

*Ram das*

# *Natural Bhakti*

*Bhakti without fear – the lost science of attraction (rati)*



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(Institute for the Investigation in the Sanskrit-scriptures)  
Bensheim 2007 (Germany)  
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This publication is listed in the German National Bibliography; bibliographic details you find at: <http://dnb.ddb.de>

© Institut zur Erforschung der Sanskrit-Schriften, Bensheim (Germany)  
October 2007  
Publisher: Tattva Viveka-Verlag  
Tattva Viveka-Schriftenreihe  
ISBN 978-3-9804144-4-9

Internet: [www.gopi.de](http://www.gopi.de)

*nama om visnu-padaya radhikayai priyatmane  
sri-srimad-bhaktivedanta-narayana iti namine*

I offer my love and respect to Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, my dear Gurudeva and wellwisher – who is very dear to Srimati Radharani.

Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto that great sage [Sukadeva Gosvami] who can enter the hearts of all. When he went away to take up the renounced order of life [sannyasa], leaving home without undergoing reformation by the sacred thread or the ceremonies observed by the higher castes, his father, Vyasadeva, fearing separation from him, cried out, »O my son!« Indeed, only the trees, which were absorbed in the same feelings of separation, echoed in response to the begrieved father.<sup>1</sup>

Sri Krishna is very quickly satisfied with one who maintains a compassionate mood towards other *jivas*, and who does not give them any kind of anxiety through his body, mind and words. Compassion is the main *dharma* of the Vaishnavas.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Srimad Bhagavatam 1.2.2

<sup>2</sup> Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura: Jaiva-dharma, 20. chapter, S. 487 (the 18<sup>th</sup> anga of vaidhi-bhakti)

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## *Editorial note*

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The first edition of this essay appeared in German in September 2006. After the release many comments came up by devotional practitioners. Many devotees were very favorable, but also some critic came up. This comments and critics gave rise to a further investigation in the scriptures and many new findings. The main points of critics had been the understanding of *vaidhi-bhakti* and the discussion of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharajas »four regulative principles«. In the following forword these points of critic are discussed.

The essay itself in this second edition (in English) had been enhanced and slightly revised according to the comments of the devotees. On my homepage ([www.gopi.de](http://www.gopi.de)) the German version is posted and an English version with the enhancements and changes in coloured letters as well, so that readers can see what had been added in the second edition.

A further text about the meaning of *vaidhi-bhakti* is available in German (»Was ist sadhana?«), an analysis and purport of the 22. chapter of Caintanya Caritamrta Madhya-lila (Sanatana siksa). It is posted on the website. The translation into English will follow soon.

## *Forword to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*

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In this paper I have collected many quotes from the scriptures and commented them. The beginning of the text gives a general introduction where I present the main theses and formulate them first without detailed argumentation and confirmation of the *sastra*. It is therefore very important to read the complete work, because all the references and further explanation follow in the main part. The introduction may be very hard to tolerate for an orthodox devotee because I question some old belief systems, which belong to the temporary historical form of the tradition (*asat*). I don't want to question the transcendental truth behind, the eternal aspect (*sat*).

I had to make a point, a counter position to the dogmatic style of many devotees. I am sure that I am not right in any aspect and maybe my presentation is not always objective and neutral. It is an answer to a questionable development in our *sangha*. This text is a counterweight to this development, a radical view from the transcendental perspective. This text should establish the priority of *raganuga-bhakti* over *vaidhi-bhakti*

and the eminent importance of emotions in *raganuga-bhakti*. As the *acaryas* state, *raganuga-bhakti* is *bhakti* without rules and regulations. I tried to relocate the importance of rules and regulations and to put them in the right relation to pure *bhakti*. I am not against the principles of *sattva-guna*, but I say that purification, renunciation and knowledge are not the cause of *bhakti* but the effect. Only *bhakti* gives *bhakti*, as 11.3.31 of Srimad Bhagavatam states (*bhaktya sanyatayah bhaktya*).

Rules and regulations refer to material shortcomings and material causality. Therefore they are not part of transcendence. I don't want to claim that *vaidhi-bhakti* does not work or that it is useless. I only claim that there is also another approach possible that works too. For some devotees *vaidhi-bhakti* is the right way, for some devotees another path may be better. I tried to see without valuing, beyond good and evil. My main concern is the question why Krishna-*bhakti*, the most precious jewel of spiritual existence, does not attract the people and how we can present Krishna-*bhakti* to the public so that it may attract the people permanently and at the same time come ourselves to a stronger *bhakti* who is far more authentic and pure in our own *sadhana*.

I think that the western culture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not the same as the Indian culture of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore there must be adjustment on the external cultural levels. Not in the internal transcendental core, but external!

As an active part of the cultural public in Germany I listen very carefully what the people think and search for, and how they see the devotees. Rigid and repressive structures are not the appropriate approach for modern intelligent Western people.

Only the transcendental beauty and sweetness of Radha-Krishna *yugala-kisora* in Vraja-lila conveyed by a pure devotee in the higher *rasas* can give, what every religion or spiritual path should give: pure ecstatic love to Godhead beyond any material consideration.

This *bhakti* that I unfold in the following paper is based exclusively on attraction, not on pressure.

It is meant for the starting people, not for *sannyasins* or perfect *bhaktas*, it discusses the intermediate situation of a *jiva* that is not perfect.

Some words like »bhava« or »rasa« I may have used in a slightly different understanding, mainly in a broader sense, in order to reach the situation of the fallen soul and to provide steps for understanding the underlying psychological dynamic in the moods of the living entity.

## The understanding of *vaidhi-bhakti*

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The general understanding of *vaidhi-bhakti* in the contemporary understanding of the devotees (in Iskcon and Gaudiya Math) seems to be different from what is told about *vaidhi-bhakti* by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in Caitanya Caritamṛta (Madhya 22. und 23. chapter).

This I found out in the following research after the discussion about the paper in Germany had started. Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja very often used the terms »rules and regulations«, »regulative principles«, »following strictly the principles« etc. By referring to the *sloka*s I found out that he usually translated the Sanskrit-term »*sadhana*« with »rules and regulations« and the term »*anga*« with »principles«.

*Sadhana* in *vaidhi-bhakti* is defined as »*sravanam*, *kirtanam-adi*«<sup>1</sup>, and also a devotee performing *raganuga-bhakti* uses this *sadhana* in his *sadhaka-deha* (material body). So the »rules and regulations« are *sravanam*, *kirtanam* etc. in the original understanding. »Rules and regulations« today are mainly understood as not smoking, drinking, meat eating etc. This not-smoking, not-drinking etc. has taken the place of *sravanam*, *kirtanam* etc. in terms of rules and regulations. In this way there came up a different understanding of rules and regulations that is very much external and material.

Indeed *sravanam*, *kirtanam* etc. is indispensable for *bhakti*, it is *bhakti*. *Sravanam*, *kirtanam* etc. are positive actions in *bhakti*, so they can give *bhakti*. But this is different in the negative injunctions of the four regulative principles of Bhaktivedanta Swami (no meat, no illicit sex, no intoxication, no gambling). These principles are not *bhakti*, but prerequisite stages. As Sri Radha raman dasa Goswami is saying in his purport to verse 1 of Sri Upadesamṛta: »It is essential to note here that by subduing the six passions described already, what is obtained is merely the qualification to enter the realm of *bhakti*. These are not direct limbs of devotional service (*sadhana-bhakti*) but, rather, the doorway through which one may enter the realm of *bhakti*. Because *bhakti* is the self-manifest function of the Lord's internal potency (*svarupa-sakti*), when it makes its appearance these six passions automatically become pacified.«<sup>2</sup>

In this statement are mentioned three main points. The first point is that controlling the urges is a prerequisite feature for *bhakti*. The second point is that the passions become pacified automatically when *bhakti* manifests. A third point is that *bhakti* is self-manifesting from the internal potency of the Lord. This means that *bhakti* is not dependent on material conditions or causes created by the living entity. The first two points seem to be kind of contradictory to me. The first statement says that you first have

to be purified in order to attain *bhakti*. The second statement says that *bhakti* itself purifies (pacifies the passions). In the following essay I try to investigate in this causality.

Because Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja used the terms »regulations«, »principles« etc. very often, many devotees emphasise this very much in terms of the four regulative principles like not smoking, but don't consider that with these terms actually is meant the *nava-anga-bhakti-sadhana* (the nine limbs of devotional service).

The following essay was written before I understood this special situation. Therefore the understanding of »rules and regulations« as well as *vaidhi-bhakti* follows the understanding of today's devotees rather than the definition of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu as recorded in Caitanya Caritamṛta.

While I have great difficulties to understand and follow the concepts of today's devotees, I have no problem of understanding and following the definitions of *vaidhi-bhakti* and *raganuga-bhakti* as given by Sri Caitanya in Caitanya Caritamṛta in Madhya-lila, chapters 8 and 22f.

## *Perfection of*

### *Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja's teachings*

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Some German devotees criticised in my paper, that I criticise Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, because I say that he made a kind of mistake with the strong emphasis on the four regulative principles. The devotees say that I must not think of any fault of Swami Maharaja, because he is a perfect soul free from any fault. So the four regulative principles are eternal absolute truth that must not be questioned. He had the spiritual perfect vision and everything what he does is eternally true and perfect.

I think I can reconcile this single point of his teachings (the four regulative principles) without questioning his perfection.

His role in bringing *bhakti* to the West afforded the introduction of the *aishvarya*-aspect first (God's aspect of majesty and power). First there had to be established the *bhagavan*-feature of Sri Krishna. Without the understanding of Sri Krishna being the highest God and the cause of everything (like described in Srimad Bhagavatam 1.1.1-2), we cannot understand the higher *rasas* and *Vraja-prema*. Although this *aishvarya-bhava* has to be forgotten in *Vraja-prema*, still it is indispensable in the development of the *sadhaka*. *Aishvarya-bhava* is not annihilated in *Vraja-prema*, but hidden. In its combination with *madhurya-rasa* it leads to the characteristic emotion of *prema-rasa*. So Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami



Maharajas task was the introduction of *aishvarya-bhava* in *dasya-rasa* by means of *vaidhi-bhakti*. In this context the strong emphasis on the four regulative principles was correct. Still there is a possibility to reconcile this aspect in relation to *madhurya-rasa* in *raganuga-bhakti*.

The four regulative principles are common ground in India's *yoga*-traditions. So also *jnana-yogis*, *karma-yogis*, mystic *yogis* etc. request these principles. They are very good and I don't want to abandon these principles, but I request another approach that is not so dogmatic and fear- and guilt-provoking. These principles are no specific feature of *bhakti* and don't belong to actual *bhakti*. So they are not part of the eternal transcendence and therefore not ultimate condition for the performance of *bhakti-yoga*, although they are favourable for *bhakti*. It is important not to mix the different levels. How *jnana* and *vairagya* is positioned in relation to *bhakti* will be discussed in this paper.

Furthermore I think this attitude of considering the devotees as absolutely perfect is appropriate and indispensable for one's own spiritual master but not for every devotee. My spiritual relation to my Gurudeva is characterized by this attitude to see him fully perfect. But this perfection is not a question in the intellectual sphere or concerning intellectual data, but it is a question of *sambandha*, of *sraddha* and faith in my Gurudeva. The correctness or incorrectness of intellectual data given by him is not relevant for the spiritual relation. So there is a difference between intellect and soul as well as between one's own spiritual master and other advanced devotees. The spiritual position of the devotee in general and the spiritual master in speciality is not afflicted by the discussion of intellectual data or external behaviour on the physical platform. This means we can honour the perfection of the devotee while still discussing phenomenal data. In this way even Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja discusses and changes instructions of his own spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Maharaja. Bhaktisiddhanta Maharaja told in his Upadesavali No. 22: »Bhagavan will not accept anything which is offered by a person who doesn't chant *harinama* one-hundred thousand times daily.« One hundred thousand names are 64 rounds. So all the devotees who chant only 16 rounds are producing only *bhoga* and doing *aparadhas*?

Also in his purport to CC Madhya 23.105 Swami Maharaja discusses Srila Sanatana Goswamis Hari-bhakti-vilasa and tells, that this scripture had been compiled in relation to the *smarta-brahmanas* and is therefore to be understood according to the historical and cultural circumstances at that time in India: »The teacher (*acarya*) has to consider time, candidate and country. (...) Sanatana Gosvami wrote his Vaishnava *smṛti*, Hari-bhakti-vilasa, which was specifically meant for India. In those days, India was more

or less following the principle of *smarta-vidhi*. Srila Sanatana Gosvami had to keep pace with this, and his Hari-bhakti-vilasa was compiled with this in mind.« As we can see, Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja was well aware of the relation between eternal truth and temporary phenomena. He puts a work of Srila Sanatana Gosvami into relativity.

Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja gave so many new instructions and changed so many things in the traditional habits. And this is so much reasonable, because the practice has to be adjusted according to time, place and circumstances. So my proposal is just a further adjustment in order to bring *bhakti* to the people in its pure and true form. There should not be given up any transcendental truth or changed anything in the spiritual reality (what is obviously impossible), I just want to adjust some external details in a further reconciliation on the basis of my Western experience.

Since 13 years I am the chief editor of a public magazine, I worked for five years in a renowned publishing house in Germany and studied six years philosophy and philology at Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University in Frankfurt/Main. This make me acquainted with the cultural and philosophical understanding of the Western intelligentsia. Therefore I think I should point out some problems in the communication of the devotees with the general public. These problems could be solved and at the same time give implications for a more transcendental understanding of *bhakti* herself. All this will not only lead to more success in preaching and increasing the number of devotees, but also to a deeper *bhakti* that is more authentic and sustainable, also in ourselves.

In order to achieve this I have included some Western knowledge and science into the essay. It is an integral attempt to set the human findings in alignment with the eternal truth. »Everyone follows my path in all respect« (BG 4.11); »Everything rests upon me as pearls are strung on a thread.« (BG 7.7) So I always kept this vision in mind and tried to see everything in its relation to Krishna.

This following presentation of *bhakti* is based on the science of *rati*, attraction. This *bhakti* that is unfolded in the following paper is based exclusively on attraction, not on pressure.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> *śravanādi-kriyā - tārā ṣvarūpa-lakṣaṇa / ṭatastha-lakṣaṇe upajāya prema-dhāna*

»The spiritual activities of hearing, chanting and remembering are the natural features of *vaidhi-bhakti*. The sideeffect ist pure love for Krishna.« (CC 2.22.106) All nine *angas*: *śravanam*, *kīrtanam*, *smaranam*, *arcanam*, *vandanam*, *dāsyam*, *pada-sevanam*, *sakhyam*, *atma-nivedanam*

<sup>2</sup> *Srīmad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja: Śrī Upadeśamṛta. The Amborisa Advice of Śrī Rupa Goswami, Gaudiya Vedanta Publications, Mathura 1997, p. 6-7*





*Ram das*

# *Natural Bhakti*

*Bhakti without fear – the lost science of attraction (rati)*

## *Preface*

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This text is a thesis paper without the claim of having final or absolute validity. It is an attempt to find a natural *bhakti* and to found her on the scriptures. These are theses and not absolute truth. The devotees are invited to experiment with these theses and to make their own experiences. Nobody can avoid his or her own experience and it is not enough to deal with ready-made and preconceptive attitudes or methods. This text is driven by the desire to find the truth. I pray to all devotees of Radha-Krishna to forgive my offences and impudence.

## *Introduction*

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When Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada came to the West in 1965, he was 69 years old and for the first time outside of India. His cultural background therefore was exclusively Indian and brahminical standard. His cultural understanding therefore was very different from that what he encountered in the Lower Eastside in New York. The hippies just had thrown out their cultural taboos and conventions and were living a free, effusive und bacchanal life. The revolution against the conservative values of the main-culture was on its peak. Old taboos were crushed, repressions and fears, which were coming from the repressive moral concepts and from the conservative values, had been challenged and fought back. Freedom was the motto of the day. In the midst of this mood of start up and questioning

the old values, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami came with a solid, conservative worldview model as it was fully valid at that time in India. For instance, it was not allowed for a woman to stay with a man in the same room except with her husband.<sup>3</sup> The women had to serve the men, bring them food and wait until all are finished in order to take her meal afterwards. Which Western woman or man today would accept such forms of conduct? We are used to a high degree of freedom and emancipation. We have lead the individuum out of its immaturity. The »age of enlightenment«, in which we are living since 300 years, is only concerned about this point: to realize the individual person, the »I«, free from paternalism and mythical anxiety. This kind of enlightenment and autonomy of the subject had not been developed in the traditional Indian society, although there had been a superficial intellectual reception of these ideas by the influence of the English colonialists and the Christian missionaries. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura is a splendid example for the intense discussion of these modern concepts and the acceptance of the positive findings of the Western intelligence for a recovery and revival of the Vedic spirituality in a non-ideological, non-culturalistic but transcendental sense.<sup>4</sup>

Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja in his direct encounter with the situation in New York must have faced a drastical contrast and cultural shock. The abyss between his solid traditional Indian culture and the revolting subculture of the West must have been quite a horror for him (the hippies dancing naked and drunken in the park). In correspondence with this background it has to be understood that Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja introduced the four regulative principles (no meat, fish and eggs, no illicit sex, no intoxication and no gambling) and put a strong emphasis on them. His successors later on absolutized them so massively that hardly any devotee sees the relativity and conditionality of these principles anymore. They live in the equation: four regulative principles = *bhakti*. In this treatise I want to show that and why this equation is not correct.

Especially the devotees of Iskcon lived for decades practically isolated from the tree of disciplic succession. Many of them, mainly the GBCs, are until today of the opinion that only their line is certified. All other branches of the tree like the succession of Nityananda Prabhu and the other Goswamis, they consider insignificant, imperfect or even deviating. In that way certain principles can be made absolute, which are unknown in other branches. So Bhaktivedanta Sadhu Maharaja from the Mungir-Ashram in Vrndavana reports that the four regulative principles in that sense are unknown in his line. Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja had introduced these principles as a response to the specific situation in New York and his own moral affright. In his purport to Caitanya Caritamṛta, Madhya-līla 23.105, Bhaktivedanta

Swami states: »A candidate for Krishna-consciousness in the Western countries should be taught about the renunciation of material existence, but one would teach candidates from a country like India in a different way.« Here we can clearly see his interpretation of the situation of the Western countries and how he was thinking to change it. When he says that the Western culture lacks renunciation, this is definitely correct. So the purification of the Westerners was one strategic goal of his mission. As the tactical mean to achieve this goal he designed the four regulative principles.

As we saw in the following decades and also today, the Westerners have great difficulties with these four regulative principles. Since some devotees claim that there is a causal connection between keeping the principles and the success in *bhakti* and even a causal relation between the four regulative principles and going to hell, many people suffer from great psychic pain feeling guilty, dirty or sinful. They give up the path of *bhakti-yoga* because they cannot bear the psychic suffering by being sentenced impure, dirty, guilty, sinful or unqualified; they cannot enjoy the fear- and guilt-provoking belief systems and cannot feel attraction to *bhakti-yoga* because no attraction is given but pressure and restriction by threat of hellish suffering etc. So in this way the goal of Bhaktivedanta Swami is not achieved: to purify the Westerners. While the goal is correct and on this level the absolute authority of Bhaktivedanta Swami can be confirmed, the mean took a problematic shape in the reception of Swami Maharaja's followers. So the followers exaggerated the four regulative principles even more due to lack of *rasa* in their own spiritual development. I suggest that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja had a completely different understanding of »rules and regulations« than his Western followers having a Christian/Puritanistic connotation of that term. I cannot imagine that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja had in mind a repressive threatening concept with these principles that should force the individuals by fear and guilt. He was an *uttama-bhakta* and full of compassion and mercy. But some of his today-followers overpronounce the regulative principles and lack the compassion and mercy of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. As we, as conditioned *jivas*, come usually from a more or less collectively ignorant and suffering society we come from a sick totality. So we are completely unaware of the neurosis created by sticking to rules and regulations having lack of faith due to our own unfortunate situation.

My point in this treatise is that renunciation is the effect of *bhakti* and not the cause. In order to make the Westerners more renounced, their engagement in the limbs of *bhakti* needs to be a prominent factor, that is *nava-anga-bhakti*.

The renunciation is easily achieved by the practice of pure *bhakti*, as

stated in Caitanya Caritamṛta, Srimad Bhagavatam, Bhagavad-gita, Bhaktirsamṛtasindhu etc. Pure *bhakti* consists out of the nine *angas* of *bhakti* but is not dependent on restrictions or bans. Pure *bhakti* comes natural. By performing natural *bhakti*, sustainable renunciation without force and bad feelings is achieved. From the very beginning to the end everything is the practice of pure *bhakti*.

The four regulative principles are useful to come to the platform of *sattva-guna*. From *sattva-guna* it is easier to get to the plane of *nirguna*, i.e. to surpass the modes of nature and to enter the transcendental platform. *Sattva-guna* is religion, but religion is distinct from spirituality. To reach the spiritual plane it is therefore necessary to transcend all *gunas*. This work therefore follows the question: To what extent the pronouncement of the purification-rules by threat of hellish conditions and punishment should be favourable for pure *bhakti*?

My thesis is that an exaggerated sticking to rules and regulations as well as forcible demands of purity block the emotions of the living entities and makes the heart like stone. Emotions are suppressed by the mental regulation and control of mind and senses. In the usual Vedanta, which is about *karma-yoga* and *jnana-yoga*, this may be favourable, but in *bhakti-yoga*, which is about the emotion in the heart, this method is a hindrance, and it even may be detrimental. There are many examples of devotees, who even after 25 years don't experience *rasa*. Even after 25 years they don't have a deep sentiment of love for Krishna, they don't have realized *bhava*. This does not result – so the thesis of this essay – from the enormous impurity of these devotees, but from the false philosophies and beliefsystems, which by abstract rules and bans create mentally operated people isolated from their emotions. They were told that by following the rules and regulations (which are misunderstood as the four regulative principles instead of *nava-anga-bhakti*) they can achieve *bhakti*.

It is the fear and anxiety of impurity that stops *bhava*. There is no more free flow, no happiness, no feeling and no opening of the heart. The heart becomes more and more like stone over the years, chanting becomes a robotic doing. These people wait for the future in the hope that the fulfilment and realization of love to Godhead will happen once, projected in a future far away or even after death. But this is not the definition of *lila*. The *lila* performed by Radha, Krishna and the *gopis* in Goloka Vrndavana is eternal. It happens here and now. There is no way to get there on our own and no action to force it. Only the unconditioned and causeless mercy of Krishna, Guru and *sadhu* combined with our inner decision can bring us there. This inner decision is the empathy to open one's heart to *sadhu-sanga*. The mirror of the heart is cleansed (*ceto darpana marcanam*), when we go



to *sadhu-sanga* with open heart in order to perform *sravanam* and *kirtanam* there. The more the heart is open, the more it can be touched by *bhava*, the faster the purification is going on and the more pure is the *bhakti*. *Bhakti* then is not mixed with *karma* and *jnana*. The bans and precepts, which are disciplination by fear (if I don't follow, it is a sin and I will be punished), close the heart, make it narrow and impede emotions. It is a big misconception to consider the emotions negative because they are focused on material things in the material sphere. Emotions are very necessary and indispensable to reach the higher stages of *bhakti* such as *ruci*, *raga*, *rasa* and *bhava*. Every mental intervention into the emotions is counterproductive. Instead, it is most important to give people an approach to their emotions. The most valuable question is: how can we give this treasure of Krishna-*bhakti* to the ignorant and innocent people outside in a way that they can accept it?

Often we don't see how high people in the West have developed their consciousness and how intelligent they are. The *kanistha-adbhikari* likes to address the non-devotees as *karmis*, which is a bad name, and to consider the whole society as nuts or crazy. With this attitude any further dialog is obsolete. In this way not one person is attracted to Krishna. And this is the reason why out of all the spiritual movements coming from the Far East/India to the West in the sixties, the Hare Krsnas are those who play the most insignificant role in the society. Other movements like Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Yogi Bajan, Mother Amma, Brahma Kumaris, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and all the *advaita*-traditions today are solid parts in public life and their followers count in hundreds of thousands. Also this phenomenon cannot be finished simply by the argument that these groups all are presenting primitive materialistic philosophies and that's why the silly materialistic *karmis* are attracted, whereas the *bhakti*-philosophy would be too high and elaborated for them (and we are so high because we understand it).

I think it is more important to look for the fault in our own. In my opinion the problem is the wrong approach of the devotees. The elitist attitude and the middle age moralistic ideas cause the new guests to run away, the faster the more intelligent and conscious they are.

Intelligent conscious people of today have severe objections against dogmatic structures or belief systems based on moral pressure. They are very sensitive towards repressive structures because they have the experience of the institutional church-Christianity and the fascism. It is a general cultural consensus in the intelligent parts of society that repressive philosophies and belief systems are historically obsolete. And it is like that. As long as devotees do not consider this cultural situation and still try to promote their ethnocentric-mythical dogma and repressive moral concepts, they will not reach the people they want to reach. Anyway, a transcendental spirituality

does not need these dogmas and repressive moral. In contrast: dogma obstructs the manifestation of spiritual realization.

I have personally spent years and years releasing myself from the injuries and armouring, which I caused myself having blind faith in a repressive Catholic morality, in order to again become more of a living and feeling entity. Now I have achieved this and now the devotees tell me that these impulses of life and emotion are under suspect of being sinful and that I should stop this liberation and should function conformed, regulated and disciplined in the institution. A young man who met the (Iskcon-) devotees in a rainbow gathering brought it in a conversation with me into the very simple formula: »Hare Krishna is catholicism<sup>5</sup> for hippies.«

Isn't it a pity that Krishna-*bhakti* is seen like this in the West? Isn't it awkward that *bhakti* in that understanding is not more than a moralism, a religion? That along with this sour moralistic preaching the sweet Krishna gets lost? That the Krishna-faith is charged up against a cigarette or a coffee? They talk about rules and regulations instead of Krishna. They only want our best, but the experience shows us that it does not work like this. We cannot treat modern or postmodern Westerners (including myself) like rural analphabets in the middle age.

The purpose of this text is not to open a new philosophy and also not to reject the principles of *sattva-guna*. The purpose is a new balance between *sattva-guna* and *nirguna*, while the highest importance should be put on *nirguna*, respectively on *bhakti*. The question is not that of a new goal, but that of a new way to that goal. There are humans who are not with Krishna so far. These living entities must be given a path to Krishna that works. This makes it necessary to consider time, place and circumstances. This essay is a plea for a more released handling of the needs of the individual persons without instantly dividing these needs in good and evil or pious and sinful. *Bhakti* is completely transcendental and beyond the material modes of nature. She therefore is not dependent on rules and regulations. It is nice if one follows them, and surely it is for his benefit. It is also in my sense to recommend the four regulative principles and the other purification-rituals. They are helpful and a good advice but not ultimate conditions. If we consider *bhakti* as ultimately dependent on rules of material purity this is an inadequate shift of levels. With such an understanding the progress in *bhakti* is hindered and is therefore to be understood as an offence against *bhakti*. Devotees who are attached to the exact performance of the rituals and exercises perform *karma-misra-bhakti*. Devotees who are attached to purity and austerities perform *jnana-misra-bhakti*. From these positions it is not possible to attain *Vraja-prema*.

Now to the elaborations in detail.

Satyaraja Khan said, »My dear Lord, being a householder and a materialistic man, I do not know the process of advancing in spiritual life. I therefore submit myself unto Your lotus feet and request You to give me orders.« (verse 103)

Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied, »Without cessation continue chanting the holy name of Lord Krishna. Whenever possible, serve Him and His devotees, the Vaiṣṇavas.« (104)

Purport: Here we see the classical situation when a neophyte on the path of *bhakti-yoga* approaches a senior devotee in order to receive instructions from him. Obviously Caitanya Mahāprabhu is more than a devotee, but this example shows what happens when He takes up the role of an instructing spiritual master (*sikṣa-guru*). There is only one instruction: the chanting of the Holy Names. He does not speak of external principles. This is happening consciously which becomes clear in the following verses that state what a devotee is and how he gets *bhakti*.

Upon hearing this, Satyaraja said, »How can I recognize a Vaiṣṇava? Please let me know what a Vaiṣṇava is. What are his common symptoms?« (105)

Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied, »Whoever chants the holy name of Krishna just once is worshipable and is the topmost human being.« (106)

Purport: This sentence is directly spoken by Caitanya Mahāprabhu and is an original verse from Caitanya Caritamṛta. Therefore it must be considered to be of highest authority. Sri Caitanya is saying here clearly that a single utterance of the Holy Names of Krishna is enough to make someone to a devotee which means that such a person should be afforded maximum respect.<sup>7</sup> Caitanya Mahāprabhu does not speak of additional principles of conduct that would be necessary to qualify someone as *bhakta*. Only the performance of *bhakti* itself is the criteria for the qualification of the *bhakta*. If therefore a person who has chanted the Holy Name of Krishna only once is already a glorifiable devotee then what to speak of a fulltime devotee or a guest coming to the temple. They cannot be judged as unqualified or insufficient.

»Simply by chanting the holy name of Krishna once, a person is relieved from all the reactions of a sinful life. One can complete the nine processes of devotional service simply by chanting the holy name. One does not

have to undergo initiation or execute the activities required before initiation. One simply has to vibrate the holy name with his lips. Thus even a man in the lowest class [*candala*] can be delivered. By chanting the holy name of the Lord, one dissolves his entanglement in material activities. After this, one becomes very much attracted to Krishna, and thus dormant love for Krishna is awakened.« (107-109)

Purport: *Bhakti* is completely transcendental, she not dependent on external endeavours. Only the chanting of the Holy Name dissolves the entanglement in material activities. No matter what fallen condition we are in, we solely should chant the Holy Name. Then everything will come. Here Caitanya Mahaprabhu is practically saying that not even initiation is necessary. On the other hand, we know about the eminent importance of initiation. The opinion that we need initiation is correct<sup>8</sup>. So we see here a semblance of contradiction that can be resolved by the philosophy of *bhedabheda-tattva* and by an understanding of the *tattvas* that works in this way. Western philosophy calls this dialectic and it is the very opposite to dogmatic philosophies.

This quote points out that there are different statements that have to be reconciled according to time, place and circumstances and that a dogmatic approach is not appropriate. A word fundamentalism, which sticks to the literal expression and denies one's own consideration as blasphemy, cannot be appropriate for a modern intelligent person, moreover it cannot provide a spiritual experience. It should be possible to validate statements by means of one's own intelligence and especially experience; with, of course, keeping in mind the goal of following in the footsteps of the *acaryas* and paying them utmost respect and reference. Still the truth must not be denied or misused. Every statement should be proved of its truthfulness in order to be integrated in the own personal experience and realization. Contradicting statements or truths may lead to a higher plane of understanding, where the duality of the respective contradiction can be integrated and solved on a higher plane. Or they lead to the understanding that simply both statements are right even if this contradicts the material logic. This is the principle of *acintya-bhedabheda-tattva*. Like this initiation and all other aspects are *bhedabheda*, dialectic. There is never only one side exclusively true, there is not one dogma that would be always right whereas the opposite would be always wrong. In an atmosphere where one side is raised to a dogma, it is necessary to bring the other side to attention. In this regard it is very good to pay more attention to the statement of Caitanya Mahaprabhu and to look what truth is behind it.

The question is: On what does *bhakti* depend? What do I have to do in order

to get *bhakti*? It is favourable to take initiation and to keep the four regulative principles. According to the above mentioned quote these things are not the essence. *Bhakti* is not dependent on it. *Bhakti* manifests independently out of her free will. Who is chosen by *bhakti* depends on the mercy of *sadhu*, Guru (what in fact requires a Guru) and Krishna. We cannot control it and no action/non-action can control *bhakti*. The following verse from Srila Rupa Goswami's Padyavali that is quoted here in Caitanya Caritamṛta points this out very clearly.

»The holy name of Lord Krishna is an attractive feature for many saintly, liberal people. It is the annihilator of all sinful reactions and is so powerful that, save for the dumb who cannot chant it, it is readily available to everyone, including the lowest type of man, the *candala*. The holy name of Krishna is the controller of the opulence of liberation, and it is identical with Krishna. When a person simply chants the holy name with his tongue, immediate effects are produced. Chanting the holy name does not depend on initiation, pious activities or the *purascarya* regulative principles generally observed before initiation. The holy name does not wait for any of these activities. It is self-sufficient.« (110)

Purport: In order to be in alignment with this statement we should focus our attention exclusively on the processes of *bhakti*, especially the chanting of the Holy Names, as well as *hari-katha*, *sanga* and *seva*. The fundamental attitude, according to which the following of the four regulative principles is an indispensable prerequisite for the performance of *bhakti*, is improper. This attitude misinterprets the way *bhakti* works and makes many devotees turn away from Krishna-consciousness in due course of time. They don't leave the *sanga* because they don't like Krishna – they like Krishna –, but because they have too much anxiety and remorse when they cannot keep all of the rules and regulations 100%. They feel threatened by the concept of sin, guilt and punishment. This concept is not only unfavourable for preaching but is also contra-productive in the philosophical and spiritual dimension. It destroys the love for Krishna. Someone who claims these regulative principles to be dogma and as a hard and fast rule and absolute condition is like someone who charges up Krishna against a cigarette or a glass of wine. He says if you cannot give up the cigarette you have to give up Krishna. But isn't Krishna million times more than that? Isn't He far beyond these material concepts? Is it necessary to lead a person, whose love for Krishna is awakening and increasing, by remorse, threatening and guilt? This is a very common but old paradigm that was the general pattern of religion in the middle age and the early modern times. But this method does not work anymore today because

people in the West have a very advanced understanding and ratio as well as traumatic experiences with this kind of repressive religion. People today in the West are very emancipated and have left behind their immaturity. So this authoritarian mode of preaching does not yield fruit today. Instead we have to start from the ratio and the freedom of man. This is not a diminution of the spiritual quality but rather a step to more spiritual quality because the ideological metastructure of religion is opposed to transcendental truth. To transcend the ideological platform of the mind therefore means to achieve the spiritual vision.

Today's ideological and dogmatic feature of bhakti-philosophy claims in its simple essence the following idea: if you are impure you *must not* perform *bhakti*. Or in other word: If you are impure and perform *bhakti*, this is an offence. This idea is wrong. The right message is: if you are impure you *must* perform *bhakti*. We are all impure and fallen. *Bhakti* is our only hope to come out of our fallen position. So how we can come out of the impure state, when we are not allowed to perform *bhakti* before we are pure? We must perform *bhakti* in the impure state. Everybody is impure, and whoever thinks that he is pure is a hypocrite.

In the Srimad Bhagavatam the following verse can be found:

**»In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart. By cultivating such knowledge one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, and thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed. Then real devotion and devotional service begin.«<sup>9</sup>**

Purport: Here the undoubted statement is made that liberation is a prerequisite of pure devotion. Without liberation it is not possible to perform pure *bhakti*. Liberation therefore should not be considered insignificant. Liberation means to not live in fear and anxiety anymore. Liberation is to come to oneself. Liberation means to resolve neurotic patterns that keep us in the conditioned state and dependent on material concepts. Often it is not clearly recognized that also our mind and intelligence are material and promote material concepts. The pure transcendence is the pure vision of the phenomena as they are, without dogma and belief systems and free from judgement and valuation. A religion that is based on dogma and belief systems has to be understood as *dharma* in the sense Krishna is saying in the Bhagavad-gita: »Give up all kinds of *dharma*« (Verse 18.66). *Dharma* are all kinds of philosophies and belief systems. They are not transcendental.

In the above quoted verse from Srimad Bhagavatam it is also stated that the

discussion (*hari-katha*) is very pleasing and satisfying. It is a pity that this aspect of *bhakti* has to be emphasized since this should be naturally the way a devotee today practices *bhakti* – in a way that is pleasing and satisfying. We have so many stories and pastimes of Krishna, so much knowledge about the *tattvas*. There is no need to speak about negative, bad things that provoke fear and guilt and shame in the peoples' minds. In this verse the sequence is clearly given: 1. *sangha*, 2. *hari-katha*, 3. *jnana*, 4. *moksa*, 5. *asakti*, 6. *prema*, 7. *seva*. That is the correct sequence. *Bhakti* works like that.

#### **Bhagavad-gita 18.54:**

**»One on the stage of *brahma-bhuta* is filled with joy. He never laments nor desires to have anything; he is equally disposed to every living entity. In that state he attains pure *bhakti* unto Me.«**

Purport: This verse from Bhagavad-gita shows clearly the relation between *brahma-bhuta*, the state of bliss and liberation, and *bhakti*. After the practitioner has reached *brahman*, liberation, he is eligible to reach the highest goal, *bhakti*. This *brahma-bhuta* stage is not *bhakti*, but an initial stage in the process. Still it is a necessary stage. Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja is saying in his purport: »Caitanya Mahaprabhu said that even this *brahma-bhuta* stage is external, because one who is situated in that stage cannot realize or attain Goloka or Vaikuntha although he has become free from the *gunas*. Goloka or Vaikuntha can only be realized when one acquires *para bhakti*. The *brahma-bhuta* platform is therefore not the highest step. Rather, it is the initial stage in the process of acquiring that supreme level.«<sup>10</sup> This verse contents different philosophical points which will be dealt with in the following chapters, for instance the proper vision towards the living entities and the role of mercy which is announced in the word »labhate«. *Labhate* means to get *bhakti* from someone, not to design or make it. This points to the eminent role of grace and is discussed in the following chapters.

Bhagavad-gita explains in Verse 2.40:

**»Endeavours on the path of *bhakti-yoga* are neither fruitless nor subject to loss. Even a little progress frees one from fear and the greatest of dangers in this material world.«**

Purport: This is the character of *bhakti*. *Bhakti* does not function like *karma*. Every small endeavour counts and never gets lost. It is therefore not a condition to perform a process perfectly. Faults, irregularities or

insufficiencies may reduce the full benefit according to the degree of omission or faulty performance but they don't destroy the complete result as this is a fact in *karma-yoga*. In *karma-yoga* one must perform the ritual perfectly without fault because otherwise the complete result will be lost or may be the opposite of the desired goal. Whereas in *bhakti* every minute action performed as *bhakti* enters eternally and irreversibly into transcendence. Whoever interrupts the process and later starts over again, continues at that very point where he had stopped before. Therefore it is impossible to lose the results of *bhakti* unless offences are committed. In that case it is possible to lose *bhakti*. But this special case should not be stressed and treated like the only focus of attention. The essential truth about *bhakti* is that in this process there is no loss or diminution.

Krishna states in Bhagavad-gita that even if someone acts sinful but has love to Krishna in his heart, he is a *bhakta* and progresses on the path of *bhakti*.<sup>11</sup> He is making progress whenever he is performing *bhakti*. All other activities that are not *bhakti* are temporary. They may continue for some time while the devotee is performing interrupted *bhakti*, which means that he sometimes practices *bhakti* and sometimes he doesn't. Still every moment of activity in *bhakti* is a full benefit for the *bhakta* without any loss. It is not dependent on any material cause and effect and cannot be minimized by material conditions.

In this regard Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja says in his purport to verse 2.40:

**»Although a *sadbhaka* has faith, if, due to ignorance of the process, there are some irregularities in his performance, the results of *bhakti-yoga* are never lost nor does he incur sin.«<sup>12</sup>**

Purport: Srila Narayana Maharaja is saying here clearly that irregular or incomplete performance of *bhakti-yoga* is no sin. Recently a devotee was preaching to a woman who was new in Krishna-consciousness and who took up the path, being deeply moved in her heart. He told her that a round she has started to chant must be finished, otherwise this would be false and offensive. That woman had chanted a round for the first time in her life and it took her one hour. She had very deep experiences and it is really astonishing how fast she could deeply immerse into love for Krishna. But as soon as she got this instruction she became fearful about chanting. She was thinking now that it might bring a lot of trouble if she must chant the complete round. It might take her one hour and she cannot know in advance if she will have enough time to chant the round with emotion and taste. Very innocently she started with the understanding that one chants with emotion. A flow of emotions



might take some time and requires spontaneous behaviour according to the waves of the emotions. It can sometimes make us stop chanting before the end of the round, especially if one round takes one hour. Usually we chant much faster and then these considerations are not so important. But in this case it is important although it represents only an example. However, there are many different situations like this incident. As a consequence of the devotee's preaching, the mood of the lady was spoiled by fear and shame. She told me that very directly and clearly. I had to preach intensively with the explanation given in the verse and purport 2.40 in order to pacify her. In this way, many imperfect concepts which are derived from *karma-yoga* and *jnana-yoga* are present in the devotees' minds. These concepts and ideas are promoted among the ignorant and innocent people, mainly to get supremacy and to make pressure. In this case the person resisted this fear-provoking preaching.<sup>13</sup> But how many people comply to these fear-provoking concepts and pass their life even more broken and depressed?

As explained above, the material actions go on during the transition period to 24-hour *bhakti*. They cannot be given up before the time is ripe. To renounce these activities artificially is not possible. This is stated in Bhagavad-gita 3.4-5:

**»Not by merely abstaining from work can one achieve freedom from reaction, nor by renunciation alone can one attain perfection. Everyone is forced to act helplessly according to the qualities he has acquired from the modes of material nature; therefore no one can refrain from doing something, not even for a moment.«** (see also 3.33, 18.11, 18.40, 18.60<sup>14</sup>)

Purport: In this verse, as in many others in the Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavatam, it is clearly stated that renunciation does not lead to the highest goal. The idea that by renunciation one can attain *bhakti* is basically a material idea. It implies that the perfection can be achieved by my own endeavour and control. This would mean that *bhakti* is controllable and dependent, underlying conditions and being therefore on the conditioned platform. But *bhakti* is completely free, independent and uncontrollable. She comes and goes as she likes and chooses whom she wants. Very often one can observe that *bhakti* manifests in persons who have no initiation, don't follow the four regulative principles and don't perform regular *japa*.

Everyone who performs severe penances and renunciation in order to intensify his *bhakti* must understand that this is a voluntary effort, which is good but no ultimate condition. If someone wants to perform renunciation he can decide freely to do it. Whoever wants it, can do it. But it is not an ultimate condition for *bhakti*. If someone is performing austerities and now

is thinking: »Well, then I can give up my austerity. Why should I suffer when others can achieve *bhakti* without austerity? Where should this lead us to if the thing would be so easy?« – then he has to think about the proper foundation of his renunciation. If it is dependent on the co-suffering of others, it is a neurotic form of renunciation that does not lead to the goal of pleasing love for Krishna. If he gets angry that another devotee does not perform that austerity, then it is envy. If he understands the benefit of performing austerities, he is in alignment with his activity and satisfied within himself without being dependent that others perform austerities as well. Moreover, this person will develop compassion for the other souls that cannot perform such renunciation. But he will never think of accusing, judging and persecuting others. As soon as one's renunciation comes onto this path, one should give it up.

Real renunciation is performed out of love for the object of this love, and it is an effect of this love, not a cause for this love. If one does the renunciation in order to prepare oneself and being available for *bhakti* because one is so eager to achieve one's beloved, than it is true renunciation. If one does it out of an intellectual understanding and reasoning (that it is more reasonable because it is less suffering at the end), it is *jnana-yoga*. This is partially true renunciation. If one does it as a dogma with the goal of gaining control over one's body and senses, it is *karma-yoga*, which is a material kind of renunciation.

**»Pure devotional service in Krishna consciousness cannot be had even by pious activity in hundreds and thousands of lives. It can be attained only by paying one price—that is intense greed to obtain it. If it is available somewhere, one must purchase it without delay.«<sup>15</sup>**

Purport: Also in this verse from the Raya Ramananda-samvada, the legendary speech between Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Raya Ramananda, it is clearly stated that it is not the point to act piously. Pious behaviour is no condition for *bhakti*. The question here is the distinction between religion and spirituality. Religion is on the material platform of *sattva-guna*. The idea is to act in a moral way, i.e. be nice and good and follow social rules. On the other hand, spirituality designates the transcendental platform beyond any external conditions, *nirguna*, the pure and eternal truth beyond any conditions, social relativity, and moral discipline. Religion is disciplination of the ego, spirituality is transformation of the ego. When the ego is transformed, when it has become Radha-*dasi*, there is no more question of disciplination. We have a perfect situation and an imperfect situation. A transcendental philosophy has to be based on the perfect situation, not on

the imperfect situation. As Radha-dasi we have spontaneous, free flowing, unrestricted devotion and love to Radha-Krishna. Then moral rules do not play any role. The rules and regulations are not part of the transcendence and are not part of a transcendental *siddhanta*. Rules and regulations can enter the philosophy only under the suspicion of sinful activity. In this way they create a repressive continuum that suppresses the movements and emotions of the soul of the living entity. This is the stage of *nitya badha*, eternally conditioned. In that sense the regulation itself creates the conditioning. The idea to get *bhakti* by following the rules and regulations is a non-transcendental idea which belongs to *karma-misra-bhakti* and *jnana-misra-bhakti*. This strategy may be reasonable sometimes when we have to deal with very primitive or materialistic and uncultivated people. It is a very gross strategy. At the momentary level of consciousness-development in the Western cultures, this gross strategy practically does not work at all.

A strategy that starts from the stage of liberation does not work with suppression but with attraction. Krishna is the all-attractive, not the all-suppressive. To suppress and block the emotions because they are evil/material leads to a general suppression of emotions. The emotions are the core essence of *rasa*. »The essence of the *hladini-sakti* is love of God, the essence of love of God is emotion (*bhava*), and the ultimate development of emotion is *mahabhava*.« (Caitanya Caritamrta Adi 4.68) To come to an attraction, a feeling for Krishna, it is much more favourable to let the emotions flow freely. At least in the beginner's stage it is therefore necessary to let the emotions flow in any way regardless any moral judgement. In that way one develops the faculty to deal with one's own emotions, to perceive them, to understand them, to discriminate them and to follow them. This is the basic principle of mental sanity according to Western psychology. Mental illness in the sense of neurosis, psychosis and personality dissociation is caused by a disintegration of the emotions. This leads to permanent suffering.

On an advanced level of *bhakti*, when we have a stable approach to *bhava*, are familiar with it and are able to discriminate *bhava* exactly from material feelings<sup>16</sup>, we can start to withdraw the emotions from material objects and activities – if this is necessary after all. In general this is not necessary because the transcendental feelings cleanse the mirror of the heart with a most powerful effect and dispell the taste for material objects. It is therefore the best to follow the emotions instantaneously regardless if this might imply at the beginner's stage to perform material and spiritual activity, i.e. not only spiritual activity. Material and spiritual actions are going parallel in a laminar flow. This means that these two substances don't mix with each other. In Bhagavad-gita, verse 13.33, we find: »The sky, due to its subtle nature, does not mix with anything, although it is all-pervading. Similarly, the soul

situated in Brahman vision does not mix with the body, though situated in that body.«

It is not necessary to fight against the material feelings. We are fallen souls and are therefore eligible for the causeless mercy of Guru and Krishna. In that sense these material feelings are alright. Yet these material emotions should disappear at some point. That is the whole idea of spiritual practice. Because material emotions are related to material temporary objects, they are themselves temporary and not part of transcendence. With an increase of spiritual emotions, these material emotions vanish automatically. We don't have to worry about this. »Don't worry«, my spiritual master uses to say.

To make this point clear once again: the idea of this paper is not to give a new goal but a new way how to get there. This is not a plea for material emotions but for the correct sequence. Material emotions as well as all other material attachments and identifications cannot be dispelled without substitution. Before they can be given up there must be an alternative, which is a personal spiritual experience of transcendental emotions. These transcendental emotions occur independently from material elements of consciousness, mind and body. As BG 13.33 states, these emotions are laminar flows which exist side by side and don't mix.

In Bhagavad-gita we find the following verse that confirms the neutral attitude against pious and sinful activities:

**»A person is said to be established in self-realization and is called a yogi [or mystic] when he is fully satisfied by virtue of acquired knowledge and realization. Such a person is situated in transcendence and is self-controlled. He sees everything—whether it be pebbles, stones or gold—as the same. A person is considered still further advanced when he regards honest well-wishers, affectionate benefactors, the neutral, mediators, the envious, friends and enemies, the pious and the sinners all with an equal mind.« (Bhagavad-gita 6.8-9)**

Purport: This description of the transcendence as presented in these two verses is forming the main part of Bhagavad-gita. A vast abundance of verses describes again and again this transcendental sight (2.56-57, 4.22, 5.18, 6.29-30, 12.13-20, 13.29-31, 14.22, 15.5, 18.20, 18.51-53)<sup>17</sup>. We can assume that this understanding of transcendence is very important for Krishna. He repeatedly describes it as the fundamental requirement for *bhakti*. This stage itself is not *bhakti*, it is the vision of *brahman*. Still the vision of *brahman*<sup>18</sup> and the stage of *jnana*<sup>19</sup> are basic for reaching *bhakti*. As the verse explains one has to transcend the duality of accepting and rejecting. The wise sees everyone with equal vision (5.18).<sup>20</sup>

The most important essence in these verses 6.8-9 is that a person with the transcendental vision does not discriminate between pious and sinful persons. According to the highest authority (Krishna), the discrimination between pious and sinful is not part of transcendence. In his commentary to the 10. Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura explains: »Separation from Krishna is not caused by sin, and meeting with Krishna is not caused by piety« (SB 10.29.10-11 purport, S. 300). A transcendental vision has to start from those parameters, and only through a transcendental vision one can clearly understand the difference between *vaidhi-bhakti* and *raganuga-bhakti*. The difference cannot be understood on the material level of *sattva-guna* (the distinction between *vaidhi* and *raganuga* will be discussed in the following chapters).

So what is the right vision of a living entity? This question is answered by Krishna in the Bhagavad-gita from different angles. Several times He states that a wise man is a friend to every living entity and has compassion and mercy for everyone.<sup>21</sup> This is the stage of *uttama-bhakti*. A devotee in the highest state of *bhakti* sees Krishna everywhere (»*Vasudeva sarvam iti.*« »*Vasudeva*, Krishna, is surely everything«, Bhagavad-gita 7.19), and because he is so much in love for Krishna, he loves also all the things that belong to Krishna, i.e. His creation with all the living entities. He sees that they are all eternal parts and parcels of Krishna. Wherever such a wise man sees a living entity, he sees a devotee and has the impulse to pay his obeisances. He is in a continuous ecstasy because he sees Krishna and devotees everywhere. This does not mean that in every human or living entity he only sees perfect qualities. A wise man does not see the single entity as single anymore. It is like a view from a distance where the material differences are not visible or relevant anymore because he does not pay attention to them.

The insignificance of the discrimination of good and evil leads also to another aspect. The reason for action is not following any set of uniformed values coming from external codes of behaviour, but from the internal impuls within the *jiva*, the individual person.

In the Bhagavad-gita it is stated that a person who follows his inner own being and his destination will achieve perfection.

»It is far better to discharge one's *sva-dharma*, even though faultily, than another's *dharma* perfectly. Destruction in the course of performing one's *sva-dharma* is better than engaging in another's *dharma*, for to follow another's path is dangerous.« (BG 3.35)

»It is better to engage in one's own occupation (*sva-dharma*), even though one may perform it imperfectly, than to accept another's occupation and

perform it perfectly. Activities prescribed according to one's nature (*sva-bhava*) are never affected by sinful reactions.« (BG 18.47)<sup>22</sup>

Sri Aurobindo, who was a devotee of Krishna in his way, elaborates on these verses: »The way the usual man individually and collectively lives seems to contradict these principles. Everyone of us burdens a horrible weight of external pressure and rules and laws. In every moment from there is created an impact on us that tries to stop our desire of expressing our inner self, of unfolding our true person, our real soul. The innermost characteristic manner of our life is injured in every minute, is manipulated, forced, deviated and separated from our own way. The influences from the environment hardly give a chance to evolve. The cultural life, the state, the society, the family and all the powers that surround us seem to conspire to model and mould ourselves, to push us in their frames, to afflict us with their mechanical interest. We become parts of a machine.« In the Bhagavad-gita especially this need to get free from such heteronomy is pronounced. Krishna is teaching Arjuna that it is even better to follow ones own path with faults than to follow perfectly the path of someone else. The more a man has the courage to live according to his own inner self, the more the soul will reveal.«<sup>23</sup>

### *An attempt to look at bhakti from a psychological approach*

Sigmund Freud differentiates in his psychoanalysis between the It, the Ego and the Super-Ego. The It is the general drive of instinct, the Super-Ego is the inner judge, and the Ego is the adult, sane and enjoying person, and thus the result of a sane and harmonic mix of the two others. The rules and laws are coming from the Super-Ego, from the inner judge, and cause mechanical action. Emotions are blocked because they are under suspicion to be material or egoistic. But true is that *rasa* or *bhava* is an emotion. With the blockage of emotions also *bhava* is blocked. For the devotee who is controlled by rules and regulations it is very hard to experience *bhava*. Some *bhava* is still coming because *bhakti* is transcendental. As soon as one is performing *bhakti*, *bhakti* comes. Ultimately body and mind are unimportant. But if the mistreatment of body and mind is too heavy, it can lead to psychic and somatic diseases. In that case it is necessary to pay more attention to our body and mind.

The liberation of the emotions means, at first, the acceptance of all emotions, both material and spiritual. There isn't any distinction between good and evil. The emotion, the feeling, gives energy. Psychologists explain that a good

feeling strengthens the body and mind and satisfies the person, makes him or her calm and peaceful and gives energy to act and to receive. Feelings are quite different to thoughts although both are considered to belong to *manas*. Feelings only arise in the present according to the present situation and correspond exclusively to the integral actuality. They cannot move to the past or to the future. On the other hand, thoughts can move into past and future faster than light but cannot give energy. Elaborate mental instructions without feelings, i.e. without realizations and own experiences, can therefore hardly provide any spiritual progress in the audience, whereas instructions on the level of personal experience of *bhavas* (emotions) can give a profound realization in the audience in the intellect and also beyond intellect. This is the difference between religion and spirituality: religion is a theoretical concept of ›must‹ and ›should‹ and how it has to be, whereas spirituality is a practical concept of ›can‹ and ›do‹ and how it is. Religion is based on a concept of being the controller, even in the negative sense of not yet being in full control. Spirituality, however, is the faith in God (Guru) and truth that everything will run nicely itself as soon as we give up the control. We just have to be honest and authentic. Progress can happen easily in that way but is hindered by neurotic schisms.

The emotions give energy. The person becomes energetically stronger and higher functions of consciousness and self-perception are activated. Emotions give satisfaction and fulfilment, they make happy and peaceful. In this state of mind it is very easy to experience transcendence because the person is self-content, rests in himself, is centred and free to connect with the higher levels of consciousness beyond the ego.

Most essential is the dealing with the spiritual contents, i.e. the performance of *bhakti-yoga*. The experience of the spiritual emotion (*bhava*) causes a highly effective cleansing of the mirror of the heart (*ceto darpana marjanam*). This impact is multiple times more effective than an external mechanical action. This means we have to get away from the super-Ego and come to the Ego, which implies the integration of It and Super-Ego to a harmonic personality. Super-Ego and It must not control the Ego because this causes psychic problems. To be in the Ego means to know what is good for me, what pleases me and what I like – my *sva-dharma* and *sva-bhava*. The Ego is the adult person who accepts his needs and is able to fulfil these needs (as long as they do not harm others). The It is necessary to recognize these needs. The Super-Ego is necessary to avoid damage to myself or others by fulfilling these needs. To reach the Ego means liberation. On the liberated level it is possible to sense and to feel. Therefore it is said that pure *bhakti* begins on the level of liberation (Srimad Bhagavatam 3.25.25). Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja speaks clearly about this topic in his purports of Bhagavad-

gita: »As it will be seen, actual devotional service begins after liberation. So in Bhagavad-gita it is said, *brahma-bhuta*. After being liberated, or being situated in the Brahman position, one's devotional service begins« (Purport of verse 9.2, Bhagavad-gita).<sup>24</sup>

Pure *bhakti* is *raganuga-bhakti*, the pure spiritual emotion of love towards Radha and Krishna in Goloka Vrndavana. This *bhakti* is pure emotion. She does not underlie the mind or the intelligence, but manifests herself spontaneously, i.e. unwillingly, not intended, unmotivated, undesigned. »A self-realized man has no purpose to fulfill in the discharge of his prescribed duties« (Bhagavad-gita 3.18). »The supreme occupation [dharma] for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated (*ahaituki*) and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self« (Srimad Bhagavatam 1.2.6). All kind of motive except *lobha* (greed) for *bhakti* is *aham/mameti* (material, false ego). It is not possible to influence Krishna or Bhakti-devi by our actions: »There is no work that affects Me; nor do I aspire for the fruits of action« (Bhagavad-gita 4.14). Therefore no independent endeavour such as austerities, pious activities, charity, cleanliness can give *bhakti*. Only *bhakti* can give *bhakti*. This is stated in Srimad Bhagavatam 11.3.31:

**»Bhaktiya sanjataya bhaktiya: bhakti is only produced by bhakti.«**

Surely the own endeavour is counting. The endeavour is to come near to Guru and *sadhu*. But the main gate to *bhakti* is mercy, the grace and compassion of the devotees and Radha-Krishna. Especially the devotees work in a highly intensive way with the energy of grace. In other traditions – like Buddhist and monistic traditions – the followers work mainly with self-generated energy because they don't have a concept of a personal God. The spiritual progress by the mercy of Guru in those traditions is only one out of many possibilities and is called »guru-yoga«. In the world of *bhakti* the grace of the Guru and Vaishnavas is so essential that it practically makes up the totality, and therefore may not be recognized in its full importance by the devotees. Grace is the essential and inherent feature of a personal God who is different from us and much greater and far more potent than we are. Grace comes from outside. Only Krishna's perfection and his ocean of *rasa* can lift us to the spiritual plane, can make our lives perfect, release our suffering and illusions etc.

The needs we are following at the beginning without discrimination in material and spiritual (*sat* and *asat*) will be purified step by step by the execution of *bhakti*. This means the individual loses the taste for gross



material needs and develops gradually, but naturally, needs for spiritual happiness because he experiences this state of bliss and love in the *bhavas*. These observations fit the natural sequence of the development of *bhakti* as it is presented in Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakuras work Madhurya Cadambini. The first step is *shraddha*, faith. Faith that Krishna is real. We believe in Krishna and His devotees. The second step is *sadhu-sanga*. We search the association of the devotees. In the association of devotees we automatically perform *bhajan* (*bhajana-kriya*). This is the third step. Then, when having *sadhu-sanga* and doing *bhajana-kriya*, the needs change through the cleansing of the mirror of the heart. This forth step is therefore called *anartha-nivritti*, giving up bad behaviours and material needs. Many devotees in the West have turned this principle upside down. Before someone has *shraddha* and before *sadhu-sanga* and *bhajana-kriya* is allowed, one has to fullfill *anartha-nivritti*. The belief system suggests that it is impossible to get *shraddha* and that it is sinful to perform *sadhu-sanga* or *bhajana-kriya* as long as one is »impure«. That's not correct. My Srila Gurudeva, Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, wrote to me in a personal letter: »The question of *bhukti*, *mukti* or *bhakti* is irrelevant once a person takes full shelter at the lotus feet of a perfect spiritual master [*sadhu-sanga*]. By the process of *diksa* all impediments are washed away very quickly. Even if there are many *anarthas*, they do not hinder or obstruct the sincere *sadhaka* because he is always enthusiastic and follows the teachings of Sri Guru.«<sup>25</sup> The connection with Sri Guru is the most important kind of *sadhu-sanga*. First there is *sadhu-sanga*, then comes *anartha-nivritti*. Not the other way round.

How many thousands of people have turned away from the path of *bhakti* because they psychically couldn't handle their »impurity«? None of these people wanted to give up Krishna, *sadhu-sanga* or *bhajan*. They only got lost because of the depressions caused by that unreachable ideal of absolute purity and sinlessness. There are always devotees who don't have this problem because they don't mind to officially stress the absolute validity of the rules and regulations, but do not follow them in their private space. But this is not the proper solution for the neurotic schism. This is more or less hypocrisy and cheating, at best a pragmatic way of dealing with the ideals. Spiritually this creates a dispartment between word and action which is not favourable for the spiritual truth. To define a philosophy (word) that is in accordance with our reality (action) would be desirable. This dispartment is one of the characteristics of dogmatism. A dogmatic person uses language as a mean to hide his crooked motives, instead of understanding the high importance of language as a reality-creating medium, as it is gloriously shown in the high esteem on the Holy Names. Hidden motives in an ideological speech

is hypocrisy and this leads to the destruction of the last remaining leg of the bull of *dharmā*, as described in SB 1.17.25: »You are now standing on one leg only, which is your truthfulness, and you are somehow or other hobbling along. But quarrel personified [Kali], flourishing by deceit, is also trying to destroy that leg.« Deception and cheating is the main problem in our age.

Purity as such has nothing to do with *bhakti*. Purity is a category from *karma* and *jñāna*. *Bhakti* mixed with purity is therefore *karma-misra-bhakti* and *jñāna-misra-bhakti*, not pure *bhakti*. I use here deliberately the words »pure *bhakti*«. The difference here is that »pure« is used as an attribute or quality of *bhakti*. »Purity« is not used here as a noun standing independently by itself, but it is a quality of *bhakti*. The main point is *bhakti*. Purity should only be understood and used in relation to the transcendental categories describing Krishna, Radha, the Gopis/*Vraja*-vāsīs and Bhakti-devī Herself. The concept of purity should not be expanded to external material categories as the material body or material objects. Purity as an alone-standing principle – purity for itself and as itself – is not appropriate for *viśuddha-bhakti*.

The substantiation of purity is the material mode of *sattva-guṇa*. With such concepts we are in the area of material religion, but not on the platform of spirituality. These kinds of religions should be abandoned according to Krishna's statement in Bhagavad-gītā 18.66. Purity in the context with the material body and the material world leads to the concept of impurity of the material body and the world. Both the body and the world will be connotated as impure, sinful, dirty and wrong, i.e. valued negatively. The individual in this way is entangled in painful contradictions between the environment and himself, a state which can only be maintained by extreme isolation from the environment. This development of the individual could be observed in the early days of Krishna-consciousness everywhere in the Western countries: an extreme withdrawal from the world and the body, the so-called escapism, or radical getaway, of the religion of the nether worlds. Every contact with the »impure« *karmis* was to be avoided. We were told not to take association but only to give association. This is the patriarchal, authoritarian controller-mood. Only a very simple audience with a poor intelligence can accept this on the long run, and that's the reason why the preaching is so ineffective. Often people who have not been able to lead a successful life, but are collapsed creatures with mental problems, are attracted to such a philosophy. Sane, successful and intelligent people, on the other hand, quickly feel aversion towards such dogmas and don't come again to the temple. The elitarian behaviour of some immature devotees are just the tip of the mountain.

In my opinion, one should rather not preach purity at all at the moment except as an attribute of *bhakti*. Purity is cold, strange and separatistic. It is

not worthwhile to pull humans away from Krishna because of the concepts of being pure or impure. Purity belongs – if at all – to *aishvarya bhava*. In Vrndavana, purity is contra-productive.

Real purity in connection with *bhakti* appears out of love towards the object of love and His paraphernalia, i.e. when I want Krishna in His pure substance and energy without mixing Him with my substance and energy. In this case purity is correct. The problem is that nobody preaches like that or acts according to a real understanding of purity. The doctrine is dogmatic and repressive, most probably due to ignorance. Dogma happens when the real explanation is not given, and instead a simple claim is given: you must be pure. Or: sex is sin. These simple dogmas cannot satisfy an intelligent person. The real explanations should be given, not only the explanations but especially the experiences.

### *What would happen if someone checked where we are going if we started to go at all?*

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I had tried to follow the four regulative principles for several years, but yet I had often failed, which as a consequence caused suffering, remorseful feelings and a decrease of taste in my *sadhana*. One day I decided to test what would happen if, on the one hand, I do not follow the four regulative principles (or some aspects of them), while, on the other hand, practicing *bhakti* freely and easily according to my taste, without the burden of negative concepts of shame, guilt and disgrace. I found out that the main problem are not the material interests of mine, which would keep me away from Krishna, but the remorse and the bad feeling resulting from the negative concepts. What prevented me from going to the temple, looking for the association with devotees, reading and chanting was not the aversion against these things, but the mental anxiety of punishment for my impurity and sinfulness. I felt too sinful to read these holy books or to come to a holy place like a temple. I thought to better give up this devotional practice than to suffer more and more from these psychic fears, which were caused by the ideological structure of that kind of philosophy. My next consideration then was: what will happen to my *bhakti* if I give up this ideological structure? When I give up the concept of good and evil, or pious and sinful, what will happen to my *bhakti*? Will she get lost? Or will she become stronger? The biggest and most horrifying anxiety was that of losing my *bhakti*. All the staunch servants of ideology hurried up to threaten me with the loss of my *bhakti* if I do not follow strictly their prescribed path. There was nobody who went

this path and who could tell me what would happen. Even more threatening was the fear that the steps in this direction seemed to be irreversible, and in some respect they are irreversible. The more you give up the control over your feelings, the more you have to have faith that what will take over the control (it is the soul) leads to *bhakti* and not to *bhukti* (sense gratification). Would everything come to a natural order? If the natural free flowing state appeared, would this be *bhakti*? Or would I sink into the material ocean if I cannot counteract with my intentional mental control? Is therefore *bhakti* the intrinsic nature of the soul? If she is, she would manifest in a natural way as soon as the soul is freed from its coverings, especially coverings of neurotic kinds such as obsessions, authority-conflicts, self-alienation, psychopathic, and fears of all kind. So it would make sense, first of all, to work on my own liberation – liberation at first not in the sense of freedom from all material needs as Vaishnavas in general understand it, but in the way the Vedas in terms of *jnana-yoga* and also the Bhagavad-gita describe liberation. For the Vaishnavas liberation is very insignificant. And it is a fact that in the state of *suddha-bhakti* – pure transcendental *bhakti* beyond the modes of material nature – the concept of liberation ceases to exist, because there is nothing more that would make us unfree. Liberation therefore is considered as unnecessary and many Vaishnavas seem to have the opinion that it is not important in what kind of conditioning one approaches *bhakti*. They think they can proceed from the conditioned state directly to *suddha-bhakti* and there is no need for achieving liberation. As the verse cited above from Srimad Bhagavatam 3.25.25 states, pure *bhakti* begins after liberation. Also verse 18.54 in Bhagavad-gita is confirming this:

**»One on the stage of *brahma-bhuta* is filled with joy. He never laments nor desires to have anything; he is equally disposed to every living entity. In that state he attains pure *bhakti* unto Me.«**

And even Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja is writing this in his purports in Bhagavad-gita 9.2 and 18.55 as quoted before (page 32 and footnote 24). If we study the statements and methods of *jnana-yoga* in order to understand what the meaning of *moksa* is, then *moksa* first of all means to become free from fears and psychic suffering. The unfree person is that one who is alienated from himself, who doesn't know himself, and who is not self-realized. His personality is split between trying to follow an ideal concept and feeling guilty and bad for not being able to follow. But how do I find out who I am? I am not looking for a general answer but I want to know quite precisely and from an individual point of view who I am and ever have been, my eternal spiritual form. I will not grasp this

individual form via external rules and regulations but from inside, by feeling and sensing what attracts me. My personal spiritual form, which is singular and incomparable with anybody else, cannot be found by abstractions and formulas but only by the meticulous and exact inner experience of my moods and emotions. We will win on two levels if we go this path. Firstly, we improve the access to our self, i.e. we come to consciousness, which means we awake from our unconsciousness. Secondly, with this approach we are nearly already there where we want to be if we seek *suddha-bhakti*: the moods and feelings of *ruci*, *bhava*, *rati* and *prema*. Then it is only a small step to move our skilled perception of our feelings from the temporary material objects fully to the objects of our love: Radha-Krishna *yugala kisora*.

Liberation means to learn to feel. Liberation means to recognize the needs that I feel, to accept and to fulfil them. If this fulfilment happens in the material realm, this is no problem. The living entity gradually recognizes the deficiency of this fulfilment (because it is of temporary character and cannot satisfy the soul) and will ultimately give up these objects. This is a natural learning process that leads automatically to Krishna without any dogmas, rules and controls (Bhagavad-gita, 4.11: »Everyone follows My path in all respects.«)

The state of consciousness beyond ideology, i.e. beyond the duality of Good and Evil, is called *brahman* in the Bhagavad-gita. This is liberation, *moksa*. In this state of consciousness the objects don't underlie valuation. Instead one sees the energy. The liberated state of consciousness is the pure VISION of energy. Being fully unattached you see what happens according to what you do and where the highest energy is. If something is ideological, it only exists in the thoughts and doesn't have energy. It has no power to clean the mirror of the heart. The more real and authentic your behaviour is – and this authenticity depends on the singular and individual disposition of the single person according to time, space and circumstances – the more energy it has. It is completely unimportant if this is good or bad in the sense of any ideology or belief system, be it material or spiritual.<sup>26</sup> The higher the energy, the faster is the progress to *bhakti*. So the hypothesis is that only in the state of full authenticity, full *bhakti* can be attained. This is in accordance with the scriptures when they say that hypocrisy is a big impediment for *bhakti*. Hypocrisy is such a big impediment that our present age is defined by this attribute, as the age of quarrel and hypocrisy.<sup>27</sup>

In this regard Krishna states in Bhagavad-gita (3.6):

»One who restrains the senses of action but whose mind dwells on sense objects certainly deludes himself and is called a pretender.«

Purport: This verse has an enormous psychological significance, it hits into the core of the neurosis. The neurotic person acts against his authenticity because he lost his self-confidence and faith in his feelings due to overpowering belief systems, rules and regulations. He is alienated from himself and only acts from the head, the mental plane, his inner authority, the super-ego, the inner judge, respectively various external authorities (this, however, does not question the real authority, God and his representative, Guru).

This is the general structure of deceit of the human culture, the manoeuvre of the authorities of power to keep people under their control. This self-alienation is the root of our suffering. Many of us do not do what would be good for us, but instead we act according to what is given by rules and regulations, conventions or social pressure. The things one wants to do, one doesn't do, and the things one doesn't want to do, one does. The origin of this malfunction is the suspicion that the human impulses are evil or sinful.

Every object and every category is artificially gripped by a valuation. The recognition of something thus works by a wrong connection in the brain. There is no more direct recognition, but only ideological recognition arranged according to good and evil. Actually this is no recognition but an illusion. What finally is defined as good and evil, is a question of power and differentiates according to religion, leader and taste.

Krishna in the Bhagavad-gita argues free from values. He establishes His statements not on a system of values but on eternal truths. We can say He sees the energy. Let us take for instance the question of violence: the question in the Bhagavad-gita is not whether the violence, which takes place in the battle, is good or bad. The sentence: »Violence is good.« is as wrong as the sentence »Violence is bad.« The question instead is: under which condition which behaviour works, and how does this behaviour work at all? According to the motivation, violence can be right or wrong. And Krishna does not miss the opportunity to locate the violence in the transcendental realm as well, i.e. He gives the definition of violence, and under which circumstances violence is generally good (BG 18.17):

**»One who is not motivated by false ego, whose intelligence is not entangled, though he kills men in this world, does not kill. Nor is he bound by his actions.«**

Purport: Here it is stated that violence also exists as a possibility in the transcendental state of consciousness (not motivated by the false ego, not disturbed, and not bound by karmic actions). In my opinion, this is a masterpiece of ideology-free vision because especially violence is quite

a taboo, and the transcendental possibility of violence is ideologically concealed by the potentates. The leaders in this world condemn violence as bad, concealing as well that their installation of power mostly happened by violence.<sup>28</sup>

As shown here by a single example of violence, it is generally an illusion to connect objects with values in a fixed way, whereas the value-free vision of the objects is the transcendental vision. The wise person sees everyone with equal vision (Bhagavad-gita 5.18, 6.8-9, 6.29, 6.32, 13.31, 14.22, 18.20).<sup>29</sup>

In practical life, however, every object and every category has a value. This value comes along unspoken with speech and is the result of a mental consideration usually used by ethnic or ideological groups as a collective screen of identification. They confirm themselves through the common values to belong to the group and to find security. The liberation from this perspective of value is the moment of entering into transcendence.

As a consequence, if the way to transcendence is the way of value-free vision, the question arises how the practitioner, the aspirant of transcendence has to act. Krishna is saying in the above mentioned verse 3.6 that it is better to be honest with the attachments to the sense objects than to cheat himself and others, and to pretend detachment as long as one is not detached. The continuation and supplement can be found in verse 3.33:

**»Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes. What can repression accomplish?«** (see also 18.11, 18.40 and 18.60<sup>30</sup>)

Purport: Repression is exactly that what causes psychic disease, depressions and neurosis. Also this verse states clearly, in the same sense as 3.6, that it is better to follow the inner impulses. Now the question may arise what happens if these inner impulses lead to material or sinful actions? My observation is that this makes one humble. If, for example, my inner feeling tells me that I should enjoy a stimulant, i.e. sense-gratification, then I perform this action and this shows me where I stand. I can see that I am not very advanced and that there is still a lot of purification needed in order to make these urges vanish. If I externally renounce the sense objects, this makes me look nice outwardly. I can gain awe and reference and develop pride. So I can hide myself behind the others and cheat myself. This is hypocrisy. In this regard Krishna is stating that it is better to act according to one's own nature and to progress step by step.

If liberation means to accept the own needs, then *bhakti* means to transform material needs into spiritual needs. It is very favourable to get rid of the material needs. But the question is how can we do so. By suppressing them?

Or by transforming them? As Krishna says, suppression does not work. This is also the conclusion of psychology. Suppression leads to blockades and armouring. So there is only transformation left. In order to transform the needs it is first necessary to understand them. If I suppress my needs permanently in order to fulfil an ideal, I cannot perceive and understand these needs anymore, and I am in contradiction to myself. So first of all I have to recognize my needs. This is what is meant by the words authenticity and honesty. Honesty comes from humbleness and the openness to accept higher knowledge. The purification of my needs is done by *bhakti*. And that is the central point. The purification does not come by extra endeavours like austerities but by performing *bhakti-yoga*. Only *bhakti* is capable to do this purification. Simply by the performance of devotional practices (*sravanam*, *kirtanam* etc.) the mirror of the heart becomes cleansed and gradually the needs change. It is therefore not necessary to intervene directly in these needs. The detachment from these needs comes automatically with the progress in *bhakti*. The awakening feelings and the awakening relationship to Guru and Krishna replace the old needs step by step. The higher taste manifests. Rules, regulations, orders and prohibitions are external interventions in this economy of my needs. They may be appropriate in acute emergency cases, but should not be the usual and universal methods to determine the process of *bhakti*. It is interesting that whenever Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja translated verses from the *sastra* and used the phrase »regulative principles«, you find in the Sanskrit or Bengali the word »*sadhana*«. *Sadhana* means the nine processes of *bhakti* (*sravanam*, *kirtanam*, *smaranam*, *arcanam*, *vandanam*, *dasyam*, *pada-sevanam*, *sakhyam*, *atma-nivedanam*), namely only positive actions of *bhakti*. *Sadhana* does not imply negative actions. This is *vaidhi-bhakti*. It was the mood of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja to be very strict and regulated, but he gave all the original verses in order to give us the possibility to reconcile and to adjust the meanings according to our respective moods of *bhakti*.

To influence and lead the *sadhaka* by rules and laws and pressure is a quite primitive method. Higher and more elegant methods of influence are processes that work with the power of the attraction, beauty and sweetness of Radha-Krishna and Their associates. This path is much easier to follow for the *sadhaka* because in that way the mean and the object are the same. The aim and object is pure love for Radha-Krishna. The mean is not fear but this very love. The operators of fear and authoritarian structures lack this love. That is why they don't have an alternative and declare their way as the only possible way.

*Bhakti* develops by one's awakening feelings and relationship to Guru and Gauranga. It is therefore necessary to examine very accurately one's feelings,



to get acquainted with them, and to perform therefore only actions of *bhakti* when they are driven by feeling. *Nama-abhasa*, the shadow of the Holy Name, cannot give *Vraja-prema* (lecture of Bhaktivedanta Sadhu Maharaja, Dole 2006). Only the Name who is canted with feeling, *bhava*, purifies the heart.

In the value-free perspective, *maya* and *bhakti* are neutrally standing side by side. When things are occupied with a negative value it is like a curse. This curse produces negativity and, as a consequence, causes an artificial remorse. We should allow people to have their little bit of *maya*, their tiny pleasures. They will vanish as soon as the higher taste is strong enough to replace the material pleasures. This process is very natural and grows gradually. If the potential of fear and threat is too high, the danger of destroying the *bhakti*-plant is there. The *bhakti-lata* must be strong enough to take over the tasks of the material plants, namely to feel happiness, to have fulfilling relationships, activities, and a fulfilling identity and life content. All this works without pressure or force, without orders or prohibitions, without suppressed impulses, without sensory deprivation but with attraction, higher taste, happiness, love etc.

This path implies to give unconditioned sovereignty to the individual. We cannot control one's behaviour, so we pass the responsibility of one's actions on to the individual person. Now it depends on the ability of the single individual to discern what he will do. This is dangerous, but in the absolute vision it is the only possible strategy. We are individual persons. And this must be taken serious. It cannot be acceptable to disclaim this sovereignty again and again, and to burden the individual with rigid rules and principles as patterns of behaviour and formulas. This will lead to psychopathic symptoms. The individual, the singular human being, must be granted this freedom and self-determination in general and a priori before any moral judgement. This is a fundamental *tattva*. This is the definition of a person, one's unconditioned sovereignty among other humans. No human can or must control another human. Only God can do this (and his representative, Guru). The human being is therefore controlled by God, but on the human plane, from human being to human being, there is freedom and equality. It is not our concern what another person does. Don't judge, so that you won't be judged. Don't criticise! The only way of influence is pure unconditioned love.

## *Jaiva Dharma about vaidhi-bhakti*

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The 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of Jaiva dharma treats with *vaidhi-sadhana-bhakti*, this means *bhakti* that is performed according to external rules and regulations. *Vaidhi-bhakti* is the basic frame for all activities of devotional service at the beginning of *bhakti-yoga*. Because in the beginning the neophyte does not know anything about this path, it is necessary to act according to the instructions of senior devotees, *mahajanas*, who in turn had received instructions from their predecessors, from the scriptures and from their own experiences. In this regard it is said:

»His *bhakti* can never bring any good fortune if he is violating the rules of *sruti*, *smṛti*, the *Puranas* and the *Pancaratra*s. One should understand that such unauthorized *bhakti* will only be the cause of confusion and disaster.«<sup>31</sup>

But on the next page it is said:

»Now, in the *bhajana* of spontaneous devotion (*raga-marga*), there is no regard for the rules of *sruti-smṛti-purana-pancaratra* and so on. The only concern the followers of this path have is to follow the inhabitants of *Vraja*, but *sadhakas* who are qualified for *vidhi-marga* must depend only on the path of *bhakti* shown by Druva, Prahlada, Narada, Vyasa, Suka and other *mahajanas*.«

Purport: This quote shows that even great devotees, such as Narada Muni, Vyasadeva and Sukadeva Goswami, belong to the category of *vaidhi-bhakti*. How elevated must be the inhabitants of *Vraja* if they supersede even those high-class devotees? Sanatana Goswami has given us in his *Brhat-bhagavatamṛtam* the sequence of devotees (*jnana-bhakta* (Prahlaḍ Maharaja), *suddha-bhakta* (Ambarisa Maharaja), *siddha-premi-bhakta* (Hanuman); *premature-bhakta* (Arjuna), *premarthatma-bhakta* (Uddhava)). All these great devotees are still outside the *Vraja-lila*. Whenever we follow in the footsteps of those great devotees, we follow the path of *vaidhi-bhakti* and won't come to Vrindavana but to Vaikuntha. It is not possible to enter *Vraja-lila* with *vaidhi-bhakti*. This is confirmed by Bhaktivinoda Thakura in *Jaiva-dharma*, page 512:

»The only way to attain *Vraja-rasa* is to practice *raganuga-sadhana-bhakti* in the *parakiya-bhava*.«

And in the Caitanya Caritamṛta it is said:

»One cannot obtain Krishna in Goloka Vrindavana by the performance of *vaidhi-bhakti*.«<sup>32</sup>

These are clear statements without any need to add anything.

A specific statement about renunciation, and a wonderful description of *bhakti* herself is found in the same chapter of Jaiva-dharma:

»The practice of knowledge (*jñāna*) and renunciation (*vairāgya*) may sometimes assist somebody to enter within the temple of *bhakti*, but *jñāna* and *vairāgya* are not *angas* of *bhakti*, because they make the heart hard, whereas *bhakti* is very soft and tender by nature. *Bhaktas* accept the *jñāna* and *vairāgya* that manifest of their own accord through the practice of *bhakti*, but *jñāna* and *vairāgya* cannot be the cause of *bhakti*, and *bhakti* easily awards results that knowledge and renunciation cannot give.« (p. 494)

Purport: This statement is given in the chapter about *vaidhi-bhakti*! We are not yet discussing *raganuga-bhakti* and even here it is clearly stated that renunciation is not a cause for *bhakti*. This means it is not possible to achieve *bhakti* by austerity, but the other way round: austerity is achieved by *bhakti*. Austerity as well as knowledge is not a separate goal. Our desire points exclusively on *bhakti*. By performing *bhakti*, knowledge and renunciation will manifest. To put it in a nutshell: The *sādhaka* starts in the state of ignorance and without renunciation. We perform *bhakti* without knowledge and renunciation. It is not only allowed to perform *bhakti* in an impure and ignorant state, but it is the common process. We don't have any other possibility. Artificial renunciation, performed independently from *bhakti* or as a mean to achieve *bhakti*, is false renunciation because renunciation is only a by-product of *bhakti*.

»Qualities such as inward and outward purity, austerity and sense control take shelter of Krishna's *bhaktas* of their own accord; the *bhaktas* do not have to endeavor for them separately.« (p. 495)

Purport: This explicit statement can be found in the last paragraph of the above mentioned chapter about *vaidhi-sādhana-bhakti*. We therefore may suggest that it is very important. Once again Bhaktivinoda Thakur is stating that the *bhakta* has no need to strive for these things, renunciation and austerities, separately. A natural enfoldment of *bhakti* starts with

the attraction that *bhakti* has. Only *bhakti* has real spiritual attraction. Renunciation and knowledge can only have a material attraction. Rather, what is mostly the case, renunciation has not the power to attract, but to suppress. In these statements we can see that Bhaktivinoda Thakur clearly differentiates between the different levels of *bhakti* and renunciation. They are two different things. *Bhakti* is the cause, renunciation is the effect. Many dogmatic devotees, who are still attached to concepts of personal control, and the idea that they are the actors, really believe that renunciation is the cause and *bhakti* is the effect. This is a completely wrong understanding. They don't have faith in *bhakti*. Their understanding is on the level of *karma-misra-bhakti* or *jnana-misra-bhakti*. This is not even *vaidhi-bhakti*.

### *The Jaiva-dharma about raganuga-bhakti*

After the chapter about *vadhi-bhakti*, the discussion of *raganuga-bhakti* follows in the 21. chapter. First of all, a very enlightening discrimination between *vaidhi-bhakti* and *raganuga-bhakti* is given:

»The principles at work in *vaidhi-bhakti* are fear, respect and reverence, whereas the only principle at work in *ragatmika-bhakti* is *lobha*, or greed, in relation to Sri Krishna's *lila*.« (p. 504)

Purport: Here it is clearly explained how *vaidhi-bhakti* works – with fear. It is the fear to be punished, be it by hellish torture, suffering or by excommunication. Religion is a form of disciplinaton executed by fear. No doubt the devotee should not take up the process out of fear, but rather inspired by a positive motivation. In the scriptures the word ›*lobha*‹ is used, which is usually translated with ›greed‹. But it is probably not so far off to use the common word ›lust‹. In the netherworld religions, which are inimical to the senses and the body, the word ›lust‹ is traditionally connotated very negatively, as is the term ›greed‹. But this term shows the dynamic of *raganuga-bhakti* in a very clear and easy way. I do it because I like it. Or in other words: I do it because my heart is open for it right now. Sometimes you will have to wait for the right moment, and then get active, i.e. not in form of a planned and strictly given schedule as it is practiced in *vaidhi-bhakti*, but spontaneously, when the time is mature, when the *bhava* comes.

The general understanding of the devotees today is that *raganuga-bhakti* is only then real *raganuga-bhakti* when she is performed uninterruptedly. This is definitely pure *raganuga-bhakti* on the perfect stage. But it may be

possible and reasonable that *raganuga-bhakti* can also manifest during a period of time – in analogy to the *spurtis* and *darshans* of Radha-Krishna, which are also not uninterrupted but start in a certain moment and end after some time and come again and again. This interrupted form of *raganuga-bhakti* would be that which most probably would manifest at the beginning of *raganuga-bhakti*.<sup>33</sup> At the beginning *raganuga-bhakti*, the transcendental feeling of *bhava*, would manifest temporarily, it would appear and cease to be present again. This seems to me to be the difference between *bhava* and *stayi-bhava*.

The moments in which *bhava* is present are the precious and matchless moments which should be used in order to make rapid progress. They are like windows to the spiritual world, and when they are opened, we should make use of this opportunity to let as much light and love into the heart as possible. This love cleanses the mirror of our heart and transforms our needs. When I am on a stage where *bhakti* is an intense desire of mine and I have a strong greed to perform *bhajan* and *seva* – because this feels so good and right to me – we surely can speak of *lobha*. When this desire, this greed, this need manifests, we are on the right track, the way of *raganuga-bhakti*. The awakening of these spiritual needs is very quick if we follow the path of *raganuga-bhakti*.

First of all you have to search this spiritual feeling. At the beginning it will manifest only rarely, in short moments it will flash up. With the right attention and faculty to recognize these moments we can grab these occasions in order to allow a deep spiritual experience to the body and the mind. That experience acts as a positive confirmation and causes the mind to search for a repetition. By means of pure positive experience without any trace of fear or remorse, and which opens the heart, the effect is multiplied. What happens is a very fast and profound progress that leads to longer and more intensive *bhavas*. One can even make the experience to enter *bhava* within a few seconds. For example, someone is busy with some material activity like work, but simply the uttering of one or two names of Radha-Krishna is enough to experience *bhava*. Instances of this kind of *bhaktas* can be found in Caitanya-lila, for instance Pundarika Vidyanidhi, who was accepted as his spiritual master by Gadadhara Pandit.<sup>34</sup>

This greed is defined more precisely:

»One who has the great fortune to have greed (*lobha*) to attain the same *bhava* (sentiment) as the *vraja-vasis* have towards Krishna has the *adbikara* for *raganuga-bhakti*.« (p. 504)

Purport: Only the sentiments towards Krishna and His associates have

the power to cleanse the mirror of the heart because these sentiments are very special sentiments. Only one who is longing for these feelings is eligible for *raganuga-bhakti*, so Bhaktivinoda Thakura. So the thing is very easy. Whoever feels a longing or greed to hear more about the pastimes of the inhabitants of *Vraja* and asks himself how he can participate in these pastimes, is an eligible candidate. My experience is that many people are interested in these topics, who have already transcended the moralistic platform of religion, and the mental concept of guilt and atonement. The moralistic devotees have great fear to talk to those people about the *Vraja-lila* because they suspect them to have an immoral attitude. But in reality those people are not below the moral level but beyond this level. They have lifted the ideological veil more or less and are not willing to go back to this stage of mythical guilt, even if they do not exactly know where their step will bring them. To know where this step leads to means to have arrived at the transcendental platform. This is the last step. In this respect we cannot blame them to have no concrete idea of the goal and not to be ready to accept a final definition. We as devotees know this goal very good, but we haven't reached it so far either. We only talk of it, theoretically. Isn't it a more humble attitude not to give the definition of the goal as long as you haven't reached it? Isn't it more honest and more authentic to avoid the instruction if it is anyway just a mental concept? Isn't it better to refer to the own spiritual realizations even if they are somewhere on the way? It is the need of the ego to be right, to be good, to be on the top. As long as the devotee's most important urge is to confirm his absolute and topmost position to be the best and to have the best philosophy, he is still on the level of *kanistha-adhikari* and his *sadhana* will bear very little fruit, and his preaching none.

»*Raganuga-bhakti* very quickly bestows that fruit which one cannot obtain even by observing the *angas* of *vaidhi-bhakti* with firm faith (*nistha*) for a long time. Devotion on the *vaidhi-marga* is weak, because it depends on rules and regulations; whereas *raganuga-bhakti* is naturally strong, because it is completely independent.« (p. 505)

Purport: Here it is clearly stated that the effect of *raganuga-bhakti* is numerous times stronger than that of *vaidhi-bhakti*. This is quite reasonable because the *raganuga-bhakti* starts with his feeling. Thus his practice and his experience have a completely different meaning. The feeling comes from within and gradually manifests externally. It is an experience that belongs fully to our complete personality; it is a power from within. In contrast, the practice of *vaidhi-bhakti* is an external action, performed mechanically in the hope that a feeling will manifest. This can happen, but not necessarily.

A more likely result of this external approach is that the action remains external and does not allow deeper experiences of *bhavas*. Therefore the progress on the path of *vaidhi-bhakti* is much slower than the progress on the path of *raganuga-bhakti*. The – doubtful – advantage of *vaidhi-bhakti* can be seen in the fact that in this way the controlling intentions of the ego can be used in the service for *bhakti*. Rules and regulations are meant for controlling; if I use the rules, I am the ruler, the controller. In this way the impure tendencies of the ego on the level of *guna* can be used for progress. The level of *sattva-guna* can be stabilized. In *raganuga-bhakti* there is no control executed by the *bhakta*. *Bhakti* herself is the controller. She decides freely and independently to whom and when and how long she will appear. In this regard Bhaktivinoda Thakura says in Jaiva-dharma:

**»Ruci for following in the footsteps of the *vraja-vasis* is only awakened in those whose hearts are *nirguna* (beyond material attributes).« (p. 505f.)**

*Nirguna* is beyond *dharma*. The question is not that of goodness, passion or ignorance and which of them is good and which is bad. Everything that exists enters transcendence in its positive aspect by putting it on its appropriate place in relation to Krishna. Then also greed (*lobha*), anger (*mana*), lust (*kama*) or possessiveness (*mameta*) are positive.<sup>35</sup> A person on the stage of *nirguna* doesn't see any difference in the material designations anymore. The above quoted sentence actually explains that someone on the stage of *sattva-guna* cannot experience the love of the *Vraja-vasis*. He stays on the moral level that, by definition, is bound to the material level because it is an answer to problems and contradictions which arise from material identifications. It is good and right to organize the material sphere with the help of morality in order to achieve a civilized exchange between humans and to form a cultivated organization of society. Charity, friendliness, helping each other, goodness and cleanliness – all these nice moral qualities refer to the material sphere. If someone had been on the barbaric level before and ascends now to the moral level, this is wonderful. But if someone on the moral level wants to hinder others to progress to the next step, i.e. the transcendental level, because he does not understand it, it is indeed a problem. Bhaktivinoda Thakura analyses these phenomena in his book *Caitanya Siksamrta* as well as in his foreword of his *Krishna Samhita*.

In the *Bhagavad-gita* Krishna describes the attitude of a person who has transcended the modes of nature (verse 14.22-25):

**»O son of Pandu, he who does not hate illumination, attachment and delusion when they are present or long for them when they disappear;**

who is unwavering and undisturbed through all these reactions of the material qualities, remaining neutral and transcendental, knowing that the modes alone are active; who is situated in the self and regards alike happiness and distress; who looks upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; who is equal toward the desirable and the undesirable; who is steady, situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor; who treats alike both friend and enemy; and who has renounced all material activities—such a person is said to have transcended the modes of nature.«

Purport: Illumination, attachment and delusion can be set analogous to the three modes. Illumination refers to *sattva-guna*, attachment refers to *raja-guna* and delusion refers to *tamas-guna*. This is quite reasonable, I think. This verse communicates that illumination comes and goes as well as attachment and illusion do. The aim of a transcendental life therefore is not to fight against attachment and illusion and to strive for illumination since this would be the moral stage of religion, i.e. a valuing attitude. As again and again stated by Krishna, the important point is to get free from attachment and aversion. Not only attachment is bad but also refusal. Refusal is just the opposite side of the coin of attachment. Neither of the two are recommended relations to the objects of material nature because both create suffering. Everything belongs to Krishna. It is not our business to judge these things. Mostly our intelligence is also not strong enough to understand all the levels of reason of what is happening. Consequently, this verse explains the intermitting character of illumination as already mentioned before, as well as the fact that with the absence of the spiritual sphere the material sphere (attachment or illusion) is naturally prominent. But a transcendentalist does not lament about this either. The real transcendentalist in a material body is very aware of his fallen position and therefore deeply filled with humility. He wouldn't claim to be 100 percent and 24 hours a day on the transcendental level. According to the statement of Bhaktivedanta Sadhu Maharaja even a *siddha-purusa* has to come to the material level from time to time in order to reciprocate to the needs of his material body. If he doesn't do this, he cannot maintain the material body and has to give it up. The *siddha-purusa* maintains his material body in order to reach out to the conditioned living entities. If he gives up the material body in order to participate in the *nitya-lila*, he can do this. But his task is to give his mercy to the fallen souls. For that he needs the material body.

Most important is to become aloof of the concept of absoluteness, only thinking in black or white, in 0 or 100 percent. Absolute extrapolations are the result of primitive dualistic logic, primitive black-white-thinking.



Much more realistic is it to reflect about intermediate stages and relations. We should give up these absolute concepts a little bit. Sure, it is about the absolute truth, and this easily brings one to the temptation to cover everything with absolute principles – which is an improper absolutation of the absolute.

*Acintya bheda abheda tattva* means to think in opposites. When we have a pair of opposites like ›the relative and the absolute‹, the proper approach is not to attach the positive value to the one pole and to attach the negative value to the other pole in order to strive solely for the positive pole and to reject the negative pole. Instead one should see both poles free from value. As soon as one evaluates, he is in serious troubles. The relative has its place as well as the absolute, and it is not our task to reject or condemn one of them (or to ignore it, which is the same), while we divinize and absolutize the other one. The lack of truth in Good and Bad is also mentioned in Caitanya Caritamṛta, f. i. Antya lila, 4.174-176:

»On the transcendental platform there is no higher or lower, pure or impure.« (Translation of 4.174 according to CC, Madhya 15.83, purport by Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.)

»In the material world, conceptions of good and bad are all mental speculations. Therefore, saying ›This is good‹ and ›This is bad‹ is all a mistake.« (CC Antya 4.176)

The question of duality is fundamental and is treated therefore also in Bhagavad-gita. A very important verse is 2.45:

»The Vedas deal mainly with the subject of the three modes of material nature. O Arjuna, become transcendental to these three modes (*nis-traigunyah*). Be free from all dualities (*nir-dvandvah*) and from all anxieties for gain and safety (*nir-yogaksemah*), and be established in the self (*atmavan*).«

Purport: This verse clearly states that we should come from the stage of *guna* to the stage of *nirguna*. Still in many places in the *sastra* as well as in the purports we find that the three *gunas* are the medium in which we perform our actions. In this regard there is a double meaning for *sattva-guna*: first, as a material mode of goodness and, second, as a transcendental level (*suddha-sattva*). Once again we find a *bhedabheda*-connection. *Sattva* is both transcendence and non-transcendence. Concerning duality see also the verses 4.22, 7.27 and 13.22.<sup>36</sup>

The question to what extent a devotee has a material or a spiritual body

is discussed by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura in his commentary to verse 10.29.10-11 in Srimad Bhagavatam:

»According to one's level of devotional service, to that degree the transcendental aspects of one's body become prominent and the material aspects diminish. This transformation is described in the following verse from the *Bhagavatam* (11.2.42): »With each bite of food that a person takes, three effects occur simultaneously: he obtains satisfaction, nourishment, and cessation of hunger. Similarly, surrendered souls engaged in *bhajana* simultaneously experience three effects: the awakening of *bhakti* aiming at *prema*, direct manifestation of the Lord's beloved form, and detachment from material objects.«

Thus those who eat only a little food will derive a little satisfaction, a little nourishment, and slight relief from hunger. Similarly, those who perform only a little hearing and chanting about Krishna will attain a little *bhakti*, some realizations of the Lord and a little detachment. However, when one achieves unalloyed *krishna-prema*, the material portions of the body disappear and his body becomes completely spiritualized.«<sup>37</sup>

Purport: In these statements, two aspects are mentioned. First, there is a gradual scale between material and spiritual. The more spiritual actions someone performs, the more spiritual his body becomes and the more the material aspects vanish. But in that stage both elements remain in different proportions. In the same purport Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura says earlier: »Sometimes the devotees may take as their sense objects mundane sounds and tastes and that is material. Thus a devotee's body can have two aspects, transcendental (*nirguna*) and material (*guna-mayam*).« (p. 300) The body of a devotee therefore can have a material and a spiritual component that varies according to the intensity of his *bhakti*. In the perfect stage, and that is the second aspect, the body becomes fully spiritual. Important in our case here is the fact that both aspects, the material as well as the spiritual, can be present at the same time in a devotee.

In Ray Ramananda samvad, Caitanya Mahaprabhu asks Raya Ramananda for the ultimate goal of life. Raya Ramananda answers that the highest goal is to follow *Varnasrama dharma* (Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya-lila, 8.57-58). But Caitanya rejects this as external, whereupon Raya Ramananda says:

»To give up one's occupational duties in the *varnasrama* system is the essence of perfection.« (CC Madhya 8.61) »Lord Sri Caitanya

**Mahaprabhu said, ›This is external. Go ahead and say something more.«  
(CC Madhya 8.64)<sup>38</sup>**

Purport: When Raya Ramananda rejects the external social duties of *varnasrama*, Caitanya Mahaprabhu accepts what Raya Ramananda expresses and now encourages him to go further. In the ongoing discourse Raya Ramananda again and again is encouraged by Caitanya Mahaprabhu to present the next higher conclusion. In this way they proceed to different forms of *bhakti* until *raganuga-bhakti*. On this level, Caitanya says: »This is all right, but if you know more, please tell Me.« (8.71). In the following verses, *raganuga-bhakti* is distinguished into the five main *rasas*, and raises up to higher and higher stages of the intimate loving relation to Krishna. In Verse 8.220 we find the clear statement:

**»One who is attracted by that ecstatic love of the *gopis* does not care about popular opinion or the regulative principles of Vedic life. He is solely engaged in Krishna-*bhajan*.«**

Purport by Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja: »In Vrajabhumi, there are no regulative principles set forth for Krishna's service. Rather, everything is carried out in spontaneous, natural love for Krishna. There is no question of following the principles of the Vedic system. Such principles are followed within this material world, and as long as one is on the material platform, he has to execute them. However, spontaneous love of Krishna is transcendental. It may seem that the regulative principles are being violated, but the devotee is on the transcendental platform. Such service is called *gunatita*, or *nirguna*, for it is not contaminated by the three modes of material nature.« (verse 221, purport)

Addressing the core of the matter at hand, verse 226 gives the final and lucid conclusion:

**»The word ›*anghri-padma-sudha*‹ means ›associating intimately with Krishna.‹ One can attain such perfection only by spontaneous love of God (*kersna-sangananda*). One cannot obtain Krishna in Goloka Vrndavana simply by serving the Lord according to regulative principles (*vidhi-marga*).«**

Purport: According to the statement of Raya Ramananda, who is inspired in his heart by Caitanya Mahaprabhu, it is clear that *Vraja-prema* can only be attained by *raganuga-bhakti*. *Vraja-prema* cannot be attained by *vaidhi-bhakti*. So the question may arise why someone who is greedy for

*Vraja-prema* should perform *vaidhi-bhakti*? As already elaborated, the only qualification for *raganuga-bhakti* is greed to attain the *bhavas* of the *Vraja-vasis*. Whoever has this greed, this longing, this desire can perform *raganuga-bhakti*. He is even encouraged to do so. Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Raya Ramananda themselves give this instruction and they assure us: »If one worships the Lord on the path of spontaneous love and goes to Vrndavana, he receives the shelter of Vrajendra-nandana, the son of Nanda Maharaja.« (verse 221) Krishna himself takes care of His devotees, is concerned about them and bewares them of reactions. There is no independent endeavour necessary in the sense of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, *moksa*.

And as to confirm it once again and to make it really clear, Raya Ramananda quotes verse 10.9.21 from Srimad Bhagavatam (in Caitanya Caritamrta verse 8.227)

**»The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, the son of mother Yasoda, is accessible to those devotees engaged in spontaneous loving service (*bhakti-matam*), but He is not as easily accessible to mental speculators, to those striving for self-realization by severe austerities and penances, or to those who consider the body the same as the self.«**

No external endeavour on the level of *guna* can reach Krishna in His *Vraja-lila*. Only pure *bhakti* herself can give us this Krishna. With this *bhakti* we surrender to Krishna and make ourself dependent on Him. Therefore Krishna personally cares for our destiny. At this point we are fully surrendered to Krishna and are not in independent concepts anymore, i.e. thinking ourself to be the actor or controller. So the circle is complete.

I would like to show with the following example, drawn from my own realizations, that *raganuga-bhakti* looks like *vaidhi-bhakti*, but is not *vaidhi-bhakti*:

After I have offered water to the picture of my Gurudeva for some time according to the rules and regulations of *vaidhi-bhakti*, I felt some lack of joy and attraction to this service. I performed this service to offer him water three times daily in a regulated way, but I waited for the transcendental feelings in vain, and I felt more and more unhappy about this duty, and it finally alienated me from my feelings because I acted against my feelings. But these feelings were of material and egoistic nature, and I felt a strong remorse to give up this mechanical mode of offering. Usually you are recommended at this point to simply go on. When the transcendental taste will come, a loving relation will develop. Because of my lack of attraction, I forgot to perform this service from time to time, which caused only more remorse and

entangled me in a horrific mess of fear, damnability and desperation. Instead of attraction, the aversion increased.

At that moment, I changed my strategy, saying to myself: if I am fallen anyway and lost, let's see what will happen if I offer the water to Srila Gurudeva when I have the proper feeling of affection and love to him. I experimented and listened to my feelings. Sometimes situation occurred when I felt a strong desire and need to give water to my Gurudeva. An inner emotional impulse came into my consciousness, usually when I myself wanted to drink water or opened a new bottle. The first cup should be for Gurudeva. In that way sometimes incidents of a spontaneous feeling of affection and care towards my Gurudeva arose. I performed the offering in different ways, always with the priority to be authentic and not to make a mechanical show. In those moments when I was there with my heart and the impulse came from inside, there was not the slightest repulsion. Instead I noticed an increasing attraction every time I served the water because the positive experience from the last time made the next time more positive. Until that moment, the offerings were quite unstructured and were done more according to my needs than that of Gurudeva's. After some time, I came to the understanding that maybe Gurudeva would also be thirsty when I am not thirsty. So it made sense to me that it would be better to offer him fresh water at least three times daily. So by means of spontaneous feeling (*raganuga-bhakti*), I finally came to a mode of action that looks like *vaidhi-bhakti*, but is not *vaidhi-bhakti*. *Vaidhi-bhakti* gives the order to regularly make the offering during the day. In *vaidhi-bhakti* the offering is done mechanically, whereas in *raganuga-bhakti* the action is motivated by the inner emotion and relation (*sambandha*). So even if the two performances look equal, they are not the same in cause and motive. Thus I suggest that all the prescribed rules and regulations and performances in *vaidhi*, called duties, are external imitations of *raganuga-bhakti*. Still those imitations are not *raganuga-bhakti* because the actions are motivated from outside and not from inside.

The statement that in *raganuga-bhakti* the same rules are (have to be) kept as in *vaidhi-bhakti* cannot be true. This would mean that *raganuga-bhakti* is dependent on *vaidhi-bhakti* and inferior to it. This is not the case. *Vaidhi-bhakti* is an external imitation of *raganuga-bhakti*. Therefore it cannot have superiority to *raganuga-bhakti*, it cannot control *raganuga-bhakti*. In a fully developed *raganuga-bhakti* the same actions are performed as in *vaidhi-bhakti* in the form of rules and regulations, for instance all *aratis*, the offering of the food in every detail up to *manasa-seva* of *asta-kaliya-lila* which is performed along a fixed schedule. But this *manasa-seva* in *raganuga-bhakti* is not performed as rules or duties but as an inner desire

that comes very naturally from the inner feelings. Radha and Krishna must wake up at that time because otherwise they could not get home before Their relatives wake up and find out that They are not at home.

The most important question is if *raganuga-bhakti* can be performed from the very beginning of devotional life in an intermitting, interrupted resp. wavelike way. This would mean to develop *bhakti* by feeling from the very beginning. My experience is that this *bhakti* will grow and that Bhakti-devi is very happy about it. She is happy because she does not judge and condemn the living entity if the performance of *bhakti* is not yet perfect.

So I request to start right at the beginning from within. This way may seem to take longer time at the beginning because the outer appearance of the devotee changes slowly. The authenticity avoids a radical change in the outward performance. The progress in the beginning is in fact slower because the practitioner only accepts real feelings of *bhakti*. After some time the progress accelerates exponentially. At the same time this progress is founded on a very profound and sustainable basis because it comes from realizations from within and is not dependent on the external performance or platform. That which takes longer time at the beginning, makes sense at the end. We attain transcendental *bhakti*, not temporary but eternally. This *bhakti* we will never lose again. She is the *bhakti* we feel, touching our heart and melting it. She is that for which we undertake the whole »endeavour«, the matchless feeling which we experience in the loving exchange with Krishna and His associates. This feeling is the way and the goal. As a way, a method, this infelt *bhakti* cleanses the mirror of our heart in a highly effective way and softens our heart. In this way we become prepared for the goal: the loving relation with Radha, Krishna, the *gopis* and the *Vraja-vasis*.

The beauty in *raganuga-bhakti* is of two things: on the one hand the marvellous experience of spontaneous *bhavas* for Radha-Krishna and, on the other hand, the ability to speak to everyone about Krishna without ideology. There is no need of defence or ideological combat, and practically everyone can listen to this *katha*, even an atheist what to speak of a *mayavadi* or a follower of another religion.

And I am not sure which of these two may be the higher benefit: I tend to consider the second feature higher. There is nothing more beautiful than to express my own love for Krishna freely and unburdened towards every human entity. This *bhakti* is like a lotus in the mud. She cannot be contaminated and cannot be hurt. She is not dependent on logic, argument, force, external structures or walls.

So where *raganuga-bhakti* leads to is the end of neurotic shism, the end of the splitting into two worlds. The devotee is no longer trapped in the contradiction between spiritual and material, or good and evil, but lives in

one world, in mind as well as in action, the world of spiritual vision that: *Vasudeva sarvam iti*. Sri Krishna is indeed everything. (BG 7.19)

## *Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja:* *The Essence of all Advice*

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This groundbreaking and revolutionary book of Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja elaborates the question of proper interpretation of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's book »The nectar of instruction« (Sri Upadesamrta). Here Narayana Maharaja proves that Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada definitely promoted the path of *raganuga-bhakti* (resp. *rupanuga-bhakti*). Sri Upadesamrta treats with the basic injunctions for the performance of *bhakti-yoga* and here rules and regulations have to be expected the most. But just in this book Srila Narayana Maharaja shows that in *prema-bhakti* keeping rules is no topic. It would surely be easy to give a plea for *raganuga-bhakti* for instance by reference to the 10<sup>th</sup> canto of Srimad Bhagavatam. That and how clearly this is done by Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja on the example of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharajas purport to Sri Upadesamrta, sheds a clear light on the relation between *vaidhi-bhakti* and *raganuga-bhakti*, as well as their importance for the highest goal in *bhakti* – *Vraja-prema*.

In due course of his arguments, Narayana Maharaja also refers to the question of purity, resp. the *anarthas*:

»Especially lust, *brid-roga*, how will it go away? There is only one way – to chant the name in the association of a higher Vaishnava whose heart is pure. His heart has been completely cleansed and he has developed his *krishna-prema* to a high degree. Being under his guidance always, obeying him, living in Vrndavana (if not by body then internally by mind), our hearts will be cleansed. First *bhakti* will come and then the heart will be cleansed. Don't think that first we will clear our hearts, that first everything will go away, and then *bhakti* will come. It will never happen like this. This is not authentic *siddhanta*. *Bhakti* will come gradually by its own power, and then without any effort this *brid-roga* will go.« (Essence of all Advice, p. 78)

Purport: Here it is clearly stated that at first *bhakti* comes and then the *anarthas* will vanish. This is the correct sequence. In addition, this quote says

that the purification of the heart doesn't come by the independent endeavour or the control of the devotee, but solely by the association with an advanced devotee. This advanced devotee has the emotions of *bhava* in his heart. Only in this way we can receive the *bhavas* ourselves. Sometimes it may happen that the *bhavas* manifest without the association of a pure devotee, e.g. only by the study of the scriptures. But the most effective and requested way is the association with a devotee who has already realized these *bhavas* in his heart. Then the transmission can happen very easily, and we can make our own spiritual experience. We experience the *bhavas* and know what it's all about and were to go. Without spiritual experience, there is no spiritual path, but it is merely religion. Religion works without spiritual experience, it is only based on external instructions and orders, for instance conventional issues, catechisms, codices, rules etc.

*Bhakti* appears gradually by her own power. *Bhakti* is independent. She cannot be attained by any manoeuvres or techniques of the *sadhaka*. Sure the *sadhaka* performs his exercises and his *sadhana*, and he does whatever he can. But this should not lead to the concept that he himself and his exercises are the root cause of *bhakti*. This would mean that *bhakti* is dependent on cause and effect, what would be a material conditioning. This is not the fact. *Bhakti* is the independent controller and actor. In this regard Srila Narayana Maharaja is saying: »Srimati Radhika is floating on that flood, and both of Them are controlled only by *premamrtaplavanat*. *Prema* is their *karta*, supreme doer. So Krishna is dancing, Radha is dancing, the *gopis* are dancing, all *Vrajavasis* are dancing. *Prema* herself is also dancing, and whoever she touches will also dance.« (p. 173) *Prema*, *bhakti* is the actor, even towards Radha and Krishna. The highest form of *bhakti* is not to chant, but to be chanted, is not to dance, but to be danced. This is the ultimate attitude of the devotee. The flood of *prema* takes him. He is not the actor. The flood of *prema* is always there, but we don't see or feel it. Why? Our heart is materially covered because the cleansing of the mirror of the heart (*ceto darpana marcanam*) is not complete. Because we still want to act and therefore make ourselves hard. We prefer to go into resistance when something moves us because we don't have faith that *bhakti* is our well-wisher, and that nothing bad will happen if we give up the control. When I go into resistance, the whole action becomes heavy and exhausting. Without resistance, the thing becomes easy and smooth.

»And after hearing, *anusnuyad atha varnayed yah bhaktim param bhagavati pratilabhya* – you will first have *bhakti*. And then, *pratilabhya kamam brid-rogam asv apahinoty acirena dhirah*. Then *kama* comes. What



*kama*? *Kama* meaning *prema* for Krishna. First this *kama* appears and all *brid-roga*, all bad desires and all ignorance will go away.«

Also in this verse Srila Narayana Maharaja states clearly that, at first, love to Krishna comes and then the material lust vanishes. We perform *raganuga-bhakti* while we still have material lust. We need not to be pre-purified. This is impossible.

Srila Narayana Maharaja refers here to the verse 10.33.39 in Srimad Bhagavatam. This is the last verse of the chapter about the *rasa-lila*-dance. The complete verse is as follows:

»Anyone who faithfully hears or describes the Lord's playful affairs with the young gopis of Vrndavana will attain the Lord's pure devotional service. Thus he will quickly become sober and conquer lust, the disease of the heart.«<sup>39</sup>

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura says in his purport to this verse:

»One who hears and chants about Krishna's *rasa-lila*, which is the crest-jewel of all pastimes, gets the crest-jewel of all results, namely *krishna-prema* (*bhaktim param*). One who continuously hears (*anusynnuyat*), glorifies or writes poetry (*varnayet*) about this autumnal *rasa-lila* (*idam*) and similar pastimes of Krishna described by other poets (*ca*), first of all, even if he has the heart disease of material lust, becomes imbued with *prema*; then, by its effect the disease of the heart is destroyed. Thus it is understood here that this *prema* is independent; it is not weak or dependent like *jnana-yoga*. Here *kamam brd-rogam* refers to the heart disease of material lust. When the word is used in relation to Krishna, however, this meaning is excluded. In relation to Krishna *kamam* is *prema*, pure love, and it has the opposite effect of material lust, *kamam*. One who faithfully hears and glorifies Krishna's *rasa* dance is described as learned (*dbirah pandita*), for he does not foolishly doubt, »How can *krishna-prema* appear if material lust is present?« *Krishna-prema* will definitely appear in that person who is devoid of foolishness (*dbirah*), and who accepts the statements of scripture with full faith. However, *krishna-prema* will not appear within those who have no faith in Krishna or who offend Krishna's Holy Name.« (Saharta Darsini, p. 377)

Purport: It is foolish to think *Krishna-prema* cannot manifest as long as material lust is in the heart. And it is unintelligent to think that one has to first conquer the material lust – in a kind of own endeavour – and then will

get *Krishna-prema* afterwards! Srila Narayana Maharaja states on page 146 in his book that even on the stage of *bhava* there are some *anarthas* in the heart (see quote below, p. 29).<sup>40</sup>

So if even on the stage of *bhava* there is no absolute 100 percent purity, how should it be possible on the preliminary stages of *nistha*, *ruci*, *asakti*, or even before these stages on our level of three quarter *shraddha* and half *sadhu sanga*? How can there be the reasoning that *bhakti* cannot be attained since material contaminations are present? From these concepts, prejudices arise that we are not qualified to hear *hari-katha* or to speak about high-class transcendental devotees like the *gopis*. This is an attitude that can be found amongst many devotees, but this attitude is wrong. The statements of Srila Narayana Maharaja as well as Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura show clearly that hearing and chanting about *rasa-lila* has to be performed in the presence of material contamination because *rasa-lila-katha* is that which fosters the purification.

»Whether one is a *bhakta*, *nirvisesa-vadi*, *visayi*, *kami* having so many desires, or *aparadhi*, having committed so many offences, everyone should hear and chant the holy name. This is told in a *sloka* in *Bhagavata* (SB 2.1.11) also: »O king, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all, including those who are free from all material desires, those who are desirous of all material enjoyment, and also those who are self-satisfied by dint of transcendental knowledge.« *Ceto-darpana-marjanam bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam*. Purification will come from the name. We want to clear our hearts: *ceto-darpana-marjanam bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam*. If we do all these unfavorable activities and after that chant *harinama*, this is absurd. You should be whatever you are, wherever you are situated, in whatever stage you are – *kami*, *visayi*, *durjana* (scoundrel) – whatever you are you should be – no harm. But be sincere, and then chant *harinama* under the guidance of a pure-hearted Vaishnava. Then, after that, *ceto darpana marjanam* will work.« (p. 80f.)

Purport: Also here Srila Narayana Maharaja emphasises the correct chronological sequence: »Then, after that...« First we perform *bhajan*, then the cleansing of the mirror of the heart will come. Not the other way round! Any kind of impurity or material desires is no hindrance. It is allowed and finally unavoidable to perform *bhajan* on the impure stage and even, as Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura literally states, to hear *rasa-lila*, to glorify it and to write our own poems about it. Everything else is a concept of fear, which leaves the devotee in fear and suppression. This impedes the flow of

*bhakti* and therefore *prema-bhakti* cannot be attained. The statement »if we do all these unfavourable activities and after that chant *harinama*, this is absurd« means that one does not perform material activities in the faith of the purifying power of the Holy Name. To chant in order to deliberately act sinful is absurd. This is not the same as performing sincere *bhajan*, which is unwillingly accompanied by material contamination.

»Yes, first comes the medicine. *Harinama* is the medicine and everything. *Harinama* should be taken first, then the disease will go. But if you think, »First the disease will go and then I will take the medicine. Then I will taste it,« this is not correct. You can progress from whatever stage you are in, no harm. You may be lusty or a liar. You may have so many worldly desires and bad qualities. Just take the medicine first. Try to leave all your bad habits, but the medicine should be taken regardless. So the medicine is *harinama*. By chanting *harinama*, gradually the disease will go away and a little taste will come for the medicine.« (p. 67)

»So, it is not the true fact that we cannot hear the pastimes of Krishna in this world. It is not true that we must first be liberated from all worldly desires and then we will go to Goloka Vrndavana, and only there we will hear pastimes of Krishna. This is quite false, quite false, quite false.« (p. 131)

With this knowledge and this vision, Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja has come to the West. He has been rectifying the misunderstanding of *bhakti*, which had occurred in the general Iskcon-doctrine. According to this misunderstanding, we are all very fallen, impure and sinful and therefore not qualified to perform and experience *prema-bhakti*. Instead we should perform austerities, follow the four regulative principles, endeavour for purity and perform *vaidhi-bhakti*. Srila Narayana Maharaja has come to stop this misunderstanding. He says it is not a sin or an offence to hear *lila-katha* on the stage of material contamination. It is not necessary to fight against this contamination separately. *Lila-katha* itself will do this purification if heard from a pure devotee.

Unfortunately many devotees of the Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti still or even more and more live in these misleading Iskcon-concepts. Those concepts represent a repressive Krishna-consciousness that centers around the sinful and impure state of the conditioned soul, and denounces and judges both other devotees and inquisitive new guests. In this way, a repressive continuum of fear develops that suppresses emotions in a neurotic and forcible way, and consequently a continuum of guilt, blame and shame aggravates this miserable situation. In such a repressive climate, no emotions

of *bhava* will occur, and supporters of that concept take this as a further proof for the fallen and rotten position of the devotee.

But these feelings of *bhava* don't lack because we are impure – all the elaborations of this paper solely should show that this interaction is a misunderstanding – but they can very well appear in the impure state. The fact is that they don't come because we don't have faith in the purifying power of the Holy Name and the *katha* etc. This faith is undermined exactly by this belief system. We believe *bhakti* is dependent on these external material conditions. In this way we weaken *bhakti* and make her inferior. This is an offence and that is the reason why no *bhava* is coming. As soon as we perform natural and free *bhakti*, a *bhakti* without fear, there is the best and greatest hope for a rapid progress towards *Vraja-prema*.

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada himself declares:

»When one has developed such attachment, he can spontaneously serve the lotus feet of Krishna even without following the regulative principles. This stage is called *raga-bhakti*, or devotional service in spontaneous love.« (p. 146f.)

And Srila Narayana Maharaja comments on that as follows:

»What is *raganuga-bhakti*? For whom is he writing? For everyone? Everyone who wants to serve Radha and Krishna. And for those who don't want to serve Radha and Krishna, it is not applicable. So I think it is Swamiji's desire that all the devotees who have left their homes to enter the *bhakti* way should follow this. But if they are not qualified to follow *raganuga*, then they should follow regulative *bhakti*.« (p. 148)

»If anyone has a very little, thin greed to taste all these things in the service of Krishna, he is qualified to enter into *raganuga-bhakti*. And he cannot be controlled by any rules and regulations.« (p. 149)

Purport: This verse describes *raganuga-bhakti*, what her relation is with regulative principles, and what the importance of greed is. Greed is the only necessary qualification. Greed means the desire to serve Radha and Krishna. Greed is the emotion that drives us forward to perform *seva* for Radha and Krishna. In *vaidhi-bhakti* it is fear. Greed is an inner wish, an internal need. Greed is an emotion. In relation to Radha and Krishna it is a positive emotion. Again and again the main subject is emotion, feeling. If we approach *bhakti* from the side of the emotion all doors will open and a rapid progress will happen. As a devotee one should therefore ask oneself: do I want to serve Radha and Krishna? Who wouldn't say »Yes« to that?

Therefore we all are qualified for *raganuga-bhakti*. In the society of devotees it is very popular to consider oneself as unqualified. Not only in Iskcon but also in the Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti, as practiced in the West, many devotees have the concept that we must perform *vaidhi-bhakti* because we are not qualified for *raganuga-bhakti*. But this is a false concept. First of all, Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada as well as Srila Narayana Maharaja explain here that even the most minute greed is enough as the qualification for *raganuga-bhakti*. Second, Srila Narayana Maharaja says in this book many times that the attitude to consider oneself as unqualified is wrong and an offence against *bhakti*:

»Even up to the stage of *bhava* there is some material attraction. But we should endeavor to progress. We should not be discouraged that we are not qualified, thinking, ›Oh, we are not even in *nistha*.‹ Don't think like this.« (p. 146)

»You should not be *kanistha-adbhikari* forever. Our way to Krishna should not be blocked by surrendering to the idea that you are not, and will not at any time be qualified to read this.« (p. 167)

»Some will say, ›Oh, we are not qualified and will never be qualified in the future.‹ This is an offence at the lotus feet of *bhakti*, Krishna Himself and Radharani also. That is why they will become more and more opposed to *rupanuga-bhakti*.« (p. 193)

Purport: One can observe a dramatic increase in the words of Srila Narayana Maharaja. Having explained this matter the third time in sequence of his lectures (page 146, 167 and 193), he now even makes a stronger argument by saying that it is an offence to consider oneself as unqualified. He sees our Western-Christian tendency to self-flagellation, which is completely counter-productive. We should better become a bit relaxed.

Furthermore, Srila Narayana Maharaja says that it is even an offence to not perform *raganuga-bhakti*:

»We will have to try to understand what *rupanuga* is, who Rupa is, what his mood is, and how we can adopt it. This is not offensive. If we are not doing this, it is offensive, being in the line of Caitanya Mahaprabhu.« (p. 193)

What should do someone who has not become pure yet?

»If someone has not yet become very pure or developed so much love and affection that he is qualified to hear, then what should he do?

Should he be forever hopeless for this? No, do not ever be hopeless. Someone may still have many *anarthas* but if he has some interest and greed to hear this, then he is considered qualified. That greed alone constitutes the qualification to hear. A devotee born in a brahmana family may have cultivated his regulative *bhakti* for *lakhas* of births and may have very few *anarthas*.<sup>41</sup> Still, if he has no honor, no *ruci*, to hear, then he is disqualified from hearing. But a third class bogus person, like Bilvamangala, entangled always in lust for a prostitute, immediately awoke when his prostitute was singing: *Radha-Ramana Hari Govinda jaya jaya...* When the prostitute was quite absorbed in singing this *kirtana*, Bilvamangala would be attracted and would also become absorbed. So this is the qualification. It does not matter if one is a lusty, wretched person with no qualification, no education, or any positive quality. This taste for hearing about these topics is itself the only required qualification. (...) *Sukriti* accumulated over *lakhas* and *lakhas* of births will not help. But the qualification can come easily if we hear from a devotee like Raya Ramananda, Svarupa Damodara, Rupa Gosvami, or their followers who tell the pastimes of Krishna so sweetly. Their *mati*, their hearts are always immersed in this ocean of love and affection for Srimati Radhika. Eligibility does not require any worldly qualification or any spiritual quality. The only requirement is some taste, *ruci*, to hear, and this *ruci* can come either from impressions from past lives or it can be newly formed in this life, no harm. *Ruci* coming from past lives is much stronger. But if it is coming from newly acquired impressions, it will still yield so many fruits. Taste to hear these topics is the only thing of any value, nothing else.« (p. 171f.)

Purport: Once again Gurudeva emphasises that there is no causal relation between *anarthas* and *bhakti*. Someone may have a lot of *anarthas*. If he has the desire to hear about these topics, he is qualified to receive *bhakti*. *Vaidhi-bhakti*, performed for hundreds of thousands of lifetimes, will not bring success. At the same time, *bhakti* can manifest even in very impure places and respectively in very impure persons like Bilvamangala. Also *sukriti* cannot give *rupanuga-bhakti*. This point is very important. Many devotees have the notion that *sukriti* is the main prerequisite for *prema-bhakti*. Maybe this is true for *vaidhi-bhakti*, but not for *raganuga-bhakti*. We attain *raganuga-bhakti* by the grace of a pure devotee, who knows this *raganuga-bhakti* because he received it from his Guru or another *sadhu*. This is the only thing we have to do. We have to find the association of a pure devotee and hear from him. He can give us knowledge because he has seen the truth (Bhagavad-gita verse 4.34: *upadeksyanti te jnanam jnaninas tattva-darsina*:

the self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth).

*Raganuga-bhakti* is living *bhakti*, therefore she can be transmitted only from one living entity to another living entity. This is personal philosophy. It is always about living persons who take up a relation together. *Raganuga-bhakti* cannot be obtained by our own endeavour. She can only be obtained in a relation because she is relation – *sambandha-jnana*. It is important that we approach such a pure devotee and hear from him. As Srila Narayana Maharaja says clearly, it is not the question if we are pure or impure. The dogma of purity, overemphasised by today's *vaidhi-bhaktas*, creates an insecurity about our qualification (am I qualified for that?), and a deeply insecure remorseful conscience that burdens the soul. But this remorse and this insecurity are the foolishness that finally drives us away from *prema-bhakti*. Confer the purports of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura to Srimad Bhagavatam 10.33.39 (as quoted already above): »One who faithfully hears and glorifies Krishna's *rasa* dance is described as learned (*dhirah pandita*), for he does not foolishly doubt, »How can *krishna-prema* appear if material lust is present?« *Krishna-prema* will definitely appear in that person who is devoid of foolishness (*dhirah*), and who accepts the statements of scripture with full faith. However, *krishna-prema* will not appear within those who have no faith in Krishna or who offend Krishna's Holy Name.« (page 377)

These statements explain that it is just this inner doubt that keeps us away from *bhakti*. It is not our material lust! It is our remorseful conscience! And this bad conscience is created by the rules and laws, by the concepts of pure and impure, pious and sinful and from all these dualities of the material world.

Actually it is so simple, straight and direct. We go to a *rasika-bhakta* and hear from him. The rest is done by *bhakti*. The loop way around the self-reflexive concepts of the mind, i.e. the prefixed doubts whether I am bona fide, interrupts this direct connection and blocks the flow of *bhakti*. You should be like the children because only in this way you can enter the spiritual realm (Jesus). This is the reason why we fell from Paradise: because we ate from the tree of discernment of Good and Evil. This distinction between Good and Evil itself is the cause for our miserable situation. This is what Gurudeva means when he always strongly emphasises: »Don't criticize!« This means *trinad-api-sunicena*: There is nothing that is worse than me. That means there is nothing bad at all, there is only good. In reality there is no judgement at all, no Good and Evil, but as soon as I come to the vision that everything is good and everything is Krishna, this view is equal to non-judgement.

This is *bhakti* free from ideology. This is *uttama-bhakti*. Liberation

means to be freed from these psychic anxieties and from this burden of conscience. Only then the feeling manifests. Therefore pure *bhakti* begins after liberation. The more unprejudiced I am, the less resistance I have, the purer is the *bhakti*. And therefore pure *bhakti* has nothing to do with pure or impure. Materially contaminated or not – this is not important. The only thing that counts is the desire to hear about transcendental topics. We need not to be concerned or to feel bad about ourselves because we may still have some material attachment. On the stages of *nista*, *ruçi*, *asakti* and *bhava* still there are material interests and identifications. Not until the stage of *prema* is achieved will these material aspects fully vanish. But *prema* cannot be realized in the material body. So only at the end of the material body the material attachments will vanish completely. If we were allowed to perform *raganuga-bhakti* no more than at this point then we would have to wait eternally until the end of our reincarnations. Without *raganuga-bhakti* we will not attain *Vraja-prema* and without *Vraja-prema* we will not escape from the circle of birth and death. So this whole theory of purity makes no sense in any respect. This theory stands upside down. Purity is not the cause of *bhakti* but her effect. First there is *bhakti*, then there is purity, not vice versa.

How many people, who came with a simple heart and a positive motivation to Krishna, have failed on the path of *bhakti* because of the fear and bad feeling coming from these repressive anxiety and guilt provoking concepts? How many have turned away from Krishna because of the oppressive structure they couldn't bear anymore? How many devotees we have already lost by our foolishness, by our doubts in the power of *bhakti*? If we have such doubts even Bhakti-devi is helpless. In this way we are kept on the conditioned stage forever.

By the performance of natural *bhakti* we attain immediate release and direct happiness. *Bhakti* becomes beautiful and strong. Our heart will open. There are no more hindrances for *bhakti*. Through the experience of the spiritual emotion on the liberated platform our ego disappears because it becomes permeable like a canal. We become the flute of Krishna, hollow and ready to play the song of Krishna. The soul jubilees, and our mind is strong and energetic. We have achieved inner peace and are fully empowered, there is no more resistance and no more restraint. We can surrender fully and completely without any problem. This is the logical consequence, or rather the natural dynamic. It is the fulfilment of emotion. This is the stage of *nitya-siddha*, permanently liberated. On the other hand, a *sadhaka* who is too much focused on the rules and regulations entangles himself more and more in the alienation from his feelings. The very first act against the feeling leads to a wrong way from which it is nearly impossible to get back to the right



path. The more one acts against his feeling, the more energy he loses, and he becomes weak and depressive. There is no energy coming from outside because this outside is not that what he actually needs and wants, at least not at that moment. He entangles more and more in a dump and emotionless situation and is only lead by his head/mind. He desperately seeks for the missing happiness, which he can at last only find in material satisfactions. This is the moment when the devotee falls down, gives up his artificially kept advanced *sadhana*, and finally opts for the material world. First he had been told he should fully surrender, keep all the principles, follow every instruction, perfectly perform every *sadhana* always and everywhere, never be weak, always continue, not listen to the emotions, suppress every material impulse, disregard the material body, and always chant Hare Krishna. The young devotee goes for it, yet without paying attention to his feeling and his stage. At the end of the day, after some years, the same devotee turns away from Krishna-*bhakti* in the same radical way. Is this what we strive for? What is gained by this claim of absoluteness and 100 percent? What is the use when devotees leave us after some years? Should we not better rethink our strategy? Since 40 years we have had Krishna-consciousness in the West. The devotees don't care about their image in society, i.e. in the eyes of the *karmis*. But *karmis* are the wholeness of society and they are our clientele, potential devotees. It is not very glorious that Hare Krishna in the public opinion is not only perceived as a sect – this is only a cheap disparagement – but as a repressive-authoritarian structure in general that is touched by intellectual people only with »safety-cloves« and a lot of suspicion.

How could something happen like that? Why don't they see the transcendence and sweetness of Krishna? Why don't they see the matchless emotions and the ecstasy of love of Godhead? Because nobody is showing them these things.

The repressive structures are well known. Germans know them well, not only from Christianity but also from the national socialism (the worst trauma of German history), which very precisely uses the same categories like *vaidhi-bhakti*: purity, goodness, obedience, duty, devotion to a leader, fear of punishment, exclusion from the community etc.

The devotees are in most cases very young, they don't have much life-experience, and little knowledge. As soon as they come in the association of devotees they cut off all their intellectual and mental connection to other forms of knowledge than that of the Vedic literature. They don't endeavour at all to prove or relate their philosophy with other philosophies and opinions, and if necessary reconcile both sides. This leads to a strange indifference towards the experiences and the wisdom of mankind. The suffering and the austerities of many generations are the fundament of realized knowledge.

The human society progresses, its consciousness increases and proceeds. We don't live anymore in the Middle Ages, neither are we in India. I cannot understand why the devotees don't care for this inner wealth, this knowledge and life-wisdom, which the Western people have acquired over the last decades and centuries. Instead, they preach as 500 years ago, as if there had never been an age of enlightenment, fascism, a 68-movement or globalisation. Luckily not all of them. Srila Narayana Maharaja says in this regard:

»Everyone who is interested in Krishna consciousness should ultimately take shelter of Shrimati Radhika and Radhakunda. He (Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja) is saying ›everyone‹, and we are making so many walls, divisions in these instructions. There are no walls – the walls are false.« (p. 194)

»I think that to only do *vaidhi-bhakti* algamated with *karma* and *jnana* will not be sufficient to come into the family of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, in His *sampradaya*. If you want to be in Caitanya Mahaprabhu's *sampradaya*, you will have to do *rupanuga-bhakti*.« (p. 183)

This is natural, free, spontaneous *bhakti*, without fear. Srila Gurudeva comments in one of his purports:

»We know how lusty Bilvamangala was, but he was changed in a day. You know Ajamila – he became such a wonderful devotee by the touch of four Vishnudutas, so we should try to follow all these teachings internally. Do not just make an outward show, like not taking cigarettes, for example. This will not help so much. We do not put so much stress on not taking cigarettes or meat – these things will automatically go. I know that (Bhaktivedanta) Swamiji once told me, ›when I go to Western countries, I will allow the boys to come in my hostel, and I will supply eggs, meat, and wine if they want.‹ I asked ›why?‹ ›Oh, the power of *krishna-nama* is very wonderful. I will tell them that you can take all these things but chant *krishna-nama*. And in a very short time, they will be transformed into good devotees.‹ (p. 212)

Purport: This statement is in line with the statements given above according to which the important thing is not purity and austerity, but *bhakti* herself, here *Krishna-nama*. Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja gave all freedom to his boys and girls, and didn't want to dominate them. He solely trusted in the spiritual power of the Holy Names. In my opinion, this is the right attitude. Everything else is a lack of devotion and faith. If I emphasise austerity and purity, this usually rises from the concept that I have to do something, and

that *bhakti* is dependent on this endeavour. But the more important fact is that *bhakti* is completely independent and manifests by grace. If we are not open for the grace, we will never make progress. The whole problem is, in essence, a problem of attitude, a question of approach. A slight change of vision is needed in order to see things clearly. Then all the categories will sort themselves in the correct sequence, and rest like pearls on a thread which gives a higher sense. The whole thing finally fits together.

»If *bhakti* will come, *vegas* will go. Otherwise they cannot go.« (p. 206)

Purport: The *vegas*, the unwanted urges, cannot disappear by dry austerity. They first can disappear when *bhakti* appears. It is therefore not necessary to focus our attention on the reduction of the *vegas*. We should focus our attention always on *bhakti* herself. The unwanted things, the *vegas* and *anarthas*, are not the focus of our attention! Attention gives power. Wherever we focus our attention, we give power to these objects. If these objects are connotated with a positive or negative value is only of subordinate importance. If we therefore focus our attention on the *anarthas* in order to lament about them, to judge them, to persecute them, we give power to them. Beside that, we waste our time because we cannot utter the Holy Names during that time.

Many devotees today refer to the first verse of Sri Upadesamrta to legitimize their mood of regulation: *vaco vegam* ... this verse is the fundamental basis, the scale, the ultimate measuring principle. Because none of us has mastered this yet, we are unqualified for *raganuga-bhakti* and first we have to purify and chasten ourselves. The further verses then are hardly being paid attention to. But the Sri Upadesamrta reaches much further than the first verse. It reaches until Radha-Kunda, the highest and most confidential place of *madhurya-rasa* of Radha-Krishna *yugala-kisora*. This location is even higher than *rasa-lila* because there not all *gopis* can take part. There we should go!

Srila Narayana Maharaja is well aware of this unfavourable aspect of overemphasising rules and regulations and purity. 1997 he spoke to Iskcon-devotees, but today these statements also refer to many devotees in our own sanga:

»But those who will only look at the first *sloka*, *vaco vegam manasah... vaco vegam manasah ... vaco vegam manasah ...*, and then close the book, thinking, ›it is all right. This is sufficient for us. We are not qualified even to do *vaco vegam manasah*, so how we can read any further?‹ how will they advance? Swamiji has come to give this *rupanuga* line to us.

**So we should not be hopeless. We should try to develop our Krishna consciousness in this line.« (p. 183)**

Purport: Srila Narayana Maharaja is disapproving in this statement the concept of overemphasised servility, of subservience, and the image of inferiority of many devotees. We have to go on, even if we haven't mastered the first verse. How should we otherwise make progress? One who has mastered these *vegas* can accept disciples over the whole world, he is *jagad-guru*. But this does not mean that one who has not mastered them yet, is not qualified to advance further. We are qualified according to our progress in *bhakti*. And even if we are unqualified – this is our only qualification, our only achievement that makes us eligible for the grace. We shouldn't be too hasty to judge ourselves in a kind of false humility, which is not real felt humility, but an intellectual concept, a value. »But it is more dangerous to lie and cheat than to take a cigarette or to drink.« (p. 211) We should take care for these *anarthas*, lying and cheating, posing, making an image. As Bhagavad-gita states (3.6): »One who restrains the senses of action but whose mind dwells on sense objects certainly deludes himself and is called a pretender.«

I advocate for more courage and less fear, for more happiness and self-acceptance, and less doubts and lack of self-esteem. We should not be too hasty to consider ourselves as sinful, impure and fallen, in order to fight against this impurity with gross methods. We are all eternal parts and particles of God, we are qualitatively one with God and loved by Him unconditionally. If we judge ourself, we also judge Krishna.

We perform *bhakti*, we have a spiritual master, we glorify Krishna and his Holy Name, we do so much *seva*. Can't we make our hearts light and say: everything is good? Can't we simply be happy to exist, and that we are on the way to Krishna, that we are with Him? Everything is already there, the *lila* is going on. Everything is good.

We should see everything in its positive feature. In Krishna everything rests like pearls on a thread. We need not to judge or to evaluate. Everything works on spiritual feelings of the innermost soul. This is the power of attraction. Everything is about loving relationship – the primordial eternal undestructible loving relationship to God as well as the very same kind of relationships amongst us eternal individual souls. We are the children of eternity, the children and loving consorts of God. Let us reclaim our eternal heritage from God. We ourselves are the performers of the Golden Age. Let us play again with Radha and Krishna in the land of Vraja, in the abundant flood of *prema*.

Hare Krishna, Radhe Radhe, *Bhakti* Devi Ki Jaya  
(First English edition, July 2007)  
(Enhanced version of the German edition, September 2006)

### Footnotes

<sup>3</sup> Srimati Patak in: Our Srila Prabhupada. A Friend to All, early Contemporaries remember Him. Compiled by Mulaprakrti d. d., Brij Books, 2004, S. 160

<sup>4</sup> See Shukavak N. Dasa: Hindu Encounter with Modernity. Kedarnath Datta Bhaktivinoda Vaishnava Theologian, Sanskrit Religions Institute 1999. Bhaktivinoda Thakura: »When the river of ancient tradition meets the stream of logic, the whirlpools of illusion are swept away.« (Quote from the back cover of the book.) The young urban modernists in this book are called »*bhadralokas*«, upper class well educated Indians interested in modern culture and reluctant towards their Vedic heritage.

<sup>5</sup> Catholicism can be defined as a neurotic psychic pattern that causes suffering to many people in society, in the form of psychic diseases like depression, neurosis, psychosis etc., as they have a very rigide system of pious and sinful, guilt, blame and shame. All these concepts are on the mental plane and do not reach the transcendental truth. This is called »ecclesiogeneous neurosis« in western psychology.

<sup>6</sup> Caitanya Caritamrta, transl. by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, BBT 1975

<sup>7</sup> Sanatana Goswami in Brhad Bagavatamrta 1.9: »All glories, all glories to the all-blissful holy name of Sri Krishna, which causes the devotee to give up all conventional religious duties, meditation and worship. When somehow or other uttered even once by a living entity, the holy name awards him liberation. The holy name of Krishna is the highest nectar. It is my life and my only treasure.« (Quoted from: Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja: Secret Truths of the Bhagavatam, p. 157)

Sri Hari-bhakti vilasa 11.234: »Krishna-nama is the sweetest of the sweet and the most auspicious of all that is auspicious. It is the fully ripened fruit of the Veda's flourishing creeper (Srimad-Bhagavatam) and the embodiment of knowledge, cit-sakti. O best of the Bhrigu dynasty, even if someone chants the holy name only once, with faith or indifference (*hela*), he is immediately delivered from this ocean of birth and death!« (Quoted from: Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja: Sri Gaudiya Giti Gucchi, Gaudiya Vedanta Publications, Vrindavana 2003, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 6)

Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya 1.194: »Jagai and Matai hat but on fault – they were addicted to sinful activity. However, volumes of sinful activity can be burned to ashes simply by a dim reflection (*nama-abhasa*) of the chanting of Your holy name.«

<sup>8</sup> This may be the reason why Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur introduced the preeminence of *siksa* over *diksa* and why we are a *siksa*-line. He combined these two aspects by transgressing the *diksa*-dogma on the one hand while simultaneously maintaining the guru-principle in general on the other hand, bringing it back to it's essential meaning as spiritual relationship and benevolent conveyance of love and truth to the disciple.

<sup>9</sup> Srimad Bhagavatam, 3.25.25, quote from: Srila Narayana Maharaja: Secret Truth of the Bhagavatam, p. 29

<sup>10</sup> Srimad Bhagavad-gita, with the commentaries of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura and Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, Sri Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti, Vrindavana 2000, p. 991

<sup>11</sup> see Bhagavad-gita 4.36, 6.44, 9.30 (quotes in the whole manuscript, if not mentioned

otherwise, from: A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada: Bhagavad-gita As It Is, BBT): 4.36: Even if you are considered to be the most sinful of all sinners, when you are situated in the boat of transcendental knowledge you will be able to cross over the ocean of miseries.

6.44: By virtue of the divine consciousness of his previous life, he automatically becomes attracted to the yogic principles – even without seeking them. Such an inquisitive transcendentalist stands always above the ritualistic principles of the scriptures.

9.30: Even if one commits the most abominable action, if he is engaged in devotional service he is to be considered saintly because he is properly situated in his determination.

<sup>12</sup> Srimad Bhagavad-gita, with the commentaries of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura and Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, Sri Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti, Vrindavana 2000, p. 148

<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile she got a lot more of these fear- and guilt-provoking messages. Temporarily she gave up Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* due to that reason of dogmatism and moral threat.

<sup>14</sup> Compare the following verses in Bhagavad-gita:

BG 3.33: Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes. What can repression accomplish?

BG 18.11: It is indeed impossible for an embodied being to give up all activities. But he who renounces the fruits of action is called one who has truly renounced.

BG 18.40: There is no being existing, either here or among the demigods in the higher planetary systems, which is freed from these three modes born of material nature.

BG 18.60: Under illusion you are now declining to act according to My direction. But, compelled by the work born of your own nature, you will act all the same, O son of Kuntī.

<sup>15</sup> Caitanya Caritamṛta, Madhya-līla: 8.70, quote from Srila Rupa Goswami: Padyavali (14)

<sup>16</sup> The definition of *bhava* as given by Srila Rupa Goswami in his Bhakti Rasamṛta Sindhu 1.3.25f: »Patience, fruitful use of time, disinterest, lack of pride, hopefulness, longing, a desire for always singing the Lord's name, attachment to proclaiming His qualities, and a delight in the places in which He dwells – these are some examples of the Indications (*anubhavas*) that appear in a person in whom a sprout of *bhava* has been born.« (The Bhaktirasamṛtasindhu of Rupa Gosvamin, transl. with Introduction and Notes by David L. Haberman, Delhi 2003)

<sup>17</sup> BG 2.56-57: One who is not disturbed in mind even amidst the threefold miseries or elated when there is happiness, and who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a sage of steady mind. In the material world, one who is unaffected by whatever good or evil he may obtain, neither praising it nor despising it, is firmly fixed in perfect knowledge.

BG 4.22: He who is satisfied with gain which comes of its own accord, who is free from duality and does not envy, who is steady in both success and failure, is never entangled, although performing actions.

BG 5.18: The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].

BG 6.29-30: A true yogi observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized person sees Me, the same Supreme Lord, everywhere. For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me.

BG 12.13-20: One who is not envious but is a kind friend to all living entities, who does

not think himself a proprietor and is free from false ego, who is equal in both happiness and distress, who is tolerant, always satisfied, self-controlled, and engaged in devotional service with determination, his mind and intelligence fixed on Me—such a devotee of Mine is very dear to Me. He by whom no one is put into difficulty and who is not disturbed by anyone, who is equipoised in happiness and distress, fear and anxiety, is very dear to Me. My devotee who is not dependent on the ordinary course of activities, who is pure, expert, without cares, free from all pains, and not striving for some result, is very dear to Me. One who neither rejoices nor grieves, who neither laments nor desires, and who renounces both auspicious and inauspicious things—such a devotee is very dear to Me. One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equipoised in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, happiness and distress, fame and infamy, who is always free from contaminating association, always silent and satisfied with anything, who doesn't care for any residence, who is fixed in knowledge and who is engaged in devotional service—such a person is very dear to Me. Those who follow this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engage themselves with faith, making Me the supreme goal, are very, very dear to Me.

BG 13.29-31: One who sees the Supersoul equally present everywhere, in every living being, does not degrade himself by his mind. Thus he approaches the transcendental destination. One who can see that all activities are performed by the body, which is created of material nature, and sees that the self does nothing, actually sees. When a sensible man ceases to see different identities due to different material bodies and he sees how beings are expanded everywhere, he attains to the Brahman conception.

BG 14.22-25: O son of Pandu, he who does not hate illumination, attachment and delusion when they are present or long for them when they disappear; who is unwavering and undisturbed through all these reactions of the material qualities, remaining neutral and transcendental, knowing that the modes alone are active; who is situated in the self and regards alike happiness and distress; who looks upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; who is equal toward the desirable and the undesirable; who is steady, situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor; who treats alike both friend and enemy; and who has renounced all material activities—such a person is said to have transcended the modes of nature (*gunas*).

BG 15.5: Those who are free from false prestige, illusion and false association, who understand the eternal, who are done with material lust, who are freed from the dualities of happiness and distress, and who, unbewildered, know how to surrender unto the Supreme Person attain to that eternal kingdom.

BG 18.20: That knowledge by which one undivided spiritual nature is seen in all living entities, though they are divided into innumerable forms, you should understand to be in the mode of goodness.

BG 18.51-53: Being purified by his intelligence and controlling the mind with determination, giving up the objects of sense gratification, being freed from attachment and hatred, one who lives in a secluded place, who eats little, who controls his body, mind and power of speech, who is always in trance and who is detached, free from false ego, false strength, false pride, lust, anger, and acceptance of material things, free from false proprietorship, and peaceful – such a person is certainly elevated to the position of self-realization.

<sup>18</sup> BG 18.54: One who is thus transcendently situated (*brahma-bhūtaḥ*) at once realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me (*mat-bhaktim*).

<sup>19</sup> BG 5.16: When, however, one is enlightened with the knowledge (*jnana*) by which nescience (*ajnana*) is destroyed, then his knowledge (*jnana*) reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime.

BG 5.17: When one's intelligence, mind, faith and refuge are all fixed in the Supreme, then one becomes fully cleansed of misgivings through complete knowledge (*jnana*) and thus proceeds straight on the path of liberation.

BG 7.16: O best among the Bharatas, four kinds of pious men begin to render devotional service unto Me—the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive, and he who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute (*jnani*).

BG 7.17: Of these, the one who is in full knowledge and who is always engaged in pure devotional service is the best. For I am very dear to him, and he is dear to Me.

BG 7.18: Though these are all certainly great souls, I consider the *jnani* to be as dear to Me as My own self. Since his thoughts dwell always in Me, he takes determined shelter of Me as his supreme destination. Verse 7.18 is taken from the English edition of Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja: Srimad Bhagavad-gita with commentaries of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura and Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja, Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti, Mathura 2000, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, p. 437f. Concerning the category of *jnana* see also: 4.10, 4.19, 4.23, 10.10-11

<sup>20</sup> BG 5.18: The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].

<sup>21</sup> BG 5.7: One who works in devotion, who is a pure soul, and who controls his mind and senses is dear to everyone, and everyone is dear to him (*sarva-bhutatma-bhutatma*). Though always working, such a man is never entangled.

BG 5.25: Those who are beyond the dualities that arise from doubts, whose minds are engaged within, who are always busy working for the welfare of all living beings (*sarva-bhuta hite ratah*), and who are free from all sins achieve liberation in the Supreme.

BG 11.55: My dear Arjuna, he who engages in My pure devotional service, free from the contaminations of frutiv activities and mental speculation, he who works for Me, who makes Me the supreme goal of his life, and who is friendly to every living being (*nirvairah sarva-bhutesu*)—he certainly comes to Me. See also BG 6.29-30, 12.13, 13.29-31, 18.20 as quoted in footnote 17.

<sup>22</sup> Translation of these two verses by the author on the basis of the translation of Srila Narayana Maharaja and Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja as well as the Sanskrit.

<sup>23</sup> Leah Freyermuth: Mahas Patah. Aufbruch in die Welt des ungebrochenen Lichts, Seite 108, Frankfurt 2006. Supplement: »I am not an apostle of love, no disciple of wisdom, no servant of the Lord. But what am I? A tool in the hands of my master, a flute played by the divine cowherd boy, a leaf moved by the breath of his Lord.« (Sri Aurobindo)

<sup>24</sup> See also Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharajas purport to BG 18.55: »After attainment of the *brahma-bhuta* stage of freedom from material conceptions, devotional service begins by one's hearing about the Lord. When one hears about the Supreme Lord, automatically the *brahma-bhuta* stage develops, and material contamination – greediness and lust for sense enjoyment – disappears. As lust and desires disappear from the heart of a devotee, he becomes more attached to the service of the Lord, and by such attachment he becomes free from material contamination. In that state of life he can understand the Supreme Lord. This is the statement of Srimad-Bhagavatam also. Also after liberation the process of *bhakti* or transcendental service continues. The Vedanta-sutra confirms this: *aprayanat tatrapi hi drstam*. This means that after liberation the process of devotional service continues.«

<sup>25</sup> Email from 18.12.06



<sup>26</sup> Krishna states in Bhagavad-gita, 9.19: » O Arjuna, I control heat, the rain, and the drought. I am immortality and I am Death personified; both sat and asat are in Me.« In the purport Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja says: »By analyzing all these different energies of Krishna, one can ascertain that for Krishna there is no distinction between matter and spirit, or, in other words, He is both matter and spirit. In the advanced stage of Krishna consciousness, one does not therefore make such distinctions. He sees Krishna only in everything.«

<sup>27</sup> Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur: »Life as an animal, bird, insect, or any other of the countless thousands of species is acceptable, but taking shelter of deceit is thoroughly improper. Only a honest person possesses real auspiciousness.« (Upadesavali, verse 11, quoted in: Sri Gaudiya Giti Gucchi, Gaudiya Vedanta Publications, Forth Edition, Vrndavana 2003, p. 202)

<sup>28</sup> The topic here is not the discussion about sense and nonsense of violence. This is used here only as an example for thinking beyond values. Who is specially interested in the question of violence in terms of transcendence may refer to my essay: »Zur Kritik der Gewalt«. There the question of transcendental force is discussed in detail. (Tattva Viveka No. 3, Frankfurt 1995)

<sup>29</sup> BG 5.18: The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].

BG 6.8-9: A person is said to be established in self-realization and is called a yogi [or mystic] when he is fully satisfied by virtue of acquired knowledge and realization. Such a person is situated in transcendence and is self-controlled. He sees everything—whether it be pebbles, stones or gold—as the same. A person is considered still further advanced when he regards honest well-wishers, affectionate benefactors, the neutral, mediators, the envious, friends and enemies, the pious and the sinners all with an equal mind.

BG 6.29: A true yogi observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized person sees Me, the same Supreme Lord, everywhere.

BG 6.32: He is a perfect yogi who, by comparison to his own self, sees the true equality of all beings, in both their happiness and their distress, O Arjuna!

BG 13.31: When a sensible man ceases to see different identities due to different material bodies and he sees how beings are expanded everywhere, he attains to the Brahman conception.

BG 14.22-25: O son of Pandu, he who does not hate illumination, attachment and delusion when they are present or long for them when they disappear; who is unwavering and undisturbed through all these reactions of the material qualities, remaining neutral and transcendental, knowing that the modes alone are active; who is situated in the self and regards alike happiness and distress; who looks upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; who is equal toward the desirable and the undesirable; who is steady, situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor; who treats alike both friend and enemy; and who has renounced all material activities—such a person is said to have transcended the modes of nature (*gunas*).

BG 18.20: That knowledge by which one undivided spiritual nature is seen in all living entities, though they are divided into innumerable forms, you should understand to be in the mode of goodness.

<sup>30</sup> BG 18.11: It is indeed impossible for an embodied being to give up all activities. But he who renounces the fruits of action is called one who has truly renounced.

BG 18.40: There is no being existing, either here or among the demigods in the higher planetary systems, which is freed from these three modes born of material nature.

BG 18.60: Under illusion you are now declining to act according to My direction. But,

compelled by the work born of your own nature, you will act all the same, O son of Kunti.

<sup>31</sup> Bhaktivinoda Thakura: Jaiva-dharma, Mathura 2002, 2nd edition, p. 480 (This sentence is practically identical with a verse from Hari-bhakti-vilasa, what is not said in this context in Jaiva-dharma. The verse is quoted in the commentary to Sri Upadesamrta, published by Srila Narayana Maharaja, p. 32.

<sup>32</sup> CC, Madhya 8.226, for further elaborations see the chapter »The essence of all advice«

<sup>33</sup> Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada writes in his purport to CC Madhya 22.109: »If one does not come to the platform of spontaneous service in the beginning, he must adopt regulative service according to the instructions of the spiritual master. This regulative service is called *vaidhi bhakti*.« This means that it is possible to practice *raganuga-bhakti* already at the beginning.

<sup>34</sup> See: Swami B. B. Tirtha: Shri Caitanya. His Life and Associates, Mandala Publishing, San Raphael 2001, p. 45f. Pundarik Vidyanidhi externally acted like a materialist, because he was wealthy, had servants and chewed pan. Gadadhara Pandit criticised him for that, when he met him the first time. His associate, Mukunda Datta, then chanted a verse from the Srimad Bhagavatam, what caused Pundarik Vidyanidhi to fall in ecstasy immediately, he started to cry and to glorify Radha-Krsna. Caitanya Mahaprabhu then requested Gadadhara Pandit to accept Pundarik Vidyanidhi as his spiritual master in order to counteract his offense.

<sup>35</sup> See Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura: Sarartha Darsini, ed. by Mahanidhi Swami, New Dehli 2004, p. 300 (10.29.10-11): »In Krishnas pastimes on earth He often turns the most lowly things into the most elevated.«, and brings examples from Krishnas role as chariot-driver and the higher position of the conjugal rasa (*srngara-rasa*) over the marital *rasa*.

<sup>36</sup> BG 4.22: He who is satisfied with gain which comes of its own accord, who is free from duality (*dvandva*) and does not envy, who is steady in both success and failure, is never entangled, although performing actions.

BG 7.27: O son of Bharata, O conqueror of the foe, all living entities are born into delusion, bewildered by dualities (*dvandva*) arisen from desire and hate.

BG 13.22: The living entity in material nature thus follows the ways of life, enjoying the three modes of nature. This is due to his association with that material nature. Thus he meets with good and evil among various species.

<sup>37</sup> Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura: Sarartha Darsini, ed. by Mahanidhi Swami, New Dehli 2004, p. 300-301 (10.29.10-11)

<sup>38</sup> The German translation in the edition of 1980 differs much from this English version from 1975. While the English says: »Mahaprabhu again rejected«, the German translation is only saying: »Mahaprabhu sagte: Sprich weiter und sage etwas mehr.« (Mahaprabhu said: Go on and tell more.« I translated the verse 8.64 according to the original Bengali-sloka.

<sup>39</sup> quoted from Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura: Sarartha Darsini, p. 377

<sup>40</sup> Madhurya Kadambini explains that *anarthas* are completely eradicated only at prema:

»Each of the *anarthas* has five grades of *anartha-nivrtti* (nullification): limited or partial (*eka-desa-vartini*), pervasive (*bahu-desa-vartini*), almost complete (*prayiki*), complete (*purna*), and absolute (*atyantiki*). Thus the nullification of *anarthas* arising from *aparadha* is as follows. From the start of devotional activities (*bhajana-kriya*) the nullification is partial according to the nyaya: the town burned, the cloth is torn.

(According to gramo-dagdhaḥ paṭo bhagah logic, when we hear that the town is burned, we can imagine that some of it must still be existing, or if a cloth is torn, the pieces are still existing.) By continued practice, with the appearance of *nistha*, the eradication is more pervasive. With the appearance of *rati*, or *bhava*, the eradication is almost complete. With the appearance of *prema*, the eradication is complete. With attainment of the Lord's association, the eradication of *anarthas* is absolute, with no possibility of their reappearance.«

(Madhurya Kamdambini p. 27)

<sup>41</sup> Important to recognize here is the approximate value. Srila Narayana Maharaja is not speaking in absolute terms but in proximity. Zero *anarthas* is practically impossible, only very, very few *anarthas*. We cannot get rid of the *anarthas* hundred percent, what isn't even necessary, because this will come automatically by performing *bhajan* and *seva*.

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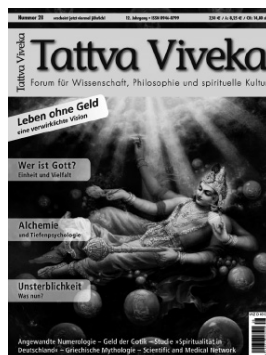


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