

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

VYASA-PUJA

[Spoken on the avirbhava-tithi (Divine Appearance Day) of Srila Narayana Maharaja]

Hilo, Hawaii January 21, 2004

In our Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya it is the custom that any acarya who is widely spreading Krsna consciousness in the line of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Srila Rupa Gosvami, under the guidance of Sri Krsna Dvaipayana Vyasadeva, will worship Srila Vyasadeva and the guru-parampara on his birthday. This worship is called Guru-puja and also Vyasa-puja.

We have seen how our Gurudeva and his god-brothers used to very humbly celebrate their Vyasa-puja. This occasion is not meant for taking puja or worship from disciples. On his birthday the acarya worships his guru and guru-parampara, Srila Vyasadeva, Sri Krsna, Sriman Mahaprabhu, Srimati Radhika and others – in a mood of great respect. This is Guru-puja or Vyasa-puja.

Why do we do bhakti to Sri Krsna? What is the reason that we pay so much respect to Sri Gurudeva? If we are gaining spiritual advancement from someone, we respect him. No gain, no respect. Sri Gurudeva always feels indebted to his Gurudeva and guru-parampara. Without Guru, guru-parampara, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Sri Krsna, what is there? Nothing. In other words there can be no spiritual advancement. Sri Guru considers that all the tattva-jnana, knowledge of established truths, that he has, and whatever bhakti he has, is due to Sri Gurudeva and his guru-parampara. Srila Gurudeva is not independent. He is dependent on his guru-parampara, coming from Srila Vyasadeva. Being a manifestation of Lord Narayana Himself, Srila Vyasadeva is the root of all Gurus, and he has written in his books – Srimad Bhagavatam, Puranas and all others scriptures – about the great debt we owe to Lord Krsna.

Alone, a person is never able to search out a bona fide Guru. If you search on your own, you will accept a bogus guru, because you don't know who is Guru and what are his qualities and standards. You will have to judge by the words of Vyasadeva:

tasmad gurum prapadyeta
jijnasuh sreya uttamam
sabde pare ca nisnatam
brahmany upasamasrayam
(SB 11.3.21)

Srila Vyasadeva has given this definition of guru, and our guru-parampara has accepted it. If you are going to search out your Gurudeva independently, I think that most of you will have bogus gurus who are fallen. You will choose Australian kan-guroos – nothing more than that. When you will have the association of a high class devotee you will have power to judge – not before that. You will also have to take the help of a vartma-pradarsaka-guru, he who shows the path to the pure Guru. The vartma-pradarsaka-guru will point him out and tell you, "Oh, he is really Guru." Otherwise, how could you have known that Parama-pujyapada Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja is Guru? Could you have judged by your intelligence? No. On your own you are not even able to judge whether or not Sri Krsna is the Supreme Lord.

Even Lord Brahma and Lord Rudra are not able to judge. Muhyanti yat surayah – the great sages and demigods are bewildered about Him. (SB 1.1.1). Even liberated persons could not understand that the son of Nanda Maharaja and Yasoda-maiya is the Supreme Lord.

So Gurudeva is very merciful. He will attract those who have sukriti (sufficient past spiritual pious activities) and he will reveal his purity in those devotees' hearts.

Sri Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was, in another form, the priest of the demigods named Brihaspati. We cannot imagine how learned he was, but still he could not understand that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is the Supreme Lord. When Sriman Mahaprabhu mercifully revealed that truth in his heart, then he understood. Otherwise, how would he have been able to know?

Today we are celebrating Guru-puja, because we are very indebted to our Gurudeva, the guru-parampara and Srila Vyasadeva. In India, all the various sampradayas – Vaisnava and Mayavadi as well – accept Sri Vyasa as Guru, and all worship him on the day of Guru-puja without hesitation. We have heard from our Gurudeva that although Sankaracarya worshiped Vyasadeva externally, he also said that Vyasadeva was bhranta, meaning that he had spoken wrongly:

"In his Vedanta-sutra Srila Vyasadeva has described that everything is but a transformation of the energy of the Lord. Sankaracarya, however, has misled the world by commenting that Vyasadeva was mistaken. Thus he has raised great opposition to theism throughout the entire world." (CC Adi 7.121)

Sankaracarya is therefore not really a sisya, disciple, and Srila Vyasadeva does not accept his so-called respect and puja.

We should try to know the heart of Gurudeva – what he really wants. Don't cook as you wish. Don't do anything as you like. This is not service to Gurudeva. We should try to know the mood of Gurudeva – what he wants and what Lord Krsna wants. Try to realize this and try to please Krsna. Whatever you do should be done to please Krsna. Here, Sri Krsna means the whole guru-parampara, Krsna Himself, and especially Srimati Radhika and all the gopis, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Sri Nityananda Prabhu. Whatever you do should be done to please Guru and Gauranga. You should only marry – to please Krsna. You should only not marry – to please Krsna. The gopis married their husbands to please

Krsna. They thought, "We will serve Krsna in parikiya-rasa." If they had married Krsna there would have been no parikiya-rasa.

We are very fortunate to come have come to this guru-parampara line of Srila Vyasadeva, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and our Gurudeva. This line is perfect. In this line you can very easily have the topmost bhakti, Vraja-bhakti. You cannot have it anywhere else.

Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja came to this world and to Western countries only to deliver these truths, and they are present in his books for those qualified to see them. However, due to the fallen state of his audience he had to begin his preaching by cutting the jungles of Mayavada, sakhi-bhiki, sahajiya and other philosophies – and then his period of stay in this world was over. Lord Krsna called him: "Please return here. I am sending your successor to take your place." So he left. He could have stayed here longer, but he saw the mood of his Gurudeva and Sri Krsna – and he went to fulfill their desires.

Sri Vyasa-puja is observed for the purpose of pleasing Krsna, and it has been celebrated since the very beginning of our parampara. Sri Sukadeva Gosvami first performed Vyasa-puja to his Gurudeva, Srila Vyasadeva himself. Then, Srila Suta Gosvami performed Guru-puja to his Gurudeva, Sri Sukadeva Gosvami. Just before replying the questions of the sages at Naimasaranya he prayed:

yam pravrajantam anupetam apeta-krtiyam
dvaipayano viraha-katara ajuhava
putreti tan-mayataya taravo bhinedus
tam sarva-bhuta-hrdayam munim anato 'smi
(Srimad-Bhagavatan 1.2.2)

["I offer pranama to Sri Sukadeva Gosvami, who can enter the hearts of all living beings. When he left home without undergoing the purificatory processes such as accepting the sacred thread, his father Sri Vyasadeva cried out, 'O my son!' As if they were absorbed in that same feeling of separation, only the trees echoed in response to his call."]

Srila Sukadeva Gosvami prayed, "O Sri Vyasadeva, my father and Guru, how marvelous you are! And how merciful! You are causelessly merciful! You dragged me from the forest and from Mayavada philosophy to your lotus feet, and you taught me Srimad-Bhagavatam. By your mercy I was totally changed." This is the job of a Guru.

The bona fide Guru does not consider that his disciples are his property, He does not think, "They are my property." Nowadays I see this going on. So-called gurus think that their disciples are their property; so they accept all their offerings and fall down. A real guru never thinks like that.

At the time of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu there was a meeting in the evening after nagara-sankirtana in the house of Srivasa Pandita. In the meeting Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu announced, "Tomorrow is Vyasa-puja. Srivasa, we will observe Vyasa-puja here in your courtyard. Do you have the paraphernalia?"

Srivasa Thakura replied, "Oh, yes. I have sacred thread, betel nut, rice and all other required ingredients and paraphernalia." Mahaprabhu ordered, "We should be ready at nine in the morning." All others came on time the next day, but Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself arrived somewhat late – and saw that all were waiting for Him. He asked, "Why are you waiting? Nityananda Prabhu is My Guru – My guru-varga (senior). It seems that he is My elder brother, but I see him in relation to his Gurudeva, who is My param-gurudeva (grand spiritual master). Nityananda is My Gurudeva's Guru and he still greater; so He will do Vyasa Puja." [Nityananda Prabhu had taken diksa from Laksmipati Tirtha, the Guru of Sri Madhavendra Puri, who was in turn the parama-guru of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Nityananda Prabhu was actually Sri Madhavendra Puri's god-brother, but He accepted him as His siksa-guru.]

Before Mahaprabhu's arrival, Srivasa Thakura, Sri Advaitya Acarya and all others had requested Sri Nityananda Prabhu to perform Vyasa-puja. They had told Him, "Please begin." Nityananda Prabhu replied, "Yes, yes, I am just about to do it. I will do it right now." But He was not doing it. He simply remained in his seat. Then, when Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu came He at once ordered Nityananda Prabhu, "Why are You delaying? You should begin Vyasa-puja." Nityananda Prabhu then took a very beautiful and fragrant garland and placed it around the neck of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, saying, "You are the same as Lord Krsna", and then He began to perform the arati and worship of Mahaprabhu.

Sriman Mahaprabhu became ashamed, thinking, "Why is He doing this?" Nityananda Prabhu – Baladeva Prabhu – possesses full knowledge of all tattva (established truths). In fact, His lotus feet stand on the head of all tattvas. He replied, "What I am doing is correct. We should try to please the worshippable deity of Srila Vyasadeva – Rasamayi Sri Krsna, who is akhila-rasamitra-sindhu (an ocean of the nectar of pure transcendental mellows). This is Vyasa-puja."

The history of Sri Vyasa-puja began at the beginning of the world, when the Vedas were first created. Vyasadeva divided Veda into four sections, and after that he further explained them in the form of the Puranas and the Upanisads. The Svetasvatara Upanisad states:

yasya deva para bhaktir
yatha deve tatha gurau
tasyaite kathita hy arthah
prakasante mahatmanah

["Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed."]

For those who have the supreme bhakti for the lotus feet of Parama-brahma, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krsna, and equal bhakti for the lotus feet of their Gurudeva

(who reveals Lord Krsna to them), the essence and all meanings of the Vedas, along with bhakti, will manifest in their hearts.

You should not think of Gurudeva like a fashion. In fact, you should have more faith in Guru than in Krsna. Krsna will never cheat you, but even if He will cheat you, Sri Gurudeva will not cheat you. And you should not try to cheat Gurudeva by trying to hide the contents of your heart and thinking, "Oh, Gurudeva should not know." He knows everything, so why attempt to cheat him?

At the time of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja there were no disciples advanced enough to understand what kind of faith one must have in the lotus feet of Gurudeva, nor were they able to understand his identity and mission. His disciples thought only that their Gurudeva had come to spread nama-sankirtana. This is not his greatest glory. This is one aspect of his glory, but there is more. His real glory is that he is Dayita-dasa. Srimati Radhika is Dayita, Sri Krsna's most beloved, and Her dasi is Sri Gurudeva. This is his supreme glory. You should realize who he is. If a person who claims to be Guru is not actually that glorious, how can he give krsna-prema to the whole world? If he has no krsna-prema, not even a scent of krsna-prema, how can he give it? If he has no raganuga-bhakti, how can he give it? If he does not even have vaidhi-bhakti – like Prahlada Maharaja who performed sravanam-kirtanam Visnu-smaranam (pure hearing, chanting and remembering the Supreme Lord) – how can he preach? Such so-called gurus are fallen, and other fallen persons will think, "Oh, my Gurudeva is very, very high." But he is actually fallen like his disciple. So you must learn and realize how to discriminate.

In one of the Upanisads there is a history of a Guru and his disciple Aruni. Aruni's Gurudeva decided to test him, to see how surrendered he was to him. He told Aruni, "It is raining and night has fallen. Go at once go to the field." The field was some distance away and there was much rain and also severe cold, and Aruni had no umbrella or any other protection. Still, his Gurudeva ordered him, "Go to the field and collect water there for paddy. You must reinforce the dam so that the water will not go to the other fields." His Gurudeva then gave him a spade.

Aruni said, "Without any cover, Gurudeva, how I can go? Please give me an umbrella, or at least a blanket or any other means of protection." His Gurudeva replied, "No, you should go at once." Aruni then went to the field in the downpour and severe cold of dark night. The water was not remaining in the field, because the dam was broken, so Aruni took that spade and began to put some earth on the dam to hold the water. But he failed. Such heavy rain and strong current was coming that all the earth was being washed away. Thinking, "I have failed to do this task," he could not return to Gurudeva. Rather, after some consideration, in order to check the water he laid his own body down beside the dam, and thus he succeeded in keeping some water in the field. The whole night his body was tortured by the water current, but still he was somehow able to sleep.

In the morning Gurudeva saw that Aruni had not returned. He asked, "Where is Aruni? I sent him to check the water, but he has still not returned." He then went to the field and called out, "Aruni! Where are you? What are you doing?" Aruni answered in a weak

voice, speaking like an almost dead person, "Oh Gurudeva, I am here." Gurudeva then approached him, took his hands, and said, "Stand up." He gave Aruni a blanket, embraced him, and said, "Oh, you have passed the examination. Now I bless you that all kinds of knowledge – everything that I have learned from the Vedas – shall manifest in your heart. You shall realize all this knowledge and you shall be like me." At once, without delay, in a moment, Gurudeva had performed a miracle! Aruni became knowledgeable in all the Vedas. This was the examination of "cruel" Gurudeva, who was actually very soft.

In another Upanisad you can see the history of Upamanyu, who was a disciple of Dhaumya Rsi. Upamanyu came to his Gurudeva and prayed, "I want brahma-jnana (knowledge of spirit beyond matter) Please give me this."

His Gurudeva replied, "Brahma-jnana is a very secret and powerful thing. You will have to stay in my gurukula for twenty-five years and graze the cows. After twenty-five years I will give you brahma-jnana if you are qualified."

Upamanyu then began to graze the cows, and after six months to one year Dhaumya Rsi called him and asked, "Upamanyu, although I never give you anything to eat, you are very strong and healthy. What do you eat?"

He answered, "When the calves drink milk and some remnant is left, I take that."

His Gurudeva ordered, "Oh, why you are doing that? You should not do that." But he did not tell him what TO do. Upamanyu again went out with the cows, and after some days Dhaumya Rsi called him and asked, "Oh, you are still very strong. What you are eating? Are you drinking milk?"

"No, no!"

"Then what do you eat?"

"When the cows are resting they chew their cud. Some foam comes outside their mouths and I take that. There are hundreds of thousands of cows, so I am okay."

"I have not given you permission to do this, so why you are doing it? You should not take that foam. They are my cows."

Upamanyu again went out with the cows, and after some days, when one day he did not return with the cows in the evening, Dhaumya Rsi began searching for him. He called out, "Where is Upamanyu? O Upamanyu, what are you doing? Where you are?"

"Gurudeva, I'm in a well."

"Why are you in a well?"

"Because you told me not to take the foam of the cows, so I took the juice from a plant and I became blind. That is why I am here. I have fallen in the well."

Gurudeva approached him, pulled him out, and told him, "First your eyesight shall be restored, and then all Vedic literature and brahma-jnana shall come to you. No need of waiting twenty-five years – you are qualified."

Upamanyu is an example of guru-seva. If you will give your life, surrender yourself like Upamanyu and Aruni, then you will receive brahma-jnana. But you will not get Vraja-bhakti; this type of prema is very high.

At the time of Sri Vyasa, Sri Krsna and Sri Baladeva went to the gurukula of Sandipani Muni. At that time Sudama Vipra from Dvaraka was also there. He was a brahmana and the same age as Krsna. One day the wife of their Gurudeva told Krsna and Sudama, "I have no wood for cooking and no wood for the fire sacrifice. Go to the forest and bring some wood." They went, and while they were out in the forest a heavy rain came with severe cold and wind. There was so much rain that they could not see where to walk. Everywhere the fields were flooded. The boys had gathered some bundles of dry wood, and now they took shelter under a dense tree and stood there the entire night. At the same time, they were holding the wood on their heads so that the wood would not get wet. In the morning, Sandipani Muni personally came out of his asrama searching for his disciples, calling out, "Where are Sudama and Krsna?"

"We are here."

"Why did you not return to the asrama?"

"Oh, there was such a flood."

The two boys were trembling from the cold. Lord Krsna is the Supreme Lord, yet He was trembling and obeying His Gurudeva. When one will be submissive like this, bhakti will then manifest in his heart. Bhakti is not so easy – I think you understand this. You will have to surrender like Krsna did. Then Guru will be happy. He will give his blessings and benedict you with brahma-jnana or even more than that.

Sandipani Muni embraced both boys and blessed them by saying, "You have come to me to learn all 64 arts and all Vedic knowledge. I bless you that everything shall come in your heart – at once." Krsna already had all knowledge, but not Sudama, so by serving his Gurudeva he received his blessings of Vedic knowledge and realization. You should try to be like that.

To be a disciple of a rupanuga Vaisnava is still far superior, and for that you will have to follow Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Srila Rupa Gosvami and Srila Jiva Gosvami. Still more sacrifice is required to achieve the type of bhakti they offer. When Srila Rupa Gosvami's disciple, Srila Jiva Gosvami, corrected Vallabhacarya in order to defend the glory of his Gurudeva, Srila Rupa Gosvami told him, "You were disrespectful to a

learned brahmana. He was only trying to help me by correcting my manuscript. You should return home." Jiva Gosvami then went to Nanda Ghata, still in Vraja Mandala, where he stayed in a crocodile hole. He fasted there and was on the verge of starving, thinking, "If Gurudeva is not happy, I should give up my life." He became so sick that it seemed there was no hope for him to remain alive. Srila Sanatana Gosvami once passed through the area where he was staying, he saw his condition, and then went to Srila Rupa Gosvami and asked him, "What is your duty to the jiva?" Rupa Gosvami replied, "To help the jiva attain krsna-bhakti."

"Then why have you rejected Jiva?" Rupa Gosvami began to weep. Sanatana Gosvami brought Jiva back and Rupa Gosvami gave him medical help and nursed him back to health. Jiva Gosvami fulfilled the desire of Srila Rupa Gosvami.

Another perfect example of guru-seva is Srila Raghunatha dasa Goswami. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu placed him in the hands of Sri Svarupa Damodara, and Raghunatha dasa served his Guru with his heart. He did not just massage him; this external seva will not do so much. To massage the heart, to please Gurudeva – this is what is needed. How can we please Guru? How did Srila Rupa Gosvami please his Gurudeva, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu? He knew His heart and he wrote Bhakti-Rasamrta-Sindhu, Ujjvala-Nilamani, Lalita Madhava, Vidagdha Madhava and other books.

Mahaprabhu was extremely happy when Srila Rupa Gosvami wrote the verse,

yah kaumara-harah sa eva hi varas ta eva caitra-ksapas
te conmilita-malati-surabhayah praudhah kadambanilah
sa caivasmi tathapi tatra surata-vyapara-lila-vidhau
reva-rodhasi vetasi-taru-tale cetah samutkanthate

"That very personality who stole away my heart during my youth is now again my master. These are the same moonlit nights of the month of Caitra. The same fragrance of malati flowers is there, and the same sweet breezes are blowing from the kadamba forest. In our intimate relationship, I am also the same lover, yet still my mind is not happy here. I am eager to go back to that place on the bank of the Reva under the Vetasi tree. That is my desire." (Caitanya-caritamrta Madhya-lila 1.58)]

The nature of the pure Vaisnavas in our parampara is that when they sprinkle their mercy upon you, you will enter raganuga-bhakti. Under the guidance of Sri Rupa Gosvami you will serve Sri Sri Radha-Krsna, with a leaning towards Srimati Radhika. This truth is very, very secret, and I have brought you here to understand it. Srila Prabhupada, Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja wanted to give this, and it is explained in his books, but you were not mature enough at that time for him to discuss it openly in his classes. Therefore, following in the line of our acaryas and by his desire, I am revealing many things about raganuga-bhakti.

No one else is speaking like this. All are silent, but I am not silent. In our entire parampara hardly anyone will give this. I want you all to have raganuga-bhakti. To get it,

however, you will have to surrender and really become like the devotees I have described today.

Don't be like Ekalabhya. No Guru will name his disciple Ekalabhya. We have no connection with him. He was a demon, not a guru-bhakta. Dronacarya told him, "I will not teach you archery." He replied, "I must learn from you." He made a statue of Dronacarya and learned everything from him (in the form of that statue). When Dronacarya later on came to the forest and saw his skill, he was in wonder and asked him, "How have you learned this?" "Oh, without your mercy I could do nothing. I received your mercy by worshipping your deity, and in this way I have become very expert in archery." Dronacarya was not pleased with Ekalabhya, who he knew wanted to fight with Sri Krsna Bhagavan and His associates like the Pandavas. He therefore asked him, "Where is your guru-daksina? I want your right hand thumb." Ekalabhya then cut off his thumb and gave it to his Guru, and later on, during the Battle of Kuruksetra, Krsna finished him by the use of His cakra.

We should not try to be like Ekalabhya. Someone may want bhakti so that by the power of bhakti he can destroy his enemy, but that is not good . What is the actual method to come to bhakti?

trnad api sunicena
taror api sahisnuna
amanina manadena
kirtaniya sada harih

["One can chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking himself lower than the straw in the street. One should be more tolerant than the tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige and ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly." (Siksastaka 3)]

This is the way by which we achieve bhakti. You will have to sacrifice and you will have to become saranagata, completely surrendered. Sri Krsna explained this in Bhagavad-gita. He played the part of Guru and Arjuna played the part of the disciple. Because Krsna is Guru, we must obey Him if we want krsna-prema. This prema is much higher than brahma-jnana.

Now I will worship my guru-parampara and offer puspanjali. Guru-parampara and Srila Vyasa-deva are also here. I am very happy with the arrangements today.

Gaura Premanande

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Picture courtesy of Krsnamayi dasi

