

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

YES, IT APPLIES TO US

May 19, 2004: Badger, California (Part 1)

[The following class is very technical, especially the discussion on the verse about the non-dual Absolute. Yet, though it may seem at first glance that such a scholarly presentation of this verse has nothing to do with us common folk, understanding this verse and the others under discussion is essential to the success of our normal everyday lives. They teach us how to view the world around us in all circumstances of life, in order to become happy:]

The 88,000 rsis (saints) and maharsis (saintly kings) at Naimisaranya asked Srila Suta Gosvami to explain the essence of all activities, by performing which ones soul can be happy. He replied:

sa vai pumsam paro dharmo
yato bhaktir adhoksaje
ahaituky apratihata
yayatma suprasidati

["The supreme occupation (dharma) for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self." (Srimad-bhagavatam 1.2.6)]

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu also inspired this verse in the heart of Srila Rupa Gosvamipada, and then Srila Rupa Gosvami composed a verse that was still sweeter and more complete:

anyabhilasita-sunyam
jnana-karmady-ana vrtam
anukulyena krsnanu-
silanam bhaktir uttama

["Uttama bhakti is the cultivation of activities that are meant exclusively for the benefit of Sri Krsna, in other words, the uninterrupted flow of service to Him, performed through all endeavors of the body, mind, and speech, and through the expression of various spiritual sentiments (bhavas). It is not covered by jnana (knowledge aimed at impersonal liberation) and karma (reward-seeking activity), yoga or austerities; and it is completely free from all desires other than the aspiration to bring happiness to Krsna." (Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.11)]

We elaborately explained this yesterday, and we have also quoted the following verse, which is presented in Srimad-bhagavatam just after "sa vai pumsam paro dharmo..."

vasudeve bhagavati

bhakti-yogah prayojitah
janayaty asu vairagyam
jnanam ca yad ahaitukam

["By rendering devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna, one immediately acquires causeless knowledge and detachment from the world." (Srimad-bhagavatam 1.2.7)]

If bhakti is performed to the lotus feet of Vrajendra-nandana Syamasundara, causeless knowledge and detachment follow. Ahaitu means causeless. Bhakti comes, then vairagya (renunciation or detachment), and then tattva-jnana (knowledge and realization of all established philosophical truths) manifests in the heart. They are sure to come. If tattva-jnana and detachment from worldly sense gratification are not coming, you should think, "This is surely due to my offenses." Otherwise, Krsna's holy name is so sweet and so powerful that detachment and tattva-jnana surely come to anyone who is sincerely chanting. How will it come? Krsna will send it through mahat-sanga – sadhu-sanga – guru-sanga.

The next verse in Srimad-bhagavatam is:

dharmah svanusthitah pumsam
visvaksena-kathasu yah
notpadayed yadi ratim
srama eva hi kevalam

["The occupational activities a man performs according to his own position are only so much useless labor if they do not provoke attraction for the message of the Personality of Godhead." (Srimad-bhagavatam 1.2.8)]

This is very important.

sravanam kirtanam visnoh
smaranam pada-sevanam
arcanam vandanam dasyam
sakhyam atma-nivedanam

["Hearing and chanting about the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes of Lord Visnu, remembering them, serving the lotus feet of the Lord, offering the Lord respectful worship with sixteen types of paraphernalia, offering prayers to the Lord, becoming His servant, considering the Lord one's best friend, and surrendering everything unto Him (in other words, serving Him with the body, mind and words)" (Srimad-bhagavatam 7.5.23)]

If you are performing all the nine limbs of bhakti – engaging in arcana by worshipping 1008 saligrama silas and doing so many other devotional activities, but you have no taste in hari-katha – all this will be rendered useless and a waste of time.

If you are worshipping thousands of saligramas, Govardhana-silas and other silas, Sri Sri Radha and Krsna, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Sri Nityananda Prabhu, and you are doing book distribution and all other devotional activities – but you have no taste in hari-katha – this is compared to a tree without a trunk. That tree has been cut down, and still you are giving it water. There is no use in that.

Moreover, if you are hearing hari-katha but are not following the principles of bhakti, and yet you are thinking, "I will hear, but I will not follow," – this is still more bogus. "Notpadayed yadi ratim srama eva hi kevalam."

vadanti tat tattva-vidas
tattvam yaj jnanam advayam
brahmeti paramatmeti
bhagavan iti sabdyate

["Learned transcendentalists who know the Absolute Truth call this nondual substance Brahman, Paramatma or Bhagavan." (SB 1.2.11)]

The first three verses of Srimad Bhagavatam are the mangala-caranam, (auspicious invocation), and also its glorification. But this verse is the very basis of the Srimad-Bhagavatam, and in fact, the entire Bhagavatam is an explanation of this verse. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami has also said this. He has explained the Srimad-Bhagavatam on the basis of this verse, and our Guru Maharaja, Parama-pujyapada Srila Bhaktiprajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, also used to do this.

What is advaya-tattva? What is the meaning of the word 'advayam'? Bhaktisar Maharaja.

[Bhaktisar Maharaja:] Actually, this verse halted even Sri Ganesh, when he was trying to write down Srimad-bhagavatam by taking dictation from Srila Vyasadeva. He couldn't understand it. His pen stopped as he began pondering the verse. In the meantime Vyasadeva wrote the rest of Bhagavatam in his mind, as well as all the other sastras, and he was still stuck there.*[See endnote]

This verse seems to be a paradoxical enigma. How can something with no duality have three features? It seems like a contradiction. If something has no difference, how is it that there are three differences in it? This is very difficult to understand.

There are three kinds of apparent differences, which are not really differences, and they are reconciled by our acaryas. One is that there is no difference between Sri Krsna and His own body and His self.

angani yasya sakalendriya-vrtti-manti
pasyanti panti kalayanti ciram jaganti
ananda-cinmaya-sad-ujjala-vigrahasya
govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami

["I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, whose transcendental form is full of bliss, truth, substantiality and is thus full of the most dazzling splendor. Each of the limbs of that transcendental figure possesses in Himself, the full-fledged functions of all the organs, and eternally sees, maintains and manifests the infinite universes, both spiritual and mundane." (Sri Brahma-samhita 5.32)]

In the conditioned state of the living entity, there is a difference between one's body, his self, and between one part of his body and another part. For instance, our hands can't see and our feet can't smell. But in the spiritual body of Lord Krsna there is no such duality. There is no duality, no difference, between one part of His body and any other part. This is one type of difference and non-difference in Krsna.

Another is that Krsna has various expansions, such as Lord Narayana and Garbhodakasayi Visnu. Although it appears that there is a difference between them, there is not. The Brahma-Samhita describes this in the following verse:

diparcir eva hi dasantaram abhyupetya
dipayate vivrta-hetu-samana-dharma
yas tadrg eva hi ca visnutaya vibhati
govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami

["The light of one candle being communicated to other candles, although it burns separately in them, is the same in its quality. I adore the primeval Lord Govinda who exhibits Himself equally in the same mobile manner in His various manifestations." (Sri Brahma-samhita 5.46)]

The power of the flame is transmitted from the original candle into other candles, which will then have the same brilliance or potency. There is no difference between the light and all those candles, even though they are originally lit from one candle. We can say there are many candles, but actually the light in them is the same. Similarly, although there are many features of Lord Krsna – many aspects – they are all actually one personality who is just displaying different features. Last year Srila Gurudeva gave the example of the quarter moon, half moon and full moon. All are the same moon, seen from different angles of vision at different times, and displaying different degrees of fullness.

Finally, there seems to be a difference between the Supreme Absolute Truth and His energies, which are not in the same category as Himself and not Himself – like prakrti (the material nature) and the jiva (living entity). The material nature and the individual living entity appear to be different from the Supreme Lord.

When we perspire from the pores of our body, the perspiration comes out and it becomes different from our body. We don't have any more relation with it. But regarding Mahavisnu, He emanates millions of universes, and He impregnates the material nature with unlimited jivas. Yet, at all times, he has complete and absolute control of that which

has come from him. If you could perspire and then recall the perspiration back into yourself, it may be said that you would have "absolute" control over that product of yourself. In other words, it would be really non-different from you, because at all times you maintain control. In this way, Srila Jiva Gosvami has described that even though there appears to be a difference between Krsna and His energies, such as prakriti and jiva, actually there is no duality. He is always the master and in complete control of His energies.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] Sundara Gopala.

[Sundara Gopala dasa:] This verse mentions the words advaya jnana para-tattva. Tattva means truth and para means supreme or absolute. So para-tattva means Supreme Truth or Absolute Truth. Advaya means non-dual. In other words, this truth is not two or three or many – but one. There is nothing that has any existence separate or independent of that truth.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] This is important. Again.

[Sundara Gopala dasa:] Advaya-jnana para-tattva means that there is no object or entity, anywhere, that has any existence separate or independent of that Truth. Someone may put forward one or more of three objections. The first is "svagata-veda", the objection that, "In the transcendental form of Sri Krsna there is some duality." In other words, Krsna has features, He has qualities and He has bodily limbs. A person may object that, "Any one of Krsna's bodily limbs is different from any other one", but this is in fact not the case. Sri Brahma-Samhita states that unlike our material bodies, which are entirely limited, being made of gross matter, the transcendental limbs of Sri Krsna are interchangeable. In other words, with His eyes, Sri Krsna can accept the food-offering of His devotees. With any one of his senses, He can perform the function of any other sense.

Srila Gurudeva has explained the analogy of a small cow or calf made of sugar. This calf or cow has features, but every part of it is made of condensed sugar. Sri Krsna is raso vai saha (fully consisting of transcendental mellows). From this sutra, raso vai saha, we can see that there is no duality in Sri Krsna – in any of His qualities or limbs, or in any of the variety that He shows in his transcendental features.

The next objection is "svajatiya veda". This is the objection that, "Sri Krsna and His various avatars are different from each other." There seems to be duality. There is Sri Nrsimhadeva, Sri Varahadeva and so many other incarnations. Someone may say, "These are different. There is duality here." Actually, however, as Sripad Bhaktisar Maharaja has explained, giving the analogy of a moon: The moon at different phases may appear to be different. Its shape will appear to be different. At a certain time, when the moon is new, it is very thin and small. It will eventually grow to a full moon, and then wane again. In the same way, the various avatars of Sri Krsna display certain qualities of Sri Krsna, but Svayam Bhagavan Vrajendra-nandana Sri Krsna (the original form of Krsna as the son of Nanda Maharaja in Vrndavana) displays all qualities to their maximum.

The next objection, "vijatiya-veda", is the objection that, "There are so many things in existence, in this world and out of this world, and they are in categories that are different from each other." The jiva, for instance, seems to be different from matter. Many different categories of existence appear to be different from each other. Someone may say, "Here there is duality." But Srila Jiva Gosvami explains in his Sri Tattva-Sandarba that if two things have the same origin and they don't conflict with each other, it may then be said that they are one. In this world it does appear that things conflict with each other; but this is actually illusion, and that illusion comes from the tendency to want to enjoy matter. Actually, everything is fully under the direction of Sri Krsna. Nothing conflicts with anything. If there is any conflict, it is merely a conflict with our own desire to enjoy this world. So, these three objections have no standing, and the absolute non-duality, the non-duality of the Absolute Truth, is thereby established.

[Madhava Maharaja:] Srila Gurudeva has said that this verse is the basis of the entire Srimad Bhagavatam:

vadanti tat tattva-vidas
tattvam yaj jnanam advayam
brahmeti paramatmeti
bhagavan iti sabdyate

["Learned transcendentalists who know the Absolute Truth call this nondual substance Brahman, Paramatma or Bhagavan." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.2.11)]

As you have heard from Sripad Sundara Gopala prabhu, "advaya" means non-dual, and "para-tattva" means Supreme Truth. He is "without second," but that does not mean that He is alone. Rather it means that no one is equal to Him, what to speak of being greater than Him. He is asamitisaya, asamaurdhva, and anurdhasamana. These words three words have the same meaning – no one is equal to Him and no one is greater than Him – and they are mentioned in relation to advaya-jnana para-tattva.

Sriman Mahaprabhu told Sri Sanatana Gosvami:

krsnera svarupa-vicara suna, sanatana
advaya-jnana-tattva, vraje vrajendra-nandana

["O Sanatana, please hear about the eternal form of Lord Krsna. He is the Absolute Truth, devoid of duality but present in Vrndavana as the son of Nanda Maharaja. (Madhya 20.153)]

This consideration is called tattva-gata vicara. Vicara means consideration. The other consideration is called rasa-gata vicara. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu heard from Raya Ramananda:

`krsnera svarupa' kaha `radhara svarupa'
`rasa' kon tattva, `prema'--kon tattva-rupa

["Kindly explain the transcendental features of Krsna and Srimati Radharani. Also explain the truth of transcendental mellows and the transcendental form of love of Godhead." (Madhya 8.119)]

When Raya Ramananda replied, he was speaking with regard to rasa-gata vicara, and Sriman Mahaprabhu replied to Srila Sanatana Gosvami on tattva-gata vicara. In this verse of Srimad Bhagavatam, "Vedanti tat tattva vidas..." the consideration of tattva-gata is being discussed, although rasa is also there.

So there are three features: Brahma (Brahman), Paramatma and Bhagavan. When Bhagavan is situated in all His power – but hiding this and only allowing something to manifest from His cit, potency, that is called Brahma. Brahma is the most distant reflection of cit-sakti (the transcendental knowledge potency). Lord Krsna's effulgence is Brahma. No pastime is there; nothing is clear.

Srila Gurudeva gave the following example in Mathura when he was discussing this sloka: Once, when Vasudeva Maharaja was performing a yajna, and Sri Narada Rsi was descending there from a Vaikuntha planet. At first, everybody present thought that a light was coming. They could not understand that it was Narada. After that, when Narada Rsi came a little closer, everyone could understand further, that he was some kind of human being. Still, the situation was not clear. When he finally came down, everybody understood that he was Narada Rsi. The first vision was not clear. It was only light: Similarly Brahma is only the most distant reflection of cit, and Paramatma is the combination of sat and cit. He has no pastimes like Bhagavan. Bhagavan is complete – sat-cit-ananda (the embodiment of eternity, bliss and knowledge).

This Bhagavan is svagata-veda-rahita, as Sundara Gopala explained. We have many limbs on our body. Krsna also has various limbs, but in His body there is no difference between one limb and another. In this connection Srila Gurudeva has given an example. Once the king of Jagannatha Puri invaded Vidyanagara in South India, and he brought the Deities of Radha Kanta, Saksi-Gopala and Bhandu Ganesh back to Puri.

At first, the king kept Saksi-gopala in the Jagannatha temple. One day Jagannatha-deva came in a dream and said, "O King, from where have you brought this Thakura? Since He arrived, He has been eating everything, and I have been fasting completely – as if it was Nirjala Ekadasi. Please take him out, to another place." Gopala is a little boy, so Saksi-gopala can crawl very quickly on His knees, hands and elbows. Whenever an offering of foodstuffs comes to the door of the altar room, even before it is placed on the altar, He runs there and eats everything." So Sri Bhagavan can eat by His eyes, He can walk by His eyes, and He can do anything by any limb of his body. Lord Brahmaji has said in Sri Brahma-Samhita:

angani yasya sakalendriya-vrtti-manti
pasyanti panti kalayanti ciram jaganti
ananda-cinmaya-sad-ujjvala-vigrahasya

govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami

["I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, whose transcendental form is full of bliss, truth, substantiality and is thus full of the most dazzling splendor. Each of the limbs of that transcendental figure possesses in Himself, the full-fledged functions of all the organs, and eternally sees, maintains and manifests the infinite universes, both spiritual and mundane." (Sri Brahma-samhita 5.32)]

By any limb of His body, He can do the job of any other limb. Any limb can do anything. Svagata-veda-rahit. There is no difference between Krsna and His body, and there is no difference between one part of His body and another.

Svajatiya means the same type. God has many incarnations. Though externally they seem different, with different features, they are not. By tattva-gata vicara, the considerations of established philosophical truths, all the incarnations are krsna-tattva. We offer tulasi leaves and flowers to the lotus feet of Krsna. In the same way, we can offer tulasi to the feet of Visnu-tattva. They are svajatiya-veda-rahit – of the same type. There is no difference.

Vijatiya-veda-rahit. There is cit-jagat (the spiritual world) and jada-jagat (the material world). They both depend on Krsna, so they have no independence or different existence. Thus, Bhavagan is svagata-veda-rahit, svajatiya-veda-rahit and vijatiya-veda-rahit.

[Syamarani dasi:] At the beginning of the Krsna consciousness movement in the West, when we were all very brand new devotees, in order to help us understand this, our Srila Prabhupada gave us some very simple analogies. One analogy is that of a mountain. When you see a mountain from very far away, it looks like a cloud. When you get closer you see it is something green, and when you get very close you see all the grasses, plants, insects, and so much other variety – but the mountain is one. Another analogy is of a train coming into the station. From afar it looks like a light, when it comes closer it looks like a lump of iron, and when you go inside you see seats, posters, poles, newspapers on the floor, people sitting, etc. The third analogy is of the sun. When the sun is seen from very far away, it seems like a glow, a light. When you look more closely, you see the sun-disc, which is over everyone's head, whether a person is in India or America or anywhere else. If you get very close and go on the sun planet itself, you can see the great varieties on the sun and even talk to the sun-god. So, these are three very simple analogies.

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] We have discussed and explained this verse in various ways, and it can be understood very simply. Tattva-vidas means those who know tattva: krsna-tattva, jiva-tattva, maya-tattva, bhakti-tattva, rasa-tattva, radha-tattva and all other kinds of tattva. In this connection, "vidas" means "to know factually". "To know" means that they have actually realized these tattvas. Such tattva-vidas are not like you, who are only speaking. Advayam means the Supreme Truth, and I will explain this in very easy language so that you can understand it.

There are not many Gods. The Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Jews and others do not worship different Supreme Gods. There is only one God. Due to the various pronunciations and languages of different places, it may thus appear that there are many Gods or Truths. But there is really only one highest established Truth.

The devotees here have explained this fact very well, and I will now explain it in a very easy way.

We do not see the Supreme Lord here. Where is He? An unrealized person sees so many other persons, so many countries, so many trees, so many mountains, so many snakes, aquatics and entities who live in the air. We see only one sun, but really there are billions of suns in the billions of universes. The existence of these entities, objects and universes is not separate from the Highest Truth, Vrajendra-nandana Syamasundara. They are not independent. Even Lord Nrsimhadeva and Lord Narayana are not independent. They all depend on Lord Krsna. What we are seeing and experiencing is not directly Sri Krsna, but at the same time it is not other than Him.

All have come from Lord Krsna's power. Sakti-saktiman abheda – Krsna and His power are non-different. Krsna is saktiman, (the possessor of all power) and Srimati Radhika is His sakti, power. The supreme power is Srimati Radhika, whose saktiman is Krsna, and there is no difference between Them. When Krsna wishes or desires anything, at once, in a moment, His power will fulfill His desire. He easily creates millions upon millions of universes, and many millions upon millions of jivas in 8,400,000 kinds of species of life – but none of them have any independent existence. Even sakti has no separate or independent existence. There is only one Truth, and that is Lord Krsna; so He is advaya-jnana para-tattva.

If you go to the Himalaya Mountains or the Alps, from very far away you will see them like a cloud or fog. If you go closer, you will see trees, mountains, water and so many other things. Then, when you finally reach the spot, everything can be seen. Similarly, as you will gradually begin to know all this tattva, you will first see Brahman, with no form and no qualities. Brahman is also Krsna, because there is no existence other than Him. So, first you will see Him like Brahman, second like Paramatma and third like Bhagavan. Brahmeti paramatmeti bhagavan iti sabdyate. Here, Sri Suta Gosvami has used the word “bhagavad-tattva,” and next time, in a later verse, he tells us who that bhagavad-tattva is.

ete camsa-kalah pumsah
krsnas tu bhagavan svayam

["All of the above-mentioned incarnations are either plenary portions or portions of the plenary portions of the Lord, but Lord Sri Krsna is the original Personality of Godhead." (Srimad-bhagavatam 1.3.28)]

There may be so many Bhagavans, Gods. Rama is Bhagavan, Narayana is Bhagavan, Mathuresa Krsna, Dvarakadhisa Krsna and Goloka Krsna are all Bhagavan. But Svayam (the original and complete) Bhagavan is Vrajendra-nandana Krsna, that Krsna whose

abode is Vrndavana. I have explained these truths in very clear language, so that it is easy for you to understand.

[Endnote: Madhava Maharaja: When Srila Vyasadeva wanted to reveal the scriptures, he needed a writer. He told Lord Brahma, "I can dictate, but I have no time to write; so I want a writer." Lord Brahma said that Sri Ganesh would be the perfect person. Ganesh thought, "I am more intelligent and more qualified than anyone. This is insulting for me, being a writer of this person." Still, he said, "Yes, I can write." He could not deny Lord Brahma, because Lord Brahma is his superior.

"But I have one condition." He added. "When I start, I should not stop my writing. If I stop once, then I will not write anymore." Srila Vyasadeva said, "I also have one condition. When I dictate to you, you have to understand everything properly. If you write without understanding, your head will crack and I will not be responsible for that." Then Sri Ganesh thought: "O my God, once I lose my head, my father will again put an elephant head on me.

When Vyasa was dictating, sometimes he spoke verses that were very hard to understand properly. If Ganesh would write without understanding, his head would explode; so when he is thinking, "What is the meaning?" in the meantime, Srila Vyasadeva composed thousands of slokas in his mind. When Ganesh then wrote down the verse after somewhat understanding it, then Vyasadeva continued dictating.

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