

Tridandi Svami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

'Tricks' of the Bona Fide Guru

Sri Sri Radha-Vinoda-bihari Gaudiya Matha

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{Although Srila Narayana Maharaja had already made general requests that his various lectures be distributed on the internet for the benefit of all, he particularly requested that the following lecture be sent}

[Just before beginning his class, Srila Narayana Maharaja corrected a devotee's pronunciation. Someone had said 'gaura-premanandi', instead of 'gaura-premanande'. And, while singing Srila Prabhupada's pranama mantra, someone had sung 'Srimati' instead of 'Srimate'.]

Deleted: 'srimatee', stead of

Once, the king of heaven, Indra, and the king of demons, Virocana, both went to Brahma for atma-jnana, transcendental knowledge. Brahma asked them, "Why have you come to me?"

They both told Brahma the same thing: "We want to be happy. We don't want to be defeated by anyone. We don't want to be controlled by anyone, and we never want to die."

Brahma replied, "The subject is very high and deep, so you must remain here and obey me. Being brahmacharis, you should stay very far away from ladies. You should live here, serving in my house for twenty-five years. Then I may tell you something. Otherwise, you will not be qualified to realize what I will tell you. You will misunderstand my intention. You will understand in a way opposite to what I want to say."

They accepted this. Giving up all sense gratification, serving in Brahma's house in all respects, not shaving, not even cutting their nails, practicing brahmacharya, remaining very far away from worldly intoxication, rising early in the morning, and sleeping very little, they very strictly followed him for 25 years. After that they approached Brahma and requested him, "Please tell us what to do. How can we be happy, how can we realize ourselves, and how can we understand the answer to the question, "Who am I?" How can we easily overcome birth, death, sorrow, and suffering in this life?"

Brahma told them, "You should obey me. At once go to a barber, shave and take bath, cut your nails and wash everything – and you should look beautiful. Having decorated your bodies in a beautiful way, come to me."

They did so. They washed everything, they became very beautiful, and they again came to Brahma. Brahma told them, "Bring a mirror," and they brought it. He then said, "Oh, you should see your faces. They are both very beautiful." Both were beautiful. Brahma then said, "This is you, this is soul, this is atma, this is paramatma – this is everything. Now you should return and try to make this body very happy. Thus you will be happy."

They were initiated and they both thought, "I have now been initiated by jagat-guru Brahma." Satisfied, they returned home.

Having returned to his kingdom, Virocana, the king of demons, announced, "I have learned about the reality of the soul, that this body is soul. Therefore, by any means, by hook or by crook, we should try to make it happy. We can drink wine; no harm. By any means we should make this body happy." He began to teach this philosophy of life, and he was fully satisfied.

Indra, on the other hand, had some doubt. When he left his Gurukula, the abode of Brahma, and he was going to his kingdom, he was not satisfied. He thought, "Why has Brahma told us this? We have heard, and Brahma has also instructed us, that the atma never dies. It is always full of jnana, knowledge. It has no transformation. Never. It is never unhappy. The atma is never unhappy. But at the same time I see that our Gurudeva told us that, 'this body is the soul, and you should try to keep it happy.' I see, I realize, that from the beginning of birth there are so many transformations. At first one is a baby of 1 day, and then 5 years, then 10 years. Gradually he becomes a young man, after that he becomes old, and then he leaves his body. So how can his body be the soul? One moment he's happy, and one moment he's feeling some separation or some suffering.

"I'm in doubt. I could not understand him. I could not follow him. He is always correct. He has perhaps told some true thing, but I could not understand him. I could not follow. So he has not made a mistake. I have made a mistake. I must return to him and ask this question again: 'What is the purpose of existence?'"

Indra went to Brahma and asked, "Gurudeva, you have told me that this body is the soul, it is permanent, it never becomes unhappy, and it has no death and no birth. But I see that this body is always transforming, moment by moment, transformation after transformation. Then, after some time this body dies and is burnt to ashes. Or, it is eaten by animals, and then it transforms into stool and so many other things. So how can this body be the soul?"

Brahma replied, "Oh, I'm very happy to hear this. I'm very happy to hear it. You should remain here for another twenty-five years, practicing brahmacharya. Then you will become qualified to realize my instructions."

Indra did so. After twenty-five more years, that is, after 50 years of practicing brahmacharya and serving Gurudeva, he again came to Brahma. Brahma said, "You know that in a dream you see that a person never dies. You will be very happy if you know the real person in a dream. You can be happy."

Indra again returned home, but again he returned to Brahma and asked, "How can this be? It can never be. The mind of a person in dream is always in ten kinds of conditions." "Ten" means that there are so many situations and so many problems. "He's always in anxiety and always upset. Sometimes he becomes happy with his children, sons, daughters, and wife or husband, but after some time he again becomes worried. He thinks, 'If I will have some wealth, I will be happy.' Wealth comes, but he's never happy. Then he thinks, 'Oh, if a wife, a very qualified, beautiful wife comes, I will be happy.' She comes, but he is not happy because there are no children. If children also come, he is still never happy. There are so many diseases and so many other problems. It is by the mind that he's thinking all this, and therefore this 'person', the mind, cannot be the soul.

"And dreams themselves are also false. When the man wakes up and comes to his external consciousness, he thinks, 'Oh, everything was false.' If in a dream someone is cutting off one's head, that person will cry, thinking, 'I'm dying, I'm dying.' But he is not actually dying. This is a very strange thing. Then he awakens and thinks, 'Oh, what nonsense I was dreaming!' So this cannot be the soul."

Again Indra went to Brahma, and this time Brahma told him, "When you are in deep sleep, that is reality, that is the experience of the soul. At that time you are not thinking any illusory thoughts, and therefore that is presence of soul." This is the Mayavada philosophy. It is negative. There is no positive spiritual thought. It is like a void. Considering this, Indra was also not satisfied with this philosophy. Again he returned to Brahma. Now it had been one hundred years since he had first come. Now he had served Brahma and performed austerities for one hundred years.

This time Brahma told him about the atma. He said, "In this body, there is something transcendental — the part and parcel of the Supreme Godhead. Now you can realize yourself by practice. If I had told you everything when you first came, you could not have practiced, and you would have had no realization. I therefore gradually took you to this point. Now, after a hundred years of serving Guru and gradually advancing, your heart is pure."

So Indra and Virocana were both disciples of Brahma. Virocana thought, "I am a disciple of Brahma," and Indra also thought that way. But who is really the disciple? He who practices, he who wants to know the real mood and teachings, the internal mood and teachings of his Gurudeva — he is actually the disciple.

Narada is Guru. He has so many disciples — Vyasa, Valmiki, Dhruva, Prahlada, Pracinabarhi, Valakilya, and the thousands and thousands of sons of Prajapati whom he

enlightened two times – all are his disciples. But why are there so many differences? Do you see any difference between Dhruva and Prahlada? Can you tell me?

[Devotee:] Dhruva Maharaja achieved...

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] Is he a disciple of Narada?

[Devotee:] Yes.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] And Prahlada is a disciple of Narada?

[Devotee:] Yes.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] What is the difference between the two? Are they both the same? Or, is there some difference?

[Devotee:] There is some difference.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] What?

[Devotee:] Dhruva Maharaja had to go through the austerity, and Prahlada Maharaja received the knowledge of Bhagavatam in the womb of his mother.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] Can you tell?

[Dhrstadyumna prabhu:] Dhruva Maharaja had some material desires. Because he prayed for some material profit, he had to get that first. But Prahlada had no material desire.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] Still, Dhruva was thinking, "I am the disciple of Narada." But Prahlada was rejecting all these material things. And what Prahlada wanted, he also received from Narada – the realization and vision that 'God is everywhere, and everything is in God.' He was as therefore a Maha-bhagavata. He could see his worshippable God everywhere, even in the grass. He had nothing to fear; he never feared. He was self-satisfied.

But Narada also has a disciple like Sri Veda Vyasa, and he gave him something more. What is that? Vyasa knows all worldly things. He has also realized transcendental things, and he has revealed that in his scriptures. He divided the Vedas into four, and he put the essence in Vedanta. Then he took the essence of Vedanta and put that in Srimad-Bhagavatam. For persons with not so much intelligence, for those always absorbed in sense gratification, he wrote Mahabharata. This scripture is very interesting because it is full with ksatriyas fighting each other. Vyasa was very intelligent. He knew how to take his readers to the transcendental realm. However, although he had written everything very cleverly, he still was not satisfied. He therefore approached Narada and said, "Oh, even though I've written so much, I'm not satisfied. Why?"

Narada replied, "I know that you cannot be satisfied. You have not glorified the sweet pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You have not yet described who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and where is His abode. And You have not described what is transcendental love and affection. You should realize all this and write about it, and then you can be happy."

Sri Vyasadeva then took shelter of bhakti, he personally saw the Supreme Godhead and maya as His shadow, and then he wrote Srimad-Bhagavatam. What is contained in Srimad Bhagavatam? The highest transcendental knowledge, love and affection, and the constitutional form of Krsna who is the embodiment of love – raso vai sah. In Srimad Bhagavatam Vyasadeva glorified the gopis:

vande nanda-vraja-strinam
pada-renum abhiksnasah
yasam hari-kathodgitam
punati bhuvana-trayam
(SB 10.47.63)

["I repeatedly offer my respects to the dust from the feet of the women of Nanda Maharaja's cowherd village. When these gopis loudly chant the glories of Sri Krsna, the vibration purifies the three worlds." (BBT)]

Though Narada explained transcendental knowledge to Prahlada, can Prahlada be like Vyasa or Sukadava Gosvami? Never. Why are these differences seen? Why? You see that Narada also gave knowledge to Pracinabarhi, but he was not so advanced.

You can see that Madhavendra Puri had so many disciples, and especially 9 or 10 sannyasis were of a very high class. However, each of his disciples was of a different category. For example, Ramacandra Puri also took initiation from Madhavendra Puripada, but he was a mayavadi. And another disciple, Sri Isvara Puripada, was a high class of realized soul and devotee. He was always weeping like Madhavendra Puri, and he became the Guru of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Paramananda Puri and Brahmananda Bharati were also his disciples. There were so many disciples of Srila Madhavendra Puri, but they were of different types. Similarly, Srila Swami Maharaja, your Prabhupada, came to this world. I think he has many lakhs of disciples – direct disciples, indirect disciples, 'by phone' disciples, by letter, by his cassettes, and nowadays also by e-mail. By so many ways they are taking shelter of him, and they are all telling that, "I am his disciple, his highest disciple."

Why are there differences? Can you explain?

[Dhrstadyumna:] Each individual is unique and has so many different desires. There are different desires.

[Sri Narayana Maharaja:] Another example is that of the Sun. The Sun is the same when reflected in glass and in water. You will see that air and water become hot by the sunrays, but wood never becomes so. Why? A magnifying glass preserves the heat of the sun to such an extent that it can burn you by its touch. By preserving the heat, it can also create fire [when it is placed at a certain angle and pointed in a certain direction]. Although this quality is not in wood, if there is more heat, that heat will also automatically enter the wood. There may even be a forest fire, at which time all wood will burn. Is there some change in the sun? Is there a dosa, defect in the sun? Or is the defect in those who receive it?

[Dhrstadyumna:] In those who receive. The Sun is the same, but it is the reception...

[Sri Narayana Maharaja:] Similarly, Guru is the same. Why, then, does he give so many various kinds of knowledge to so many disciples? And they each say that, "I am the disciple..." of Sri Swami Maharaja, of Narada, of the Sun, or of Krsna. Why are there so many differences? You should tell. Try to tell. This is a question for all, for everyone.

[Dhrstadyumna:] According to our impressions from our previous actions, our karma, according to previous association of saintly persons or of devotees we have contacted, maybe in a previous life also, we have arrived at a certain level of understanding and purification of heart. So depending on that degree of purification, that much instruction we can accept.

[Sri Narayana Maharaja:] If the hearts of two disciples are pure, and they go to one Guru, can they receive the same thing or not?

[Dhrstadyumna:] Both have a pure heart?

[Sri Narayana Maharaja:] Yes.

[Sripad Madhava Maharaja:] Like Vijaya Kumara and Brajanatha. [The svarupa, or constitutional position, of Vijaya Kumara was in madhurya-rasa and that of Brajanatha was in sakhya-rasa. Therefore, although they had the same Guru, they received the realization of their own constitutional natures.]

[Dhrstadyumna:] It depends on specialty then of their soul.

[Sri Narayana Maharaja:] Yes. But the Guru wants that all should follow him, and he wants that they should be as he is. I'm not talking about bogus gurus. They cannot give you anything because they are bogus. They can only give bogus things. They can never give real things. As a mundane analogy, if anyone wants heat and light, he should serve the Sun. Similarly, if anyone wants a high class of knowledge, tattva-jnana, he should go to a realized soul, to a real,

bona fide guru. One may think, "My guru is so high class. In this world there is no one like my guru." But that guru may actually be bogus, having no transcendental idea. He's never touched that realm. One may be thinking, "My gurudeva is now the supreme guru of gurus in the whole world. There's no one else like him." Will he gain anything by such thinking? Nothing.

na te viduh svartha-gatim hi visnum
durasaya ye bahir-artha-maninah
andha yathandhair upaniyamanas
te 'pisa-tantryam uru-damni baddhah
(SB 7.5.31)

["Persons who are strongly entrapped by the consciousness of enjoying material life, and who have therefore accepted as their leader or guru a similar blind man attached to external sense objects, cannot understand that the goal of life is to return home, back to Godhead, and to engage in the service of Lord Visnu. As blind men guided by another blind man miss the right path and fall into a ditch, materially attached men led by another materially attached man are bound by the ropes of fruitive labor, which are made of very strong cords, and they continue again and again in materialistic life, suffering the threefold miseries." (BBT)]

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] What is the meaning?

[Aranya Maharaja:] In this verse Prahlada Maharaja is saying that if there is a blind person, and other blind people take shelter of him, as they will go along they will lose the path and fall into a ditch. If guru has no transcendental knowledge, if he is not realized, then he is considered blind. And those who follow him, follow him into complete disaster. Both the spiritual master and disciple are heading for a hellish condition and will remain there for a long time.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] So, in the beginning we were blind. There was another blind person and we thought, "Oh, he has eyes and he can help me." Later, when somehow he realizes, "Oh, my guru is blind like me", what should he do? He should reject him and come to one who actually has very good eyes, who is transcendental. How will he know? He will know only by going to a pure devotee and hearing. However, if he is always engaged in worldly things and he has no time at all to take good association, how can he know? If he has no time to hear, he must enter the endless chain of birth and death. On the other hand, if anyone has time for this and thinks, "Why am I wasting my time in these material things?" He will at once reject those false things.

If anyone wants milk, he may buy a cow who can give milk. Once a man bought a cow, but later he saw that there was no milk. He was thinking that one day this cow will yield a calf and milk would come, but it never came. He waited for one year, then two years, but no milk was coming. He was very fond of milk. So what he should do?

[Sripad Madhava Maharaja:] He should reject that cow and buy a new one.

[Sri Narayana Maharaja:] Yes, why not a new cow who already has a calf? Similarly, you should choose a guru who has knowledge, who can remove all doubts, who can give knowledge – like Sri Rupa-Sanatana, like Sri Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Thakura, a guru like my Gurudeva, nitya-lila pravista om visnupada sri Srimad Bhaktiprajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja. Although I was like an insect living in stool, by his association he brought me to the line of bhakti, and now the whole world is hearing me. What a miracle he did.

We should therefore try to be in this line. Sato vrtteh:

utsahan niscayad dhairyat
tat-tat-karma-pravartanat
sanga-tyagat sato vrtteh
saõbhir bhaktih prasidhyati
(Upadesamrta 3)

["There are six principles favorable to the execution of pure devotional service: (1) being enthusiastic, (2) endeavoring with confidence, (3) being patient, (4) acting according to regulative principles [such as sraavanam kirtanam visnoh smaranam [SB 7.5.23]—hearing, chanting and remembering Kåśna], (5) abandoning the association of nondevotees, and (6) following in the footsteps of the previous acaryas. These six principles undoubtedly assure the complete success of pure devotional service." (BBT)]

What is meaning of sato vrtti?

[Dhrstadyumna:] Sato vrtti. The commentaries to this verse state that you should follow in the footsteps of the previous acarayas. For the householders it means to earn an honest living, but at the same time to do as much bhajana as one can, and not to earn more than one needs. For the brahmacaris and sannyasis it means to strictly follow in the footsteps of great previous acaryas by hearing and chanting.

[Sri Narayana Maharaja:] Can you clarify this further? You should all try to know this. This is for those who are disciples and those who want transcendental knowledge.

[Aranya Maharaja:] Sri Gurudeva is speaking a verse by Sri Rupa Gosvamipada from Upadesamrta. He has written about six kinds of activities that are favorable for devotional service. Of these six, the last one is sato vrtti. What does it mean? Vrtti means ones' livelihood. How to maintain your existence within this world is called vrtti. What kind of vrtti? Sato vrtti. As

those who are santa-mahatma, pure devotees, have maintained their lives in this world, we should accept the same path.

In other words, those who are in household life, like Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, like Srivas Thakura and others, in the same way that they maintained their lives, you should follow them – in a very simple way, and put all emphasis on doing bhajana and depending on Krsna. And then, those who are in the renounced order, like Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Sri Rupa, Sri Sanatana and others, should be followed by those who are in the brahmacari asrama or sannyasa asrama. They were simply doing bhajana, and whatever came by the mercy of the Lord, they would accept. Sometimes they did madukari, [begging a little prasada from the householders]. In this way, if someone wants to make progress in spiritual life, they have to maintain their life by appropriate means – following the examples given by the great saints according to whatever asrama they are in. If one will observe this, he must be successful in his spiritual life. However, if one will neglect this, his devotional service must be ruined.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] When Guru Maharaja was there, here were so many devotees – all brahmacaris and sannyasis. We used to beg from door-to-door, and if we collected four rupees, we thought, "This is in great excess; it is so much." When we used to give this to Gurudeva, he would be very satisfied and say, "Oh, no one has served like you."

One day Sanatana prabhu, a disciple of Srila Prabhupada...

[Madhava Maharaja]: He is the devotee who took the sannyasa order with Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] At that time he had left his house and become like a vanaprastha. He was living in the matha as a brahmacari. He told Guru Maharaja, "Oh, I want to help you Gurudeva. I want to help."

"How?"

"I want to make a workshop where each brahmacari can give one hour of his time. I will teach the brahmacaris how to make clothes for their maintenance. There will be chadars, kurtas, and dhotis for all. And, if there will be any excess, we can also sell that in the market. Thus there will be no need of begging biksa. Nowadays no one likes this, so we should try to do business. We can make a factory of soap, or incense and all other things, and we can sell them." Guru Maharaja rejected this at once. At once he rejected it and said, "You are brahmacaris and sannyasis. You are now in the renounced order. All of you should always follow Sri Rupa-Sanatana and Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami."

Can a brahmacari who has taken saffron cloth serve anywhere, in worldly companies, or anywhere in government, to make some money? Can he?

[Dhrstadyumna:] No.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] May he be allowed or not?

[Dhrstadyumna:] No.

[Brajanatha:] Only under special conditions.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] Never. Otherwise he should give up his saffron cloth.

[Brajanatha:] But sometimes we see that those who are in saffron clothes are allowed for some time to work at an outside job.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] Who allowed this? Has our Gurudeva allowed it?

[Brajanatha:] There is one example.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] This is because he was weak; but now he has left his job. For a short time, until one becomes strong, one may do this, but not if he is in saffron cloth, I cannot allow it. No guru will allow it. A brahmacari is only allowed to serve Krsna. If he's taken saffron cloth, he cannot even serve his father or mother – because Gurudeva has become his real father. That other father and mother cannot liberate us. They cannot help us. A brahmacari should follow the example of Narada and Sukadeva Gosvami. As soon as Sri Sukadeva Gosvami came out from the womb, he quickly ran away – very quickly.

If you really want to develop your Krsna consciousness, you should very strictly follow our guru varga – in vrtti, in bhakti, and in all things. If you are only following halfway, what will be the result? Only half will be equal to nothing. We should therefore try to develop. Otherwise, you will think, "I am the disciple of Narada", or "I am the disciple of Swami Prabhupada", but in reality you will not be following. In reality what will you achieve in this world? Oh, again you will come in the chain of birth and death. Carvita carvamanam. You will be 'chewing the already chewed' material existence.

Srla Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura liked to always read Prahlada-carita. We should deeply think about this topic, and then transcendental knowledge may come. If you are thinking, "Oh, this is my wife, but I have left her, but this is my wife. These are my children, but I have left them", what is the difference between the time before and after renunciation? There will be nothing different.

You should realize, "Krsna is my everything. Gurudeva has given this transcendental knowledge and relation. I should follow this. I should try to engage myself, and increase this transcendental relation and attachment to Krsna." If one is not doing this, then he will think, "I am

a disciple. I am doing well. I am dressed in saffron cloth. I am a sannyasi" – but these words will be of no use.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] Don't be upset with me. I don't mean to say anything that is pinching to your heart. I want that you should realize what is the truth.

[Brajanatha:] Any acarya, like Srla Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, in establishing Krsna consciousness may sometimes introduce something on a lower platform. . .

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] But he will not act contrary to the principles. A sannyasi should be engaged with his former wife and worldly things. There is some limit. He will not go beyond his limit.

[Brajanatha:] But if he sees that many of his followers want to do certain things, he may. . .

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] I have explained all this clearly in my class. Some of the disciples of Sri Madhavendra Puri, although sannyasis and learned persons, could not follow him. Not all could follow Narada Rsi, but still they thought, "He has given all transcendental knowledge to me." But why has Narada given Rama-bhakti to Valmiki? Why? He knows more than us. He knows that Rama is not different from Krsna. Rama-lila is one of the pastimes of Krsna. He saw that Valmiki was qualified for that.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] [He addressed the ten children who were attending the class.] Today I'm very happy with my children.

[Devotee:] They were sitting in class quietly.

[Srla Narayana Maharaja:] I will give them the sweets first. I want that every day you should be like this. Don't play at the time of class. Come to me – sometimes doing kirtana, and sometimes hearing and taking prasadam.