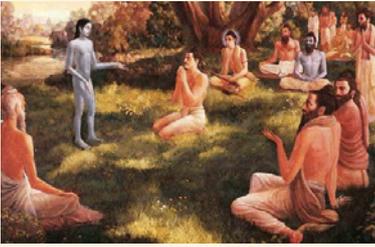


## THE TEMPLE OF THE HEART

### Five Paths to the Temple of the Heart

#### PAÑCĀNGA BHAKTI – FIVE PATHS LEADING TO THE TEMPLE OF THE HEART



- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>sādhū-saṅga</i>                  | association with devotees          |
| 2. <i>nāma-kīrtana</i>                 | chanting the holy name of the Lord |
| 3. <i>bhāgavata-śravaṇa</i>            | hearing <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i>   |
| 4. <i>mathurā-vāsa</i>                 | residing at Mathurā                |
| 5. <i>śrī-mūrtira śraddhāya sevana</i> | worshipping the deity              |

### BHĀGAVATA-ŚRAVAṆA

Serving *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the third of the five practices recommended for those who wish to become absorbed in Kṛṣṇa and enter the temple of the heart. The *Bhāgavatam* is as brilliant as the sun. It has come to help those who have lost their vision due to the inner darkness of the heart, the covering of *avidyā*, or ignorance.

#### THE ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM IS LIKE THE SUN

*kṛṣṇe sva-dhāmopagate  
dharma-jñānādibhiḥ saha  
kalau naṣṭa-dṛśām eṣa  
purāṇārko ,dhunoditaḥ*

“This Bhāgavata Purāṇa is as brilliant as the sun, and it has arisen just after the departure of Lord Kṛṣṇa to His own abode, accompanied by religion, knowledge, etc. Persons who have lost their vision due to the dense darkness of ignorance in the age of Kali shall get light from this Purāṇa.”

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 1.3.43)

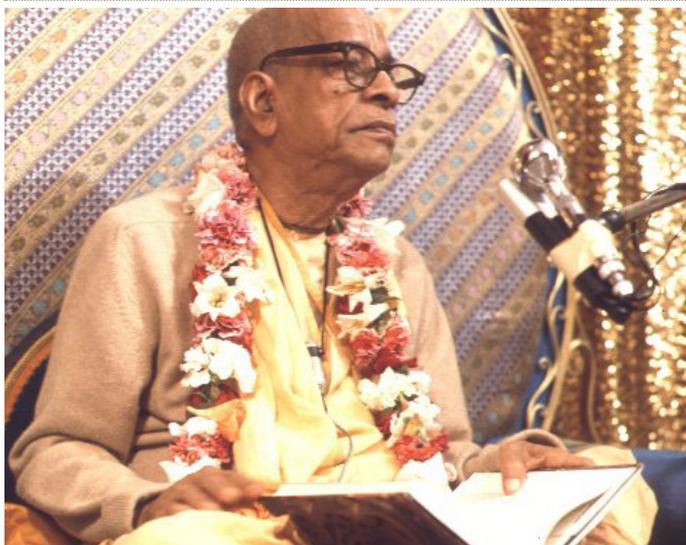
We have only one problem: Kṛṣṇa is missing from our lives. Whenever Kṛṣṇa is present, the darkness of illusion is driven away. Although Kṛṣṇa left this world 5,000 years ago, he remained in a representative form (*pratiniddhi-rūpa*), the *Bhāgavatam*. This means that just as Kṛṣṇa and His holy name are identical, so Kṛṣṇa and the *Bhāgavatam* are identical. When the *Bhāgavatam* is present, the darkness of *māyā* cannot remain.

### THE ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM MAKES KṚṢṆA APPEAR IN THE HEART

The *Bhāgavatam* explicitly promises that persons who hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* regularly and who take the matters discussed there seriously will have the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, manifested in their hearts within a short time (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 2.8.4). The experience of reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is similar to participating in a good *kīrtana*. There are magical moments when reading the *Bhāgavatam* that allow us to taste devotion for Kṛṣṇa and capture Him in our hearts.

In the beginning of our reading practice, we notice Kṛṣṇa’s presence by its *effect*: misery, illusion, and fear leave us. “Simply by giving aural reception to this Vedic literature, the feeling for loving devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, sprouts up at once to





extinguish the fire of lamentation, illusion, and fearfulness.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 1.7.7). Do you sometimes feel peaceful after reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*? If yes, then you have experienced the effect of Kṛṣṇa’s presence in your heart. If not, then you might have made a mistake in your effort to read.

But the disappearance of *māyā* is only a side effect – although it’s something even a beginner can experience. This is similar to what happens when the sun’s rays start to dispel darkness even before the sun has actually risen above the horizon.

A superior result can be experienced when Kṛṣṇa Himself reveals His form and attributes in the devoted reader’s heart. This is like the full sunrise. However, for these two effects to take place, we have to know how to read properly.

## HOW TO READ SACRED SCRIPTURES

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.8.4) mentions three important points regarding how to read the *Bhāgavatam* so Kṛṣṇa will manifest in the heart. One should read:

- 1) with faith (*śraddhayā*)
- 2) regularly (*nityam*)
- 3) and with a special endeavor (*sva-ceṣṭitam*).

Read with faith – even a theoretical faith – thinking that Kṛṣṇa is God surrounded by His many inconceivable (*acin-tya*) energies. Make reading a regular practice; consciously schedule it into your day. The special endeavor referred to here means that we make a systematic attempt to hear or read with rapt attention. In order to read attentively, however, we have to be pure in mind and habits. Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed it like this: “Simple hearing is not all; one must realize the text with proper attention. ... No one can give rapt attention who is not pure in mind. No one can be pure in mind who is not pure in action. No one can be pure in action who is not pure in eating, sleeping, fearing, and mating.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 1.3.44, purport). You can become pure in mind and habits by regular and proper spiritual practice.

This practice supplies the fertile earth you need to allow the seeds of the *Bhāgavatam*’s message to grow and eventually bring forth the sweet fruits of deep realization.

In our workshop, we practiced guidelines for prayerful reading, which stem from an ancient method of attentive hearing described by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. This method consists of four steps:

- 1) *Śravaṇa* – hearing the text (this is like eating a meal).
- 2) *Manāḥ* – reflecting on the text (this is like chewing the food).
- 3) *Nididhyāsana* – applying what you hear (this is like swallowing and absorbing the food).
- 4) Prayer – this point has been added by a different *ācārya* (Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa), because the full realization of a spiritual text is always dependent on the merciful blessings of guru and Kṛṣṇa. Therefore we should pray: “My dear Lord, please help me realize and apply this knowledge.”

## THE PRACTICE

Sit in a place where you will not be disturbed and make yourself comfortable. Tune your mind into what you are reading by first chanting a few prayers. Now start to read the text (*śravaṇa*). As soon as a point touches your heart, stop reading and reflect on it (*manāḥ*).

After you have finished reading, you might want to review again what you have read, particularly the points that struck you. Finally, try to single out the point that is most relevant to you in the moment (be careful not to choose too many points at once) and then apply it in your life (*nididhyāsana*). For ultimate success, turn to Kṛṣṇa in prayer. Pray to the Lord that He help you realize and apply the knowledge you have received.

A very effective way to practice *manāḥ* is to share and discuss with others what you have read. Speaking about what we read helps us remember it.

