

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Speaks on *Varṇāśrama* and the Goal of Life

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu could understand that the *Tattvavādīs* were very proud of their Vaiṣṇavism. He therefore smiled and began to speak to them.

– CC Madhya 9.252



The chief *ācārya* of the *Tattvavāda* community was very learned in the revealed scriptures. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu humbly questioned him.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “I do not know very well the aim of life and how to achieve it. Please tell Me of the best ideal for humanity and how to attain it.”

The *ācārya* replied, “When the activities of the four castes and the four *āśramas* are dedicated to Kṛṣṇa, they constitute the best means whereby one can attain the highest goal of life.

When one dedicates the duties of *varṇāśrama-dharma* to Kṛṣṇa, he is eligible for five kinds of liberation. Thus he is transferred to the spiritual world in Vaikuṅṭha. This is the highest goal of life and the verdict of all revealed scriptures.”

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “According to the verdict of the *śāstras*, the process of hearing and chanting is the best means to attain loving service to Kṛṣṇa.

According to the Tattvavādīs, the best process for achieving the highest goal of life is to execute the duties of the four varṇas and āśramas. In the material world, unless one is situated in one of the varṇas (brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya or śūdra) one cannot manage social affairs properly to attain the ultimate goal. One also has to follow the principles of the āśramas (brahmacarya, gr̥hastha, vānaprastha and sannyāsa), since these principles are considered essential for the attainment of the highest goal. In this way the Tattvavādīs establish that the execution of the principles of varṇa and āśrama for the sake of Kṛṣṇa is the best way to attain the topmost goal. The Tattvavādīs thus established their principles in terms of human society. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, however, differed when He said that the best process is hearing and chanting about Lord Viṣṇu. According to the Tattvavādīs, the highest goal is returning home, back to Godhead, but in Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s opinion the highest goal is attaining love of Godhead, in either the material world or the spiritual world. In the material world this is practiced according to śāstric injunction, and in the spiritual world the real achievement is already there.

– CC Madhya 9.254-258+p



This process entails hearing, chanting and remembering the holy name, form, pastimes, qualities and entourage of the Lord, offering service according to the time, place and performer, worshiping the Deity, offering prayers, always considering oneself the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, making friends with Him and dedicating everything unto Him. These

nine items of devotional service, when directly offered to Kṛṣṇa, constitute the highest attainment of life. This is the verdict of the revealed scriptures.

– CC Madhya 9.259-260



When one comes to the platform of loving service to Lord Kṛṣṇa by executing these nine processes, beginning with hearing and chanting, he has attained the fifth platform of success and the limit of life's goals.

Everyone is after success in religion, economic development, sense gratification and ultimately merging into the existence of Brahman. These are the general practices of the common man, but according to the strict principles of the Vedas, the highest attainment is to rise to the platform of śravaṇam kīrtanam [SB 7.5.23], hearing and chanting about the Supreme Personality of Godhead...According to Śrīdhara Svāmī, the material conception of success (mokṣa, or liberation) is desired by those in material existence. Devotees, however, not being situated in material existence, have no desire for liberation.

A devotee is always liberated in all stages of life because he is always engaged in the nine items of devotional service (śravaṇam, kīrtanam, etc.). Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's philosophy holds that devotional service to Kṛṣṇa always exists in everyone's heart. It simply has to be awakened by the process of śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ [SB 7.5.23]. Śravaṇādi śuddha-citte karaye udaya (Cc. Madhya 22.107). When a person is actually engaged in devotional service, his eternal relationship with the Lord, the servant-master relationship, is awakened.

– CC Madhya 9.261+p



In every revealed scripture there is condemnation of fruitive activities. It is advised everywhere to give up engagement in fruitive activities, for no one can attain the highest goal of life, love of Godhead, by executing them.

Occupational duties are described in the religious scriptures. If one analyzes them, he can fully understand their qualities and faults and then give them up completely to render service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A person who does so is considered a first-class man.

Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear. (Bg. 18.66)

– CC Madhya 9.263-265



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “Both the fruitive worker and the speculative philosopher are considered nondevotees. We see both elements present in your *sampradāya*.

The only qualification that I see in your *sampradāya* is that you accept the form of the Lord as truth.”

Thus Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu broke the pride of the *Tattvavādīs* to pieces.

– CC Madhya 9.276-278