



Sharanagati

Year fourth

SHARANAGATI - FRIDAY ISSUES

1. Good trainer and good actor

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 30.12.2007, Sofia)

The real masters are good trainers at the same time. For example, if you join the group of sportsmen, most probably you are not the world champion yet. Not yet. But it might happen. For example the hundred meters short runners; practically they are running in ecstasy. They are unaware what is going on during these ten or nine seconds. They do not know even if they breathe or not. They come to such a state that they are absolutely beyond the bodily consciousness; otherwise they cannot accomplish. So what is the goal of guru as a trainer? To help you get rid of you gross bodily consciousness – with all the efforts that he is pushing on you. Although he knows that for the first run you will run the hundred meters for half an hour. He knows that this is not a very good time. Still he does not give you up. He invests his energies into you. Why? What is the secret formula? This is divine love. Because a real master does not see your past, does not see your present; he sees your future. He is investing into your future, and your *eternal* future. Therefore the service of a real master is much greater than what we can *ever* give.

And ultimately guru is a function of the Divine. So by this training we can come closer to the ultimate rules of the universe, of the existence. And as Lord Krishna is famous for His *lilas*, not for His rules, *lila* means divine game – beyond rules, beyond regulations, beyond even the laws of our understanding. Because this is *alive*, this is not something canonized so to say. And to be part of real life, we have to give up our bodily conceptions: what is right, what is wrong according to our brain. Somebody has to break these false conceptions. But of course it does not mean that guru is wrong, but he is super-good.

So, the secret formula, the hidden essence is divine love. And this is what you should be able to perceive in the eyes of your master. Even if he is shouting at you, the eyes will always smile. It is very difficult to cover that! To hide the real intention of the master - that he wants to serve you.

But a good master is not only a good trainer, he is a good actor also. He can show such a face that you would never expect, that you had never seen before. This is when guru-person breaks our conception about *guru-tattva*. But these are rare and blessed moments – how to get rid of the false conceptions that we might have.

The power of surrender is something beyond limits! Just try once in your lifetime what does it mean to fully dedicate yourself and you will see! You will feel the wings coming on your back!

The power of dedication is beyond any limit. Why? Because it comes from the deepest and purest core of the heart, *and* you surrender before Divinity! God *is* good. If you dedicate yourself to Him, He will give you everything. In “Gita” it is said: “I will preserve what you have and I will bring what you need.” This is not theory, this is the truth. Even if you do not dedicate yourself He will preserve and bring what you need! What to speak of “Now I am Your disciple, soul surrendered unto You.” This is one of the most glorious positions that we can take – a surrendered servant.

2. What is good and what is bad

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 30.12.2007, Sofia)

Question of Manjari: You said that God is good. Is creation complete without badness, with only goodness? Is perfection boring?

Tirtha Maharaj: Good and bad – this is a kind of opinion, consent, public opinion. We agree under certain points: this we consider good and that we consider bad. From an ultimate point of view, from ontological and philosophical point of view there is no good and no bad. Because everything has its certain part and role in this whole universal existence to play. We can say that something is favorable for our spiritual progress and something is unfavorable. But even if something is unfavorable, this is not bad. So if we analyze deep enough we should come to the conclusion that there is no good and there is no bad.

Still it does not mean that there is no light and there is no darkness. Because this world is a world of dualities. And that means that something is “good” and other things are “bad”.

Actually this is a very big question of theology: if God is the ultimate creator, the ultimate source, how bad things appear, how the devil appears, for example? God is good. Still sometimes His energies function in such a way that produce the image of bad on the screen of mind of people. For example, to kill – this is not good. It is not nice, right? Still sometimes you get a war medal for killing more people. So on the material platform even these ultimate questions are sometimes very difficult to decide – whether this is good or bad.

The golden rule is: do not give others what you do not expect for yourself. Or in a positive way: do for others what you expect for yourself. And even if divine energy functions in an unusual way this is not bad, because this serves a good purpose.

There is one story about this. One carpenter was living in a village. He had got a nice family, he had got a nice household, everything was nice. So people said: “Ah, you are so fortunate! You have this nice setup, you have a grown-up son, everything is so

nice.” He said: “Well, who knows what is good, what is bad?!” Next morning his horse was lost. The horse somehow escaped from the barn and disappeared. So all the villagers would say: “Ah, you are so unfortunate! You have lost your horse; how will you work, how will you survive?!” He said: “Who can decide what is good, what is bad?!” So, next morning the horse was back – with ten other wild horses. Because meanwhile he was explaining: “Here my master will give you food.” So all the other horses were just coming, joining. Everybody in the village said: “Wow! Such a fortune is coming to you! Yesterday you had just one horse, now you have eleven horses – great!” He said: “Well, who knows what is good, what is bad, who can judge?!” So, the wild horses should be tamed, right? The next morning the son – twenty years old, bright, strong son – started to ride one wild horse. Everybody said: “You are so fortunate, you have your son, he will treat the horses very nice.” But what happened? The wild horse would throw off the bright son. And he broke his hand. So everybody said: “Ah, such a misfortunate situation! Your son has broken his hand.” The father said: “Who knows, who can judge what is good and what is bad...” The next morning the army officer was coming to the village and he said: “Now we have declared war to the neighboring state, so I have to take all the young men, twenty years old. Come, join the army!” Our friend was coming: one hand is broken, one leg is broken, the head is also in bandages. They said: “Ah, we cannot take you! You just stay here.” Again the villagers would say: “Ah, such a fortune is coming to you! You did not lose your son.”

So, who can judge what is good and what is bad? We should come to such a platform, to such an understanding, where we can *really* see how the things happening in our life will promote our spiritual progress. As soon as you have come to that platform “bad” ceases to exist. As soon as we see the hidden essence, your world will be very boring – only good.

Manjari: Can there be only good, without bad?

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes. Although sometimes the opposite helps to appreciate the real thing. I heard that some of you were attending the cooking course of Jugala Kishora Prabhu. I think he

had told you already how to make good khalva, right? Is that true? Yes. Did he give all the ingredients? So butter, semolina, sugar and water – this is the basics, right? You know, good cooks always tell the basic ingredients, but *some* they reserve. So you try at home and it never comes like he is doing! But anyway, the secret ingredient of khalva as a sweet – this is the salt. A pinch of salt. Or a drop of bitterness. But do not put that into your khalva.

So, sometimes the opposites help to appreciate the real taste. Or as Shrila Shridhara Maharaj says – and this is a smashing message – opposition enhances the beauty. But start with saying “yes”. Do not start with opposing.

Yes, perfection is boring – it is obvious, I think it is obvious.

3.He may know, he may not know

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 30.12.2007,Sofia)

Question of Yamuna: Maharaj, it is said that Shukadeva knows, and Vyasa may know or may not know. Who is saying this and how do we have to take it? Is this humility of Vyasadeva, or it is really the higher position of Shukadeva Goswami compared to him? But how to understand this if Vyasadeva is God Himself, actually an incarnation?

Tirtha Maharaj: Actually the verse is spoken by Lord Shiva: “*aham vedmi, shuko vetti, vyasa vetti na vetti va – I know, Shuka knows, Vyasa might know or might not know.*”

Just to clear the persons whom we are talking about: Vyasa – actually he is *shaktyaveshha-avatar*, he is empowered to transmit the message. He had a son, Shuka, Shukadev, who was a transcendentalist already in the womb of the mother. And when he was born, he became a personalist, a personal worshiper of God. And due to his lineage, due to his father and spiritual education, he became a high authority on spiritual topics. Therefore in the great

conference in the old times he was selected as a lecturer. And Lord Shiva, who is telling, is a *mahajan* – *mahajan* means a great personality, who knows everything about the secrets of religion. So he says: “I know, I know everything; Shuka as a young authority – he knows everything. But Vyasa - who is the father, who is the elder, who is the literary incarnation – he might know, he might not know.” How is that possible? He is the writer, he is the compiler, he is the seniormost – is there anything he does not know?!

This shows the benefits of the *parampara* system. Even if we do not understand everything fully, if we receive a perfect message and if we repeat that perfect message in a perfect manner, then that knowledge, that is transmitted through us, is perfect. But of course it does not mean that you should not have to try to understand what you repeat. Because otherwise the mp3-player would be the best preacher – it does not understand, but repeats correctly.

This verse was quoted when Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati received once a letter from one of his disciples. And this devotee was writing about some very high topics in the letter. So high, that the guru was astonished. Others were reading the letter for him, so he asked: “Where did he take this?!” Then the other devotees told him: “You were sending this to him in your previous letter.” He said: “No, no! It is impossible! I did not!” “Yes, yes, Gurudev, you were doing that.” “No, impossible. I do not know this! How can I teach what I do not know?!” And then they quoted the verse: “*aham vedmi, shuko vetti, vyasa vetti na vetti va*”. And then the next devotee told: “But only by the mercy of the master.” So the disciple will understand by the mercy of the master, even if the master declares: “I do not know!” This is the power of dedication – when divinity is manifested in unknown, unexpected way.

4. The two pianos

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 30.12.2007, Sofia)

Question of Yashoda: My question is about the inner connection between us and God. I am interested in inner connection. Because there is a verse in “Gita” where Krishna says: “Everything is in Me like pearls on a string.”

Tirtha Maharaj: The question about inner connection. The unseen essence. Does anybody know how to play a piano here? Have you ever had two pianos in one room? Try next time to have two pianos in the same room. You hit one sound; what will happen to the second piano? The same sound will resonate on the other piano also. Although these are only machines. But the vibration of one is transmitted to the other and *inspires* a reflection from the other. And it *always* happens if there are two pianos in the same room. If you hit one sound, it will always resonate from the other also. If it is tuned – so under some conditions.

A human soul is much more sensitive and much more complicated than a piano. Still if on the strings of our heart we resonate one sound, usually we do not receive the feedback. You try to vibrate a nice sound to the universe, but where is the feedback, where is the echo resonance? For that we need the tuning. We need some conditions. First of all that the strings of our heart sound crystal clear. No hindrance should be there, any! And then, if such another pure heart is close to you, resonance will come.

Still it might not happen always with all the practitioners. But due to some secret formula it is possible to resonate on the same sound. If two persons are so much tuned together that one is vibrating, one is resonating what you emit, or – if we want to go further – the other will resonate *before* you start to vibrate – that we can call *very* purified and *very* intensive spiritual connection. When the finest energies of ours are in tune... This is very rare. But sometimes it happens. For example your meditation is so strong, that

all of a sudden a message arrives on your telephone. Or some other echoes.

So, it is possible and this I call inner connection. Unseen; and it is not necessary to make it public. Because secrets should be kept secret.

But what about the sound vibration of divinity? The first invitation is coming from above, from Him. We only have to purify our hearts to resonate, to give the feedback. We have to train ourselves to be crystal clear resonates.

If we want to establish a strong connection with God, with Krishna, how we can be sure that this is correct and bona fide connection? Therefore we have to purify the heart so much that it resonates purely. And if we come to that platform, we shall be always connected. You will *feel* whether this is approved or not.

But of course until we do not know our limits we could not understand this vibration system, do not try to use that. Because most probably you will fail. In the training period we should learn and we should rely on the measurable principles, we can say –guru, *shastra*, *sadhu*. If they are satisfied with our progress, we can be sure that we are on a good path. This is where we should check: if this is according to the scriptures, revelation; is this supported by my master; is this reflected in the practice of the saints.

But it sounds very theoretical, it is boring. Because we have to add one little thing – the heart, agreement of our hearts. If you feel with your *existence*, with your *atman*, that “yes! This is what I have to do” – do it! But first purify yourself and then you can do this.

So the inner connection is there. Only remove the wax from your ears.

5. The key to be united

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 30.12.2007, Sofia)

We should find the platform where we can all agree. We should find the plane where we can be united. This world is separated by names and forms. Therefore this is also the key to be united – the name and the form. So if we are united in the Holy Name and if we are united in front of the Divine Form, then we shall be very fortunate.

On celebrations people lose their control and they think that this is happiness. We should live in permanent celebration. If we do our spiritual practices, we can lose all our controls, still we should come to much higher platform of spiritual cultivation and satisfaction than what is usually done by others. Because if you observe the happiness of a person, you will understand that person. According to the *gunas*, according to the influences of material nature our happiness is diverse. What is happiness on the lower platform is practically impossible to understand on a higher platform. And the other way round. If somebody has very simple understanding about life, for him it is practically mind-blowing that people come together and chant God's names and they derive some spiritual happiness from this – this is impossible! Still this should be the platform where we are united irrespective of creed, religion, gender or whatever. Because if we call out God by the name and if we meditate and if we worship the Supreme by the name – this is the general and best practice.

Krishna's invitation is resounding. Even the material world is created by sound vibration. So the origin is sound; the way back is also sound. What is the first mantra in "Shrimad-bhagavatam"? This is the invocation, so to say: *om namo bhagavate vasudevaya*. So the first sound is om. And the first *shloka* is *satyam param dhimahi* – "Let us meditate on *satyam param*, on the absolute truth." And what is the last verse of "Shrimad-bhagavatam"? The last verse is glorifying the holy name of God: that *kali-yuga* is full of mistakes,

but the holy name can eliminate all the mistakes. So we can say that these eighteen thousand verses are about the inner communication. Invitation: come, join our meditation on the absolute truth. And the ultimate advice: chant the holy names!

6. Not a form-maker but a form-breaker

(from a lecture of B.K. Tirtha Maharaj, 30.12.2007, Sofia)

Question of Damodar: In what connection Shrila Shridhara Maharaj said: “I did not come to create forms, but to demolish them”?

Tirtha Maharaj: Exactly he said: “I am not a form-maker, I am a form-breaker.” Well, he was a *rasik* devotee. He was living in *rasa*, in divine ecstasy. And you know, when the western practitioners started to approach him, they came with all the rules and regulations that they have understood from the first lectures. Therefore, just to show the different levels and different gradations of spiritual life and spiritual practice he said: “I am not a form-maker, I am a form-breaker.” Once somebody was, so to say, instructing him: the young titan was mentioning Krishna and Shrila Shridhara Maharaj immediately interrupted: “But who is that Krishna?” They said: “Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead!” We have learned the lesson! But then he said: “But who is He *for you*?! Who is He...” And the he started to cry when he saw that they want to instruct him and misuse him.

But anyway, this is another function of guru. Sometimes he has to break the forms that we are catching on. In order to show the essence. Because from the superficial, from the external, we should come to the internal.

So, please go on cultivating your spiritual practices. Do not be afraid to surrender fully, because Krishna is also called Bhakta Vatsala – Protector of His devotees.

Question of Yamuna: In his books Shridhara Maharaj mentions that it is said in the *shastras*, Krishna says: “Those, who follow rules and regulations are very dear to Me. But those who break the rules and regulations in order to please Me, they are really My heart and soul.” I am quoting freely. Any idea from where is this quotation?

Tirtha Maharaj: Well, I am not a *shloka*-box! You insert a coin and a *shloka* is coming out... First of all this is a high topic. But to understand the setup we should read the Tenth Canto of the “Shrimad-bhagavatam”. Because according to our tradition the greatest example of selfless dedication beyond any limit - these are the gopis. And it is described that they were ready to give up all attachment, they were ready to give up even rules of dharma, give up the family ties even – in order to satisfy Krishna. And therefore they are considered the greatest examples of that selfless dedication. In other Puranas Krishna says that “Those who worship Me they are not My real devotees; but My real devotees are those, who worship My devoted devotees.” And that “I have lost My independence, because I am a servant of My servants.”

These are very high conceptions of divinity – when God comes as a servant of His servants. But therefore we are ready to worship Krishna – because He comes so close, He is ready to come so close. And if He says: “I am your surrendered servant,” He does mean it. From Him this is not only words.

7.No debate over feelings

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 06.09.2008, Sofia)

In our prayers first of all we express our gratitude and respect to our immediate spiritual masters, because through this line something manifests in our life. Like father, like son. Apple does not fall far from the tree. If the master is very *rasik*, there is a chance that the disciple will also be a cultivator of *rasa*. Then we identify our masters as tasting the sweet nectar of divine love. And here different things are mentioned. One that Srila Prabhupada is glorious for bringing the devotional ideas to the West; and he distributed the nectar of the “Bhagavatam” and the knowledge of the “Gita”. But the last line of this prayer to him says that he was a master that always tasted the nectar of Sri Sri Radha and Govinda’s lotus feet. One reason to glorify him is to bring the knowledge to the West. The other reason is bringing the nectar of “Bhagavatam” to the West, but the real reason to glorify him is that he was tasting the nectar of the Divine Couple.

What is the real quality, what is the real so to say spiritual competition of high class devotees? This should be the competition – who can dive deeper in the divine connection. From the knowledge we come to the nectar. From ideas we come to the feelings. And about the feelings there is no discussion. My feeling you cannot blame, you cannot question – this is a feeling. Right? May be you have a different feeling. I don’t mind, this is your business. My feeling is like this. About *tattva*, about philosophy there can be discussion, because I have one argument, you have another argument, we can discuss. But ultimately if we come to the platform of divine feelings there is no question of discussion. There is no debate over the feelings. Only an exchange. If your heart is full of divine feelings you can share it with others – this is the only chance. This is a symptom of *acharya*: his heart is so full that he wants to distribute. And what is the life of a real devotee? This divine essence.

Just recently there was a discussion, almost like a debate. So may be this was not concerning directly, fully the divine feelings. This debate was about the gender of God, the Supreme. Because somehow I mentioned “He” and it was offensive for some and they said: “Why always He? Why not She?” Of course ladies were raising the question. Poor girls, poor gopis. You know, in different religions they are trained to have a male God. But finally here is such a religion where you can understand that God is also a woman. But our friends didn’t really understand these secrets yet. So I was trying to protect the position of our dear Lord Govinda – let Him be a “He”, let Him be a male. All right? Then they came with another idea – then let Him be an “It” without gender, let Him be an “It”. And I said “No, that is impossible!” A person without characters – no, it’s impossible. He is not a theory, He is not a *tattva* – God is living.

Supreme is a male and female at the same time. If we approach that theoretically it may be very difficult to explain these things, but when we see a picture of Radha and Krishna meeting, I think it is easier to understand how it is. Beautiful Lord and an even more charming Lady, Goddess. And if we want to put it short Radha Govinda, Govinda Radha, Go Ra, we can show only one person – Gouranga. People want to put everything very short, right? So even to chant or to say that Govinda Radha is too long for them. How do we make Govinda Radha shorter, what is the shorter version – Goura, Goura, Goura. So if you repeat Goura, Goura, Goura actually you chant Govinda Radhe.

Bhakti as a religious process has very elaborate and very detailed picture about the Supreme. Because first we should understand that there is a male aspect of God as the creative power, like dominating, and there is another part, another face – the beautiful and harmonious and loving female aspect, that is being dominated by God. If we say that theoretically, it is very dry, but as soon as we hear the pastimes of Radha Govinda then it becomes very sweet.

So we worship the supreme essence in these two aspects, like the creative power of God and the beautiful, loving power of the Goddess. And They are never separate – one is not complete without

the other. So that kind of unity we are searching for. This is *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is the process to create a place in your heart for Them to meet, so that rendezvous may happen in undisturbed conditions. Divine beauty and divine love meet in humans' hearts. This is the ultimate definition of religion. And you feel that this is beyond any informal limits, this is beyond any numbers, this is beyond any groups. So this is why we worship our masters - because they bring this conception. And this conception is fructifying in Vrindavana.

We have created our new universe and we started to populate our universe. Now more living entities are there because we have found our masters. And we have found also our brothers and sisters. Together with them we can join the service, the ecstatic divine service. This is concentrated in the ashram life and therefore this is not simply good, this is ecstatic. Because here we don't have any other business than to serve our Lords.

8. With "Bhagavatam" under your armpit

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 06.09.2008, Sofia)

If you want to know how to serve Krishna ... after long, long, long journey finally, just imagine, you meet Krishna face to face. You have your "Bhagavatam" under your arm. Can you enter Goloka Vrindavan with "Bhagavatam" under your arm? And you see a very unique person – bluish color, flute in hand, very nice *dhoti* - small boy with a calf - and all of a sudden you do not remember what you have learned on the lectures. Gurudev mentioned something, but who is this? Something is there, it is very important, let us check in the book. Kesava? Yes, the beautiful hair is there. Madhava? Yes, He is very rich with the *prasadam* in the hands. Govinda? Yeah, He takes care of the *brahmins*. Gopal? Yeah, He takes care of the cows. This must be my Lord!!! Yes, I identified Him. It is Him. Shyamasundar – bluish and beautiful. It is Him. And then you ask: "O, my Lord! I am

very happy to meet You.” He says: “My pleasure, my dear. What do you want?” „Well, my Gurudev said that Your service is very nice so I want to join, I want to learn about Your service. I have understood that You are the Supreme Lord, the omnipotent and all-knowing Godhead, so I want to serve You. Tell me the secrets of Your service. “ And then the all-knowing God says: “I don’t know. I know nothing about My service. But there is a solution. If you want to know this – go to the Goddess, She knows something.” So the Black will help you to come to the Bright, and the Bright will help you to come to the Black. This is one type of devotee. The other type of devotee... but this is very secret. Should I tell that?

Kripadham: Yes, Gurudev, yes!

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes! Now you say yes. When there is some service...

The other type approaches Vrindavana, knocks on the door, if there is any door in Vrindavan, and he is meeting different personalities, here and there - servants, dancers, garland makers, boys - but he is not concerned with the boys - there are girls, he is concerned with the girls. And from all the millions especially beautiful charming and more than celestial young ladies, he is searching for the special One. But this type of devotee has no *shastra* under his armpit. The truths are written in his heart and when he identifies he knows – this is my place. And immediately understands from the bright shine of that Superlady. “Yes, She is my mistress.” And without any question, without any hesitation, just throws himself in the dust to be engaged in Her service.

Because there are two types of devotees – one is a Krishna bhakta and one is a Radha bhakta. Sometimes devotees due to some special *lila* on this planet earth they compete in numbers, in followers, in influence, *rasa*. But what do you think? Which group is larger in numbers? Which group is richer? Which group is more *rasik*? Decide for yourself.

But do not forget – according to your practice you will achieve perfection. If we practice laziness and stupidity while in *sadhana-deha*, practitioner’s body, we will achieve that perfection – you die and you achieve permanent condition like that. You can

achieve the perfection of stupidity, but if we cultivate this very essential divine love while we are here and we have it as our main ideal, we will reach that. Therefore it is good to have two Lords – one God and one Goddess. Plus, we are extra fortunate for two reasons: because we have our Govinda Radha in a unified form GoRa – the shortest way to divine ecstasy - plus we have someone to tell us about this. Therefore we worship our masters as the most intimate servants of the Divine Couple. Because black, white – it is so complicated to choose from. But my Gurudev I see. One person – with my limited brain I can understand and say “yes”.

Kripadham: Why the devotee of Krishna has *shastra* under his armpit and that of Radha not?

Tirtha Maharaj: Because Krishna is described in the “Bhagavatam” and Radha is not described.

9.The magic ring

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 31.12.2007, Sofia)

“O best among men (Arjuna), the person who is not disturbed by happiness and distress and is steady in both is certainly eligible for liberation.”¹

Simple verse, serious message. The goal, according to this verse, is liberation – to find the way out from the material labyrinth. This is not the highest goal, we know. Anything beyond liberation? What is that? Bhakti is beyond liberation. Divine Love is beyond liberation. But here we go through a gradual process. Krishna is instructing Arjuna and first of all He discusses this very elementary, very simple goal – liberation. Of course, this is a very high goal! But

¹ “Bhagavad-gita” 2.15

first we have to identify, we have to learn how to achieve liberation, and then we can go further.

So actually this verse teaches us how to become free from entanglement. And to meet certain formal standards is not enough. Full perfection means that we can dedicate our soul, our heart. Have you ever tried to do a job as a duty or to do the same job as a loving offering? First will not give any inner satisfaction; the second will have a special taste. You feel the wings growing on your back. This is the way how we should cry if somebody wants to take us out from the temple. Sometimes our duties kick us out from our temples, from our spiritual practices, but cry! Cry for your rights. Because we want to find the way out not from the temple, but from the entanglement of material illusion.

But without a certain sacrifice it will *not* happen. With one ass you cannot ride two horses. Either we serve God, or we serve dog.

Therefore, in order to achieve this liberation thing, which is not the highest goal, even for that we have to be peaceful. So we should search for our inner peace. And the best way to find our inner piece is our inner connection, deep inner connection.

I think all of us know these states – happiness and distress. Which one you know better? Which is your more permanent friend? Happiness or distress? Usually when I ask, under a certain age people say: “Happiness!” After a certain age they say: “Distress.” So, our understanding also changes by age. What we think in the beginning a great happiness, later on you will understand: “Ah, that was a failure, a problem.” And what we think it was distressful situation for us, sooner or later we should understand that this was a process of liberation - shaking up people’s minds, shaking up people’s connections. And although this is difficult, still it is very beneficial. Because if something has to be separated, it is separated. But if something has to stay together, it is very strongly and surely staying together.

So, from that point of view there is no happiness and no distress. There is nothing good and nothing bad. If we have the capacity, we shall see that ultimately everything helps our clear

vision. And it would be very easy to use this trigger – that life is suffering. And to give some easy promises: “After liberation... Next life... In heaven... In the spiritual sky... it will be better!” But we should be intelligent. We should be happy and satisfied right now.

To be satisfied, to have this inner peace, not to be affected by happiness or distress, means that we have a different vision, a higher vision. If we are deeply connected to Divinity, where is the distress? Where is the illusory happiness? We are deeply rooted in eternity, in truth, in consciousness, in *ananda*. If we are eternal souls, what does it mean if somebody is coming or somebody is going?!

Of course, easy words. Yet, take the time to realize these words. But life is a transition period. If we want to sum up life in three words, it is very simple: live, love and leave. Human life on earth means: live, love and leave. Very simple, it is not a big deal. And therefore it is suggested that life is just like a bridge. Do not build your house on a bridge! Bridge is for crossing the turbulent water.

Still I think that it would be a self-cheating if we would say that neither happiness nor distress has any effect on us. Once I met a person, who said: “Well, even self-realized soul, he can lose control sometimes.” But what is the difference? He gains control quickly. Maybe he loses himself, gives himself to happiness or distress, to some influences that will come; but he is able to compose himself quickly. So, do not expect from some so to say a perfected being to be like a piece of wood – no reaction. Or like a stone image. To achieve that balanced state of consciousness is beyond our expectation. But miracles do happen. Be connected and you will feel that. And even if some great happiness comes to you, you will remember; and even if great distress is coming to you, you will remember.

Just like the Persian shah. He was disturbed by this... well, maybe not by this verse of the “Gita”, but by the same situation which is described here: sometimes happiness is coming and sometimes distress is coming. What to do? So he declared: “Someone who is bringing a magic ring to me, which will save me from suffering and save me from this euphoria – half of my kingdom

belongs to him.” First came the ministers. They were bringing the most precious rings ever on earth. The maharaja was examining the rings and throwing them away: “It is not the magic ring!” Then the magicians came with all the spells and incantations over special stones on the rings they were bringing. The king was observing and throwing them away: “It is not that!” Everybody tried his fortune – no success. Until a shepherd came, young man with a very simple ring. No stone, no magic spell, very simple, very cheap. So, he offered this to the king. First the king was a little shocked: “Who are you and what is this insignificant ring that you are bringing?” But then he put on his glasses and was watching carefully the ring. Then all of a sudden he started to smile and put the ring on the finger. And he declared: “Half of the kingdom belongs to this shepherd.” The ministers and the magicians were amazed. They were afraid to ask, but finally someone asked: “Tell me, why is this the magic ring?” And then the king said: “Well, it is very simple on the outside, but check out carefully what is on the inside.” He gave the ring to the other person and he was reading, there was one little sentence carved into the ring: “This will also pass.”

Have this magic ring on your finger and then it will be very easy to be peaceful in mind.

10. Krishna is not reserved for sannyasis

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 31.12.2007, Sofia)

“O best among men (Arjuna), the person who is not disturbed by happiness and distress and is steady in both is certainly eligible for liberation.”²

Shrila Prabhupada says in the purport: “Anyone who is steady in his determination for the advanced stage of spiritual realization and can equally tolerate the onslaughts of distress and happiness is certainly a person eligible for liberation. In the *varnashrama* institution, the fourth stage of life, namely the renounced order (*sannyasa*), is a painstaking situation. But one who is serious about making his life perfect surely adopts the *sannyasa* order of life in spite of all difficulties. The difficulties usually arise from having to sever family relationships, to give up the connection of wife and children. But if anyone is able to tolerate such difficulties, surely his path to spiritual realization is complete. Similarly in Arjuna’s discharge of duties as a *kshatriya*, he is advised to persevere, even if it is difficult to fight with his family members or similarly beloved persons. Lord Chaitanya took *sannyasa* at the age of twenty-four and his dependents, young wife as well as old mother, had no one else to look after them. Yet for a higher cause He took *sannyasa* and was steady in the discharge of higher duties. That is the way of achieving liberation from material bondage.

Question of Keshava: In the purport Shrila Prabhupada gives explanation with the *sannyasi*. He does not give explanation with somebody who is under the influence of distress or happiness. Why does the person realize liberation through the *sannyasa* way?

Tirtha Maharaj: *Sannyasa* is one way to achieve liberation. But this is not the only way. Because liberation is easy. *Bhakti* is difficult to achieve. And Krishna is not reserved for *sannyasis*, right?

² “Bhagavad-gita” 2.15

I am making an anti-propaganda now. But this is true! God resides in *everybody's* heart, not only in the *sannyasi's* heart. He is there in your heart. What are the consequences if we accept this? That means that He is *always* with us. *Always* watching. And He is *always* calling. The telephone is calling only sometimes, but His call is permanent. *When* shall we pick up the phone? *When* shall we answer the call? It is not a question of *sannyasa*. It is a question of desire. Sometimes it is a question of suffering, because we have to suffer a little bit to understand that this is not our home. To come to a real understanding. Other times this is a question of happiness, spiritual fulfillment – that helps us to be attracted to the divine beauty. So, either distress or happiness helps you to come closer.

Many people think that *sannyasa* is only an order of life. But actually we can say that *sannyasa* is an inner mood – to be connected to the Divine Couple. In that sense we all should become *sannyasis*, to have only one divine ideal – Divine Love. That is *sannyasa*. It is not the color, it is not the robes. This is the inner desire, when you are running.

So, we must obtain the inner mood. Not simply of renunciation, because renunciation is bitter. But dedication! Because dedication is sweet. This is what we have to obtain; then easily we can give up what is superficial. We are searching for the higher taste, inner fulfillment. The formulas and dogmas are not enough. We need the real thing - divine experience, our living faith and our feedback from Krishna. This is what we need.

So *sannyasa* is one way, but *bhakti* is the general way. This is a way for everyone. *Sannyasa* as an order of life is not for everyone. But the inner mood is general.

11. The heart vision

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 31.12.2007, Sofia)

Yamuna: Maharaj, once I asked a question to Gurudev³, to which he did not answer me...

Tirtha Maharaj: So, you expect me to answer?!

Yamuna: I am just sharing the question, I do not expect you to answer. The question was: “Gurudev, how do you say the things that you are saying?!” And some years ago I was at Gurudev’s library and I was running through the books and I saw that with very tiny letters in the fields he was taking notes and making cross-references... like a network! And I thought: “Ah my God! If Gurudev was preparing like this on *shastras*, what should I do?!”

Tirtha Maharaj: Worship! Because Bhakti is not simply an intellectual understanding, but a change of heart. And sometimes intellect is a great obstacle in the spiritual progress. Because there are two ways: one is of the brain, the other is of the heart. And there is a special type of meditation, this is called “the twin-heart” meditation. But “the twin-heart” meditation is not trying to find your twin partner on the outside and then meditate together. No, you should find your own twin inside. Actually this means to connect the heart and the brain. To influence the heart a little bit by the brain and to surcharge the brain with the heart. So this is this inner connection. This is not a pseudo-spiritual schizophrenia, but to join a good brain with a good heart.

And we all know, ultimate things we see with the heart. So, do not forget to cultivate on that. What is this heart vision? Heart vision is trust. We should trust what we are doing. We should trust our masters. We should trust our God. And we should trust *a little bit* ourselves also: “Yes, I will be able to do it! Not by myself, by the mercy.”

³ B.A.Narayan Maharaj

So, have the heart vision! This is the ultimate way *to understand* anything.

You know, once Sadhu Maharaj was visiting us. There was an occasion, a public lecture, and it was given the topic: “Vedanta-sutra”. So, we invited him to give the lecture on “Vedanta-sutra”. And while we were travelling he asked: “Can you read something from this “Vedanta-sutra”? And after half a page he said: “Stop! Enough of that.” That was a little too theoretical for him. And then he started to give a lecture on some *rasik* flow on dedication to Shri Guru, and “my master is like this” and “chanting the Holy Name is like that”... Because what is the conclusion of “Vedanta-sutra”? “Those who achieve perfection will never return.” Those who achieve will never return. Very simple. This is the conclusion! If we understand this one little verse, we do not have to go through these 555 verses. Those who achieve will never return. If you remember this one little verse, you can be a master of “Vedanta-sutra”. And if somebody is trying to, you know, test you: “Have you studied the “Vedanta-sutra”? If you say: “Yes! Those who reach will never return,” you will impress the guy, I tell you.

But this *reaching* is possible by faith. This reaching is possible by the heart vision. This is possible by the trust that we give to Krishna.

Question: What can be said about the fallen angel in this interpretation? Because he knew, and still had fallen...

Tirtha Maharaj: The fallen angel is us. You know, life and the different layers of the universe are just like a tall building, a skyscraper. Let us say, it has got some hundred floors. To climb the stairs is very heavy job, so therefore the clever guys take the elevator. And in a huge building there are many elevators. So, if you meet the other elevator on the fiftieth floor, pay attention to the direction: who is moving upwards and who is going downwards. Maybe the same level, but one might be an ascending devil and the other might be a falling angel. Same floor, different direction. Take care which elevator you take.

But basically we can say that the fallen angel is us. Therefore I say: grow your wings! Make your wings grow! Just remove your overcoat. Fly!

12.The inner guidance

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 31.12.2007, Sofia)

Question of Yamuna: I have heard that the four points on which we can base our decision on what to do and what not to do are guru, *shastra*, *sadhu* and *paramatma*. But I also heard from you: *guru*, *shastra*, *sadhu* and *hriday* – the heart. How to understand this – whether it is *paramatma* or *hriday*? Should we hear the voice of God in the heart or should we listen to our own heart?

Tirtha Maharaj: Good question. Usually they say only three: guru, *shastra*, *sadhu*. That means: the spiritual master, as our main authority; the scriptures, as the central revelation; and *sadhu*, or the company of the saints as the practical example. And then Shрила Shridhara Maharaj adds that you should also consult your heart – this is *hriday*. From this we can understand that the three sources of information – this is the theory. And what makes this theory into practice – this is our heart’s conviction.

But the question is very good, whether if we have some inspiration or inner voice, whether this is the divine guidance, or my taste, or maybe some fake voice...? We can say that if the heart is pure enough, if you go through the purification process you can fully trust this inner conviction, this inner guidance. It is always there, but we are prone to misunderstand it. Therefore we have to purify ourselves, our consciousness. Usually this inner guidance works in the beginning of spiritual life very strongly, because in the beginning everybody is a pure heart, everybody comes with absolutely pure intention. Right? You join a mission, you join a temple, you join a process, you join the devotees – whatever – “Yes! This is my

process! We chant Hare Krishna! We go back home, back to Godhead!” And when we are so pure in this intention, therefore the inner guidance is coming so obviously: “Yes, come, do this, follow this process, join, commit yourself!” Little later on we understand that this is simple, but not easy. Then we start to learn how complicated is the process, how complicated is the philosophy, how we cannot trust the mind, and then we fully forget about the inner guidance. Right, it happens, many times it happens?! You feel like: “Ah, I do not know anything! I cannot trust myself. I do not know whether this is only the mind or this is really me...!” But do not stop here. If you purify yourself more, then you will again hear.

Ultimately this inner heart connection – this is the way how divinity can touch you. We are praying for Krishna, we are inviting Krishna to our life, but when He enters, you are surprised. No, we should not be surprised if some inner guidance is coming. Be ready to accept that.

Of course, then again the other three sources of information are very useful and you can control, you can check whether what you have got is real or not. But be sure, if Krishna is there in everybody’s heart, the sincere prayer is heard. Stupidity is also heard. So beware!

Question of Kripadham: What is in the heart of a pure devotee?

Tirtha Maharaj: What is there? Ah... What makes a heart into a devotee heart? That is a sweet question! Because actually we can judge a person according to the ideal. And for some their ideals are residing in their brain. Sometimes this side, other times that side... you know it better. But for the *vaishnavas* their ideals are residing in the heart. Because they have already accomplished the twin-heart meditation process – tuning. So, the ideals of a devotee we search in the inner recesses, in the inner depth of their hearts. And what makes a devotee into devotee – this is the inner earning for Krishna. So many features and signs and characters are attractive in a *bhakta*. Sometimes the knowledge, sometimes the abilities – so many things! But if we search, we shall find these very fine, very delicate qualities in the heart. And it is said that ultimately we shall find Krishna there also – in the hearts of pure devotees. Therefore we

appreciate the pure saints so much – because they prepare a residence for God in their hearts.

13. Fear is frightened away

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 01.01.2008, Sofia)

We read another important verse from the second chapter of the “Bhagavad Gita”: *“In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear.”*⁴

Krishna has started the education on yoga. Before He was teaching about *sankhya*, analysis – if you do this, you will have the result like that; this is this, that is that – analysis. And in the previous verse He says: *“Thus far I have described this knowledge to you through analytical study. Now listen as I explain it in terms of working without fruitive results. O son of Pritha, when you act in such knowledge you can free yourself from the bondage of works.”*

So, before it was *sankhye* – “I was explaining in *sankhya*” – and now: *buddhi-yoga*. *Buddhi* means intellect or the yoga of enlightenment, we can say. So, the first lecture in yoga by Krishna to Arjuna is this what we have read. You can get rid of your fears. This is yoga! Yoga means to be connected, and when you are connected to Krishna, there is no fear entering. No evil spirits, no bad influence, nothing wrong can happen if we are connected. And if we analyze deeply the words of Krishna, then it is obvious from this verse, that simple analytical study will not help you to get rid of the fear. You can become very intelligent, very analytical, but you should become a *yogi* in order to get rid of the fear. So instead of analytic mind, we should have a synthesizing mind. Analytical means that I can cut the problem into pieces. And synthesizing mind means that I can put the

⁴ “Bhagavad-gita” 2.40

pieces together, to have a brighter picture. Analysis will not make us happy and satisfied. Why? If you analyze anything material, ultimately you will find the cheating inside. Or the scandal. And if you analyze something spiritual, you will find nothing by this method. Right? Because the spiritual secrets are not under the jurisdiction of analysis. We have to submit ourselves to the higher truth. You cannot analyze that! Therefore from *sankhya*, from analysis, we should come to yoga, which means unifying, synthesizing. Just like Shрила Shridhara Maharaj says: thesis, antithesis, synthesis. This is yoga – to be connected, to be connected to the absolute truth. As soon as we are connected to the absolute truth, fear will be frightened away.

Once upon a time... the great sages came together and asked Brahma, the supreme intelligence in the universe: “Tell us, what is the ultimate aspect of God? What is the ultimate name of God? What is the ultimate mantra to chant? What is the ultimate form to meditate upon?” And then Brahma started his answer. He gave one secret formula. It started with “om” and ended with “swaha”. I do not want to give this mantra now. But then he started to explain the different words of the mantra and as the names of Krishna and Govinda were included, he explained that fear is frightened away if you chant these names of God. And if you chant “svaha” at the end of this mantra, this will make the whole world turn around.

Although fear is a good old friend of ours. And I agree in this world of brutal material illusion, there is a good reason to be afraid. But many people want to get rid of their fear. They go to martial arts or to psychotherapy, or whatever. But they forget about this suggestion: be connected to God, then you will get rid of your fear.

In the purports of the “Vedanta-sutra” it is explained that those who have surrendered completely, fully to Krishna, they will have no fear. But from this we can understand that those, who did not surrender completely, they will have fear, they have a good reason to fear. But if you use this sentence again for self-analysis, if we have any little fear then you should understand that “I did not surrender completely to Krishna.” But if you have become fearless, it is a great achievement.

So, surrender brings fearlessness. If I submit myself under a protective Lord, I will be protected. Even if tests are coming to me, this will be for my benefit.

14. Even a little step forward...

(from a lecture of B.K. Tirtha Maharaj, 01.01.2008, Sofia)

“In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear.”⁵

Purport by Shrila Prabhupada: Activity in Krishna consciousness, or acting for the benefit of Krishna without expectation of sense gratification, is the highest transcendental quality of work. Even a small beginning of such activity finds no impediment, nor can that small beginning be lost at any stage. Any work begun on the material plane has to be completed, otherwise the whole attempt becomes a failure. But any work begun in Krishna consciousness has a permanent effect, even though not finished. The performer of such work is therefore not at a loss even if his work in Krishna consciousness is incomplete. One percent done in Krishna consciousness bears permanent results, so that the next beginning is from the point of two percent, whereas in material activity without a hundred percent success there is no profit. Ajamila performed his duty in some percentage of Krishna consciousness, but the result he enjoyed at the end was a hundred percent, by the grace of the Lord. There is a nice verse in this connection in “Shrimad-bhagavatam” (1.5.17): *“If someone gives up his occupational duties and works in Krishna consciousness and then falls down on account of not completing his work, what loss is there on his part? And what can*

⁵ “Bhagavad Gita” 2.40

one gain if one performs his material activities perfectly?" Or, as the Christians say, "What profiteth a man if he gain the whole world yet suffers the loss of his eternal soul?" Material activities and their results end with the body. But work in Krishna consciousness carries a person again to Krishna consciousness, even after the loss of the body. At least one is sure to have a chance in the next life of being born again as a human being, either in the family of a great cultured *brahmana* or in a rich aristocratic family that will give one a further chance for elevation. That is the unique quality of work done in Krishna consciousness.

Shrila Prabhupada very nicely explains that if we achieve one step in *krishna-bhakti*, this little achievement will stay with us forever. Do you believe that, Damodar?

Damodar: Almost.

Tirtha Maharaj: I like when you are honest.

Whatever we achieve materially is working under the principle of the magic ring. „This will also pass.” So do not be obsessed by working only on the material plane. We shall lose everything; whatever we achieve, we shall lose it. Right? I am sure you remember the story of Alexander the Great- how he made his body to be laid after his death. He gave instructions to his servants that they should lay his body in such a way, that he is covered by a textile, but his two hands should be stretched out from under the covering – in order to show that “although I am the emperor of this world, still I go empty-handed. I cannot take anything with me from this world.” And he was quite great! Little bigger achievements he had than if we put together all that we have got – it is insignificant compared to his power and achievements. So, do not work only for material gain. We shall lose it. It is said: whatever you do not give, you will lose it.

Be connected. This is the solution. And in this way from the greatest fear you can be saved. And hopefully this small little achievement will stay with us. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is so merciful, that He considers a person a *bhakta*, a devotee, if *once* he chants the Holy Name. If only once we can chant from the deepest core of our heart “Krishna”, then *He* considers us devotee! Is not that a great

achievement?! I think it is a very great achievement. So therefore we give chance to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to consider us devotees by chanting regularly. Of course in this way we give a chance for *ourselves* to join this party. And what can we do?! This is a natural consequence that all the difficulties, all the fears, all the problems slowly, slowly will be removed. This is not the goal, but this is a side effect.

Most of the things that people are working for, actually are not fit to function as goals. Therefore we should be unique searchers. Search for such a goal that will never let us down. And to find such a process, where even a little step forward will always stay with us.

15. The urgency of devotional service

(from a lecture of B.K. Tirtha Maharaj, 01.01.2008, Sofia)

Question of Premananda: In “Bhaktya-loka” Bhaktivinod Thakur speaks about the urgency of devotional service. My humble request would be if you can comment a bit about the urgency of devotional service?

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes! Do not waste a moment! Other questions?

But let us imagine a situation. You are a happy owner of a house – which is a nice achievement. And just imagine that your house is on fire. What do you do?

Somebody: Run away.

Tirtha Maharaj: This is the lazy guy. The real owner will try to protect and put the fire out, bring the water – irrespective of the height of the flames. You try to do *anything* to save the situation. And immediately! You do not hesitate, you do not ask your neighbor: “Shall I do this or shall I not do this? Maybe like this...” No! You get a bucket and bring the water.

Your consciousness is on fire! Bring the water! *Do* something about your spiritual progress! If we would understand our real situation, we would be very busy carrying the water. This is the urgency. Until you are deeply absorbed in illusion, you do not even realize your situation. You feel: “Ah, very nice warmth in this house!” But is not that situation urgent? It is.

Yet in most of the cases we do not understand our real situation in life. We are thinking: “Ah, quite nice! Warm, safe. I can say I am happy.” Right? We explain everything to ourselves. But if we would call everything by the real name... Or if we would realize the *chance* of Krisna-bhakti, what improvement it would bring in our life, we would not hesitate a moment.

So, do not waste a moment! Because what can we lose if we do not join the devotees? This is only the nectar. You will miss the nectarean moments if you do not join. We should not be so stupid and we should use *buddhi-yoga*, because this is what Krishna is explaining – be intelligent.

16. First a wise man, then an innocent child

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 01.01.2008, Sofia)

Question of Kripadham: Why in “Bhagavad-gita” Shrila Prabhupada translates *buddhi-yoga* as „devotional service”? If you can comment on this.

Tirtha Maharaj: Because *bhakti* should be performed with *buddhi*. Devotion should be a clever devotion. Why? Because in the “Vedanta-sutra” it is suggested that first the practitioners should become wise. Then they should become innocent like a child. First become *rishi-muni*, and then become a child. What does it mean? It means: first obtain *buddhi-yoga*, obtain the connection of intellect. In other places Krishna says in “Bhagavad-gita”: “Use all your

intelligence in connection with Me.”⁶ But then we should understand, that this is not the intellect that will help us to be connected back to divinity, but this is a different type of yoga – this is yoga of dedication, yoga of emotions. And that is best practiced by the children. Sometimes they are dedicated so much to playing their games, that they forget to eat or to sleep or to go back home, because they have given themselves. And they are very pure in the heart, in the intention – no complicated mind. Therefore first become a wise person and then become an innocent child. This is the way back home back to Godhead.

Therefore *buddhi-yoga* should be pure devotional service. This is a prerequisite for this innocent stage. What is the definition of wisdom?

Somebody: When thoughts are put into action.

Tirtha Maharaj: Ah! Very close to the essence!

Yamuna: What about the quality of your thoughts?

Tirtha Maharaj: Anyway, irrespective of the quality, that is intelligence if you can achieve your goals. But I also heard another definition of wisdom and this is “the practical ability to love.” Do you accept that? Which is very much similar to what you have quoted, but maybe put in this devotional, *bhakti* concept. So wisdom is not the labyrinth of the complicated brain, but some heat, some light, emanating from a divine source that comforts us. This is wisdom. This wisdom that I am talking about is not a human achievement, but this is a divine blessing. Maybe our wisdom heroes are very simple minds from the material point of view. But we should be able to perceive the essential quality. Spiritual intelligence is a divine quality of the soul. Because this is not the knowledge of much information, but this is the vision of the truth, of the essence. Which is another definition for wisdom. Therefore we pray to divine wisdom to descend on us.

⁶ “Bhagavad-gita” 12.8

17.The way to fight the violence

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 01.01.2008, Sofia)

Question: Guruji, in the “Mahabharata” Krishna asked Arjuna to kill the Kauravas and win the war, because if he wins the war it means the truth wins. In the present scenario, when killing even of animals has been prohibited, killing of human beings is also considered very bad. There is a situation, a very good man is there, he is following his life in a very good manner. So, he is facing some wrong kind of people. He has some goal. And those wrong people are trying to terrify him not to pursue the goal. Most of the time, most of the good people go back; they do not achieve their goal, because of the fear of fighting – they do not want to indulge in any kind of fighting, any kind of violence. So if the good man decides: “No, I will fight with them”, the laws will not support him, because the laws are always at the back of bad people. If the good man decides: “I will fight a war, I will kill these people.” Is it good to decide to do good for the society and do goodness for the goal? Because we consider a good man the man who does not fight. And in the present scenario I think 99.9 percent of the people are sitting idle, they do not fight. I have seen many good people who decided in this situation not to fight. They think: “I am a good man, I will not fight, because I am a good man. And he is a wrong man, let him do anything.” In this way the number of people, who are doing wrong, is increasing, because the good people are not opposing them.... So what about the good people? Should they fight?

Tirtha Maharaj: Very good question. And when you told that the good guys are sitting idle and the bad guys are active, actually this is the way to judge what is what. Because it is said that the good is idle and the bad is active. Do not forget, this is Kali-yuga, this is the time for activity of bad powers. In Satya-yuga good is active and bad is passive. Because that is an age of another turn. Sometimes you preserve the values by hiding the values. Because if you fight alone this whole corrupted system of what is around us,

easily they will finish you. This is the way of the *sannyasis*, swamis – attack the system from the outside. But the intelligent ones are the agents – inside the system, corrupting the corrupt system from the inside. So, if we are intelligent, we should use both methods. Open attack from the outside; but in the fortress everybody will laugh: “Ha! What do you want to do with little words?! Who are you?! You come from the village, you come from your monastery, what do you know? You know nothing, we know everything and we are powerful, you are a small guy from the outside!” Therefore a real *sannyasi* has to be a good strategist. He is preaching, coming as a penniless mendicant, knocking at the door of the fortress and they let him in: “Ah, he is a beggar, give him something...” But he starts to speak on the marketplace. And soon he wins over. So, if your power is not enough, then use your brain. *Buddhi-yoga*, use your intelligence to achieve your goals.

And probably you know the story of Chanakya Pandit, when he started to pour sugar-cane juice in the roots of a bunch of grass. Then Chandragupta came and said: “Swamiji, what are you doing? Why are you pouring this sweet juice on the bunch of grass?” And he said: “This grass was so sharp, that it hurt my leg. So I want to retaliate. And you know, the ants like very much the sugar. So if I pour the sweet juice over this grass, the ants will come to the roots and they will eat up the roots of the grass. In this way I will achieve my goal. The grass is finished.” Immediately Candragupta said: “You are my man! Let us go together.” And what was the consequence? The greatest power in Northern India in the early second or third century BC. That is mind and power joined together, intellect plus arm together.

So if you want to finish with the bad forces in the world, better you use your intelligence. Because by the power this game is lost for us. As you said all the laws, all the power, all the money, all the majority is on the other side. But the preaching power is on our side! Although the other side is also trying to train themselves, like television, he is the one-eyed guru, giving lecture every evening and everybody is worshiping, taking every word, that is coming from that

source like the Vedas. But stop that one-eyed guru in your life. Find a two-eyed one.

Better do not kill. Because Krishna can kill the demons in one moment, and time will finish with all the negative tendencies. So, we have to be a little bit patient to see the end of the story. But you are right, we should decide questions and actions according to our temper. And if there is a difficult or violent situation, a person might use two parts of his body: the legs or the hands. If you are a *kshatriya* type, you can use your hands. If you are a *brahmin* type you can use your legs – not for kicking high, but for running away. Because if a *brahmin* runs away from such a situation, no problem for him. But if you are a *kshatriya*, use your arm. If a fighter is running away from such a situation, this is called coward. And this is the psychological teasing that Krishna is exercising with Arjuna. Because Arjuna wanted to escape, right? “I don’t fight! I don’t mind winning the war, I don’t want to fight, I don’t want to kill!” But then Krishna started to impress him: “Hey, people will tell that you are a coward. There is no greater shame for a fighter than to be called “coward”. You are a great fighter! You are the ornament of your family, you are the best archer!” In this way Krishna influences Arjuna to accept the guidance.

Still I would say, we should try to avoid violence as much as possible. And I am not talking about killing, because killing is quite obvious that should be avoided; but like lighter or more hidden types of violence also should be avoided. Because where there is fight, there is no *gopi-bhaav*. In most of the cases fighting means fighting of egos.

Question: But, Guruji, the goodness is defeated...

Tirtha Maharaj: No! “Declare it boldly: My devotee is never lost!”⁷ We are never lost. I agree, we should fight for the truth. Yet be clever.

Sometimes we go back to gain more power to come forward. So always think in tendencies, in longer terms. Then you will be able to see the truth. But to counteract the tendencies of the present age,

⁷ “Bhagavad-gita” 9.31

we have to unite our powers. Because the outside tendencies are very strong. This age is not favorable for spiritual practices. Still we should not be depressed about it, but find the ways to practice: first help yourself and then help others. And you know, practicing yoga in Eastern Europe in communist times *did have* a special taste. So we have some understanding how to find ways under difficult political situation or oppression still go on with your practice and be effective, so to say, to reach people.

Still whatever happens we should be able to see the divine arrangement behind. Even degradation helps to see or to recognize the good ones. Until you pay the bill you will have many friends. Friend in need is a friend indeed. But you will see who is who in difficult situations. So, difficulty is good? Yes, it is very good. Few illusions lost. And one step closer to the truth.

18.The drop and the ocean

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 04.01.2009, Sofia)

A very special structure of the Indian revealed scriptures is that they give a vast knowledge, in many cases hundreds and thousands of verses, but the essence is condensed in few drops. And to speak about the essence in short – this is real eloquence.

The whole essence of this vast Vedic knowledge is contained in the names of God. And not only the Vedic scriptures, but all religious practices are contained in the names of God. And not only the essence of religions, but this is the essence of life. Because life is the broadest conception. Krishna says in the “Bhagavad-gita”: “I am the essence of life.”

But “Bhagavad-gita” is part of a very wonderful piece of literature; it is called the “Mahabharata”. Maha-Bharata. That means

“The Great Bharata⁸ story”. Or we can also say “The greatness of Bharata”. Or we can also say “The Great India.” Or “The greatness of India.” Or to put it short – India is great. And it is said: whatever is missing from this book, it doesn’t really exist. This is just like an encyclopedia of life. There are one hundred thousand verses in the “Mahabharata”. Quite long! This is seven times greater than “Iliad” and “Odyssey” combined. This is so huge! How can you read the “Mahabharata”?! It’s too long! Therefore God was merciful and said: “All right! Take your time. I give you some essence. I give you seven hundred verses, “Bhagavad-gita” – this is the essence of the “Mahabharata”. But then Kali-yuga and the twenty-first century also came. And today you say: “O! Seven hundred verses! It’s too long! Give me something short and simple.”

God knows everything, right? He knew in advance our approach. Therefore although the story was very long and never ending, He condensed the essence in four verses. So we can say that the essence of human existence, life and consciousness - this is the “Mahabharata”. And the essence of the “Mahabharata” is “Bhagavad-gita”, the Divine Song. And the essence of “Bhagavad-gita” are the four verses, contained in the tenth chapter⁹.

The essential message should be a little hidden. Therefore this is not in the beginning, this is not in the middle section, this is not in the end, but somewhere hidden.

All other different revealed scriptures, pieces of divine literature, are also condensed in a few verses. For example, the “Shrimad-bhagavatam”, which has eighteen thousand verses, is also essentially condensed in four verses. And the “Brahma-samhita”, which is a very beautiful glorification of God, is also condensed in five verses. And the “Vedanta-sutra”, which consists of five hundred fifty five sutras, is also condensed in the first ten sutras. So you can see that all the different literatures have this structure - giving you something broad, more elaborate; and some condensed drops.

⁸ Bharata is a great ancient king, after whom India is named Bharata(varsha).

⁹ “Bhagavad-gita” 10.8-11

This is very important – this example of the drops and the ocean. Because one school says that if you put the drop back to the ocean it just dissolves, loses its identity as a drop and becomes the ocean. They say this, they come with this argument. But let us take the opposite direction: if you take one drop of the ocean – you will understand, you will know the ocean. So if you take these four verses of the “Bhagavad-gita”, you will know the essence, you will know everything about the “Bhagavad-gita”. What to speak of “Bhagavad-gita” – you will know everything about the “Mahabharata”! That means – you will know everything about life as it is.

19.Me and you all

(from lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 04.01.2009, Sofia)

“Aham sarvasya prabhavo/ mattah sarvam pravartate/ iti matva bhajante mam/ budha bhaava-samanvitah - I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds, everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.”¹⁰

Krishna starts this verse with *aham*. What is this *aham*? *Aham* means “I, Myself”. But this is a combined word – “a” and “ham”. Actually – “a”, “ha” and “m”. Aha! If we understand this – this is an eureka effect. Aha! We understand something about divinity. *He* is talking.

“A” is the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet. In other place Krishna says in the “Bhagavad-gita” that “From the different sounds I am the “A”¹¹. Have you made any research what is the most frequently used sound in Bulgarian language? “A”. You see! You

¹⁰ “Bhagavad-gita” 10.8

¹¹ “Bhagavad-gita” 10.33

have a divine language. Krishna is hiding in all the “a” that you pronounce.

So “A” is the first step of the alphabet. And what is the last sound of the Sanskrit alphabet? The last letter is “ha”. So Krishna starts with “a-ha”, He gives everything that can be told. And “m” – “mmmmmm” – this is Divinity. This is resounding in the “Om”, right? This resonant nasal sound. Letters are there to describe everything that exists. And this nasal sound is the divine touch. So Krishna starts with *aham*. Is there anything else to say?! Everything is contained in one word.

Still He tries to put it in a more elaborate form. And the meaning of *aham* in this verse is “I”. That is very positive about existence. He does not say “nothing”, He says “something”. The divine identity is there, it’s not vain, it’s not nothing, it’s not emptiness. From this we can understand that there *is* supreme divine identity.

Then the second word He says is “*sarvasya*”. And “*sarvasya*” is a genitive; “*sya*” at the end shows that this is “belonging to something”. “*Sarva*” means “all”. “I am” – He says “*aham*” – and next He says “and everybody else”. “Myself and everybody else” – “*sarva*”. Krishna is a dualistic philosopher. He says: “I and you.” “Me and you all”. This is positively stressing the existence of everything else. He does not say: “I am, but you are only an illusion.” No, He says “I am and you also are.”

And “*sarvasya*” means “belonging to all”. So He says: “I belong to you.” Our Lord is a loving God: “I belong to you.” He is also selfless. Because He does not say: “You belong to Me.” But He says: “I belong to you.” Krishna is very *rasic*, too much loving, “I belong to you, I dedicate Myself to you, I give Myself to you.”

But then to help you not to forget your identity He says “*prabhavo*” - “I am your Lord.” Krishna says: “I belong to you, but you are subordinate and I am a little superior.” This is the way how to teach, how to educate people nicely. Give them friendship first and then tell the truth. “I belong to you, but our position is like this.” Because without that emotional contact is practically impossible to come closer, practically impossible to understand something. Shrila

Prabhupad also says: “First make friends with others and then you can preach to them.”

You see how condensed this verse is?! Three words – and the whole philosophy is there. “I exist, you exist, we have a connection and I am a little superior.” We can explain that for hours and years, but this is the essence: “I am, you are, we belong together.”

Then Krishna says: “*mattah*”- “from Me”. “From Me everything emanates, from Me everything comes.” Ultimately everything comes from this divine source. Certain things come from there directly, other things come indirectly. The divine domination, divine signals come directly from His source. But the signals from illusion come indirectly from that source. We can say this is a broken transmission. Yet ultimately everything comes from that source, even illusion comes from that source and starts to function over *jivas*. That shows that there *is* a source - an ultimate, a final source of all emanations.

These two lines are just like an ontological lesson. They tell you everything about existence – what exists, what is what, who is who. It describes God, it describes living entities, it describes the connection between the two and then it describes the whole creation, the whole world. And identifies the ultimate source also.

Some people say that the “Bhagavad-gita” is eclectic. Eclectic in a sense that it is not consequent enough according to their understanding. I suggest to them: learn, study and then judge.

(to be continued)

20. Ecstatic, enamored, inspired

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 04.01.2009, Sofia)

(continues from the previous issue)

*Aham sarvasya prabhavo/ mattah sarvam pravartate/ iti matva bhajante mam/ budha bhaava-samanvitah – “I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly knows this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.”*¹²

Krishna has described everything about creation. Then He focuses His attention – and our attention also – on the practitioners. *Iti matva* – “knowing this” – *bhajante* – “they will worship” – *mam* – “Me”. Those who know this will worship Me. After the theoretical description there is a practical application. If there is God, if there is human, if there is connection – what should be done? Worship. But worship whom? The movie stars? Or the politicians? No – “worship Me”. We should worship God.

Then it is said: *budha*. *Budhi* means “intelligence”. “Those who are intelligent they will worship Me.” And what is the quality of these wise men? *Bhaava-samanvitah*. What is the explanation of *bhaava-samanvitah* here?

Premananda: With great attention.

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes. But we can add some little more about this *bhaava-samanvitah*. Because what is *bhaava*? This is the spiritual mood, emotional mood. And this is very close to *bhava*. *Bhaava* and *bhava*. *Bhaava* is emotional surplus, *bhava* is existence. This is only one longer “a” – the difference. And who is the “a”? This is Krishna. If you add Krishna to your existence you become ecstatic. So *bhaava-samanvitah* means attentive; but it also means ecstatic, enamored, inspired by existence.

¹² “Bhagavad-gita”10.8

Is that verse essential? The first word is “I” and in the end there is the ecstasy, the ecstasy of life. Go deep, dive deep. Because one drop contains the entire ocean. You can dive deep in this one drop and you can drown yourself in ecstasy.

Certain things from philosophy and theology we cannot really understand by our brain. Because there is a limit to human understanding. But even those very complicated no-answer questions can be accepted by the heart. If we accept it, then the system starts to function. And when we come to a higher platform it will just be revealed to us. So this is the way to understand higher things. Not simply by intellectual efforts, but by dedication. Because Krishna can tell us the story very complicated – hundred thousand verses in the “Mahabharata” – or He can put the story very simple: “*Aham*”. If we understand then we have all the answers. *Aham sarvasya prabhavo*.

21.Engagement of the pure devotees

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 04.01.2009, Sofia)

*“Mach-chitta mad-gata-prana/ bodhayantah parasparam/
kathayantash cha mam nityam/ tushyanti cha ramanti cha - The
thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully
devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss
from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me.”¹³*

God exists, you also exist and there is a connection between you and Him. Those who understand this will start worshipping the Lord. What happens if you start to worship God? “Their consciousness is in Me, *mach-chitta*. They always think of Me.” This is one achievement of a pure devotee – that he thinks of God Supreme, of Krishna, always. Not only from time to time. Always.

¹³ “Bhagavad-gita” 10.9

And he accomplishes another thing, he never forgets Him. Always remembers and never forgets.

But this is only one achievement. The other achievement is that “their lives are fully dedicated to My service.” Then such people we can consider pure devotees. They will be also engaged. We are also engaged; they are also engaged. We are engaged in daily routine activities, but their daily routine is something else. Pure devotees are also engaged, they are very busy, no time for anything... material. And we are also engaged, no time for anything... spiritual. What is the result of being engaged in such a way? You will see at the end. But meanwhile you will also have some feedback. Because what is happening in the outside world? Everything tells us about comforts and enjoyment. Still everybody is complaining. We have a civilization of comforts and enjoyment and we have a culture of complaint. What is this combination? You work for something but you never reach. Spiritual cultivation is different. You work for no material impulse and you will get everything. Isn't it a good offer? You renounce everything and still you will get everything. You renounce your problems and you will get spiritual happiness. In the material world you are struggling hard for happiness and you will get the fruits, the bitter fruits. Spiritual life is something different. Different impulse, different motivation, different goals.

These pure devotees, who have dedicated their lives to Krishna's service and also who are able to think of Him permanently, *mad gata prana* - “their *prana*, their life is coming to Me, they fully dedicate their life energy to My service.” Then *bodhayantah* - “they will enlighten each other”. This comes from *budhi*. *Budhi* we all know, this is enlightenment. *Parasparam* means “each other”. Enlighten each other. And *kathayantah*. *Katha* means to speak about something. *Kathayantash cha mam nityam* – “about Me, they are always talking about Me.” This is their engagement. They have dedicated their lives, they have given their thoughts, they have given their words and they have given their power to enlighten each other. Everything they have dedicated to the service. This is the engagement of a pure devotee. Even if he is talking about the price of cement, because he wants to build a temple, this is pure and full

krishna-katha. There is no second motivation. He is not building his own house.

If you are engaged in something you will reach something. The result of such an engagement will be the last line: *tushyanti* and *ramanti*. *Tushti* is satisfaction, and *ramanti* is bliss. If you engage all your capacities in the service of Lord Krishna you will be fully satisfied and happy.

To repeat something twice – is it not a mistake of the poetic stile? There is something wrong here in this verse. He is repeating twice the same thing – why?

Ramvijay: Krishna was not focused on the topic.

Tirtha Maharaj: Maybe our understanding is not deep enough. The *acharyas* were discussing this topic. Why Krishna is talking about two different things as a result of one activity – dedicate yourself to God and you will feel two different things - *tushyanti cha ramanti cha*, you will be satisfied and happy. What is the secret? Is there a secret at all? I think yes, but maybe it is so secret that we do not even understand that there is a secret. If you are fulfilled, if you are satisfied – then you are happy, right? Satisfied and happy – it goes together. Why mention it separately?

(to be continued)

22. Your breath and your heartbeat will tell the story (from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 04.01.2009, Sofia)

(continues from the previous issue)

“Mach-chitta mad-gata-prana/ bodhayantah parasparam/ kathayantash cha mam nityam/ tushyanti cha ramanti cha - The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me.”¹⁴

Actually here Krishna mentions different grades of devotees. Those who enlighten others, *bodhayantah*, they will be only fulfilled, *tushyanti*. Enough? But those “who glorify Me, *kathayantah*”, they will be happy, *ramanti*. *Bodhayantah* is on the platform of *sadhana-bhakti*. This is *madhyama-adhikari* level - I teach you, I enlighten you, I explain to you. This is a level of distinction: I am higher than you. What will come from that attitude? Maximum some insignificant satisfaction, some *tushti*. But where is the happiness there? There is not so much happiness. Rama, Rama Devi is the Goddess of happiness, so *ramanti* is under Her control. You cannot enlighten others; you can only glorify the Lord! This is a completely different approach. Those who glorify the Supreme Lord – they will achieve spiritual inner bliss.

Ramanti is a very complicated word again. Rama Devi is the Goddess of bliss, of happiness, another name for Srimati Radharani. And *rama* also means “happiness”. “Anti” is just like “ante”. “Ante” means the end of something – like Veda – Vedanta. Vedanta means “in the end of Veda”. So *ramanti*, *ramante* can mean that you are *in* the supreme happiness. You will enter the topmost satisfaction, the topmost bliss. *Tushti* and *rama* – you feel the difference? Big difference. If you practice *bhakti* on the elementary platform, *sadhana-bhakti*, you can achieve *tushti*, you can achieve satisfaction.

¹⁴ “Bhagavad-gita” 10.9

If you come to the higher platform of *bhakti*, if you start to glorify the Supreme Lord, then you can reach spiritual bliss.

In one little verse the steps of the spiritual progress are also contained. If you speak nonsense you will not be satisfied. If you speak about spiritual things you can achieve satisfaction. If you start to glorify our Krishna what will be the result? First result will be that you cannot speak anymore. Your voice will choke up. This is the real glorification. Until you can speak, you are scratching the surface. But when your voice chokes up like when Mahaprabhu was in ecstasy... Usually He was glorifying Lord Jagannath, this beautiful loving form of Krishna. But whenever He could not compose Himself, He just fainted and fell in ecstasy and He could not speak nicely. Then instead of "Jagannath" He could say only "Ja ja ga ga du du..." That is the real thing. Until you can give an eloquent speech on the lecture, there is maximum *tushti*. Some satisfaction on your side, because everybody likes to hear his own voice. But when you cannot speak anymore, that is *ramanti*. That is happiness for the audience. Here we stop.

Because real glorification cannot be expressed by words, but in this verse it is contained how to express yourself when words fail. What is given in the first line? *Chitta* and *prana*. *Chitta* is residing in the heart. And *prana* is your breath. So if your words fail, then your breath and your heartbeat will tell the story. These are the ultimate rhythms of your body. Your heartbeat and your breathing. If your words fail, your heart and your *prana* will tell.

Question of Yamuna: Maharaj, I have read some commentaries that Krishna is actually speaking at two levels in this verse. It sounds like He is speaking about the future, like wishing something to happen, but actually He speaks about the past. He speaks about the *gopis* here. Can you please comment on this?

Tirtha Maharaj: I think I have told my opinion about this: *tushti* is for the elementary practitioners and *ramanti* is for the higher practitioners. *Tushti* you can achieve on the elementary *rasas* and *ramanti* you can achieve on *madhurya-rasa*.

*Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.* If you start to

nicely chant these names then a certain very subtle change will start in your life. Without anything else some purification will happen. And the more you practice, and the more *deep* you practice – more results, more sweet taste you will reach. Therefore one word is said here: *nityam* – always! Until your heart beats, until your breath works, all the time.

Yamuna: And after? After the heart stops and the breath ceases?

Tirtha Maharaj: He reasons ill who thinks that the devotee dies.

23.Intelligence surcharged with love

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 05.01.2009, Sofia)

„Tesham satata-yuktanam/ bhajatam priti-purvakam/ dadami budhi-yogam tam/ yena mam upayanti te – “To those, who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.”¹⁵

Tesham means “to them”. To whom? Who are *satata-yuktanam*. *Satata* means “always” and *yukta* means “to be connected”. *Yukta* comes from *yoga*. *Yoga* is connection, *yukta* is to be connected. So, “to those, who are always connected, eternally connected to Me”. Those, who are ready to dedicate themselves to Him. It was said that two rhythms of your life you give to Krishna: your breath and your heartbeat. Is there any other rhythm? Yes, we give our springtime also to Krishna, we give our wintertime to Krishna. We give our birth and death. We have so many different rhythms and these rhythms of the body resemble the rhythm of the universe. If you check the basic numbers for example of time calculation, you’ll find the basic rhythms of your bodily activities.

¹⁵ Bhagavad-gita 10.10

How many times you breathe for a minute? But after *kirtan* or before *kirtan*? I think sixteen or eighteen times. And what is the heartbeat? Before chanting or after chanting? Sixty something. But these basic numbers you can find multiplied in the universal construction also. From this you can understand that the micro- and the macrocosmos go together, they are parallel. Somehow there is unity, there is a hidden unity. And the way of perfection is to connect back everything to the divine source, to recognize divinity in the very simple bodily functions also.

If we speak like this it is very boring. But when you say that a pure hearted devotee will serve Krishna after his last breath, than you will understand that this is a heroic dedication. The heart is also compared to a lotus flower. It is said that a devotee should invite Krishna on the throne of his lotus heart. What does it mean – this heart is beating, but when you invite Krishna its heartbeat reflects Him. This is the way to dedicate ourselves to Him, to give all the rhythms of our life to Him.

From youth to old age – this is also a rhythm. Birth, growth, having children, staying, decrease and leaving - these are the six phases of life. We should give all these rhythms also to Krishna. This means *satata-yuktanam*, always connected. And connected not by any other means, but with devotion.

“To those, who are connected and *bhajatam*, worship Me”. To the worshipers, *bhajatam*. But not simple worshipers - qualified worshipers: *priiti-purvakam*. “To those, who worship Me with *priiti*”. *Priiti* is love.

What will happen with them? So far we were discussing what should a devotee do if he has understood that Krishna is the source, that there is a connection and he starts his worship to Him – this was the first. Then the second was that by these activities they will achieve some satisfaction and some happiness. But now again it is mentioned “to those who are connected and those who worship Me, I will give something.” Usually they think that this verse goes like: “To those who are always connected and to those who worship Me with love...” But if somebody has already *tushti* and *ramanti*, what can Krishna give? Therefore we should see, that “to those who are

connected and who worship Me I will give something else.” *Dadami* means “to give”. *Dadami buddhi-yogam* with *priti-purvakam*. “I will give them *buddhi-yoga*, the connection of intelligence, but *surcharged* with *priti*. “Do you see the difference? It is not “to those who are connected and who worship Me with love I will give *buddhi-yoga*.” No. “To those who are connected and worship Me, I will give *buddhi-yoga*, surcharged with love. I will give them such type of intellectual connection, which is surcharged with love. And through this “*yena mam upayanti te*, they will come to Me.”

(to be continued)

24. Without pain you cannot attain

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 05.01.2009, Sofia)

(continues from the previous issue)

Buddhi-yoga, connection with intelligence - sounds weird! We feel that it is not enough. We need a special type of understanding and the special type of understanding is surcharged with this loving mood. There are two ways to understand, for example, a human being, to know a person. Which are these two ways?

Premananda: Through intelligence and through feelings. Through analysis, intelligence, observing or through feelings, through love.

Tirtha Maharaj: We can agree that there is this analytic process and the other is emotional process. Which is higher?

Manohari: I think the feelings.

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes. But feelings include two types of feelings. One is positive and the other is negative: through love and

through hate you can understand a person. Just try to remember when you really hated someone so much that he was on your mind all the time. And you started to see very special features of that person. All mistakes you could recognize and identify. Even something beyond his qualities, right? You gave some new qualities to the person. It is a very intensive way to understand something – hate. Is that objective? Not so much. The picture might be precise, but little false. Let's take the other way – love. You start to know the person – and again you will give some new features, extra features which don't exist in him or in her. Is that objective? Again not. This loving picture is also not objective. Still which one we are more ready to accept? Picture distorted by love. There is no objectivity.

And here it is also included. "I give them such an intelligence, which is distorted by love." Because "if those, who are connected to Me and who worship Me – if they will understand that I am God Supreme – how can they come to Me?" This connection is very far. Once someone expressed his gratitude to Sadhu Maharaj. And he said: "O baba! Why you put me so very far away from you?" To say "thanks" that means a distance. That means a respectful connection. It is objective. Because objectively observing one is superior, the other is more insignificant. But if our *buddhi*, our intelligence is surcharged with love, then we are ready to forget about the greatness. Because it is said: in order to come closer to Krishna we have to forget that He is God. At the first steps, of course, we have to learn, we have to understand that He is God. Second step – forget about it. Understanding of majesty is called *aishvarya-gyata*. But it is distant. Yet this distorted by love, more affectionate vision will bring you closer. *Yena mam upayanti te* – "they will come to Me, through this they will come to Me."

Sometimes Krishna speaks officially, like God: "Everything comes from Me, I am the ultimate source..." But sometimes He forgets about His role. "*Mam* – they will come to Me." Not to the Brahman, not to the Supreme, but "they will come to Me as a cowherd boy." Not to general God conception, not to the Creator, but you can come to the Lover. So from the general conception we come to the specific, personal concept of God. And this shows that there is

only one way to Krishna and this is *any* type of way, but surcharged with divine love.

Yet again, how is it that someone who is always connected, *satata-yuktanam*, he “will come to *Me*”? How is that possible? If someone is already connected, how will they “come to *Me*”? It shows another grade of connection. More intensity is manifested there. You can be conscious of Krishna and you can love Him. Therefore this *special* element in this verse, which is higher than the previous ones, is this *priti-purvakam* - surcharged with emotion. If we practice *bhakti* then we can come very close to Krishna. This is not only a meditation, but this is a loving embrace. These are not simply thoughts, but this is hankering. This is unity and separation, meeting and separation. All right, meeting we can understand. Some *buddhi* is also included, but basically you can meet with *priti*, with your affection. Yet how can you tolerate separation? Separation you cannot explain emotionally. To tolerate it, not to die on the spot, you have to step back from the plane of emotions and you have to come down to intelligence. So a little *buddhi-yoga* is necessary to tolerate separation. Then again you come with some explanations - at least to satisfy your thunderous heart and soul. That means: without pain you cannot attain. The sweet part comes from *priti* and the composed, controlled part comes from *buddhi*.

But anyway, whatever you offer to Krishna it should be with some decent taste. We should use both: feelings and intelligence. Feelings to approach and intelligence to be separated; or to explain, to tolerate being separated. So without pain we cannot attain.

25. *Mystical way to see the future*

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 05.01.2009, Sofia)

Question of Dragi: Is it possible through *buddhi-yoga* a man to see the future in a mystical way, to penetrate into the future?

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes, it is possible, but may be in a different way than you think. Because it is said that the yogis can attain to that platform *trikalagya* - the three phases of time they will know. That means – the past, the present and the future. The devotees are also *trikalagya*. They also know the past, the present and the future. How? Our divine vision is our scriptures. So you can see the future, you can see the secrets through the mystic eye, third eye, you can read the Akasha Chronicles through the mystic experience, or you can read it through the *shastra chakshus*, read it with the “eyes of the *shastra*”. This is our divine vision – *shastra*. There are histories, there are predictions,

And you know, the vision of a devotee is distorted. His understanding is distorted by *priti*, by affection. So whatever future we see, it is a distorted future. Our vision is surcharged with affection. But this distorted vision can create miracles. Do you understand?

Let us take an example: the vision of a pure devotee - is that objective? For example, you go and meet a pure devotee – is his vision about you objective? No! Far from it! It is absolutely non objective. Because from an objective point of view you should make a list: pros 1,2,3; cons 99, 100... This is objectivity. But a pure devotee does not have such a vision. He does not see the bad qualities in you, he sees only good qualities. So his vision is distorted, non-objective, but powerful enough to make you good, to change you. This is the mystic power of our pure devotees, of our masters – that they have a vision of us, and it is *far* from our present reality, but they see our future! They do not check our past, they see our future. And by their trust they give us so much power, that we can build the picture what they see. So I think this is a mystical way

to see the future. And if we are pure enough then we can channel the powers, the energy to grow up to that future, to that picture.

But in one sense we should be very sad about the future of the world. Because the material world is a historically sinking ship. It will go down, finish, disappear. Still we can dance a little bit on board. So this is our mystic vision about the future: a sinking ship with some dancers on board. Happy dancers.

It is possible to have visions about the future. And the past also. You can use intelligence, *buddhi-yoga*, and you can use your *priti* to see the future, to see any mystic secret revealed. Purify your vision, purify your existence and Krishna will give you the vision. Whatever is necessary He will give to you.

26. The end of the scriptures

(from a lecture of B.K. Tirtha Maharaj, 08.01.2009, Sofia)

Although “Bhagavad-gita” is a very sacred and very high literature, still in the hierarchy of the Vedic literature, this contains the elementary, the basic information that we should understand in order to go further in our studies. Practically “Bhagavad-gita” describes that there is a God. That is very important knowledge, science. Because in Kali-yuga everything tells you that your god – if there is *at all* god – this is yourself or maybe the dollars; your spiritual master is television, listen to the lecture every evening for hours, etc. etc. So we should firmly establish: there is God! That we should understand from the “Bhagavad-gita”: there is God, there is the soul, there is a connection.

But how is God, who He is really? That we should understand from the “Shrimad-bhagavatam”. And still this is not the end of the hierarchy of the revealed scriptures. What is the next phase? Yes, this is the “Chaitanya-charitamrita”, which will describe to us how to be good *bhaktas*. Is this the end? Probably not, because there is the

“Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu”, which is the science of divine feelings. And many devotees think: “This is the top!” But actually Shrila Rupa Goswami has written many books. The title of “Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu” says “The ocean of feelings of divine love” – ocean, feelings towards God are just like an ocean! But this great ocean is not the end of the revealed scriptures, because “Ujvala-nilamani” comes after the “Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu”. And then you can think that “Ujvala-nilamani” is the end of the story.

Rupa Goswami is the *shastra-guru* of the *sampradaya* and we can say that “Ujvala-nilamani” is one of his topmost works. Yet there are some other masters among the *goswamis*. There is Raghunath das Goswami, for example. He was, so to say, the *rasa-guru* from among the *goswamis*. One of his books is entitled “The bouquet of lamentation”. “Vilapa-kusumanjali” – this is the title in Sanskrit. Show me another religion where there is a holy book called “Vilapa-kusumanjali”!

And then you might think that this is the end, this is the top. But actually if you visit the *samadhi* of Sanatana Goswami in Vrindavana, there you will find a little piece of stone, like this,— this is *samadhi* for the *shastras*. *Samadhi* is the chapel they build over the remnants of the dead body. The *goswamis* have written some books which are so high that they buried them. It is not for the public.

So where is the end of our scriptures? Full surrender – because if you go to a chapel, to the place of a departed person, what do you do? Only you offer your respects. In this *samadhi* some of the books of the *goswamis* are hidden. From this we can understand that the whole process of *bhakti* – from the very first step to end is to offer your respects.

27.His past is eternal, His future is unlimited and His present is beautiful

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 08.01.2009, Sofia)

Let us dive deep into the ocean of revelation. We can come to the next level after the “Bhagavad-gita” and this is the “Shrimad-bhagavatam”. Although it contains eighteen thousand verses, it is also condensed in four verses. That is quite an achievement – to tell a long story very shortly. Here again Krishna is speaking. Krishna is teaching Brahma, the secondary creator of the universe. Brahma is the highest intellect in the universe. Still God Supreme is teaching this highest intellect: what kind of vision you must have in order to accomplish your duty. I do not know how you feel about yourselves, but I do not feel myself the greatest intellect in this universe. So, if even Brahma needed some guidance to fulfill his duty, what to speak of us?! Maybe our duty is not so complicated as for Brahma – to create a whole universe. In most of the cases your duty as men, for most of the men is to establish your families and take care of your children, of your beloved ones. Still it is complicated enough; we need some guidance to do it nice. And meanwhile not to forget about the highest goal. Because Brahma was arranging the universe, but he was doing that as a devotional service. We should also establish our small little worlds, our private universes with some guidance and not to forget about the highest goal.

These four verses of the “Shrimad-bhagavatam” are contained in the Second Canto. Let us first check the introduction, we can say, which is also a beautiful verse. This verse says: *“All of Me, namely My actual eternal form and My transcendental existence, color, qualities and activities — let all be awakened within you by factual realization, out of My causeless mercy.”*¹⁶ So, Brahma will understand the message only by the blessings of the Supreme. “Whatever I have, whatever I possess, you will understand, let it be awakened in your heart through My blessings.” And then He says:

¹⁶ “Shrimad-bhagavatam” 2.9.32

“aham evasam evagre/ nanyad yat sad-asat param/ pascad aham yad etac ca/ yo 'vasisyeta so 'smy aham - Brahma, it is I, the Personality of Godhead, who was existing before the creation, when there was nothing but Myself. Nor was there the material nature, the cause of this creation. That which you see now is also I, the Personality of Godhead, and after annihilation what remains will also be I, the Personality of Godhead.”¹⁷

The three phases of time: past, present and future – it is God Himself. Whatever existed before, whatever is now and whatever will be there in this universe – it is Him. Just think about the dimensions of this verse. Is not it extremely important and interesting „whatever existed before the creation”? We think that everything starts with the creation and there was nothing before. But here Krishna says: “*Before anything else existed, I was.*” He is Supreme, so He can exist in the past. But then He goes on telling: “The original form of the universe was unmanifested. Now it is manifested. Whatever is here is also a reflection of Me. What you see now, it is Me. And after it will be finished, whatever remains – it will be Me, I will stay.”

Everything that is created on the material platform is temporary. Still this is a reflection of the Supreme – present. And the future is also divine. Everything that is here in this material universe will be finished. Some few little things will remain: you, as spirit souls; God, Shri Krishna; and your love to Him. These will stay, because it is eternal, beyond the limitations of matter. Past is a history, future is a mystery, present moment is a gift. Because we can be happy right now. And as we discussed: where to find God; religion says in the past, mysticism says in the future, *bhakti* says now. This is our process, because the present moment is a gift.

Try to live your life like this: every moment, every day that is given to us is a gift! If we have such a past that it was Krishna and if we have such a future that it will be Krishna, what is in between the two – it is only the present day and it is also about Him. This is the

¹⁷ “Shrimad-bhagavatam” 2.9.33

way to see Krishna always – He is our past, He is our future and He is our present.

Here one small little thing is mentioned also: “Before creation when there was nothing but Myself, nor was there the material nature, the cause of this creation...” Material nature, *prakriti*, has a very special, double function: in one sense nature is an effect, and also a kind of cause. Nature is a divine power; and it starts to function, manifest and bring so many things to the surface. From this we can understand that if we equate the material world with this divine nature, this divine energy, then we can see the connection back to Krishna. This is the way to transform our vision about nature. Because if we speak about nature, we should always ask: “*Whose nature is this?*” Right, we always say: “You have a kind nature.” Or: “You have a rough nature.” Krishna has a beautiful nature! And He has the present as a gift! He is such a type of God that His past is eternal, His future is unlimited and His present is just beautiful.

(to be continued)

28. Time and eternity

(from a lecture of B.K. Tirtha Maharaj, 08.01.2009, Sofia)

(continues from the previous issue)

If we return back to the original point that Brahma is receiving instructions to do his job better, Krishna starts the instruction with Himself. Just like in the “Bhagavad-gita”: *aham*, I am. Here also: “I existed before, I exist now and I will exist later.” So the focus of attention is on Him, because He is describing Himself as the most important element of past, present and future. And meanwhile, almost immediately He expands our vision, because He describes time. He mentions past, present and future, but actually He

means eternity. Because what to speak of some small little short periods of creation? Little *kalpas* and *yugas* here and there, few hundreds of millions of years up and down... He is discussing eternity. The lifetime of the universe is three hundred eleven trillion years. It is quite long. But it is said it is shorter than a blink of an eye for Krishna. And why He is instructing Brahma about time at the second step; at first step about Himself, at second – about time? Because he, and we also we have to understand – we are eternal souls.

And if you are an eternal soul, should you waste a moment from your life? You can say: “Well, if we are eternal souls, I have time. Instead of this meditation that takes a long time, today I go to the golf club.” Or some other very important engagements. We engage ourselves with so many stupid things. But what will be the result at the end? When you will face Yamaraja and he asks: “Hey, my dear boy, how did you spent your life?” “Well, I was attending the golf club.” “Bad mark.” “And also I have read all the newspapers. Plus I was a very obedient follower of the television guru. Etc. etc.” You can imagine your position at that time: “Ah, I made a mistake, o my God!” But it is too late, you have to pay the price. Better be alert now. Better to be afraid than to be frightened.

We have to understand that we are eternal souls. And if we have that consciousness – that we are eternal sparks of Krishna, belonging to Him – then many troubles are removed from our consciousness. Therefore Krishna speaks in this first verse about Himself and about time. Later on he will go on describing illusion. Because Brahma’s duty is to create the world, which is under the control of illusion. We also have to learn something about illusion. And better to learn about illusion in the temple and on the lectures, than go out and take direct experience. But this topic we shall discuss tomorrow morning. Because illusion is such a frightful topic, that it will create some bad dreams and nightmares, so we do not discuss that in the evenings. Evening topic – only Krishna; it will provide peaceful and beautiful spiritual dreams.

29.Suffered feeling

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 08.01.2009, Sofia)

Question: In the lecture you mentioned that it is better to hear than actually to live certain suffering. That it is better to hear and protect yourself. But we cannot be inactive, we have to act, we have to do something, we have to get involved into different relations. And while going through these relations we have different nuances in our feelings. Is not it that through suffering we enrich ourselves with a breadth of different feelings, although they are suffered ones, so that these feelings could remain in us as a kind of spiritual intelligence?

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes. Still the Vedic method of learning is by hearing. Unfortunately we are not in a Vedic age. So, definitely practical experience usually is more impressive than simply hearing about the same. But there are two ways to obtain some experience over something, to come to some conclusion about something. The first is: you go through it and in this way you experience it; and the other is that you meditate over that. Both can bring the same results. For example you sit at home and you think, you meditate over the limited nature of material world. And your friend is just running around – to perceive it, to experience it. After two years you meet, you will have the same opinion – it is limited. Why waste so much movement?

But I agree, most of the people need the experience. We have to burn our finger. If our spiritual masters says: “Do not do this!” we do not believe: “No, no, I know it better.” Kids are the same. Father will say: “Do not do this, my dear boy!” Kid says: “Yes, but I know it better.” Then he touches the fire and what will be the result? Pain. But that you will remember, right?! This is what you mean – that if we go through some suffering that we shall remember.

But if we move to the next step of our spiritual studies, of our learning process, then we should understand that by suffering we pay off our karma. And also from suffering you can generate some

energy. So, in that sense the Christian concept about suffering is correct – from suffering you also can generate some speed, some energy, some understanding. Therefore the greatest symbol of Christianity is Jesus on the cross – very painful, very suffering, dying moment.

And who is our symbol? Either this is Krishna playing the flute. Do you see any suffering there? Some tears, some pain, some wounds or something like this? No. Well, maybe some tears are there if Radharani is also there in the picture. Because if They look at each other in eye to eye contact, immediately the eyes start to tell the story. But these tears are very sweet tears. We would be happy to shed such tears. So our main symbol is either Krishna playing the flute or Chaitanya Mahaprahu. His hands are also not in a normal position, nor in this condition, crucified, but raised high! Therefore devotees like very much this exercise. Evening exercise – dance in ecstasy! Because it is described by Rupa Goswami – and he is *shastra guru* – that if you dance with raised hands and you jump high, then all the bad energy is just removed from your body. This is a complete art, complete science, nothing is missing.

Still in our tradition, in our beautiful *bhakti* movement, suffering is also mentioned. The greatest suffering is the separation of Radha and Krishna. And if we bring down this concept to our own personal level, this is our separation from Krishna. Sometimes you feel alone. Sometimes you feel neglected. Sometimes you suffer. Because unfortunately we have left this beautiful embrace. So what we need is a reintegration. We have to find our way back home, back to Godhead.

How to walk this path? With a sad face? It is said that with a sour face nobody can enter heaven. Better run like this: “Jay Radhee!”

30. What is permanent in this dream of God *(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 08.01.2009 Sofia)*

Question: I would like to ask about the breath of Brahma: how the universes are being created and annihilated in a series of explosions?

Tirtha Maharaj: Brahma's breath, no doubt is long enough. But compared to Vishnu, Brahma is breathing very heavily, very quickly, just like running a hundred meter competition. Because actually this is Vishnu's breath that gives the pulse to the material energy. It is described that from Maha Vishnu's body all the different universes, all the different structures of the material sphere are just emanating. While He exhales this emanation is just going on; and when He breaths in this emanation goes back into His body. This gives the original pulse to matter. Western science also identifies this movement – this is called the “expansion of the universe”. It will go until a limit and then it will move backwards, concentrate again. What physical science describes very dry, understanding facts, the same topic our scriptures describe in a very poetic way: that Lord Vishnu is laying on the ocean of creation and the snake of infinity is His bed. Sometimes He falls asleep. And when you are asleep you breathe very slowly, very nicely. So He starts to exhale and in this way universes emanate from His body; and all of a sudden He starts to dream. From this we can understand that this material life is a dream. But it is the dream of God, it is not our nightmare. It is the dream of God! Even this reflected, distorted, material this and that world belongs to Him – ultimately. Although this is a land of illusion, ultimately it belongs to Him. So, after this emanation, there will be some concentration again.

Therefore we should not be embarrassed to see that things are coming and going. People take birth and they die. Happiness is coming and passing. Fortunately the same happens with distress also. Coming and going. What is it that remains? Krishna, *jiva* and *bhakti*.

How can you formulate this? If we try to put it into a picture – it is complicated. If we want to explain it, we must have a long philosophical and complicated explanations. But the great art is to put a long story into a very short form. In India they have this very short formula. It is called *om*. It describes everything that is permanent. Because *om* is actually consisted of three sounds, three letters. A, *akara*; U and M. What is A? *Akara* is Krishna, Krishna says in “Bhagavad-gita”: “From the letters I am A.” *Aham*. Who is the M at the end? M at the end – this is *jiva*. So, the beginning of *om* – this is Krishna; the end of *om* – this is *jiva*. Who is between the two? This is Radha. God Supreme is in the beginning, the one extreme; the other extreme is you. What will connect you? Shrimati Radharani, divine love, the personification of divine love. This will create the connection between the living entities and God Supreme. And this is contained in *one* word, one sound – *om*! So whenever you will say: *om agyana-timirandhasya gyanangyana-shalakaya chakshur unmilitam yena tasmai shri-gurave namaha*¹⁸ – remember, *om*, God is the first. “I am here! He is there, I am here. Who will connect us? Shrimati Radharani will connect!” And we shall serve this truth up until our last breath. This is our holy trinity. *Om*.

¹⁸ “I was born in the darkest ignorance, and my spiritual master opened my eyes with the torch of knowledge. I offer my respectful obeisances unto him.” – a prayer to the spiritual master by Shrila Narottam das Thakur

31.Four questions, four answers

*(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj 09.01.2009,
Sofia)*

“Rite ‘rtham yat pratiyeta/ na pratiyeta catmani/ tad vidyat atmano mayam/ yathabhaso yatha tamah – O Brahma, whatever appears to be of any value, if it is without relation to Me, has no reality. Know it as My illusory energy, that reflection which appears to be in darkness.”¹⁹

This is the second verse from the *chaturshloki* of “Shrimad-bhagavatam”. These are in the Second Canto, Ninth Chapter, verses from 33 to 36, and now we take 34. “Shrimad-bhagavatam” is considered to be the ripe fruit of the Vedas. The tree of the Vedas brings different fruits like *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. That means religion, economic growth, sensual pleasure and liberation. But the ripe fruit of this tree is the connection to God and the essence, the juice of that connection is *bhakti*, *prema-bhakti*. These verses contain the essential meaning. We have to know that this time Krishna is answering. Before in the “Gita” Arjuna was simply listening, but now Brahma is the receiver and before Krishna started His speech, Brahma has given four questions. And Krishna gives four answers. The moment is very important, because we are just before creation. Brahma is there with his all potency, just before his great task, but still a little perplexed.

The questions of Brahma are: what are the forms of the Lord, how to see Him hidden in nature and how to see Him directly? The second question is: what are the distinctive qualities of the Lord’s energies like *maha-maya* and *yoga-maya*? The third question is: which kind of activities He is carrying through these energies? These are theoretical questions: how to see You, what are Your energies and how these energies function? And finally he gives a practical

¹⁹ “Shrimad-bhagavatam”2.9.34

question also: and what am I to do? Because we can go on with theoretical questions, but ultimately we have to do something.

The first answer of Krishna was very suggestive. Because right in the first verse He describes Himself and time, eternity. That also means that “The knowledge or the secrets about Me, they are the greatest secrets”. Because Brahma was asking “How to see You indirectly and directly.” “I am there – before the creation, while the creation is going on, and after the creation I will stay.” So this is the greatest secret: “I am.” Very much parallel with “Bhagavad-gita”: “I am, *aham*.”

The second answer of Krishna says that this great secret should be realized as a part of a picture. Therefore He will describe the functions of His energies. And the third answer is that the secret devotional service is an integral part of this picture. The goal is the secret devotional service. And finally Krishna will give the answer: “Try to understand what I say.” This is the fourth answer.

So the first: “I am the secret”; the second: “You have to understand this inside a picture”; the third is “Seek for the essence, search for the ultimate goal” and fourth: “Try to understand what I tell you.” If we translate the answers of Krishna, this is so simple.

But actually if we omit the fourth - “Please, use your brain, you are the best intellect in this universe, try to understand what I tell you” – irrespective of this, what are the first three telling about? The first three describe the main topic of “Shrimad-bhagavatam” – *sambandha*, *abhideya* and *prayojana*. *Sambandha* means that you belong to God, you have eternal connection, you belong there. *Abhideya* is the means how to achieve, the path that we should follow. And finally *prayojana* means the goal. So the secret is: “I am.” The second is: “You should understand this in a structure.” And “You have to find the ultimate goal – this is pure love.” *Sambandha* – “you belong to Me”; *abhideya* – “you have to do something about it”; and finally *prayojana*, the ultimate goal – “you have to search for pure love.”

32. Where does illusion start?

*(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 09.01.2009,
Sofia)*

We know that there are three phases to realize the absolute – Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan. Brahman is a great secret. Paramatma is an even higher secret. But the secret of secrets is Bhagavan, the personal God. Just a little reflection back to the previous verse: in Krishna’s existence – I was before, I am now and I will be after - everything is included, not only His personality, but His entourage also.

And this verse tells about realization – what will you achieve if you understand, that God always exists. This verse describes the intuitive wisdom, wisdom of intuition, which will come after certain realizations and which will bring further realizations. If we want to condense this verse it says: “everything is insignificant without Me”. Because “if something *seems* to be valuable without My connection, you should know – that is illusion.” That means, with Krishna everything is very precious, without Krishna everything is fake. By the way, tell me anything that exists without Him?

Premananda: If I have got correctly what is said in one point of “Shrimad-bhagavatam”, the free will of men is manifested mainly in their thoughts. So if one is unfortunate enough not to think of Krishna, it will be his thoughts existing without Krishna.

Tirtha Maharaj: In one sense this is true, but who has given you the brain to have thoughts?

Yamuna: Illusory vision about reality exists without Krishna.

Tirtha Maharaj: Does it?

Yamuna: Yes. Our illusion is without Him. Because we do not see everything as connected to Him.

Tirtha Maharaj: But if something is illusion, that means it does not exist, right? Because this is just an illusion.

Yamuna: But our illusion is reality.

Tirtha Maharaj: Actually this is a very tricky question. Ultimately we can trace back everything to the original cause. *Ishvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛishṇaḥ/ sac-cid-ananda-vigrahaḥ/ anadir adir govindah/ sarva-karaṇa-karaṇam*²⁰ – “I am the ultimate cause of all causes.” How can we trace back illusion to God?! We say illusion is illusion, because it does not really exist, it is not true – how can we trace back untruth to the ultimate truth? Or, if you want to put it in a more religious context, how can we trace back sin to God? Because if everything is created by God, then sin is also created by God – then how is it that He is creating sin?!

Yamuna: Or more generally: how can we trace back evil to good?

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes, correct. This is a very complicated question of theology. They are breaking their heads from two thousand years to resolve that question – with less result. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was a *bhakta*, big dancer, but He was a good philosopher also. According to His teachings we can understand that sin is not a creation of God, but this is a transformation of His energy. This is very important, please, pay attention. Evil does not come from God, but this is a distorted transformation of one of His energies. So the evil is distorted reflection of a divine energy, and this energy - *maya-shakti* – is a reflection of *para-shakti*, or the divine superior energy. Clear? There is God, there is His divine energy, there is a reflection of this divine energy, expansion so to say, and then there is a distorted reflection of this energy.

So, *maya-shakti* or illusory potency is an expansion of *chit-shakti* or the conscious energy of the Supreme. It is described by the *acharyas* in different ways that God has unlimited different potencies. In the Puranas it is also mentioned that practically innumerable different potencies are there – like knowledge, power, existence – many, many – and *hladini*, divine happiness energy is also there in the Supreme. *Chit-shakti*, the divine knowledge potency, is something very close to the source – because God is omniscient, He knows everything. Some little things He does not

²⁰ “Brahma-samhita”5.1

know, but that is a *rasic* topic. Basically we should understand that He knows everything, because He is full of His *chit-shakti*, of His, so to say, intellectual capacities. Yet sometimes our Lord wants to disguise. Therefore He uses His potencies to cover Himself – He uses the reflection or the expansion of this *chit-shakti* to cover Himself. Because through knowledge, through intellect you could understand Him, but if He curbs your understanding, you will not know that He is God. And just like you use different energies to cover yourself – like your clothes, or your thoughts or your PR, we try to hide behind these energies – in the same way Krishna uses His energies to hide. The brutal hiding is *maha-maya* – when He gives you such a distorted vision that you will think that you are God ultimately. This is the topmost illusion, when you think “I am the greatest.” This is the bottom of the whirlpool of material illusion – when humans think themselves to be God. Small or big – it does not matter. This is *maha-maya*; *maha-maya* separates. And the origin, the archetype of *maha-maya* is *yoga-maya* – the connecting potency. *Yoga-maya* also distorts the vision, but it connects you back. How to understand this?

(to be continued)

33. It exists but it is not true

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 09.01.2009,
Sofia)

(continues from the previous issue)

Krishna is very personal. He is just like you, like humans. He likes natural heart-to-heart connections. Not only official prayers: “You are the greatest!” but He likes personal prayers: “Hey, my friend, may I steal your *laddu*²¹?” But in order to help these intimate feelings to manifest He has to hide Himself. We cannot play football with *God*, right?! But we can play football with our friend. Therefore He hides Himself in a divine way also. He is ready to give up He’s being God. And we can say that He is ready to become just like humans. And the opposite of this human distortion that “I am God”, the top of the spiritual essence is that He is ready to show Himself as human. This is His divine illusion that He thinks: “Ah, I am a cowherd boy.” When He forgets about Himself being God Supreme and acts as a simple human being. This is the function of *yoga-maya* – to cover the majesty in order to improve *rasa*. Is that picture true? It is not really true, because still He is God, but He is ready to come out of His position to come closer to you. There is distortion in that higher picture also, but that is sweet distortion. While the *maha-maya* picture is bitter. So, *yoga-maya* will give you knowledge. It will help us to realize the Supreme – therefore we can consider it a connecting energy. While *maha-maya* brings you the forgetfulness, it brings illusion, it brings lack of faith. The first one brings *vidya*, knowledge; this one brings *avidya*, ignorance.

And how to get rid of this illusion, how to get rid of this *avidya*? How to come out of the darkness? With some meditation on light. “From darkness lead me to light.” From the material darkness

²¹ Indian sweetmeat

you can escape by material light. But from the spiritual darkness you can escape by divine light.

So, now Krishna is describing the picture in which setup we should understand that He is Supreme, right? This is the topic for the second verse. And basically He is describing illusion – “everything that seems to be not connected with Me, that is illusion. That is *not true* that anything is independent of Me. If you think that you are independent of Me, that is not true. Your thought is there, in that sense it is real, but it is not true.”

Just like the expression “The earth has two moons.” Is that true? It is not true. Still this expression exists? It exists, because we had told it: “The earth has two moons.” So the idea exists, but it is not true. This is illusion. The idea exists, it is real, but is not true.

Yamuna: But in a poetic way it can be true. If we are at the shore of a lake and we look at the reflection of the moon...

Tirtha Maharaj: All right, all right! From that romantic poetry let us come back to philosophy. Or “the son of a barren woman”. The expression exists, but it is not true. So this is how to understand the functioning of illusion – it exists, but it is not true. This is a reflection, a limited truth, so to say. Truth in that sense that it exists, but it is not real. Therefore Aristotle says: “We can say that if something does not exist, it exists as nonexistent.” Do you follow? It seems to be a little trick of the brain, but it is not, because it also proves – existence exists. And this is very important, because it shows that life comes from life, that existence comes from existence. The whole world comes *from something*, not from nothing. Because if it would have come from nothing, it would return to nothing. If you come from zero, you will go back to zero. But if the impulse comes from God, then this whole thing will return to Him.

Meanwhile there is this phase of *vyakta*, manifest phase, which is illusory, sorry, it is not real. Therefore we have to remove this veil of illusion.

34.Shadow and darkness

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 09.01.2009,
Sofia)

“Rite ‘rtham yat pratiyeta/ na pratiyeta catmani/ tad vidyat atmano mayam/ yathabhaso yatha tamah – O Brahma, whatever appears to be of any value, if it is without relation to Me, has no reality. Know it as My illusory energy, that reflection which appears to be in darkness.”²²

Here in the last line two different things are mentioned: *abhasa* and *tamaha*. *Abhasa* is reflection, just like a shade; not the original, but only a reflection. And *tamaha* is darkness, complete darkness.

“Whatever seems to be independent from Me, that is illusion.” This is the main topic of the verse; and then at the end He says: “just like the reflection and just like darkness.” The shadow of somebody, for example, is not the real guy. Although the caste *bramins* think that if somebody crosses over their shadow that is offensive. But the shadow is not them. Today the car-conscious men, who identify themselves with their cars, if somebody crushes their car they say: “Somebody hit me!” He didn’t hit you, he hit your car. Do not expand your false egotism to your body, to your car, to your everything – it is not you, it is only a reflection, shadow.

But why it is mentioned here: “... independent of Me it is illusion, *just like* the shade and *just like* the darkness.” How to understand this? What is this shadow? The shadow is *jiva-shakti*. Shadow is the souls, the reflection of the souls. Because a shadow has no separate identity; always goes with the original. The *jivas* do not have separate existence from God, they always should go with Him.

But the example of original and reflection is also true about the bad friend. The bad friend is always following you, he is always

²² “Shrimad-bhagavatam”2.9.34

with you – until there is sunshine. When there is no sunshine, he will leave you. This is the bad friend; until you are in light, he will follow you. Until you pay the bill, he is your best friend. Whenever you have any trouble, whenever you are in darkness, he just leaves you.

So please, do not be bad friends of Krishna. Always stay with Him, like a shadow. Always follow him. So *abhasa*, reflection, is *jiva-tattva*. And what is *tamaha* then? What is this third element of this cosmic picture?

Kripadham: Material nature?

Tirtha Maharaj: Correct! This is matter. Darkness is *jagad*, *jagad* means the world. In this way the picture is a full picture. The first verse describes “I exist – before, while and after.” The second verse tells: “What seems to be independent of Me, that is illusion. And there is you, and there is the world.” This is the meaning of this second verse. It gives the picture, the setup – how to understand this higher secret that God exists always. There is the world, there is myself, there is the Supreme. The picture is a little hazy because of the illusion, but we have to clarify it in the next verse.

35. Freedom and misuse of freedom

*(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 09.01.2009,
Sofia)*

The *jiva* has similar qualities as the Supreme. And Krishna has full freedom. His freedom is manifested in *lila*. *Lila* is pastimes, His playful life. And this *lila* is always sweet. His independence does not bring any harm neither to Himself, nor to others. This independence means freedom. And actually this is the sixth feature of God – *tyaga*, renunciation; usually they call it renunciation, but it is very difficult to understand how renunciation? But it is freedom – He is not affected by His creation or anything else, He is free from

all influences. We also have inherited some little part of His freedom. But unfortunately in most of the cases our freedom brings bitter results. His freedom brings *rasa-lila*; our freedom brings *nara-lila*, human pastime. So evil comes from the misuse of the freedom of the *jiva*. Some western philosophers also came to the conclusion that humans are co-creators with God. And we can agree with that – we had created all the trouble. This is our contribution to the universe.

So, the misuse of freedom – this is the problem. But without that freedom there is no chance for love, there is no chance for progress either. Because then everything is fixed and set; you cannot move out of the picture. But we should never forget that divine freedom brings happiness and human freedom, in most of the cases, brings suffering – misuse of the freedom.

Yamuna: Can we summarize the answer to the question of the existence of evil like this: it is explained by the mystery of the free will of *jiva*, which includes the possibility to choose and in this way the *karma* theory serves as vindication of God for the fact of the existence of evil? Because *karma* is connected to *jiva* and its free will.

Tirtha Maharaj: “If you want to misuse your freedom, I will give you the chance to do it – under these conditions, in this world, with *karma*, without Me, etc.” But the hidden meaning of this verse is not simply description of illusion, but also a way to overcome that illusion. “If something seems to be disconnected from Me – that is illusion.” How to overcome illusion? Connect everything back to Him. So do not be depressed : “Ah, here is illusion, here is darkness, here is only a reflection...” Do not be afraid. Krishna says: “I have given you these little things to engage you for a while, but as soon as you want to come out of that illusory situation, I will help you.”

36. It does not diminish, it multiplies

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 10.01.2009, Sofia)

The third verse goes like this: *yatha mahanti bhutani/ bhuteshuchchavacheshv anu/ pravishtany apravishtani/ tatha teshu na teshv aham – “O Brahma, please know that the universal elements enter into the cosmos and at the same time do not enter into the cosmos; similarly, I Myself also exist within everything created, and at the same time I am outside of everything.”*²³

Is not that a miracle? Inside and outside. God pervades everything with His energies and still preserves His own separate identity. Can you do that? To certain extend yes. How? Like a father pervades the son. Like father, like son. So, if this creation comes from God, then it is close to Him. That means He gives full support. He does not let this creation alone. By one very special energy of His He pervades this universe. This energy is called *apara-shakti* or *maya-shakti*, which is such a potency that will create illusion. And I think we all know this energy very well; we are very well acquainted with thing that seems to be very real, but they are not real.

But our Lord also preserves His individual identity. If you distribute your energies, you will lose some of them, right? Money is one energy. If you distribute your money, you will lose it. But there is a very special system in nature – if you give, you will get. If we give, if we distribute, we shall be given. Money is a very basic energy. But let us think about something more precious for human beings. What is that energy? Affection, right? Love. What happens if we distribute our love? Once they asked a mother with three kids, plus the father – so that means four she had to take care of, you can imagine – the lady from the neighborhood asked: “How can you do that?! How can you distribute your love to four guys around you? It does not diminish?” And she said: “No, it functions in a different way. The more I distribute, the more it multiplies.”

²³ “Shrimad-bhagavatam”2.9.35

This is the secret of spiritual things: the more you distribute, the more you will be supplied. Krishna is transcendental, right? The more He gives from Himself, He will not lose; still everything will be supplied completely. We know this verse from the Upanishads: *om purnam adam purnam idam/ purnat purnam udachyate/ purnasya purnam adaya/ purnam eve avashishyate*²⁴ – “That is perfect, this is also perfect. From the complete whole many complete units are extracted or expanded. No matter now many complete wholes are emanating from this source, the unity and integrity of the original is intact.” We, as spirit souls, are also transcendental. So, the more we distribute our real self, it will not diminish either. That means the more you dedicate yourself to your service, the more energy you will get.

Is that true? Well, we hope that it is true. Because we did not really try it, we did not reach the limits of our capacities. How many times you have fallen asleep while giving a lecture? Many times it happens that people fall asleep while they are listening to the lecture, because they had done so much devotional service that their body is exhausted. But if you fall asleep while *giving* a lecture – that is real exhaustion. There were some occasions while devotees fell asleep while they were taking *prasadam*. You know, a humble *vaishnava* bows down, right? So, just imagine the plate in front of you and approaching it finally this was your full dedication to the *prasadam* – everything on your face! But still that is nothing. There is even more, even higher level of dedicated service. You know, usually on the evening *arati* you dance, right? And after the *arati* there are these few minutes when they say “*Ki jay! Ki jay!*” One devotee fall asleep while this “*ki jay*” was going on.

So, we did not reach our limits. We did not give our best yet to Krishna. No doubt, we are trying, and sometimes we reach some limits, but full dedication means full support also. Until we are trying to accomplish devotional service only through our own efforts, human resources will run out. But it is said: where human efforts finish, reach the end, this is the point where divine mercy starts. That

²⁴ “Shri Ishopanishad” 1

means, if we continue, if we go on with our dedication, we shall reach to such a limit, where all our resources run out – *then* real spiritual transition will start. Because we have to understand that the miracle does not happen by our efforts. No, this is given by the Supreme Lord and He is inexhaustible. We are tiny little sparks of energy, but He is the supreme fire. Therefore if we connect back to Him, our energy will be supplied also.

Therefore we need a connection. This connection is yoga; yoga means to be connected. Stay always connected! Then Krishna will pervade your heart also. He is naturally there, originally there, but if we perceive that more consciously, then He will really accept the throne of our heart.

37. Separate and pervading at the same time

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 10.01.2009, Sofia)

“O Brahma, please know that the universal elements enter into the cosmos and at the same time do not enter into the cosmos; similarly, I Myself also exist within everything created, and at the same time I am outside of everything.”²⁵

Actually here in this verse the functioning of the different divine energies are described – how these different primordial elements enter the creation. The elements existed before the bodies were formed. They are the material cause of the bodies. Body is taken from matter, therefore body will return to matter. Soul is coming from the Supreme, somehow, in a very hidden way; therefore it will return back to Him. So we can say that the spiritual sparks, the *jivas*, take a form. They build a body all around themselves from the elements that are available in the universe. If matter is the material

²⁵ “Shrimad-bhagavatam”2.9.35

cause, there must be some master plan also behind forming the bodies. There must be such a cause that is a plan cause. We can say that this is the thought, the desire of the *jiva*. If there is a desire, there will be some consequences; according to your desires you will get a body with different capacities. Therefore we can say that the body is an embodied thought. Be careful about your thoughts, because you will get the body according to your thoughts.

So, the bodily forms are taken from matter and they will return to matter. Still this ocean, this storehouse of matter, exists independently of your limited bodily construction also. If you take one drop of the ocean, it does not diminish. If you add one drop to the ocean, it does not become greater.

This is a very mysterious action of our Lord – that He is pervading the universe and at the same time remains separate. In the “Bhagavad-gita” He says: “In My unmanifest form I pervade this whole universe. All living entities are inside Me but I am not in them. Nevertheless all the creation is not in Me. This is My mystic power. Although I am the maintainer of all the living entities and I am present everywhere, still I am the original source of creation.”

This seems to be controversial – that He is separate and pervading. We expect God to be clear and not controversial. Still what we see here? Which opinion should we believe: when He says “Yes, I am inside everything” or when He says “But I am not”? How can we believe such words? Well, we can say we should not believe, we should glorify these qualities. Philosophy means the ability of admiration. To say “Wow! That is great!” This is real philosophy. But philosophy is not the end. Because philosophy is only an approach to the truth, it is not the truth itself. First you should become a philosopher; and then you should become pure like a child. Krishna says in some verses: “What is the use of this complicated philosophy? With an insignificant fragment of My glories I just pervade this whole universe.”

And if we have purified vision, it will be easier to see this mystery of Supreme Lord Krishna – that He is everywhere and He preserves His separate identity.

Therefore we can say that Krishna is everything, but not everything is Krishna. Because for example, let us take this carpet. Where do the threads come from? Not from the sheep, but finally from God. And where do the colors come? Not from the chemicals or natural colors, but ultimately from God Supreme. And where does the talent to make a carpet like this comes from? Not from the person, who is making it, but it is provided by the Supreme. So ultimately this is a manifestation of divine energy. Right? By source, by material, by talents, by use – because it is used in the temple. Still in most of the cases we do not put the carpets on our altar to worship that. In one sense this is Krishna, still this is not Krishna.

Just like you! In one sense you are Krishna. At least a small Krishna; or some little part of His energy. But we cannot say that you are Krishna. Similar in nature, but separate in personality. Just imagine if so many Krishnas would run around here, stealing all the butter from “BILLA”. Big problem! One is enough! One Makanchor²⁶ is enough.

²⁶ Makanchor – The Butter Thief, Krishna

38. *Makanchor – The butter thief*

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 10.01.2009, Sofia)

We have heard this name of Krishna – *Makanchor* – so many times. But once we were walking in Ayodhya, Ramachandra's place, and all of a sudden on the street we met a vender with a big basket covered with something and inside there was something white, like a whipped cream. And you know, it is not very recommended in India to eat on the streets. But when I understood what it is, I could not resist, because it was *makan*. Immediately you could understand: "Ah, they sell *makan* on the streets. Our Lord likes this *makan* so much, so we should also take." So immediately we bought one portion of *makan* to all the devotees and then we understood some divine quality. Because it was so sweet and so satisfying that we had to take another round. Then I understood why Krishna is stealing that. It is never enough! You can have never enough of that. So charming and so satisfying! Fortunately His energies are unlimited and although He is the best thief, a divine thief, He can create so unlimited quality of *makan*, that He can steal all the time.

But what is happening? Actually *makan* is a manifestation of divine energy. So Krishna is stealing His own energy. He is playing with Himself. He creates the *makan* and He takes the *makan*. But wait a minute, let us think: what is this *makan*? What is the symbol behind it? Ah, I forgot to tell that some sugar is also added! It is not simply a whipped cream, but it is *sweet*. In the material calculation the milk is the product of the cow. So we can say that the essence of the cow is the milk. And the essence of the milk is the butter. And the essence of butter is *makan* – it is a very, very sweet, whipped essence. You are the cow. Life is your milk. Dedication is your sugar and love is your *makan*. This is what Krishna wants to steal from you – your sweet love, the *only* thing He is interested in, nothing else. You can offer Him... what? What we can offer to God?

Somebody: Apples.

Tirtha Maharaj: What? Apples? Good idea, but compared to *makan* it is nothing. We can offer the wealth of the whole world – it

is nothing! You can offer delicious foodstuffs – what you consider delicious foodstuffs – but actually He has *raja-bhoga* offerings, royal offerings in Vaikuntha planets. How can you compete that? Only by offering a small little portion of *makan*. Made it sweeter with your dedication. This is the only thing that our Lord is interested to receive from you.

How this name tells – Makan-chor. Not Makan-hari, because that would mean “eating the *makan*”; Makan-chor means “stealing the *makan*”. Why is He stealing? I am ready to offer Him! I know that this is the best of all foodstuffs and I am ready to offer this. I am clever, I have understood that love is the greatest energy of life. So I am ready to offer this to the Lord. But a little portion I preserve for myself. Fifty-fifty; I give to Him and I preserve for myself also. Be realistic! What happens if God does not exist; then I will be here empty-handed. Be realistic – something for Him and something for me. But then Makanchor becomes agitated: “What? You want to satisfy Me with fifty percent?! I want the extra fifty percent that you want to preserve for yourself. Plus eight percent as a punishment. So, ultimately I take hundred and eight percent from you.” Makanchor – He will *steal* what you want to preserve for yourself.

Now I invite everybody to an open and honest confession. Have you ever stolen something? Most of us have tried that. How much happiness you derived from that? Not much, right? Especially if you look back. Before you thought: “Ah, that would be good for me,” but when you did it... it is different. That proves that it was not divine. Because just imagine: God in doubts: “Ah my God, I had stolen the hearts of My devotees!” So God says: “Ah my God! Maybe I committed a mistake?! Maybe that was not right – to steal the hearts of My devotees. But what can I do? I am not satisfied with wishful offerings. I want the essence. Because I know that the obedient ones want to offer me everything. But I know the rebellious ones, who want to preserve something for themselves. They want to preserve the best part for themselves. I want the best part! I cannot tolerate a second one in this picture.”

Do not keep your *makan* for yourself. Give it to Him, share it with others and then your supply will be unlimited. This is the yoga of affection, this is *bhakti*.

Therefore Krishna says in this verse: “I am inside of everything and I am outside. I am Paramatma in your heart to generate your affectionate powers. And I am Krishna from outside who will enjoy your loving offering.” How can we offer our love, our affection in the best way to Krishna? There are many ways. But if we call Him by His name: *Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare*, He will be very satisfied. And you also will be satisfied. First we give, then we receive.

So, this is what this verse tells to us – the greatest mystery: Krishna is there everywhere, still we should focus our attention more and more, whip the cream, add the sugar and offer this to Him.

Question of Kripadham: As we know the *gopis* are the most elevated souls that could exist, the most devoted to Krishna. And they have the greatest love for Him. My question is: why Krishna is stealing their butter? Why He is not stealing Kamsa’s butter?

Brajeshvar: Because his is bitter.

Tirtha Maharaj: He forgot to add the sugar.

Kripadham: Does it mean that the *gopis* have preserved something?

Tirtha Maharaj: It is too *rasik*, we cannot enter that question. We might think that this is a spiritual politics. I heard that you will have elections here soon; left wing and right wing. And actually there are these fractions in the *gopi* groups also. The rightists are always very obedient. They always say “yes”. And the leftists sometimes say “no”. But I cannot go further in these matters. That means you preserve something that will not obediently, officially give; but you want to give more, therefore you preserve something.

39. The clear-cut picture

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 10.01.2009, Sofia)

This is real knowledge when we see not only the fragments, but we see the whole picture. Just imagine yourself going too close to a picture. You will see all the small little pixels of the picture but you will have no idea about the whole picture. You take a distance from the picture, and then from a certain distance the picture will be very clear. Go further – again you will lose this clear-cut picture. It will diminish so much, will become so small that you will not be able to perceive it. So, we need a certain distance to get the full picture. That means our perception is limited. Until you are in your practitioner's form, in your *sadhaka-deha*, keep this distance. But when we reach the perfection stage, there is no distance anymore.

We should focus our vision in order not to see only the fragments, but to get the whole picture. If you start from the other direction, you have to have such a sharp vision, so that you see not only the whole picture, but the fragments also. How to understand this? First we learn that there is the Supreme Lord, Krishna. Just like if you take an excursion to the mountain. You see the highest peak. And you are invited by the peak: "Come!" So, you start your journey and still you see the highest peak, your goal. But then soon you realize that there is a small hill you have to climb first. Then there is a valley. Up and down, up and down you go, but still your highest peak is in front of your eyes. This is your false conception: the peak and me! Or: me and the peak! Later on you begin to see that there are some others, who are walking the path with you. Some are quick in their walking, others are lingering behind. Later on you will see the small little grass on the path... So you will have a more detailed picture, but still you will have your goal ahead of you.

The same happens in the spiritual life also. First we understand that there is Supreme Lord Krishna. Krishna and me. Or: me and Krishna. Two of us – it is a good combination. Later on you look around and you say: "Hey! There is Krishna, but there is guru

also.” A third person. “All right, Krishna is high, so I can surrender to Him. All right, this guru is also high, this is a quite high conception, I can surrender to guru also. They say it is necessary, so let us do it. I can become an ornament in his mission.” But that means I did not check who is coming with us, who is coming with me. Because there are some others walking the path. They are called *vaishnavas*. “God is there – all right; guru is there – we accept; *vaishnava* – what is this?! What is the necessity for that? All right, our holy trinity – God, guru and me – enough! Why should be anybody else in this picture?” That means, we have not realized that we should walk this path together with others. We have to surrender to all devotees. And all the future devotees also. Because there are two types of people – the *bhaktas* and the non-*bhaktas*; usually we use this separation. But we should change our vision: there are only two types of people – the already devoted and the future devotees. So we have to surrender to each and every present and future *vaishnava*. Because Krishna says in “Shrimad-bhagavatam”: “You can pour your oblations into the ashes if you worship Me in the temple but you neglect My living entities.” This is a major mistake, definitely identified by Krishna. “If you try to formally, officially worship Me but you neglect My creatures, I will not accept your worship.”

And why it is said that it is just like when you pour your oblations into the ashes? Because if you throw something over the ashes, there is no result. If you throw something into the fire, it will burn. The sacrificial fire creates a connection between this stage of existence and the higher one. And whatever we bring to throw it into the fire, it will be delivered to the higher authorities - your desires and your *karma* also. So first of all we should sacrifice for the sake of the Supreme Lord, then all right, you can sacrifice for your own sake, and you can also sacrifice, burn up your sins. Therefore the sacrifice will purify the atmosphere. It will purify our energies also. It will purify our existence.

Question of Premananda: Gurudev, we have this very special case of our Black Peak here in Vitosha, that you do not really see from below. The peak you see is not actually the Black Peak.

How would you comment such a situation? Can it happen on our path also?

Tirtha Maharaj: Especially when it is covered with white snow. Then you will not see the Black Peak. Because Krishna is black, and there is somebody in this picture, who is white.

40. Love questions

(from a lecture of B.K. Tirtha Maharaj, 10.01.2009, Sofia)

Once it was a very sweet discussion: a very nice devotee raised a question. He said: “Well, if we are dedicated to Krishna, but if we have some other inclination in our heart, some attention, given to somebody else” - that means that I divide my heart between Krishna and somebody else – “then how He will take it?” Now you can come with your expectations: ah, He should be tolerant enough, more tolerant than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, He should tolerate my stupidities. But you know, this person was just newly married; so I asked: “I think you are married, right?” He said: “Yes, I am married.” Then I asked: “Well, how would you feel if your wife is very loving and very obedient to you, but she has somebody else in her heart also?” No more questions.

We cannot do that with our beloved God. “I love you, but I love myself also.” We cannot do that. We should give our love, not preserve it. Because remember, the more you give, the more you will receive. And as Shrila Prabhupad has written: “Life comes from life.” Consciousness comes from consciousness. And love comes from love. And from love love comes. Nothing else. If Krishna is the love of God, tell me a second thing that comes from Him except love? This should be our vision. This should be our offering.

Giridhari: Still there is some internal contradiction. You cannot love only God without loving anybody else.

Tirtha Maharaj: Of course! I do not feel any contradiction here.

Giridhari: It comes because all our love should be directed to God.

Tirtha Maharaj: Ah, I see. What to do?! It is difficult. Well, if we love God generally, Krishna is so great; to love Him, we cannot encompass Him with our understanding. Let us choose one part. One part of His body. We know that He is transcendental, one little portion can fulfill all the roles, so let us take one piece. One piece is the same like the whole, the whole is too big, so let us take a smaller portion that we can accomplish. My suggestion is: let us take His heart. Because without the heart the body will not function and we know that some essential energies are in the heart, so let us take the heart. And ultimately we are practicing *bhakti-yoga*, the yoga of emotions, so which other part you can take from God than His heart! And it is suggested that you should continue the search until you find. So, first you search the body of Krishna – this is the feet, this is the chest and inside there is the heart. Then you take your knife and cut: what is there inside the heart? Let see what is there hidden in the heart? And what will you find in the heart of Krishna? Pure devotees. Heart of Krishna contains the pure devotees. So again, we cannot get rid of these *vaishnavas* around. Yet at least we got rid of those, who are future *vaishnavas* – who are not pure devotees yet. But then you will meet a great problem. Because there is someone, whose heart is greater even from Krishna's heart. Who is that only person, whose heart is greater even from Krishna's heart? From the heart of God! This is the heart of the Goddess. Shrimati Radharani's heart is even greater than Krishna's heart. She can invite all in the service.

So, if we take the essential part of Krishna – His heart – we shall meet the pure devotees there. And if we take a pure devotee, in his heart we shall meet Krishna. Shrila Shridhara Maharaj describes this: what is this exceptional power and vibration that is around the pure devotees? What is their ideal, what is their inspiration? You will find it in their hearts – this is Krishna, residing in the hearts of the pure devotees. This is the way to love Him and His servants. And do

not forget, love is not divided, it is multiplied. This is the secret of transcendental love.

Question of Krishna Priya: Does it mean that if you give your love to a human being, you again give it to Krishna? If you give your love to a human being, effectively you give it to the Lord.

Tirtha Maharaj: If you have that vision... But if you do not have that high, spiritual vision then it is a mistake. If we are on the level to see the soul, then it is possible. Because then it is not the body that we love, but it is the soul that we share our feelings with. Until you are not on that platform, focus your attention. And in *this* perspective see everybody else. Because Krishna is emanating a very special light. Although He is dark, still He is emanating a light, a divine brightness. So in understanding Him you can understand the others. If you see everybody as servant of the lord, then you can freely share your feelings. But we should never mix, we should never misunderstand the distorted earthly feelings and the divine spiritual affection. One is *kama*, the other is *prema*. *Kama* is selfish, involves your selfish enjoyment; *prema* is divine – only between the souls. So we should not mix. We should not think that one can be exchanged with the other.

41. Carry on the search

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 12.01.2009, Sofia)

”O Brahma, just follow this conclusion by fixed concentration of mind, and no pride will disturb you, neither in the partial nor in the final devastation.”²⁷

Generally people are living in very peaceful conditions. The amplitude of their life is not very big. No high peaks and no deep wells. Simple peaceful and boring life. Nothing happens, no

²⁷ “Shrimad-bhagawatam” 2.9.37

disturbance, outside and inside everything is fine. The life of Brahma was a little different. Because just imagine yourself: all of a sudden you happen to be on a lonely island. Rather we say – stranded in a lonely universe. At the first time Brahma was alone and he had a very great task – to accomplish the duty of secondary creation. This is quite a demanding task. Not only to create your small little flat – to create the whole universe! He was trying to search for the origin. Even in this search he was very deeply penetrating, but never reaching the end. Then he started to change his method, because in the first moment he was trying with the experimental method. He wanted to observe what is going on; then he understood that it is impossible. And then he started with austerity and meditation. Then he had understood what to do by the divine inspiration given to him through the heart. And then these verses tell about his meeting with God Supreme, Krishna. So I think he has got all the reasons to be proud – having a very prestigious position, first and highest intellect in the universe, direct meeting with God, demanding job, knowledge, assets, everything. Still Krishna was instructing him about different topics.

Just to clarify the situation first of all He told: “I was here, I am here and I will be here.” Because Brahma’s lifetime equals to the lifetime of the universe. It is very long period, but still it is insignificant compared to Krishna’s time, because His time is eternity. So it is said that this material time is created from one of His eyelashes – quite insignificant part of the body. Still this very small part of His body is just like an emanation of this unlimited material time. Yet Brahma is so to say under the illusion of time, therefore he needs the instruction that something and somebody is beyond the limitations of time. Therefore Krishna says: “I am here.” And then He was describing the nature of illusion, then the elements of nature and finally He instructed: “Search! Search! Carry on the search!” Then after this He says: “If you stick to these instructions, you will escape pride.” Not (only) in general situations, but in extreme situations – like the end of the world, it is quite an extreme situation.

Now you can come with all your excuses why you cannot perform your devotional service. What will you say at the end of the

world? “I cannot do my prayers, because I am busy.” The whole world is falling apart around you, you say: “Ah, sorry, I am busy.” Our teachers say that so much determination is necessary that if you see the sun and the moon and the stars falling on the ground, and if you see *pralaya* – the final destruction of the whole universal system, if you see it happen, nevertheless you are not influenced by that. So we have to stick to our faith in extreme conditions also, not only in comfortable, easy situations. It is easy to be a good *bhakta* when it is easy. But when it is more difficult, the service is more appreciated.

42.The four types of cosmic destruction

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 12.01.2009, Sofia)

”O Brahma, just follow this conclusion by fixed concentration of mind, and no pride will disturb you, neither in the partial nor in the final devastation.”²⁸

Here it is mentioned: ”final and partial destruction of the universe.” Many people expect this universal destruction, right? You must have heard about this approaching period, 2012, when we expect some great disorder in life as if in 2008, 2009 or whichever year you pick there is no disturbance. Usually people pick one time, stick to it and tremble.

Of course the material world is always in a transition. From bad it goes to worse. This is a historical sinking ship. We cannot expect too much from Kali-yuga, material world. But from a sinking ship you can jump into the ocean! On one side this is the material ocean, on the other side this is the ocean of nectar. Choose on which side to jump.

Other religions and traditions usually speak about one general destruction of the world. But as our tradition and spiritual science is

²⁸ “Shrimad-bhagawatam” 2.9.37

very elaborate on the process of creation, in the same way it is very elaborate on destruction of the world. So for those, who believe in this cosmic destruction *bhakti-yoga* would be the best option. Because in other places they have only one cosmic destruction, we have four types. This is an upgrade of cosmic destruction. Do you know these four types of cosmic destruction? All right, what is mentioned here? The partial and the full destruction. So, from this we can know that at least there are two – the partial and the full. What is the partial? It is said that at the end of Brahma's day some certain levels and regions of the cosmic structure are just destroyed. One day of Brahma is long enough, but whenever night comes up to a certain level of the structure there is some disorder. Again this shows that practically the whole body of religion is based on light mysticism. When there is light there is life; when there is darkness there is destruction. And you know, Brahma's life is passing like our life – days and nights. And certain levels of destruction and reconstruction are happen also. But then Brahma's life will also come to an end. How long Brahma is living? Hundred of his years. It is long, long, it is very long. But after his period of life, the whole universal construction is reduced to elementary state, back to unity form. Therefore it is called either final, or elementary destruction. So you see these two periods – one is shorter destruction and construction, and the other is a kind of final, ultimate decomposition of matter.

What are the two extra? There are two extra. Can you imagine anything beyond this? What kind of destruction can happen beyond this? Any ideas? Then I help, if you do not mind. There is a permanent destruction of the world and there is a private end of the world, we can say like that. Permanent? In a manifest state it is existing; how can we talk about permanent destruction? Permanent end of the world - it means this coming and going of the living entities, birth and death. By nature this world is impermanent – everything is changing, moving. So this coming and passing of the living entities – this is the permanent destruction of the world. All right – there is a partial, there is an ultimate, there is a permanent, and there is a private. What does it mean? This is when *you* leave

from this universe. Then this whole material life becomes like a dream.

When a person achieves liberation, he can leave behind this world completely, fully. You are not effected, not touched – neither by creation, nor by destruction. Therefore Krishna says: “Attach yourself, attach your attention to the instructions, keep the instructions and then you will be never disturbed – neither by the pride of being the creator, nor by the fear of the destruction of the world.”

43. Stick to the instruction I

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 12.01.2009, Sofia)

”O Brahma, just follow this conclusion by fixed concentration of mind, and no pride will disturb you, neither in the partial nor in the final devastation.”²⁹

This verse reminded me of the extreme conditions in life. We have to be prepared to practice and to stick to our faith in extreme conditions also. Usually this cosmic destruction does not happen every now and then. But this whole universe is illusion, a blade of grass, very insignificant. Why? Only if you have something better. If you have no other option, then do not blame it, do not criticize it.

How to achieve that vision – to have the vision beyond creation and beyond cosmic destruction? Just as Krishna says: stick to the instruction. But sometimes we cannot stick to the instructions, right? When our understanding is limited. Krishna says something in “Bhagavad-gita” or in the scriptures which we do not understand. Or we understand something, but we cannot perform, because the *gunas* are stronger or our conditioning is very bad. Sometimes the waves of material influence just wash you away. Then what to do? Stick to the

²⁹ “Shrimad-bhagawatam” 2.9.37

instruction, nevertheless stick to the instruction. Because most of the things that you will achieve in this impermanent world will diminish, will disappear. Then after let us say five hundred years they will excavate the stones of the Sofia Ashram and they will find some very special cultic items they cannot identify. Like a pot filled with sand, with some little drops of unknown material. And they will start to give their versions about this. So whatever you achieve it will disappear back to oblivion. Therefore we should build temples not from stones and flames not by candles and water not from the tab. We have to build the temple of the hearts and souls, we have to light the candle of our eternal flame and also we have to use the best water available – this is Mother Ganga.

This is my suggestion: stick to the instructions of Krishna. Then even in the extreme conditions of life you will be safe.

Question of Premananda: We have two kinds of extreme situations in our everyday life. One is let's say one time extreme and it is the easier, I think – when for example someone has to die as a hero, but he has to do it just once. So he gathers all his strength, dies as a hero – not such a big problem. But the bigger problem is...

Tirtha Maharaj: Permanent death, dying many times.

Premananda: Yes. I mean the situation when a person suddenly becomes stuck to a very hard situation that lasts for long, this is one kind of extreme which I think is harder to maintain your faith. And in fact from one point of view everyday life is such kind of extreme. So my question is if you could clarify a bit more about sticking to the instructions in these permanent situations. How to find strength and how to stick to the instructions when situation does not seem so extreme or it is permanent, but still the problem is there?

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes, from divine point of view to live without God – this is extreme. It is almost impossible, they have no conception of that. Well, to die once you said it is easy.

Premananda: Easier.

Tirtha Maharaj: Aha! Now you are more right. But as you mentioned this is the *kshatriya* way, the way of the fighters. To die once, but to die such a death that you achieve perfection. If they are fully sure that they will reach heaven, then they are ready to die. So

this is the approach of the *kshatriyas* to death. Let's live or die – it does not matter. What is the *vaishya* approach to death? When the death approaches to *vaishya* what will he say? “Well, I can give a little donation.” Death comes and he says: “I can pay you a trip to Bahama. Just give me some more time.” He is trying to bribe death. And what is the *shudra* approach to death? They are so dull that for them life and death is the same. And even worse that the *shurda* lever – those who has no faith. In “Shrimad-bhagavatam” it is said: those, who have no faith in Krishna are just like bellows – they breathe, but it is not life, it is just like an empty bellows. For them life and death are both meaningless.

But what is the *braminical* approach to death? If we agreed that *kshatriya* has to die once what is the situation with *bramins*? Practically every day. A *bramin* has to die many times during one lifetime. What does it mean? It means we have to purify yourself. We have to die for the previous level of consciousness and be reborn on a new, higher level of consciousness. This was happening to Brahma. Whenever he understood that he has made a mistake or he has some shortcomings, he died. Of course, he is living in a subtle form, so there is no body to leave; still it is said he gave up this “body”, he gave up this conception and from those conceptions different certain things are manifest in the universe.

In the same way, on the path of purification we also have to die many times. This is not attractive to the outsiders. Everybody wants eternal life, not many deaths. But this is reality – we have to die for ourselves to be born again for God. If we live only for ourselves, practically we live for nobody. But if we start to live for Krishna, then we start to live for everybody. This is the way to multiply your energies. And this is the way to overcome death.

(to be continued)

44. Stick to the instruction II

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 12.01.2009, Sofia)

(continues from the previous issue)

But your question³⁰ was a little different – how to overcome these permanent difficulties. There are two methods. One is the mystical and the other is the practical. The practical one is that you pray meanwhile; and the mystical one is that somehow you survive. But we cannot survive our life, we need to *live* our life. Life is such a mystery that should not be examined or thought of, but we should live our life.

Analysis or comparison is also a method. For example, once a devotee went to a hospital. There he saw some people with half heads and very serious bodily problems. And then he concluded: we have no problems! If you say that you have a problem, this is practically not true. Because still our life is not in extreme situations – in most of the cases. Or you can compare your situation to others' lives. If you feel that you suffer a lot, just meditate on the suffering in the world, on the planet earth – how much suffering is there. Then you will see that your small little suffering is very insignificant.

Again, sticking to the instruction in these permanent difficulties will help. Actually this is *gopi-bhaav*. Because ladies

³⁰ The question of Premananda from the previous issue: “I mean the situation when a person suddenly becomes stick to a very hard situation that lasts for long, this is one kind of extreme which I think is harder to maintain your faith. And in fact from one point of view everyday life is such kind of extreme. So my question is if you could clarify a bit more about sticking to the instructions in these permanent situations. How to find strength and how to stick to the instructions when situation does not seem so extreme or it is permanent, but still the problem is there?”

have this capacity to survive long standing difficulties. Men are easy to fall, die one heroic death. But ladies are clever, they will survive. From this again we can see that *gopi-bhaav* or the feminine element is very important.

But Krishna is just like the full moon – going with the nighttime traveler). Even in the death of the night the full moon is with you. So if you feel that life is very difficult, God is there.

And from a certain point of view a little difficulty is good. If there is something to achieve, you can collect your energies, mobilize your best forces. If there is no opposition, you cannot show your strength. Just remember those burlesque movies. You know, it is a gag – somebody is holding a door and from the other side somebody wants to enter. He tries to push harder and harder and then more and more people join and they try to push and it does not happen; meanwhile the guy on the other side opens the door and everybody is falling. In the same way if there is opposition, if there is a closed door you can come with your forces. But when you think that the door is closed but it is open and you come with all your force – you fall on the ground. Why? Because fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

Nevertheless a little opposition is good. We should see Krishna even in the extreme situations, not only in sweet dreams about Goloka Vrindavana. As we heard: “directly or indirectly”. Direct is our dreams, our hopes about Goloka Vrindavana, the higher reality. Indirect is when you observe the situation of the world and yourself. Nothing is independent on Him, but He is ready to hide behind the curtains. Just like when you put this cover in front of the altar. Now you have a direct vision. But as your vision is not obstructed, you take a look and then your attention is off. But when it is hidden everybody is looking through the little holes to see what is happening. Just examine the kids: wherever the cover is there, the kid enters and immediately wants to run behind the paravan. We are also like small kids. We all want to see the secrets. At least to have a glimpse of this divine something happening there. The cover blocks your vision, still it gives you the urge to search better, closer. So difficulties are good.

Premananda: I suspect that the angels have also gathered their strengths a lot, although they are not rushing like fools. I suspect that they have this delicate mentality, and still they have gathered all their strength. Is that true and if so, how do they do it?

Tirtha Maharaj: They are following the instruction. But this is also a question of culture. Therefore sometimes we talk about etiquette – what should be done and what should be avoided. Because it is said: A man is his style. If you observe a person you can read who he is. We have to appreciate things, not grab it. Just to take it and enjoy it – this is very brutal. But if you appreciate, you cherish your ideals, your beloved ones, your practices – this is higher. So, please, be well educated in this science. Be like the angels. Do not enter forcefully. Wait for the invitation – then it is sweeter.

45. To find your shelter

(from a lecture of B.K. Tirtha Maharaj, 11.01.2009, Sofia)

It is not necessary to write about taking shelter and surrender, but it is necessary to practise. *Sharanagati* means how to take shelter. This song says:

“In order to show mercy on the fallen jivas, Shri Krishna Chaitanya descended to this world with His personal associates and divine realm in order to teach sharanagati, or selfless surrender in front of God, and to distribute freely the otherwise so difficultly obtained ecstatic love of Godhead. This sharanagati is the life of the true devotees.”³¹

So, Mahaprabhu came with His personal associates and divine realm. He came for two reasons – to distribute *prema*, divine love; *durlabha* means “difficult to achieve” and *dhana* means “gift”

³¹ Couplet of devotional song “Sharanagati” by Bhaktivinoda Thakura

– so He comes with the greatest treasure free. Is that really free? Not really, there is some price – this is *sharanagati*, we have to surrender. Therefore He came to distribute this love of Godhead and to teach *sharanagati*. So, if we want to achieve selfless love of Godhead then we have to practice this *sharanagati* process.

Sharanagati, or to find your shelter – this is a general principle, everybody knows it should be like this. Women take shelter of men, men take shelter of alcohol, etc, everybody is searching for shelter. But instead of a fake and limited shelter we have to come under the protection of the ultimate shelter. Therefore we have to be clever enough where and how to practice this *sharanagati* process. Do not surrender to some false ideas. Do not surrender to your weaknesses, or your stupidity, or illusions – not to anything limited, but to something beyond.

What is the first step of beyond? Give me some ideal that is beyond the limited conceptions?

Manohari: God.

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes, but He is almost the last word in this process. Give me the first word that is beyond material dualities.

Paramananda: Purification.

Tirtha Maharaj: This is the process. It is before.

Yashoda: Searching for the spiritual authority.

Tirtha Maharaj: Also part of the process, it is not the goal. It is not an achievement. It is a necessary ingredient. So here we can find fake shelters. Give me such a shelter that is beyond this limited reality. What is the first thing, first ideal, first level that is beyond the material level?

Manjari: Is not it love?

Tirtha Maharaj: Love is very high. We need the first, lower.

Somebody: Faith.

Damodar: It must be something before faith, maybe penance?

Premananda: I thought when you start to serve, this is already an achievement.

Tirtha Maharaj: Truth, my dears! The first thing that is beyond material dualities – this is the truth. As I told you, we should

be clever enough to search for truth. This is, so to say, on the ultimate platform. But truth is not the end of the story, because there is God in between and finally there is love, divine love. So, in case you want to surrender to something, to some idea, *minimum* this should be the truth.

We should commit ourselves to the absolute truth. This is the start of a general search. And meanwhile you will find all those necessary ingredients that you have mentioned, like faith, purification, following a process, masters – you will find everything. You will find also God. And if you go further you will find the secret how actually to come close to Him – how to love Him. Therefore we can say we should pay attention to all teachers who teach us about anything higher on material platform – knowledge - and in the spiritual sense also. But we should pay especially great and careful attention to those who teach us about divine love.

(to be continued)

46.The six elements of sharanagati

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 11.01.2009, Sofia)

(continues from the previous issue)

If we are surrendered to the truth, then we should practise, and here³² it is given what are the elements of surrender, of taking shelter. Many times we have discussed this but I think it is very useful to repeat that the entrance of achieving shelter is to practise what is favorable and to avoid unfavorable things. These are the preliminary exercises. Then on the subjective platform we have to practise humility and dedication of the self. And on the objective

³² in the devotional song “Sharanagati” by Bhaktivinoda Thakura

platform, on the divine platform Krishna's contribution is that we should accept Him as the ultimate maintainer and the firm faith that He will protect us from everything.

These are the six elements: do what is necessary and avoid what is harmful; be humble and dedicate yourself; and accept that Krishna is the maintainer and protector. Is that a complicated process? It is simple – only six elements, my dears. Difficult, no doubt, but it is very simple.

And then the song says: *“The young son of Nanda Maharaj, Shri Krishna, will listen to the prayers of all those, who seek His shelter through these six processes.”*

You do not have to believe that, to take it, because it is said. Try it! Try! Experience! You do some offering, you do some – so to say – sacrifice and you will see the results.

Then *“Bhaktivinod places a blade of grass between his teeth and offers full dandavats in front of Rupa and Sanatana Goswamis.”* This is the sign of humility – to take a blade of grass and to offer full dandavats. *“And catches their lotus feet and he tells them crying: “No doubt, I am the worse man, but please, make me the best by teaching me the six elements of sharanagati.”*

So, it does not matter where you come from. But it *does* matter where do you go and how. Practise *sharanagati*. We should practise that limit of humility. Offer yourself, not only formally, but in case you have a trouble, surrender to the situation. For example you have a – well, I would not say an enemy, but problem – go there, offer yourself fully.

Because if you ask mercy from anyone, how can he reject? If you ask for the truth, you will get it. But if you humbly pray for some little drops of mercy, maybe it will be showered over you also. Yet the first step is the truth. Later on these are little more fine elements of our practice.

So, we should practise what is favorable for the spiritual growth, avoid what is unfavorable, be humble, dedicate yourself and have firm faith that Krishna is the supporter and the protector.

Practise sharanagati. Avoid bad, practise good. And here we need the intelligence. We have to learn what is favorable, what is

unfavorable. And if you have found the pure environment, *then* you should apply your humility and dedication. And with the firm faith that Krishna protects and maintains, you can go on.

47.Hurled down to Vaikuntha

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 11.01.2009, Sofia)

Question of Damodar: If the truth is the first step beyond the material plane, I have heard that for most of the people the willingness to turn to God does not come from searching for the truth. And if they are not turning towards God because they are searching for the truth, what is the reason that still they do it?

Tirtha Maharaj: But you have already turned. So you have accomplished the first mystery – turning your attention from the outside material reflection to some inner essential points. But in “Gita” it is very nicely described why people start any type of search or religion. Because they seek benefits, they are suffering, inquisitive *or* searchers for the truth. These are the main reasons: *arta, artharathi, jigyasi and gyani*³³- four types. But on any reason you start, you will reach something. Because Krishna acknowledges all these different approaches as bona fide, true.

Premananda: Gurudev, these different motivations to search – are they related to the *gunas*, or something else?

Tirtha Maharaj: Can be. But if we consider from the absolute point of view *gunas* cannot have any influence on anything spiritual. We can say, for example, that a person in *tama-guna* is suffering so much, that he wants to escape; while somebody in *rajas* prays for more material assets; the *sattvic* type is inquisitive, he is searching for knowledge. But the ultimate approach is *gyana* – and *gyana* not in a limited sense, but as search for the absolute. Yet it

³³ “Bhagavad-gita”7.16

does not matter where you come from – Krishna can enter the game and He can divert your attention. You are searching for material gain and finally you will find something higher; you simply want to escape from your sufferings and suddenly you find yourself in Vaikuntha, etc.

So, if Krishna enters the picture, He will make it sweeter. But if we search for Him, He will escape from the picture – just to make the whole game more intensive. So be careful! If you search for something else, you will find Him; if you search for Him, you will not find Him. This is the nature of the game.

Kripadham: My question is related to the service. When we try to serve Krishna or guru in most of the cases our motivation is not pure...

Tirtha Maharaj: Is that possible?!

Kripadham: In my case, yes. There is always some element of personal interest included – like attaining perfection or being the closest one to the spiritual master, or this kind of things. My question is do we receive *karmic* result for these mistakes and more generally what is the connection of the *karma* with this process?

Tirtha Maharaj: Well, if you would simply get some insignificant *karmic* result for your mistakes, that would be very easy. But spiritual mistakes – spiritual reaction. In the outside world: material action – material reaction; here spiritual action or mistake – spiritual reaction.

Just visit a holy place and you will see sincere prayers are immediately heard. Krishna fulfils the sincere desires – I do not know the proportion, but let's say – thousand times. But that is also true – if you make a mistake, at least hundred times more you have to pay. Spiritual life is not a joke.

Kripadham: What is the price we have to pay? This is the fall down to the material world?

Tirtha Maharaj: Price that you will have to pay is that you will be hurled down to Vaikuntha. This is our fall theory – you will be hurled down to Vaikuntha. That means no *goloka-prema*. The more mistakes you commit, the farther you separate yourself from Krishna.

But simple *karma* has no influence over *bhakti*. Because *karma* is material, *bhakti* is *spiritual*. Nothing to do with each other.

48.A blade of grass

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 06.01.2009, Sofia)

The whole world is insignificant as a blade of grass. Is that a realistic view? Well, maybe it sounds weird for general people. But in two ways we can understand this.

One is if we can evaluate the beauty and the great qualities of the blade of grass. Because the grass is the symbol of humility. Very small, very insignificant living entity, but still has some very remarkable qualities. For example, he is never standing alone, always keeps company. A small little thing, but always grows and with his green existence gives some food for some bigger animals, like the sheep of the *ashram* or the cows of Krishna. But then the autumn time comes. And then it stops growing. And then the sheep practically cut everything to the root, only very little remains. The next spring comes – and it is coming again! So this is a very powerful proof of the power of life. Sometimes difficult times come, like winter, when the souls are trembling and more like hiding. Sometimes there is a winter outside in this material world. That means – not favorable for spiritual cultivation. Never mind, pull back your energies, preserve and next moment when it is appropriate, just come forward. Because small little blade of grass can do that; how is it that you cannot do that? But other times a tempest is attacking the forest. And big and proud trees are broken down. Last summer we had such a very heavy, incredibly strong wind and it broke down some dozens of huge trees around the *ashram*, fortunately not on the *ashram*. And the foresters told that every 12-20th year such a storm comes and then leaves some marks behind him. And also the grapes and different plants in the garden were really hit hard. No problem

with the grasses. Because they use their humility to bow down in front of the tempest.

So if you meet some very powerful element, use this method. If you bow down, if you are ready to admit that the other party is stronger, you will have less problems. Humility works. Humility sometimes helps to survive certain situations. This is what we can learn from a simple blade of grass. And if we see that power to survive, then we can say that this is a glory to the world if we compare it to the blade of grass.

But on the other side it is said that it is insignificant as a blade of grass. How can you compare this wide universe to such an insignificant something? Well, only if we have found something better. And if we have a very small little understanding about the spiritual sky then we can say: ah, this material universe is nothing! Although the divine beauty is manifested here on this relative platform. And if this world contains such incredible miracles, then we can imagine what is happening there in spiritual sky, which is complete.

49. The touchstone of the holy name

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 06.01.2009, Sofia)

The holy name is like a touchstone. Touchstone has a very special capacity – very base metals it can turn into gold. Once a poor person approached Sanatana Goswami because he has heard that Sanatana Goswami has a piece of this touchstone. And you know, he was struggling hard whole of his life and no results, no fruits, he was so poor. So finally he decided: “I must go to this saint and ask for some help.” He said: “Ah, *swamiji*, I am devastated. I know that it is not appropriate to go to the saints for material benefits, but you know, I am totally lost and I heard that you have a piece of

touchstone.” And Sanatana Goswami said: “Yes, I have it.” Although he was living in very simple, poor conditions, he did not even have a hut, he was under the shade of a tree. But he was chanting his rounds in the morning, during the day and during the night. So, our friend asked: “Can you borrow me, can you give me this touchstone?” Sanatana Goswami said: “Yes, of course, you can have it!” Just imagine such an offer – after a long, long poor life finally you will get the solution to all your problems. “Yes, you can have it, you can find it over there in the garbage.” Our friend was a little surprised: “How is that, the most precious thing is hidden in the garbage?! Maybe Sanatana Goswami is clever enough, because if he would keep it in a nice place, the thieves and robbers could identify, but if he is preserving it there, nobody would search for it in the garbage, so he is clever.” So happily he was running back home and said: “Wow! I have the solution to all my problems!” But he was so poor that he had nothing metallic, so he could not use it. He was trying with some wooden articles, with some earthen pots here and there but no result. Then he started to meditate: “Wait a minute! If this is so precious, why he is keeping it in the garbage? Maybe he has something more? He is a clever man. He must have something else, more precious than this.” So next morning he is running back: “*Goswamiji!* I have a problem with this touchstone.” What, my dear, you have asked it, I have given it to you. Are you not happy?” “Not! Because you must have something more precious. Isn’t it?” And Sanatan Goswami said: “Yes, of course! I have something much more precious than this insignificant touchstone.” “What is that?” “This is the holy name of our Lord – *Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.*” And our friend was astonished. “May I have that precious gift?” And Sanatana Goswami said: “Yes, of course! It is for you.”

All right, now we have heard a nice story, telling the glories of the holy name; compared to that this whole world is insignificant just like a blade of grass. But this is true. Whatever you can achieve on and in this world, it is nothing compared to the achievements of the chanting process. And certain little things we can achieve here.

Like people try to achieve success here and there, or some name, fame, glory, money, influence – this is what people think is big achievement in this world. Maybe they achieve some friendship or love – I mean real feelings, but that is very rare. In a false world to find something real on the emotional platform – this is very rare. Anyway, whatever you achieve materially, you will lose it. But if you achieve something spiritually, you will never lose it.

What is the ultimate benefit of the holy name? It is not simply stopping of *karma* – that means providing you a better life. It is not simply achieving liberation – to lead you out of this maze. But they say it will bring you to the lotus feet of Krishna. And this is the ultimate achievement of the chanting process.

50.To serve the name

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj, 06.01.2009, Sofia)

Question of Yashoda: How to serve the holy name better?

Tirtha Maharaj: How to serve it better? I would say just let the process work on you. That is enough.

Once I met a person and he asked: “What is your service?” And I said: “I have no special service, little things in the garden and eating *prasadam*... This is my service. And also one thing – I try not to give obstacles in the plans of Mahaprabhu.” This should be our policy. Do not give trouble to Krishna.

So let the holy name work on you. It is said, be brave with the holy name so that the holy name will be brave with you. At the same time we have to be like the dogs – desiring for many but satisfied with less. We want the whole thing, we want the full achievement. But if some little things you achieve, you should be satisfied.

Chanting is a great art. I would not say that this is a great knowledge, science, I would say this is a great art. Because this is a cultivation of the emotional contact between humans and God. Of

course there is some scientific side also included here – like western science finally agreed that ultimately everything is a vibration. Two or three years ago they were distributing the Nobel prize in physics for a new understanding – they identified that this material universe has “a black body nature”. The scientific term is “black body nature”. The background vibration, background energy impulse behind all the revelation has got this black body nature – something black is standing behind all this manifestation. Something black is behind this cosmic vibration. The yogis are telling this for thousand of years – that there is a black body behind this manifestation. Like everything emanates from the black body of Mahavishnu. Nobody has distributed them Nobel prizes here and there. Thanks to God.

So there is a scientific side also – that if you create vibrations, you will have result. Did we make the vibrational experiment? Not? Shall we make it? It is very simple. Practically we can chant anything, but here in this circle we can chant the *mahamantra* and then we can touch different parts of our body. *Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare*. Touch your chest. *Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare*. Now top of your head. *Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare*. You see? Everything is vibration. You can feel the resonance all over your body. But this is not simply a physical resonance. There is something more. Because sounds have different aspects. The first is physiological aspect – some vibration reaches your ear, then you sense it and then you hear. Then there is the meaning of the words that come to you. Then there are the feelings that they create in you – this is the third phase. And the fourth phase is impossible to describe by words – this is the transcendental effect. So even if we start from this scientific approach there are some very significant results.

But if you are fathers and mothers or if you remember your childhood, you will very easily know that to call somebody by the name is very sweet. And all the mothers and fathers are charmed to chant the names of their babies. “Ah my dear one, like this, like that”

– you are always chanting the name – because you love him or her. This establishes a very deep and very loving connection. And most of the times you are not satisfied with one name, like official name, but you want to have some private name, some nickname, something personal. In the same way Krishna has unlimited names, like Krishna-Govinda. So the name will help us to establish a very deep and very loving connection. Chanting is not only a question of quantity, this is a question of quality. How to serve it better? With more quality.

Actually it is said in the *shastras* that this whole world, this whole universe is divided by name and form. If there is no form and there is no name, there is only one mass, right? But if there are forms and there are names, then we can identify individuality. Many people think that this is bad. I think that this is very good. Because in this way our prayers are not sent into oblivion, but directed to someone. So by this vibrational effect it is not only your body that will resonate, but also it touches the heart and soul. And there will be some results. The magic transformation will start by the touchstone of the holy name. If iron turns into gold by this touch, the different limbs of the body can also acquire different qualities. Like, as Shrila Sadhu Maharaj says, you can drink with your ears; you can accept with your heart and you can tell with your eyes. And what are the words of the eyes? At least a few drops.

So drink with the ears the nectar of the holy name. There will be some transformation in the heart. And then your eyes will tell the story what is happening inside.

51.The loving surcharge

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj. 06.01.2009. Sofia)

We should be very careful about the quality of the holy name. Because the holy name is not a material vibration, but it is surcharged with something – surcharged with devotion, dedication. Just like in one previous verse it was said: “*Dadami buddhi yogam tam – buddhi yoga* but with *pritti-purvakam*” – the loving surcharge is there in your consciousness. In the same way the characters or the sound form must be surcharged with your dedication.

The best example is Gaura Kishora Das Babaji Maharaj. I think nobody can question his chanting. But many times he was just jumping into the Ganges, ready to drown himself, because he felt that the holy name is not coming, not descending on his lips. So much so that the devotees on the bank were really afraid and praying: “Ah, Babaji Maharaj, come out, come out of the Ganges! Don’t let yourself to be drowned!”

What is our quality of chanting? Where is the Ganges to drown ourselves fully?

Other times I heard one story in South India. You know, in South India people are mostly either Rama worshipers or Vishnu worshipers, and Shiva also. So one *ashram* started to function there and one boy, one *brahmachari* was taking the pots to the river to wash them. Ana all of a sudden he was bitten by snake. And you know, snake bite is quite dangerous. You have got a few minutes left, not so much. This boy was practically fainted already. But when the others recognized what was happening, they run up to him and started to chant the *mahamantra* into his ears. He regained the consciousness and he was saved. Immediately the villagers started to pay some attention: “Ah! This mantra is very good against snake bite! It is working.”

We are searching for our private goals, benefits: protection against snake bites, solution to my financial problems... Never mind, it works! But if you are searching for the real result, you have to pay

some more time. Because chanting the holy name with dedication will bring chanting in pure form. There is *nama*, and there is *shuddha-nama*. And the *shuddha-nama* will bring *bhakti*, *prema*. And *prema* is very strong, even stronger than God. He becomes a slave of those, who has this devotion, dedication, Therefore He is a little reserved to give it freely. He is ready to distribute material benefits, a little *moksha* here and there, some mystic powers, just to buy your attention, to divert your attention. Many people are ready to exchange divinity for material things. But for a devotee this is very painful. Therefore we try to invite people to this purification process and by the divine touch of the holy name from materialistic persons we can become dedicated servants of God.

The quality is very important.

Question of Yashoda: I am searching all the time and thinking about what is real meditation in connection with the holy name? Because I have certain misunderstanding due to my previous attempts to meditate when all the time I was falling asleep.

Tirtha Maharaj: As we made this experiment, there is a vibrational effect on the body. From one state of consciousness you come to another one while doing any type of spiritual practice. As the words have these four aspects –the sound, the meaning, the feeling and the transcendental one – in the same way human consciousness also has four phases. The first is the wake consciousness when your senses are turned outwards. But this is very active and very disturbed state of mind. The dream state is when your senses are turned inwards. The third – when the senses are turned neither inward nor outward, this is the dreamless state, state of inspiration, so to say. And the fourth is again the transcendental state, spiritual. So, when we are awake our mind is very active, but everything is going out. If you start to meditate, if you start to stop this outgoing functioning of your senses, then they will turn inward, and, as we are conditioned, when the senses turn inward we fall asleep, then we are in a dream. Therefore in the beginning you might have this result – you stop the functioning and then you start dreaming, so to say, fall asleep. But later on you will be able to

control these urges. And then we can maintain a very alert state, although there is no outer functioning.

The same happens if somebody starts to chant. Sometimes all your bodily functions are very calm, come down to a very smooth platform. Until you try it mechanically, you will fall asleep. But when you start emotionally, then you will dance and sing in ecstasy. If the holy name is dancing on your lips how can you fall asleep? But if the holy name is dancing on your lips, even if you fall asleep, that is a divine sleep.

Once we were invited to give a lecture in a university club. This was full program – *bhajan*, lecture, slideshow, *prasadam*, talking and everything. It started at six or something; and after midnight somebody from the audience said: “Can we sing a little bit more?” We were really exhausted, but how can you resist such an invitation! And that person, who asked for more *bhajan*, of course became a devotee, a very nice devotee. And later on she told me her story – she also attended yoga courses and practiced. And she said: “Before these yogis were always telling: *samadhi*, trance, ecstasy... I never understood what is this! But after the *bhajan* I immediately understood what it is. So, that is a good sign. Just have your eyes open. If on a public lecture somebody says: “*bhajan!*” - this is a prospective devotee. Because *bhajan* always touches the heart.

52.The protective shield of the holy name

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj. 06.01.2009. Sofia)

If somebody is interested in the effects of the holy name, I suggest you should read and study carefully, very carefully the article from Shrila Shridhara Maharaj “The descend of the holy name”. Because if this whole world is vibration then it is very important what kind of vibration *we* create. What do we *add* to this world? And of course what kind of vibrations *you* accept from the world. For example if you were sensitive enough here you would feel unlimited different types of vibrations, like television transmissions, radio stations, cb distribution of the taxis, and also the telephones – different microwaves here and there and military lines, neighbors – so many vibrations are there. But how much of these different vibrations are divine? I think some 70-80 percent of the internet traffic is pornography. What to speak of the other vibrations, other transmissions!?! They are surcharged with very basic, very low information. Or telling a lie – it will also resonate your body. And as the holy name touches our heart, our soul, in the same way a lie or some hatred or some bad words that you pronounce, will also vibrate in your body. It can simply break down your brain. So we have to be very careful. Therefore purified life is crucial for spiritual growth.

But if you purify yourself you will suffer more under unfavorable conditions, right? Because then you will be more sensitive and you will feel more the stupid attack. Isn't it? Never mind, go on! Because the next step is when you start to become stronger. The holy name is just like a defend system around you, protective system. There are special protective mantras for certain cases. But if you submit ourselves under the protection of Krishna – who can attack you? Although even in Vrindavana these day it is not the towers of the temples that are highest, but the transmission towers for telecommunication. So a different vibration is entering the holy places also. But we have some advantage, because at least we have the knowledge that there is divine vibration. And just like these little receivers are tuned to receive only a certain type of vibrations,

in the same way if we tune our heart and soul, then we shall be able to select the best vibration.

But why should we talk about the bad vibrations of the world? Better to chant the holy names. Because there *will* be a transformation in your heart.

Question of Manjari: Gurudev, you said that second phase is when we become strong enough so that we are not easily hurt and influenced. How do we become strong?

Tirtha Maharaj: By doing it! This is not simply a result of our own efforts. But the protective shield of the devotees, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Krishna Himself. Who is watching Drakula movies? You know, when they draw a magic circle that will protect the guy and bad guys cannot enter that circle. You only have to wait for the first rays of the sunshine to come and then you are safe. But what is this magic circle in devotional life? The magic circle is given by our spiritual master. He will tell us: “These are the limits. Stay inside these limits.” Then you are protected fully. Therefore we make the vow to study and to put into practice *dharmā*, to accept the rules and regulations, I mean the prohibitions and that we shall follow the recommendations. Practically this is the magic circle around you that will protect you. Because our gurus are strong enough to protect us, they know how to do it, therefore they give the limits: “These are the limits. Inside you are protected.” Just like a kid, a small kid. You give some certain limits and inside these limits he is safe. But what happens if he moves out of that protective circle? First of all he will start crying and you will start trembling. The same happens if you move out of this magic circle, then you have to take all responsibility. You *can* go out, but then it is your business. So until we move inside this protective circle then we are absolutely safe.

But this is just like a transformation. First when you give up your material conditioning you feel you become weaker. Later on when this veil of illusion is removed completely, you will see: we are always protected. Under His shelter we are protected.

(to be continued)

53. Vaishnava vampirology

(from a lecture of B.K.Tirtha Maharaj. 06.01.2009. Sofia)

Question of Premananda: Gurudev, while we are still on the vampire's topic...

Tirtha Maharaj: Ah, you are still there!

Premananda: I want to ask about another example in another movie about vampires...

Tirtha Maharaj: This was a trick to understand all the nonsense that you are doing!

Premananda: What they were doing was catching these creatures, bringing them into light and then they were dissolving. And if we take this as a metaphor of our inner vampires, what is the way to approach them, how to handle, how to get rid of these hidden demons inside?

Tirtha Maharaj: Vaishnava vampirology! First of all, who is a daemon?

Yadunath: Very talented person.

Tirtha Maharaj: No, this is the demon. Talented, but the direction is not correct. This is the demon. The word "daemon" is coming from Plato. He identified it like inner creature. He said: "You can create your own daemons". And they can be good or bad. Sometimes due to bad conditionings or bad habits we create these inner vampires, daemons, demons in that respect, but they reside in your mind structure. In most of the cases they are creatures of our own imagination. For example you expect something from yourself and then you become a slave of your expectations. And then you start to feel guilty when you do not meet your own created expectations. Then you start to think that your spiritual master is expecting something from you. Then you start to be afraid of him. Because you do not meet *your* own created daemonic expectations and you project it on somebody else. But if you go there and ask him: "What is the expectation from me?" He says: "Nothing. Or yes, there is one – be

happy!” Then in the light of spirit, in the light of divinity these inner daemons are just dissipated.

Of course there are demons who are not your creatures, but some outside forces really, yet by determined practice and under correct protection you can escape such influence also.

But as it is said, without pain you cannot attain, all the great ones are tested. Lord Jesus was tempted by the Satan. Lord Buddha was also tempted by Maya Devi. Haridas Thakur was also tempted by being bitten on marketplaces – and many others. So do not think that without being tried you will achieve something high. We should be ready to accept that part of the purification also – be prepared.

Anyway, our process is not much based on frightening people with inner and outer demons, but rather submit yourself under divine protection.

But the question was how to fight them, how to get rid of them. There is a nice story. Once two young *brahmacharies* approached an old *swami*, old master. And one said: “Ah, master, I have a problem!” “What, my dear, what is your problem?” “Ah! I have my temptations.” “Everybody has his temptations.” “But what to do?” Then the master said: “Well, you should hide in the *ashram*, close the door and do not let the temptation in.” Then the other boy said: “Master, I also have my temptations.” Then the master said: “Open the door of the temple and let them in!” The boys were perplexed: “But for me you said to close the door against the temptations. For him you said to open the door. What to do now?” Then he said: “You are weak, so you better hide and do not let the temptations attack you. But you are strong, so you can let them in and fight them.”

But it is said: “There is only one thing that I cannot resist. There are so many prohibitions, so many rules and regulations, so many bad things – but only one thing I cannot resist. Temptation.” Only one!

So, keep on chanting, keep on calling our beloved Lord by the name. And be sensitive to hear when He is calling you.

SHARANAGATI - EXTRA MONDAY ISSUES

1. Soul makes beauty

Krishna says: “*I am the heat in fire.*”³⁴ Fire is a purifying element. And this is one sign of life – heat. Living body has a certain heat. When the temperature is too high or too low, problem is there.

Sanskrit is a very systematic language. What was Brahma doing at the time of creation? He was performing a kind of *tapas*, *tapaha* – renunciation. And *tap* in Sanskrit means “heat, fire”. So if you perform penance, you will have this heat energy of life. Where is this energy coming from? “I am the heat of fire.” And you are very much ready to embrace a warm, living body; but you are not so much ready to embrace a cool, dead body – this is considered aberration when you want to embrace dead bodies. Why? What you want to embrace this is not the body, this is the soul. Soul makes beauty.

And you can see this heat of existence everywhere. If you examine, for example, in the wintertime everything is high in snow, but around the trees you will find a little ring where the snow is melted. Right?

Harilila: And around the new spring flowers...

Tirtha Maharaj: Also. Why? Because jiva which is inside is heat power.

And although the trees are almost sleeping during the winter, still some energy they give out. We humans are also full of this heat energy and our energy is manifested in so many different ways. But the most powerful and most delicate energy of the humans – what is this?

Harilila: Love.

³⁴ “Bhagavad-gita” 7.9

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes, this is love, which cannot be produced by artificial methods. Everything else you can produce artificially: heat – you can put the wood on fire; or whatever else. But this special energy you cannot produce. Therefore this is very human – this loving energy. But many times we throw it in the garbage. We should use it in the best way, we should apply it to the best person, best target – when you are never turned down, you are never refused. You should divert your love energy to such a target, from where you are never refused.

And if we cannot share our loving capacity, then we choke up.

2. *Unity beautified by plurality*

*“I am the life of all that lives.”*³⁵ Everything is dressed in the robes of God. “I am the life of all that exists.” This is the great unity behind existence – that everything is based on *sat*, existence, and not on *asat*. So the basic principle of the *whole* existence that we can imagine is *sat*. Before the manifest creation there was only *sat*, existence. The world did not originate from nothing. It is coming from something. And something means existence, so it is positive. “Gita”, Upanishads they say: be logical! The wise have examined: from something cannot become nothing and from nothing cannot become something. So, if now we exist, we have existed before and we shall exist forever. There is only one thing that does not exist – the nonexistence. Nonexistence does not exist.

Of course, it is a logical paradox, a game, so to say. But from this we can understand the essence: we are based on existence, we are based on positive. Krishna is the basic, ultimate principle of life. And this is the great unity behind the diverse appearance. But this unity is beautified by the plurality. If everything would be only one –

³⁵ “Bhagavad-gita” 7.9

that is nice, that is powerful. For example when you see a big field of corn, of grains – it is beautiful, one, everything is one. But if you go closer you see the separate little ears – and it is more beautiful! Or if you observe the meadows; from a distance it is all green – beautiful! When you come closer you see the different little flowers – yellow and blue and like this and like that... It is more beautiful. So this unity and diversity *together* – this is the complete whole. Because “I am the life of everything that exists”- this is the unifying principle. Sorry, better we put it like this: “I am the life of all”- this is the unifying principle; “that exists”- and this is the diversity principle. And if we examine both, then this is the global, the full picture.

3. The source of spiritual strength

Krishna says: “*I am the penances of all ascetics.*”³⁶ This principle is very much unpopular these days. Nobody is ready to do some ascetics practices. But life comes and helps us to perform some *tapasya*. Because from the renunciation spiritual growth is coming. The “Shrimad Bhagavatam” says that from *tapas* the spiritual strength will come. If you can control yourself that helps you to be connected to the central source and then you will have more power to perform your activities. Again this is a signal to overcome the limitations of nature and body. If you do some penance you can overcome the human limitations. This is what Rishabhadev suggested to his sons: he said that human life is not for enjoying the senses, because this enjoyment is available even for the hogs and dogs; but human existence is for *tapas*. That means – sacrifice yourself for some higher goal.

Again we come back to the idea that existence on the biological platform is limited. How can you overcome these

³⁶ „Bhagavad-gita” 7.9

limitations? By *tapas*, higher kind of sacrifice. Then you can come in connection with the higher principle. Therefore you should also become ascetics. But ascetism is not something sour. If the face of an ascetic is sour, nobody wants to follow his example. Or it is also said that with a sour face you cannot enter heaven. Because the soul naturally is happy. But *tapas* helps us to perceive that higher happiness. So actually this word “renunciation” is not really appropriate. Because what can we renounce? Maybe we should use better “dedication”. We can dedicate our energies, all that we have. This is real ascetism.

There was one very sweet story. Once we had a birthday celebration of one *brahmachari* in the ashram. And you know ladies are very much ready to make some nice cakes and he got such a high cake! One friend came also and we were taking the sweets at the end of *prasadam*. And while he was taking the cake he said that this bhakti-yoga is not really good because it is not ascetic enough. I did not want to ask: “Hey, my boy, then why do you take the sweets? If you want to make some more *tapasya*, why do you take the sweets?” So, I think bhakti-yoga is very good, because there is sweet cake and there is *tapasya* also. Both is there. When you are too much frustrated by your *tapasya*, then comes the next birthday... Because Krishna is merciful finally. He does not want you to be with sour face.

4. About giving

Krishna gives a picture: “I am this, I am that, I am also that.” And later on He tells Arjuna: “Now give everything to Me. Whatever you have, whatever you do, whatever you sacrifice with all your *tapasya* – just do it for Me!” So what is happening? First He gives: “I am the taste of water; I am your *tapasya*, I am your life, I am everything.” Then He says: “And now return it back to Me.” Is not that a beautiful connection? He provides everything and you can serve Him with what has been given. If you were in a bad phase, difficult phase of your spiritual life, then you would say: “Well, God takes everything. He has taken everything from me.” But do not forget who has provided it. This was coming from Him; it is quite approved if He wants to take it back. How can you change this quality? Because if you are deprived of something, this is not a good feeling. How can you change this situation?

Ramvijay: By giving!

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes! Give it free! It is said: whatever you do not give you will lose it.

Harilila: What you will give...

Tirtha Maharaj: ... you will receive! Thank you, this is the positive side.

Harilila: But is it true?

Tirtha Maharaj: It is true. It is true. If you give attention to people they will also pay attention to you. If you give them help, they will help you. If you give them affection, they will also give you love. Very simple principle! And so difficult to practice... Somehow still we always forget about it. And always wait for the other to make the first step. But that is business: you should serve me first and then I will also serve. No! Not in this way. *You* should make the first step. Apply this principle in different situations in your life. In your families – *how many* times you have expectations towards the other?! “I would be ready to serve my husband, but he should do first something!” Or the other way round: “I come home, I want to be served warm *prasadam*. How is it that my wife is not coming with

the *prasadam*, but only with the problems?!” You make the first step! Do not expect the other to move. Gandhi said: “You should become the change that you want to see.” Very practical principle!

So better we give to Krishna freely because then a loving connection can be manifest. If we lose something this is a forceful connection. But by giving we can express our feelings.

5.A new world within

The concept of Divine Love is a very high concept. First most of the people have to understand what is the essence of life, what is existence. First we have to identify that there is a God. How? The whole world was created by sounds. If we chant divine sounds, if we have divine sound vibration, then a new world, a new kind of existence will be created in our structure.

Just imagine, in the beginning there was darkness, all the scriptures say that there was darkness. Then light appeared - again this darkness and brightness coming together. So even in the very beginning of creation, the very beginning of existence our Radha Krishna, Radha Govinda conception is there, but in a hidden form.

If we chant a mantra of creation then we understand that God exists and He is the supreme intellect. *Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya!* The creation of a new world is affected. In our minds, in our hearts the new cosmic order is established. Because this mantra says that “Oh my Lord, oh Supreme Intelligence, I dedicate myself to You and I glorify Your greatness.” So, new world is created in our hearts and on the throne of our hearts we can establish, we can invite our Lord. At the same time this mantra is an ultimate protective mantra, protecting us from all bad influences. So whenever you are in trouble don’t forget this mantra, because it will protect our creative, inner world, inner cosmos from any danger. If there is God is there any distress or any danger?

Damodar: There is a danger to fall in love with God.

Tirtha Maharaj: There is another danger – to forget Him. Therefore we should be connected all the time. There is a neutral position when you don't fall in love, but you don't forget – it is a kind of lukewarm. You know, many times I have mentioned that even in the Bible it is said that God spits out the lukewarm. So neutral is nothing. Either you fall in love or forget it. But the ultimate instruction of the Vedas is to remember always and never to forget. So to overcome neutrality there is only one chance and that is dedicated service. Therefore if this conception of God appeared in our mind, our hearts and our structure - if we believe, we accept that He exists - then the next question is how He exists, what is His nature, what is His activity, what is His taste, what does He like. This is the revealing science of God – to understand His ways. Is this the end of the path? No, this is during, in between. The end of the path is a different stage of spiritual elevation, but as you are all very deep and very dedicated practitioners we should not speak about the beginning and we should not speak about the end. Because you are over the beginning and you are before the end. You are somewhere in between – neither here, nor there.

Today we tried to prepare our hearts with this beautiful mantra: “*Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya*” so that a new world, new cosmos is created in our hearts and we should fill it up, fill this universe with best feelings.

6.A friend of everyone is a servant of none

Sometimes we think that if we make another formal step “I will come to higher platform. For example, if I change my dress then I will become a devotee; or I put some special marks on my forehead and immediately it will bring the change of heart also. Or I give the glory to one person that he can be my spiritual master. So I am a

serious guy – it is his glory if he accepts me as a disciple. When another guy comes I give him also the chance to teach me, so I take another initiation from him.” There are some people who are collectors of initiations. Especially in India you will find, because people there are very religious and not so fanatic, so to say. So if one teacher comes to your village then everybody joins him: “Ah, Guruji, very nice! “ And he distributes the *malas*, gives the names and everybody is a follower of this creed. Next week another *sadhu* is coming from a different line and they say: “Oh, Maharaj, you are so great! We want to follow you!” Once a friend of mine told me that he visited one such village and in one home the different *malas* were hanging like this. Because for them God is one. If you call Him Shiva, Krishna or Mahadev – at least you should be a *sadhu*. All *sadhus* are accepted. And from one point of view this is nice because we should respect all saintly persons, we should respect all special aspects of God. No doubt. But a friend of everyone is a servant of none. And our main ideal is to become servant, right? After service comes friendship. After commitment comes freedom. We should not mix the sequence.

In this way commitment means a very deep connection between the master and the disciple. This is not only a simple similarity or some theoretical understanding, but such a connection that probably in the ideal case is the strongest of everything. Stronger than any other tie in human relationships. Therefore we have to examine what do we join, what list we join. As it is suggested that the disciple should examine the master and the master should examine the disciple.

So if God appeared in our consciousness we should understand that the *sadhus* will also come. We have understood that God is never alone, He comes in company. That means if you want to invite God in your heart really, then some *sadhus* will also come with Him. And this makes the whole affair very practical. Because through these servants of God we can express something of our commitment. So when people say that without a guru it is impossible, this is what they mean. Without a guide and without a

shelter it is very difficult to express our willingness to serve Lord Krishna.

But this is not a campaign, we are not canvassing people to join a certain mission or group, but we are trying to represent the truth. It is very easy to convince people forcibly to do something. First – quickly brainwash them and then give them a new commitment. This is the neophyte platform.

Do not think that neophyte means that he received initiation only two weeks ago. Fanaticism and neophyte approach does not depend on your age, does not depend on your religion, does not depend on your initiation – it depends on your mental consciousness, on your condition. If you are stupid – you are stupid, irrespective of any other conditions. Therefore please do not remain on that platform.

So in the beginning we think if I change my dress I will make a big step. You go on doing that for years. Then comes the next step – “Why should I change my dress, why should I put on my *dhoti*, what is this *sari* – I am Bulgarian Why? This is a different culture, this is not my culture.” So this is another step, another phase of your life, of your being engaged in devotional service, in your trying to overcome your neophyte problems. So if you survive the first stupidity - that „if I put on a new dress I will change my consciousness”, this is one very serious disease - then will come the next phase when you do not want to change your dress, when you do not want to do any practice; so if you survive that also, then you will come to the beginner intermediate platform.

Srila Prabhupad in the beginning was very tolerant. When people asked him: “If I want to join your mission should I shave up?” What did he say? No. “Should I change my dress?” No. “Should I give all my money to you?” No. He refused these suggestions. But devotees were so intent and so dedicated that they naturally wanted to follow the good example of their master. Just imagine if you are dedicated to a good example good results you can expect. But if you are dedicated to a bad example what results can you expect?

So definitely from the neophyte platform we should come to the intermediate stage. And sometimes neophyte type problems you

can find on higher platforms official ranks, so to say. Because the human shortcomings are not only revealed in the practically neophyte devotees, but on higher platforms also. There was a period when certain preachers were competing each other who had collected more numbers of disciples. If you have 2000 initiates then you are a great guy. If only 1500 – intermediate. 1000 – neophyte. Then the other phase came – who has more money. Because people equals money. The more numbers you have, the more money you can make. How is it said? – sweeter than honey, this is the money. But this was the neophyte competition, I tell you. Intermediate competition came later when we started to count who is more *rasik*, who can faint when giving a lecture, who can produce some tears when talking about Radha Krishna, who can quote such scriptures that nobody knows on this planet earth. So what is this? This is a neophyte approach, neophyte platform in a very unusual dress. Unfortunately for some people this is reality. Therefore we should be very careful. If our conception that God exists has been born in our heart and mind we should be very careful how to cultivate this conviction. Do not forget – for a competition minimum two parties are necessary. If somebody wants to compete with you do not be so stupid to enter that game.

7.The glory of Shri Radha’s 1000 names

We are not satisfied to call our God or our Goddess on one name. We need a thousand mouths to chant the thousand names of Srimati Radharani. This is our ideal - to broaden the vision.

There is a reason, there is a method and there is a goal of chanting mantras. If you knew the goal, the results of chanting these 1000 names of Shri Radhika, you would be motivated to chant this prayer. So I will tell the *phala*, the fruit now, because in this way we could chant these mantras selflessly, only for glorification, irrespective of the good results that are coming to us. *Phala sruti*,

phala is the fruit, *sruti* – of hearing. *Phala sruti* – the fruit of hearing: if you are hearing these 1000 names you will achieve the following fruits. Actually these names were mentioned in a conversation between Parvati and Shiva. Parvati was asking: “Can you tell me about these names? Can you tell me something about Srimati Radharani?” Shiva, who is full of mystic powers, said “Yes, I can tell you something.” And then he started: *shri radha radhika krishna*, etc. Then he said: “O Devi, thus I have revealed to you the 1000 names of Shri Radha. Shri Madhava becomes very pleased by someone, who recites or encourages others to recite these names. “So Madhava is very satisfied with you. And who is Madhava? He is the Lord of the Goddess of Fortune. So if someone wants to achieve the blessings of that Goddess, it is impossible without the service of the Lord of that Goddess. “O dear one, for a person who has attained the favor of Shri Janardana, there is no need to take bath in the holy water of Yamuna or visit holy places like Kurukshetra.” Who is Janardana? Janardana is the maintainer aspect of Krishna. Maintainer of the living entities. “What one cannot achieve by the grace of this prayer? Is there anything you cannot achieve by this prayer? A *brahmin* can attain perfection in spiritual potency, and a *kshatriya* can become a king of the world, a *vaishya* can become rich and a *shudra* can become liberated from his degraded life. Moreover all types of sinful activities like killing a *brahmin*, drinking wine and stealing others’ property are at once destroyed by the mercy of this prayer.” So these are the sins mentioned here. Killing a *brahmin* is the most insignificant sin. Just imagine. Because killing a *brahmin* you cannot actually kill the soul, because it is only the physical body that you harm, but more sinful is to drink wine, especially the famous Bulgarian wines, because by this you lose your caste. And what is the most sinful activity? To steal others’ property, especially to steal *vaishnava*, *brahmana* or guru’s property. It doesn’t mean I have my vineyard and make my own wine, I kill *brahmins* and I steal the properties and I am very enthusiastic to chant these names to rectify these mistakes.

And here four people are mentioned: a *brahmin* can achieve perfection, a *kshatriya* can become lord over the whole world,

vaishya can become rich and a *shudra* can become liberated. How do you identify yourself? What do you want? Radharani will give it to you. Perfection – it is yours. Money? Take it. It is only disturbing in Goloka Vrindavana. You want to dominate the whole world? Let it be. If you want only pieces of glass – take it, take it!

Devotee is not mentioned here. So what will a devotee achieve by chanting these names? That is beyond description. “O Goddess, there is no doubt that by the mercy of this prayer one immediately becomes liberated, because in this world there is nothing equal to the 1000 names of Sri Radha. There is nothing more auspicious and sanctified than the 1000 names of Sri Radha either in the heavenly planets or in the hellish planets or in the mountains or within the waters. O beautiful one, all desires of a person who recites or hears these 1000 names of Sri Radha with a pure and controlled mind on Ekadashi become fulfilled. “ So we can see that this prayer fulfills the desires. How? By achieving the mercy of Srimati Radharani.

Therefore it is very good to have two well-wishers. If you have only one well-wisher and you make a mistake then you are in trouble. But if I have two well-wishers, may be I have made a mistake with one then the other can harmonize the situation. Or if I make a mistake with the other then the first one can help.

Question of Manjari: Anyway Radharani is so merciful that she is fulfilling all our desires and the problem is not that She is not fulfilling our desires, but that we wish some stupid things. So when we chant Her names does it help us to start desiring higher things or rather She will fulfill our stupid desires?

Tirtha Maharaj: Well, if you remember the names sometimes you will almost faint by some memories of the names. One name was Sarasvati, right? And recently we discussed that whenever you commit a mistake, because if your pronunciation is not perfect – that is a mistake. But then She comes and corrects the mistake. Same with the desires. If we have some simple low desires, you pray in that mood, but it will not reach the destination, because this is a good sensory system. There are so many who are reading your prayers, digesting and then transmitting. Then it will reach the

destination completely perfect. Just imagine Radharani being engaged in fulfilling your stupid desires – no, that’s impossible. She has got another business.

8.If we learn Vrindavan mood...

Do not forget the example of Srila Rupa Goswami. He was on an absolutely realized platform. He had a little hut and he was studying, writing and chanting there. Not so much any other engagements – sometimes meeting with the devotees. And once a great fighter came to him who wanted to challenge him in philosophy. This is the usual habit in *tattva*, in philosophical school, that people come together and debate on certain topics. And they challenge each other and they have to reply to the questions – like this. And finally who is running out of arguments he should surrender to the other, he should accept him as a spiritual master. So this fighter entered Vrindavan and was knocking on the door of Rupa Gswmai “I am here to challenge you!”. And Rupa Goswami said: “Good, put me on your list. You have defeated me.” He was not so stupid to enter a fight. If you are on a realized platform will you ever fight? Yes, sometimes. But only superficially, not in your heart. “Your mercy is coming to me. I am on your list. Take my scalp.” And the challenger was so satisfied. “This is the *shastra* guru of the *sampradaya*, the highest representative, and he doesn’t come to me. They are very weak.”

But then a neophyte one was also listening to the story. This was Jiva Goswami. He was the nephew of Rupa Goswami. You know different generation. Rupa Goswami was old guy who was chanting Hare Krishna, it was enough for him. But Jiva Goswami was energetic young lion. „What?! Somebody is criticizing the *shastra* guru of the *sampradaya*?! Who is by the way my uncle!” So he said immediately “Instead of him I will fight with you.” The

young ones they have a hot head, ready to jump into occasions. And definitely Jiva Goswami defeated this guy, smashed him. Why? Because Jiva Goswami was practically the most massive, productive philosopher writing more than 400 000 verses on vaishnava philosophy. 400 000! “Gita” is 700. “Vedanta Sutra” is 555. “Bhagavatam” is 18 000. “Mahabharata” is 100 000 and he wrote 400 000 verses about philosophy. “Mahabharata” is 7 times greater than “Iliad” and “Odyssey” together. So from this you can understand the proportions of the works of Jiva Goswami. Of course he could not tolerate someone to challenge his master and senior. Do you like this story? Usually we like this story. But then some criticism attacked Jiva Goswami: “You think that you are cleverer than your master? This is offensive. If he says: “No, take my name and put it in your list,” you should leave it like that. Whatever is given by Rupa Goswami you should accept.” It is difficult for the young lions to accept.

But in order to protect our masters like Jiva Goswami and Rupa Goswami we have to be smart enough how to apply the rules and regulations on the practical situations. So therefore we have to learn very attentively. And this is not only lexical knowledge, collecting the facts or information, but this is trying to catch the mood because after certain limit this is not a question of information, but this is a question of mood. How we come together in service. What is the special taste that brings us together in devotional service.

Kripadham: What happened at the end with the story of Rupa and Jiva Goswami?

Tirtha Maharaj: This was the end. So the other guy surrendered of course. He admitted being defeated.

Yamuna: Did he surrender himself to Jiva or Rupa Goswami?

Tirtha Maharaj: Just imagine yourself in this situation.

Yamuna: As in the role of the defeated one?

Tirtha Maharaj: You can imagine yourself as Rupa Goswami also, but he kept silent. If we imagine ourselves in the role of the challenger, try to enter Vrindavan, irrespective of your bad mentality – that you come with a challenging mentality – you are

there. You get your lesson. First you think that you can overcome Rupa Goswami and then you are smashed by the neophyte Jiva Goswami. So your false egotism is just broken into pieces. Then you come to some higher understanding and immediately the natural born devotee is manifested in your heart and you say: "Oh Jiva Goswami Prabhupada, I was so offensive, please correct my mistakes, *koro he uttama*, make me the best devotee. I want to surrender to your lotus feet." May be with this role we can identify ourselves with. But try to identify yourselves with Jiva Goswami. Very sharp, very bright but at the same time a real devotee on the highest platform. He was protecting the dignity of the line, the dignity of his uncle, giving a lecture to an offender in such a pure way, that he comes to a higher understanding. "And he wants to surrender to me?! No, no, no – it's impossible, I cannot take it. Go to him, to my uncle!"

So if we learn this mood, Vrindavan mood, it is impossible to commit mistakes because then you do not think you are the savior of the whole world. You do not think: "Oh, I am Jiva Goswami, the protector of the line, so everyone should follow and surrender to me." Not like that.

Vrindavan is a very special place. Physically you can enter the *bhajan kutir* and the *samadhi mandir* of Rupa Goswami – it is there, available. This is at the back yard of Radha Damodar temple. But this is only a physical visit if you are not on that platform. As a tourist you can check the attractive points, tourist attractions in Vrindavan, but this is not the real thing. Because we should go to the place of Rupa Goswami with tears in our eyes.

And I have a friend – he visited the *bhajana kutir*. These little huts are standing opposite each other at the back yard. So when my friend wanted to offer *dandavats* to Rupa Goswami, the main teacher of the line, he said: "Well, I don't want to go to the place where he is buried. I want to go to the place where he is still meditating." So he decided to offer his *dandavat pranams* and prayers at the *bhajana kutir*. And while he was offering the *dandavats* he said: "Please, Rupa Goswami, you are such a great teacher, such a great master for the whole line. Give me your blessings so I can also understand a little, tiny little thing in this beautiful *bhakti* message. " And most

probably this was a sincere prayer because he was still lying on the floor when the *pujari* from the *bhajana kutir* came and gave him a garland.

If this would happen to you, what would you think? Sincere prayers are heard. And in holy places the spiritual desires are fulfilled. In case you enter Vrindavan, even if you came with a challenging mood – take your lesson, practice sincere humility, and then some drops of mercy will come to you.

9.A blessing hand instead of a punishing finger

Even if our masters let us do or do not let us do, sometimes we have to overrun the instructions. Shall I give you an example? This is a difficult, this is a hard story. Once a spiritual master told one of his disciples: “Go to that other disciple and bring his *japa* from initiation. Because he is not up to the standard, he is not doing his service, he is only criticizing and he is not cooperating, so I reject him, I withdraw my mercy from him.”

My dear ones, just imagine yourselves receiving such a service from Gurudev – go to your brother, snatch the *japamala* and tell him that „you are rejected”. Devotional service – ki jay! So our friend went to this brother and his heart was a little heavy. “I should come with such a sad message to a person, to my brother.” So with some little compassion he tried to approach the person to understand what is happening. May be the activities, may be the news are not so positive about the person, but what is there? And as they were discussing, he understood that “Wait a minute! He is not an offender. He doesn’t want to give up Gurudev’s connection. He is not so bad. Definitely he has some problems, but he is not an offender.” So what was his decision – he decided *not* to fulfill the desire, the direct instruction of the spiritual master: “Bring the *japamala* back from this person and tell him that he is rejected.” He did not do.

But you know in a good system you have to report your activities. So it did not pass unnoticed that the *japamala* did not return back and the message was not transmitted to the person. Our friend had to report what he was doing. So in a very humble way next time he started to explain to his spiritual master. His master asked: “Did you fulfill my direct order?”

I have noticed a very special type of avoiding mentality within the devotees - when they get a direct question, they come with the excuses. “Have you cooked the *prasadam* for Krishna?” “You know, Gurudev, today was very difficult and I was very engaged.” This is avoiding. Direct question, direct answer. “No, I was not preparing the *prasadam* yet.” Because usually the master is not interested in your excuses because he knows all of them, he knows much better and much more excuses than you can give. So don’t come with the excuses – direct question, direct answer, please! “Have you accomplished your rounds?” “Gurudev, you know, today...” No!

But at the classical times it was happening: direct question, direct answer. So the master asked: “Where is the *japa*? Have you accomplished the mission?” and he said: “No, Gurudev!” And then he gave the explanation why not, why this guy was very offensively overrunning the direct instruction of the spiritual master. And what did the spiritual master say? “Very nice!”

I think this is a very instructive story. Sometimes, even in spiritual circles there are very difficult services. If you are fanatic – you will go, snatch the *japa*, smash the person, accomplish your mission and get a patting on the shoulder from your master. “Yes! He is an offender number one. He is lazy, he is in *maya*. You were right, Gurudev – he is in *maya*, totally! I also knew him like this.” Trying to get a better position – up licking, down kicking. But no, this guy said: “Gurudev I could not do that, because I was watching, I was observing, I was talking to that guy and he is a very nice devotee. May be little in trouble, but don’t do that. Please don’t do like that.” It happens that sometimes instead of the punishing finger of your spiritual master you can become the blessing hand.

Yet the basic principle is to say “yes” to guru, trying to accomplish the service that is given to us, however difficult it is, because without sacrifice you cannot live and you will not be successful either in this lifetime, or in the next.

10.To see the cosmic dance

We try to catch the essence beyond the obvious outside things, to see Lord Krishna in everything. Whatever is happening to us to be happy. There are many different processes that propagate themselves: „easy and safe way to be happy”. But these are based on illusion. We should tear apart the veil of illusion in order to see the divine essence behind.

Illusion sometimes gives happiness, other times gives trouble. Sometimes when we have this happiness side we feel: “Ah, very nice!” And when we have some difficulties we think: “Ah, this is very bad!” But spirituality means, yoga means: be connected and have equal vision, whatever is coming.

If you see the divine arrangement behind everything, then you can see the essence. Our vision should be so sharp, that Krishna could not be able to hide. And this vision can be provided by a special ointment. When you have some eye disease, you apply some ointment. *Premanjana churita bhakti vilochanena/ santah sadaiva hridayeshu vilokayanti/ yam shyamasundaram achintya guna svarupam/ govindam adi purusham tam aham bhajami*³⁷ – If your eyes are anointed with the ointment of *prema*, then you will always be able to see Shyamasundara Krishna in your heart, whatever happens outside.

“Know that all states of being – be they of goodness, passion or ignorance – are manifested by My energy. I am, in one sense,

³⁷ “Brahma-samhita” 5.38

everything, but I am independent. I am not under the modes of material nature, for they, on the contrary, are within Me.”³⁸

Krishna is everything, but not everything is Krishna. So every arrangement, every thing, every occasion that is coming to you, happening to us, we should see some divine arrangement, but we should not identify. Nothing can exist apart from Krishna. He gives the definition of illusion in the “Shrimad Bhagavatam”. He says: “If something seems to be existing independent of Me, then you should know, that this is illusion.” And illusion gives troubles; Krishna gives shelter. Krishna is called Bhakta-vatsala. That means Protector of the devotees, Savior of the devotees. When our life is happy and balanced, we easily forget about Him. But in difficulty it is so easy to remember! So easy to remember! Yet remembrance can have two directions. In one taste you blame Him, in another taste you pray. And we should follow the example of Kunti Devi. Because after the Pandavas survived all the difficulties of the exile in the jungle for so many years – life danger, and killing, and hiding, and like this and like that – so many dangers, when her life stabilized, she started to pray: “Ah my Lord, please, give me some more troubles! At that time I could pray so heartfelt. I felt so close to You. Now I feel safe, everything is arranged and I am so far away from You! Please, give me some more troubles!” What a beautiful prayer! We always pray: “Ah my Lord, please, take away my troubles! I cannot think of You because of my troubles.” And Kunti Devi said: “Give me more troubles, because if I am more troubled, I can think of You more deeply.” Is it not like this? Human character works like this. When something is available, you cannot really appreciate it. But in the absence *immediately* you do. And this is the definition of a *vaishnava*: you should have such a character, that when you are present in the company, nobody recognizes you, but when you are absent, everybody is talking about you, because they are missing you. This is the spiritual training. Material training is: when I enter a society, everybody should be focused on me! So *change* this mentality!

³⁸ “Bhagavad-gita” 7.12

“Everything is coming from Me, but do not identify everything with Me.” Krishna is there, but He is there as a friend. Of course it is not a mistake if you do not pray for more difficulties in your life. Enough we have! That is enough to digest. But with the divine blessings you can do that. Even from a disaster you can come out with victory. Because finally everything is a manifestation of the divine will, cosmic dance...

11.It takes one to know one

Krishna says: *“O son of Pritha, know that I am the original seed of all the existences, the intelligence of the intelligent and the prowess of all powerful men.”*³⁹

The original seed of all existence – this is a kind of conception about the father, Supreme Father. The essence of a great tree is hidden in a small seed. From a little seed a huge, unlimited tree can come. That power is the divine power. Krishna is manifested in all existence.

And He is “the intelligence of the intelligent”. How can you recognize intelligence? If you are also intelligent. If you are stupid, you will not recognize who is intelligent, who is not. But if you are intelligent, immediately you will understand: “This person is of my kind.” Because you have the same taste, you have the same understanding, you have the same mood.

And how can you recognize Krishna? How can you recognize Supreme Intelligence? If you have supreme intelligence. Man can realize God because he has something divine in him. But men, humans are very special species. This is mixture: one part of divine and a big part of animal. The distinction is only in proportions. More

³⁹ “Bhagavad-gita” 7.10

animal, less spiritual; more spiritual, less animal. This is the human species: half animal, half angelic. But the angels never sleep.

So, first of all we have to purify our existence. We should examine our proportions of divine and animalistic properties. And we should use our intelligence to be connected to the supreme intelligence. Because in other place Krishna says: “*dadami buddhi yogam tam – I will give them the understanding by which they can come to Me.*”⁴⁰ So even your brain substance is coming from Him. Do not lose, do not spoil and do not waste your capacities. Because our intelligence is also Krishna: “I am the intelligence of the intelligent.” First of all we have to become intelligent people, and then we should understand that this intelligence is also divine. Therefore it is suggested, that in certain cases we can listen and follow the advice of the intelligence as we follow the advice of guru. In many cases we cannot consult spiritual master. But that time you can consult your pure intelligence, your pure understanding.

12.The real strength

Krishna says: “*I am the strength of the strong, devoid of passion and desire. I am sex life, which is not contrary to religious principles, o lord of the Bharatas, Arjuna.*”⁴¹

Strength is very much appreciated in the world. Knowledge, strength, power or time is very much appreciated usually. People judge things according to different measurements. *Bramins* judge superiority according to knowledge. Right? Whoever is more knowledgeable is more respected. Very useful principle. *Kshatriyas* judge according to power. *Vaishyas* judge according to money. And *shudras* judge according to age. And you collect your wealth

⁴⁰ “Bhagavad-gita” 10.10

⁴¹ „Bhagavad-gita” 7.11

according to these different levels. If you are on a *shudra* level you are doing nothing but just aging; and just collect your years. If somebody has *vaishya* mentality, he will collect money, wealth, possessions. This is so popular these days: ah, I possess so much, I am wealthy, I am great. Right? Of course, it is different if you have full pocket; you feel different when your pocket is empty. Shrila Prabhupad said that a sign of intelligence is to have always something in your pocket. And money or wealth is very sweet, very sweet, very attractive! You can be attached to that very much. But you remember, when Mao Tze Dun died, they started to sue „the gang of four”. And one of these was the wife of Mao Tze Dun. Behind a great man there is a great woman. She was very powerful and they asked her: “What is the most attractive thing on earth? Is that sex life?” She said: “It’s nothing!” And said: “Power! That is the real thing!” So *kshatriyas* search for power. They want to have influence. To influence people – this is even more charming than sexual life or money... Power! But this is stupidity. We should become minimum *bramins*, because the *bramin* collects wealth on knowledge, realizations.

All right but then where to position the *vaishnava*? *Vaishnava* is a *shudra*, or *bramin*, or *kshatriya*, or this, or that? What is the wealth of a *vashnava*? What is he collecting?

Bhakti-shakti: *Prema-bhakti*.

Tirtha Maharaj: Ah, that would be nice! On a practical level service he is collecting. And his wealth is his devotion. In this way you can transcend these human categories.

„I am the strength of the strong.” But if you are strong, you should be devoid of passion and desire. That is real power – when you have no desire and no passion. If you are really surrendered, no harm can come to you. This is the strength of a devotee – fully surrendered and fully under the protection of the Lord. This is real strength.

But then Krishna goes on saying: “I am sex life which is not contrary to religious principles.” Usually people think that sexual life is a kind of taboo and sometimes it is very difficult to talk about it. But this is simply a part of life, which should be regulated according

to divine principles, in order to achieve the goal. Sexual life is very important when you want to get *in* the material trap. Because if your father and mother did not have sexual life, you could not come. So, for entering the material platform this is necessary. But when you want to get *out* of this trap, it is not so much necessary. So, we should decide: which direction – inside or outside?

13. Gentle as a dove, clever as a snake

Humility is one great key for success. But humility does not mean stupidity. Did I tell you the story of the snake? Once there was a snake, living a little bit outside of the village. He was a father of his family and he was taking very nice care of the wife and the children. They were living in a secluded and deserted house. And he was very fearful, so people were always escaping the place, because they were afraid of being bitten by the snake. From time to time he was going out and hissing; and everybody was very much afraid. Once he was again on a tour. Then he noticed somebody approaching, without any fear. He was looking: what is this?! And in the night he had seen some shining garment of saffron color. A *sannyasi* was approaching without fear. Finally the cobra was just raising the hoods and trying to stop and influence the *sannyasi*: “This is my territory! Do not enter!” Then *swamiji* said: “Ah my dear son, I am so happy to meet you! You are such a nice creature of God!” And then the snake said: “Are you not afraid of me?” “Not at all, my dear! You are *jiva*, I am *jiva*, we belong together, we belong to the same father, I am so happy to meet you!” So, the snake was impressed: “How is that!? He is not afraid of me, treating me so gently, so nicely.” Immediately he could understand that he had met a great saint. So he surrendered on the spot: “I want to accept you as my guru. Please, teach me! What am I to do?” Guru started to give lectures. “Do like this, do like that... You know, *ahimsa* is there, but you are a *grihastha*, so take care of

the family... I will give you this mantra, chant this mantra nice and do your spiritual practices. I will return in one year and then we can discuss.” *Swamiji* slept for the night and on the next morning he went on.

So our cobra started to meditate deep: “Gurudev blessed us! So I am chanting my mantra and I feel so much love towards all the living entities.” And he was so much absorbed in these feelings and mantras, that he started to neglect *dharmā*. Before he was strong and long, and powerful, but now as he understood: “Ah, my Gurudev is so thin, so less eating, such an ascetic!” he started to follow the example. Week and months are passing and he is not eating and not taking anything – losing the power, losing the strength. Before from time to time he was carrying some foodstuff for the family; now the wife was quarreling: “Again these mantras!? No birds?! The children are dying! Why are you neglecting your duties?!” He said: “You know, my *guruji* told me like this and I want to become a nice devotee.” And he started to neglect duty not only feeding the family, but also hissing at people. So the small boys from the village were approaching more and more, throwing some small pebbles first, and later bricks on him. Because he was not hissing at them, he was trying to follow *ahimsa*, started to take only grass. His body was totally thin and full of wounds.

Finally this one year expired. *Guruji* is returning. And he is searching for his nice, strong, stalwart disciple.... But he had seen some very thin ascetic snake, hiding in the bushes. Then he asked: “Hey, what is happening to you? This is you!?” “Yes, yes, *guruji*, I am so happy that you came,” but he could not hear his voice, because he was so weak. And then he started to explain what was happening to him: “You know, I was always chanting my mantras and I started to change my diet and like this, like that... But I had a little trouble: these boys started to throw stones over me.” And guru was very much dissatisfied. “All right, I told you to follow *ahimsa*, but I did not tell you to stop hissing!”

What was the point of the story? Humility is not stupidity. Humility should be applied to saints. But you can fight for your rights. It is not necessary to bite people, but you can hiss. Lord Jesus

said: “Be gentle as a dove and be clever as a snake”. You can have both qualities.

(to be continued)

14.Homo homini lupus

(continues from the previous issue)

Question of Ramvijay: About humility. This topic is very difficult for me to understand, especially this balance between humility and stupidity. For example Jesus says: “If someone slaps you on the one side, turn the other side also.” And frankly I like this. I mean, maybe foolishly, that this is a way to let your *karma* flow. Because if they hit you, it is not without a reason. Everything has a reason. And having received a hit, if I reply to this hit, next hit will come. And also since my nature is not the nature of a fighter, maybe I prefer to accept the stones of the children in the case of this snake rather than really fighting. On the other hand we know the advice coming from “Bhagavad Gita” that it is not always good to accept everything that is coming. So if you could enlighten us a little bit more on how to decide and how to act properly, not to mix up being very humble and at the same time not generating *karma* and not being stupid.

Tirtha Maharaj: This ideal that you have mentioned from the Bible to show your other cheek - I have read that many times and I have heard that many times, but I think I can tell you I have never seen that in practice. Why is this? Because this is a wrong idea? I do not think so. But this is too high. Too high! Too high to believe that it works.

Little examples I can mention. For example once a devotee was travelling in a metro. It was half empty, he was sitting and a strong guy came in front of him and said: “I want to sit down *here*.” And the devotee said: “Yes, please, take my seat.” And our violent

man was so much impressed that he could not fight with this person, he was amazed. So sometimes non-violence really works.

But that standard is quite high – to show the other cheek. The limit of tolerance and humility in Hungarian language, in our use is: “You can chop wood on his back.” Tolerant person is such – you can chop wood on his back. This is also high! I had a friend who was like this. Many people tried this on his back and he was tolerant for some time. But then he said: “Now stop! This is the end.”

Of course humility is a risky game. Because if you are humble, you show your weakness. Weakness in such a sense that “I am not fighting.” When wolves are fighting they are very strong and very ferocious animals. When one feels “Ah, I am defeated,” he gives the neck: “You can bite my neck.” And what happens at that time? The stronger, the victorious *does not* bite the neck. What is the material standard amongst humans? You fight, you lose, you give your neck and they *bite!* Homo homini lupus – human is wolf for another human. Sometimes human beings are even worse than animals. What is a natural standard for wolves is a very unnatural standard for humans. So, if you are humble towards wolves and fools, then you lose.

But to handle such a situation there is a good advice: discriminate between the action and the actor. Because you can disagree with the activity, still you should fully respect the person. Even in difficult situation, even if some attack is coming to us. You can defend yourself, but you should have gentle feelings.

So, humility should be applied in the right company, where they will not misuse your humility. If somebody will misuse your humility, try to avoid that situation. I share your opinion, I would not fight either. But if somebody is a fighter, no problem, he can fight.

There is another story - it is a very nice story - that in the jungles of South America some Christian missionaries established their mission. And the same soldier who was before hunting for the Indians, later he became a monk and went to the same spot in the jungle to the Indian mission. And due to some political reasons they decided to close up this mission. The high priest and the high politicians said: “You should stop!” But of course they did not want

to stop, because this is beautiful! So, an army was sent against them and the monks and the people in the mission were preparing - according to their nature. The old father was making *puja*. He was a *brahmin*, so he was making a *puja*, celebrating the mass, praying, singing – like this. And this new member of the mission, who was a fighter before, what was he doing? He was organizing the fight! He was teaching the young kids how to fight, how to use the guns and everything. So, he was using his capacities for the same purpose. We can say that this is violent, but in my calculation this is service. This is humility – to protect the mission.

So according to our habit, according to our character, according to our *guna*, we can also take part in our spiritual practices. Our humility is how to satisfy Shri Guru, Shri Krishna, *vaishnavas* – Hari, guru, *vaishnava* – three. Humility is the entrance fee to the divine realm. Do not forget to pay the price of entrance.

15. Difficult moments in the spiritual practice

Question of Bhakti Shakti: I wanted to ask what is the help, what is your advice if it is becoming hard sometimes to follow your *sadhana*...?

Tirtha Maharaj: Do it more strong!

Bhakti Shakti: ... or you are starting to neglect your duties..?

Tirtha Mahara: Do not do that! You asked what is the advice. This is the advice.

Bhakti Shakti: Yes, but I mean, is there any instrument to help?

Tirtha Maharaj: Be more serious. More intent. Do not play with the fire. Because if you play with the fire, you will burn yourself. If you think: “Now, be just a little bit more flexible on the rules. We should not be fanatic about this *sadhana*, we are *raga-*

marga devotees. *Sadhana* is for the beginners. Now, after half a year...” Do not do that.

But of course there are some difficult moments in our spiritual life, difficult periods. At that time we should be more attentive. From cultivation results will come. So maybe we cannot concentrate our full energy on one specific service, then go for the other service. But *something* should be done very strongly. And by this slowly, slowly you can come to the same standard. Because you know the three main reasons why somebody stops his progress in the spiritual life. What is that?

Kripadham: *Aparadha*?

Tirtha Maharaj: This is the third.

Kripadham: To loose his *sadhana*.

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes. And what is the first actually? The first is when your *sukriti* is running out. *Sukriti* is running out – you stop. But you gain more *sukriti*, you go on. *Sadhana* gives you much strength; when you give up *sadhana*, you lose your energy. When you take up *sadhana*, the same strength comes to you. The difficult thing is *aparadha*. It should be avoided. Associate more, pray more, chant more. Try to create such an atmosphere around you that you can *dive deep*. And wait...

Bhakti Shakti: To wait for what?

Tirtha Maharaj: For the mercy to come.

16. The crown of creation

Question of Kripadham: We know the story of Brahma in *krishna-lila* when he steals the friends of Krishna, not knowing that this is Krishna. We also know that Brahma is the highest entity in our universe. And also we know that he is one of the founders of our *parampara*. How does it happen that Kaliya, who is a demon in *krishna-lila*, gets directly the mercy of the lotus feet of Krishna, and Brahma even does not recognize that this is Krishna? I cannot

understand why Krishna decided to dance on the heads of Kaliya, but with Brahma performed another type of *lila*. As Kaliya is a demon, and Brahma is a devotee!

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes, but they had different roles to fulfill. And you know, Saraswati was not present in the *lila*. And Saraswati is the *shakti* partner of Brahma. But the *nagapatnis*, the wives of Kaliya, were present in Kaliya-*lila*. So, Kaliya was a dull-headed snake. But the ladies were so devoted to Krishna, that they were praying to Him: “Ah, do not kill our husband! If he dies what shall we do!?” But, you know, Krishna was in danger, because the snake was coiling Him up, so He decided to do something about it. Still the wives were crying so charmingly, that He could not resist. And the ladies suggested: “We know, that our Kaliya has many heads and in each head bad thoughts about You. There is only one way for him to get rid of these bad thoughts – if You dance out, kick out these bad thoughts out of his heads.”

So, if the ladies interfere, the *lilas* are more mild. If the ladies were not there, Krishna simply would finish quickly with him. But because the ladies were so devoted to Krishna: “Please, do not kill this stupid Kaliya! We need him!” Krishna said: “All right, but what can I do then?” “Dance on his heads!” In this way, by the blessings of some devotees, the devoted wives, Kaliya achieved this special touch of Krishna’s feet.

So what can we do? For male devotees there are two options: if you are stupid, take a nice devoted wife; if you are not so stupid, it is not necessary.

Kripadham: But finally as I know Brahma did not receive the mercy from the lotus feet of Krishna?

Tirtha Maharaj: Why? Because he had his crown on his head. First we should put off our crown. Because Brahma came as the lord of the universe. A little disturbed: “Did I do it right or wrong, or what is going on...?!” But still the crown was on top of his head. Men are the same, they feel they are the crown of creation. So they put their own crown. But have you tried bowing down your head with a crown?! It does not really work. Put down your crown and then you can bow down your head.

But this is a complicated *lila*. Brahma-lila and Kaliya-lila is very broad. You can read about this in the “Loving search for the lost servant” from Shrila Shridhara Maharaj. But basically if we have some friends, who can say a word for us to Krishna, then we are safe.

17.They do not belong here

Damodar: My question is why we, the living entities that are here, are not coming directly from there, from the spiritual world?

Tirtha Maharaj: Then from where? We come directly, but the question is what the starting point is. The destination is clear – this is the material world. But the starting point is may be a little hazy for one or the other. But if you study the version of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu about the origin of the soul and the original position of the soul – then the picture is very clear. Because He says: “*jivera svarupa haya krishnera nitya-dasa krishnera tatastha-shakti bhedabheda prakasha*”⁴² That means that the original position of the spirit soul is that he is servant of Krishna. And he originally is *tatastha-shakti* of the Lord, the marginal energy of God, similar and different at the same time. So I think this quite clearly explains the whole situation that you come directly from the spiritual world, but you are *tatastha-shakti*. *Tatastha-shakti* also is included in *para-shakti*, in divine realm, but not in divine presence, personal presence. It is only a question of section, of your point of view. But next time when we visit the sea you will very easily understand this. Because if you walk on the shore you are sometimes under the influence of the water, sometimes under the influence of the dry land – this is *tatastha-shakti*: sometimes this, sometimes that.

But to be a personal companion of Krishna – that is different. From that you cannot come. Prahlad Maharaj says: “How can I ever

⁴² „Chaitanya-charitamrita” Madhya, 20.108

leave his service?!” This is very important, very nice verse from the “Srimad-bhagavatam”: “How can I ever leave his service?!” If you are committed to your master, if you are committed to your Lord – how can you ever leave his service?! And those, who have the personal contact, who are personal companions, *parishads* of God Himself – they can never leave Him. They cannot fall. It is said “In Vaikuntha not even the leaves fall.” They are evergreen, everything is evergreen. How can *jivas* fall if not even the leaves fall? That’s impossible.

But when you are in this marginal place sometimes the waves of illusion will come and wipe you off, take you for a ride, for a swim. But if you *decide*: “No. I want to go back. I don’t want to serve this illusory ocean”, then Mayadevi will understand that “he is not my servant” and the ocean will spit you off. That means you will fall from your illusory position. But that fall is an elevation, is a jump.

Yamuna: Sadhu Maharaj also said that we have to prove to *maya* that we are completely useless so that she can spit us out.

Tirtha Maharaj: Something like this. But for that you don’t have to work very hard. Most of the devotees are very useless; not from the divine point of view, but from the material point of view. Why? Because they do not belong here. They are strangers, foreigners in this land. By mistake you are here, you are not originating from here. But as soon as you come back to your original home, then you feel fine. And then immediately we shall find our use. How we can be useful for Krishna’s service. We can be useful if we submit ourselves to Krishna. He is waiting for you. This is the beauty of the *bhakti* process. That it is not us who are waiting for God, but God is waiting for us. Do you understand how deep it is? Our superior is taking care, He is expecting us to join his campaign! Do not make Him wait too long. Because immediately when we achieve our eternal destination our life becomes fulfilled.

Yashoda: I want to ask what is ecstasy?

Tirtha Maharaj: Ecstasy is what you feel at the end of the *kirtan*.

Yashoda: ... and why there is fear from it?

Tirtha Maharaj: Because it's very heavy. Why there is a fear? Because you don't have the taste for it. As soon as we shall have the taste, we shall not be able to live without it.

18. The main ingredient

Question: Would you please explain to us the meaning of those completely material things that we have to do in order to follow the path of devotion? I mean the hygiene of the body, washing our teeth, maintaining order in our home – those most simple material things and what is their meaning? Because may be some people think: “Okay. I am sitting and chanting, connecting with God, pouring water on my plant of devotion, but I am leaving the other things behind.” Is this an obstacle on the way?

Tirtha Maharaj: If you have an obedient wife – no. I chant and the others work – this is a good distribution. I agree, your spiritual development is somehow shown in your activities, reflected in your circumstances. If you have order inside you will have order outside also. But only for the sake of those who has no other measurement than material we follow and we accept some material standards also. Because most of the people can understand that if this is a nice book then this must be a good religion. It is very simple combining one experience with some opinions.

At the same time it is said in the tradition that with black nails you cannot go back to Vaikuntha. Even the *shastras*, even the *acharyas* and the high gurus have to educate people on the very simple basic platform also. But if the spiritual teacher discusses the topic how to keep the order in the temple it doesn't mean that this is his level. Or if you cook together with your spiritual master you should not think that you have the same capacity to stir the *dahl*. Try it, his *dahl* will be different. Why? Because of the stirring capacity? Or due to the cleansed fingers? No, I am sure, due to the cleansed

heart. So if we keep our fingers very clean, but we cannot purify our hearts, then you knock at the door of Vaikuntha: “I have come. Look at my fingers! Good?” They will say: “Sorry. Go back! Few more rounds down there.”

Yet somehow we have to start a general war against illusion, so that no illusion could enter our fingers, no illusion could enter our hearts, no illusion could enter our consciousness. Cleanliness is next to godliness. Because if there is disorder outside it will be very difficult to keep order inside. First you will have dirt in the corners and then everywhere; and then the worms will also come. So we have to come to the *sattvic* platform as much as possible.

The body works on the energy input system. If we put bad, or distorted, or improper energy into our system on any level – it will have some effect. Therefore peaceful environment can help our spiritual development. In the *shastras* there are recommendations what kind of environment you should have: isolated nice place with the chirping of birds and the swans swimming in the nearby lake. And the surface is even, no pebbles, no thorns, no disturbing elements. No people. No noise. And no 20 cm of snow. It is strictly forbidden! And there you can enter deep into your meditation. What do we have? Sofia. Noise. People. No swans - big problem! No chirping of beautiful birds, but only the shouting of crows.

So sometimes we cannot provide all the necessary ingredients, but still we have to provide one main ingredient and that is dedication. By dedication even the mistakes become ornaments.

19. *Consensus, not compromise*

Question: If someone wants to make a compromise, to light a cigarette, just one cigarette for today, or just one beer – in that sense, how does the material cleanliness influence the path? We think at the same time that we shall sing few songs, we shall make our chanting and everything will be wiped away.

Tirtha Maharaj: No doubt, the holy name is very powerful. If you start to follow the practice, the rules and regulations, then you can quickly jump from your previous position. I do not really like compromises, because compromise means that I have to give up something. But I like consensus, that means we both agree on certain points. So instead of compromises we should go for consensus.

But it depends on the situation. Once there was a sixty years old lady, vegetarian for forty years and she had some blood pressure problems. So the doctor told her: “Well, sometimes you can drink coffee.” And she said: “Coffee!? Oh, that is very sinful! How I will go back to Vaikuntha if I drink coffee?!” But if you drink a coffee for your sense enjoyment, to have the feeling – or you take it instead of some pills to regulate your blood pressure – in this special case I think this is not an obstacle. Yet, if in the *sampradaya* everybody wants to regulate his or her blood pressure by drinking this and that – of course that is stupid!

The basic rule is to keep all the regulations. Actually there are three levels: one is the *dharma*, the teachings as a whole; then there are the rules and regulations, the prohibitions; and the third one is the recommendations. All three we have to follow. Basically try to understand this whole structure of beautiful philosophy and practice. This is *bhakti-dharma*. Then follow the rules and regulations, it will help you. Krishna says in “Bhagavad-gita”: “Always think of Me. If you cannot do that – follow the rules, then you can come closer to Me.”⁴³ But in most of the cases the rules and regulations will tell you what *not* to do. Do not do this! Do not do that! Then what to do?

⁴³ “Bhagavad-gita” 12.8-9

That is given in the recommendations. Do this, do that. This is the positive side - giving some good advice and if you follow you will see the result. We should take the full story. Not only a limited version. You pick certain parts of the picture which you like and you practice, and for the things you do not like you say: "This is external." No, we should take the full picture.

But love of Godhead is ultimately not a question of diet. This is not a question of fashion, what kind of robes you wear. Not a question of language – Sanskrit or other. But this is a question of transformation in the heart. And all the knowledge in this divine science – all the rules and regulations, and prohibitions, and all the recommendations work for your benefit. Replace the bad practice with good practice.

And where to learn the good practice? Therefore we go to the saints, therefore we associate with the devotees. Sometimes people learn languages by themselves. We had one writer, who had learned English by himself in a jail. And when he started to speak to English people they ask: "What kind of language you speak?" He thought that he is speaking English, but it was something else. In the same way, if you take your "Bhagavad-gita", you sit at home and you start to study how to become a devotee, Krishna will ask you: "Sorry, what kind of language you speak?" But if you have a professor, he will tell you the correct pronunciation. Therefore we must have some instructors, therefore we must have some companions, we must have a spiritual master, who will explain to us how to understand, how to go deeper, how to penetrate this high topics. By following the advice of our spiritual masters we can come to a more regulated lifestyle and also we can achieve our spiritual goals. Simply by following *sadhana*, a spiritual regime, a practice you can be very effective in your life. But if somebody cannot meet certain standards you should help him or her. Time is on our side.

20. The meaning of real progress

This is a new year ahead of us, plus eternity. What should be our program for this year? To carry on the heavy luggage? Or to put down your burdens...

Usually at the turn of the years, people make some balance about the tempo of the dance rhythm: what was happening, what they expected; what was their goal and what are their achievements.

It is not enough simply to wait for the miracle to happen to us, we also have to act. The chance to grow and the chance to develop ourselves are very inspiring for all of us. But what is this progress? Is it in some achievements that you can measure? In items or numbers, or something like this? We all know that the real development, the real progress is something else. I feel that real progress is when you come closer to God, for example. Or when something that was inaccessible for you before all of a sudden becomes your practice. When the impossible becomes possible – this is real progress. When we repeat, we do the same thing and all of a sudden it becomes ecstasy. And when we see the devotees around us more and more like devotees. When we are able to perceive this divine beauty around. When we understand that the practical dedication is the real answer to all the questions. Or when we understand that collecting the twigs for the fire gives us a lesson about eternity. When you remove a piece of stone and you see the complete whole. When you look around and you see those with whom you will live this lifetime in dedication. Real progress is when Krishna cannot hide anymore from your vision. And this does not concern simply the official formulas: the temple, the deities, the worship, “Bhagavatam” or your *japa*; but when it is extended and expanded to all the moments of your life.

Desire is natural, this is a natural expression of our existence, of our soul. Desire is very natural, but what we should desire for? Prestige, adoration, distinction? Private fulfillment, material satisfaction or worldly frustration? Money, women, fame?

Simplicity, purity, humility? Faith, hope, love? Happiness, happiness, happiness...? What we should desire for? Wherever we start from, we come to love. This is the ultimate word in all respects. And if we can practice divine love, all other spiritual practices are considered insignificant. It is a great art; and this art is humanly beautiful and divinely wonderful. Enough for one lifetime.

Still, how to measure the progress? We agreed, not in the obvious things. Children are born, our services become more and more expanded, devotees join the group – and we can continue. But the greatest proof of progress is the breakdown of blocks. When the barriers are removed. I can see on the faces of the devotees that the misunderstanding is gone. Inner difficulties are removed. And if we have a deeper vision and if we treat each other in a more *vaishnava* way, more spiritual way – that is real progress. I should tell you a secret. Many times we have seen or heard that devotees were coming together, discussing, making some resolution, etc. And they can go on fighting and complaining and things like this after resolutions. But very, very few times, practically at no times, I have ever seen in my short little time of devotional service that devotees are coming together to improve their services; that they make a “competition”, so to say, who will chant the holy names in a more penetrating, dedicating and more divine way. Therefore I should quote from a letter: “Let me share a secret. I am also trying, and with some success, to chant more rounds and for the first time I really feel happiness, inner satisfaction and that higher taste, impossible to express by words.” What can we say?! Jay Radhe... I consider this real progress. If someone comes closer to this higher taste, do we need any other proofs? Do we need any other achievements? If you are satisfied, do you need anything else? I think not. Then we are completely fulfilled.

21. Some good words

We have to note which service will bring us further, but it is even more important which service is dear to Krishna. Maybe something is attractive for me, but if it is attractive for Krishna – that is the main question.

For the next years, dear fathers and mothers, raise your kids to be honest and reliable persons, and good devotees. We should not forget about this minimum twenty years duty. And after that you will see how your investment pays off. How much your dedication is growing in the hearts of your kids. Please share with others what you have perceived. If there is an experience, there is something to share. Study the scriptures and try to feel deeply that this is direct worship of the Divine Couple and this kind of sacrifice is also dedicated directly to Them. Establish and develop your private life, but beyond that help the progress of the mission. And do not think that it is too complicated. If *you* become a little better devotees or a little happier persons, that is a big contribution. The spiritual unity will give incredible power and it will help to avoid disharmony. You can contribute with some practical work also.

We should always think about the next generation, coming after us, following us. Give to the new devotees the same what you have got – that attention, that happiness, that service, that is provided to you by other devotees. Preserve the achievements and multiply them. If you sow a seed it will fructify after some time. Appreciate all results, however small or insignificant they are, because it is given by Krishna. We should be able to share the happiness of divine service with others. Help the progress of others – this will make you really satisfied. I am together with you in the service of beauty and love.

And I would like to say thanks to all of you for your services these years. Because you are doing great job. Illusion is very attractive and she can engage her servants completely. So that is a real miracle that somebody wants to escape that charm and decides

that “I want to dedicate my life in divine service.” Usually the duty of the spiritual master is not to say good, nice words about devotees. Still I have to say that your god brothers and god sisters appreciate you very much. They see some example in you. And something more I have to tell you, now speaking as a friend: that your spiritual master loves you very much. The Sofia mood is so important for Hungarian devotees that they cherish it like the highest and the most burning, flaming essence. Somebody is protecting you from all bad influence.

22. Religion, mysticism and bhakti

After so many years we are still together here. Which is stronger – the past, the present or the future? Where to find God – in the past, in the present or in the future? In the present moment. That means, we need the *bhakti* school of yoga. Because religion says we can find God in the past. Mysticism says we can find God in the future. *Bhakti*, the way of divine love says we can find Him here and now.

This is our chance to live a full, complete present moment. And the best way to find Him is when we purify our vision. The Supreme Lord is hidden in so many ways. In so many places He is hiding. Especially where? He is hiding practically in the hearts of the pure devotees. And it is also said that the pure devotees are in His heart. So whenever we come closer to God, that means we also come closer to His associates. And whenever we come closer to His associates, that means we come closer to Him.

Therefore practice *bhakti*. Because by religion you can become a follower of *dharma*, a dharmic person. He is called *dharmachari* - living according to *dharma*. It is much better than *adharmachari* – person who is not living according to *dharma*. But simply to become dharmic is boring for Krishna.

If you are a mystic, you will live in mist. But *bhakti* will clean up this mist.

To find God not in the past, not in the future, but in the present moment we must apply this very special method – divine love. In most of the cases religion is a way to preserve some culture; in most of the cases mysticism is a way to miss the target; but *bhakti* should be a direct way. Therefore this is religion above religion, this is mysticism over mysticism. *Raja vidya raja guhyam*⁴⁴ – the king of knowledge and the king of mysticism. This is our *bhakti* process.

23.Reduce opulence, raise intimacy

Mahaprabhu was visiting one place not far from Jagannath Puri. This place is a small village but famous for worshipping a deity of Lord Vishnu there. And Vishnu comes with all opulence, right? He is God Supreme. He comes with four hands. And just like the kid says: “Give me one, give me another”- to have in both hands – good that they do not have four hands, because then you should work harder to satisfy them. But if Lord Vishnu comes, He has all four hands and He captures the whole world and keeps the whole world’s sacred life in His four hands. Everything is covered by Him. He is a beautiful, big, black God with four hands. Marvelous worship is there. But when Mahaprabhu entered the temple, He paid respect, yet somehow He was dissatisfied. “Ah my Lord,” He said, “why are You hiding from me? Why are You showing this external, divine, four-armed form? Why do not You show me Yourself?” And that prayer was so intense, that in that moment some external hands were removed from the deity. Then the real divine Krishna form manifested. At that time Krishna said: “I cannot hide Myself.”

⁴⁴ “Bhagavad-gita” 9.2

When God comes as a worshiper, God comes as a devotee, this is very special. When God comes as God, it is simple. Nothing special, God is God. But when God Supreme comes in a hidden form, *gupta-avatar*, then there is a very special reason for His appearance. If God comes in His opulence and His power then He plays the role of God. You cannot imitate that, because He is Supreme, He can do, I cannot. But when He comes as a worshiper, then you can follow. Then you can do what He is doing: pray to the deities that Their two extra hands fall off. If your prayer is strong enough, it will happen. This is the real essence of devotional life – we follow a good example. When Mahaprabhu came, when God came as a worshiper, then we can follow His example.

Very similar is the situation in Christianity. People have a vague idea about God Himself, God Father, but they have some conception of God Son. It is easier to follow someone, who is closer to us.

Just like in the “Bhagavad-gita” Arjuna said: “Show me Your divine opulence.” “All right,” said Krishna, “I will show you something. But first I will give you a divine vision to be able to perceive.” He gave him the vision and then He showed the divine opulence. Then Arjuna was frightened. Even with the divine eyes he said: “Wow! It is a little too much for me! Slowly, slowly... Where are You, my Lord? I see only the opulence, but where are You?” Then Krishna reduced the opulence, but raised the intimacy. But only one step, He said: “All right, it is not the Universal Form, I will show you My four-armed form.” A downgrade, so to say. But even that was too much for Arjuna, he said: “That is a little better. Show me Your original form, to which I am accustomed to.” Then He reduced even more opulence, and raised more intimacy – two hands. Does it mean that He reduced opulence? No, His opulence did not diminish, it was overflowing in a different way.

So, if we achieve the divine blessings, we shall be able to perceive Him, able to perceive the spiritual bliss, able to perceive this mercy that we are discussing so many times. Do not forget, once devotees asked one master: “Where to find mercy?” He said: “It is all

around. It is here. Do not you see? Do not you feel?” So, blessings will help us to achieve this divine vision.

24.Ointment of the lotus flower

We should have such an intense desire that Krishna shows Himself, that He should not be able to hide. For that we have to purify our existence, but we need something extra – some little blessings. Because our eyes are in a diseased condition. If you go to the doctor, he will give you some drops: “Apply these drops to your eyes and they will be cured.” What drops should we apply to the materially diseased eyes? What ointment we should use? We are talking about the eyes diseased by material conception.

Premananda: These should be the drops prescribed by the spiritual master.

Tirtha Maharaj: And if he is not a medical practitioner? Well, this is very close to the solution. It is said that we must apply the ointment of a potion from a flower. Which flower should we pick from the Indian flora? Better we pick the lotus. Where to find the lotus?

Yashoda: In the lotus feet.

Tirtha Maharaj: So, this special ointment is called *guru pada-padma* – the ointment of the lotus feet of the spiritual master. That ointment applied on the materially diseased eyes will give you the divine vision. And this is not only nice flowery words, very poetic expression. But what does it really mean? What will you remember if you see a lotus flower? The lotus is the symbol of purity. If you see a lotus flower immediately you will remember purity. And if you see the lotus feet of God, what will you remember?

Ramvijay: Mercy.

Tirtha Maharaj: Well... yes, yes, this is when we receive. I will tell you: we should remember service. If you see lotus feet – service. Do not forget, if you see some lotus feet – service mood. Krishna has different lotuses on His body. Lotus feet, lotus navel, lotus eyes – so many different lotuses are there. But start with the lotus feet. Do not gaze at the lotus face of Krishna. Because maybe that purity is too much burning. Start with the lotus feet and step by step raise your vision.

This is what it means to apply the ointment of the lotus flower of the spiritual master. And step by step we try to follow the instructions more and more, we serve here, we do something there, elevate our consciousness – this is the way.

At first it might be a mechanical process; later on this will be your second nature. And this is the real transformation. We should work for that and by this ointment our vision will be changed.

25.Face yourself

The inner progress, inner development has a very difficult element – you have to face yourself, so that to understand all our realities, so to say. It is a very complicated feeling, difficult feeling, but it will help our inner progress. If we practice humility, it will elevate us. If you make yourself low, you will be raised. This is a very simple formula we should practice. We have to face ourselves because we cannot hide behind the back of others. We cannot quote on others, we cannot rely on others. We have to face ourselves, we have to face our faith, we have to face our God. Of course, this is very beneficial if we have some support. And we have support. But depending on our understanding we perceive this support in a different way. We can perceive the world in such a way that is given to us. Either this is our limitations, our *gunas*, or this is mercy, that is extended to us – it will limit our ability to perceive life. Show me all

the beauty – this should be our prayer. Then this inner progress, the correct vision will come.

Be blessed, go on with your services, forget about yourselves – then you will be more satisfied.

Yashoda: How can we do this – first to face ourselves and then forget ourselves at the same time?

Tirtha Maharaj: Well, do not forget your mistakes or shortcomings. Keep it in mind. And that is enough to face yourself.

But facing ourselves can also mean a very special type of egotism. I am concerned with my mistakes. I meditate on *my* shortcomings. If we overestimate or underestimate ourselves - this is also mistake.

Facing yourself means that you are your best friend. Your good friend is always with you, gives honest opinion, is your best critic. And we have to be very aware what is going on. If we are aware of our activities, influences, responses, that means that we face ourselves, that we are able to examine ourselves from the outside.

The next step, how to forget about ourselves – this is a question of dedication. If we have given ourselves - no rights anymore. Shrila Shridhara Maharaj many times says: “All rights are reserved – by Krishna.”

26. First use your brain, then lose your brain

Question of Paramananda: I have heard that Sadhu Maharaj had said that being thankful creates distance. Does it mean that when one achieves love, loving relationship with the Supreme Lord, his thankfulness transforms into something else?

Tirtha Maharaj: Very nice question, but let us analyze the first part a little bit more. Again this analysis! You see, the answer is very fallen, very insignificant. Analysis... But anyway we have to analyze. Because it is said that there are three types of devotees: the

beginners, the intermediate and the great ones. And if we meet anyone, we can be on the same platform, he can be superior, or he can be more neophyte than us. In the material sphere if you meet people you lick upwards and you kick downwards. But we should not apply the same method in spiritual dealings - that we try to flatter those who are ahead of us and we try to kick those who come behind us. Every connection should be based on appreciation, trust and love. And again in the material sphere if you start to glorify someone he will accept. "Yes. Yes, yes, you see my greatness. Correct." But if you start to glorify a real pure-hearted devotee, he will say: "No, no, no, what do you speak... It's not me." And this is real humility, it is not a show. Nevertheless we shouldn't forget that he is superior and I am coming later. And if a superior says "O my brother!" and embraces you, you should not say: "Yes, my dear!" Because still we are not on the same level. So whatever is extended to us, whatever is given to us from a higher authority, we should accept it nicely. If this is his gentle embrace, then we *let* ourselves be embraced. But do not pat him on the shoulder back. Still at least in the inner core of our heart we should maintain some knowledge of distance.

Once Gurudev was playing chess with one of his disciples. And the disciple won. So, it is a very interesting moment.

Yamuna: I thought Gurudev is unbeatable!

Tirtha Maharaj: Basically yes, yet sometimes he let the devotees win. But of course if a guru plays chess with you, this is not simply a game, this is a chance to instruct you. With this disciple he had such an intimate connection that the disciple could win over the guru. But then immediately Gurudev said: "Do not forget who taught you to play chess!" Is this a good instruction? It is a very good instruction! Because in one sense – and forget about the chess – the victory of the disciple, this is the glory of the master. Like the example of Lokanath Goswami and Narottam das Thakur. If Narottam das Thakur invited sixty thousand people under the banner of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, this is the glory of his master, who had only one or few disciples. So in one sense the disciple is greater than the master, right, because he has many followers. But of course a real disciple will never think like this. "Gurudev's mercy. It's not my

achievement, it's not my service, he is acting through me.” This is called dedication. “Whatever service and achievement comes to me – this is not mine but my authority’s.” So if any superior is very gentle, very open to us, I would not say be reserved” - no, accept what is given to you, but don't forget about your position. It is better if we have natural atmosphere with decent mood - when the mood is relaxed and still it is surcharged with polite appreciation.

The second part of your question was if our feeling of gratitude transforms into something else connected with Krishna. Just read the “Bhagavatam”, you will see what kind of transformation is there. When the *gopis* are chastising Krishna I don't really see any sign of gratitude, they are heavily chastising Him. And I think that the power of ladies to chastise men comes from that source. So dear brothers, husbands, this is our daily bread – just to remind you about Goloka Vrindavan. From any thing, from any kind of situation you can get spiritual benefit. So you can be very grateful to your wives to remind you.

But to be a little more serious: gratitude is there until a certain limit. Because anyway gratitude creates some distance. Until there is the knowledge about the majesty of the Lord, this *aishvarya-gyata*, we can be grateful. But the closer you go, the more you forget. Here *buddhi-yoga* is the basic approach, right? But if our *priti*, our affection will erase our intelligence, this is the real way to approach, to come closer. We cannot take part in an ecstatic dance with some feeling of gratitude. There is no calculation in ecstasy. Therefore it is said: “First use your brain, then lose your brain.” But when the dance is over we come back to the normal state. And the best transformation is if our gratitude grows into more affection. Yet gratitude is a natural response of a human being for the divine mercy. If Krishna is merciful then we are grateful. It is a natural transaction, it is good.

You try to think the opposite way, put yourself in the position of the respected person. You enter the room, because you want to enjoy the company of the others, you enter the room and everybody just stops and trembles. It is not very convenient. Or you want to ask the personal opinion of someone and he starts with some long list of

glorifying prayers to you. Sometimes you need simple human dealings. But the invitation comes from above. If we are invited to dance, we dance. If we are instructed to control ourselves, we control ourselves. This is dedication.

27. Proof that God is a person

Question of Yadunath: Are there any objective linguistic proofs that God is a person? Like when He says “Aham”. Because if I try to step out of the *bhakti* circle I am quite weak and I really do not have a strong answer. How could I explain to them?

Tirtha Maharaj: Proof that God is a person? How can we prove the existence of the sun? Open your eyes, go out in the sun and immediately you will see.

To quote a *sloka* from “Bhagavad-gita” for those, who have no conception that God is a person is useless. It will have no effect. But once I heard a devotee preaching so sweetly, telling: “There is somebody to take care of you. There is a Supreme Lord, He is embracing you and leading your path. Can’t you feel that?” I think this might be a better explanation. To give a few drops of faith, of hope, of *rasa*.

I think linguistic proofs are very weak to prove anything. Because if you try to prove something by reason, by arguments, tomorrow comes somebody with stronger arguments and then you lose everything you have got. Thesis, antithesis, synthesis - always fluctuating, always moving. But when you are emotionally convinced, then you can lose your conviction only if you get some more dose of affection.

But actually to prove anything is very difficult. How can you prove the existence of God? There is no way. There are some proofs for the existence of God, but they work *only* if you accept them. I am

not joking, this is true! Only if you accept that this logic is the topic. This creation is type of explanation, there is teleological explanation that God exists, but these different proofs work only if you accept that they are valid. So there is this ontological proof that God exists, there is this cosmological proof that God exists and there is this physical teleological proof – too much complicated – but they work only if you accept them. Yet in the same way you cannot prove that God doesn't exist either! It is also impossible to prove.

Proving is very basic, very elementary level. Even about the truth they say: It is not necessary to understand the truth – serve it. Can you explain what truth is? Can you prove what truth is? No. We cannot understand, but we can serve. Life – can you explain what life is? You should not think about the mystery of life, you should *live* your life. Can you explain who God is? Therefore Srila Prabhupad says: “Simply try to love Krishna.”

Concerning your question, in one sense everything – all your conclusions, all your *siddhanta*, all your grammar – depends on the school where you belong. From the “Bhagavad-gita” you can come to the conclusion that God is impersonal - ah, not God, because that is too specific – but the Ultimate is impersonal. And you can come to the conclusion that God is our Krishna! My Krishna! Why? Because from the milk ocean they churned both poison and nectar. Same ocean – opposite fruits. First was the poison that could kill all the world, *hala-hala*. And the last one was *amrita* – the nectar of immortality. From the same source you can bring poison and you can bring nectar. Depends on the school – how you churn the ocean. How you try to understand “Bhagavad-gita” – you can come to nectar and you can come to poison. Therefore the school is very important. Beyond a certain limit there is no other explanation – only the line. And here on the Balkan Peninsula we think that it is a very easy question – how to identify the line, the school. But I tell you, this is very highly complicated question. Because the different *shakhas*, the different schools, traditional lines of the Vedic explanations have opposing opinions on certain verses. So in one sense we can say: even the school does not really help you. What helps us? Someone who can explain something about the school and

the line and the opposing elements. Therefore *shakha*, line, guru, *parampara* – they all work for the same transmission: to help you find the path back home, back to Godhead.

Try to prove that God is a person by some emotional surplus.

28. *Avadhuta*

Nityananda Prabhu got the instruction to enlighten people about the holy names of Krishna. But how do you think, He was an obedient servant or He had some private opinion? He had private opinion, because He was *avadhuta* type. He thought: “I have got an instruction to do this, but better I do something else.” Sometimes do you have that feeling also? You got an instruction from your master and then you decide to do another way. Because you know it better, right!? This is when you are coming closer to this *avadhuta* style: “I know better!”

There was a story when a master told a disciple: “Well, in order to get some training I feel that you need to go to some martial arts, because there you will be disciplined and you will learn something.” All right, next time after half a year again they meet, so the master asks: “Have you gone to martial arts?” and the boy says: “No.” The master says: “How not?! I have told you to go there.” “Yes, you have told, but I was thinking about this and I thought that maybe it is better to practice yoga instead of martial arts.” So the master says: “All right! And did you go to practice yoga?” He said: “No!”

This is the *avadhuta* style, you do not care practically for anything. Of course we all know that Nityananda Prabhu was an *avadhuta* type. But here is a little secret. He is not simply neglecting or rejecting the instructions, but He had a special mood. Finally He did not preach about Krishna *nam*, but He started to preach about something else. How was that mantra? “*Bhaja Gourang, kaha*

Gouranga, laha gourangera nam...” This was His mood, this was His preaching. He did not want to glorify some ancient, faraway God, Krishna, hiding in His places. He wanted to glorify His personal, beloved God.

But if we want to understand the *avadhuta* style, we have to break the *avadhuta* code. What is *avadhuta*? First is A. A is *akshara* – that means “imperishable”. This is the beginning of *avadhuta* – you have to be imperishable. VA stands for *varenyam* – “best, exclusive, extraordinary”. DHU stands for *dhuta*, or “shaken of”. And finally TA stands for “that”, *tat*. So *avadhuta* means who have shaken off the chains of material existence and who is very well versed in the imperishable.

This is the quality of an *avadhuta*. It is not that he goes against the rules and regulations. Because that is very easy. Even the stupid guys can do that. Even the uncontrolled people outside can have some *avadhuta* features. But without this – being well versed in the absolute truth and being free from material limitations – you cannot become a real *avadhuta*. So it is not enough to invent instructions for yourself, like an *avadhuta*, or change the *mantra*, but you have to be well versed and you have to be free from contamination.

And this was what Nityananda Prabhu had.

29. The line of mercy

The appearance day of Nityananda Prabhu is an auspicious moment because it reminds us that some savior has also entered our life, our consciousness. And this unites the devotees irrespective of their countries, of their lines, of their missions, because somehow everybody is under one banner and this banner is divine love. And we share the same faith that through the *parampara*, through the

specific channel through which we are connected to divinity, we shall reach our final goal and destination.

Gurudev is an expansion of Nityananda. And His name reminds us the quality of a guru – *nitya ananda* – perfect and eternal happiness. Although the activities and the behavior of Nityananda Prabhu is little difficult to understand, but still we should worship this, because the essential part of Nityananda is represented by our master. He will give us the best. Like a candy. He will give this purification process like a candy.

We belong to the Mercy *sampradaya*. The Mercy *sampradaya* is an ever-growing chain of mercy. We expect that Krishna is merciful. When Radharani is there, She makes the whole situation even more merciful. Then Their mercy is combined in Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and that condensed mercy is delivered to the audience by Nityananda, the original representative of guru. Our masters distribute the same mercy. So in one sense we can say that Gurudev is most merciful to introduce us to Nityananda and He will take us to Gauranga, and then They will guide us to Radha Govinda.

But who is at the end of this chain? *You* are at the end of this chain. The *vaishnava* is the ultimate cup of mercy. That means: *you* should be the most merciful!

How to do that, how to understand that? Very easy. In one sense: bring people to the source, where you have taken your happiness. This is the best service. Then we can convey the mercy, which we have received, so that it reaches others. It is very simple. But also you can exercise this mercy in other ways. Sometimes even the merciful incarnation Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was rejecting or chastising some devotees due to some mistakes or some foul behavior. But what did the devotees do? They were trying and inventing methods how to pacify the Lord, how to bring the excluded, the excommunicated devotee back to the devotional circles.

Sometimes your Gurumaharaj will also chastise some of your brothers and sisters. Then what is your duty? If you belong to the Mercy Sampradaya, if you want to expand the mercy you have received from your masters, you have to help – to heal the wounds,

to pacify the passions or to bring the devotees with difficulties back on stage. Then we can say that we belong to the Mercy Sampradaya. Then we can convey something that we have achieved, that we have got. If you give you will be given. If you divide you will be supplied.

Feel blessed to belong to this Mercy *sampradaya*. Because it can heal the wounds.

Now many times we are not glorifying each other enough, but after five hundred years only the beauty will remain, only the achievements will stay. We have to work for that – so that after five hundred years devotees should come together and glorify together and they can feel that somebody have worked for them also. Because we are working for the next generations. We are here not only for ourselves, not only for our fathers – our spiritual masters – but we are here for the next generations. They will chew what you will give to them. So, please, give them extraordinary *prasadam*.

Be blessed, be happy in your services, be committed to your practices, grow in dedication and... shine! Shine the happiness, the *ananda* of dedication, because this world is quite dark. We all need light.

30.Listen to your heart

Question of Shanti Devi: Sometimes devotees say: “Ah, this is my feeling, I cannot go against my feeling, this is coming from inside, what *shastra* says is not applying to me.” So, how can we be in the line of *shastra*, but not to neglect ourselves?

Tirtha Maharaj: First just neglect yourself, no problem. Later on we can come back to the question: “What about us?” Because without taming the wild animal you cannot come to higher truth. That means control, that means yoga. How many steps are there in the spiritual practice? Three. What are these three? The first

is taming the wild animal – control yourself. The second one is associate – learn how to tolerate others, learn to cooperate, unite your powers, unite your energies. This is the social platform, group dynamics, we can say. First is control yourself, second is learn to cooperate with others, and *then* comes the third – the real spiritual practice. Until we cannot subdue ourselves and we cannot tolerate the others – what we are talking about?! Be practical.

Therefore we need these three steps. In the beginning we have to renounce our private ideas, we have to adjust to others, this is natural. But if we follow a pure process and we are under a proper guidance, then we shall not lose our private identity, our character, but it will be enhanced; it will be purified and then enhanced. So in this way we do not lose.

But your question is how to stick to the *shastras* and at the same time stick to ourselves. The best situation is when there is harmony between guru, *shastra*, *sadhu* and *hridaya* – when with your heart you can agree with the *shastras*, with the instructions of your master and with the practice of others. But in most of the cases this harmony is not fully developed. We are working hard and we are trying our best, but still sometimes we do not understand *shastra*. Because we need newspapers instead of “Shrimad Bhagavatam”. Other times we read too much *shastra*. Too much knowledge – it is a big disturbance! Too little knowledge – you will be cheated; too much knowledge – you will be robbed! You have to find the golden middle path. Mahaprabhu said: “Do not read many books.” This was one good advice. Because if you read books for the sake of polishing your I-do-not-know-what, to show your knowledge, to enjoy how people admire your abilities: “He has read this unknown author coming from who knows what source...” No, this is not the correct mood. We better study the *shastra*, but at the same time keep moderate in this respect.

So this is about *shastra*. Guru, instruction of guru: previously I have mentioned one case when even Nityananda Prabhu was, so to say, reshaping the instruction that He has got. Many times we are doing the same. We are following the example, right – He was doing, we are also doing. But maybe the quality is a little different. We have

this tendency to find the excuses – why we do something or why we neglect something. But if you are serious about yourself and you are ready to look into the mirror, then sooner or later you will understand that this is a mistake. Then you’ll try to stick more properly to the instruction.

And then *sadhu*; *sadhu* is a very important topic for us, because at least there is something to criticize. We need *sadhus*, because there we can see all the mistakes.

So we can misuse all these references. And there is one ultimate reference that Shrila Shridhara Maharaj says – *hriday*, your heart. You have to listen to your heart. Because how to judge, how to understand, how to find out the truth? *Only* with the inner search. Because in most of the case, even if we are very well versed in the scriptures, this is not enough to find the truth. If we are blind followers of the instructions of our masters, we will not reach the goal. And if we neglect the *sadhus*, if we do not respect the *sadhus* – our brothers, sisters, people in general – then I think God will not be happy with our offerings.

So if our heart will tell us: “Yes! Take the essence of the scriptures,” if our heart will tell us: “Yes! Try to grab the lotus feet of your master,” if our heart will tell us: “Yes! Embrace the *sadhus*,” I think this is a proper reference how to use these three main sources of reference for our best benefit.

31. The line between the heart and the false ego is sincerity

Question: You were talking about the heart, about listening to the heart. And I wanted to question you how to make the difference between listening to the heart and to the false ego? Sometimes the line is very thin.

Tirtha Maharaj: Without purification it will not work. Therefore the first step is: control yourself, go through the purification process. Just like the education; it starts in the kindergarten, it does not start in the university. But if you attend the university, but you have the mentality of a five year old kid, it will not work. So after some time we have to come to such a level of understanding ourselves that we should discriminate. When I speak because I am hurt; or when I can decide and stick to the truth, or at least to some little higher conception than my limited world. I think this is not really difficult. And we should be able to come to that platform when you can analyze yourself, when you can understand the instruction in a correct way, when the *shastras* will tell you something. When the *shastras* give you only doubts or more confusion, there is no use. We have to select for the best purpose. And as Shrila Sadhu Maharaj use to say: “Whatever poison you have, bring it to your spiritual master and give it to him, he will turn it into nectar”. Yes, that is true, but still, do not overburden your master.

So, sincerity. I think this is very much necessary. We have to be sincere – to ourselves, to others. We have to be able to analyze and we have to be able to open our hearts so that the truth might come. Because if we want to formulate the truth it will not work. But when it comes to you, then it will be obvious. If the sun is rising over the horizon, it is obvious, no second question. Maybe somebody does not want to see it, but what can we do? Because we are searching for experience also, right? Not only theories: “It is written in the books, but I do not know anything about it.” We need a direct contact. And if you are connected to Krishna, if you are really connected to the

essence of the teachings of your master, practically you cannot commit a real mistake – if you are honest. Because divinity means purity, absolute purity. And if you come in contact with that you will be also purified, irrespective of your resistance.

But of course we should not use it as an excuse: “I am connected, I know, I see...” because this is false. But the real thing will be revealed to the sincere heart. I am sure. By the blessings of Lord Nityananda even the impossible becomes possible. And the definite proof that miracles do exist is that we are sitting here now. That means that this divine principle of mercy has no limitations. It is said that philosophy will not go to the slums. But mercy will go. Because mercy comes for the fallen guys, not for those, who are already saved.

So be proud that you have received this mercy. Ultimately in the long run this is our hope. And if you look back, you will feel, you will understand how fortunate you are.

32. Give proper respect to everyone

Question of Shanti Devi: My question is how important it is to be in the line?

Tirtha Maharaj: Sticking to the line – I think this is very important. But, you know, politics also comes from spiritual practices, it also comes from spiritual platform. And in politics they differentiate between the nationalistic approach and the chauvinistic approach. What is nationalistic? It is when they say: “Croatian nation is the best!” But when you say: “I am good but the other is wrong” – this is chauvinistic. So, we should feel that our line, our faith, our tradition, our guru is the best. But immediately if you say: “Yours in not the best,” this is offensive, this is stupid. Because in this way we try to limit divinity. We want to think that divinity can come only through one channel. Is that true? I think this is *opposing the rasa-*

tattva! There is not only one *rasa* that is available in the spiritual sky. There is multiplicity of *rasa*. If there is multiplicity up there, there should be multiplicity down here. So there are many representatives. Krishna can reach out for His devotees through different channels, He has unlimited ways to attract attention. Just recently we made an investigation – what devotees need. And mostly they were praying and crying for more *bhajan*, *kirtan*, jumping...

Somebody: *Prasadam...*

Tirtha Maharaj: It was not mentioned, I think they are supplied. But this is very attractive. Others are attracted by personal experience. Still others by philosophy. You know, Krishna has many ways to attract people. So we cannot limit. Because through the masters the *guru-tattva* functions. The *guru-tattva* has a very special feature that if you start to cultivate your *guru-bhakti*, then it starts to work for you. Through that channel it can reach you. You start to cultivate, you start to express your faith to your spiritual master and then this channel opens for you, Krishna can guide you through that channel. This is a very mystic thing! And as this is very sacred, therefore we have to respect this function. Because if this function, *guru-tattva*, somehow enters our life, it will change it, definitely it will change our life. This is a sacred, divine intervention into our life. And into the life of other devotees. So we should respect this, because it is a very delicate question. We should respect the sacred function of Krishna guiding the devotees – this is very unique and very beautiful feature. Nityananda Prabhu is guiding that process.

So even a little fanatic we can be regarding our line, so to say. You know, like fan club. There are fan clubs of this, of that – they come together, they enjoy, they exchange pictures of film stars... We can be a fan club; but our fan club should never go against the other fan clubs. We should not be chauvinistic, exclusive – exclusive in that sense that we exclude others from the nectar. No, we should be inclusive.

This is my opinion of how to stay in tune, how to be loyal and faithful to your line and at the same time not to be stupid and offensive to others. I have learned from Shrila Narayan Maharaj, he says: “Give proper respect to everyone.” I think this is the best

advice. If we give proper respect to everyone according to their status, there is no harm. Otherwise you easily become a spiritual prostitute – if you do not stick to the line. But never mind, Nityananda Prabhu can preach to the prostitutes also.

Feel blessed because this divine principle has entered your life. And this is yet the beginning of the journey, there are so many miracles to be experienced. They are waiting for all of us. So we should go, we should search – search for Shri Krishna, reality the beautiful.

33. The conclusion is not meditation, but worship

Question of Yamuna: When Lord Brahma was born in the lotus flower, he started going down following the stem of the lotus and it is described that for endless amount of time he was going down, but he could not reach the navel of Vishnu, from where actually it starts. He went back and he started to meditate and through meditation he reached.

Tirtha Maharaj: Almost like this, because he was trying to go down to find the roots of the lotus flower, but no result. Then returned back to the flower itself and then he started to meditate. Through this meditation he understood: I cannot find the end of the lotus, therefore it is better to worship it. So the conclusion was not meditation, the conclusion was worship. Because you cannot understand, better worship. So even at that very first act in the universe comes to the conclusion of dedicated service.

Yamuna: Also I have heard two versions: that the first sound heard by Brahma was *tapaha* and that the first sound was *om*. Which was the first sound and when did he hear it – before his meditation, during or when he reached the conclusion?

Tirtha Maharaj: Well, the first *mantra* that was given to Brahma this is *tapaha*. This was the inspiration coming through his

heart: do some penance, *tapaha* means do some penance. But *tapaha* also means energy, heat. And that suggest through meditation you can generate more power. Then he was able to complete the task to arrange the universal matter.

But in another way the first sound to resound in space, this is *om*. I did not check, but they say that if you take a metal plate, you throw some sand on it and you start to resonate the plate, the sand will form the *om* on the surface. I do not know but they say it is like this. That shows that even in the reflection the original creative sound is there. So we can say that *om* is the first *mantra* to create order in the chaos. There are some few millions of Vedic *mantras*, because all the creation depends on the *mantras*. These are like the codes of creation. The first *mantra*, the basic root *mantra* is *om*. *Om* is like the flute sound of Krishna ultimately. We discussed material universe, but anything that is there in the material universe comes from the divine realm.

34. The golden section

Question of Prana Krishna: I would like Gurudev to say a few words why after the meditation one feels renewed with the inflow of energy?

Tirtha Maharaj: Why? What is your good name? Prana Krishna. So in meditation what we do? You sit straightforward, right? And if you examine a person sitting in this yoga posture, what is the shape? Shape is a pyramid. And the pyramid is so stabile, that it stands there for three thousand years in Egypt. This is practically the most stabile geometrical form. And at the golden section in the big pyramid there is the chamber. They think that this is for preserving the dead bodies, but actually this is for initiation. Because much energy can be focused on that golden section – it is about $2/3 - 1/3$. And then you focus your attention. Where do we focus our

attention? You look up between your brows. You focus on the third eye and you just feel the divine energy, life force streaming in. So you can infuse *prana* into your body. Feel the life force streaming in. If you get more *prana* you will be refreshed. We inhale *prana* in a physical plus mystical sense and we exhale carbon dioxide plus all the negative feelings, tendencies and whatever garbage we have got - we give it out. If you create order in your room, you will feel better. If you clean your system, you will feel better. Less poison is there. You give out the poison and you take in the nectar with every breath. So our construction of the pyramid is focused in the third eye and you bring more energy here.

This about the first part of your name, *Prana*. But where is the golden section of the human pyramid? Maybe the heart *chakra*? Possible. Whom we should invite into our heart *chakra*? Maybe the second part of your name. This is why you feel refreshed after your meditation. Because you take in *prana* and you invite Krishna. Krishna is like the sun and illusion is like the darkness. Wherever there is the sun there is no power of darkness.

Prana Krishna: Thank you, Gurudev, for the wonderful answer. I would not expect for a better one. And if I can add something more for you to comment. During the dream only the body is sleeping. The mind is not sleeping; it classifies, analyses, creating illusions... And during the meditation, besides that the body is not spending energy, the *vrittis* of the mind are calmed down. It is only the idea of the Lord existing. From here everything that you explained stems.

Tirtha Maharaj: *Chitta-vritti nirudha* - Patanjali defines yoga as “to stop all the whirlpools of the mind”. Therefore we need a certain peace of mind, no running here and there. Then the higher functions can manifest. It is very correct what you said: while you are awake your energy goes out, your senses look outwards. When you are in a dream, senses go inwards, therefore the mind functions very much. But in a third stage, meditation, senses do not go out, senses do not go in. There is no function. Only purity and equilibrium in order to be open for the higher truth to manifest. Therefore we need fixed *asana*, which you can keep for a long time.

35. It is not enough to become sattvic

Question of Premananda: I have one question, it concerns emotions. I met certain text on material emotions and they were described from material point of view. And it was shown that basically most of the material emotions are under the influence of either *raja* or *tama guna*. And it is only the calm, peaceful, happy state that is *sattvic*. And I made the conclusion that if we want to practice *bhakti-yoga*, then if we at all allow ourselves material feelings, we should not go below this level. So at least the practitioners should find a way to be in this happy *sattvic* platform, which inquires a lot of efforts in everyday life to achieve. But still it should be the minimum. And our goal is higher than that. So in order to achieve at least this minimum, I made the conclusion that we should kind of integrate, harmonize all our life and make our ideal pervade everywhere. We should not allow anything untrue of lower nature anywhere in our relationships and everything. How would you comment this, just to clarify this picture, if possible?

Tirtha Maharaj: First of all the main feature of *sattva* is not only happiness. There is knowledge also. Without knowledge there is no happiness. So do not try to be *sattvic* in the way to enjoy happiness without making the efforts for knowledge. The main features of *sattva-guna* are the knowledge and happiness. And actually these are the main problems with *sattva-guna*. Because *sattva-guna* is *guna*, rope, to bind you up. It keeps, it prevents you from freedom, because it is a *guna*. Does it mean that in order to overcome *sattva* we have to be bad? How to overcome goodness – by being bad, by doing wrong or by behaving nonsense? Or to be stupid and suffering? No, this is not the way. But we should purify even *sattva*. This is one remark.

The other remark is that it is not a mechanical process, that whenever you start to feel something or you start to react on something, you take your “Bhagavad-gita”, look up in the Seventeenth Chapter: “This is a little *tamasic* influence, so I feel not

acting like that.” Or next time you say: “Mmm, this is *sattvic* enough, so I can do it.” This is not that mechanical process. Anyway, on the spot you have no time for reading “Bhagavad-gita”. You have to act, you have to decide. Therefore we need training. And we have to surrender ourselves to some higher authority. Because until we are under the control of the *gunas*, whichever *guna*, we are on a low platform. Therefore we have to surrender to a higher authority, the Lord of the *gunas*. It is not enough to become simply *sattvic*. Let it happen to the outsiders, to the general mass of people. But our policy is to become *bhaktic*, not only *sattvic*. Surrender to the higher authority and then you can resolve the problems on the lower platforms. And the natural result, natural consequence of that higher surrender will be that you will become more *sattvic*. It is very simple. By naturally cultivating *bhakti* you will elevate yourself.

36. The bigger family

We are many different types of devotees sitting together here in this room. One is good, the other is better. Because there are only two types of devotees – the good ones and the better ones. We represent here our different masters, our different lines. There are many different schools and teachers, represented here by the disciples, like Shrila Paramadvaiti Maharaj, Shrila Sadhu Maharaj, Shrila Govinda Maharaj. And on official platform we might say that we belong to different connections. But ultimately we are connected in certain elementary, very basic and very important convictions that we all share. Such a strong tie is the Holy Name of God, something that connects us very strongly – all the different devotees all around the planet. Another very strong connection for all of us – this is devotional service: how we can serve God through our dedication of the heart. And to get a taste of that dedicated service gives us a very

direct perception of the divine perfection. Another strong tie that connects us all together is the deep faith in our masters.

So let me tell as a certain line of thought how to broaden our vision. If we put our spiritual master in the center of attention, then only our brothers and sisters will be the intimate circle of our family ties, family connections. All others are, so to say, outside of that circle. But if we put into the center of our attention the master of our spiritual master, *all* his missions becomes our family. And if we put Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur in the center, then all the different branches of the Gaudia Math and the successor *acharyas*, gurus and students – they are all our members. So, we have to build a big temple. But if we put Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the center, then all the lines and big traditions, following His example are also our members. And in Mayapur there is a beautiful temple of Chaitanya Math and there you can see the father-*acharyas* of the four different *sampradayas*. So, if we include them also, then even whole South India becomes our brothers and sisters. Millions! But if we put, beyond Mahaprabhu, Krishna in the center, then all the different other worshipers of Krishna become our brothers and sisters. But if we put Radhika also together with Krishna, then all the lovers of Radha also become our brothers and sisters. If we put Vishnu in the center, the worshipers of Krishna, Rama, Varaha, Nrisimha and all the other *avatars* become our brothers. But if we put God in the center, the majority of humanity is our brothers. And what about the atheists? Maybe the atheists are excluded? No, they are the future *bhaktas*, we can preach to them.

It is very nice to be faithful to our specific line, through which the divine touch came to us, but we should never be chauvinistic about our spiritual masters. The broader and the deeper vision we have, most probably we can serve better our spiritual masters, because all realized souls have universal vision, they perceive God's presence everywhere.

37. *The eternal connection*

“Nityananda Prabhu is the universal spiritual master, the embodiment of the original guru. He is the guru-tattva in the four rasas; and in the fifth rasa the sister of Radharani, Ananga Manjari, is representative. But Nityananda Prabhu is in a more dignified position than Baladeva as He is distributing prema, the divine love. Prema is supreme, the most elevated, the rarest. And such a person is on the highest platform, who can give us the gift of divine love. If Mahaprabhu is more elevated than Krishna, then Nityananda Prabhu is more than Balaram. Basically they are the same, but Nityananda is more generous than Baladeva.”⁴⁵

So, here it is mentioned that guru, the spiritual master, is a divine function. In Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura’s Gurvastaka it is said *yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado/ yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto 'pi/ dhyayam stuvams tasya yasas trisandhyam/ vande guroh sri-caranaravindam* - “by the mercy of the master the divine mercy is provided”. This is a positive remark: if the guru blesses you, the divine blessings will also come. That means that divine blessings can come in many other ways, we cannot control that; but usually it comes like this, through this channel. And “we meditate on him minimum three times per day”. So, what do you do if you start to remember your guru for the fourth time? Then you say: “Stop! Three is enough! Three is *shastric*!” Or you say: “No, no, no! We don’t want to be *shastric*, we want to be *bhactic*! We want to be *rasik* – for permanent devotion.” And “I offer my respects at his lotus feet.”

“Although we offer respects to our master, still we should not consider our master an idol – he is not an idol or an impersonal theory. And we should not forget that these are the instructions and the teachings of the spiritual master that are really important. Therefore we praise him, the spiritual master; his teaching is what established the connection between us. Our connection is not a simple physical contact, because we are searching for the absolute

⁴⁵ Shрила Shridhara Maharaj, “Shri Guru and his grace”

truth and the guru is our help in this search. We want to follow the spiritual path. Therefore in order to accomplish it successfully a formal connection, a formal attachment is not enough. The spiritual life is fully and completely transcendental process. In order to achieve perfect and clear vision, we get rid of all material concepts, be it physical, mental or intellectual. Our understanding will become spiritual through this. This is our ultimate benefit, because it is impossible to understand the spiritual reality through material methods.”

So we should always remember that spiritual life, as it is, is a completely transcendental process, it is not something material; it is not coming from this world. Including the specific position and our connection to our master. One sign from which you can understand that something is spiritual is that from material point of view it is *completely* irrelevant, useless. Because what the spiritual master tells us? Work more and in a selfless manner. Work more but expect less. This is completely useless! And the obedient disciple will say: “Gurudev, this is stupidity.” But that is a sign – well, one signal - that it might be transcendental. Why? Because the spiritual master wants to establish us not simply on the material platform, but he wants to reach the root of transcendence for us.

The spiritual master is not simply a divine function. He is not an idol and not an impersonal conception. The secret teaching is: guru is also a person sometimes, a human being. And that makes the picture more beautiful – that our masters *do* have specific, unique, human character also. For example, Shrila Paramadvaiti Maharaj is famous all over the world as a constant traveler and preacher, organizing the big planetary movement of Vaishnavism. Permanently traveling, preaching, meeting devotees and enthusing them. Or: Sadhu Maharaj is the enchanter of the hearts, like a sweet grandpa coming and embracing everyone in his loving embrace. So we all have our masters, we all have our heroes, we all have our examples. And we should understand that disciplic succession transmits different spiritual assets and energies to the followers and practitioners. And many excellent qualities of your Gurudev is also with you, because this line transfers these positive qualities.

Still the spiritual master is not an idol, is not God, so to say, he is a person. Spiritual master is the servant-god, *sevak-bhagavan*, and God Divine, Krishna, the blue one, is *sevya-bhagavan*.

We are eternally connected to our spiritual masters. How to understand this eternal connection? The day before yesterday we did not know our masters. And the day after tomorrow we shall easily forget about him. What does it mean – eternal connection? No, this is an eternal connection because the gurus, our masters, they show eternal secret assets, the values in our heart. This connection and this link will stay with us *forever*.

38. The essence is to understand the instructions

“How to recognize our spiritual master? We should not identify him with the picture that is perceived by our senses. In the wintertime he is using a big coat and during the summer he is dressed in a small dhoti. The clothes are not so important. In one life guru can take such a body, in another life – different body. In different times guru appears in different forms. On the higher planetary systems the demigods, gandharvas and siddhas also have spiritual masters, although there have no such crude physical bodies. The form might be different or different acharyas might perform their services parallel. But to recognize the spiritual master outside vision is not enough; we must perceive the essence. Krishna says: “Ultimately I am the acharya – acharyam mam vijaniyam – Know, that I am no different from the acharya.”⁴⁶ This is a divine function, but to recognize this divine function, we must have transcendental vision.

A human being is judged according to the most superficial qualities – like his cloths, his body, his mind or intellect. But the

⁴⁶ “Shrimad-bhagavatam” 11.17.27

spiritual clear vision will show us reality in a correct manner. We should get rid of the misconception that the picture shown through our senses is reality. Real reality is beyond the conception of the senses and only with the help of the spiritual master we can conceive that.”⁴⁷

With the help of the spiritual master we can understand that the real reality is beyond, it is over there. But with his help we can understand that this “over there” is over here! Yet we should not mix that what is over here is over there; this might be a mistake.

“Perfect knowledge can come to some conclusions from even small signals. From the superficial signs we should come to the essence. Of course it does not mean that the physical presence of the spiritual master should be neglected, but the essence hides in a deeper recess. The things, left by our spiritual master, like the coat or the shoes, are worshipable, but the personal service is more precious. The photograph is not the guru although it describes him. Vision or hearing does not give a full vision of a person. The real experience is the words or the understanding of the instructions of the spiritual master. This is real Krishna consciousness.”

Sometimes the disciples of Shrila Prabhupad were collecting the *dhotis* of Shrila Prabhupad – just to remember the spiritual master... But I am convinced that it is not enough to collect some relics from our spiritual masters, to keep it like in a museum, sometimes to clean it from the dust – and otherwise this is our surrender to our masters; it is not enough. The essence here is to understand the instructions. Our spiritual growth, our spiritual understanding is tested on the achievement how much we had understood from the instructions.

“Beyond the different qualities of our master we can appreciate his charming character, his way of behavior, his gestures or intellectual capacities, but we should not miss the essence – i.e. the instructions. This should be the highest goal and for this high goal we should be ready to sacrifice everything.”

⁴⁷ Shrila Shridhara Maharaj, “Shri Guru and his grace”

So, I wanted to mention these little thoughts and quote this from Shrila Shridhara Maharaj – how to recognize the master. And as the wrist-watch is not time itself, it only shows the time, the picture is not the guru himself, but describes the master.

39.Divine alchemy

*“The worship of Shri Guru also includes absolute and relative aspects. The most important is not to lose the spirit, because if we lose the essence, then we shall become worshipers of the form. In order to achieve the mercy of Nityananda Prabhu we have to study the character of Gouranga Mahaprabhu, we have to study about Him and His dhama, and also the devotees.”*⁴⁸ I think this is why the devotees are so happy in Sofia – because everybody is serving Gouranga Mahaprabhu so nicely.

But presently we are occupied with so many difficulties. We are occupied with all the different stupidities of life: I am too young to become a devotee, I am too old to be a devotee, I am a man, I am a woman, I am rich, I am poor, I cannot practice *bhakti* because I am this and that. But these are occupations given by Maya Devi. Yet we should never forget about the ultimate goal we started for – and this is divine love.

“The supreme goal of our life is given by Ragunath das Goswami in a following manner: “My most secret and cherished dream is that once I will reach to the place where Radhika and Madhava enjoy each other’s company in the greatest glory.” And he is praying to His master. This prayer says: “I am eternally indebted to Shri Gurudev, because I have to say thanks so many times to him. From him I have obtained the most precious gift – this is the holy name of Krishna, the mahamantra. The unlimitedly auspicious holy

⁴⁸ Shrila Shridhara Maharaj, “Shri Guru and his grace”

name includes the most complete thought, endeavor and ideal. He taught me how to serve the son of Mother Shachi, our benevolent savior. By the blessings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu the path, leading to Krishna-lila, is shining in a golden hue. Gurudev has taken me to the most intimate servant of Mahaprabhu, Svarupa Damodara, who is not different from Lalita Devi, the most intimate girlfriend of Radhika. Through him (her) I came in contact with Shri Rupa, who was distributing the sweetest rasa, the ecstatic love of Godhead, due to the desire of Mahaprabhu.”

Therefore we are very grateful to our masters, because they teach us how to worship the Divine Couple in a dedicated mood. Always stick to the essence! The final principle is: respect the master and worship God. Respect and worship are two different things. If your master sees that you worship the Lord, he will be very satisfied. And if God sees that you respect your master, He will be also very satisfied.

We should stick to the essence and in this way we also become essential. And not simply essential but quintessential, which is the fifth element of divine alchemy. Shrila Bhakti Promod Puri Goswami Maharaj studied chemistry at the university. I was wandering: chemistry in devotional service, what is that? But then I understood, this is not simple chemistry, this is alchemy – how to change iron into gold, how to convert materialist into a faithful person. And what is more: how to create from a faithful person, I mean a follower of faith, an ecstatic devotee – this is the divine alchemy. Therefore we are attracted to our masters – because they are doing the miracle for us.

40. The two main schools of bhakti

“The respectful worship, like *vaidhi-bhakti*, is not as majestic as the spontaneous love of Godhead springing from the depths of the heart. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu considered Rupa Goswami the best person to distribute *raganuga-bhakti*.”⁴⁹

What is *vaidhi-bhakti*? Which category it belongs to? There are different types, different levels of *bhakti*, what type is *vaidhi*? Damodar?

Damodar: Regulated devotional service.

Tirtha Maharaj: Correct. What is the Sanskrit name for that?

Damodar: *Sadhana*.

Tirtha Maharaj: *Sadhana-bhakti*, of course! *Vaidhi-bhakti* is *sadhana-bhakti*. And what about *raganuga*? *Raganuga* is a simple practice or a high type?

Damodar: High.

Tirtha Maharaj: Hm. Belonging to which category? Is this *sadhana-bhakti* or not?

Damodar: Not.

Tirtha Maharaj: Not? O-o! Labanga says: “Spontaneous attachment...?” never concluding the sentence. There are two schools of *bhakti*: one is *sadhana-bhakti*, i.e. following the principles; and the second is the spontaneous attachment. *Sadhana-bhakti*, following of certain rules and regulations, has two sub-categories. One is *vaidhi-sadhana*, that means really following certain rules and regulations, and the other is *raganuga-bhakti*, where our main principle is to follow such a person, who has *raga*. This should be understood: that both *vaidhi* – following principles, rules and regulation – plus following a good example, both categories belong to *sadhana-bhakti*. Of course, *raganuga* is a higher type, but still belongs to the same category. And the other, the high higher

⁴⁹ from “Shri Guru and his grace”, by Shrila Shridhara Maharaj

type – this is the *ragatmika-bhakti*. That means that the *atman* of that type of devotional service is *raga*, the essence. But this is very rare and we should not imitate *ragatmika-bhakti*.

So if somebody wants to practice *ragatmika* – forget it, you cannot practice *ragatmika*, but if somebody wants to practice *raganuga-bhakti* without obtaining and following the principles, then result is fall down. If you throw away the principles before accomplishing them that is total failure. But if you do not throw away the principles after accomplishing them that is total failure also. In all mystic schools they agree that after you have reached perfection you have a different duty then the process that has leading you to that position.

Here the two main schools of *bhakti* are mentioned – following the principles and following the good example, *vaidhi* and *raganuga*. Therefore we have to follow the rules and also the good examples, because they will bring us closer to our achievements. Somebody gave a definition about *sadhu-sanga* or the *bhakti*-process, he said that this is not a simple company of few people who follow a vegetarian diet and believe in reincarnation – this is something more. Why *sadhu-sanga* is more than simply company of people with stomach problems? The answer is dedication. This is what makes the principle. Because a devotee is fully dedicated to Krishna. Just remember that story when the devotee⁵⁰ was peeling the banana, throwing away the flash and offering to Krishna the cover. Is that *vaidhi* or *raganuga*? This is *banananuga*. *Bananatmika*. But if you are cooking for the deities, please, please, when you peel the bananas, use the banana, not the skin.

I think we can agree, if you make diagram of your progress, the first steps you think: “Ah, I follow certain rules and regulations – that is a big step”, but actually this is a small little step. On the higher levels you make one little-little progress, but on the absolute platform this is very high.

So which one to choose: *sadhana* or *sadhana*? Damodar?

Damodar: Which is closer to us.

⁵⁰ the wife of Vidura, Mahabharata

Tirtha Maharaj: *Sadhana*, correct. Which is closer? Most probably this is *sadhana-bhakti* which is more close to the practitioners. Because most of the devotees can hardly follow the very limited number of rules and regulations that are provided. What to speak of the *danger* of committing some spontaneous dedication? Maybe this is like a theoretical question right now, but do not forget that elementary practices are not equal to the ultimate goal.

41. Hell turns into heaven

Mahaprabhu thought that Rupa Goswami is the best person to distribute *raganuga-bhakti*. Therefore he is the *shastra-guru*, the spiritual master teaching through the scriptures, his book. Rupa Goswami did not describe only the elementary practices in the “Upadeshamrita” first few verses, but the higher types also. Therefore he is considered to be a *shastra-guru*. According to our practices on the elementary platforms, we shall reach the superior platforms of devotional service. As we perform now, we shall perform on the higher platform also.

Many, many things we understand and we learn through the service of the devotees. Therefore they say that without *guru-bhakti* there is no *krishna-bhakti* and that *bhakata seva parama siddhi* – the service to the devotees is the highest perfection.

Then further it says: “*Due to the mercy of my Gurudev I have obtained the company of Sanatan Goswami – says Ragunath Das – who guides us in the spirit of raganuga-bhakti. He reveals the path of regulated devotional service and from him we can understand the real knowledge of sambandha-gyana and some understanding about the surrounding world. From his mercy I have learned about Mathura-mandala, where Radha and Govinda enjoy Their pastimes. Here not only the forests and the hills, but the bushes and the plants,*

and also the little particles of dust are connected to Radha-Krishna lila. Whatever I see, everything reminds me of Radha and Govinda. My Gurudev has taken me to Vrindavana, in the home of the cows and cowherds. Step by step I will also become like the gopas and I will feel their dedicated and enthusiastic loving service towards Krishna. Due to the mercy of my spiritual master I have understood the Govardhana Hill and Radha Kunda which are the places of Radha-Govinda pastimes. And finally he has given me the hope that one day I will also be able to serve Radha and Madhava. Therefore with a grateful heart I will bow down at his lotus feet.”⁵¹

This is a list of achievements in *bhakti*. So many things we have obtained! Like company of the devotees, the beautiful practice of chanting, the conception that God is alive and so many beautiful expressions of our dedication. If we take that list, it is practically unlimited.

“Wherever I look everything reminds me of Radha-Govinda!” Is that a physical place or a state of consciousness? I think it is a state of consciousness, because our guru has taken us to that level of consciousness, where we can see the divine presence everywhere. In the eyes of your kids, in the milk of the cow, in the mountains, the Seven Lakes... everywhere, and in the hearts of the devotees so many beautiful things you can see. This is not a physical location, this is a vision. And if you have achieved that platform, then you can stay wherever you want. Hell turns into heaven.

“And step by step I start to become a gopa.” Damodar, how do you think, is this possible?

Damodar: After many steps.

Tirtha Maharaj: Yes. But all the long journeys start with the first step. We have to make the first steps, irrespective of the distance of the journey. But “step by step I start to become like a *gopa*. And I also feel, I also share their loving attachment to Krishna.” Step by step; whether this is *vaidhi-sadhana* or *raganuga-sadhana*? When you start to feel the dedication of the *gopals* – what is that level? Ultimately *raganuga*. The *gopas* are the good example – they have

⁵¹ from “Shri Guru and his grace”, by Shrila Shridhara Maharaj

that natural, spontaneous love for Krishna. The practitioner is following the example of the *gopals* and starts to feel the same. This is the main principle of *raganuga-bhakti* – that we follow a good example. It is *not* that you give up the principles! What is the main rule of *raganuga-bhakti* – to forget about the principles? No! I do not agree. No! The main principle is to follow the good example. And *before* you have to make all the different steps – of controlling yourself, following the principles, achieving a perfect state of consciousness, etc.

42. Little particles of dust

*“This is our hope that by the mercy of our masters we shall be able to serve Shri Shri Radha-Madhava, therefore I offer respects at his lotus feet.”*⁵²

Can we achieve *ragatmika-bhakti* by following a *raganuga bhakta*? And what type of person we should follow – someone who is practicing *sadhana* very nicely or someone who has *raganuga*? In certain sense – both. But we should understand the basics. Because there is a *practice* that our guru gives us a certain person in Vrindavana and tells us to meditate on him or her. That person must be *ragatmika*, who has the *raga*. And by following a *ragatmika* person, you can become a *raganuga*. If you follow simply *raganuga-bhakti*, you cannot become *raganuga*, because this is *sadhana*. By following a *sadhana* type of *bhakta* you cannot become a spontaneous *bhakta*. If we follow simply *raganuga-bhakti*, we cannot achieve spontaneous devotion.

But I fully agree – first do the practical service, the practical next step of services.

⁵² from “Shri Guru and his grace”, by Shрила Shridhara Maharaj

We are discussing *raganuga*, *ragatmika*, *vaidhi*, *sadhana*, this and that and nobody knows what to do. So what to do? What is necessary is to follow very seriously the practice, take the instructions to our hearts and study deeply the scriptures. And also put the theory into practice in our life, and always check it – whether it is approved or not. In this way we can achieve valuable achievement. This should be done – be very serious in your practices. Search, search for the absolute truth. And beyond the truth, search for divine love. The practical key to this process is sincerity.

Question of Yashoda: We follow *ragatmika* person to achieve *raganuga*. And to achieve *ragatmika* what should we follow?

Tirtha Maharaj: It will come, it is not that we achieve. It will come as blessings on us. Because *bhakti*, *prema-bhakti* comes on its own. We cannot enforce it: “Krishna, I am chanting here for three lifetimes, reveal Yourself!” Not in this way. Just follow the loving principles that we have learned in this process and Krishna will come, Krishna is there. He says in “Bhagavad-gita”: “In sacrificial acts I am always present.” And if we dedicate our life, this is a life sacrifice, Krishna is there, He is permanently there.

But actually *ragatmika-bhakti* is reserved for the higher ones – those eternal participates, eternal companions of Krishna. Anyway, we are very satisfied of being little particles of dust at the lotus feet of Gouranga.

Question: These ideals are very high and our insignificant try in *sadhana-bhakti* seems to be very useless. Then what to do? Are we such a hopeless case?

Tirtha Maharaj: Just go to the first pub, check out the people there and immediately you will understand your level – that *you have* achieved something.

43. The purifying effect

We continue our studies from this important book “Shri Guru and his grace” by Shriila Shridhara Maharaj.

“The supremely purified teaching Krishna-bhakti descends just like the water of the Ganges from the Himalayas step by step from one grade to the other. Although Saraswati joins the Ganges, still it is not considered Ganges water. But when the two rivers join, then both are considered to be Ganges. That is even the water of Saraswati becomes water of the Ganges. It has got a purifying effect irrespective of the different origin. The purifying effect of the Ganges is completely different from the water that we perceive by the senses. The water of the Ganges is purifying in transcendental sense, therefore it is able to cleanse people.”

The first part is very obvious – that the Ganges originates from high above and descends step by step. But the second part is more interesting and more difficult to understand – that if the waters of different rivers meet, then they merge. And it is said, especially in the case of the Ganges, that from the side which another river joins, on that side the water of that river is running and on the other side the real Ganges water is running. But later on if you move further they merge. And you can see this joining, even different colors of water – they join. Up in the Himalayas at Dev Prayag one is bluish and the other is yellowish – and they merge. Later in Mayapur also you can see this. And if you go further you can see that this is mixed up, you cannot distinguish anymore.

And as it was mentioned that the Ganges has a purifying effect, because it is transcendental, in the same way if our life, if our practice is a strong current, even though sometimes some garbage is manifested in our minds and hearts, it will be removed by the purifying effect of the current of devotion. So, be strong in your current.

44. *Guru is...*

Guru is...what? Now we shall finish the sentence one by one. I will listen to your versions, how you accomplish the sentence. Guru is...?

Damodar: Everything.

Tirtha Maharaj: Everything? How everything?

Damodar: If it was a test and we should answer with one word, this is the word – everything.

Tirtha Maharaj: I understand. I accept. Neli?

Neli: The more I consider this the more I understand I do not know.

Tirtha Maharaj: Good. That is a good sign. Because we should not try to *understand* the spiritual master, it is close to impossible. It is better to serve and follow. Yashoda?

Yashoda: Guru is our personal savior.

Tirtha Maharaj: Where did you get it?

Yashoda: That is why I was silenced in the beginning, because in my mind there are only ready phrases. It was not from the heart.

Tirtha Maharaj: Manohari, your version?

Manohari: Guru is guide, guardian and gardener.

Tirtha Maharaj: Plus boatman, right? So, all the heavy job is on the guru! Cultivate the garden and chop the wood...

Very good! Shрила Shridhara Maharaj accomplishes this sentence like: “*Guru is the person who knows pure love of Godhead.*”

And continues: “*If it would be in another way, then guru-parampara would be only a line of generations. Then the caste bramins and gowamis concept would be proper, because they pass the mantra from father to son in caste consciousness – this is their parampara. But that mantra is dead. We want a living mantra, living*

devotional connection – that is what we search. Where I find it - that is my spiritual master.”⁵³

There is a very simple ending of this sentence: “Guru is... you, Gurudev!” A little romantic answer. But here devotees are trained in a more like *tattva* way – everybody is coming with definitions and philosophy and this and that. But actually who was the person that transformed our hearts, who made the first impression to make *at least one little step* towards Krishna – this is our personal savior, this is our example, this is our ideal. Therefore we follow him.

Therefore if you meet *any* disciple, the guru will be very important for him or her. If you meet any disciple belonging to any guru, you will see how important the guru is for them. Why? Because the miracle starts to happen if we get this divine touch. By this divine touch, by this personal inspiration our hearts will be enlivened. Therefore we have to respect this commitment very much – in everyone’s heart. This is sacred, this is worshipable. And even if you have a different opinion about that spiritual master, even then you have to respect that, because that is a divine function.

Imagine, one of your brothers and sisters pushes the ON button and starts to preach and represent Krishna so nice that hundreds and thousands start to follow him or her. Everybody is offering prayers and is glorifying: “Maharaj, give me a drop of your mercy! Let me offer my eternal services at your lotus feet!” And you listen to this and you remember: “This guy always overeats from halava – is this the big saint?! He was sleeping in the next sleeping bag. I know all the mistakes of him.” Still what you have to say? “Yes!” Because guru principle is worshipable. And you should be *proud* that some consider your brother and sister as a spiritual authority. This is *our* victory, this is *our* dignity! This is not a one man show.

And the miracles happen in the hearts of the disciples. This is directly under divine control. The guru is only an instrument in that sense – instrument of elevation of the disciple. We can say that all

⁵³ from “Shri Guru and his grace” by Shrila Shridhara Maharaj

the *guru-parampara*, all the gurus and Krishna are working *on* and *for* the disciple.

If somebody is recognized as spiritual authority by others, we should be proud, because this is our common asset.

45. Power of community

How to recognize divinity, spirituality – it is that everybody wins. This is unusual, because in the world usually one party wins, the other loses. How to recognize divinity – that it is unusual! If you see the win-win basis, this is very close to the spiritual world.

Question: *Bhakti* works on win-win principle. But what happens if somebody falls back – then is this my failure also or how to understand it? How to evaluate the situation if someone is in trouble?

Tirtha Maharaj: There is a story. Two devotees were living together and somehow one devotee left. And the master started to criticize the one who left. And that devotee, who remained with the master, said: “Ah, Gurudev, he was not that bad.” Then guru said: “You cannot criticize, but I can!” Yet the feeling of the other devotee was: “I did not had enough *bhakti* to keep that person.” This is some little attitude how to handle such a situation.

Sometimes we see the people join, other times we see that they leave. Sometimes it happens. When I first heard that somebody left *bhakti*, I did not understand at all how is that possible. Finally somebody came and then leaves?! Crazy! Still it happens and we see that sometimes the fate and the *karma* of people are like this that they start, they come, they try with sincere heart, still they cannot find their peace. Yet we should always examine ourselves if we have done everything for that person or not. Because Krishna has sent devotees to us to serve them, not to kick them! We should examine ourselves and we should check if we have gone to the utmost limit

that we can do – if you have bowed down to his lotus feet, grab it and in tears say: “Please, *prabhu*, you know that this is not the direction, please, come to your senses!” Then you have done everything.

Still, the community as a whole has some prowess. If you share your happiness with others, your success with others then what happens? If we share our success and happiness, that grows and if you share your trouble and failure, then it diminishes. This is the power of a good community. And I feel that your group is strong enough in many respects. I have heard that some temple president is proud that: “We are so strong that seventy percent of the people leave our temple!” And he is proud of that! I think there is something wrong with that calculation. If seventy percent would *stay* with you, then you can be proud of that.

But until you are occupied with stupid little things: “He had told me like this. He was having a bad eye on me like that...” then I am fully satisfied, I know that you do not have real problem. Because if you will have problems, you will know who will help you. And sometimes Krishna teaches us, gives us real trouble; but then we can keep together strongly.

Just like Shrila Prabhupad when he was distributing the incense to devotees and said: “Break it!”- they did it very easily. Then there was one wrestler in the group of devotees with big body and Prabhupad brought a pack of incense and gave him to break it and it was impossible. So if we are unified, then nothing can break the unity of the group. This is real *sadhu-sanga*. We have to be unified in opinion, we have to be unified in spirit, we have to be unified in service and commitment.

And this is not only an earthly politics. Just imagine that the whole group is in front of the gates of Goloka Vrindavana. And then you start with discussions: “This way! That way! No, we should enter this door! No, not that door – this rasa! That rasa!”

No. Enter. Be unified.

And I can tell you that this group of the devotees has this power to preserve what you have achieved. Once I heard an opinion about the present devotees: “A big event! Without any trouble, without any shouting, without devotees cursing each other?! It

always happens like this here?!” Devotees are not cursing each other. Very unusual remark!

From this we can understand that *you have* achieved a lot! Maybe the steam is not going out too much, but I think that this is a remarkable achievement - that the group is unified. And you should work a lot to maintain that. Because in difficulties, in extreme situations we need extreme solutions. And if we see the devotees as our spiritual brothers and sisters, that minimum this one lifetime we shall spent together in service. This is our commitment.

The principle is: one for all and all for one.

46.Three secrets of “Bhagavad Gita”

You are interested in yoga and this is the topic that has brought us together today. We are meeting in 21th century. Still we are interested in something very ancient and practically unlimited in space and time. We are searching for eternity. Why? Because the soul is different from the body. And we know that body is limited in so many aspects. But we hope, we believe and we know that the soul is eternal. Yoga will help us to realize that. Yoga is a way to be connected, yoga is a way to elevate our consciousness, achieve purification and perfection.

Most of us will say: perfect human being does not exist. Usually this is our conclusion – that perfection on human level does not exist. But do not be so quick with your judgment; you can say you did not meet a perfect person, but we cannot say it does not exist.

“Bhagavad Gita” is a divine song, divine revelation. And at least we should give respect to this book, to this scripture – such a divine respect in order to understand the message. Because actually three secrets are hidden in “Bhagavad Gita”. We are human beings,

so we are interested in secrets. The basic secret is that unity and superiority beyond differentiation and beyond matter exists. This is called Brahman – the spiritual substance. This is a very secret message, because most of the people see only matter, only the bodies. The spiritual essence exists beyond this platform. But the higher secret of “Gita” is that this spiritual essence pervades everything. There is no hidden place in this universe, which is not pervaded by this divine power. The space outside and the space inside is pervaded by that power. This is very secret thing. You should go on thinking and meditating about this with a very sincere heart and then this will be revealed to you. But shall I tell you the topmost secret or shall we stop here? Let’s go for the secret! All right! This divine essence is a person. This personal power, personal manifestation is very lovely, very attractive. This is Krishna.

47. The existential triangle

In the universe there are practically only three categories existing. The first is ourselves. We should start from ourselves, we should perceive our existence. This is a little egoistic, still this is the starting point from where we can begin our search for perfection. If we know ourselves and if we look around, we shall see the world outside – this is the second category. This is the manifested reality around us. So, imagine a triangle. The first corner of the triangle this is you; the other corner of this triangle is the world. Practically we are on the basic platform. The third corner of this triangle – this is the Supreme. Us, the world and the Supreme – this is the triangle of existence. Actually we are searching to find the angles, the connections, the relationships between these corners of this existential triangle.

The first search is for ourselves. We have to know ourselves in order to find our place in this setup. Then we have to get some information about this world around us. Is there a connection

between us and the world? There is. In which direction? We influence the world or the world influences us? Both directions. So, let us take another side of this triangle – the human beings and God or the Supreme. Is there a connection between these two? Yes; and what is the direction? We influence Him or He influences us? It is also both directions. Because He has started this initial step of creation and we can reflect, for example we can offer our *mantras*, we can offer our meditations back to Him. So there is a connection and this connection is both sides. And what about the third side of the triangle, like God and creation? Is there a connection? Of course there is a connection. What is the direction? The connection between the Supreme and the world is one way. He has influence over the world, but the world does not give a shadow over Him. So, if we can understand that anything that exists in this universe can be measured in these three categories – the souls (individual living entities), the objective world and the Supreme – then we have the full picture.

In order to understand this picture better we have to use our intelligence. The goal is yoga – to be connected to the Supreme, Lord Krishna – but how to do this, how to be connected always we have to learn, we have to study.

One essence of the human beings is their consciousness. One part of our body that we treat very nice – this is our head. We think it is very important – and it is important, no doubt. There is another part of our body which is maybe a little more precious and this is the heart. And the goal of yoga is to connect the heart with the brain, to unite knowledge and feeling and use the benefit of both. Ultimately we have to use our intelligence to understand our original home, our present situation and the method to be applied. And we have to use our heart to perceive the goal and to collect the energy, to collect the inspiration to go.

48. *The subjective evolution of consciousness*

In yoga it is very precisely described how the human consciousness is formed – what levels and regions it goes through. We invite you on a trip – the subjective evolution of consciousness. We are discussing the topic of consciousness – how to elevate our consciousness in a subjective way. And here subjectivity will mean two things. We have to do it ourselves; and we have to achieve a supersubjective goal. This trip starts with selfishness but ends with selflessness.

I will try to show you different planes or formulations of human consciousness. Actually the consciousness is manifestation of the soul, of soul power. When you take your birth the first understanding about existence is very much connected to food. Maybe we have already forgotten this, but immediately when you start to have your sons and daughters, you can understand that they are totally focused on two things – eating and sleeping. Actually this is one level of consciousness – how we perceive life. For life foodstuff is necessary. But we should not stop at this level – this is called “*annamaya-kosha*”. *Kosha* is like covering; *anna* means “food”, *maya* means “consisting of” – so this cover consists of food. So the soul by the first moment is covered by this illusion. It is sweet for a baby, but if you are grown up and still conditioned only by food – it is not very nice. So maybe we have to raise our level of consciousness.

What is the next step? The next step is *pranamaya-kosha* – or the covering of existential power, life force. Again, think of a baby. When he or she starts to learn its body – how it works. He wants to use the hands but is punching the nose. *Pranamaya-kosha*, the life force covering means that we perceive life in the functioning of our senses. Sometimes hitting ourselves, sometimes breaking our heads, but we try. And sometimes we are amazed, just like a small boy looking at himself in the mirror and saying: “Wow! Excellent body! It’s so strange, I am a soul and still I have this reflection?! ”He is amazed, he is surprised to perceive himself through his senses.

Although when you take a body the algorithm of life is carved in stone. Because the soul has descended into solid matter, a material body. And this period of progress of human consciousness, like perceiving life through your senses, it takes quite long time.

What is the next step? We should not stop here. The next step is when your thoughts start to manifest, when you are able to think. Actually thinking capacity is one main feature of humans. This is happening in the mind, therefore this covering is called *manomaya-kosha*. *Mana* is “mind” in Sanskrit. The function of the mind is threefold: thinking willing and feeling. These three functions are happening in our mind – our thinking capacity, our willpower and our feelings. But the mind is quite mischievous. You want to control him and then he will do all the nonsense. If we agree that for three minutes we should not think of red bicycle, then what would happen if you start to meditate on not thinking of it? Immediately you will remember what not to remember. So, to control the mind is very difficult. Actually the mind receives and rejects – these are the two ways of the mind functioning. The previous level of consciousness, sense organs, bring the information. And the mind is the centre which will choose between this information. I like this, I take this; I do not like that, I reject that. This always happens in the mind – we try to get more happiness and we try to avoid suffering. And we use our brain practically only for this reason – to get something and to avoid other things.

But we should not stop at that platform, we should go on – from thought we should come to intelligence. See the vibration of a person, who is meditating. It is very powerful. If you are pure enough, then your meditation will be very powerful. Actually we should use our intelligence to reach our goal. But what is our goal? End of physical body or eternity of the spirit soul? So, intelligence should be applied to the supreme goals. We have to use our intelligence to control the mind, and then to control the senses, and then to control the body. We can see that we start from food but we come to very high type of intelligence – this is a very long path.

And what is the highest goal – this is bliss, the happiness, *anandamaya-kosha* – the covering of the soul, composed of spiritual

happiness. In the meeting of Radha and Krishna, Radha symbolizes the love, the attraction, for example of the soul; and Krishna is God. So Their meeting is the happiness of the soul and God meeting. And the key to that spiritual happiness is the service attitude. So, if we want to achieve divine bliss, spiritual happiness, satisfaction – the way is through service. This is the way to enter the secrets.

49. The tree of yoga

Let us see the tree of yoga. Many times you have heard that yoga has different practices, but how they are connected?

What is the first level of yoga? The first level is *yama*, right? What *not* to do, what should be avoided. So, what should be avoided – this is the root of the tree of yoga. Without roots any tree exists? Yes, exists – in a cut form. If you want the tree alive, it must have some roots. And you know the prohibitions – don't lie, don't steel, etc. These are the five don'ts – don't do this, don't do that. This is the basis, this is the root. It will keep you very firm, very fixed if you follow.

The next part of the tree of yoga is *nyama*, the practice that should be done – and this is the trunk. This is what you should do, what you should practice – like satisfaction, purity, simple lifestyle, etc. And ultimately worship of God. Because in the “Yoga Sutras” it is said: “You can achieve perfection also by worship of the Lord.” This all comes under the practice.

The third level of *asana* – these are the postures – are the greater branches of the tree. It will make the whole tree very beautiful. And with *pranayama*, which are the leafs on the tree everything comes under control. It brings the air to the functioning of the body, to the functioning of the tree of yoga also.

But certain things should be avoided, and to withdraw *pratyahara* is the next level. This is the bark of the tree. It will prevent the loss of energy.

The next step, the next element of our tree is concentration, *dharana* – to preserve what we have – and this is the inner sap, circulating in the tree. Just like in our body different liquids are circulating and this will provide the good function of energy distribution and life.

These were the intermediate levels of yoga. And finally come the last two: meditation, *dhyana*, which is the flowers on the tree – you know the tree is very beautiful when it is in flowers – this is just the threshold of perfection; and ultimately the eight is the condition of trans, or *samadhi*, which is the fruit.

Without the root you cannot get the fruit. Therefore we have to perceive this whole tree of yoga – from the first step to the last.

50. Universal construction – the reflection

We are trying to search for ourselves. Let's have a vision of the universal construction. The world is build just like the Sofia Mall. It is a huge building, many levels up and many levels down. You enter somewhere this maze, you lose all of your energies – run out of your money – and then finally you want to find the way out.

The zero level is where you enter. I do not know how many levels it has for the parking? Two, three – it does not matter. The material world has also many levels down. Let's examine this topic a little bit.

Here is the material world that we perceive right now around us. This is the world of *karma* – action and reaction. You know, just like in the fairy tales – if you do something good, you will be benefited. What is reality? You do something good and...? Sometimes we are frustrated, but never mind, let's live in fairy tales!

Whatever we give it shall return to us. If you give something bad to others – like suffering, torture or anything – it will return to you; if you give something good, good will return to you.

Material life, material universe is just like a maze and this maze is symbolized by this conch shell. You can enter the conch shell from this side and we understand that the direction is inauspicious. We enter the maze, we come on the ground zero and this is kind of neutral, eternal plane. Zero equals *nirvana*. But we go down, do not forget, so the first down level is ether. Now we shall discuss the different basic elements of the material universe. Ether is a very fine element, pervading everything. Although this is material, it is very subtle. And the characteristic feature of ether is sound. Just imagine, we are at the beginning of creation. Only the first condensification has started and immediately that very subtle element is pervaded by divine sound: *om*. This is the creative, divine *mantra*, which will bring the order in chaos.

One more level down we go – it is more condensed – this is the air. Through the air we can perceive things, we can touch things. One more level down – this is the fire – the cosmic element, which brings energy. Then there is the water, which will bring life. And finally you will reach the most solid element, which is the earth – like matter.

This is the degradation of the chances – from the subtle you go to more rude. Earth is everything that is solid. But it is very difficult to move. And what will be the effect if you go down in this universal mall? There will be some reaction – material ignorance will be the reaction. We can identify material ignorance when humans think that they are God. From a neutral potential position we started this process of degradation and we hit the bottom when we think that we are God.

This is a dark region. Let's take a walk on the upper platforms. The yoga tradition says that this material world is a reflection. There is an original world of what we see now and what we have gone through, mater and different degradation – there is an original form.

So, let's try to find the way out from this dark region. If we use our brain then from the maze we can come back to the level of eternity. This is the path of knowledge. With knowledge you can achieve salvation, liberation. But there is another path also, which will not simply bring you to eternity – this passive, neutral level – and this is the elevator of the universal mall - the path of dedication. My suggestion is: let's take the elevator - the path of dedication.

(to be continued)

51. Universal construction – the original

(continues form the previous issue)

Now we shall see the original world. Before we saw the reflection, now we shall see the original world. The original world, the spiritual sky, is the world of divine pastimes. Before we started on the top, neutrality, *nirvana*, and step by step we were going down, down, down. Now this neutrality is at the bottom. Eternity is the first word in perfection, it is not the last achievement. Through the path of dedication we can come to that platform, we can *cross* that platform actually, and then you enter this positive conch shell. In this way this is not a symbol of a maze, labyrinth, but this is a symbol of the victory of the spirit over the mater.

So what happens if we enter there? The first level, the first positive platform is neutral connection to divinity, based on faith, based on consciousness – when you know that God exists. But nothing more. Should I do something about it? No, I am satisfied with this understanding.

Let's make some other steps. The second platform is serving mood. When I understand that there is God, I have to give something to Him. It is not only that He has to give me so many things. "Give

me my daily bread, give me the air, give me the life, give me intelligence, give me health..." No, we should also give. Therefore this next level is readiness – when we are ready to do something for Him. By service you can come closer to a person. You can also become his friend. This is the friendly mood with God – I think it is quite good to be friends with God. We depend on our friends; so if He is the Supreme, then you have a very powerful friend. On the platform of friendship we feel equal. This is friendship – we are equal. Friend is your second self. He is very close to you. Before we had the conception about God that He is zero level of eternity. Very weak, vain conception. Then we understood that He exists – all right, it is better, but still the picture is not very clear. Later on we understand that we have to be ready for doing something about His existence. If I am here and He is there, let's come closer. Then you can reach this friendly mood, equality. But if you want to go further, then like in human connections we have these parental, paternal feelings, when the parents take care of their children, then the meaning of this connection is caring, you want to care for the others. We can have that attitude, that approach to the Supreme also – when we want to take care of Him. And the ultimate supreme platform of consciousness is the loving mood, affectionate mood – when you are enchanted by Him. So from neutrality you can come to ecstasy in this way.

This world is for the divine pastimes. That plane will also bring some effect. The reflection brought some illusion, when humans started to feel like gods. This was the greatest mistake, this was the deepest bottom. But what is happening there, in the divine realm? There divine forgetfulness will come, when God is ready to forget about His position as Supreme, when He is ready to come so close to His creatures, that He feels one of them. So, this is the world of divine pastimes.

At the end of this trip of elevation of consciousness do not forget these three messages: *Asato ma sat gamaya* – from unreal lead me to real; *tamaso ma jyotir gamaya* – from darkness lead me to light; *mrityor ma amritam gamaya* – from death lead me to eternity.

It is up to you which level of this universal mall you enter, you visit. But you know, the best places are reserved on the top. So we invite everybody to join the elevator.

52. Fear of God versus love of God

Question: As we know, in Christianity one of the ways to approach God is to fear Him. Happily this is not available in yoga. If we fear Him how can we love Him?!

Tirtha Maharaj: Maybe you should ask this question from a Christian priest. But no doubt, fear of God is not a simple expression that human being should be fearful. To fear God means like to follow, to admire, etc – so this is in broad sense. Still this feeling or this word was misused for centuries. With quoting that you are sinful and you will go to eternal hell if you do not surrender right now, it is very easy to make people fearful. Immediately you will try to do something about it, but maybe there are some other approaches also. Just think of this greatest and so to say most popular symbol of Christianity – Jesus Christ on the cross. This is a very painful picture. But if you see, for example, “Bhagavad Gita” – God, Krishna, instructing His friend, Arjuna, although they are in front of a huge battle, no fear is included there. Or if we remember the loving embrace of Radha and Krishna – no fear is included there. Krishna, as a symbol of *bhakti-yoga*, or the path of dedication, is a charming young boy playing His flute, preserving for His devotees what they have and bringing what they need –no fear. Our motto is: “Chant the names of God and be happy!” Not: “Be baptized and suffer in fear!” Fortunately Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, our savior, who is the *avatar* for the present age, came with a happy message: “Kali-yuga is over! The dark age is over! Just join the happy dancing *kirtan* of devotee! *Hari haraye nama krishna yadavaya namaha!*”- this was His invitation.

The vision of Indian wisdom is completely different. It does not say that you come from the original sin of your forefathers. Adam made some mistakes in the beginning and I suffer now. Come on!

But actually Adam is a very symbolic name. If you read Adam in Sanskrit it will mean *adama* – *adama* means “no control”. There was only one condition: “Do not take this fruit! You can go any place you want, but do not take this fruit!” Don’t think of the red bicycle. What happened? Eating the fruit immediately. *Adama* – if there is no control suffering will come. Therefore we have to practice yoga, because yoga means “control yourself”. But our vision is that the soul, we all come from a divine source. Our source is not sin, our source is divinity. You all are spiritual sparks, not future candidates for eternal hell. And if we come from superior platform, then we can return back there.

So this is the difference in the vision. The individual souls have similar qualities to God. The Supreme is eternal, conscious and happy and in the same way you are also eternal, conscious and happy. This is only illusion that brings us the false conceptions that it is not true. You are eternal – that means you are not this limited, temporary body. You are conscious – it means you do not have to collect diplomas on your wall, it is not a question of brain, but this is a natural function of the soul. And ultimately you are happy. Some psychologists give definition of happiness – “when you do not suffer too much, this is happiness.” Sorry, be more positive, my dear. Give me some real definition of happiness. And real definition of happiness is when you are connected back to the Supreme. Yoga means connection.

Question of Krishna Priya: As we originate from God, why this separation has come? Why do we have again to find Him?

Tirtha Maharaj: Because without separation there is no meeting. We want to meet Him, but without separation there is no meeting. Meeting starts with separation.

53.How to find the real teacher

Question: I want to ask what is your opinion about the living guru? Do you think that we need to have a living teacher, who can instruct us all the time on the path, who can lead us, because it is said that without a teacher you cannot go anywhere. And how can you find the real teacher?

Tirtha Maharaj: Well, I also have a question. How to find the real disciple?

Comment: As far as I know the teacher is finding the disciple.

Tirtha Maharaj: Aha, all the job is on his shoulder! But this is a very important question that you touch. Yes, in all traditions it is very much stressed that without a master you cannot achieve perfection. It is also said: if the disciple is ready the guru will come. And how to recognize our master? How you will recognize your love, your beloved one. You will *feel* it! You cannot explain it, but with all your conviction you will feel: this person is for me! And love or marriage is for one lifetime; guru is for eternity. So you will feel it much more. Until you do not feel that, do not jump. If others tell you: “You should do like this, you should do like that, come, join, do this!” do not believe them. But when you will feel this inner urge, then you have to inquire.

There are three ways to approach the master. Because the master is a representative of the truth, so the three ways are search, inquiry and service. This is the way how we can approach a spiritual master. Search, inquire and serve.

Guru is such a light that can enlighten others. The connection between *shishya*, the disciple, and the master is very intimate. There are some qualifications that we can check. The guru should belong to a tradition; he should live according to the revealed scriptures – to follow some rules and regulations; also he must know some theoretical knowledge and practical application. But there is one quality that we can very easily feel – that the guru is able to dispel the doubts of the disciple. If you will find all these qualities, plus

your heart will tell you: “Yes, go there!” do not hesitate to do it. God is there in your heart. If you commit yourself to Him, He will guide you from the inside to find guidance on the outside.

Question of Premananda: I would like to ask two questions, using some metaphor to put them. You were speaking about elevating the consciousness. If we take the example of the flying balloon they heat the substance inside, it becomes finer and elevates. If the heat is dedication, we know that dedication is the force that drives upwards, my first question is who is keeping this fire? And similar principle in this physical example, that depends on difference in pressure, is found in submarines also. But there the submarines use it to dive deep. So what this equating of pressure would be like? Trying to bring these higher ideals in our everyday life?

Tirtha Maharaj: The heat comes from self-control. *Tapaha* is the word for self-control. And the other meaning of *tapaha* is “heat”. So if we follow the principles of spiritual life, we can generate power, the strength to practice. And the ballast to dive deep – this is the *rasic* teaching of our master, the instructions of our spiritual master. Because if we follow the instructions of our masters, we can dive deep in this ocean of divine bliss - to put it very simply and very shortly.