

News from the West Coast: Srila Narayana Maharaja's Preaching Tour

Strong Current Sweeps Through U.S.

Submitted by Sripad Vrndavana dasa. [Founder of Govinda's Juices in Hawaii.]

The current of bhakti is sweeping through the U.S. like a rising river of nectar which has overflowed its banks, taking all in its path to a place few can even dream about. Hard-core devotee-businessmen as well as intellectuals, are acting like children in a candy shop as the expert surgeon, Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja, performs surgery on their once complacent hearts. With a glance, with a smile, or a stern look, with a word, sometimes sweet, sometimes strong and cutting -- he is inspiring all that are able to come within his proximity.

His voice is soft and sweet, yet simultaneously he boldly and fearlessly presents the absolute truth in a way that is unparalleled. One can't help but be reminded of the sweetness of our own Srila Prabhupada -- how he was so expert in dealing with so many varieties of personalities.

Srila Narayana Maharaja is especially kind to the young generation, nurturing them and encouraging them not to waste their lives in pursuit of the intangible idea of happiness in this world. He is inspiring them to dive deep into bhakti-yoga.

From Salt Spring Island, Canada, to Eugene, Oregon, and then to Badger, California, the momentum quickened and became thicker. By the time Srila Narayana Maharaja's party reached L.A., the earth was shaking. The kirtana was so explosive with ecstasy that the concrete floor in the Furama Hotel was bouncing like a trampoline as over five hundred devotees danced in ecstasy. The chandelier on the floor below nearly fell as the hotel manager who, while impressed with the good manners and enthusiasm of the devotees, asked that we try to be somewhat less energetic.

Srila Narayana Maharaja spoke on Srila Raya Ramananda Samvad with the most lucid explanations and deep understanding of the different destinations as described by Raya Ramananda in Madhya Lila, chapter eight. I can only remember the verse of Srila Rupa Gosvami:

smeram bhangi-traya-paricitam saci-vistirna-drstim
vamsi-nyastadhara-kisalaya-ujjvalam candrakena
govindakhyam hari-tanum itah kesi-tirthopakante
ma preksisthas tava yadi sakhe bandhu-sange 'sti rangah
(Adi lila 5.224)

"If you want to enjoy the material happiness of a loving relationship with wife, family and friends, don't go to the river Jamuna and see the enchanting form of Govinda who is standing at Kesi Ghat in His three-fold bending form and playing on His flute.

Don't go see Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja ...

The following is a transcription of a lecture given by Srila Narayana Maharaja in Badger, California, just before his coming to Los Angeles. The lecture was spoken on the celebration day of the appearance of Lord Nrsimhadeva, on May 6, 2001. Over five hundred devotees, from California and around the world, had gathered to hear:

Nrsimha Caturdasi

Today is the appearance day of Lord Nrsimhadeva.

What class of person was Hiranyakasipu? Was he a theist or an atheist? He was a theist. From sastra it appears that he believed in God, but he was against Him, he wanted to kill Him, and he had no honor for any of His devotees. He wanted to conquer Him and defeat Him -- because it was natural for him. How was it natural? It was natural because he was Jaya or Vijaya, the associate of Narayana.

Why did he fall down from Narayana-loka? Vaikuntha and Goloka are both beyond the influence of Maya. They are beyond Viraja-nadi, the river that is situated between the material and spiritual worlds. There is no chance of falling down from there. Even so, we see that he fell down. Why?

Syamarani: Yudhisthira Maharaja asked Narada Muni, "You say that the sages cursed him, but I don't believe that any associate of the Lord in Vaikuntha could fall down. They all have spiritual bodies, not material bodies, and matter can never touch them."

Srila Narayana Maharaja: There was no possibility of a curse there, and yet we see that he fell down. Why?

Syamarani: Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura explains that Krsna's iccha-sakti, desire potency, Yogamaya, was actually responsible for their coming to this world, not Mahamaya. All the propensities that we have in this world are present in their original, perfect form in the Lord Himself. He also has vira-rasa, the chivalrous propensity. He likes to mock-fight, just as boys like to mock-fight in this world. However, as everyone in Vaikuntha worships Him in awe and reverence, who would fight with Him there?

Seeing the Lord's desire, and seeing the desire of Jaya and Vijaya to always please Him, Yogamaya personally inspired them to become angry when the four Kumaras tried to enter. In their travels the four Kumaras had come to Vaikuntha, but the gatekeepers blocked their path. The four Kumaras therefore told them, "Oh, you have a materialistic mentality, and you are affected by the modes of nature. You are not qualified to be in Vaikuntha." This was all by the arrangement of Yogamaya so that the Lord could come to this world as Nrsimhadeva and fulfill His fighting propensity. He would never fight with a demon or atheist. Only His devotee is qualified to fight with Him, and therefore His devotee had to come to this world with Him -- to fight with Him and fulfill that desire.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: Very good, but some correction is needed. First you should know the nature of bhakti. It is to always please and satisfy the Lord -- nothing else. Jaya and Vijaya are eternally liberated. They saw that, "There is something in my Prabhu's heart. He wants to taste and enjoy vira-rasa." They knew this, and they started to worry, "How can we fulfill His desire? We cannot fight in this body, but we want to satisfy Him." At once Narayana knew, "They want to fulfill My desire!" He remembered Yogamaya and told them, "Wait a little, and I will give you a good chance to fight with

Me and satisfy Me." By the influence of Yogamaya, the four Kumaras were then attracted to come to Vaikuntha.

There is no possibility of being angry in Vaikuntha. That place is not like the material world. Rather, it was by the influence of Yogamaya that Jaya and Vijaya became angry and wanted to stop the four Kumaras from entering. There was also no chance that Jaya and Vijaya could check them. No one can stop anyone there. Therefore, it was done by Yogamaya.

Immediately Jaya and Vijaya challenged these four Kumaras, who had come there naked. They said, "O, you must be properly dressed to go before our Prabhu." Having been stopped, the four Kumaras became angry and cursed the doorkeepers.

In the meantime, Narayana Himself came and told the Kumaras, "Please forgive My two boys. They are always serving Me, so you should forgive them."

Then Narayana removed His Yogamaya. Now free from the influence of Yogamaya, they began lamenting and weeping. They realized, "What have we done?! We have made an offence!" Narayana assured them, "I have done this. I wanted to play in the material world and to enjoy vira-rasa, and thus I am fulfilling the desire of my two eternal servants. Now they will go to the material world and there, in three births, they will satisfy My desire. I will taste vira-rasa with them, because no one else is qualified to enjoy that rasa with Me."

Jaya and Vijaya were not at all deviated from Vaikuntha. In one form they were always in Vaikuntha, and in another form, as Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksa, Ravana and Kumbhakarna, and Sisupala and Dantavakra, they came to the material world in three births. Krsna killed them and, being thus purified, they returned to Narayana-loka. No one can ever fall or deviate from Goloka Vrndavana or from Narayana-loka. Citraketu Maharaja also was cursed (by Parvati devi), and he took his next birth as the demon Vrtrasura, but he was not actually a demon. Bharata Maharaja is another example. He had attained bhava-bhakti, and from that platform no one can deviate. For siksa, for teaching us, they have performed pastimes like these. We should try to learn what they are trying to teach us, and we should never make offenses at the lotus feet of any high-class devotees.

In this way, to teach us, Jaya and Vijaya were Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksa. Hiranyakasipu had faith in God, but because He had killed his brother, he was against Him and wanted to take revenge by killing Him. It was for this reason that he was also against Prahlada Maharaja. He demanded, "Why are you on the side of Visnu? I don't want that. I have given you birth, and I have given you everything. I have supported and nourished you, and I am sending you to school to become educated. Why you are on the side of that Visnu? I don't like this at all. You are like the handle of an axe. Alone, the head of the axe cannot do any thing. However, as soon as there is a handle, that axe can cut down a tree. You are like that handle, and you are cutting me."

The story begins thus. In the council of Yudhisthira Maharaja, when a fire sacrifice was being performed, Krsna took His cakra and cut off the head of Sisupala. A light came from Sisupala's body and merged into the lotus feet of Krsna. Yudhisthira Maharaja thought, "Oh, how wonderful this is! How did he merge into Krsna? So many rsis are performing severe austerities, day and night, not sleeping, standing on their toes, sometimes even standing upside down on their thumbs, not taking any water, and not

even breathing air. Still, doing this for a very long time, they cannot attain liberation. But in a moment Sisupala achieved this. How wonderful this is!"

Krsna is neutral. God is neutral to all. All are His parts and parcels. Then why does He take the side of the demigods and become the enemy of the demons? He helps the demigods and kills the demons. Why? For Him both are the same. The answer to this question is that although Krsna is always neutral. His specialty is that He is not impartial or neutral in regard to His devotees. Where devotees are concerned, He cannot be neutral. For general persons He is neutral, otherwise He would not be God. God is love and love is God. Krsna is love. Where does love live? In the abode of love. Who is the abode of love? The devotees. Therefore Krsna must be partial to them.

Narada replied to Yudhisthira Maharaja's questions by narrating the history of Hiranyakasipu and Prahlada Maharaja:

Prahlada Maharaja went to school, and after four or five months he returned home. After his mother decorated him, Hiranyakasipu came and took him in his lap, smiling and caressing him. He said, "O my dear son, what have you learned in school from your Gurudeva?" Prahlada replied boldly. What did he reply?

Sripada Aranya Maharaja: Prahlada Maharaja sat on the lap of his father, and his father's heart was melting with parental affection with tears in his eyes. He was so proud, thinking, "My son is so qualified."

Srila Narayana Maharaja: This is a very interesting subject. You may read Srimad Bhagavatam, but the deep meaning will not come to you. You cannot read Srimad Bhagavatam on your own. Even if you are hearing from others, if they are not high-class devotees they cannot give the meanings. Only Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, Srila Jiva Gosvami, Srila Sanatana Gosvami, and Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura can give the meanings. If anyone is not in their line, they cannot give such meanings. We are speaking from the commentaries of Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, Jiva Gosvami, and Sanatana Gosvami.

Sripada Aranya Maharaja: His father wanted to know, "My dear son, what is the best thing you have learned?" Prahlada Maharaja very politely, and without any fear at all, replied:

tat sadhu manye 'sura-varya dehinam
sada samudvigna-dhiyam asad-grahat
hitvatma-patam grham andha-kupam
vanam gato yad dharim asrayeta
(Bhag. 7.5.5)

"O my dear father—asura-varya dehinam! O best among all of the demons!"

Srila Narayana Maharaja: Hearing this, Hiranyakasipu became very happy! He was thinking, "I am emperor of all the demons!" Demons are very proud that, "We are demons" and the demigods are also thinking, "We are very proud that we are demigods." They are also full of pride.

Sripada Aranya Maharaja: Tat sadhu manye 'sura-varya dehinam. "O best of the demons! In this world, those who have accepted this temporary body to be the self and to be the source and basis of happiness, who accept this body to be real, become constantly afflicted by one problem after another, one anxiety after another, like endless waves in an ocean. They are always embarrassed. The best thing that I have learned is that such persons have fallen into a deep, dark well. Household life in which one identifies with the body, considering one's family members, household goods, property and wealth to be one's own, is like a deep, dark, dangerous well. Hitvatma-patam. This path of life is a path that completely checks the progress of the soul towards the goal of life -- the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Therefore, the best thing I have learned is that such persons should get out of that dark well. Vanam gato yad dharim asrayeta. They should go to the forest, especially Vrndavana forest. This means they should go to that holy place which is sacred because of the presence of pure devotees and, being in good association, they should unconditionally take shelter and surrender at the lotus feet of Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura explains, in his commentary of this verse, the meaning of grham andha-kupam -- the dark well of this world: Once upon a time a man was in the forest. He heard the sound of a tiger. Being afraid, he tried to run away because there was a chance that the tiger would eat him. He was looking here and there for some shelter, but he could not find shelter anywhere. Finally, he came across a blind well. This was a well that was no longer being used, and some grass and trees had grown over the top. Taking the help of two branches of a tree, he lowered himself down into the well, thinking, "The tiger cannot come down here to get me." As he was going down, he saw that the bottom of the well was dry and there were many snakes living there. They raised their hoods, hissing, and they were ready to bite him.

Now he was really in a predicament, hanging from two branches, halfway down a well. At the bottom, there are so many poisonous snakes waiting to bite him, and at the top there is a ferocious tiger just waiting to eat him. At that time he was suffering in great anxiety.

On the top of the well there were two rats — one black and one white, and they were nibbling away at the very same branches onto which he was holding. Now it was only a question of time. Either he had to climb out and be eaten by the tiger, or he would have to go down and be bitten by the snakes. He could not stay where he was for long, because the rats would gradually, gradually, eat away the branches and he would fall down. Whatever he would do, he would suffer and come to a very gruesome end.

At that time, when he was in this very precarious situation, he noticed a honeycomb on the branch of the tree. Because the tree was shaking, some honey was dripping, and it just happened to be dripping very close to his face. Taking this golden opportunity, he stuck out his tongue and a drop of honey came on the tip of his tongue. He took that honey into his mouth and began to relish the flavor, thinking, "How sweet! How sweet!" And thus he felt some happiness. This is the example of all the conditioned souls, like you and me, here in this world. We are in a very dangerous situation.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: Especially lusty people, those who are engaged in sense gratification, are in this position. They are going to die at any moment. There is no way for them to be saved from death. There is only one person who can be saved, but we will tell you afterwards who that is.

Sripada Aranya Maharaja: It seems that this person is now experiencing some happiness. It seems that in this world there are so many people who are well situated, who are content and satisfied with their situation. But what is their happiness? It is just like the happiness of this man when he is tasting a drop of honey. Why? All the components of this analogy represent the conditions in our lives. The snakes are hissing, and they represent so many problems. . .

Srila Narayana Maharaja: These problems come one after another, like an ocean of waves. We think, "Oh, this is the last problem. After that, we will be happy." But then even bigger waves come. Those who are surfers know this better than I do.

Sripada Aranya Maharaja: This world is made of problems and nothing else. There are only problems and problems, and yet the conditioned soul in this world is very surprised when he meets a problem. He thinks, "Where did this problem come from?" He later overcomes the problem with a great hope and aspiration that, "When this problem is gone, all of my problems will be gone." And then, what a surprise! Another problem comes.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: Not only one. So many come.

Sripada Aranya Maharaja: Not one at a time, but five at a time, six at a time, and these are like so many poisonous snakes in the bottom of the well. At the top of the well there is a tiger. He represents death. Death is waiting for everyone in this world. It must come and devour them and take away everything.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: There is no fixed time. It can come at any moment. Death will not give even one minute's notice, allowing that I may speak with others and then die." At once it will come!

What are the two trees?

Sripada Aranya Maharaja: This person was hanging from two trees. These two trees represent our karma, fruitive activities, good and bad, pious and impious. We are living our life in the experience of the reactions of our pious and impious activities. This is the duration of our life, and it is being taken away moment by moment. Regarding the rats, the black rat represents nighttime and the white rat means daytime. We are very happy when another day comes and goes, but actually each day and night will never come back. In this way, the duration of our life is being gnawed away.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: All around are problems and dangers, and in the midst of this one drop of honey comes. What is that one drop?

Sripada Aranya Maharaja: Even though we are in this very dangerous predicament, we may feel some happiness, and that is like the drop of honey. This drop of honey represents the affection of our friends and family members in this world. After suffering so much, being repeatedly abused and treated badly in the course of doing one's work, a man returns to his home and his wife meets him with very sweet words: "O honey, you're back. I have been waiting to see you." He takes this honey. His children jump in his lap and say, "O daddy, daddy, can you give us a hundred dollars?" In this way, even though there is danger and suffering everywhere, when he takes this one drop of honey in the form of the affection of so many people in this world with whom he has a temporary relationship, the man feels, "My life is successful." This is the purport of the verse spoken by Prahlada Maharaja.

Srila Narayana Maharaja: We are all in this position. How can anyone be happy in this situation?

Another example has been given, as a supplement. A deer was grazing in a lush, green forest, and all of a sudden he saw that he was surrounded by so many problems. On one side there was a hunter with two Alsatian dogs. On another side there was a forest fire. On the third side there was a very big and deep river, and on the fourth side was a big net. Seeing that he was completely surrounded, the deer became very frightened and thought, "What should I do?" At once, he closed his eyes and prayed, "O Krsna! I am Yours. I am surrendering to you. Save me, save me!"

When the deer took shelter, what did Krsna do? A big gust of wind came with many pebbles and dust which got into the eyes of that hunter as he was drawing his bow. Taken by surprise and unable to see, he let loose an arrow that pierced the eyes and mouths of the dogs, who were killed at once. It began raining, thus completely extinguishing the fire, and the net got caught in the wind and blew away. Three sides were now open, and the deer jumped and ran away.

Therefore, if anyone is in that well and chanting, it may be that by the mercy of Krsna a hunter will come and kill that tiger. He will lower a rope into the well, saying, "Oh, you should take hold of this rope and come out." He will save you. Krsna is so merciful.

We are surrounded by these death traps. Guru realizes this and he wants to help us all. On one side there is death, on another side there are so many problems, on a third side some madhu (honey) is dripping, and the rats are gnawing at the branches. You are all in this situation, and you do not understand this. Don't think that this is our first life, our first birth. You have enjoyed so much sex life, and you are very lusty like pigs and hogs. Day and night you are not resting. You are having sex and you are creating so many children.

Previously, in past lives, all of you were even demigods. You have also come in a human form before, but you lost that time. Again, after lakhs and lakhs of births you are now here in good association, with a very good body. This is likened to a strong boat with favorable winds. Krsna has arranged for you to have such high-class association. Krsna has given all of you this auspicious opportunity, and still you think, "I want a nice teen-aged girl, one who is very beautiful. I want to marry and taste sense gratification." Those who think in this way are foolish, mad persons. I cannot give any appropriate name for them. Don't be angry with me for saying so, but they are rascals -- worse than

hogs or pigs. O my dear rascals, don't go there. At once come out, and be with me. Come back to God, and back to home!

Even you old persons -- why do you want to marry again? Perhaps you are very lusty. My dear friends, don't be angry with me. I am your well-wisher, your eternal well-wisher, so come and follow me. By the order of Srila Bhaktivedanta Svami Maharaja, my Gurudeva, and my guru parampara, I have come here to save you from this vast ocean of lust. Don't go there! Otherwise, a big Mahabharata battle will come and you will be killed. Try to realize this. Be free from all these worldly things, from the andha kupa that has been described in Prahlada Caritra. Be very careful.

Gaura premanande