

The Qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami



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Persons interested in the subject matter of this book are invited to correspond with our secretary:

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Introduction

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī enumerates the sixty-four transcendental qualities of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa. These qualities appear in Chapters Twenty-one and Twenty-two of *The Nectar of Devotion*, Śrīla Prabhupāda's summary study of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. The devotees, who are never satiated with hearing the Lord's glories, relish these descriptions.

Recently while rereading these chapters, I was having trouble meditating on each quality. I knew the trouble was coming from my own mental distraction and other bad habits. I decided to help myself by "fluffing out" each of the descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's qualities by finding more references in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Since it helped my own reading to do this, I thought others might find my notes helpful to them.

In case anyone doubts whether it is permissible to expand on what has already been given in *The Nectar of Devotion*, I offer the following exchange I had with Śrīla Prabhupāda as evidence of his encouragement. I had been surprised that Prabhupāda had written to an eight-year-old boy at our Dallas

gurukula, urging him to learn English so that he could write Kṛṣṇa conscious books. I wrote a letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda and inquired from him what would be the need of books written by his followers since he had presented everything so completely himself. He replied:

You ask one question about the nature of books I want you to write as my disciples; on this point Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not limited. Persons like all of the Gosvāmīs wrote so many books. Viśvanātha Cakravartī and all the *ācāryas* wrote books, and still I am writing books. Similarly, also my disciples will write. So any self-realized soul can write unlimited books without deviating from the original ideas.

Rūpa Gosvāmī's, and subsequently Śrīla Prabhupāda's presentation of Kṛṣṇa's qualities, constitutes a direct attack on the Māyāvāda notion of the Absolute as impersonal. Hearing these qualities destroys the Buddhist's void and brings clear, theistic light to the Christian's dark cloud of unknowing. God no longer has to be defined by the *via negationis*,* but by describing His infinite, all-attractive qualities.

* The "negative way" to the discovery of God. In this method, God's otherness from the universe means that He can be

Devotees should study Kṛṣṇa's qualities and pray to become qualified, according to their capacity, by developing these qualities themselves. In this way, we can become pure devotees of the Lord. "... for one who wants to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Kṛṣṇa creates all these qualities, but the person develops them himself from within. One who engages in the devotional service of the Supreme Lord develops all the good qualities, as arranged by the Supreme Lord." (Bg. 10.5, purport)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is above all material qualities (*nirguṇa*), but He is not void of personal, *transcendental* qualities. The attempt to praise Brahman as quality-less is actually a method of insulting the Supreme Truth, just as if someone were to taunt, "You cripple! You are blind! You have no face or hands! You are nothing!" The impersonalist's fear of personal existence is based on his bitter experience in this world of cheaters and the cheated. He thinks nondifferentiated nothingness (*nirvāṇa*) will bring him peace.

The Vedic scriptures, however, clearly define spiritual existence as *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*, the form of eternity, knowledge, and bliss. Without

approached by negating the world; the *negatio* of these characteristics allows us to gain some understanding of the divine nature.

form and personality, we would not be able to exchange love with the Supreme, and without love, there would be no life.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, “Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be.” (Bg. 2.12) The *Vedānta-sūtra* describes the Absolute Truth (Brahman) as *janmādy asya yataḥ*, that from whom everything emanates. Therefore, how could the Absolute Truth be devoid of qualities? How could He be great if He is nothing?

Prabhupāda asks, “Which is greater, a mountain or a person?” A person is greater because he has consciousness and personal qualities. The impersonalist thinks that all qualities are *māyā*, temporary, and therefore unreal (*asat*), but this is not the version of the *śāstras*. The Māyāvāda teaching is nothing more than atheism attempting to cover itself with scriptural respectability. It is devious. We therefore reject the idea that Kṛṣṇa’s qualities are merely figurative or that Kṛṣṇa is a myth or an ordinary mortal being.

Let us, therefore, churn the ocean of truth and see the vision of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as He is, with form, pastimes, and qualities. Only then, by the grace of the Vaiṣṇavas, can we serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in love.

1. Beautiful Bodily Features

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī at once informs us that the beauty of Kṛṣṇa's form is incomparable. If we could experience Kṛṣṇa's beauty firsthand, then we would realize that there is no value in comparing His face to the beauty of the moon or His thighs to the powerful trunks of elephants. "Ordinary persons, who cannot understand how exalted are the bodily features of the Lord, are simply given a chance to understand by a material comparison." (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 157) The *ācāryas* are kind to extend these comparisons to us who do not know Kṛṣṇa or *bhakti-rasa*. Their method is to point to the moon by referencing it to the branches of a tree on a hill. The moon is far away in outer space, but the local reference points help us to see it and appreciate it.

There is no harm—let us compare Kṛṣṇa to the moon. He is the moon of Goloka. He is the moon of the *gopīs'* minds, which are like the *cakora* birds that subsist only upon moonlight (*mānasa-candra-cakora*).

We see many Kṛṣṇa *mūrtis*, especially in Vṛndāvana. Their beauty is perceived according to the

devotion of the seer. Kṛṣṇa is not a marble or brass statue imperfectly wrought by the *mūrti-wallas*, but when these statues are carved according to śāstric descriptions, we see young Kṛṣṇa in His *tribhaṅga* pose, holding a flute and wearing a peacock-feathered crown. We worship Him as *arcā-vigraha* and He receives that worship. He is pleased with His devotees' offerings of foodstuffs, their cleaning of His temple, and their decoration of His Deity form.

May Kṛṣṇa's beautiful body be praised! May He be seen by these eyes and served by these hands. May we hear with faith the descriptions of His pure devotees. "The glory of the Lord is always worth singing, for His glories enhance the glories of His devotees. One should therefore meditate upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead and upon His devotees. One should meditate on the eternal form of the Lord until the mind becomes fixed." (*Bhāg.* 3.28.18)

"The transcendental form of Kṛṣṇa is shown to the world by Lord Kṛṣṇa's internal spiritual energy, which is a transformation of pure goodness. This jewellike form is the most confidential treasure of the devotees. This form is manifest from Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes." (Cc. *Madhya* 21.103)

2. Auspicious Characteristics

This quality refers to Kṛṣṇa's bodily limbs and is similar to the previous quality, "beautiful bodily features." Kṛṣṇa's limbs are not only beautiful, but they bear thirty-two auspicious signs usually present only on the bodies of great personalities.

Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate. He has the ideal intelligence and the most perfect form. He is the best philosopher, the best lover, the best cheater, the best everything. No one can compare with Him. The lines on anyone's palm may show that he is long-lived, poetic, financially successful, or whatever, but they won't reveal that he is the eternal, all-knowing Supreme Personality of Godhead, Bhagavān. Kṛṣṇa possesses all the opulence any person may possess, but to an unlimited extent.

Kṛṣṇa plays as a human being in His *nara-līlā*. He appears in human society as one of us, but He does so in the most perfect form (*ātmā-māyaya*), a form that is not subject to defects. He is not too short or too fat or balding. His hands are not too small. He has no crooked teeth. Everything is perfect. His form is not material, but all-spiritual. He is always a

person. “One should meditate upon the Supreme Person as the one who knows everything, as He who is the oldest, who is the controller, who is smaller than the smallest . . . beyond all material conception . . . and who is always a person.” (Bg. 8.9)

In the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is described as the Absolute Truth, one without a second, infallible, unborn, as appearing in unlimited forms—yet He appears fresh and youthful.

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared in His form of pure devotion as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, He bore all the marks of a perfect person on His body. As a baby, He astonished His mother and father with the marks on the soles of His feet and the palms of His hands. The astrologer Nīlāmbara Cakravartī quoted the *Sāmudrika*: “There are thirty-two bodily symptoms of a great person: five of his bodily parts are large, five fine, seven reddish, six raised, three small, three broad and three grave.” Then he declared, “This baby has all the symptoms of Lord Nārāyaṇa on His palms and soles. He will be able to deliver all the three worlds.” (Cc. *Ādi* 14.15–6)

The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* states, “Such a person is called ‘*nyagrodha-parimaṇḍala*.’ Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who personifies all good qualities, has the body of a *nyagrodha-parimaṇḍala*.” (Cc. *Ādi* 3.43)

Once an “all-knowing astrologer” came to the home of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and calculated

that the Lord's body is the resting place of the unlimited *Vaikuṇṭha* planets. Lord Caitanya joked with the astrologer and said, "I was a cowherd boy in My last birth, and because of such pious activities, I have now become the son of a *brāhmaṇa*." The astrologer replied, "Whatever You may be or whoever You may be, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You!" (Cc. *Ādi* 17.114)

Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya are the perfection of human persons possessing all beauty and opulence. We should accept Them as supreme and beg to be engaged in Their service. "When the Lord assumes a humanlike body to show mercy to His devotees, He engages in such pastimes as will attract those who hear about them to become dedicated to Him." (*Bhāg.* 10.33.36)

Of all of Kṛṣṇa's forms, His appearance as the human-like son of Nanda, the friend of the *gopas*, is the most perfect. The residents of *Vṛndāvana* do not need the evidence of astrologers or the *Sāmudrika* in order to recognize and love Kṛṣṇa. They don't care whether His markings prove that He is Lord Viṣṇu. They love Him spontaneously, in the *Vṛndāvana* mood.

All glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa whose form is *sac-cid-ānanda*. All glories to those whose eyes are anointed with *kṛṣṇa-prema* and who see Kṛṣṇa's form within

their hearts. May we hear their descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's qualities and form and thus develop attachment to Nanda's Govinda.

3. *Pleasing*

Kṛṣṇa is *rucira*, pleasing. The *gopīs* declare that there is no greater object of vision than the beautiful face of Kṛṣṇa as He enters the forest, driving His cows before Him, holding His flute to His mouth, and glancing lovingly upon the residents of Vṛndāvana. Their eyes are so satisfied that they don't want to be separated from this vision even for a moment. Separation from Kṛṣṇa (*viraha*) causes great pain to the Vrajavāsīs. As Lord Caitanya declared, "Now in Your absence, I am seeing the whole world as vacant."

Nothing is so pleasing as Kṛṣṇa, and whatever else we find pleasing is actually coming from Him. The sunset, the way the hills look at dawn—whatever delights us—are but a spark of His energy.

The partial manifestations of Kṛṣṇa cannot fully satisfy us. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "For the whole duration of our life we go see different forms in the material world, but none of them is just apt to satisfy the mind, nor can any one of them vanish all perturbation of the mind. These are the special features of the transcendental form of the Lord, and one

who has once seen that form is not satisfied with anything else; no form in the material world can any longer satisfy the seer.” (*Bhāg.* 1.6.18, purport)

Even when the *gopīs* had to remain at home, they were able to see Kṛṣṇa in their hearts. They found solace in talking among themselves, describing their inner visions of Kṛṣṇa, and how all the creatures of Vṛndāvana became stunned by the melody of His flute.

A genuine devotee is always pleased (*sadā-ruci*) by Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even separation from Kṛṣṇa fully absorbs the devotee in contemplation of all-pleasing Kṛṣṇa. “. . . Thus during the daytime the women of Vṛndāvana took pleasure in continuously singing about the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, and those ladies’ minds and hearts, absorbed in Him, were filled with great festivity.” (*Bhāg.* 10.35.26)

As described in *The Nectar of Devotion*, “It is said that the transcendental body of Kṛṣṇa resembles the lotus flower in eight parts—namely His face, His two eyes, His two hands, His navel and His two feet. The *gopīs* and inhabitants of Vṛndāvana used to see the luster of lotus flowers everywhere, and they could hardly withdraw their eyes from such a vision.” (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 159)

Those of us who do not have love-anointed eyes want to hear the description of Kṛṣṇa’s pleasing features, and thus see through our ears.

Somehow or other, we want to be filled with Kṛṣṇa. The Vaiṣṇava poets are kind to give us Kṛṣṇa's *darśana*, whose beauty is beyond words, by comparisons to whatever we know as most beautiful in this world.

“Kṛṣṇa's body is a city of attractive features, and it is sweeter than sweet. His face, which is like the moon, is sweeter still, and the gentle smile on that moonlike face is like rays of moonshine.” (Cc. *Madhya* 21.138)

We should regret that we cannot see the beauty of the lotuses in this way—or the moonlike effulgence of Kṛṣṇa's body. We should pray to receive Kṛṣṇa's glance in one of our many future lifetimes—and then we will know separation from Kṛṣṇa.

4. Effulgent

Every human being has an effulgence, an aura, but a human aura is tiny whereas Kṛṣṇa's effulgence is unlimitedly bright. "The luster of the hosts of jewels fixed on the chest of the Lord can defeat even the luster of the sun, and still, when compared with the bodily luster of the Lord, that crest of jewels appears to be only as bright as one of the stars in the sky. Therefore the transcendental influence of Kṛṣṇa is so great that it can defeat anyone." (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 159) Lord Brahmā once tested his own influence against Kṛṣṇa's. The conclusion was that the small mystic power exhibited by Brahmā was "like snow in darkness or the glowworm in day-time." (*Kṛṣṇa*, Chap. 13, p. 121) There is a similar comparison in "Description of Autumn":

During the rainy season, in the evening, there are many glowworms visible about the tops of trees, hither and thither, and they glitter just like lights. But the luminaries of the sky, the stars and the moons, are not visible. Similarly, in the Age of

Kali, persons who are atheists or miscreants become very prominently visible, whereas persons who are actually following the Vedic principles for spiritual emancipation are practically obscured.

—*Kṛṣṇa*, Chap. 20, p. 177

Lord Kṛṣṇa allows this covering to take place in the material world, but above the insignificant cloud, He reigns supreme and brilliant. He is so brilliant that His effulgence sometimes covers His personal form. Therefore, the devotee prays that the Lord may remove the dazzling effulgence so that His personal form can be seen.

The pure devotees of Vṛndāvana do not accept glowworms as bright lights, nor are they dazzled by the *brahmajyoti* coming from Kṛṣṇa's body. By Yogamāyā's arrangement, the *rāgātmikā* devotees of Vraja always see Kṛṣṇa in His pleasing form as the youthful son of Nanda. He is indescribably beautiful and influential, but He is always the object of their love.

Kṛṣṇa's opulence (*aiśvarya*) is present in Vṛndāvana, but it is covered by His sweetness (*mādhurya*). If the *gopas* and *gopīs* were aware of Kṛṣṇa's dazzling effulgence, they would not be able to approach Him in an intimate way. This was the case when Kṛṣṇa showed His effulgence to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. When Arjuna beheld the

Universal Form, he said, “Your form is difficult to see because of its glaring effulgence, spreading on all sides, like blazing fire or the immeasurable radiance of the sun.” (Bg. 11.17) He saw Lord Kṛṣṇa as “covering all the universe with [His] effulgence,” and thus he wished to disown his personal friendship with Kṛṣṇa, thinking it to be presumptuous: “Please forgive whatever I may have done in madness or in love.” (Bg. 11.41) Out of kindness to Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa then finished His display of the form of glaring effulgence (*tejo-mayaṁ viśvam anantaṁ adyaṁ*) and showed His original two-armed form.

When Kṛṣṇa does display His effulgence in Vṛndāvana, the devotees tend to discount it, as when Mother Yaśodā overlooked the Viśva-rūpa in Kṛṣṇa’s mouth and preferred to embrace Kṛṣṇa as her naughty, dependent child. When Kṛṣṇa’s bodily effulgence shines like many suns in the sky, the pure *bhaktas* do not much appreciate it. In His constant, normal dealings in Vraja, Kṛṣṇa displays a different kind of effulgence. The *gopīs* see Kṛṣṇa as a transcendental Kāmadeva (Cupid) and they are attracted to His aura of sweetness, not His majestic might. Thus we hear of the effulgence coming from His toenails, and the moonlight effulgence from His face, which is decorated with glittering earrings and His bright smile. This kind of effulgence does not force

one to his knees in fear, but attracts the devotee like a magnet. We pray to receive His light of love.

The *gopīs* are like mirrors that reflect Kṛṣṇa's bodily luster. Their love creates a competition of exchange between themselves and Kṛṣṇa in which both sides constantly increase and newer pastimes are generated. In this way, Kṛṣṇa's effulgence shines brighter with love. "The quintessence of Kṛṣṇa's sweet bodily luster is so perfect that there is no perfection above it. He is the immutable mine of all transcendental qualities." (Cc. *Madhya* 21.117)

"All men and women were accustomed to enjoying the beauty of the shining face of Kṛṣṇa, as well as His shark-like earrings swinging on His ears." (*Bhāg.* 9.24.65)

And so it is said that Kṛṣṇa is light and *māyā* is darkness. Where there is Kṛṣṇa, there is no nescience.

5. Strong

If Śrī Kṛṣṇa were beautiful but not strong, He would be incomplete. Who would protect us? Without Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, the pastimes would end in disaster when the demons attacked. Śaṅka-cūḍa ran away with all the *gopīs*. Sometimes it so happens in the world that merry-making is intruded on by murderers. Peaceful sages cannot meditate when Dvivida gorilla comes and pollutes their *bhajana-kuṭīrs*. *Yogīs* are killed and eaten by *rāk-śasas*. Rāvaṇa plots to kidnap Sītā-devī. But Kṛṣṇa is *baliyān*.

“When Kṛṣṇa killed Ariṣṭāśura, some of the *gopīs* said, ‘My dear friends, just see how Kṛṣṇa has killed Ariṣṭāśura! Although he was stronger than a mountain, Kṛṣṇa plucked him up just like a piece of cotton and threw him away without any difficulty!’” (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 159)

As defined by Parāśara Muni, strength is one of the six opulences of Bhagavān. There are many strong men, but He who has unlimited power is Bhagavān. Kṛṣṇa is so powerful that He does not have to personally maintain the universes, but

maintains them through His expansions and energies. “Sometimes we see a picture of Atlas holding the globe on his shoulders; he seems to be very tired, holding this great earthly planet. Such an image should not be entertained in connection with Kṛṣṇa’s upholding this created universe.” (Bg. 9.5, purport)

Kṛṣṇa can do anything. Any one of His senses can perform the function of another. He can impregnate by His glance, and He can accept food simply by hearing His devotees’ prayers. He can kill whole armies of demons as many-armed Nṛsiṃhadeva, and He can understand a devotee’s heart without either of them ever speaking. But He prefers to play in Vṛndāvana with His parents, boyfriends, and beautiful *gopīs*. When strength is required, then by His will, everything is performed perfectly and inconceivably.

If Kṛṣṇa kicks a demon or punches Kāṁsa or Kāṁsa’s washerman, that is for sport and for the pleasure of His devotees. Kṛṣṇa is many-faceted. We have already heard that He is pleasing and beautiful to behold. His body is delicate to the touch. But those who are opposed to Kṛṣṇa experience His hard side. They feel His hot, iron-like fist in their mouths or His strong dancing feet upon their heads.

In Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa appears as a young boy, yet Lord Brahmā, the creator of the universe, admits,

“There is so much difference between Your body and mine that I cannot estimate the potency of Your body.” When Kṛṣṇa was only six years old, He crushed the hundred-headed serpent, Kāliya, who had poisoned the Yamunā. Just by Kṛṣṇa’s jumping into the Yamunā to fight with Kāliya, the river overflowed its banks as if something very large had fallen into it. “This exhibition of Kṛṣṇa’s strength is not at all uncommon because He is the reservoir of all strength.” (*Kṛṣṇa*, Chap. 16, p. 156)

Kṛṣṇa’s strength is spiritual. If He were only another strong man of this material world, He would eventually slacken with age and be replaced by younger, more powerful men. Kṛṣṇa is not like that. He is the prowess of all powerful men (*tejas tejasvinām aham*). In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa declares, “I am the strength of the strong.” Prabhupāda writes, “When Kṛṣṇa was present on earth, no one could surpass Him in strength. Even in His childhood He lifted Govardhana Hill. No one can surpass Him in cheating, no one can surpass Him in splendor, no one can surpass Him in victory, no one can surpass Him in enterprise, and no one can surpass Him in strength.” (Bg. 10.36, purport)

May Kṛṣṇa protect us. We are weak in every way. The strongest among us is a plaything against the power of *māyā*. We try to control our minds, but it is as difficult as controlling the wind. We want to be



renunciates, but we feel weak in the grip of our own lust. We want to defeat the demons, but sometimes they defeat us. In all circumstances, we have no recourse but to seek shelter in all-powerful, all-good Kṛṣṇa. The demigods know this well, and whenever a demon like Hiranyakaśipu or Hiranyākṣa appears, they pray to the Lord to please destroy the evil force. Kṛṣṇa complies with their prayers, appearing in the world to rescue the devotees and to destroy the demons.

In Kali-yuga, it often appears that the devotees are hopelessly outnumbered and in no position to fight. Even when they lack physical strength, however, devotees can appeal to the ultimate power. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “There are two kinds of strength—*daiva* and *puruṣākāra*. *Daiva* refers to the strength achieved from the Transcendence, and *puruṣākāra* refers to the strength organized by one’s own intelligence and power. Transcendental power is always superior to the power of the materialist. . . . We should fight our enemy to the best of our ability, but for victory we must depend on the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (*Bhāg.* 9.10.20, purport)

In this age of quarrel, Lord Caitanya advises that we fight with the divine weapon of *harināma-saṅkīrtana*. “Think of Me and fight,” Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna. Prabhupāda has encouraged us, “Go on

chanting. Be tolerant. You will be victorious. There is no other way.”

“O my dear devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, may the left hand of Kṛṣṇa, which has lifted Govardhana Hill like a ball, save you from all dangers.”

6. Ever Youthful

Rūpa Gosvāmī tells us that Kṛṣṇa is most attractive when He reaches His *kaiśora* (youthful) age. Similarly, the devotees' relationships with Kṛṣṇa increase in intimacy from servitude, friendship, and parental love during His childhood and boyhood, and culminate in conjugal love (*mādhurya-rasa*) during His youth. Rūpa Gosvāmī states, "Increasing love is experienced in various tastes, one above another. But that love which has the highest taste in the gradual succession of desire manifests itself in the form of conjugal love." (BRS 2.5.38, quoted in Cc. Ādi 4.45)

Youthful Kṛṣṇa as transcendental Cupid (Kāma-deva) displays qualities not found in any other incarnation of God. He never grows old. He is *navayauvanam*, ever-fresh. At the same time, God is described as the oldest. He must be the oldest, because He existed before creation. All beings emanate from Him: *aham ādir hi devānām*—"I am the source of all the demigods." Considering that God is the oldest, Western theologians and artists have sometimes shown Him as a bony patriarch with

a long, white beard. But this is a material, speculative image of the Supreme Person. For Bhagavān to be all-powerful, He must be the oldest, yet He must not become decrepit with age as mortal beings do. Therefore, Lord Brahmā declares that Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is *purāṇam nava-yauvanam*: He is both the oldest person and He who always appears as a fresh youth.

The living entities share Śrī Kṛṣṇa's qualities in minute proportion. Therefore, we are all unborn, ever-existing, and not subject to the deterioration of age. Only when we accept material bodies do we experience old age and death. In our spiritual forms we are fit to exchange in full youth with the youthful son of Nanda Mahārāja, but to approach Kṛṣṇa in His *kaiśora* form, we have to first purify ourselves of all material desires and mental speculation. The first and best *bhakti* process for achieving this is faithful hearing of Kṛṣṇa's words and pastimes from the mouths of self-realized, pure devotees. Only from the pure devotees do we gain conviction to overcome doubts and take up devotional service as fully surrendered souls. Only from the pure devotees and from the *śāstras* they present to us, such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *The Nectar of Devotion*, do we gain attraction for youthful Kṛṣṇa.

The Vaiṣṇava *kavis* sing, "O youthful son of Nanda (Nanda-kīśora), life after life may I serve

those devotees who worship Your lotus feet.” May we never worship any other transcendental object, such as the impersonal Brahman, or God as Father, or even Lord Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṇṭha. Even if we cannot attain entrance to Nanda-kiśora’s pastimes for many, many lifetimes, may we never abandon our goal. May we always see before us young Kṛṣṇa and His young friends in Vṛndāvana, and may we serve and please those devotees who exclusively teach the *bhakti* path unto Govinda.

7. Wonderful Linguist

It should be no wonder that God can speak all languages; He is omnipotent. But the residents of Vṛndāvana were surprised, “How wonderful it is that Kṛṣṇa, who owns the hearts of all the young girls of Vrajabhūmi, can nicely speak the language of Vrajabhūmi with the *gopīs*, while in Sanskrit He speaks with the demigods, and in the language of the animals He can even speak with the cows and buffalo! Similarly, in the language of the Kashmir Province, and with the parrots and other birds, as well as in most common languages, Kṛṣṇa is so expressive!” (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 160) He argues arrogantly with the *gopīs* when He stops them and demands a tax on their milk as they cross Govardhana Hill. He boasts among the cowherd boys. He speaks childishly with Nanda Mahārāja and Yaśodādevī. Sometimes He speaks His heart’s love to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and sometimes He covers His love when He jokes with Her. He warns the demon Kāliya, “You must immediately leave this place and go to the ocean. Don’t pollute the waters of the

Yamunā.” He speaks the *Bhagavad-gītā* and other discourses when the occasion arises.

Kṛṣṇa can speak in every language and to every mentality. As we surrender, He reciprocates. The best way to speak to Kṛṣṇa is to approach Him as His eternal servant. Speak words of love to Him and He will be inclined to speak words of love to us.

Kṛṣṇa’s speaking is not ordinary. When Kṛṣṇa speaks about *bhakti* or about Himself, it is auspicious for all the worlds. “The devotees will always worship such authoritative statements of Kṛṣṇa because they are always eager to know more and more about Him. . . . that He is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*—the eternal form of bliss and knowledge—that He is transcendental . . .” (Bg. 4.4 purport)

It is not exactly His expertise in language we worship, but Kṛṣṇa Himself. There may be many expert linguists, but only Kṛṣṇa can say, “Give up all religion and surrender to Me. I will rescue you from all sinful reactions. Don’t be afraid.” Only Kṛṣṇa can say, “I am the Supreme. Come to Me. Think of Me at the time of death. I am telling you this because you are My dear friend.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda once said that Kṛṣṇa can speak, but He doesn’t talk with any nonsense person. He speaks with His devotees because they are carrying out His mission in this world. We are not so

qualified, but we can hear Kṛṣṇa's talks with His pure devotees as recorded in our *paramparā śāstras*.

And yes, Kṛṣṇa speaks wonderfully, elegantly, humorously, gravely, sweetly, and always according to time, place, and person. He is also able to sum up the most complicated concept in an aphorism.

Here are some tidbits spoken either by Kṛṣṇa or about Kṛṣṇa's speaking:

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead then said: 'O Brahmā, O depth of Vedic wisdom, be neither depressed nor anxious about the execution of creation. What you are begging from Me has already been granted before.'" (*Bhāg.* 3.9.29)

When the Lord assumed the form of Varāha, He roared like a great mountain. The demigods were enlivened by His repeated roaring "with His uncommon voice, which echoed in all directions," and in response they chanted Vedic hymns (*Bhāg.* 3.13.24–5).

To the four Kumāras: "The Lord's excellent speech was difficult to comprehend because of its momentous import and its most profound significance. The sages heard it with wide-open ears and pondered it as well. But although hearing, they could not understand what He intended to do." (*Bhāg.* 3.16.14) Commenting on this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "No one can surpass the Supreme Personality of Godhead in speaking."

To Prahlāda Mahārāja, the Lord said, “It does not matter that you are in the material world. You should always, continuously, hear the instructions and messages given by Me and always be absorbed in thought of Me, for I am the Supersoul existing in the core of everyone’s heart.” (*Bhāg.* 7.10.13)

In speaking to the *gopīs* after having disappeared from their midst during the *rāsa* dance, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, “. . . kindly excuse Me if I have done anything wrong. I cannot repay your continual love for Me, even throughout the lifetimes of the demigods.” (*Kṛṣṇa*, Chap. 31, p. 267)

Kṛṣṇa’s words are never false (unless He wants to play with His devotees). His language is profound as well as ornamented, playful, and filled with love. He is all-expressive. Let us hear whenever we can from those who have conversed with Kṛṣṇa and who treasure His words. Let us recall and memorize His words to Arjuna and to His other devotees, such as Vraja’s cows. Let us learn at least one of His languages and speak it in order to please Him.

O Kṛṣṇa, please be pleased with me. In some future birth, may I hear You speak and my heart melt with love for You.

8. Truthful

An ordinary person cannot keep his vow, but Kṛṣṇa never fails. Therefore, He is called Acyuta, infallible. Sometimes in His pastimes, Kṛṣṇa may not speak so truthfully, but that is just to protect His devotees or to increase the *rasa* in His exchanges with them. He told King Yudhiṣṭhira to tell a lie and say that Aśvatthāmā was dead, but that was to help His devotees, the Pāṇḍavas, to gain victory over Droṇācārya. Knowing that He had a reputation for being tricky, Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, “O son of Kuntī, declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes.” (Bg. 9.31) Although Arjuna makes the declaration on Kṛṣṇa’s behalf, it is Kṛṣṇa who upholds the truth of Arjuna’s statement. Thus He is truth personified.

“The demigods prayed: ‘O Lord, You never deviate from Your vow, which is always perfect because whatever You decide is perfectly correct and cannot be stopped by anyone.

“... You are the Supreme Truth. Indeed, unless one is completely truthful, one cannot achieve Your favor, which therefore cannot be achieved by hypocrites.” (*Bhāg.* 10.2.26)

Sometimes Kṛṣṇa breaks a lesser vow in order to protect His ultimate vow to always protect His sincere devotees. Kṛṣṇa stated that He would not fight for either side in the battle of Kurukṣetra, although He agreed to become Arjuna's charioteer. Bhiṣmadeva forced Kṛṣṇa to break His promise not to fight in order to save Arjuna.

We worship Kṛṣṇa's promises in *Bhagavad-gītā*. A devotee has undying faith that Kṛṣṇa's words will always prove true. Lord Kṛṣṇa promises that if one thinks of Him at the time of death, "he will attain Me without doubt." If one knows the reason for Kṛṣṇa's appearance and activities in this world, he will not have to be reborn, but will attain the eternal abode of Kṛṣṇa (Bg. 4.9).

Kṛṣṇa also promises that if one offers Him simple food—a leaf, fruit, or water—with devotion, then "I will accept it." Based on these words and the guru's assurance, the devotee offers all that he has to Kṛṣṇa.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend." (Bg. 18.65) With faith in these words, the devotee dedicates body, mind, and words, and feels accepted by Kṛṣṇa even in this lifetime.

As the truth personified, Kṛṣṇa also wants to see how truthful we are to Him. At initiation, we promise to avoid illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating, and gambling, and to always chant at least sixteen rounds of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* a day. We promise before the guru, before the Deity, before the sacrificial fire, and before the assembled Vaiṣṇavas. Who but a madman would commit perjury before such witnesses? “So what I have said I will do—I must do—no matter what the cost.”

Because we are tiny and *māyā* is strong, we may, in some extreme situation, fail to keep our vow. Lord Kṛṣṇa will overlook our failure and still consider us truthful if we are sorry for our falldown and we take steps to rectify ourselves.

Let us be true and always engage in fulfilling our obligations to guru and Kṛṣṇa. Then we can attain an eternal place at His lotus feet. Unless we can attain the *param-dhāma*, we will have to continue revolving in the cycle of birth and death in this world of untruth. Surrounded as we are by falsity, it will be difficult to remain truthful even in a moral sense. Those who pass the test, however, can quit this world of lies and illusion, and in their own *sat* feature (*svarūpa-siddhi*), play with Kṛṣṇa and His dearest friends, who are always true in unalloyed love for the Supreme Lord.

9. Pleasing Talker, 10. Fluent

“Most important is how the man in Kṛṣṇa consciousness speaks; for speech is the most important quality of any man.” (Bg. 2.54, purport) Lord Kṛṣṇa says that among the feminine qualities, He is fine speech (Bg. 10.34). He can speak perfectly on any occasion, whether to enemies, sages, juniors, or elders. Someone with a vague conception of God may think that He doesn’t speak at all, or that He utters only somber judgments in stuffy, ecclesiastical language. The Supreme Lord, however, is flexible, and capable of both strength and delicacy in speech.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī states, “A person who can speak sweetly even with his enemy just to pacify him is called a pleasing talker.” (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 161) Kṛṣṇa spoke nicely to His enemy, Kālīya, after subduing him: “My dear King of the snakes, although I have given you so much pain, please do not be dissatisfied with Me.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa also spoke pleasing words when He gave a firm but gentle reminder to Brahmā that he had made a mistake in granting boons to Hiraṇyakaśipu. “The Personality of Godhead replied: ‘My dear Lord Brahmā, O great lord born from the lotus

flower, just as it is dangerous to feed milk to a snake, so it is dangerous to give benedictions to demons.” (*Bhāg.* 7.10.30)

After the Lord’s devotee, Bali Mahārāja, became victorious despite Śukrācārya’s curse, Lord Viṣṇu questioned Śukrācārya in a humble but decisive manner: “O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, Śukrācārya, please describe the fault or discrepancy in your disciple Bali Mahārāja, who engaged in performing sacrifices. This fault will be nullified when judged in the presence of qualified *brāhmaṇas*.” (*Bhāg.* 8.23.14)

The quality of fine speech in Kṛṣṇa indicates that He is highly cultured, sensitive, and always a person. He is the greatest and the smallest. To less developed spiritualists, He may appear as a bright light or as something symbolic or impersonal, but beyond His unlimited grandeur is a person who speaks reasonably and with gravity. He also speaks lightheartedly with His devotees. He is capable of speaking directly or indirectly, according to what is appropriate for a particular pastime.

Lord Kṛṣṇa will speak to us according to our relationship with Him. Few of us will be so fortunate as to immediately talk with Kṛṣṇa from our present position. Even Lord Brahmā has to meditate on the shore of the milk ocean and hear from Kṣīrodakṣāyī Viṣṇu within his heart. At the beginning of the

cosmic manifestation, Brahmā heard only two syllables pronounced from the sky: “*ta-pa*,” practice austerity. When Kṛṣṇa became pleased with him, He shook hands with Brahmā, smiled slightly, and said: “I wish you good luck. O Brahmā, you may ask from Me . . . all that you may desire.” (*Bhāg.* 2.9.21)

Lord Kṛṣṇa’s instructions to Brahmā are immortal and worthy of meditation. “Brahmā, it is I, the Personality of Godhead, who was existing before the creation, when there was nothing but Myself. Nor was there the material nature, the cause of this creation. That which you see now is also I, the Personality of Godhead . . .” (*Bhāg.* 2.9.33)

Śrīla Prabhupāda states that many theologians talk about God, but unless we realize the Supreme Person and are able to talk with Him, we are not advanced in God consciousness. God talks, but not with rascals, because they demand, “If God comes before me and talks to me, only then will I believe.” God talks, but only with His trusted servants.

Lord Kṛṣṇa’s speeches have been preserved in the *śāstra* and that is as good as hearing from Him directly, provided we give the *śāstras* submissive, aural reception. “Now hear, O son of Pṛthā . . . I shall now declare unto you in full this knowledge . . . Because you are My very dear friend, I am speaking to you My supreme instruction . . .” (*Bg.* 7.1-2, 18.64)

A doubter may say, “Kṛṣṇa was speaking to Arjuna, not to me, and neither was I there when they spoke.” But Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā* through Arjuna, to all souls, for all time. “And I declare that he who studies this sacred conversation of ours worships Me by his intelligence.” (Bg. 18.70) Kṛṣṇa speaks and His devotees speak back to Him as loving servants. Whoever listens to these talks becomes liberated.

Similarly, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s representative also speaks pleasing words that give liberation. “That very *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* I shall recite before you because you are the most sincere devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. One who gives full attention and respect to hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* achieves unflinching faith in the Supreme Lord, the giver of salvation.” (*Bhāg.* 2.1.10)

“O learned *brāhmaṇa*, because of my drinking the nectar of the message of the infallible Personality of Godhead, which is flowing down from the ocean of your speeches, I do not feel any sort of exhaustion due to my fasting.” (*Bhāg.* 2.8.26)

Let us go on hearing the Lord and His pure devotees speaking. By serving the pure devotees in full surrender, and expressing our sincere prayers to them, we too can become qualified, in some future birth, to talk with Kṛṣṇa and thrill at every moment when we hear His words.

*11. Highly Learned,
12. Highly Intelligent, 13. Genius*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead does not receive education from any source. He is eternally all-knowing, “the self-sufficient philosopher.” But in His pastimes in this world, He appears within human society, accepts a mother and father, grows up, and receives an education. When Kṛṣṇa went to Mathurā, Vasudeva and Devakī sent both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to the *gurukula* of Sāṇḍīpani Muni, where They mastered all departments of knowledge.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were extraordinary students, and within sixty-four days, They had learned all the arts and sciences required in human society. “During daytime They took lessons on a subject from the teacher, and by nightfall, after having heard from the teacher, They were expert in that department of knowledge.” (*Kṛṣṇa*, Chap. 44, p. 358)

When Their education was complete, They offered to reward Their teacher anything he desired. Knowing Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma’s power, Sāṇḍīpani Muni asked Them to return his dead son to him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma retrieved the soul from Yama-

rāja's kingdom and satisfied Their teacher and his wife.

Sāndīpani Muni blessed Them: “. . . whatever You speak will remain as eternally fresh as the instruction of the *Vedas*. Your teachings will not only be honored within this universe or in this millennium, but in all places and ages, and will remain increasingly new and important.” Śrīla Prabhupāda states that due to this benediction from His teacher, Lord Kṛṣṇa's *Bhagavad-gītā* is ever-fresh and renowned throughout the universes.

During His manifested pastimes on earth, Lord Kṛṣṇa continued to show His proficiency as highly learned. On the occasion of a sacrificial ceremony performed by Kṛṣṇa's father, Vasudeva, Kṛṣṇa spoke to an assembly of respected sages and ascetics.

When the supreme authority, Lord Kṛṣṇa, was thus speaking with great gravity, all the sages and ascetics remained in dead silence. They became amazed upon hearing Him speak the absolute philosophy of life in such a concise way. . . . All those who heard considered the speech of Lord Kṛṣṇa for some time, and they concluded that Lord Kṛṣṇa was actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead playing the role of an ordinary human

being . . . He was assuming this pastime . . . simply to teach the people in general how they should live for perfection of the human mission.

—Kṛṣṇa, Chap. 83, p. 715

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's definition of highly learned includes "highly educated" and "acting on moral principles." This is different than the modern standard of academic education, where a "brilliant" teacher is not discredited for his sinful habits. Kṛṣṇa's dealings, however, are always full of kindness and morality. "Because Kṛṣṇa is all-good, His dealings with everyone are always good." (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 163)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is also highly intelligent. Rūpa Gosvāmī defines highly intelligent as possessing sharp memory and fine discretion. Lord Kṛṣṇa showed His discretion in numerous situations, particularly as a *kṣatriya* dealing with politics, ethics, and inimical persons. For example, He led the untouchable king, Kālayāvaṇa, into Mucukunda's cave where he was burnt to ashes.

As the independent Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa sometimes acts transcendental to worldly morality, although usually He behaves in such a way that ordinary people can follow. Therefore, we have to use our discretion, and take guidance from superior Vaiṣṇavas, to know when

Kṛṣṇa's behavior is to be followed and when He is demonstrating that He is the Supreme Controller and not to be imitated.

In explaining the spiritual nature of Kṛṣṇa's dancing with other men's wives, Śukadeva Gosvāmī reminds us that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Soul and the *gopīs* are all His internal, spiritual potencies. When Mahārāja Parīkṣit doubted the morality of Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa* dance, Śukadeva Gosvāmī explained how the Supreme Lord's activities are beyond our capacity to perform or to judge: "O King, the Supreme Lord is inexhaustible and immeasurable, and He is untouched by the material modes because He is their controller. His personal appearance in this world is meant for bestowing the highest benefit on humanity." (*Bhāg.* 10.29.14)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a genius who can refute any opposition with newer and newer arguments. Rūpa Gosvāmī illustrates how Kṛṣṇa did this in the clever but playful replies He gave in a conversation with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. All glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's genius, which gladdens Śrīmatī Rādhikā's heart!

We take pleasure in hearing of Kṛṣṇa's many qualities. Whatever we may learn of His qualities is only a small sampling of His unlimited personality. Kṛṣṇa is the reservoir of all *rasa*; whatever qualities we observe in humans or demigods originate and are complete in Kṛṣṇa. We should never think that

Kṛṣṇa is just one of the many educated geniuses who have appeared in this world. Kṛṣṇa is one without a second. There is no one equal to or greater than Him.

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is inconceivably opulent, who is devoid of all material names, forms and pastimes, and who is all-pervading, is especially merciful to the devotees who worship His lotus feet. Thus He exhibits transcendental forms and names with His different pastimes. May that Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose form is eternal and full of knowledge and bliss, be merciful to me.” (*Bhāg.* 6.4.33)

14. Artistic 15. Clever 16. Expert

Kṛṣṇa is artistic. He dresses beautifully and places a *karnikāra* flower over His ear. He is not slovenly or boorish. He speaks, dances, and plays the flute. All the Vrajavāsīs are charmed by Kṛṣṇa's artistry.

Kṛṣṇa is the original creator and Lord of the universe. Śukadeva Gosvāmī says, "Varieties of birds are indications of His masterful artistic sense." (*Bhāg.* 2.1.36) Śrīla Prabhupāda comments, "His musical taste, artistic sense and standard intelligence, which is never fallible, are different signs of His supreme personality." A devotee can, therefore, sense Kṛṣṇa's presence everywhere in the material world.

For example, when we see sunlight in a room in the morning, we remember the sun and are confident, "The sun is there." Similarly, when a devotee sees a tree, he sees Kṛṣṇa by reference to the context. "For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me." (*Bg.* 6.30) It is only by perverse refusal to see God that we fail to perceive and appreciate the Supreme Person every day of our lives. Prabhupāda



writes, “Who is such a fool that he does not want to be Kṛṣṇa conscious by this simple method and thus attain the highest perfectional life of eternity, bliss and knowledge?” (Bg. 9.26, purport)

Appreciation of Kṛṣṇa’s qualities leads to the desire to serve Him, and service is the most congenial form of intimacy with Kṛṣṇa. “He is so great and attractive, let me worship Him and serve Him.” We should not allow ourselves to be left out. His pure devotees want to include us, and they wander over the earth “just to turn the face of the bewildered soul toward Kṛṣṇa.” He is kind. Therefore, He will accept our simple offering of a fruit, a leaf, or a palmful of water.

Kṛṣṇa is clever. He can do all types of work at once. When He appears in the world, He kills Kāṁsa, answers Lord Brahmā’s prayers, rewards Devakī and Vasudeva by becoming their son, rescues the earth from its burden, gives pleasure to His entourage, speaks *Bhagavad-gītā*—so many things at once. As one of the *gopīs* said of Kṛṣṇa, “. . . He is sitting with different living entities in different ways, and He is thoroughly enjoying the situation.” (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 165)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is also expert. When a devotee worships Him, He doesn’t reward that devotee with material desires. The devotee may still be foolish enough to desire material rewards for his service, but Kṛṣṇa

says, “Since I am very intelligent, why should I give this fool material prosperity? Instead I shall induce him to take the nectar of the shelter of My lotus feet and make him forget illusory material enjoyment.” (Cc. *Madhya* 22.39)

“O expert Mystic,” the devotees pray, “Your prowess never deteriorates. You are the proprietor of the transcendental abode, and You descend to relieve the distresses of the cows, the *brāhmaṇas* and the devotees. . . . You are the almighty God, and I offer You my respectful obeisances.” (*Bhāg.* 1.8.43)

The conditioned souls display their “expertise” by avoiding Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, and His *mahā-māyā* is also expert to keep the conditioned souls entrapped in the cycle of birth and death. It is an insurmountable dilemma. A repentant devotee, therefore, recognizes the Lord as the greatest expert and prays to Kṛṣṇa to free him. “O Gopīnātha, You are indeed the wisest person. Please look for a way to bring about auspiciousness for this fool, and please do not consider this servant as an outsider.” (“Gopīnātha,” Part 2, verse 8) Kṛṣṇa cut to pieces all weapons raised to oppose Him. Certainly He can defeat our enemies. Kṛṣṇa appeared at the side of each and every *gopī* in the *rāsa* dance. Surely He can come to us, even though He is occupied in pleasing countless devotees in the spiritual world.

O expert Mystic, You have arranged for our safety by sending Your pure devotee. That was a fit exhibition of Your prowess. Śrīla Prabhupāda came to us in Kali-yuga's capital, New York City. You disguised him as an elderly man. He magically pulled us out of the labyrinth of dirty desires by *kīrtana* and *prasādam*. By his pleasing ways and formidable knowledge, he expertly turned us into Your servants. He was Your expert representative.

17. Grateful 18. Determined
19. Expert Judge of Time and
Circumstance

“Any person who is conscious of his friend’s beneficent activities and never forgets his service is called grateful.” (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 166) Lord Kṛṣṇa was grateful to Draupadī because while He was away from her, she cried with folded hands, “*He Govinda!*” Kṛṣṇa states, “This call for Me has put Me in her debt, and that indebtedness is gradually increasing in My heart!”

The *mahā-mantra* (Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare) is also simply an address to the Lord and His energy. So to anyone who is constantly engaged in addressing the Lord and His energy, we can imagine how much the Supreme Lord is obliged. It is impossible for the Lord to ever forget such a devotee. It is clearly stated in this verse that anyone who addresses the Lord immediately attracts the attention of the Lord, who always remains obliged to him.

—NOD, Chap. 21, p. 166

Someone may think that God is not obliged to anyone. That is true in the sense that God doesn't borrow power from anyone. Neither does He need anyone's favor. No one can add to His stature by offering Him gifts. He is never in trouble and never needs help. By His causeless mercy, however, He is grateful to His devotees.

Kṛṣṇa is a person and He has all-attractive qualities. He is strong and hard ("Of punishment I am the rod of chastisement"), but also soft and grateful when He is offered anything with devotion. The Supreme Lord desires that the lost souls, His parts and parcels, rejoin Him in His eternal pastimes. He asks us to give up our sinful life of disobedience and perform devotional service. When a *jīva* responds to Kṛṣṇa's advice, Kṛṣṇa is grateful. He is especially pleased when someone favors His pure devotees who work on His behalf in this world.

When I make an effort in my chanting of the holy name, Kṛṣṇa is grateful. I must have faith in His reciprocation. I may still be struggling to overcome the ten offenses, but Kṛṣṇa is more pleased than displeased if He sees I am chanting sincerely. Kṛṣṇa magnifies whatever good we do. Therefore, we should not become depressed by our slowness. At least we should never give up our practices or think that Kṛṣṇa doesn't hear us. He hears everything and

He is keen to see the good essence in our attempts. He is *bhāva-grāhī janārdana*.

It is comforting to meditate on Kṛṣṇa's quality of gratefulness. The pure devotee takes pleasure in hearing and chanting about the qualities, names, and forms of Rādhā and Mādhava. "In Him reside . . . [these and] many other qualities, which are eternally present and never to be separated from Him." (*Bhāg.* 1.16.26–30)

Kṛṣṇa is determined. The example of the Lord's determination given in *The Nectar of Devotion* shows His decision to always protect and please His devotees. When He decided to fetch the *pārijāta* flower from the heavenly planets to please Satya-bhāmā, Lord Kṛṣṇa was undeterred even when Indra and all his allies tried to defeat Him. Recalling that victory, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said to Nārada, " . . . declare to the devotees in general, and to the nondevotees in particular, that . . . none could make Me break My promise to My queen." (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 167)

Kṛṣṇa makes this promise not only to His favorite queen, but to all devotees: "O son of Kuntī, declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes." (Bg. 9.31) Let us not be faithless or forgetful of Kṛṣṇa's promise. Let us respond with gratitude. We have such a dear and grateful Supreme Personality of Godhead to serve; surely His service deserves our utmost determination. "Kṛṣṇa, I shall never desert

You. By Your grace, I will always be resolute in service to my spiritual master. If by some trick of *māyā* I am diverted, I will use all my powers to get back on track. Please keep me in Your care.”

Kṛṣṇa is also an expert judge of time and circumstance. If God were simply all-powerful and had no tact or consideration, He could push His programs through with no care for time or circumstance. Ruthless dictators act like this. Their only criteria is to fulfill their own desires. Kṛṣṇa responds to a situation by looking for the most satisfaction for Himself and His devotees. If necessary, He can adjust the circumstances to make them more favorable, or He can make the inauspicious time auspicious by His own will.

For example, as the *yuga-avatāra*, the Lord introduced a system of religion appropriate for the age. Kali-yuga is a bad age. People's life duration is short and they are always disturbed. Judging these circumstances, He appeared as the most merciful Lord Caitanya and granted a dispensation: in the age of Kali people can attain the highest goal, love of God, simply by chanting His holy names.

When Kṛṣṇa appeared in Mathurā, the moon was waning. Because taking birth during a waning moon is considered inauspicious, He arranged for the full moon to accompany His appearance. He also took advantage of the full moon night in autumn, in the

best place in the universe, Vṛndāvana, to enact His *rāsa* dance with the most beautiful girls, the *gopīs*. All this was arranged by His maidservants, Yogamāyā and Vṛndā-devī, but ultimately, the arrangement is under the Lord's control.

Since Kṛṣṇa is so grateful and considerate of persons and situations, we should be that way also, as His servants. We should appreciate Kṛṣṇa's efforts to save conditioned souls. He has done everything possible to bring us out of the suffering of material life. We should not be dull or unmindful. After all, we have the same qualities as Kṛṣṇa, if only in minute proportion. Therefore, we want to live gratefully, with determination, with sensitivity to Kṛṣṇa's arrangements, and be always active in His service.

20. Seer by the Authority of the Scriptures

The Nectar of Devotion reminds us that Śrī Kṛṣṇa cited the *Vedānta-sūtra* as authority while making His arguments to Arjuna. Also, when Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared as His pure devotee, Lord Caitanya, He exemplified the *tattva-darśi*, the one who sees the truth through the scriptures. Prabhupāda calls Lord Caitanya the ideal preacher of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Lord Caitanya was constantly immersed in reciting *ślokas* and tasting their meanings with His devotees or preaching to the nondevotees and impersonalists. Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa Himself, but when He wants to express the mellows of pure love, or when He wants to defeat Māyāvāda philosophy, He turns to the perfect statements given in the *śāstra*. When Lord Caitanya taught Sanātana Gosvāmī, Sanātana asked Him to give explanations of the *ātmārāma* verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.*

* *ātmārāmāś ca munayo, nirgranthā apy urukrame/
kurvanty ahaitukīm bhaktim, ittham-bhūta-guṇo hariḥ*

All different varieties of *ātmārāmas* (those who take pleasure in *ātmā*, or spirit self), especially those established on

Lord Caitanya gave so many brilliant expositions on that verse that Sanātana fell at His feet and declared that Lord Caitanya was that same Nārāyaṇa who had originally breathed forth the *Vedas*. Lord Caitanya replied, “Why are you praising Me? You should praise the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.” Thus we see that the Lord wanted to deflect praise from Himself and have us see the amazing truth of the *śāstra* itself. Therefore, if Kṛṣṇa quotes the scriptures, it does not mean that His knowledge is incomplete or that He is disqualified in any way.

When Lord Caitanya felt separation from Kṛṣṇa in the mood of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, He quoted the words of the *gopīs* from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other *śāstras*. In this way, He taught us that we never depart from the *śāstras* even when we experience the most personal and intense ecstasies of spiritual life.

Rather, if we do depart from the *śāstras*, we become a disturbance to the society of devotees. The *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* states, *śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-pañcaratra-vidhiṁ vinā . . .* “Devotional service to the Lord that ignores the authorized

the path of self-realization, though freed from all kinds of material bondage, desire to render unalloyed devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead. This means that the Lord possesses transcendental qualities and therefore can attract everyone, including liberated souls. (*Bhāg.* 1.7.10)

Vedic literatures like the *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇas*, *Nārada-Pañcarātra*, etc., is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society.” (BRS, 1.2.101)

It's no wonder that Kṛṣṇa sees through the scriptures because the scriptures are compiled by Him in His literary incarnation as Śrīla Vyāsadeva. Kṛṣṇa and Vyāsa collaborate to put the eternal Vedic truths into the Sanskrit verses we know as the *śruti*, and their different supplementary forms of *smṛti*. If Kṛṣṇa comes in different incarnations aside from Vyāsa and speaks what He has already spoken in that form, that does not make Him a mere student of scripture. The scriptures are nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is *bhāgavata* in person and the scriptures are *bhāgavata* in literary form.

Our seeing through the eyes of *śāstra* is different than Kṛṣṇa's seeing. We have no other way to see perfectly. Therefore, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* declares that those who want to see the light in this dark age of Kali must receive the brilliant light of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

When we see through the *śāstra*, we see ourselves as unique individuals. We are one of Kṛṣṇa's many servitors in the spiritual world, and to recover that eternal identity, we must understand who we are in the generic sense: we are eternal spirit souls. Kṛṣṇa teaches this point right from the beginning of

Bhagavad-gītā, and what He teaches Arjuna applies to each of us.

So it goes as we continue to be students of the *Bhāgavatam*, starting with *śraddhā* and continuing to *prema*. For one who never departs from the śāstric truths, those truths will lead him to the higher levels of personal and free expression of love for the Lord. Seeing through the scriptures, therefore, is real seeing. Everything else is hallucination.

21. Pure

In the beginning of *The Nectar of Devotion*, we read about the six characteristics of *bhakti*. One of them is the purity of devotional service. We learn how devotional service is so pure that it can banish all sins without having to perform separate atonement. *Bhakti* is so pure that people who are born and raised in sinful conditions can become washed of all bad habits. In other words, purity means potency. Kṛṣṇa conscious purity is not a minor form of cleanliness or a neutral attribute; it is a purity so forceful that it can drive out all contamination. Ultimately, that purity is Kṛṣṇa. If *bhakti* is pure, and *bhakti* means the method of devotional service, then certainly Lord Kṛṣṇa is the supreme pure. Unless we become pure, we cannot know Him.

According to the philosophy of the Absolute Truth, Kṛṣṇa's name is as good as Kṛṣṇa in person. His name is the most merciful, most accessible form of the Lord. We can avail ourselves of the potency of Kṛṣṇa's purity by chanting His holy names. However, everything has stages. That is, our performance has to become pure. The three stages of

chanting are offensive, clearing of offenses, and pure. Pure chanting, *śuddha-nāma*, is the full potency that delivers us to pure love of God.

In explaining the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, Prabhupāda says that Kṛṣṇa can actually be seen. He is not formless. The only qualification we need to be able to see Him is *premāñjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena*, that our eyes are anointed with the salve of love of God. We have to be free from sense gratification and mental speculation. These two big impurities are sometimes referred to as *bhukti* and *mukti*, the two witches or pots of poison.

Sense gratification and mental speculation bring us into a relationship with the material body. That is another definition of impurity. Kṛṣṇa consciousness offers a series of purifications—by *saṁskāra*, by initiation, by *ācamana*, and especially by the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, which purifies us of doubt, fear, and other *anarthas*. Lord Caitanya says that the chanting acts to cleanse the mirror of the mind: *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam*.

Kṛṣṇa Himself is so pure that if anyone approaches Him with impurity, He is never affected. He always accepts the good in our actions, even if we act to kill Him as Pūtanā did. Kṛṣṇa was not only just in His treatment of Pūtanā, but He recognized her as one of His nurses and gave her liberation in

Goloka Vṛndāvana. Therefore, who should we worship but Kṛṣṇa, the all-merciful Lord?

Kṛṣṇa's purity is also shown by His ability to enter into the heart of all living entities as the Supersoul. When Kṛṣṇa is in the heart of a hog, He doesn't become compromised or dirty by the hog's activities. He remains transcendental, although He is apparently associated with that spirit soul residing in a lower species.

Kṛṣṇa is never corrupt. In the material world, we say that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. It is human frailty to cheat and misuse power. One may think, therefore, that purity and power are at opposite poles. One can "afford" to be pure if he has nothing to lose, but if we provide him with wealth, he will fall prey to greed and ambition.

In Kṛṣṇa, however, these two qualities exist harmoniously and infinitely. Whatever Kṛṣṇa does is good and pure. He is pure power and pure mercy. Even if He becomes angry, His anger is also pure—always transcendental and for the good of all souls.

Of course, we are mentioning all these qualities as a way to glorify the personhood of the Lord, the Personality of Godhead. We wish to defeat the Māyāvāda conception of the Absolute. Yet Kṛṣṇa is also impersonal. It is not that He is only personal. He is the pure light, the pure land, the *brahmajyoti*.

For those who wish to see Kṛṣṇa only as purity in terms of pure force or pure light, Kṛṣṇa appears in these ways. However, as the *Bhagavad-gītā* states, the pure light of Brahman is an emanation from Kṛṣṇa in His personal form. Kṛṣṇa's being a person is not an impurity because everything about Him is perfect. His purity is not one-sided or composed only of impersonal light. Rather, all varieties of emotion and activities reside in and emanate from Him. His purity is accepted as incomprehensible, and then relished as such by the devotees. The nondevotees and demons choose to see Him in fear.

22. Self-controlled

Kṛṣṇa's self-control is exemplified by the fact that He has thousands of beautiful wives and yet remains unagitated. Kṛṣṇa is Hṛṣīkeśa, the master of the senses. "All the sixteen thousand wives of Kṛṣṇa were so exquisitely beautiful that their smiling and shyness were able to captivate the minds of great demigods like Lord Śiva. But still they could not even agitate the mind of Kṛṣṇa, in spite of their attractive feminine behavior." (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 169)

Bhīṣmadeva offers similar praise to Kṛṣṇa during Yudhiṣṭhira's *rājasūya* sacrifice. Bhīṣmadeva said, "I am a *brahmacārī*, but if I were to associate with all the beautiful *gopīs* the way Kṛṣṇa did, I would not be able to keep my *brahmacārī* status. However, Kṛṣṇa is always with the *gopīs* in the *rāsa* dance and other situations, but He does not become uncontrolled."

It is obvious that the Supreme Lord should be able to control His senses. All universes depend upon His steadiness and infallibility. If Kṛṣṇa were not in control, how could He be God? In fact, this is

the main doubt of the agnostics. Their minds cannot accommodate the concept of a Supreme Controller. Because they measure the cosmic manifestation against their own limited experiences, and because they have no experience of a Supreme Controller, they think no one is able to have complete control.

In the material world, no one has control over their birth or the identity of their parents. We are simply dumped into our mother's womb and then out into the world to engage in whatever activities we must engage in according to our karma. No one is ever able to gain complete control over their lives. Therefore, our mind boggles when we try to contemplate a Supreme Controller. We may concede that some God or some powerful being has some control, but how can He have all control?

If we use clear reason, however, we will see that control is actually being exerted over everything. The seasons are controlled, the movement of the sun and ocean tides are controlled, and the time of death is controlled. Due to our limited vision, we may not be able to understand the identity of the controller, but the *śāstra* can give us that information.

When we hear that the Supreme Controller is a person and that He can control His own senses, that shouldn't sound astonishing. Kṛṣṇa controls everyone and everything; certainly He can control Him-

self. For a conditioned soul to gain control over his senses usually means imposing rules and regulations and accepting various austerities. Kṛṣṇa does not need to follow any restrictions or regulations to gain self-control. He is naturally and sublimely self-controlled.

Sometimes Kṛṣṇa appears to be out of control when He becomes attracted to His pure devotees' loving dealings. He appears to submit to *bhakti* when rendered by a pure devotee. Therefore, although Kṛṣṇa is called *ajita*, the unconquerable, it is said that He becomes conquered by the love of His devotees.

However, *bhakti* is also within Kṛṣṇa's control. Kṛṣṇa gives the supreme control to *bhakti*, and *bhakti* serves Him by sometimes appearing to control Him through the beauty of His pure devotees' service to Him. Therefore, when we say that Kṛṣṇa is self-controlled, we shouldn't think of Him as a neophyte devotee straining to avoid sinful activity, or who only remains self-controlled under the strictures of *sāstra* and the watchful eyes of a master. Kṛṣṇa's self-control is part of the ecstatic flow of His activities. He is such a nice Supreme Personality of Godhead that He does not act randomly, under the control of His own passions, but everything is done beautifully.

Kṛṣṇa is unfailing in whatever He does. Self-control is just one example. The astounding thing is not that Kṛṣṇa controls His senses, but that He is a person. His personhood is the transcendental fact which is asserted and glorified in all the scriptures.

O Sanātana, please hear about the eternal form of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He is the Absolute Truth, devoid of duality but present in Vṛndāvana as the son of Nanda Mahārāja. Kṛṣṇa is the original source of everything and the sum total of everything. He appears as the supreme youth, and His whole body is composed of spiritual bliss. He is the shelter of everything and master of everyone. The original Supreme Personality of Godhead is Kṛṣṇa. His original name is Govinda. He is full of all opulences, and His eternal abode is known as Goloka Vṛndāvana.

—Cc. *Madhya* 20.152–3, 155

23. Steadfast

The Nectar of Devotion defines steadfast as “a person who continues to work until his desired goal is achieved.” The Collins English dictionary defines steadfast as referring especially to a person’s gaze when “fixed in intensity or direction.”

Kṛṣṇa is steadfast in seeking out Jāmbavān, who was hiding in his cave. Although many people approached the tunnel leading to Jāmbavān’s cave with Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa entered the tunnel alone. The people from Dvārakā waited outside for twelve days, but they returned to Dvārakā before Kṛṣṇa reappeared. Kṛṣṇa stayed and fought alone for twenty-eight days, and in the end, defeated Jāmbavān. Of course, Lord Kṛṣṇa could have accomplished all this in a minute, but He enjoyed His pastime of endurance and combat with His devotee, Jāmbavān.

Lord Kṛṣṇa fixed His steadfast gaze on many demons, such as Ariṣṭāsura, who came to fight with Him. The Lord also told Arjuna to be steadfast before his enemies, the Kurus, in the battle of Kurukṣetra. Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa to drive the chariot between the two armies so that he could see with

whom he had to fight that day, but when Arjuna turned away from the battle, Kṛṣṇa said, “My dear Arjuna, how have these impurities come upon you? They are not at all befitting a man who knows the value of life.”

As conditioned souls, we waiver and want to abandon our purposes after a little endeavor. We have to pray to Kṛṣṇa for the strength to endure in our lives and to continue practicing devotional service. After being trained in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and having our eyes fixed on the goal, *māyā* may attempt to divert us. Whatever the reason may be to give up our steadfastness, it is petty and should not turn us away from Lord Kṛṣṇa’s devotional service. We need *bala*, strength, to remain fixed. Even if we fail to take Kṛṣṇa’s help, Kṛṣṇa will remain loyal to His vow never to abandon us. He will wait for us and present us with opportunities to return to Him. Kṛṣṇa is not a quitter and we shouldn’t be either.

When Kṛṣṇa stole the clothes of the unmarried *gopīs*, He showed steadfastness in another context. The *gopīs* pleaded with Him, and then threatened Him, not to persist in this joke, but “when the *gopīs* saw that Kṛṣṇa was strong and determined,” they had to surrender to His will.

Steadfastness is our qualification for attaining Kṛṣṇa consciousness. *Māyā*’s test is to see whether

we are worthy to be with Kṛṣṇa. If we don't practice steadfastness in earnest, then we will fall away.

Lord Kṛṣṇa always tolerates our failings. We are absorbed in our own struggle and we don't always appreciate how steadfast the Lord is. Even when we turn our back on Him, He remains our best well-wisher. We are fickle. Actually, our inattention to Kṛṣṇa is insulting, such as when we chant the holy names inattentively. But Lord Kṛṣṇa is steadfast and sends us the spiritual master, and He continues to see the good in whatever we do. Even if we chant many rounds without attention, if finally we chant one Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra with devotion, Kṛṣṇa immediately accepts our surrender. He is our best well-wisher.

24. Forbearing

The Nectar of Devotion gives this single example of Lord Kṛṣṇa's tolerating austerities as a student in *gurukula*: "When Kṛṣṇa was residing at the place of His spiritual master, He did not mind taking all troubles in rendering service to His guru, although His body was very soft and delicate." The Lord recalled His *gurukula* days fondly in later years when He met His old schoolmate, Sudāmā. They both agreed that their spiritual master had not been cruel, but had trained them.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also explains that if a student is not called to eat, he should fast rather than push himself forward and demand food. How hard it is not to step forward and ask for what we consider our due. Even if we manage to stay in the background, we grumble and complain when we are not recognized.

Lord Caitanya compared forbearance to the nature of a tree. A tree does not complain if it is not watered or even if it is cut down. Despite neglect and ill treatment, a tree continues to produce fruits and flowers for others.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness means following the *Bhāgavatam* verse, *tat te 'nukampāṁ su-samīkṣamāṇo*. Any trouble that we encounter in our lives is actually only a token of what we deserve according to our karma. A devotee not only endures life's reverses, but offers heartfelt obeisances to Kṛṣṇa, confident that He will eventually take him back to Godhead.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī coupled enthusiasm with patience as the first two items of auspiciousness in *bhakti*. Patience is almost synonymous with forbearance. It is important that devotees work to attain both these qualities. We should do the best we can, always be enthusiastic even about small gains, and patiently wait for Kṛṣṇa's mercy.

By remembering Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, we can gain strength from His perfect example in our own times of stress. When we need forbearance, for example, we can remember Kṛṣṇa's life at *gurukula*, how He went hand in hand with Sudāmā into the forest, how they were overtaken by the storm, and how they stayed alone all night in the flooding waters, faithful to the order of their spiritual master. Kṛṣṇa's pastimes can thus provide inspiration in our own Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

It may seem odd to us to think of God as having to be patient or to endure difficult times. One may ask, "Why doesn't Kṛṣṇa simply overcome the opposition?" But these pastimes are in Kṛṣṇa's *nara-*

līlā. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa is impatient, such as when He demands His mother's breast milk.

Similarly, Kṛṣṇa is never harried by the demons who attack Him. Sometimes He takes His time in dispatching them, and sometimes He kills them immediately. He is not afraid. When Indra poured rain on the residents of Vṛndāvana during the Govardhana-līlā, the Lord was forbearing. He was able to humiliate Indra in a way that did not seriously damage the demigod's prestige or endanger his life. Whatever Kṛṣṇa does is perfect. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa's devotees live lives of endurance and forbearance and are always confident that Kṛṣṇa will triumph in the end.

25. Forgiving

Rūpa Gosvāmī defines a forgiving person as “a person who can tolerate all kinds of offenses from the opposite party.” Lord Kṛṣṇa tolerated Śiśupāla’s blasphemy. “Śrī Yamunācārya further says in his prayer that the forgiving power of Lord Kṛṣṇa is even greater than that of Lord Rāmacandra, because Śiśupāla was always in the habit of insulting Kṛṣṇa—not only in one lifetime, but continually throughout three lives. Still, Kṛṣṇa was so kind that He gave Śiśupāla the salvation of merging into His existence.” (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 171)

Kṛṣṇa is the supreme father. He loves all living entities. He is confident, secure, and filled with well-being. This is the basis of His forgiving nature. In turn, Lord Kṛṣṇa will be pleased with us if we are forgiving toward others. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa says that forgiveness as well as intelligence, knowledge, truthfulness, fearlessness, nonviolence, and austerity—“all these various qualities of living beings are created by Me alone.” (Bg. 10.5) To attain forgiveness, therefore, is to triumph in saintly behavior. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita describes forgiveness as a *sādhū’s* chief quality. Mahārāja Ambariṣa exemplified this forgiveness by showing mercy to Durvāsā

Muni, even though Durvāsā tried to kill him. Similarly, Lord Nityānanda forgave Jagāi and Mādhāi.

Lord Kṛṣṇa sets the standard for a devotee's forgiveness. He insists that since we want Him to forgive us, we should first of all be forgiving toward others. A saintly person forgives not only his own family members, but his enemies. (Kṛṣṇa is so kind to His enemies that He grants them liberation.) Prabhupāda reminded us that Jesus Christ asked God to forgive the ignorance of those who crucified him. Christ gave his followers the following words in the "Lord's Prayer": "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

A good way to demonstrate forgiveness is to continue to give people Kṛṣṇa consciousness despite their ingratitude. This is the preacher's mood. Although there are so many reasons why we may want to reject the nondevotees, a devotee displays forgiveness by continuing to preach.

Forgiveness requires honesty and humility. We have to first be honest enough to admit that we ourselves are offenders and in need of forgiveness. In humility, we pray to be forgiven by the Supreme Lord. We know that we should be punished for our misbehavior and offenses and for whatever intentional and unintentional violence we may commit toward other living beings. We hope the Lord *will* forgive us as we attempt to rectify ourselves. As we

expect the Lord's kindness, we should be kind to others for their intentional or unintentional violence against us.

26. *Grave*

“A person who does not express his mind to everyone, or whose mental activity and plan of action are very difficult to understand, is called grave.” Even in the conditioned state, people can possess gravity. They don’t attain gravity by practicing virtue, but as karma from their past lives. Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes refers to the psycho-physical nature by which one person will be inclined to brahminical life and another to administration. These qualities are often displayed even in childhood and are part of a person’s conditioned nature.

Whether a devotee possesses the quality of gravity or not, all devotees should aspire for it. For example, simply because we are in the company of people speaking *prajalpa* doesn’t mean we have to waste our time in a similar way. If someone laughs, we don’t have to laugh with them. If someone cries, we don’t have to cry with them. To possess gravity means to keep our central focus deep. Surface exchanges or irritations won’t make us lose that focus.

If we are not grave, but are susceptible to others' influence, we should be careful to associate with persons who possess gravity, purity, forgiveness, and other devotional qualities.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa cannot be carried away by the whims of another, nor can His inner meanings be immediately understood. Lord Kṛṣṇa does not allow most people to know Him: "I am covered by the curtain of Yogamāyā, and therefore the fools of this world do not know Me."

When a devotee is fortunate enough to see the Lord, then he or she is awe-struck by the Supreme Lord's inconceivable beauty and gravity. When the four Kumāras met Lord Viṣṇu in Vaikuṇṭha, He spoke to them at length and in excellent words, yet they could not fathom His meaning or being. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

The sages tried with wide-open ears to understand the words from the lips of the Supreme Lord, but although His speech was very concise and meaningful, the sages could not completely comprehend what He was saying. They could not even comprehend the purport of the speech or what the Supreme Lord wanted to do. Nor could they understand whether the Lord was angry or pleased with them.

—*Bhāg.* 3.16.14, purport

Kṛṣṇa's gravity does not preclude His ability to be lighthearted and accessible to His pure devotees. When He played in His childhood *tīlā*, Kṛṣṇa's parents and elders thought they knew His mind—He wanted milk or to be patted or to play with the cows and cowherd boys. That is the power of Yogamāyā. When He desires to hide His purposes, however, then even Lord Balarāma cannot know His mind.

The Nectar of Devotion states: “Kṛṣṇa was always very silent about His love affairs with Rādhārāṇī, so much so that Baladeva, Kṛṣṇa's elder brother and constant companion, could not understand the transformations of Kṛṣṇa on account of His gravity.” (p. 171)

We who met Kṛṣṇa's dear devotee, Śrīla Prabhu-pāda, know that he displayed such gravity that we never knew what he was thinking, even though he was often candid, childlike, and open. Thus it is said, *vaiṣṇavera kriyā mudrā vijñe nā bujhaya*, “One should not try to understand the mind of the Vaiṣṇava.” We can be satisfied and happy to know that the Supreme Lord and His pure devotee are ultimately unknown to us—unless they wish to reveal themselves out of their causeless mercy.

27. Self-satisfied

“A person who is fully satisfied in himself, without any hankering, and who is not agitated even in the presence of serious cause for distress, is called self-satisfied.” The *Bhāgavatam* states: “All different varieties of *ātmārāmas* [those who take pleasure in *ātmā*, or spirit self], especially those established on the path of self-realization, though freed from all kinds of material bondage, desire to render unalloyed devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead. This means that the Lord possesses transcendental qualities and therefore can attract everyone, including liberated souls.” (*Bhāg.* 1.7.10) This proves that Lord Kṛṣṇa’s name, form, and qualities have nothing to do with the material modes of nature. Kṛṣṇa attracts everyone from all different points of view, whether they be *ātmārāma* sages or whatever.

Similarly, the young cowherd damsels were attracted by the bodily features of the Lord, and Rukmīṇī was attracted by hearing about the glories of the Lord. Lord Kṛṣṇa attracts even the mind of the goddess of fortune. He attracts, in special cases,

the minds of all young girls. He attracts the minds of the elderly ladies by paternal affection. He attracts the mind of the male in the humors of servitude and friendship.

—*Bhāg.* 1.7.10, purport

Because Kṛṣṇa contains everything within Himself, He never tries to take credit for His activities and is never disturbed or threatened. Kṛṣṇa was glad to give Arjuna the credit for being victorious on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, and He gave credit to Bhīma for killing Jarāsandha.

Lord Kṛṣṇa's apparent hankering for affection from His parents, cowherd boyfriends, and *gopīs*, are all brilliant displays of His loving dealings. They do not indicate that Kṛṣṇa is incomplete in Himself. When the *gopīs* wanted to dance with Kṛṣṇa in the autumn night, Kṛṣṇa disappeared from their presence and thus they lamented for Him with their beautiful songs known as the "*Gopī-gīta*." When Kṛṣṇa reappeared to them, they then criticized Him in a loving way and asked Him to tell them His opinion about worthy lovers. They described three kinds of persons, "one class simply receives, another class reciprocates favorably, even if a lover is very contrary, and a third class neither acts contrary nor answers favorably in dealings of love. Out of these

three classes, which do You prefer or which do You call honest?"

Lord Kṛṣṇa then described Himself in terms of those three classes. He said He was not like a merchant who reciprocates only to get sense gratification. He said He preferred the second class who love in spite of the opposite party's contrariness, because at least they have some tinge of love beyond the mercantile exchange. As for the third class, those who neither reciprocate with nor neglect their lovers, Kṛṣṇa said they can be further divided into two classes. "One is the self-satisfied, who does not require anyone's love. They are called *ātmārāma*, which means they are absorbed in the thought of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and do not care whether one loves them or not." The other class who don't care are ungrateful.

Then Lord Kṛṣṇa described Himself. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his *Kṛṣṇa* book: "In answer, Kṛṣṇa said that He, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is self-satisfied. He does not require anyone's love, but at the same time, He said that He is not ungrateful." Lord Kṛṣṇa then went on to tell the *gopīs* that they should not be aggrieved by His disappearing from them. He left them just to increase their love for Him. Thus Kṛṣṇa is self-satisfied, but deeply moved and always reciprocal with the love offered to Him by His devotees.

28. Possessing Equilibrium

Kṛṣṇa is not partial and does not favor one group over another. In the material world, politics means gaining allies in order to strengthen our own position. When canvassing for allies, we naturally create enemies, whom we then have to curb in some way. We favor or disapprove of a person or cause based on fear, sense gratification, or idealistic dedication. Even what passes for altruism in this world is incomplete unless linked with God consciousness.

Sometimes people pretend to have attained equilibrium because it appears to be a desirable quality. People admire balance and impartiality in others and consider it a sign of saintliness or wisdom. Often what happens, however, is that when the pretender's selfish interests are threatened, his true colors are revealed and his impartiality falls apart in anger or selfishness.

The Nectar of Devotion glorifies Lord Kṛṣṇa for possessing equilibrium. The prayers of Kāliya's wives are cited because although Kāliya was such an offender and the Lord punished him, yet the chastisement purified the serpent.

O dear Lord, You are equal to everyone. For You there is no distinction between Your sons, friends or enemies. Therefore the punishment which You have so kindly offered to Kāliya is exactly befitting. O Lord, You have descended especially for the purpose of annihilating all kinds of disturbing elements within the world, and because You are the Absolute Truth, there is no difference between Your mercy and punishment. We think, therefore, that this apparent punishment to Kāliya is actually some benediction. We consider that Your punishment is Your great mercy upon us because when You punish someone it is to be understood that the reactions of his sinful activities are eradicated.

—*Kṛṣṇa*, Chap. 16, pp. 159–60

They then asked the Lord to go even further in His impartiality by sparing their husband from further punishment.

The Nectar of Devotion offers another prayer in which Lord Kṛṣṇa is praised for His impartiality. “If anyone finds any partiality in Your characteristics, he is surely mistaken.” The Lord Himself directly asserts this in the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse, *samo ’haṁ sarva-bhūteṣu*, “I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all.” (Bg. 9.29) In the same verse, Kṛṣṇa goes on to say, “But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains how Kṛṣṇa can be impartial and yet take special interest in His devotees. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “. . . this is not discrimination; it is natural.” Just as a charitable man is kind to all and yet has a special interest in his children, so Kṛṣṇa takes a special interest in His devotees. Everyone is Lord Kṛṣṇa’s child, but those who come forward to claim their loving relationship with Him receive His special blessings.

Anyone can qualify to become Kṛṣṇa’s dear friend. It is not predetermined by birth or any other karmic condition. Whoever responds to the Lord’s entreaties through the scripture, through the *sādhus*, or through the guru, can become Kṛṣṇa conscious and qualified to reciprocate with Kṛṣṇa in love. The Nāgapatnīs confirm, “Every living being can be relieved of all kinds of despair if he agrees to abide by Your orders.” Thus when Kṛṣṇa is partial to the devotees, it is also a kind of impartial partiality. *Ye yathā mām prapadyante*, “As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Pṛthā.” (Bg. 4.11)

In the purport to that verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “. . . Kṛṣṇa is the object of everyone’s realization, and thus anyone and everyone is satisfied according to one’s desire to have Him. In the transcendental world also, Kṛṣṇa reciprocates with

His pure devotees in the transcendental attitude, just as the devotee wants Him. One devotee may want Kṛṣṇa as supreme master, another as his personal friend, another as his son, and still another as his lover. Kṛṣṇa rewards all the devotees equally, according to their different intensities of love for Him.”

Since Kṛṣṇa is impartial and His exchanges are always for everyone's good, whether they be pure devotees or ill-motivated, everyone is advised to take shelter of this all-powerful and impartial Supreme Lord. “A person who has broader intelligence, whether he be full of all material desire, or desiring liberation, must by all means worship the supreme whole, the Personality of Godhead.” (*Bhāg.* 2.3.10)

29. *Magnanimous*
30. *Religious* 31. *Heroic*

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa lived in Dvārakā, He lived in 16,108 palaces with His 16,108 queens. Every day, from each of these palaces, He gave 13,054 cows in charity. This is a sample of the Lord's magnanimity. A magnanimous person isn't stingy with what he has—his life, wealth, and intelligence—but he gives it to others. Rūpa Gosvāmī prayed to the Supreme Lord, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, with the words *namo mahā-vadānyāya*, “the most magnanimous of all persons,” because Lord Caitanya gave freely what no other incarnation of Godhead has given before: *kṛṣṇa-prema*. He gave it by the process of *hari-nāma saṅkīrtana*.

Following these examples, the devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa are not miserly. They are *mahātmās*, broad-minded persons who wish to benefit others. We become broad-minded by being magnanimous with ourselves. We have to first give ourselves Kṛṣṇa consciousness before we can give it to others: *āpani ācari' prabhu jivera śikhaya*. “Perfect yourself,” Lord Caitanya instructed, “and then teach others.” This

was also Śrīla Prabhupāda's teaching to his disciples, who on his behalf, were distributing Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world.

Similarly, a religious person practices his religion honestly and gives what he has realized to others. Among the six duties of a *brāhmaṇa*, the first three are to study the scriptures, to perform sacrifice (*yajña*), and to live by receiving charity. The last three duties are to teach scripture, perform *yajña* for the benefit of others, and to give in charity.

Kṛṣṇa is the enunciator of religion (*dharma*). He is the staunch opponent of irreligion. "To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium." (Bg. 4.8) Unless a society practices *dharma*, at least in a preliminary form, it is not human or civilized. Śrīla Prabhupāda was a champion of *dharma* in the modern age. He strongly denounced irreligion and sinful behavior in the so-called civilized countries of the world. He offered the means to practice religion from the first steps of reform up to the practice of pure *bhakti-yoga*.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* refuses to call anything less than pure *bhakti* religion. *Dharmah projjhita-kaitavo . . .* Only the highest truth, pure love of God, deserves to be called pure and unmotivated religion. The goal of this pure religion is to love the Supreme

Personality of Godhead. Therefore, another term for *bhakti* is *bhāgavata-dharma*, devotional service unto Bhagavān, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is also known as *sanātana-dharma* and is defined as the constitutional nature of all souls in their pure state, beyond the dogmas and designations of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and other forms of religion. As Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “Religion means to obey the laws of God.” Religion means to obey, to serve, and to love Kṛṣṇa, who is the friend of all and the Self of all selves. Kṛṣṇa is therefore not only religious; He is religion personified.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is heroic. When He appeared in this world, He personally fought against demons and their armies, but He was never defeated. “When Jarāsandha and thirteen divisions of soldiers attacked Kṛṣṇa’s army, they were unable to hurt even one soldier on the side of Kṛṣṇa. This was due to Kṛṣṇa’s expert military training. This is unique in the history of military art.”

Although Kṛṣṇa promised not to fight in the Battle of Kurukṣetra, it was because He wanted to give His devotee, Arjuna, the credit for the victory. Arjuna’s grandson, Mahārāja Parīkṣit, admitted, however, that Lord Kṛṣṇa was actually the hero at Kurukṣetra. There were many warriors who were more powerful than Arjuna and who fought against him, such as Bhīṣma, Karṇa, and Droṇa, but Arjuna

defeated them all because Kṛṣṇa drove his chariot. As the *Bhagavad-gītā* concludes, “Wherever there is Kṛṣṇa, the master of all mystics, and wherever there is Arjuna, the supreme archer, there will also certainly be opulence, victory, extraordinary power, and morality. That is my opinion.” (Bg. 18.78)

If we are concerned for our own victory over the merciless cycle of birth and death, we had better join with heroic Kṛṣṇa and stop opposing Him. Victory is with the Pāṇḍavas because they have chosen Kṛṣṇa as their Lord. Who can hope to be victorious without Him?

32. Compassionate
33. Respectful 34. Gentle

A compassionate person is unable to bear another's distress. Kṛṣṇa's compassion was shown in His rescue of the kings imprisoned by Magadhendra. He was also compassionate to Bhīṣma and cried at the time of Bhīṣma's passing away. Śrīla Prabhupāda advises us how to attain Kṛṣṇa's compassion:

Therefore, instead of offering obeisances to Kṛṣṇa directly, devotees offer obeisances to His compassionate nature. Actually, because Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, it is very difficult to approach Him. But the devotees, taking advantage of His compassionate nature, which is represented by Rādhārāṇī, always pray to Rādhārāṇī for Kṛṣṇa's compassion.

—NOD, p. 176

May we pray directly to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī? Yes. There are many prayers in which devotees beg for Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's mercy and we can follow them. However, uttering prayers is not enough. We must

also follow and serve in the footsteps of the pure devotees.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, thank you for your invitation and permission to take advantage of Kṛṣṇa's compassionate nature. May you be pleased with us. You are our direct link to the compassion of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Let us be staunch in our service to you. Let us improve. Let us do as you require.

Hearing of Kṛṣṇa's qualities is not a game. We are meant to meditate on them deeply and lovingly. When I recently read the description of Kṛṣṇa's compassion in *The Nectar of Devotion*, I turned to *Kṛṣṇa* book and read the full account of Kṛṣṇa releasing the kings imprisoned by Magadhendra. *The Nectar of Devotion* gives its evidences briefly, but we may turn to the source of the reference and read the full account, this time focused on how it reveals a particular quality in Kṛṣṇa. I also read the full description of Kṛṣṇa's compassion for Grandfather Bhīṣma.

In the Introduction, I mentioned that I am sometimes distracted in reading *The Nectar of Devotion* or other books by Prabhupāda. It seems that when I start cold—and I always seem to start that way—I feel a lack of depth in *śraddhā* and feeling. I don't *really* doubt that Kṛṣṇa is God, or that He can perform His *līlās*, or that His *līlās* are actual

historical events, but still the doubts swarm up like mosquitoes. I have to kill them.

The lack of feeling is harder to cure. Daily reading, despite imperfections, is the only cure. It is a long, gradual cure, but daily reading can gradually eradicate lifetimes of toxins stored in our belief and feeling systems. “This *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is as brilliant as the sun, and it has arisen just after the departure of Lord Kṛṣṇa to His own abode, accompanied by religion, knowledge, etc. Persons who have lost their vision due to the dense darkness of ignorance in the age of Kali shall get light from this *Purāṇa*.” (*Bhāg.* 1.3.43)

Kṛṣṇa is also respectful. The Vedic *śāstras* declare that no one is greater than or equal to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Śrī Kṛṣṇa states, “Because I am transcendental, beyond both the fallible and the infallible, and because I am the greatest, I am celebrated both in the world and in the *Vedas* as that Supreme Person.” (Bg. 15.18) Where, then, is the scope for Kṛṣṇa to regard some devotees as superior and to offer them respect? It is all part of His pastimes as a member of human society. To set an example, Śrī Kṛṣṇa offers respects to *brāhmaṇas*, His spiritual master, His father, and His elder brother Balarāma.

Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches that we should respect not only superiors, but all living entities. “The humble

sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle *brāhmaṇa*, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste]." (Bg. 5.18) Even though our dealings with people may be different according to their social or spiritual positions, a devotee should be respectful to all and not commit unnecessary violence. Lord Caitanya advised that if we want to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra in a peaceful and humble state of mind, we should "offer all respects to others without expecting respect for ourselves."

Describing Srī Kṛṣṇa as respectful, *The Nectar of Devotion* states: "In this way Lord Kṛṣṇa, the lotus-eyed, was completely happy and pure in heart in all of His dealings." (NOD, Chap. 22, p. 176)

Kṛṣṇa is gentle. "Any person who neither becomes impudent nor exhibits a puffed-up nature is called gentle." Kṛṣṇa can demand everyone's subservience. Still, He never forgets to follow social etiquette in His dealings. Kṛṣṇa is many-sided. When a challenge demands that He be strong and even belligerent (remember His quality of "heroic"), He is always equal to the task. In His normal dealings, however, He has nothing to "prove" and enjoys gentle exchanges with His devotees and servitors.

The Nectar of Devotion speaks of Kṛṣṇa offering obeisances to Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira before the *rājasūya* sacrifice as an example of His gentleness,

but His most amazing act at the *rājasūya* sacrifice was His volunteering to wash the feet of the arriving guests. How gentle Kṛṣṇa is. What other great and powerful king would be willing to overcome his own arrogance to touch the feet of so many people? Kṛṣṇa did not agree to bathe the guests' feet out of political motivation; He bathed their feet as an exchange of love. Kṛṣṇa is both father and mother to all living beings. He likes to care for them in a way that eases their hearts. Certainly, His washing the guests' feet is an example of His quality of gentleness.

Another example of Kṛṣṇa's gentleness occurred in His speech to Vasudeva and Devakī after Kāṁsa was killed. "After finishing this business, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma immediately released Their father and mother, Vasudeva and Devakī, who had been imprisoned by Kāṁsa. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma fell at Their parents' feet and offered them prayers." (*Kṛṣṇa*, Chap. 43, pp. 350–51)

And from *Bhāg.* 3.2.17: "Lord Kṛṣṇa begged pardon from His parents for Their [Kṛṣṇa's and Balarāma's] inability to serve their feet, due to being away from home because of great fear of Kāṁsa. He said, 'O mother, O father, please excuse Us for this inability.'"

We have a more common usage of the word "gentle." Gentleness means kindness, mildness, and



is the opposite of severity or roughness. It is an admirable quality. Although we cannot expect people to always be gentle, a *sādhū* is by nature gentle.

Even when a *sādhū* is placed in a stressful situation, his natural gentleness—his tolerance and mercy—shines through. Prabhupāda gives the example that when someone feels mental distress, then he is not ready to receive anyone or to be compassionate. He says, “Leave me alone. I’m troubled right now.” Gentleness is something an ordinary person practices only when he is free of trouble.

A saintly person, however, is always gentle. Even when vigorous or even violent action is called for, he remains gentle. For example, the saintly *kṣatriyas* were gentle even on the battlefield. They didn’t resort to dirty tricks against the *kṣatriya* code, such as stabbing an opponent in the back or killing him when he had already surrendered.

Kind parents are gentle with their children, even when they have to reprimand them. Prabhupāda said that his own father was like that, and when he had to reprimand him, Gour Mohan De would say, “My dear son, I have to give you a little punishment now, but please excuse me. This is for your own good. Even Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s father had to punish his child sometimes.” Therefore, gentleness

can be accompanied by force, although it appears contradictory.

Everyone likes to be dealt with gently. We think of some people as so hardy that they have no sensitivity. When we look into their hearts, however, we can understand that everyone is sensitive. No human being is made up simply of his shaggy bark exterior. We all have tender hearts and are easily hurt. Therefore, devotees should practice gentleness, following the examples of Kṛṣṇa's behavior.

It is not sentimental to stress the importance of gentleness. Even when someone asks us for the straight truth, we should deliver it gently. And we should not offer a false gentleness, which is often covering a malicious intent. Better to receive naked aggression than false gentleness.

Our gentleness should extend to all living beings. Animals respond to gentleness just as much as humans do. We should also be gentle with the non-devotees and with aggressors. This is such a dog-eat-dog world that it's impossible to be gentle toward aggressors unless we have an infinite amount of compassion. Therefore, persons like Cāṇakya Paṇḍita warn us that if we are going to deal with cheaters, we will also have to cheat. Although that mentality may help us survive the traumas of the material world, and it may even be useful in

preaching, it would seem that gentleness toward other living beings is a deeper spiritual quality.

We can remember Jesus's saying in the Bible: "... but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." If someone takes your shirt, then give him your garment also. We should not respond by trying to revenge ourselves on our aggressors.

A saintly person's gentleness comes from deep within himself. He knows that everyone is suffering and therefore he treats them with the same compassion he would treat a child. It is a preacher's expertise to know that resistance is more often overcome and dismantled by gentleness and encouragement than by roughness.

Therefore, gentleness is a genuine Vaiṣṇava quality. When we are touched by a devotee's gentleness, we are thrilled by the humanness of it, and relieved from the brusqueness, belligerence, or cold analysis that usually greets us and leaves us feeling dry and empty.

It is said of the six Gosvāmīs that they were attractive both to the gentle (*dhīra*) and to the ruffians (*adhīra*). Nārada Muni was so gentle that he could disarm demons and convert low-grade hunters to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That gentleness comes from the devotee's pure desire to extend Kṛṣṇa's compassion. People can see that a gentle

devotee is free of malice. They can see that he or she is almost incapable of hurting them. Thus they relax and are able to take the essence of what the devotee is offering—Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

35. Liberal 36. Shy
37. Protector of Surrendered Souls

Lord Kṛṣṇa is liberal toward His devotees. Even if they are guilty of an offense, He considers the good they have done in devotional service. *Bhāva-grāhi-janārdana*—the Supreme Lord sees the positive essence of our acts. Śrī Kṛṣṇa demonstrated this principle when Satrājit wrongly accused Kṛṣṇa of murdering his brother to obtain the Syamantaka jewel. Satrājit's brother was actually killed by a lion, but Lord Kṛṣṇa went to the forest to investigate his death. First He found the dead body of Satrājit's brother, then the dead body of the lion. Then he saw the long tunnel leading to Jāmbavān's cave. Kṛṣṇa knew that only Jāmbavān could have killed the lion, so He fearlessly entered the tunnel, fought with Jāmbavān for the jewel (which Jāmbavān had given to his son as a toy), and later returned the jewel to Satrājit. Satrājit felt bad that he had defamed Kṛṣṇa mistakenly, so he offered Kṛṣṇa his beautiful daughter, Satyabhāmā, in marriage. Satrājit also wanted to give Kṛṣṇa the Syamantaka jewel, but Kṛṣṇa asked that the jewel be kept in the temple so

that everyone in Dvārakā could benefit from the gold it produced.

Another example of Kṛṣṇa's accepting the essence occurred when He visited His devotee, Vidura. In the ecstasy of forgetfulness, Vidura served Kṛṣṇa banana peels and threw away the bananas. Śrī Kṛṣṇa happily ate the peels because they were offered in love.

“A person who sometimes exhibits humility and bashfulness is called shy.” Lord Kṛṣṇa is sometimes shy to show His love for the *gopīs* if Balarāma or His parents are present. We relish Kṛṣṇa in this mood. We adore His belligerent boasting when He is about to fight a demon, and we also adore His exhibition of shyness. This is part of His greatness. Kṛṣṇa is all-sided. He is not only heroic, but shy. Kṛṣṇa's shyness is one of His confidential qualities and devotees should learn to qualify themselves to appreciate it.

Kṛṣṇa is also the protector of surrendered souls. Kṛṣṇa even gives shelter to the demons if they surrender to Him. “Some enemy of Kṛṣṇa's was enlivened with the thought that he needn't fear Kṛṣṇa, because if he simply surrendered unto Him, Kṛṣṇa would give him all protection.” Vibhīṣaṇa took shelter of Lord Rāma and was welcomed into the camp. When Kāliya surrendered to Kṛṣṇa, He was given the protection by the marks of Kṛṣṇa's

feet on his hoods so that Garuḍa would not disturb him.

One of the six symptoms of surrender is to see Kṛṣṇa as our protector. The Vrajavāsīs usually see Kṛṣṇa as their child, friend, or lover, but in difficulty, they always seek His protection. When Indra sent torrents of rain to Vṛndāvana, the residents ran to Kṛṣṇa and He protected them by lifting Govardhana Hill over them like an umbrella.

Another instance of their dependence on Kṛṣṇa was when Nanda Mahārāja was being swallowed by a serpent. He called out to his son, Kṛṣṇa, “My dear son, Kṛṣṇa, please come and save me from this danger! This serpent is swallowing me!” (*Kṛṣṇa*, Chap. 33, p. 283)

Another time, a forest fire raged through Vṛndāvana forest and the lives of the boys and cows were in danger. The boys cried out to Kṛṣṇa, “We know You can protect us from this great danger . . . We are all completely dependent on You . . . ” (*Kṛṣṇa*, Chap. 19, p. 174)

The Supreme Lord offers His protection to all souls: “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.” (Bg 18.66)

38. Happy

God is happy. “Any person who is always joyful and untouched by any distress is called happy.” We sometimes hear that Kṛṣṇa is sad to see the *jīvas* suffering; His unhappiness is inconceivable. Kṛṣṇa is happy with His devotees in the spiritual world and unaffected by material suffering. Still, He feels compassionate toward the *jīvas* and arranges for them to join Him in His jubilant dancing party.

Not even a slight distress can touch Kṛṣṇa. Once some of the *gopīs* went to the place where the *brāhmaṇas* were performing sacrifices and said, “Dear wives of the *brāhmaṇas*, you must know that not even a slight smell of distress can touch Kṛṣṇa. He knows no loss, He knows no defamation, He has no fear, He has no anxiety, and He does not know calamity. He is simply encircled by the dancers of Vraja and is enjoying their company in the *rāsa* dance.”

—NOD, Chap. 22, p. 178

Prabhupāda used to tell us that if we were feeling morose, it was a sign that we were not properly

situated in spiritual life. Spiritual activity makes people jolly whereas bodily identification makes people depressed. There is a variety of spiritual happiness in which we feel separation from Kṛṣṇa, but this is actually a kind of ecstasy. When the *gopīs* sing songs of separation from Kṛṣṇa it is not due to their misfortune. *Yata dekha vaiṣṇaver vyavahāra duḥkh/niścaya jāniha sei paramānanda sukh:* “Whenever one sees a Vaiṣṇava acting unhappy, one should know for sure that he is actually experiencing the highest spiritual bliss.”

Another expression of Kṛṣṇa’s happiness is when Kṛṣṇa was sitting under a young banyan tree. “The Lord was sitting, taking rest against a young banyan tree, with His right lotus foot on His left thigh, and although He had left all household comforts, He looked quite cheerful in that posture.”

39. *Well-wisher of His Devotees*

Kṛṣṇa is *bhakta-vatsala*—He is especially inclined to His devotees. Among all His glories, this is the best. Neither does this love compromise His impartiality toward the *jīvas*. It is His way of reciprocating equally to give Himself to those who want only Him.

In *The Nectar of Devotion*, Rūpa Gosvāmī gives the example of Kṛṣṇa's favoritism toward Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra. Lord Kṛṣṇa promised that He would not fight or show favoritism to one or the other side, but Bhīṣma forced Lord Kṛṣṇa to save Arjuna. Bhīṣmadeva fought so hard that Arjuna was on the verge of being killed at his hands. Bhīṣma did this because he was confident and wanted to see Kṛṣṇa favor His devotee. Thus he forced Kṛṣṇa to break His promise and to rush forward with a wheel to kill him.

Bhīṣma tried to defeat Arjuna so that he could exchange with Kṛṣṇa in a chivalrous mood. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The dealings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Bhīṣmadeva on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra are interesting because the activities of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa appear to be partial to Arjuna and at enmity

with Bhīṣmadeva; but factually all this was especially meant to show special favor to Bhīṣmadeva, the great devotee of the Lord. The astounding feature of such dealings is that a devotee can please the Lord by playing the part of an enemy. The Lord, being absolute, can accept service from His pure devotee even in the garb of an enemy.” (*Bhāg.* 1.9.38, purport)

Further evidence of Kṛṣṇa’s favoritism toward Bhīṣmadeva is that the Lord personally appeared at Bhīṣmadeva’s deathbed just to assure the great warrior that he would be able to see Him at the last moment of his life. Bhīṣmadeva states, “Yet, despite His being equally kind to everyone, He has graciously come before me while I am ending my life, for I am His unflinching servitor” (*Bhāg.* 1.9.22). In the purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “The Supreme Lord, the Absolute Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, although equal to everyone, is still more inclined to His unflinching devotee who is completely surrendered and knows no one else as his protector and master.”

How did the Lord deal with those on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra who were not His dear devotees? Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, “It is said that all the fighters who assembled on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra attained salvation by personally seeing the Lord at the time of death. Therefore, His

diminishing the duration of life of Arjuna's enemy does not mean that He was partial to the cause of Arjuna. Factually He was merciful to the opposite party because they would not have attained salvation by dying at home in the ordinary course of life. . . . Therefore, the Lord is all good, and whatever He does is for everyone's good. . . . Such are the transcendental activities of the Lord, and whoever understands this also gets salvation after quitting his material body." (*Bhāg.* 1.9.35, purport)

40. Controlled by Love

The Nectar of Devotion gives the example of Sudāmā Vipra, who “controlled” the Lord by his affection as an affectionate schoolmate of Kṛṣṇa, and by Sudāmā’s subsequent life of poverty and devotion as a faultless *brāhmaṇa*. Thus Kṛṣṇa shed tears while receiving him.

The other instance given in *The Nectar of Devotion* is Mother Yaśodā trying to bind Kṛṣṇa with ropes. Kṛṣṇa allowed Himself to be controlled by His mother on that occasion, showing that no one can bind Him by any means other than love.

The *gopīs* are so single-minded in their dedication to Kṛṣṇa that He admits He is unable to repay them. They break His vow that “I respond to each devotee according to how they surrender to Me.” Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī’s love for Kṛṣṇa is so captivating that Lord Kṛṣṇa wanted to taste that love from Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī’s position. Thus He appeared as Lord Caitanya and tasted Her love for Him.

In describing Kṛṣṇa’s loving reciprocation, Prabhupāda writes, “Kṛṣṇa becomes obliged to the loving spirit of the devotee and not exactly to the service rendered.” We may take heart in this

statement. If we are unable to do heroic service, or even as much service as we used to do, Kṛṣṇa will still appreciate our attempts. It is the service mood that counts. As Lord Kṛṣṇa accepts us despite our limits, we should accept other devotees in this way.

It is common to see someone join the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, serve with tremendous energy during his youth, then bow to the limits the body places on him as he grows physically older. Some devotees get serious diseases and become physically reduced and unable to engage in many practical duties. We should encourage such devotees and appreciate their inner spirit, which is not necessarily affected by their physical condition. More likely, a devotee undergoing a physical trial is more surrendered than when he or she was young. Kṛṣṇa will be “controlled” by a devotee’s actual sincerity, and not by how many service hours he or she puts in.

Kṛṣṇa is controlled by love. He is conquered by *prema*. Those who are wise take shelter of Kṛṣṇa’s devotees and ultimately pray to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī for mercy. She is the personification of the topmost expression of Kṛṣṇa-conquering love. Under Her protection, we will be assured of Kṛṣṇa’s love.

. . . Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the property of His pure unconditional devotees, and as such only the devotees can deliver Kṛṣṇa to another devotee;

Kṛṣṇa is never obtainable directly. . . . A pure devotee therefore never approaches the Lord directly, but tries to please the servant of the Lord's servants, and thus the Lord becomes pleased, and only then can the devotee relish the taste of the *tulasī* leaves stuck to His lotus feet. . . . In Vṛndāvana all the pure devotees pray for the mercy of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the pleasure potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is a tenderhearted feminine counterpart of the supreme whole, resembling the perfectional stage of the worldly feminine nature. Therefore, the mercy of Rādhārāṇī is available very readily to the sincere devotees, and once She recommends such a devotee to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Lord at once accepts the devotee's admittance into His association.

—*Bhāg.* 2.3.23, purport

To seek Kṛṣṇa's love and attention is the highest goal (*premā pum-artho mahān*), and it is achieved by the mercy of the devotees.

41. All-auspicious

While listing the six primary characteristics of *bhakti*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says that *bhakti* is all-auspicious. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the source of auspiciousness. Whatever He does is good for everyone. The closer we come to Kṛṣṇa in devotional service, the more we receive of that good fortune. A weak-hearted devotee often hesitates to receive Kṛṣṇa's blessings because he is afraid to break his material attachments. But when Kṛṣṇa removes his material attachments, it is another form of auspiciousness.

The Personality of Godhead said: If I especially favor someone, I gradually deprive him of his wealth. Then the relatives and friends of such a poverty-stricken man abandon him. In this way he suffers one distress after another. . . . A person who has thus become sober fully realizes the Absolute as the highest truth, the most subtle and perfect manifestation of spirit, the transcendental existence without end. In this way realizing that the Supreme Truth is the foundation of his own existence, he is freed from the cycle of material life.

—*Bhāg.* 10.88.8, 10

According to *The Nectar of Devotion*, a person who is always engaged in auspicious welfare activities for everyone is known as all-auspicious. Śrī Uddhava spoke of the Lord in this way: “Kṛṣṇa satisfied all great sages by His wonderful pastimes. He demolished all of the demoniac activities of the cruel royal order, protected all pious men and killed all cruel fighters on the battlefield. Therefore He is all-auspicious for all men.” (*NOD*, Chap. 22, p.179)

We look for good omens, favorable times and days on the calendar, auspicious stars, and likely-to-succeed operations. It is a kind of mysticism that everyone indulges in, looking for the best weather and other signs in our favor. We don't want hunches, but solid indications, such as an early jump into the lead, and so on. But good signs may be destroyed by fate. What starts out as auspicious can end in disaster. A wedding ends in divorce. A military campaign ends in defeat. For one who always depends on Kṛṣṇa, however, life is always auspicious.

42. Most Powerful

“When Kṛṣṇa was present on this planet, just as the powerful sun drives all darkness to take shelter in caves, He drove away all of His enemies, who fled like owls to take shelter beyond His sight.” (NOD, Chap. 22, p.180) Thus Kṛṣṇa is most powerful.

Although devotees favor nonviolence, sometimes power is needed. The religious *kṣatriyas* are Kṛṣṇa’s arms. When all else fails, devotees pray to Lord Kṛṣṇa to personally descend and kill the Rāvaṇas, Kaṁsas, or Hiranyaśāyus of this world. We do not always see Him come, but we pray for His strength to descend. In this age, He appears as His all-powerful holy names. May He always protect us.

There is a connection between the qualities of power and purity. Power in the spiritual sense includes the power to purify. For example, the sun is powerful enough to sterilize even a puddle of urine. That is part of the sun’s definition, that it has the power to purify contamination.

Similarly, the holy name is so powerful that it can erase more sins than someone is able to commit. In the Sixth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the

Yamadūtas underestimated the holy name's power. In fact, they were ignorant of the glories of the holy name. They knew only that Ajāmila had accumulated heaps of sinful activities and should therefore be taken to hell. The Viṣṇudūtas, who were themselves power personified, stopped the Yamadūtas. They instructed the Yamadūtas about the power and purity of the holy name and explained how simply by chanting the name of Nārāyaṇa, Ajāmila had become free from all sinful reaction.

When the Yamadūtas approached their master, Yamarāja, to inquire further, Yamarāja said: "Therefore it should be understood that one is easily relieved from all sinful reactions by chanting the holy name of the Lord and chanting of His qualities and activities. This is the only process recommended for relief from sinful reactions. Even if one chants the holy name of the Lord with improper pronunciation, he will achieve relief from material bondage if he chants without offenses. Ajāmila, for example, was extremely sinful, but while dying he merely chanted the holy name, and although calling his son, he achieved complete liberation because he remembered the name of Nārāyaṇa." (*Bhāg.* 6.3.24)

Yamarāja concludes: "My dear servants, please do not approach such devotees, for they have fully surrendered to the lotus feet of the Supreme

Personality of Godhead. They are equal to everyone, and their narrations are sung by the demigods and the inhabitants of Siddhaloka. Please do not even go near them. They are always protected by the club of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore Lord Brahmā and I and even the time factor are not competent to chastise them.” (*Bhāg.* 6.3.27) Even fear personified is afraid of the Lord.

Another evidence of the holy name’s power is the way Nāma Prabhu can manifest Himself anywhere. No one can keep Him out. He can appear on the tongue of anyone who chants the name’s syllables. We usually think of this as due to our own prowess in chanting, but actually, it is due to the power of the holy name.

We say death is powerful because he can enter anyone’s chamber—whether he be a king surrounded by his armies or a poor man alone—and take him away. This is even more true of the holy name. Anyone can chant the holy name. The Lord will then enter his mind through the sound vibration and purify him. No other religious method is as powerful or as simple as chanting the holy name. Chanting requires no preliminary breathing exercises, no paraphernalia, no money or priests or building codes. Everything is complete in the pure utterance of the holy name.

The holy name is so powerful that compared to it, everything else appears inconsequential. Whatever good is to be found in anything in this world, it is only in its ability to lead someone to the feet of the holy name. Scriptural study, which leads the intellect to understand the difference between matter and spirit, is culminated when the scholar chants the holy name. *Karma-kāṇḍīya* activities culminate when the fruitive worker realizes that he must surrender to Kṛṣṇa through His holy name. Every activity culminates in surrender to the holy name.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was immersed in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa—Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. Aware of the holy name's power, he was confident enough to travel to America. He knew that although the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra would sound foreign to Western ears, the holy name was so powerful that it could manifest in their heart's regardless. By Śrīla Prabhupāda's mercy, the powerful movement of chanting the holy names is spreading to every town and village around the world.

The holy name's power is not yet fully unleashed in Kali-yuga. People can see Kṛṣṇa, if only they will take wholeheartedly to chanting. Those who are already chanting can see the holy name's power in their lives. We can only hope that society's leaders

will discover the real universal power, and give up tinkering with their electronic and atomic energies before they bring about major destruction. Spreading the power of the holy name is the work of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

43. All-famous

Kṛṣṇa is all-famous. The example Prabhupāda gives is Kṛṣṇa's famous discourse, the *Bhagavad-gītā*. One may argue that other books are more famous and that other persons are more well-known in this world than God Himself. We reply that others are actually infamous if they do not recognize the Supreme. Rūpa Gosvāmī writes, "A person who becomes well known due to his spotless character is called famous." (NOD, Chap. 22, p.180) No one is famous in that sense except the transcendental Lord, or one who serves Him. Only an exalted person can appreciate Kṛṣṇa's fame. Fools and owls cannot appreciate it.

"It is stated that the diffusion of Kṛṣṇa's fame is like the moonshine, which turns darkness into light. In other words, if Kṛṣṇa consciousness is preached all over the world, the darkness of ignorance and the anxiety of material existence will turn into the whiteness of purity, peacefulness and prosperity."

44. Popular

45. Special Attraction for Devotees

46. Very Attractive to Women

Everyone cheered, “*Jaya! Jaya! Jaya!*” when Kṛṣṇa entered the sacrificial arena in Mathurā. He is dear to the people.

We may ask, “Why, then, isn’t His Hare Kṛṣṇa movement popular in this world?” Kṛṣṇa is popular with enlightened people, not with the ignorant, two-legged animals. He puts a curtain of *māyā* between Himself and the *mūḍhas*. “Me, no one knows.”

When Kṛṣṇa returned to Dvārakā, all the citizens joyfully received Him and said, “. . . while You were gone every moment appeared to us like millions of years. Your separation is completely unbearable to us.” (NOD, Chap. 22, p. 180)

Kṛṣṇa’s quality of partiality to the devotees is similar to the previous one, “well-wisher of His devotees.” The Lord’s affection for His devotees is one of His most outstanding qualities, and therefore this trait reappears with slight differences. Kṛṣṇa is impartial, but if there is a fight, He sides with His

devotee. He chose to stand by Mahārāja Ambarīṣa over Durvāsā Muni. He sided with Indra and the demigods over the *asuras*.

The Supreme Lord is partial not only to the outstanding *bhaktas* described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but He favors *any* devotee. He gives His mercy to *any* person who renders even a little devotional service. “Even a little act of devotion can save one from the greatest fear at the time of death.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is attractive to women. “My dear Lord, You are just like a magnet, and all the damsels of Vraja are just like iron: in whichever direction You are moving they are following You, as iron is attracted by magnetic force.” (*NOD*, Chap. 22, p. 181)

Kṛṣṇa is especially attractive to the devotees in the internal energy. The sight of His body, His fragrance, the taste of nectar from His lips, and the sound of His flute are like arrows shot from His bow of love. They enter the *gopīs*’ hearts and the *gopīs* become stunned.

In one prayer composed by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, a *gopī* warns, “If you want to remain at home faithful to your husbands and family, then don’t go see Govinda standing in the moonlight at Vamśīvaṭa playing on His flute.” Many of the verses in the Tenth Canto are composed from the *gopīs*’ point of

view. Through their vision of Kṛṣṇa, the whole world can learn how attractive He is.

“As Kṛṣṇa respectfully greets His well-wishing friends, His eyes roll slightly as if from intoxication. He wears a flower garland, and the beauty of His soft cheeks is accentuated by the brilliance of His golden earrings and the whiteness of His face, which has the color of a *badara* berry. With His cheerful face resembling the moon, lord of the night, the Lord of the Yadus moves with the grace of a regal elephant. Thus He returns in the evening, delivering the cows of Vraja from the heat of the day.” (*Bhāg.* 10.35.25)

Kṛṣṇa is attractive to all beings, but no one appreciates Him as much as the *gopīs*. That is the special advantage of *mādhurya-līlā*. “Unless one follows in the footsteps of the *gopīs*, he cannot attain the service of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāja. If one is overcome by knowledge of the Lord’s opulence, he cannot attain the Lord’s lotus feet, even though he is engaged in devotional service.” (Cc. *Madhya* 8.230)

47. All-worshipable 48. All-opulent

Everyone wants to have someone to worship and adore. We may neglect this tendency in ourselves, or we may overcome it by cynicism or disgust, but worship is a function of the living entity, and it is perfected in our relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes on this subject while discussing the word *bhajate* in his purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* 6.47: “The English word ‘worship’ cannot be used in the same sense as *bhaj*. Worship means to adore, or to show respect and honor to the worthy one. But service with love and faith is especially meant for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One can avoid worshiping a respectable man or a demigod and may be called discourteous, but one cannot avoid serving the Supreme Lord without being thoroughly condemned.”

Thus worship is natural. If we allow ourselves to enter into the mood of the worshipper, we feel spiritually satisfied. Our worship should be educated, however, and in the mode of goodness, so that we worship the Supreme Lord and not a

demigod, an ordinary man, or a demon or ghost. Such worship is in the lower modes of nature.

Dhruva Mahārāja began his worship in a lower mode because he was materially motivated. However, by following Nārada Muni's instructions, he eventually received the *darśana* of Lord Viṣṇu and was able to transform his worship into transcendental service. When Dhruva Mahārāja saw Lord Viṣṇu, he said, "Now I am satisfied and I don't want anything else but service to You."

Sometimes we say that a superior person should not demand our respect, he should command it. In other words, we want to be inspired to serve someone because he has superior qualities. We don't want to worship someone because we are forced. Śrī Kṛṣṇa both commands and demands our respect: "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions." (Bg. 18.66)

Lord Kṛṣṇa possesses in full the sixty-four qualities described in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. Actually, He possesses infinitely more qualities than are listed there. Therefore, He is worshipable. *Oṃ tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam sadā, paśyanti sūrayo*. As stated in *The Nectar of Devotion*, "Kṛṣṇa is worshiped not only by all living entities, including the great demigods like Lord Śiva and Lord Brahmā, but also by Viṣṇu expansions (forms of

Godhead) such as Baladeva and Śeṣa.” (NOD, Chap. 22, p. 182)

Lord Kṛṣṇa is also all-opulent. The sage Parāśara defined God as Bhagavān, “one who possesses six chief opulences in full: all wealth, all strength, all fame, all beauty, all knowledge, and all renunciation.” Many persons possess riches, beauty, and knowledge, but no one can possess these opulences in their entirety. “Only Kṛṣṇa can claim this because He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (Bg. 2.2, purport)

Although He possesses all opulence, Kṛṣṇa is not attached to it. His renunciation is one of His opulences. He can give up the worship He receives and live without it if He desires. Kṛṣṇa displayed the quality of renunciation in many incarnations, such as when He appeared as Nara-Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi, in order to teach *vairāgya* to the world.

In His form as Lord Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa appeared with the opulence of renunciation by accepting the *sannyāsa* order of life. This was to teach us that *bhakti* includes renunciation—*vairāgya-vidyā nija bhakti-yoga*. The Lord enjoyed His pastimes with His devotees in that way.

Kṛṣṇa has all qualities. He is not quality-less, as the Māyāvādīs think. The Māyāvādīs are hampered by the idea that *guṇa* (quality) must always be material. They want to reach *nirvāṇa*, and they have

no faith in *sāstra* or God. Perhaps they never gained the association of the pure devotees of the Lord—those who have realized to some extent the qualities of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The pure devotee gives us his company freely, or he may withhold it. We become objects of his mercy when he speaks to us or resides with us or writes to us. Śrīla Prabhupāda told us, “People say God is dead or God has no qualities, but the Vaiṣṇava gives you God hand to hand.”

When we follow the spiritual master’s order, God is pleased with us and one day reveals Himself to His sincere servitor: “I am like this.” Only a fool or stubborn atheist will refuse to accept this path in favor of meditation on *nirguṇa*.

49. All-honorable

Everyone goes to Kṛṣṇa for protection, knowledge, blessings, or in devotion. Those who don't go to Him are in *māyā*. Even the demigods and their worshipers depend on Him (Bg. 7.21–2).

Kṛṣṇa is always the chief person present in any assembly. The atheists and the lower rungs of humankind fail to recognize this and therefore, the purpose of their conferences are always baffled. In effect, they meet only to challenge God.

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu gives us a picture of how the demigods see Kṛṣṇa's honorable audience in Dvārakā. The doorkeeper who has to manage the entrance of the demigods spoke thus on a busy day: "My dear Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva, please sit down on this bench and wait. My dear Indra, please desist from reading your prayers. This is creating a disturbance. Please wait silently. My dear Varuṇa, please go away. And my dear demigods, do not waste your time uselessly. Kṛṣṇa is very busy; He cannot see you!" (NOD, Chap. 22, p. 182–3)

Lord Kṛṣṇa is all-honorable not only during His four-year term of office or for the duration of a

human life. He is esteemed eternally. Those who know this make Lord Kṛṣṇa all-honorable in their own lives and they do not have to bow to the so-called leaders of this world.

50. The Supreme Controller

This is one of the qualities that a *jīva* can possess in part. If he attempts to possess it in full, he becomes pitiful. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say that we are all *īśvaras*, controllers, to some extent. The President of the United States is a big controller, a religious leader may control hundreds of followers, a family man controls his wife, a *yogī* controls his senses, but only Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Controller.

From the *Brahma-saṁhitā*: *īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ, sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*. From the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: *ekale īśvara kṛṣṇa āra saba bhṛtya*. Only Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme; all others are His servants. *Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*.

The two aspects of a controller are: (1) He is independent of others' control; and (2) His orders cannot be neglected by others. Lord Kṛṣṇa fulfills both these criteria to an infinite degree. By His energy as Time, He controls all living beings in the universe. "Time I am and I have come to engage everyone." Time itself, as well as all subordinate gods and their cosmic operations, are all subject to the will of the Supreme. "Simply by Your orders

and by Your partial representation of Viṣṇu, You are maintaining the universes. In this way, O Kṛṣṇa, O enemy of Kāṁsa, there are so many Brahmās and Śivas who are simply carrying out Your orders.” (NOD, Chap. 22, p. 183)

51. Changeless

As described in *The Nectar of Devotion*, the individual soul can possess fifty of the Supreme Lord's sixty-four qualities. These may be present in minute quantity, whereas the qualities are fully present in the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Besides these fifty qualities, however, there are five more which are sometimes partially manifest in Lord Brahmā or Lord Śiva. The first of these is "Changeless."

We *jīvas* change bodies when we come into this material world, one life after another. "As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones." (Bg. 2.22)

Lord Kṛṣṇa is changeless. "We may also note herein that a living entity forgets everything due to his change of body, but the Lord remembers because He does not change His *sac-cid-ānanda* body." (Bg. 4.5, purport)

Change is forced on us. It is the law of nature. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the controller of the laws of change. Therefore, He is never under their control. It may

be said that Lord Brahmā or Lord Śiva are, to some extent, above the material laws, but ultimately no one but the Supreme Personality of Godhead can make this claim.

“ . . . Kṛṣṇa does not change His body. He appears in His own body and is therefore not affected by the modes of material nature. . . . although the Lord sometimes appears in this material world, He has nothing to do with the modes of material nature, and He acts with full independence in His transcendental position. This is the special quality of the Lord.” (NOD, Chap. 22, p. 184)

52. All-cognizant

This has always been one of the standard definitions of God: omniscient. God knows everything; no one else does. As the *Upaniṣads* state, He is greater than all, no one is equal to Him, and He has no prescribed duty.

The Nectar of Devotion defines “all-cognizant” as “any person who can understand the feelings of all persons and incidents in all places at all times.” Kṛṣṇa does not just possess unlimited *jñāna*, but He possesses concern for everyone. He knows our qualities and our sufferings. Nothing goes unnoticed by Him.

In warfare, Śrī Kṛṣṇa used His all-cognizant feature to help the Pāṇḍavas. He knew that Duryodhana kept five secret arrows to use against them, so He told Arjuna how to get them. He also knew that Gandhārī had the power to make her son, Duryodhana, invincible, just by glancing at his naked body. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa saw the naked Duryodhana going to his mother, Kṛṣṇa advised him to cover his lower parts. In this way, He tricked

Duryodhana, whose lower part remained vulnerable in battle.

Lord Kṛṣṇa also knew the minds of the 16,000 princesses who were imprisoned by Bhaumāsura. They wanted Kṛṣṇa to marry them and He complied. He knew the desires of the unmarried *gopīs* who were worshipping Kātyāyanī to obtain Him as their husband: “The Supreme Personality of Godhead, knowing the minds of the unmarried young *gopīs*, benedicted them with their desired objective.” (*Kṛṣṇa*, Chap. 22, p. 194) There is nothing that Kṛṣṇa does not know.

We should never doubt that Kṛṣṇa knows what is best for our ultimate welfare and that He is actively working to bring about our liberation. He knows best how to bring us back to Him. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura prays, “O Gopīnātha, You are the wisest person. Please look for a way to bring about auspiciousness for this fool.”

Kṛṣṇa is not only aware of all events in the past, present, and future, He is aware of everyone’s mind. He is wisdom personified. All-knowing, all-compassionate, all-wise, all-attractive—He is the greatest and the smallest, and He is always a person. He is the darling son of Mother Yaśodā and Mahārāja Nanda; the pride of all the cowherd boys; the protector of the cows and *brāhmaṇas*; the dearest of the *gopīs*; the lover of Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

We bow at His lotus feet. We beg for the nectar of His holy names. We serve His devotees. Our spiritual master has taught us the truth and to him we pray, please always keep us under your protection. Allow us to always recite and remember the unlimited qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His entourage.

53. *Ever Fresh*

“Kṛṣṇa is always remembered, and His name is always chanted by millions of devotees, but the devotees never become saturated. . . . Therefore Kṛṣṇa is ever fresh.” (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 185)

As stated in the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Absolute Truth, He has no cause, He is the oldest, yet He is *nava-yauvanam*, always a fresh youth. Kṛṣṇa’s knowledge is also always fresh, as exemplified by the eternal nature of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Neophyte devotees may become jaded in their routine practices of worship, but we should always acknowledge that this is our own fault. When genuinely performed, devotional service brings joy and new insights at every moment. We need to go deeper and to remove *anarthas*, and then we will never think devotional service is stale.

The *gopīs* of Vraja are blessed with *pūrva-rāga*. This is the stage of loving Kṛṣṇa before actually meeting with Him. It is the freshest stage, where Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī hears Kṛṣṇa’s name, hears His flute, and sees His form for the first time. She becomes enchanted by Her beloved and forgets all

other duties. This *pūrva-rāga* continues even after many meetings with Kṛṣṇa. The *gopīs* may be with Kṛṣṇa all night, but by the next day feel as if they have never met Him. Thus they are always eager to go to Him. “Most of the girl friends of Kṛṣṇa were married, but because Kṛṣṇa was their friend before their marriages, they could not forget His attractive features, which were always fascinating to them, even after their marriages.” (NOD, Chap. 22, p. 185)

Let us pray to attain the quality of ever fresh appreciation for Kṛṣṇa. The world of *māyā* presents many obstacles to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but when we can taste the sweetness of *harināma* as ever fresh, as always revealing more to us, then we will be able to overcome all obstacles.

I do believe Kṛṣṇa is ever fresh, but whether I believe it or not, my realization is small. Never mind. I must go forward by hearing from the *ācāryas*. I will one day get a glimpse of Kṛṣṇa in His unlimited qualities.

54. *Sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*

55. *Possessing All Mystic Perfections*

Impersonalists speak of *sac-cid-ānanda*, but not *vigraha*. How can there be *ānanda* and knowledge without personal consciousness, personal form? There must be *vigraha*, the form of the Personality of Godhead, from whom everything comes (including our form), and who is eternal, full of bliss and knowledge.

The conditioned souls are originally one in quality with the Supreme Lord, although we have now fallen into an opposite condition. We are *asat*, not eternal, *acit*, in ignorance, and *nirānanda*, not blissful. Instead, we are beset with miseries. That is why the *jñānīs* seek liberation in a negative way. They want to escape the *acit*, *nirānanda*, *asat*. We cannot escape ignorance or unhappiness by spiritual suicide. We each have a personal identity; that in its purified form is the very nature of the self. We too are *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*, and our perfection is to play with Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world, far beyond the sufferings of the material world and beyond the relative ignorance of impersonal liberation.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is known as Yogeśvara, the Lord of yoga. Lord Śiva is sometimes known as the lord of the *yogīs*, but Kṛṣṇa controls the yoga system itself and He is its ultimate goal. As stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *vāsudeva-parā yogā*, “Yoga is for realizing Him.” (*Bhāg.* 1.2.28) Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa possesses all mystic perfections.

There are eight yogic *siddhis* which the *yogīs* strive for. One is called *aṇimā-siddhi*, whereby one becomes so small that he can enter a stone. Kṛṣṇa displays this *siddhi* by becoming “smaller than the smallest.” (*Bg.* 8.9) “He can enter into the atom and into the heart of the smallest and control him as the Supersoul.”

Prāpti is another *siddhi*. By this art, the *yogī* can extend his hand and touch the moon with his finger. The Supreme Lord does this when He accepts the offerings of food and flowers made by His devotees. As described in *Īśopaniṣad*, He is far away, but very near as well. Located uncountable miles away in Kṛṣṇaloka, He can reach out and accept any devotional offering made by a sincere soul in the material world.

Kṛṣṇa displayed all the yogic perfections in His pastimes. He expanded Himself inside the neck of the Aghāsura demon. He became heavier than the heaviest in order to bring Tṛṇāvarta down from the sky. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma jumped eighty-four miles

from the peak of a burning mountain. All these nature-defying acts were performed by Kṛṣṇa without any prior yogic practice. Nor is Kṛṣṇa like any ordinary *yogī* who has to sit and meditate. His perfections are His natural endowments; they are part of His qualities. He displays them as the occasion and inclination arises. And He awards them to others. He is *Yogeśvara*.

56. *Kṛṣṇa's Inconceivable Potencies*

57. *Kṛṣṇa's Body Generates*

Innumerable Universes

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī states that unless we accept God's inconceivable potencies, we cannot understand Him at all. There is no way to explain many of the feats Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs in His *līlās* except to agree that He has inconceivable powers. He can make the impossible possible.

Even lowly creatures in the material world possess a certain amount of inconceivable potency (*acintya-śakti*). Small birds fly great distances over the ocean. Frogs bury themselves under the earth. Grass tolerates. Who can subdue the power of fog, volcanoes, hurricanes? All of these powers are beyond the abilities of humans, although the natural world carries them out. The many small *acintya-śaktis* must have a source which contains all these inconceivable powers, and that is Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa's qualities sometimes bewilder us. We have tiny brains and cannot conceive how everything is

taking place in the Supreme. As stated in *Īśo-paniṣad*, “The Supreme Lord walks and does not walk. He is far away, but He is very near as well. He is within everything, and yet He is outside of everything.” (Mantra 5)

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: “Here is an explanation of the Supreme Lord’s transcendental activities as executed by His inconceivable potencies. Contradictions are given here by way of proving the inconceivable potency . . . [for without them] there can be no meaning to the words ‘Supreme Lord.’” (Mantra 5, purport)

Lord Kṛṣṇa’s body generates innumerable universes. This quality of the Lord is not manifest in *jīvas*, but in the body of Lord Nārāyaṇa. Lord Brahmā prays, “. . . even though one of the many universes is created by me, innumerable universes are coming and going from the pores of Your body . . . I think I am very, very insignificant before You, and I am therefore begging Your pardon.” (*Bhāg.* 10.14.11, as quoted in NOD, Chap. 21, p. 188)

In His original form, the Supreme Lord is Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He expands into Viṣṇu forms beginning with Baladeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha. A further Viṣṇu expansion is Kṣīrodakṣāyī Viṣṇu, from whom the universes expand. Beginning as small droplets from the pores of His body, the universes expand into huge egg shapes. The Lord

then enters each universe as Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu and begins creating through the agency of His son, Lord Brahmā.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Although Kṛṣṇa is the origin of all this, He can always be seen in Vṛndāvana, exhibiting His inconceivable potencies. So who can adequately worship such an all-powerful Lord, possessed of such inconceivable energy?” (NOD, Chap. 21, p. 189)

Kṛṣṇa displays His *acintya-śakti* by granting causeless mercy to the fallen souls. We don’t deserve it, but by His dispensation of mercy, we receive the gift of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. The Lord’s holy names descend in this way. *Golokera prema-dhana, hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana*.

When Yamarāja’s messengers arrested Ajāmila, they were stopped by the Viṣṇudūtas. Although the Yamadūtas are expert in deciding how sinners should be punished, they did not understand the potency of the holy name. Because Ajāmila had once chanted the name of Nārāyaṇa, he was exempt from their punishment. That is the Lord’s inconceivable mercy.

It is also inconceivable how we fail to understand the essence of *harināma*. We make our *japa* a session for scanning millions of passing thoughts. Still, even today we can try again. Something merciful is coming through to us, even to us.

58. The Original Source of All Incarnations

59. Kṛṣṇa Gives Salvation to the Enemies That He Kills

Avatāra means “one who descends.” In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*’s list of incarnations, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are mentioned as numbers nineteen and twenty, but Vyāsadeva, fearing that people might misunderstand, made it clear that Kṛṣṇa is the source of all incarnations. “All of the above-mentioned incarnations are either plenary portions or portions of the plenary portions of the Lord, but Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead.” (*Bhāg.* 1.3.28)

In his purport to this verse Prabhupāda writes:

So all the different incarnations of the Lord indirectly or directly manifested different features, but Lord Kṛṣṇa, the primeval Lord, exhibited the complete features of Godhead, and thus it is confirmed that He is the source of all other incarnations. And the most extraordinary feature

exhibited by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa was His internal energetic manifestation of His pastimes with the cowherd girls.

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī turns to this verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to support his proof that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then he takes it further to show that Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Person.

Another evidence that Kṛṣṇa is the source of all incarnations is found in the *Brahma-saṁhitā*:

The light of one candle being communicated to other candles, although it burns separately in them, is the same in its quality. I adore the primeval Lord Govinda who exhibits Himself equally in the same mobile manner in His various manifestations.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original candle. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura writes, "From the subjective majestic manifestation of the Supreme self-luminous Govinda emanates Kāraṇodakaśāyī, Garbhodakaśāyī, Kṣīrodakaśāyī, and all other derivative subjective divine descents (*avatāras*) such as Rāma, etc., analogous to communicated light appearing in different candles, shining by the operation of the spiritual potency of Govinda.

—BS, Chapter 5, text 46 and purport

Sometimes ten principal incarnations are described, sometimes twenty, but Kṛṣṇa's incarnations are innumerable. In His teachings to Sanātana Gosvāmī, Lord Caitanya describes six divisions of *avatāras*: *guṇa-avatāras*, *yuga-avatāras*, *lilā-avatāras*, *śaktyāveśa-avatāras*, *manvantaras*, and *puruṣa-avatāras*. Just among the *manvantaras* alone, there are more incarnations than we can count. There are 54,000 Manus in the lifetime of a Brahmā. Lord Caitanya states, "We should consider that these incarnations are also unlimited and that no one can count them." Similarly, there are unlimited *śaktyāveśa* incarnations of Lord Kṛṣṇa. All of the incarnations, as numerous as the waves of the sea, are coming from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. No one can estimate the potency of His body and His power.

Kṛṣṇa gives salvation to the enemy that He kills. In Bhīṣmadeva's prayers at the time of his passing away, he asserts that Kṛṣṇa "shortened the life span of the opposite party by His merciful glance." (*Bhāg.* 1.9.35) In his purport Prabhupāda explains, "It is said that all the fighters who assembled on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra attained salvation by personally seeing the Lord at the time of death. . . . Factually He was merciful to the opposite party because they would not have attained salvation by dying at home in the ordinary course of life."

When Kṛṣṇa killed the demon Agha, witnesses saw the tiny effulgence of Agha's spirit soul enter into Kṛṣṇa's body. Similarly, when the Lord killed Śiśupāla, the light of his spirit soul entered the Lord's body.

If Kṛṣṇa awards liberation to His enemies, certainly those who are His dear devotees must get a better destination.

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī says, "Since even Śiśupāla, who hated Kṛṣṇa, achieved perfection, then what to speak of the Lord's dear devotees." (*Bhāg.* 10.29.13) Certainly Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives the *gopīs* and all the other eternal residents of Vṛndāvana His topmost attention and affection, but any person who constantly thinks of the Lord can attain liberation from birth and death and eventually, by the association of the pure devotees, gain his eternal *rasa*. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states, "Persons who constantly direct their lust, anger, fear, protective affection, feeling of impersonal oneness or friendship toward Lord Hari are sure to become absorbed in thought of Him." (*Bhāg.* 10.29.15) That is Kṛṣṇa's mercy, and therefore He is known as the deliverer of His enemies.

60. The Attractor of Liberated Souls
61. Performer of Wonderful Activities

“Kṛṣṇa” means “all-attractive.” This quality of the Supreme Lord is stated in the *ātmārāma* verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.7.10):

“All different varieties of *ātmārāmas* [those who take pleasure in *ātmā*, or spirit self], especially those established on the path of self-realization, though freed from all kinds of material bondage, desire to render unalloyed devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead. This means that the Lord possesses transcendental qualities and therefore can attract everyone, including liberated souls.”

In his purport Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

The personal form of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is so attractive that it comprehends all attraction, all bliss, and all tastes (*rasas*). These attractions are so strong that no one wants to exchange them for material enjoyment, mystic powers, and liberation. There is no need of logical arguments in support of this statement, but out of one's own nature one becomes attracted by the qualities of Lord Śrī

Kṛṣṇa. . . . There are innumerable qualities of the Lord, and one is attracted by one quality while another is attracted by another.

The four *brahmacārī* devotees, Sanaka, Sanātana, Sananda, and Sanāt-kumāra, were attracted by the fragrance of the flowers, *tulasī* leaves, and sandalwood pulp that had been offered to the Lord's lotus feet. Śukadeva Gosvāmī was already liberated, but he was attracted by the Lord's pastimes. The *gopīs* were attracted by the Lord's bodily features. Queen Rukmiṇī was attracted by hearing about the Lord's glories and wanted to marry Him. Although the Lord has innumerable qualities, devotees are attracted to qualities on the basis of their *rasa* with Him.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī explains himself to Mahārāja Parīkṣit: "I was certainly situated perfectly in transcendence, yet I was still attracted by the delineation of the pastimes of the Lord, who is described by enlightened verses." (*Bhāg.* 2.1.9) This statement by the already-liberated Śukadeva proves that he was not attracted by any mundane qualities. Since he is already beyond attraction to mundane activity, when he is convinced by a superior method, we may know for certain that he is attracted by the transcendental activities of the Lord.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the performer of wonderful activities. This is the sixty-first in the list given by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, and it is the first of the four qualities which are not manifest even in the Nārāyaṇa form of Godhead. This quality specifically refers to Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vṛndāvana.

One time, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was pleased to hear a discussion between His two intimate devotees, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura and Svarūpa Dāmodara. Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura was praising the opulence of Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune, and the glories of Vaikuṇṭha-dhāma. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu began to smile and He asked Svarūpa Dāmodara to reveal something of the opulence of Vṛndāvana.

Svarūpa Dāmodara said, "The natural opulence of Vṛndāvana is just like an ocean. The opulence of Dvārakā and Vaikuṇṭha is not even to be compared to a drop. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead full of all opulences, and His complete opulences are exhibited only in Vṛndāvana-dhāma. . . . Vṛndāvana is a natural forest of desire trees and creepers, and the inhabitants do not want anything but the fruits and flowers of those desire trees." (Cc. *Madhya* 14.219–20, 222)

Although there is infinite wealth, knowledge, and power in Vṛndāvana, these *aiśvarya* or majestic aspects of God are covered by the predominant loving mood of Kṛṣṇa in His Vṛndāvana pastimes.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa prefers the intimate exchanges of His Vṛndāvana pastimes much more than those in which His grandeur is emphasized, as in Vaikuṇṭha.

“All the universe is filled with the conception of My majesty, but love weakened by that sense of majesty does not satisfy Me. . . . Taking these pure devotees with Me, I shall descend and sport in various wonderful ways, unknown even in Vaikuṇṭha. I shall broadcast such pastimes by which even I am amazed. The influence of *yogamāyā* will inspire the *gopīs* with the sentiment that I am their paramour. Neither the *gopīs* nor I shall notice this, for our minds will always be entranced by one another’s beauty and qualities.” (Cc. *Ādi* 4.17, 27–30)

*62. Kṛṣṇa is Surrounded by Loving
Devotees*

63. Kṛṣṇa's Attractive Flute:

*He can attract all living entities all over the
universe by playing on His flute*

One might doubt why the quality “surrounded by loving devotees” is so rare that it is not even present in other expansions of Godhead. Even in this material world, a famous person is surrounded by admirers.

There is a special quality to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's devotees in Vṛndāvana. They desire only to see Kṛṣṇa happy. Kṛṣṇa is obliged to them for their intense *prema*, and He engages with them in the intimate pastimes He finds most pleasing. Thus it is said that Kṛṣṇa never goes a step outside Vṛndāvana.

Lord Brahmā, although himself not a resident of Vṛndāvana, was able to see the unexcelled devotion of the Lord's devotees there. He said, “I surmise that You shall ever remain a debtor to the residents of Vṛndāvana, being unable to repay their loving service. My Lord, I can understand that the super-

excellent service of the residents of Vṛndāvana is due to their spontaneously engaging all natural instincts in Your service.” (*Kṛṣṇa*, Chap. 14, p. 141)

The Lord’s devotees in Vṛndāvana do not approach Him in awe and reverence, and certainly they have no desire for material rewards or impersonal liberation. They have attained, after many, many lives of devotional service, the unique position of being able to please Kṛṣṇa in an intimate, sometimes equal, or even superior relationship.

“Mother sometimes binds Me as her son. She nourishes and protects Me, thinking Me utterly helpless. My friends climb on My shoulders in pure friendship, saying, ‘What kind of big man are You? You and I are equal.’ If My beloved consort reproaches Me in a sulky mood, that steals My mind from the reverent hymns of the *Vedas*.” (Cc. *Ādi* 4.24–26)

Although Kṛṣṇa states in *Bhagavad-gītā* that He reciprocates equally with everyone according to their surrender, He admits that He has no way to fully reciprocate with the pure love offered to Him at every moment by the Vrajavāsīs.

In the same mood, Kṛṣṇa acknowledges that He has been so won over by the *gopīs’ prema* that He cannot repay them even in many lifetimes. “I am not able to repay My debt for your spotless service, even within a lifetime of Brahmā. Your connection with



Me is beyond reproach. You have worshiped Me, cutting off all domestic ties, which are difficult to break. Therefore please let your own glorious deeds be your compensation.” (*Bhāg.* 10.32.22)

When Kṛṣṇa plays His flute, all living entities respond with their individual expressions of ecstasy. Hard and nonmoving entities such as the stones melt and flow; moving entities become immobile. The calves stop drinking their mothers’ milk when they hear the flute. They do not swallow whatever milk is in their mouths, but stand motionless, fully absorbed, in the beautiful sound of the flute. The birds fly up to the trees, close their eyes, and meditate like sages in trance. The male and female deer come as near as possible, entranced by the melodic sound vibration.

Although everyone loves the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa’s flute, the *gopīs* more than any other devotees in Vraja are overwhelmed by the flute. They praise the flutes piety and eulogize its parents. How to account for the great fortune of this flute, which is merely a dry piece of wood? How is it that this dry bamboo is able to constantly drink the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s lips? The *gopīs* are envious of the flute. The nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s lips is really meant for them alone, yet the flute boldly drinks it right in front of them. These are some of the blissful, unexcelled emotions

which come to the Vrajavāsīs when Kṛṣṇa plays His flute.

“The fortunate flute deeply drinks the nectar of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s lips day and night. I offer my respectful obeisances to this flute, which, with its transcendental music, weakens the pride of Śrīmatī Rādhikā.” (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava*, text 48)

64. *Kṛṣṇa Has a Wonderful Excellence of Beauty Which Cannot be Rivaled Anywhere in the Creation*

When Lord Kṛṣṇa exhibits Himself in fullness, He is appreciated by great learned scholars as most perfect. When He is in Goloka Vṛndāvana, His transcendental qualities are exhibited as most perfect; when He is in Dvārakā, He exhibits His qualities as very perfect, and when He is Mathurā, He exhibits His qualities as perfect.

Of all the devotees, the *gopīs* are the best able to appreciate Kṛṣṇa's beauty. Their expressions are therefore the supreme *ślokas*.

Barhāpiḍam naṭa-vara-vapuḥ karṇayoḥ karṇi-kāram . . . "Wearing a peacock-feather ornament upon His head, blue *karṇikāra* flowers on His ears, a yellow garment as brilliant as gold, and the Vaijayantī garland, Lord Kṛṣṇa exhibited His transcendental form as the greatest of dancers as He entered the forest of Vṛndāvana, beautifying it with the marks of His footprints. He filled the holes of

His flute with the nectar of His lips, and the cowherd boys sang His glories.” (*Bhāg.* 10.21.5)

The *gopīs* were so much in love with Kṛṣṇa that they were able to visualize His form throughout the day and night. When they thought of Kṛṣṇa, they thought of all His beautiful bodily features.

The *gopīs* were not satisfied to contemplate Kṛṣṇa’s beautiful form from a distance. Therefore, they lamented that although they see Kṛṣṇa returning from the pastures, they were not allowed to approach Him because of the presence of their superiors. Whether in separation from Kṛṣṇa, or with Kṛṣṇa in the *rāsa* dance, the *gopīs* were always stunned with Kṛṣṇa’s beauty. Therefore, it is said that Kṛṣṇa by Himself is not so beautiful, but when He is with the *gopīs*, then He manifests His true, all-attractive form.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has delineated Kṛṣṇa’s sixty-four qualities. He does not claim that these are the sum total of Kṛṣṇa’s glories, but a sampling. Similarly, when Lord Caitanya instructed Rūpa Gosvāmī, He said that it was not possible to speak about the entire ocean of love of God. Instead, He would give Rūpa Gosvāmī one drop of that ocean. If we can taste one drop of the Atlantic Ocean, we can understand that the entire ocean is salty. Similarly, by tasting one drop of the *bhakti* ocean, we can understand its nature.

No one can know Kṛṣṇa in full. Lord Brahmā admitted this in his prayers to Kṛṣṇa. He said that anyone who thinks he knows everything about Kṛṣṇa is not intelligent. Only those who are learned know that it is impossible to measure the power, glory, and sweetness of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi.*

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This small book is meant to help devotees churn the ocean of *kṛṣṇa-kathā* by examining Kṛṣṇa's sixty-four transcendental qualities. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has enumerated these qualities in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, and Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us these descriptions in Chapters 21 and 22 of *The Nectar of Devotion*. Devotees relish these descriptions because they allow us to know a spark of Kṛṣṇa's form and personality. Without that understanding, we would not be able to exchange love with the Supreme and there would be no life.

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