



Home Deity Worship Course

The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 9



ISKCON Deity Worship Ministry

CHAPTER NINE

Further Consideration of Devotional Principles

BLASPHEMY

One should not tolerate blasphemy of the Lord or His devotees. In this connection, in the Tenth Canto, seventy-fourth chapter, verse 40 of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śukadeva Gosvāmī tells Parīkṣit Mahārāja, “My dear King, if a person, after hearing blasphemous propaganda against the Lord and His devotees, does not go away from that place, he becomes bereft of the effect of all pious activities.”

In one of Lord Caitanya’s *Śikṣāṣṭaka* verses it is stated, “The devotee should be more tolerant than the tree and more submissive than the grass. He should offer all honor to others but may not accept any honor for himself.” In spite of Lord Caitanya’s being so humble and meek as a devotee, when He was informed about injuries inflicted on the body of Śrī Nityānanda, He immediately ran to the spot and wanted to kill the offenders, Jagāi and Mādhāi. This behavior of Lord Caitanya’s is very significant. It shows that a Vaiṣṇava may be very tolerant and meek, foregoing everything for his personal honor, but when it is a question of the honor of Kṛṣṇa or His devotee, he will not tolerate any insult.

There are three ways of dealing with such insults. If someone is heard blaspheming by words, one should be so expert that he can defeat the opposing party by argument. If he is unable to defeat the opposing party, then the next step is that he should not just stand there meekly but should give up his life. The third process is followed if he is unable to execute the above-mentioned two processes, and this is that he must leave the place and go away. If a devotee does not follow any of the above-mentioned three processes, he falls down from his position of devotion.

TILAKA AND TULASĪ BEADS

In the *Padma Purāṇa* there is a statement describing how a Vaiṣṇava should decorate his body with *tilaka* and beads: “Persons who put *tulasī* beads on the neck, who mark twelve places of their bodies as Viṣṇu temples with Viṣṇu’s symbolic representations [the four items held in the four hands of Lord Viṣṇu – conch, mace, disc and lotus], and who have *viṣṇu-tilaka* on their foreheads,



are to be understood as the devotees of Lord Viṣṇu in this world. Their presence makes the world purified, and anywhere they remain, they make that place as good as Vaikuṇṭha.”

A similar statement is in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, which says, “Persons who are decorated with *tilaka* or *gopī-candana* [a kind of clay resembling fuller’s earth that is produced in certain quarters of Vṛndāvana], and who mark their bodies all over with the holy names of the Lord, and on whose necks and breasts there are *tulasī* beads, are never approached by the Yama-dūtas.” The Yama-dūtas are the constables of King Yama (the lord of death), who punishes all sinful men. Vaiṣṇavas are never called for by such constables of Yamarāja. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, in the narration of Ajāmila’s deliverance, it is said that Yamarāja gave clear instructions to his assistants not to approach the Vaiṣṇavas. Vaiṣṇavas are beyond the jurisdiction of Yamarāja’s activities.

The *Padma Purāṇa* also mentions, “A person whose body is decorated with the pulp of sandalwood with paintings of the holy name of the Lord is delivered from all sinful reactions, and after his death he goes directly to Kṛṣṇaloka to live in association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

ACCEPTING FLOWER GARLANDS

The next instruction is that one should put on flower garlands that are offered to the Deity. In this connection, in the Eleventh Canto, sixth chapter, verse 46 of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Uddhava says to Kṛṣṇa, “My dear Kṛṣṇa, I have taken things that You have used and enjoyed, such as garlands of flowers, scented oils, garments and ornaments, and I eat only the remnants of Your foodstuff, because I am Your menial servant. So therefore I am sure that I shall not be attacked by the spell of the material energy.” The purport of this verse is that for any person who simply follows these rules and regulations of decorating the body with the marks of *tilaka* made from *gopī-candana* or sandalwood pulp, and who puts on the garlands that were offered to Kṛṣṇa, there is no question of being conquered by the spell of the material energy. At the time of death, there is no question of such a person’s being called by the constables of Yamarāja. Even if one does not accept all the Vaiṣṇava principles but still takes the remnants of foodstuff offered to Kṛṣṇa, or *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*, he will gradually become qualified to rise to the platform of a Vaiṣṇava.

Similarly, in the *Skanda Purāṇa* Lord Brahmā tells Nārada, “My dear Nārada, anyone who puts on his neck the flower garland which was formerly used by



Kṛṣṇa becomes relieved from all disease and reactions to sinful activities, and gradually he is liberated from the contamination of matter.”

DANCING BEFORE THE DEITY

In the *Dvārakā-māhātmya* the importance of dancing before the Deity is stated by Lord Kṛṣṇa as follows: “A person who is in a jubilant spirit, who feels profound devotional ecstasy while dancing before Me, and who manifests different features of bodily expression can burn away all the accumulated sinful reactions he has stocked up for many, many thousands of years.” In the same book there is a statement by Nārada wherein he asserts, “From the body of any person who claps and dances before the Deity, showing manifestations of ecstasy, all the birds of sinful activities fly away upward.” Just as by clapping the hands one can cause many birds to fly away, similarly the birds of all sinful activities, which are sitting on the body, can be made to fly away simply by dancing and clapping before the Deity of Kṛṣṇa.

BOWING DOWN IN HONOR OF THE DEITY

In the *Nāradiya Purāṇa* there is a statement about bowing down and offering respect to the Deity. It is said there, “A person who has performed a great ritualistic sacrifice and a person who has simply offered his respectful obeisances by bowing down before the Lord cannot be held as equals.” The person who has executed many great sacrifices will attain the result of his pious activities, but when such results are finished, he has to take birth again on the earthly planet; however, the person who has once offered respects, bowing down before the Deity, will not come back to this world, because he will go directly to the abode of Kṛṣṇa.

STANDING UP TO RECEIVE THE LORD

In the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* it is said, “A person who sees the Lord’s Ratha-yātrā car festival and then stands up to receive the Lord can purge all kinds of sinful results from his body.”

FOLLOWING THE DEITY

A similar statement is there in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, in which it is said, “Even if born of a lowly family, a person who follows the Ratha-yātrā car when the



Deities pass in front or from behind will surely be elevated to the position of achieving equal opulence with Viṣṇu.”

GOING TO THE TEMPLE OF VIṢṆU OR TO PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE

It is stated in the *Purāṇas*, “Persons who attempt to visit the holy places of pilgrimage, like Vṛndāvana, Mathurā or Dvārakā, are actually glorified. By such traveling activities, they can pass over the desert of material existence.”

In the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* there is a statement about the benefit of visiting the temples of Lord Kṛṣṇa. As we have explained previously, in Vṛndāvana, Mathurā and Dvārakā the system is that all the devotees take advantage of visiting various temples situated in those holy places. It is stated in the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya*, “Persons who are impelled by pure devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and who therefore go to see the Deities of Viṣṇu in the temple will surely get relief from entering again into the prison house of a mother’s womb.” The conditioned soul forgets the trouble of living within the mother’s womb during birth, but it is a very painful and terrible experience. In order to make an escape from this material condition, one is advised to visit a temple of Viṣṇu with devotional consciousness. Then one can very easily get out of the miserable condition of material birth.

CIRCUMAMBULATING THE TEMPLE OF VIṢṆU

It is said in the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya*, “A person who is circumambulating the Deity of Viṣṇu can counteract the circumambulation of repeated birth and death in this material world.” The conditioned soul is circumambulating through repeated births and deaths on account of his material existence, and this can be counteracted simply by circumambulating the Deity in the temple.

The Cātur-māsya ceremony is observed during the four months of the rainy season in India (approximately July, August, September and October), beginning from Śrāvaṇa. During these four months, saintly persons who are accustomed to travel from one place to another to propagate Kṛṣṇa consciousness remain at one place, usually a holy place of pilgrimage. During these times, there are certain special rules and regulations that are strictly followed. It is stated in the *Skanda Purāṇa* that during this period, if someone circumambulates the temple of Viṣṇu at least four times, it is understood that he has traveled all over the universe. By such circumambulation, one is



understood to have seen all the holy places where the Ganges water is flowing, and by following the regulative principles of Cāturmāsya one can very quickly be raised to the platform of devotional service.

ARCANĀ

Arcanā means worship of the Deity in the temple. By executing this process one confirms himself to be not the body but spirit soul. In the Tenth Canto, eighty-first chapter, verse 19 of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, it is told how Sudāmā, an intimate friend of Kṛṣṇa's, while going to the house of a *brāhmaṇa*, murmured to himself, "Simply by worshiping Kṛṣṇa one can easily achieve all the results of heavenly opulence, liberation, supremacy over the planetary systems of the universe, all the opulences of this material world and the mystic power of performing the *yoga* system."

The events leading to Sudāmā's murmuring this statement are as follows. Śrī Kṛṣṇa had ordered His friend Sudāmā to go to a *brāhmaṇa*'s house and ask for some food. The *brāhmaṇas* were performing a great sacrifice, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa told Sudāmā to plead with them that He and Balarāma were feeling hungry and needed some food. When Sudāmā went there, the *brāhmaṇas* refused to offer anything, but the wives of the *brāhmaṇas*, upon hearing that Śrī Kṛṣṇa wanted some foodstuff, immediately took many palatable dishes and went to offer them to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the *Viṣṇu-rahasya*, also, it is stated, "Any person within this world who is engaged in the worship of Viṣṇu can very easily achieve the ever-blissful kingdom of God, known as Vaikuṇṭha-loka."

RENDERING SERVICE TO THE LORD

It is stated in the *Viṣṇu-rahasya*, "Any person who can arrange for service to the Lord in the same way that a king is given service by his attendants is surely elevated to the abode of Kṛṣṇa after death." Actually, in India the temples are just like royal palaces. They are not ordinary buildings, because the worship of Kṛṣṇa should be performed in just the way that a king is worshiped in his palace. So in Vṛndāvana there are many hundreds of temples wherein the Deity is worshiped exactly like a king. In the *Nārādīya Purāṇa* it is stated, "If a person stays in the Lord's temple even for a few moments, he can surely achieve the transcendental kingdom of God."

The conclusion is that those who are rich men in society should construct beautiful temples and arrange for the worship of Viṣṇu, so that people may be



attracted to visit such temples and thereby be offered the opportunity of dancing before the Lord or chanting the holy name of the Lord, or else of hearing the holy name of the Lord. In this way, everyone will be given the chance to elevate himself to the kingdom of God. In other words, even a common man, simply by visiting such a temple, will be able to attain the highest benedictions, not to mention the devotees who are constantly engaged in the service of the Lord in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In this connection, there is a statement in the Fourth Canto, twenty-first chapter, verse 31 of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, wherein King Pṛthu says to his subjects, “My dear citizens, please note that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, is actually the deliverer of all fallen, conditioned souls. No demigod can perform this act of delivering the conditioned souls because the demigods themselves are conditioned. A conditioned soul cannot deliver another conditioned soul. Only Kṛṣṇa or His bona fide representative can deliver him. The Ganges water, which is flowing down from the toe of Lord Viṣṇu, falls upon the earthly planet and other planets and thereby delivers all the conditioned sinful living entities. So what need is there to speak of the deliverance of persons who are always engaged in the service of the Lord? There is no doubt about their liberation, even if they have stocks of sinful activities from many, many births.” In other words, a person who is engaged in the worship of the Deities can minimize his stock of sinful reactions coming from many, many previous births. This process of worshiping the Deity has already been described, and one should try to follow these rules and regulations seriously.

SINGING

In the *Līṅga Purāṇa* there is a statement about glorifying and singing about the Lord. It is said there, “A *brāhmaṇa* who is constantly engaged in singing the glories of the Lord is surely elevated to the same planet as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Lord Kṛṣṇa appreciates this singing even more than the prayers offered by Lord Śiva.”

SAṆKĪRTANA

When a person loudly chants the glories of the Lord’s activities, qualities, form, etc., his chanting is called *saṅkīrtana*. *Saṅkīrtana* also refers to the congregational chanting of the holy name of the Lord.



In the *Viṣṇu-dharma* there is a statement glorifying this process of congregational chanting: “My dear King, this word *kṛṣṇa* is so auspicious that anyone who chants this holy name immediately gets rid of the resultant actions of sinful activities from many, many births.” That is a fact. There is the following statement in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: “A person who chants the holy name of Kṛṣṇa once can counteract the resultant actions of more sinful activities than he is able to perform.” A sinful man can perform many, many sinful activities, but he is unable to perform so many that they cannot be wiped out by one single uttering of *kṛṣṇa*.

In the Seventh Canto, ninth chapter, verse 18 of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Mahārāja Prahlāda offers the following prayers to the Lord: “My dear Lord Nṛsiṃha, if I can be elevated to the position of Your servant, then it will be possible for me to hear about Your activities. You are the supreme friend, the supreme worshipable Deity. Your pastimes are transcendental, and simply by hearing of them one can counteract all his sinful activities. Therefore, I shall not care for all those sinful activities, because simply by hearing about Your pastimes I shall get out of all the contamination of material attachment.”

There are many songs about the Lord’s activities. For example, there is the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, sung by Lord Brahmā; *Nārada Pañcarātra*, sung by Nārada Muni; and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, sung by Śukadeva Gosvāmī. If these songs are heard by any person, he can easily get out of the clutches of material contamination. There should be no difficulty in hearing these songs of God. They are coming down from many, many millions of years ago, and people are still taking advantage of them. So why, at this time, should one not take full advantage and thus become liberated?

In the First Canto, fifth chapter, verse 22 of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Nārada Muni tells his disciple Vyāsadeva, “My dear Vyāsa, you should know that persons who are engaged in executing austerities and penances, studying the *Vedas*, performing big sacrifices, chanting the hymns of the *Vedas*, speculating on transcendental knowledge and performing charitable functions have for all their auspicious activities simply to gain a place in the association of devotees and chant the glories of the Lord.” It is indicated here that chanting about and glorifying the Lord is the ultimate activity of the living entity.



JAPA

Chanting a *mantra* or hymn softly and slowly is called *japa*, and chanting the same *mantra* loudly is called *kīrtana*. For example, uttering the *mahā-mantra* (Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare) very softly, only for one's own hearing, is called *japa*. Chanting the same *mantra* loudly for being heard by all others is called *kīrtana*. The *mahā-mantra* can be used for *japa* and *kīrtana* also. When *japa* is practiced it is for the personal benefit of the chanter, but when *kīrtana* is performed it is for the benefit of all others who may hear.

In the *Padma Purāṇa* there is a statement: “For any person who is chanting the holy name either softly or loudly, the paths to liberation and even heavenly happiness are at once open.”

SUBMISSION

In the *Skanda Purāṇa* there is a statement about submission unto the lotus feet of the Lord. It is said there that those who are sober devotees can offer their submission to Kṛṣṇa in the following three ways: (1) *samprārthanātmikā*, very feelingly offering prayers; (2) *dainya-bodhikā*, humbly submitting oneself; (3) *lālasā-mayī*, desiring some perfectional stage. This desiring some perfectional stage in spiritual life is not sense gratification. When one realizes something of his constitutional relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he understands his original position and wants to be reinstated in this position, either as friend, servant, parent or conjugal lover of Kṛṣṇa. That is called *lālasā-mayī*, or very eagerly desiring to go to one's natural position. This *lālasā-mayī* stage of submission comes in the stage of perfect liberation, which is technically called *svarūpa-siddhi*, when the living entity understands, by perfect spiritual advancement and revelation, his original relationship with the Lord.

In the *Padma Purāṇa* there is a statement of submission in feeling by devotees praying to the Lord: “My Lord, I know that young girls have natural affection for young boys, and that young boys have natural affection for young girls. I am praying at Your lotus feet that my mind may become attracted unto You in the same spontaneous way.” The example is very appropriate. When a young boy or girl sees a member of the opposite sex there is a natural attraction, without the need for any introduction. Without any training there is a natural attraction due to the sex impulse. This is a material example, but the devotee is



praying that he may develop a similar spontaneous attachment for the Supreme Lord, free from any desire for profit and without any other cause. This natural attraction for the Lord is the perfectional stage of self-realization.

In the same *Padma Purāṇa* there is a statement about submission in humbleness. It is stated there, “My dear Lord, there is no sinful living entity who is more of a sinner than myself. Nor is there a greater offender than myself. I am so greatly sinful and offensive that when I come to confess my sinful activities before You, I am ashamed.” This is a natural position for a devotee. As far as the conditioned soul is concerned, there is no wonder that he has some sinful activities in his past life, and this should be admitted and confessed before the Lord. As soon as this is done, the Lord excuses the sincere devotee. But that does not mean that one should take advantage of the Lord’s causeless mercy and expect to be excused over and over again, while he commits the same sinful activities. Such a mentality is only for shameless persons. Here it is clearly said, “When I come to confess my sinful activities I become ashamed.” So if a person is not ashamed of his sinful activities and continues to commit the same sinful activities with the knowledge that the Lord will excuse him, that is a most nonsensical proposition. Such an idea is not accepted in any part of the Vedic literature. It is a fact that by chanting the holy name of the Lord one becomes washed clean of all sinful activities from his past life. But that does not mean that after being washed off, one should again begin sinful activities and expect to be washed again. These are nonsensical propositions and are not admitted in devotional service. Someone may think, “For a whole week I may commit sinful activities, and for one day I will go to the temple or church and admit my sinful activities so that I can become washed off and again begin my sinning.” This is most nonsensical and offensive and is not acceptable to the author of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*.

In the *Nārada Pañcarātra* there is a statement of submission accompanied by the desire for perfection. The devotee says, “My dear Lord, when shall that day come when You will ask me to fan Your body, and according to Your pleasure, You will say, ‘You just fan Me in this way’?” The idea in this verse is that the devotee is desiring to personally fan the body of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That means that he is desiring to become the personal associate of the Supreme Lord. Of course, any devotee in any capacity, either as servant, friend or conjugal lover, always has direct association with the Lord. But according to his different individual taste, a person desires for just one of these relationships. Here the devotee is desiring to become a servant of the Lord and desires to fan the Lord, as does His internal energy, Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune. He also wishes that the Personality of Godhead will be pleased to give



him directions as to how to fan. This submission with transcendental desire, or *lālasā-mayī vijñapti*, is the highest perfectional stage of spiritual realization.

In the same *Nārada Pañcarātra*, there is another expression of submission, wherein the devotee says, “My dear Lord, O lotus-eyed one, when will that day come when on the bank of the Yamunā I shall become just like a madman and continue to chant Your holy name while incessant tears flow from my eyes?” This is another perfectional stage. Lord Caitanya also desired that “a moment will appear unto me as twelve years of time, and the whole world will appear to me as vacant on account of not seeing You, my dear Lord.” One should feelingly pray and become eager to render his particular type of service to the Lord. This is the teaching of all great devotees, especially Lord Caitanya.

In other words, one should learn how to cry for the Lord. One should learn this small technique, and he should be very eager and actually cry to become engaged in some particular type of service. This is called *lauhya*, and such tears are the price for the highest perfection. If one develops this *lauhya*, or excessive eagerness for meeting and serving the Lord in a particular way, that is the price to enter into the kingdom of God. Otherwise, there is no material calculation for the value of the ticket by which one can enter the kingdom of God. The only price for such entrance is this *lauhya-lālasā-mayī*, or desire and great eagerness.

RECITING NOTABLE PRAYERS

According to great learned scholars, the whole *Bhagavad-gītā* contains many authorized prayers, especially in the eleventh chapter, where Arjuna prays to the universal form of the Lord. Similarly, in the *Gautamīya-tantra* all the verses are called prayers. Again, in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there are hundreds of prayers to the Lord. So a devotee should select some of these prayers for his recitation. In the *Skanda Purāṇa* the glories of these prayers are stated as follows: “Devotees whose tongues are decorated always with prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa are always given respect even by the great saintly persons and sages, and such devotees are actually worshipable by the demigods.”

Those who are less intelligent want to worship different demigods for some material gain rather than worship Kṛṣṇa. But here it is stated that a devotee who is always engaged in offering prayers to the Lord is worshipable even by the demigods themselves. The pure devotees have nothing to ask from any demigod; rather, the demigods are anxious to offer prayers to the pure devotees.



In the *Nṛsiṃha Purāṇa* it is stated, “Any person who comes before the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa and begins to chant different prayers is immediately relieved from all the reactions of sinful activities and becomes eligible, without any doubt, to enter into the Vaikuṇṭha-loka.”

PARTAKING OF PRASĀDA

There is this specific statement in the *Padma Purāṇa*: “A person who honors the *prasāda* and regularly eats it, not exactly in front of the Deity, along with *caraṇāmṛta* [the water offered to the lotus feet of the Lord, which is mixed with seeds of the *tulasī* tree], immediately can achieve the results of the pious activities that are obtained through ten thousand performances of sacrificial rites.”

DRINKING CARAṆĀMṚTA

Caraṇāmṛta is obtained in the morning while the Lord is being washed before dressing. Scented with perfumes and flowers, the water comes gliding down through His lotus feet and is collected and mixed with yogurt. In this way this *caraṇāmṛta* not only becomes very tastefully flavored, but also has tremendous spiritual value. As described in the *Padma Purāṇa*, even a person who has never been able to give in charity, who has never been able to perform a great sacrifice, who has never been able to study the *Vedas*, who has never been able to worship the Lord – or, in other words, even one who has never done any pious activities – will become eligible to enter into the kingdom of God if he simply drinks the *caraṇāmṛta* that is kept in the temple. In the temple it is the custom that the *caraṇāmṛta* be kept in a big pot. The devotees who come to visit and offer respects to the Deity take three drops of *caraṇāmṛta* very submissively and feel themselves happy in transcendental bliss.

SMELLING THE INCENSE OR FLOWERS OFFERED TO THE DEITY

In the *Hari-bhakti-sūdhodaya* there is a statement about the incense which is offered in the temple: “When the devotees smell the good flavor of the incense which is offered to the Deity, they thus become cured of the poisonous effects of material contamination, as much as one becomes cured of a snakebite by smelling the prescribed medicinal herbs.” The explanation of this verse is that there is an herb found in the jungles that expert persons know how to use to revive the consciousness of one who is bitten by a snake. Simply by smelling



that herb one becomes immediately relieved of the poisonous effects of the snakebite. The same example is applicable: When a person comes to visit the temple and smells the incense offered to the Deity, he is cured at that time from all his material contamination.

Any devotee coming into the temple should always offer something to the Deity – fruit, flowers, incense, etc. If one cannot offer anything in cash, something else must be offered. In India the system is that all the ladies and gentlemen who come in the morning to visit the temple bring so many things. Even one morsel of rice or one morsel of flour can be offered. It is a regulative principle that one should not go to see a saintly person or the Deity in the temple without any offering. The offering may be very humble, or it may be priceless. Even a flower, a little fruit, a little water – whatever is possible – must be offered. So when a devotee comes to offer something to the Deity in the morning, he is sure to smell the good flavor of the incense, and then at once he will become cleansed of the poisonous effect of material existence.

It is stated in the *Tantra-śāstra*, “If the smell of the garland that was offered to the Deity in the temple enters into a person’s nostrils, immediately his bondage to sinful activities becomes cleared. And even if one has no sinful activities, still, by smelling such remnants of flowers, one can advance from Māyāvādī [impersonalist] to devotee.” There are several instances of this, a prime one being the advancement of the four Kumāras. They were impersonalist Māyāvādīs, but after smelling the remnants of flowers and incense in the temple, they turned to become devotees. From the above verse it appears that the Māyāvādīs, or impersonalists, are more or less contaminated. They are not pure.

It is confirmed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, “One who has not washed off all reactions of sinful activities cannot be a pure devotee. A pure devotee has no more doubts about the supremacy of the Personality of Godhead, and thus he engages himself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and devotional service.” A similar statement is in the *Agastya-saṁhitā*: Just to purify the impurities of our nostrils, we should try to smell the remnants of flowers offered to Kṛṣṇa in the temple.

TOUCHING THE DEITY

In the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara* there is a statement about touching the lotus feet of the Lord. It is said, “Only a person who is initiated as a Vaiṣṇava and is executing devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness has the right to touch the



body of the Deity.” In India there was agitation during Gandhi’s political movement because the lowborn classes of men like street-sweepers and *caṇḍālas* are prohibited, according to the Vedic system, from entering the temple. Due to their unclean habits they are prohibited, but at the same time they are given other facilities so they may be elevated to the highest grade of devotional service by association with pure devotees. A man born in any family is not barred, but he must be cleansed. That cleansing process must be adopted. Gandhi wanted to make them clean simply by stamping them with a fictitious name, *hari-jana* (“children of God”), and so there was a great tug-of-war between the temple owners and Gandhi’s followers.

But anyway, the present law is the law of all scripture – that if anyone is purified he can enter into the temple. Actually, that is the position. Only one who is properly initiated, who is properly following the rules and regulations, can enter and touch the Deity – not all. And one who touches the body of the Deity, following such regulative principles, is immediately delivered from the contamination of material sins, and all of his desires become fulfilled without delay.

SEEING THE DEITY

In the *Varāha Purāṇa* there is a statement praising the seeing of the Deity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the temple. A devotee says there, “My dear Vasundharā, any person who goes to Vṛndāvana and sees the Deity of Govinda-deva is free from the courthouse of Yamarāja and is allowed to enter into the highest planetary system, in which reside the demigods.” This means that even an ordinary person who goes to Vṛndāvana out of inquisitiveness and by chance sees the temple, especially that of Govinda-deva, even if he is not elevated to the spiritual kingdom, is still assured promotion to the higher planetary systems. This means that simply by visiting the Deity of Govinda in Vṛndāvana one becomes highly elevated in pious life.

OBSERVING ĀRATI AND CELEBRATIONS OF THE LORD

In the *Skanda Purāṇa* there is the following description of the result of seeing *ārati* (worship) of the Deity: “If someone sees the face of the Lord while *ārati* is going on, he can be relieved of all sinful reactions coming from many, many thousands and millions of years past. He is even excused from the killing of a *brāhmaṇa* or similar prohibited activities.”



As we have already explained, there are different ceremonies to be observed, such as the birthday of Kṛṣṇa, the birthday of Lord Rāmacandra, the birthday of some prominent Vaiṣṇavas, the ceremony of Jhulana-yātrā with the Lord sitting on a swing, and Dola-yātrā (the Lord’s activities in the month of March). In all festivals the Lord is seated on a car, and the car moves through different streets of the city so that people may take advantage of visiting the Lord. In the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* it is said, “In such a ceremony, if even a *caṇḍāla* [dog-eater], simply out of curiosity, sees the Lord on the cart, he becomes counted as one of the associates of Viṣṇu.”

In the *Agni Purāṇa* it is stated, “Any person who in gladness sees the worship of the Deity in the temple will obtain the results of *kriyā-yoga*, which are described in the *Pañcarātra* scripture.” *Kriyā-yoga* is a system of practice much like practical devotional service, but it is especially meant for the mystic *yogīs*. In other words, by this gradual process the mystic *yogīs* are eventually elevated to the devotional service of the Lord.

