

Awakening to the Absolute



SRILA B.R. SRIDHAR MAHARAJ

PART ONE

WAKING FROM THE DREAM

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: We find this verse in *Srimad Bhagavatam*:

*avismrtih krsna-padaravindayoh
ksinoty abhadrani ca sam tanoti
sattvasya-suddhim paramatma-bhaktim
jnanam ca vijnana-viraga-yuktam
(Srimad Bhagavatam 12.12.55)*

(“For one who remembers the lotus feet of Krishna, all inauspiciousness soon disappears, and one’s good fortune expands. In other words, one becomes free from all material contamination, one attains liberation from repeated birth and death, and one’s real spiritual life begins. As one’s heart becomes gradually purified, one’s devotion for the Lord within the heart awakens, and one realized the *Paramatma*. Thus one gradually develops knowledge (*jnana*), realization (*vijnana*), and renunciation (*vairagya*).”)

Krishna consciousness, remembrance of the divine feet of Krishna – *krsna-padaravindayoh* – will dissipate, destroy the *abhadra*, what is undesirable, what is not good in us. That which is nasty, which is impure within us, will be destroyed by the continuance of Krishna consciousness. In any stage of its development, even in its lower stage, its slightest, ‘negligent’ connection can destroy our undesirable connection with the things of lower nature. And, it will promote goodness within us: *sattvasya-suddhim*, the substantial character of our existence, will be improved; our soul-existence, that will be purified. Our standpoint, our understanding, our aspiration – everything, will be purified. And, *paramatma-bhaktim*: we shall attain devotion, attachment to the super-subjective realm; and our knowledge, our conception about that – *jnanam ca* – will improve. And that knowledge – the conception about Him – will develop to *vijnana*, a proper conception, and will effect in us *viraga-yuktam*, apathy to this mundane world.

At any cost, we are to maintain our Krishna consciousness. The advice is: try to maintain Krishna consciousness, it is *the* medicine. And there is no other medicine which can produce Krishna consciousness, which can cure our disease and discover Krishna consciousness within us.

Light from Light

Krishna consciousness is the cause of Krishna consciousness! And we have to get help from the *sadhu* who has got Krishna consciousness within them. Just as, from one candle another candle may be lit. A candle cannot produce light from within, but it is to be lit from another candle – it is something like that. We are to awaken our buried Krishna consciousness, which is covered by ‘*anyabhilasa-karma-jnana*’ (fruit-seeking, selfish work, the result of the attempt to satisfy material desires, both fleeting and ‘organized’; and the search for philosophical/spiritual knowledge, devoid or independent of devotional service.); so, that light, that association, will come to help the sleeping Krishna consciousness within us, and our consciousness will arise from its sleep and show itself, as it is. So, the method is that: to take *sadhu-sangha – krsna-bhakti janma-mula, haya sadhu-sangha* – association with the *sadhu*, devotee of Krishna, is the root-cause of Krishna consciousness.

At the same time, it is told that Krishna consciousness is *ahaituki*, causeless. How are we to harmonise these truths? – *Krsna-bhakti*, faith in Krishna, or devotion to Krishna, we can get from the *sadhu*; at the same time it is told that it is ‘causeless’.

In this connection, Visvanath Cakravarti Thakur has explained the meaning of *ahaituki* in this verse from *Srimad Bhagavatam* (1.2.6):

*sai vai pumsam paro dharmo
yatho bhaktir adhoksaje
ahaituky apratihata
yayatma suprasidati*

(“The supreme occupation (*dharma*) for all humanity is that by which man can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent

Lord. Such devotional service must be causeless and uninterrupted, to completely satisfy the self”) –

He explains that here, *krsna-bhakti* is described as *ahaituki*, causeless, and also *apratihata*, continuous – so when it is awakened in our heart, we can feel that our heart is getting wonderfully satisfied, *yayatma suprasidati*. The satisfaction is produced in our heart, we can feel it. *Ahaituky apratihata*: it has no cause; and it cannot be checked, cannot be opposed, opposition cannot have any effect there – it is such. *Bhakti* comes from *bhakti*. In this way it is *ahaituki*. Just as, the light is there and another candle is lit from it. From light, light is coming. In this way we are to trace it out, to understand it: the original Light, that is eternal, self-existent, and is extending itself, so it has no cause, it is ‘causeless’. The cause is there eternally, and it is extending itself.

Connection with the Causal Plane

And, *bhakti* is *apratihata*: temporarily, it may seem to be opposed, or apparently checked, but: *nehabhikrama-naso ‘sti pratyavayo-na vidyate* – (“Even a small beginning in this devotional service can never go in vain nor can any loss be suffered.” *Bhagavad-gita* 2.49) – It won’t leave you! For the time being it may be suppressed a little, but it cannot be finished – it is of eternal character. It is of eternal character: it has got connection with the eternal aspect of the universe. So, it is ‘*apratihata*’. We are to come near such sort of existence, we are to come in connection with that plane of life – a particular plane, plenary existence, acquaintance, or nature. It is there; only we are to have our connection with it.

Systematic Knowledge

So, in this verse from *Srimad Bhagavatam*:

*avismrtih krsna-padaravindayoh
ksinoty abhadrani ca sam tanoti
sattvasya-suddhim paramatma-bhaktim
jnanam ca vijnana-viraga-yuktam*

(Srimad Bhagavatam 12.12.55)

We find here, *jnanam ca vijnana viraga-yuktam* – ‘*jnana*’ means direct knowledge of a thing, and ‘*vijnana*’, systematic knowledge. In *Bhagavad-gita* also, we find this ‘*vijnana*’:

*jnanam te 'ham sa-vijnanam,
idam vaksyamy asesatah
yj jnatva neha bhuyo 'nyaj,
jnatavyam avasisyate
(Bhagavad-gita 7.2)*

(“Now I shall fully describe to you, with the taste of the flavour of divine sweetness, this knowledge of My grand majestic splendour and opulences. After knowing all this, absolutely nothing will remain for you to know, being situated on this beautiful, joyful and victorious path”) –

Here we find that *jnana* means a general knowledge, of the whole, and *vijnana* means the knowledge of its constituent parts – as a system, systematic knowledge. So:

Jnanam ca vijnana-viraga-yuktam, you will attain the knowledge of the Absolute as a ‘system’ – of parts, in gradation, a hierarchy.

Adjusted Attraction

And, ‘*viraga*’ – *viraga* has a twofold meaning: one ‘negative’, and the other ‘positive’. The negative meaning is : you will have no attraction for ‘non-God’, that is, you will have no mundane attachment, no attraction for mundane ‘necessity’. And positive: *visisyate-raga* – you will have excellent (*visisyate*) attachment (*raga*) – that kind of attachment which is accepted through the process of ‘selection and elimination’, attachment located in its proper place. Your attraction (to Him, to God) will not be through a raw or approximate estimation: “This is good; that is bad; this is a mixture”; but you will have progressively eliminative attraction, adjusted attraction. This is the meaning of *viraga-yuktam*.

So, this knowledge is such: ‘*jnanam ca vijnanam-viraga-yuktam*’: knowledge that is supported by (based on) attraction, and also, by experience of the ‘system’, that knows how much attachment – more attachment, or less – is necessary in any part of it. Discriminative at-

tachment: “attachment for the eye, attachment for the hand, they should not be equal”; an adjusted attachment, in a particular system. The attachment should be well-adjusted: wherever, and how much, attention is necessary – the criterion is according to that. So, “The head is more important, and the leg, a little less”. In this way, you will gradually acquire properly adjusted attachment for the systematic whole.

First it is hazy, a ‘mass of attraction’, and then the attraction will be systematised. As much as you will come in connection with the other side – the object of your attachment – in a systematic way, so much you will be able to realise (Him).

Clearer Conception

So:

*avismrtih krsna-padaravindayoh
ksinoty abhadrani ca sam tanoti*

In a general way, the path of good advancement is given here. And, then, ‘*sattvasya-suddhim*’: your understanding, in its progress, will have its undesirable portion eliminated. Your conception will become more clear – clearer and clearer. With that clarity, undesirable things from your conception will gradually vanish, and your progress will lead you to the perfect conception: *sattvasya-suddhim*. In the beginning, that ‘*sattva*’ (truth) is what you come to understand in an approximate way, to be ‘eternal’, or *sat-cit-ananda* (eternal truth, consciousness and bliss), but there will be gradual development in your understanding; it will become more clear and more pure.

So, the development towards Krishna consciousness is such. First, a ‘mass of light’; then the figure; then the potency; then the ‘*lila*’ (pastimes) with the potency. In this way your approach will be closer and closer, and many things, the closest and minutest things, will come to your view. The minutest part also, the most detailed things – the whole *cit-vilasa* (the spiritual variegatedness of the conscious plane) will be very close to you. You will be led higher and higher, closer to the specified, differentiated view of that plane. In this way there is progressive development – progress in *bhakti*, devotion.

PART TWO

THE PATH OF THE HEART

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Any question?

Disciple: In the *Bhagavad-gita*, Krishna says:

*bahunam janmanam ante,
jnanavan mam prapadyate
vasudevah sarvam iti,
sa mahatma sudurlabhah
(Bhagavad-gita 7.19)*

(“After many, many births, the *jnani*, person in knowledge (who happens to achieve the association of My pure devotee) finally comes to understand that the whole universe of moving and stationary beings is of the nature of Vasudeva, alone, in as much all are subordinate to Vasudeva. (I, as Vasudeva am the source and substance of all that be.) Having grasped this conception, he surrenders unto Me. Know such a great soul to be extremely rare.”)

What exactly is the meaning, here?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: From ‘*brahma*’ conception, the different instalments follow. In *brahma* realisation, there is a ‘mass’ of consciousness: ‘all-consciousness’. Then, the next step will come: the consciousness is of individual character – with deeper vision, individuality is added to consciousness. There is consciousness plus individuality.

Consciousness and Personality

In fact, no consciousness can exist without individuality, without personality. So, the consciousness is personal: personality and consciousness, they cannot be separated, one from the other. What is diffe-

rentiated from personality, that is only the halo of the personality – it is something like that. And that ‘halo’ that *brahma* – is also the combination of minutest personality, of souls.

Substance is of two kinds: *ksara*, or changing, perishable; and *aksara*, unchanging, eternal. In the *Bhagavad-gita* (15.16) Lord Krishna says: *ksarah sarvani bhutani* – whatever we see in the changing aspect of the world, that is called *ksara*. And what is unchangeable is called *aksara*. Then, He says:

*yasmat ksaram atito ‘ham
aksarad api cottamah
ato ‘smi like vede ca,
prathitah purusottamah
(Bhagavad-gita 15.18)*

“My existence transcends both of these two substances, *ksara* – *aksara*. So, I am *purusottamah* – My name is ‘Purussottama’. My glories are sung in the world and in the scriptures, as Purusottama, the Supreme Person.”

‘Purusottama’ means Vasudeva. So, *bahunam janmanam ante...*; after many births, when the *jnanis*, those of the impersonal school, come to understand that the Prime Cause of the consciousness of their quest is a personal one, then they come to conceive of Vasudeva.

Real Devotion – Most Rare

But such *jnanis* are very rarely to be found. Mostly, *jnanis* cannot cross this line. They are lost there:

*ye ‘nye’ ravindaksa vimukta-maninas
tvayy asta-bhavad avisuddha buddhayah
aruhyā krcchrena param padam tatah
patanty adho ‘nadrta-yusmad anghrayah
(Srimad Bhagavatam 10.2.32)*

“O lotus-eyed Lord, although non-devotees who accept severe penances and austerities to achieve the highest position may think them-

selves liberated, their intelligence remains impure. They simply speculate in various ways and do not seek the means to take shelter of You. Because they have no regard for Your lotus feet, they simply fall down from their position of imagined superiority into material existence again”).

Generally, it is the fate of the *jnanis* to climb up to the highest position with great effort, and then, when they cannot grasp that “consciousness means ‘person’” – they cannot cross that understanding – they have to revert back. They have to come back, fall back. And for those who can cross this line, who can understand that: “Yes, consciousness means person – a Big Personality, I am small”, *bhakti* begins there. The relation of subordination of the lower to the Higher, that comes into effect. And, *sa mahatma sudurlabhah* – such a person among the *jnanis* is very rarely to be found, who can take the positive connection of the higher aspect of life. Mostly they come back, they have to come back from there. After much penance, they climb up to that high mark, but they cannot accommodate that “the higher Entity must be dealt with devotion”, so they have to come back.

Personality with Potency

But those who realise: *vasudevah sarvam iti*, that Vasudeva – Purusottama – is personal, they can ‘cross the line’ and enter Vaikuntha, the service area proper.

And there, we are told, gradually as their vision grows more and more, they can find potency on the side of the personal God. Then they become the devotee of Laksmi-Narayana, and enter completely into Vaikuntha-*seva*. And in that service, we find awe, reverence; there are *sastric* (scriptural) rules, and also examples of the higher-realised souls, to guide them.

The Search for Full Engagement

And in that Vaikuntha-*seva*, if the soul does not find the whole of his innate nature having full engagement, there will be some sort of thirst, some inner tendency which cannot find any corresponding relation to satisfy itself. And when he feels this kind of urge from within, he

has to search after another *rasa* (a soul's specific service mood/relationship with the Lord, and the 'taste' derived therefrom.), for a purer, more friendly service than the filial service (*dasya-rasa*).

And ultimately the *madhura-rasa* service – the sweetheart's service, in consortherhood – urges him to go up. It urges him to go up, and to go deeper. And gradually, by coming in contact with such (*madhura rasa*) agents, he finds his own heart blossoming. And blossoming to its fullest extent, his heart takes him gradually towards Goloka Vrindavana (the supreme spiritual planet, abode of Lord Krishna).....

The Service of Reality the Beautiful

Then he can see that what was (initially realised as) '*brahma*'; then *Paramatma*, or Vasudeva; then Laksmi-Narayana – that has gradually come to him as Krishna consciousness, not Narayana consciousness. Superceding Narayana consciousness, he comes in contact with Krishna consciousness of the Reality. He is awakened – he finds himself awakened in a plane where he see the all-connecting, all-harmonising principle is no longer Narayana, but Krishna – He is showing Himself as Krishna. Then he is fully awakened. His heart is fully awakened, and at the same time he sees that the environment, and the object of his search, is also fully equipped. This is full-fledged theism.

Full-fledged theism – where the theistic conviction receives its satisfaction in the fullest way. Just as, with the opening of the eye we can see the world, and according to the degree of our sight we come to see the subtlest thing of the environment, so also, by our inner awakenment of the fullest type, we come to a particular world, environment, and that is Vrindavana – Goloka Vrindavana, the land of love. And movement there is spontaneous; and all around, we find the environment only friendly. It is so simple, so friendly; and the dealing of all who are there are filled with so much intimacy.

And in Vrindavana we will find that our thirst for any higher change of environment, of association, no longer needs to be quenched; but there is thirst, eternal thirst, for coming in closer relation with them, closer connection with them. There is no possibility of any higher change of environment – where he has reached is almost final – and now the only remaining thing, is how to come into a more and more close connection

with the environment. And that becomes the initiative of our movement there: more and more intimate connection with the environment. The environment is eternal, but in the intimacy of connection – the ‘competition’ (in loving service), the movement, is there. And the guidance is given according to that.

Merging in Krishna Consciousness

In this way, there is progress. There is some sort of ‘necessity’, by which the service is moving. And, there is repetition – a kind of ‘repetition’, but it is ever-fresh, ever-new! It is ever-new, and it is only a question of the time. For example, every day when I am hungry, in the morning, food is tasteful to me, and not always – by the movement of the time, it is like that. In this way, everything is palatable, not stale. In that plane, there is movement of time, but it is eternal. It is managed by *yogamaya* (the internal potency of Lord Krishna, who arranges and conducts His *lila*) in such a way.

And finally, there we will attain the fullest satisfaction of all the inner parts of our system, the wholesale satisfaction of every atom of every constituent part of our spiritual body: *priti anga lage kale, priti anga mora* – “Every part of my every limb, cries for union with the corresponding part of every limb of the other side”. *Sambandha* – relationship with the environment – may come to such a stage, that every atom constituting my spiritual body and mind, will aspire after union with every corresponding part of the environment.

In this way, in such a friendly way, so many are moving there, and it is adjusted accordingly by *yogamaya*. And this is the highest conception.

Priti anga lage kale, priti anga mora – “Every atom of my existence is in loving aspiration with the environment, and that is Krishna. Krishna consciousness has surrounded me.” ‘Surrounded me’ means, “From all sides it has embraced me; I am lost in the thought of Krishna consciousness, with its detailed, elaborate acquaintance. I am merged, merged in the deepest part of Krishna consciousness, where I shall find “Krishna has captured every atom of my existence. Every atom is feeling as if it is experiencing separate pleasure by His embracing....”

This is possible only in consortherhood relationship, where every atom has been embraced, captured, by coming into the most intimate connec-

tion with Him. It is called *adi-rasa*, or *mukhya-rasa*. The name of *madhurya-rasa* is *adi-rasa*, that is, it is the most original, it is the source of all other *rasas*, and all other *rasas* are dependent on it. So it is called ‘*adi-rasa*’. And, *mukhya-rasa*: the sum total of all ‘*rasas*’ – their gist, their essence, is represented there. We are told like that.

And Mahaprabhu came with this gift – *madhurya-rasa*. It is *anarpita carim cirat*, “that which was never distributed before” – that of which, it is considered, any distribution was not possible previously, before Him.

Highest Revelation

In Bhaktivinod Thakur’s book *Jaiva Dharma*, we find that one Vaisnava is asking his Gurudeva, “Devotion, it is eternal; but why do you say that it came from Mahaprabhu?” Then his Guru, Paramahansa Babaji, is saying, “I visited Vrindavana and asked the eternal servitor of Sri Caitanyadeva, Sanatana Goswami: “This *anarpita carim cirat* – “which has never been dealt with before” – what is the meaning underlying it?” Then Sanatana Goswami replied: “Bhakti is eternal; in ‘*Narada-bhakti-sutra*’, ‘*Sandilya-sutra*’, all such scriptures, this has been given – but the type of devotion which Mahaprabhu came with, which we meet after the advent of Mahaprabhu Sri Caitanyadeva, that was not previously at any time open to the ordinary person. So, it is called ‘*anarpita carim*’. And what is that standard of devotion? It is this: complete surrender to Krishna in consorhood, where every atom of the jiva-soul gets welcomed and embraced by the corresponding atom of Krishna consciousness – *madhura-rasa*. That was not open to the public before. This is my finding, my faith. You may accept, or not accept ...” Sanatana Goswami told like this to that Vaisnava: “This is my private conception – you may take it, or not”. This was his reply.

The World of Dedication

So devotion has its beginning; the beginning of devotional life is here, where Krishna says ‘*vasudevah sarvam iti*’ (*Bhagavad-gita* 7.19) (“I, Vasudeva, am the source and substance of all that be”). Then, the beginning of bhakti, the primary admission into the devotional school

above ‘*jnana*’ – knowledge - and *vairagya* – renunciation, that is *santa-rasa* (‘passive’ relationship with the Lord.) And from there the gradation: *dasya-rasa* (servitude); then *sakhya-rasa* (fraternity); then *vatsalya-rasa* (parenthood); then *madhura-rasa* (conjugal). All this is given in details in ‘*ramananda-samvada*’.

In this way, *bhakti* is going up. Systematically, we are to understand, and digest, digest what is ‘*bhakti*’. But, in the beginning, we are to have a broad conception of the positive world, the world of dedication.

Epilogue

This famous discussion (*ramananda-samvada*) is recorded by Srila Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami in his sublime account of the life of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, *Sri Chaitanya-charitamrta*, (*Madhya-lila*, Chapter 8: “Talks between Sri Chaitana Mahaprabhu and Ramananda Raya”). It is mentioned in this talk only briefly by Srila Sridhar Maharaj, but we give its reference for the reader, because this ‘*ramananda-samvada*’ was most beloved to, and often quoted by Srila Sridhar Maharaj. On the order of his Guru Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, Srila Sridhar Maharaj discovered the location where this historic discussion took place, on the bank of the Godavari river (Andhra-Padesh, India) and established a Temple there. He many times pointed out that the entire theological basis of Gaudiya (Caitanyite) Vaisnavism is contained therein.

The Golden Gift

*sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu nityananda,
sri-advaita gadadhara
srivasadi-gaura-bhakti vrnda
golokera prema dhana, harinama-sankirttana:*

The Golden Gift brought to this world

From the topmost planet of the spiritual sky,
Goloka dham, by the Golden Lord
Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu – the Hare Krishna
Mahamantra (Great Chant for Deliverance):

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare

*harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam,
kaulau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatih anyatha*

“The Holy Name! The Holy Name! The Holy Name! Without chanting of the Holy Name, in this age of Kali there is certainly no means of deliverance. There is no other way. There is no other way.”

(Brhan-naradiya-Purana, 38.126)

“Those who are actually advanced in knowledge are able to appreciate the essential value of this age of Kali. Such enlightened persons worship *Kali-yuga* because in this fallen age, all perfection of life can easily be achieved by the performance of *sankirttana*, the congregational chanting of the Lord’s Holy Names.”

Sri Karabhajana Muni
(Srimad Bhagavatam 11.5.36)

*trnad api sunicena taror abi sahisnuna
amanina manadena kirttaniyah sada harih*

“One who is humbler than a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree,
who gives due honour to others without desiring it for himself is quali-
fied to always chant the Holy Name of Krishna”

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

(*Siksastakam*, 3)

*sri krsna caitanya-
radha-krsna nahe anya,
rupanuga janera jivana:*

“Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is none other than
Sri Sri Radha and Krishna, the life and soul
Of the true followers of Srila Rupa Goswami

(Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur

“As much as you surrender to the lotus feet of Sri Gauranga,
you’ll find yourself safely situated in the service of
Sri Sri Radha-Govinda.
Don’t try to approach Them directly.
If you do, there may be some difficulty.
But the lotus feet of Sri Gauranga will take you there safely.”

(Srila B.R. Sridhar Dev-Goswami)

*prabuddhe jnana-bhaktibhyam
atmany ananda-cinmayi
udety anuttama bhaktir
bhagavat-prema-laksana*

“When transcendental experience awakens
by means of Knowledge and Devotion,
the highest Devotion symptomised
by Love for the Supreme Lord,
Sri Krishna, the Beloved of the soul,
awakens in the devotee’s heart.”

(Sri Brahma-samhita verse 58)