Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

## **Developing Devotion**

San Francisco, California: June 16, 2007

[Respected Readers,

Please accept our humble obeisances. All glories to Sri Sri Guru and Gauranga.

From June 15-17, 2007, Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja presided over a 3-day festival in San Francisco, California. We hope you will enjoy the transcription below, of the discourse he gave on June 16.

First, a special message for those of you who are relatively new to Krsna-consciousness:

This science of devotion is coming from ancient times, from the Indian scriptures, and the language of such times and scriptures is Sanskrit. We hope that you will enjoy becoming familiar with these important Sanskrit terms, which we have tried our best to explain in English.

Regarding the 4-line Sanskrit verses quoted now and then in Srila Narayana Maharaja's discourses: if they are too foreign for you, you may simply skip over them. At the same time, you will be happy to know that because they are all transcendental mantras, even if you don't understand them, simply by contacting them you are unconsciously receiving their powerful purifying effect. That is, they take away all undesirable elements and increase the quality of life.

Your aspiring servants, The Hari-katha team]

Now, Srila Narayana Maharaja's lecture:

Yesterday evening we explained pure devotional service (uttama-bhakti). Where does uttama-bhakti begin? Its smallest fraction is called sraddha. Sraddha means the desire to serve Sri Krsna and Srimati Radhika, and this desire is the root of all devotion (bhakti) to the Supreme Lord. The symptoms of sraddha are faith in Guru's words, Vaisnava's words, Krsna's words, and words of the scriptures, especially the Srimad-Bhagavatam. These are the external symptoms, and the internal symptom is surrender (saranagati) [\*See Endnote 1], which is the doorway to bhakti.

If a person has totally surrendered to Krsna, why should he call others when suffering comes? Surrendered souls like Draupadi, Gajendra the elephant, and others depended only on Krsna.

Krsna is always our protector. He is everywhere. He is in our hearts and He knows everything. So, why should we fold our palms and pray to others? The understanding that Krsna will certainly save us comes at the stage of sraddha. Where does sraddha come form? It comes from sadhu-sanga (association with Krsna's pure devotees). The root of bhakti is sadhu-sanga.

'sadhu-sanga', `sadhu-sanga'-sarva-sastre kaya lava-matra sadhu-sange sarva-siddhi haya

["The verdict of all revealed scriptures is that by even a moment's association with a pure devotee, one can attain all success." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Madhya-lila, 22.54)]

Sadhu-sanga (association of pure devotees) comes first, before sraddha, because sraddha manifests by the accumulation of previous spiritual pious activities (sukriti) and not by any material pious activities resulting from one's relationship with one's father, mother, and other mundane relations. If we hear hari-katha from Vaisnavas, or if we have donated something to them – water or anything they require – sukriti may come. Or, if we have given ghee to keep the lamp burning in the Lord's temple, sukriti will come. Not only a small amount – a lot of sukriti will be created by this. Then, sadhu-sanga comes again. Then, by serving Krsna, our life will be successful.

When sraddha is present, one wants to hear more, and at that time sadhu-sanga comes for the second time. By the saintly sadhus' association, one begins to think about the necessity of accepting a bona fide, self-realized spiritual master (sad guru). Krsna then sends a true guru to that person, and for others He sends a bogus guru.

tasmad gurum prapadyeta jijnasuh sreya uttamam sabde pare ca nisnatam brahmany upasamasrayam

["Therefore any person who seriously desires real happiness must seek a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of the bona fide guru is that he has realized the conclusions of the scriptures by deliberation and is able to convince others of these conclusions. Such great personalities, who have taken shelter of the Supreme Godhead, leaving aside all material considerations, should be understood to be bona fide spiritual masters." (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 11.3.21)]

The bona fide guru knows all the deep meanings of the words and concepts of sastra, especially Srimad-Bhagavatam, and therefore he can remove all the doubts of his disciples. He has realization of Krsna, and therefore he can give Krsna from his heart to others'. Most important, he is detached from worldly desires.

Krsna is merciful to give a guru like this.

The disciple then engages in the guru's intimate service and thinks, "He is my well-wisher." Sri guru will kindly associate with you and teach you the process of bhakti. Pure bhakti cannot be achieved without a pure guru. Guru-nistha (strong faith in guru) is the backbone of bhakti. If there is no guru-nistha, there is no bhakti.

The disciple then begins the process of sadhana. What is sadhana?

krti-sadhya bhavet sadhyabhava sa sadhanabhidha nitya-siddhasya bhavasya prakatyam hrdi sadhyata

["When transcendental devotional service, by which love for Krsna is attained, is executed by the senses, it is called sadhana-bhakti, or the regulative discharge of devotional service. Such devotion eternally exists within the heart of every living entity. The awakening of this eternal devotion is the potentiality of devotional service in practice.' (Caitanya-caritamrta, Madhya-lila 22.105)]

Sadhana is the performance of all activities of the mind and body for the purpose of achieving bhava (pure spiritual emotions). We are eternal servants of Krsna, and we have a particular relationship with Him. That nitya-siddha bhava (eternal mood of a specific service) in the above-mentioned verse will manifest by that performance. This is sadhana.

There are 2 kinds of bhakti: unsteady (anisthita) and steady (nisthita). Unsteady bhakti comes first. Sometimes one is very enthusiastic in his bhakti sadhana; and sometimes, if he has no real taste for it, he is not enthusiastic. Sometimes one thinks, "Should I marry or not? Should I be renounced? Janaka Maharaja was a householder, but Srila Sukadeva, Gosvami, Sri Narada Muni and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and His followers such as Srila Rupa Gosvami and Srila Sanatana Gosvami were renounced; I should be too." In this way, one is in dilemma (on the mental plane). This stage is called anisthitha (unsteady) bhakti.

Then comes the stage of anartha nivritti (gradual clearance of unwanted habits and thoughts), and after that comes the stage of nistha (steady devotion). Some anarthas (unwanted habits and thoughts) are still present at the stage of nistha; not fully, but still they are present. Anarthas go away according to the proportion of one's advancement. In this way, pure bhakti gradually manifests.

After nistha, ruci (taste in devotional practices) comes, and there are two types of ruci: vaisistha apeksini (that which awaits specific requirements) and anapeksini (that which does not await any requirements). If the Deities are well decorated, one thinks, "What a beautiful Thakurji (another appellation for 'Deity')." If the Deities are not dressed nicely, that person has no taste to see or to serve. If a Vaisnava is singing, but his voice is not very good, then one does not like the kirtana. However, if someone sings with no bhakti at all, but with instruments and a good melody, one thinks, "Oh, very good kirtana!"

Vamsidasa Babaji Maharaja and other pure devotees are examples of devotees whose taste was not conditioned by circumstance.

Krsna-bhakti, devotion for Krsna, gradually comes and gives inspiration.

After taste, asakti (pure spiritual attachment) will come. First it comes in devotional practices (sadhana), and after that attachment comes for Radha-Krsna and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu personally.

Then, most importantly, rati (the first stage of love of God) will come. What is rati?

suddha-sattva-visesatma prema-suryamsu-samya-bhak rucibhis citta-masrnyakrd asau bhava ucyate

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

In this verse, prema (transcendental love of God) is compared to the sun, and the first ray of that 'sun' is called rati. Rati is on the platform of suddha-sattva (the spiritual platform of pure goodness). The Sanskrit word sattva means 'existence'. Whatever we are seeing is sattva. Misra (material) sattva is in conditioned souls, those souls with a material body. Suddha-sattva is in a pure, liberated soul. Visuddha-sattva is in the body of Krsna, His paraphernalia and His associates.

If one has greed to be a friend of Krsna, or to be His father or mother, or His most beloved gopis, then, along with meditating on Krsna, he should meditate on His friends, His mother Yasoda, His father Nanda Baba, or on His gopis (beloveds). By a devotee's following them, their moods come in that devotee's heart, and thus visuddha-sattva manifests there.

Then, very soon, prema (unalloyed, unconditional love of the soul for God, Krsna) comes. The quality of prema is such that, despite any occasion coming because of which prema should be destroyed, that prema goes higher and higher. Prema progresses through the developmental stages of sneha, maan, pranaya, raga, anuraga, bhava, mahabhava, rudha, adiruddha, mohan, and after that, madan, the quality of prema such that it is only in Srimati Radhika. Madan is the highest stage of bhakti, which is only in Srimati Radhika.

The serving mood in Srimati Radhika is called madanakya-mahabhava, which is the highest stage of uttama-bhakti, and the first stage of bhakti is called sraddha.

I would like to tell you about the gradations of uttama-bhakti, through the examples of various great personalities. Srila Sanatana Gosvami has divided those who are practicing uttama-bhakti into various categories. First is the jnani-bhakta, then the suddha-bhakta, the premapara-bhakta and finally the prematura-bhakta.

Prahlada Maharaja is in the first stage of uttama-bhakti, as are the four Kumaras and Srila Sukadeva Gosvami when he first appeared in this world. Prahlada is an uttama bhakta called a 'jnani bhakta' (a pure devotee who is fully aware of the Supreme Lord's unlimited powers).

There are two kinds of jnanis. One is the nirvisesa-jnani, who does not accept that Krsna has qualities or a form. Followers of nirvisesa-jnana think that God is zero. They think, "This world is false. We living entities are brahma (the impersonal godhead), and everything in this world is false. This philosophy is against bhakti.

The second kind of jnani is the jnani-bhakta who sees his worshipable Deity everywhere. Prahlada Maharaja is an example of this. He sees all living entities in Krsna and Krsna in all living entities. Such persons are maha-bhagavatas (great devotees).

What is the defect there? Such devotees cannot serve Krsna with all their senses, body, moods, and soul. Prahlada considers that his Lord is very powerful and has unlimited opulence. He therefore thinks that his Lord has no appetite or thirst, that He never becomes tired, and that He thus feels no need to receive service. Prahlada thinks, "Oh Prabhu [Lord and Master], please be merciful."

Ambarisa Maharja is a suddha (pure) bhakta. He served Krsna with all his senses.

Hanuman is a premi-bhakta. He is always personally serving Lord Rama in His pastimes, with his mind, soul, and all his senses. But, he cannot embrace Lord Rama. He cannot share any food from the same plate as Lord Rama, and he cannot sleep on the same bed as Rama. When Rama is on the throne, Hanuman sits below Him.

The Pandavas are so much higher than Hanuman. Krsna married His own sister, Subhadra, to the Pandava Arjuna. He personally became Arjuna's charioteer, and He was following Arjuna's orders like a servant. He became the messenger of the Pandavas and delivered their message to Duryodhana. In the battle of Kuruksetra, when Arjuna's horses became tired, He massaged them. He and Arjuna took prasadam from the same plate, and sometimes they would sleep on the same bed.

However, when Krsna showed Arjuna His universal form, Arjuna became afraid, thinking, "What have I done? I have called Him 'friend'. He is the creator of the entire world. I have made an offense to His lotus feet. I told him to drive my chariot into the middle of the battlefield." In other words, although at times Arjuna saw Krsna as his friend and cousin, at other times a reverential mood manifested in Arjuna's heart and he saw Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Uddhava is much higher than the Pandavas, and he prayed to the footdust of the gopis; so the gopis are superior to even Uddhava. All the Vrajavasis are superior to Uddhava. And among the Vrajavasis, Krsna's friends, like Subala and Sridhama, are superior to His servants. His friends can fight with Krsna, and when He is sleeping they can say, "Oh Kanhaya, wake up, wake up."

Krsna's mother and father, Mother Yasoda and Nanda Baba, are still higher, and Mother Yasoda has still more affection and a sense of 'mine-ness' towards Krsna than Nanda Baba; so she is superior.

All the gopis are superior to Krsna's parents, and, of them, Candravali and Srimati Radhika are still more superior. Moreover, in this category of Krsna's most beloved gopis, Srimati Radhika is far superior to all, because She has madanakya-mahabhava towards Krsna.

In Houston (where Srila Narayana Maharaja gave a Hari-katha festival a few days earlier than the date of this discourse), we discussed Rasa-pancadhaya (the five chapters in Srimad-Bhagavatam regarding Krsna's rasa-lila pastimes).

After Yugala-gita ("The Gopis song of Krsna as He wanders in the Forest" [SB 10.35]), Krsna killed Sudarsana, a demigod who came in the form of a python. After that He killed the Kesi (horse) demon, Vyomasura, Aristasura (the bull-demon) and other demons.

In the meantime, the great sage Narada Rsi went to Krsna's demoniac uncle Kamsa and said, "Do you know that the girl who came in the form of eight-armed Durga-devi was not the daughter of Vasudeva and Devaki? She was really the daughter of Yasoda. Sri Krsna is really the son of Devaki and Baladeva is the son of Rohini. Actually, all the prominent Yadavas (Krsna's family members) are demigods. They want to kill you, so be careful." Then, singing on his vina "Sriman Narayana, Narayana, Narayana," Narada left Kamsa's palace.

Back in Vrndavana, Krsna killed Aristasura (the demon in the form of a bull). After He killed the demon, the gopis told him, "We cannot touch You. You have committed an offense by killing a cow."

Krsna asked, "How will I become purified?"

They replied, "You should take bath in all holy places like Prayaga, Puskara, Gangotri, Haridwara, and other holy places."

Krsna at once created Syama-kunda with His heel, and Srimati Radharani made Radha-kunda.\* [See endnote 2]

After Krsna killed the Kesi (horse) demon, Sri Narada went to Vraja while singing His glories and met with Him.

Narada said, "Oh Master, You are the Supreme Lord. Responding to the prayers of Brahma, Sankara, and other demigods, You have come to reduce the burden of the Earth. I would like to see that the day after tomorrow You will go to Mathura, and there You will kill the elephant Kuvalayapida, You will kill the wrestlers Canura and Mustika, and You will even kill Kamsa.

"After that, You will defeat Jarasandha seventeen times, and after that You will go with Your entire family to the very beautiful city of Dvaraka, which will be constructed by Visvakarma in the night. There You will kill Pundarika Vasudeva, who will imitate You by attaching two extra wooden arms on his back and tell you, 'I am Vasudeva Krsna.' You will then cut off his head with Your sudarsana-cakra.

"After that, Baladeva Prabhu will marry, and You will marry Rukmini, Satyabhama, and other queens. I will see this."

"Then, in the Mahabharata war, all the warriors will die except for You and the Pandavas on Your side, and on the party of the Kauravas, only Asvatthama, Krpacarya and Krtavarma will remain alive. I want to see all of this. By this pastime of Yours, so much burden of the Earth will disappear.

"I know that You are now sinking in the ocean of Vraja-prema. You are not remembering your duties in Mathura and Dvaraka, so I have come to remind You."

Sri Narada Rsi then went to Kamsa and told him, "Be careful of the demigods and Krsna and Balarama." And then he returned to Krsna and said, "I want to see You kill Kamsa and other demons."

Narada is playing both sides. Kamsa thinks, "Narada is my Gurudeva" and Krsna thinks that Narada is a high-class devotee. Demoniac people cannot understand him. Why did he appear to play both sides?

He thought, "Kamsa is torturing Vasudeva, Devaki, King Ugrasena, and others. I should do something so that his torturing increases, and then Krsna will come more quickly to kill him."

Kamsa then called a meeting with Canura, Mustika, Tal, Tosala, Kalyavana, and other demons. He told them what Narada had told him and he asked, "What should we do? I sent so many powerful demons to Vraja to kill Krsna and Baladeva, but they never came back to tell what happened. Since we cannot kill Krsna in Vraja, we must call Him here. We will arrange a sacrifice. We will tell them the sacrifice will be performed to please Rangesvara Mahadeva. We should call all the prominent kings. In this way, we should trick Krsna and Baladeva into coming, and then my elephant Kuvalayapida will crush Them. If They survive this, then Canura and Mustika will crush them."

Kamsa then called Krsna's uncle Akrura and told him, "Oh my friend Akrura, I know that you are my well-wisher. I trust you. Please go to Vrndavana and tell Nanda Baba that he should come with a presentation and pay my tax."

Now Kamsa's last days are approaching. If anyone takes a poisonous snake on his neck, that snake will bite and kill him. The serpent – Krsna – was very far away, and Kamsa is now bringing 'it' there to Mathura. Akrura thought, "I am very fortunate that it is I who will go to Vraja and bring Them." Akrura went to Vraja and was overwhelmed by seeing the footprints of Krsna, and he offered Krsna prayers. When he was about to take Krsna from Vraja to Mathura, he saw the gopis lamenting in great feelings of separation.

On the way to Vrndavana, Akrura was thinking, "I am very fortunate. I will go and serve the Supreme Lord Krsna and Baladeva. Will They say, 'Oh, My dear uncle'? Will They embrace me? Will I place my head at Their lotus feet?" Thinking in this way, he went to Nandagaon, where he saw the footprints of Krsna and Balarama with the impressions of the conch, club, wheel, and lotus. He at once jumped off his chariot and began to roll on the lotus foot-dust of Krsna, and his eyes filled with tears.

Srila Sukadeva Gosvami told Pariksit Maharaja that if anyone has a mood like Akrura, they will certainly attain the mercy of Krsna.

It was declared by Nanda Baba, "Tomorrow morning, Krsna and Baladeva and their cowherd boyfriends and I will go to Mathura to pay tax. If we do not obey Kamsa, he will torture us and try and kill Krsna and Baladeva. So it is best that we go."

The gopis lamented the entire night, thinking, "We are not as beautiful as the princesses of Mathura, the wives of the Yadavas. They will be attracted by seeing the smiling face of Krsna, and He will also be attracted to them. How will He return to us? We know He will not return. They are princesses of Mathura city, and we are merely cowherd girls. We are not qualified for Krsna, so He will not return."

They continued speaking to each other. "Our fathers and mothers and all the Vrajavasis are foolish for not stopping Him. Why are they allowing Him to go? Mother Yasoda is so foolish. She has no intelligence. She is not stopping Nanda Baba from going to Mathura."

They wept the entire night. When Nanda Baba and all the others were ready to leave, and Krsna and Baladeva were on the chariot, Mother Yasoda took Krsna and brought Him to His room and told Him, "Hide under the bed." Nanda Baba was searching, "Where is Krsna, where is Krsna?" He told Mother Yasoda, "Don't be worried. I am personally taking Him. Don't worry. I promise that I will return and put your son on your lap."

Eager to go and see the bow sacrifice, the cowherd boys and Nanda Baba were ready to leave. At that time, the gopis gave up their shame, came in front of their superiors, and

caught hold of the reigns of the chariot's horses. Some gopis were even lying on the ground, as if making a 'hunger strike.'

They told Krsna, "Don't go." Krsna then came down from His chariot and told them, "Today I will go, I promise that tomorrow I will finish my work there, and the day after tomorrow I will definitely come back."

The gopis thought, "Krsna is satya-sankalpa. Whatever He tells must come true." They fell unconscious, as Akrura drove away the chariot in a zigzag way to avoid hitting the gopis who were lying on the pathway in front of the chariot.

They said, "This Akrura is cruel (krura). He has come to take away our life and soul."

Nanda Baba and all the cowherd boys reached the bank of Yamuna, where they rested and waited for Krsna. When Krsna and Baladeva arrived, Akrura requested them, "Please come to my house."

Krsna said, "Uncle, We will finish our work here, and then will go to your house. Don't worry."

Akrura then went to Kamsa and said, "I have brought Krsna and Balarama." That night Kamsa had many dreams. He saw himself sitting on a donkey, someone was killing him, and so on. He was seeing that all the jackals were weeping, blood was raining from the sky, and there were many other inauspicious happenings. He became scared. \*[See endnote 3]

Everyone in Mathura was so happy to see Krsna.

The guards of the bow and Kamsa's entire army tried to kill Krsna and Baladeva, but Krsna and Baladeva killed them all. Kamsa saw that Krsna and Baladeva were very strong, and he thought, "They killed our entire army and broke the bow that was greater than even Indra's bow. Now I may be killed by Them."

He then ordered the wrestlers Canura and Mustika, and the elephant driver, "Give a large quantity of wine to the elephant. Then, when Krsna and Balarama come through the main gate, the elephant will crush them. If somehow Krsna is not killed by the elephant, then Canura and Mustika should kill Him and Balarama as well."

In this way, Kamsa and his demoniac friends made a plan, and after that....

Gaura-premanande, hari hari bol.

[On the following evening, Srila Narayana Maharaja continued to explain Krsna's pastimes, from where he left off.]

## ENDNOTE 1:

[The definition of Saranagati: "The six divisions of surrender are the acceptance of those things favorable to devotional service, the rejection of unfavorable things, the conviction that Krsna will give protection, the acceptance of the Lord as one's guardian or master, full self-surrender, and humility." (Hari-Bhakti Vilasa)]

## ENDNOTE 2:

Sri Krsna killed Aristasura during the day. That same night, He met with His beloved Sri Radhika and the other sakhis here. Sri Krsna was very eager to embrace Srimati Radhika, but as soon as He reached out for Her, She stepped back. Jokingly, She said, "Today, You have killed a bull, which belongs to the cow family. You have therefore committed the sin of killing a cow. Please don't touch My pure body."

Smilingly, Krsna answered, "Dear darling, it was a demon that I killed, who had deceitfully assumed the form of a bull; so how can sin even touch Me?"

Srimatiji insisted, "Whatever he was, he was in the form of a bull when You killed him. Hence, you are definitely guilty of the sin of killing a cow." The sakhis supported Her words.

Sri Krsna asked how He could atone for this sin. Srimatiji smiled and answered, "The only atonement is to take bath in all the tirthas of the entire Earth planet." Hearing this, Sri Krsna created an extensive kunda simply by striking His heel on the ground. He then summoned all the tirthas of the entire planet to it. Uncountable tirthas immediately came before Krsna in their personified forms. Krsna asked them to enter the kunda in the form of water, and in a moment, the kunda was filled with pure, sacred water. Sri Krsna took bath in that kunda and again tried to touch Srimatiji.

But, in response to Her beloved's bragging, Srimati Radhika now wanted to manifest a kunda full of water that was larger and more exquisite than Krsna's. She and Her sakhis therefore stubbornly dug out a very attractive kunda nearby with their bracelets. However, not so much as a drop of water appeared in it. Krsna joked that they could take water from His kunda, but Srimatiji along with Her innumerable sakhis prepared themselves to bring water from Manasi Ganga in clay pots. Sri Krsna signalled to the tirthas that they should insist that Srimatiji and Her sakhis fill up their kunda by taking water from His kunda. The tirthas personified offered Srimati Radhika and Her sakhis many prayers and thus pleased Her.

Srimati Radhika then gave them permission to enter Her kunda. Immediately, the current of water that had flowed into Krsna Kunda also filled Radha Kunda. With great pleasure, Sri Krsna bathed and played in the water (jal-vihara) with Srimati Radhika and the sakhis in this dear kunda.

(Sri Braja Mandala Parikrama, Part 2, Chapter 6)]

## [ENDNOTE 3:

On the other side, when Kamsa came to understand about the breaking of his wonderful bow and the killing of the caretakers and soldiers by Krsna, he could partially realize the power of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He could realize that the eighth son of Devaki had appeared and that now his death was imminent.

Thinking of his imminent death, he was restless the entire night. He began to have many inauspicious visions, and he could understand that Krsna and Balarama, who had approached the precincts of the city, were his messengers of death. Kamsa saw various kinds of inauspicious signs while both awake and dreaming. When he looked in the mirror he could not see his head, although the head was actually present. He saw the luminaries in the sky in double, although there was only one set factually. He began to see holes in his shadow, and he heard a high buzzing sound within his ears.

All the trees before him appeared to be made of gold, and he could not see his own footprints in dust or muddy clay. In dreams he saw various kinds of ghosts being carried in a carriage drawn by donkeys. He also dreamed that someone gave him poison and he was drinking it. He dreamed also that he was going naked with a garland of flowers and was smearing oil all over his body.

Thus, as Kamsa saw various signs of death while both awake and sleeping, he could understand that death was certain, and thus in great anxiety he could not rest that night. Just after the night expired, he busily arranged for the wrestling match. (Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, ch. 42)]

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