

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

IS BOOK DISTRIBUTION PURE BHAKTI?

Los Angeles, California: Excerpts from May 11 and May 12, 2003

[Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja is in the process of printing a large quantity of Sri Brahma-samhita, Sri Bhajana Rahasya, The Origin of Ratha-yatra, and revised editions of Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindhu, Gaudiya-giti-guccha (the Song book), Their Lasting Relationship, Guru-devatatma, and My Siksa-guru and Priya-bandhu, and Our Gurus: One in Siddhanta, One in Heart. He encouraged the devotees to distribute these books, and others, by sprinkling his Los Angeles classes with excerpts on that subject: The following are a few of those excerpts.]

May 11:

The books that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja produced, and also the books that I am now producing, should be printed in very large numbers – and now it is taking place. We are presently spending about one crore rupees (\$200,000) to print books, and now there is a question of distributing them. I do not want the books to remain in cold storage. I want you all to help me in the distribution of books, and you may also keep some profit for your going here and there.

[This was the introduction to the class. During the class, Srila Narayana Maharaja called on various devotees to speak. During this time, Sripad Madhava Maharaja addressed the devotee audience:]

[Sripad Madhava Maharaja:] One devotee just said that book distribution is not pure bhakti. But when a devotee goes for book distribution, he will take the book and say, "Oh, this book contains Vasanta-pancami (the pastimes of Krsna's rasa-lila during spring time)." Or, "This book contains the disappearance days of Srila Dasa Gosvami and Srila Cakravarti Thakura." They are explaining something about bhakti; they are doing kirtana. When Sriman Mahaprabhu, being Krsna and having taken the complexion of Srimati Radhika, went to South India, He brought Kurma Purana and Brahma-samhita and ordered His devotees to make copies of them. This is book distribution.

[Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja:] He wanted to obey me, so he spoke in summary; and he left some remnants for you and for me. If book distribution is done for one's own purposes, such as personal profit or reputation, then it is not pure bhakti. A devotee must think, "They should have this book and read it thoroughly, and they should enter into a deep understanding of bhakti. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu returned from South India with Sri Brahma-samhita and Sri Krsna-karnamrta, and He told the devotees that they should make a necklace of the teachings therein. Why? Because there is so much siddhanta in them. Without knowing all these subjects, you cannot enter the realm of bhakti.

Book distribution is for this end – by the order of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, to please Guru and Krsna – then it will be real bhakti, otherwise it will not. You should be careful about this. While distributing books, you should think, "I am doing this to please my Gurudeva and Krsna, all should know what is written in Jaiva Dharma." You may tell people, "Jaiva Dharma includes everything from top to bottom about how to develop your bhakti from the beginning. If you want to read only one book, then you will have to read Jaiva Dharma by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura. From the conclusions of Bhagavad Gita starting with Saranagati, and continuing to maha-bhava, everything has been explained in this book. So you must read and follow Jaiva Dharma." Know that book distribution is essential. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu did this Himself, and we must follow His example. But always be careful. It should not be sanga-siddha or aropa-siddha bhakti.

May 12

Book Distribution is not aropa-siddha-bhakti

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself distributed books to others, so don't think that book distribution is aropa-siddha-bhakti [see endnote 1]. Never think like that; never. Srila Vyasadeva first compiled Srimad Bhagavatam, and then he instructed Sri Sukadeva Gosvami to preach it everywhere. If book distribution was aropa-siddha bhakti, why, then, did Krsna give an order in the Gita that this knowledge should be given to everyone?

ya idam paramam guhyam mad bhaktesv abhidhasyati
bhaktim mayi param krtva mam evaisyaty asamsayah
na ca tasman manusyesu kascin me priya krttamah
bhavita na ca me tasmad anyah priyataro bhuvi

["For one who explains this supreme secret to the devotees, pure devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me. There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear." (Bg 18.68-69)]

If there is no Bhagavad-gita in book form, how we can preach? Don't think that distributing it is aropa-siddha bhakti. Have a strong belief in this. If the motive is other than to please Krsna – if it is to earn money to maintain oneself – then it is bogus, aropa-siddha-bhakti. However, if any book is distributed to please Gurudeva and Krsna, for the benefit of all human beings and the entire universe, then it is not aropa-siddha-bhakti; it is svarupa-siddha-bhakti, pure bhakti.*[See endnote 2]

What to speak of book distribution, even a person who cleans the stool of another devotee is much better situated than someone who is chanting and remembering but is criticizing others. Many mayavadis [impersonalists] and sahajiyas [those who equate mundane sex life with Krsna's transcendental loving pastimes] chant the holy name, which generally comes in the category of svarupa-siddha-bhakti, but what is the fruit they aspire for by their chanting? They want to merge in Krsna, and this is offensive. So you should be clear in your mind. When the book is distributed for the benefit of humanity, to please Gurudeva, it is bhakti.* [See endnote 3]

If Gurudeva tells you to clean up the stool of any devotee, you should run immediately to do so. There was once a very sincere devotee of our Gurudeva who rendered him so much service; playing mrdanga and singing excellently, cooking, and washing the cloths of Gurudeva. That disciple, who was quite young, became sick, and Gurudeva became busy in serving and caring for him – even though that boy was his disciple. At that time I personally told Gurudeva, "I want to help you, so that you may have time to preach. I will look after my godbrother." Every day I would wipe off the blood coming from his mouth, and clean up his urine and stools. As a result of this, my Guru Maharaja became very, very pleased with me, and that is why I have been blessed to come here to preach today. Pujyapada Trivikrama Maharaja, used to glorify me, saying, "You risked your life to serve this devotee."

[Sripad Madhava Maharaja:] And he also said, "And by this you conquered Gurudeva's heart."

So you should not have any doubt. You should chant, remember, perform nagara-sankirtana and book distribution, and go through the books; learn the essence of these books and try to follow sincerely. Then it will not be aropa-siddha-bhakti. Otherwise, it must be.

Thank you.

*Endnotes:

1. "Aropa-siddha-bhakti – Endeavors indirectly attributed with the quality of bhakti. Endeavors which by nature are not purely constituted of bhakti – that is, anukulya-krsnanusilana – and in which the performer, in order to fulfill his own purpose, offers his activities and their results to the Lord so that He may be pleased, is called aropa-siddha-bhakti. In other words, because his activities are assigned (aropa) to the Supreme Lord, bhakti is attributed (aropita) to them." (Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindu, 92)

2. "Svarupa-siddha-bhakti: Endeavors purely constituted of Uttama-bhakti

All favorable endeavors or ceta such as sravana, kirtana, smarana, and so on, as well as the manifestation of the spiritual sentiments which occur beginning from the stage of bhava, which are completely devoid of all desires separate from Sri Krsna and which are freed from the coverings of jnana and karma are known as svarupa-siddha-bhakti. In other words all endeavors of the body, words and mind which are related to Sri Krsna and which are performed exclusively and directly for His pleasure without any interruption, these are known as svarupa-siddha-bhakti.

Therefore in Raya Ramananda samvada, the conversation between Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Raya Ramananda found in Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, both aropa-siddha and sanga-siddha-bhakti have been described as external." (Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindu 18-19)

3. " [Within the 64 limbs of bhakti, this is #54] Vaisnava-sastra-seva (serving Vaisnava scriptures) – Only those sastras which cause Bhagavad-bhakti to be obtained are vaisnava-sastras. One should faithfully and regularly study such scriptures, hear them from the mouths of pure devotees, and read and recite them with a worshipful attitude. One should know the object to be obtained by such scriptures, that is bhagavad-bhakti, and having full faith in that, one should mold one's life in accordance with its principles. The restoration of, careful keeping of, publication and propagation of vaisnava-sastras are all included within sastra-seva (service to Vaisnava scriptures)." (Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu-bindu.)

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