

Divine guidance, through the letters, to the sincere
aspirants on the path of devotion by a Messenger of
Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, His Divine Grace
Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Goswāmī Mahārāj





ALL GLORIES TO ŚRĪ ŚRĪ GURU AND GAURĀṄGA!

Affectionately

Yours

Divine Letters

(1981 - 2012)

His Divine Grace

Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Goswāmī Mahārāj

SREE CHAITANYA GAUDIYA MATH

Other books by Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Goswāmī Mahārāj in English:

Śrī Chaitanya: His Life & Associates
A Taste of Transcendence
Sages of Ancient India
Śuddha Bhakti: The Path of Pure Devotion
Daśāvatāra: The Ten Manifestations of Godhead
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The Holy life of Śrīla B.D. Mādhava Goswāmī Mahārāj
Śrī Archana Paddhati: The Puja Book
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The Philosophy of Love

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Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Goswāmī Mahārāj*

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❧ *Table of Contents* ❧

	<i>Preface</i> _____	7
PART I:	Fundamentals of Devotion_____	19
PART II:	Medicine for the Mind_____	47
PART III:	Harinām and Dīkṣā_____	71
PART IV:	Association of Sādhus_____	93
PART V:	Realising the Infinite_____	145
PART VI:	Practicing Devotion in Family Life_____	175
PART VII:	Spreading the Message of Lord Chaitanya_____	215
PART VIII:	Vaiṣṇava Vows and Observances_____	235
	<i>About the Author</i> _____	249





❧ Preface ❧

A primary feature of the modern world is the great extent and rapid speed of communication. It is the nature of living beings to share their experiences and knowledge with others—communication is the very essence of relationships. However, the plight of the *jīvātmā* (individual spirit soul) immersed in the material world is such that most communication is focused on mundane temporary relationships and temporary sense objects, and therefore contributes to an overall sense of impermanence, not just of the world but also of the self. As the actual nature of the *jīvātmā* is that of an eternally existing entity, he or she can never find happiness in this paradoxical situation. However, the ancient Indian scriptures and the guardians of those sacred literatures in the form of authentic *sampradāyas* (lineages of spiritual preceptors) communicate to us a more positive and complete view of Reality— an environment where the focus is on the eternal relationships between the Supreme Transcendental Divine Couple, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Krishna, and Their devotees, in a variety of mellows of divine love. We are also informed that access to this divine realm is by the sincere cultivation of a relationship with a representative and intimate associate of these Transcendental Personalities— a *śuddha-bhakta*, a *guru* established in pure eternal transcendental devotion and knowledge. By hearing from such a person, by exchanging thoughts and loving sentiments with such a person, the heart becomes saturated with

divine love, and realisation of one's actual nature as the eternal servant of God is revealed.

The present book, consisting of the letters, transcendental communications, between His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Goswāmī Mahārāj and his dear disciples and followers, is an example of the importance of association with a self-realised person for those with the desire to understand Ultimate Truth and their actual self. Not only that, it is an example of the most affectionate and compassionate nature of the bona-fide spiritual *guru* for his disciples and, likewise, the affection of the sincere disciples for their *guru*. Without a doubt, one of Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Goswāmī Mahārāj's foremost qualities is his affectionate nature and humble attitude. He is a most munificent and self-realised soul, and the exchanges over the years via mail collated in this book demonstrate this clearly. In fact it can be said that his signing of “Affectionately yours” at the end of his letters reveals everything about his endearing personality and demeanor.

We thank the devotees who contributed their letters to this presentation. Respecting the confidentiality we tried to carefully eliminate the personal information, if any, and also limited the devotees' elaborate letters to His Divine Grace to few words or sentences, just to retain the questions. We humbly request forgiveness for any errors or omissions we may have made in this endeavour to present the timeless message of His Divine Grace to the contemporary reader.

The present book, being a more extensive collection of letters sent till date, retains the same title as it was published few years ago in the form of a magazine. Some of these letters were personally written by His Divine Grace, some sent via email with the help of His personal assistants while some were drafted by them under His guidance.

We extend our heart-felt thanks to all those who have contributed to this project through their valuable suggestions, time and effort.

It is our hope that all spiritual practitioners, whether aspiring, novice or advanced will relish the contents of this book. We pray to His Divine Grace for his mercy and blessings upon all sincere *sādhakas* pursuing the path of devotion. May Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛishna be pleased with this attempt to serve the lotus feet of Their pure devotee.

With humility,
The Publishers



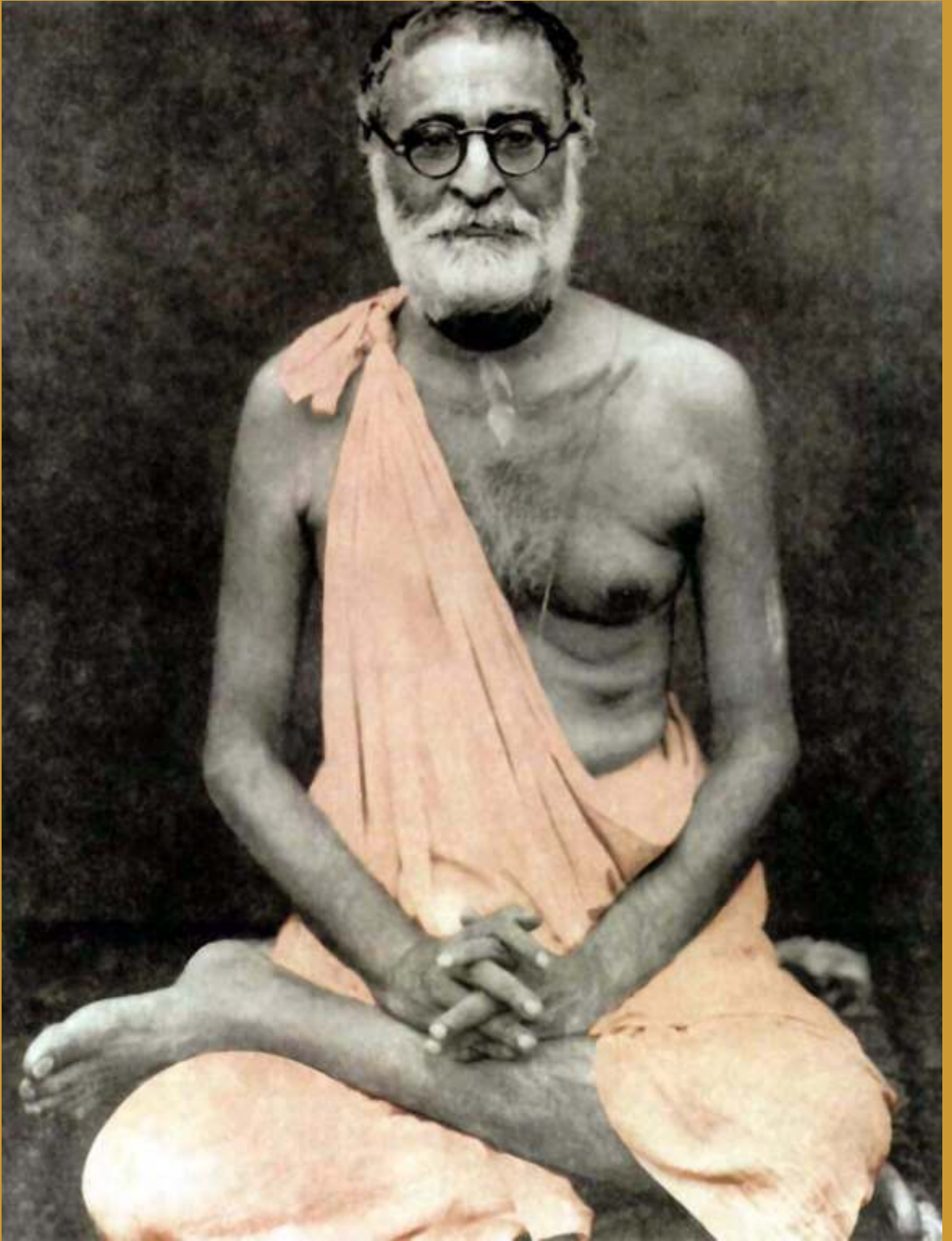
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ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTI BALLABH TIRTHA GOSWĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJ



nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa oṃ viṣṇupāda paramahamṣa parivrājakācārya 108

ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTI DAYITA MĀDHAV GOSWĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJ



nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa oṃ viṣṇupāda paramahaṃsa parivrājakācārya 108

ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTISIDDHĀNTA SARASVATĪ GOSWĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJ



SUPREME PERSONALITY OF GODHEAD ŚRĪ KRISHNA CHAITANYA
AND LORD ŚRĪ NITYĀNANDA



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Date 12.12.1987

*Loving benediction to the souls consecrated to the service
of Sree Hari, Guru & vaisnavas*

*My dear Sri Akinchandas
Sruemati Lalita Devi,*

*On my return here from Punjab-Tour last morning
I was in receipt of your affectionate letter through Sru Sudama
Bablu and noted the contents.*

*You will be happy to know, by the Grace of Sree Guru
and Sra Gauranga, the month-long Sree Vrajamandal Parikrama
(Circumambulation Ceremony of Sree Vrajamandal), the installation Ceremony
of the Deities Sree Guru-Gauranga-Radhakrishna at Behrabun Math
successfully and grandly terminated. At the fervent request of the
devotees of Chandigarh and Punjab I had to visit Chandigarh,
Amritsar and Bhatinda with a big party where I had a heavy
programme of discourses and sankirtan three or four times a day.
Many persons have embraced the order of Suddha-Bhakti (Pure
devotional cult) and have taken absolute shelter at the Lotus Feet
of Most Revered Sreea Gurudev.*

*Nobody can do anything against the Will of Supreme
Lord Sree Krishna who is All-Powerful and Supreme Controller. It is by
His sanction that you came in contact with us and I was ultimately
persuaded to help you in your aptitude for the service of Sree Krishna.
It is now upto you to make good use of the Grace showered upon you
by All-Merciful Supreme Lord Sree Krishna. The real self of every Jiva
(individual) is the eternal servant of the Supreme Lord Sree Krishna
as he is coming out of His marginal potency. You may be
unknown to me as I have got limitations but you are not
unknown to Sree Krishna as you are a part of His creation.*

At the first stage, association of real sadhus (genuine devotees) is necessary for the novice to protect him or her from the negative influence of the evil persons who are averse to the service of God. It is difficult for you to get that congenial association in the environment of your stay. In absence of companion of real sadhus you can go through devotional authentic scriptures, especially, pure doctrinal scriptures relating to the teachings of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. It is a good sign that you have felt the sweetness of the association of Sri Krishna's devotees and Sri Krishna's Name. Since Krishna is residing within your heart, so there is nothing nearer to you than Him. He will surely protect you from the negative influence if you sincerely submit to Him. There is nothing to be afraid of. Always remember ninefold teachings of 'Saranagati' (surrender to Lord).

You will not be deceived, you will not repent or you will not have frustrations or disappointments if you love Supreme Lord Sri Krishna. We cannot have retribution of love from anybody else in this world except Supreme Lord Sri Krishna, a Buddha bhakta or a Sad guru (Real Guru). People will love you in this world as long as you will be able to satisfy their demands. It is not actually love, it is lust. They want only their own sense-gratification. Worldly people have got so much limitations that they are incapable of meeting the demands of other persons. Supreme Lord Sri Krishna is Absolute. He has got nothing to get from anybody else. So, His love is disinterested and pure. He can meet all the demands of a person who wants to love Him, as He is Supreme in all respects. His Spiritual Transcendental Form is Most-Beautiful. All His Transcendental Qualities are sweetest. Our demands will be fulfilled to the extreme extent beyond our expectation if we can have contact with Him. There is a great pacification of heart that His love is carefree and He does not look into the insufficiency and drawbacks of the Jivas (spirit souls) and He has taken the Most-Munificent Form of Lord Sri Jagananga going to all persons, door to door irrespective of their insufficiency and dignifications, position and status and paying love from all that - "I am embracing you, you come and love Me." In spite of that if we do not love Sri Krishna, it is our mistake. Love for Sri Krishna will foster love for all Jivas as they are coming out from the same Source.

Accept your paying to All-Monarch Sri Krishna to whom you all. Accept your

a writing ten-fold process: the eternal nature of the real self - love for Sri Krishna will be manifested.

By universal chanting of the Holy Name of Sri Krishna Kṛṣṇa-māṇavaṇaṁ

We are in a way. Hope this will find all of you quite safe and

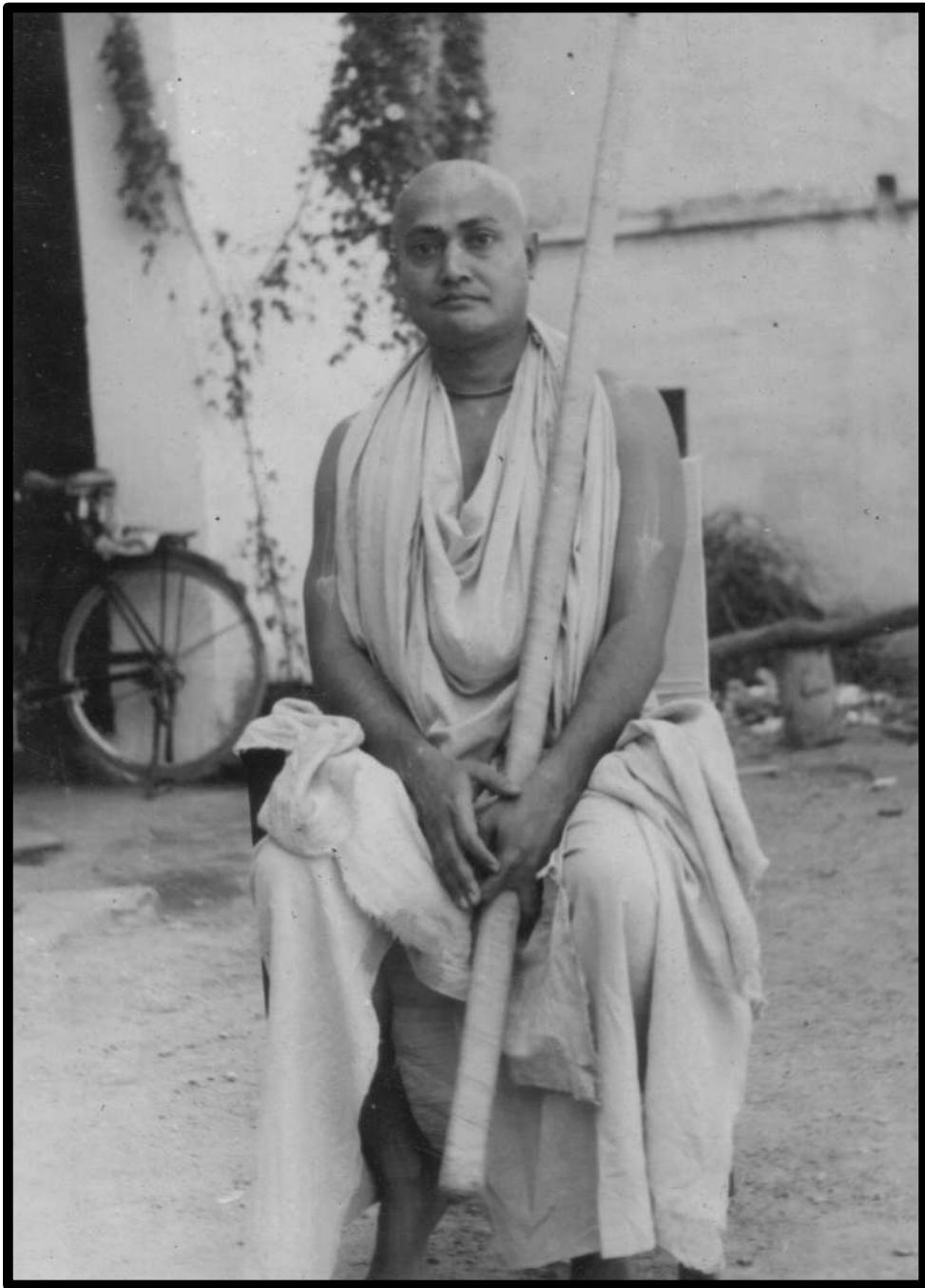
Accept your paying to



Affly yours

Blakely Ballath Lirith





PART I

Fundamentals of Devotion

If there is a mistake in determining the self, there will also be a mistake in the determination of the actual necessity of the self. If necessity (goal of life) is wrongly determined, the means to achieve it will also be wrong. So, all efforts will be futile. It is very essential to have clear and correct knowledge of self.



Root cause of sufferings

All glory to Śrī Guru & Gaurāṅga

Dear Śrī _____,

Received your letter dated _____ sent by e-mail and noted the contents.

May All Merciful Śrī Guru, Gaurāṅga Rādhā Krishna bless you.

The very fact that we are in bondage and are suffering threefold afflictions proves that we are averse to God (Śrī Krishna). The root cause of our affliction is forgetfulness of our eternal relationship with Śrī Krishna. Those *jīvas*, who have done eternal good deeds, who are fortunate, come in contact with real *sādhus* (*śuddha bhaktas*) and come to know about their real self; that they are eternal servants of Śrī Krishna and as they have forgotten their eternal relationship with Śrī Krishna, they are entangled in the snare of Māya. Now if they take absolute shelter at the Lotus Feet of Śrī Krishna, they will be rescued. *Jīvas* are atomic spiritual sparks - they have the qualities of thinking, feeling and willing. Misuse of their relative independence (volition) is the cause of their averseness to Śrī Krishna.

Śrī Krishna does not want to destroy the relative independence of *jīvas*, because by that, the very purpose and existence of *jīvas* will be destroyed. So Śrī Krishna and His devotees always try to advise *jīvas* and make them understand so that they will submit to Him willingly.

We do not know when we have become averse to God - to our Supreme Master, Śrī Krishna. We do not find any date here. We have forgotten our relationship with Śrī Krishna from time immemorial. When we became averse to Śrī Krishna by misuse of our relative independence, the illusory energy (external material energy) of Śrī Krishna enveloped us and since then we have been passing through innumerable cycles of births and deaths.

We reap the fruits of our own good and bad deeds. We should not blame others for the afflictions we get due to our own *karma*. Others may be instrumental, but not the cause. The result of *karma* (*prārabdha karma*) which has started should be suffered or enjoyed — whether he is an ascetic or a householder.

Only *śuddha-bhakti* or *śuddha nām* can destroy the fruits of even *prārabdha-karma*.

My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Accept the path willingly

The Supreme Lord never interferes with the relative independence of the conditioned souls. If their relative independence is stopped forcibly, the individual soul which is *aṇu- sacchidānanda* will be destroyed. If consciousness is destroyed, both the Supreme Lord, Who is All-existence, All-knowledge and All-bliss, as well as the *jīva*, a minute particle of consciousness originating from the marginal potency, will not be benefited. Hence the Supreme Lord does not interfere in the relative independence of conditioned souls, but as the indwelling monitor, existing within their hearts, He bestows upon them the discriminating power of understanding what is good and bad, eternal and non-eternal. Sometimes He Himself appears to help the *jīvas* to make good use of their relative independence and take absolute shelter of Him, and He also inspires the conditioned souls through His personal associates. The individual soul should submit to God willingly. If the Supreme Lord does not want to do anything forcibly to change the minds of the conditioned souls, how can conditioned souls, like us, use force to change individual minds? *Sādhus* (pure devotees) always help all conditioned souls to accept the right path willingly, by dint of their ideal lives and affectionate behaviour.

Enslaved *jīvas*, who are averse to Śrī Krishna and want to enjoy the material world, are enveloped by the material energy consisting of three primal qualities - *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ* - which are designated as Mahamāya. The non-eternal bodies of living beings are created by *rajo guṇa*, they are sustained for some time by *sattva guṇa* and they are destroyed by *tamo guṇa*. To fulfill the desires of the unfortunate *jīvas*, the Supreme Lord has created 84 lacs (8,400,000) of species. The Lord is satisfied by creating the human species because they are capable of accepting the Eternal Truth and giving up non- eternal things, i.e. they are capable of worshipping God. The human birth is not meant for eating, sleeping, defending, and mating like beasts and

birds. It is only meant for worship of the Supreme Lord.

*sṛṣṭvā purāṇi vividhāny ajayātma-śaktyā
vṛkṣān sarīrpa-paśūn khaga-dandaśūkān
tais tair atuṣṭa-hṛdayaḥ puruṣaṁ vidhāya
brahmāvaloka-dhiṣaṇaṁ mudam āpa devaḥ
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.9.28)*

'The Supreme Lord did not get contentment after creating the variety of living beings — trees, reptiles, beasts, birds and ferocious animals etc. — by His own Māya śakti. So lastly, He created the human species and was satisfied, because human beings have the proper eligibility to worship Krishna.'

So, God's desire is that human beings should worship Him. Consider the following example: One person had enough money, was a well-to-do person and had all comforts, but he had difficulties with his wife. His wife was disobedient and obstinate. There always was disturbance and want of peace in the family. He had one friend who was very expert in mesmerism. He expressed his heart to him and prayed to him whether he could make his wife obedient to him. That mesmeriser gave him one magic stick. By that stick he could regulate his wife. Whatever he would order her to do, she would be forced to do. He was very happy on hearing this. He came back to the house with that stick and ordered his wife, 'sit down', 'stand up', 'come here'. In this way whatever he was ordering his wife, she was doing. But after doing this for some time he lost interest in it, because it became like a puppet show of dolls, without life. He wanted his wife to obey him willingly and by her own independence. If necessary she could object, and could say anything against him also. If she moved like a lifeless doll, the husband would not get any satisfaction. Similarly, if the Lord forcibly makes sentient beings do something, their consciousness will be destroyed, it will become matter. The Supreme Lord is not a fool, He is Omniscient. He cannot do such nonsense which is not beneficial to the sentient beings. The wife, retaining her relative independence, should willingly perform action for the satisfaction of the husband. As it is stated before, by making her a lifeless doll the husband will not be benefited.

My love to you all. May the All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Śrī Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Are karma and free choice incompatible? Do we really have free choice, as all that happens in samasāra is the cause and effect of karma? Or is it not?

Power of discrimination

God has bestowed conscience, discriminating power between good and bad, eternal and non-eternal, to human beings so they can accept that which is eternal and good and give up that which is non-eternal and bad. Human beings, because of their power of discrimination, are superior to all other species of living beings.

As human beings have this discriminating power between good and bad, right and wrong, if they do wrong and perform bad actions, they are liable to be punished, as stated in the Gītā—'*karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana*' 'We have got the right to do *karma*, actions, but the fruits of actions are controlled by Me (Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna).' Beasts, birds etc. have no such discriminating power and the understanding, they are not punished like human beings. They have their development gradually. There are exceptional cases in regard to this as stated in the scripture. 'A pigeon, being shot by a hunter with an arrow, fell down on the ground from a tree, circumambulated Viṣṇu's temple while fidgeting and died. The pigeon did not know that God is satisfied if any living being circumambulates His temple and that such a being will get the approved fruit. But due to this eternal good deed, the pigeon took his next birth in a human body, in a brāhmin family. By crossing over numerous, intermediate, other births, he got the association of a bona fide devotee and attained the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Lord.

Holy names

As stated above, although human beings are liable to be punished, they can be released from the sins of millions of births just by *nāmābhās*— glow of the Holy Name of Śrī Hari. Even they can get emancipation. An example is Ajāmila, as narrated in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 6th Canto. It is stated in the Padma Purāṇa that

while doing *Harinām*, the votary should be careful not to commit offence to Viṣṇu and *vaiṣṇavas*. Offence to *vaiṣṇavas* is more serious than offence committed to Viṣṇu. Ajāmila did not speak ill of God or devotees, but had the aptitude for sense enjoyment. His youngest son's name was Nārāyaṇ. He had great affection for the son and was fully engrossed in thinking about his son. All of a sudden, three messengers of the God of death appeared. By seeing these horrifying figures, out of fear, he loudly called out for his son 'Nārāyaṇ!' From the little son, it ultimately targeted Viṣṇu -- Nārāyaṇ, so it is called '*sāṅketya nāmābhās*'. By this he was rescued from all sins committed in his millions of births and he even got emancipation, *mukti*.

Uttering of the Holy Name is more powerful than performing silently on the beads. If the Holy Name is uttered loudly, beasts and birds will also be benefited by hearing.

It is stated above that offenders committing offence to *vaiṣṇavas* and *guru* are not rescued by uttering the Holy Name, but again in this very *Kaliyuga*, the Supreme Lord appeared as Gaura-Nityānanda. Even if the offenders, who committed offence to *vaiṣṇavas* and *guru*, utter the Holy Name Nitai-Gaurāṅga, with firm faith that Śrīman Nityananda Prabhu and Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu are Grace-incarnate Forms of the Supreme Lord, they will be rescued from the offences. Our Most Revered Gurudev used to warn that the votary should be simple hearted and sincere. It is not that out of deceitfulness they go on reproaching the *sādhus* and *gurus* thinking that they will utter Nitai-Gaurāṅga at the end of the day and they will be rescued. This is also a kind of offence, like one of the tenfold offences to Holy Name - '*nāma bale pāp budhi*' - to commit sins thinking that chanting of the Holy Name will destroy all sins.

My love to you all. May All-Merciful Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Mundane vs eternal welfare

It will not be wise to devote our valuable time and energy of this precious human birth for mundane affairs and mundane temporary benefits. This *brahmāṇḍa* is the prison house of the culprits who are averse to the service of the Supreme Eternal Master, Śrī Krishna. Culprits cannot expect to get peace in this prison house.

Blessed are those who have the association of a bona fide *śuddha-bhakta* and who remember Śrī Krishna always. Incessant remembrance of Śrī Krishna will eradicate all evils. If we want eternal benefit we should submit to Śrī Krishna unconditionally and serve Him. *Śaraṇāgati* is the best solution to all problems.

Mundane benefits are not actual benefits, as whatever we do in this world is impermanent. Relations in this world are most temporary. Efforts in this world will not produce lasting results. But what can we do, as we are entangled in these temporary mundane affairs? To make the best of a bad bargain, primary attention should be given for eternal benefit. Interests of the apparent selves should be subservient to the interest of the real self; otherwise, ultimately we may feel frustration.

There is no cause for rejoicing and moroseness in any happening of the temporary world. Everything is impermanent here. Our eternal place of stay is in the Transcendental Region - Goloka Vrindāvana. All our efforts to establish ourselves in this impermanent world will be finished, the moment this body perishes.

My love to you all. May the All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Śrī Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Only real thing

Whatever you have written in your letter is applicable to all conditioned souls. We are the eternal servants of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, but when we forget Him, the illusory energy of Śrī Krishna envelops us and we are put into this miserable plight. We wrongly think we are physical bodies and physical relations are the real relations. All these mundane relations may vanish any moment. Remembrance of Śrī Krishna and service of Śrī Krishna is the only real thing and nothing is real in this world. Under all circumstances we should always worship Śrī Krishna.

There is no difficulty in the worship of Śrī Krishna, as He is the nearest and dearest.

He is residing within our hearts. He is seeing everything. If we sincerely desire to serve Him, He will surely help us. He does not see mundane merits. He sees the sincerity of our hearts whether we actually want Him or not. One who sincerely wants Him, will surely get Him. You submit all your prayers to Him sincerely. He will fulfil your desires.

My love to you all. May the All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Śrī Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - The basis of Vaishnavism is the conception about soul, body, material consciousness and false ego. To gain success in my spiritual life, I should completely reject all that I consider “me” and “myself” now. It takes time and sincere practice to understand that I am not this body. But it is very difficult for me to accept that we should perform sādhana to finish our false self to get the real self, because I don't consider “myself” as something false. It is completely impossible to live in this world with this idea of “self- destruction”. Whom do you want to see in me? Which person should I become? You told me to perform bhajan. I do it - partially as a duty, partially as a habit. But without fundamental realisation and faith, I cannot do it sincerely.

What is bhakti?

Received your letter sent by e-mail and noted the contents.

At present I am somehow pulling on. Comparatively, I may say, I am a bit better. I am advised not to undertake any journey outside India this year, to speak less and to take complete rest. What is the use of going for preaching if I cannot serve the devotees there? The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna willing, I have the desire to go to some place in Europe or Russia next year. My present health condition does not permit me to take the risk of an extensive tour programme. If there be any programme in Russia, I shall remain in one place and devotees are to come to that place to meet me. At the most I may go to Minsk (Belarus) from Moscow.

The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and His Absolute Counterpart, bona fide *śuddha bhakta*, are impartial to all. The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna has emphatically said in the Gītā (6.40) - 'A sincere soul will never be deceived or distressed.'

Śrīla Rūpā Goswāmī in his writing, 'Śrī Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu', has given the definition of '*bhakti*'—

sarvopādhi-vinirmuktaṁ tat-paratvena nirmalam
hṛṣīkeṇa hṛṣīkeśa- sevanaṁ bhaktir ucyate
(Nārada-pañcharātra)

Our Most Revered Gurudev used to explain this Sanskrit verse elaborately. '*sarvopādhi-vinirmuktaṁ*'— in this world we get numerous denominations according to our actions, viz., doctor, lawyer, businessman, engineer and so on and even egos of *varṇāśrama* - *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra*, four stages - *brahmacharya*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyās*, and egos of belonging to any country, province, language, sect, political party, group. All these material egos of the world are to be effaced from the mind. This whole *Brahmāṇḍa* (consisting of 14 worlds) is considered unholy - '*avirinchat amaṅgalam*'. Even if anybody thinks he belongs to this *brahmāṇḍa*, he becomes unholy, he cannot perform *bhakti*. Again, by simply giving up all unholy egos of this world we are not eligible to do *bhakti*. *tat-paratvena nirmalam*— we are not of this world, we are of the Supreme Lord, Who is All-Good and Transcendental. When we realise this, then we can become pure. According to the evidence of the Gītā, subtle and gross bodies are the outcome of the '*aparā* potency' of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and *ātmā* (real self) is the outcome of the '*parā* potency'. Potency should remain for the possessor of potency. Actually, the Supreme Lord is the owner of my real and apparent selves, gross and subtle. After giving up all false apparent egos and accepting the real ego that I am of Krishna, whatever I shall do by my sense organs, for the service of Transcendental Reality Śrī Krishna, is called '*bhakti*'.

'*Bhaktistu bhagvad bhakta saṅgena parijāyate*' —Bṛhad Nāradiya Purāṇa. '*Bhakti* can be manifested only by the association of pure devotees.' A pure devotee, *śuddha bhakta*, is identical with *sādhū*. Any person, who has accumulations of previous impressions of eternal good deeds, is eligible to get the association of bona fide *sādhū*s. When one, knowingly or unknowingly, serves the Supreme Lord or His pure devotees, accumulation of such impressions of eternal good deeds has impact on the

real self, which causes awakening of the real self for the search of Eternal Truth.

Prahlād Maharāj, in reply to the question of his father Hiranyaśipu, has clearly said that no conditioned soul of the world can have devotion to the Supreme Lord by his own capacity and by the united efforts of other conditioned souls, until he takes bath in the holy dust of the lotus feet of a *śuddha bhakta*, pure devotee, i.e., until he gets the grace of a pure devotee.

We should give more stress to positive devotional practice instead of negative practice. While in the process of trying to negate the material physical body and bodily relations, thoughts of the body and bodily relationships come to our mind. But in doing positive devotional practice, remembrance of our actual real self and actual eternal relationship with Śrī Krishna and His devotees, will enter into our mind and thinking of non-eternal things of this world will be automatically removed. If you can do this remembrance of Krishna and His devotees always, uninterruptedly, you will get deliverance from your entanglement with non-eternal relationships.

But at the present stage of enslaved condition, an enslaved *jīva* is incapable of withdrawing his mind from worldly non-eternal things. Hence, association of well-established realised souls - *sādhus* - is absolutely necessary. If you keep company with the persons of the world, who have the wrong conception of self and attraction for worldly things, it will be impossible for you to release yourself from the grip of false self and false non-eternal relationships.

Root cause of sin - kāma

You can get a clear idea of it by carefully going through the writings of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura in his exposition of the three verses of the Gītā, 3rd chapter, verses 36, 37 and 39: “Arjuna asked, 'O! Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, why is a *jīva* (conditioned soul) forced to commit sin even against his desire to do it? You have stated that a spirit soul is eternal and pure— completely separate from all material qualities and relations. As such a *jīva* cannot commit sin by nature, but it is seen they are always committing sins. Therefore, clearly tell me who is engaging the *jīva* to commit sin.' *Bhagavān* said, 'O Arjuna! Passion originating from *rajo-guṇa* induces a person to commit sin. *Kāma* (passion) is desire for enjoyment. Passion is turned into anger by circumstance. *Kāma* is produced by *rajo-guṇa* and when there is obstruction in the fulfilment of the desire, by the influence of *tamo-guṇa*, it turns into anger.

'Kāma' is very violent and can devour everything. 'Kāma' is the principal enemy of the *jīva*. This passion causes nescience. *Kāma* certainly is the eternal foe of the *jīva*. This passion, like turbulent fire, envelops the *jīva*-soul. As I (*Bhagavān*) am Spiritual Substance, *jīva* is also spiritual entity. The difference is this, I am complete Spiritual Substance, possessing all opulences, and *jīva* is the minutest particle of spiritual energy and by My bestowed power, capable of doing action. As such, *jīva*'s eternal nature is to serve Me. This is called '*prema*' - Divine Love - or service of Krishna without gainful motive. Every conscious entity is naturally independent. Spirit soul is also independent (self-guided). Therefore, every spirit soul should willingly be My eternal servant. Passion or nescience is misuse of relative independence. Those *jīvas*, who by misuse of their relative independence, do not accept Me as their Eternal Master are degenerated. *Kāma* gradually envelops them and they are reduced to almost inert matter. This is called *jīva*'s entanglement with the non-eternal relationships of the world and consequently subjection to worldly sufferings'.

Way to acquire divine knowledge

As the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna is Transcendental, His instructions are also Transcendental. As such the purport of His sayings is only revealed to a completely surrendered soul. The significance of His pithy sayings - apophthegms - cannot be understood or realised correctly by human efforts through inductive process, i.e., by review or discussions. It is very clear in the aforesaid teachings of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, and explanation of those teachings by Śrīla Bhaktinodāya Tākur, that Śrī Krishna has emphatically said, He and His own persons, bona fide *guru* or *śuddha bhakta*, never interfere in the relative independence of the conditioned souls. The Supreme Lord, by His personal appearance or by His representative's appearance as *guru* or *sādhū*, always tries to persuade the conditioned souls to accept His teachings willingly and submit to Him. How can *sādhaka bhaktas* (performers of *sādhana bhakti*) supersede the process of persuasion of the Supreme Lord and His personal associates and forcibly inculcate the teachings in conditioned souls for submission to the Supreme Lord? It is not good to elaborate the subject further.

My stay in Calcutta Maṭh may be prolonged for one and a half months including Janmāṣṭamī, Rādhāṣṭamī and other functions.

Hope this will find you all in good health and spirit. My love to you all. May the All-Merciful Supreme Lord, Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



The soul, the material world, and the supreme lord

Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Can you explain how the soul, having a spiritual origin, comes in contact with the material energy?

In quality, the soul is a conscious unit and has the propensity for thinking, feeling and willing. These are the qualities of consciousness. So God has given this relative independence to every spirit soul. You can go either side. If he is forced to go one side, then he has become inert. He has got no value. God can do - can forcibly do - but then he will be reduced to inert. God will not get any benefit and that sensual being will not get any benefit. So He appears and tries to advise him to submit to Him by his own will, by doing good with his own will. He is not forcing. He himself comes and He sends his own representatives. If He does it forcibly, then it will become matter.

Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Why does the soul not want to go to the spiritual world or know Krishna? Why does he come to the material world?

When the soul is there, by the misuse of their relative independence, they become averse to Śrī Krishna, they want to enjoy this world. They have the aptitude to enjoy the world. Krishna has affection for his own sons. We are all sons of Krishna. So Krishna sends us into this material world to realise the fact and to practise, to go back home, back to Godhead (to achieve the real purpose of human life.) This is the greatest opportunity for the human being.

Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Do conditioned souls come from Vaikuṇṭha?

Not from Vaikuṇṭha. They come from *taṭasthā śakti* (marginal potency). Now when they come here, they desire. So Krishna created infinite *brahmāṇḍas* and created many species, "You go through it and enjoy if you want to." After enjoying, passing through eighty lakhs of births, through aquatics, animals, birds, trees, etc, when he gets this precious human birth, Krishna gives him discriminative power between

eternal knowledge and non-eternal knowledge, "You think now. Do you want to enjoy this world or do you want to come to Me to worship Me?"

"No, I do not want this because there are many miseries. There are many births and at the time of birth from mother's womb I had great pain there. And then, I got three-fold affliction. I do not want to remain."

Then he can go to Vaikuṇṭha.

Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Why does Krishna want jīvas to come to Him? Is it that He is lacking something? Does He do it to seek rasa-exchange with the jīvas?

He gives the opportunity to jīvas to get Him, to get His service. Jīvas are more benefited than Krishna. Because of Krishna, jīvas can come to Him and jīvas can taste the sweetness of Krishna by rendering service. Krishna is All-Existence, always *nitya kiśore*, always young. Krishna is not old and He remains always beautiful. Here we will find some people are very beautiful and after some time some disease comes, and they become so ugly. Do you not find? But Krishna will not become ugly, always beautiful. In all relationships, He is Supreme. You can love Him and you will be greatly benefited. Krishna has given us the scope, "You love Me. You have got the chance. I shall accept you as My servant, as My servitor to serve Me. I am giving you the opportunity, the greatest opportunity." But we are not taking that opportunity; we are running after this and that. We are getting afflictions. You start worshipping Krishna, see whether you are happy or not. Sincerely you try. Take absolute shelter of Him.

Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Why does Mahamāyā create a desire in us to be averse to the Lord, even though she is His servant?

The definition of *Bhagavān* is as follows: *Bhaga* means 'opulences', and *vān* means 'one who possesses'. The Supreme Lord possesses not only six-fold, but infinite kinds of opulences. Amongst those opulences are the internal spiritual potencies, called *antaraṅgā śakti*, the external material potency called *bahiraṅgā śakti*, and the marginal potency called *jīva śakti*. These three kinds of energies are relevant for the conditioned souls of this world. The internal potency and external potency are stated as *Yogamāyā* and *Mahamāyā* respectively. For instance we find that here in this world, the mother is affectionate to her child. Out of affection, the mother

sometimes adores the child and sometimes slaps the child. Similarly, out of affection, the Supreme Lord punishes the conditioned souls for their misdeeds through Mahamāya, and adores and advises them through Yogamāya to submit to the Lord and worship Him.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I did a spiritual search in many religious faiths. I was not satisfied as they lack either spiritual science or devotion or both. When I read Gauḍīya literature, I liked them and developed inclination towards those teachings. Bless me so that I make progress in this path.

Love for Śrī Krishna is inherent

I have gotten the impression, by going through your letter, that you have some liking for devotion. It has been stated in authentic scriptures that without previous impressions of eternal good deeds, which you must have done knowingly or unknowingly, you cannot have such aptitude for worshipping Krishna with devotion. As such, in spite of your spiritual search in the teachings of other faiths, you are not satisfied. In fact, every living being has natural love for the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna in their real selves. Take for instance magnet and iron— magnet attracts iron and iron is attracted by magnet. This attraction is not seen when there is rust on the iron. If the dirt on the iron is removed, the iron will run towards the magnet. So, the Supreme Lord is Śrī Krishna, Who attracts all and pleases all. Other animated beings are *kārṣṇa*, who are attracted by Him. When by misuse of relative independence, the living entities became averse to Śrī Krishna, they were enveloped by the illusory energy of Supreme Lord and they developed misidentification of self. Being victims of the illusory energy, they forget they are eternal servants of Śrī Krishna. They pass through cycles of births and deaths and ultimately become fortunate to obtain this human birth.

God has given human beings the discriminating power to understand good and bad, eternal and non-eternal. The human beings have the capacity to accept the Eternal Truth and give up non-eternal things. God was satisfied by creating human beings as they have the capacity to worship Him. This precious human birth is only meant for worship of the Supreme Lord.

Love for Śrī Krishna is inherent in every spirit soul. It is to be manifested by the

company of bona fide devotees. It is stated in Chaitanya Charitāmrita, 'Pure devotion for Krishna always exists in the real self; it is not to be acquired'. It is revealed only through hearing from a true devotee with a sincere heart.

An awakened soul can awaken many other unawakened souls. When the eternal causeless devotion of the real self is awakened, nobody can stop the eagerness and perturbation of heart of that awakened soul. The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna has said emphatically in the Gītā—'A sincere soul will never be deceived'. God is everywhere and His Grace Incarnate *Vaiṣṇavas* are also everywhere. God is Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent. As He is Complete Reality, He is also impartial. Nobody can do anything which is not in His knowledge.

It is necessary for the devotees to meet, at least once in a week, to practise principal devotional forms — 'śravan' and 'kīrtan'.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Attraction to Krishna is natural

It comes to my mind, by going through your letter, about your intense desire to come to India to worship Śrī Gaura-Hari and Śrī Krishna. The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna in fact, attracts all because of His Supreme Transcendental Qualities. The name Krishna denotes that He pleases all by attracting all. All others, other than the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna are being attracted by Him. As for example, it is the nature of a magnet to attract iron and it is the nature of iron to be attracted by a magnet. But when there is rust on the iron, this nature is not seen to be manifested. When the rust is removed, iron immediately runs towards the magnet. All living beings of this world, in their real selves, have attraction for Śrī Krishna i.e. have natural love for Śrī Krishna. It is not to be borrowed from somebody else. When a spirit soul, by the misuse of his relative independence, becomes averse to Śrī Krishna, he is enveloped by the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord and is hurled down into this world, which is an ocean of births and deaths. When a fortunate spirit soul, by

the previous good impressions of eternal good deeds, comes in contact with the bona fide pure devotee, the eternal nature to love Krishna is awakened. Your feeling is applicable to all living beings of this universe. You are blessed as you have a natural inclination to worship Gaura-Hari and Śrī Krishna.

I have discussed about your desire to live permanently in India so as to be in a congenial atmosphere, associating with pure devotees because it is very difficult to get such congenial association at your place.

I am anxious to know about the present health condition of your wife. Hope this will find you all in good health and spirit.

May All Merciful Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga and Rādhā Krishna bless you

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Love of god is intrinsic

Revered affectionate mother,

I am in receipt of your affectionate letter by airmail, full of sweet words showered upon me like a true mother.

Although the Supreme Lord is the sustainer and maintainer of all living beings, in fact practically, in a worldly sense, household devotees are sustaining and maintaining the ascetics. I was away from Calcutta for about three weeks in our preaching tour in Assam— North-East India. We have four Maṭhs in different places in Assam. Doctors have advised me not to undertake a hectic tour. But since many devotees were very eager for my presence in their places, our friends made arrangements for my preaching tour with the provisions of proper rest. So I beg to be excused for not being able to write to you earlier.

Love of God exists in every living being, they are not to borrow it from anybody. For example, the relationship between magnet and iron is natural — magnet attracts iron and iron is attracted by magnet. Somebody may say it is not so always. The cause of non- manifestation of attraction between magnet and iron is rust on the iron. If the rust is removed, mutual attraction will be manifested. The eternal nature of a living being's love for God is awakened in the association of a bona fide pure

devotee. Amongst all living beings it is mainly possible within the human species, because human beings have the power of discrimination between good and bad, eternal and non-eternal. Only this human birth is suitable for worship of God. This human birth is not meant for eating, sleeping, defending and mating like other beasts and birds.

Misuse of relative independence

When I was on a preaching tour in America, your affectionate son used to introduce me to others in every place speaking about the specialty of human birth. Though we are eternal servants of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna when we become averse to Him by misuse of our relative independence, we are hurled down in this world - a prison house - to pass through cycles of births and deaths and suffer threefold affliction.

The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna has emphatically said in the Gītā (7.14), '*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā, mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te* — It is almost impossible for the conditioned souls to cross over this ocean of births and deaths. But if anybody submits to Krishna wholeheartedly, Krishna will rescue him from the snare of Māyā (illusory energy of three primal qualities *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ*).'¹ Our actual relations are with the Supreme Lord, Śrī Krishna. Whatever physical relations we are seeing in this world are non-eternal and perishable. So if you want to love Krishna or serve Krishna as sincerely as the cows, the Lord can fulfil your desire. Actually all cows in Vraja-maṇḍal are not ordinary cows. Even ṛṣis and *munis* desire to be born as cows to serve Krishna.

Your writing is very inspiring. I am indebted to you for your affection. Please submit prayers to Nandanandan Śrī Krishna in favour of me so that I can serve Him as my Dearest Object of Worship. We are all busy here regarding the arrangements of circumambulation of Navadvīp *dhām*. We shall leave tomorrow for Śrī Mayapur.

May the All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga, Rādhā-Krishna bless your son and your daughter. My respect to you. Hope this will find you all in good health and spirit.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Love amongst all

In the present age, *nāma-sankīrtan* is the best medicine and most effective way to achieve the summum bonum of human life as it can be performed under any circumstances. According to Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, *harinām sankīrtan* is the strongest spiritual force on earth. It can establish love and unity of hearts amongst all human beings and thereby establish real peace in the world.

Love is superior to non-violence. Non-violence only implies to refrain from inflicting injury to others, while love is to do good to others. It is positive. When there is love, the question of inflicting injuries to any part of the object of love does not arise. If we can get love for Śrī Krishna, we cannot have the impetus to inflict injuries to any of His parts emanating from His marginal potency the living entities. All living entities are related to each other due to their common relationship to Śrī Krishna. *Nāma-sankīrtan* is a universal religion under whose banner people of all sects and rank can unite.



Search for truth

Seeing the sad plight of the wretched creatures of *Kaliyuga*, the Supreme Lord, Śrī Krishna Himself, out of causeless mercy, appeared as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu at Śrī Māyāpura, Nadia, West Bengal, India accepting the complexion and mood of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, to rescue the fallen souls. When Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu had His advent in 1486 A.D. Bengal was under the rule of a Muslim Emperor, Hussain Shah. Śrī Sanātana Goswāmī was his prime minister and Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī was an important and responsible administrator. Maldah was then capital of Bengal. Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu first met Śrī Sanātana Goswāmī and Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī at Ramkeli village in the Maldah District. At the first sight, both were attracted by the highly impressive Divine Personality of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. He advised them to give up worldly life and join Him when He would proceed to Vrindāvana. Initially, Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī and his younger brother, Śrī Anupam, on getting information about Mahāprabhu's departure for Vrindāvana, left for Vrindāvana relinquishing household life. Later on, Śrī Sanātana Goswāmī, who was imprisoned by King Hussain Shah, somehow releasing himself from jail, left for Vrindāvana through a rural route, avoiding main thoroughfares. When he reached Benaras (Kāśī), he received information about Mahāprabhu's stay at the house of Śrī Chandra Shekhar Vaidya. He went there, humbly fell prostrated at the Lotus Feet of

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and enquired, "Who am I? Why am I being burned with threefold affliction? I do not know how I can get eternal welfare. I am not competent even to enquire about my ultimate goal of life and the means to attain it. Kindly instruct me all about the spiritual, fundamental principle."

Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is instructing all human beings through His personal associate, Śrī Sanātana Goswāmī that when anybody's time for getting emancipation from worldly bondage will come, he will have this theological inquiry to a bona fide *guru* (Divine Master). Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is playing the part of a *guru* and Sanātana Goswāmī that of a disciple. A true disciple should search for truth and enquire into the discrimination between the eternal and non-eternal.

Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu gave replies to all the above questions - *sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana*. *Sambandha* - Knowledge of God, soul and world and mutual relationship; *Abhidheya* - engaging in the practical activities of devotional service; *Prayojana* - ultimate goal of life, the real necessity of life. The subject has been dealt with elaborately in the authentic scripture, Śrī Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, written by Śrī Krishnadas Kavirāja Goswāmī.

Elaborate discussion is not possible here. I am going to discuss some fundamental points of the subject in brief.

The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna is the Ultimate Reality. He is the Prime Cause of all causes, God of all gods. He is the Origin of all. He has no origin. He is the Embodiment of All-Existence, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss. Śrī Krishna has infinite potencies. Of them the three principal potencies are:

- (i) *Aantaraṅgā śakti* — Internal Potency
- (ii) *Bahiraṅgā śakti* — External Potency
- (iii) *Taṭasthā śakti* — Marginal Potency.

My love to you all. May the All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Śrī Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Cause of affliction

A woe-stricken person cannot speak on the subject, "Cause of Affliction and its Remedy," as he himself is under the grip of suffering. As an entrant (novice) to a spiritual organisation for cultivation of devotion to God, it is the holy mandate of my Most Revered Divine Master and other Revered *vaiṣṇavas* to recite what I have heard so far from the holy lips of my Divine Master and Revered *vaiṣṇavas*. The recapitulation of the sayings of the Divine Master and Revered *vaiṣṇavas*, as well as the Divine message of authentic scriptures descending through preceptorial line, will purify my mind and bestow on me all spiritual attainments. It is the best devotional means for me.

Our Most Revered Divine Master, while delivering sermons, used to quote evidence from the eleventh canto of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the quintessence of all scriptures, relevant to this subject. Nine *munis* (saints), the youngest group of sons of Śrī Rishabh Deva, renowned as Navayogendra, once set their holy feet in the *yajña-sthali* (place of sacrifice) of Śrī Nimi, Emperor of Videha (modern Mithila - North Bihar, India). Emperor Nimi cordially received them with profound devotion and reverential gesture of getting up, washing their lotus feet and worshipping them with offerings. Emperor Nimi asked nine questions and the nine saints gave their replies one by one. One of the queries was:

*yathaitām aiśvarīm māyām dustarām akṛtātmabhiḥ
taranty añjaḥ sthūla-dhiyo maharṣa idam ucyatām
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.3.17)*

O Saints! I am a dullard having attachment to this body and to persons related to this body. I have no control over senses. It is impossible for me to rescue myself from the clutches of the deluding external potency of the Lord having three primal qualities of *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ*, i.e., preserving, creating and destroying qualities. Birth, existence and death are caused by the deluding force of the Lord's external potency. We suffer at the time of birth and death as well as during existence. As long as we live in this world, we suffer threefold afflictions - (i) affliction caused by physical ailments and mental sufferings such as grief due to the separation from near and dear ones; (ii) affliction caused by other living beings; (iii) affliction caused by demigods, i.e., natural calamities - earthquakes, inundation, famine, epidemics, drought, deluge, etc. Kindly show me the simple path to get deliverance from the forest fire of worldly affliction.

Prabuddha Muni, one of the nine saints, replied –

*karmāṇy ārabhamāṇānām duḥkha-hatyai sukhāya ca
paśyēt pāka-viparyāsaṁ mithunī-cāriṇām nṛṇām*
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.3.18)

A man starts a profession or business, weds or does not wed with the sole purpose of removing affliction and getting happiness. When he finds that he is unable to remove affliction and get happiness by his own effort, he marries and becomes two to try jointly to remove affliction and get happiness. Even then when he is unsuccessful he begets children and increases the number of family members, to try with joint efforts to attain the objective. But, O Videha Rāj Nimi! Behold! The result is just the reverse, neither he can remove affliction nor he can get happiness.

Money, the source of misery

*nityārtidena vittena durlabhenātma-mṛtyunā
grhāpatyāpta-paśubhiḥ kā prītiḥ sādhitaiś calaiḥ*
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.3.19)

An enslaved *jīva* (individual conscious unit), overwhelmed by the external deluding potency of the Lord wrongly conceives himself as the master and has the ego to enjoy the world. As such he thinks he will be happy if he can get objects of enjoyment and become master. Both can be achieved by amassing wealth. So, he takes pains in accumulating money more and more. But, O Nimi Maharāj! Carefully note money itself is a cause of pain to those craving for enjoyment and mastery. If we do not get money we become unhappy as our desires will not be fulfilled. If we get money, then also we are worried for its preservation. If money acquired is lost, we mourn. Worldly things are such, if we do not get them we are unhappy; if we get them we are worried (unhappy); if we lose them we mourn (unhappy). Money constantly gives us trouble. Yet money is so dear to us that we are bent on earning money, even at the cost of our life, as in the case of thieves, servants and merchants. Then that hard-earned money is spent for building houses to live comfortably, for bringing up children, maintaining kinsmen and domestic animals. But all these are non-eternal— ephemeral. What happiness or benefit can we derive out of it? — things. nothing. No one can get even an iota of happiness from worldly transitory

*evam lokam param vidyān naśvaram karma-nirmitam
sa-tulyātiśaya-dhvaṁsam yathā maṇḍala-vartinām
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.3.20)*

We may say, we may not be happy here in this world but we shall be happy if we go to higher worlds. But the higher worlds are attained by *karma*, by material efforts or by material actions. Rivalry, emulation, and fights amongst equals and malice or animosity towards superiors exist there also as we experience in this world.

Expert spiritual doctor

*tasmād guruṁ prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam
śābde pare ca niṣṇātaṁ brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.3.21)*

Therefore, if we sincerely want actual bliss, we should give up our arrogance that we can get it by our own efforts. We should take absolute shelter at the lotus feet of *gurudev* (Divine Master), who will be indicated by the attributes of being well-versed in the Vedas (Holy Writings) and equivalent scriptures, receiving transcendental divine messages through the preceptorial line, as well as having realisation of the Divinity. We should enquire from Him about our eternal benefit.

A diseased person, who has no knowledge of medical science is incapable of treating himself and has to go to an expert doctor for treatment. The doctor examines him and diagnoses the disease then prescribes medicines and diet. If the ailing person follows his advice and undergoes treatment, he gets cured. Similarly, we have to go to an expert spiritual doctor, a bona fide *guru* (Divine Master), who knows the cause of the malady of worldly affliction. He can correctly prescribe the panacea for the definite cure of the disease of the cycle of birth and death. However it is very difficult to get a bona fide *guru* at the present sinful black age (*Kaliyuga*) of corruption. In fact, it is stated in the scriptures that there may be many so-called *gurus* to grab money from disciples. A bona fide *guru* who can dispel all afflictions is rarely to be found. If we want quality, we have to sacrifice quantity.



Bringing hearts together

Revered affectionate mother,

Received your kind letter sent by post and noted the contents.

Actually, love of God, Śrī Krishna, is inherent in every individual soul. Due to forgetfulness of our relation with Śrī Krishna, we are enveloped by the illusory energy consisting of three primal qualities, *sattva*, *rajaḥ*, and *tamaḥ*, and pass through cycles of births, deaths and threefold afflictions. An illustration of magnet and iron is given to understand it easily (also written to you in detail in my previous letter). Love of God is not to be borrowed from somebody, only it is to be awakened by the company of a pure bonafide devotee. We have got our actual, eternal & all kinds of love relations with Krishna. When we forget the actual relation with Krishna, we are under the false egos of this material world, having false material relations and false interests. So we find everywhere in the prison house, this world, severe clashing of interests. This is the greatest infliction of punishment on conditioned souls for their aversion to the Supreme Lord. In this context, I remember the teachings of our Most Revered Gurudev, which I also had the scope to submit to the learned dignitaries of the function solemnised on the occasion of the 106th Advent Anniversary of *Paramgurudev* Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākur at Puri. The relevant portion of my submission is as follows.

'We have been brought physically nearer by science but our hearts are further apart now. Cultivation of love can remove this distance between hearts. Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Prabhupād preached the Doctrine of Divine Love of Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Love for Śrī Krishna, the Absolute Whole, will foster love for all. Non-violence is automatic in the culture of pure love. Love of God is the greatest spiritual force on earth which can bring unity of hearts among all human beings. Cultivation of Love for Śrī Krishna, 'Krishna-*prema*,' is to be widely propagated for bringing abiding peace in the hearts of the people, which is the basis for progress of human civilisation. Amongst all spiritual practices, *nāma-sankīrtan* is the best and most effective *sādhana* to attain Krishna-*prema* in *Kaliyuga*. This spiritual practice of *Nāma-sankīrtan* is a universal religion. Under this banner people of all sects and ranks can unite.

You wrote in your letter that Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākur has his *samādhi* temple in Sarbhog, Assam, which you didn't know earlier. I am to say in

regard to this, the original *samādhi* temple is at Śrī Māyāpur, District Nadia, West Bengal. The *samādhi mandir* at Sarbhog is the *puṣpa-samādhi* temple (floral remnants brought from the original *samādhi* temple at Śrī Māyāpur).

Due to your affection for me, you are worried upon hearing about my illness and blood transfusion into me. I am reaping the fruits of my own actions. Nobody is to be blamed for this. I was deprived from participating in the holy festivals of the Maṭhs and preaching centers in North-India and to get the company of the devotees there. As per doctor's advice, I had to restrict my movements and participation in functions. I had to return to Calcutta for climatic change and for complete rest. I am allowed to attend only special functions to meet the devotees and to get some opportunity to sing the glories of the Supreme Lord. It is my good fortune that in spite of my being a conditioned soul and having so many drawbacks, you have got so much affection for me. You have showered your heart's blessings unto me without hesitation. This human body is non-eternal. That which is born or produced, will ultimately die or will be destroyed. Nobody can remain in this world eternally with this temporary body. I implore you, kindly submit your prayer to Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna so that I can attain Him as *prāṇapati*, Dearest Object of Worship. Kindly communicate my love to your son, daughter and to all others. Hope this will find you in good health and spirit.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev – Please enlighten me on Jīva Tattva. I consider you as a tattva- darshee and I will take your version as that of the scripture.

Jīva tattva

Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and the *jīvas* are eternally related with each other. Lord Śrī Chiatanya Mahaprabhu has termed this relation as *acintya-bhedābheda*. This means we are different and simultaneously non-different from Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna.

When I was at home I had several doubts about *jīva-tattva*, *bhagvaad-tattva*, etc. in my mind and I used to write letters to my Most Revered Śrīla Gurudev. One time

Śrīla Gurudev asked me to read 'Jaiva-dharma', written by Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura. I went to a library and got that book. When the book was issued to me, the librarian said, "You are the first person who has asked for this book. So far no one has got this book issued." When I read 'Jaiva dharma', all my doubts about *jīva-tattva* and *bhagavad-tattva* were clarified. You may also read Jaiva-dharma. You will get all the answers to your questions because Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura is not an ordinary human being. He is Śrī Kamala Manjari in Goloka-līla.

Human birth is very rare

The *jīvas* here means all the living entities, including beasts and birds. There are 8,400,000 kinds of living entities. In Viṣṇu Purāṇa it is said:

*jalajā nava lakṣāni sthāvara lakṣa viṃśati
krmayo rudra-sankhyakaḥ pakṣinām daśa lakṣaṇaṁ
trimsal lakṣāni paśavaḥ catur lakṣāni mānuṣaḥ*

There are 900,000 kinds of aquatics, 2,000,000 kinds of trees and plants, 1,100,000 kinds of insects and reptiles, 1,000,000 kinds of birds, 3,000,000 kinds of four-legged beasts, and 400,000 kinds of human species.

The human birth is very rare and one should not lose this precious opportunity. Only human beings have got the capacity to worship Supreme Lord. Other living entities have got no capacity. So it is not wise to lose the precious human birth for mundane pleasures.

Immediately start bhajan

In Śrīmad Bhagavatam (11.9.29) it is said,

*labdhvā sudurlabham idaṁ bahu-sambhavānte
mānuṣyam arthadam anityam apīha dhīraḥ
tūrṇaṁ yateta na pated anumṛtyu yāvan
niḥśreyasāya viśayaḥ khalu sarvataḥ syāt*

'After innumerable births, we have been born as human beings. Therefore, this human birth is very rare. Although it is impermanent, it bestows the highest benefit

of serving Supreme Lord and to get the highest object permanently. It is the actual duty of all human beings to try utmost to achieve the highest welfare. Therefore a person who has got the actual knowledge will endeavor for highest eternal welfare before another death occurs because in all other births we can get connection with non-eternal worldly objects, which cause intense suffering. But the actual eternal welfare is not possible in other births.'

Our Most Revered Paramguru-Pādapadma Nitya-līlā Praviṣṭa Om 108 Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda had spoken on the above verse continuously for a month at Ultadaṅga, Kolkata. In spite of that he was not satisfied. Two students of Scottish Church College, Kolkata went there to see. Our Most Revered Śrīla Paramgurudev said that even a moment of human birth should not be wasted. The two students said that they have come only to see what was happening there and that they have to go back to their homes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “*tūrṇam* – immediately you should start the worship of Supreme Lord.”

The two students then said, “Oh! Our house is burning.” Śrīla Prabhupāda, “Let it burn.”

The students, “Our neighboring houses will get burnt.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda, “Let the entire world burn. You are *brahma-bhūta* (of the Lord and from the Lord), not *saṁsāra-bhūta* (of this world and from this world).”

Later the two students stayed in the Maṭh.

Śrī Prahlāda Maharāja instructs in Śrīmad Bhagavatam (7.6.1)

*kaumāra ācāret prājño dharmān bhāgavatān iha
durlabhaṁ mānuṣaṁ janma tad apy adhravam arthadam*

'One who is sufficiently intelligent should use the human form of body from the tender age of childhood to practice the activities of devotional service, giving up all other engagements. The human body is most rarely achieved, and although temporary like other bodies, it is meaningful because in human life one can perform devotional service.'

Hence it is unwise to use this human birth, which is rare, for transitory happiness. We may lose this opportunity any time. We will fall down to lower species.

Pastime of king Bharat

It happened with king Bharat. He left his kingdom and family to worship Supreme Lord. In the forest when he went to fetch some water, he saw a pregnant female deer jumping over the water stream. She gave birth to a child-deer and died. Thinking that the child is motherless, he started taking care of him and in the process he got attached to the child- deer. Since he remembered the deer at the time of his death, he had to take birth as deer in his next life. But he remembered his past life and also the reason for his birth as a deer. He did not mix with other deers, instead associated with sadhus. In his subsequent next life he became Jaḍa Bharat and attained Lord.

My love to you all. May the All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Śrī Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



PART II

Medicine for the Mind

Without taking medicine nobody can be cured. Without doing anything positively, we cannot get effective result. In spite of our evil desires imbibed in the mind through cycles of births and deaths, we should not stop our bhajan.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - (1) My mind is filled with many unwanted desires and it oscillates making me feel good and at times bad about me. I cannot control my senses and I am afraid of spiritual fall. In theory, I know the goal of life but my actions are not consistent with the goal. I also feel bogged down with everyday problems. I know only pure devotion is the solution to all my problems but how can I receive mercy from pure devotees with my undesirable wants? (2) I am praying to you for some kind of service by which I can engage my mind and by which my other desires will go away so that I can get devotion and harmonise my life and become a good practitioner of bhakti yoga.

Controlling mind

Received your letter dated __ and noted the contents. You have expressed your heart openly in your letter. Whatever you have written is the problem of all conditioned souls of the world, at least those who are aspirants - votaries.

I have the opportunity, in this context, to remember the teachings of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna in His reply to the question of Śrī Arjuna in the Gītā, 6.34:

arjuna uvāca
cañcalaṁ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad dṛḍham
tasyāhaṁ nigrahaṁ manye vāyor iva su-duṣkaram

Purport of the verse with two implications:- Śrī Arjuna said:

(1) “O Lord Krishna! You have already instructed me that by the discriminating power of intelligence between good and evil, right and wrong one should restrain or regulate the mind. But I fear that mind has the power even to crush our conscience or discriminating capability. Therefore, it seems extremely difficult for me to control the mind, which may be compared with the useless endeavour to restrain the velocity of the wind”.

(2) “O Lord Krishna! You have already instructed me to attain maintenance of balance, he who realises joy and sorrows equally with all living beings in this world is a best yogi. But in spite of that, I fear my mind has got the power even to crush the maintenance of balance. Therefore, it appears extremely difficult for me to control the mind as it is compared with the difficulty to restrain the velocity of wind”.

śrī-bhagavān uvāca
asaṁśayaṁ mahā-bāho mano durnigrahaṁ calam
abhyāseṇa tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca grhyate
(Bhagavad Gītā 6.35)

“O *mahābāho* (chief of heroes)! I admit whatever you have stated is true but it is the special instruction of *yogaśāstra* that the restless mind, which is difficult to resist, can be brought under control gradually by repeated devotional practice as well as non-attachment to worldly (non-eternal) objects”.

The Sanskrit word '*vairāgya*' has got two implications - (1) non-attachment to worldly non-eternal objects and (2) positive significance, attachment to the Supreme Lord '*viśiṣṭe parampūruṣe rāgaḥ, tasya bhāvaḥ vairāgya*'. As much attachment as a votary shall have for the Supreme Lord, so much detachment he will obtain from non-eternal objects of the world.

When a child tries to stand up and to walk, he falls on the ground a hundred times, yet when he does not stop trying ultimately he succeeds. If a child, after trying several times, stops trying further, he will never be able to stand up and walk.

One who wants unfailing positive eternal welfare should go through the instruction of the following verse of Kaṭhapaniṣad very carefully:-

śreyaś ca preyaś ca manuṣyam etas
tau saṁparitya vivinakti dhīrāḥ
śreyaḥ hi dhīro 'bhīpreyaśo vṛṇṇite
preyaḥ mando yogakṣemān vṛṇṇite
(Kaṭhapaniṣad 1.2.2)

Quality is better than quantity

Kaṭhapaniṣad ascertains two paths - (1) path for eternal welfare and (2) path for hedonism (belief in worldly pleasure as the proper aim). These two paths only exist in the human species. The wise human beings after knowing the proper implications of these two paths consider the path of eternal welfare as the cause of emancipation and the other path of hedonism as the cause of bondage. They adore the path of eternal welfare relinquishing the path of hedonism. But unfortunate and

unscrupulous persons lacking in conscience, accepting the path of hedonism, engage all their energy only to accumulate material wealth and preserve wealth and property thus acquired only to get immediate benefit of sense enjoyments without thinking about its consequence. More than ninety-nine percent of people in this world are supporters of hedonism. It seems like nectar at the time of sensuous pleasure but its consequence is deadly poison. In the path of eternal welfare, at the time of spiritual practice, it appears to be like poison because the votary has to control his sense organs and has to restrict his evil propensities but the consequence of such austerities and self-discipline is ambrosia. Sincere devotees of such a path of eternal welfare are very rare in this world, which is like a prison house.

Devotees in the highest degree are less in number. We are not to give importance to increase numbers. One person of good character can do good to numerous persons but millions of characterless persons cannot do any good even to a single person in this world. If we are very particular to increase the quantity, we are to sacrifice quality. By that what actual benefit we shall get? A pure devotee *śuddha bhakta* - is very rare in this world.

Special kaliyuga

The present *Kaliyuga* (Iron Age), of the seventh *Manvantar*, has a very special significance as the most Munificent Form of Godhead, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, appeared in this *Kaliyuga* and distributed Krishna-prema (Universal Divine Love) to all irrespective of nationality, geographical barriers etc. The most fortunate persons in this age should take this opportunity and pray to All-Merciful God immediately by uttering from the core of the heart 'Ha Nityānanda! Ha Gaurāṅga!' with firm belief, by taking absolute shelter at Their Lotus Feet. You will find its reference in the hymns of Śrī Narottam Ṭhākura about the glories of Śrī Gaurāṅga and Śrī Nityānanda. I heard those songs in many places in foreign countries 'je gauranger nāma loy tār hay premodoy'; 'grihe va vane thāko ha gaurāṅga bole dāko'; 'nitāi pada-kamala, koṭī-candra suśītala, ye chāyāya jagat juḍāya'hena nitai bine bhai radha-krishna paite nai'; 'nitai na balila mukhe majila samsār sukhe vidya kule ki karibe tār'. [Significance of the above quotations of Bengali songs : 'Divine love will be manifested in him who utters the holy name of Śrī Gaurāṅga'.

'Whether one lives in the house or in the forest, (signifying living with non-attachment) one should utter the Holy Name Gaurāṅga addressing with separation

grief 'Ha Gaurāṅga!'. 'The Lotus Feet of Śrī Nityānanda are supremely pleasant and cooling, like the charming delightfulness of millions of moonlights, and under whose sweet shelter the whole world will be allayed from sufferings and pain and without whose grace nobody can get actual contact with Rādhā-Krishna'. 'One who does not utter the Holy Name 'Nitai' - will be utterly ruined, being attracted by non-eternal worldly enjoyments and by acquiring so called worldly learning and family dignity'.

I think you have gone through the biography of the great household devotee Ambarīṣa Mahārāj in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, written by Veda-Vyās Muni. He conquered all desires gradually, by engaging all sense organs for the service of the Supreme Lord. Without devotional practice nobody can achieve the objective. With patience and tenacity of purpose, an aspirant can be successful in achieving the desired objective.

I am somehow pulling on. I may have to go to New Delhi towards the end of this month to discuss my health with the doctors.

Hope, this will find you all in good health and spirit. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha

P.S.: Spiritual sound and material sound are completely different. As the Supreme Lord is Absolute Complete Reality, His Name, Form, Attributes and Pastimes are identical. For example, the word 'water' does not indicate the thing 'water'. By uttering the word 'water' several times one cannot quench his thirst, so the word 'water' itself is not the thing 'water'. But the Name of the Supreme Lord and the Named (object indicated by name Supreme Lord) are identical. When the Holy Name will be uttered without offence the Name, Form, Attributes, Pastimes - all will be manifested gradually in the same order.



The heart disease

The heart disease of every *jīva* is *kāma* (lust or passion). An enslaved *jīva* cannot conquer *kāma* by his own capacity. We become victims of *kāma* when we become averse to Śrī Krishna. This punishment has been inflicted upon those, who, being

the eternal servants of Śrī Krishna, are reluctant to serve Him. If the root cause of passion is not eradicated, how can we conquer *kāma*? When we become averse to Śrī Krishna and want to enjoy Māya, Māya immediately envelops us and we get false egos relating to subtle and gross bodies. As such, we are passing through cycles of births since time immemorial and burning in the conflagration of births and deaths and threefold afflictions. The only way of getting emancipation from worldly suffering is total unconditional surrender to the Lotus Feet of Śrī Krishna.

As we have inherited the egoistic mentality, passing through many lives, it is not easy to give up all mundane egos and take absolute unconditional shelter at the Lotus Feet of Śrī Krishna. Association of bona fide *śuddha bhaktas* is essential for getting enhancement in spiritual life. We cannot get the desired result all of a sudden. It requires time. It depends upon the intensity of the *sādhana*. Even Ambarīṣa Mahārāj, a great devotee, could only conquer all *kāma* gradually. We are to continue to perform *sādhana* with steadfast belief and patience. It is better to go through *bhakta-chāritras*—biographies of devotees in Srimad Bhāgavatam—as we get impetus from *bhaktas* how they attained God.

When one can see drawbacks and painfulness of enjoyment, one cannot willfully take recourse to this. An enslaved *jīva* cannot rescue himself from the clutches of Māya by his own capability, as long as he remains averse to Śrī Krishna. Every enslaved *jīva* is attracted by lust - desire for money, women, name and fame. Only a sincere and completely surrendered soul can rescue himself from the clutches of Māya by the grace of Śrī Krishna and His Absolute Counterpart, Gurudev. *Śaraṇāgati* is the Divine Panacea of all diseases. Invoking 'Śrī Krishna' from the core of the heart is the best expression of *śaraṇāgati*.

I am worried to know the deteriorated condition of your health and the health of your wife. This world is not the permanent place of our stay. That which is born will die one day. The wise do not mourn for that which is inevitable. *Jīvas* come and go as per desire of Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. Out of ignorance we think them to be ours and become attached to them. All *jīvas* are eternally related with Śrī Krishna. When *jīvas*, by their relative independence, become averse to Śrī Krishna they become enveloped by the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and pass through cycles of births and deaths. We have this precious human birth to rescue ourselves from this severe bondage and take absolute shelter at the Lotus Feet of Śrī Krishna, which can only bestow us absolute bliss.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna bless you. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
B. B. Tirtha



On depression

I am in receipt of your letter. I am worried to learn of your wife's sudden depression. It is nothing unusual. Conditioned souls with the wrong conception of self may come into the grip of such depression. Eating, sleeping, defending etc. are the characteristics of all living beings, including human beings. Human beings are distinct from other living beings in the sense that they have the power of discrimination between good and bad, eternal and non-eternal. The root cause of all our distress is aversion to the Supreme Lord. The moment a conditioned soul becomes averse to Śrī Krishna, illusory energy envelops him and that causes misidentification of self and due to that there are non-eternal desires relating to the gross body and subtle body. As long as misconception of self persists, there cannot be an actual remedy for all kinds of distress and depression. *Vaiṣṇavas* generally advise anybody who is in distress, to remember Narasimhadeva. For remembrance, utterance of Narasimha *mantra* is essential. Narasimhadeva removes all anti-devotional desires so that the sincere aspirants can remove the root cause of suffering— 'aversion to Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna'. Simultaneously it may also give non-eternal benefits. Utterance of the Holy Name should be from the core of the heart, with firm belief.

True *vaiṣṇavas* do not want to disturb their object of worship, the Supreme Lord and His Absolute Counterpart *gurudev*, for their worldly difficulties. If they require any kind of relief from physical disease, they take the help of physicians. I am not a doctor of the physical diseases, but I suggest that by taking doctor's advice, she can take medicine. Some sort of family difficulty can cause tension in the mind. Composed persons can withstand that.

Arrangements are being made to take out a huge *sankīrtan* procession with 108 mridangas, band parties of Punjab and Assam etc. on the occasions of the Advent

Anniversary of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Centennial celebration of *gurudev* and Visva-Vaishnav-Rajsabha Meeting. There is also an arrangement made for distributing *Prasad*, on Jagannātha Misra's Ananda Festival Day, to countless numbers of devotees. I have heard that you will also participate in this Navadvīp *dhām parikrama* and Centennial Function. We will leave from Calcutta for Śrī Mayapur on 17th March, 2005. We are so so.

My love to you all. May All-Merciful Supreme Lord Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna bless you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Why bad things happen to me regularly? Sometimes accidents and other times physical abuse. I was attacked and escaped death. I wanted to attend Hari-Kirtan and Hari-Katha. Now I am afraid to attend programmes because they finish late at night.

The only piety in kaliyuga

Received your letter dated _____. I am shocked to go through the contents of your letter. I did not receive such letter earlier. Every heinous crime is possible in this *Kaliyuga* (black age). We are hearing such events almost daily in newspapers. Time of this material world is divided into four divisions in our Indian scriptures —*Satya*, *Treta*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali*. In western countries, it is generally accepted as Golden Age, Silver Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age. Time duration may vary in Indian and western systems. There is gradual degradation of piety from *Satya Yuga* to *Kali Yuga*. In *Satya Yuga* there are four kinds of piety— penance, sanctity, compassion and truth. In *Treta Yuga* there are three kinds of piety, in *Dvāpara Yuga* two kinds of piety and in the most deteriorated *Kali Yuga* only one piety, truthfulness — the Holy Name. Therefore, most of the people have a criminal propensity.

It is due to the fruits of our previous actions that we are getting attacked by aforesaid environment. You have rightly written, “I understand this to be the result of my previous deeds - *karma*”. Sunīti Devi, mother of devotee Dhruva Mahārāj, consoled

her son by saying that, “You must have done in your previous birth such behaviour to somebody. Through your stepmother Suruchi you have now got that sort of harsh misbehaviour.”

*māmaṅgalaṁ tāta pareṣu maṁsthā
bhuṅkte jano yat para-duḥkhadas tat
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 4.8.17)*

“O beloved son! Don't blame others for your distress. Whatever misbehaviour one inflicts to others, that sort of behaviour will rebound to him.”

Even Nārada Goswāmī repeated the same words to pacify Dhruva and advised him to efface all hostile mentalities to anybody in this world and invoke Śrī Hari from the core of the heart, so that all his obstacles would be removed and he would get the objective. The Supreme Lord is impartial and equal to all. The special characteristic of Dhruva is that he accepted in total the teachings of his mother Sunīti Devi and *guru* Nārada Goswāmī.

This world is the prison house of prisoners to get punishment for being averse to Śrī Krishna. This world is not the place for getting actual peace or bliss. Śrī Krishna has said in the Gītā, 7.14 —

*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā,
mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te*

“It is very difficult for conditioned souls to surmount My illusory energy (External Potency consisting of three primal qualities — *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ*.) By *Rajoguṇa* *jīvas* are born, by *Satvaguṇa* they are sustained and by *Tamoguṇa*, they are destroyed. Only souls completely surrendered to Me can be rescued from the clutches of *Māyā*.” Here also Śrī Krishna has said emphatically that any living being who takes shelter of His Lotus Feet sincerely, will be rescued.

Further, it is my advice you should also utter four *praṇām-mantras* of Śrī Narasimha Deva, Panchatattva and lastly Mahāmantra while going to bed and on rising up from the bed regularly. It will be better to utter instead of doing silently. These holy sounds of the *mantras* will remove all obstacles and also sanctify the environment. In addition to this, you count *Harinām* (*Mahāmantra*) on beads as much as you can

afford to do but without tenfold offences and with absorption of mind. Of course, without counting on beads, you can do *Harinām* always.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha

N.B: Utterance of the Holy Names of Śrī Nitai-Gaurāṅga - the Most Munificent Forms of Godhead - is the best and most powerful panacea to fight against the most vitiated influence of *Kali*.



Surrender - the only panacea

Received your letter and noted the contents. We had seen you actively participating in our first preaching tour and also you sponsored the first tour in _____. I became worried when I did not see your participation in our next tour programme in _____. When I inquired about you, I was told that you were in great difficulty due to worldly problems. You were so enthusiastic in attending all the programmes in the first tour, but your absence in the last tour programme was felt by me.

This material world is full of problems. Nobody on earth can avoid it. There are ups and downs in this world. The Supreme Lord, Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, has said “This world is like a forest fire and chanting the 'Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare, Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare' Mahāmantra will extinguish the forest fire”.

The difference between a realised soul and conditioned soul in this world is that the realised soul, by the grace of the Supreme Lord, has the capacity to tolerate all afflictions and tribulations, but a conditioned soul cannot. A conditioned soul, remaining in darkness, cannot solve any problem. When light comes, problems created by darkness are automatically removed. *Parampujyapād* Bhaktivedanta Swāmī Mahārāj, quoted in one of his sermons, “When one is enlightened by knowledge by which ignorance is destroyed, then his knowledge reveals everything, as sun lights up everything at daytime”.

The Supreme Lord, Who is All-Bliss, is self-effulgent. He descends to a completely surrendered soul. As for instance, Prahlād Mahārāj, who was apparently in a problem of extreme torture by his own father and was surrounded by hostile demons, was always in peace because of his total submission to the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna; he never became unbalanced.

Our Most Revered Gurudev used to advise us 'Finite human beings, when they take any decision by their finite intellect and wisdom for their benefit, they commit mistakes and the result can be opposite. But if we take absolute shelter of the Lotus Feet of *Guru- Vaiṣṇava-Bhagavān* then, by Their grace, the light of transcendental knowledge will descend to our heart and solve all the problems. In my life I have practical experience of it. I think someone has already advised you to remember four Narasimha mantras followed by *panchatattva* and *mahāmantra*, each four times, before going to bed and after rising up from bed and also if possible while going out to do any work. It is better to utter those *mantras* so that the holy sound will purify the atmosphere, remove obstacles and bestow to you the mental power to tolerate.

May Supreme Lord Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu and Rādhā-Krishna bless you. My love to you.

Affectionately yours,
B.B.Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Please save us from anarthās. Please teach us to serve vaiṣṇavas, to become humble and surrendered.

Fulfilling lust is like pouring ghee onto fire

There is one illustration in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam that Śrī Yayāti Mahārāj could not satisfy his sexual lust even by prolonging his youth, by getting the young age from his youngest son, Pūru, for one thousand years. He came to sense, after one thousand years, that he took a wrong path and ultimately gave up completely the appetite for sexual pleasure. He declared “*na jātu kāmaḥ kāmānām upabhogena sāmyati haviṣā kṛṣṇa- vartmeva bhūya evābhivardhate*”. If anybody goes on pouring ghee (clarified butter) onto the fire, that fire will go on increasing. In like manner, if we go on giving impetus to sexual pleasure it will go on increasing and we will not be delivered

from this evil propensity. Our Most Revered Gurudev used to advise us by giving the example, if a huge amount of ghee, say a thousand kg of ghee is poured on the fire, the fire will be extinguished. The only way of extinguishing the desire for sexual pleasure and other desires is to have extreme longing for getting the Supreme Lord, who is Absolute and Complete Reality.

Need of sādhu-sanga

To get this extreme desire for realisation of a relationship with the God, association with bona fide devotee *sādhus* is absolutely necessary. Not being able to get the direct association of bona fide *sādhus*, the only other way is to go on praying for the grace of the realised souls like our Most Revered Gurudev, Most Revered Paramgurudev, other *guruvargas*, six Goswāmīs and such established realised souls. The Personal Associates of the Supreme Lord may appear anytime, anywhere to rescue the fallen souls if sincerely prayed for.

Further, I think you are repeating four Narasimha mantras and each mantra at least four times and after that *panchatattva* and *mahāmantra* four times, while going to bed in the night and rising up in the morning. You will get immediate effect if you utter those *mantras*. If loud utterance is not possible, at least you should utter those *mantras* in a low voice. The Transcendental sound of utterance of Holy Names can remove the pollution of material sounds.

Positive devotional practice

We should always remember the highest ideal of devotion of Ambarīṣa Mahārāj, narrated in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 9th Canto. He engaged all his sense organs, his mind and objects of sense organs for the service of Śrī Krishna continuously, without any interruption. By that he was able to conquer all kinds of worldly desires completely. As Ambarīṣa Mahārāj engaged all his sense organs and especially the master of sense organs, mind, towards thinking about the service of the Lord, he had no scope of imbibing material desires into his heart.

Positive devotional spiritual practice is more effective than the negative way of practice i.e. practising detachment from evil desires. If we do not do positive devotional practice, how can we remove evil desires from the mind. Parīkṣit Mahārāj, by hearing the Transcendental Hari-katha from Śukadev Goswāmī

sincerely and most attentively with concentration, continuously for one week, could achieve the ultimate objective. Śukadev Goswāmī imparted the holy ideas. The Holy Divine ideas entering into the heart removed all non-eternal evil ideas. Non-eternal evil ideas are light and Transcendental Divine ideas are heavy. For example, if a heavy object is dropped into a tank of water, water being light will be purged out. However, a speaker of Hari-*katha* should be a realised soul like Śukadev Goswāmī.

Amār bhajan

When darkness of ignorance envelops the whole world, no enslaved *jīvas* of this world can rescue us, only the appearance of the Supreme Lord or His Personal Associates can. For this reason, the God, Himself sometimes appears in the world or as per His direction; His personal associates appear to rescue the fallen souls. When we do not get contact with personal associates of the Supreme Lord, we have got no other way except going through their precepts i.e., their writings. Therefore, occasionally I remember the precepts of our Most Revered Gurudev. Recently, I read and discussed His own writing “*Amār Bhajan - My Worship*” at Chandigarh, which can rectify us. Actually, those words had a great impact on the minds of the listeners or votaries - sincere seekers of Truth. I have the desire to translate those most impressive teachings of Śrīla Gurudev into english but as ill luck would have it, I have no spare time and no competency to do this. I also fear my translation may not be as effective as the words of *gurudev*.

Lastly, as without taking medicine nobody can be cured, without doing positively anything, we cannot get effective result. In spite of our evil desires imbibed in the mind through cycles of births and deaths, we should not stop our *bhajan*.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna bless you. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
B. B. Tirtha



Controlling the restless mind

Our minds are preoccupied with thoughts of the world. We cannot totally eradicate these worldly, unholy ideas all of a sudden. It will take time. It depends upon the intensity of *sādhana*. Even *maha-bhāgavat* Ambarīṣa Mahārāj could not remove worldly ideas in a day; he also could only remove these ideas gradually. The more you will imbibe divine ideas in your mind, the more worldly ideas will be purged out. This is the only way, applicable to all. You are not to be disheartened; with enthusiasm you have to do *sādhana*. You are to remember the teachings of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī in *Upadeśāmṛta* -

*utsāhān niścayād dhairyāt
tat-tat-karma-pravartanāt
saṅga-tyāgāt sato vṛtteḥ
ṣaḍbhir bhaktiḥ prasidhyati*

“These six principles assure the complete success of pure devotional service: (1) being enthusiastic, (2) endeavouring with confidence, (3) being patient, (4) acting according to regulative principles, (5) abandoning the association of non-devotees and (6) following in the footsteps of the previous *acharyas*”.

We have imported to our minds the ideas of the material world through our sense organs which are like cameras snapping photos of the world through eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. The worldly ideas of millions of births have occupied our minds. We have taken those ideas in our minds with adoration. Now, when we want them to go out from our minds, they will not go. For example, you cannot vacate a tenant if you allow him to occupy a portion of your house (for a very long time). Nobody wants to leave the place when once he is allowed to occupy it. We have embraced the material thoughts, now, when we want to concentrate our mind on our object of worship, those thoughts in our minds come up and disturb us. It is our fault or mistake that we have imbibed material thoughts in our minds. So, it is our duty now to remove those thoughts.

Mind is very restless. How to quiet it or control it? Lord Śrī Krishna advises us to practise *abhyāsyoga* and *vairāgya*. *Abhyāsyoga* means to try repeatedly. *Vairāgya* has two implications— detachment to worldly non-eternal objects and attachment to eternal Entity Śrī Krishna. We should not become disheartened under any circumstance and stop performing *bhajan*. Worldly thoughts, which are light, will be

purged out to the extent we shall imbibe divine thoughts, which are heavy and sublime, to our minds.

We get some sort of temporary pleasure in fulfilling the demands of the senses. That delusion of sense-pleasure drags us forcibly to the sinful acts whose ultimate result is suffering. When we actually realise the harmful result of sense-gratification, we shall refrain ourselves from doing so.

If we pour *ghee* (purified butter) into the fire, the fire will increase. In the like manner if we fulfil the desire of lust, the lust-fire will increase; it will not be extinguished. That is not the procedure for getting deliverance from our propensity to fulfil lustful desires. If we can pour a huge quantity of *ghee* at a time onto the fire, the fire will be extinguished. In the like manner if we have craving for the Absolute Whole Śrī Krishna, that craving will extinguish the fire of worldly desires, sense-gratification desires.



Realising our defects

As long as we cannot give up our material egos, it will not be possible to eradicate mundane vanities and drawbacks. Misconception of self is the root cause of self-aggrandisement, deceitfulness and other drawbacks. It is not easy for an enslaved *jīva* to give up mundane egos, so naturally it is very difficult to remove those shortcomings. By constant company of bona fide *sādhus* and by steadfast practice of different forms of devotion with submission to real *sādhus* we can gradually remove our shortcomings. It will take time. It depends upon the intensity of *sādhana*. Nothing can be achieved all of a sudden. This is also true when we actually perform *sādhana*. We can realise our defects and drawbacks and we become humble. We become more and more humble when we come in contact more and more with Śrī Krishna, Who is Absolute Good. This humbleness is not bad. When we come in touch with light, we can then realise that we were in darkness.

I am glad to learn that you are sincerely performing *bhajan*. When a person sincerely performs *bhajan*, he feels his drawbacks. Now when you are trying to perform *bhajan* for God-realisation you are facing so many hurdles on the way to reach the ultimate goal, so many drawbacks of which you had no feeling earlier. This is a long journey.

You have only started *bhajan*. Nothing can be achieved all of sudden. It will take time. It depends upon the tenacity of purpose and wholehearted sincere endeavour. We should not do anything emotionally.

The greatest impediment in *nām-bhajan* is vilification of genuine *sādhus*. We should remember the teachings of Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Those who are humbler than a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree, giving due respect to all, but not desirous of getting respect from others, are eligible to perform *Harināma sankīrtan*. We should censure ourselves. We should not take the risk of censuring others.



Removing obstacles

Śrī Narasimha Bhagavān removes our obstacles of *bhajan*. It will be good for you to remember Him daily. You are to pray for the Grace of *Patitpāvan Nityānanda Prabhu*, *Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu* and *vaiṣṇavas*. They will show you the right path.

Remembrance of Śrī Narasimhadeva is good for all. You should also remember Him. He will show you the right direction. We should always remember Narasimhadeva — morning, day time, evening and night. It is good that you are chanting the Holy Name regularly.

Bhagavān Balarāma appeared in *Kaliyuga* as Nityānanda, Who is gracious to all fallen souls. If you pray to Him with sincere heart, all doubts and obstacles in your *bhajan* will be removed.



Shelter of a bona fide guru

We should know that conditioned souls due to their aversion to the Supreme Lord have been hurled down here in the prison house of the world. This world is not the place of real peace and bliss. The prison house is a place for the punishment of culprits. As we find that a diseased person cannot treat himself and has to go to an expert doctor for treatment, similarly, for the treatment of worldly disease - birth,

death and threefold afflictions - bona fide expert spiritual doctors are necessary. You will find scriptural evidence for this in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (11.3.21):

*tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam
śābde pare ca niṣṇātaṁ brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam*

“Therefore, after submitting to Śrī Guru, the votary should ask for his eternal welfare. The bona fide *guru* must have the qualities of being well-versed in the scriptures and should have realisation of the ultimate reality, the Supreme Lord”.

Mahadev said to Pārvati Devi, 'There may be so many pseudo-gurus to snatch money from the disciples but they cannot remove sufferings by prescribing actual treatment. A real bona fide *guru* is very rare.' When you want quality you cannot get quantity. If you are to increase quantity you are to sacrifice quality.

Challenging mood

Absolute bliss is the Supreme Person — *Parabrahma*. He is omnipotent and omniscient. There is nothing equal to Him or more than Him. Absolute Bliss can take the initiative. He is no unconscious cipher. We commit a Himalayan Blunder when we think that Absolute Bliss is subservient to us. Nobody in the universe can have contact with Him by a challenging mood. Those who make such attempts for the realisation of Absolute Bliss, by their finite intellectual and mental endeavour, will be totally frustrated and that transcendental, spiritual, blissful realm will remain ever-sealed for them. We cannot approach Him by the process of ascension. He will descend to a completely surrendered soul. It is categorically said in the Gītā (7.15): 'The mischievous and demoniac persons will never submit to the Supreme Lord'. Just after that it is also said — ‘four kinds of persons who have got previous eternal spiritual good impressions will have the aptitude to worship Him’.

In respect to this, the evidence is referred to here in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (7.6.3), Prahlāda's advice to the demon boys: “O demon boys! Embodied souls, owing to their connection with bodies, have produced passion of sense organs for corresponding sense-enjoyments. But such material enjoyments will come automatically, without endeavour, according to previous destiny. Nobody wants misery or pain, but, it comes automatically because of previous misdeeds. Hence, it is not proper or necessary to make efforts to get worldly pleasures because by such endeavour one's

duration of life will be wasted. We will get eternal welfare by worshipping the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Lord Krishna. But we will never get such benefit by endeavouring for material pleasures.”

Enhance good thoughts

Due to previous impressions of bad and good deeds of the aspirants, waves of the currents of bad and good thoughts will remain in their minds. A sincere votary will try to subdue evil thoughts and enhance good thoughts. By that the momentum of evil thoughts will be lessened and the momentum of good thoughts will be increased. As stated in the Gītā (6.34-35) Arjuna asked Lord Krishna, 'O Lord! The mind is much too restless. The mind is more difficult to control than the wind.' Lord Krishna said, 'I agree to this, but you are very mighty. It is not impossible to subdue the mind. You can suppress it or control it by your endeavour in two ways: (1) *abhyāsa* - you are to practise concentration of the mind on your object of worship repeatedly and (2) *vairāgya* - practice detachment from material non-eternal things (the negative procedure of practice) and attachment to the Supreme Lord (the positive procedure of practice).



Question to Śrīla Gurudev- I am chanting each day and reading but inside everything feels dry and empty as if anything I do is evaporating into the air. I am urgently writing for your advice on how I can again find some taste and stop myself from walking away - as I am very close to the edge.

Practise to get stable state of mind

Prominent saints of India say that by association of bona fide *sādhus* for 15 minutes, or even for a moment, millions of offences will be removed and that it is like a boat to cross over the ocean of birth, death and the threefold affliction. One can get the association of a *sādhū* by one's previous accumulated impressions of eternal good deeds. So, it is undoubtedly true that the person who gets the company of *sādhus* is most fortunate.

The root cause of our being imprisoned in the prison house of worldly bondage is our aversion to the Supreme Lord. After forgetting the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and being enveloped by the illusory energy, we have passed through eight million births -

as aquatic animals, trees, worms, birds and beasts - and after that we got this precious human birth. God has bestowed discriminating power between the eternal and non-eternal to human beings, so that they are capable of accepting Eternal Truth by giving up non-eternal things. This human birth is not meant for eating, sleeping, defending and mating like beasts and birds. Human beings can worship Krishna (God). But any moment we may lose this chance.

We have imbibed bad and good thoughts in our minds by passing through so many births. So it will take time to remove the bad thoughts and enhance devotional, eternal, good thoughts. The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna has advised in the Gītā that through '*abhyāsa yoga*' — spiritual practice of subduing the evil thoughts and enhancing good eternal thoughts — by sincerely practising, gradually we will be able to get a stable state of mind.

Śrī Krishna has emphatically said in the Gītā— 'A sincere soul will never be deceived'. God is residing in our hearts, seeing everything. Nobody can do anything without His knowledge. We are reaping the fruits of our own actions. Nobody is to be blamed for our difficulties which are created by us by our own misdeeds. A sincere votary, who wants eternal welfare, should always see his own defects and good qualities in others. We can rectify ourselves if we see our own defects. It is due to our own actions that we have congenial and uncongenial environments. In this age, votaries are not capable of doing meditation, oblation and worship of Deities correctly. Chanting of the Holy Name is the only remedy for our disease of birth and death in this *Kaliyuga*.

The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna willing, I may leave for New Delhi from Calcutta with two other devotees. We will stay in our Maṭh in Paharganj, New Delhi. I am glad to learn that you are also coming on the Vrajamaṇḍal parikrama celebration. Month long Vrajamaṇḍal parikrama (Circumambulation of Vraja dhām) will start from 14th October.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - (1) My bhajan is not steady because my attachments to past material things still trouble my mind. What should I do? (2) How do I balance between my duties as a husband and a son and take devotees' association?

Fight against unholy thoughts

Received your letter in our Eastern zonal office, Guwahati, Assam and noted the contents.

The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna has emphatically said in the Gītā that a sincere soul will never be deceived. The Supreme Lord is residing in the heart of every soul and knows everything. He is omniscient and omnipotent and he regulates the fruits of the actions of conditioned souls. There cannot be any mistake in His giving fruits. In the Gītā it is said, "*karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana*" – ‘We can perform actions but we can have no hold over the fruits of the actions. Fruits are regulated by the Supreme Lord’ (Bhagavad Gītā. 2:47).

Conditioned souls have currents of thoughts in their minds imbibed from previous impressions of millions of births, both, holy thoughts and unholy thoughts. This human birth is given by the Lord to fight against unholy thoughts and to enhance holy thoughts. After passing through 80 lakhs (8 million) births of different species, we have got this human birth. God was satisfied by creating human beings as human beings have the capacity to discriminate between eternal and non-eternal and can worship the Supreme Lord, who is All-existence, All-knowledge and All-bliss. This human birth is not meant for eating, sleeping, defending and mating like birds and beasts. In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 9th Canto, Veda Vyāsa Muni has said that even Ambarīṣa Mahārāj, who was a most dear devotee of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, could only remove all desires of this world gradually by performing *bhajan* without deceitfulness. A conditioned soul cannot get the desired result all of a sudden. If he is sincere in his efforts, by the grace of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and His devotees, he will be ultimately successful. Actually we reap the fruits of our own actions. It is out of ignorance that we blame others for our own drawbacks. I hope as you are sincere you will be helped by the Supreme Lord and His devotees.

Take the help of devotees

Unless the root cause of committing sin is eradicated, the aptitude to commit sin cannot be removed. The cause of sin is desire for committing sin, the cause of desire for committing sin is misconception of self, the cause of misconception of self is nescience (ignorance) and the cause of nescience is aversion to the Supreme Lord, who is All- Existence, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss. Therefore, the root cause of sin is aversion to Śrī Krishna. So Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has said, “The conditioned souls of the world, due to forgetfulness of their relationship with the Supreme Lord, are averse to Śrī Krishna since time immemorial.” Therefore, it is advised to cultivate devotional practices, principally to chant the Holy Name for remembrance of Śrī Krishna. We have forgotten Śrī Krishna from time immemorial. We should undo it and for this we need to take the help of bona fide *śuddha bhaktas*. '*sādhana vinu sādhya-vastu keha nāhi pāya*' - without devotional practice nobody can get the objective.

You should take advantage of *sādhya sanga* as much as practically possible. Also, you should not blame others for your own circumstances. As per the fruits of our own previous *karma* we have got such circumstances but you should not stop devotion to the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna under any circumstances. You should continually engage your energy to worship Śrī Krishna and not for your relatives. As and when you get an opportunity for *sādhya sanga* you take advantage of it. Just as when we go to a doctor and take a potent injection, the effect of the injection remains for a long period. Similarly, when we take the injection of *sādhya sanga*, the effect remains for some period, say, 3-4 months. Many householder devotees who are not able to get much *sādhya sanga*, come for Navadvīp *dhām parikrama* and the effect of this injection remains for the rest of the year and then again.

As I am awfully busy I have written a few lines to you after getting some spare time.

My love to you. May All-Merciful Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and His AbsoluteCounterpart, *Gurudev*, bless you.

Affectionately yours,
B. B. Tirtha



Real quality of a sādhu

In regard to the birthday of your son, I pray to Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna to bless him.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu preached *bhāgavat dharma śuddha bhakti dharma* and taught the same by practising. Kapil *Bhagavān* in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 3rd Canto, clearly pointed out that the real quality of a *sādhu* is exclusive one-pointed devotion to the Supreme Lord. Without this no one can become a real *sādhu*. Meera Bai has also substantiated this.

The last message of Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākur to His disciples before his disappearance in Baghbazar Gauḍīya Maṭh, Calcutta was 'With the sole purpose of worshipping Śrī Hari we should pull on our life somehow in this most non- eternal world. We should not give up Hari *bhajan* in spite of hundreds of calamities, hundreds of obstacles, hundreds of reproaches and harassments. Don't be disheartened to serve Śrī Krishna, without deceitfulness, although seeing the majority of the worldly people are not accepting it. Don't give up your worship of Śrī Krishna and your spiritual devotional wealth listening and chanting *Krishna-katha* under any circumstances. Always do Hari-*kīrtan* with the two qualities of being humbler than a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree. We shall be able to realise Transcendental Delightfulness of service of Śrī Krishna when we shall be entitled to do '*aprākṛita harinām*', remaining aloof from all attractions and repulsions of this world. All arrangements of this world are extremely momentary. Never should we have indifference to or dislike for Śrī Krishna *sankīrtan yajña*, which will bestow on us all attainments.'

Śuddha Krishna *bhakti* in this world is most scarce as stated in the scriptures. Amongst crores of emancipated souls we will find one Krishna *bhakta*. You have already heard - if we want quality, we cannot get quantity.

My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
B. B. Tirtha



Keep your body fit for performing bhajan

After returning to Calcutta and carefully taking proper diet, I am feeling better. I am taking care of my health as far as practicable. It is not good always to think about the body which will perish one day. Mind is the cause of bondage as well as emancipation.

I am worried that your father is indisposed and has got heart trouble. Mental and physical rest is the best medicine for heart disease. He should not have any tension in his mind. Diet control and light physical exercise is necessary for controlling blood sugar. He should follow doctor's advice strictly. Ayurvedic medicine is good for heart disease. Your father should not give up allopathic medicines as he is accustomed to them but he should simultaneously take Ayurvedic medicines with a gap of 2 to 3 hours, as per doctor's advice.

We are in bondage when our mind is attached to non-eternal things and we get emancipation when our mind is attached to Eternal Reality, Śrī Krishna, Who is All-Existence, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss. This precious human birth is only meant for Hari *bhajan* and not for anything else. Any moment we may lose this chance. It will not be wise to give more importance to the necessities of the apparent self instead of the real self. As we are not emancipated souls, as long as we are in bondage we cannot become totally indifferent to the necessities of body. Physical troubles will cause mental reactions. Hence, you are to keep your body fit for performing *bhajan* uninterruptedly. It is necessary that you should follow doctor's advice.



PART III

Harinām and Dīkṣā

The essence of knowledge is - 'Life is impermanent and full of adversities. Therefore, take absolute shelter of Śrī Harināma and do your relative duties. Cool down the burning sensation of the threefold afflictions by drinking the ambrosia of Harināma. There is nothing valuable except Śrī Harināma in these fourteen worlds.'



Question to Śrīla Gurudev – Is dīkṣā only a formality? How one name of Krishna equals three names of Rām?

Bonafide Guru

A *sadguru* (bona fide guru) is rarely to be found in this world (remember Mahadeva's instruction to Pārvati Devi— '*guravo bahavah...*'). The criterion for recognising a *sadguru* is the presence of two special qualities – being well-versed in authentic scriptural knowledge and being well-established in the service of the God. The Upanishad, the Gītā and Bhāgavatam mention these in the verses '*śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham...*'; '*jñāninaḥ tattva-darśinaḥ...*' and '*śābde pare ca niṣṇātaṁ...*', respectively. One meaning of *śrotriya* is 'being well-versed in the Vedas and other allied scriptures', another meaning is 'receiving *mantra* through a preceptorial channel'; *jñāninaḥ* means scriptural knowledge; *śābde niṣṇātaṁ* refers to authentic scriptural knowledge. A bona fide *guru* must also have complete fixation of mind to Absolute *Parabrahma*, and realisation of the Supreme Divinity, to be well-established in the service of the God.

For instance, Prahlād Mahārāj gave proper respect to his family *gurus*, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, who had preceptorial knowledge and were well-versed in the Vedas but they had no realisation of *Parabrahma* Vishnu. When Hiranyakaśipu, father of Prahlād, asked Prahlād about '*sādhu*' and 'essence of the teachings of *guru*', Prahlād did not give the answer as per the desire of his father or his family *gurus*, but he stated the teachings of Nārada Goswāmī, from whom he got Vishnu-*bhakti* while he was in his mother's womb. He accepted Nārada Goswāmī as actual *guru*.

So-called family *gurus*, claiming to have received *mantra* through the right preceptorial channel, cannot achieve their own eternal benefit and have no capacity to bestow eternal benefit to others. Practical life- realisation is essential for being a *sadguru*.

After the disappearance of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and His personal associates, the Sad- Goswāmīs, Śrī Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswāmī, Śrī Viswanath Chakraborty, Narottam Thākur etc., darkness descended on the horizon of *śuddha bhakti*. Nobody could understand what *śuddha bhakti* actually is. Many pseudo sects cropped up - not only thirteen pseudo sects as described by Totaram Das Babaji Mahārāj but numerous others. The number of such pseudo sects went on increasing and even now will go on increasing because conditioned souls cannot understand the implication of

the instructions of the Supreme Lord by their own endeavour. Therefore, the Supreme Lord sent His own personal associates, Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura, to rescue the fallen souls.

Dīkṣā is not a formality

It seems, according to the alternative meanings of 'formality' in the Oxford Dictionary, you have meant that *dīkṣā* has no importance or meaning, it is only a ritualistic form. But to have a clear conception of the *dīkṣā* you are to go through 'Rūpā śikṣā' stated in Chaitanya Charitāmṛita. There it is written that, after moving through different species in the universe, a fortunate living being gets a human birth, and even in human birth, due to accumulation of the good impressions of eternal good deeds of previous lives, comes in contact with *guru* and *Bhagavān*. By the grace of *Bhagavān* he comes in contact with a bona fide *guru* and by the grace of a bona fide *guru* he gets the service of *Bhagavān*. It is a long topic, you can go through it from Chaitanya Charitāmṛita, Madhya Līlā, Chapter : 19. There it is clearly written - you should get the seed of *bhakti* from a bona fide *guru*. The seed should have life in it otherwise you cannot get the desired fruit. As for example, if a lifeless seed is sown on a cultivated land, you cannot get any fruit out of it. *Sadguru* is necessary to get a seed of *bhakti* having life in it. It is not non-important. It is not merely a formality.

One of Krishna's names equals three of Rāma's name

The Supreme Lord is One. Rāma, Nṛsimha, etc. are His different manifestations as per different pastimes. The comparison given here that one Krishna name equals three Rāma names is in the sense of the benefit that can be attained by chanting them, i.e., the benefit that is attained by chanting one Krishna name is three times the benefit that is attained by chanting the name of Rama (Lord Rāmachandra, not Rāma as in Mahāmantra, which signifies Krishna only —'Rādhikāramana Rāma'). This comparison of benefit is in the sense that all delightful love relationships are there with Krishna or in *braja-prem*, whereas with Lord Rāmachandra only three and a half rasas (delightful love relations) are there. By chanting the name of Krishna you will get more attachment to the Supreme Lord, which is the ultimate goal. Highest attachment will be in *gopi-prem*.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I have the following questions (1) Many times it occurs within our sampradāya that a name is given at initiation that is not directly related to Krishna, but to Rāma. Of course we know that Rāma in tattva is non-different from Krishna, but in rasa there is difference. So my question is then why are sometimes names given that reminds one of Lord Rāma? Or do all these names of Rāma līla have their corresponding Personalities in Krishna līla? Urmila refers to the wife of Lakshman. Is there a corresponding personality in Krishna līla?

(2) At the time of initiation the guru places the bhakti-lata-bīja in the heart of the disciple through imparting the mantra. Now say that at the end of the life the disciple is not fully realised, and still has some upādhis, so he has to come back. Then in the next life, is that bhakti-lata-bīja still present in his heart? Or does he need to get a new bhakti-lata-bīja from another guru?

(3) Does a guru who is not fully realised yet (who is madyam adhikāri) have the power to impart the bhakti-lata-bīja?

Ontologically same manifestations

(1) The Supreme Lord is Absolute or Infinite. Nothing can be outside the Supreme Lord. Everything is within Him and under Him. Even a particle of dust cannot be outside the Infinite. If it is accepted that a particle of dust can remain outside the Absolute, Absolute will lose His position. There cannot be many Supreme Lords. *Sanātana dharma* or *vaiṣṇava dharma* never says that the Supreme Lord can be many. We should remember the teachings of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu at Ranganath dhām to Venkatbhatta and his family members who were devout worshippers of Lakshmi-Nārāyaṇa. After coming in contact with Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and by His grace they became worshippers of Rādhā-Krishna. In that context, it has been said in Śrī Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, Madhya Līlā, 9.117, “*siddhāntatas tv abhede 'pi śrīśa-kṛṣṇa-svarūpayoḥ, rasenotkṛṣyate kṛṣṇa- rūpam eṣā rasa-sthitiḥ*”— 'There is no difference in Lakshmi-pati-Nārāyaṇa and Rādhā- pati-Krishna, but in līla-rasa, all kinds of sweet divine love due to all kinds of delightful love-relationships are only manifested in Nandanandan Śrī Krishna. In reality, ontologically they are the same. The difference is that in Krishna-līla there is enhancement in rasa. By worshipping Nandanandan Krishna we can get all kinds of rasas. In that sense, Nandanandan Krishna is *avatāri*. But if any worshipper worships numerous different forms of the Supreme Lord, they are not worshipping different Supreme Lords. Evidence you will

get from the hymn 'Daśāvatār' written by Śrī Jayadeva Goswāmī, the greatest devotee of *mādhurya rasa*. He has sung the glories of ten different Forms of God in this way—'*keśava dhṛta mīna śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare, keśava dhṛta kūrma śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare...*' He is singing the glories of Jagadish Krishna, Who has performed so many pastimes. Of course, it is true that if you get the taste of higher *rasa* in the worship of a higher Form of God (higher in regard to manifestation of *rasa*), you cannot have the desire to go to the Form of the Supreme Lord where that *rasa* is not manifested. The conditioned souls of this world, who have just started worship of God as novices, have no actual taste of sweetness of any Form of the Supreme Lord. Externally, even if one is given Krishna-*mantra*, if for any reason he comes in contact with Matsya- *Bhagavān* (Fish Form of the Supreme Lord) or *Kūrma Bhagavān* (Tortoise Form of the Supreme Lord), he will be so much attracted that he would not be able to go to Śrī Krishna, of Whom he has only heard but had no actual contact.

It is written in the Rāmāyaṇa that the ṛṣis of Daṇḍakāraṇya forest, being very much attracted by the beautiful Form of Lord Rāmachandra, wanted to serve Him in husband-wife relationship. Rāmachandra said, in that pastime, (*Maryāda-Pūrushottam*), giving dignity to ethical principles, that only Sīta Devi is entitled to get Him as husband and no one else. They could get Him as husband by attaining birth in a *gopi* family and by taking shelter of the *gopis*, when He would appear as Krishna in Vraja- *dhām*. By the grace of Rāmachandra, those ṛṣis were born in *gopi* families and got Krishna with husband-wife relationship, even more than that—relationship. *gopi-mādhurya* relationship.

Without the grace of Baladeva, nobody can get Krishna. Lakshman in Rāma-*līla* is non- different from Balarāma in Krishna-*līla*. Lakshman, being the younger brother of Rāma, had to obey the orders of Rāmachandra as elder brother and could not serve Rāma as per His desire. He wanted to become the elder brother of *Bhagavān* Rāma and His desire was fulfilled in Krishna-*līla* when He appeared as Balarāma. Krishna had to obey the orders of His elder brother Balarāma. Revati is the internal potency of Balarāma. Urmila, non- different from Revati, is the complete internal potency of Lakshman *Bhagavān*. As the ṛṣis of Daṇḍakāraṇya could get Krishna by the grace of Rāmachandra, similarly by the grace of Lakshman, Who is identical with Balarāma, we can get the service of Śrī Krishna. Urmila is non-different from Lakshman. She is His grace incarnate form. She can give everything, if She desires, but there should be sincerity in the submission of the desire.

The ultimate mantra

(2) One should go through the Brihad-Bhāgavatāmṛita. As Krishna-mantra is the ultimate mantra, if mantra-japa is not stopped, it will take the worshipper ultimately to Śrī Krishna, passing through many attractive realms, even transcendental realms. Also, Bhagavad-Gītā, 6.41 —

*prāpya puṇya-kṛtām lokān uṣitvā śāśvatīḥ samāḥ
śucīnām Śrīmadām gehe yoga-bhraṣṭo 'bhijāyate*

'The unsuccessful yogī, after many, many years of enjoyment on the planets of the pious living entities, is born into a family of righteous people, or into a family of rich aristocracy.'

(3) The *sadguru* or bona fide *sādhū* is very rare in this world. Mahadeva said to Pārvati, '*guravo bahavaḥ santi śiṣya-vittāpahārakaḥ, durlabha sadguru devī śiṣya-santāpahārakāḥ*' – 'There are so many so called *gurus* who squeeze out money from disciples, but one who can allay the miseries of the disciples is rare to be found. If you want quality, you are to sacrifice quantity and if you want to increase quantity, you are to sacrifice quality'.

I am also sending the article 'Vaishnav Aparādh' to you, as much as we have written. In that also, in the first page, there is reference to your third question of *madhyam-adhikāris*.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Some miscreants had broken my car window and had stolen a number of articles including my japa-mālā given to me by my guru Mahārāj at the time of my initiation, 30 years ago. I am devastated by the loss of my japa-mālā. Even though I am undeserving of any mercy, I would like to ask if it would be possible for you to give me a new japa-mālā that has been chanted on by you. If that were possible, would it also be possible to send them to me by post as it will be some time before I might get to India. I am very perturbed and am hopeful of some solution. I am missing you very, very much.

Guru-disciple relationship is eternal

Received your letter dated ___ and I am shocked to learn that you lost your *japamāla*, which you got 30 years before from your Most Revered Gurudev, His Divine Grace Parampujyapād Śrīmad Bhaktivedanta Swāmī Mahārāj. ISKCON temple is outside of city area and it is in a bit of a secluded place. You are to be very careful in going to such places outside the city. It is my suggestion to you that you should submit your prayer to the ISKCON temple authority to make arrangements for getting *japamāla* by searching in the nearby area. By thorough search it may be possible to get the *japamāla*. I do not know whether you have already done it. In many cases, I found that by searching, devotees got back their *japamāla*. Generally, we used to advise devotees in India, who lost their *japamālas*, to try to get such *japamāla* from the ascetic or household godbrothers or godsisters who have left the body. I think there may be such godbrothers of yours in London. You can try this.

His Divine Grace Parampujyapād Śrīmad Bhaktivedanta Swāmī Mahārāj is my Revered *śikṣā guru*, one of the dearest disciples of our Most Revered *Paramgurupadpadma* His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākur. You know that he preached the message of Divine Love of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu throughout the world, being directed by his Most Revered Gurudev. You are fortunate that you have got *harinām* from him. A sincere disciple should see his *gurudev* as the Grace Incarnate Form of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. You should know that the relationship between the bona fide *guru* and the bona fide disciple is eternal. There cannot be any severance of such eternal spiritual relationship. Although you are not seeing him physically by your material eyes, the Absolute Counterpart of the Supreme Lord - *gurudev* - is as eternal as the Supreme Lord. *Gurudev* is the Grace Incarnate Form of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. His grace is upon you, always. Your *japamāla* can be taken away, but his compassion on you, nobody can take away. So what is the reason of your being so much perturbed. You submit your prayer to your *gurudev* wholeheartedly and worship your *gurudev*, which every disciple should do, always. The worshipper should first worship *guru* and after that, taking his permission, one can worship Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna. All-Merciful *gurudev* already graced you. You can keep one Tulasi *māla* in the hand of the Deity of your *gurudev* and take it from him and do *harinām*. The Supreme Lord and His personal associates do not give importance to words but they see the heart of the worshipper. You can worship your *gurudev* for one week and accepting the *mala* from His sacred hands, perform *japam* on it; one lakh beads everyday for

one week. As you personally got the grace of your *gurudev*, there is no reason for you being worried for the loss of the *japamāla*. In spite of that, whenever you will come to India I shall speak to you and try to satisfy you in whatever way you want me to do.

I am somehow pulling on. My present health condition is not so good. Friends are advising me for proper check-up by heart specialist. We shall be happy if we submit to the will of Supreme Lord, Who is All-Good.

My love to you. May All-Merciful Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Losing japamāla & mantra paper

He expressed his grief in his letter to me for losing his *japamāla* in the train. *Japamāla* should not be kept hanging or in the pocket, especially lower pocket, it should be kept around the neck, particularly during a journey or outside tour-programmes. He should be very careful regarding this in future.

You have lost your *mantra* paper. It is not good to miss *mantra* paper. It should be kept very carefully. It should not be seen by anybody. You are to search further to get it. General rule is — *mantra* is to be heard and not given through writing. As we cannot stay at a place for long and cannot spare time and as *mantra japam* should be correct, this paper is given. But when you think that you have remembered the *mantra* correctly, you are to put the *mantra* paper in the river Ganges or Yamuna to flow away so that nobody can get it. The *mantra* paper cannot be sent by post. I shall give it to you personally.



Desire for initiation

I was in receipt of your letters sent by Air Mail to the Calcutta Maṭh address. Recently, I also got your short letter. I have gone through the contents of your three letters. In spite of my desire to write to you, I could not do it, as you have not given any address or e-mail. I have got your e-mail address now in your letter.

You have expressed in your letter your desire for getting further initiation. I do not know whether you will be able to come to India to take such initiation and I do not know when I shall be able to do this service. As far as I remember, you had such a programme in 2002, but it could not be materialised. Everything depends upon the will of the Supreme Lord. I learned from your letter that you had first come in contact with Parampūjyapād Śrīmad Bhaktivedanta Swāmī Mahārāj, our Most Revered Śikṣā Guru, in 1976, due to eternal impressions of your previous good deeds, and got the aptitude to worship the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna

This human birth is only meant for worship of the Supreme Lord and for nothing else. God has given the discriminating power to human beings to understand what is good and what is bad, what is eternal and what is non-eternal. This human birth is not meant for eating, sleeping, defending and mating like beasts and birds. After passing through 80 lakhs of births, you have got this valuable human birth to get deliverance from the shackles of Māyā and to get the highest objective — Krishna-*prema*. It will be foolish to spend a moment of this valuable human birth for non-eternal benefits of the world. All physical relations in this world are apparent and unreal.

Whether the conditioned soul understands or not, his eternal relationship is with the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. As the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna appeared in this blessed *Kaliyuga* as Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu, the most munificent form of Godhead, and Baladeva Prabhu appeared as Nityānanda Prabhu, furthestmost munificent form of Godhead, a blessed votary should take absolute shelter of Their Lotus Feet, and call Them by uttering Their Names from the core of his heart. This way all obstacles will be removed in no time. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu gave His standing order to all conditioned souls in this world that they should do Śrī Krishna *sankīrtan*, i.e., Hare Krishna *mahāmantra*, without tenfold offences. If you do this, it will be your greatest service to the Supreme Lord. You will get more benefit if you do *Harinām* before Tulasi. It is better if you can also utter four Nṛsiṃha *praṇām mantras* while going to bed and after rising from the bed.

Hope this will find you all in good health and spirit. May All-Merciful Śrī GuruGaurāṅga Nityānanda Prabhu bless you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Essence of knowledge

Śrī Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura says - "The essence of knowledge is 'Life is impermanent and full of adversities. Therefore, take absolute shelter of Śrī Harināma and do your relative duties. Cool the hotness of the burning sensation of the threefold afflictions by drinking the ambrosia of Harināma. There is nothing valuable except Śrī Harināma in these fourteen worlds.'

Chanting of the Holy Name, avoiding the tenfold offences in the company of *śuddha bhaktas* (pure devotees), is the only way to get emancipation from the miseries of the world and to get Absolute Bliss. Uncongenial company of worldly people, who are averse to Śrī Krishna, is to be avoided for getting devotional progress and eternal welfare."



Aspiring devotees and service of the holy name

The Holy Name should emerge from the core of the heart of the votary. By the company of a bona fide pure devotee, causeless devotion to God will be revealed in the heart of the votary, i.e. causeless devotion will be manifested in the soul of the votary. No *bhakti* can be done when retaining any misconceptions of self.

asādhu-saṅge kṛishna-nāma nāhi hoy,
nāmākṣara bahirāya baṭe tabu nāma kabhu noy
kabhu nāmābhāsa hoy sadā nāma-aparādh,
e saba jānibe bhāi kṛishna-bhaktir bādh
jadi karibe kṛishna-nāma sādhu-saṅga kor,
bhukti-mukti-siddhi-bānchā dūre parihor

The association of bona fide *sādhus* is essential for doing any kind of *bhakti*.

*na tathā hy aghavān rājan pūyeta tapa-ādibhiḥ
yathā kṛṣṇārpita-prāṇas tat-puruṣa-niṣevayā
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 6.1.16)*

Sukadev Goswāmī said to Parīkṣit Maharāja, 'O king! A vicious person cannot be so much sanctified by expiation of *karma* or *jñāna* as much as he will be so by taking unconditional submission to Śrī Krishna. How does one get that unconditional submission? Only by the service of a pure devotee, a bona fide surrendered soul.'

*Sarvopādhi-vinirmuktaṁ tat-paratvena nirmalam hr̥ṣīkeṇa hr̥ṣīkeśa-sevanam bhaktir
ucyate (Nārada-pañcarātra/CC. Madhya Līlā 19.170)* — 'All misconceptions of self or material egos, gross and subtle, should be completely effaced from the heart. After that one should have the knowledge that he is of Krishna (of *guru-vaiṣṇavas-bhagavān*). In this way when one will become holy, after that whatever he will do by his sense organs for the service of Hṛṣīkeśa, the Supreme Lord, will be *bhakti*'.

In this context we should remember the teachings of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka, 4th verse:

*na dhanam na janam na sundarīm kavitām vā jagadīśa kāmāye,
mama janmani janmanīśvare bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayī*

'O almighty Lord, I have no desire to accumulate wealth, nor do I desire to enjoy beautiful women, nor do I want any number of followers. I only want Your causeless devotional service in my life birth after birth.'

*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ
(Śrī Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu)*

*nikhila-śruti-mauli-ratna-māla- dyuti-nīrājita-pāda-pankajānta
ayi mukta-kulair upāsyamānām paritas tvām hari-nāma samśrayāmi*



Question to Śrīla Gurudev – Even though we are chanting, worshipping and taking prasāda for a long time, still the heart is not changing. What one has to do to change the heart?

We do not want Krishna from the heart

For this, one has to have the company of a *śuddha-bhakta*. Outwardly we are uttering the name 'Hare Krishna' 'Hare Krishna' 'Hare Krishna' but inwardly we have got misconception of the self, "I am this body", and bodily interests predominate in our heart. We are chanting the Name and thinking, "Oh Lord, I am in difficulty. I require another 50,000 dollars. Please save me. Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna".

God sees my heart. According to my heart's desire He will fulfil my desires. I do not want Krishna from the heart but I am trying to remove my worldly problems. If anybody wants Krishna immediately he will get Him. But we can't sincerely utter as we are habituated in desiring worldly things, "I do not want to leave this Honolulu. Where we will be taken we do not know". And if Krishna comes and says, "Come with me! I will take you to Vrindāvan! It appears as a hot place but actually it is a very good place!" If we will leave this place and go there we will be in great difficulty. We will have to beg alms. That is why we won't be able to go with Krishna to Vrindāvan. You are uttering the name of Krishna and when Krishna comes and says, "I have come. Now, come along!"

"No, No. I have got these nice hog family responsibilities"

When Indra was cursed by his *gurudev*, he came to this world and became a hog. Lord Brahma came to know about this when all the demigods told Lord Brahma, "There is no government, no monarch on the throne in heaven, the chair is vacant."

"He is gone; he has gone to the Earth. He was cursed. He has taken the form of a hog." So, Lord Brahma went there to that place where Indra was a hog and he told him:

"Oh my dear Sir, you are not a hog, you are a king, emperor of Heaven. Come along." Then Indra [as hog] said: "Who are you? Why, I have got this nice hog society, beautiful wife, many children and I do not want to go. Who are you?"

This is forgetfulness. In a like manner Krishna says to us: *anityam asukham lokam imam prāpya bhajasva mām* 'O living beings of this world! You have forgotten me, so you have come to this miserable and perishable world. Worship me and you will be rescued.' (Bhagavad Gītā 9.33)

sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja - 'Give up all of your relative duties. Take Absolute Shelter of me. I shall rescue you from all sins.' (Bhagavad-Gītā 18.66)

But we say: "Who are you? I have got this nice society and many responsibilities, many obligations - many. I have got wife, children, etc. - Who are you? I don't believe you. I won't go with you. I won't leave, I won't leave. I won't leave this Honolulu."



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I keep losing my concentration while chanting. It is very difficult to focus.

Chant loudly

For that reason Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu taught us through Haridas Ṭhākura. If we perform *japam* (alone) we will have mental diversion. But, if we perform chanting in the holy company of *śuddha-bhaktas*, if we chant loudly, and we hear only Krishna, Krishna, Krishna then no sound of this world can enter. That is why we will have concentration if we are always hearing Rādhā Krishna, Rādhā Krishna, Rādhā Krishna. For us loud chanting is more effective.

*sei du'ti katha, bhula' na sarvatha uccai svare kara 'hari nama-rava
'phalgu' āra 'yukta', 'baddha' āra 'mukta' kabhu nā bhaviha, ekākāra saba
(Vaiṣṇava Ke? by Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura)*

Our Paramgurudev's advice is that we should loudly chant the Holy Name (*uccai svare*). To not loudly chant Krishna, is not *yukta-vairāgya*; that is *phalgu-vairāgya* or false renunciation. There is one river in Gaya, India. Externally we see only sand but below the sand there is an undercurrent water. It is a *phalgu* River - the False River.

If you do not loudly chant the Holy Name, the Holy Name's grace will not come to you. His grace will not come to you, His remembrance will not come to you. So, your

enjoying spirit, your ulterior motives will not be removed; they will still remain. You may be showing yourself as a renouncer but inwardly wildly thinking about the objects of sensual enjoyment. This is *phalgu-vairāgya* - pseudo *vairāgya*, false renunciation.

In actual *vairāgya* we shall devote our mind towards Śrī Krishna. How? If we loudly chant, it will be good for us and also for all other living beings of this world (because the Name and the Named are the same). If you loudly chant you will have concentration. Other living beings will also be able to hear - Krishna, Krishna, Krishna. They also have forgotten Krishna and for that reason they have come to this world. When you chant loudly they may remember; they may not be able to chant but they can hear.

However, here in this place (Hawaii) we are told, "No permission! No noise to be made! Therefore loud chanting is not allowed." When I was in San Francisco, Ramdas Prabhu said: 'You can perform *sankīrtan* at my temple there (Hawaii) but not here (San Francisco). If you do it, the neighbours will complain, 'Do not do so loudly.' I have come to this place (Hawaii). This is also such a place where if you do *kīrtan* loudly, the neighbors will complain to the police and they will come and ask, "What are you doing? What is this?"

But in India there are many mosquitoes in every hall but you can do *harinām sankīrtan* (spiritual devotional performance in association with devotees) wherever you like. In a holy place, when we perform *bhajan*, everybody is inspired to do this.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev – I am not able to chant Harinām loudly as I have a problem in my vocal cords. How should I do japa? How many rounds of mālā do I have to chant? How to increase chanting? What does it mean to chant continuously? How can I live by the third sloka of Śikṣāṣṭaka? How to stop identifying myself with this body?

Bhajan is not possible with material ego

It is not that *japa* of *Harinām* can be done only by chanting loudly.

nāmāparādha-yuktānām nāmāny eva haranty agham

aviśrānti-prayuktāni tāny evārtha-karāṇi ca (Padma Purāṇa)

Dikṣā mantra japa can be done only mentally but *Harinām* can be done mentally as well as loudly.

Material non-eternal sense organs have drawbacks, but there cannot be any defect in the spiritual sense organs of a *tāttvik guru* who is established in the realised state. One who is established in the eternal nature of the real self can chant correctly. Enslaved *jīvas* with material egos and material sense organs can never do any kind of *bhajan*. Whatever they do is only *karma* for material benefits. We find evidence from Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura-

siddha-deha diyā vṛndāvana mājhe sevāmṛta karo dāna,
piyāiyā prema matta kari more suno nija guṇa gāna

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura has submitted His prayer to the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna to bestow the ambrosia of loving service to Him by giving realised spiritual form. The Supreme Lord actually, by imparting *prema* to His associate, sings His own glories through the devotee and also hears His own glories. With material ego and material endeavour, actually, you cannot do any kind of service to the Supreme Lord. Also, Śrīla Rūpā Goswāmī has written in *Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu* (1.2.234):

ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ

“The Name of the Supreme Lord is not material sound. In this material realm, a sound denotes a thing; sound itself is not the thing. As for example, the word 'water' denotes the thing 'water'. Just uttering 'water' you cannot quench your thirst. You have to drink water. So in this material world, material sound and the thing indicated by material sound are different but in the Transcendental Spiritual Realm, the Transcendental Name of the Supreme Lord and the Transcendental Entity of the Supreme Lord are non-different. The Supreme Lord is the cause of all causes, and therefore, naturally, is Self-effulgent. His Transcendental Name is also Self-effulgent”.

The Transcendental Name descends to a completely surrendered soul. The Supreme Lord descends in the sanctified heart of a bona fide surrendered soul. The

Transcendental Name and Form descends to the tongue etc. of surrendered devotees inclined to serve Śrī Krishna. It is never possible to have contact with the Transcendental Reality, the Supreme Lord, Who is All-Existence, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss, by the process of ascension. Only through the process of descension, the Transcendental Name, Form, Attributes and Pastimes of the Supreme Lord can be realised.

Conditioned souls have the aptitude to know things with their own endeavour. The only way to realise the Absolute Spirit is unconditional surrender to Him, or more correctly, to His Grace-Incarnate Form — *śuddha bhakta* or *sadguru*.

Nirguṇa Bhagavān, Who is Absolute Reality, descends through a bona fide preceptorial channel. Hence, without submission to a bona fide preceptorial channel, the cultivation of *mantra*, of the Holy Name, will not be fruitful. As stated in the Padma Purāṇa — ‘*sampradāya-vihīnā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ*’. We should have clear understanding of the distinction of a material conditioned soul and a sincere blessed soul aspiring for eternal real welfare, *śuddha bhakti*.

Direct service of the Lord

Our previous *ācārya* Śrīla Jagannātha Das Babaji Mahārāj had two *sevakas*. The *sevakas* were aggrieved of getting an order from their *gurudev* (Śrīla Jagannātha Das Babaji Mahārāj) to work in the vegetable garden, in spite of their praying to Him for giving them scope to go through Bhāgavatam. Ultimately they submitted their problem to Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur - about their *gurudev* not giving them scope to read Bhāgavatam and to do *Harinām*. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur, after hearing them smiled and told them that their *gurudev* is not an ordinary human being. Actually, He is a personal associate of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. He is directly serving the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. Out of compassion, he has given you the order to go to the vegetable garden to grow vegetables there, to make you fit to do *Harinām*. His garden is not an ordinary garden for the enjoyment of enslaved householders. If you accept the order of *gurudev* and serve, that will be direct service to the Supreme Lord. By that, your sense organs will be engaged actually for the service of Śrī Krishna and ultimately you will be able to utter the Name of Śrī Krishna correctly. Moreover, while working in the garden you can also chant *Harinām* simultaneously”.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev – By the mercy of the Supreme Lord only, have I come in contact with you, when you mercifully travelled the world over. Your mercy has brought divine bliss to the fortunate souls and the world at large. For my own purification, to attract the grace of Gaurāṅga, I am helping to organise a japa seminar, a retreat where devotees are going to gather to extensively perform japa during 2 weeks. We are so neophyte; we need the presence of experienced and advanced devotees to bless the whole performance. ‘Krishna Consciousness’ is not a theory, so please bless us by sending any senior devotee you will appoint. Anyone of those worshipping devotees, by his presence, will make the seminar a spiritual success.

Foreign tours

I have gone through your kind letter by e-mail. I know you have got affection for me. When I was in _____, you helped me a great deal and made arrangements for our going from one place to another.

Initially, I had no desire to go outside India. But, when I was in North-India, devotees there insisted on my going. As our Most Revered Gurudev had disappeared, I approached our Most Revered Śikṣā Guru Parampujyapad Śrīmad B. P. Puri Goswāmī Mahārāj, three years consistently. He encouraged me vigorously, by citing instances of the orders of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākur and other *guruvarḡ*, to go to foreign countries to spread the divine message of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. “For the conditioned souls of the world, wherever they may be, there is no other way to get deliverance from the shackles of *Māyā* and to get the highest objective ‘Krishna-prema’, except *Harinām sankīrtan*. Whether they accept or not this should be intimated to all.” I then submitted my prayer to Most Revered Puri Goswāmī Mahārāj, if he would take the responsibility so that I might not have a spiritual fall. He said that my *gurudev* would take the responsibility.

Our Most Revered Gurudev directed me that I should not speak with the spirit of delivering a speech but should try to repeat whatever I heard from *gurudev*, other *guruvarḡ* and from authentic scriptures for my own spiritual benefit. As I could not rescue myself how can I rescue others?

After continuous preaching for four years or so, I got blockage of the heart as diagnosed by heart-specialist doctors who advised me to restrict my preaching

programmes and also to speak less. Afterwards, as per my request, one doctor said that in the summer season I can go to Europe or America but should remain in one place. Some friends advised me not to undertake long distance air flights. Our attendant friends are always preventing me from going outside. Many are advising me to confine myself only to writing. So, it seems the Supreme Lord now does not want that I should go outside. Nothing can be done without the approval of the Supreme Lord. Although I am not fit for taking the strain of a tour programme, still sometimes, for giving *Harinām* and *dīkṣā* I have been permitted to go short distances within India.

Perform japa for His satisfaction

It is good to perform *harinām japa* (silently in the mind). But Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura, our *gurudev* and *guruvarṅga* gave more stress for doing *sankīrtan* because performers of *sankīrtan* will have concentration on the object of worship due to the loud utterance of the Holy Name and others will also hear it. All forms of devotion are to be performed with the knowledge that we are of Krishna. We should take complete shelter of Śrī Krishna and do *nāma sankīrtan* only for His satisfaction, and not for any other ulterior desires.

I have discussed the matter and it is proposed that Tridāṇḍī Swāmī Śrīmad B. S. Niṣkiṇcana Mahārāj, Maṭh-in-charge of Chandigarh Maṭh and Jt. Secretary of our institution, who also speaks English, should go with the party of Śrī Ananta Ram Brahmachārī and Bhutabhavan Das (Bhupendra). I think Śrīmad B. S. Niṣkiṇcana Mahārāj will require a sponsorship letter from you. You should contact him, as well as Swarup Dāmodar of New Delhi, for his passport and visa.

I am so so. My *daṇḍavat praṇāms* to you and also to Prabhu. My love to others.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna bless you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Divine knowledge descends

Humble representation to affectionate mother for her intense eagerness to serve Krishna and *vaiṣṇavas* as per direction of her Most Revered Gurudev.

Hope this will find you all in good health and spirit. I am much impressed having gone through your long letter of seven pages. As you are the mother of Śrī _____ , automatically you have become like a mother to me also. Over and above this, as you are a disciple of my Most Revered Śikṣā Guru, Śrīla Bhaktivedanta Swāmī Mahārāj, you have got spiritual relation with me as cousin god-sister. Sincerely taking shelter of a bona fide *guru* is the highest spiritual devotional qualification. Transcendental Divine Knowledge descends through a bona fide preceptorial channel. No conditioned soul, by his own effort, can have contact with the Transcendental Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, Who is All-Existence, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss. Aversion to Śrī Krishna is the root cause of the envelopment of the conditioned souls by nescience - deep dark ignorance - and thereby conditioned souls become victim of the threefold afflictions in the prison house of the world.

I shall request you to go through the enlightenment of your Revered Gurudev in His pithy explanation of one verse of Gītā - 'When one is enlightened with the knowledge by which ignorance is destroyed, then his knowledge reveals everything as the Sun lights up everything at daytime.' Here knowledge is not intellectual knowledge but self-effulgent knowledge. Realisation of the God is extremely difficult as well as very easy. Without belief and submission to Him, nobody can have His actual realisation. If there will be total unconditional submission, immediately everything will be clear.

As I have got heart trouble, my movements have been restricted. Yet, Supreme Lord willing, I have got the desire to go to New Delhi on 6th October, 2005. I shall have scope then, occasionally to participate in the circumambulation ceremony of Vraja dhām and other celebrations. It will start on 14th October and terminate on 13th November. We are so so.

Lastly, I pray for your blessings. My love to your son and others.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev – I am your gṛhastha (householder) disciple. Though sometimes I am able to give donation, I've not been able to render any other service to you. Is there any particular service that you can direct me to do?

Greatest service

Actually, you are not my disciple but you are the disciple of our Most Revered Gurudev, Who is the Absolute Counterpart of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and His Grace Incarnate Form. Our Most Revered Gurudev used to say that a bona fide *guru* never thinks himself a *guru* when giving *mantra* to a disciple. A *śuddha bhakta* always thinks of himself as a servitor of the Supreme Lord. The greatest devotion to the Supreme Lord is to persuade the conditioned souls, who have become victims of the threefold afflictions by being enveloped by the illusory energy of Supreme Lord, to divert their minds from worldly non-eternal things towards their relationships with the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna with Whom they have an eternal, real relationship. To engage one conditioned soul, by persuasion, to serve Śrī Krishna is one of the greatest services to the Supreme Lord. A *śuddha bhakta* does this duty for the satisfaction of Krishna but a third person sees that one is '*guru*' giving *mantra* and another is '*disciple*' receiving *mantra*.

Krishna is easily satisfied

It is not difficult to propitiate Śrī Krishna. Prahlād Mahārāj, to persuade demon boys to worship the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna said -'*na hy acyutaṁ prīṇayato bahv-āyāso surātma-jāḥ, ātmavāt sarva-bhūtānām siddhatvād iha sarvataḥ*'- Bhāgavatam 7.6.19 - 'It is not difficult to please Krishna as He is dear to all living beings and is residing in their hearts. As such there is no difficulty to search for Him. Don't think that as the Supreme Lord is Almighty and Infinite, little boys cannot worship Him. It may be difficult for a wife to please her husband or for a husband to please his wife; for parents to please the children or for children to please their parents in spite of their utmost efforts, but it is easy to satisfy Śrī Krishna as He is dearest and nearest.'

Even if a small boy, having no worldly qualification and ability, submits his prayer to the Supreme Lord “O beloved Lord! I am an insignificant creature. I am unable to serve you. Please be gracious to me”, Krishna will be immediately satisfied. Wealth, erudition, social status etc. are not indispensable for the service of Śrī Krishna. Only firm faith and sincerity of heart are necessary. The Most Munificent Form of

Godhead, the Supreme Lord, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, has given a standing order to all conditioned souls in this world- 'Do *jaṇam* of *Mahāmantra*, keeping the fixed number; you will get all kinds of attainments. Utter the Holy Name always without any binding of time, place, age or circumstance - even while eating, lying down and awakening. Day and night think about Krishna and chant His Name.

You have already heard - Ajāmila got deliverance from worldly bondage just by uttering the Holy Name 'Nārāyaṇa' out of fear, when he was on the verge of death, upon seeing the horrifying figures of the messengers of God of death.

My love to you all. May All-Merciful Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



PART IV

Association of Sādhus

I am happy and encouraged to see your initiative and aptitude to serve Viṣṇu and *Vaiṣṇavas*. The eternal nature of our real self is to serve Viṣṇu and *Vaiṣṇavas*. Those *jīvas* are blessed who have got the aptitude to serve Śrī Krishna and Krishna *bhaktas*.



Company of devotees

The heart-specialist doctor advised me to remain in one place at least for 6 months. When I had a discussion with him regarding a preaching tour outside India, he had no objection if done after 3 months i.e. in the coming summer season. But I'm supposed to stay only at one place and devotees can come and see me. But will it be practically possible - if I go there and confine myself only to one place?

The company of bona fide devotees is necessary for devotional enhancement. You and your family are all devotionally inclined. If I can get your company, I shall also be happy. Actually we do not want the company of persons desirous of sensuous enjoyments nor of renouncers. We want the company of *śuddha bhaktas* only. They may be in a household life or in an ascetic life. It is said “*bhaktistu bhagavad bhakta sangena parijāyate*”— *bhakti* can be attained only through the association of bona fide devotees. If the Supreme Lord desires, we can get the company of the devotees in Europe. Actually, when someone becomes eligible to get the company of a pure devotee, it is sure either the Supreme Lord will appear as a devotee before him or He will bring him to the company of devotees. As the sun is non-different from the rays of the sun, the Supreme Lord is also non-different from His Grace-incarnate Form, *śuddha bhakta*. Therefore it is my submission to you that devotees should get together at any place at least once a week for *Hari-katha*. When there is lack of association of devotees one should go through the authentic scriptures or authentic writings of personal associates of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu—Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura or Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura. This was the advice of our most revered Gurudev.

Hope by the grace of Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna, you all are keeping well. My love to you all and also accept my *daṇḍavat praṇāms*.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Congenial association

Congenial association is a great factor in achieving enhancement in *bhajan*. Uncongenial association diverts the minds of *sādhakas*. In exceptional cases,

spiritually well-established persons can do *bhajan* under any circumstance anywhere and everywhere. In this *Kaliyuga*, congenial company is necessary for making progress in *bhajan*. Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda says, "I don't get strength in practising *Harināma* (*sankīrtan*) alone."

Collective *bhajan* is strength in *Kaliyuga*. But this collective *bhajan* should be with like minded bona fide souls and not with those persons who have got ulterior motives. Evil company is to be avoided. We should perform *Harināma* avoiding the tenfold offences.

You have rightly said that association of a true devotee is essential for spiritual devotional amelioration. A true devotee is rarely to be found in this world. If you want quality, you cannot get quantity.

Even if we, by previous eternal good deeds, come in contact with a true devotee, we cannot submit to him sincerely and wholeheartedly. It is very difficult to give up our mundane egotism which we have acquired by cycles of births and deaths after being averse to Śrī Krishna. But there is no cause for disappointment. If we sincerely try, God and His Personal Associates will come to help us and rescue us.



Serving Viṣṇu and vaiṣṇavas

I am happy and encouraged to see your initiative and aptitude to serve Viṣṇu and *vaiṣṇavas*. The eternal nature of the real self, *jīva* soul, is to serve Śrī Viṣṇu and *vaiṣṇavas*. When we are averse to Them, the illusory energy of Viṣṇu *Bhagavān* envelops us and we get two kinds of defects:

- (i) Forgetfulness of our real self that we are an eternal servant of Śrī Krishna, and
- (ii) Misconception of self that we are the body.

Repugnance to the service of Śrī Krishna and his devotees is the cause of nescience. Nescience, i.e. ignorance, is the cause of misidentification of the self. Misidentification of the self is the cause of material desires. Material desires are the cause of committing sins. Committing sins is the cause of suffering. So the root cause of suffering is averseness to serving Śrī Krishna. Those *jīvas* are blessed who have got the aptitude to serve Śrī Krishna and Krishna *bhaktas*. Wherever we shall

devote our energy, we shall go there. We shall become attached to those things. So, the wise always devote their mind, intelligence, senses, words and everything for the service of Śrī Krishna.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - (1) I left my job and hometown to stay with the devotees in another city. Now I am feeling very much drawn toward my previous way of living and the people. I am not able to adjust with devotees here. It seems that all my attempts to be with devotees are without success and I have to keep at some distance from them. Now I do not have a place to live. How should I maintain myself? (2) For entering into family life, whose disciple my husband should be? How can I know if we are suited to each other? How can I recognise a devotee with whom I would be able to live a life in the service of the Lord? What qualities should the devotee possess so that I could entrust my life to him?

Be guided by the realised souls

Whenever I submitted difficult problems to my Most Revered Gurudev, He used to give me the advice not to take any decision by own initiative, as the mind and intellect of a finite being (conditioned soul) is also finite and prone to commit mistakes. Any decision taken by the finite mind and finite intellect can increase problems. The correct way is to take absolute shelter of the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Lord and His Absolute Counterpart, *gurudev* or *śuddha bhakta*, who are omniscient and All-Merciful. A light of Transcendental Divine Knowledge will then enter into the heart of such a surrendered soul and remove all their doubts. All problems will be solved by it immediately and effectively. I mean to say, in short, we should not be carried away by our finite mental and intellectual feelings. One should be guided by the realised souls. Finite individual souls of this world by their finite intellect can never solve their own problems nor of others as they are enveloped by illusory energy. They have misconception of the self and misunderstand their actual requirements. Further difficulty is that the association of a bona fide *śuddha bhakta* or *sadguru* is very scarce. Our only hope is this the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, has said in the Gītā, 'If anybody is sincere, he will never be deceived'. God exists in the heart of every soul and knows everything. Nobody can do good or bad acts without His knowledge and the Supreme Lord is controlling the fruits of the actions of all. We can do actions but can have no hold over the fruits of actions.

'To those who always worship Śrī Krishna with sincerity of heart, the Supreme Lord bestows wisdom to understand the way to attain Him.' (Bhagavad Gītā 10.10)

Nārada Goswāmī's instruction to Dhruva was— 'One who wants to attain God should not blame others for his troubles and worries. All reap the fruits of their own actions' Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 4th Canto.

The last message of His Divine Grace Most Revered *Paramgurudev* Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura to His disciples before His disappearance was—'Don't be disheartened by seeing that the majority of the people of the world are not accepting service of Śrī Krishna (devotion to Śrī Krishna) without deceitfulness. Don't give up your worship and your only spiritual wealth of hearing and chanting Krishna-*katha*. Always do Hari-*kīrtan* being humbler than a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree. All arrangements in this world are momentary.'

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev – Please explain the last line of the verse of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.2.37 (*bhaktyaikayeśaṁ guru-devatātmā*) - to accept Śrīla Gurudev as our *ātmā* and our worshipping deity. It is not fully clear to me. Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Krishna are our worshipping deities and we should fully surrender to Them. But I also read that Śrīla Gurudev is my worshipping deity and that I should surrender fully unto Him. How to reconcile this?

Material designations

The *ātmā* is *sacchidānanda*—an eternally existing entity of knowledge and blissfulness. *Upādhi* means 'denomination or denotation' which an individual gets due to contact with the body and sense organs (gross and subtle). We get any designation by our actions in this world. A person may be a doctor, professor, engineer or have any other qualification due to his *karma* (action) and this is termed as *upādhi*. *Brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*, *brahmacharya*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa* (the four *varṇas* and four *āśrama*), any denotation regarding his birth in any country, any material ego, any relationship with the world

or universe—are all *upādhi*. We should be completely freed from any relationship with the non-eternal world.

Guru is the regulator

Fear comes when there is misconception of self. He who is averse to the Supreme Lord is ensnared by the Lord's illusory energy and is affected by two defects—misidentification of self with the body and forgetfulness of real self. The wise will understand that worship of Krishna with devout one-pointed devotion is the only remedy, for which taking shelter of a bona fide *guru* is essential, in the knowledge that *guru* is the regulator and also the dearest.

For consistency, adjustment and harmony, we shall have to go through the teachings of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam repeatedly and very ardently. If there is no such enthusiasm or determination, we will be foredoomed to failure. We have heard that Śrī Krishna Dvaipāyana Vedavyāsa Muni (who is accepted as *guru* by all sects in India), could not get tranquility of mind after expanding or dividing the *vedas* into four categories (Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma, and Atharva), and after writing *vedānta* (Brahmasūtra), the Mahābhārata (which includes the Gītā) and the 18 Purāṇas. Therefore He had to play the pastimes of remembering his *guru* (Nārada Goswāmī) at the holy place Badrinath *dhām* and praying for his grace. Nārada Goswāmī appeared before him and disciplined him, saying whatever he had done was wrong and advised him to sing the glories of Śrī Krishna, only for Krishna's satisfaction, and not for *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, non-eternal benefits, and not even for salvation, to merge with the impersonal formless *Brahman*. By the imparted grace of Nārada Goswāmī, Vedavyāsa Muni meditated on the four verses of the Bhāgavatam (*chaturśloki* Bhāgavatam), wrote the Bhāgavatam consisting of twelve cantos and eighteen thousand verses, and got eternal bliss.

Here it should be noted very carefully that even if anybody hears about Bhāgavatam innumerable times, it can never become stale. Śrī Vrindāvan Das Ṭhākura in his treatise, Śrī Chaitanya Bhāgavat, has written that Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, after hearing Dhruva *chāritra* (4th canto) and Prahlād *chāritra* (7th canto) of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam a hundred times from Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita Goswāmī, wanted to hear about those topics again and again. *Śabda-brahma* - Transcendental Sound - can never become stale. At every hearing complete ambrosia of *Harikatha* will be relished afresh.

Associate with sādhus

In regard to the above query, you are to go through or hear about Kapila-Devahūti *samvād* 3rd canto, 25th Chapter, of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, again and again. The summary of the dialogue between Mother Devahūti and Kapila Bhagavān is as follows: Mother Devahūti inquired, “For so long I was infatuated by Your illusory energy and I wanted a son. I have realised this just after Your appearance. Please tell me how I can deliver myself from my entanglement in non-eternal desires?”

Kapila Bhagavān smiled and said, “You have no worldly desires, otherwise I could not have appeared in you. Your heart is pure and sanctified. You have no attachment. Your query is for the eternal benefit of the conditioned souls of the world. I shall reply to your query for the benefit of the enslaved *jīvas*.

Certainly, the mind is the cause of attachment, but the mind is also the cause of emancipation. When the mind is attached to the external potency of the Supreme Lord (*triguṇa*) consisting of the three primeval qualities— *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ*, it causes bondage. When the mind is attached to *nirguṇa* (Transcendental) *Bhagavān*, it causes deliverance from the clutches of Māyā (illusory energy).”

Mother Devahūti again asked, “Please explain clearly what *triguṇa* is and how votaries can have attachment to God (*nirguṇa Bhagavān*)?”

Kapila Bhagavān replied, “It is already stated that *triguṇa* is *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ*, the three primeval qualities of the external potency of the Supreme Lord. By *rajo-guṇa* living beings are created, by *sattva-guṇa* they are sustained and by *tamo-guṇa* they are destroyed. The body is *triguṇa* because it is born by *rajo-guṇa*, it exists for some time by *sattva-guṇa*, and is destroyed by *tamo-guṇa*. Attachment to the body and to other bodily relationships is the cause of firm bondage. How can an aspirant get attachment to God (*Bhagavān*), because He is not speaking and there is no exchange of thoughts with Him, except in rare cases? How can aspirants get attachment to *nirguṇa Bhagavān*? Although knowing fully well that all mundane relationships are most transitory, still, because of their connection with the body, they become attached to them. But *sādhus* are moving and talking in this world. If any votary associates with the *sādhus* sincerely, then by the process of six-fold behavior— to give and take, to offer food and take *prasādam*, and to divulge their heart to *sādhus*— the *sādhū* will open his heart.”

Who is a sādhu?

Mother Devahūti again inquired, “Who is a *sādhu*? How does one recognise a *sādhu*? What are the characteristics?”

Kapila Bhagavān said, “There are two kinds of characteristics of *sādhus*. There is the original qualification, and when that original qualification exists, *taṭastha* characteristics will be manifested, which may be indicated as concomitant qualities.” First, the accompanying characteristics are explained:

*titikṣavaḥ kārūṇikāḥ suhṛdaḥ sarva-dehinām
ajāta-śatravaḥ śāntāḥ sādharmaḥ sādhu-bhūṣaṇāḥ*
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 3.25.21)

'Forbearance, compassion, well-wishing friendliness to all living-beings, no vision of foes (as *sādhus* see all as coming from the same source and thus inter-related), calmness, serenity and simple heartedness.'

The original qualities are then described:

*mayy ananyena bhāvena
bhaktim kurvanti ye dṛḍhām
mat-kṛte tyakta-karmāṇas
tyakta-svajana-bāndhavāḥ*
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 3.25.22)

'Exclusive and firm, one-pointed devotion to the Supreme Lord, giving up *karma* (*varṇāśrama dharma*) and kinsmen for worship of *Bhagavān*, sincerely hearing and speaking *Harikatha* with the sole object of serving the Supreme Lord and not for any other ulterior motive.'

Such devotees may play the pastimes of being sick but they do not feel the pangs of diseases as their minds are fully engrossed in thinking about their object of worship.

Although Śrī Krishna, Śrī Rāmachandra, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu are the Supreme Lord, they accepted a *guru*. Why? To teach the votaries that taking shelter of a *guru* is essential.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I am seeking a very deep and bonding relationship with you, gurudev. I want to be completely absorbed in the service of your lotus feet. I want to be engaged in this service 24 hours a day with my body, mind and speech. Without your mercy and direct leadership over my entire life, any sādhana that I could artificially perform, may only bring damage to my faith and life. Please advise me what I should do, how I should lead my life from now on?

Surrender necessary to receive instructions

Received your letter through e-mail and noted the contents. It is good that you have opened your heart's doubts sincerely. You have mentioned in your letter partially about one verse of the Gītā (2.7)- 'kārpaṇya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ prcchāmi tvāṁ dharma- sammūdha-cetāḥ, yac chreyaḥ syān niścitaṁ brūhi tan me śiṣyas te 'haṁ śādhi mām tvāṁ prapannam'. Briefly to say, Arjuna made the pastime of being extremely infatuated by seeing his kinsmen and objects of his regard and worship in the battlefield in front of him before fight. He mourned and gave up his desire to fight. Śrī Krishna reproached Arjuna by saying, "This sort of your deliberation in the battlefield is unwarranted. Give up this weakness of heart and be ready to fight." On being reproached by his most beloved object of worship Krishna, Arjuna took shelter in Him, his Eternal Master and prayed to show him the path of eternal welfare. That is the purport of the above verse. Krishna then started giving him instructions. As long as we do not take unconditional absolute shelter to *guru-vaiṣṇava*, there will be no impetus for Them to give instructions. To know the actual teachings of the Gītā, we should go through the instructions of a bonafide personal associate of Śrī Krishna. I shall advise you to go through the explanation of Gītā written by Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura.

Misconception of the self

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura has stated in his book 'Śrī Bhajan-rahasya' that there are four drawbacks for the votaries to get success in devotional worship, viz.

- (1) misconception of self
- (2) evil non-eternal desires
- (3) weakness of heart
- (4) propensity to commit offence

The actual origin of these four hindrances is 'misconception of self'. Due to misconception of self, we have evil non-eternal desires, weakness of heart and committal of offence to the Supreme Lord and His devotees. The enslaved *jīva* has been hurled down into this prison house of the world and is passing through cycles of births and deaths due to his forgetfulness of his relationship with Śrī Krishna. God has given the power of discrimination in the human birth so that he can discriminate between bad and good, eternal and non-eternal. Due to previous good impressions of eternal good deeds (knowingly or unknowingly serving the Supreme Lord and His personal associates) they get the aptitude to enquire about Eternal Truth and can come in contact with a realised soul - a pure devotee.

Actual association

Association with bona fide devotees is essential to awaken the eternal nature of the real self to have the aptitude to worship the Supreme Lord. If any votary sincerely has the desire to get the company of a bona fide *sādhū*, he will get it by the grace of the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Lord is Omniscient, Omnipotent and gracious to all. He is residing in the hearts of all living beings in this world and He knows everything. Krishna says in the Gītā, '*na hi kalyāṇa-kṛt kaścid durgatiṁ tāta gacchati*' - 'A sincere soul will never be deceived.' The Supreme Lord is equal to all and is completely impartial. It is not the fact that if a neophyte devotee externally remains in a great distant place he is unable to associate with bona fide *sādhū*s. Mere proximity of the *sādhū* and direct physical contact with the *sādhū* will not give the actual benefit. When bugs are there in the bed of a bona fide *sādhū* and in direct contact with the *sādhū*, are they associating with the *sādhū* or sucking his blood? Exploitation of *sādhū* is not association of *sādhū*. Remaining at a distance, if anybody follows the instruction of a bona fide *sādhū* and practically acts upon those instructions, it will be considered actual association of the *sādhū*. As for example, Dhruva saw his *gurudev* once and got instruction from him only once, but his spiritual life was successful because he sincerely accepted the teachings of *gurudev* and acted upon the instructions.

I shall continue to stay at Calcutta up to Śrī Krishna Janmashtami function. After that, Supreme Lord willing, I may go to Hyderabad Maṭh and Bangalore for a fortnight. On return to Calcutta, I have given word to devotees of Bhatinda to observe Dāmodar *vratā* in our big Maṭh there. I may reach there on 22nd October, 2004.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga and Rādhā - Krishna bless you.

My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



The sādhu fulfills the desire of the Lord

I was away from Calcutta with a party to participate in the Annual Function of our Puri Maṭh, solemnised on the occasion of Ratha-Yatra. I had to return immediately to Calcutta to go to Agartala although my health was not fit to undertake the journey. Annual Functions, both at Puri and Agartala were grandly celebrated. I returned to Calcutta with the party and now I have the opportunity to go through your letter.

Our Most Revered Gurudev often used to say while delivering sermons, “An actual *guru* never thinks himself as a competent *guru* and advises others with the idea of rescuing them from the clutches of *Māyā*.” A real *guru*, a real *sādhu*, a real devotee, always tries to satisfy his Eternal Object of worship, the Supreme Lord. He never deviates from the target of satisfying his Object of worship. The Supreme Lord has love for all living beings and always wants them to come to Him willingly with submission.

But due to misuse of their relative independence, they do not want to worship Him, or more correctly to say, to love Him. They want to enjoy this world, being enveloped by the illusory energy of three primeval qualities— *sattva*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ*. So, God has to create so many species of life and universes to fulfill the desires of the misguided, conditioned souls.

The Supreme Lord is Omnipotent. He can do whatever He likes, but He does not want to destroy the relative independence of the conditioned souls and forcibly interfere in their discretion. If consciousness is destroyed, the Supreme Lord and the living beings both will be deprived of getting an actual relationship of love and bliss. God wants that the conditioned souls willingly love and serve Him, retaining their relative independence. The target of a bona fide *guru* or *sādhu* will be fulfilled if

they can persuade the misguided, conditioned souls to submit and engage fully for the service of their Eternal Master, the Supreme Lord. An outside third person may see externally that one is acting as a *guru* by helping some willing persons to worship the Lord by giving *mantra* and instructions and those receivers of instructions are disciples. But actually *guru* is not making disciples. His target is to satisfy the Supreme Lord.

Bhāgavat dharma is true dharma

We observed *guru-pūrṇimā pūjā tithi* on 21st July. *Guru-pūrṇimā pūjā tithi* means observance of the appearance day ceremony of Krishna Dvaipayana Vedavyāsa Muni, who appeared accepting Parashara Ṛṣi and Satyavati Devi as parents. Vedavyāsa Muni is worshipped throughout India by all groups of worshippers—*karmīs*, *jñānīs*, *yogīs* and *bhaktas*. Vedavyāsa Muni expanded the Vedas in four categories, Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma, and Atharva, wrote 18 Purāṇas, Vedānta (the highest scriptural evidence of the *jñānīs*), Mahabhārata and within it Gītā, but failed to get tranquility of mind—actual bliss. It is a long history; it will not be good to elaborate the subject here. Vedavyāsa Muni submitted to his *gurudev* Nārada Goswāmī at Badrinārāyaṇ and expressed his problem that in spite of writing so many scriptures for fulfilling the desires of the human beings—*dharma* (piety), *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (fulfillment of ulterior desires) and *mokṣa* (salvation or merging into impersonal formless Brahma or merging into the personal God)—he could not get eternal bliss. Nārada Goswāmī, as *guru*, said that whatever Śrī Vedavyāsa did, his works were harmful to all, as conditioned souls have a natural tendency for non-eternal material benefits and he did more serious harm to them by prescribing *mokṣa*. Evidence of this is in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1st Canto, 1st Chapter, 2nd verse '*dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām...*' Here the highest *dharma* is stated to be *bhāgavat dharma*, completely negating all other motives—*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*.

The suicidal act

Also, it is stated in Śrī Chaitanya Charitāmrita, Adi, 1.90, 92 —

*ajñāna-tamera nāma kahiye 'kaitava'
dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa-vāñchā ādi saba*

*tāra madhye mokṣa-vāñchā kaitava-pradhāna
yāhā haite kṛṣṇa-bhakti haya antardhāna*

'Darkest ignorance is deceitfulness. Worldly piety, wealth and other ulterior desires emerge from ignorance. Extreme deceitfulness is desire for *mokṣa*— merging oneself in Impersonal Formless Brahma or merging in the personal God. By this suicidal act Krishna *bhakti* will totally disappear.'

To have a clear idea, you should go through the two verses of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 10th Canto, 2nd Chapter, verses 32-33—

*ye 'nye 'ravindākṣa vimukta-māninas
tvayy asta-bhāvād aviśuddha-buddhayaḥ
āruhya kṛcchreṇa param padam tataḥ
patanty adho 'nāḍṛta-yuṣmad-aṅghrayaḥ
tathā na te mādharma tāvakāḥ kvacid
bhraśyanti mārgāt tvayi baddha-sauhrdāḥ
tvayābhiguptā vicaranti nirbhayā
vināyakānīkapa-mūrdhasu prabho*

O Lotus Eyed Supreme Lord! Non-devotees who think themselves falsely as perfectly emancipated from worldly ego conception, are not holy. These *jñānī* strivers, by the process of ascension, think themselves emancipated by their immense hard austerity. They have no adoration to your Lotus Feet which are the shelter of all. So, they fall down and also get into a more abominable state. O Mādhav! Your pure devotees have firm love for you. They never deviate like strivers who are falsely thinking themselves to be emancipated, so they do not fall down. The pure devotees, being well protected by you, can move in this world without any fear over the heads of the leaders of their opponents.

You have the desire to participate in Vrajamaṇḍal *parikrama* with two new aspirants. Everything depends upon the desire of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Krishna, Who is All- Good. If your coming with the two aspirants or any other devotees is finalised, you are to inform Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñān Hṛṣīkeś Mahārāj in Calcutta Maṭh as well as Śrī Bhakti Kushal Padmanābh Mahārāj at Vrindāvan Maṭh for proper arrangement of your stay in different camps. Śrī Bhakti Vichar Viṣṇu Mahārāj is in charge of this and he has made special arrangements for foreign devotees, as I have heard.

Hope this will find you all in good health and spirit. May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna bless you all. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



The protector and sustainer

Revered affectionate mother,

Glad to receive your blessings through your beloved son. I remember having received one letter from you but I beg to be excused for not giving reply to that letter. You are already aware of my present health condition.

Our doctors and friends are always advising me to take rest. Although I understand the direction of the doctors and advice of my friends, I cannot remain indifferent to essential duties to be done by me as per order of my Most Revered Gurudev. I am to look into the urgent works of the institution and to do the duty of giving initiation. To lessen the pressure, devotees advise me to do the duty of giving initiation taking proper rest with intervals.

I reached Calcutta Maṭh on 17th June, 2007. Previously I was in Delhi, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Assam and other places in India. My present health condition is better. I am somehow pulling on and doing my duty by your affectionate blessing.

Actually, *sannyāsīs* (ascetics) have nothing of their own in the Maṭhs. Everything is donated by household devotees. Ascetics have renounced worldly relationships like parents but God is sustaining and maintaining them through many parents. His Divine Grace Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara Deva Goswāmī Mahārāj is the elder godbrother of our Most Revered Gurudev and they are intimately connected. He is one of the dearest disciples of Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura. He is our *śikṣa-guru*. I am grateful to you for reminding me about him to pray for his grace. When we do not get the opportunity of associating with pure devotees, we are to go through their teachings. Especially his writings are very impressive and sweet. His Divine Grace Om Viṣṇupad 108 Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura is the personal associate of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Krishna, who

appeared in this world when darkness descended on the horizon of pure devotion. Although all scriptures, the Vedas, Brahmasutra (Vedānta), Mahābhārat, Gītā, 18 Purāṇas, quintessence of all scriptures Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Śrī Chaitanya Charitāmrita, Śrī Chaitanya Bhāgavat and also the writings of the *Sadgoswāmīs* (six Goswāmīs) are present, no learned person could understand the implication of the teachings of the scriptures. Many pseudo sects cropped up. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, the Most Munificent Form of Godhead, out of compassion, sent His own persons, Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura and Śrīla Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura, to rescue the conditioned souls from ignorance and to show the actual devotional path. Unfortunate persons, who were enveloped by illusory energy, might have done heinous crimes to defame the extraordinary great personality Śrīla Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura. Although Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura did not do anything against them and tolerated all tortures, the Supreme Lord punished those persons. By His extraordinary personality, *śuddha* Krishna *bhakti* is spread throughout the world. The Supreme Lord is the protector and sustainer of all His bona fide devotees. For instance, we can give the illustration of the biographies of Prahlaḍ Mahārāj and Ambarīṣa Mahārāj in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Hiraṇyakaśipu and Durvasa ṛṣi acted harshly only to prove the unparalleled spiritual personalities of Prahlaḍ and Ambarīṣa Mahārāj. You have also mentioned the illustration of Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura. He was attached to a harlot at first, but being reproached by her, his mind changed and he became a great devotee of Krishna. There is no need of narrating the history.

Śuddha bhakti is inherent

The Supreme Lord is residing in the hearts of every living being and He has actual love for all. All are from Krishna, by Krishna and in Krishna. Eternal causeless devotion naturally exists in every soul. Due to the aversion of conditioned souls to Śrī Krishna, they are enveloped by the dirt of worldly desires. The illustration can be given of magnet and iron. It is the nature of a magnet to attract iron and the nature of iron is to be attracted by a magnet. But if magnet and iron are near and there is no attraction, it is due to the dirt or rust on the iron. *Śuddha bhakti* is not to be borrowed from somebody, it is inherent in every *jīva*. It is to be manifested by the company of a bona fide *śuddha bhakta*. Association of a *śuddha bhakta*, therefore, is essential. From a distant place also we can have association of *sādhus* by sincerely following their heart. Remaining outwardly in contact with a *sādhū* is not the association of a *sādhū*. As for example, bugs remain in the beds of the *sādhus* and lice in the heads of the *sādhus*. They are not associating with the *sādhus*, they are exploiting the *sādhus*.

I am fortunate that by your letter you have inspired me to correct myself. Accept my *daṇḍavat praṇāms*. May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna bless us all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



***Question to Śrīla Gurudev** - I have Śrīmad Bhāgavatam in English with purport by Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj. I have been reading it for several years when I was told recently that I should receive gurudev's permission to read the Book. That is why I am asking you: can I read Bhāgavatam? I have a poor understanding of foreign languages (Bengali, Hindi and English). Is it necessary to understand Hari-katha with one's intelligence?*

Read Bhāgavatam with great reverence

The Supreme Lord, Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, has instructed us to practise five principal forms of devotion— association of *sādhus*, chanting of Holy Names, hearing Bhāgavatam, dwelling in Mathura and serving Deities with firm faith. Hearing of Bhāgavatam is one of the principal forms of devotion. It is necessary first to hear Bhāgavatam from a bona fide true devotee for being entitled to read Bhāgavatam.

As Most Revered, His Holiness Tridaṇḍī Swāmī, Śrīmad Bhaktivedanta Swāmī Mahārāj was the disciple of our Most Revered Paramgurudev, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura, there cannot be any objection to going through the translation written by him. A devotee should not go through Bhāgavatam without devotion, like ordinary readers. Instead, devotees should read Bhāgavatam with great reverence and devotion, after praying for the grace of *Guru-Vaishnav-Bhagavān*. The significance of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, which is one with Śrī Krishna, will be revealed to a bona fide surrendered soul. It is not possible to realise the inner significance of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam by intellectual and mental capacity. Our *Paramguru-pāḍpadma*, Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura, used to say, '*bhakti* cannot be propagated by a non-devotee by ornamental rhetoric language'.

When a bona fide true devotee, who has the sole purpose of propitiating Śrī Krishna, reads Bhāgavatam, his words are transcendental as such. Then one can feel

spiritual and devotional vibration in their soul even if they do not understand its meaning.

Worldly educated persons cannot exactly interpret the teachings of a devotee. You should hear interpretation also from a true devotee. In this consideration, _____ is a befitting person to interpret as he has a good hold over devotional conclusions and has enough knowledge of Bengali and Sanskrit. In short, whatever devotional forms we practice, the target should be correct, i.e. the target should be for the satisfaction of Śrī Krishna and His devotees. We should be very careful in regard to this so that we donot miss the target.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga bless you. We are so-so. Hope this will find you all in good health and spirits. My love to you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - (1) Are there gradations of madhyama adhikāri? (2) Is it possible to have a small trace of ruchi during anartha nivritti? If so, how does one tell the difference between real and imaginary taste? (3) Does a devotee ever really know his stage of advancement i.e. the most advanced devotees seem to claim that they are not at all advanced while those that claim to be advanced rarely are?

Stages of devotional development

I am encouraged to know your enquiry to understand a votary's position in the stages of devotional development as well as your reference to one verse of Bhaktirasāmṛta Sindhu, Pūrva Vibhāg, to enquire about the gradual progress of the votary to get the highest stage, 'prema'.

'Adhikāri' means competency. This topic is discussed elaborately in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 11th Canto, 2nd Chapter. These three grades of eligibility of the votary, *kaniṣṭha*, *madhyam* and *uttam*, are discussed there. Havi Muni, one of the nine young sons of Śrī Rishabhdeva, narrated about this topic to Nimi, the king of Videha—

arcāyām eva haraye
pūjām yaḥ śraddhayehate
na tad-bhakteṣu cānyeṣu
sa bhaktaḥ prākṛtaḥ smṛtaḥ
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.2.47)

First stage devotee

The votary who worships the Deity of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari, with faith and only for His satisfaction, but does not have the aptitude to worship the devotees and also none else, is stated to be in the category of '*prākṛita vaiṣṇava*', i.e., low status devotee. The first low status worshipper is considered to be a *vaiṣṇava*, because of his faith that the Supreme Lord is One and by serving the Supreme Lord he is serving all demigods and other objects of worship. But, he has no aptitude to serve devotees. Where there is no belief in One Supreme Lord or that by serving the Supreme Lord all are served, he will not be considered even a *kaniṣṭha vaiṣṇava*. As for example, you cannot have the conception of a king without subjects and subjects without a king. Both are correlative terms. In like manner, the Supreme Lord and His devotees are both interconnected. We cannot have conception of devotees without the devoted and devoted without the devotees. So, *kaniṣṭha vaiṣṇava* has no accurate knowledge of the conception of the Supreme Lord that He cannot be without the devotees. The *kaniṣṭha vaiṣṇava* has the inertia of dullness due to an incomplete conception of the Supreme Lord.

Second stage devotee

The second highest category of devotees is *madhyam adhikāri vaiṣṇava*. To understand the qualification of a *madhyam adhikāri*, Havi Muni has said: “He is entitled to be a *madhyam adhikāri*, who has love for the Supreme Lord, friendly relationships with devotees, compassion for the ignorant and indifference towards hostile persons.” Actually *śuddha bhakti* starts from *madhyam adhikāra* because here the votary has the aptitude to serve the *vaiṣṇavas*. He behaves compassionately to the ignorant who are simple hearted and non-deceitful and remains aloof from the persons who are hostile, because if he speaks something to them, they will commit more offence to God and His personal associates. So, it is better to ignore them without discussing anything. Here in *madhyam adhikāra*, we find four kinds of behaviour.

Highest devotee

Uttam adhikāri vaiṣṇava is the highest devotee. Havi Muni narrates the qualification of *uttam adhikāri* in this way: “One who sees his own existence and the existence of the Supreme Lord in all living beings and realises the existence of all living beings in his own self as well as in the Supreme Lord is considered to be the highest *bhāgavat* or *vaiṣṇava*.”

sthāvara-jaṅgama dekhe, nā dekhe tāra mūrti
sarvatra haya tāra iṣṭa-deva-sphūrti
(Śrī Chaitanya Charitāmrita, Madhya, 8.273)

‘The Transcendental Divine Love of realised devotees is such that whatever they see, immobile things or mobile living beings, they see the manifestation of the divine relationship of Krishna everywhere, without seeing their outside external forms.’

The accurate realisation of the highest *vaiṣṇava* indicates that he perceives that all are connected with the Supreme Lord directly or indirectly, i.e. all are directly or indirectly serving the Supreme Lord.

To whatever extent the connection with or realisation of the beauty or sweetness of the Supreme Lord exists in the devotees, to that same extent, will be the depth of their humbleness. When we see things inferior to us, we shall have the feeling that we are superior to them and we shall have vanity. On going through the conditions of the three *adhikāris* as stated above, the votary should judge in which category he belongs.

My love to you all. May Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev – Since receiving your last letter I have been trying to study (as you suggested) Śrīla Rūpā Goswāmīpad's Śrī Upadeśāmṛta, the purports of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla

Bhaktivedanta Swāmī Mahārāj. So far, I have studied the first four verses several times and have some questions (1) A bona-fide guru must have the 6 urges controlled but there is more to his qualifications than this. So why is it stated in 1st verse that such person can make disciples? (2) In verse two, we are instructed to avoid association with persons who are opposed to bhakti. While living in this mundane world, we are always in contact with many people who are opposed to the process of bhakti. As neophyte devotees, how should we associate with these people? (3) In verse three, we are told that bhakti may be obtained by being enthusiastic, and having patience. But how do we get this enthusiasm while staying away from sādhu sanga? (4) My gurudev has instructed to me to preach in the local area where I live, therefore I humbly ask for your blessings so that I may be able to represent the words of our guru-varga cent-per-cent and promote the teachings of my beloved guardians (such as yourself) with some success.

Practise yukta-vairāgya

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur has said in his explanation of the first verse of Upadeśāmṛta, “The conditioned souls who had previous impressions of eternal good deeds, i.e., impressions achieved by serving God and His devotees knowingly or unknowingly, have the impetus to worship God. By the Lord's grace, coming in contact with a bona fide Grace-Incarnate Form *guru*, one can get the knowledge of relationship with the Supreme Lord. That blessed conditioned soul is entitled to go through Upadeśāmṛta written by Śrīla Rūpā Goswāmī for devotional enhancement. But there are two categories of votaries— household devotees and ascetic devotees. The first verse to control the six urges is principally required for the household devotee. Only those who have controlled the six urges are entitled to be real ascetics.” But again in his commentary, 'Pīyūṣavarṣiṇī Vṛitti' in Bengali, he has stated, “When a novice starts the practice of devotion, the above six urges will create hindrance to his getting enhancement in devotional practice. The bona fide aspirant can remove the hindrances by the association of the pure bona fide devotees, by doing *Harinām* without the tenfold offences and with exclusive submission to God. Devotees practise *yukta-vairāgya* positively by the actual renunciation of engaging mind, intellect, words and sense organs in the service of the Lord and His devotees and negatively by withdrawing the gross and subtle sense organs from the respective material objects. Devotees have no aptitude for practising *sushka-vairāgya* (external abnegation without the positive side of engaging all sense organs for the service of Krishna).

The purpose of Maṭhs

Here by the word '*gṛha-tyāgi*', Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura indicates Paramhansa Babajis like the Sadgoswāmīs (six Goswāmīs). But Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura cogitated that in this *Kaliyuga* such pure ascetic devotees would be very rare. We, ordinary conditioned souls, have no knowledge of hindsight and foresight. Śrīla Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura realised the gradually deteriorating moral state of the conditioned souls in the future, in this black age. Nowadays, the aspirants desirous of worshipping the Lord sincerely from the core of the heart will find difficulty in performing all devotional forms wholeheartedly, remaining in the house. Also, they are not capable of performing *bhajan* like the realised elevated souls, Sadgoswāmīs, as complete renouncers.

As such, for giving scope to the intending novice votaries, he started establishing Maṭhs where they can get a congenial atmosphere to perform *bhajan*. These Maṭhs are in the middle of complete asceticism on one side and uncongenial disturbed household conditions on the other. Śrīla Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura, knowing fully well about the aspirant's defects and inability to control sense organs, allows him to be admitted into the Maṭh for starting *bhajan*, only seeing his slight inclination for worship of the Lord. The novice will find a completely better atmosphere in the Maṭh and congeniality to do all forms of devotion as per scriptural injunctions. Of course, enhancement in *bhajan* will depend on one's sincere intensity.

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura has stated in his writing, that those who can tolerate the urges of senses, can govern the whole world. The word '*sisyāt*' does not indicate making disciples, but indicates the qualification for governing the worldly people.

Sādhū gives mantra to satisfy God

A sincere *guru* or a sincere *sādhū* or devotee can never think of himself as *guru* or *sādhū* who has the right to make disciples and control others. They are the best servitors of the Lord and His devotees. The Lord will be satisfied if unfortunate conditioned souls, being averse to Him and enveloped by the illusory energy and thrown into this pit of births, deaths and unbearable suffering, are rescued and brought to the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Lord for their eternal welfare. A true devotee of the Lord always sincerely endeavours to serve the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and engage others in His service. When they give *Harinām* and *mantra* to

intending aspirants, a third person may see that the *sādhū* who is giving *mantra* is *guru* and the aspirant who is taking *mantra* is disciple. But actually a true devotee or *guru* does not do this with the false ego of being *guru* or *sādhū*. The fortunate aspirant should recognise a true devotee or true *guru* by his behaviour and movements. Krishna says in the Gītā, 'A sincere votary will never be deceived'. God will give him the wisdom to understand a sincere *sādhū*.

Qualities of a guru

The actual qualities of a *guru* have been stated in Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad—'*śrotriyaṃ* and *brahma-niṣṭham*.' The aspirant must get Divine Knowledge through a bona fide preceptorial channel and from a *guru* who has practical realisation of the Divinity. There are stages of *gurus* and devotees. In the highest stage, they see their object of worship everywhere and all are worshipping Krishna positively and negatively. So the highest devotee, *uttam bhāgavat*, cannot actually instruct anybody. The highest devotee *uttam bhāgavat* in the pastimes of *madhyam bhāgavat* sees four differences namely:

- God,
- devotee of the Supreme Lord
- simple hearted genuine persons who actually want to worship God but have no clear knowledge
- hostile persons

The *madhyam bhāgavat* has love for Krishna, friendly relationships with devotees, compassion for the sincere souls and remains aloof from hostile persons. To speak elaborately on the basic principles for enhancement of devotion, in a letter, is not possible.

The Maṭh hospitals

It has been stated earlier that nowadays in this black age so many things of attraction have been invented that people become victims of those attractions and as a result their minds become diverted. Nobody is to be blamed for this. It is due to our own previous actions, that we are getting such an atmosphere and day-by-day, deterioration of morality and anti-devotional thinking is increasing. Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura, feeling this precarious condition of the aspirants to worship the Lord, introduced the system of Maṭhs in different places

where aspirants can get the company of bona fide *sādhus*. But here carefully note one thing— these Maṭhs are like hospitals for the treatment of diseased persons, where there must be some spiritual doctors. When there is a lack of association of higher status *vaiṣṇavas*, devotees should go through the writings of the bona fide *guruvara* and *vaiṣṇavas*. There is no other alternative. Even in a Maṭh, there should be regular classes of chanting and hearing. Otherwise, the purpose of establishing Maṭhs will not be fulfilled. God is residing in the heart of every conditioned soul. He is Omniscient and Omnipotent. God is everywhere and His personal associates are everywhere. They will surely come to help the sincere aspirants.

Purpose of preaching

The purpose of preaching should not be to rectify others. We are to practise *śraavan bhakti*, *kīrtan bhakti*, *smaran bhakti* for our own benefit. If we can correct ourselves, then preaching will be automatic. It is natural that when we come in contact with higher status *vaiṣṇavas*, we become more enthusiastic. But it is not practically possible to get such company always. Such *sādhus* are very rare. Under any circumstance, a neophyte aspirant should not be disheartened. He should not stop *bhajan*. Praying for the grace of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura, Śrīla Sarasvatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura and *guruvara* from the core of the heart, they will surely give you power to do good to yourself and others.

My love to you all. May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Adjust with the environment

I know that he has got good qualities and I have got no doubt in his honesty. I am confident that he will tolerate my strong words.

Every conditioned soul in this world has got defects as well as good qualities. *Gurudev*'s nectarous saying was 'Vilification or speaking ill of others is prohibited,

because by that we pollute our minds. *Vaiṣṇavas* never do anything out of a grudge. They never like to speak against anybody to belittle them'. Whatever they do, they do it for the eternal benefit of others. *Vaiṣṇavas* are '*Paramhaṁsa*'. As a *haṁsa* (swan) has got the capacity to extract milk from a mixture of milk and water; *vaiṣṇavas* always see the good qualities in others and see defects in themselves. If we do not see our defects, we cannot rectify ourselves and we cannot have spiritual enhancement. When we have got any sort of obstinacy in our mind, if there be anything against it, we can become unbalanced and our real purpose of life, to worship Śrī Krishna, may get lost. We should remember the ideal characters of Śrī Prahlād Mahārāj and Śrī Ambarīṣa Mahārāj. Under all circumstances and severe oppressions, they were calm and serene.

If we see maladjustment, we shall be disturbed and we cannot concentrate on the object of worship. We forget for what purpose we have come to the Maṭh. We should adjust ourselves with the environment; we can never make the environment adjusted to us. Whatever we shall decide by our finite intellect will be wrong. '*Śaraṇāgati*' is the best divine panacea of all diseases and problems.

My love to you all. May All-Merciful Śrī *Guru* & *Gaurāṅga* bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Do not blame others

Praying the blessings of Śrī *Guru-Gaurāṅga-Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa* unto the sincere souls desirous of serving Śrī Krishna and His devotees.

The Supreme Lord appears in this world in different Forms to give scope to sincere devotees to serve Him. Śrī *vigraha* also descends to the unconditionally completely surrendered soul. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura wrote in the first hymn of his '*Śaraṇāgati gīti kāvya grantha*', 'Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu out of compassion for all living beings, appeared in this world with His personal associates and His transcendental realm to bestow the highest transcendental divine love, which is very scarce. He taught the forms of *śaraṇāgati* which can be manifested in the hearts

of those sincere souls who sincerely associate with sādhus i.e. bonafide surrendered souls.' We should go through the hymn very carefully and properly practice it sincerely.

Gītā 6.40 tells us: '*na hi kalyāṇa-kṛt kaścīd durgatim tāta gacchati*' - One who desires eternal welfare sincerely, will never have to repent for distress. Gītā 2.47 says: '*karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana*' - We can do bad and good deeds, but the fruits of those actions are controlled by the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. Sunīti Devi advised her child Dhruva not to blame anybody in this world for his afflictions. We reap the fruits of our own actions, others are only instrumental. Dhruva immediately accepted the teachings of his mother and effaced from his heart all hostile mentality towards anybody in this world and with an undisturbed mind chanted the Holy Name— '*O Padmapalāshalochan Hari*' from the core of his heart and the Supreme Lord was propitiated. The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, who is residing in the heart of every living being, is directly protecting Dhruva from all calamities. No ferocious jungle beasts could do any harm to the little child. Moreover his step mother, his father and all others started weeping profusely for him.

Pithy sayings of Vitṛāsura

Our Most Revered Gurudev often used to remind us to remember the pithy sayings of Vitṛāsura to Devarāj Indra. The conditioned souls have the greatest defect in that what they hear they immediately forget because of their misconception of self which is the root cause of all ulterior desires. The first pithy saying of Vitṛāsura is, 'Śrī Krishna does not bestow worldly property or any wealth of the three worlds to those who have got one-pointed causeless devotion to Him and whom Śrī Krishna thinks his own dear & favorite. Because worldly wealth causes malice, anxiety, mental anguish, vanity, quarrel, indulgence in vices. Moreover severe tension is involved in acquiring it and preserving the acquired'. We should also remember that Vitṛāsura said to Devarāj Indra that even if a sincere devotee, out of ignorance, wants those worldly things, the Supreme Lord puts obstacles to it. That hindrance is the actual grace of God. It is better we should go through all the pithy sayings of Vitṛāsura again and again.

Another method of getting mental calm and serenity, is to at least remember the four hymns of glorification of Nṛsimha *Bhagavān* as well as the *Panchatattva* and

Mahāmantra each at least four times while going to bed and while waking up.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga-Rādhā-Krishna bless you. My love to all others.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



No time to criticise others

Our Most Revered Gurudev occasionally warned us by saying that after the disappearance of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and His personal associates as well as the prominent *vaiṣṇava ācāryas* like Narottam Thākura, Shyamānanda Prabhu and Śrīnivas Āchārya, darkness descended on the horizon of *śuddha bhakti* and many pseudo sects cropped up. The renowned saint Totaram Das Babaji Maharāj mentioned thirteen pseudo sects - '*āula, bāula, karttābhajā, neḍā, daraveśa, sāṇi, sahajiyā, sakhībhekī, smārta, jata-gosāṇi ativādī, cūḍādhārī, gaurāṅga-nāgarī, tota kahe ei tera saṅga nāhi kori*'. Sincere aspirants should be careful to avoid association of the pseudo sects. Each of the pseudo sects try to establish that they are preaching Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings, but actually they are defaming, disrespecting and tarnishing the teachings of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

A novice or beginner may be cheated, so our *guruvara* refuted their contentions with strong words so that sincere souls are not misled and deprived of getting actual spiritual devotional benefit. But at the same time, they gave a warning to us: don't attack out of personal grudge the persons who are preaching pseudo sects. We are not to attack any person in this world as he is from Krishna, by Krishna and in Krishna. *Sādhus* have got no personal grudge to anybody in this world, but for the eternal benefit of all, they refute the anti-devotional contentions only to save the sincere souls from being misled. If we attack those proponents with hostile mentality, their bad qualities will come to us and we will have a spiritual fall. Even if those proponents come to the *sādhus*, *sādhus* pay respect to them and serve them with *prasāda* because they have got no personal grudge against these people. If they sincerely want to hear pure devotional conclusive thoughts, *sādhus* speak to them mildly, establish devotional thoughts and show defects of anti-devotional thoughts.

But they remain silent when they find the person has come not to hear sincerely, but to show pedantic fits. *Śuddha bhaktas* do not like idle talks. They have no desire to speak unnecessarily because they want to engage themselves fully for the service of God and His devotees. They know that at any moment they may leave this most perishable world. They are completely disinterested in non-eternal worldly affairs. Real aspirants utilise their time for their actual benefit - they find no time to find faults and criticise others.

The *vaiṣṇava* is *paramahansa*. As a swan can extract milk from a mixture of water and milk, *vaiṣṇavas* see the good qualities in human beings. Human beings have both good and bad qualities in them. When good qualities predominate he is called good and when bad qualities predominate he is called a bad person. Emancipated realised souls have only good qualities. They are the rarest in this world. The *vaiṣṇava* has the capacity to see good qualities in all human beings. They have got no propensity to see bad qualities in others, but they see bad qualities in themselves. When a votary sees his own bad qualities, he can rectify himself. The *vaiṣṇava* has got no vanity or pride. They give respect to all but do not aspire for respect from others.

The root cause of suffering is false ego and false interests. The material world is finite, so if anybody gets some property, others are deprived of it. When human beings are taught that they are the physical body, they all try to get the requirements of the body and engage in competition against one another. Actually the real self is neither the physical body nor subtle material body. Being enveloped by material energy they wrongly misconceive. So Indian *ṛṣis* first tried for material property and afterwards they found it only leads to extreme suffering. Actually the requirement is Complete Bliss, Who is God - *pūrṇa-sukh* - Absolute Bliss or Infinite Bliss. Infinite *Saccidānanda* is Infinite Bliss. If the attention of human beings is diverted towards Infinite bliss and if anybody gets Absolute Bliss, others will not be deprived of it. According to differential calculus mathematics, infinity minus infinity is infinity. Infinite *jīvas* can get infinite bliss. There is no possibility of clashing. When one will lose interest for material acquisitions he will become indifferent to it. Then no clashing with others will occur.

Ātmā requires ātmā

As long as we shall remain in this world, we should be satisfied with minimum material possessions. *Ātmā* requires *ātmā* for its sustenance, not *anātmā*. *Anātmā* is

foreign to it. If one gets the property of one world, he will have the desire to get another. The material world is actually devoid of actual bliss. The material world is the shadow of the Supreme Lord, Who is All-Existence All-Knowledge and All-Bliss. The material world is the outcome of Māya which means - 'not that'. The shadow of a tree has got no actual existence.

*tasmād idam jagad aśeṣam asat-svarūpaṁ
svapnābham asta-dhiṣaṇaṁ puru-duḥkha-duḥkham
tvayy eva nitya-sukha-bodha-tanāv anante
māyāta udyad api yat sad ivāvabhāti
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.14.22)*

This entire universe is non-eternal, so it is dream-like (illusory), transitory (not permanent), devoid of knowledge, inert and extremely painful. But O Lord Krishna! You are All-Existence All-Knowledge and All-Bliss and therefore Infinite. The entire universe has been created and destroyed by your inconceivable power, yet it appears to be truth actually existing.

The Supreme Lord is Supreme in all aspects. He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent and He is All-Bliss. By the grace of Absolute Bliss we can get complete bliss. Grace descends to a surrendered soul. All desires of the votary will be fulfilled if he takes unconditional total submission to the Supreme Lord. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thākura has written -

*mānasa, deha, geḥ, yo kichu mora, arpituṁ tuyā pade nanda-kīṣora!
ampade vipade, jīvanē-maraṇē, dāy mama gelā, tuvā o-pada baraṇē
māroḍi rākhobījo icchā tohārā, nitya-dāsa prati tuvā adhikārā*

O Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna! You can kill me or protect me. You can do whatever you want. You have got every right over your eternal servant.



Tolerating rebuke and censure of seniors

I have heard from *guruvarga* that person is fortunate and blessed, who is rebuked and censured by others, especially by senior superior persons, because that will destroy all his sins without penance. But the condition is this - the person should

have the capacity to tolerate censure.

On the contrary, the person who is always respected and praised by others, is most unfortunate, because he has got no scope to get deliverance from the ill-consequence of sins which he has committed. The conditioned souls of the world are always very keen to get respect and praise from others, because of which, they are enslaved — enveloped by the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord.

As you are censured by a senior *vaiṣṇava*, I don't find any cause of your being disappointed and worried. *Sādhus* do not become worried if they are oppressed by others; they become worried if they, by mistake, inflict any kind of harm to any person as counter protest. We should always remember the instruction of Suniti Devi and Śrī Nārada Goswāmī to Dhruva, if we want to get the highest objective, Krishna-prem, "Don't blame others for your distress. *Jīvas* suffer the same afflictions which they inflicted upon others." Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has taught us how to worship Śrī Krishna in the third verse of Śikṣāṣṭakam. These instructions are not merely for giving advice to others, but we are to practise it in our life.

As you are confident that you have not done wrong to anybody, there is no cause of your being disturbed. We have got hold over our actions, but not over the fruits of the actions. Fruits are controlled by the Supreme Lord, Who is all good and Who is equal to all.

The greatest hurdle to *Krishna bhakti* is committal of offence at the lotus feet of *vaiṣṇavas*. We should not neglect paying respects to superior *vaiṣṇavas*. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu never tolerated disrespect to senior *vaiṣṇavas*. So, it will be unwise to sacrifice eternal benefit for the sake of mundane temporary benefits.



Paying respect to senior vaiṣṇavas

When our *guruvara* used to meet and discuss among themselves, we, as disciples, did not enter into their conversation. We only entered when they ordered us to meet them, because, as a neophyte, we may sometimes misunderstand their behaviour and their way of talking and discussion. Always we should understand we are disciples and they are our objects of reverence as *śikṣā gurus*. It is still in my mind when our

śikṣā guru Parampujyapad Śrīmad Bhakti Vedanta Swāmī Mahārāj was talking with our *gurumahārāj* in the room, I did not enter into that room. After their discussions, when Swāmī Mahārāj came out from the room and was returning to his place from our Maṭh at Vrindāvan, I had a talk with him at the gate. We should be very careful in our behaviour with *śikṣā gurus* and also with senior *vaiṣṇavas* and *sannyāsīs*. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has taught us in the third verse of *Śikṣāṣṭakam* that we should pay respect to all human beings thinking that our object of worship the Supreme Lord is residing in their heart. So, it goes without saying that we should pay respect to all *vaiṣṇavas*, especially to superior senior *vaiṣṇavas*, if we want to do *Harinām* without offences”.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I would like to know from you how the vaiṣṇavas could come to a better relationship between each other up to the point of even helping each other. With our website we try to promote this type of consciousness and for that we need the blessings of all the acharyas.

Vaiṣṇava relationship

Vaiṣṇavas are mutually always in the best relationship, otherwise they cannot be *vaiṣṇavas*. The only target of *vaiṣṇavas* is to satisfy Viṣṇu. By serving Viṣṇu, they give contentment to Viṣṇu and contentment to all. Prahlād Mahārāj said to his father Hiraṇyakaśipu, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.8.9 - 'My dear father! Please give up your demoniac mentality. Do not discriminate in your heart between enemies and friends; make your mind equipoised towards everyone. Except for the uncontrolled and misguided mind, there is no enemy within this world. When one sees everyone on the platform of equality, one then comes to the position of worshiping the Lord perfectly.' (Translation by Most Revered Śrīmad Bhakti Vedanta Swāmī Mahārāj)

The last message of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura to all ascetic and household devotees was 'All of you should remain in close co-operation with the objective to propitiate the Supreme Lord (Absolute Undivided Knowledge) with wholehearted allegiance to the Grace Incarnate form *gurudev* (*āśraya-vigraha*), the Absolute Counterpart of the Supreme Lord. All of you, with the only object of satisfying the Supreme Lord, somehow maintain your livelihood in this most perishable non- eternal world. Don't give up worship of God in spite of hundreds of

troubles, hundreds of humiliations and hundreds of abuse. Don't be discouraged by seeing that most of the conditioned souls in this world are not accepting the service of Śrī Krishna sincerely, without deceitfulness. Never give up your own worship, never give up your only wealth, the –'be-all and end-all' of your life - hearing and chanting of the glories of Śrī Krishna.

Always do *Harikīrtan* with the qualities of being humbler than a blade of grass and more forbearing than a tree.' The root cause of all troubles and sufferings is aversion to Śrī Krishna. Problems in this world of disunion etc. cannot be removed by retaining the nescience.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - If someone has taken sannyās but is not holding the vows, are we still supposed to give our visible praṇāms?

Avoid association when not sure of character

*api cet su-durācāro bhajate mām ananya-bhāk
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ
(Bhagavad Gītā 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."

Whether one is engaged in devotional service or not as mentioned above, we will know from his characteristics. If the person is sincere in devotion, he will have repentance in his heart for his misdeeds. However, if such repentance is not present and such wrong behaviour has become his nature then it is a different case. It is sometimes difficult to know about his heart's feelings. If we are not sure, then it is advised, *durācār vaiṣṇava vandaya na tu sanga yogya*. He is still to be given due respect but his association should be avoided.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I and my wife have been associating with many devotees of

various gurus of different Gauḍīya Maṭhs and we find it very enlivening. There are sometimes incompatibilities between the groups but I offer my sincere respects to all of these vaiṣṇava acharyas whom I view to be śuddha bhaktas. But I am particularly attracted to you.

Ulterior desire leads to incompatibilities

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu preached the All-Embracing and All-Accommodating Gospel of Divine Love, i.e. Love for the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and all in relation to Śrī Krishna. How can the sincere devotees who preach this All-Embracing Gospel of Divine Love have incompatibilities amongst them? A real sādhu sees adjustment in all circumstances, even in contrary circumstances. Actually when we miss the target, everything becomes chaos. The target should be pure causeless devotion to Śrī Krishna for His satisfaction only. There should not be any ulterior desire in the mind. Actually realised sincere souls are very scarce in this world. The novice, who has started *bhajan*, can attain this elevated state gradually, of course, by the grace of *Guru*, *Vaiṣṇava* and *Bhagavān*. I am encouraged to know that the devotees of different Maṭhs or institutions gather together and are doing *bhajan* united. This is good for them and also for the eternal benefit of others, who will be encouraged to see this ideal. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has emphatically declared in His writing the four qualities required for devotees to do *Harinām* he should be humbler than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, should give respect to all and should not desire to get respect from others. We will not get the actual benefit if we only memorise these but do not practice. Example is better than precept.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - We are a group of disciples of different ācharyas. Some devotees complain about _____ saying that he does not follow vaiṣṇava siddhānta of Gauḍīya vaiṣṇavas. We would like to know your opinion in this regard and your good advice how we (as his disciples) should behave with these persons.

Conditioned soul has drawbacks

I am glad to learn that all the devotees _____ get together to engage themselves in the service of *guru*, *vaiṣṇavas* and *Bhagavān*. This material universe is the prison house of the culprits. Here most of the living beings, almost all, are prisoners. As

they are averse to Śrī Krishna, they have got this punishment. Actually they are eternal servants of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, but due to aversion to Śrī Krishna caused by misuse of their relative independence, they become entangled in the trap of the external deluding potency of Supreme Lord. They have forgotten their relation with Śrī Krishna and want to enjoy this world. Owing to this offence, they passed through cycles of births and deaths and after 8 millions of births in different species they have got this precious human birth. God is satisfied by creating human beings, as they have got the discriminating power between good and bad, eternal and non- eternal. They have got the capacity to worship God, Who is All-Existence All-Knowledge and All-Bliss. This human birth is not meant for eating, sleeping, defending and mating like beasts and birds. But the fact is, as they passed through different species, they enjoyed material pleasures and also suffered tremendous afflictions while getting innumerable births and deaths. Every conditioned soul has the drawback of the influence of bad impressions imbibed through previous innumerable births. But the Lord has given them the capacity to understand the distinction between good and bad so human birth is eligible for worshipping God. When seeing the drawbacks in the conditioned souls, we should not be disheartened. Waves of bad impressions and good impressions exist in the minds of the conditioned souls. Only the fortunate votary tries to suppress the evil impressions and enhance good impressions. This sort of endeavor of the votary will enable them to get the highest objective. Śrī Krishna has said in the Gītā, 'A sincere soul will never be deceived'. Also He said—

*api cet su-durācāro bhajate mām ananya-bhāḥ
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ
kṣīpraṁ bhavati dharmātmā śaśvac-chāntim nigacchati
kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati
(Bhagavad Gītā 9.30-31)*

Even a conditioned soul, who has taken the vow of worshipping Krishna with one-pointed devotion, may commit a very abominable sin due to the impact of his previous bad impressions. But in spite of that, he should not be considered 'asādhū' (Non-sādhū). Of course, he must not give up his exclusive devotion to Śrī Krishna and should continue worshipping Him. He will ultimately become a virtuous devotee and will get eternal peace.' Krishna asked Arjuna to declare solemnly that His devotee with one- pointed devotion to Him will never have a spiritual fall.

All conditioned souls of the world have got good and bad qualities. When bad qualities predominate, his nomenclature is 'bad person' and when good qualities predominate, his nomenclature is 'good person'. No conditioned soul can be without demerits. Only realised souls are perfect, but they are very rare. It is the instruction of our *guruvarṅga* that if you are serious about progressing in spiritual or devotional worship, don't see defects in other persons, see their qualities. The votary should see his own defects. Then he can rectify himself and there will be no fear of committing offence to any devotee. A *haṁsa* (swan) has the capacity to take out the milk from the mixture of milk and water. *Vaiṣṇavas* have got such qualification and for that they are regarded as '*Paramhaṁsa*'. We should carefully go through the divine last message of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura to all ascetic and household devotees.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - (1) As devotees our goal is to have one-pointed devotion to Śrī Krishna and Śrīmatī Rādhikā and to develop the internal moods of Śrī Vrindāvan dhām. With this in mind why do devotees place a lot of significance on the chanting of prayers to Śrī Nrisimhadeva as part of our sādhanā? It seems that the two moods of worship are contradictory. One in opulence and one in mādhyama, so if we are trying to enter the realm of sweetness, why is prominence often placed on the other aspect? (2) Also I have another enquiry regarding vaiṣṇava etiquette. I often feel that I have love for Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda and say that I have, but I find that I have no love for many of his disciples who very proudly condemn my gurudev and the Gauḍīya Maṭh. How can I learn to love somebody who causes offense to my spiritual master?

Surrender to Guru

I am in receipt of your letter dated _____. You have wanted in your letter clarification of your doubts. It is impossible for conditioned souls to remove their doubts by their efforts, especially regarding transcendental spiritual matters. The significance of the teachings of the bona fide *guru*, *vaiṣṇava* and *Bhagavān* can only be understood by unconditional complete surrender to Them. The sermons of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura have been preserved and printed as a collection of speeches in the books '*Vaktritāvalī*' (four volumes). In the fourth

volume, 'To be entitled to hear *mantra*', he invoked the following verse of Svetasvatāra Upaniṣad for Vyāsa Pūjā:

*yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau,
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanah*

Only to one who has got sincere devotion to the Supreme Lord *Bhagavān* and the same devotion to a bona fide *guru*, the implication of the Vedas will be revealed.

Of course it is also true, if you want quality, you cannot get quantity and if you have the desire to increase the number, you are to sacrifice quality. Mahādeva has said to Pārvati Devi—

*guravo bahavaḥ śanti śiṣyavittāpahārakāḥ
durlabhaḥ sadgururdevi, śiṣyasantāpahārakāḥ*

There may be many so called gurus in this world to squeeze money from disciples, but a bona fide *guru*, who can remove the drawbacks and sufferings of disciples, is very rare.

Special kaliyuga

Qualitatively, a bona fide *guru* and a bona fide votary are rarely to be found. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has advised us to perform one-pointed exclusive causeless devotion to Śrī Krishna. You will find evidence in the fourth verse of *Śikṣāṣṭaka* written by Him. The Highest Sweet Form of the Supreme Lord - Nandanandan Śrī Krishna, appears in this universe only once in one day of Brahmā. Finite human beings cannot calculate the span of life of a day of Brahmā. The span of life of fourteen Manus is equal to one day of Brahmā. Nandanandan Krishna has appeared in the 28th *chaturyuga* of *Vaivasvata Manvantara* (7th *Manvantara*) in the *Dvāpara Yuga*. Nandanandan Krishna only performs sweet pastimes with His own personal associates in the above mentioned special *Dvāpara Yuga*. But just after that *Dvāpara Yuga*, in the same *Manvantara*, in the next *Kaliyuga*, by taking the complexion and mood of worship of Rādhārāṇī, Nandanandan Krishna appears as Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu to distribute the highest Krishna-*prem* to all, irrespective of caste, creed and religion, even to beasts and birds, without consideration. So, He is the Most Munificent Form of Godhead. You are to go through the verse of Vidagdha-Mādhav written by Śrīla Rūpā Goswāmī:-

*anarpita-carīm cirāt karuṇayāvatīrṇaḥ kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasām sva-bhakti-śriyam
hariḥ purāṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandīpitah
sadā hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ śacī-nandanaḥ*

Aversion to Krishna got us material relations

Here the words '*anarpita-carīm cirāt*' mean that the highest Krishna-*prem* was not given for a long period. We are very fortunate that we have taken birth in this very *Kaliyuga* and close to the appearance time of Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu. All sweet delightful relations are manifested only in Nandanandan Śrī Krishna. Actual relations of master and servant, bosom friendship, parental affection, consorthood of love, all kinds of delightful relations exist only with Him. By misuse of relative independence, when the conditioned souls become averse to Śrī Krishna, they come in contact with the material universe or planets and are attracted by the apparent dazzling beauty of the creation created by the Lord's external potency, jump into this world for enjoyment and get entangled in non-eternal undesirable material relations. As long as they have misidentification of the self, i.e., they think that they are material bodies, there is every possibility of the tendency to enjoy this world. This world is the perverted reflection of the Transcendental Highest Spiritual Realm Vrindāvan *dhām*. That sweet relation, which is the highest in Vrindāvan *dhām*, is the lowest in this material world. There is apprehension that in the name of *gopi-prem*, we may indulge in non-eternal man and woman relation. For that reason, realised *vaiṣṇava ācāryas* have warned us. Śrīla Rūpā Goswāmī has written about Rādhā-*prem* in the last verse of his book 'Upadeśāmṛta', but we should carefully note from where he started. In the first two verses '*vāco vegam...*' and '*atyāhāraḥ prayāsaś ca...*' he has warned us strongly. We should also go through the commentaries of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura. If we do not understand the gradual procedure, the result will be reverse. It is very difficult to write about all points. Direct contact is necessary.

The obstacles to pure devotion for a neophyte aspirant are attraction for money, sex connection and name and fame. If anybody has such attraction, he cannot get *śuddha-bhakti*, what to speak of *Prem-bhakti* of Vrindāvan. So Śrī Krishna has appeared as Narasimhadeva to rescue the conditioned souls from such attractions. Narasimhadeva has killed Hiraṇyakaśipu. '*Hiraṇya*' means gold or money. '*Kaśipu*'

means 'Bed' signifying sex enjoyment and along with that is also desire for name and fame. Narasimhadeva will kill this demon existing in our hearts. Of course, Prahlād is also existing in our hearts. So, Narasimhadeva not only removes obstacles, but also gives pure devotion.

The Supreme Lord is one. He cannot be more than one. He is Infinite and Absolute. If we think anything can be outside the Absolute, then the Absolute will lose His position. So, ontologically God is one. But He has got infinite manifestations. His everything is infinite - infinite creations, infinite created worlds, infinite transcendental realms etc. As per the degree of submission of the aspirant, the Lord's transcendental qualities will descend to him. But that is not the end. Nobody can finish realisation of the Supreme Lord. It will go on ad infinitum.

Sādhū's mind cannot be diverted

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu in His third verse of *Śikṣāṣṭakam* has taught us that to perform *Harinām* without tenfold offences, we should have these four qualities: we should be humbler than a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree, should not have the desire of getting name and fame from others and should give respect to all in the consideration that our object of love Śrī Krishna is existing in the heart of every living being. It is good for sincere aspirants to rectify themselves by condemning or subduing their own evil deeds and thoughts. Only then, by their own ideal character, can they warn others in regard to these. A bona fide *sādhū* cannot have any kind of hostile mentality to anybody or any living being in this world. He may condemn the evil practices or doings but he has got no enmity to the persons who are doing such sinful acts. So *sādhūs* are always calm and serene. Nobody in this world can divert his mind from his concentrated devotion to Lord.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has taught us by His own life. Although He knew that Ramchandra Puri committed offence to Mādhavendra Puri, He did not go to discipline Ramchandra Puri because he was a godbrother of His *gurudev* Isvara Puri. We commit a Himalayan blunder when we become hostile to anybody in this world by seeing his bad practices and bad actions. We have got no grudge over any person but we do not support the evil practices. We should condemn those practices. You will find example of this in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Dhruva, in his childhood, accepted the teachings of his mother and Nārada completely and effaced from his heart all hostile mentalities against his stepmother, revered father or anybody in this world. Without hostile mentality to anybody, when he called Nārāyaṇa, he got His grace.

Nārāyaṇa appeared in the forest as Nārada.

We are so so. Hope this will find you all in good health and spirit. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha

Hate the sin, not sinner

N.B.: After the disappearance of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and His personal associates and subsequently Narottam Ṭhākura, Śyāmānand Prabhu and Śrīnivas Āchārya, darkness descended on the horizon of the Gauḍīya *sampradāya* and many pseudo sects cropped up in the name of real propagation of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's message of Divine Love. By discerning the abominable activities of those pseudo sects, the learned and respectable residents of Bengal lost their faith in the teachings of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Totarām Das Babaji, one of the prominent saints of Navadvīp, mentioned the names of those pseudo sects— '*āula, bāula, karttābhajā, neḍā, daraveśa, sāñi, sahajiyā, sakhibhekī, smārta, jata-gosāñi, ativādī, cūḍādhārī, gaurāṅga-nāgarī, tota kahe ei tāra saṅga nāhi kori*'. Although all authentic scriptures - the Bhāgavatam, the Vedas, the Upanishads, Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, Chaitanya Bhāgavat and other writings of the powerful sad-goswāmīs are existing, nobody could understand their actual implication. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, on seeing the despicable condition of the conditioned souls, out of compassion sent His own personal associates Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (Kamal Manjari) and Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura (Nayanmani Manjari) to the world, who wrote hundreds of books in different languages refuting all anti-devotional conclusive thoughts and evil practices in the name of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's pure Divine Love. Many so-called devotees started strong vehement vilification of the persons who preached Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings wrongly. But then, all the defects and abominable nature of those pseudo sects rebounded and made these so-called devotees, who vilified the proponents of the above pseudo sects, even more condemnable and abominable. Our Most Revered Gurudev Nitya-līlā-pravistha Om Viṣṇupad Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhav Goswāmī Mahārāj occasionally used to caution us against disparaging the persons of the pseudo sects but to be careful of our own eternal welfare, saying we should remain aloof from such evil company and should also condemn the evil practices, but without any personal grudge to anybody. We commit a gross mistake when we reprimand those proponents, persons of anti-devotional ideologies, because in reaction there is fear of our being contaminated

with those evil thoughts. We should censure the anti-devotional thoughts or practices but not the persons. Any kind of hatred to any person will be an obstacle to our spiritual amelioration. That we should not do under any circumstance. The conditioned souls, worldly people, behave like this and quarrel amongst themselves. But a realised sincere *sādhū* never does this.



Life in the maṭh

When inmates of the Maṭh have the aptitude for staying independently by the use of their relative independence, it will become difficult for them to stay with devotional restrictions and submission to *vaiṣṇavas*. It is sure that they cannot get actual bliss and eternal benefit by staying independently. At least if we can somehow stay within the precincts of the Maṭhs established by His Divine Grace Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, knowingly or unknowingly our energy will be devoted for the service of the Presiding Deities installed by Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. Our life may be a bit successful. But if we stay outside, our life may be totally baffled. If we can serve the presiding Deities of His Divine Grace Śrīla Guru Mahārāj with steadfast devotion, our life will be fully successful. His Divine Grace Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, the personal associate of Śrī Krishna Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, has manifested his dearest object of worship before us to give scope to us to serve Them.

The Maṭh-rakshaka (temple-president) should be tolerant; otherwise he cannot keep *sevakas* who are voluntary servitors. We should be sympathetic to all Maṭh-*sevakas* and try to retain them. It is very bad and anti-devotional to speak ill of one to another. There may be frailties and drawbacks in *sādhakas*. We should, as true friends, try to rectify them with sympathy. Can anybody say with assertion that he is completely defectless? If we take out hairs from the blanket, it will be finished.

Behaviour cannot be imposed upon persons. It should come from within. Inmates of the Maṭh are voluntary servitors. They serve for their devotional progress. Service by paid persons is not actual service; it is a kind of profession. Combined publication of magazines is a good method to bring relation of hearts amongst member-organisations.



Highest teachings of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura

May All Merciful Śrī Guru, Gaurāṅga Rādhā Krishna bless you.

I am very glad to see your tremendous respect to our Most Revered Gurudev Nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa Om Viṣṇupad 108 Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhav Goswāmī Mahārāj. Our Most Revered Gurudev clearly said to all His disciples by His forcible teaching – “You are not to do anything except, and only except propagating the teachings of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura in different languages of the world.” Actually, the daily teachings of Krishna *bhakti* are by Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura.

Śrīla Most Revered Gurudev, by seeing my non-belief of the transcendental poems by Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura – Śaraṅāgati, Kalyāṇa-kalpataru Gītāvalī, Gīta-mālā, ordered me to go through the teachings of Kalyāṇa-kalpataru. I went through that. After half an hour, my heart had been choked. After that my mind had changed.

So it is my desire, don't be disheartened, go through the extra-ordinary prayers.

Śaraṅāgati prayers

1. *śrī-krishna-chaitanya prabhu dayā kara more*
2. *bhuliyā tomāre saṁsāre āsiyā*
3. *mānasa, deha, geḥa, jo kichu mora*
4. *ātma-nivedana tuyāpadekori*
5. *sarvasva tomār, caraṇe saṁpiyā,*
6. *tumi sarveśvareśvara, brajendra-nandan*
7. *rādhā-kunḍa-taṭa-kuñja-kuṭīra*
8. *hari he! prapañce poḍiyā, agati hoiyā,*

Kalyāṇa-kalpataru prayers

1. *ore manā, bhālo nāhi lāge e saṁsāra*
2. *durlabha mānava-janma labhiyā saṁsāre*
3. *jīvana-samāpt-kāle koribo bhajana,*
4. *amī to durjana ati sadādurācāra*
5. *bhavārṇave pa'de mor ākula parān*
6. *āmār samān hina nāhi e saṁsāre*
7. *śuno, he raśika jāna, krishna-guṇā agaṇana,*

Go through these transcendental poems in detail. You will be rescued from worldly attachments.

My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - At this moment my whole material and spiritual life is messed up. I feel I need to make some adjustments in my life. I do not know how to do it, because I am afraid that I will make things only worse. Please advise me how to continue with my sādhana in a more balanced way. Can You advise whether to come to India or not this time?

Take shelter of guru

In Padma Purāṇa it is mentioned –

*guravo bahavaḥ santi śiṣya-vittapaharakah
durlabhah sad- guruṁ devi śiṣya-santā-pahārakāḥ*

O Devi, there are many *gurus* who are expert in plundering the wealth of their disciples, but it is very rare to find a bona fide *guru*, who can remove the miseries of his disciples. Getting a bona fide *guru* is not so easy. It is very difficult. A *guru* who desires worldly opulence is not an actual *guru*. You should realize the position of a *guru*. Actually, I am not a *guru*. Our *gurudev* is actual *guru*. I told them (aspirants, votaries) to accept His shelter; not to accept my shelter. Because it is my Gurudev's order, I have to instruct everyone to take His shelter. If you take shelter to Him and surrender to Him, then everything will come automatically. We should surrender to a pure devotee. Then those transcendental feelings will descend to us. Without the mercy of devotees it cannot happen. It cannot be attained from non-devotees.

This world is filled with non-devotees. They see only material things. We are surrounded by worldly people. We see them and desire worldly benefits. If we do not get worldly benefit then we become disturbed. Internally we want worldly benefit; we do not want Him (Śrī Krishna), actually. If anybody wants Him, then he will not give any kind of blame to anybody. Never. He thinks, 'I am the cause of my

difficulties. Nobody else is the cause.' Dhruva had been taught, 'You should not have any kind of hostile mentality to anybody in this world. If you have such hostile mentality, you will not get Supreme Lord.' And immediately he finished (effaced) everything from his heart and chanted (the Lord's name). We should not blame others.

You can come to India. If Lord wishes you will get *sādhū-sanga*. *Sādhū-sanga* cannot be attained everywhere. It is not so easy. But when one will become fit, he will have the tendency to come and he will have an opportunity to get such company of *sādhū*s. Now we are surrounded by worldly things totally. So we are not giving our whole-hearted attention or whole-hearted mentality to Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. We are giving our mind to worldly things. So those things will come. They will be prominent. And that will disturb you. Actually it is very difficult to get a real devotee in this world. Very difficult. When *Nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa* Om Viṣṇupad 108 Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Tākur Prabhupād was present, those who came in His touch immediately accepted. After His disappearance they found that they had become powerless. How? Previously they were going everywhere without fear. When they were in contact with Him they were fearless but after He disappeared they felt powerless. They experienced this. But those who want to get the actual benefit, they will try to do bhajan inspite of that.

Human birth is rare

We have got His teaching. He had instructed,

*labdhvā sudurlabham idaṁ bahu-sambhavānte
mānuṣyam arthadam anityam apīha dhīraḥ
tūrṇaṁ yateta na pated anumṛtyu yāvan
niḥśreyasāya viśayaḥ khalu sarvataḥ syāt
(Śrīmad Bhagavatam 11.9.29)*

'After innumerable births, we have been born as human beings. Therefore, this human birth is very rare. Although it is impermanent, it bestows the highest benefit of serving Supreme Lord and to get the highest object permanently. It is the actual duty of all human beings to try utmost to achieve the highest welfare. Therefore a person who has got the actual knowledge will endeavor for highest eternal welfare before another death occurs because in all other births we can get connection with

non-eternal worldly objects, which cause intense suffering. But the actual eternal welfare is not possible in other births.'

Śrīla Prabhupād had commented on this verse for one month. He instructed to all those who went to Him, asked them to stay there itself and stopped them from going home. They stayed there only. Can we do? It is not so easy.

You should submit your prayers to Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and Śrīmatī Rādhā Rānī – Śrī Rādhā krishna, "You kindly rescue me." Then you will be rescued. He will rescue anybody if prayed from the heart. Perform *pūjā*, pray to Śrī Rādhā krishna. By your own efforts you will not get. When the impetus to serve Supreme Lord will come to you, you will be sent to a person where you will get more impetus. Without your wanting how He (Lord) will come? Actually we want worldly things. We may show from outside but from inside there is no feeling. It is difficult for them (may be referring to devotees outside India) because they will not find actual devotee. In this world all are surrounded by material people.

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur has said that the devotion we perform will never be lost. Those who desire from inside will get Supreme Lord for sure. After the disappearance of Mahāprabhu many *apa-sampradāyas* (non-bona fide paths) have cropped up but now it will not happen again. He said that. So you have to take this opportunity.

You should meditate on the following *bhajan* by Sachidāndanda Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur:

*jibana-samapti-kale koribo bhajana,
ebe kori grha-sukha'
kakhan e katha nahi bole vijna-jana,
e deha patanonmukha*

Those who have got the actual spiritual knowledge will never say, 'At the end of my life I shall perform *bhajan*, but now I want to have mundane worldly pleasures' because they know that this body is perishable any moment.

*aji va sateka varse avasya marana,
niscinta na thako bhai*

yata sighra para, bhajo sri-krishna-charana jivaner thik nai

Death certainly must come - either today or in about hundred years, so do not remain in unworried state. Begin worshipping the lotus feet of Krishna as early as possible, because it is not certain when we will get human birth again. We may become bird, beast or anything. Whatever we think at the time of death, we'll become that. We should not waste this human life like birds and beasts. Only a human being can have the knowledge about eternal and non-eternal and can perform *bhajan*. If there is no knowledge how can we perform *bhajan*? Nobody can say for sure that we'll get this opportunity again. You have to consider it's value.

*samsar nirvana kori' ja'bo ami vrindavana
rina-troy sodhibare koritechhi suyatana*

'I shall settle (take care of) my worldly life and later I shall go to Vrindāvana. To purify myself of the three debts (debt to parents, debt to sages, debt to other human beings) I shall endeavor very hard now'.

*e asay nahi prayojana
emon durasa vase, ya'be prana avasese,
na hoibe dina-bandhu charana-sevana*

Such hopes are useless. By the influence of such undesirable longings or desires, your life will depart in the end without serving the lotus feet of *dīna-bandhu*, the dear most Friend of the fallen.

*yadi sumangala chao, sada krishna-nama gao,
grihe thako, vane thako, ithe tarka akarana*

If you want the supreme eternal welfare, then just chant the Holy name of Śrī Krishna always whether you live in the house or in the forest. All other arguments are simply useless.

Inspite of all your difficulties, I have got the hope that I'll get your company for our spiritual benefit.



Sincerely submit to the Lord

Praying for blessings of Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Śrī Rādhā-Krishna unto the sincere souls desirous of serving Śrī Krishna and His devotees.

Received your letter dated _____ when I was at Śrī Māyāpur, Ishodyan during Śrī Navadvīp *dhām parikrama*. Also I received one affectionate letter from your mother in Bengali. I wrote in my letter to her briefly about all my circumstances including serious health condition in the month of August in the year 2006. By Śrī Krishna's desire, I got back my life.

Birth, duration of life in this world, and death are controlled by the Supreme Lord. Submission to the will of the Lord is the only way of getting bliss. Conditioned souls have got numerous desires and when their desires are not fulfilled, they become unbalanced. By going through your letter, I was reminded of the pithy saying of our Most Revered *Gurudev Nitya-līlā-pravishtha* Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhav Goswāmī Mahārāj when I met Him in Calcutta, Hazra Road, Gauḍīya Maṭh. By the grace of the All-Merciful Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, I came in contact with the Grace-Incarnate Form of Krishna - *Gurudev* - at Goalpara, Assam at my birth-place. Here I do not want to go in detail about my questions and correspondence with Him. I decided to renounce household life and met Him in Hazra Road, Calcutta Maṭh. I told Him I have become too much indifferent to worldly relations, which are so perishable. I openly expressed my heart to *gurudev*, saying that although I am indifferent to worldly relations, I also have the propensity of sense-enjoyment. I asked whether it was proper for me to renounce household life in this condition. *Gurudev*, in reply to this question, said no conditioned souls of this world could definitely say that they are completely detached from worldly desires. They should sincerely submit to the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, Who can rescue them from the clutches of Māyā (the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord). *Gurudev* expressed His strong desire that I should renounce the house and join the institution. After that I decided to join the institution, without seeking permission of the family members.

I also heard *gurudev* speaking in regard to this from the Gītā: Arjuna asked Krishna, *cañcalaṁ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa* - “My mind is too restless. It seems almost impossible for me, a conditioned soul, to control my restless mind as it is impossible to control the air- current.” Śrī Krishna in reply said, 'I admit that surely it is difficult to control the mind, but it is not impossible. You are very powerful. You can control the mind

by *abhyāsayoga* (repeated practice) and *vairāgya* (detachment). There are two significant aspects of *vairāgya*— (1) practice of detachment to non-eternal things of this world and (2) attachment to the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. As much attachment we shall have for Krishna, so much actual detachment to non-eternal things we can get automatically.

No time factor in the spiritual sky

To understand the time factor, we are to very carefully note the instruction given about it in the authentic scriptures of India. There are two kinds of sky - material sky and transcendental sky. In the material sky there exist three states of time factor – past, present and future. But in the transcendental spiritual sky there exists no past or future, only present. As long as we are in the grip of material egos, being enveloped by the illusory energy consisting of the three primal qualities, *rajaḥ*, *sattva* and *tamaḥ*, we are in the grip of material time - past, present and future (by *rajaḥ-guṇa* living beings are created, by *sattva-guṇa* they are sustained and by *tama-guṇa* they are destroyed).

Words uttered in the material sphere with material egos are material words which will give us contact with non-eternal things and relations causing bondage and the threefold sufferings - (1) physical and mental sufferings (2) sufferings caused by other living beings (nowadays horrifying sufferings are inflicted by the human beings themselves) and (3) natural calamities. Transcendental realised souls can utter transcendental sound which will give us contact with the Eternal Blissful Entity, the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and His devotees. If we associate with worldly people we shall hear worldly words and our minds will be attached to non-eternal things of this world. Provided we associate with realised souls, we will be in contact with transcendental sounds with transcendental rhythm which can awaken the eternal real nature of the soul viz. eternal pure devotion to the Supreme Lord.

sakarma phala bhuk pumān - Human beings will reap the fruits of their own actions. It is stated in the Gītā, '*karmaṇy evādhikāras te, mā phaleṣu kadācana*' - every conscious living being has got relative independence (thinking, feeling and willing). By the good or bad use of relative independence, they can do good or bad acts. Fruits of the actions are controlled by the Supreme Lord. We commit a Himalayan blunder when we blame others for our own sufferings.

Nāmakīrtan is the best

It is written in the letter to your mother in Bengali that association of a bona fide *śuddha bhakta*, pure devotee, is essential - '*tato duḥsaṅgam utsrjya satsu sajjeta buddhimān, santa evāśya chindanti mano-vyāsaṅgam uktibhiḥ*', Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.26.26. For getting actual fruit, you are to practice *navada-bhakti* as stated by Prahlaḍ Mahārāj in the seventh canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, or the five forms of devotion as taught by Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, namely *sādhū sanga* (association of bona fide *sādhus*), *nāma-kīrtan* (chanting of the Holy Name), *bhāgavat śravan* (hearing of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam), Mathura *vās* (residing in Mathura Dhām) and *śraddhaya śrīmūrti seva* (worship of Deities with firm faith). Out of them *nāmakīrtan* is the best in *Kaliyuga*.

More when we meet. My love to you. May All-Merciful Śrī Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga Rādhā- Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Trading devotion

His Divine Grace, Most Revered Śrīla Gurudev Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhav Goswāmī Mahārāj, (Founder-President of Śrī Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh, Registered Institution), on the auspicious day of the holy advent of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, 13th February, 1965, while He was on a preaching tour in North-East Assam, from Hailakandi, Kachhar, sent His instructive message to His godbrother, Śrīmad Jagamohan Das Brahmachārī, the then Math-in-charge of Śrī Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh, Calcutta and also the manager of 'Śrī Chaitanya Vāṇī', Bengali Monthly Magazine, to publish his instruction in the said magazine. Gurumahārāj wanted that His message should not be confined only to ascetic Maṭh-members, but it is also for the household devotees, subscribers of the magazine, as well as others who are eager to get enhancement in pure devotion: —

There are many categories of servitors (worshippers). Amongst them, three

principal categories (1) servitors inspired by intense love, (2) servitors urged by obligation of duty and (3) servitors encouraged by selfish worldly interests.

The last category of the servitors mentioned above cannot be stated to be pure servitor because the relationship there of the served and servitor is non-eternal. Service will be stopped there if the worldly interest is not fulfilled. The relationship of the servitor with the Served - 'God' - is severed. It is somewhat like trading. Here acceptance of service is outward show and is only meant for fulfillment of mundane benefits. As the worldly interest is non-eternal, the relation between the Served and the so-called servitor is not permanent. Therefore this sort of conditional service certainly is not the performance of service which exists in the Eternal Spiritual Realm. This last category of service is only an endeavour within the domain of *karma* (actions sanctioned by the Vedas).

Independent but dependent

The first category of service is very pure and eternal. The second category of the service, although not inspired by pure love, but by obligation of the sense of duty and devotional rules sanctioned by the scriptures, is also eternal and stable. Service inspired by pure love and service by the obligation of the sense of duty and scriptural prescript are accepted as service. These two are '*Rāga-bhakti*' and '*vaidhi-bhakti*'. Service is eternal in both these two categories of servitors and the relationship between Served and servitor is eternal.

A pure servitor is independent but that independence is subject to the fulfillment of the desires of God, i.e., inspired by love of God. Therefore, some subscribe to the view that the pure servitor is also dependent. Although a *rāga-bhakta* is bound by pure devotion to God (the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna), there is no lack of his independence to serve. What is understood by the word 'arbitrariness' does not exist in a pure devotee. A servitor is not a wooden doll. The servitors are spiritual entities. The freedom of the servitor is eternally admitted, but that independence is never used against the service of God— the object of service.

Service is delightful, not insensible

Rasa (pure bliss) originates from the eternal, delightful, love relationship of two independent spiritual entities. That extraordinary bliss originating from the eternal,

delightful, sweet relationship elates both the served and the servitor. The devotees and the devoted both are unable to bear the pangs of separation from each other. Sometimes it is perceived that separation is necessary to increase the intensity of love originating from the sweet, delightful relationship. This certainly exists in Spiritual Transcendental Pastimes. Diversity of service is perfectly observed amongst pure servitors. There is a gradual progress of the degrees of splendour of different delightful relationships—*dāśya* (master-servant relationship), *sākhya* (bosom-friendship relationship), *vātsalya* (parental relationship) and *kānta* (consortherhood relationship). There is no want of intent or inclination of service in any of these modes of worship. Devotional service is perceptible and delightful and not insensible. As such, realised *ācāryas* give the definition of *bhakti* as cognition embraced with the essence of exhilarating potency.

No designation matches a devotee's dignity

The status of a devotee of God or the status of a genuine servitor is even desired by eminent demigods. No less fortunate person can get the designation of being a servitor of the Supreme Lord. No designation within this *Brahmāṇḍa* (cosmos) can be equal to the dignified status of a devotee of the Lord. Those who have no knowledge of the Supreme Lord— Absolute Reality, Who is All-existence All-knowledge and All-bliss — cannot have the capacity to understand the dignity of a devotee. Therefore, they are nothing but worthless persons who disrespect a devotee out of ignorance and without knowledge of the Truth. Actually, they are trampling their own good fortune under their feet by considering the servitor of God as a lower status person. Servitors subdue the Served according to the degree of their service.

The Supreme Lord, the Possessor of six-fold opulences namely totality of wealth, power, fame, beauty, knowledge and renunciation, is the root cause of creation, preservation and destruction within infinite *Brahmāṇḍas*. But those who have conquered the Supreme Lord, Who is the cause of all causes, and subdued Him by pure love, are so great that they are beyond comprehension. The status of such pure devotees is the highest in the *Brahmāṇḍa*.

The surest and best way

Contact with a genuine servitor will bring us close to the Supreme Lord. Service to

the servitor bestows service to his object of service, the Supreme Lord, and subdues Him. For this reason, wise persons always carry out the orders of the servitors of the Supreme Lord to get their objective. A genuine *sādhū* associates with a *bhakta* and becomes his servitor. The servitor of the *bhakta* will certainly get *bhakti* and realised status.

A devotee of the Supreme Lord devises many ways to give scope of service to the votaries who want eternal welfare, according to their eligibility. This opportunity of service will gradually make them eligible to get *bhagavad-prem*. Service of *bhakta* is the surest and best way of attaining God.



PART V

Realising the Infinite

A surrendered soul cannot say that his realisation of the Supreme Lord and gurudeva is final, what to speak of conditioned souls. The realisation of God and His Personal Associates has no end; it will go on ad infinitum.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev – Is it true that Krishna has eternally existing forms covering all species, not just higher order animals? Secondly, my sister is going to be coming to Kolkata in August for a few days on a trip sponsored by her work, so I wonder if it might be possible for her to come and meet you? My mother sends you her warmest and most heartfelt daṇḍavat praṇāms and says to tell you that she thinks of you always.

All living beings are interrelated

I am also eager to know about the well-being of your wife and your daughter; whether they can be present in video conferences. Actually all living beings are interrelated through the relationship of Śrī Krishna. Nobody can be detached. All are within Krishna, nothing can be outside Krishna. Even if it is said that a particle of dust is outside Krishna, He will lose His absolute position, He will become finite.

In fact, I am a conditioned soul. I have got many drawbacks. I am not omniscient and can never become omniscient.

It is the standing order of our Most Revered Gurudev to repeat what we have heard from the holy lips of *gurudev* and bona fide *vaiṣṇavas* and to remember the teachings of authentic scriptures especially of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam — the quintessence of all.

Humans are not god makers

The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna gave instructions to Uddhav in reply to his question (vide Bhāgavatam, 11th Canto, Chapters 7 to 9) about 24 *gurus* — including earth, water, fire, air, sky, moon, sun, pigeons etc. Lastly, He mentioned the human form, where He has said that (through an anchorite *brāhmin*) — the Supreme Lord, by His external potency, illusory energy, consisting of three primeval qualities (*Sattva*, *Rajaḥ* and *Tamaḥ*) creates plants, reptiles, beasts, birds, ferocious animals, various living beings but could not get heart's contentment. Ultimately, He creates human beings and becomes completely satisfied and delighted to see that human beings are capable of worshipping Him. They have the discriminating power between good and bad, eternal and non- eternal and can realise Divinity.

Here this is to be carefully noted - amongst all created beings the human being is the best because he has the ability to worship God. Hence, descent of God shall be in such Forms so that human beings are attracted to worship. Ontologically God is one, Absolute Reality cannot be more than one, but His pastimes may be different and

various. As He is omnipotent, no condition can be imposed on Him. He can appear in any Form He likes, He can even appear as an insect with all powers. If a conditioned soul by limited knowledge says “No”, then he has no knowledge of God. A human being is finite, he cannot be God-maker. There are infinite *Brahmāṇḍas* (planets), infinite transcendental realms. A finite being with limited knowledge cannot say what sorts of pastimes are going on in these realms, or what types of the Lord's personal associates and Forms of God exist there.

We are all happy to know that your sister is coming to Calcutta in the month of August on a trip sponsored by her work. Kindly inform me on what date she is coming to Calcutta and on what date and time she will come to our Maṭh to see us. Explain to her everything clearly, about the address and location of our Maṭh.

It is my good fortune that I have the blessing and affection of your revered mother. Convey my heart's regards to her.

Hope this will find you in good health and spirits. My love to you all. *Daṇḍavat*
Praṇāms.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - (1) What is the form & activities of the transcendental body(*siddha deha* - spiritual liberated body)? Does it also go through birth, growth & death like a material body? Does it need food and sleep? Are there trees, plants, mountains, rivers in the Transcendental Realm (spiritual planets)?

(2) Why does the Supreme Lord Krishna play the pastime of separating from *Rādhārāṇī*, even though He knows it will cause immense suffering to His pure and most beloved devotee?

Answer-(1)

Indian devotional philosophical significance

Indian philosophers, particularly devotional philosophers, use the word 'transcendental' (*aprākṛit*, *prākṛitir-atīt*) for objects beyond matter. Spiritual objects

are beyond the comprehension of the finite gross and subtle (mind and intelligence) sense organs of the material body. As the material body has birth and death, so the sense organs of the non-eternal body will also be non-eternal. Therefore, everything - every perception - comprehended by non-eternal sense organs is also non-eternal.

According to the English Pocket Oxford Dictionary, the significance of the word 'transcendental' is given thus:

Transcendental (a): a priori; not based on experience, intuitively accepted, innate in the mind, consisting of or dealing in or inspired by abstraction.

a priori:- From causes to effects, from general principle to particular instance; involving reasoning thus; assumed without investigation.

Abstract (a): to do with or existing in thought or theory rather than matter or practice, not concrete.

Concrete: existing in material form, real, definite, positive.

According to the above observation, 'transcendental' signifies a different meaning, not at par with Indian devotional philosophical significance. Even 'philosophy' and '*darśan- śāstra*' are not synonymous words. They do not express the same meaning.

According to the Oxford Dictionary 'philosophy' means: The use of reason and argument in search for truth and knowledge of reality.

In Indian thought, the reasoning and arguments of the finite mind and finite intelligence of the conditioned soul cannot determine one's cause, which is the Ultimate Reality. Infinite reality, the Absolute, cannot be manufactured in the mental or intellectual factories of finite living beings. If Reality is Reality, He is always existing. We are to find out the way how to realise the Truth or the Reality. This is called '*darśan- śāstra*'. Infinite Reality is self-effulgent. By their challenging mood, no-one can know this. The Unchallengeable Truth, the Supreme Lord, will reveal Himself to a completely surrendered soul.

Greatest of the greatest

As the mental inclinations of most persons in the modern age are towards materialism, it is difficult for the Indian saints to make them realise the implications of Indian school of thought.

*indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ
manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ
(Bhagavad Gītā 3.42)*

The sense organs are finer and superior to the perceptible gross material objects, mind is finer and superior to sense organs, intelligence is finer and superior to mind, and spirit soul is finer and superior to intelligence.

*yasmāt kṣaram atīto 'ham akṣarād api cottamaḥ
ato 'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ Bhagavad Gītā 15.18*

'I' indicates the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. The Supreme Lord is beyond the comprehension of the individual spirit souls. Individual spirit souls are designated as *kṣara* because they are fallible i.e. they can deviate from their normal states. Śrī Krishna is supremely superior to *Paramātmā* and *brahman* (*akṣara*), so He is renowned as 'Purushottama'. Furthermore it is stated: *brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham amṛtasyāvyayasya ca* in the Bhagavad Gītā (14.27). He is the establishment or cause of the formless *brahman*. The Supreme Lord is the greatest of the greatest, minutest of the minutest, and everything in between. The Supreme Lord has five extraordinary opulences: *avicintya-mahā-śakti* (inconceivable absolute power), *koṭi-brahmāṇḍa- vigraha* (millions of universes are within Him), *avatārāvalī-bījaṁ* (He is the Prime cause of all *avatāras*), *hatāri-sugati-dāyakaḥ* (He can even bestow eternal welfare to the foes killed by Him), *ātmārāma-gaṇākārṣīty* (He can attract even self-contented emancipated souls).

Vrindāvan, not part of this world

The transcendental Supreme Lord and all His associates, who are also transcendental, cannot be restricted and limited like material bodies. Nothing is non-eternal and non- spiritual in the transcendental spiritual realm. Thus, plants, mountains, rivers, everything is spiritual and therefore extremely blissful. There is a gulf of difference between realised souls and enslaved *jīvas*. Nobody can enter into the transcendental realm with the help of his non-eternal physical body. All the personal associates of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu had great enthusiasm to do *bhajan* in Vrindāvan *dhām*, because they had direct contact with the blissful realm, trees, rivers, beaches etc. Conditioned souls, with all the defects and limitations of material bodies, cannot enter into this transcendental realm. Vrindāvan *dhām* is

completely spiritual. It descends into this world. It is not a part of the world, or India or of the state Uttar Pradesh. The Lord, with His Name, form, attributes, pastimes and realm, descends to a completely surrendered soul.

You have heard about Hanumān, who can become the biggest and minutest. Even the demigods of heaven have such power in this material universe.

Waves of ānanda

The *ātmā* requires *ātmā* for its sustenance. *Anātmā* is that which is foreign to *ātmā*. The *anātmā* - body i.e. material body requires the five elements (earth, water, fire, air and sky) or a transformation of those five elements, foods etc., for the sustenance of the material body. The *ātmā* has no birth, no death. The physical body or *anātmā* has birth, death and threefold afflictions.

This material world is full of suffering and distress. There exists variety in this world. As this variety is the cause of extreme suffering, there are waves of sufferings in this material world. Beyond this realm lies the existence of *Viraja* where there is no creation and no variety. Although it is in the realm of nescience and suffering, there are no waves of suffering. In *Brahman dhām* there is *ānanda* (bliss), but there are no waves of *ānanda*. Waves of bliss do exist in *Vaikuṇṭha dhām*. Upon getting *Nārāyaṇa-bhakti*, Catuhsan, being attracted by the fragrance of the offerings of the Lotus Feet of Nārāyaṇa, gave up *Brahmānanda* and started worshipping Nārāyaṇa. But, Goloka-Vrindāvan is the highest blissful realm where devotees get the highest bliss by coming in contact with Śrī Krishna through all kinds of delightful relationships. Goloka Vrindāvan is spherical (360 degree) whereas Vaikuṇṭha is a hemisphere (180 degree).

Subtle everlasting forms

In Goloka-Vrindāvan, Krishna, Rādhā and almost all *gopis* are *kishore* — adolescent. Those who are elders, parents etc., have grown up bodies, bigger in size, but those are also eternal. Krishna and all cowherd boys are almost of the same size, only Balarām is taller.

As there is no birth and no death and as all relationships are eternal, those relationships are very delightful and everlasting. Everlasting forms are so subtle, they

cannot be destroyed. The atom bomb could not destroy the sky of Hiroshima or Nagasaki of Japan, so how can an atom bomb destroy those who are much finer than the sky? As there is no influence of a time factor like we find in this material world, there is no actual existence of past and future, everything is in the present in the transcendental realm of Vraja *dhām*. The sweet pastimes are arranged by Yogamāya to relish the sweet pure love, where the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and His Absolute Counterpart Spiritual Potency Śrīmatī Rādhā forget themselves.

Start with the hearing of the Holy Name

It is relevant to go through Śrī Jīva Goswāmī's commentary of the verse of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Prahlād-caritra, 7th canto, 5th Chapter, 18th verse and Krama Sandarbha tīka (commentary):-

prathamam nāmaṇ śravanam antaḥkaraṇa-suddhy-artham apekṣyam. śuddhe cāntaḥkarṇe rūpa-śravaṇena tad-udaya-yogyatā bhavati. samyag-udite ca rūpe guṇānām sphurānām sampadyate. sampanne ca guṇānām sphurane parikara- vaiśiṣṭyena tad-vaiśiṣṭyam sampadyate. tatas teṣu nāma-rūpa-guṇa-parikareṣu samyak sphuriteṣu līlānām sphuranam suṣṭu bhavati.

First, start with the hearing of the Holy Name from a bona fide devotee because for the revelation of the Holy Name, purification of heart is essential. After that, form, attributes etc. will gradually be revealed. After doing *Harinām* properly without offences, the transcendental form, finer than the Name, will be revealed in the pure heart, and after that, transcendental attributes, transcendental associates and then ultimately the finest *līla* (pastimes) of Krishna will be revealed successively.

'nāma', 'vigraha', 'svarūpa'—tina *eka-rūpa*
tine 'bheda' nāhi,—tina 'cid-ānanda-rūpa'
deha-dehīra, nāma-nāmīra kṛṣṇe nāhi 'bheda'
jīvera dharma—nāma-deha-svarūpe 'vibheda'
ataeva kṛṣṇera 'nāma', 'deha', 'vilāsa'
prākṛtendriya-grāhya nahe, haya sva-prakāśa
(Śrī Chaitanya Charitāmrita, Madhya, 17.131-132, 134)

The Holy Name, *vigraha* (Deity) and the original transcendental form are identical as all are *saccidānanda*; all-existence, all-knowledge and all-bliss. Name and named,

body and the possessor of the body are non-different from Krishna. A conditioned soul's name, body and real self are different. But Krishna's Holy Name, form and pastimes are non-different. For that reason, they cannot be apprehended by the material sense organs, but can only be realised through revelation.

Answer-(2)

The purest and highest prema

Krishna is the predominating aspect of the moiety and Śrīmatī Rādhika is the predominated aspect of the moiety. Moiety means one of two parts of a thing.

There are two sides of *prema*: union and separation. *Prema* in separation bestows much more happiness than *prema* in union. This *prema* is called *adhirūḍha mahābhāva*. Here, the manifestation of the object of worship (Krishna's sweet form) is more than the manifestation caused by union. For that reason Nandanandan Krishna appeared in *Kali-yuga* as Gaurāṅga (inside Krishna outside Rādhā, He has taken the mood (of worship) of Rādhā and Her complexion) in order to taste His own extraordinary sweetness as Rādhā has tasted (the sweetness of *prema* in separation - *vipralamba rasa*), as well as to perform the pastimes of the most munificent form of Godhead, to distribute the highest *prema*, *unnata ujjwala rasa* to all, irrespective of caste, creed and nationality. Rādhārāṇī's *prema* is the purest and highest. She is most magnanimous. She is prepared to sacrifice everything for the satisfaction of Krishna.

nā gaṇi āpana-duḥkha, dekhi' vrajeśvarī-mukha,
vraja-janera hṛdaya vidare
kibā māra' vraja-vāsī, kibā jīyāo vraje āsī',
kena jīyāo duḥkha sahāibāre?

“I do not consider my grief. I only want His satisfaction. My only object is His contentment. If by giving pain to me, He is highly delighted, that pain will be my greatest blessedness (supreme happiness).”



Sweetness of Śrī Krishna

As long as the sweetness of Śrī Krishna is not tasted, this tug-of-war between worldly attraction and Krishna-*bhakti* will continue. We cannot give up our attraction for worldly objects unless and until we get the taste of the transcendental sweetness of Name, Form, Attributes and Pastimes of Śrī Krishna. Of course, even at the stage of *sādhana-bhakti* we can have some feeling of the transcendental sweetness of Śrī Krishna. Progress in the *sādhana* depends on the intensity of our devotional practice.

In our devotional spiritual cultivation we are to practise detachment from worldly objects and attachment to Śrī Krishna simultaneously. We are to give more stress to positive practice than to negative practice. When we try to withdraw ourselves from worldly things, their remembrance comes to our mind. The undesirable temporary things of the world result in severe suffering at the time of separation from them. However, if we always remember Śrī Krishna, devote ourselves to the service of Śrī Krishna, Who is All-Good, All-Existence, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss, we will be automatically withdrawn from worldly objects.



Ad infinitum

I am grateful to _____ for reminding me about my Most Revered Śikṣā Guru, His Divine Grace *Parampujyapad Parivrajakāchārya*, Tridandi Swāmī Śrīmad Bhakti Promode Puri Goswāmī Maharāj and to be able to pray for His blessings, by way of providing me with the privilege of writing a preface on her writing of His holy biography.

The Supreme Lord as well as His absolute counterpart, grace-incarnate form, *gurudev* are transcendental, beyond comprehension of the conditioned souls of this world. Only a bona fide surrendered soul, to the extent of his degree of submission, can narrate the transcendental qualities of the Supreme Lord and His absolute counterpart *gurudev*. As there is no end to the degree of submission there can be no end to the realisation of Their transcendental qualities. A surrendered soul cannot say that his realisation of the Supreme Lord and *gurudev* is final, what to speak of conditioned souls. The realisation of God and His Personal Associates has no end; it will go on ad infinitum. Therefore, when we sincerely endeavour to write or speak

with humbleness about the glories of the Supreme Lord and *gurudev*, They will be satisfied and accept our service, forgiving our shortcomings.

I had the opportunity to be in close contact with him because I was also engaged in the writing and review of the matter for the press along with him. However, I feel this contact was external as due to want of bona fide submission to him, I could not touch his transcendental qualities. From whatever I have understood about his special qualities, he was doing any devotional form with great sincerity and humbleness. I saw him writing Bengali articles quickly and without any spelling mistake. He was an erudite scholar.

As ____ is sincerely devoted to her *gurudev*, her writings will be more authentic. I think readers will be spiritually benefited by going through her writings.

Remembrance of *Guru*, *Vaishnavas* and *Bhagavān* will remove all the obstacles and bestow the devotional objective. One can get emancipation from worldly bondage by singing the glories of *vaiṣṇavas* and *guru*. But as *guru* and *vaiṣṇavas* are transcendental, without their grace we cannot even remember them, pray for their grace or sing their glories. Yet if we are sincere and humble, we shall get their grace as they are all-merciful.

I pay my innumerable prostrated humble obeisances to his lotus feet to forgive me for my offences, which I might have committed knowingly or unknowingly and beg him to offer his causeless mercy unto me.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Deity is not an idol

It is not always easy to understand the profound meaning of the teachings of Indian saints. They have advised us to worship '*Vigraha*' or Deities. The Deity is not an idol, it is very different.

The Supreme Lord is all-powerful. Thus, He can appear in any form, to give service to His devotees. If we say that the Supreme Lord cannot appear in the form of a

Deity, then it is irrational talk. Nothing is impossible for the All-Powerful. Not that any object will become the Supreme Lord by somebody saying so but it is illogical to say that the Supreme Lord cannot appear by His own wish in any object i.e. in the form of a Deity.

Eyes of devotion

We cannot see the Supreme Lord with our material eyes – eyes of lust. When we will submit to Him, surrender to Him, then by His grace, we can see Him, with spiritual devotional eyes. The Supreme Lord can be seen only by the eyes of devotion to those who have the aptitude to serve Him. When the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna was present in *Dvāpara Yuga*, He could not be recognised by Kāṁsa, Jarāsandha etc. When the Supreme Lord appeared as Rāma, He also could not be recognised by all. Hiraṇyakaśipu, who was greatly learned and a knower of the Vedas, could not recognise the Supreme Lord Śrī Nṛsiṁha Deva with his eyes of lust, Who appeared in front of him supernaturally from a pillar. But his son, Śrī Prahlād Maharāj, could recognise Narasiṁha Deva as the Supreme Lord because he saw with the eyes of devotion.

As stated in the scriptures, He is '*sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*'. Cause of all causes. If there is no form in the Supreme Lord then there cannot be form in this world. But since this world is full of forms, how can the Supreme Lord be formless? The Supreme Lord has form. He has no material form, liable to perversion, but Transcendental and Spiritual Form.



Bhakta chāritras

It will be better for you to study Dhruva *chāritra* (biographies of devotees), Prahlād *chāritra*, Ambariṣa Maharāj's *chāritra*, and Ajāmīl *upākhyari*, from Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 4th *Skanda* (Canto), 7th *Skanda*, 9th *Skanda*, and 6th *Skanda* respectively. Śrī Śukadev Goswāmī only started speaking about the *līla-katha* of Śrī Krishna, found in 10th *Skanda*, to Śrī Parikṣit Maharāj after holding discourses on 1st *Skanda* to 9th *Skanda*, thus making the foundation of being eligible to hear *līla-katha*.



Gradual development of realisation

I had seen your letter and had gone through it but could not get time earlier to reply due to heavy engagements.

Ecstatic feelings of Divinity are helpful to the extent that we have remembrance of Divinity. It is the devotional scriptural instruction to remember Śrī Krishna always and never to forget Him. There are lists of positive assertions - commandments - and negative assertions - prohibitions - to remember Krishna always and never to forget Him. This is the criterion to understand what you are to do and not to do.

Although feelings of Divinity as mentioned in your letter are helpful to some extent for remembrance of Divinity, this is not direct realisation of the Divinity. If there be direct realisation of Divinity, the persons who have got such realisation cannot live in this world. Gradual development of realisation depends on the intensity of *sādhana* (Devotional practice). Jīva Goswāmī has said in the commentary of one verse in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam; While doing *Harinām* (*mahāmantra*) without tenfold offences gradual developments will be manifested 1) Purification of mind, 2) Revelation of Transcendental Form, 3) Revelation of the Personal Associates of Śrī Hari and ultimately 4) Transcendental Delightful Pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Krishna.

I believe that you have heard that our *Paramgurudev*, Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākur performed one hundred crores of *Harinām* (*mahāmantra*) at Śrī Māyāpur *dhām* for six years at a stretch with severe austerity.

I am so so. May All-Merciful Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna bless you all. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
B. B. Tirtha



Realisation according to the degree of submission

We can know nothing about Śrī Krishna and his devotees by our mundane capacities - by material senses, mind and intelligence - because they are beyond the reach of

mundane senses. Those transcendental qualities are revealed to a bona fide surrendered soul. The excellence of transcendental qualities is felt according to the degree of submission to the Lord and His devotees.

Those who know the ontological aspect of God and His devotees cannot have vanity at any stage of their realisation. As such, *śuddha bhaktas* (realised souls) are in their nature submissive and humbler than a blade of grass. I am encouraged to go through the expression of your feelings regarding a true devotee in your long letter. As the Supreme Lord is Infinite, the realisation of His infinite transcendental good qualities cannot be said to be final at any stage of our feeling of those qualities. The degree of correct feeling of the transcendental good qualities of Śrī Krishna depends upon the degree of submission.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - We need the mercy of guru but it seems we won't progress if we won't take that mercy, Is it always a matter of our own choice and desire to take the mercy of Guru or not? e.g., think of mercy as a hook coming down then if we hold it we'll be rescued Otherwise not?

Bunch of hooks

Attachment to non-eternal things is the cause of bondage. Love for the eternal Supreme Lord, Who is All-Existence, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss, is the cause of emancipation. Conditioned souls are drowning in a deep ocean or deep pit from which their release is almost impossible. The Supreme Lord, out of compassion, descends into that deep ocean or pit to rescue the fallen souls, taking various Forms. These Forms are compared with hooks. For instance, if a bucket falls into a deep well, to lift the bucket a bunch of hooks, tightly fastened with a strong rope, is dropped into the well. Then by turning the rope throughout the well, one of the hooks catches the bucket. By drawing up the rope, the bucket will be lifted from the deep well. As every conscious being has got relative independence of will and taste, he can catch hold of any Form of God tightly as per his liking. Then he will be taken out from the ocean. So, God descends into this world in so many Forms (Fish, Tortoise, Boar, Nṛsimhadeva, Vāmana, etc.) to attract the conditioned souls. Whomever they like, they can catch hold of. Catching should be sincere and steadfast. Like God, realised personal associates of God also may descend to rescue

the fallen souls. The instance of the fastening of Gopāla by mother Yaśoda will be a satisfactory reply.

Infinite within finite

Mother Yaśoda, measuring the belly of her little child, brought the rope but could not fasten it as the rope was short by two fingers. She was very surprised. She brought another rope and joined it with the first rope and again it was two fingers less. The rope was made very long (say more than a mile) yet she could not fasten the child. Every time it was two fingers less. As the Supreme Lord in that little child Form is infinite, infinite miles of rope will not be able to fasten the child. This is His inconceivable power. Within a finite form, He is infinite. Rabindranath Tagore has also said, “*sīmāra madhye asīm tumi*” - God is infinite within a limited Form. Yaśoda was very tired. All the *gopīs* were laughing from a distance. Yet Yaśoda did not stop trying to fasten Gopāla. Ultimately, the Supreme Lord, being attracted by the tremendous sweet affection of His mother, accepted fastening. Then the child could be tied by the first rope. Two fingers being less every time indicates that to get God, God's grace as well as sincere steadfast endeavor of service to attract the grace of God are both essential. When these two coincide, the desired fruit will be achieved.

Only devotion can propitiate god

Bhagavān said to Uddhava:

*bhaktyāham ekayā grāhyaḥ śraddhayātmā priyaḥ satām
bhaktiḥ punāti man-niṣṭhā śva-pākān api sambhavāt
(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.14.21)*

“I, being the Supreme Lord residing in the hearts of all and really beloved of all, can be realisable by *sādhya* by the manifestation of exclusive devotion due to the influence of faith in Me. One-pointed exclusive devotion can even sanctify one of the lowest caste.”

In his Padyāvalī, Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī has also referred to this verse written by a South- Indian versifier:

*vyādhasyācaraṇam dhruvasya ca vayo vidyā gajendrasya kā
kubjāyāḥ kim u nāma rūpam adhikam kim tat sudāmno dhanam*

*vaṁsaḥ ko vidurasya yādava-pāter ugrasya kim pauruṣaṁ
bhaktyā tuṣyati kevalaṁ na ca guṇair bhakti-priyo mādhaḥ*

“The hunter's previous killing nature, Dhruva's young age, Gajendra's (leader of wild elephants) want of education, Kubjā's (hunch-backed woman) lack of beauty, Sudāmā's extreme poverty, Vidura's socially depressed lineage, and Ugrasena's (king of Yādavas) lack of virility were not taken into consideration. They all propitiated God by pure devotion. Mādhava (an appellation of the Supreme Lord) is gratified only by *bhakti* and not by worldly qualifications or merits.” (Padyāvalī 8)



Goverdhan non-different from Krishna

I am glad to know your safe return through telephonic message.

When His Divine Grace Most Revered Gurudev played the pastimes of being seriously indisposed and doctors did not give any hope of His recovery, I became unbalanced and took recourse to do something for my own mundane benefit, which is actually anti- devotional. My purpose of going to Govardhan was to rescue myself from the serious troubles which might occur after the disappearance of *gurudev*. The target of a bona fide devotee should always be for the satisfaction of the object of worship and not for anything else. This wrong example should not be imitated by others. The pastimes of appearance and disappearance of the Supreme Lord and a bonafide devotee, who is a personal associate of the Supreme Lord, are eternal. In this connection we should remember the advice of *Bhagavān* Śrī Ramchandra at Modadrumdwip to Śrī Sita Devi under a banyan tree, vide Navadwīp Dhām Mahātamyā written by Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura. There is a gulf of difference between Most Revered Gurudev, the personal associate of Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, and me, a conditioned soul of the world. I gave immense troubles to all *vaiṣṇavas* and to our revered Panda of Govardhan for my own personal interest. Govardhan is identical with Krishna and the devotees of Krishna. Govardhan *pūjā* indicates worship of Krishna and worship of His devotees. Our relationships with Krishna and His devotees are eternal. We should not forget this; we should not miss the target.

Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna willing, I desire to go next January, 2004 for inauguration of the Maṭh office there. I think the function should be held on the ground floor.

The place should be made as clean as possible. For this if any contribution is necessary, I shall try to contribute. You should consult this with all Maṭh member devotees there.

Hope this will find you all in good health and spirit. I may go to Dehradun on 16th May and return to Chandigarh on 18th instant. After that I may plan to go back to Calcutta. Date of departure to Calcutta is not yet decided.

My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



No anxiety for a surrendered soul

The moment we shall submit to Śrī Krishna unconditionally, all our ills and sufferings will go. A completely surrendered soul has got no separate desire of his own. He is happy in whatever circumstance he is put by the will of his beloved Supreme Master.

Śaraṇāgati is six fold. We are to practise it as follows:

- (1) We are to accept all that is congenial for pure devotion
- (2) Give up all that is not congenial.
- (3) We should have firm faith that Śrī Krishna will protect us under all circumstances — from outside foes and inside foes (passions).
- (4) He is the only Sustainer and Maintainer of our real and apparent selves.
- (5) We should know that all belongs to Him, i.e., we are His (*ātmanivandan*).
- (6) We should give up all material egos - should think that we are spiritual sparks, minutest parts of the marginal potency (*taṭasthā śakti*) of Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, i.e., we should not have mundane vanities. We should be humbler than a blade of grass.

A completely surrendered soul has no cause for being worried under any circumstance and under any pressure in this most transitory world. Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna always protects and sustains a bona fide surrendered soul. According to

our *karma*, we get congenial and uncongenial environments. Nobody is to be blamed for this.

Only complete unconditional surrender to the Lotus Feet of Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna can bestow on us eternal peace. This world is not the place of peace. Nobody can get peace with material egos and material desires. If we want peace, we are to transcend this material realm. Whatever is done by the will of the Supreme Lord, Who is All-Good, is for the eternal benefit of all. We reap the fruits of our own actions. It is wrong to blame others for our own suffering. They may be instrumental, but they are not the cause. We should not be perturbed under any circumstance and give up *bhajan*, in our short duration of stay in this transitory world. A completely surrendered soul is always protected and maintained by Śrī Krishna. There is no cause of anxiety for him. He remains calm under all circumstances.

We are controlled by Absolute Will. We cannot do anything against His Will. Whether we shall lead an ascetic life or household life depends upon His will. If He wishes anything, nobody can obstruct it.



Nobody can bribe him

Nobody is to be blamed for our afflictions and drawbacks. We reap the fruits of our own actions. It was the advice of Śrī Nārada to Dhruva: 'Don't blame others for your own sufferings. We get similar kind of sufferings as we inflict upon others. As long as we have this ignorance of blaming others for our sufferings, we shall not get the Grace of God.' Dhruva, taking the advice of his *guru* Nārada, relinquished his ignorance of blaming others and called God's Name from the core of his heart with one-pointed devotion. All hindrances of Dhruva were removed and those persons who were hostile to him became favourable automatically, without asking for this. God controls and gives the fruits of our actions, not man. We should rectify our *karmas* (acts) and not blame others.

God and His absolute counterpart *gurudev* (real *gurudev*) are impartial. God is equal to all. As He is Absolute (*pūrṇa*), nobody can bribe Him and nobody can force Him to do anything which is unjust. But God may test a devotee by putting him in adverse circumstances to qualify him to get the service of His Lotus Feet. We shall be successful in the test - examination.

Sincere souls will never be deceived. So don't be disheartened. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Without sādhana, sādhyavastu, cannot be achieved

Whether you are in *pravritti mārg* or *nivritti mārg*, you are to start *bhajan*. It is a long journey. We will not get anything all of a sudden. For enslaved *jīvas*, *śuddha bhakti* - *śuddha harināma*, is difficult, but if there is sincere desire to perform *bhakti* and chant *harināma* correctly, Śrī Krishna and Śrī Krishna's *bhakta* will be at your back to help you. By their grace you will succeed in getting *śuddha bhakti* and in uttering *harināma* rightly.

Without *sādhana*, *sādhyavastu*, the goal of life cannot be achieved. You are to perform *sādhana* with sincerity and steadfastness. Progress in the *sādhana* depends on the intensity of our devotional practice.



Complete surrender is the only solution

We should not be disappointed by the happenings of the world and give up our *bhajan*. This world is the place of turmoil and disturbances caused by the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. Only a completely surrendered soul can emancipate himself from the grip of illusory energy and surmount the ocean of births and deaths and threefold afflictions. We are to practice six-fold *śaraṇāgati* which is the basis of devotional life. Without *śaraṇāgati*, there cannot be *bhakti*.

We should not be perturbed by mundane worldly loss and gain. We should be very careful about the eternal benefit of the eternal self which will go with us. Whatever is done by the Will of Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, Who is All-Good, is for the eternal benefit of all. *Jīvas* reap the fruits of their own *karma*. Nobody is to be blamed for this. We should not be perturbed under any circumstance and give up *bhajan* in our short duration of stay in this transitory world. A completely surrendered soul is always protected and maintained by Śrī Krishna. There is no cause of anxiety for

them. They remain calm under all circumstances. We are controlled by Absolute-Will. We cannot do anything against His Will. Whether we shall lead an ascetic life or household life depends upon His Will. If He wishes anything, nobody can obstruct it.

Remove your repugnance

We cannot see adjustment and cannot find solution by our own capacity. Total unconditional submission is the only way of solving all problems. *Jīvas* commit offence at the Lotus Feet of Śrī Krishna when they being eternal servants of Śrī Krishna, become averse to Śrī Krishna. As long as *jīvas* will not remove this offence there will be no practical solution. *Māya* will surely envelop them and there will be desire for enjoyment, which will hurl them down to hell — intense suffering.

The root cause of the disease is to be eradicated otherwise undesirable symptoms will crop up. Hence, the root cause of all troubles, repugnance to Śrī Krishna, is to be removed. We are averse to Śrī Krishna from time immemorial. This averseness cannot be removed all of a sudden. It may require thousands of births or one birth. Even Ambarīṣa Maharāj, the great devotee, could only gradually conquer all material desires. Nothing can be achieved all of a sudden. *Sādhya* — ultimate blissful spiritual existence — cannot be attained without *sādhana*. Association of bona fide real *sādhus* is essential for spiritual enhancement.



Serve to get attachment

I am pleased to see that you have sincerely tried to serve the Maṭh which is exclusively meant for the service of Śrī Krishna and His devotees. The duty of a servitor is to try to serve without any desire for the fruits of the action. We can act, but we have got no hold on the fruits of the action. The fruits of actions are controlled by the Supreme Lord (*Gītā* 2.47). The main purpose of our endeavour to serve is to become attached to the Served (Śrī Krishna and His devotees). That attachment will go with us and everything will remain in this world.

This has been done by the Absolute Will of Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga. We were only instruments. Your impetus for this is due to the Will of Lord, Who is All Good.

You are blessed as you have been selected by Most Revered Śrīla Gurudev to become an instrument to this. Whatever you have done, you have done well. I am now relieved of my worries.



Riots and violence

There is serious dislocation of communication here due to agitation of a section of people. There are occasional strikes and also acts of violence. Everywhere we find disturbance now. There is outbreak of conflagration of group clashes throughout the world. Only the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna can devour this conflagration and rescue us. A completely surrendered soul to Śrī Krishna can attain eternal peace. You should be careful in your movement and behaviour in this present age of unrest and unbalanced mentality of people.

I am worried to read in the newspaper, news of bomb explosions and disturbances. People have become so violent and barbarous that they do not hesitate in committing heinous crimes by assassinating innocent persons, to fulfil their political ends. All humanitarian considerations have been relinquished. A section of people has become more ferocious than beasts. People have now become habitual to these day-to-day horrible crimes. They are now seeking justifications in committing such great sins.

There is no other way of getting emancipation from such worldly conflagrations except complete unconditional surrender to the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. Only He can rescue us and nobody else. We are always to remember the saying of Lord Śrī Krishna in the *Gītā* (18.62)—

*tam eva śaraṇaṁ gaccha sarva-bhāvena bhārata
tat-prasādāt parāṁ śāntiṁ sthānaṁ prāpsyasi śāśvatam*

O scion of Bhārata, surrender unto Him utterly. By His grace you will attain transcendental peace and the supreme and eternal abode.

The world is the prison-house for the punishment of culprits who are averse to Śrī Krishna. We cannot get permanent peace in this prison-house; it will always remain

disturbed. In fact the whole country is now disturbed. Nowhere will you find peace. Yet we are to do our duty and perform *bhajan*. The whole world is under conflagration. Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna drank forest fires at *Vrindāvan* and *Bhāndiravan* and rescued His associates who took absolute shelter at His Lotus Feet. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur elucidates the meaning of forest fires—

- (i) oppression of atheists and irreligious persons over the righteous and the theists.
- (ii) group-clashing due to false egos and false interests.

As long as we shall not submit unconditionally to Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, we cannot be rescued from the forest-fires of worldly afflictions.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I want to feel in my heart that I mean my love for Krishna. I only know there is love for You and the devotees but there is no love for Krishna in my heart; He is so far away from my daily situation. My chanting is empty, meaningless, just words. It is not that I do not want to serve Krishna. I want to, but I want to feel love by doing so. Can You help me to find that love; just enough to keep me going on the path of bhakti?

Follow the mahājans

Prahlād Maharāj is one of the pure devotees, great saints, amongst the renowned 12 *mahājans* (highest order of saints). This is the scriptural prescript, that if anybody wants foremost eternal welfare, he can get it from the teachings of the 12 *mahājans*. When Yudhishtir Maharāj was asked by demigod *Dharma*, — 'What is the actual path for eternal welfare?' he said, '*mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*' the path accepted by the 12 *mahājans* is the only path for getting eternal benefit. This is applicable to all human beings. A real *mahājan* sees that all living beings in this universe are connected with the Supreme Lord. Love of Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna means actual love for all living beings, who are connected with Him. Prahlād Maharāj's pithy saying to his father Hiraṇyakaśipu, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (7.8.9)— “My dear father, please give up your demoniac mentality. “Do not discriminate in your heart between enemies and friends; make your mind equipoised towards everyone. Except for the uncontrolled and misguided mind, there is no enemy within this world. When one sees everyone on the platform of equality, one then comes to the position of worshiping the Lord perfectly.”

Criterion of pure love

Prahlād Maharāj also said to the demon boys, (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.6.19) “You may think you are young children of 4-5 years of age, so how can you have contact with the Absolute Supreme Lord? But you should know definitely, without doubt, there is no difficulty to please Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, as He is the dearest of all living beings. It is an axiomatic truth in this world for all time to come.” Even in this world we find the mother has got natural affection for her child, although there may be some inherent desires in the heart; but God's love is always unconditional. When a child gives a part of its biscuit besmeared with phlegm and dirt to mother for eating, the mother takes it to satisfy the child. Prahlād Maharāj has further said, it may be difficult for a wife to please her husband, it may be difficult for a husband to please his wife, it may be difficult for parents to please children, it may be difficult for children to please parents here in this world, but there is no difficulty to please Krishna as He is the dearest and in His love there is no contamination of condition. An illustration may be given between magnet and iron. Magnet attracts iron and iron is attracted by magnet. But when there is rust on the iron, this nature is not manifested. Similarly, Krishna is like a magnet and we are like iron, we have got natural affection but our souls have been enveloped by dirt which is to be removed by the association of bona fide *sādhus*.

A true devotee never wants anything from his object of worship Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. If the Supreme Lord is happy by not giving His contact to the devotee, the devotee thinks whatever Krishna wants that is his desire. If Krishna is happy by not appearing before him, he does not want His appearance. This is the criterion of pure love.

I am on A.C.T. (Artery Clearance Therapy) in Ludhiana (India). I have already taken ten intravenous drips. I still have to take another 20-25 drips. I reached here in Ashok Vihar, Delhi to participate in the month long *Kārtik-vratā* — Dāmodar *vratā* which started from this morning. I shall have to go back to Ludhiana again on 9th November, 2003 for that drip therapy. Some foreign devotees have participated in Dāmodar-*vratā* vow. Many others will come on different days.

I am now a bit better. I am holding discourses but devotees prohibit me to participate in *nagar sankīrtan*.

My love to you all. May All-merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - (1) Even though I have so much external spiritual success, I am completely unhappy and unlucky in my real attempts to reach spiritual consciousness. I have got most odious qualities, like perverted lust, envy and anger against all in any case. Because of that I've got no taste to chant Harinām. (2) Mostly here (outside India), all the people are against worshipping Krishna. What service do you want from me here?

Transcendental realm vs material world

It is not possible for me to write a big letter to you replying all your questions. You should understand the difference of this material world and the Transcendental Spiritual Realm. Śrī Krishna is the only Master and Enjoyer in the Transcendental Spiritual Realm, Vrindāvana *dhām*, and there, all others are His servitors in different love-relations. The target of the servitors there is only for the satisfaction of Śrī Krishna and for nothing else. Whereas in this world, the conditioned souls, all think themselves as masters and enjoyers and they want to enjoy and lord it over others. This whole material world is a place of forest fire, where all are egocentric and they are fighting with each other for material interests. When centers of interests are many, clashing is inevitable. We remain in this world, with misconception of the self and for the fulfillment of material non-eternal desires, thinking we can be happy. It can never be possible.

It will take time to change habits

You have already heard several times from *vaiṣṇavas* that the real self of the *jīva* is the eternal servant of Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and when he forgets his relation with Śrī Krishna and is enveloped by the illusory energy, he is hurled down in this material world to receive the punishment for his aversion to Śrī Krishna, for his reluctance to serve Krishna. The conditioned souls, due to forgetfulness of their relation to Śrī Krishna, are passing through cycles of births and deaths from time immemorial. It is not so easy for them to change their propensity to enjoy this world.

Even a person who starts drinking wine and becomes habituated to it, cannot give up his bad habit all of a sudden, despite understanding fully well that intoxication is bad for him. In the like manner, we have imbibed through cycles of births and deaths, so many various propensities in this world. It will take time to change our habits. For that if we lose patience, we cannot get the objective. *Sādhana vinu sādhya-vastu keha nāhi pāya* - nobody can get his objective without performing penance for it. A neophyte to devotional practice may be restless at any moment, if he does not get actual association of a bona fide *śuddha bhakta*. It is not so easy to get such association in this material world, at least in western countries where they are more inclined for material enjoyments. We should not be disappointed by this. If we are sincere, we will never be deceived and Krishna will protect us. God is All-Merciful and His personal associates are also All-Merciful.

You should remember four Nṛsiṃha Mantras, each four times, as well as *Panchtattva* and *Mahāmantra*, each four times before going to bed and after rising up from bed.

Nṛsiṃha Bhagavān can remove all ulterior desires and bestow pure devotion to Him. My love to you all. May All-Merciful Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Often I feel some anger, irritation and frustration. That disturbs my relationships with both the devotees and the regular people. In addition, due to the same problem, I can't concentrate on anything; whenever I try to do something I can't do it well enough.

God is impartial

Without firm belief, no *bhajan* can be started. By serving Supreme Lord Who is One, all are served. Śrī Krishna Dvaipāyan Veda Vyāsa Muni has given two analogies for this in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: (1) by pouring water at the root of the tree, all parts of the tree are nourished and (2) by giving food to the stomach, all the limbs of the body are nourished. The Supreme Lord is residing in the heart of every living being. So He understands whether a votary has got actual faith in Him or not. When there will be sincerity of belief, you will get the fruit.

In worshipping the Supreme Lord, it is essential to know that nobody on earth is to be blamed for our own difficulties. We reap the fruits of our own actions. Others are not the cause, although they may be instrumental. Dhruva, son of Uttānapād Maharāj, believed in the instruction of his mother Sunīti Devi and after that the instruction of his *guru* Nārada Goswāmī and effaced from his heart all hostile mentalities to anybody on earth and called *God* from the core of his heart. *God* was satisfied and as a result his father, his stepmother and all others who were not congenial to him, all started crying immensely in his separation. This is the difference between an ordinary aspirant for worship of *God* and a sincere devotee, who can immediately accept all the teachings of *guru* and perform worship of *God* from the core of the heart. Ordinary aspirants hear many things but cannot accept those teachings from the heart. As *God* is Absolute Complete Reality, He is equal to all. He is naturally impartial. It is not the fact that He will grace to Dhruva, Prahlād, Ambarīṣa Maharāj and not others. Sun is giving light everywhere without discrimination of good or bad place. Some may accept the light for their benefit and some may not. What can the Sun do? Unconditional submission to the Lord is necessary to get His grace.

You will find in Prahlād's teaching that the nine forms of *bhakti* can be rightly practised only with the fulfillment of the conditions (i) the worshipper should have the knowledge that he is of *God* or Supreme Lord i.e. with total submission to Him and (ii) it should be done only for His propitiation.

When we desire good behaviour from somebody and do not get it, we become unbalanced. Desireless devotees are happy under all circumstances.

I am leaving for New Delhi on 11th October, 2004 by morning flight. After short halts at New Delhi, Chandigarh and Ludhiana, I shall reach Bhatinda (Punjab) to observe the month-long *Kārtik vratā* there.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga bless you. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Incapability of mundane senses

Praying blessings of Śrī Guru, Śrī Gaurāṅga and Śrī Rādhā-Krishna unto sincere souls desirous of serving Śrī Krishna and His devotees.

I am surprised and glad to come in contact with you and your wife who have come to India to meet me. Everything depends on the Grace of All-Merciful Supreme Lord.

I have heard from our most revered Gurudev that only by the actual Grace of the Pure Devotees of Supreme Lord, this human birth will be successful. In this context I am giving an instance from Śrīmad Bhagavatam and Śrī Chaitanya Charitāmṛta to get the highest bliss and to get the highest object fully.

*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ
(Śrī Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, Madhya, 17.136)*

The most important highest pure devotee Śrī Rūpā Goswāmī gave this highest instruction. In the big book 'Śrī Chaitanya: His Life and Associates', page 153 – 'She who was known in Vṛndāvana as Rūpā Manjari has now appeared as Rūpā Goswāmī. Lalita is chief amongst the Sakhis who make up Rādhārāṇī's entourage, and Rūpā Manjari is the foremost amongst those Sakhis who follow Lalita. It is for this reason that Rūpā Goswāmī was chief amongst the six Goswāmīs in Gaura Līlā.'

Śrī Rūpā Goswāmī very strongly warned all that Śrī Krishna's Name, Beauty, Qualities and Pastimes cannot be known by the worldly use of non-eternal senses. Ordinarily, all those persons are deprived from actual knowledge of real realisation. Real actual devotees have got the capacity for strong realisation of the actual eternal existence of Name, Beauty, Qualities and Pastimes. Without the grace of Śrīla Rūpā Goswāmī actual realisation is impossible. It is hard for the worldly human beings to realize Supreme Lord without the grace of suddha bhakta.

The most perplexing

I want to give an instance to you from a Great Personality, Śrī Yudhistir Maharāj. He has given this example –

*ahany ahani bhūtāni gacchantīha yama mandiram
śeṣāḥ sthāvaram icchanti kim āścaryam ataḥ param*

Everyday the dead bodies of human beings are entering the funeral (which is stated in India as Yama-mandir). But more perplexing is this – those who are living always think they will remain in this world permanently, what can be more surprising than this.

Also about the history of 'Dhruva' (Page No. 20, Book – Sages of Ancient India) if you go through, all your doubts will be removed. I hope you have got this book.

I am leaving tomorrow to get the Grace of Śrī Jagannāth Deb at Chakdah. Whatever I have written you can go through.

My love to you all. May Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna grace you.

Affectionately Yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Īśvara parama-Krishna

Most Revered _____,

I am grateful to you for your motherly affection. By the grace of Śrī Rādhā-Krishna, you have shown your actual love to me.

I bow down to you for your wonderful respect to Brahma-saṁhitā. First sloka of Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā is wonderful.

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ krishnaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*

Saccidānanda (eternal and omniscient and ever blissful) Vighraha (Embodiment) Śrī Krishna is Parameshwar (Supreme Personality). He is Svayṁrūpa (Self-manifest), Ānadi (Beginningless) and He is principal cause of all Vishnu and Vaishnavas and He is cause of all causes. (Śrī Gauḍīya-kanṭhahāra book in Bengali Pg. 93).

You expressed your humbleness whether it will be possible to get the Holy Objective.

We all here are grateful to your humbleness.

I always pray for your blessings. Although my present age is about 90 years, I pray to you to bestow your motherly affection.

I do not know how I can submit my prayer to you as I am deprived of getting proper address of you and also your son so that I write to you.

I want your grace from the core of my heart.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



PART VI

Practicing Devotion in Family Life

Mundane relations are not actual relations; worldly relations are always changeable. Our actual relationship is with the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. Household devotees, both man and woman, should always think that the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna is the actual owner of the house, husband, wife and children. All family members are the servitors of Śrī Krishna.



PART VI

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For householders

A household devotee should lead his household life for the service of Śrī Krishna and His devotees, relinquishing all anti-devotional acts and habits. Śrī Krishna is the Master of the house and the inmates of the house are His servitors. It is the instruction of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu to *gṛhastha vaiṣṇavas*:

- 1) To do *Harināma*,
- 2) To serve *vaiṣṇavas* and
- 3) To worship Deities

If there is any difficulty in performing *archan* of Deities, they must serve *vaiṣṇavas* and do *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. With the association of *śuddha bhaktas* they will get inspiration. It will be a reminder to them that their life is for the service of Śrī Krishna and for nothing else. It is very difficult for a householder to remain totally aloof from the transitory surroundings and the influence of the temporary physical relations.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - (1) Śrīla Sachidānanda Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura has written that one should follow the *varṇāśrama dharma* until one has transcended the material plane. But in western countries such a system does not exist. How should I conduct my activities in such case so that there will be no hindrance in my bhajan?

(2) My mother is organising weekly meetings for devotees. Please give us some advice on how to perform those meetings.

(3) Who do you think should translate the Holy biography of Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhav Goswāmī Mahārāj for centennial celebrations?

A prison house

Received your letter and noted the contents.

Our previous *guru*, Śrīla Sachidānanda Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura, has described this material world as a prison house where the souls who are averse to the Supreme Lord are hurled down as prisoners. Prisoners cannot expect to find actual abiding peace in this prison house of the world. If someone still considers worldly sensuous

enjoyments to be good, that reflects the severity of the disease in that person. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura has stated in his hymn about this material world: 'I do not like this world, which is replete with birth, death and infirmity. Worldly wealth and relationships with wife, children etc are all non-eternal and do not belong to anyone. The relationships with parents, wife, children, brothers, sisters and others that appear real now will vanish after death.

After passing through 8,000,000 species, we have attained the precious human birth, which is the competent boat to cross over this ocean of births and deaths and the threefold afflictions. God has granted the power of discrimination to human beings to be able to distinguish between good and bad, eternal and non-eternal. Despite this, one who spoils his valuable time just in eating, sleeping, defending and mating like the birds and beasts and does not worship the Supreme Lord, Who is All-Existence, All- Knowledge and All-Bliss is most unfortunate.

As we go to a doctor for the treatment of various diseases, a fortunate person will approach a spiritual doctor - a bona fide *guru* - for the amelioration of the tremendous suffering of the disease of repeated births and deaths.

Our Most Revered Gurudev, before His disappearance, advised His disciples that the desires of wealth, sex-enjoyment and name and fame are the greatest obstacles for worship of the Supreme Lord. Votaries should give up all anti-devotional desires. Of course, it is very difficult for a neophyte-aspirant to give up these unholy desires. The conditioned souls are attracted by such things. These desires remain in the neophyte aspirants but those who seek their eternal welfare should not give indulgence to these desires.

The two paths

There are two paths—the path of sensuous enjoyment and the path of eternal welfare. 999 people out of 1000 or more are running after sensuous enjoyments. In the beginning, the path of sensuous enjoyment appears to be nectar but the consequence is poisonous. On the path of sense enjoyment, the risk of contacting various diseases must also be seriously considered. Those unfortunate persons, who are inclined to enjoy without restriction, take the risk of becoming infected by diseases such as AIDS and so on. On the other side the path of eternal welfare, where the aspirant restricts the passions and enjoyments of the senses, seems at the

beginning to be like poison but the consequence is nectarian. Only those who have taken to the path of eternal welfare can worship the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna.

We should not indulge in anti-devotional activities of sensual enjoyment. We should completely abandon and never adore these propensities. A sincere aspirant should never emulate unfortunate, evil-minded people. Otherwise what will determine the difference between a votary and an ordinary enslaved *jīva*?

'*na jātu kāmāḥ kāmānām upabhogena sāmyati haviṣā kṛṣṇa-vartmeva bhūya evābhivardhate*' - If we pour 'ghee' (purified butter) into fire, the flames will increase. Similarly, if we fulfill our desires of lust, the lust-fire will also increase. It will not be extinguished. Therefore, fulfilling such desires is not the procedure for obtaining deliverance from lusty desires. However, if we pour a huge quantity of *ghee* at a time into the fire, the fire will be extinguished. Analogously, if we have a craving for the Absolute Whole Śrī Krishna then this craving will extinguish the fire of worldly or sense-gratifying desires.

The association of bona fide *sādhus* is essential for neophytes for their devotional and spiritual progress. In the case of want of bona fide devotees, they should take the help of the powerful spiritual sayings of saints by going through the devotional scriptures. One should also worship Tulsi with great devotion and pray for Her grace. The positive performance of devotional methods with devoutness is more effective than the negative endeavor to restrict anti-devotional aptitudes.

As I am very busy during the present preaching tour, it will not be possible for me to write an elaborate letter. Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna willing, if we shall be at your place during the upcoming preaching tour, I shall take time to discuss things in detail with you.

To explain briefly, the *varṇāśrama* social system, whether *daiva* or *adaiva*, is unknown in the western countries. As per my practical experience, this social system of family life does not exist in the western countries. In India, there are two ways of worshipping the Supreme Lord— *pravṛtti-mārg* and *nivṛtti-mārg* - '*pravṛttir eṣā bhūtānām nivṛttis tu mahā-phalā*'. *Pravṛtti-mārg* is generally befitting to all conditioned souls. In *nivṛtti-mārg*, there is the surety of attaining the highest objective, but persons who are eligible for this are rarely to be found. In India we see that not all are eligible for the ascetic order and it naturally follows that in the western countries eligible persons will be even scarcer. Nonetheless, by the special

grace of the Supreme Lord, there may be some deserving persons to accept the ascetic order in the western countries. There is also difficulty in the following of *pravṛtti-mārg* in the western countries, because if marriage exists only for sense gratification, without taking into account the different aspects of family life, then at any moment the marriage relationship may be severed. You are to make a decision in regard to this after careful consideration of all the pros and cons.

Weekly meetings for devotees

I am glad to know that your revered mother is organising weekly meetings for devotees. In the weekly sittings you can start with the teachings of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu - His writing, Śikṣāṣṭakam, with the commentaries of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur and Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākur. After that, you may go through Upadeśāmṛta, written by Śrīla Rūpā Goswāmī with the explanations of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur and Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākur. Gradually, you may go through Jaiva Dharma, Śrī Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, Śrī Chaitanya Bhāgavata and Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Also you may read the Gītā with the commentaries of Śrīla Viśvanāth Chakravarti and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇ and the explanations of Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākur.

A 3-year extensive program has been fixed from 2003-2005 to commemorate the occasion of the Centenary Function of our Most Revered Gurudev Om Vishnupād Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhav Goswāmī Mahārāj. A translation of the biography of our Most Revered Gurudev will be necessary before your arrangement of the celebration of the function. The translator should have accurate knowledge of both languages.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga bless you all. My love to you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I am in a grhastha āśram. Due to my association with non-devotees and materialistic persons at work, my spiritual practice is getting affected. I desire to accept vānaprastha āśram. I do not have any children and my wife will be taken

care either by her parents or mine. Is it possible?

Marriage life is religious

Pravṛttir eṣa bhūtānām nivṛttis tu mahā-phala - Ordinarily, human beings are eligible for *pravṛtti mārg*, i.e., a household married life. The root cause for the conditioned souls to pass through 84 lakhs of species is their aversion to the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. After passing through 80 lakhs of species one can get the precious human birth. This human birth is congenial for the worship of the Supreme Lord because of the discriminating power given by the Lord to human beings. A human being has the power of discrimination between good and bad, eternal and non-eternal etc. After passing through many cycles of births and deaths, the impressions of the force of sense- gratification also persist. Even in the western countries they know human beings possess both animality and rationality. It is very difficult for conditioned souls to restrain the animal instinct of sense gratification. So, most of the human beings are entitled to worship the Supreme Lord in *pravṛtti mārg*. A conditioned soul remaining in *pravṛtti mārg* is not able to devote his full energy for the service of the Supreme Lord because he must give his attention for the maintenance of the family.

Vedic injunction is the injunction of the Supreme Lord. Those who are unable to restrain sex desire are not entitled for *vānaprastha* or *sannyās āśram*. From *brahmacharya āśram*, if anybody wants to accept household life, he can do so by taking permission of his *guru*.

In Vedic order the wife is called '*bhāryyā*' and at the time of marriage the husband takes the responsibility of maintaining her. It is stated in the scriptures '*putrārthe kriyate bhāryyā*' i.e. one should marry for begetting children by observing all the regulations enjoined in the Vedas. This is also a religious life. One should not marry for sense- gratification only. After marriage whether one gets a son or not depends on the Lord's will. In my opinion it will not be good for you to change it now. Both of you, following ideal household life, should worship Krishna and His devotees.

In India, one can accept *vānaprastha āśram* only after 50 years of age and not before that. Even *vānaprastha āśram* one can observe with or without wife.

Although *nivṛtti mārg*, i.e., *sannyās āśram* is congenial for engaging and devoting all the time for worship of Śrī Krishna and nothing else, this sort of competent person is rarely to be found in this world. After *sannyās āśram* no one is supposed to go back

to household life as it will be a spiritual fall. So it is not wise to take a sudden decision of accepting *sannyās āśram*.

Surrender is the best medicine

An actually bona fide surrendered soul is protected by the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna whether he is in *gṛhastha āśram* or he has accepted the ascetic order. We are peaceful when we see adjustment under all circumstances. We cannot make the environment adjust to us but we are to adjust ourselves with the environment. A conditioned soul reaps the fruit of his own actions - good or bad. It is my advice that it will be good for you not to take any decision by your own initiative. You should continue to pray for the grace of *guru, vaiṣṇavas*, personal associates of Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu such as the six Goswāmīs and especially Nityānanda Prabhu and Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu. Depend on Them absolutely and I am sure They will do whatever is beneficial for your eternal welfare. They are All-Merciful and All-Powerful. I myself after joining the institution as an ascetic submitted my prayer to my Most Revered Gurudev to give me proper advice. He advised me - *śaraṇāgati* is the best medicine of all problems.

As I am busy here, I have got no time to speak more on this matter. Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna willing, if I come in contact with you, I shall speak to you in detail.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Marriage system

Received your letter and noted the contents.

Whenever we had been to _____, we stayed at your house. The house is respectable and also comfortable for us. You left your own house and stayed in another person's house known to you, thinking about our comforts to stay at your place. This proves you have got sincere desire to serve the *vaiṣṇavas*.

In fact, I had no knowledge that you were not married and you never told me you

wanted to marry. In India, generally this is the rule for girls - first to remain under the shelter of parents and after that, by marriage, to remain under the shelter of husband and in old age, under the shelter of a competent son. Married life of a girl should be at a young age. The society in India is quite different from society in western countries. Here marriage is done in the presence of priest, parents, guardians and other well-wisher friends and the marriage relationship will last till the end of life. But it is my experience that married life relations may not be lasting in foreign countries. You are to marry according to your society and government rules. So if you get a *vaiṣṇava* husband who will accept you as wife permanently, there cannot be any objection to it.

Always remember Krishna

In the Gītā, Śrī Krishna has advised - to those who worship the Supreme Lord with one- pointed devotion, God will bestow on them that sort of wisdom to understand what is good and what is bad and they can achieve the ultimate Blissful Transcendental Realm. Śrī Krishna also said, 'A sincere soul will never be deceived'. The criterion to understand what we are to do and what we are not to do, is given by Veda Vyās Muni himself in Padma Purāṇa - we are to always remember Krishna, never to forget Him. There are some prescribed devotional practices to remember Krishna and there are also some prohibitions against those that make us forget Krishna. If there be any action beyond the prescribed commandments which will remind you of Krishna, it is allowed, and prohibitions which will make you forget Krishna are prohibited. Without *śaraṇāgati*, there cannot be any *bhakti*. You are aware that there are six fold teachings of *śaraṇāgati*. I don't want to elaborate on this.

Lord appears for His devotees

Mūrti-pūjā is permitted in *sanātan dharma*. There is a gulf of difference between *mūrti-pūjā* and idol worship. We are not idol worshippers. The Supreme Lord is the Supreme Person, Lord of all Lords. He is the Transcendental Spiritual Supreme Person. Personality is attributed to the conscious principle and not to unconscious matter. Nobody on earth considers a dead body to be a person. As long as consciousness, which has got thinking, feeling and willing, exists in the body, he is considered a person. If an atomic part of the conscious energy of the Supreme Lord is considered a person, what is the difficulty in understanding that He, Who has got Absolute Existence, Absolute Knowledge and Absolute Bliss (Complete

Saccidānanda), is the Supreme Person. There is no reason for not accepting Him as the Supreme Person.

The root cause of the appearance of the Supreme Lord in this world is to remove extreme separation grief of the *śuddha bhakta*. There are numerous *avataras*, but Śrī Krishna is Original *Bhagavān*, as you have written, 'self-manifesting *svayam Bhagavān*'. Śrī Krishna appears in His Transcendental Spiritual Form by the pure devotion in a pure devotee. We have heard from our *guruvarṅ* that *karma-kāṇḍa prāṇ pratiṣṭhā* is not absolutely necessary. It will be better for you to worship the portraits of manifested Deities Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Krishna, installed by a pure devotee. In that case, if you are unable to worship the Deity due to some physical or other kind of difficulty, there will be no serious offence because you can remember that the Deities are being worshipped in the temple where they are installed. In the case when deities are installed as per prescript of *vaiṣṇava śāstra*, worship of those deities must be done without fail, as per regulation of *vaiṣṇava śruti*, daily.

I have heard, Supreme Lord God willing, we may go to some places in Russia in the month of September. I shall have the opportunity to speak to you personally in detail.

We are leaving today for extensive preaching-tour in North-India with a big party. May All-Merciful Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Is it right for a householder devotee to abandon his mundane duties and just walk away to the forest even though his family members need his help (e.g., to enter into vānaprastha or sannyāsa)?

Ātmā can go either side

The Indian scriptures mention two paths - *pravṛttir eṣā bhūtānām nivṛttis tu mahā-phalā* - the path of worldly-mindedness and the path of renunciation. Conditioned

souls are generally eligible for the path of worldly-mindedness. Persons eligible for the path of renunciation are very rare. When conditioned souls become averse to the worship of the Supreme Lord, they are enveloped by the external material potency consisting of three primal qualities— *sattvaḥ*, *rajaḥ* and *tamaḥ*. Living beings are created by *rajo-guṇa*, they are sustained for some time by *sattva-guṇa* and they are destroyed by *tamo-guṇa*. Conditioned souls have become victims of birth, death and the threefold afflictions. The real self (*ātmā*) originates from the marginal potency or, according to the Gītā, from the *parā-śakti* (internal spiritual potency). The *ātmā* is *aṇu-saccidānanda*, an entity of minute existence, knowledge and bliss. As the *ātmā* is the outcome of the marginal potency (a demarcating line between the internal potency and external potency), it can go to either side. When *ātmās* become averse to God by misusing their relative independence, they are enveloped by the external or illusory energy. After eight million births in different species, they become human beings. In this body, God gives them the power to discriminate between eternal and non-eternal. They can accept the Eternal Reality, the Supreme Lord, and worship Him.

Incompetence should not lead to relinquishing

Previously, in ancient times, *varṇāśrama-dharma* was prescribed according to quality and action. Four *varṇas* (*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra*) and four *āśramas* (*brahmacārī*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*) were introduced. This subject is very elaborate and scientific. It is not possible to have an elaborate discussion of it through letters. Many scriptural evidences are to be referred to. There is a gradual procedure to attain the highest spiritual stage.

Due to foreign invasions, the Indian scientific process of social enhancement was disturbed. The social systems are different in foreign countries so it is irrelevant to go into it in detail. *Varṇāśrama-dharma* is in vogue only in India. In *Kaliyuga*, *varṇāśrama-dharma* has deteriorated due to foreign influence.

Incompetent persons, finding difficulty after marriage to lead household life and to maintain family members, give up family life and thereby commit sin. Acceptance of *sannyāsa* is prohibited for them. There may be some exceptional cases. By providence, some fortunate persons may come in contact with bona fide *sādhus* and get a chance of developing the temperament for worshipping God and leading restricted lives.

In the third canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Kapila Bhagavān, in His instruction to mother Devahūti, talks about the original and concomitant qualities of a bona fide pure devotee (*sādhū*). He mentions that one of the original qualifications of a *sādhū* should be *mat-kṛte tyakta-karmāṇas tyakta-svajana-bāndhavāḥ*. Abandoning of *varṇāśrama-dharma* and relinquishing of bodily relations and friends are allowed if it is for the propitiation of the Supreme Lord. If there is any other ulterior motive, such as to fulfill material desires, the abandoning of *varṇāśrama* duties and relations will be considered as a sinful act.

To attain actual knowledge of this, one should study the conversation between Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda in Kovur, South India, as narrated by Śrīla Kavirāja Goswāmī in Śrī Caitanya-Caritāmṛta.



Nivritti mārg is not to be imparted

There are two paths - *pravritti mārg* - path through married life (*sva-varṇa-vivāha*) and *nivritti mārg* (path through unmarried life— ascetic life). General people are eligible for *pravritti mārg*. Only persons who have made up their minds that they will never go to household life (worldly life) are competent to take the ascetic order.

Regarding your taking decision in your marriage, you are to seek advice from your parents. They know best your mental and physical status.

You should not wait for your decision whether in future you will accept married life or unmarried life; you should start *bhajan* immediately (chanting of Holy Name, etc., avoiding tenfold offences), because nobody knows when they will have to leave this world. When Śrīmad Raghunātha Dāsa Goswāmī became very eager to surmount this worldly ocean, Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu pacified him at first, saying he should not become mad, but at present he should remain in his house with a restful mind. Nobody can surmount the ocean of births and deaths all of a sudden, it will take time; gradually he can surmount it, and he should not try to outwardly show his indifference to worldly affairs, but inwardly he should practice abnegation and worship Śrī Krishna with sincerity. Śrī Krishna will rescue him from the pangs of worldly suffering in no time.

At this stage it is not advisable for you to accept *nivritti mārg*. *Nivritti mārg* is not something to be thrust upon anybody. It should be automatic and spontaneous. When there develops tremendous thirst for Śrī Krishna, you will not know how it will come, but abnegation from the world will be automatic then. It cannot be done by making prior programmes.

There is no such mandatory order of Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu that while performing *Harināma* in household life, one must marry. *Pravriti mārg* is congenial for those who are unable to control their sensuous appetite but at the same time want to perform *Hari bhajan*. Those who are unable to control the senses should marry as per instruction of the scriptures, i.e., it should be *śva-varṇa-vivāha*, but they should strictly follow devotional rules - *bhakti sadācār*. There is no doubt that *nivritti mārg* is most effective and is definitely better than *pravriti mārg*, if one can afford to take this path.

One can perform uninterrupted *bhajan* in *nivritti mārg*. We should not do anything according to our emotions. We should accept *nivritti mārg* after deep thinking. Tremendous thirst for Śrī Krishna automatically inspires one to renounce this world. It should come from within. It is nothing to be forcibly imparted. At present you go on performing *bhajan* with one-pointed steadfast devotion. Śrī Krishna will guide you from within and show you the right path.

Those who want to devote themselves fully for Krishna *bhajan* accept *nivritti mārg*, so that there may not be any interruption in *bhajan*. Those who are unable to give up their desire for sensuous enjoyments but also want to do *bhajan*, accept *pravriti mārg*. If anybody wants to accept *pravriti mārg* he should do it at the right time and right age and in that case he should have to bear the trouble of earning money.

If a *jīva*, by his previous eternal good deeds, wants to take absolute shelter at the Lotus Feet of Śrī Krishna and serve Him, greatest harm will be inflicted to him if he is obstructed to do this. We should not put hindrance to any *jīva* for their desire to serve Śrī Krishna. I think you will appreciate my position.

Every *jīva* reaps the fruits of their own actions. We get births, circumstances, environment and paraphernalia as per our own *karma*. Nobody is responsible for this. We have the right to do *karma*, but the fruits are controlled by Śrī Krishna. We should not be impatient. Gradually we can surmount the ocean of births and deaths.

We should go on chanting the holy names of Śrī Krishna, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu and submit our prayers to them constantly. They will decide whether household life or ascetic life is congenial for us. Nothing is impossible for Śrī Krishna, Who is Omnipotent.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - A devotee planning separation from his wife.

Adjustments in family life

We should always remember that we belong to Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's school of thought. Chaitanya Mahāprabhu teaches us to love all human beings, nay even other living beings, seeing their eternal relation with our most beloved object of worship— the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. If we, as followers of the teachings of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, cannot love our own persons, how can we love others?

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu teaches us to chant the Holy Name with the four qualities of being humbler than a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree, giving respect to all and having no desire to get respect from others.

The devotees here have got great respect for your family and polite behaviour. This dignity should be retained at all costs. Worldly interests should not be allowed to harm eternal spiritual interests. You yourself, in introducing me used to say that this precious human birth was only meant for the service of Śrī Krishna and not for eating, sleeping, defending and mating. Sometimes in family love-relationships there may be a temporary expression of offended state of mind but it is usually not lasting.

Our Most Revered Gurudev used to advise us to remember the instructions of Prahlād Mahārāj, “*yad vadanti yad icchanti cānumodeta nirmamaḥ*” i.e. if anybody in the family says something or does something against one's liking, sometimes it is necessary to approve that but without attachment. In that case, we will not be responsible for the approval. For a peaceful family life, this sort of behaviour is necessary. One should think deeply about how Prahlād Mahārāj could stay in the most hostile atmosphere with a calm and serene mentality. He never became unbalanced and lost his calmness of mind. We should try to adjust ourselves with the environment; we cannot make the environment adjusted to us. Lord Chaitanya

Mahāprabhu and our *guruvarg* repeatedly advise us to go through the holy biographies of Prahlaḍ Mahārāj and Ambarīṣa Mahārāj. I think what I have heard is only a temporary expression of emotion. I am anxiously waiting to hear from you in regard to this at the earliest.

Kindly please remember daily the four Narasimha Mantras. May All-Merciful Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga bless you.
My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I don't know how to actually and properly turn myself towards Śrī Krishna. I'm chanting his Holy name and also performing other devotional practices but still I'm unhappy. I also don't have any strength and courage to surrender fully to Śrī Krishna's lotus feet. I am now a householder and I'm very lazy and always reluctant to do any kind of practical work. Although I am formally employed in the company, I don't feel myself connected with that kind of work. What should I do now?

Glow of the Holy Name

Received your letter through email.

I was away from Calcutta during early January to participate in the Annual Functions of Mumbai and Centennial Function of Most Revered Gurudev at Kochi, Kerala (India). We have got four Maṭhs in Assam. I could not go last year to participate in the Annual Functions of those Maṭhs. This year also, I was advised not to undertake hectic-tour. I had been to Tezpur, North-East Assam area, by to and fro air-flight only to satisfy the devotees of Assam. Annual Function and *sankīrtan* procession function of Tezpur Gauḍīya Maṭh were grandly successful. Many persons came to Tezpur from different parts of Assam and took *Harinām* and *mantra dīkṣā*. I returned here with two other devotees on 17th February, 2005. You heard about this in the Videoconference last Sunday.

You have expressed your heart feelings in your letter that you are always unhappy

and in distress. The Supreme Lord is All-Bliss. Even a glow of the Holy Name of Śrī Krishna can destroy the sins of millions of births and even beyond that, can bestow emancipation. The sayings of the scriptures are not untrue. There must be some cause for which the votary is unable to get the objective. The aspirants should think about this very seriously. Every human being is reaping the fruits of his own actions, good or bad. Others are not the cause of the good and bad fruits, they are only instrumental. As we find in this world, the sun is giving light or heat to all without discrimination, so similarly the Supreme Lord is equal to all. He has got no enemy, no friend. But those who worship Him sincerely from the core of the heart, engaging all the sense-organs, mind and intellect for His service, they are for Him, and the Supreme Lord is also for them (Gītā, 9.29).

Sincere attempt is a must

A conditioned soul, forgetting his relationship with the Supreme Lord, passed through numerous births and has now got the precious human birth. God has given human beings the discriminating power between good and bad, eternal and non-eternal. Conditioned souls have imbibed all the impressions of previous births and naturally they are under the influence of those impressions in this world. If anybody makes a bad habit, it becomes very difficult for him to change the habit. We are to practice in two ways as stated in the Gītā, 6.34,35 -

*cañcalaṁ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad dṛḍham
tasyāhaṁ nigrahaṁ manye vāyor iva su-duṣkaram*

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca
asaṁśayaṁ mahā-bāho mano durnigrahaṁ calam
abhyāsa tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate*

The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna acknowledges that it is very difficult to control the mind and sense-organs, but it is not impossible. It can be done by *abhyāsa* (repeated practice) and *vairāgya*. Significance of the word *vairāgya* has got two interpretations - (1) practice of detachment from non-eternal things of this world and (2) the positive meaning, attachment to the Supreme Lord. As much attachment we shall have for Śrī Krishna Who is All-Existence, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss, so much detachment we shall have from non-eternal things of this world. Association of higher status *sādhus* is necessary to achieve success in these two ways of practice.

Sādhus can help us in our practice, but we should also make sincere effort to get the objective. If we try sincerely, God, His personal associates and the *sādhus* will come at our back. Always we should remember Yaśodā Devi's pastimes to fasten Krishna, Gopāl, but every time there were two fingers less of rope. One finger— His Grace, other finger— sincere desire to serve.

Engage in service

As you are a family man, you should not remain in the house as an ascetic, completely indifferent to worldly affairs. You are a household devotee, you cannot beg. So it will be necessary for you to earn something. You should not engage yourself to earn huge money, but you should earn something to meet the minimum necessity. If you do it along with your mother, I think it will be better, because out of affection, mother will take care of you. You should not give much importance to martial art training, which you used to do earlier. All these will divert your mind. But for physical health, you may do some exercise as per expert's advice. Nothing of this world will go with us. Only devotion to God will go with us.

Practice of *nāma-sankīrtan* is the best way in *Kaliyuga*. There is no other way better than this. You call Krishna from the core of the heart. Don't be idle in regard to this. Krishna, appearing in your heart, will remove all difficulties and gradually bestow you eternal bliss. With firm belief, go on doing this. Nobody can remain in this world completely idle. If you do not engage your sense organs, mind or intellect for the service of Krishna, they will be automatically engaged in other inferior things. The sense-organs will not sit idle. Actually Śrī Krishna is the owner of our body, subtle body and soul. So all should be engaged in His service.

My submission to your respected mother is to look after you for spiritual amelioration and for your day-to-day physical requirements as well as she would also look after me.

My love to you all. May All-Merciful Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Lord's associates are transcendental

Received your letter. I can remember that as per your desire, we had been to your house, where we had our afternoon program as well as *prasād*. We were happy to see you and your husband's sincere desire to serve *vaiṣṇavas* and your affectionate behaviour with us.

You are blessed as you have got the grace of one of the prominent personal associates of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Goswāmī Ṭhākura and our Most Revered Śikṣā Guru, His Divine Grace Śrīmad Bhakti Promode Puri Goswāmī Mahārāj. The significance of the teachings of authentic scriptures and of the teachings of a transcendental personality, *mahābhāgavat*, descends to a completely surrendered soul. You will find evidence in regard to this in Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23 '*yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau...*'. The Supreme Lord is Transcendental and His personal associates are also transcendental. So, naturally the significance of their teachings is beyond the comprehension of the sense-organs, mind and intellect of conditioned souls.

The purport of your letter as far as it is represented to me in English and as far as I have understood, manifests your sincere desire to worship Śrī Krishna and His devotees. Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna says in the Gītā, 6.40, '*na hi kalyāṇa-kṛt kaścid durgatiṁ tāta gacchati*'. A sincere soul will never be deceived.

Servitorship is natural

A *śuddha bhakta*, pure devotee, can never have the aptitude to enjoy or renounce. The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna is the only Enjoyer and Master of all sacrifices. He is the only *Puruṣa* - Supreme Person. As we are not masters and enjoyers, we cannot enjoy or renounce. We are the parts of the potency of Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, so naturally we are to be dominated by Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna.

Finite atomic animated beings of the world (*jīvas*), by the misuse of their relative independence, become averse to Śrī Krishna, are enveloped by the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord consisting of three primal qualities - *Sattva*, *Rajaḥ* and *Tamaḥ* - and are hurled down in this world. As they misconceive themselves as enjoyers of this world, they pass through cycles of births and deaths and suffer severe threefold

afflictions. An actual master can enjoy or give up. As *jīvas* are not masters, they cannot enjoy or give up. The spirit of enjoying and the spirit of giving up are unnatural. They are eternal servants; their only duty is to serve. An example may be given here of Indian family-life, which most western people may not understand. In India, when a chaste woman is married to a chaste man she, according to Indian social custom, belongs to her husband and even changes her family-descent from parents to husband. Husband is considered to be the owner of house, wealth and even his wife. If that wife prepares many good dishes for her husband from the articles belonging to the husband and after preparing good palatable dishes, says to the husband, “I am contributing these to you” then this sort of ego of contribution is wrong and will be ridiculous. Our gross body and subtle body, being the outcome of the material potency (*aparā* potency) of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, and our real self, being the outcome of the spiritual energy (*parā* Potency) of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, both belong to Śrī Krishna. As my potency works for me, Supreme Lord's potency will also work for Him. By serving Krishna with all His articles in a proper way, we can get the highest objective— Love for Śrī Krishna. So service of Krishna is natural and everything else is unnatural.

The actual owner

Household devotees cannot remain completely indifferent to household affairs. Only a bona fide ascetic devotee can remain indifferent to worldly affairs. It is stated in the scriptures that, in general, the conditioned souls are suitable for household-life. Ascetic order of spiritual life is rare. However, in general, especially in India, women are not entitled to become ascetics because of their physical constitution. So while doing worship, female devotees should also give some energy to their relative duty of rearing a child. Household devotees, both men and women, should always think that the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna is the actual owner of the house, husband, wife and children. All family members are only the servitors of Śrī Krishna.

Even Ambarīṣa Mahārāj, who was such a great devotee that even the formidable saint Durvasa Ṛṣi's curse could not touch him, could only remove all worldly desires gradually. We cannot get the objective all of a sudden. It depends upon our intensity and sincerity of *sādhana*.

I am awfully busy here in attending religious functions in different places in North-India. I shall return to Calcutta from Bombay on 26th January, 2002 to attend the

Annual Function of Calcutta Maṭh.

May Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna bestow you eternal peace— '*Ya molus boguo vichnom wasem vlage*'

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Krishna is the only maintainer

Our Most Revered Gurudev often used to say that birth, death and marriage are not in the hands of the human beings. They are controlled by the Supreme Lord. Parents have the duty to perform arrangement of marriage, but the fruits are controlled by the Supreme Lord. Nowadays it is difficult to find a suitable match for a devotee girl, but you should not stop trying. Actually we have our eternal real relationships with Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. All the relations in this world are temporary and perishable. As you are all worshippers of Krishna, your daughter has got no difficulty to worship Krishna in whatever relation she likes. Devotees should have this sort of firm belief that Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna is the only maintainer and sustainer. I am a conditioned soul with hundreds of drawbacks, what can I do to mitigate your worries? I can submit my prayer to *guru, vaiṣṇava* and *Bhagavān* to bless you all.

My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



The dog's tail

Received your letters by hand and by e-mail.

Lust is the heart disease of all conditioned souls of the world. Our Most Revered Gurudev used to give an illustration of the dog. If the tail of the dog is made straight by pulling, the tail of the dog will return to its curled state, when the pulling is

stopped. In a similar manner, at the time of associating with *sādhus*, we think we have become alright but the moment we give up the company of the *sādhus*, we forget everything and we come to the same state as we were before. It is a long journey; we cannot get the desired fruit all of a sudden. As Rūpā Goswāmī has said in the Upadeśāmṛta – “Without earnestness, firm belief that Krishna will surely grace us, patience, practicing devotional service, disassociating from non-*sādhus* and accepting scriptural prescripts, we cannot get success in our devotional spiritual life.” In your worldly life also, if you lose patience, you cannot succeed. So for spiritual amelioration, immense patience is necessary.

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu advised the household devotees first, “You do *Harinām*, you serve *vaiṣṇavas* and worship Deities”. But when household devotees again asked what they will do after going back to their home. Chaitanya Mahāprabhu advised them, “You do *Harinām* and serve *vaiṣṇavas*”, without mentioning about worship of Deities. It is true that householders, for their entanglement with worldly things, should worship Deities for engaging their sense-organs in service of the Deities. Worship of installed Deities should be performed without offence. A householder should think seriously before installing Deities, whether they will be able to worship Deities without offence and can continue the *seva-pūjā*. You can worship portraits of *Guru-Vaiṣnavas- Bhagavān*, where there is less possibility of committing offence.

More when we meet. Hope this will find you in good health and spirits. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



One-pointed devotion

Household devotees, who have got attachment for family members, very often become victims to inducements detrimental to their spiritual life. If the family members, who have not accepted the pure devotional cult, insist on restoring the *pūjā* of *kuladevi* (family deity) let them do it; it will not be wise to oppose them. But we should be firm in *ananya bhakti* (one-pointed exclusive devotion).

It is learnt from _____ that you may go to Agartala with us. Now you are not a

free man; there are household obligations and duties. You should not be disheartened if there is any hindrance.

I am too much engaged here in writing articles for Śrī Chaitanya Vani monthly magazine and seeing proofs, as I shall be away from Calcutta for a long period.

We are so so. My love to you all. May All-Merciful Śrī Guru, Śrī Gaurāṅga and Śrī Rādhā-Krishna bless you all.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I sorely miss your divine association. I feel I have lost even everything spiritual since my separation with my wife. Some time ago I told you that my japamāla had been stolen. Would it be possible for you to give a japamāla that you had chanted on? I feel like everything I do and think is mere hypocrisy and need to feel something more real some, more genuine, not show bottle devotion.

Separation inevitable from mundane relations

Our physical relations in this world are extremely transitory. Any moment these relations may be finished. This body has birth, so death is inevitable. Separation is inevitable, nobody can avoid it. Real self is eternal, so one's relation with the Eternal Supreme Lord is real and eternal. Whatever we see in this world, and all temporary relations, are due to our being enveloped by the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord. As long as we are in the grip of the external potency consisting of three primal qualities - *Sattva*, *Rajaḥ* and *Tamaḥ* - remembrance of our eternal relation with the Supreme Lord is enveloped. We have got false egos, false relations, and false interests and are burning in the fire of clashing of false interests. No conditioned soul can stop it. Only a bona fide surrendered soul can be rescued from the clutches of *Māyā*. Krishna has said in the *Gītā* (7.14) clearly, “*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā, mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te*”— A surrendered soul will be rescued from the clutches of *Māyā*. By the fruit we can understand whether we have actually surrendered or not. A *śuddha bhakta* has got love for Krishna (causeless exclusive devotion to Śrī Krishna) and love for all living beings in this world. He always sees Krishna and all living beings related to Krishna. He does not see that there exists anybody in this world as his enemy. By the Lord's grace we have got this precious human birth only for worship of Śrī Krishna and not for worldly

non-eternal interests. Any moment we may lose this chance. So, we should utilise our valuable time only for the service of Śrī Krishna and for nothing else.

As per your desire, I shall send one *Japamāla* to you, thinking it to be the desire of Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and His Grace-incarnate Form Śrīla Gurudev, as well as my *śikshā guru* Śrīmad Bhaktivedanta Swāmi Mahārāj. I am a conditioned soul. I have got many drawbacks, no foresight, no hindsight. How can I pose to be *guru*? I only try to abide by your desire and send you *japamāla*. It is my prayer to you, please put the *māla* on the lotus hands of the portrait of your *gurudev* Parampujyapad Śrīmad Bhaktivedanta Swāmi Mahārāj by paying prostrated obeisances, praying for his blessings and do *japam*.

Supreme Lord, Who is All-Good, willing, I hope to come in contact with you anywhere in _____. Hope this will find you all in good health and spirit.

Affectionately yours
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Since 1991 I have been chanting 16 *mālās* of *Harinām* daily. My wife also got attracted to this philosophy but later in 1999 she had become disappointed and had given up devotional practice. All my attempts to inspire her failed. Now we live separately without officially divorcing. I took care of my 2 children as it was my duty. Now, by the mercy of Śrī Bhagavān, You and *vaiṣṇavas* I am living in an *āśram*. I have one problem regarding the *māla* given by you. One day it came undone and I, not knowing that all the beads must be in a strict sequence, stringed them in a wanton order. What am I to do now?

Parents' behaviour influences the children

According to Indian scriptural injunction, there are two paths of spiritual life - worldly family life and life of renunciation. Generally people are eligible for worldly life. Illicit connection with women is prohibited. If they are to go to household life, they should marry according to scriptural injunction - only to get children. Parents should be very careful in their behaviour after begetting children. Their behaviour will have influence upon the children. The difficulty is this – the Indian way of marriage is not prevalent in western countries. According to Indian scriptural

prescript, if the parents, after marriage, beget children and do not do their duty of bringing up the children, it is a kind of sin. After begetting children, both father and mother have the duty to maintain children and try to do whatever is beneficial to them.

By creating human beings, the Supreme Lord is satisfied because human beings have the discriminating power between good and bad, eternal and non-eternal. Other creatures have got no such conscience or discriminating power. It is not good for the parents to remain indifferent to children. Children have got no capacity to be reared without the help of parents.

Human birth is not meant for eating, sleeping, defending and mating like animals and birds. Household devotees should not move like ascetics. They should worship remaining in the household. We should have firm faith in our Object of worship, Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna - He is the sustainer and maintainer. You should try to do your duty always taking shelter at the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Lord sincerely from the heart. The Supreme Lord is maintaining infinite planets; He has got no difficulty to maintain you and your children.

Crossing the unsafe region

I have heard about starting of one *āśram* at Minsk or near Minsk, Belarus. It will be convenient for the devotees to perform devotional service in such a congenial place. You have written that your wife was at first congenial to devotion but now she has given up everything. Conditioned souls pass through millions of species. Now, although he or she has got human birth, previous impressions of good and bad deeds may come to them and envelope them. Good and bad thoughts are flowing in their hearts. A sincere soul who wants eternal welfare should suppress the flow of bad thoughts and should increase the flow of good thoughts. Spiritual practice means struggle. When good thoughts predominate then one has crossed the unsafe region. It is my hope, if your wife gets association of superior *vaiṣṇavas*, her mind will be changed. You should remember you cannot get spiritual eternal welfare and also cannot get so called material gain by your own capability. Take absolute shelter of Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and His devotees and become peaceful. Prahlaḍ Mahārāj was completely surrounded by the anti-devotional demoniac persons but he never became unbalanced or gave up *bhajan* because of his absolute reliance on the Lotus Feet of his *guru* Nārada Goswāmī and Supreme Lord Śrī Narasimha Deva. Go

through the holy life of Prahlaḍ Mahārāj narrated in the seventh canto of Bhāgavatam.

You should remember four Narasimha *mantras* while going to bed and just after rising up from the bed and also if possible remember Narasimha Deva, *Panchatattva* and *Mahāmantra* before going to do something at daytime. By remembrance of Narasimha Deva, *Panchatattva* and *Mahāmantra*, disturbance of demoniac creatures and all troubles will be removed. But you should do it sincerely with firm faith.

During the time of giving *Mahāmantra*, I have instructed everybody including you, how to do *Mahāmantra* on the beads. You should not cross 'Sumeru' of the *māla*. Take advice in regard to this from any elevated devotee. You should know that to cross *Sumeru* is a kind of offence. You should also know how to count the beads. If any kind of offence is committed out of mistake, atonement is to take shelter of *Harinām* and pray for His mercy. Whatever you do, you should do with sincerity. Krishna has said emphatically, a sincere soul will never be deceived.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Krishna bless you. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I am going to start a process of changing my legal name to my *sannyās* name. For this, the process requires me to go along with my former wife to the government authorities few times. In all those instances I can take my brother or some other man with me, so that I don't have to be alone with my former wife. Can I do so?

Cannot go back

In India, after taking *tridaṇḍa sannyās*, one cannot go back to one's non-eternal relations, wife, children etc. A *sannyāsī* becomes totally dissociated from all non-eternal relations. From *brahmacarya āśram*, one can go back to the household life by taking permission from *gurudev*, but not from *sannyās āśram*. From *brahmacarya āśram*, after entering *gṛhastha āśram*, a befitting person can give up family relations and take the order of *vānaprastha*. He is then *vanachāri* and not *brahmachāri*. After

taking the last *āśram*, *sannyās*, there is no provision of coming back to household life. If any *sannyāsī*, giving up *sannyās*, returns to his previous household life that will be considered as a spiritual fall.

The social and religious system in foreign countries is totally different from India. So, a foreign devotee, after considering all these points and also their obligations in their countries, should take steps accordingly. It is not good to give advice from here.

Precious human birth

Conditioned souls pass through cycles of births and deaths, so naturally they have got their previous non-eternal impressions of non-eternal material relations. After passing through 80 lakhs of species, a conditioned soul luckily gets the precious human birth. God has given discriminating power in human birth to know what is good and what is bad, what is eternal and non-eternal, etc. So human beings are eligible to worship the Supreme Lord, Who is All-Existence, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss.

A novice who starts *bhajan* is always in the tug of war between attraction to worldly things and attraction to spiritual culture. Nobody can get the realised state all of a sudden. It depends upon the intensity of sincerely practicing devotion to the Supreme Lord. As much we can increase our eternal devotional impressions in our heart, to that extent we can detach ourselves from our attraction to non-eternal relations and non-eternal impressions. Even Ambarīṣa Mahārāj, who was a great devotee, could only conquer all worldly desires gradually.



Submit to Lord's will

I am sorry to learn that your grandmother suddenly expired on 25th October. It is natural when one of the kith and kin expires, other members of the family suffer agony for this and I feel very much for his or her separation. But Lord Krishna says in the *Gītā*, "That which has its birth, will have its death. We should not mourn for that which is inevitable." Nobody will remain in this world eternally. Everybody will have to leave this world either today or tomorrow.

Your grandmother has taught you that this body will perish one day, and that we

should immediately prepare ourselves for emancipation from the bondage of Māya to get Absolute Bliss. We wrongly think that parents, children and relatives are ours but nobody in this world is ours. Wrongly thinking that relatives are ours, we become attached to them and get afflictions. They have not come by our will and they will not go by our will. By the Lord's will they have come and by the Lord's will they will go. Actually they belong to the Lord. Forgetfulness of our eternal relationship with the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna is the root cause of our bondage and afflictions. We should submit to Him wholeheartedly and remember Him under all circumstances.

I am severely shocked to learn from _____ that your son met with an accident and died. It is always painful for the parents to bear the separation of a son. Accidental deaths cause severe shocks which are very difficult to be endured. Time is the only healing factor.

Cycle of karma

Śrī Vāsudeva and Śrī Devaki Devi, who had the great fortune to get the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna as their son, had to bear the terrible shock of the deaths of their six sons murdered one by one by Kāṁsa. They are, or they were, most sacred souls. We do not find any sufficient reasons why they had to suffer rude shocks. Actually, they did not feel the shocks as severely as we think, because they understood that mundane relations are very transitory and all *jīvas* reap the fruits of their own actions. As long as they have the fruits of their actions in this world, they remain in this world. When the fruits of actions end, they are to leave this world and go to a separable place. That last day may come by any kind of mishap - maybe accident, fever, heart disease, etc. We shall have to tolerate that for which there is no remedy. It is written in the scriptures that the six sons of Vāsudeva and Devaki Devi had such *karma* in their previous births that they were to be murdered by Kāṁsa in their next birth. This cycle of *karma* is going on for everyone.

Mourn for forgetting relation with the lord

Mundane relations are not actual relations; worldly relations are always changeable. We have our actual relationship with the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. Actually we should mourn for forgetting our relationship with the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, Who is really our dearest.

As per the desire of Śrī Krishna, *jīvas* have births and deaths, so they come and go. We falsely think them to be our own. A time will come when the whole universe will perish and the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna will take away all the *jīvas*. Nobody can resist His Absolute Will. So, it is always wise to submit to the Absolute Will of the Absolute *Pūrṇa*, Who is All Good.

Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna teaches us in the *Gītā* that we should not mourn for that which is inevitable. He who is born will die one day.

Take absolute shelter in Śrī Gurudev and the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and go on chanting the Holy Name of Śrī Krishna. Chanting of the Holy Name will remove the pains of your heart and give you solace. I have got no words to pacify you.

May All- Merciful Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna bestow peace to the departed soul.

Suffering is like a dream

We never dreamt that we would be deprived of the company of _____ so soon and so suddenly. He was well reputed in all our Maṭhs in India and Bangladesh for his devotion to Śrī Gurudev and marvellous preaching work in Punjab. Everybody is mourning his sudden demise and we have been receiving many letters from different persons. There is no other way but to submit to the Will of the Supreme Lord and bear the pangs of separation. His sudden demise is a notice to us to prepare ourselves for getting emancipation from the cycle of births and deaths and attaining love of Śrī Krishna because at any moment we may die and lose this valuable chance.

We are forced to tolerate that for which there is no remedy. The born will die and the dead will be born. Lord Śrī Krishna forbids us to mourn for that which is inevitable. *Prārabdha-karma-nirvāṇo nyapatat pāñca-bhautikaḥ*. When the fruits of *karma* which have started come to an end, this body will perish. This end may come through disease, accident, etc., but all these are instrumental. *Jīvas* come and go by the Will of Śrī Krishna, but out of nescience we think them to be ours and we suffer due to attachment. Nobody comes and goes by our desire.

When *jīvas* become averse to Śrī Krishna, His illusory energy envelops them and they are drowned in the ocean of births and deaths and the threefold afflictions. We

wrongly think ourselves to be the body and that other bodies related to us are ours. Actually we are of Śrī Krishna and He is ours. There is no existence of suffering. This is like a dream. When we forget our relationship with Śrī Krishna, we become a victim of suffering. A realised soul has constant remembrance of Śrī Krishna, so he is beyond this dream.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Three Vedic astrologers and a western astrologer looked at the horoscope of my 13 year old son and predicted differently. But all those predictions scare me. My gurudev is not replying to me. You kindly advise.

Horoscope - reading

Your main subject in the letter is regarding the horoscope of your 13 year old son. You have written observations of three Vedic astrologers and one western astrologer. It is further written that your revered *gurudev* did not reply to your letter, which may be due to his busy schedule and health condition. It will be good for you to approach your *gurudev* directly and take his advice.

As my experience goes in respect of such horoscopes— in many cases astrologers vary in their observations. It is also true, observation or prediction may change by actions in different modes and in higher ages. So you are not to be worried for this. By *bhajan* and doing *harinām*, all obstacles can be removed and all good fruits can be achieved. Performance of *śuddha-bhakti* will bestow upon the performer eternal welfare.

May all-merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga, Rādhā-Krishna bless you and your child.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - My husband is seriously ill. I am very worried. What should I do?

Actual and real relation

The living beings in this world have their actual and real relation with the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. Relationships in this world are apparent. Conditioned souls of this world are passing through numerous births and deaths being enveloped by the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord. The fruits of the actions of conditioned souls, which have started, will have their end. Then nobody can remain in this world. Śrī Krishna says in the Gītā, “The wise do not mourn for the going and coming of the conditioned souls”. The only way of doing eternal benefit to other conditioned souls is to worship Śrī Krishna with pure devotion. If God is satisfied, all will be satisfied.

You are doing your duty to your husband sincerely. What further can you do? I think you are duly remembering Narasimha *mantra*. *Bhagavān* Narasimha Deva can remove all obstacles - obstacles of the world, as well as obstacles of devotion.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I would like to inform you that my wife is in poor health condition and is currently very sick. She will need to go for another scope operation in her esophageal to repair the necessary swelling. I am praying every moment to Śrī Narasimha to protect her and to relieve her suffering. I just thought I should let you know and hope that you can give her all the blessings.

Human birth - more congenial than a demigod's

I am very much worried to know the serious deteriorated condition of the health of your wife. I had heard about her liver disease, but now it has become very acute. You have taken immediate steps for her proper treatment. Now she is a bit better. She is admitted in the hospital and the doctor has said she will need an operation. It is good that you are praying to Narasimha *Bhagavān*. It will be better if you utter 4 hymns of Narasimha *Bhagavān*, each 4 times in the morning and at the time of going to bed and with it also, 4 times *Panchatattva* and *Mahāmantra*.

Our stay in this world is very short. After passing through 8 millions of births of

different species, we have received this precious human birth. This birth is very rare. After passing through immense sufferings due to numerous births, we have this human birth and God has given human beings the discriminating power between eternal and non- eternal, so they can worship the Supreme Lord Rādhā-Krishna. Births of aquatic animals, immobile living beings, worms, birds and beasts and even the birth of demigods are not congenial for worship of the Supreme Lord. One of the great saints of West India has instructed human beings thus - “O beloved brothers and sisters! Utter the Holy Name of Krishna immediately; you will be able to crossover the ocean of births and deaths. There is no guarantee that you can get a human birth again. If you do not worship Krishna, ultimately you will have to seriously repent. When you were born, you did not bring anything from your previous birth and at the time of death you are to leave this world empty-handed. Wealth, property - nothing will go with you. Your connection with the world will be finished one day. Having attained this human birth, start doing *Harinām*.”

I have heard your wife is a disciple of my *śikṣā guru* Parampujyapad Śrīmad Bhakti Kusum Śramaṇ Goswāmī Mahārāj. So she has got spiritual relationship with us. Always remember the pithy saying, 'Back to home and back to Godhead'.

May all merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Krishna bless your wife and bestow you strength to do your duty.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - My son is not interested in his job, I am worried about my son, how he will maintain his family, because his wife also quit her job. But this situation must be solved. I now submit my question to your Lotus Feet. Please tell me what I should do to help my son and myself.

Householders should take responsibility

It is the inherent nature of the mother to have love for her children. Children have the natural liberty to demand many things from their mother. It is very difficult to change the inherent mutual nature of the relation. The child is born from your

womb, so how is it possible for you to behave unaffectionately and strongly. As the child is serving under the mother, this service will not be at par with his behaviour to bosses of outside companies.

As your child is grown up and educated, he should understand that he is not an ascetic; he is a household devotee and also married. He has got his duty towards parents as well as to his wife. He is not a mendicant, he cannot beg. He is to earn money to meet the expenses of the house. In future his mother won't be able to serve the company as she is doing now, due to old age. So it will be wise for the child to try to lessen your burden. There is no need of earning much money because such desire has got no end. At least that which is necessary for livelihood, you both are to earn that requirement. Otherwise the whole family will be in trouble in future. Household devotees must depend on their minimum earnings. If they become indifferent to this, more problems will be created in the family. Household devotees cannot perform worship like ascetics. They are to spend energy for worldly affairs also.

As your son is under you, he has got less difficulty. If he goes to an outside company to do work, he will have to spend much more time for earning money and will find it difficult to adjust with the environment. It is good for him that he is working under you. You are worried to see your son not at par with the qualification of a responsible person and thinking about his future. As he is educated, I am sure he will understand this drawback and take responsibility conferred to him by the company and give relief to you.

May All Merciful Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga bless you all. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - In 2001 my daughter got Harinām, and in 2004, dīkṣā from Your Divine Grace. She is going to graduate from the art college, therefore she couldn't come with us now for Śrī Vrajamaṇḍal parikrama. In the end of December the devotees from my country informed me that she fell in asat-sanga. She wants to leave the place of devotees and wants to rent some flat together with her boy-friends from college. I am very worried for her. All devotees are also worried. My son and I are writing long letters to

her, in attempt to help her at this critical time. Guru Mahārāj, if it is possible, please write something to her. Hari- katha will save her, I am hopeful of this.

Devotees do not use force

Received your letter written in your mother tongue translated into English and subsequently sent by email.

I have gone through your letter and I am sorry that although you remain here in Calcutta, you cannot express your heart to me due to language difficulty and at present also there is no person here who can interpret your thoughts in English to me.

It is true that by the grace of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna you could participate in Śrī Vrajamaṇḍal *parikrama* with your son. Without the approval of Śrī Krishna, nothing can happen. I had been to ____ several times by the desire of Supreme Lord and was happy to get the company of the devotees there. My undertaking a journey outside India is not allowed now because of my health condition.

The Supreme Lord does not interfere in the relative independence of the conditioned souls. Real self is *ātmā*, who thinks, feels and wills. Nobody on earth considers a dead body to be a person. As long as consciousness exists in it, it is considered a person. If the Supreme Lord exerts His power forcibly to make the conditioned souls inclined to Him then the real self will be reduced to an inert thing. For that reason the Supreme Lord resides in the heart of the conditioned soul as the indwelling monitor, *Paramātmā*, also appearing in this world in different Transcendental Divine Forms and sending His own personal associates in this world to persuade the conditioned souls so that they can willingly submit to Him. You should go through the biography of the great devotee saint Prahlād Mahārāj. Prahlād Mahārāj tried his best to change the mind of his son Virochan to worship the Supreme Lord, but in spite of his best efforts he failed and his son became a demon. But Prahlād Mahārāj did not become unbalanced, thinking that due to Virochan's previous bad impressions imbibed by previous bad deeds, he could not accept his teachings. Prahlād Mahārāj thought he had done his duty for the eternal welfare of the son but the son could not accept it due to his previous bad impressions. Since the Supreme Lord and His powerful personal associates do not perform the pastimes of using force to change the mind of the worldly people, how can we do it? It is our duty to help the enslaved *jīvas* by our ideal character to change their mind so that they

can submit to the Supreme Lord and worship Him. But we should not make a firm determination to execute it because in case our desire is not fulfilled, we may become unstable.

Mental diversion will be a setback

There exist two kinds of paths - (1) the path of eternal welfare and (2) the path for sensuous enjoyment. In this prison house world, almost 999 in 1000 are in the group of the path of sensuous enjoyment. You may get a few eligible persons for the path of eternal welfare. In the beginning of this path at the time of restraining sense-organs etc., it may seem to be like poison but its ultimate consequence will be ambrosia or nectar. In the path of enjoyment, at first it seems to be like ambrosia but the consequence will be virulent poison. Most fortunate aspirants accept the path of eternal welfare.

The specialty of human birth is the capacity of discriminating between bad and good, eternal and non-eternal. God has given this precious human birth for worship of Him and not for eating, sleeping, defending and mating like birds and beasts. In that sense your daughter is lucky enough to have accepted the spiritual eternal path. Mental diversion for non-eternal sensuous enjoyments for her will be a setback. Everyone who accepts the path of enjoyment ultimately repents severely. But then it may be too late. All the conditioned souls are running after enjoyments - for pleasure of ears, eyes, tongue and organs of smell and touch. When a conditioned soul becomes averse to Śrī Krishna, he comes in contact with the illusory energy and thinks all material enjoyments are his requirement. The eye organ is very strong in insects. Being attracted by the dazzling light of fire, they jump into it to enjoy but are burnt and destroyed. Ignorant unfortunate persons only run after sensuous enjoyment by hook or crook, not thinking of its venomous consequence. The actual existence of all *rūpa* (beauty), *rasa* (taste), *śabda* (sweet sound), *sparsa* (sweet touch) and *gandha* (sweet smell), is in the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. The conditioned souls are actually running after the shadow of Śrī Krishna, *māyā*, and ultimately their lives are frustrated. A real votary should be alert of his ultimate target of life— causeless devotion to Śrī Krishna.

May All-Merciful Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga bless you all.
'Ya molus' Bogu'o vichnom vashem blage'

My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev – A devotee in financial difficulty.

Extremely poor but happy

Received your letter and noted the contents. I am worried knowing your difficulties. This world is the prison-house for the conditioned souls of the world. They are all under the grip of threefold afflictions - *ādhyātmik* (mental and physical miseries), *ādhibhautik* (afflictions inflicted by other living beings) and *ādhidaivik* (natural calamities), as well as suffering tremendously at the time of birth and death.

The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna has said in the Gītā (7.14), '*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te*' - 'It is extremely difficult for the conditioned souls to cross over the ocean of births and deaths and threefold afflictions due to their entanglement in the snare of *Māyā*, the external potency consisting of three primeval qualities— *sattva*, *raja* and *tama*. Only the souls completely surrendered to the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna can be delivered from the shackles of *Māyā*.' We are to remember the six-fold teachings of '*śaraṇāgati*' - '*ānukūlasya saṅkalpaḥ prātikūlya-vivarjanam, rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso goptṛtve varaṇam tathā, ātma- nikṣepa-kārpaṇye ṣaḍ-vidhā śaraṇāgatiḥ*' - We are to accept that which is congenial and give up that which is not congenial for worship of Krishna; we should have firm faith that He is the only sustainer and protector; we are to dedicate ourself totally to the Lotus Feet of Krishna; and be humble by giving up all false material egos.

There are many instances of household devotees being in extreme poverty, but still happy - Vidura and Vidura's wife, Śrīdhara pandit (personal associate of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu), Sudāmā Brāhmaṇa, the friend of Krishna etc.

*ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryuṣāsate teṣāṁ
nityābhiyuktānāṁ yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham
(Bhagavad Gītā 9.22)*

'My devotees always have one-pointed devotion to Me, they are fully engaged in My service. For the maintenance of the body, they accept everything which is not anti-devotional. They dedicate everything to me, so I give them their requirements and maintain them.

Krishna has emphatically said, '*na hi kalyāṇa-kṛt kaścid durgatiṁ tāta gacchati*' (Gītā 6.40) - A sincere soul will never be deceived. Also Krishna has said in the Gītā (2.47), '*karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana*' - The conditioned souls have got the right to do good and bad deeds but the Supreme Lord is controlling the fruits of their actions. So the wise never blame others for their difficulties.

If you are badly in need of some money for the treatment of your parents, I shall give to you. Supreme Lord willing, I may go to our Puri Maṭh to participate in the Annual Function on the occasion of Ratha-Yatra and will return on 9th July, 2005. I am so so. Hope this will find you all in good health and spirit.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Krishna bless you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - I was thinking about quitting my job before coming to Vrajamaṇḍal parikrama in October this year. Another idea is that I could open some shop with Indian articles. We are thinking to associate with GOKUL here. Now I feel that the only way that I would find fulfillment in my life is to dedicate myself fully for Your purpose, to become Your instrument in fulfilling the desires of Śrī Guruvarṅga and our Lordships.

Practice Śikṣāṣṭaka sincerely

Received your letter sent through e-mail. I am glad to go through the contents of your letter, knowing that you are very much eager to serve *guru*, *vaiṣṇava* and Rādhā-Krishna.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu appeared in this very *Kaliyuga* of Vaivasvata Manvantar

by taking the form and mood of worship of Rādhārāṇī, principally to taste the sweetness of the Supreme Lord Krishna and simultaneously to distribute Krishna-*prema* to all, irrespective of caste, creed and religion. He is the Highest Munificent Form of Godhead. Although He is the Supreme Lord, He takes the Form of a devotee to teach others how to love Krishna by practicing Himself. So it is very essential to go through His teachings, 'Śikṣāṣṭaka'. A sincere servitor always tries to satisfy his object of worship. During Vrajamaṇḍal *parikrama*, devotees will go through His teachings throughout the month of *Kārtik-vratā*. A votary, to satisfy Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, should at least practice the first and third verses of Śikṣāṣṭaka sincerely from the core of the heart. Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has taught in the first verse, mainly seven principal attainments or more correctly all attainments while doing Śrī Rādhā-Krishna *sankīrtan*. *Sankīrtan* means to perform *kīrtan* without tenfold offences; to perform *kīrtan* completely i.e. to sing His Name, Form, Attributes, Personal Associates, Pastimes and also in the company of bona fide *śuddha bhaktas*. For doing *sankīrtan* without the tenfold offences, you are to go through the third verse of Śikṣāṣṭakam - to be humbler than a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree, to give respect to all thinking that your object of worship is residing in their hearts and not to have the desire to get respect from others. Everything depends upon practice; merely by speaking we cannot get the desired fruit. We are to examine ourselves whether we are actually following the teachings of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. The actual follower will surely get the highest object, Rādhā- Krishna *prema*. Service means to engage all sense-organs (gross and subtle) and all efforts for *Guru-Vaiṣṇav-Bhagavān*.

sarvopādhi-vinirmuktaṁ tat-paraṭvena nirmalam
hṛṣīkeṇa hṛṣīkeśa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate
(Chaitanya Charitāmṛta Madhya 19.170)

One can serve Krishna only after being completely free from mundane egos, gross and subtle, and acquiring the knowledge that the aspirant is of Him.

I am aware that GOKUL (Global Organisation of Krishnachaitanya's Universal Love) Institution is registered at _____. So, it will be good if there be any activity of the institution. After taking *mantra*, it is necessary for the votary to perform the devotional forms of hearing and chanting of the glories of Krishna. I have heard that you have solemnised the Centennial Function of our *gurudev*. A report of it should be sent here for publication in our monthly magazine, Śrī Chaitanya Vāṇi.

We are to submit to the Will of the Supreme Lord, Who is all-good. Whatever is done by His Will, is for the benefit of all. By the Lord's desire, I am now confined here in India and doctors have advised me not to undertake a hectic tour, but if the Supreme Lord Krishna desires, I may have the opportunity to participate in the Vrajamaṇḍal *parikrama* celebration.

Regarding your job, you should consult with your husband, mother-in-law, and if necessary, other experienced people and take decision.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga bless you all. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev – *Can a devotee work in a medicine factory where animal products are treated and there is apprehension of bad smell etc?*

Animal products in medicines

There is risk of contamination by animal propensity when using such animal product drugs. That contamination may spoil our mind whether we take directly or even are in contact indirectly.

Previously in India, treatment for all kinds of diseases was done by drugs from herbs or trees with very effective results. However due to alien influence in India for hundreds of years, there is now a lack of knowledge of different herbs and Ayurvedic treatment has diminished. Western type systems of treatment are prevailing now which are more inclined to use animal products in the manufacturing of medicines. If they can use Ayurvedic medicine it will be better.

We are enslaved *jīvas*. We already have an innate propensity of taking animal products. Therefore any further contact with it will be derogatory to spiritual upliftment. Even on an *Ekādaśī tithi*, for a critical illness, medicine containing animal product is not allowed to be taken.

Conversely, I have seen in newspapers that people in western countries have started preferring a vegetarian diet. The number of people taking to vegetarianism is increasing as they have started believing that a non-vegetarian diet is the cause of many diseases.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



PART VII

Spreading the Message of Lord Chaitanya

In my opinion it will not be beneficial for our devotional spiritual elevation if we do *prachār* (preaching) for *prachār*'s sake. The purpose of preaching should not be to rectify others. All forms of *bhajan* including *kīrtan* should be performed for the propitiation of Śrī Krishna and His devotees. If we can correct ourselves, then preaching will be automatic.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - The mission of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is known as a preaching movement. Should devotees of all stages of advancement participate in preaching? Can they contribute in the religious and spiritual advancement of the living entities in general?

The rescuer of all vile sinners

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura, our original spiritual guide, is the writer of the lyrical poem called 'Kalyāṇ Kalpataru' (beneficial wish-yielding tree). At the outset, I want to remember a portion of the teachings of one song of Kalyāṇ Kalpataru which is applicable to me:

*āmi to durjana ati sadā duracāra koṭi koṭi janme mora nāhika uddhāra
e hena dayālu kebā e jagate āche e mata pāmāre uddhāriyā la'be kāche
suniyāchi śrī-caitanya patita-pāvana ananta-pātaki jane karila mocana
e mata dayāra sindhu kṛpā bitariyā kabe uddhāribe more śrī-caraṇa diyā*

'I am a villainous person, always indulging in nasty abominable practices. Surely I won't be rescued in my millions and millions of births. Where is such a merciful person in this world to come to rescue and embrace this vile sinner? I have heard that Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is the rescuer of all vile sinners. He is the Most Munificent Form of Godhead. He has delivered infinite fallen souls. Will Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, by His ocean of compassion and while distributing His grace to all, also rescue me by stretching His Holy Lotus Feet upon me?'

Actually it is by the grace of the Supreme Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and His absolute counterpart, the all-merciful *gurudev*, that the devotees are inspired to put forth questions, and to express their desire to engage me in singing the glories of the Supreme Lord and to recapitulate whatever I heard from *gurudev* to purify my mind with the object to get enhancement in devotion.

Ontological aspect of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu

Ontologically, Who is Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, and what is His teaching? Appropriate knowledge of these two queries is absolutely necessary to realise the answer of the question. As time is limited, an elaborate discussion will not be possible. Consider the evidence from Śrī Chaitanya Charitāmṛta, Ādi, 1.3:

yad advaitam brahmopaniṣadi tad apy asya tanu-bhā
ya ātmāntar-yāmī puruṣa iti so 'syāmśa-vibhavaḥ
ṣaḍ-aiśvaryaiḥ pūrṇo ya iha bhagavān sa svayam ayaṁ
na caitanyāt kṛṣṇāt jagati para-tattvaṁ param iha

'Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is the self-evident, complete and original Supreme Lord, the Possessor of six-fold opulences. No other entity is superior to Him. What the Upanishads have referred to as *advaita brahma* is actually the effulgence of His transcendental form. *Paramātmā*, Who is residing in the heart of every living being, is His partial manifestation.'

Consider the following evidence from Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (11.5.32). Karbhājan Muni (sage) spoke to Nimi Maharāj about the Holy divine descent in this iron age (*yugāvatar* in *Kaliyuga*)

krishna-varṇam tviṣākrishnam sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārṣadam
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ

'He Who is always devoted to uttering the two syllables (in Sanskrit) 'kr' and 'ṣṇa' and by that is devotionally inclined to search for Krishna; Whose essential parts are Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Advaita Āchārya; Whose accessory limbs are His sheltered devotees— Śrīvās Paṇḍit etc.; Whose weapon is *Harinām*— holy transcendental divine sound; Whose personal and most dear associates are Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍit, Dāmodarswarup, Rai Ramānanda, Sanātan, Rūpa etc.; Whose charming color is *akrishna* (i.e. signifying the golden color of that very Gaurasundara—inside Krishna and outside Gaura (golden color), the effulgence of the combined manifestation of Rādhā Krishna; will be worshipped by highly talented persons in this *Kaliyuga* by means of *sankīrtan-yajna*.'

Rare kaliyuga

The original Supreme Lord and many *avatāras* have descended in India. Therefore there are so many holy places of pilgrimage in India. Actually the holy name of India is '*Bhāratvarṣa*'. The holy scriptures of *Bhāratvarṣa* are all written in Sanskrit. So it is difficult for persons outside India to understand the ontological significance of the Indian scriptural words. That is why we are repeatedly submitting our prayers to foreign devotees to adopt some words befitting *Bhāratvarṣa*, although it is true that

many foreign devotees have now become accustomed to some Sanskrit words due to the wide- spread *Harikatha* of our revered *śikṣā-guru* Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Swāmi Maharāj in English. For example, the meaning of *Bhagavān*: 'Bhaga' means opulences and 'vān' means one who possesses the totality of wealth, totality of power, totality of beauty, totality of knowledge and totality of renunciation.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, the most munificent form of Godhead, appeared in this Kaliyuga in the seventh Manvantar, to bestow the highest Krishna-*prema*, transcendental pure devotion to all, irrespective of caste, creed, religion or sect. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu appears only once in one day of Brahma. We are fortunate to be born in that day of Brahma. The span of life of fourteen Manvantars is equal to the span of life of one day of Brahma. We are now in the Kaliyuga of the 28th *caturyuga* (one cycle of the four ages: *satya*, *treta*, *dvāpara* and *kali*), during the 7th Vaivasvata Manvantar. The span of life of one Manvantar is 71 *caturyugas*. It is because of the direction of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and His personal associates descending through the preceptorial channel that devotees are going outside India for propagation of *śuddha bhakti* or pure devotion, only for the gratification of the Supreme Lord and His devotees. Preaching for preaching's sake is not good.

Very easy and extremely difficult

In one sense *śuddha bhakti* (pure devotion) is extremely difficult, but in another sense it is very easy. When fortunate votaries take absolute shelter of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and His personal associates, it will be very easy. But if the conditioned souls in the name of pure devotion endeavour for worldly interests with vanity and a challenging mood, they will be totally deprived of actual eternal benefit. Votaries must be simple hearted. There should not be any deceitfulness in their heart. We have heard one practical instance of this from our *guruvarg*. Emperor Khatvāṅga in India, was able to attain transcendental divine love in a moment when he sincerely took shelter of the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Lord. As long as there is misconception of self (any false ego in relation to the gross and subtle material bodies and also in relation to the non-eternal material world), the votary will be totally deprived of obtaining *śuddha bhakti*. We should positively think we are not of this world. We are actually of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and His transcendental realm. After that, whatever we do, will be *bhakti*. Pure devotion is the only way to get connection with the Supreme Lord, Who is all-bliss.

Śravaṇam and kīrtanam

To emphasise this, if we think we are of this unholy material world we shall become unholy, whereas if we think we are of the Supreme Lord we shall become holy, and after that we can serve the Supreme Lord with pure devotion. Our actual target of worship should be the gratification of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna not with any other purpose in mind. The end justifies the means. If the end is bad, the means will also be bad.

Example is better than precept. A pure devotee who engages himself for the service of Śrī Krishna and His devotees will inspire others by his ideal life. This human birth is very rare and is only meant for worship of Śrī Krishna. After creating the human species the Supreme Lord is satisfied. There is evidence from Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (11.9.28). God is not satisfied by creating beasts, birds, trees, reptiles and ferocious animals, because they have got no power to discriminate between good and bad, eternal and non- eternal. They perform their actions out of instinct.

*śṛṇvataḥ śraddhayā nityam grṇataś ca sva-ceṣṭitam
nātidīrghaṇa kālena bhagavān viśate hṛdi
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 2.8.4)*

'When a devotee hears with firm faith about the name, form, attributes, personal associates and pastimes of the Supreme Lord daily, and if after hearing he himself chants those glories, then *Bhagavān* Śrī Krishna will appear in his heart very soon.'

The devotee who is hearing and chanting does not need to remember the pastimes artificially. Śrī Viśvanāth Chakravarti has put the emphasis in his commentary to *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*, and says that remembrance is subservient to *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*.

*kṛte yad dhyāyato viṣṇum tretāyām yajato makhaiḥ
dvāpare paricaryāyām kalau tad hari-kīrtanāt
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 12.3.52)*

'Whatever we get by meditation in *Satya-yuga*, by oblation in *Treta-yuga* and by worship of Deities in *Dvāpara-yuga*, we can get that objective in *Kali-yuga* only by doing Krishna *nām sankīrtan*.'

But, when chanting Krishna *nām* we should be very careful that it is done without the tenfold offences. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu says in His writing, *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, first verse, '*ceto darpaṇa mārjanam...*' by Śrī Krishna *sankīrtan* we can get sevenfold attainments. Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has given emphasis on uttering *Harināma* loudly, which contributes to the spiritual advancement of all living entities in general.



Do not sacrifice eternal benefit

Prachār (preaching) is not for *prachār*'s sake; it is not for mundane temporary benefits. Wherever we may go by the will of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, Who is All-Good, we should perform *bhajan* (devotional practice); we should not forget the devotional purpose of our life. Everything will remain in this world; nothing from here will go with us; only devotion to Śrī Krishna will go with us. So, it will be unwise to sacrifice eternal benefit for the sake of mundane temporary benefits. The greatest hurdle of Krishna *bhakti* is committal of offence at the Lotus Feet of *vaiṣṇavas*. We should always remember the teachings of Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

In my opinion it will not be beneficial for our devotional spiritual elevation if we do *prachār* for *prachār*'s sake. All forms of *bhajan* including *kīrtan* should be performed for the propitiation of Śrī Krishna and His devotees.

Chanting of the Glories of Śrī Krishna, His Name, Form, Attributes and Pastimes is the best form of *bhakti*. While performing *bhakti* (*kīrtan bhakti*), *prachār* will be automatic. There is no need of making separate endeavour for this.

I returned to Calcutta with our party the day before yesterday after participating in the Śrī Jhulan yātrā festival of Vrindāvana Maṭh and doing some urgent work in New Delhi.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Recently I met my old friends. Many years ago, we used to drink beer and wine. By the grace of Lord Krishna I was able to stop it and start following the path of *bhakti*. My friends still continue to drink and eat meat. I want them to quit their bad habits. How can I help them?

Help thyself and god will help thee

I think it will be better to get a clear understanding for the solution of your problem, by going through the conversation of Kapil Bhagavān and Devahuti in the third canto, twenty-fifth chapter of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Kapil Bhagavān has mentioned the qualities of a bona fide *sādhū*. First He has narrated the concomitant qualities and after that the original qualities of a *sādhū*. In mentioning the accompanying qualities, He has said that *sādhūs* are compassionate to the conditioned souls. *Sādhūs* try to remove the root cause of the miseries of conditioned souls, aversion to Śrī Krishna, by persuading them to worship the Supreme Lord and practicing that in their lives. But in spite of this the conditioned souls, due to their bad impressions from previous lives imbibed by evil propensities, have the aptitude to commit sins. The aspirant, who desires to remove evil propensities, should try for himself to change his evil propensity. From outside, sympathetic persons may help him by spiritual instructions, but he has to try for this from his own initiative. 'God helps those who help themselves', 'Help thyself and God will help thee' (George Herbert). Śrī Prahlaḍ Mahārāj tried his utmost to rectify his son Virochan by his own ideal life and teachings, but failed. However he did not become unbalanced, because he knew that in spite of his endeavour and teachings, his son may or may not accept his advice due to the influence of previous bad impressions. The Supreme Lord and His absolute counterpart *gurudev* do not interfere in the relative independence of the conditioned souls. The Supreme Lord is Omnipotent; He can do whatever He likes. But if He forcibly interferes, the person will be bereft of consciousness. If consciousness is destroyed, neither the person nor the Supreme Lord will be benefited. So the Supreme Lord by His personal appearance in the world and His personal associates, tries to persuade the aspirant to submit to and accept His teachings willingly.

Your effort to help your friends is laudable. You should not stop your endeavour and affection for your friends but you should not be disheartened if your friends are unable to accept your teachings.

I was glad to see your son in the last video conference. May All-Merciful Śrī Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Krishna bless you all. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - It is not possible to register any kind of religious organisation in _____ as the law restricts any group other than Christianity, Islam and Judaism. It is better to hold devotional activities in a devotee's house privately where devotees can get together. Regarding the _____ project, the devotee donor has requested the MaṭhMaṭh to be the Maṭh of Pūjyapād Puri Goswāmī Mahārāj. Hence I suggest that your donation be used in some other projects.

Health and tour

You are aware that I was awfully busy in the more than month-long Vrajamaṇḍal *parikrama*. It is my vow that I should participate in all sittings of Dāmodar *vrata* and also if possible not to miss participating in *nagar sankīrtan*. I had to speak in 3 languages— Bengali, Hindi and English. There were so many devotees for initiation that I had to do this duty for 2 days. After Vrajamaṇḍal *parikrama*, I went to Chandigarh, Una (Himachal Pradesh), Rajpura (Punjab), and Bhatinda (Punjab). I participated in the Annual Functions in Una, Rajpura and Bhatinda Maṭh, delivered speeches and also for some time, participated in *nagar sankīrtans*.

Perhaps due to this heavy program, I felt some sort of heart trouble. Śrī Swarup Dāmodar Das engaged one heart specialist doctor of New Delhi to examine me. In fact, I was admitted in the renowned Batra hospital and by angiography examination, it was found that out of 3 vessels, one vessel is completely blocked and other 2 vessels are blocked 70% and 50%. I have been advised to take complete rest. Dr. Kaul, heart specialist, has prescribed medicines to be taken daily. In spite of this heart trouble, I did not stop speaking in the evening meetings. I had to return to Calcutta from New Delhi to do some urgent works after taking permission from Dr. Kaul and also I participated in the 5-day spiritual sittings of the Calcutta Maṭh Annual Function. I also participated in the *nagar sankīrtan* for some time. High court Justices of Calcutta and many dignitaries came to Calcutta Maṭh and requested me with folded hands to take complete rest and to speak as little as possible. Their idea is that I should not go for bypass surgery but taking rest and medicines regularly for several months and lifestyle regulations would be more advisable. Their advice is 'Prevention is better than cure'. At this age, bypass surgery will not help to increase the span of life. In spite of this difficulty, I had to come to Assam to attend the Annual Functions of 3 Maṭhs at Tezpur, Goalpara and Guwahati. I also participated in *nagar sankīrtans* at Tezpur and Goalpara, which I should not have done. I felt some angina pain in Goalpara. I did not participate in

the *nagar sankīrtan* of Guwahati Maṭh but regularly delivered speeches in the evening functions. I was engaged awfully at Tezpur, Goalpara and Guwahati with the duty of giving initiation to so many devotees. I have been receiving so many telephone calls to return to Calcutta immediately without participating in any other function, but as I have already announced about the Vyāsa Pūjā ceremony at Puri Maṭh on the occasion of the advent anniversary of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī Ṭhākur in his advent place, it is impossible for me to cancel that program. Some foreign devotees already reached Puri and many others will go there to attend the function. I am leaving by flight with 5 others from Guwahati to Bhubaneswar on 18th February. Vyāsa pūjā will be celebrated on 21st February but meetings will be continued till 22nd February. We shall return to Calcutta on 24th February.

I have gone through the contents of your letter. It is my desire that there should be some permanent place for the devotees of Russia, Belarus and Minsk to meet, in whatever way possible in any convenient place. My humble donation can be used for the purpose wherever you want to spend that. _____ expressed his desire to spend some of my donation in the proposed place of Minsk. You can have a direct talk with him in regard to this. I was told by him that the proposed Maṭh would be materialised within 2-3 months. I am anxious to know what progress has been done in regard to this.

Serve all by serving the lord

You are also aware that some women leaders of the 'women devotees association' of about 300 devotees, on being informed of our arrival at _____, came to participate in the function and I was intimated that 2 or 3 of them have taken initiation and later on by their inspiration, 50 other women devotees have taken *Harinām* initiation at _____. They were very enthusiastic.

I received a letter from one woman devotee leader who has taken *Harinām*, explaining that something has happened by which they are disheartened. She has written, "We want to learn all religions and all religious movements but not to belong to any of them and not to look for a *guru* from any part of the Mondial religion. This is a decision of all the learners. I am bound to obey. We want to communicate freely with representatives of different movements but not to be much linked to any religion in any way. This is our way and our free will."

We belong to Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's school of thought, which practices and preaches pure devotion, one pointed devotion to the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, by serving Whom we serve all. The main qualification of getting *Harinām* initiation in our school of thought is that firm faith should be there, without any doubt in it. By serving Śrī Krishna we serve all. If we pour water on the root of the tree, the whole tree will be nourished; if we give food to the stomach, all parts of the body will be nourished. Similarly, if we serve the Supreme Lord, Who is the All-unifying Spiritual Principle, we serve all. Without this qualification, nobody is entitled to take *Harinām*. To give *Harinām* to anybody without this belief is a kind of offence. We should be very careful in regard to this. Our school of thought is not an institution to increase disciples. My request to you is - you should try to meet the group of women or the woman devotee and personally talk to them or talk to her and discover the actual facts.

Our devotees should be taught about this. Giving initiation to a sincere soul is a kind of service to Supreme Lord. If there be any ulterior motive of increasing number, without seeing the qualification, our devotional spiritual life will be spoiled. To increase the number of disciples by any means is totally anti-devotional. We should not do this.

Hope this will find you all in good health and spirit.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Recently I started organising mass bhajans where devotees from different Gauḍīya Maṭhs including ISKCON could meet devotees and perform sankīrtan in a vegetarian restaurant run by one of the disciples of Srīman BR Śrīdhara dev Goswāmī. By the grace of Śrī Krishna, recently the President of the Lakshmi Nārāyaṇ Temple has decided to offer this temple as the permanent venue for such sankīrtans and prasād distribution every Sunday evenings. I seek and need your advice and blessing as to how I should continue to progress.

Requirements of bhakti seed

I am exceedingly delighted to get a letter from you after a long time.

I am glad to know that you have taken the initiative to restart the work of the registered society in Singapore. It is also encouraging to know that, in whose house I stayed once with my preaching party, is the President of the society and also our well-wisher friend _____, who helped me in preaching, has also taken interest in it.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, through Śrīla Rūpā Goswāmī, has taught us that hearing and speaking about the glories of Śrī Krishna, *śravan* and *kīrtan*, are essential for getting enhancement in *bhakti*. *Śravan-kīrtan* has been compared with water. As a living seed requires water for its growth, the potential real seed of *bhakti*, received from a bona fide *guru*, can have enhancement after practicing *śravan-bhakti* - hearing of the glories of Krishna from a bona fide *bhakta*, and *kīrtan-bhakti*, reciting the same. I firmly believe that your sincere endeavour, by the Grace of Śrī Guru-Vaishnav and the Supreme Lord Śrī Gaurāṅga and Śrī Rādhā-Krishna, will be successful.

I think you remember, when we tried to have our preaching program at Singapore two years ago, we were not successful as we could not get a visa. Instead, we had our *prachār* program at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Devotees of Kuala Lumpur repeatedly requested us to go to a place near Kuala Lumpur for preaching. Everything depends upon the will of the Supreme Lord. Without his desire, a leaf of a tree cannot move. We are to submit to the will of Śrī Krishna, Who is All-Good.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga bless you all.

My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Please explain to us how GOKUL is functioning at present and how it should function in the future as per your vision and desire. Should we legally register our own group here in our country or should we join the existing global one (and how)? Our desire also is, if you could send some of your sannyāsī, brahmachāri or householder god-brothers or disciples to hold programs here if you personally cannot

come because of your health difficulties, to give us the necessary inspiration and strength to go on with the service of Śrī Guru-Vaishnav-Bhagavān. I have been invited by disciples of Śrīla Bhakti Vaibhav Puri Mahārāj to speak on public vaiṣṇava-program. As I feel myself incompetent for this task I am asking for your advice in this matter. I can speak nice flowery theoretical words to get mundane name and fame, but my realisation and actual service to Śrī Krishna is very weak and I don't want to bring bad name on vaiṣṇava religion.

Sankīrtan is highest bhakti

GOKUL is the abbreviation of 'Global Organisation of Krishna Chaitanya's Universal Love'. The word 'Universal' denotes that it is for all. But as per worldly legal rules, it is better if you register it in. Members will be devotees of the Gauḍīya school of thought.

When I consulted with the specialist doctor about my going outside India, he instructed me that the summer season would not be congenial to me in India, so I should go abroad with the condition that I should confine myself in one place and avoid undertaking tour-programs in different places. Devotees will come to me from different places. For the choice of the place, you are to consult with all devotees of Europe and England, especially, _____, and _____. For sending of preaching party, *sannyāsī*, *brahmachārī* or household devotees, I shall have to consult with devotees and *sannyāsīs* and can intimate you accordingly.

In regard to your last question, a bona fide devotee's life is dedicated fully for the service of Śrī Krishna and Krishna-bhakta. Highest *bhakti* is *sankīrtan*, i.e., to speak about the glories of the Name, Form, Attributes and Pastimes of Śrī Krishna and His personal associates. Wherever we stay, we are to regularly perform *śravan-kīrtan* (hearing and speaking), if we seriously want progress in *bhakti*. Our life is not meant for delivering speeches but it should be dedicated for the service of Krishna and his devotees. *Śravan-kīrtan* is like water. If water is not poured at the root of the tree, it will not be nourished. After taking *mantra*, you are to give water to it, i.e., hearing about Krishna and speaking about Krishna. With that end in view, you can go and recapitulate what you have heard from *gurudev*, *vaiṣṇavas* and authentic scriptures.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Krishna bless you all and bestow you strength to serve them. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Engage whole energy for service

As an ascetic (*brahmachāri*) you are free to move anywhere you like. You can contribute by using your skills for the broadcast of the message of Divine Love of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Those who live in household life are confined in the limited narrow sphere like a '*kūpa maṇḍūka*'— a frog in the well. This precious human birth is meant only for Krishna *bhajan*; not for eating, sleeping, defending and mating like beasts and birds. One who understands this engages his whole energy for the service of Śrī Krishna. Any moment this body may perish and we will lose this chance. As you are sincere, I think you can contribute valuable service to the Institution.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru, Gaurāṅga and Śrī Rādhā-Krishna bless you. My love for you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Everything ever-linked with Lord

Praying blessings of Śrī Guru, Śrī Gaurāṅga and Śrī Rādhā-Krishna unto sincere souls desirous of serving Śrī Krishna and His devotees without deceitfulness.

Received your letter dated ____ . I remember having received another letter from you earlier.

The Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna has said in the Gītā (7.7) '*mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti dhanañjaya mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva*'. "There is nothing superior to Me. Everything is ever-linked with Me as pearls are connected by thread." This realisation of connection with all living beings in relation to the Supreme Lord, will solve all problems caused by maladjustments. In this connection

we should deeply think about what Prahāda Mahārāj said to his father Hiraṇyakaśipu —

*jahy āsuram bhāvam imam tvam ātmanah
samarṇ mano dhatsva na santi vidviṣaḥ
ṛte 'jitād ātmana utpathe sthitāt
tad dhi hy anantasya mahat samarhaṇam
(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.8.9)*

Translation by Parampujyapad Śrīmad Swāmī Mahārāj— 'Prahāda Mahārāj continued: My dear father, please give up your demoniac mentality. Do not discriminate in your heart between enemies and friends; make your mind equipoised toward everyone. Except for the uncontrolled and misguided mind, there is no enemy within this world. When one sees everyone on the platform of equality, one then comes to the position of worshipping the Lord perfectly.'

Your writing — 'Everything is engaged by the Will of Supreme Lord, and everything He arranges is for the good of all'— gives me solace. By the desire of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, His Absolute Counterpart Most Revered *Gurudev* and Revered Jagamohan Brahmachārī Prabhu, I came in contact with you and your husband at Calcutta Maṭh and because of the repeated requests of _____ and approval of Pūjyapād Śrīmad Jagamohan Brahmachārī Prabhu, godbrother of our Most Revered *Gurudev* and Maṭh- in-charge of Calcutta Maṭh, you received *Harinām* initiation. As previously mentioned, my coming in contact with you helped our preaching in different places of USA and England and is so sweet and encouraging, which can never be forgotten. I think your enthusiasm for the service of Śrī Krishna and His devotees will be resumed again with double force.

Considering my deteriorated health condition, our friends advised me not to undertake journeys outside India this year. Even in the next year, if there be any program of my going on foreign tour, I may go to London and stay in one place. Devotees are to come to my place of stay to see me. It may not be possible for me to undertake hectic tour. For my program in London, you are to consult with _____ and other devotees and friends. Everything depends upon the will of the Supreme Lord Who is All-Good. We shall be happy if we submit to His Will.

My love to you all. May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Krishna bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Risk of undesirable elements

If the organisations have got the same end -- unadulterated devotion to Śrī Krishna, there is no apprehension of erosion in the mutual love relations. Due to aversion to serving Śrī Krishna, living beings are enveloped by the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord and are hurled down into this world to pass through cycles of births and deaths and to suffer three-fold afflictions. The prison house of *brahmāṇḍa* is filled with enslaved *jīvas*. A few living beings, due to their previous eternal good deeds, have the aptitude to worship Śrī Krishna. Worshipers of Śrī Krishna are rarely to be found in this world. When we want quality, we cannot get quantity. If we want to increase quantity we shall have to sacrifice quality.

When preaching centres and Maṭhs are established for cultivation of spiritual and devotional enhancement, there is fear of undesirable elements entering into the spiritual organisations. Such ill-motivated persons can create disturbance. There exist such problems in all societies, because there are differences in the entrants regarding their calibre, taste and behaviour, which cannot be rectified all of a sudden. No institution can run without *sevakas*, so for that they allow *sevakas*. Undesirable elements also enter into it. All institutions have got this practical difficulty. The ideal is high, no doubt, but persons acting on it are very few. So, Krishna *bhakti* cannot be spread over without the initiative of Śrī Krishna. There is no other way than to make the best of a bad bargain.



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - According to Krishna's will and Your blessings I have started to organise programs for devotees once a week. However we are still not inviting new people. Please instruct if I should continue in this way or organise something else?

Congregational chanting

One of the original qualities of a *śuddha bhakta* (narrated in Canto 3 of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Kapil-Devahuti topic) is fondness for hearing and speaking about the

glories of Śrī Krishna and His devotees. As a fish cannot survive without water, a devotee also cannot remain without hearing and speaking Hari-katha. For progressing in *bhakti*, this is essential. Another important point is this — in this Black age (*Kaliyuga*), a votary cannot get inspiration to perform devotional practices separately, alone, without the association of bona fide devotees. *Sangha śakti* (congregational chanting) is beneficial for the votaries of *Kaliyuga*. Something is better than nothing. In this consideration you should start doing this at least once a week. Devotees should get together, whatever the number may be. I hope if you start this by praying for the grace of *Guru*, *Vaishnavas* and *Bhagavān* you will be successful. If there be any person interested in devotional practice, who may not be of our own group, they should be allowed to participate.

I pray to Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga to bless you all. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - One wealthy well-wisher, not a vaiṣṇava, has volunteered to help us with a place and equipment for a publication center. They have also brought here a whole car of different foodstuffs to somewhat meet half-year requirements, and I do not know what to do! I cannot throw that away, at the same time "viṣayīra anna khāile malina haya mana" always sound in memory.

Everything is good if the target is good

With *daṇḍavat pranāms* to the Lotus Feet of Revered *Vaiṣṇavas*.

Received your affectionate letter sent through e-mail.

I am exceedingly delighted to know that you observed the month-long Dāmodar *vrata* with other devotees. As you have knowledge of Bengali and also of Sanskrit, your explanation of Bengali and Sanskrit writings in the _____ language naturally becomes impressive to the listeners. I am also encouraged that the listeners continued to hear explanation of the commentary (*Sanmodan-bhāṣya*) of Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura regarding *Śikṣāṣṭaka*. Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura's writing is simple, lucid and can be easily understood. *Sanmodan* means pleasing to the *sādhus* (*śuddha*

bhaktas). It is very necessary for enhancement in devotion, for the aspirants who have taken Krishna *mantra*, to regularly hear and speak about the glories of the Name, Form, Attributes and Pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Krishna.

I read about the generous wealthy person who sponsored the festivals. He is blessed as he contributed to the service of Śrī Krishna and His devotees. Now he has the aptitude to help you to get a place for a publication center. You have started the work at a rented private house. You have also purchased computer equipment to work with your Most Revered *Gurudev*'s archives.

The ascetics do *prachār* (preaching) and serve the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, and His devotees collect funds from generous persons. If the collected funds and commodities are for the service of Śrī Krishna and His devotees it cannot be harmful to the ascetics. If the target is good, everything is good. I am thankful to the generous person who has volunteered to give you a car-load of different foodstuffs to meet the requirements for 6 months but the foodstuffs should be such which can be offered to Supreme Lord. You are a sincere soul; your purpose is good; so I think you shouldn't be too much worried for this. When you come to India, I shall hear about your future program of Vishnu-aiṣṇava *seva* and I shall try to contribute to it to the extent of my ability.

More when we meet next. Hope this will find you all quite hale and hearty. Accept my *daṇḍavat prāṇām*. I pray to Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna to bless the generous minded donor for propagation of the teachings of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu.

Vaishnavdāsānudās,
Bhakti BallabhTirtha



Question to Śrīla Gurudev - Is it advisable for a *sannyāsī* to take help from lady-devotees in setting up and running the Maṭh? What are the rules for dealings with women by a *sannyāsī* in his preaching activity?

Unholy vision is condemnable

We cannot avoid seeing women but we should be careful of our motive while dealing

with them. Everything depends upon how we look at them. Lord Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has said that—

*niṣkiñcanasya bhagavad-bhajanonmukhasya
pāram param jigamiṣor bhava-sāgarasya
sandarśanam viṣayiṇām atha yoṣitām ca
hā hanta hanta viṣa-bhakṣaṇato 'py asādhū*
(Śrī Caitanya-Candrodaya-Nāṭaka 8.24)

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu expressed His extreme regret by saying, “A bona fide *sannyāsī*, who has taken up the vow to cross over the ocean of birth and death and the miseries of this world by fully dedicating himself to the service of the Lord, should avoid the vision of a person with mundane interest and enjoying spirit attached to riches and women. This sort of unholy vision is more condemnable than directly consuming poison”.

The female devotees can come to the Maṭh, participate in the devotional functions, and even help in running the Maṭh. However, staying in the Maṭh as a permanent resident, especially at night, should be avoided.



Kārtik program

By the grace of Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga Rādhā Mādhav ji, the month-long Dāmodar *vratā* celebration terminated at Chandigarh Maṭh grandly and successfully. A large number of devotees from different parts of India as well as some devotees from foreign countries participated in this function. I had to speak in Hindi and English. I tried to observe Dāmodar *vratā* as minutely as possible. It is a kind of vow to me every year. Here also I was totally engaged in attending early morning, morning, forenoon, afternoon and night sessions from 4:30am to 11pm. In the observance of the vow, I am to think continuously of the teachings of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's Śikṣāṣṭaka as well as uninterruptedly to remember the transcendental pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Krishna during the eight periods. So I had less opportunity to devote myself to any other work during that time. The Holy Advent Anniversary of our Most Revered *Gurudev* was performed very grandly on 7th November in which countless numbers of devotees participated to offer *pushpānjali*. Many persons including foreigners have taken Harinām and Mantra *dikṣā*. One newly initiated foreign devotee of Africa is insisting for my going to Mauritius Island as well as

Johannesburg, another place in South Africa. The friend devotees are prohibiting me to undertake foreign tour now at the present state of my indisposed health.



PART VIII

Vaiṣṇava Vows and Observances

It is only by serving the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, His personal associates and devotees that you can pay off your debts to father or mother correctly.
Service to devotees is actual service to God.



Ekādaśī vratā

There are two distinct ways of observing *Ekādaśī vratā* - *śuddha bhakti vichār* and *karmakāṇḍa (smārta) vichār*. *Śuddha bhaktas* observe *Ekādaśī vratā* only for the satisfaction of Śrī Krishna and His devotees and not for any material purpose. *Karmakāṇḍis* observe *Ekādaśī vratā* and other *vratas* for the fulfilment of mundane material interests. Actually *Ekādaśī vratā* is one of the forms of pure devotional practice to attain Krishna *prema*. In *karmakāṇḍa*, temptation of material fruits has been given to persuade the encaged ignorant *jīvas* to observe *Ekādaśī tithi*. This is not applicable to *śuddha bhaktas*.



Purushottam vratā

We shall observe Śrī Purushottam *vratā* from 16th May to 13th June, 1999. We shall daily read the glories of Purushottam *vratā*, from the writing of Śrī Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura, in the morning; daily recite Śrī Jagannāthāṣṭakam and Chaurāgraganya *Purushāṣṭakam* in the afternoon and perform *jaṇam* instructed by Kauṇḍilya Muni:-

*goverdhana-dharam vande gopālam goṇarūpinam
gokulotsavameeshānam govindam gopikāpriyam.*

In the evening perform *deep-dān* of pure ghee before Vishnu *mandir*. At night read *Brahmastav* from Bhāgavatam - *daśam skanda* (Canto 10).



Chaturmāsya vratā

Chaturmāsya vratā is observed by all— *karmīs*, *jñānīs*, *yogīs* and *bhaktas*— for the attainment of their respective ends. It is a kind of penance. But there is difference in the mode of *sādhana*, as the ends of *karmīs*, *jñānīs*, *yogīs* and *bhaktas* are different. The ultimate goal of *bhaktas* is to get love for Śrī Krishna (*Krishna prema*).

The Supreme Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, our Most Revered Param *Gurudev* and our Most Revered *Gurudev*, observed *Chaturmāsya vratā* only to teach us that

we should also observe this *vratā*. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu observed *Chaturmāsya vratā* at Purushottam *dhām* and at the house of Śrī Venkat Bhaṭṭ in Ranganath *dhām* by spending the whole time performing Krishna *katha*.

Listening to and chanting of the Holy Name, Form, Attributes and Pastimes of Śrī Krishna should be mainly performed. Along with this we should also observe exoteric rules as enjoined in the scriptures as far as practicable.

Gourd (*Louki*), bean (kidney bean, a long-size bean), brinjal, patal (a kind of vegetable), kalmishāk and purnishāk -- two kinds of herbs (leaves of plants) are prohibited in the four months of *Chaturmāsya*. Kalmishak and purnishak are not available in your side, so you are not to bother about this. All leaves of plants are prohibited in the month of *Śrāvan*, curd is prohibited in the month of *Bhādra* and milk in the month of *Ashwin* and all kinds of tasteful food prohibited in the month of *Kārtik*. There are other rules also. You are to know these by personal contact.



Navadvīpa dhām parikrama

More than one thousand devotees participated in Śrī Navadvīpa dhām parikrama celebration, staying at our Maṭh as guests. It was a huge thing. So, naturally we were all awfully busy in looking into the arrangements of stay and *prasād* of guests as well as regarding *parikrama*. We performed *parikrama* daily on foot and with *sankīrtan* procession, walking daily four miles, ten miles and one day 17-18 miles. Millions of people came to visit the birthplace of Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and the places of holy pastimes of Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates.

Circumambulation of the holy abode of the Supreme Lord Śrī Hari is one of the principal devotional practices of the 64 kinds of devotion as specified by Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī in his book 'Śrī Bhakti Rasāmrita Sindhu' which include circumambulation, recital of hymns, counting over the beads silently and chanting of the Holy Name. There is evidence from the *Srīmad Bhāgavatam* that the renowned devotee, Śrī Ambarīṣ Mahārāj, emperor of the world, employed his feet in performing circumambulation of *Haridhām* (abode of Śrī Hari).

Parikrama (circumambulation) for devotion is to be performed on bare foot. It will

be service to the devotees if we can give them comfort in performing *parikrama* on bare foot. Service to devotees is actual service to God.

Śrī Māyāpura and Śrī Nabadwīp *dhām* are not parts of West Bengal or India or a land of matter. Nabadwīp *dhām* or Śrī Māyāpura *dhām* has descended. As Śrī Gaurahari is beyond our comprehension, His *dhām* is also beyond our comprehension. By the causeless mercy of Śrī Gaurahari and Śrī Gaura-*dhām*, we can have contact with it. Therefore Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura says "Lord Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, out of compassion, appeared in this world with His entourage, transcendental realm, name, form etc., to bestow Krishna *prema*, but he taught us six-fold *śaraṇāgati* by which we can get His grace."

External development is also necessary for the service of devotees and attraction of conditioned souls. To give comforts to the willing participants on *parikrama*, roads can be made smooth; sides of the roads should be grassy; there should be arrangement of drinking water at intervals and resting places. Śrī Māyāpura area roads, this year, have become dangerous for moving vehicles. Roads became bad due to inundation. We should think about a permanent solution.



Vaiṣṇava rituals

It is good news that you have got a baby boy. Your parents will be happy to have a grandson. The first letter of the name should be 'a' or 'l' as per almanac. You can name the child Ananta Biswambher, Lalit Mādhav or any other name suitable to you after consultation with your parents. A household devotee will do *vaiṣṇava-seva*, *harināma* and *Bhāgavatam pāṭh* in all holy deeds. To pray for the grace of Bhagavān Narasimha Deva is also good to remove obstacles. You can do *vaiṣṇava-seva* at Śrī Māyāpura during Nabadwīp -*dhām parikrama*. You already performed your eleventh day ritualistic performance but you should always remember - no ritualistic performance is equal to *harināma*. The success of all ritualistic performances depends on the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna. The best way of propitiating Śrī Krishna is chanting of the Holy Name, which you can do in all holy performances.

Annaprāśan of a daughter should be celebrated either in the 5th month or 7th month. In that case, it should be celebrated in the month of *Bhādra* or *Kārtik*.

Muṇḍan saṁskāra (*chūrākaraṇ saṁskāra*) is done in the 1st year, 3rd year or 5th year of a child as per family custom. There are fixed dates for performing *chūrākaraṇ saṁskāra* of a child every year. As per the almanac, the fixed dates for performing *chūrākaraṇ saṁskāra* his year (Bengal Calendar year) were in the month of Vaisakh - 25th April and 7th May. But you want to perform *muṇḍan saṁskāra* towards the end of September or early October. You are to find out some dates auspicious for other rituals and perform the function then. Generally, we do this in case of urgency. You should avoid doing the rituals in the month of *Bhādra*. You are to positively perform *nāma-saṅkīrtana* (especially *kīrtana* of Śrī Narasingh Deva) during *chūrākaraṇ saṁskāra*.

You are going to start a new business. Success of any enterprise depends on the satisfaction of Śrī Krishna. The easiest way of propitiating Śrī Krishna is to serve the *vaiṣṇavas*. *Harināma saṅkīrtan*, with allegiance to *vaiṣṇavas*, will remove all obstacles. You should perform Śrī Narasingh-stava *kīrtana*. You are to take advice from Śrī _____ regarding formalities of the function, viz. —banana-trees, leaves of mango-tree, *Maṅgal Ghaṭ* (consecrated earthen pitcher), *Swastika* (holy sign of fylfot) on earthen pitcher with *Sindūr* (vermilion) and pure *ghee*. The pitcher should be filled with water, *amra-pallav* (mango twigs) with five or seven leaves on the pitcher. Over that, if possible, one coconut and over that one new napkin, etc. Blowing of the conchshell is also sacred. There should be fruits and sweets for *bhog* and distribution as *prasāda* to all present.

Submission to the Will of the Lord is the only way to get peace. We should not have any separate desire. Mundane things are perishable. Attachment to non-eternal things will ultimately end in suffering. We should pray for unadulterated one-pointed devotion and nothing else. Our relation with Śrī Krishna is eternal. All other relations are apparent and non-real. Śrī Krishna is the object of all-love. You can love Him as a son.

My love to you all. May All-Merciful Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga bless you.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Glories of Śrī Tulsi

You have expressed the desire in your letter to know about the glory of Śrī Tulsi and the necessity and efficacy of Tulsi *pūjā*. There are enough scriptural evidences which have described elaborately about the glories of Tulsi which cannot be quoted here in a letter. The subject has been elaborately dealt with in some issues of Śrī Chaitanya-Vāṇī monthly magazine.

You will get enough evidences in *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Padma Purāṇa*, *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa* and other *Purāṇas* regarding glories of Tulsi and advent of Śrī Vrinda Devi as Holy Tulsi Tree in this world to grace the *jīvas* of this world by bestowing on them service of Śrī Krishna and Śrī Nārāyaṇa.

Jīvas are deprived of the service of Śrī Krishna, when they unfortunately become averse to Him due to misuse of relative independence. It is narrated in the *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa* that Vrinda Devi appeared in this world as Tulsi accepting King Dharamadhvaj and Madhavi Devi as her parents in *Kārtika Purnīma tithi* as per the desire of Śrī Krishna and Śrīmatī Rādhā Rāṇī. As there was none equal to her in beauty, she was named Tulsi. Tulsi performed a *līlā* (pastime) of severe penance to get Nārāyaṇa as her husband (*pati*). She obtained this boon from Śrī Brahma. As per the desire of Śrīmatī Rādhā Rāṇī, Sudāma *gopa* appeared in this world as Sankhachur *dānava*, whom Tulsi married first. Sankhachur *dānava* seized *Swarga* (the abode of the demigods) by his tremendous power. The *devatas* (demigods) at first took shelter of Brahma, then Siva and ultimately Vishṇu for their rescue from the oppression of Sankhachur *dānava*. Vishnu *Bhagavān* appeared, killed Sankhachur *dānava* and fulfilled the desire of Tulsi. Vishnu conferred a boon on Tulsi that her body would be Gaṇḍakī *nadi* (Gaṇḍakī River) and her hairs would be Tulsi. Vishnu *Bhagavān* appeared in this world as śālagrāma-śilā.

Whatever is done by the will of God is for the eternal benefit of all, as He is All-Good. E.g cow-dung (stool of cow) & conch-shell (bone of an animal) are considered sacred by the will of the Lord. So what difficulty is there in believing Tulsi as the holy tree appearing in this world by the will of Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna to bestow on us His service? There is nothing impossible for God, Who is Omnipotent. God can appear in this world in any form He likes, for the eternal good of the enslaved *jīvas*, over whom He has got affection. You should perform Tulsi *pūjā* daily.

The glory of Tulsi has been narrated immensely in all scriptures. It has been stated in the scriptures that only the most fortunate persons get the opportunity of being cremated by Tulsi tree after death. Even if a bough or branch or twig of Tulsi tree is offered on the dead body during cremation, the person will get emancipation from all sins. But Tulsi branch should be put on the upper portion of the dead body.



Serve the root

I was shocked to receive the news that your most revered father suddenly passed away. It will be difficult to fill the vacuum created by his passing. He was like a guardian of our Maṭh in Assam and it is very difficult to tolerate his separation from us. Naturally it will be more difficult for you, your brother, sisters and dear and near ones to tolerate this severe grief of separation. Your revered father, grandfather and grandmother, are all well known to me and they are a renowned family of Goalpara. Your father was a very religious person and your revered mother is also devotionally inclined like your father. Their affection for us and the encouragement they gave for the support of the institution is immense, at least to me. I have no suitable words to give consolation to your revered mother in her bereavement. My class-friend is residing near your house. It is my desire that you should approach him and request him to come to your house to console your mother and others. He is also a religious-minded, wise person.

Actually all relationships in this world are temporary. By the desire of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, *jīvas* take birth and after living here in this world for some time they leave this world. Being infatuated by the Lord's illusory energy of three primal qualities, *Sattva*, *Rajaḥ* and *Tamaḥ*, we wrongly think all these relations are ours. By thinking so, we become attached to them and mourn in separation from them. In the *Gītā* (2.27) it is said, “*jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca tasmād aparihārye 'rthe na tvaṁ śocitum arhasi*”— 'The person who is born will surely die, and after death will be born again to reap the fruits of his actions from previous births. The wise do not mourn for that which is inevitable.'

Now how can we serve your father and pay back our debts to him? In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, the quintessence of all scriptures, Veda Vyās Muni has said (4.31.14), “*yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena tṛpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopaśākhāḥ prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyāṇām tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā*”— If we pour water at the root of

the tree, the whole of the tree will be nourished; if we give food to the stomach, all the limbs of the body will be sustained and maintained; similarly, if we serve the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, Who is 'achyuta', the all Unifying Spiritual Principle, and is the root of all, all will actually be served including your father.

You may engage *brāhmins* to perform *śrāddha* (obsequies) for your late father in whatever way you prefer according to social custom. But as your father was devotionally inclined, it is my desire that, in addition to your *śrāddha*-function, you should also hold discourses on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam with *vaiṣṇavas* and arrange for *nāma sankīrtan* at your house for the satisfaction of the departed soul. Also, it is my further desire that you should do something for the worship of Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Krishna at Śrī Chaitanya Gauḍīya Maṭh, Paltan Bazar, Guwahati, on that auspicious day and make arrangement for distribution of *prasād* to devotees. For this you may approach Śrīmad Bhakti Ranjan Yācak Mahārāj, Maṭh-in-charge, and take his advice. I want to contribute to this holy function and shall speak on the phone to Śrīmad Yācak Mahārāj.

I also want to publish an article about your revered father in our monthly Bengali Journal with photograph. You are to send one good photo and all particulars of his holy life. You are to make your mother understand the purport of my writing.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga Śrī Rādhā-Krishna bestow eternal peace to the departed soul of your revered father and also bless you all. My love to you all.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Greatest grief

We are all shocked to receive the sudden heartrending news of the demise of your revered father who had been inspiring us to engage ourselves in the service of Guru, *Vaiṣṇava* and *Bhagavān*. We received the news that he passed away in his own house in Bhatinda on 17th February, 2008, Sunday, mid-day.

duḥkha-madhye kona duḥkha haya gurutara?

kṛṣṇa-bhakta-viraha vinā duḥkha nāhi dekhi para
(Śrī Chaitanya Charitāmrita, Madhyalīla, 8.248)

'Amongst all kinds of sufferings which suffering is considered very serious? Other than separation from a devotee of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, no other grief is so painful.'

It is beyond my capacity to write suitable soothing words to give consolation to your mother and to you. It is only by serving the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, His personal associates and devotees that you can pay off your debts to father or mother correctly.

I want to know something about the history of your father including his parents, other relations, his spiritual initiations etc. for our monthly magazine.

May our All-Merciful Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Krishna bless you all and bestow you strength to tolerate the grief of separation. I am so so.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Separation grief

We are all extremely dismayed to receive the heartrending news of our sudden separation from your revered father who had dedicated his life completely and sincerely to the service of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna and was always giving impetus to all for making their valuable human births successful. We heard the news of his demise in his own house on 28th April, 2008, Monday at about 9 a.m.

duḥkha-madhye kona duḥkha haya gurutara?
kṛṣṇa-bhakta-viraha vinā duḥkha nāhi dekhi para
(Śrī Chaitanya Charitāmrita, Madhyalīla, 8.247)

'Amongst all kinds of sufferings which suffering is considered very serious? Other than separation from a devotee of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, no other grief is so painful.'

It is beyond my capacity to say some soothing words to console the hearts of you and your family members. I want to give reference to one important instruction of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, the quintessence of all scriptures (4.31.14), 'by pouring water on the root of a tree, the whole tree is nourished and by giving food to the stomach, all parts of the body are nourished. Similarly, by serving Achyuta-Śrī Krishna, all will be properly served.' As your revered father served the Supreme Lord Śrī Krishna, his devotion has paid back his debts to all. So for the Supreme Lord's satisfaction we must make arrangements to serve Śrī Krishna and His devotees on the proper auspicious day which will be decided by the devotees. Śrīmad Bhakti Saurabh Āchārya Mahārāj or another *sannyāsī* will serve as priest and will do everything properly, including *vaiṣṇava hom*. Devotees are to be invited and served. There should also be *harinām sankīrtan* and reading of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. There should also be *viraha-utsav* and *viraha-sabha*, where *sādhus* will speak about the glory of your revered father. I shall also do *viraha-mahotsav* as well as *viraha-sabha* here in Kolkata Maṭh.

May All-Merciful Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Śrī Krishna bless you and bestow you strength to tolerate your grief of separation.

Further I am inspired to repeat a divine message of a renowned saint of North-India in Hindi, which you must have heard:-

*kṛṣṇa-nām tū bhajale manavā, bhavasāgara tara jāyegā
jo nā tūne bhajan kiya to phira pāche pachatāyegā*

(O mind, just worship the divine Name of Krishna and you will cross the ocean of birth and death. If you don't worship now, then you will repent later.)

*kyā lekar tū āyā jagata meñ, kyā lekar tū jāyegā
muṭṭhi bāndhe āyā jagat meñ, hath pasāre jāyegā*

(What have you brought here and what will you take with you? You came here with a closed hand, and you will go with an open palm.)

*dhan daulat aur māl khajānā, saṅg nahin kuch jānā hai
is duniyā se ristā terā, ek din sab chuṭa jānā hai*

(Money, wealth or any treasure, nothing will go with you. All your relations in this world will be left behind one day.)

*do din yahān paḍā hai mūrakh, phir sāche ghar jāyegā
jo nā tūne bhajan kiya to, phir pāche pachatāyegā*

(O fool, you are here only for a day, or two, after which you have to go to the abode of the Lord of death. If you don't worship now, then you will repent later.)

*manuṣya colā pāyā hai to, harinām kā jap karo
caraṇa-bhakti prabhu mujhko dekar, merā bhī uddhār karo*

(Since you have received this human birth, you should chant the Holy Name, praying thus: “O Lord, Please give me devotion at Your Lotus feet and rescue me thus.”)

*māyā moh ko choḍkar mūrakh, tu ūpar uṭh jāyegā
kṛṣṇa-nam tū bhajale manavā, bhavasāgar tar jāyegā*

(O fool, leaving all your material entanglements, you should rise above. O mind, just take the divine Name of Krishna, and you will cross over the ocean of birth and death.)

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha



Exclusive necessity of devotion

I hope by the grace of Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga that you are all in good health and spirit.

You are aware that two persons have taken initiation at _____ by your recommendation. One of them is an aged woman devotee. You are well versed in the devotional conclusive thoughts of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and you can make her understand correctly in your language. It is learnt from her letter that she came to

our Maṭh at Vrindāvan and met me, but because of my heavy engagements, I cannot remember her meeting me. Another devotee from _____ took few books from me and after returning to _____, offered those books to her. She has expressed her desire to do something for propagating the teachings of *śuddha bhakti* if she gets some impetus and help for this. I think you have some of our printed books with you, which can be offered to her.

As per the injunction of the scriptures, no female devotee should be invested with sacred thread in which *hom* (offering ghee to fire) is performed. Only competent male members can get investment of sacred thread as per direction of *guru*, but that is not exclusively necessary for *bhajan*. Chanting of the Holy Name is the only way to get the highest objective -- Krishna *prema* in *Kaliyuga*, the black age. We can give the illustration of the holy biography and teachings of *Namāchārya* Haridas Ṭhākura. I have heard from our *guruvarṅga* that Vaishnavism has got some similarity with the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is important to practice pure devotion in the company of a pure devotee. 'Example is better than precept'.

Accept my *daṇḍavat praṇāma*.

Affectionately yours,
Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha

