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THE VALUE OF ASSOCIATION WITH PURE DEVOTEES

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I am happy that devotees from various parts of Australia, and also various parts of the world, have assembled here for association. You could have easily chanted the holy names, read books, and performed other devotional activities at your home. You can easily do that. So why have you come here? Spending so much money you have come here—only for hearing hari-katha. This is a very good sign.

The association of high-class bhaktas is glorified everywhere in Srimad Bhagavatam. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has written the song “Sudha bhakata carana renu, bhajana anukula.” What is the meaning of this song? “The dust from the lotus-feet of the high class of Vaisnavas, especially those in the line of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and especially in the line of Srila Rupa Goswami, is very favorable for success in bhajana. Also, if rasika Vaisnavas are telling all kinds of very high hari-katha, it is so beneficial to hear from them. Therefore, when Sri Sukadeva Goswami began to give class on Srimad Bhagavatam, including Sri Narada, Sri Vedavyasa and Sri Parasara Muni all the elevated Vaisnavas assembled to hear from him.

I can tell, therefore, that you are so fortunate. So, so much fortunate. I pray to Krsna, to Srimati Radhika, to Their combined mercy in the form of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and to Sri Guru Nityananda Prabhu to bestow His mercy. By mercy They are non-different, and therefore I told only ‘His’ mercy or ‘Her’ mercy.

I think your coming here will not go in vain. It will ever go in vain. Even if you have so much lust, no harm. Even if you have many worldly desires, there is no harm. Even if you have so many impurities, there is no harm—as long as you have very strong belief in the association of pure devotees. “Sadhu sanga, sadhu sanga sarva sastre koy, lava matra sarva sastra sarva siddhi hoyo...” What is the meaning of sarva siddhi? All perfection. If you especially want sarva siddhi, that is very good. If you want Swarga, attainment of heavenly planets, very good. If you want Vaikuntha, or if you want the love and affection of Ramacandra like that of Hanuman, very good. If you want to be like the prominent queens of Dwaraka like Satyabhama and others, you can have that very quickly. Moreover, if you want to be a Vrajavasi, and you want the Vrajavasis love and affection for Krsna, Krsna will engage Srimati Radhika and say, “O, try to give them that love. At once they should have it.” And, if Srimati Radhika wants this, then it will happen quickly.

Don’t have any doubt about this. Never, never. If you have some doubt, duplicity, hypocrisy, or other unwanted mentalities, then this sadhu-sanga will not give its fruit. You should be saddhiam (one who has no offensiveness in his heart).

Srila Rupa Goswami has explained about the five most prominent items of bhakti. What are they? Sadhu-sanga, nama-kirtan, bhagavata sravan, Mathuravasa, and Sri murti sraddhaya seva. The meaning is that if you are chanting the holy name in Vrndavana under the guidance of Sri Rupa Goswami—if you are in his line—this is the most important thing...

tan-nama-rupa-caritadi-sukirtananu-
smrtyoh kramena rasana-manasi niyojya
tisthan vraje tad-anuragi-jaganugami

kalam nayed akhilam ity upadesa-saram
(Nectar of Instruction, v.8)

“The essence of all advice is that one should utilize one’s full time—twenty-four hours a day—in nicely chanting and remembering the Lord’s divine name, transcendental form, qualities and eternal pastimes, thereby gradually engaging one’s tongue and mind. In this way one should reside in Vraja [Goloka Vrindavana-dhama] and serve Krsna under the guidance of devotees. One should follow in the footsteps of the Lord’s beloved devotees, who are deeply attached to His devotional service.”

If you are chanting the holy name, remembering, or doing anything, it must be under the guidance of advanced Vaisnavas in the line of Srila Rupa Goswami—and it must be in Vraja. If you are not physically in Vraja, then always keep your mind there. All these things—nama-kirtana, bhagavat sravan, and so on—must be performed in that high class of association. Mathuravasa. Mathura means Vrindavana or Vraja-mandala, Ksetra-mandala (Jagannatha Puri), Gaura-mandala (Navadvipa)—anywhere—as long as you are under the guidance of elevated Vaisnavas. If you are going to Navadvip, it should be under the guidance of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura or Srila Narottama das Thakura.

If you are performing arcana, that arcana alone will not do. However, when you do it under the guidance of Srila Raganatha das Goswami, then your arcana will be like his—bathing Thakurji (the Deity) with tears, and fanning Him with side-long glances. Everything should be under the guidance of high-class Vaisnavas. Then, if your chanting is somewhat less, no harm. If your arcana is less, no harm. If there is some defect, no harm. Give importance to that association.

You should not think, “Oh, he is a disciple of my Gurudeva. Whether he has good qualities or not, I should follow him.” This will not do. You should always keep your eyes and your heart on the high class of Vaisnavas in the family of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. There should be no consideration of caste and creed at all. We should try to follow all these things. I want that Prema Prayojana should speak about the glories of sadhu-sanga.

[Prema Preyोजना (now Pujapada Bhakti Vedanta Aranya Maharaja)] Everywhere, throughout the scriptures, the glories of sadhu-sanga have been given. They are so wonderful, inconceivable and miraculous that we cannot even explain them. It is such a great thing. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu visited Mathura-mandala. He met with one brahmana there, and when He saw him they began to have kirtan. While this brahmana was chanting in the kirtan, he was crying. He had such ecstatic symptoms that when Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu saw him, He could understand one thing. Mahaprabhu said to him, “I think that you must have had some connection with Sri Madhavendra Puripada. Unless one has had connection with Madhavendra Puripada, he cannot have such ecstatic transcendental love for the lotus feet of Sri Sri Radha and Krsna.” So this is the effect. Without sadhu-sanga this transcendental love cannot be realized. And, sadhu-sanga produces such a miraculous effect that even the lowest of persons can become greatly elevated very quickly.

This morning Srila Gurudeva gave the example of the Mathura brahmana, and how he met Gopa Kumara. Gopa Kumara spoke so much hari-katha to him; yet he had not realised the subject matter. He had not understood it; he had not felt it in his heart. He was only hearing without any realisation. Gopa Kumar understood this, and he did something which is not available by reading books, something which is not available by watching videos of any sadhu on the television, something which is not available by hearing from any tape recorder—or any medium whatsoever. What did he do? He gave his blessings. He placed his hands upon the brahmana’s head and he blessed him. In a moment that brahmana found himself racing all the way up to Goloka Vrindavana, and he became an eternal associate of Krsna—just like Gopa Kumara himself. One may say, “But this is impossible. How is it possible?”

[Srla Narayana Maharaja] Gopa Kumara had practised for lakhs and lakhs of years and births, and he gradually went everywhere. After that he came to Vrindavana, and from there he went to aprakat (unmanifest) Vrindavana. He took many births—so much time. As for the Mathura brahmana, however, he never did any practice. He achieved perfection only by the mercy of Swarupa (Swarupa is the name of Gopa Kumara in his form of a cowherd boyfriend of Krsna in Goloka Vrindavana). What Swarupa had achieved by so much difficulty, by his hand—in a moment—they both went to Goloka Vrindavana directly. How wonderful this is. Don't disbelieve this. Don't have doubt. Then quickly you will realize the same thing.

[Aranya Maharaja] Anaradhya radham padamboja renum. First of all you have to worship the foot-dust of Srimati Radhika. Anasristya vrndatavi tat padamkam. And you have to worship Sri Vrindavana dhama which is sanctified by Her footprints. Asambhasya tad bham gambhira cittam. You must associate with that devotee whose heart is fully dedicated to Her lotus feet; and you should hear the nectarean discussions of the pastimes of Radha and Krsna from Her pure devotee. Only then can you understand, only then can you have some idea or conception, and only then can you ultimately realize what is the yugala-priti of Sri Sri Radha and Krsna. Otherwise it is quite impossible.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja] You should know, and have strong belief, in what has been told here. In high-class association, first sraddha (faith) comes in sadhana (practice) and then it comes in sadya (perfection). Gradually that faith will increase, and love and affection for Krsna will surely come. If we think that we are associating with high class of devotees, but still lust and a wish for marriage, worldly opulence and so on comes in our heart, what should we decide? Is this the fruit of elevated association? Why did such desires come? There is some defect. Try to give up that association very quickly. On the other hand, there are so many instances where a person with material desires became renounced by good association. One example is the prostitute who took the association of Srla Haridasa Thakura and then became a saint, a devotee.

Srla Ragunatha dasa Goswami had the association of Srla Haridasa Thakura and Sri Svarupa Damodara. He never developed desire for worldly things, not even in dream. Rather, he was gradually developing Krsna consciousness, and ultimately he was bitterly weeping, "Radhe Radhe."

tavaivasmi tavaivasmi
na jivami tvaya vina
iti vijnaya devi tvam
naya mam caranantikam

"I am Yours! I am Yours! I cannot live without You! O Queen, please understand this and bring me to Your feet."

Srla Rupa Goswami, who is the "Guru of Guru of Gurus" prayed, "O Radhike, please put my name on the list of your dasis. If you do not do so, I will give up my life. Even if my name is the last on the list, no harm. Even if I am the dasi of the dasi of your dasi, no harm. I want to be the dasi of the dasi of the dasi of your dasi. So please enlist my name; otherwise I will give up my life."

ha! devi kaku-bhara-gadgadayadya vaca
yace nipatya bhuv dandavad udbhartarih
asya prasadam adbhudasya janasya krtva
gandharvike tava gane gananam vidhehi

"O Devi Gandharvike ! In utter desperation I throw myself on the ground like a stick and with choked voice humbly implore You to please be merciful to this fool and count me as one of Your own."

This is the result of sadhu-sanga. If you are thinking, however, “Oh, lust is coming; I must marry. I should have a very high class of building and so many opulences”, this is not the result of good association. At that time you should think, “Where is the defect?” and try to reform. That is why Srimad Bhagavatam says:

jnane prayasam udapasya namanta eva
jivanti san mukharitam bhavadiya vartam
sthane sthitah sruti gatam tanu van-manobhir
ye prayaso jita jito 'py asi tais tri-lokyam

(C.C. Madya 8 Ch Verse 67)

[Srila Narayana Maharaja asks Syamarani dasi to speak] In Caitanya Caritamrta there is a wonderful discussion between Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Raya Ramananda. Sriman Mahaprabhu is asking Sri Raya Ramananda, “What is the essence of the perfection of life?” This verse represents his first suggestion which Lord Caitanya did not reject and say, “It is external; say something else.” Hearing this suggestion Lord Caitanya said, “Very good. You can go on.”

‘Jnane’ has two meanings. It generally means mental speculation culminating in the desire to become one with the Supreme. But there is another meaning: to become a ‘jnani bhakta’, a devotee who is aware of the opulence of God. Such a devotee is aware that Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Sri Ramananda Raya is saying, ‘jnane prayasama uda pasya namanta eva.’ One should give up the conception that Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and instead hear the sweet pastimes of Vrajendranandana Krsna from the lips of a pure devotee. It does not matter in what position one is in the varnas or asramas. Sthane sthitah sruti gatam tanu van-manobhir. It doesn’t matter if one is in a very fallen position, or as Srila Gurudeva mentioned, if he has so many anarthas; if he is a brahmana, ksatriya, or vaisya; or if he is a sannyasi or a grhastha. Whatever one is, if he is surrendered to hearing, and following what he hears, with body, mind and words, then no matter where he is, anywhere in the three worlds, tais tri lokyam, jita jito pyasi. He becomes pure. At that time the unconquerable Lord Ajita, who is never conquered by anyone, becomes conquered by that devotee.”

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] Srila Sanatana Goswami is telling us about sadhu-sanga. In this world someone may knowingly or unknowingly be in the association of a lusty person who is smoking, taking drugs, or doing all other bad things—whose character is very loose. If you take your meals with him, if you sleep beside him, if you do other activities with him, what will be the result? You will go to hell. You will become like him. Your character will be loose and you will begin to take drugs and all other things. You will be very far away from bhakti and thus your life will be spoiled. Similarly, if even unknowingly, you get the association of a very high class of Vaisnava and take meals with him, talk with him, and always be with him, what will be the result? All his good qualities will enter you, and thus your life will be successful.

Suppose you have the opportunity to be in the elevated association of an advanced devotee who has very good character, and who has so much love and affection for Krsna and for chanting and remembering hari-katha. Even if that devotee is not telling any hari-katha, you should sit with him. Don’t give up his association. Even if he speaks about worldly things, there will be much benefit from that. Somehow he will bring Krsna’s pastimes there by trick, and he will convert all worldly things into high-class hari-katha. Therefore, even if he is not telling hari-katha, you should try to be in his association.

Even if that advanced devotee is not giving any instructions, you should try to be with him. Vidura has stated in Srimad Bhagavatam:

yat sevaya bhagavatah
kuta-sthasya madhu-dvisah
rati-raso bhavet tivrah
padayor vyanardana
(S.B. 3.7.19)

“By serving the feet of the spiritual master, one is enabled to develop transcendental ecstasy in the service of the Personality of Godhead, who is the unchangeable enemy of the Madhu demon and whose service vanquishes one’s material distresses.”

This is a very brilliant sloka, and Sri Sanatana Goswami explains it in his commentary. One should serve high class of bhagavata who is bhagavatas utasta madudvisa.

The association of those who are serving Svayam Bhagavan Krsna, is highly desirable. Even if there is no greed for that association and my mind is not liking it; even if some sleepiness or some idleness is coming, still I will not give it up. I will be with him; I will always be with him. And what will be the result? Rati-raso bhavet tivrah—one develops transcendental ecstasy in service.

Srila Sanatan Goswami explains that ‘kutastah’ means he who has totally left everything—all worldly things. Kutastah means worldly desires, lust and so forth. If one has left all kinds of desires for Svarga and moksa, and even for service to Dwarakadisa and all other Vaikuntha avatars, he is kutasta. Moreover, ‘kut’ means mountain, and in that case kutastah means one who is always on the mountain. Who is that? Krsna Bhagavan. He is always on Govardhana Hill. He is also known as Madhudvisa; and what is He doing as Madhudvisa? He is always drinking madhu, the honey of the association of the gopis, sakhas, and others. If you are serving and associating with a bhakta of this Madhudvisa, Krsna, who is cowherding and playing in the groves of Govardhana, then rati-raso bhavet tivrah. Rati means bhava (transcendental emotion). Very soon bhava for the lotus-feet of Krsnacandra becomes manifest. There is also another meaning of rati. Rati raso. A pure greed to enter rasa (the mellow taste of ones specific transcendental relationship with Krsna) enters in the heart. Greed will come very soon. Rati-raso bhavet tivrah.

The gopis are dancing on Govardhan Hill, and Krsna is also dancing there. It may be that Krsna will tell the gopis, “O, now you are tired and you are perspiring.” He takes His pitambara (yellow shawl) and removes their perspiration. He asks them, “O, may I tie your anklebells? May I massage you because you are tired?” This is called ‘rasa’.

We may enter in rasa by hearing, and by associating with this kind of bhakta. Perhaps you are in the assembly of Srila Rupa Goswami, and there Srila Ragunath Bhatta Goswami is giving class of Srimad Bhagavatam. Or you should come to Jagannatha Puri, in the council of Tota-Gopinatha. Who is speaking Srimad Bhagavatam? Sri Gadadhara Pandit. And who is the srotya, listener? Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is hearing along with so many others like Sri Svarupa Damodara, Sri Ramananda Raya, Sri Ragunatha das Goswami, and sometimes Sri Rupa Goswami and Sri Sanatana Goswami may be there. Sri Sikimahiti and Srimati Madhavi devi may also be there. Who is speaking? Sri Gadadhara Pandit. Who is he? He is actually Srimati Radhika. Srimati Radhika is giving class on Srimad Bhagavatam, Rasa pancadyaya (the five chapters explaining Rasa-lila).

tava kathamrtam tapta jivanam
kavibir iditam kalmasapaham
sravana mangalam srimad-atatam

bhuvi gnanti ye bhurida janah
(SB.10.31.9)

“The nectar of Your words and the descriptions of Your activities are the life and soul of those who are always aggrieved in this material world. These narrations are transmitted by exalted personalities, and they eradicate all sinful reactions. Whoever hears these narrations attains all good fortune. These narrations are broadcast all over the world and are filled with spiritual power. Those who spread the message of Godhead are certainly the most munificent welfare workers.”

What high class of association is there. And what is the result of being in such association? Rati raso bhavet tirva. You will have so much thick greed to enter that rasa. This is the highest thing; you cannot even imagine. You should know the benefit of an exalted Vaisnava coming anywhere. Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada came. Why did he come? What he has realized in so many past lives, what he learned from his Gurudeva for so many years—he came to give all these things. He could have given everything in a moment, but you were not sufficiently qualified to enter into those topics.

Similarly, I have served my guru-varga (disciplic succession of bona fide spiritual masters)—and then I realized something—and I have also come to give these realizations. Sometimes I was worried that I cannot give all these truths, because I am not so qualified, or it may be that no one is so qualified to realize them. But really, I have no self-interest at all. I came only to help you, and to give this same thing. That is why I am explaining these topics in this class. If, out of lakhs and lakhs, hundreds and thousands, a rare person somehow picks up this katha, then it will be a very great gain for the whole world.

After me there will be another guru. And after that guru, another guru will give all this to others. And among those others, some will be qualified. Thus, in the line of guru parampara, this katha will go on. Otherwise, if we are not giving all these things, the link will be broken—and what will happen? All will be deprived of happiness. So, whether you have so much taste or not, somehow you should try to be there, and to hear all these truths. Gradually you will see that all kinds of lust and worldly desires will quickly leave.

tasmin mahan-mukharita madhubhir-caritra-
piyusa-sesa-saritam parith sravanti
ta ye pibanty avitrso nrpa gadha-karnais
tan na sprsanty asana-trd-bhaya-soka-mohah
(S.B. 4.29.40)

“My dear king, in the place where pure devotees live, following the rules and regulations and thus purely conscious and engaged with great eagerness in hearing and chanting the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in that place if one gets a chance to hear their constant flow of nectar, which is exactly like the waves of a river, one will forget the necessities of life—namely hunger and thirst—and become immune to all kinds of fear, lamentation, and illusion.”

What is the meaning? You cannot please me by anything else—neither by money nor by praise. I have so much praise—too much praise—and I am tired of it. You should take a very little of what we are discussing. That is all I want. Sometimes I see that someone becomes sleepy and wants to go outside. So I have some medicine for this. Chili powder. When you become sleepy, just give this punishment to the eyes and say, “Why are you like this?” Try to listen very carefully. You have come from very far, far distant places, and you are giving up all other things—only for this. If you take just a little bit, my coming will be successful.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja asks Navina Krsna prabhu to speak.]

[Navina Krsna (now Pujapada Bhaktivedanta Madhava Maharaja)] Srila Gurudeva was explaining the glory of sadhu-sanga. He quoted one sloka, “tasmin mahan-mukarita...” He told you that he came to distribute his realizations. Among lakhs and lakhs of devotees, if one person can understand his realization, he thinks his coming and preaching in the West is successful. Why? Because those who will accept can distribute this idea, this conception, this realization, to others.

For example, so many fountains are coming from the Himalayas, and there is no end to this water. Similarly, when a sadhu is speaking hari-katha from Srimad Bhagavatam, then automatically, like a fountain, the pastimes of Krsna are realized and seen in his heart. He is explaining all topics about Krsna, and they are coming automatically, without any effort. Madhubid caritra. What is the characteristic of Madhubid? Madhubid is Krsna, He who can destroy the Madhu demon. Madhu also means lust, and Madhubid is He who can destroy lust. By hearing, we can understand who is this personality.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja] What is an example of madhubic caritra? Krsna’s premalap, His loving conversations or dialogues with the gopis. This is very sweet rasala (nectar). The gopis say, “O Krsna, we are very thirsty”.

“O, you can go to Yamuna, or here and there, and you can take water.”

“No, I am very thirsty for your love and affection.”

This is a very sweet conversation, and there are so many other things.

Srimati Radharani is mad in divyonmada. Jalpa, prajalpa, and so on (there are ten kinds of conversations in transcendental madness described in sastra) are going on, and Uddhava is hearing and seeing all these pastimes. “Madhuva kitava bandhu...” O black bee, you should at once go from here. You are a drunkard and you are impure. At once go. I don’t want to see you. You want to fall at my feet, telling me you have some message from Krsna.” This is madhuricarita. Piyusa sesa. It is more than nectar, and the hearer of hari-katha is always drinking this nectar. How? Not with the mouth, but by the heart. He will never be satisfied in lakhs and lakhs of years. He will say, “O, more should come; more should come.”

We have to drink with our ears. In the material world we drink by mouth, but in this case we should not drink by mouth. We have to drink this nectarian drink from the bona fide sadhu by the ear. And what will be the effect? When you hear with your ears, then ‘pravista karuna.’ Krsna will enter through your ears—because there is no difference between Krsna and krsna-katha. By the causeless mercy of Guru and Vaisnavas, Krsna will enter in our heart through hari-katha. When Krsna once enters, He never comes out. At that time bhava will manifest in our heart, and then we can control Krsna there.

For we have many types of anarthas (unwanted habits and mentalities)—and especially lust—then Sri Sukadeva Goswami is telling another thing. Krsna will wash all these away. Srila Sukadeva Goswami gives the example that in the rainy season all rivers and falls become muddy. Even if you want to purify it, it will be muddy when the rain comes again. When autumn season comes, however, the water will become transparent—automatically—without any effort. Similarly, if you want to get rid of lust, anger, and anarthas by your own endeavour, this is not possible for you. However, if you have sadhu-sanga, if you come under the guidance of any bona fide Gurudeva and hear these pastimes from him, it will be very powerful.

[Madhava Maharaja] Srila Maharaja said it will be so powerful. Krsna will come in your heart and arrange that bad things will never again come in your heart. Gurudeva is very merciful. He has explained in a very simple way, just as a mother teaches her son, holding his hand and writing ‘A,B,C’. The boy does not know anything, so the father and mother are teaching. Similarly, Srila Gurudeva is so causelessly merciful—giving us the essence of Sri Sanatana Goswami’s commentary.