

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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Bhāgavatam Rasamālayam

The Abode of Supreme Nectar

Meditations & Reflections from the lectures of His Holiness Bhakti Charu Swami

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Looking towards Krishna

Srila Prabhupada is pointing out the difference between the Pandavas and Vidura. Although Vidura was a very, very exalted personality, but the position of the Pandavas was higher than his, or superior to his, because the Pandavas are the eternal associates of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. "Eternal associates" means nitya-siddha, that is, they're always in the spiritual sky with the Lord, and when they come to the material nature, they do not come due to the law of karma or due to their own forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa, but wherever Kṛṣṇa goes, Kṛṣṇa also takes them with Him. Sometimes He may take them with Him; sometimes He may not. It's up to Him. A pure devotee's situation is that he is completely surrendered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His will. A pure devotee, or a liberated soul, doesn't have any independent will. He is completely tuned to Kṛṣṇa's will, and that is the meaning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Consciousness is the symptom of the soul. Just as fire naturally radiates light, similarly, a spirit soul naturally radiates consciousness.



Sometimes, that consciousness can become tinged or covered. Like, when a living entity looks away from Kṛṣṇa – and looking away from Kṛṣṇa means looking into the material nature – he becomes conditioned. Just a small little mistake of just looking away from Kṛṣṇa – momentary glance away from Kṛṣṇa – entraps a living entity into his endless bondage in the material nature. This has been very graphically explained as:

kṛṣṇa-bahirmukha hañā bhoga-vāñchā kare
nikaṭa-stha māyā tāre jāpaṭiyā dhare
[Prema-vivarta]

Bahirmukha, the word mukha means face, and bahirmukha means facing away. Like, our face is towards Kṛṣṇa – that's called unmukha, when you look towards Kṛṣṇa. And, when you look away from Kṛṣṇa, that is, our face is turned away from Kṛṣṇa, then away from Kṛṣṇa means: Kṛṣṇa's external energy. Everything is Kṛṣṇa. Everything is Kṛṣṇa's – manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's energy. The spiritual world is Kṛṣṇa's internal energy where Kṛṣṇa is personally present and everyone is related directly to Kṛṣṇa. That is the spiritual reality. And, as soon as one looks away from Kṛṣṇa, then he looks into the external energy of Kṛṣṇa which is somewhat like the reflection of the spiritual world.

Now, this energy, the external energy, is inferior by nature; whereas, the living entity is superior. He is coming from Kṛṣṇa's superior energy. Although he is minute, but he is coming from Kṛṣṇa's superior energy. Therefore, qualitatively the living entity is superior to the external energy of Kṛṣṇa: māyā. So, when a superior comes across an inferior, then what happens? The natural outcome of that is he develops a tendency to lord over. When a superior comes across an inferior, he tries to dominate over him. So, similarly, as soon as the living entity looks at this material nature which is inferior in quality, he develops a tendency to dominate over that. But, by nature, he is not to be dominating, or he is not meant to be dominant. He is meant to be subordinate. By nature, by his natural constitutional position, a living entity is a servant of Kṛṣṇa. But, just by this momentary glance toward the material nature, a living entity develops his desire to lord over. And that causes him the first covering of the material nature: the covering of false ego. And this covering causes him to forget his actual identity and he develops a mistaken identity. That is exactly the meaning of the word ahankara or false ego.

A mistaken identity is developed. That is the first covering. And, now that he has developed this mistaken identity of thinking himself to be the lord and master of the material nature, now he begins to plan how he is going to establish himself and enjoy this material nature. And that causes him the second covering of the material nature called intelligence. And then, through the agency of the mind, his consciousness constantly flows towards the material nature. And in this way, he develops three subtle coverings of mind, intelligence and false ego. And then, according to the shape of his subtle body, material nature awards him a gross body made of five gross elements, namely: earth, water, fire, air and ether. So, this is how a living entity becomes entrapped into the material nature. And although at the time of death he becomes free from the gross body, the subtle body continues. And, it is the subtle body that carries the spirit soul to his next destination. The gross body dies but the subtle body doesn't die. In this way, the living entity becomes very, very intensely bound to this material nature, and this bondage is practically impossible to free oneself from.

Just a small little mistake of just looking away from Kṛṣṇa – momentary glance away from Kṛṣṇa – entraps a living entity into his endless bondage in the material nature. There is only, just, one way that a living entity can become free from this bondage of māyā. When one surrenders unto Me, then he can become free from the bondage of māyā."

And, regarding that, Kṛṣṇa is telling in Bhagavad-gītā, "mama māyā duratyayā: this influence of this material nature is impossible to surmount." [Bhagavad-gītā 7.14] And, this māyā is daivī māyā – "daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī." It's Kṛṣṇa's potency; Kṛṣṇa's own energy. "Mama māyā: My māyā, My energy." Therefore, it's impossible to free oneself from this bondage of māyā, but, there is one way. There is only, just, only one way that a living entity can become free from this bondage of māyā. That is: "mām eva ye prapadyante/ māyām etāṁ taranti te. When one surrenders unto Me, then he can become free from the bondage of māyā." So, this surrender unto Kṛṣṇa actually means the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"Just think of Me"

That is, the cause of a living entity's bondage is that he looked away from Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, to rectify that situation, one has to simply look towards Kṛṣṇa, and never ever look away from Him. That is the condition. And, regarding that, Kṛṣṇa is saying, "man-manā bhava: with your mind, just think of Me." [Bhagavad-gītā 9.34] Why? Because the mind is the medium through which consciousness is flowing. So, therefore, when the mind is projected towards Kṛṣṇa, or through the mind, the consciousness is projected towards Kṛṣṇa, one actually is becoming situated in Kṛṣṇa's internal potency.

Now, this is the normal condition for a living entity to become free from the bondage of the material nature, but Kṛṣṇa appearing as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu made it even easier. Even easier in the sense: a living entity normally has to turn his face away from material nature and towards Kṛṣṇa constantly. That was the requirement for devotional service, but Caitanya Mahaprabhu came and made a very special kind of arrangement and that arrangement is called saṅkīrtana. Saṅkīrtana means using everything for the sake of glorifying Kṛṣṇa. Even though we may not be able to constantly think of Kṛṣṇa with our mind, but whatever we are seeing, wherever our mind is, wherever our consciousness is, we can take that object and use it in the service of Kṛṣṇa. So, that is the special prerogative of being involved in the saṅkīrtana movement. We do not have to turn our face away from matter and on towards the spiritual reality or the spiritual nature. Our face can be towards the material nature but whatever we are seeing, whatever we are doing, through that we simply have to see Kṛṣṇa and we have to use those objects in glorifying Kṛṣṇa.

This is how Mahaprabhu has created – Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has created – a very special good fortune for the living entities of this age. This possibility was not available in other ages, not even in Satya-yuga or Tretā-yuga or Dvāpara-yuga. There, one had to become qualified to become a devotee. Now, that point has been established in this way, that: in those ages, the progression was gradual. Like, first, one would be involved in the karma-kāṇḍa section of the Vedas. And then, he would come to the jñāna-kāṇḍa section of the Vedas, and the topmost activity of the jñāna-kāṇḍa is the yoga, aṣṭāṅga-yoga.

And through aṣṭāṅga-yoga, he would become completely free from the influence of the material nature or the bondage of the material nature, and he would see, he would withdraw himself completely from the material nature and project his consciousness inwardly in the core of his heart, and there he would see the Supersoul. And there, by seeing the Supersoul, he would recognize his insignificant position as a spirit soul. The Supersoul is the Supreme and he sees himself as a minute. Like, as opposed to the material condition: the living entity sees that he is superior and the material nature is inferior, but by seeing the Supersoul, he sees the Supersoul or the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the Supreme and he is absolutely insignificant. Now, when one sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead and comes to this consciousness, then what happens? Then, he surrenders himself. And, this surrender is called prapatti or śaraṇāgati. So, this surrender is the very foundation of devotional service. Unless and until one came to that platform of surrender, one could not become a devotee. So, that has been very beautifully explained by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura as:

śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu jīve doyā kori'
swa-pārṣada swīya dhāma saha avatari'

atyanta durlabha prema koribāre dāna
śikhāya śaraṇāgati bhakatera prana
[Śaraṇāgati, Introduction]

"Śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu jīve doyā kori'." In order to bestow His mercy upon the living entities, Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahaprabhu – "swa-pārṣada swīya dhāma saha avatari'" – descended with His associates and abode. And – "atyanta durlabha prema koribāre dāna" – in order to bestow the very rare love of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa-prema – "śikhāya śaraṇāgati bhakatera prana" – He is teaching the process of Śaraṇāgati, the process of surrender, which is the life and soul of devotion or which is the very foundation of devotion.

So, this is how Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is creating or promoting us to a very special situation. In other ages, one had to gradually be promoted, but what Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu did: Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu just created the good fortune to promote us into that platform which is beyond the platform of yoga samādhi. In samādhi a yogi would see the Supersoul, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and then surrender, and then the devotional service would begin.

Inquiries of the soul

Question: Maharaj, in the beginning you were saying in that if somebody is surrendered to Krishna and if he commits some mistake, still he comes back to Krishna again. So I wanted to know what is that "surrender" considered as and on what level is that devotee to be considered on?

HH BCS: Well the main consideration is that because one has gotten the taste, even if he deviates due to some mistake or allurements or even bad association, bad provocation, but then very quickly he realizes that that is a mistake. This is not the path of enjoyment! That is the life of enjoyment! So what happens? He just leaves everything and comes back to the association of devotees.

Question: Maharaj, in the beginning you were saying in that if somebody is surrendered to Krishna and if he commits some mistake, still he comes back to Krishna again. So I wanted to know what is that "surrender" considered as and on what level is that devotee to be considered on?

HH BCS: If somebody is not properly situated, he should be corrected. That's why we have the authority structure. No misappropriation or misbehavior should be tolerated. Prabhupada gave us the responsibility, especially to the leaders, to keep ISKCON pure. If somebody is cheating, why should it be tolerated? He should be warned and if he is not corrected, if he doesn't want to correct, then remove him. This place is not meant for unscrupulous individuals. Prabhupada was very careful that unscrupulous individuals are not taking advantage. That shouldn't be tolerated.

Question: Hare Krsna Maharaj. In renounced order of brahmachari ashram, there is sadhana and association of devotees. Both things are very, very important. But many times, the practicing sadhaka gets overpowered by false ego and because of the false ego, he is not situated properly and he does not have good relationships and association of devotees. So how can he free himself?

HH BCS: You see these are the practical challenges that the local management has to deal with. The first consideration is, is it desirable to develop false ego in Krsna Consciousness? So at the very outset, at the very beginning, something is wrong. He should be taught, he should be encouraged to give up his false ego. We are not here to develop our false ego; instead we are here to get rid of our false ego. Initially somebody may have some false ego but the teachers have to see that he is actually getting rid of it not promoting it.

Question: In brahmachari life, so much we are instructed to read Prabhupada's books. So my question is that down the line also Prabhupada's disciple's and his grand disciples, they also write so many books and repeating what Prabhupada has told in his books so how much effective are these books in purifying somebody's heart and can they do so by distributing and reading.

HH BCS: You see, all these books are eventually helping understand Srila Prabhupada's teachings. That should be the main motivation. In ISKCON, everyone's business is to enhance Srila Prabhupada's teachings. Say for example, Tamal Krishna Maharaj was assigned by Prabhupada to preach in China. Now the Chinese people could not directly go to Bhagavad Gita. He saw that. So he wrote a novel, based on some Chinese character, leading to Bhagavad Gita. He saw the need to present it in such a way that they will understand. So similarly in future devotees will write like that for people to understand. For example Radhanatha Maharaj's "The journey home". It is creating such a wonderful effect among the people who are not going to come straight to Krishna Consciousness. But it is through that book that they are becoming interested in Krishna Consciousness. So this is how devotees in future will write literature..

Question: Hare Krishna Maharaj, you mentioned that one who is endeavoring for enjoyment is a karmi. Now we sometimes get option to choose service and take up service as we like. Is this also karmi mentality? There also we came out of this and take services just as given to us fully surrendered and not choosing what we like.

HH BCS: You see, there are different levels of advancement. At a neophyte stage we may opt for some service that we like to do because we still have the tendency if not to enjoy but at least to do things in a comfortable way but when one makes advancement then he doesn't say whether he likes it or not. Whatever is offered he does. So it will depend upon the degree of advancement. It is not that in the material world devotional service is not tasty. It is because you are jaundiced you are not getting the taste. The taste is there but because of the diseased condition we are not getting the taste. Like a person who has jaundice cannot taste the sweetness of sugar candy.