

Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra

Introduction

MM 1: O Mukunda, my Lord! Please let me become a constant reciter of Your names, addressing You as Sri-vallabha ["He who is very dear to Laksmi"], Varada ["the bestower of benedictions"], Dayapara ["He who is causelessly merciful"], Bhakta-priya ["He who is very dear to His devotees"], Bhava-lunthana-kovida ["He who is expert at plundering the status quo of repeated birth and death"], Natha ["the Supreme Lord"], Jagan-nivasa ["the resort of the cosmos"], and Naga-sayana ["the Lord who lies down on the serpent bed"].

MM 2: All glories to this Personality of Godhead known as the son of Srimati Devaki devi! All glories to Lord Sri Krsna, the brilliant light of the Vrsni dynasty! All glories to the Personality of Godhead, the hue of whose soft body resembles the blackish color of a new cloud! All glories to Lord Mukunda, who removes the burdens of the earth!

MM 3: O Lord Mukunda! I bow down my head to Your Lordship and respectfully ask You to fulfill this one desire of mine: that in each of my future births I will, by Your Lordship's mercy, always remember and never forget Your lotus feet.

MM 4: O Lord Hari, it is not to be saved from the dualities of material existence or the grim tribulations of the Kumbhipaka hell that I pray to Your lotus feet. Nor is my purpose to enjoy the soft-skinned beautiful women who reside in the gardens of heaven. I pray to Your lotus feet only so that I may remember You alone in the core of my heart, birth after birth.

MM 5: O my Lord! I have no attachment for religiosity, or for accumulating wealth, or for enjoying sense gratification. Let these come as they inevitably must, in accordance with my past deeds. But I do pray for this most cherished boon: birth after birth, let me render unflinching devotional service unto Your two lotus feet.

MM 6: O Lord, killer of the demon Naraka! Let me reside either in the realm of the demigods, in the world of human beings, or in hell, as You please. I pray only that at the point of death I may remember Your two lotus feet, whose beauty defies that of the lotus growing in the Sarat season.

MM 7: I always think of Lord Hari, whose joyful lotus face bears a gentle smile. Although He is the son of the cowherd Nanda, He is also the Supreme Absolute Truth worshiped by great sages like Narada.

MM 8: The desert of material existence has exhausted me. But today I will cast aside all troubles by diving into the lake of Lord Hari and drinking freely of the abundant waters of His splendor. The lotuses in that lake are His hands and feet, and the fish are His brilliant shining eyes. That lake's water relieves all fatigue and is agitated by the waves His arms create. Its current flows deep beyond fathoming.

MM 9: O mind, please never stop taking pleasure in thinking of the Mura demon's destroyer, who has lotus eyes and bears the conch and disc weapon. Indeed, I know of nothing else that gives such extreme pleasure as meditating on Lord Hari's divine feet.

MM 10: O foolish mind, stop your fearful fretting about the extensive torments imposed by Yamaraja. How can your enemies, the sinful reactions you have accrued, even touch you? After all, is your master not the Supreme Lord, the husband of Goddess Sri? Cast aside all hesitation and concentrate your thoughts on Lord Narayana, whom one very easily attains through

devotional service. What can that dispeller of the whole world's troubles not do for His own servant?

MM 11: The people in this vast ocean of birth and death are being blown about by the winds of material dualities. As they flounder in the perilous waters of sense indulgence, with no boat to help them, they are sorely distressed by the need to protect their sons, daughters, and wives. Only the boat that is Lord Visnu can save them.

MM 12: Dear mind, do not bewilder yourself by anxiously thinking, How can I cross this fathomless and impassable ocean of material existence? There is one who can save you — Devotion. If you offer her to the lotus-eyed Lord, the killer of Narakasura, she will carry you across this ocean without fail.

MM 13: O Lord of the three worlds, we are drowning in the vast ocean of , which is filled with the waters of material hankering, with many waves of illusion whipped up by the winds of lust, with whirlpools of wives, and with vast schools of sharks and other sea monsters who are our sons and brothers. O giver of all benedictions, please grant me a place on the boat of devotion that is Your lotus feet.

MM 14: Once our savior has been seen, the whole earth becomes no greater than a speck of dust, all the waters of the ocean become mere droplets, the totality of fire becomes a minute spark, the winds become just a faint sigh, and the expanse of space becomes a tiny hole. Great lords like Rudra and Grandfather Brahma become insignificant, and all the demigods become like small insects. Indeed, even one particle of dust from our Lord's feet conquers all.

MM 15: O people, please hear of this treatment for the disease of birth and death! It is the name of Krsna. Recommended by Yajñavalkya and other expert yogis steeped in wisdom, this boundless, eternal inner light is the best medicine, for when drunk it bestows complete and final liberation. Just drink it!

MM 16: O mortal beings, you have submerged yourselves fully in the ocean of material existence, which is filled with the waves of misfortune. Please hear as I briefly tell you how to attain your supreme benefit. Just put aside your various attempts at gaining knowledge and instead begin constantly chanting the mantra namo naranayana and bowing down to the Lord.

MM 17: Our master, the Personality of Godhead Narayana, who alone rules the three worlds, whom one can serve in meditation, and who happily shares His personal domain, is manifest before us. Yet still we beg for the service of some minor lord of a few villages, some lowly man who can only meagerly reward us. Alas, what foolish wretches we are!

MM 18: O lotus-eyed Lord, please sustain our lives as we constantly relish the nectar of meditating on Your lotus feet, with our palms prayerfully joined, our heads bowed down, our bodily hair standing up in jubilation, our voices choked with emotion, and our eyes flowing with tears.

MM 19: That head is the loftiest which is white with dust from bowing down to Lord Krsna. Those eyes are the most beautiful which darkness has abandoned after they have seen Lord Hari. That intelligence is spotless — like the white glow of the moon or a conchshell — which concentrates on Lord Madhava. And that tongue rains down nectar which constantly glorifies Lord Narayana.

MM 20: O tongue, praise the glories of Lord Kesava. O mind, worship the enemy of Mura. O hands, serve the Lord of Sri. O ears, hear the topics of Lord Acyuta. O eyes, gaze upon Sri Krsna. O feet, go to the temple of Lord Hari. O nose, smell the tulasi buds on Lord Mukunda's feet. O head, bow down to Lord Adhoksaja.

MM 21: All glories to Lord Narayana! Without remembrance of His lotus feet, recitation of scripture is merely crying in the wilderness, regular observance of severe vows enjoined in the Vedas is no more than a way to lose weight, execution of prescribed pious duties is like pouring oblations onto ashes, and bathing at various holy sites is no better than an elephant's bath.

MM 22: O Cupid, abandon your residence in my mind, which is now the home of Lord Mukunda's lotus feet. You have already been incinerated by Lord Siva's fiery glance, so why have you forgotten the power of Lord Murari's disc?

MM 23: Think only of your master and sustainer, the Supreme Lord, who is known as Narayana and Madhava and who lies on the body of the serpent Ananta. He is the darling son of Devaki, the hero of the demigods, and the Lord of the cows, and He holds a conchshell and the bow Sarnga. He is the husband of the goddess of fortune and the controller of all the universes, which He manifests from His abdomen as a pastime. What will you gain by thinking of anything else?

MM 24: O Madhava, please do not let me even glance at those whose pious credits are so depleted that they have no devotion for Your lotus feet. Please do not let me be distracted from listening to the worthy narrations of Your pastimes and become interested in other topics. Please, O Lord of the universe, let me pay no attention to those who avoid thinking of You. And let me never be unable to serve You in some menial way, birth after birth.

MM 25: O enemy of Madhu and Kaitabha, O Lord of the universe, the perfection of my life and the most cherished mercy You could show me would be for You to consider me the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of Your servant.

MM 26: My dear tongue, I stand before you with joined palms and beg you to recite the names of Lord Narayana. These names describing the Supreme Absolute Truth bring great pleasure, as if exuding honey.

MM 27: At every moment I bow down to the lotus feet of Narayana, I perform worship to Narayana, I recite the pure name of Narayana, and I reflect on the infallible truth of Narayana.

MM 28-29: O Srinatha, Narayana, Vasudeva, divine Krsna, O kind friend of Your devotees! O Cakrapani, Padmanabha, Acyuta, Kaitabhari, Rama, Padmaksa, Hari, Murari! O Ananta, Vaikuntha, Mukunda, Krsna, Govinda, Damodara, Madhava! Although all people can address You, still they remain silent. Just see how eager they are for their own peril!

MM 30: He is the jewel riding on the back of Garuda, who carries away the Lord's devotees on his wings. He is the magic jewel protecting the three worlds, the jewellike cloud attracting the cataka-bird eyes of the gopis, and the jewel among all who gesture gracefully. He is the only jeweled ornament on the ample breasts of Queen Rukmini, who is herself the jewel of beloved consorts. May that crown jewel of all gods, the best of the cowherds, grant us the supreme benediction.

MM 31: O tongue, please constantly chant the mantra composed of Sri Krsna's names. This is the only mantra for destroying all enemies, the mantra worshiped by every word of the Upanisads, the mantra that uproots, the mantra that drives away all the darkness of ignorance, the mantra for attaining infinite opulence, the mantra for curing those bitten by the poisonous snake of worldly distress, and the mantra for making one's birth in this world successful.

MM 32: O mind, please drink the transcendental medicine of Sri Krsna's glories. It is the perfect medicine for curing the disease of bewilderment, for inspiring sages to engage their minds in meditation, and for tormenting the mighty Daitya demons. It alone is the medicine for restoring the three worlds to life and for bestowing unlimited blessings on the Supreme Lord's devotees. Indeed, it is the only medicine that can destroy one's fear of material existence and lead one to the attainment of the supreme good.

MM 33: O Lord Krsna, at this moment let the royal swan of my mind enter the tangled stems of the lotus of Your feet. How will it be possible for me to remember You at the time of death, when my throat will be choked up with mucus, bile, and air?

MM 34: O mind, think of the lotus-eyed Lord who reclines on the mountainlike serpent Ananta. O tongue, glorify Him. O head, bow down to Him. O hands, join your palms in supplication to Him. O body, offer outstretched obeisances to Him. O heart, take full shelter of Him. That Supreme Lord is the topmost Deity. It is He alone who is all-auspicious and supremely purifying, He alone who awards eternal perfection.

MM 35: One who hears descriptions of Lord Janardana's pastimes and glorious qualities but whose bodily hair fails to bristle in ecstasy and whose eyes fail to flood with tears of pure love — such a person is indeed the most degraded rascal. What a condemned life he leads!

MM 36: O Lord, the powerful thieves of my senses have blinded me by stealing my most precious possession, my discrimination, and they have thrown me deep into the pitch-dark well of delusion. Please, O Lord of lords, extend Your hand and save this wretched soul.

MM 37: This body's beauty is fleeting, and at last the body must succumb to death after its hundreds of joints have stiffened with old age. So why, bewildered fool, are you asking for medication? Just take the Krsna elixir, the one cure that never fails.

MM 38: The greatest wonder in human society is this: People are so incorrigible that they reject the life-giving nectar of Lord Narayana's names and instead drink poison by speaking everything else.

MM 39: Let my relatives all abandon me and my superiors condemn me. Still, the supremely blissful Govinda remains my life and soul.

MM 40: O mankind, with arms raised high I declare the truth! Any mortal who chants the names Mukunda, Nr, and Janardana day after day, even in battle or when facing death, will come to regard his most cherished ambitions as no more valuable than a stone or a block of wood.

MM 41: Raising my arms, I utter this compassionate advice as loudly as I can: If those in the renounced order want to be delivered from the terrible, poisonous condition of material life, they should have the good sense to constantly hear the mantra namo narayanaya.

MM 42: My mind cannot turn from Sri Krsna's lotus feet, even for a moment. So let my dear ones and other relatives criticize me, my superiors accept or reject me as they like, the common people spread evil gossip about me, and my family's reputation be sullied. For a madman like me, it is honor enough to feel this flood of love of Godhead, which brings such sweet emotions of attraction for my Lord.

MM 43: May Krsna, the spiritual master of the three worlds, protect us. Continually bow down to Krsna. Krsna has killed all our enemies. Obeisances to Krsna. From Krsna alone this world has come into being. I am the servant of Krsna. This entire universe rests within Krsna. O Krsna, please protect me!

MM 44: O young cowherd boy! O ocean of mercy! O husband of Laksmi, the ocean's daughter! O killer of ! O merciful benefactor of Gajendra! O Madhava! O younger brother of Rama! O spiritual master of the three worlds! O lotus-eyed Lord of the gopis! I know no one greater than You. Please protect me.

MM 45: Your wife is the beautiful daughter of the ocean, and Your son is Lord Brahma. The Vedas are Your panegyrist, the demigods comprise Your company of servants, and liberation is Your benediction, while this entire universe is a display of Your magic power. Srimati Devaki is Your mother, and Arjuna, the son Indra, is Your friend. For these reasons I have no interest in anyone but You.

MM 46: The wise inhabitants of the heavenly regions know that the perfection of the head is to offer prostrate obeisances to the Supreme Lord, the perfection of the life-breath is to worship the Lord, the perfection of the mind is to ponder the details of His transcendental qualities, and the perfection of speech is to chant the glories of His qualities.

MM 47: What person, even if most sinful, has ever said aloud the blessed name Narayana and failed to fulfill his desires? But we, alas, never used our power of speech in that way, and so we had to suffer such miseries as living in a womb.

MM 48: The unlimited and infallible Visnu, who is always present within the lotus of the heart, grants fearlessness to those who fix their intelligence upon Him. The devotees who meditate on Him will reach the supreme perfection of the Vaisnavas.

MM 49: O Supreme Lord, O Visnu, You are the most compassionate. So now please show me Your favor and bestow Your mercy upon this helpless soul. O unlimited Lord, kindly uplift this wretch who is drowning in the ocean of material existence. O Lord Hari, You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

MM 50: Obeisances to Lord Madhava, enemy of the Madhu demon. His beautiful form, lying on the couch of the serpent Ananta, is speckled by the shower of spray from the milk ocean's waves.

MM 51: By themselves the words "Krsna, Krsna" are sufficient to drive away the sins of all living beings. Anyone who possesses devotion for Lord Mukunda that is densely imbued with ecstasy holds in the palms of his hands the gifts of liberation, worldly influence, and wealth.

MM 52: This work was composed by King Kulasekhara, a bee at the lotus feet of the lotus-eyed Lord. The king's two beloved friends are the twin stems of the exquisite lotus of the brahmana community, expert Vedic scholars renowned as leaders of the community of poets.

MM 53: Who among those who recite this Mukunda-mala will not achieve complete happiness? An embodied being who chants these prayers will have all his sinful reactions eradicated and proceed straight to the supreme abode of Lord Visnu.



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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Satsvarupa dasa Goswami
Gopiparanadhana dasa Adhikari

Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra, Introduction

Of the many hundreds of poetic Sanskrit stotras-songs of glorification offered to the Supreme Lord, His devotees, and the holy places of His pastimes-King Kulasekhara's Mukunda-mala-stotra is one of the most perennially famous. Some say that its author conceived it as a garland (mala) of verses offered for Lord Krsna's pleasure. It has long been dear to Vaisnavas of all schools, and our own spiritual master, Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, frequently enjoyed citing certain favorite stanzas from it.

King Kulasekhara was part of the Sri-sampradaya, the Vaisnava school founded by Lord Visnu's divine consort, Sri. This school's most prominent representative, Ramanuja Acarya (eleventh century), built on the work of his predecessors Natha Muni and Yamuna Acarya and established the systematic philosophy of Sri Vaisnavism. But these acaryas came in an already old tradition, that of the ecstatic mystic poets called Alvars. The twelve Alvars appeared at various times in South India, in the area roughly corresponding to present-day Tamil Nadu. According to the tradition of the Sri Vaisnavas, the earliest Alvars lived more than five thousand years ago, at the start of the present age, Kali-yuga, while the most recent lived in the first millennium A.D.

The Alvars' Tamil poetry was collected in the Tiruvaymoli, revered by Sri Vaisnavas as their own vernacular Veda. On the strength of the Tiruvaymoli's devotional authority, the Sri Vaisnavas claim to follow Ubhaya-vedanta, the dual Vedanta philosophy founded on both Sanskrit and Tamil scripture. Some Alvars were atypical renunciants: the third, Andal, was a woman, and three were involved in governing. Among these was the tenth Alvar, Kulasekhara Perumal, who was a ruling king in the Cera dynasty of Malainadu, in what is now Kerala. Modern scholars say he may have lived during the ninth century A.D.

A traditional history of King Kulasekhara states that once, as he slept in his palace quarters, he had a brilliant and distinct vision of Lord Krsna. Upon awaking he fell into a devotional trance and failed to notice dawn breaking. The royal musicians and ministers came as usual to his door to wake him, but after waiting some time without hearing him respond, they reluctantly took the liberty of entering his room. The king came out of his trance and described his vision to them, and from that day on he no longer took much interest in ruling. He delegated most of his responsibilities to his ministers and dedicated himself to rendering devotional service to the Lord. After some years he abdicated the throne and went to Sri Rangam, where he remained in the association of the Krsna Deity of Ranganatha and His many exalted devotees. At Sri Rangam Kulasekhara is said to have composed his two great works: the Mukunda-mala-stotra, in Sanskrit; and 105 Tamil hymns, which were later incorporated into the Tiruvaymoli under the title Perumal-tirumoli.

As the other Alvars do in their mystic expressions, in his Perumal-tirumoli King Kulasekhara emulates the roles of some of Lord Ramacandra's and Lord Krsna's intimate devotees: King Dasaratha; two of the Lord's mothers, Kausalya and Devaki; and some of the young cowherd women of Vrndavana. But Maharaja Kulasekhara expresses no pride in realizing such confidential devotional moods. On the contrary, with deep humility he repeatedly begs simply to be allowed to take his next births as a bird, fish, or flower in the place where Lord Krsna enacts His pastimes, and in this way to enjoy the association of His devotees.

The Mukunda-mala-stotra, although composed in elegant Sanskrit, is a simple expression of King Kulasekhara's devotion to Krsna and his eagerness to share his good fortune with everyone else. Being thus a very public work, it does not delve into intimate personal revelations or abstruse philosophical conundrums. Like most other works of the stotra genre, it aims less at presenting a plot than at vividly and honestly expressing the true feelings of a lover of God. With this much we the readers should be completely satisfied, because it is a rare opportunity for us when a devotee of King Kulasekhara's stature opens his heart so freely-and

in a way just appropriate for us, with all our imperfections, to appreciate.

About the Present Edition

Using a Sanskrit edition published by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura in 1895, Srila Prabhupada began translating the Mukunda-mala-stotra in the late 1950's. But after completing six verses with commentary, he suspended it to work on the Srimad-Bhagavatam. He never resumed it. Yet he clearly intended that the Mukunda-mala be published, since he included it in the list of his other English books at the beginning of each of the three volumes of the Bhagavatam's First Canto.

In 1989, the Governing Body Commission of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness requested Satsvarupa dasa Goswami to complete the Mukunda-mala-stotra. One of Srila Prabhupada's earliest disciples, Satsvarupa Goswami had distinguished himself over the years as one of his most learned and literary followers. He had served as editor of Back to Godhead magazine-the Society's monthly journal-for most of the twenty-three years it had been published in the West, and had written many books already, most notably a six-volume biography of Srila Prabhupada.

Satsvarupa Goswami accepted the assignment and enlisted the help of Gopiparanadhana dasa, the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust's Sanskrit editor, to translate the remaining fortyseven verses. Then he carefully prepared the purports, often quoting from Srila Prabhupada's Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam, and other works. The result is a book that we trust will be informative and enlivening to devotees, scholars, and laymen alike.

The Publishers

Editor's note: Citations from Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead are from "The Great Classics of India" edition (1985). Citations from The Nectar of Devotion are from the 1982 edition.



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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness
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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 1

sri-vallabheti vara-deti daya-pareti
bhakta-priyeti bhava-lunthana-kovideti
natheti naga-sayaneti jagan-nivasety
prati- kuru mukunda

SYNONYMS

sri-vallabha — O beloved of Laksmi (the Supreme Lord's consort); **iti** — thus; **vara-da** — O bestower of benedictions; **iti** — thus; **daya-para** — O causelessly merciful one; **iti** — thus; **bhakta-priya** — O You who are very dear to Your devotees; **iti** — thus; **bhava** — the repetition of birth and death; **lunthana** — in plundering; **kovida** — O You who are expert; **iti** — thus; **natha** — O Lord; **iti** — thus; **naga-sayana** — O You who sleep on the serpent bed (of Ananta Sesa); **iti** — thus; **jagat-nivasa** — O resort of the cosmos; **iti** — thus; **alapinam** — reciter; **prati-dinam** — every day; **kuru** — please make; **mam** — me; **mukunda** — O Mukunda.

TRANSLATION

O Mukunda, my Lord! Please let me become a constant reciter of Your names, addressing You as Sri-vallabha ["He who is very dear to Laksmi"], Varada ["the bestower of benedictions"], Dayapara ["He who is causelessly merciful"], Bhakta-priya ["He who is very dear to His devotees"], Bhava-lunthana-kovida ["He who is expert at plundering the status quo of repeated birth and death"], Natha ["the Supreme Lord"], Jagan-nivasa ["the resort of the cosmos"], and Naga-sayana ["the Lord who lies down on the serpent bed"].

PURPORT

A devotee of Godhead is he who glorifies the Personality of Godhead under the dictation of transcendental ecstasy. This ecstasy is a by-product of profound love for the Supreme, which is itself attained by the process of glorification. In this age of quarrel and fighting, the process of chanting and glorification recommended here by King Kulasekhara is the only way to attain perfection.

Persons who are infected with the disease of material attachment and who suffer from the pangs of repeated birth and death cannot relish such recitation of the Lord's glories, just as a person suffering from jaundice cannot relish the taste of sugar candy. By nature sugar candy is as sweet as anything, but to a patient suffering from jaundice it tastes as bitter as anything. Still, sugar candy is the best medicine for jaundice. By regular treatment with doses of sugar candy, one can gradually get relief from the infection of jaundice, and when the patient is perfectly cured, the same sugar candy that tasted bitter to him regains its natural sweetness.

In the same way, glorification of the transcendental name, fame, attributes, pastimes, and entourage of the Personality of Godhead tastes bitter to those who are suffering from the infection of material consciousness, but it is very sweet to those who have recovered from this infection.

All mundane philosophers, religionists, and people in general, who are constantly suffering from the threefold miseries of material existence, can get freedom from all such troubles simply by chanting and glorifying the holy name, fame, and pastimes of the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Lord, the Absolute Truth, is all spirit, and therefore His name, fame, and pastimes are nondifferent from Him. All of them are identical. In other words, the holy name of the Lord is the Lord Himself, and this can be understood by realization. By chanting the holy names of the

Lord, which are innumerable, one can actually associate with the Lord personally, and by such constant personal touch with the all-spiritual Lord, one will become spiritually self-realized. This process of self-realization is very suitable for the fallen souls of this age, when life is short and when people are slow in understanding the importance of spiritual realization, prone to be misled by false association and false spiritual masters, unfortunate in every respect, and continuously disturbed by innumerable material problems.

King Kulasekhara, an ideal pure devotee of the Lord, shows us by his own realization how to offer prayers to the Lord. Since he is a maha-jana, an authority in the line of devotional service, it is our prime duty to follow in his footsteps in order to achieve the highest devotional platform.

He first addresses the Lord as Sri-vallabha, "He who is very dear to Laksmi." The Lord is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and His consort, Laksmi, is a manifestation of His internal potency. By expanding His internal potency, the Lord enjoys His spiritual paraphernalia. In the highest spiritual realization, therefore, the Lord is not impersonal or void, as empiric philosophers conceive Him to be. Although He is not of the material world, He is much more than simply a negation of material variegatedness. He is positively the supreme enjoyer of spiritual variegatedness, of which Laksmi, the internal potency, is the fountainhead.

King Kulasekhara next addresses the Lord as Varada, "the bestower of benedictions," because it is He alone who can deliver to us the actual substance — spiritual bliss. When we detach ourselves from His association, we are always in the midst of want and scarcity, but as soon as we get in touch with Him, our gradual endowment with all bliss begins. The first installment of this bliss is the clearance of the layer of dust that has accumulated in our hearts due to millions of years of material association. As soon as the dust of materialism is brushed aside, the clear mirror of the heart reflects the presence of the Lord. And as soon as we see Him we are automatically freed from all kinds of aspirations and frustrations. In that liberated state, everything is blissful in relation with the Lord, and one has no desires to fulfill and nothing to lament over. Thus, following the benediction, full spiritual bliss comes upon us, ushering in full knowledge, full life, and full satisfaction with our whole existence.

King Kulasekhara next addresses the Lord as Dayapara, "He who is causelessly merciful," because there is no one but the Lord who can be a causelessly merciful friend to us. He is therefore also called Dina-bandhu, "the friend of the needy." Unfortunately, at times of need we seek our friends in the mundane world, not knowing that one needy man cannot help another. No mundane man is full in every respect; even a man possessing the greatest riches is himself needy if he is devoid of a relationship with the Lord. Everything is zero without the Lord, who is the digit that transforms zero into ten, two zeros into one hundred, three zeros into one thousand, and so on. Thus a "zero man" cannot become happy without the association of the Lord, the supreme "1."

The supreme "1" always wants to make our zero efforts valuable by His association, just as a loving father always wants an unhappy son to be in a prosperous position. A rebellious son, however, stubbornly refuses the cooperation of the loving father and thus suffers all sorts of miseries. The Lord, therefore, sends His bona fide representatives to all parts of the material creation, and sometimes He even comes Himself to reclaim His fallen sons. For this purpose He also exhibits the actual life in the transcendental world, which is characterized by relationships with Him in servitorship, friendship, parenthood, and consorthood. All relationships in the material world are but perverted reflections of these original relationships. In the mundane world we experience only the shadow of the reality, which exists in the spiritual world.

The all-merciful Lord is always mindful of our difficulties in the mundane world, and He is more eager to get us to return home, back to Godhead, than we are eager to go. He is by nature merciful toward us, despite our rebellious attitude. Even in our rebellious condition we get all our necessities from Him, such as food, air, light, water, warmth, and coolness. Yet because we have detached ourselves from Him, we simply mismanage this paternal property. The leaders of society, despite all their materialistic plans, are misleaders, for they have no plan

to revive our lost relationship with the Lord. His bona fide devotees, however, try their utmost to broadcast the message of our transcendental relationship with Him. In this way the devotees work to remind the fallen souls of their actual position and to bring them back home, back to Godhead. Such stainless servants of Godhead are very dear to Him. They receive such special favor from the Lord for their compassionate work that they can even go back to Godhead in this very lifetime and not be forced to take another birth.

The Lord is therefore next addressed as Bhakta-priya, meaning "He who is very dear to His devotees" or "He who is very affectionate to His devotees." In the Bhagavad-gita (9.29) the Lord very nicely describes His sublime and transcendental affection for His devotees. There the Lord declares that although He is undoubtedly equally kind to all living beings — because all of them are part and parcel of Him and are His spiritual sons — those who are especially attached to Him by love and affection, who regard nothing dearer than Him, are particularly dear to Him.

An example of such a pure devotee is Lord Jesus Christ, who agreed to be mercilessly crucified rather than give up preaching on behalf of God. He was never prepared to compromise on the issue of believing in God. Such a son of God cannot be other than dear to the Lord. Similarly, when Thakura Haridasa was told to give up chanting the holy name of God, he refused to do so, with the result that he was flogged in twenty-two marketplaces. And Prahlada Maharaja persisted in disagreeing with his father, the great atheist Hiranyakasipu, and thus voluntarily accepted the cruelties his father inflicted upon him. These are some examples of renowned devotees of the Lord, and we should simply try to understand how dear such devotees are to Him.

The Lord has emphatically declared that no one can vanquish His devotee under any circumstances. A good example is Ambarisa Maharaja. When the great mystic yogi Durvasa deliberately attempted to take the life of Ambarisa, the Lord suitably punished Durvasa, even though he was a powerful yogi who could approach all the demigods and even the Lord Himself.

Sometimes, even at the risk of having to cross many stumbling blocks, a devotee relinquishes all family connections and homely comforts for the Lord's service. Can the Lord forget all these sacrifices of His bona fide devotee? No, not even for a moment, for the relationship between the Lord and His devotee is reciprocal, as He clearly says in the Bhagavad-gita (9.29): "Whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend — is in Me — and I am also a friend to him."

A devotee is never as eager to see the Lord as he is to render service to Him. Yet the Lord does appear before His devotee, for He is just like an affectionate father, who is more eager to see his son than the son is to see him. There is no contradiction in such a quantitative difference in affection. Such a disparity exists in the original reality — between the Lord and His devotees — and is reflected here not only in the relations between parents and children in human society but even in the animal kingdom. Parental affection is exhibited even among lower animals because originally such affection in its fullness exists in God, the original father of all species of living beings. When a man kills an animal, God, the affectionate father, is perturbed and is pained at heart. Thus the slaughterer of the animal is suitably punished by the material energy, just as a murderer is punished by the government through police action.

By the mercy of the Lord, a devotee develops all the good qualities of God, for a devotee can never remain in the darkness of ignorance. A father is always anxious to impart knowledge and experience to his son, but the son can choose whether to accept such instructions. A submissive devotee becomes automatically enlightened in all the intricacies of knowledge because the Lord, from within, dissipates his ignorance with the self-illuminated lamp of wisdom. If the Lord Himself instructs the devotee, how can he remain foolish like the mundane wranglers?

A father is naturally inclined to act for the good of his son, and when the father chastises his son, that chastisement is also mixed with affection. Similarly, all the living entities who have

lost their place in paradise due to disobedience to the Supreme Father are put into the hands of the material energy to undergo a prison life of the threefold miseries. Yet the Supreme Father does not forget His rebellious sons. He creates scriptures for them like the Vedas and Puranas in order to revive their lost relationship with Him and awaken their divine consciousness. Intelligent persons take advantage of the knowledge contained in these scriptures and thus attain the highest perfection of life.

For His devotees, the Lord personally descends to this world to give them relief and save them from the insane acts of miscreants. It is foolish to try to impose the limits of an ordinary living being upon the unlimited potency of Godhead and obstinately maintain that the Supreme Lord cannot descend. To mitigate His devotees' material pangs, He descends as He is, yet He is not infected by material qualities.

As soon as a person agrees to surrender unto the Lord, the Lord takes complete charge of him. Satisfied with the activities of such a devotee, He gives him instruction from within, and thus the devotee becomes pure and advances on the path back to Godhead. The Lord is expert at guiding such a pure devotee, who is not at all anxious for material superiority. A pure devotee does not wish to possess material wealth, nor does he want to have a great following, nor does he desire a beautiful wife, for by the mercy of the Lord he knows the insignificance of material happiness. What he very sincerely desires at heart is to continue in the loving service of the Lord, even at the risk of taking birth again.

When a neophyte devotee deviates from the path of pure devotion and wants to simultaneously enjoy sense gratification and discharge devotional service, the all-merciful Lord very tactfully corrects the bewildered devotee by exhibiting before him the real nature of this material world. In the material world all relationships are actually mercenary but are covered by an illusory curtain of so-called love and affection. The so-called wives and husbands, parents and children, and masters and servants are all concerned with reciprocal material profit. As soon as the shroud of illusion is removed, the dead body of material so-called love and affection is at once manifest to the naked eye.

The Lord expertly removes the shroud of illusion for the neophyte devotee by depriving him of his material assets, and thus the devotee finds himself alone in the midst of his so-called relatives. In this helpless condition he experiences the awkwardness of his so-called relationships with his so-called wife and children. When a man is financially ruined, no one loves him, not even his wife or children. Such a poverty-stricken devotee more perfectly fixes his faith in the Lord, and the Lord then delivers him from the fate of frustration.

The entire cosmic creation is the Lord's expert arrangement for the delusion of the living beings who try to be false enjoyers. The living being's constitutional position is to be a servant of the Lord, but in the transcendental relationship the servant and the Lord are in one sense identical, for the Lord also serves the servant. The typical example is Sri Krsna's becoming the charioteer of His eternal servant Arjuna. Illusioned mundaners cannot understand the transcendental and reciprocal relationship between the Lord and His devotees, and therefore they want to lord it over material nature or cynically merge with the Absolute. Thus a living being forgets his constitutional position and wants to become either a lord or a mendicant, but such illusions are arrangements of Maya, the Lord's illusory potency. A false life either as a lord or a mendicant meets with frustration until the living being comes to his senses and surrenders to the Lord as His eternal servant. Then the Lord liberates him and saves him from repeated birth and death. Thus the Lord is also addressed here as Bhava-lunthana-kovida, "He who is expert at plundering the status quo of repeated birth and death." A sensible man understands his position as the eternal servant of the Lord and molds his life accordingly.

The Lord is also addressed as Natha, the real Lord. One can attain the perfection of life only by serving the real Lord. The entire material atmosphere is surcharged with the false lordship of the living beings. The illusioned beings are all struggling for false lordship, and thus no one wants to serve. Everyone wants to be the lord, even though such lordship is conditional and temporary. A hardworking man thinks himself the lord of his family and estate, but actually

he is a servant of desire and the employee of anger. Such service of the senses is neither pensionable nor terminable, for desire and anger are masters who are never to be satisfied. The more one serves them, the more service they exact, and as such the false overlordship continues until the day of annihilation. As a result, the foolish living being is pushed into degraded life and fails to recognize the Lord as the beneficiary of all activities, the ruler of the universe, and the friend of all entities. One who knows the real Lord is called a brahmana, but one who fails to know Him is called a krpana, or number-one miser.

The Lord of the creative energy is called Ananta-sayana. The material energy is impregnated by the glance of this feature of the Lord and is then able to give birth to all organic and inorganic matter. Ananta-sayana sleeps on the bed of Sesa Naga, who has a form like a serpent but is identical with the Lord. Because He sleeps on a serpent bed, the Lord is also known as Naga-sayana. By His spiritual energy Sesa Naga sustains all the planetary globes upon His invisible hoods. Sesa Naga is popularly known as Sankarsana, or "that which keeps balance by the law of magnetism." In the scientific world this feature of the Lord is referred to as the law of gravitation, but factually this law, which keeps all the planets floating in space, is one of the energies of the Lord. All the universes are born with the exhalation of the Lord as He lies on Sesa Naga, and all of them are annihilated with His inhalation. Due to these functions of creation, maintenance, and annihilation, the Lord is celebrated by the name Jagannivasa, indicating that He is the supreme resort of all the universes.

There are hundreds of thousands of other names of Lord Visnu, and each one of them is as powerful as the Lord Himself. One can constantly chant any name of the Lord and thereby constantly associate with Him. There are no hard and fast rules for chanting His names. At any time and any stage of life one can freely chant them, but we are so unfortunate that we are too misled even to adopt this simple process. This is the way of Maya, the Lord's misleading energy. However, one can avoid her ways simply by always remembering the lotus feet of the Lord. King Kulasekhara prays for this facility from Mukunda, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

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Satsvarupa dasa Goswami
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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 2

jayatu jayatu devo devaki-nandano '
 jayatu jayatu krsno vrsni--pradipah
 jayatu jayatu megha-syamalah komalango
 jayatu jayatu prthvi-bhara-naso mukundah

SYNONYMS

jayatu jayatu — all glories, all glories; **devah** — to the Personality of Godhead; **devaki-nandanah** — son of Devaki; **ayam** — this; **jayatu jayatu** — all glories, all glories; **krsnah** — to Lord Krsna; **vrsni** — of Vrsni (Lord Krsna's forefather); — of the dynasty; **pradipah** — the beacon light; **jayatu jayatu** — all glories, all glories; **megha** — like a new cloud; **syamalah** — who is blackish; **komala** — very soft; **angah** — whose body; **jayatu jayatu** — all glories, all glories; **prthvi** — the earth's; **bhara** — of the burden; **nasah** — to the destroyer; **mukundah** — Lord Sri Krsna.

TRANSLATION

All glories to this Personality of Godhead known as the son of Srimati Devaki devi! All glories to Lord Sri Krsna, the brilliant light of the Vrsni dynasty! All glories to the Personality of Godhead, the hue of whose soft body resembles the blackish color of a new cloud! All glories to Lord Mukunda, who removes the burdens of the earth!

PURPORT

The theme of this verse is that the Supreme Truth is the Supreme Person. That the Lord's bodily texture and color are described indicates that He is a person, for the impersonal Brahman cannot have a body that is as soft as anything or whose hue is visualized. The Personality of Godhead appeared as the son of Vasudeva and Devaki because for a very long time they performed severe austerities to have the Supreme Lord as their son. Satisfied by their penance and determination, the Lord agreed to become their son.

From the description of the Lord's birth in the Srimad-Bhagavatam, we learn that the Lord appeared before Vasudeva and Devaki as Narayana, with four hands. But when they prayed to Him to conceal His divinity, the Lord became a small baby with two hands. In the Bhagavad-gita (4.9) the Lord promises that one who simply understands the mysteries of His transcendental birth and deeds will be liberated from the clutches of Maya and go back to Godhead. Therefore there is a gulf of difference between the birth of Krsna and that of an ordinary child.

One may ask, Since the Supreme Lord is the original father of all living entities, how could a lady known as Devaki give birth to Him as her son? The answer is that Devaki no more gave birth to the Lord than the eastern horizon gives birth to the sun. The sun rises on the eastern horizon and sets below the western horizon, but actually the sun neither rises nor sets. The sun is always in its fixed position in the sky, but the earth is revolving, and due to the different positions of the revolving earth, the sun appears to be rising or setting. In the same way, the Lord always exists, but for His pastimes as a human being He seems to take birth like an ordinary child.

In His impersonal feature (Brahman) the Supreme Lord is everywhere, inside and outside: as the Supersoul (Paramatma) He is inside everything, from the gigantic universal form down to the atoms and electrons; and as the Supreme Personality of Godhead (Bhagavan) He sustains everything with His energies. (We have already described this feature of the Lord in the purport to the previous verse, in connection with the name Jagan-nivasa.) Therefore in each of His

three features — Brahman, Paramatma, and Bhagavan — the Lord is present everywhere in the material world. Yet He remains aloof, busy with His transcendental pastimes in His supreme abode.

Those with a poor fund of knowledge cannot accept the idea that the Lord appears in person on the face of the earth. Because they are not conversant with the intricacies of the Lord's transcendental position, whenever such people hear about the appearance of the Lord, they take Him to be either a superhuman being born with a material body or a historical personality worshiped as God under the influence of anthropomorphism or zoomorphism. But the Lord is not the plaything of such fools. He is what He is and does not agree to be a subject of their speculations, which perpetually lead them to conclude that His impersonal feature is supreme. The supreme feature of the Absolute Truth is personal — the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The impersonal Brahman is His effulgence, like the light diffused by a powerful fire. The fire burns in one place but diffuses its warmth and light all round, thus exhibiting its different energies. Similarly, by means of His variegated energies the Supreme Lord expands Himself in many ways.

Persons with a poor fund of knowledge are captivated by one part of His energy and therefore fail to penetrate into the original source of the energy. Whatever astounding energies we see manifest in this world, including atomic and nuclear energies, are all part and parcel of His material, or external, energy. Superior to this material energy, however, is the Lord's marginal energy, exhibited as the living being. Besides these energies, the Supreme Lord has another energy, which is known as the internal energy. The marginal energy can take shelter of either the internal energy or the external energy, but factually it belongs to the Lord's internal energy. The living beings are therefore infinitesimal samples of the Supreme Lord. Qualitatively the living being and the Supreme Lord are equal, but quantitatively they are different, for the Lord is unlimitedly potent whereas the living entities, being infinitesimal by nature, have limited potency.

Although the Lord is full with all energies and is thus self-sufficient, He enjoys transcendental pleasure by subordinating Himself to His unalloyed devotees. Some great devotees of the Lord cannot surpass the boundary of awe and veneration. But other devotees are in such an intense compact of love with the Lord that they forget His exalted position and regard themselves as His equals or even His superiors. These eternal associates of the Lord relate with Him in the higher statuses of friendship, parenthood, and consortherhood. Devotees in a transcendental parental relationship with the Lord think of Him as their dependent child. They forget His exalted position and think that unless they properly feed Him He will fall victim to undernourishment and His health will deteriorate. Devotees in a conjugal relationship with the Lord rebuke Him to correct His behavior, and the Lord enjoys those rebukes more than the prayers of the Vedas. Ordinary devotees bound up by the formalities of Vedic rites cannot enter deep into such confidential loving service to the Lord, and thus their realization remains imperfect. Sometimes they even fall victim to the calamity of impersonalism.

Vasudeva and Devaki are confidential devotees of the Lord in the mood of parental love. Even greater than them are Nanda and Yasoda, His foster parents in Vrndavana. The Lord takes great pleasure in being addressed as Devaki-nandana ("the son of Devaki"), Nanda-nandana ("the son of Nanda"), Yasoda-nandana ("the son of Yasoda"), Dasarathi ("the son of King Dasaratha"), Janaki-natha ("the husband of Janaki"), and so on. The pleasure one gives the Lord by addressing Him by such names is many, many times greater than the pleasure He enjoys when He is addressed as the Supreme Father, the Greatest of the Great, Paramesvara, or anything of that nature, which indicate volumes of awe and veneration. Therefore the names King Kulasekhara uses to glorify the Lord in this verse indicate his intimate transcendental relationship with the Lord.

As explained above, all the names of the Lord are as powerful as the Lord Himself, but one can experience different transcendental mellows by chanting His different transcendental names. For example, the sastra (scripture) states that there are one thousand principal names of Lord Visnu, the Personality of Godhead. But if a person utters the name Rama only once, he gets the result of chanting one thousand names of Visnu. And if somebody once chants the name Krsna,

he achieves the results obtained by chanting the name Rama three times. In other words, uttering the name Krsna once is equal to uttering three thousand other names of Visnu.

Therefore King Kulasekhara, knowing how pleased the Lord is to be addressed by a name indicating His transcendental relationships with His intimate devotees, and knowing also the potency of the name Krsna, has chosen to glorify the Lord by addressing Him as Devaki-nandana and Krsna. The king also addresses Him as Vrsni--pradipa ("the brilliant light in the Vrsni dynasty") because millions of generations of the Vrsni dynasty became sanctified by the Lord's appearance within it. The sastras state that a family in which a pure devotee is born is sanctified for one hundred generations of ancestors and descendants. And the sastras also state that every place within a radius of one hundred miles from where a devotee is born becomes sanctified. If a devotee can sanctify the place and family of his birth so extraordinarily, then what to speak of how completely the Lord can sanctify the place and family in which He chooses to take His birth.

The Lord's birth on the face of the earth is certainly very mysterious, and therefore it is difficult for ordinary men to believe in His birth. How can the all-powerful Lord take birth, seemingly like an ordinary man? The matter is explained in the Bhagavad-gita (4.6), where the Lord says,

ajō 'pi sann avyayatma bhutanam isvaro 'pi san
prakr svam adhisthaya sambhavamy atma-mayaya

"Although I am unborn and My transcendental body never deteriorates, and although I am the Lord of all living entities, by My transcendental potency I still appear in every millennium in My original transcendental form." From the sastra we learn that the Lord takes birth not only in the family of human beings but also in the families of demigods, aquatics, animals, and so on. One may argue that an ordinary living being is eternal and unborn like the Lord and also takes birth in different species of life, and so there is no difference between the Lord and an ordinary living being. The difference is, however, that while an ordinary living being changes his body when he transmigrates from one species of life to another, the Lord never changes His body: He appears in His original body, without any change. Also, while there is a vast difference between the ordinary living entity and his body, there is no difference between the Lord and His body because He is pure spirit. In other words, there is no distinction between His body and His soul.

The word avyayatma in the above verse from the Bhagavad-gita clearly indicates that the Lord's body is not made of material elements. He is all spirit. Birth and death apply only to the material body. The body of the ordinary living being is made of material elements and is therefore subject to birth and death. But the Lord's body, being all spiritual and thus eternal, neither takes birth nor dies. Nor can the Lord be forced to take birth in some particular family due to His past deeds, as an ordinary living being is.

The Lord is the supreme controller of the material elements, and being endless and beginningless, He exists in all times — past, present, and future. And because He is absolute, He has nothing to do with vice and virtue. In other words, for Him "vices" and "virtues" are one and the same; otherwise the Lord would not be the Absolute Truth.

Since the Lord appears by His internal potency, His incarnations in different species of life are not the creation of the external potency, Maya. Therefore those who think that the Supreme Lord appears in different forms by accepting a body made of material elements are wrong; their vision is imperfect because they do not understand how the Lord's internal potency works. The Vedas inquire, Where does the Supreme Lord stand? And the reply is immediately given: He stands on His internal potency. So the conclusion is that although the Lord may seem to assume a material body when He takes birth, like an ordinary being, in fact He does not, for there is no difference between Him and His body. Thus He remains the Absolute Truth in all His appearances in different species of life.

In other words, the living being and the Supreme Lord appear in this material world under different circumstances. One can easily understand these different circumstances if one understands how the Lord's different potencies work. As explained before, the Lord has three kinds of potency, namely, internal, marginal, and external. We have wide experience of the external, or material, potency, but we generally fail to inquire about the actions and reactions of the other two potencies. A simple example will help us understand how the Lord's potencies work. Consider three identities: God, a man, and a doll. The doll consists of material energy, the man is a combination of material and spiritual energy, and God consists wholly of spiritual energy. The doll is all matter, internally and externally. Man is externally matter but internally spirit. And God is all spirit, both internally and externally. As the doll is all matter, so God is all spirit. But the man is half spirit and half matter.

Thus the body of God and the body of a living being are differently constituted. Because the Lord's body is pure spirit, it never deteriorates, and therefore He is called *avyayatma*. His body is absolute, beginningless, unborn, and eternal, while the material body of the living being is relative and therefore temporary — it undergoes birth and death. The living being himself, of course, is eternal, and if He so desires he can realize his eternality by merging into the body of the Absolute Truth or being reinstated in his constitutional position as an eternal servant of the Lord. If he does not do so, then his eternality is still maintained, but he remains ignorant of it.

The conclusion is that the Personality of Godhead appears in His original body, without any change, and this is made possible by His inconceivable potency. We should always remember that nothing is impossible for the omnipotent Lord. If He so desires, He can transform material energy into spiritual energy. Indeed, if he so desires He can bring the entire spiritual nature within the material nature, without the spiritual nature being affected by the material modes in any way.

The Lord's different potencies remain tightly under His control. In fact, the Lord actually has only one potency — namely, the internal potency — which He employs for different purposes. The situation is similar to how one uses electricity. The same electricity can be used for both heating and cooling. Such contradictory results are due to the expert handling of a technician. In the same way, by His supreme will the Lord employs His one internal potency to accomplish many different purposes. That is the information we get from the *srutis* (*Svetasvatara Upanisad 6.8*): *parasya saktir vividhaiva sruyate*.

The present verse of the *Mukunda-mala-stotra* states that the color of the Lord's body is blackish, like that of a new cloud. Also, His body is very soft. Softness of the body is a sign of a great personality. The *sastras* state that the following bodily features indicate a great personality: a reddish luster in seven places — the eyes, the palms, the soles, the palate, the lips, the tongue, and the nails; broadness in three places — the waist, the forehead, and the chest; shortness in three places — the neck, the thighs, and the genitals; deepness in three places — the voice, the intelligence, and the navel; highness in five places — the nose, the arms, the ears, the forehead, and the thighs; and fineness in five places — the skin, the hair on the head, the bodily hair, the teeth, and the fingertips. All these features are present in the body of the Lord.

The *Brahma-* confirms that the color the Lord's body is blackish, like that of a new cloud. But this blackish color is so beautiful that it surpasses the beauty of millions of Cupids. So this blackish color does not correspond to any blackish color in the material world.

Such descriptions of the Lord's body are not imaginary; rather, they are the statements of those who have seen the Lord with their supernatural vision. This supernatural vision is bestowed upon devotees like *Brahma* and upon those who follow the footsteps of pure devotees like him. But upstarts and unbelievers cannot have any access to this transcendental vision, for they lack the required submission to the will of the Lord.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 3

mukunda murdhna pranipatya yace
bhavantam ekantam iyantam artham
avismrtis tvac-caranaravinde
bhava bhava me 'stu bhavat-prasadat

SYNONYMS

mukunda — O Lord Mukunda; **murdhna** — with my head; **pranipatya** — bowing down; **yace** — I respectfully beg; **bhavantam** — from You; **ekantam** — exclusively; **iyantam** — this much; **artham** — desire to be fulfilled; **avismrtih** — freedom from forgetfulness; **tvat** — Your; **carana-aravinde** — at the lotus feet; **bhava bhava** — in each repeated birth; **me** — my; **astu** — let there be; **bhavat** — Your; **prasadat** — by the mercy.

TRANSLATION

O Lord Mukunda! I bow down my head to Your Lordship and respectfully ask You to fulfill this one desire of mine: that in each of my future births I will, by Your Lordship's mercy, always remember and never forget Your lotus feet.

PURPORT

The world in which we live is a miserable place. It is, so to speak, a prison house for the spirit soul. Just as a prisoner cannot move or enjoy life fully, so the living entities who have been conditioned by the laws of material nature cannot experience their actual ever-joyful nature. They cannot have any freedom, because they must suffer four principal miseries — birth, old age, disease, and death. The laws of material nature impose this punishment upon the living entities who have forgotten the Lord and who are busy making plans for lasting happiness in this desert of distress.

By the mercy of the Lord, the pure devotee knows all this very well. Indeed, his whole philosophy of life is based on this understanding. Advancement of knowledge means to understand the naked truth of this world and to not be deluded by the temporary beauty of this phantasmagoria.

The material nature is not at all beautiful, for it is an "imitation peacock." The real peacock is a different thing, and one must have the sense to understand this. Those who are mad after capturing and enjoying the imitation peacock, as well as those who have a pessimistic view of the imitation peacock but lack any positive information of the real peacock — both are illusioned by the modes of material nature. Those who are after the imitation peacock are the fruitive workers, and those who simply condemn the imitation peacock but are ignorant of the real peacock are the empiric philosophers. Disgusted with the mirage of happiness in the material desert, they seek to merge into voidness.

But a pure devotee does not belong to either of these two bewildered classes. Neither aspiring to enjoy the imitation peacock nor condemning it out of disgust, he seeks the real peacock. Thus he is unlike either the deluded fruitive worker or the baffled empiricist. He is above these servants of material nature because he prefers to serve the Lord, the master of material nature. He seeks the substance and does not wish to give it up. The substance is the lotus feet of Mukunda, and King Kulasekhara, being a most intelligent devotee, prays to gain that substance and not the shadow.

A pure devotee of Lord Narayana, or Mukunda, is not at all afraid of any circumstance that may befall him. Despite all difficulties, therefore, such a pure devotee asks nothing from the Lord on his own account. He is not at all afraid if by chance he has to visit the hellish worlds, nor is he eager to enter the kingdom of heaven. For him both these kingdoms are like castles in the air. He is not concerned with either of them, and this is very nicely expressed by King Kulasekhara in Text 6.

A pure devotee of the Lord like King Kulasekhara does not pray to God for material wealth, followers, a beautiful wife, or any such imitation peacocks, for he knows the real value of such things. And if by circumstance he is placed in a situation where he possesses such things, he does not try to artificially get out of it by condemnation.

Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, a great associate of Lord Caitanya's, was a very rich man's son who had a beautiful wife and all other opulences. When he first met Lord Caitanya at Panihati, a village about forty miles from Calcutta, Raghunatha dasa asked permission from the Lord to leave his material connections and accompany Him. The Lord refused to accept this proposal and instructed Raghunatha dasa that it is useless to leave worldly connections out of sentimentality or artificial renunciation. One must have the real thing at heart. If one finds himself entangled in worldly connections, one should behave outwardly like a worldly man but remain inwardly faithful for spiritual realization. That will help one on the progressive march of life. Nobody can cross over the big ocean in a sudden jump. What was possible for Hanuman by the grace of Lord Rama is not possible for an ordinary man. So to cross the ocean of illusion one should patiently cultivate devotion to the Lord, and in this way one can gradually reach the other side.

Although a pure devotee does not bother himself about what is going to happen next in his material situation, he is always alert not to forget his ultimate aim. King Kulasekhara therefore prays that he may not forget the lotus feet of the Lord at any time.

To forget one's relationship with the Lord and thus to remain overwhelmed by material hankerings is the most condemned mode of life. This is exactly the nature of animal life. When the living entity is born in a species of lower animals, he completely forgets his relationship with the Lord and therefore remains always busy in the matter of eating, sleeping, fearing, and mating. Modern civilization promotes such a life of forgetfulness, with an improved economic condition for eating and so on. Various agents of the external energy make explicit propaganda to try to root out the very seed of divine consciousness. But this is impossible to do, because although circumstances may choke up a living being's divine consciousness for the time being, it cannot be killed. In his original identity the living entity is indestructible, and so also are his original spiritual qualities. One can kill neither the spirit soul nor his spiritual qualities. To remember the Lord and desire to serve Him are the spiritual qualities of the spirit soul. One can curb down these spiritual qualities by artificial means, but they will be reflected in a perverted way on the mirror of material existence. The spiritual quality of serving the Lord out of transcendental affinity will be pervertedly reflected as love for wine, women, and wealth in different forms. The so-called love of material things — even love for one's country, community, religion, or family, which is accepted as a superior qualification for civilized human beings — is simply a perverted reflection of the love of Godhead dormant in every soul. The position of King Kulasekhara is therefore the position of a liberated soul, because he does not want to allow his genuine love of God to become degraded into so-called love for material things.

The words bhava bhava are very significant here. They mean "birth after birth." Unlike the jñanis, who aspire to merge with the impersonal Absolute and thereby stop the process of repeatedly taking birth, a pure devotee is never afraid of this process. In the Bhagavad-gita (4.9) Lord Kṛṣṇa says that His birth and deeds are all divyam, transcendental. In the same chapter (4.5) the Lord says that both He and Arjuna had had many, many previous births, but that while the Lord could remember all of them, Arjuna could not. For the Lord there is no difference between past, present, and future, but for the living being who has forgotten the Lord there is a difference, on account of his being forgetful of the past and ignorant of the future. But a living entity who always remembers the Lord and is thus His constant companion is as transcendently situated as the Lord Himself. For such a devotee birth and death are one

and the same, because he knows that such occurrences are only ephemeral flashes that do not affect his spiritual existence.

We may use a crude example to illustrate the difference between a devotee's death and an ordinary man's death. In her mouth the cat captures both her offspring and her prey, the rat. Such capturings may appear the same, but there is a vast difference between them. While the rat is being carried in the cat's mouth, his sensation is poles apart from that of the cat's offspring. For the rat the capture is a painful death strike, while for the offspring it is a pleasurable caress.

Similarly, the death of an ordinary man is vastly different from a devotee's passing away from the active scene of material existence. The death of an ordinary man occurs against the background of his past good and evil deeds, which determine his next birth. But for a devotee the case is different. Even if the devotee has failed to perfect his devotional service, he is guaranteed to take birth in a good family — a family of learned and devoted brahmanas or a family of rich vaisyas (merchants). A person who takes birth in such a family has a good chance to practice devotional service and improve his spiritual condition.

Unfortunately, in this iron age the members of well-to-do families generally misuse their wealth. Instead of improving their spiritual condition, they are misled by faulty association and fall victim to sensuality. To be saved from this faulty association, King Kulasekhara prays fervently to the Lord that he may never forget His lotus feet in any future birth. A devotee who perfects his devotional service certainly goes back to Godhead without a doubt, so for him there is no question of birth or death. And, as mentioned above, a devotee who does not achieve complete perfection is guaranteed to take his birth in a learned and well-to-do family. But even if a devotee is not given the advantage of good parentage, if he can attain the benediction of always remembering the lotus feet of the Lord, that is greater than any number of material assets. Constant remembrance of the Lord's name, fame, qualities, and so on automatically nullifies the reactions of all vices and invokes the blessings of the Lord. This constant remembrance of the lotus feet of the Lord is possible only when one engages in His active service.

A pure devotee therefore never asks the Lord for wealth, followers, or even a beautiful wife. He simply prays for uninterrupted engagement in the Lord's service. That should be the motto of life for all prospective students in devotional service.

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Gopiparanadhana dasa Adhikari

Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 4

vande tava caranayor dvandvam advandva-hetoh
 gurum api hare napanetum
 ramya-rama-mrdu-tanu-lata nandane napi
 bhava bhava hrdaya-bhavane bhavantam

SYNONYMS

na — not; aham — I; vande — pray; tava — Your; caranayoh — of the lotus feet; dvandvam — to the pair; advandva — of release from duality; hetoh — for the reason; kumbhipakam — the planet of boiling oil; gurum — most severe; api — either; hare — O Hari; narakam — hell; na — not; apanetum — to avoid; ramya — very beautiful; rama — of the fair sex; mrdu — soft; tanu-lata — of creeperlike bodies; nandane — in the pleasure gardens of heaven; na api — nor; rantum — to enjoy; bhava bhava — in various rebirths; hrdaya — of my heart; bhavane — within the house; bhavayeyam — may I concentrate; bhavantam — on You.

TRANSLATION

O Lord Hari, it is not to be saved from the dualities of material existence or the grim tribulations of the Kumbhipaka hell that I pray to Your lotus feet. Nor is my purpose to enjoy the soft-skinned beautiful women who reside in the gardens of heaven. I pray to Your lotus feet only so that I may remember You alone in the core of my heart, birth after birth.

PURPORT

There are two classes of men: the atheists and the theists. The atheists have no faith in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, while the theists have various degrees of faith in Him.

The atheists are faithless on account of their many misdeeds in their present and past lives. They fall into four categories: (1) the gross materialists, (2) the immoral sinners, (3) the number-one fools, and (4) those who are bewildered by maya despite their mundane erudition. No one among these four classes of atheist ever believes in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, what to speak of offering prayers unto His lotus feet.

The theists, on the other hand, have faith in the Lord and pray to Him with various motives. One attains such a theistic life not by chance but as a result of performing many pious acts in both the present life and the past life. Such pious men also belong to four categories: (1) the needy, (2) those who have fallen into difficulty, (3) those who are inquisitive about the transcendental science, and (4) the genuine philosophers. The philosophers and those who are inquisitive are better than those in categories (1) and (2). But a pure devotee is far above these four classes of pious men, for he is in the transcendental position.

The needy pious man prays to God for a better standard of life, and the pious man who has fallen into material difficulty prays in order to get rid of his trouble. But the inquisitive man and the philosopher do not pray to God for amelioration of mundane problems. They pray for the ability to know Him as He is, and they try to reach Him through science and logic. Such pious men are generally known as theosophists.

Needy pious men pray to God to improve their economic condition because all they know is sense gratification, while those in difficulty ask Him to free them from a hellish life of tribulations. Such ignorant people do not know the value of human life. This life is meant to prepare one to return to the absolute world, the kingdom of God.

A pure devotee is neither a needy man, a man fallen into difficulty, nor an empiric philosopher who tries to approach the Divinity on the strength his own imperfect knowledge. A pure devotee receives knowledge of the Divinity from the right source — the disciplic succession of realized souls who have followed strictly the disciplinary method of devotional service under the guidance of bona fide spiritual masters. It is not possible to know the transcendental nature of the Divinity by dint of one's imperfect sense perception, but the Divinity reveals Himself to a pure devotee in proportion to the transcendental service rendered unto Him.

King Kulasekhara is a pure devotee, and as such he is not eager to improve himself by the standards of the empiric philosophers, distressed men, or fruitive workers of this world. Pious acts may lead a mundane creature toward the path of spiritual realization, but practical activity in the domain of devotional service to the Lord need not wait for the reactions of pious acts. A pure devotee does not think in terms of his personal gain or loss because he is fully surrendered to the Lord. He is concerned only with the service of the Lord and always engages in that service, and for this reason his heart is the Lord's home. The Lord being absolute, there is no difference between Him and His service. A pure devotee's heart is always filled with ideas about executing the Lord's service, which is bestowed upon the pure devotee through the transparent medium of the spiritual master.

The spiritual master in the authoritative line of disciplic succession is the "son of God," or in other words the Lord's bona fide representative. The proof that he is bona fide is his invincible faith in God, which protects him from the calamity of impersonalism. An impersonalist cannot be a bona fide spiritual master, for such a spiritual master's only purpose in life must be to render service to the Lord. He preaches the message of Godhead as the Lord's appointed agent and has nothing to do with sense gratification or the mundane wrangling of the impersonalists. No one can render devotional service to an impersonal entity because such service implies a reciprocal personal relationship between the servant and the master. In the impersonal school the so-called devotee is supposed to merge with the Lord and lose his separate existence.

Pure devotees like King Kulasekhara are particularly careful to avoid a process that will end in their becoming one with the existence of the Lord, a state known as *advandva*, nonduality. This is simply spiritual suicide. Out of the five kinds of salvation, *advandva* is the most abominable for a devotee. A pure devotee denounces such oneness with the Lord as worse than going to hell.

As His separated expansions, the living beings are part and parcel of the Lord. The Lord expands Himself into plenary parts and separated parts to enjoy transcendental pastimes, and if a living being refuses to engage in these transcendental blissful pastimes, he is at liberty to merge into the Absolute. This is something like a son's committing suicide instead of living with his father according to the rules the father sets down. By committing suicide, the son thus sacrifices the happiness he could have enjoyed by engaging in a filial loving relationship with his father and enjoying his father's estate. A pure devotee persistently avoids such a criminal policy, and King Kulasekhara is guiding us to avoid this pitfall.

The king also says that the reason he is praying to the Lord is not to be saved from the Kumbhipaka hell. Laborers in gigantic iron and steel mills suffer tribulations similar to those in the Kumbhipaka hell. Kumbhi means "pot," and paka means "boiling." So if a person were put into a pot of oil and the pot were set to boiling, he would have some idea of the suffering in Kumbhipaka hell.

There are innumerable hellish engagements in the modern so-called civilization, and by the grace of the Lord's illusory energy people think these hellish engagements are a great fortune. Modern industrial factories fully equipped with up-to-date machines are so many Kumbhipaka hells, and the organizers of these enterprises regard them as indispensable for the advancement of economic welfare. The mass of laborers exploited by the organizers directly experience the "welfare" conditions in these factories, but what the organizers do not know is that by the law of karma they will in due time become laborers in similar Kumbhipaka hells.

Intelligent persons certainly want to be saved from such Kumbhipaka hells, and they pray to God for this benediction. But a pure devotee does not pray in this way. A pure devotee of Narayana looks equally upon the happiness enjoyed in heaven, the transcendental bliss of becoming one with the Lord, and the tribulations experienced in the Kumbhipaka hell. He is not concerned with any of them because he is always engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. By the grace of the Lord, even in the Kumbhipaka hell a pure devotee can adjust the situation and turn it into Vaikuntha.

The Bhagavad-gita and all other revealed scriptures say that the Lord accompanies every living being in His localized aspect of Paramatma, the Supersoul. Therefore even a living being destined to reside in the Kumbhipaka hell is accompanied by his eternal companion, the Lord. But by His inconceivable power the Lord remains aloof from these hellish circumstances, just as the sky remains separate from the air although seemingly mixed with it.

Similarly, the pure devotee of the Lord does not live anywhere in this material world, although He appears to live among mundane creatures. Actually, the devotee lives in Vaikuntha. In this way the Supreme Lord bestows upon His pure devotee the inconceivable power that allows him to stay aloof from all mundane circumstances and reside eternally in the spiritual world. The devotee does not want this power consciously or unconsciously, but the Lord is careful about His devotee, just as a mother is always careful about her little child, who is completely dependent on her care.

A pure devotee like King Kulasekhara refuses to associate with beautiful soft-skinned women. There are different grades of women on different planets in the universe. Even on the earth there are different types of women who are enjoyed by different types of men. But on higher planets there are women many, many millions of times more beautiful than the women on this planet, and there are also many pleasure abodes where they can be enjoyed. The best of all of these is the Nandana Gardens on Svargaloka. In the Nandana Gardens — a "Garden of Eden" — those who are qualified can enjoy varieties of beautiful women called Apsaras. The demigods generally enjoy the company of the Apsaras in the same way that the great Mogul kings and nawabs enjoyed their harems. But these kings and nawabs are like straw before the demigods of Svargaloka, which lies in the third stratum of the universe.

The inner tendency to enjoy is in the core of every living being's heart. But in the diseased state of material existence the living being misuses that tendency. The more he increases this diseased, conditioned state, the longer he extends his period of material existence. The sastras advise, therefore, that a living entity should accept only those sense-enjoyable objects necessary for the upkeep of the material body and reject those that are just for sense gratification. In this way he will reduce the tendency for sense enjoyment. This restraint cannot be imposed by force; it must be voluntary.

Such restraint automatically develops in the course of one's executing devotional service. Thus one who is already engaged in devotional service need not restrain his senses artificially. A pure devotee like King Kulasekhara, therefore, neither desires sense enjoyment nor exerts himself to restrain his senses; rather, he tries only to engage himself in the transcendental loving service of the Lord, without any stop.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 5

nastha dharme na vasu-nicaye naiva kamopabhoge
 yad tad bhavatu bhagavan purva-karmanurupam
 etat mama bahu janma-janmantare 'pi
 tvat-padambhoruha-yuga-gata niscala bhaktir astu

SYNONYMS

na — not; **astha** — special regard; **dharme** — for religiosity; **na** — nor; **vasu** — of wealth; **nicaye** — for the accumulation; **na eva** — nor even; **kama-upabhoge** — for sense enjoyment; **yad** — whatever; **bhavyam** — inevitable; **tad** — that; **bhavatu** — let it happen; **bhagavan** — O Lord; **purva** — previous; **karma** — my deeds; **anurupam** — according to; **etat** — this; **prarthyam** — to be requested; **mama** — by me; **bahu matam** — most desirable; **janma-janma** — birth after birth; **antare** — during; **api** — even; **tvat** — Your; **pada-amboruha** — of lotus feet; **yuga** — in the pair; **gata** — resting; **niscala** — unflinching; **bhaktih** — devotion; **astu** — may there be.

TRANSLATION

O my Lord! I have no attachment for religiosity, or for accumulating wealth, or for enjoying sense gratification. Let these come as they inevitably must, in accordance with my past deeds. But I do pray for this most cherished boon: birth after birth, let me render unflinching devotional service unto Your two lotus feet.

PURPORT

Human beings advance toward God consciousness when they go beyond the gross materialistic life of eating, sleeping, fearing, and mating and begin to develop moral and ethical principles. These principles develop further into religious consciousness, leading to an imaginary conception of God without any practical realization of the truth. These stages of God consciousness are called religiosity, which promises material prosperity of various degrees.

People who develop this conception of religiosity perform sacrifices, give in charity, and undergo different types of austerity and penance, all with a view toward being rewarded with material prosperity. The ultimate goal of such so-called religious people is sense gratification of various kinds. For sense gratification, material prosperity is necessary, and therefore they perform religious rituals with a view toward the resultant material name, fame, and gain.

But genuine religion is different. In Sanskrit such genuine religion is called dharma, which means "the essential quality of the living being." The sastras say that this essential quality is to render eternal service, and the proper object of this service is the Supreme Truth, Lord Krsna, the Absolute Personality of Godhead. This eternal, transcendental service of the Lord is misdirected under material conditions and takes the shape of (1) the aforementioned religiosity, (2) economic development, (3) sense gratification, and (4) salvation, or the attempt to negate all material variegatedness out of frustration.

Genuine religion, however, does not culminate in either economic development, sense gratification, or salvation. The perfection of religion is to attain complete satisfaction of the spirit soul, and this is accomplished by rendering devotional service to the Lord, who is beyond the perception of the material senses. When the living being directs his eternal service attitude toward the eternal Supreme Being, such service can never be hampered by any sort of material hindrance. Such transcendental service is above even salvation, and therefore it certainly does not aim at any kind of material reward in the shape of name, fame, or gain.

One who engages in the transcendental loving service of the Supreme Being automatically attains detachment from material name, fame, and gain, which are aspired for only by those who do not understand that this name, fame, and gain are merely shadows of the real thing. Material name, fame, and gain are only perverted reflections of the substance — the name, fame, and opulences of the Lord. Therefore the pure devotee of Lord Vasudeva, enlightened by the transcendental service attitude, has no attraction for such false things as religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, or salvation, the last snare of Maya.

The purpose of performing real religion is to attain attachment for hearing and chanting the messages of the kingdom of God. Materialistic people are attached to ordinary newspapers on account of their lack of spiritual consciousness. Real religion develops this spiritual consciousness and also attachment for the messages of God, without which all labor in the performance of religious rites is only a waste of energy.

Therefore one should not practice religion with the aim of improving one's economic welfare, nor should one use one's wealth for sense gratification, nor should the frustration of one's plans for sense gratification lead one to aspire for salvation, or liberation from material conditions. Instead of indulging in sense gratification of different grades with the fruits of one's labor, one should work just to maintain the body and soul together, with the aim of inquiring into the ultimate aims and objects of life. In other words, one should inquire into the Absolute Truth.

The Absolute Truth is realized in three phases, namely, the impersonal Brahman, the localized Paramatma, and the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A person who attains the highest stage of spiritual realization — realization of the Supreme Personality of Godhead — automatically prays as King Kulasekhara does here.

Only one who renders devotional service to the Lord can attain this stage of indifference to the false and temporary assets of material nature. Such devotional service is not a mental concoction of depraved persons but is an actual process of God realization characterized by full cognizance and detachment and based on the Vedic literature. So-called devotional practices that have no reference to the rules and regulations set down in such books of Vedic literature as the sruti, the smṛti, the Puranas, and the Pañcaratras are not bona fide. The self-realized souls advise us to reject such pseudodevotional practices, which simply create a disturbance on the path of spiritual realization. Only by sincerely engaging in the service of the Lord according to the injunctions of scripture can one gradually become a qualified devotee of the Lord, and it does not matter whether it takes many repetitions of birth and death, life after life.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 6

divi va bhuvi va mamastu vaso
narake va narakantaka prakamam
avadhirita-saradaravindau
caranau te marane 'pi cintayami

SYNONYMS

divi — in the abode of the demigods; **va** — or; **bhuvi** — on the earth, the home of human beings; **va** — or; **mama** — my; **astu** — may be; **vasah** — residence; **narake** — in hell; **va** — or; **naraka-antaka** — O killer of the demon Naraka; **prakamam** — however You desire; **avadhirita** — which have defied; **sarada** — of the fall season; **aravindau** — the lotus flowers; **caranau** — the two feet; **te** — Your; **marane** — at the time of death; **api** — even; **cintayami** — may I remember.

TRANSLATION

O Lord, killer of the demon Naraka! Let me reside either in the realm of the demigods, in the world of human beings, or in hell, as You please. I pray only that at the point of death I may remember Your two lotus feet, whose beauty defies that of the lotus growing in the Sarat season.

PURPORT

As stated before, a pure devotee of the Lord has nothing to do with mundane religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, or salvation, nor is he concerned whether his standard of material existence is the highest or the lowest. To him, heaven and hell are of equal value. He is not afraid of going to hell for the service of the Lord, nor is he glad to live in heaven without the service of the Lord. In any circumstance his consciousness is fixed on the Lord's lotus feet, whose beauty defies the most beautiful lotus flower of the mundane world.

The defiance is due to the transcendental position of the Lord's form, name, qualities, pastimes, and so on. The sruti mantras declare that although the Lord has no hands He can accept anything we offer Him with devotion, although He has no feet He can travel anywhere, and although He has no mundane eyes He can see anywhere and

everywhere without hindrance. The Brahma- describes each of His senses as omnipotent. The mundane eye can see but not hear, but His eyes can see, hear, eat, generate offspring, and so on. The sruti mantras say that He impregnates material nature with the seeds of living beings simply by casting His glance at her. He does not need any other kind of intercourse with mother nature to beget the living beings in her womb and become their father.

Therefore any relationship the Lord has with His many devotees — whether fatherhood, sonhood, or any other — is not at all material. The Lord is pure spirit, and only when the living being is in his pure spiritual state can he have all sorts of relationships with Him. Philosophers with a poor fund of knowledge cannot conceive of these positive spiritual relationships between the Lord and the all-spiritual living beings, and thus they simply think in terms of negating material relationships. In this way such philosophers naturally adopt the concept of impersonalism.

By contrast, a pure devotee like King Kulasekhara has complete knowledge of both matter and spirit. He does not say that everything material is false, yet he has nothing to do with

anything material, from heaven down to hell. He fully understands the statement in the Bhagavad-gita that from the lowest planets up to Brahmaloaka, the highest planet in the universe, there is no spiritual bliss, which the living beings hanker for. Therefore the pure devotee, being in full knowledge of spiritual life, simultaneously rejects material relationships and cultivates his spiritual relationship with the Lord. In other words, the spiritual knowledge a devotee possesses not only allows him to reject material existence, but it also provides him with an understanding of the reality of positive, eternal spiritual existence. This is the understanding King Kulasekhara expresses in this prayer.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 7

cintayami harim eva
 manda-hasa-muditananambujam
 nanda-gopa- parat
 naradadi-muni-vrnda-vanditam

SYNONYMS

cintayami — I think; **harim** — about Lord Hari; **eva** — indeed; **santatam** — always; **manda** — gentle; **hasa** — with a smile; **mudita** — joyful; **anana-ambujam** — whose lotus face; **nanda-gopa** — of the cowherd Nanda; **tanayam** — the son; **parat param** — the Supreme Absolute Truth; **narada-adi** — beginning with Narada; **muni-vrnda** — by all the sages; **vanditam** — worshiped.

TRANSLATION

I always think of Lord Hari, whose joyful lotus face bears a gentle smile. Although He is the son of the cowherd Nanda, He is also the Supreme Absolute Truth worshiped by great sages like Narada.

PURPORT

As King Kulasekhara thinks of the Lord and remembers His happiness, the king also becomes happy. Lord Krsna is eternally happy, but the conditioned soul is mostly unhappy. When we live in forgetfulness of our spiritual nature, even our so-called bliss is illusion — it is unsatisfying, flickering pleasure (capala-sukha). The poet Govinda dasa expresses this in his re mana: "What assurance is there in all one's wealth, youthfulness, sons, and family members? This life is tilting like a drop of water on a lotus petal. Therefore you should always serve the divine feet of Lord Hari."

Another Vaisnava poet, Narottama dasa Thakura, has expressed the happiness of the Supreme in a song addressed to Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityananda: ha ha prabhu nityananda premananda-sukhi krpa-balo-kana koro ami bado dukkhi: "My dear Lord Nityananda, You are always joyful in spiritual bliss. Since You always appear very happy, I have come to You because I am most unhappy. If You kindly cast Your glance upon me, I may also become happy."

In this prayer King Kulasekhara reveals himself to be at the stage of spontaneous love of God, in which the devotee goes beyond mere formal ceremonies and ritual recitations and thinks of Lord Hari always. This is the actual standard of happiness in devotional service. Such constant remembrance of the Lord is possible through constant chanting of His name. As Lord Caitanya recommends in His Siksastaka (3), kirtaniyah sada harih: [Cc. adi 17.31] "One should always chant the holy name of the Lord." In this way one will always be happy in the joy of Lord Krsna. The Lord's happiness is always increasing, like an ever-expanding ocean (anandambudhi-varadhanam), and the living entity is meant to dive into that ocean because his original nature is to be ever-blissful in contact with the Lord.

King Kulasekhara further hints at the unlimited happiness of Krsna consciousness when he describes Lord Krsna as the son of Nanda Gopa. Krsna is the Lord of Vaikuntha, and He expands Himself as the catur-vyuha, as the purusa-avatars, and as many other forms. But His original form is a cowherd boy in Goloka Vrndavana. He came to Vrndavana-dhama within this world to reciprocate loving exchanges with His pure devotees here who wished to be His friends, parents, and lovers. They cherished the desire to serve the Lord in intimate ways, and

they finally fulfilled it after, as Srila Prabhupada says in his Krsna book, "accumulating heaps of pious activities." In other words, after they had perfected their loving devotion to the Lord through many lives of service, He appeared in person to reciprocate with them in their specific mood.

Krsna enjoyed playing as the son of Nanda. For example, Krsna would sometimes delight His parents by carrying His father's wooden slippers on His head, just like an ordinary child. And Krsna would also enjoy His magnificent pastimes in Dvaraka, where He lived in unequalled opulence in 16,108 palaces with an equal number of queens. Narada once visited the Lord at Dvaraka and saw Him engaging in various pastimes in His many palaces. At that time Narada became astounded and described Him as the source of all opulences.

There is no contradiction between Krsna's charmingly sweet pastimes in the simple village of Vrndavana and His magnificently opulent pastimes in Dvaraka. All of the Lord's pastimes are oceans of happiness. And the devotee who can always think of the Lord performing any of His multifarious pastimes dives into that ocean. Even in this world, one who always thinks of the Lord will forget all material miseries and enter the spiritual abode.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 8

kara-carana-saroje kantiman-netra-mine
 srama-musi bhujavici-vyakule 'gadhamarge
 hari-sarasi vigahyapiya tejo
 bhava-maru-parikhinnah klesam adya tyajami

SYNONYMS

kara — hands; **carana** — and feet; **saroje** — whose lotuses; **kanti-mat** — shining; **netra** — eyes; **mine** — whose fish; **srama** — exhaustion; **musi** — robbing; **bhujavici** — of arms; **vici** — by waves; **vyakule** — agitated; **agadha** — fathomless; **marge** — whose movement; **hari** — of Lord Hari; **sarasi** — in the lake; **vigahya** — by diving; **apiya** — drinking fully; **tejah** — of His splendor; **jala** — of water; **ogham** — the flood; **bhava** — of material existence; **maru** — in the desert; **parikhinnah** — worn out; **klesam** — distress; **adya** — today; **tyajami** — I will abandon.

TRANSLATION

The desert of material existence has exhausted me. But today I will cast aside all troubles by diving into the lake of Lord Hari and drinking freely of the abundant waters of His splendor. The lotuses in that lake are His hands and feet, and the fish are His brilliant shining eyes. That lake's water relieves all fatigue and is agitated by the waves His arms create. Its current flows deep beyond fathoming.

PURPORT

In this prayer King Kulasekhara employs an elaborate metaphor comparing the Lord's all-attractive form to a rejuvenating lake. If a devotee dives into that lake and drinks its waters, all his exhaustion from material life will go away. We simply have to plunge into devotional service by hearing about Krsna, chanting His glories, and

remembering Him. Why don't we all do it? It is illusion that makes us think there is no relief here, or that the lake is a mirage. Or, out of foolish attachment to material activities, we may think it's irresponsible to dive into the ocean of pleasure that is Krsna consciousness. "Where is that lake?" we think. "I would gladly jump into it if I could find it. But it sounds like the legendary fountain of youth."

When we show the nondevotees the Lord's form and invite them to serve Him, they refuse. They think He's just an ordinary man or a mythical figure. But there is a "lake of Lord Hari," and there are aquatics sporting in it — the Lord's pure devotees, who have no cares or fear or anger or lust. They have dived into that lake and are free of all material exhaustion. In body, mind, and spirit we grow tired, but the waters of this lake relieve all our fatigue.

Elsewhere in the Vedic literature we hear of lakes such as Bindu-sarovara, where Devahuti was revived and made beautiful again after her long austerities. But the effect of immersing oneself in the lake of Lord Hari is not the restoration of youth, which will soon be exhausted again. It is eternal relief from , the repetition of birth and death.

We may attain attraction to the Lord's form by worshiping the Deity in the temple and hearing descriptions of His form in the sastra. Also, chanting and hearing His names evokes attraction to His form, which the Lord eventually manifests to the pure chanter. As we become attracted to the form of the Lord, we will give up trying to enjoy other forms, an effort that simply leads to exhaustion. We will know then that only Krsna can satisfy us.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 9

sarasija-nayane sa-sankha-cakre
mura-bhidi ma viramasva citta rantum
sukha-taram na jatu jane
hari-carana-smaranamrtena tulyam

SYNONYMS

sarasi-ja — like the lotus flower born in a lake; **nayane** — whose eyes; **sa** — together with; **sankha** — His conch; **cakre** — and disc weapon; **mura-bhidi** — in the annihilator of the demon Mura; **ma viramasva** — please never cease; **citta** — O mind; **rantum** — to enjoy; **sukha-taram** — extremely pleasurable; **aparam** — anything else; **na** — not; **jatu** — at all; **jane** — I know; **hari-carana** — of the feet of Lord Hari; **smarana** — of the remembrance; **amrtena** — the immortal nectar; **tulyam** — equal to.

TRANSLATION

O mind, please never stop taking pleasure in thinking of the Mura demon's destroyer, who has lotus eyes and bears the conch and disc weapon. Indeed, I know of nothing else that gives such extreme pleasure as meditating on Lord Hari's divine feet.

PURPORT

From his own experience, King Kulasekhara is speaking of how delightful it is to think of Krsna. That thinking is his greatest pleasure in life. As a king he had access to many worldly pleasures, but they all counted as nothing compared to meditation on the Lord's lotus feet. This Krsna meditation is available for all, and the Supreme Lord and His representatives want everyone to enjoy it. Thus Lord Krsna says in the Bhagavad-gita, "Always think of Me." This meditation is not only for philosophers and poets. Though Arjuna was a military man, Lord Krsna instructed him, "Remember Me and fight."

The Vedic literature, prepared by Srila Vyasadeva and filled with narrations of the Lord and His devotees, is meant to help us remember the Lord always. These books teach us how to divert our mind from ordinary thoughts, which are filled with business, entertainment, speculation, and the like, and fix it on the Supreme Lord in His personal feature. Otherwise, numerous worldly thoughts will absorb us: News of politics, for instance, is always bombarding us via TV, radio, and the print media. Also, our personal economic affairs are themselves fully absorbing. And to put up with anxieties, we can take part in diversions like videos, music, intoxication, and sex stimulation. Wasting time with mundane thoughts is nothing new, but today the pace, variety, and intensity of diversions grabbing for our attention seem to have increased.

Thus although meditation on God is as essential as ever, one may conclude that it is impossible nowadays. However, by the grace of Srila Prabhupada and the Krsna consciousness movement he founded, we can absorb the mind in thoughts of the Lord even in this age. If one lives in a city with an ISKCON temple, one can directly visit the Deity of Lord Visnu, as King Kulasekhara did. Even on the way to work one may find time to stop and briefly see the Lord in the temple. If one lives far from a temple, one can still read Srila Prabhupada's books, correspond with devotees, listen to devotional recordings, subscribe to regular Krsna conscious publications, and, of course, chant the Hare Krsna mantra alone or with friends. Thus in these and many other ways, meditation on Krsna is available to those who want it.

Here King Kulasekhara specifically mentions meditation upon the feet of the Lord. Such meditation implies humility and indicates that the meditator desires shelter under the Lord's protection. Indeed, the Lord's lotus feet symbolize that shelter. Elsewhere the Vedic literature describes the Lord's lotus feet as umbrellas shielding the devotees from material life. So a devotee is satisfied meditating on the Lord's feet, although he sometimes meditates on other parts of the Lord's body. We should remember, however, that although the lotus feet of the Lord symbolize the total shelter He extends toward His devotees, there is nothing "symbolic" about them: they are always to be thought of in a personal, literal sense.

Once some hatha-yoga students asked Srila Prabhupada if there was a sastric reference specifically stating that transcendentalists who regard the Absolute Truth as impersonal would fall down. Prabhupada quoted the following verse from Srimad-Bhagavatam (10.2.32):

ye 'nye 'ravindaksa vimukta-maninas
tvayy asta-bhavad avisuddha-buddhayah
aruhya krcchrena tatah
patanty adho 'nadrta yusmad-anghrayah

"O lotus-eyed Lord, although nondevotees who accept severe austerities and penances to achieve the highest position may think themselves liberated, their intelligence is impure. They fall down from their position of imagined superiority because they have no regard for Your lotus feet." After quoting the verse, Prabhupada said, " 'Feet' means 'person.' "

In conclusion, then, we should have firm faith that the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Person, Krsna, that His body is all-blissful, and that His feet are worth meditating upon.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 10

mabhir manda-mano vicintya bahudha yamis yatana
 naivami prabhavanti papa-ripavah svami nanu sridharah
 vyapaniya bhakti dhyayasva narayan
 lokasya vyasanapanodana-karo dasasya na ksamah

SYNONYMS

ma bhiih — do not be afraid; **manda** — foolish; **manah** — O mind; **vicintya** — thinking; **bahudha** — repeatedly; **yamih** — caused by Yamaraja, the lord of death; **ciram** — long-lasting; **yatanah** — about the torments; **na** — not; **eva** — indeed; **ami** — these; **prabhavanti** — are effective; **papa** — sinful reactions; **ripavah** — the enemies; **svami** — master; **nanu** — is He not; **sri-dharah** — the maintainer of the goddess of fortune; **alasyam** — sloth; **vyapaniya** — driving off; **bhakti** — by devotional service; **su-labham** — who is easily attained; **dhyayasva** — just meditate; **narayanam** — upon the Supreme Lord Narayana; **lokasya** — of the world; **vyasana** — the troubles; **apanodana-karah** — who dispels; **dasasya** — for His servant; **kim** — what; **na** — not; **ksamah** — capable.

TRANSLATION

O foolish mind, stop your fearful fretting about the extensive torments imposed by Yamaraja. How can your enemies, the sinful reactions you have accrued, even touch you? After all, is your master not the Supreme Lord, the husband of Goddess Sri? Cast aside all hesitation and concentrate your thoughts on Lord Narayana, whom one very easily attains through devotional service. What can that dispeller of the whole world's troubles not do for His own servant?

PURPORT

In a very positive mood, King Kulasekhara reminds us that as long as we are under the protection of the supreme, all-powerful Lord, no harm can come to us, even that which our own sinful reactions would normally bring us. Lord Krsna also orders Arjuna in the Bhagavad-gita (9.31), "Declare it boldly: My devotee will never be vanquished."

Sinful life and its reactions are certainly serious matters, not to be easily dismissed. Yamaraja metes out hellish torments to all sinful living beings. But the process of bhakti is so potent that it drives away all sinful reactions as if they were merely enemies one might see in a bad dream. In Text 15 King Kulasekhara will recommend the chanting of the holy name of Krsna as the best way to attain freedom from the miseries of birth and death. Namacarya Haridasa Thakura concurs, declaring that even the shadow of pure chanting of the holy names, known as namabhasa, destroys the entire stock of sins one has accumulated for many lifetimes and thus grants liberation.

The devotees' claim to victory over birth and death is not an idle boast, but it requires full surrender to Lord Hari. The Lord offers this benediction to the unalloyed servant of His servant, and not to others. As long as one tries to protect oneself with wealth and worldly power, one will be an easy victim for powerful Maya. The jiva who is serious about freeing himself from does not, therefore, pretend to act on his or her own prowess but always follows the authorized directions of the Supreme Lord and His representatives. Only such a dependent servitor of the Lord, under His full protection, can be confident of conquering birth and death.

In this prayer King Kulasekhara mentions Yamaraja, the lord of death, as the cause of long-

lasting torments. But such suffering is not for the Lord's devotees. Yamaraja himself once instructed his servants, the Yamadutas, that those who chant the holy names of the Lord were not under Yama's jurisdiction. Yamaraja said, "Generally [the devotees] never commit sinful activities, but even if by mistake or because of bewilderment or illusion they sometimes commit sinful acts, they are protected from sinful reactions because they always chant the Hare Krsna mantra" (Bhag. 6.3.26). Yamaraja told his followers they should not even go near the devotees. The Vaisnavas are always protected by Lord Visnu's club, and thus neither Lord Brahma nor even the time factor can chastise them.

Srila Prabhupada said that when a devotee receives initiation from his spiritual master he is freed from his karmic reactions. Pains and pleasures that may appear like continuing karmic reactions are merely the residual effects of nondevotional activities, like the last revolutions of an electric fan after it's been unplugged. But everything depends on the sincere execution of devotional service. One who again regularly transgresses the laws of God, even after taking the vows of initiation, is once more subject to the merciless dealings of the material nature.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 11

bhava-jaladhi- dvandva
suta-duhitr-kalatra-trana-bhararditanam
visama-visaya-toye majjatam
bhavati saranam eko visnu-poto naranam

SYNONYMS

bhava — of material existence; **jaladhi** — in the ocean; **gatanam** — who are present; **dvandva** — of material dualities; **vata** — by the wind; **ahatanam** — struck; **suta** — sons; **duhitr** — daughters; **kalatra** — and wives; **trana** — of protecting; **bhara** — by the burden; **arditanam** — distressed; **visama** — perilous; **visaya** — of sense gratification; **toye** — in the water; **majjatam** — drowning; **aplavanam** — having no vessel to carry them away; **bhavati** — is; **saranam** — the shelter; **ekah** — only; **visnu-potah** — the boat that is Lord Visnu; **naranam** — for people in general.

TRANSLATION

The people in this vast ocean of birth and death are being blown about by the winds of material dualities. As they flounder in the perilous waters of sense indulgence, with no boat to help them, they are sorely distressed by the need to protect their sons, daughters, and wives. Only the boat that is Lord Visnu can save them.

PURPORT

Materialists sometimes philosophize that dualities such as heat and cold provide an interesting variety or spice to life. In truth, however, although we may romanticize about life in this temporary world of duality, its main quality is misery. Prahlada Maharaja has described this world as a place where we meet up with things we don't want and are separated from what we love. We either hanker for what we lack, or we lament upon losing something valuable. Whenever we seem to run into smooth sailing on the sea of human affairs, we know, either consciously or at the back of our minds, that we are being pursued by Time, the ultimate destroyer.

Attempting to expand our happiness, we select a marriage partner and raise a family. We may sometimes see our family members as protectors against the ravages of fate, but they prove to be, in Srila Prabhupada's immortal words, "fallible soldiers." Our search for security and happiness through family life merely increases our jeopardy and pain. As Narada Muni said when King Citraketu's infant son died: "My dear king, now you are actually experiencing the misery of a person who has sons and daughters. O king,... a person's wife, his house, the opulence of his kingdom, and his various other opulences and objects of sense perception are all the same in that they are temporary. One's kingdom, military power, treasury, servants, ministers, friends, and relatives are all causes of fear, illusion, lamentation, and distress. They are like a gandharva-nagara, a nonexistent palace that one imagines to exist in the forest. Because they are impermanent, they are no better than illusions, dreams, and mental concoctions" (Bhag. 6.15.23).

When distress strikes it is natural to seek shelter, and at such times a pious soul turns to the Supreme Lord, our only protector. When Gajendra, the king of the elephants, was attacked in the water by a crocodile, he soon realized that none of his wives or fellow elephants could save him. "They cannot do anything," said Gajendra. "It is by the will of providence that I have been attacked by this crocodile, and therefore I shall seek the shelter of the Supreme

Personality of Godhead, who is always the shelter of everyone, even of great personalities" (Bhag. 8.2.32).

None of us wants calamities, yet when they come they may serve as an impetus to surrender to Lord Krsna. Thus Queen Kunti prayed,

vipadah santu tah sasvat tatra tatra jagad-guro
bhavato yat syad apunar bhava-darsanam

"I wish that all those calamities would happen again and again so that we could see You again and again, for seeing You means that we will no longer see repeated births and deaths" (Bhag. 1.8.25).

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 12

bhava-jaladhim
katham aham iti ceto ma sma gah kataratvam
sarasija-drsi deve taraki bhaktir eka
naraka-bhidi nisanna tarayisyaty avasyam

SYNONYMS

bhava — of material existence; **jaladhim** — the ocean; **agadham** — fathomless; **dustaram** — impossible to cross; **nistareyam** — will cross beyond; **katham** — how; **aham** — I; **iti** — thus; **cetah** — my dear mind; **ma sma gah** — please do not come; **kataratvam** — to complete distress; **sarasi-ja** — like a lotus; **drsi** — whose eyes; **deve** — unto the Lord; **taraki** — deliver; **bhaktih** — the personality of Devotion; **eka** — only; **naraka** — of the demon Naraka; **bhidi** — in the destroyer; **nisanna** — reposed; **tarayisyati** — will bring you across; **avasyam** — inevitably.

TRANSLATION

Dear mind, do not bewilder yourself by anxiously thinking, How can I cross this fathomless and impassable ocean of material existence? There is one who can save you — Devotion. If you offer her to the lotus-eyed Lord, the killer of Narakasura, she will carry you across this ocean without fail.

PURPORT

The devotee is not afraid of the miseries of material existence. He is confident that Krsna will save him. Although the forces of destruction are more powerful than any mortal, the devotee is like a tiny bird protected by its parents. The Supreme Lord assures us, "Declare it boldly, O Arjuna, that my devotee never perishes" (Bg. 9.31).

However, if one seeks the protection of the Lord through some means other than devotion, one will fail. Krsna is not impressed by anything but devotion. For example, in the Bhagavad-gita (9.26) He encourages the devotee to offer Him food in order to increase the devotee's loving relationship with Him: "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, I will accept it." The Supreme Lord does not want any food or flowers in and of themselves, but when His devotee offers them with bhakti, He is very attracted and inclined to reciprocate His devotee's love.

prakasah

sarvasya yogamaya-samavrtah [Bg. 7.25]). And without His personal intervention, a soul will remain stranded in the cycle of birth and death, despite all material qualifications. In his prayers to Lord Nr, Pahlada Maharaja confirms that bhakti alone can satisfy the Lord: "One may possess wealth, an aristocratic family, beauty, austerity, education, sensory expertise, luster, influence, physical strength, diligence, intelligence, and mystic yogic power, but I think that even by all these qualifications one cannot satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. However, one can satisfy the Lord simply by devotional service. Gajendra did this, and thus the Lord was satisfied with him" (Bhag. 7.9.9).

Even though one is serving a spiritual master, one may doubt the efficacy of bhakti. But King Kulasekhara assures his mind that there is no need for anxiety. If we contemplate the abysmal depth and impassable breadth of the material ocean, or if we frighten ourselves by dwelling on the torments of hell, then we will become paralyzed and unable to carry out normal activities. There is no need for such fear if one is situated sincerely in devotional service. As the

brahmana from Avantidesa said,

sa asthaya paratma-nistham
purvatamair maharsibhiih
tarisyami duranta-
tamo mukundanghri-nisevayaiva

"I shall cross over the insurmountable ocean of nescience by being firmly fixed in the service of the lotus feet of Krsna. This was approved by the previous acaryas, who were fixed in firm devotion to the Lord, Paramatma, the Supreme Personality of Godhead" (Bhag. 11.23.57).

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 13

tr̥sna-toye madana-pavanoddhuta-mohormi-male
daravarte tanaya-sahaja-graha-sanghakule ca
mahati jaladhau nas tri-dhaman
padambhoje vara-da bhavato bhakti- prayaccha

SYNONYMS

tr̥sna — thirst; **toye** — whose water; **madana** — of Cupid; **pavana** — by the winds; **uddhuta** — stirred up; **moha** — illusion; **urmi** — of waves; **male** — rows; **dara** — wife; **avarte** — whose whirlpool; **tanaya** — sons; **sahaja** — and brothers; **graha** — of sharks; **sangha** — with hordes; **akule** — crowded; **ca** — and; **-akhye** — called ; **mahati** — vast; **jaladhau** — in the ocean; **majjatam** — who are drowning; **nah** — to us; **tri-dhaman** — O Lord of the three worlds; **pada** — to the feet; **ambhoje** — lotuslike; **vara-da** — O giver of benedictions; **bhavatah** — of Your good self; **bhakti** — of devotion; **navam** — the boat; **prayaccha** — please bestow.

TRANSLATION

O Lord of the three worlds, we are drowning in the vast ocean of , which is filled with the waters of material hankering, with many waves of illusion whipped up by the winds of lust, with whirlpools of wives, and with vast schools of sharks and other sea monsters who are our sons and brothers. O giver of all benedictions, please grant me a place on the boat of devotion that is Your lotus feet.

PURPORT

In this nightmare vision, all the dear and familiar things in life become fearful. And yet this is an accurate assessment of material reality. King Kulasekhara's oceanic metaphors are not fanciful, but show us vividly what actually is.

There is a common saying that a drowning person suddenly sees his whole life pass before him. But we never hear what happens to the person after death. The atheist assumes that when we die it is all over and we rest in peace. But according to Vedic knowledge, there is life after death. "One who has taken birth is sure to die, and after death one is sure to take birth again" (Bg. 2.27). If the conditioned soul sees his life pass before him at death, it is usually with regret. His strong attachment to life-long companions and family members becomes a big weight that drags him down into repeated birth and death.

Therefore it is better for a person to see the fearfulness inherent in material life before it is too late to rectify his consciousness. When he begins to realize that there is great danger in the way he is leading his life, enjoying a false sense of security within his orbit of friends and relatives, then he must by all means try to change the situation by taking up devotional service to the Lord. If he is fortunate he can convince his friends and relatives to also change and lead a life dedicated to God consciousness. But if he cannot change them, then he should at least save himself. As Prahlada Maharaja told his demoniac father, Hiranyakasipu:

tat sadhu manye 'sura-varya
sada samudvigna-dhiyam asad-grahat
hitvatma- grham andha-
gato yad dharim asrayeta

"O best of the asuras, king of the demons, as far as I have learned from my spiritual

master, any person who has accepted a temporary body and temporary household life is certainly embarrassed by anxiety because of having fallen into a dark well where there is no water but only suffering. One should give up this position and go to the forest. More clearly, one should go to Vrndavana, where only Krsna consciousness is prevalent, and should thus take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead" (Bhag. 7.5.5).

It is not an easy thing to wake up from the complacency of ordinary life. Everyone knows that life is full of difficulties, but we tend to think that our family members and friends are our only solace. But as Kulasekhara and other Vedic sages point out, in materialistic life our family members are like vicious beasts attacking us. To convey this unpalatable truth, Jada Bharata related to King Rahugana an allegory about the forest of material enjoyment. In this context he said, "My dear king, family members in this material world go under the names of wives and children, but actually they behave like tigers and jackals."

Several times in the Mukunda-mala-stotra, the poet compares the material world to the sea, and the Lord (or His lotus feet) to a boat that can rescue us. The metaphor is excellent, for no matter how expert a swimmer a person may be, he cannot survive on his own in the rough and vast expanses of the ocean. So our attempt to swim the ocean of material life on our own strength, encouraged by our family and friends, is as futile as the attempt of the lone swimmer at sea. We should turn to our only rescuer, the Lord, and with utmost sincerity thank Him for coming to save us.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 14

prthvi renur anuh kanikah phalguh sphulingo laghus
 tejo nih marut tanu- su-suks nabhah
 ksudra rudra-pitamaha-prabhrtayah kitah samastah sura
 drste yatra sa tarako vijayate sri-pada-dhuli-kanah

SYNONYMS

prthvi — the earth; **renuh** — a piece of dust; **anuh** — atomic; — the waters (of the oceans); **kanikah** — drops; **phalguh** — tiny; **sphulingah** — a spark; **laghuh** — insignificant; **tejah** — the totality of elemental fire; **nih-svasanam** — a sigh; **marut** — the wind; **tanu-taram** — very faint; **randhram** — a hole; **su** — very; **suksmam** — small; **nabhah** — the ethereal sky; **ksudrah** — petty; **rudra** — Lord Siva; **pitamaha** — Lord Brahma; **prabhrtayah** — and the like; **kitah** — insects; **samastah** — all; **surah** — the demigods; **drste** — having been seen; **yatra** — where; **sah** — He; **tarakah** — the deliverer; **vijayate** — is victorious; **sri** — divine; **pada** — from the feet; **dhuli** — of dust; **kanah** — a particle.

TRANSLATION

Once our savior has been seen, the whole earth becomes no greater than a speck of dust, all the waters of the ocean become mere droplets, the totality of fire becomes a minute spark, the winds become just a faint sigh, and the expanse of space becomes a tiny hole. Great lords like Rudra and Grandfather Brahma become insignificant, and all the demigods become like small insects. Indeed, even one particle of dust from our Lord's feet conquers all.

PURPORT

Lord Krsna is unlimited: no one is greater than or equal to Him. Therefore it is impossible to compare Him with anyone else, even if we wish to make a favorable comparison. He is unique. Everything depends on Him, and He is the only provider (*eko yo vidadhati kaman*). Therefore to say that God is greater than all others is insufficient praise.

But to bring the reality of the Godhead more vividly to focus in our limited minds (which are always prone to making comparisons), King Kulasekhara here gives us metaphors that stress the supreme greatness of the Lord. He compares the Supreme Lord to persons and things we might think are the very greatest. Those who reject the personal conception of God, such as pantheists, think that the earth itself is God. Some impersonalists think that the sky is the greatest manifestation, and so they consider it to be God. Demigod-worshipers consider Rudra or Brahma the supreme person, or they think all gods are equal. Thus Kulasekhara's metaphors serve to dismantle all these misconceptions.

This verse expresses King Kulasekhara's mood of awe and reverence as he contemplates the Supreme Lord's magnificent power and opulence. Many pure bhaktas go beyond this appreciation of the Lord in His opulent majesty and come to enjoy intimate loving exchanges with Him. But regardless of one's ultimate relationship with the Lord, when one starts one's devotional career, one must be trained to appreciate the greatness of the Supreme Lord. Therefore in the Bhagavad-gita (9.8) Krsna teaches His friend Arjuna, "The whole cosmic order is under Me. Under My will it is automatically manifested again and again, and under My will it is annihilated at the end."

Because the Supreme Lord's potencies are unlimited, they are also inconceivable. For example, Krsna creates all the species of life and yet He has no connection with them. The jiva

souls have no awareness of how the cosmic process is taking place, yet by the will of the Lord they are sometimes supplied bodies, allowed to maintain themselves for awhile, and then, without their knowledge or control, they are annihilated. But He whose will directs all these changes is not involved with it.

Glorifying the Lord as King Kulasekhara does in this prayer awakens in us the proper mood of appreciation for the Lord's greatness and also helps us understand our position as His insignificant servants.

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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Satsvarupa dasa Goswami
Gopiparanadhana dasa Adhikari

Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 15

he lokah srnuta prasuti-marana-vyadhes cikitsam
yoga-jñah samudaharanti munayo yajñavalkyadayah
antar-jyotir ameyam ekam amr krsnakhyam
tat paramaus vitanute nirvanam atyantikam

SYNONYMS

he lokah — O people of the world; **srnuta** — just hear; **prasuti** — of birth; **marana** — and death; **vyadheh** — for the disease; **cikitsam** — about the treatment; **imam** — this; **yoga-jñah** — experts in knowledge of mystic yoga; **samudaharanti** — recommend; **munayah** — sagacious; **yam** — which; **yajñavalkya-adayah** — such as Yajñavalkya; **antah** — inner; **jyotih** — light; **ameyam** — immeasurable; **ekam** — only; **amrtam** — immortal; **krsna-akhyam** — the name of Krsna; **apiyatam** — just drink; **tat** — it; **pitam** — being drunk; **parama** — supreme; **ausadham** — medicine; **vitanute** — bestows; **nirvanam** — liberation; **atyantikam** — absolute.

TRANSLATION

O people, please hear of this treatment for the disease of birth and death! It is the name of Krsna. Recommended by Yajñavalkya and other expert yogis steeped in wisdom, this boundless, eternal inner light is the best medicine, for when drunk it bestows complete and final liberation. Just drink it!

PURPORT

Devotees are always pleased to hear bona fide verses proclaiming the glories of the Lord's holy names. We like to be reminded and encouraged to always chant and hear the holy names with great attention and devotion.

As a pure devotee of Lord Krsna, King Kulasekhara naturally worships the holy names of the Lord. Here he compares them to a medicine for curing the disease of . Of all dreaded maladies, is the worst, because it includes all other diseases. As long as we are bound to take birth in the material world, we must inevitably expose ourselves to cancers, heart attacks, AIDS, and so on. All cures within this world are temporary because even if we are cured of one disease, we will eventually contract another, either in the present life or a future one. As with our attempts for happiness, our attempts for health must fail sooner or later.

In previous ages in India, a criminal would sometimes be strapped to a chair and immersed in water almost to the point of drowning. Upon being brought up, he felt great relief — only to be plunged under again by his torturers. Similarly, the times when we are pain-free and happy are like the few seconds of relief the prisoner feels when he is brought up from under water. The basic principle of material life is suffering.

Therefore we should be very eager to receive the medicine that will cure all our diseases. The word nirvana in this verse refers to the permanent cessation of and its attendant miseries. Nirvana has become famous from the teachings of Buddhism, but the voidistic liberation the Buddhists teach is unnatural for the living entity, and thus it is temporary. We can find factual, permanent release from pain only in the kind of liberation King Kulasekhara refers to here: the liberation of a devotee engaged in eternal service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When through the process of devotional service we become free of all material desires and attain pure love of God, we will be transferred to the Vaikuntha realm, where there are no anxieties or suffering.

At the beginning of the Tenth Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam (10.1.4), King Pariksit also uses the word *ausadhi* ("medicine") to refer to the chanting and hearing of *kṛṣṇa-kātha*, or words about *Kṛṣṇa*: "Descriptions of the Lord are the right medicine for the conditioned soul undergoing repeated birth and death." Such descriptions, of course, include the chanting and hearing of the Lord's holy name.

As with any *bona fide* medicine, one should take the nectarean potion of the holy name under the guidance of experts, in this case sages and the spiritual master. The Supreme Lord's names vary with His different pastimes and relationships with His pure devotees. He appeared as the son of Mother *Yasoda* and also as the son of Mother *Devaki*, and therefore He is named *Devaki-nandana* and *Yasoda-nandana*. One should receive the Lord's authorized names from the spiritual master in disciplic succession.

The *sastras* recommend which names we should chant. For example, the *Kali-santarana Upaniṣad* recommends the *Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra*: *Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare*. We don't have to search for some name or manufacture one. Rather, we must follow the saintly persons and the *sastras* in chanting the Lord's holy names, as *Srila Prabhupada* recommends in his *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (8.1.13, purport).

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Satsvarupa dasa Goswami
Gopiparanadhana dasa Adhikari

Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 16

he martyah srnuta vo vaksyami sanksepatah
 avam apad-urmi- samyak pravisya sthitah
 nana-jñanam apasya cetasi namo narayanayety
 sa-pran pranama- muhuh

SYNONYMS

he martyah — O mortals; paramam — supreme; hitam — benefit; srnuta — just hear about; vah — to you; vaksyami — I will tell; sanksepatah — in summary; — of the cycle of material existence; arnavam — the ocean; apat — of misfortunes; urmi — with the waves; bahulam — crowded; samyak — fully; pravisya — having entered; sthitah — situated within; nana — various; jñanam — knowledge; apasya — rejecting; cetasi — within your heart; namah — obeisances; narayanaya — to Lord Narayana; iti — thus; amum — this; mantram — chant; sa-pranavam — together with the syllable om; pranama — bowing down; sahitam — also with; pravartayadhvam — please practice; muhuh — continuously.

TRANSLATION

O mortal beings, you have submerged yourselves fully in the ocean of material existence, which is filled with the waves of misfortune. Please hear as I briefly tell you how to attain your supreme benefit. Just put aside your various attempts at gaining knowledge and instead begin constantly chanting the mantra namo narayanaya and bowing down to the Lord.

PURPORT

No matter how expert a swimmer one may be, one cannot survive for long in a vast sea like the Pacific Ocean. Similarly, no matter how expert a materialist one may be, whether a karmi, jñani, or yogi, one cannot survive forever amidst the tossing waves of . Indeed, all living entities are being tossed repeatedly from one life to the next, from one species to another. Many philosophers have sought relief from by cultivating knowledge, but no amount of mental speculation or Vedanta study will take one to the other shore of the ocean of . At best, a jñani can come to know that all material life is suffering, and by further purification he can understand the spiritual oneness of all beings. But even that understanding does not bring ultimate relief. Liberation from the ocean of birth and death comes with direct surrender to the Supreme Lord, who personally frees the devotee from suffering. As Lord Krsna states, "For the devotees I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death" (Bg. 12.7).

King Kulasekhara recommends the constant chanting of God's names as the way out of . Of course, only one who has spontaneous love of God can continuously chant His holy names. Mechanical chanting cannot continue for very long. But even neophytes are advised to chant Hare Krsna as much as possible to develop their taste for the holy names. A symptom of an advanced devotee is that he has nama-gane sada rucih, tireless attraction for chanting or singing the Lord's names.

The six Gosvamis of Vrndavana achieved the perfect state of attraction for the holy names, chanting and hearing almost twenty-four hours daily. Prabhupada writes, "Of course, we should not imitate him [Rupa Gosvami], but the devotees of the Krsna consciousness movement must at least be very careful to complete their sixteen rounds, their minimum amount of prescribed chanting. Nama-gane sada rucih: we have to increase our taste for singing and chanting Hare Krsna" (Teachings of Queen Kunti, pp. 149-50).

Continuous chanting of the holy name with great relish (ruci) is the privilege of the advanced devotee, but one who chants with offenses is also recommended to chant constantly. As the Padma Purana states, although in the beginning one may chant the Hare Krsna mantra with offenses, one can free himself from those offenses by chanting again and again. Papa-ksayas ca bhavati tam ahar-nisam: "One becomes free from all sinful reactions if one remembers the Lord day and night."

Whatever a person thinks of at the time of death determines his next life. This is another reason for chanting the holy names constantly. If we can chant at the difficult hour of death, we will guarantee our return home, back to Godhead, without a doubt.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 17

nathe nah purusottame tri- ekadhipe cetasa
 sevye svasya padasya datari pare narayane tisthati
 kañcit purus katipaya-gramesam alpartha-
 sevayai mrgayamahe naram aho mudha varaka vayam

SYNONYMS

nathe — master; **nah** — our; **purusa-uttame** — the Personality of Godhead; **tri** — three; **jagatam** — of the worlds; **eka** — the one; **adhipe** — Lord; **cetasa** — by the mind; **sevye** — capable of being served; **svasya** — of His own; **padasya** — position; **datari** — the granter; **pare** — the Supreme; **narayane** — Lord Narayana; **tisthati** — when He is present; **yam kañcit** — some; **purusa** — person; **adhamam** — lowly; **katipaya** — of a few; **grama** — villages; **isam** — controller; **alpa** — meager; **artha** — benefit; **dam** — who can give; **sevayai** — for service; **mrgayamahe** — we seek out; **naram** — this man; **aho** — ah; **mudhah** — bewildered; **varakah** — degraded fools; **vayam** — we.

TRANSLATION

Our master, the Personality of Godhead Narayana, who alone rules the three worlds, whom one can serve in meditation, and who happily shares His personal domain, is manifest before us. Yet still we beg for the service of some minor lord of a few villages, some lowly man who can only meagerly reward us. Alas, what foolish wretches we are!

PURPORT

The eternal dharma of the living being is to render service. No one can escape it. Originally we are meant to serve the Supreme Lord out of love, but in our conditioned state we forget the real object of service and out of selfish motives seek to serve unworthy masters. We serve such persons not out of love but in hopes of gaining remuneration from them. Even when we perform so-called altruistic acts, such service to country or humanity at large is usually tainted by a desire to be recognized as generous or compassionate. Ultimately, all materially motivated service is frustrated in many ways and winds up satisfying neither ourselves nor our masters.

By contrast, Kulasekhara points out the great advantage of becoming the servant of the Supreme Lord. Lord Narayana is the ruler of all the worlds (sarva-loka-mahesvaram). Part of His glory, however, is that although He is unlimitedly majestic and powerful, He makes Himself accessible so that we can easily serve Him anywhere and at any time by chanting His holy names or meditating on His form, qualities, pastimes, and instructions. Such devotional service should be performed without any desire for personal reward. But even if a conditioned soul harbors personal desires, he should render active service to the Supreme. As Sukadeva Gosvami said to King Pariksit in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (2.3.10),

akamah sarva-kamo va moksa-kama udara-dhih
 tivrena bhakti-yogena yajeta purus param

"A person who has broader intelligence, whether he be full of all material desire, without any material desire, or desiring liberation, must by all means worship the supreme whole, the Personality of Godhead."

Service to Lord Narayana culminates in our rejoining Him in the eternal Vaikuntha planets. There the servants of the Lord share almost equally in His opulences. As Srila Prabhupada used

to say, "Become great by serving the great." But despite the overwhelming advantages of serving Lord Narayana, we still misdirect our service in the pitiful way King Kulasekhara describes here.

Sometimes a person adopts the impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth and thinks that by practicing austerities and cultivating knowledge he will eventually become equal with the Supreme in all respects: "I will give up serving and become the Self," he thinks. This resistance to bhakti results from ignorance of the transcendental pleasure the Lord's servant enjoys. If we actually knew how happy we would become by acting in our constitutional position as the Lord's servant, we would take up devotional service at once.

In this connection, Srila Prabhupada tells the story of a man whose burning desire was to serve the greatest person. The man was born into a small village, where he became attracted to serving the village chief. He was very happy in this capacity and tried to please the chief in many ways. But one day a district governor visited the village, and the servant came to understand that his local chief was also a servant — of the governor. He then asked to be transferred to the service of the greater master. The governor accepted him into his service, and the man was again satisfied trying to please his new master. But then he saw that the governor was paying taxes and offering obeisances to the king. The man who wanted to serve the greatest managed to transfer himself into the king's direct service. Now he was completely satisfied, and the king treated him as a favorite servant. But one day the man saw that the king went off alone into the woods to worship and serve an ascetic. The king's servant later approached that guru and addressed him, "You must be the greatest person of all, because even the king serves you. Please let me be your servant." The ascetic replied that he himself was the lowly servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna. The perpetual servant then asked where he could find Krsna, and the guru directed him to the nearest Krsna temple. With an ardent desire the servant went to the temple and received a direct indication from the Deity that he was indeed accepted as His servant. Finally, the aspiring servant of the greatest reached his goal, a position as the servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

There are five major rasas, or relationships, with the Supreme Lord, but the basis of them all is service. The glories of loving service won praise from the great yogi Durvasa Muni, who saw how pleased the Supreme Lord was with His pure devotee Ambarisa. Durvasa said, "What remains to be attained for those who have become the Lord's servants?" And in the Stotra-ratna (43), Sri Yamunacarya states,

bhavantam evanucaran nirantarah
 prasanta-nihsesa-mano-rathantarah
 kadaham aikantika-nitya-kinkarah
 praharsaisyami sanatha-jvitam

"By serving You constantly, one is freed from all material desires and is completely pacified. When shall I engage as Your permanent eternal servant and always feel joyful to have such a perfect master?" (Cc. Madhya 1.206).

Another reason a foolish jiva may avoid serving the Lord is because of social pressure. If we serve Lord Krsna, many people may laugh at us, whereas if we serve the mundane gods of money, prestige, and power, we will be widely accepted. Some people prefer to seek anonymity, and they are afraid that becoming a devotee of the Lord would make them far too noticeable. A real devotee, however, derives such great satisfaction from his service to the spiritual master and Krsna that he doesn't care what others think. As the Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.2.40) states,

-vratah sva-priya-nama-kirtya
 jatanurago druta-citta ucchaih
 hasaty atho roditi rauti gayaty
 unmada-van nrtyati loka-bahyah

"By chanting the holy name of the Lord, one comes to the stage of love of Godhead. Then the devotee is fixed in his vow as an eternal servant of the Lord, and he gradually becomes very much attached to a particular name and form of the Lord. As his heart melts with ecstatic love, he laughs very loudly or cries and shouts. Sometimes he sings and dances like a madman, for he is indifferent to public opinion."

Devotees in the Krsna consciousness movement may be shy at first, but they soon learn to forget their inhibitions while publicly chanting the holy names and dancing. They do this as a service to the Lord, for the welfare of all people, and they also find it ecstatic. In his Padyavali (73), Srila Rupa Gosvami quotes a verse written by Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya describing just how ecstatic devotional service can be, and how indifferent to public opinion an ecstatic devotee is: "Let the garrulous populace say whatever they like. We shall pay them no regard. Thoroughly maddened by the ecstasy of the intoxicating beverage of love for Krsna, we shall enjoy life, running about and rolling on the ground and dancing in ecstasy."



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 18

baddhenañjalina natena sirasa gatraih sa-romodgamaih
 kanthena svara-gadgadena nayanenodgirna-baspambuna
 tvac-caranaravinda-yugala-dhyanamrtasvadinam
 sarasiruhaksa jivitam

SYNONYMS

baddhena — closed together; **añjalina** — with joined palms; **natena** — bowed down; **sirasa** — with our heads; **gatraih** — with bodily limbs; **sa** — having; **roma** — of their hair; **udgamaih** — eruptions; **kanthena** — with the voice; **svara** — sounds; **gadgadena** — choked up; **nayanena** — with eyes; **udgirna** — emitting; **baspa** — of tears; **ambuna** — with the water; **nityam** — constant; **tvat** — Your; **carana** — of the feet; **aravinda** — lotus; **yugala** — on the pair; **dhya** — from meditation; **amrta** — immortal nectar; **asvadinam** — who are tasting; **asmakam** — our; **sarasi-ruha** — like a lotus growing in a lake; **aksa** — O You whose eyes; **satatam** — always; **sam-padyatam** — please assure; **jivitam** — our livelihood.

TRANSLATION

O lotus-eyed Lord, please sustain our lives as we constantly relish the nectar of meditating on Your lotus feet, with our palms prayerfully joined, our heads bowed down, our bodily hair standing up in jubilation, our voices choked with emotion, and our eyes flowing with tears.

PURPORT

A devotee finds full satisfaction in reverently worshiping his Lord, appreciating His personal features. And while rapt in worshiping the Lord, a Vaisnava does not worry much about his own sustenance. In modern cities, by contrast, earning one's livelihood has become an exaggerated endeavor that takes one's full energy, day and night, leaving no time left for God, except perhaps on Sunday, the day of rest.

The Vedic philosophy teaches that the top priority in life should be reawakening our relationship with the Lord. Therefore a sensible man should never allow himself to get so wrapped up in his material duties that they sap all his energy and kill his desire for serving Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Bhaktivinoḍa Thākura, who was both a great Vaisnava and a responsible magistrate in the Indian government, said that we should balance our material and spiritual needs, but that we should favor the latter. In other words, we should earn our livelihood in the spirit of simple living and high thinking.

In the Srimad-Bhagavatam (7.14.6), Narada Muni recommends just such a life to Maharaja Yudhisthira: "An intelligent man in human society should make his program of activities very simple. If there are suggestions from his friends, children, parents, brothers, or anyone else, he should externally agree, saying, 'Yes, that is all right,' but internally he should be determined not to create a cumbersome life in which the purpose of life will not be fulfilled."

An ideal service for a householder is Deity worship, either at home or in the temple. As one cleans the altar, cooks, or dresses the Deity, one should relish the nectar of meditating on the Lord's lotus feet, as King Kulasekhara says in this prayer. To be effective, worship must never be done in a time-serving mood. Sometimes Mayavadis appear to worship Deities as the Vaisnavas do. But there is a world of difference, because Mayavadis do not think that the Supreme Lord is a perpetual object of devotion. Rather, they think that Deity worship may help one develop a meditative mood, which will eventually lead one to realize that the Lord Himself

is illusion. Then the worshiper merges with the impersonal Brahman. Neither the Supreme Lord nor His pure devotee ever accepts this kind of time-serving bhakti.

The Srimad-Bhagavatam and all the spiritual masters in disciplic succession warn us never to consider Deity worship to be idol worship. The arca-vigraha is not a symbolic creation but is Krsna Himself appearing in a form of metal, stone, wood, etc., to facilitate devotional exchanges with His devotees.

One of the great blessings of Deity worship is that it provides us with a concrete image to meditate on. Thus Deity worship, in conjunction with descriptions of the Lord found in authorized sastras like Srimad-Bhagavatam, enables the devotee easily to absorb his mind in the form of the Lord. Here are just two of the many descriptions of the Lord's form found in the Bhagavatam:

"His lotus feet are placed over the whorls of the lotuslike hearts of great mystics. On His chest is the Kaustubha jewel, engraved with a beautiful calf, and there are other jewels on His shoulders. His complete torso is garlanded with fresh flowers" (Bhag. 2.2.10).

"Krsna's face is decorated with ornaments, such as earrings resembling sharks. His ears are beautiful, His cheeks are brilliant, and His smiling face is attractive to everyone. Whoever sees Lord Krsna sees a festival. His face and body are fully satisfying for everyone to see, but the devotees are angry at the creator for the disturbance caused by the momentary blinking of their eyes" (Bhag. 9.24.65).



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 19

yat krsna-pranipata-dhuli- tad varsma tad vai siras
 te netre tamasojjhite su-rucire harir drsyate
 sa buddhir vimalendu-sankha-dhavala ya madhava-dhyayini
 sa jihvamrta-varsini prati- ya stauti narayanam

SYNONYMS

yat — which; krsna — to Lord Krsna; pranipata — from bowing down; dhuli — with dust; dhavalam — whitened; tat — that; varsma — topmost; tat — that; vai — indeed; siras — head; te — those two; netre — eyes; tamasa — by darkness; ujjhite — abandoned; su — very; rucire — attractive; yabhyam — by which; harih — Lord Hari; drsyate — is seen; sa — that; buddhih — intelligence; vimala — spotless; indu — like the moon; sankha — or a conchshell; dhavala — shining white; ya — which; madhava-dhyayini — meditating on Lord Madhava; sa — that; jihva — tongue; amrta — nectar; varsini — raining down; prati-padam — at every step; ya — which; stauti — praises; narayanam — Lord Narayana.

TRANSLATION

That head is the loftiest which is white with dust from bowing down to Lord Krsna. Those eyes are the most beautiful which darkness has abandoned after they have seen Lord Hari. That intelligence is spotless — like the white glow of the moon or a conchshell — which concentrates on Lord Madhava. And that tongue rains down nectar which constantly glorifies Lord Narayana.

PURPORT

Devotional service to Lord Krsna gradually spiritualizes and beautifies all one's senses. Ordinary people may not see how a Vaisnava is being transformed, for only a devotee can appreciate the actual beauty of other devotees. Therefore Srila Rupa Gosvami cautions us in his Upadesamrta (5) against judging a devotee superficially: "One should overlook a devotee's being born in a low family, having a body with a bad complexion, a deformed body, or a diseased or infirm body. According to ordinary vision, such imperfections may seem prominent in the body of a pure devotee, but despite such seeming defects, the body of a pure devotee cannot be polluted. It is exactly like the waters of the Ganges, which during the rainy season are sometimes full of bubbles, foam, and mud [but which remain pure and thus able to purify one who bathes in them]."

Often, however, the transforming power of devotional service is dramatic. Srila Prabhupada would sometimes recall how when he first met many of his future disciples, they were dirty, morose hippies. But as they took to Krsna consciousness, Prabhupada said, they became like bright-faced angels from Vaikuntha.

In the course of the Lord's pastimes, the Lord will sometimes personally cause dramatic changes in His devotees' bodies. As Lord Krsna entered Mathura He met a young hunchback girl who anointed Him with sandalwood pulp that had been meant for King, and in return for her service the Lord straightened her body and changed her into a beautiful girl. Similarly, Lord Caitanya instantly cured the leper Vasudeva. The ultimate bodily transformation takes place when a devotee gains his svarupa, his spiritual body, and enters the spiritual world to worship the Lord in Vaikuntha.

A devotee becomes beautiful by humbling himself in the dust as he offers obeisances to the Lord. By contrast, a proud person who is trying to impress the opposite sex with his or her

so-called beauty will avoid bowing in the dust. But King Kulasekhara recommends it as a kind of beauty treatment. True beauty means that which is pleasing to Lord Krsna.

The devotees' eyes become beautiful by seeing the most beautiful form of Krsna. A reflection of Krsna's radiance shines in the eyes of devotional mystics. Those who saw His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada saw this radiance in his eyes.

The spotless intelligence referred to here is one that is cleansed of all doubts and filled with pure faith in the Lord. One who has attained such clear buddhi, spiritual intelligence, is peaceful and is able to solve all problems, both his own and others'. Therefore the devotees' intelligence is likened to the moon, whose cool, soothing beauty can be seen and appreciated by everyone in the world. Similarly, the tongue of one who glorifies the Lord is said to shower down a rain of nectar, which, like the moonshine, is available to all without distinction.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 20

jihve kirtaya mura- ceto bhaja
 pani-dvandva samarcayacyuta-kathah srotra-dvaya srnu
 krsn lokaya locana-dvaya harer
 jighra ghrana mukunda-pada- murdhan namadhoksajam

SYNONYMS

jihve — O tongue; **kirtaya** — chant the praise; **kesavam** — of Lord Kesava; **mura-ripum** — the enemy of Mura; **cetah** — O mind; **bhaja** — worship; **sri-dharam** — the Lord of Sri, the goddess of fortune; **pani-dvandva** — O two hands; **samarcaya** — serve; **acyuta-kathah** — topics of Lord Acyuta; **srotra-dvaya** — O two ears; **tvam** — you; **srnu** — just hear; **krsnam** — at Krsna; **lokaya** — look; **locana-dvaya** — O two eyes; **hareh** — of Lord Hari; **gaccha** — go to; **anghri-yugma** — O two feet; **alayam** — to the residence; **jighra** — smell; **ghrana** — O nose; **mukunda** — of Lord Mukunda; **pada** — at the feet; **tulasim** — the tulasi flowers; **murdhan** — O head; **nama** — bow down; **adhoksajam** — to Lord Adhoksaja.

TRANSLATION

O tongue, praise the glories of Lord Kesava. O mind, worship the enemy of Mura. O hands, serve the Lord of Sri. O ears, hear the topics of Lord Acyuta. O eyes, gaze upon Sri Krsna. O feet, go to the temple of Lord Hari. O nose, smell the tulasi buds on Lord Mukunda's feet. O head, bow down to Lord Adhoksaja.

PURPORT

Here the poet orders each of his senses to cooperate in serving the Lord. The spirit soul is higher than the senses, and so it is right that he should order them:

indriyani parany ahur indriyebyah manah
 manasas tu para buddhir yo buddheh paratas tu sah

"The working senses are superior to dull matter; mind is higher than the senses; intelligence is still higher than the mind; and he [the soul] is even higher than the intelligence" (Bg. 3.42).

Texts 19 and 20 of Mukunda-mala-stotra call to mind a series of verses by Saunaka Rsi in Srimad-Bhagavatam (2.3.20-24): "One who has not listened to the messages about the prowess and marvelous acts of the Personality of Godhead and has not sung or chanted loudly the worthy songs about the Lord is to be considered to possess earholes like the holes snakes live in and a tongue like the tongue of a frog. The upper portion of the body, though crowned with a silk turban, is only a heavy burden if not bowed down before the Personality of Godhead, who can award mukti [freedom from birth and death]. And the hands, though decorated with glittering bangles, are like those of a dead man if not engaged in the service of the Personality of Godhead, Hari. The eyes which do not look at the symbolic representations [Deity forms] of the Personality of Godhead, Visnu, are like those printed on the plumes of the peacock, and the legs which do not move to the holy places [where the Lord is remembered] are considered to be like tree trunks. The person who has not at any time received the dust of the feet of the Lord's pure devotee upon his head is certainly a dead body. And the person who has never experienced the aroma of the tulasi flowers decorating the lotus feet of the Lord is also a dead body, although breathing. Certainly that heart is steel-framed which, in spite of one's chanting the holy name of the Lord with concentration, does not change and feel ecstasy, at which time

tears fill the eyes and the hairs stand on end."

Each of our senses may help or hinder us in devotional service. If we allow even one sense free rein, it can seriously distract our mind, just as a gust of wind can sweep away an unanchored sailboat on the ocean. The Supreme Personality of Godhead has senses, and so do we, and our perfection lies in serving Hrsikesa (the Lord of the senses) with all of our senses. We may engage our senses in the service of Krsna or in the service of Maya, illusion. The choice is vividly shown in the verses by Kulasekhara and Saunaka Rsi.

For example, our sincere singing (kirtana) may please the Supreme Lord and evoke His mercy, or our materialistic songs will resemble the frog's croaking, which attracts the predator snake — death. Similarly, we may be beautified by bowing our head before the Lord, or that same head, burdened by ornaments and pride, will drag us down into the ocean of birth and death. A person in a high social position is often too proud to humble himself before the Deity in the temple. In that case he will be pulled down by his own pride, just as a man who falls overboard in the ocean is pulled down by his heavy clothes and headdress. In Lord Caitanya's time, King Prataparudra set the perfect example for a worldly leader by performing the menial service of sweeping the road before Lord Jagannatha's chariot. In this way he showed his subordination to the Almighty.

One can best serve the Lord's senses by serving His devotees. Srila Prabhupada states, "Krsna is the property of His pure, unconditioned devotees, and as such only the devotees can deliver Krsna to another devotee; Krsna is never obtainable directly" (Bhag. 2.3.23, purport). A disciple should therefore use his senses to perform all kinds of services for the satisfaction of his guru.

We should engage not only our senses but also our mind in the Lord's service. The mind, after all, provides the impetus for the actions of all the bodily limbs. So thinking of Krsna is the basis of all devotional service. As the Lord instructs in the Bhagavad-gita (9.34), man-mana bhava mad-bhaktah: "Think of Me and become My devotee." The mind fixed in chanting and praying to Krsna will change the heart, which will transform the conditioned soul into a pure devotee. A pure devotee, therefore, is one whose body, mind, and words are all merged in devotional service to Krsna, with no room for illusion.

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Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

Gopiparanadhana dasa Adhikari

Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 21

amnayabhyasanany aranya- veda-vratany anv-
medas-cheda-phalani purta-vidhayah bhasmani
tirthanam avagahanani ca gaja- vina yat-pada-
dvandvambhoruha- vijayate devah sa narayanah

SYNONYMS

amnaya — of the revealed scriptures; **abhyasanani** — studies; **aranya** — in the forest; **ruditam** — crying; **veda** — Vedic; **vratani** — vows of austerity; **anu-aham** — daily; **medah** — of fat; **cheda** — removal; **phalani** — whose result; **purta-vidhayah** — prescribed pious works; **sarvam** — all; **hutam** — oblations offered; **bhasmani** — onto ashes; **tirthanam** — at holy sites; **avagahanani** — acts of bathing; **ca** — and; **gaja** — of an elephant; **snanam** — the bathing; **vina** — without; **yat** — whose; **pada** — of the feet; **dvandva** — the pair; **amboruha** — lotus; **tim** — remembrance; **vijayate** — may He be victorious; **devah** — the Lord; **sah** — He; **narayanah** — Narayana.

TRANSLATION

All glories to Lord Narayana! Without remembrance of His lotus feet, recitation of scripture is merely crying in the wilderness, regular observance of severe vows enjoined in the Vedas is no more than a way to lose weight, execution of prescribed pious duties is like pouring oblations onto ashes, and bathing at various holy sites is no better than an elephant's bath.

PURPORT

Remembrance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the goal of all spiritual practices. One moment's remembrance of Lord Krsna is the greatest fortune, and a moment's forgetfulness of Him is the greatest loss. Therefore even the important religious duties mentioned in this verse become null and void if they do not lead to remembrance of Krsna. Studying the scriptures, visiting temples, observing vows — none of these is unimportant or dispensable for devotees. King Kulasekhara, therefore, condemns them only when they are improperly performed in the name of religion. For example, the studies and meditations of the impersonalists, who deride the personal, spiritual form of the Absolute Truth, are useless. Other useless acts would include austerities performed for political ends or demigod worship aimed at winning material boons. The renunciant may become very skinny, but he will not please the Lord, and therefore he himself will not be pleased at heart. So what is the use of his austerities? As stated in the Narada-pañcaratra:

aradhito yadi haris tapasa tatah kim
naradhito yadi haris tapasa tatah kim
antar bahir yadi haris tapasa tatah kim
nantar bahir yadi haris tapasa tatah kim

"If one is worshiping Lord Hari, what is the use of severe penances? And if one is not worshiping Lord Hari, what is the use of severe penances? If one can understand that Lord Hari is all-pervading, what is the use of severe penances? And if one cannot understand that Lord Hari is all-pervading, what is the use of severe penances?"

The successful devotee has learned to think of the Lord in every conceivable circumstance. Thinking of Krsna is not something to be practiced only when we are removed from our daily occupation, as in solitary meditation. Rather, Lord Krsna instructed Arjuna to "remember Me

and fight." In other words, we are meant to carry out our daily duties and at the same time think of Krsna. Lord Caitanya's injunction to always chant the names of Krsna is the same instruction, given in such a way that we can happily and easily follow it. In the advanced stage, a devotee effortlessly remembers Krsna out of spontaneous love. In the beginning and intermediate stages, one can also think of Krsna day and night, by chanting the holy name and molding one's activities in His service, under the direction of a pure devotee of the Lord.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 22

madana parihara madiye
manasi mukunda-padaravinda-dhamni
hara-nayana-krsanuna krso 'si
smarasi na cakra- murareh

SYNONYMS

madana — O Cupid; **parihara** — give up; **sthitim** — your residence; **madiye** — my; **manasi** — in the mind; **mukunda** — of Lord Mukunda; **pada-aravinda** — of the lotus feet; **dhamni** — which is the abode; **hara** — of Lord Siva; **nayana** — from the eye; **krsanuna** — by the fire; **krsah** — decimated; **asi** — you have become; **smarasi na** — you do not remember; **cakra** — of the disc weapon; **parakramam** — the powerful capability; **mura-areh** — of the enemy of Mura.

TRANSLATION

O Cupid, abandon your residence in my mind, which is now the home of Lord Mukunda's lotus feet. You have already been incinerated by Lord Siva's fiery glance, so why have you forgotten the power of Lord Murari's disc?

PURPORT

This is a bold challenge to Cupid, who can usually subdue everyone, including aspiring transcendentalists. As Lord Kapila says to His mother, "Just try to understand the mighty strength of My maya in the shape of a woman, who by the mere movement of her eyebrows can keep even the greatest conquerors of the world under her grip" (Bhag. 3.31.38).

A devotee can challenge Kamadeva (Cupid) in such a feisty way because devotees constantly meditate on Lord Krsna, who destroys Cupid's influence. Here King Kulasekhara is giving fair warning to Kamadeva to leave the king's mind or risk destruction for a second time. The reference here is to an incident in which Kamadeva tried to shoot his arrows at Lord Siva to arouse lust in him. Lord Siva retaliated by burning Kamadeva to ashes with his glance. Kamadeva should have learned his lesson from that incident. If not, King Kulasekhara warns that Lord Krsna will have no trouble destroying Kamadeva with His disc and freeing His devotee's mind of lust.

Kamadeva is also called Madana, a name that means "one who attracts." But Lord Krsna is known as Madana-mohana, "the bewilderer of Cupid." In other words, Krsna is so transcendently attractive that anyone who absorbs his mind in Him will not be troubled by sex desire. Furthermore, Lord Krsna's consort, Srimati Radharani, is called Madana-mohana-mohini because She alone can captivate even Krsna.

In all the world's religions, ascetics have practiced renunciation, and Kamadeva always tests them and gives them trouble. Often, despite one's best attempts at purification, one thinks of the opposite sex at the time of death. Then one has to come back in the cycle of birth and death, to be again attracted and again suffer the miseries of material life. Even the powerful mystic Visvamitra became a victim of the beauty of Menaka, united with her, and begot Sakuntala.

But the bhaktas have discovered an infallible shelter from Cupid — absorption in the beauty of Krsna. One who is captivated by the beauty of Krsna is not victimized by lust. As Sri Yamunacarya sings,

yad-avadhi mama cetah krsna-padaravinde
nava-nava-rasa-dhamany rantum asit
tad-avadhi bata nari-sangame smaryamane
bhavati mukha-vikarah susthu nist ca

"Since my mind has been engaged in the service of the lotus feet of Lord Krsna and I have been enjoying ever-new transcendental pleasure in that service, whenever I think of sex with a woman my face at once turns from it, and I spit at the thought."

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 23

nathe dhatari bhogi-bhoga-sayane narayane madhave
 deve devaki-nandane sura-vare cakrayudhe sarngini
 lilasesa-jagat-prapañca-jathare visvesvare sridhare
 govinde kuru citta-vrttim acalam anyais tu vartanaih

SYNONYMS

nathe — on your master; **dhatari** — and sustainer; **bhogi** — of the serpent (Ananta Sesa); **bhoga** — on the body; **sayane** — who lies down; **narayane madhave** — known as Narayana and Madhava; **deve** — the Supreme Lord; **devaki-nandane** — the darling son of Devaki; **sura-vare** — the hero of the demigods; **cakra-ayudhe** — the holder of the disc; **sarn-gini** — the possessor of the bow Sarnga; **lila** — as a pastime; **asesa** — endless; **jagat** — universes; **prapañca** — manifestation; **jathare** — in the stomach; **visva** — of the universes; **isvare** — the controller; **sridhare** — the Lord of Sri; **govinde** — on Lord Govinda; **kuru** — place; **citta** — of your mind; **vrttim** — the workings; **acalam** — without deviation; **anyaih** — other; **tu** — conversely; **kim** — what is the use; **vartanaih** — with engagements.

TRANSLATION

Think only of your master and sustainer, the Supreme Lord, who is known as Narayana and Madhava and who lies on the body of the serpent Ananta. He is the darling son of Devaki, the hero of the demigods, and the Lord of the cows, and He holds a conchshell and the bow Sarnga. He is the husband of the goddess of fortune and the controller of all the universes, which He manifests from His abdomen as a pastime. What will you gain by thinking of anything else?

PURPORT

In previous verses King Kulasekhara has instructed his own mind to be fixed at the lotus feet of Krsna, and now he instructs his readers to fix their minds on Him as well. He gives some of the Lord's innumerable names, which describe His qualities and pastimes. Devotees are attracted to serving a specific aspect of the Supreme Lord according to their specific rasa, or loving relationship with Him. One may meditate on and serve any bona fide form of the Lord and derive the same benefit of going back to Godhead. While passing away from the world, Grandfather Bhisma, who was in a chivalrous relationship with Krsna, chanted prayers recalling that aspect of the Lord. Praying that his mind would go unto Krsna, he reviewed the Lord's chivalrous pastimes in his mind: "May He, Lord Sri Krsna, the Personality of Godhead, who awards salvation, be my ultimate destination. On the battlefield He charged me, as if angry because of the wounds dealt by my sharp arrows. His shield was scattered, and His body was smeared with blood due to the wounds" (Bhag. 1.9.38).

In this verse King Kulasekhara instructs us to attain samadhi, or ecstatic concentration on the Supreme. Yogis try to achieve samadhi by perfecting the eightfold yoga process, but this is very difficult. When Krsna recommended this practice to Arjuna, he replied, "O Madhusudana, the system of yoga You have summarized appears impractical and unbearable to me, for the mind is restless and unsteady.... [Controlling the mind] is more difficult than controlling the wind" (Bg. 6.33-34).

By contrast, bhakti-yoga is so easy that anyone can successfully practice it. A sincere soul who chants and hears the holy names of Krsna, and also hears His pastimes and qualities narrated by self-realized devotees, can progress to the highest stages of concentration with an

ease unknown to the followers of other yoga processes.

Why does King Kulasekhara deem as worthless all activities except fixing the mind on Krsna? Because all other acts and thoughts are temporary and thus lead to unending entanglement in material misery. As Srila Prabhupada writes in his Bhagavad-gita commentary, "If one is not in Krsna consciousness, there cannot be a final goal for the mind." By the tricks of fate and the inexorable workings of karma, what appears auspicious and happy one moment may turn into tragedy the next. Like the Supreme Lord, the soul is sac-cid-ananda-vigraha [Bs. 5.1] (eternal and full of bliss and knowledge), and as such he can be fully satisfied only when he unites in bhakti with the Lord. We should join with Bhismadeva in praying, "May His lotus feet always remain the objects of my attraction."



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 24

ma draks ksina-punyan ksanam api bhavato bhakti-hinan padabje
 ma sraus sravya- tava caritam apasyanyad akhyana-jatam
 ma smars madhava tvam api bhuvana-pate cetasapahnuvanan
 ma tvat-saparya-vyatikara-rahito janma-janmantare 'pi

SYNONYMS

ma draksam — may I not look at; **ksina** — depleted; **punyan** — whose credit of piety; **ksanam** — a moment; **api** — even; **bhavatah** — Your; **bhakti** — devotion; **hinan** — devoid of; **pada-abje** — for the lotus feet; **ma srausam** — may I not hear; **sravya** — worth hearing; **bandham** — compositions about which; **tava** — Your; **caritam** — pastimes; **apasya** — putting aside; **anyat** — other; **akhyana** — of narrations; **jatam** — topics; **ma smarsam** — may I not remember; **madhava** — O Madhava; **tvam** — Your; **api** — indeed; **bhuvana** — of the world; **pate** — O master; **cetasa** — mentally; **apahnuvanan** — those who avoid; **ma bhuvam** — may I not become; **tvat** — Your; **saparya** — for the personal service; **vyatikara** — the opportunity; **rahita** — devoid of; **janma-janma-antare** — in repeated rebirths; **api** — even.

TRANSLATION

O Madhava, please do not let me even glance at those whose pious credits are so depleted that they have no devotion for Your lotus feet. Please do not let me be distracted from listening to the worthy narrations of Your pastimes and become interested in other topics. Please, O Lord of the universe, let me pay no attention to those who avoid thinking of You. And let me never be unable to serve You in some menial way, birth after birth.

PURPORT

Like other Vaisnavas' prayers, King Kulasekhara's are characterized by single-minded intensity. A critic might say his attitude doesn't embody the "golden mean" praised in Greek wisdom. The critic might ask, "What's wrong with sometimes serving Krsna and sometimes enjoying yourself in sense gratification? Why be so fanatical as to avoid even glancing at impious persons? And why focus exclusively on the Deity of Lord Visnu?" These questions are not to be answered by reason alone. The devotee's exclusive intensity is dictated by love. It is unreasonable to ask someone in love to be interested in something other than his beloved.

But krsna-bhakti is not an ordinary lover's madness. Sri Krsna is the Absolute Truth, the source of supreme wisdom, and, as such, in the Bhagavad-gita He teaches single-minded devotion to Himself:

bhaktya tv ananyaya sakya aham -vidho 'rjuna
 drast ca tattvena pravest ca parantapa

"My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding" (Bg. 11.54). Furthermore, unlike ordinary, materialistic "love," one-pointed devotion to Krsna does not produce indifference to everyone else besides one's beloved. While in this verse King Kulasekhara expresses his valid wish to avoid the association of nondevotees, out of compassion a pure devotee will "glance at" and "pay attention to" nondevotees for the sake of preaching. When a devotee actually becomes fully absorbed in Krsna, he sees the whole world as the Lord's creation and everything as part and parcel of His energies. Through his exclusive devotion to the Lord, the devotee becomes a mahatma, a high-

souled person who works for the benefit of all living beings by reminding them of their connection with Krsna.

The stage of Krsna consciousness King Kulasekhara desires is not artificial but is the original state of the living being. He is therefore calling out to the Lord to invoke His mercy so that he can return to his original, undistracted, blissful state of samadhi. In the conditioned state, souls are bewildered by innumerable distractions in the name of necessities, sufferings, and enjoyments, and so a devotee prays for the removal of these distractions. The language of devotion may seem extreme to the distracted materialist, but it is actually a prayer for a return to sanity and balance, a return to eternal servitude by the eternal servant of the supreme master.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 25

maj-janmanah phalam madhu-kaitabhare
 mat-prarthaniya-mad-anugraha esa eva
 tvad-bhrtya-bhrtya-paricaraka-bhrtya-bhrtya-
 bhrtyasya bhrtya iti smara loka-natha

SYNONYMS

mat — my; **janmanah** — of the birth; **phalam** — the fruit; **idam** — this; **madhu-kaitabha-are** — O enemy of Madhu and Kaitabha; **mat** — by me; **prarthaniya** — prayed for; **mat** — to me; **anugraha** — mercy; **esah** — this; **eva** — certainly; **tvat** — Your; **bhrtya-bhrtya** — of the servant's servant; **paricaraka** — of the servant; **bhrtya-bhrtya-bhrtyasya** — of the servant of the servant of the servant; **bhrtyah** — the servant; **iti** — so; **mam** — me; **smara** — think of; **loka** — of the world; **natha** — O master.

TRANSLATION

O enemy of Madhu and Kaitabha, O Lord of the universe, the perfection of my life and the most cherished mercy You could show me would be for You to consider me the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of Your servant.

PURPORT

This verse is startling for its repetition of the word "servant" seven times. One can almost picture all the servants of the Lord whom Kulasekhara wishes to serve. Direct servants of Lord Krsna are Srimati Radharani or Lord Balarama and other gopis and cowherd boys. Some of the gopis and cowherd boys are assistants to the direct servants. Among these assistants are the mañjaris, who help Radharani serve Krsna and who, according to Her, experience a happiness even greater than Hers. The Vaisnava spiritual masters, especially those in the madhurya-rasa, serve the gopis, and each spiritual master is being served by his disciples. In the modern age Lord Krsna appeared as Lord Caitanya, who was served directly by the six Gosvamis of Vrndavana, and these Gosvamis also took disciples, such as Krsnadasa Kaviraja, who in turn accepted disciples — and His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada is in the eleventh spiritual generation of that Caitanya-sampradaya. So the phrase tvad-bhrtya-bhrtya-paricaraka-bhrtya-bhrtya-bhrtyasya bhrtyah is not only pleasing poetry, but it is an accurate description of the parampara: each devotee is serving a previous servant of the Lord.

To consider oneself a servant of all the Vaisnavas and to put their foot-dust on one's head is not demeaning; it is the best way to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krsna. Prahlada Maharaja told his father that unless one humbly serves the Vaisnavas and "bathes" in the dust of their lotus feet, one can never attain devotional service to Krsna.

King Kulasekhara says that if the Lord grants this prayer it will be the display of His most cherished mercy. But why does he ask to be so many times removed from direct service? Why not ask simply to be the servant of the Lord? One reason is that the Supreme Lord does not accept direct service without service to His servants. As Krsna states in the Adi Purana,

ye me bhakta-janah partha na me bhaktas ca te janah
 mad ca ye bhaktas te me bhaktatamah matah

"My dear Partha, those who say they are My devotees are not My devotees, but those who

claim to be devotees of My devotees are actually My devotees."

The pure devotee's chief aim is to please his worshipable Lord, and a wise Vaisnava knows what will please Him best — becoming the servant, many times removed, of the Lord's bona fide servants. It is because the servants of God are so dear to the Lord that one can please Him best by pleasing them. Srila Prabhupada compared the process to an ordinary person's attempt to please a very great man. Normally an ordinary man cannot even approach the great man, but if by good fortune he is able to please the great man's pet dog, then he can quickly achieve the favor of the celebrated person.

Another reason a devotee wishes to serve through other devotees is that he is naturally humble. He wants to take that place below, rather than push himself forward. He wants to serve all the devotees, or even worship the place where they have walked. The genuine devotee does not rashly presume that he is a member of the inner circle of the Lord's most dear ones. Lord Caitanya has advised us that if we really wish to chant the holy name constantly, we should consider ourselves "lower than the straw in the street, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and ready to offer all respects to others." We should serve not only recognized devotees but all living entities, by giving them Krsna consciousness.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 26

bruvanani parastan
 madhu ksarantiva mudavahani
 pravartaya prañjalir asmi jihve
 namani narayana-gocarani

SYNONYMS

tattvam — the truth; **bruvanani** — which speak; **param** — supreme; **parastat** — beyond everything superior; **madhu** — honey; **ksaranti** — dripping; **iva** — as if; **muda** — joy; **avahani** — bringing; **pravartaya** — please recite; **prañjalih** — with joined palms; **asmi** — I am; **jihve** — O tongue; **namani** — the names; **narayana-gocarani** — which refer to Lord Narayana.

TRANSLATION

My dear tongue, I stand before you with joined palms and beg you to recite the names of Lord Narayana. These names describing the Supreme Absolute Truth bring great pleasure, as if exuding honey.

PURPORT

At first our tongues may be unwilling to chant the Lord's names. Describing the neophyte chanter, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura states, "Some bear only the burden; others appreciate the true worth of things." Srila Rupa Gosvami also recognizes the plight of the beginner and encourages him to pursue his chanting even though it seems dry and unpleasant: "The holy name, character, pastimes, and activities of Krsna are all transcendently sweet like sugar candy. Although the tongue of one afflicted by the jaundice of avidya, ignorance, cannot taste anything sweet, it is wonderful that if a person simply chants these sweet names carefully every day, a natural relish awakens within his tongue, and his disease is gradually destroyed at the root" (Nectar of Instruction 7).

We may also take heart in the example of Namacarya Haridasa Thakura. Although born in a Muslim family, he received the mercy of the holy name and began to chant Hare Krsna constantly. In this way he achieved the highest perfection of love of Godhead. Indeed, he was such an exalted devotee that Lord Caitanya Himself praised him "as if speaking with five mouths." We cannot imitate Haridasa Thakura, but it is encouraging to know that although one may be lowborn, one can overcome all obstacles by the mercy of the holy name. Moreover, Haridasa Thakura always remained very humble and wanted to remain aware of his material disqualifications. He therefore did not want to associate too intimately with Lord Caitanya, and he did not attempt to enter the temple at Jagannatha Puri. Cultivating humility in the mood of Haridasa Thakura is an absolute requirement for one who wishes to taste the nectar of the holy name and to chant constantly.

The honey within the holy name is remembrance of Krsna. That is why chanting the name brings ecstasy. As Srila Prabhupada writes, "The more one chants the names of Krsna, the more one becomes attached. Thus service by sraavana and kirtana, hearing and chanting about Krsna, is the beginning. The next process is smarana — always remembering Krsna. When one is perfect in hearing and chanting, he will always remember Krsna. In this third stage he becomes the greatest yogi" (The Matchless Gift, p. 89). Whether we are still at the beginning stage of bhakti, afflicted with avidya, or whether we are starting to appreciate "the true worth of things," let us all go on chanting the holy names of the Lord. And let us relish verses from the authorized devotees who tell us of the honey in the holy name, such as this one by Srila

Sanatana Gosvami:

jayati jayati namananda- murarer
viramita-nija-dharma-dhyana-pujadi-yatnam
katham api sakr mukti- pran yat
paramam amrtam bhusan me

"All glories, all glories to the all-blissful holy name of Sri Krsna, which causes the devotee to give up all conventional religious duties, meditation, and worship. When somehow or other uttered even once by a living entity, the holy name awards him liberation. The holy name of Krsna is the highest nectar. It is my very life and my only treasure" (Brhad-bhagavatamrta 1.9).

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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Satsvarupa dasa Goswami
Gopiparanadhana dasa Adhikari

Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 27

namami narayana-pada-
karomi narayana- sada
vadami narayana-nama
smarami narayana-tattvam avyayam

SYNONYMS

namami — I offer obeisances; **narayana** — of Lord Narayana; **pada-pankajam** — to the lotus feet; **karomi** — I do; **narayana** — of Lord Narayana; **pujanam** — worship; **sada** — always; **vadami** — I speak; **narayana** — of Lord Narayana; **nama** — the name; **nirmalam** — free from contamination; **smarami** — I remember; **narayana** — of Narayana; **tattvam** — truth; **avyayam** — infallible.

TRANSLATION

At every moment I bow down to the lotus feet of Narayana, I perform worship to Narayana, I recite the pure name of Narayana, and I reflect on the infallible truth of Narayana.

PURPORT

One may wonder, Is this an exaggeration or perhaps an expression of wishful thinking? The answer is no, this verse describes the practical experience of King Kulasekhara, a pure devotee. Moreover, such absorption in various services to the Lord is possible not only for King Kulasekhara but for all sincere devotees. Such twenty-four-hour engagement in the Lord's service is rarely possible at once, but we can take encouragement from Lord Krsna's words in the Bhagavad-gita (12.9): "If you cannot fix your mind upon Me without deviation, then follow the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga. In this way develop the desire to attain to Me."

King Kulasekhara first states, namami: "I offer obeisances." This refers to bowing down to the Lord physically and mentally, thus praying to Him with one's whole being to be placed, as Lord Caitanya said, as "an atom at [His] lotus feet." We offer obeisances because we recognize the inconceivable greatness of the Supreme Lord, and we beg for awareness of our own tinyness and dependence on Him. In addition to following the regulative principles of devotional service, we should take time regularly to go beyond the mechanical activity of religious duties, beyond all the relative roles we may play with our family and in our religious institution, and to try to recall that we are actually eternal servants of the Supreme Lord and of all living beings.

The preacher of Krsna consciousness should offer mental obeisances to the recipients of his message. Lord Caitanya advised His followers, yare dekha tare kaha krsna-upadesa: "Impart Krsna's teachings to whomever you meet" (Cc. Madhya 7.128). By carrying out this order we offer humble obeisances to the Lord within all living entities.

King Kulasekhara says that he recites the name of Narayana at every moment. Srila Prabhupada advised his followers to do the same: "In our Krsna consciousness movement we are teaching our followers to chant the Hare Krsna mantra continuously on beads. Even those who are not accustomed to this practice are advised to chant at least sixteen rounds on beads so they may be trained.... Sada means 'always.' Haridasa Thakura says nirantara nama lao: 'Chant the Hare Krsna mantra without stopping' " (Cc. Antya 3.139, purport).

To chant all the time one has to follow Lord Caitanya's advice — to think oneself lower than the straw in the street and offer all respects to others. In this way one combines reciting the

Lord's names and offering obeisances. A person who does not offer respects to God and all God's creatures, who is proud of his material acquisitions, cannot call upon the Lord sincerely. Even if he does occasionally chant the Lord's name, he does so with complacency. A devotee who realizes his actual situation of dependence on Kṛṣṇa calls on the name of the Lord the way a child calls upon his mother. And as stated in previous verses, such a chanter tastes unprecedented nectar in the holy name.

King Kulasekhara also reflects on the infallible truth of Narayana. The conclusion (siddhanta) concerning the science of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is received from the scriptures, from the guru, and from authorized sadhus. One should regularly read and hear the Srimad-Bhagavatam, the Bhagavad-gita, the Caitanya-caritamṛta, and similar Vaisnava works, and one should also hear realized devotees explain them. One who does so will eventually be able to see all events in a Kṛṣṇa conscious way. This is known as sastra-caksur, seeing the world with the vision gained through scriptural knowledge.

And so King Kulasekhara has offered four activities that should consume all our time without distraction: offering obeisances to the Lord, worshiping Him, chanting His holy names, and thinking of the conclusive truths concerning Him. These practices are included in the ninefold process of devotional service Pṛahlada Maharaja describes in the Seventh Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam (7.5.23). So whether one performs the activities King Kulasekhara mentions here or adds the ones Pṛahlada Maharaja recommends — praying, worshiping the Deity, becoming the Lord's friend, and so on — one can move from one activity to another, from one thought to another, and yet stay within the internal, spiritual energy of Lord Narayana. Such a fully Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee will transfer at the time of death to the spiritual world, where he will render further services in the blissful company of the Lord and His intimate associates.



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Satsvarupa dasa Goswami
Gopiparanadhana dasa Adhikari

Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 28-29

sri-natha narayana vasudeva
 sri-krsna bhakta-priya cakra-pane
 sri-padmanabhacyuta kaitabhare
 sri-rama padmaksa hare murare
 ananta vaikuntha mukunda krsna
 govinda damodara madhaveti
 samartho 'pi na vakti kascid
 aho vyasanabhimukhyam

SYNONYMS

sri-natha — O Lord of the goddess of fortune; **narayana** — O resort of all living entities; **vasudeva** — O supreme proprietor; **sri-krsna** — O Krsna, son of Devaki; **bhakta** — toward Your devotees; **priya** — O You who are favorably disposed; **cakra** — the disc weapon; **pane** — O You who hold in Your hand; **sri** — divine; **padma-nabha** — O You from whose navel grows a lotus; **acyuta** — O infallible Lord; **kaitabha-are** — O enemy of Kaitabha, sri-rama — O blessed Rama; **padma-aksa** — O lotus-eyed one; **hare** — O remover of misfortune; **mura-are** — O enemy of Mura; **ananta** — O limitless one; **vaikuntha** — O Lord of the spiritual kingdom; **mukunda** — O bestower of liberation; **krsna** — O Krsna; **govinda** — O master of the cows; **damodara** — O You who were tied up as punishment by Your mother; **madhava** — O Lord of the supreme goddess; **iti** — thus; **vaktum** — to speak; **samarthah** — able; **api** — although; **na vakti** — one does not say; **kascit** — anything; **aho** — ah; **jananam** — of people; **vyasana** — toward a danger; **abhimukhyam** — the inclination.

TRANSLATION

O Srinatha, Narayana, Vasudeva, divine Krsna, O kind friend of Your devotees! O Cakrapani, Padmanabha, Acyuta, Kaitabhari, Rama, Padmaksa, Hari, Murari! O Ananta, Vaikuntha, Mukunda, Krsna, Govinda, Damodara, Madhava! Although all people can address You, still they remain silent. Just see how eager they are for their own peril!

PURPORT

The Supreme Personality of Godhead manifests innumerable inconceivable qualities, and to remember and glorify these qualities His devotees address Him by innumerable names. The names themselves are fully invested with the power of the Lord. As Lord Caitanya states in His Siksastaka (2), *namnam akari bahudha nija-sarva-saktis tatarpita niyamitah smarane na kalah*: "O my Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, in Your holy name there is all good fortune for the living entity, and therefore You have many names, such as Krsna and Govinda, by which You expand Yourself. You have invested all Your potencies in those names, and there are no hard and fast rules for chanting them."

Sri Yamunacarya, who appeared in the same sampradaya as King Kulasekhara, composed a verse lamenting that although the Lord is fully accessible by His many names and qualities, the nondevotees do not approach Him, and thus they bring about their own destruction. In Bhagavad-gita (7.15), Lord Krsna summarizes the types of persons who do not surrender to Him:

na duskrino mudhah prapadyante naradhamah
 mayayapahrta-jñana bhavam asritah

"Those miscreants who are grossly foolish, who are the lowest among mankind, whose knowledge is stolen by illusion, and who partake of the atheistic nature of demons do not surrender to Me."

As His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada traveled worldwide spreading the Krsna consciousness movement, he noted that most people could not understand the simplest rudiments of transcendental knowledge. The first lesson of spiritual knowledge is that the self is not the body but rather the soul, and that therefore the soul is the truly important thing. But in Western countries, even among the scholarly elite, people do not understand the nature of the soul, and therefore they fail to understand the real mission of human life — understanding God. One who cannot understand the soul cannot understand God, for the soul is a minute particle of God, and failing to understand the particle, one fails to understand the whole. Instead of even trying to understand the spirit soul, most people ignore it or, even worse, deny its existence entirely. And godless scientists encourage the people in their ignorance by propounding the theory that life arises from matter. Srila Prabhupada decried this atheistic theory and exposed the fact that it could not be proved. Thus he said that civilized countries, especially in the West, were living in a fool's paradise.

King Kulasekhara notes that we ignore God and His many names and activities at our peril. This peril is not only individual but collective. Materialists try to live in a technological paradise, but the paradise is lost when war breaks out or other calamities strike. Although Srila Prabhupada noted that fools become angry when called fools, he never hesitated to boldly criticize the foolish materialists in his books and lectures. But he didn't simply criticize: he offered the teachings and the example that can bring relief to the whole world. He taught the members of his International Society for Krishna Consciousness to live in a way that leaves ample time for spiritual advancement. The Society is meant to be an example for the whole world, a community whose members have reduced their problems and are simply interested living a God-centered life.

Though the four kinds of unsundered persons Krsna mentions in the Bhagavad-gita are not interested in surrendering to Him, the devotees continue their efforts, satisfied to set the example their spiritual master has requested and to help conditioned souls wherever possible.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 30

bhaktapaya-bhujanga-garuda-manis trailokya-raksa-manir
gopi-locana-catakambuda-manih saundarya-mudra-manih
yah kanta-mani-rukmini-ghana-kuca-dvandvaika-bhusa-manih
sreyo deva-sikha-manir disatu no gopala-cuda-manih

SYNONYMS

bhakta — His devotees; **apaya** — who takes away; **bhuja-anga** — whose arms; **garuda** — riding on the great bird Garuda; **manih** — the jewel; **trai-lokya** — of the three worlds; **raksa** — for protection; **manih** — the jewel; **gopi** — of the cowherd girls; **locana** — of the eyes; **cataka** — for the cataka birds; **ambuda** — of clouds; **manih** — the jewel; **saundarya** — displaying beauty; **mudra** — of gestures; **manih** — the jewel; **yah** — who; **kanta** — of consorts; **mani** — who is the jewel; **rukmini** — of Rukmini; **ghana** — full; **kuca-dvandva** — of the two breasts; **eka** — the one; **bhusa** — decorative; **manih** — jewel; **sreyah** — ultimate benefit; **deva** — of the demigods; **sikha-manih** — the crown jewel; **disatu** — may He grant; **nah** — to us; **gopala** — of cowherds; **cuda-manih** — the crest jewel.

TRANSLATION

He is the jewel riding on the back of Garuda, who carries away the Lord's devotees on his wings. He is the magic jewel protecting the three worlds, the jewellike cloud attracting the cataka-bird eyes of the gopis, and the jewel among all who gesture gracefully. He is the only jeweled ornament on the ample breasts of Queen Rukmini, who is herself the jewel of beloved consorts. May that crown jewel of all gods, the best of the cowherds, grant us the supreme benediction.

PURPORT

In this verse King Kulasekhara gives us glimpses of Lord Krsna in some of His various lilas. In each example, the Lord is described as mani, a jewel. Like a jewel, He is self-effulgent, very beautiful, and highly valuable.

Without a jewel, a ring-setting looks empty, and so without Krsna, Garuda would have no extraordinary importance, although he is a large and powerful bird. Without Krsna, the gopis' eyes would have no place to rest and nothing to see, just as a cataka bird remains restless until it sees a rain-bearing and life-giving cloud. As Lord Caitanya says in the mood of a gopi, "The whole world appears vacant without You." In the absence of Krsna, the gods would be without their crest jewel, and their own value would fall away. Thus Lord Krsna is the absolutely essential figure in His own lila in the spiritual world, as well as in all the operations of the material worlds. As He states in the Bhagavad-gita (7.7), "Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread."

When a soul misuses his free will, he tries to become the center of existence and thinks he can do without Krsna. This mistake is illustrated in the story of Satrajit, who once possessed a wondrous jewel called Syamantaka, which he wore in a locket around his neck. When Satrajit entered Dvaraka, Krsna asked him to deliver the jewel to the king, Ugrasena. But instead Satrajit installed the jewel in a temple, worshiped it, and gained 170 pounds of gold daily. Because of his claim that the jewel did not belong to Krsna, King Satrajit and his family suffered in many ways. The king found peace only when he realized that the Syamantaka should be given to the supreme jewel, Lord Krsna. And so he gave both the jewel and his daughter, Satyabhama, to the Lord.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 31

satru-cchedaika- sakalam upanisad-vakya-sampujya-
samucita-tamasah sangha-niryana-mantram
sarvaisvaryaika- vyasana-bhujaga-sandasta-santrana-
jihve sri-krsna- japa japa janma-saphalya-mantram

SYNONYMS

satru — enemies; **cheda** — for destroying; **eka** — the only; **mantram** — mystic chant; **sakalam** — entire; **upanisat** — of the Upanisads; **vakya** — by the words; **sampujya** — worshiped; **mantram** — the mystic chant; — the cycle of birth and death; **uccheda** — which uproots; **mantram** — the mystic chant; **samucita** — accumulated; **tamasah** — of darkness; **sangha** — the mass; **niryana** — for driving away; **mantram** — the mystic chant; **sarva** — all; **aisvarya** — for opulence; **eka** — the only; **mantram** — mystic chant; **vyasana** — of material distress; **bhujaga** — by the snake; **sandasta** — for those who have been bitten; **santrana** — saving; **mantram** — the mystic chant; **jihve** — O my tongue; **sri-krsna** — of Sri Krsna; **mantram** — the mystic chant; **japa japa** — please repeatedly chant; **satatam** — always; **janma** — of one's birth; **saphalya** — for the success; **mantram** — the mystic chant.

TRANSLATION

O tongue, please constantly chant the mantra composed of Sri Krsna's names. This is the only mantra for destroying all enemies, the mantra worshiped by every word of the Upanisads, the mantra that uproots, the mantra that drives away all the darkness of ignorance, the mantra for attaining infinite opulence, the mantra for curing those bitten by the poisonous snake of worldly distress, and the mantra for making one's birth in this world successful.

PURPORT

A mantra is a sound vibration that delivers the mind from illusion. When a person chants a mantra consisting of the Lord's names, his mind is freed of distress and he comes to the state of transcendental peace in God consciousness. Of all such mantras, however, the one King Kulasekhara recommends is a krsna-mantra — in other words, one composed of Krsna's names. One of these is the Hare Krsna maha-mantra, which Lord Caitanya chanted and which the Upanisads proclaim the best mantra for Kali-yuga:

hare krsna hare krsna krsna krsna hare hare
hare rama hare rama rama rama hare hare
iti sod kali-kalmasa-nasanam
natah parataropayah sarva-vedesu drsyate

"Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. These sixteen names composed of thirty-two syllables are the only means of counteracting the evil effects of the Kali-yuga. After searching through all the Vedic literature, one cannot find a method of religion for this age so sublime as the chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra" (Kali-santarana Upanisad).

King Kulasekhara declares that the krsna-mantra destroys one's enemies. We find one confirmation of this in the story of Ajamila, who chanted the name Narayana and was protected from the agents of death. Elsewhere the Srimad-Bhagavatam states,

apannah yan-nama vivaso grnan

tatah sadyo vimucyeta yad bibheti bhayam

"Living beings who are entangled in the complicated meshes of birth and death can be freed immediately by even unconsciously chanting the holy name of Krsna, which is feared by fear personified" (Bhag. 1.1.14). Also, chanting the holy name of Krsna destroys the six mental enemies: lust, anger, greed, illusion, madness, and envy.

Next Kulasekhara says that the krsna-mantra is worshiped throughout the Upanisads. For the most part, the Upanisads describe the personal form of the Lord indirectly, yet they always point toward Krsna. Srila Rupa Gosvami reveals this inner meaning of the Upanisads in his Namastaka (1):

nikhila-sruti-mauli-ratna-mala-
dyuti-nirajita-pada-pankajanta
ayi mukta-kulair
paritas hari-nama

"O Hari-nama! The tips of the toes of Your lotus feet are constantly being worshiped by the glowing radiance emanating from the string of gems known as the Upanisads, the crown jewels of all the Vedas. You are eternally adored by liberated souls such as Narada and Sukadeva. O Hari-nama! I take complete shelter of You."

The krsna-mantra also uproots . Lord Caitanya confirms this in His Siksastaka (1), where He states, bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam: "The congregational chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra extinguishes the blazing fire of repeated birth and death." The krsna-mantra is also most effective for driving away the darkness of ignorance. As Lord Caitanya says in the same verse, vidya-vadhu-jivanam: "Chanting Hare Krsna is the life and soul of transcendental knowledge." Also, the second verse of the Caitanya-caritamrta compares Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityananda, the foremost propagators of the chanting of Krsna's names, to the sun and moon: "They have arisen simultaneously on the horizon of Gauda [Bengal] to dissipate the darkness of ignorance and thus wonderfully bestow benediction upon all." Elaborating on this point, Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja informs us that the material sun and moon are able to dissipate the darkness of the external world, "but these two brothers [Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityananda] dissipate the darkness of the inner core of the heart and thus help one to meet the two kinds of bhagavatas [persons or things related to the Supreme Personality of Godhead]" (Cc. Adi 1.98).

King Kulasekhara glorifies the krsna-mantra as the bestower of infinite opulence. The most valuable thing, even more valuable than the cintamani stone of this world, is love of Godhead. "Simply chanting the Hare Krsna maha-mantra without offenses vanquishes all sinful activity. Thus pure devotional service, which is the cause of love of Godhead, becomes manifest" (Cc. Adi 8.26).

King Kulasekhara also praises the krsna-mantra as a type of medicine that relieves the suffering of those who have been bitten by the snake of material distress. In Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's song Arunodaya-kirtana, Lord Caitanya says to the people of the world, "I have brought the medicine for destroying the illusion of Maya. Now pray for this hari-nama maha-mantra and take it."

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 32

vyamoha-prasamaus muni-mano-vrtti-pravrtyty-
 daityendrarti-karaus tri-bhuvane sañjivanaikausadham
 bhaktatyanta-hitaus bhava-bhaya
 sreya-prapti-karaus piba manah sri-krsna-divyausadham

SYNONYMS

vyamoha — utter bewilderment; **prasama** — for subduing; **ausadham** — the herbal medicine; **muni** — of sages; **manah** — of the minds; **vrtti** — the functioning; **pravrtyty** — which initiates; **ausadham** — the medicine; **daitya** — of the demoniac descendants of Diti; **indra** — for the leaders; **arti** — distress; **kara** — which causes; **ausadham** — the medicine; **tri-bhuvane** — within the three worlds; **sañjivana** — for bringing the dead back to life; **eka** — the only; **ausadham** — medicine; **bhakta** — of the Lord's devotees; **atyanta** — absolute; **hita** — for benefit; **ausadham** — the medicine; **bhava** — of material existence; **bhaya** — fear; — for destroying; **eka** — the only; **ausadham** — medicine; **sreya** — of supreme good; **prapti** — attainment; **kara** — which effects; **ausadham** — the medicine; **piba** — just drink; **manah** — O mind; **sri-krsna** — of Lord Sri Krsna; **divya** — transcendental; **ausadham** — the medicinal herb.

TRANSLATION

O mind, please drink the transcendental medicine of Sri Krsna's glories. It is the perfect medicine for curing the disease of bewilderment, for inspiring sages to engage their minds in meditation, and for tormenting the mighty Daitya demons. It alone is the medicine for restoring the three worlds to life and for bestowing unlimited blessings on the Supreme Lord's devotees. Indeed, it is the only medicine that can destroy one's fear of material existence and lead one to the attainment of the supreme good.

PURPORT

My colleague Gopiparanadhana Prabhu notes, "Mani, mantra, and ausadha [jewels, mantras, and medicine] are often grouped together by Vedic philosophers as examples of things in this world that have acintya-sakti (inconceivable energy)." Since the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His energies are inconceivable, it is understandable why the poets and philosophers compare Him to jewels and medicine and praise the wonderful powers of mantras composed of His names.

Aside from jewels, mantras, and medicine, every living being in the creation possesses acintya-sakti to some degree. Although human beings often consider themselves the most powerful of all God's creatures, many lowly creatures possess abilities far beyond those of human beings. For example, growing grass endures trampling and stays out all night in freezing weather without a protest. A human being is not so tolerant. Frogs possess an inconceivable ability to maintain their lives even while buried under the earth. Hummingbirds and insects are flying machines so sophisticated that they can outmaneuver airplanes in many ways. Although scientists tend to think of their work as demystifying the secrets of the universe, they admit that nature at its most basic level remains inconceivable.

The presence of acintya-sakti in both the smallest and the greatest aspects of the universe should lead us to ask, Who is the source of this inconceivable energy? That source is described in the Brahma- as the acintya-rupa, or inconceivable form, of Lord Govinda, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The process of bhakti-yoga is also inconceivable. Every person fortunate enough to take up the process of Krsna consciousness can attest to the inconceivable potency of the medicine of devotional service. Although we may have tried to give up vices before encountering Krsna consciousness, we could not do so for long. But as soon as we began serving Krsna and the pure devotee and chanting the Lord's holy names, the "impossible" was easily accomplished. The inconceivable energy that brings about these changes is called krsna-sakti.

By the grace of the Supreme Lord, a pure devotee possesses this krsna-sakti, and when he chants the holy name or speaks about Krsna, the potent sound enters the consciousness of the receptive hearer and purifies him. By contrast, when a nondevotee speaks of Krsna or chants His name, the effect on the hearer is not purifying but poisonous. Only one who is directly empowered by the Supreme Lord can spread Krsna consciousness through krsna-sakti. Thus only from the pure devotees can we gain the jewel, mantra, or medicine of devotional service, from which we can derive the inconceivable benefits of love of God.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 33

krsna tvadiya-pada-pankaja-pañjarantam
 adyaiva me visatu manasa-raja-
 prana-prayana-samaye kapha-vata-pittaih
 kanthavarodhana-vidhau smaran kutas te

SYNONYMS

krsna — O Lord Krsna; **tvadiya** — Your; **pada** — feet; **pankaja** — lotus flower; **pañjara** — the network; **antam** — the edge; **adya** — now, at this moment; **eva** — certainly; **me** — my; **visatu** — may enter; **manasa** — mind; **raja** — royal; — swan; **prana-prayana** — of death; **samaye** — at the time; **kapha** — mucus; **vata** — air; **pittaih** — and with bile; **kantha** — throat; **avarodhana-vidhau** — when it is choked; **smaranam** — remembrance; **kutah** — how is it possible; **te** — of You.

TRANSLATION

O Lord Krsna, at this moment let the royal swan of my mind enter the tangled stems of the lotus of Your feet. How will it be possible for me to remember You at the time of death, when my throat will be choked up with mucus, bile, and air?

PURPORT

Of all the verses of the Mukunda-mala-stotra, this one was the most beloved of Srila Prabhupada. He frequently quoted it and sang it as a bhajana. On one of the first record albums His Divine Grace produced, he sang this sloka as a complete song. Devotees who served Srila Prabhupada often heard him sing it as he went about his daily activities, or sometimes alone in his room. He also quoted it many times in his purports. Here he explains it in the purport to the second verse of the Eighth Chapter of his Bhagavad-gita As It Is, in reference to the word prayana-kala, which carries the same meaning as prana-prayana-samaye in Kulasekhara's verse:

Now, the word prayana-kale in this [Bhagavad-gita] verse is very significant because whatever we do in life will be tested at the time of death. Arjuna is very anxious to know of those who are constantly engaged in Krsna consciousness. What should be their position at that final moment? At the time of death all the bodily functions are disrupted, and the mind is not in a proper condition. Thus disturbed by the bodily situation, one may not be able to remember the Supreme Lord. Maharaja Kulasekhara, a great devotee, prays, "My dear Lord, just now I am quite healthy, and it is better that I die immediately so that the swan of my mind can seek entrance at the stem of Your lotus feet." The metaphor is used because the swan, a bird of the water, takes pleasure in digging into the lotus flowers; its sporting proclivity is to enter the lotus flower. Maharaja Kulasekhara says to the Lord, "Now my mind is undisturbed, and I am quite healthy. If I die immediately, thinking of Your lotus feet, then I am sure that my performance of Your devotional service will become perfect. But if I have to wait for my natural death, then I do not know what will happen, because at that time the bodily functions will be disrupted, my throat will be choked up, and I do not know whether I shall be able to chant Your name. Better let me die immediately."

Later in the Eighth Chapter Lord Krsna says that the exact moment of death is crucial: "Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body,... that state he will attain without fail" (Bg. 8.6). And in his purports Srila Prabhupada repeatedly recommends chanting the Hare Krsna mantra as the best process for remembering Krsna at the time of death and

successfully transferring oneself to the spiritual world.

The practical difficulty, brought up in Kulasekhara's verse, is that although it is crucial to remember Krsna at the time of death, that time also produces the greatest disruption of one's physical and mental functions. Srila Prabhupada explained that death occurs when the body becomes so painful that the soul finds it unbearable to live in the body any longer. Therefore the paradox: At the time when we should be the most meditative, fixing our mind on Krsna and preparing to transfer ourselves to the spiritual world, we are also faced with the greatest possible distraction in the form of agonizing pain. Thus here King Kulasekhara prays to die now, in good health, so he will be able to absorb his mind in thoughts of Krsna's lotus feet.

The acaryas have assured us that the essence of Krsna consciousness is our lifelong devotional activities and sentiments. Krsna will not disqualify or discount our accumulated devotional activities due to a last moment epileptic fit or sudden heart failure. Nevertheless, we should always practice chanting Hare Krsna so that we will be able to "pass the test" at the end.

In the Isopanisad (17), a devotee requests the Lord: "[At the moment of my death,] please remember all that I have done for You." In his purport Srila Prabhupada informs us that Krsna does not have to be reminded; He is the witness within our heart, and He also desires — more than we do — that we come back to Him, back to Godhead. Considering the trauma of death and the dangerous quirks of fate, however, Maharaja Kulasekhara prays that he may die immediately rather than wait for old age, when he may forget Krsna in the agony of his death throes.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 34

cetas cintaya kirtayasva rasane namri-bhava siro
 hastav añjali-samput vandasva vapuh
 atman pundarika- nagacalendra-
 punya- tad eva hi sat-siddhaye

SYNONYMS

cetah — O mind; **cintaya** — please think; **kirtayasva** — please glorify; **rasane** — O tongue; **namri** — bowed down; **bhava** — become; **tvam** — you; **sirah** — O head; **hastau** — O hands; **añjali-samputam** — palms folded in supplication; **racayatam** — please make; **vandasva** — please offer obeisances; **dirgham** — outstretched; **vapuh** — O body; **atman** — O heart; — take full shelter; **pundarika** — like lotuses; **nayanam** — of Him whose eyes; **naga** — on the serpent; **acala** — of mountains; **indra** — like the king; **sthitam** — seated; **dhanyam** — all-auspicious; **punya-tamam** — supremely purifying; **tat** — He; **eva** — alone; **paramam** — the topmost; **daivam** — Deity; **hi** — indeed; **sat** — of permanent perfection; **siddhaye** — for the achievement.

TRANSLATION

O mind, think of the lotus-eyed Lord who reclines on the mountainlike serpent Ananta. O tongue, glorify Him. O head, bow down to Him. O hands, join your palms in supplication to Him. O body, offer outstretched obeisances to Him. O heart, take full shelter of Him. That Supreme Lord is the topmost Deity. It is He alone who is all-auspicious and supremely purifying, He alone who awards eternal perfection.

PURPORT

This verse is similar to Text 20, wherein the poet instructs his mind, his tongue, his head, and other parts of his body to serve the Lord with full, reverent devotion. Here King Kulasekhara also offers us some succinct reasons why the Lord is worshipable. He is no mortal being but rather the inconceivable Maha-Visnu, who lies on the serpent couch Ananta Sesha. Lord Sesha is Himself the resting place of all the universes, and Maha-Visnu is the omnipotent source of all creation.

The Supreme Absolute Truth is complete along with His personal energies, who serve and worship Him. Just as a king is complete only when he interacts with his loving subjects, so the Parabrahman is complete along with his worshipers. And the devotees are fully satisfied only when rendering devotional service to the Lord. Throughout his prayers, King Kulasekhara advocates the relationship of the eternal servant with his eternal Lord. He never suggests that the living entities can become one in all respects with the Supreme, or that both the servants and the Lord will ultimately lose their identity in impersonal Brahman. The impersonal theory of the Absolute is an interpretive one, and does not come directly from the Vedic scriptures. The Vedas personified make this statement in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (10.87.30):

aparimita dhruvas tanu-bhrto yadi sarva-gatas
 tarhi na sasyateti niyamo dhruva netaratha
 ajani ca yan- tad avimucya niyantr bhavet
 samam yad mata-dustataya

"O supreme eternal! If the embodied living entities were eternal and all-pervading like You, then they would not be under Your control. But if the living entities are accepted as minute energies of Your Lordship, then they are at once subject to Your supreme control. Therefore

real liberation entails surrender by the living entities to Your control, and that surrender will make them happy. In that constitutional position only can they be controllers. Therefore, men with limited knowledge who advocate the monistic theory that God and the living entities are equal in all respects are actually misleading themselves and others."

Worship of the Supreme Lord is auspicious and purifying. It clears all dirt from our heart, including the illusion that we are the prime mover in our world and the center of enjoyment. To worship someone or something greater than ourselves is natural, but we often mistake a great person or demigod as the proper object of worship. In the Bhagavad-gita Lord Krsna makes it clear that He alone is the only proper object of worship. And in this verse King Kulasekhara reiterates this point by stating that the lotus-eyed Supreme Lord is the topmost Deity. For universal management Lord Krsna expands into many Visnu forms and empowers millions of demigods. Thus there are innumerable deities, or isvaras (controllers), but the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the topmost controller of all.

King Kulasekhara's prayer calls to mind similar prayers in the Srimad-Bhagavatam and other Vedic sastras, uttered by devotees who attained the direct vision (darsana) of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The pure devotees always receive the darsana of the Lord in a mood of worshipful ecstasy. They never consider Him an ordinary human being of this universe; nor do they seek to lose their identities and merge into His impersonal effulgence. The devotional sentiments such as exalted Vaisnavas express evince the natural awakening of the soul as it comes into the presence of the Lord. The soul becomes humbled and purified and worships his beloved Lord with eloquent prayers and praises. In reciprocation, the Lord bestows His mercy upon His devotees.

In this prayer King Kulasekhara speaks of the sat-siddhi, or permanent achievement, awarded by the Supreme Lord. This refers to the personal liberation of going back to Godhead. The jivas are qualitatively one with Krsna, and when they come together with Him, a natural attraction occurs. The devotee then wants to use all his faculties to worship the Supreme Lord, who is auspicious to worship and inconceivably great. As great as He is, however, He doesn't force reciprocation. Krsna makes this clear in the Bhagavad-gita (4.11): "As they approach Me, I reciprocate with them." Thus it is up to the devotee to choose to serve the Lord out of his own free will.

This verse is, therefore, a call to one's free will. It is a prayer to one's own self to not misuse one's God-given faculties but to engage them in the Lord's service and worship. Because Krsna is supremely independent and we are part and parcel of Him, we have minute free will, and so the all-important decision is in our own hands. As Prabhupada would say, "Man is the architect of his own fortune." Hearing the prayers of King Kulasekhara inspires us to use our free will properly.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 35

srnvañ janardana-katha-guna-kirtanani
dehe na yasya pulakodgama-roma-rajih
notpadyate nayanayor vimalambu-mala
dhik tasya jivitam aho purusadhamasya

SYNONYMS

srnvan — hearing; **janardana** — of Lord Janardana; **katha** — histories; **guna** — of His qualities; **kirtanani** — and glorification; **dehe** — in the body; **na** — not; **yasya** — of whom; **pulaka-udgama** — bristling; **roma** — of hair on the limbs; **rajih** — in rows; **na utpadyate** — there does not arise; **nayanayoh** — in the eyes; **vimala** — pure; **amba** — of water; **mala** — a continuous flow; **dhik** — condemnation; **tasya** — of him; **jivitam** — on the life; **aho** — ah; **purusa** — of such a person; **adhamasya** — most degraded.

TRANSLATION

One who hears descriptions of Lord Janardana's pastimes and glorious qualities but whose bodily hair fails to bristle in ecstasy and whose eyes fail to flood with tears of pure love — such a person is indeed the most degraded rascal. What a condemned life he leads!

PURPORT

Hearing authorized descriptions of the Supreme Lord from the Vedic literature should produce ecstasy. This is the symptom of genuine Krsna consciousness. Krsna consciousness is not a subject to be studied as mythology or as comparative religion, and certainly not as a means of reaching impersonal meditation. Merely to be neutral concerning God or to theoretically acknowledge, "Yes, I believe God exists," is not enough. Hearing about Lord Krsna should initially produce a regret within the conditioned soul that he has been so long separated from his master, protector, and best friend. Ultimately, with tears of love, he should feel pure affection with the revival of his natural and all-fulfilling relationship with the Lord.

The process of bhakti has three stages: sambandha, abhidheya, and prayojana. In the first stage one hears from authorized sources and awakens to the understanding of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, oneself, the creation, and the relationship among all these. One then realizes the supreme value of bhakti-yoga, devotional service unto the all-attractive Lord. In the second stage, called abhidheya, one engages in the practical activities of devotional service. This culminates in the final stage, prayojana, in which one achieves pure love of God, the goal of life.

In a Srimad-Bhagavatam verse similar to this one by King Kulasekhara, Sukadeva Gosvami describes the unfortunate position of one who doesn't awaken to the message of Godhead:

tad asma- hr
yad grhyamanair hari-nama-dheyaih
na vikriyetatha yada vikaro
netre gatra-ruhesu harsah

"Certainly that heart is steel-framed which, in spite of one's chanting the holy name of the Lord with concentration, does not change and feel ecstasy, at which time tears fill the eyes and the hairs stand on end" (Bhag. 2.3.24).

The acaryas warn us that pretenders imitate these symptoms, complete with tears and bristling hair. Therefore the most reliable symptoms of advancement are detachment from material pleasures and steady, sincere service to the Lord under the guidance of the spiritual master.

This does not negate, however, the importance of ecstasy. In His Siksastaka (2) Lord Caitanya, taking the role of a conditioned soul, laments that although He chants the holy name, He fails to achieve ecstasy because He is so unfortunate that He cannot stop committing offenses. Thus if we want to progress toward love of Godhead, we must study and carefully avoid the ten offenses to the holy name. (See *The Nectar of Devotion*, p. 72.)

One who is fortunate enough to get the association of a pure devotee of the Lord can rectify all these bad habits. Otherwise, one will remain steel-hearted and unfit to advance in devotional service. Srila Prabhupada writes, "A complete progressive march on the return path home, back to Godhead, will depend on the instruction of the revealed scriptures directed by realized devotees." By serving the pure devotee one will automatically experience the progressive and ecstatic stages of bhakti, without disappointment or imitation.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 36

andhasya me hrta-viveka-maha-dhanasya
cauraih prabho balibhir indriya-namadheyaih
mohandha-kupa-kuhare vinipatitasya
devesa dehi krpanasya karavalambam

SYNONYMS

andhasya — who is blind; **me** — of me; **hrta** — stolen; **viveka** — discrimination; **maha** — great; **dhanasya** — whose wealth; **cauraih** — by thieves; **prabho** — O master; **balibhir** — powerful; **indriya** — as the senses; **namadheyaih** — who are named; **moha** — of delusion; **andha-kupa** — of the pitch-dark well; **kuhare** — into the cavity; **vinipatitasya** — thrown down; **deva** — of the demigods; **isa** — O supreme controller; **dehi** — give; **krpanasya** — to this unfortunate person; **kara** — of the hand; **avalambam** — the aid.

TRANSLATION

O Lord, the powerful thieves of my senses have blinded me by stealing my most precious possession, my discrimination, and they have thrown me deep into the pitch-dark well of delusion. Please, O Lord of lords, extend Your hand and save this wretched soul.

PURPORT

In texts 20, 26, 31, and 34, King Kulasekhara instructed his senses to serve the Lord. But now those same senses have apparently dragged him down into the well of delusion. Of course, the king is a liberated, pure devotee of the Lord, and he is simply taking the role of a fallen conditioned soul for our instruction. But still, one might question why Kulasekhara has first encouraged us with descriptions of proper sensory engagement in the Lord's service — and then discouraged us with this dreary picture of uncontrolled senses casting the hapless soul into the well of delusion.

The answer is that King Kulasekhara is simply giving us a realistic picture of the alternatives faced by the living being in the clutches of the material energy. We need a sober view of Maya's powers if we hope to extricate ourselves. As the Isopanisad (11) states,

ca yas tad saha
avidyaya mr tirtva vidyayamrtam asnute

"Only one who can learn the process of nescience and that of transcendental knowledge side by side can transcend the influence of repeated birth and death and enjoy the full blessings of immortality." The right choice for human beings is vidya, or transcendental knowledge, with restricted sense enjoyment. We are taught about avidya so that we will be fully aware of its dire consequences. Then we can strongly reject it and engage our mind and senses wholeheartedly in devotional service to Krsna. As Lord Krsna states in the Bhagavad-gita (6.5), "A man must elevate himself by his own mind, not degrade himself. The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well."

How to use all of one's faculties in Krsna's service was exemplified by Maharaja Ambarisa, who engaged his mind in meditating on the Lord's lotus feet, his words in glorifying the Lord's transcendental qualities, his hands in cleaning the Lord's temple, his ears in hearing the Lord's pastimes, his eyes in seeing the Lord's transcendental forms, his body in touching the bodies of the Lord's devotees, his sense of smell in smelling the flowers offered to the Deity, his tongue in

tasting the tulasi leaves offered to the Lord, his legs in going to the holy places where the Lord's temples are situated, his head in offering humble obeisances to the Lord, and his desires in fulfilling the Lord's desires.

If despite warnings we follow the wanton dictates of our senses, those senses will lead us into the ditch of deep illusion, just as an unreined horse might drag a chariot into a ditch. If this happens — if we fall deep into sinful life — then our only recourse is to call sincerely upon the Supreme Lord to extricate us. King Kulasekhara's metaphor is not imaginary, for in India a person will sometimes accidentally fall into a dry, overgrown well known as an andha-kupa, or "blind well." Once at the bottom of the well — if he survives the fall — he cannot possibly get out by himself.

Similarly, we cannot extricate ourselves from the deep well of material life unless we grab the rope of mercy lowered by Kṛṣṇa or His representative. As Srila Rupa Goswami prays in his Stava-mala:

manasija-phani-juste labdha-pato 'smi duste
timira-gahana-rupe hanta -kupe
ajita nikhila-raksa-hetum uddhara-daks
upanaya mama haste bhakti te

"Alas, I have fallen into the deep, dark, filthy well of , in which the viper of sex desire dwells. O invincible Lord, the rope of devotional service is the cause of universal protection and is expert at delivering the fallen souls. Please place that rope in my hand. I offer my respectful obeisances unto You."

In a similar mood, Srila Raghunatha dasa Goswami says the following in the fifth verse of his Manah-siksa ("Instructions to the Mind"):

asac-cesta-kasta-prada-vikata-pasalibhir iha
kamadi-prakata-pathapati-vyatikaraih
gale baddhva hanye 'ham iti baka-bhid vartmapa-gane
kuru phut-karan avati sa yatha mana itah

"The highwaymen of lust and his accomplices — greed, etc. — have waylaid me and bound my neck with the horrible ropes of sinful activities. O mind, please scream out for help, crying 'O Kṛṣṇa! O killer of Baka, I am on the verge of death!' If you do this, then Kṛṣṇa will certainly save me."

To be aware of danger is itself a blessing. If we see the disaster of death and rebirth approaching, we will naturally call out to Kṛṣṇa for help. But if we remain in ignorance we will foolishly continue trying to enjoy sense pleasure, not recognizing that sense gratification implicates us in repeated birth and death. However, once we begin sincerely calling on Kṛṣṇa, in full awareness that we are in mortal danger and that He is our only protector, we are already saved.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 37

parinama-
pataty sata-sandhi-jarjaram
kim aus prcchasi mudha durmate
krsna piba

SYNONYMS

idam — this; **sariram** — body; **parinama** — as subject to transformation; **pesalam** — attractive; **patati** — falls down; **avasyam** — inevitably; **sata** — hundreds; **sandhi** — joints; **jarjaram** — having become decrepit; **kim** — why; **ausadham** — for medication; **prcchasi** — you are asking; **mudha** — deluded; **durmate** — O fool; **niramayam** — prophylactic; **krsna** — of Krsna; **rasa-ayanam** — the elixir; **piba** — just drink.

TRANSLATION

This body's beauty is fleeting, and at last the body must succumb to death after its hundreds of joints have stiffened with old age. So why, bewildered fool, are you asking for medication? Just take the Krsna elixir, the one cure that never fails.

PURPORT

Youth is often blind and deaf to the warnings of oncoming old age and death. A passionate young person may think that such admonitions are for old-timers who do not know how to enjoy. Many so-called philosophers encourage this hedonistic attitude, which is precisely the attitude King Kulasekhara is condemning in this verse. The hedonists advise, "Enjoy as much as you can while you're young, because you only live once." Not only is this advice morally unsound, but its premise is untrue: according to Vedic wisdom, our present life is only one in a series of innumerable lives we've experienced and will experience in innumerable bodies. Thus hedonism is a prescription for disaster, for the karmic reactions to a misspent youth will cause us to suffer in this lifetime and the next. In his poem Saranagati, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura outlines the story of the conditioned soul who wastes a brief lifetime:

I drank the deadly poison of worldliness, pretending it was nectar, and now the sun is setting on the horizon of my life. So soon has old age arrived and all happiness departed! Wracked by disease, troubled and weak, I find all my senses feeble now, my body wrecked and exhausted and my spirits downcast in the absence of youthful pleasures.

Since I lack even a particle of devotion and am devoid of all enlightenment, what help is there for me now? Only You, O Lord, O friend of the fallen, can help me. I am certainly fallen, the lowest of men. So please lift me up and place me at Your lotus feet.

King Kulasekhara berates the foolish old person whose only response to his failing health is to seek some medicine. No medicine in the material world can prevent old age and disease, though modern allopathic medicine may temporarily cover the symptoms. The only medicine that can actually bring relief is the Krsna elixir — Krsna consciousness. It is sheer folly to turn solely to doctors in old age instead of to Krsna.

One can see enlightenment among the elderly at pilgrimage sites in India, especially in Vrndavana. There one sees many old people visiting temples with intense devotion early in the morning. Hundreds of old people walk the circumambulation (parikrama) paths despite physical debilities. Some are bent nearly double! Someone might criticize that these people are not being

provided with the Western medical treatment that could add a few years to their lives or ease their pain. But the sincere babajis and widows of Vrndavana who somehow make their way every morning to see Krsna in the temples and who call out "Jaya Radhe!" are actually fortunate and most intelligent. They are taking the krsna-rasayana, the elixir that will grant them eternal life in Krsna's spiritual abode. The Vedic sastras recommend that one drink this elixir from the beginning of life, but even if one neglects to do so earlier, one should by all means drink it during the waning days of life and thus cure the disease of repeated birth and death.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 38

ascaryam etad dhi manusya-loke
 parityajya vis pibanti
 namani narayana-gocarani
 tyaktvanya-vacah kuhakah pathanti

SYNONYMS

ascaryam — wonder; **etat** — this; **hi** — indeed; **manusya** — of human beings; **loke** — in the world; **sudham** — life-giving nectar; **parityajya** — rejecting; **visam** — poison; **pibanti** — people drink; **namani** — the names; **narayana-gocarani** — which refer to Lord Narayana; **tyaktva** — avoiding; **anya** — other; **vacah** — words; **kuhakah** — rogues; **pathanti** — they recite.

TRANSLATION

The greatest wonder in human society is this: People are so incorrigible that they reject the life-giving nectar of Lord Narayana's names and instead drink poison by speaking everything else.

PURPORT

This verse reminds us of the verse in the Mahabharata (Vana-parva 313.116) in which Maharaja Yudhisthira answers this question from his father, Yamaraja: "What is the most amazing thing in the world?" Yudhisthira replies,

ahany ahani bhutani
 gacchantiha yamalayam
 sesah sthavaram icchanti
 kim ascaryam atah param

"Day after day countless living entities in this world go to the kingdom of death. Still, those who remain aspire for a permanent situation here. What could be more amazing than this?"

Both King Kulasekhara and Maharaja Yudhisthira use the word *ascaryam*, "amazing," in the sense of amazingly stupid. Yudhisthira is amazed that people can be so stupid and self-destructive that they refuse to recognize their impending deaths and thus misuse their brief human lives by failing to prepare for the next life. Kulasekhara is amazed that people don't chant the holy names of God, although by this simple act they could gain eternal life. It is amazing that instead of blissfully drinking the nectar of the holy names, people drink the poison of worldly talk. As we have noted before, Srila Prabhupada compared such worldly "chanting" to a frog's croaking, which attracts the snake — death.

One might argue that chanting the holy names is not everything. Can't we also meditate on Brahman and discuss many worthy philosophical topics? Why does King Kulasekhara condemn us just because we don't chant the names of God? The reason is that chanting the holy name has been directly given for all humanity as the *yuga-dharma*, the religion of the age. Spiritual methods such as yoga meditation were recommended for past millenniums, when conditions were more favorable. For this age, all Vedic scriptures and spiritual authorities have declared that chanting the holy names is the easiest method and also the topmost. To refuse it is stubbornness and foolishness

In 1970, when devotees of the Krsna consciousness movement were publicly chanting hari-nama daily in Berkeley, California, Dr. J. F. Staal, professor of philosophy and South Asian languages at the University of California, objected in a newspaper interview that the Krsna consciousness movement was not bona fide because "[the devotees] spend too much time chanting to develop a philosophy." In an ensuing exchange of letters between Srila Prabhupada and Dr. Staal, Prabhupada quoted many scriptures to prove that chanting should be emphasized above all other practices for spiritual advancement. Dr. Staal had said that the Bhagavad-gita does not recommend constant chanting, but Prabhupada reminded him of verse 9.14, wherein Krsna says about the mahatmas, or great souls: kirtayanto mam. "[They] are always chanting My glories."

Srila Prabhupada quoted other verses from the Bhagavad-gita, as well as from the Svetasvatara Upanisad and the Narada Pañcaratra, confirming the importance of chanting the Hare Krsna mantra. When the professor replied that he could also produce quotes to counter the Vedic conclusion, Prabhupada agreed that the quoting could go back and forth forever without producing a conclusion. Therefore, Prabhupada suggested, instead of arguing fruitlessly they should accept the judgment of an impeccable authority, such as Lord Caitanya. Srila Prabhupada also pointed out that one could judge the effectiveness of chanting the holy names by seeing how young Westerners were becoming sanctified devotees of the Lord simply by following that process.

If speculative discussion on transcendental subjects is less valuable than chanting the holy names, then mundane talks are absolutely worthless. Unfortunately, most people are unaware that the goal of human life is liberation from birth and death. So they find nothing wrong in chattering away from morning till night on topics totally irrelevant to their liberation. The acaryas give them innumerable warnings about the folly of wasting one's life in this way, and the material nature gives them many stiff lessons to teach them that finding permanent happiness here is a hopeless dream. But the "wonderful thing" is that people ignore their own mortality and refuse the life-giving nectar of the holy names in favor of the deadly poison of mundane talks.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 39

tyajantu bandhavah sarve
nindantu guravo janah
tathapi paramanando
govindo mama jivanam

SYNONYMS

tyajantu — may they reject me; **bandhavah** — relatives; **sarve** — all; **nindantu** — may they condemn; **guravah** — superior; **janah** — persons; **tatha api** — nonetheless; **parama** — supreme; **anandah** — the embodiment of bliss; **govindah** — Lord Govinda; **mama** — my; **jivanam** — very life.

TRANSLATION

Let my relatives all abandon me and my superiors condemn me. Still, the supremely blissful Govinda remains my life and soul.

PURPORT

Ordinary people may condemn the Lord's devotees as ignorant fools, but the truly learned never do so. As Prahlada Maharaja states, "One who has dedicated his life to Krsna through the nine methods of bhakti should be understood to be the most learned person, for he has acquired complete knowledge" (Bhag. 7.5.24). But in the Kali-yuga, out of ignorance people mock the saintly devotees and praise demonic leaders in government, entertainment, and sports. Taking courage from the examples of saints like King Kulasekhara and others, the devotees should not be ashamed when ordinary people disrespect them. They should be very concerned, however, that the Vaisnavas and the Supreme Lord are pleased with their behavior.

Even the sage Narada was condemned for his devotional activities: Daksa cursed him because he taught renunciation to Daksa's sons. Narada remained tolerant, however, and continued traveling and preaching. The aim of Narada and the devotees who follow his example is not to disrupt people's lives, but if their work is misunderstood, they must not abandon their duty but must continue their mission on behalf of the Lord. Srila Prabhupada writes, "Because Narada Muni and the members of his disciplic succession disrupt friendships and family life, they are sometimes accused of being sauhrda-ghna, creators of enmity between relatives. Actually such devotees are friends of every living entity (suhra sarva-bhutanam), but they are misunderstood to be enemies. Preaching can be a difficult, thankless task, but a preacher must follow the orders of the Supreme Lord and be unafraid of materialistic persons" (Bhag. 6.5.39, purport). Conclusion: A devotee should remain happy executing his duty and not develop a "persecution complex."

The sentiment King Kulasekhara expresses here is echoed by Madhavendra Puri in one of his verses: "Let the sharp moralist accuse me of being illusioned; I do not mind. Experts in Vedic activities may slander me as being misled, friends and relatives may call me frustrated, my brothers may call me a fool, the wealthy mammonites may point me out as mad, and the learned philosophers may assert that I am much too proud. Still my mind does not budge an inch from the determination to serve the lotus feet of Govinda, though I am unable to do so."





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Gopiparanadhana dasa Adhikari

Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 40

bravimi manujah svayam urdhva-bahur
 yo yo mukunda janardaneti
 jivo japaty anu- marane rane va
 pasana-kastha-sadrsaya dadaty abhistam

SYNONYMS

satyam — the truth; **bravimi** — I am speaking; **manujah** — O humans; **svayam** — myself; **urdhva** — with raised; **bahuh** — arms; **yah yah** — whoever; **mukunda janardana** — O Mukunda, Janardana; **iti** — thus saying; **jivah** — a living being; **japati** — chants; **anu-dinam** — every day; **marane** — at the time of death; **rane** — during battle; **va** — or; **pasana** — stone; **kastha** — or wood; **sadrsaya** — to a state of similarity with; **dadati** — he renders; **abhistam** — his cherished desires.

TRANSLATION

O mankind, with arms raised high I declare the truth! Any mortal who chants the names Mukunda, Nr, and Janardana day after day, even in battle or when facing death, will come to regard his most cherished ambitions as no more valuable than a stone or a block of wood.

PURPORT

Even those who sincerely endeavor for self-improvement know that it is very hard to quell cherished ambitions. Sometimes these ambitions are so grandiose that we keep them secret, yet we cherish them within. An obscure, untalented man thinks he may one day become the dictator of the world. An unpublished poet dreams he will become the next Shakespeare. And so on. The materialists are always being encouraged to fan the fires of their ambition; even children are encouraged by their parents to "get ahead."

But pure devotees of the Lord are well aware that all worldly ambitions are useless. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, to instruct us, criticizes his own mind and asks, "Why are you after fame? Don't you know it is as worthless as the dung of a boar?" Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami uses an equally graphic metaphor to criticize his mind in his Manah-siksa, comparing the desire for fame to a filthy dog-eater dancing in his heart. Devotees, then, must always be vigilant that the subtle desire for name, fame, and high position, technically called pratisthasa, does not arise within the heart, since it blocks pure love for Krsna from entering there.

In contrast to a devotee, an impersonalist finds it impossible to cleanse his heart completely of materialistic ambition. Even after he subdues some of the grosser ambitions, he still maintains the impossible wish to "become God." Srila Prabhupada called this desire to become one in all respects with the Absolute Truth "the last snare of Maya." And the demigods, in their prayers to Krsna while He was still in the womb of Devaki, have given the last word on the impersonalists' so-called liberation of merging with the Absolute Truth:

ye 'nye 'ravindaksa vimukta-maninas
 tvayy asta-bhavad avisuddha-buddhayah
 aruhya krcchrena tatah
 patanty adho 'nadrta-yusmad-anghrayah

"O lotus-eyed Lord, although nondevotees who accept severe austerities and penances to

achieve the highest position may think themselves liberated, their intelligence is impure. They fall down from their position of imagined superiority because they have no regard for Your lotus feet" (Bhag. 10.2.32).

King Kulasekhara advises us how to rid ourselves of all material ambitions: We should chant the holy names of God — Mukunda, Nr, and Janardana. These are all names of Krsna, and as such they are contained within the maha-mantra: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Chanting the names of Krsna awakens one's love for Him, and then all one's material ambitions vanish. Srila Prabhupada used to say that just as when someone gets a million dollars all his ten-dollar and hundred-dollar problems are automatically solved, so when we attain pure love for Krsna all our petty material needs and desires pale to insignificance. Chanting the name of the Lord in pure ecstatic love puts the devotee in direct touch with the wonderful forms, qualities, and pastimes of the Lord; in that state the devotee is fully satisfied and loses all traces of egoistic ambition. He becomes happy simply to worship, serve, and be with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The history of Dhruva Maharaja illustrates the purifying power of Krsna consciousness. Dhruva sought out the Supreme Lord as a way to obtain a material kingdom. But after he had performed severe austerities and came face to face with Lord Visnu, he declared, svamin krtartho 'smi na yace: "My dear Lord, I am fully satisfied. I do not ask from You any benediction for material sense gratification" (Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya).

Love of God is dormant within everyone, and to realize that love is to fulfill the purest ambition. The Vaisnava acaryas never advise us to try to kill our ambitious spirit; rather, they instruct us to desire only to awaken our taste for pure devotional service.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 41

narayanaya nama ity amum eva
 -ghora-visa-nirharanaya nityam
 srnvantu bhavya-matayo yatayo 'nuragad
 uccaistaram upadisamy aham urdhva-bahuh

SYNONYMS

narayanaya namah iti — "obeisances to Narayana"; **amum** — this; **eva** — indeed; **mantram** — invocation; — of the cycle of material existence; **ghora** — terrible; **visa** — from the poison; **nirharanaya** — for deliverance; **nityam** — always; **srnvantu** — they should hear; **bhavya** — good; **matayah** — of intelligence; **yatayah** — members of the renounced order; **anuragat** — out of love; **uccaih-taram** — very loudly; **upadisami** — am advising; **aham** — I; **urdhva-bahuh** — with arms raised.

TRANSLATION

Raising my arms, I utter this compassionate advice as loudly as I can: If those in the renounced order want to be delivered from the terrible, poisonous condition of material life, they should have the good sense to constantly hear the mantra namo narayanaya.

PURPORT

King Kulasekhara addresses this verse to those who are renounced and also intelligent — two qualities essential for becoming fully Krsna conscious.

As for renunciation, it is the basis of advancement on the path of yoga. In the Bhagavad-gita (6.2) Lord Krsna states, "What is called renunciation is the same as yoga, or linking oneself with the Supreme, for no one can become a yogi unless he renounces the desire for sense gratification." In Kulasekhara's verse, the word *yatayah*, translated as "members of the renounced order," refers not only to those who have formally accepted the *sannyasa*, or mendicant, order, but to all those who have embraced the true spirit of renunciation. Krsna defines *sannyasa* as follows: "One who is unattached to the fruits of his work and who works as he is obligated is in the renounced order of life, and he is the true mystic, not he who lights no fire and performs no work" (Bg. 6.1). In other words, anyone who works solely for the pleasure of Krsna, without a tinge of self-interest, has attained true renunciation.

Intelligence is also required to perform devotional service, especially to take up the chanting of the holy names. As Karabhajana Muni says to King Nimi in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.5.32),

krsna-varn tvisakrsn parsadam
 yajñair sankirtana-prayair yajanta hi su-medhasah

"In the Age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting of the holy names of God to worship the incarnation of Godhead who constantly sings the names of Krsna. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Krsna Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons, and confidential companions."

Intelligence is not gauged by IQ examinations but by the ability to distinguish the permanent from the temporary, the true from the false, the good from the bad — and to act on

that understanding. One can acquire such genuine intelligence only by hearing from a bona fide spiritual master and the authorized Vaisnava scriptures. Then one will have the good sense to sacrifice immediate, temporary sense pleasures (preyas) in the interests of attaining the permanent good (sreyas): pure love of God and liberation from birth and death.

In the previous two verses King Kulasekhara has expressed himself emphatically, raising his arms and chanting as loudly as he can. He has learned the most precious secret of existence and does not wish to hide it. That which is of such inestimable value — the mantra composed of the names of God — should not be kept secret. People should not be denied access to it, even if they seem unqualified. Once the acarya Ramanuja was given a secret mantra by his guru, who told him that revealing it would be detrimental to his spiritual advancement. But Ramanuja loudly chanted the potent mantra and taught it to the people in general. When his guru asked him why he had done this, Ramanuja said that if the mantra was beneficial, then he wished to give it to everyone, even at the risk of going to hell. This mood is reflected in Lord Caitanya and His sankirtana movement: "Not considering who asked for it and who did not, and who is fit and who is unfit to receive it, Caitanya Mahaprabhu distributed the fruit of devotional service" (Cc. Adi 9.29.36).

Especially in the present age, most people do not have sufficient good karma to attain renunciation or higher intelligence. And yet every living entity, being a pure spirit soul, originally has all good qualities. The acaryas and preachers help conditioned souls bring out their dormant good qualities by inducing them to chant the holy names. Again and again King Kulasekhara recommends hari-nama, in the form of both congregational chanting (sankirtana) and individual meditative chanting (japa). There are no hard and fast rules for chanting the holy names of the Lord, but what is a hard and fast rule, especially in this age, is that everyone must take part in calling on God by His innumerable names.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 42

naiva nivartate ksanam api sri-krsna-padambujan
nindantu priya-bandhava guru-jana grhnantu muñcantu va
parighosayantu manuja kalanko 'stu va
tadrk-prema-dharanuraga-madhuna mattaya tu me

SYNONYMS

cittam — the mind; **na eva** — never; **nivartate** — turns away; **ksanam api** — even for a moment; **sri-krsna-pada-ambujat** — from the lotus feet of Sri Krsna; **nindantu** — let them criticize; **priya** — dear ones; **bandhavah** — and other relatives; **guru-janah** — superior; **grhnantu** — let them accept; **muñcantu** — reject; **va** — or; **durvadham** — calumny; **parighosayantu** — let them proclaim; **manujah** — people; — on the family; **kalankah** — a dirty spot; **astu** — let there be; **va** — or; **tadrk** — such as this; **prema** — of love of Godhead; **dhara** — the abundance; **anuraga** — of sentiments of attractions; **madhuna** — with the sweet honey; **mattaya** — who is maddened; **manam** — respect; **tu** — however; **me** — for me.

TRANSLATION

My mind cannot turn from Sri Krsna's lotus feet, even for a moment. So let my dear ones and other relatives criticize me, my superiors accept or reject me as they like, the common people spread evil gossip about me, and my family's reputation be sullied. For a madman like me, it is honor enough to feel this flood of love of Godhead, which brings such sweet emotions of attraction for my Lord.

PURPORT

King Kulasekhara again expresses his lack of concern about suffering ill repute due to his intense devotion to Lord Krsna. If devotional service resulted in such criticism hundreds of years ago in India, then how much more calumny must devotees undergo in modern countries that have no heritage of worshiping at the lotus feet of Sri Krsna! Therefore King Kulasekhara gives us a realistic warning — and assurance not to be afraid of criticism.

When Lord Krsna enjoyed His pastimes in Vrndavana five thousand years ago, the gopis, His dearest devotees, also risked their reputations to serve Him. In the middle of the full-moon night of the autumn season, He called the gopis by playing His transcendental flute, and they all rushed out to meet Him. Disregarding the commands of their husbands, brothers, and other relatives, ignoring such duties as suckling their children and cooking, they broke all the bonds of Vedic propriety and went to meet their lover, Krsna. The Lord very much appreciated this daring sacrifice by the gopis. As stated in Caitanya-caritamṛta, "The gopis have forsaken everything, including their own relatives and their punishment and scolding, for the sake of serving Lord Krsna. They render loving service to Him for the sake of His enjoyment" (Cc. Adī 4.169).

A devotee knows that he is pleasing Lord Krsna when he pleases the representative of Krsna, and also when he feels spiritual satisfaction (yenatmasu-prasidati). At that time he doesn't care about any volume of worldly criticism. When a surrendered devotee faces slights and ostracism, these simply help crush any lingering desire he may have to enjoy the company of family and friends. In this way Krsna severs the worldly ties of His devotee and brings him entirely under His control and within His shelter.

King Kulasekhara tells us why he can endure criticism without much pain: He is feeling an

abundance of love of Godhead, accompanied by varieties of ecstatic emotions, and he considers this to be so wonderful and honorable that he can easily tolerate the petty insults of nondevotees. This kind of indifference is the effect of advancement in chanting the holy names, as explained in the following verse from Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.2.40), which Lord Caitanya says embodies the essence of the Bhagavatam's teachings:

-vratah sva-priya-nama-kirtya
jatanurago druta-citta uccaih
hasaty atho roditi rauti gayaty
unmada-van nrtyati loka-bahyah

"By chanting the holy name of the Supreme Lord, one comes to the stage of love of Godhead. Then the devotee is fixed in his vow as an eternal servant of the Lord, and he gradually becomes very much attached to a particular name and form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As his heart melts with ecstatic love, he laughs very loudly or cries or shouts. Sometimes he sings and dances like a madman, for he is indifferent to public opinion."

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 43

krsno raksatu no jagat-traya-guruh krsn sada
krsnenakhila-satravo vinihatah krsnaya tasmai namah
krsnad eva jagad krsnasya daso 'smy
krsne tisthati visvam etad he krsna raksasva mam

SYNONYMS

krsnah — Krsna; **raksatu** — may He protect; **nah** — us; **jagat** — of the worlds; **traya** — three; **guruh** — the spiritual master; **krsnam** — to Krsna; **namadhvam** — all of you bow down; **sada** — constantly; **krsnena** — by Krsna; **akhila** — all; **satravah** — enemies; **vinihatah** — killed; **krsnaya** — to Krsna; **tasmai** — Him; **namah** — obeisances; **krsnat** — from Krsna; **eva** — alone; **samutthitam** — risen; **jagat** — world; **idam** — this; **krsnasya** — of Krsna; **dasah** — the servant; **asmi** — am; **aham** — I; **krsne** — in Krsna; **tisthati** — stands; **visvam** — universe; **etat** — this; **akhilam** — entire; **he krsna** — O Krsna; **raksasva mam** — protect me.

TRANSLATION

May Krsna, the spiritual master of the three worlds, protect us. Continually bow down to Krsna. Krsna has killed all our enemies. Obeisances to Krsna. From Krsna alone this world has come into being. I am the servant of Krsna. This entire universe rests within Krsna. O Krsna, please protect me!

PURPORT

Gopiparanadhana Prabhu notes, "This verse uses each of the eight grammatical cases of the word Krsna, one after another." By this Krsna-ized Sanskrit composition, the poet reveals various ways to approach Lord Krsna's name and pastimes.

This verse is reminiscent of how Lord Caitanya (then known as Nimai Pandita) taught Sanskrit grammar when He was a sixteen-year-old schoolmaster. He opened His own catus-pathī (village school) in the area of Navadvīpa, and at first He would teach grammar in the traditional way. But after returning from Gaya, where He received initiation from Śrīla Isvara Puri, He would simply explain Krsna in all the readings of grammar. Śrīla Prabhupada writes, "In order to please Lord Caitanya, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī later composed a grammar in Sanskrit in which all the rules of the grammar are exemplified with the holy names of the Lord. This grammar is still current and is known as Hari-namamṛta-vyakarana and is prescribed by the syllabus of Sanskrit schools in Bengal even today" (Srimad-Bhagavatam Introduction).

Here King Kulasekhara addresses Lord Krsna as the spiritual master of the three worlds, the killer of enemies, and the creator and maintainer of the universe. Although the Supreme Lord appoints intermediaries to represent Him as guru, protector, creator, and maintainer, Lord Krsna is the ultimate person behind all those who act on His behalf. The bona fide initiating and instructing gurus faithfully carry the message of the original guru, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Also, the Lord is a guru in a more direct sense, since He personally becomes a spiritual master for any aspiring devotee, even today, through His teachings in the Bhagavad-gīta. And as the caitya-guru, the spiritual master within the heart, He is also the personal inner guide for every living being. In a similar way, Lord Krsna protects all jivas as Maha-Visnu when they merge into Him at the time of universal annihilation, and He kills demons for the benefit of all human beings when He appears in His various avatars.

Although one should not expect the Lord to come running to protect us or teach us, as if

He were our servant, a sincere devotee should expect Krsna's guidance and protection — and also accept them in whatever form they come. The standard method of receiving Krsna's instructions and protection is through the parampara, or disciplic succession, which embodies the combined potency of guru, sastra, and sadhu (the spiritual master, the scriptures, and the saintly devotees). Therefore we may all call out directly to the Lord, "O Krsna, please protect me!" and receive His mercy in parampara.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 44

he gopalaka he krpa-jala-nidhe he sindhu-kanya-pate
 gajendra-karuna-parina he madhava
 he ramanuja he jagat-traya-guro he pundarikaksa
 he gopijana-natha palaya janami na vina

SYNONYMS

he gopalaka — O cowherd boy; he — O; krpa — of mercy; jala-nidhe — ocean; he — O; sindhu — of the ocean; kanya — of the daughter (goddess Laksmi, who took birth from the Milk Ocean); pate — husband; he -antaka — O killer of ; he — O; gaja-indra — to the king of the elephants; karuna — with mercy; parina — full; he madhava — O Lord Madhava; he rama-anuja — O younger brother of Lord Balarama; he — O; jagat-traya — of the three worlds; guro — spiritual master; he — O; pundarika-aksa — lotus-eyed one; mam — me; he — O; gopi-jana — of the cowherd women of Vraja; natha — master; palaya — please protect; param — supreme; janami na — I do not know; tvam vina — other than You.

TRANSLATION

O young cowherd boy! O ocean of mercy! O husband of Laksmi, the ocean's daughter! O killer of ! O merciful benefactor of Gajendra! O Madhava! O younger brother of Rama! O spiritual master of the three worlds! O lotus-eyed Lord of the gopis! I know no one greater than You. Please protect me.

PURPORT

King Kulasekhara's prayers are all addressed to the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His various expansions and incarnations. Sometimes he addresses Lord Narayana or Lord Rama, but very frequently he specifies Lord Krsna as his object of special attraction. According to the Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.3.28), Lord Krsna is in fact the source of all incarnations and expansions:

ete kalah krsnas tu bhagavan svayam
 indrari- mrdayanti yuge yuge

"All [these] incarnations are either plenary portions or portions of the plenary portions of the Lord, but Lord Sri Krsna is the original Personality of Godhead Himself. In every age He protects the world through His different features when the world is disturbed by the enemies of Indra" (Bhag. 1.3.28).

In his famous "Govinda Prayers" in the Brahma-, Lord Brahma teaches this same conclusive truth, or siddhanta — namely, that all incarnations of Godhead and all demigods, as well as all the material and spiritual worlds and their constitutional elements, originate from Lord Krsna, or Govinda: govindam adi-purus tam bhajami **.

In Text 43 King Kulasekhara directly used the name Krsna nine times, while in the present verse he calls on Krsna by names that refer to His pastimes. The names in this verse are all as good as the name Krsna, since they all arise from krsna-lila, in which the Lord is known variously as Gopala (a cowherd), as Ramanuja (the younger brother of Balarama), or as Gopijananaatha (the Lord of the gopis). Ultimately, all names of God refer to Krsna. For a Krsna devotee, whether God is addressed by the name Krsna or other names — even names of God from other religions — the devotee, following the conclusion of the

Srimad-Bhagavatam and the Brahma-, always understands that these names ultimately designate the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna.

In this verse we also see a combination of personal devotion and objective appreciation of the Lord. One often finds this in the Vaisnava poetry of the Alvars of South India, of whom Kulasekhara is one. Within a few lines the bhakta will praise the Lord for some of His inconceivable, awe-inspiring activities — and then exclaim how this same great Lord is his personal Lord in the heart.

King Kulasekhara addresses Lord Krsna as the spiritual master of the three worlds, and he calls upon the Lord to protect him. One may question, "Since Lord Visnu is already protecting all living beings, why should a devotee ask for personal protection?" But the bhakta is not seeking physical protection; he wants his personal loving relationship with the Lord to be nourished and maintained. In other words, he wants the Lord to protect him from the greatest calamity — forgetfulness of Him.

Srila Prabhupada explains, "The Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is already in charge of the maintenance of this creation by virtue of His plenary expansion Kṣīrodaksayi Visnu, but this maintenance is not direct. However, when the Lord says that He takes charge of His pure devotee, He actually takes direct charge" (Caitanya-caritamṛta, Preface). The pure devotee is one who surrenders to the Lord just as a child surrenders to his parents or an animal to its master. When a devotee submits himself in that way, Krsna gives him special attention and protection. King Kulasekhara praises the Lord according to the sastra and according to His lila, and yet he also calls upon Him for personal protection, confident that the Lord will fulfill His promise to reciprocate with all His devotees according to how they approach Him.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 45

dara var-akara-vara-suta te tanujo viriñcih
 stota vedas tava sura-gana bhrtya-vargah prasadah
 muktir maya jagad tavaki devaki te
 mata bala-ripu-sutas tat tvad na jane

SYNONYMS

dara — wife; **vah-akara** — of the ocean; **vara** — excellent; **suta** — the daughter (Laksmi); **te** — Your; **tanujah** — son; **virin̄cih** — Lord Brahma; **stota** — praiser; **vedah** — the Vedas; **tava** — Your; **sura-ganah** — the demigods; **bhrtya** — of servants; **vargah** — company; **prasadah** — grace; **muktih** — liberation; **maya** — magic power; **jagat** — the universe; **avikalam** — entire; **tavaki** — Your; **devaki** — Devaki; **te** — Your; **mata** — mother; **mitram** — friend; **bala-ripu** — (Indra) the enemy of the demon Bala; **sutah** — the son (Arjuna); **tat** — thus; **tvat** — than You; **anyam** — any other; **na jane** — I do not know.

TRANSLATION

Your wife is the beautiful daughter of the ocean, and Your son is Lord Brahma. The Vedas are Your panegyrist, the demigods comprise Your company of servants, and liberation is Your benediction, while this entire universe is a display of Your magic power. Srimati Devaki is Your mother, and Arjuna, the son Indra, is Your friend. For these reasons I have no interest in anyone but You.

PURPORT

Even an ordinary man may have a daughter and a son; a famous man will have so many people praising him (or he may hire press agents to do so); and a powerful political leader will have less powerful political figures as his official servants. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is also a person, and therefore He also has family members, as well as servants, friends, and praisers. Since the Absolute Truth is the source of everything (janmady asya yatah [SB 1.1.1]), we should not think He lacks anything we see in the material world. But when the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, manifests personal relationships, they are not ordinary: His wife, friends, servants, and praisers are all liberated souls, His personal energies, or expansions of Himself.

People doubt that God can have a father, mother, wife, or special friend. Some say that these relationships compromise the impartiality and unchangeability of the Supreme. But the Lord's transcendental relationships with His eternal associates do not compromise Him in any way. Rather, they add to His ever-increasing glory. Lord Kṛṣṇa does not actually need any of His friends, wives, and so on, but He allows them to associate with Him intimately because He is always pleased to reciprocate with loving devotees.

That the Lord's associates are not ordinary is proved by the fact that they often undergo extreme austerities or great sacrifices to become His friends or parents. For example, Vasudeva and Devaki, who took the role of Kṛṣṇa's father and mother, executed many lifetimes of austerity in preparation. Soon after His birth, Kṛṣṇa described to them what they had undergone in a previous life to receive the benediction of having Him as their son:

Both of you practiced severe austerities for twelve thousand years, by the calculation of the demigods. During that time, your mind was always absorbed in Me. When you were executing devotional service and always thinking of Me within your heart, I was very much pleased with you. O sinless mother, your heart is therefore always pure. At that time I also appeared before

you in this form just to fulfill your desire, and I asked you to ask whatever you desired. At that time you wished to have Me born as your son. [Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, pp. 44-45)

In His spiritual kingdom the Supreme Lord eternally enjoys loving relationships with His personal associates, but He is also present in all nooks and crannies of the material universes and in everyone's heart. In this way His influence is spread throughout all existence, both spiritual and material. Thus King Kulasekhara says, "This entire universe is a display of Your magic power." Lord Krsna is not a minor magician. He is Yogesvara, the controller of all mystic potencies. In the Bhagavad-gita (5.29), Lord Krsna declares, sarva-loka-mahesvaram: "I am the supreme controller of all universes." Moreover, Krsna controls all the universes effortlessly. As Srila Prabhupada says, we should not think He is like Atlas, whom we see struggling to hold up the earth on his arms. Krsna always has free time to enjoy with His loving associates.

"For all these reasons," declares King Kulasekhara, "I have no interest in anyone but You."

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 46

pranamam isasya sirah- vidus
 tad- prana- divaukasah
 manah- tad-guna-tattva-
 vacah- tad-guna- budhah

SYNONYMS

pranamam — offering obeisances; **isasya** — to the Supreme Lord; **sirah** — of the head; **phalam** — the perfection; **viduh** — they know; **tat** — His; **arcanam** — worship; **prana** — of one's breath; **phalam** — the perfection; **diva-okasah** — the residents of heaven; **manah** — of the mind; **phalam** — the perfection; **tat** — His; **guna** — of the qualities; **tattva** — on the details; **cintanam** — meditation; **vacah** — of speech; **phalam** — the perfection; **tat** — His; **guna** — about the qualities; **kirtanam** — chanting; **budhah** — intelligent.

TRANSLATION

The wise inhabitants of the heavenly regions know that the perfection of the head is to offer prostrate obeisances to the Supreme Lord, the perfection of the life-breath is to worship the Lord, the perfection of the mind is to ponder the details of His transcendental qualities, and the perfection of speech is to chant the glories of His qualities.

PURPORT

The word *divaukasah* refers to the *devas*, or demigods. These are devotees of the Supreme Lord who inhabit the heavenly planets and enjoy a rare standard of sense gratification, which places them squarely within the material world as conditioned souls. But because they are staunch followers of Lord Visnu, He always protects them. Being Visnu's followers, they are usually victorious in their battles with the demons, who frequently threaten to possess the heavenly kingdom.

King Kulasekhara mentions the *devas* not because of their material opulence but because of their good quality of rendering devotional service to Lord Hari. The residents of the heavenly planets are not like the people of the earth, where, in Kali-yuga, the philosophy of "God is dead" predominates and the ideas of atheists like Darwin, Marx, and Freud are hugely influential in all affairs. Although the *devas* have access to very advanced forms of technology and possess mystic powers, their faith in Lord Visnu remains pure.

By the grace of Lord Caitanya, even the people of the earth planet, although unqualified in many ways, can also approach Lord Krsna in devotional service. Indeed, Lord Caitanya is so magnanimous that He has given the residents of earth a great advantage over the demigods. That advantage is *sankirtana*, the congregational chanting of the holy names of God. Because of this great advantage, the earth is the best place to achieve the ultimate goal of life, going back to the eternal spiritual world. As stated in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (5.19.21),

Since the human form of life is the sublime position for spiritual realization, all the demigods in heaven speak in this way: "How wonderful it is for these human beings to have been born in the land of Bharata-varsa [the earth]! They must have executed pious acts of austerity in the past, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself must have been pleased with them. Otherwise, how could they engage in devotional service in so many ways? We demigods can only aspire to achieve human births in Bharata-varsa to execute devotional service, but these human beings are already engaged there."

At one time the whole world was known as Bharata-varsa, but now only India is known by that name. India is cited as the best place to achieve self-realization because it was in India that many acaryas and incarnations of Krsna appeared, and it is in India that the tradition of devotional service to the Lord remains strong. Srila Prabhupada writes, "From all points of view, Bharata-varsa is the special land where one can very easily understand the process of devotional service and adopt it to make his life successful." Lord Caitanya has further encouraged the residents of Bharata-varsa to make themselves successful in devotional service and then preach throughout the world. This is the work of the Krsna consciousness movement, a mission that was developed so thoroughly and successfully by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

King Kulasekhara reminds us of the proper functions of the various parts of the body. The head, for instance, is the center of all the senses, so we try to give it pleasure in many ways, but usually not by the humble act recommended here — bowing down before the Supreme Lord. Of course, bowing is not merely a mechanical act: the head should bow down accompanied by sincere feelings of devotion in the heart. Prostrating the body was an important part of the daily sadhana (discipline) of liberated souls like the six Gosvamis of Vrndavana. In his prayers to the six Gosvamis, Srinivasa Acarya states that they were "engaged in chanting the holy names of the Lord and bowing down in a scheduled measurement." Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, one of the six Gosvamis, offered one thousand obeisances to the Lord's devotees daily.

The word prana, used in this verse of Mukunda-mala-stotra, refers to the life-breath, which we should use in worshiping the Lord. Yogis practice pranayama, regulation of the breath, to gain control of the mind and senses, and it is often recommended as a method of rejuvenation. Although one may certainly gain such benefits by controlling the breath, the path of bhakti calls on the devotee simply to use his life-breath in loving service to the Lord. Similarly, we should use the mind, speech, and all our other God-given faculties in the Lord's loving service. This perfection is available to all, whether demigods or human beings.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 47

sriman-nama procya narayan
ke na prapur papino 'pi
ha nah vak pravrtta na
tena garbha-vasadi-duhkham

SYNONYMS

srimat — blessed; **nama** — the name; **procya** — having said out loud; **narayana-akhyam** — called "Narayana"; **ke** — who; **na prapuh** — did not obtain; **vañchitam** — what they desired; **papinah** — sinful persons; **api** — even; **ha** — alas; **nah** — our; **purvam** — previously; **vak** — speech; **pravrtta** — engaged; **na** — not; **tasmin** — in that; **tena** — therefore; **praptam** — achieved; **garbha** — in a womb; **vasa** — residence; **adi** — beginning with; **duhkham** — misery.

TRANSLATION

What person, even if most sinful, has ever said aloud the blessed name Narayana and failed to fulfill his desires? But we, alas, never used our power of speech in that way, and so we had to suffer such miseries as living in a womb.

PURPORT

This verse brings to mind the story of Ajamila from the Srimad-Bhagavatam. Ajamila was sinful, but by chanting the name Narayana when on the verge of death, he fulfilled his ultimate desires. In the following quotation from the Bhagavatam (6.2.13), Lord Visnu's servants explain to the servants of Yamaraja, the lord of death, why Ajamila is not a fit candidate for punishment:

"At the time of his death this Ajamila helplessly and very loudly chanted the holy name of the Lord, Narayana. That chanting alone has already freed him from the reactions of all sinful life. Therefore, O servants of Yamaraja, do not try to take him to your master for punishment in hellish conditions."

Ajamila had chanted indirectly, calling out the name of his son, but because he uttered the holy name Narayana he was saved from hell. He then went on to perfect his Krsna consciousness and return home, back to Godhead. His "accidental" chanting of the holy name, therefore, awakened his original desire to serve the Lord. If even an extremely sinful person like Ajamila could be saved by chanting the name Narayana indirectly, then no one else should fail to achieve his utmost desires by chanting the blessed name Narayana.

King Kulasekhara speaks on behalf of all those who forget to chant the holy names. These verses are meant for all of us who are missing the opportunity of achieving perfection through chanting. If we do not call on the Supreme Lord, then we will have to face all kinds of miseries. Kulasekhara mentions the pain of living in the womb. Lord Kapila provides graphic details of that ordeal in His teachings to His mother, Devahuti:

Bitten again and again all over the body by the hungry worms in the abdomen itself, the child suffers terrible agony. Because of his tenderness he thus becomes unconscious moment after moment because of the terrible condition.

Then owing to the mother's eating bitter, pungent foods, or food which is too salty or too

sour, the body of the child incessantly suffers pains which are almost intolerable. [Bhag. 3.31.7-8]

People refuse to recognize these facts, and that is one reason they do not take shelter of the holy name. Even if they are reminded of the pains they suffered in the past, they claim that it doesn't matter now because they are free from the pain. But a person who dis-regards natural and scriptural law guarantees that he will suffer the same torments he claims to have forgotten. Srila Prabhupada writes, "One who does not take heed of these indications of suffering in human existence is said to be undoubtedly committing suicide" (Bhag. 7.31.9, purport).

Vaisnava poetry is filled with Vedic truths and can bring the utmost benefit, as well as pleasure to the ear and heart. In this singlesloka King Kulasekhara has given us a poignant description of our unfortunate predicament, with a hint of hope for ultimate salvation. If we can grasp the message of even this one verse — and also feel it and act upon it — then we can save ourselves unlimited grief.

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 48

dhyayanti ye visnum anantam
hrt-padma-madhye vyavasthitam
satatabhaya-
te yanti tu vaisnavim

SYNONYMS

dhyayanti — meditate; **ye** — who; **visnum** — on Lord Visnu; **anantam** — the unlimited; **avyayam** — the infallible; **hrt** — of the heart; **padma** — the lotus; **madhye** — within; **satatam** — always; **vyavasthitam** — situated; **samahitanam** — for those who are fixed in awareness of Him; **satata** — perpetual; **abhaya** — fearlessness; **pradam** — granting; **te** — they; **yanti** — attain; **siddhim** — perfection; **paramam** — supreme; **tu** — indeed; **vaisnavim** — of the Vaisnavas, and in relation to Visnu.

TRANSLATION

The unlimited and infallible Visnu, who is always present within the lotus of the heart, grants fearlessness to those who fix their intelligence upon Him. The devotees who meditate on Him will reach the supreme perfection of the Vaisnavas.

PURPORT

King Kulasekhara has previously spoken of perfections we can attain by using our mind and senses in the service of the Supreme Lord. Now he specifies that the ultimate perfection is *vaisnavim*, the supreme perfection of the Vaisnavas.

All Vaisnavas are rightly situated, but even among devotees there are progressive states. In *The Nectar of Devotion*, Srila Prabhupada summarizes the characteristics of three classes of devotees. We paraphrase his summary as follows: The third-class devotee is one whose faith is not strong and who, at the same time, does not recognize the decision of the revealed scriptures. The second-class devotee may not be expert in arguing on the basis of scripture, but he has firm faith in the objective. And the first-class devotee is one who is very expert in the study and explanation of the scriptures and at the same time has strong faith.

For the most part, the third-class devotee (known as *kanistha-adhikari*) has faith in the Deity in the temple and worships the Lord there. But the *kanistha-adhikari* is usually unable to appreciate other devotees or the presence of the Lord in everyone's heart. Nevertheless, even the third-class Vaisnava is considered highly elevated. Srila Prabhupada writes, "Even the third-class devotee — who is not advanced in knowledge of the Absolute Truth but simply offers obeisances with great devotion, thinks of the Lord, sees the Lord in the temple, and brings flowers and fruit to offer to the Deity — becomes imperceptibly liberated" (Bhag. 3.25.36, purport). By dint of his attraction to the Deities of Sri Sri Radha-Krsna or Laksmi-Narayana, the *kanistha-adhikari* is in a transcendental position, above those who are trying for liberation by speculation or other methods.

One advances through the stages of perfection by applying oneself under the direction of the guru — and everything depends on one's faith. In the *Caitanya-caritamṛta* (Madhya 22.64), Lord Caitanya confirms this, explaining to Sanatana Gosvami that one becomes qualified as a devotee on the elementary platform, the intermediate platform, and the highest platform of devotional service according to the development of one's *sṛaddha* (faith).

One does not advance in devotional service as one does in the material world, by climbing up a social ladder or by working hard for economic development or by military strength. Rather, one has to give up all material "strengths" and designations and become as humble as a blade of grass. The basis of devotional service is chanting of the holy name, and according to Lord Caitanya one cannot chant constantly unless one offers all respects to others without expecting respect for oneself. Instead of trying to push oneself ahead while maintaining the contaminations of lust, anger, and greed in the heart, one has to become pure and realize oneself as the servant of God, His devotees, and all living beings.

The perfect stage of devotion is described in Text 25 of the Mukunda-mala-stotra: "O enemy of Madhu and Kaitabha, O Lord of the universe, the perfection of my life and the most cherished mercy You could show me would be for You to consider me the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of Your servant." Lord Caitanya also expressed this important sentiment when He declared that He was not a brahmana or a sannyasi but a servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of Krsna, the

Lord of the gopis of Vrndavana. Thus devotees who want to attain devotional perfections will pray for the good fortune to serve recognized Vaisnavas.

King Kulasekhara also gives us the vision of constant meditation on Lord Visnu. This can be attained by engaging oneself twenty-four hours a day in various services within the framework of the ninefold practices of bhakti (see Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.5.24). A true Vaisnava never thinks he has attained the ultimate state of perfection, but rather continues to serve the Lord and the devotees while always remaining conscious of the Supreme Lord in his heart.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 49

tat prasida bhagavan kuru mayy anathe
visno kr parama-karunikah khalu tvam
-sagara-nimagnam ananta dinam
uddhartum arhasi hare purusottamo 'si

SYNONYMS

tat — therefore; **tvam** — You; **prasida** — please show Your favor; **bhagavan** — O Supreme Lord; **kuru** — please give; **mayi** — to me; **anathe** — who am without a master; **visno** — O Visnu; **krpam** — mercy; **parama** — the most; **karunikah** — compassionate; **khalu** — after all; **tvam** — You; — of material existence; **sagara** — in the ocean; **nimagnam** — submerged; **ananta** — O limitless one; **dinam** — wretched; **uddhartum** — to lift up; **arhasi** — You should please; **hare** — O Hari; **purusa-uttamah** — the Supreme Personality of Godhead; **asi** — You are.

TRANSLATION

O Supreme Lord, O Visnu, You are the most compassionate. So now please show me Your favor and bestow Your mercy upon this helpless soul. O unlimited Lord, kindly uplift this wretch who is drowning in the ocean of material existence. O Lord Hari, You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

PURPORT

A complacent religionist may think a devotee need not call out for personal attention. "Lord Krsna already knows everything, so there's no need for individual supplication." But according to the acaryas, when a soul who feels himself helpless and unfortunate calls out to the Lord, he touches the Lord's heart. Srila Prabhupada once gave an example of this while walking with his devotees in a park. A group of ducks in a pond swam forward toward the devotees, and the duck who quacked the loudest was given some food. Prabhupada remarked that in a similar way we have to cry out for Krsna, as a child cries for its mother. Of course this shouldn't be done in an egotistic or artificial way, but the Lord will respond to his devotees' sincere and helpless cries.

A devotee does not wish to bother the Lord with any demands or petitions, yet calling for mercy does not contradict the selfless mood of service. A good example is Gajendra, who asked the Lord to release him from the jaws of a crocodile. Srila Prabhupada writes,

Unalloyed devotees have nothing to ask from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but Gajendra, the king of the elephants, was circumstantially asking for an immediate benediction because he had no other way to be rescued. Sometimes, when there is no alternative, a pure devotee, being fully dependent on the mercy of the Supreme Lord, prays for some benediction. But in such a prayer there is also regret. [Bhag. 8.3.21, purport]

Queen Kunti made a similar special request in her prayers:

atha visvesa visvatman visva-murte svakesu me
sneha-pasam chindhi drd pandusu vrsnisu

"O Lord of the universe, soul of the universe, O personality of the form of the universe, please, therefore, sever my tie of affection for my kinsmen, the Pandavas and the Vrsnis"

(Bhag. 1.8.41). In these instances the pure devotees ask not for material benedictions but for the Lord to intervene and arrange things so that they may more fully surrender to Him. About Queen Kunti's petition, Srila Prabhupada writes,

A pure devotee of the Lord is ashamed to ask anything in self-interest from the Lord. But the householders are sometimes obliged to ask favors from the Lord, being bound by the tie of family affection. Srimati Kuntidevi was conscious of this fact, and therefore she prayed to the Lord to cut off her affectionate ties for her own kinsmen, the Pandavas and the Vrsnis. [Bhag. 1.8.41, purport]

Also, there are many moving songs by Vaisnavas of the recent age in which they call out to the Lord for individual help on the path of devotional service. For example, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura sings in Gopinatha,

O Gopinatha, this sinner, who is weeping and weeping, begs for an eternal place at Your divine feet. Please give him Your mercy.

O Gopinatha, You are able to do anything, and therefore You have the power to deliver all sinners. Who is there that is more of a sinner than myself?

Deeply considering his disqualifications and asking for special help, the devotee requests his savior to be compassionate. The devotee's recognition of his complete dependence on the Supreme Lord is a prerequisite for his purification. He knows that if Lord Hari does not respond, he has no one else to turn to.

King Kulasekhara teaches us how to turn to Lord Krsna at all times, whether in meditation while absorbed in His all-attractive name, form, and pastimes, or in desperation while sinking in the ocean of material life.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 50

ksira-sagara-taranga-sikara-
sara-tarakita-caru-murtaye
bhogi-bhoga-sayaniya-sayine
madhavaya madhu-vidvise namah

SYNONYMS

ksira — of milk; **sagara** — in the ocean; **taranga** — from the waves; **sikara** — of the spray; **asara** — by the shower; **tarakita** — bespeckled; **caru** — charming; **murtaye** — whose form; **bhogi** — the serpent's (Lord Ananta Sesa's); **bhoga** — of the body; **sayaniya** — on the couch; **sayine** — who lies; **madhavaya** — to Lord Madhava; **madhu-vidvise** — the antagonist of the demon Madhu; **namah** — obeisances.

TRANSLATION

Obeisances to Lord Madhava, enemy of the Madhu demon. His beautiful form, lying on the couch of the serpent Ananta, is speckled by the shower of spray from the milk ocean's waves.

PURPORT

This is a picturesque view of Ksirodakasayi Visnu, the expansion of Lord Krsna who inhabits the spiritual planet Svetadvipa. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam (3.8.24) Srila Vyasadeva also describes the beauty of Lord Visnu as He lies in yoga-nidra:

The luster of the transcendental body of the Lord mocked the beauty of the coral mountain. The coral mountain is very beautifully dressed by the evening sky, but the yellow dress of the Lord mocked its beauty. There is gold in the summit of the mountain, but the Lord's helmet, bedecked with jewels, mocked it. The mountain's waterfalls, herbs, etc., with a panorama of flowers, seem like garlands, but the Lord's gigantic body, and His hands and legs, decorated with jewels, pearls, tulasi leaves, and flower garlands, mocked the scene on the mountain.

King Kulasekhara describes Lord Visnu as the killer of Madhu. Although in the form of Ksirodakasayi Visnu the Lord did not kill Madhu, there is no contradiction in addressing the Supreme Lord by any of His pastime names. As Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja points out in his Caitanya-caritamṛta (Adi 5.128-130, 132),

There is no difference between the incarnation and the source of all incarnations. Previously Lord Krsna was regarded in the light of different principles by different people. Some said that Krsna was directly Lord Nara-Narayana, and some called Him Lord Vamanadeva incarnate. Some called Lord Krsna an incarnation of Lord Ksirodakasayi. All these names are true.... In whatever form one knows the Lord, one speaks of Him in that way. In this there is no falsity, since everything is possible in Krsna.

The Ksirodakasayi form of Lord Visnu is very rarely seen, even by advanced devotees. Sometimes when there is a crisis in universal management, Lord Brahma goes to Svetadvipa to consult with Ksirodakasayi Visnu. Brahma sits on the bank of the milk ocean and chants the Purusa-sukta prayers. In meditation, he then hears instructions from the Lord.

The shower of spray from the milk ocean speckling the Lord's form mocks the impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth. The source of all incarnations is not an impersonal effulgence

but the transcendental Lord Himself, the Supreme Person. King Kulasekhara does not manufacture images but strictly follows the Vedic descriptions of the Lord of Svetadvipa.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 51

alam alam alam eka pran
nirasana-visaye ya krsna krsneti vani
yadi bhavati mukunde bhaktir ananda-sandra
karatala-kalita sa moksa-samrajya-laksmih

SYNONYMS

alam alam alam — enough, enough, enough; eka — by itself; praninam — of living beings; patakanam — of the sins; nirasana — driving away; visaye — in the matter of; ya — which; krsna krsna — "Krsna, Krsna"; iti — thus; vani — words; yadi — if; bhavati — there is; mukunde — for Lord Mukunda; bhaktih — devotion; ananda — with ecstasy; sandra — dense; kara-tala — in the palms of one's hands; kalitah — available; sa — she (devotion); moksa — liberation; samrajya — influence; laksmih — and opulence.

TRANSLATION

By themselves the words "Krsna, Krsna" are sufficient to drive away the sins of all living beings. Anyone who possesses devotion for Lord Mukunda that is densely imbued with ecstasy holds in the palms of his hands the gifts of liberation, worldly influence, and wealth.

PURPORT

King Kulasekhara's declaration that the holy name drives away sins brings to mind a similar statement spoken by Namacarya Haridasa Thakura. First he quoted a verse that makes use of the analogy of the rising sun:

sakrd udayad eva sakala-lokasya
taranir iva timira-
jayati jagan- harer nama

"As the rising sun immediately dissipates all the world's darkness, which is deep like an ocean, so the holy name of Lord Hari, if chanted once without offenses, dissipates all the reactions of a living being's sinful life. All glories to that holy name of the Lord, which is auspicious for the entire world" (Cc. Antya 3.181).

Next Haridasa Thakura explained the verse as follows: As the first glimpse of sunlight dissipates one's fear of thieves and ghosts, so with the first hint of offenseless chanting of the Lord's names, reactions of sinful life immediately disappear. If a devotee can continue to chant without offenses, he goes on to awaken ecstatic love for Krsna.

Then Haridasa Thakura stated, "Liberation is the insignificant result derived from a glimpse of the awakening of offenseless chanting of the holy name." When Haridasa made this claim, a ritualistic brahmana challenged him, saying that he had exaggerated the powers of the holy name. But Haridasa Thakura replied with sastric proof. He gave the example of Ajamila, who chanted the Lord's holy name with the intention of calling his son Narayana, yet who was thereby immediately freed of his sinful reactions and who ultimately attained to the spiritual world. Haridasa also quoted a verse from the Srimad-Bhagavatam proving that pure devotees prefer serving the Lord to being liberated without such service.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura elaborately describes the stages of chanting the holy name in his Hari-nama-cintamani: Chanting that is full of ignorance and offenses is known as nama-aparadha. The next stage, which still contains imperfections, is known as nama-abhasa, or the shadow of the holy name. This is the stage in which one can attain freedom from sins and even liberation. But one can attain pure krsna-prema only by chanting without offense, a stage known as suddha-nama, or the pure chanting of the holy name.

King Kulasekhara says that one who has attained love of Krsna has all other benedictions easily within his grip, including mukti and the gifts of Laksmi, the goddess of fortune. The bhakta's indifference toward liberation is further expressed by Bilvamangala Thakura in his Sri Krsna-karnamrta (107):

bhaktis tvayi sthira-tara bhagavan yadi syad
 daivena nah phalati divya-kisora-murtih
 muktiḥ mukulitañjali sevate 'sman
 dharmartha-kama-gatayah samaya-pratiksah

"My dear Lord, if I am engaged in firm devotional service unto You, then I can very easily perceive Your transcendental youthful form. And as far as liberation is concerned, she stands at my door with folded hands, waiting to serve me, and all material conveniences of religiosity, economic development, and sense gratification stand with her."

A pure devotee easily attains wealth and liberation, but he is not interested in them. As Srila Prabodhananda Sarasvati writes in his Sri Caitanya-candramrta (5), "[For a pure devotee] impersonal liberation is as palatable as going to hell, and the heavenly cities of the demigods are as real as flowers imagined to float in the sky." The devotee is atmarama, self-satisfied, because he knows that devotional service to Krsna brings everything.



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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 52

yasya priyau sruti-dharau kavi-loka-virau
mitrau dvi-janma-vara-padma-sarav abhutam
tenambujaksa-caranambuja-sat-padena
rajña krta krtir kulasekharena

SYNONYMS

yasya — whose; **priyau** — beloved; **sruti-dharau** — expert in knowledge of the Vedas; **kavi** — of poets; **loka** — in the society; **virau** — eminent leaders; **mitrau** — two friends; **dvi-janma** — of the brahmanas; **vara** — superior; **padma** — of the lotus; **sarau** — stems; **abhutam** — have become; **tena** — by him; **ambuja-aksa** — of the lotus-eyed Lord; **carana-ambuja** — at the lotus feet; **sat-padena** — by the bee; **rajña** — by the king; **krta** — made; **krtih** — composition; **iyam** — this; **kulasekharena** — by Kulasekhara.

TRANSLATION

This work was composed by King Kulasekhara, a bee at the lotus feet of the lotus-eyed Lord. The king's two beloved friends are the twin stems of the exquisite lotus of the brahmana community, expert Vedic scholars renowned as leaders of the community of poets.

PURPORT

Like a bee at the lotus feet of Lord Krsna, King Kulasekhara has made honey in the form of his exquisite poetry, which overflows with nectarean descriptions of the Supreme Lord. He has also cried out to the Lord for deliverance from the ocean of material suffering. By using a wide repertoire of metaphors, and by speaking from the depth of sincere Vaisnava feelings, he has made his readers indebted to him. Now they may also become bees and drink the honey of the Mukunda-mala-stotra.

Among the twenty-six qualities of a devotee, one is that he is a kavi, or poet. The subject of a devotee's chanting and hearing comprises the superexcellent name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Krsna. The qualified kavi receives Krsna consciousness faithfully in parampara and renders it into excellent poems and discourses. Thus it is said of the Srimad-Bhagavatam that "it emanated from the lips of Sri Sukadeva Gosvami. Therefore this fruit [of the desire tree of Vedic literature] has become even more tasteful, although its nectarean juice was already relishable for all, including liberated souls" (Bhag. 1.1.3). Describing the contribution of Sukadeva Gosvami to the Bhagavatam, Prabhupada writes, "The Vedic fruit which is mature and ripe in knowledge is spoken through the lips of Sri Sukadeva Gosvami, who is compared to the parrot not for his ability to recite the Bhagavatam exactly as he heard it from his learned father, but for his ability to present the work in a manner that would appeal to all classes of men." Like Sukadeva, King Kulasekhara has imbibed the Vedic conclusions and added to them his own taste of devotional mellows.

In his Govinda-lilamrta, Sri Krsnadasa Kaviraja ends each chapter of his work with a statement similar to King Kulasekhara's here. He writes, sri-caitanya-padaravinda-madhupa-sri-rupa-seva-phale: "This book is the ripened fruit of my service to Srila Rupa Gosvami, who is a bumblebee relishing honey at the lotus feet of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu."

The honey-sweet nectarean rasa of Krsna consciousness is also expressed by Bilvamangala Thakura in his Sri Krsna-karnamrta (92):

vapur asya vibhor
madhuram
madhu-gandhi mrdu-smitam etad aho
madhuram

"This transcendental body of Krsna is very sweet, and His face is even sweeter. But His soft smile, which has the fragrance of honey, is sweeter still."

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Bhaktivedanta VedaBase: Mukunda-mala-stotra 53

mukunda- pat naran
asesa- labhate na kah svit
samasta-papa-ksayam etya dehi
prayati visnoh tat

SYNONYMS

mukunda-malam — this flower garland for Lord Mukunda; **pathatam** — who recite; **naranam** — among persons; **asesa** — complete; **saukhyam** — happiness; **labhate na** — does not achieve; **kah svit** — who at all; **samasta** — of all; **papa** — sins; **ksayam** — the eradication; **etya** — obtaining; **dehi** — an embodied being; **prayati** — proceeds; **visnoh** — of Lord Visnu; **paramam** — supreme; **padam** — to the abode; **tat** — that.

TRANSLATION

Who among those who recite this Mukunda-mala will not achieve complete happiness? An embodied being who chants these prayers will have all his sinful reactions eradicated and proceed straight to the supreme abode of Lord Visnu.

PURPORT

Following the sastric tradition, King Kulasekhara ends his poem with an auspicious benediction for his readers. We find many such benedictions in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. For example, Canto Seven contains this statement: "Anyone who with great attention hears this narration concerning the activities of Prahlada Maharaja, the killing of Hiranyakasipu, and the activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nr there is no anxiety" (Bhag. 7.10.47).

The Vaisnava poet's blessing upon the reader is not merely a literary form. The Srimad-Bhagavatam or the Mukunda-mala-stotra can deliver full benedictions to any receptive reader and send him back home, back to Godhead. One need only consider the elevated topics King Kulasekhara has covered in his poem. For example, he has often mentioned that the holy names of the Lord can save us from . And he has exhorted us to call out to Lord Krsna for protection. Indeed, the Mukunda-mala-stotra is filled with friendly advice to chant Krsna's names, bow down before Him, and serve Him with all our senses and mind. King Kulasekhara has advised us to become a servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord. All these statements are actually injunctions directly from the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the sastras. King Kulasekhara has repeated them in his own voice and with his own convictions, but his prayers have the authority of the Supreme Lord behind them.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada chose these potent verses for rendering as The Prayers of King Kulasekhara. He began translating them into English for wide distribution through his magazine, Back to Godhead. It will be our good fortune to go on hearing these verses in earnest, to sing them repeatedly, and to study and remember them. As followers of Srila Prabhupada, we will be particularly inclined to remember Text 33:

krsna tvadiya-pada-pankaja-pañjarantam
adyaiva me visatu manasa-rajā-
prana-prayana-samaye kapha-vata-pittaih
kanthavarodhana-vidhau smaran kutas te

"O Lord Krsna, at this moment let the royal swan of my mind enter the tangled stems of the lotus of Your feet. How will it be possible for me to remember You at the time of death, when my throat will be choked up with mucus, bile, and air?"

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