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TO HEAR OR NOT TO HEAR...

Wales, July 1, 2000 (Evening)

Today I want to discuss the subject of Tenth Canto Srimad Bhagavatam. There has been some confusion in this regard. A preacher from India came and told something that we don't agree with. What he told is not written anywhere in sastra. I think that you should wash away your doubts and be clear about this—especially those who are sincere and senior, those who know something about bhakti, and those who are entering into madhyama adhikari. You should know all these things—clearly. There should be no doubt.

Some persons may say that we should not read Tenth Canto Srimad Bhagavatam, but I will not listen to this warning. I will say, “Produce any evidence that we should not. Has it been written in Srimad Bhagavatam, or in Sri Caitanya Caritamrta, or has any guru in our line written like this? Has your Gurudeva told this?” Such persons will never be able to answer. I know that Srila Swami Maharaja has never written like this.

Stand up and read. What Prabhupada has written is clear from his writings. You should all hear this. Don't neglect it.

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: Someone was writing to Srila Prabhupada about whether or not the devotees could hear and chant about the gopis. Srila Prabhupada replied, “The policy should be that people may not understand the gopis to be like ordinary girls. You should be careful to present the gopis. It does not mean that we should not utter even the name of the gopis; that we have taken a vow to boycott the gopis. No. They are our worshipable devotees. How can we avoid them?”

This next quote is a letter to Hayagriva prabhu in 1968. Srila Prabhupada wrote, “The Deity worship must be continued by everyone. Another secret of success is that when one is very much sexually disturbed, he should think of Krsna's pastimes with the gopis—and he will forget his sex-urge.”

Srila Narayana Maharaja: What is the meaning? Was your Prabhupada ignorant when he wrote this? He is an authentic person. He can never do anything wrong. Go on.

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: Srila Prabhupada continues: “One should think of Krsna's pastimes with the gopis, but not try to imitate them.”

Srila Narayana Maharaja: Never imitate. You should hear His pastimes with honor. Then your lust will go. Among all the pastimes of Krsna, rasa-lila is the most powerful medicine. It has been told in sastra:

nivṛtta-tarsair upagiyamanad
bhavausadhac chrotra-mano-'bhiramat
ka uttamasloka-gunanuvadat
puman virajyeta vina pasughnat

What is the meaning? Those who are not hearing this rasa-lila of Tenth Canto Srimad Bhagavatam are 'pasughna'. What is the meaning of pasughna? Self-killer. If they are not hearing, they are killing others and also themselves. Nivṛtta-tarsair upagiyamanad. What is the meaning?

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: Nivṛtta-tarsair upagiyamanad. Those persons who are nivṛtta-tarsair have no thirst for material enjoyment. They are liberated souls. They speak about the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and their speaking of these pastimes is bhavausadi—the cure for the contamination of material existence. It is like a medicine. Ka uttamasloka-gunanuvadat. What kind of person will not listen to the Tenth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam? Only a very cruel person who would like to kill himself and others.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: Here it has been told that those who are visayis, full of lust, those who are liberated, those who are kanistha, madhyama and uttama bhaktas, those who in the stage of suddha sattva or bhava-bhakti, and even those who have received prema—they should all hear this Srimad Bhagavatam Tenth Canto. If they are not hearing, they are killing themselves and others. What more shall we clear? Everything is clear; we must read. Continue.

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: This is Srila Prabhupada. He is describing in Sri Caitanya Caritamṛta, Adi-lila, chapter four, text thirty: "The Lord is so merciful that He Himself descends to take the fallen souls back home to the kingdom of Godhead where the erotic principles of Godhead are eternally relished in their real form, distinct from the perverted sexual love so much adored and indulged in by the fallen souls in their diseased condition. The reason the Lord displays the rasa-lila is essentially to induce all of the fallen souls to give up their diseased morality and religiosity, and to attract them to the kingdom of God to enjoy the reality. A person who actually understands what is rasa-lila will certainly hate to indulge in mundane sex life."

Srila Narayana Maharaja: It is clear. Are you understanding all these things? After that?

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: Some people say that Srila Prabhupada never spoke about the gopis, especially in public and especially not to new people. But this is not the case. The following is a conversation between Srila Prabhupada and a person who was not a devotee. He was Bob Cohen, a peace-core worker. Bob is asking, "Does the devotee keep his individual likes and dislikes?" Srila Prabhupada: "Yes, he keeps everything, but he gives preference to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa says positively, 'I like these things.' We have to offer to Kṛṣṇa what He likes, and then we will take the prasada. Kṛṣṇa likes Radharani." So now Srila Prabhupada begins to speak about Radharani to a completely new person who doesn't know anything. "Kṛṣṇa likes Radharani. Therefore all the gopis are trying to push Radharani to Kṛṣṇa. 'Kṛṣṇa likes this gopi. All right, let's push Her.' That is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness." Bob said, "Is Kṛṣṇa attractive to rascals?" Srila Prabhupada said, "Oh yes, He as the greatest rascal also." Then

Bob asked, “How can you say that Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is a rascal?” Srila Prabhupada began to laugh. “Because He is always teasing the gopis. Yes. Sometimes, when Radharani would go out, Krsna would attack Her. And when She would fall down, She would say, ‘O Krsna, don’t torture Me in that way.’ They would fall on the ground and Krsna would take an opportunity to kiss Her.” Srila Prabhupada laughed again and said, “So Radharani was very pleased, but superficially Krsna was the greatest rascal. So unless rascaldom is in Krsna, then how could rascaldom be existent in this world?”

Srila Narayana Maharaja: Even I have not spoken like this. What is he writing? She fell down and He kissed Her. What is this? Prabhupada was also a good ras(a)cal—full of all kinds of rasas. He is in the line of Krsna. Otherwise how could he have spoken like this? Ras(a)cal means rasa—full of rasa. But rascals cannot understand this ras(a)cal. No one in sakhya rasa (fraternal love) can speak like like this. Prabhupada was of madhurya rasa (conjugal love). Therefore he can speak like this. More?

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: In 1968, Srila Prabhupada was speaking with Saradiya devi dasi. She was only sixteen years old and she had just joined.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: And what is he speaking with her?

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: She is asking a question to Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: Even I have not told anything like this. I always tell about Druva Maharaja, Prahlada Maharaja, Citraketu Maharaja, Ajamila, and Jagai and Madhai. And sometimes I tell Damodara-lila. Go on.

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: Saradiya dasi is asking the question: “I want to know, when we serve Krsna we have spiritual senses, that satisfies our spiritual senses when we serve Krsna in Krsnaloka. Is it correct?” Srila Prabhupada said, “Yes, you can dance with Krsna, you can eat with Krsna, you can talk with Krsna, you can enjoy with Krsna, and Krsna will also kiss you.”

Srila Narayana Maharaja: Yes. This is ras(a)cal. We should therefore not hear from those who say not to read Tenth Canto. And we should not hear from those who say that Prabhupada also warned against it. We should follow our line. We are in the same line. I am not different from him. Oh, yes. In some senses I am different. I am not beautiful as he was, I am not as healthy as he was, and I am not a powerful acarya like he was. I am his disciple. I cannot be like him, but I am in his line. Achintya beda-beda. We are in the same family, the same line. We have taken sannyasa from the same guru in the same line—in the line of jagad-guru Srila Bhaktisaddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami—the Sarasvata line. I gave him all the sannyasa mantras, his danda, and so on. And at the end of his manifest stay I also gave him Samadhi.

You must believe in him. And you can believe in me also; no harm. I have no chance of falling down because I am now crossing my eightieth year. I am not speaking from my own ego. I am only telling all these things by the power of my Gurudeva, by our guru-parampara, by the mercy of Prabhupada. He told me that our relationship is transcendental—eternal. What

does eternal mean? I have so much faith in his words that I will never fall down. So you can depend on me; no harm.

If anyone is not reading Tenth Canto Srimad Bhagavatam and yet he is reading Sri Caitanya Caritamrta, what is he doing? What has not been written clearly in Srimad Bhagavatam is everywhere in Caitanya Caritamrta. For example, in the dialogue between Srila Raya Ramananda and Mahaprabhu—what has been told? Do you know about kila-kincita bhava? This has not been explained in Srimad Bhagavatam. Sometimes Srimati Radhika wanted to meet Krsna...and He caught hold of Her hand. [“Approaching Her, Krsna prohibits Srimati Radharani from picking flowers. He may also touch Her in front of Her friends” (Cc. Madhya 14.173).] Now She was so much angry. She was weeping, but also smiling. Her hair was standing on end and She was exhibiting all the symptoms of sattvika-bhava. This is so high-class. She was weeping and smiling; and She was also rebuking Krsna. This is all written in Sri Caitanya Caritamrta, and you should read it. I am not telling these things. It has been told in Caitanya Caritamrta.

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: Sri Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya-lila, chapter fourteen: “When Srimati Radharani saw Lord Krsna just before Her, Her progress stopped. She assumed an attitude of opposition. Although her face was slightly covered by a blue garment, Her two starry eyes were agitated, being wide and curved. Thus She was decorated with the ornaments of vilasa, and Her beauty increased to give pleasure to Sri Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When Srimati Radharani stands before Krsna, She stands bent in three places—Her neck, waist, and legs; and Her eyebrows begin to dance. When there is an awakening of various ecstatic features on Srimati Radharani’s face and eyes, the *lalita* ornaments are manifest. When the bodily features are delicate and expertly curved, and when the eyebrows are very beautifully agitated, the ornaments of charm called *lalita alankara* are manifest.”

Srila Narayana Maharaja: All these very mysterious and deep things are vividly written in Sri Caitanya Caritamrta, and for this reason Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami was worried. He said, “Only animals like camels, dogs and pigs will not have interest in these things. So I don’t fear. I should write, and only the peacocks, meaning the very high class of *rasika* devotees, will have interest. *Nigama-kalpa-taror galitam phalam*. [“All the scriptures are like a transcendental desire tree, and on that tree Srimad Bhagavatam is the sweetest fruit of all.”]

To what is Sri Vyasadeva referring? Only to *rasa-lila*. If *rasa-lila* was taken out from Srimad Bhagavatam, there would be no beauty at all. Srimad Bhagavatam would no longer be *rasa-sindhu*, the ocean of *rasa*. Everything is there—more than anyone can imagine.

And even more is in Sri Caitanya Caritamrta. If Tenth Canto should be banned, then Caitanya Caritamrta should also be banned. We should not read it. If you cannot read Srimad Bhagavatam, how can you read Caitanya Caritamrta? From beginning to end, there is only one conception: Mahaprabhu is always absorbed in Radha’s mood. In that case we should not read it?

Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami is telling that we should always hear Caitanya Caritamrta. It has been written:

sruyatam sruyatam nityam
giyatam giyatam muda
cintyatam cintyatam bhaktas
caitanya-caritamata

"O devotees, may the transcendental life and characteristics of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu be always heard, chanted and meditated upon with great happiness"(Antya 12.2). So it is clear. Caitanya Caritamrta is full of unlimited rasa, and everything is there. If we can read Caitanya Caritamrta, why can we not read Tenth Canto?

I know that Pujyapada Madhava Maharaja has introduced the singing of astakaliya-lila during kartikka month. What is astakaliya-lila?

Sripad Madhava Maharaja: The confidential pastimes of Radha and Krsna.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: It is written in Sri Govinda-lilamrta by Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami. Those who can sing and follow astakaliya-lila are very elevated. We only do pranama to these lilas; but he has introduced this. For whom? For all devotees, here and there. He introduced it for those who are initiated, not initiated, senior, and neophyte also. Astakaliya-lila is more than Srimad Bhagavatam. There are certain preachers who are coming from India, and who say that unless one is perfect he cannot read Tenth Canto. But we do not agree.

There are four ways or three types of persons who tell others not to read Tenth Canto. The first way is simply told in ignorance. Elevated and high-class devotees know all the reasons why Caitanya Mahaprabhu descended to this world. Do you know why He came? If you are not reading and hearing the Tenth Canto Srimad Bhagavatam you cannot know. You will be cheated. So you should try to hear Srimad Bhagavatam from elevated Vaisnavas. Do not think—as some devotees may tell you—that we should not read the Tenth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam.

Good devotees know everything, and they may tell you in the second way: "You should begin from the First Canto, then the Second, the Third, Fourth, Fifth, and thus you can go there. The third way is to 'cheat'. How will they cheat? They will say: "What is in my hands? Can you tell me what I have in my hands?" Others then become curious to know. If anyone tells you: "Do not read the Tenth Canto of the Srimad Bhagavatam!", this curiosity will come automatically: "What is there? I should know that!" In order to increase others' curiosity to hear and read Srimad Bhagavatam, they do like this. In the forth way the speaker is speaking exactly opposite to what he means. When Srila Rupa Gosvami says, "Don't go to the banks of the Jamuna where Govinda is sweetly playing on His flute, because then you'll forget all about your society, friendship and love", he means, "Do go." For all these reasons they are telling these things.

There was a devotee in my village who used to go to the Ganges river to take bath daily. Whenever someone came and called out to him, "Rama! Rama!" he became very

furious and, taking his stick, he wanted to beat that person. Why did he do so? And why did all the boys from all the villages call out to him in this way? Whenever they said, “Rama! Rama!”, he would pretend to beat them. Why did he do so? In order to make them chant, “Rama! Rama!”. It was a kind of fun.

If anyone is telling that you should not read the Srimad Bhagavatam, then there should be a curiosity to know what is inside. There *must* be some jewel there.

Without hearing and reading, especially without hearing the Tenth Canto Srimad Bhagavatam, you cannot decide the aim and object of your devotional life. On the other hand, by hearing the Tenth Canto, a greed may come to attain that object.

Why has your Gurudeva, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, written Krsna Book? He has even explained about rasa-lila there, and you should read it now. You should hear it; it is a very important thing. You should hear it carefully. I tell that you should read First Canto, Second Canto, Third Canto; and after that you should take Tenth Canto. Don't jump. Prabhupada has also told this. I never tell the pastimes of the gopis with Krsna to common people. Any high class of devotee, who has given up lust and all other bad qualities, can describe all these things; and we must hear from him. This is the powerful medicine—to hear. What is Prabhupada telling? You can hear:

Trai dasa prabhu: This quotation is from the Introduction in the Krsna Book. It was written in 1969, very early in the Iskcon movement. This is the introduction to the first book that we distributed en mass, to the general public. From the first day it came out, we were distributing thousands. “This krsna-katha will also be very much appealing to the most materialistic persons because Krsna's pastimes with the gopis, cowherd girls, are exactly like the loving affairs between young girls and boys within this material world. Actually, the sex feeling found in human society is not unnatural, because the same sex feeling is there in the original Personality of Godhead.

“The pleasure potency is called Srimati Radharani. The attraction of loving affairs on the basis of sex feeling is the original feature of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We, the conditioned souls, being part and parcel of the Supreme, have such feelings also, but they are experienced within a perverted minute condition. Therefore, when those who are after sex-life in this material world hear about Krsna's pastimes with the gopis, they will relish transcendental pleasure although it appears to be materialistic. The advantage will be that they will gradually be elevated to the spiritual platform. In the Bhagavatam it is stated that if one hears the pastimes of Lord Krsna with the gopis from authorities, with submission, then he will be promoted to the platform of transcendental loving service to the Lord, and the material disease of lust within his heart will be completely vanquished. In other words, such hearing will counteract material sex-life.”

Srila Narayana Maharaja: What did he say?

Dristadyumna prabhu: Even if materially contaminated people don't understand the higher spiritual truth behind the Krsna Book, simply by reading and hearing from the proper authority,

they will gradually be purified, and come to understand in a correct way. They will then become free from all these mundane attachments.

Agraya prabhu: In Krsna Book, chapter thirty-three, which is the chapter about rasa-lila, Srila Prabhupada writes: “Some ask that if Krsna is self-sufficient, why did He manifest the pastimes with the gopis, which are disturbing to the so-called moralists of the world? The answer is that such activities show special mercy to the fallen, conditioned souls. The gopis are expansions of His internal energy, but because Krsna wanted to exhibit the rasa-lila, they appeared as ordinary human beings.

“In the material world, pleasure is ultimately manifested in the sex attraction between a man and woman. The man lives simply to be attracted by women and the woman lives simply to be attracted by men. That is the basic principle of material life. As soon as these attractions are combined, people become more and more implicated in material existence. In order to show them special favor, Krsna exhibited this rasa-lila dance. It is just to captivate the conditioned soul. Since they are very much attracted by sex, they can enjoy the same life with Krsna and thus become liberated from the material condition. In the Second Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, Maharaja Pariksit also explains that the pastimes and activities of Lord Krsna are medicine for the conditioned souls. If they simply hear about Krsna, they become relieved of the material disease. They are addicted to material enjoyment and are accustomed to reading sex literature; but by hearing these transcendental pastimes of Krsna with the gopis, they will be relieved of material contamination.”

Srila Narayana Maharaja: Everything is clear by all this evidence. The powerful disease for worldly persons is lust. No one can become free from it. Even Brahma, Siva and Narada, who are liberated souls, could not control this lust. It can be controlled only by devotees like Srila Haridasa Thakura, Srila Rupa Gosvami, Srila Sanatana Gosvami, Srila Raya Ramananda, and all others like them—very easily. How? By always remembering, chanting, and hearing this with honor.

We should not imitate Krsna., even by mind. But we should very honorably hear all these topics. This has been very clearly written in Srimad Bhagavatam and Sri Caitanya Caritamrta. In Adi-lila 334, it is written, "Anugrahaya bhaktanam." You should read the meaning.

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: “Krsna manifests His eternal, human-like form, and performs His pastimes to show mercy to the devotees. Having heard such pastimes, one should engage in service to Him.” The next verse states: “Here the use of the word ‘bhavet’, which is in the imperative mood, tells us that this certainly must be done. If one does not do this, non-compliance will be an abandonment of duty.”

Srila Narayana Maharaja: There is a verbal root—bhavet. What is the meaning of bhavet? ‘You must hear. If you are not hearing, then it is like an offense. You must obey.’ You must hear—but with honor, from elevated devotees. If you are not hearing, you are killing yourself. This is the meaning of bhavet.

Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, who is a rupanuga Vaisnava, is telling this in Sri Caitanya Caritamṛta. “You must hear, but don’t imitate.”

We are warned not to read Govinda-līlāmṛta, and all these rasa-līla pastimes from Srimad Bhagavatam. But we know that so many of the devotees in Iskcon are reading Govinda-līlāmṛta and all other similar books. Although all these books are especially warned against, they still read them. So many have Govinda-līlāmṛta and Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura’s Kṛṣṇa Bhavanāmṛta. Yet, for others they are telling, “You should not read.” What is the meaning of this?

I think it will be better that they not read—but hear—the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa from elevated devotees. Throughout the entire kartikka month we sing: ‘namamisvaram saccidananda-rupam lasat-kundalam gokulebhrajanam yasoda-bhiyolukhalad-dhavamanam paramṛtam atyam tato drutya gopya.’ What is this? Damodara-līla. From where has it come? From Dasama Skanda; from Tenth Canto. Why do we do it? Because our entire guru-parampara does it.

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura has explained this sloka.

vikṛḍitam vraja-vadhubhir idam ca viṣṇoḥ
sraddhanvito ’nusrṇuyad atha varṇayed yaḥ
bhaktim param bhagavati pratilabhya kamam
hṛd-rogam asv apahinoty acireṇa dhīrah

["Anyone who faithfully hears or describes the Lord’s playful affairs with the young gopis of Vrndavana will attain the Lord’s pure devotional service. Thus he will quickly become sober and conquer lust, the disease of the heart."] What is the meaning? You should explain the very essence of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura’s words. He has written the meaning of the word ’dhira’.

Sripad Aranya Maharaja: In this verse, which concludes the chapters on rasa-līla, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura has given a commentary on the words of Sri Sukadeva Gosvami. In this verse he is saying that the gopis of Vrindavan are playing and performing this rasa-līla with Kṛṣṇa. Anusrnuya means ‘you should hear it continuously’.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: It means you must hear with faith—with honor. If you have no honor, then you should purchase that honor from anywhere. "Kṛṣṇa-bhakti rasa bhavita mati. You should buy it, and then read with honor. You should hear.

