

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam

Emanated from the lotus mouth
of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu



Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam

1. Śrī Sanmodana Bhāṣyam by Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
2. Śrī Bhajana-Rahasya by Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
3. Related Verses from Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta with Srila Prabhupada's Purport
4. Vivṛti Commentary by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvati Ṭhākura
5. Śikṣāṣṭākam songs from Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Gītāvalī

Śrī Sanmodana Bhāṣyam

I begin Śrī Sanmodana Bhāṣyam, a commentary on the Śikṣāṣṭaka
verses by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, at first offering my humble
obeisances to the Lord, who is eternally manifest with His eternal
associates, the Pañca-tattva.

Śrī Sanmodana Bhāṣyam

1. Supremacy of the path of
devotional service

The path of devotional service is the highest perfection of life, and it is sought after in all Vedic literatures.

Applying his superior intelligence to researching the Vedas thoroughly several times, Lord Brahma ascertained that the best method of self-realization is the awakening of one's loving attachment to Lord Hari, the Supreme Lord within everyone's heart.

This philosophical conclusion thus unequivocally establishes the supremacy of devotional service over fruitive activities, speculative knowledge, or any other process.

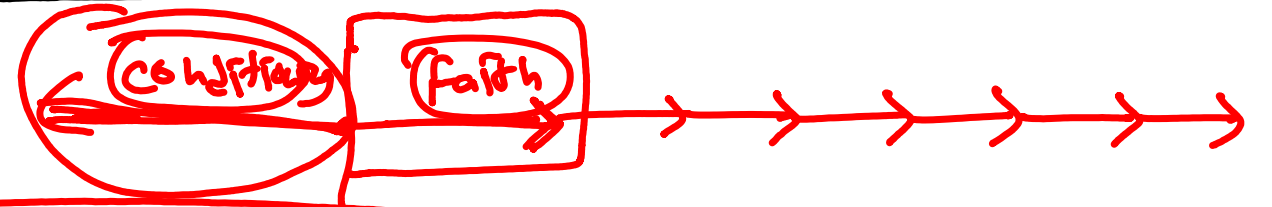
intensely → *Rāga bhakti*
purify → *vaidhi bhakti*

Pure devotional love of Godhead is unattainable without great faith and [intense] eagerness to relish the nectarean pastimes of the Supreme Lord, and without a deep understanding of the esoteric truths of the scriptures.

And even when profound faith is present, it is impossible to discuss the transcendental topics of the Supreme Lord, without the association of saintly persons, because this activity is integral to the hearing and chanting process of devotional service.

The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam confirms this as follows:

“It is only in the association of My pure devotees that discussions about My transcendental glory become spiritually potent and arouse loving devotional mellow within the inner core of one's heart.”



Statements as these extol the virtues of saintly association because the Lord's holy name, form, qualities and activities are perfectly glorified in righteous company.

Lord Caitanya's in His teachings, foremostly discusses these glories.

In the fourth line of the present śloka, for example, the word 'param' indicates the process of chanting Kṛṣṇa's holy name, which is naturally all-purifying, and so is the highest form of benediction.

Through all the different stages of spiritual progress beginning with 'sraddha' or faith, 'sadhu sanga' (saintly association) 'bhajan-kriya' (practical devotional service), etc. chanting maintains its pre-eminence.

However, chanting in a pure and devotional mood is never to be confused with cheap sentimentality or pseudo-devotional chanting.

Śrī Sanmodana Bhāṣyam

2. Lord Caitanya's Philosophy

In these Śikṣāṣṭaka verses, Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has explained in His own words the principles of sambandha, abhidheya and prayojana, or our eternal relationship with God, the means by which we can revive it, and the nature of this relationship as the ultimate goal and necessity for every living being.

This commentary, then, will briefly discuss these philosophical conclusions.

Lord Caitanya, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is lovingly served by the pure Vaiṣṇava devotees, Himself declares: “let the congregational chanting of the holy name be especially glorified.”

Śrī Sanmodana Bhāṣyam

3. Personal vs. Impersonal conception of God

Therefore, please hear how the chanting of the holy name is always victorious even in the mundane world which is created by the external energy of the Lord.

Scripture emphasizes the absolute oneness of the Supreme Truth.

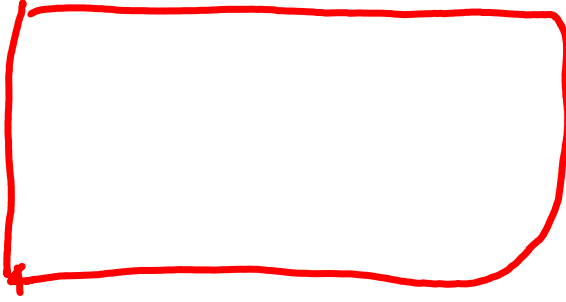
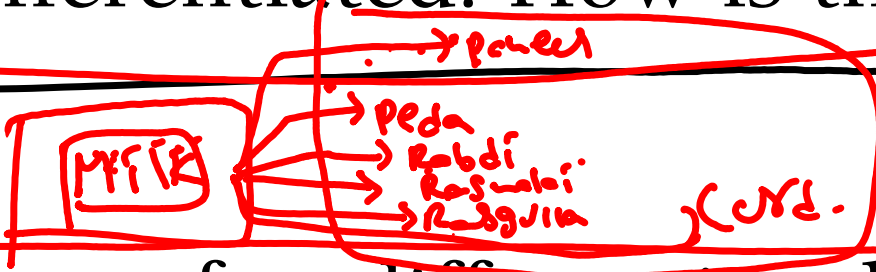
We read in the Sruti-śāstra: "Only that One non-dual substance (the supreme Godhead) existed before creation."

And in another place: "other than (He) the one non-dual brahman, no variegatedness exists."

These statements establish what is essentially the all-pervading, impersonal aspect of the Absolute Truth.

In-personal feature
personal feature.

However, the statement "everything is brahman" actually emphasizes the principle that the eternal and supreme Absolute Truth is personal and differentiated. How is this?



In the simultaneity of differentiated personalism and undifferentiated impersonalism, it is the personal feature which is prominently perceptible whereas impersonalism is imperceptible due to it being non-differentiated.

(The study of epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, reveals the fact that without differentiation perception is impossible.

Will an observer in a completely dark room at midnight be able to see a black cat walk across the room?

Of course not; our senses and mind distinguish one object from another by differentiating of their attributes.

Similarly, since the infinite brahman is totally undifferentiated, merging with brahman means to lose any possibility of perceiving it, and by applying the same logic, likewise it is with consciousness denotes the presence of the soul in the body, the kaivalya (impersonal liberation) of the impersonalists is equivalent to spiritual suicide. -Ed.)

Therefore, the personal feature of the Absolute Truth predominates.

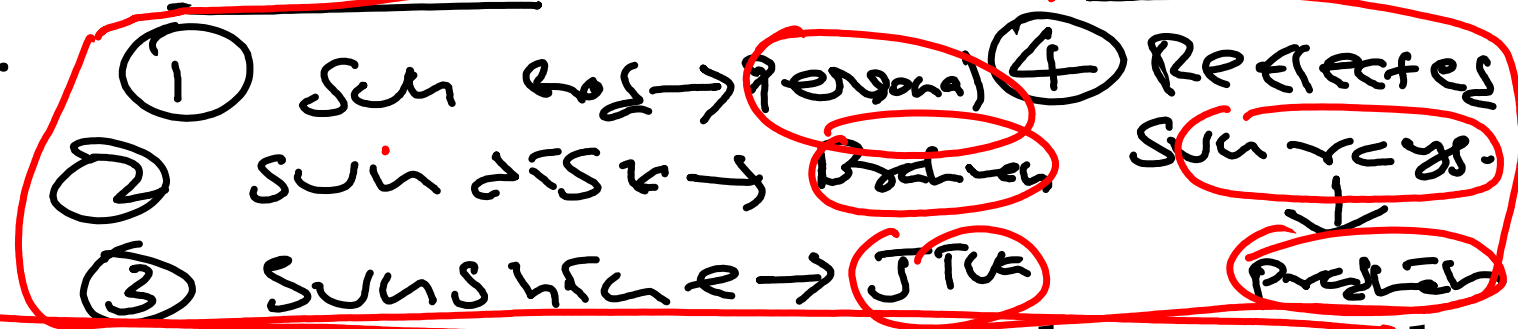


Our guru on such scriptural conclusions, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, states that the one Absolute Truth eternally exists in four features: His original transcendental form, His external and all-pervasive potency, the living entities, and as the sum total of all existence.)

Śrī Sanmodana Bhāṣyam

4. The analogy of the sun

This is analogous to the four features of the sun: the sun-god himself, (Surya) the sun disk, the sunshine, and the reflections of the sun's rays on other surfaces.



The point here is that God alone is the Supreme Absolute Truth, śaktiman, the only source of all potencies or energies.

Although Śrīpad Sankarācārya's commentary on the Brahma-sutra does argue the essential oneness of the energetic source, śaktiman, and energy, śakti, the Vedas conclude [Svetasvatara Upanisad 6.8]:

“That Supreme Absolute Truth manifests Himself in a variety of forms. His potencies are multifarious.”

This proves that the inconceivable Absolute Truth performs actions that appear paradoxical and contradictory.

Hence, the essential and eternal difference between energy and the energetic source is also an unavoidable conclusion, a conclusive principle that cannot be successfully challenged by arguments from the philosophical school of monism, or kevala-advaita-vada.

The Absolute Potent, or the Supreme Truth, manifests Himself in three categories: as His internal potency, as His marginal potency, and as His external potency.

Through the agency of His internal spiritual potency, He manifests the full absolute nature or infinite transcendental realm; and as the possessor of all energetic expansions, He exists there eternally as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

To facilitate the enacting of personal pastimes, His internal potency manifests the spiritual Vaikuṅṭha planets.

The marginal potency, or the eternal living entity, who is like a ray of the sun—an infinitesimal spark—is part and parcel of the Absolute Truth and thus non-different from Him.

But the external energy, or maya, is only the reflection of this eternal spiritual realm, and acts as the backdrop for the different mundane situations to which the conditioned souls become attracted.

Śrī Sanmodana Bhāṣyam

5. Simultaneous oneness and difference

In this way the living entity, or marginal energy, and Vaikuntha, or the transcendence, are simultaneously different and non-different from the Supreme Lord.

→ 2 types of JIVAS → a) nitya baddha
b) nitya siddha (nitya-uktā)

As long as the jīva takes full shelter of the Supreme Lord he remains a resident of the spiritual planets, but when he forgets the innate spiritual knowledge about the Lord he is placed outside the transcendental realm.

The jīva is compared to a ray of the sun, but under the cloud of maya, or the illusory energy, his conditioned state is an unconstitutional and hence unnatural term of existence.

The jīva exists to support and participate in the Supreme Lord's transcendental pastimes, but his marginal nature makes him vulnerable and can bring him under maya's spell, to suffer the pangs of repeated birth and death.

↓
tatastha nature of jīva

But as soon as the individual spiritual spark awakens to realise his original self, the dark mist of ignorance, or maya, dissipate, and the long suffering of repeated birth and death at last comes to a halt.

He regains his true spiritual identity.

The pure association of saintly persons acts miraculously on jīva.

Sāṅgīya Kṛpā
↓
māhātmya-seva
↓
aśṛita-sukṛti
↓
śraddhā

He develops taste and interest for scriptural knowledge as well as attraction for the all-attractive Supreme Lord Himself.

Thus situated in his original constitutional position, the awakened soul becomes eligible to enter into loving conjugal exchanges with the Lord.

in dev Shradhe

It is sincere faith that leads one to find real saintly association and thence to the shelter of a bona fide spiritual master, from whom he hears the true imports of the revealed scriptures.

Shradhe → Seshu kanga → bhakti bhakti bhakti



After submissive hearing, the process of chanting begins, and gradually, as his original nature becomes dominant, the spiritualized jiva triumphs over the illusory energy, maya.

This briefly is the sublime effect of chanting the Lord's holy name; for chanting alone cleanses the heart (ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam) and eventually brings seven types of perfections to the jiva.