

Tridandiswami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja
WHO CAN OFFER BHOGA TO KRSNA?
Germany: Dec. 16, 2001 (eve)

[The following lecture was put on Internet several months ago. However, many devotees joined the hari-katha mailing list after this lecture was sent out, and many others just didn't read it when they received it. Due to popular demand, we are sending it again.]

[Srila Narayana Maharaja is sometimes asked why the procedures and standards for offering bhoga to the Deities, as taught by him, appear different from those established by Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. In the following class, given on Dec. 16, 2001, Srila Maharaja replies:]

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] If you want to ask anything, you can ask. For example, I heard a question regarding a person who is not initiated, or a person who has only received first initiation (harinama). The question was asked, "Has such a person the right to make offerings to Krsna? What should he do?"

Suppose a person is not initiated at all, but he has faith and honor for Krsna and he knows that Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Or, he believes in Nrsimhadeva or Rama or any Visnu-tattva as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He wants to serve, he is engaged in some puja, and he has learned something from his family, his father, mother, or anyone else. He can offer preparations to Krsna. We have heard from sastra:

nanopacara-krta-pujanam arta-bandhoh
premaiva bhakta-hrdayam sukha-vidrutam syat
yavat ksud asti jathare jaratha pipasa
tavat sukhaya bhavato nanu bhaksya-peye

["As long as there is hunger and thirst within the stomach, varieties of food and drink make one feel very happy. Similarly, when the Lord is worshiped with pure love, the various activities performed in the course of that worship awaken transcendental bliss in the heart of the devotee." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Madhya-lila 8.69)]

If you are fully initiated but you do not have love and affection for Krsna, then even if you offer something by mantra and 16 kinds of paraphernalia, Krsna will not accept your offering. On the other hand, if you have prema, Krsna will have so much hunger for taking whatever you offer. Krsna thinks, "When My devotee offers anything to Me, I will take it. I will accept it, because he has prema. If that pure devotee is bringing something to Krsna and he has not yet offered it, Krsna will run after him to take it.

Even if one has not received second initiation, if he offers anything with bhakti, Krsna is bound to accept his offering. It may be that one has devotional impressions from past births, and in this birth he has surrendered to a sad-guru. The above-mentioned verse is for him only. It is not meant for kanistha-adhikaris, those who are without such past impressions and who are just

beginning to receive impressions in this birth by somehow associating with devotees. If one has some transcendental sraddha, he can make an offering. The kanistha-adhikari Vaisnava does not have very much faith. He is not of that high caliber.

Srila Swami Maharaja introduced something for his new disciples. Even if they had not received second initiation, he told them, "You can offer bhoga to Krsna by the mantras:
Namah om visnu-padaya krsna-presthaya bhutale... / namo maha-vadanyaya krsna-prema-pradaya te... / namo brahmanya devaya go brahmana hitaya ca..."

A question may arise here: "Did Srila Swami Maharaja take initiation from his Gurudeva or not? Did he know all the rules and regulations for offering bhoga? Did he give those mantras [which are not for offering bhoga, but rather for offering obeisances] out of his ignorance, or did he purposely and knowingly give them? What is the reality?" The reality is that Srila Swami Maharaja considered, "Somehow I should gradually introduce all the rules and regulations. For these neophytes, the only rule and regulation is that they should not take meat, eggs, and alcohol. They should not smoke or engage in other abominable activities. They should think that they are devotees." For that purpose your Prabhupada gave initiation into the Hare Krsna mantra, and he told his young disciples, "Now you are devotees. You can now offer bhoga by this mantra: 'Namo brahmanya devaya...'"

This is not an offering mantra. He knew this, but he purposely did not give the offering mantras because at that time his disciples were not qualified to receive them. Proper following was very difficult for them. Now, however, so much water has passed under the bridge. Now they are very qualified, even more so than Indians. They can do it now. Now they should make offerings according to the proper procedures, and your Prabhupada has therefore sent me. He told me, "Go and introduce all these principles."

At present, the devotees are offering agarbhatti (incense) for much longer than necessary when they perform arati. At that time Krsna is very hungry, thinking, "When will he finish?!" Then, after the incense, they offer a lamp, again for too long. Again Krsna thinks, "I'm so hungry. If he does not stop this arati soon, I will die of hunger. I will definitely die today." Therefore, Krsna runs away as they perform arati. Don't follow this drawn-out procedure. Try to follow what has been written in the scriptures that teach the proper procedures. You can offer agarbhatti to Krsna three times, and then to His associates. The lamp may be offered fourteen times, but not more than that. Otherwise, Krsna will be very upset and run away. He especially fears if someone improperly offers the camara. He thinks, "Oh, he came to make an offering, but now he is exercising." Don't discover new things. Follow what is written in the authorized sastras.

Srila Swami Maharaja somehow engaged them. It was very, very difficult for him, as it would have been for any pure guru at that time, to introduce the actual strict procedures. "Jena tena prakarena" He introduced them to the line of bhakti and engaged them. [In his lecture of Dec. 20, 1966, Srila Prabhupada explained, "Rupa Gosvami, one of the big acaryas, says, yena tena prakarena manah krsne nivesayet: 'The first business is that somehow or other people should be Krsna conscious.' As far as rules and regulations are concerned...

yena tena prakarena

manah krsne nivesayet
sarve vidhi-nisedha syur
etayor eva kinkarah

"If one takes to that line of activities, Krsna consciousness, then all regulations will follow, as a servant follows a master. If the master starts, the servant follows. Similarly, the rules and regulations will follow automatically."]

Now the time has come for us to reform and progress. At the time of offering your preparations, you should utter the correct mantras: "Etat naivedyam sa tulasi paniya jalam, kling gauraya svaha," and so on.

At first you should remember your Gurudeva and think, "Krsna may reject my offering, but He cannot reject my Gurudeva's offering." You should offer the bhoga to Gurudeva, not for him to eat, but for him to offer it to Radha-Krsna and Mahaprabhu. Then you should call the Deity. Still now, in Puri, at the Radha-Kanta Matha, the vigraha of Sri Gopal Guru is presented the bhoga, and after that, thinking that Gopal Guru is making the offering, the bhoga is offered to Thakurji. Try to follow all these principles. Those who have not received second initiation, therefore, should take initiation. Otherwise, if the Guru thinks they should wait for some time, they can offer in this way: "Prabhu [Krsna], I don't know anything. Gurudeva, please offer this." And he can do it. Krsna is 'bhava grahi janardana.' He accepts an offering according to the level of devotional qualification of the devotee making the offering. Such a devotee can offer according to his ability.

[Prabhupada stated in his lecture of May 25, 1969, "But in everything we do, devotion and sincerity are the real things. There is a word in Sanskrit; bhava grahi janardana: This means the Lord accepts service in devotional emotion. If we are sincere in offering something to the Lord in devotional love, He will accept it. The procedure may not be very correct, but the desire being sincere, He accepts our offering. This is also confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita. He accepts foodstuffs from devotees because they are offered to Him in complete love and affection. That is required."]

Now our time is over. If you have any questions, or you want to discuss anything with me, you can come to see me. Our classes here in Germany are finished, and now our school will go to America for some days.

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