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## THE JOURNEY TO PREMA

~ A Course in the Science of Bhakti-Yoga ~

Lesson 8

**Please Chant:**

**Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa - Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare**  
**Hare Rāma Hare Rāma - Rāma Rāma Hare Hare**

**IN THIS LESSON:**

- (Y)our Dilemma(s) - Reasons to Proceed
- The Path of Knowledge - Real Relationships
- Four Types of Chanting
- Requesting Japa Beads
- Three Levels of Chanting
- Offending the Holy Names, Numbers 1 Through 6
- Closing

By the way ....

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**Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja**  
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**THE JOURNEY TO PREMA – LESSON 8**

Dear servant of God,

Please accept our sincere and humble respects as we bow down and offer them to you. All glories to Śrīla Gurudeva!

It's so good to be with you again. Thank you so much for joining us as we dig for life's greatest treasure together. We hope that your month was filled with many marvelous mahā-mantra moments and many hours of blissful bhakti.

We have a lot in store for you this month. We're going to start off with a short note on the dilemmas we presented last month. Then we'll give you some reasons why you should proceed with this course, no matter where your levels of faith and devotion currently stand.

After that we'll walk the path of knowledge for a while. The truths (tattvas) we'll discover are one's that the sādhus tell us we need to learn. These tattvas will allow us to understand the relationships that exist between the Lord, ourselves, and the illusions that imprison us.

The next subject we'll cover is one of our absolute favorites. Can you guess what it will be? We'll just let you find out for yourself.

The last topic will be the offenses against the Holy Names. We're going to start at the top and we're going to discuss all of the offenses that we didn't cover last month. In this section we are also going to include a pastime of Lord Caitanya's that deals with the first offense against the Holy Names. This story well illustrates just how serious these offenses are.

We hope you enjoy this lesson and that you gain a lot from it. Although it is almost entirely devoted to just a few topics it should still give you plenty to learn. Understanding, in other words, acting according to these truths, will help you make your journey to prema a smooth and comfortable ride.

**(Y)Our Dilemma(S)**

If you look at the title to this section you will see how we used it to express the fact that the dilemmas we discussed over the last couple of months are very interconnected.

We know that we sincerely tried to solve our dilemma. We made an honest effort to increase your faith and devotion before we began to share the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gītā, the glories of the Holy Names, and the personalities They address. Unfortunately, for now at least, we have no real way of knowing if we succeeded.

As far as your dilemma goes, we can only hope that you were honest and sincere with yourself when it came to examining your heart to see if you have some faith and devotion developing there. If you are still here with us because you found that those qualities have begun to develop, then we are very happy for you. If you can increase your faith and devotion then you will become more enthusiastic about your practices and more confident that you are leading a successful life.

However, if your search came up empty, but you chose to proceed any way, that's okay too. We are realists. We knew that there would be those who would forge ahead even though they knew they lacked faith and devotion. So even if you happen to be here alone, unaccompanied by those valuable qualities, we want you to know that you are still welcome to walk with us. Still, we do ask you to proceed with caution, and to take our warnings about committing offenses very seriously.

If we chant the Holy Names while continuing to make offenses against them we will not make much progress on our journey. We can chant with offenses for many lifetimes and still not achieve prema. If you have decided to proceed, knowing you lack faith and devotion, we ask you to please at least try to be respectful to the Names, the Vedas, the guru, the sādhus, and most importantly to Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

No matter what has brought you to this point in the course, and no matter what stage of development your spiritual qualities are at, the Vedas provide us with words of comfort that should be enough to encourage us to continue along our journey.

**The Reasons Why We All Need to Proceed**

The Vedas provide us with many teachings that were spoken by the Lord Himself. One of these teachings provides us with an excellent reason to proceed with our bhakti-yoga practices.

Just before leaving this planet, Lord Kṛṣṇa held a long conversation with one of His greatest devotees. During their discussion He taught us this: It is impossible for us to suffer any type of loss as a result of our bhakti practices.

Since the bhakti-yoga process was designed by the Lord Himself, all of the practices it contains, such as hearing about the Lord and chanting His names, have beneficial results, even if they are improperly performed.

Therefore, even if we are not yet able to chant perfectly, and without committing any offenses to the Names, we should still proceed on this path.

Of course we will not make much forward progress if we chant with offenses, but even still, we will at least be able to keep our heads above the water. If we allow ourselves to go under, if we sink deeply into the ocean of material sufferings, we may stay submerged there for millions of births before we again reach the surface, where we at least have a chance of escape.

The Lord's devotees are constantly looking for opportunities to save us. They comb this ocean on search and rescue missions, looking for a chance to haul us from these dangerous waters.

So if we can just stay visible, if we can at least practice enough to keep ourselves afloat, we'll be in a position to grab their hands and take hold, when they reach out to us.

If for now, the best we can do is to chant with offenses, we should still chant, and chant, and chant some more, for we have no chance of loss, and everything to gain.

Our next encouraging teaching deals with the important topic of controlling the mind.

In Lesson 5 we spoke about wasting precious time doing unproductive things. We know we may have been a bit harsh in the way we addressed this issue, but it was a point we needed to make. We hope you absorbed this teaching because it's not one that we intend to dwell on. This course will focus much more on the things we should do with our lives, than on the things we need to avoid doing.

The simple but stark reality is this: Time is irreplaceable. We need to spend it wisely if we want to make steady progress toward our goal. Working a few minutes a day to uncover our prema, and then spending the rest of our time trying to fulfill our material desires will turn our journey into a long, slow, and distress filled trip.

When we discussed the mind, we told you about the influence that samskāras can have on our lives. The material desires that we all struggle with are products of these samskāras. Although the impressions on the mind that causes these desires can be very deep seated, and difficult to overcome, we must not allow their presence to pull us from the path of bhakti.

Once again, the Vedas provide us with an excellent reason to continue our practices, even though we may still be struggling with material desires. They tell us that we can still practice bhakti-yoga, no matter how many unwanted desires we have.

Of course we should never seek to fulfill these desires through our bhakti-practices, for that is not bhakti at all. Instead, we should use the intelligence to suppress these desires, at least during the time of our practices, and we should use the intelligence to focus our thoughts on spiritual subjects and goals.

The next reason why everyone should continue this course and proceed on the path to prema deals with the first step on our journey, faith.

In order to explain this teaching we need to be sure you know what we mean by "faith", so let's do a little review.

We've told you that we neither want nor expect you to accept the teachings we share with you based on "blind faith". Blind faith is weak faith, and we cannot build strong practices on a

Staple

weak foundation

For this reason, one of the things we've tried to do, is to present you with some teachings that will allow you to build a foundation of solid and dependable faith. In order to help you do this we've discussed topics like "what we are really made of", and "the ways of the mind". We chose these type of subjects because we felt that they contain teachings that demonstrate the clarity and logic of the Vedas. We also hoped that, by recognizing the depth and insight of these teachings, you would begin to develop faith in them.

These types of teachings cover topics that we can easily relate to because they mostly involve things that we are at least somewhat familiar with. On the other hand, the Vedas also cover many topics that are completely unfamiliar to most of us. Therefore, when it comes to these type of teachings we may be forced, at least temporarily, to accept them based solely on our ability to "believe" things are true.

For example, the Vedas tell us that properly worshipped Deity forms of the Lord, **are** God. They are not just statues that represent God. Instead, They are a special type of form of the Lord, that He agrees to accept so that we can see Him with our material senses.

Less advanced souls cannot grasp this truth. To them, the Deity is nothing more than a statue made of material elements. A sincere devotee however, will accept or "believe" that the Deity is God, even before he is able to directly perceive this for himself. A wise devotee's "beliefs" will be well founded and fully sincere because they will be based upon the teachings of the Vedas and the statements of the sādhus.

Highly advanced devotees do not rely on "beliefs". They are able to directly perceive the reality of the Lord in His Deity form, because their senses are no longer limited to material perceptions. Their senses have been purified by the application of a salve, a medicine that is composed of their love for the Lord, and the services they have performed for Him.

Until we reach that state we will, at times, have to "believe" certain teachings. As we progress we will be able to convert our "beliefs" into a more solid, fully sincere, and deeply heartfelt level of faith, the type of faith that is unshakeable, and upon which we can build a foundation that will support our journey to prema.

For many, accepting things that are beyond the reach of their material senses requires a "leap of faith". This leap is easy for some, but difficult for others. Let's take a look at what the Vedas say about the various levels of faith that seem to be a natural part of our makeup.

Although the root cause of faith is not commonly known, the Vedas tell us exactly how it arises in our hearts.

In that timeless, borderland existence, when we all made our first decision, looking toward the worlds of illusion and away from the Lord, we took on a material consciousness that possessed little, if any, faith.

Knowing we would need this precious commodity in order to escape our imprisonment, the Lord implemented a system that would allow our faith to develop.

Feeling compassion for us, He devised various means to instill and nurture our faith. Sometimes He descends to the material worlds. When He does so He allows many conditioned souls to witness or learn of His appearance and activities, or in some cases, to simply learn of teachings that He leaves behind, all of which allow us to develop faith in Him.

The Lord also sends empowered representatives, in the form of true gurus and sādhus, who have the ability to instill faith in our hearts.

The gurus, sādhus, and others who have developed faith follow the Lord's instructions, and then, individually, or in groups or societies, practice the various processes of bhakti-yoga.

This further increases the opportunities for others to develop faith because another way that we can awaken it is through

contact with the activities of bhakti.

This includes such things as cleaning the Lord's temple, seeing His Deity form, which are, at times, brought out of the temple and into the public streets, thus further increasing our chances to develop faith. This can also take place if we give in charity to the devotees, or if we fast on a holy day. Even if we do these things unknowingly, or with no real spiritual intent, we still build up an account of **sukṛti + soo-kri-tee**.

The direct translation of this Sanskrit word comes from the two root words that it is composed of, **su**, which means good, and **kṛita**, which means works, but to simply call sukṛti "**good works**" would fail to convey why these works lead to faith.

When we perform these acts of sukṛti we accumulate what we call "spiritual credits".

We can also acquire sukṛti by coming into contact with sādhus. If we associate with them, serve them, or hear their discussion on the Lord, even unintentionally, we build our spiritual credit account.

Over time, these credits will cause us to be attracted to the sādhus and we will seek out their association. Through their association we will gain knowledge of the Vedas until we finally develop faith in those teachings.

From that faith we will develop faith in the guru and then we will begin to practice bhakti-yoga under his guidance. As we firmly establish ourselves under the shelter of a true guru, we will be provided with all of the tools that we need to uncover our treasure of prema.

These facts about how faith develops should allow you to understand that you have obviously accumulated some of these spiritual credits. This is made evident by the fact that you knowingly requested this course after reading Lesson 1.

If you are wise enough to take this course seriously; if you read, reread, study, and absorb these lessons; and if you simultaneously put into practice the processes it recommends, then your faith will continue to grow and your journey to prema will become smoother, steadier, and tastier as you draw closer and closer to your goal.

This description of how faith develops should also provide encouragement and a reason to proceed to those of you who may feel that you do not yet have much faith. By studying these lessons you put yourself in contact with the sādhus and with acts of bhakti. Since both of these will build your spiritual credit account, and cause your faith to grow, you should continue to take this course, even if you feel that your current level of faith is low.

As long as you are able to avoid becoming an offender to Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa you should continue this course. Even if the mind is not yet under control, and even if your heart is full of material desires, you should continue this course. And no matter where your levels of faith and devotion currently stand, you should continue this course. But, no matter what, whether you continue this course or not, you should continue to chant the mahā-mantra.

All of the suffering we experience in this world are all symptoms of the same disease. The disease of an impure heart. And the best medicine for this disease, the universal cure for all our troubles, is the Holy Names of the Lord.

We hope these encouraging statements have provided you with plenty of reasons why you need to proceed on the path of bhakti and continue on your journey to prema.

As we follow the path of bhakti, it will at times be advisable to walk the path of knowledge as well. In our next section, we'll explore the relationship between these two paths and examine why we are sometimes wise to allow these paths to merge, so that we can walk along both of them at the same time.

### **Walking the Path of Knowledge**

In Lesson 4 we told you that much of the information we had shared with you was drawn from the yoga of knowledge. We've also told you that one of the reasons we provided that knowledge was in hopes that it would help to increase your faith in the

Vedas, which was something that we've been instructed to do before we share certain teachings.

Although the yoga of knowledge, standing alone, cannot lead us to prema, it can provide us with beneficial truths that can help us understand and stay on the path of bhakti.

The sādhus have told us that the truths we will share in our next section are just this type of beneficial knowledge. This knowledge is so important that we cannot fully develop our understandings of bhakti without it.

In Lesson 2 we compared the Vedas to a map with many paths. We also told you that there may be times where these paths merge, where certain teachings or practices can be used by people who are ultimately on separate paths.

In the early stages of bhakti, we often need information from the path of knowledge, so it can be beneficial to walk along these paths simultaneously.

So let's open up the mind, and sharpen up the intelligence as we prepare to gather up some valuable information. Let's take a little walk along the path of knowledge.

### **What is Their Relationship?**

The knowledge contained in this section is very important. One of our gurus has told us that we must understand the teachings of this section on relationships if we want to become an advanced practitioner of bhakti-yoga. Although there may be rare, blessed souls who can advance on the path of bhakti without this knowledge, we should study it based upon our guru's recommendation. On top of this there is yet another reason, even beyond our desire to aide you with your own advancement, why we want share this knowledge with you.

We have told you that Lord Caitanya has instructed us all to become gurus. This means we all should try to absorb the teachings of the Vedas so that we can share them with others. So, even if we feel we can proceed without this information from the path of knowledge, we should gather it anyway; because it may be a tool that we can use to help someone else build their faith.

The yoga of knowledge contains all of the truths about the relationships that exist between things. This includes such topics as the relationship between the student and the guru, between the different types of devotees, between devotees and non-devotees, and between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His name.

In this section we are going to focus on three participants and the relationships that exist between each of them. The participants we will be discussing are; the Lord, the living entities (us), and māyā, the energy that creates the illusions that overwhelm our consciousness, and keep us from understanding who we really are. In order to understand these relationships we need to understand some of the truths about the participants. To help us understand these participants let's discuss something that they all have in common, energy.

There is a Sanskrit word that we need to teach you. This word, and the concept it represents is important, not only as it relates to our current subject, but in regards to future subjects as well. For these reasons we have decided to add it to the list of words that you should try to learn.

The word is **śaktis + shuk-ti** (usually pronounced, shock-tee). **Śakti** means **energy, potency, or power**. Ultimately, all śaktis flow from the Lord.

In past lessons we have discussed examples of śaktis, though we did not call them that at the time because we had not yet shared this term with you. For example we spoke of the mercy of the guru and the power of the Holy Names. Both of these are śaktis. When the guru or a sādhu plants the seed of bhakti in your heart, they do so by utilizing the mercy śakti of the Lord. When we discussed President Obama we mentioned that as the representative of the United States, he has the ability to use the powers that this country possesses. Similarly, as God's dearest servant and representative, the guru has the ability to use the Lord's mercy śakti as he sees fit.

The Lord has many, many different types of śaktis. In fact He

is the possessor of all śaktis. All of the śakti that exists, all power, all energy, all potency, flows from Him. There are several different Sanskrit words that all represent the ultimate sum total of all śaktis, in other words, the śakti from which all others flow, but we will keep it simple by referring to this potency as God's Personal Śakti. We will use Śakti, with a capital "S", to distinguish this all-encompassing Śakti from those that flow from it.

Us, our souls, the ever existing essences of what we are really made of, are sparks of God's Śakti. Every one of us is a totally individual and eternal spark of God's Śakti. That spark is composed of consciousness. This spark of consciousness is the soul.

We're going to step away from the topic of relationships for a moment to discuss a subject related to the teaching that we are sparks of God's energy. We're going to examine a misconception about this truth that has led some people to accept distorted teachings.

Most of you have probably never been exposed to these false beliefs, but on the chance that some of you may have been, or will be in the future, we're going to shine some light into the darkness that surrounds these misunderstandings.

We also do this because Lord Caitanya tells us that these false beliefs are dangerous philosophies, and that we should not expose ourselves to their poison. In consideration of His warnings, we present the following discussion.

The truth that we just shared with you, that we are sparks of God's energy is a very deep and important teaching. Although this may seem like a fairly simple truth it contains some profound meanings as well.

There are certain misled people, who, based upon a distortion of this truth, claim to be bits of God Himself (as opposed to bits of His energy). While relying on bogus theories and faulty logic they generally believe that they can remove the barriers that separate them from their true nature. They try to do this through various means, which often include "meditation".

They believe that if they can remove these barriers they will then "merge into" God, or "become one" with Him.

The teaching we shared, when properly understood, totally destroys their false beliefs. We are sparks of God's **energy**, and not sparks of God Himself. This is a very subtle difference, but a major one.

All that we are, and all that we can ever be, are totally individual sparks of consciousness/awareness. Although we are interconnected with God in ways that can never be broken, we can never give up our individuality in order to become one with He from whom we came. Those who believe otherwise are simply wrong.

The relationships that we are now discussing are dependent upon the reality that we exist as separate individuals. It is only by understanding and accepting these relationships that we will be able to "link up" with God, through bhakti-yoga. It is only through this process that we, like links in a chain, can become fully connected to Him, while again, like links in a chain, maintaining our own individuality.

So let's return to our discussion on relationships so that we can further explore who we really are.

Although there is a Sanskrit word for the soul, there is also a word for the being who possesses a soul. When we told you that you are really made of, we mentioned not just the soul, but a true ego as well. It is this true ego that makes "you" who "you" are. Since the word that describes this aspect of us, the larger us, the soul plus the true ego will be used extensively in this course, we will teach it to you at this time, rather than the word for the soul itself.

This word is **jīva +jee-vuh**. **Every living entity is a jīva**; every human, plant, ant, and elephant are all alike in this way. The energy that flows from the soul to maintain the functions of the material body, **the energy that makes "us", "us" and keeps**

Staple

**our material bodies "alive" is called jīva-śakti.**

This same energy keeps our subtle body; the mind, intelligence, and false ego running as well.

So now that we have told you a little bit about God and

His personal Śakti, and about you, the spark, the jīva-śakti, we are ready to talk about the third participant in our discussion on relationships, the śakti of matter and illusion.

In discussing the jīva-śakti, we told you that it keeps our material bodies "alive" and our subtle bodies running, but we did not say that these bodies were composed of this energy. That was because they are not. All of the ingredients that make up those bodies, the "vehicles" for the jīva to travel around in; in fact, all gasses, liquids, solids, warmth, and material space; as well as the mind, intelligence and false ego, are all made up of the Lord's inferior energy.

This **inferior energy, the material energy of the Lord** is called **māyā +ma-ya** (like mop/yacht) (often pronounced my-uh). We refer to this energy as an inferior energy because all of the things composed of this energy can be controlled, manipulated, and used by the jīva. This **māyā śakti** composes all of the "elements" that the scientists and industrialists try to manipulate in their attempts to control and exploit the energy of the Lord.

This **māyā-śakti also creates the illusions that the false ego relies on.** It is because of māyā-śakti that we believe we are this material body, that we need to satisfy our material senses, that we will literally "die" when the body ceases to function, and oh so many other bits of nonsense. Knowing that māyā causes us to believe all these false ideas should help you understand why the literal translation for māyā is "**that which is not.**" In books that deal with Vedic truths you will most often see māyā translated as "**illusion.**"

Along with composing the things we have discussed, and putting us under her spell of illusion, māyā is also responsible for the manifestation of time and material activities.

The Vedas tell us that these three subjects, God, the jīva, and māyā are worthy of being known about. In other words, knowledge of them is valuable. They tell us this is so for two reasons. First, they all are real. They eternally exist. They are not temporary things. The second reason we should learn these truths is because the jīva and māyā are both related to God.

Now that you have met the participants, let's further discuss the relationships that they have with each other.

The first relationship we will examine is the one between God and the jīvas. Although the jīvas are ultimately composed of one of God's energies, they are not composed of His Personal Śakti. Not only that, they are also eternally separated from Him; they are 100 percent individual entities.

The truth about what the jīva is, what its highest function or purpose for existing is, and what its relationship with God is, were all subjects that had become confusing, even for those who were trying to understand these things. The reasons for this confusion are varied, but they do include what we spoke of earlier in regards to the difference between being part of God's energy and part of God Himself. Although we will not go in to any of these other confused beliefs right now, we will tell you that one of the things Kṛṣṇa did, when He descended as Lord Caitanya, was to clear up the controversies surrounding the jīva by giving us a short and simple, but profound explanation of jīva-tattva, the truths of the jīva.

In this explanation, He told us four things. The first two things he told us where what the jīvas function is, and a basic, but necessary understanding of our relationship with the Lord. We have discussed this teaching before, but we will do so again to put it into the context of this lesson.

In Lesson 2 we discussed that the nature of the soul is to serve. That it is always serving. It serves by keeping our material body "alive." We also use the soul's energy to serve ourselves or to serve others. What Lord Caitanya taught us was that the function of the jīva, the soul plus its true ego, is to serve the Lord. This is

its natural and highest purpose. So, the relationship between the Lord and His jīvas is that of master and servant.

This is exactly the type of valuable information that we should draw from the path of knowledge. The Vedas tell us that Kṛṣṇa gives us knowledge about Himself through the Vedas and the guru, and that from these sources we come to understand that Kṛṣṇa is not only our master, He is our deliverer as well. Both of these relationships between the jīva and the Lord will be discussed in this course.

The third aspect of jīva-tattva that the Lord explained is that, although the jīva is not composed of the inferior energy of māyā, it is also not composed of God's superior Personal Śakti. The energy that the jīva is composed of sits between these two aspects of the Lord.

The literal translation for the word that is used to describe **the śakti that composes the jīva-śakti is "situated on the shore."** This translation actually does a great job of describing this energy. We can use this translation to illustrate the relationship that the jīva has with māyā, as well as another aspect of the jīva's relationship with God.

As long as the jīva remains in the worlds of illusion he can come under the influence of māyā, or he can situate himself under the shelter and protection of the Lord. The example we will use to illustrate this situation is as follows.

On the edge of the ocean we find the shore. The shore is sometimes covered by water, when the tide is high, and sometimes situated on dry land, when the tide is low. When the jīva is in the material world he is sometimes covered by the illusions of māyā. As long as he remains covered by these illusions he will be filled with material desires and the mind will make all of its decisions based on the ignorance of the false ego. The jīva will identify himself with the body, serve the senses, and remain covered by the waters of the ocean of sufferings, which is what the material worlds really are.

If the jīva is fortunate, he will come into contact with the sādhus. Through their association and mercy he will learn how to take shelter of the guru, the Holy Names, and the other processes of bhakti. Through these practices he can situate himself under the Lord's protection and remain on dry land, far from the ocean of material sufferings. While situated there he can allow his true ego to control the mind and the other senses and he can dedicate himself to serving God. He can focus his attention inward and he can discover, uncover, and experience his prema.

Lord Caitanya also discussed the jīva's relationship with māyā. This included information about escaping from the illusions of māyā. He told us that the jīva cannot overcome māyā by his own effort, and that it is for this reason that Kṛṣṇa mercifully gave us the Vedas. He also told us that when a jīva, who is living under the influence of the false ego, receives the mercy of the Vedas and the sādhus, then he will turn his consciousness toward Kṛṣṇa. When he does this, he will overcome the false ego and māyā will begin to release him.

These teachings of Lord Caitanya should help us to appreciate how kind Kṛṣṇa is. He is not happy to see us, the jīvas, His children, remain in illusion. He has therefore given us the Vedas and the sādhus in order to allow us to step from the darkness of illusion and ignorance into the light of spiritual understandings.

The eternal spark of consciousness that we are composed of is tiny. That is why, even though our jīva-śakti is naturally more potent than māyā-śakti, it can still be overwhelmed by illusions. However, when we connect our jīva-śakti to God's Śakti, via the guru, the Holy Names, and bhakti-yoga, we become energized and we have a much greater chance of avoiding the illusions of māyā.

The fourth teaching of jīva-tattva that the Lord gave us is one that is a bit tougher to understand, and is in fact often misunderstood. The teaching is this; the jīva is simultaneously different and non-different from the Lord. Just to show us that He knew this teaching would be difficult to understand, He also told

us that this teaching about the difference is inconceivable. This does not quite mean that this teaching is impossible to understand, however, since it involves a spiritual reality, there are no material examples that we can use which will fully illustrate this tattva. It will only be understood through contemplation and by the use of our spiritual senses.

There are however, examples we can use that will help us to understand this teaching. Think of a blazing chemical fire, one that is so hot that it cannot be put out with water, because it just burns the water away. Then imagine the tiny flame of a single match.

The fire and the flame have the same qualities, but in entirely different quantities. The Lord's consciousness can never be affected by the illusions of māyā, while ours can. The chemical fire cannot be put out by water, while the match can be extinguished by just a drop or two. The fire and the match flame are both different and non-different.

The Lord is eternal, His consciousness is unlimited, He is aware of everything, He possesses all knowledge, He knows all that has happened in the past, what is happening now, and all that will happen in the future. He has an unlimited number of associates and pastimes, each of which bring Him pleasure, so He experiences an unlimited amount of bliss.

Even while living in a material body, the jīva is still eternal, but his consciousness is limited, he has awareness, but it is limited as well, he knows only what he has learned by gathering knowledge, he forgets past, and has no idea of the future, he can experience bliss, but to a limited degree.

Both the Lord and the jīva are eternal, are aware, and both experience bliss. They have the same qualities, so in this way they are non-different. But the Lord's awareness and bliss are unlimited while the jīvas are limited, the quantity is not the same, in this way they are different. Simultaneously, different and non-different, it's really quite simple don't you think?

So now that you have this information, let's put these relationships into a nutshell.

The Lord's relationship with māyā is that He controls this energy and can therefore never come under its influence. The material world is a prison house composed of temporary relationships and illusions.

Māyā-śakti's relationship with Kṛṣṇa is to serve Him by acting as warden of this prison. Her relationship with the jīva is to try to keep us captivated by illusions so that we do not take shelter of the guru or Kṛṣṇa and thereby escape her ocean of sufferings.

Our relationship with māyā is up to us. We can allow ourselves to focus on temporary things and temporary pleasures, while we work for temporary bosses, and for temporary rewards, or we can turn our focus inward, associate with sādhus, surrender to the guru, practice bhakti-yoga, and permanently sever our relationship with māyā. Our śakti is superior. We should do all we can to charge up its energy so that māyā will never be able to put us under her illusory spells again.

The jīva's relationship with the Lord is based upon His being superior to us.

Kṛṣṇa is infinite spiritual consciousness. The jīvas are minute sparks of that consciousness. Kṛṣṇa is complete. The jīva is incomplete. Therefore, their relationships are natural byproducts of this "superior over inferior" reality.

Kṛṣṇa is the attractor; the jīvas are attracted to Him. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme ruler; the jīvas are ruled. Kṛṣṇa is the observer; the jīvas are observed. Kṛṣṇa is supremely powerful and the source of all śakti; the jīva is powerless and has no śakti without Kṛṣṇa. For all of these reasons, our eternal relationship with the Lord is to be His servant, and, at His request, the servant of His servants. This relationship is based upon a simple fact; the part is always the servant of the whole.

Now, what we actually serve is up to us. We can serve our parts; our senses. We can serve what we are parts of; our family, the company we work for, our community. Or, we can serve none

of these. We can instead decide to serve the only thing that all jīvas are parts of, the Supreme Personality of God.

These are the basic truths that our gurus tell us we should try to understand as a part of developing a firm basis for our progress. These truths should clarify why we should decide to seek the shelter of the guru and move away from the shore of the ocean of material sufferings. If you fail to accept these facts, and if you fail to begin to live your life based on the realities of these truths, then you will not escape the tides of this ocean, you will be swept up in its illusions.

We will however once again point out that we are realists. We know that not everyone will escape these tides. We know this because Lord Kṛṣṇa tells us these things Himself. He told Arjuna that the illusions of māyā that bewilder us are difficult to overcome. But He also assured His friend that those who take exclusive shelter of Him can easily escape form these illusions. (Bhagavad-gita,.7.14)

As representatives of the mercy-śakti that Śrīla Gurudeva possessed, we are reaching out to you. This course, our website, our pen pal services, and our prison book distribution program are all designed to pull you away from the ocean and place you under the shelter of the guru and the Holy Names of the Lord. We are here to assist you on your journey to prema and we pray that you will continue to walk this path with us.

### Chanting

When you saw the title of this section you may have thought, "Chanting! Again? Enough already." We hope you did not react that way, but we know that some of you may have done so. Let us be honest with you. This course will repeat this word over and over and over again. Chanting is the most powerful and most important of all the bhakti-yoga practices, so you should do your best to be happy when you see this word, and when you think about the idea of doing some chanting yourself.

The reason we have come back to this subject right now is because the rest of this lesson will directly and indirectly relate to chanting, and in order for you to understand some of the following sections we need to provide some foundation for them. Also, at the end of last month's lesson we told you we would soon be giving you some information about the different types of chanting that we do in bhakti-yoga.

So put a smile on your face and fill your heart with joy as you continue to receive the mercy of the Vedas, the sādhus, the guru, and the Lord. Each month they all come to you, in the form of these lessons, to help you escape māyā's prison.

When we use the word chanting we are generally referring to singing, speaking, or remembering a mantra composed mostly or entirely of God's Names. Unless otherwise noted we will usually be referring to the mahā-mantra and to repeating it over and over again. However this is not the only meaning of the Sanskrit word that we translate as chanting.

In another lesson, we will give you this Sanskrit word and discuss some of the other important meanings for this word, but for now were going to skip the Sanskrit. Instead we will just use English terms to describe the various types of chanting (mantra repetition). Then we will give you a Sanskrit term for one final type. This type will be the chanting process that will probably be best suited for a prison environment.

The following descriptions are very basic. We may expand on them at times, especially in regards to the final type we will discuss. These introductory descriptions are not meant to be complete. They are just designed to help you understand basic varieties of chanting as they relate to each other.

### Loud Group Chanting

This is the type of chanting that Lord Caitanya and His followers were probably most famous for. In Lesson 3, when we discussed the Pañca-tattva, we told you that immediately after accepting a guru Lord Caitanya began this practice of group chanting. These chanting parties were originally held in the

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courtyard of Śrīvās' home. Śrīvās, as you may remember, is one of the members of the Pañca-tattva. This loud group chanting is usually accompanied by musical instruments, but that is not a requirement. The two most common instruments are; a special type of two headed drum that is worn on strap and hung over the shoulder; and hand cymbals. Traditionally, other instruments that are used include various type of horns as well. In more modern times many other types of instruments are occasionally included, guitars for example, but in the majority of cases it will only be the two-headed drums and hand cymbals.

These chanting parties generally get quite loud, which is actually a highly recommended part of the process, and they will often include dancing as well.

Although other types of chanting are highly recommended and very effective, this loud group chanting is the specific type of chanting that the Vedas tell us is the most effective process for this degraded age we live in. They also tell us that one of the reasons that Lord Caitanya came was to establish this specific type of chanting. And one of the most exalted devotees in Vedic history tells us that loud chanting is 100 times more effective than quiet chanting.

Along with the mahā-mantra, Lord Caitanya would also chant other mantras during loud group chanting and we will share some of those with you in the future.

The benefit of this type of chanting is also increased by the fact that it is done in the association of other devotees. In fact if the chanting leader, (see next paragraph) or even if the majority of those in the group, are not devotees, then not only is there no extra benefit, but chanting in that group should be avoided entirely.

In group chanting, one person will sing the mantra first, then the group will repeat it, then the leader, then the group. In this way each has an opportunity to concentrate on both hearing and on chanting. It also provides the leader with a chance to change beats, rhythms, or even mantras to make the chanting more captivating and invigorating.

Although there may be little chance for many of you to practice this type of chanting in prison, some of you may get the opportunity. We at the IBPYS prison program are currently trying to establish more on site programs, where we can go to prisons in person to conduct meetings and chanting parties, and in some prisons, inmates have joined up with other inmates at their facility to institute chanting sessions. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is very merciful and in time there is every chance that all of you will engage in this most effective and joyous practice.

### Loud Group Chanting in Public Places

This process is the same as the last, except in this case, the group goes out into public places to chant. Although we said the last process was the most effective type of chanting we will now slightly amend that, because, when you take that process into public places you not only benefit those in the group, but you now also benefit those who hear the chanting. Therefore, loud public group chanting could perhaps be called the super most effective type of chanting.

In another lesson, when we tell you the other meanings for the word we translate as chanting, one of them will be preaching, and public chanting is considered a form of preaching. So this is why we will give it the title of the super most effective chanting process.

This was also one of Lord Caitanya's activities. In fact, He spent about 6 years travelling around India, conducting massive public chanting parties, where hundreds of thousands of people would all partake of the mercy of the Holy Names.

### Musical Chanting

This type of chanting is usually done in smaller groups, and accompanied by a wider variety of musical instruments. It often involves singing "songs" as opposed to just mantras and will, at times, not include the lead, repeat, lead, repeat pattern.

Many sādhus have written beautiful songs and poems about spiritual subjects. These works cover a huge variety of topics, from the Lords Name, forms, qualities, associates, and pastimes, to the guru, to the places where the Lord's pastimes take place, to the moods a devotee should learn to enter into while practicing bhakti-yoga.

There are again some extremely traditional instruments used during this type of chanting.

Musical chanting can be extremely sweet and beautiful. When it comes to listening to or being involved in singing or playing instruments in this type of chanting, one thing we must be careful to avoid is allowing it to become something we listen to or do for our own sense pleasure.

All chanting should be done as service, as an offering to the Lord, and we should even listen in this way, reflecting on and remembering the Lord and the other topics that are being sung about. But if we listen simply because we like the singers voice, or to enjoy the melody, the music, or the instruments, then we will not receive the benefits that we otherwise would.

### Personal Chanting

This type of chanting is also a very important part of the bhakti-yoga process. Again, Lord Caitanya Himself participated in this type of chanting and instructed His followers to do likewise. Since we are going to talk about this type of chanting later in this lesson, because it will be the type that many of you will probably be doing the most of, and also because it is a process that all of us should make a part of our daily life, we are going to give you the Sanskrit word for this type of chanting and discuss it in a little more detail, both here and later in this lesson.

The Sanskrit word for this type of chanting is **japa +juh-puh** (often pronounced jā-puh, like job/punt). The word japa comes from the root word **jap +jup** which means **to utter or whisper repeatedly**, and the word japa has been defined as **the speaking of mantras either within the heart or verbally**.

When Lord Caitanya gave the instruction to chant japa, He said that we should take a vow to chant a fixed number of mantras each day and we should chant those mantras without fail. That is why, as part of last month's lesson, we asked you to take a vow to chant the mahā-mantra at least 108 times a day.

We chose the number 108 because that is how many beads there are on the string of beads that devotees use to count their mantras. The reason there are 108 beads will be discussed in a future lesson, for now you just need to know it is a very special number. Therefore, starting with a minimum vow of 108 mahā-mantras is an important first step in practicing japa.

When you are firmly established in keeping your vow of 108 mantras, which would be one time around the string of beads, then you should next commit yourself to do 108 more mantras. Since doing this many mantras will take you all the way around the beads, it is often referred to as "a round of japa."

Some prisons will allow inmates to receive japa beads. You should check with your chaplain about your facilities rules. If you are allowed to receive them, we will send some to you. However, we will only send them to those inmates who become sincerely committed to keeping a vow of at least two rounds (216) mantras every day, without fail, and who have kept this vow for at least one month before requesting the beads. We will talk a little bit more about how to request japa beads later in this lesson.

Until such time as you become a committed chanter, and receive some beads, there is an easy and practical way to count your mantras. This system was actually used by Lord Caitanya Himself, so there is no reason to feel that you need to wait to get beads before becoming committed to chanting japa.

The method involves using your thumb to "count" on the joints of your fingers. Start with the thumb of your right hand on the first top joint of your right index finger and say one mahā-mantra. Then move it to the middle joint, say a mantra, then to the joint where the finger meets the hand, and say a mantra there as well. Move to the middle finger, then the ring finger, then the pinky,

repeating the process along the way. One hand will be 12 mantras. Then, put the thumb of your left hand on the top first joint of the left index finger. This indicates that you have done one "hand's worth"; 12 mantras.

After chanting another hand's worth (on your right hand) move the thumb of your left hand to the middle joint on the index finger. Continue this process, moving the left thumb after completing the right hand. When the thumb on the left hand reaches the bottom joint of the ring finger, where it meets the hand, you will have chanted 9 hands worth of mantras. 9 times 12 equals 108. Easy as pie.

Last month we told you that this process only takes about 10 minutes. However, in next month's lesson we're going to describe a much deeper method of chanting japa that will slow the process down. Just remember there is no hurry to complete your chanting. In fact, if you are trying to hurry it or just chanting to get it done, it will probably not be first-class chanting.

There will be days, especially early on in developing your japa practices where you will have to strike a balance between keeping your vow and chanting with the type of deep concentration we will introduce next month. When you face that dilemma you should finish the number of rounds you are committed to. As an absolute minimum, your chanting should include pronouncing the mahā-mantra clearly and focusing on hearing the Holy Names. From there, over time, you can gradually develop the deeper levels of concentration.

When we started out by requesting a vow of one round, we did not mention the amount of japa that most devotees commit to, nor the amount that advanced devotees chant. This was because we simply wanted to give you a goal that would seem so reachable, you would be more likely to commit to it. Our hope is, that as some of your obstacles begin to clear away due to your chanting, you will be willing to make a larger commitment.

Now that we have told you more about japa, we will tell you about the type of vows taken by most devotees and also about the vows of the very advanced souls.

Śrīla Gurudeva generally requested his followers to start out with a minimum vow of 4 rounds. However, if they wanted to become a serious follower, he required the chanting of 16 rounds, which takes about 2 hours a day. Even this vow is nothing in comparison to the vows taken by some devotees. Many gurus in the past have chanted, and required their followers to chant, 64 rounds a day. There are 16 Names in each mahā-mantra, so, by chanting 64 rounds, a person would chant over 100,000 Names a day!

But still, there are devotees who chant more than this. And then, to top off all chanters there is the greatest japa chanter ever. At the time of Lord Caitanya's visit there was a devotee who chanted so much, and whose chanting was so pure, that Lord Caitanya gave him the title **Nāmācārya + nām-ā-chār-yuh**, this means **one who teaches others how to chant the Name by his own example**. This greatest of all chanters took a vow to chant over 300,000 names a day! Ten million Names a month! That's about 192 rounds a day! Although this chanting took him about 20 hours a day, he completed it without fail.

So our request was an absolute minimum. We hope you will decide on your own to increase it and that you will keep a vow of at least two rounds a day. Then we want you to send us a request letting us know, in detail, what we must do to send a set of beads to you. We can also send you a cloth bag that the beads are kept in. Check with your chaplain, and if you can also receive this gab, you may request one along with your beads.

Our inmate contributor tells us that some prison systems will only allow inmates to receive religious items that pertain to their officially registered religion. If you face that type of situation you should discuss it with your chaplain. If you are fully convinced that you wish to continue to practice bhakti-yoga then you may be able to do whatever paperwork is necessary to designate yourself as belonging to an officially recognized religion that

uses prayer beads. If however, you are not yet ready to make that type of change, then other options may be available. Again, we suggest that you discuss receiving the beads with your chaplain. (For more information on receiving beads, see the section below)

Japa is generally done in a low tone of voice, however there are no set rules on this factor of the practice. The great chanter that we just spoke of always chanted loudly, in that way his chanting benefitted not only himself but others who heard it as well. Chanting in prison will most likely require quiet japa, or even silent japa. An interesting note on this point is that if you refer back to the definition of japa that we gave you, you will see that it spoke of chanting verbally, or "within the heart," but not within the mind.

This factor of japa goes back to what we discussed when we first gave you the mahā-mantra, the concept of chanting with a certain mood. We are going to discuss that again in next month's lesson, but we cannot over-emphasize the importance of this factor. To just say the sounds of the mantra without hearing them, or while the mind focuses on temporary things, is a very low-grade level of chanting.

Making a commitment to chanting japa every day is something that every serious follower of Lord Caitanya does. We strongly encourage you to take up this practice. The longer you practice this process the sweeter it becomes, until at some point you will understand and appreciate that the Names are Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. When this happens, you will experience great joy as you associate with the Divine Couple each day.

In later sections of this lesson we are going to briefly cover the three levels of chanting that we will progress through as we develop our chanting practices. Then we'll close out this lesson by giving you the details of the remaining offenses against the Names. We absolutely must avoid these offenses if we want our chanting to bring us closer to our ultimate goal.

Our hope is, that by the time you have completed this lesson, you will be fully prepared to engage in the most focused and heartfelt chanting that you have done so far.

#### How to request Japa Beads

It is now possible, for those of you who have made a serious commitment to chanting, to receive a set of japa beads. The most important thing you must do is become absolutely sure that you understand the policies that regulate your receiving of these beads.

To request beads, you must send us **exact** and **fully detailed** instructions telling us how to send these beads to you. If you know nothing about this process, you may want to start with your chaplain.

Some facilities may require you to be listed in your prison file as a member of a faith that uses chanting beads. As of now we are not officially recognized. We can, however, suggest a recognized faith whose guidelines do include chanting and japa beads. If such a listing is required, you may want to list yourself as a member of ISKCON, the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. Some inmates tell us that they must jump such hurdles in order to receive beads.

We can also send you a cloth bag that is used to keep the beads in, both during your chanting and while in storage. Check with your chaplain, and if you can receive this bag you may request one.

Along with detailed mailing instructions we ask you to send a letter stating that you have chanted at least two rounds of the mahā-mantra (216 mantras) every day for at least one month, and a statement that you are committed to maintaining your chanting. We would also appreciate a few comments about your chanting experiences. You may share things like why you chant, what you feel you gain by chanting, or anything else you'd like us to know about your bhakti practices. When we send your beads, we will also include a sheet of instructions about using and caring for your beads. Please send your letters and requests to the following

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address. We look forward to providing this service to you.

IBPYS Prison Preaching Program  
c/o R. Smith  
13400 N.W. 140th St. #1502  
Alachua, FL 32615

### The Three Levels of Chanting

For the vast majority of us, the chanting process involves three successive stages. Some purified souls, who enter their lives in advanced spiritual states, may begin their chanting at the middle, or even the highest stage, but those souls are rare. We want you to know this so you will not feel discouraged to find yourself situated below the topmost level.

By becoming aware of these levels, and the qualities of the chanting they include, we will be able to know what we need to do to rise to the next level. When our chanting reaches the highest stage, each Name that we chant will allow us to taste a wide variety of sweet spiritual emotions.

#### Stage One: Chanting with Offenses

By the time you finish this lesson you will have been given a description of all of the various offenses to the Holy Names. When we begin to practice the chanting process we will probably commit some of these offenses.

We've told you that the way to overcome these offenses is to continue chanting, so even if we chant with offenses, it's better than not chanting at all. When we chant at this level the effectiveness of our chanting is severely limited.

We can still make progress while our chanting is at this level because our other bhakti practices, such as worshipping Śrīla Gurudeva can help us move forward. But, since chanting is our most effective tool, we don't want to try to uncover our prema without it.

#### Stage Two: The Shadow of the Names

When we see the shadow of something we can get an idea of what the object is, say for instance a hand or a round object, but we cannot determine its true nature. The hand could belong to a man or a woman; a person of any race; or of a social status. The round object may be an apple, a ball, or a hubcap.

So chanting the Names in the second stage gives us some idea of what chanting really is but not a true picture.

As long as we remain in illusion, allowing māyā to control our thoughts and actions our chanting will remain at this level. And yet there are great benefits even at this stage. Let's look at some of the things that cause our chanting to remain at this level and at the benefits we so receive at this level, as well.

When we chant with a wandering mind, our chanting is shadow chanting. We told you that during japa your minimum level of focus should include clearly pronouncing and carefully hearing the Names. As we progress in chanting we will move our focus to things such as Śrī guru and various teachings that we need to absorb into our heart. Then we'll learn to progressively focus on the Names, Forms, qualities, associates, and pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

These stages must be reached gradually. It is not wise to rush forward. We should be firmly established at each level of realization before we move to the next.

For now we've given you three very basic practices; clear pronunciation, attentive listening, and focusing on a picture of the Divine Couple. We've also shared a technique that can be practiced at all levels, chanting with a mood of separation.

When you are chanting, and the mind wanders, you should use these practices to help you refocus the mind on your chanting.

Learning to chant with a focused mind is a very critical part of making progress in our chanting practices. Some of our gurus have explained inattentive chanting as shadow chanting, while others, considering this type of chanting to be more dangerous, have listed it among the offenses to the Holy Names.

While it is improper to try to guess what a guru is thinking, it is reasonable to consider variations in teachings that arise in order

to discover the consistency or compatibility of different viewpoints.

Before we examine this subject we should tell you that inattentive chanting has been divided into three main categories: indifference or inattention, distraction, and laziness. This discussion will focus on the first two of these categories. We will discuss more about laziness at another time.

In our attempt to reconcile these two views on the severity of inattentive chanting we're going to look at two main factors: the intent behind the unfocused chanting, and whether it was purposefully done.

If one is doing his very best to keep the mind focused on the Names, or whatever spiritual subject he is concentrating on, and the mind simply drifts away momentarily, as long as the chanter immediately refocuses it, as soon as he notices that it has wandered, then his chanting is probably not offensive, however, it is still shadow chanting.

If however, when the chanter notices that the mind has wandered, he latches on to a non-devotional train of thought and contentedly rides along, thinking about material subjects for as long as the mind stays focused there, without making any attempt to bring it back under control, then his chanting is likely offensive to the Names.

We can use this example: If you invite someone to visit your home, welcome them in, but then totally ignore them while you go about doing whatever business you please, that would clearly be very disrespectful.

Similarly, when we chant, we invite the Divine Couple into our presence. To totally ignore Them, while we follow the mind to wherever it chooses to lead us, is offensive to the Holy Names, which are the Divine Couple Themselves.

So these considerations focus on a chanter whose original intent was to chant attentively, but who then must deal with a wandering mind. Accidental, quickly corrected loss of focus probably does not rise to the level of offense, whereas offenses do arise if we notice the loss of focus and allow it to go on unchecked. The other factor we'll look at is the intent behind the chanting.

If we sit down to chant with no intent to focus the mind on spiritual subjects, we are definitely doing offensive chanting. If we chant with the intention of seeking material rewards, even if we think about the Names, or look at Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa while doing so, we are being offensive. We cannot use the Names as a type of prayer for our material desires to be fulfilled.

If we are using the Names simply as a means to focus the mind, as a form of "meditation," with our only true intent being to "feel peaceful" or some other such nonsense, we are offending the Names.

Even if we believe we are using the Names as a part of a spiritual practice, if the intent of that practice is to "eliminate the self," or to "merge with God," or any similar ridiculous goal, we are chanting offensively.

A non-offensive chanter understands that the Names are both the goal and the means to achieve the goal. If our intent is to use the Names only as a temporary tool that we want to use to reach any goal other than prema, or if we think we can give up the Names (which is the same as giving up our relationship with the Divine Couple) once we reach some superior level of consciousness, then our use of Names, and all of the chanting we do, is offensive.

We also want to point out that some of these offenses can also be classified under offense number 8, considering the Names to be equal to other activities that are designed to bring about temporary results. This shows us that we can simultaneously commit multiple offenses.

All these examples show us that if we chant while we intentionally focus on any goal other than one related to attaining prema we offend the Names.

Inattentive chanting is never pure chanting, but as long as it is

not intentionally done, and as long as we correct our focus the moment we notice our loss of concentration, then we are at least at the level of shadow chanting. This is still an effective means of purifying our heart and consciousness and will bring us closer to the level of pure chanting.

We pray that we have properly analyzed the subject of when inattentive chanting is shadow chanting, and when it rises to the level of offensive chanting. We also pray that any offense we may have committed in carrying out this analysis will be forgiven. We sincerely apologize if we have in any way misunderstood this subject or put forth faulty considerations.

If we want to chant purely, we must chant with full attention, with the intent of reaching prema, by serving our gurus, the sādhus, and the Divine Couple through the process of chanting the Holy Names.

If someone says a Holy Name without meaning to refer to, or to callout to the person the Name refers to, it will also be shadow chanting. For example, in India there is a river called the Kṛṣṇa river. Someone who knows nothing about Lord Kṛṣṇa may say this river's name, meaning to indicate the river. If the Names are said in this way. They are shadow Names.

When a person says the Names jokingly, antagonistically, or even disrespectfully, he is also shadow chanting. As long as these types of chanting are done by someone who is unaware that they are being offensive, the Names will still provide them with Their mercy, but if they know they are being offensive to the Names then it is offensive chanting.

The amazing benefit of shadow chanting is that even speaking the Names in these ways will eliminate a person's entire history of sins. One can escape the cycle of birth and death through shadow chanting but he cannot attain prema for Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in this way. Since we cannot attain our goal by shadow chanting we should be committed to rise to the next level of chanting.

The four types of shadow chanting that we have discussed so far: speaking the Names to indicate something else; and speaking them jokingly, antagonistically, or disrespectfully, can all be performed even by those who lack faith in the Names and by those who are ignorant of Vedic truths.

Both of these factors, lack of faith and ignorance, will prevent us from rising beyond the stage of shadow chanting. This is one of the reasons that we shared the information on relationships with you. As long as one remains ignorant of how the Lord, the jīva, and māyā are situated, and what the relationships between them are, one cannot reach the level of pure chanting. Similarly, until one develops faith in the Names and Their glories, he can only perform shadow chanting.

Another factor that can keep us at this level is the presence of various obstacles that obstruct us on the path to prema. We will discuss these obstacles next month. As part of that discussion we will refer back to this lesson, in order to tie those obstacles in with the topic of shadow chanting. For now we'll just let you know that as long as these obstacles remain in our path, our chanting will remain in the shadow stage.

Now we're going to share some great news with you. This news will tie the last two topics we've discussed together in a very encouraging way.

Within the stage of shadow chanting there are two very distinct levels. Those who lack faith in the Names are on the lower level, those with faith, the higher.

The good news for those on this lower level is that by chanting the Names, even without faith in Them, they will build sukṛti, the spiritual credits that will awaken their faith and bring them to the higher level.

The good news for those who already have faith in the Names is that by avoiding the offenses, and chanting with faith, the obstacles that we will discuss next month are easily destroyed.

By this we can see that just as faith is a necessary ingredient in building a strong foundation on the path to prema, faith is also a necessary ingredient in our progress toward pure chanting.

It is through faithful chanting and an understanding of the relationships between the Lord, the jīva, and māyā, that we will rise to the level of pure chanting.

### **Stage Three: Pure Chanting**

The result of pure chanting is prema. The best way to move from shadow to pure chanting is to associate with sādhus and chant under their guidance. In a prison setting this guidance will often times have to come from this course, books, or a pen pal, but these can help you reach this level.

Along with proper association, we must give up all association with non-devotees. This does not mean moving to a cave and never speaking to anyone. We can still deal with people as circumstances require, but we should minimize our interactions down to the lowest possible levels.

We also need to abandon our material desires and all of our ill feelings toward others. We need to fill our hearts with compassion and we need to develop all of the qualities of highly developed faith that we discussed in Lesson 2.

It is also critical for us to take shelter of a guru. This necessary ingredient of pure chanting will be focused on again next month.

If we whole-heartedly work on these things, and we continue to keep our vow to chant a specific number of Names each day, then we can become a pure chanter.

Of course the first thing we must do is overcome the offenses to the Names. With that goal in mind let's move on so that we can discuss the offenses that we've yet to cover.

### **Offending the Names - Offenses 1 Through 6**

Last month we discussed the last four of the ten offenses to the Holy Names. We followed this unusual pattern for two reasons; space considerations, and the fact that we wanted to the offense of sinning on the strength of the Holy Names right away, so that we could fully clarify that we cannot abuse the sin forgiving powers of the Names.

This month we'll cover the first six offenses. When you read about the first offense you may notice something that seems to present a slight contradiction to a teaching we've shared earlier. This will surround the ability of the Names to rectify any offenses that we do commit. We hope that our explanation on this point will clarify this issue.

We've done our best to make you aware of the seriousness of these offenses and the critical need to avoid making them.

Knowing the importance of this topic, we ask you to study these offenses, memorize them, and to set your heart and intelligence to work on avoiding them at all costs.

### **Offense Number 1**

#### **To Blaspheme Devotees and Sādhus.**

First we will discuss the meaning of the word 'blaspheme', as this is not a word that we commonly see. To blaspheme means to speak about in a disrespectful way or to say things without considering the holiness of the person or thing that you are talking about. For example, some sādhus abandon all income producing activities. They rely 100% on the Lord for their sustenance. It is actually out of mercy that they will sometimes beg a little food or drink from people, because people can gain great spiritual benefit by giving charity to them. If someone chases them away from their door, calls them names, or even thinks of them as useless, common beggars, they have committed blaspheme.

It is of course also an offense to disrespect them in more physical ways. For example, one of Lord Caitanya's instructions was that we should join together in groups and chant in public. We do this to deliver the Holy Names to the ears and hearts of the common people. If someone does something to prevent or disrupt this activity, they are committing an offense against the Holy Names. There are many factual historical cases where this has been done. Even in Lord Caitanya's times people would break the devotees drums or have the government order them to stop chanting. In modern times someone may throw things at the

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devotees or try to block their passage. These are all great offenses against both the sādhus and the Holy Names as well.

One of our gurus has included criticizing the devotees and sādhus within this offense. This could include things like saying negative things about their lifestyle or activities. Such as; they are only fools who are trying to escape from reality, or that they waste all of their time singing about God but they do nothing to contribute to society. These types of closed-minded criticisms are offensive.

We are also told that merely disregarding the sādhus is also an offense. This could include such things as ignoring and turning away from a sādhu who approaches you in an attempt to preach to you about Lord Caitanya's message, or refusing to accept a book on spiritual truths that is offered to you.

In discussing what types of people are included as devotees and sādhus, when it comes to this offense, our gurus have told us that this offense especially applies to anyone who has dedicated his life to spreading the Holy Names and Their glories. It should be quite easy to see why offending someone who is dedicated to serving the Holy Names in this way is also offensive to the Names Themselves.

There is yet another aspect of this offense that we need to share with you. We've previously discussed the fact that offenses to the Holy Names can be overcome by chanting. While this is almost always true, there are situations where this will not be the case.

When we discussed offense number seven we told you about a similar limitation on the purifying power of the Names. If we commit offenses, thinking that we will simply chant to overcome them, then that chanting will also become offensive, and since offensive chanting has almost no purifying effect, we may end up putting ourselves into a downward spiral.

To recover from the offense of blasphemy of a devotee, we must do more than just chant. We must go to that devotee, fall at his feet, and beg forgiveness for our actions.

In one of Lord Caitanya's biographies there are several stories about the seriousness of offending devotees. One of those stories involves the Lord's own mother. To help you understand how serious this offense is, we're going to share that story with you.

Lord Caitanya had an older brother. His brother was a very serious child who considered the spiritual side of life to be of the upmost importance. He loved to spend time at Śrī Advaita's house, studying the Vedas under his direction.

At a very young age he gave up all his family attachments and left home to take up the life of a wandering sādhu. After he left, his mother never saw him again.

Later, after Lord Caitanya received the mahā-mantra, He began His preaching mission. While preaching, He would pass out prema to most everyone He encountered, regardless of their status in life. And yet, after some time, His own mother had not received this gift.

His mother's name was **Sachī Devī**+**Suh-chee Day-vee**. Śrīvās Paṇḍita, who was a member of the Pañca-tattva and a dear friend of the Lord, became very concerned that Sachī Devī had not yet received the gift of prema. One day, when the Lord was handing out blessings to His followers, Śrīvās asked Him to give prema to Mother Sachī.

Lord Caitanya told Him that He would not do this because His mother had committed an offense against a sādhu. This news devastated Śrīvās. He could not understand how this could be enough of a reason to prevent her from attaining prema. In hopes of changing the Lord's mind he said that, since Sachī Devī was the Lord's own mother, it would be a death-blow to His followers if she were to be denied prema. He also said that a proper son could not possibly deny his own mother such a gift.

Although Lord Caitanya remained firm that He would not do this, He did reveal what could be done to relieve her of the offense, thus making her eligible for prema. He said that the only

way for her to be forgiven was for her to receive the foot dust of the person she had offended on her head. (The Vedas tell us that the foot dust of a devotee is very purifying) He also named Advaita Aḥarya as the sādhu whom she had offended.

The Lord's followers immediately gave this news to Sachī Devī, then all set out for Śrī Advaita's house.

When they told him what the situation was, he became overwhelmed with grief. He said he could not survive if this were the case, for how could he give a blessing to someone from someone who is so pure that he should be begging for foot dust from them. He considered Sachī Devī to be his own mother, and everyone else's mother as well, for she was the mother of the Lord of the Universe.

This dire situation proved too much for him to bare and he passed out, unconscious with grief. Taking this opportunity, mother Sachī took his foot dust. When she placed it on her head, she to fell unconscious.

Realizing that her offense was now cleared, everyone began to sing, dance and shout, "All glories to the Lord!" Lord Caitanya, who had also arrived on the scene, laughed at this great spectacle. He announced that now that His mother's offense was cleared, she could receive the gift of prema.

By performing this pastime, the Lord taught us about the seriousness of offending a devotee. No matter how advanced a person is, if they offend a devotee, they will be ruined.

To help us understand that even small offenses are not tolerated, the author tells us about the offense that mother Sachī had committed.

When her eldest son had left home, she had considered that Śrī Advaita might be to blame for his departure. She felt that the teachings he had given her son may have caused him to take up a sādhu's life.

Later, Lord Caitanya had also started going to Śrī Advaita's to hear the Vedas. By this time, her husband had passed away and she feared that Lord Caitanya might follow His brother's path, which would leave her all alone in the world. In this desperate mood she decided that perhaps Śrī Advaita was not a devotee at all, for how could a devotee cause her to suffer so, sending both of her sons away.

It was for this offense, questioning Śrī Advaita's devotion, that she had been denied prema. She had not even intentionally offended him, yet the offense still took effect. The Lord used this situation as an example to teach us the seriousness of this offense.

Reflecting on this story should help us to understand that if we should ever offend a devotee, we must go directly to that devotee and seek forgiveness, for this is the only means of forgiveness, and the treasure of prema will remain out of our reach if we do not rectify this offense.

We'll also make mention of the fact that the other stories in this book that deal with this offense also give dire warnings of the consequences the offender must face.

Perhaps the most frightening of all is that the power of the Holy Names is withdrawn from one who knowingly commits this offense and either refuses to acknowledge the offense or refuses to seek forgiveness from the devotee he has offended.

In such a case, Lord Caitanya tells us that He will personally see to the punishment of the offender. When we consider the fact that Lord Caitanya is glorified as the most merciful of all of the Lord's forms, finding out that this offense turns Him from deliverer to punisher should make it quite clear that we must never commit offenses against the Lord's devotees.

Three additional final points on this offense are mentioned by one of our gurus.

He tells us that we should reject from our heart all tendencies to disrespect anyone who has dedicated himself to the Holy Names. He also tells us that we should accept such devotees as the most saintly of all persons, and having done so, we should seek out their association, perform chanting of the Holy Names in their company, and take instructions from them on the glories of

the Holy Names.

The final point we will make about offending a devotee is this: devotees of the Lord are famous for their compassion. If we do somehow offend one, and we go to them with a sincere apology, they will surely accept it, so we should never hesitate to do so. It is only by making this apology that we can ensure that the full potency of the Holy Names will remain available to us, and without the mercy of the Names, we will never complete our journey to prema.

### **Offense Number 2**

#### **To Consider the Demigods to be Equal to or Independent of the Supreme Lord.**

To explain this offense, we must first discuss what is meant by the term “demigod.” This term refers to individuals that could also be referred to as “god” with a small “g” as opposed to God with a capital “G.” These individuals are empowered by God to manage certain aspects of the material worlds. They may be in charge of creating a material universe or destroying one, or they may oversee a department in nature, like the winds or the rain, but their power & their position is totally dependent on God. They receive all their power and authority from Him.

The role the demigods play in the grand scheme of things is too large of a subject for us to develop right now. The important points to consider here are that the **demigods are not God**, and **they are not equal to Him**. We have nothing to gain from them that we cannot gain from God, as they are only allowed to act with His approval. Therefore to consider them to be equal to or independent of God, or to believe that we can receive the same benefit from chanting their names as we can from chanting God’s names, is an offense to the Holy Names.

There is another aspect to this offense as well. While we must always be aware of the difference between God and the demigods, we still must give proper respect to these servants of the Lord. To criticize them, or the scriptures that glorify them, is also an offense.

There are no special means of rectifying these offenses. If we commit them we are simply to try to avoid committing them again by surrendering to and remembering the special and topmost glories of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of God.

### **Offense Number 3**

#### **To Disobey a True Guru Who Reveals the Truth About the Holy Names.**

In future lessons we will go into even more detail about the guru than we did in Lesson 2. When we do so, one of the things we will discuss is that our service to the guru is just as, if not more important than our service to God. For many of us, coming to the point where we can understand and fully accept this fact will be one of our greatest struggles on our journey to prema. This is because full surrender to the guru requires maximum humility, total faith, and complete destruction of our false ego.

In explaining this third offense to the Holy Names our gurus have told us that we are not to consider the guru to be an ordinary human being, and to do so is an offense. They tell us that the main reason that many of us are unable to fully surrender to our guru is because of this offense.

If we have a pure spiritual vision of the guru, if we can see that the guru is a direct representation of God, that he is in fact one of God’s limbs, then we will understand that we must accept his instructions without any considerations whatsoever. If we can come to the point where we realize that the guru presents only pure truths, then we will obey his every instruction. This type of humble service position can guarantee our success in life.

When we discussed the guru in Lesson 2 we told you that the most important quality he must possess is the ability to lead us to prema. We should learn the steps to prema and begin to judge if we are progressing toward the goal, for if we keep our promises, and practice the processes he gives us, we will uncover our treasure.

If we see the guru as an ordinary person then we may begin to

question, doubt, or reject his instructions. These offenses can cause us to lose our way on our journey to prema. Therefore the gurus who have told us about this offense to the Holy Names have said that considering the guru to be an ordinary person is the greatest of all offenses. The Vedas tell us that if we offend and fail to receive the mercy of the guru, we will not receive the mercy of God.

Another aspect of this offense relates to the fact that the guru who gives instructions on the Holy Names is the best of all gurus. There may be other gurus that are qualified to give instructions on other types of bona fide yoga systems, the lower steps on the staircase to prema, but the guru who gives instruction on bhakti-yoga, and especially on the Holy Names and Their glories is superior, and it is an offense to think that these other gurus are equal to him.

Included within this explanation is the fact that it is our duty to have strong faith in the guru of the Names, and to lovingly serve him as well. We have told you that strong faith can carry us through all obstacles that we may encounter on our journey to prema. If we can put all of our faith in the guru, accepting him to be fully capable of leading us to our goal, then nothing will prevent us from following his instructions, and nothing will prevent us from reaching our goal.

If we associate with non-devotees, or if we read literature that gives false teachings, or if, out of our own weakness or lack of understanding, we commit this offense we should give up this bad association, stop reading these bogus books, and we should approach our guru with great sorrow in our hearts. If we do this, along with continuing our faithful chanting, we will surely be forgiven for committing this offense.

### **Offense Number 4**

#### **To Criticize the Portions of the Vedas Which Describe the Glories of the Holy Names.**

As we have discussed, the Vedas are divided into many different sections. Each of us sits at our own unique level, when it comes to the spiritual qualities we have and our qualification to understand and accept the Vedas. These qualifications will also determine the sections of the Vedas that we will be attracted to.

Of course our current level is not set in stone. We can change it by association with sādhus and by performing the processes of bhakti-yoga.

The portions of the Vedas which describe the Holy Names and their glories are the life and soul of the Vedas. These portions also include instructions on who should chant, what to chant, when to chant, why we should chant, how to chant, and how a true servant of the Name should live. They also tell us about the powers of the Names Themselves.

It is an offense to consider other portions of the Vedas to be equal to or of greater importance than those that describe these aspects of the Names, or to criticize these portions in any way. Those who are attracted to other portions of the Vedas, and who are more qualified to accept and practice other yoga systems will sometimes say negative things about the portions that propound the glories of the Names, in order to support their belief that they are practicing a superior form of yoga. This is an offense to the Holy Names

Our gurus have also explained this offense to include criticism of any portion of the Vedas. Ultimately, all of the Vedas are designed to lead us to the Holy Names. So, even though some portions of the Vedas are aimed at those with lesser spiritual qualifications, all of the Vedas are to be held in high regard and we are not to criticize any portion.

There is another aspect of this offense that is not apparent based upon its title. Many different false gurus have taught various distorted versions of the Vedas. If we develop faith in any teaching that does not accept the truth of the relationships that we discussed; or if we have faith in any teaching that does not accept prema as our goal; or if we consider any teaching to be equal to, or superior to, the teaching that prema is our goal and that bhakti-

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yoga is the only means to reach it, then we commit the offense of disrespecting the scriptures.

Along with chanting, we can help ourselves to overcome this offense by feeling sorrowful for committing this offense and by making an offering of flowers to the Vedas. Because they are a manifestation of the Lord, the Vedas are also full of mercy and are very forgiving.

### **Offense Number 5**

#### **To Consider the Glories of the Holy Names to be an Exaggeration or to Create One's Own Interpretation of Them.**

The Vedas are full of descriptions of the glories of the Holy Names. It is not that these descriptions are confined only to certain areas or certain books. When we speak of the portions of the Vedas that contain these descriptions we include every single verse that does so.

Earlier we mentioned how an unlimited number of sins can be eliminated by saying the Lord's name just one time. This fact appears in many different places. It is an offense to consider such a statement to be an exaggeration. In upcoming lessons we will tell you other incredible glories of the Names. All of these glories must be accepted as fact if we wish to avoid this offense. If we think that maybe our sins can be forgiven by chanting the Names, but that this only happens a little bit at a time, then we are considering Their glories to be an exaggeration and committing this offense.

We have told you that Kṛṣṇa is fully present in His name. The full realization of this will generally only come after we have made quite a bit of progress on our journey. However, until the time comes when we personally experience this to be true we need to accept this as much as we can. If we think that it is an exaggeration to believe that the Names of God are a form of God Himself, we are committing an offense.

This aspect of the Names, failing to see Them as equal to God, has also been put under the second offense based on some statements in the Vedas. We saved it to present it to you under this offense because this oneness of God and His names is one of Their glories as well.

As to the second part of this offense, creating our own interpretations on the Names, this offense is usually committed by those who do not accept the glories of the Name to be true, either because they consider Them exaggerations, or else products of the imagination, the next offense we will cover. Therefore this offense has been listed under both the fifth and sixth offense.

Those who are attracted to other portions of the Vedas can become very attached to, and defensive of, those portions. Those portions may be designed to allow them to fulfill deep-seated desires that they have. Not wanting to give up those desires they create interpretations as to the purposes and powers of the Holy Names, even going so far as to say that the Names are designed to be used within their own practices, to reach the ends they desire. For example someone may say that the Names are to be used as prayers to obtain material wealth. Creating these bogus interpretations is an offense to the Holy Names.

If we commit this offense, and want to overcome it, we can chant and we can go to devotees who discuss the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His Names and ask their forgiveness. Such devotees are very merciful and their forgiveness will assist you in not committing this offense again.

We are also warned that we should not discuss spiritual truths with those who commit this offense. Hearing them degrade the glories of the Holy Names should be avoided at all costs and we should chant or purify ourselves through other bhakti practices if we hear such slander.

### **Offense Number 6**

#### **To Consider the Holy Names and Their Glories to be a Product of the Imagination.**

Some people are entirely unaware that the Vedas exist. Others

may know they exist but know nothing about what they teach. These unfortunate souls are especially vulnerable to this offense. They just cannot accept the glories of the Holy Names to be based on the facts so they decide that the Names and Their glories are just products of the imaginations of ordinary men.

Everything we will tell you about the Holy Names and Their glories will be true statements that are based upon information given to us by God Himself. No average, un-empowered person just made these things up. When God was here 500 years ago, as Lord Caitanya, He personally confirmed the glories of the Holy Names and this course is really nothing more than a continuation of the teachings He presented. To think that the Holy Names and Their glories are products of the imagination is offensive.

For people of lower spiritual qualification, this offense can be easily committed. Someone who considers the glories of the Holy Names to be exaggerations (the fifth offense) has at least accepted that the Names are actually the Names of God. Those who doubt even this truth, who believe that the Names and Their glories are just the mental creations of a human being, commit this sixth offense. We often see Lord Kṛṣṇa and His activities, which factually existed on this planet about 5,000 years ago, referred to as "myths." People who use this term do not believe Kṛṣṇa ever existed.

This same mentality leads people to believe all of the Vedas and their histories and teachings are just stories that were made up out of someone's imagination.

Perhaps some of you who are taking this course are strong enough to at least admit that you feel this way too. If that is the case then you should just continue to chant with as much sincerity as you can. If you feel the Names and Their glories are just imaginary creations you will probably feel the same way about the personalities They belong to. If you feel that way, there is little chance that you will be able to understand these personalities. Considering Them to be unreal is in itself offensive, and that position could easily lead to even more serious offenses.

We have warned you that offending Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is even more serious than offending the Names. If you do not believe the mahā-mantra is a direct manifestation of God, that all His powers and glories are contained within His names, and that these Names are the Names of God's original forms, then you should chant these Names and pray for the insight to overcome these offenses before you risk piling even greater offenses on top of these already serious ones.

This offense is similar to offense number 5, so if we happen to commit it we can follow the same recommendations given in the last two paragraphs of that offense.

#### **Some Final Comments on Offending the Names**

So, now you have the complete list of offenses as well as some fairly detailed information on each offense. We all need to learn these offenses and avoid making them. If we can do that, we are assured of rising to at least the second level of chanting, shadow chanting. Then if we can chant with faith we will rise to the upper stage of this level as well.

By chanting with faith, we will also overcome the obstacles that we will list for you next month. Knowing this ahead of time will allow you avoid becoming overly concerned when you see the many obstacles that can obstruct us on our journey to prema.

We've done our best to convince you to learn and avoid these offenses. We pray that you succeed in doing so.

#### **Review and Closing**

This lesson started out with a short note on the dilemmas we presented last month. Do you remember what our dilemma was? What yours was? Or do you need to go back and review them?

In the next section we shared several reasons why we all need to proceed on our journey to prema, regardless of how far we've traveled so far. Can you recall all those reasons?

After a short discussion about how the path of knowledge relates to bhakti, we shared some valuable truths about the jīva,

māyā, and the Lord. We explained the relationships that exist between them and we spoke of how they relate to the Lord's śaktis. Do you remember these topics?

We talked about four different types of chanting as well. Can you name them? Can you describe their similarities and their differences?

We also asked you to make a serious vow to chant a certain number of mahā-mantras each day. How many was it?

Do you remember the three levels of chanting? Or what the results of each type of chanting will be?

In our final major section we continued our description of the offenses against the Holy Names. Now that you have this complete list you should learn these offenses so that you can do all that you can to avoid them.

When we chant with offenses we mainly tread water, as we purify our chanting we will be able to rapidly swim across the ocean of a material sufferings until we reach the land of prema.

We included these offenses on last month's pocket aide. We again encourage you to study and learn these offenses. By committing things to memory we build a strong foundation of spiritual knowledge. This knowledge will often support our faith, and upon these steady principles we can then build our tower of bhakti.

Now that we've given you these offenses, and done our best to help you build some faith and devotion, were going to begin to help you develop systems that will allow you to improve your chanting and give you ways to enter into the moods of bhakti.

For this month's practices we ask you to please take the mahā-mantra vow that we suggested and to do all you can to keep it. Of course we always ask you to seriously study this lesson, to learn the teachings it presents, and then to act on your understanding of these teachings.

Remember, as you chant the Names without offenses, to call out to the Divine Couple with love and a mood of separation. "Oh Kṛṣṇa! Where are You? Hare! I miss You. Oh Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, please help my desire to serve you grow stronger every day."

**You are always in our prayers.**

**May you empty your heart of material desires,  
And fill it with love for the Lord.**

**We are, the servants of God's servants,  
The IPBYS Prison Program  
All glories to Śrīla Gurudeva!**

### Śrīmad Bhagavad-Gita

#### Quotes for Study, Meditation, or Memorization

**2.70** – The ocean is not disturbed by the countless rivers that constantly flow into it. Similarly, the mind of a man who has a steady intelligence does not become disturbed, even though the countless desires of the senses are always flowing into it. One who is in this state can attain peace; but one who strives to satisfy those rivers of desires will never be at peace.

**5.22** – All "pleasures" that arise, from the senses coming into contact with the object that they desire, have a beginning and an end, and thus, they can only be sources of misery. Knowing this to be true, a wise man does not desire these temporary "pleasures", nor does he take part in them or become attached to them.

**6.5** – We must deliver ourselves from the material ocean by cutting our chains of attachments. We must not allow the mind to degrade us (by dragging us deeper into that ocean). The mind can act as both a great friend (when it is controlled by our true ego and the intelligence), and as a terrible enemy (when it is controlled by the false ego and the desires of the senses).

**6.7** – One who has gained control of the mind (by practicing the science of yoga) remains very peaceful. With the mind absorbed in a state of samādhi, he is unaffected by dualities, and being

honored or dishonored. (This is because he is not attached to any material situation)

**6.9** – One's intelligence is at the highest level when he sees the equality of everyone: be they his friends or his enemies; those who are well-wishers to all; those who try to help others settle their differences; the sādhus (who look out for everyone's spiritual welfare); or the sinners (who care not about other, nor even themselves).

**6.19** – One who want to control the mind, by practicing the science of yoga, should always consider this teaching: The flame of a lamp, that is situated in a place with no winds, does not flicker.

**6.35** – There is no doubt that the mind is very unsteady, and difficult to control, but it can be done. One who wishes to do so must do two things: constantly practice the science of yoga, and give up attachment to all things that distract him from his path.



In this painting, Lord Nārāyaṇa is emerging from the ocean. We spoke about Him and His four-armed form in the last lesson.

Correspondence CourseLesson 8

1. Give the Sanskrit word for “sp̄iritual truth”?
  2. What can we do that will cause our practices on the path toward bhakti to have negative results?
  3. Can you give two ways to replace lost time?
  4. Name three ways we can increase our faith.
  5. What is sukritī? Say a few words about sukritī.
  6. Say a bit about māyā.
  7. What is śakti?
  8. Are we parts of God himself? If not, what are we?
  9. What is the soul composed of? say a little about your feelings as to this truth.
  10. Please share any comments you have on the illusion that we are parts of God Himself, or that we can “become one” with Him. Also, please let us know if our discussion on this topic benefitted you in any way.
  11. What is a jīva? What energy powers our material bodies? Where is this energy situated?
  12. Give three reasons why the subjects of God, the jīva, and māyā are worthy of being know.
- Note** — the sādhus have told us that we need to learn about the relationships between God, the jīva, and māyā. Therefore, we ask you to make a special effort to say as much as you can in answer to questions 13, 14, and 15.
13. **Discuss the relationship between God and the jīva.**
  14. **Discuss the relationship between God and māyā.**
  15. **Discuss the relationship between māyā and the jīva.**
  16. Are any of these relationships subject to change? If so, which ones, and why?
  17. Can the jīva overcome māyā entirely by his own efforts?
  18. Say a few words about the different types of chanting (loud group chanting, etc.).
  19. What does japa mean?
  20. What vow is an important part of japa?
  21. How many mantras are there in one “round” of japa?
  22. What are the three levels of chanting?
  23. What are the three most basic aspects of proper chanting?
  24. Say a few words about inattentive chanting.
  25. If we use the Holy Names as a tool to achieve a goal other than prema, what level of chanting are we on?
  26. Name at least three factors that will keep us at the level of shadow chanting.
  27. Name at least four aspects of pure chanting.
  28. How can we blaspheme a sādhu? What must we do to overcome this offense? Name the two most frightening things about this offense.
  29. Say a few words about the dangers of seeing Śrī guru as an ordinary person.
  30. Should we criticize any sections of the Vedas? Are any sections more important than others? If so, which ones?
  31. For you personally, what was the most important teaching in this lesson, and why did you choose that particular teaching

You may formally participate in this course by sending your answers to our Alachua team (see address—page 1), or you may use these questions for self-study