

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

THE DEITY IS NOT STONE

Vrndavana, India: February 26, 2004

[In Seva-kunja-gali, just a few doors from Sri Rupa-Sanatana Gaudiya Matha, there was an old temple of Sri Krsna-Balarama. The temple was in shambles, and at times the Krsna-Balarama Deities, who are 322 years old, were not well-served. A few devotees were asked to serve the deities and to take over the property. They tore down the old temple and constructed a new one, and Srila Trivikrama Maharaja gave the temple the name Rupanuga Gaudiya Bhajana-sthali.

After returning from this year's winter world preaching tour, Srila Narayana Maharaja's first class was given there. During that class they celebrated the completion of the temple and the upcoming installation of Sri Sri Radha-Lalita-Madhava. The following is a translation from his Hindi class, on the topic of sri-vigraha-tattva:]

This place is very sacred and very old. Long ago, Sri Krsna-Balarama were worshiped here in a very small temple, and so it was known as the temple of Krsna and Balarama. Now that the temple is rebuilt, this place is called Sri Rupanuga Gaudiya Bhajana-sthali – a very good name.

I came here a few years ago, when construction of the temple first began, and at that time this place was very small, with only one small deity. Now, with the help of many devotees, this matha (temple) has been nicely established. Numerous devotees may now come here and hear hari-katha.

Tonight I will speak about sri-vigraha-tattva. The Deity is not wood, stone, iron, gold or metal – He is directly Lord Krsna, Lord Balarama, or Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, etc. Some people say that God has no form. They say, "If God has a form, He would also have to take birth and die. But this is not the case. There is no birth and death for the Lord, so we should not consider that He has a personal form." Many people also say, "He who is manifest everywhere, who is endless, limitless, in all living entities and in each and every atom – how can that Supreme Being have a form? It is not possible."

The scriptures, however, say something different:

aho bhagym aho bhagym
nanda- gopa- vrajaukasam
yan- mitram paramanandam
purnam brahma sanatanam

["How greatly fortunate are Nanda Maharaja, the cowherd men and all the other inhabitants of Vrajabhumi! There is no limit to their good fortune, because the Absolute Truth, the source of transcendental bliss, the eternal Supreme Brahman, has become their friend." (Srimad-bhagavatam 10.14.32)]

Lord Krsna gave advice to Arjuna, and He has also performed many pastimes in Vrndavana – so He certainly has a form.

There is a theory that every action has some cause; there has to be a reason behind whatever we see happening in this world. Krsna is the cause of all causes. Sarva karana karanam. A mango tree it comes from a seed. We also have taken birth from the semen of our father, established in the womb of our mother. All living entities have a cause in their coming into being, and this cause must have potency. If the seed of the mango tree doesn't have power or potency, how can it produce that tree? A mango tree will be produced, not a jackfruit tree. A neem seed will sprout into a neem tree.

It is explained in the scriptures that Lord Sri Krsna is the cause of all who come into being and all who are destroyed.

yato va imani bhutani jayante
yena jatani jivanti
yat prayanty abhisamvisanti
tad vijijnasasva tad brahmeti

["This entire cosmic manifestation is made possible by the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead." (Taittiriya Upanisad 3.1.1)]* [See endnote 1]

From whom this world has come, through whom it is all present and into which it enters, is called Brahman. What to speak of our Vedic scriptures, even the Muslims' Koran and the Christian's Bible say, "God created man after His own image." God has made our form similar to His own form. The living entities are similar in shape to His own form. All the scriptures say all forms have come from Brahman. If He does not have a form, then from where have these forms come?

There is another point to be considered. Some people, like the Buddhists and Sankarites say that the world was zero and it will enter into zero. They also say that there is no such thing as this world – it was false, it is false and will always be false. But the Vedas say:

om purnam adah purnam idam
purnat purnam udacaye
purnasya purnam adaya
purnam evavasisyate

["The Personality of Godhead is perfect and complete, and because He is completely perfect, all emanations from Him, such as this phenomenal world, are perfectly equipped as complete wholes. Whatever is produced of the Complete Whole is also complete in itself. Because He is the Complete Whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance." (Sri Isopanisad Invocation)]

The Lord is complete. All incarnations appearing from the Lord are complete, and their

origin is also complete. The origin of this world is supremely complete, and He is Sri Krsna. This entire world is emanating from Krsna.

Can you create something from zero? Something has to be there from which something else can be created. Can the world be made from nothingness? The Western theory about the creation is wrong. It is said there that first came fish, then turtles, then reptiles, then animals, then monkeys, then gorillas, and from them came human beings. This is bogus, or in the words of Parama-pujyapada Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, this is a statement made by "rascals".

First of all, human beings were manifested. From Lord Brahma came Manu and from Manu came manava, human beings. All varieties came into being simultaneously, and all varieties of trees were also created at the same time. Darwin's theory is absolutely false. If we adhere to his theory, we would have to think that another species would have manifested after the human species. Why has nothing come after humans? There is no truth or strength in his theory.

The form of the Lord, and what one calls His statue, is known as Vigraha. "Vi" means special, and "grahan" means that God has accepted this form. In this form He accepts whatever we offer; He accepts our bhakti and He accepts a form; and that is why He is called Vigraha – He who has taken a form in a special way. In the scripture Vedanta-sutra it is stated: "Pratikena na hi sa", which means He is God Himself. "Pratikena" means like a statue, "na" means no, it is not a statue and "sa hi" means He is definitely the Lord Himself.

God has form but we can't see Him. There is ghee in milk, but it is not seen externally. Only by churning and boiling will the ghee come out. Similarly, we cannot see God in this world with our material senses, because He is sad-cit-ananda vigraha – His form is transcendental. It is not possible to see Him with our material senses but we can see Him by worshipping Him. If you are not qualified to see Him, how can you see Him? This can be proved quite clearly, by historical evidence. The Vrajavasis saw Krsna, and although Duryodhana was not a devotee, he also saw Him. So many people saw Lord Krsna when He was present.

Dhruva Maharaja saw Lord Narayana, and the Lord had four-arms and was holding conch, disk, lotus flower and club. Sri Naradaji also saw the Lord Narayana, and by the strength of his worship Sri Prahlada Maharaja saw Lord Nrsimhadeva.

Even if one worships God with his material senses and paraphernalia, his material senses will gradually become tadatma (one in quality) with his inner spiritual senses, and he will be able to see and meet with Him.

This is pratyaksa, evidence. In order to give evidence that the Deity is not a piece of stone or wood, I will relate some histories. The Deity of Saksi-gopala walked from Vrndavana to Vidyanagara*[See endnote 2]. Where Pujiyapada Bhaktivaibhava Puri Maharaja has his Matha named Raja Mahandri.

That Deity later went to Kataka and then to Jagannatha Puri. The Saksi-gopala temple was built and He was installed there, and all arrangements were made for Him.*[See Endnote 3]

tanra bhakti-vase gopala tanre ajna dila
gopala la-iya sei katake aila

["When the King begged Him to come to his kingdom, Gopala, who was already obliged to the king for his devotional service, accepted his prayer. Thus the King took the Gopala Deity and went back to Kataka." (Sri Caitanya Caritamarita, Madhya 5.123)]

Is this Deity wood or stone? Can stone or wood walk? He walked for over 1,000 kilometers, crossing mountains and rivers and playing His flute.

Jagannathaji and Baladevaji went to fight on behalf of King Purusottama-jana, the father of King Prataparudra.*[See endnote 4] Are they statues? No, they are the Lords themselves. To consider them statues is a big mistake.

When the Saksi-gopala Deity was in Kataka, the queen of King Purusottama Jana looked at Him thinking, "If He had a hole in His nose, I would give Him a beautiful nose-ring." That night He came in her dream and said, "I have a hole in My nose, so you can come and put the nose-ring in My nose as you have desired." In the morning the king and queen saw that hole. *[See Endnote 5] If the Deity is made of stone, can He perform such pastimes? He is not stone or wood.

Srila Sanatana Gosvami used to reside on the banks of the Yamuna in Vrndavana, and he would go to Govardhana and perform a 14 mile parikrama there. Then he would go to Mathura and do biksa (begging) at the brahma-vaisnava's homes, and then he would return to Vrndavana. This was his daily routine. While in Mathura one day, he saw the Deity of Sri Madana-mohanji playing a traditional game with two sticks (gilidanda) with another boy. He thought, "This Thakurji is playing with the child of this lady here." He sat down, stunned and astonished. When Krsna won the game He told the child to give him a piggy-back ride and the child gave it to Him. When the child won and it was Krsna's turn to give a piggy-back ride, He returned to His Deity form on His throne. The child then told Him, "Next time, don't come to play with me. Don't even come near me. Tomorrow, when You come, who will You play with?" This Deity requested Srila Sanatana Gosvami, "Please take me to Vrndavana and serve Me there." Srila Sanatana Gosvami replied, "I don't have anything. I am eating dry chapattis without salt. If You are ready to accept that, I can offer You that." Sri Krsna is the son of Nanda Baba, who owns 900,000 cows, in addition to eating at His own house He steals butter from other people's houses, and He also expands Himself into millions of calves and gopas who also eat sumptuously – and yet His belly doesn't get full. Whatever Srila Sanatana Gosvami offered Sri Madan-mohan was without salt, and the Deity thus requested him, "At least bring some salt for Me. I cannot eat this dry food." Srila Sanatana Gosvami said, "What can I do? Can You arrange for this?" Thakuraji replied, "Yes, I will arrange," and He did.

All the Deities, such as Sri Madan-mohanji and Sri Govindaji, are not just statues. They are sad-cit-ananda vighraha Sri Krsna Himself.

is varah paramah krsnah
sac-cid-ananda-vigrahah
anadir adir govindah
sarva-karana-karanam

["Krsna who is known as Govinda is the Supreme Godhead. He has an eternal blissful spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin and He is the prime cause of all causes." (Brahma-samhita 5.1)]

He is the cause of all causes.

We see how the Deities interact with their devotees. By worshipping them they will give us their darsana, fulfill our desires and ambitions, and they will even give us entrance into Vraja.

Now it is 7 pm and I must go to Mathura. Please forgive me, but I must leave. If possible I will come again.

[*Endnote 1: "The Vedic hymns confirm the fact that He is the origin of all living entities and the resting place of all. After creation, everything rests in His omnipotence, and after annihilation everything again returns to rest in Him." (A purport to this verse by Srila Bhaktivedanta Svami Prabhupada)]

[*Endnote 2: Srila Prabhupada writes in his translation of Sri Caitanya-caritamrta Madhya-lila: "Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura gives the following summary of the Fifth Chapter in his Amrta-pravaha-bhasya. Once there were two brahmanas, one elderly and the other young, who were inhabitants of a place known as Vidyana-gara. After touring many places of pilgrimage, the two brahmanas finally reached Vrndavana. The elderly brahmana was very satisfied with the service of the young brahmana, and he wanted to offer him his youngest daughter in marriage. The young brahmana received the promise of his elder before the Gopala Deity of Vrndavana; thus the Gopala Deity acted as a witness. When the two brahmanas returned to Vidyana-gara, the younger brahmana raised the question of this marriage, but the elderly brahmana, due to obligations to his friends and wife, answered that he could not remember his promise. Because of this, the younger brahmana returned to Vrndavana and narrated the whole story to Gopalaji. Thus Gopalaji, being obliged by the young man's devotional service, accompanied him to southern India. Gopalaji followed the younger brahmana, who could hear the tinkling sound of Gopalaji's ankle bells. When all the respectable gentlemen of Vidyana-gara were assembled, Gopalaji testified to the promise of the elderly brahmana. Thus the marriage was performed. Later, the king of that country constructed a fine temple for Gopala."]

[*Endnote 3: "The Saksi-gopala temple is situated between the Bhuvanesvara-Khurda Road junction railway station and the Jagannatha Puri station. The Deity is not presently

situated in Kataka, but when Nityananda Prabhu traveled there, the Deity was present. Kataka is a town in Orissa situated on the Mahanadi River. When Saksi-gopala was brought from Vidyanagara in southern India, He stayed for some time at Kataka. Thereafter, He was situated for some time in the Jagannatha temple. It seems that in the temple of Jagannatha there was some disagreement between Jagannatha and Saksi-gopala, a disagreement called prema-kalaha, a quarrel of love. In order to settle this love quarrel, the King of Orissa constructed a village about eleven miles from Jagannatha Puri. The village was called Satyavadi, and Gopala was stationed there. Thereafter, a new temple was constructed. Now there is a Saksi-gopala station, and people go to Satyavadi to see the witness Gopala." (Cc. Madhya-lila 5.9 purport)

[*Endnote 4: "When Purusottama Jana (also known as Purusottama-deva) was about 24 years old, he was very beautiful and strong, and he had an agreement with the King of Vidyanagara in South India that he would marry the King's daughter. He had been communicating with the King of Vidyanagara through messengers and the King informed him that he would come to meet him in person, but he did not specify when. Later, the King went unannounced to see with his own eyes how beautiful, wealthy, and qualified Purusottama Jana actually was. He went along with his whole family, to see if they would agree with the marriage proposal.

At that time, fortunately or unfortunately, it was the first day of the Chariot Festival, and King Purusottama Jana was dressed as a sweeper, sweeping the road before Jagannatha-deva. Seeing this, the King of Vidyanagara became quite upset and felt some disgust toward him. He appreciated that Purusottama Jana was very youthful and beautiful, but he considered him to be a mere sweeper. He thought, "He is supposed to be so wealthy and qualified, but he is sweeping? I wanted to give my daughter to him, but now I see that he is not qualified. He is sweeping like a street-cleaner. I cannot give my daughter to this sweeper." Thinking like this, he returned home and canceled the marriage.

A few days after the festival was over, Purusottama Jana remembered the agreement and wondered what had happened. He asked his counselors, "That king wanted to give his daughter to me in marriage, but there has been no recent indication at all. Why not?" The counselors informed him, "He saw you sweeping on the day of the Ratha-yatra Festival and thought you were a mere sweeper. He doesn't want to give his daughter to a common sweeper."

When Purusottama Jana heard this, he became angry and said, "I must invade his kingdom!" In his mind, he told that king, "You don't know the glory of my Jagannatha-deva!" He collected all his soldiers and generals, declared war on that king, and a ferocious battle took place in the state of that other king.

The King of Vidyanagara worshiped the demigod Ganesa, who was therefore somewhat favorable towards him. Ganesa fought against Purusottama Jana's party and defeated them. Thus, extremely disturbed, they returned to Puri empty-handed. Weeping, Purusottama Jana went to the temple and told Lord Jagannatha, "O Lord, I am your servant. That very mighty King told me, 'You are only a sweeper of Jagannatha,' and he

refused to give me his daughter in marriage. Please help me. I was sweeping for You. I thought You would help me at all times, but he defeated me. I'm serving You, and yet You didn't help me. I was defeated because Ganesa helped him. I remembered You, but You did not help me. Now everyone in the world will think, 'Jagannatha has no power, and that is why His devotee has no power. Jagannatha is very weak and insignificant.' This is so shameful; I will die here. I will not eat or drink anything, and I will die here in front of You, in Your temple."

Later that night, King Purusottama Jana had a dream in which Jagannatha-deva told him, "Try again. Last time you went straight to war without calling Me and therefore I did not help you. But now I will help you. March again with all your soldiers and generals. Don't be afraid, and don't worry. Go and invade that king's territory again. Baladeva and I will go there personally, and somehow you will be aware of this. You will defeat that king, along with Ganesa, and everyone else on his side."

Purusottama Jana became very happy and made arrangements to again invade the kingdom. The next day he called for more soldiers and generals, and they started on their way and marched quickly towards Vidyanagara.

Meanwhile, Jagannatha and Baladeva got up on very strong and beautiful horses. Baladeva's horse was white, and Krsna Himself rode a red one. They were both sixteen years of age, one blackish and the other white, and both were very powerful, strong, and beautiful. They wanted Purusottama Jana to have faith that they were going to fight for him, so they went some miles ahead of him. Many miles from Puri, they reached a village near Chilka, Alalanatha, near a very large and beautiful lake. There, Krsna and Baladeva came upon an old village gvalini (milk-lady) carrying a large pot of buttermilk on her head. It was a hot summer day, and Jagannatha and Baladeva said to her, "Mother, can you give us some buttermilk? We are very thirsty."

"Can you pay me?" the gvalini asked them. "I will give you some buttermilk if you pay me." Krsna and Baladeva replied, "We cannot pay you. We are soldiers of the King, and we are on the way to battle. Our King is coming and he will pay you when he reaches here. You can tell him, 'Your two soldiers were going this way. One was blackish and the other white. They were riding on their horses with their swords and other weapons.'" She asked, "How will he be able to recognize that you are his soldiers? How will he know that it is his own soldiers who have taken this buttermilk?"

They replied, "We will give you some proof to show the King, and then he will pay you."

The village lady gave them her whole pot of buttermilk, and they drank it all and felt satisfied. Then they gave her their very beautiful rings and told her, "Give these rings to the King and tell him, 'The owners of these rings have gone before you, and they said that you will pay for their buttermilk.'" The boys then went happily onwards.

The milk seller waited and waited, and finally the King arrived there with his entire army of hundreds of thousands of soldiers. When the army arrived, the old lady began to search

for him, asking, "Where is the King? Where is the King?" The soldiers told her, "The King is there," and she walked up to him and said, "Your two soldiers have gone ahead. They were both young, beautiful, and very energetic, and they were riding on horses. They drank my entire pot of buttermilk, and they told me, 'Our King will pay.' So you should pay for my buttermilk." The King told the old lady, "None of my soldiers have gone before us." She replied, "Yes, they have. I've seen them and I've given them my buttermilk." The King told her, "How can I believe they are my soldiers? All my soldiers are with me. No one has gone ahead. We are the first to come." Then he asked her, "Do you have any proof?" "Yes," she said, "I have proof."

The milk-lady showed the two rings to the King, and on the rings he saw the names Jagannatha Simha and Baladeva Simha (Simha means "lion"). He became happy and inspired, and he thought, "These are the two rings I had made by the goldsmith.

They are the same rings that I presented to Jagannatha and Baladeva! Jagannatha and Baladeva have done this for me so that I would know they are with me. This time I will surely conquer that King." He then donated some of his kingdom to that old village woman. He offered her a large estate, telling her, "Take this land and nourish many generations of your family with it." That lady's family is living on the same estate to this very day.

Purusottama Jana then invaded his enemy's kingdom and defeated his entire army. He forcibly took away the King's daughter and imprisoned her, and all the King's counselors as well. He also took the King's golden throne, and the deity of Bhanda (cheater) Ganesa. Bhanda Ganesa had been fighting on the side of the King of Vidyanagara, so Krsna and Baladeva captured him and bound him up, saying, "He is Bhanda Ganesa." Ganesa knows well that Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the all-in-all, yet he took the wrong side. That is why Krsna and Balarama called him "Cheater Ganesa." Purusottama Jana arrested the King, and then mercifully released him, saying, "I shall not kill you." Then, having conquered Vidyanagara, he took permission of the deity Saksigopala, the witness of the young brahmana, and brought that deity to Kataka. He also took the very large and beautiful deities of Radha-kanta, who are still in the Sri Radha-kanta Matha in Jagannatha Puri, where Caitanya Mahaprabhu used to live in the Gambhira. He also took Bhanda Ganesa, bringing all these deities to Puri. [Origins of Ratha-yatra by Srila Bhaktivendanta Narayana Maharaja]

[*Endnote 5: When the Gopala Deity was installed at Kataka, the Queen of Purusottamadeva went to see Him and, with great devotion, presented various kinds of ornaments.

The Queen had a very valuable pearl, which she wore on her nose, and she wished to give it to Gopala. She then began to think as follows.

"If there were a hole in the Deity's nose, I could transfer the pearl to Him."

Considering this, the Queen offered her obeisances to Gopala and returned to her palace. That night she dreamed that Gopala appeared and began to speak to her as follows.

"During My childhood My mother made a hole in My nose and with great endeavor set a pearl there.

"That very hole is still there, and you can use it to set the pearl you desired to give Me."

After dreaming this, the Queen explained it to her husband, the King. Both the King and the Queen then went to the temple with the pearl.

Seeing the hole in the nose of the Deity, they set the pearl there and, being very pleased, held a great festival.

Since then, Gopala has been situated in the city of Kataka [Cuttak], and He has been known ever since as Saksi-gopala.

Thus Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu heard the narration of Gopala's activities. Both He and His personal devotees became very pleased.

When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was sitting before the Gopala Deity, all the devotees saw Him and the Deity as being of the same form.

They were of the same complexion, and both had gigantic bodies. Both wore saffron cloth, and both were very grave.

The devotees saw that both Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Gopala were brilliantly effulgent and had eyes like lotuses. They were both absorbed in ecstasy, and both Their faces resembled full moons.

When Nityananda saw the Gopala Deity and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in that way, He began to exchange remarks with the devotees, all of whom were smiling." (Cc. Madhya-lila 5. 125-138)]

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