

What teaching we are getting from this pastime of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu? A realized emancipated soul cannot think of himself as competent or qualified in understanding the pastimes of the Supreme Lord. Realized souls are naturally humble because of their contact with the Highest Reality. Enslaved jivas or conditioned souls are always in contact with the things of the world over which they can dominate. So vanity and egotism are natural to them. Whenever anybody expressed his vanity in any form, he is not entitled to get the qualification of understanding the eternal transcendental pastimes of the Supreme Lord.

Now the problem is: how will the neophytes start bhajan or speak *hari-katha*, the highest form of devotion? Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has given advice in regard to this in his writings as well as his personal life. Whenever He started speaking *hari-katha*, He first took absolute shelter to the preceptorial channel. He has said in His teachings that the transcendental Reality can be understood only through hearing from a bona fide *shuddha bhakta* or *sadguru* (*adhokṣaja vastu sravanaika vedyā*). He has given emphasis on *śrauta-vāṇi-kīrtan*—to recapitulate what we have heard from the lips of bona fide *shuddha bhakta* with engrossment of mind. We conditioned souls, who aspire to get enhancement in devotion, are entitled to do *anukīrtan*: after intently hearing *hari-katha* from a bona fide devotee to reproduce it, praying the grace of the Guru and the Vaishnavas.

In this context, I am endeavouring in a feeble way to recapitulate the instructive precepts of our Most Revered Gurudeva His Divine Grace Om Vishnupad Srila Bhakti Dayita Madhav Goswami Maharaj, by going through His writings as well as to the extent of my memory of hearing His sermons.

Those who according to their respective eligibility have understood or realized the significance of the teachings of the scriptures and the teachings of great saints, may be broadly classified into two categories

(1) Adhirohavadaśrayī or Adhyakṣik

(2) Avarohavadaśrayī or Śaraṇāgata

The first regards the method of ascension or empiricism, while the second regards the method of descent or the process of unconditional surrender.

The Supreme Lord is One as He is Absolute or Infinite. Everything is within Him and subservient to Him. He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent. He is Saccidānanda, meaning all-Existence, all-Knowledge and all-Bliss. As He is the Cause of all causes and there is no cause of Him, He is self-effulgent. As per evidence of *śvetaśvatara Upaniṣad*, the Supreme Lord is *asamordha*—Nothing is equal to Him or more than Him. Therefore, the only way of realizing the Supreme Lord is by His grace. Grace descends to a completely surrendered soul. As for example, the self-luminous sun can be seen only through its rays. In a like manner, the self-effulgent Supreme Lord can be realized through His grace. The teachings of the authentic scriptures and the teachings of realized personal associates of the Supreme Lord can be understood by their grace through revelation. His Divine Grace Tridandi Swami Srimad Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj, founder of ISKCON, has clarified this as follows: "When one is enlightened with the knowledge by which ignorance is destroyed, than his knowledge reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime." (Bhagavad Gītā 5.15.)

Our most revered founder-president Srila Gurudeva,

in His representation in the first edition of the Gītā published from Book department of Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, has stated: "The empiricists according to their respective merits and intellectual capacity have interpreted differently about the significance of the Transcendental Holy Words of the Supreme Lord. The pride of the glory of their material wisdom acquired by empiricism (by the process of observation and experiment) will never be able to rescue them from the grip of nescience, and there is no possibility of the readers of their books to go beyond the domain of material realm and to reach the target of attaining actual transcendental theological knowledge."

The synonym of the English word 'logic' of the West is 'Tarkaśāstra' or 'Yukatividyā', in India. They have ascertained two methods of attaining knowledge, which have their basis in reasoning: the inductive method and deductive method. Whatever finite human beings with finite intellect may ascertain, whether inductive or deductive, is actually in the domain of process of ascension, which in India is called Avarohavāda. Induction refers to inferring of general law from particular instances, while deduction refers to inferring of particular instance from general law. In his book *Raja Vidya*, His Divine Grace Tridandi Swami Srimad Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj is writing: "There are two processes for attaining knowledge: one is inductive and the other is deductive. The deductive method is considered to be more perfect. We may take a premise such as, "All men are mortal," and no one need discuss how man is mortal. It is generally accepted that this is the case. The deductive conclusion is: "Mr. Johnson is a man; therefore Mr. Johnson is mortal." But how is the premise that all men are mortal arrived at? Followers of the inductive method wish to arrive at this premise through experiment and observations. We may thus study that this man died and that man died, etc.,

and after seeing that so many men have died we may conclude or generalize that all men are mortal, but there is a major defect in this inductive method, and that is that our experience is limited. We may never have seen a man who is not mortal, but we are judging this on our personal experience, which is finite. Our senses have limited power, and there are so many defects in our conditional state. The inductive process consequently is not always perfect, whereas the deductive process from a source of perfect knowledge is perfect. The Vedic process is such a process.'

In India, there are disciplic successions coming from Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya, Nimbārka, Viṣṇusvāmī and other great sages. The Vedic literatures are understood through the superior spiritual masters. Arjuna understood the Bhagavad-gītā from Kṛṣṇa, and if we wish to understand it, we have to understand it from Arjuna, not from any other source. If we have any knowledge of Bhagavad-gītā, we have to see how it tallies with the understanding of Arjuna. If we understand Bhagavad-gītā in the same way that Arjuna did, we should know that our understanding is correct. This should be the criteria for our studying of the Bhagavad-gītā. If we actually want to receive benefit from the Bhagavad-gītā, we have to follow this principle. The Bhagavad-gītā is not an ordinary book of knowledge which we can purchase from the market place, read and merely consult a dictionary to understand. This is not possible. If it were, Kṛṣṇa would never have told Arjuna that the science was lost. It is not difficult to understand the necessity of going through the disciplic succession to understand Bhagavad-gītā. If we wish to be a lawyer, an engineer or doctor, we have to receive knowledge from the authoritative lawyers, engineers and doctors. A new lawyer has to become an apprentice of an experienced lawyer, or a young man studying to be a doctor has to become an intern and work with those who are already

licensed practitioners. Our knowledge of a subject cannot be perfectionalized unless we receive it through authoritative sources. This has been acknowledged in the Bhagavad Gita:

"This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of religion. It is everlasting, and it is joyfully performed."

An evidence in this regard can also be given from Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Bhagavan Vāman Deva said to Śukrācārya, the renowned guru of demons: "Your disciple Bali Maharaj is in difficulty, it will be befitting for you to perform yajña for his benefit." On hearing this, Śukrācārya smiled and replied,

*mantrataṣ tantrataṣ chidraṁ, deśa-kālārha-vastutah
sarvaṁ karoti niśchidraṁ, anusankīrtanaṁ tava*

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 8.23.16

"My disciple has seen you and you have graced him by setting your Holy Lotus Feet on his head. He has performed 'Anusankirtan', meaning that he has recapitulated about your Name, Form, Attributes, Pastimes, after hearing about these from a bona fide *shuddha-bhakta*. Where is the necessity of performing *karmakāṇḍa yajña*? By utterance of your Holy Name and glories, all defects in the utterance of mantra and tantra (inversion of sequence) and sinister influence of place, time and articles are removed." *Anusankirtan* means recapitulation of the glories of Supreme Lord, heard through a bona fide preceptorial channel. Here also a condition is imposed, that the hearing should be from a bona fide devotee, not from a professional singer.

In order to establish how to sing the glories of Supreme Lord Sri Krishna and how to perform *Harinam*

without offence, it is necessary to remember the teachings of authentic scriptures. Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur in His explanation of the first verse of Śikṣāṣṭaka, written by Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, has stated that there are infinite forms of devotion, of which chanting of the Holy Name is the foremost. Nine principal devotional forms are stated by Prahlād Maharaj in the seventh canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Srila Rupa Goswami has given a list of sixty-four kinds of principal devotional forms in his book called Sri Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu. Supreme Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has given the following five principal forms of devotion: Association of sadhus, chanting of the Holy Name, hearing of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, dwelling in transcendental realm of Mathura Dham, and worship of Deities with firm faith. Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has emphatically said that out of these five forms of devotion, Nam-Sankīrtan is the best.

*bhajanera madhye śreṣṭha nava-vidhā bhakti
'kṛṣṇa-prema', 'kṛṣṇa' dite dhare mahā-śakti
tāra madhye sarva-śreṣṭha nāma-sankīrtana
niraparādhe nāma laile pāya prema-dhana
Sri Caitanya Caritāmṛta—Antya Lila 4.70-71*

"Nine forms of devotion are foremost amid all devotional forms. Krishna has got immense power to bestow Krishna-prema. Again, Nāma Sankīrtan is the best of all forms of devotion. One can get the highest wealth of Krishna-prema by doing Harinam without offences."

The scriptural evidence of Brhad Nāradya Purāṇa gives triple emphasis that there is no other way except Harinam in Kaliyuga—'Harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam, kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā'. Krishna-dvaipayana Veda Vyas Muni has concluded

his last and highest gift, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, with the following verse:

*nāma-sankīrtanam yasya
sarva-pāpa pranāśanam
pranāmo duḥkha-samanas
tam namāmi harim param
Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 12.13.23*

"I bow down to Supreme Lord Hari, the chanting of Whose Name can eradicate the cause of all sins and taking shelter of whom can completely destroy all miseries."

The criterion to understand what we are to do and what we are not to do, is stated in the Padma Purāṇa and is also mentioned in Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, as well as in Sri Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Madhya līlā 22.109):

*smartavyaḥ satataṁ viṣṇur vismartavyo na jātucit
sarve vidhi-niṣedhāḥ syur etayoḥ eva kinkarāḥ*

The devotional scriptural prescript is always to remember Vishnu and never to forget Him. There may be hundreds of devotional forms. The purpose of the list of devotional forms, or positive assertions, is to remember Krishna and the purpose of the list of prohibitions, or negative assertions, is never to forget Krishna. Any action which may not be in the list of prescribed devotional forms but makes us remember Krishna is allowed, and any action which may not be in the list of prohibitions but makes us forget Krishna is prohibited. The aspirant should carefully try to understand the implication of the devotional scriptural evidence of Vaiṣṇava-cintāmaṇi, mentioned in Hari-bhakti-vilās—

*agha-cchit smaranam viṣṇor
bahv-āyāsenā sādhyate
oṣṭha-spandana-mātreṇa
kīrtanam tu tato varam*

"It is extremely difficult for conditioned souls to remember Vishnu, Who can eradicate all sins but by moving the lips. Uttering the Holy Name is uttered it is supremely superior to the devotional practice of remembrance." The purpose of remembrance will be well-served by uttering the Holy Name.

*Kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra, nāma haite haya sarva-
jagat-nistāra*

"Krishna appears in the Form of 'Name' in Kaliyuga. The whole world will be rescued by Nāma, the Holy Name."

Before I joined the institution, I had the impression that whatever I learnt in the schools and colleges should be excluded or forgotten because all these teachings were for material benefit and had no connection with spiritualism. In fact, in my life in the family, I had no aptitude to speak to many friends and to recite or speak in any meeting. I used to hear and did not speak. After joining the institution, I had great interest in hearing *hari-katha* from Most Revered Srila Gurudeva and Gurudeva used to take me with Him everywhere at a stretch for a year and He wanted me to write letters as per His dictation. By that I had the opportunity to know many answers of the questions of the aspirants. After one year all of a sudden, He ordered me to speak in a meeting at 'Sri Shyamananda Gaudiya Math', in Midnapore (West Bengal). I was perturbed because I had no aptitude and no capacity to speak in the meetings. I thought that delivering speech was not a qualification of worshipping Krishna. If I would have known earlier that the qualification of delivering

speech is also required for Krishna-bhajan, I might not have joined the institution. I became unbalanced on hearing this direct order from Most Revered Gurudeva. Due to spiritual obligation, I had to stand in the meeting and I was incessantly praying for the grace of Nityananda Prabhu to rescue me from this peril. I could remember the first hymn written by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur in 'Śaraṇāgati' and explained that for 15 minutes. I was a bit astonished how I could speak. After that Gurumaharaj used to order me on several occasions to speak in the meetings. To remove my doubt, Gurumaharaj, said that aspirants of devotional practice should not have the aptitude to deliver speeches, but they must do *hari-kīrtan*, meaning that they should recapitulate what they had heard from Guru and Vaishnavas. The target of speaking should be for satisfaction of Krishna and not for any other ulterior motive. Hari-kīrtan is the highest devotional form in Kaliyuga, which is confirmed by Srila Jiva Goswami:

*'yadyapi anyā bhaktiḥ kalau kartavyā tadā, kīrtanābhya-
bhakti-sāmyogenaiva'*

"Although practice of other devotional forms are proper in Kaliyuga, but it should be done with Kīrtan bhakti."

One can speak about the glories of Sri Hari after hearing from a bona fide devotee—*ādau śravaṇam*. Without hearing from a realized soul, nobody can properly perform *kīrtan-bhakti*. In the explanation of the verse of Gītā (4.34), *tad viddhi pranīpātena paripraśnena sevayā, upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninas tattva-darśinah*, Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has interpreted *Pranīpāt* (or *Śaraṇāgati*) as follows: "One who hears hari katha intently from shuddha bhakta, actually has submitted to Supreme

Lord Sri Hari." Even in the highest Transcendental Realm Goloka Vrindavana, the foremost devotees (*gopis*) relish the sweetness of the Name, Form, Attributes and Pastimes of Sri Krishna, always afresh. Narration and also hearing of the glories of Sri Krishna never becomes stale. That transcendental sweetness of Sri Krishna always remains afresh and new. Entrance to that Transcendental Realm is only through hearing. Here in this world, sound is the finest element, but in Transcendental Realm sound is the first appearance of getting contact of the Transcendental Reality. That transcendental sound is designated as *Śabda brahman*, which is completely distinct from material sound. Sound emanating from material egos is material sound, but sound emanating from transcendental ego is transcendental sound.

In the material sound of this world, sound and the thing indicated by the sound are different. As for example, by uttering the word 'water', one cannot quench his thirst. The 'water' word is different from 'water' thing. But in Transcendental Realm, Transcendental Sound is identical with Transcendental Reality. This Transcendental Sound descends. Śrīla Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur in His explanation of the first verse of *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, has written at the beginning of His writing— 'Sri Kṛṣṇa Kīrtanāya Namaḥ'. Worldly people cannot understand the implication of these words. We can make obeisance to a person, how one can bow down to 'Kṛṣṇa Kīrtana'? 'Sri Kṛṣṇāya Namaḥ', 'Sri Rāmāya Namaḥ', 'Sri Nārāyaṇāya Namaḥ' are easy to understand but 'Sri Kṛṣṇa Kīrtanāya Namaḥ' seems to be absurd. Here Śrīla Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur indicates by His words that 'Krishna Kīrtan' and 'Krishna' are both are identical. One who has this realization is entitled to do Kṛṣṇa-Nāma. Just after that, in the explanation of the above verse, He has written: *Sri Kṛṣṇa Sankīrtanakārī Gurudevā jaya hauḥ*, meaning: "I pray for

the grace of guru, who can actually utter the Name of Krishna." According to Him, the Name and Named are identical. In the third line, Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes *Sri Kṛṣṇa Sankīrtana Vighraha Gaurāṅga Māhāprabhuḥ jaya hauḥ*, meaning: "I pray for the grace of Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu, Whose *vighraha* (Form) is identical with Krishna-sankīrtan." By these three expressions at the beginning, Saraswati Goswami Thakur has explained everything. Hence submission to a bona fide guru or a bona fide *śuddha bhakta* signifies hearing of the glories of Krishna from them. We are to hear from such realized souls who can speak *hari-katha*. Others are not entitled to speak *hari-katha*.

According to Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is the quintessence of all scriptures and the highest authentic scriptural evidence in support of His message of All-embracing and All-accommodating Transcendental Divine Love. Sri Krishna Dvaipayana Veda Vyas Muni is universally regarded as Guru by all schools of thought of Sanatan Dharma in India. He himself has stated in his own writing *Garuda Purāṇa*:

*artha 'yam brahma-sūtrāṇām bhāratārtha-vinirṇayaḥ,
gāyatrī-bhāṣya-rūpo 'sau vedārtha-paribhṛtitaḥ'*

"*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is the meaning of the *Brahma Sūtras*. The significance of *Mahābhārata* and the world-famous *Gītā* is to be understood in the light of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. The *Bhāgavatam* is the commentary of *Kāma Gāyatrī*. The import of the teachings of the four Vedas is retained and expanded in *Bhāgavatam*."

Devotees are also well acquainted with the biography of Veda Vyas Muni in which he made the pastimes of not getting Eternal Bliss by expanding the Vedas, writing *Vedānta*, the eighteen *Purāṇas*, the *Mahābhārata* and the

Bhagavad Gītā. He prayed for the grace of his gurudeva Narada Goswami and went to Badrinarayan, a historical place by the side of river Saraswati. Narada Goswami appeared and advised him to sing the glories of Supreme Lord Sri Krishna for His satisfaction. He taught Veda Vyas Muni the 'Caturloki Bhāgavat'. By the grace of his Guru, the transcendental glories of Sri Krishna were revealed in his heart and he wrote Srimad Bhāgavatam consisting of 12 cantos and 18,000 verses, and received the highest objective—Eternal Bliss.

Veda Vyas Muni narrated the glories of Sri Krishna first to his disciple-son Sri Sukadeva Goswami. Actually, the first sitting of the Bhāgavatam was at Badrinarayan, where the speaker was Veda Vyas Muni and listener was only one: Sukadeva Goswami. Badrinarayan is Vaikuntha Dham. So the place of speaking and hearing was holy and completely calm and serene. The second sitting of the Bhāgavatam was at Sukartal by the side of the bank of the Ganges—still now quiet and secluded. At Sukartal, the speaker was Sukadeva Goswami and listeners were many prominent *rishi-munis* and kings of India. There was pin-drop silence. No disturbance of the hubbub of the worldly people. Parikshit Maharaj, being cursed by a Brahmin, went to Sukartal to get advice of the *rishi-munis*. The sages advised different paths. Parikshit Maharaj was puzzled and took shelter to Supreme Lord Sri Krishna to show him the actual path for eternal welfare. Subsequently, Sukadeva Goswami set his holy footprints there and advised him to only hear Bhāgavatam—Krishna-katha. Parikshit Maharaj was attracted by his spiritual personality, heard him for seven days continuously, without taking food, water and rest. We have to carefully note about the selection of the place for *hari-katha*. The third and last sitting of the Bhāgavatam was at Naimisaranya, where sixty thousand rishis heard the

Bhāgavatam from Suta Goswami. Here also the place selected was holy, calm and serene and there was pin-drop silence. Supreme Lord Sri Krishna in the form of Guru (Baladeva Prabhu) taught one lesson here. Lomaharshan Suta Goswami started speaking the Bhāgavatam, but Baladeva Prabhu punished him for his vanity and replaced him by his son Uggrasrava Suta Goswami.

Sri Baladeva Prabhu has a direct connection with the living beings of the cosmos. As such he has natural affection for all, especially for human beings who have been given discriminating power to understand good and bad, eternal and non-eternal. The human birth is befitting for worship of Sri Krishna. Baladeva Prabhu is the All-pervading Function-Holder of the Personal Godhead Sri Krishna, and also is the Prime Source of the All-embracing, All-pervading, All-extending Energy as depicted by Srila Saraswati Goswami Thakur. Sri Krishna in the Form of Baladeva Prabhu engages the conditioned souls in His service. A special excellent characteristic of Vishnu is that even if a person who is hostile to Divinity is killed by Vishnu, he will get deliverance. Out of affection, Baladeva Prabhu regulates and loves the conditioned souls of the universe. Baladeva Prabhu accepts five Forms: Maha Sankarshan, Karanabdhisayi Mahavishnu, Garbhodakshayi, Kshirodaksayi and Shesa. He has appeared as Nityananda Prabhu in Gaur-lila. So for worship of Sri Krishna, the grace of Baladeva Prabhu/Nityananda Prabhu is essential.

In our extensive previous aforesaid discussion, it has been delineated by reasoning and authentic scriptural evidence that the Supreme Lord can only descend to a completely bona fide surrendered soul. No conditioned soul can know the glories of the Unchallengeable Truth by His own efforts through the process of ascension. Unsubmissive

strivers can know nothing about the Supreme Lord and therefore they are incompetent to speak *hari-katha*. I must therefore try to recapitulate whatever I heard from my Most Revered Gurudeva for my own spiritual benefit. Gurumaharaj often used to say that one who knows Krishna (or perceives Krishna by realization) can speak about Him. How can one who has no realization of Krishna speak about Him? As the Supreme Lord is Absolute, His glories are infinite. His transcendental glories will be revealed to the hearts of the bona fide votaries according to the degrees of submission. Degrees of submission to God are ad-infinitum, so revelations of the glories of Divinity will also be ad infinitum. No votary can sing the glories of Supreme Lord completely. Realization of the incompleteness of the narration of the glories of Sri Krishna will always exist in the heart of a bona fide votary. A sincere devotee will always have the taste of the sweetness of Sri Krishna afresh, it will never become stale. Devotees, according to their degrees of devotion or submission will be entitled to speak to that extent about the glories, Name, Form, Attributes, Personal Associates and Pastimes of Sri Krishna. Our Most Revered Gurudeva used to give a simple instance for clarification of understanding. There is a person bearing a particular name, say 'Rambabu'. The person who has never seen him, never come in contact with him, cannot speak anything about him. The person who has seen him externally, he can speak to some extent about external denominations, like his appearance, his dress and the like. But the person who has come closer to him by way of a master-servant relation will be able to speak about him much more than the person who has seen him from a distance. But between master and servant, due to gravity of reverence the relation is such that both cannot exchange their hearts freely. Love in this relation is restricted by inferiority and superiority complex, and

therefore hampers unrestrained outpouring of thoughts and affection. A servant can speak much more than the indifferent and unconcerned person. Whereas a bosom friend can have entrance into the secret thoughts of Rambabu because of reliance. The friend can know the inner heart and speak about it. Parental love is even more intense than a friendship relation. Especially the mother rears up the child, so her affection for the child is great. She knows many more secret matters of the child than a friend, she even knows any kind of private bodily defects which are not known to others. The mother always thinks of the child as incompetent and inferior, so her intensity of love is much more than a friend. In spite of this tremendous affection, there exists a kind of reservation of heart between parents and child, even between mother and child. Intensity of love between a chaste wife and a chaste husband is the highest, because no portion of the heart of the chaste wife is concealed from her husband and vice versa. The chaste wife's service is unrestricted. She serves with all her sense-organs. As the chaste wife dedicates herself totally for the service of her husband, the chaste husband is compelled to dedicate himself fully for his devoted wife. This is natural. This has been corroborated by scriptural evidence:-

*mayi nīrbaddha-hṛdayāḥ
sādhavaḥ sama-darśanāḥ
vaśe kurvanti mām bhaktyā
sat-striyaḥ sat-patīm yathā*

Srīmad Bhāgavatm 9.4.66

Supreme Lord Narayana spoke to Durvasa Rishi, "Sadhus, who have one-pointed devotion to Me, have equal vision to all. As a chaste wife by her desireless pure love subdues her chaste husband, a pure devotee by his causeless devotion subdues Me."

This world is the perverted reflection of the Highest Transcendental Spiritual Realm— Sri Goloka Vrindavana. All actual delightful love-relations exist with Supreme Lord Sri Krishna in Goloka Vrindavana. That which is the highest in the Transcendental Spiritual Realm, is the lowest here and that which is the lowest in Goloka Vrindavana, is the highest in this world. This world is the outcome of the Lord's material energy consisting of three primal qualities— Sattvah, Rajah and Tamah. The reflection of the Transcendental Realm in this material world is reverse. An illustration can be given here for convenience of understanding. The reflected form of a tree which is near a pond is observed upside-down. In a like manner, the Transcendental Realm when reflected in the material energy is seen as reverse.

The soul is a minute particle of consciousness. Having the qualities of thinking, feeling and willing, the soul is an eternal servant of Supreme Lord Sri Krishna. The conditioned soul has three aspects: the gross physical body, the subtle astral body and the real self. The Gross body is composed of earth, water, fire, air and ether and the subtle body consists of mind, intelligence and perverted ego. These two bodies are the outcome of the material energy (*apara* potency) of Supreme Lord Sri Krishna, and the real self is the outcome of the superior energy (*para* potency, according to the scriptural evidence of the Gītā. Sri Krishna is the owner of the material energy and the superior energy. He is thus the owner of the gross body, the subtle body as well as the soul. As my energy remains for me and serves me, likewise the Lord's energy or parts of His energy will remain for Him and serve Him. When the conditioned spirit-soul, by the misuse of his relative independence, becomes averse to Sri Krishna and does not want to serve Him, he gets a non-eternal relation of master and servant in this world where separation

grief is inevitable. When the spirit soul does not want to serve Krishna in delightful friendship relation, he will be hurled down in this world and get a non-eternal friendship relation. When he does not want to love Krishna as son, he will get a non-eternal son. Lastly, when he does not want to serve Krishna as husband, he will get a non-eternal consortherhood of love in the material world. As much attachment we shall have for non-eternal relations, so much will be the separation grief.

As per degree of dedication to Supreme Lord Sri Krishna and His personal associates, so much will be the revelation of the transcendental sweet glories of Sri Krishna and His associates in the hearts of the bona fide devotees. Unsubmissive non-devotees have absolutely no jurisdiction to enter into it. This has been amply discussed earlier. Our most revered Gurudeva, occasionally used to say in his sermons: "There is disparity in the degrees of dedication amongst devotees. Therefore there exist so much degrees of revelation of the glories of the Divinity. Dhruva and Prahlad both perceived God by realization. But Prahlad's realization of Divinity is superior to Dhruva's realization. Dhruva's devotion was at first actuated by desire to get more property than his father, but after seeing Nārāyaṇa, Dhruva's desire for getting more property than his father disappeared. Prahlad's devotion however was without any material motive from the beginning. As Prahlad's dedication is more than Dhruva's, his attainment or realization of Divinity is superior to Dhruva. Again, Prahlad and Hanuman both are bona fide devotees. But Hanuman's dedication is supremely superior to Prahlad because Prahlad had no scope to get opportunity to devote himself to serve his object of worship Sri Nārāsimha Deva directly, because of the hostile environment. He could only engage in *smaran bhakti* (practice of meditation). Hanuman however had the scope of

carrying out the orders of his beloved eternal Master Sri Ramchandra and to serve Him in various ways. Hanuman had the opportunity to devote his intellect, mind, words and sense-organs for the service of Sri Ramchandra, while Prahlad had no such scope. Hence Hanuman's dedication or contact with Sri Ramchandra is definitely much more than Prahlad. So Hanuman's attainment of Divinity is higher than Prahlad's. Further, if it is considered without prejudice, the Pandava's (especially Arjuna's) domination and control over their object of worship Sri Krishna is definitely superior to Hanuman's. Hanuman can never imagine that he can direct his Eternal Master, but Arjuna ordered Krishna to place the chariot in the middle of the two warring groups so that he could see the warriors of the rival opponents. The Supreme Lord, being subdued by the devotion of Arjuna, serves Arjuna as a driver. Therefore Arjuna's attainment of Sri Krishna is definitely more than Hanuman.

Sri Krishna made the pastimes of being born in the 'Yadu dynasty' or 'Yadav family'. The Yadavas are closely connected with Sri Krishna and unhesitatingly sport with Him like playmates, climbing up and down each others back and shoulder. Due to the unrestricted mixing with Sri Krishna they are more fortunate and blessed than other devotees like the Pandavas. Amongst the Yadavas, Uddhav is foremost. Uddhav Maharaj is the disciple of Brihaspati, chief-advisor of the Yadavas and dearest bosom friend of Sri Krishna.

In reply to the question of Uddhav how dear a devotee is to Him, Sri Krishna's stated:

na tathā me priyatama ātma-yonir na śaṅkarah
na ca saṅkarṣaṇo na śrīr naivātmā ca yathā bhavān
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.14.15

'How can I say how dear a devotee is to Me? Even my son Brahma, who originated from Me, is not as dear to Me as My devotee.' On hearing this, Uddhav was astonished and perplexed. Sri Krishna again reiterated, "O Uddhav, why are you so stupefied? Even Shiva, who has emerged from Me, is not so dear to Me as a devotee. Don't be bewildered, even My brother Baladeva, My consort Lakshmi Devi, or my Own Self are not so much attractive to Me than the attraction of the pure devotion of a pure devotee." Uddhav was thunderstruck on hearing this and asked, "Who is that devotee?" Sri Krishna said smiling, "O Uddhav, you are my dearest and none else."

Uddhav was happy on hearing Sri Krishna's high impression about him and a sense of pride appeared in his mind. One special characteristic nature of Supreme Lord is to humble anybody's pride or self-esteem. Understanding the inner thought of Uddhav, Sri Krishna politely divulged His heart's desire to Sri Uddhav in this way: "There are some devotees affectionately inclined to Me in Sri Vrajadham. My parents, the *gopas* (milkmen) and *gopis* (milkwomen), have been spending their time with grief due to their long separation from Me. You should go there soon to console them by giving them the news of my well-being." Submissively obeying the order of Sri Krishna, Sri Uddhav departed from Dwaraka by chariot and reached Sri Vrajadham in the evening. At that time cows were returning from the grazing ground, and by the treading of the cows the area was enveloped with dust. The *gopis* could not see the chariot, but by their singing of the glories of Sri Balaram and Sri Krishna and lighting of lamps in the evening, Vrajadham's blooming sweetness was manifested.

On his arrival at Sri Vrajadham, Sri Uddhav first came in contact with Sri Nanda Maharaj at Nanda-Bhavan.

Sri Nanda Maharaj received Sri Uddhav cordially, understanding him as non-different from Vasudev-Kṛṣṇa. He entertained him sumptuously with good dishes. After that both went to bed to sleep in the night, lying down side by side. Nanda Maharaj had the opportunity to speak his heart to Uddhav. Actually there was an outburst of intense grief due to the long separation from his beloved child Krishna, and he was profusely weeping all the time. He expressed his perturbation of heart in this way— "O Uddhav! I am very anxious to know the well-being of Sri Vasudev, Sri Devaki Devi and their son Krishna, and whether Krishna remembers us, His playmates, His bosom friends, Gokul Mahaban and Giriraj Govardhan. We feel horripilated by thinking how Krishna saved us from awful calamities such as a forest-fire, storms, inundation, many dreadful demons. We become nonplussed when we see the sweet footprints of Krishna everywhere in Vrajamandal. As Krishna and Balaram are children, we become motionless by thinking how they could fight against the evil king Kamsa, the formidable wrestlers Chanur and Mustik and the dreadful gigantic mad elephant Kabalayapir. Now we sometimes feel what Sri Garga Rishi has said, that the Supreme Lord has appeared as Krishna and Balaram, may be true." Nanda Maharaj's voice was choked and he could not speak. Tears were flowing down from his eyes and milk was oozing out from the breasts of mother Yashoda Devi out of tremendous affection for the child Krishna. Uddhav was overwhelmed with delight by seeing the extraordinary parental affection of Nanda and Yashoda. Uddhav narrates the glories of Nanda Maharaj with these words—

*yuvām ślāghyatamau nūnam dehināmihamānada
nārāyaṇe 'khila-gurau yatkr̥tā matiridṛṣī
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.46.30*

"Such affectionately inclined sagacity is revealed in you for Narayana-Krishna, Who is Guru of the whole universe. Therefore both of you have become the most revered of all living beings, and are the object of worship for all."

That whole night Nanda Maharaj and Uddhav spent with Krishna-katha. When next morning after sunrise the *gopis* saw a chariot at the gate of Vraja, they became panicky, thinking it to be Akrur's chariot. As the complexion, yellow loin cloth, lotus eyes and figure of Krishna and Uddhav were completely identical, the *gopis* thought Krishna had come. Being overwhelmed with joy they immediately reported this good news to the foremost *gopi*, Srimati Radhika. Radhika removed their wrong notion by saying, "If Krishna would have come, various symptoms would have been manifested in me. I think some great devotee of Krishna has come, and I have the aptitude to adore him as a devotee." Later on after inquiry, the *gopis* understood that Uddhav had come from Dwaraka as per direction of Krishna.

The *gopis* directly approached Sri Uddhav and requested him to go with them to a secluded place, far away from Nandagram, so that they could speak to him without any hesitation. They wanted to avoid any outburst of their long suppressed separation grief for Krishna before the senior *gopas* and *gopis*. Uddhav agreed to their proposal and went to a secluded forest, well known amongst devotees as 'Uddhav-Kewari' or 'Uddho-Kriya'. All the *gopis* surrounded Uddhav and divulged their tremendous agony for their long estrangement from Krishna with appalling eyes, speaking to him in plaintive voices and with heartrending words. Upon seeing the extreme separation grief of the *gopis*, who were deliriously singing the glories of Krishna with sweet voices, Uddhav was utterly stupefied by the unfathomable deep love

of the *gopis*. He then submitted his prayer to be born as herb, shrub or creeper and thus be blessed with the dust of the lotus feet of *gopis*:

*āsāmah carana-renu-juṣāmaham syām
vṛndāvane kimapī gulma-latauṣadhīnām
yā dustyajam sva-janam ārya-pathamca hitvā
bhejur mukunda-padaviṁ śrūtibhirvimrgyām*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.47.61

"Alas! May I have the good fortune to be born in Vrindavana Dham as shrub, creeper or herb, which are blessed with the opportunity of serving the lotus feet of the most sanctified *gopis*. The *gopis* have renounced their beloved kinsmen, who are difficult to be disowned, and they even abandoned the virtuous path as enjoined by the Vedas, for the sake of worshipping the lotus feet of Mukunda, which are cherished by emancipated saints."

*vande nanda-vraja-strīnām pāda-renum abhikṣaṇāḥ
yāsām hari-kathodgitam punāti bhuvana-trayam*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.47.63

Uddhav Maharaj, being thoroughly moved by the unblemished perfect devotion of the *gopis*, has sung in adoration: "I continuously narrate the glories of the dust particles of the lotus feet of the *gopis*, (I have no audacity to sing about the glories of the lotus feet of the milkwomen of Vrajadham, I can only sing about the glories of the devotees blessed by the *gopis*, i.e., the dust particles of their own lotus feet), because their *hari-katha* can sanctify the three worlds." The purport of this verse is that the *gopis* and their own personal associates have dedicated themselves completely to Sri Krishna and His entourage, and as such they actually know the glories of Sri Radha-Krishna and can speak about Them.

In conclusion, it will be inspiring if we can remember the inconceivable wonderful love for Krishna of the *gopis*, stated briefly as follows. Our revered spiritual masters used to narrate one topic as an illustration to understand the highest pre-eminence of the *gopis*. Once, Sri Krishna displayed the pastime of having a severe headache in His palace at Dwaraka. At that time Sri Narada Muni came to meet Krishna and was perplexed to hear about His headache. Narada never heard of such a thing before and was at a loss to ascertain what to do. Witnessing restlessness of his beloved Master, Narad asked Krishna, "O beloved Master, You are the Supreme Lord, You are omniscient, so please tell me the remedy of the disease of Your headache." Krishna replied, "There is one panacea for getting recovery from this headache. If you can bring the dust of the feet of a devotee and apply that to my head, I shall be cured."

Narada Muni was contemplating, 'I am a devotee, but how can I give the dust of my feet on the head of my Most Revered Supreme Lord. If I do this, I shall go to inferno.' Thus he went to Satyabhama, Rukmini and the other sixteen thousand one hundred six consorts of Krishna to ask for the dust of their feet. However, no queen of Krishna agreed to give the dust of their feet. How can a chaste wife allow the dust of her feet to be applied to the head of her object of worship, her husband? They all chastised Narada for this impossible proposal. When Narada, with frustration of heart, returned to the palace to meet Sri Krishna, Krishna made the pastimes of being more restless. Seeing this Narada became confounded. To console Narada, Krishna said, "O Narada, there are some devotees in Vrajadham, who have love for me. If you go there and ask for foot-dust, they will give you. Don't be worried."

When Narada reached Vrajadham on Krishna's

advice, all of Krishna's personal associates surrounded him with eagerness to know about the well-being of Krishna. Perceiving the extreme anxiety and worries of the *gopis*, Narada remained silent. After being repeatedly asked, Narada finally said: "Krishna had serious headache." On hearing this some of the *gopis* fainted. Some other *gopis* said with great regret: "When Krishna is ill, why have you come here leaving Him behind?" Then Narada replied that Krishna assured him that if he could get the dust of the feet of a devotee to be put on His head, Krishna would recover from His headache. The *gopis* immediately retorted and said, "O Naradji, you are a devotee, you could have given the dust of your feet, and there were so many queens in Dwaraka, they could have given." Narada said, "How can a servant put the dust of his feet on the head of his Master? How can the wives of Krishna put the dust of their feet on the head of their respected husband?" The *gopis* were irritated by Narada's reply and said: "Ah! So long you have given trouble to Krishna unnecessarily. You can take dust of our feet as much as you want and immediately go there to put it on the head of Sri Krishna. If by our foot-dust Krishna gets relief, we are ready to embrace the condemnation of hell for eternity."

This, then, is the extraordinary specialty of *gopi-prema*. The *gopis* do not consider their own difficulty, but want the satisfaction of Krishna alone.