

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

ŚRĪ MŪRTI SEVĀ

The last way to contact God we will address is faithful service to the deity.

GOD APPEARS IN A FORM WE CAN SEE

God has an original transcendental form, but He also expands Himself into other forms. According to the *Pañcarātra texts* (*Pañcarātra-Pradīpa*, Supplement 1: The Process of Deity Worship, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Canto 11, chapter 27) the five forms in which God appears are:

- 1) In His original form, Kṛṣṇa
- 2) The *vyūha* expansions (Lord Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha)
- 3) The twenty-four expansions of Nārāyaṇa which preside over the Vaikuṅṭha planets
- 4) The Paramātmā present in everyone's heart
- 5) The *arcā-vigraha*, or deity.

The deity is a form of God we can see – or, as Śrīla Prabhupāda expresses it: “*Arcā* refers to the form we can worship in our present condition.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 3.25.35, purport). Because we are materially conditioned, God takes on a form made of matter so we can be transformed when we see Him. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī describes the power of seeing the deity:



O my dear friend, if you desire to enjoy with your friends and relatives, then do not look upon the form of the Lord called Govinda wandering near Keśī-tīrtha on the bank of the Yamunā River, with a slight smile on His lips, with a threefold bending form, eyes roving restlessly, flute placed to His red, tender-bud lips, and shining gloriously with His peacock feather.

(*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.2.239)

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments: “The idea is that if you once see Kṛṣṇa, then you will forget all this nonsense material enjoyment. That is seeing Kṛṣṇa.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture, 1.2.12, August 15, 1972, Los Angeles).

THE DEITY'S FOUR TRANSCENDENTAL QUALITIES

During *darśana* (the time when we both see and are seen by the deity) the *arcā-vigraha* manifests four qualities that transform and encourage us:

1) *Saulabhya* – He is visible to our human eyes. We can actually see Him, fix our attention on Him, pray to Him, and take shelter of Him. The vague idea that we should surrender to Kṛṣṇa becomes concrete when we come before the deity.

2) *Sauśilya* – He gives everyone who approaches Him a feeling of security and assurance. He assures His worshippers that He is accessible to them and that they need not feel they cannot serve Him because He is so high and “I am so low.” Before the deity even a fallen sinner can be sure that he or she can worship the Lord.

3) *Svāmitva* – He encourages a deep confidence in our heart that He will surely fulfill our desires. Have you noticed how when you pray to the deity and connect with Him, your anxieties and worries leave you? This is due to this third of the deity's transcendental qualities.

4) *Vātsalya* – The deity gives constant protection to His worshippers despite their personal faults. During *darśana* devotees can feel the deity's parental protection: “Now that I'm with my Lord, everything will be all right because He will protect me.”

HOW TO ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DEITY

It's important to approach the deity properly if you want to establish a relationship with Him. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (*Cc. Madhya*, chapter 22) explains the different services we should offer the deity:

- dancing before the deity
- singing before the deity
- opening our mind before the deity
- offering obeisances to the deity
- standing before the deity to show Him respect
- following the deity when He is on procession
- seeing the deity in His temple
- smelling the incense and flower garlands the deity has been offered
- eating the remnants of food offered to the deity
- attending the deity's *ārati* and festivals
- presenting what is dear to us to the deity
- meditating on the deity

Darśana is something quite different than what most people think it is. The most important aspect of *darśana* is not that we see the deity but that He sees us. During *darśana* a special



substance called *śuddhakara* (lit., “to purify”) comes from Kṛṣṇa's eyes. This substance enlivens and purifies those upon whom He looks. The Lord's *śuddhakara*-laden glance awakens the devotees' auspicious desires to offer Him devotional service. So when we come before the deity we should come with the prayer that Kṛṣṇa will look at us.

Also, we should present ourselves in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. So wear clean clothes (clean devotional clothes will put us in a devotional frame of mind) and mark your body with *tilaka* (*tilaka* shows we are devoted to the Lord). Don't pass air or burp when you stand before the deity as this is impolite. Look only at Kṛṣṇa; don't talk to others in front of Him.

Aside from these things, there are two other important practices when taking *darśana*.

1) Recite Prayers

The prayers you recite before the deity should come from your heart and help you feel your relationship with Him. Here are some nice prayers to consider:

My dear [fill in the name of the deity whom you worship], I am so fortunate to be standing before you. Please accept my obeisances. You have a lotus navel, you wear a lotus garland, and you have lotus eyes and lotus feet. I am so fortunate to see you, because you give happiness to my eyes. When my eyes receive the sight of you they become pleasantly cool.

(Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, in a purport to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam)

O Lord, please be merciful to me! O my Lord, please protect me, who am surrendered to You. I am most fearful of this ocean of material existence, standing as I am in the mouth of death.

(from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.27.45–46)

2) Reveal Your Mind

We all stuff things into our hearts – our hopes, plans, shame, and heartache. We never express these things because we don't trust others to receive them with sympathy. If we don't look at what is in our hearts, and process it wisely we will have to deal with it later – sometimes it can even disturb us greatly. Because whatever we've stuffed doesn't disappear, and the more things we accumulate, the bigger our "shadow" becomes. This shadow follows us everywhere and inconveniences us in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

It is recommended to confess our sinful activities to the Lord in a mood of repentance. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "As far as the conditioned soul is concerned, there is no wonder that he has some sinful activities in his past life, and this should be admitted and confessed before the Lord. As soon as this is done, the Lord excuses the sincere devotee." (*Nectar of Devotion*, chapter 9)

The mood of repentance is such a strong feeling that we are immediately freed from *māyā* if we pray to Kṛṣṇa with this attitude. One should pray:

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, although I have forgotten You for so many long years in the material world, today I am surrendering unto You. I am Your sincere and serious servant. Please engage me in Your service.

(Cc. *Madhya* 22.33)

The sense of repentance becomes strong when we understand we have wasted so much time in the material world with our foolish, insignificant desires that separate us from our Lord's interests. If we repent this and come before the Lord to beg to be accepted in His service, He will give us the strength to overcome *māyā*.

Here is another nice prayer in the mood of repentance:



My dear Lord, there is no sinful living entity who is more of a sinner than myself. Nor is there a greater offender than myself. I am so greatly sinful and offensive that when I come to confess my sinful activities before You, I am ashamed.

(*Nectar of Devotion*, chapter 9)

Revealing our mind to the Lord, talking to him, and confessing our undesirable qualities will release us – that is, Kṛṣṇa will excuse us and give us strength. However, if we simply cover our faults and talk ourselves into "Oh, it's all right, my bad behavior is normal. My neighbor has the same problem," then we will not be freed of the dark sides of our being.

KṚṢṆA'S RECIPROCATION

If we approach the deity sincerely He will reciprocate. He will change our heart and respond to us. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

Sometimes the Lord, as the child of Mother Yaśodā, requests His devotee for some food, as if He were very hungry. Sometimes He tells His devotee in a dream that His temple and His garden are now very old and that He cannot enjoy them very nicely. Thus He requests the devotee to repair them. Sometimes He is buried in the earth, and as if unable to come out Himself, He requests His devotee to rescue Him. Sometimes He requests His devotee to preach His glories all over the world, although He alone is quite competent to perform this task. Even though the Supreme Personality of Godhead is endowed with all possessions and is self-sufficient, He depends on His devotees.

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.19.5, purport).

The Lord talks; He is not mute. Can you hear Him? Do you want to hear Him? Do you want to follow Him? The Lord talks to His surrendered devotees and gives them inspiration.

