Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja THE BHAKTI-LATA-BIJA Toulouse, France: July 6, 2002

[From July 2 to July 7, three hundred devotees gathered from France, Germany, England, Italy, and America to hear the hari-katha of Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja in Toulouse, France. Every evening he gave class from Caitanya-caritamrta, leading up to the topic of Sri Rupa-siksa, and within that, he discussed the topic of the seed of the bhakti creeper. He specifically requested that his lectures on this subject be published.]

[Sripad Madhava Maharaja:] Srila Gurudeva has ordered me to explain the verse:

brahmanda bhramite kona bhagyavan jiva guru krsna prasade paya bhakti-lata-bija

By the causeless mercy of guru and Krsna, the devotional practitioner can receive the seed of bhakti.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Who will receive the seed?

[Madhava Maharaja:] The sadhaka.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Why did you say sadhaka? Anyone can receive it.

[Sripad Madhava Maharaja:] By the combined causeless mercy of Guru and Krsna, any living entity can receive the bhakti-lata-bija. In this verse, "guru krsna" has two meanings: It means "by the combined mercy of Sri Guru and Sri Krsna," and it means that Guru is a manifestation of Krsna. Guru and Krsna are non-different, and this is confirmed in the Caitanya-caritamrta:

guru krsna-rupa hana sastrera pramane guru-rupe krsna krpa karena bhakta-gane) ["According to the revealed opinion of all revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is nondifferent from Krsna. Lord Krsna, in the form of the spiritual master, delivers His devotees." (Cc Adi 1.45)]

By the causeless mercy of asraya-bhagavan (the spiritual master), the living entity can receive the bhakti-lata-bija. This bhakti-lata-bija is the desire to serve Krsna. How will this desire to serve Krsna manifest in the heart? It manifests by hearing hari-katha from the bona fide Guru and bona fide Vaisnavas. If we try to hear Krsna's pastimes with faith from Gurudeva, and also from pure Vaisnavas, the desire to serve will appear in the heart. I'd like to give some examples from the pastimes we have heard from our Gurudeva and from the Vaisnavas:

One time, Krsna and His sakhas like Sridama, Madhumangala, and others were wrestling with one another, and eventually Sridama came out the winner – and Krsna was clapping alone.

Seeing this, the sakhas asked Him, "Krsna, why are You clapping so much?" He replied, "Because I defeated Sridama in the wrestling match."

Meanwhile, Durvasa Rsi, who was sitting and watching the whole scene, couldn't decide whether Krsna was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, or just a mundane boy. He watched in amazement as the boys debated with Krsna. Sridama challenged Him, "Krsna Kanhaiya, how can You say that You defeated me? All the sakhas are eyewitnesses; they all saw that You were on the ground on Your back, underneath me. Therefore I am the winner." Krsna replied, "But My nose was pointing up, and he whose nose points down is the loser; so you are the loser!" Just then they saw that a Baba was sitting nearby and staring at them. Being causelessly merciful, Krsna, along with Sridama and the other sakhas, desired to give him His darsana. He said, "Let us ask this Baba; he saw everything." Then, approaching Durvasa Rsi He said, "Baba, I am the winner and Sridama is the loser. Is it not?" Durvasa simply sat there and remained silent, for he was completely bewildered by what was taking place. Sridama then said, "Baba, please speak the truth. Don't lie like Krsna; please don't lie. I am the winner and Krsna is the loser. It is not fitting for a saintly person to lie. If you lie, the sin of lying will strike you."

Durvasa Rsi remained sitting, and staring, and now he was also somewhat trembling. Coming very close and looking at him, Krsna said, "Why aren't you replying? Are you dumb?" Sridama added, "Baba why are you not replying? Are you deaf?" In his bewilderment Durvasa Rsi tried to say something, but he could only stutter, "What should I say...I don't know what to say... " Now Krsna told Sridama, "Oh! This Baba is bogus! He doesn't know anything." Krsna pulled on the beard of Durvasa Rsi and said, "O Baba! Are you dumb or are you deaf? Why aren't you answering us?" Sridama joined Him, and also pulling on Durvasa's beard said, "Yes, are you deaf or are you dumb?" The sakhas finally said, "Let us go. He doesn't know."

By being in good association and hearing hari-katha like this from a bona fide Guru or Vaisnavas, one will gradually develop the desire to be the friend of Krsna, to play with Him as one of His sakhas. This is very good. Now I will repeat another pastime:

Mother Yasoda had given Krsna a bath, and few moments after being bathed and dressed very nicely by His mother, Krsna rolled on the ground and made His clothes dirty. After that He came to her, demanding to be picked up. She told Him, "No. I shall not touch You. You are dirty; You are a naughty boy. I have just given You a bath and dressed You so nicely, but You went and rolled on the ground. I shall not touch You."

Narada Muni had been watching the whole scene and thought to himself, "How fortunate is Mother Yasoda! The Supreme Personality of Godhead wants to come and sit in her lap, and she is chastising Him, saying, 'No. Don't come and touch me. You are a naughty, dirty boy.'" By hearing this type of hari-katha from Guru and Vaisnavas, one may gradually develop the desire to serve Krsna like Mother Yasoda and Nanda Baba. This desire is called krsna-sevavasana, and it is the bhakti-lata-bija. Now I want to give one last example. Once, Krsna wanted to console Srimati Radhika and to apologize for upsetting Her due to His notorious activities. He came to meet with Her, but She told Him, "Hari hari jahe, Madhava jahe. Madhava kaitava badham. O Hari, You should go away from here! O Kesava, go away! O Madhava, go away from here!" The manjaris of Srimati Radhika can also chastise Krsna. Without their permission, Krsna is not allowed to enter Radhika's kunja.

The desire to serve the Divine Couple in a mood of Radhika's manjaris is also called krsna-sevavasana. How does it come? By being in good association and hearing pastimes like these from Sri Guru and Vaisnavas, the greed or the desire to serve Krsna can enter the heart of the sincere disciple by their mercy. This is the desire to serve Krsna: krsna-seva-vasana, and it is the bhaktilata-bija.

I have given 3 examples of how krsna-seva-vasana comes by good association: in friendship (sakhya-rasa), in a paternal mood (vatsalya-rasa) and in the mood of a paramour lover (madhurya-rasa). If someone who hears these pastimes develops the desire to serve Krsna in any one of the relationships, we should know that he has been given the bhakti-lata-bija by the causeless mercy of Sri Guru and Krsna. This is the meaning of guru krsna prasade paya, bhakti-lata-bija. If anyone obtains this bija, his life will be successful.

[Syamarani dasi:] Srila Gurudeva has ordered me to give the translation and meaning of this verse.

After taking births within the millions of species of life from a time immemorial, the living entity finally meets the spiritual master and receives the seed of bhakti from him. The spiritual master does not plant the seed himself; rather he gives it to the disciple who then becomes like a gardener, mali-hana, and plants the seed in his own heart. The disciple then nurtures and nourishes the seed by watering it with the process of hearing and chanting under the guidance of the Guru, and in this way the seed begins to sprout.

This verse has many beautiful deep meanings. It is stated in Caitanya-caritamrta:

nitya siddha krsna prema sadhya kabhu naya sravanadi suddha citta koraye udaya

["Pure love for Krsna is eternally established in the hearts of the living entities. It is not something to be gained from another source. When the heart is purified by hearing and chanting, this love naturally awakens." (Cc Madhya 22.108)]

It's not that the spiritual master is giving a seed of something that is not already in the heart of the living entity. Nitya siddha krsna prema: krsna prema is already lying dormant, latent within our hearts, in the same way that the seed of any tree or plant has everything about that tree or plant already within it – in potency. For instance, a mango seed has within it the tree, its branches, leaves, flowers, fruit, and even the flavor and aroma of the fruit. Everything is already

there in potency. Similarly, krsna-bhakti, krsna-prema, is already in our hearts in seed form. Our entire spiritual form, services, dress, hairstyles – everything is there. This is also stated in the verse:

jivera svarupa hoya krsna nitya dasa krsnera tatastha sakti bedhabeda prakasa

The living entity is eternally Krsna dasa, and therefore everything about him is already there. We are eternally qualitatively the same as Krsna and quantitatively different from Him. If krsnaprema is already there in a dormant state as a seed in the heart, what then is meant by the statement: the spiritual master gives the seed? In answer, the acaryas have given us the example of a certain planetary constellation called svati-naksatra. When the rain comes at the time of this constellation, it has a special effect on different living entities. For instance, the oysters within the ocean have the potency to produce pearls, but unless the rains of the svati-naksatra fall onto the water in which the oyster lives, the pearl is never developed. Likewise, an elephant has the potential to produce a gaja-mukta (elephant pearl), and if that particular rain falls on the hoof of a cow, gaurocana, a yellow-gold pigment that is used in unguents, appears. Also, the snake has the potential to produce a jewel, and this happens when the svati-naksatra rains fall on its head.

Similarly, every living entity has an eternal relationship with Krsna in one of the five rasas. This relationship is eternal; but it cannot be developed without the inspiration of the spiritual master. It is he who gives "the seed" of inspiration, and teaches the disciple how to water it by proper hearing and chanting.

When the seed first begins to sprout, the first two leaves that manifest are called klesaghni and subhada. Upon the appearance of these two leaves, all kinds of klesa, sufferings, such as ignorance, attachment, envy, and fear begin to fade away. At the same time, all kinds of subhada, good qualities, appear, like trnad api sunicena: humility, offering respects to others, and not desiring any for oneself. The seed that produced these two leaves is called sraddha. In Caitanya-caritamrta there is a very nice verse:

sraddha sabde visvasa kahe sudrdha niscaya krsne bhakti kaile sarva karma krta haya

["Sraddha is the confident, firm faith that, by rendering transcendental loving service to Krsna, one automatically performs all subsidiary activities. Such faith is favorable for the discharge of devotional service." (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindhu 1.3.41)]

Simply by engaging in the service of Krsna, everything is accomplished. Every desire that I have in this material world, including the desires for liberation and for mystic powers, is fulfilled by bhakti, in the same way that the leaves and branches of a tree are automatically watered by watering the root of the tree. The belief in the above statement is called sraddha. As Sripad Madhava Maharaja said, the tendency to serve Krsna, krsna-seva-vasana, is inspired in the heart by the Guru.

An expert gardener is able to know the characteristic quality of a seed just by looking at it; he will know what kind of tree will grow from it, what kind of water is needed, and how much sunlight it should have. He can also expertly nourish that seed so that one day it will become a healthy tree. Similarly, the expert spiritual master can look in the heart of any living entity – not only the heart of his disciple, but of every living entity in any species – and he can tell what type of seed of bhakti is there and what kind of relationship he has with Krsna. The spiritual master can also nurture that relationship and actually give the perfection of krsna-prema by his guidance.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja called out to a devotee in the far rear of the hall, who had been hearing a simultaneous translation of the class in German:] What was the gist of all that has been said? You can speak in the German language. Speak loudly so I can hear. I know German somewhat. What is bhakti-lata-bija?

[Then, after hearing the devotee try to repeat, Srila Narayana Maharaja continued:] That means you are not hearing.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja then addressed Sundara Gopal dasa:] Give the gist of what was said in two or four lines.

[Sundara Gopal dasa:] Taking birth within the millions of species since time immemorial, the living entity may become extremely fortunate to come into contact with a pure devotee. For this, he must have performed some sukrti, such as celebrating Janmastami or other good activities. When this sukrti matures in his heart, he will come to the pure devotee and have natural faith to hear the hari-katha that is coming form his lotus mouth. The potential to serve Krsna in a particular relationship is dormant within the heart of every jiva, and when the living entity listens to hari-katha from a pure devotee, the seed of bhakti may enter his heart. He may develop krsna-seva-vasana, the tendency to serve Sri Krsna.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] What is the result of that vasana (desire)?

[Sundara Gopal dasa:] The result is that bhakti creeper will begin to flourish...

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] He will think, "Oh my life will be successful."

[Sundara Gopal dasa:] He will take initiation from a bona fide spiritual master and his life will be supremely successful.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] He has this conviction: "By serving Krsna, all the other activities of my life will automatically be accomplished:

sraddha sabde visvasa kahe sudrdha niscaya krsne bhakti kaile sarva karma krta haya

["Sraddha is the confident firm faith that by rendering transcendental loving service to Krsna, one automatically performs all subsidiary activities. Such firm faith is favorable for the discharge of devotional service." (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindhu 1.3.41)]

What is the meaning of this verse?

[Sundara Gopal dasa:] To have sraddha means to have the firm conviction that by serving Krsna, nothing else needs to be done. Just as when you water the root of a tree there is no need to water the leaves: it will flourish by watering the roots. Similarly, by serving Sri Krsna and Guru, there is no need to perform any other activity.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Can that devotee, without effort, maintain his life? Will money come or not? Will he be able to nourish and support his family simply by that sraddha? If he is serving Krsna and making no effort to support his children, will that support be accomplished or not?

[Sundara Gopal dasa:] Krsna promises in Gita that He will maintain that person who engages all his energy in His service, and in the service to his Gurudeva.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Very good, thank you. From today on, you should all try to have the firm belief that by serving Krsna your lives will be successful, and that your maintenance and everything else will automatically be taken care of. With this firm belief, you will not need to do anything except chant and remember Krsna. I am repeating these very important topics again and again, in order that you may come to realize them. Try to realize this: if you are serving Krsna, your whole life will be successful; you will not need to do anything for your worldly necessities. In this way, instead of doing anything for your maintenance, you will perform all devotional activities: sravana kirtanam visnu smaranam pada sevana.

[Srila Maharaja now calls out to another devotee at the back of the hall, Akhilesa dasa:] Stand up and tell the purport of all that we have discussed. You are German, so speak loudly [the devotee begins to speak softly.]

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Speak more loudly – like a lion. Speak as I do, otherwise I will erase your name from the list of those who are German. [Germans should be bold]

[Akhilesa dasa:] At the beginning of your class you spoke on the verse from Caitanya-caritamrta: brahmanda bhramite kona bhagyavan jiva, wherein it is described that the living entity is wandering throughout the universe and taking birth among the 8,400,000 different species of life. Then, by great good fortune he meets the spiritual master who gives the seed of bhakti-lata...

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] What is that seed?

[Akhilesa dasa:] The desire to serve Krsna.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] This is the inner symptom. What is the outer symptom?

[Akhilesa dasa:] The outer symptom is that he has sraddha and accepts initiation from a bona fide spiritual master.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Not only this. He has firm faith, sraddha, in the words of Guru, Krsna, and sastra. With this faith will come the desire to serve. Moreover, he will think, that whatever has been stated by them is all right, that there is nothing wrong in their words."

[Akhilesa dasa:] Then he begins to cultivate the bhakti-lata, becoming an expert gardener...

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] What does a soul do when he receives this bhakti-seed?

[Akhilesa dasa:] He plants it in his heart, and gives it the proper nourishment of hari-katha and good association.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Very good. You should know that Gurudeva gives the seed of bhakti, the bhakti-lata-bija, but if he sees that the field of the devotee's heart is not fertile, it will not be possible for the creeper to sprout – what to speak of bear fruit. If the aspiring devotee examines himself, he will also see whether or not the field of his heart is barren, and whether or not there are only stones on that barren land. [*See Endnote 1] He must therefore first of all plow his heart, making it soft, and he must apply fertilizer; otherwise it is not possible that a creeper can sprout there. He must remove the stones by plowing, and when he sees that the land is now fertile, he will put the seed of the desire to serve Krsna in his heart. [*See Endnote 2]

Due to unlimited material desires, the heart has become like stone. How can the devotee remove them? Sukrtis are accumulated by serving Hari, Guru, and Vaisnavas, and it is by these sukrtis that the disciple will have the desire to give up all unwanted anarthas. Lust is the greatest anartha. The devotee should remove it at once; he must take it out.

Strictly follow the regulative principles; no smoking, gambling, meat eating, illicit sex, etc., and give up duplicity and hypocrisy at once. These anarthas are like holes, and whatever water the devotee collects to nourish his seed will come out again through these holes, without having touched the bhakti-lata seed. The gardener should first of all make the necessary arrangements. He should repair the holes and then remove the rocks from his heart, and in this way he can plant the seed of bhakti. [*See Endnote 3]

What will he do first? Sravanam, sravanam, sravanam. He will first of all hear continuously from a bona fide guru, and after some time, when he becomes expert in hearing, he can try to do kirtana – to speak. Who is actually performing kirtana? Vyasadeva, Sukadeva Gosvami, and others like them. One should hear just like Pariksit Maharaja heard Bhagavatam from Srila

Sukadeva Gosvami. This is sravanam kirtanam. These nine limbs, sravanam, kirtanam, visnu smaranam, etc. are important, and out of these nine, five are prominent:

sadhu-sanga, nama-kirtana, bhagavata-sravana mathura-vasa, sri-murtira sraddhaya sevana

["One should associate with devotees, chant the holy name of the Lord, hear Srimad-Bhagavatam, reside at Mathura and worship the Deity with faith and veneration." (Caitanya-caritamrta Madhya 22.128)]

sakala-sadhana-srestha ei panca anga krsna-prema janmaya ei pancera alpa sanga

["These five limbs of devotional service are the best of all. Even a slight performance of these five awakens love for Krsna." (Caitanya-caritamrta Madhya 22.129)]

If anyone engages in these five practices, beginning with sadhu-sanga, and if within sadhu-sanga he performs, nama-kirtana, bhagavad-sravana, mathura-vasa (residing in Mathura, Vrndavana, Navadvipa or any other holy tirtha) and Sri Vigraha-seva, he will quickly attain krsna-prema. If he is committing offences, however, this is very dangerous for him, and krsna-prema will not appear in his heart.

The gardener takes the seed, plants it in his now fertile heart, and waters it. He won't pour too much water in the beginning, by chanting, "Goopi goopi goopi."[*See Endnote 4] This is too much water, and by over-watering the seed in the beginning, it will not sprout; it will rot in the ground instead.

One should study the character and activities of Sri Prahlada Maharaja, Jagai-Madhai, Srila Haridasa Thakura, Sriman Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu, and Srila Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami. This is the appropriate water for the seed.

The seed will become totally rotten if you try to water it in the beginning by hearing the confidential secrets of asta-kaliya-lila, like rasa-lila and other pastimes enjoyed by Radha and Krsna in the groves. So be very careful. The qualification to hear these topics will come automatically if you sincerely follow the process; but in the beginning stage, one should gradually try to develop sraddha, nistha, ruci, asakti, rati, and so on. Don't hear all these confidential pastimes before you have attained these stages.

There are two kinds of sraddha: one is worldly sraddha, worldly faith, and the second is transcendental faith. Worldly sraddha is always komala, shaky and very weak. On the other hand, if one has transcendental sraddha (like Haridasa Thakura) he will think, "Even if you cut me into thousands of pieces, I will not give up my chanting and my worship."

You can now judge for yourselves if you have transcendental sraddha or not. Without transcendental sraddha you cannot develop; therefore, from today you should promise, "No matter how many problems may come; even if the greatest problems come to me, I will never give up my chanting and remembering Krsna." Only by having a mood such as this will the bhakti seed sprout; otherwise it will take a very long time. Sadhu-sanga is always required, for without it your faith will always be weak and you will eventually give up following the process. If you don't follow the process, even if your bhakti-lata-bija has already sprouted it will eventually dry up.

I will come tomorrow for one half hour, in the early morning [just before his departure], to explain many things.

Gaura premanande.

[Devotee:] You said that when transcendental sraddha comes, one doesn't care if he is cut into pieces; he will still chant and remember. But you also said at another time that when transcendental sraddha first appears, one serves out of fear and respect, and duty, according to sastra, and he considers that if he doesn't serve he will go to hell. My question is: how can the sraddha of one who serves Krsna out of fear and duty be strong enough to be called transcendental?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Without transcendental sraddha, you cannot develop in your bhakti, and therefore you must first of all come to that stage. Until transcendental sraddha has developed, sraddha will be mixed; it will be both worldly and transcendental. However, by practice under the guidance and association of Gurudeva, transcendental sraddha will gradually develop, and at the same time worldly sraddha will gradually disappear. When full transcendental faith has developed, you will be like Haridasa Thakura.

[Devotee:] In Jaiva dharma it says that everything is coming by chance; so does 'bhagyavan,' good fortune, mean chance?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] It can be said that the atomic jiva has fallen by chance, that we get Krsna's mercy by chance, and you are gathering sukrtis by chance. But the word "chance" has a deep meaning.

Krsna is Guru, and He is very merciful. He is called caitya-guru. As caitya-guru, He inspires the devotee from within: "A Vaisnava has come. You should go and inquire from him." He will inspire, and the devotee will go. As well as inspiring the devotee from within, He will also appear externally, as the Guru. In our current conditioned state, we do not see this; we merely see it as chance. But this "chance" has really come by the management of Krsna. All chance is managed by Krsna; He is the root of all chance. It may be said that these opportunities come about by chance, but actually, no worldly language can express transcendental ideas. Worldly words cannot touch proper sentiments or convey proper siddhanta; there are bound to be mistakes.

[Devotee:] Srila Gurudeva, please kindly tell us: on which level do we have transcendental faith? Is it nistha, ruci, asakti, or what?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] It will begin from the beginning and slowly increase. As your ignorance and anarthas are removed, faith becomes stronger. At the stage of ruci faith is very strong, and it is then transcendental. Something of transcendental faith or bhakti is somewhat in all devotees, and as much as you continue to hear in the association of Vaisnavas, meditate on what you've heard, and try to go deeply in these topics, your sraddha will increase and gradually all anarthas will disappear. Bhakti is there at the beginning, but it is at the lowest point. Then by chanting, hearing and remembering Krsna in sadhu-sanga, the scale of transcendental sraddha will gradually increase and simultaneously worldly sraddha will decrease.

[Devotee:] Srila Gurudeva. Can you please give the definition of duplicity and hypocrisy?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] If what is in the heart is different than what comes from the mouth, it is duplicity. If in our hearts we want to have some position, to cheat others, or to make money, but outwardly we are saying, "Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna," that is duplicity.

Someone may say, "I can give you krsna-bhakti; I have a passport and visa for Goloka Vrndavana. Pay me at least ten thousands Euros and I will give them to you." This is hypocrisy and duplicity. If we say, "They should quarrel, and I will get worldly gain by that," that is duplicitous. Duryodhana wanted that there be war, so that he would get the royal throne. Similarly, if we think that we should engage in arguing and quarreling with others, or engage others in quarreling, so that we will be worshiped and given a special position, then we are duplicitous. Duryodhana was duplicitous, but the Pandavas had no duplicity.

Gaura premanande

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[*Endnote 1 – Before the disciple's desire to serve Krsna is present in the real sense, the spiritual master carefully removes his obstacles, anarthas, and misconceptions. This is what is meant by plowing the field. Then, after the field is fertile, the spiritual master will give the seed. The aspiring disciple may want to plant the seed before this process has been completed, but that seed would not fructify. Therefore the disciple first hears from the spiritual master how to overcome his obstacles in the form of anarthas, etc.)

[*Endnote 2 – Descriptions of this can be found in the Caitanya-caritamrta, Madhya-lila Ch.12: Cleansing of the Gundica Temple)

[*Endnote 3 – These represent different stages of the heart of the conditioned soul.

[*Endnote 4 – This refers to those who artificially imagine a relationship with the gopis, or imagine that they are themselves realized in their gopi identity, but connect themselves instead with worldly sentiments. "Goopi" simply means there is no spiritual meaning to such a person's imagined connection with the gopis, although he is chanting, "Gopi, Gopi."