

Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja

Interview by a Reporter

Perth, Australia: December 23, 1998

[Respected Readers,

Please accept our humble obeisances. We pray that those of you who are new to Krsna consciousness, and also those of you who are already experienced practitioners, will find inspiration from the following interview with Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja. (You can also see the video of this interview by clicking on the link at the bottom of the lecture).

Your servants, the Harikatha team]

[Reporter:] How many followers do you have?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] In the entire world?

[Reporter:] Well, yes.

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] It may be hundreds of thousands.

[Reporter:] In the information I received about you, it said that you were born in a priestly family. Have you inherited your position by birth, or did you choose to study this?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] In India, brahmanas are often seen in very aristocratic families. They are learned and also wealthy. I was in that type of family.

[Reporter:] When did you start studying bhakti-yoga?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] I have been chanting and remembering Krsna since my birth. My father was a devotee and my mother was also a devotee. Born in a devotee family, I was a devotee from the beginning.

[Reporter:] Can you describe what you have gone through since you were young – what you had to do and the various stages you had to go through – to get to where you are now?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] I used to rise early in the morning, at about 4am, and I would chant and remember: “Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna

Krsna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare.” I was always worshipping Lord Krsna and Lord Rama. I was always very kind to all animals, trees, creepers, and grasses. From the beginning of my childhood, I was very fond of reading and studying the Vedas, Upanisads, Ramayana, and Mahabharata. I was always a very religious person, with a great taste for studying.

I was also a good soccer player. In track and field I participated in the high jump, long jump, and the 440 yd, 880 yd, 1 mile, 2 miles, and up to 5 mile race. [There are 1760 yards in one mile, so 440 yards = quarter mile race, and 880 yards = half mile race.] In the entire district of India where I lived, no one was equal to me in this. I also used to sail boats, cycle, and play other sports also.

When I used to compete in athletics, thousands of people in the audience would clap, and for that reason I was selected for a high-ranking position in the police force.

[Reporter:] So you were a policeman before?

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Yes. All high-rank police officers were pleased with me because of my good character. I never took a bribe from anyone – not a single penny. As you may know, India is very famous for bribing and other types of corruption, but I was always so honest that everyone loved me. I was chosen for a promotion by the police officers, but at that time I met my Guru Maharaja, my spiritual master, and I became totally renounced.

Here is the history of how I met my Guru Maharaja: I was seeing that no one can be happy in this world without transcendental life. I saw that although there is beauty in this world, it lasts only for a moment. There is love and affection, but with self-interest. No one here can love purely because everyone wants their own self-interests fulfilled.

I understood that neither wealth nor praise can give happiness, and that everyone is bound to become old and die. I considered that I am not this body. I am actually inside the body, captured there.

Who am I, and who is controlling this world? Where did this world come from? Who is God – G-O-D – the Generator, Operator, and Destroyer of this world? I began to think about all this, and I became detached from this world. I began thinking that I must go to a realized holy master who can teach me.

[Reporter:] So who did you go to?

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] I went to the Himalayas and other places. I searched all over India, but I did not find the type of Guru I was looking for. Then, one day while I was in my service as a police officer, a disciple of my Gurudeva came to my town. He spoke with me and convinced me to come to Navadvipa, where I met Gurudeva and heard him speak at a Bhagavat-sapta (Seven-day discourse on the entire Srimad-Bhagavatam). I was fully satisfied by his words, and I vowed that I would go to serve him and learn all transcendental topics from him. I quickly left my service at the police force, although the police and my family were not in a mood to let me go.

[Reporter:] And your family?

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] I was married and had children, but I was detached. I forgot everything of this world and was only thinking, “Where is Krsna, where is Krsna? How can I serve Him? I want to serve Him. I want to see Him.” I quickly left everything and came to join our Gurudeva’s mission, and gradually I began to learn all transcendental truths.

Who is God? He is the embodiment of love and affection. He is Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He has so much love, and He has a very beautiful body. All other beautiful bodies have come from Him, and all pure love has come from Him. When I heard this, I fully surrendered and Gurudeva gave me initiation. I began to serve him in all ways, with all my energy. I used to cook for him.

[Reporter:] How old were you when you did this?

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] My age was 24 or 25.

[Reporter:] Sorry, keep going. I will have to interrupt from time to time.

[Brajnatha dasa:] You were cooking for him....

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] I used to wash his clothes, and I used to take dictations from him for his magazine articles. When he spoke on any subject, I would hear very attentively and note down his words in my heart. I used my “heart-camera” to note it all down – not a tape recorder. I never used tape recorders.

[Reporter:] It is cheating, isn't it? And I use the computer as well.

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] I never believed in computers and tape recorders; they can cheat us. I always used my heart.

My taste in all devotional services, beginning with chanting and remembering, gradually increased more and more. I gradually began to learn the Vedas, Upanisads, Srimad-Bhagavatam, and other books, and I began to realize all transcendental truths.

Gurudeva ordered me to write some books and to translate books from Bengali to Hindi. He put me in charge of a preaching center, and he made me editor of a magazine called Sri Bhagavata Patrika. I then began to translate many Bengali books to Hindi. My Guru Maharaja was so happy with me for this, and he sent me to preach in various places. He created the Gaudiya Vedanta Society to preach throughout the world. He also gave sannyasa (the renounced order) to a very famous preacher from India. That preacher's name is Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, and his disciples also call him Prabhupada. He established ISKCON (International Society for Krsna Consciousness) centers all over the world, including here in Australia as well as in America and England. He took sannyasa in Mathura from my Gurudeva, and I was present there and helped him. He made devotees all over the world, and he told me to come and help them.

I have come here as a preacher of ancient Indian culture and Vedic culture, to preach harinama (the pure chanting of the holy names of Sri Krsna) and bhakti-yoga. I am now preaching throughout the world, and this is my sixth world tour.

[Reporter:] Sixth world tour? I'm jealous.

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Everywhere I go, so many persons develop love for me. They also worship me, but I see them as my friends, and I think, "I must help them". I am concerned about their happiness, and I want to help them so that they will not become old at any time.

As you know, the president of America had such a high position, but he could not control his senses. He was attached to his office girl. This shows that he was not happy.

In this world, people cannot control their senses. They cannot control their

future situations so that they will never become old. Also, they cannot control their suffering and sorrows, and so many problems. You may be very beautiful at present, but one day your teeth will fall out.

[Reporter:] Thank you for reminding me.

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Your hair will become white, and it may be that your eyes will become very weak.

[Reporter:] I wear glasses already.

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] The day will come when you will not be able to walk without the help of a cane. And one day, although you will not want to do so, you will have to give up this body.

There is no birth or death for the soul, so why are we coming here and suffering? It is because we have forgotten our loving father, mother, friend, and most beloved – Krsna, the embodiment of love. We are His parts and parcels, but now we have forgotten Him, and that is why we experience birth, old age, death, and their concomitant sufferings. One day we were little babies, and one day, although we desire that this stage will not come, we will all have to give up these bodies.

We can stop all of these things very easily by chanting and remembering Sri Krsna. Anyone – old, young, Hindu, or Muslim – anyone can chant the name of God. There is no time limit; you can do this in the night or the day. And there is no expense at all. Without any money or any special conditions, we can chant, “Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare.” By this chanting, you will develop love for all. You will not be able to kill any animal, or even a tree. You will not want to give pain even to grass. You will see God and souls everywhere. God is so merciful.

This is our mission.

[Reporter:] This may be a stupid question, but you are obviously vegetarian?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Yes. If anyone is vegetarian, then he will surely be very kind to all. Do you know the meaning of meat?

[Reporter:] Well, it is an animal that you are killing to feed yourself, isn't it?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Meat: M-E-A-T divides into two sections—ME-EAT. Whom I will eat will eat me after some days. The animals we eat will later get human bodies and eat us (at that time we will have animal bodies). So we should not eat meat.

[Reporter:] We should just leave it?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Yes.

This is called bhakti-yoga. What is the meaning of yoga? If there are two or more things and we combine them or tighten them together, this is yoga. 1+1 equals 2 – this is yoga. When a soul is connected with God, this is pure yoga – bhakti-yoga. If we want to connect two bricks, we must bring some ingredient that will connect them, like mud or cement, and then they will be connected. If one wants to connect souls with God, there must be something added to bond them. What is that? It is love and affection. If we have love and affection for you, you will have love and affection for us. In this world everything is tightened by love and affection, but here it is not pure. For example, after some time, husbands and wives divorce each other.

In the spiritual world, however, love and affection is so pure that the soul can be connected with God forever, eternally and transcendently; this is called bhakti yoga. I have love and affection here in my heart, and you have it also. All souls have affection and love, and even trees have it. If trees do not meet together, they cannot give fruit. [Trees are male and female. The female trees are fertilized by the male trees. By the breeze of the wind they meet. This is called pollination. In this connection, the birds and the bees may also be involved.] If a wife and husband do not meet, there is no child, and if two creepers do not meet together, there are no flowers or fruits. No one can be happy if they do not meet with another in love and affection.

Similarly, we can be connected to the Supreme Personality of Godhead by love and affection. We have love and affection now, but it is not transcendental. Now we become 'happy' by meat-eating, by taking drugs, by drinking alcohol, and so on.

[Reporter:] So you don't drink alcohol? Nothing?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] No, never. That is why we are so happy now, and we will be happy forever.

[Reporter:] Unlike those of us who will get sclerosis of the liver.

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] If one is drinking alcohol and eating meat, he will be very cruel. Although he may be laughing and making merry, he may divorce his wife and also leave his children. However, those who have true love and affection in their heart – those who are chanting and remembering Krsna – they can conquer the entire world. Napoleon Bonaparte could not do so, and Hitler could not do so. However, by love and affection, one can conquer the world – as we are doing. Everywhere I go, so many people come to me like little babies and children, and they follow my words – because I have love and affection for all. This is called bhakti-yoga. We have come here to preach this mission of bhakti-yoga.

Do you have any other questions? Have you seen love?

[Reporter:] Have I seen love? I've never been in love.

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] What is love?

[Reporter:] Don't ask me. It hasn't happened to me yet.

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] I want to make you taste love; then you will be happy forever.

[Reporter:] I love my dogs.

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] But when these dogs will die...then?

[Reporter:] Then I will be very upset for a long time, and then I will go and get some more.

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] What will happen when those dogs are gone and you are also gone?

[Reporter:] I don't know. I am waiting for you to tell me that.

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] I have come to tell you that you are coming from that eternal realm, and that is our abode, our eternal abode. “Back to Godhead, back to home” is our policy.

[Reporter:] That is what you are praying for?

[Devotee:] We are inviting everyone to come back to home, back to Godhead, and be happy forever.

[Reporter:] Now in order to do that, this is the meditation? I read that from the age of 26 onwards, you vowed that you would chant a 100,000 times a day?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] When I was a student, I did not chant so much. I used to chant in the evening and morning. But when I became attached to Krsna, I would chant 100,000 names a day.

[Reporter:] What is it that you would chant 100,000 times?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare.

[Reporter:] 100,000 times?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Sometimes double that.

[Reporter:] How long does it take?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] It may take more than 12 hours – continuous. Our Gurudeva and Srila Haridasa Thakura used to chant 300,000 names per day.

[Reporter:] What did they do – sleep, wake up, and then start chanting...?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] No. They slept only 24 minutes throughout the day and night.

[Reporter:] 24 minutes of sleep? That's devotion, isn't it?! I need my sleep.

So you do it 100,000 times each day? Some in the morning and some at night?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] I wake up at about 3am in the morning and chant. Then I engage in reading and writing many books, giving classes here and there, and preaching up until 9pm at night. At 9pm I take some prasadam (foodstuffs offered to Sri Krsna) and then I go to bed.

[Reporter:] No food or drink at all during the day?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] A little bit.

[Reporter:] Only a little?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Very little.

[Reporter:] This is very different than my lifestyle. You make me feel guilty. You have written 30 books, haven't you? Are they all original books or are they translations?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Mostly they are original, and some are translations.

[Reporter:] How many books have you sold?

[Brajnath dasa:] We have distributed about 100,000 , and many of the devotees with Srila Gurudeva have distributed millions of books published by our siksa-guru, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. Now he is publishing more and more books, which are being distributed as he travels around the world on his preaching tour.

[Reporter:] Are you working on a particular book at the moment?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Two books. There is a very good book in India called Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu, meaning 'Ocean of Love and Affection,' and another is called Ujjvala-nilamani.

[Reporter:] Translation?

[Prema-prayojana dasa:] 'The Effulgent Sapphire.' Nilamani means 'sapphire,' and it refers to Krsna.

[Reporter:] I've never heard the word 'effulgent' before. I'll have to check it in my dictionary. When will these books be finished?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] I think in 6 months. They are very big books. I have also translated and explained Bhagavad-gita in Hindi, and it is in the process of being translated in English. If you will come later, I will give you a copy.

[Reporter:] Now, the haircuts. I thought my haircut was short; all of my friends make fun of my short hair. So why is the hair of the men so short and why the little ponytail?

[Brajanath dasa:] Why the shaven head and sikha (tuft of hair in the back of the shaven head, which remains uncut)?

[Navina Krsna dasa (now Sripad Madhava Maharaja):] A transcendental aerial.

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] This is like a transcendental aerial. By this sikha we can hear the transcendental words from the transcendental world, just as an antenna has some power to catch words.

[Reporter (laughing, speaking to Navina Krsna dasa:)] Oh, so you were serious. At first I thought that you were making fun of me.

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] No. What we are telling is true. It catches the sound. Just as an aerial catches sound, this sikha catches transcendental words. It is true to the highest extent.

You know that the lines on our hands indicate something.

[Reporter:] Yes, I wrote an article on palmistry and had my palms read.

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] These lines are true, and this fact which we are presenting now is more true than that.

[Reporter:] A person's lines change according to what he does with his life.

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] There was a lady in India whose son was on his way to England. When her son was in the channel between France and England, a heavy storm came and his boat was capsized. Water entered that boat from the bottom, and everyone in the boat was about to die.

The son cried, "Oh mother, oh mother." At that time, in Calcutta, India, his mother was thinking, "I wonder if there is some calamity befalling my son." She quickly began to pray, "God, God, Krsna, Krsna!" After some time, by the grace of God, the son was saved. He later told his mother, "At that time I was calling, 'Mother, Mother!'" And his mother said, "At that same time I was thinking there was some danger."

So, there is something in the heart. You have something there. If you pray to Krsna from your heart, Krsna will hear; God will hear. He will give you some transcendental news and inspire you.

All your senses can be engaged by us in a way to connect us with Krsna, with God. All of our activities are in accordance with the injunctions of Vedic culture, and all these activities are very helpful for our meditation. We can change the lines on our palms by these bhakti-yoga activities, and we can also change our death-date.

[Reporter:] You will live longer? How is that?

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Yes. It is written in scripture. There is proof. Someone was dying, and he called out, 'Narayana! Narayana! Narayana!' which is one of the names of God. The date of his death was quickly postponed. After that, he chanted Krsna's name for 10 or 15 years, and after that his death was canceled.

[Reporter:] You mean he is still here?

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] He left the planet and his soul was liberated.

[Reporter:] So you're here from today, and you're giving speeches that are open to everybody?

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Yes, we chant and remember Krsna, and give classes on bhakti-yoga. We do this to make everyone free from lust and anger. We can conquer lust, anger, and all other bodily urges very easily; and we can realize our soul and the controller of this world.

Do you know that God controls the waves of the sea? He controls the sun, so that it rises at a fixed time. Each minute passes, gradually reducing the duration of the day; and then a new, full day comes. All of the days are controlled by Him. He is so merciful that if you call Him, He will hear you, He will nourish you, and He will give you the intelligence to know how you can meet Him.

[Reporter:] What about the usual questions about religion and God – like war and famine and that sort of thing?

[Srla Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Oh, in our eyes, war has no value.

[Reporter:] So why is it happening?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] Wicked persons, who cannot control their senses, think, “I am the monarch of all.” They like to quarrel with others and to take others’ property, praise, etc. They want to be happy, but they cannot be happy by this. Rather, Krsna arranges that they are destroyed by their wars. On the other hand, we know that no one has really died in war, because the soul is immortal. This body is mortal, but the soul is immortal.

[Reporter:] Oh, I see.

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] We are not so worried about these things. War has been going on from the beginning of this creation, and all beings are traveling in the endless cycle of birth and death. Those who do not remember Krsna, God, will have to come and take birth again, and they will suffer. However, those who are chanting, remembering, and performing spiritual pious activities, knowing that all beings in this world are like orphans and all are sons of God, all are like brothers and sisters, they will not suffer. Rather, those who have love and affection for all beings will quickly be liberated. They will go to Krsna and will never come back to this world. As for others, they are bound to come and fight with each other, and to die and again take birth. It may be that they will come in the species of animals such as hogs and pigs.

[Reporter:] Oh, that’s like you become a worm if you did something terrible before, isn’t it? You put it in very simple words.

Where will you go after Perth?

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] From here we will go to Brisbane, then to Fiji, Melbourne, Singapore, again Melbourne and Sydney, from there to the Philippines, and then India.

[Reporter:] Very nice.

[Srila Narayana Gosvami Maharaja:] On the next tour we will go to Hawaii, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and many other places. You can travel with us here and there.

I am happy to meet you. This was a very pleasant talk.

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