

Disk 101, track 8, Disciple's retreat in Magdalinovka, 22.05.2008, Seminar "Anartha-nivritti", lecture 1

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Hare Krishna. I welcome you all to our wonderful retreat in Magdalinovka. Let's greet each other (cries of "Haribol").

Before I start my presentation, I'd like to say a few introductory words about why we get together. Any true society, normal society, is based on a simple feeling, on the feeling of gratitude. If people are bound together by gratitude, this is a simple feeling, which can be developed, which can be deepened, which can be expressed somehow or other in numerous possible ways. If people are bound by this simple feeling then staying together and doing something together will benefit them all. And vice versa, if people have not somehow or other learned to show gratitude to each other and don't understand the importance of this, don't know to what extent gratitude softens our hearts, then staying together will bring about just degradation.

And ultimately we get together in order to learn to show gratitude to each other, in order to make this gratitude live, so that this gratitude is not something external or imposed or superficial; so that it becomes the very essence and the core of our heart and our consciousness. And here we get together to express gratitude to one another, to express the highest gratitude to Srila Prabhupada, who has brought us together, and we must never forget that we are all members of his family. I know that in some circles, the phrase "Bhakti Vijnana Goswami's family" goes around, but in fact we don't have a separate family. Traditional society is built on the principle of large families where there's one forefather and he's got lots of followers, who have children who have their own children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and they all feel unity and belonging to the same family.

And we are here primarily to express this deep gratitude to Srila Prabhupada, who has founded our family, and to the other previous *acharyas*. And when we truly express this gratitude, as I said, the heart becomes softer. Don't be afraid, don't be stingy, let our hearts be generous with gratitude. You can even make this your *sadhana*. The Goswamis of Vrindavana made their *sadhana* the obeisances they paid to the devotees. Anyway, Srila Prabhupada has not established a fixed number of obeisances that we have to pay, although that would've been nice – minimum 100 obeisances... 108 on beads (laughs). But in any case, in the form of obeisances or in the form of some other things, gratitude must become the highest and most vital reality of our hearts. Therefore we have gathered here to acquire the experience of such gratitude and realize how beneficial it is to our heart. And then pass this experience further on, because, as I said, this gratitude shouldn't be confined within a small group of people. Gratitude means spiritual culture. Or rather not that spiritual, but at least the beginning of spiritual culture, which we are learning all together.

Therefore, let's once again thank first of all the organizers of this wonderful festival who haven't slept for many days and nights, who've been getting together and thinking about how to do it, who've been incurring the curses of other devotees, who've been striving to come here but were refused to do so, thus risking their spiritual life and who have endured many other austerities. Let's thank them from the very beginning (cries of "Haribol"). I also think that we should very sincerely thank all those who prepared these premises for our arrival. A lot of volunteer work days were held here together, people have been coming from other cities, even

from Simferopol, the Crimea, Kharkov, Donetsk, Lugansk. Let us thank them all (cries of “Haribol”). I think that Aditi-dukhaha Prabhu who came here deserves our special thanks (applause). We are actually grateful to tears to him and our best gratitude will be if we cry at his *kirtans*. And let’s thank each other once again, for we all have undergone some austerities, we have all sacrificed something in order to get here and get together (shouts of “Haribol”). Thank you very much.

Let’s now pronounce the mantras before we start talking about Krishna (saying the mantras).

I’ll be speaking on small fragments associated with the initial stages of *bhakti*. I would like us all to think about what we have to do so that the *bhakti* in our heart becomes an irreversible fact. Like, Srila Prabhupada translates the word *nistha* or *naishtiki-bhakti* as irreversible *bhakti*; *bhakti* after which there is no turning back. Up to that point one might somehow or other hesitate, go away for some time, try to look for happiness in other forms of activity. But when one reaches *nistha* then practically there are no chances for him to turn back. And I’d like us to think a little bit about what obstacles lay in wait for us on this path, what we must do and what we must not do in order to make this path from the initial spark of *bhakti*, laid in our heart by the spiritual master, by Srila Prabhupada and the other Vaisnavas to the unflickering flame of *nistha* as short as possible and to overcome the problematic initial stages of *bhakti* as soon as possible.

Bhakti is a stairway, a stairway leading to the spiritual world. Srila Prabhupada has told us that once Ravana decided to build a staircase leading to the spiritual world ... to the heavenly planets, because he didn’t really want to go to the spiritual world. Ravana was the first democrat. He wanted all people to have equal opportunities and by climbing that staircase to get to the heavenly planets. And he undertook this enterprise, this venture of building a staircase leading there. Unfortunately, what happened to that staircase? It collapsed because any staircase needs some support.

In “Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu” Rupa Goswami explains another stairway, a stairway that can truly bring us to the spiritual world, the support of which not material. Because the staircase that Ravana wanted to build was to be based on the ground and it was never sufficient to make the staircase reach the required height. You cannot get into the spiritual world by material means. You cannot change your nature by material means. But Srila Rupa Goswami explains the spiritual stairway or the spiritual path and I’d like very much that we all progress along this stairway, ascending from stage to stage. And it’s this stairway, these stages and small steps on the stairway that we’ll be speaking about. Let us first read the verses describing the whole stairway:

adau sraddha tatah sadhu
sango 'tha bhajana-kriya
tato 'nartha-nivrittih syat
tato nistha rucis tatah

athasaktis tato bhavas
tatah premabhyudancati
sadhakanam ayam premnah
pradurbhave bhavet kramah

Rupa Goswami describes the steps of this stairway, and you've probably heard these verses, you probably know something, but at the same time I have some doubts that you know everything that's associated with each of these steps.

This path described by Srila Rupa Goswami is the most common way of attaining *bhakti*; it's not the only one. There are other ways of attaining *bhakti*, there are other ways of going back to the spiritual world. Are there any instances of living beings that have attained the spiritual world without following this gradual path? Can anyone say? (answers from the audience). Lord Chaitanya, that's clear. Lord Caitanya doesn't count. Mrigari did follow this path, Mrigari followed precisely this path. Putana didn't follow this path. Narada Muni followed this path. Putana didn't follow this path, no, Putana didn't. Putana came to poison Krishna and as a result she went to the spiritual world. Kamsa didn't follow this path ... There were many fortunate living beings who didn't follow this path. But it's not for us. We cannot follow in Putana's footsteps and cannot establish a Putana-Gaudiya-Vaishnava-Sampradaya (laughter), these are not *acharyas*.

Srila Rupa Goswami explains the most common or most standard path that can be reproduced because his task consists in giving us the practice, his task consists in explaining to us what we must do to ensure spiritual advancement in our heart. And he explains that, roughly speaking, in the first approximation, this path is divided into two parts: before *bhava* and after *bhava*. Which category does *bhava* fall into? Does it fall into the category of *sadhana* or practice? That's right, the second answer is correct, it does. It falls into the category of *sadhana* because there we still have to make efforts. *Sadhana* is when I make systematic efforts to achieve a certain state or to achieve the goal. And *bhava* is still the level on which we still make efforts; but why does it nevertheless stand out? Why does it take an intermediate position? Rupa Goswami says that on the one hand it's *sadhya*, or the result, the goal of our efforts but on the other hand it's still *sadhana*. Why? No. Listen carefully, because we all want to achieve *bhava*. Do we want to achieve *bhava*? On the stage of *bhava* these efforts become our nature, on the stage of *bhava* the efforts that we make to reach the next stage are absolutely natural to us. What do we need to do up to the stage of *bhava*? Make efforts that are against our nature. Up to the stage of *bhava* we must overcome the external or the imposed nature that we have acquired. That is precisely the difference. Both here and there we still make efforts because this is *sadhana*, but at the level of *bhava* *sadhana* becomes our nature, it becomes the essence of our heart. Up to the level of *bhava* this is to some extent unnatural.

And, actually, that's the reason; because the cause of all our problems is that we have to overcome our material nature which means that up to the level of *bhava* there is a very powerful force that is constantly pulling us down. As a soul that's aspiring to the highest, to God, we are making efforts. Are we making efforts? Those who are making efforts, raise both hands up and loudly shout "Haribol". But at the same time some kind of force is pulling us down. If some force is pulling you down raise two hands and loudly shout "Haribol" (shouting). Congratulations (laughs).

This is the problem that is addressed by practically all spiritual practices, by all religions. Apostle Paul says that "There are two laws in my heart: one law is the law of flesh, and the other is the law of spirit. And the law of spirit is leading me upwards while the law of flesh is pulling me down". And *bhava* is the level on which one ultimately feels that the law of flesh has completely lost its power over him because although he's still making efforts the desire or the *samskaras* that have been pulling him down are almost gone, almost destroyed. In other words, another way of putting this is as follows: the farther we are from the stage of *bhava* the more efforts we have to make, the greater the force that will be throwing us back will be, the

more difficult the struggle will be, the more efforts we'll have to make. Therefore it's so important to understand on these initial stages what force is pushing us forward. Because the force that will be pushing us back is clear, it's our *samskaras*, desires, habits, our taste of material happiness. But there must be another force that exceeds that force. There must always be a balance between the two forces and the balance must be in favor of the spiritual one. The spiritual power or spiritual component must be stronger. And, actually, this entire seminar is about this, about how even at this very first stage to make the spiritual component or spiritual impulse stronger than all the material impulses.

We know that Srila Rupa Goswami defines pure *bhakti* as *anyabhilasita-sunyam jnana-karmady anavritam anukulyena krisnanu-silanam bhaktir uttama*. He has set this, at first glance unthinkable ideal: *anya abhilashita shunyam*. *Anya abhilashita-shunyam* means that pure *bhakti* is the *bhakti* when one has no other desires; moreover, when one has no inclinations to have other desires. He doesn't say *anya abhilash-sunyam*, he says *anya abhilashita-sunyam* which even reinforces his requirement. One who's practicing pure *bhakti* shouldn't have even the propensity to have others desires. Is such a state possible at the very first stage of spiritual practice? When we don't have not simply other desires, even the desire to wish for other desires is not there; when there is no thought whatsoever of having any other desire. Is such a state possible at the very first stage of spiritual practice? No? It is, it is, who said that? Come and sit here, you tell us (laughs). The point is that it is possible. The secret of *uttama-bhakti* is that such a state is possible even at the earliest stages of spiritual practice. And it is in this state that one can advance properly. I'll try to reveal these secrets to you in my small seminar. Do you want to know these secrets? Somewhat not very confident (cries of "Haribol").

Desires remain in us. In fact, if we honestly look, we'll see that desires may remain in us even at the level of *bhava*, up to the level of *bhava* some desires may still appear, but these desires actually have no power any more. As long as the desires are strong, the mind, under the influence of these desires, will constantly fluctuate. Desires are the factor in the mind, which turns the mind into a state of jimjams, into the state of constant shaking, vibration and uncertainty. Therefore, there is another very important milestone, or step on the path of *bhakti* called *nistha*. And *nistha* is the stage where most of the desires not simply have no power over us, but basically go away from our consciousness, from our mind. And my presentation will be exactly about this, about how to achieve the level of *nistha*. Because, although, as I've already said, only at the level of *bhava* the efforts will become fully natural, but after the level of *nistha*, generally, it's a downhill path; it's a path that goes down by itself. Up to the level of *nistha* it's an uphill path. And everyone knows that when we go up the hill, as soon as we stop what starts happening to us? Yes, we start going down. As long as we go uphill we must not stop because any stop on this path will result in our throwing us back.

And *anartha-nivritti* ... Srila Prabhupada very nicely defines this level or this stage, the stage of *anartha-nivritti* – it is the stage on which the attraction of other objects, of everything else in this world is gradually reduced, and, on the other hand, the attraction to Krishna is getting stronger and stronger. *Anartha-nivritti* is the stage when we feel the gradual weakening of attraction of *visaya*, the objects of sensual pleasure.

And we'll be speaking precisely about this. Then, after *anartha-nivritti* this power of the other objects to attract becomes so weak, and just the opposite, the taste that permeates our practice, the taste for Krishna, becomes so strong that we can feel completely safe. Up to that level no one must feel completely safe. Srila Prabhupada used to say that "the only thing that distinguishes me from my disciples is that I'm afraid of *maya* and they are not; they've achieved complete fearlessness, they are not afraid of its attraction" but it's precisely us that must fear

maya, because for us the material world, with all its temptations, is still attractive to some extent. When we've realized the attractiveness or the sweetness of the ultimate truth, the taste of the ultimate truth, then there will be practically nothing to fear, although there, too, some problems lay in wait for the *sadhaka*, for the one who's following spiritual practice.

I'll start with the first stage that Srila Rupa Goswami speaks about and today we'll be talking about it, *adau sraddha*, everything begins with faith. And, in describing faith, I'll try to describe material faith and spiritual faith so that we learn to distinguish one from the other, so that we understand which faith is material and which is spiritual. And even on the level of spiritual faith there are various types, there are various categories of spiritual faith and there are categories of spiritual faith that are not the best and there are categories of spiritual faith that are good or recommended. This will be my subject today – so that in our heart we learn to distinguish, to analyze what kind of faith motivates me on this path. At the end of our talk I'll ask you to get into pairs or slightly larger groups so that we can discuss this material together and think about what kind of faith has brought me to the spiritual path and what kind of faith currently drives my spiritual advancement. So today we are going to have a very interesting, very practical conversation when we'll be trying to understand or classify the various forms of faith.

It all begins with what? What gives rise to one's faith? Yes, the meeting with the devotees, the association, the contact with devotees, with Srila Prabhupada's books or the live contact with practicing Vaishnavas. Today I read a letter that came to me. A woman is writing that most of her life she's lived in a Muslim family, though she is Russian, and the Muslim family taught her to believe in a Muslim way. She says that when I saw the devotees these people struck me. We don't realize the extent to which we are all striking, but it's a true and undeniable fact: devotees are special people. We have somehow got used to each other, to the other devotees, and sometimes we don't appreciate what spiritual practice gives us. Sometimes I meet some devotees in a year's time, and, looking at them, I am struck to see the extent to which they have changed over the year, the extent to which the features of their faces have cleared, the extent to which their eyes have become deeper – amazing changes take place with the devotees as a result of this practice. A person who's just encountered the devotees and has just heard the devotees, has just heard the Vaisnavas – and this is the most important thing, because a Vaishnava reveals himself first of all in sound. When a person meets the devotees and hears the Vaishnavas and if he feels reverence and respect, if he doesn't reject it all from the very beginning, if he doesn't put barriers or screens within himself, then something in his heart moves from the dead point.

Today we were on a train and there was a young conductor who asked Kanai Gopala, "Are you Buddhists or what?" Kanai Gopal sent Prana Kishor Prabhu to preach to him, because Prana Kishor Prabhu had said, "I am now telling everyone about Krishna". About half an hour or forty minutes remained to Dnepropetrovsk. As we were leaving I saw Prana Kishor Prabhu writing down in that conductor's notebooks the Hare Krishna mantra. When I said "Goodbye" to the conductor, he folded his palms and said, "Hare Krishna" (laughter and applause).

This is how the first faith appears. But this first faith is not the highest type of faith. In Sanskrit this first faith is called *samajik-sraddha* or *sraddha* which appears as a result of association, as a result of our contact with the devotees. It's then, after that that the most important thing begins. Here we must understand what the person who has obtained this first faith or this first impulse must do. The first faith, even though it might be a very small spark, it's the faith that the path of *bhakti* is the only path one must take up. It's not for nothing that that person said Hare Krishna. He may still not be aware that he has already believed in the fact that the path of *bhakti* is the only way one must take up. He may still think that at the railway he'll be shown

some other ways but actually he's obtained faith in this path and faith in this practice, because that's what we say at the beginning when we meet people; this is what we start talking about. We are trying to share our experience with the people and eventually our experience of happiness, our experience of joy. And though some people don't like it, but generally we want to pull them all to our own path, because we want to explain to them how nice it is, how easy and nice a person feels when he has suddenly acquired meaning in his life.

I recently talked to a devotee. She's a serious woman, she's doing business, she's rich, wealthy; she brought something for me and I said to her, "Thank you!" She said, "It's me who must thank you for you gave me the most precious thing, you gave me the meaning of my existence. Until then, in spite of all the well-being that I had, life was completely meaningless. Now I know at least what I'm living for and what I'm doing". We want to give people faith in this path. From the beginning our faith, the faith we give people is the faith in this path, the faith that *bhakti* is the only way one should take up.

And Srila Rupa Goswami says that for a person to go along the path of pure *bhakti*, *ananya-bhakti* – and here listen very carefully, here starts something, probably new, something we haven't heard before – the path of pure *bhakti* begins with faith, whereas the path of ordinary *bhakti* doesn't need to be accompanied by faith. Actually, one can practice *bhakti* without faith. Have you ever heard such allegations? Surely you have. Perhaps not so obviously, not so openly, not so rudely, not so heretically, as I'm saying it now, but was Ajamila practicing *bhakti* in reality? He was, because he was chanting "Narayana, Narayana ..." Is chanting of the Holy Name *bhakti*? It is. Did he have any faith in the holy name? No, he didn't. Did he reach the results of *bhakti*? He did. So, maybe we don't need faith? This is an important point, which I would like remain with you at least from our today's lecture. Faith is required to enable us to practice pure *bhakti* or *ananya-bhakti*, unalloyed *bhakti*, because it's the unalloyed *bhakti* that can bring us where? I've cheated you, I lied to you ... for, can impure *bhakti* bring us to the spiritual world? It can, it can. *Bhakti*'s is so powerful that even if it's impure it can bring us to the spiritual world; that even if it's impure it can give us salvation from all our sins and eventually give us *sarupya-mukti* or some other *mukti* – *sarsti*, *samipyra*, *salokya* – all this is possible, you don't have to practice pure *bhakti* for that. Generally, it's already in your pocket (laughter). We haven't gathered here for this (laughs). We have gathered here to practice pure *bhakti* and as a result of our practicing pure *bhakti* attain what? *Prema*, love of God, because attainment of *prema* or love of God is possible only by means of pure *bhakti*. To practice impure *bhakti* faith is not required.

In order to practice pure *bhakti* so that our *bhakti* is purified we need to have faith, *sraddha*, and faith of special quality. And all the remaining time I'll be speaking about what kind of faith this is, this *sraddha*, which can make our *bhakti* pure even at the very first, the initial stages and steps, and what other types of faith can there be in a person which, unfortunately, are not going to yield the desired result. That's clear, isn't it? We have established this very important truth that *sraddha* is not required in order to practice simply *bhakti*. *Sraddha* is required – and this is the only qualification – in order to practice pure *bhakti*.

And *sraddha*, I've already explained, starts with our having faith in a devotee and our feeling respect or reverence for a devotee – this is the first step. A little trust in or a little respect for a devotee means a glimmer of *sraddha*. If this respect is not there ... how many people listened to Srila Prabhupada? – Far not all of them became devotees. How many people met other saints? – Far not with all of them happened something in their heart. A prerequisite for attaining this faith or *sraddha* is respect or reverence. It's even said that *lava matra sadhu-sanga sarva siddhi haya* – that even an instant of association with a devotee can give us *sarva-siddhi*, all

perfections. What kind of perfection can an instant of association with a pure devotee give us? Yesterday or the day before in Alchevsk I was speaking some things about *bhakti*, about Bhakti Tirtha Maharaja, and a person asked me, “All this is clear, but what about *siddhas*? How can one obtain *siddhas*” All the *sastras* say *lava matra sadhu-sanga sarva siddhi haya* – one can attain any perfections even in an instant of association with a devotee. Because, ultimately, perfection means that we find ourselves in the spiritual world, perfection means that love of God appears within us – that’s the greatest perfection, everything else is not perfection.

There is a wonderful story in the Puranas, when Bali Maharaja once met Narada Muni. Narada Muni went to see him in his palace and Bali Maharaja duely received him, he washed his feet, sat him on the throne, sat at his feet and said, “I have one request to you, my heart bleeds when I think of my brother. My brother is a scoundrel, an atheist and a demon. We are all of a demons’ birth, from a demoniac family, so it runs in our blood to be demons. But this demon is a demon of all demons, he’s a drunkard, a rowdy man, he commits all possible sins and I’ve been trying in some way or another do something for him, but nothing works out. But you’re a great saint, a great devotee, you’ll be able to help him”. And Narada Muni said, “Of course, I’m a great saint, I’m a great devotee, I can help him”. And he went to that demon’s palace, to Bali Maharaja’s brother. This demon was sitting there ... He saw Narada Muni, he saw the saffron color and his eyes went red and bloodshot. He said, “Ahh, who’s that? Who’s come here?” He grabbed a bottle and started chasing after Narada Muni to drive him away. Fortunately, he was drunk, so he wasn’t running very fast, Narada Muni was prompter. He ran into a safe distance, he realized that he wont’ be able to do anything with him under such initial circumstances of their meeting, they were not very favorable, but in an impulse of compassion and mindful of his promise to Bali Maharaja, he shouted to him, “When you stand before Yama, before the lord of death, ask him, please, one question: what can association with a devotee give one?”

This drunk man sobered up a bit – when he was told about Yamaraja, he somewhat came to his senses. And for some reason, these words sank into his heart, for, once again, the sound coming from a devotee, has the power to penetrate into the heart, it has the power to pierce the veil of ignorance, which in all other situations close our ears and our minds to spiritual vibrations. This sound remained with him and in due course he found himself in hell, he appeared before Yamaraja and Yamaraja, tired of his hard work, looked sadly at him. Citragupta read out the long list of his misdeeds and his sins and Yamaraja said, “Well, what shall we do?” Like, sometimes the judges say, “Well, what shall we do, mister Goodman?” They know what is to be done, but appear to give him a choice. And then the demon felt, “That’s my chance!” He said, “Yamaraja, before you sentence me, answer one question: what can association with a Vaisnava give one?”

Upon hearing the question Yamaraja was lost in thought. He began to think and then said, “You know, I don’t know what association with a Vaisnava can give one, because here I have no Vaisnavas. I can not quite understand what it can give, because I need some kind of experience but I have no experience of this *sadhu-sanga*. Let’s go to Brahma”. And they went together to Brahma to ask him this question, and Yamaraja said, “An inquiring sinner came to me in hell. And usually sinners don’t ask such questions. For some reason this sinner asked me, what can association with a Vaisnava give one?” Upon hearing this question Brahma frowned and began to think intensely with all four heads and then said, “My four heads are not enough to explain this – my mind is too small to fully explain this. Let’s go together to Shiva”. And all the three of them now went to Shiva.

And Brahma said, “Yamaraja came to me and Yamaraja asked an unexpected question: what benefits can a person get by associating with Vaishnavas? And I couldn’t fully answer it

because I started thinking and I couldn't fathom and fully describe the abyss that opened before me. Per chance you happen to know?" Shiva began to cry. Shiva began, "How can I understand that? Look at my entourage, you see who's following me! Look at all these goblins. I'm compassionate, I feel sorry for them and I have to carry them all along. How am I supposed to fully know what can *sadhu-sanga* give one? Vishnu alone can answer that question".

And the four of them now went to Vishnu and Shiva said, "Brahma came to me, and before that Yamaraja came to him, and to Yamaraja this sinner came who asked a question that none of us was able to fully answer: what can association with a Vaisnava give one?" Vishnu smiled with His enigmatic smile. When Vishnu realizes that something is impossible to explain, He smiles. He smiled and said, "Association with a Vaishnava can give everything including that one is saved from hell and attains the spiritual world, and since this sinner's attained the spirit world, I Myself declare: *yad gatva on nivartante tad dhama paramam mama* (Gita, 15.6) – the one who gets here, never goes back. Therefore, stay here in the spiritual world". Brahma, Shiva and Yamaraja asked permission to leave because they had many things to do whereas Bali Maharaja's brother remained in the spiritual world". (applause)

But the point of this story is that even a small contact with the Vaishnavas, if we have a small fraction of respect, it can save one. In this case, Bali Maharaja's brother had enough respect for Narada Muni to listen to him and obey his request. He had asked him, "Please, remember me when you feel utterly bad. And he remembered. Therefore Rupa Goswami says that it all starts with *sraddha* or with a little respect for the Vaisnavas, which, in the process of our spiritual advancement must consciously deepen. This is a very important lesson of our today's lecture. *Sraddha* begins with respect, *sraddha* means respect because *sraddha* means trust, and trust means respect. And if we want our path to be unimpeded we must deepen our respect for the Vaisnavas. We must see the other Vaishnavas as our saviours. We must feel our dependence on the other Vaisnavas. This is a very important feature of Vaishnava culture or association with Vaishnavas. What do people want in the material world? Independence. All people want independence. What should we want in the spiritual world or in the spiritual society? What should we ask for? Yes, we should ask that our dependence on other Vaishnavas becomes deeper and deeper, becomes more and more sincere. By no means should we consider ourselves independent of other Vaishnavas because that will be the very stimulus that will be strengthening our *sraddha*. And Rupa Goswami, **Sanatana Goswami**, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Himself in the "Caitanya-caritamrita", in their instructions to **Sanatana Goswami** says: *sraddhavan jan haya bhakti adhikari* – that in order to practice pure *bhakti*, one must have *sraddha*.

Now I'm going to speak in greater detail about the nature of *sraddha*. *Sraddha* is an important qualification on all paths – on the path of yoga, on the path of *jnana* and on the path of *karma* one needs *sraddha*. And Srila Vyasadeva defines *sraddha* very curiously. Patanjali Muni in his "Yoga Sutras" says that *sraddha* is the first step on the way to *samadhi*: *sraddha virya smriti samadhi pragya purvakam itaresam*. He says that other people, in order to achieve *Samadhi*, first acquire *sraddha* or faith; then they acquire *virya* or strength because *sraddha* is the source of strength, then they acquire *smriti* or strong memory and strong memory brings them to absolute concentration. And Vyasadeva, commenting on this *sutra* – this is *sutra* 1.20 from Patanjali's "Yoga Sutras" – he gives a very interesting definition of *sraddha*. He says *sraddha cetasa sam prasadah*. What is *sraddha*? Now we'll try to understand the nature of this phenomenon, faith or *sraddha*. Vyasadeva says *cetasa sam prasadah* which translated into Russian means that *sraddha* is a clear state of mind. This is a clarified, absolutely pure, clear state of mind. *Sam prasadah* means: *sam* means perfect, *prasadah* means clear, transparent, light, enlightetened state of mind. *Cetasam sam prasadah* is the state in which one is freed

from the the main contamination, the original contamination. Which is the main contamination in one at the very beginning which prevents him to advance? Doubt, that's right. Doubts are the main contamination. We have our doubts. Doubts prevent us from making the first step. When doubts somehow or other go away by the grace of a devotee, we feel enlightenment in our mind. Has anyone felt in their mind, when they suddenly came across with a devotee, when he felt that and all of a sudden everything became clear? Suddenly it becomes clear that this is a path, that there is God, that everything is very simple. Has anyone felt this sudden enlightenment, although it seems so simple that we could have known it ourselves? I could have thought of that myself, right? You read Srila Prabhupada's books and think, "I could have written it". But for some reason it's not me who's written it but him. Who had this enlightenment in the mind when you came into contact with a devotee? Suddenly, everything falls into place.

And Vyasadeva says *sraddha cetasa sam prasadah*. *Sraddha* means enlightenment, when the cloud of doubt, the darkness of doubt, the fog, the slime, the mold of these doubts go away by the grace of the devotees. And what happens next? Doubt is what prevents one from acting. What's the Sanskrit word for doubt, who knows? *Samsayah*. Can anyone translate what the word *samsayah* literally means? What does *sam* mean? Fully, absolutely. And *saya*, *sayate* means to sleep, right. That's a nice translation, you've made a correct translation. *Samsayah* means sleep of mind. *Samsayah*, doubt, is when the mind doesn't know what must be done; and when the mind is divided we are deprived of power and we don't really know what to do.

And when our doubts regarding the spiritual practice go away, when this *samsayah* goes away, the spiritual mind is awakened and along with this awakened mind we feel ... What does one feel when he feels faith, *sraddha*? Energy. One is filled with energy. *Sraddha* is the source of energy because doubts go away and immediately there is clarity and understanding of what I should do, there is understanding, there is this source of energy. Therefore it is said that *sraddha* is *sakti*, this is one of the Lord's energies. Together with the descent of *sraddha* upon us we feel energized and Patanjali Muni writes the same thing. Patanjali Muni says *sraddha viriya* – *sraddha* is followed by *viriya*. *Viriya* means the force, the energy that one feels. Has anyone felt this extraordinary, incredible burst of energy that faith gives? Raise your hands and shout "Haribol!" I know one *mataji* – I've known her for a long time – it's Mataji Triveni, she's a disciple of Gopal Krishna Maharaj. She's a simple woman, very kind-hearted. She's got an incredible amount of energy, just incredible! I look at her and I envy her with the most innocent envy that I'm capable of (laughs). And I see that this energy goes on and on year after year, the source of this energy; and I gave just one example, you can certainly give many other examples. But this incredible energy that she has, it's all sourced by *sraddha*, by faith, which in turn means clarity of mind when doubts are gone.

Therefore further on Vyasadeva says *sahi janani iva kalyani yoginam pati*. He says that this *sraddha* which frees one of doubts and gives one energy, is like a mother to a yogi. What does a loving mother do to her beloved son? She takes care of him, feeds him, protects him. And Vyasadeva says *sraddha* is like a loving mother to all of us. When the child runs away the mother watches him so that he doesn't fall down, she warns him, she says, "Don't go there", she feeds him, she gives him to drink ... Just in the same way as long as we have faith in our hearts, we can be absolutely safe. We can know that this faith will take care of us, that we'll be growing, we'll be happily going along this path and it's important to understand that without faith we can never truly go along the spiritual path, because we'll lack this care or protective power that will protect us from all obstacles. What *sraddha* gives one is that it helps one to overcome all the obstacles that invariably, inevitably will stand up in the way of anyone who's going along the spiritual path.

And sometimes we say that our faith is a special faith, it's not a blind faith. Is it not blind? Faith is always blind. There is no faith that is not blind. That's why it's faith. Faith means that I don't know something. Faith means that I give credit to something, I believe in something, the experience of which I don't have yet. It's precisely this faith that can carry us through any obstacles because if we don't have faith, what will we do when we come across some obstacles? Yes, we'll start having doubts, we'll turn back, we'll lose heart, all our energy will go away, all the desire to follow. As long as everything's fine, as long as the sun shines, as long as there's a nice *prasadam* and everyone smiles to me *bhakti* can be practiced without faith. When things get bad – here we need faith. And Vyasadeva says that faith is like a mother. At that moment it will rub you on the head and say, "Don't worry, everything's going to be fine, have a little patience, a little more, take one more step, not everything will always be so bad!" That's why we need faith. But this is just a most preliminary description of the necessity of faith, the very beginning. We are in for another very interesting journey. Are you tired? I'm afraid of overloading you with all these things, but it's really an important subject matter.

Now quickly together with you, I'll try to give definition of the four types of faith. What are the four types of faith in this world? That's right – faith in ignorance, faith in passion, faith in goodness and what kind of faith else? Transcendental faith, faith beyond the modes of material nature. There are these three types of faith, because, as Krishna Himself says, *sraddha-maya yam puruso* – one consists of faith. To do whatever one has to do, to engage in whatever activity one has to engage in, one needs faith; without faith one won't be able to do anything. If he doesn't have any faith, he'll be sitting in one place and, indeed, he won't be able even to sit because without faith he'll always think, "What if everything just collapses beneath me?" He won't be able to make a single step he needs faith to perform the simplest actions, the simplest actions are based on some kind of faith. Any activity is based on faith. Faith is the source of energy for any activity and when in the material nature it's perverted, when it takes on perverted forms, transformed by the modes of material nature, it becomes *tamasika-sraddha*, *rajasika-sraddha* and *sattvika-sraddha*. And what is *tamasika-sraddha*? That's faith in what? No, that's faith in godless sinful activities. The faith that if I engage in these things and commit sins, I'll be happy. Have you ever met such people, who have a firm unshakable *nistha* in this kind of activity? People think that I'm going to do it, I must do it that's good, that's right, they engage in terrible things and yet they have faith in that. Satanists is one such category of people, but there are people who don't even have any theological justification for this, they just have faith that this is what should be done because that's a way to live in this world.

What is *rajasika-sraddha* or faith in passion? It's first of all faith in what? In oneself, in one's own strength, faith in our own mind, in our own intellect, in our own power; in the fact that if I do the right thing I'll be successful by all means; faith in some kind of karmic activity that yields results.

And finally, faith in *sattva-guna*, *sattvika-sraddha*, what's that? Yes, that's faith in purification, faith in the various practices of purification, when one fasts, that's *sattvika-sraddha*. One thinks, if I'm fast long enough I'll become immortal. Actually, he would just die quicker if he fasts too long (laughter). But *sattvika-sraddha* is the faith in some kind of spiritual practices. When people do yoga, for example, what kind of faith's that? They don't really know what yoga is, what the purpose of yoga is, why it should be yoga, but they think, they know that you have to stand on your head. They were told you have to stand on your head and they do stand on their heads. And to stand on your head – especially for a long time – you need to really have faith in it. If you've read any books on yoga, in the yoga books it's written: stand on your head and you will achieve immortality. And people think, "That's cool!" However, they forget that to achieve

immortality you have to stand on your head all the time, 24 hours a day, then may be such a person ... But there is also a huge element of faith, it's said: you must do this, you must do this pose, you must breathe ... One doesn't know, but he has faith that this practice will purify him, he has this ideal of purification. These are all possible kinds of spiritual and pseudo-spiritual practices based on *sattvika-sraddha*.

Finally, there is transcendental faith. What kind of faith is that? That's faith in what? In Krishna or not in Krishna? No, not in Krishna. That's faith in the service of Krishna. *Prasadam* is included (laughter). Krishna Himself says *mad sevaya tu nirgunam*. This verse is actually from the Eleventh Canto, chapter 25 of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" where Krishna describes this to Uddhava. He says, "This is the faith that we must serve Krishna, that I must serve the Personality of Godhead." This is the faith that, offering a flower, *patram puspam phalam toyam yo me bhaktya prayachchhati* – I'll be able to achieve something, that just by having picked a small flower and offered it to this little figure made of bronze, I'll be able to attain all the perfections of this world. This is a special faith, this is a transcendental faith, faith beyond the modes of material nature. This is the belief that God can do anything, that God can be manifested through everything and anything, that God can accept everything we have and, accepting everything we have, He can give us the most important thing that we need – love of Himself. This is a special, amazing, rare faith.

Okay, we've left behind the *tamasika-sraddha*, the *rajasika-sraddha*, the *sattvika-sraddhs* and we are left alone with the transcendental faith. Is this sufficient or not? No, it's not, that's the point, that fun starts further on. Okay, somehow we've turned lucky and obtained some kind of faith in spiritual activities or in Krishna's service. Who's attained some kind of faith in spiritual activity? Everyone, otherwise you wouldn't be sitting here, otherwise you wouldn't be wasting your time, otherwise you would've been doing something else. We do have some kind of faith. Now starts the most interesting thing. Viswanatha Chakravarti Thakur says that this kind of faith, the transcendental faith, is of two types or two categories. The first is called *svabhaviki*. What does *svabhaviki* mean? Natural, it's the manifestation of one's own being, one's own nature. And the second category is called *balat-utpadita* which means imposed faith. And, once again, this is where the shoe pinches. The question I'll ask you at the end will consist in your own definition to what extent your faith belongs to the first category and to what extent it has the nature of the second category. There are two categories of faith and what we have is some mixture, because faith is the source or the motive for action, and analysing these two categories of faith, we'll see that we are driven by mixed motives. And although they both belong to the transcendental category the second category of faith is highly unfavorable.

Are you eager to hear what this is? We're plunging even deeper into the psychological analysis of the devotee, we're approaching quite dangerous depths of the devotee's psychology. But first I'll be speaking on the natural faith, on the faith that is kind of a continuation of the human nature. Why does Viswanath Cakravarti Thakur call it natural faith? Because by its very form, this faith reflects one's nature, it's not imposed on him. And, looking ahead, I'll give the definition of this faith. This is faith that is based on the *sastras*. It is natural precisely because it's a reflection of or our response to the spiritual sound. This faith appears as a result of our hearing a message from the spiritual world, of our hearing the holy name, *vaikuntha-nama*, of our hearing the *sastras*, of our hearing the "Bhagavad-gita" and our heart's responded to the "Bhagavad-gita". Who had the feeling that I already know all that, when we read the "Bhagavad-gita"? That everything is as it should be, that it just cannot be otherwise? That that's it, everything's clear, everything's natural. Therefore, Viswanatha Cakravarti Thakur calls it *sastriya-sraddha* – this is Jiva Goswami's term, his predecessor's, and he says that there is *sastriya-sraddha* or faith in the scriptures, in the understanding of the meaning of the

scriptures – Viswanatha Cakravarti Thakur calls it *svabhaviki-sraddha* or natural *sraddha* when one hears this message and responds to it or awakens. Just like to wake up one has to hear a sound. In the same way to awaken from the sleep of material existence one must also hear a sound. What's the sound one must hear? *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare*. Yes, when we hear the sound of the scriptures or the sound of the holy name. I remember my feeling when I first heard the sound of the holy name. My mind was saying, "Your mate is crazy!" And my heart was saying: *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare*. There was something extremely familiar, something inside responded to all that.

Srila Niranjana Maharaj told an amazing story about how *svabhaviki-sraddha* works. Recently, I'm sure many of you've heard, when they were in Moscow together with Srila Radhanatha Maharaja, he told this story about his spiritual sister Isha Devi Dasi, who was and still is Srila Prabhupada's disciple, she's very old, she's 91. And once she was found in the doorway, on the porch of her house, completely paralyzed. She was somehow driven to the hospital, she was brought to her senses and there was extensive paralysis due to which she forgot everything. She didn't even remember how to eat. She had to be taught everything over again – how to eat, where the food is, how to dress. She didn't even know how to dress – she had absolutely all memory. And Niranjana Maharaja, who loved and loves her very much, was told about this after a while, a week later, and was told that she was completely unconscious and doesn't remember anything.

He decided to call her immediately. He called and said, "Can I speak to Isha Devi Dasi?" She was told that, "Niranjana Swami wants to speak to you". She got the phone and when she heard Niranjana Maharaja's voice she sang into the phone, "*Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare*". She didn't remember how to eat nor how to dress, but as soon as she heard, "Niranjana Swami wants to talk", she started singing on the phone. Then, when she finished singing, she shouted as loudly as she could, "All glories to Srila Prabhupada!" (laughter) Maharaj then says that he went to visit her and found her being taught how to eat. Her doctor was there teaching her to eat, saying, "This is a plate, you have to do like this and this" just like a small child. And he says that I found an amazing scene: sitting next to her was the doctor and the doctor asked her trying to remind her of something. Her name is Edith. He said, "Edith, where is your home?" She thought for a moment, "My home?! My home is in Vrindavan". The doctor never heard of Vrindavan. He said, "In Chicago?" She said, "What Chicago? In Vrindavan! My home is ...". He says, "Where is that?" She says, "Where? In Vrindavan, I live in Vrindavan, I come from there!"

This is, in fact, a reflection of *svabhaviki* or the deep internal nature of the soul; when one hears the sound of the scriptures and remembers about it and follows precisely the sound of the scriptures in his life, then this sound of the scriptures will ultimately by all means bring him home, to Vrindavan.

I'll now give the definition, because we are studying a science and a science means a clear understanding of the definitions. *Svabhaviki-sraddha* is, as I already said, the *sastriya-sraddha*, or faith in the words of the scriptures, or, more precisely, if some of you are taking notes, then put down, please, this definition or try to remember it. This is the faith in the infallibility of the fundamental teachings of the scriptures which concerns the nature of God, the individual soul, the universe, the *maya* and their relationships with each other. This is the faith in the infallibility of the basic or fundamental doctrines of the scriptures regarding the nature of God, the individual soul, the universe, the *maya* and their relationships with each other, as well as the highest goal of all our efforts. This is the essence of faith. *Sastriya-sraddha* or *svabhaviki-*

sraddha is the deep faith in the essence of the scriptures, which describes to us the nature of God, the nature of the individual soul, the relationships which connect the individual soul and God, the nature of the material world, the nature of *maya*. All these truths, if we get them from the scriptures and they are imprinted in our hearts, and if in doing so we are aware that our main goal is to realize love of God, truly, in the highest form, then all this will represent the natural or correct *sraddha*. Therefore Caytanya Mahaprabhu gave the famous definition of *sraddha*: *Sraddha sabde visvasa kahe sudridha niscaya*. There are two translations of these simple words: *sraddha-sabde visvasa kahe sudridha nischaya*. First is *sraddha-sabda*. *Sabda* means word. The word *sraddha* means *visvasa*, *visvasa* means trust. *Sudridha nischaya* means unwavering trust in the fact that by practicing *bhakti*, *krisne-bhakti kayle sarva-karma crita haya* – that just by practicing *bhakti* one will do everything that is needed, will achieve everything that is required, that there is no need for anything else. But there is another, also obvious translation of this, a little different: *sraddha-sabde visvasa*. *Visvasa* means trust, *sabda* means what? Yes, scriptures. *Sraddha* means trust or faith in the scriptures. *Sraddhe-sabda visvasa*. When we repose our *visvas* or our trust, our faith in the words of the scriptures, not in anything else. We need nothing else but precisely this overwhelming faith in the words of the scriptures; the faith that will help me to focus on the words of the scriptures.

It's almost 6:00; can I speak a little longer, because I don't want to interrupt. Are you tired? *Sraddha-sabde-visvasa kahe sudridha nischaya*: *Sraddha* is the faith or trust in *sabda*, in the words of the scriptures, in the meaning of the scriptures, and not simply faith, but faith of particular quality or particular power when we understand that it is the most important thing. *Sraddha* is a specific state when I realize that everything else is not that important, when this truth of the scripture is revealed to me from within and suddenly it all becomes clear to me, I realize that nothing else matters. Absorption is the sign of true faith. Faith becomes true when it allows me to fully focus on all this, when everything else ceases to be something significant or important to us; when we hear the scriptures being praised as the most important thing in our life, when we hear with an insatiable thirst. There is an example of this in the scriptures themselves. Who listened with an extraordinary concentration? Yes, Maharaja Parikshit. Why? Because he knew he was going to die soon. Are we going to die soon? No, we're not going to die soon, so we don't need to listen in such a way, right? We are also going to die soon. It's not by chance that he listened for seven days. Seven days means a week, and we know that week after week pass by and death comes very soon. And faith means the understanding that this is the most important thing: what's happening now is the most important thing. Mind works in a particular way: whatever I'm doing I think that something else is more important. Have you noticed that? No matter what I'm doing ... As soon as I start doing something my mind immediately starts telling me, "Maybe you could do something else?" Especially if I'm chanting mantra – the mind immediately says, "Yes, yes, I have to do so many things!" But the most amazing thing is that as soon as I start doing something else, the mind will say what? Yes, the mind says that there's something else to be done. If we're reading *sastra*, the mind's saying, "I have to do something else!" But the meaning of *sraddha* is that *sraddha*, if this faith or this state, this *vritti*, this state of consciousness has appeared in one, he realizes that this is the most important thing; that the most important thing for me now is to listen. We want to achieve exactly this state of *sraddha* – to hear as Maharaja Parikshit was hearing; in such a way as to forget about hunger, about thirst, about everything else.

Why is it this particular quality that is essential in *sraddha* and why is it this particular quality that we can and must try to develop in ourselves? This is the kind of *sraddha* we need. Why? Let's go back to the very beginning of our presentation. I said that even at the very beginning our *bhakti* can be pure. How can it be pure? If there is this particular quality of faith. If I have the faith that this is the most important thing, even if there appears some other desire in my

heart then what do I say to myself? “You wait a little, I can’t think of you right now!” Therefore Rupa Goswami says that this is the qualification for practicing *akincana-bhakti*. If I don’t have such faith, my *bhakti* will be deprived of purity, my mind, my consciousness will be divided by many other things. My many branched mind will be dedicated to this, to that, to something else and so on ... Therefore one must ultimately develop in oneself *sastriya-sraddha* and this *sraddha* must become so intensive that everything else would stop worrying me, disturbing me, bothering me, so that it wouldn’t impede me, even if these desires somehow or other appear in me.

And it actually doesn’t take much to do this. To do this we must understand that we are where? On the verge of what? On the threshold of great things (laughter). On the verge of death. This is the question that “Srimad-Bhagavatam” begins with, this is one of the questions when the sages of the Naimisaranya forest ask Suta Goswami, “What is the person on the verge of death supposed to do, what must a person on the verge of death understand?” And we must believe the fact that we are all going to die. Does anyone believe that he’s going to die? Actually, no one believes it, this is the problem – the problem is that we don’t believe that we are on the verge of death, we don’t believe that we’re going to die, we don’t believe that we need it. If we start to strongly believe it, that here is the meaning of the scriptures before us and we can do it now, we’ll be able absorb ourselves in all this. That’s precisely why our *bhakti* can be very pure when we have this faith which allows us to focus our minds and reject all other interests when all other interests cease to really affect us. Has anyone felt such faith when all of a sudden everything else suddenly becomes insipid? Suddenly you realize that everything else is insipid and that’s faith, that’s real faith.

Srila Radhanath Maharaj told one amazing story besides all the numerous other stories he was telling. It’s the story Ganeshyama Babaji, his nice good friend, the very one who found the Deities of Radha-Gopijana-Vallabha and who whenever he met him, would say, “I’m your humble servant”. And he wasn’t just saying that, he actually meant it. And he once asked him, “Could you tell me your story? How did you get here, what brought you here, to Vrindavan?” He was embarrassed and said, “But what’s the use of my story?” A Vaishnava doesn’t like talking about himself, a Vaishnava doesn’t like to be the object of glorification or talk. But then he thought for a while and said, “However, the story is worth telling in order to glorify Krishna”. This is a story meaningful because it shows how great Krishna is. However, it’s a simple story. The story consists in the fact that he came from a very rich royal family, a young man once came to Vrindavan. When his family decided to leave Vrindavan, he felt he was unable to leave Vrindavan. That’s the whole story, that’s the end of the whole story. He came to Vrindavan and realized that he wouldn’t be able to leave it, Krishna caught him in His net. The family left in extreme anger, in complete frustration, he was the only heir. And they were writing letters to him, they were threatening to deprive him of any inheritance and everything else. “Inheritance? – One speck of Vrindavan dust is more precious than the entire treasures of this world. I have so many of these dust specks here! I can bathe in the dust!” And that means faith when a little faith appears in one. This little faith is sufficient to burn everything else that’s there inside us. Such a person understands that there’s nothing better than this; there’s nothing more attractive than this, there’s nothing more astonishing than this. And ultimately that’s *sastriya-sraddha*.

Now I’d like to ask you a tactless question: Whose faith is so strong that he’s not interested in anything else? Don’t answer this question, but ask it to yourself and listen to the answer that will come from your heart. Do we have faith? We do. It is strong enough? Not really. The best and most wonderful thing is that we can make our faith stronger. How can we strengthen the *sastriya-sraddha*? Yes, there are two ways to strengthen this *sastriya-sraddha*. And that’s why, generally, the most important thing we must do now is to listen and Srila Jiva Goswami

explains in the “Bhakti-sandharbha” that faith, *sastriya-sraddha*, by its origin and by its very nature is divided into two categories: *vicar-pradhan* and *ruci-pradhan*. *Vicar-pradhan* is the faith when I listen to the *sastras* and try to get rid of the doubts that inevitably arise in me with regards to the *sastras*; when I try to understand the logic of the *sastras*, when I try to see the overall structure of the *sastras*. And, having seen the overall structure of the *sastras* I realize: everything is perfect, everything is as it is, that’s the way it is; I see this well-composed comprehensive structure of the *sastras* with all its logic and my doubts are cleared. Because, to be honest, we do have doubts, we do, we cannot comprehend those multi-headed and multi-armed deamons on the various planets ... We’ve never seen all that! But if we see the overall structure, if we feel the logic, if we feel how every little piece of everything that is said in the *sastras* logically builds up to the complete whole; if we understand that everything is connected, that not a single brick can be removed, that everything is in its place, that everything is as it should be, then we can believe; we see the lower floors of the foundation or the plinth of that building of the *sastras*, but we can see that all the rest, what we haven’t yet experienced ourselves, also fits in there. Can it be? That we start from something we’re confident on and give credit to all the rest.

And Srila Jiva Goswami says that this is *vicar-pradhan*, faith that results from reflection on the *sastras*. I hear and not simply hear, I try to see, to catch, to feel the logic of what is written in the *sastras*. And this is actually the most common form of faith. We don’t have to rush off to somewhere else. We must strengthen our faith by hearing explanations of the *sastras* by those who understand the logic of the *sastras*, and by no means neglect this, even if we think that everything’s fine with us. Even if we think that everythin’s fine, that “I know everything, why should I need it? I chant *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare* and everything’s gona be fine, I’ve got it all, I’ve got faith in the path, everything’s clear, everything’s fine, why should I need all that? I’ve heard that so many times!” Do such thoughts sometimes occur to any of you? Well, we’ve heard it all, haven’t we?! Over and over again? Why?! The problem’s that for the time being everything’s fine with all of you. Tomorrow everything’s gonna be bad. And the day after tomorrow too. Or when you come back from the retreat. Or, when you are left all alone with your mind. Or when someone comes up and says something that suddenly raises the doubts that have never actually disappeared, but were simply hidden somewhere deep inside. Someone will tell you something and that’s it, all your faith will fall into pieces. Again and again one must hear explanation of the *sastras*. This is very important, you cannot overstate the value of this. I’ll never get tired of repeating: one must hear the *sastras*. This is not *jnana*. Sometimes I hear an absolutely terrible offence towards the *sastras*, when people say, “Those who study the *sastras* are *janis*”. They’re not *janis*, they’re just smart *bhaktas* (applause). Those who don’t study *sastra* are stupid *bhaktas* and the problem is that ... Srila Jiva Goswami says that. A little later I’ll quote him, he’ll say what happens with those whose faith is not strong enough, because he hasn’t fully understood the logic, because he hasn’t been listening enough, whereas it is exactly listening that is the driving force at the early stages of devotional service. And it’s not simply listening, because listening can be improper. A little later I’ll be talking about the wrong forms of listening. But we’ll get to that point. Listening is the engine that pulls us forward, that enables us to overcome the obstacles that will sooner or later encounter us on our path. And what happens ultimately to the person that has listened long enough, if he’s been listening and thinking about it, listening and trying to understand what is being said, listening and trying to make it a part of his or her own life? He starts seeing this world in a particular way, his meditation becomes continuous, he starts seeing Krishna here, because he becomes *sastracaksu*, he starts seeing through the prism of the scriptures; he doesn’t just see a birch tree anymore, he sees how this birch tree is connected to Krishna; not just a bird that’s fluttering, he sees the soul.

Like, one person was telling me recently, too, a *matāji* has written me a letter. She says, that “Previously I’ve heard many times that Krishna is in the heart of all living beings, I’ve heard many times that all living beings are souls, but many times I didn’t pay any attention to that”. I’m a little embarrassed to speak about this because she’s present here in this room, but nevertheless, she’ll understand who I’m talking about. And she’s writing to me that at some point when she was pulled down by a disease and she started thinking why this disease has come to her? Why has this disease happened to her? Suddenly she realized that the disease has come to remind her that Krishna is in the hearts of all living beings, that she didn’t have the proper attitude towards all living beings on the basis of *sastra*. This is the meaning of *sastrīya-sraddha* – that I listen for a long time, over and over again. I hear that many times, but don’t understand it. But at some point, since I’ve been hearing many times something happens and all of a sudden I start seeing it. If I hadn’t heard, I would have never seen it. But, since I’ve heard it over and over again, all of a sudden I start seeing that it’s not just some rascal sitting before me, who I have to just push out or come to terms with. No, Krishna’s in his heart, right there. I see it! And this is the advantage or the amazing result of *sastrīya-sraddha*, that ultimately worshipping the Lord as a result of such *sraddha*, as a result of such hearing becomes my very life, it becomes somewhat natural, as natural as it can be even on the first level, on the level of *sraddha*.

And there is faith of another nature, of another type – when we listen to the *sastras* ... The first is called *vicar-pradhan*, it results from *vicara*, or reflection, and the second is called *ruci-radhan* – I hear about Krishna and what? And I just like it. I love it and love it so much that I’m willing to listen without end. And I listen and I love it all the more, and everything’s fine.

satāṁ prasaṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido
 bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ
 taj-joṣaṇād āśv apavarga-vartmani
 śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati
 (*Bhagavatam*, 3.25.25)

I’m listening and *bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ* – and this thing, this sound, just the sound, just the fact that I’m hearing it, just the process of hearing becomes a *rasayana* to my heart and to my ear. *Rasayana* is a tonic, the more you take it the more you want it. Tonic is what gives strength. You hear and want to hear more. This is another source of faith or another type of faith. *Bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ- taj-joṣaṇād āśv apavarga-vartmani śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati* – Kapiladeva says that as a result of such hearing when hearing becomes a tonic or a *rasayana*, when hearing enlivens us from within and we have learned, we have somehow or other developed a taste for hearing, as a result, there is *sraddha* first. That is, at the beginning this *sraddha* might not be there, *sraddha* appears as a result of this hearing, then *rati* appears, or attachment to Krishna, and then *bhakti* appears.

We are still to go through many points. Organizers should be asked what they have to say about it? Because we can, basically, stop here and shift wrong hearing and wrong things to tomorrow, because here we still have many things. Can I go on speaking? I do not know, maybe it’s better to stop here I’m not asking you, I’m asking the organizers (laughs). Vijay Krishna? (applause) The loud-voiced minority wan over. The major part was sitting silently thinking, “Ah!” but didn’t dare to admit it. Several people shouted, “Go on, go on!” There is one honest man: we have service to do. Perhaps we’d rather stop here? Okay, those who have to do service can go. Those who are to cut vegetables – follow Vasudevananda! That’s good, we haven’t started talking about the bad things yet, we’ll first talk about the good ones. I don’t know

if we'll have time to start talking about the bad things. This *ruci-pradhan* is *sraddha* which appears because there's *ruci* – that's good. We listen to a devotee and we like listening and we want to listen and it becomes a tonic for us.

Since it seems that we need lots of vegetables for tomorrow, I'll not speak too long, I wanted to talk about the important things when everyone is listening attentively. I'll say literally a few more words which are nevertheless very important. We're thinking and reflecting over the nature of faith, the nature of *sraddha*. We've already said what the nature of *sraddha* is: that mind is purified of doubts, the energy or desire to do something appears, the understanding that I have to serve Krishna; and when we listen to the *sastras*, what else appears along with it, along with the desire to do something for Krishna, with the desire to go along this path? The hope that I will very soon reach the goal. There is hope, that's also a sign of *sastriya-sraddha*. The *sastras* are written in a particular way, the *sastras* are written specifically to strengthen this hope in us, to make it strong and very firm. Especially Srila Prabhupada – he is an expert in this, he presents everything in such a way that it seems: a little more and there it is. He says what *anartha-nivritti* means – If you've stopped eating meat – all *anarthas* are gone, just give smoking and everything will be fine. Give up all these unnecessary stuff; give up all this nonsense and rubbish and everything will come very quickly. A little more and you start dancing – last time we described how he's describing the entire path: if you dance at the *kirtan* that's already *bhava*. If you dance for a long time that's already *prema* (laughs), and if even longer, then without noticing you'll find yourself in the spiritual world. And that's a sign of *sastriya-sraddha*. *Sastriya-sraddha* gives faith in attaining the perfection described in the *sastras*. The *sastras* speak of perfection, the perfection of *prema*, the perfection of spiritual love and this faith arises in us. But what's very important ... For what other reason is it so important to study the *sastras*? – Because along with this faith in the words of the scriptures and the hope that they give us, we have a clear understanding of what ... we start to feel respect that allows us to avoid all obstacle on the path of *bhakti*, namely the deliberate offences, the desire for fame, honor, and all sorts of other things. And it's also a feature of *sraddha*. And why is it so important and why should *sraddha* be based on *sastra*? Because when we read the *sastras* we have a clear understanding of what I need and what I don't need. Do I need honor, fame, celebrity? ... I do, that's clear, who doesn't need it? Everyone needs it, that's a nice pleasurable thing ... But we read about this in the *sastras* and understand: I don't need it, it's an obstacle, it's a nasty thing. The *sastras* say, it's a nasty thing – don't touch it! (laughs) It's not worth it, you'll get smeared in all that. It's actually dirt, it's dirt. And if I'm not absorbed in the *sastras*, I won't be able to understand all that. And all these things will be coming to me, and we'll be analyzing in the next few days, which I hope will be long and we won't have so many vegetables so that we are able to hear about all this. We'll be analyzing how these things will be coming to us and not just coming. Krishna will Himself be coming and offering it to us. Krishna will be cheating us, Krishna will be saying, "Please, take it! Just look here: here's fame, here's money, take it, please, take it to please Me, I like giving this to My devotees, take it!"

At this point, we must have *sraddha* which is strong enough to enable us to tell Him what? I don't want it, no, I won't! But this requires faith, because it all will come. This is the good news: all this is sure to come! But when it comes, this is where the fun starts. At this point you must say, "No, I do not need it! It's not for this that I've come here! It's not for this that I'm doing all this!" And this is the meaning of *sraddha*: *sraddha* helps one to avoid offences. Because if I don't have *sraddha*, if I don't have respect, if I don't have the clear desire to understand that this is the goal and I want to attain this goal, and in order to achieve this goal I must first of all avoid offences on my way, then I'll be offending the devotees. Do I sometimes want to offend the devotees? Who else is there to offend, they're all around. Like, a devotee was complaining to me, he said, "The *sastras* say that the devotees are rare. But what you have all around is

just devotees! Krishna says that of thousands and thousands of people, hardly one ... and here there are just devotees!" And this temptation to offend, this temptation to think bad of them will be there. *Sraddha* will protect us against this. Therefore Vyasadeva says that it's like a mother who will say, "Don't do that!" It will give you the clear understanding: here's the goal, everything else you don't need, and even if we have this firm faith or firm *sraddha* that we've obtained from the only source, for there's no other source of the right *sraddha* – only *sastra* – *sastras*, *sadhu*, *guru* - if we've obtained this firm faith, then even if we somehow or other stumble or our attachments still stick to us, then what will we be feeling? Repentance. And if *sraddha* is not there, we won't feel repentance. Repentance is a sign of *sraddha*, it's a sign of faith. If we have a clear understanding of what *sastra* wants to tell us, when we get attached to something or when we do something that we know well, is not good, we'll feel repentance. And if there is no faith, then there will be no repentance either. And since there will be no repentance, we won't be cleansed of all of these things and these attachments will be growing stronger and stronger, they'll be dragging us back.

That is why faith is so important at the beginning and faith can be strengthened; there is only one way to strengthen our faith. What should we do for this? Listen to the *sastras*. Listen to the *sastras* every day, listen to the *sastras* all the time and by no means should we think that I already know everything. Does anyone think sometimes that "I've already heard all that"? Yes ... We must listen to the *sastras* every day because faith is the foundation and if we want to build a tall building or a high stairway that will reach the spiritual world, the foundation must be very strong. If this is not there ... And one can be practising *ananya-bhakti* without *sraddha*. This is another amazing thing I'm going to reveal to you today. First I told you that one can practice *bhakti* without faith, but I told you that to practice pure *bhakti* one needs faith, one needs *sraddha*. Now I say something even more astonishing – that even to practice *ananya-bhakti* one doesn't need faith or doesn't need strong faith. A person can be engaged in pure devotional service without having strong faith. What will happen to such a person? These are Srila Jiva Goswami's words. Let's consider this carefully and stop here because I wanted to leave the next piece for tomorrow. He says *kadacit kincit pravritta ca niscayati*. He says that sometimes, if one is not so deeply absorbed, if he somehow or other has not obtained faith of such quality that I was trying to describe, if one's not so much absorbed and doesn't understand the importance of everything that he's being told now, to the degree that it would cast aside all other interests, then, in this case, *niscayati*, his focus on the practice of devotional service will sooner or later come to an end. And we have seen such results: a person engages in *bhakti* and at the beginning he feels an extraordinary enthusiasm, great ecstasy, but he lacks faith which is strong enough, because at the beginning there's a lot of new information, nice people, nice food, nice *prasadam*, a lot of nice things, he engages in all this and everything is okay with him. Have you seen such devotees, who are perfectly Okay? Everything's fine with them, it's just amazing! He's dressed in a *dhoti*, in a *saree*, he's got a *tilaka* like an arrow and everything's fine for a while, but then look he's disappeared, he's not there any more. Why is this happening? Because there was no strong faith and one hasn't taken the care to make this faith stronger, that's all, as simple as that. At the beginning he had this feeling that that's it, there's nothing better than this, that everything's so attractive here, I don't even know what attracts me more – everything's just so nice, so perfect ... But if I don't have the clear understanding, the clear and distinct faith based on *sastra*, sooner or later, Srila Jiva Goswami says, such a person will go away because faith – and this is one last definition that I wanted to give today: faith is hunger for God. When we read the scriptures, when we realize that there is God, when our mind is suddenly enlightened for a moment and all of a sudden we realize that, "Yes, I must be with God that my place is in Vrindavan", I start feeling this hunger, and if I listen, then this hunger will be growing, the desire to come to God must become stronger and stronger. But if our hunger is not strong, not that strong, then all kinds of

strange, not so nice things can be happening to us. One may be engaged in *bhakti* ... It's just like when one's not very hungry but is eating, what will the food turn into? Into poison, into *ama*. Similarly, when hunger is not intense and I'm practicing devotional service – I get up early in the morning, I chant the *mantra* and for a while it seems that everyone else eat and I eat, but then I think, "Well, how long can this go on? I'm fed up" and I stop eating.

Well, this was the description of *sastriya-sraddha*. First of all simply *sraddha* or faith, what faith is. We have covered an extensive material today and I'd like you to try to somehow preserve it with you. Srila Rupa Goswami says that our way to the spiritual world starts with *sraddha* and *sraddha* is the faith in the spiritual path, the faith in spiritual practice. We leave behind some material kinds of faith, by happy coincidence, we've met with the devotees, we've heard from them, some taste for this has appeared in us and we've started doing this. Now it's very important that our faith is the correct one and therefore Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur says that faith is of two kinds: one is *svabhaviki-sraddha* and the other is *balat-utpadita sraddha*, imposed faith. We'll be analyzing this second category of faith tomorrow, it's a very important thing, which, unfortunately, many of us have and many of us are impeded by it especially when we get together, but I will not go ahead.

This faith must grow stronger and the only way to strengthen this faith is to hear the scriptures, to try to understand the logic, and even if we don't understand much of the logic, just try to get a taste of it, just listen, because that's what our heart and our ears like – hear again and again. But if we don't have this taste, the way to get a taste is to properly think it over, because if we look, in the *sastras* there are lots of amazing things, amazing treasures, most interesting and wonderful things that are told to us and about us. And if this faith is there, it will help us to focus entirely on the spiritual path and the other desires that are there in our hearts will not disturb us, they won't have any power over us, no influence. This is, in general terms, what I was trying to tell you about today. That faith is very important and it can be strengthened, but to be the proper kind, faith must be based on *sastra*. Well, that's all for today (applause). I've got some questions.

Question: If doubts don't come up for a long time, do they disappear, are they burnt?

Answer: No, it means that they don't come up for a long time. Like, sometimes when a person has drowned, he also lies there on the bottom for a long time, but then it comes up as a corpse. If a person has no particular doubts, but he knows that they are somewhere out there, these worms are somewhere there within, I just pay no attention to them, I shouldn't wait until they come up, I should try to deal with them, I shouldn't just pretend that they're not there. They don't bother me and that's Okay. There are no particular doubts, everything's okay, I know they're out there somewhere, there's something I'm not quite aware of, there's something I've misunderstood, but generally everything's Okay at about 85%, so I can ignore everything else. No, that's the point of *vicara-pradhan*, reflection on the *sastras*, that we have to understand how perfect and complete, how consistent everything is so much so that you can't find any flaw. This is the faith that will enable us to resolve all our doubts.

And there's a question related to that.

Question: All of us have faith, but where to get the strength to act in accordance with faith?

Answer: I've already explained where to take it in order to act in accordance with faith. Where can I get the strength to act in accordance with my faith? In faith itself. Ultimately strength comes when we have no doubts. If we don't have strength it means that we don't really have

faith, it means that doubts are depriving us of the opportunity to act. Doubts are a terrible thing, because doubts tear us apart and we think, “Well, I’ll now do it, but what’ll happen next? Who’ll then take care of me? Okay, I’ll now surrender to Krishna, others too have surrendered before me and what’s become of them? And, they too had faith at the beginning, but all faith’s gone, and what will become of me?” And all these doubts just deprive us of the opportunity to act. Like someone said how some devotees are used to complaining that “I’ve given to Krishna consciousness the best years of my life”. There’s a nice answer to this, “Who’s stopping you to give it the worst, if you’ve already given the best? Give the worst, what’s the problem?” (laughter) These are doubts. One cannot act just because something inside him impedes him, therefore the source of power is faith alone, and faith comes from hearing, it comes from the clear understanding of the way and of the coordinates that we are following.

Question: How can we recognize the person who understands the logic of the *sastras*?

Answer: Well, how can we recognize him? He can explain it to others. A person who understands the logic of the *sastras*, *sastra-yukti*, a person who knows everything, can explain all that. A person who doesn’t understand will be saying, “Krishna that’s cool. And if you do not chant you’ll go to hell, don’t you understand?” One who knows will not, when talking to others, be trying to somehow or other force the other person, he gives the other person the opportunity to think about it himself, because he himself in the process of deep reflection has come to the need of taking up the spiritual path and he realizes that the spiritual path has made him happy, he understands that the spiritual path has given him a lot and he understands in what way the spiritual path gives. And the person who understands the logic of the *sastras* can be recognized on this very basis – he can explain that logic to others, he can understand what it means and explain it.

Question: We can see that some charismatic leader preaches and gives people faith but not in Krishna, but in himself. Then such a leader goes away and people too go away. How can we avoid such cheating in preaching and give people Krishna and not ourselves?

Answer: Very simply. Tomorrow I’ll be speaking precisely about this. I wanted to speak on this today, but since we have to cut so many vegetables, I decided to postpone it till tomorrow. Because such a person starts speaking not on the *sastras*. Instead of attracting people to the *sastras* ... Like Srila Prabhupada – Srila Prabhupada didn’t attract people to himself. People were attracted to him because a devotee becomes attractive, but Srila Prabhupada directed people to the *sastras*. He gave the “Bhagavad-gita”, he would start speaking on the “Bhagavad-gita” from the very beginning. I’m now listening to Srila Prabhupada’s lectures in Hindi and I love listening to them because everything is clear. I absolutely don’t speak Hindi, but everything’s clear to me because there is no Hindi there, there’s a quote after a quote from the “Bhagavad-gita” followed by an explanation of the quote in Hindi, but I know their translation anyway. Srila Prabhupada explains it all and it’s a great pleasure to hear – there is one quote after another, he gives it all, connecting it all together. Whereas if I do this for my own sake, I’ll be trying in one way or another to attract people’s attention to myself. Srila Prabhupada would point this out, he would tell of a “Bhagavad-gita” commentator who commented on Krishna’s words. Krishna says *man-mana bhava mad-bhakto* – think of Me. The commentator writes, “Actually one’s supposed to think not about Krishna, one must think about something inexplicable that is contained in Krishna ... and that’s basically me, for all of us are Brahman”. No, Krishna says, “Think of Krishna, think of Me”, and we must give people Krishna, tell them something, share something with them that is in the *sastras*, and at the same time, naturally, we must be very honest with ourselves.

Once again, this is tomorrow's topic, but today we can touch upon it. Such a person starts speaking about something to delight the audience, to meet their needs, because unfortunately, the *sastras* are not always popular. If we just speak on the *sastras* it would appear that we won't be able to attract so many people, and one wants more, one thinks that preaching means when I attract lots of people, that the meaning of preaching is to be heard by as many people as possible. Srila Prabhupada used to say, quoting his spiritual master, that even if one person hears you, that will be a great victory. And when he was on his way to America, he didn't know who would listen to him, and at some point not a single person was listening, he was sitting at his place among his four walls dictating the introduction to "Gitopanishad" that later became the introduction to the "Bhagavad-gita". And he was happy with this, because he was alone with Krishna's words, with the *sastras*, and for him that equaled being directly with Krishna, talking with Krishna. Whereas if I want to attract people at all costs, that's another very important point, that not always successful preaching is measured by the number of attracted people. Because people can be attracted but if I attract them by the wrong thing, then I sow in their hearts the seeds of future problems. They come into Krishna consciousness – so to speak Krishna consciousness, but since from the very beginning I try to attract them by something here, "Come to Krishna consciousness, please do, you'll feel good, you'll get rid of all your diseases ...", we sow the seeds of problems in people. Therefore, successful preaching is not measured by the number; successful preaching is measured by purity – by the purity of our motives and our desire to give people exactly Krishna. And we can give people Krishna in one way only, in the form of *sastras*, in the form of His words, in the form of *krisna-katha*. And this is the success of preaching. Srila Prabhupada was not concerned with that, he said, "I didn't know at all whether a single person will be attracted or not." Yesterday we watched this amazing video about the first period, when Srila Prabhupada was sitting under a tree singing this tune (singing): *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare*, and if we just look at Srila Prabhupada, at those people, some kind of hippies dancing there, and at him, he was totally focused on the sound of the holy name. And someone said yesterday that actually it's unbelievable that it all just happened like that. Indeed, that was truly an absolutely unbelievable scene: an elderly man sitting from a completely different culture, from a completely different world, who arrived to the hippies of America. Sitting and chanting Hare Krishna and people chanting after him, people responding to this. And he doesn't want to take them with any bait. If we look, in fact, that's the best example of this, if we want to understand what it means to present Krishna purely, the best example is Srila Prabhupada. There was no affectation in his preaching, no flirting whatsoever with the people. He's just speaking about Krishna. If people listen that's good, if not - what to do? If people want to hear – I'm giving it to them, if not – that's their right, that's their free will.

We're talking precisely about this, and it's precisely the second type of faith when we have forced a person to render so called devotional service or service to Krishna by means of various preaching techniques, and it's called imposed faith, with the help of various tricks. And this second category of faith is most deplorable and it's worth talking about in detail, because it carries within itself the seeds of very serious problems, it spreads like a cancer in the society of devotees, when devotees somehow or other start speaking about their own ideas and there are a lot of various other problems or some not very good things appear as a result of such so called preaching or hearing. It appears in the process of hearing, too, it also increases as a result of hearing, but that's not the faith that we need. Therefore, the simple answer to this question, "How to avoid such substitutes in preaching and give people Krishna and not ourselves? – to do this we have to speak on the *sastras* and we have to follow Srila Prabhupada; to do this we have to try to understand, to feel his spirit and follow the way he speaks about Krishna. This will be the best way to tell others about Krishna, this is the method that won't generate unnecessary problems in them.

Ok, we're late by a full hour now and I'm not going to give you any interactivities, because we have to sing Gaura-arati. Thank you very much. Srila Prabhupada ki! Jaya! Gaura Premanandeee! Haribol!

Disk 101, tracks 10-14, Disciple's retreat in Magdalinovka, 23.05.2008, Seminar "Anartha-nivritti", lecture 2

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Lets' read together the verse from "Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu":

adau sraddha tatah sadhu
sango 'tha bhajana-kriya
tato 'nartha-nivrittih syat
tato nistha rucis tatah

athasaktis tato bhavas
tatah premabhyudancati
sadhakanam ayam premnah
pradurbhave bhavet kramah

Hare Krishna. I won't torture you as long as yesterday, in the evening Kanai Gopal gave me a scolding (laughs) and since I'm his obedient servant, I won't make this mistake again.

Yesterday I talked a little about the first step that pure *bhakti* starts with. This first step is called *sraddha* or faith. Literally, the word *sraddha* means "to hold onto the truth". *Srad* means truth, something that actually exists, the same as *sat*, and *dha* means to hold or to hold onto something. In other words, in the full sense of the word *sraddha* is one's ability to adhere to the truth under all circumstances, no matter what happens, no matter what the external conditions are – whether they are favorable or not; a person to whom truth has revealed itself by its mercy holds on to this truth without deviation, this is the meaning of *sraddha*. Therefore this quality is a prerequisite for one's further progress along the path of devotion. And today I'll speak – maybe today, maybe tomorrow – about some of the obstacles that arise on one's way. Yesterday, we talked about this cause in general terms; that the material nature acquired by us is pulling us back all the time. And to resist this inertia of material existence we need *sraddha*. And the source of true *sraddha* is the scriptures.

Srila Jiva Goswami gives another very important definition or description of *sraddha* in the "Bhakti-sandharbha". He says *sastra abhidheya avadharana sya eva anga tad visvas rupa tvat: sraddha* is the ability to store or keep within the meaning of *sastra* - *sastra abhidheya avadharana*. *Sraddha*, faith, gives us an opportunity to remember the *sastras*, understand their meaning and check ourselves against this meaning every moment of our life – this is the meaning of *sraddha*. Because otherwise the truths of the scriptures will remain a theory and we won't be able to put them into practice, whereas *sraddha* enables us to keep them inside and not to deviate from them, carry these truths throughout our life. This is why *sraddha* is so important. Once again, *sastra abhidheya avadharana tad visvas* – the conviction that these truths are the saving truth and therefore I have to hold onto them. And, ultimately, we know that all scriptures are talking about what? What is the meaning of all scriptures? There is no certainty. *Bhakti*, yes. Ultimately, all scriptures are needed to encourage us to take up the path of *bhakti*, to cultivate devotion and develop our love of God. Because we don't need anything else, we need only undivided, pure love. And yesterday, too, I was explaining that *sraddha* develops in the course of hearing. There is only one way to develop *sraddha* – it's listening. And we quoted the famous verse from the Third Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam":

satām prasaṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido
bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ
taj-joṣaṇād āśv apavarga-vartmani
śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati
(Bhagavatam, 3.25.25)

– that one who listens from the devotees, *satam*, how they speak *mama vīrya-saṁvido* – these words are also very important in this verse. *Vīrya-saṁvido* means stories about the potency of the Supreme Lord, about the mightiness of the Supreme Lord, about God’s being everywhere, about God’s ability to pull us out of this mire of material existence. Such *prasanga* very quickly leads to the step-by-step appearance of, firstly, *śraddha*, then *rati*, attachment to Krishna or *bhava*, and finally to *prema* or *bhakti*. And a very important word here is *prasangan*. What is *pra-sanga*? We know what *sanga* is – association. But here Kapiladeva says *satam prasangan mama vīrya-saṁvido* – that there is a special form of association with saintly persons which leads to precisely such results. *Prasanga* means, roughly speaking, a very strong and very deep *sanga*, *prakriṣṭha rūpena*. The prefix *pra* means deepening, emphasis, or, in other words, close association, intimate association, *satam prasangan*. Because association can be of various types. There is a superficial association, association at the mundane level, when people gather, share some superficial things with each other, chatter, and this chatter doesn’t oblige them in any way. Can such a *sanga* give us *śraddhā*? No. If people just come and they are just after having a good time, they think, “Well, let me listen a little bit.” No. *Sanga* should be *prasanga*, it must be a very deep and very close *sanga* because it’s something most important that’s happening at the moment when we are hearing about Krishna. Why is this important? It is important because the person who’s telling us about Krishna, is actually sharing the innermost and we should understand that he’s sharing this innermost thing with us. There is nothing more innermost than telling someone about Krishna or trying to tell someone about devotional service. This person must, willy-nilly, reveal his heart, if he wants his story to touch the other person, and the person who’s listening must realize what’s going on in this moment, that he’s being told something most important. Because in order to start speaking about Krishna the speaker must be confident that people have some faith. When we tell something to people who don’t have faith – and you can see it in their faces – you have no desire whatsoever to talk about anything intimate.

A few days ago I spoke at a factory; a crowd gathered there and some women were sitting and I especially kept an eye on the two of them, such contempt was displayed on their faces that I had no idea why they had come there. And, clearly, before such an audience or under such initial conditions a person has no desire to share anything intimate. I was telling them about the Vedic culture and in the end I was asked, “And specifically to you, can you specifically tell us what the Vedic culture has specifically given you, what achievement?” I started intensely thinking what the Vedic culture has given to me. My tongue wouldn’t turn to tell them that it gave me God, that I now know that there is Krishna and that He has a lot of wives, beloveds, and that sometimes I cry when chanting His holy name ... So, I had to tell them that the Vedic culture has relieved me from constipation (laughter), because they were asking about specific achievements. I told the truth, I didn’t sin against the truth. The point is that *katha* can be of different levels (laughs), that one can speak with people about different things.

And we must clearly understand that when someone’s telling us about Krishna he is trying to share with us something most intimate, and that this is the highest form of trust, when we are trying to tell someone about Krishna. And when one is listening, appreciating what he is being told – properly, truly appreciating it, then he gets a taste, *ruci*. And when there is taste, this *katha* becomes a *rasayana*, it revives and rejuvenates the heart, it gives energy and gives

strength. Yesterday I tried to speak about this, how the *katha* that inspires faith, simultaneously rejuvenates us. Has anyone noticed how faith can make even an old person young? Here's sitting Dola-yatra Mataji. From the material point of view she's already an elderly woman, but in fact she is younger than many of us because she has *sraddha* and this is what Kapiladeva is talking about when he calls this *katha rasayana*.

And I also tried to explain yesterday what *sastrya-sraddha* or faith in the *sastras* gives us. Faith in the *sastras* encourages us to surrender to Krishna, *saranagati*. This feeling that I can give up everything unnecessary for Krishna's sake appears when we have a clear understanding of what the *sastras* want to tell me. *Saranagati*, the desire to surrender all of oneself is a sign or a symptom of the appearance of *sraddha*. In a sense, our presentation this year is a continuation of the last year presentation when I was trying to talk about *saranagati*. *Saranagati* means *sraddha*. And *saranagati*, this mood, has many aspects, many shades, but all this is a sign that true faith has awakened in our heart, and along with it the spirit of surrender. In other words, there appear the desire to achieve something high in life and the unwillingness to exchange our life for nothing, for nonsense, for pointless things, and along with it the hope of achieving a higher purpose. *Saranagati* also means to understand that Sri Hari, Lord Krishna is very compassionate, and that no matter what our background is, no matter what we previously did, no matter what we have now – at any time one can surrender and become completely purified. All this is *sraddha*.

Now we're going to have a little exercise soon, where I wanted to summarize the description of proper faith. Faith is the state which appears in a person when he sees the whole of the truth, set out in or pervading the scriptures and, most importantly, this faith helps him to avoid numerous obstacles on the path of *bhakti*: the offences that we're trying to avoid, if we have *sraddha*, the desire for fame, honor – all this is what accompanies true faith. We understand that we don't need all this, that all this is simply insignificant, minor fruits of following the scriptures.

I'd also like, looking at this nice hall with portraits of spiritual masters, I'd like to invite all of you to strengthen your *sraddha* by listening to different spiritual masters. Each of them, speaking about Krishna, shares something very intimate, their own spiritual experience, comprising many years of service to Srila Prabhupada and each of them has his own deep understanding of the *sastras*. And although outwardly they can be talking about various things and accents may differ, but if we listen to various spiritual masters we can form a very strong and very harmonious *sraddha* within us. In his lectures Srila Radhanath Maharaj emphasizes again and again the importance of humility and patience, explaining the third verse of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's "Sri Siksastaka". Over and over again, without getting tired, he's explaining how important it is to be humble and that the meaning of the *sastras* is revealed only to a humble person. Srila Niranjana Maharaj in his lectures shares his taste for the holy name and the understanding of how the holy name can save us. Bhakti Bringa Govinda Maharaj speaks *krisna-katha* and this *krisna-katha* is very inspiring. Sivarama Maharaj gives a very fundamental, logical system by which we can understand how everything in the scriptures leads us to one highest purpose and is aimed at it. All spiritual teachers share their intimate understanding of the meaning of the *sastras* and it's very important to listen to them so that our *sraddha* becomes stronger and very healthy, because in the beginning it might be weak.

And yesterday I spoke a little about this important and significant feature of my understanding of my dependence on the other devotees. In order to go along the spiritual path I must resort to the help of other devotees. Especially at the initial stages there will necessarily be difficulties; even if there are none now, at some point they will appear. This may be apathy, laziness, lack of

strong faith, and we need to constantly meditate precisely on this, on how the other devotees can help us; how the other devotees do help us and how the other devotees share with us their experience and their understanding and enthuse us, inspire us and encourage us to go along this way, despite all the difficulties.

And now I'd like that we all turn to each other and split into groups of two or three people as you like, four people, but not too big and try to tell each other about how the other devotees have helped us in our life, how the *sastras* have helped us, how the instructions I once heard helped me in my life. Some story from your own life, when suddenly I've realized an instruction has struck me and that saved me in my situation. I'll give you an example now, I'll read you a part of a letter, with your permission, that I received. Yesterday I quoted it a little to make it clearer what I am asking you to do, this is an excerpt from the letter. "As you already know, I went through a severe disease. It began with the flu, then there were multiple complications ... For me it was a hard test. There was an inability to understand what's happening at all and there was fear, fear of death. I've never been so sick. I desperately prayed to Krishna to let me know what lesson I have to learn from this situation. I started reflecting, realizing that disease is first formed on the subtle platform, I re-read Audharya Dhama's booklet "Causes of Disease." And although I heard many times and I've heard lots of lectures on this subject, in no way could I understand what that meant in my case, I couldn't understand where it all was coming from. And suddenly, like a revelation, I realized everything. I often behave irritably toward my husband and toward other people. This had nothing to do with the devotees, but I felt I have the right to react in such a way toward other people. I would even feel some disdain toward them. As soon as I realized this everything changed in a moment – I started understanding other people better and finally I realized what it means to see Krishna in everyone's heart." That is, once again, the person had this *sraddha*, she heard all this many times and at some point when Krishna gave her a lesson or a test, this *sraddha* was revived in her heart. "How many times I heard it but for me it was an empty sound. Also, over the disease period I formed an ulcer. First I wanted to blame the doctors, the medicines that they made this ulcer to me, but then again I read that ulcer happens to a person who hates someone. I started thinking, "Where has that come to me from?" And again I had the revelation – of course, I am to blame myself! How many years have I been accumulating hatred for one person. Finally I realized: what right do I have to judge this person, his actions? Then repentance came and simultaneously happiness that Krishna has given me the opportunity to see the dirt in my heart. And I used to give no meaning to it all. Then I personally asked forgiveness from that person and it seemed load off my soul. The ulcer closed very quickly."

This is an example of how the teachings of the scriptures save us. Disease is one of the obstacles we are faced with and disease always has a subtle and sometimes a spiritual nature. And that is how, reflecting on the instructions of the *sastras*, we can overcome the obstacles; how faith helps us to overcome these obstacles. I would like you to share your insights and if you can't tell anything else, tell how the devotees helped you, how they saved you in the most needful moment. Your time has started. I will see how it is ...

Workshop.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. I hope that after this small exercise your faith has greatly strengthened. Are you ready to go on? You'll have another opportunity to talk to each other, the break's over.

Literally, a few more words about what I said yesterday so that we could pass on directly to our today's topic. I explained yesterday that in order to practice mixed *bhakti* we don't need faith.

Why? Because the practice of *bhakti* has a potency unlike all other spiritual practices. Following the path of *karma* without faith is impossible. Following the path of *jnana* is impossible without faith, because it is faith that gives potency to all these methods or these paths and in this sense all the other paths depend on *bhakti* because faith is part of *bhakti*. But *bhakti* is potent by itself. To understand what is meant, we can give the following example: fire burns by itself, right? No faith is required for a fire or a burning log to set fire to another piece of wood. If a piece of wood is dry just by touching it with the first piece of wood we'll be able to set fire on it. But iron can not burn. What does it take for iron to start burning? Yes, we have to heat it, we have to perform a certain ritual. And this is the difference between *karma*. For *karma* to be efficient numerous conditions have to be met. For *karma* to be efficient you have to do everything very thoroughly according to the *sastras*. And it's not the ritual itself that works but the preciseness of this ritual, whether it is performed in accordance with the *sastras*. Like when we throw grains into the fire. If someone just happens to throw some rice into a fire while accidentally uttering 'svaha' meaning 'matchmaker' (laughter), is it going to have any effect on him? No, it won't. But if a person accidentally says 'Krishna', this will have effect on him – that same moment all his sins will go away. Therefore, people who follow the paths of *karma-kanda* cannot understand the potency of *bhakti*, they think that all these statements are an exaggeration. But *bhakti* is potent by itself.

However, yesterday we explained that *sraddha* is required in order to practice pure *bhakti*. Why? Why, nevertheless, *sraddha* or faith is required for *bhakti* to become pure? Because *sraddha* helps us to fully focus on this process. *Sraddha* helps us to achieve the proper state of mind that will yield results much faster. And finally – and this is very important – *sraddha*, as we explained it yesterday, *sastriya-sraddha* which appears as a result of reflection on the meaning of the scriptures, the deep understanding of the scriptures, or at least as a result of simply taste, *ruci-pradhan*, as a result of having a huge taste for hearing the scriptures, that *sraddha* makes a person free in practicing *bhakti*. When a person has faith he realizes that no one is forcing me to do it, I do it by my own will. Along with this he obtains a great desire to do this and the key or the main meaning of *sraddha*, proper *sraddha*, *sraddha* which has formed as a result of understanding the scriptures is that one does so voluntarily, on his own, he himself wants to do it, he feels that he needs it, he realizes that he needs it.

And, having said that, we pass on to another kind of *sraddha* which also appears as a result of hearing and also as a result maybe partly somehow somewhere of the scriptures or some passages of the scriptures, but Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur calls this *sraddha balat-utpadita* which means imposed *sraddha*, which means faith forced or imposed upon us. And this is where we should reflect a little which category our faith falls into. I can tell you straight away that as a rule it's a mixture of *sastriya-sraddha* and *balat-utpadita-sraddha* or imposed faith. And this is something that we've all experienced. Someone starts preaching and he has the charisma, as it was written yesterday in the note, or he has some sort of conviction or fanaticism or something like that and he persuades another person to take to *bhakti*. And this other person takes to *bhakti*. And taking to *bhakti* implies his giving up certain things – giving up certain pleasures, certain enjoyments, their former way of life, their former values. But since this faith is not voluntary, it is borrowed faith, faith that has come to us from without. *Sastriya-sraddha* is *svabhavika* faith, that is faith that ultimately comes from within, for, *sastra* is not something external to us, *sastra* is the law that exists within us, and when we read the *sastras* we feel this law inside; and freedom also comes from within. But it happens sometimes that faith comes from without and it is imposed on us. Has it ever happened to you, or have you ever seen around you someone imposing this faith on someone else? And this imposed *sraddha* is not based on the free internal understanding that I should practise *bhakti* but very often it is based on the laws of the crowd. This *sraddha* is of social nature and people start practicing *bhakti*

because everyone around is practicing *bhakti*, because they somehow get into this environment, they live in this environment, they think that “I’m Ok, I live with devotees and I also do what one’s supposed to do”, and these laws of the crowd come into effect because a person behaves in society differently than he behaves when he’s alone, when he’s on his own. When a person is alone, he behaves in one way, when the people two they behave in a different way, when ten people get together completely different laws start to take effect. When 100 people or 250 people, like here, get together, *sraddha* is so cool that ... But people don’t realize that in this case the cause of enthusiasm ... And this *sraddha* also gives enthusiasm. The *sraddha* we’ve received from others is also a source of enthusiasm. The problem is that the cause of this enthusiasm is what? External. Whereas if *sraddha* is the natural manifestation of the soul, when I’ve understood this, the cause of enthusiasm is internal, nobody will be able to destroy or eliminate it. If in my enthusiasm or in my practice of *bhakti* I depend on external circumstances or conditions, on other people, on other people’s opinion, then my enthusiasm will very much depend on external circumstances, too. Therefore, there is a category of devotees, they are called *uttsava-Vaisnavas* who go from one festival to another, because all their *sraddha* manifests only at festivals. When there is a festival – there is a “Haribol”, and when there is no festival there is no *sraddha*, there is no practice, no desire to chant mantra. Have you experienced such a phenomenon yourselves? When there are people all around – Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare! And when I’m alone - Hare Kriiishhhhhh eeeee

It is a completely different category of *sraddha* and we should clearly understand its nature, too. The laws of the crowd when I find myself in a crowd, I can’t but start imitating all the others, it becomes very easy to do all the things that the others do, in the crowd everything somehow becomes easier, if the crowd is doing one thing, then I will also do the same thing, it doesn’t matter whether I understand or not why I’m doing it – everyone cries out ‘Haribol’ and I cry out “Haribol”, too (laughs). If I were alone, I wouldn’t cry out any “Haribol”. Therefore Jiva Goswami calls this faith *laukika-faith*, *laukika-sraddha*. *Laukika-sraddha* means *sraddha* of the crowd; the *sraddha* that one obtains due to the influence of the crowd. Everyone around are adopting *bhakti* and I must adopt *bhakti*, my acquaintances have adopted *bhakti*, and I also have to adopt it. Or, more often, it is a very common example – some spiritual master comes into fashion, some spiritual teacher becomes fashionable and everyone around starts, “Yes, yes, yes, such and such is my Guru Maharaj”. Why? Because that’s what everyone around is doing. Not because I have the inner understanding, and not because I have a deep faith, not because I have the awareness or realization of how these instructions help me in my life, it’s just because everyone else is doing it. And that’s the reason why Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur calls this imposed faith. The difference between this faith and the other one is that true faith or *shastriya-sraddha* or *svabhaviki-sraddha* makes one free, he clearly understands why I’m doing it, what for. Whereas imposed faith deprives one of freedom. And when a person is deprived of freedom, he’s following the path of *bhakti* for some time, although he doesn’t understand why, and he’s constantly postponing the fruits of this *bhakti* to the future. I’ve seen this very phenomenon in ISKCON, when huge crowds of people were coming, crowds and crowds of people, but they mostly came not because they were well aware of why they need it, what for, why they’re doing it, but simply because everyone else was doing it. Some people are nostalgic for the 90’s. In the 90’s in Russia there were many good things, but there was also this phenomenon of imitation *sraddha*, when people were just following each other with little understanding. They were going to the spiritual world in a herd. Can you go to the spiritual world in a herd? You can’t. A provoker is going ahead and everyone else like a flock of sheep are following him without understanding where and why they are going. Well, they’re sheep and they bleat. This is what is called *balat-utpadita sraddha* or *laukika-sraddha*.

And I would like to contribute to our *sampradaya* by making a certain classification of these forms of faith, based on my experience, on my sociological observations of the devotees' social dynamics, what types they can be or what characterizes this kind of *sraddha*. The first or one of the characteristic features of such mass faith – another way of calling this faith is mass faith – and when religion becomes a mass one, it is very likely to result in precisely such category of devotees who are devotees because all the rest are devotees, because everyone else around us is. Like, now there's a lot – and this is in no way a reproach to Christianity – but many people nowadays are Christians. Why? Because everybody around are Christians and they don't know, they are not aware of it, but if you ask them, "Who is your God?" They'll say, "Jesus Christ" and will evidence this by showing you their cross. And one sign of this is the appearance of new rituals that are in no way based on the *sastras* or on anything else. Very often rituals appear because a certain tradition, a certain ritual, is established by the crowd, and since everyone's following it, it becomes fixed. This is one of the signs of this kind of faith. Like nowadays on the Easter day everybody goes to the cemetery and poor priests cannot understand why on Easter you must go to the cemetery since it's not written anywhere. But the ritual has appeared. And how do such rituals appear? Rituals appear very simply: you take something nice, you take away everything burdensome, and, accordingly, a new tradition appears. All the inconvenient parts mentioned in the *sastras* are removed and just the nice are left. We talked about it with Aditi yesterday and he said, "I look at the people, at the devotees nowadays – nobody fasts on festivals but still everybody celebrates, right? – Janmashtami, Rama-navami, Nrisimhacaturdasi – everyone loves celebrating but no one likes fasting. Therefore, respectively, nowadays people take only what is pleasant, and all that is unpleasant ... What's the purpose of the festival? As Bhaktivinoda defines a festival, – *madhava tithi bhakati janani* – that *madhava tithi* are special *tithi* needed to periodically remind us of Madhava, the Supreme Lord Hari, so that we can focus your mind and so that on this day, at least on this day, we can put aside all other jobs and forget about everything else, just think of Krishna, think about certain *lilas* of Krishna, reflect on their meaning, reflect on what happened many millions of years ago, and what this has to do with me. That's what Rama-navami is there for. Whereas we, why do we need festivals? To feast together, right? This is the main meaning, right? I'm going to disappoint you: on festivals, on Vishnu-*tattva* appearance days you're not supposed to feast! ... Weak applause (laughs). Festivals are intended to minimize material things. The purpose of the festivals is to make us think about Krishna, to make us sing about Krishna, not to make us feast. On festivals we are supposed to perform *sankalpa*, we break the fast by taking a little, usually some *ekadasi prasadam*, usually we take some fruits. We can feast the next day, but the festival itself is not meant for this. We have a completely different ... We are in ISKCON, we have our own *bhakti*, we have formed our own rituals that are convenient for us. And why do we need festivals? To feast. In other words, this *balat-utpadita-sraddha* or imposed *sraddha* or popular *sraddha*, traditional *sraddha*, *sraddha*, which takes its source in the crowd – this is the *sraddha*, when it's the people who become our authority, not the *sastras*, and the crowd's opinion; when it's the crowd's opinion or some persons' opinion who are not actually authorized that become authoritative.

There are numerous stories associated with this, numerous customs and traditions that are preserved. No one knows, for example, why everyone dyes eggs for Easter. Does anyone know why people dye eggs? No one, absolutely no one knows why people dye eggs. But eggs must be dyed! And then there are these dyed eggs and everybody thinks, "Wow, what a nice religion we have – we can dye eggs!" No one understands anything. You shouldn't laugh for we, too, are full of some of these things and there is a tendency for their appearance. And there is a famous story, Srila Prabhupada once told it, the story about the cat. Do you know the story about the cat? About how once in a traditional *brahmana* home there was a wedding celebration. And, typically for India, weddings are celebrated with great opulence. The problem

was that the cat that lived there, was constantly coming into the room; and the cat is considered an unclean animal, because instead of washing, it licks itself, that's its concept of hygiene. And when it comes in it defiles everything and the ritual is considered defiled. Therefore the mother of the groom ordered to put the cat in a basket and close it off so that it doesn't interfere; so, the cat was put in a basket with a lid on top and taken to one of the other rooms. And the young couple saw the mother order that the cat is put away in a basket and they had a nice happy life, they lived a happy family life, and when they got their own children they had to, respectively, marry their son, they remembered and started thinking, "We had a very nice ceremony". They remembered the cat in the basket and they thought that, "Maybe it was all because of the cat sitting in the basket at that time?" And when they were marrying their son, they found a cat, found a basket, put the cat in the basket put it in a room specifically designated for this and instructed their son that if you want your family life to be happy, the cat should stay in the basket throughout the wedding. Since then, no wedding has been celebrated in the village without a cat in the basket and everyone is fully confident that this tradition has been sanctified by an ancient authority and has its sacred purport, and *bhakti* is entirely dependent on whether there was a cat in a basket at my wedding, or not. So one of the features of such faith is a cat in the basket. And I would advise you to look around, to look at your own life, find the cats in the baskets and let them free.

There is another very important form or another manifestation of such *śraddha* that is important to us. As I said, this *śraddha* is a result of hearing. But who do we hear from? People. People become our authority. And usually we start building our lives on the basis of something we have heard somewhere, sometime, somehow from someone. There are so many traditions and so many of these things floating around in the Society for Krishna Consciousness. Someone's told me something ... I was told something and I start doing it without even asking him where it all came from, which authority that was; still people are doing it. Very often questions like this come from the audience, "I've heard that ..." and what follows is a complete nonsense. Or, again, people base their faith or their practice not on the *śāstras* but on some scraps of information and practice by hearsay, because it happens that we read some things and there are lots of all sorts of esoteric books which are absolute nonsense And we happen to read something about *japa-yoga*. Sivananda writes about *japa-yoga*, he has a whole book called "Japa-yoga" and we listen. And Sivananda says that the most powerful way of chanting is in the mind and we think, "Wow! Finally the truth has been revealed to me!" Srila Prabhupada never said this but that's not so important, it doesn't matter because Sivananda says that! Or things like that and there's a lot of information. Recently I opened the encyclopedia of folk medicine and there was an article, "Healing with sound", and there was a reference to the Hare Krishna mantra: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. In other words, this has now become a popular method of treating diseases (laughs), that's what the "Folk Medicine Encyclopedia" says. If you don't trust me, you can buy the "Folk Medicine Encyclopedia" and strengthen your *śraddha* (laughter) having received this information from the "Folk Medicine Encyclopedia" and become convinced that you have to chant mantra to be healed by sound. They have their own explanation of the mantra there and why you should chant it. People base their practice, once again, not on the *śāstras* but on some some scraps of conversation and the like. This is another example of such *śraddha*.

And there is one very important agent by means of which this infection is transmitted – these are rumours about miracles. How should you strengthen your *śraddha*? Yes, we should tell about some miracle! About the miracle that happened to my great-grandmother or the great-grandmother of my great-grandmother or to some devotee, whom I never saw, but the devotee who has seen the devotee who has seen the devotee who has once seen this devotee told me that such a thing has happened to him! Or various stories about miracles. I remember one such

ardent preacher of *laukika-sraddha* was giving me faith at the very beginning in order to strengthen my weak unfortified faith in chanting mantra. He said, "The mantra works just incredibly, the mantra does have an effect! You can check for yourself: get on a bus and start chanting the *nrsimha-pranama* to yourself. The ticket-collector will get on and walk past without even noticing you! Try it, the mantra works! You just have to chant and that's it, it's as if you were not there!" He said, "I've been convinced of this many times!" and I thought, "Wow, that's cool! That's cool! Now I can travel by bus without a ticket!" Has anyone heard such preaching or this kind of miracles or this type of confirmations that the mantra works? Recently one person told me that someone was telling him how in Suhumi, during the war he was going somewhere at night and there were patrols, and he began to chant the mantra inwardly, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, and that they didn't notice him, he passed by and he thought "Aahhh!" Or there are people who base their *sraddha* on some fables, things like that, on the UFO's. I could never understand what the UFO's have to do with *bhakti*? What relevance do the UFO's have here? What relevance do all these things have here?

And there are people who preach *bhakti* exactly in this way. Have you ever met such persons who preach in this way so called *bhakti* on the basis of all these things? There's nothing wrong to say about the risk of smoking or about some principles of *sattva* or something like this but when we talk to people, first of all we must base our words on the *sastras* and always try to honestly explain the meaning of the *sastras* to them. Like, Srila Prabhupada didn't always talk about Krishna, he didn't always talk about Krishna's intimate *lilas*, but at least he talked about what Krishna said at the very beginning of the "Bhagavad-Gita" - that you are not this body. And to this end he quoted the "Bhagavad-gita", he referred to authorities, he emphasized this principle of authority, this principle of *parampara*. Sometimes we forget this, that this is the principle that the success of our spiritual life is based on and depends on. Knowledge must be authorized and we should, when we refer to it ... Srila Prabhupada said that an honest man, a real devotee, when he says something, what does he do? He refers to the *sastras*, he quotes them, he doesn't speak of his own, he doesn't refer to some dubious authority, to something that he had once heard from someone but doesn't know from whom and when. And the rumors that are spread like this are very strange. But the trouble is that when our *sraddha* depends on this kind of *katha*, or when we have obtained faith from such a *katha*, then what do we want? Yes, we want the same *katha* all the time, we want the same type of confirmations all the time – stories of miracles, stories of some extraordinary phenomena, things like that. This is a very important thing.

Or people start having very strange ideas. The most amazing thing I've ever heard – I've heard lots of various amazing things when devotees tell me what they've been told – at a certain point the most amazing statement came to me. I asked one of my disciples to study the *sastras* and she took great offence at me, a deadly offence. I could feel that she was offended, but I couldn't understand why she was offended. Over a long time she kept that within herself. Rather, it wasn't immediately that she took offence but after a couple of days, but I could feel that she was offended. Then, in the end, she admitted it. She said, "I said to one *mataji* in the kitchen that you told me to study the *sastras*. And she told me that the Guru, when he wants to reject his disciple, tells him to study the *sastras*. You have rejected me!"(laughter) There's nothing funny about it. I was trying to find out what status this *mataji* had and why all her words are taken as *pramana*. She said, "No, I won't tell you which *mataji* that was, but she is a very authorized *mataji*, she told to me in the kitchen that when the Guru wants to reject his disciple, he sens him to study the *sastras*." Thus, if we follow this logic, I want to reject all of you (laughter). And this dependence on such a *katha* is a very very sad thing.

Another thing that is also associated with this, with these miracles and all the rest is the belief in miracles performed by the Guru. This is another very very important thing. Srila Prabhupada deliberately didn't do any such miracles, have you noticed? It is said that *lava matra sadhu-sanga sarva-siddhi haya* – one moment spent with a holy man can give one all *siddhas*. But we have to be extremely careful with miracles because when a person bases his faith on miracles you can be sure that this is a false form of faith. There are entire *sampradayas* or entire huge movements, where everything is based just on the Guru's miracles. Who knows an example of this? Yes, Sai Baba. Everything he does ... "He's performed such and such miracle" and everybody get together and start a *guru-katha*. What does the *guru-katha* consist in? He has performed this miracle, he has performed that miracle, he appeared in someone's sleep, he appeared before someone in real, he appeared before someone in a swoon, to someone else he appeared in some other state ...

There is a story about a disciple of Srila Prabhupada, he was a *sannyasi*, Srila Prabhupada gave him *sannyasa* and at the beginning he was a very powerful preacher. I was told about it, I don't personally know him, unfortunately he's left before that. And he met some tantric. This tantric knew various tricks and one of his most famous tricks was that he could produce chocolate and give it to the people. Like Sai Baba – he used to produce ashes, and the tantrik was even cooler, he could materialize chocolate. This Maharaj spent a long time in India, he preached there for a long time and he thought, "I must learn this trick from him by all means because if I learn this trick, I will turn all the people into devotees, right? Everyone will become devotees because clearly, if I have this opportunity – and the chocolate was quite nice, of a famous brand, – and he spent several years trying to extract this trick from the tantric. He would come to him, he would sing *bhajans* to him, he would massage his feet, trying to explain: "Please explain to me this trick, because I need this to preach, I need this in order to give people *krisna-bhakti*." Can you give people *krisna-bhakti* by means of chocolate? Keshighat says that if this chocolate is *prasadam*, then you can (laughs). It's exactly the same story, this tantric eventually tricked him, he cheated him, he promised, he promised to teach him, but didn't give it to him, he went away disappointed, but he really desired it. And we, too, sometimes have such motives, we think that if I learn something cool and I start using it in preaching all people will be ours. Is this idea correct? No, it's not. How does *bhakti* appear in ones heart? Only through *bhakti* and *bhakti* appears by means of hearing when we listen and when we listen to the *sastras*.

There was a similar story with Lord Buddha, he also had a disciple and Lord Buddha would travel and preach and many people responded to his preaching, and many others remained indifferent. He had a disciple. At the time, before he became Lord Buddha's follower, this disciple was also engaged in tantra. And when he joined Lord Buddha he decided to make use of the past and during one of Lord Buddha's preachings - I don't remember the details of this story, I read it a long time ago – but the point is that during one of his preachings when Lord Buddha himself was preaching and a large crowd of people gathered and he was telling them, trying to convey to them the urgency of his spiritual message. This disciple of his suddenly flew in the air because he could levitate and the people gasped, "Aaahhh!" He then returned to Buddha and said, "It's cool, isn't it?" And he expected his master would praise him, that his master would say, "Well, that's cool! I've got now a flying man in my team! Now we'll be able to convert anyone into our faith, because we'll say, "Now we'll give you a visual demonstration of the advantage of the Vedic culture" and you'll go flying and everybody will be converted." When he saw this man Buddha turned sad, he turned black. He looked at him and said, "You've defeated the preacher." Because, once again, the preaching or the spiritual message is transmitted in one way only – through sound, not through miracles. And the purer the sound the better the transmission of the spiritual message will be. And in no way in our preaching we

should depend on miracles; we must avoid this temptation of miracles, the temptation to such cheap tricks.

In the *Sri Sampradaya* there is a famous story about Bhaktisar Alvar who possessed all the mystic powers and nevertheless he would sit and mend his torn *dhoti*. And Lord Shiva came down to him, and I'm not going to tell the whole story, but again, the point is that a devotee doesn't misuse his powers. A true devotee has all the power, all the mystic powers, but when Srila Prabhupada was asked, "Swamiji, show a miracle," what would he say? He would say, "This is my miracle." He would point to his disciples and say, "Look, this is my miracle. I went to the hippies in America and these hippies became happy, they became happy, they followed me here, they practice *krisna-bhakti*, they chant Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

And yet another variety of this kind of *sraddha* or false *sraddha* is the belief ... One comes into the devotees' society and starts associating and, again, he builds up his activities not on the clear understanding of the meaning of the *sastras*, not on the clear understanding of what the *sastras* emphasize as being important and unimportant, but he starts to base his activities on what is valued in this society, what brings maximum honor. There are many examples of this. In no way do I wish to somehow diminish the importance of books distribution – it's very important to distribute books, Srila Prabhupada spoke about this, but when our motive becomes false, when we come to the devotees society and start distributing books, because, again, it's fashionable. Not because we deeply realize the need for this, not because we are deeply aware of this need, not out of compassion. The only proper motive in preaching is compassion when I do it because I can't help doing it; I want to share all this with the others, to share the joy or share something that I've found, that I've discovered. But if I start doing this because it brings honor, brings fame, applause, a special position, this is called *laukika-sraddha* or borrowed faith, imposed faith. There are numerous examples of this everywhere, too.

People invent some particular forms of austerity, because these austerities are valued in our society, because, again, austerity is a way to gain cheap popularity. You can see this in India. If you want to see an illustration of all these things, all kinds of deviations from the *sastras*, go to the Kumbha Mela – it's a striking scene! Go and see – it's a fair of spiritual perversion. All possible ... it's unimaginable, people do terrible things. I've been at the Kumbha Mela and there will another Kumbha Mela soon. People are going there from everywhere to show their so called spiritual achievements, their so called spiritual practice, and you can see how it is all formed. One man there is walking all in thorns, another one has made a Hanuman of himself with a sword sticking out from here (pointing to his chest) – here it comes in, there it comes out. And he's walking around and showing it off. A third one in complete *tamo-guna* is all over in thorns and there he's lying in the middle and sleeping. You can see anything there, any perversions! And it all goes under the guise of a so called spiritual practice. There is one man, a famous *babaji* in contemporary India. He's honored as a great holy man. His holiness consists in the fact that instead of walking he rolls over, thus moving from one holy place, from one temple ... and that's why he's called "the rolling *babaji*", he rolls from one place to another. He's toured all the holy places there, rolling. And people are in full ecstasy. He is ecstatic because people in ecstasy. I remember at the Kumbha Mela one of the happiest specimen at the Kumbha Mela was a *babaji*, who's been holding his right arm upright for 12 years so that it has dried up. He never put it down, when he slept he held it up, when he ate, he held it up and he was absolutely happy. Why? Because there was always a huge crowd around him. People would gather to have a look at this man, he is a celebrity because his arm has dried up. There is a huge pile of money in front of him and he's happy: "Oh, austerity has brought forth its fruit!"

These are all examples of what Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur is speaking about – when our faith is based on a fiction. And what happens as a result of this? If our devotional service is based on such faith, it's going to end very soon. And here, to make a kind of a summary – for we've got questions, too, – I wanted to say what's wrong with this faith. If my faith is based on this and it's imposed from without, it's not free, the source of this faith doesn't come from within but is imposed on me, then, at the least obstacle I can leave the devotees society. The slightest obstacle appears and sometimes it's quite difficult in the devotees society because the requirements here are very high, the ideals are high, it's difficult to deceive the devotees. The smallest wrong thing and the devotees immediately say, "This is your false ego", and we know that we long ago we have no false ego, we've been taking *prasadam* for two weeks now and chanting three rounds of mantra – what false ego can there be? The false ego's all gone. And very often people are resentful, they feel resentment at the devotees and resentment against the devotees society is a manifestation of what? It's a sign of weak faith, it's a sign of the fact that I haven't become firmly established in this. This is evidence that in my faith I am dependent on whom? Yes, on the others' opinion, on how they treat me. If they treat me well, I'm willing to stay, I'm willing to serve. Should something go wrong in all this – this is this very *laukika-sraddha*, my *sraddha* is based on the opinion of others, on the opinion of society. And this is the trouble, this is the problem.

Accordingly, various things may happen in such situations. When someone is being preached at the beginning, as often happens, we preach to someone and say, "Come on, join us" and he is glad, he joins, he finds people here... And usually when we preach, we go around this person, we take such a nice care of him, we do so many things for him, he considers himself to be the center and he thinks, "Wow! Finally I've found the society where I can be in the centre!" He becomes a devotee and very soon he realizes that people forget about him that same moment because he's already a devotee. You have to preach only until he becomes a devotee. What's the point in preaching to him, if he's become a devotee? Now what do you do with him? Exploit and poke his nose into his own ... you know what (laughs), show him his faults. That's right, this is how we show our concern for him! We now have to tell him where his false ego is, where his lust is, where his anger is, where his greed is and so on because we're all smart, where his illusion is. And then the tests begin. One comes and expects that everything here's going to be fine, that everyone's going to love him ... we were promised love, weren't we? Were we promised love? They promised to love us and instead they start doing who knows what, scold us all the time. And the worst thing is – this is the most terrible thing, I'm afraid even to say it – even Guru is so impudent as to chastise us! We were told that Guru is the one who loves, he loves everyone. He starts chastising me! It's a shock, a complete shock, it takes one a long time to recover from this, because how is that possible? This is impossible, this is wrong! Before that people were telling me what a sincere devotee I am and I joined. Nobody is chastised at the beginning, he's just admired: "What a sincere person, what a sincere person!" but then after I've stayed here for three months everyone starts chastising me. Or people start to be resentful of others, "I wasn't given a recommendation". Has anyone felt resentful at the fact that he was refused a recommendation? This is a manifestation of what? Of that same thing – that our faith in the association of devotees, in the very path of devotional service, in the practice of devotional service, in the goal of devotional service is not being based not on a deep understanding but rather on some social mechanisms. Sometimes these social mechanisms are good, we should include them, we should make use of them but we must understand that we'll be able to form a healthy society only when faith is strong, and then we will be less resentful and we'll hurt the others less. Both of these will be in our society if faith is truly strong. Because actually a true devotee doesn't take offense, a true devotee never takes offense.

Shall I tell you a story to end with? This is a story about the saint Tukarama. He was a *bhakta* and he came from a very low family. His parents were traders, not even of a high caste, and he became a saint *bhakta* and his words were so touching, he didn't know Sanskrit, he didn't speak any language properly, he could speak just in *marathi*, but people moved by his sincerity, his simplicity and purity, gathered around him by hundreds to hear from him. And nearby there lived a *brahmana* and the *brahmana* had disciples. He had a few disciples but the crowd went to Tukarama. Those who went to learn from the *brahmana* were few. And the *Brahmana* put up with it for some time but his patience came to an end when several of his disciples went over to Tukarama – that was just too much! “I am a *brahmana*, I know Sanskrit, I know everything, I teach properly, and there's some ignorant man that people are going to!” And when his disciples went away to him, he couldn't stand it anymore! What did he do? He found a thorny shrub, picked up several twigs of this thorns shrub and late at night he lay in wait for Tukarama when he was going back home. When he saw him his anger became so intense, his hatred was so intense that he started beating this Tukarama as hard as he could, he beat him absolutely mercilessly! And the thorns, the spines remained stuck in Tukarama's body. And Tukarama couldn't understand what was going on, he was being thrashed and in the end, when the *brahmana*'s anger was exhausted he went home and Tukarama, lying and bleeding, could hardly crawl to his home. Throughout the night Tukarama was thinking, “I must have hurt this *brahmana*, for why should he be so angry at me?” I don't know how I've hurt him, I don't know why I've hurt him, I don't know for what reason, but for sure it's my own fault!” And he kept thinking, “How could I've hurt him? How could I've brought him to such a state! What a terrible scoundrel I am to bring a person to such a state!” Feeling intense remorse he couldn't fall asleep at all. His body was bleeding but he didn't feel the pain. The only pain he felt was the pain of having insulted this *brahmana*. And the *brahmana*, too, got back home and felt somewhat guilty; he thought, “I shouldn't have beaten the man, I should've just chastised him”. He also felt somewhat uneasy, he was tossing in bed unable to fall asleep or feel any relief. Tukarama could barely wait for dawn and at dawn he limped to the *brahmana*'s house, knocked on the door, the *brahmana* opened the door and stood in the doorway. Tukarama fell before him and begged for forgiveness, “Forgive me, please, I didn't mean to offend you. Tell me, please, in what way I have offended you? And even if you don't ... I know you are a noble man, you're not going to tell me how I've hurt you, but just forgive me, please, I beg you”. And when the *brahmana* saw this, it was too much for him. He fell to his knees before Tukarama and started saying, “It's me who is to be forgiven, it's me who is the scoundrel, this was how the envy in my heart manifested”. And Tukarama said, “It can't be! You're a *brahmana*, you're a devotee!”

This is the story about how a devotee never takes offence. If they feel something wrong from another person, they ask themselves, “I must have done something wrong, I've probably offended him in some way”. Therefore, I wanted to stop here. Now we will answer some questions. Thank you very much. (Applause)

Here are the questions (laughs).

Question: How authorized is it to snap fingers at one's mouth when yawning? (Laughter)

Answer: The lecture did have an effect (laughter), it has struck a chord, people started looking for cats in baskets. I've heard this from Atmatattva Prabhu when he was speaking on the Ramayana. He was telling his own stories of Ramayana which I couldn't find in any edition of the Ramayana, but the stories were very nice (laughs). He is from a traditional family of the *Sri Vaishnavas* from the south of India and he said that when yawning you have to snap your fingers. I don't know how trustworthy this source is, I haven't seen that anywhere else. But the point is ... anyway (laughs) ... Srila Prabhupada didn't teach this.

Question: Why is there this perception that expressing doubts in the words of a senior devotee, not to mention guru – is an offence? Is this so?

Answer: No, it's not. We can have doubts, this is our right, but doubts can be different. We can have doubts and even express our doubts, but the main point is to properly formulate this doubt and, most importantly, to properly regard this doubt inside. If we have some doubt we should very humbly approach this person and say, "So and so, I've heard something from you that for one reason or another is in contradiction with my understanding of the *sastras* or what I've heard from Srila Prabhupada or Guru Maharaj. Could you please clarify this to me?" And you'd better not discuss this doubt with anyone else, but rather directly approach this person and ask him, put forward this question before him. And if we formulate our doubt in this way very humbly without shouting about it from the house-rops, "He's speaking unauthorized things, this and that ...", then that's all right. Once again, what is the point of expressing these doubts? If we are convinced that this person had said something wrong and we are sure about it and we have good reason to think that this kind of thing is not quite right, it makes no sense to talk about it, either. There is no point in discussing it at every turn. If we are not sure we should approach him and try to dispel the doubt very humbly. Whereas people start expressing their doubts again in order to be proud. If I express my doubts in order to show that I'm above this person, then it is an offence, because the motive is initially offensive. Otherwise there can be doubts.

Yesterday's question: Are there different categories of *sastras* that are priorities for those at the level of *anartha-nivritti*?

Answer: For us, the most important *sastras* are Srila Rupa Goswami's "Upadesamrita", the "Nectar of Instruction", we must know it very well, the "Bhagavad-gita" and the first part of the "Nectar of Devotion" - these are what we must know very very well because the science of devotional service is set out in the "Nectar of Devotion" and the "Nectar of Instruction", and the "Bhagavad-gita" gives us the context, the overview of the various paths, gives us an overview of all the paths of spiritual development and shows that of all the paths of spiritual development *bhakti* is the topmost. And if I clearly understand the "Bhagavad Gita," I'll be clear and confident in what I do, no one will be able to confuse me. If I clearly understand the "Nectar of Devotion" and the "Nectar of Instruction" I will clearly understand what it means to follow the path of devotional service, what it means to practice pure *bhakti* and I'll not confuse pure *bhakti* with anything else. And also the "Isopanisad", it's also important, these are the four books that are included in the *bhakti-sastra* course. The fourth book, the "Isopanisad", is also an introduction to the Vedic culture. It's Srila Prabhupada's purport to "The Upanishads", where Srila Prabhupada gives an interpretation of the Gaudiya Upanishads and everything that is contained in the Upanishads, and if a person wants to, in one way or another, understand the overall context of the Vedic culture ... "Bhagavad-gita" gives an overview of the various practices, it's an overall of the variety of practical ways of achieving perfection. The "Isopanisad" or Srila Prabhupada's purport on the "Isopanisad" gives an idea of the Vedic context, of the Vedic discourse, what is discussed in the Vedas, of the the philosophy of the Vedas, that is, it introduces us into the philosophical context.

Question: The more we try to expand our movement, the more we run the risk of rituals appearing that are not based on the *sastras* in our movement.

Answer: It's a fact. Therefore, our attitude towards what Srila Prabhupada gave us should be most respectful, we should follow him without distorting neither the spirit nor the essence of his message, the letter of his message, to follow the principles he established, and try not to impose

any new invented rituals. But still understand the spirit. A movement, on the other hand, cannot be dead, either, it cannot be frozen, it must develop in accordance with time, place and circumstances. This means that we clearly understand the spirit, but do not introduce something new ourselves. And the very principle of *parampara* or authority is very important. We must always ask this question, “how authorized is all this, how closely it corresponds to the scriptures? Here in Ukraine and Russia we are trying now to establish a system of mentors or curators, and this is something very important. The point is precisely this – to help people correctly practice Krishna consciousness. But for these mentors to be authorized, to be able to help others to act correctly, they too, must, in turn, obtain it from their own mentors or spiritual masters. Because the meaning of our movement is only this, our movement comes down to only one thing: the meaning of our movement is the authorized transmission of spiritual knowledge. That’s all! Everything we do, everything else is just a way or a method, a mechanism of authorized transmission of spiritual knowledge. If we start transmitting just prejudice, is it worth fussing about? It’s not. Our movement is not supposed to transmit prejudice, it’s supposed to transmit spiritual knowledge in an undistorted way. And each of you please take to heart this responsibility before others, before Srila Prabhupada and before the spiritual master, before all our *parampara*, we bear this responsibility to pass on spiritual knowledge in an undistorted way, without introducing too many cats in baskets.

Question: Very often devotees behave in an arrogant way. I’m now almost used to it, although this used to disturb me very much. But what can we say to those who see this and as a result change their attitude to Krishna consciousness?

Answer: There are two aspects of this question. One is arrogance. Arrogance is a manifestation of pride and devotees behave arrogantly because they start to be proud of being devotees. Can we be proud of being devotees? We can, but not of ourselves. We shouldn’t be proud of ourselves, we should be proud of our tradition, of our teachers, of our practice, of our philosophy, of our culture, but we must understand that the meaning of our culture is to be humble. At the time Madan Mohan Prabhu formulated the difference between the one and the other in a very nice way – that there are representatives of tradition and there are carriers of tradition. So, the carriers are those who are proud. The representatives are those who are not proud, they represent the tradition inside, inwardly. To represent our tradition means to be humble, because what is our tradition all about?

trinad api sunicena
taror api sahisnuna
amanina manadena
kirtaniyah sada harih

We want to reach the state where the holy name will permanently vibrate inside our heart and to ensure that it permanently vibrates in our hearts, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says that we must be more humble than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, we must give respect to others and not expect respect for ourselves in return. Therefore, a devotee should not be arrogant. If a devotee is arrogant, he is not a devotee. Therefore, if someone is disappointed that the devotees are being arrogant and leaves we should tell him that “Don’t be disappointed, this is not a devotee. Devotees are not arrogant by definition”.

And the other aspect is that we ourselves must be humble and approaching other devotees we must try to somehow elevate them or awaken in them their best qualities. I know people in whose association you willy-nilly become humble. Just because you see their humility. In their association you cannot be arrogant. And if I see arrogant people around me, there is a high

probability that they are arrogant around me, because I'm arrogant too. Because if I were truly humble, then maybe they would also show these qualities. This is another aspect of the same issue.

We have many ... *Prasadam* is at two o'clock? What is the schedule? Let me stop here, we will have a separate time tomorrow just for questions and after the lecture we'll meet again in the evening, during the second half of the day, to answer all these questions. But I wanted There are still a few more minutes ... Anyone who wants can go and cut vegetables, and if someone has a few more minutes, I'd like us to fix what we've heard in a kind of a discussion – to talk and tell each other about how all this takes place in our own lives – and it's good to tell about ourselves because it's good to reveal our heart, or in the lives of our friends, or generally what we've observed in life, in what way this imposed faith has manifested, this faith based on hearsay or faith in some prejudices or things like that. Or you can tell about how you've been told about some miracles or how you talked about miracles. Or you tell about how you were disappointed in ISKCON and how you said, "This ISKCON's so bad!" One *mataji* also told me, "It's all clear to me now, she said, all *prabhus* are highly irresponsible", I said, "*Mataji*, do you know each one of them?" She says, "No, no, it's all clear, all *prabhus* are irresponsible!" This is a manifestation of our frustration in the devotees' society. Or you can tell each other about the reasons why devotees have left the ISKCON, based on this same material, so that we try to deeply reflect on what we've heard, Okay? Tell each other about it while I read the the questions.

Discussion.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. I hope that over the last few minutes your ideas about the various kinds of false faith have been highly enriched (laughter), but this is the meaning of studying the scriptures, we must try to see how all this manifests in our own life and I hope that this kind of discussion – I deliberately interrupted it because I realized that if I don't do so we can go on discussing it forever, but you'll have another opportunity to discuss it yet.

I'd like to thank you all, once again, for coming here, for gathering here and listening and for trying to practice pure *bhakti*. Thank you very much.

Disk 101, tracks 14 & 15, Disciple's retreat in Magdalinovka, 24.05.2008, Seminar "Anartha-nivritti", lecture 3

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Yesterday several people asked me, "Are we going to get to *anartha-nivritti*?" Because the topic of our discussion is *anartha-nivritti*, and we have just finished dealing with *śraddha*. Well, I have good news for you – we'll get to it, at least we'll start talking a little about what it means to purify our hearts from *anarthas* in the process of devotional service. But that will be tomorrow. Today our topic is different, although actually, by talking or thinking about these issues we are trying to cleanse our hearts from unwanted things, from all that prevents *bhakti* to sprout in our hearts. Let's read this verse:

adau śraddha tatah sadhu
sango 'tha bhajana-kriya
tato 'nartha-nivrittih syat
tato nistha rucis tatah

athasaktis tato bhavas
tatah premabhyudancati
sadhakanam ayam premnah
pradurbhave bhavet kramah

Yesterday and the day before we reflected on how faith appears in one's heart. And a most important fact that we shouldn't stop repeating or which can't be overstated is that our entire progress on the path of *bhakti* depends on hearing (Bhagavatam, 1.2.17):

srinvatam sva-kathah krishnah
punya-sravana-kirtanah
hridy antah stho hy abhadrani
vidhunoti suhrit satam

Krishna is situated in our hearts, *hridy antah stho*, and when we turn our ears to the stories about Him, when we start hearing about Him or start listening to His words from the "Bhagavad-gita" and start talking about all that in one way or another is related to devotional service, Krishna, who is situated in our hearts, starts Himself cleansing our hearts. Not us, not because we are so nice and so clever – Krishna Himself gets down to the job and cleanses our hearts of all *anarthas*.

However, as Srila Prabhupada emphasizes over and over again, we have to hear *katha* from the right source. We should hear *katha* from an authorized source, because if *katha* doesn't come from a pure source, it may bring along problems for us. Srila Bhaktivinoda compares *śraddhā*, when it's still young and newly born, to a little baby-girl. And he says that oftentimes babies get sick, that a baby can get sick very easily. And the risk that the baby will get sick increases if we don't feed the baby properly, right? *Katha* from the right source can be compared to mother's milk, because what is the right source for nourishing a child? - only one - the mother's breast. If we feed it on the dry mixture "Malysh"... on the box of which there's a picture of a child with diathesis cheeks; if we mix in some water and feed the baby on this artificial mixture ... Or, God forbid, if we feed it on something else, on some canned food or sprat, the child will surely get sick. In the same way *katha* is the nourishment for our *śraddha* which should grow and become stronger, deeper and firmer. But if it's canned food, there is a

good chance that our *sraddha* will get sick and this unhealthy *sraddha* will be a source of problems. Therefore Srila Prabhupada emphasized this point so much – you should find a pure source and hear *katha* or Krishna’s name from a pure source.

Srila Sanatana makes the same comparison, he says that milk nourishes but if touched by the lips of a serpent this milk turns poisonous. Sometimes people unwittingly put some poison into their *katha*, even when speaking about Krishna. And above all, this is the poison of offenses against devotees. If we want to clearly understand the nature of the poison which can be contained in *krishna-katha*, the nature of this poison is one – some kind of resentment towards the devotees or offenses. If in one form or another this comes through in their *katha*, you can be sure that by hearing such *katha* we’ll get infected or get sick. This is to draw a line below the first topic that we discussed, *sraddha*.

What comes next, following *sraddha*? *Sadhu-sanga*. And *sadhu-sanga*, in this case, although everything begins with *sadhu-sanga*, in this case it means a special form of *sadhu-sanga*. It’s a form of *sadhu-sanga* when I intentionally place myself at the mercy of a particular *sadhu* and his *katha*. It’s not that I just listen to him; rather, I understand that his words are meant to change my life, I allow his words to change my life. Because when I simply listen in a slightly relaxed attitude, lying on the couch and thinking that, “Go on, I’m listening ... the soldier sleeps, the service goes on, everything is okay ... *katha* enters my ears ...” *Sadhu-sanga* doesn’t mean that I simply listen, no, I want his *katha*, his words have changed something in my life, I allow this to happen.

Sometimes we listen in a selective way, we listen only to those lectures which don’t oblige us in any way, which don’t burden us, right – because there are lectures that burden us – don’t make us change anything. But *sadhu-sanga* or true *sadhu-sanga* means that I happily open my heart to the changes that can take place. And I accept a spiritual master, because accepting a spiritual master means placing ourselves at his mercy. Recently a person asked me something and nonplused me by his question, “What does it mean to take shelter?” It’s clear what it means to get initiated, everyone knows that – you, you’ve shaved your head, you sit for a while, throw some grain, you get your beads – this is clear; but what does it mean to take shelter? Taking shelter means exactly this – I understand that I depend on this person, that I must serve him and in this service try to cleanse my heart. And this marks the next stage, *bhajana-kriya* or devotional practice, which truly begins at the very moment when I’ve felt my dependence on a Vaishnava; when I’ve realized that I won’t be able to progress if I preserve my independence.

And many interesting things start here, when a person begins *bhajana-kriya* and today I’ll speak about this. Probably many of you have heard, at the time I was giving a seminar on this subject, stages of *bhakti*. That was a long time ago, when I myself was at the stage of the first enthusiasm. But it’s worthwhile hearing about it over and over again so that we can recognize all these symptoms in ourselves and try to deeply understand their causes and by itself this will be *anartha-nivritti*, elimination of *anarthas*. Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur explains that at the beginning our *bhajana-kriya* or practice is unstable – *anishthita*, because the mind is unstable, because the mind has this quality. Srila Prabhupada explains the reason for the mind’s instability. Why isn’t our mind stable? (answers from the audience). Srila Prabhupada gives a much more precise explanation. There’s no goodness? It’s clear that there’s no goodness, that’s a fact, but Srila Prabhupada gives a very precise explanation and a specific reason. He says that instability or agitation of the mind takes place when it comes into contact with the material world and the objects of pleasure in the material world. And of all the pleasurable objects in the material world – and there are lots of them, we’re not going to enumerate them all – Srila Prabhupada points out two. What are the two objects in the material world is? Yes, gold

and sex. This is from his purport to the second chapter of the First Canto of “Srimad-Bhagavatam”, to the following verse (1.2.17):

srinvatam sva-kathah krishnah
punya-sravana-kirtanah
hridy antah stho hy abhadrani
vidhunoti suhrit satam

or to the next verse (1.2.18):

nashta-prayeshv abhadreshu
nityam bhagavata-sevaya
bhagavaty uttama-sloke
bhaktir bhavati naishtiki

He says that all this agitates the mind, a person gets agitated when he feels the prospective of either obtaining wealth which will then enable him to enjoy, or attaining the supreme pleasure in the material world in the form of sex or enjoyment with the opposite sex. And that makes a person’s mind highly unstable, preventing him from focusing on his practice of devotional service. Therefore, at the beginning it’s practically an inevitable thing which no one avoids – a person engages in devotional service in a not very stable way.

And Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur identifies six stages or six levels of instability: *uttsaha-mayi*, *ghana-tarala*, *vyudha-vikalpa*, *visaya-sangara*, *niyama-aksama* and *taranga-rangini*. Now we’ll try to analyze these six stages one by one. Of these, I’d very much like to get to the sixth one today. I think we’ll be able to do so, we are not going to linger too long on each of them, we are going to analyze the most appropriate – the first three and the sixth one; well, we’ll also touch on the fourth and fifth ones.

What does *uttsaha-mayi* mean? What does *mayi* mean? Aah, I wanted to confuse you but Vrajarenu didn’t let me do so. *Uttsaha-mayi* means enthusiasm. The very word *uttsaha-mayi* doesn’t contain a word meaning “false”. A person is full of enthusiasm. We’ll see whether it’s false or not, but it is enthusiasm, it’s real enthusiasm that constitutes the life of a devotee at the first stage. But if we translate the meaning of this stage, it means false self-confidence. If we properly and correctly translate everything that Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur describes, the first stage of devotional service is accompanied exactly by a false sense of self-confidence or enthusiasm, which is caused by our ignorance. And the enthusiasm is quite understandable; because I come across with all these new things – I get new feelings, new friends, new society, new music, new tastes, new impressions – it’s all new. And this novelty gives me great enthusiasm, because actually the mind likes everything that’s new. Why does this enthusiasm arise at the beginning? It’s not because I have a deep faith, faith is not so deep yet – this enthusiasm is due to a natural reason: the mind always likes new things. The mind likes to switch over, and here it finds a whole new realm. Everything is new, it’s a new life! I used to sleep until ten o’clock or until one pm, and now we have to get up at one am. And the very feeling of me getting up at three o’clock is already a source of enthusiasm. True, it doesn’t last long, but ... Or I come to the *mangala-arati*, as one woman told me, “When I first joined devotional service, I thought I’d never be able to get up for the *mangala-arati*, never! It’s just impossible! Get up at 4:00 am – it’s just madness!” She said, “When I first got up and went to the Deities, the hairs on my body stood up on end, tears flowed from my eyes, I heard this melody: *samsara-davanala-lidha-loka-tranaya karunya ghanaganatva ... oh!*” Everything is new – new music, new friends, and most importantly, the main source of enthusiasm is that I now

there are new ways I can show my pride. This is actually the main source of the surge of enthusiasm, because all the old ways of showing my pride have failed, right? Have we tried to show our pride? Have we tried to enjoy? Has it worked? It hasn't, has it? And here we start life with a clean slate. And, having started with a clean slate, having joined a new society, where no one knows us, where everyone respects us, where everyone loves us and where everyone tells us, "What a sincere person, oh, what a sincere person!" At the beginning everyone's sincere, right? Everyone's sincere and it's all raptures. A new person joins and everyone's in raptures, and he's in raptures because everybody's in raptures about him and it's just a vicious circle of raptures, an avalanche of raptures.

This is the first stage of our initial raptures, which ultimately leads to very serious problems, because this is raptures, as I've already said, and we should be very well aware of the reason for this raptures; that it's based on the fact that I'm starting to manifest my pride in new ways here, in the devotees society. And my pride is manifested in numerous ways, but basically there are two forms of how a person manifests his pride at the beginning. In what way? The first thing he starts doing is he starts preaching to everyone, right? In this first upsurge of enthusiasm and raptures, he wants to make everyone devotees right away, right? And the first victims of his preaching is who? Yes, his parents, his relatives, he attacks them like a hawk and he starts tearing them apart and telling them, "What are you doing, rascals, you'll go to hell, you eat meat, how can you do this? How?" Immediately our closest people become the victims of our pride and we must be well aware precisely of this, that this entire first preaching is based on pride and is just bigotry that makes us try and make everyone else do the same thing we do. Yes, we have obtained faith, we are not denying it, we have obtained true faith, but this true faith isn't strong enough yet to overcome our pride or to allow us to see this pride. And we start preaching. And usually such preaching is full of bigotry. Please raise hands who've sinned in this way? (laughs) Unanimously.

And what is the second way to show our pride in the association of devotees? It's the fact that I look around and don't see any other devotee as pure as me (laughter), because everybody walking around is just who knows who! I jump up, I rush to the *mangala-arati*, I do my rounds, I do everything right, and everybody around me are just fallen devotees, failed yogis who are like a torn cloud which is neither here nor there. They're walking with dull faces, with dull eyes and I look around and I don't see a single person strictly following everything, right? No one, not a single one. Of course, the one and only I see – in the mirror (laughter). A person starts being proud of himself and it seems to him that he is the purest devotee, that he knows best, that he understands best and when others praise him – and in the beginning we are praised, right – what happens with us? We think, "Finally I've found the society I've been always looking for! For here I'm praised, here I've found myself, here I can look down on others, because I can ...". And in the beginning it's easy, in this upsurge of enthusiasm, along with this prime pride, with this upsurge of enthusiasm and new sensations, new experiences, a person thinks that it's very easy to observe everything and that it'll be like that forever, that this honeymoon of devotional service will last forever. And this is *uttsaha-mayi*.

And as someone correctly observed, another way to prove to everyone – I myself do realize that I'm better than the others, that's clear, I can see that I am enthusiastic and the others are not, I see that I can easily do everything and I don't see such ease and effortlessness in others in all this – but in order to prove to everyone that I can easily do all this, what does a person start doing? Yes, he starts demonstrating hyper asceticism. At the beginning we all used to be great ascetics. Who used to be an ascetic at the beginning, raise hands? We used to fast, do many rounds – all to one purpose only: so that everyone would see how special I am. We perform all this hyper asceticism – another hyper new star has lit on the sky of devotional

service and this hyper new star is burning bright. Because a person wants to draw attention to himself, he wants to say, “Don’t you see, this is *bhakti*, look, here it is, *bhakti*’s in me and it’s manifesting, look how special I am! Why am I not given second initiation? Immediately, along with the first one, why am I not appreciated?”

And even this asceticism is easy to perform because a person is willing to do anything out of pride, one can do any penance. And history knows many sad instances of this kind. Because when a person gets proud of himself, he simultaneously starts offending others. One devotee recently told me her story with tears in her eyes, with tears of sincere repentance. She said, “A year ago I thought” – and don’t think that this first period lasts just a few weeks, it may take years, that’s quite possible. A person may quite remain at this state of euphoric enthusiasm over several years, which is based on ignorance and arrogance. She said, “At one point I thought, ‘Wow, everything is Okay with me! Things are going on with me better than with anyone else. Actually, everything’s perfect with me, I’m doing so well – I chant mantra, my spiritual master is the best ever, I have a husband, I have money, I follow all the principles, I have no problems at all!’” And at the same time she was looking at her equals, at those she had joined together with or at some young people and was seeing that they were in trouble. In particular – she’s a very young girl and she was looking at some Gurukula graduates who were having problems or something like that and she said, “Armed with this feeling of doing well, I went out to the masses to give them the gospel, to preach pure devotional service and explain to them what they should do, to try to explain to them that ‘how is it, how can you sometimes smoke or use drugs?’ or things like that.

She was crying when she was saying that. She said, “Then I was deprived of everything. Within a few short months I lost everything. I do the same things that they do but worse and I have no taste whatsoever for anything, Krishna has taken away everything! Because of this arrogance Krishna has deprived me of everything, there’s nothing left!” And she said, “I don’t know whether it will come back to me or not, I remember my state, I remember how good I felt, I remember everything I had”. And she’s very well aware of why all this has happened, why all this has gone – precisely because out of arrogance she’d started offending others, looking down on them, thinking that everything’s Okay with me, and with the others it’s not. In fact, when a neophyte sees another devotee and sees that he’s not doing well, he must think that, “This is a senior devotee, he’s more advanced on the path of devotional service. He’s already there, while I’m still here and he struggles with all this, while to me this is just yet to come. He’s, at least, successfully passed the first stage of this initial enthusiasm, and I’ve not”.

In other words, one must always remain humble. There is another story, I’ve told it, Srila Radhanath Maharaj told it once to me. A story about Osho, about how Osho in his days, in a fit of the same enthusiasm ... He used to be a brilliant speaker, he brilliantly knew the *sastras* and people gathered by thousands to hear him speak. And it arrived to Gujarat, to Ahmedabad, and a thousand people came to listen to him and he said, “What’s your Gandhi?” – because Gandhi came from Gujarat – “in his autobiography Gandhi admits that he had lust, and I have no lust”. A woman of the ancient trade stepped up (laughter) ... and he made this challenge, he said, “Fie, I have no lust, I can spend the night with any woman – nothing will happen to me!” And a woman stepped up and said, “Come on, let’s try?” The next morning he spoke a different philosophy. This is how the philosophy of Rajneesh appeared. Out of this prime enthusiasm and the pride, associated with this prime enthusiasm, with this fall that follows arrogance. Now, that’s the first stage. Have we overcome it? Well, at least we’ve overcome it at the lecture. Shall we move further?

Actually, how should a person think when he's in such a state? All that I have I owe to Krishna and my spiritual master. All that ease that I have now, all the enthusiasm that I have now, is not thanks of me. It's just because I've heard words that undid a few knots of *karma* in my heart, and as these few knots of *karma* were undone, I felt some relief. And as I felt relieved, I immediately thought, "that's it, I'm already there!" Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur says it's like a boy who's just beginning to study and he thinks that he already knows everything. And we're all neophytes, we're all in the kindergarten and if we have something, and from the very beginning we have a lot, but we should always remember whom we owe having all this, for that all this has come to us. I owe it all to my spiritual master and I can lose it at any time, if I'm not humble.

Then the next stage starts which is called *ghana-tarala*. What does *ghana* mean? *Ghanaghanatvam* *Ghana* means thick and *tarala* means empty. *Ghana-tarala* means feast or famine – this is the following stage or the next step – feast or famine. Because at first we have this enthusiasm, we have the desire to do something, and if we translate the meaning, it will be feast or famine. Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur uses very poetic words *ghana-tarala* – a feast or famine – but if we translate the meaning, then it would be "sporadic efforts". When I apply great efforts, I have this enthusiasm to do something, but then all of a sudden this enthusiasm dies out, this enthusiasm vanishes into thin air, it dissolves, fades away. And as it usually happens, our enthusiasm dampens, for the initial enthusiasm is based on what? On pride. Therefore what usually dampens our enthusiasm? The others, yes, who quench our pride, who quench us because they see – a person's proud and in the society of devotees it's a dangerous thing. To be proud is dangerous everywhere, pride is a very dangerous state, because people don't like it when people around are proud. The safest state is the state of humility. As one wise man said about false humility, humility is the safest form of behavior, because it's least annoying to others. But he meant the mimicry of humility, not true humility. But in the society of devotees pride is even more dangerous, because the devotees know everything, they've read all the *sastras*, they all know how pride is manifested, it's very difficult to deceive them. We show any, the slightest signs of pride, and they're immediately pointed out to us. And when we're pointed this out how do we feel? We are shocked! I've never expected this from the devotees – it's a shock! We are hit on the head with all this. "How could they say that to me? I'm a pure devotee! I'm almost a pure devotee! My whole heart is so pure, I've given up everything!"

We have this feeling: we weren't truly appreciated here. Like, I was recently told of a devotee, who is now living at Radha-kunda; he met a devotee and started pouring out his resentment towards the others, saying that, "ISKCON will never have a bright future as long as the gurus don't learn to understand the inner life of their disciples". Who does he mean? Himself. His inner life hasn't been understood, he hasn't been appreciated, he hasn't been glorified enough, or he's been hurt by something like this. Actually when devotees point out something to us, first of all, I have to ask myself, "Maybe this really makes sense? Maybe things are not so bad and maybe they wish me well?" And what's the question that one asks when this initial enthusiasm goes away? When the initial enthusiasm is gone and there's no enthusiasm whatsoever and we have to go on doing all this and there's no taste, because nothing fuels our pride, what's the question that one asks himself? Yes, "Why am I here? Why have I come here? Do I need all this at all or not?" Has anyone asked himself this question? And we are looking for someone who would respond positively to this question, who would tell you, "You don't need this."

Or, another reason why this enthusiasm dies away ... We have this enthusiasm to do something, right? We want to do something and we're trying to do something, but what do people do to us? They stand in the way, right? They interfere. One phrase I hear all the time is "Why don't devotees cooperate with me?" We all want to cooperate, but our understanding of

the meaning of cooperation is unambiguous: who should they cooperate with? "With me! Only I have the understanding, only I have the vision, only I know what must be done. I know, I'm an enthusiast, am I not?! I know so many things, I see, Srila Prabhupada wanted it, I've realized this, I have all this! No one is cooperating with me! No one is appreciating what I'm doing!" Who has felt in this way, please raise your hands. That no one cooperates with me, that no one appreciates me and I start thinking, "These people have no vision at all! I'd rather go away and start preaching myself! Then no one will interfere with me! Because all the devotees have gathered here for one purpose only – to interfere with me, to destroy my enthusiasm!" Well, admit it, who has thought in this way?

Actually, it's a problem. People start doing something enthusiastically, but since they don't have this internal stability, they don't have a deep understanding, they don't have humility and tolerance, their gunpowder doesn't last long and this enthusiasm dies away, like when someone starts studying some foreign language. Have any of you studied foreign languages? We have this understanding that "I need a foreign language, I need English, I must learn English by all means, because my Guru Maharaj speaks in English, I'm fed up of these translators who always distort the meaning of my words, of my *siddhanta* ..." And we begin studying the language and what happens to us next? We get bored because language means every day. Anyone can learn a language, but there is only one rule to follow in order to learn the language – you must do it every day. And very quickly we're bored by all this because we must memorize something, and as soon as we memorize something new, we forget the first thing we memorized in the first place and we only remember "How do you do?" and "How are you?" And we think that we are just about to ... At first everything seems very easy, just a little bit of this and that ... Ultimately I'll memorize a few words, and then there is "How are you?" and "How do you do?" and everything's messed up and we say "How do are you?" or "What are doing?" There are some strange forms, gerunds – ahhh! And you lose all enthusiasm and what does the mind start saying to you? Why do you need all this? Can't you be a devotee without this? You can perfectly be a devotee without this, can't you?" Similarly, a person at this stage, feast or famine, he thinks, "Why do you need it? Ultimately, do you need the devotees association? You can be a devotee by yourself. Stay away, you know everything, you have faith, chant Hare Krishna by yourself!" Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

And Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur says that there are two reasons for this stage, why does a person fall into such a state? He says that it's either because a person doesn't understand something, he's come across something that he hasn't fully understood, he hasn't fully grasped – either in the *sastras* or something around, that he can't explain to himself, or because he doesn't have enough taste. And the same applies not only to ... The same applies to our activities, sometimes we enthusiastically start worshipping the Deities and we worship and worship Them. We spent hours on *puja* and think, "Jaya! Haribol!" And then lo! – The enthusiasm has gone and the Deities are covered with dust on our shelves, along with all the paraphernalia of Their worship. And it's all dusty and we look at all this and think, "Damn it! The *sastras* says that the most important thing is to listen to the Holy Name and to sing *kirtan* ..." And so on, one oscillates in this way. And this oscillation is related, once again ... However, if he nevertheless goes on hearing, what happens to him? Yes, at some point he again finds enthusiasm. The enthusiasm is gone, but at some point this enthusiasm comes back, because he's heard something, he's realized something and he feels a new surge of enthusiasm until the next disappointment, until the new falldown, until the next misunderstandings. The reason for this is that we don't have a sufficiently stable and true taste. And most importantly, what must we do in this situation? Yes, we must remain in the devotees association. In all these situations we must stay in the devotees society, we must serve, be as humble as possible.

We've gone through the first two stages, and this is already a great achievement on our way. The third stage now begins which is called *vyudha-vikalpa*. What does *vyudha* mean? *Vyudha* means the possibilities which appear before me, and *vikalpa* means confusion – of the possibilities that are opening in front of me I can't choose the one I need. In other words, one cannot understand what he must do, how to proceed, where to direct his steps, what to focus and concentrate on in order to progress. *Vyudha-vikalpa* means that he reads various statements in the *sastras* and these various statements of the *sastras* leave a mess in his head, a complete mess. He reads a little here, a little there, he's a *pandit*, isn't he, and he must know everything, he must sometimes put in something from the "Caitanya-caritamrita". He's read half of the second chapter of the "Bhagavad-gita" and studied the eighth chapter of the Madhya-lila of "Caitanya-caritamrita" and because of this he's got a complete mess in his head. And with this mess in his head he starts thinking, "What shall I do?" And usually the first hesitations or oscillations faced by people, are related to the statement of the *sastras* that one should renounce the material world, right? This is the first thing that catches our eye in the *sastras*, right? We meet with God on the pages of the *sastras* and when we've met with God, what does that mean? This means that everything else should be left behind. And one looks at what Srila Prabhupada writes, he looks at all these instructions and thinks that I must give up all this. Because this is the first thing that we immediately learn. And besides, as a rule we come into devotional service as a result of what? As a result of a complete disappointment. We're already disappointed in one way or another and it turns out that there is a nice philosophy which allows us to not just give up and forsake everything, but also draw a philosophical base under this. What does Krishna say in the "Bhagavad-gita"? What is the essence of all Krishna's teachings in the "Bhagavad-gita"?

sarva-dharman parityaja
 mam ekam saranam vraja
 aham tvam sarva papebhyo
 moksaysyami ma sucah

Give up everything, Krishna says, "Give up everything!" And we think, "What has Krishna told Arjuna?" Krishna told Arjuna, "Kill your relatives!" (laughter) This is how the "Bhagavad-gita" begins, I must somehow or other deal with all my relatives and I think, "Who cares about all these relatives, they're just nothing but trouble. They're just a hindrance in my devotional service". Is that right, are they a hindrance? They are. They're nothing but a hindrance, a headache. And we find very clear and vivid confirmations to all this in the scriptures, because, once again, the faith we have is not just some *laukika-sraddha*, what *sraddha* do we have? *Sastriya-sraddha*. Our *sraddha* has taken deep roots in the scriptures. We read the scriptures, and we find there everything we need. What does Kapiladeva say in the Third Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" (3.31.40)? He says:

yopayati sanair maya
 yosid deva-vinirmita

"The gods have created women to specifically divert me from the path of devotional service!" Kapiladeva doesn't speak about men but the gods have created men with the same purpose (laughter). *Yopayati sanair maya* is the illusory creation and the *devas* have created *vinirmita*, they've created it all so that she gradually creeps up and how does she divert me from the path of devotional service? Kapiladeva says that she starts serving me and, by serving me, she pulls me into a dark pit, the pit of death. This is what Kapiladeva says in the Third Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam". She or he, it doesn't matter, in this case sex is unimportant. The main thing is that we think ... "Oh, mother," says Kapiladev, "woman is an image of *maya*, illusion, created by

the gods, who slowly approaches the devotees, *sanaya*, slowly, and starts serving him. As a result, all his devotion comes to an end, he enters into a dark well, overgrown with grass and therefore the *sadhaka* must regard a woman to be his spiritual death!”

And we read many other verses in “Srimad-Bhagavatam”, there are many other verses. We get to the Fifth Canto of “Srimad-Bhagavatam” and the Fifth Canto of “Srimad-Bhagavatam” speaks of Maharaja Bharata; that, driven by the desire to serve, Maharaja Bharata did what? He abandoned his beautiful wife, his obedient sons, his loving relatives and his great kingdom, turning away from them as if it were what? Yes, garbage, to put it mildly, garbage. He turned his back on them. And one starts thinking, “He had a beautiful wife. And mine is what?” (laughter) He had nice children, and mine are what? He had loving relatives, and mine are what? He had a great kingdom, and I have a one-room apartment! He turned away and gave up all that, what am I to do then? I must all the more give up all this!” And one reads this and thinks ...

But that’s not all, it doesn’t all end here, this is just the beginning, because further on he comes across another thing ... First he decides in favor of *vairagya*, he decides to somehow or other renounce, I must renounce, children stand on my way, my wife stands on my way, they don’t let me to do my *bhajan*! And he begins dreaming, because – I’ve already defined this feature of the mind: the mind is always thinking about something it doesn’t have. It never thinks about what it has. When we live in Dnepropetrovsk, we think of Vrindavan. When we live in Vrindavan, we think of Dnepropetrovsk. Therefore you’d better live in Dnepropetrovsk and think of Vrindavan, than live in Vrindavan and think about Dnepropetrovsk (laughs). One always thinks about what he doesn’t have and one starts thinking, he starts getting ... First, he starts thinking in favor of renunciation, because he starts thinking about what he doesn’t have, he thinks that everything stands in his way. After that he gets scared. When he was just about to renounce – it’s in a civilized society that he gets scared – in the uncivilized society to which we belong he renounces and after that he realizes. In a civilized society one would get scared because he knew: if one renounces there’s no turning back. And in the uncivilized world everything’s simple: we renounce and then we get attached again, then we renounce again. We think, “What’s the problem? I’ve got divorced, then I’ve got married, then I’ve got divorced again. Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur analyzes all these things on the level of a *sadhaka*’s mind. Unfortunately, with us this happens not on the level of the mind, but on the level of pure devotional service (laughs).

First he renounces, and if he has any limits inside, he gets scared and starts, frightened by this, looking in the scriptures for other statements and he does find in the scriptures other statements. There are lots of other statements in the scriptures. Krishna says in the Eleventh Canto of “Srimad-Bhagavatam” – these are also very important words to remember for those who have decided to renounce. In the Eleventh Canto of “Srimad-Bhagavatam” Krishna says that stupid people think in what way? Rather, not stupid people, but it happens so that one renounces everything and, having renounced everything, he starts to lament, starts to cry, starts to think, how will my wife get along without me, how will my children get along, how will my old parents get along, I’ve abandoned them all and they all depend on me! And Krishna Himself says that such a person meditates only on this, he thinks only about this and his death sneaks up to him, and since he hasn’t satisfied his senses to the full, he hasn’t sufficiently enjoyed, he hasn’t gone through all this, his unfulfilled desires remain, and since he’s got these unsatisfied desires he meditates only on this and when he dies in meditation of this, where does he go? Yes, eventually he degrades. Therefore Krishna says that we shouldn’t hurry up, that *vairagya* will come, but it will come in its turn. What should I do first? First, I should go through everything, I should experience everything. And one thinks, “Yes, I’ll remain here, I’ll do

all my duty, I'll do everything I'm supposed to do". This feeling comes to him for a while, that it's better in this way; that one can renounce everything but when this renunciation comes naturally, when I am 50 years old or more – 60, 70, 80 or 90 ... And he thinks, "I'd rather go through all this" also because he sees around him these people who'd renounced when still young and who had spent their best years, as we said, rendering devotional service, and then, at 50 small Nityanandas and Balaramas start appearing and at 50 they're nursing them, "tyu, tyu, tyu". One thinks, "How's that?! That's terrible! I'd better do everything in time", and he remains here for some time. But he doesn't stop reading the *sastras*, that's the problem. And because he constantly reads the *sastras*, he's inevitably faced with some other statements, which again force the pendulum of his mind to swing the other way.

In Hindi there is an interesting thing – and, by the way, it's useful, it's a kind of a sociological observation, which is inherent in the very language of Hindi. It's said that a person ... 'Fifty' in Hindi is *pacas*. Experts of Hindi interpret this in the following way: *pac* means five tens, and *as* is hope. It's said that up to 50 years of age people still have hope and one thinks, "Yes, I must endure until I'm 50" because even at 50 one cherishes the last hope that I'll be able to enjoy material happiness. 51 in Hindi is *ekavan* – a person wants to go to the forest and he thinks, "May I somehow survive until then". And this is *vyudha-vikalpa* – he cannot choose among all these possibilities.

And further on Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur makes another statement that sometimes a person decides to stay. First, he decided to leave, then he decided to stay and go away later, when he reaches old age, and when everything will be fine with him. In our situation, as I said, everything takes on much uglier forms, because a person leaves one family, renounces and then starts another family. Or he takes *sannyasa* and then, having taken *sannyasa*, joins the most progressive *ashram*, the *grihastha ashram* – that's the highest stage, the highest achievement, he can now be a *grihastha* with a good reason. And further Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur says that when a person had first renounced and then again decided to stay, all of a sudden a saving thought comes to his mind. He thinks, "Wait, who's leading the best life of all?" *Sannyasis* – they don't have to worry about anything. Wherever they go, they're fed, they're ironed, they're ... Just going around, travelling – nothing but enjoyment!" This is what Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur writes, that's not just nowadays. *Sannyasis* – they're served first, they're fed with the best foodstuff and one thinks, "Why am I sitting here in this dark pit, I must fly away from here as free as a bird and fly off preaching!" And then he remembers what Lord Brahma says in the Fourteenth Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam", where he says that actually a devotee doesn't mind where he is because if he is a devotee the home is a great happiness for him, and if he is a non-devotee the home is like a prison to him and he thinks, "I'd rather stay at home ..." and the pendulum of his mind goes on swinging. This is *vyudha-vikalpa* or swinging of the mind, the inability to choose between various options. Yes, and a person also thinks that *vairagya* is a bad thing. Has anyone thought like this? *Vairagya* is a terrible thing! This is another statement of the *sastras*. In the Eleventh Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" Krishna says *vairagya*, renunciation of the world, is an obstacle to *bhakti*, because it makes one's heart hard, and how can *bhakti* enter a hard heart? *Bhakti* cannot enter it.

So generally, shortly speaking, you can find a justification for anything you want. And one reads the *sastras* and he doesn't know where to go after the *sastras*. Now let's think about how we should understand all these statements in the *sastras*. Why are there in the *sastras* instructions that are clearly opposite? Yes, because the *sastras* are addressed to everybody, the *sastras* speak to everybody and the *sastras* describe the situation of each person, explaining at what point he should take up the spiritual path. And at which point should he take it up? At his own.

He shouldn't try to jump over and above, do something like that, he should start from the point he is at, from the level he is at. Because people always make the same mistake. The *sastras* are addressed to people of different levels of understanding, of different levels of faith and of different *samskaras*. And depending on the level of our understanding, the level of our faith and the *samskaras* we have, different things will be favorable for different people, because the *sastras* glorify both the favorable family life, which protects one and is like a fortress. Kardama Muni says that a good family life is a fortress in which one can feel safe and there are other statements and with the help of the spiritual master one must understand what he needs. In no case should he try to imitate someone else, because good is what corresponds to my level, and bad is what doesn't correspond to my level. This is, so to speak, the problem that we face at the level of *vyudha-vikalpa*. And a person is swung the other way, as I said, when sometimes he does *kirtan* because someone praises *kirtan*, and then he starts worshipping the Deity, because Maharaja Ambarisa worshiped Deities. Then he says that one should distribute books because that's the most important thing and he cannot choose from the various opportunities that are in front of him just because his mind is unstable. All this is a manifestation of instability.

I'll very quickly go through the next two stages, the 4th and the 5th, and then I'll say a few important words about the last stage, *taranga-rangini*.

Next is *visaya-sangara*. What does *visaya* mean? *Visaya* means sense objects, and *sangara* means struggle. So, at some point, when a person has overcome to a certain extent the instability of his mind, all of a sudden he starts feeling that his senses come out of his control. He sees sense objects and he cannot do anything with himself. *Visaya-sangara* means that he knows well ... At this level he knows the scriptures well enough to understand that sensual pleasures lead to what? To suffering.

ye hi samsarsa-ja bhoga
duhkha-yonaya eva te
ady-antavantah kaunteya
na teshu ramate budhah
(Gita, 5.22)

Krishna says, and a person is convinced by his own experience, he knows that sensual pleasure doesn't make him happy, that actually, what happens to a person when he's immersed in sensual pleasure, what happens to his heart, what does he feel at heart? Emptiness and depression, deception, the feeling of being cheated and a person is ware of this. He knows better than anybody else that all this is empty, it will not give him integrity. He knows that when I render devotional service an extraordinary joy and integrity spring up in my heart that I can share with others. Sensual pleasures make me unhappy. But at the same time what does he feels inside? He feels unable to cope with these yearnings. Has anyone felt that? No need to raise your hands. At this level a person... And Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur refers to very important verses from the Eleventh Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" where Krishna says, "My devotee knows that there is nothing more important than *bhakti*". At the same time, seeing the opportunity to enjoy he cannot help but enjoy it, although at the same time he reproaches himself, he feels this duality inside, internally he reproaches himself.

And this same Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur, commenting on these verses from the Eleventh Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" describes the devotee's mentality. The devotee at this level - it is actually a very high level and we shouldn't think that this is a low level - at this level the devotee thinks that I'll never give up *bhakti*! Even if Lord Brahma himself appears before me and starts saying, "Give up *bhakti* and practice *jnana* or *karma*", I'll tell him "No!" I know that

there is no other way besides *bhakti*, I know that no other pleasures will fill up my heart, there is one thing only that can fill up the void in my heart – what's that? That's the love for Krishna. And when this love is absolutely pure, I know this, and when there're no objects of sense enjoyment before my eyes, I have such resolution, because I know that there is nothing better than a devotee. I know that simply sweeping the floor in the temple or in the *ashram* or being in the devotees' association is better than enjoying the heavenly delights on the Hawaii. It's better, because the heart feels better by doing this, a person knows this, he knows that I've come to the devotees and I did something small, and I feel so light-hearted, so pure and so good. I'd gone trying to squeeze these sense enjoyments on the Hawaiian Islands or the Canaries or on some other islands but then I came back from there with an empty heart, nothing changed in my heart. Whereas if I sweep the floor or cut vegetables in the kitchen or do something simple, but with a pure heart, I feel better at heart. Who has had this feeling, raise your hands, please. That I do something simple and I feel easier and better than some subtle pleasures that had previously been available to me. Nevertheless, when I come across the opportunity to enjoy all this, I am unable to reject it. And Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur says that such a devotee does this, he falls down, but he reproaches himself, he gnaws himself and Krishna tells Uddhava that everything is Okay with such a devotee because I am with him because I see his sincerity. Krishna does appreciate it.

I have a favorite story about Srila Prabhupada, when Srila Prabhupada in everybody's presence was read a letter from some devotee, where he was describing his struggle. That devotee used to be on drugs, then he was initiated and at some point all of a sudden, he felt that he couldn't follow his vows – this happens, too, - and he was describing to Srila Prabhupada how he was struggling, trying hard to somehow overcome this habit but then is falling down again. Nevertheless, he does not give up his struggle. Srila Prabhupada began to cry, he said, "Just see how he's struggling for for Krishna!" In no way should we look down upon such a devotee. If a devotee is sincere and he has this ideal – of course, it's not an excuse, this doesn't mean that we're now allowed, that we've all now understood what it means to be a sincere devotee (laughter) – this means that I'm now going to enjoy and repent. No. But if I do have this true understanding that I want to attain the ultimate goal of *bhakti* and don't want anything else and simultaneously something doesn't work out that's no problem if I sincerely struggle for it. The spiritual master will understand this, Srila Prabhupada has always understood this, Krishna will understand this if I have this true, genuine sincerity. Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur says that a person who has this inner determination, who has felt the tangible ideal of *bhakti*, he says, "I'm ready to go even to hell, but I'm not going to give up this goal, this goal remains with me". And this is *visaya-sangara*.

Next, the fifth stage or the fifth manifestation of instability in our mind is called *niyama-aksama* and while at the previous stage a person gives in to some sensual temptations, at the next stage he feels that he needs to strengthen his devotional service in what way? Yes, by taking vows. He's overcome all these initial stages of instability and he takes vows to strengthen and deepen his devotional service and he starts saying, "I will chant more *mantra*, I'll restrict myself in some ways" and does it not for the sake of showing off as opposed to the initial enthusiasm. He takes these vows and how frequently does he take these vows? Every day, right, Vrajarenu, thank you. Why does he take vows every day? Because he breaks them every day. Every day he says, "That's it, from now on ... I've realized ... I'll chant 64 rounds, one *lakh*, everything's become clear to me and he feels easy, he wants it, he can do it. And one day he chants 64 rounds, but the next day he finds lots of reasons not to do it, "I have a practical devotional service, it takes too much time!" Or, he says, "From now I'm not going to miss a single *mangal-arati*!" Who has taken such a vow? Does this vow last long? It's very easy to take such a vow, you can do this many times. But the next day it happens so that ... and it's not my fault, I get

home late, I had to serve and as I got home late, what could I do? I have to get some sleep, we're not fanatics! (laughter) No, we are not fanatics, we're just taking some vows all the time and we're breaking them all the time, because I'm a master of my word – when I want I give one, when I want I take it back. This is *niyama-aksama*, the inability to observe the vows I've taken. In the first case it's the person's inability to resist temptations – and these can even be innocent temptations, we're not talking about some gross downfalls, rather, about some innocent temptations when one still feels attached to some simple pleasures of life; in the second case it's the feeling that he cannot accomplish something very important.

And finally, the sixth stage, *taranga-rangini*, is a very important one, because we are all preachers and for preachers of Krishna consciousness it's a very important stage, because at this stage many people put an end to their devotional service. Yesterday I was asked a question which I didn't answer, I'll explain now – this is *taranga-rangini* – and I'll try to answer this question.

The question was: Please explain how the way a person is appreciated in the devotees' society affects his faith. How to understand whether my pride increases or not?

It's exactly a question related to this stage of devotional service, because, as explained by Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur, a person who practices *bhakti* becomes very attractive. *Bhakti* is attractive by itself and any manifestations of *bhakti*, any manifestations of one's sincerity, any manifestation of holiness make a person attractive. Has anyone seen a person's attractiveness growing as he is practicing *bhakti*? A person becomes attractive, especially if he's overcome the temptations, especially if he's overcome all these initial stages of instability and has achieved stability, stability in his vows, there are no downfalls, *bhakti* works from the inside, and he feels how he's becoming stronger because *bhakti* gives strength. A person obtains this power and everywhere, all the scriptures say that *bhakti* gives everything. *Bhakti* can give us what? Yes, *bhakti* can give us sense enjoyment, *bhakti* can give us *siddhas* or mystical perfections, *bhakti* can give us *mukti*.

sidhayah paramascarya
bhuktir muktis ca sasvati
nityam ca paramanandam
bhaved govinda-bhaktitah
(Tantra-sastra, 1.1.31)

Srila Rupa Goswami quotes a verse from the Tantra, which says that *bhakti* for Govinda, if a person serves the master of the senses, then that person obtains everything: *siddhi paramascarya* – the most amazing *siddhas*, the most striking mystical powers that can ever be. It was said that Srila Prabhupada, near the end of his life, the last year of his life, in 1977, he went to the Kumbha Mela with his disciples. And the Kumbha Mela, as I already said, is a fair of various spiritual perversions. All kinds of yogis of various *siddhas* go there and once to the devotees' camp – all groups or all spiritual movements set up their camps there – and some yogi came to the devotees' camp, to ISKCON's camp. This yogi didn't like something and he said, "I want to see your guru". The devotees told him: "Who are you, on earth? Some unwashed yogi with long hair, you wait here, our Guru is busy with other things". And when he was answered in this way he looked at the person who told him that and that person was paralyzed, he couldn't move at all. The man went straight to Srila Prabhupada's room, there was a guard and the guard was about to stop him from entering, but the man looked at him and he was also paralyzed. He went in and remained there for about 15 minutes. He came out with his head down, un-paralyzed those people, fell down at their feet, started begging for

forgiveness and saying, "I've seen many, but such a power I've never seen in anybody!" He was actually crying and begging, "Please, forgive me! The guru you have ... I've never seen such a guru!" And that's a fact, because when a person has *bhakti* for Govinda and this *bhakti* is unalloyed then *siddhaya paramasharya* – a person gets the most amazing *siddhas*. *Bhuktir muktir ca sasvati*. How do *bhukti* and *mukti* come to a person? *Sasvatah* – always, constantly, every day *bhukti* and every day *mukti* – there's no suffering. Moreover, *nityam ca paramananda* – such a person reaches *paramananda*, the highest bliss. *Bhaved govinda-bhaktitah* – such a person attains all this by the virtue of having *bhakti* for Govinda. And this is the last stage of instability in devotional service.

Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur calls it *taranga-rangini*. It comes down to what? To a person starting to enjoy it, he starts liking all this. In fact, the difference ... All this will come by itself, it comes by itself and there is nothing wrong in the fact that some of these things come. Fame did come to Srila Prabhupada, power did come to Srila Prabhupada, some money did come to him. A person gets stuck at this stage for some time, if he starts deriving pleasure from all this, if he takes these things seriously, if he thinks, "Yes, that's the way it must be, of course, this is what devotion is meant for, I must give the others the opportunity to serve me, right? How else can they be saved? They cannot be saved, if they don't serve a pure devotee! How else could it be, what's wrong with this?" And this, again, is the danger that lies in wait for preachers. We all preach more or less. Preaching is a very powerful tool or a method of spiritual advancement. A person who preaches gets rid of many problems and as a natural consequence honor comes to him, *labdha* comes to him, *labdha* means money. Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur says that such a person gets followers, a lot of followers, people feel that they are dependent on him, that they depend on his preaching, they start giving him donations, and this is *labdha*. *Puja* – he starts to be honored. When I was coming here, you organized such a reception for me, everybody was showering me with flower petals and I thought, "Wow, even the president of the United States is not welcomed in this way!" And at this point the most natural thing is to take it as granted, the most natural thing is to think that's cool. At this point the person may inwardly somehow naturally might think that this is what's needed, that this is *bhakti* and unnoticeably become attached to it. *Labdha, puja* and *pratistha*. *Pratistha* means that a person starts to be proud of his special, exceptional situation; he begins to distinguish himself willingly or unwillingly, he starts to keep apart from the rest, he stops associating with his equals – this is one of the signs that a person has decided to ride the waves for a while. Because in the association of his equals he doesn't feel very comfortable. Equals don't shout "Jaya!" They don't shower petals on you, whereas he's now used to petals and there are no petals (laughs) and he goes where there are petals.

And this is probably the most important thing I wanted to say on the subject; however, I'll tell you now a very important story from the "Hari-bhakti-sudodhaya" which describes this very stage. But the most important thing to know is that in order to overcome this stage or not to fall into the trap of *taranga-rangini*, so that our mind is not colored, because *taranga-rangini* means that my mind is colored in these colors of pleasure, it ceases to be clear and all the coming pleasures become something important to me, something that I then start demanding from others, something that I then try to somehow squeeze out from the others, and if I don't get it, then a natural indignation arises inside: "How is that, rascals, they have no respect!" And all devotees who preach are faced with this in one way or another, but, of course, in this case it most endangers a spiritual master's position. And the sign that a person has not overcome this is his desire for isolation and association only with his subjects and his disciples, with those below him, with those who accept him absolutely. And he feels hurt ... And because we have, at a certain level, always have our juniors and we are mentors, but it physically hurts him to associate in a different way, because the other type of association doesn't give him the same

pleasure. That is why at the Sri Sri Radha Gopinath Mandir, at the Chowpati Temple there is a rule. It states that any person who is engaged in preaching, that is, who willingly or unwillingly comes in contact with these aspects – *puja*, *labdha* and *pratistha*, worship, honor, some money or benefits and any special treatment – any person who somehow does this must spent at least 60% of his time with his equals, with preachers of the same level. Or if not the same, at least in the same format, so to speak, when they are engaged in doing something together, when they preach together. And any preacher should be very careful about this and follow this good formula. In other words, association with our equals should take the major part of our time, because it purifies most, while association with the younger, although at first glance it may seem good, can severely contaminate us by making us proud or something like that.

And in this regard I'd like to tell an amazing story from the "Hari-bhakti-sudodhaya" (we have a few minutes left, right?), where Prahlada Maharaja, serving as an example of such a devotee, who has passed all the levels of instability and has attained steadfastness in *bhakti*, is exemplifying by his own behavior how one should react, he's explaining how one should react when faced with these secondary fruits of *bhakti*, when all these natural consequences of *bhakti* come to him.

The "Hari-bhakti-sudodhaya" describes a story, which is not contained in "Srimad-Bhagavatam". It tells of Hiranyakasipu plotting to get rid of Prahlada. And the first thing he did – he tried to get rid of him in a gross way. He sent demons with tridents and darts to him, whereas Prahlad was meditating on Krishna, Krishna was his *istha-devata*, he was thinking of Krishna. And all these demons began attacking him, all their weapons were bouncing off him as if off an armor and were turning back against themselves and as a result they all were injuring themselves and were getting killed; and Prahlad remained sitting, nothing happened to him. They were attacked him from all directions, throwing weapons at him, all the weapons thrown at him were bouncing off him and flying back to them like boomerangs and Hiranyakasipu realized that it didn't work out. Here a demoness ran to him. With tears in her eyes, the demoness ran up to him and started lamenting; she said, "My husband used to be your loyal servant, he used to be such a demon, the best ever demon you would ever find; he was the best demon! As soon as he heard that you want to kill your son, he decided to do that using mystical powers. He was the type of demon that could enter another person, obsess him and kill him from inside. And my husband entered Prahlada's body as a ghost and never ever come out of there!" The demoness started saying, "It seems that another ghost is inhabiting his body and this other ghost has strangled him when he entered him, he wanted to destroy him from inside!"

Hiranyakasipu was terrified. When he heard this story, he realized that not only can't he be killed on the gross level, he can't either be killed on the subtle level! He sent him to *gurukula*, to school and said, "Think of your spiritual master. Go there, Okay? I'm not going to harass you anymore, go, brat, get out of my sight!" But inside, at heart, this poison of jealousy, envy and fear was raging and he could find neither sleep nor rest. Then he realized what was happening. The reason's that Prahlad constantly meditates on Krishna and because he meditates on Krishna, no one can kill him. Meditation on Krishna protects him. He thought, "I should kill him at night when he's asleep, because during the day he can meditate and during his sleep – we know what we see in a dream – he should be attacked at night!" And he ordered his demons to attack him at night when Prahlad would be asleep, tie him up and throw him into the sea. And the demons did that very quickly, the *ashram* was on the shore of the ocean, they tied him up with ropes of snakes and threw him into the sea. But Prahlad didn't even notice that he was thrown into the sea. Not only didn't he wake up – actually he wasn't asleep, he was in

meditation – he didn't even notice that they threw him from atop and hurled stones after him. What happened next ... and they hoped that he will now be eaten up by all sorts of animals.

The "Hari-bhakti-sudodhaya" describes that all the sea monsters saw something shining fall into the ocean and that they all fled in terror because Prahlada emanated such radiance that no one dared to approach him. It's dark in the ocean, and all of a sudden something radiant falls in, an enormous spotlight. Prahlad was lying there in complete meditation, his arms and legs tied up, a pile of stones atop him and it's said that the stones slept off from him on their own, the stones moved away from him and the news that some shining object of unknown origin has appeared in the ocean reached Varuna. In great concern Varuna decided to find out what it was himself. He approached and saw that it was Prahlad. He pulled Prahlada out onto the shore of the ocean. Prahlad slightly recovered and saw before him bearded Tchernomor. And not only did he take him out, he took along a tray of treasures. All the treasures of the ocean depths – pearls, a huge unwitnessed pearl, a pile of precious stones. He brought it all before Prahlada, put in front of him and said, "You are a great devotee and because you are a great devotee, I feel that I must worship you in some way, this is simply my tribute to you. In my mind you're like a king, and a king should be paid tribute. Here are some of the treasures I possess, please take it, because your fortitude, your steadfastness, I feel that I must, I know I must bow down to a Krishna's devotee". (I'm making sure nothing's missed, I don't want to spoil it all because there are very important points) And he began praising Prahlada. He said, "Because due to your unwavering devotion you have become such a great devotee, here's my gift to you".

Listen to what Prahlada replied. With great humility Prahlada folded his palms and said, "Actually, I don't deserve any honor". Actually this is the standard response of a devotee, remember it well: "I don't deserve any honor". "You're much higher than me. Why? Because the Lord Himself is lying on your waters. I have one wish – to catch at least a glimpse of the Lord, whereas you can see Him at any time for He lies on the waters of the Milk ocean. It's not me who's a great devotee but you and I wonder why you should bow down to me, it's me who should bow down to you. You're the greatest of all devotees!" And the ocean, Sagara Maharaj, Varunadeva, got scared when Prahlad started glorifying him and immediately fled away, leaving before him all those diamonds and jewelry and disappeared to his own abode. And Prahlad was left alone, he didn't even pay attention to this tray. That's not the whole story. He was submerged in meditation and started praying to Krishna, started crying and thinking that, "How is it that I keep thinking of Krishna all the time and Krishna hasn't appeared before me, I've never ever seen Him!" Because he's just remembered that "Varuna sees Him, the demigods see Him, they come to the shore of the Milk ocean, they see Him, whereas I just keep thinking of Him, but He's never came to me".

And he began crying, sitting in the dark on the shore of the ocean with this tray of jewels, his eyes closed; he was inwardly praying, reciting prayers to Krishna and at the same time he was reproaching himself that "I must be unworthy of this. For, can Krishna appear before a person of impure heart? Krishna appears only before the yogis who have purified their hearts in meditation, who have been purifying their hearts for many, many years until in the end, on the clear mirror of their hearts Krishna's *darsan* appear". Or then he would say that "Krishna appears before those who, reflecting on the Vedanta-sutra, have also purified their hearts and have attained such steadfastness. And I'm neither the one, nor the other, nor the third, my heart is always agitated by lust, envy, rage, anger, greed, illusion and pride – all these waves are ripples on the surface of my heart! Can I see God in the mirror of such a heart? This is a distorting mirror, it's all completely covered with dust! No, I can't!" In such humility he was

weeping and saying, “Of course, it’s clear, of course Krishna’ll never appear before me for my heart is still impure”.

And, as you might expect, when Krishna heard these prayers, He appeared before him, because when a devotee is sincere and humble ... Being sincere is not some kind of a game, it’s the real awareness of one’s fallen state! And when a devotee becomes aware of this as a result of his practice of devotional service and stability, when he steps over the tray of jewels and says that there’s nothing more important to me than getting even a momentary *darsan* of the Lord, Krishna appears. And Krishna simultaneously appeared in two places – He appeared in his heart and in before him. Prahlada was in meditation, in tears, and he first saw Him in his heart, all of a sudden he saw Him in the heart, this entire beautiful look, with huge eyes, with a garland of forest flowers, with a peacock feather, dressed in a yellow garment, with the Kaustubha jewel, with four arms, Krishna came to him in his four-armed form. At the same time He appeared in front of him and took him up, but Prahlada didn’t see Him, didn’t hear Him, he was oblivious of Him. And He placed him on His lap and began caressing him. Prahlada enjoyed this image of Krishna in his heart when suddenly it disappeared from his heart, Prahlada opened his eyes and saw that he was sitting on the lap of the Lord, that the Lord is there! He jumped up from His knees, he fell onto the ground, he began paying obeisances to Him, saying something in his excited state. He sometimes spoke, sometimes fell on the ground again ...

And then – listen carefully – then Krishna spoke to him. The first thing He told him was, “Relax, Prahlada, there’s no need for all this, we’re friends with you, aren’t we? You are My friend and I am your friend, friends behave in a simple way, there’s no need for such reverence, for such respect”. And He began to calm him down, he began to explain, “Please, I know, Prahlad, I love you, I have no one but you, and in fact I’m totally submitted to you, by your devotion you’ve proven that for you there’s no one but Me, so I can’t but reciprocate in the same way, for Me there’s no one but you. Please ask Me for anything, Prahlad! Ask Me for some blessings”. This was Vishnu’s or Krishna’s first request, He said, “Ask Me for anything, ask Me for anything you want, I’ll fulfill your every desire!” And Prahlad was initially stumped by this, he didn’t expect this from Krishna. Then Prahlad began saying “Thank You very much for Your proposal, for Your desire that I ask something of You ...” And the fact that this story is described in the scriptures means that this is what will be happening with any *bhakta*, at some point this is exactly what will happen: Krishna Himself will appear and Krishna Himself will say, “Ask of Me any desire”.

Listen to what Prahlad replied. To this Prahlad replied that, “Well, I don’t need anything, I see You and I’m happy. The only thing I need is to drink Your beauty with my eyes, and now I’ve got this opportunity. This is what I wanted, I had no other wish, I wanted to see You and be with You, You gave me this, what else can I ask you for? I don’t need a long life, riches or followers. The main thing I wanted is already here right now in front of me”.

Prahlad parried Krishna’s first request but Krishna wouldn’t give up. Krishna told him, “Yes, yes, you are right, Prahlad. Prahlad, you’re right. I know in My heart that you have no other desire but the desire to see Me, therefore I appeared before you. But I do have a desire. You don’t have any desires, Prahlad, you don’t want anything, you just want to see Me. I do have a desire! I don’t want anything, I’m completely Self-satisfied, I have all I need, as soon as I think of something it all is there. But I have one desire – to fulfill My devotee’s desire. Don’t ask for your own sake, ask for My sake. I come to this world only because I’m happy to grant My devotee’s desires. Please, Prahlad, please ask!”

Can you feel how cunning Krishna is, that it's not so easy to get off with Him. Being a simple-minded boy, Prahlad says, "Well, if You want to fulfill my desire," – it all didn't end here – "if You want to fulfill my desire, I have one desire, so be it. Since You say that You come specifically to fulfill Your devotees' desires, I'm going to tell You now my wish that You'll be able to fulfill. Please let me have *bhakti* life after life. I want to serve You, give me that opportunity. Promise me that I will always serve You and will never give up my service to You".

It's all not that simple, it all didn't end there. Krishna said, "Perfect, I've always known that you want only *bhakti*. I've always known that you want nothing but *bhakti*. But you already have *bhakti*, and I promise you that not only you have *bhakti* now, but you will have it in future. Ask for something else. Oh, please, do me a favor! Prahlad, you are My devotee, aren't you! For the sake of serving Me please ask for something else!"

Listen to what Prahlad replied and let these words remain in your heart. Prahlad's reply to this was amazing. Prahlad said, "If I had *bhakti* in my heart You wouldn't have proposed all this to me. If I had true *bhakti* in my heart you wouldn't have come to me and wouldn't have tempted me by all this. The very fact that You're proposing all this to me means that I have no *bhakti*; therefore, give me *bhakti*! I'm not going to ask anything else because I know that *bhakti* depends only on Your mercy, that I can get it only by Your mercy. Everything else is dust, everything else is worthless".

This was the dialogue that took place between Prahlad and Lord Krishna, Vishnu, who came to him on the shore of the ocean and I wanted this dialogue to remain with us so that we can think more carefully about what the level of our own devotion is. That's all, thank you very much.

Now I'll answer a few questions and also tonight I'll have time to answer questions. And tomorrow we'll start *anartha-nivritti*, less than a few days have passed.

Question: Is it a problem that I don't suffer from lack of association with my youngers and my equals and appreciate and need most association with my seniors?

Answer: Association with our seniors is a very important. But in associating with our seniors one's it's easy to behave in the right way and all our problems may not be revealed, a person himself may not see his problems, may not suspect what his problems are because he wants to look good in the eyes of his seniors and he feels great because he looks good in the eyes of his seniors; he plays some nice proper role in this association and he may not notice or not pay attention, may not understand that the problems still remain in his heart. Therefore, although there must be association with our seniors this association is not sufficient. One must feel the need to associate with his equal because it is in this association that he can truly understand what he's worth. This is a very important thing - to learn to cooperate. Therefore these were the last words of Srila Prabhupada, practically his last words before leaving this world, this was the most important thing that he wanted to tell us, "You'll be able to prove your love for me by the ability to cooperate with each other". And cooperating means to associate on an equal footing, it means doing something together, it means serving together. Not individually, not somewhere out there, establishing our own separate *sampradaya*, exactly to the degree to which we can collaborate with others. Because for it to be proper ... What's the advantage of associating with equals? It'll be proper and give me true joy only if I learn to see the good qualities in them, that is to look up to them. Because it's easy to look up to those who are my elders. It's hard for me to look up to my equals. And for our association to be correct, I have to learn to look up to those who are my equals.

To look up to them doesn't mean to do some strange things, to look up means that I must see their good strong qualities, I must assume that they have something to give me. Because it's easy to think that my seniors have something to give me, but it's a poison for my false ego to think that a person who has joined two weeks later than me can give me something; that I can get something from him, and that is what cooperation means. Cooperation means that I see the strengths of this person and try to interact with him on the basis of his strengths, that is, I realize that he's giving me something, not that I'm giving him. That's why it's so important, that's why it's such an essential element of our practice.

Question: If a person who has lost taste due to pride, is making efforts in devotional service, will the taste come back?

Answer: Surely, it will come back. It will certainly come back if one humbly cries for the taste to come back and if one hears – and, once again, the motive force of our spiritual progress is hearing, hearing of the *sastras*, when we hear the experience of great devotees that have passed along this way. This is described in the *sastras*, like, I've been telling you the story of Prahlada and other stories – taste will surely come back, because Krishna will give this taste. Everything comes to us by Krishna's mercy and if the first taste has been poisoned by material pride – having obtained the source of strength we have attributed this strength, this energy to ourselves, the taste that comes when a person is humble is much deeper and more reliable, it will remain with us.

Tomorrow we'll do another workshop to discuss or think about everything we've heard.

Question: Is it appropriate to ask the spiritual master about our own level of development. What is the probability of getting an answer?

Answer: The spiritual master's already explaining to you your own level by telling you everything that you've heard today (laughs). What more do you need, what other answer do you need? Who has recognized themselves in some of the descriptions made today? A person can very easily recognize himself in all these things, and he doesn't need to hear anything else, he himself should understand it.

The relationship with the spiritual master is a secret and we usually know very well what level we're at. However, we come to the spiritual master hoping to hear something else (laughs). We sometimes feel painful to realize the level we are at, because we want, in our dreams we want to rush off somewhere. Therefore, before asking the spiritual master such a question one must ask himself: why am I asking him such a question? Don't I know myself the answer to this question? Don't I want to hear him say something that would be pleasing to me?

Question: Please explain what the ratio should be between practical devotional service, reading Srila Prabhupada's books, listening to lectures and *japa*, what should be paid more attention to?

Answer: This is a question of the same series. It all depends on you, there is no general formula, no recipe. Like, I gave the formula of 60% associating with equals. 60% means that I must try and make sure that my association with equals outweighs all other association or, it's the association in such a format with the other devotees when we associate as equals, as people who work together, who really, truly do something together, this is the meaning of associating with equals. But this is a formula.

With regard to this, there is no universal formula that works in all cases, because it depends on what? On the person's level. A certain person can simply ... Like, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur Prabhupada, he had a disciple, Akincana Krishnadas Babaji, who was always chanting the holy name, many of you've surely heard of him. Bhakti Bringa Govinda Maharaja likes telling about him, he knew him well. He would constantly – morning, afternoon, evening, night, no one knew when he slept – he would always chant Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare and he would also laugh, his *japa* was a special one, you could hear in his words his laughter or joy. And one day his god-brothers complained to Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati about him, of his not doing anything, just chanting the holy name all day, all night, in the morning; all the rest are working hard washing and cleaning and he's just chanting. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati said, "If you find another person who can do this ..." He told them: "Put up an ad in the newspaper: If someone is willing to come and live in our *asram* and always chant the holy name, we'll provide him with free accommodation, free *prasadam*, everything free of charge, as long as he comes and does it". They put up the ad but no one responded! (laughter) But the god-brothers left Akincana Krishnadas Babaji alone and said, "Okay, well, let him do what he's doing."

But is this recipe applicable to us? No. Each person has to find his own formula, because we must have a harmonious understanding of the very method of devotional service. We must pay attention to the practical devotional service, we must make our specific contribution to the mission, without this our practical devotional service or our service will remain a theory. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur Prabhupada Himself used to say, "If you want to realize the truths of the *sastras*, you must sweep or wash the floor of the temple or cut vegetables and clean Krishna's worshipping paraphernalia; otherwise you'll never be able to understand, this will remain a theory, an empty logic". Therefore, we must do this. We must hear lectures every day, we must chant *japa* every day, we must take care of and perform our duties and take care of our family, relatives, friends, because if we don't take care of them and abandon them, this will ultimately be just consuming more of our energy. But each person, depending on his level, on the level of his faith, on his level of understanding, on his level of spiritual experience should himself determine this. And an important criterion for this is that everyone is happy – I myself am happy, the devotees around me are happy, even though they may not always be happy, but in general they are happy, the spiritual master is happy and Krishna is happy. This is a very important criterion that shouldn't be underestimated. Krishna from the heart, if He is happy, then we are also happy. And devotees too are usually happy when they see that one is sincerely doing all this.

And Chaitanya Mahaprabhu glorified His *grihastha* followers. When He saw that Sevananda Seva's wife was pregnant, He was in ecstasy, though He was a *sannyasi*, why should He be so happy? But He was delighted and started congratulating her, just because He saw that he was an honest man. That is, the criterion or the way to find the right formula is our sincerity. Not the desire to jump higher and prove to everyone what I am, but a sincere understanding that I want to serve, I want to grow and do what I can at the level at which I can do it now.

Question: A devotee has both good and bad qualities. How to adopt the good ones without coming into contact with the bad ones?

Answer: A very good question. To adopt the good without coming into contact with the bad you have to glorify the devotee for his good qualities. When we sincerely glorify such a devotee for his good qualities, then a bridge appears between us. Through this bridge his good qualities come to us, remaining with him, too (laughs).

How to adopt his bad qualities? In the same way. We must start blaming him and then a crystal bridge will also appear. Through this crystal bridge his bad qualities will be broadcast to us. Therefore, one should see, one should meditate, one should be sincere, one should very sincerely see these qualities, then they'll come to us, too. Krishna will give us these qualities. If we've recognized them Krishna from the heart will shower His mercy.

Question: How to find balance between study and activity?

Answer: I've already said how to find balance, each person must find the balance himself and all this should be there, but the combination may vary for each person. Just like Haridas Thakur chanted three *lakhs* of names but did Rupa Goswami chant three *lakhs* of names? No. What does this mean? Does this mean that Rupa Goswami was at a lower level than Haridas Thakur? Or does it mean that Rupa Goswami was at a higher level than Haridas Thakur? No, it doesn't. Rupa Goswami wrote poetry with tears in his eyes and Haridas Thakur chanted *mantra* with tears in his eyes. Both did what they could and both put all their hearts in it.

Question: Please tell us whether these six stages of the *bhajana-kriya* come in sequence, one after the other, or sometimes they are shifted and come in a different sequence. Or sometimes they come and then go away and then reappear?

Answer: All this is possible. A person may reach a certain level, or he may immediately experience various problems, he may go back to a certain level, all this may take place because, unfortunately, in devotional service, a person doesn't take the direct way, he takes meandering paths. Why? Because we have a convoluted mind and this convoluted mind makes go through meandering pathways. That is why we sometimes go in one direction, then we go down, do something else and anything may happen, but there is a criterion and that criterion is one: I must always feel humble and if in this humble state I render devotional service, I can always feel internal progress and Krishna's protection.

Ok, I think I must stop here because it's already lunch time, I wanted to do something else. In the evening we'll have some time for questions and maybe for some workshop.

Disk 101, tracks 18, Disciple's retreat in Magdalinovka, 25.05.2008, Seminar "Anartha-nivritti", lecture 4

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Let's read the verses from the "Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu":

adau sraddha tatah sadhu
sango 'tha bhajana-kriya
tato 'nartha-nivrittih syat
tato nistha rucis tatah

athasaktis tato bhavas
tatah premabhyudancati
sadhakanam ayam premnah
pradurbhave bhavet kramah

Today I'm starting, finally, the main topic of our seminar, "Anartha-nivritti", getting rid of all that's unwanted. But I still want to go back to what we said before, so that we can once again have the opportunity to reflect on everything that was said.

The first two days we discussed that there are two categories of faith: natural faith, faith that originates from the soul itself as a response to the sound of the scriptures, and faith imposed upon us from without. And a very important practical conclusion from all this reasoning is that when we preach to others, we should be very careful so that the faith that we give to people or trying to give them, is not imposed. Because if this faith is purely external, imposed upon them, arising not from their internal need, then this faith, sooner or later, even having encouraged them to take up the path of *bhakti*, will produce some unwanted consequences. So we should leave people their freedom. Freedom is the only necessary prerequisite for obtaining true spiritual experience. Without freedom all our attempts to to obtain spiritual experience on the path of spiritual practice will fail.

If we look, we'll see how Krishna carefully avoids Arjuna's attempts to impose something upon Him because from the very beginning Arjuna asked Him, "Krishna, tell me exactly. I'll do anything, I'll salute and will do whatever You tell me, *niscitam bruhi tan me* – tell me in clear terms, there's no need for all these definitions, I am a military man, we're not philosophers here, tell me and I'll do it". And Krishna began, "Both this is good and that's good. One can either act or be inactive, but it's better to act, although you can also be inactive. And if you take up *bhakti* it's easier, but you can also not take up the path of *bhakti*, you can meditate on the Impersonal Absolute – that's also Okay, that's another possibility". Arjuna tells Him, "Tell me clearly; tell me what to do and I'll do it!" Krishna says, "Think yourself". Krishna insists on this fact that a person must think himself, must decide himself, and at the end Krishna says, "I told you everything, you now think it over and do as you wish". True, at the very end Krishna says, "Well Okay, so be it, since I trust you, I'll tell you what you must do, *man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī māṁ namaskuru māṁ evaiśyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priyo 'si me ... sarva-dharmān parityajya māṁ ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja...*" Nevertheless, at the very beginning of the spiritual path a person should have a clear understanding that he is making this step on his own, that this faith is his faith, not something imposed upon him from without. And in regards with this, I was saying that it's very important that a person understands the logic – the logic of the scripture, the logic behind *bhakti*. Because, if we start from some other end and try to unravel *bhakti* from some other end, it's very likely that we won't come to the right conclusions. One must start at the beginning.

I'd like just in a few words, although again, this is not the topic of our discussion, but I wanted to share with you how Bhaktivinoda Thakur sums up this logic of the scriptures in order to give us a firm foothold inside: why should we practice *bhakti*? He gives six points or six arguments in favor of the fact that the highest purpose of the living being or the highest nature of the living being is devotional service to the Personality of Godhead. And these are, actually, very simple arguments at first glance, but it's good to know them. I'm not going to go in great details. He says, the first argument or the first consideration, the first step in our efforts to logically understand why we should practice *bhakti* is that what do we see around us? We see around us something highly ordered, something extremely beautiful, don't we? Look around – all that is created by God is beautiful by definition. Each instant – as Radhanath Maharaj was recently saying in a lecture how he was sitting on a boulder in the middle of the Ganges watching how every moment a picture of a genius was being created. Then it would disappear and a new one, no less brilliant would appear, and a new one ... And Bhaktivinoda Thakur says that we see intelligent design, beauty and order everywhere. And a more or less thinking person can see that this cannot appear by chance, that any accidental event, just an accidental event... Or, if you look at the orderliness of everything in nature, at the subtle structure, at the subtle mechanisms behind it all, any accidental event doesn't result in beauty, if just some explosion happens. Like, some people say that all of us are the result of the Big Bang, fragments. Something hideous by its very nature had happened without any rational principle behind it all, and everything that we see appeared as a result of it. And we sit and think, "Wow, what a nice explosion that was!" (laughter)

Further on he says that the next argument or the next conception is that the universe is active. We can see that everything here is active, everything is in motion, right? But behind any activity, he says, there's always intelligence. There is always a purpose, there is always something conscious behind this because activity, once again, ... Otherwise, ultimately we have only one choice: we either live in a meaningless, chaotic, irrational universe and, accordingly, we are meaningless, too, our life is meaningless, everything is meaningless; or, we live in a creation where everything is meaningful, where everything has its place and order. And the choice is yours: if you want you can live in the first world – nothing good will come out of it. He says that behind any activity there's a doer. Behind the functioning universe there's someone who does it.

And then he gives a very important, very simple argument. Because some people say that mind originates from matter, right? Does mind originate from matter? He gives a very simple argument, discouragingly simple: if mind could originate from matter this would've been happening all the time before our eyes. Why should this have happened only once? This has happened once by accident and as a result here we are ... If this is something normal, then it must be happening to us again and again.

Further on he gives an interesting argument. He says, look, whatever people we take, no matter where they live, be it on an island in the Arctic Ocean or at the South Pole, or wherever else, at the equator or somewhere else – they all have faith in God. And he says, mistakes are never the same, the same can be only the Truth. All human beings have naturally come to one and the same, all people have in one way or another, this idea of God. And he says, actually, if we take some people who have no idea of God whatsoever ... Usually people have at least some idea of God – even the Chinese, the Chinese have no word for "god", but still they have the Dao, they have the Law, they still have the idea about the intelligence behind all this. He says, mistakes are never the same. The same can be only the Truth or the attempt to discover that same truth. And he says that if people reject God, on the contrary, rejection of God is the result of conscious efforts. Like, people have been trying to deliberately impose atheism in the

Soviet Union for 70 or 80 years but no matter how hard they've been trying, that didn't work out. Because it's something unnatural, something that a person resists to. It is precisely the other way around, faith in God is natural. Who used to pray to God, when still being a child not knowing anything about God, please raise your hands? It comes out by itself from somewhere within.

And two more arguments that he gives are directly related to us in the sense that these are arguments of the series of what our life will be like if we reject God. He says that if a person doesn't believe in God, his goals will be very insignificant and the person won't be able to live a truly human life, his life is immediately degraded and the person becomes shallow. Have you noticed this? As soon as a person rejects God his goals or his world immediately becomes very narrow around him. And he says that as a result of this a person is left with nothing but one thing: fear of death. If he rejected God the only thing that still forces him to live on is fear of death and the fear of death will be making the person more and more insignificant – his goals, his objectives, everything around him will become very small and insignificant.

The final argument that he gives is that if a person doesn't have this natural faith in God based on logic and natural gratitude, then he'll have no desire to fulfill the will of God; therefore, he won't be able to live a truly moral life. Thus a person will never achieve perfection and will remain sinful, and, therefore, unhappy. This is another curious argument, he says that if I don't have faith in God, I'll have no incentive to fulfill the Supreme will and, therefore, I'll live by some low standards, and if I live by low standards, I'll never be able to achieve perfection. This argument is very important and essential for our understanding that without faith in God I'll never be able to achieve perfection, and consequently, my life will be dirty and sinful; and, since it will be sinful, I'll be unhappy. These are the six arguments given by Bhaktivinoda Thakur. I just wanted to share them with you.

But we need to hurry up, therefore I want to move on to our goal. Yesterday we said that as long as there is no complete confidence that *bhakti* is our goal ... Faith has appeared in us, faith that *bhakti* is a path; and *bhakti* is a path by which we'll be able to attain the ultimate goal. Who has this kind of faith? We have faith in the path and faith in the goal, the faith that love is the highest goal that a person must attain, complete unselfishness, complete, absolute self-sacrifice, which can make a person truly happy. But since this faith at the beginning is not very strong, it is still hesitant, a person hesitates, then, accordingly, what else will be happening to us? Besides this goal what else will there be? Other goals. We'll be distracted by some other things, other goals will be appearing. And, actually what we were discussing yesterday was the cause of one's instability in *bhakti* ... The reason for this instability is only one – that I don't have absolute faith in the fact that this is what I want in life and that time and time again I suddenly remember and think: maybe I need something else? Maybe I've missed something? Maybe I'll miss something, if I don't do something else as well? Therefore the last stage that we discussed yesterday is the ultimate test of our stability – it's the test by what? By fame, by money, by honor ... This is a very hazardous stage because a person is still not completely and absolutely confident that the only thing he needs is love, the only thing he needs is *bhakti*. Therefore, when other things appear he thinks, "Jaya! Haribol! The scriptures have not deceived me! You can achieve everything by following the path of *bhakti*!"

And the meaning of faith or the purpose of our studying the scriptures or listening to the scriptures, that helps us to overcome all obstacles, is to again and again inwardly very clearly understand the goal: this is my goal! Everything else is not so significant. And then, when I have this clear vision of the goal, I'll be ultimately able to attain this goal. Because if I don't see the

goal clearly, will I be able to attain it? No, I won't. The goal is blurred before my eyes and ultimately I'll be going somewhere else, who knows where.

And everything we said yesterday, especially at the end, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu compares to weeds, weeds that grow among bhakti, *because* when a person is engaged in *bhakti*, there are other desires appearing and weeds grow by themselves, weeds don't need watering, weeds themselves can stifle this tree of *bhakti*. The Bengali or Sanskrit word that is used in "Chaitanya-caritamrita" when describing these weeds is *upasakha*. *Sakha* means a branch, like in Visakha, and *upasakha* means small branches or some auxiliary twigs. And another meaning or another translation of the word *upasakha* is something that grows on the tree of *bhakti*, the parasites. Here in this part of the world we don't have many parasitic plants, although there are some like cuscuta. These are plants that have no roots and feed on the main plant. In India, especially in South India, we can see a tree growing and all of a sudden some other tree growing from it which has no root system of its own. And what do these *upasakhas* or these parasites do to the tree of *bhakti*? Yes, they deplete its strength and suck out its sap and they prevent the sprout of *bhakti* from bearing fruit. Since the sprout is growing but its strength is being sucked out ultimately it cannot bear fruit, it cannot bear the fruit which it's supposed bear, love of God. It turns weak, all the necessary vitality is sucked out of it and we can see various different phenomena of this kind when people go astray from the path of *bhakti*, or mistake something else in themselves for *bhakti*, some extraneous desires and think that "I have to gain followers, I have to do something else... this is a very dangerous thing. Therefore Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur says that one of the *anarthas* are those generated by the very practice of *bhakti*, something undesirable.

Well, now we're going to actually describe the stage of *anartha-nivritti*. Of course, I'll be able to just touch on the important points but I'd like to say a few words about what *anartha-nivritti* means.

Yesterday I said that when a person begins to practice *bhajana-kriya*, at the beginning he feels what? Enthusiasm, a surge of energy, he has no problems. At the beginning no one has any problems, right? It's just our relatives that have problems (laughter), we have no problems, we want to get everyone back to the right path, but we personally have no problems. But then the problems start and the problems are supposed to start and I'd like to now mainly explain the mechanism of appearance of these problems, why problems must inevitably start. *Bhajana-kriya* is a process of purification, we begin to purify our hearts and very often in the process of purification it seems that we are getting purified but after a while we see there some things that weren't there before. Has anyone noticed this happening to him? Because a person was used to thinking that "Generally, I'm good" but then he started getting purified and all of a sudden, after five years of purification, he sees that he's turned into a complete monster. Where does it all come from? Was this monster there before or not? It was; just in the course of our life we accumulate this dirt and we don't see this dirt; we get used to it, it's there. And if we suddenly have to do spring cleaning ... Has anyone ever done spring cleaning? There is so much dirt! There's no end to it! When you start cleaning, when you start sweeping the dust, dust appears out of nowhere though it would seem it wasn't there before! Therefore, all these painful, unpleasant phenomena of the *bhajana-kriya* period are actually a healthy process. Gradually Krishna reveals to us, one by one, the monsters that live within us and whose existence we weren't even suspecting before. And along with this – of course, this is a very painful process, because at the beginning, when we started our devotional service, we were enthusiastic, joyful, ecstatic, and we thought that "I already know everything, that actually I know everything and that I'm very advanced. Right? When *anartha-nivritti* comes, a person realizes that he knows nothing and that he's not advanced at all and that actually he hardly has any merit.

Moreover, the most painful fact is that he's faced with these snakes that live at the bottom of our consciousness. There is a very important principle to remember, especially when studying "Srimad-Bhagavatam": *atha brahmin ye tatha pinda* – that the *brahmānda* or the macrocosm is structured in the same pattern and by the same plan as the microcosm. And when "Srimad-Bhagavatam" describes the structure of the universe with its 14 planetary systems, it's also a description of the structure of our consciousness. In the Puranas it's explained that the seven higher planetary systems correspond to what in our body? To the seven *cakras*. The seven higher planetary systems are the seven *cakras* that control our mind, because these are seven centers all along the body that actually direct the conscious activities of a man and the entire consciousness is controlled by these centers and there are lower centers among those higher planetary systems that control our bestial activity; there's an intermediate level and there are higher levels. And there are seven lower planetary systems Patala, Sutala, Talala, Atala, Rasatala ... All of these *talas* and the seven lower planetary systems are the seven levels of the subconsciousness. And it's said that sunlight doesn't reach down to the seven lower planetary systems and that there's no light. This means that the light of consciousness doesn't penetrate there, into those layers of the subconsciousness. And who lives there? Who lights it all up? Snakes, snakes live there. What are those snakes doing there? They're hissing and on their heads they have these stones that light up everything. In other words, there are many snakes in our subconscious mind. The light of our consciousness doesn't reached there, but the snakes of lust, absolutely horrible, live there, there's a lot of things there, a lot of nice things live in our subconscious mind. Some people are enjoying there, on those planets inhabited by those snakes. They are called *bilasvargas* – planets where a person can enjoy all this and a person does sometimes enjoy all these snaky qualities of his. Occasionally we see or hear the evil hiss of these serpents: hissss. Has anyone heard how this malice comes up from his subconsciousness? Generally, we are all good, right? But sometimes ... wow! Malice, envy, some hidden unrealized desires, driven down inside – all this sometimes comes up. And when we purify our heart, these things, these snakes sometimes creep up onto the surface. In this sense, problems are inevitable in the course of our purification. Problems cannot be absolutely avoided, and if I have no problems, what does that mean? Yes, it can only mean two things: either you are a *nitya-siddha* who's descended from the spiritual world and in this case you have no problems – this happens in about 50% of the cases (laughter), or it means that you don't practice *bhajana-kriya*. *Bhajana-kriya* is a process of purification and the process of purification means that we'll be faced with the problems we have.

And here comes the big problem, because when we come face to face with these problems it becomes very painful, right? Because we're used to thinking that we have no problems. Before we started the process of devotional service we thought that all the others have great problems and I have one or two small ones. Right? This is approximately our standard starting point. Generally, I'm a good fellow, I have no particular problems. It so happened that those around me have great problems, but I have no great problems. There are some small ones. But generally I'm a nice guy or a nice girl or a nice someone else. And all this is also a natural result of my being engaged in self-suggestion for a long time. What is our mind saying to us? There are auto-suggestion formulas like: your arm is warm, your arm is warm ... If you repeat that for a long time your arm will become warm. In the same way we too have standard formulas of auto-suggestion. What are they? You're the best. Even before we became pure devotees, we were the best. It's later that we became pure devotees. Before we became pure devotees, we were already the best and, actually, that's the only reason we became pure devotees, it's was the natural result of all this (laughs).

And we have these two formulas by which we live. Yesterday I spoke a little about it, that I am the best and everyone else is at least worse. And people love to talk about this. Actually, people have only two topics of conversation, it's about what a nice guy I am and what bad guys everyone else are, right? This is the topmost topic of all our conversations. When people get together they start talking about this – either the one or the other. I already explained yesterday that, in essence, all this is of a spiritual nature, this quality, because the soul feels its impeccability in the same way as it feels its eternity, its latent hidden nature, which is now crushed beneath the load of *anarthas* and it persistently cannot understand why this nature doesn't reveal itself and it's trying to solve this problem by self-hypnosis, by means of some self-suggestion. And it suggests this to itself and why do people so often talk about being good? Because they want to suggest that to the others, too. Right? Because myself being convinced of being the best is not enough, all the others also need to be. Fortunately for people Krishna's thought of family life. In family life we won't be allowed to retain these illusions. But a very important point that we need to understand is how *bhajana-kriya* brings out the *anarthas*. What is *bhajana-kriya* or how these *anarthas* or snakes come up, what the actual mechanism of this is and why it is exactly the devotional service that starts cleansing the heart so speedily? Ordinary activities or ordinary life doesn't lead to such a massive cleansing. To deal with these obstructions or problems in a nice way we must clearly understand the mechanism behind it all. What is *bhajana-kriya*? Service, correct. Actually, *bhajana-kriya* is the act of service. When I serve the *guru*, the *Vaishnavas* and Krishna, of course. I'm trying to serve. And what is service by definition? Who can give a definition of service, we are all engaged in service. What is service? (Repeats the answers of the audience) Selfless and uninterrupted ... I can go back and forth in a very unselfish manner and continuously do this without any self-interest – will that be service? That's right, finally: service is when I act or do something for the satisfaction of Krishna, the *Vaishnavas* and the *guru*. When by my actions, attitude and words I want to please the *guru*, the *Vaishnavas* and Krishna. And it is precisely at this point that real service begins. And here the real problem starts because people are not used to serve, we don't understand what it means to serve. We know very well how to act for our own sake, for the sake of our own pleasure. But what does it mean to act for the pleasure of someone else? This means that I must somehow adjust my mentality, I must try to change my mentality so that what I'm doing is pleasing not to myself but to him. And it's exactly because of this, it is exactly where the problems start.

I am faced with this very often. Someone comes and says, "Give me a service". I say, "Well, you can do this". "No, I'm not going to do this". "Well, maybe this?" "No, never, no way!" I think, well, maybe something else, "Then may be this?" "This is impossible, I cannot do this!" I say, "Well, then I don't know what to give you". And here a scandal begins: "I'm not given a service! I wasn't given service, I was offended!" Because people have the idea that service is what? Yes, something that I'll be proud of. Service is my way to be proud in the devotees society, therefore they say, "Give me a service!" And then take offense if the service is not what they want it to be. Or another thing I often hear is, "I've been deprived of my service!" And usually it's those who've been denied the service of a temple president or a regional secretary who say that. No one has ever said that "I was deprived of the service of washing pots". It's such a strange paradox but no one ever has complained about that. People think that service ... They transfer their own ideas ... In essence, it's the same activities we were engaged in in the material world, for which we received awards or things like that. And in the material world my activities is something I like, something that brings me something, that allows me to be proud of. And we think, "I've joined the devotees society – give me a service". Now the same thing is just called in another way: service. In essence it is the same thing and I start banging on the table and saying, "Give me some service, give me some service!"

In order to truly serve, one must be humble. I apologize for such a trivial truth, but I think we should carefully think over it. In order to truly serve, so that service is service I need a minimum amount of humility when I'm not doing this not because I want to, but because someone else wants me to, because it pleases someone else, not me. And because we are not used to this we have no understanding of this, therefore it's so difficult for us to truly serve. And then there comes this natural resentment. As long as a person does what he wants, as long as he's engaged in what he wants, it's very easy to remain nice and all these snakes are not going to come up. When I do not what I want and but what I was told to do, this is where the problem begins. That's where this entire lower nature starts emerging from within. And before that we were considered one of the humble and the good, but when we're asked to do this I start to resent, I start to quarrel, I start to envy, I start to think, "Why is he engaged in this service and I am engaged in this one? This service is higher and this service is lower!" Can a person be deprived of service? No he can't. Service is a state of heart. Service means when I want to do something that is pleasing. Can my serving someone cause troubles? No, it can't, it can't by definition, because service is what I do in order to please someone. Unfortunately, we can't serve and we don't know how to serve and when we're faced with this what happens to us? When we're told to do something and we don't want to do it what do we start doing? We start criticizing. There is such a star in the Vedic firmament called *kritika*. By the way, the month of *kartik* is its derivative. It's the most terrible star. Those born under this star are a very difficult type or people. I don't know whether the word criticism is derived from it, but anyway this word is there in Sanskrit. These are extremely quarrelsome and complex personalities who don't like and are unable to serve.

What happens in the process of *bhajana-kriya* is that we try to reset our program, the program of enjoyment in the material world to the spirit of service, to a completely different, radical revolution that must take place in our heart. Therefore in *varnasrama* people were first of all trained to serve thus ensuring that if at some point a person takes up the path of *bhakti* it would be easy and natural for him to serve on the path of *bhakti*. Whereas we've been brought up in a society where service is not valued, where service is despised, where service is something to be ashamed of. That is why it's so difficult for us and that's why the path of *bhakti* is so difficult for us. In Vedic society a wife was supposed to serve whom? Her husband. Children were supposed to serve whom? Their parents. Disciples were supposed to serve whom? Their master. Householders were supposed to serve whom? The *sannyasis* or the guests who come. In Vedic society it's a universal principle, it's the backbone on which everything else rests. People are told that the most important thing a person can do, the most important thing a person can do, the most proper thing a person can do is to serve and to serve means: I don't think of myself. When people do that, they begin to feel good, they become happy because serving is the nature of the soul in any case, this is the *dharma* of the soul. But we were never trained to do this and we find a thousand, a million excuses why we shouldn't serve. Do children serve their parents in today's society? No, they don't serve their parents, they don't care a fig about them! Does a wife serve her husband? No, she doesn't. The husband also doesn't serve anyone, no one serves the guests. Do the students at school serve their teachers? They put frogs or pins on their seats. These are the relationships that permeate everything from beginning to end, from top to bottom. Service as such doesn't exist. But in Vedic society a person was trained to do this and when he took up the path of devotional service, his progress was fast. And our progress is so slow exactly at this stage of *bhajana-kriya*... Bhaktivinoda says: how long should *bhajana-kriya* or *anartha-nivritti* take? A couple of days. Two, three or four days, several days. And they're immediately followed by *nistha*, *ruci*, *asakti*. And how long does this process takes us? Well, yes, Aditi very optimistically says that it may take two or three lives (laughs). But that's because of one simple reason – because we don't know what this means, we don't feel, we don't understand and all the time resist it. The farther, the more. This Western

culture completely deprives people of the spirit or understanding of what it means to serve others.

Several times I've told the story of Vibhu Caitanya Prabhu, Srila Prabhupada's disciple, who joined the devotees when he was well past 50. He died last year, he left this world. He came to Srila Prabhupada, he was an elderly Bengali man who has brought up his children, he heard about Srila Prabhupada, he listened to Srila Prabhupada, came to him in the Krishna-Balaram Mandir and he completely surrendered to him and for him there were no long excruciating painful stages of *anartha-nivritti*. The only thing he did – he came and went straight to the kitchen and in the kitchen he cooked all the offerings for the Deities from the beginning to the end and when Srila Prabhupada heard him sing while preparing those offerings, he said that he doesn't even have to chant *mantra*. Because his other Western disciples would say, „He doesn't chant *mantra*, he doesn't chant *mantra*! This Bengali is in *maya*!” Srila Prabhupada just heard him sing and said “He doesn't have to chant any *mantra*, he's already serving Krishna”. Those of you who were lucky enough to be in the Krishna-Balaram Mandir a few years ago, when he wasn't able to cook in the kitchen anymore, his service consisted in distributing the *caranamrita*. It's an extremely simple thing, I'm sure many of you would approach and see this silent man who would give you a few drops of *caranamrita* with such a love that gave you the shivers. And when I looked into his eyes, his eyes were shining like two diamonds. And he used to do this simple service, he used to sit there the whole day without doing anything special, without doing any feats, without making any big statements, without doing anything. Every day he would just give a few drops to everyone who came. People would leave him with a changed heart, because he would do his small service in a way that no one else was able to do it. And the most amazing thing about him was – and I didn't know about it – that when he came Srila Prabhupada told him ... After coming for a while he came in and asked, “Gurudeva, what shall I do? What can I do?” Srila Prabhupada told him, “Stay here, don't go anywhere, you'll find everything here in the Krishna-Balaram Mandir”. He lived there for more than thirty years and he's never left the boundaries of the Krishna-Malar Mandir. Once when he got sick he was forcibly taken away to the hospital, that was the only time he left it. His spiritual master told him that and he said, “Okay, well, why should I go somewhere else?” He didn't even know the way to Keshi Ghat, not to mention Loi Bazaar. One may ask, “Why live in Vrindavan if he didn't go Loi Bazaar?” (laughs) Srila Prabhupada told him a simple thing. Would any of you be able to achieve such a perfection? There was no *anartha-nivritti* for him, no *vyudha-vikalpa* or *visaya-sangara* – he went straight away to *nistha*. And this is the advantage of the proper culture. If we are talking about the proper culture, the culture of *varnashrama* which Srila Prabhupada oftentimes spoke about, its advantage consists precisely in the fact that when people are brought up in the proper culture, *bhakti* becomes a very simple and natural way of life. A person is not torn apart, a person can very easily take to *bhakti* and find happiness in *bhakti* and reach a very high level. Because when he was leaving all the inhabitants of the Krishna-Balarama Mandir, everyone was saying, “He's a real saint! A true real saint!” And this is what we should remember.

Now we can see why it's so difficult for us to get purified of our *anarthas*. Is it now clear what we should do so that our *anarthas* go away as soon as possible? Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says that it's very easy to be purified of our *anarthas*. We must chant the holy name every day in a humble state of mind, thinking ourselves to be lower than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, expecting no respect to ourselves – that's it! Every day I chant *mantra* in this state, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Well, actually, we could have ended here, but since we have a few more minutes before we start the initiation ceremony, I'll say a little more.

What is *anarthas*? The *anarthas* of which we must get purified, what is that? Someone gave the right answer – these are our habits. The habits and qualities that we've formed or acquired during our existence in the material world, needed to facilitate our existence in the material world. That's why it's so difficult to get rid of them. Does a person need lust in the material world? What am I without lust? Who will need me if I have no lust? No one will need me if I have no lust! Who will love me if I have no lust?! Anger – is it useful in the material world? Can you survive in the material world without anger? Anger is a force that can overcome any obstacles. I have to achieve something, don't I? Do we need envy in the material world? You can't live in the material world without envy! How can you live? It's not interesting to live in the material world without envy! Anger, illusion ... Pride – is pride a nice thing? Is it useful? All this is a highly useful stuff, it's an important and useful stuff! Because here they are considered to be *artha*, these are our values in the material world. Anger is a value, illusion, pride, envy, greed ... Greed – isn't it a value? How can one exist here without greed? But when we take up the path of *bhakti* and the path of *bhakti* means that we turn to 180 degrees, we make a complete turn-around, we try to live in a different way, to build our lives in accordance with different values, because we want to attain a different state of consciousness. A state of consciousness that is spirit, in which Krishna will talk to us and in that state of consciousness the values are different. What is our value? - Love, humility, patience, kindness. In the material world these are values, undoubtedly, people appreciate these things, but at the same time they hold dear the *anarthas* and since we hold dear the *anarthas*, when we must part with them, what do we do? We shout: "I'm not going to give them up!" Because we think that this is *artha*, that this is something we need, that we won't do without it, we don't want. What we must understand first of all when we come to *anartha-nivritti* is that what we don't want to part with our *anarthas*, there's no way, I need them! That even in the devotees society I won't do without them, because how can that be? These are our protective mechanisms. The *anarthas* are something we have acquired, it's a useful stuff for us to live here in the material world and to realize our program of enjoying in the material world. But if we want to realize a different program, a higher program, we have to get rid of them. And it is exactly because these *anarthas* have appeared as a result of my existence in the material world Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur classifies them on the basis of what? On the basis of their origin, on the basis of where they have appeared from, on the basis of their root. On the basis of how easy it will be to pull these *anarthas* out. We have deep roots, we hold on to all this, we don't want to part with this. And a very important principle of classification, which he gives, is how easily we can get rid of them. He says there are four kinds of *anarthas* in accordance with their origin, their source:

1. First *anarthas* are those that appear as a result of sinful activities;
2. Other *anarthas* appear as a result of pious activities;
3. There are *anarthas* that appear as a result of practicing *bhakti*,
4. And there are *anarthas* that appear as a result of *aparadhas*.

And which are the most deeply rooted *anarthas* in our hearts? The *aparadhas*, yes. The first two types of *anarthas* are very deeply rooted but not that deep. And here we should properly consider the following: why are *aparadhas* most difficult to get rid of?

Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur explains that there are five degrees of eradication of the *anarthas*. He says that first the *anarthas* are partially eradicated, one, two, three of them. Then they are eradicated massively – that's the second stage. At the third stage they're almost completely eradicated. At the fourth stage they're completely eradicated and at the fifth stage they're absolutely eradicated. He gives these five stages of eradication and he explains that the *anarthas* that appear as a result of *aparadhas*, at the level of *bhajana-kriya*, when we begin to serve, they're eradicated partially. At the level of *nistha* they're massively eradicated, that is

about 75% of them are gone, 25% are left. At the level of *bhava* when a person's reached the preliminary stage of love, they're almost completely eradicated. At the level of *prema* they're completely eradicated. They're absolutely eradicated only when a person goes back to the spiritual world. The deepest root, the most profound thing is when a person commits an offense in his practice of chanting the holy name or in his spiritual practice – and besides the chanting there's also *sravanam*, *kirtanam*, *visnoh smaranam* and so on – the consequences can be most sad, because the opportunity for a person to commit an *aparadha* remains even at the level of *bhava*. Rupa Goswami says that even when a person has reached the level of *bhava*, that is he's already serving Krishna and he has love, even here the tendency to commit *aparadhas* still remains.

And Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur gives the example of Dvididha Gorilla. Who's Dvididha Gorilla? Yes, she was in Lord Ramachandra's army, she served Lord Ramachandra, she carried those huge boulders on her back, she threw them and she built the bridge and she was very happy doing it, and then she thought, "I'm the greatest of all devotees ... I'm the best gorilla of Lord Ramachandra!" And she was envious of Lakshmana, she thought, "What is he doing? I'm doing it all! I'm doing service and he's who knows who!" As a result, she turned into what? Into a demoness. Because as soon as a person commits – and we must clearly understand this process, we must be very well aware of what happens when a person commits an *aparadha*. *Aparadha* – why are its roots so deep – because it's committed at a very profound level. When a person commits a sin – and Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur explains that the *anarthas* that appear as a result of committing sins at the level of *nistha* are destroyed how? Completely. And at the level of *ruci* they're destroyed absolutely, no trace of them remains – there's already a taste and there's no trace of the past sins, there's no taste to the past sins. Once a person reaches *nistha* all sinful consequences are virtually destroyed, there's no *karma*. At the level of *nistha* a person has no *karma*, in principle, there are no previous *samskaras*, there are no problems, there are just none. What is the difference between the one and the other? Why is one destroyed so slowly and with such an effort and why are its consequences much deeper, though, it would seem, the *anarthas* that have appeared as a result of committed sins in the past are lingering with me not from a single lifetime, I've brought them from my previous life. Why? What is the difference between the one and the other? Because when I commit a sin What is sin? Sin is when I'm trying to enjoy through the body, through the mind, when I completely identify with the body and mind, right? Sin is when I live and I have my own ideas about what I am: I'm the body, I'm the mind and I act at this level; my entire activity takes place at this level. My identification is only at the level of the body and the level of the mind. And in order to give some pleasure to my body, my mind, in order to somehow excite myself and fall into some state, I eat meat, I take drugs, I drink, I smoke, and all this doesn't affect me as such, this doesn't affect the deepest layers of my existence, because I still don't identify, I don't consider myself an eternal soul. *Aparadha* is committed in another state of mind; *aparadha* is when I've already realized that I'm a soul. I've deeply realized, I've found that eternal spark which is connected with God, which aspires to God, and, being at this level of consciousness, I start doing something completely opposite to *bhakti*. I do something that displeases who? The *guru*, the *Vaishnavas* and Krishna or the Holy Dhama. I do something that causes their displeasure and is the exact opposite of *bhakti*. And if I sin already being a *Vaishnava*, already knowing that I'm a soul, that I'm immortal, then it's an *aparadha*. This doesn't mean that now ... because the mind will immediately begin to calculate: "Ah, it's clear, we can now commit sins, the main thing is not to commit *aparadhas*". No, that's it! You have no hope anymore, because all the bad things that you commit will be an *aparadha*. That's it! And it will generate deep consequences and that's the problem. This is the problem of any spiritual practice, because that's how the spiritual practice begins, and a person needs to get up, he needs to make this first step, it's absolutely necessary to make this first step, it's absolutely necessary to

understand that I'm actually a soul. Because, without understanding this we won't be able to make any other steps. But we must also understand that if I've made this step it puts me on a very high level of commitment and I must behave in a completely different way, because all the bad things I do now is of a much more perverse nature. When I do that now at our level, do it consciously, already knowing that I'm a soul, giving vent to my envy, allowing my lower nature and everything else to be revealed, I am actually deliberately going against the spiritual truths. *Bhakti* means that I've accepted the spiritual truth, I've let the spiritual truth into my heart, and an *aparadha* means that I'm trying to kick it out of there. *Bhakti* is very powerful, it has a very potent and enormous power like that of the sun. The sun can burn down all the dirt, right? The Sun can purify anything. But what is *aparadhas*? Yes, the *aparadhas* are the clouds that shade us from the sun, that cover our consciousness, rendering it very dull and dark. And in this dark consciousness we don't let in, we don't allow the power of *bhakti* to penetrate our hearts, we don't allow the holy name to penetrate deep inside, we don't allow *bhakti* to influence us and therefore we don't get the results that are described in the scriptures.

Therefore, a person who has taken up the path of *bhakti*, the main thing he must do is to try in a conscious and a most thorough way to avoid offences, offences to the *guru*, the *Vaisnava* and Krishna. He must – and I tried to speak about this in our several classes – that we must try to see in others the soul that is aspiring to Krishna. If I act, if I have realized that I'm a soul, what prevents me from doing this? What prevents me from doing this ultimately? Nothing. Actually nothing but the habit or some perverse understanding that even here I must enjoy in one way or another some worn out and unjustified means. All this already hasn't justified itself, we're disappointed in the material life and this hasn't given us true happiness. Have offences given us any happiness? Can a person be happy with them? No, he can't. And still we continue doing this here. And this creates very deep problems in a person's heart.

I've told the story of holy Tukaram, about the way a holy man takes the offences or the insults addressed to him. And if we don't have a taste for chanting the holy name, if we don't have a taste for practicing *bhakti*, what is the answer? The only correct answer for having no taste is what? Yes, because of offenses; because for one reason or another we commit offences. And the most common offense, the worst offense, as "Padma-purana" says, the gravest offense of all, the most striking offense of all is what? Yes, that's *sadhu-ninda* when we offend a *Vaishnava*. And who is a *sadhu*? People think that a *sadhu* is someone who does everything perfectly, who does everything right and impeccably. All the others can be offended. If I find at least one such *sadhu*, for sure I won't offend him, I'll run away from him so as not to offend him. Who is a *sadhu*? Yes, a person who serves Krishna, a person who wants to serve Krishna and a person who's purposefully going to Krishna, a person who has no other desires. If I offend such a person even if he acts in a certain way, even if I tell the truth ... Sometimes people say, "Well I'm telling the truth!" Right? We tell the truth, we are truthful guys, right? We simply point out the truth! The shortcomings, yes, out of habit. The *acaryas* say, in particular Sridhar Swami says that *aparadha* is *dosa-kirtanam*. *Dosa* means what? A shortcoming, and *kirtan*? Yes, when I praise a devotee at every corner for his shortcomings, when I discredit him. *Dosa-kirtanam* means when I try to see these shortcomings. And I must clearly understand why I see these shortcomings. Yes, because I look through the prism of my own shortcomings. Because my vision is set in such a way that I will see these shortcomings, I must ... Bilvamagala Thakur pulled out his eyes and I must repent when I see shortcomings.

In one of his purports to the Fourth Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur describes four stages of *sadhu*, holiness, and four stages of *asadhu*, four stages of sinfulness. He says that the lowest level of a *sadhu*, the main quality of a *sadhu*, the essential quality of a *sadhu* is that he is *adosa-darsi*, he doesn't see shortcomings. And Visvanatha

Chakravarti Thakur says that this quality is manifested in four degrees, and the opposite is also manifested in four degrees. He says that the first degree of manifestation is when I see a defect but I interpret it as a good quality. For example, someone is chastising me and is being rude to me. How will a *sadhu* take that? He'll say this is for my own sake. Yes, maybe he chastises me in a rude way but basically that's good because I'll benefit from it. Respectively, how will an *asadhu* take it? He sees a good quality and interprets it as a bad one. For example – I'll give you Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur's examples – Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur says that there are people who're doing charity work, they distribute food, something like that and an *asadhu* sees it and what does he say? "Aaaa, rascals, they're doing that only for their own profit! Aaa, how clever they are! Aaaa, all they want to do is rob them, get something out of these people!" This is an *asadhu*.

The next stage of a *sadhu* is when a *sadhu* doesn't see bad qualities in principle. He just doesn't see any bad qualities and that's it. There is a bad quality but he doesn't see it. And Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur gives an example, he says that a *sadhu* looks at the traders and what are the traders like? Traders are very hospitable, have you noticed? Especially in Vrindavan, they say, "Come in, dear!" They're very polite and they treat you, they praise you ... and what kind of quality is that? Its' a good quality, right? (laughs) Well, it's clear that they behave like that not because they're so good, not because they're so kind, but because they want you to buy something from them. But a *sadhu* sees this and thinks, "What a nice man! All the nice people have gathered at the Loi Bazaar! What a kind man, what a hospitable man!" A *sadhu* actually doesn't see this, he cannot see this motif in the other person. And, accordingly, how does an *asadhu* act? He cannot see any good quality, he cannot, in principle! And Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur gives the example of a *sannyasi*. He says that people see a *sannyasi* and they can't see any good qualities in him. The only thing they see: "The way they guzzle! (laughter) They are just served and served!" They see nothing else but this. They don't see in principle.

He says there is a third stage of manifestation of holiness and a third stage, respectively, of the opposite quality. This is when a person doesn't see any bad qualities in another person and when he sees some some good quality, a tiny little good quality, in his eyes this quality becomes such a virtue, just an incredible virtue. And he gives an interesting example. He says that we see an example from real life, that there was a *sadhu* and this *sadhu* was sitting in Vrindavan wrapped in a blanket. At that point a robber with a sword runs up to him, takes away his blanket, grabs it, gives him a solid blow and runs off. And this *sadhu* thinks, "What a good man, what a good man! He must've been freezing, he must've been suffering, he robbed me of that blanket and now he's warmed up. And he could've killed me but didn't do that! What a kind man – sword in hands but didn't killed me! How lucky I am to come across such a kind man!" This is the third stage of saintliness. And, respectively, he gives an example of the opposite quality, also a very interesting one, and also an example of a *sannyasi*. He says, respectively, when a person doesn't see any good qualities and sees a tiny bad quality and inflates it in his eyes. And he says, if a bad person sees a *sannyasi* and this *sannyasi* stays at the house of some householder overnight and the bad person sees that and says, "What kind of a *sannyasi* is that? They're supposed to sleep in the woods! Why is he sleeping who knows where?" That is, he doesn't see the good qualities but he sees a tiny bad quality and thinks, "This one is staying overnight". And he's thinking, "For sure he's doing this in order to steal something at night from that householder, to steal some spoon". And he's thinking, "One must keep a close eye on this *sannyasi*".

Recently I was in the town of Gorky, in Nizhny Novgorod, I stayed there in an apartment and was just listening to this lecture, and when I was leaving, I saw that some of my disciples has

put a spoon from that place, I found this spoon in my luggage and I thought, “Wow, Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur was right! (laughter)

And there is also a fourth degree: a fourth degree of manifestation of saintliness and a fourth degree of manifestation of our perverted nature. It is when a person doesn't see in principle anything wrong at all, doesn't see anywhere. And, on the contrary, a person of a very perverted nature how does he look at the whole world? Yes, he doesn't see anything good at all. He looks at the devotees' society and doesn't see anything good! Have you seen such people? They don't see anything good at all! “There's nothing good in this devotional service, there's nothing good in ISKCON, in these devotees!” Have you ever heard such statements that all the devotees are rascals? All of them. When people are saying such things, listen to yourself sometimes. When people say that “all devotees are rascals or all devotees are this and that”. What does that mean? What does that mean in the first place? This demonstrates the quality of my vision, the prism through which I see the world and therefore Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur warns us against this. He says that the offense of a *Vaishnava* is the most dangerous offence, because an offense of a *Vaishnava* can pull out the roots of our *bhakti*. It's more dangerous than offending Krishna, because when we offend Krishna *bhakti* will be just a little obscured. It will be obscured by this offense and the material desires, the material tendencies in my heart will grow stronger; when we offend a *Vaishnava bhakti* can be completely destroyed, totally, irrevocably. And that is the problem.

That is why the consequences of offenses are so sad and therefore our only behavior in a *Vaishnava* society should be what? Yes, in a state of humility and with tears in my eyes I must ask forgiveness from anyone I've somehow offended. Sometimes people say that only a *sadhu* can be offended ... No, any person whom I've offended. It might be that sometimes I offend the most insignificant *Vaishnava*, and Krishna won't like this because Krishna judges in a different way. Krishna judges the *Vaishnavas* on the basis of their degree of sincerity. From our point of view he might be very insignificant, he takes no special position, he's just a nobody. But Krishna understands and sees his sincerity better than we do. For us, he's God knows who, some *bhakta*, and we think, “We can abuse this *bhakta* like anything, exploit him like anything, do anything to him!” And he's not a *bhakta*, he's a *sadhu* and Krishna thinks, “What an amazing person!” Therefore it's so important to always keep this in mind and not to offend any of the *Vaishnavas* in any way. We must always ask for forgiveness, we must praise the other *Vaishnavas*, we must give presents to the other *Vaishnavas*, we must reveal our heart to the *Vaishnavas* and then our society will become very nice. But all this is based, once again, on one principle, on the principle that I want to serve. If I have this one sincere desire, I will naturally behave in this way.

Actually my lecture is gradually turning into a lecture on the offenses against the holy name, and I'm not going to enumerate any other offenses of the holy name because this is the main offense against the holy name. The essence of *anartha-nivritti* is that a person must work on the eradication of precisely this quality from his heart. If a person solves this single problem – no need to solve ten of them, with ten we'll get confused, we'll forget them ...leave alone those ten – if we don't offend the *Vaishnavas* who somehow or other have dedicated themselves to serving Krishna, who're somehow or other trying to serve Krishna, trying to serve other *Vaishnavas*, trying to serve the spiritual master, if we remember well this one thing and constantly work inwardly on our attitude to everything that we do, if we always think that I'm more humble than a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree and that it's in this state that I can really feel the taste of Krishna's service, an amazing inner taste, an abyss of inner taste that will be revealed to me by Krishna's mercy, when I start rendering devotional service in this way.

If I understand this my *anartha-nivritti* will end up very quickly. Very quickly, and there will be no problems.

But if, out of habit and out of my desire to be proud, out of my desire to somehow enjoy here, I offend the other *Vaishnavas* and don't see their amazing qualities, then this stage will extend over many long and painful years and our lower nature will be constantly, as I explained at the very beginning, pulling us down. The soul will be aspiring to somewhere but our *bhakti* won't be strong enough. As I explained, too, in one of the lectures, that the very method of *bhakti* is powerful in itself, it's like a fire. The method of *bhakti* doesn't need any rituals, doesn't need anything, the holy name is potent by itself. The only thing that can prevent *bhakti* is what? *Aparadhas*. The only thing that can prevent fire is what? If we set fire to wood it will light up but only if the wood is dry. If the wood isn't dry, if the wood is wet, it won't catch fire. And if this inclination, this habit of committing offences remains in our heart and first of all offenses against the holy name and of all the offenses against the holy name first of all offenses of *Vaishnavas*, then our heart will remain wet and no matter how hard we try to set it on fire, striking matches ... 16 rounds of striking, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, it won't catch fire. We'll strike again and again but our heart will be wet and there will be no effect, *bhakti* will not grow because the *anarthas* will oppose this growth, they will stifle this growth. Whereas in principle, everything is very easy: we should simply love the devotees, we should simply be grateful – these are simple things. *Bhakti* starts with very simple things: with gratitude, with the ability to see the good things in people, with the ability to praise the others, with the ability to serve together, to depend on the others, to pray for the others – everything is very simple.

And now we have a small but very important workshop. We break into twos, threes, fours, as you wish and start praising each other. We should find good qualities never mind how difficult that might be; no one should be left without this. Just non-stop. And not only each other, some other people we know – without end!

Workshop...

From your happy faces I saw that you liked this exercise (cries of "Haribol" and applause).

In fact, the meaning of this description is that *bhakti* is very simple, that *bhakti* is a very simple and natural method. It is based on very simple and natural things: on gratefulness, on softness of the heart, on openness, on not taking offense – all these are very simple things and in not making up, in not ascribing to the others motifs that they don't have but trying to see their strong sides. And our life can turn into a spiritual world, everything around us will be spiritualized if we learn to live by these principles. So, everything's very simple, we just have to follow these principles: always, everywhere, consistently, without fearing and realizing that this is the truth. I was explaining in one of the lectures that *sraddha* means the ability to hold onto the truth, these are eternal truths and they work anywhere, anytime, in any circumstances. These are the eternal truths by which our soul is created: serving, loving each other, giving – these're timeless truths and our lives should aspire towards them, we must strive for them and all this will be very easy and joyful, if we follow these principles.

We should now probably go to the next stage. I'll now answer several important questions. I was asked that all those who are now getting ready for receiving initiation, come closer to the fire, all the more that it's cold, you can warm up (laughs). I'll answer some important questions that I have here although they are all interesting and important. Let's hear.

A very good question: When a person is especially conscious of his *anarthas*, he wants to completely shut himself off from the others and stop associating with them out of fear that they will see them. How to overcome this desire?

Answer: Actually, it's a very good question. When we see some of our defects, we want to escape, go away, shut off, because we start fearing that others will judge us in a wrong way. But actually, if we go away and shut off, we'll be left with this *anartha*. If, on the contrary, we come with this and tell someone about it, ask for advice some person whom we trust, if we somehow admit this to him, that I have this, and that it hurts me, then this *anartha* will go away. This is the simplest, the easiest and the most natural way – you have to expose it, to tell about it, to not be afraid to admit it, laugh at it, look at it from outside and when we do this we immediately feel better. Who's had this kind of experience that you talked about some *anartha* and you felt better, it disappeared and stopped influencing, torturing you, stopped having power over us? It could still remain in some form, but it didn't have the strength because we ourselves are nourishing these *anarthas* when we hold on to them, when we're trying to conceal them, when we kind of cherish them within whereas we just need to take them out and speak about them. This is also a very important point.

Another question, I was caught in an inconsistency: Maharaj, in the first lecture you said that one can practice *bhakti* without having faith and can attain the spiritual world, but it's impossible to attain *prema*. At the same time, the "Gita" says (Bg, 9.3):

asraddadhanah purusha
dharmasyasya parantapa
aprapya mam nivartante
mrityu-samsara-vartmani

"Those who are not faithful in this devotional service cannot attain Me, O conqueror of enemies. Therefore they return to the path of birth and death in this material world."

Answer: Was I wrong or not? (Response from the audience: No) Thank you. (laughs) No, actually there is no contradiction. Krishna pronounces this verse at the very beginning of the ninth chapter, where he speaks of *bhakti*, of *bhakti-yoga*. And normally, for a person to be able to achieve something on the path of *bhakti*, the qualification for *bhakti* is *sraddha* or faith. And the standard way of attaining the spiritual world is through *sraddha*. But there are exceptions, and these exceptions are also described in the Puranas: about the mouse that had no *sraddha* whatsoever; nevertheless it gnawed at the wick and the wick started to burn brightly and Krishna thought, "Wow, the mouse offered Me a lamp!" And in its next life this mouse was born as a queen and that queen used to offer Krishna a lamp all her life, that taste and memory remained with her, she returned to the spiritual world. But that's okay, one may think that in that queen's life there was some faith, but there were other cases where a kite was sitting on the peak of the temple, on the dome and a hunter shot at it and the kite fell off; the dog jumped up, grabbed it and carried that half-dead hike or bird around the altar and Krishna thought, "Okay, *bhakti* is powerful and if someone shows Me respect – and respect can be shown there – therefore the bird has gone to the spiritual world.

This is all an evidence that ... Krishna speaks about the normal way. The normal way applies to us, because in one way or another we're all more or less guilty of *aparadhas* and in order to overcome our *aparadhas* we need *sraddha*. Since we have *aparadhas* – and Jiva Goswami explains that all this applies to the innocent creatures who have no *aparadhas* – for them *bhakti*

immediately manifests its power, it's like setting fire to dry grass – it immediately starts burning. But since our heart is contaminated by skepticism and misunderstandings and offensive attitude towards the manifestations of spiritual energy here, we need *śraddha* and *śraddha* will be the driving force that will carry us through this difficult and painful stage. Because if there's no *śraddha*, no faith, as soon as a person is faced with the first difficulties he'll go away. To be able to overcome these painful, problematic things that we have to face, we need a very strong faith. And where does strong faith come from? From the *śāstras*, from understanding of the *śāstras* and from hearing. Strong faith arises when I hear about the scripture every day, when I listen to this *kātha*, understanding that that's necessary, understanding that to be the goal. This will give me faith that will allow me to overcome this. Have I wriggled out? (laughs)

Question: By what criteria can we determine the beginning of *anartha-nivṛtti*?

Answer: By what criteria can we determine the beginning of *anartha-nivṛtti*?

trinad api sunicena
taror api suhishnuna
amanina manadena
kirtaniyah sada-harih

Anartha-nivṛtti is when the holy name is constantly vibrating in a person's heart. And there aren't any heavy psychological aspects associated with its practice. *Anartha-nivṛtti* means that he has a clear understanding and a clear faith, clear, precise vision of the goal and this means that he's overcome the major part of *anarthas*.

Question: In today's lecture it was said that it's very important to cooperate (it wasn't today) with the other devotees, not to create a *sampradaya* of one's own. But what to do if the *sampradaya* is already there, with senior devotees unable to cooperate with each other and younger devotees forced to jump from one of the *sampradayas* into the other for fear of *Vaiṣṇava aparādhas* and for fear of being left without leadership, taking sides?

Answer: Even if you're in a situation like that where there're certain groups and each person thinks that only he behaves in the right way, you still should somehow try to take a neutral position, taking the *devotees'* leadership but without becoming sectarian. And it's an art. However, basically, if a person is a bit intelligent, he'll be able to understand how to act. Yes, I can accept the patronage of some senior *Vaiṣṇava*, who, it might be, doesn't cooperate with the other senior *Vaiṣṇavas* – at the same time I can maintain relationships with the other senior *Vaiṣṇavas*, serving them without being a member of that small sect.

I have warned you several times during our retreat against this danger. In particular, this danger is there when people are grouped around one guru trying to form a sect or a group within a group. We all serve one mission; we all serve the spiritual principles and the spiritual teachings left by Srila Prabhupada and our main task is to give this teaching to the others as purely as possible. And there is no, absolutely no reason why we could not do it, at the same time not forming groups or such a mentality. Because every group is mainly formed – especially within a certain movement – on the principles of pride. Therefore the very basis or foundation of such cliques is always false: "My guru is the best! My mentor is the best! Only we know what to do! Our type of service is the best! We'll show them all!" In the formation of such a group there's always this desire and intention to prove something to everyone else. And to prove to whom? Mainly to the *Vaiṣṇavas*. What do we want to prove? That we are right. And not so much to prove that we're right but to prove to them that they're wrong, right? That they're doing

something wrong. Therefore, if I don't have this desire, I'll get ... There's even a nice Russian saying: a tender calf sucks from two cows. If this is possible, if a calf can do this, why can't a devotee do it? If the calf's smart enough to suck from two cows, why can't the younger devotee maintain good relationship with the senior devotees, even if they are, for whatever reason, unable to come to terms. He can, if he's got the right attitude.

Question: In preaching sound is the most important thing; but what about behavior? If a person speaks but he's got bad qualities?

Answer: There are two aspects of this issue. First, we must still consider him *a sadhu* and I have already talked about this. But at the same time – and Srila Jiva Goswami speaks about this in his “Bhakti-sandarbha” and Srila Prabhupada many times talked about this in his lectures and everywhere else – the preacher must show a perfect example of behavior. *Sadhus* may be different. There are *sadhus* who behave very badly, this could be. As Krishna says, there are *sadhus* who commit all possible sins. He is *a sadhu*, if he's set to following in a determined way. But far not every *sadhu* can be a preacher. If I want to be a preacher, I must understand that I must behave perfectly, because preaching implies that people will look at me and judge by me. And if I want to preach – and this is a very powerful method of spiritual development – I must set very strict requirements to myself and to my *acar*, my behavior. Therefore, you cannot preach without behaving properly.

Question: In his recent lectures Radhanath Swami he's saying that proper chanting of the holy name will surely lead to the desire to serve the devotees. That is the fruit of the holy name. But what if there's a desire to serve the devotees, but there's no taste for the holy name – is it a paradox?

Answer: This is a fact. Srila Radhanath Maharaj quoted Srila Prabhupada in the purport to one of the verses of “Caitanya-caritamrita”, where Srila Prabhupada explains a very important criterion: if we chant properly then we'll certainly feel the desire to do something. We'll certainly have the enthusiasm to do something, and not necessarily something great, it can be something simple, but we will want to do something. Like, yesterday I was talking to a devotee and he was telling me that “I had long been teaching *bhakti*, but now I want to do something, I just want to do something tangible. To me that is *bhakti* and I feel how important this is, to just go and do something without any ... just go and wash something or clean”.

And if you have such a desire, it means that you're properly chanting the holy name, it means that you're chanting nicely, but it might be that the taste is not there yet. Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur explains that sometimes a person has already reached a certain level, but he doesn't get all the results, and he compares this to a tree: before bearing fruit, the tree will take some time. And a person might be already chanting the holy name already purely enough, but he might not yet feel all the fruits of this, the fruit of *bhava* or *prema*, but at some point this will come if he goes on doing so. This is one point.

Another possible point – and it's you who should decide to what extent which of these answers is the right one. The second answer is that if there is a desire to serve the devotees, but there's no taste for the holy name then maybe that desire is material. And I talked about this today, too, when people call something a service that essentially does not constitute a service. We like the society of devotees, we like receiving certain benefits of this so to speak service, and we have a taste, but actually this is based on our pride and it's this pride that is the motive, the driving force for my service. And the person who asked this question and all the rest must answer it themselves, which of the possible answers is the right one: either it's service to the *Vaisnavas*

and then it's unclear why there's no taste for the holy name, or it's a true serving to the *Vaisnavas* and that means that the taste for the holy name will certainly come, if not tomorrow, the day after tomorrow for sure, because the correct frame of mind cannot but result in that.

Question: Four types of people come to Krishna: those who are suffering, seeking wealth, and so on. Does a devotee necessarily, in the process of attaining the Absolute, go through all these four types, or is the reason for which he's joined sufficient?

Answer: No. Krishna is not speaking about us. Krishna is speaking about the *sakama-bhaktas* who've come here, driven not by *sraddha* in *bhakti* but by the desire to satisfy some needs. We've come here driven by pure motivation. From the very beginning – and I was trying to explain it – despite of the fact that our heart may not be pure and free from desires, nevertheless, Srila Rupa Goswami says that this is the level of pure devotional service, even at the level of *sraddha*. Why is it pure devotional service? Because my goal is pure; because somehow or someone – be it the *sastras* or some charismatic preacher has given me the opportunity to feel and understand that I need love, I need *bhakti* and that's all. Therefore it's pure, I have this faith. I came here not because ... Yes, then some things appear ... Then I suddenly remember and think, "Well, I need money as well, things like that", but that's another point, that's something different. But a person doesn't necessarily go through any of these stages at all. It's a completely different way: a person comes here because he wants to find love and among the four types of righteous people Krishna doesn't list such a person, He's forgotten about us because our path is a special one. He's talking about other people.

I think it's not possible to delay everything anymore and I'll just answer the last question. There are still many unanswered.

Question: What do the *mantras* that you say before the lecture mean?

Answer: What does *ajanu-lambita-bhujau* mean? *Ajanu* means a knee, *lambita* means reaching the knees. *Bhujau* – hands, yes. *Ajanu-lambita-bhujau kanakavadatau* – and all this is in the plural. This is the *mantra* or the verse that "Caitanya-bhagavata" begins with, glorifying Chaitanya and Nityananda. *Ajanu-lambita-bhujau* – Their hands reach to the knees; what does *kanaka* mean? – gold. Their skin is like molten gold, they're emanating a bright effulgence. *Ajanu-lambita-bhujau kanakavadatau... sankirtanaika-pitarau* - They are who? - Yes, they are fathers. *Pita* means "daddy" – they've founded the movement of *sankirtana*. *Sankirtanaika-pitarau kamalayataksau* - *kamalaya* means lotus, *aksau* – eyes: Their eyes are as huge as lotuses. *Visvambharau dvija-varau yuga-dharma-palau*: They support this world, they maintain this world, the world exists thanks to Them, thanks to Them the world has hope. *Dvija-varau* – and They are the best, *dvija-varau* – of the *brahmanas*, They are the best of all people who've taken up the spiritual path and go along the spiritual path. *Yuga-dharma-palau* – They protect the *yuga-dharma*, they give the path to those who have gone blind in the dark age of Kali. *Vande jagat priya-karau karunavatarau* – therefore I pay my respectfully obeisances to these embodiments of the Lord's mercy, *karuna-avatara*, who are dear to everyone in this world. This is the meaning of prayer. Thank you very much.