

Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

OFFER YOURSELF, NOT JUST THE MANGO

[An old lecture for new times]

San Francisco, California, June, 11, 1998

Nowadays, pure bhakti (devotion to Sri Krsna) is very rare. Most devotees who perform bhakti are adopting karma-misra bhakti, jnana-misra bhakti, and yoga-misra bhakti. Their bhakti is contaminated with all these impurities, yet they think that they are doing pure bhakti.

We must know what pure bhakti is.

What is karma-misra bhakti? If someone has not taken initiation from Gurudeva and has no knowledge of his relationship with Krsna, will his practice of bhakti be pure?

If you do not understand something, you can ask questions. This is not a formal lecture; it is an istha-gosthi (discussion about Krsna). In this way you will have a more clear understanding of the truths of Krsna consciousness.

What is karma? Karma is any activity or endeavor that is performed with a desire to enjoy the result. If you are chanting, remembering, or performing any other devotional activity, but you want to enjoy the results of those activities, that is called karma-misra (misra means 'mixture') bhakti.

When there is no relation with devotion, when an activity is performed only to taste the results for ourselves, this is pure karma. We may do something for ourselves, like eating a mango. Who is eating? Who is enjoying it? I am enjoying. So, to eat a mango is pure karma. There is no relation with bhakti at all.

However, suppose you think, "I have offered this mango (I have not offered myself). I will now take the remnants of the prasada mango, and I will become very healthy and strong." That is called karma-pradhani-bhakti. In this case, karma is prominent and bhakti is subordinate. This is karma-misra.

When bhakti is more powerful and the desire to personally taste the result of karma is less, this is called pradhani-bhuta-bhakti. Here bhakti is prominent and karma is also there, but this is not in the category of karma-misra.

When someone has no desire at all for personal enjoyment, and his only desire is to serve Krsna, and he is engaging in sravanam (hearing about Krsna), kirtanam (chanting Krsna's name and describing His glories), visnu smaranam (remembering Him), pada sevanam (serving His lotus feet or visiting the holy places), arcanam (worshipping Him), vandanam (offering Him prayers), dasyam (becoming a servant), sakhyam (becoming a

friend) and atma-nivedanam (fully surrendering oneself) to please Gurudeva and Sri Sri Radha and Krsna, that is called pure bhakti or uttama-bhakti.

anyabhilasita sunyam
jnana karmadi anavritam
anukulyena krsnanusilanam
bhaktir uttama

["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, is called uttama-bhakti, pure devotional service." (Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.11)]

This is uttama-bhakti. If it is not uttama-bhakti, then it must be mixed with karma, jnana, yoga, dry austerities and so on.

patram puspam phalam toyam
yo me bhaktya prayacchati
tad aham bhakty-upahrtam
asnami prayatatmanah

["If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it." (Bhagavad Gita 9.26)]

This is also not so high. Why? We should try to offer our soul, ourselves, all our senses and our heart – everything – first to Gurudeva, and then to Krsna.

sri-prahlada uvaca
iti pumsarpita visnau
bhaktis cen nava-laksana
kriyeta bhagavatya addha
tan manye 'dhitam uttamam

[Prahlada Maharaja said: these nine processes (described above) are accepted as pure devotional service. One who has dedicated his life to the service of Krsna through these nine methods should be understood to be the most learned person, for he has acquired complete knowledge. (Srimad-Bhagavatam. 7.5.24)]

If a person has not surrendered himself at the lotus feet of Gurudeva, Sri Sri Radha Krsna, and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he can offer something to Krsna, but it may be that Krsna will partly accept it, not wholly. On the other hand, if that person has surrendered himself, telling Krsna, "Now I am Yours. You are my beloved," or "You are my son," or "You are my friend," then whatever he does is pure bhakti.

If you have many hundreds of cows, and you are only offering one liter of milk to Krsna and nothing more, that is not pure bhakti. However, suppose you have offered yourself at the lotus feet of Krsna and Gurudeva. You have nothing; you are a Vaisnava with no other possession than Krsna Himself. You are thinking that only by the remnants of Krsna you are maintaining your life. You are thinking that whatever Krsna provides, this is what you accept in order to continue your service. Everything is for service; nothing is for you. At this stage you will not have to offer anything, because you have offered yourself. What will you give to Krsna? You have offered your very self. This is pure bhakti.

Suppose you are a disciple of Gurudeva. You are not offering yourself, but you are offering fifteen million rupees to Gurudeva and you tell him, “Gurudeva, I am offering this to you.” On the other hand, suppose there is another disciple who has nothing to give. He has given everything to Gurudeva – his heart, his soul, and all his possessions, and he is serving – in this case, who is superior? The other devotee is serving his Gurudeva throughout the day and night. He has nothing more to give because he has given himself, his property, his wife, and his children. Or maybe he has nothing to give, like Hanuman, yet he is giving everything he has to Krsna. He has nothing more to offer Krsna because he has offered himself. All his actions are performed as a servant of Krsna. This is pure bhakti.

If one has not offered any part of himself – he is a very rich person and he has given millions upon millions of dollars – but he has not given himself, there is something lacking. His endeavors are not pure bhakti; they are karma-misra. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura explains all of these important topics in his book Sri Bhakti-tattva Viveka. Try to realize these truths.

[Sripad Asrama Maharaja:] Srila Gurudeva, in your first example you said that if one eats the mango for his own sense gratification and doesn't offer it to Krsna, this is karma, not karma-misra?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] That is pure karma. There is no ‘contamination’ of bhakti (devotees laugh). But if I think, “If I eat this mango without first offering it, then it will be a very big sin. I must offer it to Krsna, then all the sin will be removed and I will taste Krsna’s remnants.” This is karma-misra bhakti.

Pradhani-bhuta bhakti is found in following the verse beginning “patram puspam phalam” above (quoted on p.2). The person who is making his offering is only giving a fruit, not himself.

Someone may be giving the results of all his karmas. This type of bhakti may be found in the following verse:

yat karosi yad asnasi
yaj juhosi dadasi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya

tat kurusva mad-arpanam

[“O son of Kunti, all that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me.”
(Bhagavad-gita, 9.27)]

He addresses Krsna, “I have taken bath and I am giving You the fruit of my taking bath. I am doing this and that, and giving You the fruit (result).” But why are you not offering yourself?

Regarding those who have totally surrendered themselves: Arjuna is surrendered and the gopis are surrendered. If the gopis are eating something, they will not offer it to Krsna in a formal way. They will not utter the offering mantra: “Etat naivedyam sa tulasi paniya jalam, srim klim radha krsnabhyam namah.”

Krsna is sitting with them. They ask Him if He wants something and then they do not let Him have it. By their sweet behavior they bring Him immense pleasure. This is pure bhakti because they have given everything. Nothing is theirs; their body, mind, and soul are Krsna’s. Outwardly they are not offering Him what He wants, but they have offered their everything. This is pure bhakti.

It may be that when bhoga is given to Srila Sukadeva Gosvami, he will eat it at once, without offering it to Krsna. He will not make the offering with mudras (hand and finger gestures). [In vaidhi-bhakti one may use mudras to invite the Deity to sit upon an asana, etc. When offering bhoga, one remembers gopal-mantra and counts by mudra upon ones fingers.] There is no need for him to do this, and Hanuman will also not do this. When Sukadeva Gosvami eats the ‘un-offered’ foodstuffs, you may think, “He is eating that without first offering it to Krsna!” If you think like this, you are a kanistha-adhikari or lower than that. You cannot understand his exalted position.

The gopis decorate themselves in order to become beautiful for Krsna.

First try to offer yourself – your whole being. For grhasthas (householder devotees) this is very hard, but they may also offer themselves. As the Pandavas, the gopis and Ambarisa Maharaja did, householders can do. Ambarisa Maharaja was a king with a very big kingdom. He had sons, daughters, and wives, but he was a suddha-bhakta (pure devotee) because he offered himself.

Now we should also know about ‘jnana’. Worldly knowledge about anything is general material jnana. When we come to the point of having no faith in material knowledge, realizing that it cannot give us material pleasure or happiness in this or any other life (because material pleasure is allotted according to one’s karma, not according to the amount of material knowledge one possesses), then we want impersonal salvation or liberation (mukti). At that time we seek to understand the impersonal Absolute, and knowing it, the aim and object of our lives becomes salvation or liberation. We then think, “I am the soul, not the body. The soul is not eating; the body is eating.” He sees the

soul as the self, but he has no knowledge of the Supersoul. His knowledge, or jnana, is called nirvisesa-jnana.

Jnana is also of two kinds – nirvisesa-jnana (a taste for voidism and impersonalism) and tattva-jnana (knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the established philosophical truths in relation to Him). Tattva-jnana is the first stage of bhakti. For one who only wants salvation, all of one's activities are known as nirvisesa-jnana.

Now, regarding the meaning of jnana-misra-bhakti:

A person may know that bhakti can do everything. In other words, he knows that by performing bhakti, material results will come; by performing bhakti, one can very easily attain mukti; and by performing bhakti one can attain Krsna-prema. He thus gives up this nirvisesa-jnana. Srila Sukadeva Gosvami and the Four Kumaras (Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, Sanaka kumara), were within this category of nirvisesa-jnanis. By the mercy of Brahma, the Four Kumaras gave up that jnana, and by the mercy of Srila Vyasadeva, Sukadeva Gosvami, gave it up. Thus they became pure devotees (suddha-bhaktas).

atmaramas ca munayo
nirgrantha apy urukrame
kurvanty ahaitukim bhaktim
ittham-bhuta-guno hariù

[“All different varieties of atmaramas (those who take pleasure in atma, or spirit self), especially those established on the path of self-realization, though freed from all kinds of material bondage, desire to render unalloyed devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead. This means that the Lord possesses transcendental qualities and therefore can attract everyone, including liberated souls.” (Srimad Bhagavatam 1.7.10)]

By the mercy of Srila Vyasadeva, Sukadeva Gosvami realized the good qualities of Krsna. He gave up impersonal jnana and became a pure rasika (knower of all transcendental rasas) tattva-jna (knower of all essential philosophical truths) bhakta.

[Sripad Asrama Maharaja:] My question is regarding the person who is doing karma-misra bhakti. He knows that the goal is Krsna, but he has some mixture....

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] No, he does not know. He has no pure Guru and no association of pure bhaktas; that is why he does not know. If he gets good association, he will know all these truths. He will give up karma and become a pure bhakta.

[Sripad Asrama Maharaja:] So if someone theoretically knows, but still....

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] He does not really know.

[Sripad Asrama Maharaja:] Like myself. I don't actually know the goal, but I have some theoretical understanding.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] There is no contamination in your bhakti, but there is some weakness. Something is lacking. There is not so much sukrti (spiritual pious credits) and samskaras (the impressions created on the heart by sukritis and bhakti). Such a person may be kanistha-adhikari, but there is no contamination. There is some weakness (daurbalya) *[see Endnote 1] but still your activities are within the category of pure bhakti. You are chanting, remembering and performing the other limbs of devotional service. There is a mixture of karma and jnana also, but bhakti is prominent, whereas karma and jnana are secondary, in the background. You know the real aim and abject of life. Gradually, in the association of pure bhaktas, you will give up all other thoughts and habits because you know the real aim and object of life.

Karma-misra bhaktas don't know what pure bhakti is. You are in the line of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu; you are in the bhakti line. You have been initiated by undergoing proper diksa and you have some relation with Guru, with Mahaprabhu and with Krsna, but there is some weakness and something is lacking.

[Devotee:] You said the person following karma-misra bhakti has no pure Guru. In the beginning, Dhruva Maharaja was in the karma-misra stage even though his Guru, Narada, was a pure Guru.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] He could not follow Narada. Narada wanted to make Dhruva pure, but Dhruva was not in a position to totally follow. It may be that Guru is pure, but his disciples may not be pure. Nowadays it is like this. If there is a pure Guru, like Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Thakura or Srila Bhaktivedanta Svami Maharaja, who has hundreds of thousands of disciples, he may have only one or two serious disciples – and they may be grhastha, not in the renounced order.

[Devotee:] Is it not that the heart of a kanistha-adhikari [neophyte or third-class devotee] is, because of the kanistha-adhikari's lack of advancement, covered by the contamination of karma and jnana?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] There may be some, but gradually he will develop his Krsna Consciousness and give up all these things. If he has a lack of pure association and he is not ready to follow, and he therefore commits offenses, he will gradually go down. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura tells us that we should understand the meaning of karma, jnana, and yoga, and then we should know what suddha-bhakti really is. In suddha-bhakti there is some gradation. We are in that gradation, we are not in karma-misra. Try to understand.

A devotee may be performing svarupa-siddha bhakti *[See endnote 2], but there are some gradations. He may not be engaged in uttama-bhakti, but he is doing some kind of bhakti. In the beginning stage he tries and promises to offer himself at his Gurudeva's lotus feet. When he took harinama and diksa initiation, he promised, "Gurudeva, I have offered myself to you. I will totally follow you. I have become yours." But he does not know what 'offer' means, and so he was not true to his word.

Gradually you will know all these truths. We will explain all these topics very clearly so that you will understand them, and your bhakti will automatically become very strong.

[Devotee:] Am I understanding correctly? I think that you want to say that if by the association of Guru the aim and object is clear about what we have to do, and we want to surrender, then our bhakti is not karma-misra?

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] He has been initiated and has some relation with Guru, Mahaprabhu and Krsna by diksa mantras, and he has offered himself.

[Devotee:] He has a desire to offer himself.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] He has offered himself, but he does not really know what 'offering' means. He may say to his Gurudeva, "I am giving this to you." [Srila Narayana Maharaja points to his own chaddar (woolen shawl).] But then he thinks, "That chaddar was so good." It is like this. He has given it, but he is still somewhat attached to it. He is thinking, "I have given this." He is not thinking, "This chaddar fully belongs to Gurudeva and Krsna. I am not the owner." A true devotee does not think, "It was mine and I am offering it to Gurudeva," He thinks, "It was a remnant of Krsna. The real owner is Krsna. He has mercifully given me this so that I would be able to serve my Guru, but actually it is not mine. My body is also not mine. Everything belongs to Krsna." If one has this mood, he will attain pure bhakti.

[*Endnote 1: Hrdaya-daurbalya (weakness of heart) is of four kinds: (1) tuccha-asakti (attachment for useless things), (2) kuti-nati (deceitful behavior). The word kuti-nati may be broken down into the constituent parts ku, 'bad or evil', and na or nati, 'that which is forbidden'. In that case it would mean 'doing wicked deeds' or 'doing that which is forbidden'), (3) matsarya (envy) and (4) sva-pratistha-lalasa (desire for one's own fame and prestige). (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindu by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura)]

[*Endnote 2: Three Types of Bhakti

One should also remember that bhakti is of three types: svarupa-siddha (those endeavors which are purely constituted of the angas of bhakti), sanga-siddha (those endeavors which are associated with or favorable to the development of bhakti, but are not in themselves purely composed of bhakti), and aropa-siddha (those activities which, although not consisting of pure bhakti, are designated as bhakti due to their being offered to the Supreme Lord).

[Svarupa-siddha bhakti may or may not be fully pure (uttama-bhakti). For example one may be performing rajasika svarupa-siddha (svarupa-siddha-bhakti mixed with the mode of passion). Only nirguna svarupa-siddha-bhakti can be said to be uttama-bhakti.]

Aropa-siddha-bhakti: Endeavors indirectly attributed with the quality of bhakti. Endeavors which by nature are not purely constituted of bhakti – that is, anukulyena-krsnanusilana – and in which the performer, in order to fulfill his own purpose, offers his

activities and their results to the Lord. This is called aropa-siddha-bhakti. In other words, because his activities are assigned (aropa) to the Supreme Lord, bhakti is attributed (aropita) to them.

Comment

That bhakti in which there is a mixture of karma or desires for material enjoyment is called sakama-bhakti or saguna-bhakti. Without the assistance of bhakti, karma cannot yield any fruit. Knowing this, many persons offer their prescribed duties for the satisfaction of the Lord, in order that He might fulfill their extraneous desires. The activities of such persons are not svarupa-siddha-bhakti. Nonetheless, because they offer the fruit of their activity to the Lord, it is considered as a type of bhakti. Although their activities are offered for the satisfaction of the Lord, their motivation is that by pleasing Him, He may fulfill their extraneous desires. In this case their activities are attributed with the sense of bhakti. Therefore, such endeavors are known as aropa-siddha-bhakti.

Sanga-siddha-bhakti: Endeavors associated with or favorable to the cultivation of bhakti. There are other endeavors which, although not purely constituted of bhakti, anukulyena-krsnanusilana, acquire a likeness to bhakti due to their being established as assistants to bhakti. Such endeavors are known as sanga-siddha-bhakti. An example of this is found in Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.3. 23-25) in the statement of Sri Prabuddha Muni to Maharaja Nimi:

"One should cultivate compassion towards others, friendliness, offering respect to others, cleanliness, austerity, tolerance, silence, study of the Vedas, simplicity, celibacy, non-violence, and so on. One should consider heat and cold, happiness and distress to be the same. One should perceive the presence of the Lord everywhere. One should live in a secluded place, renounce family attachments and remain satisfied with gain which comes of its own accord."

The behavior or practices described in this verse are not by nature purely constituted of bhakti, but they are assistants to bhakti. Thus they are considered to be like associates of bhakti. If devotion to the Supreme Lord is removed from the twenty-six qualities mentioned, then the Lord has no direct relationship with the remaining qualities such as compassion, friendliness, tolerance, austerity, and so on. Only when these items exist as assistants to or associates of bhakti is their likeness to bhakti affected. Therefore, they are known as sanga-siddha-bhakti.

Svarupa-siddha-bhakti: Endeavors purely constituted of uttama-bhakti

All favorable endeavors, such as hearing, chanting, remembering, and so on, as well as the manifestation of the spiritual sentiments which occur beginning from the stage of bhava, which are completely devoid of all desires separate from Sri Krsna and which are freed from the coverings of jnana and karma are known as svarupa-siddha-bhakti. In other words all endeavors of the body, words and mind which are related to Sri Krsna and which are performed exclusively and directly for His pleasure without any interruption are known as svarupa-siddha-bhakti.

Therefore, in the conversation between Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Raya Ramananda, found in Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta, both aropa-siddha and sanga-siddha-bhakti have been described as external. (Sri Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu-bindhu 17-19)

Here there is a need to analyze the three different conceptions of bhakti. The first is called svarupa-siddha bhakti, the second is sanga-siddha bhakti, and the third is aropa-siddha bhakti. First we should understand svarupa-siddha bhakti. Svarupa-siddha means that devotional service which by constitution is composed entirely of the limbs of bhakti such as hearing, chanting, remembering, serving, worshiping, praying, becoming a friend and fully surrendering one's soul. If someone is not doing this, but is doing something else, such as performance of prescribed duties in varnasrama-dharma, and still he thinks he is engaging in actual bhakti, he is actually superimposing the conception of pure bhakti onto something which is not pure bhakti. The word aropa means 'to superimpose', so aropa-siddha bhakti is the superimposition of the conception of devotion upon an activity which is constitutionally not devotion. Because varna and asrama are related to the physical body and not to the soul, therefore the consideration of varnasrama-dharma as pure bhakti is a superimposition.

If one engages in activities which are somewhat related to devotional service, such as giving donations to devotees, giving charity and so on, this is not actually devotional service – but it has some relationship with devotional service. This is called sanga-siddha bhakti – the cultivation of qualities, sentiments, knowledge, and the understanding which is also included in pure bhakti, but which is itself not pure bhakti.” (Srila Narayana Maharaja, August 9, 2004)

If you have some worldly desire, or any desire, then your bhakti may be sanga-siddha bhakti or aropa-siddha bhakti, but not pure transcendental bhakti. You should know what is aropa-siddha bhakti and sanga-siddha bhakti. When all this is clarified for you, then you can engage all your senses in svarupa-siddha bhakti; otherwise not. If you are doing any business, and by that business you make a very beautiful garden with many fruits and flowers, and you want to offer all these fruits and flowers to Kṛṣṇa, this is not pure bhakti. Pure bhakti consists only of hearing, chanting, remembering, etc. In pure bhakti one always chants and remembers Kṛṣṇa, and hears His pastimes in elevated association. Among all the limbs of bhakti, five limbs are most superior: sadhu-sanga (association of pure devotees), nama-kirtana (chanting the holy names of the Lord), bhagavat-sravaṇa (hearing Śrīmad-Bhagavatam and other Vedic scriptures from the lotus lips of those pure devotees), vrndavana or mathura-vasa (living in Vrndavana or any of the holy places of the Lord's pastimes), and sri murtira sraddhaya sevana (faithfully serving the Deity).” (Srila Narayana Maharaja, April 17, 2001)

Editorial Advisors: Sripad Madhava Maharaja and Srīman Brajanath dasa

Editor: Syamarani dasi

Transcriber: Sulata dasi

Typist: Anita dasi

Proof-readers: Prema-prayojana dasa and Kṛṣṇa-kamini dasi

Banner designs: Madan-mohan dasa