

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

WELCOME TO THE TOUR

May 16, 2004: Los Angeles, California

[Srila Narayana Maharaja began his 2004 Summer World Preaching Tour by blessing the new Sri Sri Radha-Govinda Gaudiya Matha in Los Angeles. Because of the efforts of the devotees in Los Angeles, numerous new people had been coming to the temple. Because of this, the local devotees moved from their original small temple to a larger one – a renovated church – a few blocks away. By Srila Maharaja's mercy, by Srila Prabhupada's mercy, and by the efforts of the local devotees, over 500 devotees and guests now sat or stood in the large temple room to hear Srila Maharaja's class.

To our knowledge, except for a three day hari-katha festival in Sydney, Australia at the end of April, Srila Maharaja had not give any formal classes since Gaura Purnima, so devotees have been eagerly awaiting this class. Before his own talk, Srila Maharaja called on a few of the senior devotees to explain in brief the mission of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the same message preached by Srila Prabhupada and Srila Maharaja, and then he called on Jaga Mohana dasa brahmachari, the Los Angeles temple president, to speak:]

[Jaga Mohana dasa:] Thank you everyone, for coming here. Srila Gurudeva has ordered me to say a few words – to thank the many disciples of Srila Prabhupada, and to share with you the ways in which they helped to establish this temple. I think every devotee who is under 30 years old, or perhaps even older, knows deep in their hearts how indebted they are to the disciples of Srila Bhaktivedanta Svami Maharaja. We offer our respectful obeisances to all his devotees.

Without their efforts and energies, serving their Guru Maharaja endlessly and tirelessly, none of us would have been able to come in touch with this divine transcendental philosophy. Especially in Los Angeles, we are so grateful to Srila Prabhupada's many disciples who have been like mothers and have given their blessings. Maybe they haven't picked up hammers and nails, but more importantly, with their hearts, they deeply and sincerely wanted this temple to be a success. Prahlada prabhu, Tirthapada prabhu, Ganga Narayana prabhu, Upananada prabhu, Rsabhadeva prabhu and his wife Nscintya didi, Nscintya prabhu and the traveling devotees are but a few. There are also so many other devotees who I have not mentioned, and we offer our thanks and pranamas to them.

We are so fortunate that we have been favored by the previous owners of this renovated church, Annette Bird who is a sculptor and her husband Dr. Bird who is a psychologist. They had so many offers to buy, because this is at such a prime location, and others offered so much more money than we did. Still, they are so aware and so liberal that they felt we were the best candidates to take on such a property. Without them we wouldn't be here. So, so much thanks to them.

One thing that is so important for a temple to thrive is a very sweet and loving mood. Without this there is no need for a temple. We desire very sweet and soft devotees to share their love with all the people in Los Angeles.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Why have devotees from so many countries assembled here? I think it was the purpose of Sri Krsna, in the form of Sri Sacinandana Gaurahari and Sri Nityananda Prabhu.

prthivite ache yata nagaradi grama
sarvatra pracara haibe mora nama

["In every town and village, the chanting of My name will be heard." (Caitanya-bhagavata, Antya 4.126)]

This was the mission, but why? What was the reason for their coming?

If any senior devotees, disciples of Srila Bhaktivedanta Svami Maharaja are sitting or standing in the back, they should come and sit in front.

What was the mission of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Srila Rupa Gosvami, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada and Srila Bhaktivedanta Svami Prabhupada? They all had the same mission, and I am also coming for this same preaching mission. I am very grateful to Srila Svami Maharaja – that he took my service. I have known him since 1946 – when I think most of you here were not yet born. I have been serving him since that time. As you may know, he and I have so many relationships. He was my transcendental siksa-guru, he was junior in sannyasa [*See Endnote] to me, and we were like bosom friends. We have so many transcendental relations and you can read about this in the book called My Siksa Guru and Priya Bandhu, compiled by Mula-prakrti didi. Our mission is the same.

We are jivera svarupa haya krsnera nitya dasa – but we don't wish to be servants of Krsna. We don't like this. Others should be dasa of Lord Krsna, but we want to be the dasis of Srimati Radhika. This is the ultimate goal given by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and our entire guru-parampara, including myself.

But, from where do we begin? This is the question. According to the stage of spiritual development of the devotee, he should begin from the smallest fraction of bhakti – bhakti meaning the combination of the essence of hladini-sakti (Srimati Radharani), and samvit-sakti, and which is called visesatma. This bhakti is the mood of Srimati Radhika – Her parakiya mood – the most elevated mood. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu came to preach this mission, which is very high.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has said to begin with sraddha (strong faith), the smallest fraction of bhakti. You should know the two kinds of sraddha. We have explained it so many times and we will also explain it in Badger the day after tomorrow.

Begin from sraddha, and do not jump. Do not try to go directly to the position of Radha-dasi. If you don't know the target of your life, you cannot practice and develop. However, first apply the actual process to attain it.

sraddha'-sabde--visvasa kahe sudrdha niscaya
krsne bhakti kaile sarva-karma krta haya

["Sraddha is confident, firm faith that by rendering transcendental loving service to Lord Krsna one automatically performs all subsidiary activities. Such faith is favorable to the discharge of devotional service." (Caitanya-caritamrta Madhya-lila 22.62)]

The desire or tendency to serve Krsna is called sraddha, and saranagati (surrender) is the symptom. Have strong belief in Guru's words. This human birth is not our first or last birth. Millions of births have already passed. We have been hogs, pigs, dogs, cats and so on. In all those births we have tried to fulfill our desire for sense gratification, but we are still not satisfied. This is a wonder – we still want to be involved in sense gratification!

If you are 25 years old and your boyfriend is 100 years old, you think, "No harm." You are attached, like that of the hogs and dogs. I have not come here to put oil, or fuel, in your fire. I will not come to fulfill requests like: "Oh Gurudeva, can I have a son?" What should I do? Should I give a son? These are silly questions.

I don't want any of you to be involved in maya, this illusory material energy – being absorbed in marriage and the like. Rather, be involved in our mission, which is to serve Sri Sri Radha and Krsna in this human life. Somehow or other you can also maintain your life, but remember that this is our aim and object.

Begin your bhakti by following the instructions in Bhagavad-gita. Why do you have fear? Is there anyone among you that has no fear of old age, problems, neighbors, husbands or wives? Very few souls in this world can say they have no fear. Only pure devotees have no fear; those who have Guru's shelter and are not engaged in sense gratification, whether they are householders or in the renounced order.

Why do you fear? Do you fear old age? Old age is bound to come. Do you fear that death will come, or that so many diseases will come? Do you fear because your neighbors are not favorable towards you? Or because you and your wife, or husband, are not happy with each other? Someone may say, "No, no. Everything is ok. But the problem is that there are no sons." Or, "My children are not favorable." This world is a place of problems.

You should know this verse:

na jayate mriyate va kadacin
nayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah
ajo nityah sasvato 'yam purano
na hanyate hanyamane sarire

["For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain." (Bhagavad-gita 2.20)]

A problem was raised by Arjuna in the Mahabharata War. He told Krsna that he preferred to maintain his life by begging here and there, rather than to live in riches as the result of killing his cousins and other family members. How did Krsna reply? He told Arjuna, "Foolish person, you are thinking that you are very intelligent by your so-called philosophical words of compassion, but actually you do not know ABCD. Why do you think you can kill your enemies on this battlefield? Only one's physical body can be "killed" – and it is already dead. When the soul is not present in the body, that body is understood by all as dead. But neither air nor fire – nor anything material – can touch the soul. So why fear? You should think that you are a transcendental servant of Lord Krsna. Have no fear at all.

You fear when there appear to be problems, and you fear that more problems will come. Why fear? Take shelter of Krsna – thoroughly.

ananyas cintayanto mam
ye janah paryupasate
tesam nityabhiyuktanam
yoga-ksemam vahamy aham

["But those who always worship Me with exclusive devotion, meditating on My transcendental form-to them I carry what they lack, and I preserve what they have." (Bhagavad-gita 9.22)]

Krsna says here, "Those who have taken shelter fully, and are always engaged in chanting and remembering Me and telling each other sweet hari-katha – I must maintain, them, and I must carry their problems and paraphernalia on My head. So why are you worried? Why not take shelter of Me?"

sarva-dharman parityajya
mam ekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo
moksaisyami ma sucah

["Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear."]

Take shelter, and then you will not die. You will think, "I will not die. I am eternal." The holy name is so powerful. Krsna has invested all His power, all His mercy, all His sweetness, beauty, strength – and everything – in His name. Death itself fears His name. If anyone chants, "Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Hare Hare," from the core of his heart, what will happen? Death will

go miles away, and even then the deity of death, Yamaraja, will offer obeisances to that devotee and desire to serve him. Why are you so anxious and worried about material situations?

Perhaps you all know this, but there are some newcomers who do not. In his last days, in Vrndavana, Srila Svami Maharaja called me to see him. At that time he had stopped talking to anyone. When he saw me, however, he took my hands in his and at once sat up from his bed and wanted to give me a seat there. I requested him to stay as he was.

Pure devotees are so humble. He told me, "I have committed many offenses to you and to my god-brothers, saying that they only sleep and take prasadam. I said they do nothing but ring the bells in the temple. This was wrong. I know that you are most qualified. I have not taken sannyasa from your Gurudeva (Srila Bhaktiprajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja) as a formality, but for bhajana-sadhana."

There were so many seniors, like Pujyapada Sridhara Maharaja and Vana Maharaja and others, but Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada sprinkled so much mercy on Srila Bhaktivedanta Svami Prabhupada by telling him, "Your English is perfect, you are a poet and preacher, you play mrdanga and you can do everything – so you are qualified to preach this mission in the West."

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada thus sent his own "hand" to Western and Eastern countries. In a couple of years your Srila Prabhupada established preaching centers in American cities like New York, New Jersey, Los Angeles and San Francisco, in European countries, in Australia – everywhere – in the mountains, on islands in oceans, and perhaps in every atom. You are spiritual atoms.

So he told me on that day, "Please excuse me; I have committed some offenses. Please tell my god-brothers that they are very qualified, and in some sense they are more qualified than I. I have preached Sriman Mahaprabhu's mission everywhere and I have collected thousands of disciples throughout the world; but due to their lack of capacity to receive, I could not fully train them." And in Bengali he said, "I have collected some monkeys." He told me this in Bengali, so that certain disciples would not understand and thus become upset – but the tape recorder played every word.

I told him, "You did not commit any kind of offense. You told this to your neophyte disciples, because that was what they needed at the time, for their inspiration to serve and preach. There is nothing to excuse." He then ordered me, "You should give me samadhi with your own hands. I want it done by you – not by anyone else." And I did so. He told me at that time to help his devotees, and for that reason I have come here to the West. I have come especially to help the senior-most devotees of Srila Swami Maharaja. There are so many hundreds, like Padmanabha Maharaja, Budhara, Bhagavata and Krprarama, and so many ladies. They are all directly related to him.

I told him not to be worried, because I would fulfill his order. I am coming to the West to please him, to serve his order and to see his glory – how he preached this mission all over

the world in a couple of years – in oceans, on the tops of mountains and hills, in forests and in so many other places. I think that you have come to me by his mercy – through reading his books and hearing the hari-katha from any of his disciples. I am successful in preaching because I have a relation with him and he has accepted my service. In a couple of years I have circled the world 16 times. He circled the world 14 times. By the mercy of the father, the son and disciple can appear to do more than him.

We will continue to explain all topics relating to bhakti. I am inviting you all to come tomorrow to Badger. If you cannot come, I am inviting you all to come in the month of Purusottama (August 3-18) to Purusottama-ksetra, Jagannatha Puri, where we will be staying for 15 days. If you cannot physically come to Puri, you can come by soul. If you cannot come to Puri, then you should come, surely and punctually, to our Kartika festival of Vraja Mandala parikrama. And, I think that those who come from very far away should then wait in Vrndavana until Gaura Purnima, for our Navadvipa Parikrama.

Gaura Premanande.

[*Endnote – Srila Prabhupada took sannyasa from Srila Narayana Maharaja's diksa-guru, Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, in 1959. Srila Narayana Maharaja, already a sannyasi at that time, performed his sannyasa initiation ceremony.]

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