

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

HOW TO PULL THE ROPE

(A lecture on the inner significance of Ratha-yatra)

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Having begun two days ago, the Chariot Festival is now taking place in Jagannatha Puri, and millions upon millions of people from all over the world are gathered there. Two days from now is Hera Pancami, after that the return festival will take place, and so many kirtanas and other events will be taking place daily.

Sri Krsna and His associates, as well as His incarnations, come to this Earth with a purpose – and that purpose is the distribution of their causeless mercy. They come to attract people, and to inspire them in the process by which they can cross the river of the endless cycle of birth and death.

We will discuss the Ratha-yatra Festival, but first I want to discuss the stages of bhakti. Bhakti begins from sraddha. Then nistha (steadiness) comes, and then ruci (taste) comes. Srila Rupa Gosvami has written:

adau sraddha tatah sadhu-
sango 'tha bhajana-kriya
tato 'narta-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)]

It seems from the external appearance of the above-mentioned verse that Srila Rupa Gosvami has not first written "sadhu-sanga". But the inner meaning is that sadhu-sanga is first. The word "adau" implies sadhu-sanga.

krsna-bhakti-janma-mula haya `sadhu-sanga'
krsna-prema janme, tenho punah mukhya anga

["The root cause of devotional service to Lord Krsna is association with advanced devotees. Even when one's dormant love for Krsna awakens, association with devotees is still most essential." (Caitanya-Caritamrta Madhya-lila 22.83)]

A sadhu is not understood simply by appearance. Disguised as a tridandi sannyasi sadhu, the demon Ravana approached Sita and kidnapped her. Nowadays, millions of demons like Ravana disguise themselves as sadhus and tour here and there. It may be that there are many Ravana among us also, who are trying to attract "Sita" and kidnap her. They have come in the form of sadhus, but they should know that Rama and Laksmana are here.

Ordinary people don't know who is a sadhu and who is not. They judge only outer symptoms. Their consideration depends on that – because they don't know.

Without any apparent reason the bona fide sadhu comes to the door of a householder and asks, "Can you give me a glass of water?" "Can you give me a pair of sandals?" He is not thirsty. Rather, he is creating their sukriti, and in conversations with them he gives some thoughts about the aim and object of their lives. They speak from Mahabharata or Srimad-bhagavatam, and in the process they give some knowledge of bhakti and tell who is really sadhu and who is not. By this association they bring the general people to a platform upon which they can have real transcendental sraddha. But hearing alone will no do. If people do not serve and obey high class sadhus, they cannot advance.

Bhagavad-gita states:

tad viddhi pranipatena
pariprasnena sevaya
upadeksyanti te jnanam
jnaninas tattva-darsinah

["Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth." (Bhagavad-gita 4.34)]

If you are not performing seva to the elevated sadhu, not obeying him and not having a strong belief in him, you cannot advance. This is the meaning of association.

By that association, first sraddha manifests.

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 Krsna one automatically performs all subsidiary activities. Such faith is favorable to the discharge of devotional service." (Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya 22.62)]

Sraddha is the strong conviction that, "If I will chant, remember and meditate on Lord Krsna, my life will be successful and I need do nothing else – I will have nothing to collect and no need to maintain myself."

This life has been given by Lord Krsna, as a result of your past activities. Even if you do not do anything to earn a living, your maintenance is still bound to come. There is nothing to worry about, nothing to suffer. Birds, ants and pythons do nothing for their maintenance, but their life is maintained. We, on the other hand, think, "I am so active. I am engaged in business. I am serving my company, and thus money is coming and maintaining me." This idea is quite false. Do not believe in this theory. Believe in the truth that Krsna has given you this human form and He has written your fate in such and such a way – for your entire life. Suffering and happiness may come, but your life will somehow be maintained. If you are sitting somewhere, some one will come and ask, "Why are you hungry? Here take this." Krsna Himself may come, and there are so many histories in this regard.

Try to do krsna-bhakti and nothing else, and you will see that you now have enough time to do bhajana. Why did Srila Vyasadeva write the Srimad-bhagavatam, Bhagavad-gita, Puranas and other scriptures? He wrote them for us, but we are so unfortunate that we are not taking advantage of them. We must have a strong faith in scriptures like Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-bhagavatam, Ramayana and all others. Sri Valmiki is not less than Vyasadeva; he is also a Vyasa – the Vyasa of Rama avatara. Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, Sri Caitanya-bhagavata and the books of Srila Rupa Gosvami are not less important than the works of Srila Vyasadeva, and in some cases they are superior. Try to make a vow that, "In this human form I have only one aim and object of my life – to practice bhakti-yoga."

Now, I want to give a brief explanation of Ratha-yatra and its origin. Sri Krsna went to Kuruksetra to observe a solar eclipse, and Srimati Radhika and all other Vrajavasis also went there. There are some histories about this in Brhad-bhagavatamrta and other scriptures, and we have explained this many times.

[At this time Srila Narayana Maharaja called on devotees to relate the three histories that were causes of Lord Jagannathas appearance. We sent out the first

two on the harikatha mailing list at the time of Ratha-yatra, taken from "The Origin of Ratha-yatra", and you will find the third as Endnote 1.]

[Devotees sing Hari Hari Vihpale Janama Gonainu by Srila Narottama dasa Thakura:]

"O Hari! Even after receiving this rare human birth, I have wasted this life, not having performed bhajana of Radha-Krsna. Rather, I have knowingly drunk poison. The treasure of prema-bhakti has descended with nama-sankirtana. Oh, why am I not attracted to it? My heart is burning night and day in the poisonous fire of material life, but I have not taken the remedy to extinguish it. Vrajendra-nandana has come as Saci-suta Gaurasundara. Balarama has come as Nityananda. They delivered all the fallen and wretched jivas through harinama, as witnessed in Jagai and Madhai. O Radhe! O Krsna! Please give me mercy one time. Don't push me away from Your lotus feet, which are like red lotuses. Except for You, no one else is mine in this world."

Srila Narottama dasa Thakura realized the meaning of this song and, weeping, he sang it from the core of his heart. When he would begin to sing this kirtana, his heart would melt and the entire audience would weep. He would fall on the ground unconscious and begin rolling on the ground. We should realize all kirtanas and then sing. If you are realizing, your heart will be melted; but our problem is that our hearts are made of thunderbolts.

dehka ore bhai, tri-bhuvane nai, emana dayala-data
pasu pakhi jhre, pasana vidare, suni ja'ra guna-gatha

["O brother, just see! In all the three worlds there is no one else as merciful as Them. Hearing Their glories (especially Their mercy) sung, the animals and birds cry tears of love, and stones melt." (Sri Gaura-Nityanandera Daya, verse 3)]

Stones melted, and there are so many examples of this – like Carana pahari in Vraja, at the Puri temple, and at Citrakuta and in Alalanatha. But our hearts are even harder than stones.

It was for this reason – to teach us how to purify our hearts – that Lord Caitanya performed Gundica-mandira-marjana before performing Ratha-yatra; and this has been written in the Sri Caitanya-caritamrta. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took the service of cleaning from the King, through Kasi Misra. He went to the Gundica temple with thousands of His associates, each carrying one broom and one pitcher, and He Himself cleaned with His own utariya (sannyasa upper garment). He first swept with a broom, then he removed stones and chips, and then also the dust here and there. He made the temple as clean as His heart.

Why did He and His associates clean so thoroughly? The cleansing of the mandira was conducted by Mahaprabhu to let us know how the heart should be cleansed

and soothed in order to receive Lord Krsna and enable Him to sit within the heart without disturbance. Only a pure heart can pull the chariot.

Become free from all your anarthas and all kinds of offenses – sadhu-ninda, gurur avagna, sruti-sastra-ninda etc [*See Endnote 2]. There are ten offenses to chanting the holy name. Also, try to understand what Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura has written about anistitha-bhakti. When all impediments and obstacles are gone, ones heart becomes spotless. Then, at the time of bhava (rati) the devotee can pull the rope of Lord Jagannatha's chariot. Do you understand? We ordinary people pull the ropes for show. We are not qualified to pull them. We only touch them. Many elephants cannot pull the rope, what to speak of a single man. Who can pull the chariot? One whose heart is pure – like Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu – can pull it.

Krsna's heart is also not pure, in the sense that He has so much attraction for all – all the gopis, all the Mathura-ramanis, the Queens of Dvaraka and any brand new associates – so His heart is not pure. Only the heart of the gopis, and especially the heart of Srimati Radhika is clean and pure, because they are one-pointed to Krsna. We should try to follow them. Srimati Radhika can pull and attract the chariot of Krsna, and She can also attract His heart. This is the meaning of Gundica-mandira-marjana.

Try to see your offenses and anarthas; and to understand the six kinds of anistitha-bhakti (unsteady bhakti) [*See Endnote 3] and after that the five obstacles. [*See Endnote 4]

As the above-mentioned obstacles disappear, ruci (taste) in devotional service will come. This means that the devotee is getting ready to pull the chariot – but even he cannot, unless he comes to the stage of rati, and especially to the stage of madanakya-mahabhava. This is the final or ultimate stage.

The gopis can pull the ropes, and they are pulling them and bringing Krsna from Kuruksetra to Vrndavana. You, on the other hand, can't even bring an advanced Vaisnava because you don't recognize him.

This is the internal meaning of Gundica-mandira-marjanam and the pulling of the chariot. Try to become so purified that, what to speak of touching the ropes, you can pull the Ratha chariot.

Now, I request you all to come tomorrow by 5:00pm, so that we can discuss for two hours – and other classes should be continued during the day.

Gaura premanande.

[*Endnote 1 – The Third History, from Srila Narayana Maharaja's book, "The Origin of Ratha-yatra":

We have discussed many topics regarding the Festival of the Chariots, and about the deities of Jagannatha, Baladeva, and Subhadra, but I do not think that we have touched even a small fraction of their glory. Even if Anantadeva would come with his thousands and thousands of hoods to glorify Lord Jagannatha, and Jagannatha Himself appeared before him, Anantadeva would still not be able to glorify Him properly.

We have already related two histories explaining Jagannatha's appearance, and there is one more, a third history, which came from the heart of a very advanced devotee. This history has extraordinarily deep and secret rasa, transcendental flavor. I used to relate it in Mathura and Vrndavana, and in Jagannatha Puri as well. When I told it, everyone listened silently, and they were moved, for they had never heard such secrets before. They wondered, "Where has he discovered this?"

A few years later I saw a magazine article by Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja, a prominent disciple of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. As I began to read it, I thought, "Oh, he has written the same thing here with a few small changes. How has he taken this from my heart?" I became happy and thought, "This person, Gour Govinda Maharaja, is one of the rare people in this world who are genuinely in the line of Caitanya Mahaprabhu and the Gosvamis. Only a real devotee can know all these truths."

A few years ago, while I was translating some books in Jagannatha Puri, Gour Govinda Maharaja came with only one disciple to meet me. He heard my hari-katha very patiently, and he was charmed. We became friends, and he told me, "I saw you in Vrndavana at the time of Srila Prabhupada's disappearance, when you placed him in samadhi. I was there, but at that time I was quite insignificant. You moved me very much, and I wanted to meet you and hear your classes, but I could not do so at that time. Now I have come."

He continued, "There are some problems. I cannot speak the glories of Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Radha-Krsna. I am controlled by some people who don't want to hear them. They are creating problems, and even stopping me from going to Australia, Germany, and other countries. I cannot open my heart and tell these glories," and he began to weep. I embraced him and said, "Don't worry – be strong like me. If problems come, jump over them like a lion. Be like Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja and my Gurudeva." I consoled him so much, and then he went away. The next year he went to Mayapura, and there he departed from this world while relating this very history. Many of his disciples came to me weeping, and I told them, "I will help you. Don't worry." His ideas were very similar to my own, and this story is therefore also related to him.

What I explained there in Jagannatha Puri and during our grand Navadvipa Chariot Festival has also been published in our monthly magazine, Bhagavat Patrika. I also searched for the scripture in which this pastime was originally written, but no one could tell me where it was. I asked many learned pandas in

Jagannatha Puri, and they could only tell me, "We've read it, and we'll have to search for the original book," but they could not produce it.

Krsna returns to Vrndavana

All the Vrajavasis feel great separation when Krsna goes to Mathura and Dvaraka, especially Mother Yasoda and Nanda Baba, and above all, Krsna's beloved gopis. Sometimes they faint and lose consciousness, appearing as if dead, and one may even think, "Oh, they have died!" Krsna also feels separation from the gopis, and especially from Radhika. Sometimes He also loses external consciousness, and He remains in that state for many days.

As we hear and discuss these elevated topics, we feel proud and think, "My gurudeva and I are in the line of Srila Rupa Gosvami as rupanuga Vaisnavas." The senior devotees are especially aware that our guru-varga, the gurus in our disciplic succession, are all rupanuga Vaisnavas. We should therefore understand Srila Rupa Gosvami's mood at this Festival of the Chariots.

As discussed previously, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was reciting a verse of Sahitya-darpana over and over again, even though it was originally written in the base mood of mundane lovers and is thus against moral etiquette:

yah kaumara-harah sa eva hi varas ta eva caitra-ksapas
te conmilata-malati-surabhayah praudhah kadambanilah
sa caivasmi tathapi tatra surata-vyapara-lila-vidhau
reva-rodhasi vetasi-taru-tale cetah samutkanthate

["That very personality who stole my heart during my youth is now again my master. These are the same moonlit nights of the month of Caitra. The same fragrance of malati flowers is there, and the same sweet breezes are blowing from the kadamba forest. In our intimate relationship, I am also the same lover, yet still my mind is not happy here. I am eager to go back to that place on the bank of the Reva under the Vetasi tree. That is my desire. (Sri Caitanya-caritamrta Antya-lila 1.78)]

One person, Svarupa Damodara, understood Caitanya Mahaprabhu's inner meaning, and there was a second person who did as well – a very young man who later became Srila Rupa Gosvami. No one other than them understood Mahaprabhu's deep meaning. Mahaprabhu had empowered Rupa Gosvami at Prayaga, and given him His full mercy, so that now he was able to write the meaning in his own sloka:

priyah so 'yam krsnah saha-cari kuru-ksetra-militas
tathaham sa radha tad idam ubhayoh sangama-sukham
tathapy antah-khelan-madhura-murali-pancama-juse

mano me kalindi-pulina-vipinaya sprhayati

["Now I have met My very old and dear friend Krsna on this field of Kuruksetra. I am the same, and now we are meeting together. It is very pleasant, but still I would like to go to the bank of the Yamuna beneath the trees of the forest there. I wish to hear the vibration of His sweet flute playing the fifth note within that forest of Vrndavana." (Sri Caitanya-caritamrta Antya-lila 1.79)]

The verses from Sri Caitanya-caritamrta (Madhya-lila13.126–31) that follow this one further explain its meaning:

avasese radha krsne kare nivedana
sei tumi, sei ami, sei nava sangama

["In the mood of Srimati Radhika, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu spoke thus to Lord Jagannatha: You are the same Krsna, and I am the same Radharani. We are meeting again in the same way that we met in the beginning of our lives."]

tathapi amara mana hare vrndavana
vrndavane udaya karao apana-carana

["Although we are both the same, My mind is still attracted to Vrndavana-dhama. I wish that You will please again appear with Your lotus feet in Vrndavana."]

ihan lokaranya, hati, ghoda, ratha-dhvani
tahan pusparanya, bhrnga-pika-nada suni

["In Kuruksetra there are crowds of people, elephants, and horses, and also the rattling of chariots. But in Vrndavana there are flower gardens, and the humming of bees and chirping of birds can be heard."]

ihan raja-vesa, sange saba ksatriya-gana
tahan gopa-vesa, sange murali-vadana

["Here at Kuruksetra You are dressed like a royal prince, and You are accompanied by great warriors, but in Vrndavana You appeared just like an ordinary cowherd boy, accompanied only by Your beautiful flute."]

vraje tomara sange yei sukha-asvadana
sei sukha-samudrera ihan nahi eka kana

["Here there is not even a drop of the ocean of transcendental happiness that I enjoyed with You in Vrndavana."]

ama lana punah lila karaha vrndavane
tabe amara mano-vancha haya ta' purane

["I therefore request You to come to Vrndavana and enjoy pastimes with Me. If You do so, My ambition will be fulfilled."]

Srimati Radhika is saying, "I am the same, My beloved Krsna is the same, and we are meeting now after a long time; but I am not happy here. I want to be in Vrndavana, under the shade of the very fragrant kadamba trees, where the Yamuna is flowing. We were not married at that time, and We met freely there without any messenger. Our love increased simply by our glancing at each other, and that love reached an extreme height. Now we are meeting again, here in Kuruksetra, but I am not satisfied. I want You to come to My heart, that is, Vrndavana. I want to meet You there again."

Srila Rupa Gosvami has made the meaning clear in his sloka. If one remembers and follows these ideas, he is actually a rupanuga Vaisnava, and if not, he is outside the disciplic line. Those who forbid others to think about these things are not rupanuga Vaisnavas in the line of Rupa Gosvami. Try to understand this. It is egotistic to think, "My gurudeva, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, has not encouraged us to understand this." Your gurudeva has explained this thousands of times, but you have no eyes to see, or ears to hear. He was a rupanuga, as were all our past acaryas, down to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura and my gurudeva.

When my gurudeva remembered these topics, his complexion used to become reddish, yellowish, and whitish, and then he used to become faint. And when I would tell him these pastimes, he would weep continuously. All bona fide gurus are in one line, and if you are not in this line, you are derailed. Granted, we should not explain this subject matter to unqualified people, but if we do not explain it at all, then all these ideas will be gone – washed away from this world forever. Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami has replied to all doubts in this regard. Try to realize this reply.

Srimad-Bhagavatam (7.5.23) states:

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) – these nine processes are accepted as pure devotional service."]

Those who tell us only the general or external meaning of this sloka should go to the Ramanuja or Madhvacarya sampradayas, for they only know general principles. We should add the mood of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to these principles. For example, in the first line of this sloka, "Visnu" means Krsna with Radhika and the gopis. This is the understanding of those in the line of Srila Rupa Gosvami. Try to understand this. If you never remember, realize, and explain this to those who are qualified, you are derailed from our guru-parampara. You must come in the proper line.

Srimad-Bhagavatam (10.33.39, 36) also states:

vikriditam vraja-vadhubhir idam ca visnoh
sraddhanvito 'nusrnuyad atha varnayed yah
bhaktim param bhagavati pratilabhya kamam
hrd-rogam asv apahinoty acirena dhirah

["A sober person who faithfully hears or describes the Lord's playful affairs with the young gopis of Vrndavana will attain the Lord's pure devotional service. Thus he will quickly conquer lust, the disease of the heart."]

anugrahaya bhaktanam
manusam deham asthitah
bhajate tadsih krida
yah srutva tat-paro bhavet

["When the Lord assumes a human-like body to show mercy to His devotees, He engages in such pastimes as will attract those who hear about them to become dedicated to Him."]

Tat-paro bhavet means, "You must do this; otherwise you are derailed." You should not do anukarana; that is, you should not imitate Krsna's pastimes. However, those of you who are coming gradually to the stage of madhyama-adhikara must try to hear these pastimes; otherwise you are derailed. It is essential to follow the statements of Sri Rupa Gosvami at the Chariot Festival.

Don't be confused. Have no doubt at all. You can think in this way: "The whole world may criticize and be against me – I don't care. I care for my gurudeva, for Srila Rupa Gosvami, and for our acarya-varga." Krsna has given you good intelligence. Use your own intelligence and don't run after others'. Try to judge, and see, and read the authorized sastras. If you say, "We are rupanuga-varga," you must follow Rupa Gosvami, not conceal him. Use your intelligence and see for yourself, and then you will realize what is correct and what is incorrect. If I conceal my father's name, is it right? Is it correct to conceal the name of my father?

You can read the translation of this sloka, and after that you can read the explanation of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja and especially that of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura.

Now I am coming again to the point – the third history. When the gopis became unconscious because of being absorbed in feelings of separation from Krsna, He also became unconscious in Dvaraka, thinking, "Radhika, Radhika!" This had become a very big problem, and Narada, Uddhava, Baladeva Prabhu, and others began discussing how to bring Him back to consciousness. At first, they suggested that Narada should play on his vina and glorify Vraja, Mother Yasoda, the gopis, and all other Vrajavasis, but Narada objected: "Do you know what will happen when Krsna awakens? He will go to Vrndavana at once, and no one will be able to stop Him. He will stay there with the gopis and never return. You should consider this when you are deciding what to do."

Now they were in a dilemma. They thought again, and decided, "Uddhava should go to Vraja and tell Mother Yasoda, Nanda Maharaja, and the gopas and gopis that Krsna is coming. He will tell them, 'Now you can welcome Him.' No one can know what state the Vrajavasis are in now. Some are even lying here and there unconscious. When they hear that Krsna is coming, they will return to consciousness and make arrangements to welcome Him. Then Uddhava will somehow bring Krsna to Dvaraka again by a trick. There will be no problem. Uddhava must go there. Krsna sent him previously, and therefore he should go now and tell them that Krsna is coming."

Uddhava was very unhappy when he heard this proposal. "Listen to me," he told them. "If I go to Vrndavana and say that Krsna is coming, they will not believe me because I bluffed them before. I told them, 'I am going, and very soon I will bring Krsna here. I will definitely bring Him.' After that I requested Krsna many times, but He gave all kinds of excuses, so what could I do? It's useless for me to go, because they will not believe me. They will say, 'Oh, the liar has come. The cheater has come!' Especially Mother Yasoda will say this."

Narada Muni said, "Then Baladeva Prabhu can go. He can pacify all the gopis and gopas." But Baladeva Prabhu replied in the same way: "I told Krsna so many times to go there, and He always answered, 'Yes, I will go,' but He never went. Finally I went alone and I pacified them by saying, 'I promise that I will go to Dvaraka and bring Krsna.'"

"I don't know why this cruel Krsna never wants to go there. He used to be very soft and sweet, but now His heart has turned to stone. What can I say? If I go, the Vrajavasis will also say about me, 'Oh, this cheater and liar has come!' There is no use in my going because they will not believe Me, either. They cannot be consoled without Krsna's direct presence. Krsna should go Himself."

While they were discussing what to do, Krsna's sister Subhadra came in and heard everything. "Don't worry," she said, "I'm going. I will go to Vrndavana and take darsana of Mother Yasoda. First I will sit on her lap, and then I will caress her and tell her, 'Mother, Krsna is coming. He was traveling with Me, but on the way many kings surrounded Him and began performing arcana to Him, praying to Him, and offering Him many presentations. That is why I have arrived here first. Krsna will be a bit late, but He's on His way. It may be some hours, or one or two days, but He is coming.' I will go door-to-door to the gopis' homes. I will console them and tell them, 'Oh, now be happy. Don't feel separation. Krsna is coming!' They will become happy, and then I will tell them, 'You should all be ready to welcome Krsna.' Later, I will play a trick and tell My brother, 'Oh, You are sitting here, while Your mother Devaki, Your father Vasudeva, and all Your queens are living there in Dvaraka?' I will bring Him back to Dvaraka by some trick, so don't worry. Let me first bring a good chariot. After that Narada should sing the glory of Vraja accompanied by his vina, then Krsna will return to consciousness, and after that He will come to Vrndavana, where everything will be ready."

A chariot was brought and Subhadra was ready to go. Then Baladeva said, "If my brother and sister are going, I must go. I want to meet with my mother and father, Yasoda-maiya and Nanda Baba, and I want to meet all my friends and the gopis. I cannot remain here. I must go." Subhadra said, "Yes, we will go together. Baladeva Prabhu will go first, and I will follow Him." So another chariot was brought, and Baladeva's ratha was placed in front of Subhadra's. As they were about to leave, Baladeva Prabhu told Daruka, Krsna's chariot driver, "Bring your chariot here and be ready. When Krsna returns to consciousness, take the chariot and fly to Vrndavana."

Narada Muni was then requested to glorify Vraja and, accompanied by his vina, he began to sing very beautifully. As Narada's sweet glorification of Vraja entered Krsna's ears, He regained consciousness and thought, "It is morning, and I am in Vraja. Where is My sweet vamsi?" He asked. "Where, where? Oh, I know. The gopis are very tricky. They have stolen it. I'll give them a good lesson." Then He stood in a beautiful threefold bending form, as He had previously done in Vraja, and He appeared in a way that no one in Dvaraka had ever seen before.

As He began searching, He said, "Oh, Lalita has taken it! If not Lalita, then Radhika Herself has stolen it with Visakha's help." He acted as though He was searching them to see where they had kept His flute. In the meantime, He saw Uddhava and asked, "Uddhava, why are you in Vrndavana?" Then He saw Narada and asked, "Oh, you are also in Vrndavana? From where have you come?" Narada replied, "Oh my Lord, You are not in Vrndavana. You are in Dvaraka. This is not the Yamuna; it is the ocean in Dvaraka Puri. Please remember where You are."

Krsna was so absorbed that He forgot Uddhava and Narada and everyone else, and He was ready to run away to Vrndavana to quickly meet the gopas and gopis.

Uddhava told Him, "Prabhu, Your chariot is ready, because we knew that You would do this. You can mount Your chariot and go to Vrndavana immediately."

Krsna wanted to ascend His chariot, but He was so mad in Radha-prema that He could not walk alone. Many people began to assist Him as He walked by, holding Him and helping Him from the front and back, and from both sides. He was like a mad person, lost in Radha's love and affection. Somehow He was taken to the chariot and raised upon it, and Daruka at once drove off with great speed toward Vrndavana. Balarama and Subhadra were ahead, and Krsna followed behind.

In the meantime, in Vrndavana, Radhika was in the last stage of Her life, feeling unbearable separation. She was just about to die, not breathing in or out, and all the Vrajavasis were very worried, thinking, "She is going to leave Her body!" Everyone had lost hope that She would remain alive, and they were totally grief-stricken. They all thought, "We cannot save Her! She will certainly die!" Lalita and Visakha were trying hard to revive Her, but there were no signs of revival.

While this was going on, all the other sakhis also assembled there, and they were also extremely upset – and even Candravali came to show her sympathy. Somehow Radhika said in a very low voice, "If I die, My dead body should be placed around a tamala tree. Let the air in My body be mixed with the air of Nandagaon where Krsna takes His breaths. Let the fire in My body mix with the sun-rays at Nanda Baba's house so that it will shine there and I will touch Krsna. May the earth of My body mix with the courtyard of Nanda-bhavana, so that Krsna can walk on Me and I can touch Him." As She lamented in this way, She again became unconscious.

In the meantime, three chariots arrived in Vraja – Subhadra's and Baladeva's in front, and Krsna's following. As soon as Krsna reached there, He heard, "Radhika is going to die, and She will not remain alive for even one more moment." He ran very quickly to the spot where She was giving up Her body, and when He saw Her, He began to cry bitterly. Becoming more and more absorbed in Radha-prema, His hands began melting. The lower part of His body also melted, then His face as well; and only two large round eyes remained. Just then, Baladeva Prabhu and Subhadra arrived, and when they saw this scene, they could not control themselves and they also became like Krsna.

In the meantime, Lalita spoke repeatedly in the ear of Radhika, "Radha, Radha! Krsna has come. Krsna has come to meet You! Don't die." Visakha said in the other ear, "Krsna has come to meet You!" Gradually Radhika regained Her external consciousness, opened Her eyes, and thought, "Oh, beautiful Krsna has come!" She became further absorbed in the ecstasy of love and affection. Seeing Her, Krsna's love also increased, and He lost external consciousness. In that same state He began rolling on the earth.

Radhika told Visakha, "Please help Krsna; otherwise He may die. You know the mantra to revive Him. Say in His ear, 'Radha, Radha!' "When Krsna heard this sweet injection of the powerful mantra from the lips of Visakha, "Radha, Radha, Radha, Radha!" He opened His eyes and became so happy again. Gradually He revived, and They met together and everyone became happy.

Narada also arrived, and he requested Krsna, "Prabhu, please manifest these three forms that You revealed when You were absorbed and melted. In that way everyone will see and realize these truths about You. Please manifest these forms somewhere in this world." Krsna replied, "Tatha 'stu, tatha 'stu evam bhavatu! So be it. I will always remain in this shape in Nilacala, which will be like Dvaraka, and everyone will be able to come and see Me there."

I have told this very beautiful pastime in brief. This lila is in the hearts of pure devotees, and Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja has also touched it. I have also reconciled some points to clarify any doubts or misunderstandings about this lila.

You should know that there are four groups of gopis in Vraja: svapaksa (belonging to Radhika's own group), vipaksa (belonging to the group of Her rivals), tatastha-paksa (belonging to the group that is neutral to Her), and suhrt-paksa (belonging to the group that is friendly to Her), and Krsna's pastimes cannot take place without them. However, there are no parties when Krsna disappears, or when He goes to Mathura or Dvaraka and a separation mood manifests in the gopis' hearts. At that time, all the parties become one for Krsna, and they help each other. Candravali, or Bhadra, or any of the others may come and pacify Srimati Radhika, because Her separation is the highest. They are very sympathetic towards Her, because their separation mood is not as high in comparison. They tell Her, "O Radhika, You should not weep. Krsna will come." Even Candravali, who has a deep separation mood of her own, will also come and speak like this.

The interactions here are very mysterious, and I want to give you realization and entrance into these very extraordinary pastimes, but you have to become qualified first. Try to follow regulated bhakti – sravanam kirtanam visnoh smaranam – otherwise you will not be able to maintain your spiritual life. You will become lusty, and after some time you will think that Krsna's pastimes are the same as your pastimes of getting divorced. I have not read scriptures like Govinda-lilamrta, but I know that most of you have copies of all these books. Many of those who read these have fallen down, so you should not read them at this time, nor should you give classes on these topics. Be very, very careful. Our aim and object is to realize Krsna's pastimes, but you cannot jump to this. If you want to be situated on a tree, you must first try to climb up from the root, and from there you can go to the highest places. If you try to jump, you will fall down.

I request you to read Upadesamrta, Manah-siksa, and books like them. Try to chant more. Chanting only sixteen rounds will not suffice. Your gurudeva has given sixteen and then one, sixteen and then one, sixteen and then one; there are

four sets of sixteen. Has he given this without a purpose? A man may be very expert in speaking hari-katha and performing related services, but if he does not chant because he has no taste, he is a very weak devotee, and after some time he may fall down.

tan-nama-rupa-caritadi-sukirtananu-
smrtyoh kramena rasana-manasi niyojya
tisthan vraje tad-anuragi jananugami
kalam nayed akhila ity upadesa-saram

["The essence of all advice is that one should utilize his full time – twenty-four hours a day – in nicely chanting and remembering the Lord's divine name, transcendental form, qualities, and eternal pastimes, thereby gradually engaging his tongue and mind. In this way one should reside in Vraja and serve Krsna under the guidance of devotees. One should follow in the footsteps of the Lord's beloved devotees, who are deeply attached to His devotional service."
(Upadesamrta verse 8)]

Be in Vrndavana, under the guidance of a rasika-tattvajna Vaisnava guru, and always chant the names with their meaning, knowing and remembering Sri Radha-Krsna's pastimes. Then you will become fully qualified for this highest object of life.”(Origin of Ratha-yatra, chapter 8)]

[*Endnote 2: There are ten offenses to avoid in chanting the Hare Krsna maha-mantra. The first offense is to blaspheme great personalities who are engaged in distributing the holy name of the Lord. It is said in the sastra (Sri Caitanya-caritamrta Antya-lila 7.11), krsna-sakti vina nahe tara pravartana: one cannot distribute the holy names of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra unless he is empowered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore one should not criticize or blaspheme a devotee who is thus engaged.

The second namaparadha is described as follows:

sivasya sri-visnor ya iha guna-namadi-sakalam
dhiya bhinnam pasyet sa khalu hari-namahita-karah

In this material world, the holy name of Visnu is all-auspicious. Visnu's name, form, qualities and pastimes are all transcendental absolute knowledge. Therefore, if one tries to separate the Absolute Personality of Godhead from His holy name or His transcendental form, qualities and pastimes, thinking them to be material, that is offensive. Similarly, to think the names of demigods such as Lord give to be as good as the name of Lord Visnu-or in other words, to think Lord Siva and the other demigods to be other forms of God and therefore equal to Visnu-is also blasphemous. This is the second offense at the lotus feet of the Lord.

The third offense at the lotus feet of the holy name, which is called guror avajna, is to consider the spiritual master to be material and therefore envy his exalted position. The fourth offense (sruti-sastra-nindanam) is to blaspheme Vedic literatures such as the four Vedas and the Puranas. The fifth offense (tathartha-vadah) is to consider the glories of the holy name to be exaggerations. Similarly, the sixth offense (hari-namni kalpanam) is to consider the holy name of the Lord to be imaginary.

The seventh offense is described as follows:

namno balad yasya hi papa-buddhir
na vidyate tasya yamair hi suddhih

To think that since the Hare Krsna mantra can counteract all sinful reactions one may therefore go on with his sinful activities and at the same time chant the Hare Krsna mantra to neutralize them is the greatest offense at the lotus feet of hari-nama.

The eighth offense is stated thus:

dharma-vrata-tyaga-hutadi-sarva-subha-kriya-samyam api pramadah.

It is offensive to consider the chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra to be a religious ritualistic ceremony. Performing religious ceremonies, following vows and practicing renunciation and sacrifice are all materialistic auspicious activities. The chanting of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra must not be compared to such materialistic religiosity. This is an offense at the lotus feet of the Lord.

The ninth offense is described as follows:

asraddadhane vimukhe 'py asrnvati
yas copadesah siva-namaparadhah

It is an offense to preach the glories of the holy name among persons who have no intelligence or no faith in the subject matter. Such people should be given the chance to hear the chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra, but in the beginning they should not be instructed about the glories of the spiritual significance of the holy name. By constant hearing of the holy name, their hearts will be purified, and then they will be able to understand the transcendental position of the holy name.

The tenth offense is as follows:

srutvapi nama-mahatmyam
yah priti-rahito narah
aham-mamadi-paramo
namni so 'py aparadha-krt

If one has heard the glories of the transcendental holy name of the Lord but nevertheless continues in a materialistic concept of life, thinking, "I am this body and everything belonging to this body is mine [aham mameti SB 5.5.8]," and does not show respect and love for the chanting of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra, that is an offense. "(Sri Caitanya-caritamrta Adi-lila 8.25)]

[*Endnote 3 – (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 4: Laya means the tendency to sleep during kirtana, sravana, and smarana (japa), in order of increasing tendency. Viksepa means distraction toward mundane topics while doing devotional service (gossiping while doing japa). Apratipatti refers to the occasional inability to do kirtana or other service in spite of the absence of laya or viksepa. Kasaya refers to the innate tendency toward such qualities as anger, greed, and pride. Rasavada means the inability to absorb the mind in kirtana and other services if one gets the opportunity for material sense pleasure. (Madurya kadambini page 34)]

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