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THE HIGHEST PERFECTION

His Divine Grace A.C.

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



Why is Radha Kund so exalted? Because it belongs to Srimati Radharani, who is the most beloved object of Sri Krishna. Among all the *gopīs*, she is the most beloved. Similarly, her lake, Sri Radha Kund, is also described by great sages as the

lake that is as dear to Krishna as Radha herself. Indeed, Krishna's love for Radha Kund and Srimati Radharani is the same in all respects. Radha Kund is very rarely attained, even by great personalities fully engaged in devotional service, not to speak of ordinary devotees who are only engaged in the practice of *vaidhī-bhakti*.

It is stated that a devotee will at once develop pure love of Krishna in the wake of the *gopīs* if he once takes a bath in Radha Kund. Srila Rupa Goswami recommends that even if one cannot live permanently on the banks of Radha Kund, he should at least take a bath in the lake as many times as possible. This is a most important item in the execution of devotional service. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur writes in this connection that Sri Radha Kund is the most select place for those interested in advancing their devotional service in the wake of the lady friends (*sakhīs*) and confidential serving maids (*mañjarīs*) of Srimati Radharani. Living entities who are eager to return home to the transcendental kingdom of God, Goloka Vrindavan, by

means of attaining their spiritual bodies (*siddha-deha*) should live at Radha Kund, take shelter of the confidential serving maids of Sri Radha, and under their direction engage constantly in her service. This is the most exalted method for those engaged in devotional service under the protection of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. In this connection, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur writes that even great sages and great devotees like Narada and Sanaka do not get an opportunity to come to Radha Kund to take their baths. What, then, to speak of ordinary devotees? If, by great fortune, one gets an opportunity to come to Radha Kund and bathe even once, he can develop his transcendental love for Krishna exactly as the *gopīs* did. It is also recommended that one should live on the banks of Radha Kund and should be absorbed in the loving service of the Lord. One should bathe there regularly and give up all material conceptions, taking shelter of Sri Radha and her assistant *gopīs*. If one is thus constantly engaged during his lifetime, after giving up the body he will return back to Godhead to serve Sri Radha in the same way as he contemplated during his life on the banks of Radha Kund. The conclusion is that to live on the banks of the Radha Kund and to bathe there daily constitute the highest perfection of devotional service. It is a difficult position to attain, even for great sages and devotees like Narada. Thus there is no limit to the glory of Sri Radha Kund. By serving Radha Kund, one can get an opportunity to become an

assistant of Srimati Radharani under the eternal guidance of the *gopīs*. ❧

— Purport to Nectar of Instruction 11

NOT JUST BY DRESS

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta

Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

One cannot gain anything simply by wearing the garb of a sannyasi. One can become a real sannyasi by becoming a staunch follower of his guru and by making the guru's service his life and soul. One should become such a Vaishnava sannyasi by becoming attached to both the spiritual master and the holy name. But those who indulge in bad association instead of serving Krishna under the guru's guidance will certainly be ruined. They will never know the Supreme Personality of Godhead or attain his service. One can cheat people by dressing as a sadhu, but the omniscient Lord, who gives the fruit of karma, will never leave such cheaters alone. Those who engage in bad association while dressed as sadhus are chopping at their own legs with an ax. ❧

— *Amṛta Vāṇī*, a collection of statements from Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. Originally compiled in Bengali by Sri Bhakti Bhagavat Mayukha Maharaja. Translated into English by Bhumipati Das. Touchstone Media. Mumbai. 2004. Page 361.

SRILA PRABHUPADA'S GIFTS

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

There are people who follow some principles of *dharma*, but they are *karma-niṣṭha*, *karmīs*. Out of crores of *karma-niṣṭhas*, one may find a *jñānī*. Such a *jñānī* is *śreṣṭha*, superior. Out of crores of such *jñānīs*, one may become liberated, *mukta*. *koṭi-mukta-madhya 'durlabha' eka kṛṣṇa-bhakta* — And out of crores of such liberated persons, one *kṛṣṇa-bhakta* is very rare. My revered spiritual master is such a devotee.

He has come here out of his causeless mercy. The heart of one who is a *vaiṣṇava-sādhu* bleeds seeing the suffering of the conditioned souls here in the material world.

*mahānta-svabhāva ei tārīte pāmara
nija kārya nāhi tabu yāna tāra ghara* [8.39]

The nature of a *mahātma* is that he has no business in this world. He is not a conditioned soul that is compelled to come here. *na karma-bandhanam janma vaiṣṇavānām ca vidyate* — A *vaiṣṇava-sādhu* has no *karma-bandhana*; he is not subject to birth and death. [Padma Purāṇa 6.229.58] Out of causeless mercy he descends to deliver the *pāmaras*, the most degraded souls.

When his guru, Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada Maharaja, first

saw him in 1922, he immediately recognized him as the person who has come to fulfill the prophecy of Sriman Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. In Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's line, the most famous *ācārya* is Bhaktivinode Thakur, so this succession is also known as *bhaktivinoda-dhārā*. Sri Bhaktivinode Thakur was such a *vaiṣṇava* that when he saw Western education and civilization spreading in India and thought of how the Indians were blindly imitating the Westerners, he became shocked. So he thought this message, these teachings of Sriman Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, should be preached in Western countries in the English language. It had to be done. Otherwise, the whole world would be doomed. So he started writing books in English first. Bhaktivinode then desired to have a qualified and powerful son who could spread the teachings of Sriman Mahaprabhu throughout the world. A very powerful *vaiṣṇava* was born, Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada Maharaja. He trained his disciples very nicely. Among them were many *sannyāsīs*. He sent some of them to the West to preach the science of Krishna consciousness in English. They came prior to the arrival of my revered spiritual master, Sri Srimad A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. But they couldn't do anything. They went back. My *guru-mahārāja* was at the time a *grhastha*, not a *sannyāsī*. He was not staying in the *maṭha*. But he was such an empowered person, such a dear devotee of Mahaprabhu, Krishna, that he was able to perform this miracle. He was specially empowered by Mahaprabhu, Bhaktivinode Thakur, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami, and all of the previous *ācāryas*. He never twisted things. He just followed their instructions as they are. Because of this, he came out successful.

Nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe — This *pāścātya-deśa*, Western world, is *nirviśeṣavāda*, *sūnyavāda*, full of impersonalism and voidism, and the most sinful persons — *mlecchas* and *yavanas* — inhabit it. Sriman Mahaprabhu is *patita-pāvana*, deliverer of the *patitas*, most degraded persons. Yet how could Mahaprabhu's prophecy be fulfilled? Srila Prabhupada was especially empowered to accomplish that work. His heart was filled with so much mercy that even at such an old age he came to the Western world and in spite of facing great troubles he cast his merciful glance over the *patitas* and delivered them. The *Bhāgavatam* (3.5.3) states:

anugrahāyeha caranti nūnam bhūtāni bhavyāni janārdanasya — Great philanthropic souls travel on the earth on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead to show compassion to the fallen souls.

Today, some people say, "There is no *sādhu*." But how can you see a *sādhu*? Have you the vision to see? A *sādhu* is not an ordinary person. He is not a living being of this material world. He has come down from Krishna's abode, from the spiritual kingdom. Just as you cannot see Krishna with material vision, you cannot see *sādhu* with material vision. You want to be a seer, but you are not a seer. Krishna is the seer. *Sādhu* is the seer. You are to be seen. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*madhya* 19.151) explains:

*brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*

After undergoing so many species of life in so many lakhs of *brahmāṇḍas*, if someone is fortunate enough, *bhāgyavān*, he comes in contact with a *sādhu*. When the *sādhu* casts his merciful glance on someone, then that person's good fortune arises. What does *sādhu* do? *Sādhu* comes here to give you Krishna. My *guru-mahārāja* is such a *sādhu*. How did he give Krishna? One devotee was just reading a letter from Prabhupada, "Just follow my instructions as they are. Chant sixteen rounds nicely, offenselessly, follow the four regulative principles, accept *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*. I am always with you." He is still here. A *vaiṣṇava* never dies. There is no birth or death for him. He is always here as Krishna is always here. If you have vision, you can see him. Otherwise, how can you see him? It is a question of vision, and that vision is obtained by the mercy of *sādhu*. You cannot get that vision in any other way. So many people say, "Oh, he is gone. He is no more." That is foolish. He is here in his books, instructions, and lectures. He is still here. You should develop the proper vision to see him, to get his mercy.

He opened Vaikunthas. He said, "These ISKCON temples are Vaikuntha. Come and take shelter here. This is Kali-yuga, but if you strictly follow these four regulative principles — no meat eating, no gambling, no intoxication, no illicit sex — accept a bonafide guru who can give you Krishna, then you will be free from the influence of Kali and you will be in Satya-yuga. You will be in Vaikuntha." He made all sorts of arrangements for everyone to be engaged. For *saṁnyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* — those who have given up family life and household affairs,

tyakta gṛha — they may take shelter in the temple and be engaged twenty-four hours a day in the loving service of Krishna under the guidance of guru. He also made arrangements for those who are *gṛhasthas*. "You *gṛhasthas* should help this temple. You should come take part every day, if you can find the time. If not daily, once a week, as the Sunday festival is there. If not weekly, once a fortnight or once a month you should come, associate with the devotees, chant, dance, take *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*, hear *hari-kathā*, *kṛṣṇa-kathā* — that will make your life successful." For those who cannot follow the regulative principles, he also made arrangements. "They are wealthy persons, earning money, but they cannot follow. They have no time. Many people say, 'We cannot do this.' All right, how can they get the mercy?" He made the Life Membership program. "They will give some percent of their hard-earned money. Thereby, they will get mercy, *sukṛti*. That will help them develop Krishna consciousness." He even trained his disciples as preachers and sent them throughout the world, "Go out and preach Krishna consciousness." He has made all of these arrangements.

This is a day we should glorify and remember him. We should beg for mercy at his lotus feet. Cry for his mercy. *vaiṣṇava kṛpā pāya sarva siddhi* — If you can get the mercy of such a *vaiṣṇava sādhu* you will achieve the perfection of your life. The *sādhu's* mercy is so powerful. Only *sādhu's* mercy is required, nothing else. What can you do? *karma nāhi, jñāna nāhi, kṛṣṇa bhakti na* — I have nothing, no *karma*, no *jñāna*, no *bhakti*. *tomāra karuṇā sāra* — I am completely dependent on your mercy. Beg for his mercy, it is so powerful. I hope you get the mercy of my *guru-mahārāja* and make your life successful. ❀

— Excerpt from a lecture on Srila Prabhupada's disappearance day, New York, 10 November 1991. Printed as chapter two of *My Revered Spiritual Master*. Gopal Jiu Publications. Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India. 2007

WHAT TYPE OF KIRTAN IS BEST?

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has written (*Śikṣāṣṭaka* 1): *param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam* — "All glories to congregational Sri Krishna *kīrtana*." In *Bhakti-sandarbhā* (173), Srila Jiva Goswami has described that in Kali Yuga any of the nine types of devotional service can be executed, but to be effective they must be done in conjunction with *kīrtana* — *yad anyāpi bhaktiḥ kalau kartavyā, tadā tat saṁnyogenaiva*. *Kīrtana* is the best and only means of success in Kali Yuga.

But there are different types of *kīrtana*. Bhagavan Das, a Gaudiya Vaishnava devotee from Orissa who was a disciple of Srila Syamananda Prabhu, composed a book called *Gaurāṅga Bhāgavata*. Therein he raises a question, "If in the first verse of his *Śikṣāṣṭakam* Mahaprabhu is emphasizing *kīrtana*, which type is he stressing?"

In the third section of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur's *Kalyāṇa Kālpa-taru*, five different types of *kīrtana* are described:

1) *Nāma-kīrtana* — songs containing the Lord's names. For example, the songs beginning with the words: "*vibhāvarī śeṣa*" (*Kalyāṇa Kālpa-taru* 3.4.9), "*yaśomatī-nandana*" (Bhaktivinode's *Gītāvalī* 7.1) and "*hari haraye namaḥ kṛṣṇa yādavāya namaḥ*".

2) *Rūpa-kīrtana* — songs describing the beautiful form of the Lord. For example, the song beginning with: "*janama saphala tā'r*" (*Kalyāṇa Kālpa-taru* 3.4.11).

3) *Guṇa-kīrtana* — glorifications of the Lord's wonderful qualities. Examples are the songs beginning with: "*bahirmukha ho'ye*" (*Kalyāṇa Kālpa-taru* 3.4.12) and "*gaurāṅga karuna koro*" (Narottam Das).

4) *Līlā-kīrtana* — songs focusing on the Lord's extraordinary pastimes. For example, the song beginning with: "*jīve kṛpā kori*" (*Kalyāṇa Kālpa-taru*

3.4.14) and the third section of Bhaktivinode's *Gītā-mālā*, "*Śoka-śatana*", subtitled *Śrī Gaurāṅga-līlā-carita*, describing the pastime of the death of Srivas Thakur's son during one of Mahaprabhu's nocturnal *kīrtanas*.

5) *Rasa-kīrtana* — songs describing Krishna's relationships with his dear devotees. An example is the song starting with, "*kṛṣṇa vaiśī-gīta śuni*" (*Kalyāṇa Kālpa-taru* 3.4.16).

Some Gaudiya Vaishnavas have emphasized *līlā* and *rasa-kīrtana*, while others, including the followers of Srila Saraswati Thakur, have placed more stress on *nāma-kīrtana*. Which, if either, is more important? Bhagavan Das says that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has himself answered that question in the second verse of *Śikṣāṣṭaka: nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktiḥ* — *kīrtana* of the Lord's names is the best.

This point is substantiated by *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 2.1.11:

*etan nirvidyamānānām icchatām akuto-bhayam
yoginām nṛpa nirṇītam harer nāmānukīrtanam*

O King, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all, including those who are free from all material desires, those who are desirous of all material enjoyment, and also those who are self-satisfied by dint of transcendental knowledge.

Viswanatha Chakravarti Thakur explains in his commentary on this verse:

Although various *śāstras* glorify *bhakti*, a question arises: Amongst the different processes of *bhakti*, which is *mukhya*, the main process? It is *nāma-kīrtana*. *Śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, and *smaraṇa* — hearing, chanting and remembering — are chief amongst all the processes of *bhakti*, as evidenced in the *śloka* beginning "*tasmād bhārata*" (*Bhāg.* 2.1.5). This verse (*etan nirvidyamānānām*) describes that amongst these three processes, *kīrtana* is the best. — MD

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