

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

STEADINESS AND TASTE

Badger, California – May 16, 2003

[One year prior to this class Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja went to Badger (New Vraja), and at that time he discussed these same topics of steadiness and taste, as well as the other stages of bhakti, from the books Sri Bhajana Rahasya and Sri Madhurya Kadambini. This year he added many new insights, as seen from the following transcription. There are several technical Sanskrit terms in this class, which are essential to know in order to advance in bhakti, but please don't be alarmed. They are all explained, and gradually they will become second nature to you:]

Now we are coming to our subject – bhakti.

adau sraddha tatah sadhu-
sango 'tha bhajana-kriya
tato 'nartha-nivrttih syat
tato nistha rucis tatah

athasaktis tato bhavas
tatah premabhyudancati
sadhakanam ayam premnah
pradurbhave bhavet kramah

("In the beginning there must be faith. Then one becomes interested in associating with pure devotees. Thereafter one is initiated by the spiritual master and executes the regulative principles under his orders. Thus one is freed from all unwanted habits and becomes firmly fixed in devotional service. Thereafter, one develops taste and attachment. This is the way of sadhana-bhakti, the execution of devotional service according to the regulative principles. Gradually emotions intensify, and finally there is an awakening of love. This is the gradual development of love of Godhead for the devotee interested in Krsna consciousness."(Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.4.15-16])

In our class yesterday I very elaborately explained the anarthas (unwanted habits). If you are doing bhajana but are not trying to give up all the various kinds of anarthas, the result will be like zero. Try to give up all offences, such as seva-aparadha (offences to the deities), dhama-aparadha (offences to Krsna's holy pastime places), vaisnava-aparadha (offences to devotees) and nama-aparadha (offences to the holy names), as well as all sixteen kinds of anarthas* [see endnote 1].

We have explained about utsaha-mayi (enthusiasm based on false ego), ghana-tarala (sometimes condensed and sometimes diluted interest in devotional activities) and all the other symptoms of unsteady (anisthita) bhakti* [see endnote 2]. We have also explained about sukrti-uttha, (impediments in bhakti coming from past material pious activities)

bhakti-uttha (impediments in bhakti coming from materially motivated bhakti activities) and so on * [see endnote 3]. Try to give up all these anarthas.

First of all try to follow this instruction of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu:

trnad api sunicena taror api sahisnunu
amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada harih

["Thinking oneself to be even lower and more worthless than the insignificant grass which is trampled beneath the feet of all, being more tolerant than a tree, accepting no honor but offering respect to all others according to their respective positions, one should continuously chant the holy name of Sri Hari." (Sri Siksastakam, verse 3)]

I think that the qualities described in this verse are somewhat neglected by devotees. They know and can explain so many topics with reference to sastra (the Vedic scriptures), but their hearts do not touch the subject matter and pure bhakti does not come to them. Always give proper respect to all Vaisnavas, even if they are kanistha-adhikaris, as well as to plants and creepers – because Krsna is everywhere. If you do, bhakti is bound to come in your heart.

We have discussed so much up to anisthita-bhakti. Regarding nistha-bhakti (steady devotion), it has been stated in Srimad Bhagavatam (1.2.17):

srnvatam sva-kathah krsnah
punya-sravana-kirtanah
hrdy antah stho hy abhadrani
vidhunoti suhrt satam

["Sri Krsna, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Paramatma (Supersoul) in everyone's heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses the desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge to hear His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted." (SB 1.2.17)]

It is very easy to speak on this subject, but very hard to follow. Speaking alone will not do. Try to follow in a practical sense – not only in theory. Everything will come if you follow even one sloka of Srimad Bhagavatam, one payar (Bengali verse) of Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, or one sloka written by Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami or Srila Rupa Gosvami. For example, Srila Rupa Gosvami has written:

vaco vegam manasah krodha-vegam
jihva-vegam udaropastha-vegam
etan vegan yo visaheta dhirah
sarvam apimam prthivim sa sisyat

["A sober person who can tolerate the urge to speak, the mind's demands, the actions of anger and the urges of the tongue, belly and genitals is qualified to make disciples all over the world." (Sri Upadesamrta, verse 1)]

Simply following this verse will suffice.

Nistha means niscalata, unwavering; not being like a pendulum but rather being steady or one-pointed. One should be steady in determination, thinking, "I will do bhagavad-bhajana (krsna-bhajana)." An example of nistha in bhajana is Srila Haridasa Thakura who vowed, "I may be cut into thousands of pieces, but I will not give up bhajana (my chanting of Hare Krsna)." Regarding the devotee who has nistha in acarana-puja (deity worship), his intelligence will be steady in acana-puja. Regarding harinama, he will think, "I must somehow complete my chanting of harinama." The Six Gosvamis were like this.

sankhya-purvaka-nama-gana-natibhih kalavasani-krtau
nidrahara-viharakadi-vijitau catyanta-dinau ca yau
radha-krsna guna smrter madhurimanandena sammohitau
vande rupa-sanatanau raghu-yugau sri-jiva-gopalakau

["I worship the Six Gosvamis, who passed all their time in chanting the holy names, singing songs, and offering dandavat-pranama, thereby humbly fulfilling their vow to complete a fixed number daily. In this way they utilized their valuable lives and conquered over eating and sleeping. Always seeing themselves as completely worthless, they became enchanted in divine rapture by remembering Sri Radha-Krsna's sweet qualities." (Sri Sad-Gosvamyastakam, verse 6)]

"Sankhya-purvaka-nama." Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami used to chant one lakh (64 rounds) or more of harinama daily. Sometimes he was not able to complete this, however, because when he used to chant the holy name he would sometimes faint for eight or ten hours.* [See endnote 4] So how could he complete his chanting? He was trying, however, to somehow chant at least one lakh. He was also doing dandavat pranama at least one thousand eight times, to Krsna, to all the gopis, to Srimati Radhika, to Giriraja Govardhana, Bhandirvana and all the other holy places, to all the prominent associates of Krsna, and to all the associates of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu like Sri Svarupa Damodara, Sri Raya Ramananda, Sikhi Mahiti, Madhavi devi, Pundarika Vidyanidhi, Paramananda Puri, Brahmananda Bharati, Isvara Puripada, Madhavendra Puripada, Gopal-guru Gosvami and so on. We cannot do even one dandavat pranama to these associates. I think that very few are doing full sastang pranama (keeping all the limbs of the body flat on the ground).

Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami only used to drink a very small quantity of buttermilk, and he gave up eating all else. Once a person came and gave him buttermilk in a bigger leaf pot than usual, and he asked, "From where have these bigger leaves been brought?" That person replied, "Sakhi-sthali." "Oh, sakhi-sthali?" Srila Raghunatha das Gosvami said, "Go away at once, otherwise I will beat you!" Why did he act in this way? He had entered the mood of the gopis, the manjaris. These manjaris never want to even hear the name of sakhi-sthali, where Srimati Radhika's rivals like Candravali, Saibhya, Padma, and others used to stay; where Krsna used to go for a moment in order to taste another kind of bhakti-rasa.

The devotee at the stage of nistha has so much steady faith in hearing these topics.

Hari-katha sravana is the most prominent limb of bhakti. First of all you should hear. Do not try so much to make others hear from you. First know, and then speak. "Anusrnyad atha varnayed yah." First hear continuously, and then know, and then you can preach to others. How can a person who does not know and does not follow all these practices preach? If such a person "preaches," that will be karma (fruitive activity) – not bhakti – and it will have no effect.

There should be nistha in guru-seva, and that is the backbone of bhakti. I have seen, and I have also heard, that some "very near and dear" disciples proclaim that they have guru-nistha and then later on became against him and want to kill him for worldly gain. We should not be like this. We have come for bhakti, and we can obtain bhakti only by the mercy of Guru and pure Vaisnavas. We should try to realize their mano-bhisham (innermost heart's desire) and try to follow it.

At the time of Srila Prabhupada so many qualified and very learned persons came and went. Especially, those who were materially qualified, beautiful and coming from high families could not actually serve Krsna, because they could not be akincana (possessionless, or thinking that one's possessions really belong to Krsna).

We have come to serve Krsna and Gurudeva – not anyone else. We should not follow someone who is engaging in nonsense, whether he is a friend, a father, a mother or even a guru. We should have very mature nistha in all kinds of anusilana (devotional activities performed continually by body and mind, under proper guidance). One in nistha is buddhi-purvaka, performing bhakti by his intelligence rather than his heart. He may have no taste; but still, thinking by his intelligence, he vows: "I must do bhakti." Such an aspiring devotee does not have so much taste in chanting harinama and his mind is fickle. He does not want to chant. Still, he will take a whip to his mind, thinking, "I will give it a lesson. I must chant." He will force his mind to chant: Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna Hare Hare [The assembled devotees begin to chant with Srila Narayana Maharaja and then he called out to them: "Louder!" Then he continued with the devotees chanting more loudly:] Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

He will chant more loudly, and then his mind will be controlled. If you softly chant: "Hare Krsna Hare Krsna", the mind may not be controlled. So when your mind is going here and there like a pendulum, chant more loudly. Chant, "O Krsna! O Radhe! O Caitanya Mahaprabhu! O Nityananda Prabhu! Please be merciful!" Call out in this way, and at the same time continue chanting, "Hare Krsna Hare Krsna."

Do you know Dhruva Maharaja? He had nistha. Sri Narada Muni told him, "I am initiating you with this mantra. Remain in any good place, in a favorable place on the banks of Yamuna, near Govardhana, and do what I tell you to do." When he left, Dhruva went to Madhuvana. First he took bath there in a pond or in Yamuna, and then he sat down and stayed there for six months. For the first month he ate only fruits and berries on every third day. In the second month he ate only every six days, and for his eatables he took dry grass and leaves. In the third month he drank water only every nine days. In the

fourth month he inhaled air only, and only on every twelfth day. By the fifth month he had controlled his breathing so perfectly that he was able to stand on only one leg and concentrate his mind fully on Parabrahman.

Although the forest was full of snakes, dangerous animals and biting insects, he was like iron – like a stone. Narayana came in his trance and finally came directly in front of him.

Try to be like Dhruva. If your mind does not want to practice, don't care. Practice anyway.

Another example of steadiness is Srila Haridasa Thakura. The Muslim Kazi (Magistrate) wanted him to chant Allah or Hoda, but he was chanting Hare Krsna. The Kazi told him, "If you do not change we will cut you in pieces." He ordered some men to take him through twenty-two markets and beat him, so that all his blood, flesh and so on would fall away and he would die. In general, when they would beat a person in only one market that person would die, but they beat Srila Haridasa Thakura in twenty-two markets and he was still alive and chanting. He had no flesh and no blood, but he continued to chant Hare Krsna Hare Krsna. His executioners then prayed to him, "O Prabhu, please die for us. Otherwise the Kazi will kill us and our families." Then Srila Haridasa Thakura went into trance, chanting, Hare Krsna Hare Krsna. He prayed, "O Krsna, don't take their offence, because they are obliged to do what they are doing. Please forgive them." After that they went to the Kazi and told him, "He is killed now; what should we do?" The Kazi replied, "Throw him in Ganges, then he will go to hell. If you put him in a grave he may go to heaven, so don't do so. Throw him in the Ganges."

The Muslim Kazi and his followers always did things opposite to the principles of sanatana-dharma, and therefore the Kazi did not want to put Srila Haridasa Thakura in a grave, which is what his followers would do with their own people when they died. By Krsna's mercy, therefore, Haridasa Thakura was put in the Ganges. Then, he at once came out of the Ganges chanting Hare Krsna, with full body, very beautiful, and very energetic. Bolo Haridasa Thakura Ki Jaya (All glories to Srila Haridasa Thakura). The Kazi later came to know of this and said, "That Srila Haridasa Thakura is a demigod. Don't disturb him any more." We should have nistha like Srila Haridasa Thakura and Dhruva Maharaja.

You know about Sri Prahlada Maharaja. So many problems continually came from his father, but he was never disturbed. He knew that, "Krsna will save me, because I have taken His shelter." Sudarsana-cakra (the wheel-weapon carried by Krsna or Visnu) was ready to come to cut off the head of Hiranyakasipu. from the beginning of his torturing Prahlada Maharaja, but that cakra became Nrsimhadeva who said, "I should show some vicitra-lila, uniquely variegated pastimes. That is why he played thus. Otherwise, at first glance he would have cut off Hiranyakasipu's head.

Do you know the history of Ambarisa Maharaja? He used to practice all the sixty-four kinds of bhakti with such steadiness that Sudarsana-cakra also came to save him. We should also try to follow him.

If you are in the stage of nistha and you continue to follow the principles of bhakti for some time, then, when that nistha will be perfectly matured, you attain the stage called ruci. What are the symptoms of ruci?

Srila Haridasa Thakura was once going to Adi-saptagrama, to the assembly of the father of Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, and on the way he saw a snake-charmer making a snake dance. The snake charmer was singing a song about Kaliya-damana lila, and when Srila Haridasa Thakura heard this song he at once trembled, his eyes became full of tears, and he fainted. He had remembered the pastimes of Krsna, and at once his heart had melted and he fainted. That snake-charmer then took the foot dust of Srila Haridasa Thakura and glorified him.

A very jealous brahmana was present there and he thought, "Thousands of people in the audience have taken the foot dust of this Mohammedan – not mine. I am from a brahmana family, so I must do as he did so that all will come and take my foot dust – including this snake charmer." Srila Haridasa Thakura left, and when that snake-charmer again began to sing and make the snake dance, the brahmana came forward and began to tremble, pretend to weep with tears falling from his eyes, and then he fell flat. The snake charmer knew that he had done so for name and fame, so he took his stick and gave him three blows. That brahmana then ran away from there and never came back.

Haridasa Thakura's ruci was anapeksini* [See endnote 5], independent. He simply heard and then he fainted. Similarly Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His associates used to hear "Krsna Krsna," and they also used to faint.

During the time of Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Thakura there was a very prominent babaji named Vamsidasa babaji. He had long hair and wore only one loincloth – nothing else. He had no bhajana-kutira at all. Rather, he lived under the shade of a tree as did his two deities, Gaura and Nityananda, who were always undecorated. Vamsidasa babaji used to play with them and sometimes quarrel with Them. He once went to pick some flowers for his worship, and there was a tree nearby with yellow karnikara flowers. It was not a very high tree, so he climbed up that tree to pick flowers. In the meantime the son of the proprietor of that land came and said, "What nonsense are you doing? He pushed Vamsidasa babaji, who fell down from the tree and became somewhat injured. Vamsidasa babaji then went directly to his deities and began to quarrel. He said, "Oh, Nityananda is very simple and very good. But this Mahaprabhu is very tricky and very cruel! I was picking some flowers for Him and He would not save me! Why did You not save me? I will not serve You. From now on I will not offer You anything." And thus he began to quarrel. He was beyond external considerations, and this is called anapeksini. Although his deities were not beautifully dressed, he used to think that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself and Sri Nityananda Prabhu were there. Our ruci should be like this.

I know you have so many problems – because you still have no ruci. You have anisthita-bhakti (unsteady). Sometimes you cannot chant when diseases come, but for those with ruci there is no consideration of disease at all. Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami and Srila Rupa Gosvami were living in the forest where there were so many dangerous animals,

but those animals could not bite them or hurt them in any way. On the other hand, we have to taste the reactions of our previous activities, so we cannot be fearless like them. However, by increasing our practice of bhakti and by service to Gurudeva and pure Vaisnavas, we may become like them.

When this kind of ruci comes there is no more fear – but up to this stage there is so much fear and at any time you can give up bhakti. On the other hand, when ruci will come, taste for hari-katha, taste for guru-seva, taste for nama-kirtana, taste for anything regarding krsna-bhakti, then your life will be successful. There will be hardly any chance of falling. Some chance is there, as shown by Bharata Maharaja. He had left his kingdom, his wife and his children, and had come to a very sacred place and was chanting and remembering, but he once saw a deer calf and became attracted. Thus, it took him three lives to become perfect.

Always remember these topics and try to be like these pure devotees. I have seen so many devotees, even sannyasis and what to speak of grhastha bhaktas, who have left their children, wives, and so on, and many are now in our assembly. But I see that they are very attached to children – to take them on their shoulders and to love and kiss them. We should be very careful about this.

Then, when ruci is matured, at once the stage of asakti comes. This is the stage of attachment for Krsna. This is a very good stage, and we will explain it another day.

Gaura Premanande.

[*Endnote 1 – (From Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindhu by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura) Anarthas are of four kinds: (1) svarupa-bhrama (illusion about spiritual identity), (2) asat-trsna (thirst for that which is unreal; that is, material enjoyment), (3) aparadha (offences) and (4) hrdaya-daurbalya (weakness of heart).

Svarupa-bhrama is of four kinds: (1) sva-tattva- or jiva-svarupa-bhrama (illusion about one's spiritual identity), (2) para-tattva-bhrama (illusion about the spiritual identity of the supreme absolute truth), (3) sadhya-sadhana-tattva-bhrama (illusion about sadhana-bhakti, the means of spiritual perfection, and sadhya, the object to be obtained by such sadhana, or in other words prema-bhakti) and (4) maya-tattva-bhrama (illusion about the Lord's external energy, maya).

Asat-trsna is of four types: (1) varieties of desires for material enjoyment in this world, (2) desires for enjoyment in the higher planetary systems of Svargaloka, (3) desires for the attainment of the eight mystic siddhis. (4) the desire for impersonal liberation.

Aparadha is of four kinds: (1) offences towards Sri Krsna, (2) offences towards krsna-nama, (3) offences towards krsna-svarupa (the deity form of the Lord) and (4) offences towards the jivas (living entities who are infinitesimal particles of spirit belonging to the Lord).

Hrdaya-daurbalya is of four kinds: (1) tuccha-asakti (attachment for useless things), (2) kuti-nati (deceitful behavior. The word kuti-nati may be broken down into the constituent parts ku, bad or evil, and na or nati, that which is forbidden. In that case it would mean doing wicked deeds or doing that which is forbidden), (3) matsarya (envy) and (4) sva-pratistha-lalasa (desire for one's own fame and prestige).

[*Endnote 2 – (From Madhurya-kadambini by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura)
Utsaha-mayi: A brahmana child, having just begun study of the scriptures, thinks he has immediately become a learned scholar worthy of everyone's praise. Similarly, a person just beginning devotional service may have the audacity to think that he has mastered everything. This is called utsaha-mayi, or filled (puffed-up) with enthusiasm.

Ghana-tarala: The same child at times diligently engages in his studies, and yet at other times, due to inability to understand the schoolbooks or lack of real taste, is negligent. In the same way, a new devotee will sometimes practice the different forms of devotional service and at other times neglect them. Being sometimes diligent and at other times negligent, his endeavor is called ghana-tarala (condensed-dilute, thick-thin).

Vyudha-vikalpa: "Shall I just spend my life happily in family life, making my wife and children Krsna conscious and worshipping the Lord? Or should I give them all up and go to Vrndavana to perfect myself by engaging full time in hearing and chanting with no distractions? Shall I wait till the last stage, after enjoying all sorts of pleasures and I've finally understood that the whole material world is simply a forest fire of affliction? Or is it better that I renounce right now? In this way, the mind spends time vacillating between the life of renunciation and household life considering the different options. This is called vyudha-vikalpa, or extensive speculation.

Visaya-sangara: Seeing that material enjoyment is forcibly carrying him away and impairing his steadiness in serving Krsna, the devotee resolves to renounce his addictions and take shelter of the holy name. But many times his attempts at renunciation often end in enjoying what he's trying to renounce. This on-going battle with his desires for sense enjoyment from former habit, where he sometimes meets with victory and sometimes with defeat, is called visaya-sangara, or struggle with sense pleasure.

Niyamaksama: Then the devotee will resolve, "From today I will chant such and such number of rounds of japa and will pay so many obeisances. I'll also perform services for the devotees. I won't talk about anything except the Lord, and I'll give up all association with people who talk gossip." Though the devotee makes such resolutions every day, he is not always able to carry them out. This is called niyamaksama, or inability to follow rules. Visaya-sangara is the inability to give up sense enjoyment, while niyamaksama is the inability to improve his devotional service.

Taranga-rangini: Finally, it is well-known that the very nature of bhakti is to be attractive, thus many people become attracted to the devotee. And, as the old adage goes, "By the public's attraction one becomes wealthy." Bhakti produces much opportunity for material gain, worship, and position (labha, puja, pratistha). These are weeds around the creeper of bhakti. Seeking one's pleasure (ranga) amidst these weed-like facilities, which are but

small waves (taranga) in the ocean of bhakti, is called taranga-rangini, delighting in material facilities. (Madurya kadambini pages 15-18]

[*Endnote 3 – (From Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindhu by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura) There are four additional varieties of anartha: (1) duskrti-uttha (obstacles in bhakti arising from past sins), (2) sukrti-uttha (obstacles arising from previous pious activities), (3) aparadha-uttha (obstacles arising from offences) and (4) bhakti-uttha (obstacles arising in relation to impure or mixed bhakti).

(1) Duskrti-uttha: anarthas arising from past sinful activities refer to five types of klesa or distress, which are (i) avidya (ignorance or forgetfulness of Krsna), (ii) asmita (the false egoism arising from the bodily conception of life), (iii) raga (attachment for the objects of sense gratification), (iv) dvesa (hatred or aversion to unpleasant, disagreeable or adverse situations) and (v) abhinivesa (attachment for or absorption in sinful activities).

(2) Sukrti-uttha: obstacles arising from various kinds of material enjoyment which come from the pious activities of one's previous birth.

(3) Aparadha-uttha: obstacles arising from namaparadha and other types of offences.

(4) Bhakti-uttha: desires for labha (material gain), puja (worship) and pratistha (prestige) arising from the performance of sakama-bhakti or sopadhika-bhakti (conditional devotional service). (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindhu)]

[*Endnote 4 – "We have many things to learn about bhajana, or worship of the Lord, by following in the footsteps of Raghunatha dasa Gosvami. All the Gosvamis engaged in such transcendental activities, as described by Srinivasa Acarya in his poem about them (krsnotkirtana-gana-nartana-parau premamrtambho-nidhi). Following in the footsteps of Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Srila Rupa Gosvami and Sanatana Gosvami, one has to execute devotional service very strictly, specifically by chanting the holy name of the Lord." (Cc Adi 10.100 Srila Prabhupada's purport)]

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