



Home Deity Worship Course

The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 13



ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Five Potent Forms of Devotional Service

Rūpa Gosvāmī has stated that five kinds of devotional activities – namely, residing in Mathurā, worshiping the Deity of the Lord, reciting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, serving a devotee and chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* – are so potent that a small attachment to any one of these five items can arouse devotional ecstasy even in a neophyte.

Regarding worship of the form of the Lord, or Deity, Rūpa Gosvāmī has written the following verse: “My dear friend, if you still have any desire to enjoy the company of your friends within this material world, then don’t look upon the form of Kṛṣṇa, who is standing on the bank of Keśī-ghāṭa [a bathing place in Vṛndāvana]. He is known as Govinda, and His eyes are very enchanting. He is playing upon His flute, and on His head there is a peacock feather. And His whole body is illuminated by the moonlight in the sky.”

The purport of this verse is that if someone becomes attached to the *śrī-mūrti*, or Deity of Kṛṣṇa, by worshiping at home, then he will forget his relationships of so-called friendship, love and society. Thus it is the duty of every householder to install Deities of the Lord at home and to begin the process of worshiping along with all of his family members. This will save everyone from such unwanted activities as going to clubs, cinemas and dancing parties, and smoking, drinking, etc. All such nonsense will be forgotten if one stresses the worship of the Deities at home.

Rūpa Gosvāmī further writes, “My dear foolish friend, I think that you have already heard some of the auspicious *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which decries seeking the results of fruitive activities, economic development and liberation. I think that now it is certain that gradually the verses of the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, describing the pastimes of the Lord, will enter your ears and go into your heart.”

In the beginning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is said that unless one has the ability to throw out, just like garbage, the fruitive results of ritualistic ceremonies, economic development and becoming one with the Supreme (or salvation), one cannot understand *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The *Bhāgavatam* deals exclusively with devotional service. Only one who studies *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the spirit of renunciation can understand the pastimes of the Lord that are described in



the Tenth Canto. In other words, one should not try to understand the topics of the Tenth Canto, such as the *rāsa-līlā* (love dance), unless he has spontaneous attraction for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. One must be situated in pure devotional service before he can relish *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as it is.

In the above two verses of Rūpa Gosvāmī there are some metaphorical analogies that indirectly condemn the association of materialistic society, friendship and love. People are generally attracted to society, friendship and love, and they make elaborate arrangements and strong endeavors to develop these material contaminations. But to see the *śrī-mūrtis* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is to forget such endeavors for material association. Rūpa Gosvāmī composed his verse in such a way that he was seemingly praising the material association of friendship and love and was condemning the audience of *śrī-mūrti* or Govinda. This metaphorical analogy is constructed in such a way that things that seem to be praised are condemned, and things that are to be condemned are praised. The actual import of the verse is that one must see the form of Govinda if one at all wants to forget the nonsense of material friendship, love and society.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has similarly described the transcendental nature of relishing topics that concern Kṛṣṇa. A devotee once said, “It is very astonishing that since I have seen this Personality of Godhead, who is washed by the tears of my eyes, there is shivering of my body and He has made me a failure in executing my material duties. Since seeing Him, I cannot remain silently at home. I wish to go out to Him always.” The purport of this statement is that as soon as one is fortunate enough to contact a pure devotee, one must be anxious immediately to hear about Kṛṣṇa, to learn about Kṛṣṇa, or, in other words, to become fully Kṛṣṇa conscious.

Similarly, there is a statement about hearing and chanting the *mahā-mantra*: “It is said that saints have been able to hear the vibrating strings of the *vīṇā* in the hands of Nārada, who is always singing the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Now this same sound vibration has entered my ears, and I am always feeling the presence of the Supreme Personality. Gradually I am becoming bereft of all attachment for material enjoyment.”

Again, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has described Mathurā-maṇḍala: “I remember the Lord standing by the banks of the Yamunā River, so beautiful amid the *kadamba* trees, where many birds are chirping in the gardens. And these impressions are always giving me transcendental realization of beauty and bliss.” This feeling about Mathurā-maṇḍala and Vṛndāvana described by Rūpa Gosvāmī can actually be felt even by nondevotees. The places in the eighty-



four-square-mile district of Mathurā are so beautifully situated on the banks of the river Yamunā that anyone who goes there will never want to return to this material world. These statements by Rūpa Gosvāmī are factually realized descriptions of Mathurā and Vṛndāvana. All these qualities prove that Mathurā and Vṛndāvana are situated transcendently. Otherwise, there would be no possibility of invoking our transcendental sentiments in these places. Such transcendental feelings are aroused immediately and without fail after one arrives in Mathurā or Vṛndāvana.

In these statements about devotional service, sometimes it may appear that the results have been overestimated, but actually there is no overestimation. Some devotees, as revealed scriptures give evidence, have had immediate results by such association, although this is not possible for all. For example, the Kumāras immediately became devotees simply by smelling the incense in the temple. Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura simply heard about Kṛṣṇa and then immediately gave up his beautiful girlfriend and started out for Mathurā and Vṛndāvana, where he became a perfect Vaiṣṇava. So these statements are not overestimations, nor are they stories. They are actual facts, but are true for certain devotees and do not necessarily apply to all. These descriptions, even if considered overestimations, must be taken as they are in order to divert our attention from the fleeting material beauty to the eternal beauty of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And for a person who is already in contact with Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the described results are not unusual.

Some scholars argue that simply by following the principles of *varṇa* and *āśrama* one can gradually rise to the perfections reached by practicing devotional service, but this argument is not accepted by the great authorities. Lord Caitanya also condemned this idea while He was talking with Rāmānanda Rāya about the gradual development of devotional service. He rejected the idea of the importance of *varṇāśrama-dharma* when it was put forward by Rāmānanda Rāya. He said that this advancement of *varṇa* and *āśrama* is merely external. There is a higher principle. In *Bhagavad-gītā* also the Lord says that one has to give up all other principles of elevation and take simply to the method of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That will help one in achieving the highest perfection of life.

In the Eleventh Canto, twentieth chapter, verse 9 of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the Lord Himself says, “One should execute the prescribed duties of *varṇa* and *āśrama* as long as he has not developed spontaneous attachment for hearing about My pastimes and activities.” In other words, the prescribed forms of *varṇa* and *āśrama* are ritualistic ceremonies of religion intended for economic



development, sense gratification or salvation. All of these things are recommended for persons who have not developed Kṛṣṇa consciousness; in fact, all such activities are recommended in the revealed scriptures only to bring one to the point of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But one who has already developed spontaneous attachment for Kṛṣṇa does not require to execute the duties prescribed in the scriptures.