

# Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”, lecture 1

September, 10, 2011  
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**Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”.**  
**“Bhakti-sangama” festival**  
**Yevpatoriya, 2011**

## **Annotation:**

“Brihad-bhagavatamrita” and its origins. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu chose Sanatana Gosvami because the latter was devoted to the *sastra*. It’s only *sastriya shraddha* that can give us God. The *sastra* possesses the same features as God. “Brihad- bhagavatamrita” is a commentary on the “Srimad Bhagavatam” because he is, like pure *bhakti* (*gopi-bhava*), is very hard to understand. One of the reasons is our established views and conceptions of what *bhakti* is. “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” explains the essence of true *bhakti* and what it’s not. For that Sanatana Gosvami uses the method of glorification of devotees, who are in different levels of *bhakti*. In response, they speak about their motives and views of *bhakti* as well as about what they are striving for, thus giving themselves away.

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Hare Krishna. I’m very happy to see you all in this wonderful *pandal*. I feel greatly honoured and a little nervous, because it’s not that easy to speak before such an exalted audience.

My seminar is called “Meeting Lord Shiva”, and it’ll be based on “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” by Srila Sanatana Gosvami. Today I’m going to explain why I chose this topic and what it has to do with our practice, or, to be more exact, with our attempts to practise devotional service.

Certainly, this topic is very extensive, so I won’t be able to cover it all in three lectures, therefore, I decided to resort to a dishonest method: I’ll start this seminar here and finish it at the Russian festival. In this way, those wishing to go there may get another incentive.

Well, let me begin the introduction. Today we’re going to have an introductory lecture to explain some basic notions. “Brihad-bhagavatamrita”, which has recently been published in English with Gopiparanadhana Prabhu’s commentaries based on the author’s commentary by Sanatana Gosvami, is the first book in our *sampradaya* to systematically expound on Lord Caitanya’s teachings. Lord Caitanya’s teachings are truly unique even against the background of other amazing schools of the Vedic philosophy. The Gosvamis of Vrindavana presented His teachings on a systematic basis according to what they had themselves heard from Lord Caitanya’s mouth. “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” is the first book written in our *sampradaya*, and it holds a special place, because in it Srila Sanatana Gosvami provides a key to understanding the “Srimad Bhagavatam”. The title of the book itself, “Brihad-bhagavatamrita”, means “the great nectar of Bhagavatam.” *Brihad* means “great” and *bhagavatamrita* means “the nectar of the “Srimad Bhagavatam.”

It explains the very essence, or in what way one can understand and perceive a very complicated writing, the “Srimad Bhagavatam”, the fundamental text of our *sampradaya*, the fundamental book all our *sampradaya* is guided by. It’s no accident that Srila Sanatana Gosvami wrote this book, for it had been his favourite book since his childhood years. Our favourites were “The Three Musketeers” or, maybe, “Three Little Pigs” (laughter), or “The Speckled Hen” and other exalted transcendental scriptures. But Sanatana Gosvami had studied the “Srimad Bhagavatam” since his very childhood, since his boyhood, and there’s a story of how it happened.

Once, Srila Sanatana Gosvami dreamt about someone knocking at his door. He stepped out and a man appeared before him, radiant, and this man was pressing a book to his bosom. Without saying a word, silently, with an enigmatic smile on his lips, this man held out this book to Sanatana Gosvami. When the latter took this book with his hands trembling he realized that it was the “Srimad Bhagavatam”. He thus realized that that was a sign, but the most striking thing happened when he woke up. Some time later there was a knock on the door. Approaching the door, he saw that same man, *a brahmana*, standing on the threshold with an enigmatic smile on his lips and pressing a thick book to his bosom. Without saying a single word this *brahmana* held out this book, the “Srimad Bhagavatam Maha Purana”. This is how Srila Sanatana Gosvami got his mission or his life’s work.

Sanatana Gosvami was called Santosha, his younger brother’s name was Amara, and the youngest of the several children that his father had was called Vallabha. Santosha became Sanatana and Amara came to be known as Rupa Gosvami, and they devoted all of their lives to reveal to people the hidden meaning of the “Srimad Bhagavatam”.

“Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta” explains what Sanatana Gosvami did when he had made up his mind to retire. After meeting Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in Ramakeli he felt completely indifferent towards performing his mundane responsibilities as the chief minister in the government of Hussein Shah. Under the pretext of being sick, he locked himself inside his home. His assistants and secretaries - and he had the whole staff of secretaries and assistants - were overjoyed. Srila Ptabhupada writes that those assistants... Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī says that they were *lobhi kayastha*, greedy for *ayastha*, greedy for power, so, they started to perform his responsibilities for him. It’s commonly said that power is an addictive drug, and if it’s possible, although not without effort, to get rid of drug addiction - and it’s very difficult to get rid of addiction to hard drugs - there’s still one type of addiction, which can’t be got rid of, and it’s power. We know that people addicted to power cling onto it until the final moments of their life. But although Sanatana Gosvami possessed a great power, one day he left everything at the mercy of his secretaries and assistants, retreated to his home and what did he start doing? Studying the “Srimad Bhagavatam”.

“Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta” says that he had summoned twenty or thirty *panditas* together with twenty or thirty *brahmanas*, experts on the Vedic scriptures, and they began to get absorbed in the nectar of the “Srimad Bhagavatam”. Because, actually, the “Srimad Bhagavatam” is a very complicated book. It’s written in a mysterious language, the language of *samadhi*, *samadhi-bhasya*. This is a trance language of Srila Vyasadeva and, accordingly, he needed help of twenty or thirty *panditas* to explain the hidden meaning of the “Srimad Bhagavatam” from different angles. As a matter of fact, from then on he never stopped doing this, studying the “Srimad Bhagavatam”.

It’s no accident that it was Sanatana Gosvami whom Caitanya Mahaprabhu chose. Sanatana Gosvami became one of Caitanya Mahaprabhu’s chosen ones for one simple reason. And this is a very important thing I’d like to tell you today - Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu chose Sanatana Gosvami because he was devoted to the *sastra*. Actually, we should be well-aware that our path must be based on the *sastra*, *adau-shraddha*. Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura explains that *adau shraddha* is the *shraddha*, or faith, that develops at the beginning of the path. A spiritual path begins with *shraddha*, faith, and this faith, which is at the beginning of the path must be the faith in the scriptures, *shastriya-shraddha*.

Someone may say, “I believe”, everybody believes in something; the faith itself doesn’t make sense. If faith isn’t based on the *sastra*, that’s not a big achievement. When Rupa Gosvami says *adau shraddha*, a path begins with faith, he means faith in the scriptures. When one has faith in the scriptures and a firm foundation of faith in the scriptures... Faith in the scriptures doesn’t mean that, “I believe: here, I have a scripture on my shelf and I believe in it.” Faith in the scriptures means that I’m well-aware of the logic of the *sastra*, I understand the meaning of the *sastra* and I see the whole picture contained in the *sastra*. If such faith is at the beginning, it will very naturally bring us to *sadhu-sanga*, *bhajana kriya*, *anartha-nivritti*, *nistha*, *ruci*, *asakti*, *bhava*, and *prema*.

When this faith, whose seeds are planted within our heart by the spiritual master, is developing, it is certain to bear the fruit of love of God. If the seed is sound it’s sure to bear sound fruits. Very often do we see people in our society having chanted the mantra for a long time: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. Caitanya Mahaprabhu compared *sravanam* and *kirtaman* to watering the seed of faith, but, suddenly, this watering results in such a fruit that makes your hair stand on end. Why? Because the seed being watered was the wrong one. The right seed gives the right result. The wrong seed doesn’t give the right result. It’s the law of genetics. It’s only watering the right seed that bears the right fruit, therefore, we often see that the wrong faith turns into *asat-sanga* instead of *sat-sanga*. Instead if *bhajana-kriya* it turns into *bhojana-kriya*. *Bhojana-kriya* means practicing sense enjoyment. Instead of *anartha-nivritti* – into *anartha-pravritti*, when *anarthas* start multiplying within our heart. That’s why it’s very important to understand that we should have the right faith, or faith in the *sastra*, and that’s, actually, what forms the basis of our practice.

'*sraddha*'-sabde -- *visvasa kahe sudridha niscaya krishne bhakti kaile sarva-karma krita haya*  
(CC Madhya, 22.62)

*Sraddha* consists in the faith that if I practice *krishna-bhakti*, I will achieve all perfections. The *sastra*, or the Vedas, can, eventually, give us insight into things, which can’t be understood in any other way. Why are the Vedas so important? Because it’s only the Vedas that can explain to us what is the soul, who is God and what are their relationships. There are no other scriptures to be found explaining all these truths so completely and definitely. When one rejects the *sastra* he is sure to become an atheist. The Indian culture defines atheism as rejecting the Vedas, *nastika*. The one who has no faith in the Vedas becomes an atheist. Why? Because, sooner or later, due to inability to understand all these truths, due to inability to understand the nature of God, the soul and relationship between the soul and God, he’ll become an atheist, he’ll have to reject the very existence of God. And the other way round, if one believes in the Vedas he’ll sooner or later understand these truths. Even if initially his faith wasn’t exactly focused on it, if he believes in the *sastra* or the Vedas for the purpose of fulfilling his material desires, such faith is better than believing in any other things.

In other words, faith in the *sastra* is very important up to the point that even if God Himself rejects the *sastra* what do we do with such God? (The audience: “Reject Him.”) We don’t reject God, but we do reject His teachings. Lord Buddha is an example. What is Lord Buddha? God, right? Do we accept Him? We do. But in words. Why? Because He rejects the *sastra*, so everything He teaches is, ultimately, atheism. Because understanding God is bound to be very superficial, very rough if I don’t believe in or understand the *sastra*. One has to be well aware of it and realize it.

Srila Jiva Gosvami explains in “*Tattva-sandarbha*” that God is characterized by three things that make Him impossible to conceive by any other methods except through *sastra* revelations. He says that the first characteristic of God is *sarva-atita*, which means that He is beyond everything, he’s transcendental. In other words, he cannot be conceived by any material instruments because

he's beyond any material instruments. A second characteristic is *sarva-asraya*. Simultaneously, being beyond everything God contains everything. He is *sarva-asraya*. He is the shelter of everything. As He says Himself in the "Bhagavad-gita": "I am beyond everything and yet everything is in Me." Therefore, naturally, the whole cannot be conceived by any limited methods because any method will be limited, it's within God Himself.

Further Srila Jiva Gosvami says *sarva-acintya-ascarya*, God is most illogical, most amazing, so, He can't be conceived by any empirical methods or speculation. He goes on to say that the Vedas completely measure up to these characteristics of God. What does he imply? That the Vedas have the same three characteristics, which make them a suitable instrument to conceive God. He says that the Vedas are *anadi-siddha*, that is, they aren't of material origin. In other words, they are of the same origin as God. The Vedas and God are equally significant; they are on the same level. If God is beyond everything, then the origin of the Vedas is also beyond all things that exist, they are *anadi-siddha*.

Secondly, he says and the Vedas explain everything that there's here. Just like God is beyond everything and contains everything, the Vedas, although being beyond everything, their source beyond this creation, explain everything. The Vedas contain medicine, astrology, yoga, architecture, music, prescriptions of how to go to the toilet – the Vedas have everything. The Vedas are beyond everything and, nonetheless, they explain how to go to the toilet properly. That means that the Vedas can, virtually, provide anyone on any level with what he needs and take him beyond this world.

Further Srila Jiva Gosvami explains: *sarva-laukikalaukika-jnana* 24:10 – knowledge both mundane and transcendental is contained in these Vedas. He goes on to say that *aprakrita-vacana-laksano* – that the point... Why can the Vedas reveal God to us Who is *sarva-acintya-ascarya*, absolutely illogical? Because *aprakrita-vacana-laksano*, because the Vedas use transcendental sound. The Vedas are characterized by the sound, spiritual in itself, being able to reveal transcendental knowledge from within. It doesn't use logic. Transcendental sound doesn't affect us by means of logic because God can't be conceived by means of logic. But by means of these sounds the knowledge reveals itself in our hearts. Thus Jiva Gosvami proves that the Vedas is the only way to conceive God. Actually, it's only the Vedas that can provide us with true and genuine knowledge. Krishna speaks about it in the "Bhagavad-gita" (16.24): *tasmāc chāstram pramānam te* – the *sastra* is *pramana*, or something that gives *prama*. *Prama* means genuine knowledge. There's *brahma* and there's *prama*. (In fact, I'm now trying to figure out what else I wanted to say).

And now some more words relating to the Vedas, the importance of our lives being based on the *sastra*.

*yaḥ śāstra-vidhim utsṛjya  
vartate kāma-kārataḥ  
na sa siddhim avāpnoti  
na sukhaṁ na parām gatim  
(BG 16.23)*

Krishna says in the "Bhagavad-gita" that if one rejects the Vedas his life won't be successful, he won't succeed in anything - *na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na parām gatim*.

In fact, what do the Vedas give in terms of our life? The Vedas are a very interesting thing. The Vedas make one disciplined. When one begins to follow the Vedic regulations his life becomes civilized, they teach one discipline and instill faith in the scriptures, in the long run. Of course, the Vedas promise lots of things, they promise what can excite one. Sometimes indirect

preachers are criticized in our society. We have indirect preachers who begin to explain this or that, one thing and another and don't speak about *bhakti*. Is it good or bad? Shall we vote? Most of the Vedas don't speak about *bhakti* although all the Vedas only want to speak about *bhakti*. Most of the Vedas just refer to indirect preaching because the Vedas... Like sometimes I address some audience and I have to say something that the audience will respond to. I should be able to stir the audience's minds. But I'll only be able to stir their minds if I say something they're interested in.

I sometimes try to address a completely strange audience, and it's absolutely clear: talking about *bhakti* isn't going to excite them at all, and their faces will betray that at once because they will drift off immediately (shows). Their minds don't respond to what you're talking about because at a particular stage of human development *bahkti*, or love of God, doesn't seem to be something truly needful or urgent in their lives. Therefore, the Vedas speak about what is important for a human being. Is health important? Yes. Everybody is bound to like to hear about health, especially those over 25 or 30. The Vedas speak about what is important. Is future important? Is the year 2012 important? 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2012. The Vedas are going to tell you everything about December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012. Is marital happiness important? If you need to attract a big audience the topic should be "A man – woman relationship". Moreover, if you add an arrow-pierced heart, your success is ensured. Therefore the Vedas speak about all these things and, on the whole, there's nothing wrong with it because they spark people's interest to urge them to move farther. If one goes farther he'll realize what the Vedas actually mean to say.

Yesterday I was told a story about one woman, who's most likely to be sitting here, in this hall. I was told that she had first read "The Science of Self-Realization", she had been given "The Science of Self-Realization". So, she got to be opposed to it, saying, "There's nothing..." Or, to be more exact, she hadn't even finished the book. Having read a hundred pages, she shut the book thinking, "Nothing good." Later on she heard the lectures by Oleg Torsunov (laughter) and his lectures... you don't have to laugh... many a human being began their way back to Godhead with his lectures (shouting "Haribol" and applause). I'm sure it isn't a story of only the woman I've told you about, this is a story of many. But the most striking thing was that later she got back to "The Science of Self-Realization" because she got to be aware of some connection. She had read the book and said, "What a fool I was! Everything is correct here! Here's just everything I needed to hear!"

But, again, the point is that one cannot understand some fundamentals things straight away. Therefore, the Vedas begin from afar. But, eventually, the Vedas must bring us to what they mean. And the most amazing thing is that even Krishna in the "Bhagavad-gita" doesn't announce at once that:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya  
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja  
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo  
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*  
(BG, 18.66)

Did you notice that? At first Krishna beats about the bush. He's speaking that way not to scare Arjuna off for him, God forbid, not to flee somewhere too soon, and Krishna starts to explain it to him this way and every way, saying, "Well, basically, all is good. This is good and that is good. Impersonalism? Very good (laughter), that's OK, nothing bad about it. Personalism is better but impersonalism will do." And Arjuna is thinking, "I say! What a broad concept!" (laughter)

In other words, why does it happen so? Because Krishna is looking at Arjuna and sees: Arjuna is not ready. He sees that Arjuna isn't ready to hear some things. That's why He is beginning to gradually introduce Arjuna to something very important, very important to Arjuna, after all.

Actually, where was I? Rupa and Sanatana highly believed in the *sastra*, believed in the *sastra*'s smallest detail. Therefore, as a result, Sanatana Gosvami wrote "Hari bhakti vilasa", where he explains every detail of how our life should be organized. Actually, *bhakti* life is highly orderly and organized. We should try to remember everything.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu was trying him. When He was in Jagannatha Puri he invited him to Tota Yameshavari, and Sanatana Gosvami took a bypass across the beach causing him to get blisters on his heels. He asked, "Why did you go that way?" And Sanatana Gosvami answered, "Because I couldn't contaminate the Temple of Lord Jagannatha." The principles of the Vedas are, first of all, the principles of purity, the principles of purity of our lives, our bodies, which, eventually, result in purity of mind, and one should have a clear and good understanding of the importance of all these things.

In Sanatana Gosvami's life itself there was another interesting episode, again, very important for our initial understanding of what we'll be talking about. For us the principal *sastra* is the "Srimad-Bhagavatam", and "Caitanya Caritamrita" speaks about Sanatana Gosvami's hearing 61 explanations of the *atmarama sloka* from Lord Caitanya. In response to his request, Lord Caitanya sat down and began to explain one *sloka*. In this one *sloka* He gave 61 explanations adding that it was just the very beginning. We're reading the "Srimad-Bhagavatam" being unable to catch even one meaning that Srila Prabhupada translated for us. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took a single *sloka*, which is *atmaramash ca munayo*, and started to explain it, and 61 explanations just so freely and easily passed his lips. When Sanatana Gosvami heard it, he fell to his knees before Him and began to speak, "You are Lord Himself! *Sakshat vrajendra-nandana!* You are Lord Himself and You are giving this multitude of explanations of the "Srimad-Bhagavatam." Caitanya Mahaprabhu's response to these glorifications was quite interesting. When he began to say, "You are Lord Himself! You are *sakshat vrajendra-nandana* Himself! You Yourself are giving explanations of the "Srimad-Bhagavatam", Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, "Enough! Stop it! Instead of glorifying me you'd better sit down and study the "Srimad-Bhagavatam." Why? He says: *krsna-tulya bhagavata -- vibhu, sarvasraya* 24.318. Because Bhagavatam is on the same level as Krishna and he is *sarvasraya*, he includes everything and he is *vibhu*. *Vibhu* means the supreme. Bhagavatam is practically on the same level with God Himself and he is an ideal shelter of all that exists.

Actually, the whole purpose of the "Srimad-Bhagavatam" is revealed here because the "Srimad-Bhagavatam" is a most sophisticated book. The "Srimad-Bhagavatam" explains what pure *bhakti* is and how one can tell pure *bhakti* from impure *bhakti*.

Another very important point I'd like to touch upon today is that it's very hard for us to understand pure *bhakti* for one simple reason. Similarly, it's hard for us to understand the purpose of the "Srimad-Bhagavatam" for one simple reason: because in our heads we already have ready-made concepts. Who has ready-made concepts in his head? Three persons. Everyone has ready-made concepts in his head, and they're the lens through which we see the whole world including the scriptures. Listen very carefully since it's a very important point. This or that way, we've all come to accept *bhakti* but we all have our own idea of what *bhakti* is. Everyone of us keeps saying, "*Bhakti, bhakti, bhakti ... bhakti-sangama.*" Right? But as many as there are people in this hall as many there are ideas of what *bhakti* is. Every man understands it in his own way. Prahlada Maharaja says, "Since everyone has his own concept he tries to apply to something, no one understands Krishna." Krishna can only be understood if I get rid of my own

concepts and try to see Him and this entire world through the concept of Krishna Himself, which is Krishna consciousness (SB 7.5.30):

*matir na kṛṣṇe parataḥ svato vā  
mitho 'bhipadyeta gr̥ha-vratānām  
adānta-gobhir viśatām tamisraṁ  
punaḥ punaś carvita-carvaṇānām*

Prahlada Maharaja says that *matir na kṛṣṇe*, however hard one tries to think about Krishna - *matir na kṛṣṇe* – his intelligence doesn't think about Krishna. *Parataḥ svato vā* – by their own efforts or when speaking with others as clever as he is. If he just sits and starts discussing. Like now we live in the century of democracy, that's why everybody is equal and there's need for discussions. People sit down and discuss *bhakti*. Prahlada Maharaja says, "It won't work! *Matir na kṛṣṇe* - you won't be able, you won't learn to think about Krishna. *Mitho 'bhipadyeta gr̥ha-vratānām* – and your senses will continue to be addicted to sense gratification. *Adānta-gobhir* – you cannot control your senses and they'll, finally, draw you in hellish conditions.

Can anyone confirm that, try as he might, by only his own efforts he can't think about Krishna? Jai! Haribol! Prahlada Maharaja is right, after all. But, once again, the point is that it's really hard to understand pure *bhakti*, and the only way to understand pure *bhakti* is to have unshakeable faith in one's spiritual master. Unshakeable faith in one's spiritual master is the only way to rid of one's own concepts or views.

Actually, no one has this unshakeable faith in the beginning. Sometimes people say, "How is that? Do I have faith or not? Do I have to take initiation if I don't have complete faith?" I want to encourage you: do not expect to have complete faith – Arjuna didn't have it. What does Arjuna say in the beginning? *Śiṣyas te 'haṁ śādhi māṁ tvām prapannam*, "I am Your disciple and soul surrendered unto You, but I will not fight, Govinda!" (laughter). What does that mean? Does that really mean that he's a surrendered soul? That means that he doesn't have faith and that, actually, the process of our understanding the scriptures is simultaneously the process of our faith in the scriptures and in the spiritual master being strengthened, which will result in our false concepts being gradually replaced.

This process isn't that speedy. Krishna had to explain the whole "Bhagavad-gita" to Arjuna. At the very beginning of the "Bhagavad-gita" Arjuna says, "I am Your disciple, a soul surrendered unto You, I will not fight, do to me whatever You like, tell me whatever You want." Krishna does speak. Krishna is dancing around Arjuna, around his concepts. In the end, He told him everything and said, "In general, I told you everything, just think thoroughly and do whatever you like." It means that even at the end of the "Bhagavad-gita" Arjuna wasn't ready to hear. Then Krishna is looking at Arjuna and sees a little of disappointment. He feels that Arjuna has understood, "I am not trusted." It sometimes happens that a disciple comes and says, "Please, tell me everything!" The spiritual master looks at him and says, "All in all, do whatever you like." And the disciple thinks, "Great! Good!" But an intelligent disciple understands, "I am not trusted!"

There's a great funny story, the best funny story I've ever heard. Madana Mohana told it. A disciple comes to his guru and says, "Guru Maharaja, tell me, what can I do for you?" Guru Maharaja thought a little, looked into his eyes and said, "Well, do the laundry." "Wrong guess, wrong guess!" (laughter). I felt that everybody understood who was meant. But, again, the point is that in the beginning our devotion is made for effect. This is a good starting point, one shouldn't be ashamed of it, this is the point where you can start. But as we study the scriptures

we should increase our faith in the spiritual master, causing our own, knowingly false ideas to be gradually replaced by the right ones.

As a matter of fact, this is what Srila Sanatana Gosvami explains in “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” that there’s true *bhakti*. What’s the point of true *bhakti* and how is one thus to tell true *bhakti* from false conceptions and false ideas of *bhakti*? Seems like I have to finish, don’t I? I just don’t know whether I should start another topic. Okay, I’ll speak a little, take just a few minutes as to what makes... to make it clearer why I chose just this topic.

One reason why I... For us to have better understanding of Sanatana Gosvami’s message... “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” is an absolutely brilliant book, and everything one has to know is contained in this one book. He’s trying to explain what *bhakti* is. One of the reasons why it’s so hard to understand *bhakti* is because *bhakti* has none of exterior form. When it comes to *karma* or some ritual or something else, it’s basically not so hard to explain. Or yoga – yoga has quite a distinct exterior form, which is easy to explain. Yoga says: you should sit like this; the one who is good at yoga will explain the smallest details of how one should place one muscle or the other... Those who did Iyengar yoga, know how they explain it. Basically, one can understand everything. If one is a good teacher, he can give a clear explanation of this exterior form, and, in fact, this exterior form gives all the understanding you need. In case of music it also has its specific exterior form. *Bhakti* has no exterior form. Because *bhakti* is *bhava*, which is an inner emotional state. One can try to explain one’s inner emotional state by means of some exterior things, through some exterior signs, but that will never give complete, thorough understanding of what *bhakti* is. It’s easy to say, “*Bhakti* is love.” Everybody says “love”, but what is love? How can one feel this love, how can one explain it? If someone starts to explain to you what yoga is you will feel it at once: one will do some pose, his energies will start flowing right away, things will get right. And as for *bhakti* – we keep saying “*bhakti, bahkti, bhakti*”, and nobody can explain what *bhakti* is, after all.

There’s the only way to explain it, or two ways, to be more exact. There are two ways to explain *bhakti*. One way is to try to explain from the external point of view how a man who has *bhakti* behaves. He starts crying, tearing his hair, rushing about, loses consciousness. But, in general, it’s quite difficult to tell that. Some people try to imitate *bhakti*. They heard that if you have *bhakti*, you should fall to the ground and roll on it, and think, “Great! Now, since this is yoga – we’re going to fall and start rolling.” It doesn’t work that way. There’s another way to explain what *bhakti* is. When one starts saying something being overwhelmed by this feeling. The “Srimad-Bhagavatam” in part, but mostly “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” use this same technique – when a highly dramatic situation, a story, a storyline is being described and all of a sudden, at the high point as the story culminates a man starts to say prayers or things that reveal his *bhakti*.

One of the most outstanding stories in the “Srimad-Bhagavatam” is the story of Vritrasura. When Vritrasura, the demon, is fighting against Indra and when they are supposed to fight, and there’s supposed to be the final battle and Vritrasura knows he’s going to die. Indra comes out knowing that he has a weapon he’s going to kill Vritrasura with, and in so doing Indra starts shaking and doubting, “What if it doesn’t kill?” Vritrasura challenges him saying, “Kill me! Kill me! You don’t believe in God? God Himself told you that you’d kill me! Kill me, kill me quick! Throw this *vajra*! But Indra won’t listen to him, he doesn’t understand anything, “Why is he saying “Kill!” How kill? What’s he talking about?” And then Vritrasura starts saying his prayers, the four prayers that come out of Vritrasura’s mouth are considered to be the pinnacle of the description of *bhakti* where Vritrasura starts speaking on what *bhakti* is, his understanding of *bhakti*, his understanding of love of God. He reveals his *bhava*, and this is one way to describe *bhakti*.



Here in “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” Sanatana Gosvami is doing just this thing: he’s making people on different levels of devotion explain how they understand *bhakti*. And they also explain it, let’s say, in an angry mood, because everyone Narada addresses either gets angry with him or laments, or something else, and thus this mood or *bhava* comes out of the mouth of the characters of the “Srimad-Bhagavatam” or “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” in the form of prayers.

What does the “Srimad-Bhagavatam” want to tell us after all? The “Srimad-Bhagavatam” wants to tell us that the highest manifestation of *bhakti* is the *bhakti* of the Vrindavana cowherd girls, and this is the hardest thing to perceive. Actually, Krishna can’t be perceived and the love of Vrindavana cowherd girls is much harder to perceive than Krishna. Usually, when people speak about it, it sounds cheap. It’s still very hard to explain, because externally the life of Vrindavana cowherd girls isn’t particularly different. They don’t perform austerities, they don’t stand on one foot. When we hear about someone standing on one foot we think, “Oh, yes, this is cool!” If someone observes *Ekadasi* without taking any water, we tend to think, “Of course, this is *bhakti*!” Vrindavana cowherd girls didn’t observe *Ekadasi*! They didn’t even wear *Kantheni Malas*! They didn’t go on pilgrimages! Nanda Maharaja attempted to go on a pilgrimage a couple of times, and Krishna told him, “Why do you need to go, stay here, everything’s here: the Ganges is here, Prayag is here, don’t do that, everything’s here!” There’s nothing special, and, nevertheless, we should understand the mood they are in, *gopi-bhava*. The mood of *bhakti* they have. How do we understand that? Srila Sanatana Gosvami used an amazing technique where he is trying to explain to us by leading us through different levels of *bhakti*, to explain to us how exalted the *gopis*’ love is. He starts from the very bottom, and, starting from the very bottom, he explains what pure *bhakti* is not. While reading these descriptions of impure *bhakti* we can recognize with horror in these descriptions our own conceptions of *bhakti*. If we’re careful enough while reading, we’ll realize what we’re worth. But it’s very important to understand because in order to buy a diamond I should know what a diamond is and I also should know what fakes there are.

At the Puri beach there are people selling diamonds about this size and of different colours. To prove this is a diamond they take a stone, put this diamond and with all their might strike it with this other stone saying, “Look, it hasn’t broken!”; and one thinks, “Oh, really!” Because the only thing he knows about the diamond is that it doesn’t break, that it’s harder than glass and can’t be scratched. They strike this cheap synthetic diamond with all their might and one thinks, “Oh!” And the seller says, “Only 3000 rupees.” And after a little bargaining you can beat the price down to 200 rupees. As a result, you get a diamond this size for only 200 rupees and happily go home. Why? Because you don’t know what the diamond is and what the diamond is not and what fake diamonds there are.

Srila Sanatana Gosvami explains in “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” what the diamond is and how to tell it from all kinds of fakes. We’ll continue to speak about how he does it tomorrow; and as early as tomorrow I’m going to explain why exactly the meeting with Shiva, this exact chapter. Thank you very much. I’m going to look through the questions. There’s going to be the opening ceremony of the festival, so we have to leave. I’ll look through all the questions and try to answer them either in a lecture or separately.



## Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”, lecture 2

September 11, 2011  
Bhakti Vijnana Goswami Maharaja

Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”.  
“Bhakti-sangama” festival  
Yevpatoriya, 2011

### Annotation:

Questions: Should those who believe in other scriptures be considered atheists; what is the reason for faith weakening; how should we understand whether our seed of faith is right; how do we understand indirect preaching.

The summary of Lecture 1. *Guru* plays a key role in our disposing of false concepts. The main characteristic of a devotee is to be never satisfied with one’s level of devotion. A summary of the levels Narada Muni had seen. False concepts of *bhakti*: a happy family life, a long life, power, effulgence, travel etc. Indra’s and Brahma’s concepts. Brahma, after all, yearns for *mukti*. Glorification of Lord Shiva – he is not attached, can bestow *mukti*, Krishna loves him and worships him Himself.

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Hare Krishna. We’re going to continue our story. Yesterday there were a few very good questions, and I will start by answering some of them. I said that he who believes in the Vedic revelation can be perceived as a true theist or not just the one who believes in God but the one who has or, at least, has a chance to get a clear idea. Of course, a question was asked “What about those who believe in the Bible and the Quran? Are they atheists in the full sense of the word?”

I have some good news: no. The Bible and the Quran – and Srila Prabhupada mentioned that many times – are also revelations containing certain conceptions of God. We don’t consider the followers of these scriptures to be atheists. But we do believe their revelation is lacking in completeness. They think the same about all the others. They are bound to tell you the same - that in other places the revelation is lacking in completeness.

There was another very important question: what is the cause of faith weakening? I’ve mentioned that we need faith, that faith is the beginning of everything and that it should be *sastra-sraddha*, or faith in scriptures. There’s only one cause why faith weakens - offences. Srila Rupa Goswami explains in the “Bhakti Rasamrta Sindhu” where he says that our attachment to God... And faith is the initial stage of attachment to God. Faith in scriptures is display of attachment to God, which manifests itself by mercy of the spiritual master, a *vaisnava*, and any weakening of attachment to God is due to offences we commit. Ultimately, our attachment should manifest itself in our developing elevated feelings towards God. When describing Radha’s love, Prabhodananda Sarasvati says that She is *subhava*. *Subhava* means elevated, refined emotions. Anyone doing *bhakti* sometimes suddenly finds his heart filled with bubbling emotions and one doesn’t know where they come from. And one feels blissed-out. The way of developing devotion is the way of increasing and enhancing these emotions to the degree when they become one’s permanent state of consciousness. Heart means consciousness. When this state is elevated and refined, the inner emotional state will become a permanent reality,

which is called *bhava*, the preliminary stage of love of God, where one develops some certain relationship with God, or *sthayi-bhava*.

An offence is something diametrically opposed to elevated emotions because offences contaminate our consciousness right away. Whereas *bhakti* elevates our consciousness making us kind of hover over this world. Anyone who has even experienced mundane love knows and will tell you that, “I didn’t walk on the ground, I hovered over it”. Why? Because inside there’s this feeling of flying, happiness, the elevated inner state. But once one starts insulting someone, something happens to him right away. Smack! Immediately one’s consciousness becomes ... (shows). It takes a strange shape and you don’t feel like you’re hovering any more, you wish you could at least crawl a little. Actually, weakening of faith is weakening of attachment in its first stage, and that means that I have committed some offences, that is, I’ve done something antipodal, something that ultimately weakens my faith and love. This is called *aparadha* or offence.

The note contained another very important addition to this question. I was asked, “How do we understand whether our seed is right or not?”

I said yesterday that faith is a seed of love and that one should be very careful to water the seed properly. On the one hand, I’d like to reassure that all of you – all of you sitting here – have the right seed. The trouble is that we sometimes water the wrong seeds. We don’t water the right seeds. After all, how do we understand where this right seed we have to water and nourish is? I’ve already mentioned that this is, actually, faith in *sastra* and the Gosvamis of Vrindavana explain what faith in *sastra* is. Faith in the *sastra* is understanding that *sastra* contains *sambandha*, *abhideya* and *prayojana* and that *sastra* describes relationship with God, that *sastra* describes how to develop or deepen these relationships and the ultimate aim of deepening these relationships. The right seed is our right understanding of what *sastra* wants to tell us. *Sastra* wants to tell us about our relationship with God and about what is the most important thing in our lives and about how to make this relationship strong and unshakeable.

Very often if we look into our hearts and analyse the motives why we’re staying here, in this society, we’ll see that our faith is no faith in *sastra*. What makes us want to stay here – and, undoubtedly, it’s faith that keeps us going, some faith, faith that here, in this society, in ISKCON, it feels good, but often this faith is not faith in *sastra*. This is faith in some person, who embodies, let’s say, our ideas of *bhakti*, of what love of God is. And it’s not that he really embodies love of God. He embodies our ideas of love of God. Or, very often, it’s just faith that I feel good here, in this society, “Why not! No alcohol drinking, no smoking, almost no cursing, good people.”

I remember many years ago when we were going through some crisis of faith in our society it was rumoured that Srila Prabhupada had again taken birth on the Earth and they even mentioned some individual that had been born and that individual was two years of age then. I asked one *mataji*, I was just wondering, “Do you believe this is Srila Prabhupada?” And she said, “I don’t believe, I know this is Srila Prabhupada!” There was no question of faith in *sastra*. Often people believe in individuals, and there’s nothing bad about it if we’re confident that this individual is carrying the message of *sastra* undistorted. But if our faith in an individual begins to obscure our faith in *sastra*, that’s a problem. I have to face different displays of this phenomenon again and again.

I'd like to tell you one short story about how Srila Prabhupada implanted in people the right faith. It was told by Umapati Maharaja, one of the first Srila Prabhupada's disciples. He says, "I felt greatly relieved to hear Srila Prabhupada say that God is a person." He continues, "Before that I'd read Buddhism and it says that one couldn't say that God exists, neither could one say that He doesn't exist, we couldn't say that he exists or doesn't exist... All in all, nothing could be said." And then Srila Prabhupada comes and says, "The Supreme Personality of Godhead." He says, "At once did I feel relieved and went on analysing and thinking, "Swamiji is a good man and is definitely not after money, he's obviously an honest man. But he might himself be deluded." What he was thinking about was who he should follow, how he should choose the one to follow and he got that doubt, "Well, maybe, OK, he's a disinterested man, but disinterested people also get deluded, don't they?" And he says that when he came to hear a lecture the following day, first thing Prabhupada said looking at him was, "I don't say anything you can't find in scriptures." So he said, "I felt relieved at once. I thought right away, "Okay then, good, so, I can go on."

This is Prabhupada's greatness, the way he lays the foundation of this faith. Not without reason did he call the "Bhagavad-gita" "Bhagavad - gita as it is". Not without reason does he urge us again and again to analyse whether it's really the "Bhagavad-gita". He builds his preaching on *sastra* only and keeps quoting *sastra*. Whereas if our faith is based on faith in the society, that this society is good, people are good, the outcome can be any. Sometimes the society turns its back on us. Sometimes we do some stupid thing and people turn away from us. I often see people's faith fall in moments like that. So, we need... But if we have faith in *sastra*, nothing is going to shake it except for offences.

There's another last question I'm going to answer, it's also very important. A man asked a puzzling question about indirect preaching. It says, "Those doing indirect preaching speak about everything except *bhakti*, or, to be more exact, *bhakti* is the last thing they speak about. Whereas Srila Prabhupada spoke nothing but *bhakti*, or, to be more exact, the rest was the last he spoke about. How do I understand it?"

When I was speaking about it yesterday... This is a complicated thing to speak on. I didn't say that, you shouldn't interpret my words as some 100% excuse for any form of indirect preaching. Actually, indirect preaching may do a lot of harm, because what we hear for the first time plants seeds of faith and if this seed isn't right, it'll yield the wrong fruit, as I said yesterday. But it can also do good... anyway... The only thing I said yesterday was that preaching should arouse interest, it should affect people minds, make them think and for that we should speak about something that's important for them. But it's very important to do it the right way. It's not that any method to arouse someone's interest is right. We can get someone so interested in the Vedic scriptures that he'll never get out of the slough of the Vedic astrology etc. Again, the main thing, the point and the essence, the quintessence of preaching is to make one believe that one can find in the Vedic scriptures answers to all the questions, all material questions and needs and requirements and, naturally, to our spiritual needs and requirements.

And here I will make a smooth transition to the topic I started. Yesterday I stopped when explaining that we very often mistake our concepts, our ideas for *bhakti* because *bhakti* is very hard to explain. I said that, virtually, if one wants to understand *bhakti*, he has to become a "tabula rasa" – it has nothing to do with *madhurya-rasa*. "Tabula rasa" means blank slate in Latin, not in Sanskrit. "Tabula rasa" means that one has to clear oneself from one's initial not always right or almost always wrong concepts of what *bhakti* is and for that one needs a spiritual master. We have this program in us and we have to learn to look at our program, see our program and detach ourselves from it. Otherwise, it'll be hard for us to understand. Actually, hardly anyone can understand. If you're told now that what is waiting for you in the eternity is what the

cowherd boys do in Vrandavana – milking cows, kneading cow dung... Who wants to knead cow dung forever? (“Haribol” shouts). There are a few enthusiasts, the rest are moderately enthusiastic about this prospect. If you’re asked now “Will you become Brahma?”, who’s going to shout “Haribol!”? Why isn’t anyone shouting “Haribol!”? Then, I’ll have to (shouts “Haribol!” and laughs).

What do I mean to say? It’s very hard to understand all these concepts and we need to clear out some space to learn to drink this juice of the “Bhagavatam”. In his introduction to the “Srimad-Bhagavatam” Vyasadeva urges us: *pibata bhagavatam rasamalayam* – sip this “Srimad-Bhagavatam”, which is full of *rasa*. Actually, to be drinking the “Srimad-Bhagavatam” means to be experience this relationship described in the “Bhagavatam” from the very beginning to the very end. There are different juices of relationship with God and, after all, we choose the most intoxicating juice of *madhurya rasa*. There’s this special wine that’s contained in the “Bhagavatam”. This is the best, the purest juice we have to choose.

Actually, this is *guru’s* responsibility. *Guru* should come and destroy our concepts. Srila Prabhupada liked to explain the verse from the Eleventh Canto of the “Srimad-Bhagavatam”, which says: *santa evasya chindanti mano-vyasangam uktibhih*. He says that *santas* and *sadhus* – saintly people - *evasya chindanti mano-vyasangam* - cut off people’s bad attachments or excessive attachments to their own concepts of what’s good and what’s bad, what’s right and what’s wrong. *Uktibhih* they do it with their words, *mano-vyasangam uktibhih*. Srila Prabhupada says that, actually, this is spiritual master’s responsibility.

There’s a wonderful story that Sacinandana Maharaja loves to tell – the story of his first meeting with Srila Prabhupada. A young hippie came, who was then about 15, and Srila Prabhupada was speaking about God. Finally, he decided to ask a question, a question that had tormented him, or it seemed to him that he’d seen some contradiction in Srila Prabhupada’s words. He raised his hand and Srila Prabhupada said, “Ask your question”, and he asked, “If God is that good, why did He create *maya* everybody suffers from?” Srila Prabhupada looked at his secretary and asked, “What’s he saying?” That one didn’t understand either. Again, “If God is that good, if He’s all-good, if He’s kind, why did He create *maya*?” Srila Prabhupada looked at everyone again and, “What did he say?” Do you feel that? He repeated for the third time. Again, Srila Prabhupada addressed his secretary, “What’s he asking?” The secretary repeated, “If God is so good, why did he create *maya*?” Prabhupada looked directly at him and said, “Krishna didn’t create *maya*. You did.” (laughter). Sacinandana Maharaja says that he still can’t recover from that answer.

What did Srila Prabhupada, actually, do in that moment? He smashed, destroyed the concepts for the man to turn over a new leaf. This is a very important and thankless responsibility of the spiritual master.

I also said that *bhakti* is very hard to describe because *bhakti* doesn’t have a form; that, virtually, one cannot judge how great a devotee is by his actions. This is the problem. We’re always tempted to judge a man by his external actions. Because we don’t know what’s he thinking while doing it, what’s he feeling, what state he’s in; but with actions everything is clear, everything is simple. Right? We often judge devotees by their actions. If a man’s sitting with a big audience in front of him and everybody’s listening with their mouths open, “He might be a great devotee.” But if he is pottering about washing the pots for Krishna, “Do you call him a devotee. This is a *bhakta* who wants to get recommendation for initiation.” No. That’s just the trouble that it’s not the measure, the criterion.

One of the topics in “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” that runs through is that one should on no account judge by actions. Sanatana Gosvami resorts to a brilliant method. I’d like to tell you about the starting point of “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” or Part 1 of “Brihad-bhagavatamrita”. What does Narada Muni do in “Brihad-bhagavatamrita”? He comes to devotees and starts glorifying them for their deeds. He starts by saying, “Look! Look, what you’re doing! That’s great devotion!” He came to Indra and saw him crying while worshipping Upendra and his younger brother, Vamanadeva. Vamanadeva is there, on the heavenly planets, and Indra is standing, tears streaming out of his thousands of eyes – Indra has lots of eyes. Is Indra a devotee? Sure thing! If one is crying while worshipping... The thing is that we don’t know why he’s crying. And Indra himself... Narada starts glorifying him by saying, “You’re worshipping with so much love, I’ve seen it with my own eyes: you’ve been crying!” And Indra himself unable to contain himself says, “You know why I have been crying? I’ve been crying out of resentment! I’ve been crying because I feel hurt by God! Not because I love Him!”

This the method Sanatana Gosvami resorts to in “Brihad-bhagavatamrita”. He speaks through Narada Muni’s mouth, worshipping devotees for their deeds and the devotees deny it by saying, “You don’t know what I was thinking about in that moment! Yes, yes, I was doing that but you have no idea what I was trying to gain.” They, in turn, begin talking about what they’re seeking and that’s where they betray themselves. By speaking about their ideal, about their idea of *bhakti*, they betray or dispose themselves completely, and it goes on and on, and on as Narada continues on his way.

Thus, he explains what *bhakti* means. Of course, each devotee Narada Muni meets... There’s one distinctive qualification, which must be shared by all devotees, although, on the whole, Sanatana Gosvami in “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” is, let’s say, rather skeptical about the devotion of all the rest except for the inhabitants of Vrindavana, he, nevertheless, mentions one very important qualification we should also note: a devotee should never be happy with his devotion. The moment I start to think that I’ve attained everything, I’ve attained devotion, that means that I, actually, have stopped. As a rule, it means that I’ve got stuck on a rather low, primitive level. We should always be unsatisfied.

I’ve recently been asked, “How come that, on the one hand, we’re told we should be satisfied.” Right? It’s one of a *brahmana*’s qualifications that he should always be pleased with things, always satisfied, should always smile. On the other hand, if I’m satisfied, it means that something’s wrong with me. Well, the answer to this puzzle is very simple: one should always be satisfied with one’s material circumstances and never satisfied with one’s spiritual state.

Chanakya Pandit gives a wonderful, brilliant formula. He says that one, or rather a man, should always be satisfied with his spouse, his food and his wealth. And he should never be satisfied with his *japa*, his study of *sastra* and amount of charity he performs. If we get an honest look at ourselves, we’ll see that we’re in an opposite state of mind: we’re never satisfied with our wife or husband, our food or wealth. Those who’re not satisfied with their wealth, raise your hands, please. Who isn’t satisfied with his wife? Don’t raise your hands (laughter). Whereas we’re always satisfied with our *japa*, our knowledge of *sastra* and, especially, our charity. But the formula is quite clear. One should know this secret in order to advance.

When devotees start responding to Narada Muni, they desperately say “I don’t have such devotion.” Because, again, if we think that we have devotion, that will be where we’ll stop. A man finds it really difficult to give up some of his concepts. But in order to advance spiritually I should always be ready to turn away from my point of view and see things from a neutral point of view, from the point of view of *sastra*, from Krishna’s point of view. This is how I’ll always be on the move.

Actually, these are the preliminary things I wanted to tell you. In other words, Sanatana Gosvami explains this comparative way of developing *bhakti* for us to have a clearer idea of what true *bhakti* is, for this understanding to get well imprinted in our heart.

This first book we're going to read, a few verses from which we're going to read, is called "In Search of Lord's Mercy", "Sri Bhagavata-kripa-nirdhara", where Narada Muni set himself a task to find the one who enjoys Lord's mercy. Because our ideas of mercy, will, actually, reflect our ideas of the goal, of what we're aspiring to.

If we try to answer the question how we understand Lord's mercy, what is Lord's mercy to us. If someone has a lot of money, does he have Lord's mercy? Be honest. If someone has a long life, is it Lord's mercy or not? If someone is intelligent, beautiful, educated, is it Lord's mercy. It is, it is. To us it's mercy.

Srila Sanatana Gosvami says in "Brihad-bhagavatamrita" that there's only one yardstick of Lord's mercy – the purity of one's devotion. If we want to understand whether we have Lord's mercy or not, we should try to evaluate how much our devotion is directed at Krishna Himself, how much we want Krishna, not something from Him. The intensity and the power of this desire will mean God's mercy. Srila Jiva Gosvami speaks about that in "Bhakti-sandarbha". He says: *prema taratamyenaiva bhakta maha taratmya mukhyam ??? 37:05*. He says that the greatness of *bhakta*, a devotee, is, in the first place, determined by the intensity of *prema* he possesses.

Before going on to the story itself, I will speak shortly about different concepts of God's mercy Narada Muni has already seen. First he met a *brahmana* from Prayag. This *brahmana* from Prayag was dancing, he had an obedient family, he had obedient children, sons, a happy family life. He worshipped a Salagrama-sila, he fed *sadhus*, he distributed *prasadam*. Narada Muni came running to him and cried, "Oh, you *bhagavad-kripa-patra*! You, vessel of Lord's mercy!" The *brahmana* became very much upset to have heard that and said, "Who am I? I've only got a few sons who sometimes obey me and sometimes don't. I have a small Deity, I can feed a small number of people, I don't have so many followers, I occasionally do something good. If you go to the king in South India, he has a big Deity! He has a big temple! All of his subjects are dutiful, there are no revolutions! The earth yields itself. Well, this is God's mercy!" Feel it? Mercy? "He has no rivals! Mercy! Mercy! Mercy!"

Narada Muni goes to this king and says, "Oh, you have God's mercy! You're sure to have dutiful subjects, everybody obeys you, you have power!" And the king says, "No, I have none of mercy! Indra – this is mercy! He's got mercy!" And he starts speaking about his idea of mercy. He says, "Indra's lived long! I've only lived a hundred years. Indra's lived, wow, for so long!" Feel it? If one has a long life, this is sure to be God's mercy.

This year I've taken a group of people, absolutely new, a small group, on a pilgrimage and we arrived in Vrindavana. We came to Madana-Mohana Temple. A few years ago there lived a *sadhu* aged 108. I said, "Here used to live a *sadhu* who was 108 years old." They responded, "Oh, 108 years?! A saint!" You may laugh but if you're 108, you'll be considered a saint, if you haven't lost your wits by that time. But people tend to think automatically that if one lives a long life, he's blessed with God's mercy. And this king starts to speak, "And his body is effulgent" – Indra's body. The king began to explain how God's mercy manifests itself in Indra. "There, on the heavenly planets, their bodies are effulgent, they're called *devas*. *Deva* means the one whose body is radiant. When saints are depicted, what's around their heads? A halo. If someone is shining, this means mercy. Right? If you should shine now? Ooh! If the aura is big - a devotee! A devotee is bound to shine brightly. And the brighter the more devoted. Right? Do you have such ideas of holiness? Sure.



He further says, “They possess such power! I rule one small kingdom and he, Indra, rules the entire heavenly kingdom.” Do we think that the more power one has the more devoted one is? We know – if he’s followed by a huge crowd of followers! Ooh! Sometimes devotees describe Srila Prabhupada saying, “Oh, he came in emanating such light, and everybody as soon as they saw him just “flop!” and fell to the ground!”

These are our ideas of devotion. This is how we externally see and perceive devotion. Then he said another thing about Indra and the inhabitants of the heavenly planets, that they’re great devotees, they can travel everywhere and anywhere. At once it reminded me of the ISKCON *sannyasis* - they also travel everywhere and anywhere. But, actually, all of these, this way or other, without exception, are material concepts of *bhakti* or of God’s mercy.

Narada goes to Indra and starts saying, “O Indra! You are such a great devotee! You can travel anywhere, you rule over the heavenly planets, you are radiant, and Indra starts by saying, “I’m not even a *bhakta*, let alone a devotee, I’m an *aparadhi*. I’ve committed lots of offences!” This is also a very important qualification of a devotee. Actually, Indra is, certainly, a devotee. But a true devotee should always feel that he doesn’t conform to the ideal of devotion. Indra’s speaking about it and denies his devotion by saying, “You say I’ve got a long life, but do I live long? Brahma that’s who lives long. Who’s a great devotee? Brahma’s a great devotee because 14 Indras change in one day of Brahma, and you say I live long. Brahma, that’s who lives long! You say I have great riches. Brahma has such riches that, oh my!” and so on. “You say I have power. But who appointed me? Brahma did! When the time comes he’ll remove me, then appoint. Here’s *bhakti*, here’s mercy, that’s something!”

Narada comes to Brahma and tells him, “Brahma, dearest, listen, you’re Krishna Himself!” and Brahma claps his hands to his ears and says, “You’re telling me!” And Brahma starts talking about his problems. And it’s very important to understand here how Brahma describes his problems. You know what Brahma’s main problem is? Anyone knows how long Brahma lives? Brahma lives so long that it’s even impossible to remember how long he lives. Because this is a number that’s hard to take in. Brahma says, “My main problem is that I’m afraid of death!” Feel it? We think: how can he fear death? But, actually, Death's sword of Damocles always hangs over him. Because he knows: sooner or later all this is going to end – all these riches, all this luxury, all of these wonderful pleasures, all these dances, all this sense of power – all of these are bound to end!

It seems to us that, well, how can one fear death if you live that long because time and again we see death. We sort of got used to death but Brahma doesn’t know, doesn’t see what death is, so to him death is very fearful. On *Satya-loka*, where Brahma lives, there are no funeral homes or crematories. There there’s no death but, nonetheless, there’s death. This death sword of Damocles spoils the pleasures to be enjoyed there. Krishna Himself says: *ā-brahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ dukhalayam asastvatam* – that in this world, in this abode, in this vale of tears there’s nothing good. All this should make us understand that, generally speaking, even Brahma can’t enjoy properly in this world.

Brahma tells Narada – and that’s where we have come close to our topic – “I’m dreaming of *mukti*! Oh, boy! I’m dreaming of liberation. There are too many problems here, I’m so tired of them, I’m tired of fearing death that haunts me!” In other words, what does he want? He wants liberation and considers it to be God’s mercy. He says, “So, you say that I’ve got God’s mercy. Shiva’s got God’s mercy. Shiva is who’s got God’s mercy!” And he goes on, “Look at Shiva!” – and that’s where we’re close to meeting Lord Siva. He says, “Look at Shiva!” How does he start describing him? “Shiva walks around naked! (laughter) I wear the finest silk garments! I wear an exquisite garland of fragrant flowers, I anoint my body with aroma oils. And Shiva walks around

naked, he's got a garland of bones and datura flowers and instead of oils he rubs his body with cremation ashes!" Brahma says, "Why would he do that? To make fun of us!" He says, "Shiva is unattached, he's absolutely free! He's got this *mukti*. We're trying to prolong life by wearing flower garlands."

As a matter of fact, this is from the category of indirect preaching – a wonderful Vedic custom of offering fresh flower garlands. Nowadays people sometimes give flowers but they don't know why. In fact, it's meant for prolonging youth. When one wears a fresh flower garland freshness and youth enter his body. *Matajis*, this is for you (laughter).

Brahma says, "I've lived for so long, moreover, I'm wearing a fresh flower garland to live longer and be healthier. And Shiva laughs at me, Shiva's wearing a garland of bones! Shiva just roars with laughter and that means that he, actually, is absolutely unattached." He says he's wearing a garland of datura flowers. We wear garlands of roses. You know datura, don't you? It grows here, it's got such white, long flowers and thorny fruits. He wears there a garland of datura and *arka* plant flowers. *Arka* is a magic, medicinal plant. I don't know whether it grows here or not but in India it grows at every step – one of the cheapest things. Shiva is wearing all of these. That is, in other words, he starts saying, "He's totally unattached. I am attached. I'm attached to clothes of silk, I'm attached to the garland, to perfume, to all of these. He isn't – this is God's mercy." Mercy? Krishna speaks about it (BG 18.54)

*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā  
na śocati na kāṅkṣati  
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu  
mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām*

Where does *bhakti* begin? *Brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā* – when one attains liberation. Brahma says, "He's not interested in *dharma*, *artha* or *kama*." As far as *dharma* is concerned, we have no problems with that - we aren't interested in it either (laughter). As for *artha* and *kama*, that's where one should think well. He says, "He takes absolutely no interest in *dharma* or *kama*. *Moksha*! Moreover, he himself can bestow *moksha*, he can give *mukti* and not only he himself but also his wife can give *mukti*. You feel what a great devotee he is! He says, "Krishna loves him so much! Krishna protects him from demons." And he goes on saying, "Krishna Himself worships Shiva. Krishna sometimes acts as his subordinate and begins to worship Shiva!" Can you imagine what mercy of God this is?

In fact, I should finish. What have we just heard? We've heard about Brahma's concept of what mercy is. When I called my seminar "Meeting Lord Shiva" I meant a particular sort of mentality or desire for *moksha* we often mistake for *bhakti*. When someone is a renunciant, when someone is a great ascet, when someone doesn't take food, fasts and chants 64 rounds, or 128 rounds, or 192 rounds, we say, "He's a great devotee." Right? A great devotee? Especially if he's idle.

In this third chapter of "Brihad-bhagavatamrita" Sanatana Gosvami thoroughly separates the motive of liberation from *bhakti*. In the end Rupa Gosvami will also say in "Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu" that *bhukti* and *mukti* are two witches and we won't be able to taste *bhakti* while they're in our heart. And very often what we consider to be *bhakti* is a mere desire for *mukti*. When we're saying "we'll all go back to Godhead, Nitai-Goura Premanande! Haribol!" this is a desire for *mukti*. This a desire for liberation. You can do *bhakti* here. To do *bhakti*, one doesn't need to go to the spiritual world! There's no need. Moreover, sometimes it's even better to stay here. Moreover, Lord Shiva himself says that a devotee can perform his devotional service everywhere, anywhere, he doesn't care where he is – in hell or in heaven – everywhere, anywhere. Who of you wants to go to hell and perform devotional service? Are there any volunteers? Yes, there's one. If I give my blessings? Approach me for blessings (laughter). Does anyone want to go to heaven for devotional service? A sly one is saying, "If you give your blessings."

So, what I wanted to speak about is how we mistake our desire for liberation for devotional service and, actually, this is where we meet Lord Shiva in our hearts. From our point of view, Lord Shiva is doing

*bhakti* but his *bhakti* is mixed with this desire for liberation or freeing oneself from sufferings. His devotional service is just like this and it manifests itself in our lives, which is what I'll be speaking about tomorrow and continue at the Russian festival. Thank you very much.

## Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”, lecture 3

September 12, 2011  
Bhakti Vijnana Goswami Maharaja

**Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”.**  
**Bhakti-sangama festival**  
**Yevpatoriya, 2011**

### **Annotation:**

Glorification of Shiva’s devotion and exposure of this devotion by Shiva himself.

Questions: Having a relationship with Krishna is so elevated, can’t we try something lower? If Brahma has a relationship with Krishna, why does he need something else (*mukti*)? A story about some Hindus on an Indian train. Brahma sends Narada Muni to Shiva. Narada finds himself in an ecstatic *kirtan*. Psychological analysis of Shiva’s behavior. Narada glorifies Shiva’s devotion – he is Krishna Himself; he’s the greatest of *vaisnavas*; Krishna Himself asks for his blessings. The *lilas* proving it (the story of *Sudarsana Chakra* and Banasura).

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Hare Krishna. I’m very grateful to all of you for the opportunity to speak before you, because this is the only chance to understand something myself. The things we’re discussing are very complicated. On the face of it they’re easy and we’ve long heard and known of them but it’s very difficult to properly understand them or feel deeply. However, this is the only purpose of human life – to try to understand all of it.

Yesterday I got a question and it sounds like this: having a relationship with Krishna is such an elevated thing! Is it worth trying something lower?

My answer is categorical – no! Because, although a relationship with Krishna is a highly elevated thing, but if you got a chance to achieve the most amazing and intimate type of relationship with God – and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to make it accessible to us, to show graphically what it means – it’s only an absolute fool or the most unfortunate person who having gained an access to it will go on looking for something else.

Yes, it mightn’t be so easy to achieve perfection in such a relationship with Krishna, but nothing ventured, nothing gained. The one, who doesn’t attempt to reach the highest goal, won’t get it. It may not be so easy to reach, but on the other hand, Krishna says this is an every-ticket-wins lottery (BG 2.40):

*nehābhikrama-nāśo 'sti*  
*pratyavāyo na vidyate*  
*sv-ālpam apy asya dharmasya*  
*trāyate mahato bhayāt*

In “Bhagavad-gita” He says, “On this path there is no loss or defeat. Even a little advancement on this path will protect one from very many problems.” As you know, an every-ticket-wins lottery is when everyone gets some kind of prize. Someone gets a pencil, another one – a rubber, someone else – a 15-pence pen, and there’s one who gets a car. In any case, a prize, at least a consolation prize, is sure to be. But the most amazing this is that each and every of us has this chance – each of us! Despite all the apparent difficulties, the most amazing is that by mercy of Gauranga Mahaprabhu and Srila Prabhupada we have this chance and one should be a fool to miss it.

Okay, we’ll continue our story and today I’m going to talk about the greatness of Lord Shiva and his relationship with Krishna. But yesterday there was also another very important question, which sounded like this, “It’s strange that being a devotee Brahma desires *mukti*. If he has a relationship with Krishna

why would he need anything else?” The question is very important since in *Madhava-sampradaya*, in *suddhadvaita*, in the Madhavacarya school, Brahma is considered to be a greatest *bhakta*, a greatest devotee, a greatest Krishna follower and the demigods together with him. But we’re cardinally different from this and we say that we don’t recognise this criterion. Our criterion is purity of love of God, and, according to this criterion, Brahma has none of a relationship with Krishna, as paradoxical as it may sound. Certainly, who are we to judge - we should revere Brahma, but if we have a look at the philosophy of the “Srimad-Bhagavatam”, we’ll understand that, actually, Krishna and Brahma are not in a particularly close relationship. Well, yes, the Second Canto of the “Srimad-Bhagavatam” says that Krishna shook hands with Brahma when the latter showed up on Vaikuntha - a ceremonial handshake. But, actually, Brahma himself says in “Brihad-bhagavatamrita”, “I came to Vrindavana, I made a mess of it, I committed so many offences, asked Krishna for forgiveness and then rushed away home to avoid more offences.”

We know that Chapter 14 of Canto 10 of the “Srimad-Bhagavatam” contains exalted Brahma’s prayers and Brahma reveals one after another the deepest truths of the spiritual science. And Krishna’s just sitting and listening to all of it. Brahma finished, bowed to Him and flew away to his place – and Krishna didn’t say a single word! Brahma came to apologise to Him – Krishna didn’t say anything, His face being stonelike, without a single muscle moving. He didn’t even give Brahma a smile, even a wink, like “This is our *lila*.” Nothing like that. And Brhma himself says, “Krishna is not happy with me, I’m an offender. When I gave my blessing to Hiranyakashipu Krishna was so furious with me that He just glanced at me, looked at me, which made me shudder and said, “Don’t you ever give such blessings!” Thereafter I went and gave blessings to Ravana and I can’t even bring myself to say what happened next.”

The matter is that there’s no close relationship because a close relationship develops when one eliminates obstacles in one’s heart hampering these close relationships. Any kind of self-interest residing in our heart is a wall preventing this relationship from getting truly close. According to our philosophy, there are two fundamental obstacles coming in numerous forms and kinds: these are the desire for material enjoyment and the desire for liberation. These are the two fundamental obstacles that prevent one from tasting *bhakti*. We all have some taste and we’re going to see today Shiva dancing absolutely ecstatically in a *kirtana*. We also dance absolutely ecstatically here at night during *kirtanas* but, unfortunately, it doesn’t mean that we don’t have such obstacles in our hearts. We can dance in full ecstasy prompted by a desire for liberation. Or, as I mentioned yesterday, Indra’s also crying when worshipping Krishna – crying with resentment.

Therefore, Srila Jiva Gosvami says: *bhukti-mukti-spṛhā yāvat piśācī hṛdi vartate/tāvad bhakti-sukhasyātra katham abhyudayo bhavet* (CC, Madhya 19.176) – two *pisacis*, two witches live within my heart – the desire for *bhukti* and the desire for *mukti*, the material desire to enjoy and the desire for liberation. *Tāvad bhakti-sukhasyātra* – and until they’re there to stay, *bhakti-sukha*, a taste of *bhakti*, happiness of *bhakti*, a pure, absolutely intoxicating taste of *bhakti* is not accessible. *Katham abhyudayo bhavet* – how will it develop there? It won’t, because our heart is contaminated, and in this contaminated heart pure *bhakti* will never dance, never dance.

One should very well understand the practical point of what I’m trying say. The practical point is that when we take our beads and start chanting the *mantra*... Like today one devotee told me, “My wife has also been fiddling her beads.” When you’re beginning to “fiddle the beads” it’s very important to understand what you’re asking Krishna for. *Nama cintamani krishna caitanya-rasa-vigraha* – Krishna’s name - *nama cintamani Krishna* – is a philosopher’s stone, which can fulfill any of our wishes. And I’m asking Krishna for something willi-nilly. As I said yesterday, we can ask Krishna for a long life, a happy family life, followers, power, money, unclouded happiness in our lives. This automatically means that we’ll be planting the seeds of these desires and they’re going to sprout and bear fruit, but it’ll be too late. As there’s a famous Ostap Bender quote, “An idiot’s dream has come true!” We’re asking for something... Or there’s another wonderful prayer, “Lord, I know that money can’t make me happy, but let me learn it from my own experience.” (laughter)

Krishna's name can make any of our dreams come true but the practical point I'm now talking about is that we should be very well aware of what desire we're watering at the moment with the water of the holy name. I've got this seed – by mercy of Srila Prabhupada we all have it - the seed of pure *bhakti* but at the moment we should be trying to water this very seed or this very desire. Otherwise, other things will sprout in our hearts and we'll think this is *bhakti*. But the main thing, the most amazing thing is that all the rest will think this is *bhakti*. Someone has achieved some success, he has a lot of followers, he's glorious, he's got money and something else – everybody will think “*Bhakti!*” And it's only Krishna in our heart who will know “It's weed again! Thistle and saltbush have grown in his heart.”

Srila Prabhupada once told a brilliant story and it'll be easier to understand for those who've been to India. If someone happened to travel on an Indian 3<sup>rd</sup> class sleeper train during a rush hour, he knows that sometimes ten times as many people as a train is able to hold pack into it. People are packed like sardines in a tin, but the main thing is that they're absolutely happy – this is the most astonishing thing – happy and cheerful! Srila Prabhupada tells a story about a man once going on such a train. He was sitting on his seat thinking, “How lucky I am, I'm sitting!” Suddenly a thin Hindu showed up by him and this Hindu gave an embarrassed smile and saw there's a tiny space between him and others and he - one, two – smiling embarrassingly, absolutely innocently – squeezed himself in. The man is thinking, “Okay, good – let him sit.” The Hindu started turning a little and soon called up his son and put him on his lap, then put him next to himself, then started turning again and soon his fat wife came. The man, who at first let this thin Hindu in, found himself standing and the fat wife was sitting on his seat. Srila Prabhupada said, “This is exactly the way *maya* acts.” (laughter)

If we leave a tiny space for *maya*, a tiny space, *maya* will come and say, giving us an embarrassed smile, “May I sit somewhere here on the edge?” And very soon we'll be somewhere in the middle of nowhere.

This is the moral of this story. Of course, I'm going to talk about it. Shiva is a great devotee, there's no doubt about it, and what I'm going to speak about today proves the greatness of Shiva's devotion, the greatness of his *bhakti*. Actually, I suggest doing a kind of puzzle today – while you're listening to me, try to understand where the catch is. I already explained yesterday that the idea and the point of “Brihad-bhagavatamrita” is that we start glorifying someone based on his external behaviour, on some of his external achievements, but then he starts speaking about what he's really thinking about and betrays his own problems and then speaks about someone who is above him.

So, we're getting to Chapter 3 of Part 1 of “Brihad-bhagavatamrita”. Brahma told Narada about how great Shiva is. And Narada started looking down at Kailash because Shiva resides on Kailash. Has anyone been to Kailash? Kailash is a wonderful mount in the Himalayas, one of the most amazing mountains, which is sacred to Buddhists, to Shivaists, and to Vaisnavas as well. Shiva is said to reside there at Kuvera's request. No one has ever climbed this mountain. People just circumambulate it with respect and in awe worshipping it. A few stupid guys have tried to climb it but were found dead. Narada was about to set off there, for Kailash, but Brahma checked him saying, “You're not looking the right way!” Narada was looking down. I don't know how he was looking down; he might have approached the edge of *Brahma-loka* and started looking down at Kailash. But Brahma pointed up and said, “You're looking the wrong way! You're looking at the abode of a Shiva's expansion while I'm talking about Sada Shiva. If you set off for Kailash, you won't see Shiva in all his glory. You're going to see a hermit, a yogi, sitting absorbed in meditation in the Himalayan snows, naked or only wearing deer skin, with a *kamandalu*. But if you set off for *Sada-Shiva-loka*, for Shiva's abode beyond the material world, you'll see Shiva in all his glory. You'll see what riches Shiva possesses! After seeing his riches you'll also see that he's absolutely unattached to them.”

And in this moment Brahma reveals his innermost desire. He says, “Oh! Shiva is so wealthy and unattached at that.” One way or another, he explained where he should go and Narada set off absolutely

ecstatically singing “Shiva! Krishna! Shiva! Krishna!” because Brahma told him that Shiva and Krishna are, actually, non-different. In point of fact, he is Lord Himself living there, in His abode, beyond the material world. Narada set off being absolutely ecstatic, crossed the river Viraja and the Causal ocean. The Causal ocean separates our area of creation where everything is based on cause and effect. Here, in the material world, everything has its cause, this way or another. In the spiritual world there are no causes, everything is causeless, everything is primeval. Cause means that something has the beginning. We have a cause – our father or our mother; our mother and father have a cause; everything here, in this world has a cause and the beginning. We’re on this side of the Causal ocean where everything is bound by the law of cause and effect, or the law of *karma*. And Narada went to the other side of the Causal ocean, he crossed the river Viraja successfully because he’s an absolutely pure devotee - he travels in his consciousness, at the speed of consciousness. He started to approach the place where Shiva is with his devotees. In this chapter Shiva, having heard Narada’s glorifications, is going to tell him that he’s nothing like a devotee, he has no devotion at all, that he, actually, has no relationship with God and he’s going to tell – I’m anticipating, I will reveal the biggest secret. The biggest secret of this chapter is where Shiva’s going to start his confession to Narada; he’s going to say, “I have a false ego and this ego, or awareness of our separation from God, is the biggest obstacle that separates me from God.”

Actually, pure devotion begins as soon as one eliminates his ego, when one gets rid of this feeling of being separate or independent from God. But Shiva values his independence, he’s an independent *isvara*, an independent ruler and, moreover, he’s a symbol of this ego. Shiva is going to tell him that “I’m no devotee at all, that great devotees are on the Vaikuntha, and even greater devotees live on the Earth”. He’s going to speak about Prahlad Maharaja and about how merciful Krishna towards Prahlad Maharaja is and that Krishna put him on His lap. None of the Vaikuntha devotees does Krishna, Narayana, put on His lap. Have you ever seen a scene like that – Narayana is in Vaikuntha – everybody’s worshipping Him and He calls someone up and puts him on His lap? No. But He put Prahlad on His lap, He stroked him, and, this way or other, Shiva explains his greatness. But we won’t get as far; we’re much more interested in learning the plot itself: the description of Shiva’s devotion and exposure of this devotion by Shiva himself.

When Narada arrived there, he saw a staggering scene, something like Bhakti-sangama – a *kirtana* was roaring and Shiva, overwhelmed by love of God, was dancing swaying from side to side in the midst. Just imagine this scene: Shiva’s very handsome, he has tangled hair like a yogi, they got disheveled, he’s dancing! Shiva’s the best dancer! Shiva’s the origin of all the dances in this world. When Shiva starts dancing – Hare Krishna! – the whole universe can get destroyed. But on this *Sada-Shiva-loka*, on his planet, Shiva dances different dances. There he dances devotional dances. Sanatana Gosvami says that Shiva had just finished worshipping, an *arati*, Sankarsana, the form of God Shiva always worships, and together with his devotees he was dancing and singing, and Shiva was walking... A *kirtana* is going on and Shiva is the boss. Shiva’s dancing, Shiva’s singing. He’s singing Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. Ooh! I wish I could see that scene! Shiva was walking around, his followers – and it’s very important – are everywhere. Sanatana Gosvami is speaking about followers. On *Brahma-loka* Brahma’s devotees were following him in chanting Vedic *mantras*, pretending to be a Vedic jazz band. The followers of the king in South India were worshipping in the temple like the king; here together with Shiva they were singing a *kirtana*, they were supporting him in this *bhava*, in this mood, in this emotion that Shiva was overwhelmed by. And in doing so, Shiva was walking around encouraging each of them. Sometimes he approached someone, approached Nandi and said, “Nandi, you’re singing so beautifully today!” Then he approached someone else, patted him on the shoulder, embraced someone and said, “Oh! Hare Krishna!” This is the scene we’ve seen with Narada’s eyes.

Naturally, Sanatana Gosvami is giving a subtle hint at some things, which, if we don’t read carefully what he’s telling us, will be easily overlooked. First thing he’s saying is, “The worship had just finished and

everybody was dancing and singing happily.” We know how joyful we get when we’ve finished the sixteen rounds - we, too, start dancing ecstatically. I know a devotee who, when he has finished the sixteen rounds, would take the beads and say “That’s all!” It should make us think a bit why they’re being so joyful, when the *arati* has finished and when they’re singing.

There’s another very important thing, Sanatana Gosvami’s making a very important remark. In the purport to the verses describing the initial scene Narada saw, he explains why Shiva’s dancing and why he’s encouraging others. That’s another very interesting psychological point – the fact that he’s walking and encouraging everyone. What do you think that means? When someone approaches us during a *kirtana* and says, “You’re dancing so well today.” What do we start doing? Sometimes *brahmacaris* leap so high, especially when *matajis* are watching them (laughter). Actually, it means that they need it and Shiva knows that, “If I don’t take any notice of how they’re dancing, tomorrow they’ll stop dancing; today I won’t praise them saying what wonderful devotees they are – tomorrow they will think, “Shall I leave for the *Gaudiya-math* or somewhere else?” if, this way or other, I don’t appreciate their devotion.”

In his purport Sanatana Gosvami makes one small interesting remark, which is also very easy to overlook. Why is Shiva doing it himself? *Bhagavad-bhakti-rasa pravartan artham eva*. Shiva’s doing it... *Artham* means for some purpose. *Bhagavad-bhakti-rasa pravartana* – he’s doing it to - *pravartana* means expand – to expand this *bhagavad-bhakti-rasa* or *rasa* of love of Krishna. In other words, he’s doing it to inspire his followers living with him on this *Sada-Shiva-loka*. By the way, on *Sada-Shiva-loka* there are no ghosts, goblins, dwarves, brownies or other evil spirits following Shiva in this world. There only pure devotees of Lord Shiva live who worship Shiva as a devotee. Shiva’s trying to do it to increase their devotion to God and here some catch is actually revealed. When I’m doing something to teach others, what does it mean? It means I’m doing it out of a sense of duty. We know that Lenin participated in a Communist subbotnik\* to set an example for others. Sometimes people do it, sometimes senior devotees participate by distributing *prasadam* to set an example for others and everybody’s thinking “Aha!” It doesn’t mean that senior devotees want to distribute *prasadam*. It means that that they’re doing it to teach others and here Sanatana Gosvami is speaking about it and it really means that his *bhakti*, or devotion, is not without reason; that, in a sense, it’s still unclear yet what he would be doing if there weren’t all these followers of his who need him to set an example for them, who need to be taught like that.

But, nonetheless, although we should analyse it like this, the scene itself is very beautiful. All the associates are crying “Jaya! Jaya!” and Uma, Lord Shiva’s consort, is clapping her hands. Sanatana Gosvami says that when Uma was clapping her hands it’s not at all like when you’re clapping your hands. He says that Uma was clapping her hands in such a way - I won’t be able to do it anyway – that when they saw her clapping her hands everybody got even more inspired and cheerful.

Narada, when he saw that, when he heard that singing and the *kirtana* – and he’s got his own *vina* – came running and started to accompany on his *vina*. You know, when a *kirtana* is going on and suddenly a man with a guitar runs out and starts playing it and singing. That’s exactly the way Narada started to play on his *vina* singing along: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. And the *kirtana* started to gradually fade away and in this moment Narada, while continuing to play his *vina*, started singing a *raga*. Immediately did he compose a song glorifying Lord Shiva. In it he started to celebrate Lord Shiva and his devotion. Do you know how classical singers sing? Do you know how opera singers sing? They’re trembling, their Adam’s apple rippling here (shows, laughter). Narada started singing this song about Lord Shiva’s devotion and he got completely absorbed, his eyes rolling up, tears streaming, and he goes on singing... Finally, he finished the song, came running to Shiva to touch him and Shiva, still intoxicated – Shiva was still experiencing this *kirtan-rasa* – picked up Narada and started hugging him. Narada made an attempt to touch his feet and Shiva started



embracing him saying, “Tell me, what are you singing about?” In other words, Shiva didn’t understand anything. Everybody has been to the opera, you know you don’t understand what they’re singing (laughter) but it’s very beautiful. That’s exactly the way Narada performed his aria and Shiva got to ask, “What are you singing about? What are you singing about?” Shiva thought to himself, “He might be describing the glory of Lord Hari!” And he started asking him, “Narada, Narada, tell me what you’re singing about?” And then Narada said, “Well, okay, calm down, I’ll tell you in prose without all these things!” The Shiva sat down on a simple *asana* and Sanatana Gosvami explains that Shiva sat in *virasana*. *Virasana* is usually Hanuman’s sitting posture if you’ve seen the posture of being ready to serve. In other words, Shiva got ready to listen about Krishna and this is service. Hearing is the main form of our service and in order to listen correctly Shiva got ready – he had sat in *virasana*, which helps to concentrate. That’s when the right hand is turned... Well, okay, it doesn’t matter, just look how Hanuman is sitting. Shiva sat down all ears and concentration and began listening to Narada not to miss a single word, and all of his associates sat down around him. Narada started saying, “Shiva, you’re Krishna Himself!” “Brahma-samhita” says:

kshiram yatha dadhi vikara-visesha-yogat  
sanjayate na hi tatah prithag asti hetoh  
yah sambhutam api tatha samupaiti karyad  
govindam adi-purusham tam aham bhajami

“I worship Lord Shiva who is almost non-different from Krishna Himself. He’s as different from Krishna as milk is different from yoghurt, which is the same milk but a little bit transformed. He assumes this form of Lord Shiva for some special purpose. We know that the second offence of the holy name is to consider Shiva, his names, his qualities, different from the names and qualities of Lord Krishna. Narada started to quote different scriptures, which say, “You are Krishna Himself! You are Krishna Himself!” Just for the purpose of teaching others you assume this form of a devotee, a *bhakta*, and worship Krishna.

Shiva wanted to hear something worthy. When he heard that... When he heard those words, He felt an agonizing pain in his heart. Srila Sanatana Gosvami explains why he felt that pain. He covered his ears and said, “What are you saying? What are you doing?” He says: *sarva vaisnava murdanyo visnu-bhakti-pravartakah*. He says that Shiva is the greatest of *vaisnavas* and the point of his existence, the purpose of his existence is *visnu-bhakti-pravartakah*, to spread *visnu-bhakti*. When Shiva heard that he appeared to be Krishna Himself, Narada, actually, devalued his existence. If he’s Krishna Himself, how can he spread devotion to Krishna? Therefore, Sanatana Gosvami says, “Rudra covered his ears and yelled “Stop it! Stop it!” He raised his voice, got infuriated and being infuriated he started to shout “*Najatu-jagadishu ham!*” “I am no Jagadisha! I am no Lord! I am no ruler of the universe! *Na pi krishna kripa spadam* – moreover, I don’t even have a fraction of Krishna’s mercy! *Param tad dasa dasanam sadhanugraha kamukah* - I’m just a beggar praying to get mercy of the servants of servants of Krishna. And we know that when we glorify some devotee how does the devotee reply? He’ll say the same. Shiva had obviously completed the Bhakta Program, maybe even a *bhakti-sastri* course. Shiva started to say that “I am no Jagadisha, I’m just a beggar praying for mercy of Lord’s devotees so that they give him this mercy.”

Narada got terribly frightened because when Shiva is infuriated the whole universe may burn down. Before that Narada had been singing loudly, “You are Jagadisha, you are the ruler of the universe, and just for the sake of teaching others you’re pretending to be a devotee.” But when Narada heard that, he at once began to speak quietly explaining another thing in a soft voice. He said, “I’m taking back my words, I didn’t mean that. I meant to say that you’re a *Vasnava* but not just a *Vaisnava* but the best of *Vaisnavas*, and you know the glory of *Vaisnavas* and you glorify *Vaisnavas* with all of your deeds and words. Moreover, Krishna Himself wants to glorify you. Your devotion is so great that Krishna Himself glorifies you.” And Sanatana Gosvami explains that during this *ksirasagara-manthana-lila*, or the *lila* of churning

the Ocean of Milk, when the poison surfaced, what did Krishna say to the demigods? Call Shiva. Who can save us? Only Shiva can save us. Why did He do that? To glorify Shiva, to show how compassionate Shiva is, how magnanimous he is, how he can swallow the poison. The rest had snapped up the rest of the things. Indra got an elephant, Vishnu Himself got Lakshmi and what did Shiva get? The poison! Krishna glorified Shiva and Narada's saying, "Look, look! Krishna Himself wants to glorify you by showing your greatness, proving how magnanimous you are, how selfless you are." And it's not all yet, it's just the beginning.

Then he said, "Furthermore, I'm going to tell an even more innermost secret: Krishna loves you so much that He sometimes asks you for blessings and you mercifully give Him your blessings."

When Shiva heard that... Narada had treaded on his kibe. When Shiva heard that... Before that he'd been sitting in *virasana* not to miss a single word but at that moment he jumped up and started yelling at Narada, "Stop reminding me of this disgrace! This is a fact that I've given my blessings to Krishna lots of times but I still can't get what on earth made me do that!" Shiva continued, "This is an unquestionable fact but why he did that I can't get and no one can because Krishna's *lila* is *durvitarkya-tara* - highly illogical. No one can understand why He does it, for what purpose He does it. This is an irrefutable fact, it's happened many times." We know - Ramacandra prayed to Lord Shiva to get strength to do away with Ravana. Krishna Himself when He was living in Dvaraka wanted a son. He wanted to conceive a son with Jambavati. We know that sometimes people fail. Krishna also failed. Krishna set off for Kailash and performed austerities for twelve years. Finally, Shiva came to Him and asked, "Krishna, what do You want?" (laughter). Krishna replied, "I want a son." Shiva said, "*Tatasthu*. So be it." That's how Samba was born.

Shiva, when he heard it, when Narad had reminded him of it, Shiva blushed. Shiva is, actually, white but he blushed with shame and started talking, "No one can clearly understand what my Lord is doing. His *lila* is *durvitarkya-tara*, His *lila* is *vaibhava*, no one can ever understand why He's doing it. He goes and performs austerities. Why would Krishna perform austerities? Can anyone say? There are no reasons! Then I have to show up and He asks, "Please, give me your blessings." What do I do? To say "No" is no good, to say "Okay" is also stupid. Yes, I give blessings but how? Who can say why He's doing it?"

In an extraordinary agitation - Shiva was terribly agitated in that moment, absolutely terribly agitated - he started saying, "No one can understand and, in spite of me being an offender - I commit an awful lot of offences - Krishna, my Lord, nonetheless, doesn't take offence." Narada was delighted. When he felt that *bhakti* in Shiva's heart, when he saw tears in Shiva's eyes, Narada came running to Shiva, touched his feet and said, "Sit down, Shiva, now I'm going to tell you everything and you won't be able to refute me! I'm going to tell the things that will prove you once and for all what a great devotee you are!"

Shiva sat down reluctantly and Narada began telling him the whole truth. He said, "Shiva"... (I have no time to tell this). Narada began to enumerate one after the other the *lilas* that Shiva performs with Krishna where Krishna accepts a subordinate position, and Narada started to explain how pure Shiva's devotion is. I'm going to tell just a couple of stories or we'll see - I still have a few minutes.

At first he said, "Shiva, don't you remember that Vishnu's favourite weapon is ..." What's Vishnu's favourite weapon? *Sudarshana Chakra*. "This terrifying weapon nothing can withstand was given to Him by you!"

"Vamana-purana" tells a story that once demon Shridhama decided to steal the Kaustubha jewel. Vishnu was lying asleep in the Ocean of Milk. Sometimes, when people are sleeping, thieves usually get very much inspired. Shridham started scheming how to get there to steal the Kaustubha gem from Him. Vishnu found it out and decided to kill the demon but He failed. Then He turned to Shiva and said, "Shiva, give Me a weapon I can kill this demon with!" Shiva replied, "Okay, I'll give You such a weapon." Shiva

started to meditate and created *Sudarshana Chakra*, the discus of time, from his mind. Shiva kindly held it out to Vishnu saying, “Take it if You wish, nobody will be able to withstand this weapon.” Vishnu smiled and said, “Even you won’t? Can I test it on you?” Shiva replies, “Sure You can.” So, the first one Vishnu threw *Sudarshana Chakra* at was Shiva. Shiva was cut into three pieces – since then there’s been three expansions of Shiva.

Narada started by saying, “Do you remember giving *Sudarshana Chakra* - since then Krishna has been inseparable from it! He loves you so much that it’s even hard to imagine.” He started to enumerate one by one different stories that happened to Shiva and mentioned Banasura in particular. He said, “Do you remember there was once demon Banasura? He was thousand-armed.” Actually, the story of Banasura is very interesting because we know that usually, demons perform severe austerities to get Shiva’s mercy. Banasura received Shiva’s mercy by playing *mridanga*. Once Shiva was dancing his *tandava-nritya* dance when, hearing that Shiva was dancing, Banasura came running with a *mridanga* – he had one thousand arms – you can just imagine him playing the *mridanga*! If some of his arms got tired, other arms carried on and Shiva continued dancing. Everybody knows that when a *mridanga* is playing well, that’s wow! This dance was going on for a long time, then, finally, Shiva got tired, brushed sweat away from his face and asked Banasura, “Banasura, ask of me whatever you want!” Banasura said, “Shiva, guard my palace gates.” Shiva was hurt and thought to himself, “What a cheeky guy!” But there was no help for it – he’d already given his promise. Then Banasura said, “Now I’m the strongest – Shiva himself protects me! Tell me, please, who shall I fight?” Shiva squinted his eyes and said, “I’m giving you a flag and when the staff is cut, you may consider you’ve met a worthy rival.”

We know this story – it’s described in detail in Krishna book how Banasura started to persecute everyone and how Shiva himself protected him and how, finally, he captured Aniruddha, how his daughter Usha fell in love with Aniruddha and, having learnt about their liaison, Banasura put Aniruddha, the grandson of Krishna Himself, in prison. Narada Muni set off for Dvaraka to see Krishna and said that Aniruddha was in prison. Narad Muni loves detective stories – he just wanted to see. Narada started describing to Shiva, “Do you remember what happened at that moment?” Overwhelmed by anger, Krishna galloped towards the walls of Banasura’s capital. Banasura, proud of his invincibility, of his one thousand arms, came out. At first Krishna threw his *Sudarshana Chakra* at the staff of the flag, flying over Banasura’s palace. There’s still this village in the Himalayas, nearby Rudra Prayag, you’ll be passing by if you ever go to Badrinath. Not far from this village there’s Banasura temple, where Banasura is almost worshipped as Supreme Lord and nearby there’s a small Aniruddha temple – this is the former Banasura’s capital. This place’s still there. Krishna galloped towards this place and, firstly, cut off the flag and then started fighting with Banasura cutting off his arms one after another. Banasuar had one thousand arms and, finally, he almost cut off all of Banasura’s arms but Narada tells Shiva here, “It only took you to ask Krishna to have mercy on Banasura and He immediately tempered justice with mercy, in no time!”

Imagine that scene: Krishna is outrageous, He’s fighting this demon cutting one arm after another! When one flies into a passion, it’s hard to stop but Narad Muni says, “Look, how close Krishna is to you! It only took you to ask Him “Spare my devotee” when Krishna immediately set aside His anger, He suddenly became so pleased that He said, “Banasura, I’m leaving four of your arms. Those nine hundred and ninety-six I cut off you didn’t need, you’ll keep your four arms.” Shiva didn’t ask for anything, he just asked “Please, don’t kill this rogue, take pity on him” and Krishna gave him his blessings at once. He said, “From now on, you will have an immortal four-armed body, you’ll look like Me and live with Lord Shiva eternally.” This is a happy end of the story of Banasura.

But there are going to be a few other stories – to hear them all one will have to go to the Russian festival but Narada starts by explaining what close relationship Krishna and Shiva appear to be in. He proves it to him remembering all these stories. The most interesting thing comes when Shiva is going to refute all of it, when Shiva's going to speak about what really happened, what he was thinking and what he was being motivated by. But this is the continuation of our seminar. That's where I'll have to end my story today. Thank you very much.

*\*Days of volunteer work following the October Revolution. Subbotniks are mostly organized for cleaning the streets of garbage, fixing public amenities, collecting recyclable material, and other community services*

# Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”, lecture 4

September 21, 2011  
Bhakti Vijnana Goswami Maharaja

**Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”.**  
**Sadhu-sanga Festival**  
**Tuapse, 2011**

## **Annotation:**

Glorification of Gopiparanadhana, his departure.

Revision of the introduction to the seminar. “Brihad Bhagavatamrita” is a commentary on the “Srimad Bhagavatam” describing the subtlest levels of *bhakti*. A touch of *jnana* manifests itself in a very subtle way. The plot. Revision of the previous lecture on Shiva glorification (he bestows boons on Krishna Himself; Krishna doesn’t accept Shiva’s offences). The story of Ghanta Karana.

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Hare Krishna. First of all, I’d like to apologise. Bhakti Caitanya Maharaja is going to usually give his morning lectures here, in this hall, but since he hasn’t arrived today, I’m going to substitute him. On other days my lecture will be the third period class here, in the pandal. But today it’s the first period class.

Secondly, I’d like to say that I’m going to try to dedicate my story to His Grace Gopiparanadhana Prabhu. I happened to have chosen the topic of the seminar based on his book. He wrote a commentary on “Brihad Bhagavatamrita” based on Srila Sanatana Goswami’s auto-commentary, and I’m going to speak on the contents of Chapter 3, Part 1, of “Brihad Bhagavatamrita” where Narada Muni meets Lord Shiva.

Of course, I chose this topic not knowing what was going to happen but between the Ukrainian and the Russian Festivals Gopiparanadhana Prabhu departed from this world. He had been on the Polish tour, preaching there and was supposed to visit our festival. We were talking and then he said, “I’ve already promised to go to China.” He had commitments to the Chinese devotees, he was studying Chinese - apart from English, Russian, Hindi and Sanskrit he also knew Chinese. On the table after his departure there were lying two books – the commentary on Upanishadas, “Upanishada-bhashya”, and another book – a Chinese-English dictionary. He was supposed to go to China. On his way from Poland to China he called at the Govardhana for two days and Krishna had made His own arrangements – He brought him to the bottom of the Govardhana Hill, the place of his *bhajana*, and from there He took him to the spiritual world.

I’ve already mentioned that Gopal Krishna Maharaja suggested dedicating the whole festival to his memory and it’s very appropriate that I’ll be speaking on something from his book. Srila Prabhupada explained to us that the true knowledge, - not book learning, not theoretical knowledge, - descends on those who are below. Knowledge is like water – it’s always flowing down. Water never flows upwards; it always finds some low place. Gopiparanadhana Prabhu was exactly such a person who became a vessel of transcendental knowledge because he always kept his head very low. It was hard to find in the whole huge ISCKON society a more humble, sincere or purer person. At the same time, when it came to protecting *siddhanta* or Srila Prabhupada’s teachings, it was hardly possible to find a more ardent defender than him. As soon as someone just tried to play down the significance of Srila Prabhupada or his contribution, Gopiparanadhana transformed, turning into a lion. He was gentle and when someone didn’t

appreciate him, he didn't take it seriously. But when someone tried to belittle his spiritual master, I sometimes heard him shout and it was terrible.

This is a person who was with us, a person who left such an amazing contribution. As Bhaktivinoda Thakura says, a *Vaisnava* lives in sound, in the sound he left. This is a very interesting idea. Actually, we're all a vibration. Each of us is nothing more than some vibration in the ether. Of course, we have coarsened and passed to the *sthula-sarira* level. The Sanskrit word *sthul* itself very clearly describes the nature of our gross body – *sthula-sarira* – a lot of stool (laughter). But, eventually, we remain a vibration and our purity is, in the first place, in the purity of sound. Bhaktivinoda Thakura says that a *Vaisnava* leaves an indelible mark in the form of sound - sound in the ether - which other generations of devotees will be able to catch, to detect.

Srila Gopiparanadhana Prabhu left behind this captured sound in the form of the three huge volumes of commentaries on “Sri Brihad Bhagavatamrita” by Sanatana Goswami. I devote my awkward and crude attempt to tell something related to this book to him, if I have the right. Srila Gopiparanadhana Prabhu ki! Jaya!

I've explained that I began this seminar at the Ukrainian festival, but I saved up the most interesting for the Russian festival. But “Brihad Bhagavatamrita” is, actually, a commentary on the “Srimad Bhagavatam”. Therefore it's called “Brihad Bhagavatamrita”, the great nectar of “Bhagavatam” where Srila Sanatana Goswami dissects “Bhagavatam”, a book, which is very hard to understand without this analysis. Srila Vyasadeva at the very beginning of the “Srimad Bhagavatam” (1.1.2) says: *dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām* – that there's nothing false in this book, but at the same time, we know that the “Srimad Bhagavatam” contains lots of things. The “Srimad Bhagavatam” is *varnasrama*, yoga, where yoga is described minutely, about how a yogi leaves his body, how he puts the water into the fire, the fire into the air, the air into the ether, and you're sitting and brooding, “Shall I learn it or what?”

The “Srimad Bhagavatam” contains a huge number of different things – this is an encyclopedia of the Vedic knowledge, of the Vedic culture, and, on the face of it, not everything meets this highest *uttama-bhakti* standard. But, nonetheless, Srila Vyasadeva says with great confidence: there's nothing misleading here. The message of this statement is very simple. It means that the rest of the things in the “Srimad-Bhagavatam” are only needed to set off or explain the meaning of pure *bhakti*. They're also there, without doubt. But you shouldn't think that everything in the “Srimad Bhagavatam” is pure gold. No, but, at the same time, everything written in the “Srimad Bhagavatam” is pure gold because it helps us understand what pure gold is. This is a comparison that Srila Prabhupada gave. He said that to understand what pure gold is one should know what impure gold is. Because if you don't know what impure gold is, you're very likely to be cheated, to buy iron instead of gold, just a little bit gilded.

Actually, this fake is what this seminar is about. The point is that *bhakti* is very hard to understand. *Bhakti* is alien to this world. Our mind is unable to comprehend the concept of *bhakti*. The material world is sure not to be able to comprehend this concept of *bhakti* and although everybody says “*bhakti, bhakti, bhakti*”, those who don't know the word “*bhakti*” say “love, love, love” – this is the most overused word. You can check on the Internet: google the word “love” and you'll see how many search results there will be. But who knows what love is? Who really knows what love is? Therefore, the principles of *jnana-marga* and *karma-marga* are often passed for the principles of *bhakti*. This is not some abstract thing related to poor deluded Indians. It's immediately related to us. We often mistake *karma* and *jnana* for *bhakti*.

I'd like to tell in this short seminar how exactly this adulteration of *jnana* manifests itself in our lives, in our practice and, the main thing, in our mentality. The problem of understanding what *bhakti* is that we already have some perception. We have some concept of what *bhakti* is, what devotion is and until we get rid of this concept, there will be no place for true devotion in our heart. We are going to mistake this poisonous weed of *jnana* for *bhakti* – both in ourselves and in others. We're going to look at others thinking, "Wow, what a devotee!" and follow the suit.

There's another thing I spoke on in detail in Ukraine I'd like to explain because, apparently, there's some misunderstanding. Yes, I've already said that *bhakti* is a concept... We need to have the right concept of *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is by no means a concept. But for *bhakti*, or feelings, sentiments of *bhakti*, to get into our inmost heart we should have clear and distinct ideas of what it is. Our notions about *bhakti* are clearly seen when we judge others, how we evaluate others, whose example we follow, who we learn from, who we think to be a role model of *bhakti* and what makes him a role model. Certainly, for us Srila Prabhupada is an impeccable model or standard of *bhakti*, but even when people are speaking about Srila Prabhupada, everybody speaks in his own way what exactly touched him in Srila Prabhupada. Someone says, "Oh, he radiated such light!" So, anyone who is a *bhakta* should radiate light. I'll be sitting and mediating on the light that a *bhakta* radiates until I start emanating it.

A lot of different things wear the guise of *bhakti*, and, at the same time, very often true *bhaktas* go unnoticed. As soon as some simple *bhakta*, such as Ananga Mohan Prabhu, who'd always been running with books... He was a man of great modesty! He couldn't speak beautifully, he was always very shy. Whenever I approached him, he immediately started to feel shy trying to keep in the background. Lord Chaitanya came to him in his dream and said, "I'm taking you away! Enough of it! It's time! My heart is bleeding in separation from you!" Who really noticed him when he was alive, who appreciated him, who followed his example? Not so many people. That's, actually, where our conception of what *bhakti* is manifests itself: whose example we follow, how we understand and what we appreciate in others.

This is what, according to Sanatana Goswami – and lord Shiva is going to say it in this chapter – he'll say that the standard of greatness of a man is the degree of his devotion, the depth of his love and devotion to Krishna. Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura makes a very interesting classification. He says that there are four classes of devotees. We're used to thinking that there are three classes of devotees or even two: me and the rest – that's our classification – I am a separate class and the rest are somewhere there in another class. So, the rest can be divided into *kanishthas*, *madhyamas*, *uttamas* and me,- so, it makes the same four classes.

Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura makes another classification according to the understanding of the *acaryas* of *Gaudya-sampradaya*, Sanatana Goswami, Rupa Goswami, Jiva Goswami and his predecessors. He says that there are ordinary devotees and there are lots of them. Lots of people have devotion, or *bhakti*, in their hearts. People who choose other ways, ways of *bhakti*, also possess some *bhakti*. We have some *bhakti* and Visvanatha Cakravarti says this is the first class of *bhaktas* whose *bhakti* is minute, a small atom of *bhakti*, a speck of dust, a grain, a grain of sand of *bhakti*. He says that there's a second class, the great devotees and, according to him, Narada belongs to them. This second class - do you see how big the leap is? He says their *bhakti* is more... Our *bhakti* is microscopic, one should need an electron microscope to see it. There are such special microscopes – one should be looking long to eventually find this *bhakti* there. The *bhakti* of great devotees is macroscopic and it can be seen. They become like a philosophy stone and anyone getting in touch with such devotees becomes a devotee himself like Narada. He says there's a third class of devotees – the inhabitants of Vraja and they have, according to Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, strong love. There's a fourth class of devotees – and who belongs to it? Yes, there's only one living being there and this is Radhika. There's no match for Her love.

“Brihad Bhagavatamrita” was written for us to be able to understand the subtlest gradations of *bhakti* and how *bhakti* manifests itself in different forms and types. There’s another very important thing not everybody understood. I said that *bhakti* is very hard to explain because *bhakti* has no visible or visual form. *Bhakti* is *bhava*, that is, a mood and a mood is very hard to describe. Try to describe a mood. Where do I start? We can describe something having a visible, clear-cut form or manifestation. That’s why very often people judge *bhakti* by actions and that’s okay, but *bhakti* shouldn’t be judged by actions but by the motives behind the actions. Not by words. Words are cheap, actions are a little bit more expensive but even actions are cheap. Because no one knows what that means, what the man is motivated by. There are a lot of examples of this. Srila Prabhupada often warned devotees that when we start judging on actions only, we very often impute to the man our own motives. A devotee can’t be judged by actions! And above all a pure devotee. If we take the life of Bhaktisiddhanata Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada, we’ll find there so many things even his disciples are trying to hush up. Just one episode from the life of Bhaktisiddhanata Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada. He took his followers to Bhaktivinoda Thakura’s house on Godrumdvipa and drove his brother, Lalita Prasad Thakura, out of the house. Feel it?

If you judge by that – and many people condemn, many people sink to this vulgar conception of righteousness and unrighteousness in terms of mundane things. The criterion of actions is the criterion of *dharma*, it’s the criterion of mundane righteousness but *bhakti* is in the motive, and we’ll only understand all the actions of any pure devotee when we understand that the motive force behind them is service to Krishna or desire to serve Srimati Radharani. It’s only then that we’ll be able to interpret it in the right way, otherwise, we’ll sink as low as to the level of mundane moralists who are going to judge “this is good and this is bad” in terms of mundane morality. This is the subtlety, this is the problem that mundane morality doesn’t apply to pure devotees. Let it still apply to us as yet, one shouldn’t rush thinking that now this mundane morality doesn’t apply to me either.

In “Caitanya Bhagavata” there’s an interesting episode when Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took off Lord Nityananda’s *kaupina* in full view of all of his followers and put it on His head saying that anyone touching that *kaupina* would become purified. Now *kaupina* is... Why did he do that? The reason is that even in Lord Caitanya’s immediate surrounding there were people who judged Lord Nityananda, and to show them he could by no means be condemned, the faultless Lord Himself who was held in unquestionable respect by everyone, all of a sudden put the *kaupina* on his head! But at the same time, He said that if Lord Nityananda were embracing a Moslem girl – you’re going down a Navadvipa street and see Lord Nityananda embracing a Moslem girl... Hare Krishna! Or if Lord Nityananda went to an alehouse, he’d remain Lord Nityananda, anyway, he would remain a pure devotee.

In other words, Lord Caitanya points out one thing: that devotees should by no means be judged by their external actions. To actually understand a devotee’s action one should understand the *bhava* living in his heart. That’s why Srila Prabhupada would often quote one verse. He would change it a little but the verse from “Caitanya-caritamrita” Srila Prabhupada often quoted is:

*tāñra vākya, kriyā, mudrā vijñeha nā bujhaya yanra citte krishna-prema karaye udaya*  
(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 23.39).

In whose consciousness, or in whose heart *yanra citte krishna-prema karaye udaya -krishna-prema* awakens, if the rise of *krishna-prema* has taken place in the heart, then *tāñra vākya, kriyā, mudrā vijñeha nā bujhaya* - even the most perfect and learned scholar cannot understand the activities and symptoms of such a man. That’s why *bhakti* is so hard to understand.

What does Sanatana Gosvami do in “Brihad Bhagavatamrita”? Sanatana Gosvami puts devotees of various levels in an agitated emotional state and in this state their *bhava* bursts out. A man in a normal state can conceal his *bhava*. But Sanatana Gosvami with the help of Narada Muni... Narada Muni, we know - o-oh - is a primordial politician, moving around, always up to something... Because he has *bhakti*. Whatever he does, he does it to glorify Krishna and His devotees. Narada Muni approaches everyone and glorifies people. I can tell you: there’s nothing



more painful for a devotee than to hear oneself being glorified. For a true devotee it's a most painful situation. Narada starts by saying, "O-o-oh!"

In one verse that survived Caitanya Mahaprabhu formulated or described what it feels like for a devotee:  
*na prema-gandho 'sti darāpi me harau*  
*krandāmi saubhāgya-bharam prakāśitum*  
*vaṁśī-vilāsy-ānana-lokanam vinā* (C.C., Madhya, 2:45).

He says *na prema-gandho 'sti darāpi me harau* – I have not the slightest tinge of *prema* within My heart. *Krandami* – but I'm crying. Why? *Saubhāgya-bharam prakāśitum* – for everyone to see how fortunate I am. *Vaṁśī-vilāsy-ānana-lokanam vinā* – but I don't see Krishna, I don't see Krishna's face! I don't see the face of Krishna playing His flute! What *bhakti* can one talk about?! I'm dragging out a life of an insect. The deeper the devotion the more he's aware of his lack of devotion. A devotee will never say "I am a devotee", that "I am a great devotee" – it's out of the question. A devotee will never speak about his achievements or something else. It hurts a devotee to speak about it because he always feels... The greater the devotee is the more aware he is of his lack of devotion.

Once Gour Govinda Maharaja was asked a question. One girl, a devotee, approached him after a lecture and asked, "Guru Maharaja, will I ever achieve *bhakti*?" Gour Govinda Maharaja looked at her closely right into her heart and replied, "You will. But you'll never know it."

That's the trouble, that's a paradox. Narada Muni, what's he doing? He approaches different devotees and starts glorifying them for their devotion and immediately the devotees start scolding him. He says, "Stop teasing me! Enough of that? I definitely know I don't even have a bit of devotion." At that moment they start talking about what true devotion is in their view. In this way we can form some idea of their position.

This is a kind of introduction and I'm going on to Chapter Three. In Chapter Three Narada Muni finds himself on *Sada-shiva-loka*, which is beyond the material world. *Sada-shiva-loka* is a place beyond the material layers of the universe. Brahma told him, "Go there. Don't go to Lord Shiva's abode here, in this material world, to Kailas in the Himalayas. Go to *Sada-shiva-loka*." After Narada Muni crossed the Causal ocean and the river Viraja he found himself on *Sada-shiva-loka* and saw the following picture: Sada Shiva along with his devotees and with Parvati is singing *kirtanas*. They'd just finished worshipping Sankarsana, being happy and cheerful. On *Sada-shiva-loka* there are no traditional Lord Shiva's companions – there are no those with horns, with distorted faces. Only pure Lord Shiva's devotees live on *Sada-shiva-loka* who are of amazing beauty. There are no all these evil spirits, orcs and others.

They are dancing in a *kirtana*. Can you imagine the Sadhu-sanga festival on *Sada-shiva-loka*? Sada Shiva is an honourable male guest, Parvati is an honourable female guest. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. Sanatana Gosvami says that Shiva's whole body consisted of these *bhakti* emotions. He was dancing oblivious of everything around. Sometimes he would come running to the devotees, embrace them and say, "Jai! Jai! Haribol! Good singing!" And Parvati was clapping hands almost like you helping Shiva intensify this ecstasy. All in all, there was a *kirtana* going on. I wish I would participate in such a *kirtana* one day. Narada Muni just... Narada Muni is a musician. He heard this *kirtana*, he came running with his *vina* and started singing "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna" and dancing. A *kirtana* is going on... Narada Muni along with others hears it from a long way away, he heard it and he's ecstatic. He thinks, "Pure devotees are dancing and glorifying!" When the *kirtana* subsided, finished, Narada Muni took it up and started to glorify Lord Shiva using a special *raga*. He sang a classical raga (sings). Don't applaud me. Immediately did he compose a song and sang it. Lord Shiva was totally overwhelmed by ecstasy of love, so he didn't understand anything. He kept listening, and Narada went on like (sings)... Lord Shiva approached him, embraced and said, "Brother, what are you singing about?" He didn't understand anything at all, not a word. And he naively thought, "Oh, he might be singing about Krishna!" Devotees like hearing about Krishna.

Lord Shiva said, "Listen, spare me these..., just tell me something in a simple way." And Lord Shiva sat down to listen to Narada Muni. He sat down all ears in the hero pose, *virasana*, - it's a special pose meaning full and absolute attention and devotion - not to miss a word. Now Narada Muni started to tell Lord Shiva something in prose or in verse, "Shiva, Brahma sent me to you and Brahma told me that you

are non-different from Krishna Himself. Anyone considering you being different from Krishna, is an offender of the holy name because there's no difference between you and Krishna. When Shiva heard that, he got angry, he got into a fury.

Describing this emotional response of Shiva's to this glorification, that he had been compared to God, Srila Sanatana Gosvami calls Shiva *visnu-bhakti-pravartaka*, which means that Shiva's whole purpose of life is to spread *visnu-bhakti*, and as soon as someone comes and says "You are God Himself, you are God Himself"... Like there are numerous *avataras* in India who say without scruples, "I am God Himself. I am Bhagavan." There are some who say, "I am *purna-bhagavan*, *purna-avatara*."

But Shiva flew into a rage and Narada saw that Shiva had got red. He shouted, "Stop it! Stop it!" Narada came to his senses and started saying other things. Shiva sat down and Narada began talking. He began to glorify Shiva. Today and a little bit tomorrow we're going to discuss Lord Shiva's glory. Glorifying Shiva, he said the first thing, "O, Lord Shiva, you are a great *Vaisnava* and you are spreading Visnu's and *Vaisnavas'* glory everywhere, which no one else can comprehend."

This is a very important thing and a very important statement. I've already mentioned that no one can comprehend *Visnu* or *Vaisnavas*. Why? For a very simple reason. Because an ordinary person's mind is programmed and acts in terms of *dharmā*, *artha* and *kama*. When we meet a *Vaisnava* and try to size him up or estimate somehow, we naturally tend to judge him in terms of *dharmā*, *artha* and *kama*. *Dharma* means that we're wondering whether he's pious or not, how he acts; we're trying to guess whether he's rich or not in terms of *artha*; we're wondering whether he's enjoying or not, whether he feels glad or not, whether he's laughing all the time or not. Even *moksa* is hard for ordinary people to understand, and Krishna and *Vaisnavas* are beyond these categories. Actually, when we see them, it's only if we have some supply of *bhakti* in our own hearts, can we value or respond to the *bhakti* in the heart of another *Vaisnava*. Only in this case. If we don't have such perception based on the previous life's supply of *bhakti*, we will not be able to understand anything. Never will we be able to understand anything.

Shiva is doing it: he's explaining to all of his devotees, too, the glory of Visnu and *visnu-bhaktas*. There's a wonderful story in "Mahabharata" about Ghanta Karna. It was a demon who originated from Shiva himself. At one point this demon was generated from Shiva's body and he was absolutely devoted to Shiva. He was sure that Shiva was the Supreme Lord, so, eventually, he got the name of Ghanta Karna because on his ears he wore two bells. *Ghanta* means "bell" and *karna* means "ear". As soon as someone tried to utter the name of Lord Visnu, as soon as someone just twisted his lips to pronounce the sound "v", Ghanta Karna started ringing his bell to ensure that Lord Visnu's name, God forbid, did not enter his ears. He was so totally confident that Shiva was the Supreme Lord that he didn't want to hear a thing about Visnu. Once he was worshipping Shiva performing severe austerities in the Himalayan mountains not far from Badrikashram. And there's a very interesting story associated with it. Eventually, Shiva appeared before him and said, "What do you wish?" He replied, "I wish nothing. I want to be your devotee." Shiva asks, "Why?" And he says, "What do you mean? I only wish to serve you with devotion." And Shiva asks, "Why?" He responds, "Well, I want liberation." Shiva says, "No." Ghanta Karna asks, "Why?" "Because it's only Visnu who can give it to you. Because I myself worship Visnu." Ghanta Karna looked at the bells hanging from his ears. He had rung those bells countless times. He tore down the bells angrily and said, "Okay, I got it. I'm going to worship Visnu." Shiva was jubilant and said, "I bless you that you will hereafter achieve perfection here in Badrikashram and meet Visnu Himself."

Once, when Krishna was ruling Dwarka, he made up His mind to set off for the Himalayas. Sometimes even Krishna is drawn by the Himalayas. The Himalayas is an amazing place. Krishna put one of His deputies in charge of Dwarka and set off for the Himalayas. Actually, He wanted to get to Kailas to visit Shiva but when he reached Badrikashram, the beauty of this place struck Krishna and He got absorbed in meditation. At some point He heard dogs barking and very soon a pack of dogs headed by Ghanta Karna ran out. Krishna asked, "What do you want? Why have you disturbed My meditation?" And Ghanta Karna said, "Well, I want to see Visnu. I was told that here, in Badrikashram, I would see Visnu." Krishna looked at this demon – and he was a demon – and said "Well, okay" and showed him His universal form. He saw everything. Ghanta Karna's mouth fell open in shock and he was so moved that that he ran towards his cave, got out half a corpse and brought it to Krishna saying, "This is my present for You." Krishna looked, "Of all things!". "This is the most precious thing I have. I wanted to eat it

today, but since You're God, here You are. Have it!" Krishna said "Okay" and Ghanta Karna got a boon from Him. Ghanta Karna is still in the temple in Badrikashram. He is a *dikpala*, the guardian of that area, and he returned to the spiritual world, to the Vaikuntha, immediately. He wasn't vegetarian and fed on *brahmins* exclusively.

But, again, the point of this story is that Shiva only lives to prove the greatness of *visnu-bhaktas* – *visnu-bhakti pravartakam*. He explains to people the greatness of *Vaisnavas* and Visnu, which is so difficult to comprehend or understand.

Further, while glorifying Shiva, Narada Muni says that "you are the best of all the *Vaisnavas*, therefore *Vaisnavas* are trying to get your mercy." This is also an amazing thing. We know that *Vaisnavas* worship Shiva. In Vrindavana there's the Temple of Bankadi Mahadeva, in Vrindavana there's the Temple of Gopisvara Mahadeva, near the Govardhana there's the Temple of Chakalesvara Mahadeva. Mahadeva is everywhere, wherever you go. This is a place where Krishna should be worshipped and everybody worships Mahadeva. In Nandagram – Asesvara Mahadeva, in Mathura – Bhutesvara Mahadeva. They are the principal deities there, somewhere somehow. In Mathura people go to this Bhutesvara Mahadeva Temple - it's one of the most famous temples. Sanatana Gosvami says here, "Look how close your relationship with Krishna is." Listen carefully, because what is *bhakti*? *Bhakti* is a relationship. When glorifying Shiva, Sanatana Gosvami explains just this aspect – how close they are, how much their consciousness resounds, how close their relationship is. If we want to understand *bhakti*, we should understand that *bhakti* is a mystic ability to mentally merge with another person, know another man's thoughts, feel, and Sanatana Gosvami in Narada Muni's words begins to explain how great Shiva is. He says that "you know who Visnu is, you glorify Him, therefore, all the *Vaisnavas* worship you."

We can also mention that Sanatana Gosvami himself worshipped Shiva. Why? Because he is a greatest *Vaisnava* and "this is why – as Narada Muni puts it – Krishna Himself tries to glorify you. You want to glorify Krishna. What does Krishna do? Krishna glorifies you." Like in Arjuna's case: Krishna could have Himself defeated all of those warriors that were on the other side. What did He do? He said, "Arjuna, fight! I don't really need fame, I want to glorify you. You should win fame: *nimita matra bhava savyasaci* – be a tool in My hands and try to earn fame." Here Sanatana Gosvami says, "Whatever Krishna does, He only does it to glorify you. You're trying to glorify Krishna and Krishna is trying to glorify you." Is it *bhakti*? *Bhakti*, right. Pure *bhakti*? It's pure alright. But we're going to discuss the rest of things a little later.

Narada Muni started speaking to Shiva very boldly. He said, "Look, Shiva, Krishna is so fond of you that He Himself worships you with love. Dear Shiva, sometimes Krishna performs austerities to win your favour." He says, "*Bhaktya-bhavanta aradhya* – Krishna Himself worships you with *bhakti* – *bhaktya-bhavantam aradhya*." Lots of different demons worship Shiva, but how do demons worship Shiva? Demons worship Shiva, then after getting some boon from Shiva they run after him to try it on him. Just like Vrikasura who said, "Grant me a benediction, a trifle one, that as soon as I touch someone's head it will break into a thousand smithereens." Shiva says, "*Tathaastu*, so be it, so it will be." And Vrikasura says, "Well, let me try it on you." At that moment Shiva got into an awkward situation because he knows he's immortal and nothing is going to happen if his head is touched; on the other hand, he has bestowed a boon. Some people think that he started to run away because he was frightened that his head would break into a thousand pieces. He started to run away because he had got into an awkward situation – as if he'd deceived Vrikasura. Vrikasura's running, Shiva's running away from him, and here's Krishna looking like a young boy and saying, "Oh, come now, Vrikasura, don't you know that he cheats everyone? Touch your head and we're going to know first whether the benediction's working or not." And Vrikasura says, "You're right, boy, why am I running after him, wasting my energy... might it be working?!" Bang!

But the point is that this is the demoniac mentality. When one with the demoniac mentality is worshipping, he hates the one he's worshipping! He wants to get something from him and when he does, he starts loathing him even more because he feels it like being humiliated. But here, by worshipping Lord Shiva, Narada Muni says that "Krishna's worshipping you with love and asks for your blessings."

When Shiva heard that... Before that he'd been sitting. I've said that Shiva flew into a fury when told that he was non-different from Krishna but he kept sitting. But when he heard that, he jumped to his feet, he came running to Narada Muni and covered his mouth with his hand, "Stop it!" And at that moment Narada Muni reminded Shiva that, actually, there are a lot of stories in the Puranas where Krishna is performing austerities and says, "Shiva, I desire a son." If one wants to have a son, one should worship Shiva and Uma – Uma can give a son. Krishna went and performed austerities for twelve years. Shiva appeared before him and said, "What do you want, Krishna?" And Krishna replies, "I wish to have a son." Shiva says, "*Tathaastu*, so be it." This is how Samba was born. Samba is a partial incarnation of Kartikeya. When Shiva was reminded of it, he felt ashamed. He said, "Look what an insolent guy I am – I bestow blessings upon Krishna Himself!" And Narada Muni says, "But it's still taken place!" And Shiva replies, "It has, it has, but it was that I was just put into an awkward position because he'd been performing austerities for twelve years in my honour, so I had to show up and when I did, He started asking me. What was I supposed to do? To say "no" was not proper, to say "yes" wasn't proper either. So I had to."

Sanatana Gosvami says that Shiva started to explain that "my Lord's pastimes - *durvitarkya-tara lila vaibhava* – that they are highly illogical, no one is capable of understanding them. In doing so he hinted at one very important thing. He says, "Narada, you think Krishna loves me? You think Krishna is doing that to glorify me? As a matter of fact, it's not so. This is merely your interpretation of causes and motives, of the mainsprings of it." But, anyway, he started saying that "I am nobody, I have no *bhakti*." Narada – o-oh! It was a sight for Narada's eyes. Narada came running to Shiva, got hold of his feet and said, "Sit down, Shiva." But before that Shiva had jumped up and covered his mouth. Narada says, "Sit down, Shiva, I'm going to say the main thing" – and there's no stopping Narada. Narada can't stop.

Why did Shiva get so resentful? Because when he got these memories of how he sometimes treated Krishna – sometimes the Puranas describe how Shiva is fighting Krishna, sometimes the Puranas describe how Krishna accepts a subordinate position towards Shiva, requests something from him, worships him – he became grieved. Shiva started to say, "These are all offences. You're enumerating the things I was doing prompted by my pride." But Narada said, "It's only stupid people who consider these to be offences. Only stupid people will think these to be offences because when two people love they can't offend one another. Can Yashoda offend Krishna? No. Yashoda can run after Him, can spank Him, can call Him whatever names she likes... Once Hanuman said, "Please don't let me into Vrindavana." He was asked, "Why don't you want to Vrindavana?" He replied, "In Vrindavana, if I see Yashoda running after My Lord with a stick, I'm going to do something to her. So, don't let me in, I won't be able to understand all that."

And Narada Muni began to explain that where there is a close relationship, there's no place for offences. When hearts beat in unison, whatever we do... Like there's a Russian proverb "The falling out of lovers is the renewing of love". For them... As one of my acquaintances told me, such a cultured man, that "I go to live in a village for the summer. In the village there's a couple. The village is half-extinct, people a degraded generally communicating in filthy language. A typical Russian village. There's a couple there whom I call Romeo and Juliet. They curse one another up hill and down dale making the whole village hear it but, at the same time, you can tell how much they are in love with one another. They move off, sit on a bench, curse one another but you can tell when you see it that they are local Romeo and Juliet."

What's Narada going to tell Shiva? Narada will be trying to argue that "Shiva, Krishna doesn't accept your offences." The first story Narada Muni mentions – I've already told it in Ukraine – is the story of Banasura. I'm going to make it short. This story proves that Krishna didn't accept any offences from Shiva. As we know, Shiva gave Banasura a boon because he played the *mridanga* very well. Banasura had a thousand arms and he played the *mridanga* so beautifully, that... So-o-o beautifully! And Shiva danced to this *mridanga*. He was dancing, the *mridanga* was playing. Eventually, when the dance was over, Shiva said, "Ask of me whatever you want!" And Banasura said, "Aha! Be my guard." That's what demons are. Actually, Shiva got a little angry but it was too late to go back on the promise, so, he became his guard and Banasura was travelling everywhere saying, "Now that I have Shiva for my guard there's nothing for me to be afraid of." And he began bullying everybody. Then he came to Shiva and said, "It seems that there's no one in this world for me to have a fight with." Finally, he captured Aniruddha. We all know this story about how Usha and Chitrlekha found Aniruddha by means of an identikit picture.

Usha had a dream and Chitralkha drew different identikits. It was the first recorded identikit picture in the history of humanity. Usha says, “Ah yes! That’s him!” Banasura captured a grandson of Krishna Himself. Aniruddha is Krishna’s grandson. Krishna arrived, being furious. The “Srimad Bhagavatam says that Krishna was so infuriated that He grabbed His *Sudarsana-cakra*. Now, one should really drive Krishna wild to make Him grab His *Sudarsana-cakra*. *Sudarsana-cakra* is the last thing, ultimate weapon, Krishna uses. We know, when Sisupala was insulting Krishna, He was sitting, and listening, and counting “One, two, three, four, five, six...” Sisupala went on. But when Krishna was driven wild, He seized His *Sudarsana-cakra*! When *Sudarsana-cakra* is in Krishna’s hands, nothing can withstand. Krishna was so furious with Banasura that He seized the *Sudarsana-cakra* and it started cutting off his arms – one after the other – it’s a good thing that he had lots of arms! When it cut off 996 arms out of one thousand leaving four of them, Shiva asked at that moment, “Krishna, please, spare this rascal.” Narada Muni says, “You asked to spare his life – and Krishna’s anger subsided at once. It only took you to say a prayer “Please, protect this rascal, spare his life” that Krishna was so overjoyed, his anger gone. He rejoiced, smiled, looked at Banasura and said, “From now on you are going to have an eternal four-handed body – not without reason did I leave four arms.” Krishna made him Shiva’s eternal associate, which Shiva didn’t even ask for. Narada says that even demigods rarely get such a boon. Why did he do that? Because of the love that’s between you. It only took Shiva to put a good word for him for Krishna’s heart to immediately melt and he said, “So be it, I’ll do everything you want me to. For you, for the sake of my love for you I’ll do whatever you want Me to.”

Narada Muni is giving this example to prove that Krishna doesn’t accept Shiva’s offences. When Brahma gave a boon to Hiranyakasipu and Nrisimhadev appeared, absolutely enraged, Brahma was standing in a corner hiding behind a pillar not to be, God forbid, seen. Nrisimhadev gave him a withering glance addressing him through clenched teeth, “Brahma, don’t you ever give such boons!” Brahma himself had said before that that “these words gave me the creeps and after that I gave a boon to Ravana.” In other words, Brahma has said before that Krishna is resentful when he out of foolishness gives boons to some demons and here Narada says, “You give boons and Krishna is just happy “Jaya! Haribol, Shiva!” Why? Because when people love each other there can’t be any offences. Krishna knows that Shiva gave this boon for a single purpose – to prove everyone Visnu’s superiority over himself; to show that even though I can be protecting a demon, there’s nothing I can do if he’s a demon or if he’s opposed to Krishna of Visnu.”

This is the first argument of a series of arguments Narada uses to prove Shiva’s greatness. Tomorrow we’re going to hear some more very important and powerful arguments from Narada’s mouth, and in two days in our third lecture after our *kirtana* we are going to hear Lord Shiva’s refutation and that’s going to be terrible refutation because it’s sure to smite us under the fifth rib. Thank you very much.

# Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”, lecture 5

September 22, 2011  
Bhakti Vijnana Goswami Maharaja

**Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”.**  
**Sadhu-sanga Festival**  
**Tuapse, 2011**

## **Annotation:**

Maharaja continues to glorify Shiva. Four proofs that Shiva and Krishna are intimate. The tales of Sudakshina, Jayadratha and Gargya. Shiva tolerates offences by devotees. The tale of Citraketu. Shiva asks Krishna to make him more worshipped than Krishna Himself. Krishna entrusted Shiva with bestowing *mukti*. Shiva dances naked with his wife.

Revelation: In spite of all this, Shiva retains his independence. Misconceptions of *bhakti*: close relationships with influential people, renunciation, possessing mystic powers etc.

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We’re going on with our seminar called “Meeting Lord Shiva” and this is, first of all, a meeting, that takes place within our hearts. When describing various conceptions of *bhakti* or different levels of *bhakti*, Sanatana Goswami means to say one simple thing, which is hard to understand, that from our point of view everything inferior to *vraja-bhakti* is no *bhakti* at all. In fact, we are fanatics. I find it hard to say but it’s a fact. What do I mean to say? I mean to say that our philosophy has a very lofty ideal, and although we accept all and everything and can sometimes pretend being broad-minded and liberal, actually, if we strictly follow our philosophy, we don’t accept anything. There’s only one thing we accept: pure and unconditional love of God.

It’s clear that this is an ideal, and everyone only hankers for this ideal, to a greater or lesser extent. This ideal is hard to attain in one’s life but one should on no account downgrade the ideal. We should be well aware of what this ideal is, what our ultimate goal is and realize that it’s only this ideal or attainment of this ideal that can make one absolutely and unconditionally happy. It’s not that someone’s bad and we’re good. It often happens that devotees get to be proud of themselves due to the wrong fanaticism, and this pride manifests itself in a disgusting way. Any kind of pride manifests itself in a disgusting way. Devotees get this perception that “we’re the only ones who are right, the rest are not”. That’s wrong. On no account should our intercourse with other people be touched by it. First of all, we should be very well aware of how far we are from the ideal we adhere to and come to other people with our arms pressed humbly, tolerate other people, serve other people while having a very good idea of what this ideal is. This ideal is brilliantly formulated in one verse by Srila Rupa Goswami:

*anyabhilasita-shunyam*  
*jnana-karmady-anavrtam*  
*anukulyena krishnanu-*  
*silanam bhaktir uttama*

There are two principal layers, which, actually, hide true *bhakti*, this real treasure, from us: the *karma* layer manifesting itself through our valuing certain things. We value wealth, fame, success, influence, a long and happy life. There’s also *the jnana* layer, which is much thinner, on the one hand, and much thicker on the other hand. Thinner in the sense that this *jnana* layer is unnoticeable, it’s thin, because it’s very hard to discern and notice, but it’s thick because it reaches very deep into our consciousness.

Yesterday, I was giving a lecture and at the end there came only one note saying «Is it true that upon maintaining celibacy for 12 years one develops all the mystic powers?» (laughter). That's true (laughter). This *jnana* layer is subtler – the desire for mystic powers, the desire for liberation, freedom from cares and the desire for some sort of power, because what are mystic powers but rule over people? Attachment to some regulations. It's a very thick layer because, according to our philosophy, it stretches up to Dwaraka. From our point of view, even the devotees in Dwaraka have this contamination. It's about such devotees as Rukmini Devi! It's frightening but it's a fact! This is not my analysis, it's Srila Sanatana Goswami's.

Actually, that's what our tale is about. About what pure *bhakti* is, about how to see that we're motivated by *jnana* and how it manifests itself in us. Because, again, it's much easier to mistake *bhakti* than *karma*. *Karma* is gross, undisguised and simple. *Jnana* is much more complicated. So, meeting Lord Shiva means facing certain motivation within us, facing this peculiar kind of contamination. Today, I'm going to start, and tomorrow's going to be the main day I'll be talking about what it is. Today, we'll be glorifying Lord Shiva with Narada's words, but I hope we'll be able to start to analyse this problem, which is so subtle and not so easy.

Yesterday, I was saying that it's very hard to comprehend devotees' actions, that one shouldn't judge devotees by their actions for a very simple reason. What do you think this reason is? (answer: "You could get it wrong.") Why can one get it wrong? Because without knowing or understanding the motives it's very easy to attribute certain motives to a pure devotee. A devotee has no desires. A true devotee has no desires, but, he's, nonetheless, acting. What's he doing is impossible to understand! And you'll always be tempted to interpret or explain his actions one way or another, according to your own lights, based on your own understanding. But a devotee has no material motive or material desires. We can easily understand psychology or actions of an ordinary person, or to be more exact, we can very easily predict actions or behaviour of primitive living entities. The more sophisticated the living entity is the more difficult it is to understand its actions. As far as some bacterium is concerned, well... everything is clear; a worm – more or less clear; a bug – not that clear already: it's sitting and sitting and sitting and then, all of a sudden it's up – why? Impossible to understand. To understand a cow is already harder because a cow loves its calf. Sometimes cows take their lives when their calf is taken away from them. A cow then refuses to eat and it's more difficult to understand. It's possible to understand a man when he's very much attached. The more he's attached the more he is like some reflexive machine or a karma machine, the easier it is to explain his actions. But the freer he becomes the harder it actually is to explain his course of actions, to understand why he is acting like that, how he's acting, why he's acting this way rather than that way.

I've already mentioned that at the *bhakti* level the main thing is the motive; in fact, a motive is what makes *bhakti bhakti*. At the *karma* level, when one is engaged in *karma-yoga*, the main thing is the action – the purity of it, the accuracy of it, punctuality, discipline and righteousness. The motive isn't so important. At the *jnana* level the main thing is one's inactivity, one's renunciation. But at the *bhakti* level the main thing is the impetus itself or the motive. Actually, from our point of view, *bhakti* becomes *bhakti* when I'm doing what I'm doing to please Krishna or my spiritual master, when it's my conscious criterion. Before I start acting, when I start acting, as soon as I get some inner impetus to activity, I should ask myself: well, actually, what's the reason for it?

Very often devotees don't do that, especially when it comes to some crucial things. What usually happens to us, which is excusable for the one at the *sadhaka* level, is that externally we act more or less normally. We know, we've learnt - a man is a pack animal, he joined this pack, called ISKCON, he knows how to act in this pack to continue to remain in it. But what about the motive? Who, actually, asks oneself questions? But as soon as one gets into a critical situation, that's where everything comes out. In a critical situation one forgets everything – forgets how to act, forgets about everything, and *sadhana* is, actually, dealing with our motives. Why am I doing it? What am I doing? Why am I chanting my rounds? Why am I going on the *sankirtana*? Why am I distributing books? Why am I giving the lecture? Why am I studying scriptures? So that this motive will become my inward nature.

I think I've already mentioned – I don't really remember – that Gopiparanadhana Prabhu had a phrase on his desk, which said: “*Bhajan* really begins when one's outside and inside are the same.” It was a framed picture. “*Bhajan*, or true service to Krishna begins when one's outside and inside are the same.” In fact this is the ideal we're hankering for. Where does the trouble lie with the motive? That it's not only others who don't understand our motives – we ourselves don't properly understand our motives. In most cases one fails to understand one's true motives. One explains it somehow to oneself, and it's usually a noble motive, we always have some good intentions, but we very often are not aware of our true motive. One side effect of this short seminar I'm now trying to prepare and give to you is, actually, to understand my own motive by means of some criteria available.

Now, I don't suggest you should get immersed in self-reflection or something like that. But it's just sometimes very good to take a detached view of what we're doing. What does Sanatana Goswami suggest here, what method is being suggested? It's a sort of practical stunt that Sanatana Goswami is, actually, suggesting that we try hard to understand our motive by trying to estimate what we really value, what is really dear to us or what we admire in others.

A *mataji* has recently approached me here, at the festival, saying: “Oh, you are so brilliant! So brilliant! You know the secret of eternal youth. You're not changing!” It's clear enough what motive is behind it, quite excusable for a *mataji*, though. But, actually, what I meant to say is that we've come here to learn *bhakti* and how is it we're learning it? Watching others, following other peoples' examples, admiring something. Here's the question I want you all to ask yourselves: “Am I learning *bhakti* or I'm learning something else? What do I admire? Am I learning here how to serve or am learning here how to enjoy, how to rule over and influence people? What is it I'm learning here?” I'm not putting it to vote - this is a matter of self-reflection. What do I really want to learn here? What do I appreciate, what do I admire? What do I want to become? It'll reveal my motive to me.

The answer is truly simple: I've come here to learn to serve. If I want to learn *bhakti*, what's *bhakti* is about then? *Bhakti*, love of God, manifests itself as service. When one loves, one serves. When one serves, one loves. At the same time, according to our philosophy, service is primary. The emotional state of love, the experience of love – experience, self-forgetfulness, self-sacrifice – which is the most exalted spiritual experience, comes after one has learnt how to serve, after one has learnt how to forget oneself while serving Krishna. Basically, this is the topic of our discussion.

Again, I'd like to give some definition of *bhakti* based on the Sanskrit meaning of the root “*bhaj*”, which “*bhakti*” originates from. *Bhakti* is active love in the service of the object of love. That is, we should clearly understand that, if we want love, to love means to serve and to serve means to love.

Okay, now we're going to tell a few stories related to Narada's glorification of Lord Shiva. Narada wants to explain how Shiva's *bhakti* manifests itself, how his intimate relationship with Krishna manifests itself. Yesterday, I explained about Narada's first argument. Actually, Narada will be speaking about three or four manifestations of Lord Shiva's *bhakti* altogether. We're going to make a summery at the end for everything to be clear. But the first thing he said was that “you're very close to Krishna, therefore, even if you seem to commit an offence Krishna doesn't see it as one.” Feel it? Is it an intimate? It is, it is. Don't worry, there's no catch here.

The Puranas tell numerous stories where Shiva pretends to be fighting Krishna; they're fighting, doing strange things to one another, but in doing so they love one another – they're just thick as thieves. Narada says, “Look you had bestowed boon on Banasura, the demon, the son of Maharaja Bali. And Krishna was very angry but it only took you to put in a good word for him, Krishna's heart melted immediately and He said, “Oh, he's going to be all right.”

This time Narada's approaching the same topic from the other side. This, virtually, is the same argument – an intimate relationship between Shiva and Krishna. The first argument was that Shiva commits offences but Krishna tolerates them. The other part of this same argument is that when one of Shiva's devotees asks him for a boon while having in mind to harm Krishna or His devotees, Shiva hesitates to later bestow this boon on him, which, eventually, causes the devotee's death.



In other words, in cases when Shiva's devotee filled with love for him is performing austerities, Shiva shows up and says, "Give me a chance to kill a Krishna's devotee." Shiva's very careful to say "Have it your way" and bestows a tricky boon on him. Sanatana Goswami gives three examples of how Shiva acts.

In other words, Shiva is very cautious to grant hasty boons, therefore, if you want to harm some of Krishna's devotees, you'd better worship Lord Brahma – you're going to get more tangible results. There are three interesting examples Sanatana Goswami gives here of, say, tricky boons. He says, "It's, actually, you who cheats your own devotees." A man, a devotee, labours for Shiva's sake, he serves Shiva and Shiva cheats him by not granting him what he desired because Shiva knows that he'll eventually harm Krishna's devotees. There are three stories. Which one shall I start with?

The first story is, perhaps, the most illustrative of all the three. This is the story of Sudakshina. Those of you who, I hope, have read the Krishna Book, 10th Canto of the "Srimad-Bhagavatam", know this story. Who knows the story of Sudakshina? Jai! Nice talking to educated people. Sudakshina was the son of king Kashi. In those days when Krishna ruled Dwaraka, Kashi was very tight with Paundraka. Who knows who Paundraka was? Paundraka made himself two additional papier-mâché arms. I don't really know what his arms were made from, he might have sewed on additional arms. Anyway, he had four arms and he declared himself Vasudeva. "From now on – he said – I am Vasudeva, and the rest of Vasudevas are just pretenders and cheaters." His subjects were delighted, so, they would tell him every morning, "You are Vasudeva! You are Vasudeva! You're God, and the rest are cheaters!" Eventually, Paundraka wrote an angry letter to Vasudeva Krishna, saying, "Hey, Krishna, I've put up long enough with You passing Yourself off as Vasudeva." He had a veneer, painted disc, a club, a lotus flower – as it should be, all the symbols were there. He wrote to Him this angry letter, "I've tolerated far too long, my patience has worn thin. You should lay down my symbols. They're mine." Krishna read that letter and said, "I will lay down these symbols but only on your head. I know where to put these symbols, and the disc in particular."

There was a battle, which didn't last long. Krishna just approached Paundraka asking, "Are you interested in My disc?" Slash! And Paundraka's head fell off along with his arms. Kashi, the King of Benares, stood up for his friend and Krishna, without a second thought, beheaded him, too, and threw his head towards Kashi's gates. When the son of Kashi, of Kashi-rajya, Sudakshana, saw this head, he got filled with hate for Krishna. He started to perform severe penances, worshipping Lord Shiva; he summoned *brahmanas* and asked, "Who is more powerful than Krishna?" and the *brahmanas* said, "Shiva, of course. Who can be more powerful than Krishna? The great Shiva only." – "What should one do to please Shiva?" – "One should perform austerities, one should chant *mantra om namo shivaya*." Attentively and with feeling.

They performed a huge *yajna*, they were chanting this mantra with Sudakshina, they were trying so hard: he was so eager to take vengeance on Krishna this way or other. Sometimes people become great devotees when they crave revenge - such things also happen.

Have you ever experienced that? At last, Shiva appeared before Sudakshina and asked, "What do you want?" He replied, "I want to burn down Dwaraka. I want you to give me the chance, I want you to give me strength." Shiva said, "Don't, don't tell me the details. I'm going to explain everything to you as it is. You perform *abhicar yajna*." *Abhicar yajna* is the sacrifice one has to perform if one wants to get someone killed. "From there, special Agni will appear, the incarnation of the god of fire, and destroy everything you want if it's directed against those hating *brahmanas*". But he whispered this small condition. "Agni will do everything you want him to if it's directed against those who don't like *brahmanas* very much."

But when one is possessed by passion he only hears what he wants to. When Sudakshina heard this benediction, Shiva got extremely enthusiastic. Immediately did he make a fire, immediately did he start to perform *abhicar yajna*. All the *brahmanas* were performing this *abhicar yajna* with great enthusiasm, and Agni appeared from within and asked, "What should I do?" He replied, "Go to Dwaraka and burn this Vasudeva Krishna!" Agni said, "I'll, certainly, go. I'm giving no promises but I'll go." When Agni came to Dwaraka, at first people got frightened, but Krishna sent His Sudarshana Chakra and he asked, "What do you want?" He replied, "I've come here to burn something down..." He said, "Follow Me, I'll show you who you should burn." Under the wise guidance of *Sudarshana Chakra* this same Agni came and burnt Sudakshina and all the *brahmanas* who had performed the sacrifice, and then, to crown it all,

Sudarshana Chakra destroyed Kashi - something had to be done. The point of this story is that Narada says, "You give boons but how do you give them?"

There's another story explaining how boons should be given. To give a boon is a special art and some people reached perfection in giving boons with some special, in-built catches. When the devotees had to move from "Dinamo" (translator's note: Dinamo is an underground station in Moscow), the Government of Moscow granted us their boon. They said, "Move to that land – the land is great, really! Why do you need this old building, you can build a new one." And it was a written boon: a decree by the Government of Moscow... But it contained a small catch: a few months later they said, "There's a mistake here, so, we're taking everything back." In other words, this is what Lord Shiva does when knowing that some fools are trying to use him against Krishna.

The following story is the story of Jayadratha. We know Jayadratha was also performing severe austerities to please Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva appeared before him. Actually, Jayadratha was performing these austerities to take revenge on the Pandavas, though, one would think: why take revenge on the Pandavas? You first learn to behave yourself. Jayadratha was the king of Sindh province, present-day Pakistan. He was going somewhere to get married. Everything had already been arranged with some girl - he was supposed to marry her. He already had one wife - she was Duryodhana's sister - and he was on his way to take another one. He was passing through a forest when he saw Draupadi. He fell for Draupadi and sent his aide. The aide's name was Kotik (translator's note: Kotik means "kitty" in Russian): it came to pass that the aide had this beautiful Russian name. The king said, "Go and find out who she is." The aide found out, came back and said, "That's Draupadi." He thought to himself, "Well, Draupadi... Why should I go somewhere if there's such a beauty living here in the forest - I'm going to marry her!" He came and said, "Hey, marry me, beauty!" Draupadi replied, "Jayadratha, are you crazy? I already have five husbands, I don't need another one, I can't! Dear me! What proposals you're making! But Jayadratha was already possessed by lust; the lust permeating all of his body was so strong that he seized Draupadi. She said, "You're going to pay for this!" He got her into his chariot and fled. When soon Bhima learnt about it he and Arjuna rushed after Jayadratha and, eventually, Jayadratha abandoned his chariot, abandoned Draupadi, abandoned everything and rushed away, but Bhima grabbed him and before Yudhishtira could start defending him, he worked him over pretty well. Jayadratha came with shiners, all of his face swollen. Bhima hustled him into Yudhishtira's room saying, "Do to him whatever you want. Shall I kill him? You say – we'll be delighted to kill him. He dared to infringe on our wife's honour!"

Yudhishtira replied, "Well, no, then our sister Lakshmana, Duryodana's sister, will be widowed. On no account should we do that. We'll let you go, however, you'll first be our servant." Then with great pleasure Bhima shaved his head leaving five *shikhas*. Just imagine how beautiful Jayadratha looked with five *shikhas* sticking out. That's a special type of hairdo, which means that the one is a servant. It's only servants who could have such strange hairdos.

Jayadratha developed vehement hatred for the Pandavas. He was worshipping Lord Shiva and his penances were so severe – a fire was always burning, he didn't take any food. Eventually, Lord Shiva appeared before him saying, "What do you want?" He replied, "I want to defeat all the Pandavas." Shiva laughed on hearing that. He said, "It doesn't hurt to want. Even I won't be able to defeat Arjuna! How can I grant you such a boon? Okay, have it your way, – in one day you're going to defeat four of the five Pandavas and only if Arjuna is not there."

Incredibly inspired by that boon, Jayadratha arranged for Arjuna to be lured to fight elsewhere. At that moment there was set up a *chakra-vyuha*; the army of the Kauravas was arranged in the form of a *chakra-vyuha*, and there was the only one among the Pandavas who knew how to break the grid, how to penetrate it – and that was Abhimanyu. Abhimanyu penetrated it – no one else could – so thick the phalanx was, it couldn't be penetrated. Jayadratha stood at the entrance and, one by one, Bhima, Yudhishtira, Nakula and Sahadeva tried to enter it. But, much to everyone's surprise, Jayadratha defeated each of them. He beat off Bhima's, Yudhishtira's, Nakula's and Sahadeva's attacks. We know that inside that *vyuha* seven commanders killed unarmed Abhimanyu. That's why Arjuna later took revenge on Jayadratha. But yet, Shiva cheated Jayadratha again. Instead of giving him a boon in full, he said, "Well,

I guess you'll work it out – you're going to defeat four and in one day only. That's the only thing I'm giving to you."

The third example is quite interesting – it's about Gargya. Who knows what Gargya was. Gargya was a great *brahmana* who was engaged in arduous penance. He was a *brahmachari*, though married (laughter). Such things happen. He was married to the sister of the Yadavas' priest, and since he was performing austerities they were naturally childless. He once came to visit the Yadavas and his brother-in-law started to taunt him. He said, "You're impotent. Impotent – and there's nothing you can do about that." And the whole Yadava clan was there to hear. The Yadavas burst out laughing, "Ha-ha! Impotent!" Gargya looked at them and said, "I'll show you how impotent I am! I'll make you see!"

He repaired to the ocean shore and started to eat iron sand. He lived upon iron dust for twelve years. Nowadays, people who want to get into the Guinness book also eat iron dust. He ate iron dust to make his body as hard as iron. Eventually, Shiva appeared before him. He said, "I want a son of iron!" Shiva said, "Have it your way! You're going to have a son of iron!" "And I wish my son would kill the Yadavas and avenge me." Shiva replied, "Have it your way! Your son will scare the Yadavas." And who did Gargya beget? Kálayavana. He copulated with the wife of the Yavana king – the Yavana king had invited the *brahmana* to conceive a son in his wife's womb, and he begot this terrible Kálayavana. And this Kalayavana once scared the Yadavas a little.

Again does Narada remind Shiva about that. He says, "Look, your eternal servants approach you saying "give us a boon to harm devotees", which you never do."

He offers another argument, which is to prove an intimate relationship between Shiva and Krishna. There are, actually, two more very interesting arguments about this intimacy. He says, "Look, how the third thing manifests itself: when a devotee of Vishnu offends you out of foolishness - comes to Krishna and offends you – what do you do?" Is Shiva easily offended. Yes, he is. But not by a devotee of Vishnu. If a Krishna *bhakta* or a Vishnu *bhakta* comes to him and offends, Shiva says, "Hare Krishna!" and doesn't take any offences as such. Which story is it? "Srimad-Bhagavatam", Canto 6? The story of Chitraketu who was flying in his airship and saw Shiva surrounded by sages. Shiva was completely nude. He had Parvati sitting on his lap. And the sages were sitting. They were speaking on some spiritual topics. Chitraketu laughed at seeing that, "Ha-ha-ha!" When Parvati heard his laughter, she flew into a rage! She cursed him saying, "You scoundrel! You're going to be a demon!" Chitraketu got down, bowed down to her and said, "If I should become a demon, I will." Shiva didn't take any offence at all then. Parvati did, she felt hurt and cursed him, and Shiva said, "Look at him. He's Krishna's devotee. He doesn't fear anything – he doesn't care where to be – in hell or in heaven, a demon or a demigod. He doesn't care at all! He is a true devotee, he doesn't have a shadow of fear. And instead of taking offence, Shiva started to glorify Chitraketu.

Narada says, "Look, how close you are – if Krishna's devotee offends, you tolerate these offences because you know he's related to the one you love. Your love of God is so strong, that even if someone dear to Him offends you, you don't take these as offences, even if he offends you out of ignorance." Are Shiva and Krishna intimate? The revelation is following. But we have to first feel it deeply.

The fourth argument offered by Narada. He says, "Moreover, Shiva, you once came to Vishnu and said, "No one worships me. Do it so that from now on I'll be more worshipped than You." In his commentary Sanatana Goswami explains that at that moment Shiva sort of opposed Narada, "Narada, look what happened to me! What a *bhakta* I am if I once approached my Lord, the one I worship, Vishnu, and said, "Vishnu, do it so that I am worshipped more than You." And Narada says, "Yes, right. You went to your Lord and said, "Do it so that I am worshipped more than You." Because you are a *bhakta*."

Can one perceive the logic of devotees? Sadhu Maharaja has a book called "Asymmetric dialectics". To cut a long story short, the point is that it's impossible to understand anything. Sanatana Goswami explains what Narada means to say when giving such examples. This example is recorded in the Puranas because Shiva once really thought "no one worships me" and went to Vishnu with this request. But Sanatana Goswami explains what the point is. He says that, actually, - just imagine – Vishnu is very modest and Shiva came to Him to ask, "I want to be Your servant." But he knew if he asked Him "I want to be Your

servant”, Vishnu would feel embarrassed.” Imagine, some big guy approaches you saying, “I want to be Your servant.” You feel embarrassed when a high-ranking... And suddenly Shiva himself comes. Therefore Sanatana Goswami says, “You asked Him to be worshipped more than God Himself because it’s only a devotee who can be worshipped more than God. So, instead of asking “Make me Your servant” you asked for it but in this peculiar way. Because who can be worshipped more than God Himself? A devotee only. This is a well-known fact.

Once Krishna was playing dice with Rukmini. They staked and Rukmini lost everything she could, which left her with nothing to stake, so, she was thinking of what else to stake and said, “Well, okay, I’m going to stake You.” Logical? Logical. Krishna belongs to her, she has the right, considering she has nothing else. So, Krishna had to stake something to surpass Himself and he started to think of what to stake. He couldn’t stake something less than His wife did, it wouldn’t have been serious - He had to stake something more. So, Krishna kept thinking and then suddenly banged Himself on the head, saying, “I got it. I’m staking My devotees.” Feel it? Asymmetric dialectics.

This is actually a quotation from the “Srimad-Bhagavatam”: *mad-bhakta-pujabhyadhika*. Krishna tells Uddhava in the Eleventh Canto of the “Srimad-Bhagavatam” that “My bhakta deserves more worship than I Myself.” *Adhika* means “more”, *pujabhyadhika* – even more than I Myself. My *bhakta* must be more worshipped than Me. Krishna says that “I Myself am following him to get the dust of his lotus feet. This dust of his lotus feet purifies Me and all the three worlds.”

Sanatana Goswami says, “See what a great *bhakta* you are. You came to Krishna and said, “Make me Your *bhakta*, so, in this way I’m going to be more worshipped than You.” You wanted to be a *bhakta* but asked for it in such a way as to avoid embarrassing Krishna.”

Thus he gave these four different proofs of their intimate relationship. He gave a few other examples to glorify Shiva’s *bhakti*. Another example he’s giving is, “Shiva, you’re so great that Krishna entrusted you with bestowing *mukti*.” Listen carefully. Narada’s telling Shiva, “Shiva, you’re *mukti-prada*.” We know who can bestow *mukti*, liberation. *Mukunda*. Who’s *Mukunda*? Krishna. *Mukunda* is the one who bestows *mukti* or liberation. *Mukti* is a sublime thing. It’s like, let’s say... some simple example... it’s like getting an American visa in the 90th. *Mukti* was about as much appreciated as an American visa in Russia. Now imagine – Narada is saying, “Look and see how much Lord trusts you! Basically, Lord entitles you to issue visas to the spiritual world!” We all know that it may be a profitable business, don’t we? You can sell these visas under-the-counter. To give someone this right is to have absolute trust in one. If Shiva is entitled to give *mukti*, that means that Krishna trusts him implicitly. He continues by saying that “it’s not only you he gave this right to, he even gave this right to your wife, Parvati.”

Further he offers the most devastating argument. I’m going to enumerate these arguments and make a small analysis of all these things, of what it’s all about. This is the last argument by Narada. He says, “Moreover, you’re completely filled with *bhava* and love of Krishna. Your love is so huge that, possessed by this love, you start dancing. When you’re dancing you lose awareness of things around you, like crazy. *Unmada* – you’re dancing intoxicated with the love of God. In complete abandon, forgetting yourself, forgetting your family, forgetting rules of decorum – you become an *avadhuta* tearing off your clothes. Being in ecstasy, you’re dancing naked with your wife Parvati.

Aren’t you impressed? (laughter) It mightn’t be so uncommon for the modern civilization (laughter) but in the Vedic civilization a husband and wife never dance together. In the Vedic civilization a woman sees her husband as God, her *pati*, her Lord. They don’t dance – for a woman to dance with her husband is an unheard of thing! In our civilization it’s not such a rare thing because there are no wives, there are generally... Well, it doesn’t matter (laughter). Narada says, “And I saw it with my own eyes. I used to tell some stories from the Puranas or something like that... But this time I saw it for myself: in ecstasy you’re dancing with your wife in full view of everyone. That’s okay if you were dancing somewhere, God knows where. But everyone sees you dancing. Can you beat it that one loves Krishna so much!” Feel it? *Avadhuta*, absolute *avadhuta*! Everything forgotten, all standards discarded! The word “*avadhuta*” means the one who disregards all social etiquette, all the standards, all the rules - *ava-dhuta*. *Dhuta* means discard, *ava* means discard completely. *Dhuta* also means take a bath, the one who’s given up taking baths – this is another explanation or meaning of the word *avadhuta*. In our civilization there are also lots

of *avadhutas* (laughter). Narada says, “But you haven’t discarded the rules just for the sake of it but because you’re *bhava-avista* because you’re absorbed in love of God, and, filled with this love, you’re dancing and singing!” Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. But don’t tear off your clothes. Sometimes one can also see people going into ecstasy during *kirtanas* and... I keep recalling this story thinking, “He’s going to get undressed in full view of everyone.” Is it proof of love? It is. Even Krishnadas Kaviradja Goswami says in the Chaitanya Caritamrta: *radhikara prema -- guru ami -- sisya nata*. “The love of Radha is My teacher, and I am Her dancing pupil. Her love makes Me dance.” Is it love? Lovers always dance.

And now to the revelation. Please, don’t take what I’m going to say, as some coercion. Not for nothing did I say that our philosophy is absolutely black and white, and we’re not going to discuss it in order to humiliate Shiva. Shiva himself will be saying very tough things. But, actually, there are three things or arguments enumerated by Narada, which, unfortunately, aren’t indicative of an intimate relationship existing between Shiva and Krishna. Just the opposite, they’re indicative of one simple thing: Shiva preserves his independence. Love is a voluntary thing, absolute renunciation of one’s independence. I don’t want any more independence, I want complete dependence. Basically, Narada offered three arguments to prove love of Krishna.

The first argument proves Shiva’s special status, Shiva’s special nature of *bhakti*, or love, that he has an intimate relationship with Krishna. But this intimacy manifests itself, let’s say, in a very odd way. Sometimes, we also tend to brag about our close relationship with someone in order to get something. If one has some influential acquaintances, and even if one is not very familiar with them but once happened to see or be in one room with them, one is sure to long tell everyone about that, “Oh, yes, yes, I was once with Vladimir Vladimirovich... It came to pass that...”

If people are acquainted with some influential person, they tend to talk about it or sometimes boast about it but it not at all means an intimate relationship. It’s frequently our conception of *bhakti*; we think that *bhakti* manifests itself as a relationship with someone very influential enabling one to take advantage of this relationship and benefit from it. How do people usually judge *bhakti*? If someone can give them a boon, he’s a great devotee, isn’t he? Another man also takes advantage of it. Like there was once one great *guru* who gave some boons by using his connection with this divine energy. That’s no intimacy at all. And what’s the most frustrating about it? Listen, it’s the message of this seminar. That this *jnana* layer or, ultimately, desire for liberation manifests itself through one preserving one’s independence and ego, false ego. Even if one worships someone – when worshipping one remains a rival of the worshipped one. He doesn’t have a true intimate relationship or true desire to please the one one worships. Sometimes our relationship with our spiritual master may be tainted by that. Yes, we need this relationship. Why? “Oh, I have a great *guru*! I’m going to get something from this great *guru*!” But in reality we don’t desire to make him happy. We desire to preserve our independence and it’s a sign of... Don’t be disturbed, for God’s sake, there’s nothing wrong with it – we just should understand clearly: here’s where we’re cheating.

There are three things Narad is making a point of – he’s, actually, describing the perception of *bhakti* by people confusing *bhakti* and *jnana*. First, people’s perception of *bhaktas*. *Bhaktas* should be renounced. Ask any ordinary man about his vision of a saintly person. A saint is the one who has no possessions, who’s rejected everything, sleeping on bare ground, having one meal in three days. A saint? A saint, right? A *sadhu*? A *sadhu*.

In other words, from the point of view of an ordinary person he should differ from an ordinary person: an ordinary man has attachments, a *sadhu* is expected to be absolutely unattached. We remember Gadadhara Pandit who, seeing Pundarika Vidyanidhi lounging on luxurious silk cushions, having fruit, smoking from a hookah, thought to himself, “Hare Krishna.” Mukunda had been telling him, “I’m taking you to a great *bhakta*.” A great *bhakta*... Music is playing... Why? It’s the same thing. Here Narada’s saying, “Look, you have everything: your wife, who is the material energy itself; she possesses all the riches, your wealth exceeds anything and everything but you ignore it just dancing like insane and lacking in clothes at that.”

The first argument, which is the last to be offered by Narada, is, undoubtedly, renunciation. The second point is influence and power. According to common views, a saint should live somewhere in a shack, should observe a fast and be absolutely renounced.

Another perception of sainthood or *bhakti*, devotion, is that such one possesses mystic powers. Right? If one heals, is he a devotee? Certainly! Go and heal people, raise them from dead. If he can raise from dead, is he a devotee? A *sadhu*? A saint? Yes, he is. Lord Shiva can bestow *mukti*. *Mukti* is complete deliverance from suffering. Someone comes, touches us and we feel better, and we're thinking, "A saint has come." If someone puts his hands on us and does the healing, we say, "A saint has come." Shiva, the greatest saint, can give *mukti*, he can deliver you from all suffering. This is the second argument. In other words, it's power or mystic powers a man possesses. That's our perception, that's what we appreciate, that's how we perceive devotion. It means that we're tainted with *jnana*.

And the last point is what I was touching upon at the beginning – it's, so to speak, seeming intimacy, which is, actually, for the sake of getting something from somebody where there's no intimacy of the heart. Not a single episode shows that Krishna and Shiva have intimacy of the heart. Well, yes, they interact somehow, he's very careful to give boons, tolerates when offended by devotees, etc. but there's no intimacy of the heart, there's no love.

When we value such things, when we get this perception, it means that we don't, actually, value *bhakti*, we value *jnana*. Here we have this clearest and ultimate image or perception. Tomorrow we're going to hear Shiva refuting these things. We have to finish, it's time.

There will be a few other verses from this part. What's going to happen? Narada saw Parvati who was there, and thought, "I'm glorifying Shiva and if I don't glorify her, God knows what she's going to have to say about me." So, there goes – and the women are going to be pleased – glorification of Parvati followed by Shiva refuting Narada's arguments, tears in his eyes.

That is, again I'm trying to explain very complicated things we have to know to tell *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is willingness to serve to make the one we serve happy, because I put all my life into him. Just like *gopis* say in the last verse of Gopi-gita: *yat te sujata-caranamburuham stanesu* – the *gopis* say, "Our life rests only in You. You took away our lives. When You feel hurt, we feel hurt. You've left, You've abandoned us." The *gopis* are not crying on the bank of the Jamuna because Krishna's abandoned them, because they feel sorry for themselves. They're crying and saying, "Where are You roaming in the forest? There are thorns and Your feet are so tender that when we're placing them on our breasts, we fear that they will be hurt. And you're wandering there, in the forest, doing God knows what. Come soon! You're feeling bad because our lives rest on You. Your pain is our pain, Your happiness is our happiness."

This is the standard we should eventually reach some day if we follow Srila Prabhupada, by chanting the holy names and studying the scriptures. But very often – and I'd like to give this task or suggest giving it a thought – what do we appreciate in others, what is our perception of *bhakti*, of sainthood. Who do you think is a *guru*? Why are we attracted to the spiritual master? What is it that appeals to us?

This analysis will reveal to us something about our own motives, about what we really want. Well, that's all, I'm sorry if I might have hurt someone. Thank you very much.

## Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”, lecture 6

September 23, 2011  
Bhakti Vijnana Goswami Maharaja

**Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”.**  
**Sadhu-sanga Festival**  
**Tuapse, 2011**

### **Annotation:**

Questions: about chanting the holy name; about learning *slokas* by heart; what kind of service one should be engaged in; how to get over *karma-misra-bhakti*; can one avoid *Vaisnavas* in order to avoid offences; feeling like you don't belong here.

Glorification of Parvati. The story of Shiva telling Parvati a story from the Srimad-Bhagavatam (Sukadeva's appearance). Shiva's response to glorification. Explaining that any glorification is a lie. Shiva admits that he is *sarva-abhiman*, the source of pride.

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I've been thinking about these wonderful Srila Prabhupada's words. Srila Prabhupada said once that nothing can be, actually, changed in this life; that the law of karma is so severe that one can hardly change anything. The amount of money that comes to us, whether we want it or not, is predetermined and even if we find some tricky way to get more than we are supposed to, we are going either to lose it or have it taken away from us. Some other experiences we gain here - of family happiness, happiness of association with the dear ones - are more or less predestined. Or, rather, more destined than not. Everything people strive for is predestined this way or other. Whether you are striving or not, you are only going to get what you are supposed to, like in the USSR. Therefore, Srila Prabhupada said, "There is only one thing that's not destined where one can make some significant contribution of taking some effort - it's Krishna consciousness, therefore, the only area where one should make an effort is to develop Krishna consciousness; there's no other area where one should make an effort - it's going to come naturally, without any effort. At least, almost without effort. By "effort" I don't mean some external physical effort. We should take effort in order to exist in this material world. But as far as our heart's impulses and desires are concerned, we should only apply our energy within Krishna consciousness. The rest is pointless, the rest doesn't matter at all.

Before I continue our interesting topic - meeting Lord Shiva - I am going to answer a few questions I got yesterday. There's a very interesting question concerning chanting of the holy name and, since it's *ekadasi* today it makes sense to talk about it. By the way, there is also another question I was forbidden to read aloud or even give a hint, so, if you want to get an answer to that, please, approach me after the lecture, otherwise it'll be difficult for me to answer it.

The question about chanting the holy name is quite interesting, "Senior devotees say that if we put emotions into our chanting we chant on the level of mind. Thus, we seem to be on a lower level and one should chant on the level of intelligence."

I don't know what level the holy name should be chanted on but I know one should undoubtedly chant it with emotion. Emotions are, certainly, generated by the mind, but they occur when one develops a very strong desire on the level of the intelligence, *buddhi*. This allows to engage both our mind and intelligence simultaneously. If I have a desire that this way or other I want to reach Krishna, I want to become closer to Him, I want to please Krishna, I want, after all, to see Krishna, to fall in love with Him, date Him... Does anyone want to date Him? But it's not only the mind that's working. The intelligence is working, too, because the intelligence is an active force, an engine, so to say, helping one to fulfill one's desires. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid to chant on the level of the mind, on the level of the intelligence - actually, on all the levels. The main thing one needs is an ardent desire. We only develop this desire in the process of listening to Srila Prabhupada, the *Vaisnavas* repeating the words of Srila Prabhupada and

the words of the scriptures. Desire is a contagious thing. You can catch it.

I've chosen a few related questions. Another question is about learning *slokas*. I was asked, "You keep saying that one should learn *slokas*. What is the right motive for learning them?"

I should be careful not to devote the entire lecture to this. As a matter of fact, *slokas* are alive. *Slokas* can bestow mercy on us. Anyone who developed taste for learning *slokas* knows that at some point, as one keeps chanting one and the same *sloka*, it suddenly reveals itself to one. All at once, out of causeless mercy the deep meaning reveals itself and when Srila Prabhupada and *acaryas* explain some *slokas*, you can't but marvel! In fact, it's their service to the transcendental sound. *Slokas* carry the transcendental idea, Krishna's transcendental image – they are alive, truly alive. The Krishna Book contains the prayers of the Vedas personified. The personified Vedas and Upanishadas are alive. A *sloka* is alive. Madana Mohan told me how he once came to Krishna Balaram Mandir for the *mangala-arati* in time to hear Nama-kirtana by Bhaktivinoda Thakura – *vibhāvarī śeṣa, āloka-praveśa, nidrā chāri' uṭho jīva*. He said, "Suddenly at some point I was taken over by this mood, by these words and the rest and then a waterfall came down on me. I suddenly started to see and hear how everything is connected – all of these images, all of this chain, the entire spiritual world that revealed itself." Actually, *slokas* are the gates to the spiritual world. If one, consciously, of course, chants them, trying to get to their essence, knowing the meaning of each word, trying to meditate on their message, they, actually become ones props. One gets to understand that *slokas* become the basis of one's Krishna consciousness. They are like a foundation on piles. There are a few consolidation piles – and the rest lies on them. Therefore, by no means should one disregard these things. This is a gift. Srilas Prabhupada shared these treasures with us. There are tremendous *slokas*. But a taste for poems doesn't come soon, even those in Russian. Well, perhaps, it comes soon for the poems like, "Rain rain go away, come again another day..." but poems - and that's the essence of them – are the fountain of meaning. Absorbed in this meaning, in this emotion, one gets access to the spiritual world. Some *slokas* make a very clear picture, and if one remembers them, one can see this picture. The most beautiful *sloka* from the Srimad-Bhagavatam is *sloka* 5 from Chapter 21 of the 10<sup>th</sup> Canto, from Venu-gita where the *gopis*, separated from Krishna, are at their homes seeing the picture of Krishna coming to the forest with His friends:

*barhāpīḍam̐ naṭa-vara-vapuḥ karṇayoḥ karṇikāram̐ bibhrad vāsaḥ kanaka-kapiśam̐ vaijayantīm̐ ca mālām̐ randhrān veṅor adhara-sudhayāpūrayan gopa-vṛndair vṛndāraṇyam̐ sva-pada-ramaṇam̐ prāviśad gīta-kīrtiḥ*

Feel it? Krishna enters the forest, He's playing His flute filling the holes of His flute with the nectar of His lips; he's wearing a peacock-feather, a yellow garment, a lotus - *karṇikāra* - flower on His ear. The cowherd boys around Him are happy; they are jumping, singing His glories; he enters - *vṛndāraṇyam̐ sva-pada-ramaṇam̐* – the forest of Vrindavana, beautifying it with the marks of His footprints. *Prāviśad gīta-kīrtiḥ* – he enters the forest to the singing of His glories.

On the whole, in short, *slokas*... But the main thing is: what is love? Has anybody thought about it? Love is a mutual interest – I am interested to know more about Krishna, about what He thinks, what He says, about the way He thinks – and all of these are in His *slokas*, in the *slokas* He recites or in the *slokas* describing Him. I get interested, I accumulate it and the more I get interested in Krishna, the more – believe it or not - Krishna gets interested in us. Krishna starts thinking, "Wow! My devotee lives in Rostov-on-Don in *kali-yuga*! Haribol! He is a crane operator! Even such things happen in this world!"

Bhaktivinoda Thakura explains the secrets of *bhajana* (*bhajana-rahasya* means the secrets of *bhajana*), and Bhaktisiddhanata Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada describes how Bhaktivinoda Thakura chanted *japa*. He read some *sloka* and then chanted *japa* in the mood of this *sloka*. He put the concentrated mood or picture of this *sloka* to the Hare Krishna mantra because Hare Krishna can be filled with any sense. We draw this sense out of a *sloka* and chant Hare Krishna along with this *sloka*.



Therefore, *slokas* are one of the most powerful tools of generating in oneself thoughts about Krishna. They are our friends who can come to us unexpectedly in some difficult situation, who can reveal some picture and explain things. So, Hare Krishna, learn *slokas*. The main thing is that they are very easy to learn – you don't need anything for that. All it takes is to repeat a *sloka* once a day and you are sure to learn it in forty days. There's no need to exert oneself – you just need to know the meaning of the words to understand it but no strain. Those listening to my lectures must know *ajanu-lambita-bhujau kanakavadatau*. Have you remembered that? You listen to it forty times and you got it. Only. Somebody says, "I can't memorize." Don't memorize it - just chant and it will come itself – they will get in to stay forever, and at the moment of death you will be chanting some *sloka*:

*krishna tvadiya-pada-pankaja-panjarantam  
adyaiva me visatu manasa-rajahamsah*

I have tried to connect the three questions, immediately relevant to the topic of our today's lecture. Today, I am going to speak on what is ego and how this ego – *ahankara* – hampers one in executing one's devotional service. Yesterday I was asked a few very important questions related hereto. And there was one very curious, although all of the questions are good. The first one mightn't be very relevant, but, nevertheless, "What service should one do – the one one is naturally inclined to or the opposite? The one that one has a liking to or not?"

One should seek the service, which doesn't come easy, which one has no taste for so that the service doesn't seem a bowl of cherries. A good question. As a matter of fact, on the one hand pure devotees don't care, but on the other hand they are happy to have difficulties as they go. Pure devotees get ecstatic. Bhaktivinoda Thakura said, "No pain, no gain." For pure devotees overcoming difficulties is a chance to show their love for Krishna. Therefore, pure devotees like queen Kunti pleads, "Krishna, grant me difficulties." But when Krishna sends us problems one after another, we plead with Him. We don't plead, we howl. So, don't ask for difficulties – they will come anyway, there is no need for that. This world will always have difficulties in store for us. The point is that when they come we should accept them without having to artificially look for them. One should do what one likes, what comes easily because one will be able to do it better, in a more concentrated way, with much purity, in the long run. We'll have to deal with difficulties as they come. We should seek them. If we are doing what we like it'll be easier for us to do with a pure heart, like a service. Because if we are doing something we don't like and know that we aren't going to get a reward for that, it feels like masochism. As if it's not enough that we don't like it, we refuse to get any reward by saying, "I am going to do what I don't like, and I don't need any reward for that!" I'd rather you did what you like while saying, "I don't need any reward because I like it all the same."

In other words, at the first stage, one should try to find something that fits one's nature. Later, on higher levels, one can do anything, even what is not inherent in one's nature. While doing it, one will feel Krishna's special mercy.

The next question is already relevant. It sounds like this, "How can one get over the stage of *karma-misra-bhakti*?"

My first answer to this question was that to soon overcome the desire for *karma* or some fruits or enjoyable things coming from performing *bhakti*, one should hear. Pure *bhakti* comes when we are listening and developing a pure desire, "I want Krishna, I don't want any of these, it's not interesting." But there's another answer to this question, very important and directly related to the topic of our lecture. What is *karma-misra-bhakti*? *Karma-misra-bhakti* is *bhakti* with *ahankara*, with one's sense of separatedness. *Ahankara* is the notion of "I am acting", and since I

am acting I can bring Krishna my fruits out of generosity. In the long run, one gets over this stage of *karma-misra-bhakti* when one has overcome one's false ego. And the false ego is the notion of "I can, I want to and I do it." *Ahankara-vimudhatma kartaham iti manyate. Kartaham* – I am acting. One is thinking, "I am the one who acts; I am going to be successful; I am the cause of everything that's going on here – nothing would be here but for me." Feel it?

Let's get back to Bhagavad-gita for a moment and see what Krishna is doing to Arjuna. He delays telling Arjuna the truth. Why? Because Arjuna has a big ego. Of course, he's a devotee; let's put it this way – he's acting like he has a big ego. We know when he was on his last journey to *maha-prasthan*, he entered heaven. There's still a ravine on the way from Badarikasram, which the Pandavas used to go along up to heaven. It is called the *Svarga* ravine. If you walk along about 30 or 40 kilometres, there are still yogis living there, Tapovan, but you won't be able to reach it, don't worry. Arjuna wasn't. At some point he fell. It's hard to walk there because one should go up and it's very high, there's almost no oxygen, the air is rarified. Dina Chaitanya and I have been there recently. We had walked about 5 km and were almost dead because we had reached quite high.

When Arjuna fell, Bhima who was following Yudhisthira, asked the latter, "Why has Arjuna fallen? What's the reason?" Without turning back Yudhisthira replied, "Because before the battle of Kuruksetra he had boasted saying "I alone will kill them in one day without anyone's help." Feel the ego? All this *maha-prasthan* *lila* is meant to show how, in the long run, the ego leads one to death, causes one's fall. Pride is the cause of fall. But, this way or other, Arjuna has this ego, therefore Krishna delays telling him the most important things. He knows – Arjuna is not going to hear them. One can only hear things related to *bhakti* and surrender - *saranagati* - when one's ego has diminished. Therefore everybody takes to Krishna consciousness following a crisis when their ego diminishes. It's only at such a moment that they hear something. Otherwise, they should first listen to Audarya Dhama long and maybe then it will bring home to them. And Krishna did it to Arjuna. He said to him, "Come on, Arjuna! *Karma-yoga ki jai!* Astanga-yoga! Oof! Cool! Meditation!"

Arjuna was listening to that and then Krishna said, "Now, look!" Boom! The universal form! And Arjuna's ego became tiny and at that moment Krishna said:

*sarva-dharman parityajya  
mam ekam saranam vraja  
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo  
moksayisyami ma sucah*

/B-g 18.66/

Disappointed people are mostly attracted to us because being in crisis one hears what he is supposed to be told. Actually, one can get over the stage of *karma-misra-bhakti* when one despairs of one's own ability to achieve something including in one's spiritual life.

I've come across one amazing comparison I liked a lot, a metaphor. It's a Bengali metaphor – the residents of Bengal like fish. Srila Prabhupada once said, "Fish fried in mustard sauce is very delicious." So, he was asked, "Srila Prabhupada, how do you know?" And he replied, "I was told." (laughter) The point is that people in Bengal eat fish – there are lots of fishers there. The metaphor is very beautiful. Has anyone ever gone fishing? You don't need to raise your hands. When people are fishing they usually scatter bait (I haven't fished myself – people told me; laughter) Then they throw a fishing rod with a bait on the hook. And there are three types of fish. Listen, it's very important for us. One type of fish comes being attracted by the smell of the bait

scattered and then goes away. There is another type of fish coming close to the bait on the hook and leaves after having a few bites. And another type of fish are those that swallow the bait. And when a big fish swallows a bait, what does one do? Fishers know that one shouldn't bring it in at once - it should get hooked. And the fisher plays the fish - it's already hooked but, anyway, swimming back and forth struggling. Finally, when the fish is completely exhausted the fisher - hop! - and lands the fish. You got it?

Krishna is doing the same to us. In this world Krishna is scattering the bait of *krisna-katha*. Some people listen, catch on some taste for *krisna-katha* - there's such a special taste - people hear a voice and go there. But most people hear and leave like those fish that came attracted by a smell and left. There are people who try to have a few bites - they get it deeper - but they also leave. And there are those who get hooked. It's us. When *krisna-katha* has - this way or another - entered the heart... We swallowed this bait accidentally. We were stupid, we didn't know. Right? We swallowed the bait. But we are still strong, right? (laughter) The bait has been swallowed, the hook has got deep and Krishna lingers - He's not hasty in landing us because He knows. And for some time we rush about - we still have this ego and we think, "I'll get it, I'll do it. I'll get something." We are used to achieving something by ourselves, on our own. Some people even go to Vrindavana and live there. At some point they understand, "It's all in vain." It's hopeless. And when one finally realizes one is getting nowhere, one surrenders, "Krishna, I am Yours." And at this moment Krishna hears us. At this moment we begin to chant Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare with feeling. But until this point we are still *karma-misra-bhaktas*, which is, "I am going to succeed on my own" because we are affected by the false ego. But when the ego's gone, Krishna comes to our rescue. Therefore I wish you to get rid of your last illusions.

There, in the note, was another question, "Can one avoid closer association with *Vaisnavas* to avoid offences?"

The habit of offending comes from the same ego and the only way to get rid of it is associating with *Vaisnavas*. So, you shouldn't keep distance, you should get closer to *Vaisnavas* and begin to serve them because we don't offend those we identify ourselves with. If through some work, through service, through putting our energy we managed to identify ourselves with someone, we won't offend this someone because one's already part of us, because I have served one, because I've done something for one. So this is the way out.

And here's the last question I am going to answer now. There was a question about what I mentioned at the very beginning about the man at the festival who was sitting feeling like he didn't belong there. The question was, "How do I get rid of such a feeling, of a similar state of mind?"

The answer remains the same: why does one feel like a stranger? The cause is one - the ego. It separates us from other people, it puts some barriers between us, it prevents us from getting immersed in the general mood and feeling part of the whole. When one has a big ego, he has it hard because since it's very big and if someone approaches one closer than one's ego extends, one already feels that one's ego has been stepped on - it's hard to approach one too close, it's scary. Sometimes people call it aura. Psychics see the aura and say, "Big aura." As a matter of fact, it's our ego that we spread around. But when one starts to feel an integral part of something - one can feel it during a *kirtana* - then one has cast away one's ego. Actually, what people are doing during a *kirtana* is opposite to the ego. People with a big ego won't do that - they are always going to think, "What are they thinking about me?" I guess you remember this feeling when you had your first *kirtana* experience? You feel like singing but on the other hand you are wondering, "I'll sing but what are they going to think about me?" And then one sees that no one

is looking at one, everyone is singing and one starts singing along. Again, this is a matter of the ego. I am a part of Krishna, I am a part of the devotees, a part of all this, and it sometimes takes time for one to truly experience it.

Yesterday we were talking about how adulterated *bhakti* shows on Shiva's level. We got to verse 31 and in verse 32 Narada begins to glorify Parvati, Shiva's spouse. Before that he had said, "Your love is so strong that Krishna's love for you is ceaseless." He didn't tell Shiva, "Your love for Krishna is ceaseless." Narada is well aware of what to say. He says, "Krishna's love for you is ceaseless." But our love for Krishna can't be ceaseless if our ego is still there. There will always be some pauses because our ego will make us think about ourselves. We are going to speak now about what one obsessed with one's ego thinks of oneself. That was the end of what Narada said. He said, "By your mercy others became devotees" meaning the Pracetas – this story is narrated in the 4<sup>th</sup> Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam.

Further he glorifies Parvati by saying, "By Parvati's mercy also a lot of people became dear to Lord Krishna. She knows well the true nature of Lord Shiva and her own nature." In other words, he says that Parvati is also very close, she knows devotees, she is aware of Krishna's and devotees' nature, "yourself, Shiva and Krishna." This is *sambandha-jnana* – he glorifies her understanding of this nature. There are stories in the Puranas about people becoming Krishna's devotees. So, he goes on, "Parvati – Ambika – is Krishna's own sister, and as His younger sister she always gets His love. This is the reason why you live with her." Narada says a staggering thing. He explains why Shiva is attached to Parvati. He, actually, explains why Parvati was sitting on Shiva's lap, why they are so intimate. He says, "It's not that you're attached to her because she is a woman. Citraketu out of his ignorance attributed some gross material attachments to you. You have none of gross material attachments – you are attached to her because she is a *Vaisnavi*, because she's Krishna's sister. Why is she Krishna's sister? Who gave birth to her? Yashoda did. She was born in Vrindavana, not somewhere else. There Krishna gave her a boon that she would be glorified in this world under different names. What's one of Parvati's names? *Vaisnavi*. She is Krishna's devotee, she is Krishna's sister. He loves her as His sister, as Subhadra because she's dear to Him. So, Narada tells Shiva, "Your wife is Krishna's own sister." In other words, "you are Krishna's relative." Later he says the main thing, a very important thing (verse 34):

*vicitra bhagavan nama  
snakirtana-kathoh-savaih  
sade mam ramayan visnu  
jana-sanga sukham bhajet*

He's describing the ideal family life. I decided to dwell on this because I, too, want us to have an ideal family life. It's impossible – therefore I made up my mind to take *sannyasa*, but there's still hope. Shiva shows Parvati's example. Narada says, "You have an ideal marriage because your every day is a festival." Does anyone who is married want a festival every day? And not just an ordinary festival but a *mahotsava*. The Sanskrit for festival is *utsava*. *Mahotsava* is a great holiday. Narada says, "You and Parvati have a festival at your home every day." Why? "*Vicitra bhagavan nama snakirtana-kathoh-savaih* – your every day is a holiday because you make a *sankirtana* together every day, that is, you sing *vicitra bhagavan nama* – Krishna's various names and *vicitra bhagavan nama katha* – tell one another about Krishna." Feel it? This is the secret of the ideal family life. And now - although I am not going to deliver a seminar on family relations – I will share with you the secret of a perfect family: it's when the husband and the wife speak about Krishna... It's another thing that they don't know what to say about Him, but if they learn to speak about Krishna, every day is going to be a holiday. He says that, "Every day you have a *mahotsava*." In the Puranas all the *agamas*, all the *tantras* consist of stories, conversations between Shiva and Parvati. Shiva and Parvati only speak about Krishna – they get together and start talking. And they may talk about the nature of the material world, but all of their stories are about Krishna.

There's a famous story retold in Amarnath. Amarnath is a wonderful temple of Lord Shiva. Amarnath means "the lord of the immortal." This is Shiva. Shiva rules all of the immortals, all of the demigods, and there, in Amaranath, happened a very famous story, which many of you must have heard because Parvati once couldn't help asking, "Whose skulls are hanging down your neck?" Shiva has a beautiful *mala* made of skulls. When Shiva is dancing violently, these skulls are swinging from side to side. So, once Parvati approached and asked, "My dear, whose skulls are you wearing?" He replied, "Whose? Yours!" Parvati was taken aback, "How come they are mine?" He said, "Well, yours because you have taken lots of births and died many times, so these are your skulls that I'm wearing in your memory. I love you badly." Parvati replied, "That means I die and you don't? Can I also become immortal?" Shiva said, "Of course, you can but for that you should hear *amrita*. I am going to tell you Srimad Bhagavatam but it's a great secret – no one's supposed to hear it!"

They retreated to Amarnath – there's still a cave there with a Shiva temple – and Shiva said, "I am going to tell you now Krishna's most intimate *lilas* but sometimes I will fall into a trance resulting in closing my eyes, so, you should occasionally say, "M'h'm", for me to continue. I am going to be in a trance, but you should encourage me with your exclamations all the same. If you stop doing that I'll stop it all. Don't you sleep!" Parvati promised, "By no means! Never! You have my word!" Shiva started narrating, then rolled his eyes and fell into a trance whereas Parvati fell asleep. There was a parrot sitting who had heard the whole story and started to say, "M'h'm". Shiva, inspired, was speaking with his eyes closed. Parvati is sleeping and the parrot is listening. Eventually, Shiva opened his eyes and saw Parvati sleeping, even snoring. He understood she had been sleeping long enough that she hadn't just dozed off. But he had heard someone saying, "M'h'm". He looked around and saw the parrot to understand the parrot had heard what it wasn't supposed to and that the parrot had become immortal. The parrot went flying. Shiva grabbed his trident and rushed after it. The parrot tried to flee over the Himalayas while Shiva was running at full speed after this parrot with a trident in his hand. At last the parrot got to Badarikasram where Vyasadeva was living an ideal family life. Vyasadeva was telling his wife Srimad Bhagavatam and she was sitting with her mouth open. At that moment Vyasadeva was narrating the *rasa-lila* and his wife was sitting hardly believing what she was hearing. Her mouth fell open and the parrot flew into it. And who did it become? Sukadeva Gosvami. *Nitai-Gaura Premanande!* Haribol!

That's what Narada started to tell Shiva, "It's not only you who's a great devotee – your wife is also a great devotee and the only thing you are doing is talking about Krishna glorifying Krishna's names." And here comes the unmasking, here comes the main thing. This is verse 35. Pariksit starts talking:

*tato mahesvara matas  
trapa vana mitavananah*

What happened to Shiva when he heard that? Maharaja Pariksit who is telling his mother Uttara about it says that Shiva lowered his head with shame at hearing that. Then the best of the *Vaisnavas* (*vaisnava- agranih* as Maharaja Pariksit calls him) answered the great devotee Narada: *naradam bhagavad bhaktam avadat vaisnava-agranih*. Shiva hears all this and lowers his head with shame. *Trapa* means shame in Sanskrit. This is the sense, which betrays a *Vaisnava*. I would like to warn you against judging Shiva – we are going to say some words repeating after Shiva himself – but Shiva is a great *Vaisnava*, and not without reason is Maharaja Pariksit saying that he is *vaisnava-agranih*, the best of the *Vaisnavas*, the most senior of the *Vaisnavas*. Because if he wasn't a *Vaisnava* he wouldn't have felt ashamed. When being glorified, we, as a rule, tend to think, "Nectar is coming out of your mouth." But a true *Vaisnava* feels ashamed when hearing oneself being glorified. On a physical level. Like we feel ashamed when we happen to be violating some principles, if we are smoking or doing something else out of habit, right? Similarly, one feels ashamed when being glorified. A true *Vaisnava*, when being glorified, feels like he has eaten worms. He feels like he has swallowed something and it feels disgusting. This is, actually, the hallmark of a *Vaisnava* because, in fact, there are no heartfelt glorifications in this world, as a rule.

The first thing one should be well aware of is that when glorifying someone, people are not sincere. Because everyone has one's ego and, generally, if one has this ego one can't glorify anyone sincerely. As a rule people either want to get something from us by glorifying or want to encourage us to do something. Or they sometimes want to shame us. Very often one isn't glorified for what one is doing but for what people want one to do in the form of glorification.

Here Sanatana Gosvami is explaining what Shiva has thought, "Narada is mocking me. Narada says, "You are a great devotee" meaning "I'd rather you were a great devotee." Have you ever experienced feeling cheated when someone is telling you something. It sounds like you are being glorified but, in fact, they are meaning to say something completely opposite. Stupid people often take it seriously but, actually, one feels ashamed. And this shame is natural. Why is any glorification a lie? First of all, because, as a rule, one always tells lies. Secondly, any glorification is sure to be a deliberate lie because people are usually glorified for doing something but if we get to the bottom of things, what do we do? Other people's contribution in our any act or achievement is much more than ours. What helped us do it? Our body. Where did we get this body? Who gave us this body? We need air and sun to act. But we don't say, "Glorify the sun – it provided me with energy." We don't say it's due to the sun. Think how much we had eaten before doing something! Why do we have energy? Because we eat other living beings. We should say, "We'd eaten them, therefore we were able to do something, so, glorify them!" But, this way or other, the point is that when one understands the truth, one realizes – it's a lie. Have you ever felt uncomfortable when hearing someone telling lies? When you know that one is telling lies? When you are being glorified and you know this person is lying to you. When a true *Vaisnava* hears that he feels embarrassed, "Why? Don't! Why do you have to do that? Don't glorify – it's a lie!" But the trouble is that glorification is the heaviest drug. There are other heavy drugs like heroin, addiction thereto is very hard to overcome, but praise is cooler than heroin. Can anyone confirm it? Raise both of your hands and say "Haribol!"

The point is that when one is taking drugs he becomes forgetful, especially of God. What happens to us when we are being glorified? Yes, we forget about God. It hurts a *Vaisnava*. A true *Vaisnava* appreciating the opportunity to remember God every second of one's life, realizing that remembering God is his life, doesn't like being forced to forget about God. While being glorified we are thinking, "Yes, yes, that's actually right. What is there to say – this is true." And that's where I forget about God. Because, again, the ego is the cause of us forgetting God.

I wanted to say a few words how Sanatana Gosvami defines humility in part 3 of Brihad-bhagavatamrita. He says very important words: *dainya bhakti mulaka*, which means that *dainya* or humility is the root of *bhakti*, that *bhakti* will grow out of humility. We can only develop true love if we have humility. He says that *dainya* is actually the feeling that overcomes one endowed with all the talents and virtues, and, nonetheless, this one endowed with all the talents starts to feel worthless. *Dainya* is not feeling worthless by a worthless man. It's experienced by a man possessing all the talents and abilities. A *Vaisnava* taking this way purifies himself and develops all the virtues, but, nevertheless he experiences the feeling that "I alone am not able to do anything."

Sanatana Gosvami says a very important thing I'd like to tell you. In a way we know this secret, but it would be useful to revise. He says that an intelligent man - the one who has the intelligence – should work diligently on developing the speech, behavior and thought pattern to become established in humility. One should try hard to avoid everything that prevents one from becoming established in humility. Sanatana Gosvami explains in a series of verses – these are really amazing verses, very important for us – that there are two types of humility. One type of humility is the one that descends on one as God's mercy. He says that the girls of Vrindavana abandoned by Krishna are the example of this endless humility. They experienced this utter humility in separation from Krishna. But he says – don't hope for that. That will come naturally by God's mercy – it's not what we can develop. He says there's another type of humility that I can, this way or other, develop and prepare oneself for this mercy. My speech, behavior and thought pattern – I should gather bit by bit all that will help me to become established in humility. Further he says an amazing thing that *prema* and *dainya* are inseparably linked and

one has as much *prema* as one has *dainya*, humility. One is impossible without the other and one is bound with the other by cause and effect. *Prema* generates humility, love generates humility. Humility generates love. Those who love are humble and Krishna is the humblest. There's no one as humble as Krishna. Krishna is God but in spite of it what does he do? He says, "I am following My devotees trying to get the dust from their feet because it purifies all the three worlds and Myself." Krishna becomes Arjuna's coachman without turning a hair. When the organizing committee of *rajasuya-jajna* was summoned they elected Bhima its chairman as the one who possesses the best organizational skills and began appointing heads of the departments. You know in *guru-seva* it's the kitchen department, the garland department... But there was no one to take care of the department of bathing feet. All the guests were supposed to have their feet bathed but everyone refused, nobody wanted. Bhima was offered, but he said, "I can break their legs. Someone will come, stretch his legs and I will break them accidently." Then Krishna said, "Okay, I am going to bathe feet –what's the problem? I am going to bathe everyone's feet."

This is how Krishna demonstrates this same principle; that's actually why Lord Shiva lowered his head with shame and replied to Narada, the great devotee.

Unfortunately, we've run out of time and I don't know what to do now. I won't be finished with the topic today but is it O.K. if I say a little more? Just another two or three minutes. I will read another very important verse and we'll start speaking on it.

*sri mahesa uvaca:*

*aho bata mahat kastam  
tyaktva sarva 'bhimana he  
kvaham sarva-bhimananam  
mulam kva tad dresesvarah*

Translation: Sri Mahesa said, "Oh how much it hurts!" – *aho bata maha-kastam*. *Maha-kastam* means "How much it hurts!" *Kastam* means, "I feel so much pain in my heart." He says, "My dear Narada, who is free from any pride." – *tyaktva sarva-abhimana he*, "Oh, Narada, who has cast away all the *abhimana*, *kvaham sarva-bhimananam mulam kva tad dresesvarah* – how can you compare me, a source of *abhimana*, a source of pride, with Krishna, Who is the Lord of sages free from pride?" Lord Shiva points out this key principle or the main problem. Until one is adulterated with *jnana*, one will have *abhimana*. *Jnana* means the perception that I can perceive God myself. *Jnana* means transcendental knowledge and this transcendental knowledge is based on one's perception that, "I can perceive Him on my own." This is the root of pride – the subtlest manifestation of pride. He says, "I am *sarva-abhimana mul* – the root of all the pride in this world." Canto 3 of the Srimad-Bhagavatam explains that who is associated with *ahankara*? Shiva is. Brahma is associated with *buddhi*, intelligence, the Moon is associated with our mind and Shiva with our *ahankara*, the false ego! So, Shiva says, "You've cast away your *abhimana*, you are a great sage, therefore you glorify me. You are sincere in glorifying me because one can only truly glorify someone if one has no pride." Why does Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu say: *amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada harih*? What is *kirtana*? Glorification. Caitanya Mahaprabhu explains this simple principle: one can always glorify Krishna when one is willing to glorify all others and there are no desires – *aman*, *amanina*. Here Shiva says addressing Narada, "You are *amani* and Krishna – the Lord of all who have cast away pride. How can you compare me with Him? We are poles apart. He is on the one pole, He Himself is absolutely free from pride and those worshipping Him get rid of pride whereas those worshipping me get their ego inflated. Huge ego!" You can see that – those people who worship Shiva – oh, God forbid! Shiva is saying here, "How can one compare two different categories? I am an incarnation of... I have *sarva-abhimana* – I am a supplier of the false ego, I am a wholesale trader. All those who have pride get it from where? From me. You are glorifying me. It's clear why you are glorifying me –

because you have no *abhiman*. I've cast away your *abhiman*, therefore you are able to glorify. The one who has cast away pride can glorify abundantly."

You see, I suggest you get an insight into yourself. When we are asked to glorify someone we are quite reluctant to do that. We say, "Yes, yes... but one should be objective, shouldn't one?" Just imagine Narada's speech if he had this pride, if he came and started to say, "Shiva is so good, but... by the way, I've noticed, nothing escaped my notice..." But Shiva is telling him here, "Narada, it's easy for you to say, you are a happy sage, you can travel everywhere, you have no ego. You are happy travelling everywhere. Who am I? I am the source of all the pride." Actually, this pride is our main problem. Krishna is the God of those who have no pride.

Shiva himself says that Krishna is the Lord of those who are *tadrisa isvarah* – those who have got rid of pride. But I am *sarva-abhimananam mulam* – the root of all the pride. In the next verse he is going to describe his *abhiman*, what he thinks himself to be and we are going to be baffled on hearing that because Shiva will be saying, "What kind of *abhiman*, what sort of pride? I am a devotee, a *bhakta*." You feel what waiting for us? It's going to be tomorrow. Because one may seem to be performing devotional service, but comes from the same *abhiman*, his pride. He can chant 64 rounds but he'll make sure everybody knows that he chants 64 rounds. Moreover, he is going to resent the rest not doing this. This way or other, tomorrow Shiva will be explaining what his *abhiman* is composed of, what his pride consists of and this is the first main obstacle on our way. We are talking about it tomorrow. Thank you very much.



## Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”, lecture 7

September 24, 2011  
Bhakti Vijnana Goswami Maharaja

**Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”.**  
**Sadhu-sanga Festival**  
**Tuapse, 2011**

### **Annotation:**

Questions: Do Maharajas also glorify out of the false ego? We always glorify someone – does it mean we are all liars? Can one praise kids? Does one need a spiritual mentor? Will one develop humility if one behaves in a humble way? Is our path a path of love or to love? Who should one worship, after all? Can one worship Shiva?

The servant’s ego. A story of a woman who brought milk with fish for a deity. Shiva continues unmasking oneself. He bestows *mukti, jnana and bhakti*. The teacher’s ego. A passage from a lecture by Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura on his *vyasa-puja*. Destruction is Shiva’s service. False ego always leads to destruction.

Question: What kind of intimacy is between Shiva and Krishna?

Hare Krishna. We continue our story from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of Sri Brihad-bhagavatamrita by Sanatana Goswami where he explains how we should perceive stories from the Puranas and the Srimad-Bhagavatam in particular. We often see some external storyline of these stories whereas the point of them is actually for us to get to think about the motives behind these stories and, after all, apply all of that to ourselves. The Srimad-Bhagavatam is about all of us. The Srimad-Bhagavatam is an amazing book, which can explain to us how one can truly love Krishna. The point of the Srimad-Bhagavatam is to describe different obstacles on the way and, finally, remove these obstacles out the way and out of the heart.

Yesterday, I was talking on the topic that raised lots of questions, which is the topic of glorifications and praising; of how one should respond to them; what we are guided by when glorifying others. I’ve just received a note with the following question, “Are Maharajas also guided by the false ego when glorifying?”

I didn’t say that. If one has cast away one’s false ego in one’s service to Krishna, in this case one can sincerely glorify and spend all one’s life in doing that. One will glorify people in the way that will make us want to hide away because one will only see the good things about you. *Vaisnava acaryas* answer a very important question here, “How can one understand that one is advancing in one’s devotional service? How can one evaluate one’s progress in *bhakti*?” And the answer is quite paradoxical. They say, “There’s only one criterion – our ability to see other people’s faults. This is inverse dependency. It’s not that the more advanced we are in *bhakti*, the more capable we are of seeing other people’s faults. Just the opposite. The more inclined one’s heart towards Krishna gets, the more virtues we’ll see. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu says *kirtaniya sada harih*.”

There was another relevant question. One man got concerned and asked, “We always glorify someone but yesterday you said that those who do are cheaters. But we keep glorifying – the *guru*, the *Vaisnavas*... What are we supposed to do now? So, that means we are cheaters?”

We are not. We are *sadhakas*, we’re learning. This is our *sadhana* and a *sadhana* always contains the element of artificiality. That’s what *sadhana* is - there’s some difference between what we want and what we do. Glorifying others is, after all, like trying to learn to glorify Krishna constantly. Srila Rupa Gosvami explains that we are like those suffering from jaundice. We enjoy condemning others, don’t we? This is a special taste with the beautiful Sanskrit name of *ninda-rasa*, a taste for *ninda*. *Ninda* means defamation, blasphemy. *Ninda-rasa* is a special intoxicating drink. We enjoying condemning others, see other peoples’ faults while having no taste for glorification. Take newspapers, for example. What do they contain? What does the Internet contain? Gossip. The dirtier the better. The more disgraceful the situation the better. Because everybody knows that these things sell well. If newspapers say everything is all right, no one’s going to buy them except when forced to subscribe by a party organization – there is no other way to sell a good thing in this world. Because people have a taste for dirty things. There’s even whole groups of *Vaisnavas* specialising in spreading *Vaisnava* gossip. There isn’t a sadder thing, a more lamentable thing - they criticize and defame everybody and everything. This is very sad to turn our *sadhana* into defamation. Glorification should be our *sadhana* because we will gradually develop a taste for it and this is, actually, good – there’s nothing wrong with it.

Another question was about children. I was asked, “Can we praise kids? Because psychologists say that kids should be praised - they mustn’t be scolded. They should even be praised for imaginary merits – and then they may as well develop them.”

I wouldn’t advise you to praise kids for nonexistent merits – kids should certainly be praised. I am going to explain why. Kids should be praised and scolded and one should separate their shortcomings from themselves. This is a special art. The formula is simple, “How could such a good boy do such a bad thing?”

But, the point is that everyone requires attention and when we see or praise something in another we meet this person’s vital need. Now, praising children and other people is an art because praise as well as condemnation is a sort of food for our ego, a vitamin for our ego. Not even a vitamin – it’s bread. When we take notice of someone, praise someone – that’s what causes the ego to grow. Now, the ego is a bad thing – we discussed it yesterday and are going to continue – but there’s only one exception to the rule – there’s a good ego. This is the ego of a servant. If you don’t praise or scold one, one is going to make a complete impersonalist. But if we praise one to develop one’s right ego – especially at the *sadhana* and *bhava* stages (there’s no need for that at the *prema* stage because it hurts one – you’d better not stop on one’s toes). You’d better admire one silently. But on the *sadhana* stage one should be praised – that is something gladdening. One should be praised but for something one is doing right on the basis of the right ego, that is to help one develop the right ego.

Actually, the point of *sadhana* – and this is very important, although it might not be directly related to the seminar but, nonetheless, is very important – the point of *sadhana* is to help one develop the right ego, the ego of a servant. Therefore, while performing one’s *sadhana* one should try hard to serve as much as possible. *Bhava* - emotional attachment to Krishna - will only come when one’s ego is ripe. A baby who has no ego is unable to love. Friendly feelings (the first *rasa* that a child develops is friendship) occur when his ego has slightly developed,

because love or some *rasa*, the ability to a sacrificial self, are only possible if one has the right, healthy, molded ego.

This ego of a servant – I'm explaining the theory now for better understanding - generates *bhava*. *Bhava* means emotional attachment to Krishna. When one takes on responsibility and starts serving, one's ego gets healthier. The one who never takes responsibility for others will never learn to love Krishna. Never. Therefore at the *sadhana* stage we take responsibility for others, that's why we keep talking about caring for devotees, about the need for a spiritual mentor.

There was another question about how important a mentor is and whether one needs a mentor in case one has a personal relationship with the *guru*.

Maybe not but we can greatly benefit from this relationship. *Bhakti* is a science of a relationship and a hardest one. People with impersonal issues can't enter a relationship – it's absolutely impossible. Any relationship helps us properly develop our ego making it healthy, and a relationship with a mentor is based on love and care going down and service going up. This is very, very important. So, one shouldn't fear it. On the contrary, one should seek to develop this kind of a relationship.

There are some more important questions. "Did I understand right that if we behave humbly, we'll develop our humility?"

Don't forget that I didn't only speak about a humble behaviour. Srila Sanatana Gosvami gives a good piece of advice. In Sanskrit it sounds as follows:

*yaya vacehaya dainyam  
matya ca sthairyam eti tat tat  
tam yatnena bhajet vidvams  
tad-viruddhani varjayet 223*

*Tam yatnena bhajet vidvams.* *Vidvan* or a man who possesses knowledge, what does he do? He makes an effort - *tam yatnena* – with his own effort. *Bhajet* means that he cultivates and practices it. What effort does he make? For *dainya matya* – humble consciousness – to become *sthairyam* – steady. How? One should beginning with words. To become steady one should not only be humble in deeds – one should be humble in one's words. And the main thing is that one should learn to be humble in thoughts. This is the main thing. The last line of the verse is: *tad viruddhani varjayet* – everything that is opposite to humbleness should be shunned.

So, we are going to learn to be truly humble if we are humble in our deeds, words and thoughts. The point is to learn to be humble in thoughts for we can be humble in deeds and be what we've always been in thoughts.

This is related to the question I was asked the day before yesterday about whether ours is the path of love or towards love.

Ours is the path of love towards love because where love is concerned there's no difference between *sadhana* and *sadhya*. Srila Prabhupada was asked, "What's the point in chanting Hare Krishna?" He replied, "The point in chanting Hare Krishna is to chant more of Hare Krishna." The goal is non-different from the means. At the very first stage we develop *sraddha*, which means "faith". It's already a small sprout of love. As it becomes all-pervading – faith in the path, faith in those who are leading us along – it'll turn into love, a desire to serve and ability to self-forgetfulness. Therefore ours is the path of love towards complete love, towards absolute, selfless love. But everything we are doing is based on love.

And, finally, before getting to our basic topic, I'd like to answer a long question, "Why does Krishna love Radha – Tulsi is also nice, she is Krishna's wife? Why is it always Radha, Radha..? And, finally, I got confused: I've had no idea for seven years who I am supposed to worship – Tulsi, Panca-tattva, Shiva, Krishna, *Guru*..."

Although these are two questions, they are, actually one. We worship Radha and Krishna's love because there is no love purer and more sublime. There isn't more self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice than in the relationship between Radha and Krishna. The rest only attend to this love. Yes, Krishna has a lot of wives, the beloved ones, girlfriends but they all, in fact, serve Radha and Krishna's love. If we are ever able to perceive at least the shadow of this love, it means we'll become the happiest people in the world. Prabhodananda Sarasvati wrote a very interesting verse Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada loved to quote.

*venum karan nipatitam skhalitam sikhandam  
bhrasdanca pita-vasanam vraja-raja-sunoh  
yasyah kadaksa-sara-ghata-vimurcchitasya  
tam radhikam paricarami kada rasena*

He says *venum karan nipatitam skhalitam sikhandam* – when Radha goes past Krishna shooting the arrow of Her glance – what happens then to Krishna? *Venum karan nipatitam* – His flute falls from His hands! Radha went past him in the distance and just glanced at Him, and Krishna dropped His flute. *Skhalitam sikhandam* – His feather falls somewhere to the side. *Bhrasdanca pita-vasanam* – His yellow clothes get messy. *Vraja-raja-sunoh* – this is the son of the ruler of Vraja. *Yasyah kadaksa-sara-ghata-vimurcchitasya* – when this arrow pierces His heart – *vimurcchitasya* – Krishna faints. Feel it? No, you don't. So, he says: *tam radhikam paricarami kada rasena*, "When will I delight in the service of this Radha Who drives Krishna crazy?"

There's another verse... Actually, I wanted to quote another one, not this one. How is it..? Well, it doesn't matter. When sitting in this armchair you tend to forget things.

*danyati dana pavane na kritartha mani  
yogindra durgam aghatir madhusudhanopi  
tasya namostu vrisabhanu bhuvudisepi*

When the happy wind that touched Srimati Radharani's garments comes to Krishna bringing Her smell – *pavana* means "wind" – Krishna thinks, "I've made it big." When a gust of wind touches Radha and brings up a corner of Her clothes and, carrying Her smell, takes it to Krishna, so Krishna takes it in and thinks, "Gosh! I've made it big!" And who is this Krishna? *Yogindra durgam aghatir* – great yogis can't perceive Him - *durgam aghatir* – they try to achieve this goal but they can't. *Madhusudhanopi* – He is Madhusudana Himself, Who can liberate anyone.

Prabhodananda Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada says that, "I bow down to Maharaja Vrisabhanu's kingdom." In other words, "I bow down to the direction where the loveland is that drives Krishna mad." Why did start I touch upon it? I've forgotten. Oh, yes...

We worship this relationship, we worship love and others as long as they can give us this love. One can worship anyone. I got a question, "Can one worship Shiva, after all? Some say that Shiva can bestow *prema*."

I have a piece of good news: he can. Bhakti-ratnakar says that if one worships Shiva in Vrindavana – and there's a form of Shiva there called Gopesvara Mahadev – the Deity bestows the perfection of making all dreams come true. To attain Krishna's association the *gopis* keep worshipping Gopesvara Mahadev. Those who have visited Vrindavana are sure to know this temple and the story of Krishna once playing His flute. Krishna had started to play the flute meaning to say something. He meant to say that the night was coming and He would be waiting for them. At that time Shiva was deep in meditation on Sada-shiva-

*loka*. Having heard those sounds of Krishna's he came out of meditation and neglecting everything rushed to the sound. He approached Vrindavana and at that moment Purnamasya told him, "Stop! You are not allowed to go there." Shiva started to beat his breast shouting, "I am Krishna's greatest devotee." Purnamasya replied, "That's why the road is barred to you. This is the reason."

Shiva – and we are going to discuss is – has an ego. He is, actually, the origin of the male ego in this world. We all have this male ego regardless of whether you are a *mataji* or a *prabhu*, whether you sing in a high or a fine voice or a bass. Everyone here has this enjoyer ego. Shiva is the symbol of this ego.

Anyway, he came and said, "Let me in! I want to see the *rasa* dance." Purnamasya replied, "No entry for men. As long as one has the male ego one can't get access there." Shiva lost his temper and said, "I am giving away my male ego! Take it away!" Purnamasya replied, "What's going to be left of you? You have nothing else." Shiva said, "I don't know – just take away my ego." She took his hand and dipped him into the Mansarovar turning him into a small, modest, humble girl. Purnamasya took her hand and said, "Hide behind this bush and sit still! Shhh! You might watch something if you are lucky enough." So the *gopis* came, Krishna came, they are dancing the *rasa* dance – no ecstasy.

This is another question I was asked, which is, "If Haridasa Thakura's mother-in-law interfered with ecstasy – poor Haridasa Thakura didn't know he had a mother-in-law (laughter) – can we expect ecstasy?"

Well, this little girl, Shivi, who didn't even know exactly what her name was, hid there. The *gopis* started rummaging in the bushes and, finally Lalita found Shiva as a small girl and caught her by the ear. The *gopis* started questioning the girl, Who are you? We've never seen you! Where did you come from? Where do you live? Which village? What's your name? Who are your parents?" Shiva didn't know anything – he hadn't got the legend, he wasn't told what to do. Shiva started running, humming and hawing, he got slapped. His cheeks got swollen, they pulled his ears. This is the price to pay for participating in the *rasa* dance (laughter). That is, at that moment she was freed from the remainder ego she still retained and instantly Purnamasya came to her aid by saying, "Leave her alone. This is Shiva, Mahadeva. (laughter) He's renounced his ego." So, Krishna said, "Yes, I am very pleased with you. From now on you'll be known as Gopesvara - the lord of the *gopis*." Since then the *gopis* have been praying to him by saying, "Please, let us watch this miracle of love."

In fact, we can worship anyone but our prayer must be one and the same, "Give me a chance to get a little understanding of what love is." For this reason we worship Radha and Krishna, or, to be more exact, we don't even worship Krishna because there's no chance – we only worship Her.

We are starting our today's topic, although we've already discussed it. What's the problem with the ego? That the ego is antipodal to the spirit of service, the mood of service. The one who has the ego is unable to serve. If such one serves, one's only purpose is to expand one's ego. He is generally ready to serve someone so that to brag about it this way or another. I've already mentioned that the ego issue extends very far. Even Laksmi has the ego. When Laksmi intended to get into Vrindavana she was told, "You are free to be in Vrindavana but for that you should abandon the vision of you being Laksmi" and she couldn't. She is still in Kamyavan where she is performing her austerities.

This ego is called *abhiman*. We know that *man* means pride, respect. *Abhiman* means complete pride. Yesterday we were discussing that a devotee is supposed to become *amani* whereas Shiva speaks of himself, "I am *sarva-abhimani*. I am not just *abhimani* – I don't just have pride – I have *sarva-abhimani* - all the pride others possess."

This is, actually, the point. Now I'll try to explain this very important thing and this very subtle point. Why do we glorify the *gopis*? Because they renounced all these, they renounced their independence. This is the first verse from Gopi-gita (Bhagavatam 10.31.1) where they are singing:

jayati te 'dhikam janmanā vrajah  
śrayata indirā śaśvad atra hi  
dayita drśyatām dikṣu tāvakās  
tvayi dhṛtāsavas tvām vicinvate

They say tvayi dhṛtāsavas tvām vicinvate, “Why do we live. We live for You. It's only for You that we maintain our lives.” Their being free from independence enables them to experience *prema*. Independence means inability to be independently happy or independently unhappy. If happiness occurs and it's in no way connected with Krishna, I drive this happiness away. If misfortune occurs and it's in no way connected with Krishna, I drive this misfortune away. It's like Srivasa Thakura hiding his ill-fated mother-in-law. When his son died it was a misfortune, wasn't it? But he stopped himself from being overwhelmed by it not to let Sri Krishna Caitanya's spirits be dampened.

I understand this is an extreme example but it's meant for us to understand – I am happy when the one I serve is happy and I feel distressed when the one I serve is in distress. I have no other reasons for being happy or distressed, that's all! Everything I do, I do to make Him happy. *Prema* experience is possible in this state of mind. The *gopis* renounced all of these. How does Uddhava glorify them? He says: *ya dustyajam sva-janam arya-patham ca hitva* - they gave up their family ties, which are very hard to break off. *Arya-patham* – they gave up the path of chastity. Why? Because they have no ego. On the face of it, the *gopis* seem to be very simple. They don't fly or walk on the water, they don't heal anyone. The Srimad-Bhagavatam doesn't say, “The *gopis* have come and healed a man with their hands.” They don't raise the dead – nothing like that. What do they do? They knead dung. They don't bestow liberation – they are just ordinary women. The Srimad-Bhagavatam says that there's no one more elevated than them. Why? Because they completely renounced their independence and their ego. But Laksmi couldn't. Shiva did but not for long.

I wanted to tell a very good short story the point of which is that a devotee is the one who only wants to serve Krishna and nothing else. I've already told this story about a present-day *gopi*. She lived in Karoli, Rajasthan, the village where Madana Mohana temple is located. She had a cow that gave little milk. She loved Madana Mohan with all her heart but she had to sell milk as it was the only way for her to make the living. But she just wanted to donate the milk to Madana Mahana but there was little of it. You know Indian cows give nearly so much milk, half a liter. She had to make her living and, at the same time, she took the milk to Madana Mohan. Therefore every time on the way to Madana Mohan she diluted milk a little. She crossed a river, added some water to the milk and brought it. Madana Mohan liked her milk – He felt happy. Sometimes he came to her in her dreams and said, “Thank you very much. It's very delicious.” Sometimes he asked to bring something else because she was always ready to give.

One morning, as she usually did, she drew too much of water to dilute the milk and a fish got in. As it usually was, she brought the milk and gave it to the *pujari*. The *pujari* opened it and saw a fish swimming. He got infuriated. He ordered to bring her back, held out the thing and said, “I got it! You dilute milk for Madana Mohan Himself! You have brought Him milk with a fish! Who do you take Him for? I discontinue your service – no one is going to accept your milk.”

It was a blow for her because she thought, “It was Krishna who was addressing me – Krishna doesn't like my service! Krishna has refused to accept my service.”

She got back home, put down the milk and started crying and arguing with Krishna, “Krishna, so far things have been going fine. My only fault was not straining the water, not straining off the fish (laughter). You have liked the way it has been so far, You haven't minded me diluting the milk. You know, I have only one cow and I should bring You food and I have little money. If You want me to, I'll starve – no problem, but You should accept my milk! I'm telling You: until You accept my milk I am not going to eat or drink anything.

Krishna got alarmed. She was crying all day and in the twilight someone knocked on her door. She answered the door and saw a *sadhu*, a young *sadhu* wearing shabby clothes, who said, “Ma, can I stay at your place because I have no place to sleep – I’ve come to get the *darsan* of Madana Mohan. And she replied, “But, of course, you can stay here – my home is your home.” She asked, “Where are you from? I haven’t seen you before.”

I live in Vraja I’ve just come to see Madana Mohan.

Everyone must have guessed who that *sadhu* was. She said

- What shall I offer you?
- I only drink milk, I don’t need anything else.
- Just wait, I haven’t milked my cow yet. I won’t take long.
- No, ma, I haven’t eaten anything since morning. I haven’t had a single bite! Please, give me the milk you have.
- I only have the morning milk with a fish.
- Fish or no fish, filter it.
- Shall I boil it?
- Don’t, that will do!

She gave him the morning milk, he drank it and said, “Ma, what delicious milk! I’ve still to try better milk!” So, he stayed at her place overnight. She came to check whether he was comfortable to find that he was cold - it was winter – and covered him with a woolen blanket and somehow fell asleep. She has a bad sleep because she hadn’t eaten all day. Madana Mohan came to her in her dream and said, “It was I who came to you as the *sadhu* and I like your milk – you may tell everyone about it. You can take along a strainer when you dilute your milk but, generally, it’s not a big deal. Don’t worry, you will be allowed because I understand you need to do some service.”

She rejoiced! “But, He said, there’s one condition – before visiting Me you should get something to eat.” She got up, had a bite and rushed to the room where the *sadhu* had slept and saw that he had taken the blanket. So it sometimes happens to some *sadhus* (laughter). But he had left His silk yellow garments instead. She grabbed the garments and thought, “The *sadhu* must have confused, Madana Mohan has confused” and ran to Him and there the *pujari* had already found out that the yellow clothes were missing and Madana-Mohan was wearing the woolen blanket (laughter).

Anyway, the story has a happy end. But the point of this true story is that Krishna accepts service. Krishna accepts our service, which is only possible if one wants to serve, wishes for nothing else, has no selfish motives or anything else to benefit from one’s service.

Well, we are going to read another verse, a very important one. Actually, this is one of the most important verses in the chapter where Shiva explains about his ego. He said in the previous verse, “Unfortunately, you have renounced your ego, you don’t have any and you only worship the Lord of those who have no ego and I am *sarva-abhimani*.” This is how he describes his ego:

*lokesa jnana da jnani*  
*mukta mukti pradha pi aham*  
*bhakta bhakti pradha visnor*  
*itya da han kriya vritih*

He says, “How do I act? What’s my *ahankara* like? What am I being guided by when acting? *Lokesa*.” *Lokesa* means Lord of different planets or the one vested with authority. *Lokesa* – everyone has one’s own planet, right? Every of us is a *lokesa* – every of us has one’s own *loka* – someone has Shiva-*loka*, another one has Brahma-*loka*, someone else has Bhu-*loka*, someone has Uryupinsk-*loka* (Uryupinsk is a town in Russian – translator’s notice), a *yatra* president has at least Flat-*loka*. *Loka* is a place where I live. Shiva says, “*Lokesa*. I am the ruler of the place I live in.” *Jnana da jnani* – I think myself to be a *jnani*. What does “*jnani*” mean? I possess transcendental knowledge. *Jnana da* means that I can share the knowledge. *Mukta mukti pradha* – I liberated and I can bestow *mukti*. I am a *bhakta*, a devotee and I am *bhakti-pradah* – I can grant *bhakti*.

In the purport Sanatana Gosvami says, “I have *parama-maha-abhiman*.” This *abhiman* is the pride Shiva is describing here. Does anyone have a clue what he means here? Actually, he is speaking about one very important, the subtlest original manifestation of pride. This is *jnani*’s pride and *jnana-dah*, *mukta* and *mukti-dah*, *bhakta* and *bhakti-dah*. Who is this? A teacher, right. He is speaking about the spiritual master’s ego. In fact, it’s the subtlest manifestation of the ego. Many speak about that. Those studying psychology of the spiritual search say that the most... The Christians say that the subtlest temptation is the temptation of being a revered teacher. When one feels... We all know what it is – we are all preachers, ours is a preaching movement. We give *jnana*. And who can give *jnana*? The one who has *jnana*. Do we give *mukti*? Do we deliver people from sufferings? We do. Do we give *bhakti*? Yes, sure, no problem. *Bhakti*? Okey!

Like I have an acquaintance – an old, wonderful devotee. He keeps recalling who he has recommended for initiation. He has a long list of those he has recommended for initiation. Feel it? *Bhakti-pradah*, “But for me you wouldn’t have been initiated.” This is a dangerous thing.

I’d like to discuss this danger. Shiva is unmasking himself by saying, “Look who I am – I regard myself as a great devotee.” When speaking about it he says, “My original *abhiman*, which is the source of the rest of *abhimans*, of pride originates from it – this is the subtlest spiritual manifestation of pride, “I am a great devotee.” Shiva is speaking about it. I’d like to read an amazing passage from the lecture given by Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada during his *vyasa-puja* where he says that a devotee should never think oneself to be a *guru*; that a devotee should never consider oneself qualified to give *bhakti* to others. We should be very careful about that. I understand hearing it from me sounds strange but, on the other hand, it’s based on my own experience. This idea of “I am a spiritual master” and *bhakti* are antithetic. The ego of a servant and of a master are absolutely different things. Naturally, we can and should do it as service and Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada is going to mention it but at the same time, one should understand how dangerous a thing it is, what dangerous games we are playing when pretending to be masters, those who can give liberation, who can deliver others from sufferings, those who can give others transcendental knowledge, who can give others devotion.

For instance, Bhanu Svami is one of the most knowledgeable men in our movement – he doesn’t accept disciples, in principle. Gopiparanadhana Prabhu accepted disciples but he had just a few. Srila Prabhupada used to say, “I just repeat what I have heard.”

I would like to read the words full of pain that Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura said when delivering his first lecture on a *vyasa-puja* day. He was sitting on his *vyasasana* looking at those sitting around him saying, “We have taken upon ourselves the responsibility of welcoming this grave charge. All the audience have accepted ordinary seats, I alone have been provided with a lofty seat. All are being told in effect - "Do have a look at a big animal from the Zoo-gardens. What arrogance! So foolish! So wicked! Have you ever seen such a big brute? Garlands of flowers have been put round his neck! What laudations! What bombastic long-drawn, and hyperbolic adjectives! And how complacently too he is listening to the praise of his own achievements, how intently, and with his own ears! He also evidently feels delighted in mind! Is he not acting in plain violation of the teaching of Mahaprabhu? Can such a big brute, so selfish and insolent, be ever reclaimed from brutishness?”

It was a quotation. Further Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura says, “I happen to be one of the greatest of fools. No one offers me good advice on account of my arrogance. Inasmuch as nobody condescends to instruct me I placed my case before Lord Chaitanyadev Himself. The thought occurred to me that I would make over the charge of myself to Him and see what He would advise me to do. Then Shri Chaitanyadeva said to me, “Whom-so-ever thou meet’st, instruct him regarding Krishna, By My command being Guru deliver this land; In this thou wilt not be obstructed by the current of the world; Thou wilt have My company once again at this place.” In these words we find the right explanation of the above mentioned seeming contradiction. “He whose only teaching is humility greater than that of a blade of grass, said- "By My command being Guru save this land!" In this instance Mahaprabhu Himself has given the command. His command being "Perform the duty of the Guru, even as I do it Myself. Also



convey this command to whom-so-ever you chance to meet.” Chaitanyadeva says, "Tell them these very words, viz. By My command being Guru save this land Deliver the people from their foolishness." Now who-so-ever happens to hear these words would naturally protest with palms joined - "But I am really a great sinner, how can I be Guru? You are Godhead Himself, the Teacher of the world. You can be Guru." To this Mahaprabhu replies:

"Do not practice the craft of a Guru for the purpose of injuring others through malice. Do not adopt the trade of a Guru in order to get immersed in the slough of this world. But if you can, indeed, be My guileless servant you will be endowed with My power--then you need not fear."

In other words, Shiva is saying here, "Look at me – I really regard myself as a guru." Our true ego should always be, "I am a servant. I am a servant." If I am doing something, if I am teaching others, it's not because I want to but because I was told so. Srila Prabhupada says to this effect, "What am I doing? I'm just repeating my master's words. I don't teach myself, I don't teach on my behalf."

What I mean to say is that we should track it down in ourselves and in others. If people tell us, "Follow me, I am going to teach you. I am a *mukti-pradah*, I am a *bhakti-pradah*, I am a *jnani*, I am a *jnani-dah...*" It's easy to hear or say these words. Shiva is saying here, "Look at me." He is grieving over having to say that.

He continues by saying even harder words. He displays signs of a *Vaisnava*. In fact, it hurts Shiva to say that. There are many other people who are happy to say those words. There are a lot of people who really believe it's so. Srila Prabhupada – the greatest teacher – never spoke so. The only thing he said was, "I just repeat my guru's words, I repeat the words of the scriptures – I don't invent anything. I speak on their behalf and my only merit is that I am trying to speak on their behalf because I am nobody." He himself was always in this state of mind that, "Please, have my words get into their hearts this way or another."

As I have already said, we can analyse Shiva's personality but in so doing we should understand: he is a great *Vaisnava*. He is speaking about it with pain. One of the traits of a great *Vaisnava* is that he is not afraid to be frank about himself. A sign of a great *Vaisnava* is that he is happy to get a chance to say something like that about oneself.

There is a wonderful story in *Vaisnava-jivani* - a *Vaisnava* biography. There is a story of a *mahatma* who was in Vrindavana and was giving a lecture on the bank of the Jamuna. At that moment a wind blew from the Jamuna and raised the *sari* on a woman's breast. It revealed her breast and this *Vaisnava-mahatma* saw and some shadow of a thought crossed his mind. At that very moment he jumped up onto the *vyasasana* and said, "Just look at me! Have you ever seen a cheater like me? I felt lust as soon as I saw the breast. Look at me!"

Hare Krishna! This is the *Vaisnava* psychology. So Shiva says, "Look at me! Just look at me! I think myself to be a *bhakta*! I consider myself the best of devotees, I am positive!" And he goes on – I am going to read just a couple of verses - "Now, look – and what is the outcome? I regard myself as a great devotee giving *mukti*, giving *jnana*. I am a great teacher. And what kind of service do I have? This is a wonderful service: *sarva grasa kore gore maha* (57:50). When *maha-kal* comes... *Maha-kal* is the time of the destruction of universe. *Vilaji asesam sambara tamasa sva-prayojanat* – because of being connected with *tamo-guna* I get to destroy the universe. Shiva says, "Think of it! Just look at me! Other people have a normal service – someone is building something, some distribute books, create something and I ... dance, I start dancing when the universe has to be destroyed. *Tamasa-sva-prayojanat*. Why? Because I am bound by my false ego.

There is another very important thing he is going to say later. He says that the ego is always connected with destruction. Why does Shiva, Rudra destroy? Why is Shiva called Rudra? Rudra means "the roarer", "the crier". Where there is a big ego there is destruction.

Yet, I am going to tell you the most interesting thing today. The next verse is the most interesting one of those we've read so far. They are all interesting... He says, "Look at me. My service... If I happen to go and boast, if devotees ask you, "What service do you do?" you say, "I have this and this service." But when it's my turn to answer, what will I say? "I destroy the universe. This is my *seva* to the Supreme Lord." Why? Because I have *tamas*. Because, basically, ego is always ignorance. He further says, "What's the outcome?" *Mai narada varteta krips lesa pi cet dharet tad akim parijotasa haranadau maya*

*ranah* ??? 60:15. He says, “I don’t even have a grain of Lord Hari’s mercy, otherwise, why would I fight Lord Hari Himself on account of this *parijata* tree?”

Did you notice what happens when one has a big ego? All it takes for one to start fighting is - God forbid - to touch one’s sore spot. Shiva recalls, “Krishna wanted to bring His wife a house plant in a pot. Indra got piqued but the main thing is that I was right on the spot to help him.” He continues, “Look at me: if I had love of Krishna would I have fought for that? There are enough of *parijata* plants on the heavenly planets. Krishna just wanted to take away a small tree – and here I am. When fighting against Usa I took Banasura’s side.”

Listen, it’s a very important thing that I’d like to tell you. What does Shiva actually mean here? This is the answer to the question already asked. This question is very important and interesting, “So, there’s still intimacy between Krishna and Shiva but not on the level of heart? So, what kind of intimacy is that?”

This intimacy and devotion they have is superficial and Shiva confirms it. This is superficial or pretentious devotion we all have, too. Sometimes we start to serve someone to prove our devotion. So, here Shiva is, actually, explaining that there were at least two occurrences described in the scriptures if not more where Shiva got to fighting with his Lord for what? Why did he fight for? To keep his followers’ reverence. He, actually, betrayed his own master, his guru, his Lord to continue being revered by his followers.

In other words, this is a very serious thing. He demonstrates that he, actually, is not a devoted servant of Krishna’s, that this is just a superficial, pretentious devotion, which is not on the level of heart. I am ready, this way or other, to betray my *guru*, my master. What he means to say is that when one gets followers one, as a rule, stops being a follower. That’s what Shiva is saying, “I am a *guru*. What’s the most important thing for a *guru*? To be thought well of by his disciples.” Right? These are the two things he mentions. There are lots of similar stories in the spiritual history of the world. The most prominent example of the similar attitude is Judas who betrayed his spiritual master. Anyway, the point is that one who has the ego of a master won’t be able to develop the ego of a servant. Accordingly, he’ll never be able to be a true devotee and won’t be able to experience devotion or *bhakti*.

Therefore he starts to spread a false teaching. Srila Prabhupada had disciples who seemed devoted to him. Externally they were devoted to him but, in fact, they themselves wanted to be *gurus* and as soon as Srila Prabhupada had been gone they began to spread a false teaching. In the next verse Shiva is going to touch upon this, “I come as who? As Sankara. And what do I do? I spread a false teaching. Why? Because I want people to worship me.”

Okay, I am through with today’s material. I decided to speak on this because I had felt it might be quite relevant for many of us. The ego we have often takes the shape of devotion and we think we are devotees and everybody else thinks we are devotees. But there’s a very subtle difference: there’s pure *bhakti*, which is by no means a simple thing, a cheap thing. Srila Prabhupada, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada, Bhaktivinoda Thakura all struggled against the notion that everything is very simple and easy. It’s called *sahajiya*. *Sahajiya* -everything’s very simple. As a rule, *sahajiyas* are, after all, impersonalists somewhere deep inside. If you delve in their philosophy you are sure to find in their spiritual practice manifestations of the false ego, whereas *bhakti* is the way of cleansing one’s consciousness from the false ego, from the sense of independence by means of service and love in order to gain the most elevated experience of love.

I am sorry I might have hurt someone but I think it’s important. This is meeting Lord Shiva in one’s own heart. Has anyone met Lord Shiva? Gopisvara mahadeva ki! Jaya! Sanatana Gosvami ki! Jaya! Gaura-premanande! Haribol! Srila Prabhupada ki! Jaya! Thank you very much.

# Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”, lecture 8

September 25, 2011  
Bhakti Vijnana Goswami Maharaja

**Seminar “Meeting Lord Shiva”.**  
**Sadhu-sanga Festival**  
**Tuapse, 2011**

**Annotation:**

Questions: Why does Krishna send difficulties that separate people from God? What does causeless mercy mean? How can one understand one’s own motives? How can one teach others if one doesn’t have the ego of a teacher?

Once again about different kinds of faith and importance of *sastriya-sraddha*.

The false ego brings one to fighting Lord and spreading a teaching for the sake of getting followers.

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Today, I am going to summarize and try to make it sound a little more positive. I’ve been trying to explain in what way contamination by *jnana* manifests itself in our hearts. Even when we think we are performing *bhakti*, even when we desire for devotion. I’ve explained that *jnana* is easily mistaken for *bhakti*. People usually mistake one for the other.

One of the most widespread manifestations of striving for liberation - for easy way of liberation – in our world is taking drugs. What are drugs? They are *moksa*. You take some drugs, you have a drink – you instantly get *mukti* or liberation from suffering. It doesn’t last long but nevertheless... All of these are very much characteristic for our Russian mentality. The farther to the West the clearer the tendency for *karma*, economic prosperity, well-being, industry, material happiness, success. Russia is a country of people striving for *moksa*. No wonder we have the river Moksha. Some say that the word Moskva (Moscow) originates from the word *moksa*. I don’t know how true it is but it’s quite likely.

Another Russian synonym of striving for liberation – *moksa* - is pofigism (apathy, couldn’t care less attitude). It sounds a little rough but is quite accurate. It’s when one doesn’t care at all and is not at all motivated. This is a very insidious weed. It includes lots of species, manifestations, types. By means of this story – Brihad-bhagavatamrita – Sanatana Gosvami explains... This is the Puranic style to teach by telling stories instead of giving direct instructions, which is not always efficient because it hurts our ego. We try to teach by telling some stories to have it get deeper into our heart. I hope it will make sense and I will get a little deeper into the topic we touched upon yesterday. But first I’d like to answer a few relevant questions. There are not so many of them today.

One question, actually, has a little connection with the topic we discussed yesterday. “Why does Krishna send difficulties separating people from God?”

It’s absolutely obvious (and it’s exemplified by some of our acquaintances, by us) that some difficulties estrange a man from God and it might seem why send such difficulties? To, probably, reveal to the person his/her desire to get separated from God that might be hidden from him/her. It’s like Krishna sending Shiva as Sankaracarya to lead people away from God. In fact, no one can lead one away from God, moreover, no difficulties can estrange one from God. If someone has ever experienced difficulties it’s the Pandavas. They were born in a forest despite the fact that they came from a royal family. They were persecuted from their childhood. So many things did they experience! There were attempts to poison, kill, drown, send into exile, burn them. Who? Their own relatives – their uncle who was supposed to protect them. They were absolutely innocent. Bhisma himself says with tears in his eyes, “You are completely innocent! Why has it happened to you? I can’t get it. You’ve had every chance to resist it but, nonetheless, misfortune rained down on you one after the other!”

It would seem - they have become established in their kingdom in Indraprastha and then it's new misfortunes – they lose everything, go into exile, live in a forest and only feed on roots. And there, too, they were not left alone. Then there was war. Soon after the war it was time for them to leave. All of their kids had been killed. Who has ever been exposed to more difficulties than the Pandavas? But it didn't even occur to them to stop loving God for one simple reason. And there's no one to get it. This reason is really hard to understand. The reason why the Pandavas and anyone who loves God don't reject God despite difficulties is because love is causeless. The cause is that love is causeless. Therefore no cause can destroy it. If my love is motivated, if it's based on some gain, some expectations or something else, then, of course, my expectations are not met and I move away from God. But the point is that love of God has no cause therefore it's uninterrupted.

When at the very beginning of the Srimad-Bhagavatam Suta Gosvami says “*ahaituky apratihata*” defining the supreme experience of happiness, he says that what brings one to this unmotivated and uninterrupted love – and he uses these two synonyms because if love is unmotivated, *ahaituky*, it will be *apratihata* – nothing will stop it, there will be no obstacles for it. But to just explain how this unmotivatedness manifests itself he says, “Nothing can stop it, it can never be interrupted.”

Thereupon there is a question related to this incomprehension, “What does it mean that the mercy is causeless? He loves His devotees – this is the cause of His mercy.”

The point is that... No one can answer the question why He loves. When saying it's causeless we mean that God's love is of the same nature as God Himself and God has no cause. Right? Does God have a cause? No. Who created God? Stupid atheists say, “Well, okay, God created this world and who created God?” They don't understand this is a stupid question because by definition has no cause. He is the cause of all causes, which means He is the only cause of Himself. He is the ultimate cause. Similarly, love is absolutely causeless being on the same level as God. It has no cause except love itself. It's just like Krishna is the cause of Oneself, Krishna's love is the only cause of what is happening.

In other words, no one can say when love and mercy arrive. It, certainly, makes our life much more complicated because if it's causeless, one can't obtain it either. Because if we want to obtain something, we should create the cause of it. But, nevertheless, it's possible and don't ask me why. But I am going to speak on that later.

Actually, this first part describes what God's mercy is. Narada is walking around saying, “Here is God's mercy! Take it! Take it!” I wanted to play Narada with you by telling you that “you all have the mercy of God.” And I'll explain why, at least, I'll try.

We should be well aware – and that's what Sanatana Gosvami explains in Brihad-bhagavatamrita – what mercy is. In our case the mercy of God is the faith we develop. This faith is of special nature. I spoke on this at the Ukrainian festival when beginning my seminar and I'd like to repeat the same thing in the conclusion of this seminar – God's mercy is faith based on *sastra*. If one has developed faith in the word of God this means that God's mercy has come to one and it's come through a devotee. Although, as we've already said, God's mercy is causeless – it has no cause – it nevertheless comes through our contact with a devotee and that's, actually, the point. When one develops faith in *sastra*, that is in the purport of *sastra*, in the injunctions of *sastra* and in the purpose of *sastra* – it means that one is actually in a safe place – one has no other place to go. Because faith is what makes one determined. When one has faith, one will have determination. Therefore Krishna says a very interesting thing – and this is one of the most famous and paradoxical verses of Bhagavad-gita (9.30):

*apī cet su-durācāro  
bhajate mām ananya-bhāḥ  
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ  
samyag vyavasīto hi saḥ*

He says, “If one just develops faith in *sastra*, even if it's not so strong, one is already a *sadhu*.” Why? Because one is not going to leave. Even if one accidentally falls, even if one accidentally makes a mistake,

even commits some very serious thing - *sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ* - one is properly situated in one's determination. Determination and faith are synonyms. This is where mercy is. Feel it? I'm bringing you to a positive point. It really means that if I have evolved faith and if I act properly, stay with devotees trying to strengthen my faith, I am going to overcome all the obstacles, however hard they seem; that I'll finally perceive the truth, come to Krishna because I have faith that this is the highest thing of all.

Again, I would like to warn you about different kinds of faith. In fact, Krishna describes in Bhagavad-gita four types of faith. One is faith in *sastra* – *sastriya-sraddha* – and three kinds of faith in the *gunas* of the material nature: *tamo-guna sraddha*, *rajo-guna sraddha* and *sattva-guna sraddha* or *sattvika-sraddha*, *rajasika-sraddha* and *tamasika-sraddha*. Faith in the *gunas* of the material nature... Sometimes one mistakes the faith one has in one's heart for transcendental faith. Now, one should thoroughly separate one truth from the others. Sometimes people believe in one man. One of the strata of meaning of this seminar is that our faith in a man or *guru* shouldn't turn into the personality cult because we believe in a man who follows the injunctions of *sastra* in his life. After all, *sastra* is the most important thing and if one deviates from *sastra* we should stop believing in one. Our faith shouldn't simply be based on faith in man. Faith in man – and he can be nice, likeable, sing well, roll up his eyes in good time – this is all nonsense. Our faith in *guru* should be based on him bringing home the word of *sastra* to us, explaining *sastra*, the words of *sastra*, helping and encouraging us to live our life according to *sastra*. It's for this reason that he is a spiritual master. As soon as he deviates from *sastra* – and that's what the famous verse from Mahabharata is about, which says that one should reject such a person because he's forgotten what can be done and what can't, a person who betrays *sastra* and leaves the path leading upwards, *utpatha*. *Utpatha* means the evolutionary path. If one, this way or another, starts degrading, we should leave one. This is the injunction of *sastra*. We shouldn't be sentimental thinking, "Oh, he is *guru*, he is *guru* and will always be my *guru*." He is *guru* as long as he inspires me to follow *sastra*. Even if he makes a mistake but doesn't betray *sastra*, he will continue to be my *guru*. We should also have a very clear understanding of the *sastric* principles as far as this point is concerned.

In fact, communication with people, *sadhu-sanga*, communication, with such people results into us evolving faith in *sastra* and in this regard we say that *guru* is the carrier of God's mercy. Again, I'd like to define "mercy" because Narada is looking for the one having mercy. That's why I've come to you and said, "You all have mercy." Why? Because you have faith in *sastra*. Therefore after this lecture you are going to distribute *sastra* or Srila Prabhupada's books.

I would also like to speak on the wrong manifestation of all these things. Because people often – all the people joining some religious movement – expect miracles. Do we want miracles? Everybody wants miracles and the main thing is that they should happen in our lives. People think, "I've communicated with a saintly person and a miracle is now supposed to occur: all of my *anarthas* should be gone at once, all of my problems should be gone, love of God is supposed to bubble in my heart and pour out of it." Or one thinks, "I will go to the holy *dhama* and all of my problems will be gone." The miracle that occurred in our lives is the faith we've evolved. The rest of the things will come in due course. This faith will finally become mature turning, finally, into love. Don't you think that it will come so soon – there is some natural course.

Gaurakisora Dasa Babaji said that if a woman who hasn't conceived comes to a maternity ward and bear down, however much she bears down she won't give birth to anything. There is a certain natural process – first conception and conception means faith. In nine months, if everything is all right, if there's no miscarriage resulting from *vaisnava-aparadha* she is going to give birth to a baby – develop love in her heart. So, if we are communicating with saintly people – *sadhus* – this is the type of miracle we should count on.

There one more thing: a few questions about how to become sincere, to see one's inner motives – that's what I'd like to speak on. In fact, that's what the seminar is about – how to become sincere and discern one's inner motives. If we are aware of something, we get to detect such a thing. We haven't seen that so far, right? If one doesn't know botany, doesn't know the names of plants, to the one it will just be no more than greenery – that's what one will see. I've recently been to the Himalayas and with me there was a yogi. He had lived in the Himalayas for a long time and his teacher had taught him long. He was saying while walking, "This herb is against scorpion bite; this herb must be eaten when there's a stomach ache;

this herb is for burns; if you eat this herb, you won't need to eat for a week." It was obvious that he noticed everything but for me it's just grass – nothing special about that. Everything is grass. Similarly, having heard of or learnt about something, we will tell that. We'll see, "Here I am sincere." And we all possess this sincerity – we want to go back to Krishna – but apart from that we want some other things. We will start to see – this is *anya-abhilasa*, this is a weed in my heart – other, unwanted desires, and this is a true desire.

This is very important because people very often mistake contra fact products for licenced ones. Like they sell *rudrakshas* in the Himalayas. Have you ever seen *rudrakshas*? They are much valued especially *ek mukhi* (one faced) *rudrakshas*, single segmented *rudrakshas*. They are very expensive and rare. It's more likely to find *panca mukhi rudrakshas* or others possessing different powers. What are *ek mukhi rudrakshas* most naturally supposed to give us? *Mukti*. Because it's *ek mukhi* – you become one. There is more to that but this is the most powerful type of *rudrakshas*, which is very rare and sold in every small shop (laughter). In every shop! Some shops have special *ek mukhi rudrakshas* where there is a *shiva lingam*, a snake, everything! And you are thinking while buying, "What a rare *rudraksha* I've got!" The thing is that the next shop has it, too. We were there bargaining and ran into an honest merchant. We say, "Do you have an *ek mukhi*?" He replies, "Sure, as many as you want, lots! They are all *masala*." *Masala* means fake. We move to the next shop and the merchant says, "The others have *masala*, mine are not." We show it to the one who told us all of them were *masala* asking, "Is it *masala*?" to hear, "Yes, *masala, masala*!" Again, we give it back to the one who sold it but he's already lost interest in us – he doesn't feel like explaining to us this is the only genuine one.

The point is that this world offers lots of fake things. Everything is forged in this world especially nowadays and the *acaryas* of our *sampradaya* have done a lot of work to explain to us what, after all, we should aspire to. Sometimes at one point we realize that we are not very pure devotees. It's a painful discovery. One shouldn't be afraid to experience this pain because it's healthy pain. In the beginning everybody thinks, "I am a pure devotee." In the beginning when one has just joined he is enthusiastic and strictly follows all the rules but he has his concept of what *bhakti* is – getting up at three in the morning, chanting the mantra, singing *samsara-davanala-lida-loka* whatever it means (laughter). And when one starts doing it, one thinks, "I am a pure devotee!"

Has anyone ever had such thoughts? Raise your hands! And what is interesting – you get them confirmed soon. Why? Because one looks around thinking, "Hardly anybody is doing it. I've often heard this is a very rare thing. Now I know from my own experience – it's only me who has pure *bhakti* and no one else!" A fact is a rare thing. Senior devotees are clearly a gone goose. But this is the delusion almost everybody has been under because in the beginning one has this misconception that *bhakti* is following certain rules. If I learn to follow them, I am already a pure devotee. But *acaryas* explain to us that it's not that simple, and this is good because it means that we are going the right way. It means we are not being cheated and no one wants to manipulate our misconception.

Actually, the point is to direct our desire to desirable things – we should want this pure, genuine, true *bhakti* when we have completely renounced our independence. Sanatana Gosvami is showing or kind of explaining to us what we have to want but in a very peculiar way. He says, "Everyone not possessing it is not happy. Shiva doesn't feel satisfied. Before him Brahma didn't feel satisfied. Before him Indra didn't feel satisfied – he cried. Shiva doesn't feel satisfied. Up to Shiva's level - people don't have a true relationship with God, so they don't experience a true satisfaction." Actually, we have a terminal disease of indifference to God and this indifference is soul necrosis, deadly leprosy – a terminal disease of indifference to God. This indifference to God – Sanatana Gosvami clearly demonstrates it – develops as a result of a separated ego.

And we are now moving on to the main topic of this seminar. As long as we have this feeling of independence, desire for our own happiness, the concept of one's own happiness being the most important thing – and that's what I need and have to be concerned with and I have conceptions of myself like, "I am Indra. I am Shiva. I am Brahma" or even "I am Laksmi", "I am a husband", "I am a teacher." – I won't have a true experience of love or *bhakti* because *bhakti* means complete renunciation of one's independence and full surrender to Krishna.

There was another very important question, “How can one teach others without having the teacher’s ego?” And the question is very interesting. He says, “Does it mean that one should sometimes switch on this ego and sometimes switch it off?” You switch it on – you are a teacher, you should go and give a lecture – you sit down, press a button and teach. You leave the stage – you press the button.

No. One can have the teacher’s ego if it originates from of the ego of a servant. If I possess this principal ego of a servant, if the foundation, if my perception of what I am and what I need is only based on, “I am a servant, I am only supposed to do things that please my spiritual master, Krishna and this is the purpose of my existence.” If I have this type of ego, I’ll certainly be able to play the rest of the roles. I’ll be a husband, a teacher or someone else. But I won’t have a separate, independent desire to enjoy it because a separated ego means separated desires. Separated desires mean activities independent from Krishna. Accomplishments independent from Krishna mean enjoying these accomplishments. That’s all! If I have a separated ego, I am going to create my own image in a separate way, try to enjoy this role and what comes my way with this role. But if I don’t have this ego, if I have the only one ego of “I am a servant”, in such a mood I can play different roles. Sometimes I need to go and do the washing up – and I will do the dishes and then I will teach.

Srila Prabhupada is the best example of it. He came to America to teach people, to give lectures and tell *sastra*. One devotee says, “It was at the very beginning on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. I stayed on. We would come, listen to the lecture, sing a *kirtana*, eat *prasadam* and leave and it was all right. But once I happened to stay a little longer to see that everyone had left their dirty plates. Svamiji collected all the plates and took them to the kitchen to wash up.” Washing plates after hippies! Srila Prabhupada didn’t have this ego like, “I am a *guru*! How come?! How dare they?!” No. If one has to wash, one will. If one has to do something, one will. This hippie saw Svamiji picking up the plates and said, “May I help you?” Having heard that Srila Prabhupada replied, “It’s high time.” But before that he hadn’t even mentioned that because one should do what should be done.

Like sometimes one develops some independent ego, “I am a *sanyasi*, which means “I should do nothing except teaching others, studying *sastra* and something else.” Srila Prabhupada wrote a letter to explain what *sanyasi* is, “A *sanyasi* is like me: when one should go to the bank, one should go to the bank to sign bills; when one should wash, one should wash; when one should give a lecture, one should give a lecture.” He further says, “This is called *gopi-bhava*.” We’ve never heard of the *gopis* going to the bank but Srila Prabhupada explains, “I am a servant. If I have to do it, if I have to fight, I will go and fight. If I have to be humble and listen, I will listen. If I have to chant the mantra, I will chant the mantra. I am a servant – I am going to do what I am supposed to – there’s no independence of my own.”

At one point, in particular, it was in fashion – I guess it has gone a little out of fashion now – *siddha-svarupa*, *manjari-bhava*... “I have *manjari-bhava*.” What is *manjari-bhava*? We know what *manjari* is – it’s a *tulasi* flower and the point is that the flower is trembling when the *tulasi* Herself is trembling. Srimati Radharani is said to be a liana and *manjaris* are the flowers on this liana. They are trembling when the liana is trembling. In other words they are doing whatever She is doing – they don’t do anything independently. *Manjari* means that one doesn’t have one’s own independence – one has love. Love and independence are two opposite things. This is, actually, the point – when I have an independent ego I am bound to act independently and I am not going to experience the love and complete happiness I deserve, which is my nature. But if I have the right ego of a servant, I’ll be able to play different parts, including the role of a teacher if need be.

Now we are about to start discussing very important things. It’s like I want to get back and summarize. Up to the Shiva level everything was clear. On the *karma* level people want from God very simple things like a healthy, long life, prosperity, happiness, peace, to be obeyed by their kith and kin. What else do they want from God? There’s another thing the people infected by *karma* very much want from God, “When I am in trouble God should help me.” This is the most prominent, the main sign of being contaminated by *karma*: I am in trouble – God should come to my aid. Sanatana Gosvami mentions and explains it again and again. When Indra is in trouble he calls to God. Sometimes God comes, sometimes He doesn’t and Indra gets resentful. It’s contamination by *karma*. They wish some material prosperity and this is the first reason why people become devotees of God. Krishna Himself says in Bhagavad-gita that there are four types of pious men. Srila Prabhupada said that during World War II German women went

to church to pray to God, “Lord, save our husbands. Lord, save our sons.” And when their sons didn’t return they got disappointed in God and stopped believing in Him.

Actually, it’s a very important point – when one prompted by a karmic desire doesn’t get what one expects from God, one interrupts one’s relationship with Him. He feels hurt by God, he gets resentful or he sometimes starts, like Indra, a fight with Krishna. Indra didn’t get his small sacrifice and he is willing to do anything for Krishna. This is a low mentality of a karmic person: I want something from God but God didn’t help me. Who cares for such God? Andrey Voznesenskiy (a Russian poet) was good at articulating this idea, “What’s this God if He didn’t help?!” (laughter). Everything is clear.

Again, externally, this man may seem very devoted. Srila Prabhupada would say a very famous Bengal saying: *ati bhakti corera laksana*, “Too much devotion is a symptom of a thief.” Sometimes you look and see, “He is a pure devotee.” For some time to come until it becomes clear that his intention was to steal. One shouldn’t mix it up. One may be strongly motivated but what kind of motivation is that? Does he want God as such?

Sanatana Gosvami is explaining a very important thing that on this level of mentality one is tormented by envy and fear. Envy – because he is envious of those others who have more than he does or he always feels being envied by those who have less than he does; he has this competitive spirit on this level of mentality. And he has fear because he is afraid to lose what he has. These are, actually, the two problems one always faces. One is afraid to lose one’s status, prestige, achievements, money and something else.

But then *jnana* comes, which is renunciation of material enjoyment, material life, disenchantment with it; and people usually think that this is where true spirituality begins. Sanatana Gosvami and all of our *acaryas* unanimously say, “Don’t get confused. Spirituality doesn’t begin on this level.” Because what happens? One is fed up with the struggle for existence and, as a result, starts taking drugs or seek liberation. People very often become devotees at this point but they want to serve God because this way they hope to have all of their problems solved. Our *asramas* are often full of such people. They live in our *asramas* with the desire for deliverance from this world burning in their hearts and poorly concealed resentment against God.

What does Sanatana Gosvami do? Listen, because we are actually, getting to it. He says that such people are usually perceived as saintly. If they achieve something in their desire for liberation, if they choose the path of least resistance achieving something in their renunciation – and we have, actually, discussed it in our small seminar – they develop three symptoms that ordinary people see as symptoms of sainthood. Firstly, it’s that such a man can put in a good word for us with God. Why do people visit a saintly person? Because he is close to God? He’ll pray for us and we are going to be fine. A *karma* man comes to a *jnana* man and says, “Pray for me – you are closer to God.” And the latter replies, “Okay, I will pray for you.”

Sanatana Gosvami explains it when using Naradas words explaining Krishna’s relationship with Shiva. Powerful Shiva put a word for Banasura and Krishna had mercy on him at once, took pity on him. He has this connection and he can put a good word for us if need be, protect us before God. This is one symptom.

Another symptom is the miracles they make, renunciation they can bestow. First symptom – they will stand up for us before God, second – miracles. A saintly person is supposed to make miracles, isn’t he? If he doesn’t make miracles he is no saintly. It’s a fact. Some *gopis* - God knows what they are doing – are churning butter. They could sit and meditate and it would get churned itself. Anyone possessing some mystic powers wouldn’t need to churn. He would sit down, chant a mantra and bang! – butter’s ready.

The third symptom is their complete renunciation, detachment and feeling of some special ecstasy. Right? A saintly person is supposed to experience ecstasy. If he doesn’t experience ecstasy what sort of saint is he? I am going to disappoint you – saintly persons don’t like ecstasy. There’s a story in The Nectar of Devotion of Rupa Gosvami experiencing ecstasy when serving Krishna, when fanning Him. At that moment he cursed his ecstasy because it prevented him from serving Krishna. “Who cares for an ecstasy like this if it stops me serving Krishna?”



There was a wonderful saintly woman – she’s recently departed. Srila Radhanatha Maharaja describes meeting her in his book. Her name is Anandamayi Ma. I’ve read a book about her. And she’s really an amazing, remarkable person – she displayed all these symptoms. Why did everyone regard her as saintly? Because she experienced ecstasy. Such ecstasy did she sometimes experience – ooh!

Sanatana Gosvami says, “Sham! Don’t buy this cheap stuff.” He says, “That’s no *bhakti*, no *bhakti*!” You see what an unconventional minority we are? (laughter) We do not recognize any widely spread concepts of being saintly. That’s what Narada said and Shiva himself started to deny. I mentioned it yesterday. Again, it’s very important to recall all Shiva’s refutations. First thing he says, “I have no *bhakti*, there’s no mercy on me because I have a big ego.” This big ego is an essential attribute of the one taking the path of renunciation. When one is performing austerities, when one is taking a path of renunciation he is bound to look down on everyone, “I am more elevated, better and purer than others.”

Anyone ever performing austerities knows that. Has anyone ever performed austerities? Observed *ekadasi* fasting? How do we regard those who have the face to eat on such a sacred day for all the *Vaisnavas*? One is performing a small austerity and all at once one becomes proud. Shiva is renunciation personified and Sanatana Gosvami describes his ego in a very interesting way. He puts it into Brahma’s mouth. He says, “Shiva sneers at us because he wears a garland of bones to show the futility of our efforts and attempts to enjoy this world.”

Just imagine me coming with this garland of bones. It’s like Caitanya Mahaprabhu was visited by Bharati the *sanyasi*. He came dressed in a tiger skin because *sanyasis* are supposed to wear a tiger skin, otherwise they are no *sanyasis*. Caitanya Mahaprabhu looked at him and asked, “Who’s this?” He was well aware of who he was but asked, “Who’s the one who came wearing a tiger skin? Why is he wearing a tiger skin?” He perceived him at once: ego. Brahma says, “Look, he’s mocking all of us.”

Also, in Radhanatha Maharaja’s book there is an interesting scene where he comes to a catholic monastery in Italy where there’s a museum. It has lots of beautiful things like candlesticks, patterns, floral designs, furniture made from skeleton parts of monks. Then there were a few skeletons wearing monk robes and pointing to a sign that read, “As you are now, we used to be. As we are now, you will be.” (laughter).

This is the same pride, the same laughter the same sneer. Sneering at and mocking others comes from pride. Shiva explains it, “First reason why I don’t get mercy is my big ego.” This is a lot of many people engaged in religious activities. They come to a monastery and what do they want? They want ego, they want to rule over others. Another very important reason Shiva is giving is, “If I have an ego, ego is bound to bring to destruction.” And the most important thing at this moment is to apply these things to ourselves right on hearing. The first thing is clear: as soon as we try to get God’s mercy by means of renunciation our ego starts growing and our heart becomes withered, flinty and dry. It’s something absolutely opposite to *bhakti*. If renunciation results from love of God, that’s another matter. But if we take the path of renunciation it’s not ours.

Another very important thing is what Shiva is talking about, which doesn’t seem to apply to us on the face of it. Shiva is saying, “Look, the point of my service is to destroy everything.” But, in fact, it equally applies to us, too. If one desires for *mukti*, one day one is sure to destroy even what one has been creating with one’s own hands. I’ve seen it: when the weed has completely sprouted – and in Shiva’s case it also takes long, for a long time he seems to have been just renouncing God’s creation – but at one point he comes and does his service, which is to destroy God’s creation.

What happens to people in our case? If one has let the shoot of *mukti* sprout in one’s heart, at some point one starts destroying what one’s teacher created. Some Srila Prabhupada’s disciples at some point began to destroy ISKCON. I remember in 1998 there was a type of devotees who said just this, “We created ISKCON – we will destroy it.” Why? Ego. Firstly, they didn’t create ISKCON – it was created by Srila Prabhupada. But they said – and that’s actually what they said, “We created ISKCON here – we will destroy it.” It’s not them who created it - it’s not up to them to destroy it. But Krishna uses them to serve. But the point is that the ego starts acting and, in fact, all the destructive processes are based on the ego,

the desire for liberation. When one gives rein to one's desires in the heart, one's relationships start to collapse – almost everything collapses due to the ego and desire for liberation.

The third thing we mentioned yesterday... well, I don't know what to do – I'll have to give another lecture tomorrow... I've been given the opportunity (laughter). The third thing I mentioned yesterday is very important – I just repeat what we discussed yesterday – Shiva says, "I have no *bhakti*, I have no true love of God because I fight Lord and argue with Him every now and then." He gave two examples of Banasura in the story with *parijata* when Indra had invited him and Shiva fought on the Lord's side.

Again, what does it have to do with us? We don't fight God, do we? Our ego hasn't become as big as to dare struggle with Lord Himself. But, actually, it's equally applicable to us. When one allows this desire for liberation and *mukti* to sprout in one's heart, what happens? One's ego starts to grow and this ego not based on the ego of a servant this way or the other causes one in an attempt to protect or keep one's ego to fight even those who have provided one with this opportunity. I've seen it many times since I've been in ISKCON. One takes some position. This is service, isn't it? What difference does it make what kind of service it is? I can have some position - I cannot, I can wash pots, I can be president of the whole universe – no problem. A servant is a servant – there's no difference at all. But if one comes here and does it out of one's desire for liberation... One has this ego, "I am a teacher, I am a *jnani*, I am a *bhakta*, I am a *mukta*, I am a bestower of *bhakti*, I am the liberator of all, I can liberate anyone." And if one is liberated from the position held (laughter), this "liberated" personality gets to fight violently saying, "I am going to Dvorkin\*! I am going to provide all incriminating evidence!" Suddenly, one changes. He used to be a servant and seemed to serve sincerely, used to do something but then he turns out to have become an enemy. That's what Shiva means, "Look – if it's not my way, I immediately become Krishna's enemy. When everything's fine and the sun is shining, I say, "O Krishna, Hare Krishna, I am your servant." As soon as something is not my way, I start fighting Him."

So, it's equally applicable to us. How come that we start resisting God is also a very interesting moment. I've explained to you why Shiva fights Krishna. Because he wants to please his followers. He finds it more important to be loved, appreciated and treated well by his followers than please Krishna. For that Shiva starts to fight with Krishna. It, actually, applies to us. Why? Sometimes to please our followers, if we get ones – and we know that everyone in ISKCON has one's followers... It might be *bhakti-vriksa* or *nama-hata*, or it can be a big *nama-hata*, a *yatra*. Well, it doesn't matter – everyone can have one's own followers. We say: *na dhanam na janam na sundarim* meaning the opposite. And we often fight with God to please our followers. To flatter our followers, to keep our followers, we get to alter the injunctions of the scriptures, "Well, yes, actually, Srila Prabhupada mentioned this but it's not that relevant anymore."

This is our war with God. When one alters *sastra*, alters the instructions of the spiritual master or God, after all, it's like one fights with Him. We've seen it happen in ISKCON, when some of Srila Prabhupada's followers suddenly began to change things finding excuses in Srila Prabhupada's words, esoteric letters etc. Like Srila Prabhupada wrote in one of his letters, "Jesus Christ is our teacher and we should worship him." And soon enough there was a crucifix of Jesus on the altar. Srila Prabhupada said, "You can't worship a crucified spiritual master – what an odd type of worship?" But, nevertheless, that's how it is when we begin to fight Krishna. Why? Due to the ego. The ego, after all, is a manifestation of our separated, independent desires, which manifest themselves in the form of the desire for liberation. Therefore, when Narada was glorifying Shiva his last words were very important. He said, "O Shiva, your love of Krishna is uninterrupted" meaning at the same time that "your love of Krishna is, alas, interrupted." Why? Because there is ego. In other words, there are three arguments that Shiva himself disproves saying, "I have no *bhakti* because I have the ego."

I realize that I haven't been able to cover everything but these are important things and I wanted to apply them to myself. But, unfortunately, we didn't go further. But I hope tomorrow we'll have a little time to enable us to move on and continue our seminar if everything goes right. Tomorrow at the same time at 5 o'clock if you have the opportunity. Thank you very much.

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and since 2009 Vice-President of European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarianism (FECRIS), umbrella organization for anti-cult groups in Europe. Initiated the Bhagavad Gita trial in Russia, seeking to ban ISKCON's edition of the *Bhagavad Gita*. On March 21, 2012, the Russian appeals court rejected Dvorkin's petition and also upheld the decision of the lower court.