



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

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OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ- ŚIKṢĀ

by Śivarāma Swami

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

- The first verse of Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā explains what conditioned living entities should do when faith in Kṛṣṇa manifests within them.
- In Manaḥ-śikṣā, Kṛṣṇa means Śyāmasundara Kṛṣṇa.
- It doesn't mean Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā, Kṛṣṇa in Mathurā, or any incarnation of Kṛṣṇa.
- It simply means Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāja.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḢ-ŚIKṢĀ

- So by good fortune, bhāgyavān jīva guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja, by the mercy of both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, one receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service.
- This is śraddhā, a very difficult commodity to achieve.
- When someone acquires faith in kṛṣṇa-kathā (hearing the topics about Kṛṣṇa) then one should accept dīkṣā, initiation from a spiritual master, taking the mantra from guru.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

One then worships Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Vaiṣṇavas, and gurus—dīkṣā-guru and śikṣā-gurus.

This first verse moves us from adhau śraddhā (the preliminary stage), to sadhu-saṅga (the association of Vaiṣṇavas and the spiritual master).

Then, the process of dīkṣā takes the practitioner to bhajana kriyā.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

Some questions may arise just by reading the first verse.

We are advised to worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the Vaiṣṇavas, and gurus.

So, first, if we're supposed to just take dīkṣā and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa all day long, then how are we meant to maintain our body as well as perform our religious duties?

How are we supposed to work and live in this world while being totally dedicated to spiritual life?

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-SIKṢĀ

This is a familiar question for spiritual practitioners.

It's also Arjuna's question when he hears about work and renunciation.

He considers it a contradiction, that renunciation means to go to the forest, which is irreconcilable with working.

The first verse says just to worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Vaiṣṇavas, and gurus; Lord Caitanya is not mentioned.

So, second, one may ask what the relationship is between Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu's worship and the worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

And the third question concerns the statement that one should also worship Vaiṣṇavas and the gurus.

We may ask about the mood of worshiping gurus or the spiritual master.

We need to know how, when, and at what point we worship our gurus.

In verse two, we find the answers to these three questions.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

To the first question, the answer is that there are two levels at which someone chants Hare Kṛṣṇa after receiving dīkṣā.

One is as a practitioner (a sādḥaka).

The second is when someone has become a siddha.

As long as one is a sādḥaka still struggling to purify anarthas and come to the perfectional stage, one should perform one's religious duties, such as householder duties.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

But one should do them in a mood of detachment and as a service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

When, through the process of offenceless chanting, one purifies one's anarthas and comes to the perfected platform, then he or she is considered to be siddha.

At that point one can give up one's obligations, sarva-dharmān parityajya, and one can renounce and go to Vṛndāvana.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

Verse two also answers the second and third questions that arise from verse one.

Guru and Gaurāṅga should also be worshiped.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says in his commentary that worship must be done in that order—first guru and then Gaurāṅga, before one worships Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

In other words, worshiping Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa means one first must worship one's spiritual master and Caitanya Mahāprabhu ajasram (unceasingly).

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī uses ajasram to indicate that we will always worship.

There is never any time when we are not worshiping, and in that particular order.

Verse three answers an often-asked question: can a person achieve the perfection of achieving vṛndāvana-dhāma, where Kṛṣṇa is engaging in loving pastimes, technically known as rāgātmikā-bhakti, outside of the Gauḍīya sampradāya?

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

In the third mantra, Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī says, in effect, that it is possible, but it is difficult and very rare.

Of course anything is possible, but in the Gauḍīya sampradāya, if one follows in the footsteps of Caitanya Mahāprabhu then this goal becomes very easy.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

Verses four through seven deal with obstacles in this practice of devotional service, rāga-bhajana.

These four verses are an extension of a phrase which Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī gives in the first verse, dambhaṁ hitvā.

Dambha means pride.

He says in verse one, “You should throw out pride.”

And then he goes on to answer, in verses two and three, questions as discussed above.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

Now in verse four he begins the explanation of this point about getting rid of pride.

In verse four, he discusses external obstacles.

First is mundane talk, or what we call prajalpa.

The second is the desire for impersonal liberation as an impediment to rāga-bhajana.

And the third, one may be surprised, is not particularly considered to be an anartha but is rather an obstacle to going back to vṛndāvana-dhāma; and that is becoming attached to Lord Nārāyaṇa and Lakṣmī, or other incarnations or forms of Kṛṣṇa.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-SIKṢĀ

Lakṣmī-pati-ratim ito vyoma-nayanīm. Lakṣmī-pati-rati—
to become attached to Lakṣmī-pati, or the husband of
Lakṣmī.

The fourth verse also shows how these things can be
removed.

Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī instructs that one should
worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana.

Thus it is a codified answer.

Without Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's commentary it would be
impossible to actually understand these brief instructions.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

In the fifth verse, Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī indicates that there are six internal obstacles starting with lust.

Bhaktivinoda lists them as lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, and envy.

Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī says that in order to be free of them, a person has to know how to cry out for the help of the devotees.

We can't get their help unless we know how to actually ask for it.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

A little child who slams a finger in a door immediately starts to call out for mother.

Children don't have any qualms about crying if there's a problem.

So similarly we also have to cry.

And what obstructs us from that crying is often our pride: pride that we are something other than what we actually are.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

In the sixth and seventh verses, Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī considers the results of being free from lust, anger, greed, etc., which are in one sense the gross manifestations of internal obstacles.

But still this is not freedom from deceit and false prestige (pratiṣṭhā).

Deceit means duplicity.

To be free of internal obstacles, aside from calling out for help from Vaiṣṇavas, we must worship the pure devotees of the Lord.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

Verse eight answers the question, “What if there are no pure devotees available?”

Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī answers that one should pray to Kṛṣṇa with great humility and become Rādhārāṇī’s servant.

In other words, one should simply pray and Kṛṣṇa will do what is needed.

Verse eight of Manaḥ-śikṣā is the turning point.

If a spiritual practitioner has come this far, then by applying this particular instruction, one will become absorbed and realize that the end, or the goal, is sufficient to satisfy us and free us from all obstacles.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

Happily one comes to the ninth verse where Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī no longer speaks about anarthas, or absorbing ourselves in our own deficiencies.

In verse eight he gave the general instruction to pray to Kṛṣṇa with humility.

In verse nine we learn specifically what to pray for.

We pray to Kṛṣṇa for his mercy and to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī for her service.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

We pray to Lalitā to be accepted as Rādhārāṇī's servant, and to Viśākhā to develop spontaneous devotional service.

We worship Rādhā-kuṇḍa to be able to get darśana of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and we worship Girirāja, Govardhana Hill, as a place of residence.

In verse ten there is a hint of the glories and aspects of service to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, as well as the requirements to understand her service.

These are humility, spiritual greed, and determination.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

The eleventh verse is the last instruction.

Here we learn the specific details of this service to Rādhārāṇī to which we aspire.

The twelfth verse is what is called a phala-stuti, an explanation of the fruit, or the benefit, of hearing and regularly reading this Manaḥ-śikṣā.

One should practice Manaḥ-śikṣā and memorize the verses, not just hear them.

OVERVIEW OF MANAḤ-ŚIKṢĀ

This book is certainly something we need: instructions to the mind.

We are always getting instructions from our mind, so this is an opportunity to give some instructions to our mind.