

reflections

LETTERS

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A Newsletter from His Holiness Bhakti Tirtha Swami

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The Most Dangerous Elements

by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



The Lord states that as soon as one reaches Him by devotional service — which is the one and only way to approach the Personality of Godhead — one attains complete freedom from the bondage of birth and death. In other words, the path of salvation from the material clutches fully depends on the

principles of knowledge and detachment gained from serving the Lord. The pseudo religionists have neither knowledge nor detachment from material affairs, for most of them want to live in the golden shackles of material bondage under the shadow of philanthropic activities disguised as religious principles. By a false display of religious sentiments, they present a show of devotional service while indulging in all sorts of immoral activities. In this way they pass as spiritual masters and devotees of God. Such violators of religious principles have no respect for the authoritative *ācāryas*, the

holy teachers in the strict disciplic succession. They ignore the Vedic injunction *ācāryopāsana* — “One must worship the *ācārya*” — and Kṛṣṇa’s statement in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.2) *evaṁ paramparā-prāptam*, “This supreme science of God is received through the disciplic succession.” Instead, to mislead the people in general they themselves become so-called *ācāryas*, but they do not even follow the principles of the *ācāryas*.

These rogues are the most dangerous elements in human society. Because there is no religious government, they escape punishment by the law of the state. They cannot, however, escape the law of the Supreme, who has clearly declared in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that envious demons in the garb of religious propagandists shall be thrown into the darkest regions of hell (*Bg.* 16.19-20). *Śrī Isopaniṣad* confirms that these pseudo religionists are heading toward the most obnoxious place in the universe after the completion of their spiritual master business, which they conduct simply for sense gratification.

-*Sri Isopanisad Verse 12*



Sukadeva Gosvami Instructing King Pariksit

Understanding Selflessness

by His Holiness Bhakti Tirtha Swami



While materialists derive happiness from acquiring material things, pious people obtain the most enjoyment from helping others. Receiving appreciation for their deeds is part of what enlivens pious people, as well as knowing internally that they have done something wonderful. Rarely is a person in this world happiest when he or she acts positively for another without receiving approval. But for extraordinary souls, no external appreciation is needed. Whatever they do, they do for Krishna. Let us be honest with ourselves. Which category do we fall into? Hopefully, none of us are like those who define the happiest moments of their lives by the acquisition of material possessions. Overjoyed when they finally buy a house or get a raise, materialists link happiness intimately to objects related to their own bodies or somebody else's body.

Pious people, on the other hand, are unsatisfied with just meditating on themselves. Situated somewhat in the mode of goodness, they strive to uplift others, but at the same time want to know that they are valued. The transcendental state surpasses piety, however, because it does not depend on recognition. Situated in the mode of pure goodness, true transcendentalists do not need external validation. Why should they depend on somebody else to let them know they have value, when they continually feel the approval of Krishna within their hearts? Most of us, however, still seek happiness based on distinct reciprocation from others. If we do something we feel is wonderful, but do not receive the reciprocation we want, do we feel angry or disturbed, depressed or frustrated? If so, we are still trapped within the modes of material nature.

As spirit-souls, all of us crave to reach a point at which we experience God's presence powerfully in all things, in all circumstances, and at all times. In such a consciousness, we can genuinely work with and assist others, understanding sincerely that whatever we do then becomes an offering of great love to the Lord. Such a person will attain the highest level of happiness because very few obstacles will block them. Firstly, they will not allow themselves to be stopped by the lack of material possessions or facility, as they operate outside the arena of the physical. Secondly, they will not be stagnated by pouring their emotional energy into expectations for external reciprocation, because whatever they undertake is for the benefit of the soul in connection with Krishna. Therefore, they constantly find numerous opportunities for richer experiences of ever-deepening happiness.

How important it is to truly reflect on ourselves! Let us go beyond just thinking of ourselves or others in a material sense. Let us surpass the need for external appreciation. We all want to connect with real love. We know theoretically that genuine love cannot be found outside of our connection with Krishna. Yet, at the same time, most of us find it difficult to develop true selflessness, which is a prerequisite for experiencing real love.

Developing selflessness is like learning a new language. Most of us find it difficult to acquire new language skills, unless we are linguists by profession or possess a natural talent. Learning a new language means having to codify the world differently. It's quite a task to continue to interact in our normal environments, but to label the objects that surround us in an extraordinary way. Imagine that the words we usually use to describe a table or a chair, a man or a woman, belong to our previous language. Suddenly, we now have to use new vocabulary to describe familiar objects. Similarly, when trying to access selflessness, we do not have to change our environment or our activities, but we must transform the way we label and interact with them. Acknowledging that the false ego is part of our consciousness, we now need to question ourselves constantly about the source of our behavior. Ask yourself: Are my actions motivated by a desire for fame and adoration? Or are they motivated by a longing to be fully present for another? Do my words stem from a hidden need to make the best arrangements for my own comfort, or do they come from a genuine desire to make the best connection with God within another person?

Devotee Spotlight: Mahajana dasa



How and where did you join the International Society for Krishna Consciousness?

Well, it is a long story but, basically, I was drifting around the world looking for the meaning of life and searching for a personal God. Since all of the gods who had been presented to me until that point in my life were not personal, I decided to go and expose myself to the world by coming out of my shell, thinking that it would be easier for Him to see me if I was out and around looking for Him—ha-ha. I was so proud....

After some years of living in many countries and visiting many more, crossing from the Andes to the African Atlas Mountains and passing through almost every mountain chain in the world, including forests, jungles, oceans, and seas, living under bridges, streets, beaches, and so on, I became a sailor. Finally after going around the globe over and over again, in the Polynesian Islands, more exactly in

New Zealand, I joined the Auckland Hare Krishna Farm community. It is a place where I've been treated with so much love and compassion that I decided to surrender everything to Srila Prabhupada and Krishna.

I was a dirty and crazy fellow, but at the first *mangalaratik* when the curtains opened, I saw a black boy with a little girl, both of them surrounded by so much freshness and covered with fragrant flowers, being worship by many grown up people. I thought to myself, "If anyone in the absolute existence is God, I'm sure that He must be this charming boy." Two days later I started to chant my sixteen rounds and I never left the movement. Many mystical and adventurous things happened since I got my first book on some island's pier, but for that maybe we can talk another day.

How did you meet your spiritual master?

I met H.H. Bhakti Tirtha Swami after many attempts to be initiated by other ISKCON *gurus*; for some reason I wasn't having much luck with my choices. Either the *gurus* were having some problems in their spiritual lives or they stopped giving initiation at that time. I was frustrated and I asked Krishna to please give me once and for all a *guru*, and that very same day I saw a picture of Bhakti Tirtha Swami in the San Diego's *brahmachari* ashram. I asked about him; I wanted to learn more. One of his disciples told me that he had three books published and that he could lend them to me. I agreed and, when I got them, I read them all in a week.

I wanted more, so he told me that now I could hear one of his classes on tape. When I did, after the first five minutes, I shouted, "Yes! He is my *guru*." I ran to ask somebody when and where I could meet him and was told that he would be at New York Ratha-yatra dancing and chanting in front of the chariots.

I flew into NY with the expectation of meeting him. I went to the parade and I ran in front of every chariot until I got to Lord Jagannath's where I saw hundreds of devotees wildly dancing around someone. I made my way through the devotees and I saw him. As I said before, I was very proud and for some reason I felt that he should be noticing me. But, of course, why should he? Until all of a sudden he embraced me and gave me the microphone to chant for as long as five minutes. After that, I asked him to give me his glasses while he was dancing so I could clean the sweat that had wet them. Although he had done that many times throughout the parade, he always thanked me with his beautiful smile.

After that, when we were at the park, I was introduced formally to him and I asked him if I could be his disciple. He agreed but he told me that he would not give me initiation until the following May. But a month later, he said that he

would give me initiation as an award for having the top sankirtan scores in all of the US for one week. A day later, we went to some forest and sat amongst the trees there; we talked and he gave me my first initiation.

What are some of your short-term goals in Krishna consciousness? Long-term goals?

I will express my long-term goals by quoting a phrase that Srila Bhakti Tirtha Swami used to quote, and it goes more or less like this: "The best way to honor someone who you love is to create and maintain a community in which we are putting into practice the principles that he taught." That has always been and it will always be my main goal. Another one will be to make Srila Bhakti Tirtha Swami known in every Spanish speaking country around the world by his wonderful books, and have this literature in every bookstore in Latin-America.

Regarding my short-term goals, I can say that they are of great importance in my day-to-day life. I strive to dedicate my daily personal activities to bringing about harmony in the loving relationship amongst devotees. These are the two long-term and one short-term goal that give some meaning to my life; all the rest is irrelevant to me. I've been practicing this for the last 15 years and I pray to the *Vaishnavas* to please bless me so that I may continue doing it for the rest of my life.

I also will present you now with a list of additional goals that are very important to me. I have this list printed out and it is always with me. These were the goals of my spiritual master's life, and these are the goals of my life.

1. Try to be an example of an unalloyed devotee.
2. Help to create an environment that values each devotee more and provides more substantial care.
3. Act as a catalyst to help devotees focus more on development of holistic communities, in which, under the banner of simple living and high thinking, they will be able to put emphasis on communication, strong *sadhana* and *samskaras*.
4. Learn and teach the devotees to connect more and influence global consciousness.
5. Learn and teach the devotees how to chastely maintain Krishna consciousness and at the same time make it more relevant to other religions and the secular society.
6. Preach, write, and show how to solve material problems with spiritual solutions.

What are the most important aspects of your personal *sadhana* that help you remain steady in devotional service?

I worship my Deities every single day and have done so for the last eleven years. I try to spend the major part of my day doing things for the *Vaishnavas*, and I listen to a class everyday.

Can you tell about an event in your life when you really saw Krishna's mercy coming through?

During the last three months of my Guru Maharaja's time on this planet, I was part of the team of eight fortunate souls who were with him in his *nirjana bhajan*. Honestly, if someone were not needed there, that person would have been me. But he told me a few days before he left, "You know why you are here Mahajan? You are here to tell the world what you saw."

In conclusion, please share any other thoughts or realizations that could benefit the *Vaisnava* community.

Throughout all these short years that I have been in the movement, I have finally come to realize that two things are the most important components in the devotional life of a conditioned living entity. One is *tattva* (philosophy) and the other one is *rasa* (relationships). Sometimes we are very expert in quoting *sastras*, and reading tons and tons of books on philosophy, but we are very much lacking the proper techniques to operate harmonious loving relationships based on the understanding of those *sastras*.

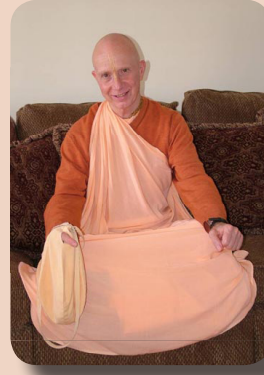
Sometimes we try to impress each other with all the knowledge of the *Vaishnava* philosophy that we have studied in our *bhakti-sastri* course, but most of the time we fail in our loving relationships. We do not understand that it is more important "to be properly related than to be right." That brings us to the famous phrase that Srila Prabhupada said a short time before leaving this world: "Your love for me will be shown by the ability that you have for working together."

If we can do that by starting from the basics in our husband and wife relationship, leader and subject relationship, society and global community relationship, etc., stopping abusive interactions and unhealthy dealings, we will be able to live as "bombs of love" about to explode and inundate the whole world with Krishna Prema.

Mahajana dasa is a disciple of H.H. Bhakti Tirtha Swami. He lives in Argentina and organizes outreach programs throughout South America.

Developing Faith

by His Holiness Candramauli Swami



Whatever one does in life requires some faith. When you get on a plane after you've paid your money, you have faith the pilot will get you where you are going safely. You don't even know his name yet, but there is faith. Without faith, there is no progress in anything. Spiritual life, particularly the process of *bhakti-yoga*, is the path of faith. This is known as *sraddha* or firm faith.

The different processes of *yoga* are characterized by certain outstanding traits. *Karma-yoga* is the path of sacrificing the fruits of one's work. *Jnana-yoga* is the path of knowledge leading to liberation from material entanglement. *Astanga-yoga* is the eight-fold path of mysticism culminating in meditation on the Supreme. *Bhakti-yoga* is devoting all of one's activities in loving service to the Supreme

Bhakti or the path of devotional service is centered on faith: faith in *guru*, faith in the revealed scriptures. That faith is not blind but develops in the association with those on the path. "[In the] beginning is faith, but faith should not be blind. *Mahajano yena gatah sa pantha* [Cc. Madhya 17.186]. You have to take faith from great personalities. That is faith. This is the way. But faith is the beginning. And that is quite natural. Faith means by seeing others, respectable persons following, "And why not I shall follow?" That is faith. Faith is not also blind. You can see that so many others are doing, "So why I myself?" (Srila Prabhupada, Room Conv., May 2, 1976, Fiji).

So faith is not blind. One can practically experience by observing others and following the same process. This faith is called *balotpadika* or coming from external sources. One will naturally observe, "These persons are progressing spiritually. They are becoming free from material activities and are exhibiting enthusiasm in serving the Lord. They are happy and have knowledge of scripture." This will give one the faith that, if I follow these persons, then I will have the same experience.

So one may say, yes, I have faith that the process works but it may not work for me or I am differently situated, therefore it may not be effective. No, it works for everyone but what is required is faith in a spiritual guide. The *guru* is one who can instill faith by giving spiritual knowledge along with practical guidance. Faith in the representative of Krishna, the spiritual master, is fundamental. That faith is awaked and develops by the process of hearing from *guru* and Krsna:

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Now hear, O son of Prtha, how by practicing *yoga* in full consciousness of Me, with mind attached to Me, you can know Me in full, free from doubt.” (*Bhagavad-gita* 7.1)

“To hear about Krsna from Vedic literatures, or to hear from Him directly through the *Bhagavad-gita*, is itself righteous activity. And for one who hears about Krsna, Lord Krsna, who is dwelling in everyone’s heart, acts as a best-wishing friend and purifies the devotee who constantly engages in hearing of Him. In this way, a devotee naturally develops his dormant transcendental knowledge. As he hears more about Krsna from the *Bhagavatam* and from the devotees, he becomes fixed in the devotional service of the Lord. By development of devotional service one becomes freed from the modes of passion and ignorance, and thus material lusts and avarice are diminished. When these impurities are wiped away, the candidate remains steady in his position of pure goodness, becomes enlivened by devotional service and understands the science of God perfectly. Thus *bhakti-yoga* severs the hard knot of material affection and enables one to come at once to the stage of *asamsayam-samagram*, understanding of the Supreme Absolute Truth Personality of Godhead.” (SB 1.2.17-21)

Therefore only by hearing from Krsna or from His devotee in Krsna consciousness can one understand the science of Krsna.

Both faith in the process of *bhakti-yoga* and transcendental knowledge awaken and develop by regular and systematic hearing from both *guru* and Krsna, especially when done in the association of devotees. Awakening and developing faith is not done whimsically or haphazardly but is an exact process of activity that results in a transformation of one consciousness from the material to the spiritual that is characterized by attachment for spiritual activities and simultaneous detachment from material activities. Initially some preliminarily faith is required but that faith then becomes *sraddha* or strong faith.

Now let us explore a deeper faith principle. The following verse and purport from the *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, *Madhya-lila* 22.62 indicate that by serving the Lord in devotion, everything else is simultaneously and perfectly achieved:

TRANSLATION

“*Sraddha* is confident, firm faith that by rendering transcendental loving service to Krsna, one automatically performs all subsidiary activities. Such faith is favorable to the discharge of devotional service.”

PURPORT

Firm faith and confidence are called *sraddha*. When one engages in the Lord’s devotional service, he is to be understood to have performed all his responsibilities in the material world. He has satisfied his forefathers, ordinary living entities, and demigods and is free from all responsibility. Such a person does not need to take care of his responsibilities separately. It is automatically done.

Krsna further confirms this statement by explaining how devotional service to Himself satisfies everyone and everything in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 11.5.41:

TRANSLATION

O King, one who has given up all material duties and has taken full shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, who offers shelter to all, is not indebted to the demigods, great sages, ordinary living beings, relatives, friends, mankind or even one’s forefathers who have passed away. Since all such classes of living entities are part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, one who has surrendered to the Lord’s service has no need to serve such persons separately.

PURPORT

In fact, the members of the Krsna consciousness society are sometimes criticized by materialistic persons for giving too much attention to Krsna rather than working to fulfill all of the above-mentioned obligations. In reply to this, the *Bhagavatam* (4.31.14) states, *yatha taror mula-nishecanena tripyanti tat-skandha-bhujopasakhah*. If one waters the root of a tree, automatically all of the branches, twigs, leaves, etc., are also nourished. There is no need for, nor any effectiveness in, separately pouring water on the branches, twigs and leaves of a tree. The water has to be placed on the root. Similarly, food must be placed in the stomach, from where it is automatically distributed to all of the limbs of the body. It is foolish to try to nourish the whole body by rubbing food separately on all the bodily limbs. Similarly, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna, is the source of all existence. Everything is emanating from Krsna, everything is maintained by Krsna, and at the end, everything will merge to rest in Krsna. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna, is the supreme benefactor, friend, protector and well-wisher of every living entity, and if He is satisfied, then automatically the whole world will become satisfied, just as all of the bodily limbs are strengthened and satisfied when food is duly remitted to the stomach.

Again it is confirmed by the Lord how faith brings one ultimately to the stage of spiritual perfection in *Bhagavad-gita* 3.39:

TRANSLATION

A faithful man who is dedicated to transcendental knowledge and who subdues his senses is eligible to achieve such knowledge, and having achieved it he quickly attains the supreme spiritual peace.

PURPORT

Such knowledge in Krsna consciousness, can be achieved by a faithful person who believes firmly in Krsna. One is called a faithful man who thinks that simply by acting in Krsna consciousness he can attain the highest perfection. This faith is attained by the discharge of devotional service, and by chanting Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, which cleanses one's heart of all material dirt. Over and above this, one should control the senses. A person who is faithful to Krsna and who controls the senses can easily attain perfection in the knowledge of Krsna consciousness without delay.

Here the process is explained simply as chant Hare Krsna and carefully controls the senses. The essence of all spiritual practices is the regular chanting of the Hare Krsna mahmantra. This is repeatedly stated throughout the revealed scriptures. The *Kali-santarana Upanisad* states:

*hare krsna hare krsna krsna krsna hare hare
hare rama hare rama rama rama hare hare
iti sodasakam namnam kali-kalmasa nasanam
natah parataropayah sarva vedesu drsyate*

The sixteen words of the Hare Krsna *mantra* are especially meant for counteracting the sins of the age of Kali. To save oneself from the contamination of this age there is no alternative but to chant the Hare Krsna *mantra*. After searching through all the Vedic literatures one cannot find a method of religion for this age so sublime as the chanting of Hare Krsna.

(Lord Brahma instructs Narada Muni)

The entire process of faith is dependent on complete faith in chanting Krsna's holy names. That is the perfection of faith. It works without a doubt. Have faith and always chant Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

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