

Sermons of the Guardian of Devotion
VOLUME TWO



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All Glory to the Divine Master and the Supreme Lord Sri Krsna Chaitanya

Chapter One

Invite Vasudeva to the Throne of Your Heart

Devotee: What should a devotee do when he is continually being attacked by lust, anger and greed?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: One should cry for the help of the *sadhu*; the *sadhus* are posted from above. There are many who are progressing from the mundane world to the spiritual world, and special *sadhus* are given charge to protect those travelers. So the devotee will cry aloud: "I am going to be plundered! Give me protection!" With fervor, he will move all his nerve to the extreme: "I must not allow myself to be plundered by you! All my previous tendencies have shaped my fate, and now they have appeared; I am prey to all those nasty plunderers - please protect me! *Kama*, *krodha* and *lobha* (lust, anger and greed) are jumping at me!"

There are also so many artificial methods:

*yamadibhir yogapathaih kama-lobha-hato muhuh
mukunda-sevaya yadvat tathaddhatma na samyati*
(Bhagavatam, 1.6.35)

The practices of sitting postures (*asanas*) , breath control (*pranayama*) , etc., may help us to a slight degree, but only superficially. The deep seed can be eliminated only by taking Mukunda on the throne of our heart. (*Mukunda sevaya yadvat tathaddhatma na samyati*) . If one goes on with the artificial means of *pranayama* and so on, lust and anger may seem to be a little reduced in power for the time being, but this is not a permanent cure. When the practices are slackened, they arise again. The relief from lust, anger and greed is only temporary.

The meditators and renouncers (*yogis*, *jnanis*) think these practices will quench their inner thirst, and they go on with constant deep meditation (*nidhidhyasanam*) while keeping guard outwardly with some external practices. But the devotees do not have any faith in this method. They consider the whole thing artificial. They only want to invite Vasudeva in all phases of their lives, and in this way they permanently do away with those enemies.

Devotee: Maharaj, in the beginning we're taught to follow. But it seems there is a point where we imitate, and then follow later. Because we have no qualification, when we try to follow we are actually imitating somehow. So what's the difference between the two? When does imitation or *anukarana* become following or *anusarana*?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: In *anusarana* , following, there is sincerity; and *anukarana*, imitation, is only for name and fame, or *pratistha* . To only imitate devotion outwardly without inner purity is more or less done to get the glory of a *sadhu* . And *anusarana* means to attain from the heart, sincerely. So true following is sincere progress, and imitation is artificiality.

It has been practically experienced that responsible services can help us from falling prey to lust, anger, etc. Foremost is faith (*sraddha*) , next is the association of pure devotees (*sadhu-sanga*) and deep engagement with the duties prescribed by the Divine Master (*bhajana-kriya*) . Deep engagement is necessary, especially for the mind, not merely the body. And mental engagement can be

attained only by responsibility. Some responsible service is given to the disciple. He feels weight and it occupies his brain; he cannot but think about it - the mind is engaged there, surely. So the mind gets no chance to dwell on lower things. This is the beauty of deep engagement in responsible Service. In the practical sense, that helps us a great deal. Then association and Scriptures will really be of substantial help to us: as Service (*pariprasna, sevaya*) . As much as we are able to engage ourselves in deep, responsible services, the enemies' effect on us will be minimized. They will come and peep, and will step back saying, "No - no time. He is deeply engaged. He has no time to give attention to us. He may not be enticed." In this way, they will have to retreat. Then if they return once, twice, thrice or more - "Oh, no time. He has no attention to spare for us. He is very deeply engaged - for *Seva* ."

Seva, Service, should not be merely physical; there is mental *Seva* , and only responsibility can capture the mind. In responsibility, the mind is compelled to think on the matter; otherwise, the mind may be free to wander hither and thither even while the body is apparently engaged. So engage the mind in deep Service, responsible Service.

Chapter Two

The Eye to See the Dhama - The Eye of Faith

In an ordinary country there is a capital. The capital is where the existence and position of the king is more intense than in the general section of the country. Similarly, the Lord is everywhere, and His concentrated existence is found in the *Dhama* or the Holy Abode. With fully developed vision, we can feel the special characteristic of the *Dhama*. We shall find His presence everywhere, but with particular intensity in the *Dhama*. With the awakening of our real eye, we should be able to feel and appreciate according to this criterion. There is no question of a *Dhama* for those who have no eye to see. There is also a hierarchy in the *Dhama*. All are in serving attitude whether birds, beasts, worms, insects - everything - all are contributing to the Reality. Their feeling of heart, their gesture, posture or movement - everything contributes exclusively to the Pastimes of the Lord.

Dhamera svarupa ,sphuribe nayane : in one song, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura aspires for that pure vision of the *Dhama*. Otherwise, it may appear quite ordinary to us, like a jungle. The purity of Ganges water is only perceived by those who have proper faith or *sraddha* . Otherwise to others eyes it is ordinary water. The same applies to the Deity, or *Sri Murti*. One may think that the *Sri Murti* of Lord Jagannatha in Puri appears to be a somewhat awkward figure. His arms seem incomplete, His feet are not visible, His eyes are enormous. Yet Mahaprabhu stood before Him for hours, shedding tears. No one could move Him from that place. What did Mahaprabhu see in that Figure, and what is He to our eyes? So according to the depth of vision of our inner eye we can come to that plane of the *Dhama*, the Deity, and the purifying Ganges water. *Sraddhamayo 'yam purusah* (Bhagavad-gita, 17.3): "The nature of a person is modeled on faith." Of what value is a mirror without an eye? In a looking-glass we should find the reflection, but if the eye is absent, what will the subject see in the glass? So the eye to see - faith - is necessary. According to the *sraddha*, the specific character of the *Dhama* as distinct from all other places will come into view, disclosing its real form. Everything depends on *sraddha*, faith.

Faith is the only effective link. If we wish to have any link with the sun or the moon, ordinary instruments won't do, but some plenary medium like electricity, etc., can help to connect us. We must approach via a plane similar to the object. Similarly, we can approach the infinite only with the help of *sraddha*. We cannot hope to have any connection with that finest plane of fundamental existence of this world with the help of the eye, nose or ear, or even by intelligence or reason. If we want to have any connection with the finest plane that is underlying this creation, it is possible only through faith (*sraddhamayo 'yam purusah*).

Then, the question of credibility arises: faith may be blind. But as long as the qualification of 'blind' faith exists, 'seeing' faith must also be possible! Blind faith is diseased faith, but we must connect by real or healthy faith. Then again, our experience must be confined to our own limitations; so how much faith can we accumulate?

Infinite faith in the Infinite

When we try to establish a connection with the infinite, there are infinite possibilities. But how much faith can finite things like us have? How much can we imagine? Imagination must also have a

limit, yet the infinite exists, beyond even the limit of any imagination. The infinite is so spacious and broad that even our imagination fails. How much can we imagine? We are born and bred in a cell; our experience is limited and our imagination is also limited. So imagination cannot be extended to take on an infinite character. We must be conscious that we are going to establish our relationship with the infinite, where the greatest imagination is only a point. Imagination cannot devour the infinite, so imagination must not be allowed to obstruct us. How much can we imagine? Something very meager in comparison with the infinite. We must not allow ourselves to be slaves to our imagination. The infinite is so broad, we cannot have any conception of it, we cannot imagine it. It is beyond. So we must not cower under blind faith - there may exist infinitely more than we can imagine. Only genuine faith can help us in that direction, toward the infinite. And even when we have some conception, it is said that the key to make Himself known to us is in His hand. When He opens the door, we can enter. The key is not within our hand. We can see only as much as He likes us to. He is *Adhoksaja* - Transcendental. We first have to accept this before we can approach Him or even expect to know Him. We must prepare ourselves with this attitude of accepting Him as *Adhoksaja* .

If He does not allow us to enter into His Domain, should we deny His existence? He is free to do as He pleases; what can He lose? It is we who are the losers. So we should submissively acknowledge the *Adhoksaja* Realm above us. Superseding Sankaracarya's philosophy, Sri Ramanuja introduced this *Adhoksaja* principle.

The Supersubjective Realm

Because we cannot enter that realm as a subject or making it an object of our investigation, we deny the existence of such a thing. What does this mean? Fools may be satisfied with such an imaginary tendency, but really there is such a Domain, and when He wants to take us within His jurisdiction we can have some experience of it. This is *Adhoksaja* . Srimad-Bhagavatam warns us with this expression, *Adhoksaja*. He is *Adhoksaja* - Transcendental, Supramental. We cannot enter that domain as a subject. Even if we approach Him as investigators, we can know Him only as much as He allows us to. Still, we have to admit that there is such a realm, the Supersubjective Realm. We are subject, and that is Supersubject. The *jiva-caitanya*, the soul, is not the final existence. Socrates said that the soul is immortal, and can live independent of matter. He realized that the soul is a unit independent of matter - it is not a product of matter. Yet, the soul is not the final substance. Compared to matter, the soul is spiritual, but at the same time he may be considered like matter in comparison to his Knower, the Supersoul, *Paramatman* , and so on. The subjective realm progresses onward, more and more. There, all are our masters. We cannot be master there, we can only be servants. If we want to enter into the highest position, we shall accept the position of the slave of the slave. Only then can we get the chance of entering into that Domain. It is not unreasonable.

Some may think that matter, gas, sky, and finally ether is the limit of existence; or, beyond ether, electricity is the limit. But beyond that is the soul, as Socrates said. There, soul is existence, transcending matter in all its phases. So, also, that soul is only a particle on the gross side of the Absolute. There is finer existence as Supersoul, and onwards. Just as in the material creation there are so many stages such as earth or stone, wood, gold, etc., there is similarly a gradation in spiritual substance. Generally, two - in the lower part Vaikuntha, and the highest sphere is Goloka or the Land of Love.

The Play of the Sweet Absolute

The spiritual existence may also be divided into three basic classes: *sat*, *cit*, *anandam*. Above the subjective existence of *cetana* or *cit*, the *jiva* -soul, there is a higher fundamental, categorically different element of *anandam*, or happiness, ecstasy. That is not only *cit*, not only subjective, but fulfillment of the subject as *anandam*, full in itself, or more specifically in Himself. And this is the main element to be found in Goloka. Knowledge is rather subservient there. Knowledge - *jnana*, *anubhuti* - perception, experience, even of the transcendental, is subservient, subdued, and the automatic flow of *anandam* - beauty and harmony - is the real characteristic of the Goloka section. *Jnana* does not play any part there (*jnana-sunya-bhakti*). It is something like intuition.

The movement there is intuitive, and full of ecstasy. There is no movement by calculation; it is all by intuition (*sambandha-jnana*). How and wherefrom the direction comes, they do not care to know. They are but instruments in the hands of that *Anandamaya-vilasa* or Ecstatic Play. This is Goloka, and we are told that if we have faith, we shall take the trouble of making a journey toward that plane.

Faith should be the guide, impelled by our intense desire (*lobha*, *laulyam*). Our attraction and feeling of necessity for it takes precedence: "Yes, I want that." Then, we begin. Just as Hegel said, 'the idea precedes the action.' So, in *sraddha*, we feel, "Yes, I want that thing." Then we shall take the trouble of approaching it. So we are told that the highest position is such, that is, intuitive labor of Love in the Divine Pastimes (*Vilasa*). And that is the conception of the highest quarter, where one can find the best happiness, or ecstasy. One who has attraction for that will take the trouble of accepting it and going to that place; that is given by *Bhagavatam* and Mahaprabhu.

The Land of Beauty

Satyam is the land of the conception of existence; *sivam* is the land of good; and *sundaram* is the land of beauty. *Jivam* means *mangalam*, that is, that which is safe from mortality - unassailable existence. There is existence in mortality - the material energy also exists. But there is a land where there is no death, and that is considered to be *sivam* or *mangalam*. And *sundaram* is the positive life of attraction. One aspires to live such a life. *Sundaram* is a life worth living. There is such a land in the highest quarter. Mahaprabhu and *Bhagavatam* called us for that: "Here is a soil, and you are a child of that soil. If you analyze yourself deeply, you will find that you are a child of that soil.

You are not created for this land where you are always suffering from uncertainty and apprehension. Apprehension and uncertainty are always troubling you; you must cross beyond them, go up, and you will find *sivam* - no apprehension, but the positive life. If you really like to have it, you will have to enter into the area of Goloka, the land of beauty and love. No consideration of calculation, no necessity of calculation or anything else. There, no fraud or deception can ever be dreamed of, so calculation and reasoning have no place at all. Automatically, all is good, all is fulfillment. It is the general conception.

Then, for satisfaction's sake, *Yogamaya* has designed things in such a way that Krsna's Associates are afraid of losing Him, and Krsna also misses Srimati Radharani, or Mother Yasoda, etc. This is designed to maintain the Pastimes there, and not out of necessity. It is not out of necessity, but it is the way of life: as a fashion it is maintained, and not for want.

*aher iva gatih premnah svabhava-kutula bhavet
ato hetor ahetos ca, yunor mana udancati
(Chaitanya charitamrita, Madhya 8.110)*

"The nature of Love is curved like a snake; therefore two kinds of quarrelsome pride arise between Lover and Beloved: justified and groundless."

Srila Rupa Goswami gives this example. By nature, the serpent goes by a zigzag or curved movement. So, in the land of *Prema* (Divine Love), *mana*, *abhimana* (lover's quarrel, ego) and so on, are all in the nature of dealings there, but not out of necessity or want. That is the way of *Vilasa*, or Pastimes.

Devotee: On Srimati Lalita Devi's Appearance Day, you were saying how Lalita Devi goes out to the streets of Vrndavana, with a pen and paper -

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: - canvassing right and left, "Come and join my camp! I shall give you Engagement in the Service of Radha and Govinda." And that is infinite.

Devotee: So Maharaj, can one who is aspiring for Devotional Service identify himself with the thought of becoming enrolled in that particular camp?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Of course, otherwise why does that exist? That is the Infinite. There's no rule of limitation that says all the vacancies are filled. It is not finite.

Devotee: But whether it is audacity -

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Audacity, impertinence -

Devotee: Yes - to go and ask to be engaged in *Madhura-lila*, Divine Pastimes in Consort hood?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: It will be unavoidable. Necessity does not care for anything. There is no loss in necessity. When anyone finds the aspiration in himself, he will helplessly or unconsciously appeal, "Please enlist my name." He can't resist.

Devotee: This question was troubling me very much. It is inconceivable how the great Associates of the Lord actually want to take others to such Engagement.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: There's no dearth of facility on that side. Mahaprabhu says,

*tuya daya aichena parama udara
atisaya manda natha bhaga hamara*

"Whatever may be lacking is on my part. There is no defect on Your side." The *Acarya* Thakura Bhaktivinoda has given us this interpretation.

*namnam-akari bahudha nija-sarva-saktis
tatrarpita niyamitah smarane na kalah
etadrsi tava krpa bhagavan mamapi
durdaivam idrsam ihajani nanuragah*

"O Lord, Your Holy Name bestows all good fortune unto the soul, and thus you have extended into the world Your many Names - Krsna, Govinda, etc. You have offered all Your Transcendental Potency in Your Holy Name, without enjoining any (scriptural or philosophical) hard and fast rules and regulations concerning time, place or circumstance to be observed in chanting it. Dear Lord, You have so graciously made Your Holy Name available to the ordinary souls, and yet my misfortune, my offensiveness, does not allow Love for that gracious Name to be born in my heart."

Therefore Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura says, "I don't find any taste for You in my heart - it is hard like rock. There is unlimited grace on Your side, but I am so mean, so low, and You are so High."

Overwhelming Grace - the birth of fortune

But this feeling cannot arise without being in the relativity of that Superior World. Without that, such thoughts cannot arise. When really in the relativity of that world, the thought of overwhelming grace also arises. One feels that grace, although he feels unqualified in himself. And that is the beginning. Fortune begins there. Necessity is the mother of invention. *Sraddha* has come, showing such a great prospect to the devotee, and he is very eager to attain that prospect - but he fails. That failure is also in one sense participating in a particular position. He's already in the relativity of the Infinite, otherwise he could not have made such a statement. It is infinite! Whatever degree of attainment he may reach, he'll still be unsatisfied - because that is infinite. *Na prema-gandho 'sti darapi me harau*: "Is there such an attainment in me? No. I do not possess it, because it is impossible to possess Him." Yet, possession is there in the negative sense: "I am so negative."

This is the nature of the Negative's possession of the Positive, and so, She can attract the Positive. The more the negative characteristic is found in a particular place, the more the positive is attracted there. That is the underlying truth.

Srimati Radharani says, "I am in the highest need of Krsna." So much feeling of necessity in Krsna's absence is not to be found anywhere as in Her heart. And that satisfies Krsna. Setting aside all other demands, He wants to come and satisfy the demand of that heart where want for Him is of the highest degree. Is it not natural? Dedication. We are units or aspects of the Moiety of Dedication, and not of fulfillment. Fulfillment is a stagnant thing. It is a qualification in the limited world. But in the unlimited, such an attitude can't stand. This is the nature there. *Ksudha* .

Devotee: *Ksudha* means unquenchable thirst?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes; unquenchable thirst, so the tiniest drop of nectar will be tasted as very, very sweet. Inundating.

Once in Madras, one gentleman put a question to me: "Your highest ideal is Chaitanyadev? Isn't His conception dangerous? Always mad with want of something, crying and rubbing His face against the wall, such intense madness for want of Krsna - that is a dangerous thing to us! We would be rather afraid to make that the ideal for our life."

bahye visa-jvala haya, bhitare anandamaya
krsna-premera adbhuta carita
(Chaitanya charitamrita, Madhya 2.50)

"The amazing characteristic of Love for Krsna is found in the symptoms of burning anguish without, and ecstasy within."

The Joy of hankering for the Truth

Extreme hankering for the truth is in itself *anandam*. "I want only the truth, nothing else" - that is *anandam*. It is unpossessed by any unessential thing. And by nature, the highest fulfillment is found in the negative aspect; the intense feeling of negativity is the highest attainment in its fullest position. Fulfillment of life is in the necessity of the Negative Potency.

Devotee: Maharaj, does that negativity mean humility?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes, it begins from humility. As Sri Chaitanyadev has taught us, one should consider himself lower than a straw and be more tolerant than a tree, and never expect honor for oneself, but always offer it to others.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has explained that we are actually lower than a straw because in our present existence we are *vikrta*, or deranged. But a straw is at least passive and maintaining its natural position. We have lost our proper function and become of negative value; we are lacking the positive value of a straw because we are adverse.

We are going against our own interest with our intelligence. We have intelligence, but it is misguided, opposed to the proper order of things. The straw is poised, it cannot move, but we can move in a wrong way. So we are actually in a more heinous position than a straw. We use our assets willingly to misguide ourselves, but the straw maintains its fixed position without deviation.

In the worldly sense we may hold a position superior to that of grass or a tree, but what of that? All our credits are being misused for our selfishness. So we are lower than straw. We are armed, but armed for suicide. A madman should not possess a dagger. He is dangerous. He could stab himself at any moment - he's mad.

The tolerance of the tree may also be seen in the same light. The tree must forbear his former actions, but we must be alert not only to the former but also to the present actions. In the present time also we may commit some wrong, so our position is more dangerous than a tree's. The tree is only reaping the result of its previous action, but our need is to guard ourselves against our present malactivity, so we require more forbearance than that of a tree. We should think, "I must be more cautious than the tree in my attitude of forbearance. My position is more dangerous because my special attainment is going against me."

Chapter Three

Bhajana Real and Apparent

Devotee: I have heard that some *Acaryas* hold that *smarana* , internal remembrance, is of prime importance as a devotional service to the Lord, above even *kirtana* or chanting; or is it subservient to *kirtana*?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: There are some who are of that opinion because *smarana* is exclusively connected with consciousness, or more concerned with the subtle part of our existence; so that should be the most effective form of *sadhana* , or means to the end. But our Guru Maharaj, and Srila Jiva Goswami, and also Kaviraja Goswami Prabhu, laid stress on *kirtana* - especially for the beginners. Guru Maharaj says in his song *Vaisnava ke?* ('Who is a Vaisnava?'):

*kirtana prabhava, smarana haibe,
se kale bhajana nirjjana sambhava*

"Internal remembrance can occur by the power of *kirtana*, and only then is solitary Service possible." *Nirjjana-bhajana* or *smarana*, exclusive solitary Devotion unconscious of the environment is not at all possible for beginners. And Srila Jiva Goswami says (*Bhakti-sandarbha, sankhya* 273):

*yadyapy anya bhaktih kalau karttavya,
tada kirtanakhya-bhakti-samyogenaiva.*

"In this Kali-yuga, of the nine basic forms of Devotional Practices, the forms other than *kirtana* certainly should be practiced, but they must be conducted subserviently to *kirtana* ." And this is the principle of Mahaprabhu's preaching. *Kirtana* has its own special characteristic, particularly in Kali-yuga.

*kaler dosa-nidhe rajann asti hy eko mahan gunah
kirtanad eva krsnasya mukta-sangah param vrajet*

(Bhagavatam, 12.3.51)

(Sri Sukadeva Goswami said) "O King, the age of Kali, the repository of all evils, has but one glorious characteristic: in this age, those who simply chant the Holy Name of Krsna are liberated and reach the Supreme Lord."

Also, Srila Madhvacarya has written in his commentary on *Mundakopanisad*:

*dvapariyair janair visnuh pancaratras ca kevalam
kalau tu nama-matrena pujiyate bhagavan harih*

"In Dvapara-yuga, Lord Visnu is exclusively worshiped by the people according to the principles of Deity worship delineated in the *Pancaratra* Scripture, but in Kali-yuga, the Supreme Lord Hari is worshiped only by the chanting of His Holy Name."

In the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* , when the incarnation of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is mentioned (Bhagavatam, 11.5.32), the method by which the people will worship Him is also given:

yajnah sankirtana-prayair yajanti hi sumedhasah

Here, *yajnah* means sacrifice, dedication, which is *sankirtana-praya* , or *sankirtana-pradhana* , which means 'predominated by *sankirtana* , the congregational chanting of the Holy Name'; and this is performed by those endowed with sufficient piety. So, in this age of Iron, *kirtana* has its own special privilege, granted by the Supreme Lord - Mahaprabhu's speciality is preaching, *kirtana* . He inaugurated and conducted *Hari-kirtana*.

So *kirtana* has been accepted by our Guru Maharaj, Srila Jiva Goswami, and others. To write about the Lord is also within the jurisdiction of *kirtana* To preach is assertion - to take the message to others.

So also, to be engaged in answering the questions of the environment automatically demands concentration, which is very rare in this age. When one is doing *kirtana*, he automatically cannot but give all concentration and attention. He cannot speak independently; intuitively, he must be all-attentive. For this reason, *kirtana* has been recommended to be the highest form of *bhajana* , especially in the age of Kali.

*bhajanera madhye srestha nava-vidha bhakti
'krsna-prema,"krsna' dite dhare maha-sakti
tara madhye sarva-srestha nama-sankirtana
niraparadhe nama laile paya prema-dhana
(Chaitanya charitamrita, Antya 4.70,71)*

"Of all forms of Divine Service, nine forms are superior, which with great potency bestow upon the devotees Love for Krsna, and their personal relationship with Him; and of the nine, the best is *Nama-sankirtana* . By offenselessly taking the Holy Name, the treasure of Love for the Lord is attained."

Mahaprabhu also accepted five principal limbs from the nine that are mentioned in the *Bhagavatam* as *sravanam* ,*kirtanam* , etc.:

*sadhu-sanga, nama-kirtana, bhagavat-sravana
mathura-vasa, sri-murtira sraddhaya sevana
(Chaitanya charitamrita, Madhya 22.124)*

"Association with the pure devotee, chanting the Holy Name, hearing the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* , residing in Mathura Dhama, and faithfully worshipping the Deity."

So of these five, Mahaprabhu has given *Nama-sankirtana* the highest position. *Nama-sankirtana* has been considered best of all. It has been delineated by the *Acaryas*. That was especially given by our Guru Maharaj, and the basis is supported by the *sastra*, Scriptures. But if other *Acaryas* have shown preference for *smarana* in any instance, that will be in the sense that *kirtana* may be in the relativity of the material environment, whereas *smarana* is independent of the material considerati-

on. From that point of view, *smarana* may be recommended as the highest, but that is not accepted in a general way. It may be a special opinion.

In *Caitanya-siksamrta* , Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has clarified that there are two types of devotees in the stage just prior to attaining the highest plane of *Paramahansa* or *uttamadhikara* . The devotees who cross the middle stage (*madhyamadhikara*) and reach towards occupying the highest position are called devotees in the stage of *premaruruksu* . They are classified in two sections - *gosthyanandi* and *viviktanandi* (or *bhajanandi*). The first are always engaged in preaching, and the second take to *smarana* or *nirjjana-bhajana* - a solitary life of worship, without mixing with the environment. It does not prove that one is superior to the other. The *viviktanandis* generally like secluded life and go on with *smarana* ; and those who are of the *gosthyanandi* type go on with *kirtana* , preaching, and also attain the highest position without coming to the school of exclusive *smarana* . Those who have attained the highest plane are known as *premarudha*.

Imaginary perfection - self-deception

Guru Maharaj clearly said that when we are in a lower position, *smarana* is injurious. Rather, we should take to *kirtana* . *Kirtana prabhava, smarana haibe, se kale bhajana nirjjana sambhava* . The Sahajiya school (imitationists) are more fond of *smarana* than *kirtana* . They are 'followers' of *smarana* . They lead a secluded life, and mentally they go on identifying themselves with a particular *sakhi* of their own age, her duty, her place of attendance in a particular place of Vrndavana, in a particular *lila* , under the guidance of a particular *sakhi* , and so on. They are required to go on meditating on all these things by their so-called *guru* . That is the process amongst the Sahajiya school, but we do not admit that. We consider it all false and imaginary. They are not fit for the plane. They do not have real *sambandha-jnana* , knowledge of what is what. They only go on with the habitual repetition of a particular mental speculation, but *anartha-nivrtti* (purging of evils) or any other process based on it cannot be effected thereby. Their imagined achievement is sheer concoction. They are not aware of the facts - the ontological gradation from Viraja to Brahmaloaka, Vaikuntha and Goloka. They are *pukura-curiwale* - 'pond thieves.' To think one can steal a pond is self-deception. We think that kind of '*smarana*' to be something like self-deception.

For example, Srila Gaura Kisora Babaji Maharaj went on with *smarana* . Once, there was another Babaji who constructed a *kutir* nearby, a small hut, and he went on imitating Gaura Kisora Babaji, doing *madhukari* (subsisting on alms), sitting and meditating, and wearing similar cloth. Then once Babaji remarked, "If a lady enters into a maternity ward, she cannot produce a child only by imitating the sounds and symptoms of labor. Many things are necessary before that!" So only by imitating the *Paramahansa Babaji*, *bhajana* cannot be effected. One must have connection with *suddha-sattva* , the real plane, and then all the higher symptoms may appear. Otherwise, all those speculative antics will manifest.

na uthiya vrksopari, tanatani phala dhari'
dusta-phala karile arjjana
(Kalyana-kalpataru, Upadesa 18)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura says that if one wants fruits without taking the trouble to climb the tree, what sort of fruits can he expect? The fruits will be ruined, or rotten. Without proper progression, it is all imagination - a madman's feat. One must gradually reach the plane of truth, *suddha-sattva*. There are so many planes to cross - Bhur-, Bhuvar-, Svar-, Mahar-, Janar-, Tapar-, Satya-loka, Viraja, Brahmaloaka. Mahaprabhu says that the creeper of Bhakti grows and rises up to Goloka, and she has to cross all these planes.

*upajiya bade late 'brahmanda' bhedi' yaya
'viraja,' 'brahmaloka,' bhedi"paravyoma' paya
tabe yaya tad upari 'goloka-vrndavana'
'krsna-carana'-kalpavrkse kare arohana
(Chaitanya charitamrita, Madhya 19.153,4)*

"The creeper of Devotion is born, and grows to pierce the wall of the universe. It crosses the Viraja river and the *Brahman* plane, and reaches to the Vaikuntha plane. Then it grows further up to Goloka Vrndavana, finally reaching to embrace the wish-yielding tree of Krsna's Lotus Feet."

But the pseudo-devotees do not care to know what is Paravyoma, what is Brahmaloaka, what is Viraja, what is the *Brahmanda*. Without caring to know about these things, they approach any *guru*, receive some *mantram*, and go on meditating. But in such a stage, if one goes on meditating upon *Radha-Govinda-lila*, instead of entering *Radha-Govinda-lila*, he will rather entangle with the ladies and gents of this world. He will become entangled in the domain of lust and he will have to go to hell instead of going up to Goloka.

Carmma-mamsamaya - kama, prema - cidanandadhama. The carnal appetite is lust, whereas Love is the Abode of Divine Ecstasy. So imitation is not success. It rather degrades. Imitation degrades. Imagination is only a mental exercise.

Devotee: What if that mental exercise is done with faith?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Mind is separate. *Sraddha* is connected with soul, *atma*, and mind is matter. Mind is material: a part of material potency. This is also clarified in *Gita*:

*bhumir apo 'nalo vayuh kham mano buddhir eva ca
ahankara itiyam me bhinna prakrtir astadha
(Bhagavad-gita, 7.4)*

Mind is a product of the material potency, and the *jiva* is a product of *parasakti*, the principal potency; and *Svarupa-sakti*, the Lord's Personal Potency, is higher than the *jiva*. The nature of the mind is mental speculation (*manodharma*). That has nothing to do with truth. That is drawn from the material world, the world of misconception. The mind is full of misconception (*avan-manaso gocarah*). Mind cannot reach the stage of feeling or perceiving truth proper. It is only related to mundane things or exploitation.

Devotee: But isn't pure mind a product of *sraddha*?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Mind cannot be pure, just as a fossil cannot produce life. Similarly, mind cannot produce *sraddha*. *Sraddha* is original and fundamental. When the Supreme Lord appears in the heart, mind vanishes. Reality is just the opposite. Darkness cannot produce light: light comes, darkness vanishes. So truth appears when real pure consciousness appears, and mental speculation vanishes. The mind is concerned with misconception. It is an element of the *aparasaki*, the inferior potency. That potency is both subtle and gross. Earth, water, fire, air and ether are gross; mind, intelligence and ego are subtle; but they're all material. Soul is transcendental. And *Svarupa-sakti* or the Lord's Personal Potency, *bhajana* or Divine Service, and Goloka-Vaikuntha are all Supra-mundane and Transcendental - on the other side of the soul, not on the lower side where the mind is located. Mind emerges from the ego, that is, the false ego, and it is made of the exploiting tendency. But Mahaprabhu says, *mora mana - vrndavana*: "My speculation is on the other side - Vrndavana." That is not an element of this mundane plane.

Devotee: So there is a pure mind?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj : Properly speaking, the word 'mind' does not deserve to be used in this context at all, otherwise everything will be wrongly equated. The residents of Goloka also possess senses, etc., but the affairs of the mundane world are never one with that. The mundane mentality is a product of exploitation, sense-exploitation.

We need relief from this mind. We are surrounded by poisonous thought. In the narration of the *Tri-dandi-sannyasin* in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, all the disciplines are common in that the mind should be checked.

*danam svadharmo niyamo yamas ca
srutan ca karmani ca sad-vratani
sarve mano-nigraha-laksanantah
paro hi yogo manasah samadhih
(Bhagavatam, 11.23.45)*

"Charity, constant and conditional prescribed duties, mental and sensual control, hearing the Scriptures, holy vows and duties - all these are observed to gain subjugation of the mind. Mental control is known as the supreme *yoga* ."

Devotee: You were talking about *kirtana*; I have read that Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura says that *japa* (private chanting) is also related to *kirtana* (congregational chanting, or preaching), and also that Srila Rupa Goswami says there are three types of *japa*, namely *manasika* or mental, *vacika* or vocal, and *upamsu* or whispered. Which is proper for us, and which is the most effective?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: In *upamsu* there is no sound, only movement of the lips; and in *manasika* there is no lip movement. You ask which is superior of the three types?

Devotee: Yes.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Whatever is internally real will be superior. *Japa* must be genuine, not imitative. Our attention should always be towards the negative side. If we can practice that in a real way, our promotion cannot be checked. But without qualification, if we are very eager to go up-

ward, there will be a tendency to fall down. *Dasyaya te mama raso 'stu raso 'stu satyam*: "May I have the aspiration for servitude." For *bhajana* or internal Service, such a temperament should always be followed. *Tad dasa-dasa-dasanam dasatvam dehi me prabho* .

Promotion is inevitable if we always try to adhere to the lower duty. Eagerness for promotion is the enemy. That is for *pratistha* (renown), and that will undermine everything. Srila Prabhupada said that imitation arises from the attraction for *pratistha* or desire to hold the superior position and acquire a name for oneself. That is the great enemy. Don't fall prey to that *pratistha*, eagerness to hold the higher position. Rather, *dainyam* - humility, is the healthy sign of a devotee.

Devotee: Maharaj, we see in the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* that sometimes the glories of silent chanting are mentioned, and then in other places we see that the glories of chanting very loudly, as in the case of Haridasa Thakura, are extolled. So, what is the adjustment?

Tangible Depth in Divinity

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Only a theoretical understanding won't help you much. Try to catch the spirit of the thing. When backed by the *sadhu*, the *Guru* of very high type, you can do anything. By the grace of his support, whatever *kirtana*, etc., you may do, will be effective. Meditating may have been praised as more efficient in a particular context, but if you venture to superficially try and chant in that way, the opposition will be so great you'll be nowhere - you will turn to be an atheist. It can happen if you don't have sufficient support to fight against the odds. Don't venture to attack the enemy when your position is weak. But when backed by the great generals and many munitions, you must march on. That will help us to engage in real *kirtana*.

The real factor is *sadhu-sanga*. It has association with the higher power. Otherwise, nothing has any value. The stand must be taken on the real plane - *sadhu* and *sastra* .We must cultivate the real thing. That is the all-important factor always to keep up the reality of the *bhajana*. For the weaker devotee, the *sadhaka* or aspirant, the greatest necessity is *sadhu-sanga*, and the Scriptures are necessary for knowledge. *Sadhu-sastra-krpa*. Then *kirtana* will be best.

Vrndavana Dasa Thakura says that one feeds himself, another feeds thousands and feeds himself. Who's the greater? *Kirtana* is to cultivate oneself and help many others to cultivate at the same time. But when you have no capital of your own, if you go to preach you will meet such opposition, *asat-sanga*, that the *ankura*, the bud, will be nipped. In that case, if you are *kanistha-adhikari*, neophyte, don't go to attack others without vigorous backing. *Kirtana* means to preach, or to attack others in a sense. Don't venture, as *kanistha-adhikari*. You'll be turned into an atheist. Only after passing through the proper stages - *sravana-dasa*, *varana-dasa*, *sadhana-dasa* and *prapana-dasa* (the phases of hearing, acceptance, practice, and attainment) - then you can preach independently (*apana-dasa*). Otherwise, only with the help of someone in *prapana-dasa* can you go to preach.

We should have an immovable connection with reality, an absolute conception of reality. Such a stable position is necessary. Invulnerable. A sure position, what is what - *sambandha jnana*. Then we shall be able to understand and harmonize the differences that we find in the writings of the *A-caryas*; what applies where - under what circumstances a particular line has been advised to be taken up, and under what circumstances another has been advised. Practical knowledge.

Humility

Devotee: Maharaj, this morning we were talking about humility. What is the perfection of humility for the *kanistha-adhikari*?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: It may vary for different persons. So one has to think out his own way. Humility means 'to not encroach on the rights of others.' And also, it should not be such as to kill one's own self. It must be natural.

At the time of entering the present Bagh Bazaar Math (of Sri Gaudiya Math in Calcutta), there was a festival. From a rented house, the Deities were brought on a chariot in procession. There was chanting and dancing, and the Deities were installed in the new Temple. *Mahaprasadam* was distributed. At twelve or one o'clock that night we went to bed. My bed was just nearby the bed of one of my Godbrothers, a learned professor. He was very humble. In the morning, the professor said to me, speaking very slowly, "Last night, I felt so much weakness that I thought I was dying. I thought that I would arouse you, but then again I thought, 'No, why should I disturb the Vaisnava? He's so tired tonight, and having his rest, so let me wait'; and after waiting a little I gained some strength, so I did not have to disturb you. But I'm still very weak now." Very slowly, and soberly, he told these things. He was dying, and he did not arouse me, only for fear of disturbing my rest.

When I heard these things from his lips that morning, although of course he put it very gently, it struck me like thunder! I at once went to Prabhupada and informed him that such was the case: "A gentleman was almost dying last night - but he was too meek to disturb me." Prabhupada and the devotees also knew of our professor Godbrother's nature. They took the matter seriously and immediately called for a doctor.

Sometimes I think such humility to be dangerous. The disciple's life is a valuable property of his Guru Maharaj's, not merely his own. He's not to be concerned with only his interest, but he should live in the interest of his Gurudeva. I could not appreciate such humility.

Everything must be of a real characteristic - connected with reality. I am thirsty - perhaps I won't request any Vaisnava, "Please help me with a glass of water." Then my disease may continue, for the sake of penny-wise pound-foolishness. Common sense should be utilized always.

Devotee: Just before Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj left the world, he was in Vrndavana. He was lying on the bed, unable to eat anything; his condition was so bad he could barely take even a glass of water. But I marked that when anyone visited him, he would, even in that condition, always say to the devotees, "Give them *Prasadam* ." He himself could not eat anything -

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes, he wanted to travel through the whole of Vrndavana and circumambulate Govardhana by bullock-cart. But Krsnadasa Babaji Maharaj's help was sought, and he came and was somehow able to dissuade him from that plan. Despite his serious condition of health, Swami Maharaj wanted to go to all the places of *Lila* like Radha-kunda and Govardhana, offer obeisances, and return.

So the fact is that anything in connection with God - all types of *bhajana* - all are good. We are not against anything of that type. But we must consider what will be most effective according to our capacity. At the same time we must not commit any offense by omission. If we say that *smarana* is

superior and that the other types of *bhajana* like *pada-sevana* , etc., are of a lower order, how can we be so audacious as to condemn them in such a way? Still, we may distinguish very cautiously, but not merely to satisfy our curiosity. Only when the necessity arises shall we venture to establish the superiority of Laksmi over Sukadeva, or Ambarisa, and so on. But we must not venture to make light of such matters. These are all serious points.

To consider one Vaisnava over another is not a game: the points are very subtle. They are devotees, and we must not venture to place one above the other according to our crude necessity. It is not an academic exercise that as a professor we shall amass some theoretical knowledge to quote to the students. It should not be accepted in that line. We shall always be conscious of the practical side: "They are so great, and where am I? Who am I passing judgment over?" There should be some limit to our adventurous audacity.

Devotee: My friend was relating last night that you once said 'humility is accepting no position.'

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes. 'No position' because a servant has no independent position - his position is always on the command of the master. He's always situated within infinite possibility. But he's humble to his master, not to the *goondas* (rogues). His humility must be chiefly towards whom? "I am humble, the lowest of the low, to whom? Towards my master. I am humble towards the Lord's own, the Vaisnava. I am humble there." When it is necessary for Hanumanji to burn the golden city of Lanka, his humility is not disturbed. He is as humble as anyone can be in carrying out the order of Lord Ramacandra. He is fully given, wholly surrendered.

Humility, in other words, is surrendering. Humility means no opposition to the command of the master who is related to Vaikuntha, the upper section; not to the ordinary street zone, or tiger, or serpent. Humility does not drag them into the relativity of the serpent, tiger or jackal. Their real relationship is with the Vaisnava. That is the plane where the devotee takes his stand. He's concerned with the Vaisnava. And 'humble' means that he does not resist his master's instruction. Without opposition, he carries out whatever order comes to him. He is humble. He possesses humility, *suniscata*. He is not sitting on a seat of prejudice. Generally we think of humility as pertaining to the outside world, but this is not the meaning. To the standard-thinking person, the members of the outside world are deluded they are mad. Humility is not in the standard of madness, or catering to the mad people. A madman has no standard of his own. So humility means to have a standard from the standard world. Do you follow?

Devotee: Yes.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Prabhupada has defined humility as 'that which is absent where there is a spirit of enjoyment.' Enjoying spirit, or exploitation, means aggression. There, there cannot be humility. Humility is only cent-per-cent Service. There is no humility in exploitation, or renunciation either. These two are opposed to the normal nature of the world. They are totally misconceived. They are enemies. They are the challenging element to the normal reality. Do you understand?

Devotee: Yes.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: The spirit of exploitation and the spirit of renunciation - both are a revolt against the proper smooth working of the truth. So they are totally misconceived. And real humility

must be in the relativity of the full aspect of the truth, not with the misconceived world. The standard is not of the misconceived, the madman.

Devotee: Yes. What about spiritual aggression? Like competition. There's a competitive spirit between two persons who are doing the same thing. Then where's the place for humility there?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: There will be humility if it is really Service, because its object is the Center. The devotee feels his inspiration and direction from there, and cooperates accordingly. He is connected with the Absolute Center, so competition may be arranged by *Yogamaya*. He is not responsible because his necessity is only for the Center. As we discussed, the Absolute is designed that way, but not out of necessity. *Aher iva gatih premnah, svabhava-kutila bhavet*. It seems to be crooked, but it is not; it is the very nature of absolute dealings. It is necessary only for the variegatedness of the Service of Krsna. It is designed from the upper quarter. The devotees are not responsible for that.

Devotee: So we must not infringe on the property of others. There may be competition, but we should not infringe on the property of others?

Our Duty

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Our duty will always be to dedicate ourselves more and more intensely - and we shall do that according to how we may be interfered with by the higher agency. We must always keep ourselves ready for that. Cent-per-cent we shall obey the handling from the upper house, without any hesitation. That is our duty. Whatever will be asked of us, we shall do. On the battlefield, if the general asks a particular battalion to fight in the first battle, and they say, "Why shouldn't the second battalion be commanded to go? Why should we go first? We shall die, and they will rejoice the victory in the last battle? Why should we go first?" What do you say?

Devotee: That is not dedication.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Of course. The military will shoot you then and there! "That is our consideration from above; it is not left to you whether Battalion 1, 2, 3 or 4 will go." Only the highest brains have command. Complaint against that high command means to die - to be done away with immediately.

Devotee: So, Maharaj, Arjuna followed the instructions of Krsna without question - whenever Krsna ordered him to shoot, he did so. He faithfully followed whatever instructions he received. In one incident, Yudhisthira did not follow the instructions of Lord Krsna; but when the five Pandavas were on the *mahaprasthana* or voluntary journey to court death, Arjuna fell prior to Yudhisthira. Why did Arjuna have to fall?

Devotion - relative and Absolute

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: That is not the criterion of the highest devotion. Yudhisthira's achievement was a separate thing. Devotion proper is not connected there. That is some worldly affair of *sattva-guna*. Yamaraja, in the form of a dog, went on - but Arjuna had to fall, Bhima had to fall. The test was something else, connected with the mundane world. And they went to Svarga, Heaven. That is

not the highest attainment, but only a show of the outer case of the Pandavas. Really, the Pandavas are *sakhas* or friends of Krsna, but their going to Svarga is a separate outward affair. When the Pandavas reached Svarga, they saw that Duryodhana and others had already arrived there. Although the position of Duryodhana and company was much lower - they were the enemy camp - nonetheless, after death they all achieved their good and honored position in Svarga.

Yudhisthira went with his old body of *sattva-guna*, worldly goodness. A *ksatriya* who dies on the battlefield is rewarded with life in Heaven. Yudhisthira went there, keeping his mortal body, although the others had to die first in order to take appropriate forms for that plane. But the plane was only that of *sattva-guna*, Svarga, and not the *aparakṛta* or Transcendental Planes of Vaikuntha, Dvāraka, Mathura or Goloka.

Similarly, it is also mentioned in the story of the Kesavatara (Incarnations from hair) that Lord Visnu gave a boon that a black and a white hair from his head would go and save the Earth from the horrors of the burden of sins she was suffering from. Those hairs are said to have taken the forms of Krsna and Balarama. They took up those two robes, but in that instance They are only *Bhu-bharanaharanakari Avataras*, or Descents appearing to relieve the Earth of its burden, and not *Svayam Bhagavan* or the Supreme Lord in Person. The Lord as He is in Vrndavana is entirely distinct.

So also it has been seen in many instances that the outer case is one thing, the inner man is another. The lower personality is absorbed. Just as when the prime minister comes to the city, the state governor's function is absorbed in him, if he wishes. When the king comes to visit the colony, all the officers' powers really vanish in him. Whatever he does must automatically be done by them, their own respective personalities dead. So when the higher descends into the lower case, the lower case loses its value. Then, when it retires, the lower case remains and the higher case ascends.

Nitai-Gaurahari bol! We pray to Nityananda Prabhu. We want to come to an adjusted, former position: "If I have committed any offense, *aparadha*, when dealing with so many subtle things about the great personages, please, Nityananda Prabhu, absolve me of that offense and restore me to my normal humble position."

*sarva-vaisnavera pa'ye kari namaskara,
ithe aparadha kichu nahuka amara*

Vrndavana Dasa Thakura says, "I bow at the feet of the Vaisnavas; may there be no offense in my attempt to serve them."

When we deal with so many great things, such as trying to speak about great personalities of the highest order, we should beg Nityananda Prabhu to pardon us for our audacity. He is *patita-pavana*, savior of the fallen souls. He is *adosa-darsi* - He generally does not take any offense.

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread - where angels fear to tread, fools rush in. Like fools, we rush into the subtlest realm of sentiments of the high order; so we must beg to be excused by the High Personalities. *Apasiddhanta* or philosophical adulteration strikes very harshly. It was Svarupa Damodara's Service to first examine any poems or writings for purity before they were taken to Mahaprabhu. If writings with *apasiddhduta* were offered to Mahaprabhu, He would be disturbed in a very cruel way. *Apasiddhanta* cruelly attacks the ideal of the higher-thinking persons.

There is a narration by Kalidasa about a king who required a palanquin carrier. At random he selected a man from the crowd, not knowing that the man was a learned man, a *pandit*. When bearing a corner of the palanquin, the man did not carry it steadily, due to his avoiding the ants on the road. The king inquired,

"*Skandam kim badhati ?*" (Literally, "Do you shoulder [sic] hurt?").

The pandit replied,

"*Na tatha badhate skandam yatha badhati badhate* " - "My shoulder doesn't pain me as much as your 'pain' (your grammatical misuse of *badhati* for *badhate*)!"

So, subtle beating is there in the higher sphere, in the higher sentiment. They may be offended. We shall, not with curiosity but with all humility and all respects to Them, try to enter into that garden without disturbing any plant or person roaming in that sphere. Otherwise our talks will be pure intellectualism, and not *Harikatha*.

Chapter Four

Heralding the Twilight

A Pioneer of Exclusive Devotion

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura appeared (in 1838) in a very famous Kayastha family, bearing the title Dutta. In Calcutta there is a place called Hat-khola Dutta which was named after the family. Near Birnagar there was a big village named Ula, and the family of the title Mustauphi were landowners there. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's mother came from this line. Bhaktivinoda Thakura was born and brought up at Ula, and he studied at Krishnanagar College. Of course, he had exceptional talent. He came into contact with the then educated society. Especially, there was a Mr. Duff, a Christian missionary who established the Scottish Church College. Duff was encouraging and attracting many of the young Bengalis of the time to take up Christianity. Gradually, Bhaktivinoda Thakura had close association with the Brahmo Society, the so-called culturally advanced followers of Ram Mohan Ray. Maharsi Devendranath Thakura's elder brother, Dvijendranath, was his very intimate friend.

For his livelihood he accepted government service. He was posted at Orissa in the position of sub-divisional officer. He was also posted as inspector of the Jagannatha Puri Temple, where his duty was to guard against corruption. At that time he came into contact with the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and he tried to read it. He was gradually charmed by *Bhagavatam*, *Sri Caitanya-caritamrta* and the life of Sri Chaitanyadev. The Brahmo Association had expected much of him because of his scholarly nature; he could write and debate well. But after coming into contact with the *Bhagavatam*, he dissociated himself from them. When he was serving in Dinajpur he gave his speech on *Bhagavatam*, and it was then that he completely separated himself from the Brahmo school, and he was seen to side with the Vaisnava school of thought in the line of Mahaprabhu. And gradually he also read the *sastras* and wrote many books on Vaisnavism.

After his retirement, he wanted to go to Vrndavana and pass the rest of his life there. But he repeatedly had a dream that he must discover the actual Birthplace of Sri Chaitanyadev. He could not neglect that dream. He again entered into service at Krishnanagar, and there, he consulted the records of the locality. With the help of those records, and by his divine inspiration, he discovered the Birthplace at Yogapitha, Mayapur. Then, with deepened interest, he visited the entire Nabadwip-mandal; and with reference to the Scriptures he gave a description of both the ancient and contemporary holy places in the *Dhama* of Mahaprabhu. He established a committee to ensure that the Service of Mahaprabhu's place of Advent continue. Lastly, he handed it over to our Prabhupada.

From the beginning, the fourth son of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Sri Bimala Prasad (the family name of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami) was naturally inclined to the Service of Mahaprabhu. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura finally entrusted him with the Direct Service of Mayapur. He accepted that, a little hesitantly at first, but to his last moment he conducted the Service faithfully. In that matter, from the practical standpoint Kunjabihari Vidyabhusana, later Srimad Tirtha Maharaj, assisted Prabhupada a great deal. Gradually many scholars also gathered around him. With their help, he started the movement of Sri Gaudiya Math. He was inspired to preach, and he did so up to the last moment of his life.

When Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura passed away, Srila Prabhupada arranged a condolence meeting in a public hall and invited many respectable gentlemen. Amongst them were the leading scholars of the time, including Bipin Pal, the then principal of the Metropolitan School; and Satish Sarkar, Panchkari Bandopadhyay, and others.

New Thought to the world

They all spoke very highly about Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, recognizing that he gave new thought to the society at large; his writings were of original character, not stereotyped. His investigations into Vaisnavism excelled that of all the modern *Acaryas*. Shishir Ghosh also once said, "We have heard of the Six Goswamis of the time of Mahaprabhu, but Bhaktivinoda Thakura's writings prove that he holds the seventh position amongst the Goswamis. He has left us such extensive and original writing about the teachings of Sri Chaitanyadev." In this way, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura left the world his literature - he is in his literature, present forever. He has delivered his writings about the Teachings of Mahaprabhu and Bhagavatam in a systematic and scientific way, suitable to the modern age. Our debt unto his Holy Feet has no end.

The Predominant Guru of Srila Prabhupada

Although Prabhupada, as suggested by Bhaktivinoda Thakura, took initiation from Gaura Kisora Babaji Maharaj, he still held Bhaktivinoda Thakura as his *Guru*, substantially. Formally, by the order of Bhaktivinoda Thakura, he took Gaura Kisora Babaji Maharaj as Gurudeva. Bhaktivinoda Thakura selected Srila Gaura Kisora for him, but from what we have found in him, he knew Bhaktivinoda Thakura as his *Guru* from the internal consideration. We find his outside and inside was filled with Bhaktivinoda Thakura. Bhaktivinoda Thakura not in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense. Prabhupada inaugurated many Maths (Ashrams and Temples), and we find that he named the Deities "Vinoda-Vilasa," "Vinoda-Rama," "Vinodananda," "Vinoda-Prana," and so on.

He saw everything through his Gurudeva, Bhaktivinoda Thakura. His attempt to approach Sri Sri Radha Govinda or Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is inconceivable without Bhaktivinoda Thakura's intervention in him. I attempted to write something about Bhaktivinoda Thakura, and I thought that this was the key to Prabhupada's affection towards me. His attention was drawn to me because I tried to give the greatness of Bhaktivinoda Thakura's character to the public in a systematic way. It is my own feeling. He can give everything to one who is a little attached to Bhaktivinoda Thakura.

That was his spirit. He thought himself indebted to Bhaktivinoda Thakura's holy life, so much so, that he saw Srimati Radharani and Gadadhara Pandit in him. This is the highest ideal of *Guru-tattva*: Gadadhara Pandit in *Gaura-lila*, and Srimati Radharani in *Krsna-lila*, in *Madhura-rasa*. He also once said, "If we raise our vision and observe, we shall find Srimati Radharani in *Gurudeva*." If we raise our head a little and search, then we shall find that it is Srimati Radharani Herself who is behind the function of *Gurudeva*; all others are channels or instrumentals, but the real source of Grace as *Guru* springs from the Original Source of Service, of Love. He saw Bhaktivinoda Thakura in that light.

*sakadd-haritvena samasta-sastrair
uktas tatha bhavyata eva sadbhih
kim tu prabhor yah priya eva tasya*

"According to all the Scriptures, *Gurudeva* is directly the Lord Himself, and the pure devotees also realize the same. He is actually a simultaneously one and different Manifestation of the Lord, different in the sense that he is the Lord's dearmost servitor. I offer my obeisances unto the Lotus Feet of that Divine Master, *Sri Gurudeva*."

We are asked to see *Gurudeva* not opaque, but transparent - transparent to such a degree that through him the highest end, the highest conception of Service, can be seen and attained. We can attain it there. If we are earnest, we shall find the highest link, from the very Source. So we are requested not to see *Guru* as limited in his ordinary personification, but as the Transparent Mediator of the highest function in his line. We can see this only if our vision is deep. According to the disciple's depth of *sraddha*, he will see the Lord present in his *Gurudeva*. The *Guru* Principle, *Guru-tattva*, is very special, very noble, very broad and very deep.

So we are warned against thinking that our *Gurudeva* is in mortal relativity. Prabhupada showed us by his ideal conduct how much earnestness one may have for *Gurudeva*. We have witnessed this in his practices and teachings. *Gurvaika-nistha* - exclusive adherence to the Service of *Sri Guru*. Bhaktivinoda Thakura was his very being. Everything was Bhaktivinoda Thakura.

**Indomitable Loyalty to Mahaprabhu:
Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada**

Devotee: Is it true that Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami would openly criticize Isvarachandra Vidyasagar (a famous Sanskrit scholar of the time)?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Once Vidyasagar wrote in a book '*isvara-nirakara-caitanya-svarupa*' ('The Lord is without any figure, and He is a mass of consciousness'). As but a young boy, Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada went to him and challenged, "What have you written here? You say *Isvara*, Lord, and then you say *nirakara*, formless! Where have you found this? *Isvara*, the Creator, the Master - He is *nirakara*, formless?! Where have you found that *Isvara* is *nirakara*? He has a type of *akara*, form, and that is *Cidakara*, a Transcendental Form. But you say He is only a mass of consciousness and without any figure, and He is the Creator? Where have you found this?" In this way he challenged Vidyasagar. But he was very young, and Vidyasagar may not have cared for the challenge. Nonetheless, he did his duty. That was his temperament - he would always challenge. He had to challenge whatever was against the line of Mahaprabhu, otherwise he could have the satisfaction of having done his duty.

Devotee: No compromise.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: No compromise. Protest. Once Rabindranath Tagore wrote articles in some book under a pen-name, and Prabhupada also wrote protesting against those writings, also under a pen-name.

Devotee: Maharaj, did you personally spend some time with Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes. In my later years with the mission I got chances to live with him quite often. Many persons used to come and visit him, and perhaps he liked to keep me with him to talk with them in a respectable way and to authoritatively explain his teachings to them. In his later years his memory faded, so when he spoke, some appropriate slokas from the Scriptures were required to be supplied, to indicate and support his line of thought. Very few of us could do that. When he was trying to recollect a certain *sloka* in support of his speech, I could generally supply it immediately, and sometimes in advance as well. Of course, we originally heard all those *slokas* and their proper representation from him only.

Infinite courage of the Pioneer

When Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura began the Service of the *Dhama* and Mahaprabhu, he had to do many things to attract the public to accept his discovery of the *Dhama* as authentic. At that time, the place was uninhabited. Gradually a brick building was made, and the worship of the Deity of Mahaprabhu was begun.

The Temple came later. Generally the *Brahmana* cooks he required would not stay there very long because it was an isolated place and there were violent elements nearby. To ensure that the Service continued, he had to undergo many undesirable things. For example, sometimes he had to prepare *ganjika* (hemp) by his own hand, for the cook! Otherwise, the cook would have left. At times, when 'respectable' persons came, he had to make arrangements for tobacco. There were many other trials.

Our Guru Maharaj, Prabhupada, also did similar things, to the extreme. When Anderson, the Governor, was invited to Mayapur, at that time it was arranged with a Calcutta hotel to bring appropriate food for the function, including even meats. The hotelier was arranged to cater for the Governor and his entourage. And when Prabhupada suggested some similar approach in foreign preaching also, I modestly protested that if the meat dishes, non-vegetarian dishes, were served in the Math area it would bring criticism to the mission; to which he replied, "No, no! I decided all these things thousands of births ago. We have to do anything and everything for the Service of Mahaprabhu." That was his answer. *Vaikuntha-vrtti* - no *kuntha* , no limitation: 'I am prepared to do anything for the Service of Mahaprabhu, for the propagation of His Mission. The Grace of Mahaprabhu should be distributed throughout the length and breadth of the whole world. And for that, anything should be done. No stone unturned. Physical connection is no connection. We shall try to save our internal purity, that is all.' And to save so many souls from impure habits and diet, Srimad Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj also took the risk of external contamination by filthy things. He had to go to the place of that anti-atmosphere to save them. If the house is on fire, one must run the risk of burns to his body if he really wants to save the inhabitants.

The Thakura's Divine Vision and Foresight

Devotee: Srila Thakura Bhaktivinoda also had a great vision for the world.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes. He saw in his divine eye that *Prema-dharma* , the Religion based on Divine Love, is so self-evident in character that the intelligent could never avoid embracing such a conception of Pure Religion Is the highest. Love - *Prema* - the fine intellect cannot but detect the

purity in the Love in religion, in its highest conception. His idea was: 'With an unbiased mind, the Western thinkers cannot but appreciate the doctrine of Divine Love, as given out by Sri Chaitanya-dev. So I am sure that in the future many of the Western scholars will come under the flag of Sri Chaitanyadev.' This was his conviction, and he mentioned this in lectures that he delivered throughout Bengal.

When Sripad Bhakti Saranga Goswami Maharaj returned from preaching in England, he brought one Mr. Burchett back with him. A meeting was held at the Bagh Bazaar Math. That meeting was presided over by a gentleman of the name Hiran Dutta, a good scholar and a Theosophist. In his talk he said, "When we were students at City College, Bhaktivinoda Thakura delivered a lecture there to the effect that in the near future Western scholars would come and join the *Sankirtana* under the banner of Mahaprabhu. Now, clearly, I can bear witness to the fact that his prediction is beginning to come true. I heard the lecture in my young days, and now in my old age I see the evidence - it is going to be true. I am very glad for that."

Devotee: Did Your Grace ever have the darsana of Thakura Bhaktivinoda?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: No. He left the world in 1914, and I joined the mission in 1926, twelve years later.

Devotee: Perhaps you met other persons who had his contact?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: There was one Parvat Maharaj who lived next door to Bhaktivinoda Thakura when he passed his old age in Godruma.

"To spread the Holy Name around..."

Parvat Maharaj said that there was only a partition wall between his house and Bhaktivinoda Thakura's. That was at Surabhi Kunja. From about three o'clock in the morning, Bhaktivinoda Thakura would rise and take the Name of Krsna, the *Mahamantra*, at the top of his voice. Parvat Maharaj described it like this. As though calling someone from afar - with this spirit Bhaktivinoda Thakura would chant the Holy Name. That Maharaj was astonished to see such behavior. There was a cement chair, and when Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura felt tired he took his seat and rested there awhile. And then after some time he would again wander in the garden, chanting at the top of his voice, "*Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna* !" With such animation in his voice he was calling - calling a person; with this spirit, and not in a formal way, but with a material hankering, he was calling for the Lord.

There was another thing I also heard about him from another source, Ram Gopal Vidyabhusana, an M.A. and Barrister-at-law. Ram Gopal Vidyabhusana told me, "Once we went to visit him. We had heard that a Government officer, an educated man, had become a Vaisnava Babaji. So we went to see him, and someone amongst us asked him, 'Please speak something about Krsna and *Krsna-nama* (the Holy Name of Krsna).'

"After a moment, Bhaktivinoda Thakura then said, 'Oh, you want to hear something about Krsna, you want? You want *Krsna-nama* ?' In this way he continued for some time: 'Krsna? You are so fortunate? You have come to hear *Krsna-nama*?'"

"Then the consequence of that inquiry had such an influence on his body and mind, that as it is written by him personally in his own poem, *Sri-Nama-Mahatmya* :

*krsna-nama dhare kata bala
visaya-vasananale, mora citta sada jvale,
ravi-tapta marubhumi sama;
karna-randhra patha diya, hrdis majhe pravesiya
varisaya sudha anupama [1]*

*hrdaya haite bale, jihvara agrete cale,
sabda-rupe nace anuksana;
kanthe more bhange svara, anga kape thara thara,
sthira haite na pare carana [2]*

*cakse dhara, dehe gharmma, pulakita saba carmma,
vivarna haila kalevara;
murcchita haila mana, pralayera agamana,
bhava sarva-deha jara jara [3]*

*kari' eta upadrava, citte varse sudhadrava,
more dare premera sagare;
kichu na bujhite dila, more ta' batula kaila,
mora citta-vitta saba hare [4]*

*lainu asraya ya'ra, hena vyavahara ta'ra
balite na pari e sakala;
krsna-nama icchamaya, yahe yahe sukhi haya,
sei mora sukhera sambala [5]*

*premera kalika nama, adbhuta rasera dhama,
hena bala karaye prakasa;
isat vikasi' punah, dekhaya nija-rupa-guna,
citta hari' laya krsna-pasa [6]*

*purna vikasita hanya, vraje more yaya lanya,
dekhaya more svarupa - vilasa;
more siddha deha diya, krsna-pase rakhe giya,
e dehera kare sarva-nasa [7]*

*krsna-nama cintamani, akhila-rasera khani,
nitya-mukta suddha-rasamaya;
namera balai yata, saba lay 'e hai hata,
tabe mora sukhera udaya [8]*

Cakse dhara - From my eyes tears flowed; *dehe gharmma* - my body perspired; *murcchita haila mana* - I fell into a faint; *kari' eta upadrava* - the Holy Name created a great turmoil in me; *citte varse sudha-drava* - causing a rain of nectarine current in my heart; *more dare premera sagare* -

and casting me into the ocean of ecstasy, of Love; *kichu na bujhite dila, more ta' batula kaila* - I could not feel the environment around me, and became as though mad; *mora citta-vitta saba hare* - I lost myself in that thought. For an illuminating full translation extracted from Srila Sridhar Maharaj's informal talks, see p.126-129, Search for Sri Krsna: Reality the Beautiful, published by Guardian of Devotion Press. - Ed. (search for Saranagati)

That gentleman, Ram Gopal Vidyabhusana said, "I saw with my own eyes that all these symptoms were displayed in his body and mind, simply upon hearing our inquiry. Bhaktivinoda Thakura said, 'You are so fortunate, you have come to hear *Krsna-nama* from me? Krsna - ! Krsna - !' In this way, he entered into another domain, and so many symptoms and expressions appeared in his body and mind - convulsions, tears, all these things." I heard this from an eye-witness.

Devotee: Is it true that prior to Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's appearance the Vaisnava tradition had become very much neglected?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Very few *suddha* Vaisnavas were to be found, just before the appearance of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura. But he adjusted religion in a modern garb, and so it was easy for many regardful students to come forward and accept *suddha* Vaisnavism. It had been much molested by pseudo-followers. The real ideal had become eclipsed, and so for the inquisitive it was difficult to have real entrance and real attachment for Gaudiya Vaisnavism.

The so-called *Babajis* were especially responsible for disturbing the ideal. They hailed from any caste, they could marry, and they simply went on taking the name with no proper practice or feeling of real earnestness for the truth. They dragged on their lives with no pure practices or pure habits, and worst of all, in the name of religion they freely mixed with women. That brought in return a hatred for them in society. Similarly, those '*Goswamis*' who took up initiating disciples as their trade also lost their honor in the general respectful society, because they had some low association. The *Babajis* and *Goswamis* lost their prestige in society because of their imitative character. But *Gaudiya Math* came out with the real spirit of religion, and pure practices subsequently followed. So the attention of the educated inquirers after truth was drawn to Gaudiya Math and they flocked together.

Devotee: After hearing about great personalities like Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, we feel ourselves to be very insignificant.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes. We can but do our might, contribute our might as much as possible for the Service of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura.

Chapter Five

The Krsna Sun

If we want our shelter, it must come from overhead. *Asraya* or shelter is not under our feet - shelter should be over the head. The principal Vedic mantra says,

*tad visnoh paramam padam sada pasyanti surayah
diviva caksur atatam*

The Holy Feet of Visnu who is pervading everywhere (*yah idam vyapnotiti visnuh*) - His feet, His lowest portion, is towards us. *Paramam* means 'very highly qualified, from all standpoints.' That is not to be neglected. From the standpoint of fine existence - knowledge as well as sweetness, the Absolute is *paramam padam*. *Sada pasyanti surayah* - the scholars are always conscious of the fact; this is the real basis of their life.

Man is not an animal, wandering over the earth, mountain or jungle, but the real man is in his consciousness, and he is always conscious of a higher entity. He is always seeing or conscious of that ideal. *Diviva caksur atatam* - vaguely or in a mystic way? No. As conspicuous, as clear and as real as the sun we see in the sky. *Tad visnoh paramam padam*. So we should really live and move in that consciousness. We are children of that conscious world.

Animal consciousness - the world of death

Tvam tu rajan marisyeti, pasu-buddhim imam jahi (Bha: 12.5.2). At the conclusion of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, Sri Sukadeva Goswami gives a warning to Pariksit Maharaj to be conscious of the firm basis of his teachings. Deception is like a serpent that stealthily comes to bite and kill. Ignorance comes stealthily and takes the soul down to the world of animal consciousness, and we are all moving under the deception of this heavy flesh and blood; therefore heavier 'earth' is necessary to lift us above, up onto its lap.

Diviva caksur atatam. . marisyeti, pasu-buddhim imam jahi : "So do away with your animal consciousness that you are flesh and blood. No! You are not limited to flesh and blood, but you are a conscious unit, and you won't die. You are not a member of this dying world, where everything is sure to die on account of its malidentification. This is forced upon you - 'you must die, you must become infirm, you must be born, you must suffer from disease' - but all these are misidentification of your self with your body. This is animal consciousness: consciousness that you are an animal. But you are not so. You are a conscious unit, you are spirit, you are soul."

Not only is the soul immortal, not only does God exist, not only is He the Absolute Dispenser of good and bad - but we, ourselves, are units of the conscious world. So *pasu-buddhim imam jahi* - separate yourself eternally from that mania, from that misconception and false identification with this material aspect which is the result of your degraded life. Be reinstated in your glorious position as soul. And how is this possible? You are *tatastha* (marginal) by constitution, so you cannot stand on your own two feet. You must have some shelter - either mundane within your mundane identification, or above that, you must have some shelter above your head. O *tatastha-jiva*, you must have shelter in the *Svarupa-sakti* land, the final land.

The light of light

Paramam padam, the Divine Feet of Visnu, of Narayana, of Krsna, are like the sun to you, in the material comparison. That is, *caksuh*, or 'seer,' or that which makes feeling or seeing possible. If He is withdrawn, everything is dark. If Visnu's Supreme Plane is withdrawn, everything will be dark. That is the light of light, and you must be eternally conscious that above you is another soil, and your shelter is there, and you are a soul unit. You must bring about this radical change in you. That plane is your shelter. This world is not your shelter. It is a prison-house to you. This broad and graphic comprehensive consideration must be the basis of spiritual understanding, otherwise there is danger of Sahajiyaism or imitationism. *Tad visnoh paramam padam*. We have to cross this 'Hindenburg Line.'*

*According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Paul von Hindenburg, 1847-1934, was a German field marshal during World War I. Noted for its immense strength, the 'Hindenburg Line,' also known as 'Siegfriedstellung,' was a defensive barrier improvised by the German Army on the Western Front, extending between Soissons and Laon.

The Land of Service

Basically, this is the advice of *Rg-veda*, the first *Veda* that descends from the upper world to this world: "The primary requirement for you all is to conceive that there is a world above, and 'above' means in the line of consciousness. Your highest identity is that of consciousness, and you must adopt that conscious world above you as your shelter. You will live and move there. This is the radical change. Here, you are in the atmosphere of exploitation, but that is the land of service. There, you have to think in terms of service. That is on your head. That region is superior to the stuff you are made of. So do you want that connection? Or do you prefer to reign in hell than to serve in heaven? What do you like? Consider, and then come forward. You can have a prospect of attaining everything up to Krsna, the Absolute. Otherwise you will have to revolve here in this world of 8,400,000 species":

*jvlaja navalaksani sthavara laksa-vimsatih
krmayo rudra-sankhyakah paksinam dasa-laksakam
trimsal-laksani pasavah catur laksani manusah
(Visnu-purana)*

"There are 900,000 aquatic, 2,000,000 immobile, 1,100,000 worm-cum-insect, 1,000,000 bird, 3,000,000 animal and 400,000 human species."

"These are the 8,400,000 classifications of species throughout which you will have to wander, in the world of action and reaction. You need to select your path. Do you want to be a member of the land of immortality? Do you want *janma-mrtyu-jara-vyadhi* (birth, death, old age and infirmity) - or immortality? If you want immortality, you will have to pay for the ticket. You will have to take the visa. You will have to prepare for such a categorical beginning. And the bond you have to sign is slavery - to Krsna. *Jivera svarupa haya krsnera nitya-dasa*. If you want to go to that mystic land, the land of infinite hope, prosperity and prospect, you will have to go as a slave - because that plane is made of a higher stuff than you yourselves are."

*vaikunthera prthivy adi sakala cinmaya
mayika bhutera tathi janma nahi haya
(C.c. Adi 5.53)*

There, earth, water, etc. - everything is made of consciousness, spirit. And above that, there is *a-nandam* or ecstasy, not only a matter of consciousness. Although medicine seems bitter in the beginning, in a healthy state one may taste its sweetness. Our approach to the Divine Realm may also be experienced in this way. So, in *Raga-marga*, the path of Divine Love, and in Krsnaloka, there is not only consciousness, but beauty is the prevailing element there.

Ideal

A ship without a rudder drifts aimlessly in the ocean. But if I have taken to heart the particular ideal of Krsna, Mahaprabhu and *Bhagavatam*, then I am captured. My tuft of hair (*sikha*) is tied with the feet of Guru Maharaj and the Divine Grace. The tuft of hair is captured. The head is captured there, and everything will be done through the head, the part of the body which is most revered in this material world.

One who has a good ideal is in possession of the most valuable wealth. On the other hand, one will only hanker for *kanaka-kamini-pratistha* - popularity, materials of sense pleasure, and money - all these things; but they are all animal consciousness. They are all properties in the land of animal consciousness. A radical change must be effected in us if we really want a life worth living. Such is the importance of our ideal.

A man should be judged by his ideal. The greatness of the ideal he is trying to realize is to be marked. The man of the future, the man of tomorrow, should be judged by his ideal. If his ideal is great, he is great, because if he is sincere, tomorrow or very soon he will reach it. So our ideal is the all-important factor. We may not attain our high ideal very easily. It is not inferior 'merchandise' to be disposed of cheaply in the market; it is most valuable. But whatever the cost, no matter.

We should feel within, "I want no less than that highest thing, that *Advaya-jnana*, that Autocrat. That Goodness Autocrat, the Supermost Commander of everything. I want Him, and nothing less, and I should live and move, and feel in myself that whatever I shall do, at every second, I am meant for that. I am meant for my ideal. I have no time to waste, or to hesitate for anything.

If every moment I move in every way with the ideal in my heart, I shall always make some progress towards it. If I can just stay in touch with my ideal, that will guide and inspire me. In any and every action, whatever I shall do or undo, eat, rest, etc., my ideal will be overhead. And that will gradually take me out of all these entanglements and enticements, and one day or other I shall be able to reach it."

Divine attraction reveals the ideal

*jata-sraddho mat-katha-su nirvinnah sarva-karmasu
veda duhkhatmakan kaman parityage 'py anisvarah
(Bhagavatam, 11.20.27)*

"For one who has had the chance to acquire a taste and become attracted to talks of Me, My activity and My movement, no other temptation can any longer hold him under its power. He becomes indifferent to all other activity. The outcome is that he can understand within that all other things bear some unpleasant reaction. Yet, although he can conceive that they are all pain-producing, he is helpless to immediately free himself from their clutches. The debt is already incurred, and his debtors won't allow him to escape: 'I am in the midst of so many acquisitions. It is not very easy to leave them at once by my sweet will. Previously, I consciously incurred some obligations, and I cannot abruptly cut off their connection; they won't let me free.'"

*tato bhajeta mam pritah sraddhalur drdha-niscayah
jusamanas ca tan kaman dukhodarkams ca garhayan
(Bhagavatam, 11.20.28)*

"But the *sraddha* or pure attraction he has acquired for Me is of eternal nature. It cannot be subdued or cut off by any mundane or ordinary attempt. Despite undergoing so many sufferings, he goes on remembering Me. His thinking, aspiration and earnestness is for Me, and the more he is compelled to suffer from the pressure of the environment, a firmness in Me becomes more and more sure, and finally, invulnerable. And by standing the test of all these trials, he will stand - stand and grow beyond the jurisdiction of these mundane forces. The more pressure comes from outside, the more firmness he feels in the necessity of My help to him.

"At that time, he turns his back to all the pains of the world, and he keeps Me in front. He begins to move onward: 'Whatever happens to me, I can't complain. It is in my Master's jurisdiction whether He sees fit for me to undergo these trials or not. But I won't leave my new ideal - I can't. Whatever may come, it may happen, never mind.'

"Still, he abuses himself: 'What have I done? What have I done? It is rather justice that I should be tormented and troubled in such a way! It is not wrong! Really, just dealings have come to be exercised over me. Why should I have committed this wrong? I entered this wrong alliance, entered into the tribe of the *goondas* for exploitation. The reaction that is coming to me is well and good.' He blames himself. He does not blame the environment for troubling him, but he sees a concentration camp within. He blames his own self, his own free will and fate. That becomes the nature of his temperament at that time. He does not look to place the fault on the shoulders of others, but he takes the whole burden: 'Yes, the environment is doing justice to me, the traitor, the ambitious, the oppressor of the environment.' When he's in such consciousness, his *Bhakti-yoga* or Devotional Engagement becomes more and more intense. The intensity of his progress accelerates."

*proktena bhaktiyogena bhajato ma 'sakrn muneh
kama hrdaya nasyanti sarve mayi hrdis thite
(Bhagavatam, 11.20.29)*

"With accelerated motion, his intensity towards Me grows. Then, by My appearance, all his internal and external discrepancies are gradually destroyed and evaporated. When by such an approach he reaches My Domain, or rather, I come down, extending My existence to his heart - then everything else disappears."

*bhidyate hrdaya-granthis chidyante sarva-samsayah
ksiyante casya karmani mayi drste 'khillatmani*
(Bhagavatam, 11.20.30)

Then *bhidyate hrdaya-granthis*: all the ties and entanglements, corners and angles, vanish. Crookedness vanishes. He finds himself in the midst of a straight, plain, graphic, spacious and all-embracing temperament. His atmosphere changes. All the ties of so many attractions to various achievements are at once dissolved. They have no necessity in this land.

Hrdayenabhyyanujnato (Manu 2.1): internal approval comes to assure you that you have arrived in your own land. *Chidyante sarva-samsayah*: there is no room for any doubt. You find that all your hankerings are more than fulfilled here: "I was searching; my whole body was searching."

In *Vaisnava-padavali* (Anthology of Vaisnava Songs) there is an expression: *prati anga lage kande prati anga mora* . In the acme of Divinity, *Madhura-rasa* , where Srimati Radharani is *Sakti* (the Divine Potency of the Lord), She says, "My every limb is crying for the respective limb of My Lord; not only My Self, but every part of My Body earnestly aspires for the corresponding part of My Master's."

Chidyante sarva-samsayah - Every part bears witness: "Yes, we have reached the destination we were striving for, this is our full-fledged satisfaction. This is my soil, this is my home!" Every atom of the body will say it. No trace of any doubt will be found, for there is no longer any room for that. But every atom will find its fulfillment: "This is my home, this is my home! I am in home comfort, I find."

Our Cherished Goal

Ksiyante casya karmani : (The Lord says about His devotee) "And the force of reaction won't come to trouble him, to drag him down or attract him backwards. That, too, is severed." *Mayi drste 'khillatmani*: "I am the fullest of the full perfection. He will be able to trace My friendship."

This should be the course of our life, our cherished goal. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* tells us this. Home, sweet, sweet home. You are a child of that soil. In one word, that is the goal.

Why is that the highest goal? Because that is your home. *Svarupe sabara haya, golokete sthiti* . This one word 'home' is sufficient to attract you. You are wandering in a foreign land, but here is your home. You'll get home comfort here, and you won't be able to deny that. So, back to God, back to home, back to Godhead.

God and Godhead

To avoid the Christian conception of 'God' our Guru Maharaj, Prabhupada, used the word 'Godhead.' 'God' is a particular conception of the Absolute, but 'Godhead' represents *Bhagavata* or the

background of the conception of God, which is *Svayam Bhagavan* - the Supreme Lord Himself: This is the highest conception of God. This is the meaning. So more than 'back to God' is 'back to Godhead.' Srimad Swami Maharaj named his spiritual magazine from this consideration.

Back to Godhead - there is home. Unsettled, we are running hither and thither with no principle of life, so our position is very sad. But this is a troublesome life. To think, 'I can't put my faith anywhere,' means that I can't find a friend anywhere. I am friendless, moving amongst foreigners or maybe enemies. But I must have a friend or some friendly atmosphere. I must come into such company in which I can put full faith, in which I can believe and trust, otherwise my life will be miserable. If wherever I cast my glance I think, "I can't trust, I can't trust, all are enemies" - to live in such an atmosphere is to live in a particular prison-house; all uncertainty, all untrustworthiness; that is a very deplorable position. So, by God's grace *Sraddha* should come to us: "I can not only trust and believe, but I cannot but show my regard to a personality of the higher position." *Gurum evabhi-gacchet* .

Guru - the reliable source

When we suffer from uncertainty to the extreme, we shall hanker for connection with *Guru*, the reliable source. I can not only put an inquiry to him with faith and trust, but *Guru* is a guardian who is my well-wisher more than I am to my own self. 'Guardian' means a friend who thinks more of me than I think of myself. He knows more about my welfare than I do. Such is the position to have a guardian, a friend, a *Guru*.

Narottama Thakura says, *asraya laiya bhaje tanre krsna nahi tyaje*: "If one can get a bona fide guardian, his future is ensured." Krsna cannot very easily dismiss the guardian, because the guardian has a solid position in the Lord's relationship; so if I enter into the domain of my guardian's care, my position will be ensured.

Ara saba mare akarana . Others, who have not yet been able to tie themselves with the Holy Feet of their guardian or *Guru* are in an uncertain position, and they may be deviated by any agent. Their future is deplorable.

If through our *sraddha* we can have a real ideal in life and acquire a real guardian, then certainly our future is ensured practically. Our only duty will be towards our guardian, our *Gurudeva* , and all other duties will be automatically accomplished.

So, to run throughout the length and breadth of this wide world, this land where nothing but various types of exploitation of various planes are existing, is to run as a ship without a rudder that can be swept away by sea-storm this side and that, endlessly, without purpose. It is through *sraddha* that we can connect with our highest goal of achievement and fulfillment. This matter must be solved. Then, real life begins. Any questions?

Devotee: Maharaj, you mentioned that the material world is like a prison-house. Are the demigods such as Brahma and Indra also prisoners?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: They are also prisoners, but as officers. Even prisoners may become officers on the sanction of the jail government. In the prison government, senior and qualified prisoners are also given a chance for a post. Is it not a fact?

Devotee: Yes.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: So their position is like that. They are also imprisoned, but their position is a little higher. A duty is deputed to them, but they are nonetheless prisoners.

Devotee: The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* says that there are fourteen planetary systems, and yet when we see the sky at night we see so many stars and planets, it seems that the number is unlimited.

Planes beyond planets

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Those fourteen worlds are not only of this physical type, but range from physical to subtle. Creation stems from consciousness, towards matter. The gradation from matter up to consciousness is progressively finer and finer - the gap between matter and soul.

To fill the gap from gross to subtle, there is a progression of more and more subtle planes that finally vanish in the conscious area. The gradation from *jada* to *cetana*, from matter to spirit, or from unconsciousness to consciousness, occurs in so many steps, fine, finer, finest. It is to be conceived of in this way. Bhur-, Bhuvar-, Svar-, Mahar-, Janar-, Tapar-, Satya-loka, then Viraja, then Brahma-loka or Brahman. In Brahman, we find the real existence of the soul. From Viraja downwards is the area of this material consciousness. In *Bhagavad-gita* we find:

*indriyani parany ahur indriyebhyah param manah
manasas tu pare buddhir buddher yah paratas tu sah (3.42)*

In brief, four stages of mundane elements in the middle are given here. First is matter, second is the senses, third is mind and fourth is judiciousness or reason. Finally, there is the soul. But in more elaborate detail, there are also seven subdivisions of Bhur, etc., up to Satya-loka. In this line, the soul is found in Brahman. *Paratas tu sah*. The word *sah* refers to *Brahman*. Matter may also be subdivided as stone, water, heat, gas, ether, etc. In one word it is matter, but one will also find subdivision of matter from gross to subtle. In stone one will find earth, coal, wood, maybe gold or silver. But all these elements are felt by the senses, and thus the senses are superior to all the gradations of matter.

Then there is the faculty of thinking or impulse: 'I want this, I don't want that.' But further, the faculty of judiciousness, reason or intelligence is superior: 'No, don't want that, it will produce a certain bad effect in you'; and so on. Even more subtle than the intelligence is *citta* (consciousness), which is not mentioned in *Gita*; further is *ahankara* (ego), and finally the realm of soul.

Chapter Six

Perspectives on the Absolute

Devotee: The conditioned soul has some attraction to Lord Siva in *Mahesa Dhama*. What is Lord Siva's position?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: His position is as a master of this *Maya*, Illusory Potency. He is not a slave of misunderstanding, although he remains in the relativity of misunderstanding. He remains in a masterly position. In his *Brhad-Bhagavatamrtam*, Srila Sanatana Goswami has explained that when one becomes liberated, Mayadevi comes to him, saying, "Why do you leave me? I would like to serve you, don't forsake me!" In this way, she again comes to offer her service to Siva, that is, the liberated soul. If he is enticed by that charm, he may again enter the mundane world, but if he has the attitude and *sraddha* within himself to deal indifferently, he neglects it and goes upwards: "No, I have my engagement, my duty. I have no time to satisfy anyone by accepting their service. I have my Lord, I must serve Him."

*svadharmma-nisthah sata-janmabhih puman
virincatam eti tatah param hi mam
avyakrtam bhagavato 'tha vaisnavam
padam yathaham vibudhah kalatyaye
(Bhagavatam, 4.24.29)*

Here, Mahadeva (Lord Siva) says that if one can perform his duty in *Varnasrama-dharma* (Godly socio-religious function) for one hundred consecutive births, he attains to the position of Lord Brahma. *Svadharmma* means prescribed duties according to the *Varnasrama-dharma* as sanctioned in the *Vedas* .

*yatah pravrttir bhutanam yena sarvam idam tatam
svakarmana tam abhyarccya siddhim vindati manavah
(Bhagavad-gita, 18.46)*

Also, in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* :

*etavan sankhya-yogabhyam svadharmma-parinisthaya
janma-labhah parah pumsam ante narayana-smrtih
(2.1.6)*

Sankhya means *jnana* (enlightenment by knowledge and renunciation, up to *Brahman*); *yoga* means *astangadi yoga* (*yoga* meditation on *Paramatman* ,headed by the eight-fold system); and *svadharmma-nistha* means *nikama-karma-yoga* (unselfish duty) in *Varnasrama* .*Etavan* means, 'they can lead us so far,' that is, up to liberation. Then, *janma-labhah parah pumsam ante narayana-smrtih* :we must attain the fulfillment of our life in the Service of Narayana, through *sraddha*, from a *Guru*. This is the positive attainment, like a visa; and the first three classes are comparable to a passport: the *yoga* system, progressing towards the conception of *Paramatman* ;*Varnasrama-dharma*, or executing our duties in this world because the *Vedas* have recommended this for our good, but at the same time we must not want anything in return (*niskama*); and also, *sankhya - jnana*, the pro-

cess of *neti ,neti ,neti* ,or 'this is not, this is not, this is not,' (*na iti*) - this is all gross, this is all gross, this is all gross. I am soul, I am consciousness, I am spirit - the process of elimination. Perfection in one of these three methods may be compared to gaining a passport. But *janma-labhah* , the real fulfillment of life, is *ante-narayana-smrtih* - the memory or consciousness of Narayana, after death. Narayana consciousness, Krsna consciousness, can give us proper fulfillment, and that is the visa to the *Svarupa-sakti* Realm (the Plane of Krsna's Divine Potency). Is this clear?

Devotee: Yes. But sometimes it is said that Mahesa Dhama is spiritual; it seems to be more like a marginal plane.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: It is spiritual. Mahesa Dhama is of two kinds: first in the relativity of *Ma-ya* , and secondly, Siva exists as Sadasiva, the devotee Siva. He may be entangled as a *grhastha* , but he can conceive that he has his superior position in a superior realm, and he holds the lowest position in that sphere. So, as I quoted, one who can successfully discharge his duty in the Varnasrama system for a hundred lifetimes attains to the position of Lord Brahma, who is the leader of the whole Varnasrama system in this world. Then, Mahadeva says *tatah param hi mam* : "After this, if he can continue in this way, he progresses even further: he comes to my position."

In the relativity of this universe, Lord Brahma is the creator and manager. His position is somewhat like a prime minister, but Lord Siva's position is like that of a king. He can even dismiss the prime minister and dissolve the parliament. His position is higher, but he describes himself as *avyakrtam*: "I have some limitation; I am a little indifferent." *A-vi-akrtam* means 'not well-specified,' or 'sometimes non-differentiated, with *tyaga* or *vairagya* .' Thus, he says, "Renunciation and abnegation are found to be predominant in me."

"Then, above me there is another realm which is inhabited by the *Bhagavata* , the followers of Bhagavan: it is they who attain to *Vaisnava-pada* or the Plane of Vaikuntha." *Yathaham vibudhah kalatya-ye*: "And when the universal dissolution is ordered, at that time I and other ruling demigods can also get release and join them. Everyone may have that chance if they move properly. O gods, this is the situation." Mahadeva said this, as mentioned in the Bhagavatam.

A clear perspective of reality

We must reach an ontological conception of what is what. The measure of exploitation, renunciation and devotion. Devotion is divided into Scriptural Devotion and Loving Devotion. In this world, exploitation may be regulated work, karma, and uncivilized or non-regulated work, *vikarma*. Then there is *jnana*, *yoga*, *sankhya*, *vedanta*, and so on. Brahma has his peculiar position, then there is Siva as the master of Maya, and Siva as the servant of Visnu, Narayana. Above that is Vaikuntha, and then Goloka.

One should have some conception, as with consulting a map. 'Here is America, here is Australia, here is Japan, east, west, etc.' If traveling by ship, a map and so many references show the path. Also, practical knowledge is more reliable than theoretical emblems: 'Yes, this beacon and landmark verify that we have reached the Indian Ocean.' Practical application is superior to mere theory.

Sabde pare ca nisnatam: a *Guru* of theoretical knowledge cannot help us. One who has practical experience of the way is reliable, and able to save us and give us the real position.

Devotee: Does a *jiva* attain the position of Siva?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes, he can be 'Siva,' when he is out of the clutches of Maya; and the Vaikuntha devotee is more than Siva. When a spiritual molecule is free from the clutches of the exploitation tendency, he is known as 'Siva.' *Pasa-baddho bhavej jivah pasa-muktah sadasivah*: When he is entangled, he is 'jiva,' and when he is free, he is 'Siva' (*Sivo 'ham*) . But Krsna said, when giving His blessings to Uddhava (Bhagavatam, 11.14.15):

*na tatha me priyatama atmayonir na sankarah
na ca sankarsano na srir naivatma ca yatha bhavan*

"Neither Brahma nor Siva are as dear to Me as you; My elder brother Sankarsana is not as dear to Me as you, nor even Laksmi Devi. Even My own Self is not as dear to Me as you."

Such is the position of a devotee, a bhakta. He's above Brahma, he's above Siva, he's above Sankarsana, he's above Laksmi - he's above Krsna Himself, by the free, sweet will of Krsna. *Aham bhakta-paradhinah* . This is running in the current of love, not of justice: through affection.

As in India, in the physical sense or in the sense of law, we find that the husband is master of the wife. But it may be that through affection the wife is the guide of the husband. Through affection, it is possible. This is another line of love, and no matter of right. So when the Lord says, "You are more than My own life", it is not a false statement. "My devotee is dearer to Me than Myself. If any danger comes to him, I must stand in front. First finish Me, and then try to touch My son,

My devotee!" This is the attitude of the Lord. If any danger comes to the son, the father will come forth. "Oh no, first finish me, then try to harm my son!" It is the way of affection, and that is our solace.

Take the Road of Divine Aspiration

So Mahaprabhu says, "O jiva, take that direction. Try to purchase a ticket to that department. Go through *sraddha*, faith and devotion, and you will be a real gainer.

Further, Uddhava says about the Gopis, "I aspire to be a creeper or a shrub in Vrndavana, so that I can have the feet-dust of these Divine Damsels on my head." In His magnanimity, Mahaprabhu offered such great things to us. He is none other than Krsna, because no one can give such a right to anyone and everyone without being Krsna Himself. Therefore the devotees say that He is none other than Krsna Himself, and more - Radha and Krsna combined, because He gives the highest wealth of both. Only both combined as Dayal Gauranga are entitled to give this chance to the ordinary soul.

This is inconceivable. *Anarpita-carim cirat karuna-yavatirnah kalau*: Sri Gaurangadev descended in this Kali-yuga to give what had never been given before. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura says, "What a great loss I am incurring, neglecting this chance! To whom should I tell it, and who will believe that I am consciously missing such a great chance? Who should I tell about my disastrous misfortune?"

*durllabha manava janma labhiya samsare
krsna na bhajinu duhkha kahiba kahare?*

To whom should I divulge my heart? Who will care to give me audience? Such a great chance I am trampling under my feet - I have attained this human birth, and I have just come into the vicinity of the greatest fortune, and I neglect it?"

Nine petals of the Lotus

Devotee: We have heard that the nine islands of Nabadwip represent the nine fundamental processes of Devotional Service.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: The Holy Sri Nabadwip Dhama (lit. Navadvipa) is envisaged as a lotus flower. The center of the lotus is the Birthplace of Mahaprabhu and it represents *atma-nivedanam* or self-surrender. One has to first surrender, and then all the practices of Devotion follow. The petals of the lotus represent *sravanam*, *kirtanam*, *smaranam*, *padasevanam*, *arcanam*, *vandanam*, and *dasyam* (hearing, chanting, remembering, serving the Lord's Feet, worship, prayer, and servitorship). *Sakhyam* (friendship) is situated half on one side of the Ganges and half on the other. In this way, the nine islands of Nabadwip are represented as a lotus flower embodying the Nine Standard Practices of Devotion.

Devotee: It is said that Krsna appears once in a day of Brahma. How often does Mahaprabhu appear?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Although every Kali-yuga He appears to spread *Nama-sankirtana*, and every *Dvapara-yuga* Krsna also comes, those are partial representations and not *Svayam Bhagavan* (the Supreme Lord in Person). The *Yugavataras* or Descents for certain ages, are not *Svayam Bhagavan*. *Svayam Bhagavan* comes only once in the day of Brahma, and so Mahaprabhu as Radha and Govinda combined (*Radha-Govinda-milita-tanu*) also appears only once in a day of Brahma, in Nabadwip. In all other *Dvapara* and *Kali-yugas* ordinary *Krsnavataras* and *Gauravataras* appear, only to preach general worship (*paricarya*) and general *Nama-sankirtana*, as mentioned in the *Bhagavatam* (*dvapare paricaryayam kalau tad hari-kirtanat*).

Devotee: Maharaj, I have a question: in the *Navadvipa-bhava-taranga* by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, he seems to be having actual visions of Pastimes of the Lord on the various islands of Nabadwip; yet he writes in such a way that he also seems to be aspiring for those visions. Is he actually having those visions?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes, of course. His vision is inspired. The *Dhama* has inspired these two perspectives in him. The *Dhama* allows us to see it, according to the degree of our devotion. A

doctor sees a patient according to his capacity. Higher intelligence can see deeper. Such is the case always. A higher politician can see a higher strategy, and so on.

*ya nisa sarva-bhutanam tasyam jagartti samyami
yasyam jagrati bhutani sa nisa pasyato muneh
(Bhagavad-gita, 2.69)*

"The detached, self-realized soul remains awake in the night of all beings, and the world of exploitation that all beings awaken in is similarly his night."

A detector can see the depth afforded by its capacity. The X-ray can detect to a certain depth, the microscope has another dimension of utility. There is revelation according to one's capacity. Deserve - and have.

*mallanam asanir nram naravarah
strinam smaro murtiman
gopanam svajano 'satam ksitibhujam
sasta svapitro sisuh
mrtyur bhojapater virad avidusam
tattvam param yoginam
vrsninam paradevateti
vidito rangam gatah sagrajah
(Bhagatavam, 10.43.17)*

"O King, Sri Krsna then appeared as a thunderbolt to the wrestlers, as the supreme male to the men; as Cupid incarnate to the ladies, as a friend to the cowherdsmen; as an emperor to the wicked kings, as a child to His father and mother; as death to Kamsa, as the universal form of the world to the ignorant; as the Supreme Truth to the yogis, as the Supreme Worshipful Lord to the Vrsnis - and along with Baladev He entered the arena."

When Krsna entered the arena, all the different categories of persons had different perspectives of Him, according to their inner eye. Experience of the truth must vary according to different attitudes or degrees of consciousness, and this is applicable everywhere.

Divine Sound

Devotee: Sometimes when traveling, we keep *japa-mala* beads with us and chant quietly. Is this proper?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: You may do so, there's no fault. Others may inquire, "Why are you doing this? What makes you chant this Name?" But if you are afraid that you won't be able to give them a proper explanation [laughter], you may chant within. Still, of course, you may say, "I have such faith, and so I am doing this. Through the medium of sound I can go to the truth. Sound is the medium utilized every where for every case, and here also, why shouldn't sound be the medium? Through the medium of sound, my mind wants to reach the place of origin of the sound vibration."

"The one who must reach the origin is more subtle than sound. Sound in the ordinary sense is a very gross thing compared to the *atma*, the soul. But this sound is *Vaikuntha-sabda*, which is far more subtle than ordinary sound. It possesses more efficacy, and my sound is a gross thing in comparison to it. When it touches my ear, I can find that it is very subtle, and I am gross, considering myself a bundle of material things around the spiritual existence.

"When this body will no longer exist, that sound will continue. It is undying. Its origin is Goloka, Vrndavana, the finest plane ever known to the world. The finest of the finest planes ever known.

"We know of an electrical plane, an ethereal plane, but there is finer and finer. So the finest element ever known to the world is the layer of beauty and sweetness and love. That is the most original conception of existence ever known to any consciousness. That is universal."

The perspective of Love

Love means sacrifice. If they know the real meaning of love, none can say, 'I don't want love.' Anyone may say, 'I don't want power; I may misuse it.' To be in possession of power is a great responsibility. Love is also a responsibility, but it is unavoidable. We want love, from the higher - shelter in the loving lap, in the loving consideration. We want to enter a domain where everyone will love us. A home. Home is sweet. Why? Because everyone there has some attraction and love, some blessing over us. Home is so sweet. All-favorable, all-loving, all-trustworthy. So we want to go back to home; home, sweet, sweet home.

Svarupe sabara haya, golokete sthiti. Muktir hitvanyatha-rupam svarupena vyavasthitih. Mukti is self-determination; the stage of self-determination, as much as our self can determine; our utmost interest. That is home, that is Goloka, that is the Plane of Krsna.

The most attractive sound is the sound of His flute. Srila Rupa Goswami has given a description:

*rundhann ambubhrtas camatkrti-param
kurvan muhus tumburum
dhyanad antarayan sanandana-mukhan
vismapayan vedhasam
autsukyavalibhir balim catulayan
bhogindram aghurnayan
bhindann anda-kataha-bhittim abhito
babhrama vamsi-dhvanih*

"Arresting the movement of the clouds, astonishing the Gandharvas headed by Tumburu and breaking the meditation of the sages headed by Sanandana; astonishing the heart of Lord Brahma, distracting the mind of the indomitable Baliraja with intense ecstasies, reeling the head of Ananta, the Serpent King who supports the earth planet, and piercing the covering of the universe - the vibration of Krsna's flute wandered all around."

The sound of Krsna's flute began to reverberate. When that sound entered the ear of Brahma, he became bewildered: "Oh, what can this mean, and from where is it coming? What is this? It's puzzling me!" Then the Infinite Anantadev who keeps unlimited universes on His lap - His head

began to reel. The Total Force who supports all these Brahmandas, so many lustrous masses - the intense vibration causes even His head to reel. It attacks the heart of Radharani and the *sakhas* (friends); and the cows are also with their ears perked up, inquiring, "In which direction are we wanted to go?"

Chapter Seven

A Holy Day

1. The Appearance of Srimati Visnupriya Devi

Today is the Holy Day of *Vasanta-pancami* (the fifth day of the light fortnight of the moon, month of Magh, when Krsna is worshiped with the new flowers of spring. On this day, the holy advent of Srimati Visnupriya Devi occurred. Her father was Sri Sanatana Misra of Nabadwip, who was a *Brahmana* and great devotee of Lord Visnu. Srimati Visnupriya Devi is the Eternal Consort of Sri Gaurasundar in His feature of Gaura-Narayana, and according to *Sri-Gauraganoddesa-dipika* she is directly Satyabhama in Krsna's *Dvaraka-lila*.

She was the second wife of Sriman Mahaprabhu in the householder period of His Pastimes. From childhood, she was devout in the Divine Service of the Supreme Lord. Kasinatha Pandit was the intermediary in Her marriage to Mahaprabhu. She was the ideal of Divine Self-surrender at the Lotus Feet of Mahaprabhu. When she was only fourteen, Mahaprabhu took *sannyasa*, and after that she lived the rest of Her life in penance. From early morning she would take the Holy Name the whole day, and for every *Mahamantra* that she chanted, she would put one grain of rice into a clay pot. After chanting her quota, she would take that rice and cook it and offer it to the Lord. That was all she would take for her subsistence, so gradually she became emaciated. She passed her days in this way.

Her brother was her guardian after Saci-devi departed, and ultimately she had a *Sri-Murti* (Deity) of Mahaprabhu, and she would worship Him in that Form. And since the time of Visnupriya, that worship is being continued up to the present in the Temple here in Nabadwip known as 'Mahaprabhura Badi' (the Home of Mahaprabhu). So this day of the year is connected with her holy memory, and we may achieve her Grace if we honor this time in her name, discussing her Pastimes. She will be propitiated and Sri Chaitanyadev will also be pleased with us, giving us a step forward in our transcendental march towards Him.

2. The Appearance of Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi

Today is also the appearance day of Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi. He is considered to be Vrsabhanuraja of Varsana, Vrndavana, the father of Srimati Radharani. Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi was born in a Brahmana family at Chattagram, and he bore the title 'Vidyanidhi' on account of his scholarship. Apparently he was a man of luxurious habits. In those days, people who could afford it would have a house in Nabadwip on the banks of the holy Ganges river; they would from time to time visit Nabadwip to regularly bathe in the Ganges and remain for some time in this Holy Place, and then return to their homes to continue their livelihood. So, Pundarika Vidyanidhi also had a house in Nabadwip.

Here, in *Gaura-lila*, Gadadhara Pandit was the Representation of Srimati Radharani Herself. At that time, Gadadhara Pandit was a young boy. He was younger than Mahaprabhu. Mukunda Datta was a follower and admirer of Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanyadev, and he also came from Chattagram, the village of Pundarika Vidyanidhi. He knew Pundarika Vidyanidhi to be a man of higher religious type, that is, a *Bhagavata* type or Krsna-bhakta. But outwardly Pundarika Vidyanidhi lived a life of

luxury. He was a well-to-do man, a general *zamindar* (state landowner). Mukunda Datta naturally knew him when he came to Nabadwip, since he hailed from the same place. Mukunda Datta went to Gadadhara Pandit and asked him, "Would you like to have the *darsana* of a Vaisnava?"

From childhood Gadadhara Pandit was very fond of Vaisnavas and *Krsna-nama*. He had much fondness for Nimai Pandit, when the Lord returned from Gaya. Previously he was very much afraid of Nimai Pandit, because whenever They met, Nimai Pandit would always tackle him with some apparent quarrel about etymology or something of that nature. So, after returning from Gaya, when Sri Chaitanyadev expressed His Devotional Aspect, He said one day, "Gadadhara, from your very childhood you are a devotee of Krsna, and My days have been wasted discussing grammar and mundane literature. But you, Gadadhara, My friend - your life is very successful. You have fulfillment of life. From the beginning you are fond of *Krsna-nama*." So, from the beginning Gadadhara Pandit's heart was towards Krsna. Therefore when Mukunda Datta asked him, "Would you like to see a Vaisnava who has come from afar?" the reply came, "Yes, yes, I shall go; take me there."

So Mukunda Datta took Gadadhara Pandit to Pundarika Vidyanidhi. And what kind of Vaisnava was Pundarika Vidyanidhi? He was sitting on a luxurious bedstead, smoking a very ornate and valuable pipe. His head was adorned with beautiful oiled curly locks, and many valuable pastes were anointed on his body. Two attendants fanned him on either side. Gadadhara Pandit thought, "Mukunda has brought me to this luxury-loving man sitting on the bedstead and smoking? What type of Vaisnava has he brought me to see?" He was disappointed at heart, and Mukunda could guess it. Mukunda Datta was a very good singer, and in a very sweet tone he sang this *sloka* of *Bhagavatam* :

*aho baki yam stana-kala-kutam
jighamsayapayayad apy asadhvi
lebhe gatim dhatry ucitam tato 'nyam
kam va dayalum saranam vrajema*

This sloka was chanted by Mukunda in a very sweet tone, and this created a wonderful effect in Pundarika Vidyanidhi. The *Bhagavatam* says, "Who else but Krsna should we approach? Who can be so kind, so gracious? There is limitless Grace in Him. Why? Baki - Putana, came to kill Him in a treacherous way, taking the garb of *dhatry*, a motherly garb. In this way she came to try and kill Him; yet Krsna gave her a position as a nursemaid in His group of assisting mothers. So gracious is the Lord. Who else can we approach for our good?"

This is the meaning of the verse. "She painted deadly poison on her breast, and came to suckle the boy Krsna. So treacherous was her action. In the garb of motherly affection she tried to murder the boy, and she was given such a high position as an attendant of His mother. She was elevated to the motherly group. Such Grace, such Mercy He showed, without considering or passing judgment on the worth of that action. So other than that kind-hearted and gracious Krsna, where else should we go for shelter?"

This entered the heart of Pundarika Vidyanidhi and began to vibrate, and produced such force that he was stunned; then shivering began, and madly gesticulating, he began to pull his hair and tear his silken dress, kicking over the tobacco and pipe. His rich bedding and dress were ruined, and he began to roll on the ground and cry, *kam va dayalum saranam vrajema* - "In whom shall we take shelter other than Him?" Then Gadadhara Pandit thought, "Oh, I have committed a great offense in

my mind, thinking that he was not a Vaisnava, because of his fashionable dress and style. Really, how great a Vaisnava he is - what a wonderful effect the memory of Krsna caused in him!"

Then Gadadhara Pandit revealed his mind.

"Mukunda, I have committed offense against this great Vaisnava. What will be my fate? When I first saw him, I shunned him; I committed offense. I think that if I take *mantra* from him - become his disciple then he may forgive all my offenses. There is no other way to be absolved from this *Vaisnava-aparadha*. I shall have to inform my Lord Gauracandra, Nimai Pandit, about this." So they left the place of Pundarika Vidyanidhi, and Gadadhara went to take Nimai Pandit's permission to become the disciple of Pundarika Vidyanidhi.

Before anyone knew that Pundarika had come from Chattagram to Nabadwip, and even before Mahaprabhu had met him, Mahaprabhu was seen to suddenly cry, " *Bap Pundarik! Bap Pundarik!* " In the mood of Srimati Radharani, Nimai was taking his name. *Bap* means 'father.' So He was calling, "Father, Pundarika! Father, Pundarika!" Nimai Pandit was chanting like this, in the mood of Radharani.

When Gadadhara made his proposal to Mahaprabhu, the Lord immediately replied, "Yes, very good proposal. Go and accept him at once." Gadadhara Pandit represents Radharani in *Gaura-lila*, and Pundarika is Radharani's father in *Krsna-lila* : the *Guru* is like the father, and the disciple is like the child. So Mahaprabhu at once approved and Gadadhara took initiation from Pundarika Vidyanidhi. He was none other than Vrsabhanuraja, and Gadadhara was the incarnation of Radharani in *Gaura-lila*.

Pundarika Vidyanidhi would not take bath in the Ganges because he could not tolerate that his feet would touch the holy Ganges river. Before daybreak, he would go to the Ganges and take some of the water on his head. He did not go to the Ganges by day, because he could not tolerate to see persons who would dive into the water or spit there and contaminate the pure, holy water by misusing it. Before worship, prayer, etc., the general *pandit* section may bathe in the Ganges and fast to purify their bodies of sin. But Pundarika Vidyanidhi would rather drink some Ganges water prior to his daily worship and duties, thereby teaching us the proper worshipful respect due to the Ganga.

In Puri, his dearest friend and associate was Sri Svarupa Damodara. When he went to Puri, he felt some pain in his heart that the priestly servants of Lord Jagannatha dressed the Lord in starched cloth, which is generally considered impure. When cloth is manufactured by hand loom, the thread is soaked in boiled rice water which acts as a paste to hold it firm in the loom. That cloth is considered impure, and must first be rinsed in water before offering it to the Deity. But in Puri, that was not the practice. They directly used starched cloth for dressing Lord Jagannatha, and Pundarika Vidyanidhi could not accommodate this.

That night, he dreamt that both Jagannatha and Balarama came to him and dealt slaps to his cheeks, saying, "You have come here to point out the defects in My servitors? What is this!"

They both began to slap him, and the dream was so intense that when he rose in the morning he found that both his cheeks were inflamed. He expressed to his most intimate friend, Svarupa Damodara: "My dear friend, Svarupa Damodara, such is my position. I had this objectionable feeling my

heart towards these servitors, so Jagannatha and Balarama have punished me in this way. See the swelling on both cheeks!"

Such was the nature of Pundarika Vidyanidhi. In essence, we are told that he is the father of Srimati Radharani, incarnated here as Pundarika Vidyanidhi. A slight holy association of this day, his appearance day, will help us a great deal in our advancement of spiritual life.

3. The Appearance of Sri Raghunandana Thakura

Thirdly, this is also the birthday of Raghunandana Thakura. He was born in a place named Srikhandada, near Katwa, in a Kaviraj family, a lineage of Ayurvedic doctors. Raghunandana was the son of Mukunda Kaviraja, who was such a notable doctor that even kings called for him for treatment. Raghunandana was a bachelor his whole life. His figure was extraordinarily beautiful, and he was very fond of dancing. From the beginning he was, of course, a natural devotee.

The family of Mukunda Thakura worshiped their ancestral Deity at home. Once, when Raghunandana was a growing boy, who had perhaps only recently received the sacred thread and admission to worship, his father asked him, "I'm going out and won't return in time. You please worship the Deity and feed Him - offer *bhogam* for His food." His expression was, "Please try to feed my Deity."

When he was away, Raghunandana's mother cooked many items and brought them to the temple, and asked Raghunandana to offer them to the Deity. Generally the doors are kept closed during worship, so behind the closed doors Raghunandana offered and prayed to the Lord,

"Please take these dishes I am offering You - please eat."

But the *Sri Murti* did not answer or come forward to eat. Raghunandana began to cry.

"My father will rebuke me! He has requested me to feed You, and You are not eating. I'll be punished. You have to take this food!"

The sincere boy began to cry in such a way that Krsna had to eat. Raghunandana was satisfied, and came out from the Deity room.

His mother came to remove the Prasadam.

"What is this? All the plates are empty!"

Raghunandana replied,

"You asked me to feed the Deity. He has taken."

His mother said angrily,

"You, boy, you have eaten it! The Deity doesn't eat. We offer, everything remains, and afterwards we take the *Prasadam*. You wicked boy, you have turned out to be such a rogue - you have eaten everything."

"No, no, I did not eat, the Deity ate everything."

"This is impossible, you foolish boy! Do you want to make a fool of me? This can never happen!"

He began to cry.

"No, I'm speaking the truth."

"All right, let your father come, and I shall ask him to punish you.

Mukunda returned, and Raghunandana's mother complained,

"Your boy has grown to be such a rogue! He says the Deity has eaten."

Raghunandana also petitioned his father,

"Yes, the Deity has eaten. He would not take in the beginning, but I began to cry, and then He ate."

"Is this true?"

"Yes, it is true my father, I am not lying."

"Can you show me?"

"I shall try."

So he was given another chance to worship, and from a hidden place his father could see that the Deity had actually taken the food.

Such a devotee was Raghunandana Thakura. When he danced in *Sankirtana*, it was such a charming scene that even Mahaprabhu was attracted. During the Jagannatha *Rathayatra* seven special groups would chant and dance, and in the party from Srikhanda we find that Raghunandana was the dancer.

So today is the day connected with the memory of Sri Raghunandana Thakura, who is considered to be Pradyumna *Avatara*. Many more incidents occur in his pastimes - I have only touched on them. It is also said that near the banks of the lake Madhu-puskarini there is a Jambu tree, and according to his wish two Kadamba flowers bloom on that tree every day for the worship of his Deity. Many miracles are found in his pastimes.

4The Appearance of Sri Raghunatha Dasa Goswami

Then, the fourth personality is Sri Raghunatha Dasa Goswami. He was born nearly five hundred years ago in Krsnapur village, Hooghly District. He came in the Kayastha caste. His father, Hiranya Majumdar, was a very rich man. His father had one brother, Govardhana, but Raghunatha was the only child. His father and uncle were state landowners. At that time, they collected 20 lakhs (2,000,000) rupees in taxes. 12 lakhs was to be paid to the king, and their net income was 8 lakhs.

Raghunatha heard about Mahaprabhu after His *sannyasa*. Hiranya and Govardhana had association with Advaita Acarya, and they used to make an annual contribution to all the superior Sanskrit scholars and their schools, in Bengal, of the time.

When Mahaprabhu went back to Sri Advaita Acarya's house (Advaita-bhavan) after His *sannyasa*, Raghunatha Dasa came and saw Him, and became mad with Love of Krsna. His heart was completely melted by Mahaprabhu's beauty and charming Personality, His Devotion and His Teachings of Devotion for Krsna. Mahaprabhu Himself was also aware of this. Raghunatha would not leave Mahaprabhu, but the Lord told him, "Go home. Don't be over-enthusiastic; control yourself. Keep your Divine Love for Krsna within your heart, and don't express it outwardly. Don't advertise it. Very soon the time will come when Krsna will guide you. He will make a way for you. Don't allow any external show but keep it within your heart."

*sthira hanya ghare yao, na hao batula
krame krame paya loka bhava-sindhu-kula
(Chaitanya charitamrita, Madhya 16.237)*

"Compose yourself and go home - don't be a madman. One reaches the shore of the material ocean gradually."

Then, he later came into the association of Nityananda Prabhu in Panihati. Nityananda Prabhu said to him, "Give a feast here for My followers. You are the son of a rich man, so manage to give a feast here for My followers."

Raghunatha did so, and Nityananda Prabhu was very satisfied. He also blessed him, saying, "Very soon your bright day will come." And He addressed His devotees, "See this young boy - he has immense wealth; in abundance he has everything required for a young man's enjoyment, but he does not care for it. Krsna's Grace has come down into his heart, so he does not care for anything of this world; but he's mad to leave his home of material grandeur and become a street beggar. He has become mad for Krsna. Just see this high ideal - devotion, attraction. Love of Krsna has made him mad. He is very, very fortunate. This royal dignity and prosperity cannot please him."

Anyway, he returned home. But one day Hiranya and the others noticed that he no longer entered the inner section of the house. He began to stay in the outer section only. His father and other guardians thought that his condition had become very grave, so ten men were engaged to keep guard that he may not leave.

One day in the early morning before sunrise, the family *Guru*, Yadunandana Acarya, suddenly entered the house. Finding Raghunatha in the outer section of the house, he met him and requested him, "I am going out for some important business, but there is no one to worship my Deity. So please ask one Brahmana disciple in my name to serve the Deity for a day or two during my absence." As Yadunandana Acarya left, Raghunatha went with him. The guards saw him going with the family *Guru*, so they did not interfere. On the way, Raghunatha requested the *Guru*, "You may go ahead with your business, and I shall request the gentleman to do the worship in your absence."

The *Guru* left. Raghunatha took advantage of the situation. Perhaps he requested that man to do the service, but he started off in the direction away from Puri. He knew that as soon as they realized at home that he wasn't returning, they would send men to search for him on the way to Puri. So for the whole day he walked in the opposite direction. In the evening he stopped at a cowherdsman's house, took a little milk from him and passed the night in the cowshed. Then in the morning he started for Puri.

When his guardians found that Raghunatha had not returned home, they heard from the guards that he had gone with the family *Guru*. They went to the *Guru's* house, but Raghunatha was not to be found. Then they thought that he must have left for Puri, and they sent ten men to that side. They returned without finding him. In this way, Raghunatha cleverly managed to escape. For twelve days he walked to Puri, taking food here and there for only three of those days. On the other days no food was necessary. He was helped by Divine Love, surcharged.

He had already heard that Mahaprabhu was at the Gambhira, the Kasi Misra Bhavan. He went there, and in the courtyard fell flat in obeisance unto Mahaprabhu.

Mukunda Datta announced to the Lord,

"Raghunatha has come."

Mahaprabhu said,

"Yes, look after him. He has come with great difficulty, walking and walking without food. Take care of him for a few days. Then, he will manage for himself."

That was the direction of Mahaprabhu. For a few days Raghunatha took Prasadam there. After that he began to beg at the gate of the Jagannatha Temple.

The parents now thought it was impossible to bring him back, and they did not make any further attempt. But they sent some money with one *Brahmana* and two servants, instructing them to hire a house and offer Raghunatha a place to stay, and see that their son may not die without food. They tried their best, but Raghunatha continued to subsist on alms. Over a period of two years, Raghunatha invited Mahaprabhu to take *Prasadam* at that house, and the Lord did so for his satisfaction. After that, Raghunatha left that idea, thinking, "This is only to produce some name and fame for me. Mahaprabhu is not pleased with such *Prasadam*."

Svarupa Damodara was the dearest Attendant of Mahaprabhu, and a very good scholar as well. Raghunatha was also a scholar - we find that later he left the world beautiful poetry in Sanskrit. Mahaprabhu gave Raghunatha over to the charge of Svarupa Damodara, saying, "I request Svarupa Damodara to take your charge, and he will advise you what will be necessary for your devotional life."

But suddenly one day, Raghunatha approached Mahaprabhu:

"Why have You managed to take me out of my house, and what is my best benefit? If You please tell me in Your own words, my heart will be satisfied."

Mahaprabhu said,

"I have given you over to the charge of Svarupa Damodara. He is more qualified than even Myself. Still, if you want to hear something directly from Me, then I say in brief:

*gramya-katha na sunibe, gramya-varta na kahibe
bhala na khaibe ara bhala na paribe
amani manada hanya krsna-nama sada la'be
vraje radha-krsna seva manase karibe*

"Don't indulge in worldly talk, don't hear worldly talk. Try your best to avoid mundane matters. Don't eat delicious dishes, but take whatever ordinary food may come of its own accord; and don't dress luxuriously. Always try to take the Name of Krsna with the attitude of giving respect to others, without expecting respect from anyone. Be humble, but never aspire after respectful dealings from others. In this way, try to take the Name of Krsna constantly. And within, try to serve Sri Sri Radha-Krsna in Vrndavana. Mentally, be in Vrndavana rendering Service to *Sri Sri Radha-Krsna-lila*."

Mahaprabhu told Raghunatha that this was the essence of His advice to him. Then, He again took Raghunatha's hand and offered it to the hand of Svarupa Damodara. He said, "I am giving you to the charge of Svarupa Damodara. He is the best Spiritual Teacher. He will take care of you."

After Raghunatha's arrival in Puri, Mahaprabhu stayed there continuously for sixteen years. After that, Mahaprabhu departed from the world. Raghunatha left Puri and went to Vrndavana, thinking, "I have what is to be had; now I only want to see Vrndavana Dhama once, and then I shall leave this body by jumping from the highest peak of Govardhana." With this idea he went to Vrndavana, but there he came into contact with Sanatana Goswami and Rupa Goswami - he found the beginning of a new life. He thought, "What is this? Mahaprabhu has not departed - He is living in them."

Mahaprabhu delegated Rupa and Sanatana with the power to preserve the Devotional Current they had received from Him, and to present it in a new light. They were asked to prove by drawing upon different Scriptures that Mahaprabhu's Teachings are the very gist and purpose of all the Scriptures. As in *Bhagavad-gita*, *vedais ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*: "The attempt of every Revealed Scripture is to show Me as the Highest Center - I am the Absolute." So Mahaprabhu said, "Krsna is the Absolute. With the help of the different Scriptures and historical reference - by all means possible - try to prove that Krsna is Svayam Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and that *Vraja-lila*, Vrndavana-lila, is the highest achievement."

The two brothers had already begun that work when Raghunatha came into their association, and he found, "Oh! Mahaprabhu is here." He abandoned the idea of leaving this world, and joined Rupa and Sanatana as their disciple. Mahaprabhu had already ordered Sanatana Goswami, "My followers are very poor and helpless. You'll have to look after them whenever they come to Vrndavana. You'll have to be the caretaker of all my disciples that come to Vrndavana." So Raghunatha came to Sanatana Goswami, and Sanatana took care of him.

Raghunatha was so self-forgetful that one day as he was sitting on the banks of Radha-kunda and taking the Name, a tiger came just beside him to drink water, but Raghunatha paid no attention. Suddenly, Sanatana Goswami came upon the scene. He was astonished. Up until then Raghunatha

had lived under the shade of a tree, but Sanatana said, "Please construct a hut to live in. Don't disregard my request - I entreat you to do this." Then from that time he managed to construct a small dwelling and stay there. His abnegation, *vairagya*, was incomparable. Sanatana, Rupa, and all the Goswamis' indifference to worldly enjoyment was extreme, but Raghunatha's abnegation surpassed all.

When he was in Puri, sometimes he would beg *Prasadam* at the gate of the Jagannatha Temple, and sometimes he would take *Prasadam* at a *chatram* or free kitchen where rich men distribute *Prasadam* for beggars. But then he thought, "I am taking what is due to others' *karma*."

The unsold Jagannatha *Prasadam* is given to the cows of Jagannatha Puri. But when it becomes so stale that it emits a bad odor, even the cows cannot eat it. So now Raghunatha would wash that *Prasadam* with sufficient water, and adding a little salt he would eat that. Mahaprabhu heard about this, and one day when Raghunatha was taking that *Prasadam* Mahaprabhu approached and suddenly took some and ate it. He said, "Oh! I have tasted many times the *Prasadam* of Jagannatha, but such sweet *Prasadam* I have never taken anywhere!"

So, what is the taste in *Prasadam*? It is not mundane. Raghunatha had such intense faith in *Prasadam* that he lived on apparently rotten things with a little salt - and he was the son of a family of kingly opulence. So much indifference was in him. And in his last days in Vrndavana, he would pass each day taking only a pot of *ghol*, buttermilk. This is not possible for a man of flesh and blood. Great souls like the Goswamis are really personalities come down from the other world, and so it was possible for them to show the ideal of abnegation. It is not possible for ordinary humans of flesh and blood to observe such a degree of abnegation without dying. But the Goswamis created the standard and ideal by such *vairagya*. At the same time, Raghunatha studied Rupa Goswami's presentation of the highest type of *Rasa* or Devotional Sentiment - *Madhura-rasa*.

The Acme of Divine Service

Srila Raghunatha Dasa Goswami appreciated the acme of Divine Service, the culminating point of Divine Service, *Radha-dasya*, which is Servitude unto Srimati Radharani. Therefore he is called the *Prayojanacarya*. Srila Sanatana Goswami is generally conceived of by his successors as the *A-carya* of *Sambandha-jnana*. *Sambandha* refers to 'what is what' - 'what is my position in the spiritual hierarchy.' That was explained most clearly by Srila Sanatana Goswami. And *Abhidheya* - what we should cultivate in order to attain to our objective - was mainly given by Srila Rupa Goswami. He taught us how we can attain fulfillment of our life in the Domain of Love. And what is particularly the highest point of our attainment, or *Prayojana*, was very vividly shown by Srila Raghunatha Dasa Goswami. In his famous sloka he says:

*asabharair amrta-sindhumayaih kathancit
kalo mayatigamitah kila sampratam hi
tvan cet krpam mayi vidhasyasi naiva kim me
pranair vraje na ca baroru bakarinapi*

This sloka has given us the highest conception of our attainment in the school of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. What is that? Srila Raghunatha Goswami is addressing Srimati Radharani: "O Queen of

my heart, for a long, long time I am waiting with great patience to have Your Mercy, which is so sweet to me that I cannot avoid it. It is heart-melting, heart-attracting, heart-crushing. It is so deeply touching me - I can't avoid Your Service Connection. Somehow I have managed to come such a long way, to endure such a long time, but I am impatient now. Be gracious; if You are not gracious upon me, I have got no hope. I will come to the end of my patience.

"My life will end here. So much so, that, what shall I do with this Vrndavana? Vrndavana is of no use to me! What is the utility of living my life? It is useless - it will end with no utility. I can't love even Vrndavana, which is associated with the *Lila* of Krsna. To say nothing of Vrndavana, I can't relish the company of even Krsna, without You. Without You, even Krsna is meaningless to me. I can't tolerate, I can't relish either my own life, or this environment, or even Krsna - if He Himself comes to grace me I can't relish that, without Your connection.

"So please be gracious upon me. You are all-in-all. Without You, Krsna consciousness is not Krsna consciousness. Your position is so great, so beautiful in *Krsna-lila* - You are the center of all the *Lila* of Krsna. Without You I can't conceive of any life worth living. I utterly surrender unto You, my Queen."

This is *Radha-dasya* . Our best fulfillment is in the Service of *Sri Radha* , because only She can fully attract the Grace of Krsna. She is the other Half who can draw the maximum *Rasa* , Ecstasy, from Krsna - in quantity as well as in quality. So those who are serving Srimati Radharani get the highest type of qualitative *Rasa* from Krsna in reciprocation for their Service. That cannot be had through any other channel. Service that comes through Srimati Radharani is of the highest quality, so Her Service should be our summum bonum of life.

This was announced clearly by Srila Raghunatha Dasa Goswami who is considered to be *Prayojanacarya* , the Guide to show us our highest fulfillment of life. By our association with this day and by our humble attempt to discuss all these matters, we may be benefited in the achievement of our goal. This is the day of the advent of such great personalities.

5. Departure of Sri Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura

Today is also the day that Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura departed from this world. Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura appeared about 180 years after the Advent of Sri Gaurangadev. He composed a commentary on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and many other books to help the devotees coming later in the *Sampradaya* . He was such a great *Acarya*. In his own special way, he has dealt elaborately with many spiritual matters, giving the proper approach. He was the *sastric* or Scriptural dispensation of Sri Rupa-Sanatana, etc. By his grace, Sri Baladeva Vidyabhusana composed the *Sri Gaudiya Vaisnava* commentary on *Vedanta-sutra*, *Sri Govinda-bhasya* . From such great Masters there is much to be read.

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti was born in a Brahmana family in Devagram of Murshidabad district. He was a great scholar of Sanskrit. He came in the line of Sri Narottama Thakura. He gave us extensive Scriptural writings to help us very precisely and elaborately to know about the Pastimes of Mahaprabhu and Radha-Krsna, Vrndavana, Nabadwip, and the *Guru-parampara* . The *Guruvastakam* we chant daily was written by him, as well as many other important works. Srila Rupa

Goswami wrote *Sri-Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* , 'The Nectarine Ocean of Devotional Joy,' and Srila Visvanatha wrote *Sri-Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindu* or a drop of that Ocean. And from Sri Rupa's *Sri-Ujjvala-nilamani*, 'The Brilliant Jewel of the Supernatural World,' or Krsna in *Madhura-rasa*, he gave *Ujjvala-nilamani-kirana* or a ray of that Jewel. In this way, he has given volumes of books and poems. As Sri Rupa Goswami gave the *Asta-kaliya-lila* of Krsna, or twenty-four hour Service engagement with Sri Sri Radha-Govinda, he has similarly given in *Caitanya-lila* twenty-four hour engagement in the Service of Sriman Mahaprabhu. So he has done great Service to the *Sampradaya* and profusely bestowed his mercy upon us.

5, 6. Departures of Srimad Bharati Maharaj and Srimad Parvat Maharaj

Today is also the disappearance day of two of our senior Godbrothers, *sannyasi* disciples of our Guru Maharaj, Tridandi Swami Srimad Bhakti Viveka Bharati Maharaj and Tridandi Swami Srimad Bhakti Svarupa Parvat Maharaj. They both preached extensively on the order of Srila Prabhupada. Sri Bharati Maharaj was very popular; his preaching style was very charming and engaging. In the beginning we appreciated his preaching very much.

Sri Parvat Maharaj was also among the earliest disciples of our Guru Maharaj. He was born at Svarupa Ganja, on the other side of the Ganges from here (Nabadwip). He was born in the house directly next to Surabhi Kunja where Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura lived for some time. During his childhood, he told me, he saw Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura chanting the Name. In the early morning Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura would chant the Hare Krsna *Mahamantra* just as one calling someone from a distance. A living thing - like one man calling another. In this way, in a living way, he was calling Krsna. He was in his old age, and his body was somewhat attacked with rheumatism. There was a cement chair constructed there; he would stroll about at his sweet will, and when he felt fatigued he would take his seat on that chair. That chair is still there today.

So, at a very early age, Srimad Parvat Maharaj came to Srila Prabhupada and accepted his shelter. For a long period he was posted as the caretaker at Bhakti Kutir, the then 'head office,' a small seaside house in Puri owned by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura. Then, when Prabhupada began his preaching life, Parvat Maharaj became a *sannyasi*. During the lifetime of Prabhupada he preached throughout the whole of Bengal and beyond as well. He established a Math in Orissa.

I remember, once, when I was a newcomer in the Math, he was telling one gentleman about how he preached on the East side of Bengal. At that place, some people challenged him,

"Why have you come to preach here? Don't you know that just nearby on the bank of the river there is a *siddha-mahatma*? He has attained the highest end of life. Have you seen him?"

He replied to them, "I have seen many *siddha*, like *aloo-siddha*, etc.!"

Siddha may mean 'perfected soul,' but another meaning of *siddha* is 'boiled.' So he was saying, "I've seen many *siddha* - boiled things. Boiled potatoes, boiled cabbage, etc. We already have so many boiled things!"

They said,

„What are you saying? You are insulting him."

He replied,

"This is no insult. Those who are full of all those *siddhas* - they know nothing. What Mahaprabhu has brought us is the highest. All other proposals are trash and nasty things. We have come from a great *Mahatma* to carry to you the highest objective, the summum bonum of life - accept Mahaprabhu and *Bhagavatam* . We hate all those ' *siddha* ' impostors who are deceiving the people in the garb of religion."

Such was the great preaching of Sri Gaudiya Math in those days.

To my best capacity I have tried my best to represent to you my humble knowledge of these *Mahatmas* , and I pray that they may be propitiated and give us their

favor. With this prayer, I end here: *vancha-kalpa-tarubhyas ca krpa-sindhubhya eva ca, patitanam pavanebhyo vaisnavebhyo namo namah.*

Chapter Eight

Approaching the Higher World

Devotee: Guru Maharaj, what is the reason the *Brahmanas* of Jagannatha Puri don't allow Westerners to enter the Temple?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: This is rather a case of physical purity. They strictly observe the physical purity. They don't allow even the *Mrdanga* into the Temple. According to them, if it is analyzed it is impure since it is made from the skin of a cow.

Also, there was a pandit of the *Smarta Sampradaya*, who had a peculiar religious conception; wherever he went, he always kept the wooden sandals of his *guru* tied about his chest. Once he wanted to enter the Temple at Pandarapur, but he was refused. The *Brahmanas* there told him, "They may be your *guru's* sandals; no doubt, they may be pure to you in your relationship, but we nonetheless consider them sandals, so you must leave them outside."

Such *Brahmanas* strictly reject the physical impurity, with some mental modification. That is their custom. So both the mental and physical habits of the *Mleccha* and *Yavana* (non-*Vedic* races and sects) are impure, that is, closely connected with *himsa* or animal-killing, etc., and generally their lifestyles are uncontrolled and boisterous in many other ways. They are not regulated according to the *Vedic* Scriptures. Considering all this, those *Brahmanas* won't allow them entry to the Temple.

Even Gandhi wanted to enter the Puri Temple with some of his outcast or lower caste followers, but they were prohibited. Gandhi also stayed out. He wanted to enter along with the outcasts of society. Despite his great influence over the country, he was refused entrance. Without his knowledge, Gandhi's wife entered to have the *darsana* of Lord Jagannatha. When he came to know of it, he severely chastised her for entering without him.

So Gandhi was more of a patriot than a devotee. He thought his lordship over his wife was permanent and absolute, not to be modified even by devotion for Lord Jagannatha. But according to us, his wife did right. How permanent is the relationship between husband and wife? For the main part it is only a bodily relationship. And what is the relationship with the Lord - the Husband of husbands, the Master of the whole world? What is the nasty husband in this world in comparison with the Lord of the whole universe? For a national cause, or the cause of his political creed, Gandhi wanted to check his wife's going to the Temple, as though God were within the jurisdiction of politics.

Haridasa Thakura never entered the Jagannatha Temple, nor did Rupa and Sanatana. Not only that, but Sanatana Goswami even avoided the main streets where the servitors of the Jagannatha Temple would usually pass. He did not walk there, giving respect to the current laws and by-laws (of the *Pandas*, the *Brahmanas*, whose edicts were above the jurisdiction of the king). Furthermore, Sanatana Goswami wrote in *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* that the devotees should try to follow all the rules and regulations he had listed therein, and any further practices that were not mentioned should be ascertained by noting the current practices in the Temple of Jagannatha. He was so catholic in his faith in Mahaprabhu. In other words, whatever transpired there in the presence of Mahaprabhu

should be taken by us as approved by Him, so we won't dare to interfere with that. He is above law. His Will is law - law comes from His Sweet Will. This principle we must not forget.

Designed and Destined by the Absolute

Everything is not only designed, but also destined by Him. The whole universe is designed and destined according to His Sweet Will. His position is so high and unchallengable; and it is Absolute Good. Rules and regulations are created only to take us to the Absolute Good, but the Absolute Good is not under those rules or any law. The Absolute is independent, above everything. Krsna-lila is the nearest approach to the Absolute Good Himself. He is whimsical. If we realize that much, that is the best conception. To place any restriction over the Absolute Good is to commit suicide. Do you follow?

Devotee: Yes.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: - because it is not only good, but Absolute Good. Our intellect cannot comprehend it. Once Swami Maharaj and myself had a talk here. Then after going from here to that blue house where Swami Maharaj stayed for three weeks, his disciple Acyutananda asked him, "What sort of talk did you have with Sridhar Maharaj?" Swami Maharaj replied to him, "If you hear that, you will faint." What does it mean, 'faint'? It means, "It is beyond the reach of your consciousness, unintelligible to you in your present stage of realization."

Once Ramanujacarya wanted to modify the rules and regulations that are practiced in the Jagannatha Temple. While contemplating in this way, he slept on a bedstead, and when he awoke he found that his body along with the bedstead was cast to Sri Kurmam of Ganjam District, in South India, some hundreds of miles away from the Jagannatha Temple.

He suddenly awoke. "Where am I?" He thought, "You gave me inspiration by instructing me in a dream to modify the existing rules and regulations that are being practiced in the Temples, and now why do You oppose me? I wanted to modify the current practices of rules and regulations at the Jagannatha Temple." Then he again dreamt of the Lord telling him, "No, don't modify here! Go elsewhere. You got the dream for the sake of other Temples, not here. Go and preach your regulations in all other Temples save and except this Temple."

Pundarika Vidyanidhi is considered to be the incarnation of Srimati Radharani's father, here in *Gaura-lila*. He thought, "What are these *Pandas*? They are awkward people - they do not know what is pure or impure. Indiscriminately they use starched cloth for dressing the Jagannatha Deity." At night he found that Jagannatha and Balarama, two Brothers, had come to his bedside and were slapping him on both cheeks. In the morning he found that his cheeks were swollen. Others asked him, "Why are your cheeks so swollen?" He had to recount the incident. In effect, the Lord was saying, "This is not the place to suggest any change in the regulation that is going on under My direction - don't interfere!"

So there is some special grant and there are some special rules for that place. He is Absolute, unquestionable. Our inquiries need only be for the purpose of understanding something of the inevitability of how everything enters into the Absolute Good. Any law ever conceived of ultimately enters into the Absolute Goodness. Mostly, this is a matter beyond our conceptions.

Patita-pavana Jagannatha Sarvesvara ,Vrndavanacandra Sarva-rasera Akara . When enumerating one hundred and twenty Names of Krsna (*Sri-KrsnaVimsottara-sata-Nama*), Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura mentions at the end, *Patita-pavana* : Jagannatha has come to save the fallen; and Krsna's special quality is that He is the Emporium of all Rasas: *Vrndavanacandra Sarvarasera Akara* - the very Source of all types of ecstasy, Personified. That is Krsna. Mahaprabhu is also *Patita-pavana* . He passed the major portion of His life there in Jagannatha Puri. *Patita-pavana* means 'Savior of the fallen.' Everything has its speciality. As a doctor may prescribe medicine with a free diet except for restrictions on only two or three items, similarly in the case of the Temple of Lord Jagannatha we also see great liberality, with the exception of a few items.

When I first began to appreciate Mahaprabhu and came to this line, I thought that if Mahaprabhu is the Incarnation of God, then why didn't He overthrow the non-Vedic rule? Why did he tolerate the non-Vedic rule here in India? He could have overthrown it easily. That was a question. But gradually I came to realize that this was a very trifling matter. The ruling power or political life has nothing to do with spiritual life.

Queen Kunti rather welcomed adversity. She prayed, "Keep me always in a dangerous position. That will be convenient for me to pray for Your Grace. And ordinary worldly favorable circumstances will encourage me to ignore Your valuable Grace. So always keep me in adversity." That was her prayer. So the political environment, social environment - all other campaigns have no value. According to the result of our karma we shall be placed in a particular environment, and we must start our spiritual life from wherever we are placed; we must begin our work of conquering all those *samskaras* that comprise the mental encasement we are living in.

Crossing the walls of misunderstanding

Tat te 'nukampam susamiksamanaḥ. We should not only live in our present position without complaint, but moreover, we shall have to consider it as really necessary for our upliftment. In this way, we have to accept what ever adversities that come to us as the Grace of the Lord. We must cope, with this positive angle of vision of goodness:

"This is my real necessity. There is no error in the calculation of the Lord. This test has been extended to me for my benefit. To stand, to face and cross this opposition is my chance to have my progress in life. This test has been given by Krsna to facilitate my progressive life." In the *Bhagavatam* we are advised to face all adverse circumstances in such an optimistic way. Then very easily and swiftly we shall cross these walls of misunderstanding, this *Maya* , and we will be liberated, and more - we will have participation in Krsna consciousness, the life of dedication.

Distinguishing Form and Substance

Devotee: Maharaj, I have a question. I have heard two things. One, that Vaisnava *sannyasa* is the devotional line; and I have also heard that it is a formality of *Varnasrama-dharma*. What is it really?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: The outer touch of *sannyasa* is within the *Varnasrama-dharma* (socio-religious system), but it also has its positive side. Both negative and positive sides are to be considered. *Danda* means 'punishment,' as well as 'staff.' The three *dandas* represent thought, word and deed. On the negative side, the three *dandas* of the symbolic triple staff or *tridanda* that the Vaisnava *sannyasi* accepts indicate that he should not use his thought, word and deed for any mundane or exploitative aim and object. But the positive side is that he will punish his thought, word and deed - to engage them in the Service of Krsna, Narayana.

Then the function becomes Vaisnavism. Those who do not believe in the positive side of life may accept *sannyasa* only as abstinence from using their thought, word and deed for any mundane purpose. They will prefer *mauna*, silence. But the Vaisnava *sannyasi* will prefer *Krsna-kirtana*, singing the Glories of the Lord. They have the positive side.

So, to check these three aspects of life from mingling with the incidents of this mundane world is only one side. But the other side is to use them for the spiritual object. That is Vaisnava *sannyasa*.

Devotee: Doesn't a *brahmacari* or a *grhastha* also utilize his thought, word and deed for the spiritual objective? Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Of course; but the renounced order or order of *sannyasa* is a special emblem, a reminder. It doesn't follow that one who has not taken *sannyasa* will not engage his faculties in Spiritual Service. A *grhastha Paramahansa* who is a *Parsada-bhakta* (Associate-servitor) is also possible, without *sannyasa*. He may not necessarily have a sacred thread either.

The necessity is only to remind us of that life. That is healthy. The sacred thread, the red cloth, the *danda* - they always caution us: "Think that you have dedicated your life for the spiritual objective; you are meant only for this, so be alert. Don't misuse your red cloth, your sacred thread, the *Tulasi-mala*, etc." They will remind us always. They have their utility.

Asiddha-mahatma (perfected great soul) may not have red cloth. Sanatana Goswami and others wore ordinary white cloth. They accepted the minimum necessity of garments. No red cloth, no *danda*, no sacred thread. Pure life is possible without those things. But for the beginners these things will be helpful, so they are introduced into the society of the Vaisnava school, in the lower plane. And sometimes the higher also come to accept these lower emblems, as, for example, Mahaprabhu took *sannyasa*.

Such an emblem or the dress of a world *Acarya* is also there to help the public to give proper respect to the wearer. If he is in ordinary dress the people won't show any respect or give any attention to his words and teachings. If a policeman or soldier is in his uniform, people will show some respect to the police or the military. But a military man or policeman may patrol in plain dress also, and do even higher service. Still, the uniform is necessary to regulate the society.

So this is something like a uniform. The society should learn to take them as the Teachers, the holy men, and feel, "We should deal with them very gently, for our future benefit." The society will also reap that benefit; and that holy man will also gain some instruction: "Oh, I should not mix with anyone and everyone. It should be seen that my practices keep up the standard, the model of the Teachers." Otherwise, independent of such symbols a man can culture his spiritual life, without taking the role of a *brahmacari*, *grhastha*, *vanaprastha* or *sannyasi*. Internally, he can improve his heart.

Devotee: Maharaj, how does one understand, or deal with, the fall-down of a *sannyasi* or *brahmachari*? What is the correct understanding?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Generally we shall take it that there was some offense for which he could not keep the standard of life that was expected of him by his Guru Maharaj. That should be the general way of thinking about them. Some previous offense is taking its course and not allowing him to go on smoothly in the way of his realization. It suddenly appeared and checked him. In particular cases it may be *Vaisnava-aparadha* or offense against a Vaisnava, and sometimes in general cases previous bad *karma* may have come and stood in the way of his progress.

The Vigilant Eye of the Guardian

We must always be cautious with our free choice. A minor requires the vigilant eye of the major guardian; in our immature stage our free will is surrounded by many deviations. Thus, in our lower stage it will be safe to be constantly under the guidance of a bona fide guardian until we attain promotion to the major stage. This is necessary.

Initiation and karma

Devotee: So, Guru Maharaj, if one has initiation and his *karma* has been removed, how is it possible for his previous *karma* to check him?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Do you think that by initiation all *karma* is finished at once? That is not claimed anywhere. The disciples are given a chance - admission. When a doctor has accepted a patient, it does not mean that he is immediately cured; he must follow the direction of the doctor - take proper diet and medicine - then he may expect that he will be cured shortly. To call the doctor and have his prescription does not mean that the patient is fully cured. This is not practical thinking. Why hover in the theoretical, imaginary world?

Devotee: I was told in a religious mission I joined that at the time of initiation all previous *karma* is taken away. It's not like that?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Such a statement is only meant in the context that when you have called for a good doctor and accepted his treatment, your cure is guaranteed. Otherwise, we see that so many veterans are going down. If the *Guru* is so great as to be able to create a great revolution in the world, and he has given *mantra* to the disciples he has accepted, yet many of them are also falling back - why?

The initiation is a recommendation. It is not final. Cure is guaranteed under the treatment of a good doctor. But if as a patient you don't care to accept his guidance, and secretly indulge in an evil diet, of what value is your doctor? When you have a good doctor your cure is almost guaranteed. But you have to follow him. And also it is possible that if you are becoming a little ill and your doctor comes to know that 'my patient has taken this bad diet' or 'he did not use my medicine' - then the doctor will again take up the case more seriously, and he will cure you. We may receive such help from the *Guru* and Vaisnava, but our free choice is never snatched away.

Real Taste for the Truth

Until and unless we find in our heart a real taste for the Truth, we are not safe. First, over the surface, spiritual life begins with *sraddha*, faith, and underground with *sukrti*, or special merit. Next is *sadhu-sanga*, our company with the *sadhu*. Within that is our surrender to *Guru*. Then *bhajana*, our serving life in various forms such as *sravana*, *kirtana*, *prasada-sevana*, or hearing, chanting, respecting the Lord's Remnants, etc., begins. Then *anartha-nivrtti* - our attraction for objects other than Krsna, objects other than God, diminishes. Then *nistha* - continued attempt for the Service, and not for otherwise. Then *ruci*, taste, will be created.

Real taste for the truth will be created, that is, awakened in our heart. We are safe then, but not before that. When spontaneous taste for the truth is awakened within us, we are safe. We can make fair progress from that time. Prior to that we must remain under the guardian. Taste will take me. "I have acquired the taste of sweetness, so automatically I shall run towards that which is very sweet." Until and unless we find that the Truth is sweet, Krsna is sweet, we are not safe in our approach towards Him. So many distractions may take us hither and thither.

The Guru Principle

Devotee: Maharaj, is the Guru also under the law of *karma*?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: He is not under the law of *karma*. *Guru*, as I have mentioned before from the examples of the *sadhus* and the Scriptures, is generally of three kinds: one comes from *Vaikuntha*, or the land of wholesale truth. He comes here as an agent to take the souls up. Another *Guru* has one step here, another step there, and he carries persons from here to there. The last type of *Guru* has two feet here, but his eyes are fixed there, and he takes persons along with him to that Plane.

Chapter Ten

Supersubjective Reality

Devotee: It was very nice at your birthplace; I enjoyed that very much -

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: - enjoyed?

Devotee: Yes.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: That is not to be enjoyed. We should not use that expression 'to enjoy' about any place of reverence. We should try to see with only a serving attitude. Higher existence is to be tackled only with awe, reverence, and serving attitude. Otherwise, we shall be anthropomorphists; we shall take one thing for another. *Martya-buddhi -aparadha*. It will be offense. Whenever we shall approach the higher subjective realm, we should feel that "I am not seeing; I am not the subject, but that is seeing me." Do you follow?

Devotee: Yes.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: That is the supersubjective element. For example, when we stand before the *Sri Murti*, the Deity, our attitude should be, "I am not seeing Him, He is seeing me." He's the seer. We have to approach the transcendental world not as a seer, but as we are being seen by Him. We are being bathed, cleansed by the ray of His vision. Can you understand this?

Devotee: Yes, yes.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Our whole approach should be like this, otherwise we shall see mundane things and imagine them to be spiritual. We won't come practically in connection with that reality. The reality is supersubjective. Taking this world as the object, we are a subject. But when I am going to have a touch of the Supersubjective, I must know that He is all-seer, all-feeler, all-hearer. The very basis of spiritual life is like this. Then we shall come in contact with the higher reality; otherwise we shall go on plodding in the mud of imagination. The attitude should be to want to be utilized by Him, and try for any chance of serving Him: "I have come here to serve, and not to enjoy the scenery." Can you feel this?

Devotee: Yes.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: This will take us to connection with the higher substance - subjective, super-subjective, super- super- super- super-subjective - the very fine, finer, finest - in this way, in the sphere of consciousness. So *jnana-sunya* - one should surrender himself: "How can I be utilized by Him?" This is the way. Otherwise, what is the use of sight-seeing? Enjoy the scenery - that is offensive.

Devotee: When the environment comes to attack us, how can we see that as Krsna?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: When the environment is unfavorable?

Devotee: Yes.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: We shall try to find out the Supreme Will there. We should feel, "I have done something wrong, so this is coming to control me and to exact the reaction for my offenses. *Tat te 'nukampam susamiksamano*. In the perfect vision, we are not to quarrel with the environment. "Not even a straw can move without the Supreme Will, without the order of the Supreme Will. So, whatever is coming to attack me is my necessity. Just that is necessary for me, to correct me."

Just as when the mother is punishing the child, she does so only with the good will to correct the child. Similarly, the Absolute has got no vindictive nature to punish me, but His dealings are only for my correction. We shall have to see and approach in that way.

Tat te 'nukampam susmiksamano bhunjana evatma-krtam vipakam: "Whatever undesirable I find here is the result of my previous *karma*, and by the good will at the Supreme, that previous *karma* is going to be finished. I will be relieved. I will be made fit for higher; service to Him, so this has come." That is the advice in *Bhagavatam*. Don't quarrel with the environment. Try to be adjusted with it; correct your own ego. Everything is all right.

Your ego is demanding some sort of comfort from the environment. That is the cause of this hitch. There's no hitch in the outside, no ailment; but within, you ego creates the problem. That false ego should be dissolved, and the liquid nectar will flow and place you within the highest plane, the plane where there is no complaint. The smooth movement, affectionate movement of the most fundamental plane: your soul will find yourself standing and walking in that plane. And the false friends - the circumstances we think to be friends but which are really all false - those false friends will be withdrawn. That is *nirguna*, the causeless flow of welfare, most fundamental in the Absolute Plane. That is *Bhakti* proper. *Bhakti* means *seva*, service - Service Divine. That is a causeless wave. The deepest wave, the wave of the deepest plane. That is causeless and that is irresistible. That means no beginning, no end. Eternal flow. And only my soul can take a stand in that plane and move in harmony with that plane.

Katha ganam natyam gamanam. In Brahma-samhita it is mentioned, "All the talks there are as sweet as song; all the walking there, movement, is as sweet as dancing." In this way, everything is sweet. That is the harmonious movement plane. In Vrndavana. We have to go back to that home.

We have come out with the spirit of colonization in a foreign land, with the bad object of exploitation. For the purpose of exploitation we have come to colonize in this material world, and as a reaction we suffer. The whole cover must be eliminated, and our person within, the finest ego, must emerge. Within this gross mischievous ego there is the finer ego, soul; and that is the child of that soil. Do you understand?

Devotee: Yes. Sometimes I understand -

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: So, faultfinding will take us in the wrong direction. Finding fault in others is the negative side. We should feel, "Cent-per-cent I shall engage my attention to correct myself. My responsibility is there. My main responsibility is to correct myself." 'Physician cure thyself.' That should be the principle of any bona fide student of this Krsna consciousness. That is the positive side; and the negative side, indirect side, is to judge others' practices and how to associate with them. We shall associate with the good and we shall avoid those who are not up to standard. But

this is the negative side, and this is not as important as the positive side. We shall be optimistic to see good everywhere, and for ourselves we should think, "My knowledge and angle of vision is bad, so I can't see others properly." 'Physician cure thyself.'

If our *acara* or our own practices are well, only then can we have some qualification for preaching to others. How can one who is not in a normal position try to bring others to a normal position? If we shall take the Divine Name, there are also many considerations. Mainly there are ten kinds of offenses to avoid, which deny us proper conception. Proper conception will help proper dealing and positive attainment, which is how to get out of the negative side. Maya means misconception, misunderstanding, misleading. We are misleading the environment.

The difficulty is all apparent and suicidal. Sometimes we want causeless mercy; at the same time we can't tolerate others in that same line. We go to judge in the case of others: "Why should he receive causeless mercy? He has got so many defects, so much anti-attitude and disqualification, why should he be accepted or given any chance?" But for us - we want, "Don't come to judge me, otherwise I have no hope, my Lord."

Jnana-sunya-bhakti. "If You come to judge, I have got no hope. Please grant grace, then I can hope to approach You, to offer myself to make progress towards You; if You become very lenient, not to find fault with me"; but if at the same time, in the same breath, we say, "Why should this disqualified man get any grace? Why should he get some mercy and affection?" that is hypocrisy in us, and that causes a great deal of difficulty within us. It is suicidal.

This is *Vaisnava-ninda*, *Vaisnava-aparadha* - offense to the devotee. A devotee may be accepted by Him, and gradually he will be purified; but we are very eager to find fault in him. That is most dangerous for our own progress; it is suicidal. If in my case I want something higher, but in the case of others I can't tolerate the same behavior of the Lord, that is a most difficult position.

Generally that is the basis of *Vaisnava-aparadha*. When someone has been accepted by the Lord, and He is gradually purifying him, and we give particular attention to the remnants of impurities and difficulties in him, the result is that all those difficulties will be transferred to us. This is the actual experience. If I especially mark the fault of another devotee, that will be transferred to me. It happens. In our experience and also in the *sastra* we have seen this.

So, one must be very careful not to make any remark generally about the practices and activities of another Vaisnava. It may be possible only in the case when one is empowered by the Supreme; just as in the case of his disciple. To correct his disciples, with a guardian's sympathetic eye, he can mark the defects, and he will help them to remove them. There must be some affectionate heart within. Not jealousy or anything of that type, but with good will; the affectionate guardian's want to remove the defects.

Either from the position of *Siksa-Guru* or *Diksa-Guru* one may detect the faults of the students of this line, and help them sincerely to get free from them. Otherwise, if we are attracted by those faults, they will come to us and we shall have to pay for it.

It is a practical thing; and also based on good reason and scriptural advices. We must be careful. It is also warned in the Vaisnava literature that we must be careful about *Vaisnava-aparadha* that comes from the jealous spirit of competition. That jealousy is very detrimental to our spiritual life.

So we all must be very careful to not be especially attracted by any defect. If some doubt about anyone comes to our attention we may refer it to the higher authority. But if we make too much of it, either in opposition or in any other way, that will be transferred back. We must know, "I am devouring. My mind is coming in touch with that fault." That is being devoured as food, and the contamination is transferred to the critic; somehow it is entering into the mental system of the critic, and it must get its satisfaction there, as a reaction.

This is like a trade secret of our devotional line. You must be aware and very careful about these practical difficulties in the path of your life.

So we have been recommended, *tat te 'nukampam susamiksmano*: the faculty of judgment has been discouraged; your standard of measuring things won't stand there. *Jnana-sunya-bhakti*. You have to learn a new alphabet here. In the devotional school you have to come in connection with a new alphabet. The old alphabet won't do. *Jnana-sunya-bhakti*. Give up all the pride of your past experience. Your knowledge out of experience of the mortal world won't do here, won't be applied here. This is the position in the case of the Infinite Autocrat and Goodness.

In our mouth we pronounce all these big things - Absolute Good - Absolute Truth - but we do not know about the characteristic of that. So we need His revelation. He reveals Himself. We must carefully note His nature.

So, *jnana-sunya* - give up the pride of your old experience on the basis of which you will go to judge things. It is not like that. A new law is here, and we have to think of the land of Autocrat and Goodness. In *jnana-sunya-bhakti* the first step will be to give up all the pride of our previous experience, and to begin a new life: "I shall accept the laws of the infinite, not the laws of this finite world that I acquired as a subject. I shall have to enter that domain as an object, of the subject. There, He is the subject and I am the object here, possessing only a particle of the space there; and that is also at His sweet will. At any time I may be dispossessed of it." This is not in the democratic government, but in the mad monarchy - a kind of dictatorship. This is to live in the land of dictatorship, and not in the democracy and law. *Jnane prayasam udapasya namanta eva* .

Everywhere we shall try our best to find mercy, grace, kindness, pity. Because whatever the dictator is doing is all good. We have to be trained like that. He's the highest dictator, without fault, so we may or may not understand, but whatever is commanded by the dictator must be helpful for us. There is no law on which we shall base our judgment and give any remark. To remark is not only absolutely useless but it is faulty and injurious to ourselves. Such consciousness we have to acquire, and it is not unreasonable.

Newton said, "I am only collecting pebbles on the shore of the ocean of knowledge." He was a man of this world, yet he had the sincerity and courage to make this statement. If such a statement is made in deference to the knowledge of only this world, what should be thought of the knowledge of the infinite unknown and unknowable? We must have courage, just as Columbus floated his ship to discover America. He had the courage. To float our little boat in the ocean of the unknown and unknowable, we must be cognizant that the laws will be of that type. The laws of the higher ocean may not be applied in the strait or local sea. A thoroughly new thing we have to study - the revealed truth. If we go to measure the infinite with the law of finite, it will be hopeless for us to go that side. We must invite and think purely of that land, that standard. The unknown world.

*svayam samuttirya sudustaram dyaman
bhavarnavam bhimam adabhra-sauhrdah
bhavat-padambhoruha-navam atra te
nidhaya yatah sad anugraho bhavan
(Bhagavatam, 10.2.31)*

"O Self-revealed One, You are *Bhakta-vanchakalpa-taru*, the wish-fulfilling tree of the devotee. The great devotees surrendered unto Your Lotus Feet, who have crossed over this ghastly insurmountable ocean of mundanity, have left the boat of Your Lotus Feet in this world (in the *Guru-parampara* or in the line of Revealed Truth, *Srauta-pantha*) - because, they are greatly affectionate to all beings."

The Devas (Brahma and Siva) say in the Bhagavatam, "The saints who by Your Grace have crossed that insurmountable ocean, that dreadful ocean, with dreadful waves and so many water animals - those saints again sent back the boat, which is compared with the Lotus Feet of the Lord. By the help of the Lotus Feet of You, the Infinite Absolute Lord, they cross this ocean, by the Grace of Your Holy Feet; and they again send that boat back here for others to cross the same ocean. They're experienced about the ocean, and in which way they crossed and what difficulty they faced, and where. Your devotees are so magnanimous that after using the boat of Your Holy Feet to cross, they again send them back for us. Because, their friendship for the people is very white, and pure. And You are always in favor of those devotees, so by their request you can't refuse. You allow Your Lotus Feet again to come this side and take others across."

Chapter Eleven

Loving Surrender

Knowledge is our enemy, because knowledge in this world is all misleading. Its very basis is misleading. However spacious it may be, it is the negligible part of the infinite. We have collected, gathered and pushed into our brain all misleading misrepresentation. Our brains are full of misleading Maya, misunderstanding. So that is our enemy. We have to clear these things out and put in fresh things that are indented from the other world by pure sources. The theoretical is one thing, the practical another. Srila Rupa Goswami has quoted:

*jnanatah sulabha muktir bhuktir yajjadi punyatah
seyam sadhana-sahasrair hari-bhaktih sudurllabha*
(Bhakti rasamrita sindhu, Purva 1.36)

"(Mahadeva says,) 'By practice of enlightenment, *jnana*, liberation is attained easily enough. By pious work such as sacrifice, *yajna*, etc., worldly pleasure in the next life is attained easily enough. But Devotion for the Supreme Lord, *Hari-bhakti*, is very rarely attained."

By cultivating our knowledge of soul, we can attain *mukti*, that is, emancipation or liberation from miscalculation relatively easily. Though it is not so easy, still, considering the wicked nature of the environment, in a general sense one can easily renounce everything; by elimination, elimination, elimination - all elimination, for reaching something like sound sleep. That is *mukti*. Permanent sound sleep.

And we can gather our things of enjoyment by *yajna*, altruistic action. If we take altruistic action, then as a reaction they will come back to us, for our satisfaction and pleasure.

But our real wealth, Devotion to Hari, is not so easily attained. *Sadhana-sahasraih*: despite thousands of practices by the aspirant, still it is *sudurllabha*, it may or may not be acquired. Because, that is to acquire friendship with the Autocracy. Our enjoyment is 'labor and live.' If we loan some labor to another, that may come back to us. So, by the help of our labor, and by the distribution of that labor, we can easily get future enjoyment. Also, by practicing our sincere disgust with the present mortal environment, we can encourage our ego towards salvation. That is complete renunciation, cutting off all connection with the environment, *samadhi*, just like sound sleep. But to have affectionate connection with the Autocratic Infinite - that is hardly to be acquired.

Hari-bhakti-sudurllabha. And the gradual process of how one is to acquire that is also traced in *Sri-Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*:

*klesa-ghni subhada moksa-laghuta-krt sudurllabha
sandrananda-visesatma sri-krsnakarsini ca sa*
(Purva 1.17)

Klesa-ghni: all the afflicting tendencies in your mind gradually diminish. So many things - the proposal of subtle finer mundane happiness may come to try and dissuade you from this path. They are obstacles, and your sincere negligence to them develops. *Subhada*: all auspiciousness is given to you. *Moksa-laghuta-krt*: the third result is that you shall trace that *mukti*, the result of mere renunciation, that is, relief from the influence of the negative side, now appears to be a very small achieve-

vement. The consciousness will awaken in you that mere withdrawal from the negative side is a very insignificant achievement. *Moksa-laghuta-krt, sudurllabha* : if you can only feel or experience that the goal of renunciation is insignificant, it is of a lower order, does that mean you will get *Bhakti* ? No. There is no such guarantee. Even at that stage, *Bhakti* remains far away from you.

Sandrananda-visesatma : then if somehow by chance you come in connection with that reality, you will find some fundamental awakenment that infinite happiness is approaching you. *Sri-krsnakarsini ca sa*: and further, if you can continue your devotional activity in a proper line, you will find that He is coming to you as Krsna Himself, in the conception of Krsna consciousness. The Krsna concept is coming to you as Krsna Himself.

'Krsna' means the full embodiment of all types of ecstasy. That is approaching, or you are being allowed to have His nearer conception, as the fulfillment of your devotional activities of life. In this way, things progress.

So die to live - dive deep into reality - *jnana-sunya-bhakti*. The area of surrender is so high, noble, great and fulfilling. That can come. That can only take us in the plane of love and affection. If we hope to see and to live in that plane of affection and love, not this mundane affection and love, but the love of the Absolute, then we must accept complete surrender at His disposal, at His mercy. The reaction comes as love. With your highest contribution of faith towards Him, He will be aroused and He will come to accept You on His lap.

So, no risk no gain; and that is risk towards the whole: Devotion proper. It is not merely a sum total of some certain activities, or a type of study - never. Practically it is concerned with the soul, with the inner existence of us. Giving and taking must take place from the innermost part of our heart. It is not a game to play with! No superficial knowledge or bodily or mental labor can touch it. It is the dealing of the heart to heart. And that is wholesale.

Jnane prayasam udapasya . In this world we are proud of our mania for knowledge and worldly energy; bodily or mental energy, and knowledge about so many falsified things. But He can withdraw everything. Scientists may have discovered a certain law, but if He withdraws, it will be nowhere. Nothing is possible unless backed by His will. 'Let there be water, there was water; let there be light, there was light.' If we can find some faith in this, then we shall perceive that everything is designed and destined by Him. So what is the utility of some provisional incident? If He wishes, He may make or mar. The law may be reversed by His sweet will. The origin of the world is such. He is an independent designer, like a great master hypnotist.

Chapter Twelve

Earnestness

"If You kindly remove my blindness for a moment, I would like to see that great, noble figure of Yours that others have seen."

"No, no, it's not necessary for your blindness to be removed. If I just say 'see!' then you will see Me."

By His will, by His order, Dhrtarastra saw, without his blindness being removed. "Yes, being blind you can see me!" Despite being blind he could see, so what sort of sight is He? He can be seen only by His order. So, neither eyes nor our mental preparation backing the eye are indispensable to see Him. He ordered Dhrtarastra, "See me!" and he could see without eyes or without the mentality of sight. Dhrtarastra was *janmandha* , blind from birth; he had no idea of any color or figure, but still he could see - by the Lord's order. His position is such; so if we try to approach Him, what should our attitude be? How much earnestness should we have to approach that land?

It is easy - it is difficult. Easy, because it is our inborn tendency. It is home. But now, we are far from home; It is home, my own, so there is hope that I may reach there one day. It is my home and I won't find satisfaction anywhere else, so I must go there, but I am far away from that home comfort. There is the difficulty - I have lost that land.

Jnane prayasam udapasya: scholarship is poison! Are you ready to admit this? All your learning is nonsense! You are plodding in the mud. All knowledge of misrepresentation - not a bag full of money, but a bag full of rocks. The brain is taxed and filled up with all misleading things. Are you ready to admit this? Not so soon! What do you say? Many of us boast of our knowledge. But the *Bhakti* school is striking a hammer on the head of knowledge or *jnana* . Rather, ignorance is better than knowledge! Can you accept that? Knowledge is more dangerous than ignorance!!

Why? Because the so-called learned are proud by comparison. They are more confident that they are holding a higher position, and to remove them from that position is very difficult. Qualitatively, they are in a position above the ordinary laborer, so they are confident of their superiority. So to relieve them of that proud superiority is more difficult than to relieve an ordinary laborer of his ignorance. That would be easy. It is easy to educate an uneducated person, but to educate an 'educated' person is more difficult. He has firmly entrenched himself in his superiority, so he won't budge an inch from that position.

*ei du'yera madhye visayi tabu bhala
mayavadi sanga nahi magi kona kala
(Saranagati)*

The company of ordinary persons, misguided souls in the ordinary street, is somewhat better than the company and influence of the so-called scholars. That sort of subtle poison is very dangerous and difficult to remove. They're proud, thinking, "I know. I hold a higher position than the ordinary mass." That sort of fine ego is very difficult to remove. Ordinary persons may think, "Yes, we are culprits." Also, the ego of the ordinary religious men is very difficult to remove. "Oh, I am a reli-

gious man." It is very difficult to cross his so-called faith and religion, to give him something higher. This is the practical experience, and it is also advised in *sastra* .

vedasraya nastikya-vada bauddhake adhika
(Chaitanya charitamrita, Madhya 6.168)

Half-truth is more dangerous than falsehood. As in Sankara's Mayavada, there is atheism in the garb of theism. They say *so 'ham* , "I am the highest substance." They take the authority or the law as non-differentiated like zero. It cannot assert. Therefore they cannot admit, "I am among the creation." They imagine it is possible for them to hold the higher position. There is no God. There is no such thing as God who automatically holds the highest power and all that be, because ultimately there is a region of unknown and unknowable substance, and wherever there is enlightenment as a human, a wise man, he holds the highest position. "We hold the highest position." But if we have to admit God, then we have nothing. If we are his created objects, play dolls, we have nothing. As soon as we have admitted God, then we are dispossessed of everything! So much renunciation is impossible. To hold that "I am the absolute authority" means that I am nowhere. Such self-abnegation is not so cheap! Any questions?

Devotee: What can help an intellectual to develop *sastric* (scriptural) vision?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: When the sleeping aspect will be awakened, the cover will vanish automatically. Intellectualism cannot be utilized, but that real causeless eternal wealth within should be awakened and strengthened; and this cover of proud intellectualism will evaporate. *Karma* and *jnana* are only foreign covers.

vasudeve bhagavati bhakti-yogah prayojitah
janayaty asu vairagyam jnanan ca yad ahaitukam
(Bhagavatam, 1.2.7)

If somehow with the help of the Scriptures and His agents, the devotees or saints, we can develop our Devotion, *Bhakti* , then, the proper knowledge and proper apathy towards worldly substances will follow us. Healthy, proper knowledge and healthy energy will come to follow us if the reality within awakens and we become adjusted by it.

This doesn't refer to the knowledge or energy found in this plane. This is entirely distinct. Energy is the capacity to work, to move. And knowledge is to have a conception. That will come in the retinue of Devotion.

Sambandha-jnana - 'what is what.' A new world will awaken within. Misleading ideas will evaporate and retire, and the proper reading will evolve from within. *Sambandha-jnana* . "I am such and such to my Lord, and these are the Lord's friends, the Lord's lovers, etc.; and what sort of knowledge and movement should be mine in this new environment."

In that way, readjustment will come from within. The present type of knowledge and energizing will have to retire and be dispelled like darkness. Conceptions may be utilized only when proper conception awakens. When the professor will point out our misconceptions we can learn the proper conception. "In this way you are misconceiving things; your proper conception is this; but did you

misconceive this thing for that?" "Yes sir, I thought like that. Now I see the real thing is this. This is not mine. Not to speak of mine, I also belong to Krsna - my Lord."

"Everything belongs to Him; I am not a master, I am a slave. I don't hold the position of a master, not to speak of possessing so many properties. Even I am property to another possessor." The calculation must begin from that plane, and a new land will be found. That aspiration and aggression to think one can conquer the whole world by the atomic energy is a false notion. It is suffering human intellect to think one has a position to challenge God: "God is only a superstition, an imaginary thing." We need this wholesale and radical cure: "I do not belong to me, I have my eternal master." We need slave mentality.

During the time of my Guru Maharaj's preaching, one newspaper in Calcutta complained, "Gaudiya Math is spreading slave mentality to the country - this is most objectionable. This will destroy the military spirit of the land, so they can't be encouraged to spread slavery. They have no patriotism, what are they!" The atheists cannot tolerate the call to come hither and live in Vaikuntha. They can't tolerate the spreading of this 'poison' within the country. And they hold that in *Bhagavad-gita*, Krsna supported war. But that was not from *their* standpoint.

Yada yada hi dharmasya . . . The Lord says, "Sometimes the world is so thickly attacked by the atheistic influence that I have to come down again to re-establish the religious environment here. The enemies are vanquished and the good thinkers are given certain relief in their lives. I have to come."