

"The Lessons of the Govardhana-*lila*," "Priti-Lakshanam Festival", Ekaterinburg, 03.01.2013, Introductory lecture

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BVG: I am very glad to see you all here in this festival hall. Traditionally, we have come here to celebrate the New Year together. And we started this tradition of "Priti-lakshanam" festivals last year. "Priti-lakshanam" means "how to recognize love through certain external manifestations." The love between devotees can be recognized by various external manifestations: devotees talk to each other, devotees sing together, eat together and, most importantly, devotees hear together. Dayavan Prabhu, Aditi-dukhaha Prabhu, Vatsala Prabhu and your humble servant have come here to learn to love from you and share some experience we have accumulated. But the most important point – the key word in all of this – is that we are trying to do this together.

Each of us is not very strong either materially or spiritually. But when we are truly together, and not just physically together but together at the level of the heart, when we give up the envy that separates us, when we try to connect our hearts, we become very strong for a very simple reason: because Krishna likes this. When Krishna sees that the devotees do something together He empowers them and their strength increases many many times and their strength is not equal to the arithmetic sum total of the strength of each individual Vaisnava. Their strength increases many times. And the main point of this festival is that we all must do something together. Together with Dayavan we are sitting here on the *vyasasana*, together we'll sing, together we will eat and together we'll dance. And ultimately we won't even notice when we find ourselves in the spiritual world (applause).

Generally, the spiritual world is not much different from what is happening here. There, too, people talk about Krishna, dance for Krishna, sing for Krishna, eat for Krishna. Well, generally, you can consider you are already in the spiritual world. And it will happen someday – the main point is to experience this state or this experience of the spiritual world now. And for the purpose of obtaining this experience we hold these festivals and seminars where we try to better understand what it means to be together and what it means to practice spiritual life.

I'll now sing a little bit, then each of us will tell about their seminars and then we will have a concluding *kirtan*. So let's try to tune in together so that everything that separates us goes away and so that only what unites us is left: the holy name, the high ideals of spiritual life and, ultimately, God – the infinitely beautiful God of love Whose name is what? (Room: Krishna!) *Jai*.

Now is the time of the "Christmas Tree" children's festivals. I remember as a child when we went there –the Santa Claus there would also ask such questions (laughter). Everyone would loudly shout. Shout what? (audience: Krishna!) Louder, please (audience: Krishna!!)

(*Kirtan* BVGM: 5:25 - 27:00)

DAYAVAN PRABHU: Hare Krishna. I am very grateful to Bhakti Vijnana Goswami Maharaj for inviting me to this festival. I am here by the mercy of Maharaj. Last year we discussed a topic related to the holy name and this year we will continue this discussion. I wanted to say a few words about the "Priti-lakshanam" festival itself: how important such festivals are. In our region, in Tatarstan, we hold this "Priti-lakshanam" festival each year. And we hold it not just once a year, we do it every quarter. Devotees get together and we discuss how we can serve one another, the devotees, Srila Prabhupada together; how we can improve our service.

And this word, *priti-laksanam*, in itself means the external manifestation, the signs of love that Vaisnavas can reveal among each other. The word *priti* means selfless pure love. That is, *priti* means a relationship devoid of envy. And this pure energy of *priti* is transmitted not just through some information – through reading books or hearing lectures – it is transmitted also through that, but basically, this energy of *priti*, the energy of pure love, is transmitted through the association of devotees. We must get in touch with the devotees in whose heart there is no envy, or at least, in

whose heart there is less envy than in ours. In this way, associating with such devotees, we get purified, our hearts get purified.

I was recently told a story by a devotee, a nice story. He went to Govardhana to spend the month of *kartik* there. He took certain vows: to go around Govardhan every day, to chant a certain number of rounds every day, and he had some extra vows. So, he began observing his *sadhana* and he was inspired. Two weeks went by in this way and he felt that with each day he was accumulating more and more spiritual energy. And he thought, "How nicely I am spending my time here." But one day, having come back from his *parikrama*, he noticed that some devotees were put up in the next room. He heard a Russian speech, he realized it was Russian devotees and thought, "Great, now there are some devotees next door." But when he saw which devotees were those ... Rather, he saw one of them and he was very upset because not so long before he was having a clash with that devotee. That devotee was kind of his immediate superior in one place and he had a bitter experience with him. And when he saw him, he thought, "Ugh, how's that? I thought I hid at the feet of Govardhan, performing *bhajan* here, and here is this person." And it seems that that person had been really bad to him, stinging him to the quick. And at some point he realized – by the evening – that he's been thinking of that person all day long. He recalled everything that had happened between them, it all arose from his heart. And he was just thinking what a rascal he is and how he could possibly live with him here, at Govardhan.

Suddenly he realized it can't go on like that. I came here, taking a leave from my job, and I came to immerse in spiritual energy. And here I am, sitting and criticizing, thinking ill of a devotee. So, he started praying to Govardhana, he started asking Govardhana to help purify his consciousness, his mind. And the next morning he was sitting and chanting without going anywhere. He was chanting when suddenly he felt that someone approached him. Someone came up and stood behind him. And he thought – as is often the case, that it was the local *Vrajavasis*, they would come and look at the white people; they can silently stare at them for a long time – so, he thought, "It must be some *Vrajavasi*, who's come to look at me." A minute passed and another but the person wouldn't go away – and he felt that the person wanted to tell him something. He turned and saw that same devotee standing in a very humble mood with folded palms. And he said to him that "Taking advantage of this holy place, I want to ask your forgiveness." And he very sincerely begged forgiveness, saying that, "At that time I was completely wrong, at that time I was under the influence of *isvara-bhava*, and I was altogether acting improperly." And he began admitting one after another where he was wrong. And he said that very sincerely and honestly.

then, having asked for that devotee's forgiveness, he prostrated himself before him in a *dandavat* – this time it was for real. That is, he did that not because he read somewhere that one should ask for forgiveness and so on, but he said that "Krishna punished me severely for behaving so ugly. Now I've realized that one shouldn't behave like that." And he fell before him in a *dandavat*. This devotee, he felt that his heart changed – over a few seconds, maybe thirty seconds, forty seconds, or maybe that went on for a minute or five, but he knew his heart has now changed. He also prostrated himself before him in a *dandavat*.

And he told me that his heart was different now thanks to that occasion. After that he couldn't sleep the night, thinking that: "How is it possible? So many times had I read about humility, so many lectures had I heard on humility, so many times had I played the humble! And here it was enough to just see this quality manifest in real life and in a real person to change me!" That is, in a few minutes the envy that was there in that devotee's heart was transformed into love. He says, "Now I highly respect and love this person because I would've never believed that this person, in this incarnation, would be capable of such things."

In this way this *priti* energy is passed down through the chain of disciplic succession when we come into contact with live embodiments of this *priti* energy. *Priti* is the spiritual energy that can cleanse our hearts. And when we get together at such festivals we must be sure to bring here, to the festival this *priti* energy, which is revealed in the quality of humility, patience, not expecting any respect for oneself and the ability to pay respect to everyone else. In this way, sharing this spiritual energy, we'll be able to change both ourselves and everyone around us.

These festivals are very important and this is why we need to hold them regularly, more often. Such great festivals, when the whole region gets together, can be held once a year and just the leaders can get together several times a year – about 50, 60, 70 people – to discuss how we can improve our service in our community with regards to each other. So, it's an important festival.

And, taking this opportunity, I'd like to ask all of you and Maharaj for your blessings so that I would be able to tell you something valuable probably. Because I do not feel that I have the qualifications to teach you something. Rather, I would love to hear many of the devotees who are here. By the grace of Maharaja I am here and I am asking you all the blessings to do this.

(Audience: Haribol! Haribol! Haribol!)

Srila Prabhupada ki Jai!

"Priti-laksanam" Festival ki Jai!

Gaura Premananda! Haribol!

BVGM: Let's chant the *mangala-caarana* which is to be chanted before any good initiative.

om ajnana-timirandhasya jnananjana-salakaya
caksur unmilitam yena tasmai sri-gurave namah
sri-caitanya-mano-'bhistam sthapitam yena bhuta-tale
svayam rupah kada mahyam dadati sva-padantikam

vande 'ham sri-guroh sri-yuta-pada-kamalam sri-gurun vaisnavams ca
sri-rupam sagratam saha-gana-raghunathanvitam tam sa-jivam
sadvaitam savadhutam parijana-sahitam krsna-caitanya-devam
sri-radha-krsna-padan saha-gana-lalita-sri-visakhanvitams ca

he krsna karuna-sindho dina-bandho jagat-pate
gopesa gopika-kanta radha-kanta namo 'stu te
tapta-kancana-gaurangi radhe vrndavanesvari
vrsabhanu-sute devi pranamami hari-priye

vancha-kalpatarubhyas ca krpa-sindhubhya eva ca
patitanam pavanebhyo vaisnavebhyo namo namah
sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu-nityananda
sri-advaita gadadhara srivasadi-gaura-bhakta-vrnda

hare krsna hare krsna, krsna krsna hare hare
hare rama hare rama, rama rama hare hare.

ajanu-lambita-bhujau kanakavadatau
sankirtanaika-pitarau kamalayataksau
visvambharau dvija-varau yuga-dharma-palau
vande jagat priya-karau karunavatarau

yo 'ntah pravisyama mama vacam imam prasuptam
sanjivayaty akhila-sakti-dharah sva-dhamna
anyams ca hasta-carana-sravana-tvag-adin
pranan namo bhagavate purushaya tubhyam

Hare Krishna. Dayavan Prabhu told us that we have come together for a very important purpose – to learn from each other. There's no one we can't learn something from. And our whole life is a great school. The trouble is that our pride, the position of the enjoyer, prevents us from learning from others. Ultimately, this entire world is a school of love. Krishna has made this world in an amazing way. He made the world in such a way that ultimately only those who learn to love and express love can feel safe here. All the rest will fear, all the rest will shake, all the rest will try to hurt others and be hurt in return.

This world has been created in an amazing way and if we try to deeply understand the purpose behind it we'll understand that the purpose of this world is to give us, those who don't believe in love, faith in love. But we'll be able to learn to love and everything else we need to learn – ultimately, the culmination of all of our training is the understanding that the meaning of everything is love. Everything else is needed to just make us understand that one thing. Over our lifetime we can get lots of diplomas, lots of certificates about having passed this or that course, particularly speaking, *bhakti-sastri*, *bhakti-vaibhava*. But the main certificate that we should get is the one certifying that we have now learned to love. This is the highest qualification.

You can be a good doctor, you can be a good engineer, you can be a good designer or artist. But if we haven't learned to love it all is useless. This is what we're learning here and what we should be learning from devotees. This is what we must try to learn from devotees in the first place. And each of us here is a student who regards everyone else as their *guru*. If we come here as a *guru: guru maharaj ki ...* (the audience laughs: Jay!) then we are not going to learn anything. We always remain learners – beggars who have come to beg alms.

This is what Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Himself says. He is the *prema-avatara*, the personification of love, the embodiment of love. And He says that "I am a beggar: *daridra-jivana*, and I have come here to serve here and get paid for it." We know that in the material world people serve in order to get paid; and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says the same thing, "I am a mendicant and I have come to serve. And I want to get paid for it." What's the pay? Love. Because as long as I don't have love I'll remain a beggar, I will remain a miser – always hungry for something for my own self, always trying to get something from the others. Because there is no love in the heart. But when there is love in the heart a person is generous. Jealousy makes one miserly and love makes one generous. Love is like a king. When it is there in the heart one is willing to give away everything, he doesn't mind! Because he possesses the most valuable thing. And love never ends.

And we are here to learn this; to be learning from each other, to be learning from those who have more love and to be learning from those who have less love. There is something we can learn from each and every one. In "Srimad-Bhagavatam" there is a story about the *avadhuta brahmana* who had 25 *gurus*. Wherever he went he would see his *guru*. Whereas wherever we go we see just learners. We see or we are looking for them, always trying to teach, "You are not doing it properly. You are doing it in the wrong way. Here, this is the right way! I know better." This is why we are not learning.

And here I'll be speaking on the *Govardhana-lila* where, from the very beginning, Krishna is teaching this important lesson: who is to be worshiped. Listen carefully. Because in our life we worship so many. Of course, we might not perform formal rites of worship, we might not do *puja* to our boss every day – he is unlikely to appreciate it. But we do worship people when we hear of someone, when we read of someone, when we talk of someone, when we praise someone, when we are interested in someone, when we want to get something from someone – all these are various forms of worship. Seeing the inhabitants of Vrindavana running and fussing around, pottering about and carrying all sorts of ingredients to make a magnificent *puja* for Indra, Krishna thought, "What are they doing?!" The Sanskrit word Shukamuni or Sukadeva Goswami uses is *sambhrama*; Krishna saw *sambhrahma*. *Sambhrahma* means "bustle." If we look at Ekaterinburg, we will see the same *sambhrahma* – everyone is running, everyone is in a hurry, everyone is doing something, carrying around various ingredients – in order to worship someone.

Another meaning of the word *sambhrama* is "people who are completely bewildered, completely confused, completely unaware of what they are working for." Everyone is working, everyone is occupied, right? Is there someone unoccupied in this world? Is there someone who has spare time? No one has spare time! Everyone is busy, everyone is in a hurry, everyone is rushing. What for? It is not clear what for. What is the result of it all? It is not clear what. So, in a very clever way Krishna made His devotees worship the right person and direct all we do in the right direction. Let us first chant the *pranama-mantra* of Govardhana. Let's worship him and then I'll tell you a little bit about what I'm going to speak on and the meaning of this seminar:

namaste girirajaya
sri govardhana namine

asesa klesa nasaya
paramananda dayine

Listen carefully to what Krishna's saying here, addressing us. Watching how actively the *vraja-vasis* were working and collecting various stuff, Krishna said, "Whom are you worshipping with all this?" His father, Nanda Maharaja, said, "We're worshipping Indra; as our ancestors, fathers and grandfathers have done. This is what we are supposed to do. Indra provides rain. Indra gives us all we need." At that point Krishna began preaching the philosophy of *karma-vada*. He began saying, "What does Indra have to do with that?! Indra is not independent – you are going to get the results of everything you do. Ultimately, you reap what you sow. If you work hard everything will come to you. Go on, My friends! What does Indra have to do with all this?!"

And the meaning of these ridiculous arguments that anyone that has passed the *bhakti*-program can refute ... He will be taught there that *karma-vada* is wrong – the meaning of these simple arguments is actually most profound. What Krishna wants to tell us is: "My friends, you will be working in any case. My friends, here you will be acting in any case." And then Krishna says, "You will be acting here. Don't think of Indra – think of whom you directly benefit from. Why worship Indra? We're cowherds – Krishna said – and cowherds depend on Govardhana. We're already benefiting from Govardhana. Have you ever seen Indra?!" Has anyone ever seen Indra? Who's seen Indra – raise your hands, please. No one has. Krishna says: "For how many years have you worshipped Govardhana? No one has ever seen Indra. But we do see Govardhana. Govardhana is already bringing us good." And, speaking these seemingly strange things which is nothing but materialism, "Let us worship what benefits us" – He is actually telling us something most important.

Let us see who actually brings us good, whom we actually depend on – and we will worship them. And if we examine our lives we'll understand a very simple thing. We get benefit – all the good we have in our lives – from the devotees. But we are trying to worship someone else. It constantly seems to us that we can get something from someone else. Those we get the most valuable and most substantive things from, those who are closest to us – as a rule, we don't notice them and don't appreciate what they give us. Very often it happens that there is a devotee among us and we don't pay attention to him. "Well, an ordinary devotee. Plays the *mridanga*. Sings *kirtans*." Then he leaves and we think he was here I didn't appreciate him.

Oftentimes it happens that there is some devotee and we don't pay any special attention to him, "Well, an ordinary devotee. A *brahmachari*! What do you want from him?!" And we think, "This one can give me something and that one give me something," we start meditating on this one or that one, ignoring the ordinary people we truly depend on. This is precisely what Krishna said. He says it, addressing us, "Fools! You are looking in the wrong direction, you are looking for your object of worship God knows where! Look around! Those whom we're actually getting everything all we need from – are nearby." And because they are around every day – every day of our lives – we get to not appreciating them. As a rule, we do not appreciate these people. Do children appreciate their parents? They don't. They start thinking of someone else, thinking that someone else is going to give them more. Is there someone who can give children more than their parents? No!

Oftentimes the ISKCON devotees don't appreciate what we have in ISKCON. They start thinking, "Oh-oh-oh! The Gaudiya-Math," or "Oh-oh-oh! The *babajis* at Radha-kunda," "Oh-oh-oh! Madhava-Sampradaya," "Oh-oh-oh! Ramanuja Sampradaya." We've got everything from Srila Prabhupada! We don't appreciate. Because he is with us, he is there for us every day – on every page of his books. So, we stop appreciating it. Oftentimes the wife doesn't appreciate her husband or the husband doesn't appreciate his wife. The wife serves him every day – the husband pays no heed to it, he takes it for granted. The husband brings home some money every day, does things like that, taking care of his wife – no, we pay no heed.

I was recently told of a community – far away, in another country. And a *sannyasi* lives there, a great *guru*, a disciple of Srila Prabhupada, a person grown wise with vast experience. He lives there, he's settled there, he's given up everything, he's forgotten about everything. Anyway, he is there. I was told this by a disciple of his who happened to be there at that time. He says, "We were having a meeting and people started saying: 'We have no spiritual leader.'" And this *sannyasi* is

sitting right there... 'We have no spiritual leader. They ask him, "Maharaja, can you advise us where to find a spiritual leader?" And Maharaja says: "I don't where you can find one." (laughter) This person went there from Russia. Upon seeing that he said, "I was shocked. I know how much he can give, I know what his wisdom is. I know what is there in his heart, I know that by his advice – if we follow it – we'll be able to get a lot. And they're sitting and asking him where to find someone else."

Such is the nature of the human mind or the human consciousness, of the human heart, that at some point we stop appreciating those whom we can get most from. And we always think that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, that somewhere there, God knows where, we can get something else. And we start worshipping that – God know whom, forgetting of those close to us.

Upon seeing all that Krishna pointed that out to Nanda Maharaja. He said: "We are cowherds and we need to worship the cows, we need to worship Govardhana, we need to worship the *brahmanas*. Why worship Indra?! We get spiritual knowledge from the *brahmanas*, we get milk from the cows, and from Govardhan we get grass and pure water – all we need."

But actually there is another deeper meaning that I'd like you very much to take with you. This is the first and most important lesson – the lesson that Govardhana-lila opens with. The word *govardhana* is composed of two Sanskrit roots: *go-varadhana*. *Go* means "a cow" and *vardhana* means "expansion, increase, intensification, deepening." Like, in Perm there is a wonderful devotee called Prema-varadhana - "One who intensifies love." And the first meaning of the word *govardhana* means "one who increases the number of cows." Cows graze, cows breed, cows get nourished and they rise in number: *Govardhana*.

But *go* also means "senses". We know: *govinda*. *Govinda* is the one who pleases the cows and satisfies our senses. *Govardhana* means "that which intensifies our senses' attraction to Krishna." *Govardhan* is a very important word. If we go there, it's a mystical place. Who of you has been near Govardhana? We'll all find ourselves there. In a few minutes, I guarantee that to you. *Govardhana* means a place or a special situation in which the senses are attracted to Krishna by themselves. If you find yourself there you'll willy-nilly feel it. People go there, gather there, especially during the *Govardhana-puja*. During the *Govardhana-puja* thousands and thousands, tens, hundreds of thousands of people go there. There is a continuous flow of people around Govardhana. And the people are strange sometimes. They camp and stay there for the night, at the foot of Govardhana. People arrive from villages. This year I was there. Decorated with peacock feathers and in gay-coloured garments, these people, these cowherds, they all go around it. But no matter whether it's during the *Govardhana-puja* or any other day, if you go there you can feel something special.

It's a mysterious place – you feel the presence of someone gazing at you and trying to help you. You feel, you actually feel protection there. This year I went there and I was sick. Before that I hadn't been sleeping for a month and a half then somehow, by means of some medicines, I decided to have some sleep. I slept for a few nights, I went there, saw Govardhana, approached him and said: "Govardhana, that's it, I'm yours. Never mind will I be able to sleep here or not. I accept protection only from you and throw out all medicines." Since then I've been sleeping without medicines (applause). Anyway, it's a stupid example, don't take it seriously (laughter). The point is that when you are near Govardhana you can feel his personal presence.

Dayavan Prabhu and me stayed there for 10 days near him. And every night Dayavan Prabhu would go to sleep right there at the foot of Govardhana. At first we lived in a hut but then he said, "Why stay in the hut?! We must go straight to Govardhana." He says: "That's something! At night jackals come out, various creatures, deers come sniffing at you, musk deers. And you sleep in complete safety. Jackals howl but that's fine (laughter) Govardhana is there and you feel you're at home." Like Raghunath Das Goswami who asks Govardhana: *nija-nikata-nivasam dehi govardhana tvam* – "O Govardhana, give me the opportunity to be near you."

Why is that, again? Because senses start functioning in a different way. Now, in the material world, we are used to our senses being attracted by matter. Our senses love matter. The ear loves

material sounds – and the more material the better. The grosser the sounds the better. The more material passion they evoke the more they attract us. When some pop singer is singing never mind what she's singing, the most important thing is that her lust comes out in her voice. She says: "Wuaaah!" The tongue loves material tastes. We love material stuff! The nose loves material smells, the the smell of gasoline and exhaust gases. That's cool! And of course, material images, our eyes are glued to material images: the PC, the TV, as long as there's something flickering.

And we have no attachment to Krishna. When we find ourselves there, miraculously our consciousness unfolds and our senses acquire a different quality. Krishna becomes attractive and, feeling this attraction, we want to hear about Him, sing about Him, we want to somehow or other be constantly in contact with Him. And when Krishna says: "Why do you worship something that prevents you from focusing on Me? One should worship what intensifies our attachment to Krishna" ...What does Krishna actually want to tell us when He says that one should worship Govardhana? He says that if we find in this world someone who can intensify our attachment to Krishna – be it in the form of the holy name or in the form of *prasadam* ... Like Abhirama Thakur here, he cooks and strengthens our attachment to Krishna in the form of *prasadam*. When we see someone who helps us to become more attached to Krishna – he must become the object of our worship.

Why do we worship the spiritual master? It's for this reason; because thanks to the spiritual master we feel: our attachment gets stronger. Why are we to worship the devotees? Because through the devotees we start to feel, to some extent, Krishna's attractiveness. There's no need to worship anyone else! Everything else is from the evil one. Everything else is God knows why. We need to find someone who can make our attachment for Krishna stronger.

When Aditi-dukhkaha Prabhu starts singing and chanting the holy name we start to feel the taste of the holy name. Therefore, we need to worship whom? We need to worship him; from him we can obtain the most valuable and the most important thing: attachment – attachment for Krishna and attachment to the holy name. Dayavan Prabhu will be speaking on how to chant the holy name with attachment, he has this experience and he can give this.

By the example of the inhabitants of Vrindavan Krishna teaches us that we are supposed to worship *Govardhana* – that which strengthens our attachment to Krishna, our senses' attachment to Krishna, our senses' attachment to the Lord. And again, He says: usually these things are around, so we don't pay attention to them. Krishna wants to teach us, again and again Krishna gives us all these lessons. If we walk around with an open heart we'll be able to feel these things. But since we are too blinded by our pride we do not see those whom we can learn from.

Like, Dayavan Prabhu told this story about that person. There can be a person around and we'll be materially envying him but if we understand or try to see the devotee in him, one who has a taste for eternity... Devotees are people who are trying to intensify their taste of eternity and who have lost their taste for the temporary, for the mundane, for the unnecessary, for the mortal ... If we recognize in a person this part of his being and don't pay attention to his material components, which everyone has, we will become a learner from him. We will learn from him this taste of eternity which each devotee has. Who has some taste for eternity, please raise both hands high in the air and loudly shout Haribol. (audience: Haribol!) Now, those who have no taste for eternity, still raise both hands and loudly shout Haribol. (audience: Haribol!) In both cases you've demonstrated that you have a taste for eternity. Not very strong because your Haribol was rather feeble (laughter). Let's shout louder. (audience: Haribol!) Thank you. For, ultimately, I have come here to learn this from you and please don't disappoint me. I flew here from Moscow to realize this.

There is one more meaning of the word *govardhan* – a very important one. *Go* also means "Vedas", *go* means "knowledge." The senses are what gives us knowledge, right? *Jnana-indriyas*, or the sense organs by which we obtain knowledge. Therefore, *go* also means "knowledge." And *go-varadhana* means "that which expands our knowledge." And we should clearly understand what "knowledge" means. Knowledge, as opposed to the common understanding of what knowledge is: that knowledge is a piece of information, the sum total of some theoretical propositions in our world ... In his "Priti-Sandarbhā", which bears the same name as this festival "Priti-laksanam", Srila Jiva Goswami explains that knowledge means an experience; that knowledge is not just some

information or theory, something stored in our mind. Knowledge is primarily experience, consciousness.

We have consciousness. Consciousness, as an attribute of the soul, enables us to know something, ie experience something. And in his "Priti-Sandarbha" Srila Jiva Goswami says that the highest form of knowledge or experience is what? The experience of love. He says this amazing thing, that love is *jnana*. He says *jnana-visesa*, a special form of knowledge or experience, a special form of our state of consciousness. And *go-varadhana* means that which increases our love or which gives us the experience of love. You can't be in love in theory, you can't love theoretically, right? "Theoretically, I love everyone" – Dostoevsky laughed at this. There are so many – really so many – people who profess love in theory. Most of us, too, belong to that category. Let's not vote who belongs to them and who does not. Dostoevsky laughed at this very sarcastically. He said: "The more I love all the mankind as a whole, the more I hate each person individually." Because love for everyone is a theory. Towards a specific person we need to show specific love – and it is here that it all gets out, it is here that everything becomes clear. To everyone and, above all, to ourselves.

And Jiva Goswami says the same thing: that love is an experience that one must go through himself. Sometimes, due to laziness, people think that my spiritual master will come to love Krishna for me: "I don't care whether I love Him or not, the important thing is that he loves Him. That will suffice. And he will save us." How is he going to save us? Somehow, we have no idea, but he will. Does anyone think like this? There's no need to shout "Haribol" – but sometimes we do think: "Yes, yes, yes, there, he loves, he loves." Now, if someone's eating, will you be just happy to know that someone who is eating and who is full is getting that experience? Your spiritual master eats so you don't have to eat, right? The spiritual master eats for me, right? He's getting this experience, and I, who am I? I am nobody. I'll sit and not eat, right? Is the fact that someone's eating going to save us? No. We need to eat ourselves. Similarly, *bhakti*, excuse my metaphor, you have to experience it yourself. Everyone should try to experience *bhakti* himself. Therefore, Jiva Goswami says: "Love is an experience. And this love should come to each of us." But there are those who help us get this experience, who teach us what we need to do in order to get this experience.

So, Govardhana bears this name because he teaches us what we need to do in order to get the experience of love. Govardhan himself has the experience of love. When Krishna raised him, he expanded. Srila Jiva Goswami says that he became as big as the whole Earth due to ecstasy: "Krishna has raised me!" In what way does Govardhana teach us, in what way does Govardhana enhance the experience of our love? What does he teach us? To serve, right. There's one intelligent *mataji* among all the learned Vaishnavas who timidly said: "Maybe, he teaches us to serve?" Srimati Radharani says that in "Srimad-Bhagavatam": (10.21.18):

hantayam adrir abala hari-dasa-varyo
yad rama-krsna-carana-sparasa-pramodah
manam tanoti saha-go-ganayos tayor yat
paniya-suyavasa-kandara-kandamulaih

This is a famous verse glorifying Govardhana where Srimati Radharani – Raghunath Das Goswami explains that this verse came out from the mouth of Radhika Herself – She glorifies Govardhana by saying: "He is *hari-dasa-varya*, because he serves Krishna and rejoys." He doesn't just serve He rejoys at it. When we are near Govardhana we can learn what will give us love – only service can give us the experience of love. If we want to gain the experience of love, we must start serving. Not tomorrow, not in our next life, not in the heavenly planets when we get there as a result of turning into a failed *yogi*. Now! At this moment. This is what Govardhana teaches us – right now, right here. We must start serving, and if we start serving Krishna, we will be able to innerly experience love.

Krishna is saying to the inhabitants of Vrindavan: "Where are you looking? You're not looking the right way, My friends! Look at Govardhana. He's *hari-dasa-varya*, he is serving! He's constantly serving everyone in all possible ways." *Paniya-suyavasa-kandara-kandamulaih* – he provides water, he provides caves, he provides grass (he provides all that is required; he does everything that Krishna needs. This is the mood of a servant. A servant does not wait to be told, he is trying to

find out what needs to be done. He is trying to guess. He brings water, he brings *prasadam*, he gives something. Ecstatically! In complete ecstasy! *Yad rama-krsna-carana-sparasa-pramodah* – Krishna's feet touch him and he is delighted: *pramodah*. *Pramodah* means he is not just happy – he's mad with happiness.

If you go there – we are going there in a minute, to Govardhana, just in a couple of minutes – try to feel this emanation of happiness that radiates from Govardhana's stones. People worship Govardhana-*silas* and all Govardhana-*silas* they smile. Have you ever seen a sad Govardhana-*sila*? No. Each stone of Govardhana emanates happiness and love; this happiness radiates. And why is he happy? Because he is serving, because he is *hari-dasa-varya*, because he is the best of servants, because he is willing to use everything available in his service. Not just use some tiny part and keep everything else for himself. With everything! He doesn't fear, he doesn't grudge, he doesn't stint – I'll use everything available in service, I will be happy and by doing so I will teach others.

This is Govardhana's lesson. Krishna explains: "Where are you looking?! Here is the one who can teach you everything you need to learn." Do not look around, do not look for someone else. And this is the key to the whole Govardhana-*lila*. And all I'm going to do is read verses from the 24th and 25th chapters of "Srimad-Bhagavatam", the Tenth Canto. And we'll be trying to understand what Sukadeva Goswami wants us to tell us in these verses.

It is said that Krishna can enter into our hearts through the words of "Srimad-Bhagavatam." The words of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" have the power to reveal Krishna in our hearts. This is why I am going to speak on the Govardhana-*lila*. I don't know how far we'll get, how many verses we'll read, I hope we'll be able to go through half of the 24th and the 25th chapter. I was hearing the wonderful seminar of Sacinandana Swami that he gave this year at Govardhana during the Govardhana-*lila*. I've heard the seminar of Radha-Govinda Maharaja on the Govardhana-*lila* and I've read Srila Jiva Goswami's "Gopal-Campu", the "Ananda-Vrindavana-Campu" where Kavikarnapur tells this *pastime* in great detail. Naturally, the Tenth Canto of the "Bhagavatam", the very words of Sukadeva Goswami with the purports of Srila Prabhupada's followers. The purports of Sanatana Goswami and Jiva Goswami to the Tenth Canto. And I'll try to tell some tiny bits of it all so that we understand what this *lila* teaches us. Therefore, my small seminar will be called "The Lessons of the Govardhana-*lila*." And I'm not going to be the main character in this seminar; naturally, the main character is going to be Krishna Himself and Govardhana, but a major part in it is going to be played by Aditi-dukhaha Prabhu. I rely very much on him for we are going to mainly sing about Govardhana. This is actually the most important lesson of the Govardhan-*lila*: that we must learn to sing. Sing about Krishna with a pure heart as the *vraja-vasis* do.

This is, actually, what Krishna told Nanda Maharaja: "Nanda Maharaja, spiritual life is a simple thing." He didn't say that word for word, I'm paraphrasing His words a bit – but He said: "There is no need for all this fuss, all these complexities and ceremonies. Just go and feed everyone: first feed Govardhana, then feed the *brahmanas*, then feed the cows and then feed all the rest, down to the stray dogs. And then get onto the carts and go around Govardhana, sing songs and be happy. This is the highest manifestation of spiritual life." Giriraj Maharaj ki Jai ... !!

Krishna said: "Without further ado, my friends, don't try to find spiritual life where there is none. Spiritual life is in the simple things. Spiritual life is serving and feeding those who are around." And if during this festival we feed each other – just feed ... The *brahmanas* are to be fed in the first place, but everyone else is also to be fed. Moreover, Krishna has provided a criterion by which we can understand that the *brahmana* has had his fill. He says that a *brahmana* should be fed until he starts laughing. When the *brahmana* starts laughing and slapping his stomach this means that the Govardhana-*puja* is being carried out successfully and everything is going as it should. Therefore, we should feed each other until everyone starts laughing and rolling on the floor.

Are there strangers listening to us? (laughter) I understand that not everyone would appreciate such manifestations of spiritual life. People usually picture spiritual life as something terribly dull and very sad: "now we can no longer enjoy, let's practice spiritual life." Spiritual life is in feeding everyone, making everyone happy until everyone starts laughing. Laughing in response. There are no cows here and that's a setback. It would've been nice to bring at least one so it can be fed.

However, there are many *brahmanas* and that's not a problem. Govardhana is always with us, in our hearts. And I've brought my *sila*, my Govardhana-*sila*, I'll set it here to listen and bestow his *darsan* on you. And Krishna said: "That's the whole secret."

And tomorrow we'll be describing this process in detail. What we're having today is just an introduction, why we need all this and what's the philosophy of all this. We'll now once again, in conclusion, chant the *pranama-mantra* of Govardhana which doesn't require bowing down to him. *Namaste girirajaya* - "I bow to you, O king of the mountains!" The best of mountains, the king of mountains. And it would seem there are many other mountains in the world: Kailash which is higher than Govardhana, Sumeru, the golden mountain around which the whole universe revolves and on top of which are the heavenly planets, the Himalayas, where there is everything, and then there is this tiny hill in Vraja. And all those who know the essence say that he is the king of all mountains. Because he gives the most valuable thing.

Namaste girirajaya sri govardhana namine – who is known as Govardhana, that which intensifies love, that which expands and deepens our attachment to Krishna. *Sri govardhana namine. Asesa clesa nasaya* – that which can destroy the endless worries and anxieties: *clesa* – sufferings: that which destroys all suffering. *Asesa. Asesa* means "infinite, endless." *Asesa clesa nasaya. Paramananda dayine* – and can bestow us with *param-ananda*, the supreme *ananda*, or supreme bliss.

namaste girirajaya
sri govardhana namine
asesa clesa nasaya
paramananda dayine

And each of you will be able to check whether this seminar's worked out or not. It will be considered successful if we see or feel these three effects in our heart: that our anxiety, worry and pain gradually go away and we forget about them. We forget all anxiety, worry and everything else and feel *param-ananda*, supreme bliss.

And now I would like to invite the *kirtanias* on stage, who will sing the concluding *kirtan*. And all the while we'll be watching a slideshow of Govardhana; we'll be watching these slides and trying to get into the same mood. I'd ask that the *kirtan* is at least started in a meditative mood. And I'd really like to ask you when singing in the *kirtan*, to remember the wonderful Vaishnava, our constant participant of all our *kirtans* here, in Yekaterinburg, Janaka Puri Prabhu, who left this world a few days ago. People said about him that a few days before his departure he said: "I would like to be born at Govardhana. I want to leave here and get born in Govardhana" and he would chant what Raghunath Das Goswami prayed for: *nija-nikata nivasam dehi govardhana tvam*. And I'd like us to dedicate our today's concluding *kirtan* to him. Wishing him from the bottom of our hearts that he could find eternal shelter at the slopes of this wonderful hill we'll be speaking about today. Aditi-dukhaha Prabhu will also join us today. And tomorrow – Vatsala Prabhu. Thus we will have a very intensive program. But remember the most important message is that we must learn to love. And there is only one way to learn to love – to start serving those who have love, that is, the devotees. Right now. Thank you very much.

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Hare Krishna. First of all, I would like to thank each and every one of you for having gathered here and for us being all together. Also, for trying to jointly think of Krishna, remember Krishna, feel Krishna's beauty. Beauty is Krishna's topmost quality. All other qualities are derivatives of His beauty. This concept of God as of something infinitely beautiful, with Whom every living being must fall in love and is actually already in love without being aware of that – is the unique concept of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas. From a philosophical point of view, there are probably more developed philosophical systems. If we take Madhvacharya's concept, they analyze the subtlest philosophical nuances that the *acaryas* of the Gaudiya-sampradaya do not pay too much attention to, to which we belong. Surely, we can find some advantages in the other schools – but in none of them there is this infinitely attractive Krishna. And we mustn't forget that only here, among Lord Chaitanya's followers, we can find the Lord with Whom we can unconditionally fall in love and lose our head. Nowhere else will you get such a God. God is one, of course, but nowhere else you'll be told of how infinitely beautiful, merciful, kind and attractive God is; and that is what our heart is ever seeking.

We're going to read "Srimad-Bhagavatam" and try to understand the lessons that "Srimad Bhagavatam" teaches us at the beginning. I talked about this yesterday – that my seminar will be called "Lessons of the Govardhana-*lila*." Today we're going to continue our discussion. But the topmost lesson of all Krishna's *lilas* is the lesson of His beauty, His irresistible attractiveness when you don't know what that is but your heart spontaneously reaches out to Him. And if we've understood this lesson we've understood everything. If we haven't understood this lesson we've understood nothing. Let's chant the *pranama-mantra*.

(chanting the *pranama-mantra*)

namaste girirajaya
sri govardhana namine
asesa klesa nasaya
paramananda dayine

Yesterday I talked about the first three lessons of the Govardhana-*lila*. I'd like to get back to those three lessons. If someone names those three lessons he'll get a big Christmas present.

DIALOGUE (BVGM and the 1st person (*prabhu*):

- There is one eager person.
- Can I speak?
- Yes, yes.
- The third lesson ...
- The third?! What about the first one? (laughter)
- I don't remember the first one. The third one was that the only value that Govardhana bestows is that he bestows three things to the devotees: he gives *go-varadhana*, he increases the cows, the prosperity and then he increases the satisfaction of the senses; ultimately he increases the knowledge and the understanding of love.
- Jay!
- And the third lesson is that we need to understand that the only value in this life is love. And that it is developed through serving the devotees.
- Not bad.
- And for that we don't need to go far – they are here, all around.
- This *brahmacaris* has earned a plate of halava (laughter, applause, Hariboll!)

DIALOGUE (BVGM with the 2nd person (*prabhu*):

- Anyone else wants to say something?

- You talked about *priti-laksanam*, about the loving relationship between the devotees. The first thing is to give and accept presents; the second is to share our confidential thoughts, the third is to take *prasadam* and offer *prasadam*.

- Okay. Half a plate of halava (laughter, applause, Haribol!)

BVGM: Good. I will repeat the three very important lessons that we learned yesterday to some extent. Talking to His father, Nanda Maharaja, the first thing Krishna did was to tell him that a person should work hard and rely on his own labour. And, although this was said by Krishna in jest, but as we know, in every joke there is a part of a joke. The first thing Krishna wants to tell us is that *bhakti* is a labour, that a person must work, must take responsibility, and that the desire for liberation is even a greater enemy of *bhakti* than the desire to enjoy in this world. People in this world work in order to enjoy their own senses. Now, this is bad and we are used to condemning this: "Oh! He's an enjoyer! Oh! They're trying to become gods here" but all the while we are unaware of committing a much graver mistake. Condemning labour in this world, we forget that *bhakti* is also a labour – that love is always specific, that love is manifested in concrete actions. Krishna does not want us to give up acting. Krishna didn't tell His father: "Give up this *yajna*, stop this nonsense! Better sit down and meditate a little. Or, better yet, stand upside down and try self-realization in this way." Krishna didn't advise these strange things which nowadays are the routine advice for those who try to become self-realized. For, when a person gives up working he gives up living. The life of the soul is to act. But what Krishna wants to say is that this activity should be driven by the right motive. Not for our own self but out of love, out of love of God.

Thus, the first lesson is that love is always proactive; that *bhakti* means action; that a person must not give up acting; that a person should take responsibility, that a person should not stop his activities and that the attempt at liberation is much more detrimental to the development of *bhakti* than anything else. This is the first very important lesson that I'd like you to take with you.

And the second lesson I was talking about is not less important, rather, it is even more important ... Krishna said: "Why worship Indra? Who is to be worshiped? The cows, the *brahmahas*, the Govardhan Hill." Why? Because we depend on them; because we already receive from them what we need for our existence, because they support our lives. And the second lesson I was talking about yesterday is the lesson of gratitude. That very often we don't know how to show gratitude and don't feel gratitude to those we depend on, instead trying to worship someone whom we can get something from. Very often we don't notice or ignore those whom we get everything from, and try to find some happiness elsewhere. The husband ignores his wife, faithful wife, and is looking for happiness with some mistress. The wife abandons her husband and tries to find happiness with God knows whom. Children leave home, disciples give up their spiritual master, ISKCON devotees turn away from Srila Prabhupada. We can see these manifestations of common ingratitude everywhere. And Krishna wants to tell us: "Just see whom you are already dependent on! We're already dependent on the cows, we're already dependent on Govardhana, we're already dependent on the *brahmanas* – appreciate them, worship them, so that your relationship deepens, so that through this relationship you receive even more."

This lesson of gratitude is a very important one because ingratitude is a manifestation of illusion. People think: we are independent. Why is it so difficult to show gratitude? Because to show gratitude is also a manifestation of humility. A person finds it difficult to show gratitude because saying: "Thank you" – as Nata Prabhu sings: "I thank you for everything!" - means to admit one's dependence on that person. This means that I admit that I have received something from someone. And that's what makes it difficult for us! Our pride prevents us from doing it. Pride destroys relationships; pride is the root cause of all ingratitude. We are constantly trying to tell God and everyone else: "I'm not dependent, I am on my own, I don't need anyone."

If we think, we can't do anything in this world on our own. Can anyone take birth on his own? Raise your hand please, those who can go and take birth. No! Even such a simple thing as taking birth, we can't do it on our own. People help us: mother, father, the midwife. They pull us out while we cry and resist. And then ... from the beginning to the end. Can we feed ourselves when we are little and helpless? Then we grow up and get the illusion of being independent. But actually we can't do anything – neither take birth and properly live, nor die. Even to die as a human being we need help. Then also try to bury yourselves. Constantly, at every stage of our life, we're dependent

on others. Krishna says: "Admit this, admit that you are dependent and show gratitude to those you're dependent on in the most valuable thing that we have" – naturally, in love.

Understand that we are dependent on the devotees. In order to practice Krishna consciousness, in order to practice spiritual life we need the help of the devotees. And this was the next lesson: Krishna says that in order to be able to do something in this life you have to recognize the part played by other people – the devotees and Govardhana.

The third lesson was named by this *prabhu* absolutely correctly but I wanted to say a few more words about this third lesson. The third lesson – we were saying that *go-var dhana* ... *Go-var dhana* in the second sense – in the sense of the second lesson – is that which intensifies our senses' attraction to Krishna. And we should be grateful for this and worship this. That is, we should be grateful to the devotees, we should be grateful to Srila Prabhupada, to his books, to the society of devotees, to ISKCON. Because all this intensifies and deepens our senses' attraction to Krishna. And the third lesson – *go-var dhana* – is that which increases our knowledge. And I said that essentially knowledge means experience. And what is the highest form of knowledge? Love! The highest form of experience, the highest form of consciousness, when the consciousness is fully revealed, when the lotus of our consciousness comes to full blossom, this state is love.

Currently the lotus of our consciousness is just a bud, it hasn't actually opened. In one of his verses Prabodhananda Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada praises Lord Chaitanya by saying: *caitanya-candra mama hrit-kumudam vikasya* – oh, Chaitanya Chandra, may *mama hrit-kumudam vikasya*. *Kumudam* means "a lotus"; *hrit* means "heart"; *mama* means "mine"; *vikasya* means "open". *Caitanya-candra mama hrit-kumudam vikasya* – may the lotus of my heart fully open under the rays of Your love so that the exquisite aroma emanating from this lotus can be felt everywhere and the thoughts of Your *pastimes* would flock like bees to the scent of that love.

In other words, the highest knowledge is the knowledge of love. And Govardhana deepens our experience of love. How? Explaining to us how we can attain love. I am very grateful to this *brahmacari* for having understood the most important point of what I said yesterday. Who else understood this yesterday? Raise your hands and shout Haribol. (audience: Haribol!) No need to cook much *halava* for those who have understood (laughter). Listen carefully once again. Govardhana teaches us by explaining that this experience of love – the experience of the love's happiness – can be attained by serving whom? Why is Govardhana called *haridasa-varya*, the best of servants? Because he serves whom? (audience: Krishna!) Not Krishna! The cows. He serves the cows. He serves Krishna's devotees. He serves Krishna Himself. He serves Krishna's cows with equal joy because they are associated with Krishna. He is the best of the servants for he knows how to gain this experience of love because he makes no differences. Due to our stupidity we think: "I'd rather serve *guru* and Krishna and no one else!" And even better, only Krishna. Well, *guru* also, so be it.

This is our materialistic mentality and this is our misfortune. This is what Govardhana teaches us – Govardhana serves everyone: the cows, the devotees, anyone, and he's happy in doing so. And he's willing to serve more and more. He doesn't skimp on service. And the third lesson, the lesson of attaining love, the way we can attain love was the most important lesson of what I was saying yesterday.

Today we'll continue and today we'll have three lessons. And tomorrow I'll start again by asking you about what the three lessons were. So, please listen very carefully. And the fourth lesson, or the first lesson today that we're going to study, is the lesson that we didn't study yesterday. There is another very important lesson that we should study or learn – and that's the lesson of hearing. Actually, this is not a specific lesson of his *lila*, it is the lesson of the whole "Srimad-Bhagavatam." One of the initial verses of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" (1.2.17) is:

srvatam sva-kathah krsnah
punya-sravana-kirtanah
hrdy antah stho hy abhadrani
vidhunoti suhrt satam

And then again and again throughout "Srimad-Bhagavatam" it is said that Krishna can be attained by means of hearing. That we can actually see Krishna, hear Him, attain the experience of interrelation with Krishna through listening.

Listen carefully. Hearing, even in this world, helps us to understand another person. If we simply look at the other person are we going to understand something about him? When we look at someone we look at him through the prism of our own envy and we see in him our own faults. A person sees the world not as it is but as he is. We project all that we have inside outside. If we simply look at the other people we'll see the reflection of our own faults. What will a lusty person see all around? Lust. What will an envious person see all around? Envy. A greedy person will see all around and in all manifestations of human nature nothing but greed; he will project it again and again outside, onto the others. If we simply try to look with our own eyes, we won't see anything. Our eyes will see nothing but our own reflection. The eyes show us only the reflection of our own distorted nature separated from the Lord. But we can see a person through our ears. When we hear others speak about someone or start saying what he's done or start praising him, we can realize: "I knew nothing about this person."

The story that Purnachandra Maharaja told about himself ... At the time this story struck me, the way he set himself against one devotee because that devotee was the temple president and no one likes temple presidents. If you want no one to love you become a temple president. At the time people were joking about Ekaterinburg that the ex-temple presidents there can make a whole *yatra* (laughter). The most difficult is to somehow or other try to manage devotees who are unmanageable by definition. Anyway ... And there were reasons for that! If we have to, we can always justify why a person is not like this or like that. He says: "Over many-many years I saw him, he was there, and I maintained a negative attitude towards him. The day came when he was retiring and the devotees gathered to farewell him." And he says: "It was by chance that I went into that room to hear the devotees." And he says: "At that moment it was as if my eyes were unveiled. The devotees would step out and cry: "He helped me so much, he supported me in the most difficult moment of my life. He lent me a hand, he sacrificed his own self." One after another, the devotees would say something I'd never seen or realized before. And at that point I saw that person and the truth was revealed to me."

This is a very simple story under which each of us can put their name. Surely, something similar has happened to each of us in our life when we first hear something bad about a person and we believe it. The nature of envy – listen carefully – is that we easily believe everything bad. Why is gossip spread all over the world at the light's speed? It is exactly because people readily accept all the bad and pass it on multiplying it so that eventually the gossip overgrows with incredible details and turns into a monster. But if we hear about the wonderful qualities of the person we'll be able to truly see him.

The devotees shouldn't be seen with the eyes, the devotees should be heard of. The devotees should be praised and we should adjust our hearing. That's what "Srimad- Bhagavatam" begins with! Krishna can't be seen with the eyes. If we try to see Krishna with the eyes we won't see anything at all! Who of you has been to Vrindavan? Who of you has visited some temple? There is Krishna and we know that Krishna is the All-attractive Personality of Godhead. Right? But He is somewhat ... (laughter) And we think: "Yes, yes, All-attractive!" (laughter) We can't see Krishna with our eyes, Krishna can be seen only through the ears (Bhag. 3.9.11):

tvam bhakti-yoga-paribhavita-hrt-saroja
asse sruteksita-patho nanu natha pumsam
yad-yad-dhiya ta urugaya vibhavayanti
tat-tad-vapuh pranayase sad-anugrahaya

"Srimad-Bhagavatam" says that when a person listens with his ears: *sruteksita-patho... Sruta iksita patho. Sruta iksita. Sruta* means "listen" *iksita* means "eyes." When we try to listen with our ears, completely immersed in this process of *bhakti-yoga – asse*, Krishna takes a seat in our heart, Krishna enters our heart. Krishna very quickly enters our heart. And to this next lesson, the lesson of hearing, we'll dedicate some time. I'll tell you a little about the science of hearing, what it means

to hear, and tomorrow I'll ask you about it. I'll ask a *halava* to be cooked for those who give the right answers.

Who, in our scriptures, is the embodiment of hearing? Maharaja Pariksit. He attained perfection through hearing. Listen to what Maharaja Pariksit says, he's a professor in hearing. I would even say, head of department of the hearing of "Srimad-Bhagavatam." He says (Bhag. 2.8.4):

srvatah sraddhaya nityam
grnatas ca sva-cestitam
kalena natidirghena
bhagavan visate hrđi

Maharaja Pariksit personally shares his own experience. In the Second Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" he speaks this very important verse that Srila Prabhupada often quoted. He says: *srvatah sraddhaya nityam grnatas ca sva-cestitam*. He says that if a person hears, meeting three conditions or requirements, if his hearing is accompanied by three qualities ... *Sraddhaya* – with faith. The first condition, the first quality that our hearing should have in order to bring us there And what is it supposed to bring us to? *Bhagavan visate hrđi*. Who knows Sanskrit? Who is *bhagavan*? The Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Hrđi*? Heart. *Visate*? Enter. *Visate tad-anantaram* (Bg 18.55). *Bhagavan visate hrđi*. For Bhagavan, Krishna, Hari to enter our hearts, the first thing required is faith, *sraddha*. *Sraddhaya* – one must hear with faith. And what is faith? Faith is the quality which allows you to open our hearts to the person we are listening to. When we have faith we don't filter what we hear. When we don't have faith we put a filter between our consciousness and what we hear, our hearing becomes selective. We hear only what we want to hear, only what somehow or other coincides with what we already thought.

Unfortunately, people are not taught to listen. In this world the major part of information is received through hearing; nevertheless, we learn to write, we learn to read, we learn to do all sorts of other things but we don't learn to listen. Therefore, when we listen, what happens with us? Has anyone noticed what happens in his mind when he listens? The first thing that happens is: "When will he stop speaking?! So that I start speaking." We like to speak and we don't like to listen. Listening is difficult. Therefore Maharaja Pariksit says *sraddhaya*. *Sraddhaya* means "with great attention; knowing that my whole life depends on what I'm going to hear here now." *Sraddhaya* means that I'll be able to apply it in my life. When I filter all this, when I hear selectively: I like this and I don't like that, this means that actually I'm not going to apply anything and my life is not going to change. When I listen without faith I pick up from what I am being told only what I already know, what is convenient for me and only what leaves me in my comfort zone. I do not take the responsibility for what I've heard. If I listen with faith, the ability to concentrate on this, the understanding that I will need to apply all this in my life, is much deeper. And one can focus on the subject of hearing much easier. One must hear the stories of Krishna as if it is a matter of life and death.

Therefore, the perfect example of hearing is who? Maharaja Pariksit. Why? Because he knew that this is what everything depends on. Whereas we don't know, we think that nothing depends on it: let them entertain me, let them tell me a new story. I'll see whether I'll like it or not. Phew! *Sraddhaya* means this is a matter of life and death! We only have 7 more days to live! In 7 days the end of the world will come! It will! Exactly in 7 days. Either on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or Saturday or worst, on Sunday! Imagine how annoying it would be if the end of the world happens on Sunday (laughter).

The point is that the end of the world can come at any moment. And what can save us at that moment is only what we've heard. Not what we've been listening to but what we've heard, what has sunk into us. Therefore Maharaja Pariksit says: the first condition is *sraddhaya*. *Srvatam sraddhaya*. And what's next? *Nityam*! What does *nityam* mean? Constantly. I must hear every day: *nityam bhagavata sevaya* (Bhag. 1.2.18), I must hear every day. Because as soon as I don't hear once strange processes will immediately start happening in my mind. The mind immediately starts getting contaminated by something else because I hear all sorts of other things. A huge amount of other things enter my ears whether I want that or not. A huge amount of contamination enters into my ears! We very seldom and very little listen about Krishna; however, we listen to God knows what 24 hours a day! Therefore, he says: "We must hear about Krishna every day. Every day we

must chant His holy name: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare and Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare." Every day: this must be our *sadhana*.

Srila Prabhupada explains in the purport to this verse that we must regularly hear "Srimad-Bhagavatam": *nityam*. And he says that this must also be done with the help of *sva-cestitam*, this is the third condition. The third condition is *sva-cestitam*. What is *sva-cestitam*? Applying our own efforts, making an effort to do so. And this is a very important point: hearing is not a passive process. We are accustomed to thinking that hearing is a something passive. There are trainings now: If you want to succeed in business go to any school and you'll be told: "To succeed in business you must learn active listening," – there are special trainings, special drills for active listening. Why? Because everyone listens passively.

Maharaja Pariksit opened a school of active listening 5000 years ago. He said: *sva-cestitam*, you have to make your own efforts. One must not be passive because when we are passive, what happens? We think, it is said, and I don't know how they calculated that... Scientists can calculate everything, it's amazing how they calculate everything as if they have nothing else to do. Anyway, they calculated that we think exactly four times faster than we talk. And this means that while listening, while someone is speaking at a speed that is four times less than I can think, I can fly to the other end of the universe, come back and hear what he's saying.

And this is exactly what happens while we're listening: we go somewhere, then we come back, and we hear: "Ah! Again the same thing!" and again we go somewhere. "Ah! It's all clear!" and we go somewhere else. In this way our mind is constantly wandering and this is called "passive listening". Passive listening is when we let our mind do whatever it wants. And active listening is when we say, "My dear mind! Don't be a fool! How long can this go on? Listen!"; when we're actively bringing it back and at the same time we're thinking about what we are being told.

When at the trainings ... We can have now free trainings. People are given these trainings, people are specifically taught. I specifically watched what these trainings look like and what they consist of. But people are taught; they are given tasks and they are told: now you'll be told something and you must understand what you were told. And it's not that easy, you have to think. *Sva-cestitam* means "I'm listening, I think about what I was told; I'm trying to somehow or other compare it with my own experience; trying to better understand what is happening and what I need to do." And this technique of active listening is something most important. In a sense it is even more important than Krishna. What I'm saying now is heresy, right? But I'll tell you why this is so. And in doing so I will refer to the great authorities in devotional service. But I'll first read a verse from "Padma-Purana" which says the same thing. Listen:

hatam asrotaye danam anacara-hatam kulam
visvaso guru-vakyesu svasmin dinatva bhavana

mano-dosa-jayas caiva kathayam niscala matih
evam adi krtam cet syat tada vai sravane phalam

Visvaso guru-vakyesu. What does *visvaso* mean? Trust, faith – *visvas*. *Visvaso guru-vakyesu* – what must a person hear with faith? The words coming from the lotus mouth of the spiritual master. *Svasmin dinatva-bhavana* – at the same time being in this state or mood, or *bhavana*, - *dina*, that I am fallen. How should we hear from *guru*? Very humbly: *svasmin dinatva-bhavana*. *Mano-dosa-jayas caiva kathayam niscala matih* – so that my mind, *matih*, is firmly focused on the subject of hearing. And "Srimad-Bhagavatam" is to be heard in a special way: *kathayam niscala matih*, - for this to happen we need to meet these three conditions: 1) *visvaso guru-vakyesu*, 2) *svasmin dinatva-bhavana*, I must listen to the words coming from his mouth with humility and faith, and 3) *mano-dosa-jayas caiva* – and at the same time I must fight with my own mind, with the faults of my mind, with its inattention and distraction that will always distract me from listening.

And this is something very important. In other words, a person must actively listen, trying to actively pass into this proper state. Sometimes ISKCON, Srila Prabhupada and our practice are criticized for having little *krisna-katha*. Before starting my *krisna-katha* ... Oh-oo! There is even such a website: "Hari-katha." If you want to read all possible offenses, all possible Vaishnava-

aparadhas, go to that website. By some paradoxical coincidence it is called "Hari-katha." And that site also states that, "in ISKCON there's no *hari-katha*. Only we have *hari-katha* and we're now going to tell you everything". Listen carefully to what Srila Prabhupada has given us. He's given us *hari-katha*! But even more attention than to the *hari-katha* he paid to some other – at first glance irrelevant – things that are actually meant to prepare our hearts for the perception of *hari-katha*, which are meant to make us humble. People will not be able to hear the *hari-katha* if his heart is not humble. A person will not be able to hear the *hari-katha* if his mind is scattered. He won't be able to listen properly and thus his hearing will turn into an *aparadha*. We have seen this time and again! This can be seen very often. People hear the sublime *hari-katha* of the loving relationship of Radha and Krishna. Then they give up this *hari-katha* and start another *katha*, *ninda-katha*, *aparadha-katha*, they start criticizing: "This one's this, that one's that ..."

In this regard Bhaktivedanta Sadhu Maharaja likes to say that a person becomes corrupted by hearing *hari-katha* if he hears it in the wrong state of mind. Therefore, Srila Prabhupada used to pay more attention to the mood of service. Sometimes people would disdainfully say: "What is there in ISKCON? In ISKCON there ... " As I heard, too, some so-called devotees, they said ... They started talking about one ISKCON project, about one famous farm, saying that: "Oh-oh! ISKCON is a famous concentration camp." Yes, Srila Prabhupada said: "We must serve." Yes, Srila Prabhupada said: "Work now, *samadhi* later" and then added: "And generally speaking, *samadhi* may not come at all." (laughter) But Srila Prabhupada taught us how to properly hear. And in this regard Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakur says an amazing thing – listen once again very attentively for this is, in a sense, a justification of what we do before starting a *hari-katha*. Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakur said: "When mother Yasoda was taking care of Krishna she sometimes paid more attention to what? To the milk, right. We know, she would put Krishna aside. Krishna would be sitting in her lap – the embodiment of *hari-katha* would be sitting in her lap, blowing bubbles. She would take this *hari-katha*, or Hari, put Him on the floor and run elsewhere because her milk was going to boil over. An ISKCON devotee!

Devotees run elsewhere, do something else, but ultimately, Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur says, "She's realized something more important – everything associated with Krishna and everything required for Krishna's service is more important than Krishna Himself." All that helps us serve Krishna is even more important than Krishna Himself. And we need to pay more attention to it. At least at the initial stages of our devotional service. Everything that helps us hear about Krishna, everything that helps us focus on Krishna, must in our consciousness have the same weight and the same importance as Krishna Himself.

I wanted to give you this lesson, the lesson of attentive hearing. I'd like us to take that close to heart for then we're going to have a *katha*, almost immediately. After a short break. But first, by way of introduction, I wanted to talk about this. Now we will have a 5 or 10-minute *kirtan* that Aditi-dukhaha prabhu will perform. Listen to what he wants to tell to you very carefully.

(Aditi-dukhaha prabhu's *kirtan* from 63 to 71 minute)

BVGM: Take your seats, please, and try to listen carefully, I know it's hard (laughter). I know it's much easier to smear your mind all over the universe with the feeling of being its master. Focusing the mind on Krishna requires humility. But what we'll be trying to do – and this is actually the lesson of attentive hearing – if we try to explain what attentive hearing means in one phrase then this phrase would be: attentive hearing means to make efforts while listening to someone in order to have a look at the world through his eyes. Attentive hearing means nothing but the attempt to understand what that person wants to tell us. And to understand what the person wants to tell us means to see the world the way he sees it, to understand how he perceives what he perceives. If we understand this one simple thing our lives can change because people will feel that they are being heard, that they are being understood.

There was this good old-fashioned Soviet film "Survive until Monday." The main character there wrote his definition of happiness. Does anyone remember what he wrote? "Happiness is when you are understood." Attentive hearing is only this: we listen attentively and we understand what the speaker sees, how he perceives this world. And when we learn this in our common relationships our relationships will become much richer. But the most amazing thing will happen later, when we

learn to hear "Srimad-Bhagavatam" in the same way. And we'll be able to see the world as it is seen by Sukadeva Goswami. Does anyone want to see the world as it is seen by Sukadeva Goswami? (audience: Haribol!) This will be a wonderful gift and this is actually what we'll be learning by reading verses from "Srimad-Bhagavatam" and by trying to attentively hear and see what he sees.

But before we move on to that I'd like to give you another lesson. I promised that we will have three lessons today. One lesson is the lesson of attentive hearing and we've already had that. The second lesson is the lesson of gradualness or the gradual attainment of shelter through hearing of *hari-katha*. In the Second Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" there is a very important and somewhat enigmatic verse (2.10.1):

श्री-शुका उवाच
अत्रा सर्गो विसर्गाश्च
स्तथानामपोषणामुतायाश्च
मन्वन्तारेशानुकथनाश्च
निरोधो मुक्तिरश्रयाश्च

This verse lists the ten topics of "Srimad-Bhagavatam." And many of the great Vaishnavas and philosophers, the great *acaryas*, would puzzle over this verse trying to explain in what way these ten topics of "Srimad Bhagavatam", listed in this verse by Sukadeva Goswami, can be compared to the composition of "Srimad-Bhagavatam." And different people would give different interpretations. Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur's interpretation differs from Jiva Goswami's interpretation. Jiva Goswami's interpretation differs from Vallabhacharya's interpretations. Vallabhacharya differs from Sridhara Swami's. Each one would try to explain this verse in a different way because how many cantos are there in "Srimad-Bhagavatam"? Twelve. Whereas the topics are ten. And they tried to somehow or other compare different things.

But we're now not interested in the dispute that arose between them. We're now interested in one particular interpretation that I'd like to share with you because it can reveal much to us. In fact, all these interpretations are correct and we must learn to understand in what way they are all correct. But I will speak only about one so that I don't confuse you. Vallabhacharya's interpretation who has adopted the theory of *krama*, that is of sequence ... And he said that all the ten topics are sequentially described in the Twelve Cantos of "Srimad-Bhagavatam." He explained this in the following way: the first two Cantos are an introduction to this book, and then there it goes, the Third Canto is *sarga*; the Fourth Canto is *visarga*, secondary creation; *sthanam* is the Fifth Canto; *posanam* is the Sixth Canto; *uti* is the Seventh Canto; *manvantara* is the Eighth Canto; *isa-anu-katha* is the Ninth Canto; *nirodha* is the Tenth Canto, *mukti* is the Eleventh Canto and *asraya* is the Twelfth Canto.

I wanted to give you this interpretation because actually it can reveal a lot to us, it can reveal what exactly happens or should happen in our hearts when we hear *krisna-katha*. In particular, I'm interested in the last topics: *isa-anu-katha*, *nirodha*, *mukti*, *asraya*. *isa-anu-katha* is the topic of our today's lecture. *Katha* means stories about Krishna. *Anu-katha* is the *katha* told by the great *acharyas* of the past, when we hear in their footsteps, when we receive this message through the *parampara*. Vallabhacharya, one of the great commentators of "Srimad-Bhagavatam," says that what follows is *nirodha*. And this *nirodha*, that is described in the Tenth Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam", is, on the one hand, what should happen in our heart when we hear *anu-katha*.

Who knows what *nirodha* means? Destruction. *Nirodha* – we hear about Krishna and what should happen is ... Should something be happening to us when we hear about Krishna? What is the *nirodha* that should take place and what is the *nirodha* that is described in the Tenth Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam?" Vallabhacharya says: "All of the Tenth Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" describes one topic: *nirodha*." What is that destruction that is described there? Our *acaryas* say: "Of course, Krishna came to chop up all the demons like cabbage. But no, *nirodha* doesn't mean just that. *Nirodha* means ... Does anyone know the "Yoga-Sutras" of Patanjali? Does anyone know the second *sutra* of Patanjali's "Yoga-Sutras"?"

Yogas citta-vritti-nirodhah. Yoga is citta-vritti-nirodhah. Nirodha means "destruction, annihilation, halt." *Chita-vritti* is the halt of our agitated and absolutely wild, frenzied mind. And this is *yoga*. When Vallabhacarya explains what needs to happen to us at the time of hearing the *lilas* of the Tenth Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" he says that what happens is what Patanjali Muni defines as *yoga*. For *nirodha*, *citta-vritti-nirodha*, to take place by the means of *yoga*, what should happen? How does this happen? It's a long, painful, terrible and arduous process. First you need to learn: *yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, dharana, pratyahara, dhyana, samadhi*. Did I miss something or not? Anyway, it doesn't matter whether I missed something or not, no one will reach *samadhi* anyway (laughter). How to stop it? Arjuna, upon hearing that, said: "Excuse me, Krishna, this doesn't work." It is easier to stop the wind.

I recently saw a play on the "Bhagavad-Gita" and there they went further than Arjuna. They put in Arjuna's mouth, they speak the following on behalf of Arjuna: "Krishna, I can stop the wind, but I can't stop the mind." In the "Bhagavad-Gita" Arjuna says that the mind is as terrible and violent as the wind, and it is as impossible to stop as the wind. But they say that the wind can be stopped (laughter) but not the mind. Where is this *citta-vritti-nirodha*? Srila Prabhupada used to explain that the only way to feel this *citta-vritti-nirodha* is to make everyone laugh. When we laugh we do not think – that is the only time when we do not think. Therefore, from time to time, to induce attentive hearing, everyone must be made to laugh.

But Vallabhacarya says – and listen, this is very important – that actually when a person hears *krisna-katha*, if he hears in the right way, *nirodha* can take place by itself. When hearing about Krishna, the devotees of Vrindavana, everything would stop in them, they would freeze in delight. The *acaryas* say the cows' ears would be raised upright. Now we shouldn't forget that it's not our cows whose ears are upright in any case – those are Indian cows whose ears are hanging downwards. You've probably seen the Indian cows their ears are like pendants, they are long and never rise. The *acaryas* say that their ears would rise. When they would hear the sound of Krishna's flute their ears would turn into pots. They were eager to absorb that sound. Everything inside would come to a stop – their heart would stop, their eyes would stop. This is called *stambha*. *Stambha* is one of the symptoms of ecstasy when a person freezes in ecstasy, when a person wants that everything stops.

As at the time Faust breathed that out when he wanted to stay in that moment forever: "Stay a while, you are so beautiful." The inhabitants of Vrindavana are in this same state. They say: "Stay a while. There is nothing more beautiful than this." And this *nirodha* ... Actually, we have the experience of that. I want to tell you something very important – that albeit small and insignificant – we all have the experience of this *nirodha* when the mind stops wandering. And this experience is a lifesaver for us, this experience can save us. We experience this attraction to Krishna. Even without realizing it, at some point this stop of the mind takes place and we want our mind not to be distracted by anything else; we want the mind to remain where it is now. And that is *nirodha*. When the mind doesn't want to leave the subject on which he is now and he wants to remain there and remain there forever. And at some point we experience this. We hear about Krishna, some *katha* enters into our heart, the heart of Jaya and Vijaya, who happened to have fallen asleep. We've allowed this *katha* to enter inside, we've stopped perceiving all this skeptically and we've stopped thinking: "How is that possible?! From the point of view of modern science this cannot be. It cannot be that He had so many guards or so many calves. There cannot be that many calves. What is He going to do with them afterwards? There are no slaughterhouses, are there?" When our heart suddenly opens towards Krishna's name or the stories about Krishna, at some point we feel: it has happened. Have you felt that?! During some *kirtan* we don't want to go anywhere. Have you felt that? Normally we want, we usually think: "Let me quickly go somewhere else. No matter where – just out of here!" The mind is constantly in this state, the mind always wants to run off somewhere – no matter where. And wherever it flees to, it will flee from there, too. Our mind constantly runs away. It does, all the time! It is not interested in anything!

But Vallabhacarya says that this experience comes at the beginning – at the very beginning. Listen, because what I want to tell you is something very important. This experience comes at the beginning – before a person goes on to the next stage, which is called what? The next step is *mukti*. What does *mukti* mean? Liberation. Liberation from what? Liberation from the vices, liberation from the problems in our mind, liberation from suffering, liberation from the *anarthas*. The

most amazing thing about the path of *bhakti* is that one can experience this state of *nirodha* – the mind's attraction to Krishna – before his heart has been cleansed of *anarthas*. In the heart there are all the *anarthas*: there is envy... Who has envy? Jay, Haribol! Let's all shout Haribol! (audience: Haribol! Haribol!) There is envy! There is lust! There is greed! There is anger! There is illusion! There is pride! There is madness! There is everything! But attachment to Krishna, albeit small – is there, too. (audience: Haribol!)

This is the amazing quality of *bhakti-yoga* which we need to know about: a person first gets attachment for Krishna in advance. And because of this attachment, he will eventually be able to get rid of everything else: *nirodho-muktir*. Envy will go away! (audience: Haribol!) Greed will go away, lust will go away, anger will go away – everything will go away! They will if we don't hold onto them, if we don't ask them: "Please, stay, have a second helping. We have some *prasadam* left." If we don't hold onto them, they will go away easily and naturally. When a person hears about Krishna, first comes *nirodha*. The famous verse at the very end of the *rasa-lila-panca-dhyaya* (Bhag. 10.33.39):

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

is where Sukadeva Goswami explains the same thing, that the heart disease will go away after that. A person first experiences *bhakti*. And we need this Tenth Canto – if we hear the Tenth Canto or the *lilas* of the Tenth Canto in a proper way – in order to experience *nirodha*. I'd like to read to you a *sutra* from the "Narada-bhakti-sutras" which confirms this: *yaj jnatva mato bhavati, stabdho bhavati, atmaramo bhavati. Yaj jnatva* – when we attain Him. *Yaj jnatva* – that attains that. When a person attains that knowledge, then *mato bhavati* – what happens to him? He goes crazy.

When Radhanatha Maharaj went to Vrindavana he met that *muni-baba* – those who've read the "Journey Home" know that. He wrote on a board: here in Vrindavana everyone is crazy. Then he erased it and wrote with a chalk: and if you stay in Vrindavana... Then he erased it and wrote further: the same thing will happen to you. Hare Krishna.

A person goes mad with love. *Yaj jnatva mato bhavati, stabdho bhavati, atmaramo bhavati. Stabdho bhavati* – a person freezes in ecstasy, in happiness, in delight. And *atmaramo-bhavati* – he becomes fully satisfied. This is what must happen to us when we hear *krisna-katha*. Did everyone get it? This was the second lesson. Did everyone get it? No certainty whatsoever. Even if you haven't, never mind.

Ok, now we start the *lila*. (Maharaj turns on a meditative music) I'm going to imitate Sachinandana Maharaja. I just need to start speaking from the heart. (Maharaj turns off the meditative music) It's not going to work (laughter). I wanted us to start reflecting a little on the verses of "Srimad-Bhagavatam." Are you ready? Let's read one verse, verse 31, together (Bhag., 10.24.31):

sri-suka uvaca

kalatmana bhagavata
sakra-darpa-jighamsaya
proktam nisamya nandadyah
sadhv agrhnanta tad-vacah

Sukadeva Gosvami said: "Lord Krishna, who is Himself powerful time, desired to destroy the false pride of Lord Indra. When Nanda and the other senior men of Vrindavana heard Sri Krishna's statement, they accepted His words as proper." Little Krishna, He was at that time 7 years old, but looked a little bigger – about 11 years old. As the *acaryas* explain, prominent personalities grow one and a half times faster than the ordinary ones. The little boy tugged at the end of his father's *dhoti* and said, "Dad, what are you doing?" And then he began speaking some strange philosophy: "There's no need to worship Indra, you need to worship your work. Let us work properly, let's worship Govardhana Hill, let's worship the *brahmanas*, let's worship the cows – let's do all that."

Nanda looked at him unable to take his eyes away. He thought, "What nonsense is He talking about? But so convincingly!" (laughter) Nanda was ecstatic – inside he was a little anticipating, he thought: "But what will happen to me?"

And this is the third lesson. Listen carefully. At the end of our *katha* I'm going to ask you what the third lesson was. And to the one who answers correctly I'll give my own self. I don't know how I'll do that, but Krishna will help me. So listen carefully, you will have to guess what the third lesson of this *lila* is. Nanda looked at little Krishna and he was absolutely delighted with everything Krishna was saying. He was a little anxious at heart, ultimately, it's somewhat scary to break a binding tradition. We all know this: it's hard to break off something, to go against the tide. But he thought, "Well, I can't deny my son – He's too beautiful!" This was Krishna's main argument. It was the trump card that Krishna took out of his pocket and broke all the other trump cards that Nanda Maharaja had. Nanda Maharaja first tried to object to Him but then he realized: "I can't object to Him, I'll do as He wants, if only He's satisfied."

Krishna was very pleased because He wanted to destroy Indra's pride: *indra-darpa-jighamsaya*. *Jighamsaya* means "to destroy, to kill, to wipe out from the face of the earth". Why? Because Krishna is *kalatmana-bhagavata* – Krishna is no other than who? Time personified, He's the form of time. Time or God in the form of time, God taking the form of time, is constantly doing with us the same thing. What? Destroying our pride. Time or God in the form of time exists here to show us – the stupid and the proud – that we have nothing to be proud of. If we are proud of our beauty then what is time going to do with that beauty? It won't leave anything of that beauty! What happens to the most beautiful women in this world? They can't admit to themselves that that's happened to them. What will Krishna do if we are rich? Krishna will take our wealth away. What will Krishna do if we are smart and proud of it? Krishna will take away our mind and we will turn into a dote.

Indra-darpa-jighamsaya – and Krishna particularly relishes doing that with His devotees (applause). When Krishna knows that a devoted has become proud nothing can be hidden from Him ... It is absolutely impossible to hide anything from Him. There is a wonderful story that illustrates this. About how one day a whimsical king, sitting on his throne, decided to ask his minister three tricky questions. He called his minister and said: "You know all the scriptures! You're proud of that, you've studied everything there's to study. Tell me, answer me three things. Tell me: 1) where is God now? 2) where is He looking right now? That is, where is He bestowing His mercy), and 3) what is He doing now? Just don't tell me that God is engaged in creation, because this world has long ago been created. What is He doing now? I need to know what He's doing now. Where is He now, where is He looking at and what is He doing? And if you don't answer me these three questions I'll cut off your head."

The minister was terribly scared. He began rummaging the thickest folios but nowhere did he find the answer to this question. Ultimately, he packed up his modest *brahminical* belongings and decided to escape in the dark night. To his fortune, when the dawn was already breaking he saw a cowherd man he knew. The cowherd man asked him:

- *Swamiji, panditji*, where are you going?

- Here, I've packed all my thick books and am going away because I was promised to be beheaded.

- How come?

- Because I didn't find the answer to three questions that my Maharaja wanted to ask me.

- What three questions?

- Where is God, where is He looking and what is He doing now?

- Oh, that's so easy! Take me to him and I will answer all the three questions of his and you will tell him that I am your disciple and that these questions are so easy that you decided not to answer them personally.

He took him there and the king suspiciously looked at the dirty soiled clothes of that cowherd man, at his turban and not very expressive face. The Minister said: "He will answer for me. He is my disciple." At the same time inside he thought: we both are going to be beheaded (laughter) I shouldn't have agreed. The king says:

- Come on, then, answer me!

- If you want to know the answers to these questions you must take the position of a disciple because otherwise you won't hear. As long as you're sitting on this throne, even if I tell you the most learned things you won't be able to understand. Therefore, please come down from your throne, sit down here on the floor, let me sit on the throne and I'll tell you.

At first the king was taken aback with indignation but because he was a man of the Vedic culture, he remembered and said, "This man is telling the truth. He's nothing but a cowherd man but he knows the principles." He reluctantly climbed down from his high throne, sat down on the floor and said:

- Sit down, Guruji. But just answer me! (laughter)
- Everything is very simple. Is there butter in milk?
- There is.
- Where's the butter in the milk?
- Where? Everywhere.
- So is God, He's everywhere.
- Where is he looking?!

The cowherd man pointed at a shining light and says:

- Do you see? Does the light of this lamp reach you?
- Yes, it does.
- And where is the lamp looking at? Is it looking at you?
- No, it's looking everywhere.
- So is God. He's looking at everyone and He's bestowing His mercy on everyone.
- What's He doing now?!
- Well, that is even simpler. He is now doing exactly what He always does. Look where you are sitting and where I am sitting.

He did:

- I'm down here and you're up there.
 - That's exactly what He does: He casts down the prideful and promotes the humble. (applause)
- This is what He is doing now and what he always does. And the king said, "Yes, I understood everything. Hare Krishna." (laughter)

But here Suka Muni tells us about this: *kalatmana bhagavata indra-darpa-jighamsaya* – He wanted to destroy Indra's pride. And *kalatmana bhagavata* – the meaning of the word *kalatmana* ... What else does *kala* mean in Sanskrit? *Kala* means "time", *kala* means "black." Black means what? What does black colour do? It attracts. *Kalatmana bhagavata indra-darpa-jighamsaya* – Suka Muni wants to tell us that this All-attractive Absolute, this Absolute Truth that attracts everything and is infinitely wonderful has decided to prove its power to Indra: *indra-darpa-jighamsaya*.

Proktam nisamya nandadyah sadhv agrhnanta tad-vacah – therefore, having heard this from this all-attractive Absolute Personality of Godhead, the cowherd people, although in terms of logic Krishna's words could've been refuted many times, the cowherd people said: "*Sadhu! Sadgu! Sadhu!*" – Your words are perfect, o Krishna, for You're *kalatmana*, You have this quality of attraction.

Then Krishna began explaining to them (Bhag. 10.24.32-33):

tatha ca vyadadhuh sarvam
yathaha madhusudanah
vacayitva svasty-ayanam
tad-dravyena giri-dvijan
upahrtya balin samyag
adrtā yavasam gavam
go-dhanani puraskrtya
girim cakruh pradaksinam

"The cowherd community then did all that Madhusudana had suggested." Sukadeva Goswami – again, we are listening or trying to understand how he sees all this – he calls Krishna Madhusudana. Who is Madhusudana? What does *madhusudana* mean? *Madhusudana* means He who kills the Madhu demon. What does *madhu* mean? Honey! So, *madhusudana* means who? One who loves honey, one who eats honey. And Sukadeva Goswami, his heart melting with ecstasy, says here: *tatha ca vyadadhuh sarvam yathaha madhusudanah* – as Madhusudana had said, He knows. What did Krishna want? Actually, Krishna wanted to eat all that was prepared for Indra. This is why he calls Him Madhusudana. Madhusudana is the One who loves sweets. Krishna saw all the sweets that the cowherd people have brought to give Indra. He thought, "Well, what a waste of good products." He wanted those *rasagullas*, He wanted the sweet rice. He wanted that, therefore the cowherd people began doing everything as Madhusudana said.

And Madhusudana is also the One who destroys all doubts. With His words Madhusudana destroyed all doubts in the hearts of the cowherd people. No doubts whatsoever remained in them. Somehow or other His words filled them with such faith that they thought: "What fools we were! Of course, we must worship Govardhana." When we truly hear Krishna's words we have this extraordinary confidence: "Yes, everything is to be done in this way!" If we try to explain to someone else, they say: "You are absolute fools!" Have no sex?! – No way! Only for the purpose of conceiving children?! That's just madness! Right? But we hear from Krishna and think, "Of course, that's the right thing to do!" Have you personally experienced how Madhusudana talks to you? He's telling you something and you believe it. Because He's Madhusudana, He destroys all doubts. And Madhusudana means "the one who's killed the Madhu demon." This means that He can also deal with whom? With Indra. This means that somehow or other He'll be able to defeat Indra. And what did Madhusudana tell them? Madhusudana told them something very important – something that any good thing is to start with. Madhusudana taught them. They did everything as He said.

And what did He say? *Vacayitva svasty-ayanam tad-dravyena giri-dvijan* – He said that they should start with *svasti-vacanam* or *svasti-ayanam*. What is *svasti-vacanam*? Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. The first advice that Krishna gave to His father was: if you want everything to end successfully make the *brahmanas* chant the holy names. Krishna said: "First make all the *brahmanas* chant auspicious words or auspicious spells." Use all you've brought here for Indra, *tad-dravyena giri-dvijan*, for the *giri*, for the sake of this mountain, Govardhana, and for the *dvijas*, for the sake of all the *brahmanas* gathered here. "While the *brahmanas* were reciting auspicious Vedic *mantras* the residents of Vrindavan began offering them and the Govardhana Hill everything they were going to sacrifice to Indra with awe and reverence. They fed the cows with lush grass, as well. Then, letting the cows, the bulls and the calves go ahead, they circumambulated the Govardhana Hill."

And I'm going to tell you what happened 5000 years ago in that wonderful place. Let us try to be carried there together. Let's hear how the *brahmanas* are chanting those Vedic hymns. Has anyone heard these Vedic hymns (Rig-Veda 1.22.20)?

om tad visno paramam padam sada pasyanti suraya
diviva caksuratatam tad vipraso vipanyavo
jagrivam sah samindhate visnor yat paramam padam

om santih santih santih

From all directions the *brahmanas* – and there's nothing *brahmanas* like better than chanting Vedic *mantras* – from all directions Vedic *mantras* could be heard, everyone chanted trying their best and their louder. Women were singing. Women always sing. Regular women always sing. It will be said in the next verse that when they went around Govardhana they were singing. Singing about whom? Yes, about Krishna (Bhag. 10.24.34):

anamsy anadud-yuktani
te caruhya sv-alankrtah
gopyas ca krsna-viryani
gayantyah sa-dvijasisah

Dvijasisah – the *brahmanas* were giving their blessings. They became so pleased that they were bestowing their blessings to everyone, right and left. Nanda Maharaja was very happy. He was giving everything away. They made huge piles of foodstuff: rice topped with clarified butter. It all resembled the Mount Sumeru and radiated a golden glow. At the foot of these mountains there were lakes of sweet rice, lakes of milk, lakes of yogurt, lakes of cream, lakes of sour milk and other dairy products. There were mountains of *rasagulas*, mountains of *gulab-jamuns* and *sandesh* – there was just about everything under the sun! They built this *anna-kut*, everything they have collected. And, because it was Shyam who said so, people prepared all possible foodstuffs. From their homes they brought every possible foodstuff and placed it there, at the Govardhana Hill. They piled it all and everyone was happy. In his excitement, Nanda Maharaja began giving away all possible things. The *acaryas* who explain and comment on those *lilas* say: "This is a true sacrifice." Sacrifice is when we don't think of anything, we simply give away everything we have and we become happy. And Nanda Maharaja began giving away all possible stuff. Everyone loved each other, everyone was hugging each other. All were filled with extraordinary happiness. Musicians started playing music. You saw this band with various drums and the enthusiastic devotee hitting the copper plate with a big wooden stick. Now, what was happening there was a million times louder. All musicians played all types of instruments.

Hearing the music, the Ashvini Kumaras on the heavenly planets immediately started preparing a headache cure for Indra. They knew that music was going to give Indra a headache. But in Vrindavan people were having fun! Everyone was brimming with joy. Everyone was collecting, arranging or offering something. Everyone was cooking at home, everyone was running. Crowds and crowds of people were appearing out of the blue. Thousands and thousands of people gathered at that place. And the happiest of all were the *brahmanas* because they were respected and loved by everyone. What happened next? Something most incredible happened next. Shyam, who was standing there and directing all that was giving instructions: "There! Here! Do this! A bit more here! There seem to be a shortage of *rasagulas* here. And, please, sprinkle them with almonds ... and rose water ... Don't forget the rose water – Govardhana loves rose water." Krishna was explaining to everyone what was happening at that moment. And this is what is described afterwards, in the next very important verse (Bhag. 10.24.35):

krsnas tv anyatamam rupam
gopa-visrambhanam gatah
sailo 'smiti bruvan bhuri
balim adad brhad-vapuh

Suddenly, before everyone's eyes, in order to inspire faith in the cowherd people in whom a small shadow of doubt was still lingering, *krsnas tv anyatamam rupam* – Krishna took on a different form; *gopa-visrambhanam gatah* – so that true *visrambhanam*, complete confidence, appeared in them that everything is going right. Suddenly, to their surprise, they saw a gigantic form appear at the top of the Govardhana Hill – *brihad- rupam*. They gazed at it and exclaimed: "Who's that? Who's that?" It was a blue colour form with two arms decorated with gemstone bracelets. Its chest was decorated with a gemstone necklace. And most importantly, it wore a huge gigantic crown, *mukut*. That crown rose high in the air reaching the heavens. That gigantic form was infinitely beautiful. And they were saying, "This is Shyam! This is Shyam!" They looked at little Shyama and said: "No, Shyam is little and that one is big!" Shyam said: "No, look, look! It's not Shyam, it's Govardhana. See, he's walking!"

They all saw him walking, that gigantic figure. Imagine a giant mountain and a giant walking figure on top of it. It is shining like a bright sun. And those offerings there. Moreover, all of a sudden that giant mountain began speaking: "Sa-a-a-ilo-o-o-smi-! I am a mounta-a-ain!" When it opened its mouth it resembled a huge gigantic cave. But that cave was so beautiful that all the Vrindavan inhabitants wanted to immediately enter it. Some force stopped them from doing so but they did want to enter it. At that very point with its own arms the gigantic figure began gathering up all that had been prepared for it and began eating it before their eyes.

In his "Ananda-Vrindavana-Campu" Kavi Karnapur says that with his right arm he shoveled all that had been prepared and gulped it down in gigantic quantities. And with the index finger of his left

hand he did like this. Just to annoy Indra (laughter), meaning that: "My dear, nothing will be left for you today." This mountain was eating tons and tons, millions of *rasagulas*, *pakor*as and *samosas*, one after another, every now and then a melodious belch coming out of its mouth.

Don't forget that it was the belch of Krishna Himself. It was a transcendental belch. Most exquisite sounds were coming out from there. And everyone ... Everyone! When they heard it they shouted: "Did you hear?! Did you hear?! He belched! He's accepted all that we've brought him!" The *acaryas* say that each of the inhabitants of Vrindavana interacted with that form as he or she interacted with Krishna. The young were happy, they were laughing, they were saying, "Look at him! What is he doing?! What an appetite! A-ha-ha!" The children were frightened, they were looking on and crying: "A-a-a!" The old men and women were shaking their heads: "We've never seen such a thing!"

This was going on for a while. Suddenly the women who were late – they were in their kitchens and were going on cooking – they learned too late that Shyama ordered to carry out that gigantic sacrifice ... So, they were cooking *pakor*as and *samosas*, stuff like that. And they already cooked them but they realized that they are going to be late for Govardhana. They were at home and suddenly they saw that in each of their kitchens an arm reaches in, taking all they had prepared. Thousands of arms around all the Vraja! And people did see those arms. Those arms were everywhere. They were collecting all they could. And those arms were thrusting everything into that huge mouth. Every now and then saying: "Sailo-o smi-i-i! I am a mounta-a-ain!"

Everyone was ecstatic. Everyone wept with delight, everyone laughed, everyone was on top of the world. Some danced. The *yogis* who had come to Vrindavan, thought, "What fools we are! We must quickly cook for him our mental *pakor*as and offer him in our mind." In their meditation, they began offering him everything and they saw in their meditation how those same arms were reaching and taking away their mental preparations." Krishna was accepting everything! And all were delighted for that's what we want, right? Does anyone have Deities? Do you feed your Deities? Now imagine that tomorrow they will do something like that to you, that tomorrow they come and and shout: "More, more, more!" You will be absolutely delighted, you will be running in and out of the kitchen, bringing more and saying: "Eat more! Eat more!" You'll be running to the neighbors to borrow fruits from them.

When a few years ago in India a statue of Ganesh started drinking milk people would go crazy. They bought up all the milk. They say that it was all organized by the milk producers. People would go crazy. Just to see that, people brought tons of milk to temples. And they did see how the milk disappeared right in front of them! They were in ecstasy! And here Krishna showed this to everyone who wanted to see it. Everyone was in ecstasy.

All the while Krishna was sitting and looking at all that as if nothing was happening. He would work them up even more by saying: "Look, how many years have you been offering all that to Indra? Has he come to you even once? Has that Indra appeared even once?" Everyone would say: "Never has that Indra appeared! And here, it's the first time we've offered something with love and devotion and Govardhana immediately ate it. Shyam has taught us how to live! Shyam has taught us what we are supposed to do!" Everyone was ecstatic!

When Govardhana had enough, when he ate all possible stuff, what he began doing next was indescribable. He began rinsing his mouth. He began taking in his huge mouth the water from the lakes and gargling. And everyone felt being showered by the dew from his huge mouth. P-hh-hh! P-hh-hh! People saw that when those drops of water came out from Govardhana's mouth and onto Govardhana himself – immediately new grass and new trees would grow. But Govardhana did not stop there. When he properly rinsed his huge mouth, he began pulling out bamboo sticks – huge bamboo trunks – and picking his teeth with those bamboo trunks just to make Indra angry: "You've got nothing!"

Kavi Karnapur says he was doing that very arrogantly, he was picking his teeth just to spite him. As you know, sometimes people, having had their meal, would pick their teeth while you're being hungry. Govardhana was doing that same thing, having had plenty of food, having had his fill. And all the while Krishna would say: "Look, look at him! Look what he's doing! Govardhana has come!

He's come! He's accepted our offerings!" After that with his low trumpet voice coming from somewhere out of his stomach – Govardhana said: "Nanda, I am pleased with you. Ask me anything you want!"

Nanda was at the forefront and he was very happy about it. He was the happiest for it was him who organized all that. He knew people were offering all that to Govardhan at his command. But he was embarrassed, he turned to his subjects and began telling them: "Ask him! Ask him! He's pleased with us. Ask him anything you want!" Krishna said, "Oh, no. Father, you have to ask first." Krishna wanted everyone to see what was there in Nanda's heart. But then Nanda was embarrassed. Nanda blushed. Nanda began speaking with a faltering voice: "Oh, Govardhana, you're in my heart as *antaryami*, what's the need for me to say what I want? You already know all my desires. Nothing can I hide from you. You know everything! You know what I want. The only thing I want is that these two boys, Kanai and Palai, were always happy, were healthy and fortunate. If you are pleased with me, please, do so!" Govardhana laughed in response: "Ha-ha-ha! *Ta-a-ta-sthu-u-u!* So be it! So be it!" And Nanda was looking at Krishna and Krishna was looking at Nanda. They were looking at each other and their minds stopped with happiness and exaltation.

Suddenly that vision disappeared. Suddenly Govardhana disappeared. Then Krishna began speaking: "Now we all need to bow down before Govardhana. We've all gathered here and we saw what he did, we saw what a *devata* it is, we saw everything he brought us. So, let us all bow down before him." And Krishna Personally served as an example. First Nanda Maharaja showed what it meant to be a leader when he himself didn't want to ask for anything. He said to his people: "You ask." And now Krishna shows us an example of humility. He says: "If we see some manifestation of the Divine we must bow in adoration before it." And Krishna Himself led all those *vrajavasis* into those obeisances and chanted this *pranama-mantra*:

namaste girirajaya
sri govardhana namine
asesa klesa nasaya
paramananda dayine

And then, when they bowed down, Govardhana suddenly appeared again on the top. And that Govardhana took some *prasadam* and held it out to Krishna. Krishna took that *prasadam* and Govardhan disappeared. And Krishna began speaking: "And now it's time to worship the *brahmanas*." Everyone began feeding the *brahmanas*. The *brahmanas* were seated and served everything. Again *prasadam* appeared out of nowhere and the *brahmanas* began eating as I explained yesterday. They were laughing. They were so happy they've never been before. And all the rest began laughing, too. When the *brahmanas* were fed, all the rest were seated and fed. And Krishna had said before that: "Be aware of one single thing. I tell you: this *puja* will be successful only if you wear your best attires." That is why the women were wearing their best clothes and Krishna was distributing *prasadam* to the women. He liked looking at the *gopis* in their best clothes while the *gopis* modestly ate.

Everyone and all the cows got fed. Krishna says: "Now the cows are to be circumambulated." Everyone said: "It's impossible to circumambulate so many cows." Krishna said, "Let's circumambulate one cow – that will equal circumambulating all the cows." And Krishna began running among the cows, hiding from cows. The cows began going crazy. Krishna began playing the flute. Ultimately, they all went around Govardhana. And it was impossible to describe their happiness. All day long they were walking, singing songs about Krishna.

And tomorrow we'll sing that song about Krishna which is to be sung in two voices. The women ask in one voice, in their thin voice: "Who taught us to worship Govardhana?" And the men respond: "The One who killed the witch Putana!" Women ask: "Who taught us to worship Govardhana?" And the men respond: "The One who killed the witch Trinavarta!" The women ask: "Who taught us to worship Govardhana?" And the men respond: "The One who killed Bakasura!" In this way they walking and singing about Krishna. Actually, singing is the state of an awakened heart. When the heart has unfolded, when the heart is full of love, the song flows out by itself. Previously, when the culture was still more natural, the women would gather and it is the women who sing mainly – women would gather and sing. In ancient Russia women used to sing when harvesting or

ploughing the fields. During ploughing men worked. And men are sometimes down and gloomy. Women always sing. When they are cheerful or light-hearted. The women of Mathura glorify the Vrindavana inhabitants (Bhag. 10.44.15):

ya dohane 'vahanane mathanopalepa
prenkhenkhanarbha-ruditoksana-marjanadau
gayanti cainam anurakta-dhiyo 'sru-kanthyo
dhanya vraja-striya urukrama-citta-yanah

They say, "Whatever they do, these women of Vrindavana..." *Ya dohane* – when milking cows. *Ya dohane 'vahanane mathanopalepa* – when beating rice and cleaning it; when taking cow dung and water and scrubbing everything; when taking care of the children, when children are crying, when rocking the them in the cradle – whatever they're doing they always do one thing. What? Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare and P ma, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Krishna bowed down to the hill. And thousands, hundreds of thousands of people went around Govardhana. When they finished circumambulating Govardhana they didn't know what to do next – they wouldn't part. Such was the happiness they felt in their hearts! They thought, "Isn't that wonderful?! We feasted, we gave away whatever we had and we saw that miracle. And, most importantly, Shyam is here with us." And at that point Shyam began giving *prasadam* to everyone. Miraculously, Shyam, the little boy, happened to be next to each one. He would hold out some *prasadam* and everyone would know what they were to do. Each one grabbed Shyam, put Him on their shoulders and took Him home. The gigantic crowd began to disperse, but everyone knew we can't part if Shyam is not with us. So, each of them carried Krishna on their shoulders. They began dispersing to their respective villages and at the same time remembering everything that happened. They looked at Shyam. Of course, Shyam was with Yashoda and Nanda. And everyone discussed with each other what had happened.

Actually, some say that they stayed at the Govardhana Hill for the night because it was too late and the next day they celebrated the *bratri-dvitiya* – the day when sisters give *prasadam* to take their brothers. And that Sunanda's daughter, Krishna's cousin, fed Damodara on the banks of the Yamuna, which flowed there. However, they were dispersing. At some point, they did go back to their homes and their villages. And everyone was saying the same thing, everyone was glorifying Shyam. Everyone was saying: "Shyam taught us whom we are to worship. We were stupid but look at the youths! The youths do know who is to be worshiped! We worshipped that Indra! That Indra!"

And Krishna, being in everyone's heart, made everyone speak nasty things about Indra. Not only were they glorifying Shyam, everyone was saying: "Look! Shyam has taught us that we should worship Govardhan. And did you see that?" They were discussing all the details: "You remember how he snorted? P-ph-h-h! You remember how he picked his teeth? You remember how he shook his finger, how he ate, how with his hands ...? And what necklaces he had! What a *mukut* he had! And that *mukut*, that crown was all decorated with peacock feathers like a rainbow! And how he ate, how beautiful he was, what a huge mouth he had! And Indra – how many times we worshiped him and all in vain. He never came! And why did we worship him?! Shyam was right! Shyam says Indra never gave us anything. It's true, he never gave us anything. Each time we had to go to the Internet to find out what the weather will be. Are there going to be rains this summer or not? It was a continuous concern: will there be a rainy season or not? We didn't know. We offered everything to him. Each time it was something! And here we worshiped him only once and what happened!" And someone recalled Govardhana saying: "Indra will not leave it at that. Indra will try to take revenge. Indra ..." Govardhana warned them about it. And they recalled that and said, "Oh-oh-oh! You'll remember that! It seems that Indra is going to take revenge! Oh-oh-oh! That will be fun! Let's see how he will be taking revenge on us."

Thus they went home after that Govardhana-*puja*. On the second day of the bright half of the month of *kartika*, after the new moon ... Divali is celebrated on the new moon night. Govardhana-

puja is celebrated the first day and *bartri-dvitiya* the second day. And on the third day Indra decided to take his revenge. And I'll be talking about it tomorrow. But today I have one last question to you. What lesson did you get? The lesson of beauty, attentiveness, trust, peacefulness?

(various options proposed by the audience)

The third lesson ... Some of you mentioned it but just in case I won't give my entire self to them ... Some of you almost guessed. The third lesson is the lesson of ... And, actually many of you did mention it, you've got it all and I give myself to all of you. You can carry me with you from here in the form of the records of this lecture. The third lesson is the lesson of fearlessness. When we trust Krishna, when we do what He tells us to do then we become fearless. We are not afraid of any Indra. We become absolutely unshakably happy. Whatever happens to us, whoever threatens us, we understand – it's not at all scary. It all is just some phantasmagoria. This is a very important lesson of this *lila*. A person becomes fearless when he experiences the most important feeling – love. Where there is love there is no fear. Krishna explained and performed all this *lila* in order to give us the opportunity to attain complete fearlessness. But tomorrow we'll learn what happened. Because while Indra was criticized and ridiculed in every home in Vraja, there in Vraja, were spies sent by him, too. And they put down in their books each of the offense that the inhabitants of Vrindavan uttered.

"The Lessons of the Govardhana-*lila*", "Priti-Lakshanam Festival", Ekaterinburg, 04.01.2013, lecture 3

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Hare Krishna. Today we'll start the 25th chapter of the Tenth Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam," called "Krishna lifts Govardhana Hill" and I hope we'll go halfway through it up to the point where the inhabitants of Vrindavan all together surrender to Krishna. I hope by that time, we too, will all together surrender to Krishna and Krishna will perform a miracle: we'll all feel His protection. Our *acaryas* state that still the Tenth Canto is the description of *asraya* or the ultimate shelter of the living being. And, reading the verses of the Tenth Canto we can feel completely safe. If we read them in the right way, delving into the inner meaning of the words, our faith will become stronger and Krishna's protection will come. Krishna is always with us – it's us who is not with Him.

The "Mundanka Upanishad" and the "Svetasvatara Upanishad" speak of two birds sitting in the branches of the same tree. And one of them is engaged in eating the bitter fruits of that tree. While the other one is watching. And the same Upanishad says *sakhaya* – those two birds are friends but one of them has turned away from the other and is looking outward. And since it's looking outward it's always suffering and confused. But as soon as it turns towards his friend and sees his glory, feels his glory, his greatness, his protection, its suffering immediately goes away. Hearing the Tenth Canto of "Srimad Bhagavatam" is the very process by which we turn our consciousness away from the material energy and start looking at Krishna. And when we see Him, truly see Him, see Him descending to us from the pages of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" then all our sufferings go away and we feel: "I am under true protection. I have a friend." When we have an influential friend somewhere in the government we do feel protected, right? People want to have influential friends. So, the liberating message of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" is that each of us has an influential friend, we've just been too absorbed in eating the fruits of the banyan tree on which we're sitting together and thus have forgotten about Him.

We'll start with the *bhajan* but before we proceed we'll get back to what we went through yesterday. In this way we'll logically come to the *bhajans* which we should have sung yesterday.

Yesterday we spoke about how at one point the *vrajavasis* saw that form of Krishna who took a separate image. Little Shyam was standing and at the same time there appeared a gigantic form at the top of Govardhana Hill. Sometimes he had two arms, sometimes he had four arms and sometimes he had a thousand arms. He was decorated with pearl necklaces, he wore a huge crown decorated with peacock feathers which looked like a giant rainbow above his head. And he was extraordinarily beautiful, despite of being gigantic. Usually people get scared upon seeing something huge and terrible but the image that appeared was handsome. Everyone froze open-mouthed. And the stranger the actions he displayed the more excited they all became. He did various things: he was eating, crying, blessing. And no one could take their eyes away from him, even Shyam was looking at him with wide eyes and saying: "Look, look! Giriraj!" before that He had said to Nanda: "You know, I had a dream. Govardhana came to me in a dream and he said: "Why do you worship Indra?" And I saw that image in my dream. He told me: "Worship me!" And now everyone was seeing this wonderful image that Shyam Himself manifested.

The first day we were talking about three lessons. Who knows what those three lessons were? Who remembers? The first lesson is the lesson of responsibility. Krishna wants us to work, Krishna doesn't want us to do nothing. Even in the "Bhagavad-gita" He tells Arjuna: "Arjuna, you fight! I'm not going to fight." Arjuna said: "Maybe You will fight?" And Krishna says: "No, I'll be your guide. I'll be giving you good advice! But it's you who must fight!"

Like Srila Prabhupada says in one of his lectures: "Krishna didn't tell Arjuna: "Arjuna, sit down in the chariot and smoke some *ganja*, I'll do everything for you." Srila Prabhupada laughed at this hippie philosophy. Unfortunately, we've adopted too much from this hippie philosophy through *parampara*. We have this hippie philosophy – when we want to renounce this world, give it up and have nothing to do with this world – but unfortunately, this philosophy has nothing to do with *bhakti*. *Bhakti* means responsibility when we undertake something, when we do something because it is

the only way to express our love. Love – if it remains just words, if there are no actions to underpin it it's dead. This was the first lesson.

What was the second lesson? (audience: gratitude to those we depend on) Yes, thank you, the second lesson was the lesson of gratitude – rather than looking around we should try to understand who nourishes our *bhakti*, who helps our feelings get attached to Krishna and be grateful to them not to someone else. And this is a very important lesson that we often forget. And the third lesson was the lesson of what? (audience: intensifying our love through serving the devotees) Yes. Why is Govardhana the best of devotees? Because he serves not only Krishna, he serves the cows and the *brahmanas*. And not only the *brahmanas* but everyone associated with Krishna.

These were the first three lessons. And yesterday we had several other important lessons. But before that I'd like to share a quote with you. This quote is from an unexpected source. But what we're talking about is the nature of the world. Srila Prabhupada used to say that the nature of the soul is to serve, the *dharma* of the soul is to serve. Service can't be taken away from the soul. And when we start serving, we achieve success in all spheres regardless of who we are and whether we are aware of it or not. I read a wonderful book called "The leader servant" or something like that – by one *guru* but not from the ISKCON management, where he explains that becoming a truly successful leader, a leader of some large company – is possible only if you are in the mood of a servant. Success in any field, be it business, family, state management – no matter what – is achieved when a person is in the mood of service – and to the extent to which the person is in the mood of service. That is why the quote I'd like to share with you is the words of Albert Schweitzer.

Albert Schweitzer was a philosopher and public figure. He was the winner of the Nobel's Peace Prize. He had his own philosophy, the philosophy of reverence towards life. But listen what he says though he doesn't belong to our *sampradaya*. He says: "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know for sure: the only one of you who's going to be truly happy is those who will seek and find a way to serve others. Everything else is obscured in the darkness of the unknown but this can be said for sure: if you learn to serve, if you find a way to serve others you'll be happy. If you can't do that, if you don't find the way, the understanding, the disposition of this world when serving others – there will be no happiness because you'll be acting contrary to your own nature." This is our *dharma*, the *dharma* of the soul. No one can ever change this *dharma*, this nature. Only *maya*, only illusion, makes us act contrary to this principle, out of fear. We are afraid that if we serve others and don't take care of ourselves we'll be deprived of something.

It was this very lesson of love or the lesson of service, attaining love through service. And yesterday we also had three more lessons. What three lessons? The first one was the lesson of listening. And I gave a definition of active listening. What is active listening? Active listening is my conscious effort to see the world through the eyes of the person we're listening to and this is the only way to influence a person. Very often we make this mistake. Without having understood a person, without having heard the person – or we think we have understood him, or we even have understood him but haven't made our understanding clear to him, but we immediately rush with our own recipes, with our own vision of the world. We try to correct him driven by good intentions but nothing works. Because the person hasn't become aware of one thing: that we've understood him. First, a person must make sure he's been heard. And when he has the confidence of having been heard ... How often we see two persons talking to each other as if they are deaf? One is saying one thing and the other another thing? And no one is willing to make at least one step toward the other.

But if we let the person know that we understand why he is acting like that – we understand that he's had good motives, good intentions ... Of course, we all know what comes out of that ... In that case he'll be able to hear us. He'll be able to see another point of view, to see the world from a different angle and see where his mistake was. And this is something very important – to learn to listen actively. And I was saying that we do what helps us to listen - because in our case, in the case of *bhakti-yoga*, what does hearing mean? Hearing is the first method of devotional service. This is what devotional service starts with, this is what *bhakti-yoga* starts with. And in this is the uniqueness of *bhakti-yoga*! No other spiritual path – no other path – considers hearing to be of value.

Imagine, you have come to practice *yoga*. And you tell the *yoga* instructor: "You tell me," – and thus we attain *samadhi*. Is hearing a method of spiritual development on the path of *yoga*? No! You have to bend until you ache all over. You have to twist, to stretch, to breathe, you have to focus the mind. Nowhere! If you go to the *jnana-marg*, on the path of *jnana-marg* hearing is not a process! The process there is contemplation, the attempt to detach from one's own body – all those complicated methods when you have to fast and do other things. The only, the easiest way is *bhakti-yoga* where hearing is already serving. We sit, we listen and we kind of serve, right? But for this our hearing must be true hearing or active hearing.

And what was our second lesson? Yes, the lesson of gradually taking refuge – when, through hearing we attain what? *Nirodha* – our mind stops. First a person hears, his mind focuses on Krishna – this is called *nirodha, yoga*. And then gradually in the course of hearing purification of the heart from all undesirable things takes place. Ultimately a person feels the *asraya* or shelter. And of course, shelter is the most important lesson, the third lesson we talked about yesterday. The lesson of fearlessness when we have actually taken shelter. Complete fearlessness comes when we take Krishna's shelter. And Krishna Himself said a very interesting thing. Throughout this *lila*, during the Govardhana-*lila* when Govardhana manifested himself in all his glory, when Govardhana began accepting the offerings, when Govardhana was smiling and bestowing blessings – Krishna said ... This was what He had to say, this was what He had to drum into everyone's heads, including ours. He said: "This divine being is worth our worship because it has brought forward spontaneous faith in us by accepting everything that we offered him and by taking this gigantic form out of his his desire to serve us and out of compassion." Krishna makes a very important point – ultimately, when we take shelter – when we worship someone, when we consider whom we are to worship – we must have a very important criterion in our mind: that person or Deity must necessarily be compassionate.

Krishna wants to say: "You worshiped Indra and you didn't get anything from him. Indra would just accept your worship. Yes, he gave you some sops but ultimately you didn't get what you wanted." The living being seeks reciprocity. Like a small child – he runs, he cries, he pokes at the feet of his mother. If the mother or the father push him away he will be hurt. He's seeking a shelter! We are all seeking a shelter, we want a shelter and we need to know whom we should take shelter in. We should take shelter only in a person who's capable of reciprocation, who's capable of compassion. Krishna says: "Look, look! You must worship Govardhana Hill because he has proven that he is willing to respond to your worship, that he wants to respond to your worship." This is a very important point I wanted to stress today.

And we also talked about the last lesson – the lesson of fearlessness. This lesson of fearlessness is also very important. Krishna noted that not all cowherds were equally convinced. Some did that out of love for Him, others did it out of obedience, still others did it reluctantly, thinking: "What's going to happen to us? What's going to happen to us? O my Lord, save us! Instead of Indra we're worshipping some some pile of stones." And we can sometimes catch ourselves thinking the same. We stand before the Deities thinking: "My Lord! Are we supposed to worship that?" And Krishna did say: "Do worship it! Do worship the mountain. Don't worship Indra, do worship the mountain." And Krishna noticed that they were scared, that they were somewhat fearful. Therefore Krishna, again in this *lila*, shouted out something very important: "Don't fear! Don't fear anything – Giriraj can fulfill all your desires. Giriraj can fulfill all your desires! Don't doubt it!" Sometimes we think: "Are the devotees worth worshipping? Are the devotees worth serving? Can they fulfill all our desires?" Although every day we chant:

vancha-kalpatarubhyash cha
kripa-sindhubhya eva cha
patitanam pavanebhyo
vaishnavebhyo namo namaha

saying that: "The devotees, just like desire trees, can fulfill the desires of everyone" Is that so or not? (audience: it is) Why? Who are the devotees? How can they fulfill our desires? They have no money – by definition. How can they fulfill our desires? If the devotees bestow on us their blessing then Krishna will be obliged to fulfill those blessings. The devotees are very powerful precisely

because Krishna knows their desires. Krishna says: "Worship Govardhana! Don't worship Indra! Don't worship even Me! Worship Govardhana. If he's pleased with you everything will be fine with you." And this is still very popular. If you go to Vraja, there are people who do *parikrama* every day, there are people who come from different parts of India and once a month go on a *parikrama*. And everyone knows: "Giriraj fulfills our desires." Before going to exams the local students go on a *parikrama* around Giriraj wishing: "I want a good grade." Young girls go and ask Giriraj for a good husband. And everyone knows - Giriraj fulfills our desires.

This year I was at Govardhana. We were riding with a taxi driver in an auto *riksha* and a boy was sitting at the back, the driver's son. We got in and started speaking about something, bargaining about the price. The boy asked us: "America? America?" They don't know any other country. They know only one country (laughter), they are villagers. Even if you tell them: "Russia" they won't understand anything. I say: "No, not America." He says: "Oh! Not America? Oh-oh-oh!" Well ... But then I wanted to test him. I asked him: "Do you want to go to America?" Because we know all Indians want to go to America. He says: "To America?! What for? I'm here at Govardhana and I'm not going anywhere from here!" He was 10 or 11 years old, he said: "Noooo, never!" (laughter) Because Govardhana fulfills all our desires. And when a person feels that, actually feels this shelter, he becomes absolutely fearless.

And in the end, when everyone did the *parikrama*, remembering everything that had happened, everyone had full confidence that Govardhana is going to protect us. And though Govardhana himself had said: "Indra will avenge you!" Everyone said: "Yes, yes, Indra will avenge us! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Indra will avenge us but Govardhana will protect us." We sometimes fear ... Do we fear the end of the world? Honestly, have you laid in a stock? (laughter) I know, many devotees laid in a stock just in case, just in case of the end of the world. But when the devotees feel true shelter they don't fear anything. Krishna clearly stated, he wanted to prove to them that Govardhana is there and that he is alive. And He said: "Look, he's moving! Look, he's speaking! Look, he's eating! He's opened his mouth!" And everyone said, "Oh-o-oh, he's opened his mouth. Oh-oh-oh, he's eating! "

And the *vraja-vasis* had one problem. When Govardhana had his fill ... He'd eaten a huge quantity of everything and when he washed his mouth and picked his teeth – in well-bred families after guests were fed they should be offered a *puja*. I remember, we once went to a *pujari's* house, that was in Kerala. First he chanted a *mantra*, then he bowed, then he fed us sumptuous food. He took two hours to feed us. And before that he washed our feet, and then he offered us a seat and a *puja*. I thought: "Now, this is too much! (laughter)" But that's their culture: if you have a guest he must be properly received. And then they gave us gifts and also some donations. We didn't know how to escape from all that.

So, the *vraja-vasis* had now this problem: they thought: "How to offer a *puja* to such a gigantic form?" Imagine, he was like King Kong. Towering and beautiful, his crown reaching the clouds. At that point Krishna showed another miracle. All of a sudden everyone saw a gigantic *ghee*-lamp with thousands of wicks. That gigantic lamp lit by itself and started doing a *puja* around Giriraj, around the form that Krishna took on the top of Giriraj. And the *brahmanas* began chanting *mantras*: *esa dipah om krisnaya* – and everyone was delighted, everyone thought: "Now everything's fine, now that the *puja* is over."

And now we'll sing a *bhajan*. It will be projected onto the screen. First I'll tell you what this *bhajan* is about so that rather than just repeating something we can do it with a feeling. The words of the *bhajan* are very simple:

sri govardhana maharaja maharaja
tere mathe mukuta viraja rahyo

tere kanana kundala soha rahe
oura gala vaijayanti mala oura mala

tere ne mukha pe muralya soha rahi
thodi thodi pe hira lala aura lala

tere ang mein jama kesariya
oura pataka lala gulala oura gulala

tope pana cadhe aura phul chadhe
tope diye jaren dina rata dina rata

tere manasi ganga nikata bahe
tope chadhe dudha ki dhara oura dhara

tere sat kosa ki parikrama
oura cakalesvara visrama visrama

Sri govardhana maharaja - "Your head is decorated by a magnificent crown." And try to imagine this image. And then it says, then a simple description follows: "Your lovely earrings adorn your ears" – *tere mathe mukuta viraja rahyo. Kanana kundala* – *kanana* means golden, you have golden earrings in your ears. *Oura gala vajayanti mala oura mala* – and you are wearing a *vajayanti* garland. And then again – your head is decorated with a magnificent crown (*sri govardhana maharaja* - "Your head is decorated with a magnificent crown.") Actually, this is the *bhajan* sung by the inhabitants of Vrindavana, they have this vision before their eyes. They see this head and they are focused on it, they're meditating on it. And they see others things as well but they constantly come back to that gigantic crown.

"The flute at your lips is so beautiful, your chin is marked with a red diamond, your head is decorated with a magnificent crown" – *Sri govardhana maharaja* - "Your head is decorated with a magnificent crown." *Tere mukha* – what does *mukha* mean? Mouth! *Muraliya?* Flute! In your – *soha rahi* – your mouth has a wonderful crown. *Thodi thodi pe hira lala aura lala* – hey you, *lala!* What does *lala* mean? Yes, a kid, a little kid. (laughter) And then it's sung: *kesariya. Kesari*, what does *kesari* mean? Who knows the translation? Saffron! The word for saffron is *kesari*. And it goes on to say: "You are wearing saffron robes."

And then it says: *oura pataka lala gulala oura gulala*. What does *gulal* mean? *Lala gulal. Lala means "red" – red like roses.* *Oura pataka lala gulala* – you have a turban of red and pink colours. And further on: "You accept offerings" – *tope pana cadhe aura phul chadhe*. You accept various fruits and everything else. And nearby ... *Manasi ganga nikata bahe* – what does that mean? Which river flows nearby? Manasi-Ganga. And so on. And the last verse. Seven *kosas* is the duration of the *parikrama* around you. It ends at the Cakalesvara-Mahadeva. And your head is decorated with a magnificent crown. *Sri govardhana maharaja* – your head is decorated with a magnificent crown.

So that's all? Aditi will lead us into this *bhajan*.

Shri Giriraj Maharaj ki Jai ... !!!
Shri Giriraj Maharaj ki Jai ... !!!

Further purport to the *bhajan* (Aditi-dukhaha prabhu): First comes the verse that is repeated, you've seen that:

sri govardhana maharaja maharaja
tere mathe mukuta viraja rahyo

This verse is sung in a row, two lines. Then you repeat. And the verse that is sung – one line at a time. That is, after each line you repeat after me. And the chorus is fully sung.

(*bhajan* Aditi-dukhaha prabhu: 52:20 - 59:40)

Continuation of the lecture: Did you like the *bhajan*? (audience: yes!) Let's chant the *mangalacarana*. It was one of yesterday's lessons – before starting we should chant *svasti-vacanam*:

om ajñāna-timirāndhasya
jñānāñjana-śalākayā
cakṣur unmīlitaṁ yena
tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ

śrī-caitanya-mano-'bhīṣṭaṁ sthāpitaṁ yena bhū-tale
svayaṁ rūpaḥ kadā mahyaṁ dadāti sva-padāntikam

vande 'haṁ śrī-guroḥ śrī-yuta-pada-kamalaṁ śrī-gurūn vaiṣṇavāṁś ca
śrī-rūpaṁ sāgrajātaṁ saha-gaṇa-raghunāthānviṭaṁ taṁ sa-jīvam
sādvaitaṁ sāvadhūtaṁ parijana-sahitaṁ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-devaṁ
śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇa-pādān saha-gaṇa-lalitā-śrī-viśākhānviṭāṁś ca

he kṛṣṇa karuṇā-sindho
dīna-bandho jagat-pate
gopeśa gopikā-kānta
rādhā-kānta namo 'stu te

tapta-kancana-gaurangi radhe vrndavanesvari
vrsabhanu-sute devi pranamami hari-priye

vancha-kalpatarubhyas ca krpa-sindhubhya eva ca
patitanam pavanebhyo vaisnavebhyo namo namah

sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu-nityananda
sri-advaita gadadhara srivasadi-gaura-bhakta-vrnda

hare krsna hare krsna, krsna krsna hare hare
hare rama hare rama, rama rama hare hare.

nama om vishnu-padaya krishna-preshthaya bhū-tale
srimate bhaktivedanta-svamin iti namine

namas te saraswate deve gaura-vani-pracarine
nirvishesha-shunyavadi-pashchatya-desha-tarine

ajanu-lambita-bhujau kanakavadhatau
sankirtanaika-pitarau kamalayataksau
visvambharau dvija-varau yuga-dharma palau
vande jagat-priyakaro karunavatarau

yo 'ntah pravisyā mama vacam imam prasuptam
sanjivayaty akhila-sakti-dharah sva-dhamna
anyams ca hasta-carana-sravana-tvag-adin
pranan namo bhagavate purushaya tubhyam

namaste girirajaya
sri govardhana namine
asesa klesa nasaya
paramananda dayine

Yesterday we finished our *katha* at the point where the inhabitants of Vrindavan started dispersing to their homes. And everyone was talking to each other excitedly remembering everything that had happened that day. Each one had his own special details – everyone was happy. People were recalling how they were singing, dancing, feeding and serving others and how Giriraj was bestowing his mercy on them. And everyone was praising Shyama. Everyone was saying: "How smart Shyam is! So small but so smart. How come He's so smart?! Nanda Maharaja must have performed lots of austerities in his previous life so that he has a son like that. What a son! What advice He's given us! We've worshiped Indra so many times but never has Indra asked us what we

want. Never once! He should've appeared at least once asking whether there was something we need or not. Every time we worry whether it's going to rain or not. And here is Govardhana! We've worshiped him only once! And he immediately appeared and told us: "Ask anything you want!" We're going to worship only this God. We're not going to worship any other God. We have our own God! The best God. It's our God! And Indra is ... cheap stuff! "(laughter)

Krishna was extremely happy. Krishna's plan worked at 108% - everything happened as He wanted. Everyone was happy, everyone was worshiping the right person and everyone was cursing Indra. Indra's spies, as I said, were putting down everything. He sends his messengers and Krishna spotted them – they mixed with the inhabitants of Vraja. The "Rig-veda" says Indra looks at this world through the stars – he watches what's going on through the stars. There are no stars to be seen yet. I remember this summer I was giving a *katha* about Vritrasura. And there, too, Indra got it. Indra ... Fyu-u-u-h! What he did there was something. For us he enacted a small-scaled Govardhana-*lila*. What only didn't happen there! There were hurricanes and downpours. Precisely in the middle of the *katha*! And you could see he was hearing everything we were talking about him (laughter).

His messengers returned to Deva-loka all the while talking among themselves: "What fools! These cattle-breeders have become like cattle themselves!" They were laughing unable to believe what was happening. "Our Master, our King, is the Master of 33 million demigods. He's being worshipped on the heavenly planets, he lives in splendid palaces, the most beautiful women in the universe dance for him, the best *gandharva*-musicians sing for him! Nevertheless, these stupid cattle-breeders worshiped a pile of stones. What fools must they be to betray the *deva-pati*, the lord of the demigods, the *sura-pati*, whom Brahma himself, the creator of the universe, assigned to rule over all the demigods. To betray him and instead worship some idol, God knows whom!" And they were unable to grasp that. They had their own mentality and they thought: "Well, we'll tell Indra and Indra will laugh. We'll describe it full details for the sake of Indra's fun!" They sincerely thought: "How can they take such nonsense seriously?!"

They arrived at Deva-loka. Indra was sitting in his throne hall and they went up to him. He asked: "Well, how's the *puja* going on?" We know that a year equals one day by the calculation of the demigods. That is, the inhabitants of Vrindavan offered Indra a *puja* every day. And by various means, in a subtle way, it all reached the higher planets. It would charge the fire in a special way – let's not go into all these details now – but somehow or other, at he subtle level, Indra received all their offerings. And at that point on that particular day the *puja* was being delayed. So, when his messengers came in, he asked: "How is the *puja* going on?" They said: "The *puja*?! This year the *puja* is wonderful! This year the *puja* was better than in any other year. The people were much more!" Like we also assess each festival by the number of participants, right? The more the participants, the better the festival. "The people! There were so many people this year! All of them dancing and singing, all of them in ecstasy. And they performed a *puja* that you've never even dreamt of. To whom? You won't believe it – to Govardhana!" (laughter)

Indra ... And they began: "You know what they were speaking about you? Indra's this, Indra's that. Oh-oh-oh! Govardhan – that's the thing!" The inhabitants of Vrindavan purposefully, inspired by Krishna from their hearts, were comparing Indra with Govardhana. Actually, comparison is a certain sophisticated form of *ninda* or offense. We sometimes don't realize the way it works and also are constantly trying to compare. Like sometimes clever people approach a child with the question: "Whom do you love more – Mom or Dad?" Whenever I've been asked this question as a child I thought: "What a stupid question! I love both of them." The small child understands – you shouldn't compare but stupid adults do not. You shouldn't compare.

By the way, I forgot to tell you that at the end I'm going to ask you what lessons you've learned from this story. I'm not going to tell you. And the one who names more lessons will get a special award. Okay? This is a lesson of active listening.

They were comparing Indra. And when Indra heard all that he felt a terrible, an awful headache. His head was splitting and he felt sick, sick inside and then Sri Shuka begins speaking (Bhag. 10.25.1):

sri-suka uvaca
indras tadatmanah pujam
vijñaya vihatam nrpa
gopebhyah krsna-nathebhyo
nandadibhyas cukopa ha

Sukadeva Goswami said – listen to what he said: "My dear King Parikshit – *nrpa*, when Indra realized that his sacrifice had been abolished," *tadatmanah pujam vijñaya vihatam*. *Vihatam* is a very interesting word, I'll tell you later about it. "When Indra realized that his sacrifice had been abolished," but literally it means has been killed. *Vihatam* – his sacrifice was killed. "He became furious with Nanda Maharaja and the other cowherd men who were accepting Krishna as their lord." *Gopebhyah krsna-nathebhyo nandadibhyas cukopa ha* – he was furious with Nanda and the others because they had made Krishna their *natha*, their master.

The first thing to note is this word *vihatam* which means to kill. Indra literally and actually felt being killed. When the *puja* in his honor, the sacrifice in his honor was cancelled, Indra felt hurt: "I've been humiliated!" Has anyone of you felt this pain? When nothing particular happens but the pain is terrible, something in me's being killed! I wasn't paid respect; something wrong has been said about me, things like that. Has anyone felt that? Please raise your arms and shout Haribol. (audience: Haribol!) Indra felt the same! Indra felt the same that we do. What did he feel? He felt that the false image he's been trying to create – of the lord of the universe – has been killed and thus he's been humiliated. And the pain he felt was terrible. That's what Indra felt at that moment.

And what did actually happen at that moment? At that point he got furious, *cukopa ha*. He was terribly furious. Why was he terribly furious? We'll speak about that in a while. The next verse details the reason for his anger. At first sight you can decide that "Actually there was little reason to get angry. True, he didn't get those *sandesas* this year but is he short of *sandesas* there in the heavenly planets? Is he short of dairy products there? Was he so attached to those *gulab-jamuns* of the inhabitants of Vrindavan? Why did he get furious?!" One of the commentators writes a comic purport: "Of course, he was hungry and didn't get anything to eat." We all know if we are not fed we naturally get angry. And this commentator is mocking Indra: "He wasn't given to eat." Does it mean that that's the reason why Indra got furious? No. Indra was furious not because of that. It is said here that he got furious because the cowherd people accepted Krishna as their master. The next verse fully discloses this problem. The next, the second verse is very important, (Bhag. 10.25.2):

ganam samvartakam nama
meghanam canta-karinam
indrah pracodayat kruddho
vakyam cahesa-many uta

Ganam samvartakam nama – he called those *samvartaka* clouds that are reserved for only one purpose: to destroy the universe. The word *samvartaka* means "completely destroying". *Vartaka* means "destroying." Sometimes the hell fire is called *samvartaka* – the fire that burns in the hellish planets. And at the time of the destruction of the universe that fire bursts out from somewhere down there, from Patala, earthquakes start and everything is destroyed. But at the same time the *samvartaka* clouds, the special clouds, special natural disasters that can't be seen at any other time, with special tornadoes, whirlwinds and hurricanes attack the Earth. And he called those clouds.

And it's said here: *indrah pracodayat kruddho*. *Pracodayat* – it was his rage that caused those clouds. *Vakyam* – with his words. *Cahesa-many uta* – and the main words here are: *ca isa mani uta*. *Isa mani* – why? Because Indra considered himself to be the *isa*, the supreme controller. The Russian word "mnit" is derived from the Sanskrit word *mani* - "think, imagine." *Isa mani* - "imagining himself to be the *isa*." And here Sukadeva Goswami clearly displays and diagnoses him: "He thought himself to be God." *Uta* - "indeed" - thus he was disqualified. Actually, that was the cause of his anger – that his false conception of himself was destroyed.

And this is a very important lesson that I'd like you to learn – there are various problems in our hearts. Are there? And as a rule, we do not even suspect about their existence and think: "Well, as a whole, I'm a pure devotee. Most pure. Actually, you'd hardly think of anyone purer than me." At the same time inside us there's envy, malice, lust, anger, greed. And we think: "I am a pure devotee! Well ... an almost pure devotee! Well, so be it – an almost pure devotee. I've reached the level of *nistha* – I've been chanting Hare Krishna for two weeks every day. I get done it by midnight." (laughter) And they feel some strange things – sometimes they themselves don't know what's there in their hearts. Who knows what's there in their hearts? Krishna! Krishna brings that out by arranging various situations. Has it ever happened to you that suddenly Krishna arranges some situation in which your *isvara-bhava* pops up? You used to be Mahendra Das but became Mahendra. Instead of being a servant you suddenly felt like a master.

I want to confess to you – I came to you with a confession. Yesterday Krishna did that to me! (laughter) I was preparing for this lecture, thinking about how awesomely Krishna does everything and that anger is nothing but a manifestation of *isvara-bhava*. Actually, when we are angry – any manifestation of anger – is a manifestation of the fact that we consider ourselves to be God. Because anger is our reaction to something not going my way, right? And if I understand that I'm not God then why should I be upset because something is not going my way? On the contrary, I must be happy because that will be just another proof of the fact that I'm not God. Right? If something doesn't go my way I must be happy – everything's in its place. On the contrary, I must be worried if something does happen my way because there's something wrong. But with us usually in any situations when something goes wrong, this *isvara-bhava* gets down to work and we start losing temper and getting angry. For it's not the way I want it to be.

I was told about one of our rulers. Just in case, in order not to repeat the Govardhana-*lila*, I won't mention his name (laughter). I was told that at the time he wrote his most concise resolution on a piece of paper. The resolution consisted of one word: "I want" with a signature (laughter). That's what we all do, there's no one who doesn't consider himself or herself to be God – well, in their own small universe that he or she has created. Yesterday Krishna began doing to me ... I was thinking about this and I was getting more and more enthusiastic. I was thinking: "Wow! Indra! Just see how Krishna exposed him!" I was putting down something, some clever ideas that came to me. I was listening, reading, writing. And then my computer was taken away and I didn't save the file (laughter). And the person who took the computer deleted the file I was writing. A-a-a-a! (laughter) I swallowed my anger because I was just writing all that down (applause) but it took much preaching to myself. Krishna perfectly responds to all our thoughts (laughter). Krishna's in our hearts, be careful. Krishna knows what's happening to us. Therefore, Sukadeva Goswami's words: *isa-many uta* – he truly considered himself to be God – are addressed to us not to someone else.

And actually ... I think it will be most appropriate to dwell a bit on the nature of this emotion, anger. Anger, like all the other negative human qualities is ultimately a manifestation of one carefully concealed feeling: the feeling of inferiority or incompleteness. And this is the proof that we are not God. There is a nice saying: "Caesar, if you are angry you are wrong" and no other proof is needed. The very fact that we are angry means that something is wrong with us; that it's our wrongness, it's a manifestation of our inferiority. And only those who are absolutely complete in themselves – and that can be either God Himself or someone who's attained complete connection with God and thus has attained complete satisfaction – can be completely absolutely imperturbable. And that's a test! A test as to what extent a person has realized God.

There is a wonderful story described in that same Tenth Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" about the sages who gathered at a large sacrifice on the banks of Saraswati River. They had to carry out a *puja* and during the *puja* they were supposed to worship various gods, but the greatest of them was to be worshiped first. And at that point a dispute arose between them and they began to argue. Some were saying, "Siva is the greatest because he's the most renounced." Others were saying: "No, Brahma is the greatest because he's created this universe." Still others were saying: "Vishnu is the greatest because he's maintaining everything." And there was no unanimity among them as is often the case with sages. You all know the story but, again, we need to properly meditate on the meaning of the story. So the sages sent Bhrigu Muni to test who actually is God.

So, Bhrigu Muni started thinking how to determine who is and who isn't God. And he immediately realized how: by the way the God reacts to insults. This is a test. So, he decided to carry out this test. First he went to Brahma, he went to Satya-loka and Satya-loka is relatively close. He arrived at Satya-loka, Brahma was very happy to see him for he thought: "Here's my son!" But Bhrigu Muni pretended that he didn't notice Brahma so he didn't bow down to him in front of everyone. There were great sages sitting there. And innerly Brahma got angry – terrible anger arose inside him: "Why didn't he bow down to me?!" Like we sometimes get angry when someone passes by without noticing us. Do we? When someone doesn't say Hello to us, doesn't say Hare Krishna to us. Or sometimes someone doesn't bow down to us! Right? This happens to *sannyasis*. You think: "What a proud person!" (laughter) Actually, if someone doesn't bow down to us we must be happy. What's benefit for the one we bow down to? None! He gets a piece of *karma*. What's the benefit for the one who bows down? He gets all the benefit, he gets blessings and everything else. So, Bhrigu Muni didn't bow down to Brahma, but Brahma sees – there are sages. Get angry? No good. They'll condemn me. So, Brahma swallowed his anger. However, Bhrigu Muni got it all: he knew what was going on inside him. He turned around and said: "No, that's not God."

And he went to Kailash. He thought: "This one needs a stronger test, you can't treat him as simple as that. This one's more complicated." He went to Siva and Siva, his older brother, he's also Brahma's son, ran to him with open arms: "Brother! My beloved brother!" At that point Bhrigu pushed him off: "Don't touch me! You're dirty! You spend all your time at the crematories; you rub shoulders with these *yaksas* and *raksasas*. Get away! Don't touch me. I am a *brahmana*, I'm pure, don't defile me by touching me." Siva got terribly angry. In front of everyone he grabbed his trident. There were some people in Sivaloka, too but Siva ignored them. He grabbed his trident and Bhrigu ran away. It was only thanks to Parvati who grabbed Siva and started pleading with him: "Please stop it, my darling" – that Bhrigu was saved. Bhrigu thought: "There's only one left but ... A serious test."

Then he went to Vishnu. Vishnu, as ever, was laying down on his bed with half-closed eyes. Lakshmi was telling Him something and Vishnu was sometimes replying. Bhrigu Muni quietly approached from behind and all of a sudden jumped forward. With all his might he kicked Vishnu's chest with his heel, shouting at Him: "You, lazy person! You're sleeping all the time! How much can you sleep?! Karanadakasayi Vishnu, Ksirodakasayi Vishnu, Garbhodakasayi Vishnu – you always sleep, you sleep everywhere. How much can you sleep?! Get up!" Vishnu got up and said: "You haven't given me any notice – I would've met you. Did you hurt yourself? Your lotus feet are so gentle and My chest's so hard." He made him sit next to him and started massaging his heel. Upon seeing that Bhrigu Muni started weeping. He said: "I've understood everything – you're God. I've understood everything and that's all I need."

And yesterday we saw how this same Krishna – little Shyam – said: "Bow down, bow down to the mountain." And then He was the first to bow down. The Lord cannot be humiliated. The one who is truly high is impossible to humiliate. You can humiliate only someone who is low. If we feel humiliated what does that mean? That we are at a low level, that we are proud at heart. When a person is complete in himself it's impossible to humiliate him – he's happy. It's impossible to offend him, it's impossible to make him lose his temper – he's completely happy. And that's a test.

So, Bhrigu Muni went back and said that He was the true God. And that's a very important lesson – another one – that I wanted to tell you about. We must worship only those who don't need our worship – that's the paradox of spiritual life. Actually a person can and should worship only those who don't need to be worshiped. If a person needs to be worshiped, if he has that inferiority complex – he feels incompleteness, he wants something – he won't be able to give us protection. Our relationship with him will be just a business relationship! He wants to get something from us and he will be giving us exactly as much as needed to preserve our worshipping him. Again and again we can see this happen here. It is our nature to worship but we don't know who's to be worshiped and we choose the wrong object of worship. We must worship the humble and the tolerant; we must worship those who don't get angry; we must worship those who don't need to be worshiped. That is difficult – to worship those who don't need to be worshiped. It's easy to worship those who need to be worshiped, right? They need that and we know – we'll get something from them. But actually we can get what we need only from those who don't need to be worshiped. And

this is what's going on here. In this verse Sukadeva Goswami describes this quality of Indra which proves that he's not God.

The "Hari-Bhakti-Vilasa" says that before accepting a spiritual master the disciple must test him. It doesn't say how he's to be tested – well, you can come, kick him with your heel and see how he'll react to it. That's a joke (laughter). But in reality, we must look for someone who doesn't need to be worshiped, who's free of this shortcoming.

Here, as way of an important addition to this verse, I'd like to say about the six things one's inferiority complex is manifested in, one's low self-esteem. Actually, everything we see here is based on these internal complexes. The inferiority complex is always accompanied by the superiority complex. And, ultimately, it all is a manifestation of Indra's low self-esteem. Indra didn't get appreciated. Why should he need that? But there are six things, I've taken from them Srila Radhanatha Maharaja's lecture where he's talking about that. Very interesting. I'm not going into too much detail but it's interesting.

The first manifestation of this complex we have – or our low self-esteem – is that we love gossiping and spreading gossip. Why? Because we like talking about bad things, we derive pleasure from that. A person who's properly established inside, a person of integrity, likes talking about exalted things. He physically doesn't like, he's physically disgusted to talk about someone else's shortcomings and downfalls, things like that – he doesn't like relishing all that gossip. If you like gossiping that's the first symptom. Hare Krishna!

The second symptom is criticizing others. We like criticizing others, we like saying things that somehow or other condemn others. And vice versa, the symptom of inner integrity is the ability to show respect for the other person. It is out of lack of integrity that I want to criticize others; and it's due to integrity that I show respect. I'll be happy and delighted to find someone else's good qualities and show respect for him.

The third manifestation of incompleteness is that what do people always do? They always brag: "I'm this, I'm that, ultimately, I've done so much and I have this diploma and that diploma. And so on and so forth. I've achieved this, I've achieved that." What do people of integrity look like? They're humble and modest – they'll never say that.

Recently I associated with one wonderful Vaishnava. That was Bodhayan Maharaja, he's the *acarya* of the Gopinath-Gaudiya Math. We are bound by long-standing relationship with him. And I was very interested to know about his *sadhana*. From other sources I know that he chants one *lakh*, 64 rounds every day. Travelling all over the world, talking to people, taking care of others, giving lecturing. At the same time every day he chants 64 rounds and more. And I wanted to know: "How? How much time does it take him? When does he get up?" Besides, he had casually mentioned in a conversation that in *kartik* I try to chant more rounds. So, I was very interested how much more you can chant. And I asked him: "How many?" Maharaja is in an Indian body, with a dark complexion, but he apparently blushed. He said: "Well, more." I asked: "How many, Maharaj?" He said: "Well ... Well, I chant." I asked: "Mahara, how many do you chant every day?" He said: "There's no need to talk about that." And it was so natural, so unassuming. You could see he didn't want to talk about it, he had no need to talk about it – it's his relationship with God. Truly worthy people never boast – never. They don't need that, they have inner integrity. Showing off, hiding behind one's achievements – is for those who have no integrity inside, who feel this deficiency.

And the fourth manifestation of this is those with a sense of inner deficiency who constantly try to attribute other's merits to themselves and blame others for their own mistakes. If something's good then it's me; if something's bad then it's who? Anyone but me. And vice versa, someone with inner integrity will eagerly confess any shortcomings or mistakes he makes without trying to somehow or other defend himself; let alone attribute someone else's achievements to himself.

And the last two qualities or external manifestations of this complex is that people with low self-esteem, with an inferiority complex, with inner problems constantly seek to gain the others' approval. Before doing or saying something they think: is this going to please the others or not?

But those of inner integrity never mind whether it's going to please them or not. Sometimes this low self-esteem is manifested in our being afraid to say something unpleasant to people. This doesn't mean that those with true self-esteem will always speak unpleasant and nasty things. No. But if necessary, they can do that; they can honestly and straightforwardly say some things. But in a way that won't hurt the person. Our dependence on the others' opinion, our painful dependence, is a manifestation of our inner problems. And finally, the last manifestation of this is that we envy the success of others. We feel jealous when someone does something better than us. We start feeling this morbid jealousy.

These are the first two verses and I'd like to read a few more verses. You don't mind, do you? (audience: No) But maybe we can sing the *bhajan* now? (audience: Yes) We've prepared another *bhajan*. This is the *bhajan* I promised yesterday, by Jiva Goswami.

giri-pujeyam vihita kena
araci sakra-padam abhayam yena

giri-pujeyam vihita kena
trinavarta-tanu-dalanam yena

giri-pujeyam vihita kena
yamalarjuna-tarum udakali yena

giri-pujeyam vihita kena
vatsa-bakasura-hananam yen

giri-pujeyam vihita kena
vyomaghasura-maranam yena

giri-pujeyam vihita kena
kaliya-damanam kalitam yen

giri-pujeyam vihita kena
khara-pralambaka-samanam yena

giri-pujeyam vihita kena
dava-yugmam paripitam yena

giri-pujeyam vihita kena
trasyati kamsah satatam yena

I'll now read the translation, I'll explain the translation and we'll try to sing it.

Giri-pujeyam vihita kena. What does *giri* mean? A mountain. *Pujeyam*. *Puja iyam* - "this". *Vihita* - "has organized". *Kena* - "by whom." Who organized the worship of the mountain? *Araci sakra-padam abhayam yena* - "Who ordered to worship Govardhana Hill? The same who delivered us from the fear of Indra. Who ordered to worship Govardhana Hill? The same who killed Putana." And then everything is repeated. "Who ordered to worship Govardhana Hill? The same who chopped down Trinavarta." "Who ordered to worship Govardhana Hill? The same who uprooted the Yamala and Arjuna trees." "Who ordered the worship of Govardhan Hill? The same who killed Vatsasura and Bakasura." "Who ordered the worship of Govardhan Hill? The same who killed Vyomasura and Aghasura." Let's now sing and I will provide translation in parallel so that we sing consciously.

Aditi?

The main line is *giri-pujeyam vihita kena*, it is repeated all the time: "Who organized the worship of the mountain?"

(*bhajan* – by Aditi-dukhaha prabhu 109:10 – 118:30)

Sri Govardhana-lila ... ki Jai!

Continuation of the lecture: So, we are in Indra's throne hall. And Indra, feeling the pain of humiliation, feeling jealous because the cowherds ignored him and instead have accepted god knows whom as their master, Indra lost his temper. Let's take a closer look at what he says because these words can reveal very much about us, about the way we deceive ourselves. Indra is displaying his anger but at the same time he wants to justify himself. Indra's face is distorted with fury – his eyes are red, his lips are curled and he's foaming with rage. And he cries out these words (Bhag. 10.25.3):

aho sri-mada-mahatmyam
gopanam kananaukasam
krsnam martyam upasritya
ye cakrur deva-helanam

Listen to what he says! *Aho sri-mada-mahatmyam gopanam kananaukasam* – he says: "These *gopas*! These cowherd men, these ragamuffins! These cattle-breeders who know nothing except cleaning the cowdung, live in the forest", *kananaukasam*. Who lives in the forest? The most backward, right? Where do all regular people live? In capitals, in cities, right? We used to have a teacher of arts who had a saying. She was a strange woman and we constantly mocked her. And she always said: "They lived in the woods and prayed to the wheel." (laughter) What Indra was saying about the cowherd people was almost the same. He says: "They lived in the woods and prayed the wheel. They worship the mountains ... Aborigines! Ignorant people." *Aho sri-mada-mahatmyam* – and at the same time they are proud of their greatness and their wealth, *sri-mada*. *Mada* means they are intoxicated. In this way Indra's kind of saying: "Well, me getting proud is understandable, I have some reason for that. But what are they to be proud about?! They live in the forest. I understand if I had become proud of my wealth; but I'm not. And they are!"

Yesterday I told you that when a person looks at the world, what does he see in the world? His own reflection. He projects all his qualities onto the others and doesn't see anything else. All he sees is himself. And Indra, proud of his position, his wealth, his education, ultimately, he's Brihaspati's disciple, he knows Sanskrit and we'll be convinced of that when we read the following verses that he speaks. He knows everything. He's got a noble birth, wealth, beauty, delicious food, the most beautiful women in the universe dance before him and he's completely intoxicated by that.

Queen Kunti says that these four things (Bhag. 8.1.26): *janmaisvarya-sruta-sribhir ... Janma* means "birth". *Aisvarya* means "power" or "wealth." *Aisvarya* means *isvara-bhava*. *Sruta* means "learnedness" or "knowledge". *Sri* means "beauty". *Janmaisvarya-sruta-sribhir edhamana-madah puman* – they drive a person mad, they intoxicate him.

Indra sees the same thing in these cowherds. He says: "They've gone mad! These stupid cowherds have completely lost their reason." Therefore: *krsnam martyam upasritya* – whom have they taken shelter of? Of Krishna, who's *martya*. What does *martya* mean? A mere mortal person: "They've took shelter of a mere mortal." *Ye cakrur deva-helanam* - "thus have offended the gods." He doesn't say, "They have offended me" - He says they have offended whom? The demigods have been offended – we've been offended. Do you feel the deceit? He sees in them his own qualities, his own intoxication, he attributes that to them and at the same time he's afraid to admit to himself his own ignorance. He says: "It's not that I feel hurt, I'm very humble. I feel hurt for the demigods." I feel hurt - *deva-helanam* – in my person they've offended... I'm not concerned about myself, I'm concerned about the Vedic culture. Have you ever heard such arguments? It's not for my sake that I'm trying, it's for the honor of the uniform.

Indra's speaking about this and this is amazing. First of all, we must understand that these things do make us crazy. In Sanskrit *mada* means "pride", *mada* means "intoxication" and *mada* means "madness" – these three things are synonyms. If someone's proud it means he's intoxicated. All intoxicated people are proud, aren't they? Full of intoxicated bravado! An intoxicated person can cross anything, they're recklessly brave. Pride is intoxicating because if a person's drunk you can

hope the effect will go away in 24 hours but if someone's proud it won't go away even after 24 years. The person will remain in this state of intoxication all the time, if he's proud of something, some achievements. Ultimately it brings about madness, a person starts committing offenses.

One of the purports gives a striking comparison. We know that when a person is intoxicated, what happens with his head? His head's spinning? And we know that when a person is successful, he's what? His head starts spinning. Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin introduced the expression "Dizzy with Success." One attains success, position, things like that, and his head starts spinning. Now, have you ever felt dizzy? When you're dizzy you think what? You think that what's spinning? The whole world's spinning. Around whom is it spinning? It's spinning around me. Q.E.D. (quod erat demonstrandum). Right? We want only one thing – that the world spins around us. And this is very easy to do - just spin around yourself a little and the world will start spinning around you.

The world can't spin around us! We're never going to be the hub of the universe. There's already a hub in the universe and that's not us. The axis of the universe will never pass through us. I know there are plenty of places – Ekaterinburg is one of them – that compete for the right to be called Europe's center, or Eurasia's center, or something else. The center is here, right? What's important is the center. And the center – as it always happens – is where we are, right? No matter where we are – the center is where we are. We want the world to turn around us. And Krishna, by His humility, happily gives us the opportunity to feel this. He makes our head spin. *Mada!* The dizziness that takes place. And this is ignorance.

What is Indra displaying here? Indra's displaying his ignorance here. Indra is very learned; I've already said that he's Brihaspati's disciple, he knows all the Vedic disciplines, he knows astrology, he knows *yoga* – he knows everything. He knows the Vedas, he knows the *sastras*, he fluently speaks Sanskrit. Indra is a very cultured man – so, what's his ignorance? The root of ignorance is that we are not aware of our own ignorance. Ignorance starts with not being aware of our not knowing something. Indra's unaware of his own problems. Listen very carefully because this is a very important point I wanted to make. Knowledge starts not with external sparkling learnedness – knowledge starts with the awareness of our own ignorance: of our own limitations, of our own narrow-mindedness, of our own problems. A person who is capable of introspection can observe himself and see his own problems – has made one step, a huge step. And even more than one step – towards getting rid of them. He's sure to get rid of them. One who doesn't admit his own problems to himself is the most ignorant person.

At the time there was this famous story about how the Delphic Oracle ... He was asked: "Who is the most knowledgeable person in Greece?" And the Delphic Oracle said: "Socrates". This news reached Socrates and Socrates was very embarrassed when he heard that. He was genuinely embarrassed and he thought: "That can't be, the Delphic Oracle must be wrong. It's impossible that I am the most knowledgeable person." At that time – it was the age of philosophy and there was a large number of philosophers, every village had its own philosopher, one greater than the other. Everyone argued with each other, everyone was proving something. And Socrates thought: "It can't be!" He personally narrated that. And he said: "So, I went to test all those learned people. And I was convinced that the Delphic Oracle was right. I'm the most knowledgeable for, among them all I alone know that I don't know anything. And they don't know even that. Among them all I alone have realized that I don't know anything. I alone know that, they don't."

And here Indra reveals this very problem – he doesn't see his own problems. How many eyes does Indra have? 1000 eyes and he doesn't see anything. He doesn't see his own problems. This is a very important lesson for us – we must understand that knowledge starts with our understanding our own problem and ultimately our being capable of surrendering. Actually, Indra is more stupid than any blade of grass in Vrindavana because every blade of grass in Vrindavana knows that Krishna's who? God. And Indra doesn't. He says Krishna's who? A mere mortal.

And I'll just read two more verses. Listen to his ignorance and learn how we deceive ourselves, what arguments we present. What is our main deception? Our assertions of being what? Of being right! Our considering ourselves to be God is revealed in our always being right. And to prove it, we start quoting what? The *sastras*! We start giving examples, our mind starts working in a remarkable way. Indra – listen to what Indra says! (Bhag. 10.25.4):

yathadrhdhah karma-mayaih
kratubhir nama-nau-nibhah
vidyam anviksikim hitva
titirsanti bhavarnavam

He says: "Their taking shelter of Krishna is just like the foolish attempt of men who abandon transcendental knowledge of the self and instead try to cross over the great ocean of material existence in the false boats of fruitive, ritual sacrifices." You see? Indra is a literate person, he says: "Look at those fools!" There are fools who deny *anviksiki-jnana*. *Anviksiki* literally means "spiritual knowledge, transcendental knowledge, knowledge of the subtle nature of things, of the spiritual nature of things." *Anviksiki* means "subtle, imperceptible." And instead, these people, these fools are trying to cross over – as it is said here, *bhavarnavam*, the ocean of material existence, *titirsanti* – to go to the other side of this ocean of material existence, they resort to material methods. They perform sacrifices, they chant some Vedic *mantras*, they practice *yoga*. And the *yoga* says: "If you practice *yoga* the elixir of immortality will drip from your navel right onto your heart." No one has ever experienced that but still everyone believes. *Yoga*, Vedic sacrifice, *yajna*, astrology ... Does anyone love Astrology? It's going to save us, right?

Indra says: "Fools! In the same way these fools rejected me and started worshipping Govardhana." Indra, along with the other demigods, when addressing Vishnu in the Sixth Canto of "Srimad Bhagavatam" in the story of Vrtrasura were saying almost the same. Indra himself said almost the same, he said that the fools who worship others and don't worship You are like those who are trying to cross over the ocean by holding the tail of a dog. Imagine you are standing on the shore of the ocean thinking how to get to the other shore. And here comes a dog and you think: an excellent method – just strongly grab its tail and it will take us to the other shore.

Indra himself was admitting that! And Indra was saying that those who reject You and try to surrender to others are like those fools who try to cross the ocean holding onto a dog's tail. And here he says: "These fools have rejected me. I am the true method of crossing the ocean of material existence." He offends the inhabitants of Vrindavana. First he offended Nanda because he's been ignored. But when someone offends the devotees what follows inevitably? Offenses of Krishna. I've seen this happen, it's a sad thing. If a person's not on the alert and starts imagining himself to have the right to offend devotees – because he sees their mistakes, because he's more knowledgeable than them, and he starts correcting others, he starts offending them – very soon this same person who used to remarkably know the *sastras*, who used to give great lectures, who used to chant one *lakh* per day, who used to be a *sannyasi* ... I'm now talking about one particular person – not from our organization, not from ISKCON, but nevertheless, a very vivid example. This person was a *sannyasi*, this person knew Sanskrit, Bengali, this person was from Russia, he used to write great articles, this person used to give great lectures, he had a huge number of followers, he was so devoted to Krishna, he chanted one *lakh* a day, he was very learned. At some point he decided that he has the right to offend the other devotees. Within a few months this man started offending Krishna and he couldn't get his tongue to utter Krishna's name.

I beg you, please, take this lesson to heart seriously. I'm giving this example not to hurt him. It hurts me. Actually, I really liked that person, I really liked his articles, I admired him, he's younger than me, he left ISKCON and went elsewhere. But it was a wonderful person, he was a wonderful devotee in all regards. I never personally knew him but I saw how it happened, right before my eyes. Please, I implore you: never offend anyone, never think that you have the right to do so. All devotees, in one way or another, are trying to serve Krishna, and Krishna will sort it out personally – the way they're serving Him, whether it's sincerely or not. It's none of our business, we're not to judge here. We are not judges – we are servants.

That is why in the next verse Indra – it's the last verse I'll read – starts criticizing Krishna. I apologize to all the present elevated Vaisnavas for having to repeat it (Bhag. 10.25.5):

vacalam balisam stabdham
ajñam pandita-maninam

krsnam martyam upasritya
gopa me cakrur apriyam

"These *gopas* have acted inimically toward me!" *Gopa me cakrur apriyam* – they've done something that is unpleasant to me, *apriyam*, why? Because *krsnam martya upasritya* – because they took shelter of whom? Of this Krishna, this mere mortal, who's who? *Vacalam balisam stabdham ajñam pandita-maninam*. *Vacalam* means "talkative". *Vacalam* means "one who babbles." Indra was explained all the philosophy by which Krishna convinced the cowherds. This philosophy is contrary to the scriptures and Indra says: "He's babbling, he himself doesn't know anything – and they listened to that babbling little child." Actually, at that point Goddess Saraswati descended on his tongue – she couldn't allow Indra to offend Krishna, so she imparted a different meaning to his words. But we'll first say the meaning that Indra meant. *Vacalam* – he's a babbling child. *Balisam* – He's just a boy. *Stabdham* – proud, he's turned proud. *Ajnam* – ignorant. *Pandita-maninam* – imagining himself to be a *pandit*. This little boy imagines himself to be a *pandit*, he started quoting the scriptures, bringing forward arguments – so, these foolish cowherds listened to him and took refuge of him.

In effect, what Goddess Saraswati's saying is: *vachalam, vaca-alam*. *Alam* means "upper limit"; *vacalam* means "one whose speech is the perfection of eloquence." Goddess Saraswati's saying: "Indra, what you really mean is that there is no one more eloquent than Krishna. Thank you very much." *Balisa* – Goddess Saraswati's saying: "Of course, you're right, Indra. *Balisam* – despite all His learnedness and all His eloquence he behaves in a very simple way. He's as simple as an ordinary boy. That's right, that's what Krishna is." Indra says *stabdham* – *stabdham* means "one who never bows to anyone." *Stabdham* means "one whose neck and back never bend". Goddess Saraswati's saying: "Of course, He doesn't bow down to anyone. Whom is He to bow down to?" And Krishna Himself says (Bg 7.7): *mattah parataram nanyat kiñcid asti* - "There is no truth superior to Me". Naturally, He's to bow down to no one because there is no one superior to Him. *Stabdham* means "one who is very high" and Goddess Saraswati's saying: "Indra says yes, He's the highest of all in this world." *Ajnam*. *Ajnam* means ignorant – that's what Indra thinks. However, Goddess Saraswati, descending on his tongue, is saying: "Of course! Of course Krishna is *ajnam*. What does *ajnam* mean? That He knows everything, there's nothing more for Him to know. There is no reason for Him to know something more for He already knows everything." And *pandita-maninam* - "imagines himself to be a *pandit*" - "of course He considers Himself a *pandit* because He's the best of *pandits*." Thus, Goddess Saraswati tried to save Indra from his offense. However, Indra meant what he said. And all the while Krishna was thinking: "Hare Krishna. We've got the right case to apply a cure." And we will apply it, but tomorrow.

Thank you very much.

"The Lessons of the Govardhana-*lila*", "Priti-Lakshanam Festival", Ekaterinburg, 06.01.2013, lecture 4

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Today, at the end of our *katha* we will have a surprise. We sang *bhajans* in Sanskrit, then we sang *bhajans* in *Hindi*. Today we're going to sing *bhajans* in Russian. Thanks God there will be no need to translate. Specifically for our festival and seminar Nata Prabhu has written a song about Govardhana. We'll sing it all together at the end. Let's thank Nata Prabhu for this (audience: Haribol!)

We're talking about the lessons of the Govardhana-*lila*. And one of the first lessons that we've been repeating over and over again – in order to learn it by heart, understand it and apply in our lives – is certainly the lesson of gratitude. Gratitude is the feeling our spiritual life should begin with. If we have no gratitude this means our spiritual life has not begun. Yesterday I said that pride prevents us from showing gratitude. But at the same time gratitude is the feeling we can bring forth in ourselves by contemplation. Love is hard to bring forth, love should happen to us. Love is a gift, love is a mercy. Gratitude is a *sadhana*. Gratitude, showing gratitude must become our *sadhana*. In response to our *sadhana* Krishna will bestow on us His mercy and will give us love. *Sadhana-bhakti* means showing gratitude. And above all, our gratitude must be addressed to those whom we have received and are receiving Krishna consciousness from, to those who nourish our Krishna consciousness and who give us strength to continue this practice. And of course, the first among them is Srila Prabhupada. If we think over and over again about what we have received from him – we'll be struck. Srila Prabhupada has taught us everything, literally everything. Like young children when just growing they need to be taught everything, starting with going to the toilet – Srila Prabhupada has taught us the way civilized people go to the toilet. I've just went to the toilet on the third floor and realized what Srila Prabhupada's taught us and appreciated that very much. Srila Prabhupada has taught us to eat, to sleep, to associate, to chant the holy name, to prioritize the goals of our life.

Ultimately, he's teaching us the subtleties of spiritual love, of *rasa*. Strikingly, in human history there has been no teacher to give everything – from rudiments to the highest knowledge. There have been people who taught high knowledge, there have been luminaries who gave people the basics and helped them get civilized, adopt strict rules in their lives and thus grow out of the uncontrolled, violent animalistic life. There have been great spiritual reformers of all kinds. But there have been no people in human history who would come to the most fallen and gave them the highest without forgetting to bridge the gap between their fallen state and the sublime state they can and must achieve. Srila Prabhupada has performed a miracle. It is a miracle, there's no other way you can call that. And to appreciate it, to grasp it, is impossible. It is only to a certain extent that we can meditate on this, trying to be grateful to him and be imbued with appreciation of what he has done for us.

And this is the first and most important lesson of the Govardhana-*lila* – the lesson of gratitude and of worshipping those who show compassion for us. Not just some abstract heroes who don't care about us but specific personalities who sacrifice everything: their sleep, their peace, and ultimately, even their *bhajan!* - only for the sake of helping us achieve a more elevated state of consciousness.

And I also said that ultimately, as a result of this *sadhana* and gratitude we will be able to feel protection, feel shelter. Govardhana symbolizes this protection of Krishna. This protection of Krishna, just like Govardhana Hill, can expand infinitely. It is not limited to Vraja. Our *acaryas* explain that when Krishna just lifted Govardhana Hill it wasn't that big. Krishna started calling everyone: "Come here, come here, come here!" And He was asked: "How are we all going to fit under this hill?" Then Krishna said: "Look," and everyone saw how Govardhana increased in size, it became huge and rendered protection to everyone. Protection, the umbrella Krishna's protection – can grow indefinitely. Krishna is calling us under this umbrella and we need to understand very well the mechanism of how this is going to happen. Srila Prabhupada explained this to us, he

explained to us that this could happen through our taste for the holy name: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

The taste for the holy name will come when we can focus on the holy name. We'll be able to focus on the holy name when we are emotionally involved – when we feel connected with Krishna and the holy name, with Krishna in the form of the holy name. There will be an emotional connection with Krishna in the form of the holy name when "Srimad-Bhagavatam" sheds its mercy on us. For this *rasa*, this emotion of the love for Krishna is set out on the pages of "Srimad-Bhagavatam." "Srimad-Bhagavatam" will reveal to us this *rasa* when we have association with *sadhus* who have a taste for "Srimad-Bhagavatam" and who are capable of passing on this taste. In developing our taste for the holy name we'll be supported by Deity worship which will allow us to strengthen our focus, as well as the atmosphere of a holy place. These five things: *nama-kirtan*, *bhagavad-sravan*, *sadhu-sanga*, *sri murtira sraddhaya seva* and *madhura-vas*, living in a holy place or in a sanctified atmosphere – are the most important of what Srila Prabhupada's taught us.

This is the purpose we organize these festivals for. Ultimately, what's most important is that we are saved by *harinam*, the taste for the holy name. Dayavan Prabhu was giving his seminar wherein he was explaining in what way a person can succeed in actually hearing the holy name. And this is the most important thing! There's nothing more important than that! ("Brhan-Naradiya-Purana", 3.8.126):

harer nama harer nama
harer namaiva kevalam
kalau nasty eva nasty eva
nasty eva gatir anyatha

In the age of Kali there's no other way, no other way, no other way. This year I had the fortune – I met a man who has a huge, an enormous taste for the holy name. He chants three *lakhs* a day, I've already mentioned him. And finally I asked him: "What do I do if I do this, do that, that is, I'm busy?" He looked at me with extraordinary compassion. He said: "If this interferes with your *harinama* – don't do it." I was completely defeated. I thought he would say: "Well, somehow it will all come." Of course, that was his advice but that advice was very important at the same time. We must be constantly reminded that as long as we don't have a live, actual and tangible experience of associating with Krishna we'll have problems and we'll suffer. We need a live experience of association with the holy name and that's the most important thing that ISKCON should give. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness exists for this purpose only – passing on of the taste for the holy name. There are no other purposes, everything else is subordinate, everything else comes second. Whatever we do, ultimately the main purpose is to somehow or other feel the taste for the holy name, feel completeness in our relationship with the holy name.

But Srila Prabhupada knew how we are to practice in order to obtain this taste. Our basic problem is ... Like, when someone would complain to Srila Prabhupada: "Oh, this problem, that problem, this leader, that leader ..." Srila Prabhupada would say: "We have only one problem: my disciples don't chant 16 rounds of the Hare Krishna *mantra* – there is no other problem," or even if they do, God knows what kind of *mantra* that is and what they have in mind when chanting that *mantra*. The only problem is the lack of spiritual happiness that actually comes from spiritual experience.

Besides that Srila Prabhupada ... What is the most important thing? The taste of studying "Srimad-Bhagavatam" that supports us in this taste, association with *sadhus*, those who know "Srimad-Bhagavatam". In addition, he's given us preaching as the best way to engage our mind in thoughts of Krishna. He's given us preaching but not simply preaching – he's given us the mission of preaching. We are building temples, performing *harinamas*, distributing books, holding great Ratha-Yatras festivals and this is very important. All this must be there to help us focus our energy on Krishna. It is for Him, for the sake of the mission that we act not for our own sake. Srila Prabhupada's given us the Vaishnava society. He's given us everything! He's given us the most valuable thing – the taste for the holy name and "Srimad-Bhagavatam." He's given us the mission of our lives that we can dedicate ourselves to using all our energy and all our talents. Everyone is capable of something, everyone can do something, everyone can engage in this mission. Srila Prabhupada's given us the Vaishnava society where we can learn to be humble. Being in the

Vaishnava society and serving the Vaishnavas – everyone, it doesn't matter whether they are beginners, practicing or exalted Vaisnavas – serving the Vaisnavas we can realize the ideal of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu:

trnad api sunicena
taror api sahisnuna
amanina manadena
kirtaniyah sada harih

In the Vaishnava society we can be protected. It's true, lots of things are happening in the Vaishnava society. Do not try to object, I do know what's happening in the Vaisnava society. Nevertheless, it's our most secure protection. Without other Vaishnavas we'll never become aware of our problems. In the Vaishnava society we'll be able to realize what's actually setting us back; we'll be able to see our own reflection in the mirror of their hearts. But Srila Prabhupada didn't stop even there. Srila Prabhupada's given us two more things. He said that we need the respective social environment. He spoke a lot about *varnasrama* – and none of the Gaudiya-Vaisnavas has spoken as much about *varnasrama* as Srila Prabhupada. Why? Because he knew that without a healthy material environment it will be very difficult to realize the high spiritual truths; without proper upbringing of children, without proper family relationships – and all these are elements of the *varnasrama*; without social protection, without discipleship – it will be impossible to talk about high truths. Ultimately, Srila Prabhupada has given us one more thing – he said that there is one more thing you should do: simply help others. Do not expect that they will become devotees! Help them accumulate *sukriti*, treating them with the unselfishness of your hearts. Feed them, taking care of their purification. Do not expect any subtle gain from them, any subtle return – that they will become devotees, that they will start chanting the holy name. No! Just serve others, serve the ordinary people.

These five things constitute Srila Prabhupada's mission. We're speaking about this at the national council, this is our line. These five things in various combinations should be there in every devotee's life. We should have a taste for the holy name, we should have some kind of preaching, we should somehow help others, we should serve the Vaisnavas, we should somehow or other establish proper interaction with each other, we should stand firmly on the earth and achieve even material success. Srila Prabhupada wanted even that! He taught us to how to live, how to do business – he taught his disciples even that! He taught how to open restaurants, be proactive, and he said that ultimately we should do something just selflessly for the others: five things. Five things make up the integral, complete, harmonious system that allows us to develop and protect this germ of *bhakti* inside.

We've got the *bhakti-lata-bija*, the seed of *bhakti*, but most importantly, we should preserve this seed and make it grow and developed. Oftentimes in the Vaisnava society we see vacillation: some say preaching, others say Deity Worship, still others say *harinama*. Still others say: "We must just sit down and chant many *lakhs* of the holy name every day." Still others say: "We must give up all that and study the holy scriptures." And everyone argues with each other. And there is nothing more foolish than these disputes because we are supposed to do all that All that must be there in everyone's life in accordance with his or her qualifications and in the proportion he or she can understand and derive taste. Ultimately, all this will help his *bhakti*. If he starts saying something in opposition to something else it means that he has no understanding and that it's all just his ego, his pride.

We're holding these "Priti-laksanam" festivals not only here but in other towns as well so that people can get the right accents and understand what we're doing. And also to ultimately get experience. I was watching the *kirtan* we've been just having. Aditi-dukhaha Prabhu was wanderfully singing and everyone was in complete ecstasy. I was thinking: "How many people will be able to preserve it in themselves?" What is the problem with festivals and our festival culture? That during festivals a certain artificial atmosphere forms that is very difficult to transfer to the reality of our lives. I wanted to tell you something very important: very often the devotees get a wrong impression. Please carefully try to understand what I mean. The devotees get the impression that real life, spiritual life, takes place only during festivals. So, they live from festival to festival. They visit all possible festivals, all holy *dhamas*, even the most exotic ones. Any place for

the sake of having a nice time there. And at the festival they feel that: "This is where life is! This is what Krishna consciousness is!" Unfortunately, they do not know how to bring that Krishna consciousness home.

But my question to you is: "Is this what Srila Prabhupada wanted?" No! Srila Prabhupada wanted the festival of Krishna consciousness to be there in our homes every day. So that the taste we get here we can also get at home. So that at home - without waiting for Aditi-dukhaha to come to us – we sing the holy name with the same taste. So that we read "Srimad-Bhagavatam" at home without having to wait when Bhakti Vijnjana Goswami Maharaj starts gesticulating. So that we try to do it every day. Our spiritual life – and the responsibility for it lies with us – must be there every day in our life. The festival gives some hint, it helps feel something, but the real thing should take place 365 days a year at home, when we get up early in the morning, take our beads with extraordinary reverence, addressing Tulasi-devi, that these beads come from, and we ask her: "You are the mother of devotion and you can give me *bhakti*. Please give me *bhakti* today" – and reverently taking the beads, we start chanting: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Without watching TV or Internet or things like that.

We need to clearly understand what the purpose of this festival is. It is not to create some artificial atmosphere but to learn how to live in this way every day – in this state of inner celebration and happiness. And we have everything for that. Do we have the holy name? We do. Do we have "Srimad-Bhagavatam"? We do. Can we hear from *sadhus*? We can. We also have iPods and iPhones – we have everything for that, right? Do we have Deities? We do. Are there devotees? There are. Do we have the opportunity to preach? We do. Thanks God we live in Russia not somewhere in the West. The people here are seekers, they want to find something, they want love and to respond to that love. We have everything! We should just learn that.

And what's bad about festivals? I said what's good about them. Is everyone clear about what's good about them? They give a taste, they ... The bad thing is, first of all, that they leave the wrong impression that life is only here, that this is what Krishna consciousness is. The second bad thing's that very often the relationships we enter with each other at festivals are superficial. The very format of the festival does not allow the desired depth. It doesn't allow properly getting to know the person next to us, it doesn't allow opening our hearts. And sometimes this artificial ecstasy ... Well, not artificial, it's Ok, it's a nice ecstasy but still that little superficial ecstasy slurs over some real things.

In our daily lives, every day, we'll be able and we should learn to enter in much deeper relationships. *Bhakti* means relationships, a relationship with God. Will we be able to enter into a relationship with God if we haven't learned to enter into relationships with those around us? No, that's nonsense! We don't get on with anyone, we don't make friends with anyone, we grudge against everyone – but with God we certainly are Hare Krishna (laughter). Of course, we are close friends. No! A *madhyama-adhikari* is someone who can properly associate with others. And since he's capable of properly associating with others – *amanina manadena* – he doesn't need, he doesn't seek, he doesn't expect any praise or honor, and at the same time he's willing to show honor and respect to everyone. A *madhyama-adhikari* is someone who can associate with everyone and that is why he can associate with God. *Kirtaniyah sada harih* – he's never bored. He can associate with God 24 hours a day. And every time, at every moment, this relationship will be ever new and ever fresh and ecstatic. These things are closely related to each other, they cannot be separated.

I would like to start our last meeting at this festival precisely with these words so that we properly understand. And at the end, after singing Nata's song – we have a big program – I'll ask you to talk each other. We'll have a few minutes to talk to each other where I'll ask you to sit in small circles and tell each other what you've realized, what you've become aware of, what you've felt, what new has come into your hearts. Actually, we'll be able to change – and ultimately our goal here is to change – only when we have close relationships with the devotees. Without close relationships change is impossible. Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada used to say that one who is engaged in secluded *bhajan* is in complete illusion. He fancies himself a great devotee, but ultimately, the only thing he cultivates inside is *pratistha*, the desire for honor. This *pratistha* is like

sukarera-vistha, pig feces. That is why we'll have this opportunity to get to know each other a bit better. And that's what's most important.

And now please try to object: "Who's associated profoundly at this festival? Raise your hands and shout Haribol!" (audience: Haribol!) That gave me some relief. Several *matajs* have profoundly associated with each other (laughter). Thank you. *Prabhus*, learn from the *matajs*.

Okay, this was a short introduction into our today's *katha*. And today we'll have nothing but *lila-katha*. *Lila* and nothing but *lila*. And in order to properly tune to it we'll sing a *bhajan* about Govardhana Maharaja together with Aditi-dukhaha Prabhu.

namaste girirajaya
sri govardhana namine
asesa klesa nasaya
paramananda dayine

(Aditi-dukhaha rabhu's *bhajan* - from 0:49 to 0:62 minute)

BVGM:

om ajñāna-timirāndhasya
jñānāñjana-śalākayā
cakṣur unmlītaṁ yena
tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ

śrī-caitanya-mano-'bhīṣṭaṁ sthāpitaṁ yena bhū-tale
svayaṁ rūpaḥ kadā mahyaṁ dadāti sva-padāntikam

vande 'haṁ śrī-guroḥ śrī-yuta-pada-kamalaṁ śrī-gurūn vaiṣṇavāṁś ca
śrī-rūpaṁ sāgrajātaṁ saha-gaṇa-raghunāthānviṭaṁ taṁ sa-jīvam
sādvaitaṁ sāvadhūtaṁ parijana-sahitaṁ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-devaṁ
śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇa-pādān saha-gaṇa-lalitā-śrī-viśākhānviṭāṁś ca

he kṛṣṇa karuṇā-sindho
dīna-bandho jagat-pate
gopeśa gopikā-kānta
rādhā-kānta namo 'stu te

tapta-kancana-gaurangi radhe vrndavanesvari
vrsabhanu-sute devi pranamami hari-priye

vancha-kalpatarubhyas ca krpa-sindhubhya eva ca
patitanam pavanebhyo vaisnavebhyo namo namah

sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu-nityananda
sri-advaita gadadhara srivasadi-gaura-bhakta-vrnda

hare krsna hare krsna, krsna krsna hare hare
hare rama hare rama, rama rama hare hare.

nama om vishnu-padaya krishna-preshthaya bhū-tale
srimate bhaktivedanta-svamin iti namine

namas te saraswate deve gaura-vani-pracarine
nirvishesha-shunyavadi-pashchatya-desha-tarine

ajanu-lambita-bhujau kanakavadhatau
sankirtanaika-pitarau kamalayataksau

visvambharau dvija-varau yuga-dharma palau
vande jagat-priyakaro karunavatarau

yo 'ntah pravisya mama vacam imam prasuptam
sanjivayaty akhila-sakti-dharah sva-dhamna
anyams ca hasta-carana-sravana-tvag-adin
pranan namo bhagavate purushaya tubhyam

tavaivasmi tavaivasmi
na jivami tvaya vina
iti vijnaya devi tvam
naya mam caranantikam

Hare Krishna. Govardhana holds a special place in the life of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas. Sometimes it is said that Govardhana is Krishna's heart; that in the spiritual world Krishna has taken out His heart and has given it to us, leaving here this amazing mountain, the mountain of love. When thinking, speaking or singing about Govardhana we sing about the love, intimacy, warmth, sacrifice and happiness that bind Krishna and His devotees. Any remembrance of Govardhana Hill should remind us precisely of this, of their relationships, of loving relationship and what pure love is.

I'd like to start our today's talk with a small story. It is a small episode from the "Dana-Keli-Kaumudi" describing how once the *gopis* were walking in a crowd, pots of purified butter on their heads, and were going to take part in a *yajna* organized by Bhaguri Muni on the other side of Govardhana Hill. They were walking and joking with each other, their voices gently ringing like bells. They were getting closer to Govinda-kunda. As they were approaching the Govinda-kunda from afar they saw the enormous – 5 000 years ago Govardhana was much higher than it is now – the enormous hills of Govardhana, the huge peaks of Govardhana surging high into the sky. And one of them, Citra Devi, said, addressing the rest: "Just see! Just see!" They also saw a temple; the temple of Narayana, Haridev, that stood at the top of Govardhana Hill. So, one of them Citra Devi, said: "Just look! Doesn't Govardhana look just like Anantadev? Just like Anantadev holds Narayana and serves as His bed, Govardhana has received Narayana Himself in there and that temple stands on Govardhana's hillside, on the slopes of this mountain, just as Narayana lies on Anantadev."

Then Vrinda gave Chitra a stern look and said, "My dear friend, you're right, but not quite. There's much in common between Govardhana and Anantadev. Anantadev has an infinite number of hoods just as Govardhana has a huge number of peaks rising up reaching the clouds. Anantadev holds the earth on his hoods and Govardhana, too, supports the earth. In that they do resemble each other! But there's one substantial difference. That is why when comparing Govardhana to Anantadev you're offending Govardhana. No more of this *ninda*! Govardhana is much superior to Anantadev for never has the enemy of the Agha demon played on the knees, the stomach and the head of Anantadev with the *gopis*. Whereas He's doing nothing but that on the knees, the belly and the head of Govardhana! Therefore, your comparison fails in inaccuracy."

This small story and small verse from the "Dana-Keli-Kaumudi" is just about what the view, image or the very name Govardhana should remind us of. It should remind us of the love which binds the Lord and those who are willing to sacrifice everything for the Him. When these relationships become absolutely pure and selfless a person can attain Govardhana. And when Raghunatha Das Goswami asks Govardhan: *nija-nikata-nivasam dehi govardhana tvam* – "Give me the opportunity to live near you" he doesn't mean physical proximity. Physically, we all can go to Govardhana, set up a picnic and eat sandwiches or a pizza near its slopes. There's no problem at all! But that won't be intimacy. *Nija-nikata-nivasam* - "Please let me live near you" means let me have the appropriate consciousness so that ultimately I can love you. And that's precisely what our Govardhana *katha* is about.

Yesterday we stopped at the point where Indra, red-eyed with rage and internal fury, humiliated, insulted, offended and feeling hurt – deadly wounded by Krishna – let forth a stream of oaths against the inhabitants of Vrindavan and Krishna Himself. Finally, with all his might he yelled, spluttering and stamping his feet: "Megavarta! Jalavarta! Here, here, come quick!" He yelled so

loud you can't even imagine in a scary dream. He was yelling, his voice full of fury ... From all parts of his palace his servants rushed headlong to his hall not knowing what to expect: "Our Lord's angry, our Lord's calling us." He called for the minister of clouds; he has a special minister in charge of the clouds, and the minister of his own army, the minister in charge of the winds that command the natural forces. He yelled at them; he sputtered and shouted: "Where are you? What's the matter with you? Are you dead or what?! Come here right away! Are you sleeping? Look what's going on before your eyes! Your master is being insulted! A-a-a-ah!" Hare Krishna. It is difficult to delineate this properly for the *bhavas* we have with Indra are somewhat different (laughter). He called his servants before his eyes who were scared to death and terribly shaking and addressed them with the following words (Bhag. 10.25.6):

esam sriyavaliptanam
krsnenadhmapitatmanam
dhunuta sri-mada-stambham
pasun nayata sanksayam

When his servants rushed to him scared and pale, stamping his feet, he yelled at them: "Go to those madmen!" – *sriyavaliptanam*. *Avaliptanam* literally means those who've lost their head or become completely intoxicated." By what? By *sriya* – by their opulence. "Go and punish them!"

Indra wants to say something very important. He's justifying himself. He now needs to justify his action. In fact, he gave an order in accordance with which the whole of Vraja was to be destroyed, all its residents. He needs to justify himself and he wants to say: "Look at those madmen! Actually I am a mere tool in the hands of their *karma*. They have no one to blame for this! They themselves have planted the poisonous tree of their *aparadhas*. And he who plants a poisonous tree cannot expect that poisonous tree to bear nice fruits. They are to blame themselves for this! They've gone mad! I'm just executing the will of providence. I'm a humble tool in the hands of their own destiny." He who plants a *neem* tree can he expect it to yield grapes? No. If we sow the seeds of bad actions in the earth we will reap it, and that's what Indra wants to say: "They themselves have gone mad." And because they've gone mad ... Why have they gone mad? *Krsnenadhmapitatmanam* – because Krishna fanned their pride. *Adhmapita* means He took a small sparkle to that proud ... They used to be normal, they worshiped me like everyone else. Now they've gone mad. Why? Because this nasty naughty boy who fancies Himself to be a *pundit* fanned the pride in their hearts with His stupid words. And what was the result? *Dhunuta sri-mada-stambham* – please destroy those *sri-mada-stambham* – those proud people who have become intoxicated with their own pride. And *pasun nayata sanksayam* – destroy them all, their livestock, and that entire Vraj!

Indra gives His cruel order and the meaning of this cruel order is that he already has a plan. He says: "Don't leave alive in Vraj anyone who danced yesterday during the sacrifice to Govardhan. Take note of all those who threw flower petals at Govardhan and pour down on them torrents of hail and rain. Let anyone who did that be struck by a lightning. And start with their livestock for that's what they hold most dear! Let them first hear how their cattle is being killed. Let them hear the plaintive mooring of the cows, bulls and calves. Destroy the animals! Then destroy their children, then the wives and then destroy the husbands. The last to die must be Nanda! Nanda must see how before his own eyes his insults destroy his entire nation, his entire people." Because there is nothing worse for a leader than see the work of his hands being destroyed before his eyes, his subjects being destroyed. So, Indra gives that order: "The last to die must be Nanda!"

Just imagine the *sattva-guna* which his mind is in at this moment. Indra says: "Let nothing be left of this place. They're proud, *sri-mada-stambha*, they're intoxicated with their own pride, and that pride makes them call some wretched mountain – which is not even worth of being called a hill – Giriraja, the king of all mountains! Indra says: "What a pain in the neck! Every day I'm told: 'Vraj, Vraj, Vraj!' What's so special about that Vraj?! What have they found in that Vraj?! It's been several years now that I've been hearing: "Vraj, Vraj, Vraj ... And that Krishna (in an embittered voice) has done this and has done that. Aghasura, Bakasura... Vraj, Vraj, Vraj!" People will forget where that Vraj used to be. I'll send that Vraj to Patala. And the first one I'll send there will be Govardhana!" And he orders the clouds: "Destroy their animals, destroy their children, destroy the women and destroy the men. Do not touch Govardhana. I'll destroy Govardhana with my own hands."

Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur notes or reveals the degree of demoniac mentality Indra's reached at this moment. He says: "Not far away, just a few kilometers from Govardhana is the town of Mathura. And in Mathura there lives a mighty demon. What's his name? Kamsa. And that Kamsa would stop many times the sacrifices in Indra's honor. That Kamsa would kill many women and children. Indra would patiently put up with that. Indra would keep silent. Moreover, addressing his clouds, he would say: "Pour down torrents of rain onto Vraj but please don't do any of that to Mathura." The nature of anger and malice is that we can only be angry with those who are weaker than us. When it came down to Kamsa Indra would say: "Well, never mind, it happens, everyone is sometimes wrong." It's not that Indra was scared to angrily speak of Kamsa, he was scared to even think angrily of him. He would say: "Well, never mind, never mind." Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur says: "Actually, destroying Govardhana and Vraj, Indra wanted to make friends with Kamsa." That is actually the degree of degradation we can come to. Sometimes, for the sake of material prosperity, for the sake of material well-being, we are willing to betray all our ideals, we are willing to betray all we used to live for – just to get some support, some material benefit. And Indra says here, secretly whispering into their ears: "In Mathura there must be sunshine. Go and destroy Vraj." And in the next verse he continues (Bhag. 10.25.7):

aham cairavatam nagam
 aruhyanuvraje vrajam
 marud-ganair maha-vegair
 nanda-gostha-jighamsaya

Nanda-gostha-jighamsaya – to kill *nanda-gostha*, Maharaja Nanda's tribe, *aham cairavatam nagam* – I myself will follow you on my elephant Airavata. Sanatana Gosvami explains that Indra wants to say that if you, dear clouds, become short of water, Airavata will re-fill you with water. You've seen elephants collect water in their trunk and then pour it out. So he says: "If the watersupply ends Indra will serve as a water-carrier. He will fill you with new water." But what's curious is that he says: "I'll follow you. At a safe distance from it all" Actually, Indra's afraid. Where is the commander supposed to be? At the front! Of course, if it is not modern commanders who stay back in a safe bunker. Indra says: "Go ahead, my children! Don't be afraid of anything! I'll follow you. I'll render support." He says: *vrajam* – I will follow you and I will support you on my Airavata elephant, but at the same he calls Airavata *nagam*. What does *naga* mean? A snake, right? He says, I'll follow you on the snake, on my *naga-Airavata*."

Now, is Airavata a snake? No, he's an elephant. Why is he called *nagam*? One of the commentators of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" reveals this secret. He says *nagam*. What does Indra mean to say? *Na agham*. *Agham* means "sin", *na agham* - "I'll go there on the sinless Airavata." In other words, I myself am sinless. Indra wants to say: "I'm right. We'll now kill them all but I'm right. We'll now destroy everything but I will be riding a white elephant. I'm sinless. It's the others who are sinful – they are to be punished but I am sinless."

Indra seems to be saying from the very beginning that: "I'm right, I'm right, I'm right" and that's what we do. We're constantly justifying ... When we to hurt someone, when we want to cause someone trouble, when plotting something against someone what do we usually do? We must blame him, we must demonize him in our consciousness, thinking all the while that: "Well, what can I do? I'm just a tool in the hands of his *karma*." Indra is justifying himself: "I will follow you on this *naga*, on this sinless elephant along with the *maruda-ganair*." The Maruts are the winds, the hurricanes winds. They are 49 and they are Indra's closest associates. Actually, they are brothers. There's this story in the Eighth Canto of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" about how Indra entered Aditi's womb and slashed to pieces the embrio that was to appear out of her womb. So, these 49 pieces turned into the 49 Maruts, the 49 winds, the closest of Indra's assistants. So, Indra says: "Go there as soon as possible and kill all that entire Nanda's tribe" – *nanda gostha-jighamsaya*. And Sri Suka continues his narration (Bhag. 10.25.8):

sri-suka uvaca
 ittham maghavatajñapta
 megha nirmukta-bandhanah

nanda-gokulam asaraih
pidayam asur ojasa

Sukadeva Gosvami said: "Thus, upon Indra's order, the clouds of universal destruction, who were on a leash, *megha-nirmukta bandhanah*, were set free." Now don't ask me what that leash was but here it is clearly stated that these special clouds, the terrible clouds that can be seen only at the time of the destruction of the universe, are awaiting their time in a special enclosure or pen. They have a garage of their own which is firmly closed. Indra ordered the commanders in charge of all that: "Open that pen and let out those clouds."

Sur Das who is vividly describing this whole scene in his *bhajan*, says that when the leaders of the clouds heard that order of Indra's they felt somewhat easier at heart. They thought they were at fault but it turned out that someone else was. When someone is yelling and we come and it turns out that he is angry with someone else we feel relieved and extraordinarily enthusiastic at the same time, right? "We'll now teach them! We are with you!" The clouds were filled with extraordinary enthusiasm and the leader of the clouds began telling Indra: "Indra, calm down, we'll do anything you want." And Indra felt slightly relieved: he has faithful servants to carry out his mission. Out of joy he gave the *betel* he was chewing to the leader of the clouds: "Here, darling. This is my reward, my *maha-prasad*." The leader was absolutely delighted: "Ah-ah-ah! My master is pleased with me, I'll give up my life for him!"

They ran to those special hangars that the clouds were kept in. They let those clouds out. And, having stayed there for a long time, those clouds – br-ah-ah-ah-x – they eagerly rushed to Vraj. Indra must have detailed Vraj's address to them. He said: "You know Delhi? It's close to Delhi. You can get a taxi. And there is Vraj! Two hours and a half, not more. You'll find it, I know." Indra gave them the precise destination they were to reach. And it says here that these unleashed clouds, *megha-nirmukta bandhanah*, in accordance with the order rushed from there and went to ... *Nanda-gokulam-asaraih* and began pouring rains on Nanda Gokula, the land of Nanda Maharaja; *asaraih pidayam asur ojasa* – they began pouring onto them terrible agonizing torrents of rain.

Now let's take a moment and find ourselves in Vraj. In the remarkable spectacle we were shown yesterday we saw what happened there to some extent. It was early in the morning, the cowherds had gone out. It was a morning that bode no ill. The sun was out there as always. It was shining brightly; it was the month of *kartik*, in the month of *kartik* the rains come to an end and the earth is still moist with that rain. The whole of Vrindavan is green, Govardhana is overgrown with lush greenery. The sun had risen above Govardhana, the cowherds had joyfully gone out, reminiscent of their happy experience, singing about Krishna. They took their cows to the pastures. From various villages they went there, closer to Govardhana – to once again bow down to him and remember what had happened. At that point one of them noticed a black cloud on the horizon. He began pointing at it for the others to see and they began looking at them, scratching their heads. The cloud was rapidly approaching and soon, in just a few moments, the sun was blocked out by clouds as black as ink. Never had they seen such clouds! All of a sudden the land of Vraj sunk into pitch darkness and there was a terrible and freezing hurricane from the North. Fff-yyuuu-uuu-uuuhhh! At first, seeing the looming clouds, the women ran onto the roofs and looked, then they ran down, trying to hide their children, pointing upwards; the cowherds tried to protect their cows, but it all happened too quickly.

The shepherds said to one another: "That must be due to Indra's anger." But before they said that it was so dark that they lost their way. They began running to and fro, rushing in all directions. No one knew where they were. Someone reached Yamuna's waters and didn't know where to go further. He was crying out: Where is my village? Show me where my village is! Where is Govardhana, how can I find my way?" But no one knew where the way was. A woman who had left her child in the yard and has come out to get the cow in couldn't find her child. The clouds covered everything and the next moment the clouds poured down torrents of rain.

It is said in this verse: *pidayam*. *Pidayam* means "inflicting terrible pain." The following verses will be describing what the torrents of rain looked like. The entire Gokula turned into havoc, and people were crying out: "What? What? Where is Chatigra? Where is my village?!" Even if they reached

their village they were not aware of that for they couldn't find their house. It was so dark! It was pitch dark. At that point streaks of lightning began striking from the clouds. The next verse describes (Bhag. 10.25.9):

vidyotamana vidyudbhih
stanantah stanayitnubhih
tivrair marud-ganair nunna
vavrsur jala-sarkarah

Vidyotamanah – Illuminated by flashes of lightning. At least, the flashes of lightning started casting some light onto their whereabouts so now they could find their way and their homes without bumping into each other. But that didn't make it easier for the flashes of lightning were so frequent – *stanantah stanayitnubhih tivrair marud-ganair nunna vavrsur jala-sarkarah* ... What happened next? The lightnings started striking one after another, again and again and they could see the neighbor's house or the trees catching fire from them. The streaks of lightning were so frequent that soon it was as bright as daytime. And then they heard terrible thunders, thunders they have never heard. They live in tropical India where there are torrential rains but the sound of that thunder froze their hearts. That thunder made them faint! Several people died just from the thunder – not from lightning – right there on the spot. However, later Krishna brought them back to life, there was a happy end.

And to top it all at that moment it started hailing from the clouds. The hail was as big as eggs, as cobblestones. It was coming down beating everyone. People didn't know what to do. At first the cowherds tried to protect their cows, they tried to hide under the banyan trees. The gigantic banyan trees can shelter a person from any rain – but they realized that no banyan tree could shelter them from that rain. They rushed home but very soon the terrible wind blew off the roofs of their houses. There was nothing left, they didn't know where to go and where to hide. And further on Sukadeva Goswami says (Bhag. 10.25.10):

sthuna-sthula varsa-dhara
muncatsv abhresv abhiksnasah
jalaughaih plavyamana bhur
nadrsyata natonnatam

Sthuna-sthula varsa-dhara – that the torrents of rain were as thick as columns. Massive torrents and hails were pouring down from the heavens. And what happened? *Muncatsv abhresv abhiksnasah* – those torrents were released by those clouds. *Jalaughaih plavyamana bhur* – and very soon *plavyamana* – the entire earth was submerged under water. Very soon it was impossible to tell low ground from high. First they wanted to climb some mountain but there were no mountains! Everything was submerged under water, they were swimming. In a few moments literally everything turned into a medley, into a flood and they didn't know where to go. And what happened next – what happened at the same time (Bhag. 10.25.11) was:

aty-asarati-vatena
pasavo jata-vepanah
gopa gopyas ca sitarta
govindam saranam yayuh

Aty-asarati-vatena pasavo jata-vepanah – those *pasavo*, the cattle, started trembling and plaintively bleating. The cows – their beloved cows – started plaintively bleating for they were seeing the suffering of their calves. The cows were trying to protect their calves with their own bodies. They were somehow or other trying to protect the calves. The bulls, their eyes red with fury, were looking at the sky. They were raising their heads, trying to butt off the hail that was beating them. Just imagine: kh-kh – those furious bulls! But at the same time they were also lowing with pain for the hail was beating them mercilessly. It is said that the hail was striking them on the hump – in Vrindavan they all have humps – and then was running down their bodies making them shake with cold and pain. *Gopa gopyas ca sitarta* – and they all, tormented by all those terrible suffering ... First they were suffering because the cattle suffering, then because the cowherds who were outside were suffering, then the women started suffering. For, as I already said, the roofs

were blown off the houses. It was a terrible disaster. No tsunami can compare to what was happening at that moment in Vraja, the wind was blowing, streaks of lightning were striking with terrible thunder, there were torrents of rain, darkness, cold. And all that was merging with the plaintive mooing of the cows and the screaming of the women: "Rescue! Rescue! Help!" as well as with the cowherds' cries.

And what did they do in the end? *Gopa gopyas ca sitarta* – because they were suffering from the cold, *sitarta, govindam saranam yayuh* – to whom did they run for protection? To Govinda, to Krishna. They went to Him, they crowded around Him and began telling Him: "Nanda Lal, darling, we obeyed to you. Yesterday Your Govardhan would at times show two arms, four arms and then a thousand arms. Where is he now?! We worshiped him, we ignored Indra. Look what's happening as a result of that. Do something! Tell that Govardhana to do something. Let him show his 1000 arms now – we need them now more than yesterday." They began vying to implore Him: "Do something, ask Govardhana. You know, You can, we know You can save us." And Sukadeva Goswami continues (Bhag. 10.25.12):

sirah sutams ca kayena
pracchadyasara-piditah
vepamana bhagavatah
pada-mulam upayayuh

Shaking with terror, brought about by the torrential downpour, and trying to hide their heads and calves under their bodies, the cows approached the Supreme Personality of Godhead, seeking refuge at His lotus feet. Kavikarnapur says that the first to turn their plaintive looks at Govinda were the cows. The cows tried to protect themselves but couldn't for they have no arms nor can they run fast. They tried to cover the calves from all that but ultimately they realized: "No one is going to save us." With huge eyes full of tears they were looking at Govinda and plaintively mooing.

Let's now moo most plaintively: "Mooooooo, mooooooo, moooooo..." Well, can't anyone moo in a proper way? (laughter) Urban residents, what to do? (laughter) The cows were looking at Govinda with eyes full of tears. Those eyes were telling Him more than all the words in the world. Whereas Govinda, as if nothing happened, was also looking at the sky, thinking: "Indra seems a little angry." We're now going to hear what the inhabitants of Vrindavana said, addressing Govinda, and what Govinda was thinking in response. We're now going to read out a verse of complete surrender to Krishna, the verse that the Vrindavana inhabitants were crying out. They cried out (Bhag. 10.25.13):

krsna krsna maha-bhaga
tvan-natham gokulam prabho
tratum arhasi devan nah
kupitad bhakta-vatsala

Hear what the inhabitants of Vrindavana were praying for to Krishna. *Krsna krsna maha-bhaga* – "O Krishna, You are most fortunate! We do not know who You are but so far You've been very lucky. We don't know how you did that but so far You've always come out of all kinds of messes victorious. Please, invoke Your good fortune this time, too!" They were not addressing Him as God, they thought: "He's the luckiest among us. When misfortune befalls us we have to turn to those with a good *karma*." *Krsna krsna maha-bhaga tvan-natham gokulam prabho* – You are the Master of Gokula, you are our Lord, *tvan-natham*. Not Nanda Maharaja, no – we all know – Nanda Maharaj is old and we respect him for having such a son. But actually, You are our Lord: *Tvan-natham gokulam prabhu*.

And at that point Krishna kind of throws up His arms and says: "Well, look at Me! I'm a little boy, what can I do?" They say *prabho*. What does *prabho* mean? *Prabho* means "mighty." Because who's a master? A master is he who's mighty. He who's not mighty is not a master, right? So, next time when someone addresses you as *prabho* please beware of the mission assigned to you. *Tvan-natham gokulam prabho* - "O Prabhu! We know You're mighty. We know that You're a little boy and we love protecting You but when it comes down to it, we know whom to address." And then they say: *tratum arhasi devan nah* - "You should protect us from this *deva*. Although they

could've said: *tratum arhasi indran nah* – You can protect us from Indra but they thought: "Simply by uttering Indra's name we'll get contaminated. The very name of Indra will contaminate our tongue. That is why we say: Save us from this demigod, You know from whom." Save us, *kupitad* – from his wrath.

And the possible answer He can give to this is that: "But am I supposed to protect you from God's wrath, my friends? Ultimately, he's God" and they would reply to that: *Bhakta-vatsala* – Who are you? You protect Your devotees, You're *bhakta-vatsala*. For the sake of Your devotees You can do anything, You can even deal with this god. QED. They address this prayer to Him and at that point Krishna starts considering (Bhag. 10.25.14):

sila-varsati-vatena
hanyamanam acetanam
niriksyā bhagavan mene
kupitendra-krtam harih

Seeing the inhabitants of His Gokula rendered practically unconscious by the onslaught of hail and blasting wind, the Supreme Lord Hari understood that this was the work of angry Indra. That is, Krishna didn't think much about all that. Had he thought He would've foreseen everything that happened.

However, it was actually all arranged by Krishna Himself. If you think that it all was arranged by Indra then you are deeply mistaken. Because even a blade of grass doesn't move without the Supreme Lord's will. And the natural question that arises is: "So, it's Krishna, who arranged all that bloody battle?!" and the answer to it is: "Yes!" Explaining these verses, Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur says that the inhabitants of Vrindavan never experience any suffering, because all the suffering they are experiencing, is arranged by Krishna Himself and they do know why He arranges them. Why? To make them even happier, so that their love, their relationship, their affection for each other gets even stronger. Sometimes Krishna brings us to the end of the line, that's for sure. But we must understand that He does that only out of love. Hare Krishna.

Krishna saves us from all suffering. Has Krishna saved anyone from suffering? Raise your hands and shout: "Haribol." (audience: Haribol) Krishna saves, but it's Him who also gives suffering. He's waiting for us to surrender, to cry out: *krsna krsna maha-bhaga, krsna krsna maha-bhaga* – Krishna, save us! He's waiting for that and He's aware that in an extreme state something is revealed to the person that would never be revealed in any other circumstances.

Ambarisa Prabhu told me a story, Srila Prabhupada's disciple and the famous grandson of Mr. Henri Ford. We met recently and I started telling him about the Moscow temple. He said: "Yes, yes! It's pretty much the same, it's the same hand" and he began telling that one obstacle followed by another obstacle, then by a third one, then by a fourth one ... He said: "Yes, yes! I went through the same thing. We're constructing the Mayapur Temple. And, he said, I realized that Krishna's waiting for us to fully surrender. When we completely surrender everything becomes Ok." He said: "It once happened to me that everything was stopped. Everything! No hope. Everything we'd done was destroyed. No stone was left standing, we were back at the wall. And I started having doubts. I approached Srila Prabhupada and asked him: "Srila Prabhupada, is that what you want?" And I went to sleep with that question." He told me his dream, he said: "Srila Prabhupada came to me in that dream. Most clearly, the way I remember him. And I waited for him to tell me what to do. I was at those cross-roads: everything I did was destroyed, nothing was left of it. What was I to do now? So, I asked Srila Prabhupada to come. He came and it was such a clear, such a vivid dream. And I waited for him to tell me something but he said nothing. He just smiled and disappeared." He said: "I woke up and started thinking what that was supposed to mean? I asked him: "Tell me what I am to do but he just smiled back at me and disappeared." And at that moment I realized: he smiled at my stupidity, he smiled because he said: "You know what to do, don't you?! Just go on." He said: "At that point it dawned on me that everything's clear! Why get frustrated? Srila Prabhupada's smiling, so why should I get frustrated? I already know what he wants, don't I? I just need to do it and everything will be Ok". He said: "So, I started doing that and it all worked out."

Now the Mayapur temple is being built. By the time you get there it will be crowned by domes. You will see the completely finished form of it all. All that was realized thanks to this little story. And Krishna does this to us. Krishna does that to His inhabitants and then comes to rescue. He's ready to help and at the same time He instructs some Indra who also needs to be taught.

Krishna was looking very innocently at all that. And in the next few verses Sukadeva Goswami explains Krishna's thoughts – five verses explain what Krishna was thinking about. Krishna thought: "Because we have stopped his sacrifice, Indra has caused this unseasonable fierce rain along with terrible winds and hail." (Bhag. 10.25.16):

tatra pratividhim samyag
atma-yogena sadhaye
lokesa-maninam maudhyad
dhanisye sri-madam tamah

"By My mystic power I will completely counteract this disturbance caused by Indra. Demigods like Indra are proud of their opulence, and out of foolishness they falsely consider themselves the Lord of the universe. I will now destroy such ignorance." And Krishna speaks here the same words that Indra spoke: *sri-madam tamah*: I will free them from this *tamas*, from this ignorance; from the darkness brought about by having become proud: *sri* – of their wealth; *lokesa-maninam*. He says that I will free not only Indra but the other masters of their *maudhyad*, of their illusion and their stupidity, who have considered themselves to be the lords of the universe and I'll show them who's the Lord of the universe here. Krishna's plan has matured: He decided to completely ignore Indra. He has found the best remedy for the madness that Indra committed and said: "I will now free them of this arrogance. And I'll do that in a perfect way." (Bhag. 10.25.17):

na hi sad-bhava-yuktanam
suranam isa-vismayah
matto 'satam mana-bhangah
prasamayopakalpate

Since the demigods are endowed with the mode of goodness, *sad-bhava-yuktanam*, they *sad-bhava-yuktanam* – listen, this is a very important verse, it is one of the key verses in this chapter, *na hi sad-bhava-yuktanam* – because they have this *sad-bhava*, some sincerity ... *Suranam isa-vismayah* – and yet they consider themselves to be masters: *isa-vismaya* – they are wrong that they are masters. *Matto 'satam mana-bhangah* – I will make a small surgical operation, I will cut their hearts without an anesthetic and pull out of there their *man*, their pride. *Bhangah prasamayopakalpate* – this is My plan and I'll do it to destroy their pride. This word here, *prasamaya*, is very important. In this case *prasamaya* means "to bring them relief."

Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur says that Indra wanted to destroy Govardhana Mountain with his streaks of lightning without leaving a stone upon stone. At the same time, Krishna wanted to destroy the mountain of his pride. Why? *Prasamayopakalpate* – this is My intention in order to bring him relief. Krishna arranges all these things for us also because we are doing something in a wrong way. Very often we think that we're serving Krishna. Usually we think that we're serving Krishna, we always think that we serve Krishna but Krishna knows better. Krishna knows who is in the center of our consciousness. We think: "Oh-oh-oh! Serving Krishna is so cool! By serving Krishna I can put myself in the center. It didn't work out for me in that other life but here it will!" You see? In the devotees society there are such amazing opportunities to get oneself in the center. In ordinary life to become president we must work hard but here anyone can become a president. In ordinary life, to become a minister we must earn it and here we have a minister upon minister. In ordinary life to become a person of honor we must be worth something and here it's enough to chant Hare Krishna for a few years. We automatically become senior devotees – small *isvaras* with a circle of loyal followers who are ready to destroy everyone who opposes us.

And Krishna sees all that and at some point, if we are sincere ... The key word here is *sad-bhava*. He says: "Since they have at least some sincerity and at the same time all that nonsense in their head, a mountain of nonsense that crushes them down, they've now turned into hostages of their own arrogance and stupidity – so let Me relieve this mountain, let Me take away their pride and

expose everything and they will be immediately relieved. Has Krishna done that to anyone? Please raise your hands. Jai! Hariboll! I thought I would be the only one to raise my hand. Krishna does this again and again. Krishna says: "I will destroy his pride and that will be a filigree operation without anesthetic. No pride will be left. Until it grows again." Unfortunately, pride is like cancer, it grows metastases. And if not completely destroyed it can grow back again. But Krishna speaks all this here with respect to Indra. Actually, whom does He mean by that? Us: "To relieve their fate, to lighten their burden under which they're bending, I'll do that out of compassion for them for I see that they have some sincerity." And Krishna – here's the last verse of His speech (Bhag. 10.25 .18), and then the most important point will come that all this *katha* was undertaken for:

tasman mac-charanam gostham
man-natham mat-parigraham
gopaye svatma-yogena
so 'yam me vrata ahitah

Krishna says: "I will save Indra from his pride, but My primary responsibility, My main obligation is ... " *me vrata ahitah*: "I've taken this vow" – what vow has Krishna taken? Yes, *na me bhaktah pranasyati* – He says in the "Bhagavad-Gita" (9.31): "Declare it boldly to everyone, Arjuna, that My *bhakta* never perishes" and Krishna now remembers that vow: "I've taken this vow, this *vrata*, so 'yam me vrata ahitah. *Tasman mac-charanam gostham* – these people have surrendered to Me. Because they've done that, because they've felt My shelter, because they've accepted My protection ... " *Man-natham* – they obey Me, and *mat-parigraham* – they are My family, they are My nears and My dears. *Mat-parigraham gopaye svatma-yogena* – by My mystic potency, *svatma-yogena*, My *yoga-maya*, I will save them. "I must therefore protect the cowherd community by My transcendental potency, for I am their shelter, I am their master, and indeed they are My own family. After all, I have taken the vow to protect My devotees."

Devotees who have experienced great difficulties ... Like in the beginning, you know, devotees would be sent to prison and when they got out they'd tell amazing things. And many even said that I did not want the prison to end. One person told me that I felt there so secure, I felt such refuge, such protection! All the time, everywhere at every step Krishna gave me confirmation of His protection. And I was in complete ecstasy. Now I am on my own and I don't feel this. Actually, this experience of being sheltered or protected, Krishna's mercy, comes in response to our surrender. In proportion to our surrender, the degree of our surrender. When inside we have no other shelter, when we realize that no one else can protect us, when we throw up our arms and cry out: "O Govinda, O Krishna, I have no one else. I've realized: no one else is going to protect me" – at that point Krishna says: "Of course! You're my kin and I've promised to do so." Krishna says this in the last verse of the "Bhagavad-Gita" (18.66):

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

"Don't be afraid of anything, just surrender to Me." This state of internal surrender, the state of *saranagati*, is very important. This doesn't mean do silly things that usually the devotees do to prove their devotion to themselves and their relatives. That doesn't mean fanaticism. That means the inner feeling that I have no other protection but this one, that I should not seek protection elsewhere. Krishna is inside.

Like, when coming here from home on our way we pass one unfinished church (laughter). There's a big fence and it is written there: "The church has been functioning since such and such year." It is absolutely unfinished! There is no dome. It's a construction site!" The church has been functioning since such and such year." And on the other side, the fence is concrete and on the other section of it large letters read: "God exists!" (laughter). And it is absolutely clear that the person who runs this church believes in that! (laughter). He has this unfinished church but he wants to tell everyone: "God is there! He is!" And He is inside. And He has a recipe for everyone. He wants us to surrender. What He wants is one thing only: that we accept His protection and He's willing to render this protection." That's what He's saying here: "They are My kin! I've promised that

and I'll do so!" And the moment He says that He does it. In the next verse he does it (Bhag. 10.25.19):

ity uktvaikena hastena
krtva govardhanacalam
dadhara lilaya visnus
chatrakam iva balakah

Ity uktvaikena hastena – having said that, with one hand, *ekena hastena*, *krtva govardhanacalam* – He raised the *acala*. What does *acala* mean? Motionless. *Acala* means "mountain" and mountains are motionless. He lifted this motionless mountain, *govardhanacalam* which has never been moved until then. *Dadhara lilaya visnus* – and He did that easily, *lilaya*, just like that, without any special [efforts], *dadharah* – lifted it. *Catrakam iva bala* – just like a child picks a mushroom.

Now here we have to go into some details of this historic event which is recorded in the annals of history. True, most of the people didn't see how that happened! Kavikarnapur describes that at that point Krishna was standing on the veranda of His big house with some devotees were crowded there. And at that point He dashed out like a lightning. No one even realized that for had He asked Mother Yashoda's permission she'd never allow Him to do that. Imagine Krishna coming and saying: "Mother Yasoda, can I lift Govardhan Hill?" And the next moment she faints: "What?! Never! Over my dead body!" she'll say. Like a streak of lightning Krishna ran out and on. Kavikarnapur says that the *samhariki-sakti*, Visnu's, Lord Krishna's special *sakti*, then provided a spot clear of clouds so that not a single drop falls on Krishna. These heavy torrents were pouring down around, the cows were crying, everyone was in a panic, lightning was striking but Krishna ran along the road completely dry until reaching Govardhana.

And some of the commentators say that at this point an underground passage appeared. He plunged into it, ran to the middle of Govardhana and jumped out of it with this mountain. But Sanatana Goswami objects, he says: "My friends, you forget that there is a special slot, that spot is still there. Krishna entered the middle of the mountain through that slot." That slot is still there not far from the Manasi Ganga where you can see that same spot that Krishna entered in. And at that moment He went up to the middle of the mountain, He raised His finger – His tiny little finger – and with His left hand, single-handedly, as it is said here, He raised the hill. No one could say 'knife' before that happened. What happened at that point? From the middle of that hill, just in that same spot, where Krishna was holding it, a huge boulder fell off. That huge boulder fell precisely in the right place. Krishna stepped onto it so that everyone could easily get around Him and find refuge under Govardhana. Because Krishna Himself is small, right? He needs a stand. The stand was formed by itself and Krishna stepped onto it. At this point from the borders, from the end of this huge mountain stones began falling down. They formed a big fence so that the water could not get in there. That fence was kind of a dam against the flood.

Krishna lifted it effortlessly, just like in a game. He had never previously trained in raising weights. All of a sudden He did that! Someone even thought that Govardhana took off by itself. Later Sridham who will be fighting with and challenging Krishna will say: "Shyam, what are You so proud of?! You're taking pride in having killed Putana but we know that Putana was killed by the *brahmanas' mantras*. I know, I know, Shyam, that You're taking pride in having killed the terrible Aghasura demon but You've forgotten who had entered Aghasura along with You into his mouth and helped You kill him – it was us. Shyam, I know You're taking pride in having lifted Govardhana Hill but please don't tell me that. Govardhan flew up itself because it was pleased by our worship." Some people thought that Govardhana flew up itself but somehow Krishna was right there! Right in the very spot in the middle of the hill and He was holding it with His tiny finger.

Upon seeing that, Yashoda swayed and fainted. Nanda Maharaja brought her to her senses and she began saying: "I told You, You shouldn't have stopped that Indra's *yajna*." Looking reproachfully at her husband she said: "Why did you listen to our son?! He's getting these stupid ideas into His head all the time. We should have carried out Indra's *yajna*! Now look what's happening. Shyam is holding this hill. What's going to happen with Him?!" But to encourage everyone Shyam said (Bhag. 10.25.20):

athaha bhagavan gopan
he 'mba tata vrajaukasah
yathopajosam visata
giri-gartam sa-go-dhanah

"The Lord then addressed the cowherd community: O Mother, O Father, O residents of Vraja, if you wish you may now come under this hill with your cows." Actually, Krishna was purposefully holding the hill with His left hand – not just with his left hand but with the little finger of His left hand. Why? Yes, to appease His mother. He held it with His left hand just to show: "It's a piece of cake, it's not difficult at all. Don't worry. Just look!" And He went on: "Govardhana turned as light as a piece of cotton wool thanks to your worship. It's only due to your worship that it became so light. I'm not even holding it, it is hovering in the sky itself."

As I already said, at that moment Govardhana started growing so much that its peaks were reaching the clouds out of ecstasy, happiness and delight. Indra began striking Govardhana with streaks of lightning with double strength. Lightnings were striking Govardhana on all sides. But out of happiness from being held by Krishna Himself, Govardhana took no notice of those streaks of lightning. They were just like rose petals to him. And the lions that dwelt on the slopes of Govardhana Hill climbed up to the clouds; seeing those black clouds they took them to be a herd of elephants. So, they began tearing them to shreds as they did with elephants. Fearing the lions that lived on the slopes of Govardhana Hill, the clouds began scattering in different directions. Immediately a great number of events took place. They began clearing ... Indra couldn't understand anything, he began sending streaks of lightning on all sides, striking Govardhana with his *vajra*. Not a single stone fell from Govardhana except those stones that formed the dam around that spot. Shyam began shouting: "Come here! It's dry in here! It's dry! It's nice in here, there's no water! Come! Come here!" The first one He called was His mother. However, He realized His mother wouldn't go for anything. He realized that the cowherds didn't want to go. And He realized that they were simply scared He wouldn't manage to keep that mountain up.

Now let us imagine this situation. A young ten-year old boy raises a mountain. How long can He keep it up? And you are beneath it. And what will remain of you when it slips out of His hand? Therefore in the previous verse that we read describing this event, Sukadeva Goswami says *acalam* – Krishna kind of says: "Look, it's absolutely still, it doesn't even tremble. Why do you think it will slip? No way! Sure not!" They still don't go. Yashoda says: "Don't go under any circumstances! I don't allow you to go there. I'm not going to allow you to exploit my child! We're not going there. We're not going there! How can we do that?! How can we accept Shyam's service?! It's us who must serve Him, who must do something! If we don't go there He'll put down that stupid mountain and come running to us." Then Shyam resorted to His last argument. He said: "If you don't come here nut rather let me watch your suffering from beneath this mountain, then for sure My hand will tremble with compassion for you, the mountain will slip down and crush Me. Come on, quickly here!"

Shyama's logic was iron, there's no way to outargue Him. Nanda Maharaja realized: "We must quickly go there" and they went there only because they wanted to serve Shyam. Not because they were afraid for themselves, not because they feared: Shyam's happiness was their life and soul. And if Shyam's calling them they must go there. They went there and then Yashoda said: "I told you! I told you! Why?! We shouldn't have done that!" But all the rest were ecstatic. Shyam's friends were jumping up and down, saying: "Shyam! Shyam! Haribol! We had no idea how strong You are." Balaram went up to Shyam and winked at Him. And to cheer Shyam up He began dancing in front of Him. And Shyam was most pleased to see that.

Now we should ask a very important question: "Why didn't Balarama lift the hill? He is *balarama*, isn't He?! He's the most powerful!" Had Balarama lifted it, everyone would have understood. His partial expansion, Ananta Sesa, holds the entire universe on his hoods. He doesn't find that difficult! And Krishna is weak. The only thing He's been raising was His flute and sometimes with difficulty. Why did He want to do that? What for? He wanted to assure us that I Myself will protect you. He says that in the "Bhagavad-Gita" (9.22): *yoga-ksemam vahamy aham* - "I Myself will do that." Not someone else. Not even Balarama! I will personally come to you, I will be there with you."

You've probably heard the wonderful parable of the person who had a dream before his death in which he saw some footprints. Seeing two traces of footprints, he realized one of them was his own and the other one was God's. And he realized that God has been next to him throughout his life but he saw that at the most difficult ones there was just a single trace of footprints. So he started blaming God: "How come? In the most difficult times I was going alone. I know You were with me but in the most difficult periods of my life You weren't there." And at that moment God replied to him that: "My dear, that's not your footprints, that's My footprints. I was carrying you in My arms that's why your footprints are not there."

In the most difficult periods Krishna Personally comes to us. Personally! And this is what He wants to assure us of here: "I will lift this mountain Personally, I will provide a shelter to anyone who's seeking that." And He started reassuring them (Bhag. 10.25.21):

na trasa iha vah karyo
mad-dhastadri-nipatanat
vata-varsa-bhayenalam
tat-tranam vihitam hi vah

He says: you have nothing to fear, *na trasa iha vah karyo*, you should have no fear. What's the point of being scared here?! *Mad-dhastadri-nipatanat* – the mountain will never slip out of My hand. How can it? *Vata varsa-bhayenalam* – have no fear of *vata*, of the wind, or of *varsas*, the rain; don't be scared of anything. *Tat-tranam vihitam hi vah* - "You should have no fear that this mountain will fall out of My hand. And don't be afraid of the wind and rain, for your deliverance from these afflictions has already been arranged." *Tat-tranam vihitam hi vah* – He says: "I have already taken care of that."

Srila Jiva Goswami explains what was going on under the hill. While outside hurricane winds were raging, thunder was rumbling and torrents were pouring, beneath everything suddenly brightened. The light was coming from the *kaustubha* stone on Krishna's chest as well as from the other gems that were found in great quantities under Govardhana Hill. And in the light of those gems of variegated colours the devotees who came in under the hill felt a cool breeze. That cool breeze appeared out of nowhere and was blowing off and drying the drops of sweat on Shyama's forehead. Shyam was standing ...

And everyone was ecstatic. Krishna says everything's under control. "Their minds thus pacified by Lord Krishna – that's the next verse – they all entered beneath the hill, where they found ample room for themselves and all their cows, wagons, servants and priests, and for all other members of the community as well." (Bhag., 10.25.22). There was enough room under this hill and for seven days they did not know ... Those were the happiest days of their lives. They were gazing at Shyam and Shyam was gazing at them. A huge crowd gathered around Shyam and everyone was gazing at Him, their mouths open with wonder.

Actually the basis of *rasa*, or love, - any love, any experience of love – is wonder. Have you ever fallen in love? Raise your hands those who have. Who has had this exciting, this breath-stopping delight and surprise before the object of their love? Who has experienced that? "That can't be true! Aa-hh-hh!" For a moment Krishna inflicts on us His *mahamaya* and we think: A-hhh! Krishnaaaa! A-hhh!

When the inhabitants of Vrindavan went under that hill all their mouths opened with wonder. They were gazing at Krishna, holding their breath, not knowing what to do. All the while Krishna was looking at each of them. Everyone thought that Krishna was looking just at me and I'm looking just at Him and there's no one but the two of us here under this hill. And Krishna was looking at each one in a special way. Srila Jiva Goswami says that Krishna was looking at His servants with eyes full of tears. When someone takes shelter of us, someone junior, we look at him with eyes full of tears. Krishna was looking at His friends with smiling eyes and His friends were looking back at Him with eyes overflowing with happiness – they were laughing and Krishna was laughing back. Krishna was looking at His parents with humility, having no idea about what they're going to do next. In a most humble way, you know like when sometimes devotees feign humility, looking in a

humble way – Krishna was looking at His parents in that most humble way. Well, at some persons Krishna was looking sideways and we're not going to tell who those were. If you carefully watched the slide show, on one of the slides depicting Govardhana we could see Krishna looking sideways at someone. At times He would sneak up on someone with glances like arrows. And then again He would go on looking at everyone else in a humble way. And Krishna was casting meaningful glances at Indra who was getting the creeps inside for he too, thought that Krishna was looking at him.

Kavikarnapur describes that when Krishna was holding up that hill it looked like an enormous umbrella while Krishna resembled a huge sapphire column. His arm was just like the handle of that umbrella. And the hail that was pouring from all sides resembled pearls that embroidered that umbrella. The umbrella was embroidered with pearls, and those traces of hail – it was such a beautiful scene.

And at that point, as the *acaryas* explain, two simultaneous hurricanes were raging. One brought about by Indra and the other one in the hearts of Krishna's devotees. And if the first hurricane can be described, the second one is impossible to do so. Sometimes to please His devotees, to give happiness to His mother and to show that it's so easy for Him, with His right hand which was free Krishna would reach ... Usually he rested His right hand on His waist but sometimes He would take His flute out of His belt and start playing as if to say: "Mom, look! It's easy. I'm simply playing the flute." I don't know how He played the flute with one hand but somehow He did that. Krishna can do everything. He was playing the flute and while He was doing so the small fat Madhumangal who was standing next to Him, started shouting: "Help! Help! I know what's going to happen! When Shyam plays the flute stones start melting. Govardhana is going to melt and we're all going to die. Stop it right away!" Batu was shouting: "What are you doing, Shyam?! Are You crazy? Stop playing the flute!" When Batu was playing those pranks ... And every now and then Madhumangala would come up to Shyama and say: "Shyam, please don't strain Your muscles. You know very well that this entire hill is held up due to my *brahma-tejas*. I am here next to You, don't worry! You can have some rest. If you want You can even lie down. My *brahma-tejas* will support this hill." Upon hearing that, Yashoda's poor motherly heart was tearing apart. She would say: "Bata, what are you doing?! My son is straining like anything and you're laughing at Him!" Nanda Maharaj replied to her: "Why? He just wants to inspire Shyam. Everything's fine, everything's going on very well!" For seven days they were reciprocating like that.

And at times Krishna's hand did start trembling. At one point it did. Usually He would stand and the mountain didn't budge, it was frozen. But when someone cast at Him a glance of Her eyes ... Wow! That was the most dangerous moment throughout all the seven days. When Radhika came up and stole a glance at Shyam, Shyaa looked at Her. He forgot that He was holding that mountain and at that point the mountain nearly slipped out of His hand. Thanks God at that point Radhika supported the mountain with Her *sakti*. She wouldn't allow all the cows and calves and the inhabitants of Vrindavana die under Govardhana Hill.

It's one last lesson that Krishna wants to tell us by this *lila*, the most important lesson: that in this world there exists a greatest power. And it is nothing but that power that can protect us in all most terrible trials. This power alone can save us, this power alone can give us shelter. All other types of power, which are many, the dangerous, terrible and evil powers in this world surrender just as Indra surrendered in seven days. And what's that power called? Love. There's one power only. When we have this power there's nothing we fear. We're always under the protection of this gigantic hill, Krishna Himself. Krishna takes the form of that hill to protect us. When this power is not there in our hearts we are defenseless and fears will haunt us – we'll fear everything! Everything – we'll fear every trifle in this world. That's what Krishna wants to teach us. Do you want to be fearless? Do you want to fear nothing in this world? Do you want to boldly look into the eyes of each and every one? Into any dangers and trials? There's one way only to achieve that. For that we need to attain the causeless gift of love that comes in response to our faith, to our sincere desire to attain that love. Shyam raised that hill, inviting all of us under it. And all those who are in the same state of complete surrender as that of the inhabitants of Vrindavana, can find their place under that hill. This is Govardhana-*lila* and what we must learn.

Thank you very much.

Now we'll sing the song that Nata has prepared for us. Nata will lead us into this song. Try to feel the mood of the inhabitants of Vrindavan when singing this song.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Nata das: Dear devotees, before we try to sing the song together let me make an announcement. You'd probably like to listen once again to everything you have heard here. There is a wonderful devotee, Srikant Prabhu, who filmed everything on video. And he traditionally uploads the video files from the "Priti-Laksanam" festivals onto the Vaishnava and Russian Internet resources. And just in three or four days all major video-films from the festival, including lectures, will be posted on www.rutracker.org and www.venugita.ru this is also a Vaishnava tracker, where everything can be easily downloaded. I'll ask Srikant Prabhu to stand up. There he is in the orange t-shirt. You can turn to him and he will tell you how to do that.

PURPORT TO THE SONG: (Nata das): As for the songs we are to sing, it is an attempt to present one of the traditional *bhajans*, as far as I understand, it's a Vrindavana *bhajan* ... This is not the precise translation, this is, so to say, a free translation, a free version. (BVG's replica: we sang it yesterday in Sanskrit). Unfortunately, what you'll see on the board will be a draft with a few more liberties of mine added, so please forgive me if it doesn't not strictly correspond to the original.

Two groups can sing. One of the groups can ask the question "Who made us worship Govardhana?" and the other group can respond to this question. In this way the whole song is sung. In Sanskrit we could sing it with repeats but in Russian we'll probably sing it without repeats. But let's see.

The first and every odd lines sound the same, "Who made us worship Govardhana?" This is what the *gopis* ask. And the other part of the audience ... The men, or the other *gopis* they say: "He who protected us from Indra's rage."

(Nata das' song from 160 to 172 min)

BVG: Now I'll still ask you, while all the honored guests of the festival are gathering here – to have a small reflection in groups. Turn to each other, sit in small circles and try to tell each other what you've realized, what you've learned. Three or four persons, because otherwise it will be too long. Try to share some innermost realizations.

"The Lessons of the Govardhana-*lila*", "Priti-Lakshanam Festival", Ekaterinburg, 06.01.2013, lecture 5

Translation by: janakirani.bvg@mail.ru

(reflection is ongoing in full swing, lively conversation & noise) When many cows gather in one place, (laughter, applause) nothing can pacify them except Krishna's flute. Without Krishna's flute they'll disperse in different directions because each cow deems itself independent. Herd! I need your attention, please! (laughter and applause)

Our festival is not over yet – we still have a few important points. First of all we, here on the stage, would like to hear you. One, two, three or four people please say what they've learned from this festival. I've already said that the only meaning of the existence of our organization is to pass on the taste for the holy name, the taste for *krisna-katha*. It is a spiritual taste and passing it on is called *parampara* system. What we pass on is not just dry knowledge, we pass on actual experience. We all have some experience and I've been explaining during our seminar that our method of obtaining actual experience is just hearing – at least that's one method. There are other methods, there are at least eight of them, but it all begins with hearing and hearing can actually pass that experience on to us.

I'd like to ask that a few people share the experience they've obtained here. Not necessarily through hearing – through service, through association with devotees, through *prasad*, through chanting of the holy name. Please, it's very important to me to understand that I haven't come to Ekaterinburg in vain. If I understand that then next year I'll come again. If I don't understand that, neither me nor anyone else will come. So share something. Does anyone want to say something? You were talking to each other so enthusiastically, please share something with us. We've prepared special gifts for those who speak.

A feedback from the festival participants:

1st devotee (*mataji*): Today, in a conversation with a devotee, I had the following realization. I realized that actually each devotee is most valuable and each person is most valuable and dear. And that if in our life we start realizing that each and every devotee is dear to me then we'll see that it means that for Krishna each and every one is also most valuable, therefore, I am also most valuable to Krishna. Thank you.

2nd devotee (*mataji*): Hare Krishna! A very important realization for me is that recently I've come to realize that Maharaj's causeless mercy is pouring down from all sides onto all the devotees. You just become aware that Krishna's carrying you in His arms and you don't deserve it. You have no problems – your problems are just in your head. I thank all of you very much, dear Vaishnavas.

3rd devotee (*mataji*): Hare Krishna! There's something unique I've realized. Whatever disadvantages festivals have, they are necessary because without such gathering of devotees it's impossible. You start realizing that it's them who are pulling you up, who are pushing you on and on. It is at such festivals that we reveal our hearts understanding deeper and deeper that we can't get on without the devotees – no way! No way without Maharaja and and without Krishna. It's simply impossible to live in any other way. This is how we want to live – for ever submerged in a festival, no matter what the disadvantages are.

4th devotee (*mataji*): I'd like to say just one thing. Thank you very much. (crying) There's so much love, it's just amazing, please accept my most humble obeisances.

5th devotee (*prabhu*): Hare Krishna, dear Vaishnavas and Vaishnavis. Hare Krishna. Actually, I'd like to say one thing, which, in my opinion, plays an unimportant role and I think many will agree with this. I've been here at the festival for two days and for a second time at such a festival in my life. And I never cease to be amazed by the atmosphere. How natural and endearing it is. And many of those who've come here I see for the first time but I can bet it's a common feeling that we have all met somewhere before. Many will confirm that, I'm sure. All of us here, I have the feeling

that all this is my family, all the devotees. It may be the first time I see them but there is this deep sense, the sense of a family, Srila Prabhupada's family. Hare Krishna.

6th devotee (*prabhu*): I, too, want to express my deep gratitude to all the lecturers for what I received here at this festival. It's a great mercy in the form of senior Vaisnavas' experience. I thank Dayavan Prabhu for his seminar. He tried so hard to get across the experience in his relationship with the holy name. I just tried to actually practice it – that I am a soul and that I have a relationship with Krishna and it is important for me to revive it. Indeed, Dayavan Prabhu said that you'll have a taste for chanting of the holy name if you have the desire. Indeed, there was such an incredible taste – I was eager to chant the holy name on and on, to associate with it. Thank you. I thank Aditi-dukhaha Prabhu for such great enthusiasm in his service, it's so inspiring. I thank Vatsala Prabhu, every morning everyone felt as if being in the spiritual world. It's mercy. Thank you very much, Goswami Maharaja.

7th devotee (*prabhu*): Hare Krishna, dear devotees. Hare Krishna, dear Vaishnavas. Please excuse my voice I lost it a bit in the *kirtan*, I've been participating so actively for the first time. I've been at such a great Vaishnava festival for the first time. Where I live there's practically no such magnificent culture. Not yet. But tomorrow I'm taking home great relationships with wonderful people and wonderful experience of serving great Vaishnavas and devotees, a wonderful association and a wonderful *kirtan* performed by remarkable Vaishnavas. I'd also like to sincerely thank you. Thank you very much for the sweet lectures and for the wonderful *kirtans*. I thank all the devotees who have gathered here today in such a large number. It's the first time I've seen such a large number of devotees, honestly. During these days I've realized so deeply that association with the Vaishnavas is a most profound experience, a most profound realization. I'm taking this experience tomorrow with me and I'll be serving both devotees and non-devotees. With a deep love, thank you very much, Hare Krishna!

8th devotee (*mataji*): I'd like to say the following. During the *kirtan* I had deep realizations. Aditi-dukhaha Prabhu was performing miracles. Yesterday I realized that Krishna provides such opportunities that the impossible becomes possible. Everything I want or someone else wants will happen or is already happening. I had various dreams, right? The smallest of which was to play in the *kirtan* (laughter) and it happened. I thought: "Ah-ah-ah-ah, mercy is being bestowed on me!" So, please accept my humble obeisances to the senior devotee, they are so inspiring.

9th devotee (*mataji*): Haribol, dear devotees. I'm very glad I happened to be here. The most remarkable event took place just an hour ago, I guess. My heart finally opened – so much so that I felt with the heart and I beg all of you to please become my spiritual master. I just wanted so much... I came here with this intention to understand whether this is the right thing or not. So I've got that! It just reached my heart. I'm sorry. Haribol.

BVGM: Well, this is where we'll finish this part, but the festival doesn't end yet. The devotees have prepared a short 20-minute play and then we'll all get onto the stage and share our own understanding, our own realizations at this festival, saying some parting words. That is, what follows now is the play. All those who remain here will receive the blessings of the senior devotees gathered on the stage. All those who leave will do so without blessings (laughter).

(play)

Senior devotees' words in response:

Aditi-Duhkhaha Prabhu: It's the second time I've been at this festival and the second time I've happened to hear an amazing *katha* by Goswami Maharaj. I don't know why he's chosen Ekaterinburg for such special seminars. Before that he spoke on the topic "Krishna comes into Mathura" and that was something special. Remember, don't you? And now all this is deepening, it's such a nectar! Maharaj is churning Krishna's *lilas*. And actually we are so fortunate because we have no taste for the Lord's *lilas*, right? When we get together we rarely talk of Krishna, right? Because devotees think that they don't need to talk about Krishna with other devotees, we need to talk about business. We need to talk about Krishna with materialists – they don't know about Him,

right? And usually we preach to materialists but when we meet devotees we talk God knows what. This, that, who's got married, who's got children.

And here, I don't know, it's a special mercy for your *yatra*. You have the opportunity to get this special taste because by the way you've been hearing and the way Maharaj's been getting it across to you, I think each of you has felt being transferred there and witnessing all those pastimes. This is special nectar. This is the difference between reading Srila Prabhupada's books, *krisna-lila*, on your own and hearing from a Vaishnava, someone who passes on his own experience and realizations. That is why I am very happy to be here in your association, hearing along with you about the Lord's *lilas*. Thank you very much.

Dayavan Prabhu (Moscow): Hare Krishna. I was inspired to hear a devotee during the reflection who said that I'm taking with me everything I heard and saw. I thought that our festival is called "Priti-laksanam"; and actually, any festival where Vaishnavas get together is "Priti-laksanam", where we gather to exchange the love we've felt and the love we want to awaken in our hearts. And by sharing this love we fill our hearts and take and share it further on.

And I remembered that not so long ago I heard something interesting – that there are three categories of people. The first category is those who have received no love in their lives. It happened so, it was due to the circumstances that they haven't received enough or any love. These people are skeptical of any rules or instructions. They can't take care of other people, they can't have friends, they don't trust love – although they need that love most. They readily accept this love and they don't understand anything else, everything else doesn't exist for them.

There is a second category of people who to some extent have come in touch with this energy of love. These people can feel some gratitude because they have received something from this life. This is why such people like following instructions, observing laws and rules. These people very much need to learn to serve. What they need is just learn to serve. They want to learn to serve those around them.

And the third category of people are those whose hearts overflow with love. These people have received love and they are and will be receiving love. And the only need of these people is to just give away that love. These people live to take care of others, to give others what they have in their hearts. And these "Priti-laksanam" festivals is the right place where we all get imbued with that love, we get together and fill our hearts with love. And the only desire that's left is to give this love to others, to share this love, to serve everyone. In this sense these festivals are most important, we all need them, that is why I want to come and always participate in such Vaishnava festivals. Wherever Vaishnavas get together that is "Priti-laksanam". We must try to organize such festivals and come here. I thank all devotees for having been invited here and for having been endured here for three days. Hare Krishna!

Vatsala Prabhu (Moscow): Although we can tell non-devotees about Krishna we can't tell them much. Let alone tell them that God is a boy who has raised Govardhana Hill with His little finger – they won't understand this. Our tongue doesn't even turn to tell them about that. I don't think that's what we start preaching with. This is why to hear about how wonderful Krishna is is possible only in the Vaishnava society. So, if it weren't for all of you we wouldn't have had ... For sure, Maharaj surely wouldn't have been telling me about Govardhan for three days (applause).

Without an audience that is qualified and receptive *krisna-katha* is impossible. And preachers wouldn't do that, that's an offense – to preach to faithless people. But because there are those who have faith Krishna and "Srimad-Bhagavatam" can be revealed. And I've been listening to the lectures and noting how purifying ... We often say that *krisna-katha* purifies but what does it mean "purifying"? "Purifying" means that I start to see what I didn't see before. Thus, I've noted various processes that were taking place in my mind. We've been told: "Look! Can you see? That's your pride. You remember?" I do. I didn't see it before! And that the *yogis* need many lifetimes of purification – simply by getting into this flow of *krisna-katha*, faithfully hearing *krisna-katha*, we can change our minds. We can actually see by what we feel that yes, knowledge is expanding. That we are attractive; that what we call ourselves, our material selves is *anartha*, it's no good.

And I've been fortunate, I wasn't planning to be here. It was a miracle! Then I got a phone call and here I am! It's all undeserved, it's a mercy, a causeless mercy. And I do not regret it, I am just glad to have been here, in this Vaishnava society that can induce pure devotees to speak about Krishna. It's very important that we have such an audience receptive to *krisna-katha*. Without that *krisna-katha* wouldn't have taken place. Thank you for your faith. I loved hearing. Hare Krishna.

BVGM reads letters: Please accept my huge thank you, my huge cordial gratitude to all of you, those who's been revealing the spiritual reality to us. A separate huge thank you for the seminar on the holy name. The holy name came back to life. I'm writing how grateful I am to Dayavan Prabhu. Please accept our obeisances and do come, it's just impossible otherwise. The last is a blessing from a *mataji*: "We wish you intelligent and sincere disciples and attentive listeners." Hare Krishna.

BVGM speaks: I am also very grateful for this opportunity to speak about Krishna. Ultimately, for us this is a *sadhana* now. *Sadhana* is what we do at certain periods of our time. This is something that hasn't necessarily become the reality of our heart yet but what we want to become that reality of our hearts. The devotees were speaking about that. Aditi-dukhaha Prabhu said that a special occasion is needed for that. But all this must ultimately lead us into another reality – into the reality where it will cease to be a *sadhana* and will become the manifestation of our nature. When there's just love in the heart – love for the devotees, love for Krishna – *krisna-katha* becomes natural. And everything we say becomes *krisna-katha*. Now *krisna-katha* is something that we do at certain periods of time. But we need to understand that when we reach perfection in this our every word will become *krisna-katha* – every word will become a song, a sound that we use to glorify either the Vaisnavas or Krishna. And that's the happiest possible state. Actually, a person becomes extremely happy when he or she glorifies others for he or she's taking his natural position somewhere on the side while placing the devotees or Krishna, everyone that is related to Krishna, in the center.

I am very glad we had this festival and I hope that it will be held many more times and this tradition will go on. And I am especially happy that this festival hosts such wonderful devotees who have something to share. Unfortunately, it often happens that due to this regulated nature of our *krisna-katha*, *krisna-katha* turns into some half a rite and half I don't even know how to put it, something that we are obliged to do. This very often happens during "Srimad-Bhagavatam" classes. Especially when "Srimad-Bhagavatam" classes are supposed to be given every day. The lecturer takes his seat on the *vyasasan* and it's absolutely obvious that he has nothing to say but he must speak and somehow fill the 40 minutes space. And he squeezes out something, he appears to be speaking about Krishna while everyone else appears to be hearing about Krishna.

But I am very happy that the Vaishnavas who are here actually have something to say about Krishna. I've known Vatsala Prabhu for many many years. He can speak about Krishna in front of any audience. He always finds some live and vivid colours to do that. That is, you can see that it's not simply some memorized story, it's what the person lives in.

Aditi-dukhaha Prabhu ... Well, you don't even have to say much. When he starts singing about Krishna all of a sudden a new dimension evolves. And we were singing *sri govardhana maharaja...* (imitating Aditi-dukhaha Prabhu; laughter and applause) And there's ecstasy just from that one word! We don't even know what it's all about but the ecstasy's still there. You nevertheless know that this is something that comes merely from the desire to praise Govardhana.

And Dayavan Prabhu lives a true profound spiritual life. What I want to say is that we are truly fortunate that there are such people. In spiritual societies or religious groups those who are at the head often turn into professionals of their business. In Vrindavana there's even a school teaching people how to give *krisna-katha*: which song to sing, at which point, which story to tell, what joke to tell, how to make people laugh. Srila Prabhupada strongly condemned such people, such professional readers of "Srimad-Bhagavatam" who do that very beautifully. Usually they have musical instruments and everything else but still they don't live it. For them that's a means to earn a living.

All those who've gathered here: Dayavan Prabhu, Aditi-dukhaha Prabhu, Vatsala Prabhu, live it. Krishna consciousness becomes live and that is why we can get some live experience, not just stay at the level of faith, which freezes into a dead state without developing in any way, it can come to life here.

Therefore, the only thing I'd like to say is that I am very happy that these devotees have been here. And I'm sure that Srila Prabhupada's very happy. Srila Prabhupada – I was speaking about him today – he's brought and done something incredible. What he's revealed to people is incredible. Krishna consciousness which has always been there, has been somehow or other covered with something like crust, it has turned into something like a museum exhibit – Srila Prabhupada's inspired life into it. And we are here to get in touch with this source of life. In the last period of his life Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada ... Doctors would forbid him to speak. He was sick. When he was speaking he would get excited, his heart would start beating faster and doctors would say: "You will die. You will die. You will die" But he spoke. When he was forbidden to speak *krisna-katha*, he said: "I'd rather die but I will speak *krisna-katha*. Because he who speaks *krisna-katha*, he lives."

We know the words of Bhaktivinoda Thakur that a Vaishnava continues to live in sound. The life of a Vaishnava is in sound. In the sound of Krishna glorification. And we must clearly understand that we want to come back to life. People in the material world do not live, they sleep. They react to everything mechanically ...