

RAM DAS

NATURAL BHAKTI

BHAKTI WITHOUT FEAR –
THE LOST SCIENCE OF ATTRACTION (RATI)



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Mangalacarana

*nama om visnu-padaya radhikayai priyatmane
sri-srimad-bhaktivedanta-narayana iti namine*

I offer my love and respect to Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, my dear Gurudeva and wellwisher – who is very dear to Srimati Radharani.

Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto that great sage [Sukadeva Gosvami] who can enter the hearts of all. When he went away to take up the renounced order of life [sannyasa], leaving home without undergoing reformation by the sacred thread or the ceremonies observed by the higher castes, his father, Vyasadeva, fearing separation from him, cried out, »O my son!« Indeed, only the trees, which were absorbed in the same feelings of separation, echoed in response to the begrieved father.¹

Sri Krishna is very quickly satisfied with one who maintains a compassionate mood towards other *jivas*, and who does not give them any kind of anxiety through his body, mind and words. Compassion is the main *dharma* of the Vaishnavas.²

¹ Srimad Bhagavatam 1.2.2

² Srimla Bhaktivinoda Thakura; Jaiva-dharma, 20. chapter, S. 487 (the 18th anga of vaidhi-bhakti)

Editorial note

The first edition of this essay appeared in German in September 2006. After its release, many comments by devotional practitioners were made, concerning its subject matter. Although many devotees gave very positive feedback, still some critique arose. These comments and criticisms gave rise to further investigation into the scriptures and many new findings. The main points of the critiques had been the understanding of *vaidhi-bhakti* and the discussion about the »four regulative principles« of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. In the following forward, these points of critique are discussed.

The essay itself in its first English edition has been enhanced and slightly revised according to the comments of the devotees. On my homepage (www.gopi.de), the German version is posted and an English text-critical version, with the enhancements and changes in coloured letters as well, so that readers can see what had been added in the English edition.

The second edition is further revised in terms of English language and grammar. Special thanks to Niscala devi dasi from Australia.

Another text about the meaning of *vaidhi-bhakti* is available in German (»Was ist sadhana?«), an analysis and purport of the 22nd chapter of Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya-lila (Sanatana siksa). It is posted on the website (www.gopi.de). The translation into English will follow.

Foreword to the first English edition

In this paper, I have collected many quotes from the scriptures and commented on them. The beginning of the text gives a general introduction where I present the main theses and formulate them first, without detailed argumentation and confirmation from the *sastra*. It is therefore very important to read the complete work, because all the references as well as further explanations follow in the main section. The introduction may be very hard to tolerate for an orthodox devotee, because I question some old belief systems, which belong to the temporary historical form of the tradition (*asat*). I don't want to question the transcendental truth behind – the eternal aspect (*sat*). That is not my purpose.

I feel a need to make this point, in order to take a counter-position to the dogmatic style of many devotees. I am sure that I am not right in every aspect, and maybe my presentation is not always objective and neutral. However, it does respond to this questionable development of the dogmatic adhesion to tradition within our *sanga*. In fact, this text is intended to be a counterweight to that development: a radical view from the transcendental perspective.

This text should establish the priority of *raganuga-bhakti* over *vaidhi-bhakti* and the eminent importance of emotions in *raganuga-bhakti*. As the *acaryas* state, *raganuga-bhakti* is

bhakti without rules and regulations. I have tried to relocate the importance of rules and regulations and to put them in the right relation to pure *bhakti*. I am not against the principles of *sattva-guna*, but I state that purification, renunciation and knowledge are not the cause of *bhakti*, but the effect. Only *bhakti* gives *bhakti*, as 11.3.31 of Srimad Bhagavatam states (*bhaktya sanyatayah bhaktya*).

Rules and regulations refer to material shortcomings and material causality. Therefore they are not part of transcendence. I don't want to claim that *vaidhi-bhakti* does not work, or that it is useless. I only claim that there is also another approach possible, that works too. For some devotees *vaidhi-bhakti* is the right way, whereas for others another path may be better. I tried to approach this topic without valuing – beyond good and evil.

My main concern is the question as to why Krishna-*bhakti*, the most precious jewel of spiritual existence, does not attract more people; also, how we can present Krishna-*bhakti* to the public so that it may attract people permanently, and, at the same time, ourselves reach a stronger level of *bhakti* which is far more authentic and pure, in regard to our own *sadhana*.

I think that the western culture of the 21st century is not the same as the Indian culture of the 16th century. Therefore, there must be adjustment on the external cultural level. Not in the internal transcendental core, but only the external!

As a publisher, I am an active part of the cultural public in Germany, and I listen very carefully to what these people think and search for, and how they perceive the devotees.

Rigid and repressive structures are not the appropriate approach for modern intelligent Western people.

Only the transcendental beauty and sweetness of Radha-Krishna *yugala-kisora* in Vraja-lila, conveyed by a pure devotee in the higher *rasas*, can give what every religion or spiritual path should give: pure ecstatic love for Godhead, beyond any material consideration.

This *bhakti* that I unfold in the following paper is based exclusively on attraction, not on pressure.

It is meant for the beginning devotees, not for *sannyasins* or perfect *bhaktas*. It discusses the intermediate situation of a *jiva* that is not perfect.

Some words like »*bhava*« or »*rasa*« I may have used with a slightly different understanding. I have mainly used them in a broader sense, in order to reach the situation of the fallen soul, as well as to provide steps for understanding the underlying psychological dynamic in the moods of the living entity.

The understanding of *vaidhi-bhakti*

The general understanding of *vaidhi-bhakti* in the contemporary understanding of the devotees (in Iskcon and Gaudiya Math) seems to be different from what is told about *vaidhi-bhakti* by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in Caitanya Caritamrta (Madhya, 22nd and 23rd. chapter).

This I found out in my research, which followed after the

discussion about the paper in Germany. Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja very often used the terms »rules and regulations«, »regulative principles«, »following strictly the principles« etc. By referring to the *slokas*, I found out that he usually translated the Sanskrit-term »*sadhana*« into »rules and regulations« and the term »*anga*« into »principles«.

Sadhana in *vaidhi-bhakti* is defined as »*sravanam, kirtanam-adi*«¹, and also a devotee performing *raganuga-bhakti* uses this *sadhana* in his *sadhaka-deha* (material body). So the »rules and regulations« are *sravanam, kirtanam* etc. in the original understanding. »Rules and regulations« today are mainly understood as not smoking, drinking, meat eating etc. This not-smoking, not-drinking etc. has taken the place of *sravanam, kirtanam* etc. in terms of rules and regulations. In this way, there came up a different understanding of rules and regulations that is very much external and material.

Indeed, *sravanam, kirtanam* etc. are indispensable for *bhakti*; they are *bhakti itself*. *Sravanam, kirtanam* etc. are positive actions in *bhakti*, so they can impart *bhakti*. But these are different to the negative injunctions of the four regulative principles of Bhaktivedanta Swami (no meat, no illicit sex, no intoxication, no gambling). These principles are not *bhakti*, but prerequisite stages. As Sri Radha raman dasa Goswami is saying in his purport to verse 1 of Sri Upadesamrta: »It is essential to note here that by subduing the six passions described already, what is obtained is merely the qualification to enter the realm of *bhakti*. These are not direct limbs of devotional service (*sadhana-bhakti*) but,

rather, the doorway through which one may enter the realm of *bhakti*. Because *bhakti* is the self-manifest function of the Lord's internal potency (*svarupa-sakti*), when it makes its appearance these six passions automatically become pacified.«²

In this statement, three main points are mentioned. The first point is that controlling the material urges is a prerequisite feature for *bhakti*. The second point is that the passions become pacified automatically when *bhakti* manifests. A third point is that *bhakti* is self-manifesting from the internal potency of the Lord. This means that *bhakti* is not dependent on material conditions, or from causes originating in the living entity. The first two points may seem to be kind of contradictory. The first statement says that you first have to be purified in order to attain *bhakti*. The second statement says that *bhakti* itself purifies (pacifies the passions). In the following essay, I will try to investigate into the nature of this causality.

Because Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja has used the terms »regulations«, »principles« etc. very often, many devotees emphasise these very much in relation to the four regulative principles such as not smoking. They do not consider that these terms actually signify *nava-anga-bhakti-sadhana* (the nine limbs of devotional service).

The following essay was written before I understood this special situation. Therefore, the understanding of »rules and regulations« as well as of *vaidhi-bhakti* is in relation to the understanding of today's devotees, rather than the definition of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu as recorded in Caitanya

Caritamrta (what is very good because I want to address the thinking of today's devotees).

While I have great difficulty to understand and follow the concepts of today's devotees, I have no problem in understanding and following the definitions of *vaidhi-bhakti* and *raganuga-bhakti* as given by Sri Caitanya in Caitanya Caritamrta, specifically in Madhya-lila, chapters 8 and 22-23.

Perfection of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja's teachings

Some German devotees have criticised my paper, alleging that I have criticised Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, because I claim that he made a kind of mistake with his strong emphasis on the four regulative principles. These devotees say that I must not think of any fault in Swami Maharaja, because he is a perfect soul, free from any fault. So, they conclude that the four regulative principles are an eternal absolute truth that must not be questioned. After all, he had the spiritually perfect vision and therefore everything that he said must be eternally true and perfect.

I think, however, I can reconcile this single point of his teachings (the four regulative principles) without questioning his perfection.

His role in bringing *bhakti* to the West afforded the introduction of the *aishvarya*-aspect first (God's aspect of majesty and power). First, the *bhagavan*-feature of Sri Kris-

hna had to be established. Without this understanding, of Sri Krishna being the highest aspect of God and the cause of everything (as described in Srimad Bhagavatam 1.1.1-2), one cannot understand the higher *rasas* and *Vraja-prema*.

Although this *aishvarya-bhava* has to be forgotten in *Vraja-prema*, still it is indispensable in the development of the *sadhaka*. *Aishvarya-bhava* is not annihilated in *Vraja-prema*, but hidden. In its combination with *madhurya-rasa*, it leads to the characteristic emotion of *prema-rasa*. So Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja's task was the introduction of *aishvarya-bhava* in *dasya-rasa* by means of *vaidhi-bhakti*. In this context, his strong emphasis on the four regulative principles was correct. Still, there is a possibility to reconcile this aspect in relation to *madhurya-rasa* in *raganuga-bhakti*.

The four regulative principles have common ground in India's *yoga*-traditions. Not only *bhakti* yogis, but also *jnana-yogis*, *karma-yogis*, mystic *yogis* etc. require these principles. They are very beneficial, and I don't mean to denigrate the importance of their application, but I would like to suggest another approach that is not so dogmatic and provoked by fear and guilt.

The fact is, these principles have no specific feature of *bhakti* as they do not belong to actual *bhakti* itself. So they are not part of the eternal transcendence and therefore not an ultimate condition for the performance of *bhakti-yoga*, although they are favourable for its cultivation. It is important not to mix the different levels and understanding of terms. How *karma*, *jnana* and *vairagya* are positioned in relation to *bhakti* will be discussed in this paper.

Furthermore, I think the attitude of considering the devotees to be absolutely perfect is appropriate and indispensable for one's own spiritual master, but not for every devotee. My spiritual relation to my Gurudeva is characterized by this attitude to view him fully perfect. But this conception of perfection is not a question in relation to the intellectual sphere or concerning intellectual data, rather it is a question of *sambandha*, of my personal *sraddha* and faith in my Gurudeva.

The correctness or incorrectness of intellectual data given by him is not relevant for a spiritual relationship, which is based on faith. It is necessary to distinguish the difference between the intellect and soul, as well as the position of one's own spiritual master and other advanced devotees. The spiritual position of the devotee in general and the spiritual master in particular is not afflicted by the discussion of intellectual data or external behaviour on the physical platform. This means we can honour the perfection of the devotee while still discussing phenomenal data.

In this way, even Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja used to discuss and if necessary make adjustments to the instructions of his own spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Maharaja, without compromising his relationship with him. For example, Bhaktisiddhanta Maharaja wrote in his Upadesavali No. 22: that »Bhagavan will not accept anything which is offered by a person who doesn't chant *harinama* one-hundred thousand times daily.« One hundred thousand names are 64 rounds. Yet Srila Bhaktivedanta accepted that it was enough to chant 16

rounds. Without this adjustment all the devotees who chant only 16 rounds, which is the majority of us, can produce only *bhoga* and commit only *aparadhas*. It was an adjustment based on mercy for the conditioned souls in their particular temporal circumstances, which are different from those of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's time and place.

Another example is that in his purport to CC Madhya 23.105, Swami Maharaja discusses Srila Sanatana Goswamis Hari-bhakti-vilasa, stating that this scripture had been compiled in relation to the *smarta-brahmanas* and is therefore to be understood according to the historical and cultural circumstances at that time in India: »The teacher (*acarya*) has to consider time, candidate and country, and Sanatana Gosvami wrote his Vaishnava *smrti*, Hari-bhakti-vilasa, specifically in regard to the contemporary circumstances of India. In those days, India was more or less following the principle of *smarta-vidhi*. So Srila Sanatana Gosvami had to keep pace with this, and his Hari-bhakti-vilasa was compiled with this in mind.« From this comment, we can see, Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja was well aware of the relation between eternal truth and temporary phenomena. Thus, he described a work of Srila Sanatana Goswami in the scope of its relativity to circumstance.

Actually, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja gave many new instructions and changed many details in regard to traditional habits. And this is very reasonable, because the practice is required to be adjusted according to time, place and circumstances. So my proposal is simply a further adjustment, in order to bring *bhakti* to the people in its pure

and true form. There should not be, in this treatise any attempt to change transcendental truths or spiritual reality (which is obviously impossible anyway). My purpose is only to adjust some external details in a further reconciliation which is on the basis of my Western experience.

Since 14 years I am the chief editor of a public magazine. I worked for five years in a renowned publishing house in Germany and studied six years philosophy and philology at Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University in Frankfurt/Main. This has helped me become acquainted with the cultural and philosophical understanding of the Western intelligentsia. As a result I think its necessary that I should point out some problems with the communication of the devotees with the general public. I am hoping that these problems could be solved while at the same time the discussion could give inspiration for a more transcendental understanding of *bhakti* herself. All this will not only lead to more success in preaching and increasing the number of devotees, but also to a deeper *bhakti* that is more authentic and sustainable for all, including ourselves.

In order to achieve this, I have injected some ideas of Western knowledge and science into the essay. It is an integral attempt to set the human findings in alignment with the eternal truth. »Everyone follows my path in all respect« (BG 4.11); »Everything rests upon me as pearls are strung on a thread.« (BG 7.7) So in this endeavour I have always kept this vision in mind, and have tried to see everything in its relation to Krishna.

This following presentation of *bhakti* is based on the

science of *rati*, attraction. This *bhakti* that is unfolded in the following paper is based exclusively on attraction, not on pressure.

Ram Das

Natural Bhakti

*Bhakti without fear –
the lost science of attraction (rati)*

Preface

This text is a thesis paper, without the claim of having final or absolute validity. It is an attempt to find a natural *bhakti* and to found her on the scriptures. These are theses and not absolute truth. The devotees are invited to experiment with these theses and to make their own experiences. Nobody can avoid his or her own experience and it is not enough to deal with ready-made and preconceptive attitudes or methods. This text is driven by the desire to find the truth. I pray to all devotees of Radha-Krishna to forgive my offences and impudence.

Introduction

When Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada came to the West in 1965, he was 69 years old and, for the first time,

outside of India. His cultural background, therefore, was exclusively Indian and brahminical in standard. His cultural understanding was consequently very different from that which he encountered in the Lower East side of New York.

At that time the hippies just had thrown out their cultural taboos and conventions and were living a free, effusive and bacchanal life. The revolution against the conservative values of the main culture was at its peak. Old taboos were being crushed; repressions and fears, which originated from various repressive moral concepts and conservative values, were being challenged and fought against. Freedom was the motto of the day.

In the midst of this mood of rebelling against and questioning, the old value systems, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami came with a solid, conservative worldview model, one that was fully valid at that time in India. For instance, according to this viewpoint it was not allowed for a woman to stay with a man in the same room except with her husband³ and it was expected that each woman had to serve the men of the family, bring them food, and wait until all are finished in order to take her meal afterwards.

Which Western woman or man today would accept such forms of conduct? We are used to a high degree of freedom and emancipation. Over the course of our history, we have gradually lead the individuum out of its stifling immaturity of thought and choice. The age of enlightenment, in which we have been living since 300 years past, is only concerned with this point: to realize that individual person, free from paternalism and mythical anxiety. This kind of enlighten-

ment and autonomy of the subject had not yet been developed in the traditional Indian society of the time, although there had been a superficial intellectual reception of these ideas by the influence of the English colonialists and Christian missionaries. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura was a splendid example of one engaged in intense discussion of these modern concepts and of acceptance of the positive findings of the Western intelligence. His purpose was the recovery and revival of Vedic spirituality in a non-ideological, non-culturalistic, but transcendental sense.⁴

Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, in his direct encounter with the situation in New York, must have faced a drastic contrast with his native land, and the concomitant cultural shock of different values. The abyss between his solid traditional Indian culture and the revolting subculture of the West must have been quite a horror for him (such as the hippies dancing naked and drunken in the park). It should be understood that it was in connection with this kind of situation that Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja introduced the four regulative principles (no meat, fish and eggs, no illicit sex, no intoxication and no gambling) and put a strong emphasis on them. His successors later on absolutized them so massively that hardly any devotee sees the relativity and conditionality of these principles anymore. They live in the equation: four regulative principles = *bhakti*. In this treatise I want to examine this, and why this equation is not correct but a mistaken assumption.

Especially the devotees of Iskcon have lived for decades practically isolated from the other parts of the tree of

disciplic succession. Many of them, mainly the GBCs, are to this day of the opinion that only their particular line is certified. All other branches of the tree like the succession of Nityananda Prabhu and the other Goswamis and even their brothers and sisters from Gaudiya Math and the Babajis, they consider insignificant, imperfect or even deviating. One unfortunate result of this isolation is that certain principles which are unknown in other branches can be made absolute. Thus, Bhaktivedanta Sadhu Maharaja from the Mungir-Ashram in Vrndavana reports that the four regulative principles, at least in that sense, are unknown in his line. Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja had introduced these principles as a response to the specific situation he encountered in New York, and his own moral affright.

In his purport to Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya-lila 23.105, Bhaktivedanta Swami states: »A candidate for Krishna consciousness in the Western countries should be taught about the renunciation of material existence, but one would teach candidates from a country like India in a different way.« Here we can clearly see his interpretation of the situation of the Western countries and how he was thinking to change it. When he asserts that the Western culture lacks renunciation, this is definitely correct. So the purification of the Westerners was one strategic goal of his mission. As the tactical mean to achieve this goal, he designed the four regulative principles and stressed them.

However, we witnessed in the following decades and also today, Westerners have great difficulty with these four regulative principles. Since some devotees claim that there is

a causal connection between keeping the principles and success in *bhakti*, and even a causal relation between the four regulative principles and going to hell, many people suffer from great psychic pain, feeling guilty, dirty or sinful. They give up the path of *bhakti-yoga* because they cannot bear the psychic suffering that comes from being condemned as impure, dirty, guilty, sinful or unqualified. Understandably, they cannot enjoy the fear- and guilt-provoking belief systems that we operate under; thus they cannot feel attraction to *bhakti-yoga* because no attraction is given as an impetus, but pressure and restriction by threat of hellish suffering etc. So in this way, the goal of Bhaktivedanta Swami: to purify the Westerners is not achieved. While the goal is correct and, on this level, the absolute authority of Bhaktivedanta Swami can be confirmed, the means took a problematic shape, at least in the reception of Swami Maharaja's followers.

His followers exaggerated the importance of the four regulative principles even more than needed, due to lack of *rasa* in their own spiritual development. I suggest that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja had a completely different understanding of »rules and regulations« than his Western followers who gave a Christian/Puritanistic connotation to that term. I cannot imagine that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja had in mind a repressive threatening purpose for these principles that should force the individuals through fear and guilt. He was an *uttama-bhakta* and full of compassion and mercy. But some of his today-followers overstress the regulative principles while they lack the compassion and mercy of their guru. This is understandable, for as conditio-

ned *jivas*, we come from a more or less collectively ignorant and suffering society – we are part of that sick totality. So we are completely unaware of the neurosis created by rigidly adhering to rules and regulations, while lacking in faith due to our own unfortunate situation.

My point in this treatise is that renunciation is the effect of *bhakti* and not the cause. In order to make the Westerners more renounced, their engagement in the limbs of *bhakti* needs to be a prominent factor, that is, their engagement in *nava-anga-bhakti*.

After all, renunciation is easily achieved by the practice of pure *bhakti*, as stated in *Caitanya Caritamrta*, *Srimad Bhagavatam*, *Bhagavad-gita*, *Bhaktirasamrtasindhu* etc. Pure *bhakti* arises out of the nine *angas* of *bhakti*, but is not dependent on restrictions or bans. Pure *bhakti* comes naturally. By performing natural *bhakti*, sustainable renunciation without force and bad feelings is achieved. From the very beginning to the end, everything in the practice of pure *bhakti* is joyful.

The four regulative principles are nevertheless useful to come to the platform of *sattva-guna*. From *sattva-guna* it is easier to get to the plane of *nirguna*, i.e. to surpass the modes of nature and to enter the transcendental platform. *Sattva-guna* is religion, but religion is distinct from spirituality. To reach the spiritual plane, it is necessary to transcend all *gunas*, including *sattva*. This treatise therefore addresses the question: To what extent is the current over-stress of the purification-rules by threat of hellish conditions and punishment, favourable for pure *bhakti*?

My thesis is that an exaggerated focus on rules and regulations, as well as other enforceable demands of purity block the emotions of the living entities and make the heart like stone. Emotions are suppressed by the mental regulation, and control of mind and senses. In the part of Vedanta, which is about *karma-yoga* and *jnana-yoga*, this may be favourable, but in *bhakti-yoga*, which is about the emotion of the heart, this method is a hindrance, and it even may be detrimental. There are many examples of devotees, who even after 25 years don't experience *rasa*. Even after 25 years they don't have a deep sentiment of love for Krishna, they haven't realized *bhava*. The thesis of this essay is that this does not result from the enormous impurity of these devotees, but from false philosophies and belief-systems, which by abstract rules and bans, create mentally-operating people who are isolated from their emotions. This comes as no surprise for after all, they were told that by following the »rules and regulations« (misunderstood to be the four regulative principles instead of *nava-anga-bhakti*) they can achieve *bhakti*.

It is the fear and anxiety of impurity that blocks the natural unfolding of *bhava*. In such a state, there is no more free flow, no happiness, no feeling and no opening of the heart. The heart becomes more and more like stone over the years, and chanting becomes a robotic ritual. These people wait for the future in the hope that the fulfilment and realization of love of Godhead that they aspire for, will happen automatically at a time projected in the far distant future, or even after death.

This hopeful aspiration is, however, against the definition

of activities in bhakti, known also as *lila*. The *lila* performed by Radha, Krishna and the *gopis* in Goloka Vrndavana is eternal. It happens here and now. There is no way to get there on our own and no action to force it. Only the unconditioned and causeless mercy of Krishna, Guru and *sadhu*, combined with our inner decision, can bring us to that point. This inner decision we make is the empathy and willingness to open one's heart to *sadhu-sanga*. The mirror of the heart is cleansed (*ceto darpana marcanam*), when we approach *sadhu-sanga* with open heart, in order to perform *sravanam* and *kirtanam* there. The more the heart is open, the more it can be touched by *bhava*, the faster the purification is going on, and the more pure is the *bhakti*. *Bhakti* then is not mixed with *karma* and *jnana*.

The bans and precepts, which are disciplination by fear (if I don't follow, it is a sin and I will be punished), instead only close the heart, make it narrow and impede emotions. It is a great misconception to consider the emotions negative, simply because they tend to be focused on material things in the material sphere. Emotions are very necessary and indispensable to reach the higher stages of *bhakti* such as *ruci*, *raga*, *rasa* and *bhava*. Every mental intervention into the emotions is counterproductive. Consequently, it is most important to give people an approach to their emotions which is positive and natural. After all, the most crucial question regarding our preaching is: how can we give this treasure of Krishna-*bhakti* to the ignorant and innocent people outside our movement, in a way that they can accept it?

Often we don't see how high people in the West have

developed their consciousness and how intelligent they are. The *kanistha-adhikari* likes to address the non-devotees as *karmis*, which is a derogatory name, and to consider society in general to be foolish or crazy. With this attitude any further dialogue is obsolete. In this way hardly one person is attracted to Krishna. And this very likely is the reason why, out of all the spiritual movements coming from the Far East/India to the West in the sixties, the Hare Krsnas are those who play the least significant role in the society at present. Other movements like Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Yogi Bhajan, Mother Amma, Brahma Kumaris, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and all the *advaita*-traditions today are solid parts in public life and their followers count in hundreds of thousands. This phenomenon cannot be accounted for simply by the argument that these groups all are presenting primitive materialistic philosophies, which are only good for attracting silly materialistic *karmis*. Thus we consider that, the *bhakti*-philosophy would be too elevated for them to understand – and that we are so elevated because we understand it. Thus, this belief underlines not only problems with our preaching to outsiders, but problems in cultivating humility in our own hearts as well.

I think, therefore, it is essential to examine the fault on our own part, in this regard. In my opinion, the problem stems from the wrong approach of the devotees in general. The elitist attitude and middle age moralistic ideas which come from our upbringing and culture, tend to cause new guests to run away; in fact, the more intelligent and conscious they are, the faster they go.

Intelligent, conscious people of today have severe objections against dogmatic structures or belief systems based on moral pressure. They are very sensitive towards repressive structures because they have the experience of the institutional church of Christianity as well as of fascism. It is a general cultural consensus in this intelligent part of society that repressive philosophies and belief systems are historically obsolete. And this is the case. As long as devotees do not consider this cultural situation and still try to promote their ethnocentric-mythical dogma and repressive moral concepts, they will not reach the people they aspire to reach. Anyway, a transcendental spirituality does not need these dogmas and repressive morality structures. In contrast, dogma obstructs the manifestation of spiritual realization.

I have personally spent years and years releasing myself from the injuries and armour constructions, which I unnecessarily caused myself, through my blind faith in a repressive Catholic morality, in order to again become more of a living and feeling entity. Now I have achieved this, and now the devotees tell me that these natural impulses of life and emotion are under suspect of being sinful, and that I should stop this liberation and should instead function in a conformed, regulated and disciplined way within the institution. In fact a young man who had once met the (Iskcon-) devotees in a rainbow gathering, summarized his perception of this in a conversation he had with me, with this very simple formula: »Hare Krishna is catholizism⁵ for hippies.«

Isn't it a pity that Krishna-*bhakti* is seen like this in the West? Isn't it awkward that *bhakti* in that understanding is

not more than a mere moralism, a religion? That along with this sour moralistic preaching, the sweet Krishna gets lost? That the Krishna-faith is charged up against a cigarette or a coffee? They talk about rules and regulations instead of Krishna. They only want our best, but the experience shows us that it does not work like this. We cannot treat modern or postmodern Westerners (including myself) like rural an-alphabetics in the middle age.

The purpose of this text is not to open a new philosophy and also not to reject the principles of *sattva-guna*. The purpose is a new balance between *sattva-guna* and *nirguna*, while the highest importance should be put on *nirguna*, specifically on *bhakti*. Thus, the question is not that of a new goal, but that of a new way to that goal. There are humans who are not with Krishna so far. These living entities must be given a path to Krishna that works for them. This makes it necessary to consider time, place and circumstances. This essay is a plea for a more realized and mature handling of the needs of individual persons, without instantly dividing these needs into good and evil, or pious and sinful.

Bhakti is completely transcendental and beyond the material modes of nature. Therefore, she is not dependent on rules and regulations. It is nice if one follows them, and surely it is for his benefit. It is also in my own good sense to recommend the four regulative principles and the other purification-rituals. They are helpful and good advice, but not the ultimate conditions. If we consider *bhakti* as ultimately dependent on rules of material purity, we are mistaken about its nature. With such an understanding, progress in *bhakti*

is hindered and therefore such a conception is to be understood as an offence against *bhakti*. In fact, devotees who are attached to the exact performance of the external rituals and exercises, are not pure in their practice – they perform *karma-misra-bhakti*. Similarly, devotees who are attached to purity and austerities perform *jnana-misra-bhakti*. From these positions it is not possible to attain *Vraja-prema*.

Now to the elaborations in detail.

Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya lila 15.103-110⁶

Satyaraja Khan said, »My dear Lord, being a householder and a materialistic man, I do not know the process of advancing in spiritual life. I therefore submit myself unto Your lotus feet and request You to give me orders.« (verse 103)

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu replied, »Without cessation continue chanting the holy name of Lord Krishna. Whenever possible, serve Him and His devotees, the Vaishnavas.« (104)

Purport: Here we see the classical situation where a neophyte on the path of *bhakti-yoga* approaches a senior devotee in order to receive instructions from him. Obviously Caitanya Mahaprabhu is more than a devotee, but this example shows what happens when He takes up the role of an instructing spiritual master (*siksa-guru*). There is only one instruction:

the chanting of the Holy Names. He does not speak of external principles. That He deliberately omits this becomes clear in the following verses that state what a devotee is, and how he gets *bhakti* ...

Upon hearing this, Satyaraja said, »How can I recognize a Vaishnava? Please let me know what a Vaishnava is. What are his common symptoms?« (105)

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu replied, »Whoever chants the holy name of Krishna just once is worshipable and is the topmost human being.« (106)

Purport: This sentence is directly spoken by Caitanya Mahaprabhu and is an original verse from Caitanya Caritamrta. Therefore it must be considered to be of the highest authority. Sri Caitanya is saying here clearly that a single utterance of the Holy Names of Krishna is enough to make someone a devotee which means that such a person should be afforded maximum respect.⁷ Caitanya Mahaprabhu does not speak of additional principles of conduct that would be necessary to qualify someone as *bhakta*. Only the performance of *bhakti* itself is the criteria for the qualification of the *bhakta*. If, therefore, a person who has chanted the Holy Name of Krishna only once is already a glorifiable devotee, then what to speak of a fulltime devotee or a guest coming to the temple? They cannot be judged as unqualified or incapable.

»Simply by chanting the holy name of Krishna once, a

person is relieved from all the reactions of a sinful life. One can complete the nine processes of devotional service simply by chanting the holy name. One does not have to undergo initiation or execute the activities required before initiation. One simply has to vibrate the holy name with his lips. Thus even a man in the lowest class [*candala*] can be delivered. By chanting the holy name of the Lord, one dissolves his entanglement in material activities. After this, one becomes very much attracted to Krishna, and thus dormant love for Krishna is awakened.« (107-109)

Purport: *Bhakti* is completely transcendental, she is not dependent on external endeavours. Only the chanting of the Holy Name dissolves entanglement in material activities. No matter what fallen condition we are in, we solely should chant the Holy Name. Then everything will come. Here Caitanya Mahaprabhu is practically saying that even initiation is unnecessary. On the other hand, we know about the eminent importance of initiation. The opinion that we need initiation is correct⁸. So we see here a semblance of contradiction that can be resolved by the philosophy of *bhedabhe-da-tattva* and by an understanding that the *tattvas* work in this way. Western philosophy calls this dialectic, and it is the very opposite to dogmatic philosophies.

This quote points out that there are different statements that have to be reconciled according to time, place and circumstances and that a dogmatic approach is not appropriate. The practice of fundamentalism, which adheres to the literal expression of scripture and denies one's own consideration

as blasphemy, cannot be appropriate for a modern intelligent person, moreover it cannot provide a spiritual experience. It should be possible to validate statements by means of one's own intelligence and especially one's own experience.

Of course, this includes keeping in mind the goal of following in the footsteps of the *acaryas* and paying them utmost respect and reference. Still, even with this in mind, truth must not be denied or misused. Every statement should be proved for its truthfulness, in order to be integrated into one's own personal experience and realization. Contradicting statements or truths may lead to a higher plane of understanding, where the duality of the respective contradiction can be integrated and solved on a higher plane. Or they can lead to the understanding that simply both statements are right even if this contradicts the material logic.

This is the principle of *acintya-bhedabhedata-tattva*, which may extend to the contradicting aspects of initiation and other considerations. They can be put into perspective through the process of *bhedabhedata*, dialectic. There is never only one side exclusively true; for it is only dogma that is viewed as always right, and its opposite, always wrong. In an atmosphere where one side is raised to the dogmatic platform, it is necessary to bring the other side to attention, as a counter-balance. In regard to the importance of initiation, it is very good to pay more attention to the statement of Caitanya Mahaprabhu and to look what truth is behind it.

The essential question is: »On what does *bhakti* depend?« In other words, »What do I have to do in order to get *bhakti*?« In this respect, it is indeed favourable to take initiation

and to keep following the regulative principles. But we need to keep in mind that, according to the above-mentioned quote from Lord Chaitanya, these things are not the essence. *Bhakti* is not dependent on them. *Bhakti* manifests independently out of her free will. Who is chosen by *bhakti* depends on the mercy of *sadhu*, Guru (what in fact requires a Guru) and Krishna. We cannot control it and no action/non-action can control *bhakti*. The following verse from Srila Rupa Goswamis Padyavali, that is quoted here in Caitanya Caritamrta, points this out very clearly.

»The holy name of Lord Krishna is an attractive feature for many saintly, liberal people. It is the annihilator of all sinful reactions and is so powerful that, save for the dumb who cannot chant it, it is readily available to everyone, including the lowest type of man, the *candala*. The holy name of Krishna is the controller of the opulence of liberation, and it is identical with Krishna. When a person simply chants the holy name with his tongue, immediate effects are produced. Chanting the holy name does not depend on initiation, pious activities or the *purascarya* regulative principles generally observed before initiation. The holy name does not wait for any of these activities. It is self-sufficient.« (110)

Purport: In order to be in alignment with this statement as well as to get its benefit, we should focus our attention exclusively on the processes of *bhakti*, especially the chanting of the Holy Names, as well as *hari-katha*, *sanga* and

seva. The fundamentalist attitude, which insists that the following of the four regulative principles is an indispensable prerequisite for the performance of *bhakti*, is improper. This attitude misinterprets the way *bhakti* works, and causes many devotees to turn away from Krishna consciousness in due course of time. They leave the *sanga* not because they don't like Krishna – they like Krishna – but because they feel too much anxiety and remorse when perchance they cannot keep all of the rules and regulations, 100%. They feel threatened by the concept of sin, guilt and punishment, that may come from breaking these principles. This concept is not only unfavourable for preaching but is also counter-productive in the philosophical and spiritual dimension, as it destroys the soul's natural love for Krishna.

Someone who asserts these regulative principles, in dogmatic fashion, as hard and fast rules and as absolute conditions, is like someone who equates Krishna with the value of a cigarette or a glass of wine. He claims that if you cannot give up the cigarette, you have to give up Krishna. But isn't Krishna worth a million times more than that? Isn't He far beyond these material concepts? Is it necessary to lead a person, whose love for Krishna is awakening and increasing, by remorse, threats and guilt?

This is a very common but antiquated paradigm that was the general pattern of religion in the middle ages, and the early modern times. Philosophers call it »mythical religion«. But this method does not work anymore today, because people in the West have become very much advanced in their understanding and ability to rationalize, and they have, in

addition, acquaintance with the type of traumatic experiences associated with this kind of repressive religion. People today in the West are thus intellectually emancipated and have left behind them the immaturity prevalent in religion's earlier days. So the result of all this is that the authoritarian mode of preaching does not yield fruit today. Instead we have to start addressing the rationality of, and valuing the freedom inherent in man. This is not a diminution of the spiritual quality but rather a step towards it, because the ideological metastructure of religious dogma is opposed to transcendental truth. To transcend the ideological platform of the mind, one is required to achieve spiritual vision – being comfortable with dogmatic assertions is not enough.

Today's ideological and dogmatic feature of bhakti-philosophy claims, in its simple essence, the following idea: if you are impure you *must not* perform *bhakti*. Or in other word: If you are impure and perform *bhakti*, this is an offence. This idea is wrong. The right message is: if you are impure you *must* perform *bhakti*. We are all, after all, impure and fallen. *Bhakti* is our only hope to come out of our fallen position. So how we can come out of the impure state, when we are not allowed to perform *bhakti* before we are pure? We must perform *bhakti* in the impure state. Everybody is impure, and whoever thinks that he is pure is a hypocrite, as a devotee never thinks that way – he is humble.

In the Srimad Bhagavatam, the following verse can be found:

»In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the

pastimes and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart. By cultivating such knowledge one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, and thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed. Then real devotion and devotional service begin.«⁹

Purport: Here a statement is made that is uncontestable, that liberation is a prerequisite of pure devotion. In other words, without liberation it is not possible to perform pure *bhakti*. Liberation, therefore, should not be considered insignificant. Liberation means to not live in fear and anxiety anymore. Liberation is to come to oneself. Liberation means to resolve neurotic patterns that keep us in the conditioned state, and dependent on material concepts.

Often it is not clearly recognized that also our mind and intelligence are material and that they therefore are bound to promote material concepts. The pure transcendence is the pure vision of phenomena as they are, without the influence of dogma and belief systems, and freed from judgement and material evaluation. A religion that is based on dogma and belief systems has to be understood as *dharma* in the sense Krishna is saying in the Bhagavad-gita: »Give up all kinds of *dharma*« (Verse 18.66). *Dharma* means all kinds of philosophies and belief systems. They are not transcendental.

In the above quoted verse from Srimad Bhagavatam it is also stated that the discussion (*hari-katha*) is very pleasing and satisfying. It is a pity that this aspect of *bhakti* has to be emphasized, since this should be naturally the way a

devotee today practices *bhakti* – in a way that is pleasing and satisfying. We have so many stories and pastimes of Krishna, so much knowledge about the *tattvas*. There is no need to speak about negative, adverse things that provoke only fear and guilt and shame in peoples' minds. In this verse, the sequence of the progression of bhakti is clearly given: 1. *sangha*, 2. *hari-katha*, 3. *jnana*, 4. *moksa*, 5. *asakti*, 6. *prema*, 7. *seva*. That is the correct sequence. *Bhakti* works like that.

Bhagavad-gita 18.54:

»One on the stage of *brahma-bhuta* is filled with joy. He never laments nor desires to have anything; he is equally disposed to every living entity. In that state he attains pure *bhakti* unto Me.«

Purport: This verse from Bhagavad-gita shows clearly the relation between *brahma-bhuta*, the state of bliss and liberation, and *bhakti*. After the practitioner has reached the stage of *brahman*, liberation, he is eligible to reach the highest goal, *bhakti*. This *brahma-bhuta* stage is not *bhakti*, but an initial stage in the process. Still, it is a necessary stage. Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja is saying in his purport: »Caitanya Mahaprabhu said that even this *brahma-bhuta* stage is external, because one who is situated in that stage cannot realize or attain Goloka or Vaikuntha although he has become free from the *gunas*. Goloka or Vaikuntha can only be realized when one acquires *para bhakti*. The *brahma-bhuta* platform is therefore not the highest step. Rather,

it is the initial stage in the process of acquiring that supreme level.«¹⁰

This verse contains different philosophical points which will be dealt with in the following chapters, for instance, the proper vision and attitude towards other living entities and the role of mercy which is summarized in the word »labhate«. *Labhate* means to get *bhakti* from someone, not to design or make it. This points to the eminent role of grace, which is discussed in the following chapters.

Bhagavad-gita explains in Verse 2.40:

»Endeavours on the path of *bhakti-yoga* are neither fruitless nor subject to loss. Even a little progress frees one from fear and the greatest of dangers in this material world.«

Purport: This is the character of *bhakti*. *Bhakti* does not function like *karma*. Every small endeavour counts and never gets lost. It is therefore not a condition to be able to perform the process perfectly. Faults, irregularities or insufficiencies may reduce the full benefit, however, according to the degree of omission or faulty performance, but they don't destroy the complete result, as is the case with *karma-yoga*.

In *karma-yoga* one must perform the ritual perfectly, without fault, because otherwise the complete result will be lost or may be the opposite of the desired goal. In comparison, every minute action performed in *bhakti* enters eternally and irreversibly into transcendence. Whoever interrupts his practice of *bhakti* and at a later time starts it again, continues from that very point where he had stopped be-

fore. Therefore, it is impossible to lose the results of *bhakti* – unless offences are committed. In that case it is possible to lose *bhakti*. But this special case should not be stressed and treated like the only focus of attention. The essential truth about *bhakti* is that in this process there is no loss or diminution.

Krishna states in Bhagavad-gita that even if someone acts sinfully, but has love for Krishna in his heart, he is a *bhakta* and can nevertheless progress on the path of *bhakti*.¹¹ Indeed, he makes progress, whenever he is performing *bhakti*. In contrast, all other activities that are not *bhakti* are temporary. They may continue for some time while the devotee is performing interrupted *bhakti*, which means that sometimes he practices *bhakti* and sometimes he does not. Still, every moment of activity in *bhakti* is a full benefit for the *bhakta*, without any loss. It is not dependent on any material cause and effect, and cannot be minimized by material conditions.

In this regard Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja says in his purport to verse 2.40:

»Although a *sadhaka* has faith, if, due to ignorance of the process, there are some irregularities in his performance, the results of *bhakti-yoga* are never lost nor does he incur sin.«¹²

Purport: Srila Narayana Maharaja is saying here clearly that even irregular or incomplete performance of *bhakti-yoga* is no sin. Recently a devotee was preaching to a woman who

was new to Krishna-consciousness, and who had taken up the bhakti path due to being deeply moved in her heart by its experiences. He informed her that a round that she had started to chant must be finished, otherwise it would be false and offensive. This woman had chanted a round for the first time in her life and it took her one hour. She had very deep experiences from it, and it was really quite astonishing how fast she could deeply immerse herself in love for Krishna. But as soon as she got this instruction, she changed and instead became fearful about chanting.

She was thinking, thereafter, that it might be very risky and troublesome if she must chant the complete round every time. It might take her one hour to do so, and she had no way of knowing in advance if she would have enough time to chant the entire round, what to speak of chanting it carefully, with emotion and taste. Very innocently, she had started with the understanding that one should chant with emotion. But the flow of emotions sometimes takes time, and may cause spontaneous behaviour to arise, according to the waves of those emotions. This can sometimes cause us to stop chanting before the end of the round, especially if one round takes one hour.

Usually we chant much faster and therefore, for us these considerations are not so important. But in this case they were very important to this devotee's progress. They are also important because they represent only one example, of negative effects from preaching – unfortunately there are many different situations like this incident.

As a consequence of the devotee's preaching, the mood

of the lady was spoiled by fear and shame. She told me that, very directly and clearly. I had to preach to her intensely, by using the explanation given in this verse and purport of Bg 2.40, in order to pacify her. In this way, many imperfect concepts, which are derived from *karma-yoga* and *jnana-yoga* are present in the devotees' minds and come out in their preaching. These concepts and ideas are then promoted among the ignorant and innocent people, sometimes to gain a feeling of supremacy over them and to put them under the pressure of guilt. In this case, however, the person resisted this fear-provoking preaching,¹³ but how many people comply to fear-provoking concepts, mistake them as precepts of bhakti, and in this way pass their life even more broken and depressed than before they changed upon our philosophy?

As explained above, material activities may go on during the transition period to 24-hour *bhakti*. They cannot be given up before the time is ripe. To renounce these activities artificially is not possible. This is stated in Bhagavad-gita 3.4-5:

»Not by merely abstaining from work can one achieve freedom from reaction, nor by renunciation alone can one attain perfection. Everyone is forced to act helplessly according to the qualities he has acquired from the modes of material nature; therefore no one can refrain from doing something, not even for a moment.« (see also 3.33, 18.11, 18.40, 18.60¹⁴)

Purport: In this verse, as in many others in the Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavatam, it is clearly stated that renunciation does not lead to the highest goal. The idea that by renunciation, one can attain *bhakti* is basically a material idea. It implies that the perfection can be achieved by my own endeavour and control. This would mean that *bhakti* is controllable and dependent, that she has conditions that she is dependent on, and that she is therefore on the conditioned platform. But *bhakti* is completely free, independent and uncontrollable. She comes and goes as she likes and chooses whom she wants. Very often one can observe that *bhakti* manifests in persons who have no initiation, don't follow the four regulative principles and don't even perform regular *japa*.

Everyone who performs severe penances and renunciation in order to intensify his *bhakti* must understand that he is making a voluntary effort, not a forced one, and that his effort is simply conducive for *bhakti* and not a necessary condition. If someone wants to perform renunciation he can decide freely to do it, no problem. Whoever wants it, can do it. But it is not an ultimate condition for *bhakti* – that has to be understood.

This has some implications. For example, if someone is performing austerities and after reading this is now thinking: »Well, then, I can give up my austerity. Why should I suffer when others can achieve *bhakti* without austerity? What is the benefit if the thing can be so easy?« – then he has to think about the proper foundation of his renunciation. If it is dependent on the co-suffering of others, it is a

neurotic form of renunciation that does not lead to the goal of pleasing love for Krishna. If he gets angry that another devotee does not perform that austerity, then it is envy. If, however, he understands the benefit of performing his austerities, he is in alignment with his choice of activity, and satisfied within himself, without being dependent on whether others perform austerities as well. Moreover, this person will develop compassion for the other souls that cannot perform such renunciation. But he will never think of accusing, judging and persecuting others. As soon as one's renunciation comes onto this level, one should give it up.

Real renunciation is performed out of love for the object of this love, and it is an effect of this love, not a cause for this love. If one does the renunciation in order to prepare oneself to be available for *bhakti* because one is so eager to achieve one's beloved, than it is true renunciation. If one does it out of an intellectual understanding and reasoning (that it is more reasonable because it is less suffering at the end), it is *jnana-yoga*. This is partially true renunciation. If one does it as a dogma with the goal of gaining control over one's body and senses, it is *karma-yoga*, which is a material kind of renunciation.

»Pure devotional service in Krishna consciousness cannot be had even by pious activity in hundreds and thousands of lives. It can be attained only by paying one price—that is intense greed to obtain it. If it is available somewhere, one must purchase it without delay.«¹⁵

Purport: Also in this verse from the Raya Ramananda-*samvada*, the legendary speech between Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Raya Ramananda, it is clearly stated that it is not the point to act piously. Pious behaviour is no condition for *bhakti*. This is the distinction between religion and spirituality. Religion, being on the material platform of *sattva-guna*, is about how to act in a moral way, to be nice and good and follow social rules. On the other hand, spirituality designates the transcendental platform beyond any external conditions, *nirguna*, the pure and eternal truth beyond any conditions, such as social relativity, and moral discipline. Religion is discipline of the ego, spirituality is transformation of the ego. When the ego is transformed, when it has become Radha-*dasi*, there is no more question of discipline, just as a child who has matured into a healthy adult no longer requires it.

We have a perfect situation and an imperfect situation, and the rules that pertain to the imperfect situation do not necessarily relate to the perfect one. Philosophy that is transcendental has to be based on transcendence – the perfect situation – which is the goal and the process also. As eternal Radha-*dasi*, servants of Radharani, we are supposed to cultivate spontaneous, free flowing and unrestricted devotion and love to Radha-Krishna from whatever platform we begin it. Thus moral rules do not play any role, they are not part of transcendence and are therefore not part of a transcendental *siddhanta*.

Rules and regulations enter the philosophy only under the suspicion of sinful activity. In this way they create a

repressive continuum that suppresses the movements and emotions in the soul of the living entity. This is the stage of *nitya badha*, eternal conditioning. In that sense the regulation itself creates the conditioning. The idea to get *bhakti* by following the rules and regulations is a non-transcendental idea which belongs to *karma-misra-bhakti* and *jnana-misra-bhakti*. This strategy may be reasonable sometimes when we have to deal with very primitive or materialistic and uncultivated people. It is, however, a very gross strategy. At the present level of conscious development of thought and philosophy in the Western cultures, this gross strategy practically does not work at all.

A strategy that starts from the stage of liberation does not work with suppression but with attraction. Krishna is the all-attractive, not the all-suppressive! To suppress and block the emotions because they are evil/material leads to a general suppression of that which we most need to approach God with, for it is emotions that are the core essence of *rasa*. »The essence of the *hladini-sakti* is love of God, the essence of love of God is emotion (*bhava*), and the ultimate development of emotion is *mahabhava*.« (Caitanya Caritamrta Adi 4.68)

To come to an attraction, a feeling for Krishna, it is important to let the emotions flow freely. At least in the beginner's stage it is necessary to let them flow naturally, regardless any moral judgement. In that way one develops the faculty to deal with one's own emotions, to perceive them, to understand them, to discriminate them and to follow them. This is the basic principle of mental sanity, accor-

ding to Western psychology. Mental illness in the sense of neurosis, psychosis and personality dissociation is caused by a disintegration of the emotions. This leads to permanent suffering.

On an advanced level of *bhakti*, when we have a stable approach to *bhava*, are familiar with it and are able to discriminate *bhava* exactly from material feelings¹⁶, we can start to withdraw the emotions from material objects and activities – if indeed this is necessary. In general this is not necessary because transcendental feelings cleanse the mirror of the heart with a most powerful effect, and thus dispell the taste for material objects. It is therefore best to follow the emotions instantaneously regardless of whether this might imply, at the beginner's stage, the possibility that one will perform both material and spiritual activity, i.e. not only spiritual activity. One cannot approach transcendence by force.

Material and spiritual actions run parallel alongside each other in a laminar flow. This means that these two substances don't mix with each other. In Bhagavad-gita, verse 13.33, we find: »The sky, due to its subtle nature, does not mix with anything, although it is all-pervading. Similarly, the soul situated in Brahman vision does not mix with the body, though situated in that body.«

It is not necessary to fight against the material feelings. We are fallen souls and are therefore eligible for the causeless mercy of Guru and Krishna. In that sense these material feelings are alright. Yet these material emotions should disappear at some point – that is the whole idea of spiritual

practice. Because material emotions are related to material temporary objects, they are themselves temporary and not part of transcendence. With the increase of spiritual emotions, these material emotions vanish automatically. We don't have to worry about this. »Don't worry«, my spiritual master uses to say ...

To make this point clear once again: the idea of this paper is not to give a new goal, but a new way how to get there. This is not a plea for material emotions, but for the correct sequence. Material emotions, as well as all other material attachments and identifications, cannot be dispelled without a substitute. Before they can be given up, there must be an alternative, which is a personal spiritual experience of transcendental emotions. These transcendental emotions occur independently from the material elements of consciousness, mind and body. As BG 13.33 states, these emotions are laminar flows which exist side by side and don't mix.

In Bhagavad-gita we find the following verse that confirms the preferred neutral attitude towards pious and sinful activities:

»A person is said to be established in self-realization and is called a yogi [or mystic] when he is fully satisfied by virtue of acquired knowledge and realization. Such a person is situated in transcendence and is self-controlled. He sees everything—whether it be pebbles, stones or gold—as the same. A person is considered still further advanced when he regards honest well-wishers, affectionate benefactors, the neutral, mediators, the envious, friends and enemies,

the pious and the sinners all with an equal mind.« (Bhagavad-gita 6.8-9)

Purport: This description of the transcendence as presented in these two verses is forming the main part of Bhagavad-gita. A vast abundance of verses describe again and again this vision of the transcendentalist (2.56-57, 4.22, 5.18, 6.29-30, 12.13-20, 13.29-31, 14.22, 15.5, 18.20, 18.51-53)¹⁷. We can therefore safely assume that this understanding of transcendence is very important, if not vital. Krishna repeatedly describes it as the fundamental requirement for *bhakti*. This stage itself is not *bhakti*, it is the vision of *brahman*. Still the vision of *brahman*¹⁸ and the stage of *jnana*¹⁹ are basic for reaching *bhakti*. As the verse explains, one has to transcend the duality of acceptance and rejection. The wise sees everyone with equal vision (5.18).²⁰

The most important essence in these verses 6.8-9 is that a person with transcendental vision does not discriminate between pious and sinful persons. According to the highest authority (Krishna), the discrimination between pious and sinful is not a part of transcendence. In his commentary to the 10th. Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura explains: »Separation from Krishna is not caused by sin, and meeting with Krishna is not caused by piety« (SB 10.29.10-11 purport, S. 300)³⁷. Transcendental vision has to start from those parameters, and only through such vision can one clearly understand the difference between *vaidhi-bhakti* and *raganuga-bhakti*. The difference cannot be understood on the material level of

sattva-guna, which distinguishes piety from sin (the distinction between *vaidhi* and *raganuga* will be discussed in the following chapters).

So what is the right transcendental vision and attitude of the living entity? This question is answered by Krishna in the Bhagavad-gita from different angles. Several times He states that a wise man is a friend to every living entity and has compassion and mercy for everyone.²¹ This is the stage of *uttama-bhakti*. A devotee in the highest state of *bhakti* sees Krishna everywhere (»*Vasudeva sarvam iti.*«) Vasudeva, Krishna, is surely everything», Bhagavad-gita 7.19), and because he is so much in love with Krishna, he loves also all the things that belong to Krishna, i.e. His creation, along with all the living entities. He sees that they are all eternal parts and parcels of Krishna. Wherever such a wise man sees a living entity, he sees a devotee and has the impulse to pay his obeisances. He is in a continuous ecstasy because he sees Krishna and devotees everywhere. This does not mean that in every human or living entity, he only sees perfect qualities. Rather, the wise man does not see the single entity as single anymore. It is like a view from a distance where the material differences are not visible or relevant anymore because one does not pay attention to them. One sees instead the broader picture – everything in relation to the whole.

This insignificance of the moralistic discrimination between good and evil, this broader transcendental vision, leads us to yet another aspect of our discussion. The reason for action that is beneficial to the living entity is not the following of any particular set of uniformed values that aris-

se from external codes of behaviour, but from the internal impulse within the individual person, the *jiva*.

In the Bhagavad-gita it is stated that a person who follows his inner own being and his destination will achieve perfection.

»It is far better to discharge one's *sva-dharma*, even though faultily, than another's *dharma* perfectly. Destruction in the course of performing one's *sva-dharma* is better than engaging in another's *dharma*, for to follow another's path is dangerous.« (BG 3.35)

»It is better to engage in one's own occupation (*sva-dharma*), even though one may perform it imperfectly, than to accept another's occupation and perform it perfectly. Activities prescribed according to one's nature (*sva-bhava*) are never affected by sinful reactions.« (BG 18.47)²²

Sri Aurobindo, who was a devotee of Krishna in his way, elaborates on these verses: »The way the usual man individually and collectively lives seems to contradict these principles. Everyone of us burdens a horrible weight of external pressure, and rules and laws. In every moment from there is created an impact on us that tries to stop our desire of expressing our inner self, of unfolding our true person, our real soul. The innermost characteristic manner of our life is injured in every minute, is manipulated, forced, deviated and separated from our own way. The influences from the environment hardly give a chance to evolve. The cultural

life, the state, the society, the family and all the powers that surround us seem to conspire to model and mould ourselves, to push us in their frames, to afflict us with their mechanical interest. We become parts of a machine.

In the Bhagavad-gita especially this need to get free from such heteronomy is expressed. Krishna is teaching Arjuna that it is even better to follow ones own path with faults than to follow perfectly the path of someone else. The more a man has the courage to live according to his own inner self, the more the soul can be revealed, free from coverings.«²³

*An attempt to look at bhakti from a
psychological perspective*

Sigmund Freud differentiates in his psychoanalysis between the It, the Ego and the Super-Ego. The It is the general drive of instinct, the Super-Ego is the inner judge, and the Ego is the adult, sane and enjoying person, and thus the result of a sane and harmonic mix of the two others. The rules and laws are coming from the Super-Ego, from the inner judge, and they encourage mechanical actions of conformity to rules and norms of behavior. Emotions are often blocked by this inner judge, because they are under suspicion of being material or egoistic. But it is true that *rasa* or *bhava* is an emotion. Thus, with the blockage of emotions, also *bhava* is blocked. For the devotee who is controlled by rules and regulations it is therefore very difficult to experience *bhava*.

Some *bhava* still may come, because *bhakti* is transcendental. As soon as one is performing *bhakti*, *bhakti* comes, and ultimately the body and mind are unimportant. But if the mistreatment of body and mind is too heavy, it can lead to psychic and somatic diseases. In that case it is necessary to pay more attention to our body and mind, and not mistake their needs as blockages to *bhakti*, for the opposite is true.

Since there isn't any distinction between good and evil in the ultimate sense, the liberation of the emotions into their full state of purity in *bhakti* requires, at first, the acceptance of all emotions, whether material or spiritual. Emotions, our feelings, give us energy. Psychologists explain that a good feeling strengthens the body and mind and satisfies the person, makes him or her calm and peaceful, and gives energy to act and to receive.

Feelings are quite different to thoughts although both are considered to belong to *manas*. Feelings only arise in the present, according to the present situation, and correspond exclusively to the integral actuality. They cannot move into the past or the future. In comparison, thoughts can move into past and future even faster than light, but they cannot give energy. Therefore, elaborate mental instructions without feelings, i.e. without concomitant realizations and one's own inner experiences of those truths, can hardly inspire any spiritual progress in the audience, what to speak of oneself. Yet, instructions on the level of personal experience of *bhavas* (emotions) can give profound realization in the audience, on the level of the intellect and also beyond it.

This is the difference between religion and spirituality:

religion is a theoretical concept of ›must‹ and ›should‹ and how it has to be, whereas spirituality is a practical concept of ›can‹ and ›do‹ and how it is. Religion is based on a concept of being the controller, even in the negative sense of not yet being in full control. Spirituality, however, is the faith in God (and Guru) and the truth that everything will run nicely as soon as we give up the desire for control. We just have to be honest and authentic, then progress can happen very easily, without being hindered by neurotic tendencies that lead only to misunderstandings and schisms.

As stated before, our emotions give us energy; they enable us thus to become energetically stronger, whereupon our higher functions of consciousness and self-perception are activated. Emotions also give satisfaction and fulfilment, they make us happy and peaceful. In this state of mind it is very easy to experience transcendence because the one is self-content, is at peace with oneself, and is centred, and free to connect with the higher levels of consciousness beyond the ego.

But the most essential value of our emotions, and intrinsic to our aspirations, is their ability to connect us with the realm of spirituality, i.e. the performance of *bhakti-yoga*. The experience of the spiritual emotion (*bhava*) causes a highly effective cleansing of the mirror of the heart (*ceto darpana marjanam*). The impact it gives upon the heart is many times more effective than any external mechanical action.

In order to appreciate and achieve the freeing of our emotions into spiritual wholeness, we have to move away from

the strident judgements of Super-Ego, our self-defeating inner judge, and come nearer to the Ego, our true identity. This requires the integration of the It, or instinctual drives, and the Super-Ego into a harmonic personality. Neither Super-Ego, our inner judge, nor the It, our passions, should control the Ego, because from either state of helplessness many psychic problems arise.

To be in the Ego means to know what is good for me, what pleases me and what I like – my *sva-dharma* and *svabhava*. The Ego is the adult person who accepts his needs and is able to fulfil these needs (as long as they do not harm others). The It is necessary to recognize these needs. The Super-Ego is necessary to avoid damage to myself or others by fulfilling these needs. To reach the Ego means liberation, thus, on this level of the Ego, it is possible to sense and to feel emotions in a way that is beneficial to the upliftment of the soul.

Therefore it is said that pure *bhakti* begins on the level of liberation (Srimad Bhagavatam 3.25.25). Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja speaks clearly about this topic in his purports of Bhagavad-gita: »As it will be seen, actual devotional service begins after liberation. So in Bhagavad-gita it is said, *brahma-bhuta*. After being liberated, or being situated in the Brahman position, one's devotional service begins« (Purport of verse 9.2, Bhagavad-gita).²⁴

Pure *bhakti* is *raganuga-bhakti*, the pure spiritual emotion of love towards Radha and Krishna in Goloka Vrndavana. This *bhakti* is pure emotion. She does not arise from the mind or intelligence, but manifests herself spontaneously.

Therefore she is unaffected by the actions of mind and intelligence, such as our will, intentions, motivations, or plans.

»A self-realized man has no purpose to fulfill in the discharge of his prescribed duties« (Bhagavad-gita 3.18).

»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 (*ahaituki*) and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self« (Srimad Bhagavatam 1.2.6).

All kinds of motives except *lobha* (greed) for *bhakti* is *aham/mameti* (material, false ego). It is not possible to influence Krishna or Bhakti-devi by our actions:

»There is no work that affects Me; nor do I aspire for the fruits of action« (Bhagavad-gita 4.14). Therefore no independent endeavour such as austerities, pious activities, charity, cleanliness that can give *bhakti*. Only *bhakti* can give *bhakti*. This is stated in Srimad Bhagavatam 11.3.31:

»*Bhaktiya sanjataya bhaktiya*: *bhakti* is only produced by *bhakti*.«

Despite all this, it is certain that one's own endeavour is still sure to count. That endeavour should be to get the association of Guru and *sadhu*. That is helpful. But the main gate to *bhakti* is mercy, the grace and compassion of the devotees and Radha-Krishna. Especially the devotees work in a highly intensive way, utilizing the energy of grace. In other traditions – like Buddhist and monistic traditions – the followers work mainly with self-generated energy, because they

don't have a concept of a personal God. In those tradition, the way of spiritual progress by the mercy of Guru, which is called »*guru-yoga*«. is only one out of many possible ways to progress.

In the world of *bhakti*, the grace of the Guru and Vaishnavas is so essential that it practically makes up the totality, and therefore may not be recognized in its full importance by the devotees. Grace is the essential and inherent feature of a personal God, who is different from the individual soul, quantitatively being immeasurably greater in potency. Grace thus comes from outside the individual soul, from the platform of infinite potency and perfection. Only Krishna's perfection and his ocean of *rasa* can lift us to the spiritual plane, make our lives perfect, and release us from our suffering and illusions etc.

The needs or desires that at the beginning one may be following, without discrimination as to whether they are material or spiritual (*sat* or *asat*) will be purified, step by step, by the execution of *bhakti*. This means the individual loses his taste for gross material needs, and develops gradually, but naturally, the taste for spiritual happiness. This happens as he experiences that state of bliss and love in the *bhavas*. He doesn't need to strive separately for renunciation of material things.

These observations fit the natural sequence of the development of *bhakti*, as it is presented in Srimad Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura's work *Madhurya Kadambini*. The first step is *shraddha*, faith. Faith that Krishna is real, faith in Krishna and His devotees. The second step is *sadhu-*

sanga, seeking out the association of the devotees. In the association of devotees we automatically perform *bhajan* (*bhajana-kriya*). This is the third step. Then, after attaining *sadhu-sanga* and performing *bhajana-kriya*, the desires and necessities of the heart gradually change – what is known as cleansing of the mirror of the heart and mind. This fourth step is therefore called *anartha-nivritti*, giving up bad behaviours and material needs and desires. Like the other steps it is not meant to be an imposition, but rather, a consequence of performing *bhakti*. It is natural.

Many devotees in the West, however, have turned this principle upside down. Before someone has *shraddha*, and before *sadhu-sanga* and *bhajana-kriya* have developed, one has to fulfill *anartha-nivrtti*. This belief system suggests that it is impossible to get *shraddha*, and that it is sinful to perform *sadhu-sanga* or *bhajana-kriya*, as long as one is »impure«. That's a mistaken assumption. My Srila Gurudeva, Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, wrote to me in a personal letter: »The question of *bhukti*, *mukti* or *bhakti* is irrelevant once a person takes full shelter at the lotus feet of a perfect spiritual master [*sadhu sanga*]. By the process of *diksa*, all impediments are washed away very quickly. Even if there are many *anarthas*, they do not hinder or obstruct the sincere *sadhaka* because he is always enthusiastic and follows the teachings of Sri Guru.«²⁵ The connection with Sri Guru is the most important kind of *sadhu-sanga*. First there is *sadhu-sanga*, then comes *anartha-nivritti*. Not the other way round.

How many thousands of people have turned away from

the path of *bhakti* because they could not psychically get past their »impurity«? None of these people wanted to give up Krishna, *sadhu-sanga* or *bhajan*. They only got lost because of the depression caused by that unreachable and prematurely forced ideal of absolute purity and sinlessness. There are devotees who don't see a problem with this because they don't mind to officially stress the absolute validity of the rules and regulations, despite the fact that they may not even follow all the rules themselves at times, in their own private space.

Such artificial and external behavior is no solution for our neurotic schism, the breaking away of souls due to the paralysis of fear and guilt imposed upon them. This is more or less hypocrisy and cheating, which is at best a pragmatic way of dealing with the ideals for those who do not understand their application. Spiritually this situation creates a disparity between word and action which is not favourable for spiritual truth to prosper. It is important to define a philosophy (manner of words) that is in accordance with our reality (manner of actions), for disparity between the two is undesirable, being one of the characteristics of dogmatism.

A dogmatic person uses language as a means to hide his crooked motives, instead of understanding the high importance of language as a reality-creating medium, as it is gloriously shown in the high esteem of the Holy Names given in *sastra*. Certainly hidden motives in an ideological speech is hypocrisy and this leads to the destruction of the last remaining leg of the bull of *dharma*, as described in SB 1.17.25: »You are now standing on one leg only, which is

your truthfulness, and you are somehow or other hobbling along. But quarrel personified [Kali], flourishing by deceit, is also trying to destroy that leg.« Clearly, deception and cheating are the main problems in our age.

Purity as a motive, has nothing to do with *bhakti*, but is a category of *karma* and *jnana*. *Bhakti* mixed with motive for purity is therefore *karma-misra-bhakti* and *jnana-misra-bhakti*, not pure *bhakti*. I use here deliberately the words »pure *bhakti*«. The difference here is that »pure« is used as an attribute or quality of *bhakti*. »Purity« is not used here as a noun standing independently by itself, as something that the practitioner should separately strive for, but as a subordinate quality of *bhakti*. The main point of *bhakti* is *bhakti*. Purity should only be understood and used in relation to the transcendental categories, such as descriptions of Krishna, Radha, the Gopis/Vraja-vasis and Bhakti-devi Herself. The concept of purity should not be expanded to such external material categories as the material body or material objects. Purity as a stand-alone principle – purity for itself and as itself – is not appropriate for one who aspires to *visuddha-bhakti*.

The substantiation of purity is a symptom of the material mode of *sattva-guna*. With such concepts we are in the area of material religion, but not on the platform of spirituality. These kinds of religions should be abandoned, according to Krishna's statement in Bhagavad-gita 18.66. Purity in the context of the material body and the material world leads by default to the concept of impurity of the material body and the world. Both the body and the world can thus be

connoted as impure, sinful, dirty and wrong, i.e. valued negatively.

The individual, in this way, is entangled in painful contradictions between the environment and himself, a state which can only be maintained by his extreme isolation from his environment. This development could be observed in the early days of Krishna-consciousness all over the Western countries: the extreme withdrawal from the world and the body; the so-called escapism, or radical getaway; a religion of the netherworlds. Every contact with the »impure« *karmis* was to be avoided. We were told not to take association but only to give association. This is the patriarchal, authoritarian controller-mood. Only a very simple audience, or one with poor intelligence, could accept this demeaning attitude in the long run, with the result that our preaching became so ineffective over time.

Often we see that people who have not been able to lead a successful life, but are collapsed creatures with mental problems, are attracted to such a philosophy. Sane, successful and intelligent people, on the other hand, quickly feel aversion towards such dogmas and don't come again to the temple. The elitarian behaviour of some immature devotees are just the tip of the iceberg.

In my opinion, one should avoid preaching purity altogether for the time being, except as an attribute of *bhakti*. Purity is cold, strange and separatistic. It is not worthwhile to pull humans away from Krishna because of the concepts of being pure or impure. Purity belongs – if at all – to

aishvarya bhava. In Vrndavana, purity as a concept is counter-productive.

Real purity, in connection with *bhakti*, appears out of love towards the object of love and His paraphernalia, i.e. when I want Krishna in His pure substance and energy, without mixing Him with my substance and energy. In this case purity as a motive is beneficial. The problem is that nobody preaches like that, or acts according to a real understanding of purity. The doctrine is dogmatic and repressive, most probably due to ignorance.

Dogma happens when the real explanation is not understood, and instead a simple claim is given: you must be pure. Or: sex is sin. These simple dogmas cannot satisfy an intelligent person. The real explanations should be given, and especially the experience of *bhakti* should be allowed to bear fruit. That is satisfying not only to the intelligence but to the heart as well.

*Are we moving in the right direction, or at all
– an analysis of my personal case history*

My own history is that I had tried to follow the four regulative principles for several years, but yet I had often failed, which as a consequence caused much suffering, remorseful feelings and a decrease of my taste for *sadhana*. One day I decided to test what would happen if, on the one hand, I did not follow the four regulative principles (or some aspects of

them), while, on the other hand, I practiced *bhakti* freely and easily according to my taste, without the burden of negative concepts of shame, guilt and disgrace. I found out that the main problem which was keeping me away from Krishna consciousness was not the material interests of mine, but the remorse and bad feelings I had that were resulting from the negative concepts I had imbibed from our preaching.

What prevented me from going to the temple, looking for association with devotees, reading and chanting was not aversion to these things, but the mental anxiety of punishment for my impurity and sinfulness. I felt too sinful to read these holy books, or to come to a holy place like a temple. I thought it better to give up this devotional practice than to suffer more and more from these psychic fears, which were caused by the ideological structure of that kind of philosophy.

My next consideration then became: what will happen to my *bhakti* if I gave up this ideological structure? When I give up the concept of good and evil, or pious and sinful, what will happen to my *bhakti*? Will she get lost? Or will she become stronger? The biggest and most horrifying anxiety was that of losing my *bhakti*. All the staunch servants of ideology hurried up to threaten me with the loss of my *bhakti* if I did not follow strictly their prescribed path. There was nobody who had gone this path and who could therefore tell me what would happen.

Even more threatening was the fear that the steps in this direction seemed to be irreversible, and in some respects they are irreversible. The more you give up control over

your feelings, the more you have to have faith that what will take over that control (i.e. the soul) will lead one to *bhakti* and not to *bhukti* (sense gratification). Would everything come to a natural order? If the natural free flowing state appeared, would this be *bhakti*? Or would I sink into the material ocean if I could not counteract with my intentional mental control?

Is therefore *bhakti* the intrinsic nature of the soul? If she is, she would manifest in a natural way as soon as the soul is freed from its coverings, especially coverings of neurotic kinds such as obsessions, authority-conflicts, self-alienation, psychopathic symptoms, and fears of all kind. So it would make sense, first of all, to work on my own liberation – liberation initially not in the sense of freedom from all material needs, as Vaishnavas in general understand it, but in the way the Vedas in terms of *jnana-yoga* and also the Bhagavad-gita describe liberation.

For the Vaishnavas liberation is very insignificant. And it is a fact that in the state of *suddha-bhakti* – pure transcendental *bhakti* beyond the modes of material nature – the concept of liberation ceases to exist, because there is nothing that could make us unfree or conditioned again. Liberation therefore is considered as unnecessary and many Vaishnavas seem to conclude from this that it is not important in what kind of conditioning one approaches *bhakti*. They think they can proceed from the conditioned state directly to *suddha-bhakti* and there is no need for achieving liberation. But as the verse cited above from Srimad Bhagavatam 3.25.25

states, pure *bhakti* begins after liberation. Also verse 18.54 in Bhagavad-gita confirms this:

»One on the stage of *brahma-bhuta* is filled with joy. He never laments nor desires to have anything; he is equally disposed to every living entity. In that state he attains pure *bhakti* unto Me.«

In addition, Srimad-Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja upholds this in his purports in Bhagavad-gita 9.2 and 18.55 as quoted before (page 55 and footnote 24).

If we study the statements and methods of *jnana-yoga* in order to understand what the meaning of *moksa* is, then we understand that *moksa* first of all means to become free from fears and psychic suffering. The unfree person is that one who is alienated from himself, who doesn't know himself, and who is not self-realized. His personality is split between trying to follow an ideal concept and feeling guilty and bad for not being able to follow.

How to get beyond this state of confusion? Specifically, how do I find out who I am? I am not looking for a general answer in asking this, but I want to know quite precisely and from an individual point of view who I am and ever have been, my eternal spiritual form. I will not grasp this individual form via external rules and regulations but from the inside, by feeling and sensing what attracts me. My personal spiritual form, which is singular and incomparable with anybody else, cannot be found by abstractions and

formulas but only by the meticulous and exact inner experience of my moods and emotions.

We will win on two levels if we go this path. Firstly, we improve access to our self, i.e. we come to consciousness, which means we awake from our unconsciousness. Secondly, with this approach we are nearly already there where we want to be – if we seek *suddha-bhakti*: the moods and feelings of *ruci*, *bhava*, *rati* and *prema*. Then it is only a small step to move our skilled perception of our feelings from the temporary material objects fully to the objects of our love: Radha-Krishna *yugala kisora*.

Liberation means to learn to feel. Liberation means to recognize the needs that I feel, to accept and to fulfil them. If this fulfilment happens in the material realm, this is no problem. The living entity gradually recognizes the deficiency of this fulfilment (because it is of temporary character and cannot satisfy the soul) and will ultimately give up these objects. This is a natural learning process that leads automatically to Krishna without any dogmas, rules and controls (Bhagavad-gita, 4.11: »Everyone follows My path in all respects.«)

The state of consciousness beyond ideology, i.e. beyond the duality of Good and Evil, is called *brahman* in the Bhagavad-gita. This is liberation, *moksa*. In this state of consciousness, objects don't cause one to valuate – instead one sees them as energy. This liberated state of consciousness is the pure VISION of energy. Being fully unattached you see what happens according to what you do and where the highest energy is.

If something is ideological, it only exists in the thoughts, and doesn't have the energy of empowerment. Being merely cerebral, it has no power to clean the mirror of the heart. The more real and authentic your behaviour is – and this authenticity depends on the singular and individual disposition of the single person according to time, space and circumstances – the more energy it has. It is completely unimportant if this is good or bad in the sense of any ideology or belief system, be it material or spiritual.²⁶ The higher the energy, the faster is the progress to *bhakti*. So the hypothesis is that only in the state of full authenticity, full *bhakti* can be attained. This is in accordance with the scriptures when they assert that hypocrisy is a big impediment for *bhakti*. Hypocrisy is such a big impediment that our present age is defined by this attribute, as the age of quarrel and hypocrisy.²⁷

In this regard Krishna states in Bhagavad-gita (3.6):

»One who restrains the senses of action but whose mind dwells on sense objects certainly deludes himself and is called a pretender.«

Purport: This verse has an enormous psychological significance; it hits into the core of neurosis. The neurotic person acts against his authenticity because he has lost his self-confidence and faith in his feelings, due to, for example, overpowering belief systems, rules and regulations. He is alienated from himself and only acts from the head, the mental plane, specifically, his inner authority, super-ego, or inner judge,

which is shaped by various external authorities (as opposed to the real authority, God and his representative, Guru).

It is the general structure of deceit in human culture, that the authorities of power, particularly the religious kind, manipulate to keep people under their control. The resulting self-alienation is the root of our suffering. Many of us do not do what would be good for us, but instead we act according to what is given us, by rules and regulations, conventions or social pressure. The things one wants to do, one doesn't do, and the things one doesn't want to do, one does. The origin of this malfunction is the suspicion that the human impulses are evil or sinful.

Thus the perception of every object, or category is artificially valued, gripped by intense scrutiny of the right and wrong of it, instead of seen directly as it is. Things are thus recognized through a filter, a wrong connection in the brain. There is no more direct recognition, but only ideological recognition arranged according to good and evil. Actually this is not recognition but an illusion. What finally is defined as good and evil is a question of power, and differentiates according to religion, leader and taste.

Krishna in the Bhagavad-gita argues His case for freedom from this duality of material values. He establishes His statements not on any particular system of values, as put forward by men, but on eternal truths. We can say He sees the energy. Let us take for instance the question of violence: the question in the Bhagavad-gita is not whether the violence, which takes place in the battle, is good or bad. The sentence: »Violence is good.« is as wrong as the sentence »Violence is

bad.« The question instead is: under which condition does this behaviour work – if it works at all? According to one's motivation, violence can be right or wrong. And Krishna does not miss the opportunity to locate the value of violence in a transcendental sense – with detachment. Thus He gives us the definition of violence, and also under which circumstances it is generally good (BG 18.17):

»One who is not motivated by false ego, whose intelligence is not entangled, though he kills men in this world, does not kill. Nor is he bound by his actions.«

Purport: Here it is stated that violence also exists as a possibility in the transcendental state of consciousness – not motivated by the false ego, not disturbed, and not bound by karmic actions. In my opinion, this is a masterpiece of ideology-free vision because especially violence is quite a taboo, and the possibility of violence that is transcendental is thus ideologically concealed. The leaders in this world condemn violence as bad, all along concealing that their installation of power mostly happened by violence.²⁸

As shown here by a single example of violence, it is generally an illusion to connect objects with values in a fixed way, whereas the value-free vision of the objects is the transcendental vision. The wise person sees everyone with equal vision, which is to say, equal value. (Bhagavad-gita 5.18, 6.8-9, 6.29, 6.32, 13.31, 14.22, 18.20).²⁹

In practical life, however, every object and every category has its consigned value. This value is often transmitted

non-verbally, being the result of mental consideration only. Nevertheless, it is often used by ethnic or ideological groups as a collective screen of identification. They confirm themselves through their common values to belong to the group and to find security. Liberation from this perspective of value is the moment of entering into transcendence.

As a consequence, if the way to transcendence is the way of value-free vision, the question arises as to how the practitioner, the aspirant of transcendence, is supposed to act. Krishna is saying in the above mentioned verse 3.6 that it is better to be honest with one's attachments to the sense objects than to cheat himself and others, that is, to pretend detachment as long as one is not detached. The continuation and supplement can be found in verse 3.33:

»Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes. What can repression accomplish?« (see also 18.11, 18.40 and 18.60³⁰)

Purport: Repression is exactly that what causes psychic disease, depressions and neurosis. Also this verse states clearly, in the same sense as 3.6, that it is better to follow one's inner impulses. Now the question may arise what happens if these inner impulses lead to material or sinful actions? My observation is that this makes one humble. If, for example, my inner feeling tells me that I should enjoy a stimulant, i.e. sense-gratification, then I perform this action and this shows me where I stand. I can see that I am not very ad-

vanced and that there is still a lot of purification needed in order to make these urges vanish. If I externally renounce the sense objects, this makes me look nice outwardly. I can gain awe and reverence and develop pride. So I can hide myself behind the others and cheat myself. This is hypocrisy. In this regard Krishna is stating that it is better to act according to one's own nature and to progress step by step.

If liberation means to accept one's own needs, then *bhakti* means to transform material needs into spiritual needs. It is very favourable to get rid of the material needs, but the question is how should we do it – by suppressing them, or by transforming them? Krishna informs us clearly that suppression does not work, and this is also the conclusion of psychology. Suppression leads only to blockades and hardening or armouring of the heart. So there is only transformation left.

In order to transform one's needs, it is first necessary to understand them. If I suppress my needs permanently in order to fulfill an ideal, I cannot perceive and understand these needs anymore, and I am in contradiction with myself. So, first of all, I have to recognize my needs. This is what is meant by the words »authenticity« and »honesty«. Honesty comes from humility and openness to accept higher knowledge. The purification of my needs is done through *bhakti*. That is the central point. The purification does not come by extra endeavours like austerities but by performing *bhakti-yoga*. Only *bhakti* is capable of purifying.

Simply by the performance of devotional practices (*sra-vanam, kirtanam* etc.), the mirror of the heart becomes

cleansed and gradually one's needs change. It is therefore not necessary to intervene directly with these needs, as detachment from these needs comes automatically with the progress in *bhakti*. The awakening feelings and the awakening relationship to Guru and Krishna replace the old needs, step by step. Gradually, the higher taste manifests.

Rules, regulations, orders and prohibitions are external interventions in the economy of one's needs. They may be appropriate in acute emergency cases, but they should not be the usual and universal methods to determine the process of *bhakti*. It is interesting that whenever Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja translated verses from the *sastra* and used the phrase »regulative principles«, you find in the Sanskrit or Bengali the word »*sadhana*«. *Sadhana* means the nine processes of *bhakti* (*sravanam, kirtanam, smaranam, arcanam, vandanam, dasyam, pada sevanam, sakhyam, atma-nivedanam*), namely only positive actions of *bhakti*. *Sadhana* does not imply negative actions. This is *vaidhi-bhakti*. It was the mood of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja to be very strict and regulated, but he gave all the original verses in order to give us the possibility to reconcile, and to adjust the meanings according to our respective moods of *bhakti*.

To influence and lead the *sadhaka* by rules and laws and pressure is a quite primitive method. Higher and more elegant methods of influence are processes that work with the power of the attraction, the beauty and sweetness of Radha-Krishna and Their associates. This path is much easier to follow for the *sadhaka*, because in that way the means and the object are the same. The aim and object is pure love

for Radha-Krishna. The means for progress is not fear, but this very love, which is natural. The operators of fear and authoritarian structures tend to lack this love. That is why they don't see any alternative, and declare their way as the only possible way.

Bhakti develops by one's awakening feelings and relationship to Guru, Krishna and Gauranga. It is therefore necessary to examine very accurately one's feelings, to get acquainted with them, and to perform therefore only actions of *bhakti* that are driven by feeling. *Nama-abhasa*, the shadow of the Holy Name, cannot give *Vraja-prema* (lecture of Bhaktivedanta Sadhu Maharaja, Dole 2006). Only the Name when chanted with feeling, *bhava*, purifies the heart.

In the value-free perspective, *maya* and *bhakti* are neutrally standing side by side. When people or objectives are associated with negative value, it is like a curse. This curse produces negativity and, as a consequence, causes further negative effects like artificial remorse. We should allow people to have their little bit of *maya*, their tiny pleasures, without judging them. The taste for such things will vanish as soon as the higher taste is strong enough to replace it. Then the renunciation will be genuine.

This process is very natural and increases gradually, step by step. If the potential of fear and threat is too high, the danger of destroying the *bhakti*-plant is there. The *bhakti-lata* must be strong enough to take over the tasks of the material plants, namely to feel happiness, to have fulfilling relationships, activities, and a fulfilling identity and life content. All this works without pressure or force, without

orders or prohibitions, without suppressed impulses, without sensory deprivation, but with attraction, higher taste, happiness, love etc.

This path implies giving unconditioned sovereignty to the individual. Since we cannot control another's behaviour by this path, as we no longer have the coercions of guilt and remorse and the provoking of fear, we pass the responsibility for one's actions on to the individual person. Now it depends on the ability of the single individual to discern what he will do with that responsibility. This is dangerous, but in the absolute vision it is the only possible strategy. We are individual persons, and no amount of paternalistic fervour can change the fact that no one else is responsible for the decisions we make.

So this sovereignty, as a high gift from God, must be taken very seriously. We cannot get around it, and escape from its responsibility, by disclaiming its existence. Again and again, we artificially burden the individual with rigid rules and principles as patterns of behaviour and formulas, instead of letting him carry his own burden of freedom. This will only lead to psychopathic symptoms. *Bhakti*, or love, is based on freedom.

The individual, the singular human being, must be granted this freedom and self-determination, in general and *a priori*, before any moral judgement. This is a fundamental *tattva*. This is the definition of a person, one's unconditioned sovereignty among other humans. No human can or must control another human. Only God can do this (and his representative, Guru). The human being is therefore

controlled by God, but on the human plane, from human being to human being, there is freedom and equality. It is not our concern what another person does. Don't judge, so that you won't be judged. Don't criticise! The only way of influence is pure unconditioned love.

Jaiva Dharma about vaidhi-bhakti

The 20th chapter of Jaiva dharma deals with *vaidhi-sadhana-bhakti*, or *bhakti* that is performed according to external rules and regulations. *Vaidhi-bhakti* is the basic frame for all activities of devotional service at the beginning of *bhakti-yoga*. Because in the beginning the neophyte does not know anything about this path, it is necessary for him to act according to the instructions of senior devotees, *mahajanas*, who in turn have received instructions from their predecessors, from the scriptures and from their own experiences. In this regard it is said:

»His *bhakti* can never bring any good fortune if he is violating the rules of *sruti*, *smrti*, the *Puranas* and the *Pancaratras*. One should understand that such unauthorized *bhakti* will only be the cause of confusion and disaster.«³¹

But on the next page it is said:

»Now, in the *bhajana* of spontaneous devotion (*raga-mar-*

ga), there is no regard for the rules of *sruti-smrti-purana-pancaratra* and so on. The only concern the followers of this path have is to follow the inhabitants of *Vraja*, but *sadhakas* who are qualified for *vidhi-marga* must depend only on the path of *bhakti* shown by Druva, Prahlada, Narada, Vyasa, Suka and other *mahajanas*.«

Purport: This quote shows that even great devotees, such as Narada Muni, Vyasadeva and Sukadeva Goswami, belong to the category of *vaidhi-bhakti*. How elevated must be the inhabitants of *Vraja*, if they supercede even those high-class devotees? Sanatana Goswami has given us in his Brhat-bhagavatamrtam the sequence of devotees (*jnana-bhakta* (Prahlad Maharaja), *suddha-bhakta* (Ambarisa Maharaja), *siddha-premi-bhakta* (Hanuman); *premature-bhakta* (Arjuna), *premarthatma-bhakta* (Uddhava)). All these great devotees are still outside the *Vraja-lila*. Whenever we follow in the footsteps of those great devotees, we follow the path of *vaidhi-bhakti* and won't come to Vrindavana but to Vaikuntha. It is not possible to enter *Vraja-lila* with *vaidhi-bhakti*. This is confirmed by Bhaktivinoda Thakura in *Jaiva-dharma*, page 512:

»The only way to attain *Vraja-rasa* is to practice *raganuga-sadhana-bhakti* in the *parakiya-bhava*.«

And in the Caitanya Caritamrta it is said:

»One cannot obtain Krishna in Goloka Vrindavana by the performance of *vaidhi-bhakti*.«³²

These are clear statements without any need to add anything.

A specific statement about renunciation, and a wonderful description of *bhakti* herself is found in the same chapter of Jaiva-dharma:

»The practice of knowledge (*jnana*) and renunciation (*vairagya*) may sometimes assist somebody to enter within the temple of *bhakti*, but *jnana* and *vairagya* are not *angas* of *bhakti*, because they make the heart hard, whereas *bhakti* is very soft and tender by nature. *Bhaktas* accept the *jnana* and *vairagya* that manifest of their own accord through the practice of *bhakti*, but *jnana* and *vairagya* cannot be the cause of *bhakti*, and *bhakti* easily awards results that knowledge and renunciation cannot give.« (p. 494)

Purport: This statement is given in the chapter about *vadhi-bhakti*! The author is not yet discussing *raganuga-bhakti*, and yet even here he is clearly stating that renunciation is not a cause for *bhakti*. This means it is not possible to achieve *bhakti* by austerity, but the only other way round: austerity is achieved by *bhakti*. Austerity, as well as knowledge, is not a separate goal. Our desire and our goal should point exclusively to *bhakti*.

By performing *bhakti*, knowledge and renunciation will manifest. To put it in a nutshell: The *sadhaka* starts in the state

of ignorance and devoid of renunciation. He performs *bhakti* initially without knowledge and renunciation. He is not only allowed to perform *bhakti* in an impure and ignorant state, but it is the genuine process, the only one that works, as described above. We don't have any other possibility of concluding otherwise. Artificial renunciation, performed independently from *bhakti* or as a means to achieve *bhakti*, is false renunciation, because renunciation is only a by-product of *bhakti*, and is never her cause.

»Qualities such as inward and outward purity, austerity and sense control take shelter of Krishna's *bhaktas* of their own accord; the *bhaktas* do not have to endeavor for them separately.« (p. 495)

Purport: This explicit statement can be found in the last paragraph of the above mentioned chapter about *vaidhi-sadhana-bhakti*. We therefore may suggest that it is very important. Once again, Bhaktivinoda Thakur is stating that the *bhakta* has no need to strive for these things, renunciation and austerities, separately.

A natural enfolding of *bhakti* starts with the attraction that *bhakti* has to offer. Only *bhakti* offers real spiritual attraction, being of that nature herself. Renunciation and knowledge, which pertain to the mind and body, are only capable of offering a material attraction to these things. Or, what is mostly the case, renunciation often shows no power to attract at all, but only to suppress. Its only benefit in relation to *bhakti* is as an effect, not as a cause.

In these statements we can see that Bhaktivinoda Thakur clearly delineates this essential difference between *bhakti* and renunciation. The relation between them is clear – *Bhakti* is the cause, and renunciation, the effect. Many dogmatic devotees, who are still attached to concepts of personal control, and the idea that they are the actors and controllers of destiny, really believe that renunciation is the cause and *bhakti* is the effect. This is a completely wrong understanding. They don't have faith in *bhakti*. Their understanding is on the level of *karma-misra-bhakti* or *jnana-misra-bhakti*. This is not even *vaidhi-bhakti*.

The Jaiva-dharma about raganuga-bhakti

After the chapter about *vaidhi-bhakti*, the discussion of *raganuga-bhakti* follows in the 21st chapter. First of all, a very enlightening discrimination between *vaidhi-bhakti* and *raganuga-bhakti* is given:

»The principles at work in *vaidhi-bhakti* are fear, respect and reverence, whereas the only principle at work in *ragatmika-bhakti* is *lobha*, or greed, in relation to Sri Krishna's *lila*.« (p. 504)

Purport: Here it is clearly explained how *vaidhi-bhakti* works – with fear. It is the fear to be punished, be it by hellish torture, suffering or by excommunication. Religion

is a form of discipline executed by fear. No doubt the devotee should not take up the process out of fear, but rather inspired by a positive motivation. In the scriptures the word *lobha* is used, which is usually translated as ›greed‹. But it is probably not so far off to use the common word ›lust‹.

In the netherworld religions, which are inimical to the senses and the body, the word ›lust‹ is traditionally connotated very negatively, as is the term ›greed‹. But this term, put into the context of *bhakti*, reveals the dynamic of *raganuga-bhakti* in a very clear way and shows it to be natural and easy: I do it because I like it. Or in other words: I do it because my heart is open for it right now. Sometimes you will have to wait for the right moment, and then get active, i.e. not in form of a planned and strictly given schedule, as it is practiced in *vaidhi-bhakti*, but spontaneously, when the time is mature, when the *bhava* comes.

The general understanding of the devotees today is that *raganuga-bhakti* is only real when she is performed uninterrupted. This is definitely pure *raganuga-bhakti* – the perfect stage. But it may be possible and reasonable that *raganuga-bhakti* can also manifest during a period of time – like the *sphurtis* and *darshans* of Radha-Krishna, which are also not uninterrupted, but start at a certain moment, and end after some time, and come again and again. This intermittent form of *raganuga-bhakti* would be that which most probably would manifest at the beginning of *raganuga-bhakti*.³³ At the beginning of *raganuga-bhakti*, the transcendental feeling of *bhava*, would manifest temporarily, it would appear and then cease to be present.

The moments in which *bhava* is present are the precious and matchless moments which should be used in order to make rapid progress. They are like windows to the spiritual world, and when they are opened, we should make use of the opportunity to let as much light and love into the heart as possible. This love cleanses the mirror of our heart and transforms our needs. When I am on a stage where *bhakti* is an intense desire of mine, and I have a strong greed to perform *bhajan* and *seva* – because this feels so good and right to me – we surely can speak of *lobha*. When this desire, this greed, this need manifests, we are on the right track, the way of *raganuga-bhakti*. The awakening of these spiritual needs is very quick if we follow the path of *raganuga-bhakti*.

First of all one has to seek out this spiritual feeling. At the beginning it will manifest only rarely, during short moments, it may flash up. With the right attention and faculty to recognize these moments, we can grab these occasions in order to allow a deep spiritual experience to penetrate the body and the mind. That experience acts as a positive confirmation, and causes the mind to search for a repetition of it. By means of pure positive experience, without any trace of fear or remorse, in other words, one which opens up the heart, the effect is multiplied. What happens is a very fast and profound progress that leads to longer and more intensive *bhavas*.

But time is not of the essence, as in material things, for the experience of entering *bhava* may take place in the time frame of no more than a few seconds. For example, someone may be busy with some material activity like his work, but

simply by uttering of one or two names of Radha-Krishna, he finds this enough to experience *bhava*. Instances of this kind of experience can be found in the devotees described in Caitanya-lila, such as Pundarika Vidyanidhi, the spiritual master of Gadadhara Pandit.³⁴

The spiritual greed being discussed here is defined more precisely in the following verse:

»One who has the great fortune to have greed (*lobha*) to attain the same *bhava* (sentiment) as the *vraja-vasis* have towards Krishna has the *adhikara* for *raganuga-bhakti*.« (p. 504)

Purport: Only sentiments towards Krishna and His associates have the power to cleanse the mirror of the heart, because these sentiments are very special. Only one who is longing for these feelings is eligible for *raganuga-bhakti*, according to Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura. So the thing is very easy and non-exclusive, as whoever feels a longing or greed to hear more about the pastimes of the inhabitants of *Vraja*, and asks himself how he can participate in these pastimes, is an eligible candidate.

My experience is that many people who are interested in these topics, have already transcended the moralistic platform of religion, and the mental concept of guilt and atonement. The moralistic devotees have great fear to talk to these people about *Vraja-lila* because they suspect them to have an immoral attitude. But in reality these people are not below the moral level, but beyond it. They have more or

less lifted the ideological veil and looked behind it, and are not willing to go back to their previous stage of mythical guilt, even if they do not exactly know where their step will bring them.

To know where this step leads, means to have arrived at the transcendental platform. This is the last step. In this respect we cannot blame them about having no concrete idea about the goal and not being ready to accept a final definition of it. We as devotees know this goal very well, but we haven't reached it so far either. We only talk of it, theoretically.

Isn't it a more humble attitude to avoid giving a definition of the goal as long as you haven't reached it? Isn't it more honest and more authentic to avoid such instruction if it is after all just a mental concept? Isn't it better to refer to one's own spiritual realizations even if they are only somewhere along the way? It is the need of the ego to be right, to be good, to be on top. As long as the devotee's most important urge is to confirm his absolute and topmost position – to be the best and to have the best philosophy – he is still on the level of *kanistha-adhikari* where his *sadhana* will bear very little fruit, and his preaching none.

»*Raganuga-bhakti* very quickly bestows that fruit which one cannot obtain even by observing the *angas* of *vaidhi-bhakti* with firm faith (*nistha*) for a long time. Devotion on the *vaidhi-marga* is weak, because it depends on rules and regulations; whereas *raganuga-bhakti* is naturally strong, because it is completely independent.« (p. 505)

Purport: Here it is clearly stated that the effect of *raganuga-bhakti* is numerous times stronger than that of *vaidhi-bhakti*. This is quite reasonable, because the *raganuga-bhakta* starts with one's feeling. Thus one's practice and experience have a completely different meaning. The feeling comes from within, and gradually manifests externally. It is an experience that belongs fully to our complete personality; it is a power from within.

In contrast, the practice of *vaidhi-bhakti* is an external action, performed mechanically in the hope that a feeling will manifest. This can happen, but not necessarily. A more likely result of this external approach is that the action remains external and does not allow deeper experiences of *bhavas*. Therefore the progress on the path of *vaidhi-bhakti* is much slower than the progress on the path of *raganuga-bhakti*.

The – doubtful – advantage of *vaidhi-bhakti* can be seen in the fact that in this way the controlling intentions of the ego can be used in the service of *bhakti*. Rules and regulations are meant for controlling; if I use the rules, I am the ruler, the controller. In this way the impure tendencies of the ego on the level of *guna* can be used for progress. The level of *sattva-guna* can be stabilized. In *raganuga-bhakti*, however, there is no motive of control when it is executed by the *bhakta*. *Bhakti* herself is the controller. She decides freely and independently to whom and when and how long she will appear.

In this regard, Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes in his *Jaiva-dharma*:

»Ruci for following in the footsteps of the *vraja-vasis* is only awakened in those whose hearts are *nirguna* (beyond material attributes).« (p. 505f.)

Nirguna is beyond *dharma*. The question is not that of goodness, passion or ignorance, and which of them is good and which is bad. Everything that exists enters transcendence in its positive aspect by putting it in its appropriate place in relation to Krishna. Then also greed (*lobha*), anger (*mana*), lust (*kama*) or possessiveness (*mameta*) are positive.³⁵

A person on the stage of *nirguna* no longer sees any difference in material designations. The above quoted sentence actually explains that someone on the stage of *sattva-guna* cannot experience the love of the *Vraja-vasis*. He stays on the moral level, that, by definition, is bound to the material level because it is an answer to problems and contradictions which arise from material identifications.

It is good and right to organize the material sphere with the help of morality in order to achieve a civilized exchange between humans and to form a cultivated organization of society. Charity, friendliness, helping each other, goodness and cleanliness – all these nice moral qualities refer to the material sphere. If someone had been on the barbaric level before, and ascends now to the moral level, this is wonderful. But if someone on the moral level wants to hinder others to progress to the next step, i.e. the transcendental level, because he does not understand it, it is indeed a problem. Bhaktivinoda Thakura analyses these phenomena in

his book Caitanya Siksamrta as well as in his foreword of his Krishna Samhita.

In the Bhagavad-gita, Krishna describes the attitude of a person who has transcended the modes of nature (verse 14.22-25):

»O son of Pandu, he who does not hate illumination, attachment and delusion when they are present or long for them when they disappear; who is unwavering and undisturbed through all these reactions of the material qualities, remaining neutral and transcendental, knowing that the modes alone are active; who is situated in the self and regards alike happiness and distress; who looks upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; who is equal toward the desirable and the undesirable; who is steady, situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor; who treats alike both friend and enemy; and who has renounced all material activities—such a person is said to have transcended the modes of nature.«

Purport: Illumination, attachment and delusion can be seen as analogous to the three modes of material nature. Illumination refers to *sattva-guna*, attachment, to *raja-guna*, and delusion, to *tama-guna*. This is quite reasonable. This verse communicates that illumination comes and goes, just as attachment and illusion do. The aim of a transcendental life, therefore, is not to fight against attachment and illusion, nor only to strive for illumination, since this would be the moral stage of religion, i.e. a valuing attitude. As again and again

asserted by Krishna, the important point is to get free from the dual conceptions of attachment and aversion. Not only attachment is bad but also aversion, which is really just the opposite side of the coin of attachment. Neither of the two are recommended attitudes towards the objects of material nature, because both create suffering.

Everything belongs to Krishna, including all material dualities. It is not our business to judge these things as good or bad. Besides, for the most part our intelligence falls short of fully understanding the situation. Consequently, in this verse Krishna explains the intermittent character of illumination, as well as the fact that, in the absence of the spiritual sphere, the material sphere (attachment or illusion) is naturally prominent. This is not to be lamented, as it works in our favour. The real transcendentalist in a material body is very aware of his fallen position and therefore deeply filled with humility.

Such a person does not claim to be 100 percent and 24 hours a day on the transcendental level. According to the statement of Bhaktivedanta Sadhu Maharaja, even a *siddha-purusa* has to come to the material level from time to time, in order to reciprocate to the needs of his material body. If he doesn't do this, he cannot maintain the material body and has to give it up. However, the *siddha-purusa* maintains his material body only so he can reach out to the conditioned living entities. If he gives up the material body in order to participate in the *nitya-lila*, he can do that also. But his task is to give his mercy to the fallen souls, and for that he needs the material body.

Therefore, it is most important to become aloof to the concept of absoluteness, or only thinking in terms of black or white, or 0 or 100 percent. Absolute extrapolations are the result of primitive dualistic logic, primitive black-white-thinking. Much more realistic is it to reflect about the intermediate stages, between black and white, or 0 and 100 percent, and how these stages relate to our situation. As much as we can we should give up these absolute concepts in our attitude towards our philosophy. Sure, it is about the absolute truth, and this easily tempts one to cover everything with absolute principles – which is an improper absolutation of the absolute – as it mixes up the goal with the progression towards it. It ignores the relativity of the material world, and by so doing, treats it as evil.

Acintya bheda abheda tattva means to think in opposites. When we have a pair of opposites like »the relative and the absolute«, the proper approach is not to attach a positive value to one pole and a negative value to the other in order to strive solely for the positive pole and to reject the negative one. Instead one should see both poles, free from value. As soon as one evaluates, he is in serious trouble. The relative has its place as well as the absolute, and it is not our task to reject or condemn one of them (or to ignore it, which is the same), while we divinize and absolutize the other one.

The lack of truth in values like »good« and »bad« is also mentioned in Caitanya Caritamrta, f. i. Antya lila, 4.174-176:

»On the transcendental platform there is no higher or

lower, pure or impure.« (Translation of 4.174 according to CC, Madhya 15.83, purport by Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.)

»In the material world, conceptions of good and bad are all mental speculations. Therefore, saying ›This is good‹ and ›This is bad‹ is all a mistake.« (CC Antya 4.176)

The question of duality is fundamental and is therefore discussed also in Bhagavad-gita. A very important verse is 2.45:

»The Vedas deal mainly with the subject of the three modes of material nature. O Arjuna, become transcendental to these three modes (*nis-traigunyah*). Be free from all dualities (*nir-dvandvah*) and from all anxieties for gain and safety (*nir-yogaksemah*), and be established in the self (*atmavan*).«

Purport: This verse clearly states that we should come from the stage of *guna* to the stage of *nirguna*. Still, in many places in the *sastra* as well as in the purports, we find that the three *gunas* are the medium in which we perform our actions. In this regard there is a double meaning for *sattvaguna*: first, as a material mode of goodness and, second, as a transcendental level (*suddha-sattva*). Once again we find a *bhedabhedha*-connection. *Sattva* is both transcendence and non-transcendence. Concerning duality verses 4.22, 7.27 and 13.22 are also very relevant.³⁶

The question to what extent a devotee has a material or

a spiritual body is also one that sheds light on this subject matter, as we shall see. It is discussed by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura in his commentary to verse 10.29.10-11 in Srimad Bhagavatam:

»According to one's level of devotional service, to that degree the transcendental aspects of one's body become prominent and the material aspects diminish. This transformation is described in the following verse from the *Bhagavatam* (11.2.42): ›With each bite of food that a person takes, three effects occur simultaneously: he obtains satisfaction, nourishment, and cessation of hunger. Similarly, surrendered souls engaged in *bhajana* simultaneously experience three effects: the awakening of *bhakti* aiming at *prema*, direct manifestation of the Lord's beloved form, and detachment from material objects.«

Thus those who eat only a little food will derive a little satisfaction, a little nourishment, and slight relief from hunger. Similarly, those who perform only a little hearing and chanting about Krishna will attain a little *bhakti*, some realizations of the Lord and a little detachment. However, when one achieves unalloyed *krishna-prema*, the material portions of the body disappear and his body becomes completely spiritualized.«³⁷

Purport: In these statements, two aspects are mentioned. First, there is a gradual scale between material and spiritual. The more spiritual actions someone performs, the more spiritual his body becomes, and the more the material aspects

vanish. But in that intermediate stage, both elements remain in different proportions.

In the same purport, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura says earlier on: »Sometimes the devotees may take as their sense objects, mundane sounds and tastes, and that is material. Thus a devotee's body can have two aspects, transcendental (*nirguna*) and material (*guna-mayam*).« (p. 300)

The body of a devotee therefore can have a material and a spiritual component that varies according to the intensity of his *bhakti*. In the perfect stage, and that is the second aspect, the body becomes fully spiritual. Important to note in our case is that here is testimony that both aspects, the material as well as the spiritual, can be present at the same time in a devotee.

In Raya Ramananda-*samvad*, Caitanya Mahaprabhu asks Raya Ramananda for the ultimate goal of life. Raya Ramananda answers that the highest goal is to follow *Varnasrama dharma* (Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya-lila, 8.57-58). But Caitanya rejects this as external, whereupon Raya Ramananda says:

»To give up one's occupational duties in the *varnasrama* system is the essence of perfection.« (CC Madhya 8.61)
»Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, ›This is external. Go ahead and say something more.‹« (CC Madhya 8.64)³⁸

Purport: When Raya Ramananda rejects the external social duties of *varnasrama*, Caitanya Mahaprabhu accepts what Raya Ramananda expresses, and then encourages him to go

further. In the ongoing discourse, Raya Ramananda again and again is encouraged by Caitanya Mahaprabhu to present the next higher conclusion. In this way they proceed to different levels of *bhakti*, until they reach *raganuga-bhakti*. On this level, Caitanya says: »This is all right, but if you know more, please tell Me.« (8.71). In the following verses, *raganuga-bhakti* is distinguished into the five main *rasas*, and rises up to higher and higher stages of the soul's intimate loving relationship to Krishna.

In Verse 8.220 we find the clear statement:

»One who is attracted by that ecstatic love of the *gopis* does not care about popular opinion or the regulative principles of Vedic life. He is solely engaged in Krishna-*bhajan*.«

Purport by Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja: »In Vrajabhumi, there are no regulative principles set forth for Krishna's service. Rather, everything is carried out in spontaneous, natural love for Krishna. There is no question of following the principles of the Vedic system. Such principles are followed within this material world, and as long as one is on the material platform, he has to execute them. However, spontaneous love of Krishna is transcendental. It may seem that the regulative principles are being violated, but the devotee is on the transcendental platform. Such service is called *gunatita*, or *nirguna*, for it is not contaminated by the three modes of material nature.« (verse 221, purport)

Addressing the core of the matter at hand, verse 8.226 gives the final and lucid conclusion:

»The word *>angbri-padma-sudha*« means »associating intimately with Krishna.« One can attain such perfection only by spontaneous love of God (*krsna-sangananda*). One cannot obtain Krishna in Goloka Vrndavana simply by serving the Lord according to regulative principles (*vidhi-marga*).«

Purport: According to the statement of Raya Ramananda, who is inspired in his heart by Caitanya Mahaprabhu, it is clear that *Vraja-prema* can only be attained by *raganuga-bhakti*. *Vraja-prema* cannot be attained by *vaidhi-bhakti*. So the question may arise why someone who is greedy for *Vraja-prema* should perform *vaidhi-bhakti*? As already elaborated, the only qualification for *raganuga-bhakti* is greed to attain the *bhavas* of the *Vraja-vasis*. Whoever has this greed, this longing, this desire, can perform *raganuga-bhakti*. He is even encouraged to do so. Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Raya Ramananda themselves give this instruction and they assure us: »If one worships the Lord on the path of spontaneous love and goes to Vrndavana, he receives the shelter of Vrajendra-nandana, the son of Nanda Maharaja.« (verse 221)

Krishna himself takes care of His devotees; He is concerned about them, always instructing them from within how to make progress. There is no independent endeavour necessary in the sense of *dharma, artha, kama, moksa*. And just to confirm it once again, and to make it really clear, Raya Ramananda quotes verse 10.9.21 from Srimad Bhagavatam (in Caitanya Caritamrta verse 8.227):

»The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, the son of mother Yasoda, is accessible to those devotees engaged in spontaneous loving service (*bhakti-matam*), but He is not as easily accessible to mental speculators, to those striving for self-realization by severe austerities and penances, or to those who consider the body the same as the self.«

No external endeavour on the level of *guna* can reach Krishna in His *Vraja-lila*, for Krishna personally takes care of our progress towards Him, through the agency of His *bhakti*. Only pure *bhakti* herself can give us Krishna, and with this *bhakti*, we surrender to Krishna and make ourself dependent on Him. At this point, we are fully surrendered to Krishna and are not entangled in false independent concepts anymore, such as thinking ourself to be the actor or controller. Thus, the circle is complete.

I would like to show with the following example, drawn from my own realizations, that *raganuga-bhakti* looks like *vaidhi-bhakti*, but is not *vaidhi-bhakti*:

After I had been offering water to the picture of my Gurudeva for some period of time, according to the rules and regulations of *vaidhi-bhakti*, I felt some lack of joy and attraction to this service. I had been performing this service to offer him water three times daily in a regulated way, but I had waited in vain for transcendental feelings to manifest. Consequently I felt more and more unhappy about this duty and gradually I became more and more alienated from my feelings through acting against them. But these feelings were of material and egoistic nature, and

I felt a strong remorse about giving up this mechanical mode of offering.

Usually you are recommended at this point to simply go on. When the transcendental taste will come, a loving relation will develop. Because of my lack of attraction, however, I forgot to perform this service from time to time, which caused me only more remorse, and entangled me in a horrific mess of fear, damnability and desperation. Instead of attraction, the aversion increased.

At that moment, I changed my strategy, saying to myself, »if I am fallen anyway and lost, let's see what will happen if I offer the water to Srila Gurudeva only when I have the proper feeling of affection and love toward him«. I experimented, and listened to my feelings. Sometimes the situation occurred that I felt a strong desire and inner need to offer water to my Gurudeva. An inner emotional impulse came into my consciousness, usually when I myself wanted to drink water, or I opened a new bottle. »The first cup should be for Gurudeva«, that was my thought.

Thus, it was sometimes happening that I became inspired with spontaneous feelings of affection and care towards my Gurudeva. I performed the offering in different ways, always with the priority to be authentic and not to make a mechanical show. In those moments when I was there with my heart and the impulse came from inside, there was not the slightest repulsion. Instead, I noticed an increasing attraction every time I served the water, because the positive experience from the last time made the next time more positive.

Until that moment, the offerings were quite unstructured and were done more according to my needs than that of Gurudeva's. After some time, however, I came to the understanding that maybe Gurudeva would also be thirsty when I am not thirsty. So it made sense to me that it would be better to offer him fresh water at least three times daily. So, by means of spontaneous feeling (*raganuga-bhakti*), I finally came to a mode of action that resembled *vaidhi-bhakti*, though it was not *vaidhi-bhakti*.

Vaidhi-bhakti gives the order to regularly make the offering during the day. In *vadhi-bhakti* the offering is done mechanically, whereas in *raganuga-bhakti*, the action is motivated by one's inner emotion and relationship (*sambandha*). So even if the two performances appear equal, they are not the same in respect to cause and motive. Therefore I suggest that all the prescribed rules and regulations and performances of *vaidhi*, called »duties«, are actually external imitations of *raganuga-bhakti*. Still, those imitations are not *raganuga-bhakti*, because the actions are motivated from outside, from external influences, and not from inner influences only.

The statement that in *raganuga-bhakti* the same rules have to be kept as in *vaidhi-bhakti* cannot be true. This would mean that *raganuga-bhakti* is dependent on *vaidhi-bhakti* and inferior to it. This is not the case. *Vaidhi-bhakti* is an external imitation of *raganuga-bhakti*. Therefore it cannot have superiority to *raganuga-bhakti*, it cannot control *raganuga-bhakti*. In fully developed *raganuga-bhakti* the same actions are performed as in *vaidhi-bhakti* in the

form of rules and regulations. All the *aratis*, the offering of the food in every detail, right up to the *manasa-seva* of *asta-kaliya-lila* which is performed along a fixed schedule, all are performed as in *vaidhi-bhakti*. But this *manasa-seva* in *raganuga-bhakti* is not performed, as rules or duties but as an inner desire that comes very naturally from the inner feelings and meditations. Radha and Krishna must wake up at that time, because otherwise they could not get home before Their relatives woke up and find out that They are not at home.

The most important question is whether *raganuga-bhakti* can be performed from the very beginning of devotional life in an intermittent, interrupted, responsive, wavelike way. This would mean to develop *bhakti* through feeling, from the very beginning. My experience is that this practice of *bhakti* is very growthful, convincing me that Bhakti-devi is very happy about it. She is happy because she does not judge and condemn the living entity if the performance of *bhakti* is not yet perfect.

So my suggestion is to start right at the beginning with this approach from within. This way may seem to take longer time at the beginning, because the outward appearance of the devotee's service may change only slowly. The authenticity avoids a radical change in external performance, for there is no activity that is not accompanied by inner change. The progress in the beginning may be in fact slower, because the practitioner only accepts real feelings of *bhakti*. After some time, however, the progress accelerates exponentially.

At the same time, this progress is founded on a very

profound and sustainable basis, because it comes from realizations from within, and is not dependent on the external performance or platform, which is changeable. That which takes longer time at the beginning, makes more sense at the end.

We should not be discouraged by this, as through this process, we will attain transcendental *bhakti*, not temporarily, but eternally. This *bhakti* we will never lose again. She is the *bhakti* we feel, touching our heart and melting it. She is that for which we undertake the whole »endeavour«, the matchless feeling which we experience in loving exchange with Krishna and His associates. This feeling is the way and the goal. As a way, a method, this infelt *bhakti* cleanses the mirror of our heart in a highly effective way and softens our heart. In this way we become prepared for the goal: the loving relation with Radha, Krishna, the *gopis* and the *Vraja-vasis*.

The beauty of this process of *raganuga-bhakti* is of two aspects: on the one hand, the marvellous experience of spontaneous *bhavas* for Radha-Krishna and, on the other hand, the ability to speak to everyone about Krishna, without ideology. There is no need of defence or ideological combat, and practically everyone can listen to this *katha*, even an atheist, what to speak of a *mavayadi* or a follower of another religion.

And I am not sure which of these two may be the higher benefit: I tend to consider the second feature higher. There is nothing more beautiful than to express my own love for Krishna freely and unburdened towards every human entity.

This *bhakti* is like a lotus in the mud. She cannot be contaminated and cannot be hurt. She is not dependent on logic, argument, force, external structures or walls.

So where *raganuga-bhakti* leads to is the end of neurotic schism, the end of the splitting into two worlds. The devotee is no longer trapped in the contradiction between spiritual and material, or good and evil, but lives in one world, in mind as well as in action, the world of spiritual vision that: *Vasudeva sarvam iti*. Sri Krishna is indeed everything. (BG 7.19)

*Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja:
The Essence of all Advice*

This groundbreaking and revolutionary book of Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja elaborates on the question of the proper interpretation of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's book »The nectar of instruction« (Sri Upadesamrta). Here Narayana Maharaja proves that Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada definitely promoted the path of *raganuga-bhakti* (specifically *rupanuga-bhakti*).

Sri Upadesamrta deals with the basic injunctions for the performance of *bhakti-yoga*, and here rules and regulations have to be expected the most. But even in this book, Srila Narayana Maharaja shows that in *prema-bhakti*, keeping rules is not a topic that is relevant.

It would surely be easy to plead the case for *raganuga-*

bhakti, by reference to the 10th canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, where examples of it abound. But here it is done with clarity by Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja using the examples of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja's purports to Sri Upadesamrta, thus shedding a clear light on the relation between *vaidhi-bhakti* and *raganuga-bhakti*, as well as their importance for the highest goal in *bhakti – Vraja-prema*.

In the due course of his arguments, Narayana Maharaja also refers to the question of purity, specifically the *anarthas*:

»Especially lust, *hrid-roga*, how will it go away? There is only one way – to chant the name in the association of a higher Vaishnava whose heart is pure. His heart has been completely cleansed and he has developed his *krishna-prema* to a high degree. Being under his guidance always, obeying him, living in Vrndavana (if not by body then internally by mind), our hearts will be cleansed. First *bhakti* will come and then the heart will be cleansed. Don't think that first we will clear our hearts, that first everything will go away, and then *bhakti* will come. It will never happen like this. This is not authentic *siddhanta*. *Bhakti* will come gradually by its own power, and then without any effort this *hrid-roga* will go.« (Essence of all Advice, p. 78)³⁹

Purport: Here it is clearly stated that at first *bhakti* comes and then the *anarthas* will vanish. This is the correct sequence. In addition, this quote says that the purification of

the heart doesn't come by the independent endeavour or the control of the devotee, but solely by association with an advanced devotee. This advanced devotee has the emotions of *bhava* in his heart. Only in this way can we receive the *bhavas* ourself.

Sometimes it may happen that the *bhavas* manifest without the association of a pure devotee, e.g. only by the study of the scriptures. But the most effective and recommended way is association with a devotee who has already realized these *bhavas* in his heart. Then the transmission can happen very easily, and we can have our own spiritual experience. We can experience the *bhavas* and know what it's all about and where it will take us. Without spiritual experience, there is no spiritual path, but merely religion. Religion works without spiritual experience; it is only based on external instructions and orders, for instance conventional issues, catechisms, codices, rules etc.

Bhakti appears gradually by her own power. *Bhakti* is independent, and so she cannot be attained by any manoeuvres or techniques of the *sadhaka*. Sure, the *sadhaka* performs his exercises and his *sadhana*, and he does whatever he can. But this should not lead to the concept that he himself and his exercises are the root cause of *bhakti*. This would mean that *bhakti* is dependent on cause and effect, which implies she is subject to material conditioning. This is not the fact. *Bhakti* is the independent controller and actor.

In this regard Srimati Radhika is floating on that flood, and both of Them are controlled only by *premamrtaplavananat*. *Prema* is their *karta*,

supreme doer. So Krishna is dancing, Radha is dancing, the *gopis* are dancing, all *Vrajavasis* are dancing. *Prema* herself is also dancing, and whoever she touches will also dance.« (p. 173)

Prema, bhakti is the actor, even for Radha and Krishna. The highest form of *bhakti* is not to chant, but to be chanted, is not to dance, but to be danced. This is the ultimate attitude of the devotee. The flood of *prema* overcomes him. He is not the actor.

The flood of *prema* is always there, but we don't see or feel it. Why? The reason is that our heart is still materially covered, as the cleansing of the mirror of the heart (*ceto darpana marcanam*) is not yet complete. Because we still want to act and therefore make ourselves hard.

We prefer to go into resistance when something moves us, because we don't have faith that *bhakti* is our well-wisher, and that nothing bad will happen if we give up the control. When I go into resistance, the whole action becomes heavy and exhausting. Without resistance, the thing becomes easy and smooth.

»And after hearing, *anusrnuyad atha varnayed yah bhaktim param bhagavati pratilabhyā* – you will first have *bhakti*. And then, *pratilabhyā kamam hrid-rogam asv apahinoty acirena dhirah*. Then *kama* comes. What *kama*? *Kama* meaning *prema* for Krishna. First this *kama* appears and all *hrid-roga*, all bad desires and all ignorance will go away.«

Also in this verse Srila Narayana Maharaja states clearly that, at first, love to Krishna comes and then the material lust vanishes. Therefore, we start to perform *raganuga-bhakti* while we still have material lust. We need not be pre-purified. This is impossible.

Srila Narayana Maharaja refers here to the verse 10.33.39 in Srimad Bhagavatam. This is the last verse of the chapter about the *rasa-lila*-dance. The complete verse is as follows:

»Anyone 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 become sober and conquer lust, the disease of the heart.«⁴⁰

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura says in his purport to this verse:

»One who hears and chants about Krishna's *rasa-lila*, which is the crest-jewel of all pastimes, gets the crest-jewel of all results, namely *krishna-prema* (*bhaktim param*). One who continuously hears (*anusynuyat*), glorifies or writes poetry (*varnayet*) about this autumnal *rasa-lila* (*idam*) and similar pastimes of Krishna described by other poets (*ca*), first of all, even if he has the heart disease of material lust, becomes imbued with *prema*; then, by its effect the disease of the heart is destroyed. Thus it is understood here that this *prema* is independent; it is not weak or dependent like *jnana-yoga*. Here *kamam hrđ-rogam* refers to

the heart disease of material lust. When the word is used in relation to Krishna, however, this meaning is excluded. In relation to Krishna *kamam* is *prema*, pure love, and it has the opposite effect of material lust, *kamam*. One who faithfully hears and glorifies Krishna's *rasa* dance is described as learned (*dhirah pandita*), for he does not foolishly doubt, »How can *krishna-prema* appear if material lust is present?« *Krishna-prema* will definitely appear in that person who is devoid of foolishness (*dhirah*), and who accepts the statements of scripture with full faith. However, *krishna-prema* will not appear within those who have no faith in Krishna or who offend Krishna's Holy Name.« (Saharta Darsini, p. 377)

Purport: It is foolish to think *Krishna-prema* cannot manifest as long as material lust is in the heart. And it is unintelligent to think that one has to first conquer material lust – by our own endeavour – and then get *Krishna-prema* afterwards! Srila Narayana Maharaja states on page 146 in his book, that even at the stage of *bhava*, there are some *anarthas* in the heart (see quote below, p. 110).⁴¹

So if even at the stage of *bhava* there is not absolute 100 percent purity, how could it be possible at the preliminary stages of *nistha*, *ruci*, *asakti*, or even before these stages, on our level of three-quarter *shraddha* and half *sadhu sanga*? How can one thus conclude that *bhakti* cannot be attained while material contaminations are present?

From these concepts, prejudices arise that we are not qualified to hear *hari-katha* or to speak about high-class tran-

scendental devotees like the *gopis*. This is an attitude that can be found amongst many devotees, but this attitude is wrong. The statements of Srila Narayana Maharaja, as well as Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, show clearly that hearing and chanting about *rasa-lila* has to be performed even (or especially) in the presence of material contamination, because *rasa-lila-katha* is exactly that which fosters the purification.

»Whether one is a *bhakta, nirvisesa-vadi, visayi, kami* having so many desires, or *aparadhi*, having committed so many offences, everyone should hear and chant the holy name. This is told in a *sloka* in *Bhagavata* (SB 2.1.11) also: »O king, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all, including those who are free from all material desires, those who are desirous of all material enjoyment, and also those who are self-satisfied by dint of transcendental knowledge.« *Ceto-darpana-marjanam bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam*. Purification will come from the name. We want to clear our hearts: *ceto-darpana-marjanam bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam*. If we do all these unfavorable activities and after that chant *harinama*, this is absurd. You should be whatever you are, wherever you are situated, in whatever stage you are – *kami, visayi, durjana* (scoundrel) – whatever you are you should be – no harm. But be sincere, and then chant *harinama* under the guidance of a pure-hearted Vaishnava. Then, after that, *ceto darpana marjanam* will work.« (p. 80f.)

Purport: Here also, Srila Narayana Maharaja emphasises the correct chronological sequence: »Then, after that ...« First we perform *bhajan*, then the cleansing of the mirror of the heart will come. Not the other way round! Any kind of impurity or material desire is of no hindrance. It is allowed and it is inevitably unavoidable to perform *bhajan* at this impure stage anyway. Furthermore, as Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura literally states, to hear *rasa-lila*, to glorify it and to write our own poems about it, is permitted at this beginning stage. More than just permitted, it is recommended. Glorification, with feelings, is our only means.

Everything else is a concept of fear, which leaves the devotee in fear and suppression. This impedes the flow of *bhakti* and therefore, through this process, *prema-bhakti* cannot be attained. The statement: »if we do all these unfavourable activities and after that chant *harinama*, this is absurd« means that one should not perform material activities because one has faith in the purifying power of the Holy Name to save one from the reactions. To chant in order to deliberately act sinfully and escape reaction is foolish. This is not the same as performing sincere *bhajan*, which is unwillingly accompanied by material contamination. It is a question of motive.

»Yes, first comes the medicine. *Harinama* is the medicine and everything. *Harinama* should be taken first, then the disease will go. But if you think, »First the disease will go and then I will take the medicine. Then I will taste it,« this is not correct. You can progress from whatever stage

you are in, no harm. You may be lusty or a liar. You may have so many worldly desires and bad qualities. Just take the medicine first. Try to leave all your bad habits, but the medicine should be taken regardless. So the medicine is *harinama*. By chanting *harinama*, gradually the disease will go away and a little taste will come for the medicine.« (p. 67)

»So, it is not the true fact that we cannot hear the pastimes of Krishna in this world. It is not true that we must first be liberated from all worldly desires and then we will go to Goloka Vrndavana, and only there we will hear pastimes of Krishna. This is quite false, quite false, quite false.« (p. 131)

With this knowledge and this vision, Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja has come to the West. He has been rectifying the misunderstanding of *bhakti*, which had occurred in the general Iskcon-doctrine. According to this misunderstanding, we are all very fallen, impure and sinful and therefore not qualified to perform and experience *prema-bhakti*. Instead, we should perform austerities, follow the four regulative principles, endeavour for purity and perform *vaidhi-bhakti*. Srila Narayana Maharaja has come to stop this misunderstanding. He says it is not a sin or an offence to hear *lila-katha* at the stage of material contamination. And it is not necessary to fight against this contamination separately. *Lila-katha* itself will do this purification, if heard from a pure devotee.

Unfortunately, many devotees of the Gaudiya Vedanta

Samiti still live in these misleading Iskcon-concepts, and are even enmeshing themselves with this doctrine more and more over time. Those concepts represent a repressive Krishna-consciousness that centers around the sinful and impure state of the conditioned soul, and denounces and judges both other devotees and inquisitive new guests. In this way, a repressive continuum of fear develops that suppresses emotions in a neurotic and forcible way, and consequently a continuum of guilt, blame and shame aggravates this miserable situation. In such a repressive climate, no emotions of *bhava* will occur, and supporters of that concept take this as further proof of the fallen and rotten position of the devotee.

But these feelings of *bhava* are not lacking because we are impure – all the elaborations of this paper should show that this is a misunderstanding – rather, such feelings can indeed very well appear in the impure state. The fact is, we don't experience these feelings because we lack faith in the purifying power of the Holy Name and the *katha* etc. This faith is undermined exactly by this belief system. We believe *bhakti* is dependent on external material conditions. In this way, we serve to weaken *bhakti* and make her inferior. This is an offence and that is the reason why no *bhava* is coming. As soon as we perform natural and free *bhakti*, a *bhakti* without fear, there is the best and greatest hope for a rapid progress towards *Vraja-prema*.

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada himself declares:

»When one has developed such attachment, he can spon-

taneously serve the lotus feet of Krishna even without following the regulative principles. This stage is called *raga-bhakti*, or devotional service in spontaneous love.« (p. 146f.)

And Srla Narayana Maharaja comments on that as follows:

»What is *raganuga-bhakti*? For whom is he writing? For everyone? Everyone who wants to serve Radha and Krishna. And for those who don't want to serve Radha and Krishna, it is not applicable. So I think it is Swamiji's desire that all the devotees who have left their homes to enter the *bhakti* way should follow this. But if they are not qualified to follow *raganuga*, then they should follow regulative *bhakti*.« (p. 148)

»If anyone has a very little, thin greed to taste all these things in the service of Krishna, he is qualified to enter into *raganuga-bhakti*. And he cannot be controlled by any rules and regulations.« (p. 149)

Purport: This verse describes *raganuga-bhakti*, what her relation is to regulative principles, and the importance of greed. Greed, is the only necessary qualification. Greed, in this context, means the strong desire to serve Radha and Krishna. Greed is the emotion that drives us forward to perform *seva* for Radha and Krishna, whereas in *vaidhi-bhakti*, it is fear that propels us thus.

Greed is an inner wish, an internal need. Greed is an

emotion. In relation to Radha and Krishna it is a positive emotion. Again and again the main subject is emotion, feeling. If we approach *bhakti* on the basis of emotions, all doors will open and rapid progress will be made. As a devotee one should therefore ask oneself: do I want to serve Radha and Krishna? Who wouldn't say »Yes« to that? Therefore we all are qualified for *raganuga-bhakti*.

In the society of devotees it is very popular to consider oneself as unqualified. Not only in Iskcon, but also in the Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti, as practiced in the West, many devotees have the concept that we must perform *vaidhi-bhakti* because we are not qualified for *raganuga-bhakti*. But this is a false concept. First of all, Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada as well as Srila Narayana Maharaja explain here that even the most minute greed is enough as the qualification for *raganuga-bhakti*. Secondly, Srila Narayana Maharaja says in this book many times that the attitude to consider oneself as unqualified is wrong and an offence against *bhakti*:

»Even up to the stage of *bhava* there is some material attraction. But we should endeavor to progress. We should not be discouraged that we are not qualified, thinking, ›Oh, we are not even in *nistha*.‹ Don't think like this.« (p. 146)

»You should not be *kanistha-adhikari* forever. Our way to Krishna should not be blocked by surrendering to the idea that you are not, and will not at any time be qualified to read this.« (p. 167)

»Some will say, ›Oh, we are not qualified and will never

be qualified in the future.« This is an offence at the lotus feet of *bhakti*, Krishna Himself and Radharani also. That is why they will become more and more opposed to *rupanuga-bhakti*.» (p. 193)

Purport: One can observe a dramatic increase of intensity in these words of Srila Narayana Maharaja. Having explained this matter for the third time in the sequence of his lectures (page 146, 167 and 193), he now makes an even stronger argument, by saying that it is an offence to consider oneself as unqualified. He sees our Western-Christian tendency towards self-flagellation, which is completely counter-productive. We should better become more relaxed, in this respect. Furthermore, Srila Narayana Maharaja says that it is even an offence to not perform *raganuga-bhakti*:

»We will have to try to understand what *rupanuga* is, who Rupa is, what his mood is, and how we can adopt it. This is not offensive. If we are not doing this, it is offensive, being in the line of Caitanya Mahaprabhu.« (p. 193)

What should do someone who has not become pure yet?

»If someone has not yet become very pure or developed so much love and affection that he is qualified to hear, then what should he do? Should he be forever hopeless for this? No, do not ever be hopeless. Someone may still have many *anarthas* but if he has some interest and greed to hear this, then he is considered qualified. That greed alone constitu-

tes the qualification to hear. A devotee born in a brahmana family may have cultivated his regulative *bhakti* for *lakhas* of births and may have very few *anarthas*.⁴² Still, if he has no honor, no *ruci*, to hear, then he is disqualified from hearing. But a third class bogus person, like Bilvamangala, entangled always in lust for a prostitute, immediately awoke when his prostitute was singing: *Radha-Ramana Hari Govinda jaya jaya* ... When the prostitute was quite absorbed in singing this *kirtana*, Bilvamangala would be attracted and would also become absorbed. So this is the qualification. It does not matter if one is a lusty, wretched person with no qualification, no education, or any positive quality. This taste for hearing about these topics is itself the only required qualification. (...) *Sukriti* accumulated over *lakhas* and *lakhas* of births will not help. But the qualification can come easily if we hear from a devotee like Raya Ramananda, Svarupa Damodara, Rupa Gosvami, or their followers who tell the pastimes of Krishna so sweetly. Their *mati*, their hearts are always immersed in this ocean of love and affection for Srimati Radhika. Eligibility does not require any worldly qualification or any spiritual quality. The only requirement is some taste, *ruci*, to hear, and this *ruci* can come either from impressions from past lives or it can be newly formed in this life, no harm. *Ruci* coming from past lives is much stronger. But if it is coming from newly acquired impressions, it will still yield so many fruits. Taste to hear these topics is the only thing of any value, nothing else.« (p. 171f.)

Purport: Once again, Narayana Maharaja emphasises that there is no causal relation between *anarthas* and *bhakti*. Someone may have a lot of *anarthas*, but if he has the desire to hear about these topics, he is qualified to receive *bhakti*. After all, *bhakti* can manifest even in very impure places and respectively in very impure persons like the example of Bilvamangala.

Vaidhi-bhakti, in comparison, even if performed for hundreds of thousands of lifetimes, will not bring success. Similarly, *sukriti* cannot give *rupanuga-bhakti*. This point is very important. Many devotees have the notion that *sukriti* is the main prerequisite for *prema-bhakti*. Maybe this is true for *vaidhi-bhakti*, but not for *raganuga-bhakti*. We attain *raganuga-bhakti* by the grace of a pure devotee, who knows this *raganuga-bhakti*, because he received it from his Guru or another *sadhu*. This is the only thing we have to do. We have to find the association of a pure devotee and hear from him. He can give us knowledge because he has seen the truth (Bhagavad-gita verse 4.34: *upadeksyanti te jnanam jnaninas tattva-darsina*: the self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth).

Raganuga-bhakti is living *bhakti*, therefore she can be transmitted only from one living entity to another. This is personal philosophy. It is always about living persons who take up a relationship together. *Raganuga-bhakti* cannot be obtained by our own endeavour. She can only be obtained in a relationship, because she is relationship – *sambandha-jnana*.

Thus, it is important that we approach a pure devotee and

hear from him. As Srila Narayana Maharaja says clearly, it is not a question of if we are pure or impure. The dogma of purity, over-emphasised by today's *vaidhi-bhaktas*, creates an insecurity about our qualification (am I qualified for that?), and a deeply insecure and remorseful conscience that burdens the soul.

But this remorse and this insecurity are the foolishness that finally drives us away from *prema-bhakti*. We refer again to the purports of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura to Srimad Bhagavatam 10.33.39 (as quoted already above): »One who faithfully hears and glorifies Krishna's *rasa* dance is described as learned (*dhirah pandita*), for he does not foolishly doubt, ›How can *krishna-prema* appear if material lust is present?‹ *Krishna-prema* will definitely appear in that person who is devoid of foolishness (*dhirah*), and who accepts the statements of scripture with full faith. However, *krishna-prema* will not appear within those who have no faith in Krishna or who offend Krishna's Holy Name.« (page 377)

These statements explain that it is just this inner doubt that keeps us away from *bhakti*. It is not our material lust! It is our remorseful conscience! And this bad conscience is created by the rules and laws, by the concepts of pure and impure, pious and sinful and from all these dualities of the material world.

Actually it is so simple, straight and direct. We go to a *rasika-bhakta* and hear from him. The rest is done by *bhakti*. The indirect looping way around the self-reflective concepts of the mind, i.e. the preconceived doubts about whether one

is bona fide or qualified, interrupts this direct connection and blocks the flow of *bhakti*.

As Jesus advised his disciples, one should be like the children, because only in this way can one enter the spiritual realm. This is the reason why we fell from Paradise: because we ate from the tree of discernment between Good and Evil. This distinction between Good and Evil itself is the cause for our miserable situation. This is what Srimati Gurudeva means when he always strongly emphasises: »Don't criticize!« This means *trinad-api-sunicena*: There is nothing that is worse than me. That means there is nothing bad at all, there is only good. In reality there is no judgement at all, no Good and Evil, but as soon as I come to the vision that everything is good and everything is Krishna, this view is equal to non-judgement.

This is *bhakti* free from ideology. This is *uttama-bhakti*. Liberation means to be freed from these psychic anxieties and from this burden of conscience. Only then the feelings of *bhakti* can manifest. Therefore pure *bhakti* begins after liberation. This liberation frees us from the concepts and prejudices about duality, deeply embedded in the mind. The more unprejudiced I am, the less resistance I have, the purer is my *bhakti*. And therefore pure *bhakti* has nothing to do with pure or impure itself, but only our preconceptions about this, and the concomitant attractions and aversions which only serve as blockages to her flow.

Materially contaminated or not – this is not important. The only thing that counts is the desire to hear about transcendental topics. We need not to be concerned or to feel

bad about ourselves because we may still have some material attachment. On the stages of *nista*, *ruci*, *asakti* and *bhava* still there are material interests and identifications. Not until the stage of *prema* is achieved will these material aspects fully vanish.

But *prema* cannot be realized in the material body. So only at the end of the material body will the material attachments vanish completely. If we were allowed to perform *raganuga-bhakti* at no further stage of development than this point, then we would have to wait eternally until the end of our reincarnations to have it, if at all. Without *raganuga-bhakti* we will not attain *Vraja-prema* and without *Vraja-prema* we will not escape from the circle of birth and death. So this whole theory of purity makes no sense in any respect. This theory stands upside down, with effects of *bhakti* confused with her causes. Purity is not the cause of *bhakti* but her effect. First there is *bhakti*, then there is purity, not vice versa.

How many people, who came with a simple heart and a positive motivation to Krishna, have failed on the path of *bhakti* because of the fear and bad feeling coming from these repressive anxiety- and guilt-provoking concepts? How many have turned away from Krishna because of the oppressive structure they couldn't bear anymore? How many devotees have we already lost by our foolishness, by our doubts about the power of *bhakti*? If we have such doubts, even Bhakti-devi is helpless. In this way we are kept on the conditioned stage forever.

By the performance of natural *bhakti*, we attain immedi-

ate release and direct happiness. *Bhakti* becomes beautiful and strong. Our heart will open when there are no more hindrances in the way of *bhakti*. Through the experience of the spiritual emotion on the liberated platform, our ego disappears because it becomes permeable like a canal. We become the flute of Krishna, hollow and ready to play the song of Krishna. The soul rejoices, and the mind becomes strong and energetic. We have achieved inner peace and are fully empowered – there is no more resistance and no more restraint. We can surrender fully and completely without any problem.

This is the logical consequence, or rather the natural dynamic. It is the fulfilment of emotion. This is the stage of *nitya-siddha*, permanently liberated. On the other hand, a *sadhaka* who is too much focused on the rules and regulations, simply entangles himself more and more in alienation from his feelings. The very first decision to act against his feelings leads to a wrong direction from which it is nearly impossible to get back onto the right path.

The more and more he acts against his feelings, the more energy he loses, and he becomes weak and depressive. There is no energy coming from outside because this outside is not that what he actually needs or wants, at least not at that moment. Thus, he entangles himself more and more in a depressing and emotionless situation, which is only governed by his head or mind. He desperately seeks for the missing happiness, which he can at last only find in material satisfactions. At this point the devotee falls down, gives up his artificially advanced *sadhana*, and finally opts for the material world.

In the beginning he had been told he should fully surrender, keep all the principles, follow every instruction, perfectly perform every *sadhana* always and everywhere, never be weak, always push on, never listen to the emotions, suppress every material impulse, disregard the material body, and always chant Hare Krishna. The young devotee goes for it, yet without paying attention to whether his feelings are with it and what stage he is at. At the end of the day, after some years, the same devotee turns away from Krishna-*bhakti* in the same radical way.

Is this what we strive for? What is gained by this claim of absoluteness, of 100 percent following properly, or else it is useless? What is the use when after all that, devotees leave us after some years? Should we not better rethink our strategy? For the last 40 years we have had Krishna-consciousness in the West. The devotees don't care about their image in society, i.e. in the eyes of the *karmis*. But *karmis* are the wholeness of society and they are our clientele, potential devotees. It is not very glorious that Hare Krishna in the public opinion is not only perceived as a sect – this is only a cheap disparagement – but also as a repressive-authoritarian structure in general that is touched by intellectual people only using »safety-gloves« and a lot of suspicion.

How could something happen like that? Why don't they see the transcendence and sweetness of Krishna? Why don't they see the matchless emotions and the ecstasy of love of Godhead? Because nobody is showing them these things.

The repressive structures are well known. Germans know them well, not only from Christianity but also from the nati-

onal socialism (the worst trauma of German history), which very precisely used the same categories through which we now stress *vaidhi-bhakti*: purity, goodness, obedience, duty, devotion to a leader, fear of punishment, exclusion from the community etc.

The devotees are in most cases very young and don't have much life-experience or knowledge. As soon as they come in the association of devotees, they tend to cut off all their intellectual and mental connection to forms of knowledge other than that of the Vedic literature. They don't endeavour at all to prove their convictions or relate their philosophy to other philosophies and opinions, and if necessary reconcile both sides. This leads to a strange indifference towards the experiences and the wisdom of mankind.

The suffering and the austerities of many generations form, the fundamentals of realized knowledge. As human society progresses, its consciousness increases and progresses. We don't live anymore in the Middle Ages, neither are we in India or in a secluded place. Therefore, I cannot understand why the devotees don't care for this inner wealth, this knowledge and life-wisdom, which the Western people have acquired over the past decades and centuries. Instead, they preach just as they would some 500 years ago, as if there had never been an age of enlightenment, the lessons of fascism, a 68-movement, or globalisation. Luckily not all of them are in this predicament. Srila Narayana Maharaja instructs in this regard:

»Everyone who is interested in Krishna consciousness

should ultimately take shelter of Shrimati Radhika and Radhakunda. He (Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja) is saying »everyone«, and we are making so many walls, divisions in these instructions. There are no walls – the walls are false.« (p. 194)

»I think that to only do *vaidhi-bhakti* amalgamated with *karma* and *jnana* will not be sufficient to come into the family of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, in His *sampradaya*. If you want to be in Caitanya Mahaprabhu's *sampradaya*, you will have to do *rupanuga-bhakti*.« (p. 183)

This is natural, free, spontaneous *bhakti*, without fear. Srila Narayana Maharaja comments in one of his purports:

»We know how lusty Bilvamangala was, but he was changed in a day. You know Ajamila – he became such a wonderful devotee by the touch of four Vishnudutas, so we should try to follow all these teachings internally. Do not just make an outward show, like not taking cigarettes, for example. This will not help so much. We do not put so much stress on not taking cigarettes or meat – these things will automatically go. I know that (Bhaktivedanta) Swamiji once told me, »when I go to Western countries, I will allow the boys to come in my hostel, and I will supply eggs, meat, and wine if they want.« I asked »why?« Oh, the power of *krishna-nama* is very wonderful. I will tell them that you can take all these things but chant *krishna-nama*. And in a very short time, they will be transformed into good devotees.« (p. 212)

Purport: This statement is in line with the statements given above, according to which the important thing is not our purity and austerity, but *bhakti* herself, expressed here as chanting Krishna-*nama*. Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja gave all types of freedom to his boys and girls, for he didn't want to dominate them. He didn't need to, as he trusted solely in the spiritual power of the Holy Names.

In my opinion, this is the right attitude. Everything else is lack of devotion and faith. If I am emphasising austerity and purity, this usually rises from the concept that I have to do something, and that *bhakti* is dependent on this endeavour.

But the more important fact is that *bhakti* is completely independent and manifests by grace. If we are not open for the grace, we will never make progress. The whole problem is, in essence, a problem of attitude, a question of approach. A slight change of vision is needed in order to see things clearly. Then all the categories will sort themselves in the correct sequence, and rest like pearls on a thread, which gives one a higher sense of order. The whole thing finally fits together.

»If *bhakti* will come, *vegas* will go. Otherwise they cannot go.« (p. 206)

Purport: The *vegas*, the unwanted urges, cannot disappear by dry austerity. They can begin to disappear only when *bhakti* appears. It is therefore not necessary to focus our attention on the reduction of the *vegas*. We should focus our

attention always on *bhakti* herself. The unwanted things, the *vegas* and *anarthas*, are not the focus of our attention! Attention gives power. Wherever we focus our attention, we give power to these objects.

If these objects are connotated with a positive or negative value they come to be of subordinate importance. If we therefore focus our attention on *anarthas* in order to lament about them, to judge them, to persecute them, we give power to them. Beside that, we waste our time because we cannot utter the Holy Names during that time.

Many devotees today refer to the first verse of Sri Upadesamrta to legitimize their mood of regulation: *vaco vegam ...* this verse is the fundamental basis, the scale, the ultimate measuring principle, they say. Because none of us has mastered this yet, we are unqualified for *raganuga-bhakti* and first we have to purify, and chasten ourselves. In this way, the verses that follow this one hardly get any attention. But the Sri Upadesamrta reaches much further than the first verse. It reaches into the realm of Radha-Kunda, the highest and most confidential place of *madhurya-rasa* of Radha-Krishna *yugala-kisora*. This location is even higher than *rasa-lila*, because there not even all *gopis* can take part. There we should go!

Srila Narayana Maharaja is well aware of this unfavourable aspect of over-emphasising rules and regulations and purity. In 1997 he spoke to Iskcon-devotees about it, but today these statements also refer to many devotees in his own *sanga* (Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti):

»But those who will only look at the first *sloka*, *vaco vegam manasah ... vaco vegam manasah ... vaco vegam manasah ...*, and then close the book, thinking, «it is all right. This is sufficient for us. We are not qualified even to do *vaco vegam manasah*, so how we can read any further?« how will they advance? Swamiji has come to give this *rupanuga* line to us. So we should not be hopeless. We should try to develop our Krishna consciousness in this line.« (p. 183)

Purport: In this statement, Srila Narayana Maharaja is disapproving of the concept of over-emphasised servility, of subservience, and the image of inferiority that many devotees have. But we have to go on, even if we haven't mastered the first verse. How could we otherwise make progress?

One who has mastered these *vegas* can accept disciples over the whole world, he is *jagad-guru*. But this does not mean that one who has not mastered them yet, is not qualified to advance further. We are qualified according to our progress in *bhakti*. And even if we are unqualified – this is our only qualification, our only achievement that makes us eligible for the grace of Lord Chaitanya, who is *Patita-pavana*.

We shouldn't be too hasty to judge ourselves with a kind of false humility, which is not real felt humility, but an intellectual concept, a value. »But it is more dangerous to lie and cheat than to take a cigarette or to drink.« (p. 211) We should take care for these *anarthas*, lying and cheating, poising, making an image. As Bhagavad-gita states (3.6): »One who restrains the senses of action but whose mind dwells

on sense objects certainly deludes himself and is called a pretender.«

I advocate for more courage and less fear, for more happiness and self-acceptance, and less doubt and lack of self-esteem. We should not be too hasty to consider ourselves as sinful, impure and fallen, in order to fight against this impurity with gross methods that are psychologically diminishing. We are all eternal parts and particles of God, we are qualitatively one with God and loved by Him unconditionally. If we judge ourself, we also judge Krishna!

We perform *bhakti*, we have a spiritual master, we glorify Krishna and his Holy Name, we do so much *seva*. Can't we make our hearts light and say: everything is good? Can't we simply be happy to exist, and that we are on the way to Krishna, that we are with Him? Everything is already there, the *lila* is going on. Everything is good.

We should see everything in it's positive feature. In Krishna, everything rest like pearls on a thread. We need not to judge or to evaluate. Everything works on the spiritual feelings of the innermost soul. This is the power of attraction. Everything is about the loving relationship – that primordial, eternal, indestructible, loving relationship to God, as well as the very same kind of relationships amongst us eternal individual souls. We are the children of eternity, the children and loving consorts of God. Let us reclaim our eternal heritage from God. We ourselves are the performers of the Golden Age. Let us play again with Radha and Krishna in the land of Vraja, in the abundant flood of *prema*.

Hare Krishna, Radharani ki jaya, Bhakti Devi ki jaya!

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Footnotes

¹ *sravanadi-kriya - tara svarupa-laksana / tatastha-laksane upajaya prema-dhana*
»The spiritual activities of hearing, chanting and remembering are the natural features of *vaidhi-bhakti*. The sideeffect ist pure love for Krishna.« (CC 2.22.106) All nine angas: *sravanam, kirtanam, smaranam, arcanam, vandanam, dasyam, pada sevanam, sakhyam, atma-nivedanam*

² Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja: Sri Upadesamrita. The Amborisal Advice of Sri Rupa Goswami, Gaudiya Vedanta Publications, Mathura 1997, p. 6-7

³ Srimati Patak in: Our Srila Prabhupada. A Friend to All, early Contemporaries remember Him. Compiled by MulaPrakrti d. d., Brij Books, 2004, S. 160

⁴ See Shukavak N. Dasa: Hindu Encounter with Modernity. Kedarnath Datta Bhaktivinoda Vaishnava Theologian, Sanskrit Religions Institute 1999. Bhakti-

vinoda Thakura: »When the river of ancient tradition meets the stream of logic, the whirlpools of illusion are swept away.« (Quote from the back cover of the book.) The young urban modernists in this book are called »*bhadralokas*«, upper class well educated Indians interested in modern culture and reluctant towards their Vedic heritage.

⁵ Catholizism can be defined as a neurotic psychic pattern that causes suffering to many people in society, in the form of psychic diseases like depression, neurosis, psychosis etc., as they have a very rigide system of pious and sinful, guilt, blame and shame. All these concepts are on the mental plane and do not reach the transcendental truth. This is called »*ecclesiogeneous neurosis*« in western psychology.

⁶ Caitanya Caritamrta, transl. by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, BBT 1975

⁷ The value of chanting, even once, is stated in the following verses: Sanatana Goswami in Brhad Bagavatamrtam 1.9: »All glories, all glories to the all-blissful holy name of Sri Krishna, which causes the devotee to give up all conventional religious duties, meditation and worship. When somehow or other uttered even once by a living entity, the holy name awards him liberation. The holy name of Krishna is the highest nectar. It is my life and my only treasure.« (Quoted from: Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja: Secret Truths of the Bhagavatam, p. 157)

Sri Hari-bhakti vilasa 11.234: »Krishna-nama is the sweetest of the sweet and the most auspicious of all that is auspicious. It is the fully ripened fruit of the Veda's flourishing creeper (Srimad-Bhagavatam) and the embodiment of knowledge, cit-sakti. O best of the Bhrigu dynasty, even if someone chants the holy name only once, with faith or indifference (*hela*), he is immediately delivered from this ocean of birth and death!« (Quoted from: Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja: Sri Gaudiya Giti Gucchi, Gaudiya Vedanta Publications, Vrndavana 2003, 4th edition, p. 6)

Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya 1.194: »Jagai and Matai hat but on fault – they were addicted to sinful activity. However, volumes of sinful activity can be burned to ashes simply by a dim reflection (*nama-abhasa*) of the chanting of Your holy name.«

⁸ This may be the reason why Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur introduced the preeminence of *siksa* over *diksa* and why we are a *siksa*-line. He combined these two aspects by transgressing the *diksa*-dogma on the one hand while simultaneously maintaining the guru-principle in general on the other hand, bringing it back to its essential meaning as spiritual relationship and benevolent conveyance of love and truth to the disciple.

⁹ Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.25.25, quote from: Srila Narayana Maharaja: Secret Truth of the Bhagavatam, p. 29

¹⁰ Srimad Bhagavad-gita, with the commentaries of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura and Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, Sri Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti, Vrindavana 2000, p. 991

¹¹ See Bhagavad-gita 4.36, 6.44, 9.30 (quotes in the whole manuscript, if not mentioned otherwise, from: A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada: Bhagavad-gita As It Is, BBT):

BG 4.36: Even if you are considered to be the most sinful of all sinners, when you are situated in the boat of transcendental knowledge you will be able to cross over the ocean of miseries.

BG 6.44: By virtue of the divine consciousness of his previous life, he automatically becomes attracted to the yogic principles – even without seeking them. Such an inquisitive transcendentalist stands always above the ritualistic principles of the scriptures.

BG 9.30: Even if one commits the most abominable action, if he is engaged in devotional service he is to be considered saintly because he is properly situated in his determination.

¹² Srimad Bhagavad-gita, with the commentaries of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura and Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, Sri Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti, Vrindavana 2000, p. 148

¹³ Meanwhile she got a lot more of these fear- and guilt-provoking messages. Temporarily she gave up Krsna-bhakti due to that reason of dogmatism and moral threat.

¹⁴ Compare the following verses in Bhagavad-gita:

BG 3.33: Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes. What can repression accomplish?

BG 18.11: It is indeed impossible for an embodied being to give up all activities. But he who renounces the fruits of action is called one who has truly renounced.

BG 18.40: There is no being existing, either here or among the demigods in the higher planetary systems, which is freed from these three modes born of material nature.

BG 18.60: Under illusion you are now declining to act according to My direction. But, compelled by the work born of your own nature, you will act all the same, O son of Kunti.

¹⁵ Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya-lila: 8.70, quote from Srila Rupa Goswami: Padyavali (14)

¹⁶ The definition of *bhava* as given by Srila Rupa Goswami in his Bhakti Ramartha Sindhu 1.3.25f: »Patience, fruitful use of time, disinterest, lack of pride, hopefulness, longing, a desire for always singing the Lord's name, attachment to

proclaiming His qualities, and a delight in the places in which He dwells – these are some examples of the Indications (*anubhavas*) that appear in a person in whom a sprout of *bhava* has been born.» (The Bhaktirasamritasindhu of Rupa Gosvamin, transl. with Introduction and Notes by David L. Haberman, Delhi 2003)

¹⁷ BG 2.56-57: One who is not disturbed in mind even amidst the threefold miseries or elated when there is happiness, and who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a sage of steady mind. In the material world, one who is unaffected by whatever good or evil he may obtain, neither praising it nor despising it, is firmly fixed in perfect knowledge.

BG 4.22: He who is satisfied with gain which comes of its own accord, who is free from duality and does not envy, who is steady in both success and failure, is never entangled, although performing actions.

BG 5.18: The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [out-caste].

BG 6.29-30: A true yogi observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized person sees Me, the same Supreme Lord, everywhere. For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me.

BG 12.13-20: One who is not envious but is a kind friend to all living entities, who does not think himself a proprietor and is free from false ego, who is equal in both happiness and distress, who is tolerant, always satisfied, self-controlled, and engaged in devotional service with determination, his mind and intelligence fixed on Me—such a devotee of Mine is very dear to Me. He by whom no one is put into difficulty and who is not disturbed by anyone, who is equipoised in happiness and distress, fear and anxiety, is very dear to Me. My devotee who is not dependent on the ordinary course of activities, who is pure, expert, without cares, free from all pains, and not striving for some result, is very dear to Me. One who neither rejoices nor grieves, who neither laments nor desires, and who renounces both auspicious and inauspicious things—such a devotee is very dear to Me. One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equipoised in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, happiness and distress, fame and infamy, who is always free from contaminating association, always silent and satisfied with anything, who doesn't care for any residence, who is fixed in knowledge and who is engaged in devotional service—such a person is very dear to Me. Those who follow this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engage themselves with faith, making Me the supreme goal, are very, very dear to Me.

BG 13.29-31: One who sees the Supersoul equally present everywhere, in every living being, does not degrade himself by his mind. Thus he approaches the

transcendental destination. One who can see that all activities are performed by the body, which is created of material nature, and sees that the self does nothing, actually sees. When a sensible man ceases to see different identities due to different material bodies and he sees how beings are expanded everywhere, he attains to the Brahman conception.

BG 14.22-25: O son of Pandu, he who does not hate illumination, attachment and delusion when they are present or long for them when they disappear; who is unwavering and undisturbed through all these reactions of the material qualities, remaining neutral and transcendental, knowing that the modes alone are active; who is situated in the self and regards alike happiness and distress; who looks upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; who is equal toward the desirable and the undesirable; who is steady, situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor; who treats alike both friend and enemy; and who has renounced all material activities—such a person is said to have transcended the modes of nature (*gunas*).

BG 15.5: Those who are free from false prestige, illusion and false association, who understand the eternal, who are done with material lust, who are freed from the dualities of happiness and distress, and who, unbewildered, know how to surrender unto the Supreme Person attain to that eternal kingdom.

BG 18.20: That knowledge by which one undivided spiritual nature is seen in all living entities, though they are divided into innumerable forms, you should understand to be in the mode of goodness.

BG 18.51-53: Being purified by his intelligence and controlling the mind with determination, giving up the objects of sense gratification, being freed from attachment and hatred, one who lives in a secluded place, who eats little, who controls his body, mind and power of speech, who is always in trance and who is detached, free from false ego, false strength, false pride, lust, anger, and acceptance of material things, free from false proprietorship, and peaceful – such a person is certainly elevated to the position of self-realization.

¹⁸ BG 18.54: One who is thus transcendently situated (*brahma-bhutah*) at once realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me (*mat-bhaktim*).

¹⁹ BG 5.16: When, however, one is enlightened with the knowledge (*jnana*) by which nescience (*ajnana*) is destroyed, then his knowledge (*jnana*) reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime.

BG 5.17: When one's intelligence, mind, faith and refuge are all fixed in the Supreme, then one becomes fully cleansed of misgivings through complete knowledge (*jnana*) and thus proceeds straight on the path of liberation.

BG 7.16: O best among the Bharatas, four kinds of pious men begin to render

devotional service unto Me—the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive, and he who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute (*jnani*).

BG 7.17: Of these, the one who is in full knowledge and who is always engaged in pure devotional service is the best. For I am very dear to him, and he is dear to Me.

BG 7.18: Though these are all certainly great souls, I consider the *jnani* to be as dear to Me as My own self. Since his thoughts dwell always in Me, he takes determined shelter of Me as his supreme destination. Verse 7.18 is taken from the English edition of Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja: Srimad Bhagavad-gita with commentaries of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura and Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti, Mathura 2000, 1st edition, p. 437f. Concerning the category of *jnana* see also: 4.10, 4.19, 4.23, 10.10-11

²⁰ BG 5.18: The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].

²¹ BG 5.7: One who works in devotion, who is a pure soul, and who controls his mind and senses is dear to everyone, and everyone is dear to him (*sarva-bhutatma-bhutatma*). Though always working, such a man is never entangled.

BG 5.25: Those who are beyond the dualities that arise from doubts, whose minds are engaged within, who are always busy working for the welfare of all living beings (*sarva-bhuta hite ratah*), and who are free from all sins achieve liberation in the Supreme.

BG 11.55: My dear Arjuna, he who engages in My pure devotional service, free from the contaminations of frutive activities and mental speculation, he who works for Me, who makes Me the supreme goal of his life, and who is friendly to every living being (*nirvairah sarva-bhutesu*)—he certainly comes to Me. See also BG 6.29-30, 12.13, 13.29-31, 18.20 as quoted in footnote 17.

²² Translation of these two verses by the author on the basis of the translation of Srila Narayana Maharaja and Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja as well as the Sanskrit.

²³ Leah Freyermuth: Mahas Patah. Aufbruch in die Welt des ungebrochenen Lichts, Seite 108, Frankfurt 2006. Supplement: »I am not an apostle of love, no disciple of wisdom, no servant of the Lord. But what am I? A tool in the hands of my master, a flute played by the divine cowherd boy, a leaf moved by the breath of his Lord.« (Sri Aurobindo)

²⁴ See also Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharajas purport to BG 18.55: »After attainment of the *brahma-bhuta* stage of freedom from material conceptions, devotional service begins by one's hearing about the Lord. When one hears about the Supreme Lord, automatically the *brahma-bhuta* stage develops, and material

contamination – greediness and lust for sense enjoyment – disappears. As lust and desires disappear from the heart of a devotee, he becomes more attached to the service of the Lord, and by such attachment he becomes free from material contamination. In that state of life he can understand the Supreme Lord. This is the statement of Srimad-Bhagavatam also. Also after liberation the process of bhakti or transcendental service continues. The Vedanta-sutra confirms this: *aprayanat tatrapi hi drstam*. This means that after liberation the process of devotional service continues.«

²⁵ Email from 18.12.06

²⁶ Krishna states in Bhagavad-gita, 9.19: » O Arjuna, I control heat, the rain, and the drought. I am immortality and I am Death personified; both *sat* and *asat* are in Me.« In the purport Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja says: »By analyzing all these different energies of Krishna, one can ascertain that for Krishna there is no distinction between matter and spirit, or, in other words, He is both matter and spirit. In the advanced stage of Krishna consciousness, one does not therefore make such distinctions. He sees Krishna only in everything.«

²⁷ Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur: »Life as an animal, bird, insect, or any other of the countless thousands of species is acceptable, but taking shelter of deceit is thoroughly improper. Only a honest person possesses real auspiciousness.« (Upadesavali, verse 11, quoted in: Sri Gaudiya Giti Gucchi, Gaudiya Vedanta Publications, Forth Edition, Vrndavana 2003, p. 202)

²⁸ The topic here is not the discussion about sense and nonsense of violence. This is used here only as an example for thinking beyond values. Who is specially interested in the question of violence in terms of transcendence may refer to my essay: »Zur Kritik der Gewalt«. There the question of transcendental force is discussed in detail. (Tattva Viveka No. 3, Frankfurt 1995)

²⁹ BG 5.18: The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].

BG 6.8-9: A person is said to be established in self-realization and is called a yogi [or mystic] when he is fully satisfied by virtue of acquired knowledge and realization. Such a person is situated in transcendence and is self-controlled. He sees everything—whether it be pebbles, stones or gold—as the same. A person is considered still further advanced when he regards honest well-wishers, affectionate benefactors, the neutral, mediators, the envious, friends and enemies, the pious and the sinners all with an equal mind.

BG 6.29: A true yogi observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized person sees Me, the same Supreme Lord, everywhere.

BG 6.32: He is a perfect yogi who, by comparison to his own self, sees the true equality of all beings, in both their happiness and their distress, O Arjuna!

BG 13.31: When a sensible man ceases to see different identities due to different material bodies and he sees how beings are expanded everywhere, he attains to the Brahman conception.

BG 14.22-25: O son of Pandu, he who does not hate illumination, attachment and delusion when they are present or long for them when they disappear; who is unwavering and undisturbed through all these reactions of the material qualities, remaining neutral and transcendental, knowing that the modes alone are active; who is situated in the self and regards alike happiness and distress; who looks upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; who is equal toward the desirable and the undesirable; who is steady, situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor; who treats alike both friend and enemy; and who has renounced all material activities—such a person is said to have transcended the modes of nature (*gunas*).

BG 18.20: That knowledge by which one undivided spiritual nature is seen in all living entities, though they are divided into innumerable forms, you should understand to be in the mode of goodness.

³⁰ BG 18.11: It is indeed impossible for an embodied being to give up all activities. But he who renounces the fruits of action is called one who has truly renounced.

BG 18.40: There is no being existing, either here or among the demigods in the higher planetary systems, which is freed from these three modes born of material nature.

BG 18.60: Under illusion you are now declining to act according to My direction. But, compelled by the work born of your own nature, you will act all the same, O son of Kunti.

³¹ Bhaktivinoda Thakura: Jaiva-dharma, Mathura 2002, 2nd edition, p. 480 (This sentence is practically identical with a verse from Hari-bhakti-vilasa, what is not said in this context in Jaiva-dharma. The verse is quoted in the commentary to Sri Upadesamrta, published by Srila Narayana Maharaja, p. 32.

³² CC, Madhya 8.226, for further elaborations see the chapter »The essence of all advice«

³³ Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada writes in his purport to CC Madhya 22.109: »If one does not come to the platform of spontaneous service in the beginning, he must adopt regulative service according to the instructions of the spiritual master. This regulative service is called *vaidhi bhakti*.« This means that it is possible to practice *raganuga-bhakti* already at the beginning.

³⁴ See: Swami B. B. Tirtha: Shri Caitanya. His Life and Associates, Mandala Publishing, San Raphael 2001, p. 45f. Pundarik Vidyanidhi externally acted like a materialist, because he was wealthy, had servants and chewed pan. Gadadhara Pandit criticised him for that, when he met him the first time. His associate, Mu-

kunda Datta, then chanted a verse from the Srimad Bhagavatam, what caused Pundarik Vidyanidhi to fall in ecstasy immediately, he started to cry and to glorify Radha-Krsna. Caitanya Mahaprabhu then requested Gadadhara Pandit to accept Pundarik Vidyanidhi as his spiritual master in order to counteract his offense.

³⁵ See Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura: Sarartha Darsini, ed. by Mahanidhi Swami, New Dehli 2004, p. 300 (10.29.10-11): »In Krishnas pastimes on earth He often turns the most lowly things into the most elevated.«, and brings examples from Krishnas role as chariot-driver and the higher position of the conjugal rasa (*sringara-rasa*) over the marital *rasa*.

³⁶ BG 4.22: He who is satisfied with gain which comes of its own accord, who is free from duality (*dvandva*) and does not envy, who is steady in both success and failure, is never entangled, although performing actions.

BG 7.27: O son of Bharata, O conqueror of the foe, all living entities are born into delusion, bewildered by dualities (*dvandva*) arisen from desire and hate.

BG 13.22: The living entity in material nature thus follows the ways of life, enjoying the three modes of nature. This is due to his association with that material nature. Thus he meets with good and evil among various species.

³⁷ Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura: Sarartha Darsini, ed. by Mahanidhi Swami, New Dehli 2004, p. 300-301 (10.29.10-11)

³⁸ The German translation in the edition of 1980 differs much from this English version from 1975. While the English says: »Mahaprabhu again rejected«, the German translation is only saying: »Mahaprabhu sagte: Sprich weiter und sage etwas mehr.« (Mahaprabhu said: Go on and tell more.) I translated the verse 8.64 according to the original Bengali-sloka.

³⁹ Srila Narayana Maharaja: The essence of all advice. Discourses on Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami's Nectar of Instruction, Gaudiya Vedanta Publications 2004³

⁴⁰ quoted from Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura: Sarartha Darsini, p. 377

⁴¹ Madhurya Kadambini explains that *anarthas* are completely eradicated only at *prema*:

»Each of the *anarthas* has five grades of *anartha-nivrtti* (nullification): limited or partial (*eka-desa-vartini*), pervasive (*bahu-desa-vartini*), almost complete (*prayiki*), complete (*purna*), and absolute (*atyantiki*). Thus the nullification of *anarthas* arising from *aparadha* is as follows. From the start of devotional activities (*bhajana-kriya*) the nullification is partial according to the *nyaya*: the town burned, the cloth is torn. (According to *gramo-dagdhah pato bhagah* logic, when we hear that the town is burned, we can imagine that some of it must still be existing, or if a cloth is torn, the pieces are still existing.) By continued practice, with the appearance of *nistha*, the eradication is more pervasive. With the appearance of *rati*, or *bhava*, the eradication is almost complete. With the appearance of *prema*,

the eradication is complete. With attainment of the Lord's association, the eradication of *anarthas* is absolute, with no possibility of their reappearance.«
(Srila Vishvanata Cakravarti Thakur: Madhurya Kamdambini, p. 27)

⁴² Important to recognize here is the approximate value. Srila Narayana Mahara-ja is not speaking in absolute terms but in proximity. Zero *anarthas* is practically impossible, only very, very few *anarthas*. We cannot get rid of the *anarthas* hundred percent, what isn't even necessary, because this will come automatically by performing *bhajan* and *seva*.