

# My Wanderings in India

Letter from Sadananda

24 April, 1956

into English and within square brackets

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Dear Vamandas, dear Hella,

Now to your letters from 18 and 19 June. I know quite well how much you both suffer and how difficult it is to give up old ways, old habits of thinking. But it does not help. In India everything is lost, which you can comprehend from the fact that the most important parts of *the authoritative Word Revelation* (please try to find a better word for “Shastram-s” or “Shruti”) which were available 20 years ago, are not possible to find anymore, and everyone who publishes them misuse them to make them coincide with the strength or weakness of their own opinions and theories. If you meet a Shankara-, Madhva- or Gaudiya-scholar, there is not one of them who really delved deeply, even in their own texts and really *reads* them. The books one finds in English and native languages are published in the name of experts, blokes who have hired badly paid Sanskrit scholars to translate essential parts for them, scholars who also have other jobs and have made their translations in haste: rush jobs. There is not *one* line, *one* word one can rely on.

When I had been in India only for a very short time, my Guru once talked to an assembly of sannyasis and scholars in Mayapur. Having caught sight of me, coming late, he suddenly stopped speaking Bengali and called me to come closer, saying: “All the illustrious people you see here, there is not even one of them who day and night is preoccupied with the Bhagavatam. Everyone is busy with other things, no one has time to really listen to it, out of love for it.”

During my wanderings through India I met countless scholars and “holy” men, some of them were very good people, but I met no one who really considered the Shastram-s and not their own intuition and their own “experiences” (?), to be the Light. Believe me when I say that I was startled when base emotional piety was presented as bhakti and praised as such.

Before I came to India, I had read Rao’s translation of the Bhagavatam and the Guimet edition. When I asked for them and Hume’s Upanishads [The Thirteen Principal Upanishads], Gurudeva told me: “None of them has even tried to translate properly, not even philosophically. I have them here in my

bookcase, I will not give them to you.” This made me a bit disappointed, because I had the impression that Hume was better than the dreamer Deussen in this regard. And even more when I heard that by every word [in the available editions of the Shastram-s] one has to consult not only two but three editions, to see that not the same intentional or unintentional mistake had been made in all three of them. Then my head was spinning.

Gurudev used to give the following piece of advice: “When one listens to or reads the Shastram-s, one must first of all forget, free oneself from everything one knows from other sources.”

Gradually, I realised that what people read into and translate from the Shastram-s – from the Upanishads to the Bhagavatam – what they publish as the teachings of the Upanishads, etc., is not in the texts themselves, that people are either too lazy to see in which sense a word is used in the text itself, or simply are unable to keep their own world of ideas and their emotions out of the texts when they read and translate.

I have told you a lot of what the texts themselves say, and that it is not possible for everyone to start from the beginning with everything, to suffer through this and examine everything. It grieves me deeply that you seem to have been under the impression that my opinion coincides with a certain sampradaya [“tradition”], although you can read in the Bhagavatam that nothing can be more dangerous than to dedicate oneself to one system of thought, because everything human, even the very best, is guna-maya [consists of Maya’s three guna-s]. Wanting to use God and the Shastram-s to confirm oneself, to please oneself and enjoy – is there anything more heinous than this?

Every system of thought that has been read *into* the Shastram-s, has the consequence that the statements of the Shastram-s contradict themselves. What the Shastram-s say about atma, world, God, Brahma etc. is neither the result of development nor something new. One or the other Shruti is only discussing one or the other subject more in detail. All the different avatara-s have also taught the same, but in accordance with the inner nature of those they played with, the yuga etc., thereby emphasising and explaining one or the other point more than the other. It is obvious that the Shruti-s and the Revelations that deal with the innermost nature of God Himself must be in the minority, as there are only a few who are called to this path of unconditional service of God, service without any other motive than to give Him joy. [...]

Please tell Hella: Young or *old* does not matter. Every life is a step to come to right *understanding*. [...]

Sadananda