

Meditation (dhyāna)

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.28.18) Lord Kapiladeva instructs His mother on meditation:

One should therefore meditate upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead and upon His devotees. One should meditate on the eternal form of the Lord until the mind becomes fixed.

Dhyāna means concentration of the mind on the Lord and His associates, paraphernalia, pastimes, and abode. In deity worship the object of meditation is the deity being worshiped. The mind is purified through *bhūta-śuddhi* and becomes spiritualized by concentrating on the Lord's form and pastimes. The form of the Lord in the mind is considered a *mūrti* (deity) of the Lord, non-different from the Lord Himself, and the worshiper's mind is a *pīṭha*, or sacred altar for the Lord.

The form of the Lord one meditates on should correspond to authorized descriptions from bona fide *śāstra*. Some *pūjā* manuals contain verses describing the deity being worshiped, and one may recite these at this time. The important element, however, is not the recitation of the Sanskrit verses but the form of the Lord that the description evokes in the mind. Thus if you find that reciting a translation of the original Sanskrit verses in your mother language is more conducive to visualization of the Lord's form in the mind, you should follow this practice.

Internal Worship (mānasa-pūjā)

After meditating on the form of the Lord, you should engage your mind in worshiping that form. *Dhyāna* is the preparation for *mānasa-pūjā*; whereas *dhyāna* is passive, *mānasa-pūjā* is active. Whatever items you offer externally you should first offer internally with full devotion and attention. Also, whereas the items offered in external worship may be simple due to modest means, in the course of *mānasa-pūjā* one may perform very opulent worship of the Lord. (See below for the story from *The Nectar of Devotion*, Ch. 10, about the *brāhmaṇa* devotee who burned his finger on *mānasa-pūjā* sweet rice.) *Mānasa-pūjā* is the culmination of *dhyāna*. The *śāstra* points out that for one performing *sādhana-bhakti*, the *pūjā* with paraphernalia is ineffective without *mānasa-pūjā*. *Pūjā* performed with paraphernalia but without *mānasa-pūjā* may be the cause of offense for the neophyte, for he will tend to see the deity as a material object. Thus *mānasa-pūjā*, or *antar-yoga*, is essential in all types of deity worship. Elevated souls (especially *sannyāsīs*, who are always traveling) often perform only this type of worship, as exemplified in the following passage from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

When Śrī Nṛsiṃhānanda Brahmācārī heard that Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu would go to Vṛndāvana, he became very pleased and mentally began decorating the way there. First Nṛsiṃhānanda Brahmācārī contemplated a broad road starting from the city of Kuliyā. He bedecked the road with jewels, upon which he then laid a bed of stemless flowers. He mentally decorated both sides of the road with *bakula* flower

trees, and at intervals on both sides he placed lakes of a transcendental nature. These lakes had bathing places constructed with jewels, and they were filled with blossoming lotus flowers. There were various birds chirping, and the water was exactly like nectar. The entire road was surcharged with many cool breezes, which carried the fragrances from various flowers. He carried the construction of this road as far as Kānāi Nāṭaśālā. Within the mind of Nṛsiṃhānanda Brahmācārī, the road could not be constructed beyond Kānāi Nāṭaśālā. He could not understand why the road's construction could not be completed, and thus he was astonished. With great assurance he then told the devotees that Lord Caitanya would not go to Vṛndāvana at that time. [Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 1.155–161]

Both *dhyāna* and *mānasa-pūjā* are performed not only for the main deity, but also for the spiritual master and Lord Caitanya in preliminary worship.

Pañcarātra Pradīpa Vol 1 Chapter 2

References to Manasa puja in sastra

In the process of worshipping the Deity it is sometimes enjoined that one worship the Deity within the mind. In the *Padma Purāṇa*, *Uttara-khaṇḍa*, it is said, “All persons can generally worship within the mind.” The *Gautamīya Tantra* states, “For a *sannyāsī* who has no home, worship of the Deity within the mind is recommended.” In the *Nārada-pañcarātra* it is stated by Lord Nārāyaṇa that worship of the Deity within the mind is called *mānasa-pūjā*, One can become free from the four miseries by this method. Sometimes worship from the mind can be independently executed. According to the instruction of Avirhotra Muni, one of the *nava-yogendras*, as mentioned in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, one may worship the Deity by chanting all the *mantras*. Eight kinds of Deities are mentioned in the *śāstra*, and the mental Deity is one of them. In this regard, the following description is given in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.23-24

The Brāhmaṇa and the Sweet Rice

In some of the *Purāṇas* the evidence is given that if someone is simply meditating on devotional activities, he has achieved the desired result and has seen face to face the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In this connection, there is a story in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* that in the city of Pratiṣṭhānapura in South India there was once a *brāhmaṇa* who was not very well-to-do, but who was nevertheless satisfied in himself, thinking that it was because of his past misdeeds and by the desire of Kṛṣṇa that he did not get sufficient money and opulence. So he was not at all sorry for his poor material position, and he used to live very peacefully. He was very openhearted, and sometimes he went to hear some lectures delivered by great realized souls. At one such meeting, while he was very faithfully hearing about Vaiṣṇava activities, he was informed that these activities can be performed even by meditation. In other words, if a person is unable to actually perform Vaiṣṇava activities physically, he can

meditate upon the Vaiṣṇava activities and thereby acquire all of the same results. Because the *brāhmaṇa* was not very well-to-do financially, he decided that he would simply meditate on grand, royal devotional activities, and he began this business thus:

Sometimes he would take his bath in the River Godāvarī. After taking his bath he would sit in a secluded place on the bank of the river, and by practicing the *yoga* exercises of *prāṇāyāma*, the usual breathing exercises, he would concentrate his mind. These breathing exercises are meant to mechanically fix the mind upon a particular subject. That is the result of the breathing exercises and also of the different sitting postures of *yoga*. Formerly, even quite ordinary persons used to know how to fix the mind upon the remembrance of the Lord, and so the *brāhmaṇa* was doing this. When he had fixed the form of the Lord in his mind, he began to imagine in his meditations that he was dressing the Lord very nicely in costly clothing, with ornaments, helmets and other paraphernalia. Then he offered his respectful obeisances by bowing down before the Lord. After finishing the dressing, he began to imagine that he was cleaning the temple very nicely. After cleansing the temple, he imagined that he had many water jugs made of gold and silver, and he took all those jugs to the river and filled them with the holy water. Not only did he collect water from the Godāvarī, but he collected from the Ganges, Yamunā, Narmadā and Kāverī. Generally a Vaiṣṇava, while worshiping the Lord, collects water from all these rivers by *mantra* chanting. This *brāhmaṇa*, instead of chanting some *mantra*, imagined that he was physically securing water from all these rivers in golden and silver waterpots. Then he collected all kinds of paraphernalia for worship—flowers, fruits, incense and sandalwood pulp. He collected everything to place before the Deity. All these waters, flowers and scented articles were then very nicely offered to the Deities to Their satisfaction. Then he offered *ārati*, and with the regulative principles he finished all these activities in the correct worshiping method.

He would daily execute similar performances as his routine work, and he continued to do so for many, many years. Then one day the *brāhmaṇa* imagined in his meditations that he had prepared some sweet rice with milk and sugar and offered the preparation to the Deity. However, he was not very satisfied with the offering because the sweet rice had been prepared recently and it was still very hot. (This preparation, sweet rice, should not be taken hot. The cooler the sweet rice, the better its taste.) So because the sweet rice had been prepared by the *brāhmaṇa* very recently, he wanted to touch it so that he could know whether it was fit for eating by the Lord. As soon as he touched the sweet rice pot with his finger, he immediately was burnt by the heat of the pot. In this way, his meditation broke. Now, when he looked at his finger, he saw that it was burnt, and he was wondering in astonishment how this could have happened. Because he was simply meditating on touching the hot sweet rice, he never thought that his finger would actually become burnt.

While he was thinking like this, in Vaikuṇṭha Lord Nārāyaṇa, seated with the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmī, began to smile humorously. On seeing this smiling of the

Lord, all the goddesses of fortune attending the Lord became very curious and asked Lord Nārāyaṇa why He was smiling. The Lord, however, did not reply to their inquisitiveness, but instead immediately sent for the *brāhmaṇa*. An airplane sent from Vaikuṇṭha immediately brought the *brāhmaṇa* into Lord Nārāyaṇa's presence. When the *brāhmaṇa* was thus present before the Lord and the goddesses of fortune, the Lord explained the whole story. The *brāhmaṇa* was then fortunate enough to get an eternal place in Vaikuṇṭha in the association of the Lord and His Lakṣmī. This shows how the Lord is all-pervading, in spite of His being locally situated in His abode. Although the Lord was present in Vaikuṇṭha, He was present also in the heart of the *brāhmaṇa* when he was meditating on the worshiping process. Thus, we can understand that things offered by the devotees even in meditation are accepted by the Lord, and they help one achieve the desired result.

Nectar of Devotion chapter 10 — Meditation