

*guru mukha-padma-vākya, hṛdi kari mahāśakya,
āra nā kariha mane āśā |
śrī-guru-carāṇe rati, ei se uttama-gati,
ye prasāde pūre sarva āśā || 4 ||*

“The words from Śrī Guru’s lotus mouth have great power. Take them into your heart and rely upon nothing else. Attachment to his lotus feet is the best way to achieve success. By his mercy, all your hopes will be fulfilled.”

The Gravity of Śrī Guru’s Words

Sudhā-kaṇikā-vyākhyā: After the *sādhaka* has taken shelter of the lotus feet of a *sad-guru* who understands *śrī-kṛṣṇa-tattva*, meaning after he has accepted *dīkṣā-mantras*, Śrī Gurudeva shall give him instructions in *sādhana* and *bhajana*, as well as in *śrī-kṛṣṇa-tattva*, *bhakti-tattva*, *prema-tattva* and *rasa-tattva*.¹ The instructions flowing from Śrī Gurudeva’s lotus mouth are as sweet as honey and are like an elixer for the heart and ears. These instructions have a powerful effect in establishing the *sādhaka*’s *bhajana*. In this verse, Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya introduces this idea by saying *guru mukha-padma-vākya, hṛdi kari mahāśakya, āra nā kariha mane āśā*. The honeylike words falling from the lotus mouth of Śrī Gurudeva, the embodiment of *bhagavad-bhakti-rasa*, are ambrosial as well as intoxicating. There is no comparison anywhere to the instructions that Śrī Gurudeva speaks, his heart melted with affection and compassion, to his sheltered disciple. The word *mahāśakya* means ‘endowed with the power to lead one to God.’ The word *vākya* means ‘instructive speech concerning the *prema-rasa* of devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.’ Without taking those words of *śuddha-bhagavad-bhaktimaya-vigraha* Śrī Gurudeva to heart, the *sādhaka* can abandon all hope for success. The purport is that when the merciful Lord sees the sad and miserable condition of the *māyā*-bound people, His heart melts for them. In order to teach them about the various *tattvas* and cause them to personally taste the sweetness of *bhajanānanda-rasa*, the *bhagavat-svarūpa-samaṣṭi-guru* (God as the aggregate *guru*) empowers some great soul who has attained *bhakti* to act as *vyāṣṭi-guru* (individualized *guru*). He alone is to be regarded as the genuine *sad-guru*. Since Śrī Guru is the embodiment of the Lord’s mercy, there is no doubt that his instructions have the power to deliver one to the Lord. Therefore, Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya is saying here that for those who are very eager to obtain Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it is absolutely essential that they hold the powerful words of Śrī Guru within their hearts.

The question may arise that if the instructions given by Śrī Gurudeva do not

¹ *Tattva* means ‘true or real state, truth, reality, essence’. Monier-Williams

agree with the opinions of *śāstra* and the *mahājanas*, how can the *sādhaka* establish trust in those instructions? In reply, it has been said that the *sad-guru* can never give instructions that disagree with the *sādhus* and *śāstras*. If some *guru* should happen to instruct his *śiṣya* in a way contrary to the opinions of *sādhu* and *śāstra*, the virtuous *śiṣya* shall, without showing any disrespect, refuse to accept that instruction. He should disregard it with the attitude that he is unable to understand its hidden meaning. Therefore, in the twelfth verse Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says *sādhu-śāstra-guru-vākya, hṛdaye kariyā aikya, satata bhāsiba prema-mājhe*. “By making your heart one with the teachings of *sādhu-śāstra-guru*, you will always be flooded with divine love.”

After that Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says *śrī-guru-caraṇe rati, ei se uttama-gati, ye prasāde pūre sarva āsā*. This means that those who possess some attachment for Śrī Guru’s lotus feet, having accepted within their hearts his instructions on *śrī-kṛṣṇa-tattva, bhakti-tattva, prema-tattva* and *rasa-tattva*, are blessed because of that sincere devotion to easily obtain the most precious thing within the kingdom of *prema*, the service of the lotus feet of Śrī Rādhā’s beloved sweetheart. By ‘devotion to Śrī Guru’s feet,’ it is meant that if the *sādhaka’s* heart becomes charmed by his firm devotional attachment to Śrī Guru’s lotus feet, or if the *sādhaka’s* mind becomes absorbed in contemplating the form of Śrī Guru, who is always engaged in *bhajana*, then he easily obtains the supreme refuge. It may be asked that since the supreme refuge (*uttama-gati*) or most cherished attainment of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas is the *prema-sevā* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, then why is it mentioned here that devotion to the feet of Śrī Guru is the *uttama-gati*? The meaning is that because the *sādhaka* who has attachment for the feet of Śrī Guru certainly obtains the *uttama-gati* of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s *nikuñja-sevā*, it indicates in a logical and reasonable way that the two are identical. For example, the phrase *āyur ghr̥tam iti* literally means ‘ghee is life.’ Ghee is not life, but because by eating ghee one’s life is undoubtedly increased, it is said that ‘ghee is life.’ Therefore, by indicating that devotion to the feet of Śrī Guru and the *uttama-gati* are not different, Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya has determined that this attachment to Śrī Guru’s lotus feet is the *sādhaka’s* sole and most important *sādhana* and *sādhya* (means and purpose). The word ‘certainly’ has been used above because it must be understood that wherever loving devotion to Śrī Guru’s lotus feet exists, the *uttama-gati*, or ultimate refuge, is also present. The meaning of *ye prasāde pūre sarva āsā* is that by the mercy of Śrī Gurudeva, if he is pleased, all the *sādhaka’s* hopes for the *prema-sevā*² of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Their jeweled cottage within the forest of Śrī Vṛndāvana are fulfilled. ‘All hopes’ means that whenever the *sādhaka’s* heart is pervaded by constant longing for Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava’s *prema-sevā*, by the mercy of Śrī Gurudeva,

² Service such as fanning with a *cāmara* (yak tail) whisk, massaging their feet, etc.

that cherished desire is fulfilled. Srīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya has revealed a similar hope in these verses of his Prārthanā:

*kusumita vṛndāvane nācata śikhigaṇe pikakula bhramara jhaṅkāre |
priya saharī saṅge gāiyā yāibe raṅge manohara nikuñja kuṭire ||*

*hari! hari! manoratha phalibe āmāre? |
duñhaka manthara gati kautuke heraba ati aṅgabhari pulaka antare ||*

*caudike sakhīra mājhe rādhikāra iṅgite ciruṇī laiyā kare dhari |
kuṭila kuntala saba bithāriyā āñcaraba banāiba vicitra kabārī ||*

*mṛgamada malayaja saba aṅge lepaba parāiba manohara hāra |
candana kuṅkume tilaka banāiba heraba mukha-sudhākara ||*

*nīla paṭṭāmbara yatane parāiba pāye dība ratana mañjīre |
bhṛṅgārera jale rāṅgā caraṇa dhoyāiba mucchāiba āpana cikure ||*

*kusuma komala-dale seja bichāiba śayana karāba doñhākāre |
dhabala cāmara āni mṛdu mṛdu bijaba charamita duñhaka śarīre ||*

*kanaka sampuṭa kari karpūra tāmbūla bhari yogāiba doñhāra vadane |
adhara sudhā-rase tāmbūla suvāse bhokhaba adhika yatane ||*

*śrī-guru karuṇā-sindhu lokanātha dīna-bandhu mui dīne kara avadhāna |
rādhā-kṛṣṇa vṛndāvana priyanarma sakhīgaṇa narottama māge ei dāna ||*

“Along with my dear companions, I shall sing happily as we walk among the dancing peacocks, the cuckoos and buzzing bees to that charming cottage within the blossoming Vṛndāvana forest. Hari! Hari! Will my heart’s desire ever come true? When I see Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa walking slowly together, joking with each other, my limbs will erupt in goosebumps from delight. Surrounded by Her *sakhīs*, Rādhikā will beckon me to dress Her hair. With a jeweled comb I shall spread Her curled tresses and braid them into a beautiful plait. I shall anoint Her limbs with musk and sandalwood paste, and adorn Her throat with an exquisite necklace. Gazing upon Her moonlike face, I shall decorate Her forehead with delicate *tilaka* made of *candana* and *kuṅkuma*. I shall very carefully clothe Her with a blue silken dress and place jeweled anklets upon Her feet. I

shall bathe Her lotus feet with scented water and dry them with my own hair. Then I shall scatter soft flower petals upon Their bed and ask Them both to lie down. I shall fan Them very gently with a white *cāmara* and place chaplets upon Their heads. I shall fill a small, golden box with camphor-scented *tāmbūla* for Their lotus mouths. Then, with great care, I shall taste the remnants of that fragrant *tāmbūla* mixed with the nectar of Their lips. Śrī Guru! You are an ocean of mercy. Śrī Lokanātha! You are the friend of the poor. I am very miserable, so please hear my cry! Narottama begs you for the service of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa with Their *priya-narma-sakhīs* in the forests of Vṛndāvana.”

*cakṣu-dāna dila yei, janme janme prabhu sei,
divya-jñāna hr̥de prakāśita |
prema-bhakti yāñhā haite, avidyā vināśa yāte,
vede gāya yāñhāra carita || 5 ||*

He who gave me the gift of sight is my master in birth after birth. He has awakened spiritual knowledge within my heart. By this *prema-bhakti* all ignorance is destroyed. The Vedas sing of his character and activities.

Divine Knowledge

Sudhā-kaṇikā-vyākhyā: Though the spiritual nature of the *jīva* is that he is the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, since beginningless time he has been forgetful of this nature, having been swallowed by the gaping mouth of *bahiraṅgā-māyā*.³ Thinking in terms of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ concerning his material body and that which is related to it, he wanders from form to form according to his desires and mental impressions, suffering the terrible miseries of birth, death, old age and disease. Taking shelter of Śrī Guru and performing *śrī-kṛṣṇa-bhajana* is the only way to be freed from this misery.

*kṛṣṇa-nitya-dāsa jīva tāhā bhuli gela |
sei doṣe māyā tāra galāya bāndhila ||*

*tāte kṛṣṇa-bhaje kare gurura sevana |
māyā-jāla chuṭe pāya kṛṣṇera caraṇa ||*

“When the *jīva* forgets that he is the eternal servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, *māyā* binds him by the throat. Still, if he worships Kṛṣṇa and serves his *guru*, he will escape the net of

³ *Bahiraṅgā* means external.

māyā and obtain the Lord's lotus feet." (CC.M.22.24-25)

After rescuing his disciple from the ocean of material life by giving him initiation and instructions, Śrī Gurudeva opens the disciple's spiritual eyes, previously veiled by *māyā*, and causes him to directly perceive the Supreme Truth, as well as taste the nectar of *kr̥ṣṇa-bhajana*. By designating the eyes, it is synecdochically implied that the *sādhaka's* other senses also become spiritualized and thus capable of *bhagavad-bhajana*. The meaning is that the material body, mind and senses are not capable of performing *śrī-kr̥ṣṇa-bhajana*. When Śrī Gurudeva mercifully gives him the *dīkṣā-mantras*, the disciple exclaims *trāyasva bho jagannātha guro saṁsāra-vahninā, dagdham mām kāla-daṣṭam ca tvām aham śaraṇam gataḥ*. "Śrī Guru! You are the embodiment of the Lord's compassion. Please rescue me from being scorched by material life and swallowed by death! O Master, I seek your refuge." When the disciple receives Śrī Gurudeva's shelter and dedicates his body, mind and soul, then by the touch of Śrī Gurudeva's sweet mercy (just as iron is turned to gold by contact with the philosopher's stone), the disciple is infused with *bhakti-śakti*. His body and senses become spiritualized and fit for performing *bhajana* to the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān. The *sādhaka's* body, mind and senses obtain that spirituality by assuming the same nature as that of *bhagavad-bhajana*, and this transformation occurs solely by the mercy of Śrī Guru. In this way, Śrī Guru's mercy qualifies the disciple to worship the lotus feet of God, delivers him at the Lord's lotus feet and establishes his particular relationship with the Lord. Therefore, Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says *cakṣu-dāna dila yei, janme janme prabhu sei, divya-jñāna hṛde prakāśita*. "Śrī Guru, the giver of love of Kṛṣṇa and knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, is my master birth after birth, and I am his servant birth after birth. By opening my physical eyes to the Truth of God, he has also opened my spiritual eyes of devotion, smeared with the ointment of love. If Śrī Guru is satisfied, he deposits the power of his compassion within one's heart, and then the divine knowledge embodied in *kr̥ṣṇa-dīkṣā* and his instructions is realized." This clearly indicates the master-servant relationship between Śrī Guru and the disciple, as well as the permanent nature of that relationship. As the result of his past actions, the wandering *jīva* is born into various wombs, and in each birth he establishes connections with a different mother and father, and with different friends and relatives. But the *guru-śiṣya* relationship is not like that. At a suitable time among those births, the very same Śrī Guru becomes present before his disciple and causes him to drink the sweet *rasa* of *bhajana*, blesses him with the gift of *prema* and leads him into the kingdom of *līlā* for the direct *sevā* of his beloved Lord. Ah! The mercy of Śrī Guru! Nothing compares to this!

Then Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says *prema-bhakti yānhā haite, avidyā vināśa yāte, vede gāya yānhāra carita*. We have said that it is as though the compassion of that

boundless ocean of mercy, Śrī Bhagavān, has condensed into the form of Śrī Guru and appeared here for the benefit of all worldly souls. It is through Śrī Gurudeva, the *avatāra* of Śrī Bhagavān's compassion, that we experience the Lord's mercy. Śrī Gurudeva's heart is the jeweled throne of Śrī Bhakti Mahārāṇī, the quintessence of the *hlādinī-samvit-śakti*.⁴ Residing there, Bhaktirāṇī bestows Her mercy upon the people of the world. With Śrī Guru's compassion as the vehicle, Her mercy is set in motion within the *sādhaka*, and he becomes blessed with the gift of *prema*. Because of this *sambandha-jñāna* (knowledge of relationship) gained by the mercy of Śrī Guru, attachment for the body and subject matters not related to Kṛṣṇa is lost, while a deep affection for Kṛṣṇa arises. *Prema-bhakti* then appears within the *sādhaka's* heart, having flowed through the *guru-praṇālī* like the current of the Mandākinī. This mystical truth is also found in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.2.31):

*svayaṁ samuttīrya sudustaraṁ dyuman
bhavārṇavaṁ bhīmam adabhra-sauḥṛdāḥ |
bhavat padāmbhoruha-nāvam atra te
nidhāya yātāḥ sad-anugraho bhavān ||*

*bhavat padāmbhoruha-rūpāṁ nāvam atraiva nidhāya bhakti-mārga-sampradāyaṁ pravartety
arthaḥ pāraṁ yātāḥ (Svāmi-ṭīkā)*

While offering prayers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa within the womb of Devakī Devī, Brahmā and the other *devas* said, "O Self-manifested One! Your compassion for Your devotees is boundless. By the strength of that mercy, Your devotees accept the shelter of Your lotus feet, which are like sturdy boats that carry them across the troublesome ocean of material life. Moreover, by the system of *guru-paramparā* these devotees give their mercy to the souls of this world by keeping that boat here in the form of the *bhakti-mārga-sampradāya*." From this it is clearly understood that without the shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Guru there is no way to attain *prema-bhakti* and cross the ocean of material life. The direct result of receiving shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Guru is the attainment of *prema* and *sevā* at the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān. A secondary result is the destruction of ignorance, the basis of materialistic life. Therefore Śrīla Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says *avidyā vināśa yāte*. The forgetful⁵ *jīva's* beginningless aversion to God has arisen due to Śrī Bhagavān's external *māyā-śakti* of *avidyā*, or illusion. This *avidyā* is of five kinds: *tamaḥ*,

⁴ The powers of joy and consciousness

⁵ The word used here is *svarūpa-vismṛta-jīva*, or a soul who has forgotten his true nature.

moha, *mahāmoha*, *tāmisra* and *andha-tāmisra*. Here *tamaḥ* indicates ignorance, or lack of knowledge. If one extends his hand while in dense darkness, he is unable to see it or anything else around him. In the same way, if the ignorant *jīva* is unable to ascertain his own nature, how in this state of darkness shall he see Śrī Kṛṣṇa? *Moha* means the state of being unable to discern what should and shouldn't be done. *Mahāmoha* indicates desire for sensual enjoyment. *Tāmisra* means the angry state arising when one's enjoyment is hindered, and *andha-tāmisra* denotes being absorbed in guarding one's enjoyable things from possible loss. These are the functions of *avidyā-māyā*, and they are removed as a secondary fruit of Śrī Guru's mercy.

Those *anarthas*⁶ that disrupt the *sādhaka's bhajana* are also known to be *avidyā*. They are of four kinds: *duṣkṛtottha* (born of evil deeds), *sukṛtottha* (born of good deeds), *aparādhottha* (born of offensive deeds) and *bhaktyuttha* (born of attachment). The *anarthas* born of wicked acts have been described as comprised of *kleśa*, or misery and distress. *Kleśa* is of five kinds: *avidyā*, *asmitā*, *rāga*, *dveṣa* and *abhiniveśa*. Here *avidyā* means considering that which is impermanent to be eternal, that which is impure to be pure, misery to be happiness and the mundane to be spiritual. *Asmitā* means arrogance, pride, egotism. *Rāga* means desire or attachment for happiness and comfort. *Dveṣa* means the desire to remove all misery or its causes. *Abhiniveśa* means fear of death. Some also consider pious deeds aimed at sense enjoyment as *anarthas* and are thus included as miseries. By the mercy of Śrī Guru, all these are easily destroyed. By his mercy the *sādhaka* is also freed from the *anarthas* born of *aparādha*, namely the ten offenses against the Holy Name, as well as the *anarthas* born of attachment, such as the desire for profit, adoration and fame. In this way, the *sādhaka* obtains the treasure of pure *bhajana*.

vede gāya yānhāra carita: In the Vedas and the religious texts that follow the Vedas the importance of Śrī Guru has been repeatedly described. The Vedas constantly sing of him by whose mercy *prema-bhakti* is obtained and ignorance is thoroughly destroyed. *ācāryavān puruṣo veda (Chāndogya)*: "Having taken shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Guru, a person devoted to the service of Śrī Guru attains and remains situated in spiritual truth."

*yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau |
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ ||*

"For one who studies the Vedic literature with equal devotion to Śrī Hari and Śrī Guru, the power of that devotion causes the meaning of the Vedas to awaken within him."

⁶ *Anartha* means something worthless or counterproductive to one's goal.

(Svetāśvatara)

tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyam brahma-niṣṭham (Munḍaka). In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the cream of all Vedānta, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said, *ācāryam mām vijānīyāt: "Śrī Guru shall be understood as My own form."*

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* of the *Sāma-veda*, one story concerning the importance of Śrī Guru is found. Sent by Jābālā, Satyakāma Jābāla approached Maharṣi Gautama to receive spiritual knowledge. When he arrived, Gautama initiated him and engaged him in the work of cow protection. Satisfied by Satyakāma's devotion and service to his *guru*, Rṣabha (the bull), A gni (the fire), Haṁsa (the swan) and others blessed him with spiritual knowledge. Gautama, pleased by this, then also gave him instructions. When Upakauśala approached Satyakāma for spiritual knowledge, Satyakāma engaged him in tending the fires and fetching things. Pleased by Upakauśala's devotion to Śrī Guru, A gni taught spiritual knowledge to him. Then, Satyakāma, being pleased, also enlightened him. In the Veda-following *Mahābhārata*, there are also many well-known stories about the *guru-sevā* and *guru-niṣṭhā* of Upamanyu, Uttanka, Uddālaka and others. *vede gāya yāñhāra carita*.