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More Humble Than a Straw – Mathura – Oct 4 2002

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from syamarani – a lecture from Gurudeva

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

MORE HUMBLE THAN A STRAW

Mathura, India: October 4, 2002

[At the beginning of October, Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja returned to India after his ten-day visit to Ukraine and Vienna, where he spoke about Srimad Bhagavatam and the principles of suddha-bhakti to over five hundred devotees. At that time, hundreds more waited for him in Mathura. Many of them expected to hear him speak about rasa-tattva or confidential tattva-siddhanta; they expected to hear some of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and some of the deep secrets hidden within the performance of bhajana. Srila Maharaja did, in fact, discuss a very high topic, a very deep secret – one that the devotees hadn't expected.

Sometimes Srila Maharaja spoke in English and sometimes in Hindi. When he spoke in Hindi, there was a simultaneous translation, which could be heard through headphones. The following is a transcription of the notes taken during the class. –ed]

trnad api su-nicena
taror iva sahisnuna
amanina mana-dena
kirtaniyah sada harih

["One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor yet is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord." (Adi-lila 17.31)]

We want to do bhajana, but at the moment we are doing bhajana of nama-aparadha, and sometimes of nama-abhasa. We cannot do bhajana because we neglect the importance of this second verse of Sri Siksastaka, beginning with trnad api sunicena. In Caitanya-caritamṛta (Adi-lila 17.32), Srila Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī says: "I am raising my hand and taking a vow. Please listen, all devotees; hear this: if you want to do bhajana, then make a garland with the thread of nama and the jewels of trnad api sunicena."

urdhva-bahu kari' kahon, suna, sarva-loka

nama-sutre ganthi' para kanthe ei sloka

["Raising my hands, I declare, 'Everyone please hear me! String this verse on the thread of the holy name and wear it on your neck for continuous remembrance.'"]

These four qualities, trnad api sunicena, taror api sahisnuna, amanina and manadena, are four jewels on that garland. Sri Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami says that if you follow these four principles in your behavior, you must get Krsna prema.

sada nama la-iba, yatha-labhete santosa
eita acara kare bhakti-dharma-posa

["One should strictly follow the principle of always chanting the holy name, and one should be satisfied with whatever he gets easily. Such devotional behavior solidly maintains one's devotional service." (Adi 17.30)]

prabhu-ajnyaya kara ei sloka acarana
avasya paibe tabe sri-krsna-carana

["One must strictly follow the principles given by Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu in this verse. If one simply follows in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya and the Gosvamis, certainly he will achieve the ultimate goal of life, the lotus feet of Sri Krsna." (Adi-lila 17.33)]

When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was in Puri, Srila Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami confided to Svarupa Damodara, "I'm shy to ask a question directly to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. I want to hear about sadhana and sadhya. What is my duty? I want to inquire; I want to ask what my duties are, but I m hesitant." Then, after Svarupa Damodara Gosvami submitted to Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu Raghunatha dasa's submission, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu told Raghunatha dasa, "I have already made Svarupa Damodara Gosvami your instructor. You may learn your duty from him. Nevertheless, if you want to take instructions from Me, you may ascertain your duties from the following instructions: Do not listen to mundane talk; discuss sadhya and sadhana when meeting together with others. Do not talk like people in general, and do not try to taste many delicious preparations. Do not dress opulently. Do not expect honor, but offer all respect to others. Take the name with great regard, and chant with love and affection, and within your mind render service to Radha and Krsna in Vrndavana. I have briefly given you My instructions, and now you will get all the details from Svarupa Damodara; he knows more than Me."

Follow the principles of behavior in accordance with the precepts delineated in Sri Caitanya-caritamrta: trnad api su-nicena, taror iva sahisnuna, amanina manadena, kirtaniyah sada harih. Many people leave their families, wealth and so on for krsna-bhajana, but they don't try to renounce anger and lust. They don't try to practice the method of controlling the pushings and demands of the six urges delineated in Sri Upadesmrta #1. If they don't try to check these anarthas, what kind of bhajana will they perform? You should maintain two types of tolerance: if

a person cuts a tree, still that tree will not oppose him, nor will it complain if he breaks its roots or branches. A tree will never ask for water; even if it is drying up and dying it will not demand water. At the same time, it will freely give its leaves, bark, and fruit to others. We must be like the tree, not only by theory but practically. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, "Try to properly follow all these principles; if you do not follow and instead you commit Vaisnava avajna and Guru avajna (disobedience and aparadha), you will never be able to do bhajana." If a bona fide Guru is engaged in bhajana, you must endeavor to please him, not yourself. If you cannot do this, you cannot do bhajana. Always try to understand whether or not Sri Guru is pleased, and always try to follow his order. If you disobey his order, you are committing nama-aparadha.

Don't become angry even if there is a cause for anger. If one lives in the matha but he has enmity toward others, there is no meaning to his living in the matha. If the Hindi devotees think or say, "We'll kick out the Bengalis; they shouldn't come here. Why are they here?" or if they think and say, "Why are these foreigners here? They should go back to their own countries. We are the monarchs of all", then again, there is no need for such persons to live in the matha. In order for a Vaisnava to be qualified, he must be humble.

uttama hana vaisnava habe nirabhimana
jive sammana dibe jani' 'krsna'-adhisthana

["Although a Vaisnava is the most exalted person, he is prideless and gives all respect to everyone, knowing everyone to be the resting place of Krsna."(Antya 20.25)]

One should try to be more humble than a blade of grass. One should not think, "I know so much; no one knows as much as me." Be free from false ego, give respect to others and don't desire respect for your self. Respect all living entities; if someone insults you don't rebuke him, and if someone beats you, don't retaliate. Srila Haridasa Thakura was beaten in 22 market places, but he was tolerant. Only by being like him can you do bhajana. Without these qualities you cannot do bhajana; therefore give up your false ego, and give up thinking, "I am so qualified and strong." Be like Srila Haridasa Thakura and Sri Prahlada Maharaja. Don't demand anything. If someone gives something without asking, that is okay, but don't disturb anyone for your maintenance. Males should not ask ladies to cook for them, and ladies should not ask men to cook for them. We should not say to anyone of the opposite sex, "I like your cooking; can you please cook for me?" This behavior is very bad for any sadhaka. We have to always chant the holy name and never demand more than what we are receiving.

In his commentary on this verse in the Caitanya-caritamrta, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura wrote, "Give up false ego and the desire for worldly respect. If the symptoms of bhajana are not increasing, but instead false ego, anger and greed are increasing, you will be punished." There is no harm for Gurudeva if you misbehave, but there is harm for you. Don't delay in this regard. Qualify yourself to perform bhajana in this way. You must try to learn these principles from the beginning. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura said that you should think, "I am unqualified." If you are thinking yourself very qualified, and with this false ego you are chanting harinama, you will never achieve krsna prema. Give up false ego and be tolerant; don't expect prestige, and give

respect to others according to the level of their devotion. Those who live in the matha must learn this principle; otherwise they are bound to fight among themselves and with others. They will not be able to chant Harinama 24 hours a day.

Worldly desires and false ego are obstacles in bhajana, but if these anarthas are removed, you can do bhajana. If you follow the practices internally and externally, you can do bhajana, and gradually krsna-prema may come. Follow the order of a bona fide Guru. If you don't want to be controlled by the uncontrolled mind, then give up the association of anyone that wants to engage you in mundane talk; give up his association forever. By association with these types of people you will go to hell. God has given you this body, this human form, after millions and millions of births; it is meant only for doing bhajana, don't waste it.

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