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Tridandiswami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja
THE CLEARING STAGE
Paxton, Australia: Feb. 25, 2002, Eve – Part 1

The glories of the holy name have only been partly expressed in sastra, although even sastra cannot express its glories fully. Nama Prabhu is Krsna Himself and Radhika Herself, and all kinds of power, opulence, and causeless mercy are present there. Do not doubt that all varieties of sinful reactions, such as prarabda-karma (present bodily and mental sufferings and happiness) and aprarabda-karma (future sufferings and happiness), disappear by chanting. I previously explained this in a very good way, and Pundarika will tell you about that class; try to hear carefully.

[Pundarika prabhu:] A couple of years back, in Singapore, Srila Gurudeva spoke on the glories of nama-abhasa. I don't remember the complete talk, but I will try to recount as much as I remember. Srila Gurudeva first explained suddha-nama:

namah cintamanih krsnas
caitanya-rasa vigraha
purnah suddho nitya mukto
bhinnatvan nama-naminoh

["The holy name of Krsna is transcendently blissful. It bestows all spiritual benedictions, for it is Krsna Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. Krsna's name is complete and it is the form of all transcendental mellows. It is not a material name under any condition, and it's no less powerful than Krsna Himself. Since Krsna's name is not contaminated by the material qualities and there is no question of being involved with maya, Krsna's name is always liberated and spiritual; it is never contaminated by the laws of material nature. This is because the name of Krsna and Krsna Himself are identical." (Cc Madhya 17.133)]

Transcendental and completely spiritual suddha-nama is identical to Their Lordships. There is no difference between Them. This means that nama is one hundred percent pure. Suddha-bhakti is suddha (pure), but due to the different stages of the sadhaka, it is sometimes called sadhana-bhakti, sometimes bhava-bhakti, and sometimes prema-bhakti. Similarly, classifications of nama are also given because of the different stages of the sadhaka.

Nama is suddha; it is neither an abhasa (semblance) nor is it an aparadha (offence). However, because chanters are situated on different levels, the holy name is classified as nama-aparadha, nama-abhasa, or suddha-nama.

Moreover, although nama has been classified in these three general categories, there are actually several gradations. For example, within nama-aparadha there is maha-maha-nama-aparadha, maha-nama-aparadha, and minor nama-aparadha. There is also a stage in which the devotee is neither committing offenses, nor is he yet chanting actual nama-abhasa, and there is also a stage in which nama-abhasa has just begun. Then, after that, there are stages progressing more and more towards suddha-nama. There are also stages that are close to suddha-nama-abhasa, then more close, and there is also the stage of pure suddha-nama-abhasa.

The stage of nama-abhasa that has the power to destroy all prarabda, aprarabda, kuta, bija, and avidya (forgetfulness of Krsna), is its topmost stage, and that type of nama-abhasa was uttered by Ajamila. At that stage there is no tinge of any offense and there is no tinge of any other mixture. Ajamila chanted pure nama-abhasa, and therefore he attained liberation and later Vaikuntha.

On the other hand, in the circle of neophyte devotees nama-aparadha is prominent, with a rare utterance of the beginning of nama-abhasa. Chapter 25 of Jaiva Dharma describes how Vijaya Kumar inquired from Babaji Maharaja about the effects of nama-abhasa and the process to enter that stage of chanting. When he asked about the results of nama-aparadha, Babaji Maharaja replied that the punishment or reaction incurred by committing nama-aparadha is very severe. Even if we can combine the five kinds of sins and multiply them millions of times, we would find that the reaction of nama-aparadha is even more severe. Still, even in that stage, the aspirant may sometimes utter nama-abhasa. When he accumulates much nama-abhasa, he gradually gets the chance to practice nama-abhasa constantly, and then, he eventually chants suddha-nama. Nama-abhasa can liberate a person, but it will not give prema. For that one has to chant suddha-nama.

The effect of nama-abhasa eradicates one's previous sinful reactions to the degree to which he is chanting nama-abhasa. His sins will be eradicated only to the degree he chants nama-abhasa. At the same time, he also has at his disposal his present conduct, and his independence that he sometimes misuses. In that case, although the eradication of his past sins is taking place, he is simultaneously either making more offenses or he is indulging in activities which are unfavorable to the chanting of suddha-nama; and these different situations delay his progress or realization of suddha-nama. If we try to understand this particular progression from nama-aparadha, to nama-abhasa, and then to suddha-nama, we can gradually try to convert ourselves and utter suddha-nama. [*see endnotes for excerpts from Jaiva Dharma ch. 25]

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] What is your question?

[Caru Candrika dasi:] By chanting one nama-abhasa, is someone guaranteed liberation in some lifetime as long as he doesn't commit Vaisnava aparadha? And then, if he continuously chants nama-abhasa, gradually he'll be become free from all prarabda, aprarabda, kuta, bija, and all types of karma. Is that correct or not?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] First of all, you should know the meaning of prema-bhakti. Suddha-bhakti and prema-bhakti are the same; only their names are different. What is suddha-bhakti?

[Caru Candrika dasi:] anyabhilasita sunyam jnama karmadyanavrtam anukulyena krsnanusilanam bhakti uttamah. It is that kind of bhakti which isn't covered by jnana, karma, or any desires other than the desire to please Krsna.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] What is prema-bhakti, or suddha-bhakti? How high is its limit? Its limit goes up to the madana-bhava of Srimati Radhika. It begins from Ambarisa Maharaja's bhakti and develops up to mahabhava. Then, within mahabhava, it develops to ruddha, adiruddha, mohan, modan, and madan, the mood of Radhika. Madanakya mahabhava is the highest extent of bhakti, but there are so many grades, beginning from its smallest fraction, which is sraddha.

A man may be very cruel or sinful or wretched, even more so than Jagai and Madhai, but he may get sraddha. Bhakti is not controlled by karma, jnana, yoga, or anything else. Bhakti is Krsna Himself, and therefore it cannot be controlled by anyone.

Sraddha, the smallest fraction of transcendental bhakti, is the faith that our life will be successful by serving Krsna. It is the tendency to serve Krsna. A man may be wretched and without any character, but by the association of pure bhaktas, he may begin to think, "I should serve Krsna." Bhakti has given that desire, and the external symptoms of that desire is faith in the words of sastra, Hari and Guru. A devotee who is actually in that stage will think, "If my life leaves me, there is no harm; but I will not give up bhakti." This stage, the smallest fraction of transcendental bhakti, will gradually come.

Millions of stages develop from the stage of sraddha, and Srila Rupa Gosvami has briefly explained some of the important stages in his Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu and Ujjvala-nilamani. No one can fully define the limit of bhakti because it is like an endless ocean, but being very expert, Srila Rupa Gosvami has divided the millions of stages into many categories. After him, in order to make bhakti still more easily available, his followers like Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, Srila Jiva Gosvami, and Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura have divided them further; and some devotees may come in the future who will make further divisions. Sri Vedavyasa first divided the one Veda into four major parts. Then he wrote Vedanta Sutra, then Mahabharata, and after that he wrote Srimad Bhagavatam. This ocean of bhakti is unlimited.

The holy name is directly Radha and Krsna, but due to the different stages of the devotees' maturity in bhakti, that name manifests in greater or lesser degrees, or it doesn't manifest. Pure nama is Radha and Krsna in transcendental Goloka Vrndavana, playing in so many ways in the five rasas. Rasa-lila is present, as are Brahmara-gita and Vamsi-vata. All Their pastimes and qualities are present, including those not described even in Bhakti Rasamrta Sindhu, Ujjvala Nilamani, Srimad-Bhagavatam, and all other scriptures. For example, only one night of Krsna's rasa-lila pastimes have been told in Srimad-

Bhagavatam, and nothing has been told about other rasa-lilas although there are unique specialties in each.

In this way, the glory of the holy name is an unlimited ocean of rasa, and its mercy is not controlled by anyone. Therefore, if Krsna Himself wants, the chanters will be liberated and his prarabda karma will go away. There should be no doubt, no question at all; but still we are explaining this topic in various ways.

Because the influence of maya always covers the transcendental reality, what we are explaining is very hard to realize. Because no material words are pure, actual understanding and realization will come only by sadhana. Your doubt cannot go away unless Krsna Himself comes to speak to you. Understanding and realizing these truths about sri nama depends on practicing bhakti-yoga and chanting Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare in elevated association. Nama will then reveal itself in your heart, and there will be no more doubt.

From the beginning of my life I never had any doubt in the words of sastra and Gurudeva. I chanted a lot, and I also served Vaisnavas and Guru thoroughly and sincerely. I always very humbly asked Gurudeva questions, only to realize the answer. You should try to follow all these principles, and gradually all doubts will disappear. You'll be calm and quiet, not only doing bhajana externally, but actually serving Radha and Krsna.

nikhila-sruti-mauli-ratna-mala-
dyuti-nirajita-pada-pankajanta
ayi mukta-kulair upasyamanam
paritas tvam hari-nama samsrayami

["O Hari-nama! The tips of the toes of Your lotus feet are constantly being worshiped by the glowing radiance emanating from the string of gems known as the Upanisads, the crown jewels of all the Vedas. You are eternally adored by liberated souls such as Narada and Sukadeva. O Hari-nama! I take complete shelter of You." (Namastaka, verse 1)]

Nama is served only by mukta-maha-purusas, liberated souls. Baddha-jivas cannot serve; you can only exercise your tongue and mind. Krsna is so merciful, however, that even by this, if you practice in the association of advanced devotees, truly serving and establishing your Gurudeva's mano'bhista, you'll have this perfection very soon.

So try to chant more. If you chant only 16 rounds, with your mind going here and there, that will not suffice. You'll make tangible advancement when you chant one lakh as Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has explained in his Jaiva Dharma, and as Srila Rupa Gosvami has written in his Upadesamrta, verse eight:

tan-nama-rupa-caritadi-sukirtananu-
smrtyoh kramena rasana-manasi niyojya
tisthan vraje tad-anuragi-jananugami
kalam nayed akhila ity upadesa-saram

["While living in Vraja as a follower of the eternal residents of Vraja who possess inherent spontaneous love for Sri Krsna, one should utilize all his time by sequentially engaging the tongue and the mind in meticulous chanting and remembrance of Vrajandra-nandana Sri Krsna's names, form, qualities and pastimes. This is the essence of all instruction." (Sri Upadesamrta, verse 8)]

Begin from vaco vegam manasa krodha vega, jihva vega udharupasta vega. Begin from sraddha. Moreover, even if you are not chanting so much, don't miss the opportunity of advanced association and hearing and serving in that association.

tad viddhi pranipatena
pariprasnena sevaya
upadeksyanti te jnanam
jnaninas tattva-darsinah

["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-gita 4.34)]

[Sripad Asrama Maharaja:] Let us take the example of the disciples of Srila Swami Maharaja. They were just coming newly to his association, they were chanting Hare Krsna, and they didn't commit any aparadha before coming to him. Is this suddha-nama-abhasa?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] No. Nama-abhasa also has some symptoms, so theirs may be the primary stage of nama-abhasa. It may be an abhasa (semblance or shadow) of nama-abhasa. If they will always associate, and if they chant without committing nama-aparadha, gradually they will come to real nama-abhasa, chaya-nama-abhasa.

[Sripad Asrama Maharaja:] So at the beginning, even without having come to stage of sraddha, one is chanting nama-abhasa?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Sraddha or no sraddha, knowingly or unknowingly, if you put your hand in fire, it will burn.

[Sripad Asrama Maharaja:] Will that unknowingly chanting nama-abhasa destroy prarabda and aprarabdakarma?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Yes, gradually; if one continues to chant. Its effects will not be controlled by anything. It will gradually bring the chanter to good association and gradually he will chant more purely.

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[*Endnotes: The following is Chapter Twenty-five of Jaiva Dharma, called Prameya: Namabhasa:]

The next day shortly after sandhya, Vijaya and Vrajanatha came before the respected Babaji, and having offered sastanga-dandavat, they took their asanas. Vijaya took the opportunity to humbly ask, "Prabhu, kindly have mercy upon us and tell us everything about namabhasa-tattva. We are very anxious to know the secret of nama-tattva."

Babaji answered, "You are very fortunate. If you want to understand nama-tattva, you must understand three subject matters very well: nama, namabhasa and nama-aparadha. I have already explained so much about nama and nama-aparadha, and now I will explain about namabhasa, which means the semblance of sri-nama.

Vijaya: What is namabhasa, and how many kinds of abhasa are there?

Babaji: The word abhasa means luster, shadow or reflection. As the radiance that emanates from a naturally lustrous object has kanti (effulgence) or chaya (shadow), so the sun-like Name has two kinds of abhasa: one is the shadow (nama-chaya), and the other is the reflection (nama-pratibimba). Learned people who are conversant with bhakty-abhasa, bhava-abhasa, namabhasa, and vaisnava-abhasa say that all kinds of abhasa have two divisions: pratibimba (reflection) and chaya (shadow).

Vijaya: What is the relation between bhakty-abhasa, bhava-abhasa, namabhasa, and vaisnava-abhasa?

Babaji: Vaisnavas practice hari-nama, and when their practice is on the level of bhakty-abhasa, then their practice of nama is called namabhasa. They themselves are also vaisnava-abhasa, not pure bhaktas. Bhava and bhakti are one and the same thing; it is only because they are on different levels that they are known by different names.

Vijaya: On which platform is the jiva called vaisnava-abhasa?

Babaji: Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.2.47) says:
arcayam eva haraye pujam yah sraddhayehate
na tad-bhaktesu canyesu sa bhaktah prakritah smritah

"One is a materialistic devotee (kanistha) if he accepts the arca-murti of Bhagavan as Sri Hari and worships Him with faith, but does not faithfully worship Krsna's bhaktas or other jivas."

In this sloka the word sraddha is mentioned. However, the intended meaning is sraddhabhasa, not pure sraddha, because if one worships Krsna but not His bhaktas, then his sraddha is either chaya (shadow) or pratibimba (reflection). That faith is worldly faith; it is not spiritual faith (aprakṛta-sraddha). Therefore we should understand that anyone in

whom we see that faith is a materialistic devotee (prakrita-bhakta), or a semblance of a Vaisnava (vaisnava-abhasa). Sriman Mahaprabhu has said that Sri Raghunatha dasa Gosvami's father and uncle, Hiranya and Govardhana, were vaisnava-praya. This means that they accepted Vaisnava markings and dress, and chanted namabhasa, as if they were suddha-bhaktas, but actually they were not pure Vaisnavas.

Vijaya: Can Mayavadis also be called vaisnava-abhasa if they accept the symbols of a Vaisnava and chant sri-nama?

Babaji: No, they cannot even be called vaisnava-abhasa. They are simply offenders, so they are called vaisnava-aparadhi. In one sense, they might be called vaisnava-abhasa, because they have taken shelter of pratibimba-namabhasa and pratibimba-bhava-abhasa, but they are such great offenders that they are to be separated even from the name Vaisnava.

Vijaya: Prabhu, please explain the symptoms of suddha-nama even more clearly, so that we may easily understand it.

Babaji: Suddha-nama means taking nama with a favorable attitude, while remaining free from all material desire (anyabhilasa), and from coverings of jnana, karma and so on. To desire the supreme bliss that comes when the transcendental nature of nama manifests clearly is not anyabhilasa. All kinds of desires apart from that – such as the desire to be free from sins and to gain liberation – are certainly anyabhilasa. There will be no suddha-nama so long as anyabhilasa remains; one will not receive suddha-nama as long as he still desires the fruits of performing jnana, karma, yoga and so on.

Suddha-nama comes from accepting nama with only favorable inclinations, and rejecting all unfavorable emotions from the heart. If one keeps these characteristics of bhakti in mind and deliberates carefully, it becomes clear that suddha-nama is certainly that nama which is free from nama-aparadha and namabhasa. Therefore Sri Gauracandra, the merciful avatara for Kali-yuga, has said:

trinad api sunicena taror api sahisnuna
amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada harih
Siksastaka (3)

"One should think himself more insignificant and lower than the straw in the street, and should be more tolerant than a tree. He should give all respect to others, without desiring any respect for himself. Then he will be qualified to chant sri-hari-nama constantly."

Vijaya: Prabhu, what is the intrinsic difference between namabhasa and nama-aparadha?

Babaji: When there is no suddha-nama, sri-nama is called namabhasa. That namabhasa is called namabhasa at one stage, and nama-aparadha at another stage. It is called namabhasa when the name that is chanted is impure because one is in ignorance, that is to say, one is under the control of illusion and inattentiveness. However, when the name is

chanted impurely with a desire for sense enjoyment (bhoga) or liberation (moksa), and based on a Maya vada conception, that is known as nama-aparadha. If the other kinds of aparadhas that I told you about before are present because of simple ignorance, the asuddha-nama (impure name) taken in that situation is not nama-aparadha, but namabhasa. You should remember that as long as one does not commit nama-aparadha when one is chanting namabhasa, there is hope that the namabhasa will go away, and that suddha-nama will arise. However, if there is nama-aparadha, the rising of nama in the heart can only take place with great difficulty. There is no means to obtain benefit other than the method that I have already explained to become free from the offenses against sri-nama.

Vijaya: If someone is performing namabhasa, what must he do so that his namabhasa may become suddha-nama?

Babaji: The suitable engagement is that he takes the association of suddha-bhaktas. If he stays in their company and chants nama according to their order and guidance, he will then acquire a taste for suddha-bhakti. The name that appears on the tongue at that time will be suddha-nama. At the same time, he should diligently give up the company of nama-aparadhis, because suddha-nama will not manifest if one remains in their association. Sat-sanga is the only cause of the jivas' good fortune. That is why the Lord of our life, Sri Gaurangadeva, instructed Sanatana Gosvami that sat-sanga is certainly the root of bhakti. One should always renounce associating with women and non-devotees, and practice krsna-nama in the association of bhaktas.

Vijaya: Prabhu, can the sadhaka not perform suddha-nama without giving up his wife.

Babaji: It is certainly imperative to give up the association of women. A grhastha-vaisnava who remains with his married wife in a detached mood is acting properly in the Vaisnava world, and this is not called 'association with women.' The attachment of men for women and women for men is called yosit sanga. If a householder takes krsna-nama and gives up his attachments, then he will certainly attain the highest goal of life.

Vijaya: How many kinds of namabhasa are there?

Babaji: Srimad-Bhagavatam (6.2.14) enumerates four kinds of namabhasa:

sanketyam parihasyam va stobham helanam eva va
vaikuntha-nama-grahanam asesagha-haram viduh

"One may utter sri-krsna-nama to indicate something else (sanketa), jokingly (parihasa), antagonistically (stobha), or even disrespectfully (hela). Learned people know that these four types of shadow namabhasa destroy unlimited sins."

Those who are ignorant of nama-tattva and sambandha-tattva perform these four kinds of namabhasa.

Vijaya: What is sanketya-namabhasa?

Babaji: Sanketya-namabhasa is uttering Bhagavan's name when alluding to something else. For instance, Ajamila called his son Narayana at the time of his death, but Bhagavan Sri Krsna's name is also Narayana, so Ajamila's uttering 'Narayana' was an instance of sanketya-namabhasa. When Muslims see a pig, they show hatred and exclaim, "Harama! Harama!" The exclamation 'harama' contains the two words 'ha' and 'rama', so the person uttering the word 'harama' also obtains deliverance from the cycle of birth and death as a result of taking that sanketya-nama.

All the sastras accept that namabhasa gives mukti. Through sri-nama, relationship is strongly established with Mukunda, (the giver of liberation). Therefore, by uttering sri-nama one is in touch with Bhagavan Mukunda and by that contact, mukti (liberation) is easily obtained. The same liberation that is obtained with great difficulty through brahma-jnana is easily available to everybody without hard labor through namabhasa.

Vijaya: Prabhu, we have read in different places in the sastras that those who utter Krsna's names jokingly obtain liberation. This includes those who desire liberation (mumuksu), those who are vainly proud of their learning, mlecchas who are devoid of tattva-jnana, and those who are asurika and actually opposed to the ultimate goal. Now please tell us about stobha-namabhasa.

Babaji: Stobha means uttering sri-nama antagonistically to hinder others in their chanting of Krsna's name. For example, while a pure bhakta is chanting hari-nama, an offender may see him, and make faces, saying, "Your 'Hari-Kest' will do everything!" This is an example of stobha, and that stobha-nama can award liberation even to such a person as that hypocrite. The names have such natural potency.

Vijaya: What is hela-namabhasa?

Babaji: Hela-namabhasa means to utter sri-nama disrespectfully. It is said in the Prabhasa-khanda that taking sri-nama neglectfully also results in liberation from this material world.

madhura-madhuram etan mangalam mangalanam
sakala-nigama-valli sat-phalam cit-svarupam
sakrid api parigitam sraddhaya helaya va
bhriguvara nara-matram tarayet krisna-nama

"O best of the Bhrigus, this nama-brahma is more sweet than any sweet thing and the most auspicious of all that is auspicious. He is the delectable pure fruit of the flourishing sruti desire-creeper and appears as the embodiment of knowledge, delivering any human being who even once chants sri-krisna-nama either with respect or disrespect."

In this sloka, the word sraddhaya means 'with respect' and helaya means 'with disrespect'. The purport of the statement nara-matram tarayet is that Krsna's name even gives liberation to the Muslims.

Vijaya: But isn't it an offense to chant hari-nama antagonistically or disrespectfully?

Babaji: It is an offense if one is disrespectful knowingly and with bad intention, but if one is disrespectful unknowingly, it is namabhasa.

Vijaya: What is the result of namabhasa, and what will it not give?

Babaji: Namabhasa will give all kinds of enjoyment, happiness, liberation and the eight kinds of perfections (siddhis), but it will not give krsna-prema, which is the highest goal of human life. However, by giving up bad association, and by associating constantly with suddha-bhaktas and following their instructions regularly, one may quickly become a madhyama Vaisnava. Then even within a few days he can obtain suddha-bhakti and krsna-prema.

Vijaya: Prabhu, many who are vaisnava-abhasa bear the outward signs of a Vaisnava, and constantly perform namabhasa. Even so, despite engaging in this way for a long time, they still do not receive prema. What is the reason for this?

Babaji: There is one secret here. The vaisnava-abhasa-sadhaka is qualified to receive pure devotion, but he does not have pure, one-pointed bhakti. It may be that he is associating with a person whom he thinks to be a sadhu, but who is actually a Mayavadi and not a suddha-bhakta. Due to this undesirable association, the sadhaka will follow the Mayavadi's apasiddhantika instructions, and as a result, whatever bhakty-abhasa he had will vanish, and he will gradually fall down into the category of vaisnava-aparadhi. In that condition, it is quite difficult, indeed practically impossible, for him to succeed in his practice. Yet, if his previous sukriti is strong, it will remove him from that bad association and place him in the association of saintly persons; and from that sat-sanga he can obtain pure Vaisnavism again.

Vijaya: Prabhu, what is the result of nama-aparadha?

Babaji: The accumulation of sins from nama-aparadha is even more dreadful than the result of committing the five maha-papa millions of times: Thus we can easily estimate the dire result of nama-aparadha.

Vijaya: Prabhu, I understand that the result of nama-aparadha is very dangerous, but is there any good result derived from the names that are uttered offensively?

Babaji: Sri-nama will give whatever result the nama-aparadhi desires while he is chanting the names, but it will not award krsna-prema. At the same time, the offender has to suffer the result of his offenses against sri-nama. One who commits offenses to sri-nama, and who takes the name with a wicked mentality will receive the following results: In the beginning, the nama-aparadhi takes sri-nama with a wicked mentality, but after sometime he occasionally chants nama free from wickedness. This chanting of the name without a crooked mentality causes him to accumulate sukriti. Slowly, slowly, as that sukriti

increases, its influence enables him to receive the association of saintly people who are chanting suddha-nama. The influence of sat-sanga induces the nama-aparadhi to chant sri-nama constantly, which frees him from nama-aparadhas. Even people who had a great desire for liberation have gradually become hari-bhaktas by taking shelter of this process.