ISKCON HERMENEUTICS SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Śāstric Advisory Council to ISKCON's Governing Body Commission

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Supplementary Material for ISKCON Hermeneutics

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The SAC has compiled this material as an aid to understanding the foundation document of ISKCON hermeneutics, and to help ISKCON entities develop training material and instruction in hermeneutics. Other ISKCON entities may also develop their own explanatory materials to support the hermeneutics foundation.

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Methodology

This paper is the result of extensive collaboration by the SAC on email, Wiki, conference calls, and Google docs, starting in 2016, and initially building on the work of a GBC appointed hermeneutics committee that worked from 2011 to 2013. SAC had extensive discussions over email and conference calls. In addition, SAC members met three times: in Māyāpur (two days in 2018), Milan, Italy (ten days in 2018), and Houston, Texas (four days in 2019), to research and compile a firm framework for hermeneutics. Anuttama Dāsa was present for the first three days of the Milan meeting, and Rāsamaṇḍala Dāsa attended both the Milan and Houston meetings, as a consultant and facilitator. He also worked for several weeks to organize a lot of SAC's work between those two meetings.

Various individual SAC members contributed to parts of this supplementary material, and authorship is noted for each section that has an individual author. All individual sections were put on Google Docs or sent to the SAC group email for comment and review. If no individual author is noted, the work is that of the SAC as a whole. Ādi-puruṣa Dāsa, Drutakarmā Dāsa, and to a lesser extent, Kanāi Kṛṣṇa Dāsa and Urmilā-devī dāsī, are the main SAC members who researched quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda that are listed simply as evidence outside of the context of an essay or other explanation. SAC secretary Rukmiṇī-devī dāsī (Dr. Ruchira Datta) did proofreading for diacritics, formatting, correct referencing of citations, and duplications.

Repetition and Duplications

Readers who go through this document systematically will find several cases where the same citation or quote appears in more than one section. Sometimes a paragraph of explanation is also repeated. We did not eliminate all duplications as some quotes or explanations are applicable to more than one principle or tool. The document is intended as reference material for SAC's hermeneutic framework, and we therefore expect many readers to interact with it much like an encyclopedia or dictionary.

Invocation

śrī-bādarāyaṇir uvāca
evaṁ te bhagavad-dūtā
yamadūtābhibhāṣitam
upadhāryātha tān rājan
pratyāhur naya-kovidāḥ

Translation: Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: My dear King, the servants of Lord Viṣṇu are always very expert in logic and arguments. After hearing the statements of the Yamadūtas, they replied as follows. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.2.1)

śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-dayā karaha vicāra
vicāra karile citte pābe camatkāra

Translation: If you are indeed interested in logic and argument, kindly apply it to the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. If you do so, you will find it to be strikingly wonderful. (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi* 8.15)

Introduction

The basis for all ISKCON's rules, policies, programs, preaching, and social development is how members understand *śāstra*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and our *ācāryas*. Indeed, as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī emphasized a *śikṣā*, rather than a *dīkṣā-paramparā*, the continuation of the *paramparā* depends as much on the transmission of clear śāstric understanding as on initiations.

As ISKCON has developed, naturally various influential devotees have presented divergent views on how we in ISKCON can understand and apply statements from *śāstra*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and our *ācāryas*. Conflicts between some of the proponents of different views can be confusing to many ISKCON members and make global management decisions difficult.

Principles, Devotional Qualities, and Tools

Rather than continually updating a list of specific circumstances to which scholars and leaders would then turn as if consulting a code of law, SAC members felt it imperative to have an overall understanding of principles regarding explaining and implementing statements from *guru-sādhu-śāstra*. In addition to principles, those engaged in hermeneutics cultivate specific traits of character, or devotional qualities, without which the truths of statements of *guru-sādhu-śāstra* cannot manifest. With principles and devotional qualities, a devotee then uses traditional hermeneutic tools in order to practically apply the principles to specific statements of *guru-sādhu-śāstra.* These principles, devotional qualities, and tools form what is often termed "a conceptual framework" within which specific points, questions, and doubts find resolution.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Differentiates Between Explanation, Interpretation, and "As it is"

By SAC conjointly:

The dictionary definition of hermeneutics is: "the branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts." We do not find that Śrīla Prabhupāda ever used the word hermeneutics, and, in fact, generally criticized approaching scripture to "interpret" it. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda used the word "explain" as a valid way to understand scripture. A difficulty arises because most English dictionaries use "interpret" and "explain" as synonymous. In modern American English, an interpreter, for example, is someone who translates from one language to another without changing the meaning. We can look at Śrīla Prabhupāda's negative connotation of the word "interpret," and positive connotation of the word "explain."

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 13.8–12, Bombay, September 30, 1973:

> When the things are clear, in the brahma-sūtras, all the sūtras are very clear. So, you don't require any interpretation. You can expand, explain very elaborately. That is another thing. But you cannot go beyond the sūtra.

And from the same lecture:

> Therefore, Kṛṣṇa specifically mentions, *Brahma-sūtra*. *Brahma-sūtra-padaiś caiva hetumadbhir viniścitaiḥ* (*Bhagavad-gītā* 13.5). The *sampradāya* must have understanding of the *Brahma-sūtra*, *Vedānta-sūtra*. So, all the *sampradāyas*, they have got their commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*. Even Śaṅkarācārya. But his commentary is not accepted by the Vaiṣṇava-*ācāryas* because he has tried to derive some meaning, interpretation. But there is no question of interpretation. When the things are clear, in the *Brahma-sūtra*, all the *sūtras* are very clear. So, you don't require any interpretation. You can expand, explain very elaborately. That is another thing. But you cannot go beyond the *sūtra*.

Conversation at the Gītā Prātiṣṭhan meeting in Wardha, December 20, 1976:

> Guest: But Swāmījī, you have also given so much [indistinct]. That is interpretation.
>
> Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, that is not interpretation. That is explanation. Interpretation, if I change Kurukṣetra into something else, that is interpretation.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu explained one verse in 61 different ways to Sanātana Gosvāmī, and Śrīla Prabhupāda regularly encouraged his disciples to understand *śāstra* from many angles of vision.

Letter to Chaturbhuj, Bombay, January 21, 1972:

> The points of *Bhagavad-gītā*, though they are simple and complete, can be understood from unlimited angles of vision. So, our philosophy is not dry, like mental speculation. The proper function of the brain or psychological activity is to understand everything through Kṛṣṇa's perspective or point-of-view, and so there

is no limit to that understanding because Kṛṣṇa is unlimited, and even though it can be said that the devotee who knows Kṛṣṇa, he knows everything (15th Chapter), still, the philosophical process never stops and the devotee continues to increase his knowledge even though he knows everything. Try to understand this point.

In a similar way to how Śrīla Prabhupāda uses the word "interpret" to mean something other than "explain," Śrīla Prabhupāda uses the English word "story" to mean a fictional narrative, though the strict definition of "story" would include both fiction and non-fiction narratives: "You will be interested in hearing a story. Not story. It is actual fact.", from a lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.12-13, New York, July 29, 1966.

Here are some further references regarding the use of the word "interpretation":

Bhagavad-gītā, Introduction:

> We must accept *Bhagavad-gītā* without interpretation, without deletion and without our own whimsical participation in the matter.

Bhagavad-gītā 1.1, purport:

> If someone is fortunate enough to understand *Bhagavad-gītā* in that line of disciplic succession, without motivated interpretation, then he surpasses all studies of Vedic wisdom, and all scriptures of the world.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.19.4:

> This is the explanation given by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. According to another interpretation, given by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, *niraham* means *nirniścayena aham.*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.29.24, purport by disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda:

> Thus a strict interpretation of the word *amāyayā*, "without illusion," reveals that the supreme religious duty for the gopīs is to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, their real lover.

Therefore, for Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers, hermeneutics means an explanation that clarifies the original meaning, but does not change it.

By Hari Pārṣada Dāsa:

Śrīla Prabhupāda was often disapproving of allegorical interpretations that border on impersonalism, but he also approved of Vaiṣṇava interpretations that describe and enhance the glory of the personal features of the Lord. It is true that Śrīla Prabhupāda often disapproved of impersonal interpretation.

An example is the following conversation with an Indian gentleman on a morning walk in Bombay, April 5, 1974:

> Indian man (2): Then why these *ācāryas* have interpreted *Gītā*?
>
> Prabhupāda: No, no, real *ācārya* will not interpret. The one who is false *ācārya*, he will interpret.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also pointed out the fault of too many unauthorized interpretations of *śāstra in Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 9.49, purport:

> If everyone is an authority, or if everyone accepts his own intelligence as the ultimate criterion — as is presently fashionable — the scriptures will be interpreted in many different ways, and everyone will claim that his own philosophy is supreme. This has become a very great problem, and everyone is interpreting scripture in his own way and setting up his own basis of authority. *Yata mata tata patha*. Now everybody and anybody is trying to establish his own theory as the ultimate truth.

At the same time, he acknowledged bona fide interpretations, even multiple interpretations of the same verse. Following are some examples.

The Science of Congregational Chanting of the Name of the Lord (*Samkirtan*), BTG Volume 1, Parts 1 - 4, 1944:

> In the spiritual society no sect or *Sampradaya* is considered as bona fide party who has no authorized interpretation of the *Brahmasutras*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.8.5, purport:

> Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has explained these words in a very interesting way as they can be interpreted from the side of Sarasvatī, the mother of learning.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Antya* 1.136, purport:

> Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura interprets this verse (*Vidagdha-mādhava* 1.10) in two ways, for Lord Kṛṣṇa and for Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. When interpreted for Kṛṣṇa, the night is understood to have been a dark-moon night, and when interpreted for Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, it is considered to have been a full-moon night.

The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 20:

> In this second division of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* the author offers his respectful obeisances unto "Sanātana." This Sanātana can be interpreted as either Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself or as Sanātana Gosvāmī, the elder brother and spiritual master of Rūpa Gosvāmī. In the case where "Sanātana" is accepted to mean Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the obeisances are offered to Kṛṣṇa because He is naturally so beautiful and because He is the killer of the demon Agha. If it is interpreted to mean Sanātana Gosvāmī, then it is because he is so greatly favored by Rūpa Gosvāmī, being always served by him.

Kṛṣṇa Book, Chapter 6:

> Kṛṣṇa showed the nature of a small baby and closed His eyes, as if to avoid the face of Pūtanā. This closing of the eyes is interpreted and studied in different ways by the devotees. Some say that Kṛṣṇa closed His eyes because He did not like to see the face of Pūtanā, who had killed so many children and who had now come to kill Him. Others say that Pūtanā hesitated to take the baby on her lap because something extraordinary was being dictated to her from within, and that in order to give her assurance Kṛṣṇa closed His eyes so that she would not be frightened. And yet others interpret in this way: Kṛṣṇa appeared in order to kill the demons and give protection to the devotees, as stated in *the Bhagavad-gītā: paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām* [4.8]. The first demon to be killed was a woman. According to Vedic rules, the killing of a woman, a *brāhmaṇa*, cows or a child is strictly forbidden. Kṛṣṇa was obliged to kill the demon Pūtanā, and because the killing of a woman is forbidden according to Vedic *śāstra*, He could not help but close His eyes. Another interpretation is that Kṛṣṇa closed His eyes because He simply took Pūtanā to be His nurse. Pūtanā came to Kṛṣṇa just to offer her breast for the Lord to suck. Kṛṣṇa is so merciful that even though He knew Pūtanā was there to kill Him, He took her as His nurse or mother.

By looking closely at all the above citations, it is evident that Śrīla Prabhupāda was against those specific interpretations of *śāstra* which trivialize the glory of the Lord and depict Him, His associates, pastimes or abode as some impersonal void or illusion. He also disliked allegorical interpretations by recent commentators, e.g. Gandhi, who said in *The Gita According to Gandhi*, page 136:

> The *Gītā* is not a historical discourse. A physical illustration is often needed to drive home a spiritual truth. It is the description not of war between cousins but between the two natures in us — the Good and the Evil. I regard Duryodhana and his party as the baser impulses in man, and Arjuna and his party as the higher impulses. The field of battle is our own body. An eternal battle is going on between the two camps, and the Poet-seer vividly describes it. Kṛṣṇa is the Dweller within, ever whispering to a pure heart.

At the same time, Śrīla Prabhupāda was perfectly comfortable with allegorical interpretations if they came from the previous Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*. He rephrases Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's allegorical interpretation of Kurukṣetra in his purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* 1.1:

> As in the paddy field the unnecessary plants are taken out, so it is expected from the very beginning of these topics that in the religious field of Kurukṣetra, where the father of religion, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, was present, the unwanted plants like Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana and others would be wiped out and the thoroughly religious persons, headed by Yudhiṣṭhira, would be established by the Lord.

The reason for Śrīla Prabhupāda disproving Gandhi's allegorical interpretation but supporting and rephrasing Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's allegorical interpretation is that Gandhi flattens the entire meaning of the verse exclusively to the allegorical plane when he says that "The *Gītā* is not a historical discourse." On the other hand, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's intention is not to flatten the entire meaning of the verse exclusively into the allegorical dimension.

Keeping all these things in mind, we should also remember that all *śāstra* has been interpreted by the previous *ācāryas* in their commentaries. However, these are valid interpretations because they describe and enhance the glory of the personal features of the Lord. Therefore, when it is said that śāstric messages should be received and transmitted without any intermediate processing, we should understand that the phrase "intermediate processing" refers to addition of mental speculation, allegorical interpretations and impersonal conclusions.

Quotes on the Purpose of Hermeneutics

Individuals, Leaders, and Outreach

1. Individuals: Fulfilment within Personal Spiritual Life

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.5:

> O sages, I have been justly questioned by you. Your questions are worthy because they relate to Lord Kṛṣṇa and so are of relevance to the world's welfare. Only questions of this sort are capable of completely satisfying the self.

2. ISKCON Leaders: Unity within ISKCON

Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter to Kirtanananda, Bombay, October 10,1968:

> … but if we keep Kṛṣṇa in the center, then there will be agreement in varieties. This is called unity in diversity.

3. Relevance within Outreach

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.4.1, purport:

> Personal realization does not mean that one should, out of vanity, attempt to show one's own learning by trying to surpass the previous *ācārya*. He must have full confidence in the previous *ācārya*, and at the same time he must realize the subject matter so nicely that he can present the matter for the particular circumstances in a suitable manner. The original purpose of the text must be maintained. No obscure meaning should be screwed out of it, yet it should be presented in an interesting manner for the understanding of the audience. This is called realization.

Three Leadership Functions

1. Maintaining Purpose and Ethos

HH Girirāja Swami, *Watering the Seed,* 2010, page 254:

> Śrīla Prabhupāda was silent for a moment. Especially considering that whatever he said might be his last words, I strained intently to hear. He uttered one word: "Organization." He paused and then whispered, "Organization and intelligence."

Letter to Haṁsaduta, Los Angeles, June 22, 1972:

> This means that now you all leaders, especially the GBC members, must become very much responsible and do the work that I am doing to the same standard. So, I want you leaders especially to become very much absorbed in the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and become yourselves completely convinced and free from all doubt. On this platform you shall be able to carry on the work satisfactorily.

2. Having respectful Vaiṣṇava dialogue

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.3, Melbourne, April 5, 1972:

> Similarly, the GBC member means they will see that in every temple these books are very thoroughly being read and discussed and understood and applied in practical life. ... the GBC members should divide some zones and see very nicely that things are going on, that they are chanting sixteen rounds, and temple management is doing according to the routine work, and the books are being thoroughly discussed, being read, understood practically. These things are required.

Letter to Balai, San Francisco, March 22, 1968:

> I am always so pleased to see how nicely the *Iṣṭagoṣṭhi* meetings are being carried on, so I am always anticipating your letters, along with *Iṣṭagoṣṭhi* reports. Thank you very much.

Letter to Satsvarupa, April 3, 1968:

> We cannot always understand the intricacies of such incidents. Sometimes they are enacted to bewilder persons who are demons. You should therefore discuss in the *Iṣṭagosthi* current reading matters from *Bhagavad-gītā* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We should only try to understand everything from the standard of devotional service. It is clearly stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that anyone who is cent per cent engaged in the service of the Lord is transcendentally situated and the influence of *māyā* has no more any action on such body. The Lord and His pure devotees are always beyond the range of *māyā*'s action. Even though they appear like the action of *māyā,* we should understand their action of *yogamāyā* or the internal potency of the Lord.

3. The Dynamic Continuity of *Paramparā*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.16, purport:

> The expert devotees also can discover novel ways and means to convert the non-devotees in terms of particular time and circumstance. Devotional service is dynamic activity, and the expert devotees can find out competent means to inject it into the dull brains of the materialistic population.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Ādi* 7.38, purport:

> *Deśa-kāla-pātra* (the place, the time and the object) should be taken into consideration … Therefore it is a principle that a preacher must strictly follow the rules and regulations laid down in the *śāstras* yet at the same time devise a means by which the preaching work to reclaim the fallen may go on with full force.

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.10, Delhi, November 16, 1973; emphasis added:

> I have to arrange according to the country, according to the circumstances, as far as possible. … So we have to adopt *deśa-kāla-pātra* … But we are keeping our principles as it is but making arrangement according to the circumstances. *That is required.*

Letter to Haṁsadūta, December 3, 1968:

> Next January there will be an examination on this *Bhagavad-gītā*. Papers will be sent by me to all centers, and those securing the minimum passing grade will be given the title of *Bhaktiśāstrī*. Similarly, another examination will be held on Lord Caitanya's appearance day in February 1970, and it will be upon *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*. Those passing will get the title of *Bhaktivaibhava*. Another examination will be held sometime in 1971 on the four books, *Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, and *The Nectar of Devotion*. One who will pass this examination will be awarded with the title of *Bhaktivedānta*. I want all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of *Bhaktivedānta* so that the family transcendental diploma of *Bhaktivedānta* will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of *Bhaktivedānta* will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the generations. This is my program. So we should not simply publish these books for reading by outsiders, but our students must be well versed in all of our books so that we can be prepared to defeat all opposing parties in the matter of self-realization.

Principles: Quotes and Further Explanations

Overarching Principle: Understanding tradition through Śrīla Prabhupāda, accepting Śrīla Prabhupāda as the representative and conveyer of the essence of the tradition and *paramparā*, in the most appropriate way for our understanding and application.

Evidence:

Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.14.2:

ācāryavān puruṣo veda

Translation: One who approaches a bona fide spiritual master can understand everything about spiritual realization.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23:

yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ

Translation: Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 18.67, Ahmedabad, December 10, 1972:

> So this science is understood by the *paramparā* disciplic succession. So as we have understood by the *paramparā* system from my Guru Mahārāja, so any of my student who will understand, he will keep it running on. This is the process. It is not a new thing. It is the old thing. Simply we have to distribute it properly, as we have heard from our predecessor *ācārya*. Therefore in the *Bhagavad-gītā* it is recommended, *ācārya upāsanam*: "One must approach *ācārya.*" *Ācāryavān puruṣo veda*. Simply by speculating, by so-called scholarship, it is not possible. It is not possible. One must approach the *ācārya*.

Morning Walk, Los Angeles, June 23, 1975:

> Our whole process is following the example of predecessors, nothing independent. So that principle should be followed. We do not accept any preceptor who is free from the predecessors.

Lecture, Seattle, October 18, 1968:

> We are speaking on the strength of scripture, saintly persons and spiritual master. That is the way of understanding.

Letter to Muralidhara, Jaduraṇī, Artists, Rome, May 25, 1974:

> So I am glad that you are fully absorbed in your work and very concerned that it be executed just to my satisfaction in *paramparā* standard. This is your perfection. I

am hopeful we will continue our cooperation as I have many many more books to write if you can only keep up with me in publishing and painting.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.15.56, purport:

As recommended in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *ācāryopāsanam*: one must approach the *ācārya* for real knowledge. *Tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet*: [*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.12] one must approach the *ācārya*, for then one will receive perfect knowledge. When guided by the spiritual master, one attains the ultimate goal of life.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta appearance day lecture, Atlanta, March 2, 1975:

This is the process, Vedic process. One should have unflinching faith in God and spiritual master. Don't jump over God, crossing the spiritual master. Then it will be failure. You must go through. We are observing Vyāsa-pūjā ceremony, the birth anniversary of our Guru Mahārāja. Why? We cannot understand Kṛṣṇa without spiritual master. That is bogus. If anyone wants to understand Kṛṣṇa, jumping over the spiritual master, then immediately he becomes a bogus. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, *guru-kṛṣṇa-kṛpāya pāya bhakti-latā-bīja* (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 19.151). That is Vedic injunction. *Tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā* (*Bhagavad-gīta* 4.34). Nobody can understand Kṛṣṇa without going through His most confidential servant.

Lecture, Los Angeles, December 8, 1973:

So if you want to understand *Bhagavad-gīta* then we must understand in the same way as the person who directly heard from. This is called *paramparā* system. Suppose I have heard something from my spiritual master. So I speak to you the same thing. So this is *paramparā* system. You cannot imagine what my spiritual master said. Or even if you read some books, you cannot understand unless you understand it from me. This is called *paramparā* system. You cannot jump over to the superior guru, I mean to say, neglecting the next *ācārya*, immediate next *ācārya*.

Letter to Bṛhaspati, Delhi, November 17, 1971:

I am successful in my teaching work because I have not deviated one inch from my spiritual master's instruction, this is my only qualification.

Letter to Jayapatāka, Los Angeles, April 17, 1970:

Regarding our books, [...the] words are ambrosial because they are not my personal words, they are instructions of my predecessors and I am just trying to administer them to my best knowledge. That is the way of *paramparā* system. We have nothing to manufacture, but simply carry the message as a faithful person. That will be effective.

Letter to Bhīma and others, Bombay, May 16, 1974:

> I am simply serving my spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and all the *ācāryas* in the disciplic succession. If I have done anything of credit it is that I have not changed their teachings. I have not added anything of my own interpretation.

Letter to Mākhanlāl, Los Angeles, June 3, 1970:

> You are all helping me in the execution of my mission so please do not try to do anything beyond the jurisdiction of my instructions. My will I have already disclosed to you all...I can assure you that if you follow my instruction as above mentioned there is no doubt about it that through me my spiritual master Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura will be pleased, and through His mercy Lord Nityānanda will be pleased. In this way Lord Caitanya and ultimately Rādhā Kṛṣṇa will be pleased, and thus your life will be successful.

Letter to Friends, Los Angeles, May 23, 1972:

> I am very much encouraged that you are all chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and trying to become Kṛṣṇa Conscious. But I do not advise that you approach the matter of perfecting your life in this independent way. Unless there is connection with a bona fide spiritual master, coming in the line of disciplic succession, there is no possibility of making progress in spiritual life ... You say that whatever I instruct you, you will carry out, so again my instruction is that you abandon this independent scheme and join your good god-brothers and sisters at some one of our ISKCON centers.

Letter to Paramānanda, Los Angeles, June 17, 1970:

> You have rightly observed that I am simply trying to execute the order of my spiritual master. Whatever is being done it is not on account of my intelligence or endeavor because I am simply an instrument in the hands of my spiritual master. I do not know how far I have got the capacity to carry His order, but I may say that I have a sincere desire to do it. This is *paramparā* system. If a student tries to satisfy his immediate *ācārya* or the spiritual master, that is the only qualification for advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Antya* 7.134, purport:

> The *paramparā* system does not allow one to deviate from the commentaries of the previous *ācāryas*. By depending upon the previous *ācāryas*, one can write beautiful commentaries. However, one cannot defy the previous *ācāryas*. The false pride that makes one think that he can write better than the previous *ācāryas* will make one's comments faulty. At the present moment it has become fashionable for everyone to write in his own way, but such writing is never accepted by serious devotees. Because of false pride, every scholar and philosopher wants to exhibit his learning by interpreting the *śāstras*, especially the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, in his own way. This system of commenting in one's own way is fully condemned by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Therefore He says, *'artha-vyasta' likhana*

sei. Commentaries written according to one's own philosophical way are never accepted; no one will appreciate such commentaries on the revealed scriptures.

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.9.28, Māyāpur, March 6, 1976:

> So this is the process: *tava bhṛtya-sevā*. We have to... *Ādau gurvāśrayam*. First beginning of Vaiṣṇava life is to accept guru, spiritual master, *ādau gurvāśrayam*, then other things. Because who will teach you? So we have to approach a pure Vaiṣṇava as spiritual master, follow his instruction. And what is his instruction? His instruction is as he was instructed by his spiritual master. He does not invent instruction. This is instruction. The pure Vaiṣṇava, he does not invent anything new. *Yāre dekha tāre kaha kṛṣṇa upadeśa* [Cc. Madhya 7.128]. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that "You all, every one of you, become guru, everyone." *Āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra ei deśa*. Wherever you are living, it doesn't require that you have to travel all over the world. If you have no such capacity, it doesn't matter. You remain wherever you are, but you become a guru. "How I become a guru?" *Yāre dekha tāre kaha kṛṣṇa upadeśa* [Cc. Madhya 7.128]: "Very simple thing. You instruct only what is instructed by Kṛṣṇa. That's all." Don't invent. Don't become overintelligent. Remain a poor fool. *Guru more mūrkha dekhi śāsana, karila śāsana* [Cc. Ādi 7.71]. Caitanya Mahāprabhu also presenting Himself as a great fool, because He says, "My Guru Mahārāja found Me a great fool." He was a fool? He was Kṛṣṇa Himself. But one should remain always a fool before Guru Mahārāja. That is progress. If he thinks, "I know more than my Guru Mahārāja," then he's fallen. *Yasyāprasādād na gatiḥ kuto 'pi*. Then he is finished.

Explanation:

By Girirāja Swāmī:

For ISKCON members, Śrīla Prabhupāda, his words and example, is the lens through which we understand the previous *ācāryas*, the Gauḍīya sampradāya, and the whole Vedic literature. We do not "jump over" Śrīla Prabhupāda. We privilege Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision and explanations over those of others.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that his authority stemmed from his faithfulness to his guru, the previous *ācāryas*, the Gauḍīya sampradaya, and the Vedic literature. He never presented himself as having independent authority. His words and example must be understood within the context of the teachings and examples of the Vedic literature as a whole, and our specific line in particular and vice versa.

Harmonizing having Śrīla Prabhupāda as the focal point through which we understand the tradition and understanding Śrīla Prabhupāda as part of the tradition, requires maturity.

One example of understanding our tradition through Śrīla Prabhupāda would be how we observe Ekādaśī. Our food restrictions are relatively minor compared to those of other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava groups, and we generally go about our day as normal except for a change in diet. We are satisfied that the restrictions Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us are sufficient. Given that Śrīla Prabhupāda derives his authority from the tradition, we find places where he told us that individually we can take on greater austerities on Ekādaśī as fully within our tradition. The harmonizing would be that we would not impose those greater austerities on official ISKCON programs nor propagate them as being "higher" or "better" than what he gave us.

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Another example of understanding our tradition through Śrīla Prabhupāda would be studying the *śāstras* through his books. We can study the *ācāryas*' commentaries to a particular verse, but through Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport, with the aim of understanding the purport better.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa published an article in *Back to Godhead* with the title "Serving the Words of His Predecessors" and subtitle "A look at one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* reveals his loyalty to the Vaiṣṇava tradition of scriptural commentary." In the article, Gopīparāṇadhana shows how Śrīla Prabhupāda incorporated the commentaries of his predecessors in his purport, in a way suitable for our understanding and favorable for our *bhakti*:

> Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda was the founder and organizer of a large worldwide religious movement; that he developed it in just twelve years, all after his sixty-ninth birthday, shows that he was not only practical, innovative, and determined but also spiritually empowered. Although these are valid reasons to think highly of Śrīla Prabhupāda, he always de-emphasized his own abilities, preferring to be judged on the more objective grounds of his bona fide allegiance to the teachings of the Vaiṣṇava tradition he represented. He did not credit his preaching success to any special abilities of his own. As he once said, "I don't claim that I am a pure devotee or perfect, but my only qualification is that I am trying to follow the instruction of the perfect.

> In any case, spiritual realization is essentially a private matter, not open to objective evaluation. There are too many false saints who allow their disciples to fanatically advertise them as much greater than they really are. In the opinion of orthodox Vaiṣṇavas, the saintliness of a person can be known only by someone just as saintly. To publicly establish spiritual authority, then, a teacher, rather than making an open spectacle of his intimate ecstasies, should simply speak philosophically on the basis of what previous authorities have said in scripture and on reputable commentaries of scripture. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted his own authority to be accepted according to how faithfully he lived up to that standard.

> The Gauḍīya school of Vaiṣṇavism to which Śrīla Prabhupāda belongs was founded by Caitanya Mahāprabhu in Bengal five centuries ago. This Gauḍīya sampradāya is officially connected with the Vaiṣṇava school established by Madhva in the thirteenth century and also has strong philosophical and cultural bonds with the even older Śrī Vaiṣṇava school of Rāmānuja.

> Although the founding teachers of other Vaiṣṇava schools each wrote major commentaries on Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa's Vedānta-sūtra and their followers carried on debate with Advaita impersonalists and others on the basis of their theistic interpretation of Vedānta, Caitanya Mahāprabhu chose not to busy His own followers in the same way. He proposed that the ancient Bhāgavata Purāṇa (known also as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*) served perfectly well as a natural commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra, having been written by the same Veda-vyāsa. Lord Caitanya advised His associates that since the Bhāgavatam was already available and easily understandable, there was no need for them to compose new commentaries and sub-commentaries on Vedānta.

Another Purāṇa, the Garuḍa Purāṇa, corroborates Lord Caitanya's reliance on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

pūrṇaḥ so 'yam atiśayaḥ
artho 'yam brahma-sūtrāṇām
bhāratārtha-vinirṇayaḥ
gāyatrī-bhāṣya-rūpo 'sau
vedārtha-paribṛṁhitaḥ
purāṇānāṁ sāma-rūpaḥ
sākṣād bhagavatoditaḥ
dvādaśa-skandha-yukto 'yam
śata-viccheda-saṁyutaḥ
grantho 'ṣṭādaśa-sāhasraṁ
śrī-bhāgavatābhidhaḥ

Translation: This [*Purāṇa*] is perfectly complete. It is the purport of the *Vedānta-sūtra*, establishes the meaning of the Mahābhārata, is a commentary on Gāyatrī, and completes the message of the *Vedas*. It is the *Sāma Veda* among the *Purāṇas*, spoken directly by an incarnation of God [Vyāsa]. This work, consisting of twelve cantos, hundreds of chapters, and eighteen thousand verses, is called *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda considered the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, along with the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the substantial foundation of his International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. He created ISKCON primarily for making the theology of the Gītā and Bhāgavatam universally accessible, and he directed his disciples to give priority to the work of publishing and distributing these two scriptures, in English and many other languages.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's opus magnum, a multi-volume English translation of and commentary on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, was unfortunately left incomplete when he passed away in 1977; it was finished, however, ten years later by the collaborative effort of a few of his disciples. Having served as an editor of this entire series of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and participated in its posthumous completion, I have gathered some insights into Śrīla Prabhupāda's hermeneutic methodology. In this essay, I will examine Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation and commentary on one verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, with the aim of showing how he based his own presentation largely on the commentaries of previous authorities.

Nārada's Allegory

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is presented as literal, albeit very ancient, history. A few narrations in this *Purāṇa*, however, are intended to be understood as fiction—most of them allegories devised by one of the most frequent speakers in the Bhāgavatam, the itinerant preacher Nārada. The text we are going to look at belongs to one of these allegorical passages, the story of King Purañjana told by Nārada to Mahārāja Prācīnabarhi in Chapters 25–29 of the Fourth Canto.

In brief, the imaginary Purañjana is equivalent to the Everyman figure in medieval European morality plays. He represents the illusioned soul suffering from misidentification with his temporary embodiment in material life. Purañjana tries

for years to enjoy with his consort, the female personification of his material intelligence; he finally succumbs to old age, disease, and death, and then, because of too much attachment to his wife, takes his next birth as a woman. This female reincarnation of Purañjana marries a pious king who dies young, leaving his wife bewildered in lamentation.

Our text occurs at this point in the narration, as the fifty-first verse of Chapter 28. It describes an unexpected visit by an old, forgotten friend. Here are the original Sanskrit text and Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation:

> *tatra pūrvataraḥ kaścit*
> *sakhā brāhmaṇa ātmavān*
>
> *sāntvayan valgunā sāmnā*
> *tām āha rudatīṁ prabhu*

Translation: My dear King, one *brāhmaṇa*, who was an old friend of King Purañjana, came to that place and began to pacify the Queen with sweet words.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's explanation of this verse, his "purport," fills two pages. It is based on the short commentaries, each only a few lines long, by two standard Vaiṣṇava teachers, Śrīdhara Svāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī. We will first describe these commentaries and then analyze how Śrīla Prabhupāda used them.

Śrīdhara's Commentary

The oldest extant commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was written by Śrīdhara Svāmī; older commentaries are known only by name or by isolated fragments. No solid evidence supports his exact life span; Karl Potter has tentatively assigned his birth to the beginning of the fifteenth century, though Śrīdhara Svāmī may have lived earlier than that, since less than a century later Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu described Śrīdhara as being a venerable authority. In India, more than one century is usually needed for a commentator on traditional literature to become established as an authority.

As far as is known, Śrīdhara Svāmī did not belong to any of the major Vaiṣṇava schools, but was probably an initiated member of Śaṅkara's Advaita *sampradāya*. Nonetheless, the opinions he expressed in his commentaries on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the Viṣṇu *Purāṇa* were staunchly Vaiṣṇava. Caitanya Mahāprabhu's cutting comments to Vallabhācārya, a prominent Vaiṣṇava, testify to the great respect Caitanya had for Śrīdhara's opinions, as Lord Caitanya's biographer Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja recounts:

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu smilingly replied, "One who does not accept the svāmī [husband] as an authority I consider a prostitute. ... You have dared criticize Śrīdhara Svāmī, and you have begun your own commentary on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, not accepting his authority. That is your false pride. Śrīdhara Svāmī is the spiritual master of the entire world because by his mercy we can understand the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I therefore accept him as a spiritual master. Whatever you might write due to false pride, trying to surpass Śrīdhara Svāmī, would carry a contrary purport. Therefore no one would pay attention to it. One who comments

on the Bhāgavatam following in the footsteps of Śrīdhara Svāmī will be honored and accepted by everyone." (*Śri Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya-līlā* 7.115 and 132-136)

The two-sentence commentary of Śrīdhara Svāmī on the verse we are considering reads: "The friend who is 'very old' in the sense of being eternal without origin is the Supreme Lord, in accordance with the statement of revealed scripture beginning 'Two birds' ... He addressed her with sweet words of consolation."

In the first sentence, Śrīdhara Svāmī identifies the old friend of the queen as every soul's original friend, the supreme controller (*īśvara*). He supports this opinion by proposing that this verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* alludes to one of the oldest Vedic hymns. Although it is well known that the verse beginning *dvā suparṇā* occurs in both the *Muṇḍaka* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads*, less well-known is that the verse is originally found, verbatim, in the First Maṇḍala of the *Ṛg Veda*, the most archaic of scriptural sources:

> *dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā*
> *samānaṁ vṛkṣaṁ pariṣasvajāte*
> *tayor anyaḥ pippalaṁ svādv atty*
> *anaśnann anyo 'bhicākaśīti*

Translation: Two friendly companion birds together reside on one tree. One of them is eating the tree's fruits while the other does not eat but simply watches His friend.

Vaiṣṇava commentators explain that this verse refers to God in His accompanying of the finite soul in all the soul's incarnations in material existence. In every form of life, the finite soul and Supreme Soul sit together in the heart, one of them trying to enjoy material life and the other simply waiting for His eternal friend to remember Him.

Viśvanātha's Commentary

The second commentary drawn upon by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.28.51 is the one written by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in the second half of the seventeenth century. Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī was the most prominent spiritual master of sixth-generation Vaiṣṇavas in Caitanya Mahāprabhu's *sampradāya*. Śrīla Viśvanātha led the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community in Vṛndāvana during the time of the Mogul emperor Aurangzeb, who persecuted the Vaiṣṇavas. Viśvanātha's own predecessor was the celebrated devotional poet Narottama Dāsa, and among his disciples was Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, author of the *Govinda-bhāṣya* commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary on this verse is four sentences long. The first sentence suggests a deep meaning to the allegory of Queen Purañjanī's lamentation: "[This verse] implies that in such a mood of distress as is suffered when one's spiritual master has departed from this world, a disciple can experience the direct presence of God."

In this realization of Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Everyman has been replaced with a rare, special soul—the surrendered disciple of a pure Vaiṣṇava. Without any other qualifications of his own, a sincere disciple earns the right to see God simply by his attachment to his spiritual master. After the guru has passed away, the serious disciple does not lose his spiritual strength but continues to advance by remembering and executing the guru's instructions. The intense devotional mood of separation can develop into direct vision of the Supreme Person.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's second sentence is a near exact repeat of Śrīdhara Svāmī's first sentence: "In this context, the friend who is 'very old' in the sense of being eternal without origin is the Supreme Lord, in accordance with such statements of revealed scripture as the one beginning 'Two birds...'"

In the tradition of Sanskrit commentary, this sort of "plagiarism" is considered ethical. It is appropriate to simply repeat the statements of one's predecessors when further explanation for one's own generation is not required. To pretend to be original, furthermore, is frowned upon. Most of Viśvanātha Cakravartī's contemporaries who could read Sanskrit were probably acquainted with Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary and would have recognized this citation; for those unfamiliar with Śrīdhara, Viśvanātha was being considerate by passing on the past master's words.

The third sentence explains why the old friend in the allegory appears as a *brāhmaṇa*: "He [the Supreme Lord in the heart] is a *brāhmaṇa*, or in other words, he is in the guise of a *brāhmaṇa*; by this [the present verse] means to inform us that without pure love of God one can never have direct realization of God's true, original form."

The sincere disciple represented by Queen Purañjanī is not prepared to fully realize God's personality, but even in His disguised form the Lord kindly gives the soul instructions that enable him to gradually achieve perfection.
Viśvanātha Cakravartī's fourth sentence explains another word in the verse, the adjective *ātma-vān* (literally, "self-possessed" or "self-realized"), which further characterizes the *brāhmaṇa*: "Self-possessed" here means also having His original form, which He kept hidden within Himself."

Ordinarily, God, who sits silently within every person's heart, limits His functions to being a witness, sanctioner, and facilitator of the living being's endeavors. In the case of the rare soul who has become purified from material desires, God advises the soul directly from within the heart how to progress toward liberation. Besides being the Supersoul, however, He is simultaneously nondifferent from God in His full personal form. Those who progress beyond liberation to pure devotion thus realize their own personal relationship with God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Purport

Now we can look at Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport. He begins by retelling Viśvanātha Cakravartī's second sentence, which, as we have seen, is Śrīdhara Svāmī's first sentence and refers to the Upaniṣads and the Ṛg *Veda*. Viśvanātha Cakravartī had said: "In this context, the friend who is "very old" in the sense of being eternal

without origin is the Supreme Lord, in accordance with such statements of revealed scripture as the one beginning "Two birds…"

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

The appearance of an old friend in the form of a *brāhmaṇa* is very significant. In His Paramātmā feature, Kṛṣṇa is the old friend of everyone. According to Vedic injunction, Kṛṣṇa is sitting with the living entity side by side. According to the *śruti-mantra* (*dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyāḥ*), the Lord is sitting within the heart of every living entity as *suhṛt*, the best friend. The Lord is always eager to have the living entity come home, back to Godhead. Sitting with the living entity as witness, the Lord gives him all chances to enjoy himself materially, but whenever there is an opportunity, the Lord gives good counsel and advises the living entity to abandon trying to become happy through material adjustment and instead turn his face toward the Supreme Personality of Godhead and surrender unto Him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda next presents the idea of Viśvanātha Cakravartī's first sentence, which reads: "[This verse] implies that in such a mood of distress as is suffered when one's spiritual master has departed from this world, a disciple can experience the direct presence of God."

From this, Śrīla Prabhupāda's derives the following:

When one becomes serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master, his resolution is tantamount to seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As explained before, this means meeting the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the instruction of the spiritual master. This is technically called *vāṇī-sevā*.

In Sanskrit the word *vāṇī* means "the faculty of speech," "words," and "instructions." *Sevā* means "service." A disciple can serve his spiritual master's body (*vapuḥ*) whenever opportunities arise, but more important is serving his *vāṇī*. *Vāṇī-sevā* is not limited by the absence of the person being served.

Śrīla Prabhupāda continues in his purport:

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states in his *Bhagavad-gītā* commentary on the verse *vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana* (*Bhagavad-gītā*. 2.41) that one should serve the words of the spiritual master. The disciple must stick to whatever the spiritual master orders. Simply by following on that line, one sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Then Śrīla Prabhupāda renders the third sentence of Viśvanātha Cakravartī: "He [the Supreme Lord in the heart] is a *brāhmaṇa*, or in other words, he is in the guise of a *brāhmaṇa*; by this [the present verse] means to inform us that without pure love of God one can never have direct realization of God's true, original form."

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Paramātmā, appeared before the Queen as a *brāhmaṇa*, but why didn't He appear in His original form as Śrī Kṛṣṇa? Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura remarks that unless one is very highly elevated in loving the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one cannot see Him as He is.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's fourth sentence was "'Self-possessed' here means also having His original form, which He kept hidden within Himself."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's version of this is: Nonetheless, if one sticks to the principles enunciated by the spiritual master, somehow or other he is in association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Since the Lord is in the heart, He can advise a sincere disciple from within. This is also confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.10):

teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ
bhajatāṁ prīti-pūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ
yena mām upayānti te

Translation: To those who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda finishes his purport with a citation from another Vaiṣṇava authority:

In conclusion, if a disciple is very serious to execute the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead by vāṇī or vapuḥ. This is the only secret of success in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Instead of being eager to see the Lord in some bush of Vṛndāvana while at the same time engaging in sense gratification, if one instead sticks to the principle of following the words of the spiritual master, he will see the Supreme Lord without difficulty. Śrīla Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura has therefore said:

bhaktis tvayi sthiratarā bhagavan yadi syād
daivena naḥ phalati divya-kiśora-mūrtiḥ
muktiḥ svayaṁ mukulitāñjali sevate 'smān
dharmārtha-kāma-gatayaḥ samaya-pratīkṣāḥ

Translation: "If I am engaged in devotional service unto You, my dear Lord, then very easily can I perceive Your presence everywhere. And as far as liberation is concerned, I think that liberation stands at my door with folded hands, waiting to serve me—and all material conveniences of dharma [religiosity], artha [economic development], and kāma [sense gratification] stand with her." (Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta 107)

If one is very highly advanced in devotional service, he will have no difficulty in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If one engages in the service of the spiritual master, he not only sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead but attains liberation. As far as material conveniences are concerned, they automatically come, just as the maidservants of a queen follow the queen wherever she goes. Liberation is no problem for the pure devotee, and all material conveniences are simply awaiting him at all stages of life.

This single text, of course, is only a tiny sample of Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports. A much broader survey needs to be taken before a fair appraisal can be made of how he used his predecessor's commentaries. The project of researching the sources of Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā* As It Is is

only beginning, and requires the ongoing diligence of any number of disciples and scholars.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was firmly convinced of the relevance of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In his view, the Bhāgavatam's teachings were timeless, the perennial science of God consciousness. His own responsibility was simply to translate them without distortion. If the instructions of his authoritative predecessors were properly served, the whole world would surely benefit.

Admittedly, the ideas and images Śrīla Prabhupāda strove to convey in his purports are sometimes difficult for modern readers to comprehend, what to speak of assimilate. The original texts he translated are messages from a different world, ancient and foreign. But Prabhupāda felt the urgent need to deliver these messages as best he could. He was thus always concerned with how to make the Bhāgavatam's enlightening instructions comprehensible to the average, contemporary public. Certainly not everyone would understand, but even if only a few readers received benefit from this transcendental knowledge, the endeavor could be counted as a great success.

Before Śrīla Prabhupāda came to America in 1965 with his first English volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, a well-intentioned person could have questioned him, "Why present this work, which has a very small audience? Why not something else, easier and more popular?" Prabhupāda, however, did not think in such a way. To him it did not matter that there were no readers for the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*; he created his own readership. In a few years, thousands of disciples became serious students of the Bhāgavatam, and millions of other people around the world brought the book into their homes. This is the sign of a great author—that he creates an audience where there was none.

Thus, understanding how Śrīla Prabhupāda is within the tradition could include studying the *ācāryas*' commentaries to deepen one's appreciation of Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports and also explore realizations of our *ācāryas* that Śrīla Prabhupāda chose not to include in his works.

Problems can come when taking Śrīla Prabhupāda as our exclusive authority means that we separate him from the very tradition he himself claimed as his source of authority. This can happen in two extreme ways. The first is wanting to base everything wholly and solely on Śrīla Prabhupāda's words and teachings, without ever referencing our *ācāryas* and tradition. And the second is seeing Śrīla Prabhupāda only through the lens of the *parampara*, such that we try to understand *śāstra* and our *ācāryas* without keeping Śrīla Prabhupāda first, or without reference to him. By doing so, we may institute ways of preaching and acting that are inappropriate for our circumstances.

That harmonious understanding should be applied appropriately according to time, place, and person. In our tradition, *sannyāsīs* did not even speak to political leaders, as in Mahāprabhu's strict personal example. Yet Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta and our Śrīla Prabhupāda did engage in discussion with political leaders. In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda specifically sought out world leaders to speak to about bringing Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the world.

In a talk with disciples in Juhu, Bombay, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke about the dynamic tensions involved in meeting with politicians, considering the examples of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the injunctions of *śāstra*, while contemplating a friendly MP's offer to arrange for him to go to

speak with the newly elected prime minister, Morarji Desai. "Caitanya Mahāprabhu refused even to see—what to speak of going there," he said. "Even big, big kings—Akbar, Mansingh—they used to come to Rupa Gosvāmī."

We don't require anything from them, but for the whole human society's welfare we can suggest to him, 'Do like this.' But we don't require anything from them. Of course, sometimes we are in difficulty; we may ask them something.

Conversation, Bombay, April 28, 1977:

> One of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's devotees was ordered to be hanged—Gopīnātha Paṭṭanāyaka. All the devotees approached Caitanya Mahāprabhu, thinking that "He must … The king will excuse him." He never agreed. "Oh, I cannot do that. If he has done something wrong, then let him …"Of course, [Gopīnātha] was saved and protected by Caitanya Mahāprabhu's good will, but He never agreed. These are some of the examples that … Simply depend on Kṛṣṇa. But if they are actually respectful, we can ask them. But if it is a difficult job— *Viṣayiṇāṁ sandarśanām atha yoṣit.*

Śrīla Prabhupāda was referring to a verse quoted by Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu, recorded in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 11.8:

> *niṣkiñcanasya bhagavad-bhajanonmukhasya*
> *pāraṁ paraṁ jigamiṣor bhava-sāgarasya*
> *sandarśanaṁ viṣayiṇām atha yoṣitāṁ ca*
> *hā hanta hanta viṣa-bhakṣaṇato 'py asādhu*

> **Translation:** Alas, for a person who is seriously desiring to cross the material ocean and engage in the transcendental loving service of the Lord without material motives, seeing a materialist engaged in sense gratification or seeing a woman who is similarly interested is more abominable than drinking poison willingly.

The same conversation as above, Bombay, April 28, 1977:

> "We cannot keep so strictly," Śrīla Prabhupāda concluded, "but these are the principles taught by Caitanya Mahāprabhu."

Traditionally, *sannyāsīs* did not use beds or travel by means other than walking. But Śrīla Prabhupāda used planes, trains, and cars, and slept on beds. So, while our primary authority for renunciation is Śrīla Prabhupāda's own example, we also do well to look at tradition and to take heed of the principles of the renounced order. Otherwise, in the name of *yukta-vairāgya*, we may deviate. We do well to find the traditional principles, see how they have been applied in various circumstances, both ancient and by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and then adjust for the particular needs and circumstances of our time. So, when we study statements from *guru-sādhu-śāstra* about *sannyāsa* and *brahmacārya* and *vānaprastha*, we keep in mind traditional principles and practices, Śrīla Prabhupāda's application of those principles, and the current situation. Thus, we can come to understanding śāstric statements according to this overarching hermeneutic principle: Understanding tradition through Śrīla Prabhupāda, and Śrīla Prabhupāda as the representative and conveyer of the essence of the tradition and *parampara*, in the most appropriate way for our understanding and application.

1. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the object, purpose and ultimate goal of all śāstric knowledge.[1]

Evidence and Explanation:

Bhagavad-gītā 15.15:

> *sarvasya cāhaṁ hṛdi sanniviṣṭo*
> *mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanaṁ ca*
> *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo*
> *vedānta-kṛd veda-vid eva cāham*

Translation: I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. By all the *Vedas*, I am to be known. Indeed, I am the compiler of *Vedānta*, and I am the knower of the *Vedas*.

Vedānta-sūtra, *Adhikaraṇa* 4 from Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad:

> *yo 'su sarvair vedair gīyate*

Translation: The Supreme Personality of Godhead is glorified by all the *Vedas.*

Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.2.15:

> *sarve vedā yat-padam āmananti*

Translation: All the *Vedas* describe the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Bhagavad-gītā 15.15, purport:

> Why does He present the Vedic knowledge for understanding? Because a living entity individually needs to understand Kṛṣṇa. Vedic literature confirms this: *yo 'sau sarvair vedair gīyate*. In all Vedic literature, beginning from the four Vedas, Vedānta-sūtra and the Upaniṣads and Purāṇas, the glories of the Supreme Lord are celebrated. By performance of Vedic rituals, discussion of the Vedic philosophy and worship of the Lord in devotional service, He is attained. Therefore, the purpose of the Vedas is to understand Kṛṣṇa.

By Nārāyaṇī-devī dāsī:

Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate goal and meaning of all scriptures. Kṛṣṇa is the unity at the center of all the diversity found within the scriptures. As He says in *Bhagavad-gītā* 15.15: "By all the *Vedas*, I am to be known. Indeed, I am the compiler of *Vedānta*, and I am the knower of the *Vedas*."

At the same time, Kṛṣṇa is unlimited, and therefore He can be understood from many angles of vision.

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[1] The English phrase "śāstric knowledge" refers to the categories of *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana*.

Letter to Chaturbhuj, Bombay January 21, 1972:

> The points of *Bhagavad-gītā*, though they are simple and complete, can be understood from unlimited angles of vision. So our philosophy is not dry, like mental speculation. The proper function of the brain or psychological activity is to understand everything through Kṛṣṇa's perspective or point-of-view, and so there is no limit to that understanding because Kṛṣṇa is unlimited, and even though it can be said that the devotee who knows Kṛṣṇa, he knows everything (15th Chapter), still, the philosophical process never stops and the devotee continues to increase his knowledge even though he knows everything.

Letter to Satyabhāmā, Mayapur, February 28, 1972:

> ... we have to therefore daily sharpen our intelligence faculty by reading and discussing and preaching to others. In this way we are able very easily to defeat all challengers to our philosophy and everything becomes very clear as it is revealed from different angles of vision.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 24.318:

> Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu explained the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*'s *ātmārāma* verse in 61 different ways to Sanātana Gosvāmī. Māhāprabhu explains: "*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is as great as Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord and shelter of everything. In each and every verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and in each and every syllable, there are various meanings."

Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.31.14 the concept of "if we water the root of the tree, all the leaves are satisfied" in at least 6 different ways to support a variety of philosophical points in preaching applications.

Even pure devotees may differ in their understanding of specific śāstric statements. That is not a problem, because their diverse understandings all point to the same fundamental *siddhānta*. Whenever such differences occur, we try to reconcile them with due respect for both. This is the *Vedāntic* principle of *samanvaya*.

Here is an example where Śrīla Prabhupāda notes a difference of opinion between *ācāryas*, but then respectfully reconciles them and accepts both.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.15, purport:

> According to Śrīpāda Śrīdhara Svāmī, the original commentator on the *Bhāgavatam*, there is not always a devastation after the change of every Manu. And yet this inundation after the period of Cākṣuṣa Manu took place in order to show some wonders to Satyavrata. But Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī has given definite proofs from authoritative scriptures (like *Viṣṇu-dharmottara*, *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, *Harivaṁśa*, etc.) that there is always a devastation after the end of each and every Manu. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī has also supported Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, and he (Śrī Cakravartī) has also quoted from *Bhāgavatāmṛta* about this inundation after each Manu. Apart from this, the Lord, in order to show special favor to Satyavrata, a devotee of the Lord, in this particular period, incarnated Himself.

Śrīdhara Svāmī says that there is not a devastation after the change of every Manu, but rather that the Matsya inundation was to show special favor to Satyavrata, whereas Jīva Gosvāmī says that there is a devastation after every Manvantara. Śrīla Prabhupāda accepts Jīva Gosvāmī's point, but also concludes that Matsya simultaneously wanted to show special favor to Satyavrata Muni. Thus, Śrīla Prabhupāda reconciles the two differing perspectives.

However, when such reconciliation is difficult for us, we defer to Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements, for he is ISKCON's *founder-ācārya* and primary *śikṣā-guru*.

2. *Śabda* is the highest *pramāṇa* (source of evidence)

Evidence:

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 6.135:

> **pramāṇera madhye śruti pramāṇa — pradhāna**
> **śruti ye mukhyārtha kahe, sei se pramāṇa**

Translation: Although there is other evidence, the evidence given in the Vedic version must be taken as foremost. Vedic versions understood directly are first-class evidence.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in the purport:

Works that should be consulted are Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Tattva-sandarbha* (10-11), Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's commentary on that, and the following verses of the *Brahma-sūtra: śāstra-yonitvāt* (Vs. 1.1.3), *tarkāpratiṣṭhānāt* (Vs. 2.1.11) and *śrutes tu śabda-mūlatvāt* (Vs. 2.1.27), as commented upon by Śrī Rāmānujācārya, Śrī Madhvācārya, Śrī Nimbārkācārya and Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. In his book *Sarva-saṁvādinī*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has noted that although there are ten kinds of evidence—direct perception, the Vedic version, historical reference, hypothesis and so on—and although they are all generally accepted as evidence, the person presenting a hypothesis, reading the Vedic version, perceiving or interpreting by his experience is certain to be imperfect in four ways. That is, he is subject to committing mistakes, to becoming illusioned, to cheating and to having imperfect senses. Although the evidence may be correct, the person himself is in danger of being misled due to his material defects. Apart from the direct presentation, there is a chance that an interpretation may not be perfect. Therefore, the conclusion is that only a direct presentation can be considered evidence. An interpretation cannot be accepted as evidence, but may be considered proof of evidence.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 5.41, purport:

> **Śrutes tu śabda-mūlatvāt**

Translation: The Supreme Personality of Godhead, being inconceivable to an ordinary man, can be understood only through the evidence of the Vedic injunctions.

Śāstra-yonitvāt 1.1.3:

> From the source of *śāstra* [the Truth can be understood].

The complete *Tattva-sandarbha* is evidence for this principle being an essential part of Vaiṣṇava hermeneutics.

3. Scripture provides theory and method for its own understanding

Evidence:

Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.2.23 as in the purport to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 20.248:

> ***nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo***
> ***na medhayā na bahudhā śrutena***
> ***yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas***
> ***tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanuṁ svām***

Translation: The Supreme Lord is not obtained by means of expert explanations, vast intelligence or even much hearing. He is obtained only by one whom He Himself chooses. To such a person, He manifests His own form.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12:

> ***tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet***
> ***samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham***

Translation: To understand these things properly, one must humbly approach, with firewood in hand, a spiritual master who is learned in the *Vedas* and firmly devoted to the Absolute Truth.

Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2.9:

> ***naiṣā tarkeṇa matir āpaneyā***
> ***proktānyenaiva su-jñānāya preṣṭha***

Translation: This realization, my dear boy, cannot be acquired by logic. It must be spoken by an exceptionally qualified spiritual master to a knowledgeable disciple.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.24.38:

> ***madīyaṁ mahimānaṁ ca paraṁ brahmeti śabditam***
> ***vetsyasy anugṛhītaṁ me sampraśnair vivṛtaṁ hṛdi***

Translation: You will be thoroughly advised and favored by Me, and because of your inquiries, everything about My glories, which are known as *paraṁ brahma*, will be manifest within your heart. Thus, you will know everything about Me.

Vedānta-sūtra 1.1.4:

tat tu samanvayāt

Translation: Lord Kṛṣṇa is the conclusion, because of the agreement of the totality of all scriptural statements.

Iśopaniṣad, Introduction:

> Vedic knowledge is called *śabda-pramāṇa*. Another name is *śruti*. *Śruti* means that this knowledge has to be received simply by aural reception. The *Vedas* instruct that in order to understand transcendental knowledge, we have to hear from the authority. Transcendental knowledge is knowledge from beyond this universe. Within this universe is material knowledge, and beyond this universe is transcendental knowledge. We cannot even go to the end of the universe, so how can we go to the spiritual world?

Explanation

By SAC collaboratively:

Śrīla Prabhupāda's basic hermeneutic strategy included the concept of reading the text "through the text." One understands the *Bhagavad-gītā*, for example, by reading the *Bhagavad-gītā* through its own eyes, as it were. So, in order to understand the *Bhagavad-gītā*, one has to accept that Kṛṣṇa is God, at least theoretically, because that is how He is presented in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and one has to assume a devotional perspective, because the *Bhagavad-gītā* itself claims one has to do so, as in *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.2-3.

4. Identifying categories of texts, and of statements within texts, illuminates their meaning

Evidence and Explanation:

Categories of texts

By SAC conjointly:

Tattva-sandarbha 12.4:

> In *Tattva-sandarbha* Jīva Gosvāmī establishes that different *Purāṇas* are in different modes, which helps discern their relative significance. *Śrutis* traditionally are given more weight, which is also dealt with in the *Tattva-sandarbha,* due to the fact that *śrutis* are changeless, and only because already in the time of Jīva Gosvāmī only a small portion of *sruti* text were extant, we need to seek recourse in the texts that are complete in themselves, like the *Purāṇas*.

Categories of statements within texts

By Urmilā-devī dāsī:

First, there is the example of these two verses from the *Bhagavad-gītā.*

Bhagavad-gītā 2.34:

> *akīrtiṁ cāpi bhūtāni*
> *kathayiṣyanti te 'vyayām*
> *sambhāvitasya cākīrtir*
> *maraṇād atiricyate*

Translation: People will always speak of your infamy, and for a respectable person, dishonor is worse than death.

Bhagavad-gītā 2.12.18-19:

> *samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca*
> *tathā mānāpamānayoḥ*
> *śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣu*
> *samaḥ saṅga-vivarjitaḥ*
> *tulya-nindā-stutir maunī*
> *santuṣṭo yena kenacit*
> *aniketaḥ sthira-matir*
> *bhaktimān me priyo naraḥ*

Translation: One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equipoised in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, happiness and distress, fame and infamy, who is always free from contaminating association, always silent and satisfied with anything, who doesn't care for any residence, who is fixed in knowledge and who is engaged in devotional service—such a person is very dear to Me.

The category of text 2.34 is in regard to worldly duties and identification, and the category of text 12.18-19 is in regard to transcendental *bhakti*.

In verse 2.26 of *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa is speaking to those who do not believe in the soul:

> *atha cainaṁ nitya-jātaṁ*
> *nityaṁ vā manyase mṛtam*
> *tathāpi tvaṁ mahā-bāho*
> *nainaṁ śocitum arhasi*

Translation: If, however, you think that the soul [or the symptoms of life] is always born and dies forever, you still have no reason to lament, O mighty-armed.

In the purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda says:

There is always a class of philosophers, almost akin to the Buddhists, who do not believe in the separate existence of the soul beyond the body. When Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā*, it appears that such philosophers existed, and they were

known as the Lokāyatikas and Vaibhāṣikas. Such philosophers maintain that life symptoms take place at a certain mature condition of material combination. The modern material scientist and materialist philosophers also think similarly. According to them, the body is a combination of physical elements, and at a certain stage the life symptoms develop by interaction of the physical and chemical elements. The science of anthropology is based on this philosophy. Currently, many pseudo religions—now becoming fashionable in America—are also adhering to this philosophy, as are the nihilistic nondevotional Buddhist sects.

Even if Arjuna did not believe in the existence of the soul—as in the Vaibhāṣika philosophy—there would still have been no cause for lamentation. No one laments the loss of a certain bulk of chemicals and stops discharging his prescribed duty.

The above verse is in a different category than the previous verses, where the Lord had described not only the existence of the soul, but also its transcendent qualities. Thus, different verses within the same text can be explained according to different categories of those verses in order to help illuminate their meaning.

5. Hierarchies are present within *śāstra* and between *śāstras*

Evidence and Explanation:

By Brijbāsī Dāsa:

Hierarchy within a canonical Vaiṣṇava *śāstra*

Two examples about *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Both Viśvanātha Cakravartī and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explain that eighteen chapters of the *Bhagavad-gītā* are divided into three parts of six chapters each, predominantly describing karma, *bhakti,* and *jñāna* respectively. Śrīla Viśvanātha writes in his introduction to his *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* commentary:

> *tatrādhyāyānāṁ ṣaṭkenan prathamena niṣkāma-karma-yogaḥ | dvitīyena bhakti-yogaḥ | tṛtīyena jñāna-yogo darśitaḥ | tatrāpi bhakti-yogasyātirahasyatvād ubhaya-*

> *saṅjīvakatvenābhyarhitatvāt sarva-durlabhatvāc ca madhyavartīkṛtaḥ | karma-jñānayor bhakti-rāhityena vaiyarthyāt te dve bhakti-miśre eva sammatīkṛte |*

Translation by Bhānu Swāmī: Through the first six chapters of the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa presents *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, through the second six chapters he presents *bhakti-yoga*, and through the third six chapters he presents *jñāna-yoga*. *Bhakti-yoga* is placed between karma and *jñāna-yoga* because of its confidential nature, because of its superiority by which it is able to give life to the other two, and because of its being most rare. And moreover, because these two are useless without *bhakti*, the karma and *jñāna* presented in the *Gītā* have been mixed with *bhakti* and become more acceptable.

One of the main examples of how hierarchy is present within a particular *śāstra* is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In the very beginning of his narration Śukadeva Gosvāmī mentions that there are ten main topics in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.10.1:

> *śrī-śuka uvāca*
> *atra sargo visargaś ca sthānaṁ poṣaṇam ūtayaḥ*
> *manvantareśānukathā nirodho muktir āśrayaḥ*

> **Translation:** Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there are ten divisions of statements regarding the following: the creation of the universe, sub-creation, planetary systems, protection by the Lord, the creative impetus, the change of Manus, the science of God, returning home, back to Godhead, liberation, and the summum bonum.

But then he states that the last topic, the tenth, the supreme shelter, is the most important and the other nine topics are described just to give a pure understanding of it.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.10.2:

> *daśamasya viśuddhy-arthaṁ navānām iha lakṣaṇam*
> *varṇayanti mahātmānaḥ śrutenārthena cāñjasā*

> **Translation:** To isolate the transcendence of the summum bonum, the symptoms of the rest are described sometimes by Vedic inference, sometimes by direct explanation, and sometimes by summary explanations given by the great sages.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura further explains the priority among the ten topics.

Sārārtha-darśinī 1.1.1:

> *evaṁ ca, yady api sarvasya dvādaśa-skandhasyaiva śāstrasyāsya rasamaya-*
> *phalatvārkatva-dīpatvādīni tad api bhūmnā vyapadeśā bhavantīti nyāyena*
> *sarge nirodhe ca kvacit tādṛśa-stuty-ādau ca adhyātma-mātra-*
> *prakāśakatvena dīpatvam | visarga-sthāna-poṣaṇādiṣu dharmārtha-kāma-*
> *mokṣāṇām anyeṣāṁ cāśeṣa-viśeṣāṇāṁ pravṛtta-nivṛtta-vihita-niṣiddha-*
> *sādhana-phalānām api prakāśakatvenārkatvam | āśraya-tattvasya*
> *bhagavatas tad-bhaktānāṁ ca janma-karmādi-līlā-bhakti-premādauca*
> *prastute rasamaya-phalatvam |*

> **Translation by Bhānu Swāmī:** Though all twelve cantos of the *Bhāgavatam* are like the tasty fruit, the sun and the lamp, the topics of creation and destruction (*sarga* and *nirodha*) and various verses describing this are considered to be the lamp, since those topics reveal only the general aspect of the Lord (*adhyātmā*). Secondary creation (*visarga*), maintenance (*sthāna*), protection (*poṣaṇa*) and other topics (*ūti*, *manvantara*, *īśānukathā*, and *mukti*) are considered to be the sun since they reveal, in addition, the results of forbidden practices for enjoyment and renunciation available in dharma, *artha*, *kāma*, *mokṣa* and their unlimited sub-

varieties. Topics dealing with the appearance and pastimes of the Lord (*āśraya*) and his devotees, and with *bhakti* and *prema*, are considered to be the tasty fruit of *rasa*.

Usually *rasa* was the topmost criteria in deciding what is higher: the section of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* which deals with the topics of *svayam-bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa directly, tenth canto specifically, is considered by our *ācāryas* to be the highest, and even among them the five chapters on the *rasa-lila* is the topmost and most confidential part of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Hierarchy in the *śāstras* that contain mixed (devotional and non-devotional) contents

Our *ācāryas* may quote from a work that is not entirely a Vaiṣṇava scripture or even anti-Vaiṣṇava in its overall outlook. An illustrative example of this are quotes from *Śiva Purāṇa* in Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Tattva* and *Paramātma Sandarbhas* and from *Devī Purāṇa* and *Śāradā-tilaka-tantra* in Śrīla Sanatana Gosvāmī's *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*. This fact alone does not make the whole work authorized and all its statements quotable. If a statement or a section agrees with *Gauḍīya -siddhānta*, it may be carefully quoted with due discretion if there are no similar quotes from the purely Vaiṣṇava sources. It is always better to resort to the Vaiṣṇava scriptures, especially in writing and in public.

In this regard Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī quotes Lord Śiva's statement from the *Skanda Purāṇa*.

Paramātma Sandarbha 17:

> **ata uktaṁ skānde ṣaṇmukhaṁ prati śrī-śivena—**
> **śiva-śāstreṣu tad grāhyaṁ bhagavac-chāstra-yogi yat |**
> **paramo viṣṇur evaikas taj-jñānaṁ mokṣa-sādhanam |**
> **śāstrāṇāṁ nirṇayas tv eṣas tad anyan mohanāya hi ||**

> **Translation:** Therefore, Śrī Śiva told Kārttikeya in *Skanda Purāṇa*—In the scriptures related to Lord Śiva, one should accept what is in agreement with scriptures related to the Supreme Lord. Viṣṇu alone is Supreme and knowledge of him is the means of liberation. That is the conclusion of scriptures. Everything else is there just for bewilderment.

Hari-bhakti-vilāsa as an example of the Vaiṣṇava *śāstra* with some mixed contents.

While dealing with such works of our *ācāryas* as *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa,* in its present form that came to us, we should exercise care and due diligence trying to apply its statements or extrapolate its sources for theological purposes. Although written by Sanātana Gosvāmī on Lord Caitanya's personal order, *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* was a sort of "bridge preaching" of those days that contained quite a lot of material from non-Vaiṣṇava *smārta* sources along with some purely *Vaiṣṇava* statements contrary to the *smārta* understanding. Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks about this in his commentary to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 1.35:

> According to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the regulative principles of devotional service compiled by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī do not strictly follow our Vaiṣṇava principles. Actually, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī collected only a summary of the elaborate descriptions of Vaiṣṇava regulative principles from the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*. It is Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī's opinion, however, that to follow the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* strictly is to actually follow the Vaiṣṇava rituals in

perfect order. He claims that the *smārta-samāja*, which is strictly followed by caste *brāhmaṇas*, has influenced portions that Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī collected from the original *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*. It is therefore very difficult to find out Vaiṣṇava directions from the book of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī. It is better to consult the commentary made by Sanātana Gosvāmī himself for the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* under the name of *Dig-darśinī-ṭīkā*.

And then again in the purport to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.23.105:

> Sanātana Gosvāmī wrote his Vaiṣṇava *smṛti*, *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, which was specifically meant for India. In those days, India was more or less following the principle *of smārta-vidhi*. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī had to keep pace with this, and his *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* was compiled with this in mind.

Room Conversation, London, July 16, 1973:

> This *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* also, Vaiṣṇava-*smṛti*, that is also imitation of *smārta*-ism. It is called *smṛti*.

Although usually lauding *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* in general as a *smṛti* suitable for the Vaiṣṇavas, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswati Ṭhākura also warned against some of its statements.
Vaiṣṇava and other *smṛtis, Sajjana-toṣaṇī*, Volume. 23, Part 4:

> According to the propensities of people, different codes of conduct are found in the same *śāstra*. Śrī Raghunandana and other *smārtas*, who are expert in worldly dealings, have mentioned in their various essays about the separate arrangements for the Vaiṣṇavas. And spiritualist *smārtas* have concluded that the nondevotional statements of *smṛtis* quoted in Śrī *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* are not meant to be followed by the Vaiṣṇavas.

And here is a practical example how he pointed out such non-devotional statements in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa.* Sri Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava, Volume 1, page 345:

> *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* states that if deities become broken, burned, or in other ways apparently defiled they should be committed to the sea or another deep body of water, according to the rite known as *visarjana*, and another form installed. Yet Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī deemed this injunction suitable only for neophyte devotees who, being afflicted with the *smārta* misunderstanding of the deity as a statue representing an ultimately impersonal God, lacked appreciation of such transcendental forms' identity as the Supreme Lord Himself.

A few particular examples of pure Vaiṣṇava teachings and mixed statements found in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*.

The well-known verse that was very often quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda and previous *ācāryas* from *Hari-bhaki-vilāsa* 2.12:

> ***tantra-sāgare ca—***
> ***yathā kāñcanatāṁ yāti kāṁsyaṁ rasa vidhānataḥ***
> ***tathā dīkṣā vidhānena dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām***

Translation: In the *Tantra-sagara* it is said—As bell metal, when mixed with mercury, is transformed to gold, a person, even though not golden pure, can be transformed into a *brāhmaṇa*, or *dvija*, simply by the initiation process.

Then mixed statements regarding the proper time for initiation from *Hari-bhakti*-vilāsa 2.13-15:

atha dīkṣā-kālaḥ— tatra māsa-śuddhiḥ
āgame—
mantra-svīkaraṇaṁ caitre bahu-duḥkha-phala-pradam
vaiśākhe ratna-lābhaḥ syāj jyaiṣṭhe tu maraṇaṁ dhruvam
āṣāḍhe bandhu-nāśāya śrāvaṇe tu bhayāvaham
prajā-hānir bhādrapade sarvatra śubham āśvine
kārttike dhana-vṛddhiḥ syān mārgaśīrṣe śubha-pradam
pauṣe tu jñāna-hāniḥ syān māghe medhāvi-vardhanam
phālgune sarva-vaśyatvam ācāryaiḥ parikīrtitam

Translation: Then ascertainment of the proper time for initiation – purification of the months:
In the *Āgama* it is said—By accepting initiation into the chanting of a *mantra* in the month of March-April, one receives much distress. By accepting initiation in the month of April-May, one gets precious jewels. By accepting initiation in the month of May-June, one's death is certain. By accepting initiation in the month of June-July, one loses his friends or relatives. By accepting initiation in the month of July-August, one meets with danger. By accepting initiation in the month of August-September, one loses his children or followers. By accepting initiation in the month of September-October, one attains all auspiciousness. By accepting initiation in the month of October-November, one's wealth increases. By accepting initiation in the month of November-December, one attains good fortune. By accepting initiation in the month of December-January, one loses his knowledge. By accepting initiation in the month of January-February, one's intelligence is enhanced, and by accepting initiation in the month of February-March, one can bring everyone under his control. This is the opinion of the *ācāryas*.

These rather fruitive statements are amended later on by Sanātana Gosvāmī himself:

śrīmad-gopāla-mantrāṇāṁ dīkṣāyāṁ tu na duṣyati
caitra-māse yad uktā tad dīkṣā tatraiva deśikaiḥ

Translation: Although previously it was stated that initiation during the month of March-April is not recommended, this does not apply to the *mantras* related to Śrī Gopāla because learned persons prescribe initiation in this month. (2.21) and:

tattva-sāgare ca—
durlabhe sad-gurūṇāṁ ca sakṛt saṅga upasthite
tad-anujñā yadā labdhā sa dīkṣāvasaro mahān

Translation: In the *Tattva-sāgara* it is stated: As soon as there appears an occasion to meet bona fide gurus, who are very rare, then wherever one gets permission from them [to receive initiation from them] – that is the great auspicious day for initiation. (2.31)

Hierarchy between *śāstras*

The four *Vedas* are not as important for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, and, in fact, for any other Vaiṣṇavas as well, as are *Upaniṣads.* There are no commentaries on the *Vedas* except for Madhva's *Bhāṣya* to the first 40 suktas of the *Ṛg Veda*, but many Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* wrote commentaries on various *Upaniṣads.*

Upaniṣads are not as important as *Bhagavad-gītā,* being spoken by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself to His dear devotee in a clear and straightforward language with no "*neti, neti*" present in the *Upaniṣads.*

Bhagavad-gītā, "ABC of spiritual life," in Śrīla Prabhupāda's and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's words, is superseded by *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* which is more elaborate, detailed, commented upon by many *ācāryas* and is a "graduate study," in Śrīla Prabhupāda's words.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta describes the highest development of the teachings and theology of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and is on a par with it.

Besides these types of *śāstra*, there are also *Itihāsas, Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata,* and various *Purāṇas*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in his *Tattva-sandarbha*:

> *tad evam itihāsa-purāṇa-vicāra eva śreyān iti siddham. tatrāpi purāṇasyaiva*
> *garimā dṛśyate.*

> **Translation:** Thus we have established that the best way to proceed is to examine the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*. Moreover, there is evidence that of these two, the *Purāṇas* are more important.

Tattva-sandarbha 16.3:

> *uktaṁ hi nāradīye,*
> *vedārthād adhikaṁ manye purāṇārthaṁ varānane*
> *vedāḥ pratiṣṭhitāḥ sarve purāṇe nātra saṁśayaḥ*
> *purāṇam anyathā kṛtvā tiryag-yonim avāpnuyāt*
> *su-dānto 'pi su-śānto 'pi na gatiṁ kvacid āpnuyāt*

> **Translation by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa:** As stated in the *Nārada Purāṇa*, O lovely one, I consider the message of the *Purāṇas* more important than that of the *Vedas*. The *Purāṇas* provide a firm foundation for all the *Vedas*. Of this there is no doubt. A person who disrespects the *Purāṇas* will have to take his next birth as an animal; even if very much self-controlled and peaceful, he will achieve no good destination.

All the major *Purāṇas* are traditionally divided into three categories according to the modes of topics described there and the various *sādhanas*, worshipers and deities described there.

This is explained in details by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in his *Paramātma Sandarbha, Anuccheda* 17:

tathā ca pādma-śaivayor umāṁ prati śrī-śivena śrī-viṣṇu-vākyam anukṛtam—
tvām ārādhya tayā śambho grahiṣyāmi varaṁ sadā |
dvāparādau yuge bhūtvā kalayā manuṣādiṣu ||
svāgamaiḥ kalpitais tvaṁ tu janān mad-vimukhān kuru |
māṁ ca gopaya yena syāt sṛṣṭir eṣottarottarā || iti |

Translation: In the *Padma* and *Śiva Purāṇas*, Śiva repeats the following words of Bhagavān Viṣṇu to Umā Devī—O Śiva! Always worshipping you, I will receive this boon from you: at the end of Dvāpara yuga you should appear among human beings in your partial expansion and
with your imaginary scriptures turn people away from Me and hide me so that this creation continues again and again. (*Padma Purāṇa, Uttara-khaṇḍa* 42.105-106)

Varāha Purāṇa 70.35-36:

vārāhe ca—
eṣa mohaṁ sṛjāmy āśu yo janān mohayiṣyati |
tvaṁ ca rudra mahābāho moha-śāstrāṇi kāraya ||
atathyāni vitathyāni darśayasva mahābhuja |
prakāśaṁ kuru cātmānam aprakāśaṁ ca māṁ kuru ||

Translation: In the *Varāha Purāṇa* also—I am creating this illusion that will bewilder people. O mighty-armed Rudra! You also cause illusory scriptures to be written and proclaim untruths and falsehoods. Reveal yourself and hide Me.

purāṇānāṁ ca madhye yad yat tāmasa-kalpa-kathāmayaṁ, tac chivādi-
mahima-param iti śrī-viṣṇu-pratipādaka-purāṇasyaiva samyag-jñāna-
pradatvam | sattvāt sañjāyate jnānam [Gītā 14.17]
iti darśanāt | tathā ca mātsye—

Translation: Among various *Purāṇas* those that describe matters related to the mode of ignorance, are devoted to the glory of Lord Siva and so on. Therefore, only that *Purāṇa* which is centered around the topics of Lord Visnu gives the complete knowledge. It is said: Knowledge arises from the mode of goodness (*Bhagavad-gītā* 14.17).

Also, it is said in the *Matsya Purāṇa* 53.67-68:

sāttvikeṣu ca kalpeṣu māhātmyam adhikaṁ hareḥ |
rājaseṣu ca māhātmyam adhikaṁ brahmaṇo viduḥ ||
tadvad agneś ca māhātmyaṁ tāmaseṣu śivasya ca |
saṅkīrṇeṣu sarasvatyāḥ pitṝṇāṁ ca nigadyate || iti |

Translation: The sages know that the glorification of the Lord Hari is greater in *sāttvika Purāṇas*. The *rājasika Purāṇas* primarily glorify Lord Brahmā. In *tāmasika Purāṇas*, Agni and Śiva are prominently glorified. In the mixed works Sarasvatī and the Pitṛs are prominently glorified.

Padma Purāṇa, Uttara-khaṇḍa 236.19, 20, 21, 18:

> *vaiṣṇavaṁ nāradīyaṁ ca tathā bhāgavataṁ śubhe |*
> *gāruḍaṁ ca tathā pādmaṁ vārāhaṁ śubha-dṛśe |*
> *brahmāṇḍaṁ brahma-vaivartaṁ mārkaṇḍeyaṁ tathaiva ca |*
> *bhaviṣyaṁ vāmanaṁ brāhmyaṁ rājasāni nigadyate |*
> *mātsyaṁ kūrmaṁ tathā laiṅgaṁ śaivaṁ skāndaṁ tathaiva ca |*
> *āgneyakaṁ tathaitāni tāmasāni nigadyate ||*

Translation: O beautiful one, [it is said that the *Purāṇas* in the mode of goodness are]: *Viṣṇu, Nārada, Bhāgavata, Garuḍa, Padma*, and *Varāha*. It is said that the *Purāṇas* in the mode of passion are: *Brāhmāṇḍa, Brahma-vaivarta, Mārkaṇḍeya, Bhāviṣya, Vāmana*, and *Brahmā*. It is said that the *Purāṇas* in the mode of ignorance are: *Matsya, Kūrma, Liṅga, Śiva, Skanda*, and *Agni*.

Note: All quotations above cited in *Paramātma Sandarbha, Anuccheda* 17.

However, it should be noted that the divisions of the 18 *Purāṇas* into three categories according to the *guṇas* is quite relative and sometimes too broad, because even *tāmasika Purāṇas* have *sāttvika* sections that describe Kṛṣṇa and devotion to Him as the highest goal. Therefore, as also mentioned above, our *ācāryas* would quote from such *Purāṇas* profusely, e.g. from *Skanda, Liṅga* or *Śiva Purāṇas*, which does not necessarily make the whole *Purāṇa* acceptable.

Thus, *sāttvika Purāṇas* are the highest among *Purāṇas*, but *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is topmost even among the *sāttvika Purāṇas* being *amala* (spotless) *Purāṇa* which doesn't have anything (*kaitava-dharma*—cheating religion) besides *vāsudeva-kathā*, topics of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, being written after Vyāsa had written all other *Purāṇas* but was still dissatisfied with his work.

Possible criteria to understand that a particular *śāstra* is [more] important:

- *Ācāryas'* commentaries on it and their total number. Thus, according to this criterion *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the highest among *śāstras*, having dozens of commentaries from different Vaiṣṇava schools[2];

- *Ācāryas'* quotes from it and their number;

- *Ācāryas'* direct statements about its value. For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly speaking about at least some of the teachings of the *Manu-saṁhitā* despite the fact that there are no commentaries on it by the previous *ācāryas*.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in *Sarva-saṁvādinī* 11:

> But when there are conflicting statements, we must decide which is stronger and which is weaker. This relative strength and weakness apply to differences

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[2] In this regard, if someone says that *Manu-saṁhitā* is of no importance to the Vaiṣṇavas whatsoever because there are no commentaries on it by our *ācāryas,* despite the fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted and referred to it repeatedly, then other works like *Mahābhārata* must be placed in the same category as *Manu-saṁhitā*, because there are no commentaries by the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* on it. As for Śrī Madhvācārya's *Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya,* it is actually a completely different account and cannot be taken as a commentary per se. Besides that, we can't agree to several things that Madhva tells in his version of the *Mahābhārata.*

between one scripture and another as well as to different statements within a single scripture.

An example of the first type of application from *Jābāla-śruti*:

> In a conflict between *śruti* and *smṛti*, the *śruti* is stronger.[3]

An example of the second from *Mīmāṁsā-sūtra* 3.3.14, translated by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa:

> When there is conflict among direct statement, logical indication, the sentence, the larger context, the location, and the etymology, the later items are progressively weaker because they are derived by progressively more indirect methods.

6. Scriptures are consistent and coherent, enabling meaningful dialogue between "part" and "whole."

Evidence and Explanation:

Vedānta-sūtra 1.1.4:

tat tu samanvayāt

> **Translation:** Lord Kṛṣṇa is the conclusion, because of the agreement of the totality of all scriptural statements.

By Urmilā devī dasi:

One can understand the parts of the text, i.e. the verses, by the whole of the text, and the whole of the text by its individual parts. Regarding understanding the parts in relation to the whole, we first look at what Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes:

> The *Vedas* are immensely voluminous. Their exact essence can only be extracted by scrutinizing every single *śloka* from each of the *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇas*, and so on. Isolated and out-of-context statements cannot present a clear picture, but rather distort the real meaning. Ultimately, therefore, Śrī Caitanya tooth-combed the entire Vedic literature and formulated His most sublime transcendental teachings, presenting the most elevated philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, that the *jīva* and matter are simultaneously one with and distinct from the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari.[4]

For a specific example of how parts can only be understood in relation to the whole, in Canto 8, Chapter 7, there are prayers to Lord Śiva to request him to deal with the poison created by churning of the milk ocean. In many of these prayers, the descriptions of Śiva would properly apply to Viṣṇu, not Śiva. Here is one example.

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[3] While other commentators take this as a rule, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī does not, as explained above, so his citation here must be taken in the larger context that he has put forth. **Note:** see also Tool 10 for more elaboration.

[4] *Jaiva-dharma, C*hapter 18 *Nitya-dharma*: *Sambandha*, *Abhidheya* and *Prayojana*, Part 6: An Analysis of Simultaneous Oneness and Difference.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.7.23:

> *guṇa-mayyā sva-śaktyāsya sarga-sthity-apyayān vibho*
> *dhatse yadā sva-dṛg bhūman brahma-viṣṇu-śivābhidhām*

Translation: O lord, you are self-effulgent and supreme. You create this material world by your personal energy, and you assume the names Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara when you act in creation, maintenance and annihilation.

Because the *Bhāgavatam* has already established Viṣṇu as Supreme from the very beginning, this part of the *Bhāgavatam* is understood in relation to the whole literature. Thus, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains this verse in his purport as follows: "This prayer is actually offered to Lord Viṣṇu, the *puruṣa*, who in His incarnations as the *guṇa-avatāras* assumes the names Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara."

Not only do we understand specific texts in relation to the whole work in which they appear, but we also understand the whole work in terms of its parts. There are a number of tools that specifically aid in such understanding, such as Tool 8: the ten topics of the *Bhāgavatam,* Tool 17: key statement, and Tool 20: six criteria to know the main import and conclusion of a work of *śāstra.*

By Gopāl Hari Dāsa:

Three examples that the *Bhāgavatam* is consistent and coherent, enabling meaningful dialogue between 'part' and 'whole'*:*

(1) Throughout the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, we find discussions regarding an underlying dilemma: if Kṛṣṇa were absolutely one with the world and the living beings, their faults would be His, and if He were completely different from them, they would constitute an independent reality, thus impinging upon the Lord's unique status. According to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Kṛṣṇa produces everything from himself, just as a spider produces a web. "Through your *yoga-māyā*, you alone create, protect, and swallow up this world, like a spider with its web."[5] Certain passages in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* emphasize *abheda*, nondifference, while others emphasize *bheda*, or difference. If any of these passages were to be taken separately, it would seem that the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* supports either a strong monism or dualism, but when they are held together, it becomes clear that the *Bhāgavatam* supports both. For example, in 2.9.33, the first of four verses, that have been traditionally regarded as a summary of the entire *Purāṇa*, we find the *Bhāgavatam* teaching nonduality:

> *aham evāsam evāgre nānyad yat sad-asat param*
> *paścād ahaṁ yad etac ca yo 'vaśiṣyeta so 'smy aham*

Translation: Brahmā, it is I, the Personality of Godhead, who was existing before the creation, when there was nothing but Myself. Nor was there the material nature, the cause of this creation. That which you see now is also I, the Personality of Godhead, and after annihilation what remains will also be I, the Personality of Godhead.

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[5] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.21.19, see similar metaphors in 2.5.5, 2.9.28, 4.6.43, 11.9.21, 12.8.41

The *Bhāgavatam* argues here that the world *is* Kṛṣṇa, rejecting the notion that anything can exist independent of him. If something existed independent of Kṛṣṇa, it would have to have a cause apart from him, which is unacceptable. At the same time, other passages in the *Bhāgavatam* claim that Kṛṣṇa retains his independent identity, apart from creation. The third verse of the four-verse *Bhāgavatam*, 2.9.35, for example, qualifies the nonduality of the first verse:

> *yathā mahānti bhūtāni bhūteṣūccāvaceṣv anu*
> *praviṣṭāny apraviṣṭāni tathā teṣu na teṣv aham*

> **Translation:** O Brahmā, please know that the universal elements enter into the cosmos and at the same time do not enter into the cosmos; similarly, I Myself also exist within everything created, and at the same time I am outside of everything.

Put another way: "This universe is indeed the Supreme Lord but different in a way."[6]

To the casual reader, these passages come across as rather contrary. By reading the text as a whole, however, one can resolve these passages by observing that the *Bhāgavatam* subscribes to the notion of *bhedābheda*—simultaneous difference and nondifference. Furthermore, if we understand the *Bhāgavatam* as a Sāṅkhya and *Vedānta* text, we find that the *Bhāgavatam* is presenting a distinct and developed philosophical viewpoint. These apparently discordant passages are in fact presenting the Sāṅkhya doctrine of *sat-kārya-vāda* or *pariṇāma*, a term which the *Bhāgavatam* uses many times in its text.[7]

(2) Another example is the *Bhāgavatam's* statements regarding reality and unreality. The *Bhāgavatam* suggests that Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, who is regarded as the highest Brahman (*para-brahma*),[8] is the underlying ground of all phenomena and the unchanging basis of the reflection world. This reflection world is none other than *prakṛti*, the material matrix, which is colored by the three qualities (*guṇas*).

The world is not regarded as a reflection because it is unreal or inexpressible, as Śaṅkara might argue; rather, it is a reflection in the sense that its existence depends upon Bhagavān. The *Bhāgavatam* claims the world is real because it is a transformation of Bhagavān's real *śakti*: "People do not discard an object that is a transformation of gold, since after all, it does have the same essential nature as gold"[9].

In some places, however, we do find the *Bhāgavatam* claiming that the world is unreal. A good example is the following passage.

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[6] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.20
    idaṁ hi viśvaṁ bhagavān ivetaro
    yato jagat-sthāna-nirodha-sambhavāḥ
[7] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.5.22, 2.8.14, 5.26.3, 9.18.2, 11.19.18, 12.4.19, 12.4.36
[8] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.3.13, 10.10.33, 10.13.22, 10.13.61, 10.14.32.
[9] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.87.26, translated by Bryant.
    na hi vikṛtiṁ tyajanti kanakasya tad-ātmatayā
    sva-kātam anupraviṣṭam idam ātmatayāvasitam

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.87.36:

> *sata idam utthitaṁ sad iti cen nanu tarka hataṁ*
> *vyabhicarati kva ca kva ca mṛṣā na tathobhaya-yuk*
> *vyavahṛtaye vikalpa iṣito 'ndha-paramparayā*
> *bhramayati bhāratī ta uru-vṛttibhir uktha-jaḍān*

Translation: It is a false argument to say that the world is real because it has evolved from that which is real. This is refuted by logic. In some cases this argument is inconsistent, and in other cases it is false. The world is a combination of both [the real and the unreal]. The false notion [that the world is just real] is promoted by a lineage of blind people for the sake of mundane affairs.

It is important not to interpret these statements through the eyes of Śaṅkara but to allow the text to speak for itself. Śaṅkara's doctrine of *anirvacanīya*, for example, says that the world is *neither* real nor unreal, whereas the *Bhāgavatam* claims that the world is *both* real and unreal.

The world is unreal only in the sense that it is temporary. "That which did not exist before the creation, and does not survive after it, has no existence in the middle period. It is merely a name."[10] Something that has a beginning and an end is unreliable and fleeting; it is like a dream and thus has no ultimate existence. Regarding the transient as unreal is not a conviction unique to the *Bhāgavatam*, but is common throughout Vaiṣṇava and *Vedāntic* thought.

(3) A final example is regarding the *Bhāgavatam's* statements concerning the bound *jīvas'* having existed eternally in the cycle of birth and death or as having previously existed in an unbound state of eternal being, from which they fell into temporal cyclical existence. In the book *Our Original Position*, H. D. Goswami conducts a thoroughgoing analysis of the *Bhāgavatam*'s statements on this topic, an analysis that has significantly informed the following discussion.

The *Bhāgavatam* employs a variety of Sanskrit terms when referring to eternal time, e.g. *śāśvata*, *śaśvat*, *nitya*, *anādi,* and *ananta*, which mean everlasting, perpetual, eternal, beginningless, and endless, respectively. When identifying something as beginningless, the *Bhāgavatam* employs the word *anādi*, which appears alongside *ananta* (unending) or compounded with *nidhana* (end) to signify "without beginning or end"[11]. The term "*anādi*" is used on multiple occasions and in various contexts in the *Bhāgavatam*. In seven verses *anādi* refers to Kṛṣṇa (Hari)[12], in three verses it describes *kāla* (time)[13], and once it refers to *māyā*[14]. In another verse, *anādi* is compounded with the words *madhya* and *nidhana* to signify "without beginning, middle, or end" (a reference to that which is beyond *prakṛti*)[15]. *Anādi* is also used in descriptions of both the

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[10] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.28.21
     na yat purastād uta yan na paścān madhye ca tan na vyapadeśa-mātram
[11] *anādi* is combined with the word *nidhana* in four verses (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.8.28, 11.3.8, 12.6.2, 12.11.50) and with the word *anta* in seven verses (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.6.40, 3.29.45, 4.11.19, 7.3.30, 11.16.1, 12.4.19, 12.4.37)
[12] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.6.2, 12.11.50, 2.6.40, 7.3.30, 11.16.1, 12.4.37, 1.8.28
[13] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.3.8, 3.29.45, 4.11.19
[14] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.4.19 *anādy anantam avyaktaṁ nityaṁ kāraṇam avyayam*
[15] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.10.34
     ataḥ paraṁ sūkṣmatamam avyaktaṁ nirviśeṣaṇam
     anādi-madhya-nidhanaṁ nityaṁ vāṅ-manasaḥ param

cycle of creation and destruction[16] and Bhagavān's power of ignorance (*avidyā*)[17], which is a manifestation of *māyā*.

In addition to these fifteen references, we find nine verses that specifically describe the bondage of the *jīva* as *anādi*[18]. For example, in verse 4.29.70, *anādi* is used to describe the subtle body (*liṅga-rūpa*), which consists of mind, intellect, and senses and which carries the self from one physical body to another. A similar verse describes the self's connection with *saṁsāra* as "beginningless" (*anādi*)[19], and yet another describes the hard knot of *karmic* residues (*vāsanās*) as having been present since "time immemorial" (*anādi*)[20].

On the surface, these passages appear to suggest that just as Bhagavān, *kāla*, and *māyā* are beginningless, so too is the *jīva's* bondage in *saṁsāra*. However, when considering these passages in light of other passages in the *Bhāgavatam*, one is confronted with the possibility that *anādi*'s meaning may not be as straightforward as its literal definition would suggest. The *Bhāgavatam*'s use of the word *anādi* and its statements regarding the self's bondage are complex. We now carefully explore how the *Bhāgavatam* understands parts of the text, i.e. specific terms, by the whole of the text, and the whole of the text by its individual parts.

Indeed, appropriate interpretation of the terms like *anādi* and *nitya* relative to the entire text in which they appear seems to have been a point of concern within the *Bhāgavatam* itself. The problem is addressed in Canto 11, in the conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Uddhava, where the issue revolves around the import of the words *nitya-mukta* and *nitya-baddha*.

Uddhava asks Kṛṣṇa why the same *ātma* is said to be eternally liberated (*nitya-mukta*) and eternally bound (*nitya-baddha*).[21] His dilemma is apparent: since "*nitya*" literally means "without beginning or end," how can the self be both eternally liberated and eternally bound? In his gloss, Śrīdhara Svāmī rephrases the question by asking how the self that achieves liberation can be called *nitya-mukta* (*eternally* liberated) since liberation is something attained at a particular time.[22]

At the start of the next chapter, Kṛṣṇa responds by suggesting that neither bondage nor liberation are factual, but exist only in imagination, in the eternal living being's imagining of a connection with the *guṇas* and in the acceptance of the temporal body as the self.

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[16] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.10.41
    etat kecid avidvāṁso māyā-saṁsṛtim ātmanaḥ
    anādy-āvartitaṁ nèṇāṁ kādācitkaṁ pracakṣate
[17] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.11.29
    anādy-avidyayā viṣṇor ātmanaḥ sarva-dehinām
    nirmito loka-tantro 'yaṁ lokeṣu parivartate
[18] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.29.70, 5.14.1, 5.25.8, 5.26.3, 6.5.11, 8.24.46, 10.77.32, 11.11.4, 11.22.10
[19] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.14.1 *anādi-saṁsārānubhavasya*
[20] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.25.8
    anādi-kāla-karma-vāsanā-grathitam avidyāmāyaṁ hṛdaya-granthim
[21] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.10.37
    etad acyuta me brūhi praānaṁ praśna-vidāṁ vara
    nitya-baddho nitya-mukta eka eveti me bhramaḥ
[22] Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.10.37, translation by H. D. Gosvāmī in *Our Original Position*, page 54. *mukter janyatve 'nityatva-prasaṅgān nitya-mukta ity apy aṅgī-kāryaṁ syāt. tatra me bhramo bhavatīty āha.*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.11.1:

> **baddho mukta iti vyākhyā guṇato me na vastutaḥ**
> **guṇasya māyā-mūlatvān na me mokṣo na bandhanam**:

Translation: Due to the influence of the material modes of nature, which are under My control, the living entity is sometimes designated as conditioned and sometimes as liberated. In fact, however, the soul is never really bound up or liberated; and since I am the Supreme Lord of *māyā*, which is the cause of the modes of nature, I also am never to be considered liberated or in bondage.

In this verse, Kṛṣṇa uses the phrase *na vastutaḥ*, meaning "without substance" or "not in reality" to describe both the state of bondage and the state of liberation. Here the terms *nitya-mukta* and *nitya-baddha* are said to apply only in the realm of *māyā*, and not in relation to Kṛṣṇa, or God, who is beyond *māyā*. Kṛṣṇa clarifies his point by employing the metaphor of a dream. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.11.2:

> **śoka-mohau sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ dehāpattiś ca māyayā**
> **svapno yathātmanaḥ khyātiḥ saṁsṛtir na tu vāstavī**

Translation: Just as a dream is merely a creation of one's intelligence but has no actual substance, similarly, material lamentation, illusion, happiness, distress and the acceptance of the material body under the influence of *māyā* are all creations of My illusory energy. In other words, material existence has no essential reality.

The same idea is expressed in a verse found in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.14.26:

> **ajñāna-saṁjñau bhava-bandha-mokṣau**
> **dvau nāma nānyau sta ṛta-jña-bhāvāt**
>
> **ajasra-city ātmani kevale pare**
> **vicāryamāṇe taraṇāv ivāhanī**

Translation: The conception of material bondage and the conception of liberation are both manifestations of ignorance. Being outside the scope of true knowledge, they cease to exist when one correctly understands that the pure spirit soul is distinct from matter and always fully conscious. At that time, bondage and liberation no longer have any significance, just as day and night have no significance from the perspective of the sun.

One may ask, however, why the *Bhāgavatam* would refer to the conditioned self as *nitya-baddha* (eternally bound) if bondage is in fact insubstantial? At the outset, we may note that it is unlikely that the *Bhāgavatam* would use "*nitya*" in a strict literal sense in reference to the soul's bondage. After all, the *Bhāgavatam* tells numerous stories of devotees and ascetics, such as Dhruva, Nārada, Bharata, and Ajāmila, who received liberation and ascended to *Vaikuṇṭha* at the end of their lives. If bondage were endless, the *Purāṇa* would lose both its soteriological purpose and pedagogical power. Thus, commentators such as Vīrarāghava Ācārya and Viśvanātha Cakravartī have reasonably conjectured that in certain contexts, words referring to time, such as *nitya*, are used figuratively to suggest a very long period of time.[23]

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[23] Vīrarāghava Gosvāmin's commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.11.2, *evaṁ svasya guṇa-traya-karma-bandhābhāvam uktvā jīvasyāpi saṁsāra-bandha aupādhikatvād anitya ity āha śoketi*.

Like *nitya*, the word *anādi* has also been read in a figurative sense by commentators when it is applied to the bondage of the *jīva*. They often explain *anādi* as "an extremely long time ago" or "so long ago, its beginning is unknown." A good example is Chapter 26 of Canto 5, where Śukadeva Gosvāmī states that worldly desires are caused by beginningless ignorance. Viśvanātha Cakravartī comments:

> [It is said that] the *jīva* has ignorance without beginning, because it is impossible to say when or how the *jīva* developed a relationship with ignorance.[24] In the *Anvitārtha-prakāśikā* commentary, we find a similar statement regarding verse 11.11.4, "For the *jīva* there is beginningless bondage due to ignorance. Beginningless [*anādi*] means a very long time ago."[25]

In the twenty-five instances of *anādi*, fifteen refer to Bhagavān or his energies and ten refer either to the bondage of the living beings or the life of Brahmā. In the fifteen verses that refer to Bhagavān, the word *anādi* is either compounded with the word *nidhana* (to mean without beginning or end) or is accompanied by *ananta* (endless). On the contrary, all ten instances of *anādi* that refer either to the bondage of the living being or the life of Brahmā are not accompanied by these words. Because neither Brahmā's life nor the bondage of the *jīva* is endless, commentators figure that they must have a beginning (in the *Bhāgavatam*, Brahmā takes birth from Viṣṇu's navel at the beginning of creation) and interpret *anādi* in a figurative rather than literal sense, interpreting the word as "a very long time ago."[26]

Indeed, there is no instance in the *Bhāgavatam*, at least explicitly stated, of something that is beginningless but not endless, or endless but not beginningless. Like most *Vedāntic* texts, the *Bhāgavatam* divides reality into only two categories: *sat* (real, eternal) and *asat* (unreal, temporary).[27] We never come across a third category in discussions of time. This is precisely why *anādi* is so often accompanied by *ananta*, and when it is not, commentators are keen to explain away *anādi*. In effect, *anādi*, *ananta*, and *nitya* are fluid terms that are frequently used interchangeably and figuratively, especially in relation to the soul's bondage in *māyā*, despite their obvious etymological differences. The meaning of these specific words is illuminated by reading the *Bhāgavatam* as a whole.

7. There exist universal truths, applicable in all times, in all places, and to all people

Evidence and Explanation:

By Ādi-puruṣa Dāsa:

What is the value of recognizing the existence of universal truths? Universal truths can serve as foundation for understanding and applying other statements. They require the least amount of contextualization, if any, and can shine light on how to explain other statements.

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[24] Viśvanātha's commentary on *ŚB* 5.26.3, *anādy-avidyā-sambandho jīvasya kadā katham veti vaktum aśakteḥ*

[25] *Anvitārtha-prakāśikā* on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.11.4, *asya jīvasyaivāvidyayānādir bahu-kāliko bandho 'sti*

[26] *Anvitārtha-prakāśikā* on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.11.4

[27] See, for example, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.30, 1.3.33, 1.5.27, 2.5.6, 2.6.33, 2.6.42, 2.7.50, 2.9.33, 3.1.14, 3.5.25, 3.15.6, 3.22.4, 3.26.9, 3.26.10, 3.27.3.

An example of such over-arching universal statement is the *paribhāṣā-sūtra* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* as established by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in his *Tattva Sandarbha:"kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam,"* *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.28. It is supposed to reconcile contrary statements not only in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* but also in all scriptures.

Here are some other examples of Śrīla Prabhupāda and *śāstra* referring to universally applicable truths.

In the Introduction to the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* Śrīla Prabhupāda uses term *sanātana-dharma* as a description of a universally applicable duty:

> That which has neither end nor beginning must not be sectarian, for it cannot be limited by any boundaries. Those belonging to some sectarian faith will wrongly consider that *sanātana-dharma* is also sectarian, but if we go deeply into the matter and consider it in the light of modern science, it is possible for us to see that *sanātana-dharma* is the business of all the people of the world—nay, of all the living entities of the universe.

This quote is very similar to what Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes in Chapter 1 of his *Daśa-mūla-tattva.*

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.36, purport, we find a reference to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-sandarbha, Anuccheda* 115 about universality of bhakti:

> Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī Prabhupāda therefore comments on the words *sarvatra sarvadā* in the sense that the principles of bhakti-yoga, or devotional service to the Lord, are apt in all circumstances; i.e. bhakti-yoga is recommended in all the revealed scriptures, it is performed by all authorities, it is important in all places, it is useful in all causes and effects, etc.

Describing the qualities of civilized human beings, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.11.12 states:

nṛṇām ayaṁ paro dharmaḥ sarveṣāṁ samudāhṛtaḥ

Translation: These are the general principles to be followed by all human beings.

Patañjali describes the foundational regulations of yoga, *yamas,* as universal in *Yoga-sūtra* 2.31:

jāti-deśa-kāla-samayānavacchinnāḥ sārvabhaumā mahā-vratam,

Translation: These great laws are applicable universally, at all times, regardless of person's origin or current time period or circumstances.

8. Authentic understanding and exposition of *śāstra* is consistent with *siddhānta*

Evidence and Explanation:

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in *Dasa-mula-tattva*:

> Some time ago I happened to see one new publication called Śrī Caitanya Bodhinī. The authors had vowed to give the pure teachings of Śrī Caitanya to the world. The vow is not bad, but the system they proposed to gather Śrī Caitanya's teachings is very dangerous. The authors thought that they could extract the Lord's teachings from the Sanskrit works of the Gosvāmīs. They forgot that the essence of the Gosvāmīs' works is contained in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. It is sufficient to take this work in order to present the teachings of Śrī Caitanya to the world. There is no one as learned as Kavirāja Gosvāmī today. Anyone who thinks that he can extract the essence from the Sanskrit works of the Gosvāmīs better than Kavirāja Gosvāmī is certainly worthless and foolish. I have firm conviction that by presenting to the world clearly the teachings of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, nothing else need be known. However, many topics in Kavirāja's work are described in a cryptic way. In those places it is best to consult the *Sandarbhas*, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and other works of the Gosvāmīs in order to clarify matters. The aim of the Caitanya Bodhinī however was to bypass the superior authority. In the present work we will reveal the teachings of Śrī Caitanya clearly, based on the statements of Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

Note: please also see the extensive section of several essays about *siddhānta* in this book.

9. Summary statements of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* are included in śāstric text

Evidence and Explanation:

All of Śrī Caitanya's teachings—whatever they may be—are discussed in terms of three divisions: *sambandha, abhidheya and prayojana*.

In teaching Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrī Caitanya said:

> *veda-śāstre kahe, sambandha, abhidheya, prayojana*
> *kṛṣṇa, kṛṣṇa-bhakti, prema,—tina mahā-dhana*
> *mukhya-gauṇa-vṛtti, kiṁvā anvaya-vyatireke*
> *vedera pratijñā kevala kahaye kṛṣṇake*

Translation: In the Vedic literatures, Kṛṣṇa is the central point of attraction, and His service is our activity. To attain the platform of love of Kṛṣṇa is life's ultimate goal. Therefore Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa's service and love of Kṛṣṇa are the three great riches of life.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 20.143, 146:

> When one accepts Vedic literature by interpretation or even by dictionary meaning, directly or indirectly, the ultimate declaration of Vedic knowledge points to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The meaning is: *Vedas* are the scriptural authority. What the *Veda* states is true. Any religious person must act according to the instructions of the *Vedas*. The ultimate aim of the Vedic literature is to reveal Kṛṣṇa as the only Lord, either by secondary, or indirect interpretation of the statements, or by primary or direct meaning of the statements. In other words, if one examines the *sambandha* or principle of relationships described in the *Vedas*, one will find no one except Kṛṣṇa. On considering the *abhidheya* or process recommended in the *Vedas*, only devotion to Kṛṣṇa will be found. In considering the *prayojana* or goal of the scriptures, only *kṛṣṇa-prema* will be found. In order to discuss in detail the *sambandha, abhidheya* and *prayojana*, the ten conclusions taught by Śrī Caitanya will first be presented in the form of one verse, and later, each topic will be discussed separately in detail.

Note: please also see the extensive section of several essays about *siddhānta* in this book, particularly the sections about concise statements.

10. *Śāstra* both transcends and addresses context, within which it is revealed

Evidence and Explanation:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.15.27:

> *deśa-kālārtha-yuktāni*
> *hṛt-tāpopaśamāni ca*
> *haranti smarataś cittaṁ*
> *govindābhihitāni me*

> **Translation:** Now I am attracted to those instructions imparted to me by the Personality of Godhead [Govinda] because they are impregnated with instructions for relieving the burning heart in all circumstances of time and space.

By Kṛṣṇa Kṣetra Swāmī:

An important characteristic of *śāstra* is its applicability and truth-value beyond particular contexts. And yet, the embedded nature of particular śāstric statements within specific contexts can be of critical importance in hermeneutical reflection. To say that *śāstra* "transcends" context is to call attention to its relevance beyond a specific time, place or circumstance; and to say that *śāstra* "addresses" context, directs concern toward the particularities of time, place or circumstance both of the text in question and of the interpreter's situation. Just how *śāstra* may address a particular current question or situation demands the careful discernment called upon in Vaiṣṇava hermeneutics, especially as exercised by the guru and appropriate *sādhus*.

That *śāstra* has the power to transcend context is a familiar and even obvious point for most Vaiṣṇavas, a ready example being Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. We are reminded of this power with respect to the *Gītā* when Arjuna declares to Yudhiṣṭhira the following.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.15.27, purport; emphasis added:

> ***deśa-kālārtha-yuktāni hṛt-tāpopaśamāni ca***
> ***haranti smarataś cittaṁ govindābhihitāni me***

> **Translation:** Now I am attracted to those instructions imparted to me by the Personality of Godhead [Govinda] because they are impregnated with instructions for relieving the burning heart in all circumstances of time and space.

Significantly, Arjuna declares that his attraction to the Lord's recalled instructions is occurring in the present, while he is suffering the Lord's absence from the world several years after Kṛṣṇa had spoken to him at Kurukṣetra. Thus, aside from the gap in time from the original instruction to Arjuna's recollection, there is the difference in context, between the Lord's personal presence at the time of instruction and His current absence. Further, if one thinks Kṛṣṇa's instructions' validity is limited to Arjuna, Śrīla Prabhupāda comments that because the Lord's instructions are understood to be his "sound representation," persons other than Arjuna "can derive the *same benefit* from the *Bhagavad-gītā* as Arjuna did in the personal presence of the Lord".

Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks further about the authority of *śāstra* in general being a function of its eternal relevance, using a reference to the śāstric identification of cows with a mother as an example.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 17.157, purport:

> *Śāstra* must be correct always, not sometimes correct and sometimes incorrect. In the Vedic scriptures, the cow is described as a mother. Therefore she is a mother for all time; it is not, as some rascals say, that in the Vedic age she was a mother but she is not in this age. If *śāstra* is an authority, the cow is a mother always; she was a mother in the Vedic age, and she is a mother in this age also.

While *śāstra* transcends its context, *śāstra's* embeddedness in particular contexts must be considered. Indeed, context enriches our understanding of *śāstra* and its applicability in varied circumstances.

A ready example would be Prahlāda's instruction in *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.6.1:

> One who is sufficiently intelligent should use the human form of body from the very beginning of life—in other words, from the tender age of childhood—to practice the activities of devotional service, giving up all other engagements. The human body is most rarely achieved, and although temporary like other bodies, it is meaningful because in human life one can perform devotional service. Even a slight amount of sincere devotional service can give one complete perfection.

While this is clearly applicable in all times, places, and circumstances, our awareness of Prahlāda's identity as a *mahā-bhāgavata*, and the fact that he gives this advice to his *asura* classmates, enriches our understanding of the injunction and increases our motivation to imbibe it.

Let us note, in conclusion, that *śāstra's* proper contextual application requires great discernment and thereby appropriate *limitation* of a given śāstric statement's application. Thus, for example, to take certain injunctions of *Dharmaśāstra*—such as that a *śūdra* is to be punished for a

particular crime with greater severity than a *brāhmaṇa*—as being fully applicable in the present *yuga* as in an earlier or possible later age, would be a gross misunderstanding of this principle.

11. Consideration of context, including historical circumstance, is essential to gaining śāstric insight

Evidence and Explanation:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.16.26–30, purport:

> The fourteenth quality, knowledge, can be further extended into five subheadings, namely:
>
> (1) intelligence,
>
> (2) gratefulness,
>
> (3) power of understanding the circumstantial environments of place, object and time,
>
> (4) perfect knowledge of everything, and
>
> (5) knowledge of the self.

By Urmilā-devī dāsī:

There are many circumstances where consideration of context, including historical circumstance, is essential to gaining śāstric insight. Here are a few examples.

In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā*, Chapter 25 there is the story of Subuddhi Rāya and Hussain Khān. Subuddhi Rāya had whipped Hussain Khān and left scars on his back when Hussain worked for him. Later, when Hussain's wife saw the scars, she asked her husband to kill Subuddhi, but Hussain replied that Subuddhi had been "just like a father" and refused. In that historical context, whipping one's servants or employees was clearly not unusual, and could even be seen as compatible with fatherly behavior. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja is describing a cultural and historical situation that helps us to understand Caitanya's *līlā*, but he is in no way whatsoever suggesting that Subuddhi's behavior is desirable or to be copied with one's own servants, employees, or children.

In the Canto 9, Chapter 4 of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Mahārāja Ambarīṣa offended his guest, Durvāsā, by drinking water to break a fast while Durvāsā was bathing and had not yet eaten. Such were the cultural norms of that time, and does not indicate that a host cannot have a drink of water while waiting for a newly arrived guest to bathe.

When Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, "for a respectable person, dishonor is worse than death" in *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.34, the Lord is speaking in terms of material designations. Later, the Lord tells Arjuna to be free of considerations of honor and dishonor in *Bhagavad-gītā* 6.7, 12.18. So, the statement in *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.34, when understood in its cultural context, refers to the mood of materialistic people. The statement is not implying that one should die rather than be dishonored, or that one should be vengeful or morose upon being dishonored.

When considering Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions especially in letters or conversations, the historical and cultural context can be crucial. Sometimes when speaking to an Indian audience he would say things such as the following.

Morning Walk, Ahmedabad, September 25, 1975:

> Therefore you will find in Hindu culture, every family, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa worship, the husband and wife. Still there are ..., there is some glimpse of human civilization in India. So we can revive it.

Other times he would vigorously deny that we are interested in Hinduism, as in the following lecture on *The Nectar of Devotion*, Vṛndāvana, October 27, 1972:

> I never said in any meeting in the Western countries that Hindu religion is better than your Christian religion. You give up your Christian religion and come to Hindu religion. No, that was not my propaganda. There are many old students here present. They may remember. I never made propaganda. Rather, when they inquired whether one can attain perfection by following Christian principle, I said yes.

The prevailing culture of the audience was crucial to how Śrīla Prabhupāda presented his message.

Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave various instructions at different points in ISKCON's history. Sometimes he would completely reverse an instruction as the historical context changed. For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda said: "This should be strictly outlawed—no more *sannyāsīs*," in a room conversation in Bombay on January 7, 1977. Yet, a few months later, in May of the same year, he held a *sannyāsa* initiation. Clearly, he felt that something in the historical or personal context had changed, and he rescinded his decision.

By SAC collaboratively:

The word "*itihāsa*" as understood in the *Nirukti* that Śrīla Prabhupāda uses several times as a "Vedic dictionary" is not the same thing as the word "history" that is understood in the English-speaking world. The cycle and duration of *yugas* that our tradition accepts is different from the way time is imagined in popular culture or secular ideology.

Bhagavad-gītā 8.17, purport:

> The duration of the material universe is limited. It is manifested in cycles of *kalpas*. A *kalpa* is a day of Brahmā, and one day of Brahmā consists of a thousand cycles of four *yugas*, or ages: *Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara* and *Kali*. The cycle of *Satya* is characterized by virtue, wisdom and religion, there being practically no ignorance and vice, and the *yuga* lasts 1,728,000 years. In the *Tretā-yuga* vice is introduced, and this *yuga* lasts 1,296,000 years. In the *Dvāpara-yuga* there is an even greater decline in virtue and religion, vice increasing, and this *yuga* lasts 864,000 years. And finally, in *Kali-yuga* (the *yuga* we have now been experiencing over the past 5,000 years) there is an abundance of strife, ignorance, irreligion and vice, true virtue being practically nonexistent, and this *yuga* lasts 432,000 years. In *Kali-yuga* vice increases to such a point that at the termination of the *yuga* the Supreme Lord Himself appears as the *Kalki avatāra*, vanquishes the demons, saves His

devotees, and commences another *Satya-yuga*. Then the process is set rolling again. These four *yugas*, rotating a thousand times, comprise one day of Brahmā, and the same number comprise one night. Brahmā lives one hundred of such "years" and then dies. These "hundred years" by earth calculations total to 311 trillion and 40 billion earth years. By these calculations the life of Brahmā seems fantastic and interminable, but from the viewpoint of eternity it is as brief as a lightning flash. In the Causal Ocean there are innumerable Brahmās rising and disappearing like bubbles in the Atlantic.

When *śāstras* talk about "*itihāsas*" they usually mean these large cycles of time, that includes the transition between various Manus (*manvantaras*). When we use the term "history" and try to contextualize anything, we're using a semblance of what is known as the historical critical method, a term that is used by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhakura as "*ādhunika-vāda*." Our tradition limits the scope of such a historical critical method and doesn't apply it to *siddhānta* or statements that support *siddhānta*, even though a certain aspect of it is relevant for Kṛṣṇa bhakti.

By Drutakarmā Dāsa:

Śrīla Prabhupāda said in a room conversation, New Delhi, November 3, 1973:

> I was simply planning in different way. Therefore Kṛṣṇa's favor. I never deviated from this plan. Since I heard it from my Guru Mahārāja, I've simply planning how to do it successfully. But I thought at that time, that "I'll be able to do it if I get some money. Let me do some business for the time." That I was thinking. But Kṛṣṇa said, "Even if you are pauper, you try; you'll get everything." But I thought, "Without money, how this can be done?" That was difference of opinion with Kṛṣṇa, argument. And I was dreaming also, Guru Mahārāja, asking me, "Come on." So, I was going. So I was, "Oh, I have to go? I have to take *sannyāsa*?"

The point is that from an external point of view one might explain the timing of Śrīla Prabhupāda's decision to come to New York by historical context; his revealing of his internal relationships with Kṛṣṇa and his guru shows that the explanation for his coming may involve more than sociological and political factors.

For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda welcomed all persons to become *brāhmaṇas,* regardless of birth, and despite objections that were prevalent during his time.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.1.35:

> *naivaṁ-vidhaḥ puruṣa-kāra urukramasya*
> *puṁsāṁ tad-aṅghri-rajasā jita-ṣaḍ-guṇānām*
> *citraṁ vidūra-vigataḥ sakṛd ādadīta*
> *yan-nāmadheyam adhunā sa jahāti bandham*

> **Translation:** My dear King, a devotee who has taken shelter of the dust from the lotus feet of the Lord can transcend the influence of the six material waves—namely hunger, thirst, lamentation, illusion, old age and death—and he can conquer the mind and five senses. However, this is not very wonderful for a pure devotee of the Lord because even a person beyond the jurisdiction of the four castes—in other words, an untouchable—is immediately relieved of bondage to material existence if he utters the holy name of the Lord even once.

From the purport to this verse:

Not to speak of a sanctified devotee, even a *caṇḍāla*, an outcaste, who is untouchable, is immediately freed from material bondage if he utters the holy name of the Lord even once. Sometimes caste *brāhmaṇas* argue that unless one changes his body he cannot be accepted as a *brāhmaṇa*, for since the present body is obtained as a result of past actions, one who has in the past acted as a *brāhmaṇa* takes birth in a *brāhmaṇa* family. Therefore, they contend, without such a brahminical body, one cannot be accepted as a *brāhmaṇa*. Herein it is said, however, that even a *vidura-vigata*, a *caṇḍāla*—a fifth-class untouchable—is freed if he utters the holy name even once. Being freed means that he immediately changes his body. Sanātana Gosvāmī confirms this:

yathā kāñcanatāṁ yāti
kāṁsyaṁ rasa-vidhānataḥ
tathā dīkṣā-vidhānena
dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām
(*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 2.12)

When a person, even though a *caṇḍāla*, is initiated by a pure devotee into chanting the holy name of the Lord, his body changes as he follows the instructions of the spiritual master. Although one cannot see how his body has changed, we must accept, on the grounds of the authoritative statements of the *śāstras*, that he changes his body. This is to be understood without arguments. This verse clearly says, *sa jahāti bandham*: "He gives up his material bondage." The body is a symbolic representation of material bondage according to one's karma. Although sometimes we cannot see the gross body changing, chanting the holy name of the Supreme Lord immediately changes the subtle body, and because the subtle body changes, the living entity is immediately freed from material bondage.

12. Texts are properly understood and explained in terms of the intended reader or audience

Evidence:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.54:

... But this should be done in consideration of place, time, and attendant conveniences and inconveniences.

In the purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

The method of worship—chanting the *mantra* and preparing the forms of the Lord—is not stereotyped, nor is it exactly the same everywhere. It is specifically mentioned in this verse that one should take consideration of the time, place and available conveniences. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is going on throughout the entire world, and we also install Deities in different centers. Sometimes our Indian friends, puffed up with concocted notions, criticize, "This has not been done. That has not been done." But they forget this instruction of Nārada Muni to one of the greatest Vaiṣṇavas, Dhruva Mahārāja. One has to consider the particular time, country and conveniences. What is convenient in

India may not be convenient in the Western countries. Those who are not actually in the line of *ācāryas*, or who personally have no knowledge of how to act in the role of *ācārya*, unnecessarily criticize the activities of the ISKCON movement in countries outside of India. The fact is that such critics cannot do anything personally to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If someone does go and preach, taking all risks and allowing all considerations for time and place, it might be that there are changes in the manner of worship, but that is not at all faulty according to *śāstra*. Śrīmad Vīrarāghava *Ācārya*, an *ācārya* in the disciplic succession of the Rāmānuja-sampradāya, has remarked in his commentary that *caṇḍālas*, or conditioned souls who are born in lower than *śūdra* families, can also be initiated according to circumstances. The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them Vaiṣṇavas.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 7.31–32:

> **tāhā dekhi' mahāprabhu karena cintana**
> **jagat ḍubāite āmi kariluṅ yatana**
> **keha keha eḍāila, pratijñā ha-ila bhaṅga**
> **tā-sabā ḍubaite pātiba kichu raṅga**

Translation: Seeing that the Māyāvādīs and others were fleeing, Lord Caitanya thought, "I wanted everyone to be immersed in this inundation of love of Godhead, but some of them have escaped. Therefore, I shall devise a trick to drown them also.

In the purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

Here is an important point. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to invent a way to capture the Māyāvādīs and others who did not take interest in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. This is the symptom of an *ācārya*. An *ācārya* who comes for the service of the Lord cannot be expected to conform to a stereotype, for he must find the ways and means by which Kṛṣṇa consciousness may be spread. Sometimes jealous persons criticize the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement because it engages equally both boys and girls in distributing love of Godhead. Not knowing that boys and girls in countries like Europe and America mix very freely, these fools and rascals criticize the boys and girls in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for intermingling. But these rascals should consider that one cannot suddenly change a community's social customs. However, since both the boys and the girls are being trained to become preachers, those girls are not ordinary girls but are as good as their brothers who are preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, to engage both boys and girls in fully transcendental activities is a policy intended to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. These jealous fools who criticize the intermingling of boys and girls will simply have to be satisfied with their own foolishness because they cannot think of how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness by adopting ways and means that are favorable for this purpose. Their stereotyped methods will never help spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, what we are doing is perfect by the grace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, for it is He who proposed to invent a way to capture those who strayed from Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

13. Knowledge is not simply a collection of correct objective information but is invariably mediated through the knower [28]

Evidence and Explanation:

Bhagavad-gītā 18.18-22, 29–32 explains that the knower and intelligence can be in three modes.

The *Anubandha-catuṣṭaya* principle takes into account the audience.

In Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Jaiva-dharma,* Chapter 40 a personality named Śrī Guru Gosvāmī says the following:

> If a devotee having attained the *aprākṛta-bhāva* (transcendental sentiments), meaning he is situated on the perfected stage (*siddha-tattva*), tries to describe these pastimes [of Kṛṣṇa] then due to the discrepancies and inadequacies inherent in any language or words, these narrations come out impure, incomplete and imperfect. And even when the Supreme Lord Himself is the speaker, still the audience and readers are unable to perceive his speech due to their consciousness being contaminated by *māyā* or by materialism. Under these circumstances the shoreless ocean of *rasa* cannot be crossed. One may remain on its shores and try to relish and distribute but a mere drop from it.

By Ādi-puruṣa Dāsa:

Knowledge is more than information. This means that not only do Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas follow the "descending process of knowledge," *avaroha-panthā,* but that also we strive to become blessed through the proper *bhakti* process to have the revealed knowledge unfold in our heart by the grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa and *guru-paramparā.*

On June 26, 1968, Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the two processes of knowledge in his lecture given in Montreal on *Śrī Īśopaniṣad,* Mantra 1:

> All methods of acquiring knowledge can be divided into two groups. One group is called *āroha-panthā*, or research, inductive process, and another method is called deductive process, or *avaroha-panthā.* The knowledge coming from the supreme source, that is called *avaroha-panthā,* and the knowledge which is being sought after by using our imperfect senses, that is called *āroha-panthā.* Ascending process and descending process.

Tamal Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī writes in his book *A Living Theology of Kṛṣṇa Bhakti* on page 87:

> Gauḍīya Vaishnavism, like other systematic perspectives that appeal to Vedic authority, is initially concerned with ascertaining the *pramāṇa*, the means by which knowledge that is certain is acquired, before attempting to determine that which is knowable (*prameya*). In contradistinction to the current aversion toward an absolute, ahistorical vocabulary of any sort, Gauḍīya Vaishnavism, while making a conditional allowance for relative, historically contingent knowledge, insists on the capacity of valid knowledge (*pramā*) to reveal and circumscribe the

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[28] More elaborately: Knowledge (*pramā*) is the result of the knower (*pramātā*) applying the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) to the object of knowledge (*prameya*).

true nature of an object as it actually is. For the Gaudiyas, *śabda* (from *śabd*, to sound) is "revelation," not just verbal testimony, and ultimately the only source of valid knowledge in which epistemological certainty resides.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 17.186:

> *tarko 'pratiṣṭhaḥ śrutayo vibhinnā*
> *nāsāv ṛṣir yasya mataṁ na bhinnam*
> *dharmasya tattvaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyāṁ*
> *mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*

Translation: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu continued, "Dry arguments are inconclusive. A great personality whose opinion does not differ from others is not considered a great sage. Simply by studying the *Vedas*, which are variegated, one cannot come to the right path by which religious principles are understood. The solid truth of religious principles is hidden in the heart of an unadulterated, self-realized person. Consequently, as the *śāstras* confirm, one should accept whatever progressive path the *mahājanas* advocate."

However, even after we accept *śabda-pramāṇa*, authorized revealed Vedic knowledge, we require Kṛṣṇa's mercy to gain a realized insight. As the following quotes demonstrate, the Lord is unknowable in principle, by our own effort, but is capable of revealing knowledge of Himself to His devotees.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.2.3 as quoted in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.13.54, purport:

> *nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo*
> *na medhasā na bahunā śrutena*
> *yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas*
> *tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṁ svām*

Translation: The Supreme Lord is not obtained by expert explanations, by vast intelligence, or even by much hearing. He is obtained only by one whom He Himself chooses. To such a person, He manifests His own form.

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.234 as quoted in *Bhagavad-gītā* 6.8, purport:

> *ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi*
> *na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ*
> *sevonmukhe hi jihvādau*
> *svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*

Translation: No one can understand the transcendental nature of the name, form, qualities and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa through his materially contaminated senses. Only when one becomes spiritually saturated by transcendental service to the Lord are the transcendental name, form, qualities and pastimes of the Lord revealed to him.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.6.38:

> *ātmano 'vasito vatsa*
> *mahimā kavinādinā*
> *saṁvatsara-sahasrānte*
> *dhiyā yoga-vipakkayā*

Translation: O my son, the original poet, Brahmā, after mature meditation for one thousand celestial years, could know only that the glories of the Supreme Soul are inconceivable.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.6.39:

> *ato bhagavato māyā*
> *māyinām api mohinī*
> *yat svayaṁ cātma-vartmātmā*
> *na veda kim utāpare*

Translation: Thus the wonderful potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is bewildering even to the jugglers. That potent power is unknown even to the self-sufficient Lord, so it is certainly unknown to others.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.7.41:

> *nāntaṁ vidāmy aham amī munayo 'gra-jās te*
> *māyā-balasya puruṣasya kuto 'varā ye*
> *gāyan guṇān daśa-śatānana ādi-devaḥ*
> *śeṣo 'dhunāpi samavasyati nāsya pāram*

Translation: Neither I nor all the sages born before you know fully the omnipotent Personality of Godhead. So what can others, who are born after us, know about Him? Even the first incarnation of the Lord, namely Śeṣa, has not been able to reach the limit of such knowledge, although He is describing the qualities of the Lord with ten hundred faces.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.7.42:

> *yeṣāṁ sa eṣa bhagavān dayayed anantaḥ*
> *sarvātmanāśrita-pado yadi nirvyalīkam*
> *te dustarām atitaranti ca deva-māyāṁ*
> *naiṣāṁ mamāham iti dhīḥ śva-śṛgāla-bhakṣye*

Translation: But anyone who is specifically favored by the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, due to unalloyed surrender unto the service of the Lord, can overcome the insurmountable ocean of illusion and can understand the Lord. But those who are attached to this body, which is meant to be eaten at the end by dogs and jackals, cannot do so.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23 as quoted in *Bhagavad-gītā* 6.47, purport:

<div align="center">

yasya deve parā bhaktir
yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ
prakāśante mahātmanaḥ

</div>

Translation: Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.

In his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* commentary on 10.87.2, translated by the BBT, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī explains the process of revelation in this way:

How both purified and unpurified devotees use their intelligence, mind and senses in worshiping the Lord is described in reference to the following quote from the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad* (*Pūrva* 12):

<div align="center">

sat-puṇḍarīka-nayanaṁ
meghābhaṁ vaidyutāmbaram
dvi-bhujaṁ mauna-mudrāḍhyaṁ
vana-mālinam īśvaram

</div>

"The Supreme Lord, appearing in His two-armed form, had divine lotus eyes, a complexion the color of a cloud, and garments that resembled lightning. He wore a garland of forest flowers, and His beauty was enhanced by His pose of meditative silence." The transcendental intelligence and senses of the Lord's perfect devotees correctly perceive His purely spiritual beauty, and their realizations are echoed in the *Gopāla-tāpanī-śruti's* comparison of Lord Kṛṣṇa's eyes, body and clothing to a lotus, a cloud and lightning. On the other hand, devotees on the level of *sādhana*, who are in the process of becoming purified, have only barely realized the Supreme Lord's boundless spiritual beauty. Nonetheless, by hearing scriptural passages such as this one from the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad*, they engage in contemplating Him to the best of their fledgling ability. Although the neophyte devotees have not yet learned how to fully realize the Lord or meditate steadily on even the effulgence surrounding His body, still they take pleasure in presuming.

"We are meditating on our Lord." And the Supreme Lord, moved by the waves of His boundless mercy, Himself thinks, "These devotees are meditating on Me." When their devotion matures, He draws them to His feet to engage in His intimate service. Thus it is concluded that the *Vedas* have access to the personal identity of the Supreme only by His mercy.

By Hari Pārṣada Dāsa:

In Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Jaiva-dharma*, Chapter 40 a personality named Śrī Guru Gosvāmī says the following:

If a devotee having attained the *aprākṛta-bhāva* (transcendental sentiments), meaning he is situated on the perfected stage (*siddha-tattva*), tries to describe these pastimes [of Kṛṣṇa], then due to the discrepancies and inadequacies

inherent in any language or words, these narrations come out impure, incomplete and imperfect. And even when the Supreme Lord Himself is the speaker, still the audience and readers are unable to perceive his speech due to their consciousness being contaminated by *māyā* or by materialism. Under these circumstances the shoreless ocean of *rasa* cannot be crossed. One may remain on its shores and try to relish and distribute but a mere drop from it.

Yet, here we are in the 21st century, trying to bring a world created by Sanskrit and Bengali Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava poets to an audience that mainly speaks English. Sometimes, people may ask why translators take the trouble to translate when the true enjoyment is in relishing the original texts. The answer is simple: there is no such thing as an exact translation. Every so called translation is actually a "trans-creation." The original text or poetry can never be rendered in its full glory with all its cultural and grammatical nuances into another language. However, while rendering texts into another language, the renderer creates his own version of the poetry or text, and even if such a trans-creation is imperfect, it brings immense joy to the renderer and to the receiver.

14. Insight emerges through apt dialogue, and through mediation, resolution, or reconciliation of paradox, apparent contradiction, and multiple views

Evidence and Explanation:

By Kṛṣṇa Kṣetra Swami:

Sādhu-śāstra-guru vākya hṛdaye koriyā aikya: Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura in *Prema-bhakti Candrikā* 1.10 suggests by this phrase that there can be more than one or several, possibly apparently opposing, perspectives and insights that we receive from these three foundational sources, and that effort is required (*koriyā*—having made) on the part of the devotee seeking clarity to then "process" those statements in such a way that a "singularity" (*aikya*, from *eka*, one or single) is reached or emerges in the "heart" (*hṛdaye*).

We should note that such a singularity, or clear and definite single meaning, *could be different* for different devotees, particularly in the sphere of *abhidheya*—the practice of bhakti. This is to say that the guidance of *sādhu-śāstra-guru* will likely be different in matters of right or best activities for different devotees, depending on their individual circumstances and other factors. Thus, for guidance in one's own spiritual life, one seeks to discern in the various statements of *sādhu-śāstra-guru* a singular decisive meaning that is definitive for one's personal decision-making, action, and outlook. There is conscious effort involved in doing this, and there is also faith, that there *is* a single meaning.

However, such singularity of meaning may or may not be *applicable* in the same way for all devotees. Thus, Narottama dāsa implies that it is a responsibility of each devotee to realize for him or herself just how the statements of *sādhu-śāstra-guru* are meaningful for his or her own life. When we seek guidance from *sādhu-śāstra-guru* for collective understanding and action, we may still seek a singularity of meaning. Yet in this case there may be a greater challenge in discerning the meaning that applies to the group, or that applies to everyone in every respect. However, in the sphere of *sambandha-jñāna*, we seek a singular conclusion—*siddhānta*—as that which is true in all circumstances and for all persons.

The next line of the song reminds us of the *prayojana,* the goal of devotees' deliberation, *satata bhāsiba prema-mājhe:* "[Thus] I will float in love's midst." This suggests a test for the rightness of a conclusion to deliberation, to the "singularity" of understanding reached: is it conducive to, does it lead toward, advancement in devotion to its ultimate goal, *prema-bhakti*? Also, in relation to *abhidheya,* does our understanding lead to further or expanded, service?

The Nectar of Devotion 14, quoting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.20.31:

> (...)When a person becomes My devotee he automatically attains the fruits of the renunciation of material enjoyment, and he gets sufficient knowledge to understand the Absolute Truth. That is the test of advancement in devotional service. A devotee cannot be in darkness, because the Lord shows him special favor and enlightens him from within.

Raising this question urges us to be self-critical and cautious in reaching conclusions. Yet it also invites us to reach a felicitous understanding, implying as it does that devotional progress indeed awaits us as a result of such understanding.

Hidden and confidential

guhyam ākhyāti pṛcchati … Guhyam can mean "confidential" and the Sanskrit word relates to *guha*, hiding or hidden. The injunction to share confidential subjects suggests first that there *are* confidential subjects. They may be confidential because they are about our own private lives; or they may be confidential in the sense that only persons spiritually qualified have the *adhikāra* to discuss them. In discussing difficult questions of interpretation, we are called upon to delve into deeper, rather than mere surface, understanding; and this is facilitated by discussion with appropriately qualified devotees.

The phrase *guhyam ākhyāti pṛcchati* also suggests the need for a culture of trust among conversants/interlocutors. Just as the guru-disciple relationship affords the revelation of truth on the basis of trust and faith, similarly in discussion among devotees a basic sense of trust is an essential prerequisite for arriving at deeper understanding of spiritual truths. In contrast, where an adversarial spirit prevails over a humble sense of shared interest in arriving at truth, it cannot be expected that an illuminating outcome will emerge. This is not to say that disagreement cannot be present, but it must be held in a convivial mood, and all participants must share a common readiness to have their opinions changed possibly radically or at least to be refined and nuanced. Congenial discussion, which may include debate, is called *anuloma-sambhāṣa.* In Nyāya *śāstra*, this is the mood favorable for the practice of *vāda* (discussion aimed at finding truth). *Vāda* is contrasted with *jalpa* (wrangling) and with *taṇḍā-vitaṇḍā* (quibbling) both of which obstruct the aim of discerning truth.

If a positive culture of dialogue is maintained, differing or multiple views can be conducive to enriched understanding of an issue. When there are varied views, mature devotees will take this as an indication that the truth lies somewhere amidst such views, not necessarily in the form initially assumed by any of the participants in discussion. Also, while acknowledging differences among the views, they will look for similarities and common ground, as promising areas for arriving at an understanding. They will also show patience, aware that it may not necessarily happen that clear understanding emerges from a given discussion; rather, it could take several discussions, possibly over a longer time, before clear understanding emerges. Sometimes unresolved issues persist because they are ill-conceived in the first place, requiring re-framing; and sometimes what is needed is to clarify and bring to the surface what is the unspoken,

deeper issue behind an immediate issue. Related to this point, sometimes what is needed is to clarify what precisely is at stake, and for whom. This may involve recognizing and distinguishing between political interests and theological/philosophical questions, while also acknowledging that these may not be so easily separated. Also, it may be helpful, when faced with multiple, strongly held views, to determine which of the hermeneutic tools offered in this program are being implicitly applied. By making these explicit, it may be possible to discern a better way to apply the tools, with possible application of additional interpretive tools.

Mediation, resolution, or reconciliation of paradox

Arguably, paradox stands at the very center of core doctrinal propositional statements in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava ontology, specifically *acintya-bhedābheda-vāda*. Genuine paradox does not yield to resolution such that the paradox collapses. Rather, paradox defies logic and points to mystery. When introducing the verses that come to be known as *catur-śloki-bhāgavatam*—the four-verse Bhāgavatam—Lord Nārāyaṇa says in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.31:

> *jñānaṁ parama-guhyaṁ me yad vijñāna-samanvitam*
> *sa-rahasyaṁ tad-aṅgaṁ ca gṛhāṇa gaditaṁ mayā*

> **Translation:** Knowledge about Me as described in the scriptures is very confidential, and it has to be realized in conjunction with devotional service. The necessary paraphernalia for that process is being explained by Me. You may take it up carefully.

First, Lord Nārāyaṇa declares that the knowledge He will explain is *parama-guhyam*—highly, or most confidential. It is "to be realized [*vijñāna*] in conjunction [*samanvitam*] with [*sa-*] devotional service [*rahasyam*]." It is significant that Śrīla Prabhupāda translates *rahasyam* as "devotional service," considering that its standard meaning is "secret, private, clandestine, concealed, mysterious." (Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary).[29] Since the *catuh-śloki* verses 2.9.33-36, especially verse 35, articulate the principle that will later be designated by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* as *acintya-bhedābheda-vāda*, we do well to pay special attention to the emphasis on confidentiality, hiddenness, and secrecy in verse 31. Further, it is noteworthy that Śrīla Prabhupāda includes the adverb "carefully" to specify the activity of "taking up" (*gṛhāna*) this knowledge.

In his purport to this verse, 2.9.31, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

> The Lord says that Brahmā may take the answers as He explains them. This means that transcendental knowledge of the absolute Supreme Being can be known if it is made known by the Lord Himself.

We may extrapolate from this to say that when we encounter paradoxes, they are to be "handled with care" (thus, involving effort, further indicated in 2.9.36 as persistent effort) and that the truth of such paradoxes—to be grasped in the practice of devotional service—is ultimately for the Lord to reveal, not something that we can penetrate by our own—individual or collective—power. In this understanding paradox is to be celebrated rather than feared. Lord Kṛṣṇa comprehends within Himself all contradictory qualities, as expressed by the demigods in their prayer to the Lord.

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[29] Apparently Śrīla Prabhupāda derived his translation from Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary to this verse. The latter explains that the Lord is saying that the *rahasya*—the secret that he will reveal—is *prema-bhakti*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.9.36:

na hi virodha ubhayaṁ bhagavaty aparimita-guṇa-gaṇa īśvare 'navagāhya-māhātmye 'rvācīna-vikalpa-vitarka-vicāra-pramāṇābhāsa-kutarka-śāstra-kalilāntaḥkaraṇāśraya-duravagraha-vādināṁ vivādānavasara uparata-samasta-māyāmaye kevala evātma-māyām antardhāya ko nv artho durghaṭa iva bhavati svarūpa-dvayābhāvāt

Translation: O Supreme Personality of Godhead, all contradictions can be reconciled in You. O Lord, since You are the Supreme Person, the reservoir of unlimited spiritual qualities, the supreme controller, Your unlimited glories are inconceivable to the conditioned souls. Many modern theologians argue about right and wrong without knowing what is actually right. Their arguments are always false and their judgments inconclusive because they have no authorized evidence with which to gain knowledge of You. Because their minds are agitated by scriptures containing false conclusions, they are unable to understand the truth concerning You. Furthermore, because of polluted eagerness to arrive at the right conclusion, their theories are incapable of revealing You, who are transcendental to their material conceptions. You are one without a second, and therefore in You contradictions like doing and not doing, happiness and distress, are not contradictory. Your potency is so great that it can do and undo anything as You like. With the help of that potency, what is impossible for You? Since there is no duality in Your constitutional position, You can do everything by the influence of Your energy.

At the same time, where the weighing of seemingly contradictory ideas and values calls for judgments to determine action, we must be careful not to resort glibly to "*acintya-bhedābheda-vāda*" as an excuse for intellectual laziness. Especially in situations of ethical dilemmas, decisions must be made after careful consideration of alternatives, with clear understanding that one takes responsibility for one's decision(s).

Examples from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in which difficult decisions must be made despite seeming paradoxes are:

(1) Arjuna's decision to punish Aśvatthāmā (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.7); and

(2) Mahārāja Parīkṣit's decision not to kill personified Kali, but rather to give him places to reside within his kingdom. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.17)

Thus, even as we appreciate the mysteries (*rahasya*) of bhakti and ultimate truth (*param satyam*), we must guard ourselves against tendencies toward intellectual or ethical decadence that can arise from a lack of courage and resolve to make appropriate moral and ethical decisions.

Bhagavad-gītā 18.30:

O son of Pṛthā, that understanding by which one knows what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, what is binding and what is liberating, is in the mode of goodness.

Deep understanding, great skill, and artful engagement with paradox, apparent contradiction, and multiple views are required to ensure felicitous and inclusive resolve of complex issues of interpretation.

By Hari Pārṣada Dāsa:

There are various techniques for dealing with doubts, ambiguities, and differences of opinion. These techniques are all discussed in *śāstra*. There can be multiple correct interpretations of *śāstra*.

Dealing with doubts

Kṛṣṇa has clearly said in the *Bhagavad-gītā 4.42:*

> *tasmād ajñāna-sambhūtaṁ hṛt-sthaṁ jñānāsinātmanaḥ*
> *chittvainaṁ saṁśayaṁ yogam ātiṣṭhottiṣṭha bhārata*

> **Translation:** Therefore the doubts which have arisen in your heart out of ignorance should be slashed by the weapon of knowledge. Armed with yoga, O Bhārata, stand and fight.

We should have the same approach as is suggested by Kṛṣṇa. Knowledge of *śāstra* is the prime solution for dealing with doubts. Thus all doubts should be dealt with by acquiring knowledge of *śāstra*, either by directly reading it (*svādhyāya*) or by listening to it (*śravaṇa*). Direct reading of *śāstra* a.k.a. *svādhyāya* is also glorified in the *Bhagavad-gītā* 17.15.

Dealing with ambiguities

Ambiguity refers to vagueness. Such ambiguity arises when we are not sure about the meaning of a particular term or phrase in *śāstra* or if we are not sure about the intention of the author of the *śāstra* even though we may have understood the meanings of the terms.

In order to resolve such ambiguities, the previous commentators who have understood the meanings of *śāstra* have composed various categories of literature such as *ṭīkā* (commentary), *vṛtti* (gloss), *ṭippaṇī* (marginalia), etc. By referring to one or more of these, most of the ambiguities may be resolved.

Some ambiguities however, are desirable. For example, the term *tviṣākṛṣṇam* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.5.32) can break down either as *tviṣā + kṛṣṇam* (dark complexion) or *tviṣā + akṛṣṇam* (non-dark complexion). Commentators have utilized this ambiguity to give various interpretations of the verse.

Differences of opinion

Śrīla Prabhupāda said in a letter to Upendra from February 19, 1972 that differences of opinion can exist even among two *ācāryas*: "There is no reason why *ācāryas* cannot differ on certain points."

The standard solution offered by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in the *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛtam* 5.327 is to find a way to reconcile both statements in such a way that the contradiction ceases to exist:

virodho vākyayor yatra nāprāmāṇyam tad iṣyate
yathāviruddhatā ca syāt tad-arthaḥ kalpyate tayoḥ

Translation: When two contradictory statements in any two literatures or within the same literature are found, one statement does not invalidate the other. Rather, a meaning which resolves the contradiction between the two statements should be sought.

It can safely be said that there can be multiple valid interpretations of *śāstra* because of the differences in how individuals perceive the Absolute Truth. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.32.26 Kapila Muni says:

jñāna-mātraṁ paraṁ brahma paramātmeśvaraḥ pumān
dṛśy-ādibhiḥ pṛthag bhāvair bhagavān eka īyate

Translation: The Supreme Personality of Godhead alone is complete transcendental knowledge, but according to the different processes of understanding He appears differently, either as impersonal *Brahman*, as *Paramātmā*, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead or as the *puruṣa-avatāra*.

The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 24.318 also acknowledges that there can be multiple valid interpretations of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

kṛṣṇa-tulya bhāgavata—vibhu, sarvāśraya
prati-śloke prati-akṣare nānā artha kaya

Translation: *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is as great as Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord and shelter of everything. In each and every verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and in each and every syllable, there are various meanings.

However, the above does not mean that all interpretations are to be accepted as the primary interpretation of the *śāstra*. The primary interpretation of *śāstra* is that which leads one to know the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇ, *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyaḥ:* "By all the *Vedas*, I am to be known" (*Bhagavad-gītā* 15.15).

Note: this will be discussed in detail later in the section dealing with *mukhya* and *gauṇa vṛtti* in Tool 4.

15. *Śāstra* mercifully reciprocates with those who study it and compassionately reach out to others

Evidence and Explanation:

By Girirāja Swami:

On the absolute platform, *śāstra,* words spoken by Kṛṣṇa or about Him, is Kṛṣṇa and we can have the same relationship with *śāstra* as we can have with the Lord.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.11, *ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham*: "As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly." Thus, as we surrender to *śāstra*, by reading and distributing it, *śāstra* will reward us and bless us with transcendental knowledge, enlightenment, and purification.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.40 itself states that it is Kṛṣṇa:

idaṁ bhāgavataṁ nāma
purāṇaṁ brahma-sammitam
uttama-śloka-caritaṁ
cakāra bhagavān ṛṣiḥ
niḥśreyasāya lokasya
dhanyaṁ svasty-ayanaṁ mahat

> **Translation:** This scripture named *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the literary incarnation of God, and it is compiled by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the incarnation of God. It is meant for the ultimate good of all people, and it is all-successful, all-blissful, and all-perfect.

In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates:

> Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu declared that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the spotless sound representation of all Vedic knowledge and history. There are selected histories of great devotees who are in direct contact with the Personality of Godhead. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the literary incarnation of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and is therefore nondifferent from Him. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* should be worshiped as respectfully as we worship the Lord. Thereby we can derive the ultimate blessings of the Lord through its careful and patient study. As God is all light, all bliss and all perfection, so also is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We can have all the transcendental light of the Supreme Brahman, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, from the recitation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, provided it is received through the medium of the transparent spiritual master. Lord Caitanya's private secretary Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī advised all intending visitors who came to see the Lord at *Purī* to make a study of the *Bhāgavatam* from the person *Bhāgavatam*. Person *Bhāgavatam* is the self-realized bona fide spiritual master, and through him only can one understand the lessons of *Bhāgavatam* in order to receive the desired result. One can derive from the study of the *Bhāgavatam* all benefits that are possible to be derived from the personal presence of the Lord. It carries with it all the transcendental blessings of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa that we can expect from His personal contact.

Shortly before he departed from our vision, in his purport to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.13.54, Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed:

> We should discuss *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* daily as much as possible, and then everything will be clarified, for *Bhāgavatam* is the essence of all Vedic literature (*nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalam* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.3]). It was written by Vyāsadeva (*mahā-muni-kṛte* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.2]) when he was self-realized. Thus the more we read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the more its knowledge becomes clear. Each and every verse is transcendental. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* reciprocates with our efforts to assimilate its knowledge.

Apart from discussion, simple repetition can also lead to understanding. In the early days of ISKCON, Jadurāṇī asked Śrīla Prabhupāda, "What does it mean that "the moon was churned from the ocean of milk?" He replied, "Just repeat: 'The moon was churned from the ocean of milk." He had her repeat the sentence three times and then asked her, "Now do you understand?" And she replied, "Yes, the moon was churned from the ocean of milk." Also, when *The Nectar of Devotion* was first published, Śrīla Prabhupāda told the devotees that if there were any portions that they did not understand, they should read them over and over again. And from the position of author, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "It is not enough that we say that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead in one purport; we will say that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead in every purport.

The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.13.13 also states:

> If on the full moon day of the month of Bhadra one places *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* on a golden throne and gives it as a gift, he will attain the supreme transcendental destination.

As explained in the purport:

> One should place *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* on a golden throne because it is the king of all literature. On the full-moon day of the month of Bhadra, the sun, which is compared to this king of literatures, is present in the constellation Leo and looks as if raised up on a royal throne. (According to astrology, the sun is said to be exalted in the sign of Leo ...) Thus, one may unreservedly worship *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the supreme divine scripture.

By sharing not only the knowledge of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but also the book itself, one becomes exalted.

In *Kṛṣṇa-lila-stava* 412–416, translated by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa, Śrīla Sanatana Gosvāmī prays to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa:

> O nectar from the ocean of all scriptures, singular fruit of all the *Vedas*, rich mine of the precious gems of all conclusive truths, You are the only giver of sight to all the worlds.

> O life air of all the Supreme Lord's devotees, O master, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*! You are the sun risen in the darkness of Kali. You are the exact image of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

> I bow down to You, who are supremely blissful to read. Your every syllable pours down a flood of *prema*. You can always be served by everyone. You are Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself.

> My only friend, my constant companion, my spiritual master, my great wealth! My savior, my good fortune, my source of ecstasy, I bow down to You.

The greatest gift we can give anyone is Kṛṣṇa, and Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized giving Kṛṣṇa in the form of transcendental literature.

Toward the end of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa explains that He wants us to distribute the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the knowledge of the *Bhagavad-gītā,* and that one who does so is most dear to Him.

Bhagavad-gītā 18.68:

> *ya idaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ*
> *mad-bhakteṣv abhidhāsyati*
> *bhaktiṁ mayi parāṁ kṛtvā*
> *mām evaiṣyaty asaṁśayaḥ*

Translation: For one who explains this supreme secret to the devotees, pure devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me.

Bhagavad-gītā 18.69:

> *na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu*
> *kaścin me priya-kṛttamaḥ*
> *bhavitā na ca me tasmād*
> *anyaḥ priya-taro bhuvi*

Translation: There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear.

Lord Kṛṣṇa also says that one who studies the *Gita* will worship Him, become purified, and dwell on auspicious planets.

Bhagavad-gītā 18.70:

> *adhyeṣyate ca ya imaṁ*
> *dharmyaṁ saṁvādam āvayoḥ*
> *jñāna-yajñena tenāham*
> *iṣṭaḥ syām iti me matiḥ*

Translation: And I declare that he who studies this sacred conversation of ours worships Me by his intelligence.

Bhagavad-gītā 18.71:

> *śraddhāvān anasūyaś ca*
> *śṛṇuyād api yo naraḥ*
> *so 'pi muktaḥ śubhāl lokān*
> *prāpnuyāt puṇya-karmaṇām*

Translation: And one who listens with faith and without envy becomes free from sinful reactions and attains to the auspicious planets where the pious dwell.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.17 states that by hearing the messages of Kṛṣṇa one will become purified at heart and fixed in devotional service to Kṛṣṇa:

śṛṇvatāṁ sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ
hṛdy antaḥ stho hy abhadrāṇi
vidhunoti suhṛt satām

Translation: Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, who is the *Paramātmā* [Supersoul] in everyone's heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge to hear His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted.

In his purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasizes that messages of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa Himself are the same:

Messages of the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, are nondifferent from Him. Whenever, therefore, offenseless hearing and glorification of God are undertaken, it is to be understood that Lord Kṛṣṇa is present there in the form of transcendental sound, which is as powerful as the Lord personally.

... The Lord is reciprocally respondent to His devotees. When He sees that a devotee is completely sincere in getting admittance to the transcendental service of the Lord and

has thus become eager to hear about Him, the Lord acts from within the devotee in such a way that the devotee may easily go back to Him.

... One cannot enter into the kingdom of God unless one is perfectly cleared of all sins. The material sins are products of our desires to lord it over material nature. It is very difficult to get rid of such desires. Women and wealth are very difficult problems for the devotee making progress on the path back to Godhead. Many stalwarts in the devotional line fell victim to these allurements and thus retreated from the path of liberation. But when one is helped by the Lord Himself, the whole process becomes as easy as anything by the divine grace of the Lord.

To become restless in the contact of women and wealth is not an astonishment, because every living being is associated with such things from remote time, practically immemorial, and it takes time to recover from this foreign nature. But if one is engaged in hearing the glories of the Lord, gradually he realizes his real position. By the grace of God such a devotee gets sufficient strength to defend himself from the state of disturbances, and gradually all disturbing elements are eliminated from his mind

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.18:

naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu
nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā
bhagavaty uttama-śloke
bhaktir bhavati naiṣṭhikī

Translation: By regular attendance in classes on the *Bhāgavatam* and by rendering of service to the pure devotee, all that is troublesome to the heart is almost completely destroyed, and loving service unto the Personality of Godhead, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact.

In his purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates:

> Here is the remedy for eliminating all inauspicious things within the heart which are considered to be obstacles in the path of self-realization. The remedy is the association of the *Bhāgavatas*. There are two types of *Bhāgavatas*, namely the book *Bhāgavata* and the devotee *Bhāgavata*. Both the *Bhāgavatas* are competent remedies, and both of them or either of them can be good enough to eliminate the obstacles. A devotee *Bhāgavata* is as good as the book *Bhāgavata* because the devotee *Bhāgavata* leads his life in terms of the book *Bhāgavata* and the book *Bhāgavata* is full of information about the Personality of Godhead and His pure devotees, who are also *Bhāgavatas*. *Bhāgavata* book and person are identical.

So, the book *Bhāgavata, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* is identical not only with Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa, but also with the person *bhāgavata,* the pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda continues in this purport:

> … Human reason fails to understand how by serving the devotee *Bhāgavata* or the book *Bhāgavata* one gets gradual promotion on the path of devotion. But actually these are facts explained by Śrīla Nāradadeva, who happened to be a maidservant's son in his previous life. The maidservant was engaged in the menial service of the sages, and thus he also came into contact with them. And simply by associating with them and accepting the remnants of foodstuff left by the sages, the son of the maidservant got the chance to become the great devotee and personality Śrīla Nāradadeva. These are the miraculous effects of the association of *Bhāgavatas*. And to understand these effects practically, it should be noted that by such sincere association of the *Bhāgavatas* one is sure to receive transcendental knowledge very easily, with the result that he becomes fixed in the devotional service of the Lord. The more progress is made in devotional service under the guidance of the *Bhāgavatas*, the more one becomes fixed in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. The messages of the book *Bhāgavata*, therefore, have to be received from the devotee *Bhāgavata*, and the combination of these two *Bhāgavatas* will help the neophyte devotee to make progress on and on.

Quotes compiled by Ādi-puruṣa Dāsa:

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.6, purport:

> To hear and explain them is more important than reading them. One can assimilate the knowledge of the revealed scriptures only by hearing and explaining. Hearing is called *śravaṇa*, and explaining is called *kīrtana*. The two processes of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* are of primary importance to progressive spiritual life.

Note: this quote also applies to Principles 18 and 23, and is quoted there in Principle 23.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.17, purport:

> The Lord is more anxious to take us back into His kingdom than we can desire. Most of us do not desire at all to go back to Godhead. Only a very few men want to go back to Godhead. But anyone who desires to go back to Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa helps in all respects.

16. The meaning of *śāstra* is directly revealed to one with full faith in guru, *śāstra* and Kṛṣṇa

Evidence and Explanation:

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura writes in Section 9, of his *Amṛta Vāṇī: Nectar of Instructions of Immortality,* titled "Are the scriptures nondifferent from the Lord":

> If we try to study *śāstra* while lost in mental speculation, we will be cheated. *Śāstra* reveals its treasures only to surrendered souls. If we have the same unalloyed devotion for the spiritual master as we have for Supreme Lord, the purports of all the scriptures will reveal themselves to us automatically. People proud of their knowledge cannot understand the true purport of *śāstra*. If we hear from the *sādhus* while surrendering body, mind, and speech, only then will we be able to realize the confidential purport of the *śāstras*.

By Nārāyaṇī-devī dāsī:

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23 as quoted in the *Bhagavad-gītā* 6.47, purport:

> *yasya deve parā bhaktir*
> *yathā deve tatha gurau*
> *tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ*
> *prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*

> **Translation:** Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.

For those fully on the platform of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, all truth is realized, the import of *śāstra* and the words of guru fully revealed.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* 5.16:

> When, however, one is enlightened with the knowledge by which nescience is destroyed, then his knowledge reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime.

> Persons on such a platform experience the intoxication of divine love which makes the task of well-structured śāstric exposition insignificant; and they have realizations of *kṛṣṇa-prema* which are beyond ordinary logic and scriptural demands.

In the beginning of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the qualification of the person to understand *Bhāgavatam* is given that he must be nonenvious.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.2:

paramo nirmatsarāṇāṁ satām

> **Translation:** … this *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* propounds the highest truth, which is understandable by those devotees who are fully pure in heart.

Further qualification is given in the last line of the verse: "As soon as one attentively and submissively hears the message of the *Bhāgavatam*, by this culture of knowledge the Supreme Lord is established within his heart."

If one hears *Bhāgavatam* submissively and attentively, then he will achieve Lord Kṛṣṇa's association. In the purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

> The proper method for receiving this transcendental message is to hear it submissively. A challenging attitude cannot help one realize this transcendental message. One particular word is used herein for proper guidance. This word is *śuśruṣu*. One must be anxious to hear this transcendental message. The desire to sincerely hear is the first qualification …

> *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is meant to be heard from the beginning. Those who are fit to assimilate this work are mentioned in this *śloka*: "One becomes qualified to hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* after many pious deeds." The intelligent person, with thoughtful discretion, can be assured by the great sage Vyāsadeva that he can realize the Supreme Personality directly by hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Without undergoing the different stages of realization set forth in the *Vedas,* one can be lifted immediately to the position of paramahaṁsa simply by agreeing to receive this message.

By Hari Pārṣada Dāsa:

It is only through *śraddhā* that we can correctly understand *śāstra* and apply hermeneutical tools correctly.

Almost all the hermeneutical tools are either directly mentioned in *śāstra* or are derived from *śāstra*, so unless one has faith in *śāstra*, it is not possible to learn and holistically apply hermeneutical tools to *śāstra*.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says in his commentary to *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.16–17:

tasmāc chāstrārtha-viśvāsa eva śraddhā

> **Translation**: Therefore, faith in the message of *śāstra* is indeed known as *śraddhā*.

So in other words, *śraddhā* is nothing but *śāstrārtha-viśvāsa* (faith in śāstric messages). This faith impels one to follow one's *sādhana*, *bhajana* (devotional life) and attain *prīti* (affection for the Lord). This faith also helps one in understanding hermeneutical tools and applying them

correctly. Therefore first comes *śraddhā* in the *śāstra* and then we are able to understand and apply hermeneutical tools while we simultaneously progress towards attaining *prema*.

17. By purifying the senses, *bhakti* removes the conditioning that clouds and distorts perception

Evidence and Explanation:

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 17.136; *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.234:

> *ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi*
> *na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ*
> *sevonmukhe hi jihvādau*
> *svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*

Translation: Therefore material senses cannot appreciate Kṛṣṇa's holy name, form, qualities and pastimes. When a conditioned soul is awakened to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and renders service by using his tongue to chant the Lord's holy name and taste the remnants of the Lord's food, the tongue is purified, and one gradually comes to understand who Kṛṣṇa really is.

By Nārāyaṇī-devī dāsī:

Purification of consciousness, realization, surrender, and devotion of *bhakti* beyond *sattva* is necessary to understand *śāstra*. It is possible to lay out a process of hermeneutical reasoning in order to get the intended meaning of *śāstra* and *guru*. Such systems are, indeed, part of the Vedic tradition. But to be able to extract from the *śāstra* the proper meaning it is not enough to be equipped with various hermeneutical tools and techniques. The main tool in this process is the appropriate engagement of one's consciousness. If one's consciousness doesn't attune to the same wavelength, so to speak, in which *śāstra* broadcasts, one will be unable to grasp its meaning.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda states in Chapter 23 of *Teachings of Lord Caitanya:*

> Knowledge is information gathered from the scriptures, and science is practical realization of that knowledge. Knowledge is scientific when it is gathered from the scriptures through the bona fide spiritual master, but when it is interpreted by speculation, it is mental concoction. By scientifically understanding the scriptural information through the bona fide spiritual master, one learns, by one's own realization, the truths of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Ādi* 7.41:

> Śrīla Vyāsadeva compiled *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as a commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is *bhāṣyo 'yaṁ brahma-sūtrāṇām*; in other words, all the *Vedānta* philosophy in the aphorisms of the *Brahma-sūtra* is thoroughly described in the pages of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Thus the factual propounder of *Vedānta* philosophy is a Kṛṣṇa conscious person who always engages in reading and understanding the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and teaching the purport of these books to the entire world.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 22.118:

> One should not partially study a book just to pose oneself as a great scholar by being able to refer to scriptures. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we have therefore limited our study of the Vedic literatures to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. These four works are sufficient for preaching purposes. They are adequate for the understanding of the philosophy and the spreading of missionary activities all over the world. If one studies a particular book, he must do so thoroughly. That is the principle. By thoroughly studying a limited number of books, one can understand the philosophy.

18. Realization requires virtue, personal transformation, and the assimilation of knowledge by experience

Evidence and Explanation:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.2:

> **tasmād guruṁ prapadyeta**
> **jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam**
> **śābde pare ca niṣṇātaṁ**
> **brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam**

> **Translation:** Therefore any person who seriously desires real happiness must seek a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of the bona fide guru is that he has realized the conclusions of the scriptures by deliberation and is able to convince others of these conclusions. Such great personalities, who have taken shelter of the Supreme.

Godhead, leaving aside all material considerations, should be understood to be bona fide spiritual masters.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.4.5, purport:

> The practical experience of Maharaja Pariksit is disclosed herein, revealing that transcendental topics of the Lord act like injections when received by the sincere devotee from a person who is perfectly uncontaminated by material tinges. In other words, reception of the messages of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from professional men, heard by a *karma-kāṇḍiya* audience, never acts miraculously as stated here. Devotional hearing of the messages of the Lord is not like hearing ordinary topics; therefore the action will be felt by the sincere hearer by experience of the gradual disappearance of ignorance.

Note: this quote also could be used as evidence for Principle 17.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.11, purport:

> Because India has failed in her duty by neglecting this responsible work, there is so much quarrel and trouble all over the world. We are confident that if the transcendental message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is received only by the leading

men of the world, certainly there will be a change of heart, and naturally the people in general will follow them. The mass of people in general are tools in the hands of the modern politicians and leaders of the people. If there is a change of heart of the leaders only, certainly there will be a radical change in the atmosphere of the world.

19. The highest truth aims at the welfare of all

Evidence and Explanation:

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 20.122 states that all "*Veda-Purāṇa*" is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's mercy to the conditioned *jīvas:*

māyā-mugdha jīvera nāhi svataḥ kṛṣṇa-jñāna
jīvere kṛpāya kailā kṛṣṇa veda-purāṇa

Translation: The conditioned soul cannot revive his Kṛṣṇa consciousness by his own effort. But out of causeless mercy, Lord Kṛṣṇa compiled the Vedic literature and its supplements, the *Purāṇas.*

Note: this verse is also quoted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* Introduction.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.19.37–38:

satyaṁ ca sama-darśanam
anyac ca sūnṛtā vāṇī

Translation: Truthfulness means to speak the truth in a pleasing way, as declared by great sages.

In the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

Truthfulness means that one should speak in a pleasing way so that there will be a beneficial effect. If one becomes attached to pointing out the faults of others in the name of truth, then such faultfinding will not be appreciated by saintly persons. The bona fide spiritual master speaks the truth in such a way that people can elevate themselves to the spiritual platform, and one should learn this art of truthfulness.

Vedānta-sūtra 2.1.34:

vaiṣamya-nairghṛṇye na sāpekṣatvāt tathā hi darśayati

Translation: [The Absolute Truth, the Lord is] not unfair and not cruel, because of having consideration [to every person's actions]. Thus indeed [all scripture] demonstrates.

Bhagavad-gītā 3.29:

> *prakṛter guṇa-sammūḍhāḥ*
> *sajjante guṇa-karmasu*
> *tān akṛtsna-vido mandān*
> *kṛtsna-vin na vicālayet*

> **Translation:** Bewildered by the modes of material nature, the ignorant fully engage themselves in material activities and become attached. But the wise should not unsettle them, although these duties are inferior due to the performers' lack of knowledge.

In the purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> Men who are ignorant cannot appreciate activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and therefore Lord Kṛṣṇa advises us not to disturb them and simply waste valuable time. But the devotees of the Lord are more kind than the Lord because they understand the purpose of the Lord. Consequently they undertake all kinds of risks, even to the point of approaching ignorant men to try to engage them in the acts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which are absolutely necessary for the human being.

Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu 1.1.27:

> The wise explain that there are four types of auspiciousness (*śubha*): affection for all living entities, being attractive to all living entities, possession of good qualities, and happiness, as well as other items.

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary to this verse:

> *Prīṇana* or affection for the world means that he works for the world's benefit. The whole world is also attached to this person who works for the benefit of all beings. Though these two items are actually included within "possession of good qualities," the third type of *śubha,* they are listed separately to show their superiority above all other qualities. Or, though these two qualities may be included in the attainment of good qualities, they should not be relegated to the status of mere constituents. Rather they are the very *svarūpa,* the very essence of all good qualities. Therefore, they should be listed separately.

From *Śrī Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta* by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura*,* Chapter 3, translated by Bhānu Swāmī:

> When a person takes shelter of *bhakti*, mercy towards all living entities is a natural quality. Compassion does not have a separate existence from *bhakti*. The quality which, when offered to the Lord, is called *bhakti* or *prema*, becomes friendship, compassion and indifference when directed towards other living beings. It is a feeling that is inherent in the eternal nature of the soul. In the spiritual realm, this quality manifests only as friendship but in the material world it manifests as friendship towards devotees, mercy towards the innocent and indifference towards the offenders. These are but different aspects of the same compassion. In the conditioned state this compassion is extremely stunted. It starts with affection for the individual body, then widens to include attachment to household, then to *varṇa* [community], then to countrymen. Expanding, it includes the human beings

of the whole world. Compassion becomes complete when it is directed towards all living entities. Patriotism is but an aspect of this sentiment in relation to a country. Philanthropy is compassion directed towards all humanity. Vaiṣṇavas should not be limited by these sentiments. They have compassion for all living entities, not wanting to cause harm to any of them.

Note: the same three verses that start this section are also quoted as evidence for Tool 33.

20. Texts are understood according to the mood and intent of the author/speaker

Evidence and Explanation:

In *Tattva-sandarbha* 29–31, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī bases his analysis on examining the intent and realization of Śrīla Vyāsadeva and Sukadeva Gosvāmī.

In the beginning of *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha, Tattva-sandarbha* 6 Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says this work is meant for those whose chief desire is worship of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and all others would be cursed.

Sarva-saṁvādini by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī:

> Prabhākara, the founder of one of the two main branches of the Mīmāṁsā school, explains that each word expresses its meaning only when combined with the other words of a sentence. And also contributing to the meaning of a sentence is the *tātparya,* the intention of the speaker. The statement "Bring the *saindhava,*" for example, is ambiguous because the word *saindhava* can mean either "salt" or "a horse from the Sindh province." But from the context of this sentence we should be able to know which of the two meanings the speaker intended.

What follows is from a lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.1, New York, July 13, 1966:

> I'll give you one practical example how things are misinterpreted. Now, in India, there was a great dramatist. He was known as Mr. D.L. Raya. He wrote one book which is called Shah Jahan. Now this Shah Jahan, theme of this book is that Aurangzeb, the son of Shah Jahan, he was the second son of Shah Jahan, Emperor Shah Jahan, and he made a clique. He killed his elder brother, he killed his younger brother, and he arrested his own father in the fort, and he manipulated things in such a way, politician, and he became the king, emperor, king, emperor. Now, the whole activities of that book is the Aurangzeb's activities.

> So one friend of the author, D.L. Raya, he inquired from D.L. Raya that "Mr. Raya, you have written this book and this book is full of the activities of Aurangzeb. Now, why you have made the hero Shah Jahan? Shah Jahan is on the background. The old man is arrested in the fort of Agra. He is sitting there. Why you have named it Shah Jahan?" Now, just see the purpose of the author.

> The author replied, "Yes, I have purposely named this book Shah Jahan because actually the hero is Shah Jahan."

The friend inquired, "Why?"

"Now, because the whole activities was being done by Aurangzeb, but the effect was being enjoyed and suffered by Shah Jahan. Shah Jahan was the father; he could not tolerate that his eldest son was killed, his youngest son was killed, and he was arrested. This was a political maneuver by Aurangzeb. But actually, the hero, the sufferer, was the Shah Jahan, Emperor Shah Jahan."

Now, just see. The mind of the author was disclosed by the author. Nobody could interpret what was the intention.

Similarly, the intention of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is known by Kṛṣṇa, the author. So we have to understand the intention of the author. We cannot exact any meaning by our own scholarship which is different from the intention of the author. So anyone who is not in the disciplic succession, he cannot understand the intention of Kṛṣṇa, why this *Bhagavad-gītā*, why this yoga was imparted.

21. We understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements by his application of them in relation to his mood and mission

Evidence and Explanation:

Note: see the explanation for Tool 36 for examples from Śrīla Prabhupāda that relate to this principle.

By Nārāyaṇī-devī dāsī:

Examples in *śāstra* of this principle.

Nārada's preaching strategies according to time, place, circumstances

With each of his disciples Nārada used a different technique to inspire them in devotional service according to time, place and circumstance. Devotional service is a dynamic activity, and the expert devotees can find out exciting ways to inject it into the dull brains of the materialistic population.

1) Nārada instructs Vyāsa

After Vyāsadeva wrote the *Vedas*, *Vedānta-sūtra*, *Mahābhārata*, etc. he was feeling unsatisfied at heart. Then his guru Nārada came and chastised him.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.15:

The people in general are naturally inclined to enjoy, and you have encouraged them in that way in the name of religion. This is verily condemned and is quite unreasonable. Because they are guided under your instructions, they will accept such activities in the name of religion and will hardly care for prohibitions.

Nārada instructed Vyāsa to describe the pastimes of the Lord for the benefit of everyone in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.16:

vicakṣaṇo 'syārhati vedituṁ vibhor
ananta-pārasya nivṛttitaḥ sukham
pravartamānasya guṇair anātmanas
tato bhavān darśaya ceṣṭitaṁ vibhoḥ

Translation: The Supreme Lord is unlimited. Only a very expert personality, retired from the activities of material happiness, deserves to understand this knowledge of spiritual values. Therefore those who are not so well situated, due to material attachment, should be shown the ways of transcendental realization, by Your Goodness, through descriptions of the transcendental activities of the Supreme Lord.

Thus Vyāsa was inspired by Nārada to write *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.7.6:

anarthopaśamaṁ sākṣād
bhakti-yogam adhokṣaje
lokasyājānato vidvāṁś
cakre sātvata-saṁhitām

Translation: The material miseries of the living entity, which are superfluous to him, can be directly mitigated by the linking process of devotional service. But the mass of people do not know this, and therefore the learned Vyāsadeva compiled this Vedic literature, which is in relation to the Supreme Truth.

2) Dhruva Maharaja gets reverse psychology

With Dhruva, a small child, Nārada used reverse psychology. Usually, if you tell a child to do something he will say "no!" Therefore, sometimes you must tell him to do the opposite thing.

When Dhruva went to the forest to perform austerities Nārada told Dhruva: You are only a little boy, attached to sports and games. Why are you so affected by words insulting your honor? You should know that dissatisfaction is due to the illusory energy, which gives you karma according to your previous life. These austerities in the forest are very difficult for anyone to perform, therefore, I think it's better that you just go home. When you grow up, you can think of an austere life. One should be satisfied in happiness and distress.

Actually, Nārada was testing Dhruva's determination. When Dhruva firmly rejected Nārada's advice, then Nārada instructed him in yoga.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also used reverse psychology. When some teenagers were revving up their motorbikes near the temple in New Vrindavan a disciple suggested that they tell them to stop it. Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that if we tell them to stop then they will do it even more.

3) King Prācīnabarhi sees future reactions

A king in the line of Dhruva, King Prācīnabarhi, was too attached to performing animal sacrifices. So Nārada showed him to the sky as described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.25.8:

ete tvāṁ sampratīkṣante
smaranto vaiśasaṁ tava
samparetam ayaḥ-kūṭaiś
chindanty utthita-manyavaḥ

Translation: All these animals are awaiting your death so that they can avenge the injuries you have inflicted upon them. After you die, they will angrily pierce your body with iron horns.

In the purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

Nārada Muni wanted to convince the King that overindulgence in animal sacrifice is risky because as soon as there is a small discrepancy in the execution of such a sacrifice, the slaughtered animal may not be promoted to a human form of life. Consequently, the person performing sacrifice will be responsible for the death of the animal, just as much as a murderer is responsible for killing another man.

4) Pracetas hear pure devotional service

In contrast to their father, King Prācīnabarhi's sons, the Pracetas, were pure devotees. Therefore, Nārada instructed them in pure devotional service, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.31.19:

dayayā sarva-bhūteṣu
santuṣṭyā yena kena vā
sarvendriyopaśāntyā ca
tuṣyaty āśu janārdanaḥ

Translation: By showing mercy to all living entities, being satisfied somehow or other, and controlling the senses from sense enjoyment, one can very quickly satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Janārdana.

In the purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

Everyone can benefit spiritually by the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. When the transcendental vibration of Hare Kṛṣṇa is sounded, even the trees, animals and insects benefit. Thus when one chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* loudly, he actually shows mercy to all living entities. To spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement throughout the world, the devotees should be satisfied in all conditions.

Śrīla Prabhupāda showed concern for all living entities, including the trees of Juhu beach and the insects. He wanted to deliver all living entities back to home, back to Godhead.

5) Haryaśvas hear pure philosophy

Nārada saw them so purified, they could easily go back to Godhead, so he preached philosophy and they accepted. Nārada Muni described to the boys their ultimate goal of life and advised them not to become ordinary *karmīs* to beget children. Thus all the sons of Dakṣa became enlightened and left, never to return.

6) Savalāśvas told to follow their brothers

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.5.30: O sons of Dakṣa, please hear my words of instruction attentively. You are all very affectionate to your elder brothers, the Haryaśvas. Therefore you should follow their path.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.5.30, purport:

> Nārada Muni encouraged Prajāpati Dakṣa's second group of sons by awakening their natural affinity for their brothers. He urged them to follow their older brothers if they were at all affectionate toward them. Family affection is very strong, and therefore Nārada Muni followed this tactic of reminding them of their family relationship with the Haryaśvas.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also used this tactic by bringing the Americans to India at a time when many Indians wanted to follow the American culture and were hoping to go to the USA. He brought American Vaiṣṇavas to India because he wanted the Indians to follow the Americans and also become Vaiṣṇavas.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said in *Teachings of Queen Kunti* 9:

> For example, when these American devotees go to India, the Indian people are surprised to see that Americans have become so mad after God. Many Indians strive to imitate the materialistic life of the West, but when they see Americans dancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then they realize that this is what is actually worthy of being followed.

7) After Citraketu's son dies, Nārada enlightens him

Nārada waited until the death of his son to enlighten him about the temporary nature of relationships in this world. Aṅgirā and Nārada Ṛṣi came to relieve the King from excessive lamentation by instructing him about the spiritual significance of life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.15, Summary:

> The great saints Aṅgirā and Nārada explained that the relationship between father and son is not factual; it is simply a representation of the illusory energy. The relationship did not exist before, nor will it stay in the future. By the arrangement of time, the relationship exists only in the present. One should not lament for temporary relationships … As the King listened to the great sages, he was relieved from his false lamentation … Self-realization means spiritual realization of one's relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Such realization ends one's miserable material life.

Nārada tried the same with Dakṣa when Dakṣa was lamenting loss of sons but Dakṣa did not accept.

8) With Mṛgāri, Nārada used a gradual approach

He did not immediately instruct him in devotional service, or even that he was not the body, but simply begged him not to half kill animals, but kill them completely. That was Nārada's first instruction. When Mṛgāri was astonished, then Nārada showed him the animals who were ready to attack him as soon as he died. It was not until Mṛgāri surrendered that Nārada told him; Now break your bow and engage in devotional service, and I will supply all your necessities.

Other examples

Śrīla Prabhupāda used a gradual approach in the beginning with Śyāmasundara Dāsa. In the early days of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked one of his first disciples, Śyāmasundara Dāsa, an expert craftsman, to carve a deity of Lord Jagannātha from wood. At one point Śrīla Prabhupāda came to see how the work was progressing. When he entered the room, he saw a pack of cigarettes sitting on Lord Jagannātha's head.

BTG 43-04 2009, Cultivating an Empathetic Heart by Arcana Siddhi dāsī:

> "It's all right," Śrīla Prabhupāda told his embarrassed, contrite disciple.
>
> Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't need to become addicted to cigarettes to understand his disciple's plight. He instructed Śyāmasundara to reduce by one the number of cigarettes he smoked each day until the habit was gone.

The first initiation ever at Second Avenue 26, described in *Śrīla Prabhupāda Līlāmṛta,* Volume 2, by Satsvarūpa dās Gosvāmi:

> No one was asked to shave his head or even cut his hair or change his dress. No one offered Śrīla Prabhupāda the traditional *guru-dakṣinā*. Hardly anyone even relieved him of his chores, so Swāmījī himself had to do most of the cooking and other preparations for the initiation. He was perfectly aware of the mentality of his boys, and he didn't try to force anything on anyone. Some of the initiates didn't know until after the initiation, when they had inquired, that the four rules—no meat-eating, no illicit sex, no intoxication, and no gambling—were mandatory for all disciples. When they asked Śrīla Prabhupāda after initiation, Śrīla Prabhupāda's reply then was, "I am very glad that you are finally asking me that."

22. Truth is conveyed, with logic, reason and exemplary character, through the system of *paramparā*

Evidence and Explanation:

Bhagavad-gītā 4.34:

> *tad viddhi praṇipātena*
> *paripraśnena sevayā*
> *upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ*
> *jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

Translation: Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.

Bhagavad-gītā 4.2:

> *evaṁ paramparā-prāptam*
> *imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ*
> *sa kāleneha mahatā*
> *yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa*

Translation: This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way. But in course of time the succession was broken, and therefore the science as it is appears to be lost.

Bhagavad-gītā, Introduction:

He tells Arjuna that He is relating this supreme secret to him because Arjuna is His devotee and His friend. The purport of this is that *Bhagavad-gītā* is a treatise which is especially meant for the devotee of the Lord. There are three classes of transcendentalists, namely the *jñānī*, the *yogī* and the *bhakta*, or the impersonalist, the meditator and the devotee. Here the Lord clearly tells Arjuna that He is making him the first receiver of a new *paramparā* (disciplic succession) because the old succession was broken. It was the Lord's wish, therefore, to establish another *paramparā* in the same line of thought that was coming down from the sun-god to others, and it was His wish that His teaching be distributed anew by Arjuna. He wanted Arjuna to become the authority in understanding the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.14.2 as in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.22.24, purport:

Trying to advance in spiritual life outside the disciplic succession is simply ludicrous. It is said, therefore, *ācāryavān puruṣo veda*: one who follows the disciplic succession of *ācāryas* knows things as they are.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Antya* 4.102:

Some behave very well but do not preach the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whereas others preach but do not behave properly.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Antya* 4.103:

You simultaneously perform both duties in relation to the holy name by your personal behavior and by your preaching. Therefore you are the spiritual master of the entire world, for you are the most advanced devotee in the world.

23. *Paramparā* is perpetuated through discernment of meaning more than mere repetition of words

Evidence and Explanation:

Bhagavad-gītā 4.34, purport:

In this verse, both blind following and absurd inquiries are condemned. Not only should one hear submissively from the spiritual master, but one must also get a clear understanding from him, in submission and service and inquiries.

Bhagavad-gītā 17.2, purport:

The conclusion is that blind faith in a particular mode of nature cannot help a person become elevated to the perfectional stage. One has to consider things carefully, with intelligence, in the association of a bona fide spiritual master. Thus one can change his position to a higher mode of nature.

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.39 – 5.3, New York, August 24, 1966:

But faith should not be blind. Blind faith is useless. Now we have already discussed that one should go to the spiritual master with surrender, inquiry and service — three things. First of all, for acquiring knowledge we have to find out the suitable person, and if we are fortunate enough to do that, then the first thing is to surrender. And after that surrender, there are questions. One must be very intelligent to put questions to the spiritual master. Without questions you cannot make progress. So blind faith is never required, nor should questions be in a mood of challenge ... Questions or answers should be just to understand. And that should be accompanied with service. This is the correct mood.

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.6.8, Vṛndāvana, November 30,1976:

What Kṛṣṇa said forty millions of years ago, or five thousand years ago, is also correct today. That is *śāstra*. Not that "So many years have passed and it has become old. Now let us reform it and put it into new way." No. You can put the same thing in a new way, but you cannot change the principle.

Lecture on Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā* 1.13, Māyāpur, April 6, 1975; emphasis added:

> So Kṛṣṇa's *upadeśa* is *Bhagavad-gītā*. He's directly giving instruction. So one who is spreading *kṛṣṇa-upadeśa*, simply repeat what is said by Kṛṣṇa, then you become *ācārya*. Not difficult at all. Everything is stated there. We have to simply repeat like parrot. *Not exactly parrot. Parrot does not understand the meaning; he simply vibrates. But you should understand the meaning also; otherwise how you can explain?* So, so we want to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Simply prepare yourself how to repeat Kṛṣṇa's instructions very nicely, without any malinterpretation. Then, in future ... Suppose you have got now ten thousand. We shall expand to hundred thousand. That is required. Then hundred thousand to million, and million to ten million.

Note: this is also quoted in Principle 24.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.6, purport:

> He should not only be freed from all such vices but must also be well versed in all revealed scriptures, or the *Vedas*. The *Purāṇas* are also parts of the *Vedas*. And histories like the *Mahābhārata* or *Rāmāyaṇa* are also parts of the *Vedas*. The *ācārya* or the *gosvāmī* must be well acquainted with all these literatures. To hear and explain them is more important than reading them. One can assimilate the knowledge of the revealed scriptures only by hearing and explaining. Hearing is called *śravaṇa*, and explaining is called *kīrtana*. The two processes of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* are of primary importance to progressive spiritual life. Only one who has properly grasped the transcendental knowledge from the right source by submissive hearing can properly explain the subject.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.4.1, purport:

> One must have full confidence in the previous *ācārya*, and at the same time one must realize the subject matter so nicely that he can present the matter for the particular circumstances in a suitable manner. The original purpose of the text must be maintained. No obscure meaning should be screwed out of it, yet it should be presented in an interesting manner for the understanding of the audience. This is called realization.

Note: more of this purport, including this excerpt, is given as evidence for Principle 24.

24. Education in *śāstra*, delivered by the self-realized teacher (guru), helps preserve disciplic succession

Evidence and Explanation:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.4.1, purport:

> In a meeting of learned men, when there are congratulations or addresses for the speaker, the qualifications of the congratulator should be as follows. He must be the leader of the house and an elderly man. He must be vastly learned also. Śrī Śaunaka Ṛṣi had all these qualifications, and thus he stood up to congratulate Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī when he expressed his desire to present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* exactly

as he heard it from Śukadeva Gosvāmī and also realized it personally. Personal realization does not mean that one should, out of vanity, attempt to show one's own learning by trying to surpass the previous *ācārya*. One must have full confidence in the previous *ācārya*, and at the same time one must realize the subject matter so nicely that he can present the matter for the particular circumstances in a suitable manner. The original purpose of the text must be maintained. No obscure meaning should be screwed out of it, yet it should be presented in an interesting manner for the understanding of the audience. This is called realization. The leader of the assembly, Śaunaka, could estimate the value of the speaker, Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī, simply by his uttering *yathādhītam* and *yathā-mati* in the previous verse, and therefore Śaunaka was very glad to congratulate him in ecstasy. No learned man should be willing to hear a person who does not represent the original *ācārya*. So the speaker and the audience were bona fide in this meeting where the *Bhāgavatam* was being recited for the second time. That should be the standard of recitation of the *Bhāgavatam*, so that its real purpose can be served and Lord Kṛṣṇa can be realized without difficulty. Unless this situation is created, *Bhāgavatam* recitation will be for ulterior purposes, and such recitation is useless labor both for the speaker and for the audience.

Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary to *Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu* 1.2.113:

In any case, this rule means that one should not accept unqualified disciples. This is because we see examples of Nārada and others taking disciples, though they were renounced. If the rule was literally followed, and no disciples were made, then the *sampradāya* would be destroyed because there would no lineage. Consequently, there would be an appearance of false knowledge. Thus, the rule that a devotee should not be attached to making disciples actually means that the devotee should not accept unqualified disciples in order to increase the numbers in one's *sampradāya*.

Lecture on Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā* 1.13, Māyāpur, April 6, 1975; emphasis added:

So Kṛṣṇa's *upadeśa* is *Bhagavad-gītā*. He's directly giving instruction. So one who is spreading *kṛṣṇa-upadeśa*, simply repeat what is said by Kṛṣṇa, then you become *ācārya*. Not difficult at all. Everything is stated there. We have to simply repeat like parrot. *Not exactly parrot. Parrot does not understand the meaning; he simply vibrates. But you should understand the meaning also; otherwise how you can explain?* So, so we want to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Simply prepare yourself how to repeat Kṛṣṇa's instructions very nicely, without any malinterpretation. Then, in future... Suppose you have got now ten thousand. We shall expand to hundred thousand. That is required. Then hundred thousand to million, and million to ten million.

Note: this lecture is also quoted as evidence for Principle 23.

Devotional Qualities for Hermeneutics

1. Humility and Service Mode

Evidence:

Bhagavad-gītā 4.34:

> **tad viddhi praṇipātena**
> **paripraśnena sevayā**
> **upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ**
> **jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ**

Translation: Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.

Teaching of Lord Caitanya 3: Teachings to Sanātana Gosvāmī:

The Lord was pleased by Sanātana's submissive behavior, and He replied, "You have already been blessed by Lord Kṛṣṇa, and therefore you know everything and are free from all the miseries of material existence. Yet even though due to your Kṛṣṇa consciousness you have naturally achieved the grace of Kṛṣṇa and are thus already conversant with everything, because you are a humble devotee you are asking Me to confirm what you have already realized. This is very nice." These are the characteristics of a true devotee. In the *Nāradīya Purāṇa* it is said that by the grace of the Lord one who is very serious about developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness has his desire to understand Kṛṣṇa fulfilled very soon.

Explanation:

By Chaitanya Charaṇ Dāsa:

In the bhakti tradition, knowledge is understood to be a product not just of intelligence, but primarily of mercy. Present throughout our sacred texts are prayers seeking blessings of Kṛṣṇa and the gurus so that the speakers can glorify Kṛṣṇa adequately. Whenever the *ācāryas* make any contribution to the body of devotional knowledge by writing books, they begin by seeking blessings. The *Bhagavad-gītā* 10.10-11 indicates that knowledge results from Kṛṣṇa's guidance and grace that is bestowed on those who are favourably, devotionally disposed toward him.

Our purpose in speaking and writing is not to establish our own intellectual superiority over others but to become a transmitter, a via media, for the wisdom and grace coming down from Kṛṣṇa through the tradition to enter into us and enter through us into our audience. Service attitude and humility can help us to access grace.

Service attitude means that we study and share scriptural wisdom in a mood of carrying on the mission and message of our great predecessor saints.

Śrīla Prabhupāda states in his lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.1, Montreal, August 24, 1968:

> By service attitude. *Svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*. [*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.234] The name, form, quality, associates, when we are in service attitude, they become revealed to us.

Bhagavad-gītā 13.8–12, purport:

> Humility means that we acknowledge our finitude and fallibility – and with that awareness, we seek understanding to the best of our capacity. When discussing the import of scripture, our purpose is not to be honoured for proving ourselves right. Śrīla Prabhupāda states, "Humility means that one should not be anxious to have the satisfaction of being honored by others."

Service attitude connects us with our tradition so that grace can flow to us. And humility disconnects us from our ego so that our resistance to that grace decreases; thus grace can flow freely into our heart and through our heart into the hearts of others.

By SAC collaboratively:

Before approaching any *sāstra*, one should first of all check what are the motives he or she has. *Śāstras* are meant to help living entities to gradually achieve loving devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They themselves are non-different from Him. Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.11: *ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham*. Any motives caused by the false ego will obscure the purity of *bhakti*, and Kṛṣṇa won't bestow His full mercy on such a devotee. The same is applicable for *śāstras*, especially for *Śrimad-Bhāgavatam*. It is best to approach *Bhāgavatam* for guidance as to how to perform pure devotional service. Thus, *Bhāgavatam* acts as a guru for the sincere disciple.

Śrīla Sanatana Goswamī in his *Kṛṣṇa-lila-stava* 414–416, translated by Gopīparānadhana Dāsa, therefore says:

> *paramānanda-pāṭhāya*
> *prema-varṣy-akṣarāya te*
> *sarvadā sarva-sevyāya*
> *śrī-kṛṣṇāya namo 'stu me*

> *parama*—supreme; *ānanda*—bliss; *pāṭhāya*—whose reading; *prema*—pure love; *varṣi*—raining down; *akṣarāya*—whose syllables; *te*—to You; *sarvadā*—always; *sarv*—by all; *sevyāya*—to be served; *śrī-kṛṣṇāya*—to Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *namaḥ*—obeisances; *astu*—let there be; *me*—my.

> **Translation:** I bow down to You [O *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*], who are supremely blissful to read. Your every syllable pours down a flood of *prema*. You can always be served by everyone. You are Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself.

> *mad-eka-bandho mat-saṅgin*
> *mad-guro man-mahā-dhana*
> *man-nistāraka mad-bhāgya*
> *mad-ānanda namo 'stu te*

mat—my; *eka*—only one; *bandho*—O friend; *mat*—my; *saṅgin*—O constant companion; *mat*—my; *guro*—O spiritual master; *mat*—my; *mahā-dhana*—O great wealth; *mat*—my; *nistāraka*—O savior; *mat*—my; *bhāgya*—O good fortune; *mat*—my; *ānanda*—O source of ecstasy; *namaḥ*—obeisances; *astu*—let there be; *te*—unto You.

Translation: My only friend, my constant companion, my spiritual master, my great wealth! My savior, my good fortune, my source of ecstasy, I bow down to You.

<div align="center">

asādhu-sādhutā-dāyinn
ati-nīcoccatā-kara
hā na muñca kadācin mām
premṇā hṛt-kaṇṭhayoḥ sphura

</div>

asādhu—to the unsaintly; *sādhutā*—of saintliness; *dāyin*—O giver; *ati-nīca*—of the most fallen; *uccatā-kara*—O exalter; *hā*—oh; *na*—please do not; *muñca*—leave; *kadācit*—ever; *mām*—me; *premṇā*—with pure love; *hṛt*—in my heart; *kaṇṭhayoḥ*--and throat; *sphura*--please manifest.

Translation: O bestower of saintliness to the unsaintly, O exalter of the most fallen, please never leave me. Always appear in my heart and my voice with pure love.

That is the first understanding of the service mood — to study how to perform devotional service. The second is to study with the attitude that study itself is a service. How to do it practically can be deduced from Lord Kṛṣṇa's statement in the *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.34, *tad viddhi praṇipātena…* where He describes three ways a disciple should act towards his spiritual master: *praṇipāt* (approaching), *paripraśna* (inquiring submissively), *sevā* (rendering service). One can apply the same principles to the *śāstras* – approach them with the desire to understand Kṛṣṇa and serve Him, to accept śāstric conclusions as the highest truth, and to serve those instructions. The third principle may include service directly and indirectly connected to producing and distributing books, explaining their meaning to others, respectfully taking care of them, praising them, and so on.

Still another meaning is to study *śāstras* as a service to guru, having received the order to do so from him, and always remembering that order. Then there are more chances that Supreme Lord will bestow His mercy, as is explained by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa in his *Govinda-bhāṣya* commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras* 3.3.51, wherein he quotes from the *Śāṇḍilya-smṛti* as follows:

<div align="center">

siddhir bhavati vā neti saṁśayo 'cyuta sevinām
niḥsaṁśayas tu tad bhakta paricaryāratātmanām
kevalaṁ bhagavat-pāda-sevayā vimalaṁ manaḥ
na jāyate yathā nityaṁ tad bhakta-caraṇārcanāt

</div>

Translation: One may doubt whether the servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead will attain perfection, but there is absolutely no doubt that those who are attached to serving His devotees will attain perfection. One's mind is not as fully purified by serving the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord as it is by serving the feet of His devotees.

Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has also written in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi* 1.20-21:

> In the beginning of this narration, simply by remembering the spiritual master, the devotees of the Lord, and the Personality of Godhead, I have invoked their benedictions.

> Such remembrance destroys all difficulties and very easily enables one to fulfil his own desires.

Moreover, the service attitude in studying *śāstras* should include genuine humility. Śrīla Sanatana Gosvāmī writes in his *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatamṛta* 3.5.222 about the true nature of humility:

> *yenāsādhāraṇāśaktā-*
> *dhama-buddhiḥ sadātmani*
> *sarvotkarṣānvite 'pi syād*
> *budhais tad dainyam iṣyate*

> *yena*—by which; *asādhāraṇa*—exceptional; *aśakta*—of being incapable; *adhama*—and fallen; *buddhiḥ*—the mentality; *sadā*—always; *ātmani*—in oneself; *sarva*—with all; *utkarṣa*—excellences; *anvite*—endowed; *api*—even; *syāt*—is; *budhaiḥ*—by the wise men; *tat*—that; *dainyam*—utter humility; *iṣyate*—is called.

> **Translation:** Wise men define *dainya* as the state in which one always thinks oneself exceptionally incapable and low, even when endowed with all excellences.

With regard to studying *śāstras*, humility manifests as the internal convinction that one has so much more to understand and put into practice, regardless of how much one has already understood and realized. As soon as one thinks oneself possessing the full understanding of *śāstras*, that pride will block his or her further understanding.

As stated in the *Kena Upaniṣad 2.3*:

> *yasyāmataṁ tasya mataṁ*
> *mataṁ yasya na veda saḥ*
> *avijñātaṁ vijānatāṁ*
> *vijñātam avijānatām*

> **Translation:** Whoever denies having any opinion of his own about the Supreme Truth is correct in his opinion, whereas one who has his own opinion about the Supreme does not know Him. He is unknown to those who claim to know Him, and can only be known by those who do not claim to know Him.

Similar to the Supreme Lord Himself, the *śāstras* are also unlimited and impossible to understand.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.21.36 itself says:

> *śabda-brahma su-durbodhaṁ*
> *prāṇendriya-mano-mayam*
> *ananta-pāraṁ gambhīraṁ*
> *durvigāhyaṁ samudra-vat*

śabda-brahma—the transcendental sound of the *Vedas*; *su-durbodham*—extremely difficult to comprehend; *prāṇa*—of the vital air; *indriya*—senses; *manaḥ*—and mind; *mayam*—manifesting on the different levels; *ananta-pāram*—without limit; *gambhīram*—deep; *durvigāhyam*—unfathomable; *samudra-vat*—like the ocean.

Translation: The transcendental sound of the *Vedas* is very difficult to comprehend and manifests on different levels within the *prāṇa*, senses and mind. This Vedic sound is unlimited, very deep and unfathomable, just like the ocean.

Putting oneself in a humble position in front of *sāstras* inspires one to pray for the mercy of Guru and Kṛṣṇa. By their mercy, one becomes able to understand what was impossible to understand before.

2. Fidelity to Text and Tradition

Evidence:

By SAC collaboratively:

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23:

> Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.

Sārvabhauma changed *mukti-pade* to *bhakti-pade*, saying the following.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 6.263:

> The awakening of pure love of Godhead, which is the result of devotional service, far surpasses liberation from material bondage. For those averse to devotional service, merging into the Brahman effulgence is a kind of punishment.

However, Lord Caitanya was not pleased by Sārvabhauma wanting to change the words of *Bhāgavatam*. The Lord explained to Sārvabhauma that the word '*mukti-pade*' has other meanings, different from "merging with the Supreme." It may directly refer to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who gives all kinds of liberation or to giving up all material coverings and conditioning and being situated in one's original position as a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya*, Chapter 6, Summary:

> [Sārvabhauma] Bhaṭṭācārya wanted to change the reading of the *tat te 'nukampām* verse [SB 10.14.8] because he did not like the word *mukti-pada* [the position of liberation]. He wanted to substitute the word *bhakti-pada* [the position of devotional service]. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu advised Sārvabhauma not to change

the reading of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* because *mukti-pada* indicated the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Explanation:

By Brijbāsī Dāsa:

In śāstric exegesis, fidelity to the text itself and to tradition is essential. First we shall examine examples of not being faithful to the text.

Fidelity to text

Lack of fidelity to text may mean changing the text to suit one's motives (as a rule, ulterior, but sometimes with good intentions) or interpreting the text contrary to its clear meaning. Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya may be given as an example of the first type. Once after being converted by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu into a Vaiṣṇava, Sārvabhauma with all good intentions changed one word in the well-known verse.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.8:

> *tat te 'nukampāṁ su-samīkṣamāṇo*
> *bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtaṁ vipākam*
> *hṛd-vāg-vapurbhir vidadhan namas te*
> *jīveta yo mukti-pade sa dāya-bhāk*

> **Translation:** One who seeks Your compassion and thus tolerates all kinds of adverse conditions due to the karma of his past deeds, who engages always in Your devotional service with his mind, words and body, and who always offers obeisances unto You is certainly a bona fide candidate for liberation.

Sārvabhauma changed *mukti-pade* to *bhakti-pade*, saying the following.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 6.263:

> The awakening of pure love of Godhead, which is the result of devotional service, far surpasses liberation from material bondage. For those averse to devotional service, merging into the Brahman effulgence is a kind of punishment.

However, Lord Caitanya did not approve of this alteration by Sārvabhauma. Sārvabhauma's disgust towards impersonal liberation had prompted him to change the words of *Bhāgavatam*. The Lord explained to Sārvabhauma that the word *mukti-pade* has other meanings, different from "merging with the Supreme." It may directly refer to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who gives all kinds of liberation, or to giving up all material coverings and conditioning and being situated in one's original position as a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

An example of not being faithful to the text with questionable intentions is Dr. Radhakrishnan's commentary to *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.34, where Lord Kṛṣṇa clearly says that one has to devote oneself to Him:

<div align="center">

man-manā bhava mad-bhakto
mad-yājī māṁ namaskuru
mām evaiṣyasi yuktvaivam
ātmānaṁ mat-parāyaṇaḥ

</div>

> **Translation:** On Me fix thy mind; to Me be devoted; worship Me; revere Me; thus having disciplined thyself, with Me as thy goal, to Me shalt thou come.

Commentary by Dr. Radhakrishnan:

> It is not the personal Kṛṣṇa to whom we have to give ourselves up utterly but the Unborn, Beginningless, Eternal who speaks through Kṛṣṇa.

So, although Lord Kṛṣṇa in clear, simple, and unequivocal language says that one should dedicate oneself to Him, meaning "to Kṛṣṇa," and although Dr. Radhakrishnan also acknowledges this in his translation, he still directly contradicts the text and his translation by explaining that one should not dedicate oneself to Kṛṣṇa, but rather to someone else behind Kṛṣṇa, which is very far from what the text actually says.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly pointed out, Dr. Radhakrishnan is wrong in his absurd interpretation and is just misleading his readers by implying that there is someone who speaks through Kṛṣṇa (impersonal Brahman, who cannot speak because it is without any sense organs or other *viśeṣas*, specialities) and that there are differences within Kṛṣṇa, whereas, as Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed out, "Kṛṣṇa is absolute and that there is no difference between His inside and outside."[30]

Fidelity to tradition

Different *apa-sampradāyas* can be cited as examples of being non-faithful to the tradition. For example, certain *sahajiyās* teach that in order to understand *gopī-bhāva*, mood of the *gopīs*, one should behave as a woman even in one's ordinary dealings, maybe even dress as a woman (as *sakhī-bhekī* do and teach) and to engage in gross sexual activity in order to understand the confidential pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. However, this practice and teachings are not given by the bona fide *ācāryas* and we don't see anywhere that Mahāprabhu or His associates did this or told others to do this.

Another example may be cited from the previous history of ISKCON, when a senior leader started giving *sannyāsa* to women although doing so is not at all supported by Śrīla Prabhupāda who referenced tradition and *śāstra*.

In case of doubts regarding a śāstric statement one should refer to the tradition to see how predecessors followed that statement, if they did. *Śiṣṭācāra* (behavior of the learned cultured people) is one of the sources of the proper dharma, as confirmed by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

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[30] *The Science of Self-realization*, Part III, India's Greatest Impersonalist Meditated on Lord Kṛṣṇa and the *Bhagavad-gītā*, purport 3.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 17.184:

> ***prabhu kahe,—śruti, smṛti, yata ṛṣi-gaṇa***
> ***sabe 'eka'-mata nahe, bhinna bhinna dharma***

> **Translation:** Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied, "The *Vedas*, *Purāṇas* and great learned sages are not always in agreement with one another. Consequently there are different religious principles."

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 17.185:

> ***dharma-sthāpana-hetu sādhura vyavahāra***
> ***purī-gosāñira ye ācaraṇa, sei dharma sāra***

> **Translation:** A devotee's behavior establishes the true purpose of religious principles. The behavior of Mādhavendra Purī Gosvāmī is the essence of such religious principles.

This verdict of the Lord comes in the course of His conversation with a *brāhmaṇa* who belonged to a low-class *sanoḍiyā* community of *brāhmaṇas* and according to the rigid social customs of that time and place could not personally feed high-class *brāhmaṇas* like Lord Caitanya. However, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī saw that this *brāhmaṇa* was a great devotee and therefore accepted him as his disciple and also accepted food cooked by him. Therefore Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu followed his *parama-guru*'s example as proper dharma.

We may cite an examples of how tradition (*sādhu*) sometimes chooses not to put in practice some peculiar minor statements from the *śāstra*.

In the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 8.151 we find the following quote from the *Skanda Purāṇa*:

> ***yacchanti tulasī-śākaṁ śrutaṁ ye mādhavāgrataḥ***
> ***kalpāntaṁ viṣṇu-loke tu vasanti pitṛbhiḥ saha***

> **Translation:** Those who offer śāk made with tulasī leaves to Lord Madhava will live with their forefathers in the abode of Lord Viṣṇu until the end of the kalpa.

However, there is no record in the Gauḍīya tradition of *tulasī-śāk* being included in the standard bhoga preparations.

By Chaitanya Charaṇ Dāsa:

When studying scripture, we need to stay faithful to the original intent of the scripture. This intent is often evident from the explicit wording of the text itself or from the overall context within which the text has been spoken.

Śrīla Prabhupāda states in his preface to the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

> Our only purpose is to present this *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* in order to guide the conditioned student to the same purpose for which Kṛṣṇa descends to this planet.

Additionally, we have received the text from our tradition, which may have highlighted particular teachings within the text or may have revealed certain subtleties that may not have previously been revealed. While applying hermeneutical principles, we need to keep in mind the approach that our tradition has had to a particular text.

Through fidelity to text and tradition, we can better perceive and pursue the purpose of our predecessor *ācāryas* in engaging with that text and in expanding our tradition.

Special Note on Freedom from Offences as Part of this Quality

Offences block understanding of śāstra-sādhu-guru and proper application of that understanding in the practical life

By Sarvajña Dāsa:

In the principles of hermeneutics, there is stress upon the need of revelation for understanding śāstras and applying it in practical life, as in the following principles:

- Realization requires virtue, personal transformation, and the assimilation of knowledge by experience.

- The meaning of *śāstra* is directly revealed to those ones with full faith in guru and Kṛṣṇa.

- Knowledge is not simply a collection of correct objective information but is invariably mediated through the knower.

- *Śāstra* mercifully reciprocates with those who study it and compassionately reach out to others.

Both *śāstras* and *ācāryas*, including Śrīla Prabhupāda, speak about the danger of offences. *Aparādhas* have the potential to block the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, *sādhu* and guru. Therefore, if one commits or has committed offences, despite all the efforts and usage of various hermeneutical tools, one will never understand the meaning. Moreover, even understood knowledge will not be useful for such a person's practical application and internal transformation.

Therefore, while having problems in understanding *śāstras-sādhu-guru*, or better even before trying to use hermeneutical principles or tools, one should check if he or she intentionally or unintentionally committed any offence listed in *The Nectar of Devotion,* chapters 8-9, and try to use all the means to rectify it. The most important is to start with sincere internal repentance.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.31.13:

> *āste viśuddham avikāram akhaṇḍa-bodham*
> *ātapyamāna-hṛdaye 'vasitaṁ namāmi*

Translation: The Supreme Lord is unlimited, but He is perceived in the repentant heart. To Him I offer my respectful obeisances.

Out of all the offences, the most dangerous are Vaiṣṇava-*aparādhas*. To rectify them, one should not only repent or chant some *aparādha-śodhana* (purifying) prayers. The offender has to go to the person whom he offended, and beg forgiveness. Moreover, it's not enough to receive only formal forgiveness, called *kṣamā*. To nullify completely that aparādha, the offender should act in such a way, that the offended person pours his mercy (*anugraha)* on him, being satisfied by his mood, repentance and service attitude.

That principle is illustrated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* while describing the story of Dakṣa. He offended Lord Śiva, was punished, and begged forgiveness. But because he didn't receive Lord Siva's full mercy (*anugraha*), in his next life Dakṣa, born from Pracetās and bereft of the same power he had in his previous life, started performing severe austerities. After doing so for five and a half *manvantaras*, he finally achieved *darśan* of the Supreme Lord. Despite being on such an advanced stage of devotional service, Dakṣa asked not for pure devotion, but for the power to create progeny. With that boon, he got 10,000 sons called Haryaśvas, whom he sent to perform austerities for being able to do *karma-kāṇḍa*. When Nārada Muni liberated his 10,000 sons, Dakṣa couldn't appreciate the mercy of having sons who became pure Vaiṣṇavas and went back to Godhead. Usually if somebody becomes a pure devotee, he blesses many generations of his relatives. Instead of appreciating this, Dakṣa started thinking badly of Nārada Muni. When the same happened again with more of Dakṣa's sons, the 1,000 Savalāśvas, and Nārada Muni himself came to speak to him, Dakṣa offended him. Both our *ācāryas* and Śrīla Prabhupāda say that the reason why Dakṣa wasn't able to accept Nārada Muni's mercy and instructions was that in Dakṣa's heart there were some traces of Lord Śiva's offence committed in his previous life. Although Dakṣa knew the *śāstras*, he wasn't able to apply its teachings to make progress in his spiritual life. Instead, he used his vast knowledge to chastise Nārada Muni, his superior and his potential spiritual master.

3. Discerning Search for Truth

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.8-12, Los Angeles, November 27, 1968:

> This is the statement of authority. Now, apart from statement of authority, you have to apply your reason and arguments.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Ādi* 2.117:

> A sincere student should not neglect the discussion of such conclusions, considering them controversial, for such discussions strengthen the mind. Thus one's mind becomes attached to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Letter to Chaturbhuj, Bombay, January 21, 1972:

> The proper function of the brain or psychological activity is to understand everything through Kṛṣṇa's perspective or point-of-view, and so there is no limit to that understanding because Kṛṣṇa is unlimited, and even though it can be said that the devotee who knows Kṛṣṇa, he knows everything (15th Chapter), still, the philosophical process never stops and the devotee continues to increase his knowledge even though he knows everything. Try to understand this point, it is a very good question.

Explanation:

By Chaitanya Charaṇ Dāsa:

The *Bhagavad-gītā* 13.12 states that one of the concluding characteristics of knowledge is the philosophical search for truth.

When studying scripture, this discerning search for truth will ensure that we focus not on proving ourselves right, but on understanding what is right. It is easy to find quotes that support our own positions and to highlight those quotes, while downplaying quotes that challenge our positions. If we reduce hermeneutics to a quote-mining and quote-parading competition, we may well get the satisfaction of having proven our position, but we may have alienated ourselves from the disposition that will make us receptive for understanding the truth.

Arjuna has his position at the start of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and he gives his reasons and references to support his position. Yet he also exhibits an exemplary openness to re-examine his position when he surrenders to Kṛṣṇa and asks for guidance. When Kṛṣṇa begins by chastising Arjuna for mouthing learned words while being controlled by ignorant emotions, Arjuna doesn't take offence but hears submissively. He hears not to respond and defend his position but to understand and transform his own disposition.

4. Honest and Authentic Conversation

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.6-10, Los Angeles, December 23, 1968:

> *Anukaraṇa*, *anusaraṇa*, there are two Sanskrit words. One is imitation, and one who is following the footprints. If one tries to follow the footprints of great personalities, that is very nice, but we cannot imitate. Imitate. Imitation is dangerous.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, *Amṛta Vāṇī - Nectar of Instructions for Immortality*, 5: "imitation means posing."

Mahābhārata, *Śānti Parva*:

> That speaker, again, who, abandoning all regard for his own meaning, uses words that are of excellent sound and sense, awakens only erroneous impressions in the mind of the hearer.

Satsvarūpa Dās Gosvāmī, Life with the Perfect Master: A Personal Servant's Account, Chapter 1:

> After *kīrtana* [Śrīla Prabhupāda] asked each of us to read from the *Bhāgavatam* and then speak something according to our realization.

Explanation:

By Chaitanya Charaṇ Dāsa:

The *Bhagavad-gītā* 10.09 states that great devotees delight in discussing about Kṛṣṇa and in enlightening each other through such discussions. The significant point here is that even the enlightened souls continue to be enlightened and delight in that ongoing enlightenment. In the

hermeneutical context, this means that even if we have a right understanding about some scriptural point, we can still expand our understanding by discussing with other devotees who have understood that point from a different perspective.

Among the six ways of expressing love mentioned in the *Upadeśāmṛta,* verse 4, two relevant ones are *guhyam ākhyāti pṛcchati:* revealing one's mind in confidence, and inquiring confidentially. In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: "The life of the Kṛṣṇa conscious society is nourished by these six types of loving exchange among the members."

Many controversies and conflicts about specific scriptural points arise because of underlying hurts that may be loosely or strongly linked with those particular points. If an ethos of honest and open conversations can be established, those hurts can be brought forth and addressed, thereby avoiding many unnecessary and sometime unsavoury confrontations that only add fuel to the fire without resolving anything.

5. Openness to Change and Transformation

Teachings of Lord Caitanya, Prologue by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura:

> Mahāprabhu thereupon explained all the *sūtras* in His own way, without touching the pantheistic commentary of Śaṅkara. The keen understanding of Sārvabhauma saw the truth, beauty and harmony of the arguments in the explanations given by Caitanya and obliged him to utter that it was the first time he had found one who could explain the *Brahma-sūtras* in such a simple manner. He also admitted that the commentaries of Śaṅkara never gave such natural explanations of the *Vedānta-sūtras* as those he had obtained from Mahāprabhu.

Morning Walk, Los Angeles, May 02, 1973:

> Formerly, between two learned scholars there will be argument. If one is defeated... Just like Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya. As soon as he became defeated, he became His disciple. That's all. That was the system. Not that we go on arguing for hours, and one is defeated; still he remains the same.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.4.31:

> [Vyāsadeva reflected] This may be because I did not specifically point out the devotional service of the Lord, which is dear both to perfect beings and to the infallible Lord.

Hari Sauri Dāsa, *Transcendental Diary*, Chapter 5:

> Tentatively, I said, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, I think I have found a mistake in one of your books."

> "Oh, what is that?" he asked with mild interest.

> "Well, I was just reading the chapter about the battle between the demigods and the demons, where it says that the blood sprinkled up to the sun. In the purport you explain how this shows that the moon is further away from the earth than the

sun is. But in Text 5 it states that the battle took place on the shore of the ocean of milk and not on the earth."

Śrīla Prabhupāda reflected for a half-second, and then his face softened in acknowledgment. "Oh," he conceded. With a self-effacing smile and humble acquiescence, he said, "I was thinking, here is a good opportunity to expose the scientists. All right, you inform the BBT and have them remove it."

Explanation:

By Chaitanya Charaṇ Dāsa:

Scriptural understanding is an ongoing process of evolution of comprehension. Therefore, rather than thinking that we have all the answers, we can be open to expanding our understanding so that we see in fresher and richer light things that we thought we already knew.

The great sage Vyāsadeva, demonstrates such openness in the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Though he is profoundly learned and phenomenally dedicated, and has also been prolifically productive in terms of writing the various Vedic literatures, he still feels dissatisfied. When he suspects that his dissatisfaction is because he hasn't adequately glorified Kṛṣṇa, providence arranges for his guru Nārada Muni, to come there to guide him further. Their conversation in chapters 5 and 6 of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*'s Canto 1 is the foundation for the manifestation of that great devotional classic.

6. Benevolence and Generosity

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.19.37-38:

> Truthfulness means that one should speak in a pleasing way so that there will be a beneficial effect. If one becomes attached to pointing out the faults of others in the name of truth, then such fault-finding will not be appreciated by saintly persons. The bona fide spiritual master speaks the truth in such a way that people can elevate themselves to the spiritual platform, and one should learn this art of truthfulness.

Śrī Ṣaḍ-Gosvāmī Aṣṭakam, verse 2:

> I offer my respectful obeisances unto the six Gosvāmī s, who are very expert in scrutinisingly studying all the revealed scriptures with the aim of establishing eternal religious principles for the benefit of all human beings.

Explanation:
By Chaitanya Charaṇ Dāsa:

Whenever anyone has a position different from or opposite to ours, an uncharitable attitude would be to presume that they are deviants who are motivated by the desire to gain cheap followers and are ready to compromise on scriptural truths for such gains.

A more charitable attitude would be to consider that others may have the same sincere desire to share the scriptural message we have, but that they may have different perspectives about how to fulfil the purpose of the tradition.

Harsh speech filled with condemnation of one's opponents characterizes those of demonic nature (*Bhagavad-gītā* 16.4), whereas gentleness and an aversion to fault-finding characterize those of divine nature (*Bhagavad-gītā* 16.1–3).

Even if we can prove that we are right and even if the other party is forced to acknowledge the inadequacy or fallacy of their positions, we needn't drive their nose into the ground. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā,* Chapter 16 describes how Lord Chaitanya showed the shortcomings in the poetry of Keśava Kāśmīrī so thoroughly that the latter was stunned and silenced. When Lord Caitanya's students started laughing on seeing the great Paṇḍita's stupefaction, the Lord immediately told them to stop. Lord Caitanya defeated Keśava Kāśmīrī but didn't dishonour him; He didn't trumpet his victory and, in fact, arranged for His meeting with the Pandit to happen informally on the banks of the Ganga without any fanfare. The Lord's purpose was not to prove His superiority, but to improve the Pandita's mentality. We too can adopt a similar spirit when dealing with or even defeating those who oppose us.

By Rādhikā Ramaṇa Dāsa:

Generosity is a multivalent and profound virtue. Here are two ways in which it applies to hermeneutics.

Generosity toward others

In the second verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Prabhupāda defines knowledge as "reality distinguished from illusion for the welfare of all (*śivadam*)." In other words, it is not enough for something to be true; it must also benefit others. This mood—studying *śāstra* with the goal of uplifting others—is an essential virtue for a Vaiṣṇava. A Vaiṣṇava explains *śāstra* in ways that strengthen others' faith, remove doubts on the path of *bhakti*, and bring others nearer to Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Thus Vaiṣṇava hermeneutics has a close relationship to preaching, mission, and outreach.

Generosity toward *śāstra*

Contemporary secular hermeneutics often attempts to deconstruct the subject of interpretation, picking apart the text's stated motivations and purposes, in an attempt to uncover power struggles, social conflicts, and the voices of marginalized groups. While this may be useful in certain contexts, Vaiṣṇava hermeneutics attempts to arrive at a charitable understanding of *śāstra,* an understanding that is hesitant to ascribe ulterior motives to *śāstra* that are contrary to its *siddhānta*. For example, in a conversation with Rāmānujācārya, the impersonalist Yādavācarya explains a passage from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* to mean that the Lord's eyes are reddish like rear-end of a monkey. This explanation, although grammatically plausible, is deeply painful to Rāmānujācārya who explains the word as meaning, "The Lord's eyes are reddish like a lotus flower." Thus, Rāmānujācārya provides an explanation that is generous toward *śāstra* and its ultimate *siddhānta*.

Full List of Hermeneutical Tools

Note on the use of *mīmāṁsā*

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas have their own system of interpreting *Uttara-mīmāṁsā,* i.e. *Vedānta-sūtras*.

The attitude of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas towards *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā* is summarized by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in the *Paramātma-sandarbha, Anuccheda* 105 as follows:

> *pūrva-mīmāṁsāyāḥ pūrva-pakṣatvenottara-mīmāṁsā-nirṇayottara-pakṣe'sminn*
> *avaśyāpekṣyatvāt, aviruddhāṁśe sahāyatvāt*

Translation: Since *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā* is usually the *pūrva-pakṣa* (the first position of argument), it is certainly expected to be known in order to understand the conclusions of *Uttara-mīmāṁsā*. Moreover, since *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā* is helpful in some places where it is not opposed to *Uttara-mīmāṁsā* [therefore it should be known].

For this reason, it can be easily understood that whatever parts of *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā* are unopposed to *Vedānta* are acceptable to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.

By Hari Pārṣada Dāsa:

Mīmāṁsā techniques can be engaged with if they are helpful in establishing the glory of Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti*. They are not to be engaged with in case they go against the conclusions of *bhakti*.

In some cases, the linguistic techniques specified in *karma-mīmāṁsā* are utilized by our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava authorities. For example, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu uses a *Mīmāṁsā* linguistic technique as specified in the following verse.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Ādi* 4.35:

> *'bhavet' kriyā vidhiliṅ, sei ihā kaya*
> *kartavya avaśya ei, anyathā pratyavāya*

> **Translation:** Here the use of the verb "*bhavet*" which is in the imperative mood, tells us that this certainly must be done. Noncompliance would be abandonment of duty.

Here Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is making use of a *mīmāṁsā* linguistic technique named "*śābdī bhāvanā*" which says that an instruction in the imperative mood (*vidhiliṅ*) given in *śāstra* must be followed. However, if an ISKCON devotee takes this as a general rule and tries to apply it to all Vedic statements, then there are also Vedic statements such as *śyenenābhicaran yajeta:* "A person desirous of killing his enemy should perform *Śyena-yāga* sacrifice." The term *yajeta* here is also in the same imperative mood named *vidhiliṅ.* Yet Vaiṣṇavas will not take it as an order from the *Veda* and perform this sacrifice. Even if a Vaiṣṇava is desirous of killing their enemy, they will not engage in such destructive *yajñas*, because the mood of the Vaiṣṇavas is never to avenge themselves.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.18.48:

> *tiraskṛtā vipralabdhāḥ*
> *śaptāḥ kṣiptā hatā api*
> *nāsya tat pratikurvanti*
> *tad-bhaktāḥ prabhavo 'pi hi*

Translation: The devotees of the Lord are so forbearing that even though they are defamed, cheated, cursed, disturbed, neglected or even killed, they are never inclined to avenge themselves.

Thus, the linguistic techniques of *mīmāṁsā* are useful only when they facilitate service of Kṛṣṇa or service of Kṛṣṇa's devotees, associates etc. When these principles of *mīmāṁsā* go against Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti,* then the devotees do not follow them. A verse in Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Padyāvalī* criticizes those *mīmāṁsā* philosophers who are not interested in *bhakti*.

Padyāvalī 57, composed by Mādhava Sarasvatī:

> *mīmāṁsā-rajasā malīmasa-dṛśāṁ tāvan na dhīr īsvare*
> *garvodarka-kutarka-karkaṣa-dhiyāṁ dūre 'sti vartā hareḥ*
> *jānanto 'pi na jānate śruti-sukhaṁ śrī-raṅgi-saṅgād ṛte*
> *su-svāduṁ pariveśayanty api rasam gurvī na darvī spṛśet*

Translation: Those whose eyes are blinded by the dust of the *Karma-mīmāṁsā* philosophy cannot fix their hearts on the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Their intelligence is atrophied by illogical conclusions dictated by pride, and thus they stay far away from the topics of Lord Hari. Although they study and know the *Vedas*, they cannot understand the true pleasure of knowing the *Vedas*, due to staying away from devotee association. Their condition is exactly like that great ladle which is capable of distributing sweet juices to everyone but which cannot taste the juice itself.

TOOL 1: How Does it Point to Kṛṣṇa?

Method:

Ask how the statement helps people to know, serve, and please Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His associates and explain it in that light. This method can also be used to harmonize statements by showing how each ultimately points towards Kṛṣṇa.

Evidences and Explanation:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.22.6:

> *yāsāṁ vyatikarād āsīd*
> *vikalpo vadatāṁ padam*
> *prāpte śama-dame 'pyeti*
> *vādas tam anu śāmyati*

Translation: By interaction of My energies different opinions arise. But for those who have fixed their intelligence on Me and controlled their senses, differences of perception disappear, and consequently the very cause for argument is removed.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.2.10, purport:

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead according to all the evidences of the *Vedas*. He is accepted by all *ācāryas*, including Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya.

Bhagavad-gītā 15.15:

> *sarvasya cāhaṁ hṛdi sanniviṣṭo*
> *mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanaṁ ca*
> *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo*
> *vedānta-kṛd veda-vid eva cāham*

Translation: I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. By all the *Vedas*, I am to be known. Indeed, I am the compiler of *Vedānta*, and I am the knower of the *Vedas*.

TOOL 2a: Consider *Pramāṇas* (Sources of Authority)

There are 10 sources of authority accepted by Jīva Gosvāmī:

pratyakṣa:	Direct perception
anumāna:	Inference/logic
upamāna:	Simile or analogy
śabda:	Verbal testimony/scriptural authority, spiritual sound
arthāpatti:	Postulation*
abhāva:	Absence
sambhava:	Inclusion
ārṣa:	Sagacious source/testimony of a realized sage
aitihya:	Tradition/Historical evidence
ceṣṭā:	Gestures (nonverbal communication)

Method:

Step 1: Decide to use all of these or just compress into the three cardinal ones (*pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, and *śabda*), using the expanded list if the usage of *pramāṇas* in the statement in question does not clearly fall in one of the three main ones.

Step 2: Decide which *pramāṇa*(s) is/are being used in the statement we are trying to understand.

Step 3: Give statement a weight of authority that corresponds to the contextual weight of authority of the *pramāṇas* used.

Note on postulation: When two authoritative statements appear contradictory, *arthāpatti* involves postulating a third statement that reconciles the two. One example: Devadatta does not eat during the day vs Devadatta is fat. A*rthāpatti* suggests that Devadatta must be eating at night. Another example: The Absolute Truth has no form vs The Absolute Truth has form. A*rthāpatti* suggests that The Absolute Truth has spiritual form. (hypothetical syllogism. It necessarily includes presumption/hypothesis).

TOOL 2b: Consider *Pramāṇas* (Sources of Authority)

Parokṣa, *aparokṣa*, *pratyakṣa*, *adhokṣaja*, *aprākṛta* are 5 stages of perception of reality and different methods to gain knowledge.

The first three kinds of knowledge are discussed in *Vedānta* philosophy, first of all in *Advaita Vedānta* of Śaṅkara. In that context *pratyakṣa* means "knowledge gained by material senses," while *parokṣa* refers to the "mediated knowledge" gained from *śāstra* or guru but not realized yet, theoretical knowledge. And *aparokṣa* means "realized direct knowledge" which comes after one realizes his *parokṣa* knowledge.

Our recent *ācāryas* add two more levels of knowledge and sometimes correlate them with the five stages of perception of reality. It appears that Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was the first to do this in his speech "Bhāgavata — Its Philosophy, Ethics and Theology." Therein Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura describes five methods of understanding the Absolute Truth:

> *pratyakṣa* (direct sense perception),

> *parokṣa* (associated collective perception by many persons past and present),

> *aparokṣa* (cessation from individual and collective perception, intuition or realization),

> *adhokṣaja* (external or reverential method of serving the Transcendental Object of worship),

> *aprākṛta* (internal or confidential method of service of the Absolute).

According to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura the first two methods are actually hostile to the understanding of the Absolute Truth, the third one is neutral and can be used in a proper way, while the best methods are the last two.

Method:

Step 1: Decide which *pramāṇa*(s) is/are being used in the statement we are trying to understand.

Step 2: Give statement a weight of authority that corresponds to the contextual weight of authority of the *pramāṇas* used.

Note: One can also assess one's own level of understanding, which will affect how one views one's own conclusions or confusions about the statement one is trying to assess.

Evidence and Explanation:

Jaiva-dharma, Part One: *Pramāṇa*, Evidence, and *Prameya*, Truth:

> Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes: In the first *Daśa-mūla śloka*, the *Vedas* are declared as the only *pramāṇa*. *Pratyakṣa-paramaṁ*, the evidence from direct perception, has been relegated to the position of being a subordinate *pramāṇa* of the *Vedas*. However, in the philosophical schools of *nyāya* and *sāṅkhya*, etc., there is a larger group of *pramāṇas*. Even the followers of the *Purāṇas* have enumerated at least eight *pramāṇas*: *pratyakṣa*, direct perception; *anumāna*, inference; *upamāna*, analogy; *śabda*, knowledge revealed through sound; *aitihya*, traditional knowledge; *anupalabdhi*, knowledge deduced from the non-perceived; *arthāpatti*, derivative knowledge; and *sambhava*, probability.

The *pratyakṣa*, *parokṣa* and the passive *aparokṣa* methods are collectively called the *āroha* or ascending process. The proper *aparokṣa*, *adhokṣaja* and *aprākṛta* methods constitute the *avaroha* or descending process.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes in Bhāgavata—Its Philosophy, Ethics and Theology:

> The *pratyakṣa* and *parokṣa* methods aim at *dharma* (virtue), *artha* (utility), and *kāma* (sensuous) gratification. The wrong *aparokṣa* method aims at pseudo-*mokṣa* (annihilation). The right *aparokṣa* method aims at positive transcendence. The *adhokṣaja* method aims at *Bhakti* or reverential transcendental service of the Absolute. The *aprākṛta* method has in view the realization of *prema* or Divine Love.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained these five methods in different words:

> *pratyakṣa (*direct perception),
>
> *parokṣa (*hearing from authorities),
>
> *aparokṣa (*realizing, self-realization),
>
> *adhokṣaja* (understanding what is the position of God and His situation),
>
> *aprākṛta* (highest level of understanding the position of God in His humanlike feature).

Here are two examples how Śrīla Prabhupāda explained them.

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.26.1, Bombay, December 13, 1974:

> So therefore even if you are *brāhmaṇa* status, you are not still *aprākṛta*. You are *aparokṣa*. *Aparokṣa* status, not even *adhokṣaja*. As I told you, there are different stages of knowledge, so the *brahma-jñāna* is *aparokṣa-jñāna*. *Pratyakṣa*, *parokṣa*, *aparokṣa*. And the spiritual planets, *Vaikuṇṭha* knowledge, that is *adhokṣaja*. And the knowledge about Kṛṣṇa and His planet, Goloka Vṛndāvana, that is *aprākṛta*. So we have to transcend from this *prākṛta* status of life. It is very, very high grade status, *aprākṛta*, *aprākṛta* status.

We have to approach that *adhokṣaja*. There are different stages of knowledge: *pratyakṣa*, *parokṣa*, *aparokṣa*, *adhokṣaja*, *aprākṛta*. So we have to approach the *aprākṛta*, transcendental, above the material nature. *Adhokṣaja* is almost nearer than the lower grade of knowledge, *pratyakṣa*, *parokṣāparokṣa*. They are in the *kaniṣṭha-adhikāra*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.47:

> *arcāyām eva haraye*
> *yaḥ pūjāṁ ahate*
> *na tad-bhakteṣu cānyeṣu*
> *sa bhaktaḥ prākṛtaḥ smṛtaḥ*

> **Translation:** A devotee who faithfully engages in the worship of the Deity in the temple but does not behave properly toward other devotees or people in general is called a prākṛta-bhakta, a materialistic devotee, and is considered to be in the lowest position.

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.26.35-36, Bombay, January 12, 1975:

> So *prākṛta* stage is *pratyakṣa* knowledge, direct perception; and knowledge received from *paramparā*... *Pratyakṣa*, *parokṣa*, then *aparokṣa*, self-realization, then *adhokṣaja*, *aprākṛta*. So Kṛṣṇa consciousness is *aprākṛta* knowledge. It is the topmost platform of knowing Kṛṣṇa, *aprākṛta* knowledge. So, so long we are up to the *adhokṣaja* knowledge, that is regulative principles. We have to follow the regulative principles strictly. And *aprākṛta* knowledge is for the paramahaṁsa. There is... That is called *rāga-bhakta*. In these stages, *pratyakṣa*, *parokṣa*, they are called *vidhi-bhakti*. But without *vidhi-bhakti* you cannot reach to the platform of *rāga-bhakti*, although that is our aim. *Rāgānugā*, *rāga-bhakti* is executed following the footprints of the devotees in Vṛndāvana. That is called *rāga-bhakti*. Kṛṣṇa's personal associates. Not to become directly Kṛṣṇa's personal associate, but following the footprints of Kṛṣṇa's eternal associates we can come to the stage of *rāga-bhakti*.

<h1 style="text-align:center">Can Empirical Observation Influence Scriptural Testimony?</h1>

<h2 style="text-align:center">An Exploration through Jīva Gosvāmī's *Sarva-saṁvādinī*</h2>

By Rādhikā Ramaṇa Dāsa:

Note: quotations come from *Sarva-saṁvādinī,* translated by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa[31]

The Challenge: the independence of *śabda*

Anuccheda 9, page 258:

> This one means (*śabda*) consists of statements free from the flaws of inattention, false perception, the tendency to deceive, and inadequate power of the senses. … Other reasons [for the superiority of flawless verbal testimony] are that it does not depend on any of the others (*pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, etc.); that although the others may assist it as far as they are able, this one independent means of knowing, in performing its function, is even seen to overrule the others; that a fact established by the one means (*śabda*) is irreversible by the others; and finally that it is most effective in proving facts that the powers of the other means cannot even touch.

Anuccheda 23, page 268:

> The two other principal means of knowing [inference and sense perception] are thus reduced to shadowlike subordinates.

1) What counts as *śabda*?

Anuccheda 26, page 270:

> … everyone thinks his own opinion free from delusion and the other such faults and that leaves us no way to ascertain the relative value of differing opinions.

Anuccheda 28, page 271:

> Nor should we not also accept as authoritative such scriptures as those of medical science, for they too were written under the direction of the Supreme Lord. One may argue that they are unsanctioned like other works because there is no evidence to prove their authority, but we say, No, we can accept these additional texts as scripture because they faithfully follow the *Vedas*.

2) Does *śabda* negate the authority of *pratyakṣa*?

Anuccheda 29, page 273, quoting Vācaspati Miśra:

> Nor is it reasonable to say that when scripture, which depends on its elder – sensory perception – contradicts sense perception it loses its authority or else

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must be understood in a figurative sense. This idea is unreasonable because … scripture depends on no other evidence to yield its result — valid knowledge.

On the other hand, *Anuccheda* 29, page 273, quoting Vācaspati Miśra, says:

Scriptural evidence does not defeat the ordinary authority of sensory perception, for then scripture would have no cause and would not come into being. Rather, what scripture defeats is the absolute authority of sensory truth.

Anuccheda 30, page 277:

Here [in Vācaspati Miśra's statement] the word "ordinary" [*saṁvyavahārika*] should be understood to refer to that which is relevant anywhere and everywhere. And (on the other hand) scripture is commonly known as *śāstra* because it is seen, in particular cases, to engage in overruling (other *pramāṇas*).

3) The primary domain of *śabda*

Anuccheda 23, page 267:

Verbal knowledge is most effective in understanding a subject that cannot be touched by the powers of inference – for example, a person's being haunted by a ghost.

4) A special kind of *pratyakṣa* is the foundation of *śabda*

Anuccheda 15-16, page 259-260:

Sensory perception has two more divisions—perception by those who are wise and by those who are not. Among these other means, about the perceptions of the wise there is no disagreement, because these perceptions are devoid of the human weaknesses, such as faulty judgment. Moreover, the perceptions of the wise are the basis of even verbal testimony [*śabda-pramāṇa*].

5) We know something is *śabda* because it is self-evident to human apprehension

Anuccheda 18, page 261:

Take for example the statement "You are the tenth." As soon as this verbal testimony enters the path of one's ears, it dispels any confusion that might be obscuring the right understanding that 'I am the tenth.' Obviously the statement is independent.

Anuccheda 29, page 273:

… scripture is self-evident authority (*svataḥ-siddha-pramāṇa*).

6) Pratyakṣa can influence how we interpret śabda

Anuccheda 36, page 284:

> (Objection:) But we see in those very *Vedas* such statements as "the stones float," "the ground spoke," and "the water spoke, which seem to indicate that the *Vedas* are unreliable. We answer: Such praise of stones is meant to increase the potency of stones that serve a role in a particular ritual … And we should understand that such statements as "the ground spoke" and "the water spoke" refer to the demigods presiding over those elements.

TOOL 3: Seek Guidance from *Śāstra* Itself
(Through Instruction or Identifying Precedent)

Method:

Seek further guidance, especially to see if there is a precedent, e.g. an identical or related question has been previously asked and answered or see the application of a specific tool.

Method in regards to Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements

Step 1: Check if Śrīla Prabhupāda himself has interpreted his statements.

Step 2: In a case where Śrīla Prabhupāda has not interpreted his own statement, one can fall back upon *śāstra* and check if *śāstra* has some interpretation for such a statement.

Step 3: If we are unable to find a reference in *śāstra* for a particular statement, we should approach a learned devotee or a group of devotees who can point out the reference in *śāstra* for us.

Step 4: If we are still unable to locate an exact reference in *śāstra*, we must ask a devotee who has been faithfully serving Śrīla Prabhupāda to interpret the statement. Such a devotee should:

> (1) be following the regulative principles and standards of behavior given by Śrīla Prabhupāda,

> (2) demonstrate practical accomplishments in furthering Śrīla Prabhupāda's ISKCON mission, and

> (3) should be loyal to Śrīla Prabhupāda as founder-ācārya of ISKCON and accepting of the system of authority he established for ISKCON.

Note: if we are resorting to step 4, we must understand that it is possible that different sincere devotees may give different interpretations and no interpretation can be legislated or forced upon anyone as long as all interpretations are in line with *siddhānta* and the other principles of the conceptual framework.

Evidence:

Parīkṣit asks the following question in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.87.1:

> Śrī Parīkṣit said: O *brāhmaṇa*, how can the *Vedas* directly describe the Supreme Absolute Truth, who cannot be described in words? The *Vedas* are limited to describing the qualities of material nature, but the Supreme is devoid of these qualities, being transcendental to all material manifestations and their causes.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī then answered by referring to a situation where an identical question had been previously asked and answered.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.87.4:

> In this connection I will relate to you a narration concerning the Supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa. It is about a conversation that once occurred between Śrī Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi and Nārada Muni.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.87.7:

> There Nārada approached Lord Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi, who was sitting amidst sages of the village of Kalāpa. After bowing down to the Lord, O hero of the Kurus, Nārada asked Him the very same question you have asked me.

Then, again, we find the Lord Himself referring to a situation where the identical question was asked and answered.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.87.9-10:

> The Personality of Godhead said: O son of self-born Brahmā, once long ago on Janaloka, wise sages who resided there performed a great sacrifice to the Absolute Truth by vibrating transcendental sounds. These sages, mental sons of Brahmā, were all perfect celibates. At that time you happened to be visiting the Lord on Śvetadvīpa—that Supreme Lord in whom the *Vedas* lie down to rest during the period of universal annihilation. A lively discussion arose among the sages on Janaloka as to the nature of the Supreme Absolute Truth. Indeed, the same question arose then that you are asking Me now.

Śrīla Prabhupāda summaries the above as follows in Kṛṣṇa Book, Chapter 87: Prayers by the Personified *Vedas*:

> This is the way of understanding through the *paramparā*, or disciplic succession. Mahārāja Parīkṣit questioned Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and Śukadeva Gosvāmī referred the matter to Nārada, who had in the same way questioned Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi, who had put the matter to still higher authorities on the planet of Janaloka, where it was discussed among the great Kumāras—Sanātana, Sanaka, Sanandana and Sanat-kumāra.

Evidence for Method in regards to Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements

For step one, an example

From the lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 6.40–42, New York, September 16, 1966:

> Govinda dāsī: You said that after leaving this body, this body is gone, you'll part with Kṛṣṇa consciousness and go to a higher place? [indistinct]
>
> Prabhupāda: No. If you make perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then after leaving this body you go directly to Kṛṣṇa. But if you are not perfect, if you have simply executed a certain percentage only then you'll get the chance of another human body either in this planet or any other planet to execute the balance.

In this example Śrīla Prabhupāda interprets his own statement and hence, there is no need for another authoritative interpreter.

For step two, an example

If we would not have Śrīla Prabhupāda's answer to Govinda dāsī (as quoted above), we would have to depend on *śāstra* to interpret this statement.

Govinda dāsī's query was, whether after leaving the body, every devotee will leave with Kṛṣṇa consciousness to a higher planet. If we look into the pages of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, we get the same answer as Prabhupāda had given.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.6:

> ### *prītir na yāvan mayi vāsudeve na mucyate deha-yogena tāvat*
>
> **Translation:** As long as one has not developed love for Lord Vāsudeva, one is certainly not delivered from having to accept a material body again and again.

In this case, we can see that depending on *śāstra* will bring us to the same answer.

TOOL 4: Direct and Indirect Meanings

Mukhya, lakṣaṇa and gauṇa:

> (1) *mukhya* (main, the primary meaning of a word, phrase, or text),
> (2) *lakṣaṇa* (secondary, peripheral or indirect meaning),
> (3) *gauṇa/vyañjanā* (suggested, implied, or poetic meaning).

Subcategories of *mukhya*, above, are *yoga*, *rūḍhi* and *yoga-rūḍhi*.

To understand the meanings of specific words, use one of the following:

> (1) *yoga* (the etymological meaning of a term),
> (2) *rūḍhi* (the conventional meaning of a term),
> (3) *yoga-rūḍhi* (the meaning of a term as a combination of the above two).

Method:

Use the main meaning generally, and the secondary meaning if the main meaning does not make sense in context. Use the suggested meaning only if neither the primary nor secondary meaning makes sense in context. The secondary and suggested meanings are more often used in narratives and poetry; the primary meaning is more often used in philosophical works.

Evidence and Explanation:

By SAC collaboratively:

This tool relates to traditional Vedic hermeneutics applied specifically to the Sanskrit language. Therefore, the explanation is somewhat technical. Some of these points may also be applied to other languages such as Bengali, English, and so forth.
Definitions of *rūḍhi*, *yoga* etc.

The categorization of "word" can be found in the *Alaṅkāra-kaustubhaḥ, Kiraṇa* 2, *Kārikā* 15 of Kavi Karṇapura as follows:

<div align="center">

yoga-rūḍhāś ca rūḍhāś ca
yaugikāś ceti te tridhā

</div>

> **Translation:** A term related to *śāstra* suitable to be used as a noun, pronoun, adjective or verb is known as *śabda* (word). A *śabda* can have three different types of meaning/sense — *rūḍha*, *yaugika* and *yoga-rūḍha*.

***Rūḍha*:** A word which derives its meaning from conventional usage e.g. the word *ḍittha* (wooden elephant). There is no verbal root and suffix as well as grammar rules which can justify how the term *ḍittha* came to signify an elephant.

***Yaugika*:** A word which derives its meaning purely from syntactical rules of the Sanskrit grammar. For example, the word *pācaka* (cook) is derived from the verbal root *[ḍu]pac[aṣ]*. In brackets we have technical indicatory letters, used for grammatical operations, therefore, the word itself is only "*pac*." That verbal root is used in the context of cooking and can be turned into a noun with the meaning "one, who performs that activity," by adding the suffix *[ṇ]vu[l]* (again, with only "*vu*" as the functional part): "*pac*" + "*vu*." Finally through grammatical operations, "*vu*" changes into "*aka*" and "*pac*" into "*pāc*." Thus, we get "*pāc*" + "*aka*" = "*pācaka*," one who cooks: the cook.

***Yoga-rūḍha*:** A combination of *rūḍha* and *yaugika*. For example, the word *paṅkaja* (born in mud, i.e. lotus). The *word paṅka* refers to mud. To that word *paṅka*, are applied verb *jan* and suffix *[ḍ]a* using grammar rules (*Pāṇini* 3.2.97). This gives us the term *paṅkaja*. Although we can trace the derivation of that word, and it could be just *yaugika*, it is also *rūḍha* – there are many things born in mud, but out of them, this word conventionally refers to a lotus. That kind of word is called *yoga-rūḍha*.

Among the three, the conventional meaning is always stronger and should be given preference. This is according to the logic quoted by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in *Bhakti-sandarbha* 128: "*rūḍhir yogam apaharati,* c*onventional meanings override etymological meanings.*"

Definitions of *lakṣaṇā,* etc.

The three ways in which words in *śāstra* have meaning are described In the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-śeṣaḥ ,* Chapter 2, of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī as follows:

> *vācyo 'rtho 'bhidhayā bodhyo*
> *lakṣyo lakṣaṇayā mataḥ*
> *vyaṅgyo vyañjanayā tāḥ syus*
> *tisraḥ śabdasya śaktayaḥ*

> **Translation:** There are three *śaktis* (powers) through which a word expresses its *artha* (sense).

Word-power (*śakti*)	Sense conveyed
through *abhidhā,* power of direct signification	expressed meaning, *vācya*
through *lakṣaṇā,* power of indication	indicated meaning, *lakṣya*
through *vyañjanā,* power of suggestion	suggested meaning, *vyaṅgya*

Now an example of interpreting a sentence according to these three powers:

Sentence: yamunāyāṁ ghoṣaḥ

(1) Expressed Meaning: The direct meaning of *yamunāyām* is "on the *Yamunā*" and the direct meaning of *ghoṣaḥ* is "a hamlet." So, the directly expressed meaning of *yamunāyāṁ ghoṣaḥ* is "a hamlet on the *Yamunā*."

(2) Indicated Meaning: By reading the expressed meaning, one may be confused and ask: "How can there be a hamlet on a flowing river? This does not make sense. The sentence must be indicative of something else." Thus, one abandons the primary meaning and uses the power of indication to interpret the sense of words in a secondary way. One can logically conclude that the sentence indicates "a hamlet on the banks of the *Yamunā*."

(3) Suggested Meaning: When the first two powers have exhausted their abilities, the power of suggestion helps to extend the meaning of the word/sentence. This power helps in giving a new import to words beyond the first two powers. For example, *yamunāyāṁ ghoṣaḥ* (a hamlet on the banks of the Yamuna) may be interpreted in a suggestive way to say: "A hamlet on the cool and windy banks of the *Yamunā*." "Cool" and "windy" here are interpretations made through the power of *vyañjanā.* Such interpretations can be made by poets who are expert connoisseurs in understanding the language and the sense of words used in that language.

What are *mukhyā vṛttiḥ* and *gauṇī vṛttiḥ* and how do they relate to these three word powers? When a particular word/sentence is interpreted using the first power (*abhidhā)* to express the direct meaning of that word/sentence, then such an interpretation is known as *mukhyā vṛttiḥ* or primary interpretation.

When the interpretations are made using the power of indication (*lakṣaṇā)* then this is known as *gauṇī vṛttiḥ* or secondary interpretations.

What about *vyañjanā,* the power of suggestion? Is it *mukhyā vṛttiḥ* or *gauṇī vṛttiḥ*? *Vyañjanā* or the power of suggestion is never used to make an independent interpretation. It only extends the meanings derived from *abhidhā* (direct) or *lakṣaṇā* (indirect) interpretations. Therefore,

vyañjanā is neither a part of *mukhyā vṛttiḥ* or *gauṇī vṛttiḥ*. It simply extends the meanings derived using these two *vṛttis.*

It is for this reason that *vyañjanā* is classified into two types by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-śeṣaḥ* as follows:

<div align="center">

abhidhā-lakṣaṇā-mūlā
śabdasya vyañjanā dvidhā

</div>

> **Translation:** *Vyañjanā* is classified into two types — *abhidhā-mūlā* (based on direct interpretation) and *lakṣaṇā-mūlā* (based on indirect interpretation).

Example of the first type of *vyañjanā*

An example from the *Gopāla-campūḥ,* Pūrva, 29 is quoted in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-śeṣaḥ* as follows:

<div align="center">

abhitaḥ surabhita-deśaḥ
sahacari paśya mādhavaḥ sphurati

</div>

> **Translation:** [One *gopī* says to another]: "O friend! Just see how the entire place has become fragrant in all directions. Mādhava (Mādhava-*māsa,* or spring) has arrived."

Here, the description is about the beauty of the seasons, so the direct intended meaning of Mādhava here is spring. However, by using the power of *vyañjanā* we can understand that the *gopī* is also suggesting that the entire place has become fragrant because Mādhava, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, has also arrived. In this example, the direct meaning makes sense and the suggested meaning extends the domain of the direct meaning. Therefore, this is *abhidhā-mūlā vyañjanā.*

Example of the second type of *vyañjanā*

The example of *yamunāyāṁ ghoṣaḥ* given above is an example of *lakṣaṇā-mūlā vyañjanā.* In that sentence, the direct meaning does not make sense, so the meaning is derived indirectly through *lakṣaṇā.* After the meaning is indirectly derived, *vyañjanā* extends that indirect meaning to suggest that the village on the banks of the Yamunā is cool and windy. Such *vyañjanā* is known as *lakṣaṇā-mūlā vyañjanā* since it extends the indirect meaning of the sentence.

In conclusion, *mukhyā vṛttiḥ* is to interpret scriptures through the power of *abhidhā,* and *gauṇī vṛttiḥ* is to interpret them through the power of *lakṣaṇā.* The power named *vyañjanā* simply extends the meanings of the intepretations made using these two powers.

Which *vṛtti* should be used in interpreting *śāstra*?

Indirect interpretations are often appreciated in poetics and creative narrative works. However, when it comes to Vedic literature, especially of a strictly theological nature, related to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu prefers sticking to the directly expressed meaning. On many occasions, secondary meanings are completely opposed to primary meanings. Lord

Caitanya's clear opinion is that secondary interpretations may destroy the entire purpose of reading scriptures.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 7.108 - 110:

> ***upaniṣat-sahita sūtra kahe yei tattva***
> ***mukhya-vṛttye sei artha parama mahattva***
> ***gauṇa-vṛttye yebā bhāṣya karila ācārya***
> ***tāhāra śravaṇe nāśa haya sarva Kārya***
> ***tāṅhāra nāhika doṣa, īśvara-ājñā pāñā***
> ***gauṇārtha karila mukhya artha ācchādiyā***

> **Translation:** The Absolute Truth is described in the *Upaniṣads* and *Vedānta-sūtras*, but one must understand the verses according to *mukhyā vṛtti*. That is the supreme glory in understanding. Śrīpād Śaṅkarācārya has described all the Vedic literatures in terms of indirect meanings. One who hears such explanations is ruined. Śaṅkarācārya is not at fault, for it is under the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead that he has [made these indirect interpretations and] covered the real purport of the *Vedas*.

It should be noted here that Mahāprabhu's problem is not with indirect interpretations per se. His problem is with indirect interpretations which contradict or cover up primary interpretations. Thus, from this instruction of Mahāprabhu we can understand that indirect interpretations which contradict or cover up primary interpretations are not acceptable to Him and His sincere followers. Sometimes, taking shelter of indirect meanings is the only way *śāstra* can make sense, as will be shown in examples below. However, if the direct primary meaning makes sense and one artificially tries to cover it up with a secondary indirect interpretation, then such interpretations ruin the purpose of *śāstra*.

Example of a secondary meanings ruining the purpose of *śāstra*:

Kṛṣṇa says directly in the *Bhagavad-gītā* 18.66 *mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja:* "Surrender exclusively to Me." The *māyāvādī* does not believe in the eternal nature of Kṛṣṇa's body and form, and hence speculates that surrendering to a temporary form is illogical. The *māyāvādī* thus abandons the primary meaning and uses the power of indication (*lakṣaṇā*) to interpret this sentence of Kṛṣṇa as follows: "Surrender to the impersonal aspect within me." This is an example of an instance where a secondary meaning ruins the intended primary meaning. Such a secondary meaning is completely opposed to the primary meaning intended by the author, in this case, Kṛṣṇa.

The following conversation from *The Quest for Enlightenment*, Chapter 6, *Origen: The Original Christian Mystic*, sheds more light on this:

> Disciple: As far as contradictions and seeming absurdities in scripture are concerned, Origen considered them to be stumbling blocks permitted to exist by God in order for man to pass beyond the literal meaning. He writes that "everything in scripture has a spiritual meaning, but not all of it has a literal meaning."

> Śrīla Prabhupāda: Generally speaking, every word in scripture has a literal meaning, but people cannot understand it properly because they do not hear from the proper person. They interpret instead. There is no need to interpret the words of God. Sometimes the words of God cannot be understood by an ordinary person; therefore, we may require the transparent medium of the guru. Since the guru is fully cognizant of the words spoken by God, we are advised to receive the words of the scriptures through the guru.

There is no ambiguity in the words of God, but due to our imperfect knowledge, we sometimes cannot understand. Not understanding, we try to interpret, but because we are imperfect, our interpretations are also imperfect. The conclusion is that the words of God, the scriptures, should be understood from a person who has realized God.

Note: please see the section in the Foundations part of this paper about how Prabhupāda uses the terms *interpret* and *explain* in relation to *śāstra* for more information.

When are indirect interpretations acceptable?

One reason for resorting to indirect meanings (*gauṇī vṛttiḥ*), as stated in standard treatises on rhetoric, is *mukhyārtha-bādhaḥ*: "When the direct meaning does not make sense." (*Alaṅkāra-kaustubhaḥ* 2.14, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-śeṣaḥ* 2.9, *Sāhitya-kaumudī* 2.11, etc.)

Example:

The example of a direct meaning not making sense is found in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.1.8 where Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī is narrating how and when he studied the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from his father Śrī Vyāsadeva. In the verse he says that he studied the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* at *dvāparādau*, which literally translates to "at the beginning of *Dvāpara-yuga*."

Now, this does not make any sense because neither Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī nor Śrī Vyāsadeva were present at the beginning of *Dvāpara-yuga* according to information in other parts of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Since the direct literal interpretation does not make sense in the context of the whole scripture, all commentators take shelter of indirect interpretation, even though the direct literal interpretation makes sense in isolation. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says: "*dvāpara-śabdenātra dvāparānta eva lakṣyate*, by the term *dvāpara*, the final part of the *Dvāpara-yuga* is indirectly indicated." Thus, the term *dvāparādau* is now correctly explained as "the beginning of the final part of *Dvāpara-yuga*."

Another reason for resorting to such meanings is to extend the domain of the direct meaning without contradicting it.

Example:

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī quotes the following verse from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 9.4.66 in his *Bhakti-sandarbha* 307:

> *mayi nirbaddha-hṛdayāḥ*
> *sādhavaḥ sama-darśanāḥ*
> *vaśe kurvanti māṁ bhaktyā*
> *sat-striyaḥ sat-patiṁ yathā*

> **Translation:** As chaste women bring their gentle husbands under control by service, the pure devotees, who are equal to everyone and completely attached to Me in the core of the heart, bring Me under their full control.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī then says: *atra dṛṣṭāntena aṁśataḥ sakhyātmikā bhaktir lakṣyate,* through the example of wife and husband given here, one can understand by the power of indication (*lakṣaṇā*) that *bhakti* in the partial mood of a friend has also been indicated (because a wife is also in some ways a friend to the husband; similarly, this verse can indicate that the devotee also

in some ways acts as a friend to the Lord and thus conquers the Lord). In this way, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī uses *gauṇī vṛttiḥ* or indirect interpretation to extend the meaning of the verse even though the primary direct meaning makes perfect sense. All such interpretations are valid as long as they do not go against the primary meanings of *śāstra*. In poetic, dramatic, and narrative texts, such as Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Vidagdha-mādhava*, many sections are intended to be read for both primary and secondary meanings.

The primary as well as secondary meanings can be used to achieve the purpose of glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, whether one uses *mukhya-vṛttiḥ* (primary direct interpretation) or *gauṇa-vṛttiḥ* (secondary indirect interpretation), both are justified if the end result is glorification of Kṛṣṇa. Mahāprabhu supports the glorification of Kṛṣṇa through both these *vṛttis.*

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 20.146:

> **mukhya-gauṇa-vṛtti, kiṁvā anvaya-vyatireke**
> **vedera pratijñā kevala kahaye kṛṣṇake**

> **Translation:** When one accepts the Vedic literature by interpretation or even by dictionary meaning, directly or indirectly the ultimate declaration of Vedic knowledge points to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

An example of this principle of the use of indirect meanings is Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's using *gauṇa-vṛttiḥ* to give metaphorical readings of scriptural narratives in his *Kṛṣṇa Samhita,* chapters 4-6, and also *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta,* Part 5, Chapter 6. He explains how various demons killed by Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana represent various *anarthas* (undesirable behavioral traits) that the seeker needs to eradicate from his heart, which is like Vṛndāvana. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura doesn't deny the literal or historical reality of Kṛṣṇa's demon-killing pastimes; these pastimes occurred in the past when Kṛṣṇa had descended to the world. But he also states that the killing of the demons by Kṛṣṇa also represents the destruction of the *anarthas* in our heart by Kṛṣṇa that will happen when we hear those demon-killing pastimes submissively.

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself used the metaphorical interpretation of the Kurukṣetra war occasionally, as in his talk while giving initiations for the first time in America in 1966, in New York as quoted in *The Hare Kṛṣṇa Explosion* by Hayagriva Dāsa:

> Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna sat in the same chariot. But Arjuna knew that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme. We are also in a kind of chariot with Kṛṣṇa. That chariot is this material body, and within the heart Lord Kṛṣṇa is present as the Supersoul, witnessing all our activities. Even though He accompanies us within the material world, Kṛṣṇa is never attached.

Paraphrasing Śrīla Prabhupāda, the author further writes:

> He then reminds us that we should never fret when confronted with adversities, for we should always know that Lord Kṛṣṇa is driving our chariot.

Śrīla Prabhupāda rejected time and again the metaphorical interpretation of the Kurukshetra war when it was used as a substitute for the literal interpretation, as a means to deny the historicity of the *Mahābhārata* war, as a tool to explain away the violence that took place there. As a final note, tangentially related to the subject of direct and indirect interpretation of *śāstra*, we should consider a comment by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī regarding the *Bhāgavatam*. He alerts us to

a further important dimension of śāstric interpretation, what may be called "instructional mood." Jīva Gosvāmī quotes Hemādri's commentary on the *Muktā-phala* in *Tattva-sandarbha* 26.2: "The *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, and poetic works instruct like a master, a friend, and a lover respectively. The *Bhāgavatam*, however, instructs in all three ways." By attending to and respecting *śāstras* instructional mood in specific instances, we may avoid the sort of unbeneficial understandings indicated in Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's story of the foolish veterinarian apprentice, who misapplied his master's means of curing a choking horse with a hammer to its neck to all cases of sick animals.

TOOL 5: Some Statements in *Śāstra* are Intentionally Delusive or Obscure, While Others are Direct

Method:

Determine which type of statement is being made, most likely using other hermeneutic tools as well to come to an understanding.

By Brijbāsī Dāsa:

Śrīla Madhvācārya has a concept of three types of language used by Vyāsa in *Mahabhārata*:

1. *Samādhi-bhāṣā* (direct language that gives the absolute truth that Lord Viṣṇu is supreme),

2. *Darśana-bhāṣā* (delusive language that promotes other deities as Supreme),

3. *Guhya-bhāṣā* (obscure language that gives different messages to different audiences).

He explains them in his *Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya* 2.120-123 as follows:

> *bhāṣās tu trividhās tatra mayā vai sampradarśitāḥ*
> *ukto yo mahimā viṣṇoḥ sa tūkto hi samādhinā*

Translation: Therein three kinds of language (interpretation) have been indicated by myself. That by which the greatness of Viṣṇu has been stated has been indicated by *Samādhi* language.

> *śaiva-darśanam ālambya kvacic chaivī kathoditā*
> *samādhi-bhāṣayoktaṁ yat tat sarvaṁ grāhyam eva hi*

Translation: Stories relating to Śiva (highlighting his supremacy) are narrated in some places based on *Śaiva-darśana*. (They are to be treated only as an explanatory, repetition — *anuvāda* —and not to be mistaken as the author's actual opinion. It is a sample of the *Darśana* style.) Whatever is presented in the *Samādhi* style is to be wholeheartedly accepted.

> *aviruddhaṁ samādhes tu darśanoktaṁ ca gṛhyate*
> *ādy-antayor viruddhaṁ yad darśanaṁ tad udāhṛtam*

Translation: Even when set forth in the *Darśana* style, it is to be welcomed if it is not hostile to (in harmony with) the statements in the *Samādhi* style. That which is

contrary to the statements in the *Mahābhārata* in the beginning (Lord Kṛṣṇa's majesty) and towards the end (Lord Kṛṣṇa's supremacy) and contains in between some settled stories (*anuvāda*) of other *darśanas*, inimical to Vaiṣṇava *Siddhānta* (e. g., worship of Śiva by Lord Kṛṣṇa) stands out as a specimen of the *Darśana* style to elude the *asuras*.

> *darśanāntara-siddhaṁ ca guhya-bhāṣā'nyathā bhavet*
> *tasmād viṣṇor hi mahimā bhāratokto yathārthataḥ*

Translation: That which is narrated in a manner quite different from the *Samādhi* style and the *Darśana* style, is to be taken as an example of the *Guhya* style which contains some confidential (esoteric) statements.

A prominent Madhva scholar Professor K.T. Pandurangi summarizes these types of language in *Philosophic Vision of Sri Mahabharata Tatparyanirnaya and Bhagavatatatparyanirnaya* by Professor K.T. Pandurangi, 2015, page16:

> The glory of the Supreme God is conveyed by *Samādhi-bhāṣā*. This naturally has to be accepted as it is. *Darśana-bhāṣā* is of two types: (1) whatever conflicts with what is stated before and after that is *Darśana-bhāṣā*. This naturally has to be interpreted in tune with what is stated before and after or else it has to be rejected, 2) Whatever is merely a restatement (*anuvāda*) of some other *Darśana* quoted for refutation or to show the hollowness of it. *Guhya-bhāṣā* is that which is different from *Samādhi* and *Darśana-bhāṣā*. In case of *Guhya-bhāṣā* its deeper meaning has to be taken rejecting the apparent meaning.

Śrī Vādirāja Tīrtha gives the following examples of the three types of language in his commentary to Śrī Madhva's *Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya*:

> *Samādhi-bhāṣā:*
> *nāsti nārāyaṇa-samam*

Translation: There is no one equal to Nārāyaṇa

> *Darśana-bhāṣā:*
> *rudraṁ samāśritā devāḥ*

Translation: The demigods are fully under the shelter of Lord Rudra

> *Guhya-bhāṣā:*
> *aṭṭa-śūlā janapadāḥ śiva-śūlāś catuṣpathāḥ*
> *pramadāḥ keśa-śūlinyo bhaviṣyanti kalau yuge*

Translation: In Kali-*yuga* people will earn their livelihood by selling food. *Brāhmaṇas* will sell *Vedas* (making learning a salable commodity). Beautiful women will sell their bodies to make a living. (*Mahābhārata*, *Vana-parva* 186.36 and 188.51).

Why does this verse come under the category of *Guhya-bhāṣā*? Because the primary meaning of the words in it are different. *Aṭṭa* means "high palace," *śūla* means "sharp weapon," thus the first line may mean that people will have sharp weapons in their high palaces. *Śiva-śūla* means "Lord

Śiva's trident" and *catuṣpatha* means "an intersection of four roads," thus the second line may mean "crossroads will become Lord Śiva's tridents." *Śūla* also means a kind of disease, while *keśa* means "hair," thus the third line means that beautiful women will have hair diseases in Kali yuga. However, this is not what Vyāsa meant by this *śloka*. *Śūla* has an obscure meaning of "selling," while *aṭṭa* also means *anna*, food. Thus the first line means that people will make living in Kali-yuga by selling food. *Śiva* also means "the *Vedas*," while *catuṣpatha* also means "a *brāhmaṇa*," because he goes through four paths, *āśramas*, thus the second line means that *brāhmaṇas* will make living by selling *Vedas* in Kali-yuga. *Keśa* also has the meaning of *bhaga*, "female genitals," thus the third line means that women will sell their bodies in Kali-yuga.

TOOL 6: Identify the Genre of Text
(e.g. Philosophical or a Poetic/Narrative)

Method:

Step 1: Determine whether the "whole" is philosophical or poetic/narrative. One can define the "whole" as an entire *śāstra,* e.g. *Iśopaniṣad*, *Mukta-carita,* or as a section of a *śāstra:* a canto, or a chapter, or a section; or as the main intention of a particular purport, lecture, conversation, and so forth.

Step 2: The literal meaning is very often intended in a theological/philosophical work, and the figurative or indirect meaning may be intended in a poetic and narrative sense; in poetic texts the indirect meaning is often privileged over the literal meaning.

Note: Specifically for the *Bhāgavatam*, In his *Tattva-sandarbha* 26 Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī quotes the following verse from Vopadeva's *Hari-līlāmṛta* to show that *Bhāgavata*m possesses all good qualities.

Hari-līlāmṛta 1.9:

> **vedāḥ purāṇaṁ kāvyaṁ ca prabhur mitraṁ priyeva ca**
> **bodhayantīti hi prāhus trivṛd bhāgavataṁ punaḥ**

> **Translation:** It is said that the *Vedas*, *Purāṇas* and poetic works give understanding as the master, friend and lover respectively. However, *Bhāgavatam* gives understanding as all three.

Therefore, in using this method with verses from *Bhāgavatam*, one can also consider in which of these three moods is the verse in question.

Note: see Tool 34, which is related.

Explanation:

By SAC collaboratively:

In traditional Vedic hermeneutics, there is a marked preference for the literal reading of purely theological, i.e. *Vedāntic*, texts, such as the *Upaniṣads*, as Śrī Caitanya emphasized, because it is the more "economical" reading. If possible, the literal reading is seen to be better because it does not involve the shifting of the meaning to a secondary meaning, as is the case in the standard phrase "the village is in/on the Ganges," which, in order to make sense of this, we have to shift to

"the village is on the bank of the Ganges." If scripture talks of the form of God, we take that literally; if Kṛṣṇa says "surrender unto Me," we take that literally, rather than shifting that to "to the unborn within me," as Dr. Radhakrishnan famously did. Using a literal meaning for theological texts is a standard *Vedānta* preference, but this preference does not deny that *śāstra* can and sometimes indeed has to be read non-literally, which our *ācāryas*, including Śrīla Prabhupāda, often do, as when the scriptures says that God has no form, which we interpret as having no material form. Which theological statements have to be interpreted literally and which does not depend on the immediate context of the passage, on the text as a whole, and on *siddhānta*. If a non-literal reading is required, there is also often a reason that can be given for why the scriptures seem to be ambiguous, i.e. why say "the village is in/on the Ganges" when what is meant is "the village is on the bank of the Ganges."

Traditionally this preference for literal readings is not discussed in relation to narrative texts, i.e. texts about Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*, but in the modern world, when such miraculous narratives seem to contradict scientific world views, Śrīla Prabhupāda argued frequently that we cannot "interpret away" such things, as M.K. Gandhi, for example, did with Kurukṣetra in the *Gītā*. Nevertheless, our *ācāryas*, including Śrīla Prabhupāda, sometimes read narrative passages also non-literally. As Prabhupāda, for example, does in the 10th Canto's description of Kṛṣṇa's birth. Again, our *siddhānta* in terms of both *rasa* and *tattva* are the guiding factors here, and a non-literal reading should not contradict a literal one.

TOOL 7: Śāstric Statements can be Understood in Terms of *Tattva*, *Rasa*, or Both

Method:

This tool is related to, but different from, considerations of whether a text is primarily philosophical or poetic/narrative. The former lends itself more to an explanation in terms of *tattva*, and the latter more to an explanation in terms of *rasa* and *līlā*. However, many statements of guru-*sādhu-śāstra* can be understood in both ways, keeping in mind the author's intent as to which way of understanding is primary. The two types of understanding must be distinguished or we will not be able to understand how the father of everyone is the son of Nanda.

Evidence and Explanation:

By Urmilā-devī dāsī:

Śrīla Prabhupāda goes to great length in many purports to establish that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme, the origin of Visnu, in terms of *tattva*. Yet, in the following evening conversation in Perth on May 6, 1975 he explains that such a conception of the original Godhead exists because of *rasa*:

> Paramahaṁsa: Sometimes people ask, though, they say, "Well why is it even among the *ācāryas* we find sometimes that there is a difference of opinion?"
>
> Prabhupāda: They are not *ācāryas*. They are not *ācāryas*. There is no difference of understanding between *ācāryas*. What Madhvācārya understands, we understand. Suppose you are present *ācārya*. So there is no difference. What Rāmānujācārya understands, we also understand. What Caitanya Mahāprabhu understands, we also understand. So where is the difference? Difference should be that is the fact that he is not *ācārya*. As soon as he differs from the previous *ācāryas*, that means he is not *ācārya*. Otherwise there is full agreement between all the *ācāryas*. Just

like Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Person, all *ācāryas* agree. Where is the difference? Does Rāmānujācārya differ from Madhvācārya, or Madhvācārya differs from Śrī Caitanya, Caitanya differs from—no. There is no difference. That is Vaiṣṇava. All the Vaiṣṇavas, they understand that Viṣṇu is the Supreme. There may be, sometimes, such as Kṛṣṇa is understood as incarnation of Viṣṇu, and sometimes they understand Viṣṇu as the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. That is *sampradāya*. That is *sampradāya*. But either Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu, He is Supreme, that is accepted by all.

Paramahaṁsa: So that point is not so important, whether Kṛṣṇa is coming from Viṣṇu or Viṣṇu is coming from Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda: Yes, that is not important. Because, actually both of Them the same, the Supreme. That example we give that candle, two candles, that so far the power of lighting is concerned, both of them equal. Now, you may say this is first candle, I say if it is first candle. But so far the power is concerned, there is no difference of opinion. If I love somebody, I'll say he is first, and if you love somebody, you'll say he is first. But both of them same. Just like devotees: some devotees are very... Hanumānjī, he'll never accept Kṛṣṇa. And the *gopīs* will never accept Rāma or Viṣṇu. So far the Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu, They are all the same. [aside:] What is that?

Paramahaṁsa: I think perhaps the other boy has come back [indistinct]. So actually, the differences, whatever little differences may arise, those differences amongst the *ācāryas*, they are due to feelings of ... different feelings of love for Kṛṣṇa or His manifestations.

Prabhupāda: You'll find in some, among some devotees, they will criticize, "Why you are worshiping Rāmacandra? He could not save even His wife." [laughter] And some will, "Ah, you are worshiping Kṛṣṇa. He was so fond of women." Like that. In Vṛndāvana you'll find they are different. Somebody will say "Hare Kṛṣṇa," another will say "Sītā Rāma."

There will be competition. There is no difference. Both of them know that "Either I worship Rāma or Kṛṣṇa, They are the same."

This tool is used when reconciling apparently contradictory statements such as the following two purports:

One from *Bhagavad-gītā* 8.14, purport:

A pure devotee always engages in devotional service to Kṛṣṇa in one of His various personal features. Kṛṣṇa has various plenary expansions and incarnations, such as Rāma and Nṛsiṁha, and a devotee can choose to fix his mind in loving service to any of these transcendental forms of the Supreme Lord.

And, another from *Bhagavad-gītā* 18.65 purport which seems to give irreconcilable instructions with the purport in Chapter 8:

These words stress that one should concentrate his mind upon Kṛṣṇa—the very form with two hands carrying a flute, the bluish boy with a beautiful face and peacock feathers in His hair. There are descriptions of Kṛṣṇa found in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* and other literatures. One should fix his mind on this original form of

Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. One should not even divert his attention to other forms of the Lord. The Lord has multiforms as Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa, Rāma, Varāha, etc. but a devotee should concentrate his mind on the form that was present before Arjuna.

One can use this tool to explain that in the purport to 8.14, Śrīla Prabhupāda is writing from the perspective of *tattva*, and in the purport to 18.65, from the perspective of *rasa*. Such an explanation is bolstered by reference to the evening discussion of 1975 already quoted. It is also supported in the 18.65 purport itself, where Śrīla Prabhupāda refers to Kṛṣṇa as carrying a flute, and also "the form that was present before Arjuna," when clearly Kṛṣṇa was not carrying his flute. The mood of such a statement is, therefore, likely to be best understood in terms of *rasa*, rather than *tattva*.

Here is an example of the interplay of *tattva* and *rasa* in terms of understanding the Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.8.31:

gopy ādade tvayi kṛtāgasi dāma tāvad
yā te daśāśru-kalilāñjana-sambhramākṣam
vaktraṁ ninīya bhaya-bhāvanayā sthitasya
sā māṁ vimohayati bhīr api yad bibheti

Translation: My dear Kṛṣṇa, Yaśodā took up a rope to bind You when You committed an offence, and Your perturbed eyes overflooded with tears, which washed the mascara from Your eyes. And You were afraid, though fear personified is afraid of You. This sight is bewildering to me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda uses the lens of *tattva* and *rasa* in his purport to this verse to explain Kuntī's statement:

Kuntī was conscious of the exalted position of Kṛṣṇa, whereas Yaśodā was not. Therefore Yaśodā's position was more exalted than Kuntī's. Mother Yaśodā got the Lord as her child, and the Lord made her forget altogether that her child was the Lord Himself. If Mother Yaśodā had been conscious of the exalted position of the Lord, she would certainly have hesitated to punish the Lord. But she was made to forget this situation because the Lord wanted to make a complete gesture of childishness before the affectionate Yaśodā. This exchange of love between the mother and the son was performed in a natural way, and Kuntī, remembering the scene, was bewildered, and she could do nothing but praise the transcendental filial love.

TOOL 8: Ten Topics of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

(1) *Sarga* (primary creation),

(2) *Visarga* (the secondary creation by Brahma),

(3) *Sthāna* (the maintenance of the universe by the Lord),

(4) *Poṣaṇa* (special care and protection for devotees by the Lord),

(5) *Ūti* (the urge for creation, or initiative power),

(6) *Manvantara* (the periods controlled by the Manus),

(7) *Īśānukathā* (scriptural information regarding the Personality of Godhead, His incarnations on earth and the activities of His devotees),

(8) *Nirodha* (the winding up of all energies employed in creation),

(9) *Mukti* (liberation of the conditioned souls),

(10) *Āśraya* (shelter, Kṛṣṇa, the summum bonum).

Method:

This tool can be used for *Bhāgavatam* and provisionally for other sources. It helps us know that all these subjects are related to Kṛṣṇa and in what way a subject is related. This list also shows the fact that there is a system of organization of topics although not chronological. We can also examine statements and sections as to whether they teach these statements through Vedic inference by direct explanation or by summary explanations. The tenth topic, the Lord, is described in three different ways:

> (1) **śrutena**, in some places the *Bhāgavatam* introduces prayers to the Supreme Lord in the course of describing one or more of the other nine topics, and in these prayers the Supreme Person Himself is the object of glorification;

> (2) **añjasā**, in other places the Lord is described directly, as in the dialogue between Vidura and Maitreya and that between Kapila and Devahūti;

> (3) **arthena**, in yet other places, the *Bhāgavatam* glorifies the Lord indirectly through historical episodes, such as the accounts of how the Lord saved Parīkṣit Mahārāja from Aśvatthāmā's atomic weapon and of how Śukadeva Gosvāmī was captivated when he heard verses about Lord Kṛṣṇa's attributes.

TOOL 9: Consider Nested Narratives

Many of the hermeneutics tools involve considering the qualifications, intent, mood, etc. of an author or speaker. Particularly in the *Bhāgavatam*, but also in other works, there are frequently "nested narratives" where one needs to consider these points about several concentric circles of authors and speakers.

Method:

Identify whether one is dealing with a "nested narrative" and, if so, which persons are speaking and writing. Then apply the various considerations from other tools to each speaker or writer as well as their relationship with each other.

TOOL 10: Which Text Provides a Higher Level of Authority?

Method:

In terms of authority, universal meaning and application, in general, *śruti* supersedes *smṛti*, *Bhāgavatam* supersedes all, and the *Bhāgavatam* we understand through *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and the Six *Sandarbhas*.

Evidence and Explanation:

Note: please see the essay for Principle 5 regarding hierarchy of *śāstra.*

By SAC members collaboratively:

All Vedic literature are broadly classified into two categories: *śruti* and *smṛti*.

Śruti: Refers to the original Vedic literatures that emanated from the breathing of the Supreme Lord and were formerly transmitted through an oral succession.

Smṛti: Refers to texts composed by the various Vedic sages based on their understanding of the *Vedas*.

According to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, the *Vedas*, *Itihāsas*, and *Purāṇas* came from the breathing of the Lord.

Bṛhad-āraṇyaka-upaniṣad, 2.4.10:

asya mahato bhūtasya niśvasitam etad yad ṛg-vedo yajur-vedaḥ sāma-vedo'tharvāṅgirasa itihāsaḥ purāṇam

> **Translation:** From the breathing of this great Lord came the *Ṛg Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sāma Veda*, *Atharva Veda*, *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*.

However, it is to be noted that in this sequence mentioned in the *Upaniṣad*, the *Vedas* appear before the *Purāṇas*. In the earlier ages, the four *Vedas* were one unit and were taught as a single entity. It was Śrīla Vyāsadeva who divided them into four, as stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.4.19:

vedam ekaṁ catur-vidham

Translation: He divided the one *Veda* into four.

Thereafter, he compiled the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* for those who did not have access to the *Vedas*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.4.25:

strī-śūdra-dvijabandhūnāṁ trayī na śruti-gocarā
karma-śreyasi mūḍhānāṁ śreya evaṁ bhaved iha
iti bhāratam ākhyānaṁ kṛpayā muninā kṛtam

Translation: Out of compassion, the great sage thought it wise that this would enable men to achieve the ultimate goal of life. Thus, he compiled the great historical narration called the *Mahābhārata* for women, laborers and friends of the twice-born.

Thus, it is clear that the *Vedas* were being propagated much before the *Purāṇas* were brought to this planet by Śrīla Vyāsadeva. This is the reason why some schools of the *Vedas* think that if an apparent contradiction is seen between *Vedas* and other *smṛti* scriptures like *Purāṇas*, then preference must be given to the *Vedas.*

Vīramitrodaya, *Paribhāṣā-prakāśaḥ*, page 25:

śruti-smṛtyor virodhe tu śrutir balīyasī

Translation: When an apparent contradiction arises between *Vedas* and *smṛtis*, the *Vedas* are given higher priority.

However, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says that in the age of Kali, one cannot understand the *Vedas* properly. He says in the *Tattva-sandarbha, Anuccheda* 12:

tatra ca veda-śabdasya samprati duṣpāratvād duradhigamārthatvāc ca tad-artha-
nirṇāyakānāṁ munīnām api paraspara-virodhād veda-rūpo vedārtha-nirṇāyakaś
cetihāsa-purāṇātmakaḥ śabda eva vicāraṇīyaḥ

Translation: In recent times, due to the difficulties in obtaining complete editions of the *Vedas*, due to the various difficulties in studying them, and also due to the fact that the commentators upon the *Vedas* have mutually contradictory opinions, one should meditate upon the *śabda-pramāṇa* as given in *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*, which are just like *Vedas* and are useful for determining the actual import of the *Vedas*.

Therefore, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's conclusion in the *Tattva-sandarbha* is that the highest *pramāṇa* is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

He says specifically in Tattva-sandarbha, Anuccheda 18:

> *sarva-pramāṇānāṁ cakravarti-bhūtam asmad-abhimataṁ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam eva*

Translation: Well-said, because you have called to mind our own most preferred authority, the emperor.

In the six *Sandarbhas*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī employs *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the main *pramāṇa* and all other scriptures, including *Vedas,* are employed to justify the conclusions given by the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Therefore, for the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavas, the gradation of authority among the Vedic scriptures (*śruti*) is as follows:

(1) *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* book incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, and its interpretations as done by Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī, Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* and other Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*. This also includes the six *Sandarbhas*, since they are mostly elaborate commentaries on various verses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

(2) Other *Purāṇas/Itihāsas/Vedas/Vedānta-sūtra/Bhagavad-gītā/Pañcarātra* as well the six *Vedāṅgas* or limbs of the *Vedas* (*vyākaraṇa*: grammar, *chanda*: prosody, *śikṣā*: phonology, *nirukta*: etymology, *kalpa*: ritual instruction, *jyotiṣa*: timekeeping) and the entire umbrella of Vedic literature (*brāhmaṇa-grantha*: commentaries on Vedic hymns, *sarvānukramaṇī-grantha*: index of Vedic hymns, *bṛhad-devatā*: theogony of Vedic hymns, etc.).

Even among the *Purāṇas*, there are gradations. In *Tattva-sandarbha* 17.2-3 Jīva Gosvāmī explains that some *Purāṇas* are not complete[32], and they appear contradictory because they characterize different deities as supreme. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī accounts for this by dividing the *Purāṇas* according to the three modes of nature, and proposing that in different days of Brahmā, different modes of nature predominate, and therefore different deities are described as supreme.

Tattva-sandarbha 17.2:

> *atha purāṇānām evaṁ prāmāṇye sthite'pi teṣām api sāmastyenāpracarad-rūpatvān nānā-devatā-pratipādaka-prāyatvād arvācīnaiḥ kṣudrar-buddhibhir artho duradhigama iti tad-avastha eva saṁśayaḥ*

Translation by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa: Even though we have thus settled the question of the *Purāṇas*' authoritativeness, we need to next consider a doubt regarding their current status. Less intelligent people of modern times find it

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[32] "As a source of further confusion, not only are portions of the *Purāṇas* now missing, but in some cases these portions have been replaced with spurious substitutions. In recent centuries the brahminical community has become less and less familiar with several of the more rarely preserved *Purāṇas*, allowing unscrupulous scribes to distort the texts without detection. The only sure protection against such changed texts is the testimony of commentaries by reliable authorities. Over six hundred years ago Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī commented on both *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, taking special care to certify the wording of almost every verse; no such commentaries by standard *ācāryas* exist, however, for the other *Purāṇas*, only citations of isolated passages." (Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa, purport to *Tattva-sandarbha* 17.4)

difficult to understand them because their original texts are not completely available and because for the most part they promote the worship of a variety of deities.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī continues in *Tattva-sandarbha* 17.3:

yad uktaṁ mātsye —
pañcāṅgaṁ ca purāṇaṁ syād ākhyānam itarat smṛtam
sāttvikeṣu ca kalpeṣu māhātmyam adhikaṁ hareḥ
rājaseṣu ca māhātmyam adhikaṁ brahmaṇo viduḥ
tadvad agneś ca māhātmyaṁ tāmaseṣu śivasya ca
saṅkīrṇeṣu sarasvatyāḥ pitṛṇāṁ ca nigadyate – iti.

Translation by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa: As the *Matsya-purāṇa* 53.65, 68–69 states, "A historical text is a *Purāṇa* if it has the five defining characteristics; otherwise it is known as an *ākhyāna*. In *Purāṇas* describing days of Brahmā in the mode of goodness, the Supreme Lord Hari is mostly glorified. In those describing days in the mode of passion, there is especially glorification of Brahmā. In those describing days in the mode of ignorance, there is glorification of Agni and of Śiva. In those describing mixed days Sarasvatī and the Pitās are discussed.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says in *Tattva-sandarbha* 18.1 that *Purāṇas* in the mode of goodness are the highest:

tad evaṁ sati tat-tat-kalpa-kathā-mayatvenaiva mātsya eva prasiddhānāṁ
tat-tat-purāṇānāṁ vyavasthā jñāpitā | tāratamyaṁ tu kathaṁ syād yenetara-
nirṇayaḥ kriyeta | sattvādi-tāratamyenaiveti cet, sattvāt sañjāyate jñānaṁ
(Bhagavad-gītā 14.17) iti sattvaṁ yad brahma-darśanam (Śrīmad-
Bhāgavatam 1.2.24) iti ca nyāyāt sāttvikam eva purāṇādikaṁ paramārtha-
jñānāya prablama ity āyātam.

Translation by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa: Such being the facts, we can understand that the *Purāṇas* mentioned in the *Matsya Purāṇa* are divided into natural categories according the kinds of days of Brahmā they contain narrations of. But how can we define a hierarchy of these categories to determine which is superior? It might be suggested that this can be done with a hierarchy of the modes of nature—goodness, passion and ignorance. If so, we can conclude that *Purāṇas* and other scriptures in the mode of goodness have the most authority to teach us about transcendental reality, according to the reasoning of such statements as 'From the mode of goodness knowledge develops' [*Bhagavad-gītā* 14.17] and 'In the mode of goodness one can realize the Absolute Truth [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.24].

Then in *Tattva-sandarbha* 18.3 Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī goes on to propose that of all the *Purāṇas*, even those in the mode of goodness, one is superior:

tad evaṁ samādheyaṁ yady ekatamam eva purāṇa-lakṣaṇam apauruṣeyaṁ
śāstraṁ sarva-vedetihāsa-purāṇānām artha-sāraṁ brahma-sūtropajīvyaṁ
ca bhavad bhuvi sampūrṇaṁ pracarad-rūpaṁ syāt | satyam uktam, yata eva
ca sarva-pramāṇānāṁ cakravarti-bhūtam asmad-abhimataṁ Śrīmad-
Bhāgavatam evodbhāvitaṁ bhavatā.

Translation by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa: We would have such a basis of reconciliation, one might comment, if there were one scripture which fit the definition of a *Purāṇa*, had *apauruṣeya* authority [i.e. of superhuman revelation], contained the essential ideas of all the *Vedas*, *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*, gave support to the positions of the *Brahma-sūtra* and was currently available in full on the earth. Well said, because you have called to mind our own most preferred authority, the emperor of *pramāṇas*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

In this way, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī establishes a gradation of *śāstras*, with the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* at the top. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī presents thorough evidence for the *Bhāgavatam*'s supremacy, including quotations from the *Bhāgavatam* itself, statements of other *Purāṇas*, and an analysis of the *Bhāgavatam*'s content, emphasizing that its content shows it presents the essential truths of the Vedic literatures.

For any other literature besides *śruti*, we suggest that the gradation of authority is as follows.

For *smṛti*:

    (1) *Hari-bhakti-vilāsaḥ* and its commentary by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī.

    (2) Other *smṛtis* and *smṛti*-compilations such as *Nirṇaya-sindhuḥ* of Kamalakar Bhatt etc.

For other texts:

    (1) Texts written by *Gauḍīya*-Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas,* e.g. *Dāna-keli-kaumudī* of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, *Stavāvalī* of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, works of Śrīla Narottam Dāsa Ṭhākura, etc.

    (2) Texts written by other Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* belonging to bona fide Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāyas,* e.g. *Yādavābhyudayam* of *Śrī Vedānta-deśika, Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛtam* of Śrī Bilvamaṅgala, etc.

    (3) Authentic texts favorable to *bhakti* written by other *ācāryas* belonging to other non-Vaiṣṇava-*sampradāyas,* e.g. *Govindāṣṭakam* of Śrī Ādi-Śaṅkarācārya, *Raghuvaṁśa* of Kālidāsa, etc.

    (4) Authentic texts which may be neutral to *bhakti,* e.g. *Durghaṭa-vṛttiḥ* of Sharandev, *Nāṭya-śāstra* of Bharata Muni and any other text in any language which does not go against *bhakti*.

Note: Whenever a devotee finds a contradiction between two literatures, the person's first attempt should be to resolve the contradiction in such a way that both literatures are proven to be correct in their respective contexts. This principle is given by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī as follows.

Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta 5.327:

       virodho vākyayor yatra nāpramāṇyaṁ tad īśyate
       yathāviruddhatā ca syāt tathārthaḥ kalpyate tayoḥ

Translation: When two contradictory statements are found in scriptures, one statement does not invalidate the other. Instead, one should find an interpretation which brings about non-contradiction in both statements.

Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa says clearly that if two statements from the *Veda/ Itihāsa/ Purāṇa/ Vedānta-sūtra/ Bhagavad-gītā/ Pañcarātra* are apparently contradictory, then rejecting one of them as false is like half-hen logic. By rejecting one part of the *śāstra*, we reject all *śāstra*. Therefore, devotees should be cautious while resolving contradictions.

Ultimately, in *Bhagavad-gītā* 15.15, Lord Kṛṣṇa says: "*vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo*: by all the Vedic literature, He is to be known." *Śāstra* that directly gives knowledge of Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and instructions on how to attain pure devotional service to Him is more authoritative than *śāstra* that does not. So, while all *śāstra* is respected as authoritative, "the *Vedas* deal mainly with the subject of the three modes of material nature. O Arjuna, become transcendental to these three modes." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.45) We must, therefore, respect all Vedic literatures and literatures pursuant to the Vedic version, while taking as our authority those scriptures which give knowledge of the highest reality, the Personality of Godhead, and lead one to the highest goal of life, pure love of God, clearly and without diversion. Otherwise, we will not be satisfied, as exemplified by Śrīla Vyāsadeva himself.

In answering this question, which relates to our proposed conceptual framework in terms of "hierarchy of texts," we also want to consider a hierarchy Śrīla Prabhupāda often stated.

Room Conversation, Mayapur, January 16, 1976:

> If one wants full knowledge in life, then he must read *Bhāgavatam*. *Bhagavad-gītā* is the preliminary ABCD, and then let him read *Bhāgavatam*.

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.9.8, Montreal, July 2, 1968:

> To develop that Kṛṣṇa consciousness, just like when you have passed preliminary examination in the school, then you have to further enlightenment, further progress of advancement of education, you enter into the college, degree college, similarly, after finishing or understanding *Bhagavad-gītā* very nicely, if you are convinced about Kṛṣṇa, then study *Bhagavad-gītā [Bhāgavatam]*, where the beginning is: *namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*. Vyāsadeva begins by surrendering himself to *bhagavān*, Kṛṣṇa. *Bhagavate vāsudevāya. Oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya janmādy asya yataḥ* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.1]. He is the origin of everything. Then *Bhāgavata* begins. And one who has understood *Bhāgavata*, or he has made his relationship well established with Kṛṣṇa and is functioning in that relationship, then he is passed on the subject matter of *Bhāgavata*, and then you begin *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. That is postgraduate study. After getting your degree, as you try for your Ph.D. or M.A., similarly, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is like that, postgraduate study.

By Sarvajña Dāsa:

There are many *śāstras* written and edited by Śrīla Vyāsadeva. He did his job before his meeting with Nārada Muni. Although everything one needs for going back to Godhead is there, it is not systematized, and there is no focus on devotional service. On the other hand, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has everything that is in the *Vedas*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.41:

sarva-vedetihasanam saram saram samudhrtam

Translation: the cream of all Vedic literatures and histories of the universe.

But it is put in the perspective of pure devotional service. Therefore, all the statements of the *Vedas* should be interpreted through the lenses of conclusions of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in terms of tattva and rasa.

In addition, whenever one sees any statement from the *Vedas* or any other scriptures written by Vyāsadeva, such as *Vedānta-sūtra*, one has to find a similar statement in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* for the clarification of how we can understand it in the context of pure devotional service. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī does this in his *Paramātma-sandarbha, Anuccheda* 105, while using *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to explain the first four verses of *Vedānta-sūtra*.

TOOL 11: Madhva's Hierarchy of *Śāstras*

Method:

Note: because Madhva's hierarchy differs from that of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, this tool has limited use for most ISKCON members. The primary application would be when studying the works of Madhvacarya himself, including his commentaries to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures.

Determine if the statement is from an eternal source, without human authorship, or if it is a product of human authorship and not eternally existing. Give a higher level of trans-contextual authority to the former. The latter can be best understood by using various other tools, such as understanding the intention of the author, the intended audience, and so forth.

Evidence and Explanation:

By Urmilā-devī dāsī:

> Madhvācārya gives the following categories of sacred writings: the *Vedas* are eternal, an immutable entity with no beginning and no end. Other sacred writings may be in three categories: "(1) one, having birth and no destruction (2) another, having birth and destruction for one part and not having these for another part (3) and another sort which though in its essential nature devoid of birth and destruction is subject to changing states.[33]

Testimony is of two kinds: compositions not having human authorship (*apauruṣeya*) and human compositions *(pauruṣeya)*. The *Vedas* are of the first kind and all other works are of the second. The *Vedas* are also called *śrutis* because they are learnt by ear. Even the seers of the hymns declare that they only discovered their meaning. That they have no human authorship is argued as follows. The *Vedas* do not have human authorship because no author has ever been heard of and all have learnt them by ear *(sarvaiḥ śrutatvāt)* and orally repeated them (*sarvairuccaritatvāt*). The authoritative works for Madhva are the four *Vedas*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Pañcarātra*.

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[33] *Tattvasāṅkhyānām of Śrīmadānandatīrthabhagavatpādācārya with the Ṭīkā of Śrī Jayatīrtha*, published by Sri Rāmakṛṣṇappa Dvaita Vedānta Pāṭhaśālā, Bangalore, page 27.

Āgamas and such parts of the *Purāṇas* as are in harmony with these. Revelation is the ultimate authority in matters of the spirit. Scripture has to be interpreted according to the six determinative marks of purport.[34]

Note: see Tool 20: Applying Six Criteria to know the Main Import and Conclusion of a Work of *Śāstra.*

By Brijbāsī Dāsa:

Kurma Purāṇa quoted in *Gītā-bhāṣya,* Madhvācārya's *Gītā* commentary, Introduction:

> **bhārataṁ sarva-śāstreṣu bhārate gītikā varā**
> **viṣṇoḥ sahasra-nāmāpi geyaṁ pāṭhyaṁ ca tad dvayam**

Translation: *Mahābhārata* is the best of all scriptures, and *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma* are the best parts of the *Mahābhārata*. They should always be studied and recited.

Bhaviṣya Purāṇa quoted in Madhva's *Vedānta-sūtra-bhāṣya* 2.1.6:

> **ṛg-yajuḥ-sāmātharvāś ca bhārataṁ pañcarātrakam**
> **mūla-rāmāyaṇaṁ caiva veda ity eva śabditāḥ**
> **purāṇāni ca yānīha vaiṣṇavāni vido viduḥ**
> **svataḥ-prāmāṇyam eteṣāṁ nātra kiñcid vicāryate**

Śrīla Prabhupāda's rendition of these verses in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 6.137, purport:

Translation: The *Ṛg Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sāma Veda*, *Atharva Veda*, *Mahābhārata*, *Pañcarātra* and original *Rāmāyaṇa* are all considered Vedic literature. The *Purāṇas* that are especially meant for Vaiṣṇavas (such as the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*, *Nāradīya Purāṇa*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*) are also Vedic literature. Therefore, whatever is stated in such *Purāṇas* or in the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* is self-evident. There is no need for interpretation. The *Bhagavad-gītā* is also within the *Mahābhārata*; therefore, all the statements of the *Bhagavad-gītā* are self-evident. There is no need for interpretation, and if we do interpret, the entire authority of the Vedic literature is lost.

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[34] *The Epistemology of Dvaita Vedānta*, by Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao, Adyar Library and Research Centre, Madras, pages 103–104.

Madhvācārya in *Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya*:

ṛg-ādayaś ca catvāraḥ pañcarātraṁ ca bhāratam |
mūla-rāmāyaṇaṁ brahma-sūtraṁ mānaṁ svataḥ smṛtam | 1.30 |

aviruddhaṁ ca yat tv asya pramāṇaṁ tac ca nānyathā |
etad viruddhaṁ yat tu syān na tan mānaṁ kathañcana | 1.31 |

vaiṣṇavāni purāṇāni pañcarātrātmakatvataḥ |
pramāṇāny eva manv-ādyāḥ smṛtayo'py anukūlataḥ | 1.32 |

eteṣu viṣṇor ādhikyam ucyate'nyasya na kvacit |
atas tad eva mantavyaṁ nānyathā tu kathañcana | 1.33 |

mohārthāny anya-śāstrāṇi kṛtāny evā'jñayā hareḥ |
atas teṣūktam agrāhyam asurāṇāṁ tamo-gateḥ | 1.34 |

yasmāt kṛtāni tānīha viṣṇunoktaiḥ śivādibhiḥ |
eṣāṁ yan na virodhi syāt tatroktaṁ tan na vāryate | 1.35 |

viṣṇv-ādhikya-virodhīni yāni veda-vacāṁsy api |
tāni yojyāny ānukūlyād viṣṇv-ādhikyasya sarvaśaḥ | 1.36 |

Translation:

30. The four *Vedas* beginning with *Ṛg Vega*, *Pañcarātra*, the *Bharata* (*Mahābhārata*), *Mūla* (original) *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Brahma Sūtra* are said to be self-sufficient authority.

31. Whatever else is not contradictory to these is also authority and not otherwise. Whatever is opposed to these is under no circumstance authority.

32. More *Purāṇas* also which establish the supremacy of Viṣṇu are authority inasmuch as they also convey what is stated in *Pañcarātra*. The *smṛtis* like those of Manu and others are also authority so far as they are consistent (with these).

33. In these the supremacy of Viṣṇu is declared and not of anyone else anywhere. Therefore, they must be so construed only and not otherwise.

34. The other works leading to delusion have been written only under the command of Hari for the attainment of hell by Asuras. Therefore, what is said in them must be rejected.

35. Inasmuch as they have been done by Śiva and others, also as directed by Viṣṇu, whatever is contained therein as being not contradictory to these teachings (of *Vedas* etc.) is not therefore prohibited.

36. Even those Vedic texts which seem to negate the supremacy of Viṣṇu must be construed consistently (with such supremacy); on account of the supremacy of Viṣṇu (expounded) everywhere.

Nārāyaṇāṣṭākṣara-kalpa quoted in *Gītā-bhāṣya*, Introduction:

> *lokeśā brahma-rudrendrā saṁsāre kleśinaṁ janam |*
> *vedārthājñam adhīkāra-varjitaṁ ca striyādikam |*
>
> *avekṣya prārthayām āsu deveśaṁ puruṣottamam |*
> *tataḥ prasanno bhagavān vyāso bhūtvā ca tena ca |*
>
> *anyāvatāra-rūpaiś ca vedānuktārtha-bhūṣitam |*
> *kevalenātma-bodhena dṛṣṭaṁ vedārtha-saṁyutam |*
> *vedād api paraṁ cakre pañcamaṁ vedam uttamam |*
>
> *bhārataṁ pañcarātraṁ ca mūla-rāmāyaṇaṁ tathā |*
> *purāṇaṁ bhāgavataṁ ceti sambhinnaḥ śāstra-puṅgavaḥ ||*

Translation: For the sake of the people who were distraught in *saṁsāra* (the cycle of entanglement), who were devoid of the knowledge of the *Vedas*, even though they were entitled to it, and also for the sake of women and others, the leaders of the worlds, like Brahmā, Rudra and others prayed to the Lord of the *devas*, the best of the *puruṣas* (the Supreme Person). Then, being pleased, and descending as the resplendent Vyāsa, and also in other forms, he imparted the well-enlightened meaning of the *Vedas*, which were seen through means not accessible through the senses, in the best of the *Vedas*, known also as the Fifth *Veda*, the *Mahābhārata.* Thus *Mahābhārata, Pañcarātra, Mūla Rāmāyaṇa, Purāṇas, Bhāgavat Purāṇa*, and many other excellent scriptures were created.

Nārada Purāṇa quoted in *Gītā-bhāṣya* 2.78:

> *pañcarātraṁ bhārataṁ ca mūla-rāmāyaṇaṁ tathā*
> *purāṇaṁ bhāgavataṁ viṣṇu-veda itīritaḥ*
> *ataḥ śaiva-purāṇāni yojyānyanyāvirodhataḥ*

Translation: The *Pañcarātra*, *Mahābhārata*, *Mūla-Ramayana* and *Bhāgavata* are classified as "Viṣṇu-*Veda*." Therefore the Śaiva *Purāṇas* have to be construed so as not to conflict with them.

Vedānta-sūtra-bhāṣya, Madhvācārya's commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.1 and *Gītā-bhāṣya* 2.45:

> *vede rāmāyaṇe caiva purāṇe bhārate tathā*
> *ādāv ante ca madhye ca hariḥ sarvatra gīyate*

Translation: In the Vedic literature, including the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Purāṇas* and *Mahābhārata*, from the very beginning (*ādau*) to the end (*ante ca*), as well as within the middle (*madhye ca*), only Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is explained.

TOOL 12: Give More Authority to Statements And Scriptures that Favor *Sattva-Guṇa* Over the Lower Modes

Method:

We privilege the descriptions and scriptures regarding the mode of goodness over the modes of passion and ignorance in terms of authority of meaning and application.

Evidence and Explanation:

For example, there are three types of *Purāṇas* and other *śāstras*. There are different days of Lord Brahma, where there is most prominent influence of *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, or a mixture of them. Those modes of nature influence events occurring during those days. Those events are described in *Purāṇas* and other *śāstras* available at the present time.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.1.9, purport:

> According to one's attitude, Kṛṣṇa becomes one's direct adviser, or Kṛṣṇa becomes unknown. This is not Kṛṣṇa's partiality; it is His response to one's ability to understand Him. According to one's receptiveness—whether one be a *devatā*, *asura*, Yakṣa or Rākṣasa—Kṛṣṇa's quality is proportionately exhibited. This proportionate exhibition of Kṛṣṇa's power is misunderstood by less intelligent men to be Kṛṣṇa's partiality, but actually it is no such thing. Kṛṣṇa is equal to everyone, and according to one's ability to receive the favor of Kṛṣṇa, one advances in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura gives a practical example in this connection. In the sky there are many luminaries. At night, even in darkness, the moon is extremely brilliant and can be directly perceived. The sun is also extremely brilliant. When covered by clouds, however, these luminaries are not distinctly visible. Similarly, the more one advances in *sattva-guṇa*, the more his brilliance is exhibited by devotional service, but the more one is covered by *rajo-guṇa* and *tamo-guṇa*, the less visible his brilliance, for he is covered by these qualities. The visibility of one's qualities does not depend on the partiality of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; it is due to various coverings in different proportions. Thus one can understand how far he has advanced in terms of *sattva-guṇa* and how much he is covered by *rajo-guṇa* and *tamo-guṇa*.

Lecture *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.24-34, New York, August 12, 1966:

> There are generally three classes of human beings: those who are under the influence of the modes of goodness, and those who are under the modes of passion, and those who are under the modes of ignorance. The whole Vedic scriptures, they are also divided into three divisions according to these modes of material nature. There are eighteen *Purāṇas*. *Purāṇas* means supplementary to the *Vedas*. The *Vedas*, they are written in very difficult language, but in order to explain them to the ordinary person there are *Purāṇas*, *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*. The Vedic principle is described... According to these modes of material nature, there are eighteen *Purāṇas*. Out of that, six *Purāṇas* are in the modes of goodness, and six *Purāṇas* are in the modes of passion, and six *Purāṇas* are in the modes of goodness [ignorance]. So, there are different varieties of sacrifices according to the different class of men. The whole idea of Vedic literature is to give chance to every human being to develop spiritual consciousness under certain rules and

regulations. So, what is applicable to the persons who are in the modes of ignorance, they are not applicable to the persons who are in the modes of goodness, or those who are in the modes of passion, they are not applicable to the modes of goodness.

TOOL 13: Look for a Statement of Equal Force or Meaning

Method:

When comparing and harmonizing two or more statements, decide from the use of other hermeneutical tools if both (all) statements have equal force and meaning, or if one is primary and the others are understood in terms of this primary statement.

Evidence and Explanation:

By SAC collaboratively:

In addition to the rules regarding the three types of meaning of a Sanskrit word or a sentence (literal, etymological and conventional) there are some other minor rules, developed in *Nyāya* and *Mīmāṁsā* schools, usage of which is not confined only to the limits of these schools. For instance, Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa quotes one such rule from the *Nyāya* school in his *Govinda-bhāṣya* 3.2.7 - *tulyārthas tu vikalperan:* "when there are statements of equal force and of same meaning, any one of them can be chosen." But then one should be careful and diligent to see if the statements are really of equal force and the same meaning.

Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa himself discards this maxim in this particular section of his *Govinda-bhāṣya* as inapplicable because what an opponent wants to prove are not statements of equal force. The question under discussion in this *adhikaraṇa* is where does a soul rest during deep sleep? *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* and *Bṛhad-āraṇyāka-upaniṣad* mention three places where the souls enters during deep sleep (the *naḍīs*, the region around the heart and the Brahman in the form of ether). A *pūrva-pakṣī* (disputant) tries to use this logic to try and prove that the soul may choose any of these for rest during deep sleep since there is an option in these equal statements. Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa establishes *siddhānta* that actually the soul rests in Brahman since it is stated in *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* that the soul awakens from Brahman and there is no mention that the soul awakens from the *naḍīs* or the region of the heart. Thus these three statements are not of equal force or equal meaning and therefore there is no option to choose any of them.

TOOL 14: Chronologically Later Statements are Often Stronger

Method:

Give greater stress and authority to statements which occur in the later parts of a text, or which a person said or wrote at a later time. **Note:** this tool should be used in conjunction with other tools, and not on its own merit alone.

Evidence and Explanation:

By Kanāi Kṛṣṇa Dāsa:

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya 8.80:

> **pūrva-parayor madhye para-vidhir balavān**

> **Translation:** Between the former rule and the latter rule, the latter is more important.

And in the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> This is a verse from the *nyāya* literatures.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's usage in *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha.*

Pūrva-mīmāṁsā 6.5.54:

> If there is a contradiction between a former statement and a later statement, the later one is supposed to take precedence.

A simple example can illustrate this point. If one asks for a glass of water and then says, "No, I want a glass of fruit juice." What one has asked actually is the fruit juice and not the water. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī uses this principle in *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha, Anuccheda* 152 to prove the point that Nanda and Yaśodā are eternal parents of Kṛṣṇa.

Two quotes of Śrīla Prabhupāda demonstrate this principle.

Letter to Nirañjan, Honolulu, May 5, 1972:

> In the verse that you refer to, Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna, "Give up all varieties of religiousness, and just surrender unto Me; and in return I shall protect you from all sinful reactions. Therefore, you have nothing to fear." This verse is actually the essence of the whole *Bhagavad-gītā*. Throughout the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa describes the different processes of spiritual realization to Arjuna — *karma yoga*, *jñāna yoga*, *sāṅkhya yoga* — but at the end He says to give up all the different religious systems and just surrender to Him.

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.3.10, Los Angeles, May 28, 1972:

> The *śāstra* is giving you all freedom: "If you like, you do this." But ultimately gives his instruction ... Just like Kṛṣṇa, He has spoken so many things, *jñāna-yoga*,

dhyāna-yoga, *karma-yoga*. But at the end He says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śara...* [Bg 18.66]. "You give up all this nonsense. Simply surrender unto Me." That is the ultimate instruction.

TOOL 15: Using Six Stages of Strength to Determine Authority or Applicability

Method:

Mīmāṁsa-sūtra 3.3.14 applied by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in his *Tattva-sandarbha* and *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha*:

> We can use the method given by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in *Tattva-sandarbha* from the *mīmāṁsa-śāstras* in order to determine which of two conflicting statements within one single scripture has more weight.

He gives 6 stages of strength:

(1) *śruti* — direct statement,

(2) *liṅga* — logical indication of the meaning,

(3) *vākya* — syntactic connection of the words in the sentence,

(4) *prakaraṇa* — combining the information found in both of the statements in order to understand which one is stronger,

(5) *sthāna* — place: proximity in the text in which statements occur, or else the proximity of the rituals they describe in the order of a sacrifice,

(6) *samākhyā* - the etymological meaning of words.

Note: each one is progressively weaker than the previous.

Evidence and Explanation:

śruti-liṅga-vākya-prakaraṇa-sthāna-samākhyā

By SAC collaboratively:

There are six criteria, developed by the *Mīmāṁsa* school, used by our *ācāryas,* especially Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, in their works. Here is a section from his *Sarva-saṁvādinī* commentary to *Tattva-sandarbha* 11 where Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains them:

> *yatra tu vākyāntareṇaiva virodhaḥ syāt tatra balābalatvaṁ vivecanīyam | tac ca śāstra-gataṁ vacana-gataṁ ca | pūrvaṁ yathā śruti-smṛti-virodhe tu śrutir eva balīyasī ity ādi | uttaraṁ ca yathā śruti-liṅga-vākya-prakaraṇa-sthāna-samākhyānāṁ samavāye pāra-daurbalyam artha-viprakarṣāt ity ādi | niruktāni caitāni—*

śrutiś ca śabdaḥ kṣamatā liṅgaṁ
vākyaṁ padāny eva tu saṁhitāni |
sā prakriyā yat karaṇaṁ sakṣāṅkṣam,
sthānaṁ kramo yoga-balaṁ samākhyā || iti |
tac ca virodhitvaṁ parokṣa-vādādi-nibandhanaṁ cintayatvetara-vākyasya
balavad-vākyānugato'rthaś cintanīyaḥ |

Translation by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa: But when there are conflicting statements, we must decide which is stronger and which weaker. This relative strength and weakness applies to differences between one scripture and another as well as to different statements within a single scripture.

An example of the first type of application

Jābāla-śruti:

In a conflict between *śruti* and *smṛti*, the *śruti* is stronger.

An example of the second

Mīmāṁsā-sūtra 3.3.14:

When there is conflict among direct statement, logical indication, the sentence, the larger context, the location, and the etymology, the later items are progressively weaker because they are derived by progressively more indirect methods.

These terms are thus defined: Direct statement "is the word itself," "logical indication" means capability, "sentence" means the words taken together as a whole, the "larger context" is that composition which has a particular expectancy, "location" refers to sequence, and "etymology" is the strength of derivation.

When one understands that a conflict has arisen from causes such as an esoteric expression, one should then interpret one statement in accord with another that is stronger.

In his commentary Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa explains them on the basis of *Jaimini's sūtras'* commentaries:

The philosophers of the *Mīmāṁsā* school developed this method for deciding which among various possible understandings of a scriptural statement is correct, and they originally applied these six criteria to the analysis of sacrificial rituals.

***Śruti* (direct statement)** is the directly perceived meaning of a word or statement. When it is clear and unambiguous, there is no need to resort to the other criteria.

***Liṅga* (logical indication)** is the conventional meaning of a word whose meaning is not at once obvious. That conventional meaning makes a word capable of unequivocally indicating one out of a number of possible meanings. For example, there is a statement in the *Vedas* describing the ritual for preparing sacred kuśa grass: *barhir deva-sadanaṁ dāmi:* "I cut the grass, the seat of the gods." (*Maitrāyaṇīya Saṁhitā* of *Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda* 1.1.4) Etymologically, the word *barhis*

could refer to various kinds of grass, but the conventional usage is that it refers only to *kuśa* grass. To resolve the ambiguity, one must first use the *liṅga-pramāṇa*, which specifies this conventional usage. To derive from this statement an injunction, since for the *Mīmāṁsakas* the only ultimately meaningful statements are injunctions, a second step is required, the presumption of such an unspoken statement as "The cutting of *kuśa* should be done with this *mantra*."

Because applying *liṅga* requires an extra step to arrive at a specific injunction, it is less direct and so will be overruled by a directly perceived meaning (*śruti*) if one is available. For example, there is an injunction: *aindryā gārhapatyam upatiṣṭhate:* "With the *mantra* for Indra one should honor the *gārhapatya* fire." (*Maitrāyaṇīya Saṁhitā* of *Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda* 3.2.4) By *liṅga*, conventional usage, the word *aindryā* would suggest that this sentence enjoins that Indra be honored. This is overruled, however, by the direct sense of the injunction, that the fire instead is meant to be honored. By similar reasoning, the other *pramāṇas* listed in this verse are progressively still weaker because they are even more indirect, each requiring another extra step to arrive at a presumed *śruti*.

***Vākya* (the sentence)** refers in this context to the syntactic linkage between words spoken together. For example, in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 3.5.7.2 it is said, *yasya parṇa-mayī juhūr bhavati na sa pāpaṁ ślokaṁ śṛṇoti*: "One who has a *juhū* ladle made of *palāśa* wood will never be reviled." The simple fact that the adjective *parṇa-mayī* is in grammatical agreement with the noun *juhū* indicates by *vākya-pramāṇa* that being made of this kind of wood alone serves the purpose of the ladle. Although a ladle made of other wood could do the job physically, the transcendental benefit of the sacrifice is accomplished only by using a *parṇa-mayī juhū*.

An example of *vākya's* being overruled by *liṅga* can be found in the pair of statements *syonaṁ te sadanaṁ kṛṇomi, ghṛtasya dhārayā su-śevaṁ kalpayāmi. tasmin sīda, amṛte pratitiṣṭha vrīhīṇāṁ medha, sumanasyamānaḥ*, "[O rice cake], I am preparing a nice seat for you, and with a flow of ghee I am making it agreeable for your use. O cream of the rice grains, please sit on it with a composed mind and remain fixed on this immortal seat." (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 3.7.5.1-2) These are two separate sentences, but their ideas are connected by the pronoun *tasmin* ("on it") at the beginning of the second sentence. From the conventional meanings of the words involved, we can tell that the first sentence is meant for the ritual of preparing a seat for the rice cake and the second is meant for the ritual of inviting the rice cake to take the seat. Although *vākya-pramāṇa* tries to tell us, on the contrary, that these two sentences, as a combined statement, are both meant to be used in either of these rituals, *vākya* is overruled by *liṅga*.

***Prakaraṇa* (context)** is the mutual expectancy of two complementary statements. For example, from the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* (2.6.1.1 and 2.2.5.4) we can consider the two statements *samidho yajati* ("One worships with the kindling sticks") and *darśa-pūrṇamāsābhyāṁ svargakāmo yajeta* ("One who wants to achieve heaven should worship by the Darśa-pūrṇamāsa sacrifices"). The first sentence leaves unanswered the question "Worship for what purpose?" The second leaves unanswered the question "Worship by what means?" But *prakaraṇa-pramāṇa*

allows the meanings of the sentences to be combined. When both *prakaraṇa* and a stronger *pramāṇa* are available, however, prakaraṇa is overruled.

In the absence of a stronger *pramāṇa*, the context of statements may be determined by **sthāna, (proximity)**, either their proximity in the text in which they occur or else the proximity of the rituals they describe in the order of a sacrifice. *Sthāna*, however, may be overruled by *prakaraṇa*. For example, the complex Rājasūya sacrifice includes a ritual for anointing the king. In the texts that set forth the Rājasūya *yajña* there are two statements, both located near the sections describing the *abhiṣeka* (anointing): *akṣair dīvyati* ("He plays dice") and *rājanyaṁ jināti* ("He defeats kings"). By *sthāna-pramāṇa* these two statements might be thought to belong to the *abhiṣeka* ritual, but according to *prakaraṇa-pramāṇa* they belong not to the *abhiṣeka* but to the bigger context of the whole sacrifice.

The last and weakest of the six *pramāṇas* is **samākhyā,** which means the **etymological meaning of words**. In the description of *hotṛ-camasa*, a cup for drinking soma, there is no indication of whose cup it is. But the word *hotṛ-camasa* is a compound derived from *hotṛ* (*Ṛg Veda* priest) and *camasa* (*soma* cup), so *samākhyā-pramāṇa* allows the presumption that it is the Hotā's [the *hotṛ* priest's] cup.

Samākhyā-pramāṇa, however, may be overruled by *sthāna*. In the description of a particular sacrifice there is a section that begins with the heading *pauroḍaśika* ("About the rice-cake offering"). This section mentions several utensils called "the *sāmnāyya* vessels." *Samākhyā-pramāṇa* would use this information to determine that these utensils are meant for general use in offering the *puroḍaśa*. But this section also describes a secondary ritual, one for preparing an offering of milk. *Sthāna-pramāṇa*, therefore, overrules the judgment of *samākhyā* because these vessels are mentioned within the specific description of offering milk.

Examples of these criteria from Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's works

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī uses these criteria in several places in his *Sandarbhas*. Here is an example.

Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha 29:

> In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there are two statements that apparently are in conflict with each other: In the beginning it is stated that Kṛṣṇa is the source of all other form of God (*kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*, 1.3.28), but in the narrative of Mahā-Viṣṇu's meeting with Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna it is stated that they appeared on earth as Mahā-Viṣṇu's expansions (*kalāvatīrṇāv avaner bharāsurān*, 10.89.58). Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains that the latter statement from the 10th Canto is further from the direct meaning since it is an indirect instruction which is a part of a story (*itihāsa*), while the statement in the 1st Canto is a direct unequivocal statement (*śruti*). Thus on the basis of this rule of *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā* preference should be given to the direct statements, śruti, over indirect statements (*vākya* or *samākhyā*).

> If someone wants to argue that Mahā-Viṣṇu's statement "You two appeared as My parts" (*kalāvatīrṇau*) is a direct instruction (*śruti*) given to Kṛṣṇa and thus should prevail over the previous one, then, Jīva Gosvāmī says, it's a wrong interpretation

since (1) Kṛṣṇa is omniscient and never requires instructions, and (2) their meeting was not arranged so that one of them would speak and the other listen; rather Mahā-Viṣṇu stole the brāhmaṇa's children to make Kṛṣṇa show Himself to Mahā-Viṣṇu. Whereas Sūta Gosvāmī acted as a direct instructor of Bhāgavatam, thus his statement (*kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*) is a direct statement (*śruti*), while that of Mahā-Viṣṇu is not.

TOOL 16: Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas Give Different Levels of Authority to Various Commentators: *Ṭīkā Tāratamya*

Note: this tool applies when understanding commentary on *śāstra*.

Non-Devotee, including non-devotional academic, commentary needs to be at the very bottom of the list and understood using other hermeneutic tools and principles.

Method:

In order to determine the amount of universal understanding and application of a statement in a commentary, trace the statement to the commentary's author and determine its relative weight based on the hierarchy assigned by Bhaktisiddhānta. In general, he considers that the more recent the *ācārya,* the higher is the commentary's relative weight. He puts himself at the bottom but we in ISKCON put Bhaktisiddhānta up at the top, right after Śrīla Prabhupāda. Our order of authority, with 1 being the highest authority is as follows:

Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports

Vivṛti (Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura)

Bhāgavatārka-maricī-mālā (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura)

Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura)

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī

Śrīdhara Svāmī

Madhvācārya

Vijayadhvaja

Virarāghava

Śukadeva Ācārya (Kumāra-*sampradaya* author of *Siddhānta-pradīpa*)

Vallabha

Evidence and Explanation:

By Sarvajña Dāsa:

The above list is the *Ṭīkā-tāratamya,* order of priority of commentaries, given by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswati on the basis of *Catuḥ-śloki,* the four kernel verses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* There he listed only commentaries written to that section of the book. Besides these, there are many other commentaries to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* written by other *ācāryas.* Especially, there are many on the Tenth Canto: by Sanātana Gosvāmī, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, and other great Vaiṣṇavas. Therefore, the above list is incomplete and needs further work. In addition, many of the *Bhāgavatam* verses are explained in another *ācārya*'s works: *Caitanya-caritamṛta, Caitanya-bhāgavata, Caitanya-maṅgala, Bṛhad-Bhāgavatamṛta, Laghu-Bhāgavatamṛta,* Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Sandarbhas, Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi, Gopāla-campu,* and many commentaries to those books.

In addition to his other books, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī wrote *Krama-sandarbha* as a separate commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja used the Gosvāmīs' literature to write his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta.* Next Viśvanātha Cakravartī wrote his commentary during a time that was very difficult for our *sampradaya.* He had to solve many difficulties due to various deviations. After him, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa also wrote his books and commentaries to continue the work of Viśvanātha Cakravartī. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura took all his predecessors' work and systematized it for the needs of the broader Vaiṣṇava society. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswati used his father's work to continue the mission of turning the Gauḍīya *sampradaya* into a broad preaching organization, able to distribute pure love of Godhead all over the world. Śrīla Prabhupāda took the same mission and wrote his books for the sake of English-speaking people, living outside of Vaiṣṇava and Vedic culture.

From another point of view, *ācāryas* quote verses or parts of verses in their commentaries in order to explain those books. By examining those quotations, we can also understand what the meaning of those verses is. Thus, for each of the verses we can trace all history of its usage with the help of modern computer programs such as the VedaBase.

In addition, there are commentaries to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* written by non-Gauḍīya *ācāryas.* Sometimes our *ācāryas* don't give any explanation to some particular verses, but the meaning may still be unclear. To understand it, we might consult the commentary of some other non-Gauḍīya *ācāryas,* and find some explanation. The mood while doing that should be that they don't necessarily see the whole picture of reality exactly as our *ācāryas* do, who, as we assume, are on the highest level of understanding reality in terms of *tattva* and *rasa.*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the perfect explanation of that reality. If somebody is not at the same level of understanding of reality, he may give some explanation, which at first looks satisfying, but is actually giving some slightly slanted picture of the reality. Therefore, there is some danger in relying on other non-Gauḍīya *Ācāryas* — both non-Vaiṣṇava and Vaiṣṇava. Gauḍīya *ācāryas* may not explain that particular verse, but there may be some reason why they didn't do that. They could have explained it already in another place, or think that the explanation would be too complicated, or belong to the category of *acintya* (inconceivable). Therefore, we should try to see if in their commentaries to similar verses from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or their other books, such as *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatamṛta* or similar books, there is something, which can explain the verse in question. That should be our first priority. Only then, if their explanations is according to our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta,* we may accept another *ācārya*'s explanations. That should be done with great caution. The main mood is that we accept the six Gosvāmīs, the direct *śikṣā*-disciples

of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, as our primarily authorities, because they imbued His mood and mission.

The general principle is that every *ācārya* takes the core values and philosophy of his predecessors and applies them according to *deśa-kāla-pātra,* time, place and audience. Their application should be seen in that context. In addition to the general historical context, every *ācārya* wrote books for a different audience, starting from beginners up to the highest *mahā-bhāgavata* devotees. Therefore, there may be completely different interpretations of the same verses for the sake of helping those devotees at different stages of their spiritual life. One should be able to know the core principles, established by the very first *ācāryas*, which can't be changed or adjusted despite any external circumstances. If one breaks them, it can lead to many possible deviations. Those core principles should be understood by imbuing the mood of Lord Caitanya and the Six Gosvāmīs. That was the mission given by Lord Caitanya to them, to write the books explaining the essence of our *siddhānta*. Part of that mission was to establish *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the highest *pramāṇa* and Śrīdhara Swāmī as an authoritative commentator. Therefore, they wrote their books based on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and Śrīdhara Swāmī's commentaries.

The problem with Śrīdhara Swāmī's commentaries was that he wrote them for a specific audience, namely *māyāvādi* scholars. Although he gave some statements which may be ascribed to *māyāvāda* philosophy, he did not give them in the way *māyāvādis* do. He always provided a Vaiṣṇava interpretation, which usually goes first, and didn't use radical *māyāvādi* language typical of Śaṅkara and followers. A very clear example of this is his commentary to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.20. Therefore, our *ācāryas* both follow him in his Vaiṣṇava interpretations and politely disagree when he contradicts fundamental principles of our theology. That can be seen primarily in the *Sandarbhas*, as well as other books of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, and in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* commentaries by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura.

It is important to consider that many of the *ācāryas* provide different readings of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures. *Bhāgavatam* versions are more or less centered on Śrīdhara Swāmī's reading, with the exception of Madhva *tattvavādi* followers. Their version of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is quite different from the classical reading accepted by most scholars. They omit three whole chapters of the Tenth Canto, 12–14[35] and many other important verses, and have other verses absent in Śrīdhara Swāmī's reading. In addition, many of the verses have crucial differences, sometimes completely changing their meaning. Moreover, *tattvavādis* have their own whole version of *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, which is consistent with their *siddhānta* both in terms of *tattva* and *rasa*.

Another problem is that sometimes *ācāryas*, such as Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, quote verses from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to support some of their statements. There they often give alternative explanations to the direct meaning as it could be understood from the context of the verse. Applied as the main meaning, that alternative interpretation may confuse somebody who knows the main explanation given by Śrīla Prabhupāda and other *ācāryas* in their commentaries to the verses.

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[35] The *tattvavādis* eliminated these chapters because they consider it impossible for the *ādi-guru* of our entire *sampradaya*, Lord Brahmā, to be illusioned. On the other hand, we do accept these chapters and we do consider it possible, obviously. This fact is of hermeneutical relevance. **Note:** See Tool 11

TOOL 17: *Śāstras* Often Include a Key Statement That Helps to Understand the Meaning and Purpose of the Entire Text

Method:

Identify one *paribhāṣā*, the key statement of a text, which helps to understand the rest of the text.

Evidence and Explanation:

By Drutakarmā Dāsa:

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda does not make direct use of the term *paribhāṣā sūtra*, there are some quotes that indicate he considered some verses as key verses that govern the interpretation of a work.

Lecture *Bhagavad-gītā* 7.7, Vṛndāvana, August 13, 1974:

> Kṛṣṇa means Bhagavān. *Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.28]. This is the conclusion of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

Room Conversation with Mr. and Mrs. James Williams, London, July 23, 1973:

> Mrs. Williams: What is serving God?
>
> Śrīla Prabhupāda: You can see. Stay here for one or two days. You can see how we are serving God. You can learn. You are welcome; we shall give you room, you can stay, and from morning to night you will see how we are serving God.
>
> Mrs. Williams: But there isn't one phrase that tells you what it is?
>
> Śrīla Prabhupāda: Hmm?
>
> Mrs. Williams: There isn't one phrase which sums up your …
>
> Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. There is phrase in Bhāgavatam: *kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.28]. *Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*: "The Supreme Personality of Godhead is Kṛṣṇa."

In the conversation with Professor Hopkins in Philadelphia on July 13, 1975 Śrīla Prabhupāda gave a *paribhāṣā sūtra* for his own body of works:

> Professor Hopkins: A related question, which is a practical question also: I am collecting material for a kind of sourcebook, readings in Hinduism, contemporary as well as classical, and would like to include in these readings some of the things that you have written. Of the things that you have written, what do you consider most important?
>
> Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Premā pumārtho mahān*: the most important thing is how to love God. [Śrīnāth Cakravartī, *Caitanya-mata-mañjuṣā*, Maṅgalācaraṇa]…

Professor Hopkins: Yes, I've seen it. I'm just wondering what your judgment is on what… If you had to say to someone who was going to collect one small section of your work, what would you want them to collect?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is stated in few verses. [aside:] You find out this. *Dharmasya hy āpavargyasya* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.9].

By Brijbāsī Dāsa:

Definition

The technical term *paribhāṣā* literally means "an actual statement which surveys all around" (*pari* + √*bhāṣ*). Patañjali, a famous ancient authority on Sanskrit grammar who wrote a "great commentary" on Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, explains that a *paribhāṣā* statement, being situated in one place, illuminates the whole *śāstra* just like a lamp: "*paribhāṣā punaḥ ekadeśasthā satī sarvam śāstram abhijvalayati pradīpavat*," in *Mahābhāṣya* 2.1.1.

Another definition of *paribhāṣā* well-known among Sanskrit grammarians is *aniyame niyama-kāriṇī paribhāṣā:* "a *paribhāṣā* is a statement that creates a regulation where there wasn't any."

Examples of use

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.28:

> *tatra ca "ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam" iti paribhāṣā-sūtram | yatra yatrāvatārāḥ śrūyante, tatrānyān puruṣāṁśatvena jānīyāt, kṛṣṇas tu svayaṁ bhagavattveneti | pratijñā-rūpam idaṁ sarvatropatiṣṭhate | paribhāṣā hy eka-deśasthā sakalaṁ śāstram abhiprakāśayati yathā veśma-pradīpa iti prāñcaḥ | sā ca śāstre sakṛd eva paṭhyate na tv abhyāseneti vākyānāṁ koṭir api anenaikenāpi mahārāja-cakravartineva śāsanīyā bhaved ity etad viruddhāyamānānāṁ teṣāṁ vākyānām etad anuguṇārthataiva tatra tatra vyākhyeyā | kiṁ ca, teṣāṁ vākyāṁ prākaraṇikatvena durbalatvāt asya tu śruti-rūpatvena prābalyāt | śruti-liṅga-vākya-prakaraṇa-sthāna-samākhyānāṁ samavāye pāradaurbalyam artha-viprakarṣād iti nyāyena tāny evārthāntaratayā saṅamanīyani | na tu tad anurodhenaitad ity ataḥ śrīdhara-svāmi-pādair api tatra tatra tathaiva samādhitam iti |*

Translation by Bhānu Swāmī: In this chapter, *ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam* is a *paribhāṣā-sūtra*, which supplies a general definition for the whole work. Thus, wherever *avatāras* are described in the *Bhāgavatam*, others should be known as expansions of the *puruṣāvatāra*, but Kṛṣṇa should be known as *svayam bhagavān*. This conclusion is prevalent everywhere in the *Bhāgavatam*. It has been said:

> *paribhāṣā hy eka-deśasthā sakalaṁ śāstram abhiprakāśayati yathā veśma-pradīpa*

"The *paribhāṣā* statement, situated in one place, lights up the whole scripture, just as a lamp lights up the whole house."

This *sutra* appears once in the work and is not continually repeated. Though there are millions of statements in the scripture, this *sutra* controls them all like a king. Thus statements which contradict the *sutra* must be explained so that they agree with the *sutra*. That is because these contrary statements are weak, since they belong to secondary subjects in the work, and because the *sutra's* statement is strong, being supported by *śruti*. Thus these statements should be harmonized with the *sutra* by giving them another meaning, according to the rule *śruti-liṅga-vākya-prakaraṇa-sthāna-samākhyānāṁ   samavāye   pāradaurbalyam   artha-viprakarṣād*; where there is a combination of direct statements, inference, rules, discussion, philosophical stances, and interpretations, the later statements are considered progressively weaker in authority, because of their possibility of contrary meaning. (*Jaiminī-sūtra* 3.3.14) This is not just deference to a rule. Śrīdhara Svāmī has reconciled things in this way in many places.

However, *paribhāṣā* is usually pointed out either by the author himself or by his commentators, *ācāryas*. There are no specific rules to ascertain which statements are *paribhāṣās.* Also, many sacred texts do not have a *paribhāṣā,* e.g. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, various *Purāṇas*, etc.

Extracted from the explanation for Tool 20

A *paribhāṣā-sūtra* is an unequivocal statement that establishes the theme of a text in which there may be apparently unrelated or even contradictory statements. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī gives an elaborate and fascinating argument in *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha*, *Anuccheda* 29 to establish that the *paribhāṣā-sūtra* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the *śloka* beginning *ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.28.

In his *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha* commentary he gives the following definition.

Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha, Anuccheda 29:

> A *paribhāṣā-sūtra* explains the proper method for understanding a book. It gives the key by which one may understand the true purport of a series of apparently unrelated facts and arguments.

Thus if the direct meaning of a statement seems to contradict the *paribhāṣā-sūtra*, then that statement should be interpreted in such a way that it conforms to the governing theme of the *paribhāṣā-sūtra*. The *paribhāsa* is like a ruling king, whom all others have to obey. If they don't obey, then it is our duty to make them obey.

TOOL 18: Study Holistically and Repeatedly

The meaning of a part can only be understood by knowing the meaning of the whole. In other words, the statements of guru, *sādhu*, and *śāstra* should be studied holistically, the part through the whole and the whole through its parts. Unless one has studied all of guru, *sādhu*, and *śāstra*, it will be difficult to understand a particular statement of guru, *sādhu* or *śāstra*. In order to accomplish this, the reader should study the passage repeatedly, moving constantly between the specific passage and its larger context in the book.

Method:

Study an entire *śāstra* and all the work of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Unless one has read the entire *śāstra*, it will be difficult to understand a specific statement of that *śāstra* accurately. So, while we can try to understand as we read for the first time, until we have read and tried to understand the entire *śāstra*, our ideas about the meanings of parts of that *śāstra* should be provisional. Similarly, in order to understand a statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda, we need to be familiar with all of his works. The principle is "understand the part in the context of the whole."

Studying an entire *śāstra* and all the work of Śrīla Prabhupāda involves study of the individual parts to understand them on their own, as we can only understand the meaning of the whole *śāstra* by understanding its individual verses, purports, and chapters. The principle is "understand the whole through its constituent part."

Holistic hermeneutics involves both of the above: part in the context of the whole and the whole by its constituent parts. Therefore, study repeatedly, moving constantly between specific passages and the larger context.

Holistic study would include carefully observing and reflecting on the lives of guru and *sādhu*, or in other words, observing how they put the *śāstras* into practice, either by directly observing them or through hearing narrations about them. Such observation and reflection can provide an integrated understanding.

In Chapter 4 of *Bhāgavata Mahātmya* too long reading of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* at one sitting is described as tamāsic, because too long reading is accompanied by forgetfulness:

tāmasaṁ yat tu varṣeṇa sālasaṁ śraddhayāyutam |
vismṛti-smṛti-saṁyuktaṁ sevanaṁ tac ca saukhya-dam || 4.27 ||

Therefore, this tool should be combined with Tool 29: Prayer, Surrender, and Waiting for Revelation and Tool 30: Hearing, Meditating, Applying, Praying.

Evidence:

Lecture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.1.19, Los Angeles, January 15, 1970:

> Now, Śukadeva Gosvāmī is giving one historical example. Example is better than precept. Generally, common men, if they see one example, they understand better. So how, one's mind being fixed up on the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, even for a moment, he can get relief from the greatest danger, Śukadeva Gosvāmī is narrating one story.

Regarding understanding the parts in relation to the whole, we quoted the following from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in the explanation for Principle 6.

Jaiva-dharma, Chapter 18: *Nitya-dharma*: *Sambandha*, *Abhidheya* and *Prayojana*, Part 6: An Analysis of Simultaneous Oneness and Difference:

> The *Vedas* are immensely voluminous. Their exact essence can only be extracted by scrutinizing every single *śloka* from each of the *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇas*, and so on. Isolated and out-of-context statements cannot present a clear picture, but rather distort the real meaning. Ultimately, therefore, Śrī Caitanya tooth-combed the

entire Vedic literature and formulated His most sublime transcendental teachings, presenting the most elevated philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, that the *jīva* and matter are simultaneously one with and distinct from the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes this as well in his *Daśa-mūla-tattva* 6: The *Jīva*—Śrī Hari's Separated Energy, The Error of Māyāvādi Philosophy:

> To take statements out of context from one part of the *Veda* and in attempting to give one's own interpretation to them, interpolate the meanings from another section to support one's fabricated idea is to misconstrue the Vedic conclusion.

Compiled by Gaurāṅga Dāsa:

It is the duty of the GBC to see that book reading is going on in every temple, as we can see from this lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.3, Melbourne, April 5, 1972:

> Similarly, the GBC member means they will see that in every temple these books are very thoroughly being read and discussed and understood and applied in practical life. That is wanted, not to see the vouchers only, "How many books you have sold, and how many books are in the stock?" That is secondary … the GBC members should divide some zones and see very nicely that things are going on, that they are chanting sixteen rounds, and temple management is doing according to the routine work, and the books are being thoroughly discussed, being read, understood practically. These things are required. Now, suppose you go to sell some book and if somebody says, "You have read this book? Can you explain this verse?" then what you will say? You will say, "No. It is for you. It is not for me. I have to take money from you. That's all." Is that very nice answer?

Letter to Satsvarupa, Los Angeles, June 16, 1972:

> Repeated reading reveals "new lights." I have given you everything, so read and speak from the books and so many new lights will come out. We have got so many books, so if we go on preaching from them for the next 1,000 years, there is enough stock. Just like we have spent one day discussing one *śloka*, so you introduce this system in all of the temples, and very quickly the devotees will make spiritual progress by getting knowledge.

Letter to Bahurupa dasa, November 22, 1974:

> I am pleased to hear that you are chanting sixteen rounds daily and reading my books regularly and following the four rules. In my books the philosophy of Krsna consciousness is explained fully so if there is anything which you do not understand, then you simply have to read again and again. By reading daily the knowledge will be revealed to you and by this process your spiritual life will develop.

Reflection is important, as explained in this letter to Paramānanda, July 29, 1969:

> You must read *Bhagavad-gītā* at least a few verses every day and think about them throughout the day. The best thing is to read one chapter daily, but if you can

meditate upon a few verses of *Bhagavad-gītā* every day, that is better than reading for simply one hour and then forgetting the topics until the next reading.

Letter to Haṁsadūta, June 22, 1972:

I want you, leaders especially, to become absorbed in the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and become yourselves completely convinced and free from all doubt. On this platform you shall be able to carry on the work satisfactorily, but if there is a lack of knowledge or if there is forgetfulness, everything will be spoiled in time. So especially you must encourage the students to read our books throughout the day as much as possible, and give them all good advice how to understand the books, and inspire them to study the things from every point of view. Better to boil the milk very vigorously and make it thick and sweet—that is the best progress. So let us concentrate on training our devotees very thoroughly in the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness from our books, from tapes, by discussing always, and in so many ways instruct them in the right propositions.

Letter to Svarūpa Dāmodara, January 7, 1976:

I have also suggested for the G.B.C.'s consideration, that we introduce a system of examinations for the devotees to take. Sometimes there is criticism that our men are not sufficiently learned, especially the *brāhmaṇas*. Of course second initiation does not depend upon passing an examination. How one has molded his life—chanting, attending *āratī*, etc., these are essential. Still, *brāhmaṇa* means *paṇḍita*. Therefore I am suggesting the following examinations: Bhaktiśāstrī ... Bhaktivaibhava ... Bhaktivedānta ... Bhaktisārvabhauma ... [These four tests] can correspond to entrance [examination], B.A., M.A., Ph.D.

Letter dated February 3, 1976:

Regarding the examinations, the idea is that anyone, after studying the books, who wants to gain the title of Bhaktiśāstrī, can take the exam. This is academic—just like a *brāhmaṇa* with śāstric knowledge and a *brāhmaṇa* without. It is optional—one who wants may take. The real purpose is that our men should not be neglectful of the philosophy. The examinations will begin on Gaura-pūrṇimā 1977, not this year, so there is no reason why any of the devotees should give up their normal engagement.

In the above letter and in his letter to Svarūpa Dāmodara, Prabhupāda clarifies the issue by stating that *brāhmaṇas* are not required to pass the exam. Prabhupāda makes the further point that advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness goes beyond academic study to include such activities as chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and attending the morning program. Certainly the daily reading of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books is as basic to the prosecution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as any other devotional activity, but the conscientious reader does so within the context of a well-rounded Kṛṣṇa conscious life. Some *brāhmaṇas* are śāstric and some are not, but all devotees should read the books and then supplement that reading by practical work for Kṛṣṇa.

TOOL 19: Reference *Siddhānta*

Method:

Choose a concise exposition of Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* that one understands reasonably well. Use this exposition as the foundation against which to compare the statement under consideration from *guru-śāstra-sādhu,* the statement one is trying to understand. The following steps should be used in this order. The order indicates an increasing necessity of using a wide range of hermeneutic principles and tools. In other words, one requires little or no application of hermeneutical tools for the first category of statements, whereas there is often an in-depth need of hermeneutics for statements in categories 3 and 4.

Step 1: if the statement under consideration is a restatement or elucidation of *siddhānta*, ascertain if it belongs in the category of:

> a) *sambandha* such as: "the living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts"[36],
>
> b) *abhidheya* such as: "my dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am"[37] or
>
> c) *prayojana* such as: "he attains My spiritual nature"[38]. One can employ appropriate hermeneutical tools, for example, to understand that "spiritual nature" is not impersonal, and to explore in what ways the statement can be currently applied.

Step 2: if the statement is a contextual application of *siddhānta* such as: "carrying pure *kuśa* grass in his hand, the *brahmacārī* should dress regularly with a belt of straw and with deerskin garments"[39], select and apply appropriate hermeneutic tools to, for example, identify the underlying *siddhāntic* tenet(s) and its application in our own context.

Step 3: if the statement supports *siddhānta* in the sense of helping people to practically work towards realization of *siddhānta* such as: "four-legged animals like deer and goats, as well as food grains, are meant to be the food of human beings,"[40] or "when I have killed this diplomatic Viṣṇu, the demigods, for whom Lord Viṣṇu is the life and soul, will lose the source of their life and wither away,"[41] then use appropriate hermeneutic tools to understand in what way the statement relates to *siddhānta* by analyzing speaker, mood, source, varieties of meaning, cultural or historical context, genre, hierarchy, relation to key statements, and so forth.

Step 4: if the statement is opposed to *siddhānta* such as Buddha's atheistic statement or Kṛṣṇa's argument to Nanda that we should worship our work as God[42], then use appropriate hermeneutic tools to assess the meaning and intention through hierarchies, holistic study, parts of an argument, historical and cultural context, tradition, and so forth.

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[36] *Bhagavad-gītā* 15.7

[37] *Bhagavad-gītā* 11.54

[38] *Bhagavad-gītā* 14.19

[39] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.12.4 as a contextual application of *abhidheya*

[40] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.4.9

[41] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.2.9 points towards *siddhānta* in stating that Viṣṇu is the source of the demigods

[42] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.24.18

Evidence and Explanation:

Note: there is a separate extensive section specifically about the role of a concise statement of *siddhānta* in hermeneutics.

The following indicates that Lord Caitanya Himself would compare other statements about spiritual life to *siddhānta*.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 10.112–113:

> ### grantha, śloka, gīta keha prabhu-pāśe āne
> ### svarūpa parīkṣā kaile, pāche prabhu śune

grantha—scriptures; *śloka*—verses; *gīta*—songs; *keha*—anyone; *prabhu-pāśe*—to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu; *āne*—brings; *svarūpa*—Svarūpa Dāmodara; *parīkṣā kaile*—after he examined; *pāche*—later; *prabhu*—Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu; *śune*—hears.

Translation: If someone wrote a book or composed verses and songs and wanted to recite them before Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Svarūpa Dāmodara would first examine them and then correctly present them. Only then would Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu agree to listen.

> ### bhakti-siddhānta-viruddha, āra rasābhāsa
> ### śunite nā haya prabhura cittera ullāsa

bhakti-siddhānta—conclusive statements about the science of devotional service; *viruddha*—opposing; *āra*—and; *rasa-ābhāsa*—overlapping of transcendental mellows; *śunite*—to hear; *nā*—not; *haya*—becomes; *prabhura*—of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu; *cittera*—of the heart; *ullāsa*—jubilation.

Translation: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was never pleased to hear books or verses opposed to the conclusive statements of devotional service. The Lord did not like hearing *rasābhāsa*, the overlapping of transcendental mellows.

Letter to Kṛṣṇa Devī, Los Angeles, February 17, 1970:

The way of discussion with Dr. Staal reqares a little bit of knowledge in the *śāstras* which is called *siddhānta*. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* it is said that nobody should be neglectful of the *siddhānta* because by siddhāntic conclusion one becomes firm in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. So these siddhāntic conclusions are being mentioned in all my books, and the boys and girls in our Kṛṣṇa Society should now give more attention for studying the books very attentively. And to get the strength, one should chant the beads sixteen rounds without fail. In this way, when the devotee is constantly engaged in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, at that time, Kṛṣṇa will give all intelligence from within how to make steady progress in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness.

I hope in Washington center you will ask all the boys and girls to follow this method, because henceforward we will have to face many scholars and philosophers to stabilize our Kṛṣṇa Consciousness movement.

TOOL 20: Six Criteria to Know the Main Import and Conclusion of a Work of *Śāstra*

6 tātparya-liṅgas:

(1) What is stated in the beginning and the end of a text (*upakrama* and *upasaṁhāra*),

(2) What is repeated again and again (*abhyāsa*),

(3) What is unique (unobtainable otherwise) in the text (*apūrvatā*),

(4) The result of the knowledge explained in the text (*phala*),

(5) What is glorified throughout the text (*arthavāda*),

(6) Logical support (*upapatti*)

In the above list, note that successively later criteria are stronger in determining the focus of a text.

Method:

In order to determine the main topic of the text one has to look for these six criteria: what is said in the beginning and in the end, usually they are similar and point to the topic explained in the text, what is repeated in the text again and again, and so on. Finding these six helps to know the overall meaning and purpose of the text and so allows one to explain specific statements throughout the text.

Evidence and Explanation:

By Drutakarmā Dāsa:

Śrīla Prabhupāda made statements that can be taken as being about the individual criteria.

1) What is stated in the beginning and ending of a text (*upakrama* and *upasaṁhāra*)?

Teachings of Lord Caitanya 24, Talks with Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya:

> That the impersonal Brahman is dependent on the Supreme Personality is also stated in the *Hayaśīrṣa-pañcarātra*. In every other Vedic scripture, such as the Upaniṣads, whenever there is talk of the impersonal Brahman in the beginning, the Supreme Personality is finally established at the end.

Room Conversation in Bombay, September 19, 1973:

> Vyāsadeva has given Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in the Tenth Canto of *Bhāgavata*. Nine cantos are devoted for understanding Kṛṣṇa, beginning from *janmādy asya yataḥ, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.1.

2) What is repeated again and again (*abhyāsa*)?

The Nectar of Devotion 5: The Purity of Devotional Service:

> In *Bhagavad-gītā* also, the Lord says, "Give up all your occupations and just become surrendered unto Me. I give you assurance that I shall give you protection from all sinful reactions." One may think that because he is surrendering unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead he will not be able to perform all of his other obligations. But the Lord says repeatedly, "Don't hesitate. Don't consider that because you are giving up all other engagements there will be some flaw in your life. Don't think like that. I will give you all protection." That is the assurance of Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 13.5, Paris, August 13, 1973:

> Repeatedly *śāstra* says. Kṛṣṇa says, *duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam, Bhagavad-gītā* 8.15, "This place is simply for miserable condition of life." *Duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam, Bhagavad-gītā* 8.15, "And still, it is temporary."

3) What is unique in the text (*apūrvatā*)?

Bhagavad-gītā 1.1, purport:

> One will find in the *Bhagavad-gītā* all that is contained in other scriptures, but the reader will also find things which are not to be found elsewhere. That is the specific standard of the Gītā.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Ādi*, Introduction as well as *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, Introduction:

> In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa showed Arjuna His universal form because Arjuna was His very dear friend. Upon seeing Kṛṣṇa as the Lord of the universes, however, Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa to forgive the familiarity of his friendship. Lord Caitanya goes beyond this point. Through Lord Caitanya we can become friends with Kṛṣṇa, and there will be no limit to this friendship. We can become friends of Kṛṣṇa not in awe or adoration but in complete freedom. We can even relate to God as His father or mother. This is the philosophy not only of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* but of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as well. There are no other scriptures in the world in which God is treated as the son of a devotee.

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.14-16, San Francisco, March 24, 1967:

> *Vāsudeva-kathā* means Kṛṣṇa, to hear about Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa has many activities. In the world there are many scriptures—undoubtedly they accept God. But there is no information of God's activities. That is the difference between *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures.

Letter to Yadunandana, San Francisco, April 13, 1968:

> You can mention some parallels from Christian literature while explaining *Bhagavad-gītā*, but you cannot find in any other scripture in the world the full information as given in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Room Conversation, Bombay, April 19, 1977:

This is the … That's all. *Bhāgavata* is *siddhānta-kāraṇa*, so correct, so accurate, and so nicely composed. *Kim anyaiḥ śāstraiḥ*. In the beginning there is *kim anyaiḥ śāstraiḥ*: "There is no more use of any other *śāstra*." *Śrīmad-bhāgavate mahā-muni-kṛte kim anyaiḥ śāstraiḥ*[43] [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.2], *nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalam idam* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.3], *kim anyaiḥ śāstraiḥ*. *Nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalam idam*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. It is meant for the highly qualified, thoughtful philosopher. They are not flowery language. It's fact. *Nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalam idam*. So we are trying to give to the world this *nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalam*. Let them take it and take full advantage. Essence of all the Vedic knowledge. If they are intelligent.

4) The result of the knowledge contained in the text (*phala*)

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.29, Los Angeles, October 4, 1972:

> *janma guhyaṁ bhagavato*
> *ya etat prayato naraḥ*
> *sāyaṁ prātar gṛṇan bhaktyā*
> *duḥkha-grāmād vimucyate*
> *[Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.29]*

Translation: Whoever carefully recites the mysterious appearances of the Lord with devotion in the morning and in the evening gets relief from all miseries of life."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: This is called *phala-śruti*,[?] result.

5) What is glorified throughout the text (*arthavāda*)?

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.9, purport:

The root cause of the despondency of Vyāsadeva was his deliberate avoidance of glorifying the Lord in his various editions of the *Purāṇas*. He has certainly, as a matter of course, given descriptions of the glories of the Lord (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) but not as many as given to religiosity, economic development, sense gratification and salvation. These four items are by far inferior to engagement in the devotional service of the Lord. Śrī Vyāsadeva, as the authorized scholar, knew very well this difference. And still instead of giving more importance to the better type of engagement, namely, devotional service to the Lord, he had more or less improperly used his valuable time, and thus he was despondent.

The above quotation shows that Śrīla Prabhupāda was aware of how what is glorified throughout a text reveals the meaning of the text.

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[43] The reading we see is *kiṁ vā parair*, though maybe he was quoting a variant reading, as he sometimes did for some other texts.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.10, purport:

> Social literary men, scientists, mundane poets, theoretical philosophers and politicians who are completely absorbed in the material advancement of sense pleasure are all dolls of the material energy. They take pleasure in a place where rejected subject matters are thrown. According to Svāmī Śrīdhara, this is the pleasure of the prostitute-hunters.

> But literatures which describe the glories of the Lord are enjoyed by the paramahaṁsas who have grasped the essence of human activities.

6) Logical support (*upapatti*)

I could not find any statement of Śrīla Prabhupāda making use of *upapatti* in the sense of logical support. But there are quotes showing he is aware of the principle, namely that the meaning of a text can be understood by considering the conclusions supported by logic in the text.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Ādi* 7.106:

> According to learned scholars, there are three different sources of knowledge, which are called *prasthāna-traya*. According to these scholars, *Vedānta* is one of such sources, for it presents Vedic knowledge on the basis of logic and sound arguments. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (13.5) the Lord says, *brahma-sūtra-padaiś caiva hetumadbhir viniścitaiḥ*: "Understanding of the ultimate goal of life is ascertained in the *Brahma-sūtra* by legitimate logic and argument concerning cause and effect." Therefore the *Vedānta-sūtra* is known as *nyāya-prasthāna*, the *Upaniṣads* are known as *śruti-prasthāna*, and the *Gītā*, *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas* are known as *smṛti-prasthāna*. All scientific knowledge of transcendence must be supported by *śruti*, *smṛti* and a sound logical basis.

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 13.5, Paris, August 13, 1973:

> From time immemorial there are different views. But Kṛṣṇa refers herewith that *brahma-sūtra-padaiḥ hetumadbhir viniścitaiḥ*. Others ... There are many other books of knowledge. They are not very reasonable. That is dogmatic. But *hetumadbhiḥ*, if we accept with our logic and sense, that is first-class book which gives us information of the *ātmā*, *Paramātmā*.

Applying Six Criteria
(to Know the Main Import and Conclusion of a Work of Śāstra)

The Six Indicators of Meaning

By Rādhikā Ramaṇa Dāsa:

Near the end of the *Paramātma-sandarbha in, Anuccheda* 105 Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī sets out to determine the overall purport of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He does this by using the six indicators of meaning (*tātparya-liṅga*).

> The opening and concluding statements (*upakrama-upasaṁhāra*), repetition (*abhyāsa*), novelty (*apūrvatā*), result (*phala*), subordinate statements of commendation or praise (*arthavāda*), and reasoning (*upapatti*) are the indicators which are used to determine the purport.[44]

These six criteria for determining the purport of a text are one of the features of *Mīmāṁsā* hermeneutics almost universally adopted by Vedāntists. Advaitin writers employ the technique for everything from determining the meaning of a particular Upaniṣadic passage to showing the purport of the entire *Veda*. Śaṅkarācārya, for example, uses the technique to show that "*tat tvam asi*" is the purport of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad,* Chapter 6 that the identity of the *jīva* and Brahman is the theme of all the *Upaniṣads*, and that Brahman is the subject matter of the entire *Veda* (Murty 83-84). Madhvācārya asserts that the technique must be used in order to reach the harmonious concordance of all scriptures that is described in the *sūtra* "*tat tu samanvayāt.*"

In order to get a feel for how this hermeneutical method is used in *Vedānta*, let us look at two examples—first, briefly, Śaṅkarācārya's *Chāndogya* commentary[45], and then, more extensively, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's use of the technique on the *Bhāgavatam*. Śaṅkara's *Chāndogya* commentary was standard reading for all later *Vedānta ācāryas*, and so would have been quite familiar to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, although not very agreeable because of its nondualist conclusions. The sixth chapter of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* begins thus:

> There was one Śvetaketu, the son of Āruṇi. One day his father told him: "Śvetaketu, take up the celibate life of a student, for there is no one in our family, my son, who has not studied and is the kind of Brahmin who is so only because of birth."

> So he went away to become a student at the age of 12 and, after learning all the *Vedas*, returned when he was 24, swell-headed, thinking himself to be learned, and arrogant. His father then said to him: "Śvetaketu, here you are, my son, swell-headed, thinking yourself to be learned, and arrogant; so you must have surely asked about that rule of substitution by which one hears what has not been heard of before, thinks of what has not been thought of before, and perceives what has not been perceived before?"

> "How indeed does that rule of substitution work, sir?"

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[44] Here Jīva Gosvāmī is quoting a well-known verse which lists the six *tātparya-liṅgas*:
upakramopasaṁhārāv abhyāso 'pūrvatā phalam
arthavādopapattī ca liṅgaṁ tātparya-nirṇaye
[45] For further discussion of Śaṅkara's usage of the six criteria, see Jacqueline Hirst's book, *A way of teaching: studying Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta.*

"It is like this, son. By means of just one lump of clay one would perceive everything made of clay—the transformation is a verbal handle, a name—while the reality is just this: It's clay."[46]

Śaṅkara takes the phrase *yena avijñātaṁ vijñātam*: "that by which one perceives/ knows what is unperceived/ unknown," as the opening statement (*upakrama*). We can immediately make the following observation: the passages that fill the six categories are a matter of interpretive choice. The opening statement chosen by Śaṅkara is not the first sentence of Chapter 6, it occurs in verse number three, nor is it the only phrase in the first part of Chapter 6 that is meaningful enough to serve as the opening statement. The selection of the opening statement is up to the commentator, and the same can be said of the other indicators as well. This arbitrariness, however, is not in itself a drawback, for the task of the commentator is to show that a particular reading will *harmonize* the entire text in question. If a particular application of the six-indicator method leads to a consistent and coherent understanding of the text, that in itself is sufficient reason to accept the selection of verses as valid.

Śaṅkara's chosen concluding phrase, however, is indeed the very last statement of Chapter 6: "that constitutes the self of this whole world; that is the truth; that is the self (ātman). And that's how you are, Śvetaketu," Olivelle 156. The key phrase here, of course, is "*tat tvam asi*," usually translated as "you are that." Since the opening and concluding statements must be harmonious in meaning, the opening phrase "that by which one perceives" should be understood as referring to the same thing as "tat tvam asi." In other words, you are that by which one perceives.

Once the concordance (*ekavākyatā*) of the opening and concluding statements has been established, the other categories come without much difficulty. Repetition (*abhyāsa*) is quite obvious; the phrase "*tat tvam asi*" is repeated nine times. The subject matter is novel (*apūrvatā*), Śaṅkara argues, because it cannot be known by any of the other means of knowledge, such as perception or inference. The opening paragraph quoted above also makes it clear that the knowledge being presented here is different from any other learned by Śvetaketu. The fruit (*phala*) of this knowledge is relief from ignorance or bondage and a return to freedom, described in 6.14. The entire enterprise of self-realization is praised (*arthavāda*) by the very context in which the knowledge was delivered. Śvetaketu came home after twelve years of study, a master of all branches of Vedic learning, taught by "illustrious men," 148. Yet he knew nothing of the self. His father's instructions to him about his own identity (you are that!) thus stand a step above all other knowledge. Finally, the *Upaniṣad* argues and reasons (*upapatti*) by way of analogies—clay, copper, salt, and others. All of the examples point to the same thesis—the identity of the individual self and Brahman. And since all six indicators of meaning are in agreement, Śaṅkara can conclude that "you are that" is indeed the purport of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad,* Chapter 6.

Let us now turn to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's application of the six indicators in *Anuccheda* 105 of the *Paramātma-sandarbha*. His choice of verses from the *Bhāgavatam* for each of the six categories is as follows:

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[46] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* , translated by Patrick Olivelle, page 148.

Opening and Concluding Statements

For the opening statement, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī simply quotes the very first verse of the *Bhāgavatam*:

> *janmādy asya yato 'nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñaḥ svarāṭ*
> *tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ*
> *tejo-vāri-mṛdāṁ yathā vinimayo yatra trisargo 'mṛṣā*
> *dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi*

For the concluding statement, he selects verse 19 in Chapter 13 of Canto 12:

> *kasmai yena vibhāsito 'yam atulo jñāna-pradīpaḥ purā*
> *tad-rūpeṇa ca nāradāya munaye kṛṣṇāya tad-rūpiṇā*
> *yogīndrāya tad-ātmanātha bhagavad-rātāya kāruṇyatas*
> *tac chuddhaṁ vimalaṁ viśokam amṛtaṁ satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi*

Here, we have a situation that is in some ways opposite to what we had with Śaṅkara's *Chāndogya* commentary. There, Śaṅkarācārya accepted the last sentence of *Chāndogya* Chapter 6 as the concluding statement, but selected an opener that conformed in meaning but was not the very first sentence of the chapter. Here, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī does accept the first statement of the *Bhāgavatam* as the opening statement, but identifies the closing statement as a verse that occurs four verses before the end.

The very last verse of the Bhāgavatam, 12.13.23, goes like this:

> *nāma-saṅkīrtanaṁ yasya sarva-pāpa-praṇāśanam*
> *praṇāmo duḥkha-śamanas taṁ namāmi hariṁ param*

> **Translation:** I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord, Hari, the congregational chanting of whose holy names destroys all sinful reactions, and the offering of obeisances unto whom relieves all material suffering.

This verse, or any of the three before it, could just as well have served as concluding statements. But the reason for Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's selection is clear: the verse ends with the phrase "*satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi*," which matches the first verse exactly. This fact in itself validates the selection, for the initial assumption is that there is harmony between the opening and concluding statements; the expert exegete must simply find it. The three words, "*satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi*," are crucial to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary on the opening verse. Through them, he comments upon the first *sūtra* of the *Brahma-sūtra*, and establishes Bhagavān as the object of meditation or inquiry.

Sometimes, however, it becomes impossible to find harmony between the opening and concluding statements, and in such instances the question arises as to which holds precedence in determining the meaning of the text. This has sparked considerable debate among Vedāntins of different traditions, with the Advaitins arguing for the supremacy of the opening statement (*upakrama*), while the Madhvas favor the concluding statement (*upasaṁhāra*). In his work *Upakrama-parākrama,* the sixteenth century Advaitin writer, Appaya Dīkṣita, argues that if the introduction and conclusion deal with the same subject matter but conflict in their viewpoint, the introduction should be given priority, and the conclusion interpreted in conformity with it. Madhvācārya, on the other hand, holds that the six indicators are listed in ascending order of

strength, from the opening statement (*upakrama*) to the argument (*upapatti*). In response to the *Upakrama-parākrama,* Vijayīndra Tirtha, a disciple of the famous Madhva exponent Vyāsarāja, composed the *Upasaṁhāra-vijaya,* "Victory of the Conclusion." Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī follows the Madhvas in giving precedence to the conclusion, although his commentary on the opening verse far exceeds his commentary on the conclusion.

Repetition and Novelty

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī selects verse 12.12.66 from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to serve as evidence of both repetition and novelty:

> *kali-mala-saṁhati-kālano 'khileśo*
> *harir itaratra na gīyate hy abhīkṣṇam*
> *iha tu punar bhagavān aśeṣa-mūrtiḥ*
> *paripaṭhito 'nupadaṁ kathā-prasaṅgaiḥ*

Translation: Lord Hari, the supreme controller of all beings, annihilates the accumulated sins of the Kali age, yet other literatures do not constantly glorify Him. But that Supreme Personality of Godhead, appearing in His innumerable personal expansions, is abundantly and constantly described throughout the various narrations of this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

It is worth noting that here, unlike in the *Chāndogya* case, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī does not give an example of repetition in the Bhāgavatam, but only a statement that it does occur: "Bhagavān is described in every line." This kind of repetition cannot be substantiated by a simple count; it is more a question of evaluation: Is every line of the Bhāgavata somehow related to Bhagavān? Does Bhagavān permeate every narrative of the *Purāṇa*? Jīva Gosvāmī agrees that the *Bhāgavatam* sometimes describes divinities other than Bhagavān, but it does so by putting them in proper relation to Him, instead of uncritically equating them.

Nārāyaṇa and others are described here, but they are described as perfect forms (*aśeṣa-mūrti*) or descents (*avatāra*) of Him. Bhagavān, who has such characteristics, is sung here, not, as in other places, without making distinctions. By the use of different narratives, Bhagavān is pointed to in every line (*anupadam*) and is described (*paṭhita*) from all perspectives (*pari*), or in other words, he is stated clearly.

This clear focus on Bhagavān is the unique characteristic of the *Bhāgavatam*. In other words, the repetition (*abhyāsa*) itself becomes the novelty (*apūrvatā*). The *Bhāgavata* is not the only place where Bhagavān is praised; rather, it is the only place where he is praised so relentlessly. If we put the repetition and novelty together, we get a very strong claim: only Bhagavān is described in the *Bhāgavatam* and only the *Bhāgavatam* clearly describes Bhagavān.

Result

The fruit of reading the *Bhāgavatam* is described in the Second Canto, 2.2.37:

> *pibanti ye bhagavata ātmanaḥ satāṁ*
> *kathāmṛtaṁ śravaṇa-puṭeṣu saṁbhṛtam*
> *punanti te vidūṣitāśayaṁ*
> *vrajanti tac-caraṇa-saroruhāntikam*

Translation: Those who drink through aural reception, fully filled with the nectarean message of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the beloved of the devotees, purify the polluted aim of life known as material enjoyment and thus go back to Godhead, to the lotus feet of Him [the Personality of Godhead].[47]

Normally, the statement of result (*phala-śruti*) occurs at the end of a text, to inform readers or listeners of what rewards they can expect from their pious act. The *Bhāgavatam* also has such a statement at the end of the twelfth canto. Still, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī selects a verse from much earlier in the *Purāṇa*, namely, the second chapter of the second book. Why does he not use the standard statement of the result at the end?

The context in which this verse appears may provide one reason for its selection. The conversation between Śukadeva Gosvāmī and Parīkṣit Maharaja, which lies at the core of the *Purāṇa*, begins in the second canto. King Parīkṣit, who is awaiting death on the bank of the Ganges, asks Śukadeva Gosvāmī to tell him about the duty of one who is about to die. The sage's initial and essential answer comprises the first two chapters of the second canto. Jīva Gosvāmī's chosen result-verse occurs at the end of the second chapter, after which Śukadeva Gosvāmī pauses and says, "Thus I have answered your question regarding the duty of a dying man," 2.3.1. In one sense, the *Bhāgavatam* is complete at this point. Śukadeva Gosvāmī has answered King Parīkṣit's urgent question, and, with the result-verse quoted above, assured him that his instructions will have the desired effect. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's chosen verse can thus also be seen as a statement of the result at the end of a text. The difference is that, in contrast to the twelfth canto, the result-verse here carries more weight, for the proof of its efficacy can be seen in its surrounding narrative. The context of the verse adds power and reliability to its promises.

Statement of Praise

The following verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.13.1 serves as the commendatory statement:

> *yaṁ brahmā varuṇendra-rudra-marutaḥ stunvanti divyaiḥ stavair*
> *vedaiḥ sāṅga-pada-kramopaniṣadair gāyanti yaṁ sāmagāḥ*
> *dhyānāvasthita-tad-gatena manasā paśyanti yaṁ yogino*
> *yasyāntaṁ na viduḥ surāsura-gaṇā devāya tasmai namaḥ*

Translation: Sūta Gosvāmī said: Unto that personality whom Brahmā, Varuṇa, Indra, Rudra and the Maruts praise by chanting transcendental hymns and reciting the *Vedas* with all their corollaries, *pada-kramas* (special sequential arrangements of *mantras*) and *Upaniṣads*, to whom the chanters of the *Sāma Veda* always sing, whom the perfected yogīs see within their minds after fixing themselves in trance and absorbing themselves within Him, and whose limit can never be found by any demigod or demon — unto that Supreme Personality of Godhead I offer my humble obeisances.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has very little to say on this verse. Its role as a commendatory statement is clear: Bhagavān (or the "*deva*") is praised by all types of advanced beings, using various methods and media: prayer, hymn-recitation, meditation, and intellectual endeavor. The

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[47] Śridhara Svāmī also identifies this verse as a description of the *śravaṇādi-phalam*, the fruit of hearing the *Bhāgavatam*.

speaker, Sūta Gosvāmī, also glorifies the Lord by offering his obeisance. This verse appears in the final chapter of the *Bhāgavatam*, as an auspicious invocation to the chapter and conclusion to the *Purāṇa*.

Reasoning

The reasoning or argument (*upapatti*) is provided by the following verse, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.2.35. It is translated here in a way that makes the technical structure of the verse clear:

> *bhagavān sarvabhūteṣu lakṣitaḥ svātmanā hariḥ*
> *dṛśyair buddhyādibhir draṣṭā lakṣaṇair anumāpakaiḥ*

> **Translation:** By physical objects (*dṛśyaiḥ*) such as the intelligence, by his own self (*svātmanā*), by characteristics (*lakṣaṇaiḥ*), and by arguments that lead one to make inferences (*anumāpakaiḥ*), Bhagavān Hari is perceived in all beings as the seer.

This verse appears in the same context as the result-verse quoted above. Śukadeva Gosvāmī is concluding his answer to King Parīkṣit's query about the duty of a man about to die. Śukadeva Gosvāmī's final recommendation, given in the next verse, is that Bhagavān Hari should be heard about, glorified and remembered by all people, everywhere, all the time. In order to do this, one must first of all understand the existence and nature of Bhagavān. This can be done by the methods listed in the verse quoted above. Lord Brahmā used these methods at the beginning of creation to study the *Veda, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.2.34, and came to the same conclusion, namely, that Bhagavān should be worshiped by *bhakti-yoga, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.2.33.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī gives a relatively lengthy and involved explanation of this verse, as one would expect for a verse that is regarded as the source of reasoning or argument (*upapatti*). The grammatical structure of the text itself is quite simple. The subject, which is Bhagavān who is Hari who is the seer, is understood (*lakṣitaḥ*) by a number of means (*dṛśyaiḥ*, *buddhyādibhiḥ*, *svātmanā*, *lakṣaṇaiḥ*, and *anumāpakaiḥ*). The challenge lies in determining how all these different items point to Bhagavān, and how they all relate to each other. Jīva Gosvāmī divides the items into two groups: the entities whose existence leads us to conclude the existence and nature of Bhagavān, and the methods of reasoning by which we arrive at that conclusion.

In the first group are three entities: physical objects (*dṛśyaiḥ*), such as the intelligence (*buddhyādibhiḥ*), the individual living entity (*svātmanā*), and Bhagavān's own portion, the inner controller (Paramātmā, also *svātmanā*). In the second group are the two logical categories of *lakṣaṇa* (characteristics) and *anumāpaka* (that which leads one to make inferences).

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī interprets the word "*lakṣaṇaiḥ*," by characteristics, as referring to the use of *anupapattis*, or untenables, the opposite of *upapatti*, or proper reasoning. *Anupapatti* is a tool for argument by contradiction; if one can show that a particular viewpoint leads to a logically untenable position, then that viewpoint must be rejected.[48] The untenability can often be elicited by using the characteristics (*lakṣaṇas*) of the entities concerned. For example, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī attempts to show that the characteristics of the entities mentioned in the verse, physical objects, living entities, and the inner controller, lead to untenables that cannot be

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[48] The most famous instance of argumentation using *anupapattis* is found in Rāmānujācārya's *Śrībhāṣya* 1.1.1. See John Grimes, *The Seven Great Untenables*.

resolved without positing the existence of another entity, namely, Bhagavān. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's specific untenables will be given below.

As for the second logical category mentioned in the verse (*anumāpakaiḥ*), Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī understands it as a reference to the use of *vyāpti*, or invariable concomitance. Here is why: The word "*anumāpaka*" literally means "that which causes an inference (*anumāna*)." Most schools of Indian logic agree that *vyāpti*—the fact that the thing to be proved (*sādhya*) and the reason for its presence (*hetu*) are always found together—is one of the most important components of a successful inference (Kappuswami 228). Take, for example, the following standard example: "This mountain has smoke; wherever there is smoke there is fire; therefore, the mountain has fire." The second part of the inference, namely, the invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) of fire (the *sādhya*) and smoke (the *hetu*), is clearly the driving force here.

For his inferences, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī uses a three-part syllogism structure: (1) the thesis to be proven (*pratijñā*), (2) the reason (*hetu*), and (3) the exemplification (*udāharaṇa*), which includes the invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*). Using the mountain example, we can structure a syllogism as follows: (1) The mountain has fire (2) because it has smoke and (3) whatever has smoke also has fire, as in a hearth.[49] Ironically, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī does not explicitly state the *vyāpti* in the third part, it is so essential that it is obvious. For example, the first inference given below reads in Sanskrit, "*buddhyādīni kartṛprayojyāni, karaṇatvād, vāsyādivat.*" Here, the thesis is "the intelligence, etc., are dependent upon an agent," the reason is "because they are instruments," and the example is "just like an axe, etc." The unstated concomitance is "an instrument is always dependent upon an agent." The thesis is typically in the nominative case, the reason is in the ablative, and the exemplification is a word ending in the suffix "*vat*" (like).

In order to arrive at the existence and status of Bhagavān, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī builds a hierarchy of entities mentioned in the verse: physical objects, living entities (*jīva*), the inner controller (*antaryāmī* or Paramātmā), and Bhagavān; and then moves from one to the next using both untenability and inference. First, by examining the nature of the physical elements, he attempts to show the existence of the *jīva* as the actual seer and controller in the body. From the existence of the *jīva*, he deduces the presence of the *antaryāmī* as the instigator of activity, and from the *antaryāmī*, he arrives at Bhagavān. Here are the pairs of untenables and inferences which he uses to progress from one level to the next:

Physical objects reveal the *jīva* as the conscious perceiver:

> Untenable: without the self-luminous perceiver, it is not possible for the inert physical objects such as the intelligence to perceive.

> Inference: the intelligence, etc., are dependent upon an agent, because they are instruments, just like an axe, etc.

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[49] Jīva Gosvāmī is using a shortened version of the classical *parārtha-anumāna*, "inference for another," which has two additional parts after the three given above. These are (4) the subsumptive correlation (*upanaya*) and (5) conclusion (*nigamana*). The former is the assertion that we indeed have a particular instance of the general rule here, e.g. "this mountain has smoke." The latter states the specific result: "Therefore, this mountain has fire." Some schools of logic, such as the Mīmāṁsakas, regard these two parts as superfluous. For a full discussion of the *parārtha-anumāna* and the debates surrounding it, see S. Kappuswami Sastri's *A Primer of Indian Logic*, pages 215-231.

The *jīva* reveals the existence of an inner controller (*antaryāmī*):

> Untenable: because one can see that the *jīvas* are not independent agents or enjoyers, and because karma, or activity, is also inert, therefore the *jīvas'* inclination for being the agent or enjoyer cannot take place without a particular, inner instigator.[50]

> Inference: the *jīvas* are inspired by the instigating agent because they are not independent, just like woodcutters and other laborers.

The *antaryāmī* reveals the existence of a yet superior being, Bhagavān:

> Untenable: If someone superior enters the *jīvas* with *all* his portions, then he would not be the Lord (*īśvara*), because of the absence of completeness.[51]
>
> Inference: The not-very-influential *jīva's* inner controller is the Lord (*īśvara*), and he is dependent upon his own source (Bhagavān). This is also due to completeness, just like the lordship of one who employs woodcutters and other laborers is (ultimately) dependent on the lordship of the king.

Thus, by dividing the contents of the argument-verse into two groups, and then pairing each entity in the first group with each item in the second group, we can get a total of six arguments establishing Bhagavān.

Before concluding his discussion of the sixth category, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī pauses to make a slightly broader point. Not only do the entities and techniques mentioned in the *Bhāgavatam* verse prove the existence of Bhagavān, but also any scripturally based method of reasoning will ultimately lead to Bhagavān. To illustrate his point, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī quotes another verse from the *Bhāgavatam,* 3.32.33: "A single object is appreciated differently by different senses due to its having different qualities. Similarly, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is one, but according to different scriptural injunctions He appears to be different." Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī takes this as a statement of *gati-sāmānyam*, "sameness of destination" or "consistency of import." This principle of scriptural harmony is drawn from *Brahmasūtra* 1.1.11, "*gati-sāmānyāt*," which argues that Brahman and not the living entities or the inert material aggregate is the cause of the universe "because all the scriptures consistently state this to be the case." Demonstrating scriptural harmony is, of course, one of the primary tasks of *Vedāntic* hermeneutics, and the six indicators of meaning described above play an important role in that achieving that goal.

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[50] In other words, the impetus for activity cannot be located in the *jīva*, nor in the activity itself. Therefore, it must be found in the *antaryāmī* (Paramātmā).

[51] If the *antaryāmī* were the complete Bhagavān himself, it would mean that the Lord had exhausted all of himself in the creation. The *antaryāmī* is therefore only a secondary controller, a partial manifestation of Bhagavān for executing the functions of the creation.

By SAC collaboratively:

There are six criteria to ascertain the true import and main conclusion of a text, which were mentioned in Śrī Madhva's commentary to *Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.4, where he ascribed them to a work *Bṛhat-saṁhitā*:

> *upakramopasaṁhārāv abhyāso 'pūrvatā phalam*
> *arthavādopapattī ca liṅgaṁ tātparya-nirṇaye*

(1) **Upakrama-upasaṁhāra**, the introductory and concluding statements. These two are placed in a single category as they should be similar (*ekavākyatā*).

(2) **Abhyāsa**, what is repeated in the book.

(3) **Apūrvatā**, what is unique to the book or what cannot be known by any other means.

(4) **Phala**, the result that can be obtained by realizing the knowledge of the book or even by reading the book.

(5) **Arthavāda**, what is glorified throughout the book.

(6) **Upapatti**, the topics that the author has defended the most by giving the greatest number of logical arguments.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa used these six criteria in their works *Sarva-saṁvādinī* to *Tattva-sandarbha* 11 and *Paramātma-sandarbha* 105-106, *Govinda-bhāṣya* 1.1.3 and *Prameya-ratnāvalī* 4.2. In the *Paramātma-sandarbha* 105-110 Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī shows how to use these six criteria to show that the main topic of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is *Bhagavān*.

Here is a summary of his lengthy analysis:

(1) Upakrama and **upasaṁhāra,** the introductory and concluding statements, should speak of a main idea, which is common to both (*ekavākyatā*):

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.1:

> *janmādy asya yato 'nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñaḥ svarāṭ*
> *tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ*
> *tejo-vāri-mṛdāṁ yathā vinimayo yatra tri-sargo 'mṛṣā*
> *dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi*

Translation: O my Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, son of Vāsudeva, O all-pervading Personality of Godhead, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You. I meditate upon Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa because He is the Absolute Truth and the primeval cause of all causes of the creation, sustenance and destruction of the manifested universes. He is directly and indirectly conscious of all manifestations, and He is independent because there is no other cause beyond Him. It is He only who first imparted the Vedic knowledge unto the heart of Brahmā, the original living being. By Him even the great sages and demigods are placed into illusion, as one is bewildered by the illusory representations of water seen in fire, or land seen on water. Only because

of Him do the material universes, temporarily manifested by the reactions of the three modes of nature, appear factual, although they are unreal. I therefore meditate upon Him, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is eternally existent in the transcendental abode, which is forever free from the illusory representations of the material world. I meditate upon Him, for He is the Absolute Truth.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.13.19:

kasmai yena vibhāsito'yam atulo jñāna-pradīpaḥ purā
tad-rūpeṇa ca nāradāya munaye kṛṣṇāya tad-rūpiṇā
yogīndrāya tad-ātmanātha bhagavad-rātāya kāruṇyatas
tac chuddhaṁ vimalaṁ viśokam amṛtaṁ satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi

Translation: I meditate upon that pure and spotless Supreme Absolute Truth, who is free from suffering and death and who in the beginning personally revealed this incomparable torchlight of knowledge to Brahmā. Brahmā then spoke it to the sage Nārada, who narrated it to Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vyāsa. Śrīla Vyāsa revealed this *Bhāgavatam* to the greatest of sages, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and Śukadeva mercifully spoke it to Mahārāja Parīkṣit.

(2) *Abhyāsa*, repetition, and

(3) *Apūrvatā*, novelty.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.12.66:

kali-mala-saṁhati-kālano'khileśo
harir itaratra na gīyate hy abhīkṣṇam
iha tu punar bhagavān aśeṣa-mūrtiḥ
paripaṭhito'nupadaṁ kathā-prasaṅgaiḥ

Translation: Lord Hari, the supreme controller of all beings, annihilates the accumulated sins of the Kali age, yet other literatures do not constantly glorify Him. But that Supreme Personality of Godhead, appearing in His innumerable personal expansions, is abundantly and constantly described throughout the various narrations of this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Since *Bhagavān* is not known as such in any other book, this verse also is an example of *apurvatā*, novelty.

(4) Phala, the result of reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* in 2.2.37:

pibanti ye bhagavata ātmanaḥ satāṁ
kathāmṛtaṁ śravaṇa-puṭeṣu sambhṛtam
punanti te viṣaya-vidūṣitāśayaṁ
vrajanti tac-caraṇa-saroruhāntikam

Translation: Those who drink through aural reception, fully filled with the nectarean message of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the beloved of the devotees, purify the polluted aim of life known as material enjoyment and thus go back to Godhead, to the lotus feet of Him [the Personality of Godhead].

(5) Arthavāda, glorification.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.13.1:

> *yaṁ brahmā varuṇendra-rudra-marutaḥ stunvanti divyaiḥ stavair*
> *vedaiḥ sāṅga-pada-kramopaniṣadair gāyanti yaṁ sāma-gāḥ*
> *dhyānāvasthita-tad-gatena manasā paśyanti yaṁ yogino*
> *yasyāntaṁ na viduḥ surāsura-gaṇā devāya tasmai namaḥ*

Translation: Unto that personality whom Brahmā, Varuṇa, Indra, Rudra and the Maruts praise by chanting transcendental hymns and reciting the *Vedas* with all their corollaries, *pada-kramas* (special sequential arrangements of *mantras*) and *Upaniṣads*, to whom the chanters of the *Sāma Veda* always sing, whom the perfected *yogīs* see within their minds after fixing themselves in trance and absorbing themselves within Him, and whose limit can never be found by any demigod or demon—unto that Supreme Personality of Godhead I offer my humble obeisances.

(6) Upapatti, logical support or fitness. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.2.35:

> *bhagavān sarva-bhūteṣu*
> *lakṣitaḥ svātmanā hariḥ*
> *dṛśyair buddhy-ādibhir draṣṭā*
> *lakṣaṇair anumāpakaiḥ*

Translation: The Personality of Godhead Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is in every living being along with the individual soul. And this fact is perceived and hypothesized in our acts of seeing and taking help from the intelligence.

Here is another example of using these six criteria to determine the true meaning of a smaller portion of a book. In his *Govinda-bhāṣya* 1.1.3 Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa applies the criteria to a well-known passage from *Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad* 4.6-7 to show that *śāstra* teaches that there is a difference between *jīva* and *bhagavān*, in other words, duality as opposed to monism.

> *dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā*
> *samānaṁ vṛkṣaṁ pariśaṣvajāte*
> *tayor anyaḥ pippalaṁ svādv atty*
> *anaśnann anyo 'bhicakāśīti*
> *samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno*
> *'nīśāya śocati muhyamānaḥ*
> *juṣṭaṁ yadā paśyati anyam īśam*
> *asya mahimānam eti vīta-śokaḥ*

Translation: Two companion birds sit together in the shelter of the same *pippala* tree. One of them is relishing the taste of the tree's berries, while the other refrains from eating and instead watches over His friend. Although the two birds are in the same tree, the enjoying bird is full of anxiety and morose; but if, somehow, he turns to his friend, the Lord, and knows His glories, at once he is freed from all anxiety.

Below is Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's analysis:

> **(1)** **_Upakrama_** **and** **_upasaṁhāra_** (same beginning and concluding statements): *dvā suparṇā* (two birds) and *anyam īśam* (the other [bird], the Lord).
> **(2)** **_Abhyāsa_** (repetition): *tayor anyaḥ* (the other of the two), *anaśnann anyo* (the other who does not eat), *anyam īśam* (the other bird, the Lord) - here we have a word *anya* (other) repeated three times.
> **(3)** **_Apūrvat_**ā (novel knowledge): without *śāstra* the difference between the Lord and *jīva* could not be known.
> **(4)** **_Phala_** (the result of knowing the Lord, the other bird): *vīta-śoka* (freedom of grief).
> **(5)** **_Arthavāda_** (glorification): *asya mahimānam* ([knowing] His glories).
> **(6)** **_Upapatti_** (logic): *anaśnann anyo* (the other bird does not eat). This means that although the Lord does not eat the fruits He still remains satisfied, while the first bird is full of anxiety although trying to enjoy the fruits. This shows that they cannot be one.

But what if there is a conflict between these criteria? Śrīla Madhvācārya states that they have an ascending priority: *upakramādi-liṅgānāṁ balīyo hy uttarottaram:* "Among the six criteria, each is stronger than the preceding one" (*Anuvyākhyāna*, 3.4.181, 1600). Madhva's commentator Śrī Jayatīrtha briefly explains the reasons behind this:

> *upasaṁhārasya vyākhyāna-rūpatvena tad-virodhy-upakramāprāmāṇyopapattes tasya tato 'pi prābalyam | ekatroktād api bahulokteḥ prābalyād abhyāsasyopakramopasaṁhārābhyāṁ prābalyam | ekatra bahu-vāroktād api mukhyasya prābalyad apūrvatāyā upakramopasaṁhārābhyāsebhyaḥ prābalyam | phalasyoddeśyatvād upakramādibhyaḥ prābalyam | karaṇākaraṇayor iṣṭāniṣṭa-kathanādi-rūpārthavādasya phala-mātrādhikyād upakramādibhyaḥ prābalyam | upapatteḥ sarva-mūlatvena sarvataḥ prābalyam iti |*

> **Translation:** Because concluding statements are of the nature of explanation, it is logical to accept the statements in the beginning as not authoritative if they contradict concluding statements. Therefore, concluding statements are stronger. What is repeated many times is stronger than what is stated only once, thus *abhyāsa* (repetition) is stronger than introductory and concluding statements. If the main idea is stated only once (and is not otherwise known by any other source) it is stronger than what is repeated many times, thus *apūrvatā* is stronger than previous criteria. Since *phala* is the result or the aim of the book or discourse, it has priority over previous criteria. Glorification describes the desirability or undesirability of doing or not doing something and thus it is stronger than mere stating of a result. Logical support (*upapatti*) has priority over all criteria, being their basis.

The preference of concluding statements over introductory ones may sometimes not be so obvious and, in fact, it was a cause for heated debates between Advaitins and some Mīmāṁsaka*s* on one side and Vaiṣṇavas of Madhva-*sampradāya* on the other. The Vaiṣṇava view is that concluding statements should have priority over starting statements because in general the starting statements are "what is to be explained" (*vyākhyeya*), while the concluding statements are "explanation" (*vyākhyāna*).

Similar logic is quoted in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya* 8.80 in the story of Rāmacandra Purī:

pūrva-parayor madhye para-vidhir balavān

> **Translation:** Between the former rule and the latter rule, the latter is more important.

In his purport to the verse previous to this Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> The above-mentioned verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* gives two injunctions. The first, called *pūrva-vidhi*, is that one should not praise, and the second, *para-vidhi*, is that one should not criticize. As will be apparent from the following verse, the injunction against praise is less important than the injunction against blasphemy. One should carefully observe the *para-vidhi*, although one may neglect the *pūrva-vidhi.* Thus, the actual injunction is that one may praise but should not criticize. This is called *śleṣokti,* or a statement having two meanings. Rāmacandra Purī, however, acted in just the opposite way, for he neglected the *para-vidhi* but strictly observed the *pūrva-vidhi.* Since he avoided following the principle of not criticicizing, Rāmacandra Purī broke both the rules.

However, sometimes statements in the beginning should be given preference if, for example, they contain some of the more powerful criteria. Thus, if some idea is repeatedly emphasized in the beginning and not in the end, it should have priority.

Another consideration in proper understanding of a scripture is checking alignment with *paribhāṣā-sūtra*. A *paribhāṣā-sūtra* is an unequivocal statement that establishes the theme of a text in which there may be apparently unrelated or even contradictory statements. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī gives an elaborate and fascinating argument in *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha*, *Anuccheda* 29 to establish that the *paribhāṣā-sūtra* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the *śloka* beginning *ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ*. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.28) In his *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha* commentary he gives the following definition: "A *paribhāṣā-sūtra* explains the proper method for understanding a book. It gives the key by which one may understand the true purport of a series of apparently unrelated facts and arguments." (*Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha, Anuccheda* 29) Thus if the direct meaning of a statement seems to contradict the *paribhāṣā-sūtra*, then that statement should be interpreted in such a way that it conforms to the governing theme of the *paribhāṣā-sūtra*. The *paribhāsa* is like a ruling king, whom all others have to obey. If they don't obey, then it is our duty to make them obey.

However, the overall mood in understanding of apparently contradictory statements in scriptures should be that of harmonizing. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī quotes an interesting verse from *Kūrma-purāṇa* in *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 5.237 urging one to harmonize apparently contradictory statements from *śāstras* without rejecting one or the other:

> *yataḥ śrī-kaurme —*
> *virodho vākyayor yatra*
> *nāpramāṇyaṁ tad īśyate*
> *yathāviruddhatā ca syāt*
> *tad arthaḥ kalpyate tayoḥ*

Translation: When contradictions are found in the Vedic scripture, it is not that one statement is wrong. Rather, both statements should be seen in such a way that there is no contradiction.

TOOL 21: Some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Statements Have Universal Application, Whereas Others are Applicable in a Particular Context

The following is the general hierarchy of Śrīla Prabhupāda's words in terms of universality of application:

    Books
    Legal documents and similar papers
    Lectures
    Letters
    Conversations
    Remembrances without written or recorded corroboration

Method 1:

#1 from the list above is the highest in universality of meaning and application, and #5 is the least.

Other important considerations are:

- Śrīla Prabhupāda's words should not be unduly severed from their context.

- Words intended for a particular time, place, person, or circumstance must not be forced upon another. To different devotees at different times and places, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave differing advice. The instructions given for one person at one time and place and in one set of circumstances may not be suitable for another.
- When quotations are cited as evidence, their meaning should be clear and unequivocal. We should not try to bluff, presenting as definitive evidence a quotation whose meaning is fuzzy.

- We should weigh a statement from Śrīla Prabhupāda carefully when we know he modifies or contradicts it elsewhere. **Note:** see also explanation in Tool 22.

- Language that seems absolute or universal may or may not indicate universal application, depending on the context. Such statements can be seen as absolutely true in a narrow context of a particular part of a particular *līlā* rather than in a universal context and the essential underlying point can be seen as universal. Or they can be understood as general statements which apply to most aspects of the subject, though there may be exceptions.

- Be careful when you count. One way to drive a point in is to make it again and again. So we pay special heed to statements made by Śrīla Prabhupāda or the scriptures repeatedly, many times over. Note, however, that merely counting lots of "hits" doesn't make your case strong. Your quotations should be true to their context, clear in their meaning, free from contradiction elsewhere, and thoroughly relevant to the point you wish to make.

- Evidence should be relevant. The quotations you offer must actually uphold what you're trying to say.

- Thoroughly understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings. That means we must not only study it, but follow it.

- Regarding statements claimed to have been heard by devotees directly from Śrīla Prabhupāda, or in a dream, but without any audio or written source; such statements need to be evaluated in terms of other valid *pramāṇa* such as, *sādhu*, *śāstra* and guru, especially Prabhupāda's other statements.

Method 2:

- Don't apply a historical critical method to Śrīla Prabhupāda's siddhāntic statements supported by *śāstra*.

- Apply a historical critical method minimally rather than maximally, recognizing that Śrīla Prabhupāda is guided by Kṛṣṇa's direction.

- By identifying what eternal principle Śrīla Prabhupāda is applying, we can see to what extent he adjusts it for the particular time, place, and circumstance without giving up the principle. **Note:** see *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.15.27, 1.19.24, and possibly 5.1.35.

- Śrīla Prabhupāda's internal purpose, relationship with Kṛṣṇa, and mission is not influenced by historical context, although the application of that mission may be influenced.

Note: in the explanation section for this tool there is an essay from Jayādvaita Swāmī that explains the hierarchy of evidence from Śrīla Prabhupāda. There are also many relevant points in the question and answer section.

Evidence and Explanation:

By Urmilā-devī dāsī:

While everything Śrīla Prabhupāda said, wrote, or did has authority, the application and understanding of his works varies according to the source and the circumstance.

In general, statements in Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports have more universal application. Statements in lectures are directed at a particular audience and so may be more specific to the context. Letters may be very individual instructions and we often do not have access to the letter Śrīla Prabhupāda received to which he is replying, so the context may be unclear or unknown.

Conversations by their nature are the most difficult from which to draw universal conclusions, since often pronouns' antecedents are unclear and the subject at hand may suddenly shift dramatically without indication in a transcript or even audio, as the shift may have happened due to walking to a new location, or something visual that is not apparent. Conversations that are on video recordings are, therefore, easier to fully understand than those that are only audio. Finally, there are many instances of devotees who recall what Śrīla Prabhupāda said or did, but there is no corroborating evidence in written, audio, or video form.

Another consideration is that audio or video recordings of Śrīla Prabhupāda gives us his exact words as he spoke them. His books were edited at his desire and therefore editors often changed specific words, phrases, and so forth. Secretaries generally typed Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters and also changed wording somewhat.

Keeping the above in mind, purports generally have the most universal application but using specific words and phrases from purports as evidence may be done cautiously as they may be wording done by editors. It is best to check if those specific terms or phrases are also used elsewhere, especially in audio or video recordings. Regarding specific wording, it is good to keep in mind that Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes makes general points in language that seems absolute rather than general. This point is discussed, with evidence, in the question and answer section. Also, some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements in his purports are descriptive of other ages or other circumstances and not prescriptive for our times and circumstances. Thus, looking at context using other hermeneutic tools is important.

With lectures we have Śrīla Prabhupāda's exact words but the context is often more constrained than are his purports. For example, there are many higher-level topics that Śrīla Prabhupāda writes about in his books but rarely, or never, discusses in public lectures.

Letters and conversations are often very individually tailored and may not have universal applicability. Statements there should be either clearly intended by Śrīla Prabhupāda for general application or corroborated elsewhere. Even if Śrīla Prabhupāda in a letter or conversation makes a statement that he states is applicable to all ISKCON members, or all people, one should research whether or not he gave different instructions at a later date or in different circumstances, as such is common.

When using statements without any written or recorded corroboration, remembered instructions, research to see if Śrīla Prabhupāda give similar instructions that are written or recorded. Note if it's a memory of only one person, or if several people share the same memory. Consider the specific individual who is recounting his or her memory. Finally, if the remembered instructions are reasonably reliable, consider context using other hermeneutic tools.
Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes makes statements in absolute language which he does not intend to be understood absolutely. Such convention of speech is also found in the *śāstra* itself, and is common in the general mode of speech in all languages. Here we look at a simple example.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.9.65, purport:

> No one is more satisfied than the father of a person who is credited with glorious activities.

Suppose one takes the above sentence literally and completely out of context, as well as without reference to the *tattva* and *rasa* of our *siddhānta*. It could then appear that the most satisfied person in any situation or condition, ever, is a father whose son has done wonderful things, and others have given the son credit for those wonderful things. When comparing such a literal and non-contextual explanation to our *siddhānta*, we immediately understand that Śrīla Prabhupāda is not restating *siddhānta* here. According to *siddhānta*, the most satisfied person is one who is rendering pure devotional service to the Lord. When explaining this statement in terms of the *Bhāgavatam* as a whole, again we find the famous verse.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.6:

> The supreme occupation [dharma] for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self.

We could also question whether Śrīla Prabhupāda intends this sentence to apply to all ordinary dealings. In other words, we could ask whether Śrīla Prabhupāda is intending to communicate that in all instances a father is more satisfied than a mother with hearing glorification of their son, or that there is no greater material satisfaction experienced by anyone at any time in any circumstances than a father hearing his son rightly glorified. Other statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda, such as: "Materialists think that sexual indulgence is the greatest happiness in this material world," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.9.45, purport, refute such an explanation.

Therefore, we understand that Śrīla Prabhupāda's sentence is absolutely true in a narrow context of a particular part of a particular *līlā* rather than in a universal context. Looking further at the narrow context, we understand that Uttānapāda felt guilt and remorse for Dhruva's leaving, and great relief at his return. His relief and joy were increased by the public's glorification of Dhruva. So, in this particular context where the *Bhāgavatam* describes the joy of Dhruva's mothers, half-brother, the citizens, and the demigods, it was Uttānapāda who felt the most satisfaction.

What is perhaps most interesting is that an indirect explanation of Śrīla Prabhupāda's sentence does, indeed, bring us to *siddhānta*, whereas a direct and literal reading, as demonstrated above, does not. An indirect explanation indicates that Śrīla Prabhupāda may be implying the fact that *śāstra* and our *ācāryas* often state that pleasing the devotee is greater than pleasing the Lord. Such is true because the Lord, as the father of all living beings, finds no greater satisfaction than when his son or devotee is credited for glorious deeds.

By SAC conjointly:

We may find some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements difficult to understand. In such cases, we can check if Śrīla Prabhupāda himself has explained his statement elsewhere, or if *śāstra* has explained it. If no such specific references are available, we can consult with learned and faithful followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda to arrive at a scripturally harmonious understanding.

While many of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements are direct quotes from *śāstra* or clearly based on śāstric sources, others are not. While making these latter statements, if he takes the same position consistently, such statements have strong general authority. If he takes different positions while addressing a subject, then we can seek an underlying principle that helps reconcile those statements.

Some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements may be difficult to understand because they appear to contradict current established facts, yet we know that liberated souls do not make mistakes. Śrīla Prabhupāda defines mistakes as "unintentional sins," it is in that sense that liberated souls never commit mistake, *Śrī Iśopaniṣad* 18. Śrīla Prabhupāda's presentation of *siddhānta* is always perfect. Of course, Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed that no soul is ever omniscient, only God is. So, liberated souls may err in terms of grammar and usage, in recollection of verses, in details of material knowledge or in details of śāstric knowledge. Śrīla Prabhupāda also sometimes used absolute language which can be seen as absolutely true in a narrow context of a particular part of a particular *līlā* rather than in a universal context, and the essential underlying point can be

seen as universal. Or he used absolute language to describe something that is generally true.

Some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements may be difficult to understand or accept because they appear to differ from those of previous *ācāryas*, or they seem historically influenced, or are presently socially unacceptable. Whenever there are differences between Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous *ācāryas*, we try to reconcile them with due respect for both. When such reconciliation is difficult, we defer to Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements. Śrīla Prabhupāda presented the eternal truths of Kṛṣṇa consciousness according to the historical context in which Kṛṣṇa placed him. His spiritual views, although responsive to his historical context, were not dictated by it. At the same time, he sometimes adjusted teachings and practices based on his understanding of the modern cultural context. He sometimes quoted from historical sources familiar to him to supplement his scriptural teachings, although he did not take such sources as totally credible. Regarding statements that are socially unacceptable today, our default position is to accept Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements. Simultaneously, we need to follow our tradition of respectful questioning and take responsibility for presenting his message understandably. Underlying scriptural principles can never be rejected, but we may make adjustments in social, historical, and cultural applicability in terms of what practices we expect of ISKCON members. In doing so, we must keep in mind factors such as current local legalities and the qualifications of ISKCON members to carry out that practice.

When looking at how our previous *ācāryas* handled questions such as the above, we find that they have demonstrated a hermeneutic of faith, not suspicion, while doing the needful to address their particular contexts.

Regarding statements attributed to Śrīla Prabhupāda where there is no audio or written confirmation, or instructions received in dreams

Some devotees give as an example of Śrīla Prabhupāda's humility towards all living beings, ascribing to him: "Grass are living beings like us — so, we shouldn't walk on grass." Since Śrīla Prabhupāda did walk on grass on many occasions, such statements ascribed to him needn't be taken as an all-applicable *pramāṇa*.

Similarly, statements ascribed to Śrīla Prabhupāda that contradict self-evident facts needn't be taken as an authoritative prediction, especially when there's no audio source backing it.

Example:

Śrīla Prabhupāda Līlāmṛta, SPL30, London: A Dream Fulfilled:

> "By the year 2000, no one will see the light of day," Prabhupāda said. "Cities will be forced to live underground. They will have artificial light and food, but no sunlight."

As there is no audio source backing this prophecy ascribed to Śrīla Prabhupāda, its veracity is questionable, even if it is found in a published book.

About statements or orders received in dreams

If a particular statement or order of Śrīla Prabhupāda or any other Vaiṣṇava is claimed to have been received by a devotee in a dream, then such a devotee should understand that:

- Śrīla Prabhupāda never told anyone that he would appear in their dreams and give orders.

- In his own case, Śrīla Prabhupāda had received the order for *sannyāsa* in a dream not once, but thrice. Even after having received the same order thrice, he went through the *Gauḍīya-Maṭha* institutional protocol to obtain *sannyāsa*.

- An order received by an individual in a dream from Śrīla Prabhupāda or any other *Vaiṣṇava* should not be acknowledged/recognized on an institutional level.

- Such an order received in a dream should not be used as an excuse to create factions, schisms, dissensions, etc. within ISKCON.

Also, it should be noted that even during the physical presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda, there were many instances of statements which devotees claimed to have heard but which were rejected by Prabhupāda himself.

For example, morning walk, Los Angeles, 7 June 1976:

> Rāmeśvara: So, I've been told that if one fasts on *Bhīma-ekādaśī*, that it is like fasting on all the *ekādaśīs*. Is that true?
>
> Prabhupāda: Yes. *Ekādaśī* is meant for fasting, either Bhīma or Arjuna. But we cannot fast, therefore we have to take little fruits and ... Otherwise, *ekādaśī* means fasting.
>
> Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: If it is possible, should we go without eating at all?
>
> Prabhupāda: Yes. But don't lie down and sleep.
>
> Mahendra: Eating *mahā-prasādam* is also fasting.
>
> Prabhupāda: Who says?
>
> Mahendra: You said that to Paramahaṁsa Svāmī once.
>
> Prabhupāda: And you heard from Paramahaṁsa.
>
> Mahendra: No, I was in the room. It was when he was trying to observe *Caturmāsya*.
>
> Prabhupāda: I never said that.
>
> Mahendra: Oh, okay, I must have heard wrong.
>
> Prabhupāda: If there is service and, on my fasting, service will be stopped, then I

can take. First consideration, service. Now if somebody feels weak, he can take *mahā-prasāda*, render service.

What to Make of What You Find

by Jayādvaita Swami from The Bhaktivedanta VedaBase:

Introduction

The Bhaktivedānta VedaBase published by the Bhaktivedānta Archives is a powerful tool, and like all tools it may be used either well or badly. Used well, it can help us discover, gather, and bring to light many teachings the scriptures and Śrīla Prabhupāda give us. Used badly, it can help assemble false evidence, fallacious arguments, and wrong conclusions.

Here then is a brief guide to help you use the tool well. It's not a guide to the software; that you'll find elsewhere. Rather, it's a guide to what to make of what the software gives you.

The followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda look to Śrīla Prabhupāda's writings and spoken words as a source of knowledge and authority.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in *Bhagavad-gītā* 17.15, purport:

> The process of speaking in spiritual circles is to say something upheld by authority. One should at once quote from scriptural authority to back up what he is saying.

The scriptures have authority, and so too does the *ācārya*. Therefore what we say gains strength when we can quote scripture or legitimately uphold our statements with the words "Śrīla Prabhupāda said."

But what Śrīla Prabhupāda said sometimes differed. Sometimes he spoke for the benefit of an individual, sometimes for the world. Sometimes what he said was for the moment, sometimes forever. So, as well as we can we need to recognize, in what Śrīla Prabhupāda said, not only the content but the intent.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave a cohesive and practical philosophy, the Vedic philosophy, clear and consistent in its conclusions. Merely searching through a database and collecting one's "hits" cannot substitute for thoroughly and clearly understanding. Through service, inquiry, and a submissive attitude, one should try to understand the Vedic science under the guidance of the scriptures, saintly persons, and the bona fide spiritual master. This is the Vedic way to realize not only what the words of scripture and Śrīla Prabhupāda are but also what they mean.

Levels of Authority

To get the meaning right, it will be useful for us to look at the materials in this VedaBase as having different "levels of authority." Here we are not making absolute divisions, but merely rules of thumb.

Books and formal documents

At the highest level of authority we can place Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. These are the works in which Śrīla Prabhupāda formally presented for the world the message of the scriptures and the previous *ācāryas*. It is these books that form the very basis of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

There are other documents entitled to similar authority, in a different sort of way. These are legal documents in which Śrīla Prabhupāda gives explicit directions. Examples are trust deeds, incorporation papers, and his last will. Such documents were deliberate, purposeful, and clearly intended to be upheld by the full force of law.

Other documents, though not presented in the context of worldly law, are spiritual or managerial documents in which Śrīla Prabhupāda essentially "lays down the law." An example would be the notice giving rules for initiated devotees that he put on paper on November 25, 1966 at 26 Second Avenue. These, clearly, are of a similar authority.

Lectures

At the next level, we can place Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures. These too, like his books, are formal public presentations.

Still, these speeches are extemporaneous. Śrīla Prabhupāda often speaks with no reference books before him, and with no chance to review or edit his words. So we may expect minor discrepancies, for example, a Sanskrit verse quoted imprecisely or a verse cited as being from one scripture when in fact it comes from another.

We may also need to take into account, here as in all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's spoken words, that his first language is Bengali. In English, therefore, he sometimes uses one word when the meaning he intends is clearly that of another, or he uses the conventions of what students of language refer to as "Indian English." Though this may take some getting used to, it should cause little confusion.

We may also take into account that each lecture has its own context. Each is spoken at a particular time and place and to a particular audience.

In fact, however, we see that wherever Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke, his conclusions were invariably the same; though the audience varied, his philosophy never did.

The question-and-answer portion of his lectures, however, deserves special attention. Here Śrīla Prabhupāda responds to the questions of specific individuals. Though again the philosophy is always the same, we cannot assume that how he speaks it to one person is how he would speak it to all. With one inquirer he might be stern, with another sympathetic, with one subtle, with another deliberately simple. We'd be rash to cite one instance as evidence of how he would respond in all instances.

Finally, we should note that in lectures, again whenever Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks, there is the possibility of mistaken transcriptions. Though the lectures and conversations in this VedaBase have been carefully transcribed and reviewed, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke with a strong Bengali accent, and minor errors in transcription are sure to have slipped through. This should be of little substantial consequence.

Letters

In the next category of authority, we come to Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters. Here, more variables come into play. Śrīla Prabhupāda is again addressing a particular person, in a particular time and circumstance. And this time his words are sent in a sealed envelope, not spoken in a public assembly. His words, therefore, may be intended for many people or only for one. They may give instructions meant to apply always and to everyone or only to a special circumstance and one recipient.

Consider, for example, these various instructions.

Letter to Bali Mardana and Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa, September 18, 1972:

> ... this *sankirtana* or street chanting must go on, it is our ... most important program.

Letter to Dayānanda, February 8, 1971:

> Now the most important point is to recruit life members as many as possible.

Letter to Son and Daughters in Dallas, June 20, 1972:

> Now I very much appreciate your activities for conducting our school ... and I consider your work the most important in the society.

Letter to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, June 28, 1972:

> I consider this Mayapur Project to be our most important work.

Letter to Tapana Miśra Dāsa, May 26, 1975:

> The most important thing is that you must follow all of the rules and regulations very strictly.

Letter to Rāmeśvara, August 3, 1973:

> There is no doubt about it, to distribute books is our most important activity.

Clearly, what Śrīla Prabhupāda chose to emphasize as "most important" differed according to the time, place, and person.

This is by no means to say that the instructions in his letters can simply be waved away as "relative." But one must be careful to understand how, when, and to whom he intended them to apply.

A final concern about letters might be that some letters Śrīla Prabhupāda personally wrote or dictated, others he signed after a secretary composed them, and still others a secretary wrote and signed and Śrīla Prabhupāda countersigned as "approved." Such a concern, however, should have little impact. All such letters have authority. Śrīla Prabhupāda's signature shows his clear endorsement of whatever the letter might say.

Conversations

Now at last we come to Śrīla Prabhupāda's conversations. Here, as in letters, again we have variables of time, place, and circumstance. In one sense, though, the conversations are more public, several devotees, often large groups, being in attendance.

But the full dynamics of a conversation are particularly hard to follow in print. Gone are the smiles, frowns, glances, and hand gestures that often tell more than the words. Gone the surroundings. Gone, most often, whatever was said before and after. What remains may be valuable but it's far from everything.

We should keep in mind, too, that in conversations with Śrīla Prabhupāda there may often be misunderstanding due to differences in language. Śrīla Prabhupāda may mishear what those he

is speaking with have said, or they what he has said. The results are sometimes amusing, often confusing. We must take care, therefore, to make sure we have things right.

Levels of authority, summed up

In summary, a quick chart of the levels of authority we might accord to the materials in this VedaBase, starting with the highest, could look something like this:

> Books
> Legal documents and similar papers
> Lectures
> Letters
> Conversations

Again, this is merely a guideline, not a cast-iron standard. Letters and conversations may often give significant, even invaluable, knowledge and guidance not to be found anywhere else. And for the person to whom Śrīla Prabhupāda originally directed his words, they might be the most important words in the world.

What makes good evidence?

Now, we still need to use care, because good words can be used for bad arguments. So let's set some ground rules, so that the good words will lead to good understanding.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's words should NOT be unduly severed from their context

Śrīla Prabhupāda's words have a context, and one should not wrench them out of context to make a point their context would belie.

For example, suppose you wanted to demonstrate that eating meat is acceptable, so long as one pays for it. You might quote this statement made by Śrīla Prabhupāda in a letter to Brahmānanda dāsa, October 6, 1969:

> As you will pay for the dinner, for the fooding, you can offer them to Kṛṣṇa within your mind, then eat them as Kṛṣṇa *Prasadam*. Any foodstuff when it is paid for, it becomes purified. There is a verse in Vedic literature, *Drabyamulyena Suddhati*. The source of receipt of the thing, may be not very good, but if one pays for it, it becomes purified.

There you have it—proof.

But the next lines show the context, by which the supposed proof falls apart:

> So, vegetable diet when it is paid for, you can offer it in your mind to Kṛṣṇa and take it. But this *Drabya* means eatables, and eatables meaning vegetables, grains, milk, flowers, fruits; meat is not considered an eatable—it is considered untouchable. Just like if somebody purchases some stool, that does not mean it is now purified. So meat is like that. This *Drabya* means vegetables, etc.

It is pernicious to sliver sentences or carve into paragraphs to force them to say what you want. The words of an authority should be quoted faithfully to their context and to the meaning originally intended.

Words intended for a particular time, place, person or circumstance must not be forced upon another

On October 7, 1970, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Advaita dāsa:

> If there is any disagreement with your Godbrothers, you may live separately. That doesn't matter.

Just see, one might say, living with one's godbrothers is unimportant, and in the event of disagreement one is advised to live separately.

But then we have this letter, written to Kṣīrodakaśāyī dāsa on December 26, 1971:

> I understand that you are not with the devotees. I do not know why you are living separately. In the Society there may be sometimes misunderstandings, but that does not mean you should live separately.

Thus to different devotees at different times and places, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave differing advice. The instructions given for one person at one time and place and in one set of circumstances may not be suitable for another. Or again they may.

So how well the instructions fit is a matter to be carefully discerned. Square pegs should not be pounded into round holes.

When quotations are cited as evidence, their meaning should be clear and unequivocal

When Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke or wrote, he was not, after all, intent on providing quotations for a database. So you may sometimes find a "hit" whose meaning is ambiguous or obscure. Under such circumstances, the honest thing to do is admit it. We should not try to bluff, presenting as definitive evidence a quotation whose meaning is fuzzy.

In order for a quotation to strongly support a point, the meaning of what we quote should be self-evident. If to get across what Śrīla Prabhupāda supposedly means we need profuse logical explanations, are we still arguing from authority or from logic?

An argument from logic may sometimes be quite okay, but it should be seen for what it is: an argument from logic or from logic and authority combined, not purely an argument from Vedic authority.

We should weigh a statement from Śrīla Prabhupāda carefully when we know he modifies or contradicts it elsewhere

In *The Nectar of Devotion* Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> One should begin the worship of the demigod Gaṇapati, who drives away all impediments in the execution of devotional service. In the *Brahma-saṁhitā* it is stated that Gaṇapati worships the lotus feet of Lord Nṛsiṁha-deva and in that way has become auspicious for the devotees in clearing out all impediments. Therefore, all devotees should worship Gaṇapati.

We can take this as clear and authoritative proof that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted all the devotees in his society to worship Gaṇapati (Gaṇeśa).
But balance that with this passage against from this letter to Śivānanda dāsa, August 25, 1971:

> So far worshiping Ganesa is concerned, that is not necessary. Not that it should be done on a regular basis. If you like you can pray to Gaṇapati for removing all impediments on the path of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. That you can do if you like.

And finally, consider this letter, sent to "My dear Sons" in Evanston, Illinois, on December 28, 1974. **Note:** Śrīla Prabhupāda sent nearly identical messages to several other devotees.

> I do not encourage you to worship this demigod, Gaṇeśa. It is not required, it is not necessary. Simply worship Kṛṣṇa. Perform nice devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. Then your lives will certainly become perfect. Of course if one has got some sentiment for achieving the blessings of Gaṇeśa for accumulating large sums of money to serve Kṛṣṇa, then he may perform this Gaṇeśa worship, privately, not making a public show. But first of all he must give me $100,000 per month. Not a single farthing less. If he can supply this amount, $100,000 per month, then he will be allowed to do this Gaṇeśa Pūjā. Otherwise he should not do it. It will not be good. That is my order.

Although the injunction to worship Gaṇeśa is clear and comes from a book, in this case the evidence from the letters weighs in heavier.

Also, worth taking into account here: All other things being equal, which they may not always be, a later instruction outweighs an earlier one.

Be careful when you count

One way to drive a point in is to make it again and again. So we pay special heed to statements made by Śrīla Prabhupāda or the scriptures repeatedly, many times over. For example: "You have to follow these regulative principles: no illicit sex life, no meat-eating, no intoxication, no gambling" (Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, December 12, 1970). Śrīla Prabhupāda said this again and again, and clearly he meant it.

When what you're saying is backed up by such often-repeated instructions, you have a powerful case.

Note, however, that merely counting lots of "hits" doesn't make your case strong. Your quotations should be true to their context, clear in their meaning, free from contradiction elsewhere, and thoroughly relevant to the point you wish to make.

Evidence should be relevant

The quotations you offer must actually uphold what you're trying to say. Otherwise, why are you quoting them? It's not enough for a quotation merely to include the keyword you've searched for. That alone doesn't make for relevance. The quotation should directly support your point. Suppose, for example, you want to argue that in a society of devotees there ought to be no divorce. To support your case, you might quote as evidence this statement from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.13.8, purport:

> In the Western countries, due to the dissatisfaction of the family members, there is actually no family life. There are many cases of divorce, and out of dissatisfaction the children leave the protection of their parents.

That's a fine quotation. But it does virtually nothing to uphold the argument you wish to make. It says there are many cases of divorce, and many instances in which children leave their parents. But it says nothing to argue that there ought to be no divorce, and about divorce among devotees it is silent. So if you're looking for evidence, this isn't it.

You need quotations that go precisely to your point. Even though other quotations might be "hits," they're false hits, irrelevant, and you should put them aside.

Thoroughly understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings

Again, there is no substitute for thorough understanding. To use this powerful database most effectively, we should thoroughly understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's message, the message of the Vedic conclusions. The way to understand that message best is not only to study it and cite it but to follow it.

TOOL 22: Look for Any Way in Which *Guru-Sādhu-Śāstra* Define Historical or Cultural Context

Sometimes sections of *guru-sādhu-śāstra* explicitly explain the historical or cultural context of their own statements.

Method:

- Look for any clear statements about the historical, cultural or other context of the statement one is trying to understand.

- If there is such a statement, determine if there is any evaluation included, i.e. is the statement about something that is praised, condemned or neither.

- If there is such a statement, determine if there are other statements regarding application such that the statement could reasonably be taken as prescriptive.

- In the absence of any evaluation or prescriptive statements, whenever *guru-sādhu-śāstra* explicitly describes a historical and/or cultural context, one can generally understand the statements to be descriptive only, for the purpose of increasing understanding of the main subject matter, and not to be taken themselves as guidance for application of any sort.

Evidence and Explanation:

By Brijbāsī Dāsa:

Specific exceptional allowance/limited application of a rule, *rathakāra* and *niṣāda* examples.

There are some injunctions that are limited to their context and cannot be extrapolated to other contexts. The classical example of this is the *rathakāra's* right to perform only some parts of a sacrifice. A *rathakāra* (chariot-maker) is a person of mixed caste, a son of a father who is a *māhiṣa (*born to *kṣatrīya* father by *vaiśya* mother) and a mother who is a *kāraṇā (*born to *vaiśya* father by *śūdra* mother).

In the *Taittīriya-brāhmaṇa* 1.1.2.6-7 there are three injunctions to three castes: *vasante brāhmaṇo'gnim ādadhīta*, *grīṣme rājanya ādadhīta*, *śaradi vaiśya ādadhīta:* "*Brāhmaṇas* should install the sacrificial fire during the spring. *Kṣatrīyas* should install the fire during the summer. *Vaiśyas* should install the fire during the autumn." The text does not mention *śūdras*, but apparently mentions *rathakāras, varṣāsu rathakāro 'gnīn ādadhīta:* "A *rathakāra* should install the fire during the rainy season." This by elimination shows that *rathakāra* cannot belong to the three upper castes, and it's quite logical to presume that he is a *śūdra*.[52] Whether he indeed is a *śūdra* or not is a controversial topic. *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā-sūtra* 6.1.50 states that he is not a *śūdra*, but a person of a mixed caste (*saudhanvanā*), because *śūdras*' right to perform Vedic sacrifices was dismissed in the previous section, 6.1.25–43. Thus *mīmāṁsākas* consider *rathakāras* lower than the three upper *varṇas* but still superior to *śūdras*. However, from Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's commentary to *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 1.1.8 and from his *Siddhānta-darpaṇa* 2.3

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[52] Since the monsoon is between the summer and the autumn, another "logical" inference would be that the *rathakāra* is between a *kṣatrīya* and a *vaiśya,* the *varṇas* of his grandfathers.

it is clear that he considers *rathakāras* to be *śūdras,* taking the etymological meaning of the name: "chariot-maker."

Here is what he writes in *Siddhānta-darpaṇa*:

<div align="center">

vede'pi yetihāsādau śūdrasyāpy adhikāritā |
nideśād ratha-kārāder iva jñeyā kvacit tu sā ||

</div>

Translation by D. Martins: Although the *Purāṇas* and the historical works are also *Vedas*, it must be understood that the *śūdras* have the right to hear only the former, for the injunction here is similar to that applied to the *rathakāras*, etc.

Commentary by Nanda Miśra:

<div align="center">

evaṁ cet tad-bhāge śūdrādhikāraḥ katham ? tatrāha—vede'pīti | varṣāsu
rathakāro 'gninādadhīta iti vidhi-rūpa-veda-nideśād evādhāna-
mātre'pekṣitatvāt, ṛbhūṇāṁ tvā devānāṁ, vratapate vratenādadhāmi ity
ādhānāṅga-bhūta-mantra-mātre ca rathakārasya sudhanvāpara-nāmnaḥ
saṅkara-jāter advijasyādhikāraḥ, anyathā vidhi-vyākopāpatteḥ | na tūttara-
karmaṇi tad upayukte adhyayane vā, tatha tan-nideśād eva tad-bhāge vede'pi
tasyādhikāro, na tu tad-anyasminn ṛg-ādāv iti | ādi-padān, niṣāda-sthapatiṁ
yājayed iti grāhyam | atra niṣādābhinnasya sthapater yāga-mātre tad-aṅga-
mantra-mātre cādhikāro na tu tad-atirikte pāṭhe, tad-ukte karmaṇi veti ||3||

</div>

Translation of the commentary by D. Martins: If the *Purāṇas* and historical works are also *Vedas*, then how is it that the *śūdras* have the right to hear them? In the *śruti* there is the following statement:

<div align="center">

varṣāsu rathakāro 'gninādadhīta

</div>

Translation: A *rathakāra* should kindle the sacrificial fire during the rainy season.

While kindling the fire, the following mantra of the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 1.34 should be recited:

<div align="center">

ṛbhūṇāṁ tvā devānāṁ vratapate vratenādadhāmi

</div>

Translation: O Agni, I establish you with the ordinance of the divine Ṛbhus.
From the above injunction it is understood that the *rathakāras*, a mixed caste also known as Sudhanvas, have the right only to kindle the sacrificial fire and to recite the above *mantra*, since it is required in the ritual. Otherwise the injunction would be violated. However, they do not have the right to perform any further ritualistic activity or recite other *mantras*. Similarly, they have the right to study the *Purāṇas* and the historical works, but not the *Ṛg*, *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva Vedas*. By the word 'ādeh' (etc.) in the present verse it is meant that other instances must also be taken into consideration.

In the *Maitrayaniya-saṁhitā* 2.2.4 it is said:

niṣāda-sthapatiṁ yājayed

Translation: Let the chief of the Niṣādas be the sacrificer.

If the chief of the Niṣādas is himself a Niṣāda, he has the right to perform this specific sacrifice and recite the relevant *mantra*, but he has no right to perform other rituals and recite other *mantras*.

So, a *rathakāra* is not a *dvija* and thus has no right to perform a sacrifice, but here he is enjoined to perform a particular part of a sacrifice only. But that single prescription does not mean that he can perform other kinds of sacrifice or even go on to perform the whole sacrifice that he partially participated in. He can only perform that particular part of a sacrifice which is directly enjoined for him. Thus a single injunction or a statement may not necessarily be a general rule (*utsarga*) but rather an exception (*apavāda*). In order to know whether it is a rule or an exception we should have a broad understanding of the teachings of the *śāstra* and see that particular statement in the proper context.

Examples of exceptions to the general teachings of the *śāstras*

One of the fundamental teachings of the *Vedas* is non-violence (*ahiṁsā*). However, *Vedas* also enjoin the performance of sacrifices in which animals are killed and thus such sacrifices are inevitably connected with violence. Since both non-violence and animal sacrifices are prescribed by the *Vedas*, the latter should be seen as an exception of a general rule. This is explained by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa in his *Govinda-bhāṣya* 3.1.26. So the fact that *Vedas* prescribe animal sacrifices cannot serve as a pretext for opening a slaughterhouse.

Another example is the story of Mṛgāri the hunter from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.24.229. Nārada Muni instructed him to kill animals completely rather than leaving them half-killed in great suffering. Since Nārada Muni is a great *mahā-bhāgavata* devotee of the Lord every one of his instructions is meant for the ultimate benefit even if it apparently contradicts the teachings of the *Vedas* on non-violence. But if seen in the broader context they are in fact directed towards minimizing Mṛgāri's violence, half-killed animals suffer more than completely killed animals. This is another example of the exception to the universal principle of *ahiṁsā*.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswati Ṭhākura explained how *śāstra* limits the unwarranted extrapolation of its rules in the following way.

From a conversation, *Gauḍīya*, Volume 2, #2, page 6, August 25, 1923:

Q: Is there any prohibition of *gaura-nāgarī-vāda* in the *śāstra*?

A: Those who are familiar with the *vidhi* (injunctions), *niṣedha* (prohibitions) and *prasajya-pratiṣedha* (a statement where prescription is secondary to prohibition) used in the system of hermeneutics (*mīmāṁsā-praṇālī*), know that there is no need to deliberate on the direct injunctions (*vidhi*) given in the *śāstra*. But even if there is no explicit prohibition of something which is contrary to such injunction it is nevertheless prohibited. With such understanding we should know that *gaura-nāgarī-vāda* is prohibited by *śāstra*.

Examples of how Śrīla Prabhupāda or other *ācāryas* relativized their previous statements or statements of śāstra

In his book *Śrīla Prabhupāda Uvāca*, Śrutakīrti Prabhu tells a story how Śrīla Prabhupāda once gave a very unusual instruction which contradicted his repeated instructions given previously. When he received a letter from a disciple asking if he could divorce his wife and marry another, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave his permission despite so many times speaking against divorce. When asked why he condoned that, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that that devotee was going to get the divorce anyway even if Śrīla Prabhupāda wouldn't agree. So if he would do this despite Śrīla Prabhupāda's prohibition then there would also be a serious offence of disobeying the order of the spiritual master. Thus, out of his compassion, Śrīla Prabhupāda allowed his disciple to do something that was not to be done.

Ten *saṁskāras* often mentioned by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his books

Room Conversation with Malcolm, London, July 18, 1973:

> Paramahaṁsa: Śrīla Prabhupāda, I wanted to ask you that in your lectures you continually speak of the ten *saṁskāras* that children should have.

> Prabhupāda: Well, that is not possible. [laughs]

> Paramahaṁsa: Oh.

> Prabhupāda: That is not possible. It is very difficult. One *saṁskāra,* that initiation *saṁskāra*, and marriage *saṁskāra*—two, three *saṁskāras* can be done, not the ten. It is not possible. Now the circumstances will not allow. It is very difficult.

Civilization and Transcendence 10, The Process of Purification, from the conversation Answers to a Questionnaire from Bhavan's Journal, New Vrindaban, June 28, 1976:

> The question was, "Should purificatory processes be revived?" They should be revived as far as necessary, but all of them cannot be revived in this age. So people should take to the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Then all reformation will be there, and people will come to the spiritual platform—*brahma-bhūtaḥ*, the realization of Brahman.

Moon reflecting the sun's light

Bhagavad-Gītā 10.21, purport:

> Among the stars, the moon is the most prominent at night, and thus the moon represents Kṛṣṇa. It appears from this verse that the moon is one of the stars; therefore the stars that twinkle in the sky also reflect the light of the sun. The theory that there are many suns within the universe is not accepted by Vedic literature. The sun is one, and as by the reflection of the sun the moon illuminates, so also do the stars. Since *Bhagavad-gītā* indicates herein that the moon is one of the stars, the twinkling stars are not suns but are similar to the moon.

Morning Walk, Mayapur, March, 1976:

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: … Prabhupāda, there's another question I have. I remember on a walk … I have read in your books that the moon's glowing is due to reflecting the sun. Then I remember on a walk in Vṛndāvana you said that the moon is fiery just like the sun, but there's a cooling atmosphere around it. So is it actually fiery glow, or is it simply a reflecting glow?

Prabhupāda: That is stated in *Bhāgavatam.*

Gurudāsa: It says reflection in the *Bhāgavatam.*

Prabhupāda: No, it is also a fiery place. But it is because it is far away from the sun, it is not so glowing.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: So it's not a question of reflection only.

Prabhupāda: The reflection theory is the modern theory.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Because sometimes in the books it's stated…

Prabhupāda: Yes. Sometimes I have said or taken this modern theory.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: Just so that people will understand an example. I see.

This would also mean that the stars do not necessarily reflect the light from the sun.

Mīrābāi meeting Rūpa Gosvāmī

Room Conversation with Allen Ginsberg, Columbus, Ohio, May 13, 1969; emphasis added:

Allen Ginsberg: So who is the most perfect of the *Vaiṣṇava* poets? That would be Mīrā?

Guest (1): Mīrā was a devotee. She was a *Vaiṣṇava*.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Devotee means …

Guest (1): *Vaiṣṇava*. She was, Mīrā, Kṛṣṇa devotee. Oh, her songs has called me.
Allen Ginsberg: Have you used her songs here at all?

Prabhupāda: Yes, in India it is very popular, Mīrā's song. Mostly they are written in Hindi, and some of them have been interpolated. But Mīrā was a devotee. *She saw Rūpa Gosvāmī, a contemporary.* She has written many poetry about Lord Caitanya.

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā*, Ahmedabad, December 8, 1972:

When Rūpa Gosvāmī was there in Vṛndāvana in his *bhajana*, Mīrābāi went to see him. And Rūpa Gosvāmī's message was that he does not see any woman. They were very strict. At least, the story is like … So Mīrā challenged that "I came to Vṛndāvana. I know that only Kṛṣṇa is *puruṣa* here, and everyone is woman. So how

does it mean that Rūpa Gosvāmī's declined to see another woman?" So Rūpa Gosvāmī agreed, "Yes, I am mistaken. Yes, Kṛṣṇa is the only *puruṣa*."

Morning Walk, Bombay, December 17, 1975:

Dr. Patel: One Gosvāmī refused to see Mīrābai, and then she said that "There are only be men at the *bhajana*, not that ... Kṛṣṇa is the only man ..."

Prabhupāda: One thing is, we don't find any authoritative scripture that Mīrābai ever met Rūpa Gosvāmī, but they say like that in Vṛndāvana. But from the life of Rūpa Gosvāmī, we understand that the Gosvāmīs were so popular in Vṛndāvana that if there was any family quarrel, husband and wife, they used to come to Rūpa Goswāmī to settle up, and automatically he would give the decision, and they will accept. So how it is possible that he did not see any woman?

Dr. Patel: He did not, ah, Rūpa Goswāmi or Jīva Gosvāmī; some other Gosvāmī, they say.

Girirāja: It was Jīva Gosvāmī.

Prabhupāda: Jīva Gosvāmī?

Girirāja: Yes.

Prabhupāda: Why Jīva Goswāmi should not see woman? That is also doubtful.

Dr. Patel: He, he did see Mīrābai.

Prabhupāda: Caitanya Mahāprabhu also never refused to see woman. But women were offering respect from a distance, that's all. Not very near. But we don't see that He refused to see woman. Why the Gosvāmīs will do that?

Dr. Patel: That is the story going round.

Prabhupāda: Then *paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*. How it is possible?

Room Conversation, Bombay, December 26, 1976:

Kārttikeya: Prabhupāda? Jīva Gosvāmī was the guru of Mīrā?

Prabhupāda: No. I do not know who is the guru of Mīrābāi. But Mīrābāi, from the childhood, she was a devotee.

Kārttikeya: She was a devotee, but ...

Prabhupāda: But I do not hear anyone as her guru.

Kārttikeya: No, but who was living in Vṛndāvana? Was Jīva Gosvāmī living in Vṛndāvana?

Prabhupāda: Yes. Six Gosvāmīs. Rūpa, Sanātana, Bhaṭṭa Raghunātha, Śrī Jīva,

Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, Dāsa Raghunātha. Six Gosvāmīs, they were immediate disciples of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. They were entrusted to develop Vṛndāvana. And they did it. Modern Vṛndāvana means this is the contribution of the six Gowvāmīs. [break]

Kārttikeya: ... it says that when she went there and ...

Prabhupāda: So that may be, whatever is there, but Rūpa Gosvāmī had no reason to refuse seeing a woman.

Kārttikeya: No, but that's what I said. Which Gosvāmī?

Prabhupāda: No, any Gosvāmī. Because the Gosvāmīs were so popular that amongst the villagers, when there was some disagreement between family members, they used to come to him and say to him, "Bābā, [Hindi or Bengali]." That means in that way he had to see many women many times. Why he should refuse? And what is the meaning of refusing if one, anybody ... Even Caitanya Mahāprabhu did not refuse, but women used to offer their respect from little distance, not very near. That was Caitanya Mahāprabhu's restriction. But in our succession there is no such thing as refusing anyone the opportunity. Kṛṣṇa does not say. *Māṁ hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayaḥ striyaḥ śūdrās tathā vaiśyāḥ* [Bg. 9.32]. He does not make any... And so far my institute is concerned, we do not make any such thing. Everyone should be given chance. But we have restriction that we should mix with women very cautiously. You should not have any illicit sex. These things are there.

Kārttikeya: No, that is of course ...

Prabhupāda: But why a woman should be refused? This is not authentic. Why Rūpa Gosvāmī should refuse her? They were *bhikṣu, madhukarī.* So when one goes for *bhikṣā,* so how he can check that he will not see any woman? How it is possible? He has to go to the householder, "Mātājī, a *cāpāṭi* [Hindi or Bengali]." Or he'll stand. Generally woman comes to give *cāpāṭi.* So how it is possible to restrict the eyes? That is, he does not ... I think I cannot accept this, that Rūpa Gosvāmī refused. Why he should refuse? *Vaiṣṇava* is kind. But we must mix with women cautiously. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, *yāre dekha tāre kaha kṛṣṇa-upadeśa* [Cc. Madhya 7.128]. He never says, "Only to the men."

One could say that the first statement was made to encourage Allen Ginsberg and "to make a bridge" between what he already knew and valued (Mirābāi) and Śrīla Prabhupāda's values (Lord Caitanya and Gosvāmīs). The second one was made to illustrate that actually no one, either male or female, in the material world is a *puruṣa.* Secondly, it was made in Gujarat where Mirābāi is very popular. Then the third and the fourth one was made in a situation where Śrīla Prabhupāda was in an informal situation and would just speak the truth as it is.

Darwin's theory

As a rule, Śrīla Prabhupāda would criticize Darwin's theory of evolution. Here are two examples.

Room Conversation, London, July 19, 1973

> Prabhupāda: ... is taking place. The rascal Darwin says that it is coming from monkey. Why the monkey does not produce a human being? All rascals.

Room Conversation with a Guest, London, August 26, 1973:

> Prabhupāda: ... Just like Darwin's theory: he said that man has come from monkey, but not a single monkey up 'til now has produced any man, neither scientifically they can inject a monkey to produce another man. Still the theory is going on.

But then he would sometimes in general accept some parts of it:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.14.30, purport:

> First of all, the conditioned soul is cheated by so-called *svāmīs, yogīs* and incarnations when he approaches them to be relieved of material miseries. When the conditioned soul is not satisfied with them, he comes to devotees and pure *brāhmaṇas* who try to elevate him for final liberation from material bondage. However, the unscrupulous conditioned soul cannot rigidly follow the principles prohibiting illicit sex, intoxication, gambling and meat-eating. Thus he falls down and takes shelter of people who are like monkeys. In the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement these monkey disciples, being unable to follow the strict regulative principles, sometimes fall down and try to form societies based on sex. This is proof that such people are descendants of monkeys, as confirmed by Darwin. In this verse it is therefore clearly stated: *yathā vānara jāteḥ.*

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.20, Vṛndāvana, October 31, 1972:

> Prabhupāda: Yes. That is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā: manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaścid yatati siddhaye* [Bg. 7.3]. Because we are coming from animal by the evolutionary process ... According to *śāstra*, it is said that ... The Darwin's theory says from monkey. That is also fact, that after monkey a man ..., the living entity comes to the human form. Somebody says after lion. Somebody says after cow. So from the animals, we ..., the human form is developed.

Room Conversation on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.13.48–14.11, Jaipur, January 18, 1973:

> Devotee: Ahhhh!
>
> Prabhupāda: What is that?
>
> Devotee: A monkey. No one is guarding. They are probably taking [indistinct].
>
> Prabhupāda: Somebody must be there. So monkeys, they are now taking advantage, that "These people have got some eatables." Therefore Darwin's theory

is from monkey. That's a fact. From the monkey, cow and lion, the next birth is human life.

Other examples of relativizing statements

Rāmadāsa Viśvāsa as a great devotee (*parama-vaiṣṇava*).

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Antya* 13.92:

> **sarva-śāstre pravīṇa, kāvya-prakāśa-adhyāpaka**
> **parama-vaiṣṇava, raghunātha-upāsaka**

> *sarva-śāstre*—in all revealed scriptures; *pravīṇa*—very learned scholar; *kāvya-prakāśa*—of the famous book *Kāvya-prakāśa*; *adhyāpaka*—a teacher; ***parama-vaiṣṇava*—highly advanced devotee;** *raghunātha-upāsaka*—worshiper of Lord Rāmacandra.

> **Translation:** Rāmadāsa Viśvāsa was very learned in all the revealed scriptures. He was a teacher of the famous book *Kāvya-prakāśa* and was known as an advanced devotee and worshiper of Raghunātha [Lord Rāmacandra].

From this verse alone one may come to the conclusion that Rāmadāsa Viśvāsa was indeed a highly advanced devotee. However, as appears from the purport to this verse and his story told later on in this chapter, it was not the fact:

> Commenting on the word *parama-vaiṣṇava*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says that anyone who desires to merge into the existence of the Lord cannot be a pure Vaiṣṇava, but because Rāmadāsa Viśvāsa was a great devotee of Lord Rāmacandra, he was almost a Vaiṣṇava. In those days, no one could distinguish between a pure Vaiṣṇava and a pseudo Vaiṣṇava. Therefore Rāmadāsa Viśvāsa was known as a Vaiṣṇava because he worshiped Lord Rāmacandra.

About chanting of the holy name without any rules and regulations

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 8.12-13, New York, November 15, 1966:

> …twenty-four hours you can chant. There is no rules and regulation. Either in the street or in the subway, or at your home, or in your office, oh, there is no tax, no expenses. Why don't you do it? Always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Lecture at Harvard University Divinity School, Boston, April 28, 1969:

> It is open. You can take. Everyone can take. Everyone. We are chanting. You can chant with us and practice it, and there is no hard and fast rules and regulation. You can chant anyway, anywhere. Whether you are in the college, whether you're on the street, whether you are sleeping, lying, or whatever, you can chant. Because God has given you this tongue and you can chant.

Speech at Olympia Theatre, Paris, June 26, 1971:

You can chant ... If you know any other name of God, you can chant also, because there is no difference between the different names of God. And each name, holy name, is invested with all powers of God. Lord Caitanya says that each and every name, holy name of God, is nondifferent from the Supreme Lord. Therefore all the powers, all the energies that God has, it is also there in His holy name. In the absolute platform there is no such difference, as in this relative world there is difference between the name and the person whose name we are chanting. As such, there is no difference between the holy name of God and God. And Caitanya Mahāprabhu says there is no hard and fast rules and regulations for this chanting.

So you can chant the holy name of God anywhere, everywhere, and wherever it is possible. So suppose you are walking on the street or passing on the buses, but if you chant the holy name of God, especially Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, you will get much benefit without any loss of your money or without any hampering of your business.

These statements are directly supported by Lord Caitanya's statements in His *Śikṣāṣṭaka,* verse 2 and its explanations given in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta:*

nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam īdṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ

Translation: O my Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benediction to living beings, and thus You have hundreds and millions of names like Kṛṣṇa and Govinda. In these transcendental names You have invested all Your transcendental energies. There are not even hard and fast rules for chanting these names. O my Lord, out of kindness You enable us to easily approach You by chanting Your holy names, but I am so unfortunate that I have no attraction for them. [Taken from Śrīla Prabhupāda's Introduction to the First Canto]

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Antya* 20.18:

khāite śuite yathā tathā nāma laya
kāla-deśa-niyama nāhi, sarva siddhi haya

Translation: Regardless of time or place, one who chants the holy name, even while eating or sleeping, attains all perfection.

These statements could be taken at face value as endorsing any chanting, including *japa*, literally anytime and anywhere, with no rules whatsoever. But then from the writings of our *ācāryas* we know that inattentive chanting is one of the offences and, in fact, is sometimes called the cause of all other offences. Therefore we also have the following quotes that modify the call to chant anytime and anywhere.

Letter to Toṣaṇa dāsa, Calcutta, February 20, 1972:

> As you chant, try to hear each word very carefully and always complete your sixteen rounds. Regular and attentive chanting, along with following the four regulative principles will keep one pure.

Letter to Bhakta dāsa, New Delhi, August 26, 1976:

> They must chant 16 rounds a day minimum with attention, clearly chanting the mantra, and listening very carefully. This is the recommended process for purifying the heart in this sinful age of Kali.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Ādi* 8.16:

> ### bahu janma kare yadi śravaṇa, kīrtana
> ### tabu ta' nā pāya kṛṣṇa-pade prema-dhana

Translation: If one is infested with the ten offenses in the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, despite his endeavor to chant the holy name for many births, he will not get the love of Godhead that is the ultimate goal of this chanting.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Ādi* 8.29-30:

> ### hena kṛṣṇa-nāma yadi laya bahu-bāra
> ### tabu yadi prema nahe, nahe aśrudhāra
>
> ### tabe jāni, aparādha tāhāte pracura
> ### kṛṣṇa-nāma-bīja tāhe nā kare aṅkura

Translation: If one chants the exalted holy name of the Lord again and again and yet his love for the Supreme Lord does not develop and tears do not appear in his eyes, it is evident that because of his offenses in chanting, the seed of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa does not sprout.

By Hari Pārṣada Dāsa:

Is context entirely material or can it extend to the spiritual realm? If there are spiritual contexts, how are they defined and how are they different from material contexts?

The answer is that contexts can extend even to the spiritual world. For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda says in one of the purports that *parakīya-rasa* exists only in the context of a specific portion of Goloka.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 4.50, purport:

> *Svakīya* and *parakīya* conjugal love of Godhead have no existence in the material world, and *parakīya* is not exhibited anywhere in *Vaikuṇṭha*, but only in the portion of *Goloka Vṛndāvana* known as *Vraja*.

Since *parakīya-rasa* exists only in the context of a specific part of *Goloka-vṛndāvana*, it is safe to say that contexts exist even in the spiritual world.

TOOL 23: Consider One's Own Cultural and Individual Perspectives, Along with One's Life Experiences

This tool is related to honest introspection and is highly dependent on the discernment that comes from *bhakti*, or at least *sattva guṇa*. It is not so much purely an intellectual tool as a combination of both intellectual and intuitive skills.

Method:

Pray and introspect as to the emotional and psychological reasons why a particular statement of *guru-sādhu-śāstra* is disturbing to oneself individually, or to the emotional and psychological reasons why one favours a particular explanation of that statement. Be honest about one's life experiences related to the statement, as well as any strong emotions and desires one has. These experiences, emotions, and desires can all be in the line of devotional service, yet may still affect one's understanding and application of *guru-sādhu-śāstra* in ways that may adjust the meaning from the original intent.

Evidences and Explanation:

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* we find that Prajāpati Dakṣa misunderstood the meaning of Nārada's instructions because of his own life experiences and desires. He thus found disturbing instructions that were meant for his children's welfare.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.5.36, purport:

> Prajāpati Dakṣa condemned Nārada Muni because Nārada, a *brahmacārī* who could beg from door to door, had made *sannyāsīs* of Dakṣa's sons, who were being trained to be *gṛhasthas*. Dakṣa was extremely angry at Nārada because he thought that Nārada had done him a great injustice. According to Dakṣa's opinion, Nārada Muni had misled Dakṣa's inexperienced sons (*asādhv akāry arbhakāṇām*). Dakṣa regarded his sons as innocent boys who had been misled when Nārada showed them the renounced order of life. Because of all these considerations, Prajāpati Dakṣa charged that Nārada Muni was *asādhu* and should not have adopted the dress of a *sādhu*.

> Sometimes a saintly person is misunderstood by *gṛhasthas*, especially when he instructs their young sons to accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Generally a *gṛhastha* thinks that unless one enters *gṛhastha* life he cannot properly enter the renounced order. If a young man immediately adopts the path of the renounced order in accordance with the instructions of Nārada or a member of his disciplic succession, his parents become very angry. This same phenomenon is occurring in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement because we are instructing all the young boys in the Western countries to follow the path of renunciation. We allow *gṛhastha* life, but a *gṛhastha* also follows the path of renunciation. Even a *gṛhastha* has to give up so many bad habits that his parents think his life has been practically destroyed. We allow no meat-eating, no illicit sex, no gambling and no intoxication, and consequently the parents wonder how, if there are so many no's, one's life can be positive. In the Western countries especially, these four prohibited activities practically constitute the life and soul of the modern population. Therefore parents sometimes dislike our movement, just as Prajāpati Dakṣa disliked the activities of Nārada and accused Nārada of dishonesty. Nevertheless, although

parents may be angry at us, we must perform our duty without hesitation because we are in the disciplic succession from Nārada Muni.

In this next example, Arjuna's family attachment and his own conceptions of yoga as inertia make it seem that Kṛṣṇa is giving contradictory instructions.

Bhagavad-gītā 3.1:

> *arjuna uvāca*
> *jyāyasī cet karmaṇas te*
> *matā buddhir janārdana*
> *tat kiṁ karmaṇi ghore māṁ*
> *niyojayasi keśava*

Translation: Arjuna said: O Janārdana, O Keśava, why do You want to engage me in this ghastly warfare, if You think that intelligence is better than fruitive work?

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in the purport to this verse:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa has very elaborately described the constitution of the soul in the previous chapter, with a view to delivering His intimate friend Arjuna from the ocean of material grief. And the path of realization has been recommended: *buddhi-yoga* or Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa consciousness is misunderstood to be inertia and one with such a misunderstanding often withdraws to a secluded place to become fully Kṛṣṇa conscious by chanting the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. But without being trained in the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is not advisable to chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa in a secluded place, where one may acquire only cheap adoration from the innocent public. Arjuna also thought of Kṛṣṇa consciousness or *buddhi-yoga* or intelligence in spiritual advancement of knowledge, as something like retirement from active life and the practice of penance and austerity at a secluded place. In other words, he wanted to skillfully avoid the fighting by using Kṛṣṇa consciousness as an excuse. But as a sincere student, he placed the matter before his master and questioned Kṛṣṇa as to his best course of action. In answer, Lord Kṛṣṇa elaborately explained *karma-yoga* or work in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, in this Third Chapter.

TOOL 24: *Anubandha-catuṣṭaya*: Four Traditional Context Questions

      1. subject (*viṣaya*)

      2. goal (*prayojana*)

      3. intended listener (*adhikārī*)

      4. genre and qualification of author (*sambandha*), may include historical context

Or:

      (a) *Who* is it for and what are the qualifications of the intended audience? (*adhikāra*)

      (b) *What* is it about? (*abhidheya* or *viṣaya*)

      (c) *Why*? What is it for? (*prayojana* or *phala*)

      (d) *How* does it go about teaching what it teaches? (*sambandha*, i.e. what is the relationship between the subject of the text and the text itself)

Method:

These four items are sometimes specified at the beginning of a text, otherwise the reader may have to analyze the text to identify them. The reader can use them to assess whether the text is worth reading for him or her. What can the reader expect from reading the text? What is the genre of the text? Am I qualified to study the text? To whom can I teach it? What kind of audience is the statement directed toward and how does that affect the statement's meaning? These are the initial and primary contextual parameters for the text.

Evidence and Explanation:

By SAC collaboratively:

The term *"anubandha"* may be translated as "introductory factor, determining comprehension during communication," specifically for *śāstra* or its study. One benefit of using *anubandha-catuṣṭaya* is that it can be applied beyond the sphere of Sanskrit *śāstras*. It has a trans-cultural and language-independent nature, and thus may be useful for hermeneutics in ISKCON in relation to languages other than Sanskrit.

The first of these four areas is the *adhikāra* — who is the target audience? For example, Kṛṣṇa spoke an identical verse to the *gopīs* and to the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* but how we understand his meaning and intention is different because his audience was different. [*śravaṇād darśanād dhyānān, mayi bhāvo 'nukīrtanāt, na tathā sannikarṣeṇa, pratiyāta tato gṛhān* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.23.33 to the *brāhmaṇa* ladies and 10.29.27 to the *gopīs*)].

When we use *adhikāra* to understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's words in particular, we have a challenge, because Śrīla Prabhupāda's target audience was utterly inclusive most of the time. He wants anyone and everyone to read and study his books, and he even wanted everyone to distribute them. Of course, he established an *adhikāra* of first and second initiation for teaching *śāstra* in authorized ISKCON centers and programs. But, overall, the mood in the world today,

which affects ISKCON, is that everyone has equal rights to access whatever is beneficial for one's well-being, including śāstric explanation.

While Śrīla Prabhupāda had his disciples distribute each and every one of his books to the general public, he did often establish levels of qualification for understanding *śāstra* as in the following statements.

Sunday Feast Lecture, Los Angeles, January 19, 1969:

> So these things are very nicely, clearly explained in the Vedic literature. If you take advantage of this Vedic literature, especially of the… *Bhagavad-gītā* is the preliminary study, ABCD. *Bhagavad-gītā* is not very high standard spiritual knowledge. It is simply elementary, ABCD knowledge of spiritual life, rudimentary knowledge. And if you want to study more and more, there is *Vedānta-sūtra*, there is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Upaniṣad*, so many things. So our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is to give people chance to take advantage of this Vedic literature.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.8.49, purport:

> To learn how to become free from the miserable condition of material existence, *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* is the preliminary study. Then, if one understands *Bhagavad-gītā*, one can proceed to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and if one advances further, one may study *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. We are therefore presenting these invaluable books to the whole world so that people may study them and be happy, being delivered from miserable conditional life.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi, Introduction:

> Actually, the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is not intended for the novice, for it is the postgraduate study of spiritual knowledge. Ideally, one begins with the *Bhagavad-gītā* and advances through *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Although all these great scriptures are on the same absolute level, for the sake of comparative study the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is considered to be on the highest platform.

We find the above progression of books evident in Śrīla Prabhupāda's śāstric examinations, where each higher śāstric degree involves studying more advanced literature.

The following verse about these four questions is quoted in Gopāla dāsa's *Amṛtāsvādinī-ṭīkā*, commentary to the 1st introductory verse of *Hari-nāmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa*:

> **adhikārī ca sambandho**
> **viśayaś ca prayojanam**
> **avaśyam eva vaktavyaṁ**
> **śāstrādau tu catuṣṭayam**

Deśa-kāla-pātra: the time, the place, and the audience

Note: the principle of *deśa-kāla-pātra* is related to *anubandha catuṣṭaya* and involves considering the situation, or context (*deśa*), the time or appropriateness (*kāla*) and the audience or recipient (*pātra*). *Śāstra* sometimes defines the historical context of its statements.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and *adhikāra*

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura offers more nuanced meaning to terms like *uttama*, *madhyama,* etc. and instead of *kaniṣṭha* calls the third category *komala śraddhā* (tender faith). For him, the *madhyama adhikārīs* can also include rationalists, skeptics, etc. and texts like *Kṛṣṇa Samhita* are geared towards such an audience.

Note: we should also learn the exceptions to rules prescribed in *śāstra.* For example, according to traditional *smārta* literature, a *śūdra*-born is not qualified for worshipping a *śālagrāma-śilā*, but the exception is a *śūdra*-born who is initiated as a Vaiṣṇava.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and *adhikāra*

In the beginning of *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha, Tattva-sandarbha* 6*,* Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says this work is meant for those whose chief desire is worship of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and all others would be cursed.

TOOL 25: Mediated and Unmediated Knowledge

Method:

For *parokṣa* (mediated knowledge) and *aparokṣa* (unmediated knowledge) on the worldly platform, we ask whether the statement is based on the person's direct experience or through another person, culture or social context. Worldly knowledge has more authority if it is both learned from authoritative sources and the result of direct experience.

For topics on the spiritual platform, this tool is about whether a statement is based on direct experience according to the level of realization of the speaker or on something heard without direct experience or, in some cases, mediated by some sort of conditioning. Realizations through the lens of one's realized relationship with the Lord are in the category of unmediated. If the knowledge is direct experience or heard from someone with direct experience and there is no mediation of conditioning, it has higher authority than if heard indirectly and mediated by some sort of conditioning.

Various definitions of the terms used here (from Tool 2)

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī define terms as follows:

> *pratyakṣa* (knowledge received through the senses),

> *parokṣa* (knowledge received from others based on their *pratyakṣa*; the body of knowledge consisting of the collective sense-perceptory experience of the human race),

> *aparokṣa* (intuition or realization based on *pratyakṣa* and *parokṣa* or beyond *pratyakṣa* and *parokṣa*, leading to and only as far as impersonal realization of the Absolute),

> *adhokṣaja* (transcendental knowledge, from above the plane of mundane perception and speculation, surpassing *pratyakṣa*, *parokṣa*, and *aparokṣa*, leading to and only as far as *Vaikuṇṭha* realization),

aprākṛta (full-fledged spiritual knowledge of the Supreme Lord's Vraja pastimes of intimate love).

Śrīla Prabhupāda has given the following definitions, as derived from his lectures.

pratyakṣa (direct perception),

parokṣa (hearing from authorities),

aparokṣa (realizing, self-realization),

adhokṣaja (understanding what is the position of God and His situation),

aprākṛta (non-material although externally similar to material. Śrīla Prabhupāda usually didn't define this).

Evidence and Explanation:

By Urmilā-devī dāsī:

Regarding worldly knowledge

There is this instructive story in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 9.244, purport**:**

> Śaṅkarācārya went to Prayāga, where he met a great learned scholar called Kumārila Bhaṭṭa. Śaṅkarācārya wanted to discuss the authority of the scriptures, but Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, being on his deathbed, sent him to his disciple Maṇḍana, in the city of Māhiṣmatī. It was there that Śaṅkarācārya defeated Maṇḍana Miśra in a discussion of the *śāstras*. Maṇḍana had a wife named Sarasvatī, or Ubhaya-bhāratī, who served as mediator between Śaṅkarācārya and her husband. It is said that she wanted to discuss erotic principles and amorous love with Śaṅkarācārya, but Śaṅkarācārya had been a *brahmacārī* since birth and therefore had no experience in amorous love. He took a month's leave from Ubhaya-bhāratī and, by his mystic power, entered the body of a king who had just died. In this way Śaṅkarācārya experienced the erotic principles. After attaining this experience, he wanted to discuss erotic principles with Ubhaya-bhāratī, but without hearing his discussion she blessed him and assured the continuous existence of the Śṛṅgeri-maṭha. She then took leave of material life. Afterwards, Maṇḍana Miśra took the order of *sannyāsa* from Śaṅkarācārya and became known as Sureśvara.

In the above example, indirect experience did not have as much authority as direct experience regarding worldly matters.

Lecture *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.3-6, New York, July 18, 1966:

> Any knowledge, even material knowledge, if it is not received in bona fide disciplic succession, that knowledge is not perfect. Suppose if you want to be a lawyer or if you want to be an engineer, or a medical practitioner. You have to receive the knowledge from the authoritative lawyer, authoritative engineer. Of course, I do not know what is the custom here. In India the custom is that a new lawyer, he has

to become an apprentice of an experienced lawyer before he is given the license to practice. That is the Indian system.

In the above quote, in material knowledge one has to get not only theoretical training but also an apprenticeship. Therefore, material knowledge that is not based on both hearing from authority and direct experience does not have much weight.

Regarding spiritual knowledge

Bhagavad-gītā 2.29:

> *āścarya-vat paśyati kaścid enam*
> *āścarya-vad vadati tathaiva cānyaḥ*
> *āścarya-vac cainam anyaḥ śṛṇoti*
> *śrutvāpy enaṁ veda na caiva kaścit*

Translation: Some look on the soul as amazing, some describe him as amazing, and some hear of him as amazing, while others, even after hearing about him, cannot understand him at all.

Direct perception of spiritual reality is the highest level of authority

Bhagavad-gītā 9.2:

> *rāja-vidyā rāja-guhyaṁ*
> *pavitram idam uttamam*
> *pratyakṣāvagamaṁ dharmyaṁ*
> *su-sukhaṁ kartum avyayam*

Translation: This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of religion. It is everlasting, and it is joyfully performed.

The same point is made here about direct perception of spiritual reality.

Bhagavad-gītā 6.20–23:

> In the stage of perfection called trance, or *samādhi*, one's mind is completely restrained from material mental activities by practice of yoga. This perfection is characterized by one's ability to see the Self by the pure mind and to relish and rejoice in the Self. In that joyous state, one is situated in boundless transcendental happiness, realized through transcendental senses. Established thus, one never departs from the truth, and upon gaining this he thinks there is no greater gain. Being situated in such a position, one is never shaken, even in the midst of the greatest difficulty. This indeed is actual freedom from all miseries arising from material contact.

Here is an example of hearing from those who know, without a mediation of conditioning, to which we can also give the highest level of authority.

Kṛṣṇa Book, Chapter 60, Talks Between Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī:

> Without seeing Me and My actual position, simply by hearing about Me, you selected Me as your husband.

Examples of those who had direct perception or heard from others but whose knowledge was mediated through their conditioning—and thus their statements have a lower level of authority—are the many demons who make statements about the Lord. Often in such cases our *ācāryas* will interpret the demon's statements, using indirect meanings or poetic meanings, so that those statements are philosophically correct.

TOOL 26: We Should Understand *Śāstra* from Many Angles of Vision

Method:

This method is best used with several persons who can each contribute a different angle or understanding. As long as those various understandings are within the principles, values, and other tools of hermeneutics they can all be simultaneously accepted. When studying as an individual, one may attempt to imagine the valid points of view of others.

Evidence and Explanation:

By Nārāyaṇī-devī dāsī:

Different angles of preaching application used by Śrīla Prabhupāda

Quotes showing Śrīla Prabhupāda's different preaching applications for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.31.14.

Formula for a classless society

Journey of Self Discovery 7.2, *Shortcomings of Marxism*:

> If you simply pour water on the root of a tree, all the branches, twigs, leaves, and flowers will be nourished. Similarly, everyone can be satisfied simply by *acyutejyā*. Acyuta means Kṛṣṇa, and *ijyā* means worship. So this is the formula for a classless society: Make Kṛṣṇa [God] the center and do everything for Him. There are no classes in our International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. Now you are writing philosophy, but if I want you to wash dishes, you will do so immediately because you know that whatever you do, you are working for Kṛṣṇa and for your spiritual master. In the material world different kinds of work have different values, but in Kṛṣṇa consciousness everything is done on the absolute platform. Whether you wash dishes or write books or worship the Deity, the value is the same because you are serving Kṛṣṇa. That is a classless society. Actually, the perfect classless society is Vṛndāvana. In Vṛndāvana, some are cowherd boys, some are cows, some are trees, some are fathers, some are mothers, but the center is Kṛṣṇa, and everyone is satisfied simply by loving Him. When all people become Kṛṣṇa conscious and understand how to love Him, then there will be a classless society. Otherwise it is not possible.

Godless society cannot be happy as detached branches will die

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.16, New York, 1966:

Udarendriyānām. There was a meeting of all the parts of the senses, that, "We are working, and the stomach is sitting idly, and he is simply eating. So let us get on strike. We shall not work." Just like there is strike system now. Now, all the hands and legs and all parts of the body they, "No, no more we are going to work for the stomach." Now, what happened? Gradually the hand become weak, the fingers become, the eye could not see, the ear... Oh, they thought that "What is happening this? We are becoming weaker, weaker, weaker." Then they decided, "It was a mistake not to supply foodstuff to the stomach. It was good for us."

Similarly, by establishing a godless civilization we are not happy. We are not happy, just like the same way, not supplying foodstuff to the stomach, we are thinking of becoming happy. No, that cannot be. If the senses of the body, parts of the body want to become happy, then he, the senses and the parts of the body, they have to supply foodstuff to the stomach. Similarly, if you want to be happy in this world, there is no alternative without, I mean to say, performing sacrifices.

The highest love which will unite all people better than UN

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.8:

If you pour water on the every leaf, I think you'll have no time. "Oh, there are millions of leaves. How we can ...?" No. Take the root and pour water and it will reach. That is the way. Similarly, if you love your society, your friends, your country, your family, yourself, your dog, everything, if you love Kṛṣṇa, all love will be distributed. But if you don't love Kṛṣṇa, if you simply love this, simply love that, simply that, it will be never be perfect. Therefore the whole world is confused. They do not know where to repose the love. That do not know. Therefore Kṛṣṇa is canvassing: *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ* [*Bhagavad-gītā*. 18.66]. "Come here! Love Me! Increase your attachment for Me. Everything will be all right." Otherwise it is simply vague. *Śrama eva hi kevalam*. Simply waste of time.

Lecture *Bhagavad-gītā* 7.1, Bombay, January 13, 1973:

It is simply waste of time. The whole world is trying to formulate... The United Nations. How to love the nations, one another. But there is no Kṛṣṇa. Therefore twenty years they are trying to unite the nations, but they are simply becoming disunited, missing the point. They do not know how to unite. If you want to unite the whole human society into one, take to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You'll be united politically, socially, religiously, culturally, philosophically, in any way. Because Kṛṣṇa is everything. *Ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo* [*Bhagavad-gītā* 10.8]. Kṛṣṇa is the root. *Sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam* [*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.1].

Will liquidate all debts to forefather, demigods, etc.

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 13.8–12, Bombay, September 30, 1973:

Just like if you pour water on the root of a tree, the branches, the twigs, the flowers and leaves, they all become nourished, similarly, by worshiping Kṛṣṇa you'll satisfy all the demigods. You don't require to satisfy everyone. This is the statement in all *śāstras*.

> *devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇāṁ pitṛṇāṁ*
> *na kiṅkaro nāyam ṛṇī ca rājan*
> *sarvātmanā yaḥ śaraṇaṁ śaraṇyaṁ*
> *gato mukundaṁ parihṛtya kārtam*
> (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.5.41)

We are indebted to so many persons—*devatās*, *deva*, *ṛṣi*, *devarṣi*; *bhūta*, living entities; *nṛṇām*, human society. *Devarṣi-bhūtāpta*: our family men, our friends. *Devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇāṁ pitṛṇām* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.5.41]. *Pitṛloka, pitṛ-piṇḍa*. We are indebted in so many ways. It is very difficult to liquidate all these debts. It is very difficult. But if one surrenders to Kṛṣṇa, *sarvātmanā yaḥ śaraṇaṁ śaraṇyaṁ gato mukundam* ... If one has surrendered fully to Mukunda, *parihṛtya kārtam* ... There are so many duties.

Therefore Kṛṣṇa assures that "If you surrender to Me... If you think that you have not worshiped others, and if you are sinful thereby, Kṛṣṇa says, *mā śucaḥ, ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi* [*Bhagavad-gītā*. 18.66]: "I shall give you protection."

Daridra Nārāyaṇa philosophy, i.e. service to man is service to God, defeated

Room Conversation, Bombay, April 24, 1977:

Mr. Dwivedi: So I asked, "Vivekānanda has said that "Service of God... Service of humanity is service of God." Do you think it is correct or it is incorrect?" He said, "This is correct." Then I said, "We are running educational institution. Whatever good or bad, leave that aside. But in our own little small way we are rendering little service to humanity. And ..."

Prabhupāda: But I may interfere. The ... In the *Bhagavad-gītā* is there such statement, that "Service to humanity is service to God?" Is there any statement?

Mr. Dwivedi: *Daridrānām bhara kaunteya*... (?) I think there is somewhere...

Prabhupāda: There is no.

Mr. Dwivedi: But this particular I remember, *daridrānām bhara kaunteya*...

Prabhupāda: This is... This is wrong theory. Don't maintain this. This is a very wrong theory. Just like "Service to the leaves is service to the root." Is it not wrong? What do you think? Like a tree, so where the service should be given, to the root or to the leaf?

Mr. Dwivedi: The root.

Prabhupāda: Then why do you say like that? And Kṛṣṇa says openly, *mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja.* He doesn't even recommend to worship demigods. *Kamais tais tair hṛta-jñānāḥ yajanty anya-devataḥ* [*Bhagavad-gītā*. 7.20]. So these are imagination, concoction. They are not authorized. Vivekānanda advocated *daridra-nārāyaṇa-sevā* hundred years ago. So India is full of daridras. What Motilāl can do? What Vivekānanda can do? This is all simply concoction. You cannot do anything.

> *prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni*
> *guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ*
> *ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā*
> *kartāham iti manyate*
> [*Bhagavad-gītā* 3.27]

The nature's law will go on. You cannot make a poor man a rich man, unhappy man a happy man. That is not possible. *Kāraṇaṁ guṇa-saṅgo 'sya sad-asad-janma-yoniṣu* [*Bhagavad-gītā*. 13.22]. Can you make a hog eat *halavā* instead of stool? Can you make? By nature's way it is going on. *Ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate* [*Bhagavad-gītā*. 3.27]. These are foolish person who concoct ideas. It is not possible. If you can do anything to the human society, induce him to become a Kṛṣṇa devotee.

> *ya idaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ*
> *mad-bhakteṣv abhidhāsyati*
> (*Bhagavad-gītā* 18.68)

> *na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu*
> *kaścin me priya-kṛttamaḥ*
> (*Bhagavad-gītā* 18.69)

Kṛṣṇa says. So Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-dharman parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ...* [*Bhagavad-gītā*. 18.66]. Teach people that "You take it." That is real benefit. Otherwise you cannot do anything. What you can do?

If we satisfy Kṛṣṇa, then we become satisfied

Science of Self Realization 8:

The awareness of God's greatness increases when transcendental service is rendered. A person who serves the Lord in order to satisfy the senses of the Lord becomes satisfied, because Kṛṣṇa is the Supersoul and the individual living entity is His part and parcel. If He is satisfied, then the living entity is satisfied. If the stomach is satisfied, then all the parts of the body are satisfied, for they receive nourishment through the stomach. When one of my Godbrothers began to fan my Guru Mahārāja on a very hot day, Guru Mahārāja asked, "Why are you fanning me all of a sudden?" The boy replied, "Because if you are satisfied, we are all satisfied." This is the formula—we should not try to satisfy our senses separately, but should try to satisfy Kṛṣṇa's senses. Then naturally we will become satisfied.

In other words, we must give them Kṛṣṇa, not so many other isms. If we try to give anything else it is like trying to cross the ocean by catching the tail of a dog.

Dedication of the *gopīs*

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 8.208:

> There is an inexplicable fact about the natural inclinations of the *gopīs*. The *gopīs* never want to enjoy themselves with Kṛṣṇa personally.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 8.209:

> The happiness of the *gopīs* increases ten million times when they serve to engage Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Their transcendental pastimes.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 8.210:

> By nature, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is just like a creeper of love of Godhead, and the *gopīs* are the twigs, flowers and leaves of that creeper.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 8.211:

> When the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is sprinkled on that creeper, the happiness derived by the twigs, flowers and leaves is ten million times greater than that derived by the creeper itself.

In the purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> In his *Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura states, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇṇī is the creeper of love of Godhead, and the *gopīs* are exactly like twigs, flowers and leaves. When water is sprinkled on the creeper, the twigs, flowers and leaves indirectly receive all the benefits of the creeper itself. But water sprinkled directly on the twigs, leaves and flowers is not as effective as water sprinkled on the creeper's root. The *gopīs* are not as pleased when they directly mix with Kṛṣṇa as when they serve to unite Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī with Kṛṣṇa. Their transcendental pleasure lies in uniting Them.

Unity in Diversity

Science of Self Realization 7:

> In the vase there is a variety of flowers, and that variety helps us better appreciate the idea of flowers. From any point of view, Kṛṣṇa can resolve all problems. Why just the problems of Irishmen or Englishmen? All problems. That is called unity in diversity. Our students come from different backgrounds, but because they are all in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they are unified.

Letter to Kīrtanānanda, Bombay, October 18, 1973:

> In the spiritual world there are varieties, but there is agreement. That is the difference. The materialist without being able to adjust the varieties and the

disagreements makes everything zero. They cannot come into agreement with varieties, but if we keep Kṛṣṇa in the center, then there will be agreement in varieties. This is called unity in diversity. I am therefore suggesting that all our men meet in Māyāpur every year during the birth anniversary of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. With all GBC and senior men present we should discuss how to make unity in diversity. But, if we fight on account of diversity, then it is simply the material platform. Please try to maintain the philosophy of unity in diversity. That will make our movement successful. One section of men have already gone out, therefore we must be very careful to maintain unity in diversity, and remember the story in Aesop's Fables of the father of many children with the bundle of sticks. When the father asked his children to break the bundle of sticks wrapped in a bag, none of them could do it. But, when they removed the sticks from the bag, and tried one by one, the sticks were easily broken. So this is the strength in unity. If we are bunched up, we can never be broken, but when divided, then we can become broken very easily.

TOOL 27: Type of Discussion or Argument: *Vāda* (Best category is *Samvāda*), *Jalpa,* and *Vitaṇḍā*

Method and circumstances of applicability:

This tool is used in three main instances.

The first is identifying these types within *śāstra*. For example, we consider the type of discourse in the cursing at the Dakṣa *yajña* when we understand the meanings of those statements.

In the second and third instances two or more persons are trying to understand spiritual statements. The second is where we are reading or hearing a discourse and trying to understand how *others* are explaining and discussing spiritual statements. We privilege *vāda* discussions and avoid the other two. The third instance is self-reflective, where we ensure that the way we are discussing spiritual statements is only in the *vāda* mood. Sometimes the word *vāda* is used in *śāstra* to refer to arguments in general, in which case we are recommended to avoid an argumentative mentality, but rather cultivate a devotional one, albeit having discussions in a courteous manner with the aim of pleasing the Lord and understanding truth. Such discussions are the highest form of *vāda*, which is always suitable for Vaiṣṇavas, and is called *samvāda*.

According to *nyāya* philosophy:

> *vāda* - civil debate following proper rules of *nyāya,*
> *jalpa* - argument/fight (an endeavour to prove one's superiority),
> *vitaṇḍā* - wrangling or refutative debate (no point of one's own to prove, just trying to defeat others).

Note: within *vāda*, there are gradations. Sometimes in *śāstra*, *vāda* refers to civil discussion in general and is recommended. In other instances, *vāda* refers to a mundane form of civil discussion at the lower end of the spectrum and is discouraged. In such cases, the highest form of *vāda*, namely *samvāda,* is recommended. *Samvāda* ideally involves proper questions and answers between a qualified teacher and student, though it can also be applied to *bhakti*-infused discussions among equals. In general, when we recommend *vāda* for devotees, we refer to *samvāda.*

Evidence and Explanation:

The Bhaṭṭācārya presented various types of false arguments with pseudo logic and tried to defeat his opponent in many ways. However, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu refuted all these arguments and established His own conviction.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 6.177, purport:

> The word *vitaṇḍā* indicates that a debater, not touching the main point or establishing his own point, simply tries to refute the other person's argument. When one does not touch the direct meaning but tries to divert attention by misinterpretation, he engages in *chala*. The word *nigraha* also means always trying to refute the arguments of the other party.

Bhagavad-gītā 10.32, purport:

> Among logicians there are different kinds of argument. Supporting one's argument with evidence that also supports the opposing side is called *jalpa*. Merely trying to defeat one's opponent is called *vitaṇḍā*. But the actual conclusion is called *vāda*. This conclusive truth is a representation of Kṛṣṇa.

By Hari Pārṣada Dāsa:

Śrī Madhvācārya writes in his *Kathā-lakṣaṇam*:

trividhā viduṣām kathā

Translation: Amongst learned philosophers, discussions can be classified into three types — *vāda*, *jalpa* and *vitaṇḍā*.

tattva-nirṇayam-uddiśya
kevalaṁ guru-śiśyayoḥ
kathā 'nyeṣām api satām
vādo vā samiteḥ śubhā

Translation: Discussions primarily between the spiritual master and disciple that are auspiciously aimed only at establishing the truth are described by the learned as *vāda*.

khyātyādyarthaṁ spardhayā vā satāṁ jalpa itīryate

Translation: Discussions driven by the desire to earn prestige or the desire to win a debate are classified by the wise as *jalpa*.

vitaṇḍā tu satām-anyais
tattvameṣu nigūhitaṁ

Translation: A discussion that takes place between an honest person and a wicked wrangler intent only on destroying the genuine arguments of his honest opponent, without paying any heed to the establishment of truth, is called *vitaṇḍā*.

In the above classification, we should note that *vāda* refers to *samvāda*. In other literature, however, *vāda* sometimes refers to argumentation [*vivāda*]. Whenever that is the case, *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* and other literature advises against it.

Nārada-bhakti-sūtra 74:

vādo nāvalambyaḥ

Translation: Do not take shelter of *vāda* (argument).

The wrangling spirit of debate has been prohibited in this *sūtra*. The term *vāda* should be understood in its proper context. *Vāda* here means argumentative debate. The *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* prohibits argumentative debate, even if it is to apparently establish what one considers as truth. In other words, even if one firmly believes that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, do not prove this point to others while bruising their ego.

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī instructs in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.78: *bahu-grantha-kalābhyāsa-vyākhyā-vāda-vivarjanam.* He said here clearly, *vāda vivarjanam* (avoid debates). The point here is truth cannot be established merely through a rational process of dialogue. As Śrī Nārada Munī continues in his *bhakti-sūtras.*

Nārada-bhakti-sūtra 75:

bāhulyāvakāśatvād aniyatatvāc ca

Translation: Because such argument keeps on increasing in scope and does not reach a fixed conclusion.

Furthermore, we read in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.18.30:

śuṣka-vāda-vivāde na
kañcit pakṣaṁ samāśrayet

Translation: A devotee should never speak like a mere logician or skeptic or take any side whatsoever in useless arguments.

These quotes must be understood in context, or all *bhakti-yogīs* will have to enter into a state of permanent silence. Rather, when *vāda* is discouraged or prohibited, the term refers not to civilized discussion in general, but to mundane civilized argument. In such cases, devotees eschew this lower type of *vāda*. The following quote from *Bhagavad-gītā* 18.74 is an example of the best type of *vāda*, *samvāda*:

sañjaya uvāca
ity ahaṁ vāsudevasya
pārthasya ca mahātmanaḥ
saṁvādam imam aśrauṣam
adbhutaṁ roma-harṣaṇam

sañjayaḥ uvāca—Sañjaya said; *iti*—thus; *aham*—I; *vāsudevasya*—of Kṛṣṇa; *pārthasya*—and Arjuna; *ca*—also; *mahā-ātmanaḥ*—of the great soul; *saṁvādam*—

discussion; *imam*—this; *aśrauṣam*—have heard; *adbhutam*—wonderful; *roma-harṣaṇam*—making the hair stand on end.

Translation: Sañjaya said: Thus have I heard the conversation of two great souls, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. And so wonderful is that message that my hair is standing on end.

TOOL 28: Understanding Requires *Jīve Dayā*

Offenses, especially against Vaiṣṇavas, block our understanding of the statements of *guru-sādhu-śāstra*. Sometimes we are unaware of our having committed such offenses.

Method:

This method should be used along with any other hermeneutic tool one applies. Ensure that one endeavors to be kind to all living beings, especially Vaiṣṇavas, including those who have done harm to oneself, those with whom one disagrees, and intimate family members. One is advised to consult with trusted others about one's behavior for confirmation. If some statements are both controversial and difficult, one may particularly evaluate one's kindness towards those who hold views that oppose one's own.

Evidence and Explanation:

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Tattva-sūtram*, 35:

> Those who think that devotion to God and kindness to living entities are different to each other and act accordingly in their life will not be able to follow devotional culture. Their attempt is only a resemblance of devotion. All types of beneficence to others like kindness, friendliness, forgiveness, charity and respect are included in devotion to God. Giving shelter during adversity, teaching academic and spiritual education, giving charity of medicine, clothes, food and water are activities included in devotional culture.

By Drutakarmā Dāsa:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.29.46, purport:

> It is said of the Six Gosvāmīs: *nānā-śāstra-vicāraṇaika-nipuṇau sad-dharma-saṁsthāpakau lokānāṁ hita-kāriṇau*. A pure devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is always thinking of how fallen, conditioned souls can be delivered. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, influenced by the merciful devotees' attempt to deliver fallen souls, enlightens the people in general from within by His causeless mercy.

Comment by Drutakarmā Dāsa: The idea is that the devotee teacher of hermeneutics should be motivated by mercy.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.29.1, purport:

In this verse the words *dayā jīveṣu*, meaning "mercy to other living entities," indicate that a living entity must be merciful to other living entities if he wishes to make progress in self-realization. This means he must preach this knowledge after perfecting himself and understanding his own position as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. Preaching this is showing real mercy to living entities. Other types of humanitarian work may be temporarily beneficial for the body, but because a living entity is spirit soul, ultimately one can show him real mercy only by revealing knowledge of his spiritual existence.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.22.47:

> ***yair īdṛśī bhagavato gatir ātma-vāda***
> ***ekāntato nigamibhiḥ pratipāditā naḥ***
> ***tuṣyantv adabhra-karuṇāḥ sva-kṛtena nityaṁ***
> ***ko nāma tat pratikaroti vinoda-pātram***

yaiḥ—by those; *īdṛśī*—such kind of; *bhagavataḥ*—of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *gatiḥ*—progress; *ātma-vāde*—spiritual consideration; *ekāntataḥ*—in complete understanding; *nigamibhiḥ*—by Vedic evidences; *pratipāditā*—conclusively established; *naḥ*—unto us; *tuṣyantu*—be satisfied; *adabhra*—unlimited; *karuṇāḥ*—mercy; *sva-kṛtena*—by your own activity; *nityam*—eternal; *kaḥ*—who; *nāma*—no one; *tat*—that; *pratikaroti*—counteracts; *vinā*—without; *uda-pātram*—offering of water in cupped hands.

Translation: Pṛthu Mahārāja continued: How can such persons, who have rendered unlimited service by explaining the path of self-realization in relation to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and whose explanations are given for our enlightenment with complete conviction and Vedic evidence, be repaid except by folded palms containing water for their satisfaction? Such great personalities can be satisfied only by their own activities, which are distributed amongst human society out of their unlimited mercy.

Comment by Drutakarmā Dāsa: The above verse indicates that those who are trying to spread correct understanding of *siddhānta,* i.e. teachers of hermeneutic, are characterized chiefly by their merciful attitude toward the fallen souls. This suggests that in their teaching they are not motivated by a selfish desire to prevail in argument. This attitude will also be reflected in the interpretations of *śāstra* that they offer.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.29.46, purport:

It is said of the Six Gosvāmīs: *nānā-śāstra-vicāraṇaika-nipuṇau sad-dharma-saṁsthāpakau lokānāṁ hita-kāriṇau*. A pure devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is always thinking of how fallen, conditioned souls can be delivered. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, influenced by the merciful devotees' attempt to deliver fallen souls, enlightens the people in general from within by His causeless mercy.

Comment by Drutakarmā Dāsa: If the teacher is motivated by mercy, the Lord will give the students proper understanding, ideally.

Lecture on *The Nectar of Devotion,* Calcutta, January 31, 1973:

> Śrīla Prabhupāda: Just see. *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Rūpa Gosvāmī, he's presenting this *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, quoting from so many scriptures. *Nānā-śāstra-vicāraṇaika-nipuṇau*. They were very, very expert in studying *śāstra* very scrutinizingly. *Nānā-śāstra-vicāraṇaika-nipuṇau sad-dharma-saṁsthāpakau*. Why they studied so much? Because they wanted to establish *sad-dharma*, real type of religion, *bhakti*. They are quoting, therefore, from so many, *nānā-śāstra*. *Nānā-śāstra-vicāraṇaika-nipuṇau sad-dharma-saṁsthāpakau lokānāṁ hita-kāriṇau*. That is welfare activity. *Lokānāṁ hita-kāriṇau*. These people are trying to give some service to the *daridra-nārāyaṇa*, but they do not know actually what is *jīve dayā*. This is *jīve dayā. Lokānāṁ hita-kāriṇau*. They should know things with reference to the authorized scripture. Not that I manufacture some words, according to my whims.

Comment by Drutakarmā Dāsa: Why teach hermeneutics? It is part of becoming expert in the study of *śāstra*. Why? To establish the real principles of dharma. Why? For the benefit of the general population, i.e. out of *jīve dayā*, mercy to the conditioned souls.

Tool 29: Prayer, Surrender, and Waiting for Revelation

Method:

This tool should be used always, along with whatever other hermeneutic tools one uses. Additionally, some statements of *guru-sādhu-śāstra* can only be understood with this tool. Such a case manifests the value of openness to change and transformation, which includes patience and trust in the Lord and His devotees to reveal the meaning in their own time and way.

Evidence and Explanation:

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī in *Jaiva-Dharma 4: The Nitya-dharma Is Vaiṣṇavism*:

> If the mind is unable to experience spiritual consciousness through words and discussion, it shies away in doubt. However, the spiritual platform can be attained only by the sincere application of the transcendental process—the culture of *cid-ānanda*, spiritual bliss. Curb all argumentation and chant *harināma* continuously for a few days, then you will find that all doubts have been dissipated and all questions have ceased by the power of the *mantra*.

Here is an example of Śrīla Prabhupāda not immediately understanding an order given by his guru, and getting some realization years later.

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.9.13-14, Montreal, August 22, 1968:

> So once I saw in our Māyāpur, Lord Caitanya's birthplace, so a snake was going, a black snake with ... In Bengal there are many snakes. So my Guru Mahārāja was on the upstairs and everyone asked the permission whether this should be killed. He said immediately, "Yes. He should be killed." So at that time I thought that "How Guru Mahārāja ordered for killing the snake?" Then, after so many years, when I began to read *Bhāgavatam* and came to this passage, Prahlāda Mahārāja assertion, *modeta sādhur api vṛścika sarpa-hatyā*, then I thought that "My Guru Mahārāja did

right thing." Here also, modeta. Even a *sādhu*. Then why a *sādhu* is pleased when a *sarpa*, a scorpion or snake is killed? The reason is that these two kinds of creatures, they bite innocent persons without any fault. Without any fault. Or for little fault. The venomous snake. Immediately. By nature they are so angry and so envious that they feel pleasure if somebody is bitten and immediately dies. That is their nature. Therefore killing a snake and scorpion means to save it from so many sinful activities. Because it is nature. It will kill so many persons, so many animals, because its nature is innocent person, bite innocent person, kill him. So if there is seen by killing another, it will continue. Better to kill it to stop its sinful activities. That is the reason here it is said, *modeta sādhur api*.

Tool 30: Purification and Immersion
(e.g. Hearing, Meditating, Applying, Praying)

While the tool of "prayer, surrender, and waiting for revelation" is a hermeneutic tool in a general way, the following is a five-step process which Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa explains as follows.

Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.5:

Method:

(1) hearing, which implies memorization (*śravaṇam*),

(2) comprehension, reflection or trying to understand or to find the sense (*mananam*),

(3) meditating (*nididhyāsanam*),

(4) applying, praying, receiving mercy (according to Baladeva's *ṭīkā* or commentary to *Iśopaniṣad* 15),

(5) realization of the Absolute (*darśanam*).

Evidence and Explanation:

Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.5 mentions the progression of *śravanam, mānanam* and *nididhyāsanam* also referred to by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa in his commentary to *Iśopaniṣad* 15:

Śravaṇa: hear, (not reading, but hearing) to change your thinking. Thinking is like a river; dig a new riverbed. Like bringing food to mouth.

Manana: reflect about the subject matter. Sort it out, analyze it, file it in your mind. (Cannot be done when very tired.) Like biting and chewing food.

Nididhyāsana: meditate, let the subject come before your mind's eye. Be in the sacred presence of Kṛṣṇa and devotee, with all its colors, aromas, and textures; contemplate. Like enjoying food and getting refreshed and nourished; food must be digested or transformed into devotional action.

Bhagavat-prārthana: pray to the Lord, take it to heart. Mercy enables establishing our relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

Śaṅkarācārya has a commentary on this text and also quotes the first three points frequently. Whereas some later Advaita texts add *samādhi* as a fourth process after the classical trio, we Vaiṣṇavas add a fourth process of *Bhagavat-prārthana*, prayer to the Lord.

Lecture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.13, New Vrindaban, June 13, 1969:

> You have to hear from the pure source, give aural reception, and think of it, meditate upon it. Simply by doing this, you are liberated. These are not bluff. Here is the evidence. Simply receive the message from the right source and contemplate and meditate upon that instruction. You are liberated.

Tool 31: Repeated Study for Personal Transformation

Repeated reading leads to ever deeper understanding and purification of intelligence.

Method:

Be open to transformation. Each time we study *śāstra*, we are transformed. When we return to *śāstra* with that transformed understanding, we see new meanings and receive new understandings.

Do this repeatedly: This cycle of study and transformation is endless, leading to ever deeper understanding and ever greater transformation.

Evidence:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.18:

> *naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu*
> *nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā*
> *bhagavaty uttama-śloke*
> *bhaktir bhavati naiṣṭhikī*

Translation: By regular attendance in classes on the *Bhāgavatam* and by rendering of service to the pure devotee, all that is troublesome to the heart is almost completely destroyed, and loving service unto the Personality of Godhead, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 2.87:

> *yebā nāhi bujhe keha, śunite śunite seha,*
> *ki adbhuta caitanya-carita*
> *kṛṣṇe upajibe prīti, jānibe rasera rīti,*
> *śunilei baḍa haya hita*

Translation: If one does not understand in the beginning but continues to hear again and again, the wonderful effects of Lord Caitanya's pastimes will bring love for Kṛṣṇa. Gradually one will come to understand the loving affairs between Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* and other associates of Vṛndāvana. Everyone is advised to continue to hear over and over again in order to greatly benefit.

The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 22, Quality 53: Ever Fresh:

> Not only Kṛṣṇa Himself, but also Kṛṣṇa's knowledge is ever fresh. *Bhagavad-gītā*, which was imparted five thousand years ago, is still being read repeatedly by many, many men, and still new light is always being found in it.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.46, purport:

> If one simply reads over and over again about Dhruva Mahārāja by hearing and reading this chapter, one can attain the highest perfection of life in any way he desires; most importantly, he gets the chance to become a great devotee.

Discussion with BTG staff, Boston, December 24, 1969:

> So even there is difficulty, let them read over and over and again. Then they will understand. Why should we change it? Let it be presented as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī has given, and... Then don't give more than one or two pages at a time. Their brain will be puzzled. [laughter] Yes. When Guru Mahārāja was speaking, at least my brain was puzzled. [laughter] Even he would speak in Bengali, it was very difficult to understand. He was speaking from a very, very high platform. But I wanted to hear him. That's all. Even I did not understand it. That he appreciated, [laughs] that "This boy does not go away. He hears.: Actually that was my position. In the beginning I could not understand what he was speaking, but I wanted to hear him. That's all. I was very much anxious to hear him. That he marked. And he was kindly pleased on me, that "He wants to hear. He does not go away." That was my policy, that "let me hear. Even I do not understand, let me hear." That's all. Yes. Actually I did not understand in the beginning what he was speaking. So Bhaktisiddhānta's writing is not very easy to understand. Yes. But we should try, read and read again, and simply that vibration will help us. That's all. It is transcendental vibration, not that everyone will understand. But if you simply give aural reception to the vibration, that will make him advanced, not exactly that anyone has to understand it. Yes. Just like a man is sleeping and somebody is calling him. In his sleeping condition he does not understand. By calling, calling, calling, he gets up because that vibration is there. Not that in his sleeping condition he is understanding what is this sound is coming. So similarly, we should give reception to the transcendental vibrations made by Kṛṣṇa and His bona fide representatives. That will make us awakened.

TOOL 32: Explain with the Right Motives and Correct Reasons
(i.e. One's Own Spiritual Transformation)

The main purpose of studying and understanding *guru-sādhu-śāstra* is to attain personally to love and devotion for the Lord and His devotees. While defeating other philosophies and ideas is a necessary part of outreach and preaching, such a purpose is not the primary goal of the statements of *guru-sādhu-śāstra*. Rather, only when one's heart is transformed is one in a position to convince others and defeat wrong understanding.

Method:

Focus primarily on how the statement can bring oneself to a deeper level of love, devotion, faith, and service to the Lord, one's guru(s), the Vaiṣṇavas, and all living beings.

Evidence:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.15.51:

> The subject of the departure of the sons of Pāṇḍu for the ultimate goal of life, back to Godhead, is fully auspicious and perfectly pure. Therefore, anyone who hears this narration with devotional faith certainly gains the devotional service of the Lord, the highest perfection of life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.1.10, purport:

> Anyone who hears *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* attentively from its bona fide reciter is sure to become a sincere devotee of the Lord, who is able to award liberation.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.33.37:

> The description of the dealings of Kapiladeva and His mother is very confidential, and anyone who hears or reads this narration becomes a devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is carried by Garuḍa, and he thereafter enters into the abode of the Supreme Lord to engage in the transcendental loving service of the Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.46:

> Anyone who hears the narration of Dhruva Mahārāja, and who repeatedly tries with faith and devotion to understand his pure character, attains the pure devotional platform and executes pure devotional service. By such activities one can diminish the threefold miserable conditions of material life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.81.41:

> The Lord always shows *brāhmaṇas* special favor. Anyone who hears this account of the Supreme Lord's kindness to *brāhmaṇas* will come to develop love for the Lord and thus become freed from the bondage of material work.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.17–21 as quoted in *Bhagavad-gītā* 7.1, purport:

> *śṛṇvatāṁ sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ*
> *puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ*
> *hṛdy antaḥ-stho hy abhadrāṇi*
> *vidhunoti suhṛt satām*
> *naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu*
> *nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā*
> *bhagavaty uttama-śloke*
> *bhaktir bhavati naiṣṭhikī*
> *tadā rajas-tamo-bhāvāḥ*
> *kāma-lobhādayaś ca ye*
> *ceta etair anāviddhaṁ*
> *sthitaṁ sattve prasīdati*
> *evaṁ prasanna-manaso*
> *bhagavad-bhakti-yogataḥ*

bhagavat-tattva-vijñānaṁ
mukta-saṅgasya jāyate
bhidyate hṛdaya-granthiś
chidyante sarva-saṁśayāḥ
kṣīyante cāsya karmāṇi
dṛṣṭa evātmanīśvare

Translation: To hear about Kṛṣṇa from Vedic literatures, or to hear from Him directly through the *Bhagavad-gītā*, is itself righteous activity. And for one who hears about Kṛṣṇa, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is dwelling in everyone's heart, acts as a best-wishing friend and purifies the devotee who constantly engages in hearing of Him. In this way, a devotee naturally develops his dormant transcendental knowledge. As he hears more about Kṛṣṇa from the *Bhāgavatam* and from the devotees, he becomes fixed in the devotional service of the Lord. By development of devotional service one becomes freed from the modes of passion and ignorance, and thus material lusts and avarice are diminished. When these impurities are wiped away, the candidate remains steady in his position of pure goodness, becomes enlivened by devotional service and understands the science of God perfectly. Thus *bhakti-yoga* severs the hard knot of material affection and enables one to come at once to the stage of *asaṁśayaṁ-samagram*, understanding of the Supreme Absolute Truth Personality of Godhead.

Letter to Hṛṣikeśa, Hawaii, March 18, 1969:

I hope if you kindly read my books carefully that all your spiritual desires will be fulfilled.

Letter to Richard, Vrindaban, August, 20, 1974:

So you should read my books and try to understand the nature of Kṛṣṇa the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then it will be easy for you to think of Him.

Explanation:

By Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa:

We frequently think that our understanding of things is the correct understanding. When we study scripture, this mentality often makes us presume that our understanding of scripture is the right understanding. Consequently, we consciously or subconsciously highlight points that prove our point and downplay points to the contrary.

Pertinently, scripture doesn't speak in one voice to all people. It offers a multi-level understanding of truth and the path towards truth to accommodate people according to their level of spiritual evolution. That's why to find a particular section of scripture resonate with us is not surprising, it's natural and desirable. This resonance will help us rise from wherever we presently are. But to extrapolate from that individual resonance that there's nothing else of importance in scripture is unwarranted and undesirable. The *Gītā* 2.42 illustrates such an erroneous extrapolation with religious materialists, who hold that scriptural promises of heavenly material pleasures coming from pious religiosity are its most important section.

Considering that we usually don't consciously intend to study scripture for proving our point, how can we go beyond our viewpoint of scripture to its conclusion?

We can go beyond by learning scripture from great souls who have realized the truth, as the *Gītā* 4.34 recommends. Such guided study will place our viewpoint in a coherent context and proper progression. We will see how scripture steadily steers seekers towards its self-stated summit, Kṛṣṇa, as declared in the *Gītā* 15.15. To reassure us that this is indeed scripture's last word, the *Gītā* towards its end 18.66 categorically calls upon us to give up all other religious processes and just lovingly surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

As our viewpoint broadens and deepens, our focus in scriptural study will rise till it resonates with Kṛṣṇa, thereby propelling us towards life's supreme destination.

TOOL 33: Choose the Most Merciful Meaning

Method:

Among many possible explanations, favor those explanations that will benefit the greatest number of people in the kindest way, without compromising other statements of *guru-sādhu-śāstra* or other hermeneutic principles and tools.

Evidence and Explanation:

By Ādi-puruṣa Dāsa:

All "*Veda-Purāṇa*" is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's mercy to the conditioned *jīvas. Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 20.122 also quoted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* Introduction*:*

> *māyā-mugdha jīvera nāhi svataḥ kṛṣṇa-jñāna*
> *jīvere kṛpāya kailā kṛṣṇa veda-purāṇa*

> **Translation:** The conditioned soul cannot revive his Kṛṣṇa consciousness by his own effort. But out of causeless mercy, Lord Kṛṣṇa compiled the Vedic literature and its supplements, the *Purāṇas*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.19.37-38:

> *satyaṁ ca sama-darśanam*
> *anyac ca sunṛtā vāṇī*

> **Translation:** Truthfulness means to speak the truth in a pleasing way, as declared by great sages.

And in the purport to this verse:

> Truthfulness means that one should speak in a pleasing way so that there will be a beneficial effect. If one becomes attached to pointing out the faults of others in the name of truth, then such faultfinding will not be appreciated by saintly persons. The bona fide spiritual master speaks the truth in such a way that people can

elevate themselves to the spiritual platform, and one should learn this art of truthfulness.[53]

Vedānta-sūtra 2.1.34:

vaiṣamya-nairghṛṇyena na sāpekṣatvāt tathā hi darśayati.

Translation: [The Absolute Truth, the Lord is] not unfair and not cruel, because of having consideration [to every person's actions]. Thus indeed [all scripture] demonstrates.

Bhagavad-gītā 3.29:

prakṛter guṇa-sammūḍhāḥ
sajjante guṇa-karmasu
tān akṛtsna-vido mandān
kṛtsna-vin na vicālayet

Translation: Bewildered by the modes of material nature, the ignorant fully engage themselves in material activities and become attached. But the wise should not unsettle them, although these duties are inferior due to the performers' lack of knowledge.

In the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

Men who are ignorant cannot appreciate activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and therefore Lord Kṛṣṇa advises us not to disturb them and simply waste valuable time. But the devotees of the Lord are more kind than the Lord because they understand the purpose of the Lord. Consequently they undertake all kinds of risks, even to the point of approaching ignorant men to try to engage them in the acts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which are absolutely necessary for the human being.

Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu 1.1.27:

The wise explain that there are four types of auspiciousness (*śubha*): affection for all living entities, being attractive to all living entities, possession of good qualities, and happiness, as well as other items.

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[53] Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary: Truth means seeing equally everywhere. One should see others' suffering as one's own, giving up harsh qualities like envy and hatred. *Gītā* says the same:
I consider that practicing *yogī* who sees equally everything as equal to himself in all circumstances, whether in happiness or suffering, to be the topmost *yogī*. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 6.32)
Truth is not merely speaking the facts. *Ṛtam* means pleasant and truthful speech, not just speaking truthfully. Merely speaking truth includes announcing the faults of person who has faults. In doing that, one criticizes a person. But that criticism is not agreeable to the devotee listeners. That criticism lacks pleasing presentation of truth. But previous teachers have defined *satyam* as proper conduct and *ṛtam* as truthful words.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in his commentary:

> *Prīṇana* or affection for the world means that he works for the world's benefit. The whole world is also attached to this person who works for the benefit of all beings. Though these two items are actually included within "possession of good qualities," the third type of *śubha,* they are listed separately to show their superiority above all other qualities. Or, though these two qualities may be included in the attainment of good qualities, they should not be relegated to the status of mere constituents. Rather they are the very *svarūpa,* the very essence of all good qualities. Therefore, they should be listed separately.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, *Śrī Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta,* Chapter 3, translated by Bhānu Swāmī:

> When a person takes shelter of *bhakti*, mercy towards all living entities is a natural quality. Compassion does not have a separate existence from *bhakti*. The quality which, when offered to the Lord, is called *bhakti* or *prema*, becomes friendship, compassion and indifference when directed towards other living beings. It is a feeling that is inherent in the eternal nature of the soul. In the spiritual realm, this quality manifests only as friendship, but in the material world it manifests as friendship towards devotees, mercy towards the innocent and indifference towards the offenders. These are but different aspects of the same compassion. In the conditioned state this compassion is extremely stunted. It starts with affection for the individual body, then widens to include attachment to household, then to *varṇa* [community], then to countrymen. Expanding, it includes the human beings of the whole world. Compassion becomes complete when it is directed towards all living entities. Patriotism is but an aspect of this sentiment in relation to a country. Philanthropy is compassion directed towards all humanity. Vaiṣṇavas should not be limited by these sentiments. They have compassion for all living entities, not wanting to cause harm to any of them.

From Śrīla Prabhupāda

By Drutakarmā Dāsa:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.29.1, purport:

> In this verse the words *dayā jīveṣu*, meaning "mercy to other living entities," indicate that a living entity must be merciful to other living entities if he wishes to make progress in self-realization. This means he must preach this knowledge after perfecting himself and understanding his own position as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. Preaching this is showing real mercy to living entities. Other types of humanitarian work may be temporarily beneficial for the body, but because a living entity is spirit soul, ultimately one can show him real mercy only by revealing knowledge of his spiritual existence.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.22.47:

> *yair īdṛśī bhagavato gatir ātma-vāda*
> *ekāntato nigamibhiḥ pratipāditā naḥ*
> *tuṣyantv adabhra-karuṇāḥ sva-kṛtena nityaṁ*
> *ko nāma tat pratikaroti vinoda-pātram*

yaiḥ—by those; *īdṛśī*—such kind of; *bhagavataḥ*—of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *gatiḥ*—progress; *ātma-vāde*—spiritual consideration; *ekāntataḥ*—in complete understanding; *nigamibhiḥ*—by Vedic evidences; *pratipāditā*—conclusively established; *naḥ*—unto us; *tuṣyantu*—be satisfied; *adabhra*—unlimited; *karuṇāḥ*—mercy; *sva-kṛtena*—by your own activity; *nityam*—eternal; *kaḥ*—who; *nāma*—no one; *tat*—that; *pratikaroti*—counteracts; *vinā*—without; *uda-pātram*—offering of water in cupped hands.

Translation: Pṛthu Mahārāja continued: How can such persons, who have rendered unlimited service by explaining the path of self-realization in relation to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and whose explanations are given for our enlightenment with complete conviction and Vedic evidence, be repaid except by folded palms containing water for their satisfaction? Such great personalities can be satisfied only by their own activities, which are distributed amongst human society out of their unlimited mercy.

Comment by Drutakarmā Dāsa: The above verse indicates that those who are trying to spread correct understanding of *siddhānta,* i.e. teachers of hermeneutic, are characterized chiefly by their merciful attitude toward the fallen souls. This suggests that in their teaching they are not motivated by a selfish desire to prevail in argument. This attitude will also be reflected in the interpretations of *śāstra* that they offer.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.29.46, purport:

It is said of the Six Gosvāmīs: *nānā-śāstra-vicāraṇaika-nipuṇau sad-dharma-saṁsthāpakau lokānāṁ hita-kāriṇau*. A pure devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is always thinking of how fallen, conditioned souls can be delivered. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, influenced by the merciful devotees' attempt to deliver fallen souls, enlightens the people in general from within by His causeless mercy.

Comment by Drutakarmā Dāsa: If the teacher is motivated by mercy, the Lord will give the students proper understanding, ideally.

Lecture on *The Nectar of Devotion,* Calcutta, January 31, 1973:

Just see. *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Rūpa Gosvāmī, he's presenting this *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, quoting from so many scriptures. *Nānā-śāstra-vicāraṇaika-nipuṇau*. They were very, very expert in studying *śāstra* very scrutinizingly. *Nānā-śāstra-vicāraṇaika-nipuṇau sad-dharma-saṁsthāpakau*. Why they studied so much? Because they wanted to establish *sad-dharma*, real type of religion, *bhakti*. They are quoting, therefore, from so many, *nānā-śāstra*. *Nānā-śāstra-vicāraṇaika-nipuṇau sad-dharma-saṁsthāpakau lokānāṁ hita-kāriṇau*. That is welfare activity. *Lokānāṁ hita-kāriṇau*. These people are trying to give some service to the *daridra-nārāyaṇa*, but they do not know actually what is *jīve dayā*. This is *jīve dayā*. *Lokānāṁ hita-kāriṇau*. They should know things with reference to the authorized scripture. Not that I manufacture some words, according to my whims.

Comment by Drutakarmā Dāsa: Why teach hermeneutics? It is part of becoming expert in the study of *śāstra*. Why? To establish the real principles of dharma. Why? For the benefit of the general population, i.e. out of *jīve dayā*, mercy to the conditioned souls.

TOOL 34: Consider the Mood of the Statement When Understanding the Intention of the Statement

From Vopadeva's *Hari-līlāmṛta* 9, quoted by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in *Tattva-sandarbha* 26:

> *vedaḥ purāṇaṁ kāvyaṁ ca prabhur mitraṁ priyeva ca bodhayantīti hi prāhus trivad bhāgavataṁ punaḥ*

> **Translation:** They say that the *Vedas*, *Purāṇas* and poetic works give understanding as the master, friend and lover respectively. However, *Bhāgavatam* gives understanding as all three.

Note: see also Tool 6.

Method:

When explaining and understanding *śāstra*, traditionally, one starts with the categorization of words using Sanskrit grammatical principles. Some words have established meanings that cannot be understood by root words, prefixes, and so forth. Other words can be understood through analyzing the parts and history of the words. And other terms are understood through a combination of established meaning and root words. In addition, traditionally, *śāstric* meaning is normally understood through the most literal definitions of words, though indirect and even extrapolated meanings are used when a literal meaning does not make sense, or in some poetic and narrative works. If an indirect interpretation is used to supplant the direct explanation, then it is to be rejected.

In addition, different scriptures have different instructional moods, that of master, friend or lover, that need to be considered while understanding their import.

Sometimes statements that appear as prescriptive orders have a mood of testing, and therefore the intention is not for one to follow the seeming instruction, but rather to refer to other injunctions, precedent, and a holistic view. Often such a mood of testing is revealed in the group of verses, the chapter, or other section in which the statement one is considering is located, or may be noted in a commentary.

Evidence and Explanation:

By attending to and respecting *śāstras* instructional mood in specific instances, we may avoid the sort of unbeneficial understandings indicated in Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's story of the foolish veterinarian apprentice who misapplied his master's means of curing a choking horse, with a hammer to its neck, to all cases of sick animals.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.33.31:

> The instructions of the *devas* or great personalities are always auspicious for the devotees to follow. When the Lord performs pastimes as Rāma, one should follow his instructions. One should perform only those acts which do not contradict the orders given by the *devas* or great persons. But even those instructions should be approved by scriptures. Then one can act, otherwise not. The intelligent person will conduct himself in this way. Kṛṣṇa gave the order: "Kill Aśvatthāmā, who has killed your small children, in the night." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.7.35) But Arjuna

did not follow the instructions of Kṛṣṇa to kill Aśvatthāmā. Kṛṣṇa has also instructed that one should not kill a *brāhmaṇa* even if he is sinful. Another instruction is that one should kill a person armed to kill others. Aśvatthāmā was still a *brāhmaṇa*, and he was not armed to kill. Therefore, he should not be killed. That was the opinion of Kṛṣṇa in the form of scripture. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa's order to Arjuna was simply a test of his religious principles.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.1.7:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī replied: My dear King, if before one's next death whatever impious acts one has performed in this life with his mind, words and body are not counteracted through proper atonement according to the description of the Manu-saṁhitā and other dharma-śāstras, one will certainly enter the hellish planets after death and undergo terrible suffering, as I have previously described to you.

From Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport to this verse:

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura mentions that although Mahārāja Parīkṣit was a pure devotee, Śukadeva Gosvāmī did not immediately speak to him about the strength of devotional service.

As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (14.26):

> *māṁ ca yo 'vyabhicāreṇa*
> *bhakti-yogena sevate*
> *sa guṇān samatītyaitān*
> *brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*

Devotional service is so strong that if one fully surrenders to Kṛṣṇa and takes fully to His devotional service, the reactions of his sinful life immediately stop.

Elsewhere in the *Gītā* 18.66, Lord Kṛṣṇa urges that one give up all other duties and surrender to Him, and He promises, *ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi,* I shall free you from all sinful reactions and give you liberation. Therefore in response to the inquiries of Parīkṣit Mahārāja, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, his guru, could have immediately explained the principle of bhakti, but to test Parīkṣit Mahārāja's intelligence, he first prescribed atonement according to *karma-kāṇḍa*, the path of fruitive activities.

TOOL 35: Practical Intention of the Statement (Injunction, Praise, etc.)

There are 5 types of statements (Mimamsa), which are:

1. **Vidhi** (injunction),
2. **Mantra** (incantation),
3. **Nāmadheya** (designation),
4. **Niṣedha** (prohibition),
5. **Arthavāda** (exaggerated assertion).

Method:

Determining the intention of the statement helps in understanding the meaning and application of the statement itself. This is from the *Artha-saṅgraha* and its commentaries.

Evidence and Explanation:

This tool is used specifically to categorize statements from the *Vedas*. The *Artha-saṁgraha* of Laugākṣi Bhāskara says:

atha ko veda iti ced ucyate? apauruṣeyaṁ vākyaṁ vedaḥ

Translation: What then is *Veda*? An *apauruṣeya* (non-human, free of four defects) statement is *Veda*.

sa ca vidhi-mantra-nāmadheya-niṣedhārthavāda-bhedāt pañcavidhaḥ

Translation: That *Veda* is categorized into five type of statements — (1) *vidhi* (injunction) (2) *mantra* (incantation) (3) *nāmadheya* (designation) (4) *niṣedha* (prohibition) and (5) *arthavāda* (exaggerated assertion).

It then goes ahead to define *Vidhi*:

tatrājñātārtha-jñāpako veda-vibhāgo vidhiḥ

Translation: Therein, the statement which explains something which was not known previously is categorized as *vidhi*.

prayoga-samavetārtha-smārakā mantrāḥ

Translation: The statements which remind one about the necessary practical *karma-kāṇḍa* acts are known as *mantra*.

tathā hi "udbhidā yajeta paśukāmaḥ" ity atrodbhidacchado yāga-nāmadheyam

Translation: The statements in *Vedas* which specify the name of the particular *yajña* to be performed is the *nāmadheya* of that particular *yajña* e.g. *udbhidā yajeta paśukāmaḥ* — a person desiring cattle and animals should perform the *Udbhid* sacrifice.

puruṣasya nivartakaṁ vākyaṁ niṣedhaḥ

Translation: A Vedic statement preventing a person from a particular act is known as *niṣedha*.

prāśastya-nindā-anyatara-paraṁ vākyam arthavādhaḥ

Translation: Statements pertaining to exaggerated praise, exaggerated blame, etc. are categorized as *artha-vāda*.[54]

TOOL 36: Consider how Śrīla Prabhupāda Applied His Statements in His Mission

When explaining the statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda and other *ācāryas* in our line, we must take into consideration the way they applied them, as indicates their own intentions in making those statements.

Method:

In regards to Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements, understand his mood and mission, particularly with reference to the seven purposes of ISKCON. Then, research Śrīla Prabhupāda's behavior that is related to those statements. Use his behavior in the context of his mood and mission to understand the meaning and application of the statements.

In regards to previous *ācāryas*, study their lives and mission, particularly in relation to the statements one is trying to explain, and understand those statements in terms of how that *ācārya* exemplified those principles.

Keep in mind the specific source of the instruction from Śrīla Prabhupāda, i.e. purports, lectures, letter, conversations, compilations, devotee's remembrances.

Note: See Tool 21 explantion.

Evidence and Explanation:

By Nārāyaṇī Devī dāsī:

Śrīla Prabhupāda said many things in his books which appear very strict, but in his application to his followers, he adapted the principles of *śāstra* to different contexts according to his mood and mission. So the statements in his books sometimes appear to contradict his more compassionate application of those statements.

The mood and mission of a pure devotee may sometimes be more compassionate than the statements of *śāstra*, or devotees' own statements in explaining *śāstra*.

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[54] *Artha-saṁgraha* of Shri Laugakshi Bhaskara, edited by Pandit Shobhit Mishra. Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office. Vikram Samwat 2021 (1964 AD).

As Śrīla Prabhupāda says in the purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.29:

> Men who are ignorant cannot appreciate activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and therefore Lord Kṛṣṇa advises us not to disturb them and simply waste valuable time. But the devotees of the Lord are more kind than the Lord because they understand the purpose of the Lord.

We can find an example in relation to Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements about women. He often spoke strongly about women being less intelligent and subordinate in society. Taken on their own, these statements may give a particularly harsh view of Śrīla Prabhupāda. And yet, in his application, Śrīla Prabhupāda was compassionate and innovative.

Bhagavad-gītā 1.40:

> The *varṇāśrama* religion's principles were so designed that the good population would prevail in society for the general spiritual progress of state and community. Such population depends on the chastity and faithfulness of its womanhood. As children are very prone to be misled, women are similarly very prone to degradation. Therefore, both children and women require protection by the elder members of the family. By being engaged in various religious practices, women will not be misled into adultery. According to Cāṇakya Paṇḍita, women are generally not very intelligent and therefore not trustworthy. So the different family traditions of religious activities should always engage them, and thus their chastity and devotion will give birth to a good population eligible for participating in the *varṇāśrama* system. On the failure of such *varṇāśrama-dharma*, naturally the women become free to act and mix with men, and thus adultery is indulged in at the risk of unwanted population.

In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Śrīla Prabhupāda describes his preaching application in relation to women in his movement. This can help us better understand his statements about women, in light of his mood and mission.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 7.32:

> An *ācārya* who comes for the service of the Lord cannot be expected to conform to a stereotype, for he must find the ways and means by which Kṛṣṇa consciousness may be spread. Sometimes jealous persons criticize the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement because it engages equally both boys and girls in distributing love of Godhead. Not knowing that boys and girls in countries like Europe and America mix very freely, these fools and rascals criticize the boys and girls in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for intermingling. But these rascals should consider that one cannot suddenly change a community's social customs. However, since both the boys and the girls are being trained to become preachers, those girls are not ordinary girls but are as good as their brothers who are preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, to engage both boys and girls in fully transcendental activities is a policy intended to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. These jealous fools who criticize the intermingling of boys and girls will simply have to be satisfied with their own foolishness because they cannot think of how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness by adopting ways and means that are favorable for this purpose. Their stereotyped methods will never help spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, what we are doing is perfect by the grace of Lord Caitanya

Mahāprabhu, for it is He who proposed to invent a way to capture those who strayed from Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Regarding protection of women

Kīrtanānanda wanted to call all women book distributors to live on the farm in New Vrindaban so as to better do their *varṇāśrama* duties.

Here was Śrīla Prabhupāda's reply in a letter to Karandhara from October 6, 1973:

> So far as the women distributors who have left New York and Boston temples and have gone to New Vṛndāvana, they should return immediately and resume their original service. In Caitanya Mahaprabhu's movement, everyone is a preacher, whether man or woman it doesn't matter. I do now know why Kīrtanānanda Maharaja is encouraging our woman devotees not to go out on saṅkīrtana for book distribution. Everyone should go out.

When the husbands left the women to remarry Śrīla Prabhupāda did not recommend remarriage.

Letter to Govinda dāsī, April 30, 1974:

> These are material relationships and have nothing to do with spiritual advancement. Engage your life fully for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Only chant Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* day and night, read books and expressing the philosophy in your own words write articles for publishing in Back to Godhead. Don't bother anymore with rascals like Gaurasundara or anyone else. Take Kṛṣṇa as your supreme protector and Kṛṣṇa will help you in all respects. Practice this prescription and you will be happy eternally.

Letter to Dinadayādri, May 26, 1974:

> There is no question of your returning to Nara-Nārāyaṇa. He has remarried, and I also informed him when I was in Los Angeles last time, that he should keep his one wife, living peaceful in Los Angeles. You have got one child, so now make Kṛṣṇa your husband and take shelter of our temple. So take spiritual instructions from your elder Godbrothers and sisters, forget the past, and make all progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness without any material lamentation or hankering.

Regarding women as being less intelligent

Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.29-32, New York, 1966:

> Because in India, according to the caste system, or *varṇāśrama-dharma*, the *brāhmaṇa* and *kṣatriyas* are considered to be the highest in the society, and the *vaiśyas*, a little less than them, and *śūdras*, they are not taken into account. In the similarly, woman class, they are taken as *śūdra*, *śūdra*. Just like the thread ceremony is given to the *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, but there is no thread ceremony for the woman class. Although the woman is born in the *brāhmaṇa* family, she has no that reformation. Because *striyaḥ*, woman class, are taken less intelligent, they should be given protection, but they cannot be elevated. But here

in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, He surpasses all these formalities. Lord Kṛṣṇa surpasses all these formalities. He is giving facility to everyone. Never mind what he is. In the social structure, you may consider that woman is less intelligent or *śūdra* or less purified, but in spiritual consciousness there is no such bar. Here Kṛṣṇa accepts everyone. Either you become woman or you are *śūdra* or a *vaiśya* or whatever you may be, that doesn't matter. If you simply take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the Lord is there. He will give you all protection, all protection, and gradually He will help you.

Letter to Mālati, December 25, 1974:

So you please continue your devotional service, cooking, etc, and you can also keep giving *Bhāgavatam* class if you like. Women in our movement can also preach very nicely. Actually male and female bodies, these are just outward designations. Lord Caitanya said that whether one is *brāhmaṇa* or whatever he may be if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa then he is to be accepted as guru. So one who gives class, he must read and study regularly and study the purport and realize. Don't add anything or concoct anything, then he can preach very nicely. The qualification for leading class is how much one understands about Kṛṣṇa and surrendering to the process. Not whether one is male or female. Of course women, generally are less intelligent, better she has read nicely then she will speak nicely.

Regarding application of *varṇāśrama*

Letter to Haṁsaduta, October 19, 1974:

Regarding the farm, farm opening is not very essential, but if you can do it conveniently, then do it. The *varṇāśrama* system is for convenience sake in the material world. It had nothing to do with spiritual life. Acceptance of *varṇāśrama* means a little easy progress to spiritual life, otherwise it has no importance to us. For example, all my Europeans and American disciples have no *varṇāśrama* position, but spiritually because they have followed the rules and regulations and also my instructions, their advancement spiritually is being appreciated by everyone. Always remember that *varṇāśrama* life is a good program for material life, and it helps one in spiritual life; but spiritual life is not dependent upon it. After all the system of *varṇāśrama* has to be realized before accepting spiritual life; and the renounced order of sannyasa is the last stage of *varṇāśrama*.

TOOL 37: Understand a Statement as a Specific Part of an Argument:

Method:

Some statements can be categorized according to one of the three versions. When categorizing statements within a larger point or "argument," be consistent as to which version of argument one is using. Identifying the role of a particular statement within an argument sheds light on the meaning and application of that statement.

Version 1:

Here is an example of 5 steps of an argument (*pañcāṅga-nyāya*):

> (1) ***Pratijñā*** (**thesis**): The hill has fire. (What is to be proved.)

> (2) ***Hetu*** (**reason**): Because it has smoke.

> (3) ***Vyāpti*** (**rule**) with **Udāharaṇa** (**example**): Whatever has smoke has fire, as in the fireplace.

> (4) ***Upanaya*** (**application of rule**): This hill has smoke. which is invariably associated with fire.

> (5) ***Nigamana*** (**conclusion**): Therefore, this hill has fire.

Here the presence of the fire has been inferred from the presence of the smoke through five steps.

Version 2:

In the *Vedānta-sūtra* a 5-step process is used (*adhikaraṇa*):

> (1) ***viṣaya*** – topic,

> (2) ***saṁśaya*** – doubt,

> (3) ***pūrvapakṣa*** - presentation of the opposing view, i.e. based on the first impression; accepted as correct until proved otherwise,

> (4) ***siddhānta*** – conclusion,

> (5) ***saṅgati*** – correlation.

So, some statements can be categorized as a declaration of an expression of the topic, relevant doubt, possible wrong primary view, proper conclusion, or a harmonizing resolution which can indicate how to understand the statement being made within the context of the whole work.

Version 3:

The *Bhāṭṭa-cintāmaṇi* of Śrī Gāgā Bhaṭṭa has this process:

viśayaḥ saṁśayaś caiva
pūrva-pakṣas tathottaram
nirṇayaś ceti siddhāntaṁ
śāstre 'dhikaraṇaṁ smṛtam

(1)   *viśaya* (topic of discussion),

(2)   *saṁśaya* (doubt)

(3)   *pūrva-pakṣa* (hearing one side)

(4)   *uttara-pakṣa* (hearing the other side)

(5)   *nirṇayaḥ* (deciding in favor of a side)

(6)   *siddhānta* (conclusive statement)

Evidence and Explanation:

By Sarvajña Dāsa:

The *Nyāya-sūtras* of Gautama 1.1.32-39 and the *Tarka-saṅgraha* of *Annambhatta* 1.9 list five components of a logical argument (*pañcāvayavāḥ*), which is a powerful tool to come to a proper conclusion when studying *śastra*. Being a classic method of analysis, it is used in many traditional commentaries and works. While trying to understand the intended meaning of *śastric* statements, it may be helpful to see how the book proves its conclusions using those five components. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in his *Sarva-saṁvādinī* to *Anuccheda* 9 of his *Śrī Tattva Sandarbha,* paragraph 20 speaks about them while examining different *pramāṇas* - proper methods of understanding of the Absolute Truth.

Śrī Tattva Sandarbha, Sarva-saṁvādinī, Anuccheda 9:

atha pratijñā-hetūdāharaṇopanaya-nigamanābhidha-pañcāṅgam
anumānaṁ yat tad api vyabhicarati. tatra viṣama-vyāptau yathā, vṛṣṭyā tat-
kāla-nirvāpita-vahnau ciram adhikoditvara-dhūme parvate parvato 'yaṁ
vahnimān ity-ādau, varṣāsu dhūmāyamānasvabhāve parvate vā. na tu
śabdaḥ. yathā, sūrya-kāntāt saura marīci-yogenāgnir uttiṣṭhate ity atra.

Translation: Next we consider how logical inference, consisting of five parts – *pratijñā* (thesis), *hetu* (reason), *Vyāpti* (rule) with *udāharaṇa* (example), *upanaya* (application), and *nigamanā* (conclusion) – also tends to deviate, especially when facts are inconsistent. For example, a tall pillar of smoke may gather on a mountain for some time after rain has extinguished a fire, or a mountain may appear smoky on its own during the rainy season. Verbal testimony, however, is reliable, as in the statement "Fire arises from a *sūrya-kānta* stone in contact with the rays of the sun."

From the commentary of Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa:

> The Nyāya school of philosophy deals elaborately with the topic of *anumāna*, or logical inference. The school recommends that one use a five-step formal procedure when trying to persuade others by logical argument. First one should state what one intends to prove – for example, "There is fire here." Second, one should give the evidence for the thesis, such as "Because there is smoke." Third, one should state the reason as a general principle, with at least one real example, positive or negative, preferably both – for example, "Wherever there is smoke there is fire, like in the kitchen and unlike in the middle of a lake." Fourth, one should apply the reason to the specific situation at hand: "Smoke is rising from this particular mountain." Last, one should draw the conclusion: "Therefore this mountain is on fire."

For every of those five steps one should very carefully chose reasons (*hetu*) and examples (*udāharaṇa*) to prove the original proposition. If reasons or examples are not solidly provided, the proposed statement can't be accepted as true. By finding those five steps in the philosophical treatise and examining their validity, one can determine whether the conclusion is acceptable or not.

Another variation of that tool can be found in the system of analysis of the traditional commentaries to *Vedānta-sūtras* and works based on it. Written by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the *Vedānta-sūtras* are composed of four *adhyāyas*. Each of them is divided to four *pādas*, consisting of short statements – *sūtras*. Within the *pāda*, *sūtras* are grouped in logical sections called *adhikaraṇas*. Some *adhikaraṇas* consist of one *sūtra*, some have many *sūtras*.

Each *adhikaraṇa* has a structure having five steps of analysis, called *pañcāṅga-nyāya*. Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhuṣāṇa gives this description in his introduction to his Govinda-bhāṣya commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras* as follows:

> *yasyāṁ khalu viṣaya-saṁśaya-pūrvapakṣa-siddhānta-saṅgati-bhedāt pañca nyāyāṅgāni bhavanti | nyāyo'dhikaraṇāt | viṣayo vicāra-yoga-vākyam | saṅgatir iha śāstrādi-viṣayatayā bahu-vidhā'pi na vitāyate | viṣayāvagatau svayam eva vidyotanāt*

> **Translation:** There are five parts to each section or *adhikaraṇa* (within the *pāda* or section of the chapter): 1. *viṣaya* (thesis, or statement); 2. *saṁśaya* (the arousal of doubt in the tenability of the statement); 3. *pūrvapakṣa* (presentation of a view opposing the original statement) 4. *siddhānta* (determination of the actual truth, the final conclusion, by quotation from Vedic scriptures), and *saṅgati* (confirmation of the final conclusion by quotation from Vedic scriptures).

Different commentators differently group those *sūtras* into *adhikaraṇas*, thus coming to different conclusions. But every particular school of *Vedānta* has the same established opinion about which *sūtras* are grouped in which *adhikaraṇas*, and explain them in particular steps of *pañcāṅga-nyāya*. It's crucially important to understand the particular statements of the commentator in terms of those five parts. Then it will be possible to examine whether his arguments are valid and substantiate his conclusions.

According to the opinions of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the *akṛtrima-bhāṣya*,

the natural commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras*, written by the same author Śrīla Vyāsadeva. The *Gāruḍa Purāṇa*, as it is quoted in *Śrī Tattva-sandarbha, Anuccheda* 21 says:

artho'yaṁ brahma-sūtrāṇāṁ

Translation: It is the purport of the *Vedānta-sūtras*.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments:

brahma-sūtrāṇām arthas teṣām akṛtrima-bhāṣya-bhūta ity arthaḥ. pūrvaṁ sūkṣmatvena manasy āvirbhūtaṁ tad eva saṅkṣipya sūtratvena punaḥ prakaṭitaṁ paścād vistīrṇatvena sākṣāt śrībhāgavatam iti. tasmāt tad-bhāṣya-bhūte svataḥ-siddhe tasmin saty arvācīnam anyad anyeṣāṁ sva-sva-kapola-kalpitaṁ tad-anugatam evodaraṇīyam iti gamyate.

Translation: To say that the *Bhāgavatam* is the purport of the *Vedānta-sūtras* means that it is the natural commentary. He [Śrīla Vyāsadeva] first conceived of the *Vedānta* philosophy in subtle form within his mind. He then summarized it as the *Vedānta-sūtras*, and later he manifested *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* directly in its full, elaborate form. Since this *Bhāgavatam* has already appeared as the self-effulgent commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras*, we can infer that the commentaries produced by more recent authors from their own heads are worthy of attention only when faithful to the *Bhāgavatam*.

Therefore, while studying *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, we have to keep in mind that it uses the same five parts of logic. Some of the verses are the statements of *viṣaya*, some – of *saṁśaya*, some – of the opponent's views, and so on. Therefore, knowing those five parts can help understanding the internal logic of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and to come to the same proper conclusion being established in that great work of theistic *Vedānta*.

Here is an example of using those five parts in the Govinda-bhāṣya commentary to the first *sūtra* of *Vedānta-sūtra, Adhikaraṇa 1, Inquiry Into Brahman.*

The first *adhikaraṇa* of the *Vedānta-sūtra* discusses *brahma-jijñāsā* (inquiry into Brahman). The *adhikaraṇa* may be shown in its five parts in the following way:

1) *Viṣaya* (topic or statement)

One should inquire about Brahman. This statement is confirmed by the following statements of Vedic scripture.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7.25.1:

yo vai bhūma tat sukhaṁ nānyat sukham asti bhūmaiva sukhaṁ bhūmatveva vijijñāsitavyaḥ

Translation: The Supreme Personality of Godhead (bhūma) is the source of genuine happiness. Nothing else can bring one actual happiness. Only the Supreme Personality of Godhead can bring one happiness. For this reason one should inquire about the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.5:

> **ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyo maitreyi**

Translation: O Maitreyī, one should see, hear, remember, and inquire about the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

2) *Saṁśaya* (doubt)

If one has studied the *Vedas* and dharma-śāstras, need he inquire about Brahman or not? The following statements of Vedic scriptures nourish this doubt.

Ṛg Veda 8.18.3:

> **apāma somam amṛtā abhūma**

Translation: We have attained immortality by drinking the soma-juice.

> **akṣayyaṁ ha vai cāturmāsyājinaḥ sukṛtaṁ bhavati**

Translation: They who follow the vow of cāturmāsya attain an eternal reward.

3) *Pūrvapakṣa* (presentation of the opposing view)

There is no need to inquire about Brahman. Simply by discharging ordinary pious duties described in the *dharma-śāstras* one can attain immortality and an eternal reward.

4) *Siddhānta* (the conclusive truth)

In the first *sūtra* Bhagavān Vyāsadeva replies to his philosophical opponent:

> **athāto brahma-jijñāsā**

atha—now; *atah*—therefore; *brahma*—about Brahman; *jijñāsa*—there should be inquiry.

Translation: Now, therefore, one should inquire about Brahman.

And next Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhuṣāṇa gives many statements from the different scriptures supporting and explaining how that sutra dispels the doubt and the objection of the opponents.

Examples of using pañcāṅga-nyāya in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

In his commentary to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.3.40 Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura has pointed out that in verses 11.3.35 through 11.3.39 the various stages of standard logic are demonstrated. Verse 35 establishes the *viṣaya*, or general thesis. Verse 36 manifests *saṁśaya*, or an expression of doubt. Verse 37 gives the *pūrva-pakṣa* or opposing argument. And verse 38 definitely establishes the *siddhānta*, or conclusion. Verse 39 presents *saṅgati*, the summary. The *saṅgati*, or final word, is that one should become a pure devotee of the Personality of Godhead and worship the Lord's lotus feet. Here are verses from that section for the reference, which is the answer of *śrī-pippalāyana* to the following question of King Nimi.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.34:

> *śrī-rājovāca*
> *nārāyaṇābhidhānasya*
> *brahmaṇaḥ paramātmanaḥ*
> *niṣṭhām arhatha no vaktuṁ*
> *yūyaṁ hi brahma-vittamāḥ*

Translation: King Nimi inquired: Please explain to me the transcendental situation of the Supreme Lord, Nārāyaṇa, who is Himself the Absolute Truth and the Supersoul of everyone. You can explain this to me, because you are all most expert in transcendental knowledge.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.35:

> *śrī-pippalāyana uvāca*
> *sthity-udbhava-pralaya-hetur ahetur asya*
> *yat svapna-jāgara-suṣuptiṣu sad bahiś ca*
> *dehendriyāsu-hṛdayāni caranti yena*
> *sañjīvitāni tad avehi paraṁ narendra*

Translation: Śrī Pippalāyana said: The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the cause of the creation, maintenance and destruction of this universe, yet He has no prior cause. He pervades the various states of wakefulness, dreaming and unconscious deep sleep and also exists beyond them. By entering the body of every living being as the Supersoul, He enlivens the body, senses, life airs and mental activities, and thus all the subtle and gross organs of the body begin their functions. My dear King, know that Personality of Godhead to be the Supreme.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.36:

> *naitan mano viśati vāg uta cakṣur ātmā*
> *prāṇendriyāṇi ca yathānalam arciṣaḥ svāḥ*
> *śabdo 'pi bodhaka-niṣedhatayātma-mūlam*
> *arthoktam āha yad-ṛte na niṣedha-siddhiḥ*

Translation: Neither the mind nor the faculties of speech, sight, intelligence, the life air or any of the senses are capable of penetrating that Supreme Truth, any more than small sparks can affect the original fire from which they are generated. Not even the authoritative language of the *Vedas* can perfectly describe the Supreme Truth, since the *Vedas* themselves disclaim the possibility that the Truth can be expressed by words. But through indirect reference the Vedic sound does serve as evidence of the Supreme Truth, since without the existence of that Supreme Truth the various restrictions found in the *Vedas* would have no ultimate purpose.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.37:

> *sattvaṁ rajas tama iti tri-vṛd ekam ādau*
> *sūtraṁ mahān aham iti pravadanti jīvam*
> *jñāna-kriyārtha-phala-rūpatayoru-śakti*

brahmaiva bhāti sad asac ca tayoḥ paraṁ yat

Translation: Originally one, the Absolute, Brahman, comes to be known as threefold, manifesting itself as the three modes of material nature—goodness, passion and ignorance. Brahman further expands its potency, and thus the power to act and the power of consciousness become manifest, along with the false ego, which covers the identity of the conditioned living being. Thus, by the expansion of the multipotencies of the Absolute, the demigods, as the embodiment of knowledge, become manifest, along with the material senses, their objects, and the results of material activity, namely happiness and distress. In this way the manifestation of the material world takes place as the subtle cause and as the material effect visible in the appearance of gross material objects. Brahman, which is the source of all subtle and gross manifestations, is simultaneously transcendental to them, being absolute.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.38:

nātmā jajāna na mariṣyati naidhate 'sau
na kṣīyate savana-vid vyabhicāriṇāṁ hi
sarvatra śaśvad anapāyy upalabdhi-mātraṁ
prāṇo yathendriya-balena vikalpitaṁ sat

Translation: Brahman, the eternal soul, was never born and will never die, nor does it grow or decay. That spiritual soul is actually the knower of the youth, middle age and death of the material body. Thus the soul can be understood to be pure consciousness, existing everywhere at all times and never being destroyed. Just as the life air within the body, although one, becomes manifest as many in contact with the various material senses, the one soul appears to assume various material designations in contact with the material body.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.39:

aṇḍeṣu peśiṣu taruṣv aviniściteṣu
prāṇo hi jīvam upadhāvati tatra tatra
sanne yad indriya-gaṇe 'hami ca prasupte
kūṭa-stha āśayam ṛte tad-anusmṛtir naḥ

Translation: The spirit soul is born in many different species of life within the material world. Some species are born from eggs, others from embryos, others from the seeds of plants and trees, and others from perspiration. But in all species of life the prāṇa, or vital air, remains unchanging and follows the spirit soul from one body to another. Similarly, the spirit soul is eternally the same despite its material condition of life. We have practical experience of this. When we are absorbed in deep sleep without dreaming, the material senses become inactive, and even the mind and false ego are merged into a dormant condition. But although the senses, mind and false ego are inactive, one remembers upon waking that he, the soul, was peacefully sleeping.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.40:

yarhy abja-nābha-caraṇaiṣaṇayoru-bhaktyā
ceto-malāni vidhamed guṇa-karma-jāni

tasmin viśuddha upalabhyata ātma-tattvaṁ
śākṣād yathāmala-dṛśoḥ savitṛ-prakāśaḥ

Translation: When one seriously engages in the devotional service of the Personality of Godhead, fixing the Lord's lotus feet within one's heart as the only goal of life, one can destroy the innumerable impure desires lodged within the heart as a result of one's previous fruitive work within the three modes of material nature. When the heart is thus purified one can directly perceive both the Supreme Lord and one's self as transcendental entities. Thus one becomes perfect in spiritual understanding through direct experience, just as one can directly experience the sunshine through normal, healthy vision.

In addition to that, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī uses the same structure in his *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha*, the six-fold philosophical treatise explaining the whole *siddhānta* of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas on the basis of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Thus, his book is the sub-commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras* using a topical framework. In the *Tattva-sandarbha*, first of six books, in the *Anuccheda* 27 he writes about the structure of his work:

tad evaṁ parama-niḥśreyasa-niścayāya śrī-bhāgavatam eva
paurvāparyāvirodhena vicāryate. tatrāsmin sandarbha-ṣaṭkātmake granthe
sūtra-sthānīyam avatārikā-vākyaṁ viṣaya-vākyaṁ śrībhāgavata-vākyam.
bhāṣya-rūpā tad-vyākhyā tu samprati madhyadeśādau vyāptān advaita-
vādino nūnaṁ bhagavan-mahimānam avagāhayituṁ tad-vādena karvurita-
lipīnāṁ parama-vaiṣṇavānāṁ śrīdhara-svāmi-caraṇānāṁ śuddha-vaiṣṇava-
siddhāntānugatā cet tarhi yathāvad eva vilikhyate.

Translation: Therefore, this investigation concentrates on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, carefully reconciling its various statements with the texts that precede and follow them in order to ascertain what the highest good in life truly is. With this aim, in this work forming six *Sandarbhas* the introductory sentences [in each *anuccheda*] serve the function of *sūtras*. The quotations from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are the scriptural texts under consideration, and Śrīdhara Svāmī's explanation of the *Bhāgavatam* serves as our primary commentary.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī is a perfect Vaiṣṇava. But to entice the Advaitavādīs, nowadays prominent all over the central part of the country and elsewhere, to become absorbed in the glories of the Supreme Lord, he mixed into his writings traces of their theories. When Śrī Svāmi-caraṇa's commentary agrees with the conclusions of pure Vaiṣṇava philosophy, we cite it verbatim.

From the commentary of Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa:

Text 27.1 describes the formal organization of the *anucchedas*, or sections, which resembles the logical structure of the *Vedānta-sūtras*. In the *Vedānta-sūtras* Dvaipāyana Vyāsa groups short, complete arguments into *anukaraṇas* of one or more *sūtras*. The *sūtras* themselves usually resolve doubts about the correct understanding of particular Upaniṣadic statements. These *viṣaya-vākyas*, or *śruti* texts under consideration, are not given along with the *sūtras*, and which texts they are is known only through the testimony of authoritative commentaries (*bhāṣyas*). Each *Vedānta* school relies on the *bhāṣya* of its own founder-ācārya, together with any number of sub-commentaries (*ṭīkās*) by his followers. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī begins his *anucchedas* with his own introductions, which serve the

function of *sūtras*. Not leaving his *viṣaya-vākyas* unspoken, he quotes a *Bhāgavatam* verse, or sometimes a few, as the *viṣaya-vākya* to be discussed. He then comments on the meaning. As he states here, he draws much of his commentary, often quoted verbatim, from Śrīdhara Svāmī's Bhāvārtha-dīpikā. He cites what Śrīdhara Svāmī has to say about the verses under discussion, about other relevant verses, and occasionally about verses of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.

Knowing those five parts of the standard structure enables one properly to discern them from the complicated texts of *Sandarbhas*, and to understand the logic used by our great Ācārya.

And finally, because Śrīla Prabhupāda in his commentaries also used material from the Sandarbhas of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, especially from the seventh, *Krāma-sandarbha,* verse by verse commentary based on the material from the other six Sandarbhas, and from other Ācāryas' commentaries of our guru-paramparā, knowing those five parts will help one to better understand the logic of the Bhaktivedanta Purports of His Divine Grace.

TOOL 38: Refer to Tradition (*Paramparā*)

Method:

Study what previous *ācāryas* have written about the statement in particular or about the subject in general. One may also consult with other contemporary Vaiṣṇavas.

Evidence and Explanation:

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself uses this tool throughout his purports, lectures, and conversations as in the following example.

Kṛṣṇa Book, Chapter 6, Pūtanā Killed:

> Kṛṣṇa showed the nature of a small baby and closed His eyes, as if to avoid the face of Pūtanā. This closing of the eyes is interpreted and studied in different ways by the devotees. Some say that Kṛṣṇa closed His eyes because He did not like to see the face of Pūtanā, who had killed so many children and who had now come to kill Him. Others say that Pūtanā hesitated to take the baby on her lap because something extraordinary was being dictated to her from within, and that in order to give her assurance Kṛṣṇa closed His eyes so that she would not be frightened. And yet others interpret in this way: Kṛṣṇa appeared in order to kill the demons and give protection to the devotees, as stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām* [*Bhagavad-gītā*. 4.8]. The first demon to be killed was a woman. According to Vedic rules, the killing of a woman, a *brāhmaṇa*, cows or a child is strictly forbidden. Kṛṣṇa was obliged to kill the demon Pūtanā, and because the killing of a woman is forbidden according to Vedic *śāstra*, He could not help but close His eyes. Another interpretation is that Kṛṣṇa closed His eyes because He simply took Pūtanā to be His nurse. Pūtanā came to Kṛṣṇa just to offer her breast for the Lord to suck. Kṛṣṇa is so merciful that even though He knew Pūtanā was there to kill Him, He took her as His nurse or mother.

TOOL 39: Determine the Meaning of a Word or Phrase (Among Several Possible Meanings) According to the Author's Intent

Vyākaraṇa and *nirukti* (Sanskrit grammar and etymology).

Method:

Examine the overall context, the specific author of the statement, and the intent of the author, both in a general way in terms of the context under consideration. Then choose the grammatical and dictionary/lexical meaning according to the author's intent.

Explanation:

Most words in any language, including Sanskrit and English, have several meanings. While these meanings are often related to each other, some are quite different from each other, and in some cases words can even have opposite meanings, e.g. the word "dusting" or "moot." In addition, the meaning of words change over time, so one needs to consider when the words were spoken or

written. Also, sometimes general terms such as "spiritual" and "material" are clear and appropriate, and sometimes the same terms do not have a clear definition in the context in which they are used.

TOOL 40: Seek Guidance from Those Experienced in Hermeneutics

Method:

Consult contemporary Vaiṣṇavas or seek more guidance and education from those skilled in hermeneutics.

Evidence:

Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.3.18–19, Bombay, at Cross Maidan Pandal, March 23, 1977:

> Formerly, even Lord Rāmacandra, who was the king ... He is God Himself. Still, He used to consult learned brāhmaṇas, sages, saintly persons.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.22.1-2:

> King Parīkṣit inquired from Śukadeva Gosvāmī: My dear lord, you have already affirmed the truth that the supremely powerful sun-god travels around Dhruvaloka with both Dhruvaloka and Mount Sumeru on his right. Yet at the same time the sun-god faces the signs of the zodiac and keeps Sumeru and Dhruvaloka on his left. How can we reasonably accept that the sun-god proceeds with Sumeru and Dhruvaloka on both his left and right simultaneously?

> Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī clearly answered: When a potter's wheel is moving and small ants located on that big wheel are moving with it, one can see that their motion is different from that of the wheel because they appear sometimes on one part of the wheel and sometimes on another. Similarly, the signs and constellations, with Sumeru and Dhruvaloka on their right, move with the wheel of time, and the antlike sun and other planets move with them. The sun and planets, however, are seen in different signs and constellations at different times. This indicates that their motion is different from that of the zodiac and the wheel of time itself.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya 5.7-8:

> Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied, "I do not know about topics concerning Lord Kṛṣṇa. I think that only Rāmānanda Rāya knows, for I hear these topics from him. It is your good fortune that you are inclined to hear topics regarding Kṛṣṇa. The best course for you would be to go to Rāmānanda Rāya and hear these topics from him."

By Hari Pārṣada Dāsa:

Śrī Viśvanātha tackles the issue of the missing half syllable in the *kāma-gāyatrī*. The issue arises because Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī in his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 21.125 described the *kāma-gāyatrī* as being twenty-four and half syllables. However, if the syllables of the *kāma-gāyatrī* along with the *bīja* are counted, it comes to twenty-five. Śrī Viśvanātha dedicates the rest of his *kāma-gāyatrī* commentary in resolving this issue.

In trying to resolve the issue, Śrī Viśvanātha's approach is to justify the position of Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, although by normal calculations, the number of syllables in the *kāma-gāyatrī* come out to be twenty-five.

Śrī Viśvanātha starts (*Mantrārtha-dīpikā*, 15) by meditating on various reasons why Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja would have chosen to write twenty-four and half characters instead of twenty-five. If someone says that the final '*t*' in the term '*pracodayāt*' should be considered as half a syllable, then the same rule should apply to all the other half syllables present in the *mantra*. For example, in the term '*vidmahe*', the '*d*' should also be considered half a syllable. However, this is not how syllables are counted in a *mantra*. Śrī Viśvanātha says that in all the available literature related to grammar, in all the *purāṇas*, *āgamas*, *nāṭya,* and *alaṅkāra* related literature, he could not find a rule which could justify the count of twenty-four and half syllables in the *kāma-gāyatrī*.

Śrī Viśvanātha continues to say that even in the *Rādhikā-sahasra-nāma-stotra* found in the *Bṛhan-nāradīya-purāṇa*, there is a statement saying that Śrī Rādhikā has a form which is visualized using all the fifty syllables of the Sanskrit alphabet. However, there is no statement which can justify a half syllable.

Śrī Viśvanātha then goes ahead to say that Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja is a perfected soul and would never write an incorrect conclusion in his writings. For Śrī Viśvanātha, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja is a perfected soul who is beyond the defects found in ordinary humans.

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 21.126 – 128 too there is a description of the twenty-four and half-moons in the body of Kṛṣṇa. It is described there that the face of Lord Kṛṣṇa is the king of all moons and all other moons in his body are the associates of this moon. His two cheeks are two moons; his forehead is half a moon; his *tilaka* is one moon; his hand nails are ten moons and his foot nails are ten moons. In this way, there are twenty-four and half-moons in Kṛṣṇa's body. However Śrī Viśvanātha says that even in this explanation, the half-moon is not at the end but in the middle, whereas in the *kāma-gāyatrī*, the half syllable '*t*' currently occurs at the end. This does not match and therefore, according to Śrī Viśvanātha, the explanation that the final '*t*' is the half-syllable is not the one which Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja had in mind.

Not being able to find any definite solution, Śrī Viśvanātha says in *Mantrārtha-dīpikā* 16-17 that he gave up all food and water due to dejection and decided to give up his life on the banks of the Rādhā-kuṇḍa. He thought that since he could not obtain any specific direction in this regard, it would be best to end his life. However, in the second half of the night, he fell asleep and in that sleep, he saw a dream where Śrīmati Rādhikā appeared to him and told him that Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja had not made a mistake and that he would be able find the required grammar rule in the book named "*varṇāgama-bhāsvat*." She also told Śrī Viśvanātha that Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has given the conclusion of twenty-four and half syllables only after looking at that book.

Śrī Viśvanātha says in *Mantrārtha-dīpikā* 18 that on waking up, his doubts regarding the number of syllables disappeared and he located the book named "*varṇāgama-bhāsvat*" and found the following rule in it:

vi-kārānta-ya-kāreṇa
cārdhākṣaraṁ prakīrtitam

> **Translation:** If the syllable "*v*" follows the syllable "*ya*," it is to be counted as half a syllable.

According to this rule, the syllable "*ya*" in the term "*kāma-devāya*" in the *mantra* will be counted as half a syllable instead of one syllable. This reduces the total syllable count to twenty-four and half and resolves the contradiction in all ways. Moreover, since this half-syllable is present in the exact middle location, it also matches the bodily moon description given in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Thus, all contradictions are resolved.

The Place of a Concise Statement of *Siddhānta* in Hermeneutics

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Ādi* 7.106, purport:

> A *sūtra* is a compilation of aphorisms that expresses the essence of all knowledge in a minimum of words. It must be universally applicable and faultless in its linguistic presentation.

The Difference between a List of *Siddhānta* and a Creedal Religion

By Rādhikā Ramaṇa Dāsa:

Our *ācāryas* have given us several wonderful, concise statements of *siddhānta* that reveal the essential theological convictions for followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. One of the earliest such statements comes from the beginning of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* commentary by Śrīnātha Cakravartī, the spiritual master of Kavi Karṇapūra.

Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted sections of this verse in his writings:

> *ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa-tanayas tad-dhāma vṛndāvanam*
> *ramyā kācid-upāsanā vraja-vadhū-vargena yā kalpitā*
> *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam pramāṇam amalaṁ premā pumārtho mahān*
> *śrī-caitanya-mahāprabhor matam idaṁ tatrādaro naḥ paraḥ*
> (Śrīnātha Cakravartī, Caitanya-mata-mañjuṣā, Maṅgalācaraṇa)

Another important, concise statement of *siddhānta* comes from Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's *Prameya Ratnāvali.* This statement is historically significant because it demonstrates that Mahāprabhu's teachings are in the *sampradāya* of Madhvācārya:

> Śrī Madhva has said: (1) Viṣṇu is Supreme; (2) He is to be known by all the Vedas; (3) The universe is real; (4) Difference is real; (5) The living entities are devoted to Śrī Hari's lotus feet; (6) There is gradation among them; (7) Liberation means attaining the feet of Lord Viṣṇu; (8) Spotless worship of those feet is the cause of liberation; (9) The means of valid knowledge (pramāṇa) are three, beginning with perception (pratyakṣa). Thus, taught the moon-like Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who is Lord Hari.

Yet another eloquent siddhāntic statement is given to us by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, in his *Daśa-mūla-tattva,* a work which is discussed in another section of this hermeneutics paper.

These statements are indeed valuable for ISKCON devotees, for they clarify the philosophical principles that form the foundation of our faith as followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Thus, we use these siddhāntic statements throughout this paper, especially Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Daśa-mūla-tattva.* For devotees attempting to understand the meaning of *śāstra*, these siddhāntic statements serve as gold standards to ensure that our understanding of *śāstra* does not deviate from *siddhānta*.

However, it is crucial that we do not see these siddhāntic statements as "creeds"—choosing one of them as the standard statement of faith and then using it as the sole measure of correct interpretation. To use a list of *siddhāntas* as a "pledge of allegiance," or as a "test of faith," essentially imports a Protestant Christian understanding of religion into Vaiṣṇavism.

Christianity is a creedal religion, with nearly every denomination having their own creed to distinguish one from another. Members of some churches regularly recite the church's creed as a part of worship, and pledging allegiance to a creed often becomes a test of membership. Major controversies and schisms in churches have occurred over the exact wording of creedal statements. All this is not to say that daily devotional practice, the lineages of priests and teachers, as well as the formation of character have not been important in Christianity. They have been. But the emphasis typically lies on having the correct beliefs and doctrines.

Since we live in a world that is deeply influenced by Christianity, it can be very easy to slip into this mindset and use our own *ācāryas*' siddhāntic statements as creeds that provide a convenient test of faith, a criterion for membership, and a definition of what it means to be Vaiṣṇava. But we must remember that Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* provide a multifaceted understanding of how we gain knowledge and what makes someone a Vaiṣṇava. Yes, believing in the correct *siddhānta* is essential, but so is one's daily *sādhana*, service to the Vaiṣṇavas, learning from the spiritual master, and good character. Indeed, even the *siddhānta* cannot be understood correctly without these other elements.

When Mahāprabhu is asked the question, "Who is a Vaiṣṇava?" he answers three different times, but does not mention adherence to a certain creed (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 15.105 and 16.71-74). This is not to say that having the correct beliefs is not important. It is definitely important, as we see on many occasions where Mahāprabhu debates with Māyāvādīs, for example. But the point is that a creed is never used alone as a test of Vaiṣṇava, nor is a single creed selected to the exclusion of others. A Vaiṣṇava is known by many things, including his or her character and behavior (*sadācāra*), attachment to the holy name and daily practice (*sādhana*), service to the Vaiṣṇavas and the spiritual master (*sevā*), faith in Kṛṣṇa (*śraddhā*), and proper understanding of *siddhānta*. The key point is that we should not allow the siddhāntic lists to suffocate these other measures of proper understanding, but rather see them all as working together in a balanced way. All these measures of proper understanding must work together in a Vaiṣṇava hermeneutics. This verse from the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad,* so often quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda, provides a vision of that balance.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23:

> ***yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau***
> ***tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ***

> **Translation:** Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.

In what ways does fidelity to *siddhānta* differ from a creedal approach?

By Hari Pārṣada Dāsa:

While there are many Christian denominations that adhere to the creedal approach, there are also many Christian denominations that do not adhere to any particular statement of creed. For example, here is a quote about non-creedalism from William Lumpkin's work entitled *Baptist Confessions of Faith*.

William L Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, Judson Press, Philadelphia, 1959 AD:

> The Baptist movement has traditionally been non-creedal in the sense that it has not erected authoritarian confessions of faith as official bases of organization and tests of orthodoxy. An authority which could impose a confession upon individuals, churches or larger bodies, has been lacking, and the desire to achieve uniformity has never been strong enough to secure adoption of a fixed creed even if the authority for imposing had existed. Still, Baptists have recognized the valuable uses to which confessions of faith might be put.

The answer is that the term "creed" comes from the Latin term "credo" which means "I believe." This term is popularly used in connection with the three Ecumenical creeds (Apostles, Nicene and Athanasian). According to the article titled "A Brief History of the Three Creeds" written by David Meager, there are three uses to defining a creed. He says:

> The Creed seems to have had three uses, first as a confession of faith for those about to be baptized, secondly as a catechism (an instruction for new Christians in the essentials of the faith), and thirdly, as a "rule of faith" to give continuity to orthodox Christian doctrine.

Thus the essential difference between fidelity to *siddhānta* and a creedal approach is that in the former, the practitioner is expected to arrive at the *siddhānta* by following a particular process. *Bhāṭṭa-cintāmaṇi* of Śrī Gāgā Bhaṭṭa:

> *viśayaḥ saṁśayaś caiva*
> *pūrva-pakṣas tathottaram*
> *nirṇayaś ceti siddhāntaṁ*
> *śāstre 'dhikaraṇaṁ smṛtam*

> **Translation**: First comes the *viśaya* (topic of discussion), followed by *saṁśaya* (doubt), *pūrva-pakṣa* (hearing one side); *uttara-pakṣa* (hearing the other side); deciding in favor of a side (*nirṇayaḥ*) and finally *siddhānta* (conclusive statement).

The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 2.117 in fact goes ahead and encourages devotees to discuss *siddhāntas* that may be controversial but which lead to an even more mature, firm faith in the Lord.

In a creedal approach however, the statement of belief is already established by an earlier authority and the practitioner simply has to agree to believe in it. There is no logic and argumentation involved in the process and certainly no steps of arriving at the conclusion, like the ones defined above for a *siddhānta*. Either one believes it or one cannot be a member of that creed.

Moreover, in the creedal approach, very little or no freedom is allowed to accept even a slight variation in the statements of faith. In the case of siddhāntic statements however, there are many places where even the previous ācāryas have differed in their opinions. The practitioner learns to respect plurality of opinions in these siddhāntas without fear of reproach or excommunication from the sampradāya. For example, while deciding on the exact number of elements in the universe according to the Sāṅkhya philosophy, different authorities give different conclusions. In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.22.1-3 Uddhava asks Kṛṣṇa regarding this plurality of opinion:

kecit ṣaḍ-viṁśatiṁ prāhur
apare pañca-viṁśatiṁ
saptaike nava ṣaṭ kecic
catvāry ekādaśāpare
kecit saptadaśa prāhuḥ
ṣoḍaśaike trayodaśa
etāvattvaṁ hi saṅkhyānām
ṛṣayo yad-vivakṣayā
gāyanti pṛthag āyuṣmann
idaṁ no vaktum arhasi

Translation: Some authorities say that there are twenty-six elements, while others cite twenty-five or else seven, nine, six, four or eleven, and even others say that there are seventeen, sixteen or thirteen. What did each of these sages have in mind when he calculated the creative elements in such different ways? O supreme eternal, kindly explain this to me.

Kṛṣṇa replies by validating all these variations of opinions. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.22.4:

śrī-bhagavān uvāca
yuktaṁ ca santi sarvatra
bhāṣante brāhmaṇā yathā
māyāṁ madīyām udgṛhya
vadatāṁ kiṁ nu durghaṭam

Translation: Lord Kṛṣṇa replied: Because all material elements are present everywhere, it is reasonable that different learned *brāhmaṇas* have analyzed them in different ways. All such philosophers spoke under the shelter of My mystic potency, and thus they could say anything without contradicting the truth.

However in the case of some *siddhāntas* there is no plurality of opinion.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.28:

kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam

Translation: Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original personality of Godhead.

Finally, the creedal approach is a reductionist approach to defining a faith, wherein a religious denomination is defined based on absolute allegiance to a select few statements of faith. Such an approach has been adopted neither by Śrīla Prabhupāda nor by the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

According to the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhuḥ* 1.2.19 of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī:

yo bhavet komala-śraddhaḥ sa kaniṣṭho nigadyate

Even a person of soft, pliable faith is denoted as a *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* and is made to feel a part of the *sampradaya* without pressurizing them into a formal admission of faith.

Siddhānta: definition

By Harideva Dāsa:

The term "*siddhānta*" has two main meanings in the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava literature: in a specific sense it may refer to particular aspects of the general understanding or philosophical teachings, while in a broader sense it refers to the entire gamut of teachings of a particular school of thought. Thus in the first case we can see explanations of Kṛṣṇa's super-most position in Chapter 2 of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* as *siddhānta* although technically speaking this particular understanding is only a part of the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava teachings, and in the second case we hear about "Gauḍīya-*siddhānta*" or "Madhva-*siddhānta*" as the general term denoting all teachings and outlook of the particular school of Vedic philosophy. It is in this broader sense that we will use the term *siddhānta* here. Sometimes we find the term "*siddhānta*" used in **contrast** with the term "*rasa*" which would imply that *siddhānta* refers only to philosophical exposition of ontological truths (*tattva*). However, such use is merely another example of the term "*siddhānta*" used in a limited sense – in the ultimate sense "*siddhānta*" means *bhakti-siddhānta:* "the final conclusions of the *bhakti* school." Since the science of *rasa* is essential and intrinsic to the Gauḍīya-*bhakti-siddhānta*, to speak of *siddhānta* as something separate from *rasa* is not fully correct, at least in the ultimate sense in the Gauḍīya tradition.

All Vaiṣṇava traditions belong to the school of Vedānta, who each have their own commentary and understanding of the *Vedānta-sūtra*. *Vedānta-sūtra* in its turn is the treatise composed by Śrila Vyāsadeva to explain and reconcile different statements from the *Upaniṣads* and to provide a key to understanding them as the ultimate teaching of the *Vedas* (*veda anta*). Although it can be said that *Vedānta-sūtra* is the *siddhānta* (final established conclusion) of all the *Vedas*, still there are many different schools based on it that sometimes come to diametrically opposite teachings. Therefore *Vedānta-sūtra* is always inevitably understood according to a particular commentary and hermeneutical tools deployed by the respective *ācāryas* to show its meaning. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu considered *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to be a natural commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra* written by the same author, Vyāsadeva.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 25.142:

ataeva bhāgavata-sūtrera 'artha'-rūpa
nija-kṛta sūtrera nija-'bhāṣya'-svarūpa

Translation: *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* gives the actual meaning of the *Vedānta-sūtra*. The author of the *Vedānta-sūtra* is Vyāsadeva, and he himself has explained those aphorisms in the form of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* has *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the ripened fruit of all Vedic literatures, as its main and foremost basis. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is very voluminous. Therefore, even to get the correct understanding of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* one has to study it from the proper

perspective, which is based on the *siddhānta* given in the *ācāryas*' commentaries. Thus, although to say that '*Bhāgavatam* is our *siddhānta*' is not incorrect, it is at the same time a very broad definition of *siddhānta* that may be prone to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. In order to give us this proper perspective and tools to understand how the entire *bhakti-siddhānta* is present within the *Bhāgavatam* in minute details, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī composed the Six *Sandarbhas* where he arranged verses from the *Bhāgavatam* under thematic categories. Thus *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha* became the most complete exposition of the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta.*

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya 4.229:

> ʻ*bhāgavata-sandarbha*'-*nāma kaila grantha-sāra*
> *bhāgavata-siddhāntera tāhāṅ pāiye pāra*

Translation: In particular, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī compiled the book named *Bhāgavata-sandarbha*, or *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha*, which is the essence of all scriptures. From this book one can obtain a conclusive understanding of devotional service and the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Other works of our *ācāryas* explain the same truths, sometimes deeply focusing on one particular constituent of the vast body of *siddhānta*. Thus Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* provides the teachings on *rasa* in all details, his *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* establishes Kṛṣṇa as the highest form of the Lord, the source of other forms, and Sanātana Gosvāmī's *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* shows the super-excellent position of Goloka and the *gopīs* in the hierarchy of the worlds and devotees respectively.

The essence of the *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhas* and other works of our *ācāryas* are presented in simple language in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* along with the direct teachings of Lord Caitanya and scriptural evidence regarding Him being the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thus, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* also plays an important part in Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* alongside *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* to which it is nothing but a continuation and elaboration.

Summary: Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* is presented first of all in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the six *Sandarbhas* and *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

Other possible definitions of the term *siddhānta*

By Hari Pārṣada Dāsa:

The term *siddhānta* is traditionally defined by Sanskrit grammarians as follows, *siddhaḥ antaḥ niścayo yasmin iti siddhāntaḥ:* "that philosophical position in which there exists an accomplished (*siddha*) conclusion (*anta*)."

This definition defines *siddhānta* as an end. There is also a traditional definition which defines *siddhānta* as a means, *siddhaḥ antaḥ niścayaḥ yasmāt: "*that by which we arrive at an accomplished (*siddha*) conclusion (*anta*)."

The *Nyāya-sūtras* 1.1.26 of Gautama define the term *siddhānta* as follows:

tantrādhikaraṇābhyupagama-saṁsthitiḥ siddhāntaḥ

Translation: An accomplished conclusion (*saṁsthitiḥ*) attained by accepting a particular literature (*tantra*), a particular hypothesis (*adhikaraṇa*) or a particular unverified implication (*abhyupagama*) is known as a *siddhānta*.

The first variation of *siddhānta* is *tantra-saṁsthitiḥ,* accomplished conclusion by accepting a particular literature. This is again divided into two types: (a) *sarva-tantra-siddhānta,* (b) *prati-tantra-siddhānta.*

A *sarva-tantra-siddhānta* is one which is well established in one literature and not contradicted by any other literature. For example, a statement such as "eyes are sense-organs" may be given in one literature, and it is not contradicted in any other literature. Thus, such a statement becomes a *sarva-tantra-siddhānta.*

A *prati-tantra-siddhānta,* however, may be established in one literature but may be contradicted by other literature. For example: the followers of *advaita-vāda* establish in their literature that this world is *mithyā* (completely false), which is contradicted by *vaiṣṇava-śāstras* which say that the world is *satyam* (true) but temporary.

An *adhikaraṇa-siddhānta* is a conclusion that, when accepted, leads to acceptance of other *siddhāntas*. For example, if someone accepts a statement: "the soul is distinct from the body," they have already accepted the *siddhānta* that "there is such a thing as the soul."

An *abhyupagama-siddhānta* is one in which an unverified *siddhānta* is accepted as verified and then based on that *siddhānta*, some other *siddhānta* is put to the test. For example, one may accept that "soul exists" and then try to verify the *siddhānta* that "soul is distinct from matter."

Based on these types of *siddhāntas* given by traditional authorities like Gautama, it can be easily understood that not all *siddhāntas* refer to eternal, absolute truths. Some *siddhāntas* are very context-specific. For example, the statement: "Vyāsadeva is an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa" is true for the current *catur-yuga* (cycle of four ages). However, it is not true for the Vyāsadevas who appeared previous to the current one and it is also not true for those who will appear after the current Vyāsadeva in the current day of Manu. Only the current Vyāsadeva is an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa.

Viṣṇu-purāṇa 3.4.5:

kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyanaṁ vyāsaṁ
viddhi nārāyaṇaṁ prabhum
ko hy anyo bhuvi maitreya
mahābhārata-kṛd bhavet

Translation: O Maitreya! Understand the current Vyāsa (Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana) to be non-different from Lord Nārāyaṇa. Which other Vyāsa in this world can compose a literature like the Mahābhārata?

The need for a concise statement of *siddhānta* in hermeneutics

By Brijbāsī Dāsa:

Describing the discovery of the *Brahma-saṁhitā* by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja extols it as an unparalleled scripture, the reason being its concise presentation of the essence of all *siddhānta.*

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 9.239-240:

> *siddhānta-śāstra nāhi 'brahma-saṁhitā'ra sama*
> *govinda-mahimā jñānera parama kāraṇa*
> *alpākṣare kahe siddhānta apāra*
> *sakala-vaiṣṇava-śāstra-madhye ati sāra*

> **Translation:** There is no scripture equal to the *Brahma-saṁhitā* as far as the final spiritual conclusion is concerned. Indeed, that scripture is the supreme revelation of the glories of Lord Govinda, for it reveals the topmost knowledge about Him. Since all conclusions are briefly presented in the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, it is essential among all the Vaiṣṇava literatures.

From this verse we can conclude that in addition to a detailed exposition of *siddhānta,* a concise presentation of it is also an essential characteristic and a practical need. In fact, the very existence of the *sūtra* genre in Vedic culture serves as an illustration and a proof for the need of concise definitions of particular constituents of *siddhānta* that can be easily remembered and referred to. Another example of the necessity of a concise statement of particular constituents of *siddhānta* is the existence of "*kārikās,*" explanatory verses that are used by many Vedic philosophers in their treatises, including some of our *ācāryas* like Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Kavi Karṇapūra, and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. They would write *kārikās* that encapsulate essential meaning in a concise form. They would then explain them either in following verses or in a prose commentary to such *kārikās*.

After Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī wrote his monumental *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhas* there were several examples of such concise statements of our *siddhānta* in the history of our *sampradāya*. Perhaps the very first of them is the famous verse by Śrīnātha Cakravartī, a disciple of Advaita *Ācārya* and the author of one of the earliest Gauḍīya commentaries on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Śrīnātha Cakravartī, *Caitanya-mata-mañjuṣā*, Maṅgalācaraṇa:

> *ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa-tanayas tad-dhāma vṛndāvanaṁ*
> *ramyā kācid upāsanā vraja-vadhū-vargeṇā yā kalpitā*
> *śrīmad-bhāgavataṁ pramāṇam amalaṁ premā pumārtho mahān*
> *śrī-caitanya mahāprabhor matam idaṁ tatrādaro naḥ paraḥ*

> **Translation:** The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the son of Nanda Mahārāja, is to be worshiped along with His transcendental abode, Vṛndāvana. The most pleasing form of worship for the Lord is that which was performed by the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the spotless authority on everything, and pure love of God is the ultimate goal of life for all men. These statements, for which we have the highest regard, are the opinion of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

However, this verse cannot be taken as a concise exposition of all essential points of the Gauḍīya-*siddhānta*. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes about this:

> Seeing the published article entitled "Introduction to Śrī Caitanya's doctrine" we felt a particular type of happiness from disappointment. We hoped that respected author will explain Vaiṣṇava teachings on the basis of philosophical statements of the learned Gosvāmīs. However, when we saw the verse *ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa-tanayaḥ* in the very beginning we understood that respected author does not know that there is a subtle difference between *Vedāntic* statements and statements regarding *bhajana*. In his verse Śrīnātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura described Śrīman Mahāprabhu's teachings pertaining to *bhajana*. But he did not list all of His philosophical teachings. In this verse *jīva-tattva, jaḍa-tattva, śakti-tattva, sādhana-bhakti-tattva* and many other topics are not mentioned. From the point of view of *tattva* this verse is not complete. In order to give a complete list of philosophical teachings it is necessary to make an exposition of the teachings explained in the *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhas.* It is written in the *Bhakti-sandarbha*:

> *atra pūrva-sandarbha-catuṣṭayena sambandho vyākhyātaḥ | tatra pūrṇa-sanātana-paramānanda-lakṣaṇa-paratattva-rūpaṁ sambandhi ca brahma paramātmā bhagavān iti tridhāvirbhāvatayā śabditam iti nirūpitam | tatra ca bhagavattvenaivāvirbhāvasya paramotkarṣaḥ pratipāditaḥ | sa ca bhagavān svayaṁ śrī-kṛṣṇa eva iti nirdhāritam | paramātma-vaibhava-gaṇane ca taṭastha-śakti-rūpāṇāṁ cid-eka-rasānām api anādi-paratattva-jñāna-saṁsargābhāvamaya-tad-vaimukhya-labdha-cchidrayā tan-māyayāvṛta-svarūpa-jñānānāṁ tayaiva sattva-rajas-tamo-maye jaḍe pradhāne racitātma-bhāvānāṁ jīvānāṁ saṁsāra-duḥkhaṁ ca kathitam |*

> **Translation:** In the four previous *Sandarbhas* relationship (*sambandha*) was discussed. In those *Sandarbhas*, that supreme principle endowed with the complete, eternal, supreme bliss was described by the designations Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān as a factor in those relationships, and the highest manifestation was said to be Bhagavān. And the highest form of Bhagavān was concluded to be Kṛṣṇa. In enumerating the powers of Paramātmā, the *jīvas*, forms of the *taṭastha śakti*, whose unchanging nature is consciousness, were described. The *jīva's* essential knowledge is covered by *māyā*, by the misfortune of being opposed to the Lord, which means that the *jīva* has, without beginning, no knowledge of the beginningless supreme entity. The *jīva* consequently believes he is made of dull matter composed of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* and undergoes sufferings in the material world.

And it is also said in the *Prīti-sandarbha*:

> *iha khalu sakala-śāstra-pratipādyaṁ parama-tattvaṁ hi sandarbha-catuṣṭayena pūrvaṁ sambaddham | tad-upāsanā ca tad-antara-sandarbhe 'bhihitā | tat-krama-prāptatvena prayojanaṁ khalv adhunā vivicyate |*

> **Translation:** Here the supreme truth enunciated in scripture was previously established in four *sandarbhas*. Worship of the supreme entity was described in the fifth *Sandarbha*. Now the goal (*prayojana*) is described in appropriate order.

> If we read these essential statements from the *Sandarbhas* we will clearly understand that Kṛṣṇa, *kṛṣṇa-śakti* and *bhagavān-tattva* manifesting different pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, as well as *jīva-tattva*, who is part and parcel of the Lord, manifested in two categories of *nitya-baddha* and *nitya-mukta*, as well as *māyā-tattva* who covers the *jīva*, as well as *sādhana-tattva* and *sādhya-tattva,* all these *tattvas* taken separately make up nine *tattvas*. These nine *tattvas* are *prameya* and the *Vedas*, which are a self-effulgent *śāstra*, as well as the *smṛti-śāstras* headed by *Bhāgavatam* are *pramāṇa*. Vaiṣṇavas will never accept as *Vedāntic* any exposition which is devoid of these ten *siddhāntas* explained separately.

Evidence (*Pramāṇas*) for referencing a statement of *siddhānta* as a hermeneutic principle and tool

By Harideva Dāsa:

The hermeneutic algorithm (**Note:** see "a hermeneutic path" in the foundational materials) proposed by SAC is based on comparison of statements to be verified with *siddhānta*. In that hermeneutic path, *siddhānta* (taken in the sense of a completed set of established conclusions) is an integral and indispensable part of a hermeneutical process. And it should be so, because it is embedded there according to our main scriptures. For example, let's take the verse from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta.*

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 10.113, where it is written:

> ### *bhakti-siddhānta-viruddha, āra rasābhāsa*
> ### *śunite nā haya prabhura cittera ullāsa*

> **Translation:** Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was never pleased to hear books or verses opposed to the conclusive statements of devotional service. The Lord did not like hearing *rasābhāsa*, the overlapping of transcendental mellows.

In the word-for-word meanings, Śrīla Prabhupāda translates the word "*bhakti-siddhānta*" as "conclusive statements about the science of devotional service."

When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu heard some verses or entire books, He was evaluating them. And in doing so, He was doing the hermeneutical process, the first part of which was to decide: "Is it opposed to *siddhānta* or not?" Obviously, such process is based on comparison with *siddhānta*.

Here, it may be objected, that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is God, and He may understand everything directly, without the process of comparing. However, a question here is as follows: for whose sake has Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Gosvāmī written the verse? It was written for future generations of *jīvas*, with one of its purposes being to instruct them. Also, many times it was not the Lord, but Svarupa Dāmodara who thus compared written work to *siddhānta.*

We can start to unfold the instructive part of this verse from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* by recognizing that it is better that those who write down verses and books for Lord Caitanya should know the *siddhānta*, than not know it. Not only the writers or contemporaries of Lord Caitanya should know it, but any general devotee in future generations should know, as well. As the Gauḍīya

Sampradaya has been developing, the didactic part of this verse is crystallized into a sort of a commandment: "Thou shalt know the *siddhānta*."

This essential part of hermeneutics is clearly seen in the following three verses of *Prākṛta-rasa-śata-dūṣiṇī* 26-28, written by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī:

siddhānta vihīna hoile kṛṣṇe citta lāge nā |
sambandha-hīnera kabhu abhideya haya nā ||26||

    Translation: 26. When heart or consciousness is devoid of [understanding of] *siddhānta*, [it will] not be fixed on Kṛṣṇa. *Abhidheya* in no way takes place for one who is devoid of *sambandha*.

sambandha-vihīna jana prayojana pāya nā |
ku-siddhānte vyasta jana kṛṣṇa-sevā kore nā ||27||

    Translation: 27. One who is devoid of *sambandha*, doesn't obtain *prayojana*. One who is deluded by misleading conclusions (*ku-siddhānte*), doesn't perform service to Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*).

siddhānta-alasa jana anartha to' chāḍe nā |
jaḍe kṛṣṇa bhrama kori' kṛṣṇa-sevā kore nā ||28||

    Translation: 28. One, who is lazy [to understand] *siddhānta*, cannot get rid of *anarthas*. One who confuses Kṛṣṇa with matter, doesn't perform service to Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*).

Śrīla Prabhupāda has extensively written regarding the necessity of knowing of the *siddhānta* in his famous commentary in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi* 2.117. Particularly, in the beginning of the purport he wrote: "If because of laziness one does not come to know Kṛṣṇa conclusively, one will be misguided about the cult of devotion … "

Here the word "conclusively" relates to *siddhānta*. The essence of what Śrīla Prabhupāda has written is that if one doesn't know the *siddhānta*, one will be misguided.

Evidence for the fact that the statement of *siddhānta* needs to be concise to be used for hermeneutics

By Harideva Dāsa:

An ability to describe the essence of something concisely is appreciated in our main scriptures. Kṛṣṇadas Kaviraj wrote *in Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi* 1.105:

sārārtha kahi alpākṣare

    Translation: I shall describe the essence as concisely as possible.

And in the next verse he gave the Sanskrit line, found presently in *Mahā-subhāṣita-saṅgraha* 2807, as a substantiation of the importance of terseness: "Essential truth spoken concisely is true eloquence."

So, as an introduction it can surely be said, that concise speech is valued in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradaya*, and particularly regarding *siddhānta*.

Without a statement of *siddhānta* being in concise form, the hermeneutical process would be practically intractable. The core part of hermeneutical execution is based on the comparison of statements to be verified with *siddhānta*. And if *siddhānta* is presented in a form that is not concise enough and systematic enough, then the process of comparison may become dragged out for so long, that it would not be practical to reach an understanding.

However, the quantity of text of Śrīla Prabhupāda's written and (transcribed) spoken words may be 100 times greater than original Sanskrit text of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. If each leader and member of ISKCON is asked to identify the *siddhānta* from that vast work, would the extracted meaning be more or less the same for different readers? And if not, could it be called a functional *siddhānta* at all in terms of hermeneutics? If each and every member of the GBC has one's own unique *siddhānta* and if each and every ISKCON devotee has one's own unique *siddhānta*, then how we can expect that our movement be unified and peaceful? And if it is not unified and peaceful, how could it fulfil its first purpose, which is ultimately "to achieve real unity and peace in the world"? So, if we would like to make the hermeneutical process both practical and user-friendly, then our understanding of *siddhānta* in our society should be both concise and systematic.

It may be asked how the *siddhānta* is expressed in other sampradayas. The answer is that they are traditionally shaped in the form of *sūtras* (concise memorable statements). Every *vedāṅga* (supplementary branch of the *Vedas*) and every *darśana* (philosophical school) has its own *Sūtra*, which is commented by *Bhāṣya* (plus maybe *Vṛtti*) and then sub-commented by *Varttikas*. Often there are further levels of sub-commenting, such as *ṭīkā* and *vyākhyā* and *ṭippaṇī* (and there may be various other names of sub-commentaries). The whole statement of *siddhānta* has been developed in every detail and without loss of its integrity during such commenting. *Sūtras* are like a framework or skeleton for the whole *siddhāntic* corpus.

This system is quite comprehensively described in the following portion of *Parāśara-purāṇa*, which is one of the 18 *Upa-purāṇas*.

Parāśara-purāṇa, Chapter 18, verses 11-23:

> **śāstram āpātato bhāti mune bahu-mukhaṁ nṛṇāṁ ||11||**
> **nirūpite tu nyāyena vibhāty eka-mukhaṁ punaḥ |**
> **śāstra-nirṇāyakaṁ nyāya-kalāpaṁ muni-sattama ||12||**
> **sūtra-rūpeṇa kurvanti śivasyaivājñayaiva tu |**

Translation: O sage, [the *Veda*-]*śāstra* unexpectedly appears for the people [to be having] many mouths. But when described with logic (*nyāyena*), it again shines brightly as [having] one mouth. It is by the order of [the Lord] Śiva, that they make the multitude of *nyāya* [tools to] determine [all the consistent] conclusions [within the] *śāstra*, [by presenting it] in the form of *sūtras*, o best of the sages.

Comment: Lit. "they make the multitude of *nyāya* [tools and principles as] determiners of [all the consistent] conclusions … ." "They" means "those *brāhmaṇas*, who are *śāstra* expositors."

Bahu-mukham, "[to be having] many mouths" means that it seems that different fragments of a *śāstra* differ from each other to the point of mutual contradiction. The word *eka-mukham*, "[having] one mouth," shows that presented with *nyāya* the *śāstra* achieves internal consistency (*eka-vākyatā*).

alpākṣaram asandigdhaṁ sāravad viśvato-mukham ||13||
astobham anavadyaṁ ca sūtraṁ sūtravido viduḥ |

Translation: Knowers of *sūtras* know *sūtra* as [statement, having] minimal syllables, non-questionable, [due to having decided, conclusive meaning], possessing [in itself the] essence [of the discussed matter, unique in comparison to other *sūtra*-statements], [in most cases] universally [the same for each particular case of its application], comprehensive [in covering all sides of the subject studied in discipline] having no [unmeaningful] interjections, and unblamable.

Comment: This translation was done mainly according to Trivikrama-paṇḍitācārya's *Tattva-pradīpikā,* sub-commentary to Madhvācārya's *Bhāṣya* to *Brahma-sūtra*. It will be shown below.

munayaś ca manuṣyāś ca prasādād eva śūlinaḥ || 14 ||
sūtrārthaṁ bhāṣya-rūpeṇa yathāvad darśayanti ca |

Translation: It is due to satisfaction of [Lord Śiva,] the holder of the trident, that both sages and humans, make the meaning of a *sūtra* known as it is, [by showing it] in the form of *Bhāṣya*.

sūtrārtho varṇyate yatra vākyaiḥ sūtrānukāribhiḥ || 15 ||
svapadāni ca varṇyante bhāṣyaṁ bhāṣyavido viduḥ |

Translation: Knowers of *Bhāṣya* know *bhāṣya*, [as that kind of commentary,] where the meaning of a *sūtra* is described by statements, causing [the reader] to follow the [meaning of] *sūtra*, and where its words are also described.

prasādād eva rudrasya bhavānī-sahitasya tu || 16 ||
kurvanti kecid vyākhyānaṁ bhāṣyasyaiva tapobalāt |

Translation: But it is due to satisfaction of [Lord] Rudra, accompanied by Bhavānī, that some [persons] by the strength of [their] austerity make [commentary] on *Bhāṣya*, [called] *Vyākhyāna* (lit. act or process of explanation).

pada-cchedaḥ padārthoktir vigraho vākya-yojanā ||17||
ākṣepasya samādhānaṁ vyākhyānaṁ pañca-lakṣaṇam |

Translation: Division of words [into their *prākṛta* forms], speaking the meaning of words, analysis of a compound word into its constituent parts, connection [of all the words in a sentences in a row] of statements, substantiation [of them] and answer [to real or foreseeable] objections, – this is *Vyākhyāna*, [having] five characteristics.

kecid vārtika-rūpeṇa bhāṣyārthaṁ kathayanti ca || 18 ||
prāsādād eva rudrasya pūrve pūrva-tapobalāt |

Translation: And some speak the meaning of *Bhāṣya*, [by making commentary] in the form of *Vārttika* (lit. derived from *Vṛtti*). [As] before, [it is possible] by the strength of [their] past austerity, due to satisfaction of [Lord] Rudra.

uktānukta-duruktānāṁ cintā yatra pravartate ||19||
taṁ granthaṁ vārtikaṁ prāhuḥ vārttika-jñā manīṣiṇaḥ |

Translation: Wise people, knower of *Vārttikas*, call such book a *Vārttika*, where consideration is made regarding what was said, unsaid or badly said.

sva-buddhy-adhīnaṁ bhāṣyārthaṁ saṅgraheṇaiva cātha vā ||20||
vistareṇa prakurvanti kecit prakaraṇātmanā |

Translation: Also, some [persons] make the meaning of *Bhāṣya* [a] subject to one's own intelligence, summarily or at length, by commentary, called "*Prakaraṇam*" (or by [means of] one's *prakaraṇa* — well-done *ātmanā*—mind).

śāstraika-deśa-sambaddhaṁ śāstra-kāryāntare sthitam ||21||
āhuḥ prakaraṇaṁ nāma śāstra-bheda-vicakṣaṇāḥ |

Translation: [People,] well-versed in divisions of *śāstra*, call *Prakaraṇa* [a commentary,] bound to one particular part of *śāstra*, and devoted to another function of *śāstra* [(such as refuting hostile opinions), which is helpful to establish the meaning of the *śāstra* in the selected part].

Comment: The first half of the verse is translated, according to the explanation given in P.B. Aṇṇaṅgarācārya's *Vyākhyāna* (commentary) to Yāmunācārya's *Siddhi-traya* (*ātma*, 3) as follows:

śāstraikadeśārtha-pratipādana-tatparatve sati śāstrārtha-pratipatty-upayogi (virodhi-mata-nirāsādi) kāryāntara-vyāpṛtimattvaṁ prakaraṇatvam.
sūtra-bhāṣyādibhiḥ śāstraṁ sākṣād vedana-sādhanam ||22||
śrotavyaṁ svaguroḥ svātma-svarūpa-pratipattaye |

Translation: *Śāstra* is [that,] the immediate process of obtaining [which is its] comprehension by *Sūtra*, *Bhāṣya* etc. It should be heard directly from one's guru for the [sake of] immediate perception of the *svarūpa* of one's *Ātma*.

Comment: The word *sākṣād* (immediately, direct(ly)) can be applied to practically every word in the verse. The word *sādhanam* (act of obtaining, achieving), may make us recall the essence of the definition of *saṁpradāyaḥ* as *śāstra-prāptiḥ* (the acquisition of *śāstra)* from Uddyotakara's *Nyāyavārttikam*, 1.1.2. *Śāstra-saṁpradāyaḥ* is "*sam-* full, forceful; *-pra-* presentation; *-dāyaḥ* of *śāstra*" [though the network of guru-disciple relationship].

Let's look again at verses 12–13 in the beginning of the fragment. The genre of *sūtras* (*sūtra-rūpeṇa*) is designed to present *śāstra* in conclusive form (*śāstra-nirṇāyakam*), established by all kinds of tools of *nyāya* (*nyāya-kalāpam*). *Sūtras* are designed to represent the *sarva-siddhānta*, corpus of established conclusions, in its entirety. And the subsequent commenting allows one to make *siddhānta* as (practically unlimitedly) detailed as desired, without losing sight of the whole

structure. The final verse in our fragment informs us that such study of *Sūtra*, *Bhāṣya*, *Vārttika* or *Vyākhyāna*, with *prakaraṇas*, *ṭīkās* and *ṭīppaṇīs* is the most immediate form of getting learned in *śastra*.

Now, among all kinds of definitions given in the fragment of the *Upa-Purāṇa*, the most important is the definition of *sūtra*. Let's consider it more closely. Here it is again:

> **alpākṣaram asandigdhaṁ sāravad viśvato-mukham ||13||**
> **astobham anavadyaṁ ca sūtraṁ sūtravido viduḥ |**

Knowers -***vidaḥ*** of *sūtras* **sūtra-** know ***viduḥ*** *sūtra* **sūtram** [as statement(s)]

- [having] minimal ***alpa-*** syllables ***-akṣaram***,

- non-questionable ***asandigdham***, [due to having decided, conclusive meaning],

- possessing **-vat** [in itself the] essence ***sāra-*** [of the discussed matter, unique in comparison to other *sūtra*-statements],

- [in most cases] universally ***viśvato-mukham*** [the same for each particular case of its application],

- comprehensively ***viśvato-mukham*** [in covering all sides of the subject studied in its discipline],

- [having] no ***a-*** [unmeaningful] interjections **-stobham** and **ca**,

- unblamable ***anavadyam***.

There is double translation of the phrase *viśvato-mukham*. This is due to the double meaning of the term *sūtra*: (1) single *sūtra,* (2) whole corpus of *sūtras*. The former meaning is according to Trivikrama-paṇḍita's commentary; the latter meaning is according to Jayatīrtha's.

Regarding accepting this *sūtra* definition, we note that Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted it in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi* 7.106, purport. His translation: "A *sūtra* is a compilation of aphorisms that expresses the essence of all knowledge in a minimum of words. It must be universally applicable and faultless in its linguistic presentation."

Here the phrase "in a minimum of words" is most appropriate to the question discussed.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī quoted this same definition in his *Sarva-saṁvādinī* commentary to his own *Bhagavat-sandarbha*, saying that it is found in "*Skānda*" and "*Vāyavya*." The later means *Vāyu-upapurāṇa*. The *sūtra* definition also can be found in *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.33.58.

Madhvācārya included the same definition in the introduction of his *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣyam*. Thus, this definition is quite well commented in the Madhva-*sampradāya*.

There are at least two important consequences from the above research regarding the definition of *sūtra*:

> The *sūtra* genre or form is specifically used for expressing the *siddhānta* of *vidyās*, *darśanas* and *sampradāyas*; this use comes from such parameters as *asandigdham* and *viśvato-mukham.*

> *Sūtras* traditionally were written only in Sanskrit. Jayatīrtha in his *Tattva-prakāśikā* says *apaśabdādi-vaidhuryam* "*anavadyam,*" *Anavadyam* (not blamable), [means] "being devoid of *apaśabda*(s)." One of the meaning of *apaśabda* is "non-Sanskrit words." This last parameter in definition, *anavadyam,* forbids usage of any other language for this, even one lexically very similar (like Bengali).

The first conclusion from this research on the definition of the term *sūtra* brings us back to the question: "How is a statement of *siddhānta* in its entirety shaped in other *sampradāyas*?"

From the research, we conclude that the *sūtra* genre or form is especially intended for expressing the *siddhānta* in all its entirety.

In the Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva-*sampradāyas*, *siddhānta* is built around the *sūtra* of *Uttara-mīmāṁsā-darśana*, i.e. on *Vedānta-sūtra*, written by Vyāsadeva. Every such *Vedānta-sampradāya* has its own *Bhāṣya*, and then all the commentaries of subsequent levels. It is implied that *Bhāṣya* on *Vedānta-sūtra* is the central work, which incorporates, substantiates, and fastens together the entire *siddhānta* of the *sampradāya*. We should note that there is no need of a declaration in the beginning of *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*: "Here is the *siddhānta* of such and such *sampradāya* in its entirety." It is implied by the system, established at least from Ādi-Śaṅkara's times, but actually from time immemorial, when the *sūtra* genre had become general usage.

There is a clear criterion from Ādi-Śaṅkara's times for establishing a new *Vedānta-sampradāya*. The founder must write a commentary on *Prasthāna-traya* (three fundamental bodies of scripture), among which the *Bhāṣya* on *Brahma-sūtra* is the central part. First of all, the *Bhāṣya* itself must be internally consistent. But that's not enough. Commentaries to *Bhagavad-gītā* and to the main *Upaniṣads* must be written in such a way, that they should be in complete concord with the *Bhāṣya* on *Brahma-sūtra*.

There is also implied, that the *Bhāṣya*, with all its sub and sub-sub-commentaries, is the central siddhāntic pivot of the *sampradāya*; it is its herald. It is possible to write other works outside the *Prasthāna-traya* that would be expositions of *siddhānta*, but their contents should be in complete concord with the *Bhāṣya* on *Brahma-sutra*. This is the one of the necessary criteria of authoritativeness of a new work in the *sampradāya*.

In such a system it is very clear who inside the tradition (be it *vedāṅga*, *darśana* or *sampradāya*) is responsible for the exposition of its *siddhānta* and in what work it is written.

Regarding the genre of *sūtras*, it should be noted that there is no claim of *sūtras*' authorship to be God-given. The author of a *sūtra* (*sūtra-kara*) takes God-given or inspired literature, handed down from previous times, studies it thoroughly and scientifically, and produces *sūtra* work, which gives access to the content of divine literature in a way that is better systematically organized

Back to the original question: "Why should the *siddhānta* be stated in a concise form?" Because it is shown as such in the most successful *sampradayas*, continuing into current times.

Examples of Concise Statements of *Siddhānta*

Śrīla Prabhupāda's concise statement of *Gauḍīya-siddhānta f*rom his purport to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi* 1.56 where he summarizes the *catuḥ-ślokī* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

By Bhakti Vijñāna Goswāmī and Brijbāsī Dāsa:

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 1.56, purport:

> From this and the preceding three verses of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, which have been selected from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the missionary activities of Lord Caitanya can be understood.

In order to properly understand the statements of *guru-sādhu-śāstra*, we in ISKCON use a system of traditional hermeneutics that includes comparing the statement we wish to understand to a concise statement of *siddhānta*. It is most appropriate for ISKCON members to use such a statement from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Not surprisingly, Śrīla Prabhupāda's concise description of *Gauḍīya-siddhānta* is found in his summary of the *catuḥ-ślokī* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

For the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the principal source of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) on which the Gauḍīya-*siddhānta* is based. This is due to the fact that the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was compiled by Śrīla Vyāsadeva after he divided and compiled all other *śāstras* but still was not satisfied. Then, on the order of Nārada Muni he compiled *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which thus became the "ripened fruit" of all Vedic literature. In the beginning of creation, Lord Kṛṣṇa explained to Lord Brahmā the essence of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in four verses that became known as the *catuḥ-ślokī* of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja quotes the *catuḥ-ślokī* of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the first chapter of his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi* 1.50 introducing it with the following verse:

> *yathā brahmaṇe bhagavān*
> *svayam upadiśyānubhāvitavān*

> **Translation:** The Supreme Personality of Godhead [*svayaṁ bhagavān*] taught Brahmā and made him self-realized.

Thus, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja establishes that proper understanding of these four verses is sufficient for attaining spiritual perfection. Śrīla Prabhupāda gives a summary of Gauḍīya-*siddhānta* in his last purport to the *catuḥ-ślokī* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as they are quoted in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Śrīla Prabhupāda's summary gives not only the essence of ultimate truth for his followers, but also encapsulates, as he puts it, "the missionary activities of Lord Caitanya." It is, thus, perhaps appropriate and significant that Śrīla Prabhupāda placed his summary in his last purport to the *catuḥ-ślokī* as quoted in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi* 1.53–56 rather than in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* itself, where the verses originally appear, 2.9.33–36.

In his purport to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi* 1.56 Śrīla Prabhupāda summarizes the Gauḍīya-*siddhānta* in the following way:

> One should try to purchase a ticket to go back home, back to Godhead. The price of such a ticket is one's intense desire for it, which is not easily awakened, even if one continuously performs pious activities for thousands of lives. All mundane relationships are sure to be broken in the course of time, but once one establishes a relationship with the Personality of Godhead in a particular rasa, it is never to be broken, even after the annihilation of the material world.

> One should understand, through the transparent medium of the spiritual master, that the Supreme Lord exists everywhere in His transcendental spiritual nature and that the living entities' relationships with the Lord are directly and indirectly existing everywhere, even in this material world. In the spiritual world there are five kinds of relationships with the Supreme Lord—*śānta*, *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya*. ... If these *rasas* are reestablished with Lord Kṛṣṇa, the result is eternal, blissful life.

> From this and the preceding three verses of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, which have been selected from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the missionary activities of Lord Caitanya can be understood. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has eighteen thousand verses, which are summarized in the four verses beginning with *aham evāsam evāgre* (53) and concluding with *yat syāt sarvatra sarvadā* (56). In the first of these verses (53) the transcendental nature of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is explained. The second verse (54) further explains that the Lord is detached from the workings of the material energy, *māyā*. The living entities, although parts and parcels of Lord Kṛṣṇa, are prone to be controlled by the external energy; therefore, although they are spiritual, in the material world they are encased in bodies of material energy. The eternal relationship of the living entities with the Supreme Lord is explained in that verse. The next verse (55) instructs that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by His inconceivable energies, is simultaneously one with and different from the living entities and the material energy. This knowledge is called *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*. When an individual living entity surrenders to the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, he can then develop natural transcendental love for Him. This surrendering process should be the primary concern of a human being. In the next verse (56) it is said that a conditioned soul must ultimately approach a bona fide spiritual master and try to understand perfectly the material and spiritual worlds and his own existential position. Here the words *anvaya-vyatirekābhyām*, "directly and indirectly," suggest that one must learn the process of devotional service in its two aspects: one must directly execute the process of devotional service and indirectly avoid the impediments to progress.

One could use the above excerpt itself as the concise statement of *siddhānta* for ISKCON hermeneutics. For easier understanding, one can also analyze ten tenets from the above excerpt as follows. After each tenet there is a quote from the purport to text 56. In footnotes are supporting quotes from the purports to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi* 1.53–55. There are also footnotes referencing verses 51–52, which introduce the *catuḥ-ślokī*, to showing its context and importance.

1) Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead:

   In the first of these verses the transcendental nature of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is explained;
   The Supreme Lord exists everywhere in His transcendental spiritual nature.[55]

2) He has His external, inferior or material energy (*māyā*):

   The Lord is detached from the workings of the material energy, *māyā*.[56]

3) He also has His internal, superior or spiritual energy[57]:

   His transcendental spiritual nature.

4) He has His parts and parcels, the living entities, who are spiritual by nature:
   The living entities are parts and parcels of Lord Krsna; [they] are spiritual [by nature];

   The living entities' relationships with the Lord directly and indirectly exist everywhere, even in this material world.

5) The living entities in the material world are conditioned by the external energy:

   The living entities are prone to be controlled by the external energy; therefore, although they are spiritual, in the material world they are encased in bodies of material energy.

6) The living entities in the spiritual world are liberated:

   In the spiritual world there are five kinds of relationships (*rasas*) with the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa—*śānta*, *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya*.[58]

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[55] "*Aham* means "I"; therefore the speaker who is saying *aham*, "I," must have His own personality. The Māyāvādī philosophers interpret this word *aham* as referring to the impersonal Brahman. The Māyāvādīs are very proud of their grammatical knowledge, but any person who has actual knowledge of grammar can understand that *aham* means "I" and that "I" refers to a personality. Therefore the Personality of Godhead, speaking to Brahmā, uses *aham* while describing His own transcendental form. *Aham* has a specific meaning; it is not a vague term that can be whimsically interpreted. *Aham*, when spoken by Kṛṣṇa, refers to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and nothing else."
 "[Even] before the material creation He existed in fullness with all transcendental opulences, including all strength, all wealth, all beauty, all knowledge, all fame and all renunciation."
"From Him, in His abode, the *Vaikuṇṭhas*, this *brahma-jyoti* emanates. He is never impersonal." (verse 53 purport)
[56] "The material elements (earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego) display the inferior energy of the Lord."
"[The external energy, *māyā* creates] the material cosmos, [which], being temporary, is sometimes manifest and sometimes unmanifest, but [this] energy emanates from the Supreme Absolute Lord." (verse 53 purport)
[57] "The spiritual manifestation never vanishes. It belongs to the internal energy of the Supreme Lord and exists eternally." (verse 53 purport)
[58] "The actions of the living entities in the spiritual kingdom are not illusory; they are the actual, eternal activities of liberated souls." (verse 54 purport)

7) *Acintya-bhedābheda-tattva:* Simultaneous oneness and difference of the Lord and His energies:

> The Supreme Personality of Godhead by His inconceivable energies, is simultaneously one with and different from the living entities and the material energy. This knowledge is called *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*.[59]

8) Love of God is the highest goal of life

> This surrendering process should be the primary concern of a human being.

> [The eternal relationship with the Supreme Lord] which is never to be broken, even after the annihilation of the material world [is called love of Godhead].[60]

9) To achieve love of God, one should practice devotional service

> When an individual living entity surrenders to the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, he can develop natural transcendental love for Him. This surrendering process should be the primary concern of a human being.

> The price is one's intense desire for it, which is not easily awakened, even if one continuously performs pious activities for thousands of lives.

> [In this way,] one must learn the process of devotional service in its two aspects: one must directly execute the process of devotional service and indirectly avoid the impediments to progress.[61]

10) This knowledge can only be received by us through the disciplic succession

> [To understand this knowledge] a conditioned soul must ultimately approach a bona fide spiritual master and try to understand perfectly the material and spiritual worlds and his own existential position.[62]

We can compare the above ten tenets from Śrīla Prabhupāda to concise statements of *siddhānta* from our previous *ācāryas*.

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[59] "There is nothing in existence not related to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In a sense, there is nothing but Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and yet nothing is Śrī Kṛṣṇa save and except His primeval personality. This knowledge constitutes a complete transcendental science." (verse 51 purport)

[60] "The Lord is manifested to a pure devotee from within and without. This is one of the mysteries of the devotional relationship in which a devotee and the Lord are bound by a tie of spontaneous love. To achieve this love should be the goal of life for every living being." (verse 55 purport)

[61] "There are nine alternative transcendental means of attaining this stage: hearing, chanting, remembering, serving the lotus feet of the Lord, worshiping, praying, assisting, fraternizing with the Lord, and sacrificing everything for Him. These are different parts of the same devotional service" (from one of the two introductory verses: 51 purport)

[62] "The truth of these mysteries was revealed to Brahmā by the descending process, without the help of the ascending one. The Lord's mercy descends to a devotee like Brahmā and, through Brahmā, to Nārada, from Nārada to Vyāsa, from Vyāsadeva to Śukadeva and so on in the bona fide chain of disciplic succession. We cannot discover the mysteries of the Lord by our mundane endeavors; they are only revealed, by His grace, to the proper devotees." (verse 52 purport)

Here is the equivalent verse from the Madhva-*sampradāya* attributed to Vyāsa Tīrtha:

śrīmān-mādhva-mate hariḥ paratamaḥ satyaṁ jagat tattvato
bhedo jīva-gaṇā harer anucarā nicocca-bhāvaṁ gatāḥ
muktir naija-sukhānubhūtir amalā bhaktiś ca tat-sādhanam
hy akṣādi-tritayaṁ pramāṇam akhilāmnāyaika-vedyo hariḥ

Translation: In Śrī Madhva's teaching: Lord Hari is supreme; the world is real; the differences are real; there are many living entities and all of them are servants of the Lord; the living entities are situated in different high and low positions; liberation is the experience of the inherent bliss of the soul; pure devotional service is the proper means to attain that liberation; *pratyakṣa* (direct perception), *anumāna* (inference) and *śabda* (testimony of the *Vedas*) are the sources of valid knowledge; Lord Hari is to be known by all *Vedas*.

Gauḍīya-vedāntācārya Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa expressed the same basic tenets in his treatise *Prameya-ratnāvalī* 1.8 where he again refers to the previous *ācārya,* Śrī Madhva:

śrī-madhvaḥ prāha viṣṇuṁ paratamam akhilāmnāya-vedyaṁ ca viśvaṁ
satyaṁ bhedaṁ ca jīvām hari-caraṇa-juṣas tāratamyaṁ ca teṣām
mokṣaṁ viṣṇv-aṅghri-lābhaṁ tad-amala-bhajanaṁ tasya hetuṁ pramāṇaṁ
pratyākṣādi-trayaṁ cety upadiśati hariḥ kṛṣṇa-caitanyacandraḥ

Translation: Śrī Madhva taught: Lord Viṣṇu is the Supreme Absolute Truth; Lord Viṣṇu is to be known by all *Vedas*; the material world is real; the living entities are different from the Lord; all living entities are servant of the Lord's lotus feet; living entities are situated in different positions due to being conditioned or liberated; liberation is the attainment of the lotus feet of the Lord; the cause of liberation is unalloyed devotional service to the Lord; *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna* and *śabda* are the sources of valid knowledge. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Lord Hari himself, also taught these same truths.

On the basis of these verses Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura composed the following verse describing in more detail the ten fundamental truths that were taught by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

āmnāyaḥ prāha tattvaṁ harim iha paramaṁ sarva-śaktiṁ rasābdhiṁ
tad bhinnāṁsāṁś ca jīvān prakṛti-kavalitān tad-vimuktāṁś ca bhāvāt
bhedābheda-prakāśaṁ sakalam api hareḥ sādhanaṁ śuddha-bhaktiṁ
sādhyaṁ tat-prītim evety upadiśati janān gaura-candraḥ svayaṁ saḥ

Translation: 1) The *Vedas* are the principal scriptural evidence, which in turn expound the following nine principles: 2) Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Absolute Truth. 3) He possesses all energies. 4) He is the ocean of *rasa* (transcendental mellows). 5) The living entities are His separated parts and parcels. 6) The living entity, due to his nature of marginal energy, may become conditioned by the material energy. 7) Due to his marginal nature, the living entity in the liberated condition is free of the influence of material nature. 8) Everything in this material creation is inconceivably one and different from the Supreme Lord Hari. 9) Pure devotional service is the proper practice to achieve *prema*, 10) Pure love of Kṛṣṇa, which is the living entity's ultimate goal of life.

In examining the above, we can thus see that using the ten tenets gleaned from Śrīla Prabhupāda's summary of the *catuḥ-ślokī* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, as given in his purports to those verses as they are quoted in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, perfectly follows the over-arching principle of ISKCON hermeneutics. That principle is: Understanding tradition through Śrīla Prabhupāda, accepting Śrīla Prabhupāda as the representative and conveyer of the essence of the tradition and *paramparā*, in the most appropriate way for our understanding and application.

Sambandha, abhidheya, prayojana

By Nārāyaṇī-devī dāsī:

Sambandha, *abhidheya* and *prayojana* are the culmination of all *siddhānta* as well as the lens for understanding the *siddhānta*.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Ādi* 7.146:

> *sambandha, abhidheya, prayojana nāma*
> *ei tina artha sarva-sūtre paryavasāna*

Translation: One's relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, activities in terms of that relationship, and the ultimate goal of life [to develop love of God]—these three subjects are explained in every aphorism of the *Vedānta-sūtra*, for they form the culmination of the entire *Vedānta* philosophy.

From the purport to this verse:

> Knowledge of these four items—namely oneself, the universe, God, and their internal relationship—is called *sambandha-jñāna*, or the knowledge of one's relationship. When one's relationship with the Supreme Lord is established, the next program is to act in that relationship. This is called *abhidheya*, or activity in relationship with the Lord. After executing such prescribed duties, when one attains the highest goal of life, love of Godhead, he achieves *prayojana-siddhi*, or the fulfillment of his human mission.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 20.124:

> *veda-śāstra kahe—'sambandha', 'abhidheya', 'prayojana'*
> *'kṛṣṇa'—prāpya sambandha, 'bhakti'—prāptyera sādhana*

Translation: The Vedic literatures give information about the living entity's eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, which is called *sambandha*. The living entity's understanding of this relationship and his acting accordingly is called *abhidheya*. Returning home, back to Godhead, is the ultimate goal of life and is called *prayojana*.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 20.125:

> *abhidheya-nāma 'bhakti' 'prema'—prayojana*
> *puruṣārtha-śiromaṇi prema mahā-dhana*

Translation: Devotional service, or sense activity for the satisfaction of the Lord, is called *abhidheya* because it can develop one's original love of Godhead, which is the goal of life. This goal is the living entity's topmost interest and greatest wealth. Thus one attains the platform of transcendental loving service unto the Lord.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 25.131:

> *ataeva bhāgavate ei 'tina' kaya*
> *sambandha-abhidheya-prayojana-maya*

Translation: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu continued, "Thus one's relationship with the Lord, activities in devotional service, and the attainment of the highest goal of life, love of Godhead, are the subject matters of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.8.45:

> *trayyā copaniṣadbhiś ca*
> *sāṅkhya-yogaiś ca sātvataiḥ*
> *upagīyamāna-māhātmyaṁ*
> *hariṁ sāmanyatātmajam*

Translation: The glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are studied through the three *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads*, the literature of *Sāṅkhya-yoga*, and other Vaiṣṇava literature, yet mother Yaśodā considered that Supreme Person her ordinary child.

From the purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.8.45:

As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* 15.15 by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, the purpose of studying the *Vedas* is to understand Him (*vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyaḥ*). Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu explained to Sanātana Gosvāmī that there are three purposes in the *Vedas.* One is to understand our relationship with Kṛṣṇa (*sambandha*), another is to act according to that relationship (*abhidheya*), and the third is to reach the ultimate goal (*prayojana*). The word *prayojana* means "necessities," and the ultimate necessity is explained by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. *Premā pumārtho mahān:* the greatest necessity for a human being is the achievement of love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Here we see that mother Yaśodā is on the highest stage of necessity, for she is completely absorbed in love for Kṛṣṇa.

Sambandha, *abhidheya* and *prayojana* are the basis for our *siddhānta*. According to Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thakur in the Preface of *Kṛṣṇa Saṁhitā*, *sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana* are the basis for the *catuḥ-śloki* (four seed verses) of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in 2.9.33–36. According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in his *Sandarbhas*, the *catuḥ śloki*, along with Śrīla Vyāsadeva's meditation on Lord Kṛṣṇa, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.7.4-6, and his Maṅgalācaraṇa, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.1-3, are essential sections of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and therefore they delineate our *siddhānta*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.33:

> *aham evāsam evāgre*
> *nānyad yat sad-asat param*
> *paścād ahaṁ yad etac ca*
> *yo 'vaśiṣyeta so 'smy aham*

Translation: Brahmā, it is I, the Personality of Godhead, who was existing before the creation, when there was nothing but Myself. Nor was there the material nature, the cause of this creation. That which you see now is also I, the Personality of Godhead, and after annihilation what remains will also be I, the Personality of Godhead.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.34:

> *ṛte 'rthaṁ yat pratīyeta*
> *na pratīyeta cātmani*
> *tad vidyād ātmano māyāṁ*
> *yathābhāso yathā tamaḥ*

Translation: O Brahmā, whatever appears to be of any value, if it is without relation to Me, has no reality. Know it as My illusory energy, that reflection which appears to be in darkness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.35:

> *yathā mahānti bhūtāni*
> *bhūteṣūccāvaceṣv anu*
> *praviṣṭāny apraviṣṭāni*
> *tathā teṣu na teṣv aham*

Translation: Brahmā, please know that the universal elements enter into the cosmos and at the same time do not enter into the cosmos; similarly, I Myself also exist within everything created, and at the same time I am outside of everything.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.36:

> *etāvad eva jijñāsyaṁ*
> *tattva-jijñāsunātmanaḥ*
> *anvaya-vyatirekābhyāṁ*
> *yat syāt sarvatra sarvadā*

Translation: A person who is searching after the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, must certainly search for it up to this, in all circumstances, in all space and time, and both directly and indirectly.

Siddhānta can also be found in the Maṅgalācaraṇa of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.1–3 and Vyāsadeva's meditation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.7.4–6. These verses can be found in the section entitled "Expanded."

The principles of *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana* are expanded in Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Daśa Mūla*. *Sambandha* can be found in principles 2–8 of *Daśa Mūla*, *abhidheya* can be found in principle 9, and *prayojana* is in principle 10. For the complete list see the expansion of this paper. There is a further expansion of the *Daśa Mūla* to be found in *Bhagavatārka Marici Mālā*. In this book references from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are given to illuminate the twenty different topics. Chapters 2–10 describe *sambandha*, chapters 11–16 describe *abhidheya*, and chapters 17–20 describe *prayojana*. For the contents of the different chapters see the expanded part of this paper. *Sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana* are the organizing principle of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Ṣaṭ Sandarbhas*.

Expanded

Verses on *siddhānta* from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

Vyāsadeva's *Maṅgalācaraṇa.*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.1:

> *oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*
> *janmādy asya yato 'nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñaḥ svarāṭ*
> *tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ*
> *tejo-vāri-mṛdāṁ yathā vinimayo yatra tri-sargo 'mṛṣā*
> *dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi*

Translation: O my Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, son of Vasudeva, O all-pervading Personality of Godhead, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You. I meditate upon Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa because He is the Absolute Truth and the primeval cause of all causes of the creation, sustenance and destruction of the manifested universes. He is directly and indirectly conscious of all manifestations, and He is independent because there is no other cause beyond Him. It is He only who first imparted the Vedic knowledge unto the heart of Brahmājī, the original living being. By Him even the great sages and demigods are placed into illusion, as one is bewildered by the illusory representations of water seen in fire, or land seen on water. Only because of Him do the material universes, temporarily manifested by the reactions of the three modes of nature, appear factual, although they are unreal. I therefore meditate upon Him, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is eternally existent in the transcendental abode, which is forever free from the illusory representations of the material world. I meditate upon Him, for He is the Absolute Truth. ()

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.2:

> *dharmaḥ projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarāṇāṁ satāṁ*
> *vedyaṁ vāstavam atra vastu śivadaṁ tāpa-trayonmūlanam*
> *śrīmad-bhāgavate mahā-muni-kṛte kiṁ vā parair īśvaraḥ*
> *sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tat-kṣaṇāt*

Translation: Completely rejecting all religious activities which are materially motivated, this *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* propounds the highest truth, which is understandable by those devotees who are fully pure in heart. The highest truth is reality distinguished from illusion for the welfare of all. Such truth uproots the threefold miseries. This beautiful *Bhāgavatam*, compiled by the great sage

Vyāsadeva [in his maturity], is sufficient in itself for God realization. What is the need of any other scripture? As soon as one attentively and submissively hears the message of Bhāgavatam, by this culture of knowledge the Supreme Lord is established within his heart.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.3:

nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalaṁ
śuka-mukhād amṛta-drava-saṁyutam
pibata bhāgavataṁ rasam ālayaṁ
muhur aho rasikā bhuvi bhāvukāḥ

Translation: O expert and thoughtful men, relish *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the mature fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literatures. It emanated from the lips of Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Therefore this fruit has become even more tasteful, although its nectarean juice was already relishable for all, including liberated souls. Vyāsadeva's Meditation

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.7.4:

bhakti-yogena manasi
samyak praṇihite 'male
apaśyat puruṣaṁ pūrṇaṁ
māyāṁ ca tad-apāśrayām

Translation: Thus he fixed his mind, perfectly engaging it by linking it in devotional service [*bhakti-yoga*] without any tinge of materialism, and thus he saw the Absolute Personality of Godhead along with His external energy, which was under full control.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.7.5:

yayā sammohito jīva
ātmānaṁ tri-guṇātmakam
paro 'pi manute 'narthaṁ
tat-kṛtaṁ cābhipadyate

Translation: Due to this external energy, the living entity, although transcendental to the three modes of material nature, thinks of himself as a material product and thus undergoes the reactions of material miseries.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.7.6:

anarthopaśamaṁ sākṣād
bhakti-yogam adhokṣaje
lokasyājānato vidvāṁś
cakre sātvata-saṁhitām

Translation: The material miseries of the living entity, which are superfluous to him, can be directly mitigated by the linking process of devotional service. But the

mass of people do not know this, and therefore the learned Vyāsadeva compiled this Vedic literature, which is in relation to the Supreme Truth.

Daśa Mūla Tattva: first essay

By Brijbāsī Dāsa:

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura summarized Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's philosophy in ten fundamental principles that describe all the knowledge pertaining to *sambandha* (position of the Lord, His energies and the relationship between them), *abhidheya* (activities according to that knowledge) and *prayojana* (the ultimate goal of life that can be achieved by such activities).

However, these ten principles were not invented by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. In enumerating them he followed the previous *ācāryas*. For instance, he drew upon the following well-known verse from the Madhva-*sampradāya* attributed to Vyāsa Tīrtha:

> *śrīmān-madhva-mate hariḥ paratamaḥ satyaṁ jagat tattvato*
> *bhedo jīva-gaṇā harer anucarā nicocca-bhāvaṁ gataḥ*
>
> *muktir naija-sukhānubhūtir amalā bhaktiś ca tat-sādhanam*
> *hy akṣādi-tritayaṁ pramāṇam akhilāmnāyaika-vedyo hariḥ*

> **Translation:** In Śrī Madhva's teaching: Lord Hari is supreme; the world is real; the differences are real; there are many living entities and all of them are servants of the Lord; the living entities are situated in different high and low positions; liberation is the experience of the inherent bliss of the soul; pure devotional service is the proper means to attain that liberation; *pratyākṣa* (direct perception), *anumāna* (inference) and *śabda* (testimony of the *Vedas*) are the sources of valid knowledge; Lord Hari is to be known by all *Vedas*.

Drawing from the works of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and *ācāryas* of the Madhva-Gauḍīya-*sampradāya* who came before Lord Caitanya, *Gauḍīya-vedānta-ācārya* Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa expressed the same basic tenets in his treatise *Prameya-ratnāvalī* where he, for the first time in the history of our *sampradāya,* explains these ten principles of *siddhānta,* mentioned by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura above, as the essence of both Madhva and Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings.

Prameya-ratnāvalī 1.8:

> *śrī-madhvaḥ prāha viṣṇuṁ paratamam akhilāmnāya-vedyaṁ ca viśvaṁ*
> *satyaṁ bhedaṁ ca jīvām hari-caraṇa-juṣas tāratamyaṁ ca teṣām*
> *mokṣaṁ viṣṇv-aṅghri-lābhaṁ tad-amala-bhajanaṁ tasya hetuṁ pramāṇaṁ*
> *pratyākṣādi-trayaṁ cety upadiśati hariḥ kṛṣṇa-caitanyacandraḥ*

> **Translation:** Śrī Madhva taught: 1) Lord Viṣṇu is the Supreme Absolute Truth; 2) Lord Viṣṇu is to be known by all *Vedas*; 3) the material world is real; 4) the living entities are different from the Lord; 5) all living entities are servants of the Lord's lotus feet; 6) living entities are situated in different positions due to being conditioned or liberated; 7) liberation is the attainment of the lotus feet of the Lord; 8) the cause of liberation is unalloyed devotional service to the Lord;

9) *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna* and *śabda* are the sources of valid knowledge. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Lord Hari himself, also taught these same truths.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura used Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's delineation as a basis, adding the *rasa* component, so essential to Lord Caitanya's teachings. He thus composed a *kārikā* verse which perfectly delineates all the crucial aspects of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*, including both *tattva* and *rasa*:

> *āmnāyaḥ prāha tattvaṁ harim iha paramaṁ sarva-śaktim rasābdhiṁ*
> *tad bhinnāṁsāṁś ca jīvān prakṛti-kavalitān tad-vimuktāṁś ca bhāvāt*
> *bhedābheda-prakāśaṁ sakalam api hareḥ sādhanaṁ śuddha-bhaktiṁ*
> *sādhyaṁ tat-prītim evety upadiśati janān gaura-candraḥ svayaṁ saḥ*

Translation:

1) The *Vedas* are the principal scriptural evidence, which in turn expound the following nine principles:

2) Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Absolute Truth.

3) He possesses all energies.

4) He is the ocean of *rasa* (transcendental mellows).

5) The living entities are His separated parts and parcels.

6) The living entity, due to his nature of marginal energy, may become conditioned by the material energy.

7) Due to his marginal nature, the living entity in the liberated condition is free of the influence of material nature.

8) Everything in this material creation is inconceivably one and different from the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari.

9) Pure devotional service is the highest occupation for the living entity.

10) Pure love of Kṛṣṇa is the living entity's ultimate goal of life.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura emphasized these principles by including them in many of his books. In 1888, for example, he published *Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta-mālā*, the first chapter of which consists of questions and answers on these ten foundational principles. In 1892 he published *Śrīman Mahāprabhura-śikṣā, Teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu,* a book entirely based on the ten basic principles, elaborately describing every one of them in its eleven chapters. In the following year, 1893, Bhakivinoda wrote his major work, *Jaiva-dharma*, ten chapters of which, from 13 to 22, were designed to explain the concept of *daśa-mūla*. In 1896 he then composed 104 Sanskrit verses describing Lord Caitanya's important pastimes and teachings, entitled *Śrī Gaurāṅga-līlā-smaraṇa-maṅgala-stotram*. Therein he included his 13-verse explanation of the above-mentioned *"āmnāyaḥ prāha"* verse. The book had a famous introduction in English entitled *Śrī Caitanya Mahaprabhu: His Life and Precepts* and was sent to several western universities and assorted scholars. Two-thirds of the introduction was dedicated to presenting

the ten principal doctrines as the essence of Śrī Caitanya's precepts. Finally, in 1900 he published *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, the seventh chapter of which explains the ten foundational principles in simple Bengali language.

Around the same time, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *dīkṣā-guru* Vipina-vihārī Gosvāmī wrote his magnum opus on the same subject, naming it *Daśa-mūla-rasam (Vaiṣṇava-jīvanam)*—"The Ten Essential Truths (The Life of the Vaiṣṇavas)." The book is over a thousand pages long and presents a detailed exposition of the principal tenets of Gauḍīya philosophy, with many quotations from standard Vaiṣṇava *śāstras*.

Because of the timing of this work's publication, there is some contention about who was the first to describe the concept of *daśa-mūla*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura or his guru. However, it appears from the concluding words of *Daśa-mūla-rasam* that Vipina-vihārī Gosvāmī started working on the book in the beginning of 1898 upon the desire of a certain dear disciple of his, whose name he does not mention, and finished the work in April of 1899, more than ten years after Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura published *Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta-mālā*, his first work on *daśa-mūla*. Moreover, in the *Daśa-mūla-rasam* Vipina-vihārī Gosvāmī directly quotes the above mentioned "*āmnāyaḥ prāha tattvaṁ*" verse from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Śrī Gaurāṅga-līlā-smaraṇa-maṅgala-stotram* immediately after Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's aforementioned verse "*śrī-madhvaḥ prāha*." From this it is clear that they were conferring about the subject for some time, with indications that Vipina-vihārī Gosvāmī's magnum opus was directly inspired by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's works.

These ten truths can be found in every part of the vast corpus of Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava literature. In order to demonstrate this, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura composed four essays on the ten basic principles in the *Upaniṣads*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. He selected some important verses describing each principle and gave his own translation with commentary incorporated into it. These four essays remained unpublished for a long time until they were discovered by the disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda and released as a small book, along with some other works on *daśa-mūla,* on the Ṭhākura's appearance day in 1941.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura made the *daśa-mūla* developed by Bhaktivinoda a compulsory study for even less philosophically inclined disciples. In the Gauḍīya Maṭha each newcomer would be taught the knowledge of *daśa-mūla* usually prior to or shortly after *harināma-dīkṣā*. All members of the Gauḍīya Maṭha were supposed to know this verse by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura encapsulating the ten basic principles of *bhakti-siddhānta* specific to Gauḍīya understanding.

Daśa Mūla Tattva: second essay

By Nārāyaṇī-devī dāsī:

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura seems to have based *Daśa-mūla-tattva* on Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's *Prameya-ratnāvalī*, a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava version of Śrī Vyāsa Tīrtha's *prameya-ślokas*. It was Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa who established Lord Caitanya's followers as a bona fide *sampradāya*, and gave us somewhat of a link to Madhva. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's version is particularly appropriate for those of us in the Sārasvata line of the Gauḍīyas. We should also note that two of its points specifically deal with *rasa*. As *siddhānta* to which everything is compared, both *tattva* and *rasa* must be present.

āmnāyaḥ prāha tattvaṁ harim iha paramaṁ sarva-śaktim rasābdhiṁ
tad bhinnāṁsāṁś ca jīvān prakṛti-kavalitān tad-vimuktāṁś ca bhāvāt
bhedābheda-prakāśaṁ sakalam api hareḥ sādhanaṁ śuddha-bhaktiṁ
sādhyaṁ tat-prītim evety upadiśati janān gaura-candraḥ svayaṁ saḥ

1) The *Vedas* are the principal scriptural evidence, which in turn expound the following nine principles:

2) Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Absolute Truth.

3) He possesses all energies.

4) He is the ocean of *rasa* (transcendental mellows).

5) The living entities are His separated parts and parcels.

6) The living entity, due to his nature of marginal energy, may become conditioned by the material energy.

7) Due to his marginal nature, the living entity in the liberated condition is free of the influence of material nature.

8) Everything in this material creation is inconceivably one and different from the Supreme Lord Hari.

9) Pure devotional service is the proper practice to achieve *prema*,

10) Pure love of Kṛṣṇa, which is the living entity's ultimate goal of life.

Bhāgavatārka Maricī Mālā expands the *Daśa Mūla* into twenty topics which are explained in twenty chapters. Here are the contents of the chapters.

1. Indications of Evidence (*pramāṇa nirdeśaḥ*)

2. The Rising Sun of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*bhagavata arka udayaḥ*)

3. The Exposition of *Bhāgavata* (*bhāgavata vivṛttiḥ*)

4. The Factual Truth of Kṛṣṇa (*bhagavat svarūpa tattvam*)

5. The Essential Nature of the Energies of the Lord (*bhagavat śakti tattvam*)

6. The Principles of the Lord's Mellows (*bhagavat rasa tattvam*)

7. The Essential Nature of the Individual Soul (*jīva tattvam*)

8. Characteristics of the Conditioned Soul (*baddha jīva lakṣaṇam*)

9. Characteristics of the Fortunate Soul (*bhāgyavaj jīva lakṣaṇam*)

10. Characteristics of the Inconceivable Oneness and Difference (*acintya bhedābheda lakṣaṇam*)

11. Analysis of the Process (*abhidheya vicāraḥ*)

12. Devotional Service in Practice (*sādhana bhakti*)

13. *Sādhana Bhakti* Executed Exclusively by Taking Shelter of the Holy Name (*aikāntiki nāmāśrayā sādhana bhakti*)

14. Analysis of Unfavorable Conditions for *Bhakti* (*bhakti prātikūlya vicārah*)

15. Analysis of Favorable Conditions for *Bhakti* (*bhakti ānukūlya vicāraḥ*)

16. The Gradual Manifestation of *Bhāva* (*bhāva udaya kramaḥ*)

17. Analysis of the Goal of Devotional Service (*prayojana vicāraḥ*)

18. The Perfection of the Mellow of Pure Love — The Glories of *Rasa* (*siddha-prema-rase rasa-mahimā*)

19. The Perfection of the Mellow of Pure Love — The Depth of *Rasa* (*siddha-prema-rase rasa-garimā*)

20. The Sweetness of *Rasa* (*rasa-madhurimā*)

Hermenutic Issues Discussed by *Ācāryas* in our *Sampradāya*

Overall, our *ācāryas* have approached such issues with a hermeneutic of faith, not suspicion, while doing the needful to address their particular contexts.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Śrīdhara Swāmī

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī addressed some of the Advaitic statements found in Śrīdhara Svāmī's *Bhāgavatam* commentary *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*. Rādhika Ramaṇa Dāsa in his book *The Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta of Jīva Gosvāmī* analyzes, using several examples, the overall and the occasional critical attitude of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī towards Śrīdhara Swāmī's statements and concludes as follows.

Tattva-Sandarbha 27, Ravi M. Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta of Jīva Gosvāmī*, 2007, pages 83–84:

> When Jīva uses Śrīdhara Svāmī as a positive source of exegesis for *Bhāgavata* verses (which is how he uses him in almost every instance), he often quotes Śrīdhara verbatim, and sometimes mentions him by name. Indeed, while interpreting the other three lines of the *Bhāgavata's* first verse, Jīva follows Śrīdhara quite closely, in the manner we have seen above. And on those few occasions when Jīva does use Śrīdhara as the source of prima facie view, he concerns himself only with the problematic ideas and never with the author himself. Out of respect for Śrīdhara, Jīva does not quote him, paraphrase him, or even use language similar to his. As far as the reader is concerned, the opposing

views could have come from any Advaitin. Indeed, for Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrīdhara is not the source of the problematic viewpoint, since Śrīdhara is a "great Vaishnava," whose "writings are interspersed with the doctrines of Advaita so that an appreciation for the greatness of the *Bhāgavatam* may be awakened in the Advaitins."

Svakīyā and *parakīyā* relationships: Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura

In several of his major books like *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha*, *Gopāla-campu* and his commentary to *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī seems to give strong support and śāstric evidence for the *svakīya* relationships between Lord Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, especially Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, albeit stating in some places that it wasn't his own conviction. This caused a controversy among Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Only Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura more than a hundred years later effectively resolved the issue by writing a separate treatise on the topic which came to be known as *Svakīyātva-nirāsa-vicāraḥ tathā Parakīyātva-nirūpaṇam* (Analysis of *svakīyā* as having no place and the ascertainment of *parakīyā*). There, Śrīla Viśvanātha establishes *gopīs'* *parakīyā* relationships with Kṛṣṇa as the highest and at the same time faithfully upholds Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's great authority.

Note: for those who wish to explore this topic further, that short work by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī is available in an English translation. *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* text 1.21 commentaries by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura are an additional reference (available in an English translation).

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura on proper understanding of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's writings

In December 1931 when Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was still present on the planet The Harmonist magazine published an article entitled: "Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda," Vol. 29, No. 6, pp.167–173. The author's name was not stated, but from the article itself, particularly from the several references to himself as the editor of the Harmonist who revived it after it was originally started by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, it is reasonably clear that it was written by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī himself. Therein a proper understanding of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's writings was discussed. We urge readers to read the entire article, either in the reprint of the Harmonist or in Śrī Bhakti Vikāsa Swāmī's *Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava,* Volume 3, pages141–147. Here are some of the most relevant quotes from it.

> There have, however, already arisen serious misunderstandings regarding the proper interpretation of the life and teachings of Śrīla Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda. Those who suppose they understand the meaning of his message without securing the guiding grace of the *ācārya* are disposed to unduly favour the methods of empiric study of his writings. There are persons who have got by heart almost everything that he wrote without being able to catch the least particle of his meaning. Such study cannot benefit those who are not prepared to act up to the instructions lucidly conveyed by his words. There is no honest chance of missing the warnings of Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda. Those, therefore, who are misled by the perusal of his writings are led astray by their own obstinate perversity in sticking to the empiric course which they prefer to cherish against his explicit warnings. Let these unfortunate persons look more carefully into their own hearts for the cause of their misfortunes.

The personal service of the pure devotee is essential for understanding the spiritual meaning of the words of Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda. The Editor of this Journal, originally started by Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda, has been trying to draw the attention of all followers of Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda to this all-important point of his teachings. It is not necessary to try to place ourselves on a footing of equality with Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda. We are not likely to benefit by any mechanical imitation of any practices of Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda on the opportunist principle that they may be convenient for us to adopt. The Guru is not an erring mortal whose activities can be understood by the fallible reason of unreclaimed humanity. There is an eternally impassable line of demarcation between the saviour and the saved. Those who are really saved can alone know this. Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda belongs to the category of the spiritual world-teachers who eternally occupy the superior position ...

... The devotee is right even when he apparently misquotes, the non-devotee is wrong even when he quotes correctly the very words, chapter and verse of the scriptures ...

...What are the scriptures? They are nothing but the record by the pure devotees of the divine message appearing on the lips of the pure devotees. The Message conveyed by the devotees is the same in all ages. The words of the devotees are ever identical with the Scriptures. Any meaning of the scriptures that belittles the function of the devotee who is the original communicant of the Divine Message contradicts its own claim to be heard ...

... Before we open any of the books penned by Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda we should do well to reflect a little on the attitude, with which as the indispensable pre-requisite, to approach its study. It is by neglecting to remember this fundamental principle that the empiric pedants find themselves so hopelessly puzzled in their vain endeavor to reconcile the statements of the different texts of the Scriptures. The same difficulty is already in process of overtaking many of the so-called followers of Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda and for the same reason.

Similar discussions between some of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's leading disciples

The following anecdote is recorded in *Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava,* Volume 2, pages 275–276:

When an eclipse occurred during Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's last sojourn in Purī, Vāsudeva Dāsa suddenly ridiculed the description in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* of eclipses being the demonic planet Rāhu devouring either the sun or moon. Śrīmad B.R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja responded that even though Vyāsadeva and Śukadeva's description of eclipses seems physically impossible, their statements appear within *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and the literal meaning of *śāstra* is not to be facetiously dismissed. Śrīdhara Mahārāja offered an analogy: "In *Jaiva Dharma* Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura created various persona, who I think are not imaginary. What he has written might have occurred during some other day of Brahmā, and that is now being revealed." In this instance Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura did not support Vāsudeva Dāsa, but approved Śrīdhara Mahārāja's argument.

This description is based on the following conversations with Śrīdhara Mahārāja, where he describes the unfortunate events that unfolded after Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's disappearance.

Conversation, Navadvīpa, July 25, 1983:

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Tired. And he found that he has no chance, getting any position at the *Maṭha* through litigation. He sent Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī to me. None can approach Vāsudeva Dāsa, they are very much afraid of his personality. Only Śrīdhara Mahārāja can do. Though he is his greatest enemy, still he has got some affection for Śrīdhara Mahārāja. It is true, that Vāsudeva Dāsa wants to call for me and he asked me, that Prabhupāda has done many things which cannot be supported according to the scriptures and he incited that, "your name is Śrīdhara Mahārāja. Where is this name mentioned?" I told him *Gauḍīya Kaṇṭhahara*, you have all printed this, and *Ananta Saṁhitā*. You have this collection, quotations and one hundred and eight names of *sannyāsīs*. "Oh, that is all false, concoction. No *Ananta Saṁhitā*. We have concocted this name and Sachin Paṇḍita has given this Sanskrit characteristic. And does not matter. So, it is all false. So, we cannot follow strictly the principle of Prabhupāda." Then I gave him this answer. In the *Veda* and *Upaniṣad*, there is sin also. The first consideration came in the Ṛṣi, but if we consider that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the full-fledged theism and that is the primary conception of theism and full-fledged theism is given in *Bhāgavatam* and Mahāprabhu. And those persons who preach and that full-fledged theism found the expression within their heart, anything added to that, it appeared to me, is greater *śāstra* than the *Veda* and *Upaniṣad*. I asserted this before him. Then he remarked, if of course what you say may be true, when that man who feels any suggestion, expression to create new things to help this movement of the full-fledged theism, then he is *Svarūpa-siddha*. If he is *Svarūpa-siddha*, then what you say, it is true. That means that he thinks that Prabhupāda is not *Svarūpa-siddha*. I thought that this was a hard thing, so I became silent. He also became silent. ...

Akṣayānanda Svāmī: Vāsudeva Dāsa, he wanted to show *Ananta Saṁhitā*, it was not bona fide?

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Yes, that is an imagined book. That he told to me. But I do not know it for certain, but he told like that. But, still I stood.

Akṣayānanda Svāmī (Background): 108 Names.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: I took my stand in that fact.

Akṣayānanda Svāmī: What Prabhupāda had given.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: What Prabhupāda, whatever Prabhupāda or Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura have given. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura ... that is the *Caitanya-upaniṣad*.

Akṣayānanda Svāmī: *Caitanya-upaniṣad*.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: That may not be found anywhere. This detail also, *Brahmā Saṁhitā* is not to be found, it is taken by Caitanyadeva. It is written by Caitanyadeva. Bhaktivinoda

Ṭhākura has written and we do not find any book of Caitanyadeva. If *Brahmā-saṁhitā* comes from Him, then we are very much proud and we are satisfied that He has left at least one book. But Jīva Gosvāmī has shown, written, that there was really *Brahmā-saṁhitā*, with one hundred chapters, and this is one chapter out of that.

Akṣayānanda Svāmī: *Prema-vivarta* was written by Bhaktivinoda, somebody told, not Jagadānanda.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: I told. If we can think out that the teachings of Śrī Caitanyadeva is the highest, full-fledged theism as told by Prabhupāda several times and *Bhāgavata* is the highest development, then that has got reality, that is true, that cannot but be true. Whatever is felt, any more, any single division, that is generally bona fide. That is the only truth. That the revealed truth means that thousands and thousands of years back it was revealed in some Ṛṣi or so and that cannot be, the revelation cannot come at present. I don't think like that. Any time the revelation may come to support this highest form of theism, whatever the revelation. I also told that this *Jaiva Dharma*, it is fictitious, but I think that these things actually must have been true, found in the creation. When it has come in the consciousness of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, it is not contradictory. It is floating and sometimes appearing and sometimes disappearing. It is all eternal truth. In this way. And in Purī also, about the gong, Vāsudeva Dāsa, in very hateful way, laughing he told, only the *hunas* are kept here in the room, all these things ... the shadow is covering the sun and the moon and it is coming and the *Bhāgavat* has said that Rāhu has devoured. What has been used in *Bhāgavat*, that has got some value. That is all consciousness and you think to belittle all these things. Whatever is used by Śukadeva Gosvāmī to support his highest theistic principle, that has got some relative value to support that. So, not to belittle, not to laugh at it, not to ridicule it, whatever. Is there. That is to help the great structure of theistic building in *Bhāgavatam*. Whatever has been drawn in to help that great structure of knowledge, that has got some value and high value. Prabhupāda supported me, what he has told in his writing. Vāsudeva is defeated.

OM TAT SAT