtana movement and be immediately situated in transcendence. But if this is a fact and by virtue of being in the sankirtana movement all members of ISKCON are automatically above the modes of nature, then why do so many have difficulties and setbacks in spiritual life? Being transcendently situated means *na socati na kankshati*, no more hankering and lamenting. It means *prasannatma*, one is joyful, happy, satisfied, fixed for life on the path of Krishna consciousness. If these things are lacking, where is the question of being above the modes of nature?

Obviously something is lacking if each year so many leave the association of devotees. We have the best guru, the best method, the best diet, the best opportunity, but still we cannot give one lifetime to Krishna. And the process is perfect, flawless. We can only conclude that something is wrong with our understanding and application.

Even those who claim to be absorbed in the mainstream of the sankirtana mission (the book distributors) don't have a flawless record. They don't even have a comparatively better record than those in other services. The problems and falldowns are spread uniformly across the society. Proneness to falldowns are not symptoms of transcendently situated persons; they are indicative of the influence of three modes of nature. So, one does not transcend the three modes by external adjustments—changing his address, changing his dress, changing his diet, and following the regulative principles. Yes, these things are favorable for attaining our goal, but they do not in and of themselves constitute the plane of pure goodness. They do not even situate one automatically in the mode of goodness, what to speak of pure transcendental goodness.

Those who think otherwise do not understand. When Srila Prabhupada says that a devotee of the Lord automatically or immediately transcends the modes of nature, he is speaking about a pure devotee. We must always distinguish between the characteristics of a pure devotee and one who is aspiring to be a pure devotee, a *sadhaka*, one on the level of mixed devotional service. Such discrimination helps us to avoid confusion.

Praying at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada that I will rid my heart of all varieties of mixed devotional service I, Kundali Dasa, write this analytical treatise on the three modes of nature.

yo 'sau gunair viracito deho 'yam purushasya hi samsaras tan-nibandho 'yam pumso vidya cchid
atmanah

The subtle and gross material bodies are created by the modes of nature, which expand from the potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Material existence occurs when the living entity falsely accepts the gross and subtle bodies as being his own factual nature. This illusory state, however, can be destroyed by real knowledge. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.10.10)

CHAPTER FOUR

Devotional Service In Knowledge Is Best

This is an obvious point; nevertheless, some devotees protest when emphasis is placed on how we must use our intelligence to understand the modes and the process of devotional service. This unwillingness to broaden one's understanding of the process and to apply oneself stems from assuming, "I am already on the right path, what more do I need to know? I just have to blindly follow the program and I'm going to be all right. I'm sincere and Krishna is merciful."

Somehow the devotees in question are convinced that this thinking is a result of their great faith in the process. Actually it is laziness—which is a symptom of the mode of ignorance.

Some devotees expect to achieve perfection in Krishna consciousness just on the strength of their good intentions. In other words, on their sentiment. But Krishna consciousness and sentimentality go ill together. Srila Prabhupada was very careful to impress upon us that bhakti is a science. A fair percentage of devotees initially approach

the process as a science, but somewhere enroute get diverted into sentimentality and stray from the path of hard facts, logic, reason, and precise scriptural reference. They diverge from the scientific mode into what I call the touchy-feely-California-mode. They go mushy in the middle.

Some even seek to bring the scriptural statements to the relative platform so they can retain and justify their various attachments. To this end they stretch the philosophy unbearably thin in order to have it support the view they want to keep. This is alarming on two counts. For a follower of Srila Prabhupada to be mired in sentimentality is a let-down. Second, it is not a sign of sincerity when we attempt to bring the philosophy down to our level when in fact we should try to raise ourselves up to the standard of the philosophy.

The American educational system serves as a good example to illustrate the futility of lowering the standard to suit the people rather than raising the people to the standard. Upon completing high school, students are required to take SAT examinations. The results determine whether or not the students are qualified for a college education and where they should be placed. What happened in the Sixties was that less and less students passed their SATs. This caused alarm as the students who failed clogged up the high school system. The solution: rather than attempting to provide better education to increase the passing ratio, they decided to lower the level of the exam. Initially the ratio of passing students went up, but over time, again the system was clogged up. Again the standard of the SATs was lowered. The result was that more and more dullards entered the college system. People who can't even read and write were in college to become our lawyers, doctors, politicians, teachers, and so forth.

A shockwave went through the country when it was known that American college students could not pass the high school exams of Europe and Asia. In short, by neglecting to maintain the standard, American education is going to hell.

The same danger exists in devotional service. Either you come up to the standard or you go to hell (in the sense that you take birth again.) Why take the chance? We have seen what has happened to other religions. They get watered down beyond recognition and what results is something convenient, but impotent.

Don't Just Throw Yourself On The Track

The basic idea of the sentimental set, and others who are simply misinformed about the workings of devotional service, is this: "If you simply get on the right track, then you don't need to stress yourself as to what's what. Just by being on the right track, all success is assured." This, alas, is not the truth. Such blind faith is not the same as firm faith. This idea is no more feasible than, say, you go to the train station and determine from which platform your train departs, then you simply lie across the tracks waiting for the train to come. You are on the right track, but entirely in the wrong way. Despite being on the right track, you will not reach your destination. Similarly, if we blindly throw ourselves on the path of perfection, even though it is the right path, history has shown there is no guarantee that we will arrive at Krishna's lotus feet.

Discussing the three modes with devotees in some twenty temples has convinced me that this is a very real problem in the Krishna consciousness movement. Upon getting the big picture, many devotees simply throw themselves at the process of devotional service, completely confident, because they are on the right track. Indeed they are, but there is more to it. If they don't pay attention to the process, they fail to apply themselves properly, and end up a statistic. The high turnover rate in our society is proof of my point. High turnover rate means high failure rate. We are meant to remain devotees for life. True, Prabhupada said we should not be surprised at who leaves, but at who stays. Okay, but in such numbers?

I can say from personal experience that in spite of my being fairly conversant in the philosophy, I missed this point. And I am not by any means an isolated example. From counseling devotees I've learned that many have wrong assumptions about how the process works, about the progressive stages, and about the role the mode of goodness plays. Many have admitted to me that they never thought we had anything much to do with the mode of goodness.

One devotee told me that he heard from a big leader, "Krishna doesn't want us to have anything to do with the mode of goodness." How interesting. And where is the sastric reference for such a realization, I wonder? This shows that this philosophical misnomer runs through the society from top to bottom.

I remain convinced that one reason for our high turnover rate is a failure to understand the progressive steps in the process, beginning with getting to goodness. After hearing my seminar one Godsister said to me, "Why did it take me twenty years to find this out?" Another devotee told me, "I practiced Krishna consciousness for years, but I failed to change my nature. I never understood I had to change my nature. I was told a devotee is transcendental. I could not understand why I was working so hard for Krishna and yet struggling so much. So I left and now I am back and I want to pay attention to the process. This time I know I have to get to the mode of goodness."

I had a similar experience. I was never taught the philosophy in this way, but I cannot blame anyone, because Srila Prabhupada's books were available the whole time. I could have read them and understood the process myself. The same goes for everyone else.

Another devotee, who has been in the movement for eleven years, says he feels cheated to only now find out that getting to goodness is the first stage of achievement in Krishna consciousness. Of course better late than never, but I see his point. Again, it is a fact that Srila Prabhupada's books were available to him all those years, so ultimately he cannot blame anyone. Unfortunately, we don't even read the books in the mode of goodness.

We Should Always Take The Long View

The main wrong assumption is that just by joining ISKCON one is magically vaulted onto the transcendental platform. One version of that misconception is what I call the sentimental paradigm: "I am essentially already saved. It's just a matter of time until I get the mercy and ascend into Vaikuntha." A more extreme version is, "Although I may be reckless and audacious in the name of preaching, it's no big deal because I am a devotee—transcendental, and protected by Lord Caitanya. There'll be no reaction for my antics. I am a devotee and they (nondevotees) are demons. By chanting Hare Krishna all problems will be solved. I have all the knowledge I need. Devotees like Kundali, who go on and on about these things and quote the Bhagavatam, are armchair philosophers. They are simply not fired up like me; they lack faith or they are just into jnana. They are on a trip because they are not enthusiastic like me. They think book knowledge is devotional service. Poor sods."

All the devotees who have wrong assumptions are not necessarily sentimental. Many are sincere and enthusiastic, but misguided. Every devotee should be thoroughly schooled in the philosophy with specific emphasis on the three modes of nature within a matter of months after joining the movement. The aim of such training should be to set this candidate on the path for the rest of his life. The present conception is more like, "Here are the bare survival tools,; now sink or swim."

Taking the long view in training each new devotee would obviously save people a lot of floundering about, both in the philosophy and in practical life. But owing to the power of the modes of nature, we miss a lot of what we read, hence we fail to train members in a systematic, balanced approach to the study and application of the Krishna consciousness philosophy. Nevertheless, the moment we hear the science of devotion extolled correctly, we should have no trouble adjusting our understanding and getting on with the spiritual practices.

Misconceptions About Love

But in my experience we have trouble adjusting. On the one hand, devotees generally work very hard, but they often demonstrate that they are only willing to do the bare minimum to be a devotee. Some advocate even less than the bare minimum, claiming they have such faith in the mercy of the spiritual master that they need not bother with so much precision as I advocate. Sentimental persons seek an easier process than that we have received from the munificent Caitanya Mahaprabhu. They are content to throw themselves on the tracks and hope for the best.

Unfortunately the process is not so easy. They misconstrue their emotions (feelings) as sraddha, faith. They are usually not enlivened to find out that bhakti-yoga entails more than hearing nectar about Krishna, following four principles, chanting sixteen rounds and doing some service. There is work to be done—one has to discriminate between mixed and pure devotional service. There are

offenses to be avoided. There are anarthas that threaten the survival of the devotional creeper, which have to be uprooted. There are sins of omission and sins of commission to be avoided. The path of devotional service is teeming with nuances. All this complexity baffles holders of the sentimental paradigm.

The root of the problem is cultural baggage we have brought to the process in the form of our misconceptions about love. This cultural conditioning is difficult to let go. Very difficult. So difficult in fact that when faced with the choice, some would rather try to figure out how to keep it, how to incorporate it into spiritual life. They'd rather do that than gamely take up the fight to rid themselves of it.

One misconception is the tenacious belief that love is a feeling. Love is not something that's learned or practiced. Love is a feeling that sweeps you off your feet. Bows you over. When one has that experience, he or she has "fallen in love" and because love is a feeling, there is nothing to be learned about love. Love is not something you can learn. It's something that happens to you and when it does it all works on automatic. And everyone knows it on sight, instinctively.

This misconception about love is prevalent in all parts of the world where the concept of romantic love is strong. The belief in love as a feeling—as opposed to an art or an activity, something to be learned and put into practice—is embedded in the myth of romantic love, which in turn is rooted in the fairy tales we lapped up as children, wherein the perfectly charming prince carries away the beautiful, swooning princess and they live happily ever after. Thus materialists think that the feeling of infatuation of being head-over-heels in lust is actually love. This notion of love we have brought with us to the process of Krishna consciousness and because love is an integral part of the process we overlay Krishna consciousness with the misconception.

There are other facets to this misconception. People think the problem of love is that of being loved, not of loving. This sounds like different sides of the same coin, but it isn't so. One whose aim is to be lovable does not have the same orientation as one whose aim is to love. In a nutshell, the former thinks the proof of his success lies in how much he receives. He thinks love is all about getting things—respect, prestige, profit, adoration, distinction, influence, etc., even mercy. His definition of love is no different than the definition of mundane success: If you get this and this and that, you will be loved.

In contrast, one who understands that the primary experience of love is not the art of receiving, but that of giving, is not concerned with receiving anything. His entire measure of success is in giving. Naturally, in giving, the world responds and gives him much in return, but receiving is not the consideration uppermost in his mind. Hence, the Biblical statement, "It is better to give than to receive," which is reflected in Lord Caitanya's teaching of unconditional love of God, wherein the object is to become dasanudasa.

So these two psychologies—wanting to be loved and wanting to be loving—are in fact quite different. Although at first glance they seem not so far apart, they yield different results. In one, success is determined by how much one receives. In the other, success is all about giving. This version is the one more closely aligned with Krishna consciousness. True, the concept of bhakti entails a reciprocal loving exchange, but nevertheless the lover, being unconditional, is not focused on the reciprocation from the beloved. The lover of God is only concerned with how much he has to offer the beloved in devotional service, birth after birth.

Love Is Work (Service)

If the romantic conception of being swept off one's feet and being suffused with waves of feeling is not love, what, then, is love? We have love in Krishna consciousness. In our shastras there are detailed descriptions of various feelings (bhavas) that are symptoms of love. How can one assert so strongly that love is not a feeling?

Yes, it is a fact that in certain states of the love experience feelings play a prominent role. Indeed that is a great science. But the core of love, the central pivot upon which all these other features turn is not feeling per se; it is service to one's beloved. In other words, at the heart of the matter love is work. We say devotional service. Service means work. So we are on the path of devotional work. At a certain stage of development that mood of service intensifies and produces various feelings. These feelings are only symptoms of love; they are not love itself. One who wants to arrive at the feelings prematurely, without doing the work, is a sentimentalist or a sahajiya. Such persons want an easier way to the goal than to do the work. They find the work too strenuous; they just want to be "There." They do not understand love at all.

So love is not a feeling. Love is work, an art, if you will. Something to be learned, like any other art, with a theory to be mastered and then willfully put into practice, like learning music or carpentry. Erich Fromm has argued this most convincingly in *The Art of Loving*, even though he got in over his head when he tried to explain love of God. But my point is that he figured out that love is work and this is upheld throughout the length and breadth of our Vaishnava siddhanta.

Unaware of this small but vital fact about love, men and women all over the world are seeking to get love rather than give it and getting purely frustrated instead. And so it is with a large segment of ISKCON. Although it is a fact the two misconceptions described above apply primarily to the man-woman relationship, which is mundane and is surely distinct in character from love of God, which is spiritual, nonetheless, these and other misconceptions about love affect how we apply the process of Krishna consciousness.

Virtually no devotee will disagree with what's said here about the primacy of giving over receiving, but my observation is that many of us apply ourselves to the process from the premise that love is a feeling. We project the mundane, conditioned version onto the spiritual process and this is the cause for much disappointment in many cases. Not fully appreciating that love is an activity (work), a number of us half-heartedly apply ourselves to the process waiting for "the feeling" to kick-in. Anticipating like this, we don't really put our hearts and minds into the process, the activity. We think it will flow more naturally out of our being when the feeling of love kicks in. While waiting, why should I go full throttle, why should I exert myself?

By this I do not mean to say such persons don't do any work. On the contrary he or she may work very hard indeed, but not where it counts most: on one's own self, which is the hardest work of all. As the saying goes, it is easier to bring the world under submission than it is to conquer oneself. Thus while waiting for mercy to kick-in, valuable time is lost in one's discharge of spiritual life.

In the interim our mental muscles go slack. Then when someone comes along and makes a strong presentation that progress in Krishna consciousness requires deliberate and systematic effort, which spells work, which in turn spells using careful discrimination, an alarming number of devotees are dubious. Some openly argue the point. But even more worrisome are the ones who say nothing and silently stick to their conviction that all they have to do is hang on until the feeling comes, until they get the mercy.

And what exactly is that mercy? The fact is that misconceptions about mercy abound. Here is an amusing story to back up my point. I once taught the modes of nature seminar in a place where others seminars were being given. I made a strong point that Krishna consciousness is a science and that we must be attentive to details, because science means that precise steps give precise and predictable results. One of the audience did not agree and in counterpoint to what I was asserting wanted to know about the role of the mercy of the spiritual master. My answer was that the essence of the mercy of the spiritual master is the knowledge he gives us about the process of devotional service. That is why vani is ultimately more important than vapu. Knowledge received in parampara is authentic mercy. That knowledge states that bhakti-yoga is a science. He was not satisfied with my emphasis on science. He thought I should give more credence to mercy. The irony of it was that very same devotee called his seminar Krishna Consciousness: Science or Faith. Now I did not attend his seminar, but I am confident that he stressed that our process is a science and not faith. This, of course, does not add up.

I have seen it again and again; sentimentalists resent the responsibility to do the work of discrimination. They may fully surrender their body in Krishna's service, but they cannot surrender their intellect to Krishna. It's just too taxing. Some do try, but they fail to take it all the way to the finish line. Many seem to think that upon coming to this path the need for thinking, for discriminating, must go out the window. They want to sit back and enjoy the pleasant ride. When they find out that love is work—and that awakening love takes work—they are unpleasantly surprised, disappointed to learn that there is much work to be done. As soon as you stress that we must work, and particularly the work of understanding what exactly the scripture says about the process in all details, they feel an irrepressible urge to stress mercy.

But Krishna says one who studies His teachings "worships Me with his intelligence." This is very important. Otherwise what will one do with this asset called intelligence? If it is not absorbed in the philosophy, it will be absorbed in plans and schemes for profit, adoration, and so on. At least it will become rusty and nonfunctional. Unfortunately, mentally lazy, sentimental people, are never enlivened by hearing these points.

The next stage for many of them, the die-hard ones, is to cut corners in the process. Rather than doing the work of advancing by the standard process and becoming pure and soft-hearted, they want to imitate the soft heart of the advanced Vaishnava. This is always a mistake. Without the requisite self-purification, this business of imitating is simply a disturbance. It may go over well with inexperienced persons; they may even reciprocate with such feigned advancement, but only for some time. It is possible to fool all of the people all of the time—indeed it is possible to fool oneself—but Krishna, who is the guru within our hearts, is never fooled at anytime. Better safe than sorry. Better to accept the responsibility to do the work of discrimination.

Sentimental Means Poor Discrimination

But beyond the fact that the artificial advancement of the sentimentalists sets a bad example for others who are innocent and unaware of the realities of spiritual life, the main danger in sentimentality is that it is a short step from there to sahajiyism. A very short step.

Sentimentality may be defined as having emotions that are not supported by the facts. Take for example a devotee who hasn't done a lick of service in many months, except chant her rounds, but she expresses a desire to roll in the dust of Vrindavana. And she is dead serious. Obviously she doesn't know what she is talking about, because her lack of doing intense service is indicative that she is not very advanced in devotional service. An advanced devotee cannot waste a moment away

from Krishna's service, what to speak of weeks and months. So, obviously one whose idea of Krishna consciousness is to become a social butterfly can have no realization to speak about Krishna or Vrindavana.

In Vrindavana many living entities roll in the dust. Does that mean they have high spiritual realization? This type of thinking is merely a variation on the idea of looking for Krishna in some bush in Vrindavana, which Srila Prabhupada clearly advised against in the Fourth Canto (Bhag. 4.28.51, purport):

In conclusion, if a disciple is very serious to execute the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead by vani or vapu. This is the only secret of success in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Instead of being eager to see the Lord in some bush of Vrindavana while at the same time engaging in sense gratification, if one instead sticks to the principle of following the words of the spiritual master, he will see the Supreme Lord without difficulty.

Now, a discriminating person will not be taken in by the above mentioned devotee, but other sentimental devotees will. They will be deeply impressed by this great soul who is simply eager to roll in the dust of Vrindavana. Some may even envy her for being "so advanced." She will think them great souls for thinking her a great soul. Then they will say, "No, no, no. You are the great soul, because your only desire is to roll in the holy dust of Vrindavana-dhama." In this way their spiritual life goes slack, because without a dynamic life of full service (tivrēṇa bhakti-yogena) one cannot claim advanced realizations in Krishna consciousness. As Srila Prabhupada said many times, quoting his guru maharaja, "Don't try to see Krishna, but act in such a way that Krishna will want to see you." That method is to please the representative of Krishna, one's spiritual master, not by rolling in the Vrindavana dust.

Pleasing the spiritual master means to be fully absorbed with body, mind, and words in his service. Pleasing the spiritual master by one's practically exhibited service attitude. Whoever thinks otherwise is living a hallucination. That is why it is kind of amusing that sometimes devotees get excited about someone whom they think has many advanced realizations about Radha-Krishna. They think Srila Prabhupada had some realizations, but mostly he was too busy preaching to us. Other devotees who stayed back in Vrindavana, or Mayapur, or wherever, were contemplating the scriptures and getting higher realizations. They were. They were trying to get what Srila Prabhupada already had—unflinching love for Lord Caitanya—attained by unflinching, unparalleled service to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. But people who don't know the actual criteria for gauging advancement get confused about such matters.

What can be said for a follower of Srila Prabhupada who has yet to realize that while it may be that others surpassed Prabhupada in scholarship, no one surpassed him where it counted—in his utter dedication to pleasing his spiritual master at any price. See how he worked indefatigably for his master's satisfaction. Such unrelenting labor is the symptom of his love. He cannot waste a moment just sitting around all day talking about love. He demonstrates his love by his intense discharge of practical devotional service. Srila Jiva Gosvami says in the Bhakti-sandarbhā that the quality of one's relationship with the spiritual master determines the level one attains in loving and serving Krishna. If one is lawless in his mood to please the spiritual master, and is willing to make any sacrifice for him, he will proportionately achieve the mood of lawless loving service to Krishna, which is the platform of the gopis.

By this yardstick, who can have any reservations about the level of Srila Prabhupada's realizations? Who made a bigger sacrifice than Srila Prabhupada for pleasing his spiritual master? But still some people with poor discrimination, or no discrimination, are in a quandary about his spiritual position. They claim that others are "more realized" or have to go elsewhere to be convinced that Srila Prabhupada was a topmost devotee. Why? Why does anyone need confirmation of the obvious? North, South, East or West there has never been a devotee like Srila Prabhupada in the annals of history. Not even in the Puranic lore do we find a devotee comparable to Srila Prabhupada. What is the difficulty to recognize this fact? There is no difficulty, but if one is lacking discrimination, then it is very difficult. Fine. But then such a person cannot be accepted as advanced. An advanced devotee has excellent powers of discrimination.

The question arises, in what mode of nature is the sentimental devotee situated? At the end of the last chapter I mentioned that discrimination is a symptom of the mode of goodness. Srila Prabhupada writes, "Understanding which discriminates by intelligence is situated in the mode of goodness." (purport to Bg. 18.30). Failure to discriminate means, therefore, that one is not even situated in the mode of goodness.

A devotee must be purified in proportion to his realizations, but a sentimental person wants to be advanced without doing the work of advancing. They read in the shastra that the topmost devotee does not discriminate so they try to be advanced by not discriminating. This is imitating. It is not recommended. Following in the footsteps of advanced devotees is recommended. Our example in this regard is Srila Prabhupada, he showed powers of discrimination up to the last. He was a topmost devotee, but he voluntarily gave that up to please his spiritual master by being in the preaching field, which is the role of the intermediate devotee. A preacher discriminates.

It's inconceivable that the two greatest devotees in our line in recent times, Srila Prabhupada and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, would give up their powers of discrimination. Inconceivable. And they were topmost devotees; but they were teachers, preachers, and they did not want the fine line between sentimentality and pure devotional service blurred. Therefore they exhibited very keen discrimination. Our only business is to follow in their footsteps.

Bhakti-Yoga Is a Science

But such discrimination is hard work. One has to surrender not only his body but his very intelligence. Sentimentalists don't want to surrender that far, but they very much want to be perceived as surrendered. Hence they like to emphasize the mercy of God over the process. They think there are two things—those who work and philosophize and those who get the mercy. But that is not so. There is really only one thing and that is the scientific process of devotional service. One has to surrender and patiently yet enthusiastically go through the stages. It will not help us to trip over our own feet in our haste to be advanced or to be seen by others as advanced. This is a great travesty in spiritual life. It is cheating on two counts. First, I cheat myself. Second, I cheat others who may lack the power to discriminate between what is or isn't the straight path of bhakti.

The Lord, who is the original source of spiritual knowledge, describes the path of devotional service as vijñana—scientific. Just prior to speaking the catur-sloki bhagavata to Lord Brahma, Krishna said *jñānā parama-guhyā me yad vijñāna-samāvitam*, "Knowledge about Me is supremely confidential and also vijñana, scientific." And in the First Canto (Bhag. 1.2.20) we find the verse:

evam prasanna-manaso bhagavad-bhakti-yogatah bhagavat-tattva-vijnanam mukta-sangasya jayate

Thus established in the mode of unalloyed goodness, the man whose mind has been enlivened by contact with devotional service to the Lord gains positive scientific knowledge of the Personality of Godhead in the stage of liberation from all material association.

Srila Prabhupada was proud to deliver the science of devotional service to people who prided themselves on the scientific method. As already described, however, so many of us give that up in the course of time. This also happens to devotees who feel they have chanted and served for x number of years and now feel ready to promote themselves to some more rarefied plane of consciousness. This is not the process. Pure devotion is not achieved merely by serving time. Pure devotional service is achieved by determined persons who know the difference between mixed and pure devotional service, and who will not be satisfied with anything but pure devotional service. It can happen in a moment; it can take lifetimes. The duration for each person's purification may vary. The time factor depends on the candidate's degree of sincerity. The proof of such sincerity is revealed by the candidate's steadfast application of himself to the standard process of sadhana-bhakti.

Devotees say in effect, "But prabhu, what about faith in the spiritual master? If one has faith in the spiritual master and in his order, does one really need to do this work of discerning between mixed and pure devotional service?" The answer is yes. Looking for loopholes is not faith. Faith and sincerity means that we apply the knowledge the spiritual master has given, as it is. Faith means that I listen to and apply his teachings, because I respect what he has said about the process. Faith is not something separate from that. What is the value of faith if I don't know what I'm doing and why?

Why does Vyasa write the Bhagavatam with the aim of training us to distinguish reality from illusion? Why did Srila Prabhupada rise early every morning to translate and write his purports? He wanted us to have precise knowledge of the science. But we read the books enough to get the big picture, then gradually neglect them yet make so many assumptions about devotional service and where we are situated in the process. We make many assumptions, but not fine distinctions; except, maybe, at the time of lecturing. At the time of practical application many of us throw all caution to the wind.

When I emphasize that we cannot expect to bypass becoming steady in the mode of goodness as one of the milestones en route to pure devotional service, I get protests like, "What about Jagai and Madhai, prabhu; they did not go to goodness first. And they got the mercy of the Lord. What about if one just depends on the mercy of the Lord? After all we are even more fallen than Jagai and Madhai. Aren't we sure to get the mercy of the Lord?"

It always amazes me that people say this, ever questing for a loophole that will minimize their having to take responsibility for bringing their full mental powers to bear on the process. But then again it proves my point. Some of us want an even easier process than the one we already have. Some of us want to be ignorant of the intricacies of the process of devotional service, in spite of all the books upon books we have on the subject. Apart from being lazy, what does this mean?

It means we do not want to surrender our intelligence to Krishna. In the Bhagavad-gita, Krishna told Arjuna, "One who studies this sacred conversation worships Me with his intelligence." Here the

Lord gives the clue how we can surrender our intelligence: by absorbing ourselves in the study of the process. Such activity "strengthens the mind," according to Krishnadas Kaviraja Gosvami. Everyone does not have equal intelligence, just as everyone does not have equal wealth, but whatever we have, if we surrender every bit of it to Krishna that is our sincerity. That is our perfection. And the premium way to do this with our intelligence is to absorb it in the Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam and other works that illuminate the way, the process, and thus purify our intelligence.

What will be the result of such purified intelligence? Keener and keener p discrimination. How else will we be able to separate matter from spirit?

Mercy Abounds

Actually there are two ways of achieving perfection in Krishna consciousness. One way is by sadhana and the other is by kripa, or mercy. There is a third kind of perfection, the nitya-siddha, or eternal perfection, but such eternally liberated persons are not part of this discussion. They are already liberated. Our concern here is how we, the bound, may get liberation.

For many, many devotees the mercy of the Lord is an ethereal substance that showers down on special souls, and upon making contact, buoys them up, up and away. The clouds part, golden rays of sunshine stream through, a chorus of angels or gandharavas sing as they float up into the spiritual stratosphere, beyond ordinary vision, beyond the beyond. Some versions may involve a chariot or a flower airplane, but the basic idea is the same. I am exaggerating, of course, but my point is this: The sentimental conception has nothing to do with real Krishna consciousness. This conception of mercy or any conception along this line is nothing but wishful thinking.

Too often devotees relegate mercy to such an elusive abstraction that it becomes a myth. The plain truth is that the idea of mercy many devotees hold needs to be revised. One problem is that some prefer to wait for mercy as this allows them to circumvent the responsibility of understanding how the process works and to avoid applying themselves to the process with a keener focus. Thus when they hear emphasis on the need to discriminate, to achieve goodness, and so on, which means work, they feel obliged to speak up on behalf of "getting the mercy." Little do they realize that mercy abounds. They don't realize that a discussion such as this is mercy; that the opportunity to practice Krishna Consciousness is mercy; that having the chance to receive knowledge in parampara is mercy; that the association of devotees is mercy; that when a person speaking in parampara pushes us to improve ourselves in the line of devotional service, that is "the mercy."

And it really does not matter whether that person pushing us is our guru or not. One trapped in conditioned life is not in a position to dictate how he wants to receive Krishna's mercy. It may come through any channel. Our duty is to be clever enough to recognize it and receive it. This book, urging the reader to bring out the best in himself in spiritual life, is mercy.

The Only Qualification

We pray, and pray, and talk, and talk about getting the mercy and about becoming empowered, which is fine, but in another sense we already have the mercy. Srila Prabhupada gave it to us. We have come to the Krishna consciousness movement; we have connected with the parampara. Now we have to use it. The mercy has to be applied. Not that the mercy does everything and I have to do nothing. This is a mistake. The characteristic of one who wants the mercy is that he works indefatigably in Krishna's service; and the characteristic of one who has the mercy is that he works

indefatigably in Krishna's service. Thus whether one wants the mercy or one has the mercy the result will be the same. The mercy is there, readily available for whoever has the intense eagerness and applies himself to get it.

In the Caitanya-caritamrita (Madhya 19.135, purport), Srila Prabhupada put it neatly in a nutshell:

To be empowered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one has to qualify himself. This means that one must engage twenty-four hours daily in the loving devotional service of the Lord. The material position of a devotee doesn't matter because devotional service is not dependent on material considerations. In his earlier life, Srila Rupa Gosvami was a government officer and a grihastha. He was not even a brahmacari or sannyasi. He associated with mlecchas and yavanas, but because he was always eager to serve, he was a qualified recipient of the Lord's mercy. A sincere devotee can therefore be empowered by the Lord regardless of his situation... To keep oneself free from material contamination and attain the Lord's favor, one must be sincerely anxious to render service to the Lord. This is the only qualification necessary.

It really is the only qualification necessary—eagerness to serve. We have to learn to appreciate that getting the mercy does not forgo the need to do the work of spiritual life. Rather one must be sincerely eager to render service. That is the only qualification necessary. Thus when devotees choose to emphasize mercy—in contrast to knowledge of how the process works, the need to take responsibility for one's spiritual life, and the need to use keen discrimination—it immediately reveals that the person has not understood the philosophy very well, which is okay. We all need to make advancement. There is no limit, no stagnation. Krishna is unlimited and so there is always room to advance in Krishna consciousness. When we see that someone needs to advance, it's an opportunity to help him or her realize something more in devotional service. It is wonderful to inspire another in devotional service to Krishna. Krishna says so Himself in the closing verses of Bhagavad-gita, "One who explains this supreme secret to devotees is very dear to Me... Indeed there will never be one more dear." But the mercy pleaders, holders of the sentimental paradigm, are not so easy to inspire. They can be tough customers.

As I have already mentioned, there is such a thing as kripa-siddhi, perfection achieved by mercy; however, the keepers of the sentimental flame fail to understand how kripa-siddhi works. Srila Prabhupada explains this in The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter Seventeen:

Elevation to this stage of ecstasy can be possible in two ways. One way is by constant association with pure devotees. The other way is by the special mercy of Krishna or by the mercy of a pure devotee of Krishna. Elevation to the ecstatic stage of life is generally attained through association with pure devotees, while elevation to that stage by the special mercy of Krishna or His devotee is very rare. The purport is that one should execute devotional service rigidly in the association of devotees so that there will be certainty in raising oneself to that ecstatic position. In special cases, of course, there is special favor from Krishna, and although we should always expect that, we should not sit idly and simply wait for Krishna's special mercy; the regular duties must be performed. It is just as when, sometimes, it is found that a person who never attended school or college may be recognized as a great scholar, or an honorary degree from great universities may be offered to him. But this does not mean that one should avoid school and expect to automatically receive an honorary degree from some university. Similarly, one should devoutly execute the regulative principles of devotional service and at the same time hope for Krishna's favor or for His devotee's favor.

This directly addresses the mercy issue in a conclusive way. The key statement in this passage is, "In special cases, of course, there is special favor from Krishna, and although we should always expect that, we should not sit idly and simply wait for Krishna's special mercy; the regular duties must be performed." This puts the whole mercy question in perspective.

"Simply Become Bold For Krishna"

In the purport to 2.56 in the Bhagavad-gita, Srila Prabhupada wrote, that for the service of the Lord, a devotee is always "daring and active." How could such a devotee not get the full blessings of Krishna? We think we should humbly "wait for the mercy," but when one disciple timidly asked, "Srila Prabhupada how does one become humble?" Prabhupada surprised him by slamming his open hand down on his desktop, "Simply become bold for Krishna, that's all."

There is a lot in those few words. A devotee is a well-spring of service desires. He has dreams, ideas, and ambitions for spreading the glory of the Lord and so he is active in devotional service. He wants to utilize everything in the service of Krishna. Just like a materialist has a lot to accomplish in this life, a devotee has lots to do for the Lord. He knows he will not realize his dreams by being passive, so he is daring and active; but not reckless and foolish. The reckless and foolish are also daring and active, but under the spell of the modes of nature. Driven by blind ambition they are lost. But a pure devotee of the Lord is bold and forthright, being unflinchingly committed to his objective. In success or failure, he goes all out in his attempt to serve the Lord—but he does it out of duty, not out of material attachment or personal ambition. In the preliminary stage he does it out of duty and in the mature stage he does it out of love. One leads to the other.

In this connection, the renowned German author, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, wrote some inspiring words about the nature of being committed:

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment that one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never have otherwise occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way.

Srila Prabhupada was such a perfect example of this. Every line of this passage describes him. In Krishna conscious terms what Goethe is saying is this: That Supersoul (Providence), who is the fulfiller of our desires, (*eko bahunam yo vidadhati kaman*) is ready to act for fulfilling our desires the moment we are committed to a particular course of action. This is so true. In Chapter Five of the Bhagavad-gita, Srila Prabhupada writes:

The Lord is the constant companion of the living entity as Paramatma, or the Supersoul, and therefore He can understand the desires of the individual soul, as one can smell the flavor of a flower by being near it. Desire is a subtle form of conditioning for the living entity. The Lord fulfills his desire as he deserves: Man proposes and God disposes. The individual is not, therefore, omnipotent in fulfilling his desires. The Lord, however, can fulfill all desires, and the Lord, being neutral to everyone, does not interfere with the desires of the minute independent living entities. However, when one desires Krishna, the Lord takes special care and encourages one to desire in such a way that one can attain to Him and be eternally happy.

Desire is the natural feature of the soul. It is not to be snuffed out. Rather it is to be re-directed towards Krishna's devotional service. And the secret to achieving our desire is be committed to our service. And the secret to such level of commitment is to go beyond a mere sense of promise or of obligation, which is the ordinary meaning of commitment. Here commitment means having the willingness to do whatever it takes to achieve your service desire for Krishna, which is non-different from the commitment to achieving Krishna. There is no difference between these two: If I am committed to Krishna's service I get Krishna; if I am committed to getting Krishna I will serve Him. As Fromm pointed out, "We labor for whom we love; we love whom we labor for."

This willingness to do whatever it takes means one cannot have a laid-back attitude, an easy attitude, in the name of waiting for the mercy. One cannot hang back, hedging his bets, waiting to see if everyone else will move first. No. One must be daring and active. One must be single-minded about his goal and willing to do whatever it takes to achieve it. One must be bold—for Krishna.

Another snippet from Goethe:

Whatever you can do or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now.

Again, this brings to mind Srila Prabhupada. This does not mean acting in the mode of passion. It means a willingness to apply oneself—in a Krishna conscious way—to remove the obstacles between oneself and Krishna. This unshakable resolve catapults one into action. For such a devotee, idly waiting for the mercy of the Lord is simply out of the question. He is ready to do everything possible within the limit of his ability and he relies on the Lord to carry what he lacks and to preserve what he has. And this is the very terms the Lord gives in Bhagavad-gita when He says *ananyas cintayanto mam*, "When you have no other agenda save and except My devotional service, when you are so serious about My devotional service that you are willing to do all in your power for attaining Me, then I will carry what you lack and preserve what you have."

This is the method for getting the mercy. One must translate his desire into action. A devotee should actively endeavor, dynamically endeavor, for the mercy, go all out for it. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta taught this realization and only Srila Prabhupada understood it. No one else in the Gaudiya Math quite got the point or they would be clamoring to follow in his footsteps. Even today, after Srila Prabhupada's dynamic example, no one else has grasped this realization: that we are not meant to serve at half-sail while waiting for the mercy to kick in. Serving Krishna with all we've got is what qualifies us for the mercy of the Lord. Eagerness. That is the secret.

Soft-Hearted Does Not Mean Mushy

One may look at the matter from another angle: One may consider the positive emphasis given in the shastra for a devotee to develop knowledge of the science of devotional service. Invariably the mercy pleaders are lukewarm about the culture of knowledge, because one has to work hard to get it, and then carry the burden of responsibility to act on it. The path of surrender is crystal clear for one who has full knowledge, but it is hazy for one who has little knowledge. Krishna says in the Fifth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita that this knowledge reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime. That means that the scriptural knowledge makes it very clear what's to be done and what's not to be done. All a sincere soul has to do is abide by the scriptures.

But the sentimental person does not want everything lit up and clear. He thinks that as long as the path is hazy he can surrender on his own terms. He can falter here and there all the while thinking,

"My surrender is as good as any other's surrender." In reality his devotional service is not on the platform of eagerness; it is slack. He may make elaborate gestures by taking vows to chant, going on pilgrimage, but it is all show. In reality he is as out of touch with Krishna in his heart as any workaday materialists, but he is very much in touch with trying to impress the community of Vaishnavas. This is the ultimate whammy of the illusory potency of Krishna, when it convinces me that I am in the mood of full surrender when in fact I am not. I'm more like a rudderless ship at sea. From a distance I may look splendid with my full sail catching the wind, but actually a rudderless ship is going nowhere fast.

This is the predicament of the sentimental set: They look and sound the part, but they are going nowhere fast. They love to hear "sweet" classes on the topics about Krishna's Vrindavana pastimes, but classes on the philosophy and the dynamics of the process, about the ins and outs, about how to get out of square one do not attract them so much. They have heard that advanced devotees only talk about Krishna, do not discriminate, and only see the spiritual world and so, being lazy to do the work of distinguishing between reality and illusion, they try prematurely to elevate themselves to the plane of non-discrimination so they can take it easy while assuring themselves that they are advanced. How is that? Because "I'm doing what an advanced devotee does. Discriminating is for lesser mortals."

And the holders of the sentimental paradigm who give classes know how to be expert crowd-pleasers. A dynamic mutual admiration exchange is set in motion. He glorifies the audience and the audience glorifies him. They get a taste out of this, no doubt, but it is not a real taste of pure bhakti. It is an imitation taste. But sentimentalists will say to me, "You don't know what you are talking about. You are hard-hearted and envious. You have no taste for the topics about Krishna." But all their discussion about the topics about Krishna is of little practical value if there is no eagerness to serve Krishna as a result. This is the litmus test—to see how much such persons are eager to flex their physical and mental muscles for serving the Supreme Lord.

Unfortunately, they confuse intense desire to be advanced with intense desire to render service. These two items are not quite the same. A devotee does not worry about being advanced in Krishna consciousness. He never thinks about his advancement per se. After all, the more he advances the less he thinks himself advanced. He worries about being engaged in service. That is his symptom. By his complete eagerness and absorption in service he is automatically advanced. Unless eagerness to advance results in intense desire to serve the spiritual master's mission, one is on the sentimental platform, wistfully hoping to get the result without plunking down his cash. He is looking for a shortcut to success, an easy way. He hopes to beat the system.

Another point is that sentimentalists fail to appreciate that there is a distinction between a soft heart and a mushy one. Hence they consider that whoever is not mushy-in-the-middle like them, perforce, must be hard-hearted. That is simply not a fact. Mushiness and hard-heartedness are extremes. The soft-heartedness of a Vaishnava is somewhere between.

Krishna Is All-Sweet

But if you are not discriminating you may actually fall for their line of mush and doubt yourself. But if you know what is real advancement in devotional service you will be able to tell in short order whether these persons are the real thing or not. For one thing, no truly advanced devotee thinks only the lilas where Krishna is not killing demons are sweet. In the eyes of any genuinely advanced devotee everything about Krishna is sweet. His killing demons is sweet. His saying "mudha" this, "mudha" that is sweet. His charging after Bhishma with the chariot wheel is sweet. It

is all sweet. All divine. All transcendental. All equally relishable, because it all relates to the Supreme Person. It is all relishable when presented from the shastra or from the lips of realized devotees. Just see how Srila Prabhupada relished telling again and again the story of Prahlada, for example. He didn't always try to rivet our attention to Tenth Canto affairs, trying to bring all conversation to topics of Krishna and the gopis on any flimsy pretext.

Those who lack realization but want to be regarded as advanced cannot discourse on just any aspect of krishna-katha. They worry that it may not be construed as advanced. Talking about topics of the gopis, on the other hand, innocent devotees will oohh and ahhh all night in awe, "Just see how advanced this devotee is, such a brilliant speaker. And so sweet."

To hear discussions about the process of pleasing Krishna through awakening of pure, unmixed devotion is as pleasing as the intimate topics about Krishna's loving affairs. It is a misconception that such topics are for neophytes only. But in any case, whenever there are neophytes present, a genuine preacher limits his discussion to the preliminary aspects of devotional service, and the name, qualities, prowess, and so on, of the Lord. This was the example of Srila Prabhupada. The Srimad-Bhagavatam is laid out in twelve cantos and the first nine simply explain various aspects of Krishna's qualities. Very little about Krishna Himself is brought out, because one must fully comprehend all the preliminary stages of God realization first, then he is ready to go to the ultimate stage. Even then, one preaches the basics to the people in general.

Discrimination: Seeing Through The Shastra

In any event, both the advanced and neophyte devotees relish discussions about how to achieve perfection in full Krishna consciousness. There is no question of discussion on pastimes being more exalted than discussion on the process. But such discussion confers responsibility. So if I don't want to shoulder that burden, I must carefully avoid too much detailed knowledge of the process. If I am too lazy to take my life in hand and take responsibility for my spiritual life, and flex all my mental muscles for the pleasure of my spiritual master, then I will remain a mercy pleader with full conviction. Sometimes the mercy pleaders even deride the cultivation of devotional knowledge saying that Prabhupada said devotional service is all we need. One devotee, upon being told that I work on the Sandarbha translation project, told me that he is not interested in jnana. He suggested I should do something practical, "like study astrology." This devotee has not read from Prabhupada's books in years. He never attends classes yet he says he travels and preaches and helps people. What does he preach? How can he help anyone? With charm? Charisma? Platitudes? Flattery? Good intentions?

Okay, he is well-meaning. Yet we are advised that if we see a serious accident on the highway and you don't in fact know what to do, don't touch the victims. You may be well-meaning, but don't touch anyone, as you may do more damage. Rather, call someone who knows what is what. So being well-meaning is not enough. It is no qualification. The same is true in spiritual life. As the saying goes: The path to hell is paved with good intentions.

Sentimentality can cause havoc, but it is unavoidable. Some will always opt to be sentimental, but it should not be encouraged. We should not let it be pawned off as advanced devotional service. That is a disservice to the acaryas. The culture of the science of Krishna consciousness as received in parampara alone should be encouraged.

When Srila Prabhupada said we do not need to cultivate jnana, he meant useless speculative knowledge. He did not mean knowledge in the process as received in parampara. That is not

speculative knowledge. That knowledge is our very business. Otherwise why would he say, "Books are the basis"? In fact it is said that such knowledge is the specific opulence of the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya sampradaya. Devotional service is so wonderful that even the cultivation of devotional knowledge is itself devotional service. Srila Prabhupada would never be against that. Indeed the shastra and Srila Prabhupada both state that devotional service must be executed in full knowledge:

jnanena drishta-tattvena vairmgyena baliyasm tapo-yuktena yogena tivrenatma-samadhina

Devotional service has to be performed strongly in perfect knowledge and with transcendental vision. (Bhag. 3.27.22)

From the purport:

Devotional service in Krishna consciousness can be performed blindly, due to material emotion or mental concoction. It is mentioned here that one has to perform devotional service in full knowledge...and is able, by development of knowledge, to understand his constitutional position in relationship with the Superself. In this way one becomes fixed in devotional service, and his faith cannot be shaken by any material allurements.

Here the absence of knowledge is aligned with sentimentality or emotionality, and concocted spirituality. Prabhupada facetiously says, "Yes, if you insist, devotional service can be performed out of blind sentiment or some whimsical concoction." Further, the specific virtue of knowledge is extolled when he concludes, "In this way one becomes fixed in devotional service and his faith cannot be shaken by any material allurements." Who will not want this?

The Lord holds the person who approaches Him in knowledge in the greatest esteem:

tesam jnani nitya-yukta eka-bhaktir visishyate priyo hi jnanino 'tyartham aham sa ca mama priyah

Of these, the one who is in full knowledge and who is always engaged in pure devotional service is the best. For I am very dear to him, and he is dear to Me. (Bg. 7.17)

From the purport:

So by association with pure devotees the inquisitive, the distressed, the seeker after material amelioration and the man in knowledge all become themselves pure. But in the preparatory stage, the man who is in full knowledge of the Supreme Lord and is at the same time executing devotional service is very dear to the Lord.

In the previous purport Prabhupada explained that of the four types, the first three must come to the platform of knowledge or risk leaving the path of service to the Lord once their desire is fulfilled. Clearly such risk is reduced for the person who approaches and serves the Lord in knowledge. Hence the Lord says that such a person is very dear to Him. So knowledge is requisite for all who desire to progress on this path according to the standard method of sadhana-bhakti. Initially, one may approach the Lord impelled by one of the other three reasons the Lord gives—curiosity, distress, or a desire for wealth—but one has to progress to the platform of knowledge. This knowledge is itself the mercy. And if along the way other forms of mercy come to us—special mercy—then that is a very nice. We may be lucky to get an honorary degree, but unconditional

service cannot simply rely on this mercy. Our prayer for mercy must be accompanied by our endeavor. And to differentiate right endeavor from wrong endeavor we require scriptural knowledge. In the Sixteenth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita, the Lord says:

yah shastra-vidhim utsrijya vartate kama-karatah na sa siddhim avapnoti na sukham na param
gatim

He who discards scriptural injunctions and acts according to his own whim attains neither perfection nor happiness nor the supreme destination. (Bg. 16.23)

We should note, however, that even when we are fortified with scriptural knowledge and eager to practice discrimination we may still have difficulty on the path. Our endeavor alone is not enough to give a full guarantee of success. Krishna said to Arjuna, "The senses are so strong and impetuous that they can forcibly carry away the mind of a man of discrimination who is endeavoring to control them."

The conclusion is that we do require mercy, over and above our personal endeavor, but if a man of discrimination can get swept away by the power of maya, what then is the position of a person who will not make the effort to discriminate? One may safely conclude that such a person is guaranteed to be swept away. That is not to say he will necessarily leave the Krishna consciousness movement, but he will surely fall short of his goal, which is punar janma jayaya, victory over repeated birth and death.

Praying at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada that I will rid my heart of all varieties of mixed devotional service I, Kundali Dasa, write this analytical treatise on the three modes of nature.

sri-bhagavan uvaca sattvam rajas tama iti guna buddher na catmanah sattvenanyatamau hanyat
sattvam sattvena caiva hi

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: The three modes of material nature, namely goodness, passion, and ignorance, pertain to material intelligence and not to the spirit soul. By development of material goodness one can conquer the mode of passion and ignorance, and by cultivation of transcendental goodness one may free oneself from even material goodness. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.13.1)

CHAPTER FIVE

Which Comes First, Freedom From The Modes Or Pure Bhakti?

I briefly touched on this subject earlier. Here I treat it in detail. Some think that if you simply throw yourself on the path of bhakti you need not be concerned with lesser matters such as the three modes of nature. You need not hone your powers of discrimination to a fine point. Just by serving blindly you are already on the right track and there is nothing more to it. In his preaching to attract us to Krishna, Srila Prabhupada made the process sound that simple. Indeed it is simple. But a close reading of his books makes it plain that the process is not quite that simple.

Symptoms of One Transcendentally Situated

Actually pure bhakti, or the state of pure goodness, is only attained when one is free of the modes of nature. One does not become free of the modes of nature on his own whim or fantasy. He must factually be free. Such a state is not without its symptoms. Previously I quoted from the Fourteenth Chapter of the Bhagavad-gita the symptoms of one who is above the modes of nature. In the Second Chapter also, Arjuna asked Krishna what are the symptoms of one who is transcendentally situated:

sthita-prajshasya ka bhana samadhi-sthasya kesava sthita-dhih kim prabhaseta kim asita vrajeta
kim

What are the symptoms of one whose consciousness is thus merged in transcendence? How does he speak, and what is his language? How does he sit, and how does he walk? (Bg. 2.54)

In the purport, Srila Prabhupada writes:

As there are symptoms for each and every man, in terms of his particular situation, similarly one who is Krishna conscious has his particular nature—talking, walking, thinking, feeling, etc. As a rich man has his symptoms by which he is known as a rich man, as a diseased man has his symptoms by which he is known as diseased, or as a learned man has his symptoms, so a man in transcendental consciousness of Krishna has specific symptoms in various dealings. One can know his specific symptoms from the Bhagavad-gita. Most important is how the man in Krishna consciousness speaks; for speech is the most important quality of any man. It is said that a fool is undiscovered as long as he does not speak, and certainly a well-dressed fool cannot be

identified unless he speaks, but as soon as he speaks, he reveals himself at once. The immediate symptom of a Krishna conscious man is that he speaks only of Krishna and of matters relating to Him. Other symptoms then automatically follow, as stated below.

It is interesting to note that in his question, Arjuna asked "How does he speak, and what is his language? How does he sit, and how does he walk?" But in replying, Krishna does not comment on these points, because Arjuna was asking about external symptoms. Instead Krishna answers giving him pointers of a deeper significance. The significance is that we cannot merely try to understand this subject matter by appraisal of the tatastha lakshana, external symptoms. We must develop that skill by learning to see the svarupa lakshana, the internal symptoms. The first step is to have a clear understanding of the scriptural knowledge. Then to look for the various symptoms. One gets better and better with practice.

Krishna answers Arjuna:

prajahati yada kaman sarvan partha mano-gatan atmany evatmana tushtah sthita-prajnas
tadocyate duhksheshv anudvigna-manah sukheshu vigata-sprihah viita-raga-bhaya-krodhah
sthita-dhiir munir ucyate yah sarvatranabhisnehas tat tat prapya subhasubham nabhinandati na
dveshti tasya prajsha pratishthita yada samharate cayam kurmo 'ngan'iva sarvasah
indriyari'ndriyarthebhyas tasya prajsha pratishthita

O Partha, when a man gives up all varieties of desire for sense gratification, which arise from mental concoction, and when his mind, thus purified, finds satisfaction in the self alone, then he is said to be in pure transcendental consciousness. One who is not disturbed in mind even amidst the threefold miseries or elated when there is happiness, and who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a sage of steady mind. In the material world, one who is unaffected by whatever good or evil he may obtain, neither praising it nor despising it, is firmly fixed in perfect knowledge. One who is able to withdraw his senses from sense objects, as the tortoise draws its limbs within the shell, is firmly fixed in perfect consciousness. (Bg. 2.55-58)

These references clearly describe the symptoms of advanced Krishna consciousness and eliminate the need for guesswork. Simply we must know what they are, and look for them. Of course, human nature is such that even a person may have the symptoms and we still doubt their integrity. Then we have to patiently wait, see if the symptoms are permanent or temporary. But one thing we can know with certainty: that the person who lacks the symptoms is definitely not transcendently situated. So there is no guesswork if one adheres to the knowledge received from Krishna.

Unfortunately, we don't always adhere to Krishna's teachings. Sometimes we find a person who doesn't have the above symptoms, but nevertheless accept him as a great transcendentalist. Sometimes the opposite happens, the symptoms are present, but we disregard them. This can cause havoc in society. In ISKCON this happens most often by exalting the preacher. This is how it works: Every devotee knows that the greatest offense in chanting the holy name is sadhu ninda, to blaspheme the devotee who has dedicated his life as a preacher of Krishna consciousness. This is param aparadha, the greatest offense. Therefore the moment someone has a reputation as a great preacher the devotees tend to lose all objectivity in regard to that devotee and promote him to exalted status. We lose all objectivity and decide that here is an empowered preacher, a greatly realized soul, etc. We sometimes tend to go overboard in our appreciation of that devotee's contribution. This all seems pretty harmless and well-intended. After all, one is going by the shastra, which says that one should not hesitate to show appreciation for the service of a Vaishnava.

Unfortunately, life is not that simple. Persons come along besotted with personal ambition and they posture themselves as great preachers, just to get recognition, position, facility, etc. Some of us were formerly number one at everything we did—school, sports, career or whatever—and now, upon taking to Krishna consciousness, we expect to be number one here as well. This orientation distorts the practice of spiritual life. Taking a corporate view of spiritual progress is bad news, but it happens. Individuals fall for it.

But they lack these transcendental symptoms. They in effect use the status of being a great preacher to take advantage of the well-meaning devotees. In the course of time, when the so-called preacher can no longer keep up the charade, the devotees are shocked to find out he was a pseudo-devotee and the revelation plays havoc on the faith of so many devotees. Some keep up the image of being a dedicated preacher and cause havoc for a long time and by having preacher status in the society they remain insulated from any reproach.

But such disasters can be avoided if we simply stick to Krishna's instructions. A number of times in the Bhagavad-gita Krishna gives the symptoms of one who is transcendently situated—the Second, Twelfth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Chapters come immediately to mind. When taken all together these verses comprise a long list of symptoms. In fact this is such an important point in Krishna's message that all told there are 165 verses in the Bhagavad-gita describing the symptoms and activities of a transcendently situated person. That is a ratio of almost 1 out of every 4.5 verses. This means that these symptoms and activities are one of the major themes in the Gita. Why? Because it is essential to know this in order to progress in spiritual life.

Again, Krishna mercifully eliminates the need for guesswork. If we stick to Krishna's criteria then it will be difficult for us to be misled on this subtle but important point. Simply we have to accept it as our personal responsibility to discriminate on the basis of the shastra.

First Be Free of The Modes

In every instance, one who has these symptoms is the actual transcendentalist. He is free from contamination by the modes of nature. Prior to such complete freedom one is in mixed devotional service. While devotional service mixed with the modes of passion and ignorance may excite one's fever for material life behind the veil of spirituality, devotional service rendered in the mode of goodness purifies the heart of the performer. Hence this particular blend of mixed devotional service is not an obstacle to progress in Krishna consciousness. In fact in the preliminary stage it is recommended that one strive to attain steadiness in the mode of goodness as the first progressive step in the overall process of Krishna consciousness. This is clear from the Lord's instructions in the Uddhava-gita, in the Eleventh Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam and will be discussed at length later in this book.

Unfortunately those who have only a general idea of the philosophy think the process works the other way around. They think that by throwing oneself at the process of devotional service they are on the liberated platform automatically and the modes of nature are more or less irrelevant. This is a mistake.

I recall some years ago stressing in a Bhagavatam class that we must strive to get out of rendering service mixed with the modes of passion and ignorance. During the question period I was challenged, "Prabhu, devotees are transcendental to the modes of nature." When I would not give in and cited Lord Kapiladeva in my support, a senior sannyasi Godbrother was asked to settle the dispute. To my surprise he said, "Prabhupada said devotees are above the modes of nature. This

description of devotional service in the different modes of nature does not apply to us." I wondered to whom it would apply, but I thought it wise not to press the issue. Not only is it not a scriptural fact that one is completely transcendental to the modes of nature just on the strength of taking to the process of devotional service, but it is a self-evident fact as well. We have only to look at the symptoms. As far as Srila Prabhupada having said that devotees are above the modes, that without a doubt is a fact, but he means a pure devotee.

The simple fact is that one is on the right track when he takes to devotional service, but he is not there yet. If one goes to the train station and throws himself on the right track he does not automatically go to his destination. Yes, it is a fact he is on the right track, but unless he adjusts the situation the result will be a mess. And even if he makes the necessary adjustment he is still not automatically and instantly transported to his destination. The train (process) still takes time to carry him to his destination.

Just to make it clear as to which comes first here are some references from the shastra and from Srila Prabhupada:

etah samsritayah pumso guna-karma-nibandhanah yeneme nirjitah saumya guna jivena citta-jah
bhakti-yogena man-nishtho mad-bhavaya prapadyate
(Bhag. 11.25.32)

O gentle Uddhava, all these different phases of conditioned life arise from work born of the modes of material nature. The living entity who conquers these modes, manifested from the mind, can dedicate himself to Me by the process of devotional service and thus attain pure love for Me.

ta ete sadhavaḥ sadhvi sarva-saṅga-vivarjitah saṅgas teshv atha te prarthyaḥ saṅga-dosha-hara
hi te

O My mother, O virtuous lady, these are the qualities of great devotees who are free from all attachment. You must seek attachment to such holy men, for this counteracts the pernicious effects of material attachment. (Bhag. 3.25.24)

From the purport:

A pure soul who is prepared to be freed from this material entanglement must first of all be free from the association of the three modes of nature. So our endeavor should be to raise ourselves first to the sattva-guna. That we can do. And then transcend sattva-guna and reach the spiritual platform. (Morning Walk, Perth, May 11, 1975)

These references show that there can be no question of the manner of progress in Krishna consciousness. The progressive approach is one of first getting to goodness as the intermediate achievement on the way to pure goodness. The references cited in the previous chapter and in this one support this conclusion.

Another interesting twist—the claim that we are all in the mode of goodness just by following the four regulative principles. This is an amazing, possibly harmful over-simplification. There are many symptoms of the mode of goodness and while the four regulative principles are significant aids for getting us there, one is not in the mode of goodness just by having those four principles to his

credit. A person executing devotional service mixed with passion or ignorance may also be following very nicely the four regulative principles, at least for a time.

Another consideration is the self-evident fact that one may run through all three modes of nature in the course of a single day and yet not break any of the principles. So, how could it be said that one is in the mode of goodness just by following the regulative principles? That does not add up. So while adherence to the principles is undeniably favorable for being fixed in the mode of goodness, it cannot be held up as the sole proof of one being in the mode of goodness. There are numerous symptoms given in the shastras and at least a significant number of those must be present before one can be said to be predominantly in the mode of goodness.

Do We Have a Choice?

Devotees often cite Krishna's statement, "Everyone is forced to act helplessly according to the qualities he has acquired from the modes of material nature;" as proof that one has no choice. They conclude that the modes turn one into a helpless victim, like a leaf being blown by the wind or a rudderless boat in a stormy sea. This is a misunderstanding. Once we choose to act in a particular mode, either knowingly or unknowingly, then we are forced, but before that we are free to decide and the proof is that we are responsible for our actions. If we had no choice that would not be the case. We have choice, hence we reap the punishment or reward for our actions. If we had no choice we would not be able to choose the life of Krishna consciousness.

But some say, owing to a poor fund of understanding, that choosing between Maya and Krishna is our only choice. Not so. In the purport to Bhagavatam 2.9.2, Srila Prabhupada explains:

The external, material energy is represented by her three modes, namely goodness, passion and ignorance. So even in the material nature there is a chance of an independent choice by the living entity, and according to his choice the material energy offers him different varieties of material bodies.

And in Bhagavad-gita (7.2, purport) Srila Prabhupada writes:

But this nature can be changed if one associates with a bona fide spiritual master and abides by his rules and the scriptures. Gradually one can change his position from ignorance to goodness, or from passion to goodness. The conclusion is that blind faith in a particular mode of nature cannot help a person become elevated to the perfectional stage. One has to consider things carefully, with intelligence, in the association of a bona fide spiritual master. Thus, one can change his position to a higher mode of nature.

Here Srila Prabhupada makes it clear that we are responsible for choosing and therefore change is possible. If we don't choose that is also a choice. In the above reference he also makes explicit the practical role of the spiritual master.

The business of the spiritual master is to diagnose the disciple in terms of how he is entangled in the modes of nature and to systematically guide him from ignorance or passion to goodness, and then on to pure goodness. His role is like that of a doctor whose first business is to diagnose the patient, then prescribe a regimen for his cure, check his progress, and amend his prescription as he recovers or relapses. It is not enough that the doctor gives an arbitrary prescription to every patient and the patient rewards him with offerings of money and presents, fruit and flowers. It is not such a

frivolous thing. The patient has to take responsibility to follow the expert doctor and the doctor has to take responsibility for the patient's recovery. It's the same with the spiritual master and disciple.

Who Can Be Spiritual Master?

The spiritual master who simply initiates his disciples and leaves them to fend for themselves is like the doctor who makes a general observation to his patient, "You are ill," and prescribes everything in the pharmacy without offering further diagnosis. In the material world such a doctor would have malpractice suits coming from all directions, if he had any patients in the first place. In spiritual life this possibility of malpractice also exists; therefore it is advised that one should not accept too many disciples, because the burden of guiding them is an immense one to bear. One may be inclined to blindly follow the example of Srila Prabhupada, but one should know his capacity. Prabhupada is a great devotee even among great devotees. He cannot be imitated.

Devotional service is a science and any neglect in its execution by the disciple or the spiritual master can have a negative effect. A sincere candidate for spiritual life must have this confidence: that over and above all considerations, my spiritual master, who is connected to the parampara and is always serving as a transparent medium for the parampara, is expert enough to discern my degree of entanglement in the modes of nature and can guide me out of such confusion. Without this confidence one should not accept that person as spiritual master. A potential spiritual master may be charming, charismatic, or whatever, but can he guide me over the hurdles and pitfalls that will inevitably come up in my spiritual life? If I have doubts, I should wait until my doubts are cleared, or I should approach someone in whom I have no doubts.

In order to ascertain all these points, one has to take time to observe the potential spiritual master. One should not feel that he must make a hurried decision nor should one yield to peer pressure. Neophyte candidates for initiation must be extra cautious on this point. I know that many believe that because ISKCON policy is that one may choose a spiritual master after at least six months following the process that one must choose after the first six months. This is not a fact. One may wait years. The guiding principle is that one must have firm faith in the person whom he approaches for initiation. Without that conviction it is best to wait.

There are those who say the spiritual master must be a paramahansa, able to see Krishna face to face, and who list other kinds of non-quantifiable mystical criteria, none of which Srila Prabhupada gave us in his practical preaching on the subject. What Prabhupada did emphasize from the practical point of view was that the spiritual master teaches by example and is a transparent medium for the parampara. He is fixed in following the order of his spiritual master.

Here we see what is the practical result of such qualification, that the spiritual master can determine where each disciple is entangled and can systematically guide them out of entanglement in the modes of passion and ignorance. Then upon being fixed in the mode of goodness he guides them to the next stage, pure goodness. Srila Prabhupada often said, "This process is simple for the simple." There is no need to introduce novel twists in the philosophy or in its execution.

That's not to say that one who takes up the service of spiritual master must not be a pure devotee. He must be a pure devotee; but one must understand that there are different grades of pure devotees. One who follows the parampara strictly, is expert at explaining the scriptural conclusions, and able to inspire others to accept the path of Krishna consciousness can be a spiritual master. The above criteria is visible and quantifiable. In the Caitanya-caritamrita, Srila Prabhupada has written:

Haridas Thakura was the ideal spiritual master because he regularly chanted on his beads a prescribed number of times. Indeed, he was chanting the holy name of the Lord 300,000 times a day. Similarly, the members of the Krishna consciousness movement chant a minimum of sixteen rounds a day, which can be done without difficulty, and at the same time they must preach the cult of Caitanya Mahaprabhu according to the gospel of Bhagavad-gita As It Is. One who does so is quite fit to become a spiritual master for the entire world.

There is no mention here of seeing Krishna. This is by no means to say that the standard for spiritual master should be lowered, but it should not be raised to a standard based on a one-sided emphasis of Srila Prabhupada's teachings. It should not be made into something mythical. Our basic principle, as given by Srila Prabhupada, is that "who follows nicely can lead." These are the qualifications Srila Prabhupada set and one need not resort to unverifiable mystical criteria, and thus encourage inexperienced devotees to choose a spiritual master based on whim or sentiment. This only produces disciples who have fanatical conviction about matters they are not qualified to judge. In that case, what is the practical value of such preaching, other than to attract a following?

The above approach is not scientific preaching of Krishna consciousness as exemplified by our most expert Srila Prabhupada. It bespeaks something other than ahaituki-bhakti. Who follows Srila Prabhupada can lead. Who deviates cannot. All a prospective disciple needs to know is that his spiritual master is following Srila Prabhupada and is expert in explaining and applying the science of Krishna consciousness. This was clearly indicated by Srila Prabhupada when he declared, "I may see Krishna I may not see Krishna, but as far as you know I am following the order of my guru maharaja."

In addition, the prospective disciple must have firm faith that this particular person can inspire him to overcome all obstacles on the path back home, back to Godhead.

Another consideration is that we are rupanugas, followers of Srila Rupa Gosvami. He has also shed light on the matter of guru without reference to any mystical (mis-take-al) criteria:

vaco vegam manasah krodha-vegam jihva-vegam udaropastha-vegam etan vegan yo vishaheta
dhirah sarvam apimam prithivim sa sishyat

A sober person who can tolerate the urge to speak, the mind's demands, the actions of anger and the urges of the tongue, belly and genitals is qualified to make disciples all over the world.
(Upadesamrita, Text 1)

Who Can Be a Disciple?

So the prospective guru may be perfectly qualified, but unless the prospective disciple has firm faith in him then best to wait.

If the disciple lacks deep-seated conviction with respect to the guru's capacity to guide him in all practical matters of his purification, the disciple is not yet a candidate for spiritual initiation. At the time of initiation he or she must be clear of all doubts, otherwise it is better to wait. Better not to give in to peer pressure to get initiated because of so many months or years in the movement or "because this guru, or that guru, is ever-so-wonderful," and so on. Firm faith is the key. Haste and sweaty palms to get a new name is not devotion. Srila Prabhupada took eleven years to get initiated. While this does not generally happen, it is a fact that one should not take initiation without first having developed firm faith. That is essential.

Those who are already initiated should simply educate people about what is a spiritual master, what is a disciple, the principle of approaching Krishna through His representative in parampara, and so on. As preachers we are educators. People should be educated and then left to make their own decisions. In this way he or she can take full responsibility for their educated choice. It is not our business to pressure people by creating an artificial need to be initiated.

In the oft quoted adau sraddha tathah sadhu-sango'tha bhajana kriya verse from Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu, initiation comes at the stage of bhajana-kriya, the third stage. One should note that sraddha precedes the bhajana-kriya stage. Faith in the guru is what provides one the strength to follow his order. If one takes diksha before developing sraddha, where will he get the strength to follow?

Besides, what value is there for a disciple in having a guru in whom he does not have firm faith? For that matter, what value is there for a guru to have a disciple who does not have firm faith? In the second stage, sadhu-sanga, one should be properly educated on these points prior to accepting initiation.

When one finds a bonafide spiritual master and all his doubts are cleared, then he may approach him for initiation and begin the process of surrendering to Krishna's representative. In this way one embarks on the process of changing his nature to the mode of goodness. Without submitting oneself to such change and without such change factually happening no one can make significant progress on the path of pure devotional service even after years in the process. Indeed one may practice mixed devotional service for lifetimes.

A Word of Caution

On the spiritual master's side, it is his duty to test the disciple before initiation to be certain that he is a proper candidate for being a disciple on the bhakti-marga. The position of spiritual master is one of service. It is one of responsibility. He is serving as Krishna's representative. A candidate comes to the process and in essence declares to the spiritual master, "I want to meet Krishna and serve Him. Will you take me to him if I agree to have you prepare me?" And the spiritual master's duty is to see if in fact this person is ready. Just like the military has a selection process, so the spiritual master has to select who is sincere or not.

Insincere disciples—or disciples who may be sincere about the process, but somehow lack firm faith in their spiritual master—simply create havoc in spiritual life for both parties. So a devotee performing the service of spiritual master must not be hasty to add names to his list of disciples. Then it becomes attachment, not service. Then it becomes family life. Rather than preach Krishna consciousness impartially, for the upliftment of one and all, he goes about canvassing for disciples, advertising himself as guru, simply to increase his following. Such canvassing or advertising is not a symptom of detachment. It is a symptom of attachment. One who is attached is not on the transcendental platform. He is in the modes of nature. So, buyer beware: if you are canvassed, be careful.

I would have liked to report that such practice of canvassing is not going on at all, and that this discussion is merely philosophical. That would have been a great relief to me. Sad to say, this is not the case. To my embarrassment, devotees have confided to me that they have been canvassed. When this happens, one must remember Lord Caitanya's exemplary instruction:

na dhanam na janam na sundarim kavitam va jagad-isa kamaye mama janmani janmanisvare bhavatad bhaktir ahaituki tvayi.

O almighty Lord, I have no desire to accumulate wealth, nor do I desire beautiful women, nor do I want any number of followers. I only want Your causeless devotional service, birth after birth. (Sikshashtaka 4)

I have also have experienced that sometimes in lectures willful and transparent overtures are being made to attract disciples. Therefore, I say again, buyer beware. If you are canvassed, be careful.

Of course, the innocent new devotees are sometimes unable to appreciate they are being canvassed. More likely they are flattered by the attention of the "advanced" devotee. Nevertheless, being canvassed is not a symptom of one who is transcendently situated; it is a symptom of attachment.

Lord Caitanya has indicated the danger of the anartha of wanting followers in His Sikshashtaka prayers. One in the position of accepting disciples is in a position of great risk. He must always be mindful of Lord Caitanya's warning, na janam, that one must not be anxious to have followers. This is more difficult to give up than wealth and gross sex. It is subtle sex. Subtle things are more difficult to eradicate, but their capacity to hinder our progress in spiritual life is no less effective than gross attachments.

Fanatic Disciples: What Mode Are They In?

Unfortunately, owing to the powerful influence of the modes of material nature, sometimes fanatic disciples, determined to show their reverence for their guru, think it is great service to bend the will of newcomers to accept their guru as spiritual master. In this instance the guru is not canvassing—the disciples are doing it on his behalf. It amounts to the same thing. The guru may plead innocence, but in fact it is his responsibility to train his disciples how to preach and keep them from going to extremes.

This kind of syndrome, where fanatic disciples try to bend others to their will, is actually violence to a person's spiritual life. We should simply stick to educating the neophyte devotee in the principles—what is a bona fide spiritual master, what is the role of the spiritual master, what is a disciple, accept as guru one in whom you have faith, and so on. In other words, we should preach the process and let the person take responsibility for making his own decisions. Our role as preachers is to educate, not to manipulate. Krishna conscious training means we teach people how to think for themselves within the parameters of Krishna consciousness, not that we think for others. To the extent that we practice this sort of thing we are in fact functioning as a cult. It should be stopped. Coercion and manipulation are not among the twenty-six qualities of a devotee.

Of course, if a newcomer asks one's advice, that's another thing. But it is not a sign of great devotion to my guru if I scheme directly or indirectly or browbeat people to accept my guru as their guru. If a newcomer takes initiation without having firm faith, it is a great disturbance to all concerned. The person's life will be disturbed. I have seen it many times. My guru will have a growing list of names of so-called disciples, and I may well suffer for causing the disturbance. Like

any other action in the mode of passion, preaching Krishna consciousness in the mode of passion, that is to say, with fruitive intent, is sure to bring painful results.

The Accelerated Process

Let's go back to the quote where Srila Prabhupada says, "The conclusion is that blind faith in a particular mode of nature cannot help a person become elevated to the perfectional stage." (Bg. 7.2) The context in which it was spoken was in relation to faith in the demigods. This statement can be taken, however, to mean that from whatever mode of nature one is in, passion or ignorance, mere blind faith in the process of devotional service cannot elevate one to the plane of transcendence. One cannot jump over the mode of goodness from either of the lower modes into transcendence. That is altogether impossible. One must go through goodness.

Someone may go at a faster or slower rate in proportion to his surrender, but there is no alternative route. This we have to consider. There is no expedient route for getting around this progression. This is already the accelerated process and the only way to hasten it is to surrender more, but the process itself must be intact. Unconditional surrender is the only expedient factor. Such surrender can happen in a matter of moments or it can take lifetimes, but there is no other route. The conclusion is clear: One must progress to goodness, there completely free himself from all contact with the modes of nature, and then progress to pure devotional service.

Praying at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada that I will rid my heart of all varieties of mixed devotional service I, Kundali Dasa, write this analytical treatise on the three modes of nature.

tada rajas-tamo-bhavah kama-lobhadayas ca ye ceta etair anaviddham sthitam sattve prasidati

As soon as irrevocable loving service is established in the heart, the effects of nature's modes of passion and ignorance, such as lust, desire and hankering, disappear from the heart. Then the devotee is established in goodness, and he becomes completely happy. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.2.19)

CHAPTER SIX

Bhakti Mixed With The Modes of Nature

This is one of the most important chapters in the book. The subjects discussed often come as a surprise for the devotees. I encourage the reader to thoroughly study this chapter to absorb the meaning, for this knowledge can make a lot of difference in how you apply yourself in devotional life.

A Popular Misconception

We have heard again and again that devotional service is pure and transcendental, hence we automatically assume that all our service is pure and transcendental. The logic in ISKCON is, "Devotional service is transcendental and I am doing devotional service, so I am transcendental." This is a popular misconception. We support it with scriptural reference:

mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena bhakti-yogena sevate sa gunan samatityaitan brahma-bhuyaya kalpate

One who engages in full devotional service, who does not fall down in any circumstance, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman. (Bg. 14.26)

The understanding here is that I am engaged in the routine morning program and I have my service, so how could I be anywhere else but on the Brahman level? Srila Prabhupada quoted this verse so many times in this context and he often said that the devotees were in fact transcendental. Indeed, when this question was put directly to him, he said, "Devotees are above the modes." This is a fact, but before thinking that I am such a devotee, I must first make sure that I have the qualifications. What are the symptoms of a devotee who is above the modes? What is the minimum requirement?

The minimum requirement is that he performs one hundred per cent pure unalloyed devotional service. As far as symptoms go, the above verse states that he does not fall down in any circumstance. This point about fall down merits discussion. Generally, we think fall down means breaking the principles, but is that what Krishna means? Not at all. Krishna has a lot more than the principles in mind. He means that one does not fall down from complete engagement in His service day after day. One does not fall down from being unmotivated in His service. One does not fall down to the platform of attachment, hankering, and lamentation. One does not fall down to being affected by honor and dishonor. One does not succumb to lust and greed in all its myriad forms.

One does not fall down from the platform of Vaishnava integrity. That is to say, he has all the symptoms of being a perfect gentleman.

In other words, all the many symptoms of one who is transcendental to the modes of nature are present in such a devotee. He is a model character of a transcendentalist. He is indifferent to praise and blame, happiness and distress, profit and loss, victory and defeat. He is detached from sensual pleasures. He is straightforward in his dealings. He does not manipulate people and situations out of attachment for his self-interest. He does not try to control the course of events. He is honest, humble, kind, etc. If he is not these things, and he is in the process, then it is automatically understood that he is rendering service mixed with the modes of nature.

Mixed Devotional Service Is Not Good Enough

In the purport to Bhagavatam 3.29.10, Srila Prabhupada writes:

Devotional service in the modes of ignorance, passion and goodness can be divided into eighty-one categories. There are different devotional activities, such as hearing, chanting, remembering, worshipping, offering prayer, rendering service and surrendering everything, and each of them can be divided into three qualitative categories. There is hearing in the mode of passion, in the mode of ignorance and in the mode of goodness. Similarly, there is chanting in the mode of ignorance, passion and goodness, etc. Three multiplied by nine equals twenty-seven, and when again multiplied by three it becomes eighty-one. One has to transcend all such mixed materialistic devotional service in order to reach the standard of pure devotional service, as explained in the next verse.

Even devotees who have read this part of the Third Canto have difficulty comprehending what is being explained. But it is really quite simple. Pure devotional service is uncontaminated by any material qualities, but devotional service rendered with some nondevotional motives is not pure—it is mixed. Such mixed or adulterated devotional service, "does not aim at directly awakening love of God." (Cc. Adi 4.21-2, purport) Again, "One has to transcend all such mixed materialistic devotional service in order to reach the standard of pure devotional service."

Many people accept mixed devotional service and do not go beyond that. They do not distinguish between mixed and pure devotional service. But mixed devotional service will not save one from repeated birth and death. Only pure devotional service will do that. It is imperative, therefore, that we distinguish between the two and commit ourselves exclusively to pure devotional service. This fact cannot be stressed too much. A lot of what presently passes as pure devotional service is in fact mixed. Why the confusion? It is largely because we habitually refer to all kinds of service as "devotional service" and leave it at that. But Srila Prabhupada says, "One has to transcend all such mixed devotional service in order to reach the standard of pure devotional service." So we have to discriminate between the two or else we risk mistaking mixed for pure devotional service.

This business of discriminating between pure devotional service and mixed devotional service is hard work. It's not all fun and frolic. It's not a holiday. It requires a keen and unsentimental intelligence. It requires sincerity and commitment. One should be so committed that the instant one detects that he is on the platform of mixed devotional service he should immediately try to adjust his position from mixed to pure. This takes vigilance. It takes surrender. It takes determination. It takes commitment. Most of all it takes sincerity. That sincerity translates into willingness to do whatever it takes to achieve one's goal—pure devotional service. Willingness, to discriminate, to

tax one's intelligence to distinguish between mixed and pure. Willingness to look at oneself critically. Willingness to take fully the responsibility for this exercise.

Too often we prefer to adjust everyone else's understanding than our own even when the defect is in us. Many people in this age are afflicted with this fundamental character disorder. It comes with the persona of the steely-eyed, ego-centric rugged individual, whose basic assumption is that whenever he experiences any sort of conflict in life, the world must be at fault. By contrast, the neurotic is so insecure that whenever he has conflict, he automatically assumes the problem is with him. It is well-known in psychotherapeutic circles that of these two types the person afflicted with a character disorder is much harder to help, because he never accepts responsibility for the world in which he lives. He has solved all the problems of his life by placing the blame elsewhere. As the saying goes, "neurotics make themselves miserable, while those with character disorders make everyone else miserable." So true.

It's amazing, and alarming, to see the lengths we prefer to go sometimes to justify our position and to lay blame. And it is such a strain as well. Many times it is much simpler to cauterize the attachment, or anartha, by applying Krishna consciousness. Willingness to do this work, however strenuous the task, strengthens our mind and will. This willingness is the training ground wherein one develops a steady mind to prepare for death. At the time of death, the gross and subtle body are in a state of confusion. One has to have practiced developing steady, keen intelligence prior to the death experience. At the moment of death it is already too late to begin this work. But if throughout life one has taken responsibility to distinguish between reality and illusion—including mixed devotional service versus pure devotional service—then the chances are much better that he will be able to face death without a qualm.

No Substitute For Pure Devotional Service

In the beginning four types of people approach the Lord to render devotional service. They are not yet pure. By the process of sadhana-bhakti they become pure. The rate one becomes pure depends on a number of factors such as progress from the previous life, proper understanding of the process, sincerity, association, ability to hear, skill at avoiding offenses, and so forth.

Pure devotional service is not achieved merely by putting in time. This is yet another popular myth we have about the process. Pure devotional service is achieved by whoever is unreservedly surrendered to the order of the spiritual master and does not deviate from that standard. Srila Prabhupada used to say, "My only credit is that I did not deviate an inch from the order of my guru maharaja." Without that, one is not a pure devotee. Even if a person has put in many years of service for the spiritual master, if he retains his personal agenda in the life of devotional service, he is in mixed devotional service. He will take birth again. Popular opinion may seem to confirm that a devotee is advanced and pure, but popular opinion will avail us nothing at the time of death. Only Krishna's opinion will count for anything at that time. There is simply no substitute for pure devotional service.

In Madurya-kadambini Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura has described the different kinds of anarthas, and points out that there are anarthas caused by devotional service itself. The sincere devotee appreciates that these anarthas are especially likely to infect the "older" devotee and that they can be very difficult to shed. Hence he is on guard. One such pitfall is when the innocent mass of devotees assume that someone is advanced merely on the basis of popular opinion. Since the innocent lack scriptural knowledge, they are easily misled. They are ready to believe that one is advanced and pure on the criteria of having put in time in the process. But this criteria is not given

anywhere in the shastra. One has to judge if he or others are advanced by the symptoms that are present in one's character.

In Bhagavad-gita (13.8-12) Krishna gives a list of such symptoms: amanitvam—humility; adambhitvam—pridelessness; ahimsa—nonviolence; kshantih—tolerance; arjavam—simplicity; acarya-upasanam—approaching a bona fide spiritual master; saucam—cleanliness; sthairyam—steadfastness; atma-vinigraha—self-control; vairagya—renunciation; anahankarah—being without false egoism; and many other items.

Then in the purport, Srila Prabhupada writes, "As for actual advancement in spiritual science, one should have a test to see how far he is progressing. He can judge by these items."

There is no other way. We are meant to see through the eyes of the shastra. We must use sastric knowledge to our benefit and thus develop our power of discrimination. Failure to do so, either as an individual or as a group will surely be detrimental. Being part of a herd, while wonderful for promoting a sense of security, does not absolve one from the responsibility to distinguish reality from illusion. One must have his wits about him.

Another important point is that one's peers are generally a more reliable source for discerning one's own level of Krishna consciousness. By peers I do not mean those with whom we have a tacit agreement that praise is the only acceptable form of communication. I don't mean our own little circle of mutual admirers wherein the unspoken rule, the price of admission, so to speak, is don't you dare preach to me. No. By peers I mean those who are our nonenvious, sincere well-wishers that dare tell us the truth about ourselves.

Dare To Discriminate? But of Course

So, a sincere candidate for awakening love of God must learn to distinguish between mixed and pure devotional service within himself and in others. This is not to advocate fault-finding, as some have indicated. I advocate discriminating on the basis of shastra. Such discrimination is our duty. If the particular symptoms of mixed devotional service are present, we should have no qualms about recognizing them for what they are. That is proper use of intelligence. By the same token, if the symptoms of advanced devotional service are present, we should have no qualms about recognizing that for what it is. Failure to do so would be a serious offense. Nevertheless, to interpret mixed devotion as pure devotion, and vice versa is not Krishna consciousness. Krishna consciousness is for seeing things as they are, for developing clear vision, not for clouding our vision and adding to the confusion.

What about the paramahansa? He would see even mixed devotional service as pure. True, but let us not blithely accept people as paramahansa or whatever just to avoid taxing our intelligence in Krishna's service. A paramahansa also has symptoms. We should look for them. Also important is that we are preachers. A preacher is obligated to discriminate. In our line even if in reality the preacher is on the paramahansa platform, he must come down to the madhyama platform to preach, so he too is obliged to discriminate. He has to see things as they are, so to invoke the paramahansa in this context is somewhat irrelevant.

Seeing things as they are does not mean we hate or reject the devotee in mixed devotional service. Not at all, for by that rule the first person we may have to disqualify from the process would be ourselves. Rather, we must hate the sin but not the sinner. We must be merciful to the sinner, but we must recognize the sin for what it is. What will it avail us to be Pollyanna-ish and not see things as

they are? Our Founder-Acarya did not show such an example. On the contrary we find that all the acaryas in our line were masters at making fine distinctions. Srila Prabhupada was expert at discriminating. A preacher is responsible to make such fine distinctions. How else can he preach according to time, place, and circumstance? How else can he preach with precision? Sadhu means to cut; can he cut without making an accurate diagnosis?

But the subtlety I want to reveal here is that no devotee will disagree about the principle, especially when explained in the context of preaching Krishna consciousness. The problem is that we like it to be applied outside the community of devotees. As soon as we put the same discriminating eye to use among each other, one is liable to become the object of scorn. One is liable to be accused of fault-finding in the name of discriminating. However, I know from self-analysis that it is not the discriminating I object to—it is the preaching. I don't want to be preached to and in order to put the person who dares to preach to me on the defensive I accuse him of fault-finding. This is something we must guard against. We are a preaching movement. We aim to create a spiritual revolution in the lives of all mankind by preaching Krishna consciousness. Our belief is that preaching Krishna consciousness is the highest welfare work. True. And we also believe that charity begins at home.

Still the question comes, "How does discrimination differ from fault-finding—searching for pockmarks on the moon?" We must examine the motive. If I discriminate for the singular purpose to keep myself pure, or to figure out how to help another, or to protect the interest and integrity of the Krishna Consciousness Movement, then that is not fault-finding. That is duty. That is the mode of goodness.

Here some devotees like to point out that there is danger of vaishnava aparadha in what I advocate. But why? If one is discriminating on the basis of shastra, where is there danger of aparadha? Where does the shastra discourage us from discriminating? The shastra discourages aparadha and fault-finding, but it also encourages discrimination, which is a symptom of the mode of goodness. These two are different and should not be confused. Some may say those who discriminate are offensive, but that is not the problem of the one who is discriminating, is it? One who is practicing to discriminate is on the right track. Just because I disagree with or disapprove of someone who is discriminating and accuse him of being offensive, that does not make him so.

In this connection, I have one inflexible rule of thumb: Anyone who discourages me from becoming a more self-reliant, more discriminating, more Krishna conscious person sets off alarm bells in my head. He or she is immediately suspect of having less than honorable motives.

The worst is when we accuse someone of being offensive in defense of our own actions. We cunningly arouse a devotees' fear of making Vaishnava aparadha to stop him from using his discrimination. I have been accused of being offensive by someone speaking on his own behalf complete with warnings of how dangerous this was and how it will finish my spiritual life. What is actually dangerous is to be lazy and not apply the wisdom given in the shastra for helping us wend our way out of illusion. We must discriminate on the basis of the shastra. This is also surrender. Vaishnava aparadha is dangerous and failure to discriminate is also dangerous. Sins of commission are dangerous; equally dangerous are sins of omission. I often hear preaching against sins of commission but only rarely do I hear a good, clear class on the dangers of sins of omission. I will go so far as to say that I have seen devotees even in defense of themselves no less, exploit the danger of Vaishnava aparadha, knowing that devotees naturally have a great fear of the mad elephant offense. It will suffice to remind everyone that Srila Prabhupada taught us that to call a thief a thief is not an offense. If anything, failure to do so may well be the sin. Then failure to admit sin only makes matters worse.

Srimad-Bhagavatam (10.44.10) speaks directly on this point of sins of omission:

na sabham praviset prajnah sabhya-donan anusmaran abruvan vibruvann ajno narah kilbisham asnute

A wise person should not enter an assembly if he knows the participants there are committing acts of impropriety, and if, having entered such an assembly, he fails to speak the truth, speaks falsely, or pleads ignorance, he will certainly incur sin.

If one fails to speak up or speaks falsely or pleads ignorance, "he will certainly incur sin." The Mahabharata explains that Bhishmadeva had to die at Kurukshetra because he failed to speak up when Draupadi asked him if any of her husbands had a right to put her up as a wager in the gambling match with the Kauravas. Bhishmadeva kept silent and thus had to die in the battle.

First we must recognize the problem for what it is. To do so is not fault-finding or offensive. It is proper use of intelligence. Improper use of intelligence is to take something which is wrong, foolish, or absurd, and rationalize it into something else—to gloss it over as transcendental or as too far beyond the pale of ordinary understanding for anyone to venture an opinion. Krishna consciousness does not explicitly or implicitly require us to be blind or naive in the name of transcendental vision. On the contrary, Krishna consciousness means to develop alertness, keener senses, and keener intelligence—hence, keener powers of discrimination.

I remember that a leader was corrupt and ran a reign of terror in one temple for the better part of two years, but the devotees stuck it out for Srila Prabhupada. I remember questioning his actions to a temple authority and being roundly chastised for my impudence. I was given a rundown of his prior accomplishments in Prabhupada's service, which I felt was besides the point. If a former great public servant commits a crime, we may be lenient, but we don't deny that the crime is a crime. I was accused of being proud, puffed-up, over-intelligent, and endangering my spiritual life. If that was not bad enough, I was told that this devotee's actions were pure, Krishna conscious, and beyond my understanding. "You are too neophyte to understand an advanced Vaishnava's behavior." No doubt that is true if and when the behavior of the person is in fact transcendental, but when it is not, will it aid my advancement to consider black is white or that a six is a nine? Will it aid his advancement? Will it please guru and Krishna? Does it serve our mission? I think not.

Eventually the misdeeds of this leader came to light and he was made to leave. It shook up the whole temple. Many devotees were in utter shock, despite the fact that they were witness to some pretty absurd conduct on his part in the two years prior to his departure; and all done in the name of Krishna consciousness. When Prabhupada came to that temple soon afterwards he told his secretary that the devotees were all very sincere for staying steady under such adverse conditions, but, he said, "The older men in the temple should have said something."

Clearly Prabhupada expected his older men to be more discriminating. By virtue of their greater experience in Krishna consciousness, they have the responsibility to discern when things are off and send up a flare. I was neophyte, but that was besides the point. I took one and one and put it together and concluded two. Surely that was within the capacity of the older men. So how did this get by them? Because discriminating, putting one and one together to make two, is not encouraged, on the one hand, and we are lazy on the other.

One has to be prepared to do this work of discriminating from one moment to the next. In the verse cited above, the first admonition is that one should not even enter a corrupt assembly. Now how can one avoid that except by discriminating on the basis of Krishna consciousness?

But what about the saying that even a great scholar cannot understand the activities of a pure devotee? If so, how can we who are not great scholars understand the activities of a pure Vaishnava? How can we subject it to our scrutiny? Furthermore, how can neophytes do this?

First let us look at our alternative—that we blithely accept everyone as a great soul, as beyond the ken of our critical appraisal. This way we can be safe and sure of not being offensive. Everyone can just try to out-sweet the other fellow. Everyone can play the "nice" prabhu or "nice" mataji. But this is simply not an acceptable course of action. Not only may we be sinning by omission here, but this kind of utopian outlook is simply foolish. The reality is that people are all in various stages on this path and buffeted by the modes of nature to different degrees on different days and we have to take the responsibility to preach. Charity begins at home. A mutual admiration atmosphere is only attractive up to a point. Ultimately it is a spiritual doldrum at best. Worse is that one's spiritual life begins to die.

The conclusion is that somewhere between the one extreme of fault-finding and that of being naive lies the true position we should take, that of discriminating with a motive to inspire others to keep progressing on this path. All we have to go on is guru, shastra, and sadhu and the shastra says that we have to discriminate. The shastra also says beware of aparadha, especially the mad elephant aparadha. So, yes we may not judge the activities of an advanced Vaishnava, but we must ascertain, according to shastra, if this is an advanced Vaishnava in the first place. There is no need to cloud the issue with sentimentality or whim. As mentioned previously, just in Bhagavad-gita alone the Lord spoke 165 verses describing the symptoms of a transcendentalists. So we can put that knowledge to use.

So the shastra gives us symptoms of advancement in Krishna consciousness and one who has those symptoms is an advanced Vaishnava. To such a Vaishnava we may apply the statement *vaishnavera kriya-mudra vijñaneha na bujhaya*. So there is no need to give up our discrimination. Rather we must learn to use it more and more.

A devotee is not sentimental. He must be firmly committed to the work of differentiating between reality and illusion. Things are either favorable or not favorable for Krishna consciousness. If one is sentimental and too lazy to discriminate on the basis of shastra, then owing to the complex nature of the material world and the scientific precision of bhakti-yoga there is every chance that by default one may render mixed devotional service his whole life. This is certainly better than being a sold-out karmi, but as mentioned before, devotional service mixed with passion or ignorance does not automatically lead to pure devotional service. Mixed devotional service will surely award us a better situation in the material world, but this is no consolation when we had the chance of going back home, back to Godhead.

The key point to imbibe is that it is our primary duty to discriminate for Krishna. The whole success of Krishna consciousness is to learn this to the point of razor sharp keenness. Accepting responsibility for doing this as often as required is a sign of sincerity. The moment one resolves to follow the path of Krishna consciousness the work of discriminating becomes his prescribed duty. Without one accepting squarely this responsibility, it is dubious that he will go very far in achieving pure devotional service. In the Sixth Chapter Krishna told Arjuna that advancement is achieved

"gradually, step by step, with full conviction and by means of ones' intelligence." This can only mean that one must discriminate.

Dare To Question? Why Not?

At this point someone will invariably point out that I am advocating questioning authority. Indeed I am. And why not? Throughout our scriptures we see persons putting questions to authorities for having their ignorance and doubt dispelled. Somehow it has come into our society that it is taboo to question an authority figure. But why? One should not be arrogant or obnoxious, neither should one raise questions just for the sake of being difficult or challenging, but if one has doubts of any kind, why should one not question? Where is the philosophical evidence to support this taboo against questioning? All the evidence I see is to the contrary. Srila Prabhupada wants us to cooperate, but to raise a question does not mean I am being uncooperative. My alternative is to follow blindly, but that is not the duty of one on the path of Krishna consciousness, to mindlessly take orders.

We have voluntarily joined the Krishna consciousness movement on a common understanding—namely to become Krishna conscious by cooperating to follow the same process. If someone presents something to me that does not jibe with my understanding of the process, why should I blindly follow? Why should I not voice my doubts? If I have doubts, it is the duty of the authority to dispel my doubts. That is called preaching. If the "authority" invokes all varieties of irrelevant things, such as his seniority, his title, his past close association with Srila Prabhupada, his dedication to preaching, great service and sacrifice made in the past, Vaishnava aparadha, etc., etc., I cannot yield to that. After all, what does any of those things have to do with my doubt in the here and now?

In fact when he invokes these diversionary criteria it only serves to cement my doubts. If I am in a position of authority and I am convinced that my plan or decision or philosophical stance is on firm Krishna conscious ground, why should I not want to enlighten you about it the way Krishna did for Arjuna? How can I implicitly or explicitly deny you that right and still think myself Krishna conscious?

In the Eleventh Canto of Bhagavatam, while instructing Uddhava on the modes of material nature, Krishna says that justifying one's actions by one's strength—the "might is right" syndrome—is a symptom of the mode of passion. And in the Gita He says that the results of action in the mode of passion is misery. No devotee therefore should associate with the mode of passion nor should another's actions in the mode of passion be condoned.

As far as questioning authority goes, in the Bhagavad-gita the mood of Krishna, who is the ultimate authority, is like this: "My dear Arjuna, I am the ultimate authority. You may ask Me any question you want; I am ready to dispel your every doubt." Not, "Listen to Me, Arjuna. I am the authority, so questioning Me is a waste of time. You just do as I say." No. Rather, He is happy to dispel Arjuna's doubts. And in the end He says, "Have you heard all this with full attention? Are your doubts dispelled? Now you may act as your conscience dictates." This is Krishna's example and He is at the head of our sampradaya.

No doubt He could have gotten on Arjuna's case and set him straight and rather than inspire him to fight, He could have forced him to fight. The Gita would have been much shorter, but it would not have been a treatise on bhakti. This quality, this openness to challenge, was very much present in Srila Prabhupada. Round the clock, he was willing to show with logic, reason and scriptural

reference how his plans, decisions etc., were centered in Krishna consciousness. Why not follow in his footsteps?

Therefore I say question authority. Why not? If those in positions of authority know they are accountable, it can only help to raise the integrity with which they perform. How can this be a bad thing?

Become a Responsible Follower

"But", someone says, "aren't we supposed to blindly follow our authority? Didn't Srila Prabhupada blindly follow Srila Bhaktisiddhanta?" Yes, he did, and as much as our authority is faithful to the process we will follow. Even to the ends of the earth. That is not a problem at all. If I am satisfied that my authority is Krishna conscious and is doing his level best. I have no excuse not to cooperate. But if he adulterates the process, if I have doubts as to his judgment and discretion, I think it my duty to question. Even if he doesn't adulterate, but there is some question or doubt, or we simply don't see his point of view, then we should question. Not challenge.

We should question with the aim to gain understanding. And having voiced my doubt, the onus is on him to remove my doubts. This I call responsible following. If leaders know we are responsible followers, they will be inspired to be responsible (accountable) leaders. This is surely a healthy thing, a commendable and desirable thing. How will this be displeasing to Srila Prabhupada?

Prabhupada said we should show our love for him by cooperating, but it is to be understood that he does not expect us to cooperate with something not squarely within the philosophy. It is not just any cooperating that pleases him: it is us cooperating with his desire that pleases him. Any other cooperating is our negligence. Sinning by omission. He gave us a system: if we have a doubt we can go to our authority. If not satisfied, then go to the authority above that one. If not satisfied there, then go higher, all the way up to the GBC body if necessary. This is for your protection and the good of the society, and even for the good of that authority.

The conclusion is that whether a leader or a follower we must differentiate between using the force of our personality, title, aura, or whatever (material power) to get our way and using the force of the philosophy (preaching) to motivate others to serve. To use the force of our personality is to wander off the straight path of Krishna consciousness however slightly. If we coerce, manipulate or use diplomatic behavior (described by Lord Caitanya as one of the unwanted creepers that can stifle the bhakti-lata) in order to bend people to our will, that is not a good sign. Such a symptom is a sign of the influence of passion and ignorance. It is recommended that one avoid such persons in spiritual life. The saying that appropriately expresses this danger is "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

To use the force of the philosophy is to inspire people, to enlighten them, to clear away their doubts and in that way motivate them to act for pleasing Krishna. Prabhupada did this with us time and again.

All this adds up to one important principle: That one must take responsibility for his spiritual life. Don't be sentimental; don't be blind. Become a responsible follower for Srila Prabhupada. Serve this movement. Serve his servants, but at the same time be alert. Operate at your maximum intelligence. Use your discrimination. Have a conscience. Have a sense of personal integrity. Don't compromise that integrity. One does not have to give up his sense of integrity in order to be a good devotee; on the contrary, being a Vaishnava is just the opposite: one maintains his integrity at all

costs. Don't sacrifice that integrity on any pretext. That is service to Srila Prabhupada and to the movement. Indeed, it is vital service.

One must know the science of Krishna consciousness and apply it. If someone is lax about this, sooner or later there will be chaos in that individual's spiritual life. Chaos on the individual level means chaos on the collective level. Without a total commitment to the process of devotional service it is doubtful that one can be ultimately successful on this path.

What About The Mercy of The Lord?

At this point, someone in the audience invariably raises the question about mercy again, "All this you are saying is okay, but what about the mercy of the Lord? Can't I rely on His mercy if I can't get into all these fine points you advocate?"

The mercy of the Lord is there, of course, but it is doubtful one will get the particular type of mercy that absolves one from the responsibility to know the difference between pure and mixed devotional service. It is unlikely that one will be absolved from having to discern between favorable and unfavorable service to Krishna. Indeed, it is far more likely that upon taking responsibility to discriminate between all these things, the Lord, who is the witness in everyone's heart, will become inspired by the unflinching sincerity of such a devotee and help him, for the Lord helps those that help themselves. In this way one qualifies himself for the mercy. Prabhupada said that the guru acts from without and Krishna acts from within to fortify the sincere soul.

In the meantime, coming in touch with the parampara is the mercy and it is all the mercy one needs. Getting the association of devotees is the mercy. There is so much mercy available, in fact, why not focus on taking full advantage of that mercy before gnashing one's teeth about some other rarer, more elusive mercy? This makes all the sense in the world, but if I want a free ride, if I take the guru parampara for granted and don't appreciate it for what it is—mercy—then I will keep looking for something in the distance and neglect what is right within my grasp. After all, without the parampara where would we find even a clue for understanding reality beyond our senses? The parampara is cent percent mercy. Other mercy is fine, but that mercy is enough to complete the course.

This question about mercy is the most recurring doubt I encountered in preaching about the importance of discrimination and understanding the three modes of nature. I have already cleared up this matter in Chapter Four by quoting from *The Nectar of Devotion*. It bears repeating here, however, because I know this is one of the big obstacles in the minds of devotees:

Elevation to this stage of ecstasy can be possible in two ways. One way is by constant association with pure devotees. The other way is by the special mercy of Krishna or by the mercy of a pure devotee of Krishna. Elevation to the ecstatic stage of life is generally attained through association with pure devotees, while elevation to that stage by the special mercy of Krishna or His devotee is very rare. The purport is that one should execute devotional service rigidly in the association of devotees so that there will be certainty in raising oneself to that ecstatic position. In special cases, of course, there is special favor from Krishna, and although we should always expect that, we should not sit idly and simply wait for Krishna's special mercy; the regular duties must be performed. It is just as when, sometimes, it is found that a person who never attended school or college may be recognized as a great scholar, or an honorary degree from great universities may be offered to him. But this does not mean that one should avoid school and expect to automatically receive an honorary degree from some

university. Similarly, one should devoutly execute the regulative principles of devotional service and at the same time hope for Krishna's favor or for His devotee's favor.

"One should not sit idly waiting for the mercy of the Lord," waiting for the feeling of love to kick in. One should apply himself at every moment to execute the principles of devotional service. In other words, the Lord, or His representatives in parampara, give us knowledge, and by such knowledge we understand how to act in the manner most pleasing to the Lord. That is mercy. Before this mercy came along we were completely ignorant and baffled conditioned souls.

When a conditioned soul receives parampara transcendental knowledge and devoutly applies himself with full determination, even if he is not always successful, he can please the Lord by his complete, deep-seated dedication to the process as given by the Lord. This is sincerity and such sincerity can attract the special mercy of the Supreme Lord. Krishna is seated in the heart of every living being as the Supersoul and He is the witness to all their thoughts, hopes, and prayers. He knows our sincere desire, which is demonstrated by our sincerely applying the process. As in everything else, in devotional service actions generally speak louder than words. Hence Srila Prabhupada once gave this response to a devotee who enquired about praying to Krishna for sankirtana vehicles, "Yes, as long as your prayer is accompanied by your endeavor." The Lord delivers such a sincere soul to the far side of the ocean of repeated birth and death.

So it is not that by our own effort we become pure devotees. That is not possible, because the material energy of the Lord is duratyaya, impossible to overcome for the tiny jiva, but if we surrender to the Lord through His representative, then mayam etam taranti te, we can easily cross the ocean of material existence. Maya is the faithful servant of the Lord and when He wishes her to release a jiva from her clutches, she has no choice.

The example of the man with a fierce watchdog applies here. If a man's watchdog catches an intruder by his ankle, such a faithful watchdog will never let go. But when the master orders him, the intruder is released. Why will the master order such release? Only when the intruder has surrendered. When he poses no threat to the master. In Krishna consciousness the way this surrender is demonstrated is by the devotees positive effort to render service with his body, mind, and words.

Mixed Devotional Service

One in mixed devotional service is not fully surrendered. He is still in the grip of Maya although attracted to the devotional service of the Lord. And although pure devotional service liberates one from all contact with the illusory potency of Krishna, mixed devotional service does not. Only pure devotional service guarantees one of being elevated to the perfectional stage. Mixed devotional service means that one continues his involvement in this world and is not victorious over birth and death. Indeed one may remain on the platform of mixed devotional service for lifetimes. But even in that there is risk: that by the continued association of the modes of nature one may be swept away from the process altogether. Therefore, Srila Prabhupada encouraged us over and over to finish up in this life. One who is clearly hearing the philosophy will get no solace from rendering mixed devotional service. Pure devotional service is the minimum requirement. Srila Prabhupada explains:

Bhakti-yoga, as described before, is divided into four divisions, three in the material modes of nature and one in transcendence, which is not tinged by the modes of material nature. Devotional service mixed with the modes of material nature is a means for material existence, whereas devotional service without desires for fruitive result and without attempts for empirical

philosophical research is pure, transcendental devotional service." (Bhag. 3.32.37, purport)
[Emphasis added]

Again, a candidate cannot assume that any and all devotional service even though sanctioned by shastra and the spiritual master is automatically pure. It may be mixed because of the motivation of the performer. One cannot be negligent or absented-minded. The activity may be pure, as is the case with all sanctioned devotional service, but the consciousness and motive of the performer are important elements.

Three devotees may be simultaneously engaged in Deity worship, but each gets a different result according to their motives. One fellow does the service begrudgingly, resenting the person who engaged him. He is doing devotional service in the mode of ignorance. Another does it thinking he will get so much recognition from the public as an elevated servant of the Lord and thus get advantages for his sense gratification in the form of money, influence, prestige and so on. He is doing devotional service in the mode of passion. The third fellow is thinking, "I am very fallen, but for the mercy of my spiritual master I would have no opportunity to purify my heart by serving the Deity. Let me do this service as nicely as possible so I will rid my heart of the feverish contamination of material desires." He is doing devotional service in the mode of goodness. Each will get different results from his efforts.

The person in the mode of ignorance will not progress much in devotional service. Due to dullness he will go through the motions but not much cleansing of his heart will take place. If he dies in this condition, he will not achieve perfection. The same goes for the one in the mode of passion. The third person, serving in goodness, desiring his purification, advances towards pure devotional service and gets more such service opportunities by the grace of the Lord and the spiritual master. If he dies he may go back to the spiritual world if sufficiently purified. His chances of success far surpasses the two in the lower modes. If he is not sufficiently purified, he takes birth on the heavenly planets, and when he returns to this earthly plane he'll take birth in a devotee family and continue where he left off.

A sincere candidate must be rigorous in reviewing himself to make sure he uproots all his personal ambitions. In this task he must be ruthless, unflinching. It is in his self-interest. This process of self-scrutiny will surely be painful, like removing a barbed arrowhead in one's side, but it is necessary. In this connection Lord Caitanya gave the following advice (Cc. Madhya 19.161):

prathamei upashakhara karaye chedana tabe mula-sakha badi' yaya vrindavana

As soon as an intelligent devotee sees an unwanted creeper growing beside the original creeper of devotional service, he must cut it down instantly. Then the real creeper of bhakti-lata-bija grows nicely, returns home, back to Godhead, and seeks shelter under the lotus feet of Krishna.

One advances proportionally as he is able to routinely apply this practice to himself.

Bhakti In The Mode of Ignorance

Turning now to the specific symptoms of devotional service in the various modes, Lord Kapila has defined them for us in the Third Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam:

abhisandhaya yo hi'msam dambham matsaryam eva va samrambhi bhinna-drig bhavam mayi
kuryat sa tamasah

Devotional service executed by a person who is envious, proud, violent and angry, and who is a separatist, is considered to be in the mode of darkness. (Bhag. 3.29.8)

From the purport:

One who approaches the Supreme Lord to render devotional service, but who is proud of his personality, envious of others or vengeful, is in the mode of anger. He thinks that he is the best devotee. Devotional service executed in this way is not pure; it is mixed and is of the lowest grade, tamasah. Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura advises that a Vaishnava who is not of good character should be avoided. A Vaishnava is one who has taken the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the ultimate goal of life, but if one is not pure and still has motives, then he is not a Vaishnava of the first order of good character. One may offer his respects to such a Vaishnava because he has accepted the Supreme Lord as the ultimate goal of life, but one should not keep company with a Vaishnava who is in the mode of ignorance.

On account of thinking himself the best devotee, a person who renders devotional service in the mode of ignorance is described here as a separatist. The reason is he finds it difficult to be at ease in the association of the general devotees. He is a kanishtha-bhakta, the lowest grade of devotee, but he falsely thinks himself an advanced, topmost devotee and that others are unworthy of his association. Unless he is the central figure in a gathering and the object of veneration for the rest, he is ill-at-ease. Such a proud person cannot live with the devotees and requires all sorts of separate arrangements on his behalf or else he is miserable even in the midst of devotee association. He needs to be assured again and again by any number of ploys that he is a very special devotee. His idea of hell is having to mix with the mass of rank and file devotees. He distinguishes himself by his insistence on separate arrangements for himself no matter how much inconvenience he may cause others.

It's interesting to note that although the shastra exhorts us again and again to seek the association of devotees, here Srila Prabhupada quotes Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, who advises that we shun the association of a Vaishnava in the mode of ignorance. The implicit message is that even in the matter of devotee association we must use discrimination. If a Vaishnava displays the symptoms of one in the mode of ignorance we may offer respect to him, but as much as possible we should avoid him. This is for our own good.

Another possibility is to give him association by preaching to him, but while this is sometimes possible, generally such a proud Vaishnava does not respond favorably to preaching. Don't be surprised if he accuses you of envy and Vaishnava-aparadha at the mere hint that you have something to say to him that is not praise. Having placed himself above others he becomes unreceptive to the preaching of others. Praise becomes virtually the only acceptable form of communication. This is one of his symptoms. One generally has to use extreme caution in dealing with such persons. A prudent Vaishnava cultivates the wisdom to know what are those situations wherein he cannot effect change. Of course, sometimes the chips are down and one has to simply and dutifully state the truth and be detached from the result, because sometimes a person who needs preaching is immune to tact. If you preach openly and straightforwardly, they say that it is too direct: "Why can't you be more tactful, more sensitive, more subtle?" And when you do, they may

conveniently pretend not to get the message, so either way your attempt to communicate fails—it falls on deaf ears. Your last resort is to wait and see what happens. In my experience it is not usually pleasant.

The guiding principle here is you must be able to sleep with your conscience. Whatever course of action you follow, you must be guided by your sense of integrity and you must keep a clear conscience. The upshot is that one must discriminate at all times and in every instance. One must not shy away from doing this work. It is the duty of a Vaishnava, who is supposed to be the topmost class of human being.

Bhakti in The Mode of Passion

Just as it is important to discern the symptoms of devotional service in the mode of ignorance, it is equally important to know the symptoms of devotional service in the mode of passion:

vishayan abhisandhaya
yasa aisvaryam eva va arcadav arcayed yo mam prithag-bhavah sa rajasah

The worship of Deities in the temple by a separatist, with a motive for material enjoyment, fame and opulence, is devotion in the mode of passion." (Bhag. 3.29.9)

From the purport to the above verse:

When the devotee has an interest or will different from the interest of the Supreme Lord, his mentality is that of a separatist. When the so-called devotee desires material enjoyment, without reference to the interest of the Supreme Lord, or he wants to become famous or opulent by utilizing the mercy or grace of the Supreme Lord, he is in the mode of passion.

In this description of devotional service in the mode of passion, the word separatist is used again, and although it includes the same meaning as explained above, it has an additional aspect. Unlike the devotee in the mode of ignorance, the devotee in the mode of passion may mix very well with the body of devotees, but he is a separatist in the sense that inwardly he has a separate agenda. His idea is to use devotional service as a vehicle for his ambitions. His association is also to be avoided, because the nature of persons in the mode of passion is that they want to be successful in everything they do. They have a driven sort of personality. Part of their agenda is to get others caught up in their driven spirit. People in the mode of passion find security in numbers. Hence the more converts they have to their way of thinking, the more secure and justified they feel about their personal ambitions, which is the principle symptom of a Vaishnava in the mode of passion.

Another kind of ill-motive is to want to be famous as a great devotee of the Lord. This is a more subtle kind of selfish desire. The passion for fame is a powerful contamination in the conditioned soul. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has said that even after sex desire is eliminated, the desire for fame lingers on. One who renders devotional service with a desire to become famous is a devotee serving in the mode of passion. He is taking a risk because service rendered in passion and ignorance will not deliver one beyond birth and death. Such mixed devotional service is a means to continued material existence.

Bhakti in The Mode of Goodness

As far as devotional service in the mode of goodness, Lord Kapiladeva says:

karma-nirharam uddisya parasmin va tad-arpanam yajed yashtavyam iti va prithag-bhavah sa sattvikah

When a devotee worships the Supreme Personality of Godhead and offers the results of his activities in order to free himself from the inebriates of fruitive activities, his devotion is in the mode of goodness. (Bhag. 3.29.10)

In other words, we ought to render devotional service for no other purpose than to rid our hearts of the contamination of our previous sinful life. Devotional service in the mode of goodness is attained when all other motives are eliminated and our sole motive is to cleanse our hearts. This mindset is best cultivated by one who thinks, "I am fallen. Life in the material world is simply horrible. Only pure devotional service can save me, but my heart is so impure. Let me do my service nicely, with care and attention, so my heart will be purified. With a purified heart I can come to the stage of serving guru and Krishna out of pure love."

In this way, one qualifies himself to render better quality service and a greater quantity of service. The spiritual master sees that here is a person who is qualifying himself for the ultimate responsibility in devotional service, direct service to Krishna. Thus a careful candidate for pure devotional service does not lose sight of his original purpose. He has to preserve his desire to become purified. Not only preserve, but it has to be increased. The whole process of sadhana-bhakti may be summed up as a means of increasing one's desire for serving Krishna, laulyam lalasamayi.

For those not yet mature in the process of devotional service and therefore not ready to render spontaneous service to the Lord, serving in the mode of goodness is the next best thing. Mature here does not mean mature in years; it means one who is free of all contamination of the modes of nature. Until that point one must cultivate devotional service in the mode of goodness.

In the mode of goodness the mind is steady, discrimination is keen, the senses are not agitated. One's vision is clear and one's faith is strong. The discharge of service is steady and purifying. One's activities are not adding to one's store of karmic reactions. Rather, by acting in the mode of goodness one's store of karmic reactions is reduced. Krishna says that action in the mode of goodness is purifying and leads to self-realization. Thus, as the reactions subside and are gradually reduced to nil, one is elevated to the transcendental sphere. But this only accrues to those who become steady in rendering service for the sole purpose of their purification. The moment other motives enter one's service is adulterated with raja-guna or tama-guna.

But if one's determination to serve in goodness is fixed, he gets purified and advances to the stage where he transcends even the mode of goodness. Then he enters the suddha-sattva state when his heart is completely pure; then he serves the Supreme Lord out of love alone. This progression is explained in the Eleventh Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam, wherein the Lord instructs Uddhava in the science of devotional service. It is also explained in the Bhagavatam (1.2.17-21):

srinvatam sva-kathah krishnah punya-sravana-kirtanah hridy antah-stho hy abhadrani
vidhunoti suhrit satam nashta-prayeshv abhadreshu nityam bhagavata-sevaya bhagavat
uttama-sloke bhaktir bhavati naishthiki tada rajas-tamo-bhavah kama-lobhadayas ca ye ceta
etair anaviddham sthitam sattve prasidati evam prasanna-manaso bhagavad-bhakti-yogatah
bhagavat-tattva-vijnanam mukta-sangasya jayate bhidyate hridaya-granthis chidyante sarva-
samsayah kshiyante casya karmani drishta evatmanisvare

Sri Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Paramatma in everyone's heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who relishes His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted. By regularly hearing the Bhagavatam and rendering service unto the pure devotee, all that is troublesome to the heart is practically destroyed, and loving service unto the glorious Lord, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact. At the time loving service is established in the heart, the modes of passion (rajas) and ignorance (tamas), and lust and desire (kama) disappear from the heart. Then the devotee is established in goodness and he becomes happy. Thus established in the mode of goodness, the man rejuvenated by loving service to the Lord gains liberation from material association (mukti) and comes to know scientifically of the Personality of Godhead. Thus the knots of the heart and all misgivings are cut to pieces. The chain of fruitive actions (karma) is terminated when one sees the self as master.

Despite the fact that this understanding is all over Srila Prabhupada's books I still come across devotees who believe that all this emphasis on pure devotional service is okay, but it is not such a big thing, because we are special. If I'm not on the platform of pure devotional service, Krishna or Lord Caitanya will still take me back to Godhead because I'm serving the sankirtana mission. It's slightly alarming to hear this. Even more alarming is that to support their slack attitude some say things like, "When you have the promise of a paramahansa, then you just have to somehow stay in the process and the result is a sure thing."

I must confess that I am profoundly baffled by this phenomenon. How do devotees five, six years in the process, hearing classes and even giving classes in the philosophy end up with such hollow notions? How to bring such people to squarely confront the facts without becoming discouraged by the discovery that perfection in devotional service involves more than just engaging the body in service activities? Why do people blanch at the news that the mind and intelligence must also be absorbed in the process of Krishna consciousness? It makes the most sense in the world that we should do these things; after all we say that spiritual life is the razor's edge, but somehow or other it comes as a shock to some. Some react as if I am coming out with a completely new twist on the philosophy. Some even hint that I am preaching something in contradiction to what they heard from their spiritual master.

After reading this far, for whoever still thinks that pure devotional service is not the absolute minimum requirement in this process, I have a couple of scriptural references for them to consider:

bhaktya tv ananyaya sakya aham evam-vidho 'rjuna jnatum drashtum ca tattvena praveshtum
ca parantapa

My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding. (Bg. 11.54)

sattve pralinah svar yanti nara-lokam rajo-layah tamo-layas tu nirayam yanti mam eva nirgunah

Those who leave this world in the mode of goodness go to the heavenly planets, those who pass away in the mode of passion remain in the world of human beings, and those dying in the mode of ignorance must go to hell. But those who are free from the influence of the modes of nature come to Me. (Bhag. 11.25.22)

These two verses, both spoken by the Supreme Lord Himself, should be sufficient to clear all doubt as to what is the minimum requirement for perfection on the path of devotional service. For one to be on the path of perfection and fail because of negligence is surely a great misfortune. The conclusion is that a sincere candidate on this path must know what are the pitfalls so that he can avoid them. He has to be sure his service is pure devotional service. He cannot simply assume that his devotional service is of the purest and rarest variety.

Rather, a genuine devotee assumes the opposite—that his devotional service is impure, mixed, riddled with personal ambition and faults. He thinks, "I render service for all the wrong reasons. My ornaments are that I am lusty, angry, greedy, mad, illusioned, envious, and full of fear. I may be rendering some service but if I did not get praise and recognition I would not lift a finger in the Lord's service. In my fallen condition, O my Lord, I simply appeal for Your mercy. Please forgive my countless offenses and please protect me from Maya. Please engage me in Your pure devotional service."

This is the only safe way to approach the matter. All the great Vaishnava acaryas have set this example in their songs and prayers. By praying like this again and again and by rendering service in the mode of goodness—that is to say for one's purification—one can rise above devotional service mixed with the modes of passion and ignorance and eventually even the mode of goodness.

As for the importance of discriminating in spiritual life I close this chapter with a verse from Maharaja Rahugana (Bhag. 5.13.22). He spoke this verse after he was enlightened by the grace of Jada Bharata:

na hy adbhutam tvac-caranabja-renubhir hatamhaso bhaktir adhokshaje 'mala
mauhurtikad yasya samagamac ca me dustarka-mulo 'pahato 'vivekah

It is not at all wonderful that simply by being covered by the dust of your lotus feet, one immediately attains the platform of pure devotional service to Adhokshaja, which is not available even to great demigods like Brahma. By associating with you just for a moment, I am now freed from all argument, false prestige and lack of discrimination, which are the roots of entanglement in the material world. Now I am free from all these problems.

Praying at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada that I will rid my heart of all varieties of mixed devotional service I, Kundali Dasa, write this analytical treatise on the three modes of nature.

pravrittim ca nivrittim ca karyakarye bhayabhaye bandham moksham ca ya vetti buddhih sa partha
sattviki

O son of Pritha, that intelligence by which one knows what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, what is binding and what is liberating, is in the mode of goodness. (Bhagavad-gita 18.30)

CHAPTER SEVEN

Mixed Devotional Service

The science of devotional service is precise. It is also fraught with subtlety and nuance. One has to know the exact nature of this science or risk deviating from it unknowingly. As an example of the subtle elements one must be aware of, it is said that one must be engaged twenty-four hours in Krishna's service and whoever achieves this has reached the perfection of devotional life.

But even if one achieves such a level of a full day's service with not a moment wasted, one still has to check and see if his motive is right. The mere filling up of one's day with sanctioned activities in the line of devotional service is not enough to assure pure devotion, although it is a fact that one situated in pure devotion will have a full day of service activities. The subtlety here turns around the question, "Having achieved 24-hour a day engagement in the service of the Lord, are my motives pure? Am I doing this service to be known as a great devotee or am I doing this because I am convinced that I am fallen and I need to be purified?"

This question must be answered. Therefore, the Bhagavatam says devotional service that is para, of the highest type, is symptomized by being both ahaituki, causeless, without any personal ambition, and apratihata, uninterrupted.

So while it is important that we be engaged in devotional service, to get the maximum result it is equally important that we serve for the right reason. One's motive must be right. This is the main significance of the three kinds of mixed devotional service described in the previous chapter. By knowing the various symptoms we can recognize the different kinds of devotional service with greater and greater ease. This helps one develop his discrimination. In Bhagavad-gita (6.25) Krishna says that one must advance gradually, step by step, by means of one's intelligence (sanaih sanair uparamed buddhya dhriti-grihitaya). Part of the utility of this is that one does not accept popular opinion as to who is or is not Krishna conscious. Rather, one sees each person and each circumstance in terms of the shastra and if the symptoms support a particular conclusion then you know which mode of nature is present in that person or situation.

Fault-Finding Versus Discrimination

Sometimes inexperienced devotees say that this methodology should not be used among devotees. Why not? Are we to give up our discrimination when in the company of devotees? I think not. We have to be careful, but that does not mean we accept less responsibility to discriminate.

The reason some devotees advocate dropping their discrimination is because they confuse discrimination with fault-finding. To discriminate is to use the knowledge Krishna gave us to light our way. To see that a person is too attached, or is vengeful, or too easily angered over his personal affairs, or is absorbed in intrigue with the aim to control the course of events when he should be relying on Krishna is not fault-finding. It is intelligent.

Fault-finding comes into the picture when one thinks he is a better devotee or thinks a devotee a nondevotee and regards him with malice or slanders him. It means that I point out others' defects for the purpose of establishing myself as superior. I am not really interested in the other person's well-being or how I may bring out the best in that person for Krishna. That is fault-finding. That is Vaishnava aparadha. Again, motive is the prime consideration here.

One then sinks into the lower modes himself by such malicious thinking. The key is that one must become and remain the well-wisher of that devotee. One must hate the sin and not the sinner. This ability only comes with practice. If I neglect to practice, how will the ability develop?

It's Not All About Getting Glory

At the same time, if it is a fact that a Vaishnava's conduct is below the standard of Vaishnava integrity, what good will that serve anyone to deny it by not discriminating? And how else will one know to avoid such a low grade Vaishnava, which is the recommendation of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura?

More importantly, how will I know how to help that Vaishnava to improve himself in the line of serving Krishna? Without discriminating, how will I know that this Vaishnava needs preaching? How will I know what to preach?

To preach one has to diagnose. Just to throw scripture at a person or situation without some deft appraisal of what exactly is the problem in terms of the modes of material nature is not expert use of the Lord's teachings. At best it is inexperience. At worst it is laziness or just a bluff. Real care and concern is to preach Krishna consciousness with precision. Love doesn't mean that I simply wish the other person well; it means that I extend myself on another's behalf.

Sometimes we are super enthusiastic to preach, but not to devotees. This is a bluff. Too often our supposed enthusiasm for "preaching" is not at all about preaching but about getting glory. If I am in fact enthusiastic to preach Krishna consciousness, then preaching to devotees must be at the top of my agenda. Krishna says that no servant is nearer and dearer to Him than the one who preaches to the devotees. As already mentioned, charity begins at home.

But in order to preach one must discriminate. Therefore, a devotee has to make a distinction between using his powers of discrimination and being a fault-finder. Fault-finding means that I have malice stemming from envy in my heart for that person. This is not to be indulged in. A Vaishnava is non-envious, but never non-discriminating. We must not confuse the two.

Sometimes to preach among devotees is a struggle equal in scope to preaching to nondevotees. It can even be more difficult, but we should not be lazy. We should extend ourselves. We want to love Krishna, but we cannot really make great strides in doing so unless we learn to love those things in relation to Him. Topping that list is His devotees. The mere fact that this means more work for us is not a reason to avoid doing it. We are meant to do this work. This is how we practice compassion.

A Devotee Is a Mahatma, Not a Duratma

A devotee is not an ease-lover. A devotee cares about the advancement of all other devotees categorically. It does not matter whose disciple or would-be disciple that devotee is. These things we have to practice more and more in the Krishna consciousness movement. We cannot simply overlay the self-centered, cripple-minded consciousness of mundane family life on the society of devotees, thinking "I only have eyes for my disciple" and the smitten disciple thinks, "I only have eyes for my gurudeva." A devotee is broad-minded. He embraces all devotees as part of one family, Krishna's family, and cares about their progress and well-being equally. That is a preacher; that is a devotee.

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura explains in his commentary to the *api cet su-duracaro* verse that a sadhu is a member of Krishna's family. He explains that when Krishna says, *sadhu eva*, He means *sadhavo hridayam mayam*, "The saintly devotees are in My heart. They are very dear to Me. They are part of My family." One cannot wait for the appreciation of such statements to spontaneously arise in one's consciousness. One cannot wait for the feeling to kick in. One has to practice on the basis of the sastric understanding then the full realization comes.

A devotee is not like the materialists who have to see in order to believe. A devotee believes so that he can see. Otherwise, failing to appreciate and deal properly with devotees, even if he has all the external appearance of being a Vaishnava and he says and does all the right things, there is every chance he will get degraded to impersonalism.

The Varieties of Devotee Dealings

From all this one may think the need for keen discrimination is not so important. It's far safer to treat all devotees equally—it is certainly less taxing. Unfortunately the process of bhakti is not so simple. Srila Rupa Gosvami has given us advice how to honor different types of devotees according to their symptoms:

krishneti yasya giri tam manasadriyeta dikshassti cet pranatibhis ca bhajantam isam susrushaya bhajana-vijnam ananyam anya- nandadi-sunya-hridam ipsita-sanga-labdhya

One should mentally honor the devotee who chants the holy name of Lord Krishna, one should offer humble obeisances to the devotee who has undergone spiritual initiation (*diksha*) and is engaged in worshipping the Deity, and one should associate with and faithfully serve that pure devotee who is advanced in undeviated devotional service and whose heart is completely devoid of the propensity to criticize others.

From the purport to this verse:

In order to intelligently apply the six-fold loving reciprocations mentioned in the previous verse, one must select proper persons with careful discrimination. Srila Rupa Gosvami therefore advises that we should meet with the Vaishnavas in an appropriate way, according to their particular status. In this verse he tells us how to deal with three types of devotees—the *kanishtha-adhikari*, *madhyama-adhikari* and *uttama-adhikari*. The *kanishtha-adhikari* is a neophyte who has received the *hari-nama* initiation from the spiritual master and is trying to chant the holy name of Krishna. One should respect such a person within his mind as a *kanishtha-Vaishnava*. A *madhyama-adhikari* has received spiritual initiation from the spiritual

master and has been fully engaged by him in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. The madhyama-adhikari should be considered to be situated midway in devotional service. The uttama-adhikari, or highest devotee, is one who is very advanced in devotional service. An uttama-adhikari is not interested in blaspheming others, his heart is completely clean, and he has attained the realized state of unalloyed Krishna consciousness.

Here Srila Prabhupada advises that "one must select proper persons with careful discrimination." He gives some general symptoms of devotees on the different stages of devotional service. These should be accompanied by the other symptoms given elsewhere such as in Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam, and Sri Caitanya-caritamrita.

On this same subject of selecting proper persons, Srila Prabhupada gives advice in his purport to Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.29.17:

The devotee should avoid a person whose character is not fixed in the standard understanding; even though he may be a Vaishnava, or a devotee of Krishna, if his character is not correctly representative, then he should be avoided.

Of course, if one is fortunate enough to be in the association of all liberated souls, then he may be safe in the assumption to treat them all equally, although it is a fact that even on the transcendental plane there are different gradations of devotees and one may have to do the job of discriminating on that plane as well. We even have to discriminate when choosing between different services to Krishna, although all services are absolute. For example, out of two legitimate service opportunities, we have to sometimes choose which service is most pleasing to Krishna, more vital to the Krishna consciousness movement. So the need to discriminate occurs at all levels of the spiritual experience. At no stage of the process is one required to forsake his intelligence, and the principle function of the intelligence is to discriminate.

If we do not develop our capacity to discriminate on the basis of scripture, one may give undue respect, facility, and opportunities to an unqualified person. Of course, such things can happen to anyone at any time, but as much as possible we must use the knowledge the Lord gives us to our best advantage. That is a sign of one's faith in the instructions of the Lord. Failure to use our power of discrimination means one may be the cause of endangering a devotee's spiritual life. We cannot be like the Hindus who find it too taxing to discern who is the Supreme God among all the deities described in the Vedas, so they prefer to elevate all the demigods to equal status with Vishnu. This is nothing but laziness and ignorance.

An even greater danger is failure to give proper respect to a deserving Vaishnava. This can completely end one's spiritual life. Many times our preaching stresses this danger to an extreme, however, when we have seen practically that there is grave danger in giving too much too soon. And that does not mean only in the sense of causing gross fall down from the spiritual path. Giving too much too soon can also cause subtle problems in a person's spiritual life—problems that may go undetected for a long, long time. Even the person may not catch it.

The Highest Principle

Ultimately, not discriminating means that one does not in fact have a concrete sense of what activities and motives are beneficial to him or to others. It means he does not have a working sense of what is Krishna conscious and what is not. Hence he may spend years working in the wrong

direction, mistaken, confused, not knowing what is pure devotional service and what is mixed. This is no small thing because mixed devotional service "is a means to material existence." That is to say, one may render service for years in the Krishna consciousness movement in the lower modes of nature and thus fall short of the perfectional stage.

In light of the opportunity that the Krishna consciousness mission offers—victory over repeated birth and death—to miss this opportunity is surely a great misfortune. It is the greatest misfortune. As Srila Prabhupada wrote to one devotee, "the highest principle is to save oneself." And considering the wealth of books we have in our line that explain every twist and turn in the process of devotional service, no devotee can be excused for failure to understand the process and apply it properly.

One can avoid this misfortune by being fixed in the practice of reading Srila Prabhupada's books again and again, by trying to enter into a deeper and deeper understanding of his instructions, by constantly praying for pure devotional service, and by avoiding service mixed with the modes of passion and ignorance.

The Sentimental Paradigm

I must mention here again that sentimental devotees don't like to see so much stress on discriminating. They don't like all this taxing work. It's so much easier to elevate everyone to being a great Vaishnava and just gaily go on with spiritual life. They also relish the taste of being admired in mutual admiration relationships with other sentimental persons. Devotee A says to devotee B, "Prabhu, you are such a nice devotee." And devotee B thinks, "Hmmm, he is such a nice, advanced devotee. He recognized my nice qualities and my advanced position. He appreciates me. He is so advanced." B then says to A, "Actually, prabhuji, I am not an advanced devotee at all. You are the advanced devotee."

What is really happening here is that both parties are enjoying being perceived as advanced. But this is devotional service in the mode of passion. It's not an advanced platform at all, but A and B have just reinforced each others mixed devotional service while confusing it with pure devotional service. It is for reasons like this that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta used to say that one who praises me is my enemy and one who criticizes me is my friend.

Another example of the sentimental paradigm at work: I had this experience at a temple function where many different devotees were called upon to speak. Finally, towards the end, came the turn of one devotee. He went to the microphone and began by praising the previous speakers, not once, not twice, but three or four times. Nothing wrong in praising the previous speakers, but when it is done in excess, one has to wonder what's really going on?

Let us analyze: It is well-known that a symptom of an advanced devotee is that he appreciates others' service. So if I want to be considered advanced, I can present myself as appreciating other devotees, not because I appreciate what they said, but because I will be appreciated. "Devotees will think me advanced when they see how uncritical I am and how much I appreciate the service of others." This is not really about my appreciating others so much as it is about my employing flattery so I'll be perceived as an advanced devotee. The irony is that in devotional service flattery really doesn't get you anywhere.

Yes, it could be genuine appreciation, but when it is done in excess, that is a dead giveaway. An alert and attentive listener catches these things and using his knowledge of the modes of nature

understands exactly what is happening. In this way he does not become mired in emulating this sort of role model.

We Should Be Self-Critical

We come now to one of the important symptoms of mixed devotional service prevalent in our society, but before I explain the Downline Syndrome and other symptoms, I want to say a few words about something we practice that does not add up. In our philosophy, it is without question considered a healthy practice to be self-critical. Obviously, some of us do this with greater or lesser degrees of success. To the degree one is sincere he polices himself and sees how he is doing by comparison to the ideal model given in the shastra. What does not add up is we do not practice to be self-critical of ourselves as a society. In as much as being self-critical is a good practice for the individual, I believe it an equally healthy thing to do as a society.

Somehow it is taboo to point out the defects in our performance as a society. We should be open to challenge. That can only make us more circumspect in our ways of doing things. But the philosophy warns us against criticism; it is not Vaishnava. Hence we caution each other, "Don't criticize, prabhu." Don't criticize the management. Don't criticize this, don't criticize that. Don't be a fault-finder. Don't be a fly seeking the sores; see the good.

I think we tend to misapply or even abuse this aspect of the philosophy.

Criticism, of course, comes in two varieties, constructive and destructive. One may be loyal to the society and still oppose something—a practice, or policy, or a wrongdoing—and therefore criticize with the aim to get us to a higher standard of performance. Prabhupada did this all the time. Another person may criticize with the aim to find fault, or just to cause a disturbing sensation, or even to tear down and destroy. This is of course not very useful.

But even in such ill-motivated criticism, as unpleasant as it is to endure, there may be value, because despite the person's ill intentions, the criticism itself may still be valid.

For the rest of this chapter I will analyze in terms of the modes of nature certain events that have occurred in our society. I recognize that in so doing I risk disturbing certain persons who might recognize themselves in this retelling of events and may think I did it to cast them in a bad light. At this time I see no value in pointing the finger. That is a useless exercise at best. But I see immense value in us learning from our mistakes. It is said that those who do not learn from their mistakes are doomed to repeat them. With respect to our society the truth in this saying is self-evident.

The history is pretty much common knowledge, so it is not a question of my casting anybody in a bad light. The facts are the facts and are generally widely known. There is no value in denying them, but there is immense value in learning from the past. Education is so important that I think it worth risking the ire of a few for the sake of educating the many. Just see how priceless it is to read Hari Sauri prabhu's diary and learn so much about practical Krishna consciousness based on past events.

The Personal Ambition Syndrome

This is a biggie. I have learned to be especially fearful of this syndrome. I have seen quite a few otherwise admirable Godbrothers get shipwrecked on the shoals of this syndrome. We have had many, many examples of personal ambition over the years. Of course, in an organization such as

ours we will never be able to eradicate personal ambition. We are never cent-percent sure what lurks in our own heart, what to speak of another's heart, so it is practical to resign oneself to the reality that such things are not entirely avoidable in our society.

But, and this is very important, you can resolve not to be a carrier of the personal ambition virus. Not only that, you can learn to recognize its symptoms in others and when you do, you need not fuel it. That much you can do.

There are numerous manifestations of personal ambition. Here I want to subject only a few widely known ones to analysis in terms of the modes of material nature and mixed devotional service. Of course the idea is not to convince you of the particular examples. All the examples used in this chapter are simply meant to show how one may practice discrimination on the basis of the philosophy. I want to stress that I am doing this with the singular aim of informing how to apply the philosophy, how to practice being a shastra-cakshusa. Thus for examples I chose events commonplace in our society that serve to show the dangers inherent in that specific type of situation.

Of course, ultimately, anything that is not pure devotional service is dangerous, because it means one is associating with the modes of nature and there is always the chance of being swept away. But still there are different degrees of risk. Anyway, see if you agree with my analysis.

The Downline Syndrome

Downline is a term used in multi-level marketing. It refers to the people whom a representative brings into the sales company under himself as part of his sales force. A percentage of whatever his downline earns goes to him. The key to success in this marketing system is to build up one's downline as much as possible. As you get more and more people under you giving you a percentage of their earnings, it pushes you upward. Your earnings increase, along with your name, fame, position, prestige and power in the company.

Something akin to this goes on in our society. It is indicative of devotional service in the mode of passion. People desiring to get ahead in the institution, thinking that such getting ahead is the same as advancement in pure devotional service, try to surround themselves with achievers, but a unique kind of achiever—the kind of achiever who is incapable of thinking for himself, who is totally dependent on his authority. Then, rather than set about training that man to stand on his own two feet in Krishna consciousness, further dependence is ingrained in him.

"Yes man" is the common term for such dependent, unthinking type persons. They invariably need someone else to tell them what is Krishna conscious and what is not. Many leaders like this kind of submissive underling. They feel secure when surrounded by such charges. They believe fostering dependency in a person and causing him or her to fear using their own intelligence to be a real positive sign in a subordinate. Actually it is a great detriment to the growth of the individual and therefore to the growth of the movement, because our society is made up of individuals.

Some of our new bhakta training programs labored under this principle of fostering dependency, mistaking it for surrender. Perhaps programs still operate like this. I would not be surprised. I have seen new people get their self-confidence completely shredded in the name of developing their Krishna consciousness. It was done to me and I in turn did it to others.

Two things make it seem a good thing to foster this self-rot of dependency. From the leader's or manager's point of view to call the shots and have others submissively and unobjectively cooperate with him makes his life easier. And after all, why not. Management is taxing even when all my ducks line up and march in lockstep to my tune. So dependency in my subordinate is not a bad idea at all. From the subordinate's point of view it seems not a bad idea, because people generally much prefer to depend on someone to tell them what to do than figure it out themselves. This in fact does nothing at all to foster their growth—indeed it stifles it.

Ultimately, a leader with the downline syndrome is an insecure human being. It is insecurity and not Krishna consciousness that causes one to foster dependency in others in the name of Krishna consciousness.

Such a person may, for example, create brahminical boards or other kinds of steering committees or councils, in a bid to show how he is a "progressive" leader, but this is all smoke. The real qualification to be on the board is not "one man, one vote," but that each man will be uncritical and take his cues from the leader and vote accordingly. The board is not a forum for sober, independent thought, and for sincere exchange and pooling of ideas. It's not a forum where differences in point of view are treated with respect. Rather, a different point of view is considered a threat, especially if well-articulated.

Of course other negative symptoms accompany such downlines. I once participated in a zonal board where the unwritten policy was to paint the rosiest possible picture of each project month after month. Problems were only addressed when they reached the status of crisis, which was often too late to implement really effective and economical solutions.

No doubt in any organization there are a class of leaders and a class of followers, but ISKCON aims at creating a class of brahmanas, the intellectual class of men, the head of the social body. Such persons are free-thinkers, under the parameters of the shastra, of course. They know the philosophy well and they think for themselves and they can meet and discuss and reconcile differences of opinion on the basis of philosophy, which one and all voluntarily subordinate themselves to. People who will not take responsibility to think for themselves are not brahmanas by nature. Yet too often our society prefers those kind of people and encourages them. Ostensibly it is done in the name of cooperation, but in fact it is blind following, which is not the same as responsible cooperation. It is building up one's downline.

I served for years in one zone and went to the GBC man complaining that I felt he kept me at a distance, not giving me encouragement and facility. When I told him I didn't feel I was being engaged for all I was worth, his reply shocked me. "Well," he said, "there is a question of loyalty." To avoid embarrassing him I pretended not to catch his meaning and asked, "You don't think I am loyal to Srila Prabhupada?" In that moment he realized his error. After a pause, he said, "Yes, I think you are loyal to Prabhupada."

This illustrates how much we believe in the downline concept. If he had felt that I was his "yes man," I would have had all facility. Actually, this whole society belongs to Srila Prabhupada and any disciple should be willing to help any other disciple serve Prabhupada without trying to illicit some personal loyalty and credit for himself, for this is a far cry from the principle that a devotee is selfless and never eager to get credit for his service. Even materialists sometimes appreciate the value of selflessness. Ronald Reagan, for example, during his years at the White House, kept a plaque on his desk which read, "There is no limit to how much a man can accomplish if he is prepared not to take the credit for it."

That's not to say it is not naturally there, that others will not give credit, but the idea that I become a dominant figure and everyone around me is dependent on me for benefits, which I dole out as favors, means that at heart we are thinking that we have some personal opulence to distribute. Rather we should think ourselves custodians of Srila Prabhupada's opulences. The actual fact is that we all have the legacy from Srila Prabhupada. But somehow that is not conveyed in our preaching nor in our manner of dealings. What is conveyed sometimes is that some come on like they inherited ISKCON from Srila Prabhupada and others are on the dole. What this means is simply that the modes of nature are active among us and having a fair degree of success.

Srila Prabhupada's express desire was that our society would train up "independently thoughtful men." By that he meant that people would come and get trained in Krishna consciousness, and then, according to their capacity and desire, they would take initiative and do what they could to spread Krishna consciousness. And the leaders would not only encourage this *modus operandi*, but would facilitate it as well. In a 1972 letter to one former GBC man he expressed his desire thus:

(The) Krishna Consciousness Movement is for training men to be independently thoughtful and competent in all types of departments of knowledge and action, not for making bureaucracy. Once there is bureaucracy the whole thing will be spoiled. There must be always individual striving and work and responsibility, competitive spirit, not that one shall dominate and distribute benefits to the others and they do nothing but beg from you and you provide. No.

In reality, we are often threatened by the presence of independently thoughtful men in our midst. Rather than see the potential in such men for the movement's growth and encourage them to take initiative, we generally feel threatened by them. We raise questions about their loyalty, sincerity, and the like. Srila Prabhupada, on the other hand, gave his men so much encouragement. He could make a man feel that he could go out and subdue tigers for the sankirtana mission of Lord Caitanya.

We should all aspire to become independently thoughtful for Srila Prabhupada. We should encourage each other as much as possible in this direction as well. That is very valuable service to the mission.

I am sure that in the present timbre of our society some will feel threatened by the publication of this book. But why? In fact to feel threatened by this book simply confirms the merit in the book. A healthy society would never feel threatened by a publication such as this. The truth is that this book is therapeutic and long overdue in our society. Whoever feels threatened by my analysis of events in this book is actually revealing more about himself than he probably ought to.

Feeling threatened by the presence of independently thoughtful people in our midst comes from an insecure feeling that some of us harbor—that somehow or other there is not enough room in the spiritual firmament for every one to shine. If I let (what to speak of help) another to shine, maybe he will outshine me and I will not get the credit and recognition I want for myself. This sort of self-interestedness, a symptom of the mode of passion, is a detriment to the growth and expansion of our society. One is never ready to be an unsung hero for Krishna and Srila Prabhupada. Everything has a price. And this thinking goes on in spite of the fact that our philosophy states a devotee of the Lord is selfless and that one who does sincere service to Krishna never goes unnoticed. After all, the Lord Himself is in our hearts and is the witness to all that transpires therein. Somehow, in our own haste for glory in devotional service, we overlook these points. Actually, the only real glory is pure devotional service.

The true platform of Krishna consciousness is to encourage everyone to come into his own in the service of the spiritual master. Not just encourage, but to give material assistance whenever possible. Not every man for himself in the race to the finish line. A Vaishnava wants to bring out the best in everyone because he knows that this will only increase the total output of service to the mission of the spiritual master. Such a disciple gains ever-increasing satisfaction from having any role at all in the line of serving the spiritual master.

I recall confiding to a Godbrother that another senior Godbrother always tries to bend me to his will. He tries to get me to do his bidding. "He never thinks to ask me what is my dream for Srila Prabhupada. How much nicer it would be if he would say to me, 'What is your dream for Srila Prabhupada? How can I help you to realize it? And then I would naturally respond by expressing my desire to help him realize his dream for Srila Prabhupada. It's not that he alone has a vision how to serve this mission."

But when our devotional service is mixed with the mode of passion these types of me-centered complications come about. If you are not of value to my downline then you are of no value in my eyes, except when it serves my purpose to put on a show in public.

Killing a Sacred Cow

The next example I want to subject to scrutiny is the ISKCON sacred cow called book distribution. There can be no doubt that book distribution is the major activity of our society. Any devotee who is not aware of this is already dead while breathing. Book distribution is so important that many devotees believe that whoever says a word other than praise about book distribution is an incarnation of the dark side. This is bad logic. I am definitely in favor of book distribution and I have nothing to say against our policy that books must be distributed, but reflecting on my years of experience in the society in general, and with book distribution in particular, I have some observations to make about a certain type of book distributor in terms of the modes of nature.

By making book distribution an emotional issue many leave no room for objective discussion about how book distribution is done and how the consciousness around it may be improved. Every book distributor is eager to discuss how to increase, but in my experience they are not necessarily eager to discuss how the consciousness or attitude of a book distributor can be improved.

In fact the attitude of some book distributors is that as long as they distribute books they don't have the responsibility to be Krishna conscious. This I had first-hand experience of when I was in charge of book distribution in Philadelphia temple. The attitude in a couple of devotess was like this: "Look, we distribute books, we collect money and whether we are Krishna conscious or not is none of your business." One devotee even advised me, "Kundali prabhu, why do you want people to be Krishna conscious? If I was in your position, man, I would just take the money and run." That is, I should just accept the collections and be happy.

There is a breed of devotee(?) who, somehow, miraculously feel they have been absolved of the crucial responsibility to speak and act Krishna conscious. They assume that they have a reserved seat on a Vaikuntha airplane and their future destination is assured. Well, I am sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but it just isn't so.

I wager that even if someone does hundreds of thousands of books but fails to upgrade his character by freeing himself of the modes of passion and ignorance, not only is his future in Vaikuntha not assured, but it is uncertain that he will endure in the process of devotional service for the duration of

this life. But some think this upgrading happens automatically. Maybe they believe Lord Caitanya is indebted to them for their sacrifice of book distribution. That may be in fact the case for some but not in most. I can cite numerous examples to support my claim.

For openers, a lot of the book distribution we have done in America was conducted in the mode of passion. Plainly speaking, the motive was not that by the sacrifice of book distribution "I will rid my heart of the ineptitudes of the reactions of my past fruitive activities and thus free myself from bondage." The Third Canto describes this attitude as a symptom of devotional service in the mode of goodness. Instead, in a majority of cases the motive was glory, the mode of passion. During the seventies in America, instead of "every town and village" as our slogan, 'every town and pillage' would have been much more apt. The public is still scarred from the experience. I am not convinced it was necessary. Today the movement in America is still reaping bitter fruits that we sowed back then. It was nectar in the beginning; now it's poison.

There are other factors that contributed to the state of the Krishna consciousness movement in America today. The "every town and pillage" policy is only partly responsible for the bad shape the movement is in nowadays. For brevity's sake, however, in this volume I will resist the temptation to analyze the other factors I consider relevant.

What Pleases Prabhupada Most

Sticking with the topic of book distribution and glory, we may tell ourselves that the motive was not glory; the motive was to get Srila Prabhupada's attention. I agree that may have been mixed in, but the best way to get Prabhupada's attention is in fact to develop Krishna consciousness. Anyone who is not convinced of this should stay off book distribution and read the books until convinced.

To the degree book distribution did not increase our Krishna consciousness, to the extent that we maliciously took advantage, used force, or offended people to get Prabhupada's attention, then it was not activity in the mode of goodness, but in the mode of passion. And if in fact we used non-Krishna conscious methods to get books out and collect money, then it was all about getting glory rather than purification. And what does Krishna say is the result of action in the mode of passion? Action in the mode of goodness purifies the performer—Krishna says it leads to self-realization—whereas action in the mode of passion leads to misery. Though it starts off as nectar, it finishes as poison. It was about getting glory rather than purification. Let's judge by the result. It is miserable. The reputation of the society suffered for years. And so many of the stalwart book distributors—after reaping temporary glory, where are they?

So many failed to appreciate that the principal reason to distribute books is to purify the heart, to save oneself. Instead many feel that they distribute books to save people, themselves being already saved, but that turned out to be a miscalculation. Preaching Krishna consciousness by book distribution is a means of awakening Krishna consciousness in the heart of the distributor. We need to hear this more often. So many managed to distribute huge numbers of books without ridding their hearts of passion and ignorance.

Actually it is not that difficult to understand that achieving purity by distributing books will only lead to more powerful book distribution because purity is the force. The cumulative effect will be inconceivable. Instead we have had a high casualty rate. But if we were in fact saved, where would be the question of such a casualty rate?

High casualty rate means the modes of passion and ignorance. Steadiness indicates the mode of goodness. So while a few may have attained this, the majority missed the mark and in this business a near-miss is as good as a mile.

But no, devotees are hasty to point out that book distribution pleases Srila Prabhupada the most. Prabhupada said, "If you want to please me, distribute my books." But how many know that he also said, "I am most pleased when I see you are becoming Krishna conscious." Now it is a fact that he may have said it more often that book distribution pleases him. I don't know, but even granting that viewpoint, the fact is that in his books he says over and over that we must become Krishna conscious. It is clear to me that is what pleases him the most, even if he did not say it more times in other places. Is there anyone who doubts that our becoming Krishna conscious is still the essence of his mission? In the Bhagavatam, *krishnas tu bhagavan svayam* occurs only once in eighteen thousand slokas, but Srila Jiva Gosvami says this is the most important line in the whole Bhagavatam. And he proves it.

Hackles will be raised by my discussion here, but those who are in fact eager to awaken their Krishna consciousness will appreciate my words. Others who are still convinced that book distribution is all about getting glory will be bothered. My message is not for them. Those who are ready for my message will appreciate it. Not all devotees are content to be in the mode of passion. Some have faith in Krishna's description of the results of action in the mode of passion. Some have to find out the hard way.

I'm Doing This For Prabhupada

Before I go on to the other two personal ambition items, I want to dispatch some of the thunder my discussion on book distribution is sure to raise. I can see some people dusting off their Prabhupada quotes to refute me. "Book distribution is above the mode of goodness. It is on the level of the gopis. Srila Prabhupada said." Or; "My guru says book distribution is the work of brahmanas." This kind of response is so simplistic that it almost does not deserve a reply. Do you mean to say that the activity itself is in goodness or in pure goodness? I don't find that to be the fact.

What I find is that the activity is neither here nor there until the consciousness and motivation of the performer is brought into the equation. If my spiritual master praises me to encourage me in my service of book distribution, does that mean I throw out my intelligence and the standard understanding of the process? If I do that and distribute many, many books but in the end I fail to stay in the process, what is the value?

Now I know that a number of readers will scoff at my writing these words. I'm sure a number of them, in spite of the self-evident truths revealed by time, will point to the second volume of Hari Sauri's Diary, to the section where Srila Prabhupada is repelling Bhurijana prabhu's arguments about book distribution, as proof that I am a nonsense. "Kundali is against book distribution. What a useless guy. I always knew he was strange." Taking shelter of Srila Prabhupada's words, they will feel vindicated. But it is simply not a fact that I am against book distribution. I am for book distribution, but I am against maya and to the degree that there is maya mixed in with the effort to distribute books I'm saying that we should not fail to detect that maya and eradicate it.

All I am saying is that we may have to be like a lion in the chase on book distribution, we may have to exhibit boldness for Krishna, but we should still strive to develop and exhibit saintly qualities. We should not drop the ball; we should practice Krishna consciousness all day, in the temple and on sankirtana.

Another thing that does not add up is when we say, "Don't tell us book distributors about our service unless you are a book distributor." Even if that was a fact, what does it have to do with anything? Something is either done in Krishna consciousness or not. That is the real issue and devotees who know Prabhupada's books should discriminate on that basis. The criminal cannot say to the jury, "You people cannot have an opinion about my actions, because you never committed this kind of crime." He would be a laughing stock. The rascal broke the law; it does not take another law-breaker to confirm it.

Yet another thing that does not make sense, but used to be very much in practice, is that book distribution was currency. This is no longer as prominent as it once was, but it used to be that a temple or zonal leader's power, prestige, and influence in the society, indeed his credible standing as a devotee—one might say his manhood was determined by his book scores. Hence the "richest" man had the most say. Not that the most Krishna conscious man had the most say. That is not so much in vogue today, so we must be making advancement. I guess the assumption was that whoever does the most books is automatically the most Krishna conscious. How wrong that turned out to be.

This kind of simplistic outlook, absurd as it is, saves us from going beyond the surface of things. It saves us work. And because we are lazy to discriminate, we fall for it. Those who are attached to power brokering know we are lazy and so they press these made-up rules on us. "I have done so many books, opened so many temples, made so many devotees, blah, blah. What have you done for Prabhupada?" This was assumed to be valid grounds for the "big timer" to lord it over the "pooper timer," who was supposed to be intimidated and shaking in his shoes. These rules are not supported by the philosophy, but are favored by the power brokers. One can just imagine how Prabhupada's Godbrothers must have had a similarly smug attitude towards him asking "What has Abhay Babu done for Srila Prabhupada?" when he preached to them during the years prior to his coming to the USA. After all they had the titles, temples, and followers. They looked pretty good. Well, look at how Srila Prabhupada did more service in eleven years than all of them put together accomplished in their lifetime. The moral of this story is that it's prudent not to challenge a Godbrother with, "What have you done for Srila Prabhupada?" because you just never know.

A Question of Loyalty

The third phenomenon under the heading of personal ambition syndrome that I want to scrutinize is the phenomenon of Godbrothers leaving ISKCON seeking shelter elsewhere, even up to the point of getting re-initiated and so on. I have seen and heard a number of the arguments they use to support their stance. The essence of these arguments can be reduced to one sentence: We left ISKCON to preserve purity of the message of the parampara.

This is a good reason. Purity is the force. Without purity there is no question of ISKCON offering any better means of elevation to love of God than other religious institutions. We become just another religious institution. If ISKCON is irreparably corrupt and the integrity of the parampara irreparably compromised, no one should want to spend another moment in ISKCON, for that would be an ISKCON in name only. The spirit would have died. In other words, ISKCON is only valuable if it is a transparent medium for the parampara. Lose that feature and it is better to stick with the parampara.

On the other hand, if it can be repaired, then a faithful disciple's duty is to tighten his belt, grit his teeth, swallow his pride, and get to work repairing it, same as you would do in a ship at sea.

Jumping ship in mid-ocean just because the ship does not function perfectly is simply not an option. It's foolish. You abandon ship only when it is beyond repair, when it is going down, with no chance of turning the situation around. Our ISKCON ship is nowhere near such danger of sinking. This is a self-evident fact. There are surely things that need repair or improvement. So why not band together and work on it? How is that going to displease Srila Prabhupada?

Therefore, up until now no disciple of Srila Prabhupada can abandon ISKCON claiming a quest for purity and at the same time count himself a loyal disciple. Purity may be his excuse, but it is not his real reason. Love for Srila Prabhupada means to somehow cooperate. Tolerate and cooperate. Somehow ride out the storm. More than that, if you are that unhappy with the direction the movement is taking, it is your responsibility to speak up. To take your marbles and go is not a viable option. Even more dreadful is to go and then take potshots at those who stayed with the ship. Having left the kitchen because of the heat yet wanting to tell everyone how to cook is simply not very convincing. Our commitment to Srila Prabhupada should sustain us through our periods of doubt, anxiety, anger, depression, and even utter despair. That is the import of the tat te 'nukampam verse of Bhagavatam. For such a person, jiveta yo mukti pade sa daya-bhak.

Therefore, I say personal ambition is a much more likely reason those Godbrothers left. Whoever will not face this fact is stuck.

First of all, the purity of ISKCON is not demonstrated by achieving material perfection. Materially ISKCON may be more full of holes than Swiss cheese. The purity of ISKCON is that it does not deviate from the siddhanta and that our dealings are on the platform of Vaishnava integrity. When we fall short—as we inevitably do—we have to rectify. Just like a ship's tendency is to go off course. The man at the wheel has to continually correct its course. It is the same with any institution. That's why it is so important for the institution to be self-critical and open to challenge.

To point out defects in the functioning of ISKCON is fine as long as one then gets into solving the problems, correcting the ship's course. To say "Because of such and such defect I have to go elsewhere; sorry," is not a sign of pure devotional service. It is a sign of fair-weather friendship; of personal ambition; of motivated, mixed devotional service. Such mixed devotional service must be given up so we can progress to pure devotional service. But if we don't admit that it is mixed, why will we want to give it up?

If someone says, "Well, what about Prabhupada; he left his master's mission to go his own way," this is not the same thing. Prabhupada had a direct order from his spiritual master and no one would help him; his spiritual master's mission did in fact splinter; and in fact Prabhupada said, "I was never a member of the Gaudiya Math." We, on the other hand, were ordered to cooperate for the sake of pleasing him. Each and every time we surrender a little bit more in that effort to cooperate we are passing the test of the spiritual master. That adds up to progress in spiritual life.

Any organization in the material world has defects. It's sentimental to think otherwise. But does ISKCON openly and officially present an adverse conclusion to the Bhagavatam and Bhagavad-gita? Is chanting Hare Krishna no longer acceptable? Has a new Deity replaced Krishna? The answers to these and similar questions are what determines whether one should abandon ISKCON or not. Since the answer at present is "No" on all counts, then it's work as usual.

"But these are sincere devotees who just could not make it in the ISKCON establishment." Uh-uh. I don't buy it. What they could not do was cleave to the tat te 'nukampam verse; they could not pray to suffer the lot for which they are due for their previous misdoings. They could not pass the test of

the spiritual master. They had visions of glory that did not seem attainable in ISKCON. That's the real reason. That comes under devotional service mixed with the mode of passion. Hence no follower or would-be follower of Srila Prabhupada need to be bewildered as to where these Godbrothers stand.

Another example: Say you are swimming in the ocean and you get caught in a rip tide. On the shore there may be many lifeguards qualified to save you, but one particular lifeguard risked everything to save you. Now if later on you have a function and honor and venerate another "better" lifeguard, it simply does not add up. There is something amiss in your psychology. So, Srila Prabhupada risked everything to come to the western world and deliver us from nescience. He did a wonderful job of it and there can be no question of our indebtedness to him. How can we leave his service on a flimsy pretext? How can we deny him our energy, our life, our wealth, our intelligence, and our words and still count ourselves as faithful to him? The notion is absurd. It is not a crime to not be a pure devotee. After all one should not be artificial. But when we pass off our impure act as pure, that is cheating.

If the leadership of ISKCON had somehow evicted them, it would be entirely different. Yes, I agree that ISKCON leadership should orient itself towards been inclusive rather than exclusive, more towards unity in diversity, as long as it does not alter the parampara message. That would be a big plus. That would create a more attractive and healthy atmosphere in which more could thrive; but in the final analysis, the test is how much one is willing to sacrifice and tolerate on Srila Prabhupada's behalf. When some have to run off to make their own arrangements to serve and to get their own following, while screaming a quest for purity, I don't find that very convincing. Two wrongs never add up to a right. Never has and never will. Finding the ways and means to remain united—now that is very, very convincing.

Actually all these Godbrothers should simply humble themselves by facing the fact that they had a problem in spiritual life. Then they should try to unconditionally approach the GBC and request to be again part of ISKCON. Do I hear cries of righteous indignation and scoffing? "Kundali has gone off the deep end." "Who does he think he is?" "He doesn't know what he is talking about." All of this may be true, but whenever I ask my heart, "If I was in that situation and I decided to unconditionally surrender to the GBC and serve in ISKCON again, would that please Srila Prabhupada, yes or no?" The answer is a resounding "yes," every time. What more can I say? Unconditional surrender is always a good thing.

So, by seeing the symptoms, by knowing the definitions of pure and mixed devotional service, and by careful analysis, one can easily assess things and come to an enlightened conclusion. In this way one can avoid being baffled on the razor's edge.

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The fourth and final example I want to examine under the topic of symptoms of mixed devotional service is the phenomenon of New Vrindaban. What is the position of all those disciples of Srila Prabhupada who followed blindly and went off the rails and thus remained part of the New Vrindaban program these many years? Where did they go wrong in terms of the modes of nature?

Now the fact is that many of those Godbrothers have returned to ISKCON and this is highly commendable. As such one may think it poor taste for me to bring it up here, but I do not do so to impugn those Godbrothers. I am most happy to see so many devotees come back to Srila

Prabhupada's service. I simply want to discuss the lesson to be learnt from the example; for this is such an excellent example of the downline syndrome at work, it cannot be passed up.

The leader of New Vrindaban was infected with the personal ambition virus. He therefore developed a downline whereby his dream could be realized, but there is no denying the tremendous negative impact his program had on the spiritual lives of persons in his downline. Unfortunately, there is a lure of false security in being part of a downline. It is the security of herd consciousness. One who is part of a herd has no time to think for himself; he also has very little awareness beyond the herd. As long as he runs with the herd, all is well; that is if the herd does not run off a cliff.

When the leader in question began to herd his followers off the path chalked out by Srila Prabhupada, people outside of that downline sent up flares, but the herd did not want to be shaken out of their security. Life was a lot easier without straining the brain to discriminate. They subsequently followed the line of least resistance, and, after years of faithful following, many have at last awakened to the fact that they had strayed from the path of pure devotional service. But others saw for years what they did not see, could not see, did not want to see. In any case, foolishness, bewilderment, and confusion was the result. Hence one can conclude from this outcome that this was an instance of devotional service mixed with the mode of ignorance.

Specifically, this is an example of symptom of ignorance called laziness. Although these devotees are to a man very hard-working, they were lazy to put one and one together and make two. It was so much easier to stick with the status quo. And there you have it; the result was awful.

As Srila Prabhupada has said, "One has to give up all such varieties of mixed devotional service in order to reach the standard of pure devotional service."

Praying at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada that I will rid my heart of all varieties of mixed devotional service I, Kundali Dasa, write this analytical treatise on the three modes of nature.

rajas-tamobhyam yad api vidvan vikshipta-dhih punah atandrito mano yunjan dosha-drishitir na
sajjate

Although the intelligence of a learned person may be bewildered by the modes of passion and ignorance, he should again carefully bring the mind under control. By clearly seeing the contamination of the modes of nature, he does not become attached. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.13.12)

CHAPTER EIGHT

Further Considerations of Mixed Devotional Service

So far, whatever your feelings are about the analysis in the last chapter, one thing I hope is becoming clear is that there is no achieving devotional service in pure goodness without first achieving devotional service in the mode of goodness. There may be exceptions, but the exceptions if they exist at all are few and far between. In this book I am not concerned with exceptions but with the general rule. The general rule is that one must first become steady in the mode of goodness before progressing to the plane of pure goodness.

This fact is not to be overlooked. If I think that simply on the strength of my many years of service I am now ready to promote myself to "a higher stage," namely the spontaneous platform and the topics of Krishna's intimate affairs with Srimati Radharani and the gopis, this could be a major miscalculation. Without being free of the modes of nature such a person's spiritual life is in dire jeopardy. This warning Srila Prabhupada uttered many, many, times.

It's Not Just a Matter of Time

I want to stress here that the qualification for such advanced level of bhakti-yoga is not a matter of serving time. It is a matter of one's factual freedom from even the mode of material goodness, which results when one is completely purified of personal motives and only the desire to please Krishna remains. This purification takes place by rendering devotional service in the mode of goodness. If one hears about Krishna's intimate affairs with the gopis but lacks this purification, one is sure to endanger his spiritual life and he may endanger the spiritual life of others as well.

For example, a Godbrother told me that another Godbrother once put his arm around him and said, "You have been practicing sadhana for twenty-years. You are ready to move on to something else." After this, the speaker whispered several times into his ear, "Raaasiika, raaasiika, raaasiika," implying that this is really neat, what I am into, and you should get into it. The fact that the same Godbrother later denied doing any such thing only serves to bring into question his character, since it is doubtful that one who is in fact a qualified student of rasa would deny something he said or did. After all, he would be fully self-realized and aware that Krishna in his heart knows his every act. Of course, no doubt a genuine rasika lies with impunity. He is above all

convention. So, leaving that aside, let us analyze the assumption underlying his argument that after practicing sadhana for twenty years, "You are ready for something else." By this we may know if we have a genuine rasika on our hands.

Two things are amiss here: one, the assumption that a sadaka progresses in devotional service by putting in time. Hence, the erroneous reasoning, "You've been practicing sadhana for twenty years and are ready for something more." This is a miscalculation, because Krishna is not captured by time. Hence, this reasoning does not apply. The valid question then is, "What is the person's realization?"

The second problem is that this person—obviously unqualified himself for this stage of devotional practice—is canvassing another and thereby endangering another's spiritual life. It is said that even more dangerous than an unqualified person hearing about Krishna's affairs with the gopis is to hear them from the lips of an unqualified person.

With that guideline it is safe to say that the devotee doing the canvassing in the above example, while clearly unqualified to be a student of rasa shastra, must be hearing from an unqualified source as well, because part of being qualified to teach rasa is that the teacher is qualified to tell who is a suitable candidate and who is not. A suitable candidate's minimum qualification is that he has no tinge of the modes of passion and ignorance and even material goodness in his character.

The point Prabhupada emphasized while confronting those who tried prematurely to enter the advanced stage of Krishna consciousness is that before one can do so, he must be free of all tinges of material contamination. This freedom from all contamination is not an arbitrary stage that one simply decides, "Hmmm, I have chanted so many years, I have done so much service, now it is time for me to move on to higher realizations." The stage of no tinge of material contamination has symptoms and these symptoms must be present. That is the science of krishna-bhakti.

On this point of about deciding where he is in spiritual life because of the time consideration, I remember a devotee approached Srila Prabhupada for sannyasa in 1976. Srila Prabhupada asked him, "Why do you want to take sannyasa?" "I think it is time, Srila Prabhupada," came his reply. Prabhupada was not impressed. He turned to Bhavananda, "Bhavananda Maharaja, because he thinks it's time, should I give him sannyasa?" Bhavananda said, "No, Srila Prabhupada." Prabhupada turned back to the devotee and said, "You cannot take sannyasa."

The point is we may think it is time for some stage of spiritual life, but if the spiritual master does not agree, then what is our position? It is not arbitrary. One is not qualified in spiritual life just on the strength of external symptoms. That is a mistake.

But the wonderful irony of all this is that the Godbrother who is portrayed in the anecdote above will most likely be disturbed that I told the story here in the Nectar of Discrimination. Completely missing the point that I am trying to show him the error of his ways, he may even think me his enemy; he may take offense. But such a reaction only goes to show how right I am in my assessment of this situation. Don't try for too much too soon.

Desiring Before I Deserve Syndrome

The strategy for success in devotional service should not be to take Vaikuntha by storm. The strategy should be to achieve success in discreet stages. Incrementally. Discretion is the better part

of valor. Thus a devotee in the lower stage of realization must first set his sights on attaining steadiness in the mode of goodness and then go on to pure goodness.

In a lecture in 1974, in Hawaii, Srila Prabhupada used the example of a lawyer:

"Because without coming to the platform of sattva-guna, nobody can advance in spiritual life. That is a fact. Just like nobody is allowed to enter the law college unless he is graduate. This restriction is there. What he will understand, law? He must be a graduate. So similarly, first of all, one has to come to the platform of sattva-guna. Then spiritual knowledge begins. Because spiritual knowledge is above sattva-guna. Above sattva-guna. So sattva-guna is the best quality, when one brain is clear and he can see things as they are, no hazy understanding but clear understanding. So sattva-guna is the qualification of brahmana."

Being qualified is not a question of guesswork. One must have the symptoms of a transcendently situated person as given by Krishna in over 150 verses of the Bhagavad-gita. One must be aloof from all duality. Practically, one has to leave the preaching field, because having to mix it up with the material energy is incompatible with this stage of realization. Therefore, the shastra says that the first-class devotee voluntarily steps down to the second-class platform for the sake of preaching. Otherwise he cannot discriminate and thus will create havoc among the lesser advanced devotees and ordinary public. This is no trifling matter. Therefore, Srila Prabhupada warned us many, many times that to do this prematurely, or to do it publicly, even if one is qualified, would impede the preaching mission.

Of course, there is no question of one who is qualified doing it publicly. There are ample warnings about that in Srila Prabhupada's teachings and in that of Bhaktivinode Thakura as well. But over and above this, one must in fact be qualified to aspire for the paramahansa platform. Srila Prabhupada summed it up thus, "First deserve, then desire."

"This Can Finish The Preaching"

This is a very subtle matter and integral to this discussion on bhakti mixed with the three modes of nature. Srila Prabhupada declared all premature interest in Radha-Krishna conjugal affairs to be nothing but sex life. Our acaryas have issued numerous warnings about the dangers of prematurely delving into these confidential topics. They have made it plain that such topics are only for those who are completely free of all symptoms of being in the modes of nature, that is to say, complete freedom from mixed devotional service. One must be serving on the plane beyond mundane goodness; then might one go on to this stage of confidential, spontaneous devotional service.

So, as Srila Prabhupada said, "First deserve, then desire." But then again, it happens that fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

Be that as it may, you, dear reader, should be prepared to do the work of discriminating based on shastra. If you see that someone still displays the symptoms of devotional service mixed with the modes of passion and ignorance, you should understand that he or she is still not yet a fit candidate for the confidential aspects of devotional service. The same applies to you if you have those symptoms. No questions asked. And don't be a sucker for flattery. Your spiritual life is at stake.

Another thing to look out for is that our acaryas say that when one is in fact qualified and does begin to cultivate this aspect of krishna-seva, he does so discreetly, secretly. It is an intensely private thing. The qualified practitioner does not advertise his pursuit of higher realization such as

bhava and rasa, neither does he get others to advertise on his behalf. He keeps it confidential and only discusses the matter, if ever, with those on an equal platform. He knows that it is dangerous to do so with persons still in the clutches of the modes of nature. Indeed, it is violence to another person's spiritual life to prematurely expose them to such higher topics. The qualified Vaishnava internalizes the whole thing. So if you see these factors are lacking in a Vaishnava who aspires after higher realizations, you should understand that the person is in mixed devotional service and that no matter how wonderful it may appear on the external level, his or her spiritual life is in grave danger.

When things like this happen, it is a cause for great concern. A situation like this developed in our society in 1976 when a group of devotees decided it was time to cultivate their understanding of rasa. They began holding regular meetings solely to discuss the advanced topics about Krishna's affairs with the gopis using Srila Prabhupada's books. This did not even involve discussion from sources other than Srila Prabhupada himself. When this was brought to Srila Prabhupada's attention; he was so upset he could not eat his breakfast. He said, "Why only read those parts of my books? Why don't they read that Caitanya Mahaprabhu considered himself a fool before his spiritual master?" He said over and over, "This will finish the preaching."

Finish the preaching? How? One way it can happen is that such persons preach a mushy, sentimental Krishna consciousness, a boneless, lifeless, limp kind of presentation. But what did Srila Bhaktisiddhanta say? *Prana ache yara, se hetu pracara*—one who has life can preach. But if one preaches above his realization he cannot preach with life, even though his preaching is ornamented with all the right ingredients—similes, metaphors, sastric references, charming stories, etc. Those who prematurely take to advanced topics lose their ability to discern what topics are for which kind of audience. They lose their ability to discriminate. In public discourses they have to drop hints that they are into "higher realizations." They preach a Krishna consciousness that superficially sounds exciting and on the cutting edge, but in fact it lacks substance; it lacks life, because they are speaking beyond their realization.

The mere fact that a speaker strays from the topics that Srila Prabhupada taught us to be the subjects for public consumption—by his example in hundreds of classes—is an immediate giveaway that the speaker is in over his head. But if we are allured by external things and neglect to use our power of discrimination, we'll sit in such classes and lap it up thinking, "This is great. I am so fortunate to be getting this mercy. This advanced devotee is so merciful. Let me model my spiritual life after him (her)." Therefore it is said that in the matter of hearing the advanced, confidential topics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, more dangerous than being an unqualified hearer is to hear from an unqualified speaker.

We should train ourselves to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness using Srila Prabhupada's approach, which is to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness with infallible logic and reason backed by scriptural quotes. Mushy sentimentality, over-use of charisma, emphasizing one's personality over the process, emoting on the vyasasana as if one is on tryout for the Elizabethan stage, these are all cheating methods—cheap means of canvassing for disciples and following. One must preach to appeal to the intelligence of the audience not to their sentimental side. We should preach to the highest common denominator in the human being not to the lowest.

The sentimental approach to preaching means that, rather than people learning to distinguish reality from illusion, they begin to accept illusion as transcendental reality. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta has spoken strongly on this point as quoted by Srila Prabhupada in the *Antya-lila* of Caitanya-caritamṛta, while commenting on the verse where Kaviraja Gosvami explains that the characteristic of one who has love of God is that he thinks he has not a drop of love for Krishna:

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura comments that persons who are actually very poor because they possess not even a drop of love of Godhead or pure devotional service falsely advertise themselves as great devotees, although they cannot at any time relish the transcendental bliss of devotional service. A class of so-called devotees known as prakrita-sahajiyas sometimes display devotional symptoms to exhibit their good fortune. They are pretending, however, because these devotional features are only external. The prakrita-sahajiyas exhibit these symptoms to advertise their so-called advancement in love of Krishna, but instead of praising the prakrita-sahajiyas for their symptoms of transcendental ecstasy, pure devotees do not like to associate with them. It is not advisable to equate the prakrita-sahajiyas with pure devotees. When one is actually advanced in ecstatic love of Krishna, he does not try to advertise himself. Instead, he endeavors more and more to render service to the Lord.

The prakrita-sahajiyas sometimes criticize pure devotees by calling them philosophers, learned scholars, knowers of the truth, or minute observers, but not devotees. On the other hand, they depict themselves as the most advanced, transcendently blissful devotees, deeply absorbed in devotional service and mad to taste transcendental mellows. They also describe themselves as the most advanced devotees in spontaneous love, as knowers of transcendental mellows, as the topmost devotees in conjugal love of Krishna, and so on. Not actually knowing the transcendental nature of love of God, they accept their material emotions to be indicative of advancement. In this way they pollute the process of devotional service. To try to become writers of Vaishnava literature, they introduce their material conceptions of life into pure devotional service. Because of their material conceptions, they advertise themselves as knowers of transcendental mellows, but they do not understand the transcendental nature of devotional service.

"Look, Ma, I'm a Great Vaishnava" Syndrome

Sentimentality is a sure sign of laziness in the intellectual sphere. One wants an easy spiritual life, a hassle-free spiritual life. A devotee who is supposedly on the cutting edge of higher realizations told another devotee who was trying to do various services for pleasing Srila Prabhupada, "This seems like a whole lot of work. Why do you want to work so hard? Me, I just want to roll in the dust of Vrindavana." Many women look up to this devotee, but with her type of sentimental conviction what kind of good association can she offer anyone?

Similarly, another devotee, also enjoying a reputation for being on the cutting edge of higher realizations, wrote to a bhaktin, "When you are chanting the maha-mantra, you are conversing with Radharani." That may well be the transcendental fact, but how does that help advance a bhaktin embattled with keeping the mind and senses under control? What's wrong with Srila Prabhupada's advice that one should chant "like a child crying for its mother"? Simply mush and poor discrimination result when we are in a haste to be advanced.

People lose their sense of proportion when they start posturing as advanced. They become too concerned with being advanced. They get in over their heads and start preaching beyond their realization. This can cause serious trouble for people's spiritual lives. The real business is to think and feel oneself genuinely fallen. A Vaishnava does not work himself into a sweaty-palmed panic, "Am I advanced? Am I advanced?" No. A Vaishnava thinks, "Am I pleasing my spiritual master? How can I please him more?" That is immediately advanced.

Discriminating is hard work, a twenty-four-hour-a-day job, but the price for failing to discriminate can be high indeed. If one is calculating how he will enter the annals of history and be remembered

as a great Vaishnava for posterity, he cannot discriminate. Personal ambition blinds him. One becomes blinded by laziness or by catering to his ambition to garner name and recognition as an advanced devotee, an empowered preacher, or whatever.

We see from the examples of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and Srila Prabhupada that they dealt most decisively with this kind of problem. There is no trace of sentimentality in their preaching mood. This is not a mere matter of their personality. They knew what it takes to get the true message of Krishna consciousness to enter the heart. They knew what it takes to plant the seed and then to care for it up to the point of it yielding genuine fruits of love of God. They knew full well that the tendency of everything in the material world is to deteriorate. Even the parampara message can get watered down simply by a misplaced emphasis. They were never content just to look the part of an advanced Vaishnava. And they had no conception of an easy, hassle-free spiritual life. They worked hard to establish what is the true path of perfection. "Work now, samadhi later." Prabhupada compared himself to a soldier going into battle. He wanted to die on the battlefield.

Devotees like to say, "Well, Prabhupada and Bhaktisiddhanta, they were liberated souls." The idea being that we can't expect to measure up to them. Why not? They expect us to measure up. At least we should try by following in their footsteps.

If one wants to make rapid advancement, that is most commendable; but the way to do that is explained by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura in his purport to the vyavasayatmika buddhir verse of the Bhagavad-gita. He says that the disciple must make the guru's order his life and soul. In ISKCON that translates into indefatigably working in the preaching mission. That is the stage of samadhi within our grasp. At least that is the visible dimension of such a devotee's life. Other things are kept strictly private.

In this way, there are so many, many pitfalls on the path of Krishna consciousness. Those who lack discrimination are sure to meet with difficulty even on this royal road. One Godbrother admitted to me, "I am not above wanting credit for what I do." A sure sign of devotional service in the mode of passion, but this same Godbrother fancies himself eligible for the aforesaid "higher realizations." It simply does not add up.

"I Never Deviated an Inch..."

It is not my business to indulge in hearsay and unsubstantiated rumors, but in as much as it may be instructive, I wish to cite the following account which reached my ears just as I am in the final stages of preparing this work for the printer. A devotee passed away in Vrindavana. This happens to be a devotee for whom I have a great deal of respect and the news of her passing invoked a mixed feeling of elation and sadness. I had had some dealings with her and found her to be a person of integrity. Soon after getting the news of her passing I heard something that caused me alarm. It seems that just a few months prior to her passing she was advised to chant, Radhe Krishna, Radhe Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Radhe Radhe / Radhe Syama, Radhe Syama, Syama Syama, Radhe Radhe, instead of the maha-mantra. She allegedly got this advice from a Vaishnava who is said to be very advanced.

Anyway, the story goes that she took this advice to heart and practiced this chanting up to her last day. This news I found most alarming. I simply shudder to imagine how Srila Prabhupada would have reacted to this. Srila Prabhupada chanted Hare Krishna to the very end and if that was good enough for him, why must we deviate from his example? Why take unnecessary risks?

This incident may only be hearsay. I hope it is. Nevertheless, true or not, it clearly illustrates the danger we are in the moment we stray from the safe haven of Srila Prabhupada's instructions. There is no other way, no other way, no other way. The key to success in Krishna consciousness is yasya deve para bhaktir yatha deve tatha gurau, tasyaite kathita hy arthah prakasante mahatmanah, "Only unto those great souls who have complete faith in the spiritual master and Krishna are the imports of all the Vedas revealed." Pleasing the spiritual master in disciplic succession is the heart of the matter. Yasya prasadam bhagavat prasado yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto 'pi. One who fails to do so, na gatih kuto 'pi, that person's destination is unknown. I may want to believe otherwise, but then what is the meaning of calling this the science of bhakti-yoga?

The order of the spiritual master may be a heavy burden, but to comply with it is our only task in life. If we cannot immediately follow it, we must center all our energies on that order nonetheless and make the achieving of its fulfillment our life's mission. Somehow or other we must will ourselves to embrace the struggle. That determination itself is the symptom of our success in life. Srila Prabhupada, whose success in spiritual life is unquestionable, said he had no personal qualification whatsoever that caused his phenomenal success in serving Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He attributed all his success to this one factor: "My only qualification is that I never deviated an inch from the instructions received from my Guru Maharaja."

Discretion Is The Better Part of Valor

I find that there are two important lessons to be gleaned from this story. Again I want to stress that these lessons apply whether the story itself is true or not. The first lesson is that if any association, no matter what guise it takes, does not in fact reinforce our basic spiritual requirement to follow squarely Srila Prabhupada instructions, it cannot be considered "good association." No matter how much it goes against the grain of our emotions, we have no choice but to avoid such association. That is using one's powers of discrimination very nicely in devotional service.

The second lesson is that for persons who chant Hare Krishna right to the end of life there can be no lingering sense of uncertainty as to their success in the process. On the other hand, while it is a fact that chanting Radhe Krishna, Radhe Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Radhe Radhe / Radhe Syama, Radhe Syama, Syama Syama, Radhe Radhe are the holy names of the Lord and His internal potency, still there is ground for some lingering uncertainty when considered in light of Srila Prabhupada's insistence that we chant certain mantras and eschew others.

Why go after uncertainty? Why not stick with certainty? The Hitopadesa, explains how one who gives up something certain in pursuit of something uncertain loses on both counts. This kind of predicament is certainly not necessary for any follower of Srila Prabhupada. He made everything so clear, so certain, it's hard to imagine it being any clearer, any more certain.

This example of someone being advised to chant something in place of the maha-mantra should be enough to give everyone second thoughts when tempted to let his reach go beyond his grasp in this process. On this path, which is described in the Vedic literature as a razor's edge, such a thing can wreak havoc in untold ways. The adage better safe than sorry should be our watchword in circumstances like this.

The following excerpt from a letter by Srila Prabhupada, written at the height of his dealing with the devotees in Los Angeles who were prematurely engaging in "higher realizations," sums up his attitude about the risk factor in taking counsel outside of his instructions:

Los Angeles 7th June, 1976, Vrndavana My dear Nitai das, Please accept my blessings. I have received information that some of our devotees are mixing with the babajis in Vrndavana. This has produced so many problems amongst our men and women who visit Vrndavana. Here in Los Angeles, we have found that there is a group of about 40 devotees who privately meet to discuss the intimate pastimes artificially thinking that they can enter into the understanding of the gopis prematurely. This will create havoc in our society, and the result will be that if this is allowed to go on, our preaching work will be greatly hampered. This premature desire to understand the lila of Krishna is due to mundane sex-life desire as we have seen amongst many of the babajis and sahajiyas in Vrndavana. Our Jagannatha dasa came back from Vrndavana asking me that he had heard some babaji speaking about siddha-deha and he also was listening to these babajis. So I want this immediately stopped. If it continues, this mixing with the babajis, then it will mean spoiling. In many cases, these babajis keep 2 or 3 women. asatsanga tyaga. Their association is to be avoided and prohibited amongst all of our devotees who visit Vrndavana.

Of course, here Prabhupada is not talking about bona fide Vaishnavas. But the spirit of this letter is hard to miss.

Let Us Grow Together By Coming Clean

Candid discussion of events in our society in light of the philosophy, such as I am practicing in this and the last chapter, can help us to learn from history and to discriminate and thereby grow in our ability to discern between matter and spirit; and thereby render better quality and quantity service to Srila Prabhupada's mission; and thereby perfect our lives. Indeed Srila Prabhupada many times said we should come together and discuss issues, but we often find this does not work. Why? Because of the modes of material nature. We are not mutually respectful. We don't practice love and trust. We are not open to challenge. Often we don't accept consensus. Probably worst of all is we often don't want to extend ourselves.

Rather, even on the top level of leadership, we ridicule each other behind our backs and even to our faces. We slight people's opinions and ridicule them on the basis of their race or ethnic origins and so forth. Even in a public forum this deplorable conduct goes on. Such non-Vaishnava conduct does not convey a sense of gravity nor of mutual respect. This tendency to ridicule others is listed in the Eleventh Canto as a symptom of the mode of passion. This sort of practice must be stopped before we can be a healthy society, an open society, one in which we can soberly meet, put aside all our personal interest, ascertain what is in Krishna's interest and surrender to that. How will that be displeasing to Srila Prabhupada?

Someone may say, "But Kundali, this is really bad that you do this, bring out these things. Devotees will know who you mean and maybe that devotee will take offense. Would you like something like that to happen to you?" My false ego would hate it, that is a fact, but my intelligence would have to admit that it is not bad; it is good. It will deter me from making the same blunder next time. And this should be my main concern, not saving face. Right now too much emphasis is put on saving face.

We should be held accountable for the things we say and do when we accept responsibility to lead the spiritual lives of others. There is no other way. And how can "that devotee" take offense? He made an offense in the first place. How can he take offense that it is pointed out? Where is that

listed as a Vaishnava symptom—that I make a blunder and when it is pointed out, I am the one most indignant? Where is it given that a Vaishnava is wrong and strong?

Another related point: Why not bring out all these things? Why should we practice complicity to present a united front to the society that we are perfect. This is hypocrisy. My contention is that hiding our warts breeds more warts. Being in a state of denial is unhealthy for all concerned; coming clean is healthy for all concerned. It's the only way. It is a symptom of the mode of goodness. Symptom of the mode of passion: Rash eagerness to fight.

In our Krishna consciousness movement we are meant to be philosophers and we are meant to discuss philosophy, bodhayantah parasparam, and in this way grow to higher and higher understanding. Somehow, this is seen as the privilege of some and not of others, which is yet another thing that does not add up. I want to discuss philosophy. This book is an invitation to discuss philosophy with whoever cares to respond. Agree, disagree, it does not matter. Let us even agree to disagree and then transcend our differences and cooperate for Srila Prabhupada, but let us discuss.

My realization is that as much as possible we should churn the philosophy to deepen and broaden our practical understanding. Krishna says,

mac-citta mad-gata-prana bodhayantah parasparam kathayantas ca mam nityam tushyanti ca
ramanti ca

The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me. (Bg. 10.9)

This is our business. We may be in great haste to apply this to the Tenth Canto, but it seems to me we have to apply it to all the preliminary aspects of the philosophy first. This is clearly indicated by the way the Bhagavatam is structured, discussing krishna-lila after nine cantos that enlighten us as to who exactly is this Krishna. When we exhaust the philosophy, if ever, then we may consider the Tenth Canto. This was Prabhupada's practical example. Srila Prabhupada was the consummate Bhagavata preacher; he never tired of talking about any place in the Bhagavatam.

"But This Will Ruin The Faith of The Disciples"

One protest I am likely to hear, although I have not mentioned any names in this book, goes something like this: "Prabhu, by your candor you are undermining the faith of the disciples in their guru. You should not publicly discuss the mistakes and missteps of the society and especially of those devotees who have disciples. This will cause havoc." This is the ultimate charge. It carries maximum force in most people's minds, because after all "the guru-disciple relationship is sacrosanct."

Yes, indeed, the guru-disciple relationship is sacrosanct, but we should be careful not to apply this in places where it does not apply. In other words, we must discriminate. Actually, in ISKCON, of all the things we do that don't add up, this reasoning about ruining the faith of the disciples is among the most absurd.

First of all, it is not anyone's service to Srila Prabhupada to encourage people's faith at all costs. It is not anyone's duty to prop up and hold in place conduct that is not in line with Srila Prabhupada's desires in the name of fidelity to the principle of not mussing up the faith of the disciple in his guru. I am supposed to show my love for Prabhupada by cooperating, but not to the extent that I sacrifice my personal integrity if and when someone is not up to snuff. That is duplicity. That is no one's duty to Srila Prabhupada. Whoever believes that is a fool number one. That is the unwanted creeper that Lord Caitanya described called kutinati, diplomatic behavior. We are supposed to cut it down, not prop it up. We should cooperate to please Srila Prabhupada in this sense—to uphold the purity of ISKCON.

Thus, it is my service to encourage faith in those who are themselves faithful to Prabhupada, who have integrity, purity, who display the Vaishnava symptoms according to time, place, and circumstance. It is my service to preach Krishna consciousness purely so I can myself become purified. If in the course of such preaching the light of Krishna consciousness illuminates something that another person would have preferred kept in the dark, that is not my fault; neither is it a bad thing. It is a very good thing for all of us.

It is yet another point in the modes' favor that they have kept us blind to the fact that coming clean is far, far better than covering up.

"That Much Perfect"

Let us examine how we came to the current conclusion regarding how the guru-disciple relationship became distorted into its present condition wherein we believe that a disciple must think his guru perfect, and so, if some blunder happens in the guru's spiritual life, we must move to cover it up, "for the good of the society," "for the sake of the disciple's faith." So we believe. But this is not the fact. Worse, it is atrocious.

The truth is that being a guru does not mean that one is perfect in the sense that he never makes a mistake. First, he should be a perfect gentleman, that is to say, a man of integrity. And if that is the case, what is the difficulty to say, "I made a mistake. I am not perfect."

The point is people find out anyway, so what is the big problem? If Krishna engages us in making a mistake to increase our humility and detachment and surrender, how does covering the thing up further Krishna's purpose?

Actually, I can argue this point from a logical, ethical, or philosophical point of view and show it to be erroneous on all counts, but I think it will suffice to simply quote the ambrosial words of Srila Prabhupada:

If we follow Arjuna and Krishna, then we get the perfect knowledge. We may not be cent percent perfect, but as far as possible, if we follow the instruction as it is, that much perfect. In this way one will get perfection. So one has to follow. The same example, try to understand, that a perfect, expert technologist or technician or mechanic is working, and somebody is working under his instructions. So this somebody, because he is strictly working under the instruction of the expert, he's also expert. . . If you follow a pure devotee, then you are also pure devotee. It may not be that one is cent percent pure, because we are trying to raise ourselves from the conditional life. But if we strictly follow the pure devotee, then we are also pure devotee. So far as we do, that is pure. So pure devotee does not mean one has to become immediately cent percent pure, but if he sticks to the principle "We follow a pure devotee," then

his actions are. . .he is as good as pure devotee. It is not that I am explaining in my own way. It is the explanation of the Bhagavata. Mahajano yena gatah sa pantah. We have to follow the footprints of pure devotees. (Lecture, Los Angeles, November 25, 1968) Dr. Benford: So everyone I might meet who accepts Krishna as the perfect teacher is the perfect teacher? Srila Prabhupada: Yes, because he is teaching only Krishna's teachings, that's all. It is the same as the example we gave before: They may not be personally perfect, but whatever they are speaking is perfect because it is taught by Krishna. Dr. Benford: Then you are not perfect. Srila Prabhupada: No, I am not perfect. None of us claim to be perfect; we have so many faults. But because we don't speak anything beyond Krishna's teachings, our teaching is therefore perfect. (Consciousness: The Missing Link, pages 13-14)

Being guru simply means that because one only teaches and preaches what Krishna said his message is perfect. "That much perfect." In other words, to be guru one should at least have perfect integrity. Not that he is flawless in some absolute sense. And then to make matters worse, when he proves not to be absolutely flawless, everyone must rally around and prop him up as flawless and thereby hoodwink the public. If this concept of perfection was in fact the true standard of guru, then what would be the point of propping up a less than flawless person in that role when Krishna is in his heart and already knows the score?

Just like I am writing this book, I don't claim that I am perfect. I know I am not perfect. I know this fact better than anyone else, but in as much as I do not deviate from the parampara teachings received from Srila Prabhupada the message is perfect. "That much perfect." That is our standard.

The conclusion is that covering up and propping up is cheating. It works to the detriment of the guru in question and to the detriment of the society. And any disciple who becomes troubled as a result of his guru coming clean about some mistake is not a qualified disciple in the first place. Should ISKCON be geared towards the pacification of second or less-than-second-class disciples or should ISKCON simply represent the parampara

with integrity and leave the rest to Krishna? I think Srila Prabhupada's answer would be along the lines that purity is the force or we should boil the milk. True our numbers may shrink, but what is the use of growing at the cost of compromising our mission? Look at the size of the Catholic Church.

Education Is Needed

Disciples should be educated to understand what is the standard of perfection for the spiritual master along the lines given by Srila Prabhupada. Then no one has to get off the Vaishnava platform and resort to cover-up conspiracies and other such blunders and then make further blunders to cover up the original blunder. It does not work. History has shown us again and again this sort of thing does not work. This is how the message of the parampara gets watered down and altered. After all, it simply means entanglement with the modes of nature and the result of that can never be wonderful.

And what gain is there for those involved by their not coming clean? A guru teaches by example; that example should be one of coming clean and being mature enough to admit a mistake. Purity is the force, we say. The example should not be one of covering up, which reeks of attachment, of impurity.

A good disciple will not have any trouble increasing faith in his spiritual master if that master is a good example of a pure, humble Vaishnava gentleman, capable of admitting, "I made a mistake."

Satsvarupa dasa Goswami and his disciples have shown this to be a fact. A bad disciple, a sentimental disciple, on the other hand, will have trouble, but should we compromise the integrity of the society and Srila Prabhupada just to mollify such inferior-type disciples?

This is devotional service in the modes of passion and ignorance when we feel we have to cover up our defects to present ourselves as perfect to the society at large out of fear that we will lose respect, following and so on. But why fear that? Na dhanam na janam na sundarim... We are supposed to practice detachment from all these things. Every chance to do so should be seen as an opportunity, a chance to let go. Either we hold on and look good, or we let go and advance in dependency on Krishna. It is such a clear choice as to which is better.

We fear losing face, but what we should fear is displeasing Krishna and losing out on pure devotional service. If we put that fear first we will have no problem to do the right thing, which in this case means to become embarrassed by improper action and to apologize, rectify, or whatever.

If someone who has transgressed is unwilling to do this, it is most unfortunate. A devotee should not be too big to admit, "I made a mistake." True, it's hard to be humble when you are great; but, on the other hand, according to our philosophy, it is altogether impossible to be great unless you are humble.

If I never acknowledge that I made a mistake, how can I rectify? If I never rectify, how can I qualify for the rare gift of pure devotional service? If, instead, I resort to cover-up by various machinations and ploys, this is action in the mode of passion. It is not healthy for us individually nor collectively. It may seem to work, but that is just the short range result. The mode of passion always seems to work out in the short range. It is the long range that comes back to haunt us. We must have faith in Krishna's instructions that the end of action in the mode of passion is grief. We have seen this come true more than once with cover-ups in the past.

What we need to do is have faith in Krishna's teachings and in the devotees and do the right thing after we have done the wrong thing, which can happen to anyone. The right thing is to act in the mode of goodness and be embarrassed at improper action. The mode of passion is rash eagerness to fight. The mode of ignorance is to seek revenge on those who do not comply with us. Each choice gives a specified outcome and we alone are responsible for whichever choice we make.

I have gone into all this analysis merely to emphasize how vital is the need to discriminate in spiritual life. There is real danger when one fails to discriminate between pure devotional service and mixed devotional service. Let us therefore at least learn from our mistakes. As one concerned about fulfilling Srila Prabhupada's desire that our society create independently thoughtful men, I have tried to encourage this by showing the importance of discriminating on this royal road.

Praying at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada that I will rid my heart of all varieties of mixed devotional service I, Kundali Dasa, write this analytical treatise on the three modes of nature.

sa eva bhakti-yogakhya atyantika udahritah yenativrajya tri-gunam mad-bhavayopapadyate

By attaining the highest platform of devotional service, as I have explained, one can overcome the influence of the three modes of material nature and be situated in the transcendental stage, as is the Lord. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.29.14)

CHAPTER NINE

Symptoms of Pure Bhakti

To reinforce the distinction between pure and mixed devotional service it is necessary to hear descriptions of pure devotional service. Srila Prabhupada gave many different definitions of pure devotional service. A few are included here which convey the range of symptoms of pure devotion. In the Third Canto, Srila Prabhupada writes:

The manifestations of unadulterated devotional service is exhibited when one's mind is at once attracted to hearing the transcendental name and qualities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is residing in everyone's heart. Just as the water of the Ganges flows naturally down towards the ocean, such devotional ecstasy, uninterrupted by any material condition, flows towards the Supreme Lord." (Bhag. 3.29.11-12)

Symptoms Are So Important

This is one of the most important symptoms of advanced devotional service. Sometimes one hears that enthusiasm for preaching the cult of Lord Caitanya or being able to recruit many new members to the Krishna consciousness movement is the sure sign of an advanced devotee. Referring to Bhaktivinoda Thakura, we say things like, "You can tell who is an empowered preacher and an advanced Vaishnava by how many books distributed, how many devotees made, and how many temples opened."

This is certainly a fact, but it is to be understood that the symptoms of a saintly person must also be present in his character for him to fully qualify as the real thing. I have seen that we exalt people on the strength of their "preaching" when it is self-evident that they lack some important symptoms of a sadhu. We should look for these symptoms. When you have a coin, you get the heads and the tails, not just one side. This is important because we have seen that it is possible to make converts, open temples, and distribute lots of books without being an advanced, humble, sold-out devotee of the Lord. The passion for glory gives sufficient inspiration to make one accomplish these things for at least some period of time, but it all ends in grief, as we have seen again and again.

Sometimes a brand new bhakta or bhaktin distributes an amazing number of books just to catch the attention of the guru, but this does not make such a neophyte devotee advanced. One's character must exhibit symptoms of advanced Krishna consciousness. An unquenchable thirst for hearing and chanting the glories of the Lord's nama, rupa, guna, and lila; enthusiasm for discussing the process of devotional service; and so on, cannot be easily faked. This is the litmus test for advancement.

Mere thirst for glory cannot elevate one to this stage. If along with such deep-seated enthusiasm one is able to make devotees, open temples, and spread Krishna consciousness in diverse ways, we can say that devotee is exceptionally advanced and empowered. But first he must be a full on devotee, a sadhu.

If someone preaches but does not behave properly, that is not very commendable. If we glorify him to the high heavens, that only reinforces the negative side of the equation. He does not get sufficient impetus to want to improve himself. If his present strategy is working to give him what he wants out of life, why should he change?

The real value of devotee association is to give each other impetus to be the best that we can be. That translates into dynamically and creatively urging each other to advance in spiritual life. Just because someone puts on a big show of service to garner name and fame, position and power, is no reason to get swept up in that person's program. As saintly persons we are supposed to develop wisdom—the insight to distinguish between external symptoms and internal symptoms. This wisdom comes from understanding and applying the knowledge of the symptoms of the modes of material nature.

Too often we are carried away by externals only to end up in a state of bafflement when we later find out that a situation or person was not what it appeared to be. People invariably join a spiritual order with a high idealism, but as time passes they get waylaid by the modes of nature and side-tracked into various "trips." This is inevitable. And some of the wreckage caused by people on "trips" is surely unavoidable in a society like ours, but some of it is also avoidable if we would only put into practice what Krishna has given us and become men and women of integrity. That would make a tremendous difference. We would polish each other.

We Owe It To Prabhupada

When a person is presented as an advanced devotee, should one blindly accept, or should one be on the lookout to see that the symptoms of a sadhu are present? Some say looking for symptoms is a fault-finding mentality. It can be, but it doesn't have to be. But we see from the practical side that Srila Prabhupada never simply accepted anything without comparing it with the ideal of Krishna consciousness as given in the shastras. He did not blindly accept anyone or anything. True, he did not reject people very easily, but that does not mean he was taken in by them. A doctor sees the disease, but he does not reject the patient.

Prabhupada was the same way and we are meant to follow in his footsteps. His strength was his wisdom in understanding human nature. In the West we believe that wisdom is something that comes with age, if it comes at all. Generally, this is a fact. But wisdom also comes with understanding of the modes of nature; and one need not wait for age to develop this faculty. One need only take knowledge from Krishna and apply it. Naturally, with age and practice one's understanding gets better and better, but one who knows the symptoms of the modes of nature is several steps ahead of one who has no idea of what they are, or how they act.

There is no question of fault-finding or offense in practicing this. Ours is not a sentimental process, but a scientific one. One is duty-bound to see through the eyes of sastric knowledge; otherwise, what is the use of taking to the discipline of Krishna consciousness and developing knowledge if we don't use it to discriminate?

The shastras enjoin that different levels of devotees are to be dealt with differently. To do this we are obliged to discriminate. In our line we do not accept hearsay or vox populi to determine what is what. We are meant to be shastra-caksusha, or jnana-caksusha—we are meant to see everything through eyes of knowledge. Practically this means we should see in terms of the modes of nature, which are the tools Krishna gave us for this purpose. Just like a pilot knows what's going on by reading the instruments on the panel in front of him, so we understand things in terms of the modes of nature. We are not required to do guesswork.

Moreover, we owe this to Srila Prabhupada, who wrote books to ensure we would be fully educated in the science of devotional service. Thus over the next ten thousand years, we will have the opportunity to discriminate finely so there will be no confusion as to what is the way of Krishna consciousness. If someone is presented as a pure or advanced devotee, and upon observation we detect symptoms not characteristic of a sadhu, how can one talk himself into believing black is white, or vice versa? He cannot, because such gullibility and irresponsible conduct is a great detriment to the preaching mission. A disservice. One must discriminate. Such discrimination is a symptom of the mode of goodness.

Better To Be With The Parampara Than With The Masses

It often happens that one is in a situation where he may be the only one discriminating, or he may be clearly in the minority. What to do in such a situation? You have to judge the circumstance carefully. It may be that you cannot say anything for fear of reprisal. You may have to tolerate the situation. Such tolerance is also a quality of the mode of goodness. But if you are in a position to preach, you should. Light is the only antidote to darkness. Knowledge is the only solution to ignorance. Krishna consciousness is the only answer to maya. But then you run the risk of being unpopular with those whose indiscriminate ways puts them at odds with you. They will tell you how off you are and cite any number of reasons. You'll be called envious, or worse, offensive.

One flawed logic you may meet is, "You are so clearly in the minority, how can you be right?" People will say to you, "All the devotees think..." Of course, you have to take that into consideration. But you should also keep in mind that throughout history, situations that need to be changed invariably began with action on the part of a minority who could see what's what. So whatever "all the devotees" may think, you should not abandon your power of discrimination. You should simply stick to your conviction if you know it is honest and Krishna conscious.

You should know, without any reservation, that being a sycophant is neither brahminical, nor Vaishnava, nor is it service to the mission. It is not a condition or requirement that to be a good disciple or a good devotee one must be bewildered. Rather the very opposite is the case. A devotee is clear-headed and equipoised.

If you know that black is black and white is white, then it matters not how many oppose you to say black is white. This much intelligence is required. In the Panca-tantra is the story of a brahmana who was carrying a goat on his back through the forest. Some rascals accosted him at intervals and asked him, "Why are you carrying a dog on your back?" The first two times the brahmana was not convinced by their statement so he did not heed their words, but he began to doubt his intelligence. By the time the rascals pulled the same stunt a third time, the dim-witted brahmana set the goat free thinking it was a dog. This kind of uncertainty is not the platform of a Krishna conscious person. It is unimaginable, for example, that Srila Prabhupada would be in a dilemma of uncertainty like this. We should follow in his footsteps. This will make him proud.

A Krishna conscious person is modeled after the lone boy who pointed out that the emperor had no clothes. He was not out to be a crowd-pleaser. He could not run with the herd. He simply could not deny the obvious truth, that the rascal emperor had no clothes. This is the quality of simplicity required if one is to rise to the platform of Krishna consciousness. Looking good, maintaining the status quo, covering one's name, covering that valued part of the anatomy used for sitting, keen prowess at axing those we think our enemy, cover-up conspiracies, back-room deals—this may all work in our favor for some time on this temporal plane, but it is a fact that none of this adds up to Krishna consciousness. There is no other way but to have full faith in the parampara message, surrender to it and fulfill it.

To be a success in the process of Krishna consciousness one must be committed to having a clear conscience and one must prefer to be popular with the parampara than with the masses, because the opinion of the masses is not necessarily in line with the parampara. Hence, one has to discriminate. And he must do so on the basis of scripture. Once he knows he has indeed done this, he need not fear. He should trust his discretion, and if he is not in a position to rectify the situation, he should keep his conclusion and his counsel to himself. Srila Prabhupada used to say a preacher of Krishna consciousness is one who has declared war on maya. A preacher cannot preach that black is white or a six is a nine. If he does, he is not a preacher but a cheater.

The Motive Is Very Important

Considering additional symptoms of pure devotional service, in the purport to Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.29.11-12, Srila Prabhupada writes:

Avyavahita means 'without cessation.' A pure devotee must engage in the service of the Lord twenty-four hours a day, without cessation; his life is so molded that at every minute and every second he engages in some sort of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead... These are the symptoms of pure devotional service, which is free from all contamination of material nature.

Twenty-four hour engagement in the Lord's service is surely an important symptom of pure devotional service. One should note, however, such full engagement is not all that needs to be present. I may be fully engaged in serving, but my motive may be to get opulence, enjoyment, or name and fame. I may seek to utilize the mercy and opulence of the Lord for my own purpose. Having such a separate agenda or personal ambition means my devotional service is in the mode of passion. The conclusion is that along with the symptom of serving twenty-four hours, the other symptoms of a sadhu must be present; otherwise it is not yet pure devotional service.

Double Dealing—Not a Symptom of Sadhu

In the Srimad Bhagavatam, Third Canto, Lord Kapiladeva lists the symptoms of a sadhu:

titikshavah karunikah suhridah sarva-dehinam ajata-satravah santah sadhavah sadhu-bhushanah

The symptoms of a sadhu are that he is tolerant, merciful and friendly to all living entities. He has no enemies, he is peaceful, he abides by the scriptures, and all his characteristics are sublime. (Bhag. 3.25.21)

In the purport Srila Prabhupada stresses that out of his compassionate feeling for those souls ignorant of the transcendental life, a sadhu is a preacher. He also stresses that a sadhu is a strict adherent to scripture. When it says "he abides by the scriptures," it means practically that a genuine saintly devotee of the Lord subordinates himself to the scriptural injunctions and principles therein. In this way he does vital preaching by his example. It is not a symptom of a sadhu that he preaches that you must subordinate yourself to scripture but he does not apply this to himself. A sadhu does not have double standards. A sadhu abides by the scriptures. If he practices double standards, he falls prey to the unwanted creeper called kutinati, diplomatic behavior. Such an unwanted creeper stifles the growth of the bhakti-lata. To avoid this, a genuine sadhu is straightforward in his dealings. He knows that before he can spread Krishna consciousness to others he must spread it to himself. After all, one cannot truly give something that he does not have, though he may do a brilliant job of faking it. He may even fool all the people all of the time, but Krishna, being the Supersoul, is never fooled.

Another point is that example is better than precept. Hence, it is more important that one be a genuine sadhu than preach. One who speaks nicely is good. Better is one who behaves nicely. Best is one who speaks and behaves nicely. He is qualified to be spiritual master of the whole world according to Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. We should always strive to do both. If and when we stray from this standard we should not use our intelligence to justify our tangential course. This is misuse of our intellect. In our society a lot of time and energy is wasted for this. We should simply try to get back on course. Using our intelligence in this way is sincerity.

After Lord Siva chased Mohini in front of all the sages and discharged semen he came to his senses. He did not build a whole case in his defense, nor try to explain his action as some advanced behavior, or cook up some excuse. He simply fixed his mind again in meditation on the Lord, and the Bhagavatam states that the Lord was pleased by Sambhu's action along with the fact that he was not all disturbed. From this example, we should understand that when and if we go off, we need not build a whole case to justify, minimize, or just explain away our action. What we should do is simply get back on track. This course of action pleases the Lord.

By Their Faith You Shall Know Them

Comprehending the three modes of material nature means using this knowledge at every opportunity. Krishna has given us this "supreme wisdom" as tools to help us negotiate our way through the material world on the progressive march to full Krishna consciousness. By knowing well the symptoms given in the shastras one can become expert at recognizing the different grades of devotees and thus let this knowledge guide his manner of dealing. It is especially useful in choosing one's association. Such judicious dealings will be good for both parties.

A person in the mode of passion or ignorance can be a devotee, but he or she is a low grade of devotee. By association with the process and with devotees of a higher grade such a mixed devotee may be elevated to devotional service in the mode of goodness and on to pure goodness.

While instructing Srila Sanatana Gosvami, Lord Caitanya described the symptoms of the three kinds of devotees: kanishtha, madhyama, and uttama (C.c. Madhya 22.64-66):

sraddhavan jana haya bhakti-adhikari 'uttama', 'madhyama', 'kanishtha'—sraddha-anusari

A faithful devotee is a truly eligible candidate for the loving service of the Lord. According to one's faith, one is classified as a topmost devotee, an intermediate devotee or an inferior devotee.

From the purport:

The word *sraddhavan* (faithful) means understanding Krishna to be the summum bonum, the eternal truth and absolute transcendence. If one has full faith in Krishna and confidence in Him, one becomes eligible to discharge devotional service confidentially. According to one's faith, one is a topmost, intermediate, or inferior devotee.

It is interesting to note here, in light of certain events in ISKCON, that throughout this description of a topmost devotee there is no mention of seeing Krishna as the criteria. The manifestation of faith, either to a greater or lesser degree, is the basis of telling the different grades of devotees.

The Topmost Devotee

Lord Caitanya continued:

shastra-yuktye sunipuna, dridha-sraddha yanra 'uttama-adhikari' sei taraye samsara

One who is expert in logic, argument, and the revealed scriptures and who has firm faith in Krishna is classified as a topmost devotee. He can deliver the whole world.

Sri Caitanya shows how to be a topmost devotee. The criteria He gives is all quantifiable, not mystical or esoteric. One can see if a person is expert in logic and argument. One can see if he explains philosophical points lucidly, consistently, convincingly, and with conviction. One who has *sraddha* (faith) in the words of the Supreme Lord sticks to this list of symptoms describing the topmost devotee. Such faith will surely be tested, but it will not go unrewarded. There is no need to be whimsical as to who is an advanced devotee.

The Caitanya-caritamrita continues:

sastre yuktau ca nipunah sarvatha dridha-niscayah praudha-sraddho'dhikari yah sa bhaktav
uttamo matah

One who is expert in logic and understanding of revealed scriptures, and who always has firm conviction and deep faith that is not blind, is to be considered a topmost devotee in devotional service.

Here again, the symptoms given are quantifiable. Thus for all practical purposes we need not resort to mystical criteria when trying to ascertain whether someone is a first-, second-, or third-class Vaishnava. Of course, it happens that one can argue nicely the points of the philosophy, but still have the symptoms of a devotee in the mode of passion. If such symptoms are present there is no call to be bewildered as to what's what.

The Second-Class Devotee

shastra-yukti nahi jane dridha, sraddhavan 'madhyama-adhikari' sei maha-bhagyavan

One who is not very expert in argument and logic based on revealed scriptures but who has firm faith is considered a second-class devotee. He also must be considered most fortunate.

yah shastradishv anipunah sraddhavan sa tu madhyamah

He who does not know scriptural argument very well but who has firm faith is called an intermediate or second-class devotee.

The Third-Class Devotee

yahara komala sraddha, se ‘kanishtha’ jana krame krame tenho bhakta ha-ibe ‘uttama’

One whose faith is soft and pliable is called a neophyte, but by gradually following the process, he will rise to the platform of a first-class devotee.

yo bhavet komala-sraddhah sa kanishtho nigadyate

One whose faith is not very strong, who is just beginning, should be considered a neophyte devotee.

rati-prema-taratam ye bhakta—tara-tama ekadasa skandhe tara kariyache lakshana

A devotee is considered superlative and superior according to his attachment and love. In the Eleventh Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam, the following symptoms have been ascertained.

From the purport:

Those who have faith are divided into three categories—uttama, madhyama and kanishtha (first-class, second-class, and neophyte). A first-class devotee has firm conviction in the revealed scriptures and is expert in arguing according to the shastras. He is firmly convinced of the science of Krishna consciousness. The madhyama-adhikari, or second-class devotee, has firm conviction in Krishna consciousness, but he cannot support his conviction by citing sastric references. The neophyte devotee does not yet have firm faith. In this way the devotees are typed.

The standard of devotion is also categorized in the same way. A neophyte believes that only love of Krishna or Krishna consciousness is very good, but he may not know the basis of pure Krishna consciousness or how one can become a perfect devotee. Sometimes in the heart of a neophyte there is attraction for karma, jnana or yoga. When he is free and transcendental to mixed devotional activity, he becomes a second-class devotee. When he becomes expert in logic and can refer to the shastras, he becomes a first-class devotee, providing the other symptoms of one transcendently situated are also present. The devotees are also described as positive, comparative and superlative, in terms of their love and attachment for Krishna.

It should be understood that a madhyama-adhikari, a second-class devotee, is convinced of Krishna consciousness but cannot support his convictions with sastric reference. A neophyte may fall down by associating with non-devotees because he is not firmly convinced and strongly situated. The

second-class devotee, even though he cannot support his position with sastric reference, can gradually become a first-class devotee by studying the shastras and associating with a first class devotee. However, if the second-class devotee does not advance himself by associating with a first-class devotee, he makes no progress. There is no possibility that a first-class devotee will fall down, even though he may mix with non devotees to preach. Conviction and faith gradually increase to make one an uttama-adhikari, a first-class devotee.

The Opinion and Example of Our Uttama-bhagavata, Srila Prabhupada

Immediately following these verses from the Caitanya-caritamrita Krishnadasa Kaviraja quotes from the Eleventh Canto, Second Chapter of Srimad- Bhagavatam where Krishna instructs Uddhava on the science of devotional service and specifically about the three types of devotees. These verses are the ones we hear most often cited to describe the three grades of devotees. They appear at variance with the ones given in the Caitanya-caritamrita. The principal difference I see in comparing these Bhagavatam verses with the ones quoted above is that the criteria in the Eleventh Canto verses are not observable. In the Caitanya-caritamrita verses one can observe the symptoms that Lord Caitanya gave, whereas in the Bhagavatam verses one has to be on the same platform as the devotee to tell his qualifications.

sarva-bhuteshu yah pasyed bhagavad-bhavam atmanah bhutani bhagavatmany esha
bhagavatottamah

A person advanced in devotional service sees within everything the soul of souls, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna. Consequently he always sees the form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the cause of all causes and understands that all things are situated in Him. (Bhag. 11.2.45)

On this point of seeing the form of Krishna, one can be a paramahansa and not see Krishna in the literal sense. Madhavendra Puri did not recognize Krishna when the Lord came to him as a villager and offered him milk saying, "In my village nobody fasts." Sri Caitanya, in the final verse of Sikshashtakam, says adarsanan, "Krishna, I may not see You, but you are always my worshipable Lord, unconditionally." So it is possible to be a pure devotee and not see Krishna. It is entirely up to Krishna to reveal Himself or not as far as the literal sense of seeing goes. The devotee's responsibility is to be unconditional in his attitude. On the other hand, an advanced devotee sees Krishna at all times.

In an interview in Melbourne in 1974, Srila Prabhupada said a devotee "sees Krishna through the parampara." In the Srimad-Bhagavatam purport to 4.28.51, Srila Prabhupada writes:

When one becomes serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master, his resolution is tantamount to seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As explained before, this means meeting the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the instruction of the spiritual master. This is technically called vani-seva. . .

In conclusion, if a disciple is very serious to execute the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead by vani or vapu.

This means that to the degree that one has faith in the parampara one is able to see Krishna through the message. Such a devotee may not literally see the threefold-bending form of Krishna, but because of his absolute commitment to the parampara, his practical behavior is like that of one who

literally sees Krishna. This means he never deviates from the parampara conclusion in his speaking and actions. He is a pure, topmost devotee. Hence, Lord Caitanya says that one distinguishes the different grades of devotees—kanishtha, madhyama, and uttama—according to his faith.

We Should Preach Science, Not Mysticism

Another common misunderstanding: "The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth." Guru is tattva-darsi, one who sees the truth. On the strength of this, one person emphatically repeated over and over in a lecture, "Guru sees Krishna and knows Krishna. He sees Krishna and knows Krishna. He sees Krishna..." This was kept up for more times than I care to count the emphasis being made here on seeing and knowing Krishna. Now, this speaker has disciples and he is saying that this is what a guru is—one who sees Krishna and knows Krishna. What is the audience to conclude from such preaching but that the speaker sees Krishna and knows Krishna? But even if this is the fact, how can anyone in the audience verify his indirect claim?

In preaching on this point, Srila Prabhupada never resorted to criteria no one could verify, such as seeing Krishna. He stuck to tangible criteria such as guru comes in parampara, guru teaches by example, he executes the order of his spiritual master. In other words, in the practical sphere Srila Prabhupada preached and exemplified the definition of a topmost devotee that Lord Caitanya gave—expert in logic, argument, and the revealed scriptures and whose faith is unshakable—which are all visible criteria. After such an example, why would anyone resort to invisible criteria—stuff no one could take to the bank?

I concluded that here is a person openly canvassing for disciples. Why? Because when you contrast this litany about seeing Krishna and knowing Krishna with Srila Prabhupada's statement, "I may see Krishna, I may not see Krishna, but as far as you know, I am following the order of my Guru Maharaja," then it is easy to see that this speaker's preaching does not add up. Prabhupada never preached like this in a public forum.

Furthermore, in the purport to the Gita verse in question, Prabhupada never stressed seeing Krishna and knowing Krishna in the literal sense like this speaker was doing. He stressed the principle of disciplic succession. Why can't we stick to Prabhupada's example? Not that one who sees Krishna and knows Krishna cannot be guru, but how does the public know? This is the point. How does the neophyte devotee audience or the completely innocent public know what's what? We should simply stick to the example set by Srila Prabhupada in this regard. He preached that guru is one who repeats Krishna's instructions without adulteration and who teaches by example by following the order of his guru. This we can pretty much take to the bank. Srila Prabhupada had such integrity. We should simply stay within the safe precincts of his example. Mahajano yena gatah sa pantah. This is the standard and infallible process.

The Guru's Qualification

Still on the interpretation of tattva-darsi, it is interesting to note that in the very next verse (Bg. 4.35) the Lord Himself defines what He means:

yaj jnatva na punar moham evam yasyasi pandava yena bhutany aseshani drakshyasi atmany
atho mayi

Having obtained real knowledge from a self-realized soul, you will never fall again into such illusion, for by this knowledge you will see that all living beings are but part of the Supreme, or, in other words, that they are Mine.

Here the Lord explains what He means in the previous verse. No mention of seeing Him in a literal sense. On a morning walk in Bombay in 1977, Prabhupada also explained how one is a liberated soul by his commitment to the parampara, not on the basis of seeing Krishna:

Prabhupada: Our point is that if you do not get knowledge from liberated person, that knowledge is useless. That is cheating. It is very easy. Just like a child. If he takes your direction, he is liberated, and if he acts according to his childish nature, then he's conditioned. If you take Krishna's instruction, then you are liberated. If you manufacture your own idea, then you are conditioned. Two things. Child is not actually liberated. He is child. But because he takes blindly the direction of the father, he's liberated. That is mam eva ye prapadyante. Anyone who has surrendered to Krishna and strictly follows what Krishna says, then he is liberated. Otherwise not. If he manufactures idea, then he's conditioned.

Dr. Patel: It is what? Sarva-dharman parityajya?

Prabhupada: Yes, and it is very easy: "Henceforward I shall simply follow what Krishna says." That's all. You become liberated immediately. It is one minute's task, simply to decide that "No more my concoction, my imagination." Then he is liberated.

Dr. Patel: But this decision, all these things are done by the mind which has got all the vartmas of the past births.

Prabhupada: Mind may be, but if I ask the mind that "You cannot do anything except what Krishna says," then you are liberated. Very easy. You see? We are doing the same thing. We are not liberated. I am not liberated. But I am presenting Bhagavad-gita as it is. That's all. That's my doing.

Dr. Patel: You mean sve sve karmany abhiratah samsiddhim labhate narah. That is your duty you have. That is what ...

Prabhupada: So that verse is very important. That mam eva ye prapadyante mayam etam taranti te. As soon as you become fully surrendered to Krishna, you are liberated, not that liberated means one has to grow four hands and eight legs. No. Simply you have to change the consciousness, that "Henceforward I shall act only as directed by Krishna." That's all. You are liberated. It is one minute....

Dr. Patel: How do you get that direction moment by moment, hour by hour?

Prabhupada: By His representative, by His words, they are present. Where is the difficulty to get His direction? Tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena. One who has seen, one who has understood Krishna, take direction from him. "He's my representative." Yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado. If you get right guru, then you are liberated. If you follow the direction, if you want to please him, yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado, then you are liberated. Otherwise, what is the meaning of this? Mam eva ye prapadyante. There is no need of waiting for liberation. "As soon as one surrenders to Me, he is immediately above the platform of maya."

Aham tvam sarva-papebhyo mokshayishyami. Hare Krishna...therefore, our proposition is you take direction from Krishna and His representative. That's all. That will help you. Try to understand this point. Our system, parampara system, is that I am just like disciple of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. I don't say that I am liberated. I am conditioned. But because I am following the instruction of Bhaktisiddhanta, I'm liberated. This is the distinction between conditioned and liberated. When one is under the direction of a liberated person... The same thing: Electricity. The copper is not electricity, but when it is charged with electricity, if it is touched, that is electricity. And, similarly, this parampara system, the electricity is going. If you cut the parampara system, then there is no electricity. Therefore it is stressed so much. sa kaleneha mahata yogo nashtah parantapa. The electricity is lost.

Similarly, Srila Prabhupada made this important point in other instances:

Dr. Benford: So everyone I meet who accepts Krishna as the perfect teacher is the perfect teacher?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, because he is teaching only Krishna's teachings, that's all. It is the same as the example we gave before: They may not be personally perfect, but whatever they are speaking is perfect because it is taught by Krishna.

Dr. Benford: Then you are not perfect.

Srila Prabhupada: No, I am not perfect. None of us claim to be perfect; we have so many faults. But because we don't speak anything beyond Krishna's teachings, our teaching is therefore perfect. (Consciousness: The Missing Link, pages 13-14)

If we follow Arjuna and Krishna, then we get the perfect knowledge. We may not be cent percent perfect, but as far as possible, if we follow the instruction as it is, that much perfect. In this way one will get perfection. So one has to follow. The same example, try to understand, that a perfect, expert technologist or technician or mechanic is working, and somebody is working under his instruction. So this somebody, because he is strictly working under the instruction of the expert, he's also expert. It that clear? Because he is working under the expert. Do you follow? So if you follow a pure devotee, then you are also a pure devotee. It may not be that one is cent percent pure, because we are trying to raise ourselves from the conditional life. But if we strictly follow the pure devotee, then we are also pure devotee. So far we do, that is pure. So pure devotee does not mean one has to become immediately cent percent pure, but if he sticks to the principle "We'll follow a pure devotee," then his actions are. . .he is as good as pure devotee. It is not that I am explaining in my own way. It is the explanation of Bhagavata. Mahajano yena gatah sa pantah. We have to follow the footprints of pure devotees. (Lecture, Los Angeles, November 25, 1968)

Such a devotee is seeing Krishna in parampara. That is one of the meanings of seeing Krishna. It is not that seeing Krishna in the literal sense is more glorious than seeing him in parampara. That is a material conception. To a genuine devotee it does not matter whether he sees Krishna literally or not, because his faith in Krishna is absolute, unshakable. The practical result is the same in either case—complete absorption in serving Krishna. Complete absorption in serving the mission of Krishna consciousness is the same thing. Therefore Sri Caitanya said adarsanan, "My Lord, I may never see Your face, but I am Your eternal servant and You are always my worshipable Lord, unconditionally." Such a person is a pure devotee. Whether he literally sees Krishna or not, his

every thought, word, and deed is for pleasing Krishna. He is Krishna's representative. Whoever follows him is also pleasing to Krishna. He can deliver the whole world.

Of course, as a private matter, a devotee wants to see the form of Krishna and to witness His transcendental pastimes. This is not in question. All I am stressing here is that in the preaching field this is of no relevance. One who preaches like this, without logic, without a scientific presentation of the Vaishnava siddhanta is not meeting Lord Caitanya's criteria for being a topmost devotee of the Lord:

shastra-yuktye sunipuna dridha-sraddha yanra 'uttama-adhikari' sei taraye samsara

One who is expert in logic, argument, and the revealed scriptures and who has firm faith in Krishna is classified as a topmost devotee. He can deliver the whole world.

Still, I know that there will be argumentative persons who, despite the total consistency of all the above discussion with the parampara philosophy, will not accept. "Prabhupada's books are the lawbooks for the next ten thousand years. Stuff in his letters, conversations, etc., are secondary. Show me from Prabhupada's books that one does not have to be an uttama-adhikari as described in the Eleventh Canto in order to be a spiritual master." Okay. Here is a verbatim quote from the Fourth Canto (4.18.5 and purport):

tan anadrihya yo 'vidvan arthan arabhate svayam tasya vyabhicaranty artha arabdhas ca punah punah

A foolish person who manufactures his own ways and means through mental speculation and does not recognize the authority of the sages who lay down unimpeachable directions is simply unsuccessful again and again in his attempts.

From the purport:

At the present moment it has become fashionable to disobey the unimpeachable directions by the acaryas and liberated souls of the past. Presently people are so fallen that they cannot distinguish between a liberated soul and a conditioned soul. A conditioned soul is hampered by four defects: he is sure to commit mistakes, he is sure to become illusioned, he has a tendency to cheat others, and his senses are imperfect. Consequently we have to take direction from liberated persons. This Krishna consciousness movement directly receives instructions from the Supreme Personality of Godhead via persons who are strictly following His instructions. Although a follower may not be a liberated person, if he follows the supreme, liberated Personality of Godhead, his actions are naturally liberated from the contamination of material nature. Lord Caitanya therefore says: "By My order you may become a spiritual master." One can immediately become a spiritual master by having full faith in the transcendental words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and by following His instructions.

It seems pretty clear to me. No guesswork. No hijinks. No verbal sleight of hand. No razzmatazz. Simply science. As Srila Prabhupada used to say, "What is the difficulty?" There is no difficulty. Simply one must commit himself or herself with firm faith in the shastra and accept responsibility to taste the nectar of discriminating.

Don't be Third-Class

I return now to the original point—the narrative from the Caitanya-caritamrita, where Krishnadasa Kaviraja is citing the Eleventh Canto about the different types of devotees:

isvare tad-adhineshu balishesu dvishatsu ca prema-maitri-kripopeksa yah karoti sa madhyamah

An intermediate, second-class devotee shows love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is friendly to all devotees and is very merciful to neophytes and ignorant people. The intermediate devotee neglects those who are envious of devotional service.

arcayam eva haraye pujam yah sraddhayehate na tad-bhakteshu canyesu sa bhaktah prakritah smritah

A prakrita, or materialistic devotee, does not purposefully study the shastra and try to understand the actual standard of pure devotional service. Consequently he does not show proper respect to advanced devotees. He may, however, follow the regulative principles learned from his spiritual master or from his family who worships the Deity. He is to be considered on the material platform, although he is trying to advance in devotional service. Such a person is a bhakta-praya [neophyte devotee], or bhaktabhasa, for he is a little enlightened by Vaishnava philosophy.

I want to call attention to Srila Prabhupada's statement, "A prakrita, or materialistic devotee, does not purposefully study the shastra and try to understand the actual standard of pure devotional service." In other words, a third class devotee has only a general idea of the goal. To progress further he should purposefully study the shastra and try to understand the actual standard of pure devotional service, which is precisely what I am advocating throughout this book.

There are many points being made and there are many symptoms given of the different types of devotees. One has to study these and learn to recognize them. Simply to see one or two of them in isolation from the rest does not necessarily mean that the person is a devotee fixed up in that stage of spiritual progress. One cannot be too simplistic about these matters. One can get cheated. Taking the time to discriminate is work, but necessary work.

Be a Responsible Follower For Srila Prabhupada

But sometimes devotees put more effort into getting a good deal in a car purchase than they do to discriminate when faced with making a Krishna conscious decision. We must learn to not only surrender and take responsibility for doing the work of discriminating, but to relish the nectar of discriminating. There is relish in knowing that I used my intelligence to the limit for Krishna. Otherwise one may be misled or one may neglect a qualified devotee. So many things can go wrong in one's spiritual life. One may even endanger another's spiritual life.

For instance, if a person is not qualified and owing to poor discrimination we offer that devotee too much too soon, he may be allured by the opportunity for sense gratification and fall from the path of devotional service. We may then feel cheated, but we also contributed to that person's misfortune on account of our failure to discriminate. I have seen this happen on more than one occasion.

Therefore, it is imperative that one become a responsible follower. That is to say, one must know Srila Prabhupada's books and the three modes of nature well enough so he makes the right choices in life. Every devotee in the Krishna consciousness movement must accept the responsibility to know what is Krishna consciousness as given in Srila Prabhupada's books so that he can be a responsible follower and a responsible representative of the parampara. This means that he will not accept things which are not supported in Prabhupada's books. If confronted with something black and he is told it is white, he should seek an explanation. And unless he is convinced that this explanation is Krishna conscious, he should not accept it. This is not rebellion, this is not going against authority; it is responsible Krishna consciousness. Every devotee must develop the power to think for himself in light of the shastra.

Srila Prabhupada had no qualms about pointing out that something was not Krishna conscious. He expected his followers to develop similar skills. He said in this connection, "Like father, like son." He said that we should not simply glorify his achievements but we should follow his example. It will not serve the spirit and intent of Srila Prabhupada if we deify him to such a degree that we think to follow his example is unattainable and out of the question. He did not want that. He said many times, "Do as I am doing." Mahajano yena gatah sa pantah.

In our philosophy there is no sanction for blind following in the sense that one must do what is not Krishna conscious. We should blindly follow or cooperate with what is Krishna conscious. That is pleasing to the parampara. But on all levels of the institution we should bear in mind that ours is a voluntary society. Moreover, no one should be implicitly or explicitly required to forego his conscience in the name of being a surrendered soul. That is categorically not Krishna conscious.

Of course we must cooperate. How else can anything work? But we should cooperate intelligently and responsibly, not blindly. That means accept whatever is favorable for Krishna consciousness and reject what is not favorable. And when there is a doubt we should have it cleared up through the system Srila Prabhupada gave us. That system is that we appeal to higher authority if we are unable to get satisfaction from our immediate authority.

Symptoms of Ecstatic Emotion

As for further symptoms of advanced Krishna consciousness, in the Caitanya-caritamrita Lord Caitanya lists various symptoms while instructing Srila Rupa Gosvami. In the Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu Srila Rupa Gosvami also gives a list of symptoms of one in whose heart "the seed of love of God has begun to sprout":

kshantir avyarthakalatvam viraktir mana-sunyata asa-bandhah samutkantha nama-gane sada
rucih asaktis tad-gunakhyane pritis tad-vasati-sthale ity adayo'nubhavah syur jata-bhavankure
jane

When the seed of ecstatic emotion for Krishna fructifies, the following nine symptoms manifest in one's behavior: forgiveness, concern that time should not be wasted, detachment, absence of false prestige, hope, eagerness, a taste for chanting the holy name of the Lord, attachment to descriptions of the transcendental qualities of the Lord, and affection for those places where the Lord resides—that is, a temple or a holy place like Vrindavana. These are all called anubhava, subordinate signs of ecstatic emotion. They are visible in a person in whose heart the seed of love of God has begun to fructify. (Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu 1.3.25-26)

In this chapter I have given a quick overview of various symptoms of advanced devotional service. A person may show tremendous progress in but one or a few of these symptoms, but to be truly advanced we should look for them all to be present. We should not decide sentimentally or whimsically that a person is on some rarefied stage of devotional consciousness simply because we are attached to the person for one reason or another. That serves no purpose in any sphere. The safest platform on the path of Krishna consciousness is to always make sure that our feelings are supported by the facts, and the facts are explained in Srila Prabhupada's books.

Sentimentality is when our emotions are not supported by the facts. Basing everything in our life on the knowledge in Srila Prabhupada's books, and making that the standard for understanding and decision-making, is the scientific approach to spiritual life. Krishna consciousness without philosophy is sentimentality, which boils down to laziness. Such sentimentality is a disturbance to all concerned. It is antagonistic to the proper development of bhakti.

Praying at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada that I will rid my heart of all varieties of mixed devotional service I, Kundali Dasa, write this analytical treatise on the three modes of nature.

indriyair indriyartheshu gunair api guneshu ca grihyamaneshv aham kuryan na vidvan yas tv
avikriyah

An enlightened person who is free from the contamination of material desire does not consider himself the performer of bodily activities; rather, he knows that in all such activities it is only the senses, born of the modes of nature, that are contacting sense objects born of the same modes of nature. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.11.9)

CHAPTER TEN

Goodness Is The Basis For Developing Realized Knowledge

From the mode of goodness, real knowledge develops. . . (Bg. 14.17)

The manifestation of the mode of goodness can be experienced when all the gates of the body are illuminated by knowledge. (Bg. 14.11)

In the mode of goodness one can see things in the right position, one can hear things in the right position, and one can taste things in the right position. One becomes cleansed inside and outside." (From purport to the above verse)

Devotees on the path of Krishna consciousness distinguish between theoretical knowledge and realized knowledge. Theoretical knowledge is the preliminary stage. The goal is realized knowledge. As the above references indicate, only the mode of goodness is conducive to such realization.

In the mode of passion there is, at best, a hint of realization, like the pre-dawn glow seen on the eastern horizon. In the mode of ignorance there is no question of any realization. It is all bewilderment of the intelligence. Foolishness. Again, only in the mode of goodness does one make any real progress out of the theoretical stage of understanding. Krishna says that happiness in the mode of goodness "awakens one to self-realization," so there's no room for doubt as to the value of becoming fixed up in the mode of goodness. One should want to do it as soon as possible.

Being steady in the mode of goodness means increase in realization, because the intelligence is becoming purified. Purified intelligence leads to increase in realization, which leads to increase in service, which leads to increase in purification. Increase in purification means one is able to increase the quantity and quality of his service to Krishna. It becomes a dynamic upward spiral that more and more energizes the devotee's spiritual life, suffusing him with enthusiasm, confidence, and so forth, as indicated by Srila Rupa Gosvami in the Upadesamrita.

No sincere devotee objects to this happening in his spiritual life. Simply we have to stir each other to become eager for becoming purified. If we think we are already quite pure and advanced, there is

no urge to become more purified. If in class after class we compare ourselves to the fallen wretched karmis, whom we are better than, then of course we won't get impetus to become purified. At journey's end, one has no place further to go. But one is not at journey's end just by taking to the process. That is merely the beginning of the journey.

A sadhaka should never be smug. This is a bad sign in bhakti-yoga. A Vaishnava is never satisfied with his devotion. Srila Prabhupada used to say, "In Krishna consciousness there is no stagnation. Spiritual life is ever-increasing." A Vaishnava never stops hankering to become more pure and qualified to render service to please Krishna more and more. In this way he never stagnates in devotional service. But reaching that stage is contingent on his attaining steadiness in the mode of goodness.

The Sincere Disciple Versus The Average Disciple

There are other powerful statements in the Srimad-Bhagavatam and from Srila Prabhupada that affirm goodness as the basis for realization. In the First Canto (Bhag. 1.2.24):

parthivad daruno dhumas tasmad agnis trayimayah tamasas tu rajas tasmad sattvam yad
brahma-darsanam

Firewood is a transformation of earth, but smoke is better than the raw wood. And fire is still better, for by fire we can derive the benefits of superior knowledge (through Vedic sacrifices). Similarly, passion (rajas) is better than ignorance (tamas), but goodness (sattva) is best because by goodness one can come to realize the Absolute Truth.

From the purport:

As explained above, one can get release from the conditioned life of material existence by devotional service to the Personality of Godhead. It is further comprehended herein that one has to rise to the platform of the mode of goodness (sattva) so that one can be eligible for the devotional service of the Lord. But if there are impediments on the progressive path, anyone, even from the platform of tamas, can gradually rise to the sattva platform by the expert direction of the spiritual master. Sincere candidates must, therefore, approach an expert spiritual master for such a progressive march, and the bona fide, expert spiritual master is competent to direct a disciple from any stage of life: tamas, rajas, or sattva.

The progression of devotional service from the level of being mixed with the lower modes up to the stage of pure devotional service is described here. Please note the clear and definitive statement by Srila Prabhupada, "One has to rise to the platform of goodness so that one can be eligible for the devotional service of the Lord." This should leave no question as to how one should set his priorities.

The role of the spiritual master is to guide the disciple through these stages and ultimately to pure devotional service. If one accepts the order of the qualified spiritual master in full faith, he naturally will go through these progressive stages as he becomes purified. But if one knows the details of the process himself, he can aid the process by his deliberate application of this knowledge. He can systematically apply himself. This is the difference between a sincere disciple and an ordinary or average disciple.

A sincere disciple, out of his eagerness to please his spiritual master, motivates himself to become more and more ideal. He wants to become more and more qualified to render purer and steadier service and to take more responsibility for preaching Krishna consciousness. This applies even if he has no post, position or title. He feels that responsibility from within. He does not need any external prop in order to feel it fully and squarely, for he carries the order of the spiritual master enshrined in his heart. A prevailing myth in our Krishna consciousness movement is that those with positions and titles are more serious to serve Srila Prabhupada and those without these external symbols are not. When the have-nots become serious everyone will know, because they will somehow get admitted into the circle of those who have.

Not so. Just look at Srila Prabhupada's own example. He struggled to preach Krishna consciousness in householder life, he struggled as a penniless vanaprastha, he struggled after sannyasa. In all phases he was equally sincere to please his spiritual master. This spirit is required. In the matter of pleasing one's spiritual master it is not good to rely too much on external factors.

An average disciple thinks he is already advanced and fixed up and he does not have to endeavor because he's got all good things coming to him anyway. After all Krishna is sooo merciful. A vague or general idea of the goal and lots of enthusiasm is all he needs. In this way he need not expend any needless effort in the mental sphere to understand what he is about.

Going about Krishna consciousness like this is not very good. It's like the difference between having a general idea of where a friend's house is located in a distant quarter of the city and having a map and clear directions to the house. If you have a general idea, then with some trial and error you may eventually find your way. If you don't quit. But if you have the exact directions, you can save time and be confident every step of the way as well.

Srila Prabhupada wanted this confidence in his men. That's why he would sometimes ask, "Are you convinced?" His books are our map and directions to Krishna. We have to make it a high priority to know his books. It is a matter of eternal life or repeated birth and death. Here we see that the directions state: *sattvam yad brahma-darsanam*, "By goodness one can realize the Absolute Truth." We can expend energy trying to achieve that milestone or we can just exist somewhere in the process, serving by rote, waiting for something big to happen in our spiritual life, waiting for the mercy, waiting for the feeling of love to kick in. Praying for it. That decision is up to you. My recommendation, however, is that we cleave to Srila Prabhupada's advice that it is all right to pray to Krishna, "as long as your prayer is accompanied by your endeavor."

The Lord Helps Those Who Help Themselves

To my surprise, I found that many devotees object to this line of preaching, decrying the aspiration to be situated in goodness. Especially unappealing to them is all this urging for a personal effort to advance in Krishna consciousness. They tell me they prefer to depend on the mercy of the spiritual master. They tell me, "You are not the doer anyway. All this effort does not mean you will succeed. You need Krishna's mercy. Without Krishna's mercy no one can get Krishna." But our eagerness is required, then the mercy comes.

Yes, we need Krishna's mercy. Yes, we are not the doer. But we are the desirer and Krishna is the fulfiller of desires. *Eko bahunam yo vidadhati kaman*. And how does one practically demonstrate desire? By making some kind of effort. When your prayer is accompanied by your endeavor, can there be any question of your seriousness, your dedication, your determination?

The principle is that the Lord helps those who help themselves. Just like a small child in a room full of adults. If the child makes an effort to walk, immediately so many fingers go out to help him—so much encouragement is given. But if the child simply lays there year after year and makes no effort, no one bothers with such a lifeless child. We tend to help those who help themselves. This is natural psychology and something akin to this exists between the Lord and the living entity. It is not actually difficult to understand this point, but owing to the tricky workings of the modes of nature, it can be difficult to digest.

Another way of comprehending the validity of this important point is to think in terms of the relationship between the spiritual master and disciple. If you have many disciples and out of these some consistently put in a good effort to please you, naturally they become endeared to you. This is true even if those disciples have less talent and cleverness than the ones who are only endeavoring half-heartedly. It is no different with Krishna, even though it is a fact that in the final analysis we cannot succeed without His grace. Krishna says:

anayas cintayanto mam ye janah paryupasate tesham nityabhiyuktanam yoga-kshemam
vahamy aham

But those who always worship Me with exclusive devotion, meditating on My transcendental form—to them I carry what they lack, and preserve what they have. (Bg. 9.22)

Here Krishna is saying, "My dear devotee, you do everything in your power to please Me, but that will not be enough, because My maya is very difficult to overcome. When I see, however, by your constant endeavor that you are very sincere, then I shall preserve what you have and carry what you lack." That is the contract.

Neither The Kitten Nor The Baby Monkey

In the Christian tradition there has been a long-standing debate as to whether one attains salvation by grace or by one's own effort. A similar split is found among devotees in the Sri sampradaya. Some say the devotee is like a baby monkey, who has to exert himself by clinging to its mother. Similarly one must exert himself to surrender to Krishna. Others say not so—the devotee is like a kitten in that he totally depends on the Lord, the way the totally surrendered kitten is carried in the mother's jaw. The kitten does not have to exert itself. He is a mercy case.

Krishna consciousness sides with neither of these two extremes. Krishna consciousness says that complete perfection in spiritual life is achieved by a combination of both views. One's positive efforts to please the Lord through His representative, the spiritual master, combine with his ardent prayers for the mercy of the Lord. This combination of positive endeavor and total dependency on the mercy of Krishna leads to one's deliverance. This was nicely expressed by Saint Augustine, who said a devotee of the Lord should pray "as if everything depends on God and he should work as if everything depends on him." This is the perfect reconciliation of the work versus grace conflict. It perfectly describes how one must use his intelligence to the fullest in Krishna consciousness.

Guru-Kripa

Srila Prabhupada gave us advice similar to Saint Augustine's. In the early days in Boston, Srila Prabhupada was asked if it was all right to pray to Krishna for some sankirtana vehicles. His reply

was, "Yes, as long as your prayer is accompanied by your endeavor." This thinking applies throughout the process of devotional service. I must pray as if everything depends on Krishna and serve as if everything depends on me. I must use my intelligence; I must discriminate.

We pray and pray for mercy, but that mercy may take the form of scriptural knowledge, this book on the modes of nature, the opportunity to render a particular service, or something else. The mercy may manifest in any number of ways. Krishna is not limited, having only certain specified ways that He can channel His mercy. All options are open to Him. A sincere candidate must be alert to recognize it in whatever form it comes.

The concept of mercy as something totally ineffable is not compatible with devotional service in Krishna consciousness. When a disciple, Guru-kripa, asked Srila Prabhupada, "What is the meaning of guru-kripa?" Srila Prabhupada made a prodding motion with his forefinger and said, "When I push you." When anyone pushes us on this path, that is mercy. We are getting the mercy. This pushing may take many forms and we may be pushed by many agents, but it is in our interest to recognize that being pushed is a good thing: It is mercy. After all, if one responds to the push, who benefits?

Mercy pleaders please note this explanation of guru-kripa, for this is the ticket. Let us not cling to the concept of mercy as some vaguely perceptible rainlike mist akin to what comes out of the perfume atomizer. Mercy, as understood by Srila Prabhupada, is not something vague; it is quite pragmatic, scientific, like all other aspects of his preaching Krishna consciousness. And this mercy goes to those who are eager to render service. Eagerness is something demonstrable; it is not a purely mental state.

Gradually, Step by Step

Continuing on the topic of the relationship between the mode of goodness and realized knowledge, Lord Krishna instructed Uddhava about the progressive stages of devotional service:

yada cittam prasideta indriyanam ca nirvritih dehe 'bhayam mano-'sangam tat sattvam viddhi
mat-padam

When consciousness becomes clear and the senses are detached from matter, one experiences fearlessness within the material body and detachment from the material mind. You should understand this situation to be the predominance of the mode of goodness, in which one has the opportunity to realize Me." (Bhag. 11.25.16)

Here the Lord confirms that clear consciousness, detachment from the material mind, and so on, is achieved when there is a predominance of the mode of goodness, "in which one has the opportunity to realize Me." From all this we are led to conclude that the mode of goodness is a significant milestone on the way to Krishna. Indeed, after coming in contact with the process of devotional service, this is the first major milestone on the path. An intelligent candidate will therefore fix his determination on achieving the mode of goodness.

After becoming steady in goodness he may then set his sights on the next stage—pure goodness. After achieving pure goodness he may then set his sights on "higher realizations." This is the assured method of success in spiritual life. One who is unwilling to pursue Krishna consciousness in this way has no assurance of success. He is groping; he is guessing. Maybe he succeeds, maybe he

doesn't. More likely is that having thrown himself on the right track he may appear to be having great success for some time, but since he did not get on the track in the right way, it's only a matter of time before it ends in disaster. He becomes dissatisfied with spiritual life in the course of time owing to his neglect of the systematic approach. After all, bhakti-yoga is a scientific process. Considering the opportunity that the sankirtana mission offers, it is a great misfortune that a person comes, fails to apply himself properly, and then goes away.

The conclusion is that one should focus on achieving his goal in increments. Having set his goal—love of God—he should break down the achievement of his goal into stages, based on the shastra. He should then focus one at a time on each successive stage. Gradually, step by step, by means of intelligence, the goal is achieved. This approach is the way of success in all worthwhile goals, either spiritual or material. This requires a sober approach to one's objective. It requires discipline. It requires honesty. It requires integrity. It requires enthusiasm tempered by intelligence.

Such clear-headedness is not possible while in the modes of passion and ignorance. This is more feasible in the mode of goodness, and therefore Srila Prabhupada concludes, "One has to rise to the platform of goodness so that one can be eligible for the devotional service of the Lord."

Praying at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada that I will rid my heart of all varieties of mixed devotional service I, Kundali Dasa, write this analytical treatise on the three modes of nature.

rajas tamas ca sattvena
sattvam copasamena ca
etat sarvam gurau bhaktya
purusho hy anjasa jayet

One must conquer the modes of passion and ignorance by developing the mode of goodness, and then one must become detached from the mode of goodness by promoting oneself to the platform of suddha-sattva. All this can be automatically done if one engages in the service of the spiritual master with faith and devotion. In this way one can conquer the influence of the modes of nature. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.15.25)

CHAPTER ELEVEN

It's a Gradual Process

At the end of the last chapter I indicated that attaining steadiness in the mode of goodness is achieved in incremental stages. For this a sincere candidate must be prepared to persevere at all costs. Srila Prabhupada writes:

Those who are full of dirty things can take to the line of Krishna consciousness for a gradual cleansing process, following the regulative principles of devotional service. (Bg. 4.15, purport)

In Srila Prabhupada's books there are many quotes that emphasize the gradual progress of Krishna consciousness and readers may think this inconsistent with my emphasis on being pro-active in Krishna consciousness. Seminar audiences invariably remind me that Srila Prabhupada said "Krishna consciousness is a gradual process." Indeed it is. Still others bring out references where Srila Prabhupada stresses how easy and quick, "automatic," is the process of Krishna consciousness, that by taking directly to Krishna consciousness one comes immediately to the stage of perfection. For example, in the purport to Bg. 17.28, Srila Prabhupada writes:

The mode of goodness is better than the modes of passion and ignorance, but one who takes directly to Krishna consciousness is transcendental to all three modes of material nature. Although there is a process of gradual elevation, if one, by the association of pure devotees, takes directly to Krishna consciousness, that is the best way. And that is recommended in this chapter. To achieve success in this way, one must first find the proper spiritual master and receive training under his direction. Then one can achieve faith in the Supreme. When that faith matures, in course of time, it is called love of God. This love is the ultimate goal of the living entities. One should, therefore, take to Krishna consciousness directly. That is the message of this Seventeenth Chapter.

There is clearly something to be reconciled here. And then again, maybe not. The common belief is that since Krishna consciousness is the accelerated process, those on this path have nothing to do with the modes of nature and gradual elevation. Bhakti-marga surpasses all other means of elevation and catapults one to the plane of transcendence in short order. True. Relative to other methods of progress, bhakti-yoga is the elevator compared to the stairs. Nevertheless, the path Srila Prabhupada is advocating in the above passage is no different than the one I advocate in this book.

Gradual Process Versus More Gradual Process

When we read the scriptures and commentaries of the acaryas, we are supposed to mull over their statements and explanations and try to understand what is being said, taking it within the context of the whole philosophy. Failure to do this leads to an inconsistent picture, a picture with many loose ends; or I should say, many apparent loose ends. Here Srila Prabhupada advocates an accelerated way of progress in spiritual life which appears to negate the need for getting to goodness by one taking "directly to Krishna consciousness." It seems to knock down the whole premise of this book in one shot. But upon analysis one finds that it does just the opposite; it supports the understanding explained herein.

What Prabhupada is talking about in the above quote is also a gradual process. This is indicated by his description of how "by approaching a spiritual master and receiving training" then, "in the course of time" the goal, love of God, is achieved. So this is not an instantaneous process he is recommending. A lift is faster than the stairs, but it is not instantaneous. So the direct process Prabhupada is referring to is also gradual and indeed no different than the one under discussion in this book. This gradual path is not as slow as the other more gradual process he negates in the excerpt above. But then what more gradual process could he be referring to?

Prabhupada is talking about varnasrama. In a varnasrama society progress is very gradual. One may participate in that method without any reference to devotional service at all. Hence, the way of elevation is very slow by comparison to one who takes directly to vaidhi-bhakti and begins immediately to develop his transcendental knowledge and is at least rendering mixed devotional service. Still, in either case, one must achieve steadiness in the mode of goodness in order to progress to the stage of pure devotional service.

A participant in the varnasrama process of gradual elevation may achieve perfection over the course of many births, but when one has the expert guidance of the spiritual master and is very sincere to achieve pure devotional service he may do so in one lifetime. Both varnasrama and bhakti-yoga are gradual processes, but relative to each other bhakti-yoga is practically instantaneous.

Bhakti-yoga is so effective that a devotee may achieve perfection in love of God even before the demise of his present body. Our philosophy is that one does not have to wait until death to become a liberated soul. One can be fully liberated even while in this body. This is explained by Srila Rupa Gosvami:

iha yasya harer dasye karmana manasa gira nikhilasv apy avasthasu jivan muktah sa ucyate

One who engages in the transcendental service of the Lord in body, mind and words, is to be considered liberated in all conditions of material existence. (Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu 1.2.187)

Still it is a gradual, systematic process—a science.

One Must At Least Qualify As a Brahmana

Bhakti-yoga is undoubtedly the accelerated process, but progress is still gradual and achieving steadiness in the mode of goodness is essential to one's success—the first major milestone. To be fixed in thinking only of Krishna, to work only as service to Krishna, and to talk only about the topics related to Krishna means one must have the qualifications associated with the mode of

goodness such as mind and sense control, tolerance, patience, faith in the spiritual master, steadiness and so on. So the mode of goodness is integral to one's progressive march back to Godhead. In fact, if someone is eager to run the full course as quickly as possible, it is essential that he comes to goodness as soon as possible.

That Srila Prabhupada considered achieving the mode of goodness a vital preliminary stage in the overall attempt to achieve pure devotional service to Krishna is apparent from this passage in the First Canto of Bhagavatam:

Perfection of human life is attained when one can understand that he is not the product of matter but is in fact spirit. And as soon as one understands that he has nothing to do with matter, he at once ceases his material hankerings and becomes enlivened as a spiritual being. This attainment of success is possible when one is above the modes of passion and ignorance, or, in other words, when one is actually a brahmana by qualification. A brahmana is the symbol of sattva-guna, or the mode of goodness. And others, who are not in the mode of goodness, are either kshatriyas, vaisyas, sudras or less than sudras. The brahminical stage is the highest stage of human life because of its good qualities. So one cannot be a devotee unless one at least qualifies as a brahmana. (Bhag. 1.2.20, purport)

The last sentence neatly sews up the discussion. To qualify as a brahmana means the mode of goodness. Again:

But if there are impediments on the progressive path, anyone, even from the platform of tamas, can gradually rise to the sattva platform by the expert direction of the spiritual master. Sincere candidates must, therefore, approach an expert spiritual master for such a progressive march, and the bona fide, expert spiritual master is competent to direct a disciple from any stage of life: tamas, rajas or sattva. (Bhag. 1.2.24, purport)

Here Srila Prabhupada clarifies what he was speaking about in the previous reference. The business of the expert spiritual master is to direct the disciple to rise gradually to the sattva platform and then proceed from there to unalloyed goodness. Markandeya Rishi further clarifies the matter:

sattvam rajas tama itisa tavatma-bandho maya-mayah sthiti-layodaya-hetavo 'sya lila dhrita yad api sattva-mayi prasantyai nanye nrinam vyasana-moha-bhiyas ca yabhyam

O my Lord, O supreme friend of the conditioned soul, although for the creation, maintenance, and annihilation of this world You accept the modes of goodness, passion, and ignorance, which constitute Your illusory potency, You specifically employ the mode of goodness to liberate the conditioned souls. The other two modes simply bring them suffering, illusion, and fear. (Bhag. 12.8.45)

But Isn't The Mode of Goodness a Trap?

Another doubt that occurs in relation to the premise of this book is that the mode of goodness is a trap. The danger is that one may get conditioned to happiness in the mode of goodness and become complacent owing to contentment. Hence one will fail to persevere in developing his full potential for perfection in pure devotional service.

This is a misunderstanding. If someone stagnates or leaves the process upon achieving the mode of goodness that is not the fault of the process. It is not the fault of the mode of goodness any more than it is the fault of the airline if a passenger gets off the plane before his proper destination. Rather it's the individual's misuse of his volition. So one must be careful, but being careful does not mean to avoid the mode of goodness entirely. To do that and become fully Krishna conscious would take more than mercy. It would take a miracle. Better to stick with the sastraic recommendation.

The Little Bits Add Up

The saying "Krishna consciousness is a gradual process" can be applied in different ways. When, owing to the mode of ignorance, someone who is completely inert in spiritual life is urged to improve himself, he may say, "Look, Srila Prabhupada said that this is a gradual process, okay?" But what he or she really means is, "Look, don't push me."

Here the statement that Krishna consciousness is a gradual process is being misapplied. Such a person has to be reminded that even in a gradual process there is some effort. "A gradual process" implies that Krishna consciousness is achieved by degrees, in increments. The little bits add up. Cumulatively they total Krishna consciousness. But "process" means some systematic effort is being applied. Just like the Taoists have a saying: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." That is a gradual process. The steps add up.

But if you do not take steps, you cannot be said to be on the journey. You are not doing the gradual process. You are stuck. So Krishna consciousness is a gradual process, but that cannot be invoked to justify inertia. As another saying goes: "An object (person) at rest tends to stay at rest, whereas an object (person) in motion tends to stay in motion."

Willingness To Do Whatever It Takes

Another understanding of "It's a gradual process" is when a person takes to the process with the attitude that "I'm sincere. I will knock over this Krishna consciousness in a matter of days. It will be a breeze. I will simply storm the gates of Vaikuntha. No problem." These driven over-achievers have to be reminded, "Prabhu, wait, relax a little. Be patient. It's a gradual process." Yes, one must be enthusiastic, but such enthusiasm must be tempered with intelligence. Too often enthusiasm and the mode of passion are confused. But if we are observant we will see that the results of passion and that of enthusiasm, which is in goodness, are quite distinct from each other.

It can be rough on the false ego to find out that one has many shortcomings and that in spite of his high idealism he will inevitably encounter many obstacles on the path of Krishna consciousness obstacles from without and from within. The human tendency is to become discouraged. But one must stay in the fire. In other words, one must be committed to the process. If he is conditionally committed he is sure to become frustrated in the course of time, because whatever you are not willing to do to attain unalloyed Krishna consciousness is sure to come up. This point is so important that it bears repeating:

Whatever you are not willing to do to become fully Krishna conscious is sure to come up.

The formula for certified success is willingness to do whatever it takes to become Krishna consciousness. This too deserves to be set apart from the rest of the paragraph:

The formula for certified success in pure devotional service is willingness to do whatever it takes to accomplish your goal.

The process is a demanding one and somewhere along the line you will be faced with a choice: either give up your conditional terms or part ways with the process. It cannot be but this way. Bhakti-yoga is for cleansing the heart of all desires save and except the desire to serve the Supreme Lord in undivided devotional service. Any other motive must sooner or later put one in conflict with the process.

If one is unconditionally committed to the process, then it is only a matter of time before he sheds all conflicting desires and becomes infused with Krishna consciousness. How much time? That varies. Each individual will have a different experience. Krishna is beyond time, so being successful at catching Krishna depends on how quickly one's faith develops to the point of being absolute and unflinching. The main element that keeps one in the process is hearing. Srila Prabhupada once said to my Godbrother, "To the degree you are hearing, to that degree you are becoming Krishna conscious."

Like a Child Learning To Walk

An example Prabhupada often used to encourage us to stick with the process of Krishna consciousness is that of the iron in the fire:

Srila Prabhupada: You must stay in the fire of Krishna consciousness. Just like if you put an iron rod in fire, it is iron, it is not fire, but if you leave it in the fire it is just a matter of time before it becomes white hot. And then the iron acts just like fire. If someone says, "But Sir, this is not fire, it is iron," then I say, "Touch it." Similarly, if you stay in the fire of the Krishna consciousness process, in time you can act just like fire.

Another striking image Prabhupada employed is that of a child learning to walk. The small child learning to walk falls down many, many times before he is stable and can walk without conscious effort. He may fall down so many times, but because the tendency to walk is inherent in him, he doesn't lose hope. And in time he is successful, so successful that he goes beyond walking: he runs. In the same way, the inclination to serve Krishna is inherent in us because we are His parts and parcels and the part's function is to serve the whole. We may have to face many difficulties, both from within and without, but one must never give up hope. One must persevere. One must stay in the fire.

It is inevitable that in the early stages one will fall short of the standards and aspirations he sets for himself, but he must never quit. After all, there really is no alternative to Krishna consciousness if one is determined to end the cycle of repeated birth and death. Thus Prabhupada said, "Fall down a thousand times, get up a thousand times. Like a child learning to walk." There is no other way. Everything else is just an excuse.

This example of the child learning to walk also serves to show the principle that the Lord helps those that help themselves. If a child is making an effort to walk, no matter how feeble his attempt, you will see that a room full of adults will focus on this child and encourage him no end. In other words, they give their mercy to the child in the form of offering their fingers for support and speaking encouraging, cheering words. But if the child makes no attempt to walk, the adults take no notice of him. Similarly, Krishna, the spiritual master, and the Vaishnavas become galvanized with interest to support a devotee who applies himself to the process, no matter how imperfectly. Thus

the endeavoring devotee can be confident of receiving Krishna's mercy; whereas the future is uncertain for that fellow who simply wants to wait for something to happen. The child who waits for walking to happen gets nowhere.

We Don't Pray To Get Out of Suffering

It is actually a manifestation of false ego to think that we deserve an easier course in spiritual life than the one we are getting. That is another kind of "I-am-special" false ego consciousness. The real devotee's mentality is: "I am fallen. Over the course of lifetimes in material existence there is no kind of sinful vice I have not tried. There is no kind of sense gratification I have not connived to achieve. I have tried everything. Now I am beat. Exhausted. Now I simply turn to Krishna. I am ready to pay whatever the price to be delivered from the clutches of maya. Any suffering I get, I deserve. I deserve worse, but whatever it is, I don't mind, as long as I am finished with material life once and for all. While I still breathe, let me somehow keep on with my practice of Krishna consciousness."

A devotee does not pray to get out of suffering. He is not looking for a free ride. His prayer is, "Let me suffer the lot I am due for my previous misdoing, but let me be fixed in Your service." Such honest prayer coupled with perseverance makes a favorable impression on the Lord in the heart. He notes our sincerity and clears away the obstacles in our path. In this way, gradually one progresses to the mode of goodness, then to pure goodness. In the final chapter, I discuss how to do it...

Praying at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada that I will rid my heart of all varieties of mixed devotional service I, Kundali Dasa, write this analytical treatise on the three modes of nature.

tathapi sangah parivarjaniyo guneshu maya-raciteshu tavat mad-bhakti-yogena dridhena yavad rajo
nirasyeta manah-kashayah

Nevertheless, until by firmly practicing devotional service to Me one has eliminated from his mind all contamination of material passion, one must carefully avoid associating with the material modes, which are produced by My illusory energy. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.28.27)

CHAPTER TWELVE

How To Do It

How to do it is really very simple. It works on the same principle that virtually any other learning experience in this world works: Practice. That's all. Krishna confirms this to Uddhava:

sattvad dharmo bhaved vriddhat pumso mad-bhakti-lakshanah sattvikopasaya sattvam tato
dharmah pravartate dharmo rajas tamo hanyat sattva-vriddhir anuttamah asu nasyati tan-mulo
hy adharma ubhaye hate

When the living entity becomes strongly situated in the mode of goodness, then religious principles, characterized by devotional service to Me, become prominent. One can strengthen the mode of goodness by cultivation of those things that are already situated in goodness, and thus religious principles arise. Religious principles, strengthened by the mode of goodness, destroy the influence of passion and ignorance. When passion and ignorance are overcome, their original cause, irreligion, is quickly vanquished. (Bhag. 11.13.2-3)

In these verses the Lord advises Uddhava to develop the mode of goodness by "cultivation of those things that are already situated in goodness."

Practice, Practice, Practice

Cultivation simply means practice. It makes all the sense in the world. Once a person knows the distinction between the different modes of nature it is easy to decide which one is really in his interest to cultivate. Then it is a matter of practice. A good cook achieves his competence by practice. Same as a good athlete. Same as any other line of endeavor. Spiritual perfection, the attaining of Krishna consciousness, is a matter of practice. One must have fixity of purpose. Perseverance. One must be determined. One must be willing to do whatever it takes. And then one must practice, practice, practice. Srila Prabhupada made this point in Srimad-Bhagavatam:

By practice one comes to the point of the mode of goodness, and by surrendering or fixing the mind upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one becomes a very great personality, or

mahatma. In Bhagavad-gita it is clearly said, sa mahatma su-durlabhah, "Such a great soul is very rare." (Bhag. 3.26.31, purport)

As explained in the first chapter, love is an art, like music or carpentry—it entails a theory which has to be mastered and then it has to be put into practice. The same grit and nerve that is needed for achieving any worthwhile goal in the world is needed in achieving love of God, which is the greatest goal. If one is determined, if he has made up his mind, then it matters not how many times he may get deflected, distracted, dejected or discouraged. No matter how many times he may fall below the standard of his ambitions, if his mind is made up, he will simply get back on course. He must be willing to do this as many times as necessary: "Like a child learning to walk: fall down a thousand times, get up a thousand times."

Another saying of Srila Prabhupada that applies here is, "Mistakes are the pillars of success." Yes, our mistakes are the pillars upon which we build success, if we learn from our mistakes.

Goodness Is Not Antagonistic To Pure Devotion

The second thing that is clear from Lord Krishna's advice to Uddhava in the two verses above is that there is no question in the Lord's mind of how the process of bhakti-yoga works. A sincere student must progress from the lower modes to goodness and then on to pure goodness. This is how the process is meant to work.

In the Eleventh Canto the Lord also explained to Uddhava the symptoms of each mode, which He says is developed by association with that particular mode:

samo damas titiksheksha tapah satyam daya smritih ushtis tyago 'spriha sraddha hrir dayadih
sva-nirvritih

Mind and sense control, tolerance, discrimination, sticking to one's prescribed duty, truthfulness, mercy, careful study of the past and future, satisfaction in any condition, generosity, renunciation of sense gratification, faith in the spiritual master, being embarrassed at improper action, charity, simplicity, humility, and satisfaction within oneself are qualities of the mode of goodness. (Bhag. 11.25.2)

Please note that none of the symptoms given here are antagonistic to one's progress in devotional service. Indeed, a careful analysis of each reveals that they are all favorable. Further, association with a particular mode of nature means to either deliberately or accidentally exhibit the symptoms of that mode. But there is no need to be controlled by the modes and forced into a choice by circumstances. One in knowledge can deliberately choose what symptoms he wants to exhibit. Indeed, that is what it means to be on the path of Krishna consciousness.

Mind and sense control: The need for this is explained in many places in Srila Prabhupada's books. It is a familiar requirement for a practitioner of spiritual life. One dominated by the mode of passion or ignorance cannot exhibit mind and sense control. He is the helpless servant of his senses and thus always agitated. The senses are merciless masters. They are never satisfied. He may appear to have control over his mind and senses, but, because he is only interested in sense gratification, that control is only a show. When his desires for sense enjoyment are frustrated, his real condition is revealed. For one whose mind is not fixed in transcendence there is no question of peace; and how can there be any happiness without peace?

Tolerance: The nature of the material world is one of duality. One is constantly buffeted by the fluctuating dualities—happiness/distress, praise/blame, heat/cold, honor/dishonor, and so on. It is difficult to be undisturbed by these extremes, which are likened to the cycle of winter and summer seasons. Krishna says that the way to be equipoised in the midst of the constant tossing of the waves of duality is to be tolerant. This practice prepares one to be undisturbed at the time of the ultimate disturbance—death. The Krishna conscious person faces death without a qualm. He is compared to the kitten who has no fear of its mother's jaws, though the same jaws incite fear and panic in the rat. One determined to progress on the path of Krishna consciousness must make a firm resolve to tolerate the unceasing tossing of the waves of dualities that is the material nature.

Discrimination: Throughout this book discrimination has been emphasized. The chief business of a follower of the bhagavata-marga is to distinguish reality from illusion and to educate others to follow the same path. That is a constant and lifelong endeavor. In the line of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu it is never to be given up. The illusory potency is ever ready to capture the person who becomes lax about doing the work of discriminating. It is hard work, but it is also nectar; and it gets easier with practice.

Sticking to one's prescribed duty: This is another way to express the quality of steadiness. A person serving in the mode of goodness is steady because he does not give in to the mind's demands. He understands that the material mind is ever making demands, but it is useless to try and satisfy it because it is never satisfied. Knowing well the futility of such attempts the devotee decides, "Whatever my mind may say, I will not heed it. I will execute my duty in Krishna consciousness. This will purify me and I will eventually be rid of my horrid material mind once and for all." This kind of resolve results in steadiness. It is a landmark day in one's spiritual life when he decides to be steady. One who is steady is reliable, and this is highly significant for the spiritual master when he sees the disciple has attained steadiness. Then the spiritual master knows he can delegate greater responsibility to such a disciple.

Ultimately, the guru wants to give the greatest responsibility—pure devotional service in the direct association of the Lord. No responsible representative of the Lord will give this opportunity to someone incapable of being steady, hence the quality of sticking to one's prescribed duty is an essential requirement for one serious about awakening love of God. Steadiness is achieved the day the disciple resolves to no longer be unsteady. To be reliable in the service of the spiritual master is a decision. It is not something incidental. It is a choice one makes. Failure to make this choice is also a decision.

Truthfulness: A liar cannot have a clear conscience, neither can he have a peaceful mind. He has too many balls to juggle. He has to think of keeping his story straight instead of thinking how to serve Krishna nicely. His mind cannot be fixed. And why does he resort to lies in the first place except to cover up some kind of personal ambition, which is itself antagonistic to the awakening of causeless devotional service. Prabhupada says that one should be prepared to tell the truth even to an enemy. Ultimately, this practice of this quality is indicative of one's degree of surrender to Krishna. A surrendered soul is not fearful of telling the truth. A surrendered soul is not fearful at all.

Mercy: This quality is ever-present in the heart of a Vaishnava. A Vaishnava is one who has surrendered his entire being to the service of his master, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In that state he knows that there is nothing he needs or deserves that he will not get. Furthermore, he knows that there is nothing he does not deserve that can be inflicted on him. Thus he has no fear or care for himself. He has no anxiety. He is relaxed and to be in his association makes one relaxed. It

is not a good sign when the association of others makes us tense. Best to avoid such association. Vaikuntha consciousness means no anxiety.

Because a Vaishnava has no fear or care for himself he is ready to live for others. He is ready to give mercy to others at every opportunity. Thus a Vaishnava is proclaimed to be kalpa-taru, a desire fulfilling tree, and kripa-sindhu, an ocean of mercy. Specifically that mercy means to do good for others. It means that one wants to bring out the best in others—for Krishna.

Careful study of the past and future: I have mentioned elsewhere in this book that history may be gainfully employed to teach us so we can avoid making the same mistakes in the future. Otherwise the general rule is that history repeats itself; but not in the case of one who learns from his mistakes, which is the sign of intelligence. By careful study of the past we can plan a better future. Therefore I have mentioned some factual events in our society by way of giving examples how the modes of nature were mixed with our conduct. The idea is that we learn from such mistakes and avoid making them in the future. In this way our mistakes become the pillars of our success.

On the other hand, if we cover up the mistakes of the past, not only will future generations be doomed to make the same blunders, but even in our lifetime we will repeat the same mistakes. In the brief span of time since the inception of ISKCON we have seen the society suffer because of our failure to learn from our mistakes. Leaders must make a concerted and sustained effort to raise the whole Krishna consciousness society to function on the level of goodness. To do that they have to rise to the mode of goodness themselves. Then, by careful study of our individual and collective past we may plan for a better future.

Another meaning of careful study of the past and future is to study scriptures such as the Puranas, which describe events of the past and events yet to come. Similarly, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana give accounts of events in the past. By studying those accounts one can derive wisdom for dealing with one's own circumstances in life.

Satisfaction in any condition: A Vaishnava, having surrendered to Krishna as his Lord and master, knows that whatever befalls him is the will of Krishna. He is confident of Krishna's protection. He is fully dependent on the mercy of Krishna and therefore he is always satisfied and peaceful. He thinks, "Owing to my previous karma I am now suffering or enjoying this situation. I will not be too much attached to this, because it will pass. I shall accept my lot in life and remain fixed in service to my spiritual master. This will free me from all bondage to karma." Thinking like this, a devotee is always satisfied. He has no separate desire from that of the Lord. Consequently he is never in anxiety thinking, "Maybe Krishna did not get this idea fully, that there is something Krishna doesn't understand and therefore I need to move heaven and earth to make my own arrangements." Instead a devotee is satisfied.

Generosity: A possessive Vaishnava is one in the grip of the lower modes of nature. A devotee believes in the principle of nirmama, nothing is mine. He thinks, "Everything belongs to my master, Krishna. All that I have is for His service. If I have more than I need and another devotee has use for my extra money or facility or whatever for Krishna's service, then I will gladly give it to that devotee. By doing so I am in fact increasing my service and my master's service will go nicely and He will be pleased with me."

Renunciation of sense gratification: Krishna says that one who is wise does not delight in the contact of the senses with their objects because duhkha-yonaya, they are the sources of misery. As we shall see, sense gratification is a symptom of a person in the mode of passion, whereas one in

the mode of goodness shuns it. It is the cause of entanglement. We should note, however, that there are two aspects to sense gratification, gross and subtle.

One may shun gross sense gratification and therefore have the appearance of being rid of sense gratification, but subtle sense gratification, such as desire for respect, honor, name, position, and so on are also symptomatic of the mode of passion. These subtle sensual desires are tenacious. They are extremely difficult to evict from one's heart. Nevertheless, to rise to goodness one has to get rid of these subtle impurities as well. It is hard work. It takes vigilance. One must be determined to do whatever it takes to free himself from such subtle desires. If one neglects them, they are sure to grow into formidable obstacles on the path of pure devotional service.

Faith in the spiritual master: This is one of the principle requirements for a practitioner of Krishna consciousness. It is said that only unto those persons who have firm faith in the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge revealed. This quality of unshakable faith is developed in the mode of goodness. In the mode of passion one is too conditional for his faith to be of any significant merit. Besides that, his mind is not fixed. On account of too many considerations and attachments for sense gratification his mind is many-branched. His faith in the spiritual master is not mature, but it is the nature of one in the mode of passion, being yet full of false pride, to believe his faith to be of the best quality. When that faith is tested, however, he bobs and weaves and rationalizes and justifies like anything, rather than exhibit integrity.

The devotee in the mode of passion has a million and one reasons why he is right as rain and everyone else is simply out to get him. His symptom is that whenever there is conflict between himself and the world, the world is always at fault.

On the other hand, one who has faith in the spiritual simply applies himself with determination; success or no success he never wavers from his duty. He is not interested in laying blame because he sees that things are the way they are either by the will of the Lord or the action of the modes of nature. Thus he is steadfast in all circumstances. If he makes a blunder, he is ready to own up and accept whatever consequences there maybe as the mercy of the Lord. Such a faithful disciple advances in any condition of life. Even when things are the worse imaginable, such a devotee takes advantage of the situation to progress in devotional service and understanding. In this way he is sure to please Krishna.

In Chapter Twelve of the Bhagavad-gita (12.13-20) the Lord explains this point to Arjuna in detail:

One who is not envious but is a kind friend to all living entities, who does not think himself a proprietor and is free from false ego, who is equal in both happiness and distress, who is tolerant, always satisfied, self-controlled, and engaged in devotional service with determination, his mind and intelligence fixed on Me—such a devotee of Mine is very dear to Me. He for whom no

one is put into difficulty and who is not disturbed by anyone, who is equipoised in happiness and distress, fear and anxiety, is very dear to Me. My devotee who is not dependent on the ordinary course of activities, who is pure, expert, without cares, free from all pains, and not striving for some result, is very dear to Me. One who neither rejoices nor grieves, who neither laments nor desires, and who renounces both auspicious and inauspicious things—such a devotee is very dear to Me. One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equipoised in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, happiness and distress, fame and infamy, who is always free from contaminating association, always silent and satisfied with anything, who doesn't care for any residence, who is fixed in knowledge and who is engaged in devotional service—such a

person is very dear to Me. Those who follow this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engage themselves with faith, making Me the supreme goal, are very, very dear to Me.

A devotee must study these instructions and apply them with faith. The world may be in a tempestuous state, but a devotee, having faith in the Lord's words, remains fixed in these instructions. About such devotees Krishna says, *bhaktas te 'tiva me priyah*, "Such devotees are very, very dear to Me."

Being embarrassed at improper action: Not only is a devotee embarrassed at an improper action, but he is eager to correct it as well. A student of Krishna consciousness knows that the material world is a tricky place. Often enough misunderstandings come about even when the best intentions are behind one's actions. What to speak of when one makes an outright blunder. When this comes to his attention, either by being pointed out or by his own intelligence, he is embarrassed, ready to apologize and rectify the situation if possible.

In stark contrast to this is the symptom of the person in the mode of passion who displays rash eagerness to fight. He is already wrong, but now he is determined to adjust the situation by bulldozing the opposition. A devotee is so amazing that even when he in fact did no wrong he will still be embarrassed and accept blame and responsibility for something. A good example of this is Ambarisha Maharaja, who did nothing offensive to Durvasa Muni. Durvasa Muni was the offender, but when he apologized to Ambarisha, the king said, "No, no. You have not made any offense. If there was any offense, it is I who was offensive." This is Vaishnava integrity. Now that he had the upper hand, Ambarisha, thinking himself a great Vaishnava, could have admonished Durvasa Muni that, "Just see, you have been offensive to Me. You are so envious." Or he could have gotten someone to do this on his behalf, but he did not. Even a Vaishnava is wrongly accused, he will accept blame what to speak of when he is factually guilty of an improper action.

Another wonderful example in this connection was king Chitraketu, who apologized to Parvati even though he did not think he had made an offense at all. He said, "Whatever you think is my offense, please forgive me for that." There are other examples as well.

Charity: A devotee is charitably disposed towards all living entities because he is selfless. He has no desire to manipulate and coerce others. He has no trips to lay onto others. Rather, he wants to bring out the best in others for the sake of expanding Krishna's service. He does not care if he gets credit or not. All that matters to him is that Krishna is pleased. His mentality is, "Somehow or other if I can play any part at all in pleasing Krishna, then I am most happy." In this mood he is most charitably disposed at all times.

A devotee in the mode of passion, before he can lift a finger, before he can move a paper clip, he wants to know, "What's in this for me? Will I get credit?" If the answer is not positive enough, then he is not interested in the service opportunity. All the discussion in the philosophy about becoming the servant of the servant he thinks is very nice, very impressive; but in his heart of hearts he has yet to believe it and apply it.

Simplicity: The essence of simplicity is that a devotee accepts what is in the shastra and accepts the order of the spiritual master without looking for loopholes. He also has a sense of integrity which he maintains in his relationships with others, even with non-devotees, what to speak of among devotees. He is not clever for the sake of gaining personal advantage over others. He knows that if he acts for personal gain he will be acting under the influence of the lower modes of nature and

such action will entangle him in reactions, either good or bad. He shuns both, because all karma, good or bad, is bad, because it binds one in this world. A devotee's simplicity is that he resolves to finish his business in this world and he acts accordingly. He accepts whatever is favorable for his progressive march in spiritual life and rejects all that is unfavorable for his goal. All his plans are service plans not self-aggrandizement schemes.

Humility: This is the crown-jewel of saintly qualities. Humble means that a Vaishnava never does anything for his sense gratification. If he is meek, he is being meek for Krishna. If he is bold, he is being bold for Krishna. If he is indifferent, he is being indifferent for Krishna. Whatever quality he may manifest is wholly for Krishna. He is not interested in any gain for himself. In this way he is always in fact meek and humble. He is not proud of his prowess or accomplishments and if he is praised for them he feels embarrassed. By contrast, a person in the mode of passion loves to hear his praises sung.

Humility is difficult to achieve, but one time Srila Prabhupada gave the hint how to do it. His servant asked him if the disciple must pay obeisances every time he comes into the presence of the spiritual master and everytime he leaves. Srila Prabhupada said, "Yes." The servant then asked, "One should do this even if he does not feel humble?" Srila Prabhupada replied, "Practice."

Satisfaction within oneself: The inner state of a devotee is never one of turmoil. He is fully surrendered, therefore peaceful. Krishna-bhakta niskama ataeva santa. A devotee has no separate agenda to fulfill. He is only interested in pleasing the Lord by his service. He has centered all his energies on executing the will of his master. Thus, his whole interior landscape is peaceful. He may contend with many disturbances outwardly, but inwardly he is fixed and can never be thwarted from his purpose. Thus he is always satisfied. Positive. His future is always bright.

None of these symptoms are antagonistic to the development of pure devotional service. Indeed, they are all favorable. All these qualities are displayed by a person in the mode of goodness. Indeed, even a transcendently situated devotee will display the symptoms of goodness in this visible dimension. Since a devotee is supposed to be at least on the platform of goodness, one should at least have these symptoms to his credit and should look to see them in the character of others. Either a devotee has these qualities or he is working on developing them. If he does not have them, then, as explained in the previous chapter, one has to practice them until they become second nature.

Integrity Is The Key

It may seem overwhelming to have to practice all these symptoms. It may seem like a great many balls to keep in the air. The key to practicing all these symptoms of the mode of goodness can be summed up in one word—integrity. For one who has made a commitment to live with integrity, practically speaking all this long list of items are included in his resolve. We often speak of love and trust among devotees and how nice that would be. Integrity is the basis of such love and trust. It means openness. Honesty. It means one has character. It means I don't let my seniority or title or position get in the way of sincere, honest communications from those under me. It means an end to oneupmanship and mental chess with each other. It means being able to be relaxed in each others company. It means not violating the psychological and emotional space of others, not violating their dignity. It means I take responsibility for the decisions and choices I make and for what happens in my life. It means maintaining my sense of dignity and self-respect. It means not allowing myself to be a victim or to be used by others without my consent. It means to respect rather than transgress the rights and dignity of others. It means that I refrain from manipulating or deceiving others in

order for me to get ahead in ISKCON or for any other reason. It means having a conscience and letting it guide me in all matters. It means that instead of thinking that others exist to enhance my image, my service, and my reputation, I think that I exist to enhance their image and their service and their reputation. Most of all, it means that I adhere to the golden rule: I unswervingly treat others as I would like myself to be treated.

Integrity means all these things in one stroke.

All of this adds up to respect: respect for yourself and for others. If you make a decision to live by these lights you will make immediate strides towards the mode of goodness, which is purifying and leads one to self-realization.

Passion And Ignorance Incompatible With Devotional Life

After listing the symptoms of the mode of goodness the Lord described to Uddhava the symptoms of the mode of passion (Bhag. 11.25.3):

kama iha madas trishna stambha asir bhida sukham madotsaho yasah-pritir hasyam viryam
balodyamah

Material desire, great endeavor, audacity, dissatisfaction even in gain, false pride, praying for material advancement, considering oneself different and better than others, sense gratification, rash eagerness to fight, fondness for hearing oneself praised, the tendency to ridicule others, advertising one's own prowess and justifying one's actions by one's strength are qualities of the mode of passion.

These qualities are opposed to spiritual development in every way. They are so clearly antagonistic to the development of purity, integrity and so on that I will not even give an itemized description of each symptom. Just on their own these symptoms leave no room for doubt as to the comparative merits of goodness over passion even from a mundane point of view, what to speak of in spiritual life.

The mode of passion is incompatible with spiritual life. A person who considers himself a serious candidate for Krishna consciousness should disassociate himself from this mode as much as possible. Sad to say, a fair amount of these symptoms are very much in force in our Krishna consciousness society. My prayer is that this book will be an inspiration for all of us to surmount the mode of passion and its chief accomplice, ignorance. If only one person is inspired, then I consider my attempt a success.

If the qualities associated with the mode of passion are so much opposed to one's growth in Krishna consciousness, there can be no question at all about the position of those qualities in the lowest mode, ignorance. Krishna lists those qualities (Bhag. 11.25.4):

krodho lobho 'nritam himsa yacna dambhah klamah kalih soka-mohau vishadarti nidrasa bhir
anudyamah

Intolerant anger, stinginess, speaking without scriptural authority, violent hatred, living as a parasite, hypocrisy, chronic fatigue, quarrel, lamentation, delusion, unhappiness, depression,

sleeping too much, false expectations, fear and laziness constitute the major qualities of the mode of ignorance.

Again, as with the symptoms of the mode of passion, the negative impact of these qualities on one's spiritual life is so clear that in my estimation they need no elaboration. Simply they have to be given up. Success is guaranteed for one who is determined and willing to do whatever it takes to achieve his goal.

The Way Out Is The Way Through

Elsewhere in the Eleventh Canto, the Lord gives these conclusive instructions to Uddhava (Bhag. 11.3.6):

karmani karmabhih kurvan sa-nimittani deha-bhrit tat tat karma-phalam grihnan bhramatiha
sukhetaram

Until one revives one's direct knowledge of the spirit soul and drives away the illusory identification with the material body and mind caused by the three modes of material nature, one must cultivate those things in the mode of goodness. By increasing the mode of goodness, one automatically can understand and practice religious principles, and by such practice transcendental knowledge is awakened.

The case is plainly stated here. Until one is completely successful in achieving self-realization "one must cultivate those things in the mode of goodness." By the increasing predominance of the mode of goodness one is purified until the point of self-realization. The candidate must not lose hope. As long as he is not in direct realization of the self, which he knows to be the case better than anyone else—even his admirers and disciples—he must understand that he is not sufficiently saturated with the mode of goodness. The only solution to this problem is to increase the mode of goodness by practice. One must cultivate those things in the mode of goodness.

After a long time of trying to achieve this and repeatedly slipping, an aspiring devotee may be tempted to quit out of frustration. Quitting may seem attractive, but what is the alternative once one quits? Better to take heart by remembering Srila Prabhupada's advice, "Fall down a thousand times get up a thousand times." Persevere. Better I show Krishna how determined I am to be his devotee. I may be lame and cripple-minded, but as long as the breath of life has not left me, I will try for Krishna consciousness.

What alternative do I have? Is there another way to get to that place that devotional service in the line of Mahaprabhu promises to take me? The answer is no. Thus, there is no other choice but to push on. The way out is the way through. One simply has to have unflinching faith in the Lord and in the process and be willing to do whatever it takes. Anticipating this positive conclusion, the Lord spoke these encouraging words to Uddhava:

tasmad deham imam labdhva jnana-vijnana-sambhavam guna-sangam vinirdhuya mam
bhajantu vicakshanah nihsango mam bhajed vidvan apramatto jitendriyah rajas tamas
cabhijayet sattva-samsevaya munih sattvam cabhijayed yukto nairapekshyena santa-dhih
sampadyate gunair mukto jivo jivam vihaya mam jivo jiva-vinirmukto gunais casaya-
sambhavaih mayaiva brahmana purno na bahir nantaras caret

Therefore, having achieved this human form of life, which allows one to develop full knowledge, those who are intelligent should free themselves from all contamination of the modes of nature and engage exclusively in loving service to Me. A wise sage, free from all material association and unbewildered, should subdue his senses and worship Me. He should conquer the modes of passion and ignorance by engaging himself only with things in the mode of goodness. Then, being fixed in devotional service, the sage should also conquer the material mode of goodness by indifference toward the modes. Thus pacified within his mind, the spirit soul, freed from the modes of nature, gives up the very cause of his conditioned life and attains Me. From the subtle conditioning of the mind and from the modes of nature born of material consciousness, the living entity becomes completely satisfied by experiencing My transcendental form. He no longer searches for enjoyment in the external energy nor does he contemplate or remember such enjoyment within himself. (Bhag 11.25.33-36)

The conclusion is that if you desire liberation from the three modes of nature you should not lose a moment. You should have faith in the promise of the acaryas that one can be liberated even while within this body. You should actively desire this and practice to render devotional service in the mode of goodness as much as possible and all the while pray for pure devotional service. That is to say, you should serve this Krishna consciousness movement for no other purpose than your purification. Then, when your heart is purified of all material contamination, you should give up the mode of goodness by rendering service solely for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord. If you are very sincere, the Lord, who is the guru within, will surely guide you to complete success in your life's ambition. It will not be easy, but if you want the sweet taste of love of God badly enough, you will be willing to do whatever it takes to accomplish your goal. That willingness is your assurance of success.

Praying at the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada that I will rid my heart of all varieties of mixed devotional service I, Kundali Dasa, write this analytical treatise on the three modes of nature.

AFTERWORD

The True Joy of Life

I was not completely satisfied for several days after completing the last chapter. I kept going over the points in my mind. I had advocated practicing Krishna consciousness in discreet stages rather than just throwing oneself at the process and I backed up my view with scriptural reference and logical analysis. I had encouraged that one take responsibility for fine tuning one's power of discrimination, which is needed for one's steady growth in Krishna consciousness. I had advocated the practice of personal integrity as this will help to solve so many interpersonal problems and lead to love and trust. I had made a lot of lesser points along the way.

Still, I felt something lacking. I didn't feel that I had gotten it all out. In this book I have argued that the individual must learn to look after himself. But what should be the aim of it all? To awaken love of God—sure, that is clear; but what else? Although I had used terms like spiritual life, Krishna consciousness, devotional service, bhakti-yoga, and love of God throughout the book, I was not happy with that. I really wanted to refer to something more immediate. After several days mulling it over Krishna let me realize what was missing. What I ultimately wanted to encourage is that you look after more than yourself. That is an integral part of my message and I felt that did not come through clearly enough.

Srila Prabhupada had two ways of expressing this idea of looking after more than oneself. He used to say to us, "Become the servant of the servant of the servant of the Vaishnava, one thousand times removed." The other expression he used was "Do good to others." This is really the crux of the matter. The ultimate secret to this life of Krishna consciousness lies in doing good to others. It brings immediate happiness. We always translate this into preaching and it does mean that, but where many of us often fail is by our limited concept of preaching. We don't realize this idea of doing good for others, this concept of being a preacher of Krishna consciousness, extends to all spheres of our existence. We often think of preaching as something we do when we go downtown and distribute books, or when we go on TV, or to lecture in a college classroom, or organize a Ratha-yatra parade, or do anything grand. That is preaching. That is doing good to others.

Preaching is more than that. When you inspire a devotee to surrender or to do a particular service, or instill confidence in him about his spiritual life, or when you give him facility to serve or any kind of assistance—that is doing good for others. When you train people to stand on their own two legs in Krishna consciousness that is doing good for others. These things are important preaching; but we may get no glory for it. So what? It is Krishna's service, what more do we need know beyond that?

One who is a preacher, one who has centered his energies on doing good for others, one who has made an irreversible decision to bring out the best in others—for Krishna—is on the job twenty-four hours a day. He's always preaching. And according to Krishna, preaching to the devotees is topmost:

mac-citta mad-gata-prana bodhayantah parasparam kathayantas ca mam nityam tushyanti ca
ramanti ca

The thoughts of My pure devotee dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me. (Bg. 10.9)

This is the meaning of the verse: that devotees inspire each other to go further and further in the spiritual stratosphere by urging each other to be all that he or she can be for Krishna. Thus they preach and inspire each other on and on and bring out the best in each other. And what is the result? *Tushyanti ca ramanti ca*. It gives the greatest satisfaction and bliss. This keen preacher consciousness gives that extra dimension to spiritual life. It brings that extra bit of sparkle to the experience. It gives us that taste that in turn gives us the forbearance to tolerate all the adversity and setbacks that inevitably comes with the process—either from the mind or other sources.

Of course, the preaching takes different forms according to time, place and circumstances, but the inner drive is always the same—how to bring out the best in others. To do that one has to have a larger focus in life than himself. He has to care about the well-being of others. He has to become the categorical well-wisher of everyone. He has to be more concerned about giving love (service) than receiving it. He has to love others more than he loves himself.

Even materialists have appreciated that a key value in life is to do more than take care of oneself. Some say that caring only for oneself leads to a narrow, dismal existence. Of course for a devotee this is not entirely true, he can perfect his life nonetheless, but then again there is truth in it. There is something in our psychology that makes us feel uninspired to merely work for ourselves, even if it is a matter of our liberation. Take the simple example of cooking. When I am alone, I am never inspired to really get into cooking. I can eat any old thing. A two-day-old piece of cold pizza, when reheated, can be the most wonderful relish when I am alone; but as soon as there is at least one other person to cook for, I can get really inspired. And although I am inspired to cook for this other person, the beauty of it is that I also eat. My hunger-need is also satisfied.

Similarly, you may have experience that it is not the most inspiring thing to work on your own salvation but you become inspired if you feel that another's salvation depends on you. This is not strange or weird. It has been found that people often feel more inspired to make an impact in life than to simply care for themselves. You may think that such persons are exceptional cases. Not so. The psychologist Abraham Maslow made a lifetime study of people he called self-actualizing. These people exist on all levels of the social strata and are characterized by having balanced, positive psychologies and living a full life. Maslow found that the common element in these people was that they "were, without a single exception, involved in something outside their own skin, in something outside themselves."

Such people enjoy a life of personal venturesomeness, nourishing relationships, and ennobling work. In short, they make an impact. This is what Srila Prabhupada did to all of us and it is his desire that we in turn follow in his footsteps. Make an impact. Individually we should make a decision to make an impact. Not that we emulate Prabhupada in a mechanical way, as a cutout, but within the broad parameters of Krishna consciousness we should use our individual creative strengths in constructive ways to give Krishna consciousness to others within ISKCON and without. Too many times we are waiting for someone to give us Krishna consciousness. No. Give it. Simply give it and watch your store of Krishna consciousness increase and increase.

So, why not make a decision to make an impact? Don't be complacent. Be venturesome. Be daring and active in the life of devotional service. Make a decision to make ISKCON all that it should be; to right the wrongs; to iron out the wrinkles; to refine and improve our individual and collective

performance; to be a leader with or without a title; to dedicate yourself to bringing out the best in others. There is no question of a humdrum spiritual life for one who has made such a decision in his or her heart. If materialists can appreciate that this outlook adds quality to one's life, how much more true it must be when applied to Krishna consciousness?

In this vein, G.B. Shaw, a cantankerous man with no deep realizations about the nature of bhakti, appreciated that the true joy of life was in "being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one...being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy." He is right. And the only purpose that is a truly mighty one is elevation to Krishna consciousness. By Prabhupada's grace we really do have something to give. We have the answer. The materialist don't.

Lord Caitanya said, "First make your life perfect and then do good for others." But the program Prabhupada gave us goes a step further. In the Krishna consciousness movement we can work on both simultaneously. Just like in my cooking example, both me and the other person eat; similarly, when we dedicate ourselves to the preaching mission, both the preacher and the recipient get saved. *Tushanti ca ramanti ca*. In other words, when you work to bring out the best in others, for Krishna, that brings out the best in you. Automatically. It is foolproof.

Another inspiring image is this—when you help row somebody across the material ocean, you also end up on the other side.

And keep these words of Goethe in mind:

Whatever you can do or dream you can do (for Krishna, for Srila Prabhupada), begin it.
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. So begin it now.

"Simply become bold for Krishna." Hare Krishna. All glory to Srila Prabhupada.

Appendix A

A Selection of Statements From Srila Prabhupada About The Mode of Goodness

Unless one comes to the platform of sattva-guna, there is no question of perfection. (Lecture, Cc., 1971, Gorakhpur)

If in all one's activities he strictly adheres to the mode of goodness, he will certainly develop his dormant Krishna consciousness and ultimately become a pure devotee of Lord Krishna. (Cc. Antya. 3.222, purport)

A brahmana is the symbol of sattva-guna, or the mode of goodness. And others, who are not in the mode of goodness, are either kshatriyas, vaisyas, sudras or less than the sudras. The brahminical stage is the highest stage of human life because of its good qualities. So one cannot be a devotee unless one at least qualifies as a brahmana. (Bhag. 1.2.20)

Of course, one's thoughts during the course of one's life accumulate to influence one's thoughts at the moment of death, so this life creates one's next life. If in one's present life one lives in the mode of goodness and always thinks of Krishna, it is possible for one to remember Krishna at the end of one's life. That will help one be transferred to the transcendental nature of Krishna. (Bg. 9.32, purport)

But if one wants, he can develop, by practice, the mode of goodness and thus defeat the modes of ignorance and passion. One can similarly develop the mode of passion and defeat goodness and ignorance. Or one can develop the mode of ignorance and defeat goodness and passion. Although there are these three modes of material nature, if one is determined he can be blessed by the mode of goodness, and by transcending the mode of goodness he can be situated in pure goodness, which is called the vasudeva state, a state in which one can understand the science of God. (Bg. 14.11, purport)

Therefore, those who are actually serious about human life should take to the mode of goodness and in good association transcend the modes and become situated in Krishna consciousness. This is the aim of human life. Otherwise, there is no guarantee that the human being will again attain to the human status. (Bg. 14.16, purport)

Rajas-tamah. How do we know that "this man is in the modes of goodness and this man is in the modes of passion and this man is in the modes of ignorance?" How do we know? By the symptoms. By the symptoms. When one is affected by the lower qualities, rajas-tama, passion and ignorance, his symptoms are that he is very greedy and lusty. These are the symptoms. As soon as you find a person is very greedy and lusty, he is to be understood under the control of the lower grade qualities of this material world. And sattva-guna means prakasa, illumination. When one is situated in the goodness, that is brahminical qualification. Satya, sama, dama, titiksha. He is truthful, he is controlling the mind, controlling the senses, sama, dama titiksha, he is tolerant titiksha, arjavam, he is simple, simplicity. Sama, dama, titiksha, suci, he is clean, jnanam, he knows things what it is,

vijnanam, he can apply the knowledge in practical life, jnanam vijnanam astikyam. (Lecture, Bhag., 1973, New York)

Karanam guna-sango 'sya sad-asad-yoni-janmasu. Karanam. Why one man is born, one living entity is born as a very rich man and one is born as a dog. Sad-asad-yoni. Yoni means mother, and bija means father. Yatha yoni yatha bijah. So the every living entity is born—bija and yoni, father and mother. So why there are varieties? Nature is working. Why not one, one kind of living entities? No. Sad-asad-janma-yonisu. There are eight million, four hundred thousands of species. One has to take. Tatha dehantara-praptir. You have to change. But why one is in the lower grade birth, why in the higher grade? Now, karanam guna-sango 'sya. These guna. These guna, sattva-guna, rajo-guna. So we have to give up the association of rajo-guna and tamo-guna. Then there is question of progress. Otherwise it is simply a bluff. (Lecture, Bhag., 1974, Calcutta)

Through Krishna consciousness, society will develop the mode of goodness. When the mode of goodness is developed, people will see things as they are. In the mode of ignorance, people are just like animals and cannot see things clearly. In the mode of ignorance, for example, they do not see that by killing one animal they are taking the chance of being killed by the same animal in the next life. Because people have no education in actual knowledge, they become irresponsible. To stop this irresponsibility, education for developing the mode of goodness of the people in general must be there. When they are actually educated in the mode of goodness, they will become sober, in full knowledge of things as they are. Then people will be happy and prosperous. Even if the majority of the people aren't happy and prosperous, if a certain percentage of the population develops Krishna consciousness and becomes situated in the mode of goodness, then there is the possibility for peace and prosperity all over the world. Otherwise, if the world is devoted to the modes of passion and ignorance, there can be no peace or prosperity. In the mode of passion, people become greedy, and their hankering for sense enjoyment has no limit. One can see that even if one has enough money and adequate arrangements for sense gratification, there is neither happiness nor peace of mind. That is not possible, because one is situated in the mode of passion. If one wants happiness at all, his money will not help him; he has to elevate himself to the mode of goodness by practicing Krishna consciousness. When one is engaged in the mode of passion, not only is he mentally unhappy, but his profession and occupation are also very troublesome. He has to devise so many plans and schemes to acquire enough money to maintain his status quo. This is all miserable. In the mode of ignorance, people become mad. Being distressed by their circumstances, they take shelter of intoxication, and thus they sink further into ignorance. Their future in life is very dark. (Bg. 14.17, purport)

In human society, aversion to the principles of understanding the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the cause of all falldowns. That is the greatest offense of human life. Therefore, maya, the material energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is always giving us trouble in the shape of the threefold miseries. This material energy is constituted of the three modes of material nature. One has to raise himself at least to the mode of goodness before the path to understanding the Supreme Lord can be opened. Without raising oneself to the standard of the mode of goodness, one remains in ignorance and passion, which are the cause of demoniac life. Those in the modes of passion and ignorance deride the scriptures, deride the holy man, and deride the proper understanding of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They disobey the instructions of the spiritual master, and they do not care for the regulations of the scriptures. In spite of hearing the glories of devotional service, they are not attracted. Thus they manufacture their own way of elevation. These are some of the defects of human society which lead to the demoniac status of life. If, however, one is able to be guided by a proper and bona fide spiritual master, who can lead one to the path of elevation, to the higher stage, then one's life becomes successful. (Bg. 16.24, purport)

Ultimately, the material creation is but a temporary manifestation meant to give the chance of liberation to the conditioned souls, who are entrapped in the material world, and one who develops the mode of goodness under the protection of Lord Vishnu has the greatest chance of being liberated by following the Vaishnava principles and thus being promoted to the kingdom of God, no more to return to this miserable material world. (Bhag. 2.10.41 Purport)

By practice one comes to the point of the mode of goodness, and by surrendering or fixing the mind upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one becomes a very great personality, or mahatma. In Bhagavad-gita it is clearly said, sa mahatma su-durlabhah, "Such a great soul is very rare." (Bhag. 3.26.31, purport)

It is stated in the Srimad-Bhagavatam that hearing about the Supreme Personality of Godhead cleanses the heart of all contamination caused by the influence of the three modes of material nature. By continuous, regular hearing, the effects of the contamination of lust and greed to enjoy or lord it over material nature diminish, and when lust and greed diminish, one then becomes situated in the mode of goodness. This is the stage of Brahman realization, or spiritual realization. In this way one becomes fixed on the transcendental platform. Remaining fixed on the transcendental platform is liberation from material entanglement. (Bhag. 3.20.21, purport)

Our false appetite for enjoyment and lordship of the material world is due to a prominence of passion and ignorance. By bhakti-yoga these two qualities are diminished, and one becomes situated in the mode of goodness. Gradually surpassing the mode of goodness, one is situated in pure goodness, which is not contaminated by the material qualities. When thus situated, a devotee no longer has any doubts; he knows that he will not come back to this material world. (Bhag. 4.21.32, purport)

A person who is situated in the mode of goodness is certainly more intelligent than others. Therefore he can practice the brahminical activities—namely speaking the truth, controlling the senses, controlling the mind, remaining always clean, practicing tolerance, having full knowledge about one's self-identity, and understanding devotional service. In this way, if he engages himself in the loving service of the Lord as an actual brahmana, his aim to achieve the final interest of life is attained. (Bhag. 4.21.33, purport)

"By regularly hearing the Bhagavatam and rendering service unto the pure devotee, all that is troublesome to the heart is practically destroyed, and loving service unto the glorious Lord, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact." In this way, simply by hearing of the powerful activities of the Lord, the devotee's heart becomes almost completely cleansed of material contamination, and thus his original position as an eternal servant who is part and parcel of the Lord becomes manifest. While the devotee engages in devotional service, the passionate and ignorant modes of material nature are gradually vanquished, and then he acts only in the mode of goodness. At that time he becomes happy and gradually advances in Krishna consciousness. (Bhag. 5.18.11, purport)

Guest (2): One thing I have been thinking for years together, but I could never understand it. In Bhagavad-gita when Lord Krishna, Arjuna asks a question, kena prayukto 'yam papam carati purushah. Lord Krishna says, kama esha krodha esha rajo-guna-samudbhavah. The kama... Where is the beginning of this kama? Prabhupada: Rajo-guna. That is stated, rajo-guna. (Hindi) Rajo-guna-samudbhavah. Therefore you have to come to the sattva-guna. Sattva-guna, to come to the sattva-guna, you have to sattvika vikara (Hindi). They are described in the Bhagavad-gita. Brahma-karma

svabhava-jam. That is sattva-guna. Satyam saucam. Guest (2): Guna... (Hindi) Prabhupada: Guna, develop. They are... They are developing these brahminical qualifications, coming to sattva-guna. From rajo-guna, tamo-guna, they are coming to sattva-guna. Sthitam sattve prasidati. Tada rajas-tamo-bhavah kama-lobhadayas ca ye. Tada rajas-tamo-bhavah. Rajas-tamah, these qualities are manifested by lust and greediness. Tada rajas-tamo-bhavah kama-lobhadayas ca ye, ceta etair anaviddham sthitam sattve prasidati. When one's heart will not be disturbed by these two qualities, tamo-guna and rajo-guna, then he will be situated in sattva-guna. Ceta etair anaviddham sthitam sattve prasidati. Then he becomes satisfied. At that time he becomes jolly. Evam prasanna-manaso bhagavad-bhakti-yogatah, bhagavat-tattva-vijnanam mukta-sangasya jayate. When he becomes jolly, being situated in sattva-guna, at that time he can understand what is bhagavat-tattva, what is the Absolute Truth, not in the rajo-guna, tamo-guna. That is not possible. (Room Conversation, Arlington, September 11, 1972)

Prabhupada: Yes. I think it is... Maybe it is described in Seventeenth Chapter. According to our free will, we are associating with certain type of the modes of material nature, and then we become subjected to that material modes. The same example: you infect some disease, contamination, and you gain the result of it.

So our endeavor should be how to raise ourselves to the first, to the sattva-guna. That we can do. And then transcend sattva-guna and reach the spiritual platform. Everyone is trying to improve his position, but they do not know what is meant by improvement. Improvement means mostly they are in tamo-guna, ignorance. So rise from tamo-guna to rajo-guna, rajo-guna to sattva-guna, and then sattva-guna to transcendence. That is improvement.

So generally, people are suffering on account of association with tamo-guna and rajo-guna, whole material world, mostly tamo-guna and few of them in rajo-guna. The symptoms of rajo-guna and tamo-guna are lust and greediness. Just like yesterday you told me the students are talking about homosex. That means tamo-guna, that the education—students, they are discussing about homosex. That means tamo-guna, lusty desires, very prominent, and how to fulfill, by homosex, or sex with woman. This is their subject matter, kama. So everyone in this material world infected with this tamo-guna, all lusty desires, in various ways, varieties. And some of them in rajo-guna—politics and improvement of material condition.

So we have to cut down this tamo-guna and rajo-guna, come to the sattva-guna. Then he'll not be disturbed by these lusty desires and greediness. Then he'll be happy. Sthitam sattve prasidati. When he comes to the sattva-guna, now he has to make further progress, sattva-guna. And the progress means, being situated in sattva-guna if he advances in devotional service, Krishna consciousness, then he surpasses all the material qualities. That is perfection of life. (Morning Walk, Perth, May 11, 1975)

Because without coming to the platform of sattva-guna, nobody can advance in spiritual life. That is a fact. Just like nobody is allowed to enter the law college unless he is graduate. This restriction is there. What he will understand, law? He must be a graduate. So similarly, first of all, one has to come to the platform of sattva-guna. Then spiritual knowledge begins. Because spiritual knowledge is above sattva-guna. Above sattva-guna. So sattva-guna is the best quality, when one brain is clear and he can see things as they are, no hazy understanding but clear understanding. So sattva-guna is the qualification of brahmana. (Lecture, Bg. 1974, Hawaii)

No. From the wood, when you get fire, flame, then you can work. You can cook; you can get heat; you can get light, so many things. So that is required. Not that "Because I have got the wood, I have got everything." This is rascaldom. You have to ignite fire, blazing fire, flame, and that is sattva-guna. Therefore, in our society we first of all try to reform the fallen soul or most infected materially person to reform, to come to the stage of flame, because without there being flame you cannot work. It is not possible. It is very practical example. We want flame. (Lecture, Bg. 1974, Hawaii)

So when one is fixed up in devotional service, then tada rajas-tamo-bhavaḥ kama-lobhādayas ca ye, ceta etair anaviddham. At that time, when he's fixed up in devotional service, his mind is not disturbed with all this nonsense coming out of the quality of ignorance and passion. Tata rajas-tamo-bhavaḥ kama-lobhādayas ca ye, ceta etair anaviddham. Anaviddham means it is not attacked by this greediness and lustiness. Sthitam sattve prasīdati: "He is immediately in the sattva-guna, goodness. Therefore his mind is satisfied." These are the tests. Mind is no more disturbance. And as soon as his mind is in tranquillity, evam prasanna-mānaso, because as soon as one is elevated to the sattva-guna platform, he becomes happy in his mental situation. Evam prasanna-mānaso.

Unless one is situated in tranquillity of his mental position, one cannot understand the science of Krishna. That is not possible. One must become satisfied. That satisfaction comes on the platform of sattva-guna, not in the platform of ignorance and passion. (Lecture, Bhag., 1971, Gorakhpur)

So our aim of life should be to come to the platform of sattva-guna, goodness. Otherwise it is not possible. A person like Max Muller, in the depth of rajo-guna and tamo-guna, what he can write about Vedas, and what he can understand, Bhagavata? This is all nonsense. They are going to the translation of Max Muller. What he'll understand Bhagavata and Vedas? He's in the rajo-guna and tamo-guna. Therefore it is forbidden that, without becoming a brahmana, nobody should read the Vedic literature. It is forbidden. That I have already said several times. Without being a graduate, nobody should enter the law college.

Similarly, Vedas, they are meant for brahmanas, not for the sudras, not for the kshatriya. Kshatriya, also, they, they are, but under the instruction of the brahmanas. So this is perfect civilization. One must know his own business. Everyone should not attempt to understand Vedic literature, remaining himself in the rajo and tamo-guna. Kama lobhādayas ca ye. There are many so-called sannyasis, who went to your country. He was in fully in rajo and tamo-guna. He wanted to preach Vedānta. Therefore it was failure. Nobody can do so. So it is very clearly stated: tamasas tu rajas tasmāt sattvam yad brahma-darśanam. One must come to the platform of sattva-guna. (Lecture, Bhag., 1972, Vrindavana)

So the principle is that we have to place our mind, or consciousness, in the sattva-guna. That is the first business. Because the material world means sattva-guna, rajo-guna and tamo-guna. Sattva-guna is the qualification of pure brahmana. Samo damo titikṣa arjavam jñānam vijñānam astikyam brahma-karma svabhava-jam. Sattva-guna. These are the symptoms of sattva-guna. Without coming to the platform of sattva-guna, or brahminical qualification, one cannot make any advance in spiritual life. Therefore in our Krishna consciousness movement we first of all bring anyone to the platform of brahmana. (Lecture, Bhag., 1974, Calcutta)

We have to see the characteristics of God as they are stated in the śāstra. Then we can accept somebody as God by uncommon quality. So apart from God, now our present problem is that we are entangled by the infection of material qualities, rajas-tamo-bhavaḥ especially. Kama-lobhādayas

ca ye, ceta etair anaviddham sthitam sattve prasidati. We have to conquer over the quality, the infection of quality of rajas-tamah, and then we have to situate ourselves in sattva-guna. Then we are in the safe position.

And if we do not allow to be infected again by the rajo-guna and tamo-guna, if we keep ourselves purely in sattva-guna, that is called suddha-sattva, simply purified sattva-guna. Then we will be able to understand what is Krishna, what is God.

So not only we have to acquire the qualities of sattva-guna, satya sama saucam arjavam titiksha, jnanam vijnanam astikyam brahma-karma svabhava-jam. These are the characteristic of sattva-guna: truthful. So much so truthful that, as they are stated by the commentators, that even an enemy asks some secret from you, you can say. Suppose a thief has come: "Now what you have got in your box?" So if you say, "I have got so many thousands of rupees or hundreds," truthfulness should be like that. Even to your enemy it should be disclosed. That is called truthfulness.

Satya sama dama saucam, cleanliness. Then controlling the mind, controlling the senses, and simplicity, very simple in behavior, arjavam, titiksha, tolerance, and full knowledge, vijnanam, practical application of knowledge, astikyam, full faith in Vedic literature and in God. These are the qualification of sattva-guna.

So everything can be attained very nicely and easily simply by this sadhu-sanga. Sadhu-sanga. Therefore we repeatedly say that we are trying to create some sadhu so that in different parts of the world they will preach Krishna consciousness, and people will be able to associate with them, and they will become purified. One has to become at least on the sattva-guna, the brahminical qualification. Then spiritual knowledge can be realized, prakrita-guna. (Lecture, Bhag., 1974, Bombay)

Unless you acquire the qualities of sattva-guna, you cannot go even in the higher planetary system, what to speak of going beyond the universe. Beyond the universe, beyond this, there is Vaikunthaloka, or the Brahmaloaka, brahmajyoti. Then topmost is the Goloka, Vrindavana. But you can go there. Krishna says, yanti mad yajino 'pi mam. If you prepare in this life, then you can go there. There is no impediment. Simply you have to be purified. (Lecture, Bg., 1976, Hyderabad)

Appendix B

Exercises In Discriminating According To The Modes of Nature

These exercises are included to give practice in applying one's powers of discrimination according to the modes of nature. The object is to analyze which modes are interacting by the words, underlying motivations, actions, etc. Try to figure out if each speaker is in the same mode throughout or if the modes change fairly rapidly, from moment to moment.

The main objective is to develop the habit of seeing things in terms of the modes of nature. You may attempt this exercise many times. See if your conclusions change with time, with the different modes that influence you and so on. Hare Krishna.

First Dialogue:

We Really Have to Become Sadhus

Scene: Bhagavatam class. Question / Answer period.

Narada: If someone is in the mode of passion, can he do it in Krishna's service?

Paramatma: Yes. Arjuna was in the mode of passion, but he perfected his life by fighting for Krishna. So the mode of passion is normally an impediment, but if one engages in Krishna's service then it is purified.

Narada: Right, but does he have to advance, or can he remain in passion and achieve perfection?

Paramatma: Of course he has to advance; he has to develop saintly qualities. Arjuna had saintly qualities at the same time. The whole point is to develop one's higher nature. If people don't change, if they don't become purified, then they are missing the point. Sometimes devotees say, "I'm in the mode of passion, prabhu," as if that absolves them from responsibility for things they do and say, but that is not the idea. It is not that I am in the mode of passion so I can do whatever I want and then blame it on the modes. I have to go from passion to goodness, but not by a separate endeavor. I do it while rendering devotional service.

Bhakta: But I heard a devotee give class not so long ago and he said that people don't change. Now you are saying we have to change; so which is it?

Paramatma: Maybe they don't change, but they should change. If you were a liar and you join the movement, you should become truthful. If you don't, then you are not in the spirit of spiritual life. Prabhupada said that by this Krishna consciousness, one who was formerly a crow is now a swan. So change may take time, but the desire and intent to change must be there. Not just that, but one must put it into practice. One must accept responsibility to change. Then change will come.

Gurudas: In regard to book distribution you said that the devotee who is dedicated to this service should be sure to get purified otherwise he will miss the point. Could you explain that a little more?

Paramatma: Yes, the purpose of book distribution is two-fold, to preach Krishna consciousness and to purify the preacher. All activities in Krishna consciousness are meant to purify the performer.

Speaking on Bhagavatam is also for purification. Book distribution is the same thing. So is cleaning the temple or receiving the guests. Sometimes the devotees do book distribution very successfully, but they don't become purified. You don't see them changing, developing symptoms of a saintly person. Sometimes they become more angular in their dealings, fast-talking, shifty, and what have you. That is the opposite effect of what we are supposed to develop by book distribution. We have to change. If we don't do that, even after thousands of books, we have missed the point.

Gurudas: But some preachers say that if you distribute books, you please Srila Prabhupada and your spiritual master, and since success in spiritual life means pleasing the spiritual master, book distributors immediately achieve success. You don't have to worry about anything if you know you are pleasing the spiritual master.

Paramatma: That's a fact. Pleasing the spiritual master is everything in spiritual life. Yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado yasya prasadan na gatih 'kuto'pi, but we have to understand that in the context of the whole philosophy. If we take this one instruction of the spiritual master—to distribute books—and you ignore or only pay lip service to all his other instructions, will that please him? Say you neglect to avoid offenses in chanting, you neglect to protect your devotional creeper against weeds, you neglect to deal properly with devotees and non-devotees, you neglect to distinguish between mixed devotional service and pure devotional service, you neglect to cultivate knowledge of the shastras, you neglect to cultivate the mode of goodness, but you distribute lots of books, will that please the spiritual master? I doubt it. If you were a spiritual master and you gave many instructions to your disciples and they just took one instruction and paid no attention to the rest, will you be pleased by such dull disciples?

Gurudas: I see your point, but someone may still argue that this is so valuable to the spiritual master that he will be pleased anyway, although he would be more pleased if we followed many more of his instructions.

Paramatma: Yes, that is possible. But how do you know beforehand that he is pleased? I think if a disciple did not have the capacity to do more and he followed only one instruction then the spiritual master may be pleased. But for a disciple who is capable of following more than one instruction, if he simply doesn't bother because he is confident that with this minimal following success is guaranteed, then I think he is sure to fail, unless he gives up that mentality. The spiritual master is also within our hearts as caitya-guru; he knows how sincere we are.

Gurudas: But what if the spiritual master is so merciful?

Paramatma: If he is so merciful that is very nice, but my advice is better to be safe than sorry. What do you think?

Gurudas: I think that the book distributor has a special place in the heart of the spiritual master, and if he somehow does his duty, the mercy of the spiritual master will definitely come to him.

Paramatma: I agree, except that you leave out one thing that I would like to include: If the disciple does his duty and accepts responsibility to become a pure devotee according to the teachings of his spiritual master, then the mercy is sure to come to him. Otherwise all bets are off.

Gurudas: Well, I have a problem with this kind of preaching. I think it's not encouraging to the book distributors.

Paramatma: It's not encouraging to remind book distributors that we have to become pure devotees? If that is not encouragement, then I don't know what is. Okay, maybe a pep talk will fire them up, but that is another thing. Srimad-Bhagavatam class is for understanding the process. This path is known as the razor's edge. A little inattentiveness, Prabhupada said, and there can be a mishap.

Second Dialogue:
Passion or Compassion?

The setting is a harinama party. A Christian approaches one of the devotees to tell him about Jesus Christ.

Christian: Why did you join Hare Krishna?

Ralph: Because...

Christian: ... you had problems. I know. Did you hear about "The Butterfly"?

Ralph: What butterfly?

Christian: This is our little youth cafe. Each Thursday we meet there for coffee and sandwiches. Young people looking for something come there. You should come.

Ralph: Well, I don't know if I'll have the time.

Christian: You should always have time for Him.

Ralph: Who?

Christian: For Jesus, God as man, God in the flesh. He is the way, the truth, and the light. He appeared on the earth to save you. Jesus says, "No one comes to the Father but through me." He died on the cross for your sins. I was interested in this knowledge from the East. It's full of lies. Jesus saved me.

Hamsa: (Approaching and addressing Bhakta Ralph) I will talk with him. (To the Christian) Are you a vegetarian?

Christian: A vegetarian. What for?

Hamsa: Your Bible says "Thou shall not kill."

Christian: That's right. That's one of the ten commandments.

Hamsa: So why are you Christians killing animals?

Christian: It means not to kill people. The Lord says we have dominion over them. They are for us. They have no soul and that's why He gave them to us for food.

Hamsa: We will see. In your next life as a pig we will know for sure if they have souls or not, won't we?

Ralph: Don't be so heavy, prabhu.

Hamsa: And you don't be so weak. He almost defeated you.

Christian: I know all about reincarnation. I don't believe in it.

Hamsa: Who cares what you believe? Bats don't believe the sun is shining, so what? We know there is reincarnation. We don't believe it: we know it.

Christian: That's a lie. God gave us only one life and if we don't believe in Jesus, then we go to eternal damnation in hell. I don't believe it: I know it.

Hamsa: That is bogus nonsense. If you believe you should follow His commandments, then do not kill and eat animals. Srila Prabhupada said that everyone who doesn't follow the principles is an animal and he goes to hell.

Christian: Jesus is the only way.

Hamsa: That's bogus. Hare Krishna is the only way. The Vedas say, nasty eva, nasty eva, nasty eva, "There is no another way, no another way, no another way..."

Christian: You are satanic.

Hamsa: Thank you; you are welcome. (The Christian turns and walks away.) Wait! Take some halava! You will be a human being in your next life.

Ralph: Forget it. Let him go.

Hamsa: I showed him. He was completely defeated. That's the way you preach to these people—not liberal and weak, like you.

Ralph: Maybe so, but you haven't achieved anything. He even didn't take prasadam.

Hamsa: So what? It was only a Christian.

Third Dialogue: The Guru Issue

Two bhaktas are talking in the asrama. Bhakta Wayne has just decided who he wants as his spiritual master and now he tries to inspire Bhakta Jason to follow him:

Wayne: Bhakta Jason, who is your guru?

Jason: I don't know.

Wayne: You don't know? After six months you should decide, that is the GBC ruling.

Jason: Are you sure? I thought you were not supposed to choose a guru before six months, and after six months you could choose or take your time. I understood that I can take as long as I like until I find someone who inspires my faith...

Wayne: Well, I heard different. I heard that if you take too long to accept a guru you are a space case. Anyway, I have decided. You want to know whom? I will tell you: Srila Sadhana-bhakti Maharaja. It is a good choice. He is advanced and he doesn't make you wait too long for initiation. I'll give you tapes of his lectures. You can see for yourself what a far-out devotee he is. Maybe we will be spiritual brothers.

Jason: All the initiating devotees I've heard are inspiring to me.

Wayne: Don't be mental, prabhu. You simply don't want to surrender. You will belong to the Never-surrendering-sampradaya.

Jason: Because I don't follow you, that makes me mental?

Kevin: (Approaching. He is an older bhakta) What's going on, prabhus?

Wayne: Try to imagine this, Jason, the space man, has been here more than six months and still has not yet picked his guru.

Kevin: So what? I have also not yet decided.

Wayne: What are you talking about? You told me that Raganuga-bhakti Swami is your guru.

Kevin: Yes, I was attracted to him, but he gave a lecture last week and I was not convinced that he has realized the subjects he was speaking about. I asked him a question and instead of answering, he heavied me out instead. So, I decided to back off from that decision.

Wayne: Too much. You are going to judge your guru? You're supposed to think being heavied out is what you needed.

Kevin: Maybe. My understanding is that one should take a guru to have his doubts removed, not to simply to be bullied. I took it as a sign from Krishna that he is not my eternal guru. Antardvipa Swami is quite nice. Maybe he will be good for me. Also I heard a lecture of Jayahari prabhu and he sounds quite inspiring, so I am going to wait a bit longer.

Wayne: What? Jayahari prabhu is a nice devotee, but he is a grhasta. You will surrender to a grihasta? What's wrong with you?

Kevin: Being a grihasta is external. Lord Caitanya said that whoever knows the science of Krishna is guru. That's all I care about. He is a powerful preacher and he is a grihasta, but he is more detached than some sannyasis I have seen.

Wayne: So what? O my God, Kevin, you are so sentimental.

Kevin: You really think so? I think you are the sentimental one. I am making a decision based on shastra and you are making yours based on your feelings. I don't see how I am sentimental. Do you, Jason?

Jason: I agree with you. He's in a big hurry to make a decision that will affect his entire spiritual life, but I don't think he understands the philosophy yet.

Kevin: Don't take him too seriously. You should take your time. This is the most important step in the spiritual life.

Jason: That's just what I was trying to tell him. I haven't yet a strong sense of confidence in anyone. When I do, I shall decide.

Fourth Dialogue:
Mahatma Means Broad-mind—Not Tunnel Vision

Two devotees are discussing how to preach Krishna consciousness in the most effective way and about the importance of different kinds of devotional service.

Bala: We must go with the times, otherwise we will not be able to attract intellectuals and educated people to our movement. We need to develop our preaching skills so we can present the philosophy effectively to the intelligent class.

Mahamuni : Well, intellectuals are proud. Queen Kunti said that those with material knowledge are too proud to surrender to Krishna. We should aim at saving the most fallen. That is Mahaprabhu's mission.

Bala: In Kali yuga everyone is most fallen. What I hear you saying is that the qualification for getting Krishna consciousness is to be uneducated?

Mahamuni: We don't need material education. It's a major obstacle to Krishna consciousness. Srila Prabhupada gave us everything we need. Through the disciplic succession we will get everything we need to know.

Bala: Of course. But that's not my point. We should not change the philosophy, but we should adopt ourselves to time, place, and circum...

Mahamuni: Those who don't follow or agree with the Vedic tradition shouldn't come to us. Our movement needs people who want do something for Krishna.

Bala: People like you, right?

Mahamuni: Why not? I do sankirtana. Books are the basis. Preaching is the essence. Whatever happens, I know I am pleasing Srila Prabhupada by distributing his books.

Bala: That's okay. But everyone will not be a book distributor. My plan is to become expert in the philosophy so I can convince anyone, anywhere. For me the first step is to study the philosophy nicely. Two things I have understood so far is that everyone does not have the same inclination and everything can be used in devotional service.

Mahamuni: Don't be so sure. I have seen so many preachers; they need spirit. They sit the whole day studying, studying, studying and then end up on the mental platform. It would be good if they would do something.

Bala: But they organize preaching programs.

Mahamuni: And with what success? How many people joined in the last month? Two mothers who don't do sankirtana. It will be better for me not to know what consciousness these preachers had during their so-called preaching.

Bala: Good thing not everyone is so fanatic and intolerant as you.

Mahamuni: I am not being fanatic. I figured out what is the best way to become Krishna conscious. It is better to be concentrated and focused in some intense kind of service. For that book distribution is the best program. It is nectar. So-called preachers don't know this sweet taste of pleasing the spiritual master. That's the way to get the attention of the spiritual master.

Fifth Dialogue:
Encounter with the Temple Commander.

TC: Prabhu, you are late again for cleaning the kitchen. Why can't you start and finish on time? What is the difficulty?

Ananta: I've got lots of time. I'm going down in fifteen minutes. That gives me an hour. I will finish on time. Don't worry.

TC: Yes, you will finish on time, but you cannot do it nicely in that much time. Your schedule gives you two hours to clean the kitchen, but everyday you come an hour late and hurry through it so you will be on time for the harinama. I know you can't clean Krishna's kitchen nicely in only one hour. I used to clean the kitchen myself...

Ananta: Maybe you were not expert like me.

TC: Maybe, but why are the cooks complaining that the kitchen isn't cleaned nicely?

Ananta: I know who is complaining. Maybe he should not make such a mess when he cooks. Prabhupada said the cook should clean as he cooks.

TC: All cooks do some cleaning. Whether the cook clean or not, I want some assurance that you will be on time and do a good job. Right now I am not pleased with the way it is going.

Ananta: So what? You are not my spiritual master, you know. I don't have to please you. If you don't like it, you can get someone else to do it. I'm not attached.