

ŚRĪ MANAḤ-ŚIKŚĀ – INSTRUCTIONS TO THE MIND

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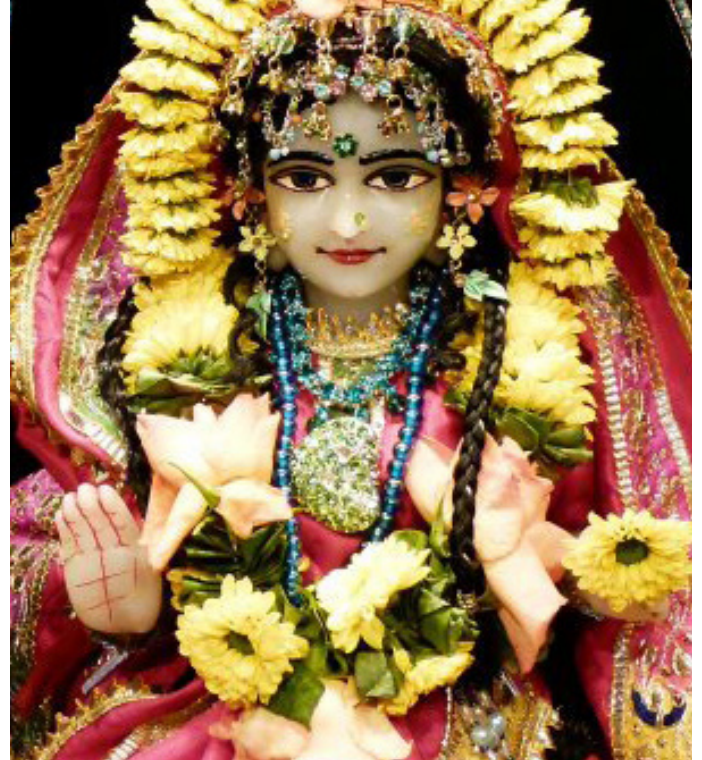
A) THE GOAL AND ORIENTATION OF ALL GAUDĪYA VAIŚNAVAS (continued)

DEVELOP LOVE FOR ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ KṚṢṆA (verse 1)

In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.23.33) Kṛṣṇa tells us how we can develop love for Him:

*śravaṇād darśanād dhyānān
mayi bhāvo ,nukirtanāt
na tathā sannikarṣeṇa
pratiyāta tato grhān*

It is by hearing about Me, seeing My Deity form, meditating upon Me and chanting My names and glories that love for Me develops, not by physical proximity. Therefore please go back to your homes.



Here Kṛṣṇa is speaking to brahmin ladies who had come to Him into the forest. Because they are married He sends them home, but He gives them this verse as an instruction to take along. This is how to develop love! Hear about Kṛṣṇa! Stare at His deity! (Women like to stare at men and men like to stare at women – stare at the deity!) Meditate upon Him and chant His names and glories. Then you will develop love for Kṛṣṇa.

MAKE YOURSELF DEPENDENT ON KṚṢṆA (verse 2)

The *Manaḥ-sikṣā* is a guidebook for those who have developed faith in Kṛṣṇa as their everything. One may ask the question how to practice single-minded devotion to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa while living in this world? How should one deal with all the rules and duties which regulate material life? The answer is: these rules are meant for people whose actions would become inauspicious and immoral without them. However, people who know about their relationships with Kṛṣṇa do not require such rules. They are instructed to surrender to Kṛṣṇa and make themselves absolutely dependent on Him.



MEDITATE ON ŚRĪ CAITANYA MAHĀPRABHU (verse 2)

Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī Ṭhākura glorifies Śrī Caitanya in a wonderfully concise way: “Had anyone even heard of something known as prema, as the ultimate aim of mankind? Did anyone know of the divine power of the Holy Name? Had anyone entered the sweet, charming forest of Vṛndāvana? Did anyone know Śrī Rādhā as the embodiment of the highest transcendental ecstasy, the personification of the furthest reaches of the sweetness of conjugal love, as Supremely worshipful, worthy of the fullest limit of loving adoration? Only due to the absolute compassion of Śrī Caitanya Candra were these rarest gems discovered, found shimmering in the darkness (of Kali Yuga), lit by the moonlight of His benevolence.”

(Śrī Caitanya Candrāmṛtaṁ, 130)

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu opens the road of mercy for us. It is due to His appearance in this world that we have access to these exalted subjects at all. Not only did He bring a goal to aspire for and a philosophy to understand, but He also provided us with a formula how to reach our goal. The simple formula of Caitanya Mahāprabhu is: chant without offences.

PROPER NOURISHMENT (verse 3)

Whatever it may be – if you want to cultivate something you need proper nourishment for it. We must learn to place a nourishing culture around our lives and endeavors. The information we process, our habits, the way we deal with others, our eating habits etc. – all this should be conducive to our goal. Only a little “Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Rāma” will not work in *kali-yuga*. The *Manaḥ-sikṣā* is all about this point to provide the proper earth, which contains the right elements, where our *bhakti-latā* can grow nicely. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī is very clear about this: if you want to attain direct service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa, you must learn from the right



people, you must have the right examples to follow. Therefore, it is important to stay with them, to be allegiant, to go deeper and deeper. If you want to construct a well, you have to drill many meters into the earth to reach the underground-water. There is no use in drilling only a few meters in many different places.

Exercise:

How do you see your lifestyle with regard to its nourishment for your *bhakti-latā*? If you see room for improvement: what would be the next thing to change? How could you change it?



B) OBSTACLES AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

ABANDON UNFAVORABLE SPIRITUAL GOALS (verse 4)

If we want to attain service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, we must give up involving ourselves in unfavorable spiritual goals. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī mentions striving for liberation and attachment to Śrī Nārāyaṇa. Divest yourself of the desire to become free from the cycle of birth and death, that is not the goal of *bhakti*. Divest yourself of the idea of entering Nārāyaṇa’s palaces, that is not the goal of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Just live in Vraja and worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa who give their devotees divine love.

CLEANSE THE HEART THROUGH ASSOCIATION (verse 5)

We are on a road to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, but there are bandits like lust, anger and greed waiting at the side of the road for an opportunity to attack us. We must take shelter of the police, of the devotees of the Lord, who can keep these bandits away from us. *Anarthas* like lust can grow in the secrecy of your consciousness, but when you reveal your mind to a powerful and merciful devotee of the Lord; in time, they will leave.

By associating with devotees in the right way, the qualities of those devotees will enter our hearts. Through the association of devotees, we start to feel “I should also become more sincere

in my spiritual life or improve in certain areas.” To explain how the devotees’ qualities enter our heart, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī quotes a verse from the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* that explains that we will acquire the qualities of those with whom we associate “just as a crystal takes up the color of the object next to it.”

(quoted in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.2.229).

Exercise:

Reflect on a situation in which association with devotees has greatly helped you.

DIG UP THE ROOT: THROW OUT PRATIṢṬHĀ BY SERVING THE GENERAL OF THE LORD (verse 7)

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī goes deeper and deeper into his discussion of obstacles on the path. On the first level of dealing with contamination he spoke of lust, envy, etc. On the second level he addresses deceitfulness – an attempt to hide the *anarthas* of the first level by not wanting to confront them. If we ask ourselves “Why do I cheat myself?” we come to the third level of contamination, the root of all the obstacles: the desire for prestige, *pratiṣṭhā*. This is the most subtle form of selfish enjoyment, the desire to be glorious and important, to be recognized and in essence: the desire to



take the place of Kṛṣṇa. This self-centeredness deforms our thoughts, behavior and other desires. The desire for *pratiṣṭhā* is the basis, the root, of all the obstacles on our path. From this desire “I must be praised.” strong enemies like envy and aggression towards others arise. One will automatically become envious of others who are better than oneself, more famous.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu lists the desire for *pratiṣṭhā* as an unwanted creeper growing next to the *bhakti-latā*. He emphasizes how important it is to pull it out, otherwise one’s chanting and hearing will not serve one’s spiritual advancement, but will only help the weed of *pratiṣṭhā* and its family to grow. (Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya*, 19.160) If you remain unaware of it, your efforts will not be dedicated to Kṛṣṇa. This does not happen out of bad intention, but out of ignorance.

What is the cure for this? How can we throw the desire for *pratiṣṭhā* out of our hearts? Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī says, “serve the leader (the general) of those who are dear to the Lord”. The two effects of such service are: you will attain love for the Divine Couple, and the obstacles on your path will be destroyed. The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (3.7.19) says:

*yat-sevayā bhagavataḥ
kūta-sthasya madhu-dviṣaḥ
rati-rāso bhavet tīvraḥ
pādayor vyasanārdanaḥ*

By serving the feet of the spiritual master, one is enabled to develop transcendental ecstasy in the service of the Personality of Godhead, who is the unchangeable enemy of the Madhu demon and whose service vanquishes one’s material distresses.

Please try this! Please forget your own concerns, and do something in the mission of a devotee. At one point you will suddenly wonder “My God, I feel so different! I feel so enlivened, I feel so ecstatic.”

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (11.26.31) also speaks about this second effect of serving a great devotee:

*yathopāśrayamāṇasya
bhagavantaṁ vibhāvasum
śītaṁ bhayaṁ tamo pyeti
sādhūn samsevatas tathā*

Just as cold, fear and darkness are eradicated for one who has approached the sacrificial fire, so dullness, fear and ignorance are destroyed for one engaged in serving the devotees of the Lord.

Do you sometimes feel dull, fearful or ignorant? Then go to the fire of the devotees! They will dispel the darkness in your heart.

Exercise:

Next time you serve a great devotee – take careful notice of the effects!

C) THE HIGHEST ASPIRATION & THE RESULT OF CHANTING THE MANAḤ-ŚIKŚĀ DAILY

WORSHIP GIRIDHĀRĪ KṚṢṆA (verse 8)

We heard how serving an exalted devotee of the Lord has the power to weed out the root of the obstacles on our path: the desire for *pratiṣṭhā*. However, such association is extremely rare! Where can we find it?

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's solution is: worship Giridhārī KṚṣṇa. Turn to the greatest devotee, Girirāja, who is KṚṣṇa Himself.

There is a three-step progression in verse 8:

1) Enter the House of Humility

Humility is our only chance. It is the opposite of all wickedness. You can only be wicked, when you forget that you are fallen. So become aware of your position – start thinking and feeling like a wretched person. This is required to walk the road of utter sincerity. After confronting all the obstacles on his path, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī starts to call for help, join his call.

The worst type of wickedness is finding faults in devotees, *vaiṣṇava-ninda*. It destroys the *bhakti* creeper completely. Here are some things you can do to root out the tendency of fault-finding:

- Always be absorbed in *bhajan* and *sādhana*.
- Speak only about the Lord.
- Speak only what is necessary and beneficial.
- Walk with your head lowered, your palms joined, showing respect to all.
- Know that everyone is superior to you.
- Immediately leave places where devotees are criticized. For example you could say, “Oh, please forgive me, I've just remembered that I have some urgent work to do.”



2) Turn to Giridhārī KṚṣṇa

If you have a genuine desire in your heart for KṚṣṇa consciousness – Girirāja will fulfill it. Pray to Him, He will remove all obstacles.

3) Giridhārī KṚṣṇa will hand you over to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī says, if you take shelter of Giridhārī, He will do something: He will grab you by the neck and forcefully bring you to the loving service of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. This is an important philosophical conclusion: You can only experience KṚṣṇa with all His qualities, if you worship Him through Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. KṚṣṇa is like a flower and if you want to have the honey that is inside Him – the highest *bhakti-rasa* – you have to take shelter of the bee, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. You cannot taste this *rasa* by approaching Him directly. KṚṣṇa only manifests the highest *bhakti-rasa* in the presence of Rādhā.

In the mood of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura we should keep these exalted topics high above our heads, knowing that we are not qualified. Can we approach it at all? With utter humility, long for what you can become with the mind-set: “I'm not qualified for all this, but I want love. My life is so boring and every little taste has already been tasted. I want to be overwhelmed! I want the desert of my heart to be finally flooded!” The moment this desire moves one's heart, one will be able to carefully approach these subject matters.

Furthermore, you must give up your *puruṣā bhava*, give up thinking you are the enjoyer. Otherwise your *bhajan* will be ruined, as Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura writes, “If one tries to interpolate the mundane into the spiritual, the ensuing result is spiritual suicide, disastrous for real transcendental life.” (Śrī Bhajana-darpaṇa) For a pure soul there is only one natural position – the spiritual female position, “I'm here for your pleasure, enjoy me.” This is required, and then you can enter the best of all *rasas*.

Exercise:

Practice humility by making it a point to speak about spiritual topics and not to criticize anyone in your next conversation. Observe: what is the conversation like? How does your heart feel afterwards?