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Introduction to Raya Ramananda Samvada

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Come with me...and be with Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu when He is going from Puri to South India to search for his brother, Visvarupa. This was only a pretext, however. He actually wanted to make all of South India, and the whole world, pure devotees—so that they would all chant and remember Krsna, and be happy forever. Without chanting no one can be happy in this world. You should know this. Mahaprabhu told everyone who came to Him, “Yare dekho tare kaho krsna upadesa, amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa.' I am telling you, and you should also tell anyone you meet, that "you should chant Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare" and then in turn he will tell others.By my order you should preach this to others". This is the order of Mahaprabhu. And in this way, very soon, this message went all over the whole world: we should chant Hari Nama and be happy. I have also come here only to tell you to be happy. Be merciful to me and be happy. Chant Hare Krsna. This is a very easy process to become happy, and so you should all follow. Those who are not yet following should follow Very soon all of South India began to chant, and all became Vaisnavas.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu thus went to the sacred river Godavari. There He saw that, “Oh, here is the Yamuna.” He saw a beautiful forest there and thought, “This is the very beautiful forest of Vrndavana.” When He saw some rocks and mountains He thought, “O, you are Giriraja Govardhana.” Thus He was absorbed in love and affection for Krsna. He forgot everything and was absorbed in dancing. Sometimes He was rolling down on the earth crying, “O my beloved Krsna, where are You? Where are You?” Sometimes He laughed, and sometimes He sang, “Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna He. Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna He. Rama Raghava Rama Raghava Rama Raghava Raksa Mam. Krsna Kesava Krsna Kesava Krsna Kesava Pahi Mam.”

Caitanya Mahaprabhu then crossed the Godavari River to take bath. It was now morning, and He came to a very lonely place near the bathing ghat. In the meantime, a governor of that area named Raya Ramananda came with many associates and thousands of Vedic brahmanas who were reciting Vedic mantras, announcing with a big drum that a king was coming. Ramananda Raya took bath there, and then he noticed that a very brilliant, effulgent young sannyasi was nearby, sitting in trance. He was very much attracted and, after taking bath, he left all his attendants, soldiers, and everyone else, and went alone to the place where Caitanya Mahaprabhu was sitting. There he offered pranama. Mahaprabhu looked at him and asked, “Are you Raya Ramananda?” Raya Ramananda replied, “Yes, I am that very same wretched person.”

Mahaprabhu told him, “When I was in Jagannatha Puri, a very learned person, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, was very kind to me. He told Me that if I would be going to South India, I must meet Raya Ramananda. He said, "Even though he is a governor, like a viceroy or representative of the king in that area, he is a greatly learned and high-class devotee.” Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya had also told Mahaprabhu, “At first I could not believe in him, and I used to joke with him, saying, ‘Oh, you are Vaisnava. Vaisnavas are nothing. They are blind followers.’ But now I am realizing that he is a high-class Vaisnava, and I pray that if You are going in that direction You must meet him. You will see what a high class of a devotee he is. Be merciful to him.”

Mahaprabhu is telling Raya Ramananda, "Sarvabhauma Battacarya was very kind and merciful to Me, and so he has told Me to meet you. That is why I have come—only to associate with you. Otherwise there is no reason for Me to come here, I want to hear hari-katha from you. Raya Ramananda said, “Because you have come here, I know that Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya is my well-wisher. He has sent You. You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is so kind to send You to me. I want that You stay here for six or seven days, not only for one or two days. Be merciful. Sprinkle Your mercy upon me.”

They were glorifying each other. This is the etiquette of Vaisnavas. Nowadays you have forgotten this etiquette, and that is why you are falling down. We should try to honor each other. We should honor all devotees. Those who are not pure devotees will simply tell each other about this problem and that problem: "My husband has left me." "My wife has left me." "Should I marry or not? What to do? Oh, this is very big problem." "I have so many problems." "I am unsuccessful in what I began." "I am in the process of divorce." "My business has stopped; what should I do?" We only speak about these problems. This is not Vaisnava etiquette. A Vaisnava has no problem at all. He is always happy, and he can make even hippies happy. I remember that Srila Swami Maharaja made thousands and thousands of hippies happy. He changed them, and they became pure devotees. They became really happy. In this way we should follow Vaisnava etiquette with each other.

While Mahaprabhu was speaking with Raya Ramananda, a brahmana came and invited Mahaprabhu to his house to take prasada. He was a real brahmana and Vaisnava, and Mahaprabhu therefore wanted to go there and take prasada. He requested Raya Ramananda, “You must meet me in the evening.” He was waiting, and Raya Ramananda also was waiting. Raya Ramananda changed his royal dress, dressed only in a very simple dhoti, and arrived with only one associate. He had no royal umbrella, no palanquin, and no bodyguard. He came alone and offered sastang pranama, prostrated obeisances, to Mahaprabhu. They sat together for the whole night, and then for so many days. Their krsna-katha continued in a regulated way, from evening to morning, with no sleep and no interruptions.

Mahaprabhu told Raya Ramananda, “I know you are a very high-class devotee. You are so learned, you know all the scriptures, and you are a master of Srimad Bhagavatam. I will therefore ask you some questions, and you should reply by giving examples from sastras. I will not give your replies any importance if you do not give evidence from the scriptures." We should always know what constitutes real pramana, evidence. So many persons tell so many things, but this is not evidence. Evidence comes from the Vedas and Upanisads, and also the words of any high-class devotee who has none of the four defects: brahma, pramada, vipralipsa, and

karanapatava. His words can be taken as evidence. In addition, the sastras which are anugatya, in accordance with the Vedas, like Sri Caitanya Caritamrta, the books of Sad-Goswamis, the four acaryas of the different Vaisnava sampradayas, are all evidence. The strongest and purest evidence, however, is the words of Srimad Bhagavatam. "So you should give the evidence of Vedas, Upanisads, and Bhagavatam, and then I will accept." Mahaprabhu's first question was, "What is sadhya and what is sadhana? What is the goal of life and what is the means to attain that goal?"

In the morning class I told you that all jivas have come out from the glance of Karanadaksayi Visnu. The jivas cannot be created, they are eternal, but they are coming from the light, the sight of Karanadaksayi Vishnu. You should know what is that light. The dim reflection of that light is a combination of the abhasa or semblance of cit-sakti. The abhasa of the tatastha or marginal mood, plus vibhinamsa-tattwa, plus maya-shakti. It is a mixture of all these four things, and it is called Sambhu-linga. It is from there that the jivas are coming. Sambhu-linga is a semblance of Sadasiva-attwa. And maya must also be present. If maya is not there, Karanadaksayi Visnu will not be there, and there will be no creation at all. All this mixing becomes Sambhu-tattwa or Sambhu-linga, and by this the creation comes. The creation of what? This gross material body and suksma sarira, subtle material body. The soul is not created, but these two are created. We should know all these truths. That jivas are not created, but rather they are an eternal potency. It is not possible to give more explanation than this. We will have to realize all this by chanting harinama.

When your Name will be a transcendental Name, then you will realize everything. By mental exercise you cannot realize anything; never. So chant. First you will realize all these things: krsna-tattva, maya-tattva, bhakti-tattva, jiva-tattva, and everything else. Then, after that, at some point, you will have to forget all these things, and you will have to know that Krsna is our bosom friend, our son and our most beloved.

Srila Swami Maharaja came to tell you that Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Now the time has come that I have come. He told me to tell you all that now you should forget that Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Now you should think that He is a bosom friend, He is a beloved, He is a son, and He is everything. In this way our bhakti should thus increase.

Now we should come to our subject. Can you read and explain Mahaprabhu's first question and Srila Swami Maharaja's explanation?

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: "Prabhu kahe". Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu ordered Ramananda Raya to recite a verse from the scriptures concerning sadhya, the ultimate goal of life.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: I am explaining what Srila Swami Maharaja, your Gurudeva, has explained. I am not in a different line from him. I am following him. Those who say that I am in a somewhat different line are themselves in a different line. They should follow, but they don't follow.

What did He tell? He explained what is sadhya, not only what is sadhana.

Aranya Maharaja: Ramananda Raya replied that if one executes the prescribed duties of his social position, he awakens his original Krsna Consciousness. He quoted a verse: "...visnur aradhyate panthah, nanyat tat-tosa karanam. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Visnu, is worshipped by the proper execution of the prescribed duties in the system of varna and asrama. There is no other way to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One must be situated in the institution of the four varnas and ashramas.

Sripad Madhava Maharaja: Sriman Mahaprabhu asked Ramananda Raya what is sadhya, the goal? At first Sriman Mahaprabhu did not ask him what is sadhana. First he wanted to fix the goal, and Ramananda Raya replied:

varnasramacara- vata
purusena parah puman
visnur aradhyate pantha
nanyat tat-tosa-karanam

This means, "You must be in varnashrama dharma. There are four varnas and four ashramas. Brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas, and sudras are the four varnas. The four ashramas are brahmacarya, grhastha, vanaprastha and sannyasa. You may be in any varna or any asrama, but you have to maintain varnashrama dharma. In this way you can please Visnu, and there is no other means." Upon hearing this, Mahaprabhu said that it is external. Why? Why did Mahaprabhu not accept it as sadhya-tattva, the goal? Because there is no explanation about the soul. Varnashrama dharma is there only to maintain our social system. In Srimad Bhagavatam it is mentioned: "Sa vai pumsam paro dharmo..." This is the best religion for the soul. What is that? Ahaituki-bhava. You must have uninterrupted and one-pointed devotion for Visnu. By this the soul and the Supersoul will both be pleased. But here, in the case of varnashrama, there is no proof that the soul and the Supersoul will be pleased. It is like karma-misra bhakti, not svarupa-siddha bhakti, and therefore Mahaprabhu said that it is external. It is not pure bhakti or the pure goal, and He therefore rejected it. Now Ramananda Raya is going ahead. Now we shall hear from Srila Gurudeva.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: You know that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Gosvami Thakura, and also my Gurudeva, and also my siksa-guru, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, all wanted to establish daiva-varnashrama. If you are not following the daiva-varnashrama process, then you are an animal. Not only an animal, but a gokarah, which means a very ignorant donkey. You can see the dogs and hogs, and their wives. One day they accept a wife, and the next day they give her up—divorcing, and again and again taking new wives. They want that their names be in the Guinness book of records. Only animals can act in this way. So the first principle is chastity with one's wife or husband; not changing. This is varnashrama dharma. In this Varnashrama dharma you should worship Visnu. What is our object? The process is worship of Visnu. But what is the aim of that worship? We want to be happy in this world. Visnu will give a boon so that we will be happy. And above this is salvation, freedom from attachment, and merging with Visnu. But this is like a curse, not a boon. We should not try to merge with

Krsna, and we should not try to do anything for becoming happy in this world which is temporary.

In this country there is an itching disease called eczema. In this disease we scratch, and it seems to be very pleasant. But it is a roga, a disease, and after some time it will be very painful. So this world is like this. Worldly life is like an itch, a disease. By worshipping Lord Visnu we can give this up and be happy for some time, but again that itch will come. Therefore it is external. There is no service of the atma—only external service for the body.

Srila Swami Maharaja and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura have tried to establish this varnashrama dharma. Why? By following it we will at least be human beings; otherwise we are animals. First we should be human, because humanity is a platform for bhakti. First we should make a platform, and then we can hear hari-katha. You should gradually go up. Varnashrama is somewhat favorable, but not fully. Therefore, Mahaprabhu is telling Ramananda Raya to go further. Is there any doubt in this? Our aim is not to follow varnashrama dharma. Srila Swami Maharaja told his disciples to create varnashrama dharma in Gita Nagari, New Vrindavana, New Mayapura and so many other places. He wanted to establish this, but only as a platform. Where are most of these projects now? They are gone. Now there is mostly barren land, and that barren land is weeping—nothing is there. So this will not help very much.

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: (reading from Caitanya Caritamṛta, Madya-lila, ch.8.) "The Lord replied, 'This is external. You had better tell me of some other means.' Ramananda replied, 'Krsne karmarpana—to offer the results of one's activities to Krsna is the essence of all perfection.' In this regard he quoted a verse from Bhagavad-gita."

Syamarani dasi: Srila Raya Ramananda quoted Bhagavad-gita: "All that you do, all that you give away, and all that you offer in sacrifice, should be done for Me." Caitanya Mahaprabhu also rejected this proposal, considering it external, because this is for our own satisfaction. Whatever activity I do in this world has a karmic reaction. Even if it is a pious action and I get a pious reaction, I still have to suffer in this world. If I give someone a lot of money, in my next life I'll be rich. However, I still have to take birth in a womb, and accept old age, disease and death. The motive is for my own personal sense gratification. Mahaprabhu rejected this as the perfection. He told him to go further, and Raya Ramananda then offered the conclusion of the Bhagavad-gita. "Sarva dharma parityajya." "Give up all varieties of so-called religious activities, and surrender everything to Me. In return I will free you from all fear and all sinful reactions. Again Mahaprabhu rejected this, not as a position, because it is better than animal life, better than having nothing to do with Krsna. So why did Lord Caitanya reject it? Again, it was external because it was related to the body. I want Krsna to free me from fear, so I have a personal motivation. I'm not trying to please Krsna, but I want Krsna's protection for my body, and for my mental and intellectual comfort. This is like a business. If I do something for Krsna, then He will do something for me. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu rejected it. Real devotion means there is no material cause and no material interruption.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: In Srimad Bhagavatam there are so many examples of this. One example is the story of King Hariscandra. He was a very powerful ksatriya king in varnashrama dharma, and he used to worship Lord Visnu. He was very truthful, he never told a lie, he never

accepted any untruth, and he was very generous to all creatures. One day Visvamitra, a high-class surrendered devotee, came in a dream to Hariscandra and told him, "You are very generous, a truthful speaker, a very good king, and you always worship Visnu. I know that if I ask anything from you, you will definitely give it. So I want something from you." In the dream Visvamitra told the king that he wanted his whole kingdom, and the king said, "Yes, I have given it to you." After that dream was over, the king came in his senses and forgot the dream. In the morning, Visvamitra himself came to Hariscandra and asked him if he remembered the previous night's dream. Hariscandra said, "I don't remember anything. What was that? Oh, you asked for my kingdom and I gave it to you." Visvamitra said, "So you should give it to me." Hariscandra replied, "Yes, I take a vow that I am giving you the kingdom. This whole kingdom is now yours." Visvamitra then told him to give some daksina, a donation of money. In India, if you donate anything, you will have to give some coins as well; and Visvamitra therefore asked him to give him some daksina .

Hariscandra called his treasurer and told him to give ten thousand gold coins to Visvamitra. Visvamitra smiled and told him, "You are a liar. You gave me your entire kingdom, and now your treasury is mine also. So how can you tell the treasurer to give gold to me? It is already mine." Hariscandra agreed, and therefore wanted to take a loan from anyone in the kingdom. But Visvamitra said, "Now all the citizens are also mine, and you may not take a loan from anyone in my kingdom."

Next, Hariscandra decided to sell himself. But Visvamitra said, "In my kingdom you cannot sell even yourself." He then became perplexed about what to do, thinking that he had done wrong. He asked Visvamitra, "What should I do? Please give me some suggestions." Visvamitra told him, "Go to Kasi, which is situated on the trident of Sankara. It is not in this world. There you can sell yourself, and then you can pay me. But you must always remember that you have to pay me."

Hariscandra went to Kasi on foot, because all his chariots, and everything else, now belonged to Visvamitra. After many days he reached there and began calling out to everyone that they could purchase him. A low-class person, the guard of the cremation grounds, told him that he would take him, but that he would have to do duty at the cremation grounds. Hariscandra accepted, because there was no one else to purchase him, but the guard gave only five thousand golden coins. He needed more, and therefore he sold his wife, Sadya, and son, Rohitasya. A very cruel brahmana gave five thousand coins and took both his wife and son. If you sell a cow, then you are no longer its owner. Similarly, now Hariscandra was not the king, nor the husband of his wife, and he was no longer the father of his child. He had some false ego, however, that, "I was or I am a King. I am the husband of Sadya and the father of Rohitasya."

After a while it happened that a snake came and bit his son—and he died. It was midnight, during the rainy season, and very cold winds were blowing and very heavy rain was falling. The brahmana told Sadya, "Take away this dead body from here. I cannot allow you to be here with this dead body. I have no pity or mercy for you." Taking her child's body in her arms, she went to the cremation ground, weeping. At that time Hariscandra was the guard of that impure place. He asked, "Who is here weeping? First you must give the tax for cremation, and then you can do something." .

Just then Visvamitra appeared with Yamaraja, or Dharmaraja. And Lord Narayana also came. They told Hariscandra to take any boon. Visvamitra told him that he was misguided. He said, "In this world no one can speak the truth. Your name is not Hariscandra. This is the name of your gross body. And what is this body made of? A combination of blood and flesh, urine and stool. You don't know that your soul is the eternal servant of Krsna. If you are thinking that, 'I am the father, husband, king, etc.', then how are you speaking the truth?"

You should know that you are part and parcel of Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You are not any worldly thing. So forget all these things. You should try to serve Krsna, and you should chant. Harischandra accepted all this, but he had one request: "Don't give such a hard test to the jivas in kali-yuga. They can never pass your test. They will always fail."

Hariscandra was doing what we want to do, (varnashrama dharma), and he was following and worshipping Lord Vishnu more seriously than we can. But he did not have any idea that we are transcendental, or that we are eternal servants of Krsna. This is our main problem. If you are thinking, "I am the doer", or even thinking that, "I am giving something to Krsna," this is not pure bhakti. That is why it has been said:

"sarva dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva papebhyo moksyaisyami ma sucah"
(BG. 18.66)

What is the meaning of this sloka?

Sripad Madhava Maharaja: Ramananda Raya is now giving the suggestion from Bhagavad Gita, Krsna has given the instruction to Arjuna: "O Arjuna, give up all temporary dharma and all activities and conceptions which are in relationship to the temporary material body and mind, and surrender yourself. Take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By doing so you will be freed from all sinful reactions. Do not be afraid. This seems to be a very transcendental and excellent suggestion, but upon hearing this Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu gave the response: "O my dear Ramananda Raya, this is external. I also reject this. You should tell me something more." The eternal occupation of the soul is to render loving service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in a relationship with Him. This love for the Supreme Lord has some ingredients: Mamata, possessiveness for the Lord, and sambhanda, a special relationship with Him; sneha, some special affection for the Lord, and suhurt, a very friendly and special mood towards Him. Saranagati is mainly the rejection of those things which are temporary and to give up all those things which are negative. In Saranagati we have not accepted the positive suggestion. The positive suggestion of an actual relationship with the Supreme Lord, with possessiveness, with love and affection. Therefore Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has rejected this conception.

Surrender to the Supreme Lord is not bhakti itself. It is not the positive and eternal, perfect activity of the soul. Yet, it is considered to be the doorway to bhakti. If you want to enter into any

building, then first you have to come to any door. You cannot walk through the wall. If anyone is hearing, chanting, remembering, and serving Kṛṣṇa, but they have not first surrendered themselves completely, saying “O Kṛṣṇa, I am yours. I depend fully on you. I accept everything which is favorable for bhakti and reject all things which are unfavorable. You are my protector, You are my maintainer. I will always be meek and humble, and will have no interest separate from your interest.” Unless one has accepted these six angas, these six limbs of saraṅgati, before he renders his devotional service, then it will not be called pure devotional service. It will be an abhasa. It will be an imitation, like a drama. The first thing is surrender. This surrender is not bhakti, but it is the prerequisite to enter into pure devotional service. So Mahāprabhu said, “It is external, please give me a higher suggestion.”

Srila Narayana Maharaja: I have heard about Jesus Christ. Once there were many persons assembled and, taking stones in their hands, and they wanted to kill a guilty person. This person had a very bad character. He was attracted to a lady, caught hold of her, and did some bad things. So all were assembled and they wanted to kill him with these stones. At once Jesus Christ came there and told them, “Oh, listen to me first. I want that you should kill this person with your stones. I also have a stone. And we will all throw these stones at him and kill him. But first hear me. Those who are not guilty of the same crime can take the stones and throw them at him. However, whoever is himself guilty of any bad activities, whoever has done as this person has, should not do so.” All of them stopped. No one there was pure in heart and not guilty of this same crime.

Although we see some mercy in Jesus, we should try to know that this mercy is not real mercy. The Supreme Personality has created all creatures—trees, insects, fish, cows, and everyone else. In everyone there is a soul. We think that the soul is only in the human body, and we should therefore only serve the human race. What are Florence Nightengale and Mother Theresa doing? They were serving all the diseased and poor people, even those with leprosy. However, they gave them beef, meat, fish, and wine, and they thought there was no harm in that. They did not know that fish also have life, cows also have life, and all others have life—just like human beings. We should not kill them, because they are all sons and daughters of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He never wants them to be killed. The cow is like a mother. She gives milk without considering caste and creed. She gives milk to all, whether they are Mohamedan, Indian, American, or anyone else. We therefore think of her as a mother who gives her breastmilk. If anyone takes a new calf and kills her for her meat, what is this? Is this mercy? I went to Vatican City and I became so happy there. Oh, there was such a great monument there. There were lakhs and lakhs of pilgrims there, all paying their respects, and I also wanted to pay respects. “O Jesus Christ, how glorious.” I saw some very beautiful and soft calves of only two or three days old. I asked, “Why are there so many calves here?” “You don’t know? The pope will take their flesh today. He will invite so many of his friends, and they will eat all of them.”

I began to hate that land and said, “I should not spend another moment here. I should go away. These people are as cruel as butchers. They have no pity or mercy on these cows and calves, nor to anyone else. What are eggs? If you want to take eggs, you can take an egg from your mother’s womb. That is also a kind of egg. So we should not take all these things. We should know that the soul is everywhere—not only in the human body. Therefore, service only to humankind is not service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We should know this.

Mahaprabhu therefore rejected sarva dharman parityajya, what to speak of all these other things. Gaura premanande!