



# ŚRĪ MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

*Splendid Instructions to the Mind*

by Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī

With the commentaries  
*Bhajana-darpaṇa* and *Manah-śikṣā Bhāṣā*  
by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Including commentaries of contemporary Vaiṣṇavas

# Śrī Manah-śikṣā

## Splendid Instructions to the Mind

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INTRODUCTION TO  
MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

by Śacīnandana Swami

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

- I read Manaḥ-śikṣā many years ago with various learned commentaries, but it struck me only recently how essential this book is.
- At that time, I had removed myself a little bit from my normal busy preaching pace, doing extensive studies into our philosophy and into the question of how to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness to a post-modern audience.
- I asked myself, “Do we have in our tradition a guidebook to bhakti in its different stages, a book which will bring a person from the beginning to perfection?”

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

- As I was asking and looking around, essentially to find a book which would save me the tremendous work of writing something myself, I again and again came upon Manaḥ-śikṣā.
- Then Ravindra-svarūpa Prabhu told me that Manaḥ-śikṣā is the guidebook which takes us to full Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- But I was still a little doubtful whether or not this is really the book, the guidebook to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, until I received a letter by our Śrīmatī Devī Dāsī.

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḢ-ŚIKṢĀ

Śrīmatī presented to me a statement from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in Jaiva Dharma where he says that Manaḣ-śikṣā is the paddhati for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

When we call something a paddhati, it means a step-by-step guide to progress; pada (foot), and hati (progress).

So Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says in his commentary to Manaḣ-śikṣā, called Bhajana-darpaṇa, or the mirror of bhajana, that when a living entity has understood that it is his prime duty in life to develop his Kṛṣṇa consciousness, when he has awakened his faith in this understanding, then he will ask how to do it.

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

Manah-śikṣā will answer this question.

If we, the readers and I, have this question, and have awakened some faith that we should develop our Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then we are qualified to hear the secrets of this guidebook.

When I was a young boy there was a rumor amongst my friends that you could learn to make gold by an alchemical process.

I remember the moment I heard about it. I said to my friends, “Teach me all about it. How can I make gold?”

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

Then we went into the cellar.

My friend Lawrence brought all sorts of things with him, and we little boys were there in the cellar trying to make gold, but it didn't work.

What we were doing only exploded in our face, and we couldn't go to school for two weeks.

In general, I remember that from childhood on I was extremely curious to get any guidebook for getting something valuable.



# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

When I stumbled upon this Manaḥ-śikṣā, I thought, “See, Śacīnandana Swami, you have now found what you were looking for as a child.

You have really found something to get the highest value.”

I practice according to these guidelines.

Once, I was finishing a month’s time in a kind of private alchemical laboratory where I tried to do something with this Manaḥ-śikṣā, and I found miracles developing just by instructing my mind with these verses.

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī promises after the eleven verses, “Becoming a follower of Śrī Rūpa and his companions, one who with a sweet voice loudly recites these eleven supreme verses, which give instructions to the mind, and strives to understand all of their meanings completely, obtains the incomparable jewel of worshiping Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the forests of Gokula.”

Now, at the very outset, I will be extremely blunt.

As we follow Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, you will see some open wounds in your heart and mind, into which the words of Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī will go.

## INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

It will be not be easy.

You will have to be very honest, because he presents a deep psychological analysis of the obstacles we face on our path, and it will be embarrassing.

However, I can encourage you, because at the end of going through Manaḥ-Śikṣā, you will have love of Godhead in your heart.

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-SIKṢĀ

Manah-śikṣā means “instructions to the mind.”

He is using a technique of Vaiṣṇava writers to address all of their readers by addressing their own minds.

In the Nectar of Instruction Śrīla Prabhupāda describes Kṛṣṇa consciousness as a culture of the mind.

This means we should gradually train our minds so that throughout the twenty-four hours of the day we can't think of anything other than Kṛṣṇa.

Now, we know it is very difficult to train the stubborn mind to always think of Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day.

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-SIKṢĀ

Arjuna, the celebrated hero of the Bhagavad-gītā, has expressed himself very candidly on this point.

He says, “The mind is so restless, so turbulent, so obstinate, so strong, O Kṛṣṇa, that I think it is more difficult to control it than to control the wind.

Don’t ask for too much, Kṛṣṇa, when you tell me I should control my mind.

How will I control a raging storm?”

But Kṛṣṇa is a good teacher. He answers the arguments of his disciple, and he defeats them step by step.

## INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

In the end, he encourages Arjuna to start a sādhana, a practice of mind control, when he says, “It is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible with suitable practice and by detachment.”

So Manaḥ-śikṣā does exactly these two things which Kṛṣṇa talks about in the Gītā.

It tells us a suitable practice we can do every day, and it also helps us to detach ourselves from material things.

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

To get the greatest benefit from this book, we need to keep in mind that there are two very powerful forces in this world.

The first is kāma (lust).

Kāma means not just the desire of man and woman to meet each other for sensual stimulation, but it means all desires separate from giving pleasure to Kṛṣṇa.

The other force is prema (love), which is not self-centered or pleasure-seeking but is the desire to give pleasure or love to Kṛṣṇa.

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-SIKṢĀ

I think all sādhakas (spiritual aspirants) have to deal with kāma.

The Ṛg Veda says, “Kāma is the basis of this world.”

And this desire for enjoyment, as Kṛṣṇa tells us, it becomes many-branched (bahu-śākhā hy anantāś ca).

Kāma is concentrated on many sense objects for selfish enjoyment.

Prema is concentrating only on Kṛṣṇa.

To some extent, these two forces sometimes struggle.



## INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

There's a voice in our heart which tells us, "Follow the scriptures, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, concentrate on Kṛṣṇa," and so on, and there's the other voice that says, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, how theoretical, how impractical."

It's very interesting that these two drives, kāma and prema, have something in common.

Let's look at their verbal roots.

Kam and prem both mean to desire.

## INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

So when we want to develop love for Kṛṣṇa, we have to learn to do the practices which the Manaḥ-śikṣā will tell us about, practices which will help us look up in the direction of the spiritual reality.

If we want to develop kāma, the desire to enjoy, we will look down to the body and the mind.

Manaḥ-śikṣā, or the training of the mind, will teach us to look to spiritual things.

This will activate bhakti first and the hlādinī-śakti next.

Then we enter into the realm of the pre-stage of prema—bhāva—and finally prema itself.

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-SIKṢĀ

I can direct my attention down to selfish enjoyment, kāma.

I can desire sense objects, such as women, gold, ice cream, and pizza, and then I will see how my consciousness degrades.

I can also choose to follow Manaḥ-śikṣā and look upwards, learning where to focus my mind.

This is how the first verse starts.

We will read about guru, the land of Vraja, the brāhmanas, and the devotees.

## INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

As I look upwards, I will feel in contact with these spiritual objects and persons.

I will feel some bhakti and be pulled upwards in a very nice way. These are the secrets of bhakti.

Under which energy do we want to work in our lives?

We can look down toward our ordinary material consciousness, the materialistic mind which talks like a monkey, and we will see a degrading influence.

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-SIKṢĀ

Or we can train our mind to truly think of those agents and elements which will fill the heart with bhakti-śakti and karuṇā-śakti.

We will be pulled upwards, not degraded, and it will be very good for us.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in the Nectar of Instruction in this connection, “In the Bhagavad-gītā it is stated, saṅgāt sanjāyate kāmaḥ. One’s desires and ambitions develop according to the company one keeps. It is often said that a man is known by his company, and if an ordinary man associates with devotees, he will certainly develop his dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

# INTRODUCTION TO MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

I want to take this statement a little bit further.

If you allow your mind to associate with the beautiful instructions of Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī your whole existence will be transformed. It really works.

Association accompanied by mental practice is so important.

If you don't have this mental practice and you always associate with material sense objects and material thoughts, then your Kṛṣṇa consciousness is only a hallucination.