

Tridandiswami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

VISVARUPA MAHOTSAVA AND THE SANNYASA CEREMONY OF SRILA  
BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA

(Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha, Mathura, India, September 13, 2000)

Today is a very sacred day in our line. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took sannyasa and began to search for his brother, Sri Visvarupa. While searching, He found out on this day that His brother had been in Pandarapur, and there he had left his body and had taken samadhi on the bank of the river Bhima. Then, although Mahaprabhu was observing Caturmasya-vrata very strictly for four months, He shaved off His hair on this day. Before this year, He had never shaved for these four months, nor did He cut his nails. He observed all the rules and regulations of Caturmasya.

There are many items that are not allowed during Caturmasya, such as leafy vegetables on the first month, yogurt on the second month, milk on the third month, and mustard oil on the fourth month. Besides this, throughout all four months, tomatoes, eggplants, and several other foodstuffs are prohibited. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu used to follow all these rules very strictly, but nowadays we see that devotees don't follow. Our Guru Maharaja and Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura were very strong in this regard. Srila Prabhupada said, "Take my photo during the four months of Caturmasya-vrata to show that I never shave at that time. Always keep it; otherwise so many so-called disciples will say, 'Oh, Prabhupada never observed Caturmasya-vrata'."

Parama-pujyapada Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja gave concessions in the western countries, and that is the only reason also used to shave. The westerners could not follow strictly at that time. That is why he allowed tomatoes and eggplant, and that is also why he used to take them. And that is why he also allowed gaja, carrots. I am therefore also giving concessions, not here in India, but in western countries. If the devotees there like, they can take these items, but we don't take them. We should strictly follow our proper line from Mahaprabhu to Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Thakura and my Gurus. In western countries some concession should be given, but here in India we are very strict. If we cannot follow this, then how can we follow Krsna, and how can we serve Radha and Krsna? Mahaprabhu shaved – after two months – and we follow this.

After taking initiation, Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, in his youth called Abhaya Carana De, became Abhaya Carana dasa Adhikari. After some time he became penniless, and about one month earlier than this day he reached here – Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha. I requested him, "Don't stay anywhere else. You are my siksa-guru, you are the friend of my Guru, and you are a very senior devotee of Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Thakura. I have known you since 1946." He accepted and said, "I will stay here." There were two rooms here. I was in this room, and I requested him to stay in the room next to mine. When this temple room was made, however, I went to that room and I requested him to go to the room opposite that one. He stayed there, and he used to write throughout the entire night.

He used to publish a magazine from here. It was from here that he established the 'League of Devotees', and later on he named it 'The International Society for Krsna Consciousness'. He published the first three volumes of Srimad Bhagavatam in Delhi, and he presented them to me. I used to edit his Hindi in the magazine Bhagavata Darsana, and he also continued that magazine while he was in Jhansi.

While he was here and I requested him, "You are so qualified, and Srila Prabhupada wanted you to preach, especially in English, and to go to western countries. You served him by writing so many articles in the 'Harmonist' and other magazines. You are very qualified. You should try to follow the order of your Gurudeva and take sannyasa?" He replied, "Oh, I used to fear this. When my Prabhupada initiated me, I began to read Srimad Bhagavatam, and I saw in a sloka there: 'yasyaham anugrhnami, harisyeh tad-dhanam sanaih. Those whom I accept – I make them street beggars.' So I feared that would be my fate. I thought, 'I have a good family – my wife, and my sons and daughters. What will become of them? Now I'm very wealthy; but if that happens, what will become of them?'" [\*See endnote]

One or two months after initiation he had become the manager of Bengal Chemical. Later he left that and came to Allahabad, where he started his own business called Prayag Chemical. That also failed. Then he started a very large medical shop, and after one year it also failed. Then he began to advertise medicines, as a medical representative. That failed, and he became poor like a beggar.

Then he came here to Mathura to sell his medicines, and in the meantime I requested him, "What are you doing? You have not come to this world to sell medicine. You are a representative of Krsna and Mahaprabhu. You should remember who you are, and take sannyasa. You are a friend of my Gurudeva – a very bosom friend. He is just about to come here. He will be here in about four or five days, so please be prepared to take sannyasa." Muni Maharaja was here, and at that time he was about ninety-five years of age. He told Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, "If you take the renounced order, then I must take it with you." In this way he very much inspired him.

Soon our Gurudeva came and I told him, "Why you are not compelling him? He cannot disobey you. He is your bosom friend. You must insist that he take the sannyasa order." Then, one day, he and Gurudeva were sitting in Gurudeva's room and were joking and talking with each other. I went there and requested my Gurudeva, "Why are you not telling him to take sannyasa?" My Gurudeva said, "Oh, now it is the best time to take sannyasa. You should not fear. What was to be done has already been done. Your wife has left you, your sons have left you, and everyone else has left. Your wealth is gone and now you are like a street beggar."

He became ready and took sannyasa where you are sitting, in the middle of this room, in front of the Deities. His own Deity, Mahaprabhu, is also here with Radha-Krsna, and He was the Deity from Jhansi. I was the priest. I made his danda, uttariya (sannyasa upper cloth), and all other items; and I taught him how to use them. Though he was so much senior to me, though he was my siksa-guru, I also became his siksa-guru in this – how to take sannyasa and how to use all these paraphernalia.

Kirtana was performed by Krsna dasa Babaji Maharaja and Sesayayi Prabhu, and so many others were chanting: "Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare." During the ceremony, kirtana was always going on. Krsna dasa Babaji Maharaja continually performed kirtana.

After this, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja began to preach in Agra, then he went to Delhi, and then he came to Vrindavana, to Radha-Damodara. In order to receive the blessing of Srila Rupa Gosvami, he stayed there, very near to him. At that time also he was penniless, and I used to go there and give him my chaddar to sit on. He had no bed, and practically no other possessions. He was very simple. Somehow he used to make capatis. He would role them and I would put them on the fire and cook them with ghee.

He knew how to make beautiful and tasteful preparations, and he used to teach others. From his letters I came to know that he would cook himself and teach others how to cook delicious foods. He used to write to me from New York, "Please send very sweet pera from Mathura; not less than ten kilos."

Especially you senior devotees should remember his pastimes – how he was a very strong personality, how he preached throughout the world in a couple of years, established so many preaching centers, and wrote and published a variety of books in many languages. He did parikrama of the entire world about twelve times, and now he is ordering me, "You should do it more times than I did." He is arranging everything, and he is always calling me, "You have done it ten times, and now you should complete at least fifteen times".

Sometimes the guru wants to make his disciples look greater than himself; and then he becomes very happy. He says, "My disciple is preaching so much here and there. He is like a father. When Maharaja Dasaratha heard that Ramacandra was very strong and could defeat the entire world, he was extremely happy. When Nanda Maharaja heard that his son Krsna has lifted Govardhana for seven days on the little finger of His left hand, he became so happy and said, "Oh, how my son is victorious!" A guru becomes so happy if his disciples are qualified. My Gurudeva will also be very happy if I'm going here and there. He will shower his mercy on me, and Srila Swami Maharaja is also like this.

In this meeting, his dear senior disciples will speak something in his glorification, and thus offer puspanjali (an offering of flowers in the form of words of glorification) at his lotus feet. After that we will perform arcana (worship).

[Some senior disciples of Srila Prabhupada, like Vrindavana Vilasini dasi, Krishna Kumari dasi, and Radha-kunda dasa spoke, after which Srila Maharaja spoke again:]

I met him in 1946 in Calcutta, when there was no ISKCON. He was apparently simply a grhastha Vaisnava. He had been a friend of my Gurudeva since 1923. My Guru Maharaja was somewhat senior because he joined Srila Prabhupada in 1916. He left his university studies and everything else in 1918, and at that time he fully joined. Then, in 1923, Sri Abhaya Carana De was initiated by Srila Prabhupada – first harinama and then diksa initiation. In 1941 our Guru Maharaja established Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti, and Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja was also one of

the establishers. From the beginning, therefore, as one of the founders, he was very intimate with Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti.

When I met him in 1946, there was no ISKCON. He was alone, but he was serving his Gurudeva, Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, in so many ways. When I saw him I was very attracted. This is my intrinsic nature – that person who is a friend of my Gurudeva, who helped my Gurudeva, who has done a little service for my Gurudeva, who glorifies Gurudeva – I like that devotee and I can give my life for him. I saw that although my Gurudeva was a sannyasi and Srila Svami Maharaja was a grhastha, Guru Maharaja gave him the same seat as himself. He never gave him a lower or inferior seat. The devotion of any person is the only standard of how much we should respect him. My Gurudeva was giving very much importance to this person, and therefore I also accepted him in that way. I thought, "He must be someone special; some qualification compels my Gurudeva to give him so much honor." I therefore began to serve him, and he was also very attracted to me. At that time I was very young, only 25 years old, but he used to talk with me in a friendly way.

I know him very well. He had a strong character and never feared anyone. He was like a lion, like his Prabhupada, and like our Gurudeva. He used to cut all the arguments of the mayavadis, sahajiyas, and many other unbonafide groups. He never tolerated their misconceptions and he made no compromise with them. He was very strong.

At that time Dr. Radha-Krishna was the president of India. He was one of the intellectual giants of the entire world, and a very learned person, especially in mayavada philosophy. He wrote an article about Bhagavad-Gita, and there he said that Krsna's soul is Krsna, but His body is not His soul. There is some difference between the possessor and possession. In reply, Srila Swami Maharaja wrote a very powerful article in our Bhagavata Patrika magazine, and it was sent to that president of India. In that article he challenged all his arguments and said, "You can reply and try to defeat my arguments. I'm not writing to you as the president of India, but I'm writing to you because you are a learned person of Advaitavada philosophy." Dr. Radha-Krishna could not reply. Such persons cannot reply.

He also cut the arguments of the 'murghi' mission. Do you know the murghi mission? It is the mission whose members kill murghis, hens, and eat them. What mission is that? The Rama-Krsna mission. They are not religious persons. They are not even a welfare society because they will even eat cow flesh and other forbidden things. They don't want to honor the Gita; they simply give importance to bread and butter. They don't believe in God, who can give eternal bliss in heaven; they believe in bread and butter.

Srila Swami Maharaja never cared for them. He was against their philosophy and activities, and he cut all their arguments. Perhaps Vivikananda had never read scriptures like the Vedas, Upanisads, and Srimad Bhagavatam. His followers are only social persons; they have nothing to do with religion. Srila Swami Maharaja was fearless like a lion, and He defeated all their arguments. He was in the line of our guru-parampara. He used to follow all the doctrines, all the acaranas (practices and behavior), vaisnava-sadacara (pure habits), and Vaisnava etiquette. I've never seen him wearing so many kunti malas around his neck, as some of his disciples do. We should totally follow him.

We should also try to be like strong lions – jumping. He was like this. He jumped the seven oceans from India and went to New York. What did he do there? He performed a miracle. He turned hippies into happies. They are now happy. A gang of hippies became a high class of devotees.

He gave a lesson to this world, that even a street beggar who has very strong faith in serving his Gurudeva and Radha-Krsna, Mahaprabhu, and Nityananda Prabhu, can jump anywhere – in fire, over the Alps and the Himalayas, in the ocean – anywhere. He can go anywhere and Krsna will help him. Although penniless, he 'jumped over the ocean.' Somehow he traveled on Scindia Navigation, and simply chanted the holy names: "Sri Krsna Caitanya Prabhu Nityananda Sri Advaita Gadadhara Srivasadi Gaura bhakta-vrnda; and Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare." He never took note of whether anyone was looking at him or not. We think, "Oh, all are seeing me," but he was never like that. Sometimes hippies used to dance to his singing. They sometimes offered him a bottle of wine or cigarettes and addressed him, "O my friend." They were very quickly attracted to him and they gradually gave up everything else.

He never made any compromise, especially with the babajis of Radha-kunda who speak sahajiya philosophy. He was like my Gurudeva and his Prabhupada. Nowadays, however, so many are going to Radha-kunda and taking babaji-vesa (the dress, mood, and behavior of the babajis) from the babajis who are not actually following Mahaprabhu. So many ISKCON members are also doing this. What becomes of them? They also become like those bogus babajis. So we should try to be like Srila Swami Maharaja and follow his process, line and instruction.

He used to say that if a blind person and a lame person travel together, they can go anywhere they like. The blind person will take the lame person on his shoulders. The lame person has eyes and he will say, "You should go this way and that way." The blind person will walk and the lame person will direct. The western world is blind and India is lame. What is the meaning? India has no source of wealth to preach this mission throughout the world. It has eyes but no legs; it is so lame. America and all western countries are very wealthy, but they have no eyes. If both combine and cooperate, we can preach this mission to the entire world.

He used to say, "Bombay is my office, Mayapura is my sadhana-bhumi or place of sadhana-bhajana, and my home is Vrndavana." That is why he came to Vrndavana in his final days and took samadhi there – in his home, in Vrndavana – in Goloka Vrndavana.

I don't know why he was so pleased with me that he always used to love me so much. He gave me so many occasions in which I have fully served him. He was very much attracted to me, and it was my fortune that he gave me so many orders to serve him. He told me, as his last service, "Put me in samadhi with your own hands." There were so many god-brothers who were very scholarly and very high-class. And there were more than a hundred very qualified GBC and all others. I had never gone to a university, or anything like that. Still he had so much faith in me, and therefore he ordered me in this way. And I followed his instructions.

He also told me, "You should try to help my devotees. I brought them, but I could not train them fully due to their inability to fully accept my instructions." Then I called Tamal Krsna, Brahmananda, Bhagavan, Kirtananda, and so many others, and I told them, "Don't quarrel after

his departure. You should not think that he will die. A Guru like him never dies. He is always in this world. He is eternally present. So if you want to serve him, you should try to preach his mission all over the world – as he wanted. Don't quarrel for position, name and fame, wealth, or disciples. I know that after the disappearance of a high class of acarya, some quarrel, and some problems come. But I think that you are qualified persons, and you should therefore not quarrel for all these things. Try to give respect to all the disciples of Srila Swami Maharaja, regardless of whether they are senior or junior. You should be very liberal to all, and then you can protect his mission. Otherwise you can destroy his whole mission. I know that you have learned something – how to make money. I know that He has trained you all how, very easily, in a moment, to make so much money. But I think that you'll have to learn more. You will have to learn what are his intrinsic moods, why he descended here from that world, and what was his mission. You should try to understand this. His mission was the same as that of Mahaprabhu. 'Anarpita carim carat' – this mission. And they both did it through sankirtana.

"You know what is kirtana, but you do not know what is real kirtana of the heart. You do not know what is the pure name. If the pure name manifests, a man is totally changed. Love and affection comes for all, even for creepers, trees and everything else. There will be no quarreling, and then you will be 'trnad api sunicena, taror api sahisnuna, amanina manadena, kirtaniya sada harih.' Then I will think that you know his intrinsic mood and you are following that."

If they will honor all devotees, I think that all will return. But if they are not giving honor and respect to the devotees, no one will join them. Even a dog knows. If you will call, "O too too too," he will come. All can understand if you have bhakti in your heart and honor for all devotees. As Srila Rupa Gosvami has told: *krneti yasya giri tam manasadriyeta, diksasti cet pranatibhis ca bhajantam isam*. We should try to honor all, according to their qualification in bhakti, and then everyone will be trained and no one will fall. Otherwise, all are going to fall down. If anyone has a strong personality like your Prabhupada, serving Gurudeva and preaching like him, he will be very high class of devotee.

So it was on this day that your Prabhupada took the renounced order from here, and he preached over the entire world in a couple of years. This miracle cannot be seen anywhere else. He was one of the arms of Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura and Srila Bhaktinoda Thakura, and they predicted his coming. Srila Bhaktinoda Thakura has written, "I think that within a very few years, thousands of western devotees, wearing sikhas, tulsī malas, and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, will join Indian devotees. Both will chant and dance together." This is what we are now seeing everywhere.

So we should chant and remember in the proper line, and all other things we will come automatically. The maha-mantra, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, is Radha and Kṛṣṇa Themselves, and Mahaprabhu Himself. If we are chanting and remembering with sadacara, proper behavior, we will achieve the goal very soon. Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja is showering his blessings upon all those who, although having left Kṛṣṇa consciousness, are now coming again to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

What is the real meaning of ISKCON, International Society for Krishna Consciousness? Kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa bhavita matih- "Pure devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be had even by pious activity in vaidhi-bhakti for hundreds and thousands of lives. It can only be attained by

paying one price – the intense greed to obtain it. If it is available anywhere, one should purchase it without delay." (C.c.Mad.8.70).] If anyone is following this principle, then he is an ISKCON member in the real sense; otherwise not. So we should try to know his mood – krsna-bhakti rasa bhavita matih. If our hearts are saturated with the bhakti-rasa of Vrndavana, then we are ISKCON members in the truest sense. If anyone is falling down, he was never a real ISKCON member, because anyone who has a taste in bhakti-rasa will never fall down. A true ISKCON member can never fall down.

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[\*Endnote: A note to those readers who are newly getting to know Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami: Srila Narayana Maharaja is describing here, and in other places in this lecture, Srila Prabhupada's naravata-lila, his human-like pastimes. Prabhupada was never a struggling conditioned soul. He descended from Krsna's abode; but he showed by example, for our benefit, how we can gradually develop faith and become pure devotees.]