

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

# THE ASSEMBLY OF SRILA RUPA GOSVAMI

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Now, I want to take you to Vrndavana, to our subject, to the assembly of Srila Rupa Gosvami. He has written:

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 one must have a preliminary desire for self-realization. This will bring one to the stage of trying to associate with persons who are spiritually elevated. In the next stage one becomes initiated by an elevated spiritual master, and under his instruction the neophyte devotee begins the process of devotional service. By execution of devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master, one becomes free from all material attachment, attains steadiness in self-realization, and acquires a taste for hearing about the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. This taste leads one further forward to attachment for Krsna consciousness, which is matured in bhava, or the preliminary stage of transcendental love of God. Real love for God is called prema, the highest perfectional stage of life." (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.4.15-16)]

We have already finished discussing asakti, the stage of attachment for Krsna, and now we will begin our discussion of bhava, the stage of transcendental emotions. We have previously had many discussions concerning bhava, yet there is still much more to say.

Try to realize this mood. I have explained to you the process: you must first take shelter of the lotus feet of the Guru, totally, without having any doubt in him at all. Visramabhena-guro seva (intimate service to Sri Guru), taking siksa and diksa from him – these are the root of bhakti. If you doubt him, the fruit of bhakti will not come to you. Mayadevi will take it away. Doubt can be there in the very beginning so that you can determine whether or not the Guru is bona fide.

There are sixty-four limbs of bhakti; and regarding raganuga-bhakti sadhana, these sixty-four are divided into five sections: bhavamayi, bhava-sambhandhi,

bhava-anukula, bhava-viruddha, and bhava-aviruddha or bhava-pratikula. You will have to know what they are if you want to develop your krsna-bhakti.

What is bhavamayi sadhana? It is the sadhana by which you can attain prema; it is the sadhana of raganuga-bhajana. What is this sadhana?

[At this point Srila Narayana Maharaja called on devotees to explain. For the sake of brevity and clarity we are replacing the speakers' talks with quotes from Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindu:]

“The four primary relationships with Krsna are dasya, sakhya, vatsalya, and madhurya. When sravana, kirtana, and other such angas of bhakti become saturated with one of the bhavas of dasya etc., they nourish the future tree of the sadhaka's prema and are known as bhavamayi sadhana.”

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] This is bhava-mayi sadhana; and what is bhava-mayi? It is a relation with Krsna or a relation with Srimati Radhika. Then, that sadhana which brings that bhava (relation) of sakha, vatsalya or madhura, which is transferred into bhava, is called bhavamayi sadhana. For example, sravana (hearing): Paraksit Maharaja heard the Tenth Canto, and especially Brahmara-gita, Venu-gita, Gopi-gita etc., from Sri Sukadeva Gosvami. This is bhavamayi sravana. Kirtana: Sri Raya Ramananda spoke to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. What Mahaprabhu questioned and what Raya Ramananda replied, beginning with varnasrama-dharma up to Radhika's highest mood of mahabhava, and also when Mahaprabhu revealed his form as Rasaraja-mahabhava, is called bhavamayi kirtana.

First there must be hearing (sravana) and after that explaining (kirtana). Anu-kirtanam means that first comes sravana and then kirtana. If you are not following, and in the meantime you are instructing others, this is zero; it is karma. First you should follow, realize something, and then preach; otherwise, what will you preach? You will preach, "By bhakti we can easily make money." First of all have some realization, follow all the instructions of Guru and sastra, and then you can preach. This is kirtana. Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami heard from Sri Svarupa Damodara and Srila Rupa Gosvami heard from Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. These are bhavamayi sravana, kirtana and smarana. They support and nourish the prema kalpa-taru (the desire-tree of prema-bhakti, or in other words, the moods of service to Srimati Radhika in prema-bhakti). Bhava comes in the heart and that is why this is called bhavamayi-sadhana – raganuga or rupanuga bhajana.

What is bhava-sambandhi sadhana?

"The angas of bhakti beginning from acceptance of the shelter of a spiritual master, mantra-japa, hearing, chanting and remembering of the name, form, qualities, and pastimes appropriate for different periods of the day of Sri Krsna

and the beloved associates of Krsna towards whom one has attraction...are known as bhava-sambandhi-sadhana. The upadana-karana, or material cause of bhava is called bhava-sambandhi. That by which bhava later develops is called the material cause. Bhava is shaped or molded by the various angas of bhakti such as guru-padasraya and so on. Therefore, these angas are called bhava-sambandhi-sadhana or that which is related to bhava. (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindu)

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] These are very important topics, and you should try to realize these topics. That which is actually full with bhava, the mood of sakhya-bhava, vatsalya-bhava, dasya-bhava or madhurya-bhava, is called bhavamayi sadhana. Those practices that later on transfer into bhava and are the upadana-karana of bhava, are called bhava-sambandhi.

And what is bhava-anakula? In bhava-anakula one observes Janmastami-vrata, Ekadasi-vrata, Kartika-vrata, wears tilaka and respects Tulasi, for the pleasure of Krsna. Do not think that tilaka or kanti-mala (tulasi neckbeads) are useless, or that we worship ordinary trees or plants. You must wear tilaka; otherwise, when the messenger of death comes, he will select you and say, "Oh, this is the bogus person I wanted. I should take him." He will watch first, and he will mark those of you who aren't wearing tilaka and say, "Oh, very soon I will take them." Please be careful – very careful. I see that many devotees don't have the time to put on tilaka. They think, "Oh, what is tilaka?!" Do not think like this. It is also favorable to pour water on tulasi and to do her parikrama. Also, the observance of Janmastami, Rama Navami, Kartika-vrata and Ekadasi are helpful for the attainment of bhava, and therefore they are called bhava-anakula. They help; they are favorable the development of your mood or bhava.

What is bhava-aviruddha?

"Bhava-aviruddha-sadhana – wearing the remnants of flower garlands and other paraphernalia offered to the deity, stamping one's body with the syllables of sri harinama, offering obeisances and other such angas of bhakti are called bhava-aviruddha-sadhana. That which is not opposed to the attainment of one's bhava is bhava-aviruddha. It is one's duty to carry out the previously mentioned angas of bhakti." (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindu, page 135)

Regarding bhava-aviruddha: We should not do nyasa or mudra. [Nyasa is to make the different parts of the body pure by the utterance of mantras, and mudra is to make many finger intertwinings before performing arcana-puja.] There is no need for this in krsna-bhajana. There is also no need of khus dharana. [This is when one ornaments his fingers with kusa grass for worshipping.] The smarta brahmanas perform these activities, but we should not do so. If you have love and affection for Dvaraka and you meditate on a very high class of Krsna's associate like Rukmini, what will be the result? You will have to go that abode – to Dvaraka. We should be careful in this regard.

Srila Rupa Gosvami has said that pure bhakti, uttama-bhakti, is of three kinds: sadhana-bhakti, bhava-bhakti and prema-bhakti. Sadhana-bhakti continues up to the stage of bhava, but there is no sadhana-bhakti in bhava-bhakti. Those following this process will achieve Goloka Vrndavana, and by serving under the guidance of either the gopis, Mother Yasoda or Sridama or Subala will first develop prema and then its subsequent stages like sneha, maan, pranaya, raga, anuraga and so on.

Why has Srila Rupa Gosvami divided bhakti into three sections? He could have divided it into two: sadhana-bhakti and siddha-bhakti (prema-bhakti). Why is there bhava-bhakti? There is a reason. The symptoms of a siddha-bhakti is that there are no anarthas at all – nothing worldly to taste. All kinds of vighna (obstacles) and anarthas have gone away. This is siddha-bhakti.

Regarding sadhana-bhakti:

krti-sadhya bhavet sadhya-  
bhava sa sadhanabhidha  
nitya-siddhasya bhavasya  
prakatyam hr̥di sadhyata

["When transcendental devotional service, by which love for Krsna is attained, is executed by the senses, it is called sadhana-bhakti, or the regulative discharge of devotional service. Pure devotion eternally exists within the heart of every living entity. The awakening of this eternal devotion is the potentiality of devotional service in practice." (CC, Madhya 22.105)]

Sadhana is that practice which brings bhava (ones transcendental and constitutional mood of service). Bhava-bhakti is not sadhana; it is the fruit of sadhana, and therefore sadhana-bhakti and bhava-bhakti cannot be one and the same. Do you understand?

Srila Rupa Gosvami states that bhava-bhakti is neither sadhana nor siddha. What is the definition of sadhana? Rati is ready to come, but some vighna, (impediments) are still there. Bharata Maharaja was about to attain rati or bhava. He had left everything, but he became attached to a deer. He had not made any offences at all, but he had attachment for that deer, and therefore he had to wait three lives to attain pure bhakti.

In Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu (2.1.276) the characteristics of a bhava-sadhaka are described as follows:

utpanna-ratayah samyan  
nairvighnyam anupagatah  
krsna-saksat-krtau yogyah

sadhakah parikirtitah

"One in whose heart rati (bhava) towards Sri Krsna has already manifested, who has become qualified to perceive the direct manifestation of the Lord, but who has not yet obtained complete freedom from all obstacles, is called a bhava-sadhaka."

All obstacles have gone from the bhava-bhakta sadhaka, but there is still a scent of it. "Saksat krtau." He is also qualified to take darsana of Krsna from time to time. An example is Sri Bilvamangala Thakura. He was first very attached to a prostitute named Cintamani. Although she was a prostitute, she was also a very elevated devotee and she used to sing only Krsna songs. One stormy night he went to see her and she told him, "You are so attracted to this body which is full of blood and urine. You have so much love and affection for me; why don't you develop this love for Krsna? If you would have this love and affection for Krsna, your life would be successful."

These words penetrated his heart, and thus he gave up his home and all possessions and relationships. Soon afterwards he was on his way to Vrndavana, but once again he became attracted to a woman. On his journey he became thirsty and went to a well, and a very beautiful teenage girl was at that well fetching water. Looking at her he said, "I want to drink some water; can you give me some?" As she gave him the water he continued looking at her. He followed her home and when he arrived the girl was inside. Her husband, who was sitting outside of their house, asked Bilvamangala, "Why have you come here? Do you want anything? Shall we give you prasadam? Is there anything you require?" Bilvamangala replied, "No, I don't require anything. I only want to meet your wife." The husband very happily called for his wife. When she came Bilvamangala asked her, "Can you give me your two hairpins?" She could not understand why he made such a request, but still she took the hairpins from her hair and gave it to him. Holding the pins to his eyes, Bilvamangala said, "These eyes are the root of all the evils. If I have no eyes I will not be attached to this world." Plucking out his eyes, he then began to cry for Krsna, "O Krsna! O Krsna!"

After that, his desire to go to Vrndavana became very strong. When Krsna saw that He wanted to go to Vrndavana, He at once became greatly merciful. Appearing in the form of a cowherd boy, He said, "Baba. Where do you want to go?" Bilvamangala replied, "I want to go to Vrndavana." Krsna told him, "Oh, I Myself am also going to Vrndavana." Bilvamangala asked Him if he could help him and Krsna replied, "Oh yes, why not? You can hold My stick and I will take you." and thus they went.

During the journey Bilvamangala repented so much and began to compose poetry for Krsna's pleasure; and Krsna was hearing and walking very happily. Although the journey would normally take two or three months by foot, after only a couple of days Krsna said, "Baba, we have come to Vrndavana." And then He left. Then,

realizing who that boy was and exclaiming, "Oh, this is none other than Krsna Himself," Bilvamangala wanted to catch Him; but he could not do so. Krsna "trickly" ran, taking all of the poetry of Bilvamangala with Him in His heart. That nectarean poetry was very near and dear to Krsna, and it thus became called Krsna-karna-amrta: The Nectar for the ears of Krsna. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu collected that poetry from South India and gave it to all the devotees. He requested them to make copies and then to distribute those copies everywhere. He told them, "You should always remember this poetry and wear it around your neck like a necklace."

So Sri Bilvamangala Thakura is a sadhaka, but it is not that he was practicing sadhana-bhakti. You should also do this. This is sadhana, but what type of sadhana? It is not sadhana-bhakti; it is bhava-bhakti, the middle stage. The sadhana of raganuga-bhakti is very high and very rare; still, I have come to help you with this. Our guru-varga (disciplic succession), that is, all of the Vaisnavas in our line, especially Parama-pujyapada Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, came to give this. Srila Swami Maharaja went to Western and Eastern countries. Actually, he went everywhere in the world to give this, but he could not give it to the general assembly of devotees. Why not? He saw that there were many jungles of mayavadism and atheism and he thought, "How is it possible to distribute this at present? First I must cut the jungles, make the land fertile, and then I will give it." He spent almost his entire time doing this, and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada has similarly said, "You should not think that I have come to give regulative bhakti, varnasrama-dharma, book distribution, and other activities as ends in themselves. I have actually come only to sprinkle the mercy of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. I've come for this reason."

anarpita-carim cirat karunaya vatirnah kalau  
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasam sva-bhakti-sriyam  
harih purata-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandipitah  
sada hrdaya-kandare sphuratu vah saci-nandanah

["May the Supreme Lord who is known as the son of Srimati Saci-devi be transcendently situated in the innermost chambers of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has appeared in the Age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what no incarnation has ever offered before: the most sublime and radiant mellow of devotional service, the mellow of conjugal love." (Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi 1.4)]

You should try to realize these facts. How can involvement in making money and acquiring positions ever help you? They'll only cause you to sink in the ocean of unlimited problems, life after life. Don't have faith in money, position, social services or anything else of that nature. Krsna has given you human life:

labdhva sudurlabham idam bahu-sambhavante  
manusyam arthadam anityam apiha dhirah  
turnam yateta na pated anumrtyu yavan

nihśreyasaya viśayah khalu sarvatah syat

["After many births we have attained this human form; therefore before death comes, we should engage ourselves in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. That is the fulfillment of human life." (Srimad Bhagavatam, 11.9.29)]

Always remember this; try to follow all the scriptural instructions and your life will be successful.

Regarding the stage of perfection, prema-bhakti, the siddha stage, Srila Rupa Gosvami has written:

avijnatakhila klesah  
sada kṛṣṇasrita kriyah  
siddhah syuh santata prema  
saukhyasvada parayanah

"One who is fully immersed in activities related to Sri Kṛṣṇa, who is completely unacquainted with impediments (vighna) or material distress (klesa) and who incessantly tastes the bliss of prema is called a siddha-bhakta." (Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu-bindu)

What are the symptoms of a siddha-bhakta? Siddha-bhaktas do not know obstacles or distress at all. A bhava-bhakta may face them, but he will not be affected by them. He will feel some suffering. It will come and he will see and experience it, but he will tolerate and pass over it. A siddha-bhakta, on the other hand, does not know what are impediments or problems. He experiences no fear, hunger, thirst, fever, disease, old age – nothing of the sort. He is in this world but beyond this world. He is compared to the lotus leaf, which is in the water but is not affected by it. "Sada kṛṣṇasrita kriya": He is always engaged in favorable service, for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa – always engaged in that bhava-mayī and bhava-sambhandhī. He is especially engaged in astakaliya-līla, serving under the guidance of Srila Rupa Gosvami (Rupa Manjari), and Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, (Rati Manjari). He always thinks about how Rupa Gosvami and Raghunatha Gosvami used to serve and do sadhana-bhajana. "Santata prema saukhyasvada parayanah": those who always taste sakha, vatsalya and especially madhurya are siddha.

Thus, Srila Rupa Gosvami has given three types or stages of bhakti: sadhana-bhakti, bhava-bhakti and siddha-bhakti (prema-bhakti). I want you to aspire for this and try to realize all these topics. Don't waste your time. If you are always engaged in sense gratification, very busily maintaining your life, you will lose so much time. Srila Bhaktivedanta Svami Maharaja came to the Western countries, and our guru-varga came, and they traveled over the universe. You are very fortunate to come into their line, so don't lose this time – this good fortune. At once come further in this line. Don't do anything for your maintenance; it will

come automatically, just as your calamities and distress come automatically. Material activities will "come on your heads" and forcibly make you old; and you will lose your position and everything else. Therefore don't waste your time on those things. From the beginning, from today, try to follow all these instructions.

Gaura Premanande.

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