

harikatha@yahoo.com

kaliyadamana@yahoo.com

admin@hari-katha.org

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staff@vnn.org

news@vnn.org

from Syamarani – Gurudeva's important lecture about our chanting

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

ARE WE CHANTING - OR SIMPLY VIBRATING AIR?

(A Talk on Sri Bhajana Rahasya)

Oahu, Hawaii: Jan. 18, 2002 (evening - part one)

[We hear so often, "Chant Hare Krsna and Be Happy." Many devotees have left their devotional practices or have become discouraged in their devotional life, because they lost faith in this promise. They think, "I am chanting Hare Krsna but I have not become happy." What is the reason for this, and how can the devotees again become encouraged? Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja gives the answer in the following lecture. - ed.]

I offer my heartfelt obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master, Om Visnupada Sri Srimad Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, and I offer my same heartfelt obeisances unto to my siksa-guru, nitya-lila-pravista Om Visnupada Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja.

Sri Bhajana Rahasya of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura delineates the development of the devotee aspirant's faith. The beginning of that faith brings one into the association of a bona fide guru, or sadhu-sanga, wherein one commences a serious practice of bhajana. By such devotional activities, unwanted habits gradually go away, and this stage is called anartha-nivrtti. By this, one comes into nistha, steadiness of purpose. Gradually, a taste for the holy name and a relish for a life immersed in such chanting develops, and that stage is called ruci.

From nistha, ruci or taste manifests. This taste is divided into two: vastu-vaisistya apeksani and vastu-vaisistya anapeksani. After passing the stage at which many anarthas remain, this taste may arise. Some anarthas are still there, but not nama-aparadha. The anarthas of the devotee in the stage of ruci are now in a very minute form.

An example of apeksani-ruci is as follows: When someone sings with a guitar, with harmonium, with so many instruments, and with a very sweet melody and voice, it will be very tasteful. On the other hand, if a high-class devotee, weeping with a melting heart, is singing with no instrument, and his voice is not so sweet, then that hearer will not have

taste to hear. If that devotee sees that any Deities are well-dressed, he will have taste in Their darsana, and if the same Deities not well-dressed, no taste will occur.

In Iskcon temples everywhere, whether there is bhakti or not, there are very well-dressed Deities. Three persons blow the conch at the same time, and they perform arati in a very beautiful way. The devotees sing a very good melody of 'Govindam adi purusham tam aham bhajami,' in a newly composed tune and of professional quality. So many persons congregate, and so many sannyasis with dandas are there - looking very fine. Everything is externally impressive, anyone who comes will have some taste to see this beautiful scene, and that person will return again and again.

On the other hand, if the same person were to take darsana of Vamsidas Babaji and his Deities, he would return home, saying, "Oh nothing is there." But Vamsidas Babaji's mood is so high that he quarrels with his Deities! He says, "Oh, this Nitai appears very simple, but He is actually very naughty. He told me to bring flowers, so I went to the tree and was climbing. He then sent a boy, who pushed me, and now my leg is injured. I will not worship Him anymore." He was weeping and quarreling with his Deities. We cannot be like this.

When ruci first develops, it depends on good melody, good decoration, and so on. When it further develops, the devotee is more advanced, and Srimati Radhika is an example of that. She is far superior to ruci, but I am giving an example. Once Srimati Radhika heard someone talking about Krsna from very far away and She fainted. In this way there are two classes of ruci. As ruci continues through its most complete stage of vastu-vaisistya anapeksani, it will be then changed into asakti.

[Sripad Pundarika Prabhu:] We just heard the two stages or two classifications of ruci. One stage is where the sadhaka is actually impelled from within for hearing, chanting, taking darsanas, or performing any limb of bhakti, because of any externally beautiful cause. And in the next successive stage, the sadhaka is now so strong that he doesn't get affected by any externally attractive or unattractive circumstance. His heart is unconditionally running towards performing these activities. We have heard about how nicely the aratis are performed in the Iskcon temples. Any ordinary person who has no connection with bhakti whatsoever, may get attracted to see that very nice arati. So, what is the difference between this person's taste and that of a person who has gone through all the stages of anartha-nivrtti and has now reached the end of nistha? Why does he have to still be dependant on external attractions to develop his sraddha or ruci for the name or for hari-katha or for the Deities?

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] The taste of general persons is only worldly, whereas the taste of a person actually situated in ruci is not. It is somewhat transcendental. He has passed anartha-nivrtti, nistha has come, and after that, ruci. General persons will go to a kirtana or arati and then they will quickly forget. This is a worldly thing. If you want to develop your Krsna consciousness, you will have to pass through these processes. You will have to judge for yourself where you are. You will have to judge yourself how much deep or shallow water you are standing in.

I know that if I don't give proper honor to some of you, or if I don't talk with you, some of you will say, "Oh, I am not coming here. He doesn't give me any attention." So many have left our classes for this reason. On the other hand, those who have passed through the proper channel, whose anarthas have somewhat gone, and who have passed through nistha and are coming to the stage of ruci will have some taste. Even if I rebuke them, they will come and sit here.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu explained the process by which we should chant the holy name so that prema will come. He has already uttered, "Trnad api sunicena," and now He is explaining something further. If one has taste, the sadhaka will think as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu exemplified:

ayi nanda-tanuja kinkaram
patitam mam visame bhavambudhau
krpaya tava pada-pankaja-
sthita-dhuli-sadrsam vicintaya

"O My Lord, O Krsna, son of Maharaja Nanda, I am Your eternal servant, but because of My own fruitive acts I have fallen into this horrible ocean of nescience. Now please be causelessly merciful to Me. Consider Me a particle of dust at Your lotus feet." (Cc Antya 20.32)

What is the meaning?

[Sripad Asrama Maharaja:] This is the fifth sloka of Sri Siksastakam. Ayi nanda kinkaram: "O son of Maharaja Nanda, I am your eternal servant. Somehow or other I have fallen into this very deep ocean of material existence. Please be merciful to me. Pick me up and place me as an insignificant tiny particle of the dust of Your lotus feet."

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura used to chant like this during the night. Taking his mala and weeping, he used to chant these Siksastakam slokas with tears in his eyes and a melting heart. "O Nandanandana, I have left Your service. I have no mood of service to You. I am in an ocean of birth and death. I am very unhappy. Please take me out of that ocean and engage me in Your service. I am your krta-dasa. I am like Your purchased slave. You have all claims on me.

tomara nitya-dasa mui, toma pasariya
padiyachon bhavarnave maya-baddha hana

"I am Your eternal servant, but I forgot Your Lordship. Now I have fallen into the ocean of nescience and have been conditioned by the external energy." (Cc Antya 20.33)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura is now explaining that when a sadhaka has crossed the stage of ruci and enters asakti, he becomes humble. Tears automatically come in his eyes and his heart melts.

nayanam galad-asru-dharaya
vadanam gadgada-ruddhaya gira
pulkair nicitam vapuh kada
tava nama-grahane bhavisyati

"My dear Lord, when will My eyes be beautified by filling with tears that constantly glide down as I chant Your holy name? When will My voice falter and all the hairs on My body stand erect in transcendental happiness as I chant Your holy name?" (Cc Antya 20.36)

The devotee repents, "I am so worthless. I have no taste for Your names." Bhaktivinoda Thakura used to weep in this way. When asakti is somewhat mature, the devotee can realize his siddha-deha, eternal form. You should know that we are not this material form. The material body appears to have very beautiful eyes, curly hair, and beautiful cheeks and nose. It appears very, very strong and beautiful. In the same way, we have our transcendental form. There is a spiritual form and it is actually very beautiful. It is like the form of Krsna. Krsna is saccidananda. He has a very beautiful form, but it is not worldly. At the stage of bhava, Yogamaya gives us light in this regard, as electricity from a powerhouse gives us light. If there is no connection, there is no light. Similarly, Krsna is saccidananda-gana; His qualities are also transcendental. As His form is saccidananda, so are His qualities. How do we make the connection?

atah sri-krsna-namadi
na bhaved grahyam indriyaih
sevonmukhe hi jihvadau
svayam eva sphuraty adah

"No one can understand the transcendental nature of the name, form, quality and pastimes of Sri Krsna through his materially contaminated senses. Only when one becomes spiritually saturated by transcendental service to the Lord are the transcendental name, form, quality and pastimes of the Lord revealed to him." (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.234)

What you are chanting at present is not the pure name. When Nama Prabhu will come by His causeless mercy and dance on your tongue, that is the pure name. At the present time, you are simply creating a vibration of air. Your chanting is only a vibration coming from your throat and tongue. Your chanting is a vibration of material sounds, an effort by your senses. However, when Nama Prabhu sees your condition and hears your prayers, He will come Himself and dance on your tongue. That is pure nama. If the pure name comes, it means that asakti has become rati (bhava).

Try to chant the pure name like this. Chant always, without interruption. Seeing your effort and endeavor, Krsna will come in the form of His name and He will dance. At that time there will be no laziness and no sleepiness, and the devotee will always be very happy. That is the pure name. Pray that Krsna's pastimes come and reveal Themselves in

your hearts. Anandambudhi vardhanam. At that time you will be so happy. You cannot realize this now, but when this stage comes, then you can dance. It cannot be explained by words, but it will take your heart, in the form of tears. These tears will also be transcendental, because they will be related to the pure name. At that time everything worldly will be forgotten. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura used to chant like this, and he has given us an outline to follow.

Transcribers: Srimati Candrakanta devi dasi and Srimati Malati devi dasi

Editor: Sripad Rsabhadeva dasa Adhikari

Ass't editor: Srimati Syamarani devi dasi

Typist: Srimati Radhika devi dasi
