

Dear Maharaja's, Prabhus and Didis,

Dandavat pranamas. Jaya Sri Sri Guru and Gauranga. The following is a report of an important meeting conducted by Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja on August 27. Most of this report was written by Sripad Bhaktivedanta Aranya Maharaja, who has just left Mathura for about one month, to preach on Srila Maharaja's behalf in the Scandinavian countries.

The next wonderful event after this one was Radhastami, and we hope to send a report of that in a few days. Please come for Kartika. It may change your life.

Your aspiring servant, Syamarani dasi

## **Raja-sabha Report**

Towards the end of the Nandotsava festival of July 24, Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja announced the forthcoming SABHA or Distinguished Assembly, to be held at Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha three days later. A report of that remarkable event follows:

Visva-vaishnava Raja-sabha  
Royal Assembly of the United Vaisnava Community  
Of All Sampradayas  
Sunday 27th August 2000

At Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha, Mathura, India.

for the purpose of discussing

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPTION OF SUDDHA-BHAKTI IN SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM

Most of the prominent erudite Vaisnavas and panditas in Vraja-Mandala assembled in Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha on this auspicious dvadasi day to discuss the evolution of the conception of suddha-bhakti in the Srimad Bhagavatam. In this distinguished assembly, many elderly Vaisnava scholars of vast learning and experience, along with their devoted disciples, united on this momentous occasion to glorify suddha bhagavat-bhakti according to the precepts of their respective sampradayas. Such a council of Vaisnavas is very rarely seen in this world. Some of the mahatmas gracing the assembly by their noble presence were:

Sri Srimad Manohara Lal Sastri  
Pandita Chote Lal Sastri  
Sri Srimad Acyuta Bhatta Gosvami  
Sripad Vasanta Lal Sastri  
Sri Thakurji Sastri  
Sri Srimad Hariharaji Chachaji  
Sri Visnudatta Pandita  
Pujoyapada Bhaktivedanta Tirtha Maharaja  
Pandita Sri Dhiresht Sastri.

More than two hundred devotees had descended upon Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha, eager to witness this unique event and hear the inevitable flow of Hari-katha. As host of the assembly, Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja welcomed and honoured all the respectable speakers with asanas, sandal paste, flower garlands, pranama and sweet words. It was very moving to see the living example of the spirit of Sri Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami as expressed in his Sri Manah Siksa. In the very first verse of that essential text, Sri Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami has informed us: Gurau gosthe gosthalayisu sujane bhusuragane.

"My dear brother, O mind, if at all you desire to enter the path of raganuga-bhakti then first of all give up all your pride and develop unprecedented attachment and affection for your diksa and siksa gurus, for Vraja-mandala, for the Vraja-vasis (past and present), for THE VAISNAVAS OF OTHER SAMPRADAYAS who reside in the dhama, and also for the BRAHMANAS who are residents of Vraja-mandala."

Thus, from the very outset of the meeting, a crucial lesson was vividly imparted in regard to a vital yet frequently overlooked aspect of our Rupanuga tradition.

The meeting opened, as is customary in such councils, with a mangalacarana (auspicious invocation), after which Sri Srimad Manohara Lal Sastri was selected as Sabha-pati (honourable president). Sripad Vasanta Lal Sastri was selected as Sancalak (Master of Ceremonies). The discourses began, some in Hindi and some in Sanskrit. It was interesting to hear how all the panditas of the various sampradayas held the conclusions of Srila Rupa Gosvami and Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura in high esteem. What follows is a brief summary of the discourses delivered by some of the prominent speakers:

Pandita Sri Dhiresh Sastri:

The main feature of suddha-bhakti is *ananya*, its one-pointedness or exclusiveness. It has been described in Srimad Bhagavatam as 'avyavahita', unobstructed or uninterrupted. Pap, sins, are an impediment or obstruction to suddha-bhakti, but by following bhakti-marg this impediment is automatically removed. By hearing from the scriptures, Bhakti-devi eventually makes Her appearance. In other words, bhakti comes afterwards. But the speciality of Srimad Bhagavatam is that bhakti appears in the heart the very moment one has the opportunity to hear from a realized soul. Bhagavatam mentions three impediments, namely SOKA (lamentation), MOHA (bewilderment) and BHAYA (fear). Here we should understand that soka refers to impediments arising from our past, moha to the present, and bhaya to the future. However, all three impediments are eradicated instantly upon the appearance of suddha-bhakti.

Sri Srimad Acyuta Bhatta Gosvami:

The Srimad Bhagavatam promises suddha-bhakti when we remove all kaitava-dharma, devotional practices which are mixed with fruitive intentions or even the idea of strengthening our bhakti with the cultivation of knowledge. The definition of suddha-bhakti has been given in Srimad Bhagavatam:

laksanam bhakti yogasya  
nirgunasya hy'udahrtam  
ahaituki avyavahita  
ya bhakti purusottame. (3.29.12)

The mukhya laksanam (intrinsic characteristic) is SEVA, and the tatastha laksanam (marginal characteristics) are that suddha-bhakti is ahaituki (unconditional) and avyavahita (uninterrupted). Similarly, Sri Rupa Gosvami has defined suddha-bhakti:

anyabhilasitam sunyam  
jnana karmadyanavrtam  
anukulyena krsnanu  
silanam bhaktir uttama

Here Sri Rupa Gosvami says that service is not defined in terms of pleasing Krsna, but rather SEVA should be 'kalyankari', for the sake of Krsna's ultimate well-being. For example, when Yasoda Maiya was binding Krsna, He was upset and did not want to be bound. Although this activity was not pleasing to Krsna, it is still bhakti because Yasoda Maiya had Krsna's best interests in mind. On the other hand, Krsna is pleased to hear the abusive criticism of Canura, Mustika, Jarasandha and others because it inspires His fighting spirit. Although Krsna is pleased by this, however, it cannot be called bhakti because their inner intention was to kill Krsna.

Bhakti has three stages, namely sadhana-bhakti, the stage of practice, bhava-bhakti, the stage of ecstatic emotion, and prema-bhakti, the mature stage of transcendental love. Sadhana-bhakti is of two types, namely vaidhi, engagement in the direct angas of bhakti instigated by the discipline of sastra, and raganuga, engagement in the direct angas of bhakti inspired by an intense greed to follow the eternal associates of Sri Bhagavan. According to the type of sadhana performed, bhava-bhakti may be of two types. Bhava mixed with feelings of awe and reverence arises after the practice of vaidhi-bhakti, whereas suddha bhava, free from the conception of Krsna's godhood, arises after the cultivation of raganuga-bhakti.

Bhava bhakti matures into prema, sneha, pranaya, mana, raga, anuraga, bhava, and mahabhava. Within mahabhava, the madana bhava of Srimati Radhika is supermost. When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was discussing this with Sri Raya Ramananda, at this point Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu put his hand over the mouth of Sri Raya Ramananda. So I will also stop here.

Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja:

For five days we have been observing the festival of Sri Krsna Janmastami. Today we invited the most learned scholars of Mathura Puri to attend this convention. The scholars of Mathura Puri are the topmost in the whole world. I always remain eager to invite them to come here so that I can hear very high-class hari-katha. I want to honor such learned Vaisnavas. Today we have heard how rasika, bhavuka and tattvajna they are.

According to Srimad Bhagavatam:

sa vai pumsam paro dharmo  
yato bhaktir adhoksaje  
ahaituki apratihata  
yayatma samprasidati (1.2.6)

“The supreme dharma is that by which the jiva can attain bhakti to the transcendent Lord. Such bhakti, which is by nature unconditional and uninterrupted, gives complete satisfaction to the atma.”

Srila Maharaja then quoted Srimad Bhagavatam's 'sa vai pumsam paro dharmo' sloka

which states that only such bhakti which is by nature unconditional and uninterrupted gives complete satisfaction to the atma. When bhakti comes, jnana and vairagya automatically come. If they are not coming, and if mamata is not coming, but rather material desires are coming, then there is no bhakti at all. Also, if one recites Bhagavatam for money, there is no bhakti.

The main topic of Srila Maharaja's talk was Sri Sanatana Gosvami's Brihat Bhagavatamrta, which discusses the five kinds of bhaktas in terms of Srila Rupa Gosvami's anyavilasia sunyam verse; that is, in terms of who is most kalyankari.

The first is the jnani-bhakta, and the example is Sri Prahlada Maharaja. He considers that Bhagavan is everywhere. He is liberated, He has knowledge of all tattvas, and he can chant and remember, but he cannot do any practical service. He thinks Bhagavan never becomes hungry, thirsty, tired, or hot, and therefore he cannot offer Him even a glass of water or a fan.

The second is the suddha-bhakta, and the example is Amberish Maharaja. He is not liberated but he has a desire to serve. Because he gave prominence to bhakti, Durvasa Muni had to beg his forgiveness. We should try to follow him. Citraketu is also an example. He is famous for his prayers to serve with all his senses, and to serve like the gopis.

The third kind is the premi-bhakta, and the example is Hanuman. He is liberated, but we can try to follow him. He serves Rama day and night. He serves Him in the mood of naravata-lila and also as God of Gods. He cannot serve Rama at night, in His inner chambers, and he cannot give Him the remnants of his own foodstuffs. If he would go to Vrndavana and see the cowherd boys sitting on Krsna's shoulders, he would think them offensive.

The fourth kind is the prematura-bhakta, and Bhisma and the Pandavas are the examples. Of them, Arjuna is the best, and Draupadi is still better. They have a family relationship with Krsna. Sometimes they remember, and sometimes they forget Krsna's Godhood. Arjuna can eat from the same plate as Krsna and sleep on the same bed, but when he saw the Universal Form, he became fearful and begged forgiveness.

The fifth kind is the premapara-bhakta, and the example is Uddhava. He had so many relationships with Krsna: as friend, servant, prime minister, commander, and advisor. He was the only one Krsna could send to Vraja to pacify the gopis and learn from them. He could not send Arjuna because he would not have understood. Only Uddhava was qualified to be admitted into the school of the gopi's prema, and he later prayed to take birth as a shrub in Vrndavana, to be bathed in their dust when they would go for abhisara.

The gopis are the best. They are above these five kinds. Krsna is bahunistha. He cannot leave even one of his unlimited devotees. But the gopis are ekanistha. They left all considerations and all relations for His sake. Therefore He is always indebted to them. To follow the gopis is the ultimate goal of life.