

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja
THE CREEPER OF DEVOTION GROWS

(A lecture on Caitanya-caritamṛta Madya-lila Chapter 19 - Sri Rupa Siksa)

Toulouse, France: July 7, 2002 (Part 1)

The senior disciples of my siksa-guru, Om Visnupada Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, who have become somewhat weak after his divine departure, are now receiving new life. This was my main objective. I wanted to obey the words of my siksa-guru, to go wherever necessary to re-inspire his disciples and followers, and I think that we have been successful. Many thanks to the devotees who have left everything for the past seven days to come and hear hari-katha. My blessings to all the devotees – that they will become very strong.

I advise you all to follow the path directed by Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. For those of you who have not been following, I request that you once again follow his instructions – in the real sense. You should once again meditate on the diksa mantras he gave you, remembering everything that he told you regarding brahma-gayatri, guru-mantra, guru-gayatri, gaura-mantra, gaura-gayatri, kṛṣṇa-mantra, and kama-gayatri.

You will not develop very much by chanting harinama by yourself, but if you chant in the association of superior Vaisnavas and follow your Guru's instructions, some fruit will come from your chanting. Caitanya-caritamṛta states:

upajiya bade lata 'brahmanda' bhedi' yaya
'viraja', 'brahma-loka' bhedi' 'para-vyoma' paya
(Cc Madhya 19.153)

["As one waters the bhakti-lata-bija, the seed sprouts, and the creeper gradually grows to the point where it penetrates the walls of this universe and goes beyond the Viraja River, which is lying between the spiritual world and the material world. It attains Brahma-loka, the brahman effulgence, and penetrating through that stratum it reaches the spiritual sky and the spiritual planet Goloka Vrndavana."]

The word upajiya means "gradually developing." In the beginning of the practice of bhakti there are many anarthas, and therefore there is no strong belief in the words of the Vaisnavas, Kṛṣṇa, and sastra. However, if one continues to hear hari-katha in the association of Vaisnavas, faith will develop. This faith is the ankur, sprout, of bhakti, which is the desire to serve Kṛṣṇa.

When one has this faith, he knows that by serving Kṛṣṇa his life will be successful, and he has the conviction that everything required for his life's maintenance will be automatically taken care of. In this way he can use most of his energy in service to Kṛṣṇa, by chanting His names and remembering Him.

Gradually, two leaves appear from the sprout of the bhakti creeper: klesha-agni (the disappearance of suffering) and subhada (the appearance of auspicious qualities) and after that two more appear, and then again two more.

In the very beginning, before taking diksa, when one begins to chant in the association of devotees, he may have some faith in the devotees but he doesn't yet realize the importance of taking shelter under a bona fide guru. The Vaisnava guru in whom he has strong faith tells him that he should take initiation; not only harinama, which can be given easily, but also diksa initiation. He replies to that Vaisnava, "I'm chanting as you have told me, but I have no taste. I have so many anarthas, and so much lust and desire for sense gratification." The guru tells him, "Take initiation; don't delay." He tells the guru, "I want to take it, but I don't want to shave off my dreadlocks." He wants to be like a female. He likes the mood of ladies, and ladies who cut their hair short want to be like males. Gurudeva finally concedes, "Then remain as you are. I will not initiate you."

Another person, however, becomes ready to take shelter of the guru; he will very easily give up his unwanted habits and paraphernalia. Those who hesitate do so because they fear that their desires for sense gratification will not be fulfilled, whereas one who has strong faith will surrender at once, and thus his relationship with the spiritual master becomes very strong; he will obey his gurudeva's every instruction. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu told Srila Sanatana Gosvami, "Go to the Ganges, take bath, and shave. Be like a gentleman." Srila Sanatana Gosvami immediately left for the Ganges, where he shaved and also gave up his valuable garments. He made his life very simple.

Spiritual life is difficult to practice in Western countries. One cannot live like those who live in India – very simply and easily. This is because the atmosphere in the West is unfavorable for that. It is not possible to go anywhere without the use of a car or similar transport, and in some places it is sometimes so cold that you will have to wear many thick and heavy garments. There are so many things you cannot avoid in the West, whereas India is favorable for spiritual life. In the West one requires money to walk from here to there, for the airport, and for this and that. But this is not the case in India, where there is not even the need for shoes and socks. It has therefore been said, 'bharata-bhumi sadhana-bhumi'. In Bharata, India, there is no need for more than the barest of necessities. Jagannatha Puri, for instance, is neither too hot nor too cold; and in Vrndavana you can beg madhukari (alms of prasadam) from almost any householder, because no one there eats meat, eggs, or fish, and they do not even smoke. It is very easy to maintain oneself in a spiritual way because so many residents of the dhama are brahminical. Any sadhu can beg bhiksa (alms), and most of the householders will gladly give him whatever he requests. Here in the West, however, you will have to buy everything yourself, and you will also have to cook for yourself; hardly anyone will give you anything. Therefore, India is very conducive for spiritual life.

bharata-bhumite haila manusya janma yara
janma sarthaka kari' kara para-upakara

["One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of India (Bharata-varsa) should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all other people." (Cc Adi 9.41)]

This utkantha (eagerness) is essential: "I must live in India so that I can do bhajana." It is stated in Srila Rupa Gosvami's Bhakti-rasamrta-sindu:

klesa-ghni subhada moksa-
laghutakrt sudurlabha
sandrananda-visesatma
sri-krsnakarsani ca sa

["Pure devotional service brings immediate relief from all kinds of material distress. It is the beginning of all auspiciousness. It minimizes the value of liberation. It is rarely achieved, it automatically puts one in transcendental pleasure, and it is the only means to attract Krsna."]

When the disciple begins to follow the process of bhakti in the real sense, by chanting, hearing etc., the first two leaves of the bhakti-creeper will appear: klesaghni and subhada. The symptom of the appearance of the first leaf, klesaghni, is that the disciple will see that the problems of his life are decreasing. Dukha-nivrtti - duhkha means unhappiness, and nivrtti means decreasing. All kinds of sufferings quickly disappear. Then, with the appearance of the second leaf, all kinds of favorable qualities begin to appear, and this is called subhada in Sanskrit. At this time many people begin to honor and pay respects to that sadhaka. They give him everything he requires for maintaining his life: someone gives fruits, another gives cloth, another gives shoes, etc. Krsna is making arrangements for his maintenance.

Gradually the second pair of leaves sprout, and they are called moksa laghutakrta and sudurlabha. At the stage of moksa laghutakrta, the devotee no longer desires worldly sense gratification or even mukti; and in fact he sees liberation as insignificant. The word sudurlabha means extremely rare, and it refers to raganuga-bhakti. That rare bhakti, sudurlabha bhakti, now makes its appearance, and thus the devotee becomes krsna-karsane; he can attract Krsna. Krsna-karsane is one of the leaves of the third pair, and the other leaf, sandrananda-visesatma: (condensed and unlimited happiness) now manifests. * [See Endnotes 1] At that time the devotee becomes overjoyed because Krsna may sometimes give him His darsana. By the mercy of Nityananda Prabhu, when Sri Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami went to Vrndavana, he saw its beauty. He saw it as it was at the time when Krsna was there. By the influence of bhakti, Krsna and His abode will also manifest to you, and then your life will be successful.

Before this stage, when the devotee is at the stage of nistha, unwanted desires and anarthas are somewhat gone. Then, after nistha comes ruci, and then asakti manifests. These are some of the stages of sadhana-bhakti, and in this way the devotee gradually advances.

If you see that after many years of trying to practice sadhana-bhakti your lust, desire for sense gratification, and anarthas are not disappearing, you can understand that there is something wrong with you, or with your guru. If the guru cannot help you to give these up, you should give up that guru. The real guru is he who can help the devotee in his Krsna consciousness. If your guru is not doing sadhana-bhajana, or chanting harinama, but is always managing, making money, and keeping a big bank account, he is bogus and he should be rejected. If your guru is bona fide but there is still something wrong, you should try to repair the problem. Give up at once whatever is unfavorable for bhakti, and in this way your bhakti creeper will develop.

upajiya bade lata 'brahmanda' bhedi' yaya
'viraja', 'brahma-loka' bhedi' 'para-vyoma' paya

["As one waters the bhakti-lata-bija, the seed sprouts, and the creeper gradually grows to the point where it penetrates the walls of this universe and goes beyond the Viraja River which is lying between the spiritual world and the material world. It attains Brahma-loka, the brahman effulgence, and penetrating through that stratum it reaches the spiritual sky and the spiritual planet Goloka Vrndavana."]

Upajiya bade lata 'brahmanda' bhedi' yaya: All material desires reside in brahmanda (this universe) like, "I will be king," "I will be Prime Minister," "I will be President," "I want to have all varieties of happiness and sense gratification." Hiranyakasipu received a great boon from Brahma, but that boon could not liberate him from the brahmanda. It was within the brahmanda.

Your creeper of bhakti will dry up if you are thinking about how you will maintain yourself in this world, or if you desire sense gratification, or if you want to go to heaven. This is also within the brahmanda. Your bhakti-creeper is still within the universe. If you would like to be like Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, and Sanat Kumara (in their previous life as brahmavadis), or even if you have become like Brahma, with the ability to create and so forth, your creeper is still inside the brahmanda.

Try to realize the nature of this brahmanda. All material desires keep you bound here. If your bhakti is pure, you will not have any worldly desires; so try to act in accordance with the principles ordained in the following sloka:

tan-nama-rupa-caritadi-sukirtananu-
smrtyoh kramana rasana-manasi niyojya
tisthan vraje tad-anuragi jananugami
kalam nayed akhila ity upadesa-saram

["The essence of all advice is that one should utilize one's full time—twenty-four hours a day—in nicely chanting and remembering the Lord's divine name, transcendental form, qualities and eternal pastimes, thereby gradually engaging one's tongue and mind. In this way one should reside in Vraja (Goloka Vrndavana dhama) and serve Krsna under the

guidance of devotees. One should follow in the footsteps of the Lord's beloved devotees, who are deeply attached to His devotional service." (Sri Upadesmrta #8)]

If you cannot be in Vrndavana physically, then try to meditate on Vrndavana. If you always chant and remember Krsna under the guidance of a rasika-tattvajna Vaisnava, your bhakti will increase.

upajiya bade lata 'brahmanda' bhedi' yaya
'viraja', 'brahma-loka' bhedi' 'para-vyoma' paya
(Cc Madhya 19.153)

["As one waters the bhakti-lata-bija, the seed sprouts, and the creeper gradually grows to the point where it penetrates the walls of this universe and goes beyond the Viraja River which is lying between the spiritual world and the material world. It attains brahma-loka, the Brahman effulgence, and penetrating through that stratum it reaches the spiritual sky and the spiritual planet Goloka Vrndavana."]

The Viraja River is not influenced by jnana, karma, yoga, tapasya, etc. In a sense, neither rajas nor tamas (the material modes of passion and ignorance) is present in the Viraja River; only suddha sattva, (pure goodness), is there. In another sense, sattva, rajas and tamas are there, but they are murchit (sleeping or lying dormant). They can wake up at anytime time, however. This means that the jiva may again fall victim to the material energy even he is situated in the Viraja River, because there is no positive spiritual activity there. The bhakti-creeper crosses beyond the Viraja River and by-passes Brahma-loka. * [See Endnote 2] What is Brahma-loka? In this sloka (upajiya bada lata...) Brahma-loka does not refer to the residence of Lord Brahma. It refers to the impersonal brahmajyoti. By brahma-jnana, one may enter and merge in brahma, and at that time he thinks, "I am brahma." But bhakti-devi can easily cross over this brahma-loka, and in fact she does not even see it.

The bhakti-creeper then goes to paravyoma, which is beyond even Siva-loka. Paravyoma, where there is no mixing in brahma, is divided into two sections. The lower of the two is like Vaikuntha, but is not actually Vaikuntha, and the jiva can also go there. It is the Vaikuntha planet within the material world, and it is called Rama-priya Vaikuntha. In that realm there is seva-sukha-uttara. There, the devotee wants to serve Lord Narayana, but he also wants the happiness accrued from the attainment of the four spiritual opulences. That desire for happiness is not like ours, for the devotees there do not have material bodies; still, that desire is not pure. In the higher section there is prema-seva-uttara; the devotee only wants to serve Narayana with love.

There is great aisvarya (opulence) in the Vaikuntha planets: one can have the same bodily features as Narayana (sarupya), he can live on the same planet with Him (salokya), he can have equal opulence (sarsti), and he can have association with the Lord. But a Vaisnava never wants these four types of liberation; he solely wants to serve.

Narayana-loka, Nrsimha-loka, Rama-loka (Ayodhya), and many other such lokas are within the Paravyoma, and the bhakti-creeper passes beyond all of them. It crosses beyond Narayana-bhakti, Nrsimha-bhakti, and Ramacandra-bhakti. The devotee will say, "I don't want that," and that creeper then goes to Goloka.

Goloka is also divided into three sections: Dvaraka, Mathura, and Gokula. The bhakti creeper very quickly passes through Dvaraka and Mathura and comes to Gokula. From Gokula, it goes to Vrndavana, and then, within Vrndavana, it goes to Nandagaon and Varsana. From there it goes to Govardhana and from there to Radha-kunda. Radha and Krsna are playing there in Radha-kunda, and the creeper is serving Their lotus feet there. That is where it stops. It produces fruits and flowers that give pleasure to Sri Sri Radha Krsna Yugal. Many manjaris also come to that Radha-kunda, which is full with beautiful flowers and sweet fruits.

Where is the gardener (caretaker of the seed) at this time? He is still in this world, but what stage is he in? If his creeper is within the brahmanda, he is a kanistha-adhikari, whereas at the stage of bhava-bhakti it has passed through the brahmanda, the Viraja River, Sivaloka, etc., and enters Narayana-loka, or Vaikunthaloka. Then, when the seed of love of God (bhava-bhakti) matures and transforms into the ripened fruit of Vraja-prema, and it is then that one's bhakti is able to pass all other places – including Goloka.

The creeper takes shelter of Mother Yasoda in Gokula, and after that it takes shelter of the gopis, then Vrndavana, and then the shelter of Govardhana. Within Govardhana, the creeper takes shelter of Rupa-manjari and then under the guidance of Rupa-manjari and Ananga-manjari, it goes to Radha-kunda. There, at Radha-kunda, the devotee serves Radha-Krsna Conjugal with a tendency towards Srimati Radhika. The creeper can go only up to there – there is no place after this.

If there is a tree, a creeper will climb all over it, covering it entirely. In the same way, the bhakti creeper is now covering all rasas, especially madhurya-rasa, and the devotee can serve Radha-Krsna Conjugal in every way. This is the inner meaning of the words:

tabe yaya tad-upari 'goloka-vrndavana'
'krsna-carana'-kalpa-vrkse kare arohana
(Cc Madhya 19.154)

["Being situated in one's heart and being watered by sravana-kirtana, the bhakti creeper grows more and more. In this way it attains the shelter of the desire tree of the lotus feet of Krsna, who is eternally situated in the planet known as Goloka Vrndavana, in the topmost region of the spiritual sky." (Cc Madhya 19.154)]

[Question:] Gurudeva, you seemed to say that at bhava-bhakti one can go to Narayana-loka, and at prema one can go to Vrndavana. I thought bhava is just the less condensed state of prema. One has the same mood of devotion, devotion to the same istadeva, but it is simply not as developed. You seemed to say that the bhava-bhakta changes his istadeva when he reaches prema.

[Srila Maharaja:] After bhavavasta (the stage of bhava-bhakti), prema will come. If the devotee is on the path of vaidhi-bhakti, then he goes to Narayana-loka. If he is on the path of raganuga-bhakti, Vraja-raganuga, then he will go directly to Vraja. There are two destinations – one coming from the execution of vaidhi-bhakti and another coming from raganuga-bhakti.

[Question:] So it's not that the bhakti creepers of all bhavavasta devotees go to Narayana-loka. Only those in vaidhi-bhakti.

[Srila Maharaja:] How can I tell all these things in a moment – at one time?

Editorial advisors: Pujiyapada Madhava Maharaja and Sripad Brajanatha dasa

Transcribers: Janaki dasi and Radhika dasi

Editors: Syamarani dasi and Premavati dasi

Typist: Basanti dasi

[*ENDNOTE 1: (Taken from Srila Maharaja's lecture of June 8, 2001 in Holland.)
What is it that is sudurlabha? It has been told in Sri Upadesamrta that even devotees like Narada cannot attain that kind of bhava-bhakti. What is sudurlabha? To serve Radha-Krsna Conjugal like the Vrajavasis is very rare. Even for premi-bhaktas it is very difficult to attain this. 'Yat presthair apy alam asulabham'. ["Undoubtedly Radha-kunda is very rarely attained even by the great devotees; therefore it is even more difficult for ordinary devotees to attain." (Upadesamrta text 11)] Even for those who have love and affection, this kind of bhava-bhakti, this raganuga-bhakti and ragatmika bhakti, are very, very, very rare. This is called sudurlabha.

In comparison, it is very easy to go to Vaikuntha. You know that Ajamila quickly went there. How did he attain this? He was only calling out the name of Narayana with reference to his son. By this chanting, namabhasa came, and then four associates of Narayana, holding sankha, cakra, gada, and padma in their four hands, came to him. They explained to him the glorification of these Names. We see here that even namabhasa is so high, and what to say of suddha-nama!

After their discussion, Ajamila returned to external consciousness and left his wife, children and everything else. He went to Haridvara where he took bath in the Ganges, and there he adopted the mantra and process given him by the four Visnudutas. By chanting and chanting, prema for Narayana came, and by this prema Ajamila went to Vaikuntha. It was not by namabhasa that he went there. No one can go to Vaikuntha by namabhasa. One can only attain that realm by pure suddha-nama.

Still, in Vaikuntha there is some opulence. Anyone can easily go there, but to go to Vraja is very high. Rupa Gosvami has explained all these things.

The fifth leaf on the creeper of bhakti is sandrananda-visesatma. . What is visesatma?

You should know this. You know sandhini, samvit, and hladini. ["The transcendental potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead by which He maintains His existence is called sandhini. The transcendental potency by which He knows Himself and causes others to know Him is called samvit. The transcendental potency by which He possesses transcendental bliss and causes His devotees to have bliss is called hladini. The total exhibition of these potencies is called visuddha-sattva..." Cc.Adi.4 purp.)] On the platform of sandhini, anything transformed by sandhini is called suddha-sattva. When the essence of hladini and samvit mix together and appear on the platform of sandhini, or suddha-sattva, this is called visesatma.

What is the meaning? Hladini is directly Srimati Radhika Herself, who is svarupa-sakti. The highest mood of that svarupa-sakti is the mood of hladini. This hladini mood in its highest stage, madana, is not even in Krsna, and it is this madana that Krsna wants to taste and realize. This mood is found only in the essence of hladini, who is Radhika Herself. The moods in Radhika, the moods of how to serve and please Krsna, is called maha-bhava.

What is bhava? Bhava is coming from samvit. Samvit is the potency of knowledge, but when that knowledge is condensed, it is transformed into bhava, and bhava is transformed into sneha, mana, pranaya, raga, anuraga, bhava, and maha-bhava. This maha-bhava is the moods in Radhika. These moods are thus the essence of samvit and hladini, the moods of serving Krsna in the highest way, and they come on the platform of suddha-sattva.

What is sattva? It is any transformation of sandhini. Within sandhini, any jiva who is liberated is called suddha-sattva, and Krsna and His svamsa or manifestations are called visuddha-sattva. Jivas are not visuddha-sattva, but they may be suddha-sattva. Asuddha-sattva are those who are not liberated, suddha-sattva are liberated, and visuddha-sattva refers to Krsna and His all incarnations including Visnu. When visuddha-sattva will combine with the essence of hladini and samvit and comes in a jiva, that essential mood to serve Krsna will be sandrananda-visesatma; otherwise not. This is a very elevated topic.]

[*ENDNOTE 2: "Outside of the Vaikuntha planets is the impersonal manifestation of Sri Krsna, which is known as Brahmaloaka. On the other side of Brahmaloaka is the spiritual karana-samudra, or Causal Ocean. The material energy exists on the other side of the Causal Ocean, without touching it." (Caitanya-caritamrta Adi-lila ch.5 Intro.)]