

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

WHAT IS YOGA?

Hong Kong: July 2, 2006

[Sri Narayana Maharaja spent 2 weeks in Hong Kong this past July, 2006. He was mostly engaged in writing, but he also gave two public discourses. He gave his first lecture in the Hong Kong Gaudiya Matha Preaching Center, and the second lecture, which is transcribed below, was given at Newman's Catholic College in central Hong Kong. About 250 devotees and guests attended from all over China.

Yoga exercises are extremely prominent in China, and therefore Sri Narayana Maharaja chose to speak on the real meaning of yoga:]

What is yoga? Yoga is a Sanskrit word which means "to add two things together." There must be two things. For example if you want to add two bricks together, then cement, water and other substances are needed.

Similarly, yoga means to connect two persons: one is the Supreme Lord and the other is the unlimited souls. Because we have forgotten that Supreme Lord, we are greatly suffering. Sometimes we suffer as donkeys, asses, dogs, pigs and so on, and sometimes as demigods; we have passed through all the various species of life.

Sri Krsna is so merciful that, by His causeless mercy, He has now given us this human form. This human form is very temporary however; we do not know when we will die. We are all suffering because we think that we are this body. Actually, this body is a bag of urine, stool, blood and other unwanted things. Still we think we are this body, and we endeavour only to please this body – not the mind and soul.

The easiest way to meet with Krsna is through yoga. You should know that the soul is part and parcel of God – the eternal servant of God – but don't think in terms of worldly servants. The service of Krsna is very loving and beautiful. It is like the service of a friend, mother, father and son, or like the service of a lover towards his most beloved. Sri Krsna's servants are all very loving. Yoga is that process by which a soul can be with Krsna – this is actually the meaning of yoga.

What is taught as yoga in this world today – especially in China and Hong Kong, as well as in other countries – is the exercise of the body. If you will do these exercises for your whole life, or thousands of lives, still you will not be happy. You will have to get old, and one day you will have to give up this body.

We are discussing real yoga. Sri Krsna is the Supreme Lord and we are part and parcels of that Supreme Lord. By what process can we meet Him and join with Him? By cement? By mud? No. It is through love and affection.

By giving our love to Krsna, we can attain that perfect stage in which we will be happy forever. But what is that process? How can we have prema (pure love of God)?

anyabhilasita-sunyam
jnana-karmady-ana-vrtam
anukulyena krsnanu-
silanam bhaktir uttama

["Uttama-bhakti, or pure devotional service, is the cultivation of activities that are meant exclusively for the pleasure of Sri Krsna, or in other words the uninterrupted flow of service to Sri Krsna, performed through all endeavours of the body, mind and speech, and through the expression of various spiritual sentiments (bhavas), which is not covered by jnana (knowledge aimed at impersonal liberation) and karma (reward-seeking activity), and which is devoid of all desires other than the aspiration to bring happiness to Sri Krsna." (Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.11)]

This is the definition of uttama-bhakti (pure devotion). By this love and affection for the Supreme Lord, you can meet with Him and serve Him. In another scripture it written: "Paranuraktir isvare." Such deep and strong affection to Isvara (the Supreme Controller) Sri Krsna is the only transcendental religion of the soul.

sa vai pumsam paro dharmo
yato bhaktir adhoksaje
ahaituky apratihata
yayatma suprasidati

["The supreme occupation [dharma] for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self ". (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 1.2.6)]

Spontaneous love and affection for the Supreme Lord Sri Krsna is the transcendental and eternal religion of the soul (parama-dharma). The teachings of present day religions are not truly dharma. If these religious teachings would indicate devotion to Sri Krsna (krsna-bhakti) then they would be dharma, but the adherents of all religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, don't accept the transcendental form of the Supreme Lord. They say there are no qualities in Him.

What would be the use of accepting God if He has no mercy and no attributes, and if He is like zero? We should not accept such false ideas. Spontaneous service to Sri Krsna is parama-dharma.

There should be no selfishness. Whatever you do should be to please Krsna. You should think, "What I am going to do – will it please Krsna or not? Will it please my Gurudeva or not?" If your endeavour will please them, only then should you do it. We should strongly reject that which is unfavorable for bhakti. This is bhakti, and it begins from its smallest fraction, which is called sraddha (faith).

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

athasaktis tato bhavas
tatah premabhyudancati
sadhakanam ayam premnah
pradurbhave bhavet kramah

["In the beginning one must have a preliminary desire for self-realization. This will bring one to the stage of trying to associate with persons who are spiritually elevated. In the next stage one becomes initiated by an elevated spiritual master, and under his instruction the neophyte devotee begins the process of devotional service. By execution of devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master, one becomes free from all material attachment, attains steadiness in self-realization, and acquires a taste for hearing about the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. This taste leads one further forward to attachment for Krsna consciousness, which is matured in bhava, or the preliminary stage of transcendental love of God. Real love for God is called prema, the highest perfectional stage of life." (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.4.15-16)]

What is sraddha? It is the strong faith that, "If I perform Krsna-bhakti, then the fulfilment of all other endeavours of my entire life have automatically been accomplished." You should know that sraddha is actually the tendency to serve Krsna (Krsna-seva-vasana), and its outer symptom is very strong faith in the words of Krsna, scriptures and Guru. This is the real sraddha. How does sraddha come? It comes only by sadhu-sanga – being in the association of sadhus. But this refers to a real sadhu, not a so-called sadhu.

Sadhu-sanga first creates faith in the words of Krsna, Guru and Vaisnavas. After that, the sadhu will say that you must take initiation – harinama and diksa. Then the student selects a bona fide guru, and after that he learns the process of performing bhakti.

Bhakti is of two kinds: vaidhi-bhakti and raganuga-bhakti. Vaidhi-bhakti-prema (the development of love of God attained by worshiping Him in awe and reverence) will lead you to Vaikuntha-dhama (the abode of Sri Krsna in His opulent feature as Lord Narayana), and raganuga-bhakti will take you to Krsna-dhama. You are lucky to come in the line of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. One day you will be able to really achieve raganuga-bhakti, by reading Caitanya-caritamrta, Srimad-Bhagavatam and the books of the Gosvamis.

Gurudeva will teach us sixty-four processes of bhakti. Of these, the first is to serve Gurudeva – to fulfill the desire of Gurudeva – and thus hear and follow the process strongly. Other processes are there, and of the sixty-four, nine are prominent:

sravanam kirtanam visnoh
smaranam pada-sevanam
arcanam vandanam dasyam

sakhyam atma-nivedanam

["Prahlada Maharaja said: 'Hearing and chanting about the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes of Lord Visnu, remembering them, serving the lotus feet of the Lord, offering the Lord respectful worship with sixteen types of paraphernalia, offering prayers to the Lord, becoming His servant, considering the Lord one's best friend, and surrendering everything unto Him (in other words, serving Him with the body, mind and words)- these nine processes are accepted as pure devotional service.'" (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 7.5.23)]

Of these nine processes, five are most 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 Mandala (which includes Vrndavana) and worship the Deity with faith and veneration. (Caitanya-caritamrta, Madhya-lila 22.128)]

And of these five, three are most prominent: sravanam (hearing), kirtanam (chanting) and smaranam (remembering). Of these three, one is most prominent – kirtana of Krsna's name. If you chant and remember Sri Krsna's name, all things will come.

harer nama harer nama
harer namaiva kevalam
kalau nasty eva nasty eva
nasty eva gatir anyatha

["In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy the only means of deliverance is chanting the holy name of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way." (Caitanya-caritamrta. Adi-lila 17.21)]

If you follow all of these processes, then all anarthas (unwanted habits) will go away. What are these anarthas? The first is nama-aparadha (offences to the holy name), of which there are ten kinds. Don't criticize any Vaisnava, don't beat them, don't be envious of them, don't disobey your Gurudeva, and do try to totally follow what he and other Vaisnavas teach us. At the time of chanting the holy name, don't sleep or be lazy. Chant, "Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare." Chant your Gurudeva's diksa-mantra, and know the meaning of its eight or nine mantras. You should chant daily.

Anarthas include nama-aparadha, seva-aparadha and so on. *[See Endnote 1] If you follow the process, these anarthas will all go away and then nistha will come. Nistha means steadiness of mind: "I may die, but I will not give up chanting the holy name." Srila Haridasa Thakura was beaten in twenty-two market places. *[See Endnote 2] As they beat him, the miscreant government followers were telling him, "You should chant Allah! Hoda! Don't chant Hare Krsna!" But he continued to chant, "Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna Hare Hare, Hare Rama

Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare." At last he became almost like a skeleton – bloody and only some skin remaining – and finally they threw him in the Ganges.

Srila Haridasa Thakura came out of the Ganges as if nothing had happened, and was still chanting, "Hare Krsna Hare Krsna." At that time his prosecutors begged pardon at his lotus feet. This is nistha.

Do you know Sri Prahlada Maharaja? His father tortured him and ordered him, "Don't speak the name of Visnu, my enemy!" But Prahlada never followed his order. He was always chanting, "Krsna, Krsna, Krsna." Oh, you should be like that – very strong. Don't become weak when I leave here. Krsna's mercy will then come to you.

After nistha, ruci will come. Taste in chanting, taste in reading books, taste in cooking for Krsna, and taste in all other devotional practices. There are two kinds of ruci: vastu-vaista-apeksani and vastu-vaista-anapeksani. If kirtana is going on with very nice instruments and very sweet voices, the devotee who has vastu-vaista-apeksani ruci will try to hear it, whereas even if the singer has so much love and affection but is not singing in a melodious tune, he will not hear. If the Deity is decorated with gold ornaments and cloth, that devotee will offer obeisances, but if the same Deity is without decorations, he will not offer obeisances.

So, this is vastu-vaista-apeksani. If all things in relation to the Deity are nice and sweet and well decorated, then he will offer obeisances.

When there is no need of all these things, when it does not make any difference whether or not the singer has a sweet voice, and only Krsna Himself is important, that type of ruci is called vastu-vaista-anapeksani. Even if the voice is not good or sweet, but the singer has sraddha, nistha and ruci – we should hear him. Where there is a sweet tune (raga-ragina) but no bhakti, we should not hear that singer.

The second type of ruci will create asakti. What is that asakti? Asakti means "attachment to the process of bhakti and to Sri Krsna." When one thinks, "Without chanting the holy name I cannot remain alive for a moment," this is asakti. The first attachment is for bhajana, and later it becomes attachment for bhajaniya (the object of bhajana, Sri Krsna), attachment to Krsna and to His associates. This is asakti, and when this asakti becomes perfect, then rati (transcendental mood) will come.

What is rati? It is very difficult to understand.

suddha-sattva-visesatma
prema-suryamsu-samyak-bhak
rucibhis citta-masrnya-
krd asau bhava ucyate

["When devotional service is situated on the transcendental platform of pure goodness, it is like a ray of the sunlight of love for Krsna. At such a time, devotional service causes the heart to be softened by various tastes, and it is called bhava [emotion]. (Caitanya-caritamrta Madhya-lila 23.5)]

Rati is on the platform of suddha-sattva, which is also very difficult to understand. If anyone is doing bhajana – if he has left his wife, children, home, wealth, reputation and everything, and yet rati, suddha-sattva has not come, this stage is very critical. That is why we fall down. So many sannyasis and others are falling down. In an easy way, you should understand what suddha-sattva is.

There are two kinds of associates of Sri Krsna: ragatmika and raganuga. *[See Endnote 3] Mother Yasoda, Nanda Baba, Subala, Sridhama and the gopis are ragatmika – eternal associates in Goloka-Vrndavana dhama – and those who follow them are raganuga. When a raganuga-bhakta sadhaka (a practitioner of raganuga-bhakti) meditates upon the associates of Krsna, like Mother Yasoda, Nanda Baba, a cowherd friend (sakha) or Krsna's most beloved gopis, that sadhaka's (practitioner's) mood is called raganuga and his stage is called suddha-sattva. This is a very, very high thing – bhakti is not an ordinary thing.

After rati, prema will come. In that regard I wanted to explain a story, but now there is no time.

[Devotees:] There is time.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] I will tell it in brief.

Sri Krsna is the Supreme Lord. He is quite independent. He is not dependent. He can do whatever He wants. Still, Mother Yasoda bound that powerful Krsna with a rope. When she did this, He began to weep. Though He is the Supreme Lord, Mother Yasoda told Him, "I will punish You," and He wept. Was He imitating? He was not imitating at all. He feels that if Mother Yasoda will not love and serve Him, He will not be able to remain alive for a second.

She tied Him to a grinding mortar. At first she threatened to beat Him, but instead she somehow bound Him. Actually she bound Him by her love and affection – Krsna was actually bound.

There is also another pastime – about a fruit seller.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja called on Syamarani dasi to briefly tell the story of the fruit seller, and then he concluded his class:] This is called prema. If you want to have Krsna, then first develop spontaneous love for Him.

*[ENDNOTE 1:

(From Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindhu by Srla Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura)

There are four additional varieties of anartha: (1) duskrti-uttha (obstacles in bhakti arising from past sins), (2) sukrti-uttha (obstacles arising from previous pious activities), (3) aparadha-uttha (obstacles arising from offences) and (4) bhakti-uttha (obstacles arising in relation to impure or mixed bhakti).

(1) Duskrti-uttha: anarthas arising from past sinful activities refer to five types of klesa or distress, which are (i) avidya (ignorance or forgetfulness of Krsna), (ii) asmita (the false egoism

arising from the bodily conception of life), (iii) raga (attachment for the objects of sense gratification), (iv) dvesa (hatred or aversion to unpleasant, disagreeable or adverse situations) and (v) abhinivesa (attachment for or absorption in sinful activities).

(2) Sukrti-uttha: obstacles arising from various kinds of material enjoyment which come from the pious activities of one's previous birth.

(3) Aparadha-uttha: obstacles arising from namaparadha and other types of offences.

(4) Bhakti-uttha: desires for labha (material gain), puja (worship) and pratistha (prestige) arising from the performance of sakama-bhakti or sopadhika-bhakti (conditional devotional service). (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindhu)]

*[ENDNOTE 2 –

(From Sri Caitanya-Bhagavat, Adi-khanda, chapter 16:

"Although by the order of the Kazi, the miscreants mercilessly beat Haridasa in twenty-two marketplaces, no sign of death or any misery was found in the body of Haridasa. Seeing this, the sinful followers of the king became very astonished. Haridasa was constantly engaged in chanting the ecstatic holy names of the Lord. Therefore, like Prahlada, he did not feel any misery in spite of such beating, but rather felt sorry for the unfortunate miscreants who were committing grave offences by torturing a Vaisnava. Haridasa prayed to the Lord to forgive their offences.

Hearing that the sinful followers of the king would be severely punished due to being unable to kill him, Haridasa entered into ecstatic meditation and appeared to be dead. The Kazi considered that if Haridasa was buried he would attain a higher destination, therefore he ordered his followers to throw Haridasa into the Ganges for his degradation.

TEXT 115: They beat him severely in order to kill him, but Haridasa was not even disturbed by their beating.

TEXT 116: The Moslems were astonished to see this and they thought, "Can a human being survive after such a beating?"

TEXT 117: "If we beat someone in two or three marketplaces, they die. But we've beaten him in twenty-two marketplaces."

TEXT 118: They all thought, "He has not died, and moreover we see that he is smiling! Is he a powerful saint?"

TEXT 119: The Moslems then said, "O Haridasa, we'll be killed because of you!

Purport: The Moslem servants who had severely beaten Haridasa said to him, "If we cannot somehow or other beat you to death, our masters will be very angry with us. Then they will kill us out of anger."

TEXT 120: "Although we've beaten you so much, you're still alive. Therefore the Kazi will kill us."

TEXT 121-122: Haridasa smiled and said, "If my remaining alive creates a problem for you, then I will give up my body right now." After saying this, Haridasa entered into deep meditation on Krsna.

TEXT 123: Haridasa, who was endowed with all mystic powers, then became motionless and his breathing stopped.

TEXT 124: Seeing this, the Moslems were struck with wonder, and they took the lifeless body of Haridasa before the king.

TEXT 125: The king ordered them, "Bury him," but the Kazi countered, "Then he will achieve a higher destination.

TEXT 126: "He was already born in a good Moslem family, but he engaged in degraded Hindu practices. Therefore he does not deserve a higher destination.

TEXT 127: "If we bury him, he will certainly attain a better destination in his next life. Better throw him in the Ganges, so that he'll suffer forever."

TEXT 128: Following the Kazi's instructions, the guards took Haridasa's body to throw in the Ganges.]

*[ENDNOTE 3:

Ragatmika: one in whose heart there naturally and eternally exists a deep spontaneous desire to love and serve Sri Krsna. This specifically refers to the eternal residents of Vraja.

Raganuga-bhakti: bhakti that follows in the wake of Sri Krsna's eternal associates in Vraja, the ragatmika-janas, whose hearts are permeated with raga, an unquenchable loving thirst for Krsna which gives rise to spontaneous and intense absorption.]

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