

Dear Maharajas, Prabhus and Didis.

Dandavat pranamas, Jaya Sri Sri Guru and Gauranga,

Srila Narayana Maharaja has just returned to Mathura after preaching for several days in Jaipur and Delhi. This morning, Sept 24, He went to Bhandiravana, the lila-sthana forest which is famous as the place where Radha and Krsna, as little children, all of a sudden became teenagers for a short time, so that Lord Brahma could perform their marriage ceremony in great pomp. Srila Maharaja went to oversee the construction of a new temple there. From there he went to Gopinatha Bhavana, a new spiritual community project which is just opposite Vrndavan's Gopinatha Gaudiya Matha and the Jamuna, and just nearby Imlitala, to oversee its development. Many residences are already built, GVP publication offices are in the process of being built, and an assembly hall and temple are planned. From there he went to Sri Rupa-Sanatana Gaudiya Matha in Seva Kunja, where he spent the rest of the day. In the evening he gave a class, and because so many western devotees had already begun to come from around the world in preparation for the upcoming Vraja-mandala parikranma, his class was mostly in English. Much of the class was based on Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings to Srila Sanatana Gosvami in Sri Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya-lila chapter 22. It is presented herewith. Your aspiring servant, Syamarani dasi

TRIDANDISVAMI BHAKTIVEDANTA NARAYANA MAHARAJA

What to Follow

[Evening lecture at Rupa-Sanatana Mandira in Vrndavan: Sept. 24, 2000 Ekadasi]

In the line of devotion, when guru gives the bhakti-lata bija, there are two things required for success -- the mercy of guru and Vaisnavas, and one's own endeavor to serve his guru. One will have to fully obey guru and Vaisnavas. If someone is a true Vaisnava and pure devotee, there will be no difference between gurudeva and that devotee. On the other hand, if someone has a difference of opinion from gurudeva, we may have some honor for him, but we should only follow the true diksa and siksa gurus. They will be in one line. Then there will be no confusion.

First, the mercy of gurudeva and Krsna is there. They have given the seed of bhakti-lata, the desire to serve Krsna. We may have taken diksa, but we should try to realize what is real diksa. Mercy is needed, but we must also make effort to engage our mind always in Krsna's service, fully engaging all the senses and all our possessions. We should see that not even for one second do our minds go here and there. If the guru is bona fide, try to obey his orders, like those in Upadesamrta first verse. These verses are not only for remembering, but for fully following. If you don't do this, you are simply cheating yourself. You cannot cheat guru, Vaisnavas and Krsna. If you don't follow Upadesamrta you cannot follow the guru's internal moods. If you follow from the beginning, from vaco vegam manasa krodha vegam, continuing to all the slokas, then you can actually follow and get the mercy of guru -- otherwise not. Guru and Krsna will see.

Sometimes it is very hard to follow, but try to overcome all the senses. Try to keep your heart and mind empty, so that it may be filled by guru and Krsna..

Our objective should be fixed. You may have a certain objective at present, but when your standard of bhakti goes up, your objective will also change and develop. From the time I first joined the matha, up to now, so many things have changed. When rati (bhava-bhakti) will come, then your objective will be fixed. Before that time there will be so many changes of objectives. An objective may be alright today, but tomorrow you will see that it was not perfect. When rati, the first stage of prema, comes, and especially when sthaya-bhava comes, at that time the objective will be fixed.

We should engage our heart, mind, and senses in the execution of bhakti, beginning with sravanam, kirtanam, visnu-smaranam. Always engage in svarupa-siddha bhakti, otherwise you will be derailed. I am seeing, and I have seen throughout my whole life, that so many came and joined the matha, and then later fell, because they didn't try hard. So practice vaco vegam manasa krodha vegam.

Sometimes I may become angry and chastise a disciple, but he should not be affected or take it in a bad way. I may especially become angry when someone tries to touch my feet. It is svabhavika; it is natural that I become angry about this. Sometimes devotees become upset, but they need not.

I also know that brahmacaris become upset when they cannot reconcile the different statements I make. Sometimes there appears to be contradictions in the scriptures, like the Vedas and Upanisads, and that is why Srila Vyasadeva manifested Vedanta Sutra. Still, without an explanation you cannot understand it. Even in Srimad Bhagavatam there are so many statements that appear contradictory to each other, and you cannot reconcile them.

There should be no hopelessness. This sense of hopelessness is the cause of downfall. If gurudeva chastises us, we should simply think how to please him more -- not that we become hopeless. For some period of time my Gurudeva appeared to be not satisfied with anything. What did I do? I always engaged in doing a great deal of service, so that he would become happy. So don't be hopeless. Think, "It is for my betterment." Gurudeva has no self-interest. You should think, "My Gurudeva is so much more intelligent than me. He is most intelligent. He is my well-wisher and friend." If a bona fide guru chastises a disciple, it is for the betterment of that disciple -- for the development of his bhakti.

I know that especially western devotees are attracted at once, but after some time they go away. They easily go. Don't be like that. Always engage your mind in bhakti. It will help you.

Try to follow from top to bottom, from beginning to end. Don't miss any of gurudeva's classes. If I say, "Stand up and say something in front of all the devotees", don't hesitate. It will help your bhakti.

Now our parikrama is coming. Try to give honor to Vraja Mandala and engage in service. Always remember that Narada has two boons from Krsna. The first is that if one hears vraja-katha, this katha will give mercy and krsna-prema will come. The second is that if one touches the lila-sthana, the places of Krsna's pastimes, krsna-prema will also come. Don't be in confusion about this. The effect will definitely come. It is certain. In this there is some obstacle, and that obstacle is doubt. If there is doubt, the mercy will not come.

You have heard and read in Sri Caitanya Caritamrta: 'sadhu-sanga, nama-samkirtana, bhagavata sravana, mathura-vasa, sri murtira sraddhaya sevana. These are the five most important items of bhakti. What is the meaning? One must have the association of rasika bhavaka bhaktas, and he must do nama-samkirtana in that association. He should always chant and remember Srimad Bhagavatam in the company of Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura, Srila Sanatana Gosvami and Srila Jiva Gosvami, in the line of Srila Rupa Gosvami and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, (by hearing, reading, and remembering their commentaries) in sadhu-sanga. He should stay in Mathura or Vrndavana, and go to such places as Radha Kunda and Govardhana, in the association and guidance of pure sadhus. In sadhu-sanga he should engage in the service of Sri Murti. But that worship should not be third-class arcana. It should be like that of Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami. The activity may look the same, but the mood is different. We should follow the mood of worship of Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami and Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, whose Deity is Gokulananda. See how Rupa Gosvami used to serve. See how Srila Gopala Bhatta Gosvami served his saligrama-sila so well that the Deity Himself turned into Sri Radha-Ramana. We should follow these acaryas.

If one even slightly touches any of these five, krsna-prema will definitely come.

If we have another motive than krsna-prema, if we commit vaisnava-aparadha and nama-aparadha, we will be in confusion. Even if there is namabhasa, the clearing stage of chanting, progress will take so much time. If we have more faith in money than we do in gurudeva, Vaisnavas and bhakti, or if we have something to hide from gurudeva, we will not progress. So we should be ready to open our hearts, even if bad thoughts are coming. If you practice like this, then very soon, in this life, you can realize something.

One may worry that, "Gurudeva and the Vaisnavas are doing parikrama, and I may be so busily engaged in service that I won't be able to complete my chanting of one lakh names, and I won't be able to do dandavat parikrama", but there is no harm. I remember when I joined the matha, and Gurudeva and the Vaisnavas were doing parikrama by foot. At that time I was so busy doing management that I could not chant or remember slokas and prarthanas (prayers). Gurudeva had also told me, "Don't do nirjala ekadasi, or you won't be able to manage." I asked him what I should do. He said he would take all the responsibility for me.

Even if you are very busy at that time, always try to engage your mind in Krsna. Try to have a siksa-guru, keep your heart with that siksa-guru, and ask him or her questions. I will also help, but sometimes I may not be physically available. There are many qualified devotees here who can help you.

