

UNDER THE DESIRE TREES

A Search For Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana

KADAMBA KANANA SWAMI

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DEDICATION



For the pleasure of
His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda,
by whose unlimited mercy we are allowed entrance into
Vṛndāvana

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INTRODUCTION

In the *Garga-saṁhitā* it is explained that the Supreme Lord revealed to the demigods that there was a secret tunnel to the spiritual world. It was filled with water, so they boarded a boat and went to that transcendental abode. We don't know of any secret tunnel, but for us the Lord made the spiritual world even more easily accessible by making a perfect replica available on our planet.

It is amazing to see the extent of His unlimited mercy.

Let us just for a moment contemplate on Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world, fully absorbed in His transcendental pleasure pastimes. Then in the middle of all of that He thought of the fallen, conditioned souls like us: "Maybe I should give them some mercy, …but why would I give them only some mercy; instead I will give them all the mercy!"

Subsequently He manifested the entire *tri-pāda vibhūti*, the three quarters of the spiritual world in the *eka-pāda vibhūti*, the one quarter of the material world – a feat that may puzzle the minds of mathematicians, but touches with even greater impact the hearts of His devotees, who find themselves stunned by such an overwhelming display of love and kindness on the part of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Although Kṛṣṇa displayed extraordinary generosity, at the same time the spiritual world is for pure devotional service and He didn't want to make it cheap. So, in order to block out materialists, He covered this replica of the spiritual world with a little layer of *yoga-māyā*, illusory energy to hide its spiritual identity. Only for those who are dedicated to pure devotional service is the curtain of illusion lifted.

So we embarked on a journey to the land of Kṛṣṇa, that holy abode

known as Śrī Vṛndāvana, with the objective of deepening our relationship with Kṛṣṇa and increasing our devotion to Him. There are many books written about Vṛndāvana, with extensive descriptions of various places where Kṛṣṇa performed His pastimes five thousand years ago. Some of these books provide photos, maps and directions of how to find all the different pastime places and provide the details of what transpired as well as the temples and shrines that were erected there. In this book we have a different approach; there are some photos, stories and details about various places, but the focus is more on the internal experience in each place. What are we meditating on? What is our prayer? What are we trying to achieve, while visiting these places?

Maybe we are looking for a special gift, some inspiration that will give us the motivation to go on with our spiritual practices in the middle of the grind of everyday life back home. Maybe we want Kṛṣṇa to lift the curtain and reveal Himself. By visiting various pastime places in Kṛṣṇa's holy abode, we are connecting with many great historical devotees and with Kṛṣṇa Himself.

This book depicts our experiences on the Vṛndāvana *parikramā* of Kārttika 2018 and is a collection of the lectures inspired at these holy places. One can travel on foot, by car, by train or plane, or one can travel with the speed of mind, so let us go to Vṛndāvana and try and come closer to Kṛṣṇa.

Your servant,
Kadamba Kanana Swami,
Vijaya Ekādaśī, March 1st 2019



MADHUVANA

"Your instructions do not resonate in my heart," said Dhruva. He had an anger issue and was advised by Nārada to give it up, but he could not. Like Dhruva, we also find ourselves with mixed motives that keep us in the outer circle, distant from the pure devotees. In Dhruvatila, we see our own lack of alignment and pray to embrace the desires of our spiritual master, not just externally but wholeheartedly.

Madhuvana got its name from the fact that Śatrughna came here and killed the son of the demon Madhu. The son was called Lavana. It is said that this Madhuvana is the original site where Mathurā was founded. That would put Mathurā back in the Tretā-yuga, because Śatrughna lived then. Later, Dhruva Mahārāja came to this place. Dhruva Mahārāja went through that frustrating experience of being denied the opportunity to sit on the lap of his father.

The birth of harsh speech

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam begins the pastime of Dhruva Mahārāja with a narration describing the sons of Lord Brahma. In there we find some interesting details. It says:

maitreya uvāca
sanakādyā nāradaś ca
ṛbhur haṁso 'ruṇir yatiḥ
naite gṛhān brahma-sutā
hy āvasann ūrdhva-retasaḥ

The great sage Maitreya said: The four great Kumāra sages headed by Sanaka, as well as Nārada, Ṛbhu, Haṁsa, Aruṇi and Yati, all sons of Brahmā, did not live at home, but became *ūrdhva-retā*, or *naiṣṭhika-brahmacārīs*, unadulterated celibates.

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.1)

mṛṣādharmasya bhāryāsīd
dambhaṁ māyāṁ ca śatru-han
asūta mithunaṁ tat tu
nirṛtir jagṛhe 'prajaḥ

Another son of Lord Brahmā was Irreligion, whose wife's name was Falsity. From their combination were born two demons named

Dambha, or Bluffing, and Māyā, or Cheating. These two demons were taken by a demon named Nirṛti, who had no children.
(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.2)

Irreligion, *adharma*, married his sister named Falsity. Prabhupāda mentions in the purport that that was the beginning of sex life between brother and sister. This unnatural combination of partners in sex life can be possible in human society only when there's *adharma*.

tayoḥ samabhaval lobho
nikṛtiś ca mahā-mate
tābhyāṁ krodhaś ca hiṁsā ca
yad duruktiḥ svasā kaliḥ

Maitreya told Vidura: O great soul, from Dambha and Māyā were born Greed and Nikṛti, or Cunning. From their combination came children named Krodha [Anger] and Hiṁsā [Envy], and from their combination were born Kali and his sister Durukti (Harsh Speech).
(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.3)

The marriage of Adharma and Falsity is an interesting introduction to the chapter. Many children appear in that lineage, including Kali and his sister, Harsh Speech. Harsh speech plays a major role in this pastime. Dhruva desired to sit on his father's lap where his step-brother, Uttama, was already seated. As Dhruva tried to climb up, his step-mother held him back and said, "No! You cannot sit on the lap of the king. Only my son can." She told Dhruva that he should first worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead to be able to take birth from her womb in his next life. Then he could sit on his father's lap.

The king didn't say anything because she was the younger wife

and he didn't want domestic difficulties. He had more than one wife, so the chance of domestic difficulties also increases. There were problems with the elder wife and she didn't know what to do because she was not the king's favourite, but she was wise. The mother of Dhruva was named Sunīti, and the step-mother was Suruci. Sunīti said to Dhruva, "Your step-mother, Suruci, gave you a very good instruction because she told you to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Follow that instruction." And then comes the point where Dhruva Mahārāja asks where the Supreme Lord can be found and his mother says, "I have heard from the sages that the Supreme Lord can be found in the forest."

Dhruva encounters Nārada

Dhruva was a *kṣatriya* and very determined. Nārada Muni appears to him, and I find it an interesting detail that Nārada Muni was aware of Dhruva Mahārāja's situation. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in the purport that Dhruva Mahārāja was absorbed in the particular mood of a *kṣatriya* therefore, although he was a child, he could not tolerate this insult. Prabhupāda explains that Nārada Muni was able to know what Dhruva Mahārāja experienced because he has the potency to know what goes on in the consciousness of every living being, just like the Supersoul. That is quite something. Imagine that! Extraordinary.

Dhruva Mahārāja was approached by Nārada who explained to him, "You are a child. You should not take such things so seriously. You should just go home now. Go to your parents."
Dhruva Mahārāja said, "No! I'm not going home! I've been insulted and I cannot tolerate it. I will stay here. I want a kingdom greater than my father's, my grandfather's and my great-grandfather's."

His great-grandfather was Lord Brahma, his grandfather was Svāyambhuva Manu, Priyavrata was his uncle and King Uttānapāda,

his father. Coming in that lineage of Brahma, their family had special potency. Brahma is known to be a *śakty-āveśa avatāra* of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, therefore Priyavrata and Uttānapāda were also blessed with great power. And Dhruva as well but he was upset. He could see that Dhruva was not going to take the instructions which would be given to a child, so Nārada Muni gave him transcendental instruction. He said, "My dear Dhruva, all these things are taking place in the temporary world. Whatever happens in this material world is not really important because it relates to the body and to temporary conditions. One should just detach oneself and not worry."

When Nārada was finished, Dhruva said, "Your instructions are absolutely true, but they don't resonate in my heart. These instructions may be suitable, and a *brāhmaṇa* may be able to follow them, but I am a *kṣatriya* and I cannot relate to them." Dhruva said that he needed something else; he wanted a kingdom greater than those of his whole lineage.

Then Nārada told him, "Alright, what you do is use clay to make the form of a Deity of the Supreme Lord and you can worship Him. You can control the mind and senses through the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* process and chant the mantra *oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*." Nārada instructed him to go to the forest called Madhuvana. And we are now at the forest Dhruva came to.

A forest encounter

Dhruva performed his *sādhana* and through his *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* he endured great austerities and controlled his breathing. At first he would eat fruits and berries every third day, then dry grass and leaves every six days. Later he only inhaled air every 12 days. The intervals were becoming bigger. Eventually, Dhruva was no longer taking anything. At one point he even stopped breathing altogether

and the whole universe started to choke. Indra approached the Supreme Lord and it was then that the Supreme Lord appeared to Dhruva.

So here on the central altar at Dhruva-tila, we see the Deity of Lord Nārāyaṇa, Lord Viṣṇu, who appeared before Dhruva. On our left is Nārada Muni and on the right is Dhruva. Nārada holds his *vīṇā*. We approach Dhruva Mahārāja through the *Bhāgavatam*. It is mentioned in the *Caitanya-bhāgavata* that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu read this pastime of Dhruva Mahārāja a hundred times. We can also read it a hundred times if we want to follow in His footsteps.

It's interesting that Dhruva has an anger issue. He is advised by Nārada to give it up, but he cannot. He was not ready to give it up in his youth. Later Dhruva got the *darśana* of the Supreme Lord who told him that all his desires would be fulfilled.

Dhruva said, "No, my Lord, my desires are already fulfilled because I have the *darśana* of You! What more could I desire? Your *darśana* is the most desirable boon. All my desires are now fulfilled! I wanted a kingdom greater than my family lineage. I wanted broken pieces of glass but now I got a jewel." So as soon as Dhruva got the *darśana* of the Lord, everything he had been desiring from the Lord transformed at that point. It all looked insignificant.

But the Lord said, "You will get your kingdom anyway. Your stepmother, Suruci, will die in a forest fire and your step brother, who joined his mother, will be killed by the Yakṣas." When the mother had denied Dhruva the chance of sitting on his father's lap, then the step brother also pushed him down. But this boon was a bit much. Dhruva had been extremely angry with his step mother and step brother and now the Lord was responding to his anger. He not only responded to his desire for a kingdom, but

to his anger as well. That was very intense.

Later, when Dhruva was ruling as a king, his brother was killed by a Yakṣa who lived in the Himalayas. Dhruva went to the kingdom of the Yakṣas and started killing all of them. Why? He had to establish that if you kill anyone from our royal family, of our kingdom, then you're in trouble. It was his duty as a *kṣatriya* to protect the authority of their kingdom. But then he kept on killing and killing. Now, was this out of anger or was it guilt? That is the question. Was it anger or was he feeling guilty that everything happened because he desired revenge? Perhaps he wanted to show that he was on the side of his brother just to put his feelings of guilt aside. His anger was certainly mixed with a sense of guilt. It is dangerous to approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead with material desire. Better not ask, "O, my Lord, give me this. Give me that." Even in a material sense, He might just fulfil it.

Mixed motives

Dhruva, as a small boy, received the *darśana* of the Lord. The Lord touched him with His conch shell and then Dhruva was able to fully glorify Him with proper prayers. Dhruva then returned to the kingdom from the forest. His father was so happy, because he had been in great anxiety as soon as the boy left home. Of course, he also felt guilty, thinking,"It's my fault that he went to the forest." His father smelled his son's head. In the *Bhāgavatam* they regularly smell their sons' heads – I don't know if other parents do that also. Dhruva offered obeisances to his father, his mother and even to his stepmother. Suruci was touched and had a change of heart. Dhruva was such a saintly personality that his extraordinary qualities just melted hearts. We hear in the *Ṣaḍ-gosvāmy-aṣṭaka, dhīrādhīra-jana-priyau priya-karau*; the transcendental personality becomes dear to both the *dhīra* and the *adhīra*, or to those who are peaceful (the devotees) and to the agitated and disturbed. It is translated as dear

to the gentle and the ruffians.

Dhruva Mahārāja managed to change the heart of Suruci who had tears in her eyes and felt great relief. She had been overcome in that previous situation by her lower nature and she had engaged in harsh speech and told him, "No! You cannot sit on the lap of your father unless you worship the Supreme Lord and take birth from my womb." But the whole palace was very upset when Dhruva left. It became a big drama and she felt guilty. She did have a change of heart when Dhruva returned, but we cannot say whether her sentiment was completely pure at that time or whether feelings of guilt were also there. Dhruva had returned from near death and it was a miracle. Everyone was just so overwhelmed and Suruci also became swept up in the whole mood. Partially her sentiment had changed because Dhruva had changed; he was no longer the boy who had left but a great personality emanating saintly qualities. Another reason was that she felt guilty because she was the cause of the boy leaving. Lastly, there was such a wave of sentiment when he returned that she was also caught up in it. Suruci's feelings were controlled by mixed motives.

In the whole narration there are plenty of mixed motives, an interesting topic because we also encounter them within our own spiritual life. We also become caught up by a collective mood. The collective is very powerful and that can also work for us. We go through such exercises like listening to Prabhupāda remembrances for almost 4 hours yesterday, on his disappearance day. It was an austerity. At one point I didn't know how to sit any more, but the exclusive focus on Prabhupāda was there. For that group, Prabhupāda really meant a lot. I liked how Guru-kṛpā spoke almost in *sūtras*. He said that Prabhupāda appeared like lightning; so intense and so short. All that incredible energy was there for a short period and then it was over in no time! He said, "I don't know Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa;

I only know Prabhupāda." That is actually the core.

The inner circle

On that day, I spoke about the different circles of devotees around Prabhupāda: the inner circle and the outer circle. In the inner circle there is great focus on Prabhupāda as the most extraordinary, transcendental personality; a *nitya-siddha* who descended straight from the spiritual world. He is our link to the spiritual world by his incredible realisation, his intimate connection with and desire to please Kṛṣṇa. And then, just like Dhruva Mahārāja, we find ourselves with mixed motives. These mixed motives keep us in the outer circle.

One doesn't get into the inner circle by initiation, although those who were initiated by Prabhupāda certainly got a head start. They are ahead of us in terms of their start but they also had to come closer by aligning their desires with his focus. Dhruva had difficulty aligning his desires even when he took up spiritual life. If he had just aligned himself with Nārada Muni, he could have saved himself a lot of trouble. He wouldn't have had to kill all these Yakṣas. He wouldn't have had to rule a kingdom, which is a managerial headache. He could not align himself because he strongly felt, "I am a *kṣatriya*."

nāhaṁ vipro na ca nara-patir nāpi vaiśyo na śūdro
nāhaṁ varṇī na ca gṛha-patir no vanastho yatir vā
kintu prodyan-nikhila-paramānanda-pūrnāmṛtābdher
gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ

" 'I am not a brāhmaṇa, I am not a *kṣatriya*, I am not a *vaiśya* or a *śūdra*. Nor am I a *brahmacārī*, a householder, a *vānaprastha* or a *sannyāsī*. I identify Myself only as the servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the maintainer of the

gopīs. He is like an ocean of nectar, and He is the cause of universal transcendental bliss. He is always existing with brilliance.' "
(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 13.80)

We are none of these designations. We don't belong in *varṇāśrama*. The mind and body belong in *varṇāśrama*. The soul has nothing to do with it. It is because we identify with our mind and body that we situate ourselves in *varṇāśrama*. When we are completely transcendental, on the platform of the soul, then we are not of the four *varṇas* or the four *āśramas*. Dhruva was conditioned. He had mixed motivations therefore he identified as a *kṣatriya* and stayed in the outer circle. He practised spiritual life but he had his own agenda, other than that of the spiritual master. He followed the process given by the spiritual master by chanting '*oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*', worshipping the Deity, controlling his mind and senses through the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* process but he had a separate agenda and he stayed in the outer circle. He could not really enter the inner circle. Later, he got mercy anyway because of the great blessings of Nārada Muni.

Blessings

Nārada had blessed him so much and that was the first and foremost reason the Lord appeared to him. It was not just because Indra complained that the demigods were suffocating or because of Dhruva's austerity. Those were only the external reasons. The principal reason was because Nārada desired it and he had a lot more credit with the Supreme Lord than Indra. Lord Indra's credit is the result of a hundred *aśvamedha-yajñas,* which is certainly extraordinary, but Nārada's credit is that he is a *śakty-āveśa* incarnation of the Lord who is empowered with the *bhakti-śakti*. Nārada is not just any devotee; he is empowered with pure devotional service and gives it wherever he goes. Nārada is the guru of so many personalities and has given transcendental instruction repeatedly. The *bhakti-*

śakti is the ultimate desirable thing therefore Nārada is very dear to Kṛṣṇa. "Anyone who preaches my glory is *priya*, most dear to me," Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. So Nārada is more dear to Kṛṣṇa than Indra, therefore Nārada's blessings is the first and principal cause of attaining the *darśana* of the Lord.

We should also understand that we are going to spend a whole life, and maybe more than one life, doing devotional service. In that devotional service we struggle. In that struggle we are trying to get benefit, *sukṛti*, which goes into our eternal spiritual bank balance. At the end of our life, what do we have to show? Only the credit in our spiritual bank balance. We come to the gates of the spiritual world and say," Look at this!"
And they go, "That's not enough. It's not going to do it."

But when you say, "I have something else. I have the blessings of my spiritual master," that is a much greater wealth. All the wealth we can accrue from a whole lifetime of service is insignificant compared to the blessings of our spiritual master. It is blessings that are the principal factor and not only of our spiritual master, but of the entire *sampradāya*, of the previous spiritual masters. One should not jump over, though. One should approach through the lineage and through the Vaiṣṇavas and therefore one has to become soft.

In the beginning, we make distinctions between Vaiṣṇavas, thinking, "This Vaiṣṇava is neophyte" or "that one is not bona fide" and "that Vaiṣṇava is weak and the other is too stubborn." Every Vaiṣṇava is not good enough for us. At one point, however, all the Vaiṣṇavas become good enough except one – ourselves. All the others are worshippable. So one has to come to this point. This is difficult when one identifies with *varṇāśrama* and is in a *kṣatriya* spirit, *brāhmaṇa* spirit or a *śūdra* spirit. Only in the pure transcendental spirit can we really worship all the Vaiṣṇavas because all faults

become insignificant in comparison to their spiritual credit. If we see that someone has spiritual credit who cares about the faults? The faults are meaningless. In this way, one can appreciate all the Vaiṣṇavas.

Be aligned

So here in Dhruva-tila, we begin our meditation for our *parikramā*. Our meditation is to try to come to that transcendental platform of simply being a servant and appreciating and glorifying all the Vaiṣṇavas. In that way, we go forward as Dhruva did, faithfully following the process. Generally we think that as long as we follow the process everything is fine but Dhruva did all this and was not fine. He still had not aligned himself with the desire of the spiritual master. This aligning process is not so easy. It is not something that is done by a decision but by cultivation.

In this age of Kali, everyone is extremely independent and no one wants to align himself. We all have a spiritual master but to fully embrace his spirit is extremely difficult. It's difficult in this age to have that humility. In Śrīla Prabhupāda we see this incredible humility where he doesn't put himself but his spiritual master in the foreground. In his purports he puts the *ācāryas* in the foreground, taking their commentaries and weaving them in. Although Prabhupāda said that whatever he wrote was dictated to him by Kṛṣṇa, he has filled his purports with commentaries of the *ācāryas* because he aligned himself.

That is my meditation here in this place. Looking at Dhruva and seeing his lack of alignment, I'm seeing my own lack of alignment. I pray that I can embrace the desires of my spiritual master, not only externally but wholeheartedly, and make them my own. Now you can ask a question or share some of your meditations on this place.

Questions and answers:

How can we purify our motives?

In the beginning of spiritual life we think that we are the ones who are doing the washing. "How can I get all these stains out of my clothes? Let's bring a brush and brush very hard." But still the stains don't come out therefore you need a cleaning agent. The Supreme Lord is the cleaning agent and we need to take shelter of Him. The only way to purify our motives is to take shelter. How do we do that? Reading the pastime of Dhruva Mahārāja 100 times may help. By chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa every day and by taking responsibility in devotional service, our motives can change. When we are on the outer circle, we are not so serious. Make a beautiful offering in your service, something really nice, and that will help.

What should Dhruva have done to align himself with Nārada Muni?

He should not have prayed for a kingdom greater than those of his father and grandfather. He should have just tried to cultivate the aloofness from the material world that Nārada had first advised him to do. Nārada's first instruction was, "Child, go home!' That he should have ignored and he did so. His second instruction was, "Be transcendental to the three modes of material nature. See your eternal position and your eternal relationship." He should have detached himself. He was denied something material – so what? There was injustice – so what? Big deal. He was a *kṣatriya* therefore he made a big deal about it. Dhruva should have stopped being a *kṣatriya* and become a transcendental personality, just as we have to become transcendental one day.

If we want to be in the inner circle, does it mean that we have to do what Dhruva did?

No. Lord Caitanya gives it to us much cheaper. Dhruva had to stop breathing. We don't. We can drink water and eat but chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. The *mahā-mantra* must be chanted and then we must dedicate our whole life in service to the *mahā-mantra*. Serve the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Those who want to be married, they can. They can have seven children, or even seventeen, because the more Kṛṣṇa children, the better. As far as I'm concerned, all devotees should have dozens of kids. In that way, at least the population of the Hare Kṛṣṇas will increase. Otherwise, do something to spread Kṛṣṇa Consciousness in the world because it's Lord Caitanya's age. We are not living in the time of Dhruva Mahārāja, but in the age of Lord Caitanya. We have to be part of spreading the *saṅkīrtana* movement.

You said that Nārada's instruction didn't resonate with Dhruva's heart. What does this mean for us? Should we always take the spiritual master's instruction to heart?

If it could resonate, that would be the best but sometimes it doesn't. After some time we realize that the spiritual master is not only teaching transcendental knowledge but he also has a character. We have a character too and there will be differences which over time become apparent. We cannot become cat-copies. We are individuals who engage in the service of the Lord. Still, we have to embrace his desire. This is actually the greatest thing we can do, although it can turn our lives upside down. I have also experienced this. Dhruva should have taken that second instruction, and just been aloof but he couldn't. And what if we can't? We then take the second best path: just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and stay within the boundaries of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness and maybe later the alignment will come, as it did for Dhruva.

Should we open a discussion with the spiritual master?

I think so. It is very good to discuss our lack of alignment with our spiritual master. We have etiquette between guru and disciple, but when you look at someone like Prabhupāda, you can see that he had so much of realization that people by nature were more inclined to submit. Even then, many people found it hard to align. We may not have spiritual masters of that same calibre, but they are connecting with Prabhupāda and serving us. It is better that we discuss because then we clear our heart rather than harbouring it in our heart and externally agreeing. Rather discuss it than smile and not align. Maybe he will convince us.

You mentioned the dangers of approaching the Lord with different intentions. So what advice would you give to those who have loved ones who approach the Lord with mixed motives?

We see it in loved ones and we see it with the ones we love the most, namely, ourselves. What to do? There's different levels of advice one can give. One level of advice is, "Do what you can." You cannot get people to do what they cannot. You cannot get everyone to be in the inner circle, but at least bring them to the outer circle. Later, from the outer circle, you can bring them to the inner circle. At least connect them. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and start to follow some regulative principles. Stop meat eating, gambling and intoxication. Alright, we will work on illicit sex. You can do six rounds. It is nice for a starter. Each month increase it by two more so that within a year you get to sixteen. We cannot immediately expect that everyone will strive for unalloyed pure devotional service, but that is the ultimate goal: *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyaṁ*. For others we can be soft, but with ourselves we can't be. If you are going to be soft with yourself, what will you get? There's a Dutch proverb that says, "Soft doctors make stinking wounds."

It is up to us. We also encounter our limitations and we have our nature. Dhruva had one advantage – he was a *kṣatriya* and they have strong determination. They can fix their minds. Someone who doesn't have a mind like that may need more cultivation. Some people feel good when they sit at a romantic, beautiful altar with candles and it helps them get absorbed in chanting. And I say, "Have your candles. Have Christmas every day if that is what it takes to get into your chanting!" In *The Nectar of Devotion, Rūpa Gosvāmī* says, *yena tena prakāreṇa manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet,* whatever the conditions may be, somehow or other fix the mind on Kṛṣṇa. We have different natures. We have to engage in the process accordingly. Some have determination, some need more cultivation, some need a reward. A *vaiśya* may offer himself a reward, "If you chant these 16 rounds then you can have a slice of pizza! It's a deal!" But if you tell me there's a book distribution competition and I can be number one, it doesn't work on me. I have no desire to be number one. If you want me to distribute books you have to come up with another argument like, "You give out a lot of mercy with books and you get a lot of mercy." Then I will go out. I don't have a competitive nature so being number one doesn't fire me up at all. Others do. I know a devotee who doesn't like to lose, and on some occasion, they had a quiz in which he was competing. Boy, did he want to win! So we have to harness our nature. If you have a strong, competitive spirit, use it!

What is the difference between doing devotional service and attracting the mercy of the spiritual master?

Doing devotional service is very potent and it acts. But the mercy of the spiritual master is an additional factor which can move us far ahead very quickly. *Anarthopaśamaṁ sākṣād bhakti-yogam adhokṣaje* – the *anarthas* are being purified by devotional service but, by the blessings of the spiritual master, we get the grace of Kṛṣṇa and

then we can be uplifted much quicker. We therefore need both. We engage in devotional service and we need the blessings of the spiritual master, especially if we really want to break through, if we really want to go towards *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyaṁ*.

Nārada Muni gave Dhruva so many instructions, which he changed according to Dhruva's ability to follow. So our spiritual master may also give us many. How do we know which instruction to align ourselves with?

That is not so easy. The first instruction to Dhruva was, "Child, go home," to which Dhruva said "No!" And he was supposed to say no. There are other such examples in our scriptures. Sometimes the spiritual master tests the disciple. Śukadeva Gosvāmī tested Mahārāja Parīkṣit. He told him to perform atonement, and Mahārāja Parīkṣit said, "No, I've seen so many animals being sacrificed, and I've seen that all these things don't really work. Still the desire to perform the action remains in the heart so there must be something more."

The disciple has to have a certain preliminary *sukṛti* or sincerity in advancement, and the spiritual master tests how deep that is. Even if the sincerity is not so deep, it doesn't matter; engage them in devotional service anyway and sort of put them on a slow boat to China. There are different programmes for different people. I call it the turtle lane. In Germany, years ago, they had signs on the freeway which read, "Turtles to the right," because in the fast lane there is no speed limit. We see the turtles in the turtle lane, taking it slow in spiritual life. In the middle lane there are people who are really trying and then you see in the fast lane some lights flashing behind us and with incredible speed something comes flying by. That was Sanātana Gosvāmī, driving in a Porsche! So you choose your lane. The spiritual master tests which lane a disciple wants to choose. He may have a little less time for the turtle lane. The middle lane gets a bit more quality attention.



TĀLAVANA

We meditate on devotional service as the means of attracting Balarāma's mercy. It is the only way to overcome the inner animal or the Dhenukāsura syndrome. There is a Dhenukāsura in all of us. We pray to Lord Balarāma as He prepares the heart and gives spiritual strength, which ultimately means happiness in spiritual life.

We were in a rush when leaving Dhruva-tila. On the way we saw Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa and there was a Dauji temple, the temple of Lord Balarāma. It is said that once Lord Balarāma was seated there, chanting. He was so deeply absorbed in the holy name, meditating on Kṛṣṇa so much, that He turned blackish – like Kṛṣṇa. That is what you call chanting!

Ploughing the heart

Lord Balarāma is very much on our mind today. He carries a plough, used to prepare the ground for planting. Balarāma is the one who prepares the heart. Kṛṣṇa is the instructor, the speaker of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and He plants transcendental knowledge within the heart. *"Bala"* means strength and Balarāma is the giver of spiritual strength. He has that strength because He is serving Kṛṣṇa in unlimited ways: as His personal paraphernalia, His bed, shoes and the instruments we use in *kīrtana*. Even the *karatālas* should never be put on the ground because it is Balarāma. He also becomes the *puruṣa* avatars: Mahā-Viṣṇu, Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu and Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. Balarāma assumes all these roles and is actually the origin of Them. He is also the basic energy of the spiritual world or the *sandhinī-śakti*, the existence potency. Rādhārāṇī is the *hlādinī śakti*, which is the pleasure potency of Kṛṣṇa. Everything is resting on Balarāma.

This is Balarāma's place because this is Tālavana. We remember very well, that one day the cowherd boys had been out in the forest the whole day and were getting hungry. There was nothing much to eat on the way, just a little pasta [just as we ate this morning], and it was not sufficient because it digested quickly. That was light, so everyone became quite hungry after some time. They had just walked past this Tālavana forest when they saw these *tāla* fruits in the palm trees which smelled so sweet. All the cowherd boys said, "Oh, we're starving! We really need some glucose to get the blood sugar going," or whatever was the equivalent of that in those days.

They wanted those *tāla* fruits and Kṛṣṇa said, "Alright, we will get them," but Dhenukāsura was there, along with his ass-like associates who were not overly intelligent.
These were not just ordinary asses. They were man-eating asses. They even had fangs. Rather heavy dudes! Balarāma took the lead in shaking one of the *tāla* trees and many of the fruits fell. The cowherd boys grabbed some and ate them to satisfy their immediate hunger but Dhenukāsura heard the noise. He came storming at Balarāma and kicked Him. Balarāma caught his hind legs and started swinging him around and threw him onto a *tāla* tree. I think you all know the domino game, where one piece falls causing many pieces to fall over. When one tree went down, it would knock over the next tree, and then the next, until the whole forest went down. This was not good for the cowherd boys' fruit but suddenly they were not hungry any more. Kṛṣṇa joined in and many of Dhenukāsura's associates came. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma made a sport of throwing the asses into all the trees and it was a lot of fun.

The *Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*, a famous book of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, describes all the demons that were killed in the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and the *anarthas* they represent. He states that we have to overcome the demons killed by Balarāma ourselves. There are demons within us; some we have to conquer and others Kṛṣṇa takes away by the process of devotional service. It is interesting that we have to make a conscious effort to overcome the demoniac qualities in ourselves represented by the demons that Balarāma killed. Asses tend to load themselves unnecessarily with great burdens. So Dhenukāsura was burdening himself with so many possessions of this world that he claimed as his. As a result, he was attached to guarding and looking after them. He unduly burdened himself, beyond what was needed for his survival and sustenance. In other words, he fell prey to *atyāhāra*, an over endeavour for material facilities. This tendency can be strongly seen in his character.

Another demon, killed by Balarāma, is Pralambāsura and he represents lust. Pralambāsura was the macho type, all muscle and sex desire – the 'hey baby' type. These kinds of tendencies, like lust and collecting many material items, have to be overcome. One has to be ready to simplify his life so that there is room for Kṛṣṇa and not become completely overwhelmed by material things. There is a place for sex life but it is not meant to take over our lives. The modern world, if I may say so, is oversexed. They basically make too much out of it. It's just too much in the foreground and given too much of importance. It's not the goal of life, although it may play a part.

Choosing Kṛṣṇa

We are beginning our first strides in spiritual life by dealing with these demoniac tendencies within us. Of course, Śrīla Prabhupāda made it very simple; four regulative principles automatically take care of these Pralambāsura tendencies. Although, it may slip in a little, and there may still be a bit of that 'hey baby' mood in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement as well. These things are deep. Our material desires are deeply rooted and we have to make a choice.

Here, we are meditating on choosing for Kṛṣṇa, choosing for devotional service. Sexual activities are described in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.11) as *kāmo 'smi bharatarṣabha* or authorized sexual activity for procreation. My question in that regards is, "Why do babies cry? Why don't they come out of the womb singing?" Have you ever thought about that? I mean, there is some punishment even in authorized sexual activity. You have your children and there your life goes.

Shew! Of course, love wins, I know. *kāmo 'smi bharatarṣabha* is okay, but illicit sex is a problem. It is not about being liberal, conservative or fanatic. One might say, "Oh, you cannot be fanatic.
After all, when you develop deep feelings for someone then what

can be done? They also have to be expressed, somehow." That may be. I understand that these feelings have to be expressed but where does it take our life? That is my question. We have to go back to Godhead in this life. Let that be our first understanding. Let us fix ourselves in the aim of going back to Godhead. Within that, we can have whatever else we want.

The Dhenukāsura syndrome

Somehow or the other, we have to first anchor ourselves and that is why there is initiation. It is meant to be our anchor. We anchor ourselves so that the strong feelings that arise at times are already placed in a context – the context of an initiation. That is the idea. We don't take initiation tomorrow, break it the day after and follow it the next day. No, initiation should be very fixed. That is required. That is our connection for going back to Godhead. Otherwise, we are missing the purpose of human life; *athāto brahma jijñāsā*, now is the time to enquire into the Absolute Truth. Now is the time, not only to inquire, but to dedicate our life to the Absolute Truth. Now is the time to take advantage of this life. We can choose an *āśrama* but not move beyond its boundaries. Otherwise, we are still suffering from the Dhenukāsura syndrome.

This Dhenukāsura syndrome is a particular psychological state. It is called an *anartha* but it is a psychological state that basically binds us in the material world. And that's not worth it. It is not worth it to take birth again, is it?

"Well, it's not that bad. It is a sort of adventure journey. Who knows where you'll take birth in your next life?"

Yes, who knows? That is not transcendental knowledge. The materialist has the tendency to add colour to the material energy – the colour of hope. We want *preyas*, immediate enjoyment, and not *śreyas*, long-term enjoyment. We want it now. We don't want to wait because we want everything here, while we are in this

world, and then "Ah! Worry about the rest later. Enjoy now and whatever comes later may come. At least we had this – our love!"

Forget it! Not at the expense of going back to Godhead. You can love someone, no problem, but without compromising spiritual life.

We are here to find spiritual strength. We are here to get more resolve. We are not here just to hear some *līlā* or some interesting stories. This is not 'Vrollywood'; this is Vṛndāvana. This is not showbiz. This is about the real thing. This is about the truth. Here, we pray to Balarāma knowing that we need His support. We need strength, and we get it from mercy, because we don't have strength on our own. I don't know about you, but I don't – definitely not. We don't have that deeper strength.

Balarāma can give it to us but how do we get it from Him? What can we do to get that strength? Well, that is simple. Balarāma is the one who is fully absorbed in serving Kṛṣṇa. Naturally, if you want something from someone and you ask them for it, they may or may not give it to you. It is better to first help them do what they're doing and then, after a while, they feel so indebted that you can say, "Could you please give me something?" How can they say no? This principle applies with Balarāma. If we assist Balarāma by helping with what is dear to Him – devotional service to Kṛṣṇa – then when we pray to Him for mercy, He will give us strength.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa Balarāma, in Vṛndāvana, partially because the area where our temple was built is Ramaṇa-reti, the place where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma would come with Their cows and rest. He also gave us Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma because we need spiritual strength so very much. That is our difficulty. The Dhenukāsura syndrome is strong.

I was in a German book store and I found a book about the 'Innerer Schweinhund'. It is a word often heard in Second World War movies. You can translate it as hog-dog in good American, the 'Inner Hog-dog'. It refers to the lower creature living inside us while on the outside we chant, "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa…' Inside there is something else. The animal is still there and it wants to come out. It may be hidden under culture. It may be hidden under birth or under family behaviour. It may be hidden under education. It may be hidden under a degree. It may be hidden in so many ways, but the animal is still there. In psychology, they sometimes use German terms and there is something called the 'schatten durchbruch', which translates into 'a shadow break-through', and to that animal suddenly coming out from the other side, out of darkness. How do we deal with the Dhenukāsura within us? By service!

Spiritual strength equals happiness

Service is what attracts Balarāma and He gives us spiritual strength, which ultimately means happiness in spiritual life. When we're happy, we are strong. When we are not happy in spiritual life, then everything is difficult and we think, "Oh, how long can I do this?" When we're happy then, "Yes! Give me more!" Balarāma gives us the happiness that comes from devotional service. That happiness is our strength and then nothing can touch us. The material energy will be of no interest to us. When we are struggling in spiritual life then the material energy looks so attractive. "Oh Māyā! Please go away. Please leave me alone. Māyā, don't do this! I told you not to do this!" Spiritual life becomes difficult.

It is good that we started our journey here in Vṛndāvana, with this meditation on Lord Balarāma. On our first day, we can begin to meditate on devotional service as the means of attracting Balarāma's mercy, by which we can overcome that inner animal, the inner Dhenukāsura. Oh yes, there is a Dhenukāsura in all of

us – an ass. One can also say that there is a fool in all of us. We are just great fools. Among the Deities in this temple, is a blackish form in the middle. That is Balarāma. There is a smaller Revatī and Kṛṣṇa also. Here, Balarāma is the prominent personality, the elder brother. He is the protector in this place, the protector of Kṛṣṇa. Balarāma is in control here. That is significant. We need Balarāma. Just as one doesn't approach Lord Caitanya without Lord Nityānanda, we cannot approach Kṛṣṇa without Balarāma. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī tried to go to Lord Caitanya directly, with no success. When he first went to Lord Nityānanda, he was successful and could meet Lord Caitanya afterwards. In the same way, we are turning to Balarāma.

It is said that there are different incarnations of the Lord and each one of them has a particular power. For example, Pṛthu Mahārāja had the *pālana śakti*, the power to protect the earth. Nārada Muni had the *bhakti-śakti*, or the power of devotional service. It is said that Balarāma, Vāmanadeva and Mohinī-mūrti have the power of great beauty. So Balarāma is especially attractive and therefore we should turn to Him. He is our spiritual master. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura says that Balarāma is the original spiritual master and the spiritual master of all. Rādhārāṇī acts as the spiritual master of those who are approaching the mood of *mādhurya rasa*, in other words, those who are very advanced. For us, who are not yet liberated, Balarāma is very important.

Serve by helping others serve

Now that the Deities are visible, you can pray for spiritual strength. We are going to need it. If you didn't give a donation, then please do so, because we want to maintain and improve all these places for the future. They've built a nice temple and helping them is where our service to the *dhāma* begins. So let us all give generously. It is the mood of Vaiṣṇavas to help each other to serve Kṛṣṇa. Service is not done alone or by elbowing others out of the

way. "Here's my elbow and there's my other elbow. Now, get out of the way. I am doing service here, can't you see? I'm serving Kṛṣṇa." No, that won't work. Service is done by helping others to serve. That is the only way. The Vaiṣṇavas may say, "Hey, you did that well. Can you do it again tomorrow?" and then you take charge of that. In this way, service is given to us by the Vaiṣṇavas. If you think, "I am going to serve Kṛṣṇa now," then you will not be successful. Let us help these local devotees to serve Lord Balarāma so that the whole world can come here.

Better a servant in hell?

We can remember how Balarāma fixed Dhenukāsura, who had no chance. One kick was all Dhenukāsura could offer and that didn't do anything. When he tried again, Balarāma picked him up, swung him around, threw him and he was already dead before he flew into the tree. All this material strength has no meaning. All this material power, acquisitions and positions have no meaning before the Supreme Lord, especially when they are used against Him.

It is difficult to be a servant. In Dante's 'Divine Comedy', the statement is made, 'better a king in hell than a servant in heaven'. This tendency is deep within us. Here, we can be king. Are you sure that you want to go to the spiritual world where you have to serve forever? Maybe you would rather stay a little longer as king or queen in the material world? Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized, 'back to Godhead'. He was trying to awaken a desire in us to go back to Godhead because he knew that we don't even have that. It sounds so far away, so unrealistic, so dreamy, so fairytale-like, and so away from the real world. What about experiencing some happiness here in this world? How about that? You're still young, full of energy and beautiful – ready like anything. There is a whole life ahead of you, so much hope!

All right, we don't all have to become *sannyāsīs* in Tālavana. This is not the place where we have to give up the world but this is simply where we focus on devotional service. This devotional service will give us credit. We pray to Balarāma, and then we can really think of going back to Godhead. Let us look for the opportunity to serve. In this *parikramā* there are many devotees who are working hard to serve and that is very nice. Our central meditation in this place is devotional service and praying to Lord Balarāma.

On that point I'll close, because I'm beginning to think about *prasādam* service. We will soon return to Vṛndāvana and tomorrow will be another day. I hope that this first day was inspiring. There was a little austerity, a little heat, a little dust, a little bumpy bus, and a little bit of Indian traffic but that is the price we have to pay. Some eagerness has to be shown. There is less eagerness in this age of Kali, therefore Kṛṣṇa arranged extra obstacles. Previously, Vṛndāvana was so sweet. You could take a bullock cart to Tālavana but now we need a bus. I know you are hot, sticky and hungry. Deena Bandhu used to take us to this well where the water turns into milk once a year. We arrived early and had to wait six hours for the water to turn into milk. I said to someone, "Are you staying?" They replied, "Yes."
I said, "Okay, bring me back some milk."

What to do? It was just too austere. So there is some austerity but it is also very nice and if we carry on until the end of Kārttika, we will feel that we actually got some spiritual benefit. Later, when we're back home in 'no where land', wherever that may be for you, some memories will come to us throughout the year. It has some effect. So our time in the holy dhāma is very good.



VARṢĀṆĀ

When Kṛṣṇa went to the forest, the remaining residents would stand at the edge, absent-minded. Their minds went with Kṛṣṇa. Their bodies stayed behind. What can we understand about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and the great intensity of Their love? By the mercy of the *ācāryas* these unmanifest pastimes become visible to us. Let us try to appreciate the spiritual world and develop a desire to go there.

Sankari-kor

There are eight villages where the various *aṣṭa-sakhīs* resided. Right now, we are here in Varṣāṇā, the village of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. The Varṣāṇā *parikramā* is situated around the Temple of Śrīji. Various deities, such as Lord Brahma and Lord Viṣṇu, have manifested themselves in the forms of hills. As hills, they carried the Lord and His devotees on their heads. We have come to Sankari-kor, where Kṛṣṇa performed the *dāna-keli* pastimes. He stopped the *gopīs* who were going to the marketplace carrying their milk sweets, yoghurt, butter and other milk products. Kṛṣṇa, along with Madhumaṅgala and some of the other cowherd boys, stopped them. Nearby is Ciksoli, the village of Citralekhā.

I'm not sure of the *śāstric* reference, but I heard from Bhakti Caitanya Mahārāja that there was a storehouse of many milk products in Ciksoli, and that Kṛṣṇa, Madhumaṅgala and the various cowherd boys, all went inside. They feasted and had a wonderful time until they got caught red- handed. There was a little window and they tried to escape through it, but it was rather small. Madhumaṅgala got stuck because he was a little bigger. The gopīs came and saw this round thing sticking out of the window. It was the backside of Madhumaṅgala and they took turns to beat it. Many joyous activities took place here and it was plenty of fun.

Making the invisible, visible

On a more philosophical note, the pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana are both *prakaṭa-līlā and aprakaṭa-līlā*. *Prakaṭa* refers to what we can actually see. There is not much that I can see. I do not know what you can see, but I do not see an awful lot. I definitely see the *pāṇḍās* waiting to get some "tax" but none of them have a peacock feather. The *prakaṭa-līlā* are the visible pastimes of the Lord, and the *aprakaṭa-līlā* are the invisible *līlās*. By the mercy of the

ācāryas, the *aprakaṭa*, that which is not visible, becomes visible to us.

Sometimes people say, "How do you know that all of these places are bona fide? We hear so many stories. Everywhere in Vṛndāvana, people claim that Kṛṣṇa did something there and they point to the donation box because Kṛṣṇa was at that place. How do you know if it is all true?"

We do not know because these things are *aprakaṭa-līlās,* invisible to us. We are not sure. But the *ācāryas* make *aprakaṭa, prakaṭa*. In the *Bhakti-ratnākara* we find a description of how Rāghava Paṇḍita took Śrīnivāsa and Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura on a *parikramā* to Vṛndāvana and many places are described there. From this book and many others, we learn of the pastime places of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī also describes various places.

By the mercy of the *ācāryas* we can know. On one day of this *parikramā*, we will go to Rādhā-kuṇḍa. We will see many temples there and I will point out to you a corner where Kṛṣṇa performed the swing pastimes. You can still see an arch and so on. The Pañca Pāṇḍava were once there in the form of five trees and you will see the one tree that is left. It is the *ācāryas* who have said these things and more. They see how Govardhana is made of jewelled slabs. They see Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa present. We cannot see. We are here to simply hear and get some idea of the spiritual reality.

The internal Vṛndāvana

There is Goloka Vṛndāvana, Bhūmi Vṛndāvana, and a third Vṛndāvana – the internal Vṛndāvana. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu says *mora mana* Vṛndāvana. We approach the holy *dhāma* and we come to all kinds of exalted places where Kṛṣṇa performed His pastimes, but to what extent can we understand the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa? When we speak about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, we can understand

that They did everything with great intensity and completely from the heart. Nothing was ever mechanical for the residents of the spiritual world; everything was focused on Kṛṣṇa. They were totally oblivious to anything else but Kṛṣṇa. Everyone was totally absorbed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa.

Sanātana Gosvāmī describes that when Kṛṣṇa went to the forest, the remaining residents would just stand there absent-minded. Were they with Kṛṣṇa? Their minds went with Kṛṣṇa to the forest. Their bodies remained behind. Their minds were with Kṛṣṇa with full intensity. On the other hand, we come from so many different places and when I look around, I see different people of all nationalities but part of our mind is still back in our countries. A little bit of our mind is at home. Every once in a while, we think about the place from which we came, and then we are back there. That is the nature of the mind.

The minds of the devotees of the spiritual world were not going anywhere else. We are trying to bring our minds back to Kṛṣṇa. On this *parikramā*, it is a little hot and always a little sticky. The body feels a little uncomfortable and there are noisy people. There is always something that is pulling us away, back to the mundane. In one sense, that makes us ineligible to fully comprehend what is happening here. By the mercy of the *ācāryas*, however, we can be in Vṛndāvana. We approach such places through the words of the *ācāryas* and the scriptures. I have written about the three aspects of Vṛndāvana; the spiritual world, the Vṛndāvana on earth and the internal Vṛndāvana. Our manifestation of the internal Vṛndāvana is not full at present. We are here anyway, and by the mercy of the *ācāryas*, Śrīla Prabhupāda and our spiritual masters, we approach Vṛndāvana, the spiritual world.

Yesterday, I spoke about the need for developing a desire to go

back to Godhead. We have to have some idea about the spiritual world, otherwise how can we have the desire to go there? It is taboo to speak about these things when we have no *adhikāra*, when we have not yet realised it enough. How can we speak about such intimate things? Last year, we went to the *aṣṭa-sakhīs* villages and just recently someone commented, "I listened to your recordings and it was so *rasika*." It was not so *rasika*. There are things that are a lot more *rasika* than what I said. It was, however, something about the spiritual world.

True goodness

Kṛṣṇa is so kind that He manifested the spiritual world when He came to this planet. Ultimately, He did so to prepare us, to give us a glimpse and some understanding. In this mood, we approach Vṛndāvana. We hear the stories, knowing that we can only appreciate the *kṛṣṇa-prema* of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Her *gopī* associates, and all the other residents of Vṛndāvana, to an extent.

I was thinking about the three modes of material nature and what a great difference there is between them. You may see a person who is completely in *tamo-guṇa*, maybe some half-mad man. You can see them here in India. Yesterday, I saw one of them and he was so dirty – dirt caked upon dirt. A urine smell emanated from him. He laughed, totally mad. All over the world, we see so many living on the streets, totally intoxicated and addicted to different drugs. That is the mode of ignorance.

We may see someone in the mode of passion. A typical example of a country in the mode of passion is Switzerland because everything is beautiful. If you go to Switzerland you will see beautiful houses, beautiful gardens, beautiful flowers and beautiful fences. Everything is beautiful. Unlike here, there is no dirt. You would not see that in Switzerland. It does not exist. Someone may ask, “Isn’t that in

the mode of goodness?"

No. It is all created to enjoy the material world, therefore it is in the mode of passion. In the mode of goodness everything is dedicated to self-realization, to purification, and therefore there is cleanliness, beautiful arrangements and so on. We see people in the mode of goodness who are peaceful, who behave with compassion and kindness. How do such people compare to the devotees? How can a *brāhmaṇa* compare to a devotee? A *brāhmaṇa* may be detached and fixed on the mode of goodness but what about his attachment to Kṛṣṇa? How can any devotee of Kṛṣṇa compare to a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa?

In the *Bhakti-sandarbha*, there are three types of pure devotees. There are those who have both feet in the material world and their eyes in the spiritual world. Others have one foot in the spiritual world, and one foot in the material world. Some have a spiritual body, like Nārada Muni, with two feet in the spiritual world. There are many levels of pure devotees.

We are not like them. We are simply here to try and appreciate the spiritual world, so that we can develop a desire to go back to Godhead instead of harbouring the desire to stay here. We are in Vṛndāvana to pray for mercy. People are covering their faces with the dust. Yes, that dust is sacred, invested with transcendental power. We are here to appreciate that we are getting that mercy. We pray to get more mercy and strength so we can focus a little more on Kṛṣṇa instead of thinking about so many other things. That is our meditation.

Making the *dhāma* transparent

Within the *parikramā*, we will have *kīrtana*. We chant without any material motives. We simply chant because of the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who told us that by this chanting we can get pure love

of God. Nobody here is chanting to become rich. Nobody is chanting for any material benefits. We are not chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to fix our back, although I would not mind my back being fixed. And while we are at it, why not the front, the top, the bottom and in between as well! We do not chant for that purpose. We chant for love of God and by Prabhupāda's mercy. Our *kīrtana* is, therefore, the echo of the *kīrtana* of the pure devotees.

So many pilgrims come to the holy *dhāma* bringing their karma with them. They all deposit their karma here. Today, we have to clean the *parikramā* path of all that karma by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. We don't do so in a proud way, claiming that our chanting can purify the *dhāma*. Simply by representing Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's movement, Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement and the pure goal of love of God, the holy names we chant can purify even the *dhāma*. It is also a part of our service to make the dhāma more transparent. For many years, I had the good fortune of serving in Vṛndāvana, at the Kṛṣṇa Balarāma temple, in a variety of ways. Over time, I realised that our service in Vṛndāvana is to make the layer that covers the *dhāma* more transparent. Today we serve in that way. We pray that we ourselves become more focused in our spiritual life and develop a desire to go back to the spiritual world. That desire will give us the strength to go back to the material places we came from and continue to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Mor-kuṭīr

In Mor-kuṭīr, Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa enjoyed different pastimes. Sometimes They dressed like peacocks and danced. Sometimes Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa met and at other times They were separated. There are many places here that we could not visit today. Just before Sankari-kor, there is the Vilāsa-ghara on the hill, and it is

there that Kṛṣṇa performed Holi pastimes. All the *gopīs* were armed with syringes – not small ones, but big and serious ones. They all had one target – Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa was surrounded and they were firing coloured liquid at Him from all sides. Kṛṣṇa only had the one syringe but when Kṛṣṇa shot, a whole cloud of colour would appear. From that cloud, other clouds developed until there were as many clouds as there were *gopīs*, and each *gopī* was covered in colour. In this way, it was a fair fight. Who won? It is hard to say.

Conquering Kṛṣṇa

In this area, many such pastimes took place. Sometimes the relationship between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa was *parakīya-rasa*, the forbidden relationship, where every moment was a stolen moment. I made this point about the difference between *parakīya* and *svakīya* many times. *Svakīya* implies that one is married and have 'tied a knot' or 'put the ring on the finger'. When that ring is on, something changes. There is an element of being obliged in a marriage relationship.

There is no obligations whatsoever in *parakīya*. Forget it! The beloved may leave at any minute therefore one has to conquer Kṛṣṇa again and again. In Dvārakā, Kṛṣṇa was married and there was no such thing as a divorce, therefore Kṛṣṇa was obliged. In Vṛndāvana however, Kṛṣṇa showed His real features, especially how He had to always be conquered. That is *parakīya-rasa*.

Again and again, we have to conquer Kṛṣṇa. We have to impress Him at each moment. We can never say, "Now I am done." Surrender is not once off, but all the time and that is pure devotional service. We may take the external step of surrender but still struggle internally. We may take initiation but it does not mean that from that day on you suddenly fly through your rounds. It sometimes may be so, but there are also days when you chant with lead boots on and every

beat of the mantra weighs a ton. Surrender is needed at every moment and that is the spirit of Vṛndāvana.

It is described that Kṛṣṇa performed His pastimes with His eternal associates. These eternal associates, known as *rāgātmikā*, are the personification of attachment, whereas we are not. We are trying to cultivate some attachment. Attachment for what? The attachment to serve, and serve always; the attachment to see Kṛṣṇa and hear Him play His flute. That is also service. We see that Dāruka, Kṛṣṇa's chariot driver, froze on the spot in ecstasy when fanning Him. Yet Dāruka did not want this ecstasy because it interfered with his service. That attachment is *rāgātmikā*. There may be ecstasy but service is the essence. It is about service. It is about the glorification of Kṛṣṇa. It is about making endless arrangements for Kṛṣṇa's comfort and pleasure. That is the spirit of Vṛndāvana.

Earlier on, when we were in Sankari-kor, I was speaking about *prakaṭa* and *aprakaṭa*. There is a lot that is *aprakaṭa* or unmanifest. All the deities and the temples that are here help make the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa more *prakaṭa* to us. We go to the *maṅgala-ārati* and the Deities are there just so that the reality of Kṛṣṇa becomes more manifest to us – more *prakaṭa*. Otherwise, we live in the illusory reality and we are concerned with the weather forecast, the world, the news, the bed we sleep on, and the mosquitoes in the room. I am also concerned with the mosquitoes because I had malaria too many times in Vṛndāvana, therefore I have a net and I make sure no mosquitoes come through. It is a part of life in Vṛndāvana, living with mosquitoes and the malaria they carry (especially around Janmāṣṭamī).

All the holy places help us appreciate the *aprakaṭa-līlā*. We are approaching the holy *dhāma* through the *ācāryas* who provide us an authorised perception. The *ācāryas*, such as Rūpa Gosvāmī,

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, Narahari Sarakāra and other great personalities, are the eternal associates of the Lord. They can see.

There is no place more safe than at Prabhupāda's lotus feet

In Varṣāṇā, there is a great culture of remembering holy places. That culture is very old and many of these places have been preserved. Many pilgrims are on this path and they all appreciate that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the greatest devotee of Kṛṣṇa. No one can please Kṛṣṇa like She can. Still, with the age of Kali there is some covering over the holy places. It may not all be completely transparent, therefore we remain chaste to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Vṛndāvana is full of Kṛṣṇa consciousness – everywhere and all over. There are many teachers who have revealed knowledge but when Prabhupāda was present it was very clear that there was nobody else like him. In all of Vṛndāvana there was no one else like him. Sometimes that is not understood now. There is no one like Prabhupāda. We are here in Prabhupāda's family. We are not the most exalted of all the Vaiṣṇavas here. We are not the greatest devotees, but we are connected to a pure devotee, a cent per cent pure devotee. Of that there is no doubt.

We are entering the *dhāma*, going from place to place. There are many places here and because there are so many of us, we cannot go everywhere. We have to cut some corners otherwise it would take us a long time. If we were in a group of ten devotees then we could stop at every place on the *parikramā*. It is best to come outside of Kārttika when it is even more peaceful. If you come back in December, it is a little colder, but you can actually wander around here early in the morning.

Vṛndāvana is my Guru?

Vṛndāvana is one of the five principle limbs of *bhakti – pañca aṅga bhakti:* chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, worshipping the Deities, residing in Vṛndāvana, hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and associating with the devotees. Vṛndāvana and Māyāpur are essential to our spiritual development. We need to connect with the *dhāma*. At the same time, when I lived here I remember some devotees who said, "Vṛndāvana is my Guru." Yes, Vṛndāvana gives us many things. Just by being here one will undoubtedly become so Kṛṣṇa conscious. However, if our spiritual life is based on just living off the nourishment of Vṛndāvana without service to the spiritual masters, then we can never penetrate through the layer of *yoga-māyā*, Kṛṣṇa's illusory energy. Some of the effulgence of the *dhāma* is also coming through in that *yoga-māyā* layer, so we will get some inspiration, but the heart will not be fulfilled. *yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi*, one can only enter into the final destination by the mercy of the spiritual master.

Increasing attachment

Therefore, we are here with Śrīla Prabhupāda, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. I will read a little from T*he Nectar of Devotion*, beginning with the introduction:

"Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the cause of all causes, the reservoir of all *rasas*, or relationships, which are called neutrality (passive adoration), servitorship, friendship, parenthood, conjugal love, comedy, compassion, fear, chivalry, ghastliness, wonder and devastation. He is the supreme attractive form, and by His universal and transcendental attractive features He has captivated all the *gopīs*, headed by Tārakā, Pālikā, Śyāmā, Lalitā, and ultimately Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī."

Kṛṣṇa is the reservoir of all the *rasas, akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti*. We get the five principle *rasas* (neutrality, servitorship, friendship,

parenthood, conjugal love) and within them the secondary *rasas* manifest. It is explained by the *ācāryas* that there are different groups of *gopīs*. These were known as *pakṣa* groups. Rādhārāṇī's group is the *svapakṣa*, literally Her own group. That *pakṣa* is headed by Lalitā, who guides that group. Śyāma is *suhṛt-pakṣa*, which is a friendly group that assists Rādhārāṇī's group. There is Pālikā who is neutral, being sometimes on Rādhārāṇī's side and at other times on Candrāvalī's side. Tārakā is in competition and has her own group who are competitors of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Different groups of *gopis* are all there to increase attachment. The whole thing is about attachment and when you have a competitor, you start to feel more attached. So the competitors are there to bring out more attachment, to make the moments more precious and more stolen. All these arrangements are there only to increase the love.

"The symbol of devotional service in the highest degree is Rādhārāṇī. Kṛṣṇa is called Madana-mohana, which means that He is so attractive that He can defeat the attraction of thousands of Cupids. But Rādhārāṇī is still more attractive, for She can even attract Kṛṣṇa. Therefore devotees call Her Madana-mohana-mohinī—the attractor of the attractor of Cupid. To perform devotional service means to follow in the footsteps of Rādhārāṇī, and devotees in Vṛndāvana put themselves under the care of Rādhārāṇī in order to achieve perfection in their devotional service."

(The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 1, Characteristics of Pure Devotional Service)

We have fleeting moments of meditation and then the material world comes in. We need the mercy of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and that mercy comes through Śrīla Prabhupāda. We can meditate in so many ways but through Prabhupāda we can meditate with real quality.

Rajapur Temple & Śrīji Temple

Continuing from Śrīla Prabhupāda's *The Nectar of Devotion:*

In the same *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta* there is another statement, about the chanting of Rādhārāṇī. It is said by one of the associates of Rādhārāṇī, "O Lord Govinda, the girl who is the daughter of King Vṛṣabhānu is now shedding tears, and She is anxiously chanting Your holy name—'Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!'"

There are many so-called devotees who artificially think of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes known as *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*. Sometimes one may artificially imitate these, pretending that Kṛṣṇa is talking with him in the form of a boy, or else one may pretend that Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa both have come to him and are talking with him. Such characteristics are sometimes exhibited by the impersonalist class of men, and they may captivate some innocent persons who have no knowledge in the science of devotional service.
(*The Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter 18, Character of One in Ecstatic Love)

Imagination

To what extent can we imagine ourselves to be with Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, performing their pastimes in Vṛndāvana? Sometimes someone pretends that Kṛṣṇa has come in a form of a boy and is talking with him, or that Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa have both come. Prabhupāda calls that impersonalism. It is one's imagination. We think that we are in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, but how far can we take that? Prabhupāda said that if we start to imagine that Kṛṣṇa is talking to us then we jump ahead of our stage of realization. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī describes the nine stages of devotional service: *ādau śraddhā, sādhu-saṅga, bhajana-kriyā, anartha-nivṛttiḥ, niṣṭhā, ruci, āsakti, bhāva* and finally *prema*.

We start with some initial faith, then we associate with devotees and engage in the regulated practice of devotional service. After that comes purification of the heart, firm determination, and then taste. If we jump over the stage where the heart becomes purified and go straight to a higher taste, then that stage will stay hollow, and later it will break – just as each part of a building has to be strong or it will not have the strength to stand. We have to undergo some serious purification. We have to really try to become purified.

"I am really pure now," we may think. "When I chant, I sometimes cry!" *The Nectar of Devotion* states that people have different types of hearts. Some people have golden hearts – they are very serious and grave. Those people do not show their emotions. Other people have hearts like cotton swabs and with the tiniest little breeze it starts to move. They are quickly blown away by the slightest of things. Some gravity also is good. We may say, "Well, I need to be sober. I need some purification," and that is what we are in Varṣāṇā for. We are in Vṛndāvana to get strength so that we can go back and face the material world, face our mind and our senses that want to pull us down again. We have to deal with that reality. It is not just so easy.

"Oh Rādhā! Oh Kṛṣṇa! Please fulfil my material desires… I mean please give me devotional service."

Wanting to be loved

I have spoken before about *Bhakta* Romeo and *Bhaktin* Juliet, sitting in the temple, with the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as the back drop. Why Romeo? Why Juliet? Why love in this world? What is it worth? Even if it were pure we would still die. In Agra, not so far from here, there is a monument known as the Taj Mahal. It was made by Shah Jahan and do you know why? He made it because his wife, Mumtaz, whom he loved very much, died at childbirth.

He made the white marble Taj Mahal as a memorial for Mumtaz. Isn't this beautiful? It shows that love transcends death. Wonderful! Now Shah Jahan was going to build a black Taj Mahal on the other side of the Yamunā. After his death, he would be placed in the black one, and there would be a bridge that would connect them both. Romance after death? Isn't that beautiful?

It is a mausoleum, meant to house a corpse. He never did build the second one because his son was Aurangzeb, the destroyer of so many temples. He thought, "The old man is spending so much money by building these tombs." He locked his father in a room and kept him there so that he would not waste all the money. Shah Jahan tried to overcome death, and in some ways he did so; by creating a memorial his love lives on until today. Shah Jahan, however, took another birth and forgot everything about his previous life. Maybe love can survive death, but can it survive birth after birth? That is my question. It gets confusing in future lives, "Which lover was it again?" Even if you had a Vedic marriage, walked around the sacrificial fire seven times and you took seven births together, what about the eighth one? Have you thought of that?

So all this love in the material world is simply there because we need it. Actually we love because we want to be loved. Real love, however, exists only on a spiritual platform and that is what we are really aiming at. We see that calibre of love with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. As long as we play Romeo and Juliet with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the background, our love will still be incomplete. Yet, who can avoid the Romeo and Juliet business?

Maybe we are still incomplete. Even while here in Varṣāṇā, the place of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, we may still be miles away. Even after dancing in ecstasy, taking mountains of *prasādam*, chanting day after day and year after year, rolling in the dust, reading and learning so

many *ślokas*, getting our *bhakti-śāstrī, bhakti-vaibhava* and, for some, even *bhakti-vedānta*, after years of service, are we really in Varṣāṇā or are we miles away? And if we are miles away, what shall we do? Shall we cry? I don't know, I do not have any tears. What do you do when you are dry and cannot cry?

Gour Govinda Mahārāja used to say, "Cry for Kṛṣṇa." If that does not work, then what do I do? I can only say, "I am fallen. I need mercy. Oh Lord Caitanya, I need Your mercy! Oh representatives of Lord Caitanya, I need your mercy! Oh Prabhupāda, I need your mercy! Oh representatives of Prabhupāda, I need your mercy!" That is all I can say because so much mercy is alive in this movement. It is still alive. In that way, we can chant ecstatically, like no others can. Our ISKCON *kīrtanas* are full of recognition of the ocean of mercy that has descended upon us.

In that spirit we continue towards the Śrīji Temple. It will be very crowded. People will be all over the temple wanting the *darśana* of the Deities. We will also take *darśana* but then we will chant at the back of the temple and go down the stairs with *kīrtana*.



KUSUMA-SAROVARA

Uddhava was Kṛṣṇa's cousin, intimate friend and
advisor, therefore He was the perfect messenger.
Seeing the love of the residents of Vṛndāvana
however, Uddhava realized he was an outsider.
We are also outsiders in Vṛndāvana. Our lack
of desire makes spiritual life an austerity.
Yet Uddhava was destined to be a messenger,
a role that only became clear at the end.
Everyone has his role and it will be
revealed in time.
Embrace it.

It's so peaceful in the morning at Kusuma-sarovara. It's a place we all know, a place that is transcendental. The *gopīs* collected different flowers here. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī made her *vaijayantī* garland for Kṛṣṇa. It is a long garland, made of five different types of flowers and it hangs below His knees. Every day, She made a new arrangement and somehow that garland would be delivered to Kṛṣṇa. In this way, the land of Vṛndāvana is transcendental.

Every inch is sacred

Once in Māyāpur, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura wanted to obtain Gaura-kuṇḍa which was next to the Yoga-pīṭha and he told his disciples to make the arrangement to buy that land. They did not know where to get the money to buy the land, but they had another plot of land and decided to swap it for Gaura-*kuṇḍa*. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was very happy that they procured the land, and started to excavate the kuṇḍa. He asked, "How did you pay for the land?"

They replied, "Oh well, we just swapped the other land for this one."

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta responded, "Oh, why did you give up that land? That was also a very important pastime place, and how could you just dispose of it like that?" He explained that every part of the *dhāma* is a place of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. We stop at a few specific places and we mark them as important but every inch is sacred.

The Jat kings of Bharatpur created this memorial for the great battles they fought to protect Vṛndāvana from Muslim subjugation. At one point it was very difficult in Vṛndāvana and many of the Deities were sent to Jaipur, Karauli and other places for safe keeping because temples were being destroyed. Kusuma-sarovara is a memorial for the devotees who sacrificed their lives to protect other devotees. Otherwise Kusuma-sarovara is about flowers (*kusuma*). It is also a meeting place.

This memorial provides a good place for us to sit, facing the *kuṇḍa*.

If it gets too hot for anyone then you can go inside, where there is shade. I need vitamin D so I am happy to have some sunshine.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was very strict about devotees not stepping on Govardhana. At the time of Kṛṣṇa, of course, the cowherd boys played in caves on Govardhana Hill. Even Mādhavendra Purī erected the temple of Gopāla on Govardhana. He was not an ordinary person at all but the *param-guru* of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and a great *ācārya* who was filled with love of God. So at the time of Kṛṣṇa and Mādhavendra Purī people would step on Govardhana Hill, but as followers of Lord Caitanya, we don't.

Behind Kusuma-sarovara, towards the right, is Uddhava-kuṇḍa. This *baba* is our friend. His name is Uddhava Dāsa. You can see he is very friendly. He takes care of Kusuma-sarovara and he is very nice to us. He says that he is *dāsānudāsa*, the servant of the servant. We are *dāsānudāsa-anudāsa*. Later, we will go to the Uddhava temple and we can help to look after the Uddhava deity there. We come to these places not to take but to serve, therefore we should donate. The real purpose of being in the *dhāma* is to give, to offer service.

Uddhava, the perfect messenger

Rūpa Gosvāmī describes in the *Uddhava-sandeśa* that Uddhava went from Mathurā to Vṛndāvana. Uddhava was called on to the roof of the palace where Kṛṣṇa was looking towards Vṛndāvana. Kṛṣṇa decided to send him as His messenger for different reasons: for one, Uddhava was the perfect representative of Kṛṣṇa since he looked like Kṛṣṇa. He was also Kṛṣṇa's cousin and wore clothes similar to His, therefore Uddhava made the ideal messenger because just seeing him reminded one of Kṛṣṇa.

Sanātana Gosvāmī describes in the *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* that Uddhava was in the court in Dvārakā, and at that time Kṛṣṇa

would assemble in the Sudharmā assembly house that He had taken from Indra. (When Satyabhāmā wanted the *pārijāta* tree, Indra did not want to give it, so Kṛṣṇa punished him by taking the royal assembly house from the demigods and placing it in Dvārakā). It was a good assembly house because anybody who would go in there would never get ill or age while inside. Some people would conveniently spend a lot of time inside. Kṛṣṇa would be seated on a throne and on His right, Vasudeva was seated on another. Next to Vasudeva was Ugrasena whose throne was in front because he was officially the ruling king. Kṛṣṇa did not want to be king, and had asked Ugrasena to do so. On the other side of Kṛṣṇa was Sātyaki, the military commander. A whole formation of dignitaries were seated in that assembly house.

Uddhava was also there and he was the disciple of Bṛhaspati. Bṛhaspati is the spiritual master of the *devatās* (demigods) and therefore he was extremely learned and so was his disciple. Uddhava would speak to Kṛṣṇa in Sanskrit and in very complicated code languages quoting from different scriptures. They spoke in code that no one else could understand, therefore Kṛṣṇa and Uddhava had intimate exchanges even while in public.

After having spent a long time in the assembly house, naturally Kṛṣṇa wanted to be alone for a bit. I also feel like that after these *parikramās*. It is like, "Yeah! I am on my own in my room. Okay everyone, see you later!" So Kṛṣṇa went to His quarters and everyone just followed Him. After some time Kṛṣṇa indicated that He was ready to be alone: "All right everyone, it is time to go." Everybody left except Uddhava, because he naturally assumed Kṛṣṇa meant everyone except him. Uddhava was Kṛṣṇa's close friend, so he would stay and massage Kṛṣṇa's legs while Kṛṣṇa was lying down. Uddhava was very intimate with Kṛṣṇa and this also made him the perfect messenger.

Uddhava, the advisor

In Dvārakā, when there was a need for some advice, Uddhava was always amongst the learned personalities who would administer advice. We remember Jarāsandha who attacked Mathurā and was defeated seventeen times. It was a huge fight and so many were killed. It was getting a bit too much for the residents of Mathurā to have armies around the city attacking them all the time. It got on peoples' nerves, so at one point Kṛṣṇa decided, "Enough is enough!" He performed the Raṇacora pastime, where He walked away from the battlefield in a very casual and relaxed manner. The Kālayavana King ran after Him and although he was running he did not get a step closer to Kṛṣṇa. Of course, Mucukunda was asleep in a cave, and he had the benediction that he could burn whoever woke him up and he burned Kālayavana.

After that, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma moved onto a mountain fort that Paraśurāma told Them about. In *Hari-vaṁśa* it is said that Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma jumped off that mountain. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that They jumped because Jarāsandha and his men set fire to the mountain. The *Hari-vaṁśa* explains that actually They did not jump off the mountain because of the fire. The fire cracked the mountain with the heat, producing water and then the fire went out. High on the mountain, however, there were orchards and lots of honey. Balarāma drank all the honey and got totally intoxicated. He said to Kṛṣṇa, "Look at what I will do," and He just jumped off the mountain which was eighty kilometres high. In the air He manifested His club and His plough at the same time. He landed in the middle of Jarāsandha's army and knocked out a good proportion of it before moving on. Then Kṛṣṇa thought, "Well, what to do?" Since Balarāma jumped, He also jumped. Moments later, Kṛṣṇa landed and He also killed a good proportion of the remaining army.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma moved on to Prabhāsa-kṣetra and made Dvārakā there, where They had their city. At that time, Uddhava advised Them on how to deal with Jarāsandha. He said, "Better than fighting with an army, go there incognito and get Bhīma to challenge him to a fight." Uddhava was very wise.

A messenger by destiny

For these reasons, Uddhava was the perfect messenger, and he became a messenger twice. He was sent to Vṛndāvana as messenger and at the end of Kṛṣṇa's life on earth, Kṛṣṇa met with Uddhava and extensively instructed Him. That conversation became the Uddhava-gītā which is found in the Eleventh Canto of the *Bhāgavatam*. The Uddhava-gītā is in some ways more elaborate, asking many questions which are not addressed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The Uddhava-gītā is actually a very important Gītā. There are various Gītās in the *Bhāgavatam*; there is the Uddhava-gītā, the Gopī-gīta (the songs of the *gopīs* in separation from Kṛṣṇa), and the Bhūmi-gītā. The Bhūmi-gītā is the song of the earth: "Many rulers have tried to possess me but what is left of them? Only names." The Uddhava-gītā was spoken because Uddhava was chosen to remain on this planet after Kṛṣṇa left. He was to go to Badarikāśrama and meet many devotees there.

We will also go to Badarīnātha later; not the one in the Himalayas but Badarīnātha in Vṛndāvana. I heard that it was in the schedule of the *parikramā* and some people thought that we were going to the Himalayas. I would not mind going to the Himalayas but not at the end of November because Badarīnātha is closed and it gets to minus seventy degrees Celsius which is not my favourite temperature. I mean, I like anything over twenty eight. I do not think that I am meant to preach in the North Pole or Antarctica. I think we will have to find someone else. Forget it, I am not going there. And Siberia? Well, isn't there a warm part of Russia? I will

go there.

So Uddhava was meant to go to Badarīnātha. Kṛṣṇa explained, "I never went there, therefore my representatives should go." This was the purpose of Uddhava's existence. We can understand that Uddhava did not realise that when he was younger. He never understood that that was the purpose but it was made clearer to him at the end of his life.

Everyone has a role to play in this movement, but we may not always see it immediately. When we are young we think, "What am I going to do with my spiritual life?" The truth of the matter is that we do not know what our role will be. I was in Vṛndāvana serving in various ways. I was a *gṛhastha* and my former wife became very ill and we had to go for a short while to Europe for medical treatment. I was there for some time and when we returned to India, we were invited to open a preaching centre. However, when I got there it was said, "A preaching centre is not so important. Why don't you manage?" I got tricked. What to do? These *saṅkīrtana* devotees!

We do not always know what our role will be in this movement. It will become clear with time and it may be different from what we imagined. Uddhava's role was also different from what he had imagined. He had no idea that he was simply destined to be a messenger.

Uddhava, the outsider

As the messenger, he went to places that were not his home. When he came to Vṛndāvana, he was an outsider and he realised that he was not able to really enter into Vṛndāvana. He saw Nanda and Yaśodā. Yaśodā was constantly crying; streams of tears flowed from her eyes and at the same time streams of milk flowed from

her breasts. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes that when Uddhava saw her, he thought, "If she goes on like this, she is going to turn into a river." I liked that.

Nanda Mahārāja said, (patronising voice), "Yaśodā!"
At the same time, Yaśodā chastised Nanda, "How could you let Him go?"
And Nanda Mahārāja said, "You mad woman! Do you not know that Kṛṣṇa has just gone to the forest and that soon He will be back?"

Who was mad? When Uddhava saw that kind of separation, he was just overwhelmed. Jīva Gosvāmī asked, "How did Uddhava get to Vṛndāvana? Was it that he travelled to Vṛndāvana by a chariot? Or by his mind?"

It was by his mind, by his desire, his thinking, feeling and willing. He could not remember how he physically got there. He was not even thinking about it. Not for a moment did Uddhava think, "I am driving a chariot." Uddhava simply thought about Kṛṣṇa and about the order that Kṛṣṇa gave him to meet the residents of Vṛndāvana.

As Uddhava was sent to Vṛndāvana he saw himself in the role of the instructor who had to somehow help the people of Vṛndāvana get over their separation. He saw himself as a superior person of great learning. When he arrived, he started to preach philosophy, that Kṛṣṇa did not actually leave because He is all pervading. He is everywhere and you can always connect with Him. There is no question of ever being separated from Kṛṣṇa. Well, the *gopīs* did not appreciate that and why not? It is true, right? One can be Kṛṣṇa conscious anywhere, in any condition and at any moment. It does not matter whether we are here in Kusuma-sarovara or somewhere else.

We cannot oversee what the future will bring. Uddhava thought he was coming as an instructor. He did not realise that he came to learn. He was transformed by that experience and realised that he was not the same any more.

Uddhava's transformation

Remember how Vidura was insulted? He placed his bow at the door of the palace and went on a pilgrimage. Later Vidura met Uddhava and asked him to speak about Kṛṣṇa. Uddhava could not speak. His voice became stunted. We read in the *Bhāgavatam* that Uddhava was completely overwhelmed by emotion and when he finally started to speak, he could not stop. He kept on speaking about Kṛṣṇa and about the residents of Vṛndāvana. Uddhava was deeply moved. That association with the residents of Vṛndāvana had boosted his Kṛṣṇa consciousness greatly.

That is our Kṛṣṇa. In *The Nectar of Devotion*, Kṛṣṇa is described as '*dakṣa*' or expert; He can fulfil many purposes at once. We see this in His dealing with Uddhava. On the one hand, Uddhava acted as the messenger. The residents of Vṛndāvana did not like his message, but at least it showed that Kṛṣṇa cared. Although the messenger was talking complete rubbish, at least Kṛṣṇa sent someone. Nanda Mahārāja said, "This Uddhava is just a boy. He is still drinking milk. He does not know what he is talking. He is a baby. Hear the nonsense this child talks."

Who cared about this philosophy that Uddhava tried to present? Knowing that Kṛṣṇa is everywhere and we can meditate on Him is not enough. The *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* elaborates the story about Gopa-kumāra, the cowherd boy from Govardhana (he must have lived somewhere in this area). Gopa-kumāra travelled to higher and higher regions of the universe and arrived at Tapoloka. That is just below Brahmaloka, where the Vedic *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs*

(not devotees) reside. In Tapoloka, everyone was just concerned with meditation. Everyone was fixed on the mental platform and not the sensual. Gopa-kumāra wanted to see Kṛṣṇa and the others said, "Why do you want to see Him? It is just an image reflected in your eye."

We know that images are reflected in the retina and the *Bhāgavatam* states that you can catch an image within the eye and send it to the mind. You see with your mind and not really your eyes. Everything is coloured by our consciousness. "Just meditate on Kṛṣṇa," they said.
Gopa-kumāra was not satisfied. "No. I want to meditate on Him but I want to see Him as well… and smell Him… and hear Him. I want to experience all aspects of Kṛṣṇa and remember Him at the same time. I want to smell the *tulasī* at His lotus feet."

This is the Vaiṣṇava, *pibata bhāgavataṁ rasam ālayam* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.3). We want to drink Him, drink the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is our process. That is our desire. That is our aim and therefore Uddhava's message was not satisfactory to the *gopīs*. They wanted to fully experience Kṛṣṇa, and not only in their minds. The residents of Vṛndāvana rejected Uddhava's answers. After some time, Uddhava realised that they were greater than him, and then he prayed to become a blade of grass in Vṛndāvana. That was his absorption.

The chosen one

These descriptions are from the *Gopāla-campū* by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. When Uddhava left Kṛṣṇa and went to Vraja, every tree on the way gave him direct vision of Kṛṣṇa. Every tree made Him think of Kṛṣṇa. Did the chariot take him to Vraja or was it the desire of his mind? In that contest, his desire defeated the chariot. Kṛṣṇa said, "To serve guru, we two brothers (Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma) went

far away. If that rumour should reach Vraja, then say that the two boys are not really far away." Touching Uddhava's folded hands and visibly giving him mercy and joy, Kṛṣṇa took him to Balarāma and explained that Uddhava would go to Vraja. Taking Uddhava and Balarāma to Rohiṇī, he obtained her consent. Showing His mercy by adorning Uddhava with beautiful ornaments and cloth, He sent Uddhava to Vraja.

I like to tell the story of the *Haṁsadūta* and how Lalitā served Rādhārāṇī when She was in separation. Rādhārāṇī was very feverish and hot. The *gopīs* placed Her on a bed of lotuses and fanned Her with wet lotuses. The water evaporated like anything due to the heat of separation. In moments it was all gone. Lalitā went to a lake to get more water. She needed to send a message to Kṛṣṇa. The first creature she saw was a swan so she just chose it as a messenger. Why? Because there was no one else and the swan became her messenger.

Kṛṣṇa did just the opposite. He looked very carefully for a messenger. When He finally chose Uddhava, He instructed him and arranged for many blessings. He gave Uddhava some of His own ornaments ensuring that he would look even more like Him. Kṛṣṇa invested everything to get the right messenger to look just right while delivering the right message.

When I meditate on Uddhava I have two angles. The first is how his life took a turn and his role began to manifest itself. I joined ISKCON in Vṛndāvana and thought I would stay there and serve that project for my whole life. Kṛṣṇa, however, arranged that I was injured and I wound up in South Africa for recovery (it's a little in between India and Europe). Weather-wise it was a good place for me, with good support. And since then, I have really spent a lot of time in South Africa. I did not plan that. If you asked me,"Do you

want to go to South Africa?" I would have said, "No, not really." I would not have chosen South Africa but when I went there I liked it actually. It was better than I thought it would be. It is the same with many other places. I never thought that I would go to Australia, since I always thought that Australians were strange people. I studied them in India and they would travel with big Styrofoam cool boxes. I thought I would never go there but I wound up in Australia and they are not that strange after all.

My first point is that Kṛṣṇa's plan unfolds in our life and we have to allow it to do so. Over time our destiny will become clear and we begin to see Kṛṣṇa's plan. The second point is that Uddhava was the outsider in Vṛndāvana. If Uddhava was an outsider, then what are we? Uddhava was the greatest devotee outside of Vṛndāvana. In Dvārakā he was so close to Kṛṣṇa.

We are all in one sense family members of Kṛṣṇa now that we are part of the *Acyuta-gotra*. The Acyuta-gotra is the infallible family lineage of Kṛṣṇa. Before I was in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I went to Gaya and I stayed in a *dharmaśālā*. The manager asked me, "What is your gotra (family lineage)?"
"Well, in my country they do not really do that."
"Okay, you write Jat."

They considered me a tribal. Now, things have changed and I know that we are part of the Acyuta-gotra. Prabhupāda explained that we are in the family of Kṛṣṇa. That is the best family lineage to be in. There are many *gotras* coming from different *brāhmaṇas*: Parāśara-gotra, Gautama-gotra. Of all of them, Acyuta-gotra is the best. Yet, within that gotra we are still behind Uddhava because we joined the family late. He was there earlier. He was ahead of us in so many ways and still he was an outsider. So what are we? We are intruders in the *dhāma*. We are in the *dhāma* but only as

outsiders. What are we doing here? Is it by some mistake? How did we get here? Do we belong in such a place with all this devotion?

Kumbha-melā eagerness

Once I went with a group of people from Vṛndāvana to Hardwar. There are different places where the Kumbha-melā occurs and Hardwar was one of them. We travelled for a whole night by bus. It was a terrible bus, not a de-luxe coach, just an ordinary one. They had straight seats with a metal bar in front of you and windows on the side, so I wore a big turban for protection in case I fell asleep and bumped into them. At three o'clock the police stopped the bus. They beat the bus with bamboo sticks as if it was a buffalo. They told us that the bus had to park in this field. There was nothing in the field. They said, "You have to walk. No bus."

We walked in one direction and, just like yesterday, after some time we found out that it was the wrong direction. (I walked eleven kilometres yesterday. You must have also did at least ten kilometres.) We turned around and walked again. Finally we asked someone, "Where is Hardwar?"
"Eh," he said, pointing in the opposite direction.

We turned around and walked that way. Eventually, after a whole night of walking, we reached Hardwar. There was such a huge crowd. We came to the Gaṅgā at about six in the morning. I put my toe in the water, and it froze on the spot. It was ice cold. So I said, "Well, maybe I will wait until the sun's brighter. At least it will warm up." The local people didn't care. Oh my God, they just got into the water! I had arranged a place to stay in a tent but the others didn't. They would just go to a *paṇḍāl* program, stay for the lecture and the *kīrtana* and afterwards lie down in the *paṇḍāl*. Imagine if you would just have to lie down right now and this would be the spot where you sleep for tonight. How would you

feel about that? Some would not be happy but these people were very happy because they had such eagerness. They were miles ahead of us. I realised that I was an outsider. I did not have that desire. It is the lack of desire that makes us the outsider.

A lack of desire

I hear, "Vṛndāvana is so austere. There is so much dust and it even rained during *parikramā*. Oh God! The *prasādam* is okay but it is not like home. Oh, that sun is hot. Gosh, it is a long way; how can I walk that far? Do you also have mosquitoes…."

Outsiders. Our desire is not so strong. When our desire is not strong all we see is austerity. When it is strong then there is no austerity. We just do not see it. If you really want to go to some place, even if there is a mountain in-between, you will go over it without a second thought. When we don't have the desire, spiritual life is so austere but if our desire is complete then it is only ecstasy. "I got one step closer to Kṛṣṇa! How ecstatic is that?" Our lack of desire turns our whole spiritual life into austerity. That is also one of my points today.

So we can take these two meditations from Kusuma-sarovara: firstly, that our lack of desire makes us outsiders, and secondly, that our role in life will unfold. Everyone has a role in this movement. Some have the role of being a humble servant. At some point you must embrace that role and make it into something. I am looking at 'Rūpa the Trouper' from Australia. Trouper is his nickname. Trouper means a soldier. For years he has been distributing books like a soldier. Now he has to accept that role, whether he likes it or not. It is too late to change. Do not change. Accept the role and just do it. Destiny gives us something, and it will clearly manifest over time in our own way. You do not get all the instructions in the beginning. You cannot ask all the questions in the beginning. You

cannot get the whole thing mapped out in the beginning. There will be surprises on the way.

Breaking the house

Since I am entertaining you with stories, there is one story that compares our life to a house. We make arrangements for our house, just as we make for our life. We create a space here and some space there. And Kṛṣṇa comes in and changes it. We know that when you become a devotee, Kṛṣṇa is going to do something in your life and make some changes. We expect that but lately it is getting too much. He is breaking the whole house down! What on earth is He doing? Yes, He is breaking the whole house, and He is planning to rebuild it and live in it Himself. That is His purpose. And we thought we were building our house and our life with the idea that we were going to live in it. When we talk about accepting our role then that little story illustrates the point.

We will now go to that Uddhava temple for *darśana* and after that to the Banabihārī temple that is maintained by the disciple of Vallabha Purī Mahārāja. There is a Deity of Banabihārī where Kṛṣṇa is making some arrangement for Rādhārāṇī's hair. Officially She is looking in the mirror at how He is arranging Her hair but actually She is not looking at Her hair; She is looking at Kṛṣṇa.



NĀRADA-KUṆḌA

What it *bhakti*? Our *ācāryas* present liberal and strict definitions depending on which direction we look. If we look towards Kṛṣṇa then we're strict, but when the *ācāryas* look towards the conditioned soul, they are liberal. Nārada qualifies what *bhakti* is: *Hṛṣīkeṇa hṛṣīkeśa-sevanaṁ bhaktir ucyate – bhakti* is the desire to please the senses of Kṛṣṇa. Let this *parikramā* be a way to satisfy Kṛṣṇa.

Nārada Muni desired to join the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa as a *gopī*. He went to Kusuma-sarovara, took his bath there and transformed into Nāradī *gopī*. That, of course, was very convenient for him to enter the pastimes of the *gopīs*. When Kṛṣṇa saw Nāradī, He began, "My Dear Nārada…" Kṛṣṇa was not fooled so that did not quite work.

"Dear Nārada, how nice it is that you are here to experience the pastimes of *bhakti*. I request that you write a book about the nature of *bhakti* that you are absorbing here."

What is true *bhakti*?

The *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* is that book. Śrīla Prabhupāda began the translation but did not finish it. It was Satsvarūpa Mahārāja who finished it later. I will read a little from the *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra*. A *sūtra* is a very short form of text, not a long verse.

athāto bhaktiṁ vyākhyāsyāmaḥ

'Now, therefore, I will try to explain the process of devotional service.'

(Sūtra 1, Nārada-bhakti-sūtra)

I think that you are a little familiar with the Vedanta Sūtra. You know that the Vedanta Sūtra begins with *athāto brahma jijñāsā*, 'Now, therefore, let me inquire into the Supreme Absolute Truth.' *Athāto* – 'now therefore' implies now that we have attained the human form of life let us enquire about the Absolute Truth. We can see that Nārada has taken inspiration from the Vedanta Sūtra and also starts with *athāto* - 'now therefore', implying, now that we have attained the human form of life, let us take up the absolute truth, devotional service.

sā tv asmin parama-prema-rūpā

'Devotional service manifests as the most elevated, pure love for God.'

(Sūtra 2, Nārada-bhakti-sūtra)

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.25.25 we find a verse which says, *śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati*. From faith (*śraddhā*) to *bhāva* (*ratir*) and then *prema* (*bhakti*), step by step we progress. That is a very high definition of *bhakti*. *Bhakti* really means love for Kṛṣṇa, therefore *bhakti* is synonymous with *prema*. A more liberal definition would count everything that is somehow related to Kṛṣṇa, as *bhakti*. Based on the liberal definition, as long as I think of Kṛṣṇa while I swallow this throat lozenge, it is actually auspicious. When connected with Kṛṣṇa it all becomes *prasādam*.

Once Gurudāsa was travelling with Śrīla Prabhupāda in Delhi. Prabhupāda was hungry and wanted some *samosās*. In those days (and in these days) rice and *samosās* were definitely vegetarian. Gurudāsa brought some *samosās* and he fell on his knees in full obeisances, with the *samosās* sitting on the railway platform in front of him. Prabhupāda asked, "What are you doing?"
"I am offering them, Śrīla Prabhupāda."
Prabhupāda said, "When we are travelling, just to know that it comes from Kṛṣṇa is enough."

He was liberal about external rules and regulations and at the same time seeing very deeply, seeing Kṛṣṇa in everything at all times. That is pure love of God.

Which direction are you looking in?

We have different approaches to *bhakti* amongst our *ācāryas*. There are two main commentaries on the *Bhagavad-gītā* in our

sampradāya. One is from Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and the other is from Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. The commentary from Viśvanātha is strict and he will not easily agree that we are practising *bhakti*. He would say, "Yes, your actions are *bhakti* but it is *karma-miśra* (mixed with personal desire) or *jñāna-miśra* (mixed with desire for liberation). It is *miśra* or mixed, not real *bhakti*." With Baladeva however, anything with the slightest connection to Kṛṣṇa was *bhakti*.

There are liberal definitions and strict definitions. The *Bhāgavatam* places *bhakti* after *ratir* or *bhāva* which means ecstasy and deep attachment to Kṛṣṇa.

Then again, the *Bhāgavatam* also says:

īśvare tad-adhīneṣu
bāliśeṣu dviṣatsu ca
prema-maitrī-kṛpopekṣā
yaḥ karoti sa madhyamaḥ
(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.46)

In relation to *īśvara*, the *madhyama-adhikārī* expresses *prema*. To the devotees (*tad-adhīneṣu*) he expresses friendship (*maitrī*) and to the ignorant (*bāliśeṣu*) he shows compassion (*kṛpā*). He ignores the envious.

Even the *madhyama-adhikārī* has *prema* for *īśvara* but his love is not mature. It is the early stages of *prema*. A mango is a mango even when it is not completely ripe. His love for Kṛṣṇa is unripe but Prabhupāda is liberally counting it as love.

We appreciate how the Vaiṣṇavas look upon love in liberal and strict ways. It depends in which direction we look. When we look

in the direction of Kṛṣṇa then we are very strict. Rādhārāṇī said, "The very fact that I did not die when Kṛṣṇa left Vṛndāvana shows that I have no love at all." She was looking in Kṛṣṇa's direction, but when we look in the direction of conditioned souls then we get very liberal.

"Oh yes, my dear Śrutakīrti, you massage me now but you say that you have no love?" asked Śrīla Prabhupāda. All the devotees had cried so much at the airport when Prabhupāda arrived but not Śrutakīrti.
Later, as he massaged Prabhupāda, he confessed, "Prabhupāda, I do not have any love for you."
Prabhupāda did not reply. The next day, when Śrutakīrti massaged him again, Prabhupāda replied, "This is also love."

Was that love? If we apply the strict definition of *prema* then how could that be love? There is either lust or love so how can we speak about love? It was not pure. It was not unalloyed. There wasn't even any tears shed – a heart of stone.

And yet it was love. Sometimes it depends in which direction the *ācārya* is looking. When he looks in the direction of the conditioned souls and sees how they are connecting with Kṛṣṇa, then he sees the root cause as love. Love is at the root, in the seed form. It is beginning to sprout. We are gaining an understanding of *bhakti*.

amṛta-svarūpā ca

"This pure love for God is eternal."

(Sūtra 3, Nārada-bhakti-sūtra)

When a person attains to the perfectional stage of love of Godhead, he becomes liberated even in his present body and realizes his constitutional position of immortality. (purport)

Amṛta means immortality. Svarūpā implies 'having as its essence'. This pure love for God is eternal. Whatever little spark of love that may be found is eternal, and it will burn like a fire. The fire of *prema* has to burn in our hearts. We cannot continue to just chant our rounds and serve mechanically. We have to gain appreciation for Kṛṣṇa. At the very least it begins there.

I hope that you like this *parikramā* so far. I am not the most learned about every corner of Vṛndāvana. I guess you have already figured that out but that also is not the essence. We are trying to awaken some love of God in our hearts. That begins with appreciating something about Kṛṣṇa.

All an act of mercy

Nārada Muni is, by his consciousness, a resident of Vaikuṇṭha who worships Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and is His representative. He is one of the mental sons of Lord Brahma who is pure and transcendental. His body is spiritual and therefore he is actually a resident of the spiritual world. As such, wherever he goes he takes the spiritual world with him. He takes many personalities into that spiritual realm. Nārada Muni acts as a spiritual master. He is the personification of the spiritual master, because he is cent per cent transcendental. There is no question of any fault in Nārada. Anything that Nārada does is an act of mercy, even if he makes politics (which he sometimes does).

Once he went to Kaṁsa just after Kaṁsa had agreed to let Vasudeva's first-born live.

"My dear Vasudeva," said Kaṁsa, "thank you so much for presenting me this child as you promised. This is your first child, not the eighth, and therefore I do not need him. Take him back."

Nārada intervened, "It is his eighth child that is prophesied to kill you, but my dear Kaṁsa, come sit here."

Kaṁsa went closer. "Oh, Nārada has come. These demigods are difficult. They are trouble makers but Nārada is different. He is my friend and actually he gives me good advice."

"Listen, O Kaṁsa. It was said that the eighth son will kill you. But which is the eighth one? It depends on where you begin counting. If we begin with the last-born then the first could be the eighth."

Nārada actually arranged that all the children of Vasudeva and Devakī were killed. They were about to be saved but he interfered and got them killed. Is this the action of a spiritual master? It is bewildering but Nārada was also thinking, "Let us speed up this whole pastime. Let Kṛṣṇa appear quickly. If all of these children are disposed of quickly, then Kṛṣṇa will come and He will surely kill Kaṁsa. Otherwise, He might hesitate to kill Kaṁsa because He was his relative." Ordinarily, you do not kill your uncle. It is just not something you do.

When Kṛṣṇa did kill Kaṁsa, there were different reports on the story. Jīva Gosvāmī explains, "Actually, Kṛṣṇa did not kill Kaṁsa. What really happened was that Kṛṣṇa wanted to knock Kaṁsa's crown off his head but Kaṁsa lost his balance, fell off the stage and died. Kṛṣṇa never had any intention to kill him at all." Of course, then He beat up the dead body. Nothing wrong with that.

Not only did Nārada speed up the appearance and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa; not only did he ensure that Kṛṣṇa would kill Kaṁsa; Nārada wanted to do more. He looked at things from a bigger perspective because he was *tri-kāla-jñā*; he knew past, present and the future. Nārada knew very well that the sons of Vasudeva and Devakī

were the sons of Kālanemi in a previous birth. And Kaṁsa, in his previous life, was Kālanemi, therefore Kaṁsa was killing his own children Our focus is not on Kaṁsa but Nārada Muni. As a spiritual master, he wrote these *bhakti* sūtras to teach what *bhakti* really is. In his *bhakti sūtras*, Nārada established that *bhakti* is *sarvopādhi-vinirmuktaṁ*, free from all material designations, and Rūpa Gosvāmī established that it is *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyaṁ*, free from all other desires. That is the same conclusion – in *bhakti* there is no desire for enjoyment of the senses or liberation but simply unalloyed, pure devotional service.

Making the connection

yat prāpya na kiñcid vāñchati na śocati na dveṣṭi na ramate notsāhī bhavati

"A person engaged in such pure devotional service neither desires anything for sense gratification, nor laments for any loss, nor hates anything, nor enjoys anything on his personal account, nor becomes very enthusiastic in material activity."

(Sūtra 5, Nārada-bhakti-sūtra)

Nārada is basically teaching *sambandha*. There are three stages, *sambandha, abhidheya* and *prayojana*. In *sambandha*, we make a connection with Kṛṣṇa and we look towards the goal. What is *bhakti* actually? It creates a focus, like a zoom lens. In *abhidheya* we get information on the process of purification. In these verses Nārada is still defining *bhakti* and where it is to be found, therefore it is *sambandha-jñāna*. An example of *prayojana-jñāna* is when we speak about Nārada being Nāradī gopī and entering into the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and His *gopī* associates. Such *Vraja bhakti*, or pure unadulterated love, is found in five *rasas* as displayed by the residents of Vṛndāvana.

Nārada now describes that same Vraja *bhakti*. We might think that if Nārada took inspiration at Kusuma-sarovara and then comes

here to write, wouldn't he write about *rasa-līlā* (*prayojana-tattva*) and just not s*ambandha-tattva*? Maybe. Let us look at what the book has to offer. Will it come later? I do not think that we can read all the *sūtras* here today. Maybe, you will have to read some *sūtras* at home. You can also download the *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* and read the purports. And why would you not? It is a book that Śrīla Prabhupāda himself started to translate. That means it is of importance and we should read it.

yaj jñātvā matto bhavati stabdho bhavaty ātmārāmo bhavati

"One who understands perfectly the process of devotional service in love of Godhead becomes intoxicated in its discharge. Sometimes he becomes stunned in ecstasy and thus enjoys his whole self, being engaged in the service of the Supreme Self."

(Sūtra 6, Nārada-bhakti-sūtra)

He begins to speak about getting stunned, or the exalted symptoms of ecstasy. Does this mean that we have now entered *prayojana-tattva*? No, we are still in *sambandha-tattva* – we are only looking philosophically at the goal, we don't yet experience love of God. Where are we going? What is pure devotional service? Defining the nature of things. These are *sambandha* questions. In these three verses we are really defining different aspects of *bhakti*. Later on, when we are more qualified, we can go to more intimate descriptions of *bhakti*.

sā na kāmayamānā nirodha-rūpatvāt

"There is no question of lust in the execution of pure devotional service, because in it all material activities are renounced."

(Sūtra 7, Nārada-bhakti-sūtra)

There is no question of lust. It is very important actually to define

bhakti in that way. There is no place for any lust in what the *gopīs* experienced.

gopyaḥ kāmād bhayāt kaṁso
dveṣāc caidyādayo nṛpāḥ
sambandhād vṛṣṇayaḥ snehād
yūyaṁ bhaktyā vayaṁ vibho

"My dear King Yudhiṣṭhira, the *gopīs* by their lusty desires, Kaṁsa by his fear, Śiśupāla and other kings by envy, the Yadus by their familial relationship with Kṛṣṇa, you Pāṇḍavas by your great affection for Kṛṣṇa, and we, the general devotees, by our devotional service, have obtained the mercy of Kṛṣṇa."

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.1.31)

gopyaḥ kāmād means 'the *gopīs* by their lusty desires' but those are not lusty desires. They look like lusty desires but they are not because the difference between lust and love is:

ātmendriya-prīti-vāñchā — tāre bali 'kāma'
kṛṣṇendriya-prīti-icchā dhare 'prema' nāma

"The desire to gratify one's own senses is *kāma* [lust], but the desire to please the senses of Lord Kṛṣṇa is *prema* [love]."

(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 4.165)

Never empty handed

Let us satisfy the senses of Kṛṣṇa. Let this *parikramā* be a way to satisfy the senses of Kṛṣṇa. One can bring some fruit and offer it on the altar to the Deities in different places. One can bring flower garlands for the Deities. Such things are common among pilgrims in India. My mother had this saying, 'Never go out of the room empty handed.' I hated that. When there was a cup we had to

bring it to the kitchen. One can apply the same philosophy to Kṛṣṇa, never to go to the temple empty handed.

When disciples grow they may also offer some thoughts to the spiritual master. They may offer some ideas. It is not that you now have to sit for the rest of your life, be completely submissive and just say, "Yes, Guru Mahārāja!" The guru has a bunch of 'yes men' and 'yes women'. That is not what we need. We need intelligence also. It is possible to say, "But Guru Mahārāja, it says over there that..." Sometimes we can assist.

The question was asked, "Can the guru make mistakes?"
Prabhupāda was walking on the shore of the Pacific Ocean. All these little crabs came out of the ocean. Prabhupāda said, "Look! Scorpions!" Everyone saw that they were crabs.
"We thought he was perfect, but now we have caught him out."

It dawned upon devotees that the scriptures say that the words of the pure devotees, or the spiritual master, are without any imperfection. Yet it seemed that Prabhupāda was caught. Finally, they mustered up the courage to ask him, "Can the pure devotee make mistakes?"
Prabhupāda said, "Those things are material. That is not a mistake. When it comes to Kṛṣṇa or spiritual subject matter – no mistake."

Yet many times we hear Prabhupāda recite a verse from the *Bhagavad-gītā* but quote a wrong word. Yes, it may happen, but that is totally unimportant and not the essence. In terms of the *siddhānta*, there is no mistake. We do not question its authenticity. Of course, we may ask. We do not just have to follow blindly but ultimately, he has the last word. We should give him the last word. In a mature guru-disciple exchange, the disciple can actually offer knowledge. We are not computers. We may not know everything

about the scriptures.

Twilight zone

When Vyāsadeva appeared, the first thing he did was divide the Vedas. That was in the beginning of the Kali-yuga because no one had the capability to capture them all. In the Kali-yuga, different sages specialize in branches of Vedic knowledge. We all may faithfully study Prabhupāda's books for many years when one day someone brings a quote from another bona fide book that we have not read and then it becomes contradictory.
"Oh! Now everything is on the line. My God!"

No, this is no big deal. It does not really matter. For example, in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.15 we find that Śrīdhara Svāmī, the original commentator, pointed out that there is not always a devastation at the change of every Manu. However, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Jīva Gosvāmī gave definite proofs from authorized scriptures that there is. Some differences in details occur between *ācāryas*, and it is so insignificant. Curious minds like it very much.
"This is something I never heard. What is this new thing?"

I have my own analogy for it. There is the daylight of knowledge, the twilight of knowledge and the night of knowledge. In the daylight of knowledge everything is very clear. No one debates about it and everyone agrees. There is peace. The twilight of knowledge is where we do not have a lot of information on the subject. We just have a quote here and there and there is room for trying to figure out what is actually being said. This is not mental speculation but philosophical speculation which is allowed in cases where we have limited knowledge, but we attempt to understand it. Mental speculation is when we, by ourselves, try to figure out what is the truth. Maybe the truth is that a purple man with three noses, six toes and seven heads… That is total speculation or imagination.

We should not spend our whole spiritual life in the twilight zone, collecting the obscure, vague stuff and trying to absorb it. This may not help us to deepen our faith. If we always look for controversy then it may actually make our faith uncertain. Our mind will be filled with controversies and in the end we will be insecure. That is not required. If we just simply take shelter of service then everything will be fine.

Even the hot potato, 'Fall of the Jīva' issue. Who cares? Prabhupāda did not like to answer the question or spend his time with it. He said, "We do not need to worry about where we came from but about how to get out of here." What does that mean? It means that we should just focus on devotional service. Simply by pleasing the senses of Kṛṣṇa, the twilight issues on *tattva* will be clear in due course of time. It will be revealed from within the heart.

How much wrangling do we need based on scriptures? Have a book in your hand and another in his hand and then beat each other with books. Are you ready? Have you heard of a pillow fight? That is nothing. Do you know about a book fight? It's much more fun. A big heavy book should fix things. "Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so simple that you might just miss it," said Prabhupāda. The *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* is like that. It has quite a simple, straight forward and clear message. I am not going to read every Sūtra because we are getting roasted and toasted in the sun.

Nārada is ours

The *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* is a book to read and a book to have. It allows us to see how *bhakti* is very strong in Nārada Muni. The *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* is important because it shows that Nārada is ours. Everyone likes to claim him. Oh yes, every Māyāvādī claims Nārada. With the *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* we claim Nārada as ours. He is a Vaiṣṇava. He is not worshipping Nārāyaṇa like an impersonalist

does. He chants the name of Nārāyaṇa but is he chanting like an impersonalist? Many impersonalists also chant the name of Nārāyaṇa. No, he is chanting in the spirit of *bhakti* because he has established exactly that in the *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra*. Of course, there is a lot more evidence that Nārada is a Vaiṣṇava but it is nice to have it all in the one *sūtra,* clear and to the point. Here it is: the evidence that Nārada is a pure Vaiṣṇava. So therefore this place is of significance to us.



HARIDEVA TEMPLE

We don't experience the same ecstasy as Lord Caitanya did but we follow in His footsteps and remember His attitude towards Vṛndāvana. Lord Caitanya danced in this very courtyard. Collect the dust, collect the dust, collect the dust!

An ecstatic Gaurāṅga

Lord Caitanya danced before this Deity in the greatest ecstasy and everyone was amazed. Of course, the place looks different now. Everything is built-up but before it was very open. It is an ancient temple with the Deity of Harideva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Lord Caitanya came to Vṛndāvana and His experience was different from our experience. He was coming home. When Lord Caitanya was in the material world, He naturally and internally resided in Vṛndāvana, but when He came to the holy *dhāma*, His ecstasies increased many-fold. It was sometimes beyond control. When Lord Caitanya came to Vṛndāvana, He embraced every tree like an old friend. When He saw the Yamunā, He just jumped in and He didn't see any reason to get out. Why would you? It was the perfection of life. He just stayed under water, and His servant had to pull Him out.

When they crossed the Yamunā, the boat rocked dangerously because Lord Caitanya was dancing on that boat. At that time the Yamunā was much bigger than today because there was no dam. Now there's a dam in Delhi which holds the water back. In those days, all the water flowed freely, so the Yamunā was a big river and ships would sail by. Crossing the river was a substantial trip and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu just couldn't contain His ecstasy. For that reason, His servants eventually decided, "Okay, let's take Him out of Vṛndāvana because His ecstasy is beyond control and something is going to get out of hand. Something will go wrong."

In Harideva temple, the local people had just never seen anything like it. They'd never seen anyone displaying such ecstasy of love of God. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu roamed around the holy *dhāma* of Vṛndāvana and we are following in His footsteps. We don't

experience the same ecstasy, but we follow in His footsteps and we remember His attitude towards Vṛndāvana. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu saw Govardhana, He embraced a large rock and cried tears of ecstasy. He went into the fields and found two ponds near Ariṣṭa-grāma which He identified as Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

The guardian

We are in Vṛndāvana as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, followers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. There are many other Vaiṣṇavas here and they have their own approach to Kṛṣṇa, either through another *sampradāya* or some may not have one, but we approach the *dhāma* through the *Gauḍīya sampradāya*. As representatives of the Gauḍīya sampradāya, we went to Sanātana Gosvāmī's *bhajana-kuṭīr*. Sanātana Gosvāmī resided just next to Cakaleśvara Mahādeva, one of the Śiva *liṅgaṁs* which is a protector of the *dhāma*. We remember that just as Nārada Muni became a *gopī* to enter the rasa dance, so too did Lord Śiva.

Kṛṣṇa said, "Aahhh, Lord Śiva! Oh, nice of you to come! Actually there are so many intruders who try to enter the *rasa* dance." Lord Śiva himself was trying to do the same. "I need someone to guard the *rasa* dance and you are the perfect person."

In this way, Lord Śiva was appointed as a guard because he could not enter the *rasa* dance either. Lakṣmī-devī also could not enter the *rasa* dance. She performed so much austerity but she could not enter. These *liṅgaṁs* are in strategic places to protect the *dhāma*.

Mosquito-free *bhajana*

Right next to Cakaleśvara Mahādeva is the *bhajana-kuṭīr* of Sanātana Gosvāmī. Sanātana Gosvāmī resided there but wanted to leave because there were so many mosquitoes. Śiva came in his

dream and said, "Don't worry, there will be no more mosquitoes." From that day on there were no mosquitoes near that *bhajana-kuṭīr*. I haven't tested it, to be honest. It is crowded and the local community there is a little intense.

Oh, the temple has opened! Let's go! Let us go in right now and take whatever dust Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has left. Let's get the mercy of the Lord by collecting lots of dust. That dust is important. We might also get a little more taste in our devotional service. Collect that dust and put it on our head. And we can also offer something as our *sevā*.

A bloated Boatman

The lake we passed is Manasi-gaṅgā and everyone knows that Manasi-gaṅgā is about the boat pastime of Kṛṣṇa. We all know that Kṛṣṇa acted as the boatman and hid His flute while He carried the *gopīs* across. On the way, the weather turned bad. He is the Supreme Lord and could easily change the weather. A storm came and the boat became really unstable. The *gopīs* were afraid and Kṛṣṇa said, "Oh! I'm hungry now. I cannot go any further. I'm weak. I must eat something."

Kṛṣṇa got many, many milk sweets but having eaten too much, He could not row. Ultimately, He brought Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī to a point of despair where She took shelter of Him personally. We've seen many paintings of this boat pastime.

"Collect the dust"

It is said that one should begin the Govardhana *parikramā* from this temple because that is what Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu did. Nowadays, some also start from Rādhā-kuṇḍa but Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu started here. In addition to the Deity, this place is very important because it is connected to Mahāprabhu. That's why I

said, “Collect the dust, collect the dust, collect the dust.” If you didn’t get any dust yet, there’s lots here.



RĀDHĀ-KUṆḌA

By refreshing our connection with Śrīla Prabhupāda in the early morning at his *samādhi*, we can come to Rādhā-kuṇḍa and read from Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Govinda-līlāmṛta*. Only then can we see a jewelled palace in the middle of the water with a beautiful bridge and swings on all corners. We are on this *parikramā* to glimpse into the spiritual world, and at the same time realize how completely unqualified we are to fully enter.

Thank you all for coming to Rādhā-kuṇḍa today. We are a large group for such a built-up place so it is a little tight but that is just the material side of things. First of all, we can just remember where we are – next to us is Ariṣṭa-grāma, the place where Ariṣṭāsura was killed.

The killer of the bull

We recall that Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* said to Kṛṣṇa, "Oh, You are a killer of a bull! Now You are contaminated therefore we can no longer associate with You. You will first have to go on a long pilgrimage to all the holy places. When You do so You can become purified from the great sin that You have committed and then we can associate with You."

Kṛṣṇa thought that this was a complication. He made a hole in the ground with His foot and immediately water appeared. The *gopīs* protested, "This is not right! You have to go to all the holy places." At that moment all the holy places personified and all the deities of the various rivers and sacred lakes appeared and they all entered into Kṛṣṇa's *kuṇḍa*.

Kṛṣṇa's *kuṇḍa* is on the other side of the little temple. It is the second *kuṇḍa*. Kṛṣṇa took His bath and afterwards He said, "Well, I am so sorry, my dear *gopīs*. Actually, I have tried to please you therefore I bathed in all of the holy places. Yet let us consider this: Ariṣṭāsura was not a bull at all. He was a demon who took the form of a bull. You have been protecting this demon and therefore you are contaminated. I cannot associate with you any longer. What to do? It is not possible."
The *gopīs* asked, "What do we do?"
"You have to take a bath in all the holy places."
And the *gopīs* said, "All right."
They cleared the ground, broke their bangles and dug a hole. And

that was to become Rādhā-*kuṇḍa*. They made a human chain from Manasi-gaṅgā and with buckets they were going to fill the *kuṇḍa*.

When Kṛṣṇa saw that, He thought, "This is going to take forever. It is not a good idea." So Kṛṣṇa requested that they bathe in His *kuṇḍa* to be purified.
They said, "No, we cannot do that. We will have our own *kuṇḍa*."

However, all the deities of the holy waters came to Rādhārāṇī and begged, "Please accept our service."

And then they entered into Her kuṇḍa, and because She is soft-hearted and filled with love, She couldn't refuse their service. That is the story of how Rādhā-kuṇḍa came into existence in this world. Of course, we cannot exactly say that it came into existence because it is eternal. Rādhā-kuṇḍa is always present. Sometimes it is manifest and otherwise not manifest to the eye but in fact it is always present.

It was Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu who discovered these two *kuṇḍas* that were forgotten in the fields. He just jumped in and started bathing in great ecstasy. The local villagers and His servants stared until He eventually revealed, "This is Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa." It was Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī who later excavated Rādhā-kuṇḍa and made the *ghāṭas* and all these arrangements.

Significant historical moments

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, as we all remember, appeared in 1486.

In 1510, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu left Navadvīpa. It took a few more years before He came to Vṛndāvana.
It is said that He discovered Rādhā-kuṇḍa around 1515. The Gosvāmīs made a plan to develop Rādhā-kuṇḍa much later.

Thirty years after Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu discovered Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Jīva Gosvāmī purchased the land around Rādhā-kuṇḍa. That was in 1545. And then Raghunātha dāsa, who was an expert in organization, excavated Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

In 1554, after everything was established, Raghunātha dāsa became the leader or the mahant of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. A mahant is a leader amongst *sādhus*. Just over on that side is Raghunātha dāsa's *samādhi*, a major place at Rādhā-kuṇḍa and we will go there a little later.

Transcendental exchanges

From *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, we remember that Raghunātha dāsa was younger than Rūpa and Sanātana who were pretty much contemporaries of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī joined Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu a little later in Jagannātha Purī. It was difficult for him to escape from home because of his wealthy family. His father held him back but he eventually escaped and was placed under the care of Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī in Jagannātha Purī.

He performed great austerities. It is said that Raghunātha dāsa lived by begging and after a while he gave that up. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu enquired, "What happened? Raghunātha used to stand at the Siṁha-dvāra Gate of the Jagannātha temple and beg for alms."

Svarūpa Dāmodara replied, "He felt that this was too much in a spirit of a prostitute. 'Yesterday this person entertained with me. Would he come today?' Raghunātha found that his mind was distracted. Now he just takes a little *prasādam* from a place of charity and then he is finished with his eating business."

After a little while Lord Caitanya enquired, "I heard that Raghunātha is no longer going to the charity booth?"
"No. He no longer goes there."
"Then what is he eating?"
"He eats the left over rice thrown out from Jagannātha temple."
"Oh, but that rice is not very nice, is it?" asked Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
"No. It is rotten and even the cows will not eat it. Raghunātha dāsa washes away the soft covering in water till only the inner core remains. He adds a little salt and eats that."

Everyone looked shocked. Is that what Raghunātha was eating? Caitanya Mahāprabhu went to Raghunātha and said, "Oh Raghunātha, what nectar are you eating?"
Raghunātha said, "Oh, my Lord. No!" He could see what was coming, "No. This is not for You."

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had very long arms. It is difficult to deal with someone who has long arms and Raghunātha tried to block but His long arms came all the way around and before he knew it, Caitanya Mahāprabhu managed to snatch some of the rice. "Ah! This is the best *prasādam* I have ever tasted. This is complete nectar. Oh Raghunātha, you are keeping it all for yourself!"

So we can see that Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was a great devotee.

Raghunātha and Kṛṣṇadāsa – an intimate connection

Later, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī came to Rādhā-kuṇḍa. In due course of time, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī also came, and Raghunātha instructed him. They were very close. His *bhajana-kuṭīr* is a little further on the same side. There was a very intimate connection between Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and Kṛṣṇadāsa

Kavirāja Gosvāmī. Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī was the personal secretary of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. As such, he resided with Him in Jagannātha Purī in His final years. For the first six years, the Bengali followers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to Purī. Then they were told not to come any more because Caitanya Mahāprabhu went through His ecstatic moods of love of God and was no longer relating to the world so much. Raghunātha dāsa closely associated with Svarūpa Dāmodara during this time.

Svarūpa Dāmodara kept a diary about the later pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Nowadays, that diary is no longer available but in the introduction to his commentary on the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes, "Raghunātha memorised the diary of Svarūpa Dāmodara." Raghunātha brought that to Rādhā-kuṇḍa. When Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī came, he heard those diaries from Raghunātha dāsa. Kṛṣṇadāsa studied under the Gosvāmīs, therefore he was closely connected to Rūpa, Sanātana and Jīva Gosvāmīs. In this way he was very expertly learned in the works of all the Gosvāmīs.

There were other biographies of Lord Caitanya: the *kaḍacā* of Murāri Gupta, an early biography of Kavi-karṇapūra, and Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura's *Caitanya-bhāgavata*. All these biographies do not describe the later pastimes of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. They do not go much further than Navadvīpa, maybe a little about Purī, but not those later years. For that reason Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja was asked to write the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. He wrote it on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

These two places are sacred: the *samādhi* of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and that place where Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja resided and wrote the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Govinda-līlāmṛta*. The *Govinda-līlāmṛta* is a book that describes Vṛndāvana and its pastimes. The pastimes

in Vṛndāvana are very difficult to understand. We can look ahead and what do we see? We see two lakes, some buildings, steps along the water. We see temples. We can get a map that shows all the temples here, and we can feel that that is Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Yet, when Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī looks, he sees something else.

Seeing by hearing

The other day I explained the *prakaṭa-līlā* and *aprakaṭa-līlā*, or that which we can see and cannot see. What we are seeing is not actually Rādhā-kuṇḍa as Kṛṣṇa sees it or as it is on a transcendental plane. We just see and hear the outer material covering.

I will read from the seventh chapter of the *Govinda-līlāmṛta*. There is a description of Rādhā-kuṇḍa as it is in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

"1- Yearning to meet His beloved Rādhārāṇī, Lord Hari walked a little distance, turned from the path, and arrived at His favourite place, Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

2- Filled with many jewelled staircases, and it's four corners studded with jewels, Rādhā-kuṇḍa appeared very beautiful.

3- In the four corners were pavilions studded with glistening jewels. Around the pavilion were jewelled mosaic floors and courtyards.

4- Around each pavilion were four wonderfully colourful swings, decorated with various fragrant flowers, and suspended from the branches of trees.

5- In the south was a swing suspended from two *campaka* trees. In the east was a swing suspended from two *kadamba* trees. In the north was a swing suspended from two mango trees. In the west was a swing suspended from two *bakula* trees. In the east by south-

east corner the grove of trees came right up to the water and a little north of that place was a wonderfully colourful bridge suspended from pillars. The water of the lake was of varying depth, sometimes as deep as one's neck, chest, belly, navel, hips, thighs, or knees. The groves of trees on the shore were of varying shapes, some six sided, seven-sided, eight-sided or circular. The temperature was always pleasant, the winters being warm and the summers cool. In all directions there were staircases studded with various jewels. The water which vanquished all thirst for its drinkers, was decorated with waves that glistened as if they were many jewels. In the middle of the water was a great assembly of waterfowl. The shore was decorated with many courtyards where Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enjoyed many joking pastimes in the company of Their associates. There were many wonderfully colourful, broad mosaic floors, and in all directions there were many trees, blossoming with many large flowers and fruits, and embraced by many flowering creepers.

6- In the four corners of Rādhā-kuṇḍa there were gardens of *mādhavī* creepers surrounded by groves of *banira*, *kesara*, and *aśoka* trees.

7- Around these were the large groves of the various *gopīs*, and beyond them were groves of plantain trees that provided nice transcendental fruits and cooling shade.

8- Beyond that were gardens and forests of flower-bearing trees. In the middle of Rādhā-kuṇḍa's waters was a glistering bridge leading to a jewelled palace.

9- In these gardens were many goddesses of fortune and hundreds of maidservants engaged by Vṛndādevī in collecting various fruits and flowers, and in rendering various services in pleasant cottages

here and there in the forest."

(Śrī Govinda-līlāmṛta, Chapter 7)

You can just visualise a palace of jewels in the middle with a beautiful, decorated, jewelled bridge leading to it. On the four corners there are swings hanging off trees. Can you see? There are jewels on the steps and beautiful gardens with many groves. Each of the *gopīs* has a grove of her own – a garden with a little wall around it. Like for example, Campakalatā's garden is known as Campakalatā Ānanda-kuñja. In that grove everything is yellow and gold. All the seats and the arrangements are gold. There is a golden throne with a golden yellow cloth on it. When Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī secretly meets with Kṛṣṇa there, She wears a golden dress and people think that Kṛṣṇa is sitting there all by Himself on that throne – nice and peaceful. Yet, She is sitting next to Him.

Am I seeing that or am I imagining it?

There is another *kuñja*, grove where everything is blackish blue. When Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa sit on that throne it looks as if Rādhārāṇī sits alone. It is said that there are various *gopīs* (we read of thousands) that assist in these gardens. One *gopī* unties her hair and sweeps the floor with it. How can one imagine these things? What is really going on? It is different from what we see.

That is why I thought we should first sit down and understand what we are really seeing here. What are we really seeing? We cannot actually see. What are we really hearing? We cannot actually hear. There is something more than we perceive. There is another reality here that is the *aprakaṭa* – that which cannot be perceived with mundane eyes. It is revealed only to those who are eligible, who are completely absorbed in service to the Lord.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, being the incredible personality that he is, opens our darkened eyes. He shows us the spiritual reality and since we do not have spiritual eyes, we are seeing by hearing. After hearing from Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī we can just look at Rādhā-kuṇḍa within our mind's eye. The waters of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa are the liquid love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This is Their most intimate place in conjugal love. Who are we to deeply understand such things?

Are we pure enough?

Many times the question comes up, "Can we take bath in Rādhā-kuṇḍa?" I was here with Bhuvaneśvara Prabhu, who cooked for the Deities in Kṛṣṇa Balarāma Mandira. He was here when Śrīla Prabhupāda came with some devotees and one devotee made a bomb. Do you know how to make a bomb? You run towards the water and jump with your knees folded and head tucked in. It creates a great splash. One American *brahmacārī* made a bomb in Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Prabhupāda was not very happy. Prabhupāda said, "We should not bathe. We should stay on the banks and either put three drops of water on our heads or scoop some water with a loṭā. It is respectful." Since then, many devotees bathe here but respectfully and prayerfully.

I am not going to be the one to say, "Oh, let us all jump in today," because I am not sure if my seniors are going to smile upon me if I do that. So, I will not do that. However, I will say this: think of how exalted this place is. Think of how Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa manifest in these waters in an embrace. Think of the many intimate dealings of that conjugal nature that take place here. And then think of yourself and whether you are really pure enough. Are we following everything externally? Always? Or is there some weakness? Weakness is human. Weakness can be forgiven. We will not hang all the devotees who are not always able to follow the principles

strictly, from the highest tree. We will not do that. Do not worry, we will be nice. We will say, "What to do? You are struggling. We understand that it is not so easy."

Are we then qualified? And what if we are following everything nicely? We follow externally. Externally, we chant sixteen rounds and follow the four regulative principles. Internally, what garbage are we bringing into the water? What is within our minds?"

Have you ever seen mandalas? In mandalas there are mantras and *yantras*. A mantra tries to capture the Absolute Truth in sound and a *yantra* tries to capture the Absolute Truth in an image. I have seen such images; a big square represents the universe. Within the square there is a circle that represents the gross body. In the circle there is a second circle that represents the subtle body. In the subtle body there are the cemeteries.

There are cemeteries within our minds. Imagine a journey through the dark corners of our minds, a place where we do not usually go. There is a road leading to that dark corner. It winds up on a mountain with a steep drop on one side. We are walking to our dark corner and pass a vulture, sitting on a branch. We approach a lane leading to a gate. A bell rings twelve times and we enter the cemetery. In modern American language, there are skeletons in a closet. Everyone has some skeletons in the closet – some impurities in his consciousness.

So think about that and then think about whether we are qualified. I do not feel so qualified, but when I went with Bhuvaneśvara, he made me take a bath. I did it. He is my senior and I went along with it. Later, I did Govardhana *parikramā* with Vaiṣṇava Mahārāja, who also made me take a bath. And then I thought, "Who am I to enter into such sacred waters?" It is not so cheap, that is for sure. I am

not telling you that you cannot bathe, but I am asking you to think about it. If you think yourself qualified, then do so. Otherwise, just take three drops and leave it at that. On the other hand, one might consider that there is a lot of mercy here and one who bathes in a respectful, prayerful mood is eligible for that mercy.

Normally, our Kṛṣṇa consciousness happens in the world, involved with material things. We drive cars. We play with computers. We shop. We do all these material things every day. Some people have jobs. Some are studying. Some count cash in a bank. Whatever it may be, we are involved in worldly life and our Kṛṣṇa consciousness is largely external restrictions. You cannot drink this, you cannot eat that, and you cannot go there. We have some *sādhana* but how deep is our *bhajana*? *Bhajana* means our mediation. How deep is our meditation on Kṛṣṇa in the morning? Is it very deep even for those who live in a temple and go to *maṅgala-ārati*? Now we are in Vṛndāvana and we all go to *maṅgala-ārati*. Are we deep in our meditation? Or are we just there thinking external things, "Oh gosh! It is really early, and already it's so crowded." I don't know how many rounds you chanted this morning. I do not know what time you started, but were they deep? Were we actually close to Kṛṣṇa? For the most part, our spiritual life is external practices and we do not encounter Kṛṣṇa deeply. Yet we have come to Vṛndāvana, the land of Kṛṣṇa – the home of Kṛṣṇa. We have come to Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:
"In the *śāstra* it is said that of all types of fruitive workers, he who is advanced in knowledge of the higher values of life is favoured by the Supreme Lord Hari. Out of many such people who are advanced in knowledge [*jñānīs*], one who is practically liberated by virtue of his knowledge may take to devotional service. He is superior to the others. However, one who has actually attained *prema*, pure love of Kṛṣṇa, is superior to him. The *gopīs* are exalted above all

the advanced devotees because they are always totally dependent upon Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the transcendental cowherd boy. Among the *gopīs*, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the most dear to Kṛṣṇa. Her *kuṇḍa* [lake] is as profoundly dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa as this most beloved of the *gopīs*. Who, then, will not reside at Rādhā-kuṇḍa and, in a spiritual body surcharged with ecstatic devotional feelings [*aprākṛta-bhāva*], render loving service to the Divine Couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, who perform Their *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, Their eternal eightfold daily pastimes. Indeed, those who execute devotional service on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa are the most fortunate people in the universe."

(Nectar of Instruction, Text ten)

There are many key points here, but essentially Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the importance of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. We come here to get a glimpse of the eternal reality. We are on this *parikramā* to glimpse the spiritual world. That is what we do in Vṛndāvana. We do not immediately forget who we are. What have we brought in our hand luggage to Vṛndāvana? What is still in our consciousness, our material conditioning? At least externally, we can still be respectful and in a mood to receive mercy.

We are trying to understand what is going on in the spiritual world and how everyone simply assists Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. There are thousands of *gopīs* in these garden surroundings. They set up groves with beautiful seating arrangements, rows of trees and plants of different colours and everything is decorated. There are delicious food stuffs, all for the pleasure of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, to bring Them together. We appreciate that this is where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's most intimate pastimes take place. These *kuṇḍas* are manifestations of Themselves, therefore we understand that this is the topmost place in the universe.

Plugged in

There is a book written by Satsvarūpa Mahārāja called *The Samādhi Diary*. Satsvarūpa Mahārāja describes two places: Śrīla Prabhupāda's *samādhi* in Vṛndāvana and Śrīla Prabhupāda's room in Kṛṣṇa Balarāma Mandira. Mahārāja writes, "For me these two places are actually the most holy places in the universe, even more so than Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa. It is there that I connect to this transcendental realm."

That means a lot to me. Personally, I came to this movement in Vṛndāvana, just after Śrīla Prabhupāda left this planet. His *samādhi*, at the time, was just a little square building – a cube that was two metres in length, breadth and height. From day one, I quickly realised that it was the hub of the whole place. Up to today, I will be there at Prabhupāda's *samādhi* for *maṅgala-ārati* whenever I am in Vṛndāvana – sick or not, I will be there. I know that it is my connection point, where I plug in. That is where the spiritual energy starts flowing. Only then can I come here to Rādhā-kuṇḍa. This morning I was at Śrīla Prabhupāda's *samādhi* and after refreshing my connection with Śrīla Prabhupāda, I can come here and read a little from Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Govinda-līlāmṛta*. Only then can I see a jewelled palace in the middle of the water with a beautiful bridge leading to it. Only then will I see jewelled swings on the corners. They are there. Have a good look.

We can think about the spiritual world, but to what extent can you take it? You may take it a step further, 'Now, in my mind, let me step into that world. Oh yes, I go over the bridge and I am in the jewelled palace.' And what then? Will you talk to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa? Will you start fanning Them? And then? Prabhupāda said, "No, that is impersonalism." (We read that in *The Nectar of Devotion* the other day at Mor-kuṭīr) That is just your projection upon Kṛṣṇa and therefore it is impersonal. We are then not waiting for Kṛṣṇa to act but within our minds we make an artistic projection upon

Kṛṣṇa. It is not like that in reality. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was not interested in pursuing *mādhurya rasa*. His mood was, "I am not qualified. I will only pursue *dāsya*. I will be the servant. Yet when the Vaiṣṇavas call on me to absorb *mādhurya rasa*, then what can I do?" That was his approach. He waited for the Vaiṣṇavas to say, "Now hear and absorb in *mādhurya rasa*." And this is the beginning of our meditation in Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Times of conflict

Under Akbar, who was quite an enlightened ruler, things were quite favourable in Vṛndāvana and the Vaiṣṇavas were flourishing. These Muslims rulers, who had come with a huge army of paid mercenaries, had made pacts with the ruling *kṣatriyas* in Rajasthan. The ruler in Delhi was Akbar and he made a connection with the rulers from Jaipur. The deal was that the Jaipur *kṣatriyas* would provide an army to support the emperor and in exchange Jaipur would be left alone. So Jaipur became a stronghold on Hinduism, and at the same time it provided an army that supported the Muslim ruler in Delhi. Akbar married princesses from the Hindu families also.

There is a poem in which Akbar expresses his devotion to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He describes seeing the dancing form of Mahāprabhu. He hears the cymbals playing in *kīrtana* and offers his obeisances. He prays for the blessing of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. That poem was translated and published by the Kolkata University press in the 1930's. So apparently Akbar was very favourable.

His great-grandson, Aurangzeb, was the opposite. To not upset the arrangements with the army, Jaipur still supported Aurangzeb in fighting with the Afghans and the Taliban, etc. The Hindus were then fighting with the Muslims, which was quite interesting. In exchange, Aurangzeb still left Jaipur alone but he did not leave

Vṛndāvana in peace. Vṛndāvana became a total mess and they were breaking the deities and killing Vaiṣṇavas. The prosecution was really horrific for quite some time. I will not go into the gory details. One result was that all the Deities of the Gosvāmīs were removed from Vṛndāvana: Madana-mohana, Rādhā-Govinda, Rādhā Gopīnātha. Lokanātha Swami's Rādhā-Vinoda and Jīva Gosvāmī's Rādhā-Dāmodara were also removed from Vṛndāvana.

All these Deities came through Rādhā-kuṇḍa on the way to Rajasthan. They stopped here for a little while. It is said that for some time they even hid the Deities under water in the *kuṇḍa*. Eventually, the Deities left and then Vṛndāvana was deprived of Them. The devotees felt so much separation that they made replicas of the Deities.

We therefore have the seven temples of Vṛndāvana and *pratibhu* Deities, which are expansions of the original. They tried to evoke the presence of the Deities of Vṛndāvana here in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. For a lot of people that is the essence of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, 'Wow, that is amazing!' Maybe not for us today. For us, Raghunātha dāsa's *samādhi* is most important and also Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, who is our *ācārya* and who gives us the eyes to see another level of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

We will not visit all these temples because then we will form a big snake of people and I will be five hundred metres in the front and no one will hear anything any more. There is a *bhajana-kuṭīr* of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura here where I would like to go. And I also want to circumambulate Śyāma-kuṇḍa but from here we will go to Raghunātha dāsa's *samādhi*. We will then walk past the place where Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja resided and then we will find our way to Bhaktisiddhānta's *bhajana-kuṭīr*.



Kusum Sarovara



Leisurely cows at Madhuvana



Śrīji Temple at Varṣāṇā



Sankari-kor, a transcendental toll road



Dhruva-tila at Madhuvana



The deity of Nārada Muni



Rādhā-kuṇḍa



Vṛndā-kuṇḍa



Parrots at Vṛndā-kuṇḍa



Radha and Krishna dance like peacocks at Mor-kuṭīr, Varṣāṇā



Śrī Girirāja Govardhana



Mukharai



Peacock decored altar at Mor-kuṭīr, Varṣāṇā



Pāvana-sarovara



Nārada-kuṇḍa at Govardhana



Vṛndādevī, the presiding deity of Vṛndā-kuṇḍa



Vṛndādevī flourishes at Vṛndā-kuṇḍa



Entrance to Lalita Behari Temple at Mukharai



MUKHARAI

When we meditate on Kṛṣṇa's exalted pastimes, we must approach with honesty. If we imagine that we are more exalted than we really are, we make them cheap. Honesty helps us realise our own shortcomings and that is humility. In that mood, we carefully approach and respect these pastimes and try to understand our great spiritual fortune.

We are ending the day on a peaceful note. Mukharai is a village not so far from Rādhā-kuṇḍa. It is the home of Mukhara, Rādhārāṇī's grandmother (from the side of Her in-laws). We know that when Rādhārāṇī lived in Yavat after She was married, Her in-laws were very strict with Her and Mukhara has the same mood. The elders were suspicious.

The exchange

On one occasion it is described that somehow Rādhārāṇī's and Kṛṣṇa's clothes were exchanged during the night. So Rādhārāṇī awoke the following morning in yellow cloth instead of dark blue. Mukhara came in and exclaimed, "What is this? You're wearing this yellow cloth?"
And Lalitā had to straighten it out very quickly, "This old lady is going blind. The sun is shining on Rādhārāṇī's blue cloth and she thinks it is yellow!"

Later on in the day, Dhaniṣṭhā, the maid servant of Kṛṣṇa, quickly arranged to exchange the cloth and everything was all right. So such things are described and it is all about *parakīya-rasa*. When we are speaking about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, there is a relationship of *parakīya*. *Parakīya*, as I mentioned in Mor-kuṭīr already, are the stolen moments where nothing can be taken for granted. *Parakīya* means that we have to earn Kṛṣṇa's mercy again and again. Of course, Kṛṣṇa's mercy is causeless. Why do we have to earn Kṛṣṇa's mercy if it is causeless?

Maybe I should surrender?

It is a fact that Kṛṣṇa's mercy is causeless and no one is exempt from it. Kṛṣṇa's mercy is everywhere, reaching anyone and everyone, even Kaṁsa. Kaṁsa thought of Kṛṣṇa, although not in a favourable way, but even Kaṁsa could not escape His mercy. Kaṁsa thought, "What will this Kṛṣṇa do to me? I am Kaṁsa and I'm very powerful!

So what can He do to me? I have Keśī; no one can stand up against Keśī."

Moments later a messenger comes to the palace and says, "Your majesty! A calamity! Keśī is dead!"
Kaṁsa was shocked. "He is too powerful. This is incredible! What shall I do? Maybe I should just surrender unto Him? But how can I do that? What will people say? Me, Kaṁsa, surrendering to Kṛṣṇa? No, I cannot do that. Let me then go to Vṛndāvana and torture the residents. Yet how can I leave the palace when I am too afraid to go out?"

I call this 'Kaṁsa's moment of doubt' where for one moment, he thought, "Maybe I should surrender to Kṛṣṇa." And then his false ego got in between – just as our false ego also gets in between. "No! How can I do that? What will my friends say? If I suddenly become too Kṛṣṇa conscious, what will the family think of me?" Some false ego comes in between.

A peaceful place in the material world?

When Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were performing Their pastimes in Vṛndāvana, Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa were very private places. It was unlike the present, where these are totally public, a little too public if you ask me. That is why I needed to come to a quiet place to end the day, to sort of remove all the external coverings that were there at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Rādhā-kuṇḍa was one of the places where They met. Obviously They were trying to hide Their meetings so Rādhā-kuṇḍa carried that very hidden covered identity which now, of course, is lost. We can appreciate for a moment what it was actually like. Without the material covering, we are really dealing with a peaceful and a private place.

We discussed many things there. We read from the *Govinda-*

līlāmṛta written by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī. We went to the place where he wrote that literature. He actually got that title, 'Kavirāja', king of poets, for writing the *Govinda-līlāmṛta*. And later on he wrote *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. *Govinda-līlāmṛta* is a little esoteric, describing how the eternal world functions. It describes how everything is centred around Kṛṣṇa and how everyone is aiming to increase the attraction and love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Mukhara, as the grandmother, sometimes becomes an obstacle only to increase the hankering. Now we also have some obstacles. It was peaceful until the loudspeakers started. But some obstacles will be there. It is peaceful again for a moment, but not for too long.

It is difficult in this age to find peace anywhere. As we practise spiritual life we realize that it is difficult to find the peace of mind to chant – a peaceful situation. We all have to worry too much about how to live and how to make money, since we're charged for everything and anything. Previously the *brahmacārīs*, the *vānaprastha* and the *sannyāsīs* were all living from charity and only the *gṛhasthas* were earning money from whatever they produced. Everyone else was living from charity. We are now living in a world where it's 'pay as you go' every step of the way. Earning and managing money creates stress in all of us.

When we go to a place like Rādhā-kuṇḍa we are meant to have an internal experience. I mean, what would it be like if we could just quietly sit there? Although we have no previous *adhikāra* or qualification, the *saṅkīrtana* movement is so powerful that it can take us there. It brought us here to Vṛndāvana; it took us this far. The influence of Vṛndāvana has reached us, but unfortunately, the influence of the west has also reached Vṛndāvana. There has been a two-way exchange.

I came here forty one years ago and it was very different. In all of Vṛndāvana, you would see a maximum of three cars in one day. The roads were very small, with just horse-carts and some bicycles. There were very few motorbikes. People did not have money for that and they did not live that way. Life was very simple. You got your water from a well instead of a tap. Electricity was very symbolic, where you had electric lines and that was a sign of your status. We did have electricity but most of the time it did not work. So we were totally prepared for a life without electricity. I had one of those candle stands which accommodated five candles at the same time so that I could read nicely. And it was a nice life because there was no noise. They know how to make noise in India; it is impressive! Today, when we went to Rādhā-kuṇḍa, we could not fully spend our time in meditation, which is why I wanted to sort of close our day here in this place, where we can think a bit. (Although, that loud speaker was not there the last time I came!)

Love for Kṛṣṇa is difficult to attain, as we all experience. We love to an extent. If I asked, "Do you have the taste for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa?" some would say, "Well, I do not know."

But if I said, "Tomorrow you are not allowed to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa," could you do it? We may think, "Oh, I have to chant these sixteen rounds," but if we were to make a rule that tomorrow no one is allowed to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, we would all break that rule: "Stuff you with your rule!"

We would rebel and we would chant anyway, because it is no longer possible. We cannot spend one day not chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Our attachment to the chanting has actually developed more than we realised.

Approach with honesty

When we meditate on Kṛṣṇa's exalted pastimes we should keep in mind that we must approach such pastimes with honesty. We must be honest about our own position. As soon as we start to imagine that we are more exalted than we really are, then we cannot approach the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and then we make it cheap.

One quality of a Vaiṣṇava is humility. Humility and honesty go together because when you are honest you realise, "I guess I am not God. I guess I am not the Almighty." The next stage is, "Maybe I am not perfect. Maybe I have some faults, and I should write them down." Three days later you have a cramp in your hand from making the list. When we start writing down all our faults there is no end to it.

So honesty helps us realise our own shortcomings. That is humility. And therefore humility and honesty are pretty much synonymous. In that mood of honesty and in that mood of simplicity we can carefully approach and respect these pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. We can actually say, "I am not qualified but by the mercy of Mahāprabhu I can know about these things. Due to all this mercy, I am here and can think about these things for a moment." The spiritual world is our goal. These eternal pastimes are what it is all about. We should not think, "This is not for us. It is for those who are advanced." No, it is not too advanced. We should also understand these subjects, but hand in hand with that honesty.

Can you imagine our fortune?

I just want to recap: I spoke from Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Nectar of Instruction* which told us that those who reside on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa are the most fortunate. Prabhupāda also added, "... in a spiritual body." So how do we look at that? It refers to those who have internally fully realised their eternal identity. Yes, such

residents are the most fortunate and can reside in Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

The *pāṇḍā* Mohana, whom I have known for many years, made some good points. He said, "You cannot imagine the good fortune that we have." Who can? Neither he nor we can imagine that. We can take that point with us. We go on pilgrimage to collect our good fortune, because we are poor. Satsvarūpa Mahārāja, who wrote so many books and did a lot of thinking, also wrote, 'A poor man reads the *Bhāgavatam*.' It is a very good title. It is very profound because we can relate to that – we are spiritually poor. Where is our spiritual wealth? What is our credit with Kṛṣṇa? What have we done for Kṛṣṇa? What sacrifices have we made? Not so much. Have you ever chanted really good rounds? Are you sure? Maybe? Sometimes? Have you even chanted one good mantra yet? Have you ever chanted one mantra with love? Are you sure? With love? With *prema*? I do not know if we ever chanted one good mantra. Our credit is meagre, our offerings are not many, yet we are here.

We are in Vṛndāvana to collect some spiritual fortune. That is why we came. We need something to take back; something that will give us a little more strength in our chanting and absorption in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*; something to overcome our material desires which usually bother us like flies buzzing around. You can chase them away but they always come back. We need a tail to deal with all these flies. Animals do, and since we are two legged animals, we also need one. For all these material desires we do have a tail; we have a *śikhā* and the ladies have a braid. If you do not have a tail then you are in trouble and the flies will get you. I have got a mini tail that does not want to grow. What to do?

Anyway, the point I am trying to make is that we need more spiritual strength. So this Vṛndāvana *parikramā* is for that. Going to these places gives us mercy by creating *saṁskāras* or impressions. The

pāṇḍā said, "Brijabāsīs, Brijabāsīs. Must give to Brijabāsīs." One thing we can say about the Brijabāsīs is that they live with Kṛṣṇa. Although some monetary interest may have entered in this age but they do live with Kṛṣṇa, there is no doubt about it.

A substantial dose

If you came only for the day, try to come for another day, because the momentum has to set in. For example, if you have something that is very dirty then soak it for a while. Soak it, brush it a bit, maybe beat it on a stone. It takes some effort. By going on *parikramā* day in and day out, you really feel, "Something has happened to me. Phew! That was a good dose of something transcendental." And that is the idea; we are trying to get a substantial dose.

Recently, I was in Mauritius and we got a substantial dose of *kīrtana*. After that, while in Australia I was still riding on the wave of that *kīrtana*. This is what we require, the after effect. We are not ready to really live in Rādhā-kuṇḍa and be there in that eternal mood, serving in our spiritual identity, *antaraṅga-sevā*. Who are we? Who is a *gopī*? Who is a cowherd boy? Do you know?

Does the spiritual identity manifest?

Sometimes I wonder if some of the spiritual identity manifests in the material identity? If someone has a very strong character, does that mean that they are left wing in the spiritual world? Right wing is more submissive than the left wing. Does some of the eternal nature come through? Or will we be rebellious in this life but totally submissive in our next? I think if I had a next life I would still be rebellious. I was probably rebellious in my last life and many before that. There is something from the spiritual nature that comes through our material nature. Maybe at one point, when we become very advanced, it becomes uncovered. For now, we do not know. I mean, Advaita Siṁha might be a *gopī* and some of the

ladies might be cowherd boys. Who knows these things?

We can only speculate about our spiritual identity at this stage. Did I not say yesterday that Uddhava was an outsider? We are behind Uddhava, as outsiders also. Why are we outsiders? Because we do not know our eternal identity. How can we really penetrate into this mysterious Vṛndāvana? There is a double world here; what we see, what we hear and what is really behind it all, is different. We saw Rādhā-kuṇḍa with our eyes and then we saw Rādhā-kuṇḍa through Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's eyes. It was a different Rādhā-kuṇḍa. With these meditations I think we will go back to Vṛndāvana and eat something. Digest the *prasādam* and digest the experience and thoughts of the day.



VṚNDĀ-KUṆḌA

In the material world, we try to find some taste or experience, but time is more powerful than any *rasa*. The spiritual sky is not limited by time, space or thought. It is governed by taste and Vṛndādevī churns that *rasa*.

Here in the holy *dhāma*, we are simply visiting the pleasure grounds of Kṛṣṇa and His associates. There are places where Kṛṣṇa is performing pastimes everywhere. Some are remembered and some are not remembered, that is the only difference. Wherever we go, Kṛṣṇa has graced this land and after 5,000 years, what can be remembered? It's amazing that anything is remembered at all! Yet, so much is remembered from 5000 years ago. And that which comes down through our Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* we can appreciate even more.

Vṛndādevī – Churning *rasa*

We do not hear so much about Vṛndādevī in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. I actually looked it up this morning and I had a hard time finding anything on Vṛndādevī other than in a very esoteric part of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* where Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu visualizes the water pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* in the Yamunā. After the bathing, Vṛndādevī arranged for clothing made of forest materials – leaves and flowers and such things.

It is Vṛndādevī who is the stage manager, always creating situations to provide joy to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, to Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd boyfriends, and also with Nanda and Yaśodā. It is Vṛndādevī who provides the taste, with different mellows. We know that churning yoghurt into butter is a pastime of Vṛndāvana. Mother Yaśodā is expert at churning. Rādhārāṇī chants Hare Kṛṣṇa while She churns butter and Vṛndādevī churns *rasa*. She does not churn butter but she churns *rasa*.

Time and space

In the material world, we also try to enjoy *rasa*, some sort of taste or experience, but time is more powerful here than any *rasa*. Time is the overpowering force in the material world. "Time I am, the destroyer of worlds," (*Bhagavad-gītā* 11.32). Everything comes

into being, then grows, flourishes for a while, produces some by-products, dwindles, and then ceases to exist. That is the nature of the material energy. In the spiritual world, we have heard many times that there is no time, there is only the present. How does that work? Is it just that everything occurs eternally in the present? No, there is also sequence. There is a sequence of events in the sense that first Kṛṣṇa eats breakfast and afterwards they go to the forest. So there is time in a sense. There is the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* which separates the day into eight segments for specific pastimes. Yet time is not ruling. That is the difference. Here, time rules.

I met a lady whom I had not seen for about 35 years. I didn't recognize her. It's scary to see what time does to people sometimes. Then you think, "What did it do to me?" When you see yourself, you think you haven't changed a bit but maybe you have? As Ālavandār Yāmunācārya said, everything in the material world is limited by time, space and thought. These three elements are prominent everywhere and what can we do about them? Not much. We cannot escape them. In the spiritual world, however, time is only another ingredient to increase *rasa*. It is *rasa* or taste that rules. So, as long as the taste is good, time will stretch as much as you like.

Here, space is also a problem. In Nanda Mahārāja's palace in Gokula, his quarters are on the northern side. It is a huge palace with a courtyard and in the middle there is a smaller palace but with limitless space. From the outside it looks like a small building, something like the Vṛndā-kuṇḍa temple, but each door you open leads to another room or garden. Imagine that you go into the Vṛndā-kuṇḍa temple and you open doors and there are entire halls and an endless variety of pastime places with seats and fountains! That is the spiritual world. The *ācāryas* have described the spiritual reality as not limited by time, space and thought.

If we start to think without these restrictions then you can come up with a lot more than you can physically do. If I think of flying over Govardhana it wouldn't be a problem to actually do it. Thoughts can take us to many places. We speak about the speed of mind as the fastest means of travel, greater than the speed of sound. That's quite something. But how far can we go with the speed of mind? One cannot capture Kṛṣṇa or enter His pastimes by thought. So the philosophers lose out and there are a few philosophers among us. It is said that in Vṛndāvana the birds sitting on the trees and jumping from branch to branch were philosophers.

Increasing *rasa*

The demigods also come as birds. When Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and the cowherd boys are picnicking and taking *prasādam*, some crumbs fall to the ground. The birds that pick up the crumbs are actually great demigods like Lord Śiva and Lord Brahma, who all come for the remnants. So Kṛṣṇa performs His transcendental pastimes and Vṛndādevī arranges everything. Exactly when crumbs are needed, preparations that easily break into crumbs are brought in. As soon as Kṛṣṇa takes a bite, the crumbs fall everywhere because Vṛndādevī is just, in a very intricate way, increasing the *rasa*.

She has her messengers in the form of the green parrots of Vṛndāvana which she sends here and there. These parrots have many discussions. A famous one took place between the male and female parrot when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to Vṛndāvana. The male parrot proclaimed that Kṛṣṇa was the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the female parrot pointed out that actually Kṛṣṇa was completely controlled by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. So these parrots competed and they were intelligent. How can we understand the spiritual world?

Limited by thought

Bhakti Puruṣottama Mahārāja wrote a book on Dāmodara and in there he mentions that Mother Yaśodā was cooking rice and she was trying to find out if the rice was cooked. Normally, you take a grain and press it and if that's soft then it's cooked, isn't it? That's the art of cooking rice. But when mother Yaśodā wanted to know if the rice was cooked, she simply asked the rice, "Rice, are you cooked?" The rice said, "Not quite!" How can we understand such things? It's bewildering when we think about how everything is conscious in the spiritual world. How then can you eat the rice? What happens after that? Some have said that you eat the rice but the rice is still there. I don't know how all that works. It's bewildering to the mind.

Because I'm approaching these matters through thought, I get stuck. We are in a material situation and we approach everything through thought. How can the rice speak? If the rice does speak then what does that mean? If I think it through a little, then I imagine the rice will say "Ouch!" Is it like that? When we try to think these things through, it becomes confusing. Our thought is limited by our previous material experience and we cannot capture the *rasa* – we cannot fully understand it.

Two weeks after Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja left this planet in Māyāpur, I had a dream that he came from the sky, paid his obeisances to me and I paid obeisances to him. He picked me up and embraced me. It was nice because so much loving energy was emanating from him. He came from the spiritual world to give me some mercy in my dream. I was talking about this to Śacīnandana Mahārāja, who said "Oh! I also had a dream!"
"Oh yes, Mahārāja? What dream did you have?"
"Well, I asked Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja to please tell me what it's like in the spiritual world and he said, 'It's different from what

you think, Śacīnandana Mahārāja.'"

It's different because we cannot think about the spiritual domain. We cannot capture it in thought. To some extent, we can think of the spiritual world but thinking, feeling and willing is all that we can do. You can send a message to someone on the other side of the world, "Thinking about Kṛṣṇa on the grass," but that is as far as it goes, until Kṛṣṇa is pleased with our service and the love in our hearts and then reveals Himself. When Nārada Muni, as a young boy, the son of a maid-servant, began meditating under the guidance of the *bhakti-vedāntas*, the Lord appeared before him. However, it was only for a short moment, just to tell him, "In this life you will not see Me any more. Only when you are completely purified and qualified will you see Me again in the next life." Likewise we are here in the *dhāma*, remembering or meditating on Kṛṣṇa, but more purification is needed to see Him face to face.

Ingredients in the spiritual pastimes

Yesterday at Rādhā-kuṇḍa there was no time with all the crowds walking around. Now, we can take some time. We want to visit two other places but they are not so far away so it's not a problem. My point here is that Vṛndādevī is organizing the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa based on *rasa* and that *rasa* is predominant. Although it looks like things go through time in the spiritual world, the time doesn't exactly follow the clock. Kṛṣṇa walks all over the *dhāma*, but we drive. This was a long drive actually. I thought, "Gee, are we ever going to reach?" I felt we were almost in Delhi. If we start thinking of the spiritual world again, then we wonder "How can Kṛṣṇa walk all these distances?"

You've heard that the *dhāma* is like a lotus and sometimes the petals open and sometimes they close. That is one explanation but that's not all there is. It is a matter of *rasa*. When Kṛṣṇa wants to

go for a long walk then it's a long walk; when Kṛṣṇa wants to go for a short walk then it's a short walk. The walk adjusts according to the *rasa* and what needs to be experienced. So if it needs to be a short walk then it is but He walks the whole way. It isn't made any shorter. It's not that a few kilometres are cut off the road. No, He walks all those kilometres but it takes only a short time. At other times He walks a short distance and it takes so much time because it is not time or distance that predominates. These three things are there (time, space and thought) but they do not govern the spiritual pastimes. They are ingredients in the spiritual pastimes.

There is space in the spiritual world, absolutely! Today is also Gopāṣṭamī and Kṛṣṇa takes the cows out for the first time. For this, He is supposed to be in the *pauganḍa* age which starts somewhere at five or six. Jīva Gosvāmī explains in the *Gopāla-campū,* a really nice book, that He was not there yet but everyone said that Kṛṣṇa was capable and old enough and they should let Him take out the cows. Nanda Mahārāja did not agree, but everyone forced him to let Kṛṣṇa go with the cows, and so they went into these narrow forest paths. Can you imagine the traffic? Just think about it. So many cows and so many calves went and how did they all fit in a narrow forest path? We have experience from Delhi how the roads just jam up with cars. I don't know what it's like in Punjab, but I guess the traffic issues are similar?

With Kṛṣṇa all of that just adjusts itself. There are unlimited cowherd boys who each have unlimited cows. When Prabhupāda explains he says, "It's not 10,000 cowherd boys, not 100,000 cowherd boys, not 1,000,000 cowherd boys, not 10,000,000 cowherd boys but unlimited cowherd boys!" How do they all fit? We see that space gets adjusted. Time is adjusted, space is adjusted, and thought… well, it all just goes beyond our thinking. That is the nature of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa lifts Govardhana Hill in the material world

and the residents were totally surprised.

For us it is not news now, but can you imagine how His associates felt?
"No! I mean, is He doing what He seems to be doing?
"No! It can't be true. He is ripping the hill out of the ground! No!"
"Yes, He's doing it!"
"No!"
"Yes!"

And the next moment He lifted the hill on His little finger and everyone went under it. It blew peoples' minds; it was beyond anything they could think of. We can see why devotees become stunned and overwhelmed. They cannot compute what is happening.

When Lord Brahma stole all the calves and cowherd boys and Kṛṣṇa took their place, Lord Brahma was very confused. The cowherd boys all became *viṣṇu-mūrtis* and Lord Brahma stood there like a golden pillar. He couldn't move any more because of a short circuit in his brain, basically. He couldn't process it any more. How was this possible? One becomes stunned when one can no longer process what is happening.

In this way, Lord Brahma and Lord Kṛṣṇa are unfolding these pastimes. Through such places in Vṛndāvana we get an opportunity to meditate and understand another piece of the puzzle. We are not able to see the eternal pastimes of Kṛṣṇa here in Vṛndāvana. They are still taking place but although we travel everywhere, we haven't actually seen Kṛṣṇa walking around with some cowherd boys… and some cows. It is Gopāṣṭamī today, yet I didn't see them anywhere this morning.

We are simply trying to approach the spiritual reality through thought. It's the best we can do. I'm trying to awaken some thoughts about Kṛṣṇa. We imagine what it would be like in the spiritual world and that's the best we can do at this stage. But, I am remembering Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja's remark, "It is different from what you think." That's very interesting.

How did you get to Vṛndāvana: by road, by train, by boat? One cannot come to Vṛndāvana by road, by train, by boat or by helicopter. One can only come to Vṛndāvana by pure devotional service. There is no other way to come to Vṛndāvana. So if we have not come entirely by pure devotional service then are we in Vṛndāvana? That is the question. Are we actually here? Anyway, that's just another thought.

At this stage, I can only remain within the realm of time, space and thought. I cannot experience anything outside of that. At least let us think about how the spiritual world is governed by *rasa*, and that it is Vṛndādevī who makes all the arrangements and provides the backdrops and the ingredients for Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. When they are needed she provides it and in this way Kṛṣṇa's desires are fulfilled. It's not like you see in the movies or in a cartoon where, when anything mystical happens, you hear the sound "whoop!" and something appears out of nowhere. Vṛndādevī does not orchestrate everything in Vṛndāvana in cartoon style. No, she does it in a more subtle and more interesting way.

We are discovering Vṛndāvana. I'm not here saying that I know everything. I know very little but even the little I do know is inspiring; for the rest we depend on what Kṛṣṇa and the *ācāryas* reveal to us. We rely on a combination of what the *ācāryas* reveal and what Kṛṣṇa has revealed so that we don't start imagining, "Oh Kṛṣṇa? Yes, I see Him!" That is not meant to be. Still, here in

Vṛndāvana we get some sense of the presence of Kṛṣṇa. We may not see Him but we may sometimes feel that maybe He was here just a few minutes ago. Where did He go? That is the nature of Vṛndāvana.

In Vṛndāvana everything is very direct. We often-times cannot see Kṛṣṇa face to face but we can see Kṛṣṇa's hand. In Vṛndāvana Kṛṣṇa acts very directly and may personally interfere in our lives. We never know. Kṛṣṇa teaches us in many ways, sometimes sweet and sometimes salty, and in Vṛndāvana He does so very quickly. That is Vṛndāvana. This is not the place where things happen by chance. This is the place where we always consider "What is Kṛṣṇa trying to communicate to me?"



PĀVANA-SAROVARA

Transcendental enjoyment is the activity of the spiritual world. Pleasure pastimes is the nature of Vṛndāvana. We relish being in Pāvana-sarovara and at the same time appreciate the transcendental mercy invested here. The lucky ones may fall in the water for a holy dip!

We are here at Pāvana-sarovara. Pāvana-sarovara got its name from Pāvana Gopa who is the father of Viśākhā.

"Viśākhā is the second most important of the eight principal *gopīs*. Her attributes, activities and resolve are all much like those of her friend, Lalitā. Viśākhā was born exactly at the same moment her dear friend Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī appeared in this world. Viśākhā's garments are decorated with stars and her complexion is like lightning. Her father is Pāvana, the son of the sister of Mukhara Gopī, and her mother is Dakṣiṇā-devī, the daughter of the sister of Jaṭilā. Her husband is Vāhika Gopa."

(Bṛhat Śrī Śrī Rādhā-kṛṣṇa-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā, Text 82-83)

Eternal family

I read this and thought about how everyone in the spiritual world is related. We were at Mukhara's home yesterday and now we hear that she has some relationship with Viśākhā. They seem to be on different sides: Jaṭilā and Mukhara on one side with Viśākhā, Lalitā and Rādhārāṇī on the other. In reality everyone is actually on the same side. Everyone is simply part of that village called Vṛndāvana and their relationships are eternal. When we attain our spiritual body we will also get a spiritual family. If you thought that you had enough of being in a family then know that there is a family waiting for you in the spiritual world. However, that is our eternal family.

Family life in this material world is just a reflection of our real family in the spiritual world. Ultimately, we are all related to Kṛṣṇa and His associates. For the time being, we are with this family of devotees in this world. Gradually, our devotee family becomes more important than our material family. Of course, some people have the good fortune of having their material family become a devotee family. That doesn't happen all the time, but I do know families

where the great grandmother and the next four generations are all initiated, including their uncles and aunties. Everyone is initiated and that's great. Then you can just stay home forever and live a transcendental life.

In Brazil there was a *gṛhastha* who had thirteen children and he had organised them really well. He said, "This is the temple commander, that is the head *pūjārī* and the other is the treasurer." He had the whole family serving as in a temple, and it seemed to work well. I guess he was the temple president. Everything can be transcendental. It is said that *vairāgya* is part of the *saṅkīrtana* movement of Lord Caitanya: *"vairāgya-vidyā-nija-bhakti-yoga,"* but that *vairāgya* simply means that we give up everything that is not devotional service. Otherwise, we are not interested in being renounced. When the associates of Lord Caitanya came to Jagannātha Purī, they were not renounced at all. Usually pilgrims who come to Purī would fast, but the associates of Caitanya Mahāprabhu did not. Big baskets of *mahā-prasādam* were brought in and they feasted. That is our family tradition.

A place for everyone

Pāvana-sarovara was a pastime place for Kṛṣṇa and His associates. It is said that Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu had a palace here. He built it for his daughter, so that She could be comfortable whenever She desired to come here. The cowherd boys would send their cows into the water to drink and cool down from the summer heat. In this way, Pāvana-sarovara was a place for everyone. The *gopīs* performed pastimes with Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa also performed pastimes with the cowherd boys. Of course, we feel like we are nowhere, in the middle of these fields, but that's not really the case.

We are on the outer periphery of Nandagrāma. This is part of the general *parikramā* path for Nandagrāma where there naturally

are many places of Nanda and Yaśodā's pastimes and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in relation to them. After all, this is where Kṛṣṇa resided when He was very young. We will not go up the hill to Nandagrāma today because I had an overdose of pāṇḍās yesterday and there's lots of them in Nandagrāma. Pāṇḍās are those from *brāhmaṇa* descent who maintain themselves by doing *pūjās* for the pilgrims.

Next we will go to Moti-kuṇḍa, which is famous for the pearl pastime. It is such a nice pastime that I didn't want to miss that place.

Pastimes of pleasure

Pāvana-sarovara is a beautiful place. Normally it is very quiet but someone is expressing his ecstasy with a whistle and he can't get enough of it. What can we do? It sounds like a bird, an intense bird. We also get into the mood of transcendental enjoyment, playing with the water or sitting there out on the chhatris. Let's see if those guys will make it back on that slippery, moss covered platform, partially submerged under water. Get your cameras ready just in case someone gets a holy dip for extra purification, as it has happened before.

This is our transcendental enjoyment. Transcendental enjoyment is really what goes on in the spiritual world. It is what they do all the time; no-one is working. In the *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* there is a description of Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā. Kṛṣṇa had a headache and didn't get up. Everyone was quiet: "Shhhh, Kṛṣṇa has a headache!"

Then Satyabhāmā spoke up, "I can't stand this hypocrisy. I just can't stand it! Everyone is sidestepping the real issue. We all know very well that Kṛṣṇa doesn't have a headache at all."

"Satyabhāmā please, calm down! Satyabhāmā please, please!"

"No!" Satyabhāmā was not ready to be quiet. Finally she pointed out that actually Kṛṣṇa was in separation from the residents of Vṛndāvana and all the queens knew very well that Kṛṣṇa had no attachment to them but His real attachment was to the residents of Vṛndāvana.

Padmāvatī said, "How can that be? He's glad that He's out of there. The way they treated Him was really too much! They made Him work so hard. He is from a royal family and what did they do to Him? They made Him herd cows and work so hard with these animals every day by picking up their stool. And then He had to milk the cows with His own hands. No wonder Kṛṣṇa doesn't want to go back to Vṛndāvana. No wonder! They burned Him out completely."
Everyone said, "Shut up, Padmāvatī! Padmāvatī is going senile."

Maybe a person who is mentally and intellectually losing it will think that Kṛṣṇa is working when He is herding the cows but these are actually Kṛṣṇa's pleasure pastimes. That is His business here – pleasure pastimes. That is the nature of Vṛndāvana. It is nice that some of you went to sit under these little chhatris, the carved sandstone little shade roofs that are in the middle of the water of Pāvana-sarovara and that have partially submerged walkways. It's a part of a fun, pleasure pastime. We are here to actually have a good time, to relish being in Pāvana-sarovara and at the same time appreciate the transcendental mercy that is here. The lucky ones are the ones who fall into the water. That group over there looks especially excited. Are you ready to walk back over that slippery, partially submerged walkway? We are waiting!



MOTI-KUṆḌA

At the time of initiation we receive pearls from our
spiritual master. It is a great treasure that
we must plant. Water them with the milk of
devotional service and they will sprout,
producing bushes with more pearls.
Initiation must be taken in that spirit.
We make offerings. We do not just
take; we must give or we will
dry up.

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has written a book about the pearl pastime that occurred here. It's not a very long book, only about eleven pages, so I think I'll read from the book and then comment a little here and there.

Narration from *Mukta-carita* by Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

Obeisances to the son of Gopendra Nanda, who enchants the world with His *līlā*, whose complexion is like a blooming blue lotus and who is as beautiful as millions of Cupids.

Obeisances to the Divine Couple, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, who are immersed in the ocean of playful buying and selling of pearls, and who are eager to defeat each other.

I worship that full moon that rose from the womb of Mother Śacī to distribute the nectar of His own loving devotional service on earth.

I bow down to my spiritual master, who gave me the holy name, the son of Mother Śacī, Svarūpa Dāmodara, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and his older brother, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, the great abode of Mathurā and the pastures of Vraja, Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Govardhana Hill, and the hope of attaining Rādhikā and Mādhava, by his grace.

The ocean of Vṛndāvana is filled with waves of the nectarean pastimes of Lord Hari. I bow down to the most blissful devotees who dwell there.

One day, after having heard something about this, Satyabhāmā eagerly asked Kṛṣṇa: "From where have these sweet vines, from whose pearls my bangles were made, come from, O Lord?"

Kṛṣṇa, remembering the story, became slightly afflicted within,

but joyful without and said: "There was a time when pearls grew on vines! Now they are kept in oysters." Satyabhāmā became curious after hearing this and repeatedly encouraged Kṛṣṇa to tell her more.

Kṛṣṇa then said: "One day in the month of Kārttika there was a Dīpāvalī festival in Gokula, near Govardhana. Everyone there was busily engaged in preparing all the paraphernalia for this. The cowherd-men were especially absorbed in decorating their cows and pets and the *gopīs* were decorating themselves in their dressing rooms with different ornaments.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī was decorating Herself with Her *sakhīs* with the best pearls in a pavilion by the bank of Malyahari-kuṇḍa (near Rādhā-kuṇḍa). I eagerly went there when I heard this from my pet parrot, who is justly named Vicakṣaṇā (clever), to beg some pearls from them, as I was eager to decorate My cows Haṁsi and Hariṇī with them.

But they were very clever and just looked at Me with disdain from the corners of their lotus-blue eyes, like sages with half-closed eyes. When I saw this I told them: 'O you mountains of pride, coming forth from attaining the valuable touchstone of youthful beauty! Will you not even lend an ear to the request of your dear friend?' Hearing this, the lively Lalitā, smiling at her friends, said with feigned anger: 'O upstart! Why are You wasting Your time asking for pearls that are fit only for great queens?'

Hearing this, I curiously replied: 'O, if you don't give Me some pearls for decorating the four horns of my two most dear cows, then their decoration cannot be completed. Where else will I get pearls?'

Lalitā replied: 'O Kṛṣṇa, there is not even one pearl good enough

for Your cows!' Hearing this I said: 'O, most talkative Lalitā! Just wait, you miser! I will get pearls from My mother Vrajeśvarī and plant them in a field! Then I will have more pearls than you!'

When I went to My mother with this request, she said: 'Silly boy, pearls don't grow in fields. ' But I assured her: 'You will see. Within three days My pearl vine will sprout!' So she gave Me some pearls and I planted them in a field by the Jalaharana-ghāṭa with three friends helping Me to fence the place off. Then for the sake of avenging Myself for their refusal to give Me pearls I had one friend go to them to ask for milk to water the pearl seeds, but they said: 'How can you grow pearls in a field and nourish them with milk? We only give milk to our cows. We are not obliged to grow pearl vines with milk to decorate Kṛṣṇa's cows!'

Then I took milk from our own *gośālā* – lots of it – and sprinkled my pearls with it every day. Then on the fourth day the vines came out. I was in ecstasy and I pulled at My mother's dress to show her the sprouting pearl plants. She was amazed and thought to herself: 'What is this?' She went back home and told all the cowherds, who, after hearing about it, all came there to see. They thought the area was just full of thorns, so they climbed a nearby Kadamba tree to look over the fence.

They were amazed when they saw the beautiful vines, full of honeybees intoxicated by the wonderful fragrance. The *gopīs* were also amazed to see the beautiful flowers growing from the vines. Eight types of pearls had grown on My vines, and they were all most charming.

When the gopīs saw all this they became greedy for pearls and consulted their counsellor: 'O friend, now Kṛṣṇa will surely not give us any pearls. Why don't we plough a field twice as big as Kṛṣṇa's

and grow our own pearls there?' Hearing this, Lalitā said: 'O *gopīs*, are you afflicted with disturbed life airs? Everyone in Vṛndāvana knows that Kṛṣṇa knows a lot of amazing mantras through which He was able to do things like lift Govardhana Hill. What is so wonderful for him to grow a pearl vine? That very delicate blue lotus that grew from the pond of the womb of Mother Yaśodā must have some special power to do these things. '

Then Tungavidya said: 'Why don't we ask Nāndīmukhī, the pupil of Mother Paurṇamāsī, if she is also initiated in such mantras'. All the *gopīs* said: 'Well spoken Tungavidya!' and they went to Nāndīmukhī to tell her of their plan. 'Let the desire tree of our playful eagerness grow!' they said.

Remembering how I grew My pearl tree, Nāndīmukhī said: 'O *sakhīs*, it was not by mantra that Mukunda could grow a pearl tree in clay soil. ' The gopīs asked: 'Then how could He do it then?' Nāndīmukhī replied: 'Because He has natural powers like that. What is the wonder that Kṛṣṇa can grow a pearl tree in an abode where the trees are made of coral, have sapphire leaves and buds of diamonds and pearls, and fruits of rubies, and other trees are golden? I'm sure that if you girls plant pearls and sprinkle on them even tastier fresh butter, you will grow even bigger pearl trees. '

Drinking Nāndīmukhī's sweet words with the cups of their ears, the *gopīs* praised her and embraced her with great satisfaction. Then they happily returned home, took all the pearls they could find, planted them in a scarcely protected field and started sprinkling them three times a day with the best milk, butter and ghee. Hearing of their activities, Candrāvalī and her group became greedy and envious, and they also planted many pearls, using all the pearls they could find in their homes and on their bodies. Then, after a few days, all the *gopīs* were devastated in their pride when they

found that thorny twigs had sprouted from their pearl seeds, and they became afraid that I would ridicule them.

One day the adults found that all their pearls and milk products had disappeared from their homes, having been used by their daughters for growing pearl trees, so they enquired from them. The older *gopīs* said: 'O old ones! Our girls have used them all for planting pearl trees. If they sprout we will gain great wealth, just like Kṛṣṇa did when He grew pearls in His field. They were suitable for great queens!'

When Viśākhā inspected the sprouts on the *gopīs*' fields she said: 'O *sakhīs*, I do not think that these sprouts are quite the same as Kṛṣṇa's. We have protected our fields from the eyes of Kṛṣṇa's friends, so I wonder what could have happened. ' When I heard from My friends that only thorns sprouted from the *gopīs*' fields, I went there, just for fun and said, slightly smiling: 'O, I have heard that you have grown so many nice pearls. Since I am your best friend, will you give Me the first fruits of your harvest?'

The *gopīs* replied: 'If we had really planted pearls, then why isn't the whole of Vraja filled with pearl trees now?' proudly denying their humiliation. I said: 'Why are you giving up the *vaiśya* duties of charity and taking to miserliness?' Then I lavishly decorated all my cows, calves, oxen, bullocks, goats and even all the monkeys with pearl ornaments. The *gopīs*, being afraid of their parents' anger over having lost all their wealth of pearls wondered what to do. They told each other: 'It's all Nāndīmukhī's fault. The traitor has joined Kṛṣṇa's side. '

So they went there and severely chastised her, but Nāndīmukhī said: ' I swear to you, on all my penances that I did not deceive you. It is rather all your own fault!' The *gopīs* said: 'Why?' Nāndīmukhī

said: 'Because you made such a noise about planting these pearls that Kṛṣṇa's friends have heard of it. Did you keep any guard around your fields?' The girls admitted they had not.

Nāndīmukhī angrily said: 'These clever boys must have heard what you planted. Then that great deceiver, Kṛṣṇa, must have bribed them with sweet rice, especially the greedy ones like Madhumaṅgala, who is easily bribed in such ways. Then they must have crept into your fields, taken all your pearls and planted seeds of thorny plants instead. Then they threw all the pearls into the Yamunā. I know this for sure!'

Not satisfied with her explanation the girls all said: 'O you greatest of cheaters, Nāndīmukhī. O crooked godsister of that clown Madhumaṅgala. You're just a Kali-yuga ascetic! Just wait!' Coming back home again they considered once more what to do. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī said: 'Nāndīmukhī may have deceived us or not, but I'm very afraid of My parents. We can only pacify their anger if we can show them some pearls. We must make some deal with Kṛṣṇa. '

The clever Candramukhī then took some gold as a price to pay Kṛṣṇa for some pearls, and said: 'I will take Kancalata with me and we will somehow buy some pearls from Kṛṣṇa.' Taking the gold, they came to Kṛṣṇa's pearl garden. When they saw Me sitting there with Subala, they told him: 'O Subala, we have heard that you have grown fresh pearls. Take this gold in exchange for some of the most exquisite among them. '

Then I said: 'Once I came to you girls for pearls and you did not give Me any. You did not even give Me a milk-cup to sprinkle My pearl field. I would rather toss all My pearls into the Yamunā. You may even offer Me all your domestic belongings in exchange for them, but I will not give you even one pearl of Mine!'

Then Kancalata and Candramukhī said: 'How can we be saved from our parents' anger now? It is too far to go to Mathurā for pearls now. O Subala, please mediate for us. Tell us what price we must pay.' Hearing this I said: 'Well, I am very soft- hearted. I'm not so hard-hearted like you girls. I suppose I must let you buy some. But how will we determine an appropriate price?'

Subala, taking the role of mediator, said: 'So, my friend, how much do you want for them? I replied: 'Look, Subala, these girls were sent by Rādhā and the others. They do not know that this gold is not sufficient for My pearls. Therefore, how can I negotiate a suitable price with them? Even though there are many *cintāmaṇi* stones in the golden basket-like breasts of Candramukhī, it is not sufficient. Even the Kaustubha gem which dwells on the chest of the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha cannot be one billionth part of the price of just one of My pearls!'

Hearing this, Kancalata looked at Me angrily and, frowning, said: 'O brainless Candramukhī, I should not have come with you to see this villain! I still came here on your request to get some pearls, but now I'm leaving.' Candramukhī replied: 'Kancalata, you are speaking the truth. I'm also going. How can I ascertain a price for these pearls alone?'

When I saw them both leaving I said: 'Subala, in this way we cannot ascertain a price for these pearls.' Subala appealed to Candramukhī: 'O *sakhi*, my friend will only discuss the price when all the *gopīs* are here, like Rādhā and Lalitā. They can come and take the desired amount of pearls. I will mediate. ' Thus Candramukhī and Kancalata returned to Rādhā and told Her with feigned anger all that had transpired.

Then Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Lalitā and all the *sakhīs* came to the pearl

garden, where Candramukhī told Subala: 'Friend Subala, here we are. Let us in a friendly spirit ascertain a suitable price.' Then Subala called me and explained everything. I came and asked: 'Why has Rādhā not come personally?' Tungavidya replied: 'O Prince of Gokula, She is lovingly engaged in household duties by Jaṭilā, unable to leave home.'

Then Madhumaṅgala secretly told Me that Rādhā was hiding close by, hearing everything we have said. So I told Tungavidya: 'Doesn't She want any pearls then?' Tungavidya said: 'We will take Her share of the pearls.' I replied: 'Viśākhā is just like Rādhā, and Rādhā is just like Viśākhā. Then Viśākhā can pay for Rādhā also. But, anyone who does not come personally to get her pearls must pay four times the normal amount. This is my firm decision!' Then I told Subala: 'Bring the pearl box here and show them our pearls. You can take the smallest pearl out and give it to Viśākhā for Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. If she cannot pay then the same will go for her as for Rādhā (four times the regular amount). As long as Rādhā does not come I will keep Viśākhā locked up in the prison house of the Mādhavī-kuñja.'

Then Madhumaṅgala said: 'Dear friend, even if You obstruct them, the other men's wives are always able to escape.' I replied: 'I know that, but don't worry, I know it is very improper to destroy the good name of housewives, but the scriptures also say: *sva karyam uddharet prajnah, kurvann api vigarhitam* – wise men sometimes perform wicked acts, but in the process they always elevate themselves. And in the *saṁhitās* it is said: *ahare vyavahare ca lajjam api parityajet* – while eating or doing business one should not feel ashamed. I will stay at the Mādhavī-kuñja, remaining awake the whole night guarding my prisoners.'

Hearing this Subala smiled and said: 'O dear Puruṣottama, how long

must Viśākhā remain in anxiety?' I replied: 'As long as Rādhā has not personally come here to pay for Her pearls.' Then Madhumaṅgala said: 'Friend, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is more expert than any other *gopī*, especially when it comes to running away, as You noticed when You tried to tax Her for carrying ghee over Govardhana Hill. You became bewildered by Her then and became overwhelmed by dizziness. I'm very worried the same thing will happen here.'

Then I smiled and told Madhumaṅgala in front of everyone: 'Friend, you are uselessly worrying. I won't become dizzy. And even if I do, then I will use Her left lotus stem-like arm as a pillow for My head, lie on Her chest using My yellow cloth as a pillow. I will enjoy Myself having a loving discussion with Her about the price of pearls and in this way We will quickly pass through the night. Otherwise, I will enjoy with Her in My dream, keeping Her bound firmly on the dense darkness of My chest, as in a prison, holding Her hips tight with My hard, sapphire coloured, snake-like arms!'

Hearing this everyone laughed. But Rādhā looked at Me and Viśākhā from the corner of Her eyes and said: 'Go on, go to Candrāvalī's *kuñja* and stay there,' chastising Me with a smile. Viśākhā looked at Me in a crooked way and said: 'O Villain, get out! Get out!' Then she hid among the *sakhīs*. Then they all told Subala: 'Subala, give up your dirty tricks. If you still want to sell your pearls then show them to us and tell us a reasonable price, otherwise we will go home. We can also get pearls in Mathurā if we want.'

Hearing this, Subala opened the pearl basket and showed them our pearls. Then he told Me: 'Dear friend, it is only by Your mercy that You wish to deal with these girls at all. All their domestic wealth and their entire wealth of cows is not a sufficient price for even one of our pearls. So, be kind and give them some pearls for just a small

price, or even just for free, forgetting your miserliness.' I replied: 'No, no, My friend. Our profession as *vaiśyas* is to do business. Now what can I do? But to take heed of your request I will be somewhat lenient in My price to them.'

Subala laughed and said: 'Well said my friend. Let them pick out their favourite pearls and make a pile of them, and then you decide on the price.' I thought that was a very good idea. Subala said: 'Please sell them the pearls at the price they humbly suggest.' I wondered what they had said to him to make him suggest that. Subala then said: 'They say they can get pearls in Mathurā, but it would take them two days to get the pearls from there, and their parents are becoming more and more angry waiting for their lost pearls and ornaments to be returned. Therefore they gave up all shame and approached you here in the forest. They said that if You give them the pearls now they will pay you in a day or two, and that You should have faith in them as honest girls who are objects of Your love anyway. If you do so, Your affection for them will simply increase.'

Then I laughed and told Subala: 'O, you are of very purified intellect, but you do not understand anything of their behaviour. They are all great experts in diplomatic trickery. As soon as they have received the pearls they will take them inside the great fortresses of their husbands' homes, on the high mountains of the elders' protection, then what will we do?'

Subala replied: 'They will not do that, my friend. And even if they do I will take them into the forest with the Arjuna trees and the blackbirds and I will embrace them...'"

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As we are reading, we can see that the pearls are an excuse to

increase *mādhurya rasa*. Meeting is never cheap. Meeting is never easy between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. There are always obstacles. It is more the anticipation that counts in the spiritual world. In the end, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were pleased to be in each other's company and to share Their pearls. And Satyabhāmā was very pleased to hear the story.

I read this because I felt that since Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was personally speaking, why would I retell the story in my own words? I might miss something. Raghunātha dāsa is obviously a *pāriṣada* devotee – one who sees the pastimes of the Lord. He is not just hearing about them but is actually seeing them.

Planting pearls

We, of course, see through the eyes of Raghunātha dāsa. We are hearing. I like this metaphor of growing pearls and I often use it as an example in relation to initiation. At the time of initiation we receive pearls from our spiritual master. We should plant these pearls and water them with devotional service. Then these pearls will sprout, produce bushes, and many more pearls will come from them. That is the way it works. It is very important that initiation is taken in that spirit; initiation means that one must make offerings. It does not mean that we just take. It means we must give.

Yes, treasures were received; pearls were received but bring the milk of devotional service. Bring the milk of all your *prāṇair arthair dhiyā vācā*; your hard labour, your intelligence, your words, your wealth. Bring it all in service because that is how we are watering the pearls of initiation – by devotional service. And then it will become wonderful.

However, if we just take the pearls and plant them but don't water them, our initiation vows will become dry. We will be initiated but

will still struggle with our mind, struggle with our senses, because we are not fulfilled. When the heart is not fulfilled by devotional service then we try to fill the emptiness with temporary enjoyment. It is only when the heart is filled with deep absorption in service and when there is so much service, that there is no room for anything else. As we grow the pearls we received, we will get more pearls, and as we keep making offerings in devotional service, our spiritual wealth will increase to the point where there is no more room for material desires. Then we can actually attain fulfilment. So this is the purpose of initiation and I like to use the analogy of the pearl story as a meditation for all of you.

A focus on Kṛṣṇa's pleasure

We are closing the day. We have seen how Vṛndādevī makes all the arrangements for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure in His transcendental playground where Kṛṣṇa's pleasure is the focus. When I said that *rasa* is predominant, it refers, ultimately, to Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. When Kṛṣṇa's pleasure is predominant then automatically everyone's pleasure is included because Kṛṣṇa is so lovable. Kṛṣṇa is irresistible. Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān. The word 'Bhagavān' is made up of three syllables: *'bha'*, *'ga'* and *'va'*, which stand for *bhajanīya guṇa-viśiṣṭa*, Kṛṣṇa is so irresistible that you have to worship Him. He is so amazing that as you get to know Him you simply have to worship and please Him. Based on that principle, we are now here to serve Him and to make arrangements for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. That is simply what we are doing on this *parikramā* – hearing about Kṛṣṇa, speaking about Kṛṣṇa, chanting His holy name and glorifying Kṛṣṇa for His pleasure. That is the first focus: to act for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. That is the nature of the spiritual world. That is the focus of Vṛndādevī, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and all the *gopīs* – Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. And that is my next point.

We went to Pāvana-sarovara which is like a playground with a

wonderful pond where one can enjoy. It was named after Pāvana Gopa, the father of Viśākhā. It was so nice that we also played a little, although no one fell in the water. I was a little disappointed. For a moment it seemed like a close call and we thought someone might just fall in. Madhu Paṇḍita Dāsa, with his backpack on, definitely stole the show. So there was entertainment and in the same way the cowherd boys would engage in playful pastimes. We also saw some temples and it was not difficult to imagine a beautiful palace on the other side built by Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu so that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī could be at Pāvana-sarovara in all comfort.

Cows first

Finally, we came here to meditate on Kṛṣṇa planting pearls. At that time Kṛṣṇa was still quite young and so were the *gopīs*. It was a great embarrassment to their parents that the pearls were lost. As I mentioned, it was Dīpāvalī and Kṛṣṇa was thinking of decorating His cows but the girls were thinking of decorating themselves and that is also a natural division of labour. That's how it is in the spiritual world and whatever goes on in the material world is a reflection of that. What can we say? But we see that Kṛṣṇa was showing the girls that they should give priority to the cows. There was a hidden message; we should serve the cows first: *namo brahmaṇya-devāya go-brāhmaṇa-hitāya ca*, first serve the cows and then the *brāhmaṇas*. At Pāvana-sarovara there was a person who asked for donations for *go-sevā*. The ones who gave are fortunate because *go-sevā* is our first service.

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, it is described that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu met an astrologer and He asked him, "Who was I in my last life?" The astrologer did all these calculations. He did it three times and he was shocked. He didn't know what to say.

"What do your calculations say?" asked Mahāprabhu.

"The calculations say that in Your last life You were the Supreme Personality of Godhead." Lord Caitanya responded, "No, no. That is all wrong. I happen to know who I was in my last life. I was a cowherd boy who took care of the cows and because of that pious activity I took birth as the son of a *brāhmaṇa* in this life."

There is no doubt that by serving the cows our piety will increase so much that we will automatically become dear to Kṛṣṇa, and when we are dear to Kṛṣṇa, then He will throw some pearls our way. That is the point. He will throw some spiritual wealth our way. He will throw some mercy our way and that mercy is what we need because we operate on mercy only.

Pearls of mercy

Without mercy how can we chant? We have to look for mercy so that we can chant. It is the only way. We have to beg for mercy wherever we can! In Moti-kuṇḍa, there is mercy. They say that this is the actual pond. The other one might also be the pond. I don't know if such things are exactly right after 5,000 years but this is the place where the pastime took place.

We visited these three places and our meditation has continued. Each day we meditate a little. As we look at the holy places and pastimes from various angles, slowly we are approaching the spiritual reality. We discussed earlier that there is *prakaṭa-līlā* and *aprakaṭa-līlā* (the pastimes we can and cannot see) and gradually we are seeing. We see through our ears. We see by hearing.

In this way we get a *darśana* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa although we are not qualified. We can pray that one day we may become qualified and in the meanwhile, let us do some service while we are here in the hope that Kṛṣṇa will throw some pearls our way. The pearls I'm talking about are the pearls of transcendental mercy because

without them, how can we ever do devotional service and stick to it? Not so easy. We need those pearls of mercy. Thank you very much. *Śrī Mukta-carita ki jai*. Śrīla Prabhupāda *ki jai*.



KĀMYAVANA

We come to such holy places to penetrate a little deeper. We come as servants of Śrīla Prabhupāda and he connects us to all the eternal associates. If we try to approach them directly we will have no *adhikāra*. Sooner or later, we will be blocked. Prabhupāda is at home in Vṛndāvana therefore we are at home here as well.

Sudevī Temple

Today we have the good fortune of having my dear friend Vaiṣṇava Mahārāja here with us. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote a letter saying that in Vṛndāvana there were six Gosvāmīs, therefore he wanted twenty-five Gosvāmīs in the Kṛṣṇa Balarāma Mandira, or twenty-five men of the calibre of the Gosvāmīs. I always wanted to be one of them and I am sure that Vaiṣṇava Mahārāja is, because he has been living and serving in Vṛndāvana for more than three and a half decades. We were here together, in the past, for a substantial time and it is from those days that we are friends.

Therefore I am very happy that he is here today. Somehow or the other I became involved in management. It was not so much my desire but I was told to do so. I never had all of this time to go on *parikramās*. These days I am making the time that I never had. But Vaiṣṇava Mahārāja was the *saṅkīrtana* leader and he was preaching in large areas like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Then when he would come back to Vṛndāvana, he was always on *parikramā*. So he knows every corner of the holy *dhāma*.

In recent times, we have come to Unchagaon every year. Just past Unchagaon is Sunhera village, the village of Sudevī. Today, we have come with bus-loads of people, and the locals get a little shy when they see so many people. If you come alone you will see that they are very friendly. They will invite you into their homes and give you meals. They are very hospitable here. You can come back here by taxi; just remember to go past Varṣāṇā, Unchagaon and then Sunhera.

May we become the servant

We will talk a little about the a*ṣṭa-sakhīs*. One point I wanted to

make is that their focus is not Kṛṣṇa. Their focus is on Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Their aim is to unite and serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa but particularly to assist Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in every possible way and they, in turn, are assisted by the *mañjarīs*. The leader of the *aṣṭa-sakhīs* is Lalitā and the assistant of Lalitā is Rūpa-mañjarī, the head of our *sampradāya*. Rūpa-mañjarī, who makes arrangements to support and assist Rādhārāṇī, is none other than Rūpa Gosvāmī.

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī explains that this is particularly the essence of the movement of Lord Caitanya: to assist the greater devotees. We don't think, "I will serve Kṛṣṇa directly." Who are we to serve Kṛṣṇa directly? We will assist Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Sudevī is also in that mood of assisting Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and this mood is something very specific to her group of *gopī* followers. There are other groups, as we have already discussed, that are in competition with Rādhārāṇī's group but this group aims to please Her. As we are part of Lord Caitanya's movement, we belong to that group. We are always meant to be in the mood of assisting someone, assisting a senior Vaiṣṇava. Therefore our identity is that of a servant.

Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasised that the nature of the *jīva* is to be a servant, but the highest service is to be the servant of the servant. Rather than serving the Supreme Lord directly, we are serving the devotee of the Supreme Lord. Let that be our meditation; may we become the servant of a devotee.

Rādhā-Govinda Temple

A few days ago, in Vṛndā-kuṇḍa, we were meditating on Vṛndādevī who makes all the arrangements for Rādhā's and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Just as Kṛṣṇa is the origin of many forms, so too is Rādhārāṇī, as Kṛṣṇa's counterpart. Vṛndādevī is also a manifestation of Rādhārāṇī.

The original Rādhā-Govinda

On this altar, we find Vṛndādevī and we also find Deities of Rādhā and Govinda. They are *pratibhu* Deities or replicas of the original. When the original Rādhā-Govinda Deities were leaving Vṛndāvana, it was such a momentous occasion. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, the Govindajī temple is described by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja as a temple where thousands of devotees would daily hear the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu from the *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, written by Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura. These devotees and *pūjārīs* were most exalted.

The Rādhā-Govinda Deities were in the centre of the worship of the Gosvāmīs and at the heart of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's movement. When They were leaving Vṛndāvana, the devotees experienced intense separation and as They passed through Rādhā-kuṇḍa, expansions of the original Deities were made. These are called *pratibhu* Deities. In that way, they continued to worship Rādhā-Govinda in Vraja. Kāmyavana is at the edge of the *dhāma*, the beginning of Rajasthan, and another set of *pratibhu* Deities were made here.

The original Rādhā-Govinda are now in Jaipur and the devotees worship Them there. Vṛndāvana is manifesting there. How many times have we went there for *darśana* and witnessed the transcendental worship of Rādhā-Govinda? There are thousands of devotees who very enthusiastically worship Them, and give everything to the Deity. Once, when I was at the Rādhā-Govinda Temple, there was an old lady who came to me and kept pulling my cloth. She gave me a small pair of binoculars and I got the *darśana* of Govindajī close-up. I saw that He was wearing a watch! Gopīnātha also wears a watch now.

So the devotees give the Lord everything. Nothing is lacking in

Their comfort. In Jaipur, they are afraid that if they neglect the Deities then the Deities will return to Vṛndāvana. And in Vṛndāvana, we are just waiting for Them to return. The Vṛndāvana Gosvāmīs ask, "When are our Deities coming back?"
And the Jaipur *pūjārīs* respond, "Never!

In Jaipur, Rādhā-Govinda are worshipped in the mood of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. That mood, of distributing mercy everywhere, travelled from Vṛndāvana to Rajasthan as well. You certainly find it in the temple of Govindajī in Jaipur. When the water from the altar is distributed, you don't receive just a little water on your head but lots of it. Mercy should be distributed in abundance. That spirit comes with Rādhā-Govinda from Vṛndāvana because They were at the centre of the *prema bhaktas*, the followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. All those who followed the Gosvāmīs resided in Vṛndāvana. And in Kāmyavana we remember Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda.

Vṛndāvana is home

We are at home here. Śrīla Prabhupāda would say, "Vṛndāvana is my home. Māyāpur is my place of worship and Bombay is my office." This is the home of Kṛṣṇa. This is the home of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is non-different from Kṛṣṇa. He brings the transcendental ecstasy of Vṛndāvana with great force to the entire world.

Before Him, all of Vṛndāvana was covered. When the Gosvāmīs first arrived in Vṛndāvana, all the pastime places were forgotten. Some were known to the villagers, but it was not common knowledge. Many Deities were installed by Kṛṣṇa's great grandson, Vajranābha, and with time, the locations of some of Them were forgotten. Vṛndāvana was overgrown with forests. At the time of the Gosvāmīs, there were many deer in the forests and even now

you can find some type of antelope or deer that run very swiftly. The blue cows are also found in Vṛndāvana. They are free spirits and you cannot keep them in captivity. I am like that also, and Mahārāja as well. Maybe we are Nilgai, blue cows.

In Kāmyavana, we are thinking about the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. We think of how Sudevī completely dedicates her life to assist Rādhārāṇī in attracting Kṛṣṇa. Somehow or the other, she must help Rādhārāṇī capture the mind of Kṛṣṇa. She is fully dedicated to that service and all the *aṣṭa-sakhīs* are. This is our mood too. We look at Vṛndādevī, who organises the pastimes of Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa, but how far can we see? Can we serve Sudevī directly? No. We see Śrīla Prabhupāda as the person we are meant to serve. We serve Śrīla Prabhupāda, who serves his spiritual master, who serves Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, who serves the other *ācāryas*. I always say that I entered Vṛndāvana through the Prabhupāda gate. We came via the Prabhupāda gate and this is very significant. Different people come to Vṛndāvana in different ways.

kṛta-puṇya-puñjāḥ: What pious activities must the cowherd boys have performed to associate with Kṛṣṇa and play with Him? What is behind all that childhood play? What service had they attained? Now, they imitate animals while playing with Kṛṣṇa, but what did they do before that? What had they done in so many previous lives? Similarly, we can enquire about these residents of Sunhera who are serving in the *dhāma*. What did they do to achieve that position? Vaiṣṇava Mahārāja explained that people in the village of Sudevī are very fortunate. They are extremely exalted. What pious activities must they have performed?

Another Deity that was taken away from Vṛndāvana is Madana-mohana who first went to Jaipur but is now in Karauli. I had a nice experience in Karauli, where a *pūjārī* was kind to me and offered

me a full plate of *prasādam*. I said to that *pūjārī*, "The whole world is being ravaged by Kali-yuga but you are so fortunate to be in such a holy place. You do not know just how bad Kali-yuga is."
He replied, "There are thousands of Kali-yuga in a day of Brahma. What is Kali-yuga? It is just a short moment in a day of Brahma. It comes and goes."

He had a broader vision. He had transcendental vision. This *pūjārī* was not unaware of Kali-yuga, but he did not care about it because he could see how small Kali-yuga is in the bigger picture. Sometimes, we get into the Kali-yuga *kathā* mood: "How bad is Kali-yuga!" Sometimes, we just chant about Kali-yuga. The truth is that Kali-yuga is insignificant in places where Kṛṣṇa is present, because it is simply another assistant of *māyā*. Wherever there is Kṛṣṇa, there is no *māyā*.

That is why we come to such holy places – to penetrate a little deeper. Of course, we come here as servants of Śrīla Prabhupāda and he connects us to all these eternal associates. When we try to go directly to the eternal associates we will find that we have no *adhikāra*. We will find that, sooner or later, we will be blocked. Prabhupāda is our connection. He is at home in Vṛndāvana. In this way, we are also at home in Vṛndāvana. Very much so. Some people may feel that this place is a little austere. No, it's home. We are at home now, because this is Kṛṣṇa's home. In many other places, Kṛṣṇa is far away. We are very fortunate to come to such places where Kṛṣṇa has lived.

Vimala-kuṇḍa

Kāmyavana is the biggest forest of all the forests in Vṛndāvana. One can easily spend a month in Kāmyavana and visit different places every day. To cover it all today is a challenge. If

we travel with the speed of our feet, we will not go very far. If we go with the speed of a bus, then I do not think we will get much further. If we would have helicopters for each one of us, then there would be a lot of noise. That would also not be a good idea. We have to resort to the speed of the mind, and travel in our minds to these different places, absorbing the transcendental atmosphere.

A *parikramā* at the speed of mind

We see that the Pāṇḍavas were here in Kāmyavana. Chaurasi Kumbha is a palace which was constructed by Viśvakarmā, the architect of the demigods. There is also Pañca Tīrtha and many places where the Pāṇḍavas performed their pastimes.

We can all recall the famous story of Durvāsā Muni who came to the Pāṇḍavas with sixty thousand disciples, looking for some hospitality. Draupadī had a plate that could provide unlimited quantities of *prasādam* for the day, but only before she herself ate. Yudhiṣṭhira received the guests of Durvāsā Muni and said, "No problem." Draupadī did not dare to say that she had already eaten. She did not know what to do. She was in great despair.

She just went to her quarters and cried and prayed to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa finally came and she explained her problems. Kṛṣṇa just said, "I am hungry." It was the last straw for Draupadī but there was a little *prasādam* left on the spoon. When Kṛṣṇa ate that little bit of *prasādam*, He was fully satisfied. And as soon as Kṛṣṇa was fully satisfied, Durvāsā Muni and all his associates felt completely full. They took their bath in Vimala-kuṇḍa and left. This famous pastime occurred here in Kāmyavana.

The *Mahābhārata* describes another famous pastime in Kāmyavana. One of the Pāṇḍavas, travelling alone, stopped at this pond to drink water. A huge crane told him that he could not drink

from the pond. Not caring about the crane, he drank anyway and died. Each time, Yudhiṣṭhira sent another Pāṇḍava in search of the first but they all drank the water and died. Finally, Yudhiṣṭhira went himself. He was thirsty and also wanted to drink the water but the crane said, "No, you cannot drink from here before you have answered these questions." When the crane had given Bhīma the same instruction, Bhīma responded, "Who are you to tell me not to drink?" Yudhiṣṭhira however, thought that it was wise to try and answer. The crane asked many questions, the most important being, "What is the greatest wonder in this world?"
Yudhiṣṭhira answered, "The most amazing thing is that although we see that everyone dies eventually, we think that it will not happen to us."

Even if we think that it will happen, it still seems like it is far away. Yudhiṣṭhira answered the questions and the crane turned out to be Yamarāja himself, also known as Dharmarāja. Yudhiṣṭhira satisfied Yamarāja who was actually his father because Kuntī received sons from various *devatās*. The other Pāṇḍavas were revived.

We also remember Aśvatthāmā, who committed the heinous act of killing the sleeping sons of Draupadī. Arjuna cut off the jewel on his head and then Aśvatthāmā was cast out. It is said that Aśvatthāmā came to Kāmyavana and that he is still performing austerity somewhere here.

There are also many places related to Rāmacandra. Lanka and other places are all represented in Vraja. At Lanka, the *gopīs* had to walk around a huge lake when carrying their milk sweets to the market.

One day, they challenged Kṛṣṇa, "If You really are the Supreme Personality of Godhead as You claim to be, then You have to show

it. Make a bridge across this water just as Lord Rāmacandra did. Here are the stones, there is the water and the monkeys."

All the monkeys came out of the trees and they wrote 'Kṛṣṇa' on the stones instead of 'Rāma'. They threw the stones in the water and these floated and became a bridge. The gopīs walked across it. You can see it in Lanka.

A shadow of pure love

For many of you this may be a first visit, but it surely is not meant to be the last. Again and again, little by little, we will get to know the *dhāma* to its fullest extent and not only externally. As we visit all these places we develop new relationships and our attachment to the *dhāma* increases.

This dust of Vraja is holy dust. Very powerful influences come from Vimala-kuṇḍa. And if you take a bath here you become even more purified than before. Not only do we become more and more purified, but the *dhāma* also lends us its *bhāva*, and we experience *chaya bhāva* – the shadow reflection of *bhāva*. Immediately, we get a taste of love for Kṛṣṇa.

In the *Gopāla-campū*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī addresses this topic in an interesting way. He says, "See the love that Vṛndāvana has for Kṛṣṇa." He describes Vṛndāvana, not only as the pleasure ground of Kṛṣṇa, but as itself being ecstatic with love for Kṛṣṇa. They say, 'where there is a will, there is a way,' and that is the spirit of Vṛndāvana. The *gopīs* wanted to cross the lake and there was a way. Kṛṣṇa made a way. Where there is a will, Kṛṣṇa will undoubtedly make a way. We pray that we get some of that love for Kṛṣṇa. We are here to meditate and to pray. We are here to get some of that ecstasy – the love of the holy *dhāma*.

In *Caitanya-bhāgavata* we see that it is Balarāma Himself who becomes the *dhāma*. He is Vṛndāvana. He is the one who is providing Vṛndāvana. So Balarāma's love for Kṛṣṇa is very deep. So by being in Vṛndāvana, one can get a shadow reflection of that love and then actually develop taste. This is what we need and that is our prayer for today. May we get the blessing that awakens within us some ecstasy, some love for Kṛṣṇa. With love of Kṛṣṇa, we will have no cares about austerity or anything else. We will forget about everything.

As Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says, "Kṛṣṇa is a thief; He steals everything. He steals your eyesight. He steals your ears so you can only hear about Him. He steals your mouth so you can only speak about Him. He steals your mind so that you can only think of Him. Kṛṣṇa steals everything." By visiting Vṛndāvana, that may actually come about therefore Vṛndāvana is mentioned as one of the five principle limbs of *bhakti* which can very quickly give us love of God. So our journey here is not without any benefit or without any results. There is a lot more gained than we are aware of.



PREMA-SAROVARA

Kṛṣṇa was so touched by Rādhārāṇī's feelings of separation that He cried streams and rivers for Her. He also cares for such little creatures like the bees. *Suhṛdaṁ sarva-bhūtānāṁ* – we must thoroughly realise that Kṛṣṇa is our best friend. Let us take that meditation with us.

Spiritual culture within the material world

Yesterday, we were at a place that was quite similar, but a little bigger – Pāvana-sarovara. It had the same kind of steps and other architecture, and is a good place to have your picture taken. This architecture is connected to the land of Kṛṣṇa. We see the same sandstone, chhatris (small platforms leading into the water) and carvings, which we know originates from Rajasthan. The kings of Rajasthan developed these places and arranged for this architecture. So what are we looking at? Rajasthani architecture? Or did some elements of the architecture of the spiritual world manifest in Rajasthan? What is Kṛṣṇa's eternal world like? Are there chhatris like we have here? Are there also *ghāṭas*, steps leading into the water, and platforms?

This architecture is a part of ancient tradition, as we read in descriptions of Dvārakā. Does some of the culture of the spiritual world then also manifest itself in our movement and in the *dhāma*? We read in the *dāmodara-līlā* that mother Yaśodā wore a *vāsa*, a dress, which Prabhupāda translated as a sari. It seems to be that Prabhupāda says so based not only on what he reads, but also what he sees. In the tenth canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, it is described that Kṛṣṇa played His flute while the *gopīs* sang. Whilst one *gopī* sang one melody, another *gopī* sang a harmony over that, and together they sang complicated melodies. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura commented that there were 16108 ragas in the spiritual world which are chanted by the *gopīs*. These ragas are spiritual. There are also *vīṇās*; when Kṛṣṇa plays his flute, Rādhārāṇī plays the *vīṇā* at times. Does some of the culture of the spiritual world manifest on this planet to an extent?

"Just like the residents of Vaikuṇṭha," said Prabhupāda when he saw devotees wear dhotis. When devotees spoke words in Sanskrit, Prabhupāda called it "Devanāgarī" – the language of the demigods.

Even in Vaikuṇṭha, Sanskrit is spoken. India is such a mystical place in many ways because this is the land where the Supreme Personality of Godhead appeared; no other place has that privilege. I went to an island in the middle of the ocean called Mauritius, within which is a place called Gaṅgā Talao. When it is Śivarātri, seventy-five percent of the island's population carry water in pots from Gaṅgā Talao to the other end of the island. Do they have the river Gaṅgā there? Actually, they took some Gaṅgā *jala* from India and made a *sarovara* there, a *kuṇḍa*. In India, however, Gaṅgā is actually here.

As described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Gaṅgā came into the universe when Lord Vāmana took three steps to cover the whole universe. At His second step, He cracked the shell of the universe and some water from the causal ocean poured through. That water was carried by the demigods in *kumbhas*, because the demigods knew how special Gaṅgā *jala* is. They desired to distribute this water, because you get more mercy when you distribute it than by just part-taking of it yourself. So India is such a mystical place where we have these transcendental things with transcendental origins. Some may say that this is all mythology; however, the scripture clearly confirms it. India is unique and there is no other place with such a spiritual dimension.

The mystery of separation

In the Prema-sarovara, all the holy rivers manifest. There is a story explaining how all the holy rivers came here on a pilgrimage. This place came about because of *viraha* – separation. In the philosophy presented by Caitanya Mahāprabhu, *viraha-bhāva* (mood of separation) is listed as the topmost state of love of God. It is a bit of a mystery and is difficult to understand because in our world, separation is no fun. Some people are homesick here, wondering, "Oh Vṛndāvana, so austere!" Some people feel separation from

someone, something or some place. How is separation the highest state in relation to Kṛṣṇa? Feeling separation from Kṛṣṇa is supposed to be the highest experience. How? Is separation fun? Is it ecstasy? It is difficult to understand this from an ordinary point of view. The only reason these feelings are the highest is because as soon as one is separated from Kṛṣṇa, one begins to remember Him.

When we remember Kṛṣṇa, it is special; it is not the same as remembering an ordinary, mundane thing. When we remember mundane things, then we are separated. When we chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, He is actually there, but by chanting the name 'water', water never manifests. There is a clear distinction. By remembering Kṛṣṇa, He immediately manifests Himself through that remembrance and the result is that one becomes ecstatic. Separation on the spiritual platform therefore immediately leads to remembrance, which leads to ecstasy. As such, separation is actually a cause of great ecstasy. We may understand this intellectually, but do we emotionally understand it? When Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa meet, this seems to be the highest experience.

Lake of tears

We are gathered at Prema-sarovara, where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa once met. When They saw each other in that meeting, They felt overwhelmed by emotion. There was a bumble bee who, upon seeing Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, thought, "Oh, the Divine Couple! This is the chance of my life! Let me circumambulate Them as in a *parikramā*." The bumble bee went around and around the Divine Couple three times. Rādhārāṇī started to get a bit uncomfortable and with Her cloth she tried to chase that bumble bee away. Yet the bumble bee was very eager for the nectar of seeing Their faces, so he was not so easily deterred. Madhumaṅgala came with a stick to help and started to wave it in such an intense way that the bumble bee decided, "Okay, time to retreat."

The bumble bee flew away with Madhumaṅgala in the chase. Madhumaṅgala returned as a hero and said, "This Madhusūdana is gone!"

Now Sanskrit is a language that is open to various interpretations. So 'Madhusūdana' can refer to the killer bee, but it can also refer to Kṛṣṇa, who is the killer of the demon Madhu. Upon hearing that Madhusūdana was gone, Rādhārāṇī immediately entered into this great state of shock. Thinking that Madhumaṅgala got rid of Kṛṣṇa, streams of tears flowed from Her eyes such that She couldn't even see Kṛṣṇa any more, even though He was standing in front of Her. Kṛṣṇa saw Rādhārāṇī cry and it broke His heart such that He also started to cry. From His eyes poured more streams of tears. All these tears then formed the waters of this *sarovara*, Prema-sarovara, a great and holy place. Once the various personalities of the holy waters came here on pilgrimage to get purified.

The God of the bees

Meanwhile, the bumble bee was also ecstatic. It went back to all the other bumble bees and told them what it had seen "Oh, I had such an amazing *darśana*! I looked at Them up-close. You cannot even imagine the effulgence."

Upon hearing this, all the other bumble bees were buzzing in ecstasy. It is not just human beings who accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Lord; the bumble bees do as well. After all, Kṛṣṇa also has a yellow dhoti, just like the bees, and a blackish body to go with. He is also into music as they are. The bees consider Kṛṣṇa to be the bee God and worship Him also.

This is our Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of all living things. *Suhṛdaṁ sarva-bhūtānāṁ*, He is a loving, well-wishing friend, a heartfelt friend of all living entities. We look at Kṛṣṇa as an ocean of kindness,

so inclined to be merciful. He never forgets anyone and always remembers every single living being. We may forget Kṛṣṇa, but He never forgets us, not for a moment. Kṛṣṇa always thinks about how He can bring the conditioned souls back to Him.

Of course, how did we get here in the first place? We do not have to worry about it. For example, now we are in Prema-sarovara. We came on the bus and every one of us had a seat, or at least I hope so. If not, then too bad. Bad luck and bad karma! Somebody has to have bad karma, that is just the way it is. Not everyone is on the best planet and has the best conditions in life. If I gave a whole lecture about the bus journey while we are at Prema-sarovara, we would be wasting our time. We didn't come here to talk about the bus, so similarly let's not talk about how we got into the material world. Let's just talk about Prema-sarovara, the distance between the spiritual reality and our reality, and how we can try to bridge that gap through our chanting, our *kathā* and our association. Let us focus on that here because it does not matter how we got here. We now have the opportunity for devotional service. Let us take advantage of devotional service, using every minute.

Close to Kṛṣṇa

Kṛṣṇa is *suhṛt*. He is our dear-most friend. Prabhupāda said that Kṛṣṇa is our best friend and the devotees responded, "No, Prabhupāda, you are our best friend! We don't know Kṛṣṇa; we only know you!"

Prabhupāda explained, "No, Kṛṣṇa is your best friend because He is omniscient and knows everything, whereas I do not and may disappoint you."

This quality of omniscience means that Kṛṣṇa knows the deepest desires within our hearts. He knows everything and as a result will

never disappoint us. Not that He gives us everything we want, but if we stick with Kṛṣṇa we will surely become completely fulfilled. So we should have this meditation with us as well. We must remember that Kṛṣṇa is not far away from us. Even here, in this material world, Kṛṣṇa is actually present with us.

Kṛṣṇa is also very accessible. Once I was preparing a seminar on prayer. While researching on the internet I ended up on a website with prayers dedicated to Saint Anthony. I had read a lot of the prayers online and many of them were just, "Please help me, Saint Anthony," or "Help me with my exams," or "My aunty has a problem with her knee, please help her!"

A lot of the prayers were quite materialistic but then I saw a prayer by a mother who said, "My daughter is only three years old and she has kidney failure. She has to be on this machine in the hospital. Oh, dear St Anthony, please transfer her pain unto me. Please save my daughter from this suffering." This was a deep prayer.

One prayer on the website said, "When I pray, I realise just how far away I am from God." This made me realise how different our movement is. We don't think about how far away we are, but about how close we are to Kṛṣṇa. When we chant, we feel close to Kṛṣṇa. That is our meditation. It's not like He has left us alone here, to pray and chant and somehow or the other get purified and thereby get qualified. No. He hasn't left us at all. He is our dear-most friend.

I personally think that this is a very important meditation because how else can one develop love? You can feel that sentiment by feeling close to Kṛṣṇa, by realising that He cares about us, that He is very kind and available. He cares about our ordeals, despite them being very insignificant. Children make a big deal about nothing. There is lots of drama over a toy they cannot find or someone else

playing with it. Similarly, we get worked up about many things that is just child's play from Kṛṣṇa's perspective. In one sense, all our dramas are like storms in a glass of water.

For example, in the *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, Mādhāi hit Lord Nityānanda with a pot and then wanted to hit Him again but Jagāi asked him to stop. Jagāi, therefore, got Lord Caitanya's mercy first and Mādhāi didn't, but later Nityānanda forgave him and was merciful. Yet Mādhāi still couldn't forgive himself, so Lord Nityānanda asked him to build a *ghāṭa* where all the pilgrims could bathe in the Gaṅgā. Mādhāi did this but still felt very contaminated. We may get the mercy of the Lord but even then we have to also come to the point where we can appreciate it. Now we have this opportunity to bridge this gap and we have to understand that even if we cannot forgive ourselves, the Lord will still forgive us. Lord Nityānanda then told him that He saw Mādhāi as a child and when a child hits the parent it's not taken very seriously, as children do some silly things. In this way, we may get the mercy of the Lord, but we still have to come to the point of appreciating it.

Investing our emotions in a smaller reality

Our concerns are so childish! We are worried about so many things but Kṛṣṇa sees the bigger picture. He is the one who looks through eternity, at our eternal relationship with the Absolute Truth, along with our service. He looks at our petty thoughts, which are so insignificant, and still cares for us. And we are worried, "This person said that to me and I am really upset about it. How could they do this? How could they not care? For three days I have not eaten because they mistreated me in such a way."

Of course, this is childish, but Kṛṣṇa takes this seriously and He still cares even though He understands that the things we care about are insignificant, like a child's fixation. I once lost my golden toy

jaguar in a sandpit. This was one of the most frustrating experiences of my childhood. I dug up the whole sandpit but still didn't find it!

There was also another childhood drama which I will tell you about. One day, when I was about five, my mother told me, "Today, a child is coming to our house with his mother and this child has no arms or legs."
I thought to myself, "What? A child with no arms or legs?"

This was something else. Oh, what a sad thing to see! I remember that I wanted to give this child something and I gave my favourite toy. It was like a teddy bear, but more of a teddy dog. I gave my teddy dog to the child and then they left… with my teddy dog. And I tell you, the pain I felt that night! The pain of renunciation was too much. I cried so much for my lost teddy dog!

Of course, this was a childish sentiment but the experience was not insignificant as I had invested all my emotions in there. And now, as an adult, I continue to invest my emotions in bigger things, such as my disciples! So times have changed, but the emotions continue to be directed. We have taken the same propensity of the soul but directed it to the smaller reality of this world.

In Prema-sarovara, we are trying to break out of this mentality and liberate ourselves from small mindedness by appreciating it is all not so important. Kṛṣṇa is. Here, we learn to appreciate Kṛṣṇa. As Prabhupāda said, we must thoroughly realise that Kṛṣṇa is our best friend. Let us take that meditation with us: Kṛṣṇa was so touched by Rādhārāṇī's feelings of separation that He cried streams and rivers for Her and He also cares for such little creatures like the bees. So please remember – *suhṛdaṁ sarva-bhūtānāṁ* – Kṛṣṇa is the best friend of all living beings!

Questions and answers:

In the Bhāgavatam, Nārada Muni had the darśana of Nārāyaṇa and then He said, "You are not going to see me again in this life." In our spiritual lives, we sometimes feel that we are stuck. How do we go further?

Nārada was not yet pure so he had to qualify himself to see Kṛṣṇa. That is true. When Nārada was five years old, his mother died from a snake bite. It was a drama. Although he was a five year old boy and all alone, he was courageous since he received instructions from great saintly personalities. Nārada went to the forest. He sat down to meditate as the sages had taught him. He meditated on the Supreme Lord and it worked. In due course of time Nārada could see the four-armed Lord Viṣṇu in his mind's eye. When he opened his eyes, the Lord stood in front of him. Close your eyes and think of Kṛṣṇa. Can you see Him? Now imagine that when you opened your eyes, He would really be standing there. How would you feel?

Nārada was so elated, totally beyond himself, because he saw the Lord. And then the Lord disappeared. He was five years old and it was too intense. He just lost it. He became angry, went mad! The Lord came back and said, "My dear Nārada, calm down. Now, you have to faithfully follow this process, as you heard it from the bhakti-vedāntas, and at the end of your life we will meet. You will not see me in this life again."

If Kṛṣṇa is our best friend and He is not far away, why did Nārada have to spend his whole life without Him? Nārada could not see Kṛṣṇa but Kṛṣṇa was seeing him. Kṛṣṇa was very close and was still taking an interest in him. He did not abandon him. He was just not showing Himself.

So many devotees have experienced seeing Kṛṣṇa's hand. You speak about something and then you open a book and it is on exactly that topic. How many times has that happened? So many. We can see how He manifests Himself. Some scientist may walk in and say, "How can you prove this?" Maybe we cannot but I am still convinced, though it may not be empiric evidence, that it is true.

You are a *saṅkīrtana* devotee, a book distributor. They say that the book distributor meets Kṛṣṇa many times on *saṅkīrtana*. Can you tell a story on how you met Kṛṣṇa whilst distributing books?

Devotee: I was in Sheffield (UK) for many days where there are many Muslims. Everyday someone would come and say, "You are going to hell."
One day I had a Koran and I thought, "Let me read something from this, then I would be able to say who is going to hell." A Muslim lady came and stood next to my box. I thought, "Oh, do not tell me that I am going to hell again."
I asked her, "How can I help you?"
She asked, "Why is your God blue?"
I replied, "Because He is God, He can do whatever He wants."
She said, "Okay. I saw a person in a dream I had a few days ago. To begin with, I did not know if he was a man or a girl. I figured out that it was a man." She pointed to a picture of Kṛṣṇa, "It was this man."
I said, "Oh! I never had such dreams. What were you doing before you had this dream?"
She said, "I was praying." I asked her what type of prayer it was and she started chanting an Arabic prayer.
I said, "That was beautiful. Thank you for sharing it with me. Would you like to take this book?" She took the book and said she would read it, but I never saw her again.

I have never seen any of the ācāryas in our paramparā concentrating on the point of how we came to the material world. Is it really worth it to think about how I came here in the first place?

Yes. It is worth thinking about it for a moment but we don't need to dwell on it. It is not an object of meditation but it is a matter of *tattva*. In terms of *tattva*, we must try to understand it but there is not much *rasa* in it, therefore we do not spend so much time on it because after a while it becomes dry. I do not want to spend my time collecting more evidence on that topic, since there is no juice there, but it is our duty to understand the matters of the *tattva* and some devotees specialise on a particular topic. They may also do a lot of research on it. It is very hard to know everything about everything. We see, amongst our *ācāryas,* each person had a different focus. We have Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa who studied *tattva*. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura was a bit more into *līlās* or pastimes. There are different moods. We should all have some philosophical understanding about it but I am not going to discuss it today. Your question is good, and we should know the *tattva*. *Bhāgavatam* is the answer to all questions.

You said that we become attached to petty things but emotions are not petty. Sometimes I find that I am not attached to the petty things but there are other things that I am attached to. They hurt, and at that time I find it very difficult to see Kṛṣṇa. I want to see Him. And especially then I really do need to see Him. I get frustrated because I am in a place of complete desolation. I just wonder whether you feel that it would be helpful to become introspective.

Introspection through the scriptures is good, where we see ourselves in relationship with Kṛṣṇa. The more we recognise our relationship

with Kṛṣṇa when our emotions are cool, the more He will be there when the emotions are not. Obviously the more we have chanted and absorbed ourselves in reading the *Bhāgavatam*, the more these things will be with us at the time when we are going through some turbulence. At the time when one is very emotionally disturbed it is very difficult to cultivate Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If someone comes and says, "Think of Kṛṣṇa," you say, "Go away. Leave me alone. The last thing I need is someone standing next to me and lecturing me about Kṛṣṇa."

It is the times when we are cool headed that we need to engage in spiritual cultivation; then in the midst of a crisis we have something to fall back on.

For example, you have come to Vṛndāvana. What are you going to do here? Will you sit in the room the whole day? You cannot do that therefore we have come to a nice place like Prema-sarovara. It is more than just external. We are developing a relationship with Prema-sarovara and Kṛṣṇa. You will carry this with you. The more you develop a relationship through the *dhāma*, the books, the holy name and service, the more you will have to pull you through all the negative emotions within our consciousness. In this way it will get better and better.

Is bhakti beyond emotions and if so, do we need to control our emotionality?

The word *bhakti* can be translated to devotion, devotional service. *Bhaja* is the root form of *bhakti*. *Bhaja dhātu* includes love, service, and worship. The very essence of bhakti is emotions. When we speak about *rasa*, it implies emotions. Whilst we are in this material world we become conditioned, therefore we have a lower and a higher nature. There are two sides in our nature. The lower

nature has become attached to the temporary and things of small significance, like when I lost my teddy dog as a child. I got over it. I grew up. When I was five, however, that was a tough moment. Emotions that are too affected by the temporary are not to be given much importance. Our emotions have to be awakened to the eternal. As we are advancing, we awaken our emotions to the eternal, towards Kṛṣṇa, and then these emotions become favourable. When connected to temporary things, these emotions will bind us to them. And because it is temporary, it will make us broken hearted.

In Māyāpur, I lived in a smaller room for some time and I was quite happy. It was later arranged that I stay in a big fancy room for some time. When I moved back to a smaller room, I did not like it any more. Yet it was temporary and it did not make sense to be attached to that big room because I knew it was going to be taken away. You are from United Kingdom, and you say, "Oh, Britannia!" What is the point of it since it is a temporary relationship? If we say, "Oh, Prema-sarovara," then we connect to the eternal, to the *dhāma*. The *dhāma* remains after the whole world is destroyed. After the dissolution of the universe, when England, Brazil and Holland will be no more, Prema-sarovara will still be here. Not exactly as we see it now, but in a spiritual, eternal form. Let us connect our feelings to the eternal and that will liberate us. It is an advanced state to have feelings for Kṛṣṇa.



SANKET

Sanket is the meeting place. It is where Kṛṣṇa meets His devotee mid-way. Rādhārāṇī is the topmost, pure and unalloyed devotee, but Kṛṣṇa is kind and He can meet us also. What is our plan to attract Kṛṣṇa? Let us leave Sanket with a plan.

Sanket is the place where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa meet. They reside at Varṣāṇā and Nandagrāma but Sanket is in the middle, the half-way point, and this is where They meet.

Half-way

Kṛṣṇa is attracted by His devotee. He can be purchased by His devotee, although, in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.6.18, it is mentioned that *muktiṁ dadāti karhicit sma na bhakti-yogam*. Mukti (liberation) is easily given by Kṛṣṇa but not bhakti. What would we say if Kṛṣṇa offered us liberation? "Here," Kṛṣṇa says with His hand outstretched. "Take this."
"Hmm. What are You hiding behind Your back, Kṛṣṇa? What's in Your hand back there?"
"Oh that? That is *bhakti*!" Kṛṣṇa would say.

Kṛṣṇa hides *bhakti* as it cannot be attained so easily. It is explained in *The Nectar of Devotion* that *bhakti* is *su-durlabhaḥ* (rarely attained), yet it is *bhakti* that we are after, nothing else. *Anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyaṁ jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam*, (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Madhya-līlā 19.167); we are free from desires for liberation or material enjoyment. It has to be unalloyed devotional service. Pure devotional service is *śrī-kṛṣṇākarṣiṇī*, able to attract Kṛṣṇa. This is our objective – to attract Kṛṣṇa.

Sanket is where Kṛṣṇa meets His devotee half-way. We can think about how we can actually attract Kṛṣṇa. Maybe we can leave Sanket with a plan. What can we do to personally attract Kṛṣṇa? Whoever we are, and whatever place we may be from, we have to do this. So what is our plan? Kṛṣṇa is not like Lord Śiva who is known as *Āśutoṣa*, meaning that he is easily pleased but also easily angered. Kṛṣṇa is not like that. What will we do to attract Him?

The *paramparā* will testify

When kids are in an argument they always say, "If you do this again, I will bring my parents into this!" We may also say the same, "Kṛṣṇa, I will bring the entire spiritual lineage, all the *ācāryas* and the whole *paramparā*. They will testify on my behalf by saying, 'Oh yes, this devotee is in our line and is bona fide.'" They will all speak up for us, every one of them, from our present guru, to Śrīla Prabhupāda, to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, to Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, to Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī, to Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, to Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, to Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, to Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, to the Six Gosvāmīs and to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. And we can go even further to Īśvara Purī, to Mādhavendra Purī, to Madhvācārya, to Vyāsadeva, to Nārada, to Lord Brahma and all the way up back to Kṛṣṇa Himself! I will bring Kṛṣṇa, because He is also in our *sampradāya*. And Kṛṣṇa will agree, "Yes, you are also a part of the lineage that stems from Me." In this way, Kṛṣṇa will never neglect us.

What do we see in our *ācāryas*? Śrīla Prabhupāda talked about the *goṣṭhy-ānandī* and *bhajanānandī* as this was strongly emphasised by his spiritual master. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said that we shouldn't make temples in remote holy places but we should place them right in the middle of the cities, where the people are. That is what he emphasised to Śrīla Prabhupāda. What did our *ācāryas* desire? Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura wrote books. It doesn't mean that everyone has to do the same thing. Some can write, some can speak, some can sing, some can dance and some can cook.

Cooked to perfection

Kūrma lived in Melbourne and he used to cook the seven o'clock offerings for the Deities. Everyone waited for the *prasādam* to get off the altar. They knew the rules: if they dared to touch it, Kūrma would electrocute them with his glances (and sweet words as well)!

No one would touch it. Many devotees would assemble. It would turn out that Kūrma cooked more than the standard offerings. He brought them all out and nicely served everyone. Every preparation was just absolutely delicious. That is Kūrma – whatever he cooks is delicious. These days he lives in Ireland. He has that special *śakti*. When he makes a *purī*, it's a delicious, balloon purī.

I used to cook *halavā* under his supervision and it was quite intense! You had to roast the grains slowly, while keeping the sugar syrup boiling. There was lots of butter, and then he would add golden syrup. At the end, when the syrup was mixed with the grain, he would turn the flame on low, place the lid on top and exactly twenty minutes later (not a second early and not a second late), he would turn off the flame. If you ever dared to lift the lid in those twenty minutes, you would be shot on spot. Naturally, you would want to look at it before to see if it was all right, but you were totally not allowed. You had to keep that lid on. Only at the time of the offering could you take the lid off, and in the end it was the perfect *halavā*.

Every person has a unique quality and a unique nature. Everyone is good at something, and it shows. For example, right now we are seeing each other every day on these hot and sticky buses, and our real personality shows under such conditions. We have our different natures and everyone makes some contribution and this is how it is in spiritual life.

Creative Accounting 101

We can do what comes naturally. Some people are very enthusiastic. Some are very precise and we can make them the treasurer. They can count money exactly to a cent. Treasurers are serious people and they ordinarily like things quiet, at a proper time, with no disturbances. Once, I was made treasurer and I was the temple commander at the same time. It was crazy. I had to give everyone

their services for the day and do the bookkeeping also. I did not have much time for it. When I was one hundred rupees short, I pulled out a hundred rupees from my pocket and gave it as donation. It was worth a hundred rupees to get out of that accounts office. Maybe I am not an accountant, although I must say that I am good at one aspect of it – creative accounting. With me the accounts would always tally. No problem. I could fix it for you, any time.

So everyone has his own capacity. Some people talk, and some are quiet; some speak three words per day and others can never stop. We must engage everyone naturally, according to their capacities, but remember that it is not only about our propensities. I went to a psychologist once and he concluded that it is my nature to be in charge of everything. "Oh, you want to be in charge of everything? Sure, we will place you in charge of cleaning the bathroom!"

If we want to attract Kṛṣṇa, we must use all our propensities, abilities and talents in His service but then also do the needful.

Now that's a festival!

Let us make a plan, in Sanket, to attract Kṛṣṇa. I don't just want to attract Kṛṣṇa for myself though; I want to attract Him for others as well. I was asked a question about feelings earlier, and whether we should express them or control them in this movement. I replied that material feelings should be controlled and feelings about Kṛṣṇa should be cultivated and acknowledged. So we must also try and awaken others' feelings about Kṛṣṇa.

How do we do that? If I give a lecture about Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a highly boring tone, then I will be the first one to fall asleep and you will probably follow me soon. The spiritual world is rich in colour, rich in taste, rich in experience, rich in enthusiasm and variety. Devotional service is like that; it is meant to be creative.

Prabhupāda appreciated it when devotees in Los Angeles started to get creative by organising a butter churning festival at the Sunday Feast. Jayānanda started to grow roses and they hosted a rose festival where they built a house for the Deities out of roses – a whole house!

In the Kṛṣṇa Balarāma temple, we have a courtyard. The temple president in the 1980s decided to flood the temple's courtyard and turn it into a lake for a boat festival. We had the Deities on the boat and fireworks on the terrace. Krtakarma, one of Jayānanda's men and my predecessor, made an island in the middle and he would place the Deities there at four o'clock. In the evening there was a bridge leading to that island, so people could make offerings to Them. We got more fired up and added a special *darśana* in the morning with Rādhā Śyāmasundara on a boat – a boat *darśana*. It turned into a whole day festival.

When it was my turn to be temple president I had to also add to the festival. I had a friend to whom I gave a suitable service – I made him a demon maker. He made demon costumes for the festival, starting with Aghāsura. It was massive, as big as a train. His body was made from electric pipes (the ones that are like hula hoops) and cloth so that the whole body could fold together. All the *bhoga* offerings were heaped onto one side, catching everyone's attention. From behind, this big snake appeared and you could see the devotees' reactions. Then the mouth of the demon opened and Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys entered it. Kṛṣṇa choked the snake. Its soul exited from its head (the *brahmānanda*), and you could see gold glitter shooting out of his head through a blow pipe. Aghāsura's eyes lit up as well. A devotee sat on a big stool on wheels inside Aghāsura's head in order to move him and under the stool, Aghāsura's tongue was hanging out. With his foot he could make the tongue move as well. It was a great production and we had lots of fun.

The following year, we made Kāliya from a rubber diving suit, with many hoods. He had a snorkel. The whole courtyard was under water. We had a curtain around the Kṛṣṇa Balarāma tree, the *tamāla* tree in the courtyard, and Kāliya hid there. Kṛṣṇa entered the water, and Kāliya swam nearby. It was dark so you did not see his snorkel. Kṛṣṇa went further into the Yamunā and suddenly the snake appeared out of the water. Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be fun. We can do things like that anywhere. We can make snakes appear in the middle of Trafalgar Square in London, or Sea Point in Cape Town or in Tokyo. The Chinese dragons are very famous. We can be creative. We can flood all of Trafalgar Square and put those Chinese dragons to shame! This is our business – spreading the glories of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

What is your plan?

In Hungary, during the time of the communists, devotees had secret meetings and hidden *harināmas* in December where they played *karatālas* inside their coats. It was so nice. At the end, they returned to cook a big feast. They fried a big purī and held it up to the camera and said, "Now you have to come and taste it."

What is our plan to attract Kṛṣṇa? That is my meditation in Sanket. In each place that we have gone to there has been a meditation. This is the meeting place, where Kṛṣṇa comes to meet His devotee mid-way. Rādhārāṇī is the top-most, pure, unalloyed devotee, but Kṛṣṇa is kind and He could meet us also.



Rādhā-Govinda Deities in Kāmyavana



Vimala-kuṇḍa at Kāmyavana



Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities at Raval



Prema-sarovara, a lake of tears



Group picture at Prema-sarovara



Simple living in Vṛndāvana



dhāma-sevā at Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa



The Yamunā River at Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa



Ter Kadamba



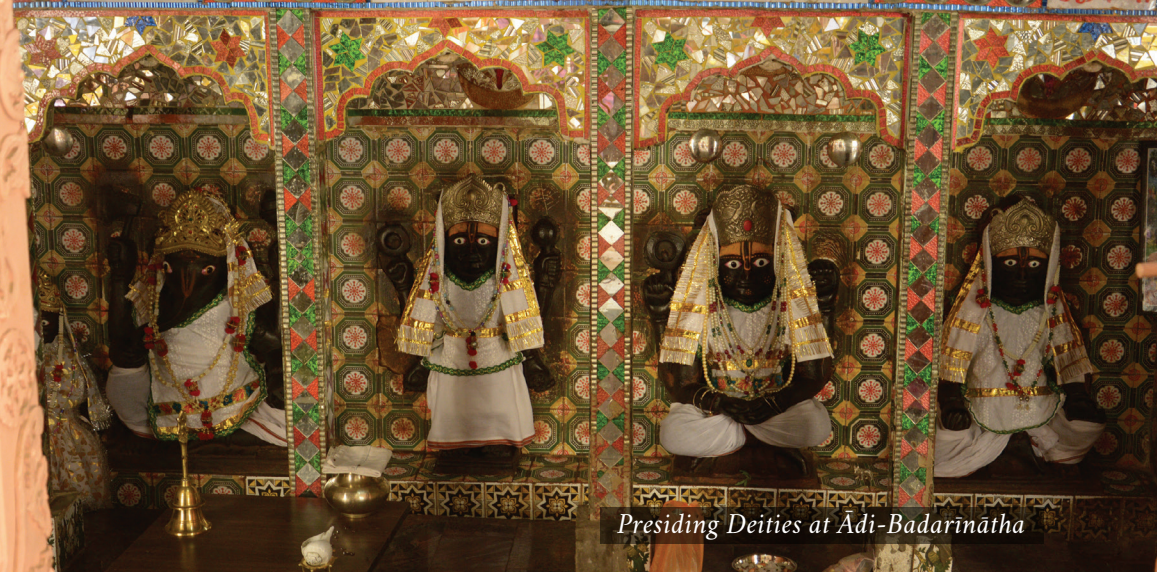
Under the desire trees at Raval



Surabhi-kuṇḍa, a place for forgiveness



Sanket, the meeting place



Presiding Deities at Ādi-Badarīnātha



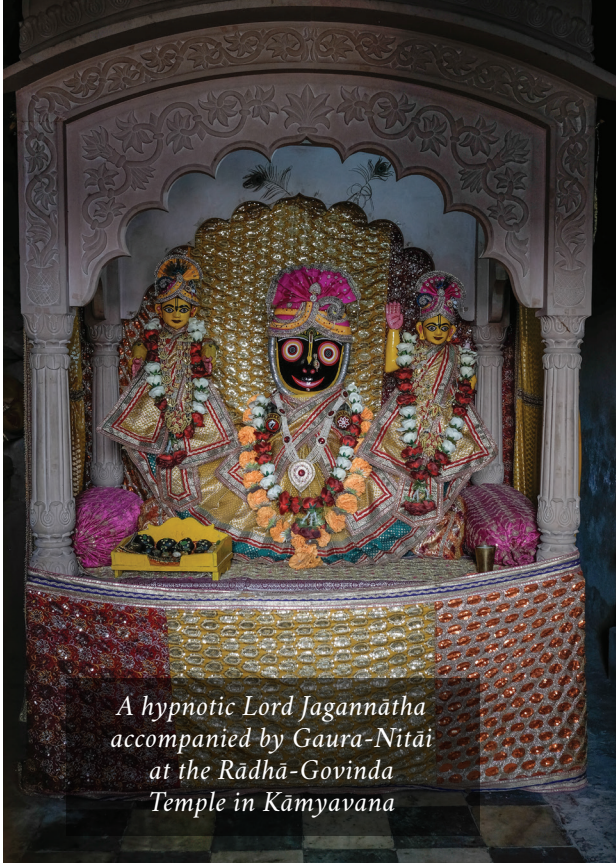
The tall domes at Ādi-Badarīnātha



Ādi-Badarīnātha



The 5000-year-old deity of Vṛndādevī at the Rādhā-Govinda Temple in Kāmyavana



A hypnotic Lord Jagannātha accompanied by Gaura-Nitāi at the Rādhā-Govinda Temple in Kāmyavana



Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Gaura-Nitāi and Girirāja at Sanket



Nṛsiṁhadeva temple at Puncari



Rūpa Gosvāmī reaches out at Ter Kadamba



TER KADAMBA

We come to the platform of pure devotional service by being a completely dedicated servant of our spiritual master and always thinking of his satisfaction. We can pray to Rūpa Gosvāmī, our original spiritual master, for that blessing. Let us serve our spiritual master to the fullest extent; then surely we will attract Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa would come to Ter Kadamba to herd His cows. In the evenings, He would climb onto a Kadamba tree and call out the names of the leaders of the various herds of cows. His japa-mālā comprised of 108 jewels, and with these He counted the 108 herds of cows. This was Kṛṣṇa's japa and by chanting He became very pleased.

Rūpa and Sanātana – the leaders of the Six Gosvāmīs

In one sense, Ter Kadamba is the most important place for us because it was where Rūpa Gosvāmī resided for quite some time. Ter Kadamba is very famous for Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *bhajana-kuṭīr*. It is commonly stated that he wrote his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* here. I don't know whether this is true or not, but I have heard so. Regardless, we can focus on Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī here. I will read from a book called '*A Prayer for Deep Absorption*' written as a companion to *The Nectar of Devotion*. It provides an overview of Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī:

"The two brothers Rūpa and Sanātana, along with a younger brother Anupama, the father of Jīva Gosvāmī, came from a village called Prembagh, in the Jessore District in East Bengal. Even as young men, they were very brilliant personalities and were therefore forcefully recruited in the service of the Nawab Hussain Shah."

(A Prayer for Deep Absorption, Page 7)

It is mentioned that an offer was made that Rūpa and Sanātana could not refuse: "Either you join government service or we will kill the entire *brāhmaṇa* community!" It was not their own lives that were threatened but that of all the *brāhmaṇas*. Since they didn't want to take responsibility for wiping out the entire *brāhmaṇa* community, they joined the government service. It was a very convincing argument. They accepted the posts and Śrīla Rūpa

Gosvāmī was known as the private secretary, Dabira Khāsa, and Sanātana Gosvāmī was Sākara Mallika. The seat of the government was in Gauḍa, a place north of Māyāpur in the Malda District. You can take a 12 hour train ride from Navadvīpa to get there. You can still find Rāmakeli and the palace of the Nawab. There are ruins and galleries that look a bit European due to their Gothic-type architecture. There is a tomb-like structure, which is said to be the jail where Sanātana Gosvāmī was kept. One can also find the Deities of Madana-mohana which people say was installed by Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī themselves (whether that is true or not, I do not know).

One can also find Lalitā-kuṇḍa, Śyāma-kuṇḍa, Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Viśākhā-kuṇḍa there. These places all relate to their future in Vṛndāvana. Later, Sanātana Gosvāmī installed Madana-mohana in Vṛndāvana and daily circumambulated Govardhana, passing all the sacred places. Even up to his old age, when he could no longer walk around the Hill, he would still worship a *govardhana-śilā.* If all these places existed prior in Rāmakeli, then they must have established them according to the scripture. They built Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa at a time when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had not yet been to Vṛndāvana to discover the original Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

In *Bhakti-ratnākara*, it is mentioned that when Sanātana Gosvāmī was a young man, he had a dream of a brāhmaṇa who offered him the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He was very happy because *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was very rare. Some of us have *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* on our phones and iPads or full sets in our bags. Nowadays, it is so easily available, but back then, it was very rare. This is why Sanātana Gosvāmī was very happy. Then, he woke up and realised it was just a dream. Later that day, the same *brāhmaṇa* brought the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to him. He was ecstatic! Sanātana Gosvāmī

writes in the *Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava* that the *Bhāgavatam* was his constant companion.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was the central book and we can appreciate that Rūpa and Sanātana were the leaders of the six Gosvāmīs, who established and excavated many holy places in Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote:

"By rough calculation it is estimated that Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī finished *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* in Gokula Vṛndāvana in the year 1552. While physically present, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī was living in different parts of Vṛndāvana, and his headquarters were in the temple of Rādhā-Dāmodara in the present city of Vṛndāvana. The place of Rūpa Gosvāmī's *bhajana*, execution of devotional service, is commemorated still. There are two different tomblike structures in the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple; one structure is called his place of *bhajana*, and in the other his body is entombed. Behind this very tomb I have my place of *bhajana*, but since 1965 I have been away. The place, however, is being taken care of by my disciples. By Kṛṣṇa's will, I am now residing at the Los Angeles temple of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. This purport is finished today, the 30th of June, 1969." (*The Nectar of Devotion,* Concluding words)

The glories of pure devotional service

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that Gosvāmī means master of the senses. He pointed out how Śrīla Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs were the masters of the senses and, according to *Nectar of Instruction*, they were suitable to be the spiritual masters of the entire world. Prabhupāda continues to explain that we are all followers of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. We remember that: *nānā-śāstra-vicāraṇaika-nipuṇau sad-dharma-saṁsthāpakau (Ṣaḍ-gosvāmy-aṣṭaka)*. Rūpa and Sanātana had studied many scriptures to collect quotes and to establish

the absolute truth on a *śāstric* basis. This *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* is a book composed of key quotes from many scriptures. It was intended to provide a foundation for pure devotional principles as taught by Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

The Nectar of Devotion begins on a high note because it describes Kṛṣṇa as *akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti*. This means that Kṛṣṇa is the complete reservoir of pleasure or the reservoir of all *rasas*. This is the situation of the spiritual world where Kṛṣṇa maintains eternal relationships with various devotees, who are each attracted to Him in various ways or *rasas*. There are 5 direct *rasas* (*śānta, dāsya, sakhya, vātsalya and mādhurya*) and 7 indirect *rasas* (*hāsya, adbhuta, vīra, karuṇā, raudra, bībhatsa and bhayānaka*), which are within the direct ones. A little bit of ghastliness (*bhayānaka*) is also considered a *rasa*, like in horror movies. Ghastliness is also a part of the relationships of the spiritual world. We are looking at *The Nectar of Devotion*, which is a book that describes pure devotional service, and that is our goal. In Ter Kadamba our meditation is on pure devotional service.

We have already had a number of meditations today. What was the first one? Oh yes, that Kṛṣṇa is our best friend (Prema-sarovara). As Śacīnandana Swami Mahārāja would say in his unique way, "You know everything!" Our second meditation focused on how to attract Kṛṣṇa and to do something so Kṛṣṇa meets us half way (Sanket). And this is exactly the topic of *The Nectar of Devotion* which states that Kṛṣṇa is *akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti*. Kṛṣṇa is always in the association of various *gopīs* and other eternal associates experiencing different *rasas* and that is the situation of the spiritual world. What is the prerequisite to attain that?

anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyaṁ
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-
śīlanaṁ bhaktir uttamā

(Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.11)

Our goal is to be free from any other desires, including liberation, any material attachment and the enjoyment of our own senses, and to cultivate pure devotional service of Kṛṣṇa in a favourable mood. That is how we reach Kṛṣṇa. Through pure devotional service, we can attain the spiritual world.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī describes the characteristics of pure devotional service, beginning with *kleśa-agni* (immediate relief from all kinds of material distress). It is only in devotional service that all suffering is destroyed. This is important. I don't know about you, but I certainly do not want to be in this material world that is full of suffering: suffering from our mind and bodies and other living entities. Sometimes my voice is hoarse and today my legs are giving me trouble. Sometimes our family causes us suffering, at other times our neighbours, or other living entities. Upon our arrival here in Ter Kadamba, we were welcomed by a big black snake. Suffering from natural circumstances is also there. All these types of suffering are destroyed by pure devotional service and everything becomes auspicious.

"Pure devotional service has been described as all auspicious. This auspiciousness, according to Rūpa Gosvāmī, has 3 qualities and these are listed as follows:

- *jagat-prīṇanādidvaya-pradatvam* – possessing love for all living entities and becoming the object of affection for all living entities.

- *sad-guṇādi-pradatvam* – bestows only good qualities.

- *sukhapradatvam* – bestows happiness."

(A Prayer for Deep Absorption, Page 33)

It is important that we actually appreciate this. Prabhupāda said that as soon as we commence a life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, everything becomes auspicious.

"These Kṛṣṇa conscious boys and girls – in sixty centres, they are living in the best houses. They are eating the best food. They are in the best consciousness. They have the best hope."

(Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture, New York, 1971-07-19)

What material happiness could they ever want? Material happiness means nothing for a Kṛṣṇa conscious person, as it is the material energy that asks to serve the pure devotees. So stay steady in your practice and simply serve Kṛṣṇa, then your satisfaction will automatically come! "Don't bother for material happiness," said Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda had this amazing, ultra positive outlook. We don't always see everything so positively. We see things as difficult, but not Prabhupāda. He saw everything in the context of serving Kṛṣṇa; You have the best houses, best food, best consciousness and best hope – hope to go back to Godhead.

What more material happiness do you want than this? It is true but we cannot see it due to our conditioning. I may say that we are in the best place because we are in Ter Kadamba in Vṛndāvana. Some may say, "Oh, but it is noisy over there." Yes, but who cares? It is still the best even with the noise. Although, I also do not like noise especially when others are making it.

I spoke about *śrī-kṛṣṇākarṣiṇī*; this pure devotional service can attract Kṛṣṇa.

śrī-kṛṣṇākarṣiṇī –
kṛtvā hariṁ prema-bhājaṁ priya-varga-samanvitam
bhaktir vaśīkarotīti śrī-kṛṣṇākarṣiṇī matā
(Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.41)

Prema-bhakti is called *śrī-kṛṣṇākarṣiṇī* i.e. possessing the power of attracting Lord Kṛṣṇa because such *bhakti* charms Kṛṣṇa into complete submission because of the devotee's endearing love and affection for Him and His entourage.

Unconditional love for Kṛṣṇa, through devotional service, attracts Kṛṣṇa. We are here voluntarily, and we are here because of love. Some may regret it, "Why did I choose to be here?" Yet still, some love is there. It may not be deep but it is still love, in a seed form, and it will mature.

Devotional service in practice

Some have come to Ter Kadamba for the first time and others have returned often. Personally, it is a place where I connect with Rūpa Gosvāmī because Prabhupāda pointed out that we need to follow in his footsteps. Rūpa Gosvāmī gave us the building blocks of our spiritual life. *The Nectar of Devotion* basically gives us the raw materials in detail and we have to construct it. It is not just, "I have decided that I am going to be a devotee." No. That is why this book is very important for us. It tells us about *sādhana-bhakti*.

"When a materially conditioned soul begins devotional service in practice, this practice is known as *sādhana-bhakti... Bhakti* is generally a continuation from a previous life and is further awakened."
(A Prayer for Deep Absorption, Page 39)

And that is what Rūpa Gosvāmī said. We were all devotees before, but we were not successful. Think about that. What did we do wrong? Maybe we are still doing something wrong and we may not make it in this lifetime either. What are the things that we know we should improve but we don't?

We don't want another life in this material world. And even if we want one, our spiritual master does not want one for us.

"Maybe I'll come back one more lifetime just to see how Lord Caitanya's movement unfolds."
You may fall down in *māyā* again, so better get out of here now and go back to Godhead. We are not qualified to be so heroic that we think we can come back to deliver all the fallen souls through *saṅkīrtana*.

Our spiritual life begins when we cultivate and practise devotional service. Afterwards, we progress to devotional service in ecstasy and then in pure love. Taste is essential. When we practise with taste, it becomes easy; otherwise it is an austerity.
"For persons who have a natural taste for understanding books like *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, devotional service is easier than for those who are simply accustomed to mental speculation and argumentative processes.

Taste comes from two things:

- previous life
- association with devotees

"Kṛṣṇa is all-attractive, yet some people have turned away from Him and now want to exploit the material energy for their own sense enjoyment. However, devotees create all kinds of opportunities for

devotional service and people may engage in devotional service even unknowingly."

(A Prayer for Deep Absorption, Page 43-44)

We should look for such opportunities. If there are devotees senior to and more advanced than us then they are the ones who will offer us opportunities to advance also. We must take them and ourselves offer opportunities for newer devotees to progress. In this way, everyone advances in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

An interesting definition of *sādhana-bhakti* is given in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. It says:

"When transcendental devotional service, by which love for Kṛṣṇa is attained, is executed by the senses, it is called *sādhana-bhakti* or the regulative discharge of devotional service. Such devotion eternally exists within the heart of every living entity. The awakening of this eternal devotion is the potentiality of devotional service in practice."

(Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.2)

It is interesting that such devotional service is executed by the senses. Usually we view senses to be like black snakes, just like the one we saw earlier. It is said that the senses bite and attack us, but through these senses we also perform devotional service. The same things that bind us to the material energy and bring us down, also lead us to Kṛṣṇa. The fangs of the snakelike senses will be broken by devotional service. The senses that would bind us, will now liberate us if we execute devotional service. To engage all our senses in devotional service is also part of our meditation.

We may not have strong faith, but an attraction will develop through association with advanced devotees or great souls. Our attraction to *māyā* will still remain within us for a while. So we

are attracted to both *māyā* and Kṛṣṇa and we have to rise above that in time.

In such instances, we must remember Bhakti Tīrtha Swami's dream. He dreamt of two dogs who were fighting within the heart. Which dog will win? The answer is that the dog you feed will win. We must remember that according to the kind of association we keep, that dog within us will grow stronger. We should always maintain and protect ourselves through the association of the Vaiṣṇavas. Kṛṣṇa will win in our fight with *māyā* if we feed our devotional tendencies. This is the only way to become free from suffering.

If Kṛṣṇa is not a part of any relationship that we want in this world then what is the point? He must remain at the centre of it all to make it work. That is the essence! And that is how weakness will be overcome. Everyone has faults. It is likely that, regardless of who you marry, they will also have faults. We must bring devotional service into all our relationships for them to work. People may appear to be working nicely together, but if Kṛṣṇa is not in the centre then they will be nicely heading to hell. Even if you fight like cats and dogs, but you have Kṛṣṇa in the centre, then at least you are fighting on your way to the spiritual world.

Faith in the spiritual master

There are many limbs of devotional service, 64, to be precise. By engaging in these 64 aspects we can make so much spiritual advancement. The first is *guru-pādāśraya* – taking shelter of the lotus feet of the spiritual master. The second one is to accept initiation and receive spiritual instructions. The third is serving the spiritual master with love.

Before we reach love, we may serve out of fear. Why? Well, the *śāstra* creates a lot of fear in our hearts as it is very clear that

we cannot disobey the orders of the spiritual master. If you don't follow the orders of the guru, your spiritual life will be ruined. If it is not too serious then you just dry up and become slack in your practice. This causes some fear but there is another reason why we are afraid of the spiritual master; never before has someone had such authority over us, not even our parents. Everyone goes through the "No!" phase. Kids go through the 'No' phase when they discover they can say "No!" And it changes everything. Not even the government or the national leaders have the same authority over you. Sometimes we may cut a few corners or cause civil disobedience and others are just outright criminals. And as I am saying all of this, I realise that I am looking straight at a lawyer seated in front of me!

We experience our limitations. We practise these 64 limbs and try to serve our spiritual master not out of fear but by trusting him. 'Okay, I will not be afraid even if he tells me to go to China or wherever.'

We must take the desire of the spiritual master and wear it like a jewel. Take it happily and not reluctantly. This relationship with the spiritual master must become our greatest treasure and we must have full faith in it. When Lord Nityānanda goes into a liquor store, we do not question his motives. We have faith that He is going in there to give mercy. In the same way, we must have faith in our spiritual master. We must offer our whole existence in that relationship. We must become what he wants us to become, not what we want to.

This *atha aṅgāni guru-pādāśrayas* is the first of Rūpa Gosvāmī's principles and the most important. Everything rests on that. Whatever else we do in devotional service, *atha aṅgāni guru-pādāśrayas* is always with us. It is first because it is the foundation

of everything we do. We should invest in that relationship because when we do that we will break through to the other side – the side of Kṛṣṇa.

Today, try to come to the platform of pure devotional service by trying to hear and by becoming a completely dedicated servant of our spiritual master and always thinking of his satisfaction. We can pray to Rūpa Gosvāmī, who is our original spiritual master, for that blessing. We remember that Kṛṣṇa is our best friend, and that we should do something to attract Him. Let us serve our spiritual master to the fullest extent and then we will surely attract Kṛṣṇa. The spiritual master is dear to Kṛṣṇa, therefore Kṛṣṇa becomes inclined to whoever serves him.



BRAHMĀṆḌA-GHĀṬA

Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa is significant because it deals with the very foundation of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings, *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*. Our entire philosophy rests on that pastime of Kṛṣṇa eating clay and Mother Yaśodā seeing the universes in His mouth. Here, we can appreciate deeply how Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously one and many.

Here we are at Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa. Brahmāṇḍa means the universe and this is the place where Kṛṣṇa was accused of eating clay.

Did Kṛṣṇa eat clay?

Mother Yaśodā: So, you have eaten clay?
Kṛṣṇa: Who says such a thing? No, no, no!
Mother Yaśodā: Everyone says so. Everyone.
Kṛṣṇa: Today we had some disagreement, Mother, and now they are making politics.
Mother Yaśodā: Hmm. Even your elder brother says so.
Kṛṣṇa: He also joined them. Yes, it was really bad today but, if you don't believe Me, then you can look into My mouth yourself and see if you find any clay.
Mother Yaśodā: Alright, open your mouth.

Mother Yaśodā made Kṛṣṇa open His mouth and when she looked inside, did she see any clay? Yes or no? This is a big debate. Did mother Yaśodā see any clay or not?

What did she see? She saw all the planets in the universe. Is there any clay on these planets? Yes! So did she see any clay? A whole planet of it! And many other planets. She saw the entire universe. She saw herself in the mouth of Kṛṣṇa, looking into the mouth of Kṛṣṇa and in that mouth she saw the whole universe again.

Prabhupāda on *parikramā*

Śrīla Prabhupāda came to Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa. It was winter actually, although the sun came out during the day. In Vṛndāvana, in the winter, it can warm up quite nicely when the sun comes out. The devotees went into the water around noon to chant *gāyatrī*. Prabhupāda first sat on the bank of the Yamunā, watching. At one point, he took off his sweater and his clothes and had his gamucha

brought in. Sure enough, he went into the water as well. Of course, it was a great opportunity to offer Prabhupāda a spontaneous *abhiṣeka*. The devotees scooped up the water and poured it over Prabhupāda. Some devotees, the smart ones, caught and drank it also.

It was an ecstatic, transcendental event when Prabhupāda personally took his disciples on *parikramā* in Vṛndāvana in 1972. At that time, he also lectured in the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple courtyard. We will go there on another day. At the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple is the *samādhi* and *bhajana-kuṭīr* of Rūpa Gosvāmī. There was a story about Prabhupāda that was circulating. It described how he was seated at Rādhā-Dāmodara, looking upon the *samādhis* of Rūpa and Sanātana, when they personally appeared before him one night and instructed him. Hari-śauri, who was Prabhupāda's servant, heard the story when he came to Vṛndāvana. He asked Prabhupāda about it. Prabhupāda said, "Oh, everybody knows that." That settled it.

The entire *dhāma* is filled with mercy. Wherever a great and pure Vaiṣṇava was present, he attracted special mercy by his presence. Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa is, therefore, a special place invested with special mercy and that's why I like to come here.

Spiritual mathematics

I'm always meditating on the *Bhāgavatam* whenever I'm here:

janmādy asya yato 'nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñaḥ svarāṭ
tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ
tejo-vāri-mṛdāṁ yathā vinimayo yatra tri-sargo 'mṛṣā
dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi
(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.1)

It is described that Kṛṣṇa is *janma-ādi*, the origin of everything. Everything comes from Him. This verse is very important: everything emanates from Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa knows everything about everything and yet He remains independent. This explains how Mother Yaśodā saw the universe in Kṛṣṇa's mouth when Kṛṣṇa was in the universe to begin with. Where else was He? He was in the universe, yet the universe was in Him. This is interesting.

The *ācāryas* explain that the very first verse of the *Bhāgavatam* describes the *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* philosophy – simultaneously one and many – which is the very foundation of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's movement. It is also the conclusion of a big quarrel. For centuries, different theological schools fought. Some said, "God is one."
Others said, "No. *Eko bahu śyāma*. He is many."
"No. He is one."
"No. He is many."
Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, "He is one and many."

That was the end of the fight. Everything was resolved. And it is a fact, because everything exists within Kṛṣṇa. We also exist within Kṛṣṇa, right now. Everything is made of Kṛṣṇa's energy. Everything! There is nothing that exists outside it. Kṛṣṇa is like a boy playing with His own energies and expanding Himself in various ways: *parāsya śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate*.

In this way, Kṛṣṇa is able to exist within the universe and yet the universe exists within Him. That is something that you cannot figure out mathematically. *Acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* is difficult to understand.
Let me try to explain it mathematically: There is Kṛṣṇa plus His energies, isn't it?

There He is standing at Keśī-ghāṭa. Do not go to Keśī-ghāṭa because if you go there you will see that flute player, Tribhaṅga, and He will steal everything. You will forget everything else. If you want any material enjoyment, do not go to Keśī-ghāṭa. Don't go to Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa either. Oh! You are already in Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa! Too bad then. Too late. What to do? Anyhow, here we are. We see that there is Kṛṣṇa and then there's the *ghāṭa*. Isn't it? There's the Yamunā and then there's Kṛṣṇa. So this implies that both Kṛṣṇa and His energies exist.

Shouldn't it mathematically read: Kṛṣṇa + energies = God? Do you see the logic?
"No, wrong!" the teacher says.
The students protest, "What is wrong? This is right! Kṛṣṇa + energies = God. Shall we strike?"
"No," says the teacher, "There is only Kṛṣṇa, and all the energies are part of Kṛṣṇa."

The completeness of Kṛṣṇa

So when we see Kṛṣṇa on the bank of the Yamunā, He is actually complete and yet the Yamunā exists separate from Him. The whole universe exists separate from Kṛṣṇa but still He is complete. Philosophers could argue about this for a long, long time. Can you understand this? How can He be complete? How is it possible that He is complete when there is the personality, and next to the personality there is also the energy? *Oṁ pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idaṁ*.

Come to Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa because here you can see it for yourself. Look into Kṛṣṇa's mouth. What will you see? Alright, you will have to think of yourself in the position of Yaśodā and look into the mouth of Kṛṣṇa. What will we see? We will see the universe and see Kṛṣṇa inside it once again. That is the proof: *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* – simultaneously one and many; you can see it right here,

in this very place.

So, this place is not only nice but it is also significant. Śrīla Prabhupāda personally took his bath and deposited some extra mercy here after Yaśodā and Kṛṣṇa already invested Their mercy. Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa, however, is especially significant because it deals with the very foundation of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is represented by the *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*. The very foundation of our entire philosophy rests on the pastime that took place here at Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa. And that is why I think that Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa is a must. I never skip it and I think it is a place where we can appreciate deeply how Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously one and many.

And did He eat clay? He did! Lots of it, actually, because the whole universe was in His mouth! For the nay-sayers, sorry, what to do? Kṛṣṇa did it. It is not a false accusation. Mother Yaśodā knew it.

Kṛṣṇa: My own mother! My own mother doesn't believe Me? Surely, My mother will believe Me. Mother, they are all making politics against Me so I'm coming to you and surely without a doubt, you will believe Me."
Mother Yaśodā: Alright Kṛṣṇa, open Your mouth.

That is what she said. She did not believe a word. She knew very well that He was lying. He did it. He ate the clay and so did Nimāi. Mother Śacī brought sweets and Nimāi did not eat the sweets, but ate clay instead. Mother Śacī turned around and asked, "What are You doing?"

Nimāi said, "Mother, what is the difference between the clay and the sweets? There is no difference. Everything has its origin in the same spiritual energy. What difference is it if I eat this energy form

of Kṛṣṇa's or that? Everything rests on that same spiritual energy." Mother Śacī defeated that argument, "No. If I take clay and I throw water on top, it becomes a mess. If I take the same clay, make a water pot and put water in, then it serves as a water container. It is not all one. It is one but simultaneously many – *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*."

That is our understanding. If it is all one, how can you cross the road? Yeah, if you are not careful, you will become one with the bus that drives over you. Good luck to you! No thanks, I'd rather look at the many; there may be a bus or a scooter. Here in India, you don't just need to look left and right when crossing a road. You have to look in all directions, and don't forget down and up, because anything is possible. Anything can come from anywhere, so look carefully.

Anyhow, here we are in Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa, within the universe, remembering how the universe is within Kṛṣṇa and how He is within the universe.



RAVAL

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's magnanimity is that She gives everything She has, up to the very last fibre of Her existence – Her complete being – in service to Kṛṣṇa. That is our objective and our meditation. Nothing else is good enough. We cannot allow ourselves anything less. Maybe we won't come to that platform, but we can never be self-satisfied in that state of falling short.

We have a special program today because we are in a special place. This is a place to go a little deeper. Here we are in the birth place of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī so my plan is this: I want to read a little bit from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* – very shortly just as a meditation – then I'll ask Ramaṇajī to sing and then I'll speak a little more.

"Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī takes Her first bath in the shower of the nectar of compassion, and She takes Her second bath in the nectar of youth.

After Her midday bath, Rādhārāṇī takes another bath in the nectar of bodily lustre, and She puts on the garment of shyness, which is Her black silk sari.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's affection for Kṛṣṇa is Her upper garment, which is pinkish in colour."

(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 8.167-169)

We see that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī wears a black sari of shyness with a pinkish upper garment which is her affection.

"She then covers Her breasts with another garment, composed of affection and anger toward Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's personal beauty is the reddish powder known as *kuṅkuma*, Her affection for Her associates is sandalwood pulp, and the sweetness of Her smile is camphor. All these, combined together, are smeared over Her body.

Conjugal love for Kṛṣṇa is an abundance of musk, and with that musk Her whole body is decorated.

Craftiness and covered anger constitute the arrangement of Her

hair. The quality of anger due to jealousy is the silk garment covering Her body.

Her attachment for Kṛṣṇa is the reddish colour of betel nuts on Her brilliant lips. Her double-dealings in loving affairs constitute the black ointment around Her eyes.

The ornaments decorating Her body are the blazing ecstasies of goodness and the constantly existing ecstasies, headed by jubilation. All these ecstasies are the ornaments all over Her body.

Also ornamenting Her body are the twenty kinds of ecstatic symptoms beginning with *kila-kiñcita*. Her transcendental qualities constitute the flower garland hanging in fullness over Her body."

(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 8.169-175)

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that it is not possible to explain properly in English what "*kila-kiñcita*" actually means. He says:
"First, in connection with the body, there are *bhāva* (ecstasy), *hāva* (gestures) and *helā* (negligence); in relation to the self there are *śobhā* (beauty), *kānti* (lustre), *dīpti* (brilliance), *mādhurya* (sweetness), *pragalbhatā* (impudence), *audārya* (magnanimity) and *dhairya* (patience); and in relation to nature there are *līlā* (pastimes), *vilāsa* (enjoyment), *vicchitti* (breaking off) and *vibhrama* (puzzlement). There are no English equivalents for the words *kila-kiñcita, moṭṭāyita* and *kuṭṭamita*.
Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's flower garland consists of Her qualities and is divided into mental, verbal and bodily parts. Her attitude of forgiveness and mercy is all mental. Her talks, which are very pleasing to the ear, are verbal. The bodily qualities are age, beauty, lustre and grace."

(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 8.175 Purport)

"The *tilaka* of good fortune is on Her beautiful broad forehead. Her various loving affairs are a gem, and Her heart is the locket.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's *gopī* friends are Her mental activities, which are concentrated on the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She keeps Her hand on the shoulder of a friend, who represents youth.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's bedstead is pride itself, and it is situated in the abode of Her bodily aroma. She is always seated there thinking of Kṛṣṇa's association.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's earrings are the name, fame and qualities of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa's name, fame and qualities are always inundating Her speech.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī induces Kṛṣṇa to drink the honey of the conjugal relationship. She is therefore engaged in satisfying all the lusty desires of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is a mine filled with valuable jewels of love for Kṛṣṇa. Her transcendental body is complete with unparalleled spiritual qualities.

'If one asks about the origin of love of Kṛṣṇa, the answer is that the origin is in Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī alone. Who is the most dear friend of Kṛṣṇa? The answer again is Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī alone. No one else. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's hair is very curly, Her two eyes are always moving to and fro, and Her breasts are firm. Since all transcendental qualities are manifested in Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, She alone is able to fulfil all the desires of Kṛṣṇa. No one else.[213]

Even Satyabhāmā, one of the queens of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, desires the fortunate position and excellent qualities of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

All the *gopīs* learn the art of dressing from Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and even the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmī, and the wife of Lord Śiva, Pārvatī, desire Her beauty and qualities. Indeed, Arundhatī, the celebrated chaste wife of Vasiṣṭha, also wants to imitate the chastity and religious principles of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

Even Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself cannot reach the limit of the transcendental qualities of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. How, then, can an insignificant living entity count them?"

Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied, "Now I have come to understand the truth of the loving affairs between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Nonetheless, I still want to hear how both of Them gloriously enjoy such love."

(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 8.176-186)

At the birthplace of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, we are, of course, in a meditative mood. I read a little from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* where the different moods of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī were compared to taking different baths. The first bath was *kāruṇya-amṛta* – in compassion. The second bath was in youth, and She was wearing a dark sari of shyness and a pink upper garment showing Her affection for Kṛṣṇa. She covered Her upper body again, with a cloth that was both showing anger and affection. There is a whole mixture of emotions. I will read a little from the purport that in connection with the body, there are the following moods:

bhāva – She displays ecstasy. How could She not? Being completely overwhelmed by love, there is no question that that love can be contained. It is not possible. Just as fire, when contained in a metal pot, will make that pot glow, and one can see the heat of the fire by the glow of the pot; in the same way, how can *bhāva* be contained within Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī? It is not possible. Her ecstasy has to

show. There is no doubt about that.

hāva – She uses gestures. These gestures are contradictory; sometimes they invite Kṛṣṇa and at other times they create a barrier, or ignore Him.

Oh yes! She is Madana-mohana-mohinī. She can attract the attractor of cupid, which is Kṛṣṇa. Not only does she attract Him, but She increases and increases His attachment and therefore His ecstasy. Usually we pray to Kṛṣṇa, "Oh, please give me love of God! Give me a little bit of ecstasy, please!" That is not Rādhārāṇī's meditation at all. She meditates on how to increase Kṛṣṇa's ecstasy.

In relation to the self, there is *śobhā* (beauty): The description is no longer of Her body, but Her very personality. *Śobhā*, the beauty that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī manifests, is the very beauty of Her nature. In that regard, there is no duplicity. Her physical beauty is an expansion of the beauty of Her consciousness, the beauty of Her being. Naturally, She is endowed with beauty greater than Kṛṣṇa's because She can attract Kṛṣṇa more than Kṛṣṇa can attract Her. This is a big question: who is more beautiful between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa? It is difficult to answer. You can stand in front of the Deities and look left and right. It is hard to say, but in the end She wins because She can capture Kṛṣṇa in ways that He cannot capture Her.

kānti – She has a lustre, an effulgence. Where there is purity, there is effulgence.

dīpti – There is also a brilliance about Her.

There are two types of effulgence: a glow (*kānti*) and a sparkling brilliance (*dīpti*).

She possesses *mādhurya* or sweetness but also *pragalbhatā*, impudence.

She now begins to cover Herself. She begins to hide because the whole nature of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's love is that it is hidden. It is not overtly shown. It is the most hidden thing. Therefore, the other day in Rādhā-kuṇḍa I had mixed feelings.

The other day at Rādhā-kuṇḍa we were at a place where the most hidden exchanges between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa took place in private *kuñjas*. I read to you the descriptions from Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī about the various *kuñjas* situated around Rādhā-kuṇḍa and we could appreciate their hidden nature. It is said that around Śyāma-kuṇḍa the cowherd boys also have their various groves but they do not manage them. They turn them over to the *gopīs* and *mañjarīs* because the cowherd boys are not allowed there. Only Kṛṣṇa, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Her associates are in these groves. The pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are very hidden. Impudence is a quality that hides that love. She challenges Kṛṣṇa. She chastises Kṛṣṇa. She speaks bluntly to Kṛṣṇa as if She wants nothing to do with Him.

audārya – magnanimity. To be magnanimous means to give without limit and not hold back in any way; to simply give to one's maximum capacity and possibly beyond. We are familiar with partial-giving, "I'll give so much. I'll hold back so much." Rādhārāṇī's magnanimity is that She gives everything, to the very last fibre of Her existence, Her complete being. She offers everything She has in service to Kṛṣṇa. That is our objective, our meditation. Nothing less will do. Nothing else is good enough. We cannot allow ourselves anything less. Maybe we cannot come to that platform. Maybe we will fall short but we can never be self-satisfied in that state of falling short. We can never say, "Well, I'm doing sixty percent. That is

good enough."

No! We can never be satisfied when encountering our own limitations. We all feel that we fall short in our devotional service but we have to come to that stage of giving ourselves completely for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa.

Audārya also includes giving to all, not just Kṛṣṇa. It includes seeing that every living being is part of Kṛṣṇa, that the spiritual world is an ocean of loving exchange and everyone belongs in that ocean with Kṛṣṇa and one another. The loving exchanges are always increasing the ecstasy of that ocean, therefore the ocean of love is eternally growing. So *audārya* includes everyone, whether human being, animal, or plant; everyone should be given mercy. No one is exempt.

Dhairya – patience. Patience is required. It means waiting for an opportunity. How difficult is it for Rādhā to meet Kṛṣṇa? How many obstacles are encountered unexpectedly, again and again? Messengers were sent from both sides and finally Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa have fixed a meeting place but for some awkward reason Jaṭilā, or another elder, appears. How is it possible? Some obstacle always arises and Their meeting doesn't happen. They try again the next time and guess what? It did not happen. It just never happens. When will They finally meet? When They do meet, it is stolen moments. Finally, in a rare moment, it somehow works out. Finally! Of course, They meet several times in the day but how many moments are They missing? How many moments are They not able to meet because of social obstacles? Oh, how much patience is required when one is waiting to meet Kṛṣṇa? One second, a moment feels like twelve years or more – just one moment!

And how much are we willing to wait? We are of the opinion that

we can wait forever.
"Well, I can always practise Kṛṣṇa Consciousness in my next life. I think I did pretty good in this one. Better than the last."

No. There is still time left. There is still the opportunity to engage in Kṛṣṇa's service and milk it to the maximum. Let us meditate on that. Let us think about it. Let us take inspiration from Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

In relation to the external nature, there are pastimes. In relation to Her nature there are also pastimes.

vilāsa – enjoyment is another feature, and also *vicchitti* – breaking off. Oh yes, breaking off, creating that separation. Rādhārāṇī is not only subjected to separation from Kṛṣṇa but She also creates separation to increase Kṛṣṇa's love and hankering. These ingredients are all mixed.

Sometimes Her attitude is, "Yes, come." At other times it is, "Take that debauchee away! I do not want to see His face!" She can be in a sullen mood, "He went to the wrong grove at the time of our appointment. I will not see Him now."

But even in Her anger, Her love for Kṛṣṇa never changes. There is no question of truly condemning Him or rejecting Him even if He misbehaves. It is not possible.

āśliṣya vā pāda-ratāṁ pinaṣṭu mām
adarśanān marma-hatāṁ karotu vā

"Whether He is present before me or handles me roughly with His embrace. Whatever He does, He is my Lord unconditionally."
(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 20.47)

The final quality that Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions is *vibhrama* – puzzlement. It refers to bewilderment or confusion. In the spiritual world the situation is different from this domain. It is the world of *sat-cit-ānanda*. It is not limited by time. It is *sat*, eternal. It is *cit*; there is unlimited knowledge and unlimited happiness (*ānanda*) in that world. Yet, one can be bewildered or become confused there, when one does not know what is going on any more. Does He love me? Does He actually love me? Or maybe not?

We remember that story described by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in the *Prema-samputa*, that took place in Yavat where a goddess came and complained about how Rādhārāṇī was being treated. The goddess revealed that the demigods watched everything that was going on in Vṛndāvana.

She said, "I cannot take it any longer! I cannot bear to see how Kṛṣṇa is treating You. You gave everything to Him and look what He does to You. How unfaithful!"

Rādhārāṇī said, "No, it is not like that. The truth of the matter is that these are all external events. Actually, Kṛṣṇa and Myself are never separated for a moment, because I am always thinking of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa is always thinking of Me. In this way We are one."

The goddess said, "Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, I understand very well that You would like to believe that but how do You really know that Kṛṣṇa is always thinking of You? I cannot believe it. You say that You are one in thought, but I will only believe that if You think of Kṛṣṇa in deep meditation and make Him appear."

Rādhārāṇī went into deep meditation. After some time She opened Her eyes and Kṛṣṇa was there but the goddess had gone.

Rādhārāṇī asked, "Where did that goddess go to?"

"Oh, she had to go," Kṛṣṇa said.

Yes, she had to go so that Kṛṣṇa could manifest and take off His disguise.

So bewilderment, doubt and confusion are all different moods that manifest at different points in time. It is not simple. It is not cheap. It is not just a sentimental "Rādhārāṇī, Rādhārāṇī," type of thing. You can get that at the tea stalls or on the little carts at the side of the road. You can buy that: some cheap *rasa-līlā* where the actors drink chai and smoke beedies after the performance. That can never penetrate into the essence of things.

We can only approach these matters on the strength of our devotional service and if our devotional service is meagre, then we will remain on the outside. We will get restless here and sit in this place thinking, "When will we go home? It went on for too long today. The *kīrtana* lasted forever. First Kadamba Kanana Swami led, then he read something, then another *kīrtana*, and yet another *kīrtana*, and he spoke again a long time."

Some might start thinking, "Oh, *prasādam*! We've already missed lunch today and will only have a snack bar again or some bananas because it's Ekādaśī. What will we eat?"

We move from the internal to the external and then again back to the internal, but if we don't take some time to meditate here, then what are we really doing? Here, we go to the core of the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and we may not be qualified, but at least we should understand something and hear about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, now that we are in the holy *dhāma*.

As you may have noticed, we are sitting under two trees grown together – not just one tree. These trees represent Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa – one is dark and one is white. Such trees are quite common in Vṛndāvana. We used to have one very close to our temple, the Kṛṣṇa Balarāma tree, which was blackish at the bottom and white on top representing Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. And here we see Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa represented by these trees, having entered into the spirit of the trees. That's why I like to sit under them. Vaiṣṇava Mahārāja says that they are *nima* and peepal trees. If you find a branch lying around on the floor from that tree, you may as well stick it into your bead bag, take it back with you and save it as one of your trophies.

By the mercy of Lord Caitanya we can approach all these places. Whatever we are lacking He will make up.

kathañcana smṛte yasmin
duṣkaraṁ sukaraṁ bhavet
(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 14.1)

Whatever is difficult becomes easy by the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and whatever is easy, becomes difficult without the mercy of Mahāprabhu. It is by His mercy that we are here today and doing whatever we are doing. In the *Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes that men in this age of Kali who dress up like *sannyāsīs*, can only do so by the mercy of Śrī Caitanya. We can approach such exalted pastime places by the mercy of Mahāprabhu, *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya rādhā-kṛṣṇa nahe anya*, who is none other than Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined.



SURABHI-KUṆḌA

Surabhi-kuṇḍa is significant for forgiveness.
For everything we do without mantra, without proper
arrangement or without devotion, we ask for
forgiveness. We can be forgiven for mistakes
but then we should not commit them again.
Stay safe on the spiritual platform.

Surabhi-kuṇḍa is where Indra met Kṛṣṇa after he heard about the worship of Govardhana, and tried to inundate the residents of Vṛndāvana with torrents of rain. Indra did not care whether they lived or died. He was ready to destroy. His anger was uncontrolled and certainly his behaviour was not befitting.

Kṛṣṇa said, "Indra, I thought that you were a devotee, but this kind of behaviour is not at all befitting a devotee. My dear Indra, how could you have behaved in that way?"
Indra replied, "I was proud."
"You should have checked your pride with intelligence and taken a humble position."
"Yes, but I was angry and therefore I forgot all transcendental knowledge."

Proudly important

Indra allowed himself to fall prey to anger by being proud. When one is proud, one gives undue importance to oneself and everything that one experiences is extremely important. When we are humble, then whatever happens to us is secondary. As soon as we are proud then everything in relation to 'I, me and mine' is very important. All my attributes are sacred. Due to his pride, Indra was in an attached position.

He thought, "Yes, I am Indra. I am an important personality so offerings should be made to me. Who else? Obviously it's for me." In this mood, Indra was concerned with his own position and his own worship and so he became angry.

If we think, "I am not worshippable," then we are in a safe position, therefore Vaiṣṇavas do not like to be worshipped. However, sometimes for the sake of leading others to Kṛṣṇa, one may receive respect and honour but one should always offer that to Kṛṣṇa. One

should always think that it is not due to oneself but to Kṛṣṇa. "I am simply representing Kṛṣṇa so all the glory goes to Him. If I was not representing Kṛṣṇa, all this glory would be gone."

In my case, as a sannyāsī, people bow down to me but the truth is that they are bowing down to my clothes. If tomorrow I would put on other clothes, they would not bow down to me any more. I remind myself, "Don't think they're bowing down to you. They are just bowing down to your clothes. If you change them, nobody will care about you." Similarly, whatever glories we possess, we have them only because they are connected to Kṛṣṇa.

Indra forgot that he was a representative of Kṛṣṇa. That was his first and foremost offence. He forgot because he was carried away by his own position. Indra is not the only devotee that fell into that trap. It is said in the *Mādhurya-kaḍambinī* that one can enjoy the side benefits from devotional service – *taraṅga-rangini*.

In beginning, you may be new, but as you engage in devotional service and time goes by, you automatically become senior. It is convenient. You do not really have to do anything – just time makes you senior. You start getting the lamp first during the *ārati*. One day, it is given to someone else first and you go, "Don't they know who I am? What's going on? Where is my cushion? Why are they not carrying my cushion today?" Thoughts like this creep into the mind. As one gets senior, people also give you money.

"Give me more money. Yes, give more, give more!" When there is no money, the mind goes, "No money? Just a letter? There is always money inside the envelopes, isn't it?"

We must remember this is not ours, but Kṛṣṇa's money. We should not try to enjoy the side benefits that come from devotional service

such as money, fame and glory. It is easy to do so.

We will find something to take pride in when we take proprietorship, but when we give everything to Kṛṣṇa, we realize that whatever recognition we receive is simply Kṛṣṇa's mercy. It is only because we did something for Him. If I look back at my spiritual life, there were many things I did not want to do. I joined in Vṛndāvana and was asked to help in the restaurant. On the second day, the manager left. Actually, it was a little more dramatic than that. I went into the kitchen and found the manager with a lady in a compromising situation. The next day, I was the manager. How did that happen? Suddenly I was a manager of a restaurant somewhere in India. Somehow, I carried on. Later on, I became the manager of many services without really wanting to. Yet, we must serve somehow. Service is given by the Vaiṣṇavas. Service is not taken. Service is a gift. When we remember that service is given by Vaiṣṇavas, then we can avoid pride.

Forgiveness

Indra got carried away and was ready to kill all the residents of Vṛndāvana. Kṛṣṇa saved them and Indra realized he had committed a great offence. He realized that Kṛṣṇa was the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thought, "How do I deal with this? How can I be forgiven for this? This is not going to be easy because I really took it too far. It was not just an insult; I sent the rains of devastation and they could have been killed. What do I do now?" He thought, "Let me go to Lord Brahma because he is wise and intelligent."

Lord Brahma suggested, "Well, you should take Surabhi and place her in front and then you will be forgiven, because Kṛṣṇa is inclined towards the cows."

That was the plan. However, Surabhi was not just a sweet cow;

she was also smart, and she took full advantage of the situation. She poured milk on Kṛṣṇa and said, "Actually, my dear Kṛṣṇa, You are our real protector. You are the real ruler of the universe, the real Indra who protects the cows. We now offer *abhiṣeka* to coronate You as Indra."

Indra had to swallow that. He was probably wondering, "What is happening here? She is crowning Kṛṣṇa as Indra. I am Indra! Anyway, what can I do?"

Indra knew that he needed forgiveness, so he ordered his elephant, Airāvata, to also offer *abhiṣeka* to Kṛṣṇa at the same time. Airāvata had water from the heavenly Gaṅgā, Ākāśa-gaṅgā, kept in his trunk. That was enough to create a full *abhiṣeka*. In this way, Kṛṣṇa got a full *abhiṣeka* with milk and Gaṅgā *jala* and was crowned as the original Indra. Meanwhile, Indra had to stand there quietly and Kṛṣṇa forgave him.

So the significance of this place is forgiveness – forgiveness for all our mistakes. In Deity worship we use this mantra: *hīnaṁ kriyā-hīnaṁ bhakti-hīnaṁ janārdana*: Please forgive me for anything offered without mantra, everything offered without a proper arrangement and without any devotion. We can apply that to our daily lives also, regarding everything that we do without mantra, without proper arrangement or without any devotion. This mindset creeps into our daily activities so we need a lot of mercy. We make many mistakes and we ask for forgiveness for our mistakes, but then we should not commit them again. Prabhupāda also said, "Oh, you commit mistake? One time – yes, I will forgive you. No problem. Second time – yes, I will forgive you. Third time – get out of here, you rascal!" So we cannot forever make the same mistake.

What counts as an accident?

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, we find a description about accidental fall down and it is always a little bewildering. What is an accidental fall down? What counts as accidental? Where does it begin? Is it not premeditated? Is it a situation when one wonders, "Oops! How did that happen?" Sometimes even a premeditated sinful activity can be counted as accidental. We are generous and can write off as accidental those encounters where we came too close to the modes of material nature and then became captured.

The verse, *kṛṣṇa-bahirmukha hañā bhoga vāñchā kare nikaṭa-stha māyā tāre jāpaṭiyā dhare* is from *Prema-vivarta* by Jagadānanda Paṇḍita, and I think it is significant. Jagadānanda says that when you flirt with the material energy, Māyā is standing nearby ready to slap you down. So it is not about falling down any more but it is about Māyā slapping us down. That is a strong statement. Otherwise one may think, "Yeah, I can walk on the edge. I can keep my balance. I know what I'm doing. I know very well what I'm doing. I know Māyā and I'm careful." No. Māyā is tricky and she slaps us down which is unexpected. So one has to keep oneself safe on the spiritual platform. Keep a safe distance. If we associate too much with materialistic people, what is going to happen? "Oh, gee. That was an accident." Accidents will then happen in one way or another. One has to keep oneself safe in good association.

Stay safe on the spiritual platform

In Amsterdam, where I am from, there is a red light district. Normally, we would not go in there because it is an intense place. They advertise, 'Whatever your secret dream is, we have it – at a price.' It is a dangerous place. You would not want to go there to seek your dreams. Better let them sleep; let them rest. Who can say that he is not from the age of Kali? Who can say that he never had a sinful thought? Who can say that he never had a sinful desire or

committed a sinful act? Who? We have to be very careful in this regard and not take unnecessary risk.

An accident can happen once but if there is a second time, then be a little more careful. Better be in a safe situation, whatever that is. It is not the same for everyone. Nityānanda could go into the liquor shop to preach but for a former alcoholic that may not be the best thing to do. Sometimes, for the sake of preaching, we will go, but some places can be contaminating.

At one time, during a Christmas marathon in Australia, we were distributing paintings. Late at night, we finished our sales at the last bar which was intense enough. Everything else was closed. A devotee said to me, "I know of one place that's open."
I said, "Let's do it. We should not stop until the last place is closed."
He hesitated, "Okay, but I dunno if you wanna go there."
I replied, "I'll go."
He explained, "The prostitutes…"
"Uh…"
But I had already said I would go. "Okay, let's go. May Kṛṣṇa protect us."

We came to this house. For the first time in my life, I entered the house of a prostitute. There were lights flashing. We rang the doorbell. A girl answered in short silver hot pants and a blouse with a cut to the navel. I swallowed, thinking, "Oh my God! What are we doing? Why are we going in here?"

We offered them the paintings and some of the girls were not interested, "Ah, salesmen." Others looked at the paintings and we kept aside the ones they liked. The girls said, "We have no money but we can work something out…"

I said, "No, no. The boss is not going to like that," thinking of Kṛṣṇa as the boss. "We have to bring back some money."

They said, "Okay. No problem, but you have to wait for us to make the money and then we will buy your paintings." So we sat there that night, and they eventually bought all the paintings. I never did that again. That was not a good idea.

Of course, we are ready to give the mercy to anyone and everyone. Lord Nityānanda's spirit is there. We can forgive everyone for their sinful activities and we can give them mercy but we have to also be careful. Do not overestimate our own power. When we feel weak we do not take unnecessary risk. That is also part of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The Eleventh canto of the *Bhāgavatam* says that one should keep oneself safe on the spiritual platform. One cannot ask to be forgiven cheaply. This is my main point and why I told these stories. We have to keep ourselves safe. If some difficulty still arises, we can pray to Kṛṣṇa and come here to Surabhi-kuṇḍa to pray for forgiveness for all our mistakes. We can then move on and learn from our mistakes. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Failure is the pillar of success," because from a failure you learn what not to do. If we do fall down, or something goes wrong, then remember, failure is the pillar of success. Prabhupāda meant that we should learn from our mistakes.

I did not tell any sweet stories of Kṛṣṇa but, at the same time, life is not always sweet. Sometimes it is, but not always. It is not sweet when we make mistakes. Indra's position was not sweet. Indra made a big mess of things and how was he going to fix it? With the help of a devotee. Indra did so by taking shelter of a devotee. He placed a devotee in front. If we make mistakes, we better be humble and take shelter of a devotee. Then we will be okay.

Questions and answers:

Why did Kṛṣṇa not kill Indra immediately since he was trying to kill the residents of Vṛndāvana?

Kṛṣṇa could have thrown a thunderbolt on his head. That would have been a surprise because usually, Indra was throwing the thunderbolts. Kṛṣṇa could have instantly killed him, but Indra is a devotee. Another reason was that Kṛṣṇa took it as an opportunity to show the residents of Vṛndāvana that He was the Supreme Personality of Godhead by lifting Govardhana Hill. He showed that He was able to give them unlimited shelter. The residents of Vṛndāvana and the cows all fitted under Govardhana Hill, although ordinarily there should not have been enough space. Kṛṣṇa made it possible. The whole pastime was something that Kṛṣṇa desired. Kṛṣṇa used Indra to create this whole situation. Of course, Kṛṣṇa also taught Indra a lesson but His first objective in this whole Govardhana *līlā* was to bestow His mercy upon all the residents of Vṛndāvana.

Why was Kṛṣṇa so rough with Bali Mahārāja, but so soft with Indra?

In the case of Bali Mahārāja, the residents of Vṛndāvana were not involved. But here Kṛṣṇa was looking at an opportunity to show the residents of Vṛndāvana something extraordinary and to establish Himself very clearly as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He was not just establishing Himself as the Indra, but as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So that is what He wanted. Correcting Indra was a secondary thing.

After some time some spiritual activities like chanting may become repetitive and the freshness disappears. It becomes

a little dry. How can we maintain a spirit of enthusiasm, go on for fifty years and hopefully even have more taste by then?

Our chanting is not based on a technique. I read a book which described that certain types of music create alpha waves, causing the brain to become very receptive. I thought, "Rubbish!" Even if it would work, it would only be a temporary fix. It would not be substantial at all because if we really want to chant, we have to become attracted to Kṛṣṇa. That is how we come to the point of chanting attentively.

We are not Haridāsa Ṭhākura and we cannot chant all the time. We are too restless. Sixteen rounds is already quite a bit for us. Sometimes we can chant more that our 16 rounds but usually not all the time. For the remainder of the time, we have to do a lot of service with our senses, with our mind, with our intelligence. Engage all these in service. It is that service that will change everything. If we really extend ourselves by using our energy and our intelligence, then by that service we become transformed. Then our chanting changes and we get taste in chanting. If we just chant and chant and chant and wait for taste and inspiration to come, we follow a path that is not practical for most of us. It is not the path that Śrīla Prabhupāda taught. Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us to do devotional service. Chant minimum sixteen rounds and do devotional service.

It is said that currently, our consciousness is invested in the sensual platform, therefore we take *prasādam* to satisfy these senses. For the mental platform, we have *kīrtana*. For the intellectual platform, we have philosophy. We can intellectually make plans for Kṛṣṇa. We can use our senses to do things for Kṛṣṇa and in this way they become purified and they will not harass us so much because, *indriyāṇi mano buddhir asyādhiṣṭhānam ucyate* (*Bhagavad-gītā* 3.40), lust is situated in the senses, the mind and the intelligence. It is

lust that creates the problem. We chant but, influenced by lust, we cannot focus. By engaging the senses, mind and intelligence in service, lust diminishes and then our chanting will improve. Our absorption will improve in this way.

You said that we have to keep ourselves safe on the spiritual platform and it may not mean always the same for everyone. Is a fall down an individual thing at times? Sometimes I have told my spiritual master about what seems like a fall down for me and he said, "Oh no, just carry on from there."

There is gross fall down and subtle fall down. Gross fall down means we break the four regulative principles. Then in the more subtle fall down, maybe we become disrespectful. That would also, in a sense, bring us to a lower level. If we are disrespectful, that can bring us down from the spiritual platform and we lose taste. We lose inspiration and go back to the modes of material nature. Then we practice spiritual life not out of love and taste but out of duty. So by being neglectful, on a more subtle level, we can bring ourselves down. But a real fall down means falling from the four regulative principles, or from chanting sixteen rounds.

How does one deal with a situation where somebody has been offended by a subtle mistake that you were not conscious that you were making at that time, and which subtly affects you as well?

Get extremely mental about it [sarcastic]. The whole day, you can imagine that you have committed some offence to some devotee and whenever you see a devotee you beg, "Please, please forgive me!" Some devotees always say that and you think, "Go away. Nothing happened. You did not do anything. So relax." Lord Caitanya shows His mercy for these little, invisible things. For the bigger offences,

we can seek forgiveness. For the little, invisible things, we pray that Lord Caitanya, Lord Nityānanda and the holy name will take it all away. Chant and have lots of *kīrtana* for many hours everyday. That is the solution.

We see from the pastimes of Caitanya Mahāprabhu that He forgave some mistakes and others, He did not. For example He forgave Kālā Kṛṣṇadāsa, but not Choṭa Haridāsa.

Choṭa Haridāsa was a *sannyāsī*. Sannyāsa is serious business. If you take *sannyāsa*, then you get heavy reactions. You have to be careful. As we take more responsibility in spiritual life, then naturally we will also be held more accountable. Some people will take initiation tomorrow. First initiation is measurable. It's a big change. You get a new name, you chant sixteen rounds and follow four regulative principles. You promise it and that is measurable. It is very clear if you are not following them. The second initiation is more complicated because you have to acquire the qualities of goodness. Where does that begin? Where does that end? You know that you have to be humble, but who is humble? You have to be very tolerant and who can be tolerant? So we do not have a lot of these qualities, but we are reminding ourselves of the qualities to acquire. With each initiation, our responsibility increases.

Once you take initiation, you will be held accountable if you do not follow. I would say that sooner or later, the majority of devotees break their vows after initiation. That is my observation. It is not a case of "Ah, well. What can you do?"

No. Prabhupāda was very serious about it. He said, "You gave your word when you took initiation and now you must be accountable." You will get reactions which are stronger than you would have gotten before. If you take second initiation, then it is not just about *gāyatrī*

mantra, "Hey! Brāhmaṇa thread. Cool." No, there is also an increase in responsibility. If we do not follow, we get increased reactions. It is one thing if you have been a devotee for two years and you make a mistake but if you make the same mistake after twenty years then you will be held more accountable. You are expected now to know better.

In the beginning, Lord Caitanya will forgive many things. He is there. You see new devotees fighting – I mean fist fights. And not only men. I saw a little *brahmacāriṇī* try to strangle a big one. I was surprised that she had it in her. I never expected that. I'm not saying that it is good, but you will not fall down from spiritual life immediately. After some time you have to stop strangling devotees and all other varieties of things. You may happen to say, "You idiot!" but do not make a culture of this. You have to be careful. In the beginning, the path is very wide and over time it narrows down. Initially we will be forgiven but gradually our responsibility increases. We are meant to perform better. That may be a little scary for us but do not be scared. It is good for us. As the path narrows down, the intensity of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness increases and our absorption deepens. We become more connected to Kṛṣṇa and spiritual life becomes more ecstatic.

Mahārāja, I am wondering how we can avoid making mistakes based on overextending ourselves and taking on something that won't be possible for us to maintain.

I do not know. There is the over-extending ourselves and 'under-extending' ourselves. What if we 'under-extend' ourselves? What if we say, "Well, I do not want to take too much of a risk, therefore I will take on only a little because I am sure I can handle that and I will be safe. I will wait and wait before I take initiation. I will do some service but not too much." In that dynamic we may 'under-

extend' ourselves. We may have both the tendency to under-endeavour and to over endeavour because we are passionate.

I am the kind of person who says,"Let us really try." I do not know how many lifetimes we have been connected to this movement. Rūpa Gosvāmī writes in *The Nectar of Devotion* that spiritual life is normally a continuation from the previous life. I mentioned, in Ter Kadamba, that that means we did not make it. We blew it! If we were devotees in a previous life then we were supposed to have gone back to Godhead. If we did not then we blew it! Big time! Yeah, totally blew it! So are we going to blow it again? I am afraid. I don't want to blow it again. This time, I want to give it all I have. That is my mood. I am trying to give it all I have because, as far as I am concerned, enough is enough. Enough of this material world. I try not to criticize anybody. I try to do as much service as I can. I try to chant as much as I can and sleep and eat as little as I can.

Let us increase our service. Let us minimize our physical needs. Let us avoid offences and do the best we can. If our service starts to interfere with our chanting or really interfere with our health – big time, not just a little but big time – then it is an over endeavour. When, in the name of service, you just keep on walking until your foot falls off then that does not make sense. It does not make sense for our chanting to suffer and that we cannot finish sixteen rounds because we do so much service. However, we have got to do something because one day we are going to die. Who is thinking about that? That is what Prabhupāda told me this morning as I got up and listened to a lecture: one day you are going to die. "Alright, got it, Prabhupāda."

I was wondering about the subtle anarthas, whether these can spill over and destroy our devotional life?

Yes, the subtle anarthas, and not the gross activities themselves, create a mentality which can eventually bring us to act in a sinful way. There is a definition given of different actions that are regarded as illicit sex: *smaraṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ keliḥ prekṣaṇaṁ guhyam āsanam*... Hearing, talking, remembering or looking at sexual acts and sitting in a secluded place with the opposite sex, all constitute illicit sex. Engaging in the act is the last aspect of the definition. So contemplation and conversation also constitute illicit sex. In other words, there is a subtle level and a gross level.

In this age of Kali, there is special license for the subtle level. Whatever we think about in the mind, even if we feel like killing a person, we get no reaction for it. There is no karma for thoughts but if you keep on thinking it, it may manifest. One day, you may put some cyanide in the coffee! When we notice that on the subtle platform we are not Kṛṣṇa conscious, then we have to also make arrangements for purification. That means hearing more. We can listen to Prabhupāda's lectures and that sound vibration will enter our consciousness and gives us inspiration, but that's not the only benefit. Prabhupāda says that a *sādhu* speaks sense and therefore our faith becomes stronger. We realize, "Yes, this is true. I can accept this as true." We change; our faith where happiness can be found, will change. We get purified and therefore we have to hear. One of our problems is that we do not hear enough. We measure our chanting daily, but not our hearing. We have to hear because that helps to control our consciousness on a more subtle level.

How can we be humble but still eager for Lord Caitanya's mercy?
By serving. Eagerness means to be eager to serve. Humility means to not take credit for the service. Do the service but give the credit to others. Actually, others helped and that's how it got done. It was not us. Yet do as much service as possible.

You often mentioned that Kṛṣṇa removes Himself from the chanting or the Deities, but I do not understand how He removes Himself.

When chanting Kṛṣṇa's names we know that the name is Kṛṣṇa and if Kṛṣṇa wants to remove Himself from His name then He just takes a distance. The name becomes just a hollow shell. You chant hollow-shell-mantras and there is no effect. There is the statement *bahu janma kare yadi śravaṇa, kīrtana tabu ta' nā pāya kṛṣṇa-pade prema-dhana* (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā* 8.16); one can chant the holy name for many many births but still not attain Kṛṣṇa *prema*. So it depends on the gravity of the offence.

Lord Caitanya understands that people from the age of Kali are struggling to follow regulative principles. In the earlier stages, He is lenient, and they become purified. Gradually, they get more responsibility. If they continue to commit offences over many years, they are going to put themselves at a bit of a distance. Still, they are devotees at heart. They know they should do better but they are still devotees. It is expected that, in the beginning, people will struggle with the principles, the rules and chanting, since they have lived a whole life without them. In the Vedic culture, progress is very gradual. Now a total revolution is required from one day to the next. No one came from a background of following four regulative principles. Even in India, people were not following the regulative principles the way Prabhupāda taught it. Now spiritual life is very revolutionary. No tea! And a few other things also! Yeah, tough. The revolution is a little difficult; it's a sudden change. Struggle can be expected and forgiven in the age of Kali, in the beginning. But if it goes on, some reactions will come. The person will stay a devotee but will go towards the external practice. You cannot just lose your Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

What about Paramātmā? Even if Kṛṣṇa removes Himself, Paramātmā stays, right?

The Paramātmā is always with us, but if we do not listen to Him then He may communicate with us a little less – until we become more favourable. The more favourable we become, the more Paramātmā will speak to us.



PUNCARI

When we have firm faith that Kṛṣṇa is soft-hearted and merciful, then no matter how long we have to wait, we will wait. We will have patience fuelled by faith. We meditate on the patience of Lotha Baba and the soft-heartedness of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva.

I will speak a little about Puncari. Govardhana is compared to a peacock, and Puncari actually refers to the tail of the peacock. At the tail, we have various places of pilgrimage.

Towards my left and your right is Dhoka Dauji, a form of Lord Balarāma who is seated, crouched. He is on the hill so we cannot go and see Him, but He is there. When Kṛṣṇa was performing *rasa-līlā* pastimes with the *gopīs*, Balarāma was watching, and He became so absorbed in the pastimes that He turned black. So Dhoka Dauji is black and is sitting in a crouched position.

A little further back is Apsarā-kuṇḍa. At Puncari, we have the temple of Lotha Baba, who is one of the cowherd boys. When Akrūra was taking Kṛṣṇa out of Vṛndāvana, first the *gopīs* tried to stop him and that did not work. Akrūra took the chariot and just drove away mercilessly. As the chariot passed Govardhana, Lotha Baba was standing here and he told Kṛṣṇa, "Oh, you must come and take some *prasādam*. I have something for you that you must eat." Kṛṣṇa said, "Yes. I will come. I am 'just now coming'. I'll be right back."

Up until today, Lotha Baba is still waiting for Kṛṣṇa to return. Later we will stop there just to take *darśana*.

Patience fuelled by faith

Lotha Baba manifests the quality of patience. Patience is essential in spiritual life because what can we do without it? We want instant results from whatever we do. If we do not get quick results, we give up. We do not last very long. But in spiritual life *utsāhān niścayād dhairyāt tat-tat-karma-pravartanāt* (*Nectar of Instruction*, Text 3), there is a need for enthusiasm, a need for determination and a need for patience. As conditioned souls, we practise our spiritual life in the form of *sādhana* or devotional service according to prescribed rules

and regulations. It is a gradual cultivation, so patience is required. If we really want to attract Kṛṣṇa, we surely will. If Lotha Baba just remains firmly fixed in his determination that he will wait for Kṛṣṇa to return, then Kṛṣṇa will. He will. You may not believe it but He will because Kṛṣṇa is merciful and He is aware of the devotee's plight. Kṛṣṇa is aware that the devotee is making this endeavour. So it is not that Kṛṣṇa will not answer our prayers or reciprocate with our service. No, Kṛṣṇa will always bestow His mercy upon us. It is just a matter of time before that happens. Until that time, we have to have patience. But patience alone is not enough; it must be accompanied by strong faith that Kṛṣṇa will surely reciprocate; *ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham* (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.11) - I will reward you according to your surrender.

It is certain that if we wait for Kṛṣṇa and continue to faithfully perform our service, Kṛṣṇa will respond and reciprocate. There is no doubt about it. Our faith has to be very strong and then we can have the patience, but when our faith is thin, patience is difficult to maintain.

"Well, I don't know. I'm just waiting for so long and still I'm not so advanced and I've tried so much. Maybe it doesn't work."

When we have weak faith, there will also be doubts about the success of our service. This strong faith is really needed. Success is guaranteed. It will come because Kṛṣṇa is merciful. He is Acyuta. He never fails to remember any service rendered. If we continue our devotional service, it will purchase Kṛṣṇa and then He will appear.

Remember Vāsudeva the leper? He was such a personality, so fixed in his devotional service and in his devotional mood. He had fully absorbed the spirit of a Vaiṣṇava. His mood was *udvega nā dibe* – do not give any anxiety to any other living being. There were worms

in his body because he had leprosy. Some fell out and he thought, "Oh, now they will starve and die." So he picked them up and put them back. So he was really extraordinary.

Vāsudeva tried so hard to meet Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He travelled as fast as he could to the place where Mahāprabhu was supposed to be, but he reached there too late. Mahāprabhu had already left. He broke down in such lamentation. Mahāprabhu, being soft-hearted and gentle, responded and returned to the spot. He embraced Vāsudeva. Vāsudeva's body became very beautiful and was cured from all disease.

Vāsudeva asked, "What will I do now? Before I was cured, I had no problem. I was not attractive to anyone and therefore it was easy to stay humble, but now that I am good looking and beautiful, there will be much trouble. How do I deal with this?"

Mahāprabhu's response was, "Simply stay in this place and instruct everyone that you meet about Kṛṣṇa."

So this is the spirit of great faith. Great faith is our foundation. Faith depends on where we think our happiness lies. When we think happiness lies in a particular country, then we will be very attached to that country. When we think our happiness lies in a certain social position, then we will be very attached to that. We place our faith where we think happiness will be attained, because the living being is by nature *ānanda-mayo 'bhyāsāt* – pleasure seeking. Obviously, our real happiness is with Kṛṣṇa. When we have firm faith that Kṛṣṇa is soft-hearted and merciful, then no matter how long we have to wait, we will wait. We will have patience. So we can meditate on the patience of Lotha Baba.

Nearby, we have the cave of Rāghava Paṇḍita. Rāghava Paṇḍita

showed Narottama and Śrīnivāsa the holy places in the holy *dhāma*. This is described in the fifth chapter of the *Bhakti-ratnākara* and is included in the VedaBase®. This chapter of the *Bhakti-ratnākara* is very important because it gives authority to many places in Vṛndāvana. The Nṛsiṁha temple is also recognized in that book and just nearby is the cave where Rāghava Paṇḍita would reside. It is said that previously the cave was bigger. Those who have great faith can appreciate. It is said that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa had pastimes in that cave. Campakalatā resided in that cave during Kṛṣṇa's *līlās* and then she returned as Rāghava Paṇḍita. We can appreciate that that cave has particular pastimes assigned to it. It is known as the Maṇikuṇḍala cave.

The Nṛsiṁha – Kṛṣṇa link

Here we are in the temple of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva. Since we are in Vṛndāvana, let me begin with Mother Yaśodā who tried to get Kṛṣṇa to fall asleep.

Kṛṣṇa said, "You have not told me a story. You have to tell me a story first, otherwise I will not go to sleep."
She said, "Okay, I will tell you a story."

Mother Yaśodā began to tell the story of Prahlāda and Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva. When she came to the point where Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva ripped the abdomen of Hiraṇyakaśipu to shreds and took out his intestines, Kṛṣṇa fell into a peaceful sleep. So this is a sweet pastime of Kṛṣṇa in relation to Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva.

We meditate on Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva specifically as *vighna-vināśa*. He is the protector and particularly the destroyer of obstacles on the spiritual path. In the *Navadvīpa-bhāva-taraṅga,* Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura goes to Nṛsiṁha Pallī and prayed for Nṛsiṁhadeva to remove all the *anarthas* from his heart so that he can finally dedicate

himself fully to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In this way, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura worshipped Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva in relation to the service of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, who are our principal Deities.

In the *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta*, there are a few Deities mentioned that particularly manifest the potency of the Lord. They are described as having the full power of the Lord. They are *ṣaḍ-aiśvarya pūrṇaḥ* and Their appearance days in particular are celebrated with great importance. One such manifestation is Lord Rāmacandra and another is Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva. We see that Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva has *vajra-nakha and vajra-daṁṣṭra*, or nails like thunderbolts and teeth like thunderbolts also – very hard. He has a golden mane around His head which is decorated by drops of blood from Hiraṇyakaśipu. As the Lord ripped out the intestines, it splashed a little. And he wore the garland of intestines around his neck.

The whole appearance of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva is very intense but if we think about Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva, then we can appreciate that He is very soft-hearted. He appeared out of his soft-heartedness towards Prahlāda. He appears because Hiraṇyakaśipu was misbehaving with Prahlāda and the Lord showed the form of extreme anger to protect him. Therefore, I look at Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva as the personification of soft-heartedness and as such, He is particularly inclined towards us.

One may wonder, why do we need Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva to protect us? Why not just Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇa can do the job. He lifted Govardhana Hill and protected everyone very nicely. Kṛṣṇa protected the cowherd boys from Aghāsura and from Kāliya. Kṛṣṇa protected the residents of Vṛndāvana from a forest fire and from Bakāsura. Kṛṣṇa protected the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana so many times. So isn't Kṛṣṇa enough as a protector? Why do we have to separately go to Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva for protection? Why can't we just pray

to Kṛṣṇa, who protects His devotees all the time?

That is an important question, especially here in Vṛndāvana, where we look at Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva in the context of Kṛṣṇa. We may consider that Kṛṣṇa has many purposes. Kṛṣṇa plays. As I said, when He lifted Govardhana Hill, chastising Indra was not His main objective. His main objective was His pastimes under the hill, with the residents of Vṛndāvana. Another objective was to really show that He was the Supreme Lord although they still did not believe that because they thought that Nanda Mahārāja and the cowherd boys were actually lifting the hill. Kṛṣṇa certainly can kill all the demons but Kṛṣṇa has many purposes that He fulfils all at once. Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva has only one purpose: to kill the demons and to remove the demoniac tendencies from within.

Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva is completely focused on that. Since the remnants of the age of Kali are so strong, we are plagued by our conditioning; *mandāḥ sumanda-matayo manda-bhāgyā hy upadrutāḥ* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.10). It is said we are lazy, less intelligent and always disturbed by something. That is our position and we carry it with us into spiritual life for a long time. It is the inherent weakness of the age of Kali. Even after knowing so much *śāstra*, we are still residents of Kali and have remnants of previous inappropriate behaviour in our hearts. In the Satya-yuga, the great personalities all went back to Godhead. In the Tretā-yuga, personalities were less great. Nevertheless, some went back to Godhead and all the others entered the lower species. In Dvāpara-yuga it was then easier to get the human birth with less qualification than in previous *yugas* and many went back to Godhead. And in the Kali-yuga, the qualification for the human birth is not very high at all.

The human animal

I compare the Kali-yuga to a school for those with learning

difficulties. This is the age where we are a bit backward, a bit retarded and we somehow get this human form although we really should, by consciousness, have a tail, hooves and various animal features. We are given human births although we have so many animalistic tendencies, and life after life, birth after birth, we keep the same mind and the subtle impressions of all these births are stored within us. We should not have had a human form but because of Kali-yuga, it was easily given. Now, we have the capacity to accept and understand transcendental knowledge. And due to our animalistic tendencies, we need to take shelter of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva who is *vighna-vināśa*, the remover of all these obstacles found everywhere in the age of Kali.

Who is not influenced by Kali? One who thinks he is not influenced by Kali, is actually very much influenced by Kali.

We can appreciate that we come to the Lord with special weakness and as such we need special mercy. Our visit to the temple of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva is of importance and so are all our prayers to Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva. It is quite interesting how Śrīla Prabhupāda introduced Nṛsiṁha worship in our movement when he was ill. He told the devotees that they could pray to Kṛṣṇa, "Please grant my spiritual master more time because he has not finished his work." They could then chant this prayer to Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva and that was how it was introduced into ISKCON. Jayadeva Gosvāmī's prayer is also chanted in the Gauḍīya Maṭha but not as much as in ISKCON. In ISKCON we chant it all the time; after every *ārati... namas te narasiṁhāya*. So we chant this prayer very much because Prabhupāda gave it to us and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura emphasized Nṛsiṁhadeva as the remover of obstacles.

We do not pray to Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva, "Oh, save these bones. Save my blood. Save all that." Of course, when we go in the bus – on

our bus at least – we never fail to chant *namas te narasiṁhāya*. The Lord may or may not save our bodies. That is not important. What is really important is that the Lord will never forsake our soul, *na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati* (*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.31), My devotee will never perish. In this way we appreciate that Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva will always protect us and make sure that we have an auspicious destiny in this life and the next.

Jatipur

Did you see the little girl dancing on the high rope at Govardhana yesterday? She was pretty good – expert, in fact. Imagine that the rope is the transcendental platform and below the rope is a net of the mode of goodness. I have an analogy of walking on the tight rope of transcendence, with the net of the mode of goodness beneath. All the rules and the regulations in spiritual life are tightly woven to form a safety net. If we approach transcendence only in a mood of renunciation then the rope is very narrow and you can easily fall. If we do fall, then we fall onto the net of the mode of goodness. However, if one is on the transcendental platform and has some attraction to Kṛṣṇa and eagerness to serve Him, then the rope becomes wider and easier to walk on.

Second initiation offers more than *brāhmaṇical* qualities; it offers us several mantras that help us develop love of God. In the second initiation, we may not speak it aloud, but we still make the vow to live by *brāhmaṇical* principles. This is no less a vow than those made in the first initiation. So we are meant to embrace these vows and live in the mode of goodness. The vows in the second initiation are a step up from those made in the first initiation. In the first initiation, we require chanting 16 rounds and following the

4 regulative principles as a minimum. So similarly, in the second initiation, we require you practising in the mode of goodness as a minimum. These are milestones; they stay with us always.



KĀLIYA-GHĀṬA

Pride and envy create a mentality that isolates us. We withdraw our feelings from others and do not care about them. A Vaiṣṇava is *para-duḥkha-duḥkhī,* concerned with the welfare of others. How can we benedict others? This is our meditation.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī describes in the *Uddhava-sandeśa* that the Kāliya Lake used to extend quite far. The area of Kṛṣṇa Balarāma Mandira and the road that goes to the Agra-Delhi Highway, join to form Chhatikara. Nanda Mahārāja and the cowherd men moved to Vṛndāvana from Gokula, because there were so many demons. At that time they made a big camp at Chhatikara with their carts and it formed a half circle. They placed the cows in the middle and kept guards at the open end and in this way they protected the cows at Chhatikara.

From Chhatikara, the Kāliya Lake began and the whole area behind our temple up to here was a big lake. At the time when Kāliya was there, it was very poisonous but later, after Kṛṣṇa had jumped in that lake, it changed and the water became sweet. In his *Uddhava-sandeśa*, Rūpa Gosvāmī writes that when you come to Chhatikara and the Kāliya Lake, you should not forget to drink the water because it is very sweet.

Poisoned

The cowherd boys came with Kṛṣṇa, who said that He had to look for a lost calf. He disappeared and left them alone. Balarāma had stayed home that day. The cowherd boys and calves drank the water from the Yamunā, which was heavily poisoned, and they all dropped dead.

When Kṛṣṇa came back He found the entire bank of the Yamunā covered with the dead bodies of calves and cowherd boys. It was a major drama, but then again, Kṛṣṇa always has a solution. Kṛṣṇa somehow revived all of them. You can just imagine what it's like. One moment you're dead. The next moment you're alive and you're wondering, "What happened? We were dead and now we're alive!" It was a bit much on the emotional platform to die and to be revived all in one day, so you can understand that the cowherd boys were

in a state of shock.

The next moment, Kṛṣṇa climbed on the Kadamba tree and jumped right into the Yamunā. It was not just a big splash; the whole river rose one foot. Such a small body entered yet the whole river rose one foot! What was going on? Kṛṣṇa began to make musical sounds with the water. It was quite clear what was to come, because how can you dance without music? That wasn't going to work. There needs to be some music in order to dance, right?

Kāliya heard that music, came out of the water and said, "Who dares to enter my waters and cause this disturbance?"

Kāliya grabbed Kṛṣṇa in his coils and started to strangle Him. The cowherd boys had just died and come back to life and now the torture started again. It was too much emotion for one day.

"Are we dead? Are we alive?"

"There's Kṛṣṇa already in the water…."

"What's He doing?"

The next moment, a huge snake begins to strangle Kṛṣṇa! "Oh my God, this is too much!"

The cowherd boys almost died on the spot again when they saw that Kṛṣṇa was being strangled.

Caught in the coils

Meanwhile, all kinds of negative omens appeared in the sky. Mother Yaśodā was at home and she could immediately understand that something was wrong. She could feel that something serious was

happening. All the cowherd men got ready and ran into the forest. They saw Kṛṣṇa's footprints because in Vṛndāvana no one will ever step on Kṛṣṇa's footprints, neither the human beings nor the animals – no one. Kṛṣṇa's footprints were clearly preserved and therefore Nanda and Yaśodā could follow the tracks very easily in the soft Vṛndāvana sand. They ran along the path that Kṛṣṇa went and they came to the Yamunā only to see Kṛṣṇa in the coils of that terrible snake.

Mother Yaśodā was ready for action. She jumped into the water and was ready to personally take on Kāliya straight away but Nanda and all the other cowherd men grabbed her and pulled her back. They stood there frozen – totally frozen. The elders could not move, seeing this terrible predicament.

In *The Nectar of Devotion*, there is a description of Lord Balarāma who dreamt about this Kāliya pastime and spoke to Kṛṣṇa in his sleep: "Oh Kṛṣṇa, please hurry up! Why are you taking so long in the coils of this snake? Kṛṣṇa please, everyone is just on the verge of death. They can no longer handle the tension. Please, please finish this snake now."

It took an extremely long time and when everyone was really about to lose it, when everyone was almost dead, Kṛṣṇa freed Himself from the coils and began to dance on the hoods of Kāliya. Kāliya had so many heads, mouths and teeth. He was trying to bite Kṛṣṇa in every possible way, but Kṛṣṇa very elegantly danced from one hood to the other, expertly avoiding the movements of the snake in a beautiful manner. Vṛndāvana-naṭa-vara – Kṛṣṇa revealed Himself as the greatest dancer of Vṛndāvana on the hoods of Kāliya.

After moving back and forth between life and death, the cowherd boys watched Kṛṣṇa dance so beautifully that they forgot

everything. They could only see Vṛndāvana-naṭa-vara, the transcendental dancer, and completely forgot about the snake because the dancing of Kṛṣṇa was so extraordinary that everyone was totally absorbed. At the next moment, they saw the snake again! They were in total shock once more.

The divine dancer

It took a day and a half! So intense! Mother Yaśodā and the cowherd men just stood there. The *gopīs* were in total agony and at one point the residents of Vṛndāvana came to a state where they could not mentally process it any more. Their minds just went on tilt. Just as a computer freezes, their minds froze and they were not able to register what was going on any more.

At that time, Kṛṣṇa bowed down and invited the *gopīs*, "Come and please dance with Me," and they had a whole *rasa* dance on the hoods of Kāliya. It went on for a long time while all the others just stood there, frozen minded. They didn't even see it. After some time, Kṛṣṇa put the *gopīs* back down and the others began to see again, coming out of their mental state. So many things were taking place simultaneously.

Saved by a prayer

Finally, Kāliya was getting tired of being kicked. Not only was Kṛṣṇa's dancing very elegant and beautiful, but He was kicking Kāliya on the head at the same time and He was kicking hard. This apparently caused some brain damage because blood started to come out of the mouth of the snake. A serious condition! He must have had a serious concussion and was definitely ready for some medical treatment.

As Kāliya's condition became critical – just before the ambulance arrived – the Nāga-patnīs, his good snake wives, came out of the

water and said, "Oh my dear Kṛṣṇa, please accept our humble obeisances. Oh Kṛṣṇa, You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Kāliya deserves Your chastisement because he killed Your friends but kindly have mercy upon us because he is our husband and what will we ladies do alone without a husband? That will not be a good condition for us. So please, please, we beg You not to kill our husband."

Kṛṣṇa thought, "Oh, what do I do now? Gosh! Everything was going just great and I was just finishing that snake off." Usually Kṛṣṇa would kill a demon before lunch every day; that was the basic schedule. They'd have breakfast at home, go out to the forest, kill a demon or two and then have lunch. So Kṛṣṇa was just killing His daily demon and then these ladies came in between all teary and crying and praying. "Alright," Kṛṣṇa said to Kāliya, "you can live but you cannot stay."

Supremely respectful

I have my own version of the story. If I was Kṛṣṇa, I would have said (cowboy accent), "Now listen, you snake, this town is not big enough for the two of us." I would have pulled out two guns, pointed them at him, "Now you dance, snake. Dance! Dance! Dance!"

Kāliya would have left town but at the edge he would have turned around and said, "I'll get you back, Swami!"

Kṛṣṇa acted differently. *The Nectar of Devotion* says that Kṛṣṇa is a pleasing talker. With a very sweet voice He said, "Oh, my dear King of the Snakes..."

Kāliya thought, "Oh, He knows that I'm a king!" Everyone likes to be flattered, right? Kāliya enjoyed the flattery. "Yes, I am the king indeed."

Kṛṣṇa was not just flattering him, He had a strategy. By calling him 'King of the Snakes', Kṛṣṇa reminded Kāliya that he had a kingdom.

"My dear King of the Snakes, I know why you came to this Yamunā. You were residing on your island, Ramaṇaka, but Garuḍa would come and eat the snakes there. There was some argument with Garuḍa and you fled for your life. You came to the Yamunā because you knew that Garuḍa could not come here".

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, there was a great sage named Saubhari Muni, who was seated under water in the Yamunā in great meditation. He sat there for 10,000 years so he got to know the environment under water quite well and he knew all the fish personally. One big fish, in particular, was the leader of all the fish – the 'King of the Fish'. Garuḍa came and swallowed that big fish. It was too much for the sage. Saubhari thought, "How could he just take the king?" So he cursed Garuḍa that if he ever appeared there again, he would die. Garuḍa could not come to the Yamunā and Kāliya knew it, therefore he hid here.

Kṛṣṇa said, "Look, my dear Kāliya, you can't stay here in the Yamunā because your poison killed all my friends and all the calves and we can't really have that in Vṛndāvana, so you'll have to go back to your kingdom. Don't worry. My footprints are now on your head and therefore Garuḍa will not touch you." So Kāliya returned to Ramaṇaka.

When we look at this pastime, we can look at many aspects. One aspect is how kind Kṛṣṇa is. Kṛṣṇa is not just a person who has friends and enemies but rather, He is the well-wisher of all. Kṛṣṇa benedicts even those who act inimical to Him. Ultimately, Kṛṣṇa is kind; He was kind to Pūtanā and He was kind to Kāliya. Kṛṣṇa is merciful and even demoniac personalities get His mercy. What

to speak of the devotees? With this pastime we can appreciate Kṛṣṇa's merciful nature and the way Kṛṣṇa deals with everyone – respectfully. Even with a lowly, poisonous, envious creature, Kṛṣṇa was still respectful.

Both by Kṛṣṇa's kicks and by His association, Kāliya was purified and became a devotee. Since he was meditating on Garuḍa, who is the carrier of the Lord, Kāliya also fell in the same category of devotee in the spiritual world. Sanātana Gosvāmī describes in the *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* that Kāliya appeared at the Yamunā in Goloka Vṛndāvana and Kṛṣṇa bridled him with ropes through the holes in his noses. All the cowherd boys mounted Kāliya and they raced up and down the Yamunā at great speed. In this way, Kāliya became Kṛṣṇa's carrier just like Garuḍa.

So the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are very interesting. Kṛṣṇa appears again and again, either in this universe or another, and His pastimes are continuous. We know that the pastimes of Kāliya are going on right now in another universe.

Ever-fresh

I used to wonder about this: if they always perform the same pastimes, doesn't it get boring? Like it does for actors who perform plays thousands or millions of times?

"Here we go again. We're going to do the Kāliya drama. Okay, everybody in your positions. Ready? Cowherd boys, don't forget to drop dead – and act dead. Where are all the cow costumes? Cows, have you got your costumes on? First drink the water! Don't just drop dead before you drink the water! How many times do I have to tell you? It has to be realistic. Stick your snout in the poisonous Yamunā and then drop dead."

Is that it? Are the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa a play that repeats over and over? Is that the spiritual world? Isn't that a little dry? Doesn't it get boring if you do it forever?

"What are we doing now?"

"Guess what? We've been doing it eternally – the Kāliya *līlā*."

"Oh, what a surprise!"

How is the spiritual world ever-fresh? In the bigger picture, the ingredients are the same: Kṛṣṇa, Kāliya and the cowherd boys are there. There is a lot of variety, however, within the bigger picture. Within the pastime there are differences and variation. It is not dry. It is not the same. It is actually ever-fresh. All the cowherd boys are playing with Kṛṣṇa in the forest and yet there's so much variety.

In the spiritual world of course, Kṛṣṇa doesn't kill any demons. He does that here in the material world. If a demon appears in Goloka Vṛndāvana, it is because that demon is also a devotee and Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are playing with him.

By being here in Kālīya-daha, we may increase our desire to go back to the spiritual world. We may desire to enter into the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. Such a desire will help us greatly in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If our desire to go back to the spiritual world is weak, how can we expect to be fixed in our spiritual life?

Tight shoes

In our current conditioned state, spiritual life is an austerity for us. We are not liberated souls. Yesterday, some devotees vowed to follow four regulative principles. It's an austerity. Later on, we may feel a sense of liberation, but currently we won't always feel

that way.

Sometimes it feels like a tight shoe. If you wear a shoe that is slightly small and tight then you can't wait to take it off. You walk in those shoes thinking, "When I get home I'm going to take these off. I can't wait to kick off my shoes!" The tight shoes of the four regulative principles are squeezing us.

"How long can you live like this? Come on. Don't you have to take off the shoes sometimes? Isn't it getting too austere?"

It's too difficult and some relief is needed. It cannot always be stressful. How much stress can one take? How can our spiritual life survive on the basis of stress? Is it possible? Not really.

If we awaken our desire to go back to the spiritual world then we will want to dedicate ourselves to this process. By connecting to such pastime places in Vṛndāvana we can actually develop that desire. In the *Bhāgavatam*, only five chapters deal with *rasa-līlā* and the activities of Rādhā-Govinda. The remaining eighty five chapters deal with the killing of demons, overcoming our own demoniac mentality.

The inner demons

Kāliya was proud of who he was. He was big, much bigger than others. It's always good when you're bigger than others, of course. A big dog knows he is big, and a big professor knows he is big as well. If we have greatness we naturally become proud. Kāliya was a snake so he was already envious. Add pride to envy then what have you got? The perfect situation to harm others. When we are proud and envious we don't care about others at all.

Aghāsura, for example, became a snake because he was cold-

blooded. Other living beings meant nothing to him. They were only utensils, something you use – a knife and a fork. That was the snake-like mentality. Pride and envy create a mentality that will make us isolated. We withdraw all our feelings from others and do not care about them. Actually a Vaiṣṇava means *para-duḥkha-duḥkhī*. So another thing we can draw from here is that we need to become *para-duḥkha-duḥkhī* – concerned with the welfare of others. Let's think about that. How can we benedict others? That is something that Kāliya didn't care about. This is our meditation.

Samādhi of Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī

Just behind us is the *samādhi* of Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī. We mentioned him earlier on our *parikramā* as the uncle of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu went to Śrī Raṅgam, He stayed there for four months during the rainy season. His room there still exists today. It is said that the Jagannātha, Baladeva and Subhadrā Deities there belonged to Caitanya Mahāprabhu and They have arms and legs. Those are nice Deities but I'm not sure if they are the original.

In Śrī Raṅgam, Caitanya Mahāprabhu spoke with Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa, who was a senior scholar and *brāhmaṇa* priest in the Rāmānuja-sampradāya. His brother, Prabodhānanda, was a *sannyāsī* in the Śrī-sampradāya, but he came to the Gauḍīyas and became a great devotee of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He wrote this book called the *Caitanya-candrāmṛta* which is absolutely amazing.

Prabodhānanda showed so much faith in Caitanya Mahāprabhu. That was his special quality. He wrote:

"What benefit did the world attain when Lord Rāma, Lord Nṛsiṁha, and many other incarnations of Godhead killed so many Rākṣasa

and Daitya demons? How important is it that Lord Kapila and other incarnations revealed the paths of Sāṅkhya and yoga? How glorious is it that Lord Brahma and other *guṇa-avatāras* create, maintain and destroy the material universes? How auspicious is it that Lord Varāha lifted the earth from the Garbhodaka Ocean? We do not consider any of these activities to be very important. The most important thing is that Lord Caitanya has revealed the great splendour of pure love of Kṛṣṇa. Let us glorify that Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu."

(Caitanya-candrāmṛta 1.7)

What was the point of any other incarnation? What was the point of Lord Varāha lifting the Earth? What was the point of Lord Rāmacandra killing so many demons? What is the point of Vāmanadeva cracking the shell of the universe and allowing the Gaṅgā to enter? What was the benefit of all these incarnations in comparison to the benefit available now by the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu? All these other incarnations certainly established the principles of scripture and religious activity but They did not reveal the path of pure, transcendental, loving, devotional service. Only Caitanya Mahāprabhu revealed that.

If we walk three steps down the alley and turn right, there's Prabodhānanda's *samādhi*. It is one of those tight little places, where only one stream of devotees can go in, and another out, and that's why I'm speaking about him here. We will go there and pray for blessings.

Prabodhānanda spoke about the great taste and spirit of renunciation that the devotees of Caitanya Mahāprabhu have. They lose all interest in the material world and simply become absorbed in transcendental ecstasy.

"Where is renunciation? Where is tranquil indifference to the temptations of sense pleasure or the torments of hell? Where are great waves of humbleness? Where is uncommon prowess? Where is the path of intense devotion? Where are these virtues present in the same way they are present in those who have made Lord Gaura the goal of their lives?"

(Caitanya-candrāmṛta 4.20)

He also described how Mahāprabhu shed tears as if coming from millions of rain clouds and millions and millions of holy names flowed from His mouth. He experienced millions and millions of times more ecstasy than anyone else ever did.

Prabodhānanda spoke about the future and how the whole world will dance in ecstasy. Old men, women and children will roll on the ground and everyone will be overwhelmed with love of God.

"Now that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose lotus feet the demigods aspire to serve, and who bears the name Caitanya, has descended to this world, the very sweet nectar waves of pure love for Kṛṣṇa are flooding the entire world. Who is a child now? Who is an old man? Who is a fool? Who is a woman? Who is fallen and unfortunate? Everyone has attained the same destiny. Everyone has attained the same sweet nectar continually tasted by those devoted to Lord Hari's feet."

(Caitanya-candrāmṛta 10.117)

We are nice and cosy here but we're not exactly rolling on the ground. Prabodhānanda describes what will happen when the Golden Age gains momentum. *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* describes a 10,000 year-long golden age which has already started. Gaṅgā

and Kṛṣṇa are in conversation and Kṛṣṇa says, "In the beginning of Kali-yuga, all people will bathe in your waters and everyone will become purified by your glory. That is the greatness of your mercy."

Gaṅgā said, "Thank you very much for speaking about my glories but can I ask one question? You said in the beginning of Kali-yuga, people will bathe in my waters. What will happen after that?" Kṛṣṇa said that the *saṅkīrtana* movement will then begin and the appearance of Caitanya Mahāprabhu will mark the start of a golden age.

The golden age has already started. Nice, huh? It's pretty good, isn't it? Do you like it? There are cars honking all around us. Is this the golden age? This is only the beginning but the holy name will, in time, spill over in all directions and transform everything.

"Now that Lord Gaura has descended to this world, the waves of the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa are suddenly flooding this planet, and the hearts of the sinful conditioned souls, which were as hard as thunderbolts, have now become as soft as butter. Let me take shelter of that Lord Gaura."

(Caitanya-candrāmṛta 10.110)

"In every home there is a tumult of *hari-saṅkīrtana*. On every body are tears, hairs standing erect, and other symptoms of ecstasy. In every heart is the most exalted and sweet spiritual path that leads far from the path of the four Vedas. All this has appeared now that Lord Gaura has descended to this world."

(Caitanya-candrāmṛta 10.114)

Prabodhānanda describes how everyone will be a devotee in the future. If there are still some people driving cars and blowing their horns, then they won't do it to get people out of the way but they will honk in ecstasy! Everything will be a symptom of ecstasy. In this Golden Age, there will no longer be *varṇāśrama*. *Eka varṇa hari bhakta*, there will be only one group of people – pure devotees of Kṛṣṇa. Everyone will spontaneously serve Kṛṣṇa.

In the Golden Age there will not just be a temple on every corner to facilitate the new world religion, but Kṛṣṇa consciousness will take on another dimension. Everyone will be ecstatic, rolling on the ground and spontaneously serving one another. The earth will spontaneously produce grain even without tilling the fields and the trees will produce ample fruit. Everything will be favourable. So, if we don't go back to Godhead, then we can be part of the Golden Age. It sounds pretty much the same. That spirit is described in *Caitanya-candrāmṛta*.

Let us offer our obeisances to Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī, who has also written *Vṛndāvana-mahimāmṛta*, describing the glories of Vṛndāvana. These two books are really important. You can purchase *Vṛndāvana-mahimāmṛta* and *Caitanya-candrāmṛta* or download them online.



VAIṢṆAVA SAMĀDHIS

Leadership in the *saṅkīrtana* movement shifted from one Vaiṣṇava to the other. When the great *ācāryas* leave, others come forward and your turn is coming soon. At that time you will have to be qualified and it will take a great endeavour. We are not qualified but we pray at the feet of the *ācāryas*. We begin by trying to learn from their example, their writings and their way of life.

Before sending Rūpa and Sanātana to Vṛndāvana, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu sent Lokanātha Gosvāmī to Vṛndāvana. Lokanātha Gosvāmī was hoping to meet with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu there.

Between Bengal and Vṛndāvana

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu basically wanted to develop a type of preaching movement in Vṛndāvana that was different from Bengal. In Bengal, Lord Nityānanda had started preaching by *kīrtana*. There were *kīrtanas* that would never end; *kīrtanas* where whole villages were swept up and disappeared into them; *kīrtanas* where old men jumped into trees and danced even on thin branches that somehow didn't break; *kīrtanas* where young boys chanted non-stop for a month, without eating or drinking, and after thirty days they ripped trees off the ground. One can read about this in *Caitanya-bhāgavata*. They were definitely ecstatic devotees, there was no doubt about that. Their *kīrtana* was from another dimension.

However, the *kīrtanas* would attract people from all kinds of backgrounds and philosophically, not everyone necessarily understood the philosophy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The Vaiṣṇava movement in Bengal was initially a little wild and not so disciplined. Then Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu sent devotees to Vṛndāvana with the intention of uncovering the holy places, writing books to establish Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings and to establish a hub for His movement.

At the time, Vṛndāvana was mostly overgrown forest. Five hundred years ago, even Vṛndāvana town was all forest with no buildings at all. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu first sent Lokanātha Gosvāmī there, he felt great separation from the Lord. He tried to meet Mahāprabhu when he heard that He was travelling to Prayāga but he missed Him each time because they were travelling on foot and

communication was poor. Each time he arrived at a place, he heard that Mahāprabhu had already left. Lokanātha Gosvāmī eventually returned to Vṛndāvana and remained here. One of the other early associates of Lokanātha Gosvāmī is Bhugarbha Gosvāmī.

The birthplace of Lokanātha Gosvāmī is in East Bengal, now Bangladesh, not far from the birthplace of Rūpa and Sanātana. Lokanātha Gosvāmī was very strict and he would not allow any of the biographers to really write about him. He told Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī not to include him in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. We find a little information about him in the *Bhakti-ratnākara* and, of course, *Narottama-vilāsa* which gives us some background about Narottama.

Our ācāryas

I sit here facing the *samādhi* of Lokanātha Gosvāmī and some of you are sitting right next to Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's *samādhi*. Next to him, in the little sandstone *samādhi*, is Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. We are looking at a number of generations of important Vaiṣṇavas. Inside the temple of Rādhā Gokulānanda, we saw the *govardhana-śilā* of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī and the Deities of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, who was a follower of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. Maybe you saw the red rings around the eyes of Rādhā Vijaya Govinda. Rādhārāṇī looks a little dazed and Govinda has a hypnotic look. Between Them, Kṛṣṇa is definitely in control. That may change from situation to situation. Sometimes Rādhārāṇī is in control, sometimes Kṛṣṇa.

This place is obviously very close to us. Every day we chant Śrī Gurvastakam which was written by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. We chant Śrī Guru Vandanaṁ – *śrī-guru-caraṇa-padma, kevala-bhakati-sadma* – which was written by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura. They are in our everyday lives, our daily devotional

practice. So these *ācāryas* are important to us and we are here at their *samādhis*.

It is said that when the *ācāryas* have completed their activities in this world, they have fully manifested their spiritual potency, therefore the places where their remains are preserved after their disappearance are, in one sense, even more important than the places where they appear in this world. At the same time, it is also a sobering reality that we have to take full advantage of this movement and of the senior Vaiṣṇavas that are here. So many senior Vaiṣṇavas are now available in our movement, who obviously will not remain here forever.

One disciple of Prabhupāda, from Holland, named Paravidha Prabhu, is an artist who writes songs. He wrote a song which I really liked, "The last Prabhupāda disciple on earth." In the song he was the last disciple, and he sang, "Why me? Kṛṣṇa, why me? How could I become the last Prabhupāda disciple? I'm totally unqualified to represent all these Prabhupāda disciples." He made a good point. The day will come when there are no Prabhupāda disciples on earth, and yet the caravan of Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* movement must continue.

Sometimes that caravan can be a long procession of many generations of Vaiṣṇavas who all continue in the same direction. In front, the Pañca-tattva dances. Around Them are the Six Gosvāmīs, and all those who are connected to them. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī and Lokanātha Gosvāmī are also there. Following them, is Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and his *śikṣā* follower, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. Behind him is Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa.[267] With each generation the authority shifts to another senior Vaiṣṇava.

When we look at the chronology, we see that Rūpa and Sanātana

Gosvāmī appeared somewhere in the late 1480s or so it is thought. Some say 1488 or 1489, others say a little earlier, and they are supposed to have left this world around 1554. After them, Raghunātha dāsa became prominent. Up until 1576 he was the main leader among the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* and then Jīva Gosvāmī took over. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī was alive then, and he lived until an old age, because he completed the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* in 1615. He supposedly appeared around 1520 and lived until 1615, whereas Caitanya Mahāprabhu lived from 1486 till 1533.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu left this world when he was 48 years old. If you do the calculation, 1486 plus 48 would make 1534 (not 1533) but the way they count birthdays in India is different from the West. In India, from zero to one year you are already considered one year old and after your first birthday, you are in your second year and therefore you are considered two. The western way of counting is different; only when you have completed two years are you counted as two. Therefore Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is said to have been 48 although he left in 1533.

We can see how the leadership in the *saṅkīrtana* movement shifted from one Vaiṣṇava to the other and here, in this Rādhā Gokulānanda temple, all these generations are represented. This is very significant. It is a very peaceful place, a good place for some discussion and meditation, because it is rare to find a quiet place in Vṛndāvana. All we hear are birds, not motorcycles, just some parrots. There is a good monkey cage over the *samādhis* so even the monkeys have given up pestering people. They are not here to make trouble because they know it doesn't work. This cage is solid.

The personalities in this particular place are part of the Gosvāmī school. We went to the *samādhi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī. We didn't go to Sanātana Gosvāmī's *samādhi*, but we walked past it as we turned

at Kālīya-daha. Just after Kālīya-daha is the *samādhi* of Sanātana Gosvāmī which used to be on top of the hill but is now at the bottom. That *samādhi* is the most important thing on the hill today because the Deities in the Madana-mohana temple are no longer the original Deities of Sanātana Gosvāmī. The originals are now in Rajasthan, in Karauli. You can also go to the temple of Madana-mohana by yourself but, when you do, don't forget to visit the little samādhi on the side.

We also visited the *samādhi* of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī and that of Jīva Gosvāmī in the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. Today, we connect with our *ācāryas* who spent their lives pushing forward this movement and that, of course, is why they are remembered. Other Vaiṣṇavas were present then but may not have done as much to push forward this movement. They also received the benefit of this movement and are blessed but they do not get the same importance.

It's your turn

In our disciplic succession there are many followers, marked by different lines. After Prabhupāda, we can draw many lines that branch out representing different gurus and their followers. The disciplic succession has grown over a few generations. After our present day gurus, it will spread out through all of you. Many of you should also come forward and take full responsibility to push on this movement. Some of the men should take *sannyāsa*.

No one ever thought that Prabhupāda would take *sannyāsa*. That was not expected. "No! Not that nice Mr De. He is a pharmacist, a businessman actually. He plays nice *mṛdaṅga* but he's a worldly man. He's not one of the *sannyāsīs*. He's a donor. He gives nice donations and he plays nice *mṛdaṅga*. He never says no when we go to his shop."

People thought that was all of him. They were surprised when, suddenly, he emerged as the most successful *ācārya*. Some just couldn't digest it. "This cannot be! How is it possible that Mr De…?"

When he accepted initiation from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, who "mercifully gave it to that householder," he was so restless. They told him, "Just serve in the Maṭha. Do some service in the temple." But he wanted to go to the west all along.

At one point, after Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta departed, he was serving in Delhi temple and he was told, "Abhay, just focus on your service. Don't be so restless. Compile the newsletter for the Gauḍīya Maṭha. You are a good writer and Śrīla Gurudeva liked your writing. Be humble, be satisfied."
He responded, "No. My spiritual master wanted me to preach in the western world."

And Prabhupāda did that. Everyone was so surprised. Who knows who will come forward in the future? Surely in every generation, Vaiṣṇavas come forward. In every generation, Kṛṣṇa brings the same knowledge:

teṣām evānukampārtham
aham ajñāna-jaṁ tamaḥ
nāśayāmy ātma-bhāva-stho
jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā

(Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 10.11)

Kṛṣṇa, from within, reveals transcendental knowledge where it is needed. What do we do when the great *ācāryas* leave? Others come forward and your turn is coming. Your turn to leave will also come but, before that, you will have to do something to take leadership

of this movement. That is what is required. And at that time we will have to be qualified. We have to make a great endeavour and really try to be qualified. So here we are, knowing that we are not qualified, but praying to become so at the feet of the *ācāryas*. We begin by simply trying to learn from their example, learn from their writings and learn from how they lived.

The first book distributors

The early *saṅkīrtana* movement of Lord Caitanya began in West Bengal by the preaching of Lord Nityānanda. Lord Caitanya stayed in Purī and He sent Nityānanda to Bengal. There the movement spread with so many followers. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu then sent the Gosvāmīs to Vṛndāvana and they were thoroughly instructed in the philosophy. He met them at the Daśāśvamedha-ghāṭa. First He met Rūpa Gosvāmī and then Sanātana Gosvāmī. When they arrived in Vṛndāvana they started to write many books, and that began the philosophical side of our movement.

Up to today, it is still very much like that: Bengal is the place of ecstatic *kīrtana* and Vṛndāvana is more the place of the *granthas*. Here we have *grantha samādhis* – the place of books – where the Gosvāmīs established philosophy. Both of these aspects are required; we need to be philosophically deep and we need to have ecstatic *kīrtana* also. Eventually, the books from the Gosvāmī school were sent to Bengal.

Narottama and Śrīnivāsa were younger and of a later generation. When they were on their way to Vṛndāvana, Jīva Gosvāmī was present. They received training from him in the conclusions of the *śāstra* as the Gosvāmīs had been teaching it. Jīva Gosvāmī then sent the books to Bengal with them. Śyāmānanda was also there at that time and he established the Śrī Śrī Rādhā Śyāmasundara temple that we just visited. Śyāmānanda was the third person, following

Narottama and Śrīnivāsa, and he was a disciple of Hṛdaya Caitanya from Bengal.

Hṛdaya Caitanya was a disciple of Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita. It is said that Gaurīdāsa had Deities that were exact replicas of Gaura Nitāi. One day, Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda visited him and therefore there were two Gauras and two Nitāis in his house – one set on the altar and another in the *kīrtana*. Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda were about to leave when Gaurīdāsa requested, "Please stay."

They said, "We are already here, on the altar!"

Gaurīdāsa replied, "No, that's not the same."

The Deities jumped off the altar and then there were two Gauras and two Nitāis in the *kīrtana*. They asked, "Which of Us would you like to stay? Two of Us will stay and two of us will go."

Gaurīdāsa didn't know Whom to choose because he couldn't see any difference between Them. Eventually he said, "Well, these two." And that pair of Gaura Nitāi stepped back onto the altar as Deities.

Since that time, however, those Deities did not behave well. They regularly left the altar and roamed everywhere. "Today They jump off the altar and tomorrow They're out the door!" Gaurīdāsa thought. He stood there with a stick at his side ready to chase Them back on the altar.

On one occasion, They jumped off the altar and Gaurīdāsa ran after Them with the stick. Gaura Nitāi ran as fast as They could and then jumped into the heart of Caitanya Dāsa, who was the disciple of Gaurīdāsa. From that day on, Caitanya Dāsa became

Hṛdaya Caitanya because Gaura Nitāi were residing in his heart. Hṛdaya Caitanya was in *sakhya-rasa*, in the mood of a cowherd boy. Śyāmānanda was his disciple and at the time he was known as Duḥkhī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa. Śyāmānanda went to Vṛndāvana and found some ankle bells which he immediately realised were not ordinary. They were transcendental. One day a girl came and asked for those ankle bells for her sister but Śyāmānanda replied, "No, I can only return them to the owner". It turned out that the owner was Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and he got to see Her. He received a *tilaka* stamp on his head and was given a new name, Śyāmānanda.

However, his guru became very angry. He thought that Jīva Gosvāmī had given him the name and he was angry with Jīva Gosvāmī. "You re-initiated my disciple!"
Jīva Gosvāmī explained, "No, I didn't give him that name," and then it was revealed that Rādhārāṇī had given him the name and the *tilaka* that wouldn't disappear.

Śyāmānanda, Narottama and Śrīnivāsa studied under the Gosvāmīs. They were very learned in the philosophy so they did not just carry books to Bengal; they were also qualified to explain them. They were the first *saṅkīrtana* party to go out on book distribution.

In Bengal, there was the King, Raja Bir Hambir, who had an astrologer. The astrologer told him, "Oh! Three men, accompanied by servants, are travelling down the road and, according to the stars, they're carrying the greatest treasure." The king was interested and arranged for them to be robbed. When he opened the trunks and found the books of the Gosvāmīs, he started reading them. As he read, his heart changed and he became really overwhelmed. He couldn't stop and he felt guilty so he sent messengers to bring Śrīnivāsa back.

When the books were stolen Narottama decided to go to Kheturi, his home town, which is now on the northern side of Bangladesh,. near Rajshahi. Narottama went home and Śyāmānanda left to preach in Orissa. Śyāmānanda was successful and, in due course of time, he initiated a disciple named Rasikānanda who was also an ecstatic devotee. We saw the Deities in the Rādhā Śyāmasundara temple very quickly and on the side was Rasikānanda. You may not have noticed him but if you go back on a quiet day you can see him. There is also a cave where Rasikānanda sat.

Gaura Pūrṇimā in Kheturi

Meanwhile, when Raja Bir Hambir had a change of heart, he had Śrīnivāsa brought before him. The king asked for forgiveness and Śrīnivāsa initiated him. Śrīnivāsa then sent news to both Narottama and Śyāmānanda that the books had been found and he ordered the King to make many copies of the manuscripts. They brought all these copies of the Gosvāmī books back to Kheturi. Narottama arranged for *brāhmaṇas* to make more handwritten copies.

In Kheturi, they celebrated the first appearance festival of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. All the Bengali devotees came and it was an amazing event. Acyutānanda, who was a small boy at the time of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, was then a mature person. He was the son of Advaita Ācārya and he lead a huge party from Bengal to Kheturi. Jāhnavā-mātā, the wife of Nityānanda, was the eldest and the most respected of all the Vaiṣṇavas and she was honoured as such. Jāhnavā-mātā had previously been to Vṛndāvana and heard instructions of the Gosvāmī literature from Rūpa Gosvāmī himself. She had heard the proper explanations of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and knew them well, therefore she was also an authority on the books of the Six Gosvāmīs.

This festival in Kheturi was amazing because they installed six

sets of Deities so that Kheturi would become a place where devotees would go to visit the Deities. One set of those original six are here in Vṛndāvana. They are known as Vraja Mohana. The others are in various places and are difficult to trace because They were moved often. We are still looking for Them.

Everyone who went to the festival received a set of books. Jāhnavā-mātā confirmed that the books were authorized and immediately the Gosvāmī teachings became the standard. It was a huge change, and even now in the Royal Asiatic Society in Kolkata, they have thousands of manuscripts from that Kheturi festival and thousands of others may still be around. It was a powerful event which united the Vaiṣṇavas from Vṛndāvana with the Vaiṣṇavas from Bengal, and brought the Gosvāmī conclusions to Bengal.

Thereafter Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī came as a representative from the Gosvāmī School with the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* became the final word, the ultimate authoritative book on all Vaiṣṇava philosophy. That was the final book on the teachings of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and it was considered so authoritative and important that the book was enshrined in temples. Even up to this day, there are temples in Bengal dedicated to the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. It became the most prominent literature.

We went to the place where Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī wrote *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. As a representative of the Gosvāmīs, Kṛṣṇadāsa brought everything together. He took authoritative knowledge from the Gosvāmīs and all other sources; Jīva Gosvāmī's *sandarbhas, Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* were all included in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. So it is the last word.

In Kheturi, Narottama introduced *kīrtana* in Dhrupad style with very slow, long-drawn notes with Alaps. It was an emotional *kīrtana* and it is described in the *Bhakti-ratnākara* that all the devotees became overwhelmed as Narottama sang in the Kheturi festival. Everyone saw the Pañca-tattva dancing in the *kīrtana* and then They disappeared! Everyone cried so many tears that the entire ground became muddied! This Kheturi festival is a historic milestone in our tradition.

Therefore, we are still present within the two *dhāmas* of Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana. The third *dhāma* is Jagannātha Purī, where Caitanya Mahāprabhu stayed for so long. It is in these three *dhāmas* that the movement of Lord Caitanya is particularly enshrined. It is there that the movement took its form. We are looking at the movement in its earlier stages and how it gradually took shape.

The architects of our movement

Of course, Śrīla Prabhupāda started to translate those same books of the Gosvāmīs such as the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (The Nectar of Devotion)* and *Upadeśāmṛta (Nectar of Instruction).* We have those very books that were distributed in Kheturi. Prabhupāda gave them to us. Prabhupāda knew everything about the importance of those particular books.

He started with *kīrtana* at Matchless Gifts and then in Tompkins Square Park he sat under the tree chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Nobody knew what was going on. We read about how the first group of devotees went from New York to Haight-Ashbury, San Francisco. "When you're going to San Francisco be sure to wear a flower in your hair!" Those were flower power hippie days with heart-shaped sunglasses and too many drugs. In the midst of all that confusion the devotees were there feeding so many people. It was all *kīrtana* and *prasādam* and not so much philosophy.

When Prabhupāda installed Lord Jagannātha, he told the devotees to light a candle on a tray and to move it around in circles. Hayagrīva exclaimed, "Wow! That's nice. Is there anything more we should do?"
Prabhupāda replied, "If I would tell you, you would faint."

There was so much more: all the Deity worship, the whole *pāñcarātrika*. They had no idea of all these things. Prabhupāda started a movement just like Lord Nityānanda who brought everybody in through *kīrtanas* and lectures that were way over their heads. Gradually he began to give it shape, by bringing in the books of the Gosvāmīs, the *Bhāgavatam, Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, etc. He did the same thing. Up until today, ISKCON is still maturing. Now, we have so much more knowledge. Even the average devotee knows so much more than the senior devotees did in the 60s and early 70s. They didn't have all these books.

After Prabhupāda's departure, the *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* came out part by part, not all in one book. I bought them straight away. The little Prabhupāda nectar books followed. I paid in advance, eagerly thinking "We've got to get all of these!" For the first time all these books were available and we had to grab them. That's how it was. Now, we have information overload! We wonder, "Can anyone read all this? Is it possible?"

Previously, there were only two sets of Prabhupāda's letters: one in Prabhupāda's house in Vṛndāvana and another in Los Angeles with the BBT. That was it. And up to today there is still a letter on Prabhupāda's desk in his rooms in Kṛṣṇa Balarāma *mandira* and you can read it.

Nowadays we think, "Okay, a letter from Prabhupāda can be read on the internet as well, right? I've got them on my phone. I've got

them everywhere." Back then, we only had them in Prabhupāda's house, and very few people had read them. As temple president, with some special privileges, I read them all and I made photocopies of the letters as my personal set. It was only later that these were published in books. The Prabhupāda conversations came out in 37 volumes; until then we had no access to them. My point is that, little by little, everything became available. That's how it happened when Prabhupāda came to the west and it happened in the same way when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was in India.

Today we have visited the architects of this movement. We stood at Rūpa Gosvāmī's *bhajana-kuṭīr* and his *samādhi*. We are *rūpānugas*. As the architects, they have given shape to the movement we have today. On our *parikramā* we are trying to understand a little more of our history and of the contribution of the *ācāryas*.

From Vṛndāvana, we can move on to the *ācāryas* in Māyāpur. Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī was seated in Māyāpur and chanting *japa*. Suddenly he took up a stick and waved it around but nobody was there. A goat in Vṛndāvana was eating a Tulasī plant in front of the *samādhis* of the Gosvāmīs and although Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī was in Māyāpur, he could see this and said, "Hut!" So our *ācāryas* are transcendental and operating on the spiritual platform, and we are simply harvesting the fruits.

In Māyāpur we have the more recent history. We can go to the house of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. We can go to the Caitanya Maṭha, where Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura fought to establish the fact that anybody, from any background, can become an initiated Vaiṣṇava. He fought for that otherwise it would not have happened. And we would have been rejected. Bhaktisiddhānta was so powerful that they couldn't stop him. *The Nectar of Devotion*, chapter five, explains the contribution of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta.

In Māyāpur, four *ācāryas* would sometimes meet in the home of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura: Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrīla Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta would all gather there. There are four pictures on our altar of these personalities and they were all sitting on that balcony, looking at the birth site of Mahāprabhu. This is all part of the history of our movement. Such history is obviously valuable because we understand better what we are part of and how we are living by the contributions of the Vaiṣṇavas.

Śrīla Prabhupāda did so much and we are living by his contribution. We were at his rooms in Rādhā-Dāmodara. Prabhupāda did not want only one room; there were fourteen rooms there and before the construction of the Kṛṣṇa Balarāma Mandira, he wanted to make an American house there, a place of learning called the Rūpānuga Vidyā-pīṭha. Later when I was Temple President, at one point we almost bought them. Somehow or the other there was a legal glitch that would have become an endless court case. We had the money and the Gosvāmī was in agreement. Everything was ready to go, but the lawyers didn't sign off on it because of certain legal issues, so we couldn't buy it. Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple is next to Sevā-kuñja, where the *rasa-līlā* takes place. Jīva Gosvāmī established the temple there.

At the time of Jīva Gosvāmī, so many amazing things happened. They placed all the land in the name of the Deities. In India you can do that – it's called Devataship. You can arrange that the Deity becomes the owner of the land. The land upon which the Kṛṣṇa Balarāma Mandira stands was the garden of the Rādhā-ramaṇa Deities. Now, 90 years later, that law has changed and they can privatise ownership. The Gosvāmīs did not just chant *japa*; they established holy places and made arrangements. Their original signatures are on the land documents, found mostly in

the Vṛndāvana Research Institute which is just a stone throw away from our temple (if you are good at throwing stones). Of course, you need to read some Sanskrit to figure it all out but if you take an expert with you, you can actually see those original manuscripts there. The history of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, which has created our foundation, is still alive here and we form a part of that.

Who is Prabhupāda?

Our history can be traced through Vṛndāvana, more recently in Māyāpur and then through Śrīla Prabhupāda. The disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda now also form part of our history. On Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance festival, the first devotee to speak was Guru-kṛpā who was a *sannyāsī* and GBC for Vṛndāvana at the time of Prabhupāda. Guru-kṛpā is a tough dude. When Prabhupāda said that he wanted this temple in Vṛndāvana, Guru-kṛpā agreed to raise the money and that was tough.

Once, Harikeśa was the secretary of Prabhupāda and he stood at the top of the stairs, at the entrance to Prabhupāda's room. He said to Guru-kṛpā, "You can't go in and see Prabhupāda right now."
Guru-kṛpā responded, "Get out of the way or I'll throw you down the stairs."

Harikeśa got out of the way and then Guru-kṛpā went into Prabhupāda's room. Prabhupāda said, "Ah, Guru-kṛpā, I'm so happy to see you!"
Guru-kṛpā looked back at Harikeśa, as if to say, "Who are you?"

This year at the Prabhupāda Disappearance Anniversary festival, Guru-kṛpā commented, "Prabhupāda was here for such a short time, like a flash of lightning; so intense with such power!" Everything was lit up, surcharged with transcendental energy like a flash of lightning. So Prabhupāda made his contribution and

so then did his disciples. It is because of Guru-kṛpā that we are walking around in the Kṛṣṇa Balarāma Mandira. He paid for it by going to Japan with his men.

Many devotees have done much service and we are harvesting the fruits of that service. Now, it is our turn to serve, so that the future generations will harvest the fruits of our service. I don't know how, but I had the good fortune to be involved in the construction of Prabhupāda's *samādhi* and to coordinate that project. It was austere and I did it even though I didn't like it, but it was my good fortune that I could do some service.

Here in this place, let us meditate on doing something to increase the history of this movement, just as all our *ācāryas* have done. There are so many things to reflect on. We got so much dust, the very auspicious Vraja *dhool*, dust from Vṛndāvana. We got holy water from everywhere; we got food for thought, mercy from the *dhāma*, mercy from the Vaiṣṇavas. We got purified in some way or other.

Vṛndāvana is sweet and Vṛndāvana is also heavy; soft like a rose, *kaṭhina vajra-maya*, and hard like a thunderbolt. Both aspects are there. Whether we were inspired or sick and laying in bed, it is all the mercy of Kṛṣṇa in the *dhāma*. In Vṛndāvana, we are on the lap of Kṛṣṇa. He will give us very direct purification, direct responses to whatever is going on. We are fortunate. Kṛṣṇa is especially close here and we leave Vṛndāvana only to come back. Wherever we have gone on this *parikramā*, be it our first, second or third acquaintance, let us come back again and again to deepen our relationship with the *dhāma* and through the *dhāma*, our relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

Even in Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda is a unique personality. In his room in Rādhā-Dāmodara, Rūpa and Sanātana came and personally instructed him how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Who

is Prabhupāda? How can we understand Prabhupāda? Bhavānanda Prabhu told us that Prabhupāda said to him, "I was in the spiritual world and Kṛṣṇa asked me to come to the material world to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I said to Kṛṣṇa, 'Oh no! I don't want to go. I don't like austerity,' and Kṛṣṇa replied, 'Don't worry. There will be no austerity. All you have to do is write books and I will do the rest!'"

Prabhupāda came to this world and he wrote his books. He said that Kṛṣṇa dictated them. Kṛṣṇa had said that He would do the rest but Prabhupāda also 'did the rest' and Kṛṣṇa helped.

So we can't imagine who Śrīla Prabhupāda is.

Of course many devotees have dreams about Prabhupāda. One such devotee was Mālatī. Now Mālatī is not just any devotee. Mālatī is a devotee from the early days who cooked for Prabhupāda in Māyāpur. The treasurer of the temple was Bengali and the Bengalis are tight with money. He gave her the exact amount to buy vegetables, but when she went to the market to buy the vegetables, the prices were higher because she was a foreigner. For the foreigners, all the prices go up. She really fought to get all the *bhoga* and then she cooked on a coal stove. It was extremely difficult to get the fire going at the proper heat and to be ready on time. It wasn't easy at all, but somehow or the other, she cooked for Prabhupāda.

One day Prabhupāda said, "Tomorrow my god brothers are coming." She had to cook for all the sannyāsīs and she brought the *prasādam* in with her head completely covered. As she walked in embarrassed in the presence of all the sannyāsīs, Prabhupāda said to his god brothers, "Oh, this is Mālatī. She would do anything for me! She would cut her throat for me and I would do the same for

her". That was something!
So Mālatī had a dream many years ago where she met the Yamadūtas. In the dream the Yamadūtas were very beautiful, and she exclaimed, "You're not the Yamadūtas. You don't look like the Yamadūtas at all!"

They replied, "No, we are the Yamadūtas, but this is our actual form. We have a beautiful form but sinful people see us in an ugly form. You don't know who your Prabhupāda is. You should know that the whole universe is worshipping him." Now, you may think that it was her imagination but I'm not so sure. That might have just been some revelation. It makes a lot of sense. A dream is a dream, you can't argue with that, but what a dream it was! The whole universe is worshipping Prabhupāda!

Who is Prabhupāda? We don't know. If you were smart, and did as I told you to, you would have placed your head at the foot of that bed in Rādhā-Dāmodara because Prabhupāda slept on it. If you didn't put your head on the bed, you better go back to that room and get that dust on your head. The big bed in Prabhupāda's room in Kṛṣṇa Balarāma Mandira is where he left his body so we also place our heads at his feet there. Just go in and bow down. Don't be shy, just do it!

Once, we were in Māyāpur in the Caitanya Maṭha. Upstairs are Bhaktisiddhānta's rooms but they're always locked. I saw the door open so I called to the devotees, "Hey, let's go!" We went inside. There was nobody there but we saw Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's shoes and we had a party, I tell you! Those shoes were dancing on everyone's head, especially on mine! When we heard the *pūjārī*, we quickly put them back. We should never be shy about grabbing the mercy.

Take some dust from these *samādhis*, before you go, because it is very precious. You can take some home, if you find enough, or smear it in your hair. Steal some flowers from Narottama's *samādhi*, dry them and keep that. This is not ordinary stuff.



ĀDI-BADARĪNĀTHA

Badarikāśrama is a place of austerity where one realises that approaching Kṛṣṇa is not cheap. We have travelled all over the *dhāma* but did we really enter Vṛndāvana? To go beyond that layer of *yoga-māyā* that covers Vṛndāvana requires a special effort. Our last meditation is on the special effort we must make to enter. We need absolute determination so that no matter what obstacle comes on the path, we will persevere.

One day, all the residents of Vṛndāvana wanted to go to Badarīnātha. They were getting ready to go on the long journey to the Himalayas and it is not so easy to get there. However, Kṛṣṇa said, "Actually we do not need to go to the Himalayas to see Badarīnātha since Badarīnātha is here in Vṛndāvana." So, here we have the Deities of Badarīnārāyaṇa and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa told Uddhava that Badarīnātha was very important to Him because many devotees resided there. Badarīnārāyaṇa is a Deity of Viṣṇu.

We are now in the outer *parikramā* of Vṛndāvana-*dhāma*. It has been a long journey, but that is the price we have to pay. Some *tapasya* has to be there. When I was going to Badarīnātha in the Himalayas, I was driving and it was very intense. We were high up on the mountains and there was a steep drop next to me. I was thinking, "I do not know if I am going to make this."

The devotees were looking at the white mountains exclaiming, "What a beautiful view!"
I looked down and agreed, "Yes, a beautiful view indeed!" Sometimes the drop was on the passenger side and then I could not see the edge. I had a co-driver and asked, "How many centimetres?" We were sometimes ten centimetres or five centimetres from the edge. It was nerve wrecking. At one point we took a wrong turn. It was a small road, and it got smaller and smaller until we got stuck. Then, I had to go back downwards. It was very intense. All the devotees got off the van and only I was still in there. So the Himalayas are exciting.…..

The original Badarīnātha

Kṛṣṇa arranged that all the holy places are here in Vṛndāvana. We should understand that this Badarīnātha here in Vṛndāvana, is not the replica of the original one that is in the Himalayas. No, this is

the original one. This is Ādi-Badarīnātha and the Badarīnātha in the Himalayas is the reflection because Vṛndāvana is the origin of everything. This place is better than the Himalayas because here there is greater benefit. It is said that one gets a thousand times more benefit in this place than in Badarīnātha in the Himalayas. So, this is the best Badarīnātha.

We remember that Vyāsadeva was living in a cave in Badarīnātha, in Tapovan. It is said that Vyāsadeva is still there and Madhvācārya actually met him there. Our disciplic succession is interesting because it starts with Kṛṣṇa, Brahma, Nārada, Vyāsa, and then Madhvācārya. There is a gap of four thousand years between Vyāsadeva and Madhvācārya. One has to accept this point that Madhvācārya actually went up to the Himalayas and had the *darśana* of Vyāsadeva. That is our tradition, and that is an interesting element about Badarikāśrama.

Another interesting element is that the sages Nara-Nārāyaṇa are also present here in the temple. Nara-Nārāyaṇa represent Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. It is said that Nara is an expansion of Arjuna and Nārāyaṇa of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna brought the *Bhagavad-gītā* to the world. The most important point is not that Arjuna was the most powerful warrior who won the battle of Kurukṣetra, but that between the two armies the *Bhagavad-gītā* was spoken. That was really the essence.

A once-in-a-lifetime journey

So when we speak about Nara-Nārāyaṇa we speak about the combination of the Supreme Lord and His fully transcendental devotee, both on the perfect, transcendental platform, one being *vibhu*, or omniscient, and the other being *aṇu*, or atomic in size. The atomic *jīva* or living entity becomes empowered to the transcendental platform and then begins to also display the nature

of *sac-cid-ānanda*.

We see that Nara-Nārāyaṇa performed great austerities. We are also ending our *parikramā* and our Kārttika with a bit of austerity. It was a journey where we had to extend our hope again and again. It took us over three hours to get here and we could have got to Delhi in the same time, but we would not have got the unique benefit and unique *darśana* that we are getting now.

As I described to you, to actually go to Badarīnātha in the Himalayas is also difficult. When you are driving on the edge, you also see vehicles that went over. When you go by bus, the ones who sit at the back are sometimes hanging in free space as the bus turns and hangs over the edge. It is exciting to go there and in previous times it was practically a once-in-a-lifetime journey. Anyone who completed that pilgrimage had done something very extraordinary. As we travelled here I realised that that particular quality of Badarīnātha is manifesting on the road. I could see it coming.

It is a very special experience. It is a bit difficult, but that is where we show our eagerness to approach the Lord. The temperature drops to minus seventy in the Himalayas, where our Badarīnārāyaṇa resides. Even the *pūjārīs* do not stay during that time. Only penguins can survive at that temperature, so the *pūjārīs* come down the mountain. But who takes care of the Lord? When the *pūjārī* leaves before the winter he puts a wick and oil in the lamp and it is still burning when he returns in spring! How is that possible? It is said that Nārada Muni comes and does the *pūjā* during the winter, filling up that lamp and so on. He has a spiritual body so the icy weather does not affect him.

Badarikāśrama is a place of austerity. It is a place where one realises that it is not so cheap to approach the Supreme Personality of

Godhead. We have travelled all over the *dhāma* in the last so many days. We visited many places, but the question can be asked, "Did we really enter Vṛndāvana?" Śrīla Prabhupāda would say that you cannot enter by plane, car, bus, or train. To really enter Vṛndāvana, to go deeper beyond that layer of *yoga-māyā* that covers Vṛndāvana, one has to make a special effort. Today, on our last day, that will be our meditation. Every day we had a meditation, and today our meditation is on the special effort we must make to enter. We must have absolute determination that no matter what obstacle comes on the path we will persevere.

Praying to be transcendental

Somehow or the other, we made it here by mercy. That is our great fortune. When Indra saw the *tapasya* of Nara-Nārāyaṇa, he was concerned. He knows that the person performing the greatest austerity and making the greatest sacrifice, accrues a lot of *puṇya* and will get his position, therefore Indra is always worried. When Indra sees some yogi or other personalities performing great austerities, he arranges for heavenly dancing girls. They come over and their ankle bells tinkle and distract the minds of the sages but in the case of Nara-Nārāyaṇa, that had absolutely no effect. Instead, what happened was that illusory forms of beautiful females started to emanate from their bodies and Indra, actually, became bewildered.

In this place, we are simply praying to become transcendental to the influence of *māyā*. Many of us are getting ready to leave, either today, tomorrow or in the next few days. Again, we will leave this transcendental abode where Kṛṣṇa consciousness is natural. In the holy *dhāma*, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is everywhere. Wherever you go, there is someone worshipping Kṛṣṇa. The residents greet us with 'Rādhe!' There are little temples everywhere. There are so many holy places related to Kṛṣṇa, where He is being worshipped and

remembered. In this *dhāma*, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very natural but when we go back to the west, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very localised – in a temple with an ocean of *māyā* around us. It is appropriate, now at the end of our journey, to pray to Nārāyaṇa to be protected from *māyā* because it is very strong. It is difficult because not only is *māyā* outside of us but inside also. We are weak. Inside our heart, *māyā* is there already. When externally we are confronted by *māyā* also, it becomes difficult and we may fall prey. Nara-Nārāyaṇa were both transcendental personalities, so *māyā* had no influence on them whatsoever. We pray that we may be transcendental to the influence of *māyā*; that is a suitable meditation here.

Rising to the occasion

Another meditation is that we have to do what it takes. We have to rise to the occasion. We do not know what is going to happen on the spiritual path but we have to rise to the occasion and deal with whatever comes. If some of you would have known that the journey here was so long, you probably would not have joined this *parikramā*. Many unknown obstacles on this path came unexpectedly, and we had to rise to the occasion, deal with it and remain fixed on the goal.

The spiritual path is like that – we have to rise to the occasion – and whatever comes on our path, we choose for Kṛṣṇa in any situation. Rising to the occasion means choosing for Kṛṣṇa. In my life, so many things have already happened that by now I am not easily surprised. Let us keep our focus and choose for Kṛṣṇa. Take shelter of Kṛṣṇa as good as we can in a given situation. Maybe it was difficult to chant on the bus. It is said that when we are chanting then the holy name is dancing. So not only was the holy name dancing, but my bead bag was dancing as well. The whole bus was dancing. Every bone in my body was dancing!

In this month of Kārttika, we have got multiplied benefit. For a whole month, we have been bathing in transcendental mercy. We got special mercy in this special month and now it is coming to an end. We have to continue on our own strength. How do we get spiritual strength? We pray to Nara-Nārāyaṇa. We can pray to Lord Balarāma. We can pray to the Deities for strength and that will help.

The leak of faith

In spiritual life there are various aspects: one aspect is cultivation and the other aspect is conviction. We can spend much energy on cultivation but if our conviction is weak then how successful will we be? I call that 'pumping up the slow-leaking tyre'. If you have a leak in your car tyre then it needs to be fixed. If you pump it up, however, you can still drive home. So you go to the petrol pump and pump it up and because it is a slow leak, you will make it home. At some point, though, you have to fix it.

We have the slow-leaking car tyre of our enthusiasm and each time our enthusiasm wanes, we engage in some spiritual activity to pump ourselves up. If you haven't read for a long time, then you go, "Oh! Bring me a book!" You read and read and then, "Aahhh! I feel better already. I already feel some inspiration." But that is not the idea. Ultimately, we have to get rid of the leak. It is the leak of faith. Our faith is leaking. It is leaking into somewhere other than Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

We are weak because of this division in our faith. It is not just about cultivation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness; it is also about conviction – being convinced about the misery of the material world. Sometimes it is straight-out misery and sometimes it is disguised, sugar coated misery, but that is really all that is there. We have so many hopes, "I want this. I desire that." In the end, we get more than we bargained

for; some nice moments and terrible moments also. We get it all. That is life. Write poetry about it, or a biography, and post it with all the other biographies. It says in the Eleventh Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 'In the end, nothing will be remembered – only names will remain and even they will be forgotten.' So, it is about conviction. It is about being convinced about the benefits of investing in spiritual life. When we are deeply convinced, then we do not need so much cultivation. When we are not so convinced then we have to constantly hear and be reminded of Kṛṣṇa.

We have to be convinced that there is nothing else that is worthwhile, *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyaṁ* (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.1.11): we have to be free from any other desires. As long as we are not, the tyre will leak and we keep on pumping it up. Today we may feel, "Vṛndāvana *parikramā* was good. I feel totally pumped up," but as we are on the plane back home, it is already leaking like anything. By the time we land, we are finished – flat tyre again! So what do I do now? My tyre is flat again. Now what? Pump it back up? Is that spiritual life – to keep pumping up the tyre? No, we must deeply understand that here in Vṛndāvana we got a glimpse of the reality, and the world outside of Vṛndāvana is a world of illusory pleasures. Let us become deep in the conviction to get out of the material world. There really is no other purpose in life.

Learning to give

In the Age of Kali, it is not going to be that beautiful. It is not possible to just get it perfect in this age. One has to always look out for disturbances and within it find some Kṛṣṇa consciousness – that is how it is in spiritual life. We are living in a crazy world and we have to block it out and keep our little Kṛṣṇa bubble. We have to find or create our own little sacred space amidst all this madness.

That sacred space depends on the depth of our faith, *kecit kevalayā*

bhaktyā vāsudeva-parāyaṇāḥ: we need to have faith that happiness will only come from devotional service. Someone came to me today and said, "I heard so many negative things about the place in which I am going to serve." Okay, then go there and bring something good with you. That is how we become transcendental. It is not about taking. What are we taking from Vṛndāvana? What we are taking from Vṛndāvana is what we have to give. If we do not take that, then we have missed the boat. If we think we came here to get something, then we got it wrong. We came here to learn to give. It is by giving only that one can rise above selfishness. Taking means 'me, I and mine': my senses, my happiness, my spiritual life, my experience, my Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Everything is about me!

In the beginning, it is an austerity to rise above this spirit of 'I and mine', because we want some immediate sense enjoyment. We do not want to be fighting with ourselves all the time in spiritual life. The one thing that will save us is taking responsibility in devotional service. Take some service, something practical – something we can do. If we have to chant all day then how long can we do that? Haridāsa Ṭhākura was chanting three hundred thousand names. If we chanted three hundred thousand names in one day, we would probably have to go to hospital the next day to recover from all that incredible austerity! Even if we could do it two days in a row, on the third day we would probably say, "I need a break. I have been chanting non-stop for two days. It is just too much. I got to slow down now."

Let us do something practical; something that relates to our nature. Chant sixteen rounds and then do service – that is the key. It is there where we can take the austerity. It is difficult to take austerity by itself. If we say, 'I am just going to fast," that is difficult because it is austerity by itself. But we can say, "Well, it is Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī.

It is Kṛṣṇa's day and on this day we offer everything to Kṛṣṇa," and instead of eating, we can cook for Kṛṣṇa. If we just serve Kṛṣṇa the whole day then we have no time to eat and then we have the right spirit, or the strength, to fast. If we are fasting and not doing anything then it is very difficult. When we are busy doing things, giving all our energy, then the austerities become possible. So the only way that we are actually able to perform austerities is by taking responsibility in devotional service. In that way our movement is unique.

I have spoken, on this *parikramā*, about how we entered Vṛndāvana through the Prabhupāda gate. Other people come into Vṛndāvana in other ways. Some people come into Vṛndāvana by birth. Some people come into Vṛndāvana by some other *sampradāya* or some other movement but we come in through the Prabhupāda gate. We are not the most austere movement, for sure. Amongst all the Vaiṣṇavas in the world, Prabhupāda's movement is not the most strict in following all the rules and regulations, but in Prabhupāda's movement we depend on one thing – that is devotional service. There is a lot of service in Prabhupāda's movement because we take on the mission of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness in so many ways, at so many festivals and temples.

Austerity in devotional service

There are people here in Vṛndāvana who just sit in a very simple place, and who very simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa every day. That is all they do, day in and day out, year in and year out. We would go nuts after a while. "This is too much! How can I just sit here? I've got to do something!" In Prabhupāda's movement we have the opportunity to glorify Kṛṣṇa in so many ways because we are part of Lord Caitanya's preaching mission. Those of us who came through the Prabhupāda gate should understand that that is our entrance. Let us just do some practical service in this movement.

Much austerity will come in the cause of that service because we promised to do it. We may skip a meal or deal with other austerities, but it is very difficult to separately deal with austerity and we are not so expert at that. Prabhupāda was not impressed by one who could fast the most.

The other day someone told me, "I met someone who has been drinking only milk." Well, in the house of Śrīvāsa there was a *brāhmaṇa* who had drank only milk and Śrīvāsa was impressed, "Oh! He must be very exalted. He drank only milk and nothing else."

The *brāhmaṇa* requested, "Please allow me to witness the *kīrtana* in your house."

Śrīvāsa replied, "Well, Lord Caitanya is very strict," but he agreed that the *brāhmaṇa* could hide in the house.

Lord Caitanya could not get into the mood of the *kīrtana* that night. He said, "There is a disturbing element. I think there is someone in the house who is not qualified." Finally, that *brāhmaṇa* was found and Lord Caitanya had him thrown out. He said, "Out! Do you think you can attain Me simply by fasting, by only taking milk? You think you could get Me in that way? Never!"

While the *brāhmaṇa* was outside, he relished the moments that he had in Lord Caitanya's association. He said, "I was so fortunate. I actually got a glimpse of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu dancing in *kīrtana*. Oh, I was so fortunate!"

As he said that, Lord Caitanya relented, "Okay, let him in." As soon as he appreciated the *kīrtana*, he was performing devotional service and then he became qualified to get the mercy of the Lord. So austerity, in itself, is not a great asset.

It is also said that *jñāna, vairāgya* and *tapasya* are not limbs of *bhakti*. Philosophical speculation, renunciation and austerity are not limbs of *bhakti*. You can perform austerity like anything and you will not get *bhakti*. Only austerity performed in the course of devotional service will give us more *bhakti*, therefore that is our focus. "I fast every Monday," is very nice but it's better to eat only Kṛṣṇa prasādam.

The key is devotional service. It can be something that relates to what we already know. Some people are singers and some are dancers. In our movement we have Candramauli Swami. Have you ever seen him dance? Candramauli Swami dances like a graceful cat! His feet are really light and he makes all these quick little steps and he pounces like a cat. He is old, you know, but when he dances, he is something else. I dance like a bear, a few gross movements and that is about it. I can dance like a monkey, but not elegant and light footed like Mahārāja. That is empowerment.

Everyone has some empowerment and over time that is revealed. I am thinking of Balabhadra, the disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda who is in America and is totally dedicated to cow protection. He spent his whole life just loving and taking care of cows. It is really impressive. He built an altar for his *govardhana-śilā* and it was Govardhana Hill made with little, dried cow dung cakes. On top of it is his *govardhana-śilā*. Around his altar, he has unlimited cows of all kinds. When he is doing *pūjā*, he is worshipping the cows, and when he is outside, he is also worshipping the cows. The cows are his whole life.

We have to find a service, something to get absorbed in and really give ourselves to. Sometimes service is given; a superior wants us to do something. We may not want it but we do it. I have experienced that a few times. I was told, "You are in charge of

all the construction in Māyāpur." And I thought, "Oh no!" That was intense. Sometimes we may not want it, but if it has been given then we embrace it. At other times we can engage our propensities, but we have got to find that service and embrace it.

And much austerity will come in that service. The devotees who have been managing this *parikramā* this month had to make so many arrangements. They performed many austerities in the course of service. It is that austerity that makes us glorious. Hurdle after hurdle, that is life, and if we just connect it with Kṛṣṇa and take hurdles for Kṛṣṇa, then everything will be fine. Amazingly so.

I know one devotee who was more of a businessman. He was doing service but he was running a little business and giving something from it to Kṛṣṇa. Nowadays that devotee, who has been around longer than I have, is dancing in Tulasī-pūjā in so much ecstasy. From all those years of just doing some service, he has now got so much taste.

When I joined, it was a different ISKCON. In those days, they would throw you in the deep-end immediately, and it was sink or swim. You were supposed to join the temple and nothing else. You were supposed to give everything you had. When you were in the temple, the authorities would send you out on the street a few hours later, and make you distribute books. You had not even read them, and did not know what it was all about, but that is what they did.

They asked, "Can you cook?"

I said, "No."

They said, "Oh, it is so easy. You just boil some water on the stove.

You add some *dhal*, rice and some spice and then you have khichri. Very easy."

Somehow, you managed it with great difficulty, and the next day they would place you in charge of the kitchen. That is how simple it was, absolutely based on surrender. If you said, "I really do not know…" the reply was, "Do not worry. Kṛṣṇa will help you." What could you say after that?

Nowadays, the movement has become congregational and most devotees never move into the temple but they add Kṛṣṇa to their life. When Kṛṣṇa is added, it is not a revolutionary thing any more; it's not a complete change where you just jump in the deep end and do whatever temple authorities say. Now it is more like, "Well, okay, I will do some service but not that service and not that other service either. I only like chocolate service."

So it may appear more difficult now, but we have to take some service and really make something of it. That service will grow and grow, and we will grow with it. The service will make us do things for Kṛṣṇa that we would otherwise not do. That is the key in spiritual life, and that is the meditation that I would like to take with us today – austerity in devotional service.

Glossary

ācārya: a spiritual master who teaches by his own example.

adhīra: one who is not sober, whose senses are not controlled or those who are agitated and disturbed.

adhikāra: being spiritually competent; having qualification.
Akrūra: an uncle of Lord Kṛṣṇa

amṛta: nectar.

anartha-nivṛttiḥ: a stage in the progressive development of devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa in which one is freed from unwanted desires and karmic reactions; cleansing the heart of all unwanted things.

anarthas: unwanted bad habits.

anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyaṁ: Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's definition of pure devotional service as being free from any other desire than the desire to serve Kṛṣṇa.

aprakaṭa: the unmanifest pastimes of the Lord. That which we cannot see or the pastimes of the Lord that is not visible.

ārati: a ceremony in which one greets and worships the Lord in the Deity form.

Arjuna trees: two trees of the Arjuna species that stood in the courtyard of Nanda Mahārāja until Kṛṣṇa uprooted them.

aśoka: a tree with long, pointed leaves.

Āśutoṣa: a name of Lord Śiva meaning, "one who is easily pleased."

aṣṭāṅga-yoga: eight limbs or branches of yoga.

aṣṭa-sakhīs: the eight principal gopīs of Vṛndāvana.

aśvamedha-yajña: the elaborate Vedic horse sacrifice.

Aurangzeb: the sixth Mogul emperor

Bakāsura: a demon in the form of a bird who tried to kill Kṛṣṇa

Bali Mahārāja: the king of the demons who gave three paces of land to Vāmanadeva, the dwarf incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, and thereby became a great devotee by surrendering everything to Him.

bhajana-kuṭīr: a cottage, hut, or similar place for performing one's devotional service.

bhajana-kriyā: to practice devotional service under the spiritual master's guidance.

bhajanānandī: a devotee who performs his devotional activities in seclusion.

Bhakti-ratnākara: a book written by Śrī Narahari Cakravartī describing the pastimes after the disappearance of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu: one of the principal works on the science of devotional service, written by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

bhāva: the stage of transcendental love experienced after transcendental affection; manifestation of ecstatic symptoms in the body of a devotee.

bhoga: food before it has been offered to the Deity.

Brahmaloka: the abode of Lord Brahma

Brahma-saṁhitā: a very ancient Sanskrit scripture recording the prayers of Brahmā offered to the Supreme Lord, Govinda, recovered from a temple in South India by Lord Caitanya.

Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta: a sacred book by Sanātana Gosvāmī.

Bṛhaspati: the spiritual master of King Indra and chief priest for the demigods.

Caitanya-bhāgavata: a biography of Caitanya Mahāprabhu written by Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura.

Campakalatā Ānanda-kuñja: a grove in the garden of Campakalatā, one of the principal gopīs of Vṛndāvana.

Ciksoli: the village of Citra-devī, who is one of the eight principal gopīs of Vṛndāvana.

cintāmaṇi: a spiritual mystically potent gemstone ("touchstone"), found in the transcendental realm. It fulfils all the desires of one who possesses it. When applied to metal, it transforms it into gold.

Dakṣiṇā-devī: the mother of Viśākhā-devī, one of the principal gopīs of Vṛndāvana.

Daruka: Kṛṣṇa's chariot driver.

dāsya: the devotional process of rendering service to the Lord.

dhāma: abode, place of residence; usually refers to the Lord's abodes.

dhīra: steady, sober

gamucha: a thin cotton towel, commonly used in India.

Gaṅgā Jala: the waters from the river Gaṅgā.

Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu: the second Viṣṇu expansion, who enters each universe and from whose navel grows a lotus upon which Lord Brahmā appears.

Garuḍa: the bird carrier of Lord Viṣṇu.

Gauḍīya Maṭha: a Vaiṣṇava institution, originally with 64 temples

in India and elsewhere, founded by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura for propagating the sacred teachings of Lord Caitanya throughout India and the world.

Gaura-kuṇḍa: when the water level of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa rises so high that both kuṇḍas overflow and combine together as one, then Śrī Gaura-kuṇḍa becomes manifest.

Gautama-gotra: the dynasty of Gautama.

gāyatrī: a sacred mantra that a brāhmaṇa chants silently three times a day at sunrise, noon and sunset to attain the transcendental platform; the Vedic mantra that delivers one from material entanglement.

ghāṭa: a flight of steps leading down to a river. A level place on the edge of a river.

GBC: The Governing Body Commission (GBC) is the ultimate managing authority of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. It was created in 1970 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness.

go-sevā: taking care off or service to cows.

Gopa-kumāra: a cowherd boy from Govardhana who travelled to the higher regions of the universe including Goloka Vṛndāvana. This journey is described in the Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta.

Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī: one of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, who directly followed Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and systematically presented His teachings.

Gopāṣṭamī: a festival that is dedicated to Lord Kṛṣṇa and cows. It is the coming-of-age celebration when Kṛṣṇa's father, Nanda Mahārāja, gave Kṛṣṇa the responsibility for taking care of the cows of Vṛndāvana.

Gopendra Nanda: the beloved son of Nanda Mahārāja who is Kṛṣṇa.

Gopī-gīta: prayers of the gopīs describing their separation from Kṛṣṇa compiled in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Canto 10.

gośālā: cowshed

goṣṭhy-ānandī: a Vaiṣṇava who is interested in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Gosvāmī: a person who has his senses under full control: the title of a person in the renounced order of life, sannyāsa; master of the senses.

gṛhastha: householder stage of life. One who lives in God conscious married life and raises a family in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Hari: the Supreme Lord, who removes all obstacles to spiritual progress.

Hari-vaṁśa: the appendix to the Mahābhārata. It is a summary of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes by Śrīla Vyāsadeva.

Hiraṇyakaśipu: a powerful demon and great atheist who tormented his son Prahlāda Mahārāja, a great devotee, and was killed by Kṛṣṇa in His incarnation as Nṛsiṁhadeva (the half man-half lion form of Lord Viṣṇu).

Indra: the chief demigod of heaven and presiding deity of rain.

Jagāi: the brother of Mādhāi. He had received special mercy from Lord Caitanya despite harassing Lord Nityānanda and Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura.

Jagannātha Purī: place of pilgrimage on the east coast of India where the Deity of Jagannātha is worshipped.

Jaṭilā: the mother-in-law of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

jīva: the living entity, who is an eternal soul, individual but part and parcel of the Supreme Lord.

Jīva Gosvāmī: one of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana and the nephew

of Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs.

Jñāna: knowledge.

Kadamba tree: a tree whose flowers appear in balls during the rainy season

kaḍacā: diary

Kaustubha gem: a jewel worn by Kṛṣṇa on His chest. It is one of the few marks visibly distinguishing Him from His devotees in Vaikuṇṭha.

Kavi-karṇapūra: a Vaiṣṇava poet

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī: author of the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta.

Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu: The puruṣa who expands into the heart of every materially embodied being as the Supersoul.

Kumbha-melā: a fair held every twelve years at Prayāga for spiritual upliftment.

Kuntī: the mother of Arjuna and aunt of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Kurukṣetra: a holy place where the great Mahābhārata war was fought; situated about ninety miles north of New Delhi where Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the Bhagavad-gītā to Arjuna five thousand years ago.

Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta: a literature that serves as a supplementary text to Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, written by Sanātana Gosvāmī as a summary of the essential conclusions of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

līlā: pastimes, the eternal activities of the Supreme Lord in loving reciprocation with His devotees.

Mādhavendra Purī: the spiritual master of Īśvara Purī.

Mādhurya-kaḍambinī: a book by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura

that provides scientific analysis of the various stages through which a practising devotee advances.

madhyama-adhikārī: a devotee in the intermediate stage.

Manasi-gaṅgā: The most sacred of lakes, located at the midpoint of Govardhana Hill. Kṛṣṇa created it from His mind and filled it with the waters of the Gaṅgā and all other holy rivers

Māyāvādī: impersonalists who believe that ultimately God is formless and without personality.

Mohinī-mūrti: The incarnation of Kṛṣṇa as the most beautiful woman. She appeared from the churning of the ocean of milk, deceived the demons, and delivered the nectar of immortality to the demigods.

Nārada-bhakti-sūtra: a well known sūtra, reportedly spoken by the famous sage, Nārada.

Nimāi: the name given to Lord Caitanya after being born under a nima tree.

niṣṭhā: firm faith

nitya-siddha: an eternally liberated soul.

pāñcarātrika: the rules and regulations of Deity worship, as given by Nārada Muni

pāṇḍā: temple priest, usually of a caste brāhmaṇa family.

Parāśara-gotra: the linage or dynasty of the Parāśara cast.

Paraśurāma: One of the most famous incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. He appeared as a brāhmaṇa but had the qualities of a warrior.

pārijāta: An exquisite flower that grows only in the spiritual world and on the heavenly planets. The tree was brought down to earth by Kṛṣṇa

as a gift to Satyabhāmā.

***pāriṣada* devotees**: devotees who are personal associates of the Lord

Peepal Tree: a sacred tree native to the Indian subcontinent; it is a storehouse of medicinal value and is used to treat many ailments and diseases.

Pṛthu Mahārāja: an empowered incarnation of the Supreme Lord who appeared as an ideal king to bring forth the resources of the earth.

Punjab: a state bordering Pakistan, which is the heart of India's Sikh community.

puṇya: pious activities, which help to liberate one from the cycle of birth and death in the material world.

Puruṣottama: Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the Supreme Person, meaning "the most exalted person."

Pūtanā: a demoness who appeared in the form of a beautiful woman to kill baby Kṛṣṇa but who was killed by Him and granted liberation

rāgātmikā: the spontaneous devotional mood of the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, displayed according to their loving attachment.

Rajasthan: a northern Indian state bordering Pakistan. Its palaces and forts are reminders of the many kingdoms that historically vied for the region.

Ramaṇaka: the proper home of Kāliya was Ramaṇaka, but he had been driven away from there by fear of Garuḍa, the foe of all serpents.

ratir: a strong attraction to God that precedes bhāva (mature ecstasy) and prema (mature love of God).

Rohiṇī: the mother of Lord Balarāma.

rūpānugas: followers of Rūpa Gosvāmī.

sādhana-bhakti: following the rules and regulations of devotional service to develop natural love for Kṛṣṇa.

sakhya-rasa: a relationship with the Supreme Lord in devotional friendship.

samādhi: total absorption and trance of the mind and senses in consciousness of the Supreme Godhead and service to Him; it is also the tomb where a great soul's body is laid after his departure from this world.

sampradāya: a disciplic succession of spiritual masters, along with the followers in that tradition, through which spiritual knowledge is transmitted; school of thought.

Sanaka: the oldest of the first four sons of Lord Brahma.

sannyāsī: one in the sannyāsa (renounced) order.

Śatrughna: The youngest of Lord Rāmacandra's three brothers.

Siṁha-dvāra: The elaborate Lions' Gate on the eastern side which is the main entrance of Lord Jagannātha temple in Purī.

ślokas: a couplet of Sanskrit verse, especially one in which each line contains sixteen syllables.

Subala: one of the cowherd boy associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Tulasī: a pure devotee in the form of a basil plant held sacred by the Vaiṣṇavas and is very dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Its leaves and mañjarīs (buds) are always offered to His lotus feet.

Tungavidya: one of the eight principal gopīs of Vṛndāvana.

Unchagaon: the village of Lalitā-devī

Uddhava-kuṇḍa: a lake located to the west of Kusuma-sarovara. At this place there is a temple dedicated to Uddhava. It is said that Uddhava always resides here praying to Lord Kṛṣṇa for the love and devotion that the gopīs had for Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Uddhava-sandeśa: a book by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, narrating the dramatic story of Uddhava carrying a message from Kṛṣṇa, now a resident of Mathurā, to the residents of Gokula plunged in a deep agony of separation from Him.

Ugrasena: the King of the Yadus, and the father of Kaṁsa

Vṛndādevī: A principal gopī, a direct expansion of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. She is the presiding deity of Vṛndāvana forest, and the tulasī plant is her expansion. She and grandmother Paurṇamāsī make all the behind-the-scenes arrangements for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's daily pastimes.

Yakṣa: ghostly followers of the demigod Kuvera, the treasurer of the demigods. They were born from the feet of Lord Brahmā.

Yamadūtas: the messengers of Yamarāja, the lord of death

Yamarāja: the demigod of death, who passes judgement on non-devotees at the time of death. He is the son of the sun-god and the brother of the sacred river Yamunā.

Yavat: the village of the marital home of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

yoga-māyā: the internal, spiritual energy of the Supreme Lord which hides Him from non-devotees.

Yudhiṣṭhira: the eldest of the Pāṇḍavas in the Mahābhārata, and the son of Dharmarāja or Yamarāja, the God of death.

About the author

Kadamba Kanana Swami, originally from the Netherlands, travelled to India at a young age. Once he came to Vṛndāvana in North India, the centre of Kṛṣṇa worship, he settled there and for many years was a leader in the Hare Kṛṣṇa *āśrama*. These days he travels widely across the world, teaching and writing about Bhakti Yoga. However, Vṛndāvana is always on his mind. In that land of Kṛṣṇa, he has found the deeper meaning of life.

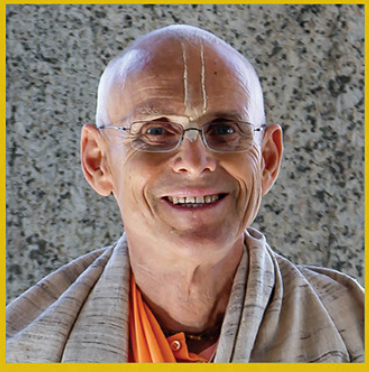
For more information about Kadamba Kanana Swami, his preaching activities, lectures and music, please visit the following websites:

www.kksblog.com

www.kkswami.com

In the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā Chapter 5, it is described that Lord Nityānanda came to His dear devotee in a dream and said, "O my dear Kṛṣṇadāsa, do not be afraid. Go to Vṛndāvana, for there you will attain all things." Kṛṣṇadāsa immediately started off for Vṛndāvana in great happiness, glorifying Lord Nityānanda. Lord Nityānanda had said, "In Vṛndāvana all things are possible."

We pray to Lord Nityānanda Balarāma, to Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī who revealed the transcendental nature of the *dhāma* in his writings, and to Śrīla Prabhupāda who gave us everything, that Śrī Vṛndāvana may manifest in our heart.



KADAMBA KANANA SWAMI

ŚABDA