

Reality the Beautiful

Rāmānanda Rāya was a married man, but he was recognized by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu as a master of his senses to the extreme degree. Once a *brāhmaṇa* priest named Pradyumna Miśra came to Mahāprabhu and told Him, “I would like to hear about Krishna from Your lips.” Mahāprabhu said, “I do not know anything about Krishna, but Rāmānanda Rāya knows. Go to him and hear about Krishna. Take My name, and perhaps he will talk with you.”

Pradyumna Miśra was hesitant, but he went and observed Rāmānanda Rāya for some time and then returned and reported to Mahāprabhu. Mahāprabhu asked him, “Have you heard about Krishna from Rāmānanda?” “No.” “Why?” “I saw him engaged in something objectionable. I watched for some time, and then returned here.” “What did you see?” Pradyumna Miśra answered, “I saw Rāmānanda Rāya training some young dancing girls!”

Girls who are generally devoted to the service of the Jagannāth Deity from a young age are known as *deva-dāsīs*. They do not marry, and sometimes their

character is not very good. Pradyumna Miśra saw Rāmānanda Rāya training *deva-dāsīs* in a very objectionable way. He was showing them how to go before the Jagannāth Deity and dance and sing. He showed them how their posture should be, how they should gesture, and how their looks should be enticing. And for such training he would sometimes even touch their private parts. So Pradyumna Miśra told Mahāprabhu, “Seeing Rāmānanda doing all these things, I had no regard for him, so for some time I saw him busily engaged in that matter, and then I went away.”

MASTER OF THE SENSES

Mahāprabhu told him, “Don’t underestimate Rāmānanda Rāya. He is the master of his senses. There is not a tinge of craft in him. Even I feel trouble from sense disturbance within Me, but Rāmānanda has no such trouble. We have no direct experience that a stage can be attained where it is possible to be above mundane sense pleasure, but we have only heard through the scriptures that there is a stage when a man may transcend all these gross attachments.

“This is mentioned in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.33.39):

vikriḍitaṁ vraja-vadhūbhir idaṁ ca viṣṇoḥ
 śraddhānvito ’nuśṛṇuyād atha varṇayed yaḥ
 bhaktiṁ parāṁ bhagavati pratilabhya kāmaṁ
 hṛd-rogam āśv apahinoty acireṇa dhīraḥ

“One who hears with firm faith the supramundane amorous affairs of Lord Krishna and the *gopīs*, as described by a pure devotee of the Lord, soon becomes freed from mundane lust and achieves divine love of Krishna.

“One may be engaged bodily in such activities, while his heart is elsewhere. And there is only one who is of that type, Rāmānanda Rāya. There are not big numbers of Rāmānandas; there is only one Rāmānanda, who has acquired such a stage because he is well-versed in the kind of sentiment and realization which is necessary for the service of Krishna and the *gopīs*. His heart is completely dedicated to the cause of Krishna; He has no selfish interest. He is always in Krishna consciousness, and whatever he does is for Krishna’s satisfaction, so don’t think ill of him. Go there again.”

MAD FOR KRISHNA

Then Pradyumna Miśra again went to see Rāmānanda Rāya, and Rāmānanda began their conversation by saying “Oh, on that day I could not oblige you. But again you have come to hear about Krishna. How fortunate I am!” In the morning, Rāmānanda Rāya began to speak, and when the afternoon came, still he was madly talking about Krishna. He completely forgot about eating, bathing, or anything else. He was mad, incessantly speaking of Krishna. Then, when it was late, his servants came twice, thrice, to ask him to take bath and eat his dinner, and finally, he had to

leave the talk and go. Then Pradyumna Miśra returned to Mahāprabhu and said, “Yes, I have heard from Rāmānanda Rāya, and my heart is full from hearing about Krishna from him.”

Mahāprabhu Himself had heard from Rāmānanda Rāya, and He said, “Rāmānanda knows what is Krishna. What I taught to Rūpa and Sanātana, I heard from Rāmānanda.” It is mentioned that Mahāprabhu took *dīkṣā*, initiation, from Īśvara Purī; for preaching purposes he took *sannyāsa*, the renounced order, from Keśava Bhāratī; and for entrance into the transcendental pastimes of Krishna in Vṛndāvana, He took *rāga mārga* initiation from Rāmānanda Rāya. Of course, Īśvara Purī, Keśava Bhāratī, and Rāmānanda Rāya never thought of themselves as the *guru* of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. But it was seen that Mahāprabhu treated Rāmānanda with some respect. It is mentioned in the *Chaitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya* 8.204) that if one wants to enter into the spontaneous devotion of Krishna’s pastimes in Vraja, it is required that he take shelter of a confidential maidservant in conjugal mellow, *mādhurya rasa* (*sakhī vinā ei līlāya anyera nāhi gati*). They are masters of that situation. The whole storehouse of this *mādhurya līlā* is in the hands of those maidservants. Only they can give it to others. In *mādhurya rasa*, the *guru* is seen in the form and spirit of a *sakhī*, a maidservant of Rādhārāṇī (*guru rūpa sakhī*). Rāmānanda Rāya was Viśākhā-sakhī, the right-hand personal attendant of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu gives us a hint of the necessity of approaching a confidential associate of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī when He says to Rāmānanda:

**kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya
yei kṛṣṇa-tattva vettā, sei ‘guru’ haya**

“Why do you shrink away from instructing Me? I am learning so much from you. You are well-versed in the affairs of Krishna, so you are *guru*; therefore I am hearing from you. Whoever is the master of that storehouse of *Krishna-līlā*, and whoever can distribute it—he is *guru*; of this, there is no doubt.”

The famous talks between Rāmānanda Rāya and Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu took place on the banks of the Godāvārī river. The name Godāvārī is significant, for it indicates that place where the highest fulfillment of our spiritual senses was given. The fullest engagement of all our senses was announced there on the banks of the Godāvārī: “Your senses are not to be rejected. If you can give up the spirit of exploitation and renunciation, then your senses will have their fulfillment with Krishna. Those tendencies bar your approach to Krishna. To properly approach Krishna, you will have to utilize your senses to the fullest extent.” That was dealt with on the banks of the Godāvārī.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF LIFE

There, in his famous conversations with Rāmānanda Rāya, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu began the approach

সখী বিনা এই লীলায় অন্নের নাহি গতি ।
 সখীভাবে যে তাঁরে করে অনুগতি ॥ ২০৪ ॥
 রাধাকৃষ্ণ-কুঞ্জসেবা-সাধ্য সেই পায় ।
 সেই সাধ্য পাইতে আর নাহিক উপায় ॥ ২০৫ ॥

The original Bengali text of the conversation between Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and Rāmānanda Rāya, recorded in the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* five hundred years ago by Krishnadās Kavirāj Goswāmī.

to pure devotional service in a general and comprehensive way. This is recorded in the *Madhya-līlā* of *Chaitanya-caritāmṛta* (8.51-313). He asked Rāmānanda Rāya, *prabhu kahe*, “*paḍa śloka sādhyera nirṇaya*”: “What is the ultimate goal of life? I not only want to hear your statements, but also evidence from the scriptures.”

The answer came from Rāmānanda Rāya: *rāya kahe*, “*sva-dharmācaraṇe viṣṇu-bhakti haya*.” “Discharge your own duty, without expecting anything in return.” *Sva dharma* means *varṇāśrama dharma*, Vedic social stratification. “You are posted in your present position by your previous *karma*. According to your present position, you have to discharge your duties on one condition: you must do them without remuneration. If you go on with your duties in *varṇāśrama dharma*, without any mundane aim, you can achieve *viṣṇu-bhakti*, devotion to God. This is confirmed in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (3.8.9):

varṇāśramācāra-vatā
 puruṣeṇa paraḥ pumān
 viṣṇur ārādhyate panthā
 nānyat tat-toṣa-kāraṇam

“The only way to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Viṣṇu, is to worship Him by properly executing one’s prescribed duties in the social system of *varṇa* and *āśrama*.” Here, Rāmānanda Rāya says that *viṣṇu-bhakti*, adherence to the Lord who is permeating everything, is the object and ultimate destination of our life. This is the Vāsudeva conception: everything is in Him, and He is everywhere. Rāmānanda explained that from our local interests, we must come to embrace the general interest, and that must reach the level of Viṣṇu consciousness: *viṣṇu-bhakti*. Our submission to Viṣṇu, the internal spirit who is everywhere, is the object of life. We must connect with Him and live accordingly, not a phenomenal life, but a spiritual life pertaining to a deeper, more subtle plane.

DEVOTION MIXED WITH DESIRES

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu said, “This is superficial; go deeper.” Of course, it may be thought that actual theistic life begins from here, giving up the special, local purpose, and acting for a universal purpose, as already ordered and programmed in the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*. But Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu said, “This is superficial; go deeper.”

Then, Rāmānanda Rāya said, *kṛṣṇe karmārpaṇa—sarva-sādhya-sāra*: “To offer the results of one’s activities to Krishna is the essence of all perfection.” In *varṇāśrama dharma*, it is the fashion that people are generally engaged in external activities and do not care to give up the fruits of their action. Even if they do, they have no direct consciousness of Viṣṇu or Krishna. They worship the goddess Durgā, perform the *śrāddhā* funeral ceremony and execute so many other religious practices. Indirectly, it is ultimately connected with Viṣṇu. They may or may not know how, but the link is there. That is the general conception of *varṇāśrama*, but here, Rāmānanda says that it will be better to have direct consciousness that Krishna is the authority. All the results of whatever we do within the *varṇāśrama* social system must be given to Krishna. If we perform all our physical, social, national and spiritual activities in Krishna consciousness, then we can approach the fulfillment of our goal in life.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu said “This is superficial; go deeper.” Then Rāmānanda Rāya revealed new light, quoting the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66): *sarva-dharmāṇa parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*, “Give up all your duties, and just surrender to Me.” We must be particular with the object of life, not the external activities of *varṇāśrama*. Less importance should be given to the form of our activity; whether I am a king, a *brāhmaṇa* intellectual, or a worker does not matter. We may think, “I

have this sort of duty, I have that sort of duty,” but that does not matter very much. We must have no attachment for that. The king may leave his kingdom and take to a brahmanical life of renunciation and austerity. A *śūdra* may give up his labor, become a beggar, and chant the name of Krishna. A *brāhmaṇa* may give up his performance of sacrifice and become a mendicant. So, we are to be particular about the aim of life, not the form of our duty. We must exclusively devote ourselves to the cause of the Lord, ignoring our present paraphernalia and duty.

KNOWLEDGE AND DEVOTION

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu said, “This is also superficial; go ahead—deeper.” Then, Rāmānanda Rāya explained *jñāna-miśra bhakti*, devotional service mixed with knowledge, by quoting from the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.54) where Krishna says:

**brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā
na śocati na kāṅkṣati
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām**

One who has come to the stage of identifying himself with spirit above matter has nothing to do with this mundane world. Any loss or gain in this mundane world is of no use to him. He is spirit; his prospect is in the world of soul, and he has nothing to do with this material world, whether it is laudable or blamable. He is already settled in the consciousness that he is soul proper

and has nothing to do with matter, so within himself he feels satisfaction. He is *ātmārāma*: self-content; he neither mourns, nor aspires for anything. If something is lost, does he mourn? No. He thinks, “This is nothing; it is only matter.” And when something is gained, he is not overly cheerful, because it is only matter; it is unnecessary and unimportant. Now true devotional service can begin. His soul can begin living in the spiritual plane, with a pure serving attitude, unmixed with any mundane aspiration. When one attains the spiritual platform, he gets the opportunity to practice a higher type of service.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu said, “This is also superficial. Such a person is only on the verge of devotional service; he has no substantial touch of devotion. He has not entered the domain of *bhakti*; he is just waiting in the marginal position, at the door. He may attain *bhakti*, but he has not yet achieved it. His negative forces are finished, but still, he is just at the door; he has not yet entered. He may enter; he may not enter. From there, if he gets anything, it will be pure, but he is still at the door.

BEYOND SPIRIT, “GO DEEPER”

Rāmānanda Rāya then said, *jñāne prayāsam udapāsya namanta eva*: “It is a very difficult thing to cross the charm of knowledge.” We think, “I want to understand everything first, and then I shall act.” Calculation and an underlying suspicion is there. Before we act, we want to know everything fully; only then will we risk our

capital. The ego, the "I" is very strong, and he wants to have an account of his loss and gain. He thinks, "I am the master. The key is in my hand, I want to test everything, I want to know it all. I know what is good for me." So, we think ourselves masters, not servants, and from the position of a master we make our inquiry.

But this calculating mentality must be given up if we at all want to enter into the domain of the Lord, where everything is superior to us. No one there will care to come to us with an explanation, thinking that we are their master. They will not reassure us by saying, "Yes, there will be no loss; your gain will be big." We may think, "I am an independent separate entity, so in my account there must be no loss. I must stand here with my head erect," but that won't do. We are to go there as slaves, not masters. That sort of mentality is necessary: we must bow down our heads, not that with our heads erect we will march over everything. But everything there is superior in quality to us.

DIVINE SLAVERY

So, we have to enter into that transcendental land, where even the earth, water, air, and whatever we will find, is made of higher materials than we ourselves are made of. They are all *guru*, and we are disciples. They are all masters, and we are servants; we have to enter the land where everything is our master. We will have to submit; that will be our real qualification. What we

will be ordered to do, we will have to do. We are not to exercise our brain so much there. The brain has no room there; they are all brainier than we. Our brain is unnecessary there; only our hands are necessary. Menial labor is necessary there. Brain there is enough. We are to enter that land if we like. It is a land of slavery for us. So, we are to hatefully dismiss our brains, and taking only our hearts, we must approach and enter that land.

We should think, "I am as insignificant as a mosquito," just as Lord Brahmā did when he went to Dwārakā to visit Lord Krishna. And it is not only for the time being; not that one will accept a humble attitude, finish his work and then come back. No. We will have to accept such an insignificant position eternally. Of course, we may expect to be educated about Krishna consciousness: how it is good, how it is great, how it is useful to us. We will be allowed *paripraśna*, honest inquiry. In the transcendental realm, everyone is our friend. They will come to help us, to make us understand that devotional service is beautiful, and that Krishna consciousness is the best form of life. Our aspiration and purity of purpose is to be valued, not our external position. The recruiters from that side will consider our purity of purpose, not so much our present position and capacity.

And although apparently it seems that we are going to be slaves, the result is just the opposite. If you can accept such an attitude of surrender and slavery, then

He who can never be conquered, will be conquered. Friends will come and help you; the *sādhus* will come and make you understand that we should become slaves, that Krishna likes His slaves very much. He is the master of slaves, and sometimes He wants to become the slave of His slaves (*gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ*). This is the key to success, and we can achieve the highest gain through this attitude.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu told Rāmānanda Rāya, “Yes, this is true. The unconquerable is conquered by surrender. We can capture Him. I accept this as the beginning plane of divine love: by giving we can get as much as we risk. As much as we risk to give ourselves, so much we can demand from that unconquerable infinite.” Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu said, “I accept this as the beginning of *śuddha-bhakti*, pure devotional service. But go farther.”

THE SCIENCE OF RASA

Rāmānanda Rāya explained that from there pure devotional service develops in a crude form, in a general way. And when it is more mature, it must take the shape of *śānta*, neutrality; *dāsyā*, servitorship; *sakhya*, friendship; *vātsalya*, paternal affection; and *mādhurya rasa*, conjugal love. In *śānta rasa*, there is adherence, *niṣṭhā*; one thinks, “I cannot withdraw myself from this consciousness of continuous submission to the truth.

Neutrality develops into *dāsyā rasa*, the desire to do some service. When a devotee is not satisfied by only sitting, showing loyalty to the Supreme Authority, he wants to be utilized by Him. He awaits the Lord's order, praying that the Lord may give him some engagement. When a devotee has such deep penetration that he wants to be utilized in any way by the Lord, that is known as *dāsyā rasa*, or devotion in the mood of service. Then there is *sakhya rasa*; devotional service in friendship.

GOD THE FRIEND

When, in *dāsyā rasa*, confidence is added to service, then it becomes a little superior. Generally old servants who are faithful become confidential servants, so when the confidential stage is added to service, it becomes *sakhya rasa*, or devotional service as a friend of the Lord. First there is *niṣṭhā*, adherence, submission; then the devotee wants to be utilized for His satisfaction; then there is confidential utilization; and then it comes to friendly service, *sakhya rasa*. In *Vaikuṅṭha*, where Lord *Nārāyaṇa* is served in calculative devotion, only *śānta rasa*, *dāsyā rasa*, and half of *sakhya rasa* are seen. Full confidence is not possible there. Awe, reverence, splendor, grandeur, pomp, apprehension—all these vanish when we develop a more confidential relationship with the Supreme Lord. At that time, the object of our worship or love changes in another way.

Then from *Vaikuṅṭha*, we feel attraction for *Ayodhyā*, the divine abode of Lord *Rāmacandra*, where there is neutrality, servitorship, and friendship with *Vibhīṣaṇa* and *Sugrīva*. There, we can also trace *vātsalya rasa*, parental love of Godhead.

GOD THE SON

In *vātsalya rasa*, confidence has developed to the peculiar stage in which the servitors think themselves promoted to the post of protecting the object of their veneration. Filial affection is also service. Although it seems that the parents are masters of the situation, controlling the Lord as their son, sometimes chastising and punishing Him, this is a superficial view. If we can enter into the depth of their service, we shall find an incomparable love of a most peculiar type. On the surface, they are engaged in punishing and rebuking the Lord; underground, they are full of interest for the welfare of the object of their service. *Vātsalya*, or parental love of Godhead, is a peculiar type of divine love. We see a very light type of *vātsalya* in *Ayodhyā*, so it is almost ignored.

MATHURĀ: THE KRISHNA CONCEPTION

Rūpa Goswāmī leaped from *Vaikuṅṭha* to *Mathurā* in one stride. In his *Uṇḍeśamṛta* (9), he writes: *vaikuṅṭhaj janito varā madhu-purī tatrāpi rāsotsavād*. “*Mathurā* is superior to *Vaikuṅṭha* because Lord *Śrī*

Krishna appeared there.” It is there that everything is shown in a clear and substantial way. In Mathurā we find the Krishna conception of Godhead. In one stride he has come from Vaikuṅṭha to the Krishna conception, but Sanātana Goswāmī has filled up the gap. In his book, *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, he says that on the way to Mathurā there is Ayodhyā, the spiritual kingdom of Lord Rāma, and there we find *sakhya* and *vātsalya rasa*.

But Rūpa Goswāmī goes to Mathurā at once. He says, “Come to Mathurā; here you will find *sakhya* and *vātsalya rasa* clearly visible. He has shown how *sakhya rasa* service is present there. The devotees there are playing with Krishna, sometimes climbing on His shoulders, and perhaps sometimes even giving Him a slap. But although they may mix with Him in this way, their heart is full of a peculiar type of service attitude. That is the criterion; they may give up their lives a thousand times to take a thorn out of His sole. They can sacrifice themselves a thousand times for the slightest satisfaction of their friend. They consider Him a thousand times more valuable than their own life. In *vātsalya rasa* also, the criterion is similar. For the slightest interest of the object of their veneration they can give their lives millions of times. Such affection is found there.

And then, from *vātsalya*, it progresses to conjugal love (*mādhurya rasa*), the all-comprehensive *rasa* which includes adherence (*śānta-niṣṭhā*), service (*dāsyā*),

friendly confidence (*sakhya*), and parental love (*vātsalya rasa*). But the wholesale dedication of every atom of our existence for Krishna's satisfaction is found in *mādhurya rasa*, which includes all other *rasas*.

PARAMOUR LOVE

And *mādhurya rasa* is more enhanced when it is couched in the form of *parakīya*, or paramour relationship. In *parakīya rasa*, the *gopīs* risk everything for the service of Krishna. *Parakīya rasa* takes two forms: in one, there is no obligation of anything; the union may happen or may not happen. So, because their meeting is very rare, it becomes even sweeter. There is another kind of *parakīya rasa*: we are told that ordinary food is not palatable to Krishna, but when He takes food by stealing, that is more tasteful to Him. If we can follow this art, that may also be applied in the case of *parakīya rasa*. "I am deceiving the party, getting what I want. I am stealing the property of someone else." That sort of posing becomes more tasteful to the subjective party.

And the dedicated party risks everything: their good name, society, future, and even the dictation of the religious scriptures. They take a wholesale risk, just as one time, when we were in Madras, the King of Jaipur gave some money for the construction of a temple. The money was sent to our head office in Calcutta. Out of five thousand rupees, the first installment was one thousand rupees, and the construction

work was begun by sending a worker from our main center. Then, Mādhava Mahārāj and I were sent to Madras, where we heard that the king would soon come. In order to show him that some work had been done we raised the construction to some extent, so the king could be told, “Your money has been spent, and now the next installment is necessary.” In order to do this, we incurred a debt. We took a loan for bricks and other things and raised the construction to a higher level.

When we wrote this to our *guru mahārāj*, we had some apprehension that he would chastise us, “Why have you taken this loan?” Instead of that, he gave us his appreciation. “You have risked your future in the service of Krishna. You have taken a loan, and that means you have to pay off that loan, so you have engaged your future energy in the service of Krishna. You will have to collect money and pay off the loan, so there is service with risk for the future.” The *gopīs* consciously risked their future: “We have disobeyed our superior persons and the directions of the *Vedas*; what we do is neither approved by society, nor by the religious books. Our future is dark.” Still, they could not but serve Krishna.

So, *vaikuṅṭhāj janito varā madhu-ṇurī tatrāpi rāsotsavād*. *Janito* means *vātsalya rasa*, and *mādhurya rasa* in Vṛndāvana: *rādhā-kuṅḍam ihāpi gokula-ṇateḥ*. In the *mādhurya rasa* also, three groups are shown: Vṛndāvana in general, selected groups in Govardhana, and the highest

group in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. All these things have been shown in the conversation between Rāmānanda Rāya and Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

RĀDHĀ: QUEEN OF THE GOPĪS

After this, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu said, “Go further.” Then, Rāmānanda Rāya began to explain the kind of service rendered by Rādhārāṇī in *mādhurya rasa*. Her devotional service is categorically higher than that of all the other *gopīs*. *Rādhām ādhāya hṛdaye tatyāja vraja-sundariḥ* (*Gīta-govinda* 3.1 by Jayadeva Goswāmī). The whole group of *gopīs* can be canceled for only one: Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. What peculiar type of service may come from Her? And Krishna, the Original Personality of Godhead (*svayam-rūpa*) is only by the side of Rādhārāṇī. By the side of other *gopīs*, that is *prābhava prakāśa*, a plenary expansion, not *svayam-rūpa*, the original form. Such is the quality of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. We should show our highest reverence to this highest ideal of devotional service.

RĀDHĀ-KRISHNA: UNION IN SEPARATION

Then the last question came from Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu: “Can you think of anything more than this?” Then, Rāmānanda Rāya said, “You asked me to quote scripture to support whatever I say, but here I won’t be able to quote scripture from anywhere. Still, I



Lord Śrī Krishna, ecstasy Himself and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the embodiment of ecstatic love of Godhead.

have a new feeling within me, and if You would like to know that, I can explain it to You.” In this way, one song was composed by Rāmānanda Rāya. He introduced this song by saying, “Whether or not it will be pleasing to You, I do not know, but it seems to me that there is a stage which is even better than the meeting

of Rādhā and Govinda.” There is a stage where both of Them, the positive and negative are combined, no individual consciousness is clear, and one is searching another in self-forgetfulness. This searching of one party by the other is very strong and intense. This seems to be a more highly elevated love: union in separation. Rādhā and Govinda are so intense in Their search of one another that even They have no consciousness of whether They have each other. Rādhārāṇī sometimes experiences that even while Krishna is present before Her, She fears losing Him; that feeling becomes as intense as if She has lost Him. They are together, but the apprehension that one may lose the other makes their meeting intolerably painful, just as a mother is always alert about the safety of her son (*aniṣṭa-śaṅkīni bandhu-hṛdayāni bhavanti hi*). A mother thinks, “Oh, my son is out—is he in an accident?” This fear of separation is the symptom of deep love.

ŚRĪ CHAITANYA AVATĀRA

Rāmānanda Raya’s composition gave a hint about the divine appearance of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu in which both Rādhā and Govinda are combined, and it is as if they are unconscious of Their separate existence. One is searching the other. Krishna Himself is overflowing with the feelings of Rādhārāṇī, and They are so deeply embraced that one is lost in the other. Then, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu put His palm over

the mouth of Rāmānanda Rāya, and told him, “No further.” *Rasa-rāja mahābhāva—dui eka rūpa*. Lord Śrī Krishna is the fountainhead of all pleasure, and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the embodiment of ecstatic love of Godhead. These two forms are united as one in Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

RASARĀJA: ECSTASY HIMSELF

Mahāprabhu replied, “Oh, because you are a cent-per-cent devotee, wherever you cast your glance you see only Krishna, nothing else. The object of your interest is represented everywhere.” Rāmānanda Rāya said, “My Lord, don’t deceive me in this way. You have come here so graciously to purify this mean person, and if You act diplomatically now, it will not look well for You. I won’t hear what You say; come out with Your real position. Who are You?” Mahāprabhu said, “By dint of your loving devotion, you can know everything in this world; nothing can be concealed from your loving eye.” *Premāñjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena*.

Then, Mahāprabhu revealed Himself: “When you see Me to be externally of a golden color, it is not so. It is by the touch of the color of Rādhārāṇī. And who can Rādhārāṇī touch and closely embrace? She will never touch anyone except Krishna. So, now you know who I am: Rasarāja—ecstasy Himself, and Mahābhāva—the one who can taste that highest *rasa*. See how They mingle together!

Rāmānanda Rāya fainted and fell flat on the floor. He could not keep his senses. Then by the touch of His hand, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu again brought him to his senses. Rāmānanda returned to his previous stage of consciousness and saw a *sannyāsī* sitting before him. After a short pause, Mahāprabhu said, “Remain here, I am going.”

Afterwards, Rāmānanda Rāya and Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu had some other talks, and Mahāprabhu said, “Rāmānanda, as long as I live I want your company.” Rāmānanda replied, “Yes, I must take shelter of Your divine feet and live there for the rest of my life.” Rāmānanda later made arrangements with the King of Orissa to retire from his post as Governor of Madras and came to Jagannāth Purī. For almost two years, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu wandered about the holy places of Southern and Western India and at last returned to Purī. There they again met.

TRANSCENDENTAL MADNESS

After this, Mahāprabhu went to Vṛndāvana through Bengal. Six years passed, and Advaita Prabhu almost gave leave to Mahāprabhu, saying, “Our pastimes of introducing the chanting of Hare Krishna are finished.” Then Mahāprabhu continuously showed Rādhārāṇī’s mood of tasting *krishna-prema*, ecstatic love of Krishna, for twelve years. Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmānanda Rāya, who are Lalitā and Viśākhā, the two principle *gopī*



An Orissan relief of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and his two intimate associates, Rāmānanda Rāya and Svarupa Damodara. They assisted Mahāprabhu in tasting ecstatic love of Krishna during the last twelve years of His manifest pastimes.

assistants of Rādhārāṇī, were Mahāprabhu's most important company during that time. There, so many things about the deep feelings of Divine love have been shown. It has never been found in the history of the world, or even expressed in any scripture how such intense love within can produce such corresponding symptoms on the surface. That was shown by Rādhārāṇī and later shown by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

It was shown by Mahāprabhu in His practices also, how *krishna prema*, love of Krishna, can play a man like a doll. Sometimes His legs and hands would enter inconceivably into His body, and sometimes His joints would disconnect and His transcendental body would appear elongated. Sometimes His whole body would

become white, and He would lay unconscious, breathing so slowly that His breath could not be traced. In this way, He exhibited many amazing symptoms of ecstasy.

Svarūpa Dāmodara, the personal secretary of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has explained the meaning of His appearance in his memoirs, which were recorded in the *Chaitanya-caritāmṛta* of Kavirāj Goswāmī. He writes:

**rādhā kṛṣṇa-praṇaya-vikṛtir hlādinī śaktir asmād
ekātmānāv api bhuvi purā deha-bhedam̐ gatau tau
caitanyākhyam̐ prakāṣam̐ adhunā tad-dvayam̐ caikyam̐ āptam̐
rādhā-bhāva-dyuti-suvalitam̐ naumi kṛṣṇa-svarūpam̐**

Sometimes Rādhā and Krishna are combined; sometimes They are separate. They are separate in Dvāpara-yuga, and in Kali-yuga they are combined as Śrī Krishna Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Both are eternal expressions of the same Absolute Truth. Summer, autumn, winter, and spring continue in a cyclic order; it cannot be said that summer is the beginning and winter comes later. So, the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā and Krishna are eternally being enacted. In ancient times, sometimes Rādhā and Krishna divided Themselves and showed Their pastimes; again both of Them, the potency and the owner of the potency, are combined and closely embraced as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. The predominating and the predominated moiety are mixed, and an extraordinary ecstatic feeling is there. Krishna is overpowered by His potency, and He Himself is



Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu: Krishna Himself tasting His own internal sweetness and madly dancing in ecstasy. Krishna Himself is engaged in the search for Śrī Krishna, Reality the Beautiful.

searching after His own Self: *kṛṣṇasya ātmānusandhāna*. Krishna Himself is engaged in the search for Śrī Krishna, Reality the Beautiful. The influence of Rādhārāṇī over Krishna has transformed Him into a devotee, and He is searching Himself. Sweetness is tasting Itself and becoming mad. And it is living sweetness — not dead or static, but dynamic ecstasy, sweetness endowed with life. And He is tasting Himself, the personification of happiness, ecstasy, and beauty — and dancing in madness. And His performance of *kīrtan* means distributing that ecstasy to others. The ultimate sweetness, or *ānanda*, is such that no other thing exists that can taste itself and express its own happiness with such intensity. I have described Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu in the *Prema Dhama Deva Stotram*:

**ātma-siddha-sāvalilā-pūrṇa-saukhya-lakṣaṇam
svānubhāva-matta-nṛtya-kīrttanātma-vaṅṭanam
advayaika-lakṣya-pūrṇa-tattva-tat-parātparam
prema-dhāma-devam-eva naumi gaura-sundaram**

“The highest conception of the Absolute Truth must also be the highest form of *ānanda*, ecstasy. Mahāprabhu’s dancing indicates that He is full of ecstasy, and His *kīrtan* is distribution of that *rasa*. So, if we scientifically search out who Mahāprabhu is, we cannot but find that He is the Ultimate Reality. He is mad in tasting His own internal nectar, and His dancing is the outcome of His transcendental ecstasy. And He is chanting, distributing that to others. So, studying quite

closely the character of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, we cannot but think that He is the Supreme Absolute Truth, in its fullest, and most dynamic expression.”