

From Sri Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir

Date: February 6, 2015

Speaker: HG Mahatma Das

Subject: SB 6.3.32

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srnvatam grnatam viryany uddamani harer muhuh

yatha sujataya bhaktya suddhyen natma vratadibhih

TRANSLATION: One who constantly hears and chants the holy name of the Lord and hears and chants about His activities can very easily attain the platform of pure devotional service, which can cleanse the dirt from one's heart. One cannot achieve such purification merely by observing vows and performing Vedic ritualistic ceremonies.

PURPORT: One may very easily practice chanting and hearing the holy name of the Lord and thus become ecstatic in spiritual life. Padma Purana states:

namaparadha-yuktanam namany eva haranty agham

avisranti-prayuktani tany evartha-karani ca

Even if one chants the Hare Krsna maha-mantra offensively, one can avoid offenses by continuously chanting without deviation. One who becomes accustomed to this practice will always remain in a pure transcendental position, untouchable by sinful reactions. Sukadeva Gosvami especially requested King Pariksit to note this fact very carefully. There is no profit, however, in executing the Vedic ritualistic ceremonies. By performing such activities one may go to the higher planetary systems, but as stated in Bhagavad-gita (9.21), ksine punye martya-lokam visanti: when the period of one's enjoyment in the heavenly planets is terminated because of the limited extent of the results of one's pious activities, one must return to earth. Thus there is no use in endeavoring to travel up and down

in the universe. It is better to chant the holy name of the Lord so that one may become fully purified and eligible to return home, back to Godhead. That is the aim of life, and that is the perfection of life.

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HG Mahatma Das: When I was reading this purport, one thing stood out in my mind. It's the first point Prabhupada makes. Prabhupada says if one chants offensively then one should remedy that by chanting continuously. There's some fine print to that which Prabhupada explained elsewhere. He explained this in a lecture which I will read. This is a lecture from January 15, 1971:

"So even if there are offenses, by simply chanting and being repentant that I have committed this offense unnecessarily or without knowledge, then simply be repentant and go on chanting. Then the stage will come. It's called namabhasa."

What stood out in my mind here is that generally, we give this instruction. If you commit an offense, just go on chanting. Prabhupada makes an important point here. It's not that you just keep chanting and committing the offense. You are repentant for the offense. And Bhaktivinoda Thakura says the same thing. When this instruction is given, to counteract offense one should continue to chant. He also says one should chant in remorse for having committed the offense. Otherwise, one could chant one lakh of names and not make any advancement.

I think it's the same thing when we take initiation. We vow to chant sixteen rounds. And there's one initiation letter where Prabhupada says to chant sixteen good rounds. It's not just chanting, chanting, chanting. Bhaktivinoda Thakura also explains that namaparadha is difficult to overcome. Sin is not difficult to overcome. One "Hare Krishna" can remove more sin than we can ever commit. But namaparadha, or any aparadha, cannot easily go away.

Here he's giving the idea of how to counteract the effects of namaparadha through remorse. Braja Bihari told me once that he had met a scholar, academic, maybe a theologian, who had studied all religions. He said, "Your religion, philosophy, and theology is the best. But you're missing one thing. At least from his perception he thought we were missing one thing. He said, "You're missing confession."

I thought that was interesting because confession is part of our theology. We see it right here in this letter. We see it in Bhaktivinoda Thakura. It's there in the Nectar of Devotion. The devotee is going in front of the Deity and admitting the sins he has committed and telling the Deity, "I am ashamed to admit what I've done." It is there in our practice. It is there in our theology. But it's not so integrated into our practice.

That's one point that has come out of this. I think it's sometimes misunderstood. Actually a powerful way to chant, at least the way I have experienced, is to chant in remorse for the aparadha we have committed to the Holy Name. Ideally, the concept of confession or remorse is to not commit that same mistake again.

Let me read this statement from Jaiva Dharma by Bhaktivinoda Thakura: "Counteracting namaparadha is troublesome. Therefore intelligent persons will carefully avoid committing aparadha."

So it naturally follows that intelligent persons who are carefully avoiding committing aparadha will be remorseful if they commit it because they understand the disastrous results that aparadha produces.

The other point of this verse and purport talks about the special position that the Holy Name has in purifying the heart. Nothing else can purify us like the Holy Name. Specifically, nothing can give prema in the mood of the residents of Vrindavan like the Holy Name.

I want to tell a story. I don't know if many people know this story. It's very sweet. Philosophically it's very interesting. When the devotees first came to India, and they went to Surat, the people in Surat went crazy when they saw the white devotees, right away. It was a huge sensation and a huge shock. The people were very happy. It was the first time they saw white Vaisnavas. You may have seen this picture and not realized it. It's a harinam party and each devotee has like six garlands on them. All the people were coming out garlanding everyone.

The newspaper ran an article, the title of which was something like, "American Vaisnavas chant and dance in ecstasy." Now if you know anything about Sanskrit, you know Bhava is the word for ecstasy. If you've studied Nectar of Devotion or other scriptures that describe Bhava, then you know there are certain symptoms such as hair standing on end, tears coming, and so forth. There were no tears coming from the eyes of devotees, no hairs standing on end, no shivering and so forth. One of the disciples of one of Prabhupada's Godbrothers objected to this title that the American devotees

are chanting and dancing in ecstasy. He objected to the word ecstasy. All of these devotees were very young in Krishna Consciousness.

He wrote a scholarly letter to the editor explaining the developing of devotional service from sraddha to prema. I didn't read the letter, but I can imagine what he said would have been something like, "These devotees are on the level of bhajana-kriya, not bhava."

As you know, bhava comes after anartha nivriti, comes after ruci, after asakti. It's pretty high up there and not normally achievable after one year. We're still working on it after almost fifty years. That was basically the argument that he had given. They read the letter that he wrote to the editor to Srila Prabhupada. The basis of the letter being that they were not in ecstasy. And Prabhupada said, "No. We were in ecstasy." That was a glorification of the power of the Holy Name.

Objectively, the devotees, at the most, were on the level of anartha nivriti, because they were young devotees. Maybe nistha, but not bhava. Prabhupada was saying that devotees in the stage of bhajana kriya or anartha nivriti or nistha, were experiencing ecstasy. That's a glorification of the Holy Name. That bhava can trickle down through the Holy Name to any stage of Krishna Consciousness and we can experience that ecstasy.

We have a very common word that we use in ISKCON. It starts with "e" and ends with "c." Who can guess it? It's an adjective that we use to describe things as being. "That prasadam was ecstatic. That kirtan was ecstatic. That class was ecstatic. Prabhu, you are ecstatic." So are we all sahajiyas? We're not on the stage of bhava, so what are we talking about? We're talking about what the Holy Name is doing in our lives that the other processes of bhakti cannot do.

When I travel, people always ask how the movement spread in the early days. My realization is that it spread by Prabhupada's faith in the Holy Name to purify us. One day I was happily sitting in the San Francisco Temple in 1970. At that point, I had been a devotee for eight months. I had just turned to the ripe age of twenty. I was called into the Temple President's office and told that I would be going to Vancouver to be the Temple President because I was so qualified. Why would Prabhupada allow that? Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

Let me read something. You're probably familiar with this quote but I'll read it again:

"This chanting of sixteen rounds is absolutely necessary. If one wants to remember Krishna and not forget him, of all the regulative principles given by the Spiritual Master, the instruction to chant sixteen rounds is most essential."

Should I read it again? Dramatically? "This chanting of sixteen rounds is absolutely necessary. If one wants to remember Krishna and not forget him, of all the regulative principles given by the Spiritual Master, the instruction to chant sixteen rounds is most essential."

There are two words here that stand out in my mind: of all the instructions, and not essential but most essential.

As many of you know, at least Godbrothers and Godsisters know, when Prabhupada would come to the Temple, sometimes he would ask, "Are you chanting sixteen rounds?" Now I have a behind-the-scenes interesting story for you. You want to hear it? I don't know if you've ever heard this story.

I was traveling on the West Coast in 1976 from San Diego to Alaska. I was in one Temple and the Temple President said to me, "I've been so busy for the last few months that I'm only chanting eight rounds a day. Every letter that Prabhupada has sent me during this time has said, "Make sure you," he didn't say all the devotees, "Make sure you are chanting your sixteen rounds."

Only during that time when he wasn't chanting were the letters he got from Prabhupada saying, "Make sure you chant your sixteen rounds." Srila Prabhupada ki jaya! Now that was quite amazing.

Of course there's another story that most of you know. But I will tell it because it's nice. In 1970, they moved into a new Temple in Los Angeles. They were refurbishing the Temple and getting it ready for Prabhupada to come. And as a side point, in 1970 I researched all of Prabhupada's letters and there you can find where Prabhupada was because he writes on his letter where he sent it from. He was in Los Angeles for seven months in 1970. It was the world headquarters.

So Prabhupada came to the Temple and asked the famous question. "Are you chanting your sixteen rounds?" To which one of our God brothers was honest enough to say, "No, Prabhupada, I'm not."

Now something weird was going on during those days. I was there, so I know. And it was being preached that service was more important than your sixteen rounds. Ok, I have to tell you a side story before I end this story, just to give you a history of ISKCON.

In May of 1970 I joined two of my God brothers to help open the first Temple in San Jose, California. Because the philosophy in those days was that service was more important than your rounds, I want to tell you our schedule. I swear on Bhagavad Gita, this is true. We were going to bed about midnight or 12:30. We would wake up at about 6 or 6:30. We would begin working on refurbishing the Temple until ten o'clock in the evening, at which time we'd take our first meal of the day.

Would you like to join the Hare Krishna movement? And then when we finished our meal we chanted our rounds. I'm just telling you this so you get the idea of the philosophy at that time.

So Bhakta das raised his hand and said, "Prabhupada, I'm not chanting my rounds." Prabhupada asked why. So he explained that they're refurbishing the Temple and he's only getting four hours of sleep a night. So he doesn't really have time to finish his rounds. Many of you know what Prabhupada said, but I'm going to ask a question to those of you who've never heard this story before. The question is what do you think Prabhupada said? You can't raise your hand if you've heard this story before. You can only give an answer if you haven't heard it. Oh, Dravida hasn't heard this story before. What do you think Prabhupada said?

Dravida Das: "Close down the Temple and chant your rounds."

Mahatma Das: Well, indirectly. Prabhupada always said to sleep less, but finish your rounds.

Ok. They're having meetings so I have to end and I'm world famous for going over time. So I will tell just one more story and I got permission to go until 8:50 so we can do questions and comments.

It's a really nice story that Trivikrama Swami tells. He was in Prabhupada's room and Prabhupada was busy so he was waiting to speak to Prabhupada. And while he was waiting, he was chanting japa. So Prabhupada looked up and apparently the way he was chanting, Prabhupada felt he was spaced out. Sometimes you hear someone chanting and you know they're thinking of something else by the way they're chanting. And Prabhupada said, "Are you listening while you're chanting?"

And Trivikrama Swami said, "Yes, Srila Prabhupada I'm listening." And Prabhupada said, "You should listen to every word of the Maha mantra because this chanting is the essence of our philosophy."

I always found that statement so interesting. The practice of chanting, Prabhupada called the essence of our philosophy. Srila Prabhupada ki jaya.

So we've been allotted five more minutes for questions or comments.

Devotee: You mentioned how we use the word ecstatic so often. Ecstatic. Ecstatic Prasad. There is a word called ecstasize. Please everyone start using that word. We need that word.

Mahatma Das: That's the proper word?

Devotee: It is a proper word. It is in the English Oxford Dictionary. It hasn't been popularized in America, but it is a perfectly good word and we need that word. That kirtan ecstasized me or I ecstasized you or something ecstasized me. Ecstasize as a verb.

Mahatma Das: "What are you doing?"

"I'm taking some ecstasize." I'm taking an ecstasized walk. Or a walk that's ecstasized. Well that's a proper term. I'm taking a japa walk that's ecstasizing. Ok. That was an ecstasized statement. It turned the lights out. Anyone else have anything they'd like to ask or comment?

Devotee: Does aparadha have an expiration? Or does it only go away if you take remedial measures? Or do you get the reaction and then you create that. . . aparadha? Does it expire?

Mahatma Das: Do aparadha's expire? Not easily. That's the whole point. They don't expire easily. Some of them don't expire until you reach the stage of bhava.

Devotee: So you don't get a reaction for the aparadha and then you're free?

Mahatma Das: The reaction is you don't get love of Krishna. So when you get love of Krishna you know they've expired. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura said, "Try to chant without committing offense." That's namabhasa. So all you can do is make the effort to not commit the offense.

I want to read something. This is ecstatic. I mean this will be an ecstasized reading. It's a verb! This is ecstasized, is that OK? Pay attention because this might twist your mind a little bit. This is from

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura:

"Unless we extend our best effort earnestly," and now he says something which seems out of place. "and qualify ourselves for the Lord's mercy," He's saying that you have to extend your effort to get mercy. And here everybody thought all we have to do is lay in bed and pray for mercy, right? Then the mercy gets us out of bed. It doesn't work that way. "Unless we extend our best effort earnestly, and qualify ourselves for the Lord's mercy, it is next to impossible that we can be rescued from our fallen condition."

So without mercy, we can't be rescued. We're not doing anything. But we're doing everything to get rescued. It's like you're lost on an island and you wave your red flags. The airplane comes and picks you up. Your effort is the red flag. So the Holy Name takes you. So, effort to overcome aparadha.

One other point. Giriraja Swami asked Prabhupada, "I'm chanting and my mind's going out of control. Is that aparadha?" Prabhupada said, "Are you trying to hear?" And Maharaja said, "Yes, I'm trying." Prabhupada said, "Then it is not offensive." So keep trying.

Devotee: In another place Srila Prabhupada also said about prema. We were talking about bhava, he said that when devotees offer a flower to Krishna, that is love. If you didn't have love for Krishna, why would you offer the flower to Krishna? So how do we understand that?

Mahatma Prabhu: Nice. I think it's the same answer. Because even though you're not on the stage of prema, you can have the seeds of it. Jaiva Dharma says bhakti is just the development of bhava. Even on the stage of sraddha you have a little bhava. It's called sraddha, but it's actually bhava. At each stage you get more bhava until you come to the stage of bhava where it's complete. Prabhupada talked a lot about love in relation to his disciples and his service.

Now we're going to get the icing on the cake.

Keshava Bharati Maharaj: Thank you very much for that class, which established without a doubt the foundation for the Krishna consciousness movement and our own devotional lives. Now there's one chink in your armor. Dancing is also a symptom of ecstasy. Hare Krishna.

Mahatma Das: Oh, definitely! One hundred percent agreed. Prabhupada said the mrdanga players should play in such a way that it makes everyone automatically dance. Dancing is not only ecstasy. He said it increases the ecstasy. Therefore you should dance even if you don't feel like dancing.



Devotee: So you've traveled all over the world. Is it true? How much has it changed from the beginning of the movement where seva was more important? Because in some Temples, especially the small Temples, "Seva, seva, seva." I don't have so much encouragement. I'm concerned that devotees chant their rounds.

Mahatma Das: Gaurangi's asking if it has changed much, because I travel a lot. The reality is that there are hundreds and hundreds of different Hare Krishna movements within ISKCON. Every Temple is different. The biggest problem that I find is that people just chant to get their rounds done. That's it. It's not done from the heart. It's just 32 syllables times 1,728 - you're good to go. That's the basic problem I find.

And in some cultures people are very ritualistic and the more they are ritualistic, the more they adhere to this idea to get this number done. They ask me how long it should take to get the number. Is it six minutes and thirty two seconds or can I do it in six minutes and forty three seconds, is that ok? Everything's mathematics and ritualistic. So I find that's a big part of the problem in some cultures.

Then you get the other cultures where it's all about feeling. You're probably familiar with that culture. It's not about the number, it's about the feeling. One round with feeling is better than sixteen rounds chanted mechanically. But they're both wrong. Sixteen rounds chanted with feeling is better; with heart.

Thank you very much.

Srila Prabhupada, ki jaya!