

The Stages of Bhakti. Odessa. 2004. Lecture 1. En.

I will speak a little about the opening verses of the tenth chapter of the “Bhagavad-gita”. And the reason why I decided to choose this topic ... they are numerous. One of them is that we often underestimate the “Bhagavad-gita”, the fact that we open it and think, “I know everything. Everything is clear – I am not this body, Krishna is God”. You can close the “Bhagavad-gita” and put it on the shelf. But actually, the greatest minds of the mankind have read and re-read the “Bhagavad-gita” over and over again. And we need to do the same, because in the process of such repetition our desire for Krishna becomes stronger and stronger. Krishna Himself explains that in the twelfth chapter of the “Bhagavad-gita” where He says that *abhyasa*, this method (*abhyasa* means repetition or practice), *abhyasa*, or the practice, the constant repetition is the method that will make our desire stronger. That is the very fan which we use to kindle the spark of our desire to go to Krishna. it is impossible to understand where from this spark has flown into our hearts. Only God knows where from! By causeless mercy, we have met the devotees, and the devotees, Srila Prabhupada's books, have instilled in our heart a spark of faith. *Abhyasa* or the constant practice of repetition allows that spark to ignite, allows us to turn it into a flame. That is one of the reasons why we should go back to the “Bhagavad-gita” again and again and try to read in it what we have not seen before, constantly comparing it with our own experience. And today I will speak specifically about this: **about how, in the process of reading the sastras, we will be able to strengthen our faith and about what I should do to attain this.** But about this later.

The second reason why I wanted to specifically speak about that part of the “Bhagavad-gita” (I do not know how many verses I will be able to explain or try to explain) is that it is exactly in those verses that Krishna presents *bhakti* in a systematic way. He began telling us about or disclosing the topic of *bhakti*, about what *bhakti* is, starting with chapter seven. **For what is the meaning of *bhakti*? What is the basic principle of *bhakti*? That God is Who?** A personality. Is not He? That we all know.

But **what does it mean that He is a person?** That He enjoys that is clear. Yes, He does enjoy, and you do develop relationship with Him, but ultimately, in philosophical terms, or in terms of *tattva*, Personality of Godhead means that He possesses energies. That might not be such an obvious truth, but that is the difference between the *mayavadi* philosophy and the *vaishnava* philosophy. *Vaishnavas* emphasize the fact that we have to realize God in conjunction with His energies, and to simultaneously realize in what ways the energies and God interact with each other, what their relationships are. So, starting with chapter seven Krishna begins describing His energies. In chapter seven He says, “I am the taste of water, the prowess of all powerful men, I am the heat in fire, I am the fragrance, the smell of the earth”. He begins explaining the various forms of energies and the personality's relationship to those energies. He begins describing His opulence, His infinite, multifarious opulence. And the tenth chapter in a certain sense concludes the subject, because after that we see the vision of *visvarupa darshana yoga* or the vision of the universal form, when Krishna displays the variety of His forms before Arjuna in order to explain which of those forms is the supreme one. Because a “person” also means a “form”. And chapter eleven explains directly that there is a hierarchy of forms, that there is a universal form, but there is also a personal form, which we should endeavor to develop a relationship with. And the twelfth chapter concludes the subject by explaining the qualities of a devotee, in fact.

But the tenth chapter in a sense takes all that Krishna has explained before, beginning with the seventh chapter: the seventh, the eighth, the ninth chapter, and Krishna explains in it all the same but in a systematic way. And “in a systematic way” means that **Krishna explains the path of *bhakti*, He explains in what way one's development takes place on the path of**

developing one's love of God. And that is exactly why I wanted to talk to all of you here regarding this path. It is always important to speak about the path.

Because if we don't know the Path it can just seem to us that we are walking along it. As some people say, "I am on the path". The problem lies in the fact that they are standing on the path. But the path is there for us to go along on it. One has taken the path but instead just stands on it. Similarly, we have taken the path of *bhakti*, but are standing on it. (laughter) That is why the explanation of the path or the stages of one's progress on the path of *bhakti*, is so important.

I have been recently to Perm where I was giving a lecture. A man surprised me with a question. He was sitting there in the corner, and then said that we used to go by the highway all together, while now we have turned off to some obscure pathway. But the more I thought about his question, the more I realized that he was right. Because the highway is the way all take, right? In a herd. Accordingly, the whole world goes by the large beaten highway, which takes us where? Merciful *Vaisnavas* immediately understood where all are going and laughed happily. (laughter) But that is a fact, there is a well-trodden road, a beaten road and everybody goes along that road in a large herd and God forbid anyone straying from that road, there will be an attempt to bring immediately the man back either by the police or by the other ties that exist in this world. But when a person goes off this well-trodden road, he begins, he treads on a new ground, on a land where nothing is clear. In Tarkovsky's film "The Stalker" that land or the spiritual journey, is symbolically represented with a zone, a zone which a person enters, and where there is danger at every step.

And the spiritual path, as explained by "Katha-upanishad", is like a razor's blade. *Uttistha jagrataprapya varan nibodhata ksurasya dhara nisita duratyaya durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti*. The great sages state, first they say: "Wake up, get up and wake up! Do not sleep anymore! How long can you go on doing this? *Jiva jago jiv jago!* How can you sleep in the lap of the witch Maya?" And then, when they have woken you up, they disclose to you the good news: "Now that you are awake, my dear, you have to take a path that is like a razor's blade". *Durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti*. **This path is sharp and it is very easy to lose one's way.** One can very easily deviate from it, and the slightest deviation may lead to one's cutting oneself. The path, the real spiritual path, of course, and that is another topic of our today's lecture, that a person can be moving along with the crowd on the spiritual path, too, blindly following this path, but this actually means that he is standing still on the path. **But the actual spiritual path is very difficult, and we need to be well aware of the milestones that were left on the path by our predecessors, by those who have walked the path before us. We need to understand very well in what way I should follow this path, so that I do not stray from it, and what stages I should get through so that I actually reach the end of this path.** That is why we can see that this path is described differently in the different scriptures. The *acharyas* thoroughly describe this path so that one can always check oneself, can always consult some criteria as to how one is spiritually advancing and how far one has gone. And we know that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has described this path in the "Siksastaka". The "Siksastaka" describes the way the emotion evolves. In essence the "Siksastaka" is a description of emotional states or moods in which we should *chant* the *mantra* at the various stages of our spiritual development, starting with *sraddha*, faith, and ending with *prema*, love in separation from Krishna. Caitanya Mahaprabhu explains that, starting from the puppy's enthusiasm, which fills one gained *sraddha*, *ceto-darpana-marjanam bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam ... param vijayate sri-krisna-sankirtanam*, after that one passes onto the state of shedding bitter tears *durdaivam idrisam ihajani nanuragahah*, and from that state of realizing one's miserableness one then passes onto a state of complete humility. *Patita pavana hetu* – You have come for the sake of the most fallen and I am most fallen. And then comes the Holy Name, *kirtaniyah sada harih*, and so on.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu explains the emotions that should gradually develop in our heart in the process of chanting if we chant properly, moving from stage to stage. That is a most powerful piece of work – only eight verses describing the entire path.

Recently Radhanatha Maharaj told me an amazing story about one *mayavadi*. It is illustrating the fact that we should be very cautious about *mayavadis*. Often we, being humble *vaishnavas*, say that they are all rascals and scoundrels and we mince no words regarding them, thus demonstrating our ability to respect every living being. But that is how, if we properly understand the “Siksastaka” – just one “Siksastaka”, actually, there is nothing more that one needs to know – if we just properly understand the “Siksastaka” and live in accordance with the “Siksastaka” because the “Siksastaka” is my map, a map of the world of spiritual emotions, my guide, guided by which I will be able to cross that sphere of spiritual emotions and attain the highest and most subtle ones.

This is a story about a famous contemporary *mayavadi*, the successor of Swami Sivananda. For sure many of you who have come to *bhakti* out of their interest in yoga, would know the name. Swami Sivananda was a great *yogi* who has written numerous books and who was the founder of the Society of Divine Love. His successor was Chidananda Saraswati. Swami Sivananda was in fact a *mayavadi*, but may we all be such *mayavadis*. Before his death, when he was dying lying on his death bed, on the day of his death, a few hours before his departure, he called Chidananda Saraswati to his bed and told him, “Today Krishna has come to me. I fully surrendered to Him and now I am absolutely happy”. He said that and in a few hours he died. May God bless all of you die in such a way.

So, that same Chidananda Saraswati *mayavadi*, a preacher of *mayavada*, his successor, was also a person highly respected by the *sadhus* of India, he owns a big *ashram* in Rishikesh. And Radhanatha Maharaj once went to visit him. Chidananda Saraswati made him sit down and asked him to talk about Srila Prabhupada for two hours. And for two hours he listened as Radhanatha Maharaj was telling him about Srila Prabhupada. Every now and then he would jump up, raising his arms, and shout “Jay! Hari Bol!” in complete ecstasy and admiration. When he heard the whole story he said that there had never been, nor there is, a greater *sadhu*. Never. The land of India had never given birth to a greater *sadhu*. When he heard Radhanath Maharaj telling him about Srila Prabhupada’s first meeting with Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati when Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, as soon as he saw Prabhupada, immediately told him: “You are an educated young man and you speak English. You should go to the English-speaking countries and preach there Krishna consciousness in the English language” Chidananda Saraswati jumped up from his seat nearly touching the ceiling and cried out, „That was not just an instruction that was a divine prophecy!” Such was his ecstasy when he heard those words. And when he heard all the story, he said: “I want to tell you a secret”. Radhanatha Maharaj revealed this secret to me, and I am revealing it to all of you.

He said, “When I was a schoolboy, I used to go from home to school and on the way there was a Gaudiya Math temple. I would occasionally go into that temple and bow down to the Deities. And once, it was springtime and it was the full moon of the month of Phalguna”. What is the full moon in the month of Phalguna? Gaura Purnima, when Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was born. “I went into the temple as usual and saw that there was a great celebration. I saw some *sannyasi* there, who was one of the most respected persons, and he was giving a lecture. I sat down and listened to the lecture. I was only 6 or 7 years old and he was speaking about the “Siksastaka”:

ceto-darpana-marjanam bhava-mahadavagni-nivapanam
sreyah-kairava-candrika-vitaranam vidya-vadhu-jivanam

He was explaining one by one all those verses of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's "Siksastaka". He said: "Since then, I had learnt the "Siksastaka" by heart. And ever since, in all my life, whenever I go to the temple and bow down to the Deities, I would recite one verse of the "Siksastaka":

nayanam galad-asru-dharaya
vadanam gadgada-ruddhaya gira
pulkair nichitam vapuh kada
tava nama grahane bhavisyati

Every time I bow down to the Deities, I beg the Deities". Beg for what? – "When will the day come when the hairs of my body will stand on end? When will tears of love flow from my eyes? And when will my voice choke up at the single sound of Your name? That is the *pranama-mantra* with which I bow down to the Deities".

Once again, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has invested in the "Siksastaka" the entire philosophy of Krishna Consciousness. In the "Nectar of Instruction" Rupa Goswami has also described that path although he has described it slightly differently. He has described it in terms of the evolution of spiritual practice. In the second chapter of the first Canto of the "Srimad-Bhagavatam" this same path is described in terms of the transformations that take place in the one's heart. **That is the same path described from different perspectives.** The "Gurvastakam" describes the path that one goes along in terms of development or evolution of one's relationship with the spiritual master. Finally, at the very beginning of Chapter ten Krishna describes the same path and the same stages of spiritual development but in terms of the evolution of one's vision of the world. That is what I will be talking about. **I will be talking about how, gradually, our spiritual practice of chanting the *mantra* Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare should bear fruit in the form of changing our vision of the world, our understanding of the world. And it is not just about some theoretical vision of the world but the real vision of our world. That is what I will be trying to speak about: how one's vision of the world evolves, how one's perception of what he sees around him evolves, on the basis of the first verses of the tenth chapter of the "The Bhagavad-Gita".**

Today I will try to explain the first two verses describing sadhu-sanga which precede sraddha, and sraddha itself. The first and second verses describe exactly those stages. But the most important point that we should understand from the very beginning, is that in the process of our practice our vision of the world should change. Unfortunately, very often our faith remains on the level of the mind, it remains theoretical, our faith does not penetrate deeply. It does not change our eyes, does not change our ears, not to speak about the tongue, the belly and the genitals.

In essence, the process of spiritual development should begin with, "Yes, I perceive something theoretically". But very soon my *achar* should change. Very quickly my perception of the world should change and together with the perception of the world my behavior in this world should also change. Because my behavior in this world is based on the fundamental truths of my perception. The way I see the world, the way I experience the world – I behave accordingly. Therefore the sanskrit root *veda* or the word *veda*, which means "to know" or "knowledge", comes from the verbal root *vid*. And the verbal root means "to know". But the verbal root *vid* also means to see. In the Russian language that has remained the same. In Latin that is *video*. *Vid* means "to see". To know means to see. And chapter ten describes exactly this, in what way the process of gaining knowledge of the world takes place. The knowledge of the world must turn into a change of our vision, a change of our view.

So, starting from the very first verse, Krishna speaks about hearing, and ending with the eleventh verse, which, in fact, concludes this first section, Krishna says that He dispels the darkness of ignorance reigning in our heart. And what does one see in the heart when the darkness of ignorance therein is dispelled? One sees Krishna, yes. *Yam syamasundaram acintya-guna-svarupam* – when the darkness of ignorance is dispelled one begins to see Krishna. And Krishna explains exactly this process, the process of internal knowledge, how, starting from the weak faith in the beginning, I come to see Krishna face to face, because, ultimately, that constitutes our goal. The goal of *bhakti* is to see Krishna, to talk to Him, to swing with Him, to sometimes ride on His back. And sometimes, to carry Him on my back. Who wants to ride on Krishna's back? Who wants to give Krishna a ride on their back?

So, actually, the point is that our vision must change. Who has read the "Bhagavad-gita"? Who knows the "Bhagavad-gita"? Because the only one who can say that he knows the "Bhagavad-gita" is the one who can see Krishna, who can hear Krishna. Only he knows in truth. Arjuna knows the "Bhagavad-Gita" but do we know the "Bhagavad-gita"? Perhaps there is someone who knows it? No, no one, everyone is very shy.

That is why I wanted to talk about this, about the way that our vision should change, or rather, the process of perception. Perhaps sometimes what I say may seem too abstract to you, especially when we dwell on some other spheres, but in reality all those are quite specific things which, if applied properly in our lives, can change our lives entirely.

Krishna, as I said, started this topic – and this is another very interesting point, the subjectmatter of the vision, where He first tells Arjuna, where He first promises Arjuna that he will be able to see Him and will be able to see Him constantly. Who remembers where? In one of the verses of the "Bhagavad-Gita", I will even tell you in which chapter, that is chapter seven. In chapter seven Krishna promises Arjuna that if he knows Him together with something else, then he will be able to see Him constantly. Who knows which that verse is? No one knows. Who has read the "Bhagavad-gita", once again, please? (laughter)

Actually, that is, once again, a very important point. Let's ponder over this for a while. That is the last verse of the seventh chapter of the "Bhagavad-gita", where Krishna says:

sadhibhutadhidaivam mam
sadiyahajnam ca ye viduh
prayana-kale 'pi ca mam
te vidur yukta-cetasah

He says that the one who knows Him, the one who has comprehended Him together with what? Those who know Him as the *adhibhuta*, the *adhidaiva* and the *adiyahajna*. *Adhiatma*, *adhibhuta* and ... sorry, *adhiatma* too, but in this case, He says, *adhibhuta*, *adhidaiva* and *adiyahajna*. What does that mean? Here in this verse Krishna emphasizes again that one must understand God together with His energies. One must understand how God is where? What does *adhibhuta* mean? *Adhibhuta* means that God is present in the hearts of all living beings.

What does *adhidaiva* mean? That is God who is present or who is acting through what? Through the demigods or the forces of the material nature. And what does *adiyahajna* mean? That is God who dwells within my heart. He is the One who yields me the fruits of all the sacrifices that I perform. He is the One who guides me throughout my life, the One who gives me all that I want. The One who fulfills all my desires. *Adyahajna* is the One who fulfills all my wishes. I want something and I begin making some 'halava' and as a result Krishna says,

"Okay, fine." It is not that I make it, because in the end it is Him who will give it to me. *Adhibhuta, adhidaiva and adhiyajna.*

And Krishna says that the one who knows Him in that form, the one who knows that He is in his heart and that He gives him all that he wants, that He fulfills all his desires, the one who knows that He is present in all the forces of the nature: the Sun, the Moon, the yesterday's rain, that He acts through them. And the one who knows that He is in the heart of all the living beings, he is able to do what? To see Him when? He says, even at the time of death. If I can see God even at the time of death, that means what? What does Krishna want to say? Krishna is not that stupid to explain in detail that you are mortal. In the „Bhagavad-Gita” Krishna reveals more interesting truths... We all think that now I cannot see God, but at the time of death I'll see Hare Krishna and I will see Him, right? Who thinks so? Confess, please.

Krishna says that you will be able to see Him even at the time of death. Because that is the most difficult thing to do. The hardest thing is to see God at the time of death. Who can see God at the time of death? Only the one who has seen Him during his life. The one who has remembered Him all his life. It is not that all of a sudden, by some miracle, I have not remembered Krishna all my life, but instead have been doing some brum-brum-brum, have been doing God knows what, I have had my own priorities, my own plans, my own priorities, and then, at the time of death, somehow or other I strain myself and say, "Hare Krishna" and Krishna comes running to my call. Like Ajamila, yes. But in the meantime I can enjoy with a prostitute (laughter), like Ajamila. *Mahajana yena gata sa pantah* – one must follow in the footsteps of great men.

Krishna points out, "even" at the time of death, because that is the most difficult thing to do. And here, at this moment, He is referring to one simple point, that the one who has learned to see the manifestation of God in all living beings, in the forces of nature, and in one's heart, in one's life, to see God who provides everything that one has, the one who has learned to see God in all those manifestations such a person only will be able to see God at the time of death. No one else, that is actually the point.

There is a story about Srila Prabhupada. When he was dying, one of the last phrases which he uttered on his deathbed in Vrindavan... His body was practically not obeying him anymore, his hand was shaking, but he started waving his hand and his disciples crowded around him, and he spoke some hardly audible words that he could hardly utter. Those words were, "Krishna is in the heart of every living being. The one who sees that is in Krishna consciousness". Only the one who sees that, the one who has realized that, is really Krishna conscious. And that person only will remember that at the time of death, otherwise at the time of death ... Has anyone had a toothache? Does toothache help us remember Krishna? It doesn't help us remember Krishna, it makes us cry, "Ah-ah-ah! Krishna, what are you punishing me for?"

But remembering Krishna does not mean being angry at Him. Remembering Krishna means remembering that He is dwelling in all living beings. Actually, pain bewilders one. If the pain is too intense, and at the time of death one experiences unbearable pain, the pain of parting with one's body, then it is extremely difficult to remember God. That is the reason why King Kulashekhar says, that at the time of death it will be extremely difficult to remember God and that now he can somehow or other remember Him. Therefore he prayed for a chance to die that very moment. While we are thinking exactly the opposite. We think: "Thanks God, I do not remember God now, therefore give me the opportunity to enjoy now, and at the time of death, I somehow or other will remember You". That is the point, that one must try to develop a vision of God, when he will be able to see God in all living beings. And for that purpose we must first of

all understand the greatness of God, or in other words, the way in which God manifests in this world.

This is another very important point, because we are often accused by our opponents, or our enemies – well, let's not call them enemies, let's call them ideological opponents – in particular, by the Christianity, they accuse us of pantheism. We are all pantheists. What does a pantheist mean? No, not monotheism, not idolaters. You are even poor pantheists. Yes, that God is everywhere, that God is present in the nature.

Like recently there was a great meeting in Pushkin's Square. And out of it came an Orthodox priest with a big cross and started speaking from the platform ... No, no, I am sorry, that was not a priest. That was Mr. Lebedev, whom you have probably seen in the debates. Mr. Lebedev, who is not very distinguished for theological intelligence, began saying, "They are rascals, they worship the devil, because their God is dissolved in the nature". Is that so? Is our God dissolved in nature? He is both dissolved and non-dissolved, correct. We were not born yesterday. (laughter) We have ready answers to everything.

But the essence, once again, in these opening verses of chapter ten of the "Bhagavad-gita" is that Krishna is trying to explain the proper vision of this world – in what way our vision should evolve and how God should first be undissolved, then should be dissolved, and then again should be undissolved; how to understand the incomprehensible; how to understand the unattainable God, to see Him in the nature and see that God is non-different from that nature. The *chatur-shloki* of the "Bhagavad-gita" are exactly about that. Four verses beginning with the eighth and ending with the eleventh, explain the essence of the "Bhagavad-gita", the meaning of "Bhagavad-gita". I will try to speak specifically about that, about how this evolution takes place, and about how it should take place together with us in the process of our attaining Krishna. And specifically about death. Again, why is Krishna giving the example with the death? Why is Krishna saying that even at the time of death we will be able to remember Him? When do we forget God? When are we oblivious of Him? When we feel bad we remember. And when do we forget about Him? When we are sitting in a "Srimad-Bhagavatam" class and we feel bad, we do remember God. When we *chant* we are trying to remember Him. But when we enjoy, when we are experiencing some material enjoyment, we forget about Him.

And this is a very significant point because our faith in God should be demonstrated in our every action. We may pretend that we believe in God, we may be dressed accordingly, have a *tilaka* and all the other designations. We may have chanting beads in our hand with a protruding finger, a special finger that we use to accuse and curse others, so everything is right. With one finger we *chant*: "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna ... and with the other we say: "You are bad, you are bad, you are a rascal". Is that so? Everything is possible. We may pretend, we may very nicely imitate a devotee, but when it comes down to it, when we are faced with a real dilemma when we have to make some difficult decision. When, for example, we find some money that belong to someone else and we know that it is someone else's, the first thought that comes to our mind is: "I need it more". (laughter) And do we remember Krishna at that moment or not? We do remember, yes. "It is Him who has sent it to me. Krishna has fulfilled my desire. I wanted to enjoy in this way and Krishna has sent me this, thus fulfilling my desire". Or in some other way. The point is that we forget and we turn into hypocrites. Faith in Krishna should manifest, once again, in our vision, and our vision should manifest in our behavior. And the only time when we will not be able to deceive anyone, not even ourselves, when we will definitely will not be able to deceive ourselves as to whether we believe in God or not, is at the time of death. Actually, at the time of death the way we have lived our lives will be subject to examination. Until then it is not very clear whether we believe in God, or not.

There is a story, I have heard it in Jagannatha Puri. It is about a devotee, Nimai Charan. He was a great devotee, and he used to always sing *bhajans*. He would glorify Lord Jagannath without end. He used to tour Orissa and preach, sing his *bhajans* and people would be moved to tears, people used to worship him. And once he was going to the temple of Jagannath, he was just entering the temple, when someone called out to him and said: “Hey, Nimai Charan! Are you going to the temple? Why should you need to go to the temple, don’t you see God everywhere? You are always singing the glories of God, you are always feeling God. Why would you need to go to any temple? Isn’t God present everywhere! Aren’t you are a great devotee?!” Nimai Charan turned to him, his eyes turning big and angry, and said, “No one has the right to call me a great devotee until I die with God’s name on my lips. Then you can call me that. Until then, it is not clear yet whether I am a great devotee or not. I may be just pretending”.

In other words, I may pretend very nicely, I may act in that way, I may sing very nicely and very beautifully. I may do this, I may do that, I may *chant* and still be a pretender. But if I die with God’s name on my lips – that will be the only case when we can be sure that all our actions have borne a real fruit. This Nimai Charan died in 1984 during the Ratha-yatra. When the Ratha-yatra was proceeding and millions of people had gathered in Puri to see Lord Jagannath riding through the streets, Nimai Charan was asked to sing a *bhajan*. He began singing a *bhajan*, praying to Lord Jagannath, “*Jagannatha swami nayana patagami bhava tu me*” – appear in front of me – and that very moment he died, at that same moment.

Or Gour Govinda Maharaj, he was speaking about Krishna and when he started describing Shrimati Radharani seeing Krishna after a long separation, Her eyes meeting Krishna’s eyes, he uttered the phrase: “Her eyes met His yes” and at that point he left this world.

Until that happens no one has the right, as Nimai Charan has said, to call us great devotees. That is exactly why Krishna is saying *prayana kali*. Who will be able to think of Him at the very last moment? Only the one who has learnt to see God everywhere. Only the one who is reminded of God by this entire world. Only the one who, whenever meeting a person – whatever that person might be, even a so called enemy or someone who insults him – would see those insults as reminders of God and not of his false ego. That is why Krishna begins chapter ten with the words:

bhuya eva maha-baho
srinu me paramam vacah
yat te 'ham priyamanaya
vaksyami hita-kamyaya

Krishna says to Arjuna in the first verse *srinu me paramam vacah*. He says *bhuya eva maha-baho*, o great archer, o mighty-armed one. *Bhuya eva maha-baho srinu me paramam vacah*. *Bhuya* means “again”, He asks him to listen to His supreme speech again. “Again” means that He has already explained that to us in the seventh, eighth and ninth chapters. Why should He repeat that again? Why should we hear about it again? (I am examining you) Yes, so that our faith becomes stronger. *Bhuya eva maha baho* – hear that again. *Srinu me paramam vacah* - My supreme speech. I am telling you this *yat te ham priyamanayam* – for you are very dear to Me. *Vaksyami hita-kamyaya* – I wish you well, it is for your benefit.

Actually Krishna explains here, in this verse, the way faith is being born in one’s heart. By virtue of what is faith born in one? By virtue of hearing. What precedes all our spiritual development, what is there just at the beginning of our spiritual development? *Sadhu-sanga*. We need to meet with the devotees, we need to hear the devotees speak, we need to hear the devotees’ words.

And how has faith, in the majority of cases, arisen in our hearts? We have met the devotees and we have read Srila Prabhupada's books.

I will speak a little today – I do not know whether I will be able to explain that properly – about that mysterious inception of faith when one meets the devotees and listens to them. *Srinu me paramam vacah* – listen to My supreme speech for it is for your benefit. When we are listening to the devotees a miracle is taking place in our heart – *sraddha* is being born.

Yesterday Niranjana Maharaj, quoting Bhaktivinoda Thakur, compared *bhakti* to the birth of a little girl. Suddenly, in our heart, this little girl takes birth and begins crying, “Ah-ah-ah!” We hear the words of a devotee and faith is born within us. Sometimes weak, sometimes strong. Sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker. And I would like to speak a little today about the nature of that faith. Because faith may also be false. Faith is one of the Lord's energies. *Sraddha* is *shakti*. *Shraddha* is one of the Lord's *shaktis*, and all the *shaktis* of the Lord fall into two categories. The *shaktis* exist together with the Lord Himself in the spiritual world. They surround Him, they serve Him. Who are those *shaktis*? The *shaktis* are the energies of the Lord, who are intended to serve Him. And *Sraddha* Devi is one of the Lord's energies, who serves the Lord in the spiritual world. But the same energies also exist in the material world. What form do they take in the material world? The form of *maya*, an illusory form. Besides *Shraddha* Devi, or the genuine faith, who is constantly serving the Lord in the spiritual world, there is also *maya-sraddha*, or the illusory faith that exists here, in the material world.

And we need to understand very well from the very beginning, what distinguishes the genuine faith from the false faith, what kind of a faith we have in our hearts. Because that is what Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur says and Jiva Goswami explains the same thing in his “*Bhakti-sandarbha*”, that there is a *sastriya-sraddha*, or *sraddha*, that has appeared as a result of the legitimate process of studying the *sastras*. As a result of the proper process of studying the *sastras* true faith may arise, or *sastriya-sraddha*. And as a result of the association with not so pure devotees *loukika-sraddha* may arise. *Loukika-sraddha* means “imposed faith” or faith arising from imitation. When we are in the association of devotees ... We are all devotees here, aren't we? Who is a devotee here? Raise your hands, please. What, not a single devotee? Ah, there, one has raised a hand.

When we associate with devotees, what else might be the cause of our faith? Or, what is the cause of our actions? We are in the association of devotees, we have moved into the temple, or we live in some community, then there is what? There is a society, and in any society there is always social pressure. Everyone is *chanting*, so, I also have to *chant*, right? Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, right? Everyone wears these clothes so I also have to wear them. And very often our faith is deprived of a genuine basis. We may fail to notice how our faith turns into *maya-sraddha*. We have joined the society of the devotees because we had some desire for a true faith. Despite that, however, very quickly that faith of ours may turn, or degrade, into an imitation faith.

Has anyone noticed, honestly, such processes in themselves? The way faith can degrade. Instead of inspiring one to surrender to Krishna more and more, it begins turning into a kind of a ritual that I perform just because everyone else does so. Has anyone noticed such processes in themselves?

This is what may happen. It is therefore essential to understand that *srinu me paramam vacah*, when Krishna says: “Listen to Me”. Or listen to whom else? Whose speeches are equal to the hearing from Krishna and are equally capable of generating a genuine faith? Yes, those of a pure devotee. We have to listen to Krishna, Krishna's words in the “*Bhagavad-gita*”, and to the

words of a pure devotee, over and over again, so that faith would begin acquiring its proper form.

I will dive into greater details. But of course, even a momentary contact with the devotees will evoke a surge of faith. And even a momentary contact with the devotees *lava-matra sadhu-sanga sarva-siddhi haya* – can bring about the appearance of all perfections in a person. But how? We should understand the right process. Ultimately, one should still ... Someone may say, “I have already come into a contact, *lava matra*, with the devotees. And that’s it, everything is secured for me”. Right? “Everything is fine, I can do nothing, *sarva-siddhi haya*”. We need to understand very well what the process is that should take place, what the process of that faith’s evolution is.

In the Puranas there is a story, a very interesting one, which illustrates the potency of *sadhu-sanga*.

A righteous king had a brother. And his brother was a rowdy person, a drunkard, a lecher, a strange person. The king, however, his elder brother, was a very nice pious person. And once he was visited by Narada. Narada Muni, as we know, would frequently call in on kings, the *rajarisis*, and would talk to them, discuss various matters. The king was delighted that Narada Muni was visiting him and in the end, when leaving, Narada Muni said to him: “I would like to fulfill any wish of yours”. The king began asking him: “You know, save my brother, talk to him. I know that you have turned Mrigari into a pure devotee, that you have turned a snake into a pure devotee, that Prahlada Maharaja has turned into a pure devotee in the womb of his mother only because he has listened to you. The potency of your words has no limit. A transformation of heart takes place in anyone who hears your words and one begins to have faith. Go to my brother and try to convert him”.

And Narada Muni decided, “Let me do it. Mrigari was converted, now let me visit this brother of his”. So, he went to see his brother. The brother was sitting and drinking. I suspect that he was either a Russian or a Ukrainian. (laughter) He was fond of drinking. And when Narada Muni came in, the first thing he did, being a cultured man, educated in the Vedic culture, is to invite him and say “Please, take a seat”. Narada Muni sat down and immediately began to preach to him, “What are you doing to yourself? Why are you drinking?” As soon as the man heard that, he flew into a rage. He grabbed the bottle that was there, and dashed after Narada Muni. Narada Muni run away trying to escape, thanks God he has got fast legs. It was with a great difficulty that the escaped running off into a safe distance. The man was a little staggering as he was drunk, thanks to which Narada managed to escape. So, from a safe distance, he shouted to him, knowing that he must be able to hear at least something. Narada Muni shouted to him: “When you will be dying...” As soon as the man heard that he started chasing after him again. For that is why people drink – they want to forget the fact that they will have to die one day. Nevertheless, Narada Muni shouted to him: “When you stand up before Yamaraja’s court and Yama will be judging you, ask him what results come from the association of devotees”. The man was drunk, he was chasing after Narada Muni, but just in case he memorized those words.

Many years passed by and ultimately he died, and of course, the *yamadutas* brought him before Yamaraja. He appeared before Yamaraja, his time came up and his case was to be heard. The prosecution witness, Chitragupta, read out all the sins he had committed. He had some lawyer but the lawyer had nothing to say. However, since he came from a noble family and had some other merits, Yamaraja felt somewhat sorry for him, and he said to him “Well, all right, all right”. In any case in accordance with the rules of the subterranean judgment which takes place after death, one is given an opportunity to speak and defend oneself, or to ask for something before

his death or punishment. Therefore Yamaraja said, “Well, you will have to spend a hell of a long time in hell, but maybe you have something to say before that?”

At that moment the man remembered – Narada Muni’s words had imprinted on his heart. For Narada Muni’s words are not pronounced by the tongue or the vocal cords, they are pronounced by the heart. So, Narada Muni cried out, as Krishna says here: *vaksyami hita-kamyaya*. *Vaksyami hita-kamyaya* – it is for your benefit! In the first verse Krishna explains that because He wished Arjuna well, He wanted to repeat that to him again. He begged him to try to understand for that was for his own benefit, not for Krishna’s. And that sincerity it remained in the heart of that man, and he did remember. And the question that Narada Muni asked him to ask emerged in his memory, and he asked: “Please, tell me what results come from *sadhu-sanga*?”

Yamaraja heard the question and said: “That is a very complicated question, because we have no *sadhus* here. And those who associate with *sadhus* generally do not come here. I know what the results of drunkenness are, I know what the results of debauchery and of cheating are. I know all those results. But what the results of *sadhu-sanga* are I do not know. Let’s go and inquire about that of Brahma. He is the creator of this universe, he knows”.

They flew to Brahma. Brahma was there creating something. Brahma constantly meditates and creates, he is busy. So, when they came and stood up before him, together with the king, Yama said, “Here is a king who asked me a question that I cannot answer. I cannot quite understand it because I know that it gives surprising results, but I do not know what exactly. Brahma, tell me, please, what the results are that *sadhu-sanga* yields”.

Brahma rolled his eyes. He said: “I cannot describe that, for the results of *sadhu-sanga* are beyond this world, and I am focused on this particular world. I create this world and all the planets within this world, so how should I know what the results of *sadhu-sanga* are?! The results of *sadhu-sanga* are there, far beyond. Go to Shiva on Kailash. Maybe Shiva will be able to explain that to you”.

They went to Kailash and approached Shiva along with that soul, and Yama said again, “This man asked me a question. We asked Brahma but he does not know, neither do I. Shiva, tell me: what are the results of *sadhu-sanga*?” Shiva said, “Look at my associates! Those are yakshas, ghosts, ghouls, vampires. And you are speaking of *sadhu-sanga*! How should I know what the results of *sadhu-sanga* are?! Vishnu alone will know that”.

So, all together they went to Vishnu. They went to the Vaikuntha planet and stood before Vishnu and Yama said, “Vishnu, Shiva does not know ...” It was Shiva who took them there because Yama himself has no access there. Siva took them there and together they went. Shiva said: “I want to know, tell me what the results of *sadhu-sanga* are?” Vishnu smiled and said: “*Sadhu-sanga* results in all one’s sins being washed away and one’s finding oneself in Vaikuntha. And the king, all his sins have been washed away. He has found himself in Vaikuntha. That’s all. So, he is to stay here. And you depart and continue with your respective service”.

That is *lava-matra sadhu-sanga sarva-siddhi haya*, when one hears a pure devotee the seed of faith is sown in one’s heart.

I have a few minutes left and I would like to explain in more detail how this works. I was also going to tell you a story from the “Katha-upanishad” today with its sacramental meaning but, probably I will not be able to do that today. But today I wanted to speak about the way in which

the sound coming out of the mouth of an *acharya*, or Krishna, or a pure devotee, generates faith in one's heart and what kind of a faith it is.

That is a complicated question. Actually, Krishna explains it, faith itself is explained in the next verse where Krishna says:

na me viduh sura-ganah
prabhavam na maharshayah
aham adir hi devanam
maharshinam ca sarvasah

Krishna says that no one knows Him. What does faith mean in the first place? What does faith in *bhakti* mean, the true faith that has to appear within us as a result of listening to a pure devotee? What kind of faith is that? We need to develop faith in what? No, not in the holy name. The faith that by dint of this I will be able to achieve everything else. The faith that there is nothing higher than the path of *bhakti*. All the rest will come by itself. The faith that when I have *bhakti*, by the means of *bhakti* I will be able to attain the highest goal. The faith that this is the highest path. This is what is explained in the "Caitanya-caritamrita", *sraddha-sabde visvasa*. The word *sabda* means *visvasa* or the firm conviction that if I practice *bhakti*, *bhakti* is superior to anything else. That the path of *bhakti* is the highest path. That is the faith which must arise in us as a result of our association with the devotees. And in the next verse Krishna says that no one really knows Him, "Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin or opulences". What does He want to tell to us when He says "Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin or opulences"? Yes, that's right. Nitai Chaitanya has given the correct answer. What does it mean that no one really knows Him? If no one knows Him – neither the demigods nor the great sages then what are we doing here? Maybe we should pack up and go home? This means that He can be understood by practicing *bhakti*.

Krishna says that the highest process of acquiring knowledge is that of *bhakti*. That all the other processes, the material processes of acquiring knowledge, all other ways of gaining some knowledge ... People want to know something. People investigate, they study various subjects, they study management, law and other various sciences in their universities. But the highest path of knowledge is the process of gaining knowledge through *bhakti*. When, by dint of practicing *bhakti*, we become eligible for the Lord's mercy. By the Lord's mercy we can know Him. Krishna points this out, He emphasizes that there is no other way, that He is *atindriya*. Krishna says that He cannot be known through the sense organs for acquiring knowledge. We are used to acquire knowledge through what? Through the eyes, the ears, the tongue. Through what else? Through the hands, the legs, the genitalia. There are various interesting knowledge acquiring processes in this world. All those are *indriyas*. And through the *indriyas* we gain knowledge about or interact with the world. But to know God, despite the fact that He is everywhere, is impossible through the senses. How can He be realized? By virtue of what can He be attained? By virtue of *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is the qualification. And it begins with faith. Faith is the qualification needed to begin comprehending God, to begin the process of realizing God. But how does this realization take place by virtue of *bhakti*? By what process does faith come to us? That is the most important question that I still cannot approach. I would like to bring you as close to it as possible.

So, what is faith? Faith itself, what is its nature? Why do we suddenly begin to have faith? In the material world this process is clear. If someone tells us something that we should believe, how can we verify it? Through the senses. Faith must imply the existence of some way of verifying it. Trust but verify. Here Krishna says He is incomprehensible, therefore one can know Him only

through love or faith. Faith is the inception of love, or rather, it is the qualification whereby the path of *bhakti* begins.

Tyutchev has also spoken about that. We all know that if something cannot be comprehended then it can only be comprehended by virtue of faith. Tyutchev has spoken thus about Russia, he said that we cannot understand Russia with our mind, we cannot measure it with a common ruler, it has a special feature – one can only believe in it. In the second verse Krishna says exactly the same thing, that it is impossible to understand Him with one's mind. Neither the great sages know Him nor the demigods – no one knows Him. That means that one can only believe in Him.

The process of God realization must begin with faith. But how is faith born? What is the actual process that gives rise to faith? Where does faith come from? Here I would like to resort to Madhvacharya's help. Madhvacharya explains that in an amazing way. Madhvacharya scrutinizingly analyzes the process of verifying the truth, in other words, the way one can know whether something is true.

Like, for example, I am telling you now that Krishna is God. Is Krishna God? How do you know? Only because I am saying that? Who believes that Krishna is God, because I am saying that? (laughter) Why are you applauding? That is the wrong answer!

There is a story telling how Srila Prabhupada gathered his disciples at the Kumbha-mela. Srila Prabhupada said, "How do you know that Krishna is God?" And someone said: "Srila Prabhupada, Krishna is God, because that's what's written in the "Bhagavad-gita"". Is that the correct answer? Srila Prabhupada said, "The "Bhagavad-gita" is just a book and one may write anything in a book! Paper will endure. There are so many books in which it is written that Krishna is not God! Why do we say that we accept the "Bhagavad-gita" and do not accept the other books?" Then someone raised his hand and said, "Srila Prabhupada, Krishna is God because you say so!" And everyone exclaimed: "Jay Srila Prabhupada!" Srila Prabhupada said, "I'm an old man. What do you expect of an old man? Whatever he says anyone will believe. Who would take an old man seriously?"

Therefore, that is the wrong answer, because we must have some organ to verify the truthfulness of something. I am joking a lot but actually I am talking about very serious things. Internally we should have some realization or discrimination of the truthfulness of something. We should have a special organ for verifying the truthfulness of a statement. Like when we speak of some material truths or material situations, material postulates, we have some organs by which we can verify them. What are those organs? Our senses. When we speak of God, of God's existence, of the existence of some other phenomena we have no organs by which we can verify that.

Or do we have some, and what is it? The soul, correct. But can we know God just through our soul? We can't, we can't. Why can't we know God through the material senses? But what does it mean that they are material? They are material and yet we perceive some spiritual objects through them. We cannot understand God through our senses, because how do the senses perceive? They are material, but how do they work? Through their contact with what? No, not with the objects, the objects are dead. Do you feel anything at night? Yes, the soul is a particle of the Lord's *cit-sakti*, it is a particle of the Lord's spiritual energy. And the soul imparts that spiritual energy to the senses. It is only because of the senses being imparted with spiritual energy that they can experience the world. Because the process of cognition is fundamentally spiritual. The senses themselves are material, therefore we cannot know God by the senses. But can we know God through the soul? Both the soul and God are spiritual. No, we can't. It is

because the soul is small and God is great. The soul is spiritual and basically it can, but nevertheless, it is unable to comprehend God, it is unable to understand God in any event, for it is smaller than Him.

That is the reason why Krishna says that no one can understand Him. Nevertheless, He can reveal Himself to the soul. And this process of revelation or inner spiritual knowledge, as you correctly said here, that the heart, or soul, can internally feel God. Inside we can feel God. How can we feel God inside? Yes, listen once again carefully.

The soul within is the organ of cognition. That is the organ of spiritual cognition, and Madhvacharya calls this organ *saksi*. That soul already knows certain truths. We all know some truths that cannot actually be verified empirically. What are those truths, for example? The fact that I exist ... No, on the contrary, the fact that I am not mortal. Who feels that he is immortal? Everyone does? Who thinks that he is going to die? Who believes that he will die? No one does. Do not tell me that, I do not believe it. Can you imagine that you have died? Because "I am dead" means that I do not exist anymore, but I do exist! Is it possible that I do not exist? No, it is impossible that I do not exist, I do exist.

In fact, the soul knows: "I am, I exist". Internally. And that is spiritual knowledge. Do you need someone to prove to you that you exist? No, you don't. If someone will be proving to you that you do not exist, will you believe him? No, you will not. You might believe that intellectually but internally you will not believe. The soul knows that it does exist. What else does the soul know? Do you need someone to prove to you whether you feel good or bad? Should I now start explaining to you whether you are happy? Like sometimes a devotee comes and sees another devotee sitting somewhat grievous. A cheerful devotee comes to him and says, "Hey, *Prabhu!* Chant Hare Krishna and be happy! You're in *maya*. The soul is blissful by nature".

The soul knows internally that there are certain truths that come from within. And the understanding of any truth must come only from within. And what happens when we hear from Krishna or a pure devotee? What is going on in our soul? Another truth is being born in our soul – the fact that God exists.

That is actually *sraddha*. *Sraddha* consists in the fact that I listen to a pure devotee and inside, in my heart, I know, "That is the way it is!" Does anyone remember the first time you read the "Bhagavad-gita"? What did you feel? Has anyone understood the "Bhagavad-gita" the first time? With all those *adhidaiva*, *adhiyagya*, *karma*, reincarnation, yoga of taking meals. What is the feeling that one gets? "That's it! That is exactly the way it is!" We are just reminded of something that we have always known. In fact, internally, in our heart we have always known that. And sometimes we listen to a pure devotee or to Krishna. As Krishna says here *srinu me paramam vacah* – listen to Me again and again. And you will have the feeling that that's the way it is and that it just cannot be otherwise, that yes, Krishna is God. Therefore, why is Krishna God? Because that's the way it is! (laughter) Because it cannot be otherwise, because I can feel it inside.

It is very important how Srila Prabhupada replied to this question. I feel that Krishna is God, because I chant Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, and I feel that that's the way it is! Krishna is God! Actually, those are self-evident truths that come from within. And to listen to them means faith. *Sraddha* or true faith (and since my time is up), I will end here, I will not speak of the symptoms of the true faith that distinguish it from the false faith, I will speak about that tomorrow. But *sraddha*, or true faith is the experience that as soon as we have heard the sound of a pure devotee, or the sound of the Holy Name, we have suddenly realized – that's the way it is, we have opened ourselves to

it, our internal organ has said: "That's it! I do exist, God does exist!" And when I study the *sastras*, I have to bring my understanding of the *sastra* to the state of that truth being self-evident to me. When I study it, when I take some postulate in Srila Prabhupada's books I should pour over that postulate and think, "Is that so or not?" until I realize that that's the way it is! That has nothing to do with the process of auto-suggestion. Again, that is a profound internal mystical process of unfolding the truth from within when all the truths contained in the scriptures must become as clear as the truth that I exist and the truth that I'm happy. Attaining that will mean that we have attained faith.

I have only briefly outlined the process. Tomorrow I'll talk about it in more detail. I'll speak about what it means to study the *sastras* and what it means to develop faith in the process of listening to a pure devotee.

Thank you. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

Disc 58, Stages of Bhakti, 2nd lecture, 26.08.2004, Odessa, duration: 66 min.

Yesterday we finished the description of faith on a very happy note: Krishna is God, because that's the way it is! But the mistake that we can very easily make is that at the beginning that is based on blind faith.

Today I will talk exactly about the way faith, from a blind one turns into a sighted one, and about the way the next process takes place after that, how one moves to the next stage of his spiritual development, *anartha-nivritti* (inaudible 1.45)

In the beginning I would like to go back and clarify a little what we said yesterday. If you remember, we started by explaining a little the last verse of the seventh chapter of the "Bhagavad-gita", where Krishna says that the one who knows Him together with the *adhibhuta*, *adhidaiva* and *adhiyajna*, who understand these three things, will be able to remember Him even at the time of death, will be able to concentrate his intelligence on Him.

I would like to ask you again the question: What does it mean to know Krishna together with the *adhibhuta*, *adhidaiva* and *adhiyajna*? What does this specifically mean in relation to us? In what situation will I be able to always remember Krishna?

"If I could see Him in nature".

"By serving Him"

That's closer – when I realize my place. Let's think once again about what *adhibhuta* means. What *adhibhuta* means with regards to our material body or to me, as a living being? *Adhibhuta* is my material body. What does *adhidaiva* means with regards to me? Those are the demigods, yes, the demigods with regards to the universe, with regards to me because the universe, the macrocosm, is reflected in the microcosm, in my body. Where are the demigods situated in my body? In the senses, yes. The demigods, as explained in the third Canto of the "Srimad-Bhagavatam" preside over all my senses. *Adhibhuta* is the matter, the direct material of which my body is created. *Adhidaiva* are the senses through which I perceive the world. And what is *adhiyajna*? That's Paramatma, Krishna, who is inside me and who fulfills all my desires, or not all of them. Sometimes all of them, sometimes not.

I was recently told of a devotee who had Jagannatha Deities. When they would not fulfill his desires, he would begin arguing with Them, he would beat and punish Them. Anyway, *adhiyajna* is the One who accepts the fruits of my sacrifices and rewards me in accordance with what I do and how I work.

What does it mean in reality to understand Krishna together with these three aspects? What does that mean, again, with regards to me? That I should understand what? That I depend on Krishna. To understand Krishna together with all these three aspects means that I depend on Krishna in all my actions. That ultimately my senses are dependent on Krishna, that my material body is dependent on Krishna, and that my fate too is entirely dependent on Krishna. In other words, anything that I can do depends on Krishna. And what I cannot do is also dependent on Krishna. What I can restrain from is also dependent on Krishna. When one is fully aware, every single moment of one's life, of his dependence on God, then one will be able to do what? To remember God. As long as I do not feel my dependence upon God, can I forget about Him? Yes, I can. But if I all the time, every single moment of my life, am aware that I am depend on Him, that my fate depends on Him, that my body depends on Him, that my speech depends on Him, that what I can say now is actually the power that God has given me and that should He wish so, He will deprive me of my speech. As Srila Prabhupada used to say, the scientists are proving with their tongues that there is no God, not realizing that they can speak only thanks to God allowing them to do so.

Anyway, one must realize one's dependence on God in all aspects of one's life. And in this case only *prayana kali* – one will be able to see God at the time of death. And not only at the time of death but during all his life. God will be everywhere and always in front of such a person. And faith is a very important point that Krishna explains in more details here in these verses of the “Bhagavad-gita” that we are now studying with you.

After that I said that the first verse of the tenth chapter, where Krishna tells Arjuna:

bhuya eva maha-baho
srinu me paramam vacah
yat te 'ham priyamanaya
vaksyami hita-kamyaya

points out that the spiritual path can begin only with one thing – with hearing. With hearing of what? No, not the “Srimad-Bhagavatam”. Yes, with the hearing of a *sadhu*, of a holy man, and of Krishna Himself. But there is a very important aspect here, which indicates the success of this type of hearing. Why is it exactly the *sadhu* who can touch our hearts? Krishna is explaining that in this verse. Why is it only the *sadhu*'s speech, or the words of the *sadhu*, the sound coming from the lips of *the sadhu* that can touch our heart and transform it?

Because he wishes us well. Yes, that is the correct answer. Not because he knows the truth. He may know the truth, but what does that have to do with me? As in the Hamlet there are verses (? 08.34) What is the benefit for me? He may know the truth but here Krishna says *priyamanaya* – you are very dear to Me. *Hita-kamyaya* – I wish you well. When we hear the sound coming out of a *sadhu*'s lips and we feel that this man is speaking only for our own sake, only for our benefit.

Because as a rule, in our ordinary life, the reason why people talk to each other is for the sake of profit, in any event. Or they talk in order to show off, at least in 99% of the cases: I'm this, I'm that, or I'm a sufferer, I'm a hero. Those are the two major topics of our conversation. Even if one is giving a lecture on the “Srimad-bhagavatam”, the underlying motive can still be the desire to show off, to show everybody who I am, to impress, to fluff up my tail of beautiful words. And we are all used to such speeches, basically, we quite accept them. Someone comes and begins entertaining us. That is called *loka ranjana*. Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupad has given several lectures in which he speaks against it. *Loka ranjana* is when I'm trying to say something in order to draw people's attention to myself, to somehow or other make an impression on the others so that they are amused. And that is the very element of exploitation.

Everything that we do in the material world is based on exploitation. One person exploits another. The one who speaks exploits the others and at the same time is being exploited by his listeners. Both sides sit and are happy exploiting each other. One of them is thinking, “Now I will make an impression and they will do something for me, they will love me, they will look at me, they will listen to me, they will admire me!” And the other one is thinking, “Well, let him entertain me. I wonder what joke he is going to tell, what story he is going to tell me now just to entertain me”.

When we listen to such a talk, our heart cannot be transformed, when the narrator's or the listener's motive is exactly like this – to exploit the narrator. Very often we listen with such a motive. We come to the lecture and think, “I'm curious about the way he'll entertain us today. What is he going to tell us?” In this way we deceive ourselves. But Krishna says that He wants to tell us something very important. He is asking us to listen very carefully, because He's going to speak to us for our own benefit and that if we understand that, our life will change. The voice of the person who is speaking for our benefit differs from the voice of the person who wants to exploit us. If one has this inner sensitivity, if one's heart is sensitively tuned to this vibration, one will be able to feel the difference between those voices.

Recently I heard a story. It may not be entirely related to our subject matter. Nevertheless, it partially illustrates this point. It is a story about a temple in Vrindavan. There used to be a

temple in Vrindavan, and it is still there. In that temple they used to worship Krishna. Krishna had a precious crown of a great value. The crown was decorated with a diamond of incredible value. Therefore, to keep the thieves away the prior of the temple hired a gatekeeper. The gatekeeper served the Deity for fifteen years. For fifteen years he walked around and guarded the temple so that no thieves would break in. And so as not to get bored, to somehow occupy his time, he sang *bhajans*. For fifteen years every night he sang *bhajans*. Once the temple prior was very late for some reason and he came to the temple when it was already dark, and he heard the guard walking around the temple and singing. When the prior heard him sing, he flew into a rage. The point is that the prior was a professional singer, and he perfectly knew all the *ragas*, the notes, all the *swaras*, all the small *srutis* (? 13.41), the small intervals. He knew how to sing. When he heard the hoarse voice of the gatekeeper who was constantly out of tune and was constantly singing in a strange way, he flew into a rage. "What a rascal! He is doing nothing but spoiling my Deity's mood all night long!" He was so terribly angry that he said, "Enough! Get out of here! I do not want to see you anymore! You're fired! Do not come here anymore!"

When he did so and the gatekeeper left he lowered his head ashamed of such anger and suddenly realized, "What have I done? Tonight I'll have to keep the gates myself. It is getting late". And he thought, "Well, there is nothing I can do". His anger calmed down a little and he thought, "Ok then, today I will have such a *seva* – I will serve here all night, walking around the Deity." And he did so. All of a sudden he heard footsteps inside the temple which was locked – loud footsteps: pooh-pooh-pooh. He started listening for them. At first he could not believe his ears, after that he began listening more attentively and then he started thinking, "How could anyone have entered in the temple? It's locked!" Finally, he opened the temple and he saw to his delight, horror and astonishment, that Krishna was going from end to end, circling the temple. Pooh-pooh-pooh. He thought, "Wow! That is a *darsan*, isn't it? I've received an amazing *darsan* of my Deity! He's walking to and fro". He fell on his knees and began praying. Krishna looked at him gravely and said, "Why did you send away My devotee? For fifteen years he has sung lullabies to Me, now I can't fall asleep! (laughter) I cannot do anything, I have insomnia". The man folded his palms and said, "*Prabhu*, I am a singer, can I sing for You?" He began singing the same *bhajan* but in a perfect flawless way with perfect intonation with all the *srutis*, *svargas*, with all the modulations, with everything that's possible. He kept singing and in two minutes Krishna shouted at him, "Stop it! I can't listen anymore!" Krishna said, "If you want to surprise Me with your *ragas*, you won't be able to do so for I know the *ragas* better than you. I Myself can sing like that. I can't listen to you, call back that gatekeeper of Mine".

The man started crying and thought: "(inaudible 16.44), a hoarse voice, and a terrible intonation". But there was nothing he could do, that's was Krishna order. He unwillingly made his way to the gatekeeper's home and when he reached the door, he heard some sobbing coming from behind the door. He opened the door and saw the gatekeeper sitting there and crying.

He asked him, "Why are you crying?" "Why are you asking that? For 15 years I've been serving Krishna and suddenly I am not needed anymore. Suddenly Krishna got rid of me through you. Krishna's said, "Go away" and now what else can I do? Nothing but cry". The prior swallowed his false ego and said, "Krishna is calling you back. Krishna said that He likes the way you sing".

The gatekeeper rushed to the temple and saw Krishna going to and fro and Krishna said to him: "Come on, sing to Me, I can't fall asleep without you". The gatekeeper started singing the prior standing next to him. He started singing his usual lullaby rhythm in a terrible voice, in wrong notes, with the wrong intonation, in a wrong *raga*... everything was wrong. But all of a sudden the prior heard a voice that he had never heard before. Suddenly he heard what was coming from within him. He realized that that was the most beautiful thing he has ever heard in all his life and tears streamed down from his eyes. He realized, "Now I can understand that Krishna likes listening to that" What he heard was not the external form, but the sound inside it. He heard the love that was there. He kept on listening and Krishna, too, kept on listening. Then Krishna got back to His place and again took His form prescribed in the *sastras*.

The gatekeeper was singing without end and the prior was listening. It was getting light, the day was breaking and people were gradually starting to come in. The *pujari* was also to come soon, who was to serve the Deity and therefore the prior said, “Enough, enough. The sun is rising”. The gatekeeper then went to the Deity and bowed down to offer his *dandavat*. The prior stood there waiting as time was passing by, minute by minute, but the gatekeeper was still lying in front of the Deity. In the end, the prior went up to him, thinking how to bring him out of that status. He patted him on the shoulder and realized that his soul had left the body, that at that same moment his soul left that mortal shell and that he is lying dead in front of Krishna. That is the story that happened once.

That’s exactly the point. Krishna is saying here, addressing us: *hitakamyaya* – I wish you well and I say that for your own benefit, so please listen to Me very carefully. It is only when one hears that voice, when one realizes that the person is speaking for no other reason but for the sake of helping us, for the sake of transforming our heart that one gains faith.

After that we said that in the next verse Krishna says (Bg., 10.2):

na me viduh sura-ganah
prabhavam na maharsayah
aham adir hi devanam
maharsinam ca sarvasah

In the next verse Krishna says that no one knows Him, “Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin or opulences”. *Prabhavam* – they do not know His origin. Why? *Aham adir hi devanam maharsayah ca sarvasah* – He is the source of all the demigods (*devanam*) and all the great sages, and all that is. Since He is the origin they cannot understand Him.

Yesterday I gave some explanation of this verse, too, which determines or proves the need of faith to us. Here Krishna says that He is to be known by no other means but faith. And He says, *aham adir hi devanam maharsinam sarvasah ca*. What else does He want to say? Why is saying that “Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know Me”? Once again, who are the demigods? The senses. This means that Krishna cannot be understood with the help of the senses. Krishna cannot be understood through one’s sensory experience.

Secondly, *maharsinam ca sarvasah* – Krishna cannot be understood with the help of one’s mind. He says that the sages also do not know Him, no matter how wise they might be. Neither the one nor the other, neither the senses nor the mind are adequate tools for the realization of God. Which is the only possible tool for attaining God? Ultimately, that is only *bhakti*, only the particular mood, the basis of which is *sraddha*, faith. Here Krishna proves to us the necessity of having faith, because otherwise we have no adequate way to understand Krishna. Yesterday I said that our feelings themselves are dead.

In the seventh Canto of the “Srimad-Bhagavatam” Narada Muni explains to Maharaj Citraketu why God is unattainable through the senses. He says that just as the iron bar, if you place it in the fire, becomes hot and acquires the ability to burn, similarly, our senses get heated and acquire the ability to feel. Why? Because they come into contact with the soul. As soon as the connection between the senses and the soul is broken, as at death or during sleep ... Every night we die. By the way, this is a very good way to get trained whether we’ll remember Krishna at the time of death or not. Have you ever noticed what you are thinking of when falling asleep and when your mind no longer obeys you? Are you thinking of Krishna? Well, sometimes, it happens occasionally.

But every night the mind and senses cease to obey us, every night. At least during the day we control them to a certain extent, but at night they stop obeying us. Accordingly, Narada Muni explains that since the senses get in touch with the soul, they are saturated with this energy of consciousness, and they may experience. As soon as the connection between the senses and

the soul is interrupted the senses turn dead and they can't perceive anything. Do we see anything at night? No, we do not see. Do we hear anything in our deep sleep? Sleep means deep sleep. One can do anything, we will not hear. We do not hear, we do not see. Do we feel any kind of smell? Neither do we have a sense of touch. For at that point the connection is broken.

Narada Muni explains that the senses acquire their ability to know through their contact with sound. And the soul acquires the ability to know because it has emanated from Krishna. What does that mean? Narada Muni says that the red-hot rod cannot be hotter than the fire itself. The rod cannot be hotter than the fire itself. This means that we cannot, the soul is too small to know God. God is too great. The soul is a small particle and we cannot, we do not have enough perspective to see God.

As you may have noticed, the animals are afraid of us. When they see a man approaching, the merciful and good king of nature, they scatter in different directions. But the tiny living beings are not afraid. For example, the ant is not afraid of humans. They are not afraid because they are stronger? No, because they are too small, because they do not see. Can we see God? That's why we are not afraid of Him, (laughter) just because we cannot see Him. Just because we are too stupid to understand Him, to feel and experience Him. God is already there. Like if we are sitting and an ant is crawling next to us. We look at it, and it's so bold that it crawls up our leg and starts tickling and biting us. And God, too, looks at us approximately in the same way while we are being just too bold.

That is why Krishna emphasizes here, *aham adir hi devanam*, He says that He is the source of all the demigods, the senses and the mind, that He is the source of all, and all that is too small to know Him. But, nevertheless, He says, He can be understood through *sraddha*, through faith. When one realizes one's dependence or smallness, one's dependence or insignificance in comparison with Krishna, one can also understand another thing. This is a most important element of our faith. What does "I believe in God" mean?

There is another thing that one should understand: that I am a part of Krishna. What does it mean that I am part of Krishna? We also have parts of the body, we have hands and feet. Does He need us? Perhaps, but not as much as we need Him.

If we cut off the arm, will it have any value? If you cut off the leg, will that leg have any value? If we cut off the nose and put it over here? A beautiful Roman nose. Will it have any value of its own? No, no matter how beautiful it is.

If we have realized that we are part of Krishna, we have to understand that I am useless, my existence is meaningless, and that is faith. Faith means that at some point I realize that my existence without Krishna is meaningless. If I do not have Krishna, the part cannot have a meaningful existence, cannot have any normal functions, cannot function properly if it is not connected to the whole. And when we realize this smallness of ours, *aham adir hi devanam*, "I have emanated from Him and that means that I am a part Him". That means that the only happiness I can experience, the only normal existence that I can have is the existence in connection with Him. That gives rise to faith, faith that has arisen or can arise as a result of listening to Krishna or His representative.

There is another argument in favor of faith. We are now proving why faith is the only proper or adequate tool for the realization of God. God is great. God is infinitely great. What else does that mean? God encompasses everything and that means that He includes us, too. All of us. But what else does that mean? Usually, when people study something in the nature, what are they trying to do? They are trying to segment it into more specific, smaller parts so that they can study it. Even a worm is difficult to study as a whole; you need to cut it into numerous smaller parts. Any good biologist will tell you that in order to study life, you first of all need to chop it up and only then study it. Only in this way I can understand something. For one simple reason: because the more complex something is, the bigger it is, the more controversial it is. Can I study with my mind something that is obviously contradictory? It's not just difficult, it is impossible.

Why, for example, Tyutchev says that one cannot understand Russia with one's mind? Because it is too big and too controversial. The mind, the logic cannot understand what it is. That is why he says that one can just have faith in it.

It is the same with God. God, by definition, includes all contradictions. Bhaktivinoda Thakura explains this. He says that Krishna has a special feature, a special *sakti*, a special energy that is able to reconcile contradictions. Why cannot people understand God? Whether He was born or not, what He is ultimately, what He is like. Because you can't understand anything at all: the unborn gets born, the greatest becomes small so that one can bind Him, and so on. You can't understand anything. The most intelligent asks for advice. It is impossible to understand, He is incomprehensible. In order to understand the incomprehensible, to understand something inherently contradictory one should just believe it. One can only believe. Because if we start analyzing our faith will be destroyed. By nature the mind is black and white and it explains: this is good, this is bad, this is correct, this is wrong. The mind cannot accommodate the contradictions. Like yesterday, I was asked that on the one hand it is said that one should "chant and be happy," and you have to be happy. On the other hand, you have to *chant* and cry. How can one simultaneously cry and be happy? Is that a contradiction? Yes, that's a contradiction.

I knew a small boy who was about 5 years old and he had learned the word "paradox". Children at that age, when they hear an unfamiliar word, they always ask: "What does it mean?" They get it explained to them and then they start using it in place and out of place. And this boy, whenever he would see something that surprised him, he would ask: "Is that a paradox?" And his mother would say, "Yes, that's a paradox". It is the same here, in this world or in the spiritual life, it is a paradox.

In order to understand a paradox you have to believe. Therefore Krishna says here, in this second verse, that it is impossible to understand Him and that one has to believe in Him. Yesterday I talked about that, and now I would like to tell another important story from the "Katha-upanishad", which explains this moment of arising faith. Yesterday we said that there is a special organ responsible for faith. Ultimately, faith is the manifestation of God's grace. The fact that at a certain point we started to have faith means that that is grace. Some people do not have faith. How many people have no faith! How many people have listened to Srila Prabhupada and never started to have faith! How many people have listened to the pure devotees without starting to have faith! How many people have no faith whatsoever!

The moment of inception of faith is a very mysterious act, a very mysterious spectacle. However, I said that we have an inner organ that is meant to inwardly verify the truth of a statement. In other words, this world is relative but it has a foundation. What is this foundation of the relative world? What is the world based on? No, not on faith. It is our existence that is based on faith. But the relative world has a foundation and that is the Absolute Truth. When we want to realize the Absolute Truth, we are asking, in essence, the following question: is the basis of everything real? Can one ask such a question or not? No, one cannot. For in order to prove its reality, we have to get out of the boundaries of that reality. In other words, the reality itself must have some foundation. One can prove something only on the basis of its cause but the Absolute Truth has no cause. In other words, the truth has no basis, because it itself is the basis of everything.

I will once again repeat this very important point: we cannot prove the truth through something else, because it is the basis of everything. There is nothing apart from it that can prove it. This feature of the truth, this essential quality is called *svataḥ pramāṇya*. *Svataḥ pramāṇyate* means self-sufficiency of the truth. An example of *svataḥ pramāṇam* is self-evidence. Truth, by definition, should be self-evident, if that is the Absolute Truth. An example of a self-evident truth is the sun. Why? In order to see the sun do we need something else besides the sun itself? Do we need a flashlight to light the sun? To see the sun, you need only the sun itself. The sun in its existence, the light of the sun, is not dependent on anything; on the contrary, all the other light is based on the sunlight. Accordingly, the truth, by definition, is *svataḥ pramāṇyate*, it must have this feature or quality of self-evidence, or self-sufficiency. But we must have an organ that feels

this self-evidence. We need to feel it. The fact that someone has realized the God's self-evidence doesn't make any difference to us. In other words, this process must take place in our own heart. We must understand that God is self-evident.

The process of the arising of faith is the process of the intuitive feeling that there is God. Now I'll try to explain how this happens. Although it is impossible to explain that, please excuse me in advance. This is an already impossible thing. But we have a soul, and as I have said, the soul is *saksi*, and the soul is the organ. That organ is called differently. The organs through which we perceive the world are called *indria* in Sanskrit. The *saksya*, in accordance with Madhavacharya's definition, are called *svarupendriya*. And the *indria*, the sense organ of the soul, *svarupa-indria*, i.e. the senses of the soul itself. The soul has an indicator or an organ which can determine the truth, and which should accept it. There, inside the heart. *Sraddha* means that inside, in my heart, I suddenly realize – there is God and I am to serve Him.

The "Katha-upanishad" tells a story that symbolically describes that process. I'm asking you to focus all your attention and try to understand, because, again, that is a very complicated matter. The Upanishads are not really meant to be understood logically. The Upanishads, through their deep symbolic meaning should lead our soul to inwardly recognizing the truth. This process of recognizing or acknowledging the truth must happen inside, in the soul. That is, inside the soul we must realize: "That is the way it is!" The soul must exclaim: "How come I didn't see that before? That is the way it is and it just cannot be otherwise!" Like yesterday we all shouted out loudly and we may well shout out again: "It just cannot be otherwise!" Hare Krishna! You are saying that without faith yet. This "It just cannot be otherwise!" must actually happen.

I wanted to tell this story so that we understand how that can happen and so that we realize whether we have a real faith or not, whether we have real faith that truly, inwardly says, "That's it!" Because, as I already said yesterday, there is *maya-sraddha*, or false faith. Usually many people have faith. As the Gospel says, "many are called, but few are chosen". Many people join religion. There is Islam, there is Christianity, there is Krishnaism. Many people join, a lot, I can see that. Many are called. But the "Katha-upanishad" explains that profound miracle, which must take place in one's heart, irrespective of the faith one formally identifies with. Ordinary faith is a blind faith that always accompanies the doubt. Like yesterday, when I was saying that "That's the way it is, that's the way it is!" and was trying to brainwash you with these neo-linguistic terms, someone came up and said, "Well, maybe that's the way it is, but when someone else comes to me and says that there is no God, something inside me also says that "That's the way it is!" (laughter) and inevitably there are doubts". The common faith, not the spiritual one, the divine faith, which should descend on us, but the common faith is always a blind faith; that is why usually at the beginning, when people join us, they become fanatics. A fanatic is a person with a blind faith, one who has closed one's eyes and says, "I believe, that's it! I do not want to know anything. There is Allah and that's why for the rest who don't believe there is the machine gun". At the beginning people are fanatic. Fanaticism means that their faith is blind. Anyone who is proud of his bigotry, does not understand that the nature of fanaticism is the blindness of its faith. And there is also another aspect of fanaticism, or fanatical belief. On the one hand it is blind – one wants to close up, one doesn't want to listen, doesn't want to see or hear anything that might shake one's faith; and on the other hand, one is always full of doubts. One tries to drive them off, drive them somewhere deep inside, one is trying not to believe, not to understand, not to hear, not to know, and just quickly die and go back to Godhead.

Whose faith is like that? I do not know anything, I do not want to know anything, I'll chant Hare Krishna, then somehow I'll die and go back to Krishna. Who believes that? That is *maya-sraddha*, this is wrong faith. That faith actually makes one to turn into a ritualist. He starts to perform rituals. Every morning he wakes up, drags to the *mangala-arati* and in between yawns sings *samsara davanala lidha loka tranaya karunya* flour ... what a scary torment! (laughter) And then sits down and chants. But "Katha-upanishad" relates an amazing story. I will first relate the external plot; meanwhile you think what the story is about.

Once upon a time there was a *brahman* whose name was Vajeshravasa. He had a son whose name was Naciketos. The *brahman* used to perform rituals and rites. One day wishing to attain the heavenly planets, to ascend to Svarga-loka, he gave away all the cows that he had. And the small boy, his son, who was about 5 or 6 years old, Naciketos, approached him. It is said in the “Katha-upanishad” that at that moment, when the boy saw the sacrificial act of his father, *sraddha*, or faith, appeared in his heart. He approached his father and said, “Dad, why did you give those cows away? Those cows were old since a long time ago, they don’t graze on the grass anymore, they don’t drink any water neither do they yield any milk. Why did you give them away?” He gave a lot of cows away that ... (inaudible) in order to go to Svarga-loka.

Then the boy looked into his father’s eyes, the small Naciketos, and asked, “Dad, what are you going to do with me? To whom will you give me? If you gave those cows away, if you donated them, then I, too, belong to you. To whom will you give me? To whom will you give me? To whom will you give me?” Three times he repeated the question. And the good father, angry at his son’s teasing, said: “I give you to death”.

The same moment Nachiketos set out on a trip to Yamaloka, to Yama’s abode, the Lord of Death, Yamaraja. On his way there he began thinking. His thoughts are also related in the “Katha-upanishad”. He thought that many have passed along this way and that most of the people have not returned and could not tell what it is like there, beyond these limits and he felt terribly lonely. He thought, “How many people have gone this way before me! But there must have been people who have passed along this way properly, too!” In the end he arrived at the Death’s abode, he went into the palace and saw Yamaraja in a completely empty room where there was nothing. There was a complete, absolute emptiness. For three days he sat and waited in the waiting room and for three days he neither drank nor ate anything, although meantime, as described in the “Katha-upanishad”, a voice was saying, “Hey, Yama! A *brahmana* has come to visit you. The *brahmana* I sitting and waiting for you. You have to offer him some food, some drinks for that is the duty of a host”. In the end, Yamaraja went to Naciketos and said, “I am very pleased with you. For three days you’ve been waiting patiently for me here, in this empty room. Now you can ask me for the fulfillment of three wishes of yours. Any three wishes of yours will be fulfilled by me”. And Naciketos asked him for three blessings.

I am not going to tell you now what kind of blessings those were. Now I would like to ask you whether anyone has made anything of this story.

Three days and three questions. That’s a question for experts. What were the questions that Nachiketos asked?

In fact, this story has a very deep meaning, a meaning directly relevant to all of us. Vajeshravasa. The word, the name Vajeshravasa, *vaja* means “food”. *Vaja* also means “strength”, *vaja* also means “energy”, “determination”. *Shravasa* means “glory”. Naciketos means *na-ciketos*. *Naciketos* means “imperceptible”, “intangible”. And that conversation, it is a very interesting conversation. Who, in your opinion, is this Vajeshravasa? What does he represent? The mind... the intelligence ... the senses... the false ego... No, he embodies the ritualistic religious practices. Because in fact, even this world, Vajeshravasa means the one who is glorious for distributing food, or the one who supports this world, the one who gives energy to the world. This world, the material world, the material religion is part of the material world. And only when there is religion in the world, the world can exist in a proper normal way. But the material religion, the traditional religion, whatever you call it, the external religion, the ritualistic religion, there is a lot of them: Christianity, Islam, Krishnaism in its traditional forms. Krishnaism in the form in which it is seen by the majority of people comes down to the rituals. What is the ritual in this case? The distribution of cows. What kind of cows? Useless, yes. I perform a ritual and I say, “Now I’ll go to Heaven”. But why should I go to Heaven? The boy was reasoning, the boy who approached his father, was reasoning, “Well, he gave these cows away that yield no milk and, instead of going to heaven, he will go to hell because he is deceiving people. Instead of sacrificing something real to them ...” What is religion? What does religion teach us? To give. Religion teaches us to sacrifice. Religion is a science, which should explain to us that one must give. And what do we give? “Lord, take this useless thing that I don’t need”.

We join some religion because we need it, because one needs to live a normal life. But at the same time the deceiver, who is within us, says: "Let's offer something to Krishna. What will we offer to Krishna? We'll offer Krishna a pizza. Why will we offer Krishna a pizza? We'll offer it to Krishna now and then will eat it". People are giving something and at the same time are not giving. People perform rituals but still do not want to give up the most precious thing that they have to give. People chant and simultaneously they do not want to give what they have to give, people do it as a ritual. A ritual means that I'm doing that senselessly, it means that I hold on to what I do not want to give away.

But at a certain point this traditional religion... In itself it is not bad, there's nothing wrong with that. If people perform rituals and do some practices, at a certain point who will be born to them? A small son, Naciketos. He won't be that obvious. Naciketos means "imperceptible". An imperceptible inner feeling will be born within us. That feeling will come up to us and will reproachfully look into our eyes and say, "Dad, are not you ashamed to give those useless cows away? What's the use of giving away those cows that yield no milk? That small son will come up to us, and, as it is said in the "Katha-upanishad", if you remember, at some point faith, *sraddha* was born in Naciketos. And he will start asking us, "What are you going to do with me? To whom will you give me? To whom will you give me? To whom will you give me?"

Ultimately, what are we supposed to give away? If faith, real faith appears in us, then what do we have to give to Krishna? Ourselves. We have to give Krishna ourselves, we have to give Krishna our false ego, our own self. We have to give ourselves completely and entirely to Krishna. And then this conscience, this awoken faith personified comes up to us says, "What are you going to do with me? When are you going to give away your own self? When are you going to sacrifice your own self? When are you going give away the most precious thing that you have?"

He asks this question three times. Why? Just to tease his father? Just to get on his nerves? He asks this question a first time: "To whom will you give me?" and the father is silent. He asks this question a second time: "To whom will you give me?" and the father is silent. He asks this question for the third time: "To whom will you give me?" and the father says, "I'll give you to Yamaraja". What does this dialogue mean?

He says that three times, because we should surrender three times. How many initiations do we have? First initiation, second initiation, third initiation. What do we have to surrender to our guru at our first initiation? Our body. At our second initiation we have to surrender to him our mind. And at the third – our speech. *Sannyas* is when one completes the process of his surrendering, when one gives up all his speech, when he speaks only about Krishna. At the first initiation we have to give up our *vapu*, our body. We say, "I will serve you". How? With my body. Then gradually, the second initiation means that I can concentrate my mind on Krishna, so I am given the *Gayatri-mantra* which I should chant in my mind. Finally, the third initiation is when one is given a *danda*. That is why one must ask this question three times, and one must say: "I am ready to give up all that I have". What should I give up? Body, mind and speech. I have to give everything to Krishna. And when I show this determination that I am ready to give everything, what will I be told? Go to Yamaraja. (laughter) What should happen to one at this moment? One must die. What does it mean to die? One must die for the material world. Who is ready to die for the material world? A few brave souls.

To die for the material world means to give up the material attachments, all of them. That means to no longer get attached to the body, to the mind, to the enjoyment offered by the mind, and the enjoyment offered by the speech. Honestly speaking, who is ready to do that?

In order to be born again, one has to die. And true faith, that moment of faith, this deep internal process should actually take place within us. At a certain point one must say, "I want to die for this world. Nothing more binds me to this world anymore. I want to give away everything that I have". That's the real faith. Everything else is just a ritualistic faith or superstition. One who has

that type of faith has true faith. Such a person gains courage and complete fearlessness, complete confidence in the path.

For, what does faith mean, once again? As we already said, faith is the beginning of what? Which path? The path to the spiritual world. The spiritual world is beyond the scope of what? Beyond the material world, that is, beyond sense experience. Faith must be strong enough to help us set out on this journey beyond sense experience. The journey beyond the sense experience also means a journey beyond sense enjoyment. The real faith must be strong enough to awaken in us the determination that, "I am ready to set out on a journey where there will be no sense enjoyment for me".

Who is ready to set out on a journey where there will be no sense enjoyment for them? That is the miracle which must take place, the determination, which must be born. True faith must render this power to go on a dangerous journey beyond sense enjoyment – completely beyond sense experience – and, therefore, beyond sense enjoyment.

I would like to say one last thing. Jiva Goswami describes in what way, what one should do so that this faith becomes stronger in him. How is this to happen? This is a very rare thing to happen. Krishna says: *manusyanam sahasresu kascid yatati siddhaye* (Bg., 7.3), that "Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection...", and those people are sitting here now. But "of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth".

We all have come here because we strive for perfection, but that is not enough. Further on Krishna says that it is a rare person out of those who have achieved perfection who attains Him. For that purpose a real, genuine faith must be born in that person. That happens very rarely and Jiva Goswami explains how this should happen, what one must do, how one must train that organ that says: "That's the way it is, God is there, I have to serve Him, I am His eternal servant".

Jiva Goswami calls this process *vicara-pradhan*. He says that when we have heard a pure devotee, we have obtained a little shade of faith, a spark of faith. That spark, in itself is already a miracle. By itself it makes us do terrible things: we break our ties with the material world, we leave our job, we leave our wife, we leave our children... one wife, another wife, third wife. (laughter) We are not sorry for anything. Even with a little faith one does strange things.

But that's not enough. Little faith is not enough. Therefore Jiva Goswami explains in the "Bhakti-sandarbha" that one who has received that little weak faith, and something inside one has responded (? 1.00) from within one's soul has confirmed, "That's the way it is! Krishna exists, God exists. Otherwise, where does it all come from, where do I come from? I exist, I do not depend on anyone".

At a certain point, and that's very interesting, people realize when they grow up, that they do not depend on their parents, that I do not have anything to do with my parents. That I am by myself, that I am on my own. What do the parents have to do with that? I am a person. I exist, I have always existed. By listening to a pure devotee one has reached the threshold of faith, a small premonition of faith. What should I do next? I should take the *sastra* and serve the *sastra*, *sastra-seva*. I should serve the *sastra*, studying it and comparing every sensation of the *sastra* with the inner sense. I should try to be convinced of the sincerity of every statement of the *sastra*, comparing it with what that inner knowledge acquiring organ already feels which is there in my soul.

I know that I exist. Now, Srila Prabhupada says that the soul is immortal; now, I should take this statement of the *sastras*: *dehino 'smin yatha dehe kaumaram yauvanam jara* (Bg., 2.13) and reflect on it, think about it until I'm fully convinced, until this organ of mine says, "That's it, I am not this body, that's it!" Do not just blindly accept it. It is not that someone has said that and I trust it. You can tick off: the test has been passed, the thirteen questions have been answered, the first initiation has been received, for the second initiation I need to pass the *bhakti-sastri*, the *bhakti-sastri* have been passed, all questions have been answered, the twenty five *slokas* from

the "Bhagavad-gita" have been learned by heart, *dehino 'smin yatha deha, sarva-dharman parityajya*, Hare Krishna!

I have to take the *sastra* and inwardly check: is that true or not? Until the soul cries out, "That's it! I have always known that was exactly like that!" until this knowledge is very clearly reflected in the mirror of our mind. For the doubts that poison our true faith are born of the mind, of the impure mind. But we have to clean the mirror of our mind, reflecting over the *sastra* until the truth becomes crystal clear to us, undoubted, otherwise we will remain blind. I know some people who have been chanting for ten, fifteen, twenty years without any result, without any change in their behavior, without any change in their qualities, without purification from some bad habits, nothing happens. Because they do it as a ritual. Because they give to Krishna what they themselves do not need, some meaningless words or something like that. But if I take every statement, and that means *vicara-pradhan*, until I understand that I am a soul and that the only purpose of my existence is to serve Krishna. And I know that 100%, for everything inside me just cries out: "That's it!"

I am a soul, and the only purpose of my existence is to serve Krishna. There is no other meaning. That's it, I know that for sure!

Hare Krishna. Thank you very much.

STAGES OF BHAKTI
lecture 3

Odessa 27.08.2004
length: 1:09:06

Annotation: The secret of being freed from sins lies in understanding that God is one and that he is the Absolute Lord.

I explained yesterday that existence of God is an axiom. The rest is a theorem. To prove the existence of the rest one should accept the axiom that God exists. And that we have an organ, a soul, or *svarupendriya*, a sense organ, inherent in soul, which can perceive God's existence intuitively. This first intuitive perception, a shimmer of perception, is called *shraddha*, or faith. And that this axiom like any axiom must be self-evident. No one can prove that the shortest distance between two points is a line. But it's clear as it is, it doesn't need to be proved.

Similarly, the fact that "I exist" is also an axiom. "I feel good or bad" is also an axiom. No one can prove that I feel good when I feel bad and vice versa, that I feel bad when I feel good. One should see the existence of God in the same way. Eventually, the existence of God as an axiom is based on another axiom. To be more exact, it is not based for God's existence can't be based on anything. But our impulse to find faith in God is caused by this inner sense of being bad.

Yesterday I explained the nature thereof. That a soul separated from Krishna can't be happy by its nature, because it's a part, and a part can't be happy without the whole. It cannot be sufficient in itself. And we set out in search of faith or this deep inner sense that God exists because we have this sense that "I need something." In ordinary material life people try to compensate for this sense in some other ways; people try to acquire some material things. But a truly intelligent person starts looking for something he cannot find within this material world. This is a verse from the 1st Canto of the "Shrimad Bhagavatam".

In the long run, we need a feeling of *svarupananda*, or bliss coming from the soul itself. This feeling of complete happiness again can only develop as a result of faith. Patanjali Muni wrote this amazing thing about *shraddha*. He says, *shraddha chetasa sam prasadah*. When one has faith, or *shraddha*, *chetasa sam prasadah*. What does *chetasa sam prasadah* mean? He becomes what? *Sam prasadah*. What does *prasadah* mean? Mercy. It also means happiness. *Sam prasadah* means complete happiness, feeling of complete satisfaction. *Prasadah* also means enlightenment or a sense of lightness of consciousness unburdened by any problems. *Shraddha chetasa sam prasadah*, when one finds faith one feels light and satisfied. Who has experienced that? Who of you were atheists before becoming Krishna conscious? Who experienced this joy from acquiring faith? *Shraddha chetasa sam prasadah*. What he writes further is ever more interesting. He explains: *sahi janani nam eva kalyanam yoginam pati*. *Shraddha*, *sa*, means it, *hi* – actually, *janana eva*, *janani* means mother. That *shraddha* is actually what? Mother. *Kalyanam yoginam pati*. What kind of mother? *Kalyanam* – loving. *Kalyana* means loving, kind, and good, and auspicious. *Yoginam pati* – whose mother? A yogi's. A yogi is born from *shraddha*. One becomes a yogi, that is one who is trying to go back to God or re-establish one's connection to God, due to *shraddha* arising in one's heart. This is the way for him to be born again. *Yoginam pati*. *Pati* means that it protects a yogi. That *shraddha* is that same mother who protects us on this hard path. Therefore, *shraddha* should be very well protected and guarded. Eventually, as Patanjali Muni promises here, *shraddha* can make us unconditionally happy.

Yesterday we were discussing how this faith, or *shraddha*, may become truly deep, what this way of faith deepening is like, how this process works. At first we listen to the one who possesses faith, a *sadhu*, who wants to do us good. So, what do we develop as a result of it? Faith. And what is faith usually accompanied by? A taste. We develop a taste. A taste for what? Yes, a taste for hearing about whom? Yes. Initially, we develop a small faith with some taste allowing us to and making us hear about Krishna again and again. Right? We didn't have a taste until we developed this faith.

This morning while I was sitting and chanting the mantra I saw a lot of devotees passing by holding their japa beads. There were also some bums without beads passing the devotees by. But you could tell a striking difference by mere sensation, by the aura around a man. As soon as you see this bum, this wanderer, the same *jiva* that wanders all around this material world having no shelter in it. He wanders by himself, totally miserable, having no taste at all. The only taste he has is for *tamo-guna*. *Tamo-guna* tastes

very delicious to some people. They are lying all day there on the beach, filthy, drunk. And it has some taste in it. And then there go devotees: “Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare...” And this is obvious: they have a goal, you can tell that by their appearance that they’re not lost, they are not cut off, they are not just wandering or roving in this material world.

And this is the faith that I develop when I am listening to a pure devotee, when I am opening my heart, when I am able to catch the sound that’s doing us good. Then I develop a taste. This taste makes me study the scriptures. But what is supposed to happen, which, unfortunately, rarely does? How am I supposed to study the scriptures? On a systematic basis. Further, I should find a spiritual master. And the role of a spiritual master is to take the “Bhagavad-gita” every day and beat me with it over my head.

*dehino 'smin yatha dehe
kaumaram yauvanam jara
tatha dehantara-praptir
dhiras tatra na muhyati*

“As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change.” (B.-g, 2.13)

If I systematically hear my spiritual master explaining the *sastra* to me from the early morning. That’s what Jiva Gosvami explains. Jiva Gosvami explains that this is the way for us to resolve our doubts, to develop a complete and total confidence that the *sastra* is right.

So, today we are going to speak about this very process. How do we resolve doubts? What do doubts give rise to and how can they be resolved? We are going to talk about the *anartha-nivritti* stage. But Jiva Gosvami points out that I should hear my spiritual master explaining the *sastra* to me. For the words of the spiritual master possess the strength to initially give rise to faith, but there is another energy put into them, what is this energy? To resolve doubts. That is, actually, what are these doubts that are in our way? They are obstacles. And doubts are reflection of what? Reflection of *anarthas*, reflection of our bad *karma*, reflection of the bad qualities in our hearts.

Furthermore, we will touch a little upon doubts. But the words of the spiritual master are supposed by definition to possess the power to eliminate these obstacles, bring us, eventually, to the higher ultimate goal. Therefore it’s so important to hear from him. It’s hardly enough to just read the “Bhagavad-gita”. Who of you have just read the “Bhagavad-gita”? Who of you have developed a systematic understanding of the “Bhagavad-gita” by just reading the “Bhagavad-gita”? Who of you have taken Bhakti Sastri courses where you are taught the “Bhagavad-gita” on a systematic basis? Has anyone acquired the slightest systematic understanding of the “Bhagavad-gita”? The “Bhagavad-gita” is there, but if we read just so, the problem is that it seems to be at our disposal. We cannot read it systematically because we read it when? When we like, right? Not when we have to, not when our guru instructs us to. And how do I read it? However I like. I read it however I like to. I do what I like. Someone once said: “I read it between the lines.” I find what I need between the lines. Because my mind is looking for something that is supposed to justify my own *maya*.

That’s why Jiva Gosvami points it out that it is only by hearing that we can have our doubts completely resolved and our faith strong and unshakable. And we can develop this realization that this is how things really are. Again, of course, the “Bhagavad-gita” is being told by Srila Prabhupada, he is a spiritual master. He is already giving some insight, but, nonetheless, we should get back to it again and again until we get it all systematized.

Once, a lady sent a letter to the BBT. There she wrote, “I’ve recently happened to buy a “Bhagavad-gita”. I opened it and started reading. As soon as I had read Chapter 1, I had tears streaming down my face. And it continued until I’d read Chapter 18. It’s the tenth time I’ve read the “Bhagavad-gita” and every time I read it tears stream from my eyes.” It reminds me of a story about Lord Chaitanya who came to Sri Rangam and saw there an illiterate *bhakta* reading the “Bhagavad-gita” and crying. Because the inner

organ, this *svarupendriya*, was crying, “That’s how things really are, really are, really are!” And tears streaming down his face his faith became stronger.

But again, we should hear from our spiritual master to have our doubts completely eliminated. Therefore, I’m going to say just a few words about the faith itself. About what it’s like, what is this faith. We’ve already discussed that there’s an ordinary faith, the faith we inherit by tradition, out of habit, which is, actually, no faith, just superstition. The second generation born into a devotee family is usually and in particular exposed to this danger; their fathers were devotees and when they were 9 years of age he brought them to some *guru* and this *guru* gave them their spiritual names. Yes? And he goes on wending his way through life with this spiritual name. And sometimes, when feeling wretched, he chants the mantra.

This is a sort of faith that comes into being by tradition, out of habit, out of superstition, a lazy faith, the faith not much interested in understanding the truth. This faith, as Jiva Gosvami puts it, is *bala purvakam*, a forced faith. One is not free in choosing one’s faith. Like sometimes devotees make their young children sit in on lectures or chant the mantra. Who of you make their children chant the mantra? Please, tell me. There’s no point in that, not at all. One has to join the Krishna Consciousness Movement willingly. Of one’s own free will. And he has to feel, “I’m joining in because it’s my own decision, not because my dad told me to. Not because I am going to be punished if I don’t do it, not because I won’t be allowed to eat ice-cream. Not for any other reasons. I should do it myself, willingly.” And I develop this free faith when I’m listening to a *sadhu*, when I’m listening to his explanations. And this inner organ, this *sakshi*, starts crying, “Hari Bol, Hari Bol! I’ve always known that! That’s exactly what I need!”

That’s why Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura explains, gives a definition of faith. What do you think faith is? Conviction, yes. Can you be more precise? Yes, conviction. But what is conviction? Confidence, knowledge. There’s no knowledge yet. There’s conviction but no knowledge. Who said that? Someone seems to have given the right answer. Willingness, yes. Willingness.

Listen carefully to the definition of *shraddha* given by Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura. Faith is willingness. Willingness to do what? And this willingness must be free. I cannot make someone want something. You can’t take your small son and tell him, “You should wish to go back to Krishna!” He’s going to say: “Yes, yes, dad, I wish for it but, give me my ice-cream, quick.” (laughter) Shakespeare wrote about it: “The man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.” Is he not?

So, faith is willingness. When we develop faith we develop willingness. Willingness to do what initially? No. Willingness to follow, to follow the path described in the *sastra*. Faith manifests itself through our willingness to follow this path. Who developed this willingness after reading Srila Prabhupada’s books?

One man told me how he developed faith. He had read lots of books, got completely mixed up and had been at a loss. Then he took the “Bhagavad-gita”. This *sakshi* was crying inside of him, “This is how things are, this is the way it is, this is the way it is.” But it had already cried many a time before, “This is the way it is, this is the way it is.” So, he hadn’t heard much. Because sometimes when reading something you feel, “This is the right thing he’s saying, this is the way things are, this is the way it is.” When reading some “Anastasia”, for instance, (laughter), where a naked woman is saying something, and this *sakshi* inside of you goes like, “This is the way it is, this is the way it really is.” (laughter). Right? Tell me, who has read “Anastasia?” (laughter).

But when he had read half the “Bhagavad-gita”, this *sakshi* inside of him started saying, “This is the way it is, this is the way it really is.” So, he looked to see the ending, “What should I do? It’s not enough that it’s the way it is, but what should I do?” You know what page he opened? “The Yoga of Eating”. (laughter). And it clicked. Yoga of eating and chanting *japa*. Developing faith is accompanied by a willingness to follow, walk this path, do something I am supposed to do, what the *sastra* tell me. But it’s still not enough. Faith is a willingness to follow the path described in the *sastra*. But how am I supposed to follow it? There’s another characteristic of faith. Although we can even develop willingness to follow this path, there must be another one, how I should follow. Right, enthusiasm, sincerity. Precisely. Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura

states: “*Sadaram*, a willingness develops. *Spriha ca sadaram*.” What does *adara* mean in Sanskrit? *Adara* means respect or enthusiasm, sincerity. There develops a desire to follow this path with a great enthusiasm. That’s all, that is to say. *Shraddha* is willingness to follow the path described in the *sastra* with enthusiasm, sincerity, giving away everything we have. And when we begin to study the *sastra*, when we develop a stronger faith in the *sastra*, again, to have a clear understanding of what must be happening in our hearts in so doing, we should come to three conclusions. As explained by Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakur, as our faith in the *sastra* deepens, we should develop three convictions in our hearts. The first one is what? They are all described in the song we’ve sung with you: *bhajahū re mana śrī-nanda-nandana abhaya-caraṇāravinda re*. What is this first conviction? No. Life without God is pointless. Life, *biphale sevinu kṛpaṇa durajana*. “I have uselessly served stupid men.” Why? *Capala sukha-laba lāgi’ re*, to find *capala sukha*, a fraction of flickering happiness, which is to vanish soon. *Biphale sevinu kṛpaṇa durajana* – life without worshipping God is lived in vain, pointlessly and uselessly. Right? The second conviction. The more we read the *sastra* the deeper this conviction should be.

What about the second conviction? I have no hope. I have no hope? Do I have hope or not? What hope do I have? For what? Yes, for mercy. There is only one hope – for mercy – and no other. We can’t get by without mercy. God is compassionate, therefore I have hope. That’s what the *sastra* is supposed to prove us. Any *sastra*. If one is reading the Bible. Sometimes people interpret the Scriptures in the wrong way but any Scripture is a ray of hope for us. “He wants to save me! God does care. God hasn’t forgotten me! God hasn’t abandoned me! God wants to save me.” Does God want to save us? Who is sure of it? Who doubts it? They won’t admit it. (laughter)

And at the same time... These are the two conclusions of the *sastra*, which make us walk this path, which make us move along. At the same time we develop indifference to sense gratification. Who’s developed indifference to sense gratification? Honestly. Jai! There are about five people. Faith is just as it’s explained in this *bhajan* by Govinda Das Kaviraja: *Bhajahū re mana śrī-nanda-nandana abhaya-caraṇāravinda re*. He writes that *e dhana, yaubana, putra, parijana ithe ki ache paratiti re*, that wealth, youthfulness, sons, and family members all of these are *kamala-dala-jala* like a drop tottering on a lotus petal, that all of it is pointless. Therefore he says, “Worship the lotus feet of the son of Nanda” because it will make you what? Fearless - *abhaya-caraṇāravinda re*. His lotus feet will make you fearless. Srila Prabhupada’s name is Abhay Charan. Abhay Charan, what does it mean? Who became fearless due to having these lotus feet, due to taking shelter of these lotus feet? Srila Prabhupada. Who but a fearless man, totally fearless, can set off for America with seven dollars in his pocket? Who of you are now ready to go to America with seven dollars in the pocket? And at the age of seventy into the bargain? Who of you here are seventy? Is anyone here seventy? Is anyone ready on reaching the age of seventy to pack one’s suitcase and go to America with seven dollars in the pocket in order to speak there about Krishna? (laughter) And how well at that! And tell whom?! The hippies, right? Who of you are ready to speak to the hippies about Krishna? And what should one tell the hippies about Krishna? Surrender and stop having sex. Just imagine for a short moment. You’ve come to America with seven dollars in your pocket, and it’s only the hippies who are ready to listen to you since no respectable people are ready to listen to you. And you should say, “One should stop having sex.” Right? Do you have any chances of success? No chances at all. Zero. Only a totally fearless person is able to do that.

Faith makes one fearless. Who has experienced that? That faith has made you fearless? That is, everyone who has raised his hand is ready to go to America, right? (laughter) Faith makes you feel that God is there for me. He guides us all along through life. He gave me everything I have. And as a result, one becomes absolutely fearless.

I’ve recently decided to imitate Srila Prabhupada. A big temptation. Because we’re all here big *acharyas*, aren’t we? In our circle. Right? Everyone has his small own *nama-hatta*, of which I am founder-*acharya*. (laughter) I’ve been to London as of recent and there’s a preaching centre there where they preach to the hippies. Hippies and tramps. London tramps. In London there are tramps as well. They come there to have some cooked cereal. And occasionally they, like, distribute this cereal there on the first floor and give lectures in the basement. That is, when these

tramps want to get some sleep after this meal they go to the basement and are given a lecture on Krishna consciousness (laughter). I came there eager to imitate Srila Prabhupada. I was thinking like, "Now I'm going to pierce the hearts of these hippies with my unshakable faith in Krishna." Well, they had assembled there in the basement. Someone in the corner was already having a nap, someone wasn't ready to sleep. And I was told, "Give the lecture!" And I thought to myself, "Now I'll tell them what I think." I asked them: "What shall we speak about?" And there was a reply, "About love." Because they might be tramps but they also want to hear about love. We're all tramps here. Why are we tramps? Because we are on no fixed address, are we? Today we live in one body, tomorrow – in another. Today we have this address and tomorrow another one. Those who are not tramps, where do they live? On the Vaikuntha planets, yes. But we are roaming here, but, nevertheless, we are interested to know about love. And I kind of got filled with sense of mission to open the hippies' eyes to the nature of material existence and said, "OK, we are going to speak about love." I looked at them, sucked in a deep lungful of air and said: "There's no love in the material world." (laughter) If they hadn't been full they'd have eaten me (laughter). I still can't get over the shock of the response I caused with my statement.

But one way or another, we should develop fearlessness (laughter). And fearlessness means... Like yesterday we were telling a story about Nachiketa. Fearlessness means that I'm ready to leave everything behind. And the other aspect of it, as I've already explained, is enthusiasm. And enthusiasm includes two things. What does enthusiasm mean? What does it mean that I am ready to walk this path to the end? Enthusiasm means... actually I've already said what it means. That means that I am ready to walk this path to the end. Jiva Gosvami explains it in his "Bhakti-sandarbha". He says that a man who has developed enthusiasm is not content with anything but the highest, he wants to reach the end, he wants to achieve the goal. But what does it actually mean to us? How is this enthusiasm to follow the path of *bhakti* supposed to manifest itself? What does "I want to go to the end" mean? Actively, uncompromisingly. What do compromises mean? It's a good hint. What does it mean "without compromise"? What are compromises. No concessions to what? Yes, to the false ego, the senses, the mind. What is this all called? *Anarthas*. Without compromises, sincerely, with enthusiasm that means that I am ready to do what? I'm ready to change. I'm ready to get rid of all of my ill habits. Only he who is ready to get rid of all of his bad habits may believe he has enthusiasm. Who is ready to get rid of all the bad habits? Please, raise your hands. Honestly? Sincerely? Why haven't you yet? No mercy, I see. I was given no mercy, so here I'm sitting (laughter). Enthusiasm means that I know that I have vices and I want to rid myself of them. And the other thing which accompanies, which is also manifestation of enthusiasm, what's that? I see my vices and what else do I do? I feel remorseful, I feel remorseful. It's also a sign of enthusiasm. If I see vices and say: "Well, what can I do? We're all people, we're all men, nothing human is alien to us." Not alien? Not alien, right? Not alien. Our willingness to follow with enthusiasm only consists of these two things. I have some vices, some problems and I'm ready to get rid of them. And as I see them manifest themselves again and again, and again I feel remorseful. And what does this remorse do to my faith when I feel remorseful. Yes, this sincere repentance makes my faith deeper. My faith becomes deeper.

But, as it has already been mentioned, it's a big paradox that, on the one hand God's existence is self-evident, like the sun, but why don't we see Him? Why don't we... Why isn't it so obvious to us? Why we sometimes... We are not so confident in it? Clouds, right, clouds. There's the sun, it's self-evident, but can we see it when it's covered by clouds? We can surmise that it's somewhere behind the clouds, because there's some light. Does our faith look like the sun covered by clouds? Our consciousness is covered by what? Clouds of what? Clouds of doubt. Doubts, what causes them? *Anarthas*, or the intelligence. Doubt is a function of the intelligence and it's, eventually, caused by *avidya*, or ignorance covering our heart.

And Krishna is giving some very important advice. Let's hear and think together why we still haven't got rid of doubts. Why do you think? Yes, material attachments. That's a correct answer. No, not weak faith. Why haven't we got rid of doubts? Because we don't want to get rid of them. Why don't we fully believe in God? Because we don't want to believe in Him. Why don't we want to believe in Him? Because doubts justify what? Yes, they justify our enjoyment. Very simple.

If we see our doubts this way, the doubts, which are deep in our hearts, we'll understand that we have no doubts about how *bhava* turns into *prema*. We don't have any doubts? No, we don't. We are well aware of it. *Bhava* turns into *prema*. But we have doubts about what? About whether God exists or not (laughter). And about what I am. Whether I'm a God's servant or not. Whether one should serve Him or not. We doubt the most basic, principal things, the most fundamental things. I doubt whether I am a God's servant. Do I doubt that I'm a God's servant? Who doubts that he's a God's servant? Because if we didn't doubt it God would have long ago stood before us, we'd have served Him, talked to Him. We have doubts about that. We have doubts about the most fundamental things, and we keep them in the most secret place. Where? In our hearts. What do people usually keep in secret places? The most valuable things. There we keep the most valuable things. What things are the most valuable? Doubts about God's existence. Take it or leave it. Because as long as I have doubts I have the right to enjoy. As long as I have doubts I can be in the centre. As long as I have doubts there's no need for me to get rid of my self-centeredness. Who of us is the centre of the universe? Please, raise your hands if you think, honestly think yourself to be the centre of the universe to be circled by the whole world? Please, admit it (laughter). All of us! We should get rid of it. All the people, all. All! However small I am. I might be a small snorter but I consider myself to be the centre of the universe all the same. I'm a small bug, right? I'm standing on the sea shore with the ocean all in front of me, which is just a small sparkle of God's magnificence and I'm thinking to myself: "How important I am! How big I am! I'm going to cross the ocean." Right? I do a few awkward movements, then get back to the shore and think, "I've defeated, I've defeated the ocean." Defeated the material nature. Everybody thinks so. A small ant thinks so. Like this story about a dung beetle which once climbed a dunghill. A big dunghill, it took it a while to climb the dunghill. When it got to the top it felt like a man that has subjugated Everest. Has anyone of you climbed high mountains? Subjugated mountain peaks? What does one feel when one subjugates a peak? How does one feel? "I've subjugated a peak!" Right? How did he subjugate it? A small fry, a clot of mucus has been climbing long and hard and have reached the peak. Why? To look where? To look down. And to feel how? "I've subjugated Everest." This beetle, it also thought it had subjugated Everest. It had climbed a dunghill and was sitting there, on the dunghill. Until an elephant squashed it. But this is another story.

The point is, again, that our doubts are very dear to us. Doubts about Krishna are very dear to us because they entitle us to enjoying ourselves, live life the way we like; continue to live the way we want. Therefore, what does Krishna say? What should we do with these doubts? What does He say at the end of Chapter 4, in the last verse of Chapter 4? What should be done? Yes. We should take this weapon of knowledge. And what should we do with this weapon of knowledge? What should be slashed? Where are these doubts situated? Yes, *hrit-stham*. He says that these doubts are situated in the heart. We should take the weapon of knowledge and slash them.

Now, has anyone operated on one's heart? Just imagine, what Krishna tells us to do. We should take a weapon, a sharp knife if not a sword. If we don't have a sword of knowledge at least we have some small knife. What do we have to do? Who is ready? Krishna says terrible things (laughter). It's just impossible to understand what Krishna wants to do to us. He says, "Take the weapon of knowledge and pull all of these doubts out of your heart, pull them out." This is an operation we have to perform ourselves. And, therefore, it's so hard to do.

Let's reflect on the nature of these doubts. It's also a very important thing. In the "Gita" Krishna explains the nature of these doubts when speaking about the four kinds of people not wanting to

do what? Surrender to Krishna, right. Four kinds of people who don't want to surrender to Krishna. And the most amazing thing about it is that these four kinds of people are situated where? In your heart. Four kinds of people. Actually, again, it's very important. Let's think about where these four types of people are headed, or, else, four kinds of sinful inclinations, four types of obstacles preventing one from surrendering, the ones we find so hard to give up, we don't want to give up.

What's the first kind? *Na mam duskrino mudhah*. There are four types of impious people. Type one is called *mudhah*. What does *mudhah* mean? *Mudhah* means ass. Is there a small ass in your heart? There's some activity going on... (laughter) Someone's said he has a big ass in his heart. *Mudhah*. *Mudhah* means... What does *mudhah* mean? Stubborn, right. What is our stubbornness? Our stubbornness is that we don't want to give up what? Our ignorance. Our attachments. Ramanujacharya gives a very interesting definition of the word *mudhah*. *Mudhah* is the one with a perverted taste. The one whose taste is pulling him where? Down. To dirt. Who has such a taste? Inferior taste, taste for inferior, rotten things. Taste for something stinky, disgusting. If you happen to think that you don't have such a taste just think next time what you're doing while surfing the net. Internet is a journey across the material world. What are we attracted to? *Mudhah*. One develops a taste for abominable things because of sins. A taste for rotten things, for decayed things, for dirty things. Right? And *mudhah* is manifestation of this taste. And this taste stops us surrendering to Krishna because we think, "How much longer? Everything's good, everything's so good, everything's so good. But something's missing, something so delicious, so dear." Some spice's missing. Everything's so sweet, sweet, sweet. We want something *risqué*. When one is attracted to goodness knows what he develops an inferior taste. And this inferior taste prevents us from surrendering.

Second, *na mam duskrino mudhah prapadyante naradhamah*. What does *naradhamah* mean? The lowest of men. Who are the lowest of men? What is a low man? Ramanujacharya explains that each subsequent problem is worse than the previous one and that the worst problem is a bad taste. The worst problem. I just have a bad taste. How can I help it? I was born that way. Yes, I do like salty dried fish, so what? (laughter) There's nothing I can do about that. Who likes salty dried fish? Don't raise your hands, please (laughter). This is one problem. *Naradhamah* is worse. *Naradhamah* is worse than *mudhah*. Because they are the lowest of men. Who are the lowest of men? Those who know they shouldn't do it and do it all the same. Hypocrites and cheaters, right. The first problem is lack of taste. Second problem is lack of what? When I know I shouldn't do that and do it all the same. Lack of will. Weak will. When I know it's bad, when I know that it's ... The one with an inferior taste doesn't even know it's bad. He thinks: "What's so bad about that? It's all right, OK. Why, what's up, guys? Are you nuts? A pint, please!" (laughter). But the one who knows it's bad but can't help it is weak-willed. And another result of sin, the result of our sinful nature is a weak will stopping one from surrendering.

The next is even worse. What are they called? *Mayayapahrta-jnana*. Who are *mayayapahrta-jnana*? It's lack of what? Of intelligence. Of intellect. When one develops perverted intelligence. As a result of his sinful activities he develops a perverted taste, a weak will and next – he develops perverted intelligence. Why are we endowed with intelligence? Well, there you are, everybody has admitted it. It turns out that God endows us with intelligence to justify our existence here. Why does God give us intelligence? We are endowed with intelligence to understand God. What do we use our intelligence for? To do what? To prove His non-existence. He doesn't exist, does not! I'm going to prove it. OK? *Mayayapahrta-jnana* are people who instead of using intelligence given to them by God to get closer to Him use it to prove He doesn't exist.

And, finally, the last, most awful lack possible is called what? *Asuram bhavam*. What does *asuram bhavam* mean? Yes, hating God. That means I know that God exists. God exists and what do I want to do to Him? Kill Him. As it's said in "Srimad-Bhagavatam", "*Sri hiranyakashipu uvaca*." What does *sri hiranyakashipu* say? Like when Vamanadev in the 8th

Canto of “Shrimad-Bhagavatam” came to Maharaja Bali and started to glorify him. He said, “Maharaja, you have such distinguished relatives! Your grandfather was Sri Hiranyakashipu himself!” And did this Hiranyakashipu want to do to Vishnu? Kill Him. And he was so eager to kill Him that what did Vishnu do? He concealed Himself. Where did He conceal Himself? In Sri Hiranyakashipu’s heart not to be found by him. This is the demoniac mentality when I want to kill God, destroy God. I know He exists but whatever the cost I am a theomachist. I want to raise a rebellion against God. Like Ravana, like Hiranyakashipu. They all chant mantras, they possess the Vedic knowledge that the soul is internal but, at the same time, want to kill God. In the 3rd verse, Chapter 10 Krishna explains how to get rid of all these problems. The 3rd verse describes how one can eliminate all of these *anarthas* in one’s heart. Chapter 10. I’m speaking on Chapter 10.

*yo mām ajam anādim ca
vetti loka-maheśvaram
asammūḍhaḥ sa martyeṣu
sarva-pāpaiḥ pramucyate*

“He who knows Me as the unborn, as the beginningless, as the Supreme Lord of all the worlds — he only, undeluded among men, is freed from all sins.” (Bg.10.3)

Krishna promises that *sarva-pāpaiḥ pramucyate* – one can be freed from what? From all sinful reactions, *pramucyate*. *Pramucyate* means completely delivered. *Sarva-pāpaiḥ pramucyate*. What kind of man can be delivered from all sinful reactions? *Yo mām ajam anādim ca vetti loka-maheśvaram*, he who knows... *Asammūḍhaḥ sa martyeṣu* – among mortal only he is not deluded who knows three things about God. *Ajam*, which means unborn, *anādim* – without beginning, *loka-maheśvaram* – the Supreme Lord of all the planets. What does Krishna imply? One is delivered, *pramucyate*, from all sinful reactions, from all sinful inclinations residing in the heart when one knows three things about God. What does Krishna imply? What kind of man is freed from all sinful reactions? And, eventually, from being dependant.

What does *ajam* mean? Unborn. What does Krishna imply here? Who is born in this world? What does this very fact of being born mean? Death. The very fact of being born means material nature. And Krishna says: “I am *ajam*.” That means that I am What? I’m beyond what? Beyond death. Beyond material nature. I’m beyond all material manifestations. But someone will say, “I’m also *ajam*.” Right? I’m *ajam*. I’m also unborn. Where does Krishna state it? Krishna Himself speaks about it. Yes.

*na jāyate mriyate vā vipaścīn
nāyam kutaścīn na babhūva kaścit
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yam purāṇo
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*

“For the soul there is neither birth nor death. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.” (Bg.2.20)

Krishna continues saying *anādim*. The soul is unborn but is it *anādim*? No. What does *anādim* mean? Without beginning, that is without cause. Krishna has no cause. Do we have a cause? Yes, this is Krishna. How can we be unborn and primeval, as Krishna puts it, and have a cause at the same time? How can it be possible? Who understands it? A paradox? A paradox (laughter). The soul is primeval but, nevertheless, it has a cause.

I’ve recently spoken with Andrei Kurayev. Andrei Kurayev considers himself as well as many people think him to be a great theologian. That was what he accused us of. He was telling us: “According to you theology, my dear sirs, the soul is unborn.” Right? It’s unborn. What does it imply? Actually, why do they hold this proposition in our philosophy against us? Because for them it means that the soul is equal to God. It’s as primeval as God Himself. And they can’t accept that because what can’t be explained otherwise? If the soul is a primeval as God Himself

what can't be explained? Yes, the fact what we are doing here. Quite right! They say it's our philosophy's very big flaw. Is it our philosophy's flaw or not? Why isn't it our philosophy's flaw? Because it's OUR philosophy, right (laughter).

As a matter of fact, that's very curious because, again, it's the same *acintya bhedabheda* philosophy, philosophy of inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference in relation to the living being and God. Virtually, they're opposed to us speaking about oneness here. When we are speaking about oneness they revolt because for them the conception of oneness means that we have become proud. That's devilish pride because we raise ourselves to the level of God. But, as a result, it causes this terrible dualism of the Christian philosophy, the Christian practice – separation of the soul from God and many other consequences of it like fanaticism, rejection of other things. These are all manifestations of the same duality. And, at the same time, they say Christ is what? Who is Christ? He is the son. But what is He? Primeval, the same God, He's, actually, equal to God. He is the son but, at the same time, he's on the same level as God. This is one of the most fundamental propositions of Christianity. There was the greatest schism at the very beginning when... What was his name? The bishop. Yes, Aelurus. When Aelurus tried to reduce Christ to being born or the position of being born of the Father. And, accordingly, what philosophy did Christianity approve? *Acintya bhedabheda tattva*. But only applied it to Jesus. As a matter of fact, this is a true philosophy, it's just that they didn't apply it to everybody.

But here, nevertheless, Krishna points out one very important thing. He says: *ajam anādim ca vetti loka-maheśvaram*. “Ultimately, I am the Supreme Lord of all creation.” And in the beginning He points out one thing for a man to get rid of sins. What thing does He point out? What does He point out? Oneness or difference? He points out difference. This is a very important point. In the beginning for a man to be able to get rid of his sins, and, besides, this is what they hold against us and, basically, it's true enough. Because some hassles on the path... Why do we take time to get rid of our sins, problems, vices or something else? Why? Because we're already where? Why, of course, we're already delivered, we're already transcendental, we're already *sat-cit-ananda*. Even time doesn't separate already. It's already here: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare. Krishna says, “In the first place, one should get a clear understanding that God is different from all things extant in this world. He is different from the individual soul. He is different from the material nature because all material things come into existence. He's different from the soul because He is *anadim*, and the soul has a beginning. He is the Supreme Lord of all creation, *loka-maheśvaram*. And *loka-maheśvaram* when one understands... What does *loka-maheśvaram* mean? The Supreme Lord of all creation. What does the Supreme Lord of all creation mean? It means that the whole creation belongs to Him.

In other words, Krishna says that he exists. And let's try now to understand one thing. If we understand this thing we'll immediately, as Krishna explains it, will be freed from all sins.

Sarva-pāpaiḥ pramucyate. He says that everything's gone right away. As soon as one understands that there's only one Lord, the Supreme Lord. What does it mean that there's only one Lord who rules over everything? The only origin of all creation and that everything belongs to Him. What does it mean? What? What? That, first of all, I don't own anything. Anything. Do I own anything in this world? Everything belongs to Him, right? Are we ready to put it into practice? Everything belongs to God. As soon as one understands, “I have nothing because if I had anything, if anything belonged to me could it be taken away from me? If I have something can anyone take it away from me? No, he can't. If something belongs to me, if it's mine, it'll always be mine. No one can take it away from me? Nothing belongs to me in this world.” As soon as one understands that one doesn't own anything, that everything belongs to God, what is happening in his heart? There's a wonderful verse in the Fifth Canto of the “Shrimad-Bhagavatam”, which Srila Prabhupada loves to quote, and devotees, too.

*yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā
sarvair guṇais tatra samāsate surāḥ
harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇā
manorathenāsati dhāvato bahiḥ*

“All the demigods and their exalted qualities, such as religion, knowledge and renunciation, become manifest in the body of one who has developed unalloyed devotion for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vāsudeva. On the other hand, a person devoid of devotional service and engaged in material activities has no good qualities. Even if he is adept at the practice of mystic yoga or the honest endeavor of maintaining his family and relatives, he must be driven by his own mental speculations and must engage in the service of the Lord's external energy. How can there be any good qualities in such a man?” (S.B. 5.18.12)

Who know this verse? What does this verse mean? That all good qualities become manifest in whose heart? In a devotee's heart. What kind of devotee? What's he called? *Akiñcanā*. What does *akiñcanā* mean? A beggar. The one who doesn't consider anything as belonging to him. All of the perfect qualities become manifest immediately, all sins are gone. As long as I'm holding on to my property, to my false sense of proprietorship, as long as I think that this, this and this belong to me. And the more I own in my consciousness, the more sins I have. As long as I think so I have sins, I have vices. I have problems in my heart. As soon as I suddenly realize that I have to let go of everything, nothing belongs to me. Let's close our eyes for a minute and imagine that, “Nothing belongs to me in this world, I own nothing. Everything's Krishna's, everything's His and He's Lord of all.” How do you feel? Someone said uncommitted. No, that's easy. All dirty things, all unnecessary things, everything is gone from my heart at once. When one understands this simple point *vetti loka-maheśvaram*, when we realized that there's only one Lord and that this Lord is above all creation, that He owns everything in this world and I don't own anything. That's what Srila Prabhupada explains at the very beginning of “Shrimad-Bhagavatam”. At the very beginning of “Shrimad-Bhagavatam” Srila Prabhupada says in the preface that there's the Absolute Truth and there's *ishvara*. What's the difference between the Absolute Truth and *ishvara*? What's Krishna saying here? I am what? I am *ishvara* or the Absolute Truth? *Ishvara* or the Absolute Truth? Who's in favour of thinking that Krishna is speaking here about the Absolute Truth? Who's in favour of considering that Krishna is speaking here about Himself as *ishvara*? Any abstentions? (laughter) When Krishna is pointing out that *ajam anādiṁ loka-maheśvaram* he's saying, “I am the Absolute Truth.” Because *ishvaras* are what? Can *ishvara* be relative? Can he? Are you *ishvaras*? We're all *ishvaras*, right? Who's *ishvara* in the family? Of course, the wife's *ishvara* (laughter). One day Gopal Krishna Maharaja and I went to visit one wealthy Hindu to persuade him to donate money to the Moscow Krishna temple. And Gopal Krishna Maharaja with these childlike ingenuousness and sincerity of his, I even felt a little ill at ease, began to say, “You should surrender, you should surrender to God.” And he says, “I've surrendered already.” (laughter) We all were a bit taken aback. And he goes on, “My wife is my God, so, I've already surrendered, there's no need for me to do anything else, I already have *ishvara* at home.” (laughter)

But *ishvara* is relative. Right? And someone can be a relative *ishvara* and can rule over in some area. What does Krishna point out here? Krishna points out that there's only one Absolute Lord. Does this world have the Absolute Lord? That's what we mustn't doubt. Because this world must only have one source. Can this world have a lot of sources? This world can't have a lot of sources. Like these poor *Yamadutas* came to Yamaraja in the Sixth Canto and started saying, “Who on earth are you? Are you God or not? We thought you were God.” Because what does God have to do? Rule and establish justice. God judges, doesn't He? But it turned out that there's another one there, some creatures with four arms came and said someone else's name had been spoken and delivered this Ajamila. And the *yamadutas* said one very important thing. They said that there must be one God. Let's repeat it out loud together. THERE MUST BE ONE GOD.

There's only one God! There's only one God! What are we if we think there are lots of Gods? Right, that means we're atheists. That means we can choose whom to surrender to and whom not. That means that we actually don't believe in God. But God is and must be one. And here Krishna is pointing it out. The secret of getting rid of one's sins is understanding that there's only one God and that He's the Absolute Lord. And since He's the Absolute Lord it means that when I'm coming nearer to Him I, too, ascend to this level of absoluteness.

Anyway, it's the last topic, I won't touch upon it now. But this is the point. Krishna explains in three verses the process of being freed from sins. Here, in this verse, he says, "He who knows that there's only one Lord and that this Lord is Me is freed from all sins." And what does one develop when freed from all sins? All good qualities. What good qualities? He enumerates them in the following verses. He says:

*buddhir jñānam asammoḥaḥ
kṣamā satyaṁ damaḥ śamaḥ
sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ bhavo 'bhāvo
bhayaṁ cābhayaṁ eva ca
ahiṁsā samatā tuṣṭis
tapo dānaṁ yaśo 'yaśaḥ
bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānām
matta eva pṛthag-vidhāḥ*

"Intelligence, knowledge, freedom from doubt and delusion, forgiveness, truthfulness, control of the senses, control of the mind, happiness and distress, birth, death, fear, fearlessness, nonviolence, equanimity, satisfaction, austerity, charity, fame and infamy — all these various qualities of living beings are created by Me alone." (BG 10.4-5)

Such a person develops intelligence, knowledge, *asammoḥaḥ* – freedom from delusion, *kṣamā damaḥ śamaḥ* and all the rest. All the rest qualities are created in me as soon as I understand in my heart, "Nothing belongs to me, everything belongs to God. And since everything belongs to Him I should think about Him. He is the only Lord."

Next time you're chanting the mantra try to meditate on it. Krishna is the only Lord. He is the Absolute Truth and Absolute Good. There can be only one God. THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE GOD. What's His name? Krishna! Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

Hare Krishna. Thank you very much!

OK. Tomorrow we'll be studying the next stage, *nishtha*. I don't know whether we'll go beyond that but tomorrow we are going to have a strong faith.

Stages of Bhakti. Odessa.2004. Lecture 4. En

Yesterday I talked a little about what *anartha-nivrtti* means. Since this is one of the most important subject matters, how to get rid of the dirt in our heart, today I will speak about this process in more detail. In particular, I will refer to what Srila Prabhupada writes in his comment to the third verse. It's not surprising that it's the first stages of devotional service that we've been dwelling on for such a long time, for it is them that are relevant to us. Of course, I cannot exclude that half of you have already reached the level of *bhava* and it is difficult for them to hear about some *sraddha*, but the probability of this is not very high. That is why we speak so much about faith, faith is a very important aspect. I said that faith, in essence, is a reflection of knowledge, that essentially it is the very condition in which one first begins to feel the knowledge hidden inside oneself. It is reflected in one's mind and takes the form of real faith.

A very important feature of faith, which I forgot to mention yesterday, an essential quality that makes faith or *sraddha* what it actually is – a mother of the *yogi*, a reliable, caring, loving mother of the *yogi* – is that faith imparts one with the quality of *anukulya* in relation to the object of this faith. Now I will explain what that means.

Our usual attitude towards other people and towards God – for actually our attitude towards other people is just a reflection of our original attitude towards God – is the attitude of a person who looks at them from his own point of view, right? I am sitting inside my small embrasure with a rifle and I shoot from there. I can shoot real bullets or I can shoot just dirty thoughts at everyone. But the point is that we are sitting in a bunker and we are looking at the world out of this bunker through a periscope with our envious eyes, looking for those who have gotten more than me, "Look at the way he is enjoying! Look at the way they are enjoying! Dirty pigs! They are enjoying it and I can't!" and so on. These are various manifestations of envy, various methods or different forms of self-centeredness that can be found in a person. One is sitting in his small fortress and is looking out. We have many lines of defense here. One line of defense is the mind, the intelligence, the body, the false ego, and all of them are brandishing their weapons.

What does faith do, irrespective of whether it is faith in God, or even just faith in some person, when suddenly I feel the attractiveness of another person, – it changes our attitude, it switches our attitude. It makes one relate with this quality, which in Sanskrit is called *anukul*. *Anukul* is very difficult to translate into Russian. Srila Prabhupada translates it into English as 'favorable'. 'Favorable' literally means auspicious. Suddenly, our mode of rebellion against God, against someone who enjoys more than me, against other people, switches into *anukul*. It becomes more important to me that the other person enjoys, not me. This is the secret of faith. That is what faith does to one, it makes one switch from the state of self-centeredness, when I am concerned only about what I feel. Basically, as a rule, we are interested only in what I feel. What does it have to do with me that someone is sitting next to me eating a *gulabjamun*? As long as this *gulabjamun* doesn't appear on my plate, it is not a *gulabjamun* but an object of envy. It turns into a *gulabjamun* when it is on my plate; not even on the plate, but on my tongue.

Anukul means that suddenly it becomes more important to me that the other person is happy. Whether this is faith in the spiritual master or faith in God, whether it is faith or simply the

beginning of love for another person, this state happens and the path of faith is essentially the path of deepening this state. Rupa Goswami defines pure *bhakti* as *anukulyena krisna anusilanam*. *Anukulyena* – one does not simply serve Krishna, because one can serve in various ways. We all serve. We serve in some office, we serve somewhere else. Griboedov has said about this that, “I’m glad to serve but not fawn”. Most of the people fawn. They are forced to serve, they do not have this *anukul*. Rupa Goswami explains that this is a very important aspect – *anukulyena krisna anusilanam* – I have to serve, I have to cultivate serving Krishna with this particular attitude towards Him. I was explaining this in my seminar on Manah-siksa last year. Those of you who have heard it know that the attitude that is called *anukul*, or ‘with love’, has three aspects which faith gives us. The first aspect *anukul – anukulyatmakam* – means that I’m doing, that I start doing what my beloved or the one that I have faith in, wants.

The criterion for my actions is not what I want anymore. We all want to do something. But now, before doing something I ask whether that person will like what I am doing or not. As soon as you notice that some faith or some anticipation of love has appeared in you for someone, you immediately start comparing: will my beloved be please by what I'm doing now; will my guru be pleased by it, and, ultimately, will Krishna be pleased by it, or not?

The second aspect of this – *anukula anugata* – is when I want what my beloved or the one I have developed faith in wants, when I do not even want what I want anymore but I want what that person wants. Is anyone capable of this? Of wanting what my beloved wants? In fact, we are all capable of this, any mother knows that. At a certain point this propensity appears in her towards her child. *Anukul* also means inclination, propensity. And it makes her do what the child wants, makes her want what the child wants.

Anton Chekhov explained this in his story “Dushechka” (“The Darling”) about how this darling, wonderful Russian lady could love. She had this gift of love. The gift of love means the ability to reflect, to reflect the desires of a person, to adjust one’s actions to that person’s and, ultimately, the ability to enjoy that person’s happiness, the ability to feel pleasure. That is *visesa-jnana*, or the specific quality when I feel what my beloved feels. If he or she enjoys, I enjoy. I start feeling what the object of my love feels. That is actually the way of deepening one’s faith. Faith switches our attitude to Krishna. Because many believe in Krishna. As I said yesterday, *asura bhava*. *Asuras* believe in Krishna, we, too, believe in Krishna. Or rather, not that they believe in Krishna, you can’t say “believe”, strictly speaking. They know that Krishna exists, perhaps even better than we do. They are confident that Krishna, God, exists. Still, the feeling that they have for Krishna is hatred: “I want to kill this God. What is He doing here? Why is all this going on at all? Rascal!” This is the difference. There are people who know that God is there, but still they start blaming Him, taking offence at Him, saying that God is bad, God is wicked, God has abandoned me.

There is a category of people, and a very large one, I suspect some of us also belong to that category, but when *sraddha* appears in one or, in other words, when I hear of a pure devotee this switching can take place with me: from a rebel and a rioter I turn into a believer, I turn into a devotee and I surrender to Krishna. This is a very important aspect, or a very important feature of faith.

Yesterday I also said, one thing I would like to add, what Jiva Goswami explains in the “Bhakti-sandarbha” regarding enthusiasm. Yesterday we said that enthusiasm – and this is directly related to the main topic of our today's lecture – Jiva Goswami explains the nature of enthusiasm. Yesterday I said that enthusiasm is the desire to change oneself, an uncompromising desire, a very strong aspiration to achieve the goal by all means. And Jiva Goswami gives a very good example. He says that if one wants to find gold, one will look for it regardless of the result. There is such a disease called “gold rush”. Is anyone infected by this disease? Gold may be paper. If a very strong desire appears in one to find gold, i.e. something very valuable, one will go on doing this regardless of whether one achieves success or not. There are people who are engaged in business; it is clear to everyone around them that it is not going to work, but still they are doing that business no matter what happens. Here he was caught stealing, there he borrowed some money and lost it all but still he is persisting on and on as hard as possible. This is called enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm is when I, regardless of whether I am successful or not, I have this goal. And when I have that goal, I know very well that I, as Jiva Goswami writes ... Similarly, a devotee should aspire to excellence regardless of the outcome. We must strive for perfection regardless of whether I am successful or not, whether I attain something or not. It is this attitude that ultimately drives the lust out of one's heart and leads one to bliss. Jiva Goswami writes that a devotee, even after achieving perfection goes on deepening his or her understanding, even when he or she has attained it. And those who have not attained it just continue striving for it. This is the attitude which we should cultivate in ourselves and which actually is the sign of faith – true, sincere faith.

There is an amazing story about Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak is the founder of the Sikh religion. He was born in Punjab at the time when India was completely conquered by the Muslims. Babur, the founder of the Mongol Empire, the Great Mughal Empire, from Fergana, attacked India and practically conquered the greater part of India, organized there the Delhi Sultanate and killed a great number of people. At that time, a little before Lord Chaitanya's birth, approximately at the same time, that boy, Guru Nanak, was born. From his very childhood he was completely detached, he was a mystic. He was looking for perfection. His father did not know what to do with him at all, for he was practically god-for-nothing. He was completely worthless. He tried to give him to various teachers, but the teachers would very quickly give up on him.

When he was six years old, he sent him to some guru, who was to teach him to read. This guru wrote down all the letters of the Devanagari Sanskrit alphabet and taught him, “Like this. If you learn this, you'll be able to read”. Guru Nanak who was six years old at that time, a little boy, knee-high to a grasshopper, turned to his teacher and asked, “Master, before you start teaching me, first explain to me what you know yourself”. Because before you teach me, I must be confident that you'll teach me the right things. And the guru says, “Well, I can read, I can count, I can sum, multiply, divide. Generally, I can teach you to do all the calculations with money. You will not get lost in any case, you will be a first class accountant”. The little boy made a face unable to contain his disgust at what he heard. He said: “What's the use of knowing all that if it won't help me, ultimately, to achieve liberation, won't help me to attain freedom. What is the sense? You're going to teach me this but I do not need it. What is the use of that knowledge, if it

won't help me to attain absolute freedom?" The teacher was somewhat frightened by the boy's uncompromising reply and said: "Explain to me, please, maybe you can tell me how I can attain freedom?"

Listen to the advice that Guru Nanak gave to his teacher. He said, "Burn all your material attachments, take all your worldly love in your heart and burn it and make some ink of the ash. Then take a piece of paper made of your intelligence, turn your intelligence into a blank sheet of paper. Then take the pen which is the love of God, dip it into the ink and, using the pen, make your heart the one who will be writing and write on that sheet of paper..." What? The name of God, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Did all of you remember what you are to do? You need to burn all the love in your heart, the material love, burn the material attachments and make some ink. Then, with the pen, which is love of God, write on the blank sheet of your mind the God's name. Actually, it's amazing, Guru Nanak lived at the same time as Lord Chaitanya, and he said that one, who does not chant the name of God with each inhalation and exhalation lives in vain, breathes in vain. What is the use of breathing and not repeating the name of God? Who of you live in vain? Each inhalation and exhalation.

And this is actually determination. This little boy says to his teacher, "What's the use of all this knowledge? Knowledge has some sense only when this knowledge leads me to perfection". What is perfection? With each inhalation and exhalation to chant, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Yesterday I explained how Krishna promises deliverance from all sins:

yo mam ajam anadim ca
vetti loka-mahesvaram
asammudhah sa martyesu
sarva-papaih pramucyate

(B.g., 10.3)

One is completely purified of all sins, if he is aware of God's omnipotence. We said yesterday that Krishna makes a very important point here. He emphasizes the difference, He emphasizes that God is principally different from His creation. Srila Prabhupada writes about it in the purport, he writes, "Sri Krishna is therefore different from everything that is created, and anyone who knows Him as such immediately becomes liberated from all sinful reactions". Once again, anyone who understands that Krishna is different from everything that is created immediately becomes liberated from all reactions of one's sins.

Now I want to ask you an indiscreet question. Who of you is completely free from all sinful reactions? *Sarva-papaih pramucyate* – *pra* means "absolutely, completely". If we have studied logic, what does this mean? This means that we do not understand that Krishna is different from His creation. I said yesterday that the basis of this sin is our position of the proprietor in this world, when we think that something here belongs to us. Since I do not understand that

everything belongs to Krishna, I act as if I am the proprietor. Since I act as the proprietor this leads to what? To suffering and sins. Because I commit sins, because I act as the proprietor of something that does not belong to me.

Well, now, that's all good theoretical stuff. Yesterday we were closing our eyes and imagining for a moment that everything belongs to Krishna and nothing belongs to us. Did we imagine that for a moment? And what did we do after that? We completely forgot that and started saying, "Where is mine this? Where is mine that? Where is what?" Actually, in Sanskrit, all this is also very interesting, not only in Sanskrit, by the way, in Russian too. In Russian, the situation is mixed, in English it is completely degraded. In Sanskrit there is no verb 'to have'. One cannot say "I have". Even in Russian, when we say 'я имею' ... Usually when the English study Russian language, they say, 'I own a book'. We literally say 'There is a book close to me'. This is a reflection of the original Sanskrit grammar formula. In Sanskrit, if one wants to say that one has something, one says *nikate*. *Nikate* means there is something near me. We say the same thing when we say 'У меня есть'. 'У меня' means 'close to me'. This means that I do not have it, the book does not belong to me, it is close to me. Money does not belong to me. Sometimes it is close, sometimes not. But in English they say only 'I have, I own'.

Actually, meditation on the fact that nothing belongs to me can destroy all our sins. However, in a sense this is not a very practical advice, therefore Srila Prabhupada, explaining the process, points out that Krishna is *vetti loka-mahesvaram* – that "I am the lord", that God is only one and this makes it highly practical. What does it mean? Obviously, this is a process. Obviously the deliverance from sins, the purification of one's heart is a process which will require a certain time. What does it mean to recognize that God is the lord, *vetti loka-mahesvaram*? What does this mean in the simplest sense of the word? Because we can't constantly think, "Yes, yes, yes, nothing belongs to me", we will immediately forget this. How can we remember this constantly? Serve ... More precisely? If someone is the boss, what does one do? One gives us instructions. If we accept that Krishna is *vetti loka-mahesvaram*, if we know that Krishna is God, what should we do? Yes, we should fulfill His will. We should follow Krishna's instructions. We should build our life in accordance with Krishna's will. When we start building our life in accordance with Krishna's will what happens to my sins? They are going away. How do I know Krishna's will? Yes, from the spiritual teacher. The spiritual master can tell me what Krishna wants. Krishna's will is non-different from the will of the spiritual master.

Here Srila Prabhupada explains this, "Anything done under the direction of Krishna is transcendental. It cannot be contaminated by material reactions" and then he says, "Such directions are given in authoritative scriptures such as the "Srimad-Bhagavatam" and the "Bhagavad-gita" or from a bona fide spiritual master. Because the spiritual master is the representative of the Supreme Lord, his direction is directly the direction of the Supreme Lord". I'll repeat once again, since the spiritual master is the representative of the Supreme Lord, the instructions given by him are the instructions of the Lord Himself. The spiritual master, the holy men and the holy scriptures, that is *sadhu, guru* and *sastra*, lead to the same goal.

In other words, here Srila Prabhupada explains the process of *anartha-nivritti*. The process of *anartha-nivrtti* or the essence of *anartha-nivrtti* consists in placing Krishna's will, which comes to me through the spiritual master, above my own will. And how do I do that? How do I change my

life, trying to gradually adjust my life to Krishna's will? "Devotional service" does not mean anything, it is an empty phrase. We too often repeat these words in order to forget what they mean. When words are repeated too often, their meaning is worn out. In what particular way can I build my life in accordance with Krishna's will? And what is 'Krishna's will'? I have to subordinate my life to Krishna's will, right? Have some of you, who have children, subordinated your life to their needs? The child is screaming and we get up, even though we want to sleep. The child wants to eat and what we prepare some food. For whom? For it, even if you yourself do not want to eat. What else does the child do? The child wants to walk and we go for a walk with it, despite the fact that we want to watch TV, or eat, or something else. What is the process of subordinating our will to the Lord's will? Not just *sadhana*, more precisely. *Arcana* or *bhajana-kriya*. *Arcana*.

What does Krishna do in the morning? He gets up and that is why we also get up. Do we want to get up in the morning? "Why is He getting up so early?!" We don't understand this at all! Krishna is hungry. How many times per day does He eat in the temple? Well, depending on the temple, in some temples He does not eat at all. But He is scheduled to eat five times a day. Five times a day we have to offer Him *arati*. Five times a day we have to offer Him food. Even if I'm not hungry, I have to cook for Him. I have to get up for Him, I have to cook for Him, I have to completely turn my life, to completely adjust my life to Krishna's schedule. That is very nice, because if it wasn't for Him, then I would sleep until what time? Well, approximately, something like that.

I once came to some devotees' place and I asked them, "Can I sing *kirtan*?" They said, "Hush! No! Our son is sleeping!" It was about 3 pm. "He's on vacation". People will sleep until God knows when, they will eat God knows when and God knows how. They will be entirely driven by their own desires. But Krishna gives us this process of *arcana*. What is the meaning of *arcana*? It means to completely transform our life.

Jiva Goswami also explains that *arcana* is required. Who is *arcana* required for? What are we called? Neophytes, right. *Arcana* is required for neophytes. Who is a neophyte here? *Arcana* is required for those who still have impurities in their heart. Jiva Goswami says that there are two main impurities that *arcana* drives out of our heart, two major defects that prevent us from focusing entirely on the Holy Name. As a whole, *arcana* is not required, it is not required for those with a pure heart, who can chant with every breath, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. They do not need *arcana*, but *arcana* is needed for us, because we have two major defects that *arcana* drives out of our heart. Who knows what these two defects are? Laziness, yes, there is laziness. The desire to dominate... We have many major defects, you're right. If we start now enumerating them we we'll have to stay here until the evening. But *arcana* specifically works on two things. Jiva Goswami explains that these two things are called *kadarya silanam* and *viksipta cintanam*.

Kadarya silanam: *silanam* means character, *kadarya* means a greedy character. What does greed mean? Greed is when I want everything for myself. Much or not so much but for myself. The more, the better. We know the story of the old man and the goldfish. But *kadarya silanam* means that I want it all for myself. How does *arcana* save us from this evil, from greed, from desire? It teaches us to give. *Arcana* teaches us to offer the best that we have to Krishna.

Gradually, like a child. Everyone knows, again, this is a very nice example. It's like with a child, when one has switched to it, one begins thinking, "What best I can buy for my child?" Not for myself. In the same way, when one has these Twins, Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai, at home, They start demanding. These are very demanding living creatures, that is why it is dangerous to have Them. However, there is a useful adjustment, the curtain. Thus, you can have Them, but you should make a nice curtain so that, when you do not need it, you draw the curtain. But *arcana* makes one think, and makes one think of doing something nice for Them, of bringing something to Them. One is now going to the market and buying things for Them. Gradually, not immediately. At first, one buys something for oneself and, out of formality, offers it to Them. But if one is engaged in *arcana* correctly, because the principle of *arcana* is such that I want and should give Krishna the best. The best, everything that I have, the best jewelry.

An acquaintance of mine, he's got poor health, little energy, and he is a little overweight. He went to an astrologer and the astrologer told him, "If you want to improve your health buy a ring with a ruby and wear it on such and such finger, because the sun will influence you and you'll have a lot of energy". Full of enthusiasm he went to a jewelry store, bought a red ruby ring, ordered a beautiful ruby ring, and was just about to put it on his finger, when Madhava Maharaj appeared in front of him. Seeing the ruby ring, Madhava Maharaj shouted, "Hey, my dear! What a nice ring! Give it to my Kanayt Balai. Why do you need a ring? The ring belongs to Kanayt Balai!" And my friend looked at the ring, looked at Madhava Maharaja and said, "Take it!"

Arcana teaches one not to think of oneself. One starts buying things for Kanayt Balai, or for Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai. One gives away even the dearest, even the ring that was supposed to make one a deer *bhakta* of Suryadeva. *Kadarya silanam* is one of the results of correcting this human character, this is one result of *arcana*. Which is the second result? *Vikshipta chintanam*.

What does *vikshipta chintanam* mean? A restless mind, a scattered mind, a mind which is scattered in numerous directions, which forces us all the time to do one thing, another thing, third thing... *Arcana* makes us focus, it allows us to train the power of our mind, it allows us to direct all our thoughts and intentions towards Krishna. In this way, gradually, one gives everything to Krishna. Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada explains in what way *arcana* gradually corrects one's heart. Because ultimately, what is the most important result of one's performing *arcana*? When my heart is completely purified in the process of worshipping the Deity what should I see? Krishna. Where should I see Him? In my heart, in the Deity – everywhere.

Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada explains that that is exactly the path, that is the mechanism of *arcana*, because who is situated in the Deity's heart? No. That can be the devotees, if you have managed to enter that heart. He says that *antaryami* is situated in the Deity's heart, or the Supersoul. Who is situated in the Supersoul's heart? *Vaibhava-prakas* – Krishna, who comes here in the form of *lila-avatars*. In the heart of the *lila-avatars* the *caturvyuha* is situated; and in *caturvyuha*'s heart the original Lord is situated, who is completely transcendent.

These are the five forms of the Lord, and they are non-different from each other. But the Lord gives us the opportunity to actually realize, now and here, that He is *loka-mahesvaram*, that He

is the Lord of everything, just by having Him at home. For that purpose the transcendent Lord is multiplied in the four forms of the *chaturvyuha*, *chaturvyuha* is spread into *vaybhavprakas*, They come here in the form of various *lila-avatars*, forcing us to think about Them, the *lila-avatars* and the *purusa-avatars* become, eventually, the *antaryami* or the Supersoul and the Supersoul turns into the *arcana*. If one worships *arca*, *arca-vigraha*, the Lord in that form, then gradually all one's service is completely transferred to the spiritual world and beyond the limits of the material world.

Now, listen carefully again, I will again explain a little about that process of one's inner transformation in the process of *arcana*, and I will tell you the end of the story about Nachikethos and his questions, or requests, to Yamaraja. That is what we will be talking about today.

One of the main processes, or rather the preliminary processes, of *arcana* is called *bhuta-suddhi*. Who knows what *bhuta-suddhi* means? Not even just purification of the mind. Not intelligence. *Bhuta-suddhi*: *bhuta* means the nature of the elements, purification of one's nature. Can we serve the Lord in a body, consisting of earth, water, excrements? No. In what kind of body can we serve God? Only in a pure spiritual body. This is why before you go into the altar ... Can I go into the altar in a material body? I cannot, a process of transformation should take place. *Arcana*, or *bhajana-kriya*, means *diksa*. Sanatana Goswami compares *diksa* to an alchemical process where mercury should turn into gold. What is that mercury that should turn into gold and what is that gold? The mercury always runs, jumps, we have this mercury also within us. This is our heart. Our heart should turn to gold as a result of this alchemical process.

Accordingly, there is this *mantra* pronounced by Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu:

naham vipro na ca nara-patir napi vaisyo na sudro
naham varni na ca griha-patir no vanastho yatir va
kintu prodyan-nikhila-paramananda-purnamritabdher
gopi-bhartuh pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanudasah

(Cc, Madhya, 13.80)

When a *pujari* goes into the altar, he must be freed of all material self-designations. Before I go into the altar, I have to focus on this idea: I'm not a *sudra*, I'm not a *vaisya*, I'm not a woman, I'm not a man, I'm not a mother, I'm not a father, I am not a *brahmana*, I'm not a *sannyasi*, I am none of these, I am *gopi-bhartuh pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanudasah* – I'm a servant of the servant of the servant of the master of *the gopis*, of the husband, the eternal consort of the *gopis*. This is who I am.

In the process of such meditation, when I offer something to Krishna, I offer exactly this; before that I get rid of all material identification and I offer to Krishna my entire self. If I meditate on this and pronounce the *mantra*, then gradually an alchemical process starts taking place in my heart, and my heart starts transforming. *Sarva-papaih pramucyate*, one is freed of all sins.

In this regard, it is also important to understand, first of all, how this happens, how gradually-gradually this process of meditation or reflection, or serving Krishna, actually fulfilling His will

changes our heart. In this regard, it is very interesting to hear what Nachiketos asked from the God of death.

We remember this story when he waited in an empty hall for three days. In a sense this desert is the preliminary process of preparing one for transformation. One should find oneself in solitude. One should be left on one's own before the guru, the spiritual teacher, comes and is able to tell him, "Ask anything from me, you have waited for three days and three nights".

In other words, one must demonstrate some patience. Sometimes when some faith appears in us and we begin chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. This is the topic of Prahladananda Maharaj's seminar. And we do not feel any response, empty material sounds, emptiness. Does anyone feel that emptiness? The feeling that there is no answer? But despite of the fact that there is no answer, one should continue going by the spiritual path. Ultimately, we will feel that response inside or outside. The spiritual master will appear either before us or inside us, he will stand in front of us and will say: "Now ask me to fulfill three wishes of yours".

Now I will tell you what three requests Nachiketos made and you try to understand what he meant. The first thing he asked for, he looked at Yama, the God of death, who appeared before him and said, "When I go back to my father, make him no longer angry with me and make him receive me with open arms". This was his first very clever request. That is, he did not say, "Let me out of the death's embrace", he said, "When I go back make him receive me well". That is, in one request – there is such an art – to put in one request several at once, and thus get more. That is, it goes without saying that he will return. Yamaraja, when he heard that, he said: "*Tatasthu* – Let it be as you wish! When you go back, your father will be happy that you're back from the embrace of death and he will meet you with great honor".

Second, he asked, "Help me, please, attain the fire of transformation and obtain the immortality that the gods have on the Svarga-loka" Did you remember well? "Help me, please, attain the fire of transformation and obtain the immortality that is enjoyed by the gods on the Svarga-loka". That was his second request and Yamaraja said, "All right, I will help you. This fire is already burning in your heart, that is, it is already there. The only thing I will help you with is to build an altar there. I will explain to you how to build an altar, because there must be an altar around the fire, how to place the bricks and what they should be made of".

Nachiketos listened to all that and then repeated: "What the bricks should be made of so that the spiritual master is pleased and how to build that altar". When he repeated that nicely, Yamaraja smiled and said, "You have learned this lesson well, that is why I'll give you an extra boon: I'm giving you a garland consisting of different forms". All of you understand that very important things are happening, don't you. Very important things are happening. And then he said, "Ask for the third wish, tell me what your third wish is".

Then Nachiketos said, "What about those who have gone beyond this world? Some people say that those living beings exist somewhere, others say they do not; in other words, is there something beyond this world or not? Will I exist, will I live or not?" When Yama heard that, he turned pale, and he said, "Ask me anything but this. Save me that promise, I know I promised you to satisfy three requests of yours, but ask of me something else".

Nachiketos said: "No, no. Please answer this question". "I do not know how to answer this question". Nachiketos said, "No, I want to hear it from you". Yama said, "Please do not pressure me". Nachiketos said: "I want to know the answer to this question". Yama then started saying, "Listen, do you want wealth? Do you want gold, horses, cows, elephants?" He says, "No, I don't any want elephants. I want to know what happens to the soul that goes beyond this world". Yama said, "And you don't want elephants? A long life! Do you want me to give you a long life? In any place you want!" Nachiketos shook his head. Yama said, "If you want, I will make you the king of the entire world!" Nachiketos shook his head. Then, at that moment many chariots appeared. In the chariots there sat beautiful women dressed in beautiful saris, all of them playing musical instruments. Yama said to Nachiketos, "Look at them! Do you like it? If you want, they all will be yours! They will serve you, they will be playing on these instruments. No one has such women!" Nachiketos looked at him and said, "No, I do not. Answer me that last question".

He drove poor Yamaraja into a corner. Now you know what to ask of Yamaraja when you appear in front of him? He said, in response to these proposals, "All those things come and go, all this is here today and gone tomorrow. Beautiful women, how long will they be beautiful? Today they are beautiful tomorrow you do not want to look at them. Wealth – here today, gone tomorrow. Power – what do I get from power? All that does not make any sense. Answer me the last question".

Did anyone make out what all these questions are about? That's right, how to achieve perfection, but that answer is too general. It's a very interesting dialogue which is happening now and which we, too, have to know very well. The first thing Nachiketos asks, having found himself before Yamaraja where his real faith led him, in this kingdom of death, when he broke all his ties, when he finished with the material world. And the first thing he asks for is "give me the opportunity to go back". Why go back? In order to do what? Yes, to preach, right. The first thing he said, "It's I not enough that only I will know. Make sure that I will be able to go back and people accept me; so that I can come to them with these gifts, and people accept these gifts from me".

In other words, who is Nachiketos, a *gosthianandi* or a *bhajanandi*? He says, "Ensure that people accept me, because I do not want to be the only one who knows that. I want to disclose that secret to others when I go back". Because sometimes, when someone who has attained a deep inner spiritual experience, goes back to the people, what do the people do to him? Yes, they crucify him or burn him at the stake, or something else. People have various forms of association with such people who bother them and not let them live peacefully their material life. Nachiketos is asking for that.

The second gift he's asking for is very important, he says, "Explain to me the fire of transformation" and Yama's response to this is, "That fire is already burning in your heart, you just need to build an altar. From now on, this fire, this sacrifice will be called by your name, I give you such a blessing". What kind of fire is burning in our heart? What is this fire of transformation? This is that same alchemy, which we were talking about. He is asking for an explanation of how I can transform my heart; and how does Yamaraja explain this? He explains

to him the process of *arcana*. Translating this into our language, he explains him the methodology, the process through which one can be transformed.

As a result of this, what will Nachiketos get, what did he ask of Yamaraja? Immortality. Where is this immortality? The immortality which is enjoyed by the demigods. Where? On Svarga-loka. What does Svarga mean? *Svar*. What does *svar* mean? What does one who has completely purified one's heart attain? Svarga-loka means ... *Svar* means *svarupa*, one's own. In essence, Nachiketos tells him, "Help me to find the fire of transformation which will be able to transform me and get me back where? No, not to one's own planet yet, but give me back my original form, i.e. understand me as a soul. The pure heart which one obtains in *arcana* might not yet be a vision of God, the vision God is further on. But first one must have a pure heart, when one feels a soul.

In the process of *arcana*, when all these good qualities appear in me and the bad qualities go away, when I become free of my material attachments, I feel a soul, I return to my natural state. And he is asking, "Explain to me the process through which I will be able to burn everything unneeded, all the dirt in my heart and in my body and become who I really am". This is the next request, which Nachiketos makes and what does Yamaraja explain? Yamaraja starts explaining to him, "The bricks should be like these, you are to build the altar like this". And when he repeats everything he says, "As a reward I give you another free application to this – a garland consisting of many forms". What is this garland? In other words, when one attains this, one obtains another very important thing, in addition, automatically. One does not even need to make any other efforts. What is this garland consisting of various forms? No, not the various forms of relationship with God, it is still early for that. *Samsara*, yes. At this moment one remembers his past lives. He starts to know not just theoretically that one constantly reincarnates, one knows, "I have been reincarnating", one knows that "I had such a form, such a form, such a form".

This knowledge comes to such a person by itself when one's heart is purified, when one attains one's true form. Because why don't we know now our past incarnations, who I was in my previous life? Because we identify ourselves with this body. With this one. I might have been Nefertiti in my previous life. I have an acquaintance, she says, "I was Nefertiti in my previous life" and cranes out like this. There are different people, but actually one knows exactly who one was, and how this process of transformation works only when one's is completely purified in the process of serving Krishna.

In other words, what else is Nachiketos asking here for? He's asking for ... Madhavacharya explains this in the comments to the "Katha-upanishad", I am telling you how Madhvacharya interprets this. He is asking for a gradual liberation, *krama-mukti*, when one first kind of reaches a higher level, one is not liberated immediately.

And finally, when Nachiketos puts forward his third request, at which Yamaraja starts trembling and saying, "No, no, no. Ask anything of me but that!", what does he want to ask for? Here is meant one's true *svarupa*. He is asking, "Please explain to me how I will exist in the spiritual world, who I am in the spiritual world. How will I serve Krishna? How do I live with Krishna there?" And what does Yamaraja reply? "Take anything else!" This is, by the way, a very

important point, a practical point, because one who has achieved perfection in *arcana*, can fulfill any of one's desires. Women? Here you are, they will be playing the *vina*. Elephants? As many as you like, you can have an entire herd. Lord of the world? You can have anything! Yamaraja says that when one is at this stage, one mustn't stop in any case. Then all the material nature, everything else starts offering one, "Do you want this? Do you want this?" What must be your answer to this? Have you thought well? Maybe you should agree to the elephants after all? One must say: "I do not want this, I want neither your elephants nor these women, I don't want anything!"

There is a wonderful story about one thief. I will tell the story and finish the lecture, because my time is up. A thief heard that the king is marrying his daughter and thought, "Wow, that's a nice opportunity!" But the king made a condition that, "I will give away my daughter only to a *sadhu*". And the thief thought, "Well, I'll now dress like a *sadhu* and go there, perchance the king's daughter will be given to me". So, *sadhus* gathered up in the throne room, the king sitting there too, his daughter next to him, fat and beautiful. A bride. The thief is sitting somewhere at the back thinking, "Wow, I may well soon be his son-in-law!" The king sent his ministers and the ministers ask one *sadhu*, then another, but all of them say straight away, "I do not need your daughter. Why should I need her, I am a *sadhu*. And I don't need your wealth either". The king says, "Half the kingdom!" "Neither a half nor a quarter do I need, nor the entire kingdom. You worry yourself about it". One after another they all refuse and go away. Because they did not know why they were called, only the thief knew.

In the end the thief's turn came. The thief feels uneasy, because he is supposed to be a *sadhu*. All the other *sadhus* refused but the thief cannot say straight away "I do not want this daughter". On the other hand, this is what he came for and neither can he say yes, I want her, because it's not proper, he is supposed to be a *sadhu*. So, he decided to say nothing and meaningfully remained silent. The minister who felt some hope in this silence, ran to the king and said, "There is a beautiful young *sadhu*. Everyone else said no, but he said nothing. There is hope that he will agree, if you, Your Majesty, persuade him". The king rejoiced, for he wanted very much to give his daughter away to a *sadhu*. He went up to the thief, brought him some gifts and asked him with folded palms, "My dear *sadhu*, my last hope rest on you alone, please take my daughter as you wife".

The thief began thinking, "I was nobody. I walked down the street, and I just put on the clothes of a *sadhu*. As soon as I put on these clothes, I didn't even really do something, I just put on these orange clothes, and here is the king himself coming up to me, folding his palms, bringing me presents. Just imagine what I will get if I actually become a *sadhu*?" and he proudly said, "I do not need your daughter, I'm going to become a *sadhu*".

Such is the moral.

So, when Yamaraja will be offering you elephants, do not give in, ask for more.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Thank you.

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Balarama – Purnima ki jai!

Today is our last day and I promised to talk about the *caturshloka* of the “Bhagavad-gita”, but I did not get to the *caturshloka*, and probably will not get there. But probably I’ll touch a little upon the first verse today. But at the beginning, I wanted to tell a short story since today is the Appearance Day of Balarama. This story is at the same time related to both Balarama and Srila Prabhupada, as well as to what the spiritual master should teach us.

Yesterday I talked about the fact that it is the submission to the will of the spiritual master and serving the Deity that will help one quickly purify one’s heart. Otherwise, if one simply chants the holy name, basically, one doesn’t need a spiritual master. The “Caitanya-caritamrita” says that in order to chant the holy name one doesn’t need to have a spiritual master, one doesn’t need to receive *diksa*, one doesn’t need to chant any another *mantra*. It is enough to chant, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, and purification will take place. But due to the peculiarity of our character, the peculiarity of the Russian or the Ukrainian character, or whatever else, we can not chant purely, since our karmic burden of sins doesn’t allow us to do this purely and truly sincerely, purification is very much delayed. Because *aparadha*, the offence to the holy name has its effect. Therefore it is said that in order to accelerate the process, and it will accelerate exactly as much as we can sincerely accept the will of the spiritual master in our heart and follow his instructions, as much as we can subordinate our own whims to Krishna’s desires and Krishna’s will.

That is why I wanted to start today’s lecture by a brief anecdote related to Srila Prabhupada and Lord Balarama. This anecdote, despite it’s being an anecdote, can teach us a lot of things. Bhakti Chaitanya Maharaj loves telling this story, about how once two devotees, very distinguished devotees, Srila Prabhupada’s disciples, started arguing with each other. They both were leaders. One was Madhudvisa. I do not know whether he was a *sannyasi* at that time. Most probably, he was still a *sannyasi* at that time. And the other one was Yamuna, who, though not a *sannyasi*, could run rings around any *sannyasi*. At the time, Srila Prabhupada promised Yamuna that your name will become more famous than the river Yamuna in Vrindavan. We listen to her singing every day as we stand before the Deities at the Deity Greeting, and when she sings with her amazing voice *govindam adi-purusham tam aham bhajami*.

Srila Prabhupada highly appreciated this wonderful devotee. So, both of them were leaders and they argued. Of course, for devotees there cannot be any worldly subject of argument, never. That’s clear. That is why they argued over Lord Balarama. Madhudvisa said that Balaram is non-different from Krishna, that practically it is the same thing. He is *eka atma dui deha* – two bodies, one soul. Balarama is the same as Krishna, only the color of the skin is different. Krishna is dark, Balaram is light, everything else is the same. And he was quoting *sastras* in order to prove his stand.

Yamuna was saying no, Balaram is completely different from Krishna because Krishna is Krishna and Balarama is Balaram. Krishna enjoys with the *gopis*. Balaram also enjoys with the *gopis*, but He has his own *gopis*. If they were one and the same, the *gopis*, too, would have been mutual. Can Srimati Radharani serve Balarama? She cannot. How can you say that Krishna and Balarama are the same?

They argued and argued, sparks flowing in all directions, and couldn’t come to terms in any case. In the end they called another leader, a third one, to resolve their dispute, Tamal Krishna Goswami. Tamal Krishna Goswami listened to them and realized that he couldn’t resolve their dispute and he referred this dispute to Srila Prabhupada. He said, “Srila

Prabhupada, we have a dispute over the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness. Madhudvisa says that Krishna and Balaram are non-different from each other – They are two bodies, one soul, one essence, just the color is slightly different”. Srila Prabhupada said, “He's right”. “But Srila Prabhupada, Yamuna says that Krishna and Balaram are totally different from each other, because Krishna can enjoy, as He enjoys, and Balaram serves Him. Balarama has His own *gopis*, Krishna has His own *gopis* and Balaram cannot even closely approach Srimati Radharani while Krishna is all the time with Srimati Radharani. How can They be one the same?”

Srila Prabhupada thought a little and said, “She's right”. (laughter) It was Tamal Krishna Goswami's turn to be surprised. He said, “Srila Prabhupada, how can that be? Because one says that Krishna and Balaram are one and the same, and the other says that Krishna and Balarama are not one and the same. And you said that both he and she are right”. Srila Prabhupada looked at him and said, “You are also right!” Tamal Krishna Maharaj said, “Srila Prabhupada, what shall we do now?” “Sort it out yourselves”, said Srila Prabhupada. This is a spiritual master.

Actually, this story has a deep philosophical meaning, despite it seemingly being anecdotal, because ... And today is the Appearance day of Balarama and we should speak about how the spiritual master teaches us, because Balarama is the original spiritual master, the original *guru*. It is said, that one thing we can never set right in ourselves and for which we need a spiritual master, for which we need ... The correction which will not happen by itself so to say – what needs to happen with the help of the spiritual master – is the black-and-whiteness of our mind. Our mind is tuned to the material wave, and being in the material world, it is used to judging everything from a material point of view. There are material categories which it's used to operating with.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura explains that when Balaram kills Dhenukasura, He doesn't just kill a demon in Vrindavan, but this is the spiritual master who kills the material mind within us. Material mind is, above all, a mind that operates with such black-and-white categories, purely logical categories. To understand the spiritual philosophy it is necessary to rise to a higher level, because Krishna and Balaram are one and the same, and at the same time They are not one and the same. Both are correct. In terms of material logic this is impossible, but material logic – and this is partly what our seminar was about – is inapplicable to spiritual matters. In order to try to understand spiritual matters, we need spiritual logic. From the point of view of spiritual logic, one plus one equals what? – One. One minus one equals what? – Also one, because God is the only one. Because there is only one *tattva*, one *vastu*, one entity from which all the rest has emanated.

Accordingly, Bhaktivinoda Thakura explains that the spiritual master is to help us get rid of the material concepts about three things. That due to the materiality of our mind one inevitably forms material concepts about the nature of the soul, the nature of God and the nature of the holy name. And when one comes to Krishna consciousness, it is exactly these physical concepts of one's soul, of God and of the holy name that lead to offences. It is exactly them that hinder one's progress. Because I come and who am I? What is my concept of myself? – The centre of the universe and also this center is enclosed in a very interesting shell. One considers oneself a body, anyway. Why isn't Srila Prabhupada lazy to repeat again and again, and again that “you are not this body”, why? Because we haven't realized this yet. The answer is very simple. We have, probably, learned this phrase by heart, but in order to really understand that I'm not this body, that I am a soul, one needs to learn how to act as a soul. And this is not that simple.

The first thing that one should ... It will not happen by itself, this is not a process that will take place by itself. This is something that the spiritual master should help us do – help us by pulling us out of the material mind, which, in turn, very strongly identifies with the material

body. The second is the material concept of God. Who is God from the point of view of the material concepts? Who is He, where is He sitting? – On a cloud. What is He doing? – Scratching His beard. He’s got a long beard, He is white-haired, He is sitting somewhere on a cloud and is doing God knows what. He is limited.

If we say that He has a form, this means that He is limited. Again our material mind turns on and it operates with black-and-white categories, which operates with the laws of material logic, the law of excluding the third. If there is one, if someone has a form, this form is limited. Material mind cannot understand how God can have a form, and at the same time be limitless. For this we need a spiritual master, and for this we need love for the spiritual master.

Finally, the third thing is the material concepts about the nature of the holy name which involuntarily appear in us. We chant the holy name and what is the holy name for us? – a sound. What sound? – A material sound. And I can pronounce ... How do I pronounce the holy name? – With the throat. Can one pronounce the holy name with the throat? Can one understand it? This is a most important task of the spiritual master – to give one an intuitive feeling that Krishna is present in the sound of the holy name and that the holy name is not just a combination of sounds, not just a combination of certain frequencies, or even just some emotions that we impart to the holy name. It is something more. This is Krishna Himself - *'bhinatvan nama-naminoh*

nama chintamani krishna chaitanya-rasa-vigraha
purnah shuddho nitya-mukto 'bhinnatvan nama-naminoh
(Padma Purana)

The name and the owner of the name are non-different from each other. This is what constitutes our material mind.

Our material mind is the Dhenukasura who is killed by Balarama, the personification of the spiritual master. This is something very persistent, for what is the main quality of an ass? - Stubbornness. And material mind is constantly braying inside: “This can’t be true!” Isn’t it? With a melodious voice, right? “This cannot be, because it can never be” – this is the argument of material mind. Material mind, again, *acaryas* explain three qualities of the ass, three *anarthas* or three aspects of material mind, of the black-and-white material mind.

The first aspect is that material mind loves ... What does an ass like doing? It likes toiling, yes. An ass loves pulling the load, because the ass thinks that if I do a good job, then at the end I’ll be given what? A carrot, right! Material mind likes to collect material knowledge. Material mind is attached to this burden of material knowledge, like an ass loaded with goods. Unfortunately, there aren’t any asses now and we don’t have the opportunity to see and learn from *muddha-lila*, the entertainment of an ass. But if you go to ... However, I have had such an opportunity, I was born in Tashkent, and the people there used to ride on asses. One could see asses are always so sad. Asses “la” are always very sad. We, too, you always sad, right? As long as we don’t become devotees. When we become devotees, we immediately cheer up. They are so sad when someone mounts them or load with goods. These goods are usually higher than the ass itself, it’s a huge bale. The ass, with the awareness of his duty is going; one can see in his eyes the awareness of the fact that he is very hard working, very righteous.

Our mind likes loading itself with goods, it likes loading itself with useless information, collecting everything, various stuff – anything; to know, to read the “Great Soviet Encyclopedia”. I had an acquaintance of mine, not even an acquaintance, a relative. He had all the issued of the “Great Soviet Encyclopedia” and he used to read them all, one after the

other and he was quite absorbed in that. We, too, have the “Great Soviet Encyclopedia” in our head.

The second quality of an ass is his stubbornness in achieving material goals. This is also an amazing feature of material mind, or the mind tuned to life in the material world. I set myself a material goal and I pursue it like an ass. You cannot stop an ass. If he sees ... Whom does he see? The she-ass, right. If he sees how beautiful she is and how melodious her voice is, and how she’s singing at night, the ass rushes towards her. And nothing can stop him. No matter how the she-ass kicks him, he will not stop. We are just like that, too, right? If we have material goals, we ...

Finally, the third quality of material mind or this *anartha* is that material mind is never satisfied. The fact that it’s never content with what it has, it always wants something else. This is the very quality that we spoke about yesterday – *kadarya-silanam* or human greed. Greed, when all the time I want more, more and more. One cannot stop and understand a simple thing, what would seem an elementary thing. I’ve got this, I’ve achieved that, I’ve achieved something else, but I haven’t become what? – Happy! But still one doesn’t care, the illusion remains. What illusion? “I haven’t become happy yet, but I will in the future; in the future, somehow or other, some day I’ll become happy. Maybe I didn’t get enough of this, maybe I didn’t get enough of something else”. In this way one is chasing all his lifetime, one is chasing material happiness in futile, tormented by the ass of his material mind. Therefore, we should invite Balarama, and what will Balarama do with Dhenukasura? Spin him by the legs.

In the “Ananda-vrindavana-campu” it is described how Krishna appeared before Dhenukasura. Dhenukasura is huge. Krishna came to Talavan; suddenly, for no apparent reason He broke into Dhenukasura’s possession. All of a sudden Krishna bursts into the possession of material mind. Material mind says, “This is mine, this is mine, you have no right, you have no place here. All fruits here are mine, I’ll enjoy these fruits”. Although he can not enjoy them. Krishna says:

bhoktaram yajna-tapasam
sarva-loka-mahesvaram
suhrdam sarva-bhutanam
jnatva mam santim rcchati
(Bhagavad-gita 5.29)

All fruits of all sacrifices belong to Me. And Krishna bravely breaks into these possessions which are guarded by Dhenukasura.

At this moment Dhenukasura, with a creepy braying, his tail turning in rage, his saliva dripping, with huge teeth, he runs towards Krishna. The “Ananda-vrindavana-campu” tells that when Dhenukasura, and he was huge, he wasn’t just an ass. Actually, he is not an ass, he is a descendant of Hiranyakasipu, he comes from a very noble family. This is exactly why Krishna did not kill him, because he was a descendant of Maharaja Bali. And Krishna has a special agreement with Maharaj Bali. Dhenukasura ran out, but when the boys looked at them, they saw that this Dhenukasura, compared with Krishna, was as small as a grasshoppers. A grasshopper ran out ... Balaram, respectively, grabbed him and began spinning him. At first He threw him up once, then the ass hit the ground, recovered a little bit then against rushed there.

Material mind is not that easy to kill. Material mind will attack us again and again, but we need to appeal to our spiritual master, who will be saying, “With the help of material mind you are not going to understand anything. As long as you hold on to your material mind, you will never be able to understand transcendental things, spiritual matters and Krishna will be

unattainable for you". If we understand this, that ultimately everything here belongs to Krishna, that we are trying to enjoy the fruits but are unable to do so.

Another feature of material mind, of Dhenukasura, is that by itself it can't enjoy these fruits. *Tal*, does anyone know the *tall* tree fruits, what they are like? A special kind of coconuts, they brown, and they are very cooling, in hot weather they cool a lot, but the problem is that they should first be ... There are very difficult to extract from there, they are kind of filled with jellyfish inside.

And this ass, he can not enjoy them. He's got these *tal* trees, they bear fruit. Who should the fruits be given to? – To Krishna. All fruits belong to Krishna. He is *adhiyajna* – all fruits belong to Him, but material mind says, "Mine, mine, mine!" And the spiritual master, when he kills Dhenukasura, what does he say? What does he say? – "Nothing here belongs to you, nothing here belongs to you".

Actually, we need material logic to prove to myself that everything here, everything that I see belongs to me and I should try to somehow achieve this, obtain all this, accumulate it around. But the spiritual master should prove to us this simple truth – nothing here belongs to you. As soon as one realizes this, material mind immediately disappears and spiritual mind appears immediately which accepts Krishna and says, "Welcome, Krishna!"

Thus, gradually, one comes to the realization of God. Krishna describes this in the next verse. We have read three verses. In the next verse, which I read in the lecture before last, He explains this process in a very interesting way, listen. It's all not that simple here. He says,

buddhir jnanam asambohah
ksama satyam damah samah
sukham dukham bhavo 'bhavo
bhayam cabhayam eva ca

ahimsa samata tustis
tapo danam yaso 'yasah
bhavanti bhava bhutanam
matta eva prthag-vidhah
(Bhagavad-gita 10.4-5)

When one gives up the sense of ownership, the false sense of ownership, one acquires *buddhi* or the ability to discriminate. What is *buddhi*? – Mind. What does intelligence mean? Who has intelligence? What is the definition of intelligence? – The ability to distinguish, distinguish between what and what? More precisely, the ability to distinguish between spirit and matter – this is *jnana*, knowledge, spiritual knowledge. But intellect... What kind of person is truly intelligent? The one who makes the right choice. In other words, intelligence, and Srila Prabhupada gives this definition here – is the ability to distinguish between what's important and what's unimportant. This is the ability to distinguish between what I really need and what I don't need. If I serve the spiritual master this ability develops in me. I suddenly realize: nothing belongs to me. This body, this wealth that I've accumulated will we taken away from me in any case, I cannot take away all these millions with me in any case. I cannot! Has anyone been able to take his millions with him? – No, no one has.

There was a joke about reincarnation. My dad believes in reincarnation, so he bequeathed his legacy to himself. (laughter) But never mind how I bequeath my legacy, I won't be able to enjoy it. It's not mine, not mine. This is Krishna's! That will always be with me? Only the love that I'll be able to attain.

Buddhi is the intelligence, the ability to understand what I need, because I need ... What do I need, as a soul, to be happy? – Krishna! Love! Only love, I don't need anything else everything else is unimportant and unnecessary. And Krishna says here, these are the qualities that appear, and He says that all these qualities, where do they come from? – From Me, I give these qualities, If one starts serving Me. He says: *buddhi, jnanam*, knowledge, the ability to distinguish between matter and spirit, *asammohah*. When one has no illusions any more. One knows what is what. One knows what is happiness and what is misery, what is eternal and what is transient, *asammohah* – one has got rid of his illusions.

Ksama. What does *kshama* mean? – This is the ability to forgive, patience and ability to forgive, when I do not take offense at anyone, when I'm able to forgive. Srila Prabhupada translates this exactly in this way here. Why don't I take offence, If I've realized that I am a soul, if I am bound to Krishna? Why do I take offence when I am connected with Krishna all the time, why do I take offense in my usual state? – People are obliged to us all the time: they are obliged to honor us, to respect us ... What else are they obliged to do? A lot of things: they are obliged to do us *puja* five times a day, right? Are they obliged? They are obliged to feed us, because are we who? Yes, small ones, but still, small *ishvaras*.

So, *ksama satyam*. *Satyam* means truth, *damah samah*. *Damah* means the ability to contain one's feelings, *samah* – the ability to contain one's mind. But this is not the main thing. Further Krishna says, *sukham dukkham bhavo 'bhavo bhayam cabhayam eva ca* – from Me also comes... If a person starts serving Me, the most important thing that happens is that apart from the fact that all these qualities come to me, that all these qualities: mind, knowledge – start to develop in me, one also begins to understand that *sukham* and *dukkham* ... What is *sukham* and *dukkham*? Happiness and unhappiness – *bhavo* and *'bhavo*. *Bhavo* means existence, life. *'Bhavo* means death. *Bhayam* and *chabhayam* means fear and fearlessness. All this also comes from Me.

In other words, when one has realized that all this comes from Krishna, then what happens to one? What happens to one? – Yes, one rises, one rises above the duality of this world, which is a source of endless suffering for us – *sukham dukkham*. When we live in happiness or misery. Am I happy or unhappy? – Oh, I'm happy. Oh, I'm unhappy. Hey, Haribol, I'm happy, finally, I'm happy. Oh, I'm unhappy.

One who serves Krishna suddenly rises above duality and understands, as Srila Prabhupada explains in the purport to the previous verse, he says that when one serves the spiritual master, one understands that in the material world nothing is good or bad. Because in the material world everything is what? – Everything is bad, yes. Why then, in the material world there is nothing good or bad, if everything is bad? Isn't there something bad, at least? (laughter) In the material world everything is rotten, in the material world everything comes to an end, even the good things come to an end. That is why the good carries in itself the seed of misery. And only one who has given up the sense of ownership and subordinates one's life to the spiritual master's will, can attain all these qualities. *Ahimsa* – one becomes, one doesn't use violence.

Samata. What does *samata* mean? Yes, one sees the entire world equally, everything is equal to him. One doesn't judge anyone, one doesn't rejoice in anything or anyone. What does *tustis* mean? *Tustis* means satisfaction. *Tapo danam* – ultimately, one ends up with *tapo* or austerity, *danam* means the ability to give or donate. And He ends up with two very important words, *yaso 'yasah* – fame and infamy, honor and dishonor.

Actually, it is very significant that Krishna puts these two words at the end, because what is most difficult to give up for us? Vanity, this is the very last fault, the deepest fault, with the deepest roots in our heart. Everyone, in one way or another, is attached to one's own glory. And Krishna says that the path of purification ends with the state, which also comes

from Krishna, when one doesn't care what people would think of one. How many of you don't care about what people think of you? Don't care at all? Well – one, two – have already reached the end. But what if someone now says that someone else has called you a fool? Will you care? Maybe. But it is Sanatana Goswami who explains this in the “Hari-bhakti-vilasa” that *pratista*, or the desire of honors, the desire for fame is the last fault. All other faults may go, all other faults go, but this is the last obstacle that one should overcome in order to see Krishna.

In essence, this path of serving, of purifying the heart, should, ultimately, lead us to this result, *yaso 'yasah*, when we do not care anymore. Sridhar Dev Goswami explains this in a very interesting way, when he says that one of the functions of the spiritual master is to help one fight duality in the mode in which our mind constantly operates. Our mind is programmed to this, to happiness and unhappiness. Is it programmed to it? Don't we care whether we are happy or unhappy? Who doesn't care whether he is happy or unhappy? – A, there's one. And when we spoke about honor and dishonor, there were two. (laughter) Where has the second one gone? Because if we don't care about honor and dishonor, then this means that we also don't care about happiness and unhappiness. We don't care about what we feel.

Sridhar Dev Goswami explains that in the beginning one is established in the mode of goodness, but the mode of goodness is still a material quality. The mode of goodness means some good qualities. But one should rise even above this, because the mode of goodness, ultimately, is a category of the material world. And the spiritual master should explain to us how I should rise even above the mode of goodness. And for that, one has to become a warrior. Honor and dishonor include attachment to what? On the basis of what do I gain fame? What is fame? Why do people think well of me? – A good person, right? Why is one a good person? – One is kind, or something else. A good-natured person. Fame is the reputation that I'm a good person. Who of you are ready to give up the reputation of a good person, the reputation of a good devotee? We are ready to do something in devotional service, we are ready to serve, we are ready, but ultimately we have an expectation of what? That we will be praised, that we will be recognized. Who will recognize us, who will praise us? People, not Krishna! People, we do this for people, that is why people's opinion is so important to us. And one gets attached to the concept of oneself as a good person. And one needs to think of oneself as a good person. At a higher level, one should destroy even this.

An example of this are Bhima and Yudhisthira. Yudhisthira is a good person, right? Yudhisthira is a very good man. And Krishna says to him, “Yudhisthira, say that Ashvatthama is dead”. And what does Yudhisthira think at that? The words stick in his throat, he cannot say it. Why can't he say it? – He's attached. Attached to what? Attached to the truth. Attached not even to the truth, but to the idea that I am a truthful person. I have the reputation of a truthful man, I am one who has never lied in his life. Krishna tells me: “Lie”. Am I ready to do it? It's hard, very hard, the words stick in the throat. But Bhima, he's all right, he is fighting with Duryodhana and Krishna tells him, “Hit him below the belt”. For a *kshatriya* this is the last thing. A *kshatriya* has no right to hit anyone below the belt. He loses all his honor as a *kshatriya* if he hits someone below the belt. Krishna tells Bhima, “Hit him below the belt” and Bhima does it: bang! bang! Because Krishna knows that this is the only part of Duryodhana's body, which is vulnerable.

At the time, Duryodhana covered his thighs when Gandhari called him. Gandhari had a very powerful look. One night before the battle, she called her son and ordered her son, “Come naked before me”, but Duryodhana, he was a demon, of course, but not such a demon like those on the beach there. (laughter) He thought, “What? Me? I am a civilized man, how can I stand naked in front of my mother?” and he put on a *gamca*. At night he came before her in a *gamca* and she looked at him and said, “What a fool you are! My look could have made you completely invulnerable, but now the part that has been covered will be vulnerable”. Krishna

knows this and Krishna shows him: on the thigh, on the thigh! And Bhima – bang, bang, not for a second did his hand with the club stop. Everyone was blaming him afterwards. And Bhima says, “What’s the matter? Who am I am? I am Krishna’s servant and for the sake of serving Krishna I’m ready to do anything. I am even ready to give up my honor”.

Like many devotees, this is, actually, the highest level of devotion. Now, I ask you not to imitate these devotees, please. Because at our level, we need to have some stimulus. At our level, we must first achieve the level of goodness. We can not step over duality, as long as we haven’t achieved goodness. But at this level, when one gives up honor, attachment to honor, attachment to the reputation of a great devotee. We can see many examples in the “Chaitanya-caritamrita”, in the “Chaitanya-bhagavata”, in the lives of the great vaishnavas, when people decided to disgrace, to dishonor Srivas Thakur. The enemies, his neighbors, scattered wine, meat, nasty things in front of his porch in order to show, “Look – during the day he is Krishna’s devotee, and during the night he is a tantric, he performs tantric rituals”. Srivas Thakur went out on the porch, saw that and said, “Thanks God, finally I was exposed”. He did not try to sweep all this quickly and remove the traces of it. He said, “Hey, people, gather up quickly look what I have here on the porch”. People gathered and said, “No, Srivas Thakur, no, we are not so easy to fool”.

Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati knew a *babaji* whom he highly respected. This *babaji* lived in Navadvipa, and, living there, he intentionally paid money to a woman of easy virtue so that she would sit next to, in front of his *bhajana-kutir*. He intentionally hired her to sit there so that people would not come to him, so that people would not disturb his *bhajan*, so that people would think: “Look, some loose woman is sitting there, while he is acting a saint there, inside the hut”. He intentionally sat there, he deliberately scattered fish bones in front of his *bhajana-kutir* so that people wouldn’t come to him, so that people wouldn’t disturb his association with God, his service to God. That is why Krishna says *yaso ’yasah* – one who is completely purified doesn’t care – be it fame or infamy, for he is always in union with Me. He is in front of Me and everything he does he does for Krsna.

I was told a similar story but from the Russian practice. The Russian Orthodox Church also has its *babajis*, its elders. And when one reaches a certain spiritual level, then a flow of people starts visiting him. And what do these people want from him? They want some material benefits, nothing else do they want. And they disturb his service, people come, people bring something to him, some food, some other stuff. And they keep bringing and bringing in a line. He does not need all this. And there was, there still is, this is a recent story, a contemporary one. There is such an elder, who became famous, his fame was spread and people started going there for his blessings one after another. And he started thinking, “What shall I do? What shall I do to get rid of this? How horrible!”

Once he had a wonderful opportunity: simultaneously two couples who were going to get married visited him to ask for his blessings. Before going to church, they visited him for blessings, because – well, in order to be happy, in order to have a happy marriage, you have to go to a holy man. And two of them went to him and said, “Father, please, bless us to a happy family life”.

He looked and looked at them and then said, “Well, something is wrong here ... Ah, I’ve got it! You have changed partners. The bride of this one should go to this groom and this woman’s groom should go to the other. Now I bless you. Go. In the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit”. The people’s jaw dropped, now that’s it, they cannot do otherwise. Now they have to change, right? On the day of their own wedding. Since then, people have stopped going to him for blessings. (laughter) So sometimes we can see that the holy men, they put on a mask of a holy fool, the mask of an *avadhuta*. They hide their holiness, and actually this is the highest level of holiness, when one has reached this state *yaso ’yasah* - I do not care

what people think about me. I do not care. What is important to me is what Krishna thinks of me, that's the only important thing to me.

And this is the last fault, the very last *pratistha* – the desire of honor, respect, fame, human fame, earthly fame here, which separates one from God, and which separates one from the next stage, from the stage of *nistha*.

I have a few more minutes, I'll speak a little about this. If you read the “Madhurya-kadambini”, the last stage there is *anisthita-bhajana-kriya*, i.e. unstable *bhajana-kriya*. What is it called? *Taranga-rangini*, when one who has reached a certain spiritual level, starts to enjoy what? The waves, the waves of material pleasures that *bhakti* brings him, *because bhakti* is a very profitable investment. *Bhakti* is a very good thing. From material point of view, this is the best thing.

I recently spoke with Bir Krishna Goswami. Bir Krishna Goswami preaches in America to Hindus, in the Fiji, some other places. So, we were talking with him and he started saying that people there donate money to me. And what do people donate to us for? Why do they donate money to us, *sannyasis*? Because we eat at their homes. Can there be a better occupation in the world? (All laugh). Is there any occupation better than this? Just visiting people, eating, and getting money for it. One who achieves something, who achieves a certain level of *bhakti* becomes very attractive to others, *taranga-rangini*. People begin to worship him, respect him and the temptation is very great because it comes by itself – enjoying it, riding on the waves of all this, swinging. But this is the last obstacle that separates us from Krishna. And Krishna says in the next verse ... I'll skip the sixth verse, unfortunately, there is no time to explain in detail how it fits in here. But I will read the seventh verse, where He says:

etam vibhutim yogam ca
mama yo vetti tattvatah
so 'vikalpena yogena
yujyate natra samsayah
(Bhagavad-gita 10.7)

When one has overcome all these temptations, he has reached a particular state, which is Krishna calls here *'vikalpena*, *'Vikalpena* is instrumental case. *'Vikalpa* means stability. One reaches a state of complete stability, absolute firmness in one's faith. What is the firm unwavering faith called? – *Nistha*. *'Vikalpena* means there is no longer ... I am fully confident that Krishna exists and this state, *nistha*, to what internal state does it lead at the same time? – To the state of humility. *Yaso 'yasah* – the last obstacle that we overcome is *pratistha*, i.e. pride or the desire for fame, honor, the desire to be distinguished. When this last thing disappears ... Like Sananata Goswami, he calls *pratistha* pig's excrements. Now pig's excrements is something special, because pig's excrements are excrement in the square, right? Ordinary excrements are just excrements when we eat something good, and they turn into stool. But the pig, what does it eat? – It eats excrements and this is excrements in the square.

He says that this desire for honor, respect, reputation is a really nasty thing. And one cannot get rid of it till the very end. The only advice that he gives is not to touch it, just bypass it at a distance. If we see this in our heart, if we see ourselves, catch ourselves on this, if we see how we, in one way or another, are trying to get some kind of honor or gain some reputation we must just bypass all this with disgust, without paying attention. Accordingly, when one has overcome this obstacle, one becomes attains a true perception of the world and a true perception of oneself. By himself one is very small, and one does not expect, one is ready to show respect to anyone, without expecting what? Without expecting any respect from anyone.

trinad api sunicena
taror api sahisnuna
amanina manadena
kirtaniya sada hari
(Siksastaka, verse 3).

This is the internal feeling, but as I said at the beginning, we are talking here about, Krishna describes here how one sees the world when one has reached this state, the state of absolute humility. How does one see the world? What does one see in the world? – Krishna! One starts to see Krishna where? – Everywhere. One starts seeing Krishna everywhere, and this is the goal of our practice. Now we are in this state where we still overcome obstacles. And we must clearly understand that the goal of our practice is not to earn the reputation of a nice devotee, not even to become a righteous person. Like, some people say that the purpose of religion is to make one righteous. This is not the goal. The goal is to see Krishna, because when I'm righteous what do I start doing because of this righteousness? – I start being proud. As Krishna Himself describes it in the Eleventh Canto of the "Srimad-Bhagavatam", where He says that one who worships the Deity with faith,

arcayam eva haraye
pujam yah sraddhayehate
na tad-bhaktesu canyesu
sa bhaktah prakritah smritah

(Bhag., 11.2.47)

Those who worship the image of Hari *śraddhayehate*, with faith, very strong faith, but at the same time do not do what? No, if one worships the image of Krishna with faith, but does not respect, does not offer respect to whom? To other vaisnavas and all the other living beings, such a person is *sa bhaktah prakritah smritah* – a materialist.

Kapiladev says that his devotion and worship is equivalent to what? Oblation of ghee where? – Not in the fire, but in the cinder, in the ash. All his sacrifices are in vain. We must understand very well and Hridayananda Maharaj, who writes purports to this verse, says, quoting Madhavacharya, that *kanistha-adhikari* considers himself the most what? – The most righteous. The most righteous, he is proud of his righteousness, "Look with what faith I worship, look how I worship everything!" As a result, he gets proud and he does not appreciate the others people. But actually, the meaning of worship, the goal of worship which we should see very clearly, is to, ultimately, overcome pride and learn offering respect to everyone, not expecting what? – Respect for ourselves in return. Because it's easy to offer respect to everyone, even this is not difficult. What is difficult is to not expect respect in return, right? But this is a very important point, that only then that I'll be able to see Krishna in His energies, only then I'll be able to see that Krishna is here, only then *nistha* will come to me, the unshakable faith in Krishna, because I'll see Him everywhere.

Only when I learn not to expect anything from this world and from these people, not to seek fame, to respect each person, because situated in every person is who? – Krishna! When I learn to see this in every person and offer respect to every person. To everyone, not just to the devotees. Krishna specifically says, it is not only the devotees that must be respected. Well, so be it, we sometimes respect the devotees, especially when something depends on them. But Krishna says everyone, *canyesu*, all the others as well. All means all living beings. It's very interesting, we sing about this every day. Where do we sing about it every day? In the Narasimha-pranama. How do we sing about it in the Narasimha-pranama? Yes, but first we sing until ...

Bahir nrisimho hridaye nrisimho, ito nrisimhah parato nrisimho – yato yato yami tato nrisimhah. What do we sing at the beginning? *Sila tanka-nakhalaye, prahladahlada-dayine* – You're the joy of Prahlada, come to me and tear apart the Hiranyakashipu in my heart. Tear Hiranyakashipu with Your steel claws, the claws which are like a stone, tear Hiranyakashipu, this desire for honor, respect and all other *anarthas* in my heart.

Once this happens, I immediately start to see what? - *Bahir nrisimho hridaye nrisimho.* The Lord is everywhere, the Lord is in my heart, the Lord is outside, the Lord is in the column, the Lord is everywhere. I start seeing Him, and since I see Him, can I doubt His existence? Can my faith waver? – It can not, my faith is unshakable. Everything starts reminding me of Krishna, because I start seeing how Krsna is manifested in the energies. I see that He is the Personality of Godhead.

I will literally say one more last thing but it is very important. I won't be able, unfortunately, to develop this thought, but it is a very important thing. That sometimes we are blamed exactly for this by superficial people, people who are not very familiar with our philosophy. They say that "you are pantheists, your goal is to see Krishna everywhere". Is our goal to see Krishna everywhere or not? First of all, that's not our goal, our goal is to see Krishna not everywhere, but where? In Vrindavan, yes! Even more specifically, where? Under a certain tree. How is that tree called? Under the Vamshivata, yes. That is our goal. He is standing under the Vamshivata, He is playing His flute, and we want to see Him there.

But some people, when they see these descriptions, because in the "Bhagavad-gita" Krishna teaches us, again and again, how to see Him in the various manifestations of this world, in the various energies of this world, how to see that this world is not separate from Krishna. They say, "That's it, your goal is pantheism, your goal is God, dissolved in nature".

I would like to explain here, for your contemplation – since, once again, I won't be able, unfortunately, to explain the situation in detail – a little about the evolution of religious consciousness, the evolution of God realization and the evolution of the perception of God in this world. What is the lowest level of religious consciousness called? What is human consciousness or philosophy called before religious consciousness? – Atheism. What is the lowest level of religious consciousness called? Or the lowest form of religious consciousness? – Polytheism, paganism, no matter what you call it. This is the lowest level of religious consciousness, when one ... Actually, this is atheism, we spoke about it, if there are many gods, it means that there is no God, right? If there are many Gods, then there is no God. From an atheist one can become a polytheist or a believer in many gods, when people personify various forces of nature as some gods and worship this goddess, that goddess, some other goddess, some other god. We have a god per each material desire, right? The gods are as many as the material desires are. How many material desires do we have? Thirty-three million, and, respectively, there are thirty-three million gods. This is the lowest level of religious consciousness. At a more advanced stage when a person has progressed a little further, what does he say, what is his understanding? – A simple thing: God? God? God? God is only one. The origin of all that is can be only one, God is only one, there can not be two Gods. There is only one God, because otherwise there would be chaos. Otherwise, gods would begin fighting. But, on the lowest level of religious consciousness, on the not very high level of monotheism, how is this monotheism manifested, in the form of what?

There is a God and He is one, but who else is there? I am there, this is clear, who else is there? Satan is there, the Devil is there, right? There is a rival. There is a good God and a bad God, and what do they do? They fight, they play in space, in star wars, right? In Star Wars. There is this great drama of star war, right? So I am in favor of whom? I am in favor of the good God, right? I am against whom? Against the bad God, right? What should be done with all those who are with the bad God? With the machine gun, they should all be put

against the wall, right? People who transfer their material consciousness, their black-and-white consciousness onto the sphere of transcendence, they recognize one God, and this is a great achievement. But at the same time, again, this so-called monotheistic consciousness arises in them, where they counterpose dualistic consciousness to God. This dualistic consciousness, a typical example, the most extreme example of this is, of course, Islam. As I have already explained, in Christianity this concept has been smoothed by the fact that they built ... I've explained it, I'm not going to ... it is a too subtle point to explain it now. But in Islam there is only one God, there is Satan, respectively, what are we supposed to do with all those who aren't on the side of our God? – Blow them up, destroy, something like that. Unfortunately, this is something, which is deeply inherent in the very black-and-white theology.

And one of them ... This is a certain stage where the Prophet Muhammad, he knew who he was dealing with. He knew that he was dealing with pagans. He knew that he was dealing with polytheists, who will worship idols. In order to establish monotheism, he said, "You mustn't worship anyone else but God alone" As a result, this philosophy appeared that now ... the fruits of which we now get, in a sense. And they bring this worshipping only God to the point of absurdity.

Recently there was such a case where some usual radical Muslim fundamentalists seized the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad. Do you know what they wanted to do with it? He is a prophet, the founder of their religion. They wanted to destroy it. Why? – Because you can only worship God, and what should be done with everyone else? – They should be destroyed.

As long as I do not understand that God is present here, in this world, I will have this strange consciousness. But at the next stage, at a higher stage, when one gets free, including from material mind, one must understand that God is where? – That God is present in everyone's heart, that God is present in everyone's heart, that He is present in this world. And I have no right to use violence to anyone, I have to respect and worship, and show respect to every living being, because God is present there.

This is a higher level. Not that it's a lesser level, but at a higher level what do I see? That Krishna is where? – No, not everywhere. Then I'll see something else. In Vrindavan, and how is He present in my heart? As Paramatma with four arms?

yam shyama-sundaram achintya-guna-svarupam
govindam adi-purusham tam aham bhajami
(Brahma-samhita 5.38)

Actually, it is a very complex evolution of spiritual consciousness and spiritual vision, which leads to a very essential conclusion in our lives. Unfortunately, I have not time to speak about this at great length, but we must be sure that Srila Prabhupada has given us something very high. And God grant that one day we understand this at least a little. Even this level, the level of *nistha*, from our point of view it is not a very high level, in terms of a stage of *bhakti*. From our point of view it is a very high level, from our point of view it is an infinitely high level. But in terms of the highest ideal which we seek to attain it is only an intermediate step that we need to pass quickly. That is why we have a long way to go, but we can do it, if we are fully aware that Krishna is God. Why? – Because that's the way it is. And that God is only one and I have to fulfill His will because nothing belongs to me and everything depends on Him. And that I am who? Louder please! A servant. Whose servant? – Servant of the servant of the servant of the One, Who enjoy with the *gopis*, Krishna. Thank you very much!