

SIDDHANT

THE TEACHINGS

INTRODUCTION

Siddhant is teaching that brings us to perfection. *Siddhant* is true philosophy. It is *siddha*, perfection, at the *anta* or end. Shri Vallabhacharya's *siddhant* is strictly for the attainment of Shri Krishna and is full of devotional, inspirational and practical advice for his followers. His words are replete with wisdom and love and are essential bhakti empowerments.

The Blessed Master's teachings nurture the delicate inner seed of devotion and guard it from the confusion and false identification that can cloud our vision and make us forget our true blissful nature. This seed of devotion begins as a subtle notion and can mature into a wishing tree that provides the blessed one with the priceless fruit of bhakti, the supreme unconditional devotion. In that blessed state the Beloved appears in the heart and throughout creation, filling us with His own joy.

Between the 12th century and the 16th century, during the "bhakti renaissance", five great schools of Vaishnavism arose. They were founded by Shri Ramanuja, Shri Madhva, Shri Nimbarka, Shri Chaitanya and Shri Vallabhacharya. Shri Vallabhacharya's Path of Grace is followed today by tens of millions of people, mostly from North and West India. This school is unique in Vaishnavism for its philosophy of

suddhadvaita, "pure non-dualism." Shri Vallabhacharya's *suddhadvaita* affirms the existence of the world, holding it to be good, pure and joyful, indeed not separate from the Divine. However, this non-dualism is distinct from the teachings of Adi Shankara, which denies the world's true existence.

With a devotional objective, let us now look at the *siddhant*, the teachings of Shri Vallabhacharya.

FIRST FIND THE RIGHT SOURCE

In spiritual life there must not only be a clear understanding of why a practice is undertaken, but an intense desire to attain the desired object. It is always better to look toward the words of those who have already figured it out rather than trying to formulate one's own conclusion about the sublime nature of Brahman. Shri Vallabhacharya tells us to absorb the teachings and wisdom of others who have come before us in God-realization. Shri Vallabhacharya composed a remarkable body of spiritual teachings in Sanskrit based on the Vedas, Brahma Sutras, Upanisads, Gita, as well as the Shrimad Bhagavatam. His teachings aid those on the Path of Grace. His *siddhant* is referred to as *Brahmavada*, the reasoned doctrine that explains to us that all is Brahman and nothing but Brahman. This pure non-dualist view of threading the mind into Shri Krishna supports the devotional view and practice.

CREATION

The whole of creation is Shri Krishna's divine play. It is His lila. We souls have manifested into it like sparks from a fire and are His various actors appearing upon the authentic

stage of this world. This inspiring view of oneness allows for diversity without animosity. According to Shri Vallabhacharya, the world is not an illusion. It is Brahman's perfect conclusion, His own modification and Shri Vallabhacharya inspires us toward this understanding by purifying our cognition through his teachings.

Shri Vallabhacharya is a pure monist and does not accept any duality between the soul, the world and Brahman. Brahman's bliss form is Shri Krishna Who is perfectly full of truth, consciousness and mostly joy. With the intention of expanding His own experience in order to taste the joy of His own Being, Brahman manifested creation. The creation is another aspect of Brahman's formless, timeless, endless, full being. The Master of Speech explains that the world only appears as an illusion when vision is tainted with maya. When the confusion is removed, the world is seen as it is; made purely of God.

Brahman stands at the beginning, middle and end of all things. He is existence, its cause, its support and end. He is the rays of the moon and the light of the sun. His forms are varied and His face is hidden everywhere. Concealment and manifestation are Brahman's two powers whereby He brings forth this dance of creation. Shri Vallabhacharya's teachings inspire us to discover this Ultimate Reality within the world of beings.

For Shri Vallabhacharya, philosophy is not merely intellectual, metaphysical, or a feat of refined logic. It endeavours to comprehend the nature of reality, for the aspirant must know the nature of God before she can feel Him. When knowledge arises along with unconditional love, the soul joyfully experiences creation's blissful form. When it is celebrated within, there is an experience of all-encompassing love in the heart.

SHRI KRISHNA'S DIVINE NATURE

Shri Krishna is totally devoid of all material attributes, yet He is also personal and replete with divinity. Shri Krishna is able to respond to a wide variety of religious experiences. His multi-dimensional aspect is clearly demonstrated when He walked into Kamsa's wrestling stadium. When He entered the arena, His parents looked upon Him as their son while the women in the stands saw Him as Love Incarnate. The yogis observed Him as the absolute unblemished Brahman, while the cowherd lads saw Shri Krishna as their friend. The wrestlers saw Him as a mighty foe while King Kamsa viewed the divine cowlad as death personified. They all became liberated by their personal view.

THE ILLUSIONS OF MAYA

Brahman's attributes appear in every object in the world. He is the clay as well as the various forms of clay-like pots and plates. Maya is simply a power of the Lord which is deluding and therefore creates false cognition. A person sees a white cloth as a yellow cloth because he is wearing yellow-tinted sunglasses. If one can discern that the white cloth is real and that the yellowness is a product of maya, then one should remove maya from one's perception without discarding the real world.

The Path of Grace sees everything as Shri Krishna and nothing but Shri Krishna. Since illusion, or maya, is a subject of perception, all objects in the world and the world itself are flawless. It is the pure non-dualist path that embraces a positive and devotional worldview where creation is seen as a perfect manifestation of God. The blessed devotee is not obsessed with liberation or any other form of yoga besides the pleasing service to Shri Krishna.

DIVINITY IN THE WORLD

Those who realize Brahman perceive the world as Brahman's form which is absolutely pure. Those who have knowledge but lack love, view the world as a mixture of Maya and God. The ignorant ones cannot find God anywhere.

Although all things are equally Brahman, for Shri Vallabhacharya, the Yamuna and Ganges rivers, as well as sacred items, places and people are set apart from the rest of the world, for they have helped people realize God. If one is confused and sees the body as the soul, then that is a condition of false identification. At that moment Brahman is not recognized as the Self of all things and the individual has forgotten his or her true joyful nature.

THE UNCONTRIVED PATH

Devotees on the Path of Grace celebrated the nectar of Shri Krishna's presence with their various refined sensitivities. This path is the uncontrived spiritual route, and Shri Vallabhacharya has taught that the means and the reward should be seen as one. Each level of realization is a part of the divine lila and Shri Krishna is the master of ceremonies. Therefore, the result is always perfect.

THE SOUL

In the Gita Shri Krishna proclaims, "In the world of beings, souls are My very parts." The soul is either pure, bound or liberated. Before the soul manifests into the world, it is a pure part of God. At the time it appears in this world of matter however, most souls become bound and their bliss is

concealed. When souls are able to remove their false identifications with their body, senses, life-force, and faculty of cognition, they are able to become re-established with Brahman and they become blissful again.

When the Lord desired to sport, He became many different souls that can achieve liberation while in the body or after death. Blessed souls are divine in nature and perform Shri Krishna's loving seva. Souls who follow the laws of scriptures are eligible for liberation while mundane souls receive worldly rewards.

The soul is atomic in nature and pervasive in effect, just as sandal-paste cools the entire body when it is applied to the forehead. The soul lives in the heart and as the Brahma Sutra states, "permeates consciousness throughout the body."

The five knots of ignorance keep the soul in bondage, says Shri Vallabhacharya in his Shastrarth Prakarana, "The five knots of ignorance are the body, senses, life-force, inner cognitive faculties as well as your spiritual being when they are not recognized as being connected to God."

When the soul becomes liberated through either wisdom or devotion, it no longer revolves in the karmic wheel and is free from rebirth. Liberation can occur while living in the body or it can be attained after leaving the body. Grace-filled souls enter into Shri Krishna's eternal lila. The law-abiding souls merge with God, while worldly souls continue to take birth here in the world.

THE BHAKTA'S DISPOSITION

Some bhaktas are pure in nature (sattvic), some are passionate (rajas), while others are obstinate (tamas). Bhaktas of every disposition are accepted by Shri Krishna. Once every virtue is directed towards Him then every emotion can be useful in His worship. The bhakta's dispositions are but

various devotional fuels that propel her to God. Since it is too difficult of a journey out, Hari descends into the world of matter and plays with the soul according to her nature.

THE PUSHTI SOLUTION FOR GOD- REALIZATION

Concerning practice, Shri Vallabhacharya is concise: "The attainment of Shri Krishna can never be dependant upon any formula. Shri Krishna, whose mood is always perfect, is attained through the precise emulation of those who have already attained Him."

TRANSFORMING DEVOTION

The practice of devotion to Shri Krishna is transforming. Like gutter water that spills into Ganga becomes Ganga, similarly in the Path of Grace, once all things are offered, they become like Shri Krishna; free of bondage. In the devotional process, everything leads to the Blessed Lord.

First there arises the subtle and blessed understanding that Shri Krishna is Brahman and therefore deserves ultimate adoration. Then, a desire for a specific relationship with Him arises, followed by practice. When Shri Krishna responds, the fruit is attained.

BOUND BY ONLY LOVE

On the subject of practice, Shri Vallabhacharya is concise, "The attainment of Shri Krishna can never be dependent upon any formula. Shri Krishna, who is perfect *bhava*, is

attained through the precise emulation of those who have already attained Him." And so, as the Gopis of Vrindavan are the ones who attained Shri Krishna, they are the grace-filled gurus of the Path. If God could be captured by a particular formula, that prisoner could not be God.

After Shri Krishna stole the butter, His mother, Yashoda, could only tie Him up when He allowed her. Although Brahman cannot be confined, Shri Krishna allows Himself to be bound by the devotees' cords of love.

SHRI KRISHNA

The primordial nature is Shri Krishna. He is the Supreme Being. Etymologically *krish* means "being" and *na* means "bliss". Shri Krishna is the All-Attractive One and He tells Arjuna in the Gita, "O Arjuna, nothing is superior to Me....I am even greater than that impersonal form of Brahman."

Shri Vallabhacharya says, "The Supreme Brahman is Shri Krishna alone." Shri Krishna is devoid of mundane limbs, hands and feet. "He runs quickly and grabs without hands and feet.... His hands, feet, face, stomach etc. all embody bliss". (Svetasvatara Upanisada).

Shri Krishna is the Supreme Person and eternally manifests all divine qualities. Shri Krishna is also *ras* (pure nectar) and can respond to the loving devotion of His bhaktas.

Shri Krishna is a dancer, a player, an actor, a husband, a cowherder, a friend, a Lover as well as a Flute Player. He is an expert in *abhinaya*, that is, in exhibiting the meaning of what He depicts. He is so good that anyone who has contact with Him or His lila-drama has an unforgettable experience. Love, Attachment and Obsession are the results.

Shri Krishna and His worship is Pure Divine Drama (*lila*). He plays and directs at the same time, all for an awakening in those whose time has come. His bhaktas have various constitutions yet share the common virtue of Attachment. Their hearts are fired by His melody and contain the rush of Shri Krishna's ras. It is all consummated in Vrindavan, where Shri Krishna plays His flute.

It is Shri Krishna's sheer confidence that allows Him to establish overwhelming attachment to Himself in whoever He chooses. In Vrindavan everything is a combination of Him. Even trees and animals fall under His spell and become enlightened. In Vrindavan everything manifests for the blissful purpose of *lila*. Shri Krishna sounds His flute to awaken the woods.

Shri Krishna is proficient in appearing and appealing to the bhakta all according to her individual temperament. Shri Krishna comes here and manifests sacred creation. *Lila* makes Shri Krishna comprehensible.

CHILD KRISHNA - ADOLESCENT KRISHNA

Many see Shri Krishna as merely a child and do not know His other lilas. He appears to them as totally naive. His mother Yashoda, His father Nanda Baba, Rohini and the other elders see Shri Krishna as only a child. They do not have access to His other lilas. Meanwhile, His other intimate Braja associates have access to all of His lilas. They are very clever. When they are before Yashoda, they act like they know nothing. Actually they know Shri Krishna's loving side very well. They become shy whenever they see His form, lovely as a million Loves. As a child, Shri Krishna removes Shri Radha's annoyance in love. It is all so amazing. Shri Krishna gives the experience of all lilas simultaneously. Shri Gusainji has written in his Cradle Song,

*As Infant Krishna swings in the cradle.
He eliminates Radha's annoyance in love.*

"While Shri Yashoda swings her infant Krishna in the cradle, at that time He appears to Shri Radha as a young man. Shri Krishna is truly a divine Child and perfectly contains all contradictions". (Gopeshvarji; Shiksha Patra 2)

SHRI KRISHNA, THE BHAKTA'S FAMILY MEMBER

Shri Vallabhacharya stressed that devotional practice should be done in the home, which is why the Path of Grace has remained almost entirely a householder lineage. It is the devotee's duty to honor Shri Krishna as the Lord of Gokul, the Supreme Brahman and also as a member of one's household. One must always serve Him with *bhava*, the unconditional loving attitude. Devotion is perfected by offering one's body, wealth and mind-heart to the Blessed Lord. In this state of dedication, true renunciation develops.

GOD'S DIFFERENT FORMS

The Supreme can appear either as Shri Krishna, the impersonal Brahman or as the foundation of God's abode. Bhaktas see this world and the formless Brahman as the foundation of His lila. Followers of the path of knowledge see Brahman as truth, consciousness and bliss, transcending time and place. Brahman is self-illuminating and beyond all material qualities.

The Lord also exists as the inner controller (the *antar yami*) who controls all things from within as well as the

divinities which preside over the sun, earth and other heavenly bodies. The Brhdaranyaka Upanisada says, "Whoever governs this and other worlds as well as all creatures from within is the inner controller." All incarnations appear from this inner controller and are partial manifestations of Shri Krishna.

GRACE

God's grace is the soul's nourishment. Shri Vallabhacharya explains, "*Pushti* is Shri Krishna's grace and it nullifies the influence of time, action and nature."

Grace can provide either mundane or divine fruit. Shri Vallabhacharya adds here, "Grace is a divine secret, yet it is proven because its effects are seen in the world."

Grace refers to that which removes powerful obstacles and provides the realization of God's feet. The Bhagavata explains, "As the Ganges flows incessantly towards the ocean, similarly our minds should flow constantly towards the Lord." When we are pulled towards the ocean of Shri Krishna's awareness, that is a condition of grace.

Devotion that arises from grace is called Blessed Devotion wherein there is no desire for any reward other than the sincere wish to acquire the Lord as the fruit of life. The Bhagavata states, "Lovely Krishna alone is the reward for all those who possess eyes."

Shri Vallabhacharya says in his Nibandha, "When the soul relies upon Shri Krishna, it is a rule of canon, but when the Lord relies upon the soul, it is an exception of grace."

The Bhagavata relates, "The residents of Vrindavan toiled all day long tending their cows and performing other pastoral chores. Exhausted from their day of work, they slept soundly throughout the night yet Shri Krishna allowed them entrance

into His divine abode." Their attainment was effortless and so this is yet another example of grace.

BHAVA

The Path of Grace is a fiery affair. Shri Krishna is known through grace, but responds to devout intensity. There must be mutual attraction. The Blessed Lord dances according to the natures of his inspired bhaktas. Shri Krishna is bound by the cords of their love. The divine exchange often arises with the guru's intervention. He performs the marriage ceremony between the soul and God.

Bhaktas are distinguished by their *bhava* (their enlightened emotional mood). It is the realization of Brahman coupled with overwhelming love. *Bhava* touches essence. When oblivion is obliterated with *bhava*, the devotional spark becomes ablaze and consumes the soul's binding karmas.

THE BLESSED PATH

Shri Harirayaji, Shri Vallabhacharya's great, great grandson was a very important teacher in the history of the Path of Grace. His explanations of the Path of Grace are concise.

"When the absence of all means is the means to achieve the fruit and when the fruit is the means, know that to be the Blessed Path.

"When worldly and scriptural achievements are accomplished through the Lord's grace alone and never through the devotee's efforts, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When the Lord accepts the soul without considering her qualifications and does so without delay, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When a devotee, who has understood the intention of the scriptural injunctions, remains attached to the Lord Himself and has no obsession for scriptural practice, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When there is no consideration of virtue or defect and when there is a continual feeling of appreciation for all the Lord's deeds, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When thought is never given to worldly and scriptural satisfaction, but is given only to please the Lord, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When there is not an infinitesimal reason for the Lord's selection of the soul and when the choice depends solely upon His divine sweet will, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When devotion is independent and does not require the external manifestation of the Lord and leads to all types of divine experiences, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When there is no fear of the world and the scriptures because of profuse divine attachment and when everything other than the Blessed Lord appears as an obstacle, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When relationship is both the means and the achievement and is established according to Shri Krishna's sweet desire, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When anything related to the Lord is treated as if it is the Lord Himself and anything unrelated is treated with indifference, while anything in opposition to the Lord is opposed, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When no concern is shown for one's body and a keen desire for Him always lingers, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When devotion has no expectation for reciprocation

from God and when the divine sentiment is nourished, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When the Lord in no case provides the devotee with the fruit of worship because the ripening of His divine attachment requires that the fruit be withheld, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When one is happier in the Lord's separation than in His union because of the inner experience of all His lilas, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When there is a reversal in the order of the means and the attainment and when devotional attachment is the attainment as well as the means, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When there is a constant feeling of divine melancholy concerning all of His activities and the bhakta's excessive eagerness to experience the Lord's lilas produces humility, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When humility is the singular means for the Lord's manifestation and the humility aroused in separation is the fruit, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When there is renunciation of all sensual objects along with a dedication of the body etc. with *bhava* for the Lord, know this to be the Blessed Path.

"When the soul always feels remembered by Shri Krishna due to total attachment to His feet and is able to forget mundane pleasures, that is the Blessed Path.

"Keeping Shri Vallabhacharya in our hearts, one should always understand and rely specifically on the Blessed Path in the above-mentioned way".

ELIGIBILITY

One becomes eligible for and inclined towards the Blessed Path by the Lord's grace. It is through the Blessed Lord's

grace that souls have association with His bhaktas. The Bhagavata states, "By always serving holy souls, my mind was purified and I became sincerely inclined towards the divine practice."

Shri Vallabhacharya says, "In all transcendental matters, inclination comes from hearing about Shri Krishna's greatness."

When there is an inner experience of God, then the seed of divine mood along with a distinct and conscious inclination grows through the means of devotional listening and other bhakti practices. It sprouts into the form of love and removes attachment to everything except God. Then follows the divine state of attachment and in the ultimate condition, the bhakta becomes addicted to Shri Krishna.

"Devotees who have direct devotion without motive for the Supreme Person do not leave My worship to accept anything, even the four types of liberation." (Bhagavata) This type of devotion is referred to as intense bhakti yoga and it arises from profound love for God.

TOTAL LOVE

Total love is an advanced stage of devotion comprised of unconditional love for God. The word "*bhava*" here means love and it is said, "Love for God and other divine things is called bhava."

The love within the soul is called *atmabhava*, "Our sons are not loved for their own sake, but for the sake of our own soul." (Brahadaranyaka 2.4.51)

As one loves oneself, similarly there should be love for God. Then there is a unity between the Supreme and the soul. In the Path of Grace, love of God is not based on duality, but occurs because the Self naturally possesses a feeling of

unity. Kamsa always viewed Shri Krishna with hostility and was awarded liberation because of his focus on Him. Now just imagine the divine condition of those who love Him!

Total love is to have a feeling of identity between the Lord and all things. Lawful love and grace-filled love are the two types of total love. Lawful love makes one feel God's presence in all things. In grace-filled love, like the love that the Gopis experienced in their separation from Shri Krishna, one experiences Him everywhere. This love is greater than the total love in the Path of Law because of the many amorous sentiments for the Lord that are included in their Total love. These and other devotional moods are very useful in experiencing the great joy of devotion.

THE REWARD OF DEVOTION

When a bhakta becomes possessed by Shri Krishna, the Blessed Lord's presence is experienced in the world as He sports with His unimaginable powers.

Nirodha is when the Blessed Lord possesses His beloved ones according to their individual nature. Through His different types of lilas, He makes His bhaktas forget the world and creates an everlasting link with them. Shri Vallabhacharya remarks, "Those that Hari possesses are blissful day and night." (Nirodha Laskhana)

A person absorbed in the mayic world is not qualified for *nirodha* while attachment to Shri Krishna allows the bhakta divine entrance. This transforms the bhakta and makes her unattached to anything that is unrelated to Him.

The bhakta's reality is related in the Bhagavata, "While sleeping, eating wandering about, speaking, playing, bathing and sitting and moving about the residents of Vrindavan were unaware of themselves. They were completely engrossed in Shri Krishna."

LILA

The divine sport or *lila* that the Lord performs is always increasing in bliss. The realization of Shri Krishna's *lila* is the devotional dharma of the soul.

Shri Vallabhacharya says, "The Lord's birth occurs when Shri Hari incarnates in the world with all powers of action, in order to bless everyone with His sight. Those bhaktas who adhere their minds to Him forget the false world and become divinely attached." (Bhagavatartha 10.20)

THE GOPIS' DEVOTION

The bhaktas of Braja cherished obstinate love for Shri Krishna and were devoid of knowledge unrelated to His *lilas*. They transgressed the rules of the world and Vedas because they were only interested in Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna praises them, "They have left the world, the Vedas and their relatives for Me."

The Gopis of Vrindavan are the gurus of the Path of Grace. The way they serve and love Shri Krishna is the highest example of devotion and Shri Vallabhacharya teaches that their devotion should be emulated. Their lives were full of Shri Krishna and they found Him everywhere. To attain Gopihood is the height of devotion.

Shri Gusainji has provided us with a beautiful description of the Gopis' bhava.

"I adore the divine Vrindavan wishing tree that grants total love for Shri Krishna to the deer-eyed Gopis. At first, the Gopis' *bhava* for Shri Krishna is a sprout that has been nourished for a very long time. When their love becomes firm, it becomes a sapling. When longing to be with Shri Krishna increases, their devotional saplings grow into

hundreds of branches. Then when Shri Krishna fulfills the Gopi's divine desires by interacting with them in numerous ways, their devotional branches fill out with lovely leaves. The joy that arises from their exchanges with Shri Krishna blossoms and when their desire to join Him increases even more, those blossoms become flowers. Finally, when Shri Krishna engages with them according to their *bhava* and fulfills their every desire, the blessed wishing-tree becomes laden with fruit."

HOW SHRI KRISHNA IS PLEASED

A follower of Shri Vallabhacharya once explained to another bhakta how to know when Shri Krishna is pleased with a bhakta's *seva*. He explained, "There are four indications. First, devotees naturally go to homes where *seva* is made. The second indication is that Shri Nathji's form fills their hearts with bliss as they reflect, 'Through the grace of Shri Mahaprabhu Vallabhacharya and Shri Gusainji, Shri Krishna comes and accepts my water and cooking.'

"The third sign is that just as they adorn Shri Krishna, so He appears. The fourth way of knowing is that the offerings that are made to Shri Krishna in Shri Mahaprabhuji's name, have many different divine tastes and the plate of prasada does not diminish. When all this occurs, know that Shri Krishna is pleased with the *seva*."

Then that bhakta went to another follower's house and asked, "How can we please Shri Krishna?" The second bhakta explained, "Shri Krishna is pleased with the ones that Shri Svaminiji (Shri Radha) is pleased with. Then She showers Her blessings. Know that Shri Svaminiji is pleased when the bhakta's faith becomes firm and there is one-pointed devotion to Shri Mahaprabhuji, Shri Gusainji, Shri Nathji, as well as to Shri Svaminiji and all Their bhaktas. Then know

that Shri Krishna has blessed the bhakta. This path is solely Shri Svaminiji's. When She is pleased, Shri Krishna allows the soul entrance into the lila and when that happens, know that Shri Krishna is delighted."

Then the bhakta went to Krishna Bhatt and told him, "We want to know how to please Shri Krishna."

Krishna Bhatt replied, "Know that Shri Krishna and Shri Svaminiji are so absorbed in Their own bliss and that Their attention does not wander elsewhere. They are perfectly enchanted with Their own lila and lost in each other's forms. There is one intimate sakhi, a friend of Theirs, who always remains nearby. When she is pleased with someone, she sings that bhakta's glories to Them. This pleases the Divine Couple and then they fulfill that bhakta's wishes.

"There is yet another Gopi who cares for all the outer arrangement of the lila. She is an attendant of the lila-bower and arranges the bed and ornaments. She stands by the door of the lila-bower and sings very sweetly. She praises the Divine Couple in various ways. Sometimes she makes divine requests on behalf of certain individuals to Shri Svaminiji's intimate Gopi at just the right time. In turn, that Gopi keeps it in her heart and when Shri Krishna and Shri Svaminiji are in a celebratory mood, she reminds them of that bhakta. Then Shri Krishna becomes pleased with that bhakta."

"Just as a woman who desires a man can arrange the meeting through her female messenger, similarly in the path of loving devotion, the bhakta who knows God is the messenger for other bhaktas. Know that Shri Krishna is found when we please such a bhakta."

LILA CONTEMPLATION

After making your lunch offering, a devotional contemplation should be done. Quietly reflect how Shri

Krishna takes His meals at home during the winter season. Follow Shri Krishna when He is invited to the Gopi's house. During the hot season, contemplate Shri Krishna's lunch in the forest by the banks of the Yamuna or in the forest at Shyamdak or at other places where His cows graze and He plays with His cowlad friends. When Shri Krishna is hungry, see how He climbs a tree to look for the Gopis who are bringing His lunch. Sometimes when the Gopis lose their way, Shri Krishna sounds His flute to show them the path. Feel the groups of Gopis coming from their homes with lunch baskets balanced on their heads. Shri Krishna enjoys their offerings and gives the leftovers to His friends. Shri Krishna plays in so many ways.

Sometimes He grabs the food, laughs and then gives the Gopis secret messages about an evening rendez-vous. There are so many bhavas to contemplate. During the rainy season, Shri Radha and Krishna come to the Vrindavan forest which is delightful to behold. Dark clouds fill the sky and when Shri Svaminiji gets wet from the rain, Shri Krishna dries Her with the edge of His blanket. Shri Krishna enchants Radha and takes Her to bowers filled with precious jewels. She implores Shri Krishna, 'You enjoy the offerings first.' They exchange sweet words while Lalita and other Gopis serve the Divine Couple and enjoy the lila. Know that Shri Krishna responds directly to the bhava of His pure bhakta." (From the 252 Vaishnavas)

PRESENT DAY SOULS

Shri Krishna tells Uddhava, 'Uddhava, by following dharma and surrendering one's soul to Me, devotion is received.' To give the special reward, the Blessed Lord plants the seed of devotion within those who belong to the Path of Grace.

Present day bhaktas learn about obstructions to

devotional life from the guru's teachings. By performing Shri Krishna's worship ignorance can be removed. When Shri Krishna incarnated and slayed the demoness Putana, He removed the ignorance from His bhaktas' hearts. Present day bhaktas need to seek Hari's shelter to remove their ignorance and they should avoid all impure association. After hearing the divine names from other blessed bhaktas, they should remember the precise form, attributes and lila connections while repeating the sacred names. Then without them even knowing it, the Lord removes numerous obstructions.

As mother Yashoda remembered and sang about Shri Krishna's lilas when she churned the curds, present day bhaktas should sing Shri Krishna's praises while engaged in wordly tasks.

Those senses that are turned away from God can become purified through devotional practices and then adhered to the Lord. Know that Bhakti Yoga has been highly praised because those who practice it can overcome the three material qualities and achieve perfect love for the Lord. The sacred Sruti texts have also advised transcendental enjoyment with the Supreme Being.

THE GRACE-FILLED REWARD

"The reward of Shri Vallabh's path has manifested for those who have flawless devotion. The scriptural type of devotional practice can also be used, but the experience of the highest reward is found in the devotion of the Gopis of Vrindavan. They have beautiful eyes and dance with Shri Krishna right in their homes! In the Path of Grace, whatever, whenever and in whatever way the bhaktas offer Shri Krishna something He desires, He appears to them directly as the Lord of the Gopis. Then His lotus face laughs as He affectionately accepts the offerings." (Shri Gusainji)