

Personality cult

Letter from Sadānanda in Calcutta 23.5.58

Into English Bengt Lundborg

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My dear Vāmandās, dear Hella, all close friends far away, [...]

You are a renowned writer and have a *strong* personality, which implies a great advantage and a great – don't be frightened – disadvantage. The advantage is that when some W. Eidlitz says and writes something, *most* vividly identifies with something, then people will listen where they would have remained unconcerned if an “expert” or someone unknown had done the same. The disadvantage is that Your *personality* carries the message, and the message is interesting because of the *personality*, – and when the personality subsides, recedes, then nothing but a weak, personal reverberation of the message will remain. [...]

This does not only concern You. – In the case of Caitanyadeva, for instance, everything rests on *Kṛṣṇa*, Bhāgavatam stands in the foreground and He Himself as Caitanya remains in the background. And thus the *eternal*, impersonal message of the Bhāgavatam etc. remains – even when He and His Own have left the world. The opposite is the case, e.g., with Gandhi and the Congress. The message of *ahimsa* had Gandhi as its focus, and *nothing* of it survived when he ended his days.

You yourself are experiencing the difficulties that arise through the attachment to a person. Whether it is mainly emotional or intellectual is unimportant. People ask You (and me) for mantras etc., because they feel that something emanates from Your personality, Your prophetic ability to convince, Your assurance etc. But when You ask them: “what is this world, Who is God, the avatāra, what does your picture of the world look like etc.?” – which by necessity must be *clearly understood* unless the “bhakti” shall simply come to naught (as becomes so clear in the Bhāgavatam and Caitanya-Bhāgavatam) –, it turns out from their replies that they want to enter into bhakti as they are, as they know themselves, with their Indian or Western world view intact, *without* a total, unconditional upheaval of this world view.

It would be a mistake to mean, that as the force of *bhakti* includes knowledge etc., the so to speak *philosophical basis* would not be needed at all – because it was *only* in the days of Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya etc. that bhakti-śakti was given *directly*, often at once, to the highest degree. *Without* being deeply shaken, without having been thrown out of one's secure world view while listening to the world view described in the Śāstrams, there can be no *basis* for bhakti whatsoever. And this philosophical basis is completely *dry*, objective, impersonal. [...]

Always in love and gratitude
Sadānanda