

The Pancha Tattva

“Pañca-tattva” means “Five Truths.” There are five transcendental personalities who comprise the Pañca-tattva. They are recognized and honored by the mantra, śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda. The first three of these personalities, Śrī-Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Nityānanda Prabhu, and Śrī Advaita Ācārya, are Viṣṇu-tattva, and are worshipable by the living entities. The other two tattvas, śakti-tattva and jīva-tattva, represented by Gadādhara and Śrīvāsa, are worshipers of the Supreme Lord. However, these two tattvas are in the same transcendental category as the Viṣṇu-tattvas because they eternally engage in the loving service of the Lord.

In Caitanya-Caitamṛta, Ādi-līlā, chapter 7, text 6, it is stated-

pañca-tattvātmakam kṛṣṇam
bhakta-rūpa-svarūpakam
bhaktāvatāram bhaktākhyam
namāmi bhakta-śaktikam

Let me offer my obeisances unto Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who has manifested Himself in five as a devotee, expansion of a devotee, incarnation of a devotee, pure devotee and devotional energy.

Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself, and Lord Nityānanda is His brother, Sri Balarāma. It is stated in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta - “Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, the Personalities of Godhead, who formerly appeared in Vṛndāvana and were millions of times more effulgent than the sun and moon, have arisen over the eastern horizon of Gauḍadeśa [West Bengal], being compassionate for the fallen state of the world.”

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is called bhakta-rūpa (the form of a devotee), and Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu is called bhakta-svarūpa (the expansion of a devotee). Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu is the immediate expansion of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as His brother. He is

the personified spiritual bliss of sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha. His body is transcendental and full of ecstasy in devotional service.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā, chapter 7, text 4, states- These five tattvas incarnate with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and thus the Lord executes His saṅkīrtana movement with great pleasure.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says in the purport to that verse-

In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam there is the following statement regarding Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

kṛṣṇa-varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam
sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārsadam
yajnaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair
yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ

“In the Age of Kali, people who are endowed with sufficient intelligence will worship the Lord, who is accompanied by His associates, by performance of saṅkīrtana-yajna.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.5.32) Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is always accompanied by His plenary expansion Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, His incarnation Śrī Advaita Prabhu, His internal potency Śrī Gadādhara Prabhu and His marginal potency Śrīvāsa Prabhu. He is in the midst of them as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One should know that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is always accompanied by these other tattvas. Therefore our obeisances to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are complete when we say śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu -nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda. As preachers of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we first offer our obeisances to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by chanting this Pañca-tattva mantra; then we say

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

There are ten offenses in the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, but these are not considered

in the chanting of the Pañca-tattva mantra, namely, śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is known as mahā-vadānyāvatāra, the most magnanimous incarnation, for He does not consider the offenses of the fallen souls. Thus to derive the full benefit of the chanting of the mahā-mantra (Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare), we must first take shelter of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, learn the Pañca-tattva mahā-mantra, and then chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. That will be very effective.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda came to Gainesville, Florida, July 29, 1971, in his arrival address, he described the Pañca-tattva. “So Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the picture is there—assisted by four others, Pañca-tattva. Kṛṣṇa appeared in five principles. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself, and Nityānanda Prabhu is His immediate expansion, and Advaita Prabhu is incarnation. Gadādhara Prabhu is internal potency, and śrīvāsādi, Śrīvāsa is the . . . heading the list of His devotees. Śrīvāsa represents the marginal potency of Kṛṣṇa. So śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda means Kṛṣṇa complete. Just like when we speak of a king, “king” does not mean king is alone. He, somebody says the king is coming here, it is to be understood that king with his associates coming. King does not come alone. Whenever a..., the king goes, he goes with his secretary, minister, commander, so many other people. King is never alone. There must be queen also, and queen’s associates. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa, the supreme king, how He can be alone? He’s not alone. He’s always with His associates.”

One must be ready to offer proper respects to the Pañca-tattva before becoming a devotee of Lord Gaurasundara or of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Otherwise, there will be offenses, or disturbances. The Pañca-tattva are most merciful. Their mercy is not dependent on the qualification of the devotee, They naturally bestow Their mercy, and by accepting this mercy,

one may attain perfection in spiritual life.

Let us approach Them by chanting:

śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita
gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda.

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