

Joy

Excerpt from a letter by Svāmī Sadānanda Dāsa in 1975

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Dear A. and B., dear children,

Śrī-Caitanya-Mahāprabhu's āvirbhāva falls on the 27th. May we clearly realize what He actually wanted. For *us* it begins with liberating ourselves from dogmas, from being stuck in all that *others* have experienced and explained **before** us or **with** us, i.e., in our time. If we consider Caitanya's attitude towards the heritage of the tradition, we learn that He did not want our heart and mind to be a repository of the thoughts and experiences of others. On His wanderings in India He visited innumerable temples, etc., of *all* of God's forms of being and His śakti-s.

It all starts with *being who and what one is*, only then one can be and become joyful. To *force oneself* into wearing a spiritual uniform – it may seem ever so fortunate – cannot be anything but an attitude Kṛṣṇa strongly rejects in Bhāgavatam XI.

One *can* help one's fellow being to be himself, not in a metaphysical, transcendent way, but simply in a *human* way, with all virtues and vices. No one should try to jump over his own shadow or make others do this. One must always leave room for the other to be (able to be) who he is. Freedom always means freedom for the other, otherwise it is no freedom. Why, God wants us to be just as free as He is, He *does not* want *any* slaves.

B. *is* in good health, she only suffers from her factual limitations – physically and mentally – as we all do to a certain extent. But she is more sensitive than you and I. The “evil” is nothing but the experience of her limitations in regard to what she wants and what she is able to do. But we must accept the limitations of our own karmic possibilities and strive deeper within these limitations. We cannot go beyond these limitations – think of Arjuna and what Kṛṣṇa told him.

It isn't healthy for her to be so isolated and to only have you to talk to. She cannot live from “metaphysical” fragments only. Sometimes she also needs to talk to other people. I know it is difficult, because you have isolated yourselves so much there – which is something I did not wish from the start. Maybe she

also feels insecure regarding her *own* path due to the former pressure from different groups.

She also writes about a book by Chögyam Trungpa¹. I do not know anything about this book but it *cannot* be that a book *lacking* the corner stones of *sambandha-jñānam* only fails in presenting bhakti and prema-bhakti. There are many paths, also atheistic, but they cannot be a foundation for karma, jñānam and bhakti. These atheistic paths might lead to śūnyam, nirvānam, etc., and it may be that some can find their goal there. My duty is to *encourage* each and everyone who has true śraddhā in a genuine path – but it does not mean that the Śāstram-s or I recommend some kind of mystical mishmash, placing all paths on an equal footing. In India, everything is different from what some persons say. Husband and wife can have their own individual guru, tread their own personal path without depreciating or overrating each other. Nobody *has to* tread the unalloyed path of bhakti. – Bhagavān loves *everyone the most*, as long as he is fully and spontaneously open-hearted.

If one expects wonders from the path one tries to follow – through mantras and the guru’s transmission of power, etc. – and then is disappointed because nothing extraordinary has happened, then this is due to incorrect teachings or misunderstanding of *correct* teachings. What is important is not *what* one does and shows to others, but one’s inner attitude – while outwardly, or as seen from the outside, one behaves like other people who seem to lack all interest in religion or are quite ordinary citizens. If one believes one has to be something special and demands too much of oneself, it will lead to self-inflicted stress, violence against oneself and despair, because one has not attained one’s “goal” and has gotten into a pointless fight of the one “self” against the other “self”. It is enough – and this is not so easy, not at all – if one is good to another person, considers his life and problems from *his* point of view and not only from one’s *own*.

Dear friends, in this letter to both of you there is *nothing* that you are not aware of and nothing that the other doesn’t know. But *one* thing is lacking: both of you must be aware of the fact that you have two children who need your love and also in the future a situation with financial security. – Unfortunately, there is no other way. If you can find a position which gives you and your family a livelihood, so much better. *No* occupation can fulfil all one’s needs, give us complete happiness *and* material security. The romantic idea of living in nature and according to the rhythm of the woods turns out to

¹ Chögyam Trungpa: Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism. Boston 1974.

be nothing but pleasant daydreaming. I also had these ideas when I was in the Youth Movement². We all have to pay dearly for our experiences in youth and as a result of our shortcomings – and in spite of these earlier mistakes go on with a life where we try to reconcile the hard "must" and the joyful, carefree "would like to".

Man is a social being and needs to communicate with other people who are more or less on the same level.

When it comes to me, I am not so fond of travelling since the small stroke last summer. In any case, I **must see you**, here or elsewhere. I don't think that *anything* can develop if it doesn't mean **joy**, directly or indirectly.

One has to make a difference between the following: (1) one has pure, unalloyed bhakti – then everything one does is His sevā; (2) one does not yet have it – then one must consider what Caitanya and Nityānanda taught Raghunātha: "Be patient, only *gradually* you cross the ocean of change. Don't practise self-denial outwardly; let your senses go their own way, but without attachment."

But there are many intermediate forms between karma, jñāna and *bhakti*, described in detail in the Bhāgavatam and in Jīva Goswāmī's "Bhakti Sandarbha" – and it is in the wide *variety* of this connection that Caitanya rejoices. When one has to be *active* in the world, one has to strive for "success", not as an end in itself and to attain honour, but one's work has to be appreciated, otherwise one cannot keep one's position in the world and in one's profession. Without a certain degree of contentment one *cannot* exist.

Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya have requested everyone *not* to neglect his duties in the world. Of course, this is not an end in itself, independent of one's whole existence; it is a **level** – *not* insignificant though, but important.

Striving for success as a *means* to sevā must be there, it is *not something negative*. In order to get cheap labour, different "gurus" delude their disciples into believing that they must give up everything, by making them believe how fast or directly they will attain enlightenment, etc. – This is irresponsible fraud.

Therefore, I hope that the two of you will soon take heart and feel joy, so that you are joyful in fulfilling your great and small duties and rejoicings without worries – hopefully you will feel neither profession nor duty as a burden; have confidence in each other as well as in your old friend Sadā.

² This refers to the Bündische Jugend (1919-1933), arisen from the Wandervogel-Bewegung (1896-1913), a variety of youth movements, created after the First World War, with a great variety of political views – from "populist" to pacifist and communist.

Rādhe! Rādhe!

Give my love to the children.