SRI GAURANGA MAHAPRABHU JAYANTI MESSAGE: LOVE OF GOD

by

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Today is specially known as Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu Jayanti, the advent of a great devotee of God who lived in the bliss and the love of God and propagated the love of God for the sake of the joy and the bliss of God. The day of love of God may be said to be Gauranga Mahaprabhu Jayanti.

We know what love is, but our concept of love is contaminated by a trade relation that we establish between the lover and the beloved. Have you ever thought of why anything is loved at all? The most initial, abrupt answer to this question would be that the object is attractive; that which attracts evokes the sentiment of love for that particular object. But, why does that object attract

One of the answers may be that it is beautiful, but what do we mean by 'beauty'? Here is something which everyone seems to know but no one can understand, because human understanding, which is intellectuality, operates on the basis of calculation, a kind of mathematical judgment of things, and measures geometrically the pros and cons of the relationship of what appears to be beautiful. But beauty is a subject of art. It is not a mathematical equation.

There are two things in the world which attract immensely – the beautiful and the sublime. Nothing else can attract. The full moon is beautiful; a blossomed lotus or rose

is beautiful. Our mind goes to it, and we look at it again and again. Even the face of a newborn baby is beautiful. Whether it is the baby of a king or of a beggar, it makes no difference; it is attractive. On seeing a little child, we cannot know whether it is a king's child or a beggar's child. One becomes a king and another a beggar later on, due to social and other types of circumstance.

Apart from that which is called beautiful, there is another thing called sublime, which attracts by grandeur, majesty, power, force, magnificence - like the elephant. In the same way as we would not like to turn our eyes away from a beautiful full moon in a blue sky, we would also like to go on looking at an elephant if we are actually aware of what happens to us when we see it.

There is a total difference between the manner in which a beautiful thing attracts and a sublime thing attracts. The elephant and the ocean also attract us, due to their terrible vastness and majesty and power. Before the majesty and the power of the elephant and the vast ocean, we look very small. Our importance is brought down to a very low level and the ego, which is usually prominent in a human being, diminishes almost to the point of abolition. We admire and enjoy a thing only when the ego ceases to operate.

This is how the sublime attracts; but beauty is a different thing. We can admire an elephant, but we cannot love it. We can be overjoyed by the majesty of the vast, turbulent ocean, but we cannot embrace it, hug it or love it. God is an object of love for a devotee; God is not merely an object of admiration. In the Bhakti Sastra two types of devotion are described. One is known as *aishwarya pradhana bhakti*; another is known as *madhurya pradhana bhakti*.

Acharyas like Madhya and Ramanuja glorify God through His magnificence, His majesty, His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence. But, there are other *acharyas* like Vallabha, and to some extent Nimbarka also - and what to speak of Gauranga Mahaprabhu - who admire God for His being the repository of all affection and beauty.

Usually, religions describe God as a Father in heaven, keeping Him far, far, at a distance from the dust of the earth – at a frightening distance, almost. Unapproachable greatness is attributed to God Almighty, but we cannot love such a God. We cannot love, from our heart, a bulldozer which has great strength, though we know its utility. Our sense of admiration may go to it, but our heart will not go.

What is this peculiar thing which makes one love God? It is that very indescribable element in the factor of love which defies human understanding. When love attracts, nothing else can be said about it, because love is where there is joy and happiness. The soul of the human being is basically an utter perfection and freedom. Where there is freedom and perfection, an internal joy manifests itself automatically. Whoever has lived in this world a life of freedom, and to some extent a perfect life, would be able to know what satisfaction is.

All said and done, nothing can move us unless it satisfies us, and only that can satisfy us which can bestow upon us all things that we need. What is it that we need? Whoever has lived the life of a mother, a parent, a devotee, a lover or a beloved, or a servant of a great master will be able to appreciate what propels attraction. The structure, the pattern, the shape of the object is not what attracts. The meaning that is hidden behind its structure, the significance that is behind it, is what attracts.

A high-valued currency note attracts not because of the material out of which it is made, but because of the meaning that it has within itself. It embodies power. In a similar manner, love is the movement of the soul in the direction of that which can fill it with joy. There are so many things in the world which also can satisfy us and fill us with some kind of joy, but they are temporary in their effect.

Every object that is dear and near is also fraught with fear, at the same time. That thing which we love most as an object which is very valuable can also perpetually keep us in anxiety due to the possibility of bereavement at the loss of

that object – which can take place at any time due to the very nature of life itself.

But, God's joy, the ananda that the Absolute Being is, is not of that nature. What is God made of? What is the substance? Everything is made of something; what is God made of? Inscrutable is this great question before us. God is made up of that capacity to inundate us and drown us in the uttermost conceivable joy, almost to self-annihilation.

Even in ordinary mortal affection, in loves that are directed to perishable objects, even in such intensity of love there is a temporary abolition of self-consciousness. The more we love a thing, the less we feel our existence at that moment, so that when we are in utter possession of the most beloved of things, we do not exist at that moment. There is an abolition of self-consciousness. And, at that time, what is our experience? There is no one to experience it because we have ceased to operate as a personality at that time. If our personality retains itself to some extent at the moment of the enjoyment of the object of love, to that extent our joy is diminished.

Only the object of love should be there, and we should not be there; only then it is perfect enjoyment. Even in such simple illustrations of a mother's love for a little child, that love makes the mother feel her own non-importance and the utter importance of the child. She pours herself entirely upon the child. When we pour ourselves on the object of love, we are no more there. It is very clear that because we have already poured ourselves upon that object, we cannot be existing separately from that.

As a molten metal can be cast into a crucible and it takes the shape of that crucible, the one who loves is cast into the mold of the object of love and experiences only that pattern of the mold; oneself does not any more exist at that time. That condition is called ecstasy. Ecstasy is the condition of loss of self-consciousness, on account of the feeling thatsomething more than oneself has been obtained. In all forms of love and affection, the object of love is considered to

be superior to oneself; otherwise, there cannot be attraction. If we are also equally important, the object of love will also be only fifty percent attractive. Utter attraction, a hundred percent engagement in the object of affection, is possible only when we are one hundred percent annihilated, and we are no more there.

If we are no more there, who experiences the joy? The soul, which is not us, but more than us, rises to action at that time. It is the soul that operates when we behold an object of art; it is reason that operates when we see a work of mathematical perfection. The soul's perfection, or God's perfection, is not the perfection of an equation; it is an inundation of indescribability. God is sometimes called the Cupid of Cupid – *sakshat manmatha-manmatha. Manmatha* is one who churns the mind of a person, and he himself gets churned by another thing, which excels his beauty.

The most beautiful objects of affection are supposed to be in the kingdom of Indra. One day Indra projected the retinue of his beauties before the great sages Narayana and Nara, near Badrinath. "*Yabhir grihitaha'purushaha somyadayo drishyati*," says the Valmiki Ramayana: "Such are those presentations that by the very touch of it one becomes crazy and mad." Such things Indra projected in a large mass of gaiety and attraction. Narayana and Nara were in intense tapas and meditation. By a stroke of his thigh, Narayana produced a beauty which made all of Indra's retinues of beauty look like crows, like darkened nothings, who hung their heads in shame and withdrew themselves. Narayana told Indra, "Take this if you want." Indra was shuddering with fear. He never imagined that there could be such a thing which the human mind cannot conceive. That is the power that only God can manifest.

Unfortunately for us human beings, men or women, we cannot imagine that God is a beautiful presentation before us. We mostly think God is like a judge, like a disciplinarian, a hard taskmaster, a parent who admonishes and perhaps even threatens with dire consequences if anyone goes

against their laws. Rarely can we imagine that God is beautiful. The human intellect is so conditioned by the limitations of space, time and objectivity that the intellect cannot appreciate beauty. It cannot see it at all. It sees only machines and calculations and arrangements of a geometrical nature, not knowing that perfection is not either mathematical, algebraical, arithmetical, or anything of the kind.

In order to appreciate the possibility of God Almighty being the object of love, one has to tear oneself completely to shreds in its egoistic encasement. The name of God cannot be taken by an egoistic individual. This is what Gauranga Mahaprabhu said in that famous, oft-quoted verse, "*Trinadapi sunichena, tarorapi sahishnuna, amanina manadena, kirtaneya sada harih*": One who is more patient than a tree, humbler than a blade of grass, one who gives respect to all but expects respect from nobody, such a person is fit to take the name of God.

That which stands between the devotee and God has to be removed. Only then can the ocean of love come and bathe the devotee. The ocean can enter the river, provided there is no dam constructed between the ocean and the river which is seeking to enter into the ocean. Ahamkara, egoism, self-consciousness, pride, self-importance – this is what divides man from God, because before God, there cannot be two selves. God is All-Self and, therefore, your self cannot stand before It. If you assert yourself, you isolate yourself from that All-Self, and that ocean of joy cannot enter you. You have created a barrier between yourself and that Being.

Our loves, generally, go for those things which will satisfy our sense organs. We do not know any other joy. Soft touches, tasty dishes, that which is very fragrant in its odor, that which is colorful, symmetrical, methodically arranged, systematic before the eyes and melodious to the ears - these are the things that attract the mind, but these are isolated objects, one disconnected from the other. The whole of the beauty cannot be enjoyed by any sense organ, because if we

see the beauty with our eyes, we cannot enjoy the melody of it, or the taste of it which is like honey, or the magical touch of it.

There is a maddening odor of fragrance, an ecstasy of touch, an indescribable taste, more than honey, for that particular sense, and a super-abundance of colorful beauty. All these blend together in the perfection of God. That is why it is said that God can be known only in intuition, and not through sensory perception. Every sense organ can see one particular object. All things cannot be seen by any particular sense, but intuition grasps at one stroke the totality of the object. There is no such thing as a total object before the sense organs. Those who see only with the eyes and hear through the ears, etc., cannot understand what a total object is. We are confronting partial objects every day. Something is given and something else cannot be given by that object. Gold can satisfy us in one way but we cannot eat gold, and what we can eat cannot equal gold in its value, etc.; such are the limitations of the objects of sensory attraction. But, there is something which can melt together all the requirements of the sense organs and pull the soul out of the body, in which condition alone we start feeling a rapture of ecstasy.

I do not know how many of us have had the occasion to be in a state of spiritual rapture. We might have had the experience of intense concentration, a kind of absorption in meditation, but I do not know how many have felt rapture, a shudder, a trembling, a feeling of rupture of the personality, as if everything in us has gone and something else has come. These are some of the hidden significances behind the teachings and even the very life of the great mahabhakta Gauranga Mahaprabhu. We only hear what he did; we cannot know what he felt. We can see sugar, but we cannot know the sweetness of it unless we put it into our own mouth.

Nobody can love God unless one believes that God is everything. If there is a suspicious attitude towards God, a possibility of getting something and also a possibility of not getting something else, then God will recede from us like the

horizon. He may be appearing to be near us, but He will move further and further away on account of doubts persisting in our mind that He is not all things.

The concept of 'All', of everything, is super-intellectual and super-rational in its comprehension. For the intellect, there is no such thing as 'All'. The all-ness that the intellect can conceive is only a multitude of finite objects. A hundred million things it can bring together and make a heap of them, and they may look like an 'All'. But millions of finite objects heaped together to not make the All, because many finites do not make an infinite. All the resources of the world put together do not give us infinite satisfaction.

Because of the fact that it is impossible for the human mind to conceive what love or joy is, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad gives us a series of degrees of perfection and happiness. Can you imagine what happiness is? Who is a happy person? Have you seen a happy person anywhere? You cannot see a totally happy person anywhere, but you can imagine it in the mind, at least – as a possibility only, not a reality. If it would be possible for you to say you are most happy, what are the things that can make you utterly happy? "The whole world should be mine. I must be the king, the emperor of the whole earth. Nobody should vie or contend with me." All right; will this give you the required satisfaction? "No. I must not die. Suppose I am the king of the whole earth, but tomorrow death is going to overtake me; this kingship is not of any utility to me." So, an inconceivably long life should be there, together with the kingdom of the earth. But even that is not sufficient.

Suppose that you have a contagious disease, an infection which is incurable. Together with this grant of a long life and the possession of the whole earth, that kind of life would be worth nothing. So, you have to ask for a third thing: you have to be free from any kind of disease. Not only that, you should not be an old man; you must be youthful and glamorous. You don't wish to rule the world as a king one hundred years old. You must be youthful, jubilant, beautiful, vigorous, healthy,

long-living, the king of the whole earth. But you should not be an idiot; you must be a highly educated person also. So,all the qualifications of knowledge also should be there.

Can you imagine such a person anywhere in the world? There is no such person, but the Upanishad says to at least imagine it. Suppose such a person exists with all these impossible qualities; the joy of that person can be considered as one unit or measure of joy. Multiply this imagined wonderful joy of the emperor by one hundred; that is the joy of the Gandharvas in the higher heaven. A hundred times the joy of the Gandharvas is the joy of the celestials in heaven. One hundred times the joy of the celestials is the joy of Indra, the ruler of the gods. One hundred times the joy of Indra is the joy of Brihaspati, the preceptor of the gods. One hundred times the joy of Brihaspati is the joy of Prajapati, the Creator Himself, the Virat. A hundred times that is the joy of Hiranyagarbha; a hundred times the joy Hiranyagarbha is the joy of Ishvara. Infinitely larger, incapable of calculation, is the joy of the Absolute Brahman.

So, what is the joy of people like us small individuals seated here? We are also happy, in some way. We look like fools and we cannot show our face to anybody in the world, if such mighty great grandeurs exist. We look like puny nothings, scratching our skin and nerves for a so-called imaginary satisfaction of contact of the sense organs with imagined objects.

Who can love God? Only one who can feel the possibility of such a perfection as has been feebly described in the Upanishad – the Brahmajnana, Brahman bliss, Absolute bliss – a million times, a million times, a million times more than all the greatest joys conceivable in this world. Can you contain the feeling of such a kind of bliss? If that imagination, at least, can be contained in our mind, we may be transformed into super-personalities in one moment, and not remain as ordinary human beings.

Great *acharyas* have proclaimed that we cannot love God unless we know what God is. These few words that I have

spoken are only an attempt to describe what God could be, though words cannot describe what He is. Even the thought of it will raise us to a kind of love and spontaneous affection which will nullify in a moment all the joys of the world as insipid, tasteless. "*Brahmaloka trinikaro vairagyasya avadirmataha*." Acharya Sankara says if the bliss of Brahmaloka can look like a straw which has no essence, you have attained supreme *vairagya*. But who can imagine the bliss of Brahmaloka, where everything is everywhere? Such kind of love was taught by Gauranga Mahaprabhu. Such was the love which the gopis felt in Brindavan, and such was the love of many of the saints and sages, the Alwars, Nayanars, and various other devotees whose biographies we read in the Bhakta Charita, Bhaktamala, and such textbooks.

Love rules the world. It is not the intellect that rules the world, because love alone can appreciate; and wherever there is appreciation, there is success of every kind. This is the rule of the beauty of God, the joy of God, which we cannot entertain in our minds if we persist in thinking that God is only a judge sitting in a court in high heaven, ready to punish the wrongdoer. God does not punish anybody; our egoism punishes us. The adamant, flint-like *ahamkara* in us, the ego, deals a blow on us, and it looks like a punishment come from God.

Thus it is before us a brief message of the devotee of devotees. This world is created by the bliss of God, not by the terror of God. The world is sustained by the bliss that is behind it. Finally, the world will enter into the bliss of God. Even the space itself is a bliss. Suppose there is no space; see how we feel. We get suffocated and all the joy of life vanishes in one second. Breathing is a joy. Spatial expanse is a joy, because the bliss of God is hiddenly manifest in all these manifestations, even in our own selves.

The bliss that is within us is calling the bliss that is without us. *Atmanastu kamaya sarvam priyam bhavati*: For the sake of the bliss of the Self, every other object in the world looks attractive and loveable. This love that is hidden

in our own selves is not in one person only. It is present in every person; even in an ant that crawls, even in a creature that moves, that self-love manifests itself. It wriggles to maintain itself. That total self-love of all creation is a little modicum of the manifestation of the infinite love of God. Such is what we are aspiring for.

The life of Gauranga Mahaprabhu, the life of great devotees like the gopis of Brindavan, are illustrations before us. The love of Saint Surdas, Kabirdas, Tulsidas – read their lives. They are inspirations before us.

Today is one of the occasions, being Gauranga Mahaprabhu Jayanti, when we can recall to our souls, not merely to our minds, the joy that is everywhere. It is well said that creation is the overflowing of the superabundance of the bliss of God. May we try to live in that bliss and be blessed.