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MADHURYA KADAMBINI

(see other translation)

(A Cloud Bank of Nectar)

by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura

Chapter One: The First Shower

The mercy of Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Who is exquisite sweetness personified, is a surging bank of clouds that brings life to the grains of devotional service newly planted in the field of the heart, and, by its auspicious approach, extinguishes the intense summer heat of lust, bestowing rapture to the universal river of living beings.

From far off, may those clouds of the Lord's mercy give satisfaction and pleasure to this worthless soul, a dried-up tree in the desert.

Though there are others who in the past have taken up the path of devotional service to the Lord, I pay my continual obeisances to Srila Rupa Goswami, who is dearmost to the Lord. By his mercy, humanity has received the intelligence to see all rasas (relationships with the Lord) revealed by bhakti (devotion to the Lord).

The Lord is Rasa

The sruti (Taittiriya Upanisad), after explaining the different coverings of consciousness (anna-maya etc.), concludes: brahma puccham pratistha "Brahman, the shelter or support for everything, is supreme". This statement would seem to establish Brahman, the shelter of everything, as superior to the anandamaya purusa. But then the same scripture says:

raso vai sah rasam hy evayam labdhvanandi bhavati

"The Lord is rasa itself. Attaining that rasa, the jiva becomes blissful."

This statement shows that the Lord in his form as rasa incarnate is supreme. In the same vein, the Srimad Bhagavatam, the cream of Vedanta and emperor amongst all

types of evidence, describes the Lord as the embodiment of rasa or pleasure:

mallanam asinir nram naravarah strinam smaro murtiman

"For the wrestlers, Krsna appeared as a thunderbolt, for ordinary people he appeared as the best of men, and for the women as the most attractive Cupid."

In the Bhagavad Gita the Lord himself asserts his identity:

brahmano hi pratisthaham

"I am the basis of Brahman."

Therefore the Absolute Truth, that blissful, transcendental Supreme Person, is none other than Sri Krsna, the son of the King of Vraja, who has an unlimited body featuring all-auspicious, transcendental names, forms, qualities, and pastimes. This blissful Lord descends to human perception of the ear, eye, mind and intellect, not by any material cause, but simply by his own independent will just as, by his own will, He appeared in the material world as Krsna in the Yadu dynasty and Rama in the Raghu dynasty.

Bhakti is Independent

Similarly, just as the Lord is not dependent on any material cause for His appearance, so His non-different energy, devotional service (bhakti), in keeping with its self-manifesting nature, is not dependent on any material cause.

Thus, in the First Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam it is said:

sa vai pumso paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhoksaje
ahaituky apratihata yayatma suprasidati

"The supreme occupation (dharma) for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the soul."

The word ahaituki (causeless) in this statement indicates that devotional service makes its appearance without material cause (hetu).

Similarly, in such statements as yadrcchaya mat kathadau, mad bhaktim yadrcchaya, and yadrcchayaivopacita, the word yadrcchaya must be understood to mean "by his own independent sweet will", because the dictionary meaning of "yadrccha" is "complete independence."

Some people take the word to mean "by luck or chance", but that meaning is not suitable here, for then one would be forced to inquire as to the origin of that good luck: is it perhaps caused by material pious activities (subha-karma), or something

else? If one assumes that this good luck is generated from pious activities, then bhakti is likewise ultimately generated from subha-karma, i.e. bhakti is dependent upon material good works. But this is in contradiction with the scripturally-attested independent, self-manifesting nature of bhakti.

If one argues that this luck is not due to any pious activity, being indescribable by words and unknowable to the intellect, then it would be insubstantial and could not be accepted as a cause.

If one proposes that the cause of bhakti is the Lord's mercy, one must then find a reason for the mercy. Thus this statement, giving rise to further need for explanation, is inconclusive in itself.

If one therefore responds that the cause is the Lord's absolute, unqualified or causeless mercy, then the Lord seems to show favoritism in bestowing it, since the unqualified mercy should, but does not, fall upon everyone equally.

The Lord is indeed partial to his devotee, but the partiality that the Lord shows in protecting his devotees from the persecution of evil elements does not bring fault to the Lord's character, but rather becomes an ornament which enhances His character. This overruling nature of the Lord's affectionate obligation to his devotees, which, like a powerful king, subjugates all contradictory factors, will be discussed in the eighth chapter.

The Mercy of the Lord and His Devotee

In proposing the unqualified mercy of the devotee as the cause of devotion, one may also see fault in the devotee's partiality in distributing mercy. If one considers the nature of the madhyama bhakta, one finds that he does exhibit partiality in his distribution of mercy: he exhibits prema towards the Lord, friendship to the devotees, mercy to the innocent and disregard for those hostile to bhakti.

Here we see how the Lord becomes subservient to His devotee, bestowing his mercy in accordance with the devotee's mercy. But there is no irregularity in this arrangement, because the reason that mercy appeared in the devotee is because bhakti is in his heart. Without having bhakti there is no possibility of the devotee manifesting mercy to others. Thus, in this case, the self-manifesting, independent nature of bhakti is again resolved. Therefore, in the statement yah kenapy atibhaghena jata sraddho'sy sevane ("the person who has attained faith in the service of the Lord by extreme good fortune"), the words atibhagyena ("extreme good fortune") should be understood to mean the attainment of the mercy of the devotee, which surpasses (atikrama) the results of material pious activities (subhakarma).

But one should not conclude that since the devotee is dependent on the will of Lord, the devotee cannot initiate the bestowal of mercy. For the Lord willingly becomes subservient to His devotee, and gives preeminence to the devotee's

position by granting him the power to bestow the Lord's mercy (svakrpa-sakti). Though as Paramatma He simply oversees the affairs of the jiva's external senses, which are the reward of his past activities, the Lord personally shows special mercy to His devotees by giving them His own independent power to bestow mercy to others. As Krsna says in the Bhagavad-gita, only by His bestowal of mercy can one attain His eternal spiritual realm. This mercy is manifested in the Lord's bestowal of His own krpa-sakti to his devotee, who then gives it to the fallen souls, as previously explained.

Is Bhakti Caused by Niskama-karma?

Through many scriptural statements (sveccavatara caritaih, sveccha mayasya) one can understand that the Lord appears by His own will. Still, material vision may impel one to say that the need to relieve the burden of evil on the earth is the cause of the Lord's advent. In the same way, sometimes it is said that prescribed activities (karma) performed without personal motives (niskama) act as the door to bhakti. There is no harm in such statements, if we understand their relative nature. But yet charity, austerities and what not are clearly denied as causes of bhakti in the Eleventh Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam:

yan na yogena sankhyena dana vrata tapo'dhvaraiha
yakhya svadhyaya sannyasa arapnuyad yatnavan api

"Even if one endeavors by yoga, analytical study, by charity, by austerity, by yajna, by chanting Vedas, by study, by renunciation one cannot attain the Lord."

But it is also stated that charity, austerity etc. are the cause of bhakti:

dana vrata tapa homa japa svadhya sanyamaih
sreyobhir vividhais canyaih krsne bhaktir hi sadhyate

"Devotion to Krsna is accomplished by such things as charity, austerities, homa, japa, study, sense control, and other pious activities."

However, this statement refers to bhakti in the mode of material goodness. This kind of bhakti is actually part of the system of jnana, rather than the transcendental, fully spiritual bhakti in the category of prema. Of course, some people say that charity means giving to Visnu and the Vaisnavas, that vrata or austerity means such vratas as ekadasi, that tapas means total renunciation of personal enjoyment for the attainment of the Lord. Thus they are all angas or limbs of sadhana bhakti. To say that bhakti is attained by these angas is not incorrect, for this simply means that bhakti is caused by bhakti. Thus the causeless nature of bhakti is again resolved. In this way all points are settled.

Bhakti is Always Distinct from Karma and Jnana

Moreover, by such verses as sreyah srtim bhaktim udasya te vibho, ko'vartha apto'bhajatam sva dharmatah, purvaiva bhuman bahavo'pi yoginah, it is seen that the accomplishment of results on the paths of jnana, karma and yoga etc. are completely dependent on bhakti, whereas the accomplishment of the result of the practice of bhakti, which is prema, is never dependent on karma, jnana or yoga. Rather it is understood that the purity of bhakti is destroyed by the touch of these elements:

na jnanam na ca vairagyam prayah sreya bhaved iha

"Jnana and vairagya are not beneficial in the practice of bhakti."

dharman samtyajya yah sarvan mam bhajet sa ca sattamah

"He who gives up all paths and simply worships me is the best amongst men."

The dependency of karma, jnana and yoga on bhakti must be accepted as fact. Moreover, bhakti is instrumental in giving the results to the practice of karma, jnana and yoga, and it is not at all dependent on these practices for its results. It is said:

yat marabhir yat tapasa jana vairagyatas ca
yat sarvan mad bhakti yogena mad bhakto labhae'njasa

"What is to be accomplished by karma, tapas, jnana and vairagya is easily attained by my devotee through devotional service."

bhagavad bhakti hinasya jatih sastram japas tapah
apranasyeva dehasya mandanam loka ranjanam

"Without devotion to the Lord, good birth, knowledge of scripture, japa, tapas are like decorating a dead body, which gives delight to relatives and friends but is no use to the dead person."

Thus without bhakti all these endeavours are fruitless. Jnana, yoga and other processes are therefore dependent upon bhakti, as a body is dependent on the life air.

Bhakti does not Depend on Purity or Faith

The dependence of karma and yoga on conditions of purity in place, time, candidate, materials and performance is well known from the smrti scriptures. This is not true of bhakti:

na desa niyamas tatra na kala niyamas tatah
nocchistadau nisedho'sti harer namani lubdhaka

"In chanting the name of the Lord, there are no restrictions concerning place, time, purity and so on."

Nor is bhakti even dependent upon faith:

sakrda api parigitam sraddaya helaya va
brguvara nara matram tarayet krsna nama

"The name of Krsna, when chanted even once either with faith or without faith, can deliver any man."

Furthermore, bhakti is not dependent on purity of practice, for whether the name is chanted purely or impurely it will deliver the fallen soul. The same cannot be said of karma yoga, where impurity is a great obstacle to progress.

mantra hinah svarato varnato
va mithah prayukto na tam artham
aha yathendra satruh svarato'paradhat
sa vag vajro yajamanam hinasti

"If a mantra is either intoned or pronounced incorrectly, not only will the mantra have not effect, but it may be harmful."

The necessity of internal purity for practice of jnana yoga is well known. Jnana yoga is moreover dependent on karma yoga, for one may enter jnana yoga only with a heart purified of gross desires, and such purity of heart stems from the performance of karma without gross desires. Because of this dependency, if the practitioner of jnana yoga commits even a small unworthy act by accident, he is condemned as a vantasi, an eater of vomit. Besides, Kamsa, Hiranyakasipu and Ravana were famous practitioners of jnana, and they are certainly not at all worthy of praise.

On the other hand, one on the path of bhakti, though afflicted by lust, has the qualification to begin the practice, and just by the practice of bhakti, lust and other impurities are destroyed. And even though impurities such as kama may sometimes appear in the devotee, the scriptures never condemn that devotee. (api cet suduracaro bhajate mam ananya bhak, vadhyamano'pi mad bhakti, etc.)

Ajamila's position as a devotee was discerned by the Visnudutas. Only because people such as Ajamila utter the name of the Lord inadvertently (in Ajamila's case, out of affection for his son), they are universally praised as devotees, even though their chanting must be considered namabhasa (not pure).

One's internal purity and the purity of place, materials and so on are indispensable for accomplishment in karma, jnana and yoga; indeed, deficiency in these areas obstructs progress on those paths. Bhakti, however, is the very giver of life to these paths. Therefore all these paths are dependent. But independent bhakti is never

dependent for its success or failure on the availability of material provisions.

Only an ignorant person will say that bhakti is but a means of attaining jnana, for factually bhakti takes a position higher than even the goal of jnana, which is moksa.

muktim dadati karhicit sma na bhaktiyogam

"The Lord easily gives liberation but not bhakti."

muktanam api siddhanam narayana parayanah
sudurlabhah prasantatma kotisvapi mahamune

"Among even many thousands of liberated jnanis and perfected yogis, the devotee of Narayana is rare."

If jnana sometimes appears to take a superior position to bhakti it is only because bhakti is mercifully playing the role of its assistant. When the Lord as Upendra become subservient to Indra to give him support, He revealed not His inferior status but rather His great mercy. In this manner bhakti, being merciful, becomes a limb of jnana in the material mode of goodness, just to give support to jnana. This is the understanding of the intelligent person.

bhaktya sanjataya bhaktya

"The fruit of bhakti is bhakti in the form of prema."

This is the topmost goal for mankind, and it by far surpasses dharma, artha, kama and moksa.

The preeminent, all-pervading, totally independent, self-manifesting and life-giving nature of the great energy, bhakti, is of the same nature as the Supreme Lord from Whom bhakti emanates. This has been explained here. If one still prefers a process other than bhakti, that person should be considered bereft of the power of good judgement. What else can be said? If one is a human being, but does not take to the process of bhakti, then he should not be considered a human being at all:

ko vai na seveta vina naretaram

"Who, except an animal, would not serve the Lord?"

Chapter 2: The Second Shower of Nectar

One will not find a full contrast and comparison of dualism and monism (bhakti vs. jnana) in the present work. Those who expect may find it in another work called Aisvarya Kadambini.

The wish-yielding creeper of pure bhakti, which grows in the field of the heart, is the refuge of the devotees who firmly vow (drdha vrata) never to seek any fruits except bhakti, and who, like bees (madhu vrata), are obsessed with the desire to taste nectar.

The very life of this creeper is a favorable attitude to devotion and the Lord. Like a touchstone, its very presence makes the heart lose its iron-like material qualities and acquire spiritual qualities of pure gold (bhakti).

Raga and Vaidhi Sadhana-Bhakti

Now sprouted and growing upwards, that creeper then unfurls two leaves, which are the splendor of sadhana bhakti. The first leaf is called klesa ghni (the dissolution of suffering) and the second is called subha da (the attainment of auspicious qualities). The smooth upper surface of the two leaves is the jurisdiction of the king called Raga. Raga is in a preeminent position due to having being generated from spontaneous thirst for all things pertaining to the Lord, and by genuine affection for the Lord in a particular relationship.

The lower surface of the leaves is rough and of a somewhat lower status because its activities are generated out of scriptural rules, and because spontaneous, deep affection for the Lord is lacking because of lack of a pure relationship with the Lord. This is the domain of the king called Vaidha.

Despite their differences, both raga and vaidhi-bhakti equally share the qualities of klesa ghni (disappearance of suffering and sin) and subha da (appearance of auspicious qualities).

Klesa Means the Cause of Suffering

The literal meaning of klesa is suffering or affliction, but here the meaning may be taken as the causes of suffering. These klesas are the cause of sinful and pious activities that in turn result in misfortune (unhappiness) or good fortune (happiness) in the material existence.

There are five kinds of klesa:

1) avidya or ignorance, which means to mistake that which is impermanent to be permanent, to mistake that which is full of misery to be blissful and to mistake what is not the self to be the self; 2) asmita or false ego, the bodily identification of me and mine; 3) raga or attachment to and desire for material happiness and those

means that will provide it; 4) dvesa or hatred, the aversion to unhappiness or the causes of unhappiness; 5) abhinnivesa or long-standing obsessions from past lifetimes with certain material things and the means of obtaining them, and obsessions with the body and with the fear of death.

The stages in the development of sin prarabdha (fructified), aprarabdha (unfructified), rudha (pre-seed) and bija (seed) are composed of these five klesas.

Subha Means Divine Qualities

Subha or auspiciousness consists of such qualities as disinterest in material affairs, interest in the Supreme Lord, friendliness to the Lord, mercy, forgiveness, truth, simplicity, equanimity, fortitude, gravity, respect, humility, and being kind to everyone. This is established in such verses as sarvair gunais tatra samasate surah: "all the qualities of the devatas are present in the devotee", and bhaktih padesanubhavo viraktir anyatra caisa trika ekakal: "devotion, taste for the Lord, and detachment from all else appear simultaneously."

By this last quotation, one may note that the two splendors or sadhana (the destruction of suffering and the appearance of all good qualities) appear simultaneously. However, just as there is a gradual unfurling of two leaves in a growing plant, there is also a gradation in the disappearance of the undesirable qualities (asubha) and the appearance of the auspicious qualities (subha). Thus there is a development of bhakti in sequential stages. Though this is very subtle and difficult to perceive, the intelligent devotees have ascertained this through scrutiny of the various effects.

The Stages of Advancement in Bhakti

First, the prospective devotee must have sraddha or faith. Sraddha is firm trust in the import of the bhakti-scriptures. It also means to have a genuine desire to undertake the activities described in those scriptures. Either of these types of faith may arise naturally or by force.

Then, taking shelter of the lotus feet of the spiritual master, the faithful beginner in bhakti inquires from him about proper conduct. By following his guru's instructions, that person mixes in friendship with devotees of his own status and finds shelter in the association of more realized devotees.

Next he takes up the practice of different types of service. This is called bhajana-kriya or the execution of devotional activities. Bhajana-kriya is also of two varieties: unsteady (anisthita) and steady (nisthita). Unsteady performance of devotional activities is of six types, listed in sequential order: false confidence (utsaha mayi), sporadic endeavour (ghana tarala), indecision (vyudha vikalpa), struggle with maya (visaya sangara), inability to uphold vows (niyamaksama), and

enjoying the waves (taranga rangini). Each one characterizes unsteadiness in devotional service.

Utsaha mayi

Just as a pupil entering school may think he has already become a great scholar worthy of everyone's praise, a person just beginning devotional service can display the audacity to think that he has mastered everything. He is called utsaha mayi, or puffed-up with enthusiasm.

Ghana Tarala

A pupil may be diligently engaged in his studies and yet at other times, because of inability to understand the subject matter and because of lack of real taste, becomes totally negligent. In the same way, a new devotee sometimes practices the different activities of devotional service nicely and sometimes neglects them. Being sometimes assiduous and at other times negligent, his sporadic endeavour is called ghana tarala (condensed-dilute, thick-thin).

Vyudha Vikalpa

"Shall I just be a householder happy in family life, making my wife and children Krsna conscious, and worshipping the Lord; or should I give all that up and go and sit in a place of meditation in Vrndavana and become a real success by engaging full-time in hearing and chanting with no distractions?"

"Shall I wait until the last stage, after enjoying all sorts of pleasures, when I have understood that the whole material world is simply a forest fire of affliction, or should I renounce right now? Should I regard this family life as death, a deep well concealed by grass, and give up this unreliable "shelter" while young? Or shall I wait until the death of my old parents before renouncing?"

"If I give up family life immaturely I will think of family life after renouncing. If I should die in that condition I will go to hell. From that type of renunciation I won't get any strength. Therefore for the time being, I will just work to keep my body alive, and later, after satisfying all my desires, I will enter Vrndavana and worship the Lord in full dedication.

"After all, renunciation is useless if one depends on it to produce bhakti. But then again, it is acceptable if one knows it is generated from bhakti and is dependent on bhakti."

By sophism, one may justify immediate renunciation of householder life, in the confidence that there will be no worry for food since it is well known that the sadhus in the asramas eat plentifully. Thus the neophyte sometimes contemplates a life of renunciation.

But at other times, applying the maxim that household life is distressful only for those who are attached, he favors household life, being supremely aloof.

"Shall I engage in chanting or perhaps in hearing, or shall I engage in service? Let me rather engage in many angas of bhakti like Ambarisa Maharaja."

When one speculates on all types of options in devotional service without deciding anything, it is called vyudha vikalpa, or extensive indecision.

Visaya Sangara

visayavista cittanam visnvavesah suduratah
varuni dig gatam vastu vrajnnaindrim kim apnuyat

"One whose heart is lodged in materialism is far from obtaining devotion to Visnu. Can a man who moves east expect to claim something that has moved in the opposite direction?" The devotee, knowing he cannot attain steadiness in serving Krsna while attached to material enjoyment, resolves to renounce his addictions. But while attempting to renounce, he may end up indulging in it, taking solace from the example of a devotee given in the Bhagavatam:

jusamanas ca tan kaman parityago'py anisvara

"The inexperienced devotee, in spite of his attempts to give up his material desires, is unable to do so completely, and is allowed to indulge in satisfying his desires to some degree."

This on-going battle with his previously acquired desires for sense pleasure, in which he is sometimes victorious and sometimes defeated, is called visaya sangara or "war with sense pleasure."

Niyama Aksama

The devotee may then resolve: "From today I will chant such and such number of rounds of japa. I will pay so many obeisances. And I will render services to the devotees. I will not talk on any subject except the Lord and I will give up all association with people who talk on material matters."

Though he makes such resolutions every day, he is always unable to execute them. This is called *niyama aksama* or inability to follow rules. *Visaya sangara* is the inability to give up material activities whereas *niyama aksama* is the inability to improve his devotional activities.

Taranga Rangini

It is well-established that people become attracted to a person possessing *bhakti*, due to *bhakti*'s auspiciousness. And as the popular saying goes, "By attracting the populace, one becomes wealthy." *Bhakti* produces much opportunity for material gain, worship and position. These are weeds around the creeper of *bhakti*. Engaging oneself in pleasure-seeking (*ranga*) amidst these weed-like facilities, which are but small waves (*taranga*) in the ocean of *bhakti*, is called *taranga rangini*, delighting in material opportunities.

The Third Shower of Nectar: Anartha Nivrtti — Clearing the Material Impurities

Successful performance of devotional activities (*bhajana kriya*) is followed by *anartha nivrtti*, or the clearing of bad qualities that obstruct the progress of *bhakti*. *Anarthas* may be classified into four types, according to origin: those arising from previous sinful activity, those arising from previous pious activity, those arising from offenses against devotional service and those arising from imperfectly performed *bhakti*.

Anarthas or obstructions to *bhakti* arising from sinful activities are the five types of *klesa* previously mentioned: ignorance, false ego, attachment, hatred and addiction to evil. *Anarthas* arising from pious activities are the addictions to the results of pious action (*sattva guna* sense enjoyment and *mukti*). Some people include the *anarthas* arising from pious activities under the categories of the *klesas* mentioned above, because the presence of *bhukti* and *mukti* deprive a person of *bhakti*, and therefore prolong his existence of suffering in the material realm.

The *anarthas* arising from offenses arise specifically from the *namaparadhas*. The *seva-aparadhas* (offenses in Deity worship such as entering the temple with shoes on or in a vehicle) are in themselves not a direct cause of *anarthas*, for *seva-aparadhas* do not usually have effect on the real devotee, because, by constant service, by chanting the holy name and by recitation of specific verses that have the power to cancel the effect of any *seva-aparadha*, these *anarthas* cannot grow. However, if one is careless, thinking he can take advantage of the protection afforded by the above measures, his *seva-aparadha* becomes *nama-aparadha*, an *anartha* that will obstruct his progress. He is guilty of the *namaparadha* of committing sin on the strength of the holy name.

The word nama in the phrase namaparadha refers not only to the holy name but to all the angas of bhakti, of which the Name is the primary representative. Even, according to dharma-sastra (scriptures dealing with codes of karma) if one willfully commits sin on the strength of prayascitta (remedial measures for commission of sin), then the effect of the sin will not be destroyed but rather increased.

One May Not Commit Offenses Out of "Enthusiasm"

On the other hand, if one takes advantage of scriptural statements that guarantee the permanent effect of even a little devotional service (simply chanting the Krsna mantra once, for instance) and, as a result, willfully omits some of the angas of bhakti, he does not commit namaparadha and create anarthas, for committing sin on the strength of the holy name refers to deliberate engagement in activities condemned by the scriptures while thinking that the power of devotional activities will nullify the bad effects. It does not refer to a willful omission of a secondary anga of bhakti. For, unlike the path of karma, where failure to perform a rite perfectly is condemned, on the path of bhakti there is no fear that failure to perform all the angas is offensive and will deprive one of results.

For the scriptures say that if in the enthusiasm of devotional service a person intentionally closes his eyes and attempts to run, he still has no fear of stumbling, falling or not attaining the goal. In other words, a person who takes complete shelter of devotional service suffers no loss of results nor is deprived of the goal even if, knowing all the angas of bhakti, he deliberately neglects to perform some of the secondary angas.

Closing the eyes and running does not mean ignorance of scripture (sruti and smrti, the two eyes of the devotee). That contradicts the direct meaning of having eyes but does not using them. Neither does it mean that by intentional neglect of some of the angas of bhakti in eager pursuance of the goal, one may commit the thirty-two seva-aparadhas and be free from reaction, for the verse describes a person who has sincerely taken shelter of the process of bhakti as outlined by the Lord himself. Therefore there is no question of intentional seva-aparadha. The thirty-two seva-aparadhas beginning with entering the temple while wearing shoes and so on should be understood to be offensive acts and should never be intentionally committed. Thus in the scriptures a person who intentionally commits a seva-aparadha is condemned as a two-legged animal.

If the namaparadhas, whether long-standing or recent, have been committed unconsciously but their presence is indicated by the result, i.e. lack of advancement, the only recourse is to chant the name constantly. By that, steadiness in bhakti will be attained and offenses will be neutralized. If namaparadha is committed in full knowledge, then the following points must be taken into account.

Disrespect for Vaisnavas

Sadhu ninda or criticism of vaisnavas is the first offense. The word "ninda" means animosity or malice. If by chance this offense occurs, the person should be repentent, recognizing his own low nature in having committing the offense. In the same way that a person who has been burned by fire seeks relief in fire, he should nullify the offense by lamenting, resolving to come before the vaisnava, fall at his feet, and satisfy him by offering his obeisances, praises and respects. If the vaisnava is not satisfied, the person should remain ready to comply with his every wish. If the offense is so great that the vaisnava's anger does not die, in great remorse, thinking himself most unfortunate and bound for hell because of his offense, he should give up everything else and take shelter of continuous nama sankirtana. By the great power of nama kirtana, certainly, in time, that person will be delivered from his offense.

But if one, reluctant to put oneself in a humble position by offering repeated respects and service to the vaisnava that one has offended, justifies himself by arguing that simply taking shelter of the Name is sufficient for the deliverance from offense, then he is guilty of further offense.

Nor should one be of the mentality to think that the offense of sadhu ninda operates only in relation to a vaisnava who is fully and perfectly qualified with all the qualities mentioned in scripture, such as tolerance, mercy and kindness to all living entities (krpalur akrta drohas titiksuh sarva dehinam). Such a person attempts to minimize his own offense by pointing out some defect in the devotee. The scriptures say that, even a person who is of very bad character, a cheater, devoid of proper behaviour, malicious, devoid of samskaras, if he takes to surrender of the Lord, must be considered a sadhu. All the more then, that a devotee who may show some occasional fault should be considered a sadhu.

Also, if a great offense has been committed against a vaisnava, but the vaisnava does not become angry because of his exalted nature, the offender should still fall at that devotee's feet and seek ways of pleasing him in order to purify himself. Though the vaisnava may forgive offenses, the dust of his feet does not tolerate the offense and delivers the fruits of the offense on the guilty person.

Sometimes, no suitable respect can ever match the causeless or fathomless mercy of the powerful, spontaneous, most elevated of mahabhagavatas in their distribution of mercy. For instance, even though made to carry Rahugana's palanquin and made the object of the King's harsh words, Jada Bharat bestowed his mercy. In a similar way Cediraja showed mercy to the atheist daityas who had come to do him violence. In the same way Sri Nityananda showed mercy to Madhai, even though Madhai had injured his forehead.

The offense of guror avajna, or disrespect to guru, the third aparadha, may be considered in the same way as the first aparadha.

Misunderstanding the position of Visnu, Siva and demigod (second aparadha)

Conscious beings are of two types; independent and dependent. The independent being is the all-pervading Lord (isvara) and the dependent beings are the particles of consciousness (jivas), energies of the Lord, who pervade individual bodies. The independent consciousness (isvara) is of two types: one is not touched at all by maya, and the other, for the Lord's pastimes, accepts the touch of maya. The first type of isvara is called by such names as Narayana:

harir hi nirgunah saksat purusah prakrte para

"It is Hari who is directly the non material Lord transcendental to material nature."

The second type of isvara is called by such names as Siva:

sivah sakti yutah sasvat trilingo guna samvrta

"Siva accepts the three gunas and is covered by them."

Though Siva is covered by the gunas, one should not think that he is in the category of jiva. As the Brahma Samhita states, Siva is a transformation of the Lord, just as yoghurt is a transformation of milk. In other scriptures also Siva is glorified as isvara.

The three modes of sattva, rajas and tamas, for maintenance, creation and destruction, are ruled by Visnu, Brahma and Siva. From this Brahma is commonly understood to be isvara. But Brahma's position as isvara or lord should be understood as power invested in a jiva by the Supreme Lord. The Brahma Samhita also says that it is by the bestowal of power by the Supreme Lord that Brahma is able to create the universe. The modes of ignorance (Siva), passion (Brahma) and goodness (Visnu) may be compared to the wood, smoke and fire, three progressive stages of fire. As smoke is superior to wood, so the mode of passion is superior to the mode of ignorance, but fire is not situated in the smoke, one cannot perceive the Supreme Lord in the mode of passion (brahma). In the mode of goodness which is like the blazing fire, one can directly perceive the Lord (visnu). Just as fire is situated within wood, so in mode of ignorance, the Lord's presence can be assumed in latent state. The happiness of realization of the Lord in his impersonal aspect may be compared to the state of sleep which is characteristic of tama guna.

The jivas are of two types: those who are covered by maya and those who are not covered by maya. The covered jivas are the devatas, men and animals. The uncovered jivas are of two types: those endowed with the Lord's aisvarya sakti, and those uninfluenced by that sakti. Those not influenced by the Lord's aisvarya sakti are of two types: those who, by practice of jnana merge in to the Lord (a lamentable

condition), and those who, by practice of bhakti, remain differentiated from the Lord and taste nectarean bliss. Those who are influenced by the aisvarya sakti are of two types: those influenced by elements such as jnana, belonging to the spiritual sphere (eg. four Kumaras), and those influenced by such elements as the function of creation etc., coming from the material sphere (eg. Brahma). In this way the position of Brahma is delineated.

One may consider that Visnu and Siva are non different, being the same isvara mode. Though this is true, the devotee must understand that there is a difference in worship of the Lord with a touch of material qualities (Siva) and with no material qualities (Visnu). Brahma and Visnu, on the other hand, are completely different tattvas: Brahma is jiva and Visnu is isvara. Sometimes Brahma and Visnu are described as identical in the Puranas, but one should understand this statement by the example of the sun (Visnu) and the surya kanta jewel (Brahma) which is invested with the light of the sun, and is therefore considered non-different.

In some mahakalpas, even Siva, like Brahma, is a jiva invested with power by the Lord:

kvacij jiva visesatvam harasyoktam vidher iva

Like Brahma, Siva is sometimes a jiva. Thus Siva is sometimes classed with Brahma, as in such statements as:

yas tu narayanam devam brahma rudradi daivataih
samatvenaiva manyeta sa pasandi bhaved dhruvam

"A person who considers Narayana as equivalent to Brahma, Siva and the other devatas is a low rascal."

Those who have not fully researched in the matter say that Visnu is the Lord, not Siva; or that Siva is the Lord, not Visnu; or that since I am a devotee of Visnu, I will not give regard to Siva, or vice versa. Such people, deliberately involving themselves in arguments, become offenders. If such offenders can become enlightened by a knowledgeable devotee, then they can realize how Siva and Visnu are non-different. With this realization, and by performing namakirtana, the person can nullify his offense.

Sruti sastra ninda: disrespect for the sruti scriptures (Vedas)

If one commits this offense one obtains relief when one has the fortune to understand from a knowledgeable person that the srutis mercifully help the most blind, unqualified and independent people to come to the path of bhakti. Commission of the fourth offense can be nullified by using the same mouth that criticized the scriptures (such as the srutis, propounding karma and jnana) to

praise the same scriptures, and to praise the practitioners of those scriptures (eg. performers of karma and jnana), and by performing loud chanting of the Holy Name.

In the same way one should understand the appearance and nullification of the other six offenses.

The anarthas arising from bhakti:

Just as, along with the main plant, many weeds grow, by the cultivation of bhakti there appears acquisition of material wealth and other facilities, worship and respect by others, a comfortable position, fame etc. By their very nature, they have the power to influence the heart of the devotee, grow in size, and cover up the main plant intended for cultivation, bhakti.

Nullification of the anarthas:

The four types of anarthas mentioned, namely, those arising from previous sinful activity, from previous pious activity, from namaparadha, and from cultivation of bhakti, have five grades of eradication: limited (to one anartha), pervasive (affecting many anarthas), general, complete and absolute.

Anarthas arising from namaparadha are removed in the following stages. One should understand that the word "nullification" (nivrtti) applies not only to the complete absence of anarthas, but to any of the progressive stages of nullification as well. Thus with performance of devotional activities (bhajana kriya) there is nullification but the eradication is limited. With the appearance of nistha, the eradication is pervasive. With the appearance of rati or bhava, the eradication is general. With the appearance of prema the eradication is complete. With the attainment of the Lord's lotus feet, the eradication is absolute.

Thus, in the case of Citraketu, who had attained the lotus feet of the Lord, his accidental maha aparadha to Siva was apparent, not real, since he was endowed with an abundance of prema. This is proven by the fact that he did not distinguish between his form as an associate of the Lord and as a demon (Vrtrasura).

The cause of the "offense" of Jaya and Vijaya was a manifestation of personal desire derived from prema. The two desired in this way:

"Oh Lord of Lords, you desire to fight but we do not see an suitable opponent for you. All those available are too weak. Though we are strong, we are not inimical to you. Somehow or other, make us inimical to you, and realize your desire to fight. We, being your faithful servants, cannot tolerate to see any lack whatever in your perfection. Diminish your quality of affection for your devotees, and fulfill our pray." Such occasional mental discrepancies can be overcome by the mind itself.

The eradication of the anarthas arising from previous sin is as follows. With the performance of bhajana kriya, the eradication is general, with the appearance of nistha eradication is complete, and with the appearance of asakti it is absolute.

The eradication of anarthas arising from bhakti is as follows. With the performance of bhajana kriya, eradication is limited. With the appearance of nistha it is complete, and with the appearance of ruci it is absolute. The wise man should conclude in this way after considering all matters thoroughly.

One may raise the objection that these stages of extinguishing anarthas do not apply to devotees, quoting such verses as:

anghah sanghavad akhilam sakrd udayad

"With one utterance of the Holy Name all sins are destroyed."

yan nama sakrc chravanat pukaso'pi vimucyate samsarat

"If one hears the Holy Name even one time, a candala can obtain liberation from the material world."

Also in the case of Ajamila, simply by his uttering the Lord's name once in namabhasa, all anarthas, even up to avidya (ignorance, the root cause of material bondage), were removed and he attained the lotus feet of the Lord.

This is all true. One should have no doubt that the Holy Name has such inestimable power. But because the Holy Name, is unhappy with offenses committed against it, it does not manifest its complete power in the offender. This is indeed the reason why the sinful tendencies continue their existence. But though these tendencies continue for some time, the servants of death have no power to attack such a person.

na te yama pasabhrt ca tad bhatan svapne'pi pasyanti

"Such a person does not see Yama or his servants carrying nooses even in dreams."

In the verse "na vidyate tasya yamair hi suddhih" however the word "yama" refers to the rules of yoga practice (yama and niyama etc.), and thus means that for such a person, there is no need of other forms of purification.

The case of the offender losing the mercy of the Name is similar to a subordinate who is offensive to his wealthy master. He is denied proper care, and is treated indifferently by the master. As a result of the withdrawal of mercy, that person suffers poverty and distress of all sorts. At the same time however, people not under the jurisdiction of wealthy master do not suffer such hardships. But if the offending servant puts himself at the beck and call of his master, the master gradually shows mercy, and that person's suffering are step by step eliminated. In the same way the offending devotee will at first suffer some miseries, but if he

performs sincere service to the spiritual master and to the scriptures etc., the Name will again gradually manifest mercy and gradually eliminate his evil tendencies.

Thus the arguments against the gradual elimination of anarthas hold no ground.

One should not say, "I have committed no offenses." One can infer the existence of either recent or long-standing offenses by their effect. The effect of offense is that a person will not manifest any symptoms of prema by performance of nama kirtana.

tad asmasaram hrdayam vatedam
tad grhyamanair hari namadheyaih
na vikriyetatha yada vikaro netre
jalam gatra ruhesu harsa

"One's heart is as hard as stone if, one chanting the holy Name there is no change in the heart, tears in the eyes or standing of hairs on the limbs."

ke te'paradha viprendra namno bhagavatah krtah
vinighnanti nrnam krtyam prakrtam hyanayantihi

"Oh best of brahmanas, what are the offenses against of the Name of the Lord which cancel the results of all ones performances, and turn everything material?"

In other words, what are these offenses against the Name of the Lord which, being committed, prevent any results from repeatedly hearing and chanting the the Lord's Name, qualities, which should give prema, from serving the sacred tirthas which bestow perfection, from tasting repeatedly the ghee, milk and betel prasadam which destroy all desires for sense enjoyment, from which all those spiritually potent activities become mere material?

This is the serious effect of namaparadha. If this is so, one may then argue that if these offenses are so serious, then a person who commits a namaparadha simply loses the grace of the Lord and thus cannot even take shelter of guru or perform devotional activities. This is true. Just as during a serious fever, losing all taste for food, it becomes impossible to eat, a person who commits a serious offense loses scope for hearing, chanting and performing devotional activities. There is no doubt about this.

However, if the fever lessens with time, some taste for food develops. Even then, nourishing foods like milk and rice cannot give their full power of nourishment to the person suffering from chronic fever. They bestow some benefit, but cannot relieve him of his wasted condition. An invalid's diet and medicine can, however, with time, restore him to his previous healthy condition. At that time the full potency of normal food can be utilized by the body.

In the same way, after a long period of suffering the effects of aparadha, the intensity reduces somewhat and the devotee develops a little taste. Again the

devotee becomes qualified for bhakti. Repeated doses of hearing and chanting the Lord's name and performance of other devotional processes, gradually, with time, reveal everything up to prema. Accordingly, the experienced devotees have described devotion as progressing gradually by stages, starting with faith, followed by association, bhajana kriya, anartha nivrtti, nistha, ruci, asakti, bhava and prema.

However, the absence of symptoms of prema and traces of sinful activity in devotees who are practicing the devotional processes such as kirtana, cannot always be attributed to namaparadha. Nor can the presence of material distresses always be attributed to the reactions of previous karma (which should be destroyed by correct execution of bhakti). For instance, though Ajamila was without offenses, he did not manifest the symptoms of prema, even though he named his son Narayan and called that name many times every day. Moreover he was also inclined to sin (sexual relation with a prostitute). And Yudhisthira, though free from past karmic reactions, had to suffer many material miseries.

Just as a fruit-bearing tree bears fruit in due time, the Holy Name, though pleased with an offenseless person, will reveal its mercy (in the form of symptoms of prema) to him after some time. Since the heaps of sinful reactions which are being experienced due to previous bad practices are factually reduced to insignificance by the process of bhakti, like the bite of a serpent without his poison fangs, the sickness, lamentation and other sufferings undergone by devotees are not due to sins in previous life, for the Lord himself has said:

yasyaham anugrhnami harisye tad dhanam sanaih
tato'dhanam tyajanty asya svajana duhkha dukkhitam

"Gradually I take away all the wealth of the person whom I favor. Being penniless and most miserable, he is rejected by his family and relatives."

nirdhanatva maha rogo mad anugraha laksanam

"The person without the malady of material possessions is the object of my mercy."

Thus the Lord, thinking of the welfare of his devotee, in order to increase his humility and longing for the Lord, bestows on him all sorts of suffering as his mercy. This suffering is not the effect of sinful actions in previous lives.

The Fourth Shower of Nectar: Nistha (Steadiness)

Previously in the discussion of the two types of bhajana kriya (anisthata and nisthata), six types of the anisthata bhajana kriya were described. Without describing nisthata bhajana kriya, anartha nivrtti was then discussed.

As Srimad Bhagavatam says:

srnvatam sva kathah krsnah punya sravana kirtanah
hrdy anah stho hy abhadrani vidhunoti suhrt satam
nasta prayesv abhadresu nityam bhagavata sevaya
bhagavatya uttama sloke bhaktir bhavati naisthiki

"Lord Krsna, who is affectionate to his devotees and situated in their hearts, destroys all inauspicious elements of those who hear topics about the Lord. When the inauspicious elements have been generally destroyed by devotional service, steady devotion to the Lord appears."

The first verse refers to the stage of anisthata or unsteady bhakti, for in the next verse naisthiki bhakti is mentioned. In the first verse, "abhadrani vidhunoti" (destruction of inauspicious elements) refers to the stage of anartha nivrtti, situated between the two stages of bhajana. The words "nasta praya" (destroyed) means that the anarthas are not present at all. The proper order according to Srimad Bhagavatam is therefore bhajana kriya, anartha nivrtti, nistha. Therefore nisthita bhakti will be discussed now.

Nistha mean to be endowed with the quality of steadiness or non fluctuation. Though a person tries for steadiness every day while anarthas are still present, he will not attain steadiness. This is due to the persistent obstacles of laya (mental inactivity or sleep), viksepa (projection), apratipatti (spiritual indifference), kasaya (sinful habits) and rasasvad (taste for material enjoyment). After the stage of anartha nivrtti, when all of these obstacles are almost completely destroyed, one achieves nisthita bhakti. The symptoms of steadiness are thus the absence of the above mentioned bad habits.

Laya refers to the tendency to sleep during kirtana, sravana and smarana (in order of increasing tendency). Viksepa refers to projecting mundane conceptions while hearing, reciting or remembering the topics of the Lord. Apratipatti refers to the state of indifference, being unable to perform kirtana etc. in spite of the absence of laya or viksepa. Kasaya means the tendency to indulge in anger, greed, pride and other unworthy habits. Rasasvad refers to inability to absorb the mind in kirtana when there arises the opportunity for material sense pleasure. Nistha appears in the absence of these faults.

tada rajah tamobhava kama lobhadayas ca ye
ceta etair anavidham sthitam sattve prasidati

"At that time one is completely free from the influence of tama and raja guna. The heart, being situated in sattva and untouched by these impurities experiences happiness."

Here the word "ca" indicates an aggregate and thus rajah and tamas are indicated in plural form rather than dual form. Since all of the impurities are completely

removed (etair anavidham) only at the stage of bhava, this means that their slight presence does not act as an obstacle during this stage.

Nisthita bhakti means steadiness of two types; concerning bhakti directly and concerning elements favorable to bhakti. Steadiness in bhakti itself has three basic divisions, bodily, vocal and mental. According to some authorities, first one attains steadiness in bodily services, then in vocal activities (kirtana etc.), and finally in mental activities (remembering, meditation). Others however disagree with this progression, saying that because of the differences of strength, endurance, or potency of the body, voice, and mind in different devotees, a particular devotee, depending on the extraordinary capacity of either his body, voice, or mind, whichever is stronger, may progress more rapidly in that one particular capacity.

Steadiness in elements favorable to bhakti refers to steadiness in such qualities as humility and giving respect to others, friendliness, and mercy. However sometimes steadiness in such qualities may be seen in devotees who have the ability to control the senses, but who have not developed steadiness in bhakti; and sometimes steadiness in humility etc. is not seen in those who have attained steadiness in bhakti. However, steadiness in bhakti itself gives one the proper intelligence to perceive the presence of steadiness in the qualities in the person who has steadiness in bhakti itself, and to perceive the absence of steadiness in the qualities in a person who does not have steadiness in bhakti. Inexperienced perception cannot substantiate the truth. This is confirmed by the verse quoted above, which states that with the appearance of naisthiki bhakti the devotee attains a position in which the qualities born of raja and tama guna, such as lust, greed etc. are absent and sattva qualities are present.

In summary, one should understand that the laxity or intensity of effort in the matters of devotional activities such as hearing and chanting, when they become a fixed practice, manifest, correspondingly, two types of bhakti, unsteady and steady.

The Fifth Shower of Nectar: Ruci (Taste)

When the golden coin of bhakti, devotion, shining effulgently by the fire of steady practice and propelled by its own energy, becomes fixed in the devotee's heart, ruci or taste for devotional activities appears.

When a person develops a taste for the activities of bhakti such as hearing and chanting, which is vastly greater than attraction to anything else, that is called ruci. Unlike the previous stages, at the state of ruci constant performance of hearing and chanting does not result in even the least fatigue. Ruci quickly produces a great attachment to the activities of bhakti. This is similar to a brahmana boy who, after diligently studying the scriptures daily, and in time grasping the meaning, finds no difficulties at all in applying himself to

study, and moreover, develops a pleasure in the task.

Because of a defect in the liver the ability to taste becomes affected, and sugar becomes distasteful. Sugar however is also the medicine to cure the defect. Understanding this, an afflicted person will take sugar daily, though it may be distasteful, and eventually he will develop a real taste for it, as it cures his sickness. In this way, the jiva's heart which is contaminated by ignorance and the other klesas, becomes cured by the medicine of hearing, chanting and the other devotional processes, which in the beginning may not be so tasteful, and eventually develops a taste for the activities.

Ruci is of two types: that which depends on excellence of elements, and that which does not. Excellence of elements refers to an excellence relating to such things as the Lord's name, qualities, form. For instance a person may only experience pleasure from kirtana if it is pleasing to the ear and artistically sung, or may only relish topics of the Lord if they are delivered skillfully with literary ornaments and qualities, or may only enjoy Deity worship if all the implements, place, and materials are of high standard. This is just like a person with a weak appetite who, when notified of a meal, will ask what types of preparations there are and of what quality. The first type of ruci is in which a slight trace of impurity remains. Therefore if a person depends on the excellency of the material elements of kirtana to experience a spiritual taste, one should understand that this is evidence of impurity in his heart.

A person with the second type of ruci will experience great pleasure wherever and whenever there is a performance of kirtana. He does not depend on excellence of the elements because he has actual depth in his taste. One should understand that he has no trace of impurity in his heart.

"Oh friend, giving up the nectar of Krsna's names, why are you engaging yourself in pursuits for security and enjoyment, so hard to attain? What can I say? I am unfortunate, for I am the lowest criminal. Though I have received the mercy of the spiritual master, I have not understood its proper value. Instead I have been wandering everywhere, and in that way I have wasted my life.

Keeping a precious jewel tied in the hem of my cloth, I have been searching out a cracked cowrie, a spot of false happiness between the banks of the river of material engagements. Not practicing any anga of bhakti, I have simply manifested lack of energy. So deceitful I am, such is my sense of taste, that I lick up acrid-tasting profane gossip like nectar and remain apathetic to hear the names, qualities and pastimes of the Lord. How unfortunate I am! When I start to hear about the Lord, I comfortably fall asleep, and at any opportunity for vulgar discussion, I prick up my ears and become wide awake. In this way I have contaminated the assembly of devotees and everything else. Old and bent as I am, what sinful act have I not performed, simply for the satisfaction of my insatiable belly? I do not know what type of hell I will have to suffer for all my activities."

In this way the devotee will despair over his previous state of consciousness with a taste of disgust.

Then, in a remote place, like a swan, he will begin tasting and speaking reverently the nectarean topics about the Lord, the juice from the fruit of the desire tree, the Great Upanisad, Srimad Bhagavatam, containing the mystic science of bhakti. He will converse constantly with devotees, to the exclusion of all topics other than Krsna like a curious spectator, first standing, then sitting, finally entering in with full attention. He will take refuge in the Lord's dhama and will fix himself purely in the Lord's service. Ignorant people will think he is going crazy.

The blissful devotional service performed by the expert devotees is like a dance. The devotee begins to learn the lessons of that dance; being taken by the hands of the dance instructress, ruci, he learns all experiencing an extraordinary, unprecedented, unimaginable golden bliss which cannot be described. In what blissful realm will he come to exist, when in time, he is made to dance by the supreme masters of dance, bhava and prema?

The Sixth Shower of Nectar: Asakti

After this, when ruci (taste) which has bhajana (hearing chanting and other devotional activities) as its object of relish, reaches extreme depth, and makes Krsna the object of relish, that is called asakti or attachment. At the stage of asakti, the creeper of bhakti bears clusters of buds. These buds will in no time become flowers, at the stage of bhava and then fruits at the stage of prema. The statement that ruci has bhajan as the object and asakti has the Lord as the object is a designation signifying proportionate quantity. Actually both ruci and asakti have both components as objects, but by less intensity in taking bhajana as object and greater intensity in taking the Lord as object, asakti become distinguishable from ruci. Asakti polishes the mirror of the heart to such a condition that a reflection of the Lord may suddenly be visible there. Before the stage of asakti, the devotee, realizing that his mind has been overpowered by material objects and desires, after putting forth deliberate effort, withdraws his mind and fixes it on the Lord's form, qualities and activities. In the stage of asakti however, absorption of the mind in the Lord is automatic, without effort. A devotee even at the stage of nistha cannot discover how his mind sometimes withdraws from the Lord and fixes itself on material affairs. The quality of attachment such that the mind sometimes withdraws from material topics and absorbs itself in topics of the Lord is not seen in one who has not attained the stage of asakti. This is however characteristic of the devotee who has attained the stage of asakti.

Early in the morning, seeing another devotee, he will begin talking, "Where are you coming from? You have a salagram sila in a nice case hanging from your neck. Your tongue is quivering every moment from tasting the nectar of Krsna's name as you chant softly. Seeing you like this I feel overwhelming joy. Tell me what holy places you have visited, and describe all the great saintly souls you have met. What realizations have you had, and what realization have you

bestowed to others?" In this way he will spend some time drinking nectar in intimate conversation.

Elsewhere, seeing a devotee with an attractive book under his arm he will say, "By your extraordinary presence I can guess that you are very learned. Please recite it for me. Bring to life by your shower of nectarean explanation just one verse of the tenth canto, which is like a cataki bird waiting for raindrops." Hearing the explanation his body hairs will stand on end.

Going elsewhere he will say, "Oh, just today my life will be successful, for this gathering of devotees will immediately destroy all my sins." Thinking in this way he will pay repeated obeisances on the earth. Being honored with affection by the most learned and advanced devotee, the crown jewel of the assembly, he will sit before him in humble, crouched posture, and beg from him with tears in his eyes, while holding his pulse. "Oh master, you are the remedy for the material disease afflicting the three worlds. I am the most fallen and depraved person. Please diagnose my malady and advise me what medicine and food to take. By that miracle drug, restore me to proper health." Overjoyed with the devotee's glance of mercy, and his trickling nectar of sweet words, he will stay for some time to serve his lotus feet.

Sometimes wandering by a lake or in the forest, observing the movements of the animals and birds, he will intuitively interpret them as signs of mercy or punishment of Krsna upon himself. "If Krsna is showing his mercy to me, then let the antelope in the distance come towards me three or four steps. If he is not showing mercy, the antelope will turn away."

Seeing a small boy playing on the outskirts of a village, he will be reminded of the child saint Sanaka and will enquire from the boy, "Will I see Vrajendra Kumara?"

"No."

Hearing that simple syllable, he will deliberate on whether to take the answer at face value or seek a deeper meaning.

Remaining in his house, like a miserly merchant greedy for treasure, with a worn face, he will be absorbed in thought all day, while dreaming, standing, and sitting. "Where am I going? What am I doing? By what means will I get my hands on my desired object?"

When asked what is the matter he will sometimes act like a mute, at other times he will feign normality. His friends will apologize, "He was alright before, but now his intelligence has become covered." His unacquainted neighbours will conclude that he is an idiot by birth. The followers of Vedic ritual will consider him stupid. The adherents of the impersonal Brahman will consider him disillusioned. The followers of pious activities will say he is fallen. The nondevotees will say he has amassed some great treasure. And the offenders will say he is pretending. In this way others will judge him.

But the devotee, far from considerations of respect and disrespect, having fallen into the current of the great celestial river of attachment (asakti) to the Lord, will simply continue his attempts to come closer to the Lord.

The Seventh Shower of Nectar: Bhava

When asakti achieves full maturity it is called rati or bhava. Bhava is the preliminary stage of manifestation of the three energies sac, cid and ananda, emanating from the Lord Himself. It is called the blossoming flower on the creeper of bhakti, whose outer luster is the quality of "sarvaih surdurlabha" (rarity) and whose inner luster is "moksa laghu krti" ("taking moksa as insignificant"), just one particle of which uproots ignorance completely. Moreover, by the profuse release of its fragrances, the flower of bhava is able to invite Madhusudana and make him appear there. In short, scented by those fragrances, all the emotions of the heart, like a cluster of sesame seeds, liquify into a perfumed oil, and become immediately fit to be smeared on all the limbs of the Lord. At the appearance of bhava, its receptacle the body of even a candala becomes worthy of the respect that is due to Lord Brahma and other devatas. At that time, his eyes, full of longing, turn towards Krsna to lick the blackness of his limbs, the rosy hue of his lips and eye-rims, the white brilliance of his moon-like teeth shining in his smiling face, the yellow hue of his clothing and ornaments; and begin to bathe his body in unlimited tears.

Like a hunted animal, here and there, from time to time, freezing his motion, he raises his ears to try to hear the sound of Krsna's flute, the jingling of his anklets, the sweet intonation of his voice, the messages of his wandering footsteps. And his body erupts in ecstasy on experiencing the longed-for touch of the Lord's tender hands. His nostrils open wide again and again, and inhale, anxious to examine the fragrance of his body. Hankering to taste the Lord's saliva, his tongue feels great joy on attaining that taste, and he licks his lips. Sometimes, when he gains the association of the Lord by the Lord's whim, his heart feels exhilarated, and he becomes drunk with the abundance of sweetness, and then, at the departure of the Lord he grieves and becomes despondent. In this way the symptoms of sancari bhava decorate his body.

His intelligence, in the states of wakefulness, sleep, and deep sleep, determines to fix itself without deviation on the path of remembrance of Krsna. At the time of attaining his spiritual body suitable for performing his eternal service, the indestructible soul enters that body, and the material body becomes almost lifeless. At this stage the devotee begins to experience extreme possessiveness of Krsna: like a bee, he becomes anxious to imbibe fragrance of Krsna's lotus feet. Having obtained the most precious jewel of bhava, the devotee, like a miser, hides it from ordinary people. As he becomes the residence of renunciation, tolerance, and the other wonderful qualities which manifest themselves at the stage of bhava,

advanced devotees will understand his internal status by those external symptoms, but others who see his distracted mind will conclude that he is mad.

This stage of bhava is of two types: that arising from raga bhakti, and that arising from vaidhi bhakti. The first type of bhava, arising from raganuga bhakti, being greater in its strength and natural feeling, with a predominance of the feeling that the Lord is on an equal level and a distaste for seeing the Lord as the almighty master, is very thick or intense. The second type, arising from vaidhi bhakti, being somewhat lesser in strength and natural feeling, with a type of possessiveness of the Lord mixed with perception of the Lord as the almighty God, is not so condensed. These two types of bhava are tasted in two different ways in the two types of hearts possessed of two types of spiritual desires in two types of devotees.

This bhava is tasted in different degrees of sweetness, as in various degrees of condensation of mango, jackfruit, sugarcane or grape juice. There are five types of devotees: those acting as santas, dasas (servants), sakhas (friends), pitrs (elders), and preyasis (lovers), acting in the moods of santa, dasya, sakhya, vatsalya, and priyata. Bhava by its own energy causes the appearance of vibhava, anubhava, and vyabhicari. The dominating mood generated from these elements is called sthayi bhava, which, by mixing with the elements, produces santa, dasya, sakhya, vatsalya, and ujjvala rasas.

The sruti texts define rasa as the very essence of the Lord (raso vai sah). Just as water is present in all the streams, rivers, and ponds but is water personified in the ocean, so this rasa, though it is present in all the avataras of the Lord and touches perfection in each of them, attains its absolute climax in Krsna, the son of the King of Vraja. Rasa (Krsna Himself), which appears at the first stage of maturity (bhava) and becomes fully substantiated in the stage of prema, is directly experienced by such a qualified devotee.

The Eighth Shower of Nectar: Prema

From the creeper of bhakti which first sprouted two leaves during sadhana bhakti, now suddenly appear many smooth petals in the form of anubhavas (the symptoms of ecstasy) attached to the flower of bhava. These anubhavas are filled with the devotional processes such as hearing and chanting, and shine brilliantly at every moment. First forming the flower called bhava, finally they bring forth the fruit called prema. But the creeper of bhakti is most astonishing for though its leaves, bud, flower and fruit mature into the succeeding form, they are not giving up their original forms. Together they shine in newer and newer ways.

The devotee's innumerable thoughts were previously bound tightly by the ropes of possessiveness to family, relatives, house and properties. However when prema appears, it easily frees one's mental functions from all those attachments, by its

inherent power completely transforming all those mental functions, material though they be, into personal, spiritually blissful elements, and similarly transforming all those ropes of material attachment into ropes of a spiritual nature. Then, by those ropes of spiritual possessiveness, prema binds the spiritualized functions of the mind to the sweetness of the Lord's name, form and qualities. The splendorous sun of prema in this way rises, and manifesting its brilliance, immediately puts to shame all material ideals (purusartha), like dim constellations in the sky.

The juice which comes from the fruit of prema, being tasted, has as its essential quality most intense, concentrated bliss, and its outstanding nourishing property is its power to attract Krsna. Needless to say, when the devotee begins to taste that juice, he does not take heed of any obstacles. Like a miser feverish for treasure, like a thief who has lost all sense of discretion out of absorption in his job, the devotee loses all sense of self consciousness. Sometimes there is an impatience for obtaining the Lord, like a hunger which cannot be satisfied even by eating the most tasty foods all day and night. Burning like the sun by that anxiety, he is soothed, as if by the coolness of a thousand moons, only on tasting the form, qualities and sweetness of the Lord, which make a momentary appearance at that time. Astonishing prema, arising in the devotee, increases slightly, and the devotee longs for direct meeting with the Lord at every moment. By the intensity of his longing for the Lord, which burns like a conflagration and tears his body like a sharp arrow, he remains unsatisfied with the momentary vision of the Lord's form, qualities and sweetness.

He considers friends as useless as a dry, overgrown well, his household becomes like a thorn-filled forest. Food becomes totally distasteful. Praise from other devotees is like the biting of a snake. Daily duties become unperformable. All the necessary rituals become an unmanageable burden. The consolation of his comrades is like poison. Though he remains constantly awake, wakefulness is an ocean of repentance and his sleep seems to be simply fleeing from life. His body seems to be the target of chastisement of the Lord. His life airs become as lifeless as roasted grains. What he previously took as his life's goal is abandoned as a great calamity. Even thinking of the Lord tears his body asunder.

Then prema, assuming the form of a tender kiss, attracts black Krsna and makes him appear to the devotee for a moment. At that time all the senses of the devotee (eyes, nose, ears, tongue, sense of touch) become the receptacles of all the auspicious qualities of Krsna his supreme beauty, fragrance, melody, youthfulness, tastiness, audarya and karunya. The ever-fresh sweetness of those qualities arises through the love of his devotee, who is the taster and relisher of those qualities, and greater hankering skillfully binds the devotee more and more at every moment. Such a great ocean of bliss appears at this time, that poetic words are not capable of discerning its limits.

Like a traveller on a desert path burned by the sun's rays during the hot season, who takes shelter in a cool place supplied with a hundred vessels filled with icy water from a divine pool, under the shade of a vast banyan tree densely tangled

with branches, or like an elephant caught in a forest fire who is finally bathed by unlimited water from a bank of rain clouds, the devotee, afflicted by mortal disease, and craving satisfaction, drinks that nectar, tastes its exquisite sweetness, and experiences unbounded bliss.

The Lord reveals first His beauty to the eyes of the devotee in this remarkable condition. On account of the sweetness of that beauty, all the senses and the mind take on the quality of eyes, and obstacles such as paralysis, shaking and tears are generated. From this the devotee swoons. To console the devotee, the Lord next reveals His fragrance to the nostrils of the devotee, and by this, the devotee's senses take on the quality of the nose in order to smell. Again the devotee swoons in bliss. The Lord then reveals His sonorous voice to the devotee's ears. All the senses become like ears to hear, and for the third time the devotee faints. The Lord then mercifully gives the touch of His lotus foot, His hands and His breast to the devotee, and the devotee experiences the Lord's fresh youthfulness. To those in the mood of servant He bestows His lotus feet on their heads, to those in the mood of friendship, He grasps their hands with His, to those in the mood of parental affection, with His hand He wipes away their tears, and those in conjugal mood He embraces, touching them with His hands and chest. Then the devotee's senses all take on the sense of touch and the devotee faints for a fourth time. The Lord then restores him by giving the taste from His own lips. This however is revealed only to those in the conjugal mood. The devotee's senses take on the sense of taste and he faints for a fifth time. This blissful swoon is so deep that the Lord must revive him by bestowing His audarya (generosity), the sixth type of mercy. Audarya refers to the state in which simultaneously all of the Lord's qualities, (His beauty, fragrance, sound, touch and taste) all suddenly manifest themselves to the devotee's various senses.

At this stage, prema, which understands the aim of the Lord, increases to the extreme, to which there is a corresponding extreme increase in craving for more; and having, of its own, given up its moonlike fickleness, it spontaneously creates in the devotee's heart a tearing friction amongst the simultaneous emotions, a conflict of a hundred waves in the ocean of bliss, and then assumes, for the devotee, the form of a presiding deity of his mind. By this means, prema bestows its influence so that one can experience the different tastes simultaneously without conflict. One should not think that the intense craving of the mind will cause dilution of the various tastes. Rather, all of the senses, attaining the inconceivable, astonishing, extraordinary quality to perform the functions of the other senses to appreciate the Lord's various qualities, give more intensity to the taste. In these matters, one cannot use material arguments evolved from material experiences. These inconceivable conditions of prema are not subject to mundane logic.

Then the Lord, seeing the devotee, like cataka bird trying to taste the totality of rain drops, wanting to taste all the sweetness of his beauty, fragrance, sound, touch, taste and audarya, but unable to do so, considers, "Why am I holding so many wonderful qualities to myself?"

To let the devotee enjoy them completely, the Lord manifests his krpa sakti (also called anugraha), the central pole of all energies, the supreme controlling energy, which is described in the scriptures as a queen in the middle of a lotus whose eight petals are the eight svarupa saktis (vimala, utkarsini, jnana, kriya, yoga, prahvi, satya, and isana), and which is called by several names, such as vatsalya (affection) in relation to his devotees in the mood of servant (dasa etc.) and karunya (compassion) in relation to the devotees in conjugal mood, and which makes visible to the devotee the lotus eyes and the body of the Lord. By this krpa sakti, the element of the Lord's all pervading free will appears in the devotees, and causes great astonishment even in those who have realized Paramatma. By this energy, the Lord's affection

for His devotees, like a emperor, rules over all the other auspicious, constitutional qualities of the Lord, such as satya, sauca, daya and ksanti, which are mentioned by earth personified in the First Canto of Bhagavatam (Text 26-30, Ch.16).

The eighteen condemned qualities of illusion, laziness, error, taste for material enjoyment, intense lust, fickleness, arrogance, envy, violence, exertion, lamentation, dishonesty, anger, longing, fear, illusion of supporting the whole world, partiality, and dependency on others are not present in the body of the Lord. But in compliance to the krpa sakti however, even these qualities become present sometimes in the various avataras such as Rama and Krsna and become realized by the devotees as excellent qualities.

Attaining the power to taste all the Lord's qualities such as His beauty and fragrance, and tasting each one, the devotee ascends to higher and higher peaks of astonishing experience, and his heart melts on incessant realization of the Lord's unprecedented affection for His devotee.

Then the Lord, displaying His wonderful nature, says, "Oh best of devotees, many births you have given up wife, house and wealth for my sake, and out of obligation to serve Me you have endured the miseries of cold, wind, hunger, thirst and pain, tolerated the contempt of oother men, taking to a life o begging. In payment for all your sacrifice, I cannot given you anything. I have become your debtor. Since lordship over the whole earth, taking the post of demigod, and acquisition of mystic powers are unsuitable for you, how can I give them to you? One cannot give grass and straw, the enjoyment of cows, to any human being. Though I am unconquerable, I have just now been conquered by you; I live for you and dance for you. I am hanging on to the creeper of your good qualities for support."

Hearing the sweet, affectionate words of the Lord, the devotee says, "Oh Lord, master, ocean of mercy, You glanced upon me while I was being bitten by an array of crocodiles, the infinite miseries of endless births and deaths amidst the terrifying current of material existence. Lord, transcendental to all the material planets, whose butter-like heart melts as it manifests mercy, original spiritual master, destroyer of ignorance in the form of such qualities as lust, by manifesting the sudarsana cakra of Your wonderful form, You have pierced those crocodiles and freed me from the clutches of their teeth. To fulfil my desire to serve Your lotus feet, You placed the syllables of Your mantra in my ears, You destroyed my

suffering, You purified me by the process of constant hearing, chanting, and remembering Your qualities and name, and made me understand how to perform service to Yourself through the association of Your devotees. I am unintelligent, the lowest of the low, and even one day have not done You service. Such a miserly selfish person deserves to be punished. Contrary to this however, showing Your very self to me, You have made me drink nectar. You have mortified me by saying that You have become my debtor. Now I am thinking what to do. I would be presumptuous to ask You to pardon all my offenses five, seven, eight, a thousand or a million? I can definitely say it must be more than a hundred thousand billion. But let be all the fruits of my past activities, received and yet to be received. Previously I compared Your dark limbs to the monsoon cloud, to the blue water lily and to the sapphire; I compared Your effulgent face to the moon, and your tender feet, to newly sprouted leaves. Now these analogies seem like a pile of burned mustard seed compared to a golden mountain or like a chick pea in comparison to a touchstone, like a jackal in comparison to a lion, or a mosquito in comparison to Garuda. By my poor intelligence I have clearly committed offense to You. Such inapt poetry meant as praise unto Yourself is accepted by common people. I am like an unsettled cow threatened by the sudden appearance of Your glorious form. But, I cannot defile the desire tree of Your beauty even with my destructive comparisons."

In this way the devotee profusely praises the Lord, and the Lord, reveals to the devotee endowed with all qualities of love, as much as possible everything desired, in relation to the Lord's pastimes, filled with quality of rasa: Sri Vrndavana, the desire tree, the maha yoga pitha, the most dear daughter of Vrsabhanu, her associates such as Lalita and other servants, His own friends such as Subala and palyamanas such as Naiciki, the Yamuna River, Govardhana, forests such as Bhandira, Nandisvara Giri, all the mothers, fathers, brothers, friends and servants there, and the houses. The Lord submerges the devotee in the enchanting tidal wave of various types of bliss, and then disappears with His entourage.

Recovering consciousness after some moments, the devotee, anxious to see the Lord again, opens his eyes, and not seeing the Lord, he begins crying, "Was I merely dreaming? No, no, I was not dreaming, because I have neither drowsiness, nor any contamination in my eyes from sleep. Was it some hallucination or witchcraft? No, for witchcraft could never give such bliss. Or was it from some defect in the mind? No, because all the symptoms of unsteady mind-such as laya and viksepa are totally absent. Was it the fulfilment of some material desire? No, no material fancy could ever approach what I have seen. Was it a momentary meeting with the Lord? No, because it is completely different from all previous visions of the Lord that I remember." In this way the devotee remains in uncertainty. Lying upon the dusty earth, he prays constantly for the same experience, but not obtaining it, he laments, rolls on the ground, weeps, wounds his own body, faints, recovers, stands, sits, runs about, and wails like a madman. Sometimes he remains silent like a sage and sometimes, like a social misfit, he fails to perform his daily obligatory duties. Like a person possessed of spirits, or affected by evil planets, he talks incoherently. Unto a devotee friend who comes

asking privately what is the matter, he explains what he has experienced. When the friend explains that it was, by good fortune, a direct meeting with the Lord, satisfied, he recovers himself and becomes happy.

But then again he laments, "How can I attain that experience again? Was it a shower of mercy from some great devotee of the Lord or was it the result, by lucky chance, somehow, sometime, of some past honest endeavour in serving the Lord. Or perhaps it was simply the causelessness of the mercy of the Lord upon the lowest of the low, filled with despicable qualities. By some indescribable fortune I have attained the Lord, but then, because of a grave offense, I have lost Him again. With muddled intelligence, I cannot ascertain the truth. Where shall I go? What shall I do? By what means? Whom to ask? I am completely vacant, without soul, without shelter, scorched by a conflagration. The whole world gazes upon me, ready to devour me. Giving up this worldly association, I will live in solitude for a while."

Doing this, he laments further, "Lotus-faced Lord, holding streams of nectar, bedecked with fragrant garlands which scent all the forests, attracting swarm of vibrating bees just for a moment may I serve Your Lordship again. Having once tasted Your sweetness, I cannot aspire for anything else."

He begins to roll on the ground, breathe heavily, faint, and lose his mind. Suddenly seeing the Lord everywhere, he rejoices, embraces, laughs, dances and sings, and when the Lord disappears again, he becomes filled with remorse, and weeps. Being extraordinary in behaviour, he withdraws his very life symptoms, and he loses awareness of whether he still has a body or not. Then, not aware that his material body has passed to the elements, he understands only that his desired Lord, the ocean of mercy, has manifested Himself, engaged him in service and is leading him to His own home. Thus the devotee reaches the goal of life.

adau sraddha tatah sadhu sango'tha bhajana kriya tato' nartha nivrttis ca
tato nistha rucis tatah athasaktis tato bhavas tatah premabhyudancati

"First appears faith, then association with devotees, devotional activities, clearing of obstacles, steadiness, taste, attachment, bhava and finally prema."

The stages of devotion mentioned in this verse have been described as they are. Sneha, mana pranaya, raga, anuraga, and mahabhava, successively specialized tastes, are fruits growing on progressively higher branches of the creeper of bhakti. Because the body of the devotee cannot tolerate the friction of extremes of all those tastes, they are not manifested in his body, and thus these tastes have not been described here.

Ruci, asakti, bhava and prema, which can be experienced, have been described, but aiming at real comprehension of these states, the scriptural evidences were not supplied, since introduction of those proofs would produce a harshness in comprehension. As they may be required, they are supplied here.

Ruci:

tasmins tad labdha rucer mahamate priyasravasi askhalita matir mama
yayaham etat sad asat sva mayaya pasye mayi brahmani kalpitam pare

"Oh great sage, as soon as I got a taste of the Personality of Godhead, my attention to hear of the Lord was unflinching, and as my taste developed, I could realize that it was only in my ignorance that I had accepted gross and subtle coverings, for both the Lord and I are transcendental." SB 1.5.27

Asakti:

cetah khalv asya bandhaya muktaye catmano matam
gunesu saktam bandhaya ratam va pumsi muktaye

"The stage in which the consciousness of the living entity is attracted by the three modes of material nature is called conditional life. But when that same consciousness is attached to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one is situated in the consciousness of liberation." SB 3.25.15

Bhava:

tatranvaham krsna-kathah pragayatam anugrahenasnavam manoharah
tah sraddhaya me 'nupadam visrnavatah priyasravasy anga mamabhavad rucih

"O Vyasadeva, in that association and by the mercy of those great Vedantists, I could hear them describe the attractive activities of Lord Krsna And thus listening attentively, my taste for hearing of the Personality of Godhead increased at every step." SB 1.5.26

Prema:

prematibhara nirbhinna pulakonga'tinirvrtah
ananda samplave lino napasyma ubhayam mune

"O Vyasadeva, at that time, being exceedingly overpowered by feelings of happiness, every part of my body became separately enlivened. Being absorbed in an ocean of ecstasy, I could not see both myself and the Lord." SB 1.6.17

Symptoms of ruci:

yatra bhagavata rajan sadhavo visadasayah
bhagavad-gunanukathana- sravana-vyagra-cetasah
tasmin mahan-mukharita madhubhic-caritra-
piyusa-sesa-saritah paritah sravanti
ta ye pibanty avitrso nrpa gadha-kamais
tan na sprsanty asana-trd-bhaya-soka-mohah

"My dear King, in the place where pure devotees live, following the rules and regulations and thus purely conscious and engaged with great eagerness in hearing and chanting the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in that place if one gets a chance to hear their constant flow of nectar, which is exactly like the waves of a river, one will forget the necessities of life namely hunger and thirst and become immune to all kinds of fear, lamentation and illusion." SB 4.29.39-40

Symptoms of asakti:

sravana su bhadrani rathanga paner janmani karmani ca yani loke
gitani namani tad arthakani gayan vilajjo vicared asango

"An intelligent person who has controlled his mind and conquered fear should give up all attachment to material objects such as wife, family and nation and should wander freely without embarrassment, hearing and chanting the holy names of the Lord, the bearer of the chariot wheel. The holy names of Krsna are all auspicious because they describe His transcendental birth and activities, which He performs within this world for the salvation of the conditioned souls. Thus the holy names of the Lord are sung throughout the world." SB 11.2.39

Symptoms of bhava:

yatha bhramyatayo brahman svayam akarsasannidha
tatha me bhramyate cetas cakrapaner yadrcchaya

"O brahmanas, as iron attracted by a magnetic stone moves automatically toward the magnet, my consciousness, having been changed by His will, is attracted by Lord Visnu, who carries a disc in His hand. Thus I have no independence. SB 7.5.14

Symptoms of prema:

evam vratah sva priyanama kirtya jatanuragodrutacittaucchaih
hasaty atho roditi, rauti gayati unmadavan nrtyati loka bahyah

"By chanting the holy name of the Supreme Lord, one comes to the state of love of Godhead. Then the devotee is fixed in his vow as an eternal servant of the Lord, and he gradually becomes very much attached to a particular name and form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As his heart melts with ecstatic love, he laughs very loudly or cries or shouts. Sometimes he sings and dances like madman, for he is indifferent to public opinion." SB 11.2.40

Temporary appearances:

pragayatah sva-viryani tirtha-padah priya-sravah
ahuta iva me sikhram darsanam yati cetasi

"The Supreme Lord Sri Krsna, whose glories and activities are pleasing to hear, at once appears on the seat of my heart, as if called for, as soon as I begin to chant His holy activities." SB 1.6.33

Meeting the Lord:

pasyanti te me rucirany amba santah prasanna vaktraruna locanani
rupani divyani vara pradani sakam vacam sprhanyam vadanti

"Oh my mother, My devotees always see the smiling face of My form, with eyes like the rising morning sun. They like to see My various transcendental forms, which are all benevolent, and they also talk favorably with Me." SB 3.25.35

Nature in that state:

tair darsaniyavayavair udara vilasa haseksita vama suktaih
hgtatmano hrta pranams ca bhaktir anicchato me gatim anvim prayunkte

"Upon seeing the charming forms of the Lord, smiling and attractive, and hearing His very pleasing words, the pure devotee almost loses all other consciousness. His senses are freed from all other engagements, and he becomes absorbed in devotional service. Thus in spite of his unwillingness, he attains liberation without separate endeavor." SB 3.25.36

Mentality in that state:

deham ca tam na caramah sthitam utthitam va
siddhao vipasyati yato' dhyagamat svarupam
daivad upetam atha daiva vasad apetam
vaso yatha parikrtammadira madandhah

"Because he has achieved his real identity, the perfectly realized soul has no conception of how the material body is moving or acting, just as an intoxicated person cannot understand whether or not he has clothing on his body." SB 3.28.37

These verses should be considered. The basic truth is as follows.

Ahankara is of two types: ahanta (consciousness of "I") and mamata (consciousness of "my"). By jnana these two are destroyed and liberation is attained. By directing these two towards body (I am this body), house (this is my house) etc. bondage results.

"I am the follower of the Lord. I am the servant of the Lord. The Lord with His associates, an ocean of sweetneess with His form, qualities and pastimes is to be served by me."

If one thinks in this way identifying oneself as the Lord's servant and making the Lord and His followers the object of one's possession, it is called prema. Prema is different from both bondage and liberation, and is thus called the crown jewel of human goals. There is an order of spiritual development, based on this.

When the materialistic aspect of ahanta and mamata is extremely deep, one remains in the cycle of birth and death. When a causeless particle of faith develops and one thinks of becoming a vaisnava and serving the Lord, ahanta and mamata becomes slightly spiritualized and the jiva becomes qualified for devotional service. At the stage of sadhu sanga, the tinge of spiritualization becomes more concrete. At the stage of anisthita bhajana kriya, the spiritualization is localized in one place, whereas the material aspect is in full force. At the stage of nistha, spiritualization becomes more pervasive and the materialistic influence decreases somewhat. At the stage of ruci, spiritualization of "me and mine" becomes dominant and the materialistic aspect becomes localized. At the stage of asakti the spiritual aspect becomes complete and the material aspect becomes a trace. At the stage of bhava the spiritual aspect becomes thorough and the material aspect becomes a shadow, occasionally appearing. At the stage of prema, the spiritual aspect becomes extremely intense and the material aspect is completely absent.

At the stage of bhajana kriya, meditation on the Lord is mixed with other topics and is temporary. At the stage of nistha, meditation on the Lord has a trace of other topics. At the stage of ruci, other topics are absent and the meditation is long lasting. At the stage of asakti, meditation becomes deep. During bhava, by meditation, the Lord appears in the mind. Achieving prema, along with the appearance of the Lord in the mind, there is direct association with the Lord.

May the sweet bank of clouds satisfy the world, by distributing its rasa lifted from the ocean of sweetness, Sri Krsna Caitanya.