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It Doesn't Matter What You Are

Murwillumbah, Australia: February 6, 2008 (Part 2)

Continuing His instructions to Uddhava, the Supreme Lord Sri Krsna said, “I have decided that taking the association of pure devotees (sat-sanga) and connecting with Me by the linking process of pure devotional service (bhakti-yoga), performed at the same time, are essential for becoming My devotee.”

If you desire to attain krsna-bhakti, it is essential to follow this process: Association with pure, self-realized devotees and, under their guidance, engaging in bhakti-yoga. Bhakti-yoga consists of hearing about the Lord (sravanam), chanting His glories (kirtanam), remembering Him (visnu-smaranam), serving His lotus feet, visiting the holy places of His divine pastimes (pada-sevanam), and so on. Someone may be hearing, but afterwards he becomes weak in his devotion. Try not to be like this. From time to time I may come to your country, and from time to time I may send my representatives to help you.

Here, Krsna reveals that it is requisite to have the association of elevated Vaisnavas (devotees of the Lord) and to perform bhakti-yoga – both at the same time. This is essential. There is no other means to be liberated from the endless pain of birth and death in this world.

Krsna continued, “Uddhava, you are My dearest friend and servant. No one is as dear to Me as you, and therefore I am now revealing very confidential subject matters to you.

na rodhayati mam yogo
na sankhyam dharma eva ca
na svadhyayas tapas tyago
nesta-purtam na daksina

vratani yajnas chandamsi
tirthani niyama yamah
yathavarundhe sat-sangah
sarva-sangapaho hi mam

[“O My dear Uddhava, by associating with My pure devotees one can destroy one's attachment for all objects of material sense gratification. Such purifying association brings Me under the control of My devotee. One may perform the astanga-yoga system, engage in philosophical analysis of the elements of material nature, practice nonviolence and other ordinary principles of piety, chant the Vedas, perform penances, accept the renounced order of life, execute sacrificial performances, dig wells, plant trees and perform other public welfare activities, give in charity, carry out severe vows, worship the demigods, chant confidential mantras, visit holy places or accept major and minor disciplinary injunctions; however, even by performing such activities, one does not bring Me under his control.” (Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.12.1-2)]

Sri Krsna continued, “If you have attachment to worldly things, to your children and to all your possessions, only association with exalted devotees of Krsna can destroy it. Only such association can remove all your worldly attachments. Such association is extremely powerful, and that is why it strongly controls Me.

“On the other hand, yoga, sankhya (analytical study of material existence), varnasramadharma (performing prescribed duties), reading from the Vedas, tapasya (austerities), tyaga (renunciation) – none of these can control Me. Even by bathing in the Ganges and performing all types of vratas (vows), or by following Vedic injunctions, one will not be able to bring Me under his control and it will never be possible to control one’s senses.

“Bhakti-yoga is not the process for only one yuga (age). It is for all four yugas; the same process is needed at all times – pure association.”

sat-sangena hi daiteya
yatudhana mrgah khagah
gandharvapsaraso nagah
siddhas carana-guhyakah

vidyadhara manusyesu
vaisyah sudrah striyo 'ntya-jah
rajas-tamah-praktayas
tasmims tasmin yuge yuge

bahavo mat-padam praptas
tvastra-kayadhavadayah
vrsaparva balir bano
mayas catha vibhisana

sugrivo hanuman rkso
gajo grdhro vanikpathah
vyadhah kubja vraje gopyo
yajna-patnyas tathapare

[“In every yuga, many living entities entangled in the modes of passion and ignorance gained the association of My devotees. Thus, such living entities as the Daityas, Raksasas, birds, beasts, Gandharvas, Apsaras, Nagas, Siddhas, Caranas, Guhyakas and Vidyadharas, as well as human beings like vaisyas, sudras, women, and others, were able to achieve My supreme abode. Vrtrasura, Prahlada Maharaja and others like them also achieved My abode by association with My devotees, as did personalities such as Vrsaparva, Bali Maharaja, Banasura, Maya, Vibhisana, Sugriva, Hanuman, Jambavan, Gajendra, Jatayu, Tuladhara, Dharma-vyadha, Kubja, the gopis in Vrndavana, and the wives of the brahmanas who were performing sacrifice (Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.12.3-6).]

Even daityas (demons), raksasas (man-eaters), lions, birds, animals, gandharvas (singers from heaven), apsaras (dancers from heaven), snakes like Kaliya, and siddhas (great yogis) have achieved perfection – only by sadhu-sanga. They have not performed sacrifice, they were not very learned, and they have never read the Vedas or other scriptures.

Among human beings, vaisyas (agriculturists and merchants), sudras (laborers), women, and even outcastes have attained the supreme abode. Vrtrasura was a demon. Prahlada Maharaja was born in the dynasty of demons as the son of the atheist Hiranyakasipu. Vrsaparva *[see endnote 1] and Bali Maharaja were also born in a demon dynasty, as was Banasura. Vibhisana was the brother of Kumbhakarna and Ravana, but he was a devotee. How did he become a devotee? By the association of Hanuman. All of Ravana's army was destroyed in that great battle between Ravana and Lord Rama, but Vibhisana was saved and given the kingdom.

Sugriva and Hanuman are monkeys, Jambavan is like a bear, Gajendra is an elephant, and Jatayu is a vulture. When Ravana was kidnapping Sita, Jatayu wanted to free Sita from his hands. He at once attacked Ravana in the sky, but Ravana cut his wing and he fell to the earth and died. Just before his death, Ramacandra came to him and said, "May I give you life again?" Jatayu replied, "No, no, no. I simply want my eyes to see You, and while meditating on You and chanting Your name – Rama Rama – I will give up my body." Ramacandra Himself performed the funeral ceremony of Jatayu, and after this, Lord Rama gave him a position like a father, to serve Rama like a father in Ayodhya-dhama, the Lord's eternal abode. How did he become a devotee? By the association of the Lord's bird carrier, Garuda. Garuda is Krsna's pure devotee, and by his association Jatayu became a devotee.

Do you know Hanuman? He is an incarnation of Lord Siva. When Ramacandra comes, Siva becomes Hanuman to serve Him. In Krsna's pastimes, Siva becomes a gopi, namely Gopesvara Mahadeva, to serve Him.

Kubja was a prostitute from Mathura. By only one day's association with Sri Krsna, she also became transformed into a devotee. Even deer, snakes like Kaliya, and so many others who were born in foolish species achieved the perfection of serving and associating with Sri Krsna – by sadhu-sanga.

What have the naga-patnis, the wives of the serpent Kaliya, done to become devotees? They heard harikatha from Sri Narada Muni. What have the yajna-patnis, the wives of the brahmanas, done to become devotees? Nothing. However, they had the association of those who used to go back and forth from Gokula to Mathura. The wives of the brahmanas would hear about Krsna from them, and in this way they were able to engage in Krsna's service by bringing Him plates of prasadam.

Krsna told Uddhava, "I cannot fully describe to you the glories of the gopis. They have not gone to school, they never read or studied the Vedas, and they never performed austerities. Still, they cannot live for a second without Me." The gopis would die without

Krsna. Their lives were residing in the heart of Krsna; otherwise, they would have died in separation from Him.

Krsna continued, “Uddhava, I am telling you about the most confidential subject matter – sadhu-sanga.

sadhu-sanga ', `sadhu-sanga '-sarva-sastre kaya
lava-matra sadhu-sange sarva-siddhi haya

[“The verdict of all revealed scriptures is that by even a moment's association with a pure devotee one can attain all success.” (Caitanya-caritamrta, Madhya 22.54)]

But that sadhu should be a real sadhu, not just someone disguised as a sadhu. They should have the above-mentioned qualities *[please see Part 1 of this lecture, sent on the Harikatha mailing list a few days ago, or see endnote] These qualities must be present in that devotee.

[*Endnote 1: The demon Vrsaparva was abandoned by his mother at birth, but he was raised by a muni and became a devotee of Lord Visnu.]

[*Endnote 2: The following are some of the qualities of the pure devotee, as given in the previous harikatha, entitled “A Teacher Should Have These Qualities”:

“O Uddhava, a saintly person is merciful and never injures others. Even if others are aggressive, he is tolerant and forgiving toward all living entities. His strength and meaning in life come from the truth itself, he is free from all envy and jealousy, and his mind is equal in material happiness and distress (Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.11.29).”

“Thinking oneself to be even lower and more worthless than insignificant grass which has been trampled beneath everyone’s feet, being more tolerant than a tree, being prideless, and offering respect to all others according to their respective positions, one should continuously chant the holy name of Sri Hari. (Sri Siksastaka 3).”

Krsna continued, “O My dear Uddhava, the devotee must take darsana of My Deity (The Lord’s form on the altar).” And especially, they should take darsana (audience) of pure Vaisnavas, (My pure devotees). They should serve these pure devotees, worship them, and serve them. They should offer prayers and obeisances to them. With strong faith, they should always hear My sweet pastimes, especially My pastimes in Vraja. They should hear about My activities in My other incarnations, like Sri Rama, Sri Nrsmhadeva, and others. Always meditating on Me, whatever is dear to them, they should offer it first to Me. After doing this, then they may take My remnants. They should first distribute My remnants to others, and then they should take what remains.]