

Niti-śāstras: Sayings of Cāṇakya and Hitopadeśa
as Quoted By Śrīla Prabhupāda

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Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

translated by Agrāhya dāsa

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Table of Contents

Preface	i
Translator's Note	vii
One: <i>eko 'pi guṇavān putro . . .</i>	1
Two: <i>ṛṇa-kartā pitā satrur . . .</i>	7
Three: <i>lālayet pañca-varṣāṇi . . .</i>	13
Four: <i>na kaścīt kasyacin mitram . . .</i>	21
Five: <i>dhanāni jivitaṃ caiva . . .</i>	26
Six: <i>lālāne bahavo doṣās . . .</i>	34
Seven: <i>kiṃ tayā kriyate dhenvā . . .</i>	43
Eight: <i>tyaja durjana-saṃsargam . . .</i>	49
Nine: <i>mūrkhā yatra na pūjyante . . .</i>	57
Ten: <i>durjanaḥ parihartavyo . . .</i>	62
Eleven: <i>mātrvat para-dāreṣu . . .</i>	67
Twelve: <i>guṇair uttamatām yāti . . .</i>	74
Thirteen: <i>ṛṇa-śeṣo 'gni-śeṣaś ca . . .</i>	80
Fourteen: <i>nirguṇeṣv api sattveṣu . . .</i>	86
Fifteen: <i>viśād apy amṛtaṃ grāhyam . . .</i>	92
Sixteen: <i>nakhinām ca nadinām ca . . .</i>	97
Seventeen: <i>mātā yasya gr̥he nāsti . . .</i>	107
Eighteen: <i>nakṣatra-bhūṣaṇam candro . . .</i>	113
Nineteen: <i>dāmpatye kalahe caiva . . .</i>	118
Twenty: <i>sarpaḥ krūraḥ khalah krūraḥ . . .</i>	124
Twenty-one: <i>āyusaḥ kṣaṇa eko 'pi . . .</i>	134
Twenty-two: <i>duṣṭā bhāryā saṭham mitram . . .</i>	143
Twenty-three: <i>aputrasya gr̥ham sūnyam . . .</i>	147
Twenty-four: <i>vidvatvam ca nṛpatvam ca . . .</i>	154
Twenty-five: <i>dūrataḥ śobhate mūrkho . . .</i>	158
Twenty-six: <i>ekenāpi su-vṛkṣeṇa . . .</i>	162
Twenty-seven: <i>udyamena hi sidhyanti . . .</i>	165
Twenty-eight: <i>sukhārthi cet tyajed vidyām . . .</i>	171
Twenty-nine: <i>aho bata vicitrāṇi . . .</i>	174
Thirty: <i>śarīrasya guṇānām ca . . .</i>	178

Thirty-one: <i>dhanikaḥ śrotriyo rājā . . .</i>	182
Thirty-two: <i>daridra-doṣo guṇa-rāṣi-nāṣi</i>	186
Thirty-three: <i>putrāṁś ca śiṣyāṁś ca</i>	192
Thirty-four: <i>ari-prayatnam abhisamikṣate</i>	195
Thirty-five: <i>kṣama-rūpaṁ tapasvinam</i>	199
Thirty-six: <i>dhanāni jīvitam caiva . . .</i>	203
Thirty-seven: <i>kṛte pratikṛtiṁ kuryād . . .</i>	208
Thirty-eight: <i>arṇy ākhyavat</i>	211
Thirty-nine: <i>ādau-mātā guroḥ patni . . .</i>	215
Forty: <i>ekenāpi kuvṛkṣeṇa . . .</i>	223
Forty-one: <i>rūpa-yauvana-sampannā . . .</i>	225
Forty-two: <i>payah pānam bhujāṅgānām . . .</i>	232
Bibliography	241
Acknowledgements	244

Preface

Cāṇakya Paṇḍita lived approximately three thousand years ago. He was the *brāhmaṇa* advisor and prime minister to the last Hindu king, Candragupta. Although he was the king's prime minister, Cāṇakya maintained his brahminical status by living in a small cottage outside the palace walls and refusing a salary. In this way, he remained independent of anyone's patronage or control. Once, the emperor asked Cāṇakya to explain something he did. Cāṇakya replied, "If I have to explain my actions to you, I resign."

Cāṇakya's ethical, moral, and political instructions are still valuable. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he studied *Cāṇakya-śloka* in his childhood. "His politics are studied even now in M.A. classes. And because he was a great politician and diplomat, the neighborhood in New Delhi in which all the foreign embassies are located is called Chanakyapuri" (Lecture, Los Angeles, June 22, 1972).

Prabhupāda often quoted Cāṇakya's *ślokas* in his lectures and talks, and his disciples became curious enough to ask Prabhupāda more about him:

Yamunā dāsi: He was a great devotee?

Prabhupāda: No.

Yamunā: So he's not authority.

Prabhupāda: No, no, he was not authority in the spiritual sense. He was a politician, moralist. Politician. That's all. Worldly man.¹

On another occasion, Prabhupāda's disciple, Siddha-svarūpa dāsa, asked, "Is Cāṇakya Paṇḍita widely available in India?"

Prabhupāda replied, "That is not a very important thing. It has nothing to do with spiritual . . . but moral instructions."²

If Cāṇakya is not a spiritual authority, then why did Prabhupāda quote him so often? One might say Cāṇakya's moral instructions, drawn from common wisdom and scriptures, also appear in *Pañca-tantra* and *Hitopadeśa*. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is transcendental to moral philosophy, and yet the morals and ethics spoken by Cāṇakya are a grounding for good behavior. Therefore, they are of interest to the transcendentalist and practicing devotee who lives in the world. Cāṇakya's lessons on morality are relevant and applicable to us. How to be decent, how to be moral, is a strong theme running throughout Cāṇakya's aphorisms. Cāṇakya also points out that by being moral, we will be happy in the long run. Uncivilized life—a life dedicated only to sense gratification—brings only unhappiness, not only to ourselves, but to the whole society. What is the use of a rascal?

I remember the early times when Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted Cāṇakya to his disciples. Once, someone had just left the movement and a devotee wrote to Prabhupāda, questioning him how this was possible. Prabhupāda wrote back and said, "I don't mind that one devotee has left. We do not need so many stars, we simply need one moon. But I have more than one moon." Then he listed our names—Mukunda, Satsvarūpa, Brahmānanda.³

At that time, we had no idea that this was a Cāṇakya *śloka*. Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't always tell us where the various expressions he used came from. Later, we realized that Cāṇakya was as famous in India as Shakespeare was in the West.

Prabhupāda called Cāṇakya an authority. Once, a devotee questioned Prabhupāda about his criticism of government policies. This devotee thought Prabhupāda's criticisms might get him into trouble. "In one purport, you openly criticize how unfortunate the citizens are because they have a woman as a prime minister, and in another purport you openly say that

the citizens should keep some of their treasury secret, which is against the principle of income tax.”

Prabhupāda replied, “Yes, so Cāṇakya is the authority. I’m quoting Cāṇakya. What is my fault? Cāṇakya is authority. Otherwise, why have you named ‘Chanakyapuri’? He is as good as Gandhi and other big, big men. I am innocent. I am quoting authority.”⁴

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to learn morality, but he also wanted us to become worldly-wise so we would not be cheated. That had already happened once, at 26 Second Avenue, when we were cheated by the real estate man, Mr. Payne. Mr. Payne was the classic example of a serpent decorated with a jewel. We were lulled into a false sense of security by that jewel and then stung by the serpent’s poisonous teeth.

There is another aphorism in which Cāṇakya says that if we deal with a cheater, we too should be shrewd. That verse had obvious relevance to Prabhupāda’s disciples both in the West and in India.

In 1977, Prabhupāda’s American disciples were battling the anti-cult movement. We were going to print a list of favorable professors as part of our defense campaign. Rāmeśvara was afraid that the anti-cultists might use the list to contact the professors and sway them against us. Again, Prabhupāda quoted Cāṇakya: “Do not reveal your plans, lest they be spoiled.”

I remember when I was doing the research for my book, *Readings in Vedic Literature*, reading something about Cāṇakya written by a scholar. This scholar compared Cāṇakya to an Indian Machiavelli, a manipulative and crafty statesman who would commit any sin to get his political choice, Candragupta, into office and keep him there. This scholar said that Cāṇakya wrote a book on “dirty politics” for people of the future and that actually, he had no morals. This man’s interpretation was so different than Prabhupāda’s interpretation and I remember not

finishing the scholar's book because his opinion was so different than Prabhupāda's.

Regardless of the fact that Cāṇakya was not a Vaiṣṇava, Śrīla Prabhupāda picked out the sayings that were applicable to us in Kṛṣṇa's service. Prabhupāda never presented him to us as anything but a worldly man. I remember also asking Prabhupāda about Cāṇakya on a morning walk in Hyderabad: "Is Cāṇakya a Vaiṣṇava?" Prabhupāda said, "No, Māyāvādī." I could understand that he was using him in Kṛṣṇa's service.

Cāṇakya himself says that we can take gold from a filthy place. His moral wisdom does not stand wholly on his own credentials. Cāṇakya drew his wisdom from the *niti-sāstra*, the common wisdom recorded in books like *Hitopadeśa* and *Pāñcatantra*. These sayings flow in the cultural blood and consciousness of India. We have sayings like, "A stitch in time saves nine," but the Indians have these gems of instruction. Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda also used these expressions in his lectures and in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

For example, Cāṇakya said that since life is short, we should do something by which we can become immortal. Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that although Cāṇakya may have meant we should do something by which we will be remembered long after death, it is a mundane consideration. Prabhupāda said that the only thing worth doing to become immortal was to worship Kṛṣṇa and go back to Godhead. He transcended Cāṇakya's mundane purpose and used his aphorism to preach about the goal of life.

Prabhupāda used Cāṇakya's verses to spice his lectures and talks. Whenever Cāṇakya was mentioned, people would perk up and listen. The aphorisms are always interesting and even witty. Then from the Cāṇakya *śloka*, he would lead into the real Kṛṣṇa conscious point.

By gathering many of the sayings by Cāṇakya and from the *Hitopadeśa* that Prabhupāda used in his books, lectures, and

conversations, we hope to give the reader a handy resource. Those who study Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings will already be familiar with Cāṇakya, but we hope this book will help them in their study. This will give us more insight into Śrīla Prabhupāda's fascinating preaching repertoire, and will help us learn to apply these *ślokas* in our own lives and preaching.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was once asked by a *gurukula* headmaster if the devotees could translate Cāṇakya *ślokas* and teach them to the children. Prabhupāda replied, "As for Cāṇakya *śloka*, I think the best is if I translate it myself and send it to you for printing, rather than wait for Pradyumna."⁵ This indicates that Śrīla Prabhupāda would be pleased to see this translation done, especially for his followers.

I'm grateful to Agrāhya Prabhu for his translation work. It was a pleasure working with him and I hope we can do more collaboration work in the future.

—Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

¹ Room conversation, Indore, December 13, 1970.

² Morning walk, Honolulu, June 18, 1975.

³ Letter, November 11, 1967.

⁴ Morning walk, Māyāpur, February 19, 1976.

⁵ Letter, April 11, 1974.

Translator's Note

Cāṇakya Paṇḍita, also known as Kauṭilya, figures prominently in the history of greater India. As chief adviser to Mahārāja Candragupta of the Maurya dynasty, he is credited with engineering the overthrow of the corrupt Nanda kings. His skill in diplomacy is mentioned even in the Twelfth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, where it is said that “a certain *brāhmaṇa* will engineer the downfall of the Nanda dynasty. He will install Candragupta on the throne.”¹ The diplomatic section of New Delhi is named “Chanakyapuri” after him.

There are different accounts of Cāṇakya's life. Some say that he was invited to the palace by Candragupta (who was then powerless in the Nanda palace). He was offended by the Nandas, and vowed that he would not retie his *sikhā* until they were overthrown. Whatever his motivation, history bears witness to his success. Mahārāja Candragupta was known as the last great Hindu emperor, with his empire reaching across what is now Cambodia (Kāmbhoja), Thailand, Indochina, and even as far as Indonesia. Despite the powerful empire his diplomacy founded, Cāṇakya continued to live simply in a grass hut and would not accept lodging in the palace or any type of salary.

Many empires, conquests, and rules have come and gone since then, but Cāṇakya Paṇḍita's greatest legacy are the Sanskrit sayings attributed to him. Along with Kauṭilya *Artha-sāstra*, a formidable treatise on government and diplomacy, he is popularly credited with a large number of wise sayings in the field of morality and diplomacy. Along with books of fables such as *Hitopadeśa* and *Pañca-tantra*, these gnostic aphorisms constitute *nīti-sāstra*, or the science of conduct.

There are several editions of Cāṇakya's sayings, known as *Cāṇakya-śloka*, *Cāṇakya-rāja-nīti*, *Cāṇakya-nīti*, *Cāṇakya-sāra-*

saṅgraha, and other names. Scholars such as Dr. Ludwik Sternbach have devoted considerable effort to researching and comparing all the different editions of Cāṇakya's sayings. These sayings have spread all over what was greater India, finding their way into Burma via the Pāli book *Lokanīti*, and thence to Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and elsewhere. We find similar verses in the literature of Indonesia, Śrī Laṅkā, in the Tibetan Tanjur, and even in Mongolia.

It may be difficult to pin down a definitive set of Cāṇakya's sayings, but we can accept the *nīti-sāstra* as a body of wise folk literature. In the introduction to *Pañca-tantra*, the author, Viṣṇuśarmā, offers his respects to Cāṇakya. In the introduction to *Hitopadeśa* ("[the book of] beneficial advice"), its author, Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍita, says that it was taken from *Pañca-tantra* and another book. There is frequent and obvious borrowing from revealed scripture, such as the *Bhagavad-gītā* (*dātavyam iti yad dānam/ diyate 'nupakāriṇe*) and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunam ca/ sāmānyam etat paśubhir narāṇam*). Far from plagiaristic, such citation of previous authorities is an important part of all Vedic literature. Many Cāṇakya verses are taken from, or are obviously influenced by, Puranic literature, *Manu-smṛti*, and the *Mahā-bhārata*.

It may be difficult for Westerners to fully appreciate the part Cāṇakya's sayings have played for generation after generation in India. If we had one source containing Benjamin Franklin's wise and witty sayings, Machiavelli's political writings, and much of Judeo-Christian morality, that would approximate the importance of Cāṇakya's sayings in India. Many of these sayings are grammatically simple and straightforward, and thus are used widely in learning Sanskrit. The textbooks Śrīla Prabhupāda used to learn Sanskrit almost certainly used these sayings, and he would have been exposed to them as folk literature from childhood.

The content of these sayings is more important than their source, and most important is the context in which they were used by Śrīla Prabhupāda. It has been a great privilege to assist Satsvarūpa Mahārāja by researching and providing some of the translations in this book. He has wonderfully illuminated those sayings with the lamp of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings.

—Agrāhya dāsa

¹ *Bhāg.* 12.1.12–3.

One

*eko 'pi guṇavān putro
nirguṇena śatena kim
ekas candras tamo hanti
na ca tārāḥ sahasraśaḥ*

ekaḥ—one; *api*—even; *guṇavān*—virtuous; *putraḥ*—son; *nirguṇena*—by worthless; *śatena*—by hundreds; *kim*—what [is the value]; *ekaḥ*—one; *candraḥ*—moon; *tamaḥ*—darkness, the night; *hanti*—destroys; *na*—not; *ca*—and; *tārāḥ*—stars; *sahasraśaḥ*—thousands.

TRANSLATION

Even one well-qualified son is better than hundreds who are worthless. A single moon destroys the darkness of night, whereas thousands of stars do not.

COMMENTARY

The success of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement cannot be measured by the number of people who join it. Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want cheap disciples who could not follow the four rules—no illicit sex, no meat-eating, no gambling, and no intoxication. If his aim was to collect as many disciples as possible, he could have said, “You can do whatever you like. Just give me money and I will give you a mantra.” Prabhupāda’s spiritual descendants should also avoid making cheap followers as they attempt to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. We should emphasize quality, not quantity. When we concentrate on quality, quantity increases automatically.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, used to send his preachers to give lectures

in various places. Sometimes one of the disciples would return despondent and report that only a few people had attended the lecture. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would encourage him, “Don’t be disappointed. Even if no one comes, we can preach to the four walls.” In this same spirit, Prabhupāda told us that we could also take solace; even the roaches in the wall can hear the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. We can preach to the sun, the moon, and the ten directions. These statements indicate that even a little Kṛṣṇa consciousness will benefit whoever can hear. It also indicates that the preachers should not dilute the message in an attempt to gain more followers.

When Prabhupāda first came to the West, his acquaintances suggested he compromise his principles. They suggested he drop the Sanskrit mantra and adopt American dress and eating habits. Śrīla Prabhupāda never responded to their suggestions. Someone even suggested calling his movement something else, “The International Society for God Consciousness,” because that might attract more followers. Prabhupāda didn’t agree. He knew that people are attracted more by purity than by compromise, just as customers patronize the sweets seller who cooks in ghee.

Generally, however, people judge the success of a movement by its numbers, just as they judge a business by its financial assets. When Prabhupāda was in Australia, a reporter asked, “Why is it that such a small percentage of the population accepts this philosophy?” In his response, Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted this *śloka*. “According to percentage, the moon is nothing. There are so many stars in the sky, and by percentage the moon is nothing. But the moon is more important than all the nonsense stars. . . . Because he is the moon, he is more important. What is the use of taking percentage of the stars in the presence of the moon? Let there be one moon, that is sufficient. . . . One ideal man. Just like in the Christian world, one ideal Lord Jesus Christ.”¹

A qualified person will have so much influence. “If I create one moon, that is sufficient. I don’t want many stars. That was my Guru Mahārāja’s principle, and that is my principle. What is the use of having numbers of fools and rascals. If one man understands rightly, he can deliver the whole world.”²

This “one moon” statement does not mean that by stressing purity, we will always have only a small number of followers. Rather, a sincere population will naturally be attracted. Because a moon-like devotee preaches as well as exemplifies pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he inspires real followers who will actually practice the disciplines of spiritual life and who will become moon-like themselves. Those followers will join the moon-like devotee and expand with him.

Someone may challenge whether the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has produced any moon-like devotees. When Prabhupāda was challenged on this point, he replied, “But it is possible, if they are ideal men.”

Kṛṣṇa conscious training is meant to produce *brāhmaṇas*. All sincere devotees are aiming to rise above ordinary behavior. Therefore, ISKCON stresses that no one can be initiated until he strictly follows the four rules and agrees to chant a minimum of sixteen rounds a day. By following these practices, even degraded people can elevate themselves and become influential spiritual leaders in society. Śrīla Prabhupāda didn’t expect everyone to become a *brāhmaṇa*—that’s not possible—but, “We have to present an ideal institution, not that we make compromise with everybody. That is not our business.”³

Śrīla Prabhupāda and his own spiritual master lived by the conviction that all of their efforts would be worthwhile if they could convince even one person to become a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. By his own testimony, Śrīla Prabhupāda was happily surprised to find that his efforts were rewarded beyond his initial expectations. “One moon is sufficient. Our propaganda

is to create one moon. But fortunately, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, many moon-like boys and girls have come to me."⁴

Probably no one among us will claim to be moons. Still, we take to heart what Śrīla Prabhupāda has said. Devotees should not be interested in only a quantitative increase in their service, but in a qualitative increase. Why? Because Śrīla Prabhupāda said he would consider all his efforts worthwhile if he could turn one of us into a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Such a statement is an order in itself. This movement is intended to create pure devotees. All our preaching, all our *prasādam* distribution, all our public lecturing and touring and public relations is simply meant to inspire love of Kṛṣṇa in our hearts and in the hearts of those we meet.

Conversely, the sign of a devotee's qualitative surrender is that his service increases. Whatever devotees do to increase Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission, whether it be book distribution, temple construction, or other forms of preaching, is a symptom of a deepening conviction in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, we should not draw a false dichotomy between quantity and quality; from quality, quantity will come.

Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say that everything should be of good quality. If the preaching, the *prasādam*, and the buildings are of good quality, then the movement will be qualitative. People will be attracted to that quality, but even if they are not, the devotees will continue with their pure presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda spoke about this point in relation to his own *Bhagavad-gītā*. The Macmillan Company, who published Prabhupāda's first American printing of *Bhagavad-gītā*, told him that other *Bhagavad-gītās* were decreasing in sales while his was increasing. Prabhupāda said it was because his *Bhagavad-gītā* was of good quality.

Why, then, doesn't ISKCON have more members? Prabhupāda used a reverse analogy to explain this: when you are

selling a diamond, you will have few customers. Śrīla Prabhupāda was prepared to defend the value of purity either way. He said that if he didn't restrict people from sinful life, he would have millions of followers.⁵

Although few devotees would claim to have become moons, as time goes on, we can see that this process is producing moon-like devotees. The people who join this movement are not ordinary people. They are developing humility and compassion, attachment to Vṛndāvana and to the Deity. They are loving Kṛṣṇa. Another moon image that Prabhupāda referred to is that although the moon may have pockmarks, it still shines brightly in the sky. The qualities of the devotees are increasing; we should not measure their qualities against their faults.

Prabhupāda is a moon-like devotee and we are all reflections of his light. Lord Gauracandra is the original benediction moon. His mercy is ever-increasing and we are all being blessed.

Cāṇakya's *śloka* contains two metaphors, one comparing the moon and the stars, and one describing how "a single qualified son is better than hundreds of foolish ones." Śrīla Prabhupāda translates this as follows: "What is the use of getting a son who is neither learned nor a devotee? . . . Two things are required: the son should be a devotee *and* learned. Without being learned, no one can become a devotee. And if one becomes a devotee, then he is learned. Sometimes he may not be materially learned, that happens. Or sometimes he may also not be a devotee. So if one is neither learned nor a devotee, what is the use of such a son?"⁶

There are similar statements in the *Niti-sāstra*. If a blind man's eyes are painful, it is better to remove them. The Hindi poet, Tulasī dāsa, said that both *putra* (son) and *mutra* (urine) come from the same source. If the son is not a scholar or a devotee, then he is no better than urine. To state the same

point positively: one aromatic flower can beautify a forest, but a fire in one tree can destroy everything.

According to these sayings, unqualified people are not only useless, they are dangerous and destructive. A pure Vaiṣṇava, however, can uplift the entire world.

An unqualified person, no matter how powerful he may be, or how popular, cannot do anything good or lasting. Therefore, teachers, governments, and institutions should always seek to encourage pure spiritual qualities in their followers and aspire to attain those same qualities themselves. That is how they can benefit society.

What are the qualifications of a moon-like devotee? When devotees asked Śrīla Prabhupāda what would please him most, he said, “If you love Kṛṣṇa.”⁷ All other qualities are subordinate to the one principle of loving Kṛṣṇa. From love of Kṛṣṇa, all other qualities come—truthfulness, cleanliness, peacefulness, and compassion. When a devotee loves Kṛṣṇa, he is naturally obedient and dedicated to his spiritual master.

Śrīla Prabhupāda would often use the word “qualified” more commonly. It meant that a devotee was well-trained, according to his estimation. And that is the point, that these *Niti-śāstra* aphorisms can really only be defined and brought to life by the Vaiṣṇava ācārya.

¹ Room conversation, Melbourne, May 21, 1975.

² Morning walk, Bombay, March 23, 1974.

³ Morning walk, Los Angeles, June 23, 1975.

⁴ Lecture, New York, April 12, 1969.

⁵ Room conversation, Bombay, January 7, 1977.

⁶ Lecture, Bombay, October 1, 1974.

⁷ Lecture, New York, April 12, 1969.

Two

*ṛṇa-kartā pitā śatruḥ
mātā ca vyabhicāriṇī
bhāryā rūpavatī śatruḥ
putraḥ śatruḥ apaṇḍitaḥ*

ṛṇa-kartā—maker of debts; *pitā*—the father; *śatruḥ*—enemy; *mātā*—mother; *ca*—also [an enemy]; *vyabhicāriṇī*—unsteady (unchaste); *bhāryā*—wife; *rūpavatī*—beautiful; *śatruḥ*—enemy; *putraḥ*—son; *śatruḥ*—enemy; *apaṇḍitaḥ*—not learned.

TRANSLATION

A father who puts the family into debt, the mother who is unchaste, the wife who is very beautiful, and the son who is a fool are all enemies.

COMMENTARY

Enemies in the home are a symptom of Kali-yuga. Kali-yuga is the age of quarrel. People quarrel worldwide—between countries, within their own countries, within communities, and within families. No one can live in peace.

If a father puts his family into debt, the family will suffer from poverty even after his death. Families are bound together by joint karma, although individuals within the family have their own destiny to fulfill. If the father is a debtor, the whole family is forced to suffer. If the father dies in debt, the sons will inherit the debt. Prabhupāda writes, “According to Vedic laws, the son is responsible for the father’s debt. He inherits the property, so why shall he not inherit the debts of the father?”¹

Prabhupāda gave the example of the famous lawyer-politician, C. R. Das. His father died insolvent, so when C. R. Das became a rich barrister, he called his father's creditors and paid them "paise to paise." If, however, the son is a poor man and cannot pay his father's debts, then he is harassed for the rest of his life. Thus, the father becomes an enemy.

The father is also an enemy if he does not educate his children in God consciousness. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says that no one should become a father unless he can liberate his children from death. The only way to liberate one's children is to give them spiritual culture. Prahlāda Mahārāja observed his father being killed and did not protest. Because his father was against Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he was an enemy to his family. Since he was the emperor, his enmity toward Kṛṣṇa consciousness made him the enemy of the entire universe. Therefore, he was killed by Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva.

Cāṇakya's moral instructions are best carried out in the context of Vedic civilization. Morality is harder to follow without a God conscious social structure. Lack of that culture does not make morality outmoded, however. It is sad to see how fallen society has become so that these basic teachings are now considered impossible to follow.

For example, in Vedic civilization, a woman who has no children can marry for a second time if her husband dies. If a woman marries a second time in the presence of her children, she becomes the enemy of those children.² Adultery has no place in Vedic culture, or for that matter, in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Śrīla Prabhupāda states, "In family life, father, mother, wife and children are assets, but if the wife or mother accepts another husband in the presence of her husband or son, then, according to Vedic civilization, she is considered an enemy. A chaste and faithful woman must not practice adultery."³

This scenario describes a woman who is so passionate that she cannot remain chaste to one husband. It may be the husband's fault or the wife's fault, but if a wife becomes attracted to another man, disruption and tragedy result. Similarly, if a man breaks the solidity of the family by committing adultery, he also becomes an enemy.

It is a husband's duty to control and direct his wife in the *gṛhastha-āśrama*. Prabhupāda writes, "By performing *bhakti-yoga* or devotional service, a man can be raised to the platform of goodness. If a husband situated in the mode of goodness can control his wife who is in passion and ignorance, the woman is benefited. Forgetting her natural inclination for passion and ignorance, the woman becomes obedient and faithful to her husband, who is situated in goodness. Such a life becomes very welcome."⁴

It is not difficult to perceive how the indebted father or the unchaste wife is an enemy to the family, but why is a beautiful wife considered an enemy? One reason is that a man may become overly attached to his beautiful wife. Other men may also become attached to her and adultery may result. Rāvaṇa kidnapped Sītā for her beauty. The husband will always be in anxiety. Śrīla Prabhupāda informs us that when he was a young man, he was not satisfied with the girl his father had chosen to be his wife. Although she appeared faithful and qualified, he was simply not attracted to her. After making plans to marry a second wife, he discussed the matter with his father. Gour Mohan De dissuaded him. "So he called me one day and said, 'My dear boy, you are trying to marry again. I request you not to do this. You do not like your wife. That is a great fortune for you.'" Recalling this later in his life, Prabhupāda was grateful to his father and saw his restriction as a great blessing. If he had become too attached to a beautiful wife, he could not have so easily left home and taken *sannyāsa*. From the spiritual

point of view, to become too attached to one's wife is an impediment.⁵

Who is that beautiful wife? It is subjective. Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. Especially in youth, a woman is attractive to men. "It is by nature's arrangement that woman is given one chance at the time of youthfulness. Otherwise, how will she be given protection by a man? They require protection, so if someone is not attracted, then how will she get protection?"⁶

This verse is not describing only a "beauty queen," but any woman who is attractive to her husband. Does that mean that every wife is her husband's enemy? She needn't be seen that way if the husband tempers his attraction to her and if she is engaged in serving Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to tell us to see our Godsisters "as gopīs." They are not for our sense gratification. A man who can see his wife's beauty as Kṛṣṇa's property can live peacefully even in the presence of a beautiful wife. Beauty itself is not the enemy; it is the attachment to beauty that is dangerous.

These aphorisms are filled with meanings and can be considered in different ways. For example, a father who leaves his family in debt is an enemy, but if that same father gave his children good Kṛṣṇa conscious education, then he has rendered them the best service and is their greatest well-wisher. On the other hand, a Joe Kennedy, who left each of his sons \$10 million, was their greatest enemy because he also left them ignorant of self-realization.

The son or daughter who is a fool is a burden to the family. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, we read of King Aṅga, whose son, Veṇa, was a criminal and rascal. King Aṅga was a saintly person. He was so disturbed by his bad son that he renounced his kingdom and went to the forest.

With all these burdens and possible enemies in home life, an intelligent person will not consider family life the ultimate

shelter. Moreover, these inimical situations are not exceptions, but the norm. When the greatly attached householder, Hiraṇyakaśipu, asked his son what was the best thing he had learned in school, Prahlāda replied that the best thing was to get out of family life, which is like a blind well full of snakes. Prabhupāda writes, “Therefore, according to Vedic culture, one has to take leave of his family members just after his fiftieth year so that the balance of his life may be completely devoted in search of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”⁷

Devotees may question the relevance of this discussion to their own attempts to practice Kṛṣṇa conscious family life. Of course, even within ISKCON, we see adultery, remarriage, and indebtedness, so Cāṇakya’s moral injunctions are relevant to us.

Beyond that, we can consider the entire Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement as a family. Śrīla Prabhupāda often compared the spiritual master to the father and the disciples to the children. Therefore, if a “son” behaves like a fool or a woman acts unchastely, it has an effect on everyone. Similarly, if the devotees behave purely, the whole ISKCON family is benefited.

According to Prahlāda Mahārāja, we have no enemies other than our own minds and senses. This is the vision of the *mahā-bhāgavata*. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, also encouraged us to protect his movement from enemies, both internal and external. He said that the real danger to our movement would come from within the movement itself. That danger shows itself in the form of schisms and in-fighting.

ISKCON is meant to be a family unit. A family is meant to be peaceful and productive, and to work toward a common goal. Yet within the family, there may be enemies. For example, if someone mispends or misappropriates funds meant to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, if devotees don’t work to maintain a high level of moral behavior, our collective preaching will be defeated. Such persons become enemies to the preaching. Neither

should we be foolish in our execution of devotional service. A foolish son is an enemy.

¹ Lecture, Vṛndāvana, September 2, 1976.

² Lecture, Los Angeles, June 25, 1975.

³ *Bhāg.* 3.23.3, purport.

⁴ *Bhāg.* 4.27.1, purport.

⁵ Morning walk, Māyāpur, January 22, 1976.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *Bhāg.* 4.13.21, purport.

Three

*lālayet pañca-varṣāṇi
daśa-varṣāṇi tāḍayet
prāpte tu ṣoḍaśe varṣe
putraṁ mitra-vad-ācaret*

lālayet—be lenient; *pañca-varṣāṇi*—for five years; *daśa-varṣāṇi*—for ten years; *tāḍayet*—chastise (be strict); *prāpte*—on reaching; *tu*—but; *ṣoḍaśe*—on the sixteenth; *varṣe*—in the year; *putram*—son; *mitra-vat*—like a friend; *ācaret*—one should behave.

TRANSLATION

Be lenient with a son for the first five years. For the next ten years, be very strict. When the son reaches the age of sixteen, treat him like a friend.

COMMENTARY

It appears that Śrīla Prabhupāda, in training his spiritual sons and daughters, mixed the three kinds of relationships described in this *śloka*. He also differed in his dealings with various individuals.

When we met Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1966, we didn't know who he was. We didn't know anything about the qualifications of a spiritual master or of the duties of a disciple. Śrīla Prabhupāda knew this and did not assert his authority or assume a fatherly role. Gradually, however, he won our love and respect.

In the summer of 1966, Prabhupāda gave a lecture in which he spoke of a "kindergarten of spiritual life." He encouraged us to dovetail our inclinations in service to Kṛṣṇa. In *bhakti-yoga*, he said, one controls the senses not by stopping their activity,

but by engaging them in Kṛṣṇa's service. He said it would cause not even a pinch of difficulty for the practitioner and would bring him to the highest stage of "dovetailing the individual consciousness with the supreme consciousness."¹ These early days were characterized by Prabhupāda's lenience with his disciples.

Prabhupāda's own father was lenient with him as he was growing up. Gour Mohan De did not like to restrict his son, but always gave in to his demands. Prabhupāda loved his father as a pure devotee and a most affectionate well-wisher.

Mother Yaśodā also allowed Kṛṣṇa to do as He liked, unless it threatened His safety. "My dear Kṛṣṇa, why have You eaten earth in a solitary place? Just see, all Your friends, including Balarāma, are complaining against You. . . . All right, if You have actually not taken any clay, then just open Your mouth. I shall see."

It appears that even the Supreme Lord subjected Himself to the strict discipline His parents meted out. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* informs us that "Jagannātha Miśra, seeing the mischievous acts of his son, gave Him lessons in morality after rebuking Him greatly." Later, a *brāhmaṇa* appeared to him in a dream and told him that he had committed a mistake in rebuking the Personality of Godhead. Jagannātha Miśra replied, "This boy may be a demigod, a mystic *yogī* or a great saintly person. It doesn't matter what He is, for I think He is only my son. It is the duty of a father to educate his son in both religion and morality. If I do not give Him this education, how will He know of it? Even if my son is not a common man but Nārāyaṇa, still it is the duty of the father to instruct his son."²

One thing Śrīla Prabhupāda did not approve of was discipline without love. Neither did he believe in "using the stick." He told the teachers in the *gurukulas* that they could show a stick, but never use it.

After the kindergarten days on the Lower East Side, Śrīla Prabhupāda gradually became stricter with his disciples. He began to strongly reprimand us, using criticism and sarcasm as teaching tools. I feared his sarcasm—his words could cut me to the heart—but I knew he never spoke out of egotism. He ruled us out of love, and we were afraid to displease him. We followed him because we wanted to. Therefore, he was able to convey a reprimand even without words, with a frown or a disappointed look. Even now, after his disappearance, I sometimes see Śrīla Prabhupāda in dreams. If he looks disappointed with me, I feel moved to rectify my ways. Why did Śrīla Prabhupāda show us his displeasure? To train us. We didn't doubt the appropriateness of his reprimands.

In his *Transcendental Diary*, Hari Śāuri Prabhu outlines the three stages of Prabhupāda's anger. When Prabhupāda was mildly angry, he would speak sarcastic words. If his anger was greater, his lower lip would tremble. If a disciple committed a great offense, Prabhupāda would not speak to the offending disciple. These reactions were spontaneous. They weren't calculated techniques to control disciples.

Prabhupāda also never held a grudge against his disciples. He could forgive and forget. Lord Caitanya was sometimes very heavy in His punishment of certain devotees. For example, He banished Junior Haridāsa and threatened to banish Mukunda from His personal association. All of Lord Caitanya's devotees loved Him more than life itself. To be banished from the Lord's association was worse than death. Śrīla Prabhupāda never banished any disciple. He reprimanded them, expressed anger or disappointment, but he was always willing to welcome a rectified devotee back into his grace.

It wasn't only Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples who received his reprimand, but he sometimes spoke scathingly to guests. Once, Dr. Patel was walking with Prabhupāda on Juhu Beach. Prabhupāda often criticized India's heroes on those walks, and in

this one exchange, Dr. Patel exclaimed, “You are so hard!” Prabhupāda replied, “Yes, I must be hard.” Dr. Patel said, “Not only hard, you are harsh and hard!” Prabhupāda answered, “I must be!”³

Prabhupāda, in his thunderbolt mood, was transcendently righteous. Often, however, the thunderbolt was followed by the rose. Here is an example of his “forgive and forget” policy:

Once when Prabhupāda was in Calcutta, a devotee was recruited to drive him to the airport. The devotee was a householder, and seeing the opportunity to use the car, he went to run some errands first. He was held up in the city and did not return in time to drive Prabhupāda. As it got later, Prabhupāda began criticizing this devotee to the other devotees present. He called him a rascal, and more than that, “a stubborn rascal.” He said he was only interested in sense gratification. In the end, another car and driver had to be arranged and Prabhupāda was able to catch his flight.

Later, the householder devotee heard about Prabhupāda’s anger and wrote a humble letter of apology. Prabhupāda dismissed the situation as no longer important and we could see that he was free from any grudge or residual anger against that devotee. It was always like that with Prabhupāda. This indicates that Prabhupāda’s anger was purposeful and not uncontrolled.

Prabhupāda once quoted this Cāṇakya *śloka* when speaking to a visitor, Mr. Koshi. “And from the fifth year to the fifteenth year,” Prabhupāda said, “you should chastise the sons and disciples just like a tiger.”

Mr. Koshi suggested, “Using the stick.”

Prabhupāda: “Yes.”

Tamāl Krishna: “That’s how you trained us, Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

Mr. Koshi: “Did you get?”

Tamāl Krishna: “Yes, by Prabhupāda. Even though we are not five years old, he treats us just as if we were five. Because spiritually we are still like that. So he is very strict with us.”

Prabhupāda: “All these boys I chastise vehemently. Even a little mistake.”

Mr. Koshi: “You . . . ?”

Prabhupāda: “They tolerate. They know.”⁴

Once, when Prabhupāda corrected the behavior of the Māyāpur temple managers, one of them wrote back and expressed his hurt feelings at Prabhupāda’s words. Prabhupāda told him that he should not be depressed when he corrects them. As the spiritual master, it is his duty to find faults in the disciples, even if there are none. Examples like this help us to understand Prabhupāda’s mind and the nature of his reprimands.

Prabhupāda’s followers took his reprimands heavily because we so much wanted to please him. Pleasing the spiritual master is the key to success in spiritual life. Devotees were often devastated by his displeasure, but they also felt the weight of responsibility in having to rectify themselves.

Of course, we cannot understand the *ācārya*’s mind, but we certainly knew that Prabhupāda wasn’t using manipulative techniques to motivate us. Prabhupāda wasn’t trying to win friends and influence people. There was no cynicism in his reprimand, and he wasn’t being calculating. If Prabhupāda looked sad and disappointed, he was sad and disappointed. “You are my disciple. Why did you do this?” Prabhupāda was *para-duḥkha-duḥkhi*. His compassion made him feel the disappointment at a disciple’s misbehavior, and a reprimand was a consequence of his compassion.

Devotees love to study Prabhupāda both externally and internally, but we cannot imitate him. If we look sad and disappointed with a subordinate, it won’t carry the same weight as Prabhupāda’s look would have done. Prabhupāda had so

much potency that he inspired us to surrender to him. Our surrender gave him control over our hearts.

The verse states that strictness is to be applied until a child is fifteen, and then the parent should become the child's friend. Followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda may ask, "When will we reach the age of sixteen and be treated as friends by our spiritual master?" As I said previously, Prabhupāda mixed these three discipline techniques. Sometimes he treated us as five-year-olds, sometimes as ten-year-olds, and sometimes as friends.

Still, the question remains: does a disciple ever "turn sixteen," shake hands with his guru, and consider himself grown up?

A disciple always wants to appear like a fool before the spiritual master, but he should not be a fool. He should strive to mature in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As the disciple matures, his relationship with the guru becomes more founded on friendship, although the disciple always remains the guru's servant. That friendship can be a symptom of the disciple's maturity.

Śrīla Prabhupāda described in one letter that in the beginning, the disciple doesn't act independently. He must take instruction on every point. As the disciple grows, he internalizes the guru's instructions and is awarded more freedom.⁵

Disciples go through different stages. In the beginning, their Kṛṣṇa conscious will is not activated. Later, they voluntarily give their intelligence and love. That is the beginning of friendship between guru and disciple.

After Prabhupāda's disappearance, there has been an increase in leniency due to the fact that he is no longer standing over his disciples with a stick. Now it is up to us to act as responsible grown-up sons and daughters, out of friendship and out of duty, or even out of fear. Our obedience has to be internalized. In some ways, the separation from Prabhupāda leaves us without a sense of direction, but when we internalize our loving attitude for him and allow it to manifest, we find

that we are still motivated to follow our spiritual master and dedicate our lives to his service. One thinks of Śrīla Prabhupāda's own example. He served his spiritual master in a deep, friendly way, and lived to carry out Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's orders to the highest degree.

In one *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture, Prabhupāda described his relationship with his disciples as that of the father with grown-up children:

It is not desirable that in grown-up ages, you should also be chastised. That is also difficult because when the disciple or son is grown-up, if he is chastised, then he breaks. . . . We should be conscious that "this is our rules and regulations. We must observe." It is advised by Cāṇakya Paṇḍita, *prāpte tu ṣoḍaśe varṣe/putraṁ mitra-vad-ācāret*, "After the sixteenth year, the disciple or son should be treated as a friend." . . . So our request is that instead of chastising, with folded hands I request you, don't become hippies again by growing hair. Keep your head cleansed at least once in a month. Neither can I chastise you. I am also an old man; you are young men.⁶

"Neither can I chastise you. I am also an old man; you are young men." Kṛṣṇa spoke similarly about his father when the *gopīs* threatened to report Him to Nanda Mahārāja for stealing their clothes. Kṛṣṇa replied, "If you lodge complaints to My father, I shall not care anyway, for I know My father is old and cannot take any action against Me."⁷

We know that when a boy grows into his teens, he can stand up and physically challenge his father's authority. Prabhupāda recognized that his disciples were not children, but adults. He also knew that they had been rebellious enough against their parents and society that they were able to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, he said he had to ask his disciples, with folded hands, to shave their heads.

His willingness to train us, and our willingness to be trained, took our relationship with Prabhupāda out of the mundane sphere. In the material world, relationships are based on the struggle for power. A disciple's surrender is symbolized by his full *daṇḍavats*. A disciple physically bows down before the guru, but he offers himself even more through service. "Now you can kill me or save me, as you so desire." Until we offer ourselves to the spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa won't pick us up.

Therefore, Prabhupāda took his responsibility to train disciples seriously. Even when he did not reprimand us for our foolishness, he appealed to our intelligence. He also never compromised his own teachings. In one way or another, he kept us under his control—for our safety and for our well-being on the path back to Godhead.

¹ Lecture, New York, April 19, 1966.

² Cc. Ādi 14.86–89.

³ Morning walk, Bombay, March 23, 1974.

⁴ Interview, Bombay, April 5, 1977.

⁵ Letter, January 2, 1972.

⁶ Lecture, Vṛndāvana, November 25, 1976.

⁷ Kṛṣṇa, Volume 1, Chapter 22, p. 154.

Four

*na kaścīt kasyacin mitram
na kaścīt kasyacid ripuḥ
kāraṇena hi jānāti
mitrāṇi ca ripūṁs tathā*

na—not; *kaścīt*—anyone; *kasyacit*—of anyone; *mitram*—friend; *na*—not; *kaścīt*—anyone; *kasyacid*—of anyone; *ripuḥ*—enemy; *kāraṇena*—by proper cause; *hi*—indeed; *jānāti*—one knows; *mitrāṇi*—as friends; *ca*—and; *ripūn*—as enemies; *tathā*—also.

TRANSLATION

No one is naturally a friend or enemy. Only when they give cause by their actions do we know them as friends or enemies.

COMMENTARY

This *Niti-sāstra śloka* seems to indicate that consistent behavior is necessary before we can actually see whether one is a friend or an enemy. One whom we assumed was a friend may act otherwise when a disagreement arises. Enemies also have been known to become friends, such as when Vibhiṣaṇa fought on Rāma's side in the battle to regain Sitā.

The heart of this verse is subtle. No one is a friend or an enemy until they prove themselves such. This verse dismantles the façade of someone claiming friendship or someone else assuming enmity without the proof of his or her behavior.

We have the example in Vedic history how during war, soldiers fought each other during the day and were friends at night. On the other hand, an honest man will reprimand his

own son or friend on a matter of principle, and thus appear inimical to that son or friend.

Similarly, demons and devotees are distinguished not by physical appearance, birth, or other material qualities, but by their behavior. For example, devotees never act as proprietors. They always recognize Kṛṣṇa as the supreme proprietor. Devotees follow scriptural injunctions. Demons defy the Lord at every turn.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that our minds are either our friends or our enemies. It depends on how they behave. A friendly mind acts for our welfare; an inimical mind acts against our best interest.

As a friend, I can understand my position as spirit soul, and seeing that somehow or other I have come in contact with material nature, I will try to get free from material entanglement by acting in such a way as to disentangle myself. In this case, I am my friend. But if after getting this opportunity I do not take it, then I should be considered my own worst enemy. “For he who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his very mind will be the greatest enemy” (Bg. 6.6).¹

As a sense organ, the mind is neutral and not intrinsically our enemy. The mind is like an instrument that must be properly tuned and then used in a harmonious and friendly way. Vaiṣṇavas often pray to their minds, requesting them to give up their attraction to the sense gratification that is inimical to the soul’s desire for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For the mind to be friendly, it has to act for our welfare in devotional service. Friendliness does not mean helping us to indulge in sense gratification. A mind that drags us down is our greatest enemy.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Prahlāda Mahārāja says that there are no friends and enemies in this world:

My dear father, please give up your demoniac mentality. Do not discriminate in your heart between enemies and friends; make your mind equipoised toward everyone. Except for the uncontrolled and misguided mind, there is no enemy within this world. When one sees everyone on the platform of equality, one then comes to the position of worshipping the Lord perfectly.²

This is the vision of a *mahā-bhāgavata*. The *mahā-bhāgavata* vision is based on the premise that everyone is an eternal servant of God. Therefore, there is oneness between all living beings. There is no meaning to calling one group friends and another enemies. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “. . . one who thinks that he has many enemies is an ignorant man, whereas one who is in Kṛṣṇa consciousness knows that there are no enemies but those within oneself—the uncontrolled mind and senses.”

These are the enemies—lust, greed, envy, anger, illusion, and madness—and they reside within us. These are the faults that prevent us from seeing everyone as eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa. The mind is our worst enemy. Therefore, conquering enemies begins with conquering our own mind and senses.

Although Prahlāda Mahārāja said that there are no friends or enemies, devotees who do not have this *mahā-bhāgavata* vision, but who are preaching on a lower standard of devotional service, should distinguish between friends and enemies. The *madhyama-adhikārī* is taught to serve the Lord, associate with devotees (friends), give mercy to the innocent, and avoid the demons (enemies). The *Manu-saṁhitā* also lists six types of aggressors who can be killed as enemies: the one who attacks with deadly weapons, the poisoner, the one who sets fire to your house, the one who kidnaps your wife, the one who plunders your riches, and the one who occupies your land.

There are enemies to our movement. Scholars may disregard ISKCON as sentimental. Anti-cult groups may pursue us with charges of brainwashing or coercion. There are others. A

devotee sees things philosophically. He sees the enemies as agents of karma and not really as enemies in their own right. After all, they are spirit souls whose eternal nature is as servants of Kṛṣṇa. This is the *mahā-bhāgavata* vision. Devotees cultivate this vision internally, but externally, they have to meet the demands of preaching and act on the platform of distinguishing between friends and enemies and protecting Kṛṣṇa from all attacks. Devotees are like knights at a jousting match. The scholar says, “Actually, there is no person Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa has been mythologized from a conglomeration of tribal chieftains.” The devotees have heard all this before. Like *kṣatriyas*, we strike back: “Nothing personal, professor, but actually, your intelligence has been stolen by illusion.” The professor might respond with an accusation of sentimentality. The devotee may call him a rascal or a dog. The argument can become heated, but the devotee is determined to defend Kṛṣṇa. Ultimately, however, the devotee maintains his internal vision that the scholar is a spirit soul in ignorance.

It is not, therefore, contradictory for a devotee to remain aloof from the passion of such arguments. Still, if a devotee is going to preach, he has to take the differences between the movement’s friends and enemies seriously. Śrīla Prabhupāda recognized that he had enemies. In America, he said, his enemies were the parents who didn’t like him. In India, the government, the *smarta-brāhmaṇas*, and even some of his God-brothers, were his enemies. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī referred to those who were inimical to Lord Caitanya’s pastimes as “hogs and dogs.”

Another point that this verse raises centers on the idea that friends and enemies are determined by their behavior. That doesn’t mean that everyone who disagrees with us is an enemy. Often, devotees become entangled in offense because they don’t understand this point. For example, Lord Caitanya spoke strongly against Vallabhācārya. He called him a prostitute for

criticizing Śrīdhara Svāmī. All this was said between scholars and devotees. Despite the Lord's criticism, Vallabha continued to invite the Lord for lunch and the Lord continued to accept. There was no offense taken.

Debating offenselessly takes intelligence and detachment. Usually, people are so mean-minded that whoever contradicts them is seen as an enemy to be defeated. There will always be differences of opinion. Many of these differences have been debated for generations. Still, there is no need to give or take offense. According to this verse, although two people may appear inimical to each other, they don't behave inimically. Therefore, they are not to be seen as enemies. On the other hand, if two people are friendly, but express that friendship in ways that are good for neither of them, then they're actually enemies. Friends do not cheat each other. Devotees especially should help each other and the world to realize the highest goal of life. Then they will be friends to everyone.

¹ *Perfection of Yoga*, p. 7.

² *Bhāg.* 7.8.9.

Five

*dhanāni jīvitam caiva
parārthe prājña utsrjet
san-nimittam varam tyāgo
vināśe niyate sati*

dhanāni—riches; *jīvitam*—existence; *ca*—and; *eva*—certainly; *para-arthe*—for the Supreme; *prājñaḥ*—a wise man; *utsrjet*—should abandon; *sat*—for the eternal; *nimittam*—such a cause; *varam*—better; *tyāgaḥ*—renunciation; *vināśe*—destruction; *niyate*—being led to; *sati*—so it is.

TRANSLATION

A wise man will renounce wealth and his very existence in the service of the Supreme. It is better to renounce things for the sake of the eternal when faced with the ultimate destruction of the body and everything related to it.

COMMENTARY

This verse has a bold spirit to it. Its logic is irrefutable. We all have to die. Therefore, we should sacrifice our lives for the best cause. Anyone who cannot rise to this logic is considered no better than an animal. Animals do not know how to use their lives for a higher cause. They simply engage in sense gratification. A human being, however, can conceive of life beyond sense gratification. A human being is able to understand self-realization.

Lecturing to the devotees in 1966, Prabhupāda quoted this Cāṇakya śloka and explained it: “Somebody is offering his body for country’s cause. Somebody is offering [his] body for the society’s cause. Or somebody is offering [his] body for a theft

case or some murdering case. Everyone has to offer his body at the end. But the man who sacrifices his body for the purpose of self-realization, he is the most intelligent man.”¹ This sacrifice for a higher cause is not only courageous, it is the only way to free ourselves from the material perplexities.

The *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* states: *yo vā etad akṣaram gārgy* . . . “He is a miserly man who doesn’t solve the problems of life as a human and who thus quits the world like cats and dogs, without understanding the science of self-realization.”² The miserly man is called a *kṛpana*. A man who fully utilizes his life for self-realization is called a *brāhmaṇa*.

When Bali Mahārāja wanted to give charity to the young *brāhmaṇa* boy who appeared in his court, his family guru, Śukrācārya warned him: “This person falsely appearing as a *brahmacārī* is actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, who has come in this form to take away all your land, wealth, beauty, power, fame and education. After taking everything from you, He will deliver it to Indra, your enemy.”³ Bali argued that he *wanted* to give charity. Then he gave instances in history in which others had given everything in charity. “Dadhīci, Śibi and many other great personalities were willing to sacrifice even their lives for the benefit of the people in general. This is the evidence of history. So why not give up this insignificant land? What is the serious consideration against it?”⁴

The history of Vṛtrāsura also reminds us of this point. Lord Viṣṇu assured Indra that he could regain the heavenly kingdom when he defeated the demon, Vṛtra, but because Vṛtrāsura was actually a devotee of the Lord, Lord Viṣṇu knew that Vṛtrāsura would agree to be killed by the demigods. Thus Vṛtrāsura was acting on the principle of not hesitating to give up his own body for the higher cause. By sacrificing his body, a devotee is never the loser. “For a devotee there is no difference between living and dying, because in this life, a devotee engages in

devotional service, and after giving up his body, he engages in the same service in the spiritual world. His devotional service is never hindered.”⁵

This verse preaches the true *yukta-vairāgya* spirit. *Yukta-vairāgya* means to renounce something not by giving it up, but by using it in Kṛṣṇa’s service. When we consider that we will be forced to renounce life itself, then we can respond by giving our lives into the fire of devotional service.

Lord Caitanya tells us that we have four things at our command: *prāṇa* (life), *artha* (wealth), *dhyāna* (intelligence), and *vaca* (words). This verse teaches us that we should sacrifice our *prāṇa*, our lives, for the supreme cause. If we cannot give up our lives, then we should give up our wealth. If we cannot do that, we should give up our intelligence. If we cannot do that, we should speak about Kṛṣṇa. What we are being asked is to make as much of a life’s offering as possible. It’s not by dying that we make the highest contribution, but by living fully for the cause. No one is being asked to become a martyr for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. It is better, instead, to live for and to exemplify the truth.

To follow the *yukta-vairāgya* spirit, we cannot be cheaters. Sometimes devotees cling to the word “*vairāgya*” and preach that all material amenities should be given up. They think that the act of renunciation is itself a sacrifice for the supreme cause. Prabhupāda (and Rūpa Gosvāmī) preached *yukta-vairāgya*—using material amenities in Kṛṣṇa’s service. That is, however, not an invitation to cheat. Devotees have to be vigilant. Are they actually giving their lives, wealth, intelligence, and words in Kṛṣṇa’s service? It’s not that we keep our wealth while only offering Kṛṣṇa a leaf, a fruit, and some water. Renunciation has to be honest.

Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes expressed his own devotional service in military terms. For example, he spoke of dying on the battlefield. He also said, “When there is question of fight, we

have to fight. Just like in Bombay, we fought but for the result, we depended on Kṛṣṇa. We have come out victorious. There was no hope of getting that land. It was a regular fight. The whole Bombay city became agitated, but we are victorious because we depended on Kṛṣṇa . . . I prayed to Kṛṣṇa, 'My dear Lord, You are seated there on that place. If You are removed, then it will be suicidal . . . I cannot tolerate this insult that You will be removed from there.' So Kṛṣṇa saved our fate . . . we should be like that. We can fight to our best, but depend for the result on Kṛṣṇa."⁶

Although we cannot imitate Śrīla Prabhupāda's heroic stature, we are all meant to be preachers and to make the supreme sacrifice.

Our sacrifice has to be intelligent. Often, devotees join and throw themselves into the fray of preaching with passion. They sacrifice not only their material interests, but their spiritual ones as well. They give up their *sādhana* in the name of surrender to spiritual life. Their motives at that stage of their devotional service are not completely transcendental or mature.

We can say that Śrīla Prabhupāda was militaristic in his approach to the preaching mission and that he wanted his disciples to respond in kind, but Prabhupāda also exemplified the life of a Vaiṣṇava saint. He never acted in the mode of passion. He was methodical in his use of time. He was clean and brahminical. He spoke strongly, but was always a gentleman. He was never overcome by external events and he was never fanatical. Those qualities, which are simply the qualities of a Vaiṣṇava, lifted him above the passionately spinning wheels of crisis management. He never thought he had to give up brahminical qualities and the *sādhaka* life to achieve his goals for preaching.

Neither did he say that sacrifice requires dying for the cause. Prabhupāda wanted us to voluntarily use all our energy

in Kṛṣṇa's service. It is not only by dying, but by living, that we sacrifice all that we have for Kṛṣṇa's purpose.

One thing that many devotees have already given is their youth. That is already a great sacrifice and for those who have given the best years of their lives, there is no loss, no matter what their experience in ISKCON has been.

Sometimes devotees lament having given those years to ISKCON based on a promise that all their material needs, and some of their material desires, would be met. ISKCON was unable to fulfill that promise in the end. Therefore, devotees lost not only their material security, but their youths in which they could have been building their careers and planning for their families. Devotees were then faced with the fact that they could never compete with the young achievers in the world. Making money and starting a career is more difficult when you're forty than when you're twenty-five.

Because of this, devotees may find themselves lamenting their years of full surrender in ISKCON, and also now being forced to step back from full participation. Still, devotees shouldn't give up the cause. They shouldn't lose their ideals through these changes, or feel that they have lost something too valuable to recover. It may be that participation in the cause has to take on a more internal facet now that they are no longer able to give all their time and energy to ISKCON's work. The fact remains that they are going to die—life will have to be sacrificed in one way or another. Better to have sacrificed it for the highest cause.

Lord Caitanya gave His youth by taking *sannyāsa* at the age of twenty-four and then traveling all over India to preach. He also sent His devotees to various places to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the benefit of others. In the same mood, Śrīla Prabhupāda sent out his call to inspire all sincere and high-spirited preachers. We shouldn't lose the spirit of sacrifice, even if our circumstances have changed.

At the present moment the entire world is in a dangerous position under the spell of a godless civilization. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement needs many exalted, learned persons who will sacrifice their lives to revive God consciousness throughout the world. We therefore invite all men and women advanced in knowledge to join the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and sacrifice their lives for the great cause of reviving God consciousness in human society.⁷

The military spirit is strong in this verse, but to follow this spirit takes guidance—leadership—and discipline. Both the *kṣatriya* and the monk follow strict discipline, although their aims are different. The reason for the *kṣatriya*'s discipline is that he has to be ready to kill or be killed on the order of a superior. All his training is focused on being able to march into battle behind his leaders and perform this very difficult task of taking others' lives or giving up his own. The monk also marches into battle behind his guru, not to kill others, but to kill his material desires, to practice renunciation, and to sacrifice everything he has for Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda discusses this point in the *Bhagavad-gītā* where he explains that Kṛṣṇa teaches Arjuna as a military man.⁸ We have to subordinate ourselves to guru and Kṛṣṇa, and that is part of the sacrifice. Our preaching is not shooting guns and taking over countries, but distributing books and the holy name. That necessitates following orders and making sacrifices. When guru and Kṛṣṇa order, we have to obey. When the trained mind orders the lower self to follow the guru's instructions against sinful life, the devotee has to obey. That is how *vaidhi-bhakti* is practiced. When the clock goes off in the morning, it's time to get up. Self-discipline is part of the sacrifice.

The reason for discipline is pointed out in this *śloka*—we all have to die. Life is temporary. For a devotee to impose this discipline upon himself, he has to have a sense of both his

body's mortality and his soul's immortality. If we face the fact that the body could die at any moment, we will realize that all we will be left with is the fruit of our actions. If our actions were focused in the material sphere, we will be forced back into that sphere to live out the reactions. If our actions, however, were performed solely for the glorification of Kṛṣṇa, then we will go to Kṛṣṇa. Without this understanding, we won't be able to respond to this verse.

Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said that the most amazing thing is that we don't think we will die, even though we see death all around us. We are holding onto our material desires, thinking that when we get the signal, we will run to Vṛndāvana and renounce everything. It may be too late. We may never get notice of our impending death. That is why we should emphasize giving everything up by living, not by dying. We have to sacrifice every minute of our time to Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this spirit.

Living with death in the forefront of our minds does not mean meditating constantly on impending doom. It means facing death as a reality and then living in such a way as to make our lives valuable. Facing death takes courage. It also takes courage to live out our ideals and our conviction in the face of death.

Facing death also means providing living things for the people who are living now and in the future. It means distributing books and building temples. It means making ourselves touchstones of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Life offers a brief chance to make immortal progress. Death is only the end of a particular life; life itself does not end.

We do hope to get some notice of our death before it actually happens. Then we will be able to clear our minds and hearts and focus exclusively on Kṛṣṇa and our dependence on Him.

¹ Lecture, New York, April 5, 1966.

² Bg. 2.7, purport.

³ *Bhāg.* 8.19.32.

⁴ *Bhāg.* 8.20.7.

⁵ *Bhāg.* 6.9.55, purport.

⁶ Lecture, Hawaii, January 23, 1974.

⁷ *Bhāg.* 6.10.6.

⁸ Bg. 18.59, purport.

Six

*lālane bahavo doṣās
tāḍane bahavo guṇāḥ
tasmāt putram ca śiṣyam ca
tāḍayen na tu lālayet*

lālane—in [excessive] leniency; *bahavaḥ*—many; *doṣāḥ*—character faults; *tāḍane*—in chastisement; *bahavaḥ*—many; *guṇāḥ*—good qualities; *tasmāt*—therefore; *putram*—the son; *ca*—and; *śiṣyam*—disciple; *ca*—also; *tāḍayet*—one should chastise; *na*—not; *tu*—but; *lālayet*—be lenient.

TRANSLATION

Excessive leniency will produce many faults, while strictness will build good character. Therefore, be strict, not lenient, with the son or disciple.

COMMENTARY

The dictionary defines the word “strict” as follows: “characterized by or acting in close conformity with requirements or principles; stringent or exacting in or in enforcing rules, requirements, obligations, etc.; stern, severe, strict laws; closely or rigorously enforced or maintained.” Those of us who experienced Prabhupāda’s personal treatment may question whether Prabhupāda followed this definition to the fullest. Certainly, Prabhupāda was always encouraging us. He once told us that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was “eighty percent lenient.” In order for Kṛṣṇa consciousness to be spread to the Western world, especially in the beginning, Prabhupāda also had to be lenient. Yet he approved of Cāṇakya’s statement and sometimes quoted it. “Don’t be angry, but it is the business of

the teacher and the father simply to find out your mistakes, not to find out your good things. . . . If you simply pat, then there will be so many faults. . . . And if you chastise, oh, they will be very much qualified.”¹

Prabhupāda told us the story about the thief and murderer who was about to be killed by the government for his crimes. As one of his last requests, he asked to see his mother. As his mother came close, he leaned over and bit her ear. The criminal exclaimed, “Mother, in my childhood when I used to steal, you indulged me and did not punish me. Because of this leniency, I have come to this awful end.”

Devotees prefer to be reprimanded by their gurus than praised. Śrīla Prabhupāda was fond of recalling the time when he was reprimanded by his spiritual master. “So far we are concerned, when our spiritual master used to chastise, we took it as a blessing.” Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us how he was fond of hearing his spiritual master speak. Once, while Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was lecturing, a retired doctor leaned over to say something to our Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda then turned to this retired doctor, but Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Mahārāja saw them and became angry. Prabhupāda says, “He saw that my attention was drawn by him. He chastised me like anything . . . First he chastised the doctor, ‘Do you think that because you pay sixty rupees a month you have purchased us?’ A very strong word he used. Then he turned and said to me, ‘Do you think that I am speaking for others? You have learned everything? You are diverting your attention. Why don’t you come up here and speak instead of me?’”² This was not a chance occasion, but Śrīla Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī regularly reprimanded his disciples. “A little discrepancy he would chastise like anything. But we liked it very much.”

Other devotees also liked to be reprimanded or chastised. Advaita Ācārya saw chastisement from Lord Caitanya as

nectar, and He tried in one way or another to make the Lord angry enough to chastise Him. When Sanātana Gosvāmī heard Lord Caitanya reprimand Jagadānanda Paṇḍita, he said, “Sir, You are making Jagadānanda drink the nectar of affectionate relationships, whereas by offering me honorable prayers, You are making me drink the bitter juice of *nimba* and *niśindā*.³ When Lord Caitanya became very hard, however, and banished someone from His association, no one wanted to experience that chastisement.

Similarly, we should accept the guru’s reprimand as mercy, and we should look for that attention from him. If we see that our spiritual master is not willing to be strict with us, then we should look within ourselves and determine whether we have given him the power over us that he needs to discipline us. The spiritual master has to be careful about applying stricture on an unsundered disciple, because if the disciple disobeys, it will be worse than if he was not given any instruction at all.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was particularly attentive to ISKCON’s development in India, and he personally supervised many of the financial and managerial details. It was inevitable, therefore, that he would see his disciples’ faults in these areas and then reprimand them. When one of the managers became depressed by Prabhupāda’s criticisms, Prabhupāda explained his teaching principle in a letter:

I know you are working hard and sincerely. I have no business to criticize you, but as head of the institution or your spiritual master, it is my duty to find out your faults. Even Caitanya Mahāprabhu presented Himself as faulty before His spiritual master. To remain faulty before the spiritual master is a good qualification so he is subjected to rectification. But if one thinks he is all perfect then there is no scope for rectification. Don’t be sorry when I find fault. That is my primary duty. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says one must find fault with disciples and sons, it is good for them. ⁴

As Prabhupāda's disciples advanced, they found themselves being corrected more often by their spiritual master. Prabhupāda reprimanded them in different ways according to who they were and how serious their mistakes were. A newcomer might sit with his feet to the Deity in front of Prabhupāda and receive a public correction, but if one of his senior disciples did the same thing, Prabhupāda would speak strongly: "You are supposed to be a *sannyāsi*! What kind of example is this?"

We could say that the reprimands were heavier for an older devotee because the older devotees were more advanced and more surrendered, but it is also true that the reprimands were heavier because those devotees were leading the movement. They were more capable of committing mistakes that affected many devotees. In 1974, Prabhupāda gave a lecture in which he said that the Lord "punishes His GBC." He went on to explain how Yamarāja is one of the twelve *mahājānas* and how he was punished and had to take birth as Vidura.⁵

This Cāṇakya *śloka* has some similar characteristics to Verse Three. After ten years of enforced discipline, a child reaches the age of sixteen and becomes a friend. This implies that the child or disciple is trustworthy and able to control his senses because he has achieved a higher taste.

For example, the devotees in Vṛndāvana had to get their checks signed by Prabhupāda and by a man in Delhi whom Prabhupāda trusted before they were able to spend any money. Prabhupāda was strict about how money was spent, and he didn't trust his disciples' discretion in spending it. It's true, however, that if the devotees could prove their trustworthiness, Prabhupāda would relax his strictures. The system of checks and balances would remain intact, but Prabhupāda would allow the devotees to take the responsibility upon themselves and sign the checks themselves.

Also, there may be an age where a child is too old to take the strict discipline anymore. Applying that discipline may no

longer be psychologically effective. If such a child or disciple gives the parent or guru control, even though he may not be able to handle strong discipline, he can still receive mercy. Ultimately, however, the spiritual master can only teach a disciple who continues to accept the strictness of discipleship. He cannot teach someone who no longer accepts his control.

We can imagine how hard it would be for the guru to be strict with a disciple, but not with himself. That would lead to a kind of decadence where both guru and disciple were indulging in bad habits. Because bad habits have to be checked if we are to make advancement in spiritual life, both guru and disciple have to agree to be strict with themselves. The guru may question the disciple's attentiveness to his service, "Did you lock the door? Did you turn out the lights? Did you wipe down the altar?" The disciple says, "Oh no, I forgot." "Then go do it. I've told you a million times!" The disciple is happy to receive that instruction. It is mercy.

That is one scenario, and we have all probably experienced how having our faults pointed out by the spiritual master makes us happy. We're happy to hear them and happy to know how to rectify ourselves. This isn't discipline without love—dry following simply to be a "good" disciple—this is discipline based on a loving and personal relationship.

When Prabhupāda visited the Dallas *gurukula*, he instructed the teachers in how to employ the principles of strictness and leniency in training young children:

Q: Should we be strict?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is all on basis of love. Strict is not very good. They should do it automatically out of love. Superficially some stricture is not a good idea . . . The basic principle should be love.

Prabhupāda went on to say that rules and regulations should be required for the children, and the teachers should set

the example by being strict with themselves. “If you don’t practice, but force them, that is not good . . . if you are too lenient there will be many faults. If you discipline them, that is good. Don’t be lenient. Not out of ‘love’ see our disciples go to hell. That is foolishness.”⁶

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself exemplified loving discipline. I don’t know how he was able to do it, but he attracted people to him and they loved him. Then he ruled with force and strictness. At the same time, it was clear that he loved them and that the discipline was being imposed on them for their own good.

I remember walking with Prabhupāda out of the apartment we had rented for him in Boston in 1969. He saw a newspaper lying in the hall and stopped to read the headlines: “Nixon Warns Students . . .” At that time, the colleges were rebelling against the Vietnam war. Prabhupāda said that Nixon’s warnings wouldn’t work. He said you can’t force without love. He gave the example that “just as I ask you to do something, you immediately do it because there is love.” And he was right. Even when Nixon called out the National Guard, the students refused to obey.

Prabhupāda’s disciples wanted to please him because they loved him. He attracted us to Kṛṣṇa. He offered us a life of eternity, knowledge, and bliss. He fed us delicious *prasādam*. He let us live in his temples and gave us the responsibility for the buildings’ upkeep. He gave us *japa* and *kirtana*. We were obliged to him. We were willing to accept his strictures as the price for living a life we loved with the person we loved.

We also had faith that he was a pure devotee who could give us Kṛṣṇa. That faith took some of the sentimentality out of our following. Although in one sense, it’s a mystery how Prabhupāda could have imposed discipline on so many young people, it was really our sense of obligation to him that made it

possible. By fulfilling our obligation to him, we came to realize that the discipline was for our own good.

I personally liked his strictness. I know others did too. It made us feel safe and righteous, not in an arrogant way, but in a religious way. Prabhupāda's discipline gave us the strength to avoid outside influences, to follow the regulative principles and chant sixteen rounds, to get up early and to talk about Kṛṣṇa instead of something mundane. Within that discipline, which we soon learned to impose upon ourselves, Prabhupāda developed a personal relationship as guru which was as real and familial and loving as any other relationship. We gave up everything—our girlfriends or boyfriends, our buddies, and often our families—to follow that one relationship.

Prabhupāda carried out much of his discipline through his correspondence. He guided his disciples now a little to the left, now a little to the right, and kept them on the track. His letters helped his disciples fine-tune their understanding and service and to feel the truth of their ongoing relationship with him.

Prabhupāda was able to maintain discipline because he was always strict with himself. He wasn't strict in the sense that he was controlling his senses even though he had a taste for sense gratification. His strictness was a natural purity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He was like a lotus flower rising above the material pool. He appeared strict with himself because he wouldn't touch anything that wasn't strictly and purely Kṛṣṇa conscious.

His disciples were affected by that purity. Someone might approach him with a material desire they were trying to dovetail, but when they came face to face with his purity, they would feel their lowness and realize that they should renounce that desire. His discipline and example pushed all of us to aspire for the highest standard.

Going back to the dictionary definition of “strict,” a further definition is as follows: “exact or precise; a strict statement of facts. Absolute, perfect, or complete.” This is the definition that applies to Śrīla Prabhupāda. He wasn’t stern or severe, but “strictly” Kṛṣṇa conscious. As his disciples perceived his natural purity, they couldn’t be anything but strictly Kṛṣṇa conscious themselves.

Śrīla Prabhupāda told us that Māyāvādī *sannyāsīs* are very strict about their adherence to the rules and regulations, but that a Vaiṣṇava may be more lenient. A Vaiṣṇava is practicing *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is so powerful that it can purify even the most fallen person who takes to it sincerely. A Vaiṣṇava’s laxity in following every regulation is not arbitrary, but based on the convenience of performing his devotional service. Generally, a more advanced devotee can act more spontaneously in his or her service than a neophyte is recommended to do. Still, an advanced devotee usually continues to follow the rules and regulations and behave strictly in order to set an example for the neophyte devotees.

No one can be strict with those who are not following him. Śrīla Prabhupāda said we should be like gentlemen, but if someone points to water and calls it milk, we cannot accept what they say. When Prabhupāda spoke to guests who were not his disciples, he couldn’t tell them to shave their heads or even to remove their shoes before coming into his room. He couldn’t tell them to do things they wouldn’t do. On the other hand, if such a person were to say that Kṛṣṇa is an ordinary man, Prabhupāda would not tolerate it. In that sense, he disciplined anyone who approached him.

That is an extended meaning of this *śloka*: a devotee is strict in his unwillingness to compromise the Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy. That unwillingness to compromise builds good character.

Discipline starts with self-discipline and self-discipline begins with training our minds. This is why Śrīla Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura encouraged us to beat our minds with shoes in the morning and with a broomstick at night. In this way, we will not compromise with a wayward mind, but will remain strict in our spiritual practices.

¹ Lecture, Tokyo, April 22, 1972.

² Ibid.

³ Cc. Antya 4.163.

⁴ Letter, April 20, 1974.

⁵ Lecture, Geneva, June 4, 1974.

⁶ *ISKCON in the 1970's*, Volume 1, pp. 149–50.

Seven

*kim tayā kriyate dhenvā
yā na dogdhṛi na garbhiṇi
ko 'rthaḥ putreṇa jātena
yo na vidvān na bhaktimān*

kim—what; *tayā*—with her; *kriyate*—to be done; *dhenvā*—with the cow; *yā*—who; *na*—not; *dogdhṛi*—gives milk; *na*—not; *garbhiṇi*—able to conceive; *kaḥ*—what; *arthaḥ*—value; *putreṇa*—by a son; *jātena*—by the birth; *yaḥ*—who; *na*—not; *vidvān*—scholar; *na*—not; *bhaktimān*—devotee.

TRANSLATION

What use is a cow who cannot conceive and cannot give milk? What use is the birth of a son who is neither a scholar nor a devotee of the Lord?

COMMENTARY

Sometimes devotees question why Cāṇakya Paṇḍita gave equal weight to the son being a devotee (*bhaktimān*) and to his being learned (*vidvān*). To answer this question, we have to analyze who Cāṇakya Paṇḍita was. He was not a Vaiṣṇava. The *ślokas* only become enriched with pure Vaiṣṇavism when they are quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda. To Prabhupāda, a learned scholar is a devotee. Prabhupāda often said that one who has become a scholar but not a devotee is useless.

In the material world, parents are often eager to conceive children, but they do not consider how painful it will be if their children grow up to be useless. When King Citraketu and his wife could not conceive children, they begged Aṅgirā Muni to bless them to have a son. Aṅgirā Muni understood that accord-

ing to his karma, Citraketu was not meant to have children, but since he insisted, he blessed his wife so that she could conceive. He also warned them that their son would be the cause of both jubilation and lamentation. Citraketu heard the sage's words and then rationalized that it didn't matter whether his son was disobedient or in any way defective. He reasoned that a blind uncle was better than no uncle at all. Prabhupāda writes, "The material world is so polluted that one wants to have a son even though he is useless."¹ When offspring turn out to be the source of pain and degradation for a family, parents curse their lot to have had such a child. If they had taken more care, and sensed the wisdom of this Cāṇakya *śloka*, they might have avoided such bitterness in family life.

Vṛtrāsura, fighting on the side of the demons, rebuked his own soldiers when he saw them run from the battle like cowards. "O demigods," Vṛtrāsura said, "these demoniac soldiers have taken birth uselessly. Indeed they have come from the bodies of their mothers exactly like stool."² Here again, the bad son is condemned. In a similar version of the Cāṇakya *śloka*, the *Hitopadeśa* states, "What is the use of a son who is neither glorious nor devoted to the Lord? Such a son is like a blind eye, which simply gives pain but cannot help one to see."

From the *Mahābhārata* we learn how an envious, nondevotee son, Duryodhana, caused the downfall of his whole family. Duryodhana and his brothers, along with their father, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, plotted against the Pāṇḍavas, who were devotees of Kṛṣṇa. This brought about their ruin. Seeing the evil that would come from such enviousness, Vidura warned Dhṛtarāṣṭra to reject Duryodhana, and spoke a verse similar to this *śloka*: "You are maintaining offense personified, Duryodhana, as your infallible son, but he is envious of Lord Kṛṣṇa. And because you are thus maintaining a nondevotee of Kṛṣṇa, you are devoid of all auspicious qualities. Relieve yourself of this ill-fortune as soon as possible and do good to the whole family!"³

According to Vedic culture, a good son can offer *piṇḍa* to the forefathers and perform sacrifices to Viṣṇu to save his father's soul after death, even if the father was fallen. Prabhupāda writes, "But if the son is already an enemy of Viṣṇu, how, in such an inimical mood, can he offer sacrifice unto Lord Viṣṇu's lotus feet? Lord Kṛṣṇa is directly the Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu, and Duryodhana was inimical to Him. He would therefore be unable to protect his father, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, after his death. He himself was to fall down because of faithlessness towards Viṣṇu. How, then, could he protect his father? Vidura advised Dhṛtarāṣṭra to get rid of such an unworthy son as Duryodhana as soon as possible if he was at all anxious to see to the good of his family." ⁴

This verse seems severe. It advises parents to disown unworthy offspring. Cāṇakya, however, is not moralizing on some impossibly high standard. Rather, he is pointing out what actually happens in the world. A grown-up child may actually disturb his parents' *bhajana*. The parents warn him and eventually, when he is old enough, let him leave their home and find his own way in life. This is a realistic assessment of what happens in many families. Although it is the parents' duty to care for their children and to instruct them in God consciousness, the children are free to choose not to take up devotional life. Parents do not have to maintain such children forever.

Śrīla Prabhupāda maintained his nondevotee children until he was fifty years old. Then he took *sannyāsa*. This verse is not saying that parents should throw their children out of the home or kill them if they are not devotees.

When Prabhupāda addressed this point, he made a distinction between a useless child and a demonic child. It's not that parents have to be completely hard-hearted. Prabhupāda often compared children to animals. He said that animals were less intelligent and should therefore be protected, not exploited or

killed for our sense gratification. Similarly, a father would not compare his successful son to his stupid son and kill the stupid son.

However, if the son is demonic, the parents should reject that child. For example, King Aṅga fathered Veṇa, who was a tyrant and a criminal. Aṅga Mahārāja abandoned his home life and went to the forest out of grief for his bad son.

When Prabhupāda came to America, he picked up so many worthless sons and daughters. He didn't reject us, but trained us to become devotees. He recognized that our worthlessness was karma and could be changed. After all, we were pure spirit souls. Prabhupāda established a new relationship with us—one of spiritual father and children. He gave us a new birth and a new opportunity to become worthy. This is an example of how unworthy children needn't be killed, but can be turned into the flowers of their generation.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda was coaching his disciples who were planning to visit India's Prime Minister, he said, "Approach them and plead that 'children from your family are expected to be respectable boys, with good character, devotees and educated . . . What is the use of begetting cats and dogs. Either he should be *bhaktimān* or *vidvān*. So we are going to teach your son to become *vidvān* and *bhaktimān*. Don't you like to bring your son up in that way?' You have to tell them like that. And present it rightly."⁵ This implies that if parents and their children, although highly placed in society, are actually debauchees, then they will cause pain to their families and nations.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave similar advice to a respectable gentleman who visited him in Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "If the aristocratic family does not give education in the spiritual line, they all become hippies, loafer, and drinking and wasting father's money. They should be informed."⁶ *Sādhus* and devotees also have the responsibility to give this advice to

parents, even if it is rejected. Nowadays, parents are more likely to regret or disown their children if they turn out to become learned devotees of the Lord. Materialistic parents regret seeing that all their material training has gone in vain, and that their child, due to the influence of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, desires pure love of God. In that situation, the wisdom of this *śloka* is reversed. The parents regard the devotee as useless, and prefer to have a son who is neither educated nor inclined for spiritual life. Such children will ultimately be the source of grief for their parents, either through fighting, litigation, or painful separation at death.

If this is true, why does Cāṇakya comment on the value of a good son at all? Isn't it all family attachment? We can measure attachment in stages. There is family attachment, there is detachment, and there is something that could prove higher, which is attachment to Kṛṣṇa within the family circle.

In the West, parents don't value a learned son or a *bhakta*, they value someone who pursues material life with zeal. They value a child who embodies their own values. Similarly, there are families that value a pious child. In either case, the stability of the family unit is an illusion. These *ślokas* are meant to remind us that there are higher principles than the stability of the family, and in Prabhupāda's hands, they become tools to take us past mundane piety.

Did Śrīla Prabhupāda ever reject unworthy disciples? I never saw him do that, although I saw many disciples reject him. Śrīla Prabhupāda was lenient. He did what he could to start the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement by giving everyone a chance to freely engage in Kṛṣṇa's service. He accepted their sincerity, even if their practices were not up to standard. Like the father of the prodigal son, he was always ready to accept his children back, even if they had been caught by the modes of nature or had misused their free will again. Prabhupāda was

aware that the bad son could again become good and therefore he would not reject him.

¹ *Bhāg.* 6.14.29, purport.

² *Bhāg.* 6.11.4.

³ *Bhāg.* 3.1.13.

⁴ *Bhāg.* 3.1.13, purport.

⁵ Room conversation, Vṛndāvana, June 24, 1977.

⁶ Room conversation, Vṛndāvana, November 5, 1976.

Eight

*tyaja durjana-saṁsargam
bhaja sādhu-samāgamam
kuru puṇyam aho-rātram
smara nityam anityatām*

tyaja—just give up; *durjana-saṁsargam*—association of wicked persons; *bhaja*—just worship; *sādhu-samāgamam*—the association of saintly persons; *kuru*—just do; *puṇyam*—pious deeds; *aho-rātram*—day and night; *smara*—just remember; *nityam*—always; *anityatām*—temporariness.

TRANSLATION

Give up the association of wicked persons, worship the association of the saintly, do pious deeds day and night, and always remember the temporality of this world.

COMMENTARY

When Lord Caitanya was asked about the duty of a Vaiṣṇava, He said, “*Asat-saṅga-tyāga—ei vaiṣṇava-ācāra*, ‘*stri-saṅgi*’—*eka asādhu*, ‘*kṛṣṇa-bhakta*’ *āra*.” A Vaiṣṇava is one who gives up the association of nondevotees.¹ What is a nondevotee? Lord Caitanya defines him as one who is too attached to material enjoyment and who is not a *sādhu*. In *The Nectar of Instruction*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī advises that one should avoid the association of nondevotees and always associate with devotees of the Lord.

When we forget the temporality of this world and give ourselves to materialistic pursuits, we meet with hankering (*kāṅkṣaṇa*) and lamentation (*śoka*). In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches how to successfully transcend this dilemma:

“One who is thus transcendently situated at once realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me.” Prabhupāda explains, “The world is miserable for the materially infected person, but for a devotee, the entire world is as good as Vaikuṇṭha, or the spiritual sky.”²

It is easy enough to agree that the association of wicked persons is not desirable, but who are these wicked rascals? Surely, educated or highly placed people would not fall into this category. According to Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, “Anyone who does not know God, he is not educated, he is a rascal. This is our conclusion. Not our conclusion, this is *sāstra*’s conclusion.”³ The *sāstras* speak strongly about this point. Even if one accepts a guru and later discovers that the guru is a rascal, then that guru can be rejected.

Cāṇakya advises us never to forget that this world is temporary. “Dreaming is always temporary,” said Prabhupāda. “We must know that whatever we possess, whatever we are seeing, these are all dreams, temporary.”⁴ If a person becomes entangled with temporary life and later takes to nationalism or even “family-ism,” it is a waste of time. Without cultivating Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we only create karma for another birth in the miserable, temporary world.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Always think that everything here in this material world is for a few days. That’s all.” To illustrate this truth, Prabhupāda told us the story of the oldest man who ever lived. There was a man whose life duration was so long that it was predicted he would outlive Lord Brahmā. In fact, this oldest man would outlive many Brahmās because every time a Brahmā died, he would lose one hair. When all his hair had fallen out, the man would die. This old man spent his time sitting on the banks of a sacred river in meditation. His

disciples saw him practicing severe austerities and begged to be allowed to build him a hut. He replied, “I’m only going to be alive for a relatively few days, so what use will a hut be to me?”

Māyāvādi philosophers often practice only the first half of this *śloka*. They may strictly avoid association with wicked persons and sense gratifiers, but they do not usually accept the association of devotees. This policy, however, will eventually lead to their falldown. One cannot remain in spiritual consciousness by following only negative injunctions. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states: *anādṛta-yuṣmad-aṅghrayaḥ*—one may rise to the Brahman platform by the performance of severe austerities, but he will fall down if he neglects to render service to Kṛṣṇa and His pure devotees.⁵

The International Society For Krishna Consciousness is dedicated to the principles stated in this *śloka* and thus tries to save people from the repetition of birth and death. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “We are establishing different centers, not for sense enjoyment, but for good association of devotees. Those who are managers of this institution must always know that we cannot make this institution or this center as a brothel. There must be such management or arrangement that we always have good association for advancement.”⁶

Often, devotees confront aphorisms such as this one and wonder how they can come up to the standard. Perhaps their lives necessitate that they associate with nondevotees as they work out in the world. When they associate with nondevotees, it’s harder to remember the temporality of the material world.

These aphorisms state an ideal. The world is full of ideals and people often trade one set of ideals for another as they grow older and wiser. Cāṇakya’s ideals, especially when they are applied by the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, are meant to lift us out of the material world all together. As long as we hold onto our ideals, we will continue to strive to fulfill them. It may not be possible to immediately perform pious deeds day and night, for example,

but just as we aspire to pure devotion and have not yet attained it, so we can aspire to follow these ideals even though we may not be able to immediately attain them.

Following ideals means remembering that the world is temporary and then living for eternality. We may not have the minute to minute consciousness that death can come at any moment, but we should accept this fact as a working principle in our life. Then we will act always on the knowledge of our identity as spirit soul instead of the illusion of bodily consciousness. We will become attached to Vṛndāvana instead of our home in the West. We will do whatever encourages renunciation instead of building up our assets in this world. We will chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, even if we don't always have the desire.

Association with wicked persons does not necessarily mean that a devotee cannot work with nondevotees. It means that he should avoid intimate association with them. If a devotee is thrown by circumstance into a job where he has to associate with nondevotees, he should not then look at this verse and think that its spirit is unattainable. Such a devotee should reserve his heartfelt exchanges for Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's devotees.

Cāṇakya says we should associate with *sādhus*. We have already discussed that a *sādhū* is a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. What, then, is the quality of that association? Someone once asked me whether staying up all night at a "devotee" New Year's eve party, drinking nonalcoholic drinks, and "ringing in the new year" could constitute devotee association. I don't think so. The same devotee also asked whether getting together to watch the Superbowl over soybean hotdogs (offered to Prabhupāda) was all right. One could say that devotees doing these things is a sign that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is taking root in American culture. We can't tell Americans not to celebrate Christmas or the New Year or Easter, so Americans can get into the spirit of their holidays by Kṛṣṇa-izing them. In some cases, this can be done. We can Kṛṣṇa-ize some holidays rather than pretend

they don't exist. However, there are limits to what can be Kṛṣṇa-ized. When I think of devotees gathered around the television and watching the Superbowl together, I imagine that their devotional service is temporarily on hold while they indulge in some *māyā* together. The injunction to "associate with devotees" means practicing devotional service together.

When this verse describes worshipping the association of the saintly, it means chanting and hearing together, and performing devotional acts in the company of *sādhus*. Similarly, doing pious deeds day and night can mean planting trees, digging wells, building roads—doing things that many people will benefit from. A Vaiṣṇava is expected to do more than that. In the same spirit of benefiting others, he is expected to disseminate spiritual life—by distributing the holy name, by distributing *prasādam*, by distributing the *sāstra*, and by building or maintaining temples. Those are the pious deeds that Śrīla Prabhupāda asked his followers to perform.

A verse like this, when applied by someone other than a Vaiṣṇava, may lead us to become complacent. Because this verse speaks to the things Indian culture holds dear, people think that by performing pious deeds, they will get a higher birth. Since spiritual life is meant to be progressive, those higher births will lead them simultaneously down the path of better sense gratification and higher levels of piety. But this is Kali-yuga, and the chances of taking a good birth are getting fewer and fewer. What can a good birth mean in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, when practically all nations in the world are torn apart by war or famine or natural disaster? Śrīla Prabhupāda compared progressive spiritual life to a royal road. He said that even on the royal road, there can be disaster. Instead of making progress, such a person could find himself suddenly carried away by sense gratification into impiety. The modes of nature are vicious. Unless we are practicing renun-

ciation and positive Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the chances of avoiding their power are slim.

The idea that “I’m religious, and that’s good enough to ensure my life of material comfort and moral rectitude” is a false one. Everyone in this world meets with misery at one time or another. We could be living in a country that suddenly experiences economic collapse due to the collective karma of the population. We could be living in a country that suddenly finds itself at war. Or the modes could sweep us away into impious indulgence and we could find ourselves taking birth in the lower species of life.

It is difficult to die and just as difficult to take birth again. Prabhupāda always tried to burst the illusion that the material world was a safe place by saying, “There is no happiness in this material world.” That there is no happiness means that there is no guarantee that things will go the way we want them to. Just because we planted so many trees or dug so many wells doesn’t guarantee us a good situation in our next life. All guarantees are torn apart by the influence of Kali-yuga.

The *Bhāgavatam* describes the nature of Kali-yuga:

Then, O King, religion, truthfulness, cleanliness, tolerance, mercy, duration of life, physical strength and memory will diminish day by day because of the powerful influence of the age of Kali. In Kali-yuga, wealth alone will be considered the sign of a man’s good birth, proper behavior and fine qualities, and law and justice will be applied only on the basis of one’s power. . . . The principles of religion will be observed only for the sake of reputation. As the earth becomes crowded with a corrupt population, whoever among any of the social classes shows himself to be the strongest will gain political power. Losing their wives and properties to such avaricious and merciless rulers, who will behave no better than ordinary thieves, the citizens will flee to the mountains and forests. Harassed by

famine and excessive taxes, people will resort to eating leaves, roots, flesh, wild honey, fruits, flowers and seeds. Struck by drought, they will become completely ruined.⁷

Kali-yuga is a dangerous time. This is the stark reality. Even if someone is able to perform enough pious deeds that he can elevate himself to the heavenly planets, there is no ultimate safety. Sometimes even Indra is chased from his throne and forced to hide to protect his life. Eventually, one who takes birth in the heavenly planets and engages in sense gratification will be forced to take birth on the earth planet again when Kali-yuga is even more advanced.

Similarly, a renunciate should not become complacent and dependent on material amenities as they are offered by householders who are trying to associate with *sādhus*. It is not that for the price of a few lectures, all the *sādhū*'s material needs are met and both he and the householders can slip into the complacent thought that they are both doing all right.

Everyone should perform their duty, therefore, recognizing Kṛṣṇa consciousness as the highest goal. Especially for the householder, performing duty takes every ounce of strength he has. Someone may tell him that he has his priorities wrong, but our society is so complex that he may not be able to make an adjustment to a simpler way of life. Fortunately, in this age, the spiritual *yajña* has been made simple. A devotee has to live in both the external world and an internal world. He has to perform his duty while simultaneously remembering Kṛṣṇa. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is simple and sublime. If the chanting is kept as a priority, it will be easier to dovetail the material duty in Kṛṣṇa's service. It will be easier to detach ourselves from the material world and build our home in the spiritual world. We are aspiring not just to become sinless or dutiful, but to become lovers of Kṛṣṇa. We can attain that ideal by

hearing and chanting with devotees, studying the *Bhāgavatam* and other Vaiṣṇava scriptures, and by seriously applying ourselves to going back to Godhead.

¹ Cc. *Madhya* 22.87.

² Bg. 18.54, and purport.

³ Lecture, Los Angeles, June 4, 1976.

⁴ Lecture, Hyderabad, November 21, 1972.

⁵ *Bhāg.* 10.2.32.

⁶ Lecture, London, August 26, 1973.

⁷ *Bhāg.* 12.2.1–2, 6–9.

Nine

*mūrkhā yatra na pūjyante
dhānyam yatra su-saṅcitam
dāmpatyoh kalaho nāsti
tatra śrīḥ svayam āgatāḥ*

mūrkhāḥ—fools and rascals; *yatra*—where; *na*—not; *pūjyante*—worshipped; *dhānyam*—grains; *yatra*—where; *su-saṅcitam*—kept in abundance (not wasted); *dāmpatyoh*—of husband and wife; *kalahaḥ*—quarrel; *na*—not; *asti*—there is; *tatra*—there; *śrīḥ*—the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmī; *svayam*—personally; *āgatāḥ*—arrived.

TRANSLATION

The goddess of fortune, Lakṣmidevī, personally resides in that place where fools and rascals are not worshipped, where food grains are kept in abundance, and where there is no quarrel between husband and wife.

COMMENTARY

If you want worldly happiness, then the things mentioned in this *śloka* are required. Does it mean, therefore, that when Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes this *śloka* he is recommending worldly happiness? No, but a peaceful foundation in family life makes us more able to prosecute Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If we are completely distracted and harassed, then all our energies will be wasted in the material struggle.

Ideally, a householder should raise his own food and maintain himself in that way. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, “Not that for your foodstuff, or earning your livelihood, you have to go a hundred miles, or fifty miles, no. At home, you produce

the food grains and stock it.”¹ In a village economy, which Prabhupāda says still exists in India today, a person can work for only a few months a year and get his basic food requirements for the whole year. “Save your time and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa,” Prabhupāda used to advise his disciples on ISKCON farms. According to the Vedic economic system, keeping cows and stocking food grains is the basis for wealth. Thus everyone should own at least a little land for agriculture and have a few cows to produce milk.

With our minimum material requirements satisfied, we can take care of our spiritual life by worshipping the guru and the Vaiṣṇavas. This is the positive application of the injunction that one should not worship fools and rascals. Getting back to village life is one of ISKCON’s goals. It is a revolutionary proposal in the Western setting.

In the West, people worship the greatest fools and rascals—Michael Jackson, O.J. Simpson—yet the goddess of fortune seems to reside here in the form of prosperity. When Śrīla Prabhupāda was asked about this point, he answered it in various ways. One time he said, “Just wait.” The goddess of fortune appears to be residing in the West despite the sinful nature of Western culture, but by the Westerners’ mismanagement of her bounty, she will soon depart.

Another point he made is that our bounty is only apparent. In the past, people ate off gold plates; now they eat off paper. In the past, women wore gold ornaments; now they wear plastic. In the past, a country’s wealth was established on the gold standard; now we have paper currency and credit. The super-tech appearance of the Western nations is deceptive. The junk yards are overflowing with old cars and non-biodegradable garbage. America appears to have the best military defenses and the best highways, but due to a general lack of God consciousness, it is all entanglement in inconvenience and *māyā*.

Whatever good fortune does reside in this country could be counted as coming from the pious deeds of our forefathers. Even in America's recent past, people stocked food grains and tilled the land, worshipped God, and respected the bonds of marriage. Śrīla Prabhupāda's remark still stands, however: "Just wait."

This *śloka* states that if the wife is good, home life will be nice. Śrīla Prabhupāda did not preach that we had to be unhappy in order to be motivated to practice spiritual life. Rather, we should try to situate ourselves in such a way that our minds are undisturbed. In that way, we will be able to concentrate on spiritual advancement. Indian civilization was so thoroughly cultured that even common people lived in conditions favorable for self-realization. When Śrīla Prabhupāda came to the West, he appreciated even more, by contrast, the advantages of Indian culture. He said, "Formerly I was thinking, 'It is custom. To become faithful wife, this is the custom.' But when I came outside [of India] I see actually what is faithful wife. In India, still in the villages, even if there is a fight between husband and wife, the wife remains faithful. Completely dependent on husband. And the husband also, in spite of fighting, is always careful that the wife does not get any inconvenience."²

In conditioned life, almost everyone needs to get married. Sex is a necessity, but it should be performed under peaceful and civilized conditions. "Here in the Western countries, there is no favorable condition. First of all, they have no idea of spiritual life, the goal of life, and neither is there a favorable condition. Gradually things are becoming more degraded. On my last tour, in Chicago, I saw one lady was advertised that within three weeks she had been twice divorced."³

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* defines the principles of a chaste wife: "To render service to the husband, to be always favorably disposed toward the husband, to be equally well disposed toward the husband's relatives and friends, and to follow the vows of

the husband—these are the four principles to be followed by women described as chaste.”⁴ According to the *Bhagavad-gītā* (1.40), if women are not chaste and protected, the result will be *varṇa-saṅkara*, or disruption of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. When *varṇāśrama-dharma* is disrupted, unwanted children are born, the social structure breaks down, and no peace and happiness can be found.

Western women often equate simplicity and chastity with unintelligence because they have been exploited. The whole atmosphere between men and women is one of mistrust. This is the fault of immoral men, but it is not that women should aspire for the same lack of morality that these men espouse. Male-female psychology is different. Men like to be dominant and women need or want protection. Therefore, they have to take a subordinate role. This is worldly consideration and not a spiritual perfection.

Those pursuing Kṛṣṇa consciousness should follow the Vedic ideal. Both men and women should strive for purity in their Kṛṣṇa consciousness and peace in their home life. If even among devotees, a man tells his wife that she is his subordinate and should therefore engage in sinful activity with him, she is not obliged.

The answer is not necessarily going to be found in trying to balance a woman’s rights with a man’s, and giving her the same freedom to enjoy sinful life as he may be experiencing. That doesn’t make for peace. The whole society has to be overhauled so that men are trained to be moral, trustworthy, and protective husbands, and women are trained to be supportive partners. Then when they come together in marriage, men and women can take up their respective responsibilities in peace and save their time for spiritual advancement.

What about the *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs*? How does this verse apply to them? *Sannyāsīs*, of course, do not have domestic quarrels. Neither do they stock food grains. These are the

duties of householders. However, a *sannyāsi* can be seen as part of the greater family of society. According to Vedic culture, a *sannyāsi* or *brahmacārī* is seen as the householders' child. At the same time, the *sannyāsi* is the spiritual master of all the orders and should give good instruction for advancement in spiritual life. That is the paradox of Vedic culture, that those who are economic dependents are on the other hand masters. For this system to flourish, Vedic society did not culture envy, but instead worshipped the *sādhus*.

According to this Cāṇakya *śloka*, Lakṣmīdevī resides in the home where peaceful conditions prevail. No one has to pray for her to come, she comes automatically and brings good fortune. Then spiritual advancement will be possible without extreme endeavor.

¹ Lecture, San Francisco, July 16, 1975.

² Room conversation, Paris, August 2, 1976.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *Bhāg.* 7.11.25.

Ten

*durjanaḥ parihartavyo
vidyayā 'laṅkṛto 'pi san
maṇinā bhūṣitaḥ sarpah
kim asau na bhayaṅkaraḥ*

durjanaḥ—wicked person; *parihartavyaḥ*—to be avoided; *vidyayā*—with learning, education; *alaṅkṛtaḥ*—ornamented; *api*—even; *san*—being; *maṇinā*—with a jewel; *bhūṣitaḥ*—decorated; *sarpah*—a [poisonous] serpent; *kim asau*—is that; *na*—not; *bhayaṅkaraḥ*—fearful.

TRANSLATION

A wicked person, even though adorned with learning, is to be avoided at all costs. If a snake is decorated with a jewel, does that not make him all the more dangerous?

COMMENTARY

A poisonous snake may appear tame, but it is always a fearsome creature, not to be trusted. Similarly, even when the Western sky appears sunny and clear, clouds and ill weather may quickly move in. A demoniac person may be a friend, but we can never trust him. The *Īsopaniṣad* makes it clear that serpent-like persons exist not only on the lower levels of human society, but on all levels. In fact, the more educated they are, the more dangerous they are. “Those who engage in the culture of nescient activities shall enter into the darkest region of ignorance. Worse still are those engaged in the culture of so-called knowledge.”¹ Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates in his purport:

Those who simply engage in the profitless pursuit of sense gratification are worshipping *avidyā* (ignorance) according to *Srī Īsopaniṣad*. Those who play the role of helping this sort of civilization in the name of educational advancement are actually doing more harm than those who are on the platform of gross sense gratification. Advancement of learning by godless people is as dangerous as a valuable jewel on the hood of a cobra. A cobra decorated with a valuable jewel is more dangerous than one not decorated.²

Lord Caitanya demonstrated this wariness toward highly placed materialists. When His devotees recommended He meet King Pratāparudra, Lord Caitanya said, “Although it is correct that the king is a great devotee, he is still to be considered a venomous snake.”³ In this way, Lord Caitanya taught us that one who is serious about spiritual life should avoid the materialists, even if they are highly qualified. Of course, the Lord eventually made an exception in the case of King Pratāparudra, but His example stands as a sobering instruction. A devotee should not be favorably impressed or swayed by a materialist’s wealth, good education, beauty, or other opulence.

Some of us had a taste of the purport to this verse early in our devotional lives. Several of us were awed by the showy wealth of a real estate man who was out to cheat us. He managed to take \$5,000 of ISKCON’s hard-earned money instead of donating a building to us as he had promised. After stealing our money, Mr. Payne and his lawyers told us that we would not get the building.

Prabhupāda had warned us not to trust this man, but we disobeyed his instructions and lost the money. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in a letter, “Take it for granted that Kṛṣṇa has taken away this money from you for your deliberate foolishness. In the future, be very cautious and abide by the orders of Kṛṣṇa.” In his letter Prabhupāda quoted the *Bhāgavatam* verse, *yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā*: a nondevotee can have no

good qualifications, despite his education or well-dressed appearance. Prabhupāda added, “In other words, you should not keep your trust on so-called gentlemen of the world, however nicely dressed he may be. In the matter of discharging our mission of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we have to meet so many so-called gentlemen, but we must be very cautious for dealing with them as we are cautious in dealing with serpents.”⁴ The nondevotee is always liable to be harmful to others because he is always aggressively pursuing sense gratification.

Both Prabhupāda and Cāṇakya give us what appears to be an opposite instruction. They tell us that we can learn from the nondevotees the skills we need to prosecute our Kṛṣṇa conscious services and at the same time, say that we should avoid the educated nondevotees, who are jewel-headed serpents. Although this appears contradictory, it is not. What we are being advised against is offering our respect to others based only on their material qualifications. We shouldn’t be naive and think that a serpent decorated with a jewel is any less a serpent. A neophyte devotee may even become envious of such a decorated materialist, but no one should be enamored by material qualifications devoid of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Another point to note is that devotees are meant to preach to the materialists. Materialistic people are only our enemies insofar as they are unwilling to hear about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even then, a devotee never gives up his compassion for them. Śrīla Prabhupāda found the means to give so many apparently asuric people Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

As with any description of the world’s ills, devotees should understand that the serpent-like enemy exists not only in others, but in ourselves as well. Therefore, we have to be careful not to become enamored or cheated out of our spiritual lives by this enemy. “The mind is always accompanied by six enemies—namely, *kāma*, *krodha*, *mada*, *moha*, *mātsarya* and *bhaya*—that is, lust, anger, intoxication, illusion, envy and fear. Although

the mind may be merged in spiritual consciousness, one should always be very careful in dealing with it, just as one is careful in dealing with a snake. One should never think that his mind is trained and that he can do whatever he likes. One interested in spiritual life should always engage his mind in the service of the Lord so that the enemies of the mind, who always accompany the mind, will always be subdued.”⁵

Even if we think we have become Vaiṣṇavas because we are well-behaved and well-respected, we should watch for the enemy of pride. “Although the six qualities—education, austerity, wealth, beauty, youth and heritage are for the highly elevated, one who is proud of possessing them becomes blind, and thus he loses his good sense and cannot appreciate the glories of great personalities.”⁶

When we see new devotees come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness with material expertise, as a movement we should be careful not to neglect that person’s spiritual needs in order for the temple to profit from his or her learning. Śrīla Prabhupāda did not treat his wealthy disciples any different than his poor disciples. On the other hand, if a wealthy philanthropist came forward to donate money to ISKCON, but was not himself serious about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Prabhupāda treated such a person as a benefactor and with respect.

Culturing humility in the heart takes time and practice. If someone comes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and is immediately engaged in the same activity he was engaged in in the material world, he may not get the opportunity to taste the simplicity of the Kṛṣṇa conscious life—hearing, chanting, and remembering the Supreme Lord. Once, a certain scholar surrendered to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, after listing off his material qualifications. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī then sent him to assist the boy working in the *gośālā*. The scholar’s first assignment was to shovel cow dung. It’s not that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was punishing him or trying to

push him down into the muck, but he was teaching him what spiritual life was all about—becoming the servant of the devotee working in the *gośālā*.

Devotees, therefore, have to keep their hearts pure and detached from material life. Then they will be able to see themselves and everyone else as spirit soul and preach in a way that benefits everyone. The enemies of lust, greed, anger, fear, illusion, and madness are compared to serpents because serpents bite even when they are not provoked. The serpent, therefore, is the personification of the malicious nature. When we become proud of our so-called good qualities, we ruin everything. We find fault with others or imagine that they are competing with us for supremacy. A genuine devotee is humble and pleased to see good qualities in others. He is not competitive and does not ruin whatever qualities he is himself able to develop.

¹ *Īsopaniṣad*, mantra 9.

² *Īsopaniṣad*, mantra 9, purport.

³ Cc. *Madhya* 11.10.

⁴ Letter, March 28, 1967.

⁵ Cc. *Madhya* 11.10, purport.

⁶ *Bhāg.* 4.3.17.

Eleven

*mātr̥vat para-dāreṣu
para-dravyeṣu loṣṭavat
ātmavat sarva-bhūteṣu
yaḥ paśyati sa paṇḍitaḥ*

mātr̥-vat—like the mother; *para-dārān*—the wives of others; *para-dravyāṇi*—the possessions of others; *loṣṭa-vat*—like stones; *ātma-vat*—like one's self; *sarva-bhūtāni*—all living beings; *yaḥ*—one who; *paśyati*—sees [this way]; *saḥ*—he; *paśyati*—[really] sees.

TRANSLATION

He is truly learned who sees other men's wives as mother, others' possessions as rubble, and all living entities to be like himself.

COMMENTARY

Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted this Cāṇakya *śloka* more than any other. Therefore, it must be important. My own impression on hearing this *śloka* is that real education is not a matter of academic learning, but of understanding these three items of human culture. This *śloka* gives the simple formula for civilized behavior and survival in the material world. One can be protected from *māyā* and remain uncomplicated, unentangled, and happy by following these injunctions.

From a morning walk:

Harikeṣa: It's not possible to give culture to a superior man unless you are one yourself.

Prabhupāda: Yes. First of all, you yourself be a cultured gentleman. The cultured man is defined by Cāṇakya Paṇḍita: *mātrvat para-dāreṣu, para-dravyeṣu loṣṭavat, ātmavat sarva-bhūteṣu, yaḥ paśyati sa paṇḍitaḥ*. Any woman should be looked upon as mother. Except his married wife, all women should be treated as mother. The *brahmacāris* were taught like that, “mother.” This is culture. Simply they are trying to elope other’s wife, other’s woman, exploit them. There is no culture at the present moment. *Mātrvat para-dāreṣu, para-dravyeṣu loṣṭavat*. And other’s money should be treated just like pebbles in the street. Nobody cares for it. But they are simply making plans how to grab other’s money. And *ātmavat sarva-bhūteṣu*: If you feel pains and pleasures, you should consider for other’s also. If your throat is cut, then do you feel very happy? Why are you cutting the throats of the poor animals? Where is culture? There is no culture. Simply rogues and thieves and rascals and fools. They do not know what is the meaning of culture. Here is culture, in three words.¹

There are various definitions of the word “*paṇḍita*” throughout the Vedic scriptures. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave this Cāṇakya *śloka* equal credence, at least as the standard of education by which a *paṇḍita* should be judged. We can see that both mundane scholars and many who claim to be religious fall short on these points. The word *budha* is often used to refer to one well-versed in the scripture, but what is the result of his scriptural learning? If he claims to be a knower of the soul and a lover of God, then he should at least follow the behavior set forth in this verse.

In Vedic civilization, even the *asuras* observed the etiquette that no one should approach a married woman with lust. When the *asuras* met Mohinī-mūrti, the Supreme Lord disguised as a beautiful woman, they approached Her, knowing She was unmarried.²

A devotee of the Lord is afraid of intimacy with the opposite sex because it can lead to falldown. Therefore, there are scrip-

tural injunctions against a man being alone with a woman, dallying with her, and so on. “In connection with *stri-sambhāṣaṇa*, talking with women, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura says that talking with women for the purpose of mingling with them for sense gratification, subtle or gross, is strictly prohibited.”³ This rule applies not only to a person in the renounced order or to a devotee, but to everyone. It is not that men should avoid women as hated objects, but they can develop a natural affection for them, chastely, as mothers. The Vedic literature teaches us that we have seven mothers: the biological mother, the wife of the spiritual master, the wife of the *brāhmaṇa*, the wife of the king, the nurse, the cow, and the earth.

Similarly, a woman is expected to see men other than her husband as her sons. The *brahmacārī* and *sannyāsī* especially go door to door to beg alms. Often, only a woman is home in the day. A woman who looks upon these men as her sons will not be tempted by lust.

“It is the duty of the *gṛhastha* to treat the *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs* as their sons. If the *brahmacārīs* are trained from childhood to address women as *mātājī*, they will grow up in a cultured way. It does not matter whether the woman is younger or older, but the *brahmacārī* addresses her as mother.”⁴ Śrīla Prabhupāda deplored the Indian trend to address women as sister. He said that there is no such thing in Vedic culture. He said that the battle of Kurukṣetra came about because Draupadī was insulted. Rather than respect this great woman as their mother, Duryodhana, Karṇa, and others wanted to strip her in the assembly hall. When Arjuna finally killed Karṇa on the battlefield, he didn’t follow the *kṣatriya* codes for fair combat. He came upon Karṇa while Karṇa was trying to lift his chariot wheel out of the mud. Karṇa was such a powerful warrior that Arjuna felt he could not overcome him in any other way. When Karṇa protested that Arjuna was

being unfair, Arjuna replied, “You yourself acted unlawfully when you tried to strip Draupadī. Therefore, you should be unlawfully killed.”

Other battles in history have also been fought over a woman. The Trojan War was fought because of Helen. Materialistic men are motivated by the association of women or lust for women. There is even a popular saying that no man is successful in business or warfare without the *śakti* that comes from a woman. Someone may ask, “Cāṇakya’s instruction to see all women but one’s wife as mother is revolutionary in Western culture. If we followed that, society would become passionless and nonprogressive. Men would have no impetus to push forward in an expansionist way.” The same point could be made from Cāṇakya’s other two edicts—to look at others’ possessions as garbage in the street and to see all living entities equally.

Śrīla Prabhupāda agrees that it is attachment to women that encourages social progress. He goes further to say, however, that the attachment should be to the wife and family and not to an illicit relationship. When we hear the popular saying, “Behind every great man, there’s a woman,” we don’t think of there being a number of women. We think of one woman, the man’s beloved, standing behind him and supporting him, and maybe even advising him in his endeavors. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he was taught in his college economics class that family life is the impetus behind material advancement. Therefore, people who don’t have a family don’t like to work much. The energy to get ahead in life comes from the wife and family.

Cāṇakya’s sayings are based on morality. He is setting boundaries for what “getting ahead in life” means. Immoral behavior is not progressive, either socially or individually. Progress means saving time for spiritual life. That is most possible in village economics—a man marries and has children, and lives as simply as possible. There are no skyscrapers in the

village. Is that bad? There are no highways, no VCRs. People hear the scriptures daily from the village guru. Where is the passion? Where is the nationalism? What a loving family life should inspire is peace, not competition and the impetus toward greater sense gratification.

The Western world is leading the way in immorality and that is resulting in war, pollution, meat-eating, and eventually, annihilation of the whole society. Due to the incredible desire for sense gratification, everyone is becoming a nervous wreck. We are producing so much waste that we don't know what to do with it all. Eventually, we will be buried under it. Therefore, Cāṇakya's moral sayings set decent boundaries on our behavior so that we can stop the passionate madness and remember the real goal of life.

For example, a *paṇḍita* does not hanker after another's wealth. Civilized life means learning that other people's property is as valuable as stones in the street. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to give the example of how in Middle Eastern countries, thieves have their hands cut off. If we learn to see other's property as garbage, no one will want to touch it. Only the most poor and degraded people are driven to rummage through the garbage to find valuables or eatables. Kali-yuga may drive some people to do this, but we can understand that garbage is untouchable. That is how we should see even first-class goods, as long as they belong to another.

The phrase *ātmavat sarva-bhūteṣu* means that we should observe all living entities on the same level as ourselves. "No one should be neglected as inferior; because Paramātmā is seated in everyone's body, everyone should be described as a temple of the Supreme Personality of Godhead."⁵

A Vaiṣṇava is *para-duḥkha-duḥkhi*. Although the Vaiṣṇava is personally happy, he becomes unhappy when he sees another's distress. A Vaiṣṇava has no envy toward any living entity. Equal vision is not only to be practiced by *brāhmaṇas*,

but by *kṣatriyas* as well. When Mahārāja Parikṣit saw a cow being beaten, he immediately took up his sword and was prepared to kill the offender. Equal vision is not meant to be the possession of only the sage, but the government should understand the spiritual nature of all living entities so that they can dispense real justice.

Once we begin to describe the *paṇḍita*, then we want to enlarge and deepen the definition. A *paṇḍita* is one who is satisfied with what God gives. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "One who is working for Kṛṣṇa, not for sense gratification, he is a learned person."⁶

The conclusion of knowledge is to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. "This is the essence of *Bhagavad-gītā*: 'I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who know this perfectly engage in devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.'"⁷

Another qualification of a *paṇḍita* is that he becomes detached from society, friendship, and love in this world. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "So long as you have a pinch of attraction for this material world, there is no possibility of being transferred to the spiritual world. Therefore, by training and education we have to become detached."⁸

Prabhupāda often cited this Cāṇakya *śloka* to show that there are no *paṇḍitas* today. Our universities and colleges now allow men and women to live together just as male and female dogs live together. "Sex philosophy" is taught in the classrooms. "It is called hog civilization," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. "Hogs eat anything and have sex with anyone."⁹

As for technological learning, that is not considered education according to the Vedic standard. Education means culture. In the items of knowledge listed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the first word is *amānitvam*, humility. People in the material world are proud of their mundane degrees. Prabhupāda said

that although they receive their degree from the university, Māyā-devī steals their intelligence.

A *paṇḍita* also distributes his knowledge to others. This *śloka* presents us with an immediate test: who is a *paṇḍita*? Prabhupāda said, “Simply by speaking that ‘I am God conscious’ will not do. These are the symptoms: *brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā, na śocati na kāṅkṣati* . . . God can be realized only by devotees who have got all these good qualities . . . God consciousness does not mean that I shall be protected and happy but let others be unhappy.”¹⁰ Ultimately, good education means Kṛṣṇa consciousness. “Unless one is God conscious, he cannot have any good qualification.”¹¹

Someone may ask, “This code of behavior expects us all to act as saints. Are we all expected to be saints?” Yes, we are. There are saintly principles and demonic principles, and perhaps in between those two, there are mediocre principles. Saintly principles are not unreachable. We should not settle for mediocrity.

¹ Morning walk, Mauritius, October 25, 1975.

² *Bhāg.* 8.9.4.

³ *Cc Antya* 2.144, purport.

⁴ Lecture, Bombay, April 5, 1974.

⁵ *Bhāg.* 6.7.29-30.

⁶ Lecture, Bombay, April 18, 1974.

⁷ *Bg.* 10.8.

⁸ Lecture, London, July 21, 1973..

⁹ Morning walk, Bombay, December 19, 1975.

¹⁰ Lecture, Stockholm, September 7, 1973.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Twelve

*guṇair uttamatām yāti
noccair āsana-saṁsthitāḥ
prāsāda-sikhara-stho 'pi
kākaḥ kiṁ garuḍāyate*

guṇaiḥ—by qualities; *uttamatām*—topmost [position]; *yāti*—attains; *na*—not; *uccaiḥ*—by elevation; *āsana-saṁsthitāḥ*—placement of the seat; *prāsāda*—of the palace; *sikhara-sthāḥ*—situated on the roof; *api*—although; *kākaḥ*—a crow; *kim*—how [is it possible?]; *garuḍāyate*—is transformed into Garuḍa, the winged carrier of Lord Viṣṇu.

TRANSLATION

One attains greatness by qualities, not by merely occupying a high position. A crow may perch on the roof of the palace, but that does not make him Garuḍa.

COMMENTARY

In explaining this *śloka*, Prabhupāda gave examples of kings who properly fulfilled their posts. Kings used to be carefully selected by a council of learned *brāhmaṇas* and sages. Although the king inherited his throne in dynastic succession, he had to be trained and guided by the council. If the council saw a mistake in his behavior, it would correct him. If the mistake was too terrible, the council would dethrone him.

Prabhupāda cited a story from the *Hitopadeśa* with a similar punch line to this *śloka*. A jackal once fell into a vat of blue dye and then presented himself as king. The animals didn't recognize him and installed him as their king. When the full moon appeared in the sky, the forest was filled with the sound of

jackals howling at the moon. The “king” jackal was forced by his nature to join in the howling and was discovered for what he was. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Anyone’s habits, even if you give good position, you cannot change it. If you make the dog the king, he will immediately come down from the throne and bite the shoes.”¹

Various lights can be drawn from this verse. For example, should a person in material consciousness who occupies a high post without qualification resign? It depends. In some cases he should resign, and in other cases he should become qualified for the exalted post.

Further, what if a devotee occupies a position for which he feels unqualified? Should he resign? It depends on how he was elevated to that position. If the spiritual master or the Vaiṣṇavas approached him and asked him to do a particular service, it is best to respond with humility, but humility does not necessarily mean refusing the position. Humility can also mean serving humbly and trying to attain the qualification.

This can even apply to the post of spiritual master. Someone might say, “Of all positions, the spiritual master has to be fully qualified before he takes on disciples. Otherwise, it is an atrocity.” I don’t necessarily agree with this statement. Everyone starts out a greenhorn, although they obviously have to have the basic, minimum qualification. Why should it be shameful to think that a spiritual master can learn on the job and become more qualified? So many positions are like that.

For example, when someone becomes a policeman, he is given a uniform and a gun, but he’s barely a policeman in the beginning. They call him a rookie, and all that separates him from being a qualified policeman is time and practice. It’s the same with a soldier. He is also given a uniform in the beginning. Then he is sent to boot camp to learn the basics. After that, all that separates him from the real soldiers is training and being seasoned by experience.

These are material examples, but spiritual positions can be seen in the same way. No one should pretend to be advanced in his particular line of work, but they can acknowledge that they have taken a particular position despite the fact that so many people may not think they are qualified for it. Still, they depend on their spiritual master and gradually learn the deeper meanings of what they are doing.

All devotees have to be qualified, not only spiritual masters. Temple presidents and GBCs and cooks and *pūjārīs* and book distributors all have to practice at their services and become better at it. In order to become qualified, they cannot simply sit on the laurels of their office. They have to do whatever is necessary to learn how to manage or preach or even to relate with their Godbrothers and Godsisters. A devotee may feel that Prabhupāda is calling him to take disciples. As soon as he develops his first guru-disciple relationship, he has to immediately jump into relating with his disciple in earnest, always representing his spiritual master, praying, and strictly following the rules and regulations. Such a devotee is different from the crow pretending to be Garuḍa. We could say that in the absence of Garuḍa, a crow has been asked to be the Lord's messenger. He then serves as best he can and begs for forgiveness while he tries to improve.

Under what conditions, then, should someone without qualification resign? If by his lack of qualification he falls into scandalous behavior or neglects his service, or if well-wishers lose their trust, then a devotee shouldn't be attached to the position. He should not fight to keep the position, but give it up. Śrīla Prabhupāda was with us through the Nixon debacle. He said, "What a rascal he is! He has been proven to have done so many things wrong, and the people are demanding that he be dragged down, but he won't resign. This is a rascal in Vedic society. Right away he would make the gesture, 'You think this way? Then I resign.' Like Lord Rāmacandra. He didn't

even keep his position as king when someone spoke badly about Him, some foolish person.”

This Cāṇakya *śloka* paints an interesting image. It implies that the crow landed on the palace not by accident, but because he thinks he is as good as Garuḍa. The crow physically usurps Garuḍa’s place. Prabhupāda compared this to the democratic system: “By hook or by crook, by democracy they get the post.”² The men running for office are not really qualified, but they steal votes and somehow occupy the place of qualified men.

When devotees think of Garuḍa, we think of the Garuḍa *stambha* in the temple. Garuḍa is a great devotee of Lord Viṣṇu. He is the Lord’s bird carrier. Therefore, because of his great qualification, he is given a place in the temple from which he can worship Lord Viṣṇu. If a crow lands in that place, that doesn’t make him Garuḍa. Similarly, if a rascal occupies the throne or the head of government, that doesn’t make him qualified. It’s the same with any post. We want to see not only that someone has made it into the White House or onto the *vyāsāsana*, into the temple president’s office with all the telephones; but what is he doing and what are his qualifications for the post?

Someone may ask, “Does a high post encourage corruption?” It is true that power provides more opportunities for corruption. Still, if we resist that corruption, then there are also more opportunities to perform humble service and set a good example for others. I don’t think that “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely” is an inevitability for devotees. If anyone has absolute power, it is Kṛṣṇa. The spiritual master may represent that absolute power, but he does it on Kṛṣṇa’s behalf, without claiming the power for himself. Because he represents Kṛṣṇa’s absolute power, his disciples will obey him. Therefore, he is careful to speak only what Kṛṣṇa speaks. If he does otherwise, it is only a matter of time before his power is usurped by the material energy.

The spiritual master knows that his disciples are voluntary servants. He tries to be lenient with them, unless strictness is necessary. He also tries to be kind to them and deal with them honorably. In that sense, his power is not absolute. If Śrīla Prabhupāda had absolute power, why did so many disciples leave him? The guru's power over disciples is given to him by the disciples. For those who want to follow him, he represents Kṛṣṇa's absolute power. By their following, the disciples become successful in spiritual life.

I know some devotees are cynical about this point. We hear them say things like, "So-and-so was a good devotee, but as soon as he became temple president, he became proud." Cynicism makes people mistrust authority. They think authority itself is abusive. I don't agree. As I said previously, it is true that there are more opportunities to be abusive when we are in a position of authority, but there are just as many opportunities to learn humility and surrender. Therefore, it is not an absolute fact in the spiritual sense that anyone with authority will become corrupt. Otherwise, how could the disciplic succession have survived its own corruption? Then the only devotees who wouldn't be corrupt would be those who have no high position or power, but that's not true either.

This *śloka* can also be analyzed according to the position of the individual. It's not only the *kṣatriyas* who have to be qualified, but every *varṇa*. For example, a *brāhmaṇa*'s power is not managerial, but in his ability to forgive and be gentle, meek, and humble—to hold no position in a world scrambling for recognition and honor. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita himself would not accept a position in Candragupta's court. Although he was the king's advisor, he did not use that power to obtain any facility for himself. That is a particular kind of power in itself, the power of renunciation.

¹ Room conversation, Indore, December 13, 1970.

² Lecture, Los Angeles, December 24, 1973.

Thirteen

*ṛṇa-śeṣo 'gni-śeṣas ca
vyādhi-śeṣas tathaiva ca
punaś ca vardhate yasmāt
tasmāc cheṣaṁ ca kārayet*

ṛṇa-śeṣaḥ—an end to debt; *agni-śeṣaḥ*—an end to fire; *ca*—also; *vyādhi-śeṣaḥ*—an end to disease; *tathā*—so; *eva*—certainly; *ca*—also; *punaḥ*—again; *ca*—and; *vardhate*—increase; *yasmāt*—from which; *tasmāt*—therefore; *śeṣam*—an end; *ca*—and; *kārayet*—one must effect.

TRANSLATION

Make a complete end of fire, enemies and disease. Otherwise, they will go on increasing.

COMMENTARY

On one morning walk on Venice Beach, California, a disciple remarked to Śrīla Prabhupāda, “The ocean waves are much bigger this morning.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “Bigger or smaller, it is always dangerous. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita has given this example: fire, debt and disease—never think of them as big or small. They are always dangerous. If you take a loan from somewhere, interest is compounded and one day it will become so big, it will be unmanageable by you. Similarly, fire may be at first a spark, but gradually it will so increase, oh, blazing fire. Disease also. Now there is a little pain, but if it increases, it becomes tuberculosis. Therefore he has said: never neglect these things, fire . . . they are always dangerous.”¹

This aphorism seems so obvious, but the human tendency is to disregard danger when it first appears in a small form. Smokers think that the spark left by their cigarette butt will go out by itself. At the onset of yet another cold, they think there is no need to go to a doctor. Śrīla Prabhupāda also mentions debt as something that must be immediately remedied. Almost everyone is in debt and making little endeavor to get out of debt quickly. Someone may humor an enemy only to regret his lenience later. Therefore, Cāṇakya advises us to take care of these three things immediately before the problem becomes unmanageable.

Although Cāṇakya's saying refers to worldly problems, it can be applied to Kṛṣṇa conscious practices. If an initiated devotee neglects to chant his sixteen rounds of *japa* one day, he may not take it too seriously. Similarly, a devotee may casually offend a devotee without realizing the havoc such talk could have on his spiritual life. Or, a man and woman may flirt with each other without realizing the seeds of desire that are being planted in the heart. Each of these occasions is as dangerous as fire, debt, and disease. A devotee may also not realize that his real enemies are within himself in the form of anger, greed, and lust, and he may humor these enemies rather than rooting them out.

Not chanting sixteen rounds every day without fail may gradually, even imperceptibly, become our working principle. After all, we have so much other service to do. Before we know it, we could be neglecting the main vow of our initiation. What started out as a jest at another devotee's expense may turn into the mad elephant of *vaiṣṇava-aparādhā*. As for flirtation between man and woman, Māyā-devī will certainly notice our proclivity and provide us with more and more opportunities to become attracted to the opposite sex. Then we will fall down and have to suffer the consequences. Humoring the six enemies—which are situated in the uncontrolled mind and

senses—when they first appear, and not conquering them by engaging them in devotional service, will lead to disaster. Some of those who have fallen down in these areas have confided in us the anatomy of their falldowns. Usually they speak in terms that confirm Cāṇakya's *śloka*, "In the beginning, it was a small deviation. I didn't take it seriously."

Devotees sometimes rather naively think that by not taking care of these deviations, they are taking a risk for Kṛṣṇa. I say "naively" because any fire left to kindle will flare up. We shouldn't think that just because we are practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we can ignore subtle deviation in the name of preaching or other forms of service.

For example, a devotee may slacken in his *sādhana* over a period of time to increase his other services. This happens especially during the Prabhupāda marathon. In itself, this may not be a deviation; it depends on the heart of the devotee. Regardless, a devotee should not think that he can continue to neglect his *sādhana* in the name of giving his time and energy to preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda also seemed to have two different attitudes about physical disease. On the one hand, he encouraged devotees to find ways to cure their diseases, and on the other, he said devotees could risk their health in order to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Someone could become fanatical about his or her health—watching the body for any slight indication of change, and basing all activities around that analysis. Caring for health is not usually foremost in a devotee's mind, but neither should health be neglected. We don't have to think that as soon as we accept one path, the other path has to be rejected. If a devotee is going to risk his health to preach, it shouldn't be done in imitation of the great souls who lived only on a little buttermilk every other day. The risk should be calculated.

We may also take a risk and go into debt to buy something needed for preaching. What about Cāṇakya's saying that we

should never go into debt? We may take the risk because the cause is great and Kṛṣṇa will protect us. Again, the risk should be calculated with awareness that we are breaking a sound principle. Going into debt shouldn't become a policy.

No one should think that these are small points, not related to our everyday devotional service. When I mentioned that I was working on this book, one devotee told me that he felt harassed by Cāṇakya's advice, as if he is adding more do's and do not's to our already lengthy list. Can't we just take a break from all these rules and regulations that seem to invade every aspect of our lives? After all, isn't the main point to do our service rather than to concentrate on all these regulations?

Śrīla Prabhupāda used these aphorisms in his preaching because he thought they were good for us. If someone thinks he would like to take a break from all these rules, he should realize that he may be taking a break from pure devotional service and surrender. We have been taking such a break ever since we came into this material world. The material nature has been breaking us into pieces. It would be better if we could apply ourselves to following a regulative life and trying to surrender than to looking for ways to avoid restriction. Morality is not ultimately meant to restrict us, but to free us from the pitfalls that stop us from practicing devotional life. Our goal is spiritual perfection. Cāṇakya says that we can achieve that perfection by performing pious deeds day and night, by always remembering the temporality of life, by avoiding the wicked, and by associating with *sādhus*. Someone who is not interested in perfection may instead be looking for the sayings that lift the restrictions—yes, you can eat chocolate, or, yes, there may be times when you can engage in sex with your wife without having children—but where is that leading? Looking for loopholes in the restrictions is like thinking that life is fulfilled by living according to the rules of mundane morality. There are

hundreds of ways to not break the rules and still enjoy sense gratification, but why would we want to?

In our present stage, we have to practice *vaidhi-bhakti*. We need to be prodded. We cannot practice ecstatic devotional service free from all sense gratification. That means we can fall down. Therefore, out of our own desire to achieve perfection, we accept the guru and the *sāstra* and whatever other authorities can help us to overcome our own mind and senses and to reach the spontaneous stage.

In this case, Cāṇakya's statements can help us to avoid grief on our path. As soon as there is a fire, put it out. Take your debts seriously. Don't complacently harbor the six enemies in your heart. Act timely. Don't wait until it's too late. Simply common sense.

Here's another related common sense statement: "Nip it in the bud." We used that expression a lot in ISKCON's early days. If someone manifested symptoms of being in a little *māyā*, immediately we would say, "Nip it in the bud." It's easier to nip a bud than to rectify a full-blown falldown. Prabhupāda said there are three stages: thinking, feeling, and willing. If we manage to stop at the thinking stage, that is best. Once something gets to the feeling and willing stage, the desire is too strong to stop.

Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted this *śloka* in one lecture. Then he said, "So everything is there for our knowledge, provided we follow. There is no difficulty. Therefore our process is *mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*." Whether it is Cāṇakya Paṇḍita's advice, or the absolute, transcendental directions of the *Vedas*, we must follow the wisdom of our disciplic succession. That is the safe path, much safer than following our own subtle and gross deviations. If we take advantage of what they have learned through experience and wisdom, we can be spared from so much pain and trouble. It is not necessary to learn by

making our own mistakes. If we can learn by hearing and accepting instructions from higher authorities, we will have found the surest method to reach the ultimate goal.

¹ Morning walk, Los Angeles, April 26, 1973.

Fourteen

*nirguṇeṣu api sattveṣu
dayām kurvanti sādhaḥ
na hi saṁharate jyotsnām
candraś caṇḍāla-veśmani*

nirguṇeṣu—upon the worthless; *api*—even; *sattveṣu*—living beings; *dayām*—mercy; *kurvanti*—exhibit; *sādhaḥ*—the saintly persons; *na*—not; *hi*—indeed; *saṁharate*—withholds; *jyotsnām*—effulgence; *candraś*—the moon; *caṇḍāla-veśmani*—from the home of an outcaste.

TRANSLATION

Saintly persons bestow their mercy upon all beings, even those with no good qualities, just as the moon does not withhold his rays even from the house of an outcaste.

COMMENTARY

Nature is generous. By examining the analogy, our consciousness can be expanded. The moon is so broadminded that it shines even on the house of a *caṇḍāla*. When we consider extreme measures by which untouchables are excluded from the caste system, the power of this analogy becomes even more striking. Although humankind may exclude sinful and low-born persons from participation in social amenities, the moon makes no distinction. Śrīla Prabhupāda also pointed out how the sun is not affected by any contamination it may contact. Rather, when the sun shines on a puddle of urine, the place becomes purified.

Although this *sloka* does not mention transcendental mercy, we can adapt it for our own uses and bring it to the spiritual

plane. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave a similar example. He said the rain falls everywhere in the most liberal manner. “Rain is not meant only for the land. It is meant for the sea also. Similarly, any God conscious movement is not meant for a particular country or section. *Bhagavad-gītā* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is not meant for the Hindus or for the Indians. It is meant for everyone.”¹

The example of the rain is given in the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, in the chapter “Description of Autumn”:

The distribution of rain by clouds is so sumptuous that it is compared to the distribution of wealth by a great, munificent person. The cloud's downpour is so sufficient that the rains fall even on rocks and hills and on the oceans and seas where there is no need for water. It is like a charitable person who opens his treasury for distribution and who does not discriminate whether the charity is needed or not. He gives in charity open-handed.²

Lord Caitanya's mercy in the form of *saṅkīrtana* is the perfect application of this verse on generosity. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī states, “Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has freely given this love of Kṛṣṇa everywhere and anywhere, even to the most fallen, such as Jagāi and Mādhāi. What, then, to speak of those who are already pious and elevated.”³

“Not considering who asked for it and who did not, nor who was fit and who was unfit to receive it, Caitanya Mahāprabhu distributed the fruit of devotional service.”⁴

Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport:

This is the sum and substance of Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* movement. There is no distinction made between those who are fit and those who are not fit to hear or take part in the *saṅkīrtana* movement. It should therefore be preached without

discrimination. The only purpose of the preachers of the *saṅkīrtana* movement must be to go on preaching without restriction. That is the way in which Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu introduced this *saṅkīrtana* movement to the world.

Giving mercy to the fallen does not mean that they remain fallen after receiving that mercy. Śrīla Prabhupāda happily declared this to be true by his own experience. He said the Westerners looked morose and dirty, but became clean, effulgent, and happy by taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He compared them to peacocks who begin to dance during the autumn season.

This verse is pertinent to book distributors in pointing out that they shouldn't be close-minded or prejudiced in who they approach, but should approach everyone indiscriminately. Often, devotees discover that they are more successful with a particular class of people than with others. If they approach only that class, they are actually avoiding the majority of people, almost as if they consider only one kind of people fit to receive a book. This is a cliché approach to book distribution, and these clichés are smashed every day by preachers who keep in their hearts the truth about Lord Caitanya's movement: He wanted His mercy distributed as generously as the moonlight, which shines on everyone equally.

When we are generous, Prabhupāda and Lord Caitanya are pleased with us. "The transcendental gardener, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, distributed handful after handful of fruits in all directions, and when the poor hungry people ate the fruit, the gardener smiled with great pleasure."⁵

This mercy can be extended, not only to the fallen human beings, but to other species. "Of course, animals and other lower species are not capable of understanding this movement, but if even a small number of living beings take it seriously, by their chanting loudly, all living entities, including even trees, animals and other lower species, will be benefited."⁶

Lord Caitanya predicted that if the fruits of love of God were distributed all over the world, then His reputation would be known everywhere and people would glorify His name with great pleasure. Śrīla Prabhupāda has fulfilled this prediction, but so much more needs to be done. *Bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya-janma yāra, janma sārthaka kari' kara para-upakāra.* “One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of India (Bhārata-varṣa) should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all other people.”⁷

Is there an instance of a saintly person considering someone unfit for his mercy? A *mahā-bhāgavata* sees everyone as fit for mercy. A *madhyama-adhikārī*, a preacher, however, does make distinctions between the demons and the innocent. Śrīla Prabhupāda was a *mahā-bhāgavata* devotee and was able to expand his mercy all over the world. In our case, we may have to keep expanding our understanding and realization of the meaning of Lord Caitanya's munificence, and break through our own stereotyped ideas of who can receive His mercy. Still, no matter how daring a preacher is, he will meet demons who will refuse to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Not only will they refuse, but they will be fiery or blasphemous. A *madhyama-adhikārī* may have to stop trying to give mercy to them in his capacity as a preacher. It will not be productive.

Even Śrīla Prabhupāda occasionally instructed his disciples like this. Prabhupāda had one disciple who repeatedly fell down and came back. Once, he came back and went to Prabhupāda, crying, “Please, I want to be taken back.” As a means of instruction, Prabhupāda said, “No, you are so expert that you have avoided all my mercy. I cannot give you any more mercy. You have shamed me too many times before Kṛṣṇa.” It can reach a point where somebody demonstrates himself as hopeless or faithless. To continue to give that person mercy would mean committing the ninth offense against the holy name.

Although we want to be like the moon in our distribution of Lord Caitanya's mercy, we also have to recognize our limits. We are not as powerful as the moon. Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi are the moons. Our service is simply to carry Their moon rays all over the world, but we cannot imitate Them. They have inconceivable power in Their ability to give mercy indiscriminately. Therefore, we can only try to be as indiscriminate as possible, always pushing against our own fears and shortcomings, but never distributing the holy name to those who are blasphemous or offensive or faithless.

Aside from preaching to others, we should also make sure that we are taking advantage of the moon rays of Lord Caitanya's mercy that are shining on us. Prabhupāda said we shouldn't be like owls and stay indoors when the sun comes out. We should take advantage and receive the benediction for ourselves.

We take advantage of the benediction moon by associating with devotees. If we stay indoors too long, we'll become afraid to go out. We'll become like Indra who didn't want to return to the heavenly planets, but preferred to stay in his pig sty. Devotees will help us overcome our avoidance of the mercy. They will even drag us out into it, knowing that we'll be happy as soon as we take part in the *saṅkīrtana* movement. If we stay in the association of owls, we will deprive ourselves of the opportunity.

In this way, we can take the moon analogy further. Although the moon is powerful enough to shine everywhere, it is possible to hide from its rays. There is always a basement somewhere in which to hide, or we can simply close our eyes. What can the moon do for us then?

Prabhupāda gave us ways to avail ourselves of Lord Caitanya's mercy. The primary way is to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Most devotees do chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, but they are still not feeling the

full effect of the moon rays. Does that mean that the mercy is incomplete?

No. We are the ones cowering in the darkness of inattentive chanting. *Ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*. Chanting the holy name can cleanse the mirror of the mind. That we didn't chant properly does not imply a defect in the mercy being given. Our inability to chant properly means we are not yet able to stand out in the full light. The moon is shining; we have to deliberately avail ourselves of its rays. The moon is so munificent and widespread. Why are we avoiding it?

¹ Lecture, Montreal, June 12, 1968.

² *Kṛṣṇa*, Volume 1, Chapter 20, p. 177.

³ Cc. *Ādi* 8.20.

⁴ Cc. *Ādi* 9.29.

⁵ Cc. *Ādi* 9.30.

⁶ Cc. *Ādi* 9.30, purport.

⁷ Cc. *Ādi* 9.41.

Fifteen

*viṣād apy amṛtaṁ grāhyam
amedhyād api kāñcanam
nīcād apy uttamām vidyām
strī-ratnam duṣkulād api*

viṣāt—from the midst of poison; *api*—even; *amṛtam*—nectar; *grāhyam*—to be accepted; *amedhyāt*—from filth; *api*—even; *kāñcanam*—gold; *nīcāt*—from a low [person]; *api*—even; *uttamām*—fine; *vidyām*—knowledge; *strī-ratnam*—a jewel among women; *duṣkulāt*—from an undistinguished family; *api*—even.

TRANSLATION

One should skim the nectar from the surface of a pot of poison, take gold from a filthy place, accept instruction even from the lowest person, and accept a qualified wife even from an undistinguished family.

COMMENTARY

There are occasions when we can break time-honored traditions. An intelligent person follows the rules and regulations, but not in such a way that the rules become formalities which prevent him from getting at the essence of life. For example, according to the Vedic system, education must be received from a person of the *brāhmaṇa* caste, but if a non-*brāhmaṇa* is in possession of the topmost knowledge, an intelligent person will accept instruction from him.

Lord Caitanya set this example by accepting Rāmānanda Rāya as His teacher. He discussed the highest topics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness with him, even though Rāmānanda Rāya was a *śūdra* by caste. Lord Caitanya also appointed Haridāsa Ṭhāk-

ura, a Mohammedan, the *nāmācārya* or “prime minister” of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, *kibā vipra, kibā nyāsi sūdra kene naya, yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei ‘guru’ haya*. “Whether one is a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sannyāsi* or a *sūdra*—regardless of what he is—he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa.”¹

Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Caitanya Mahāprabhu instructed everyone to become a guru. The world is suffering for want of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That was His mission. He wanted that from India, everyone should become a guru and preach outside. Because there is no Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu: ‘You become a guru on My order, and you deliver your country or other countries.’”²

In the same mood, Devahūti took lessons from her son, Kapila, because He knew the science of Kṛṣṇa. The demigods once requested Viśvarūpa to become their yajñic priest, even though Viśvarūpa was their junior. In the purport to this section in the *Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “The demigods explain that this should not be a cause for hesitation; he could become their priest because he was advanced in Vedic knowledge. Similarly, Cāṇakya Paṇḍita advises, *nicād apy uttamām vidyām*: one may accept education from a member of the lower social order. . . . Therefore if one is advanced in the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, regardless of his position in human society, he may become a spiritual master.”³

Śrīla Prabhupāda used this argument to convince Westerners not to reject Kṛṣṇa consciousness on sectarian grounds. He explained this principle to Dr. Stillson Judah of the Theological Union in California. “In India,” Prabhupāda said, “when they want higher technological knowledge, they come to foreign countries. . . . Wherever knowledge is available, we should take it. That is the real position of a seeker of knowledge. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says, ‘In the pot of poison, if there is a little nectar in it, take it.’ . . . So anything very good, even if it

is available in a place which is not desirable, one should accept it. If you are actually seeking after God, so here is God available from Vedic literature. Why don't you take it? Why should you refuse it? That is not a very good sign." ⁴

By the same logic, we may acknowledge that religious truth can be found in other religions. In *The Matchless Gift*, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "One may learn about this relationship with God by any process—through Christianity, through the Vedic literatures or through the Koran—but in any case it must be learned. The purpose of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is not to make Christians into Hindus or Hindus into Christians, but to inform everyone that the duty of a human being is to understand his relationship with God. . . . If one has a practice, he should practice it, or he can come and learn this process. One should not begrudge a selection of one process over another."⁵

Vedic marriage compatibility is calculated astrologically. Compatibility is based on family, social position, personality, and karma. If a man finds a qualified wife, he should accept her, despite external considerations of social position or family. For example, King Purūravā chose Urvaśī, although Urvaśī was of higher birth than the king. Urvaśī said to the king, "Although I belong to the heavenly planets and you belong to earth, I shall certainly enjoy sexual union with you. I have no objection to accepting you as my husband, for you are superior in every respect."⁶

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in the purport, "A woman who finds a man with superior qualities may accept such a man as her husband. Similarly, if a man finds a woman who is from an inferior family, but who has good qualities, he can accept such a brilliant wife, as advised by Śrī Cāṇakya Paṇḍita (*strī-ratnam duṣkūlād api*). The combination between male and female is worthwhile if the qualities of both are on an equal level."

This verse can also apply to the devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in another way. We tend to assume that we are able to take gold from a filthy place and to be above caste distinctions in choosing our spouses, but we don't always remember that we have been recipients of Śrīla Prabhupāda's application of this verse. We are grateful that Śrīla Prabhupāda was able to see some gold in us. It's not that we are so golden, but we are all spirit souls and Prabhupāda knew that we are all intrinsically servants of Kṛṣṇa. This verse is in a similar mood to the mood of generosity shown by the moon. The moon-like devotee came to the West to distribute his mercy. He didn't find any fit candidates to receive it, but he saw the essential golden spark in us and he picked us up.

Prabhupāda was often criticized by his countrymen for picking us up. They considered us contaminated and hopeless, lower than *sūdras*, etc., but Śrīla Prabhupāda picked us up and then washed off the filth. This verse confirms the rightness of what he did. Now Prabhupāda's followers should not only be grateful for having been rescued, but should carry out his instructions so we never dishonor him or fall back into the muck.

Someone may ask whether there is any gold to be found in Kali-yuga. For example, is there any such thing as a lowborn, but qualified, family? Is there even any such thing as a high-born and qualified family? The scriptures state, *kalau sūdra-sambhavāḥ*—everyone is lowborn in the age of Kali. Therefore, this verse stands as a good instruction to those who are proud of their social positions that the essence of life can be found in many different places. This verse is broadminded. Why should someone stand by the caste system if there is so much gold even in the lower ranks?

Of course, the "caste system" originally referred to and was practiced as *varṇāśrama-dharma*. It was more in place when Cāṇakya spoke these aphorisms than it is today. There is no

caste system at all in the West. These verses may have their fullest meaning when understood within Vedic culture, and may even lose some of their impact when translated into Western terms. Therefore, we want to hear how Prabhupāda applied them.

Devotees can apply this verse in their spiritual lives by understanding that often what they see glittering in filthy places is a glimmer of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Whatever little Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be found here and there can be gathered in, but devotees shouldn't have to themselves step outside Kṛṣṇa conscious culture to pick it up.

Another point that can be raised is that in thinking we are expert enough to take nectar from a pot of poison, we have to be honest and not cheat. We can't be after the taste of the poison in the name of separating the nectar from it. A devotee has to apply this verse very carefully. It's almost like a surgical operation. Spiritual life is like the razor's edge. Only by vigilant honesty can we ensure that we are breaking time-honored traditions in order to get the essence of life rather than more sense gratification.

This verse gives us the green light: go ahead, get the nectar. Lift the gold from that filthy place or a wife from that lowborn family. The verse offers a green light, but it does not encourage us to be indiscriminate. We have to be expert to perform this work. It will be our disqualification if we still have a taste for sense gratification. This verse is not for cheaters. It is for people who don't want to be hampered by unnecessary rules and regulations and who have the real goal in mind.

¹ Cc. *Madhya* 8.128.

² Lecture, Bombay, November 7, 1974.

³ *Bhāg.* 6.7.33.

⁴ Morning walk, Los Angeles, June 25, 1975.

⁵ *The Matchless Gift*, p. 70.

⁶ *Bhāg.* 9.14.21.

Sixteen

*nakhinām ca nadinām ca
śṛṅginām śastra-pāṇinām
viśvāso naiva kartavyaḥ
strīṣu rāja-kuleṣu ca*

nakhinām—in animals with claws; *ca*—and; *nadinām*—in rivers; *ca*—also; *śṛṅginām*—in animals with horns; *śastra-pāṇinām*—in those with weapons in hand; *viśvāsaḥ*—faith; *na eva*—certainly not; *kartavyaḥ*—to be placed; *strīṣu*—in women; *rāja-kuleṣu*—in the ruling class; *ca*—and.

TRANSLATION

Never place your trust in an animal with claws, a river, an animal with horns, a man bearing weapons, a woman, or a politician.

COMMENTARY

Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted this *śloka* frequently. He discussed only two items from the verse: don't have faith in women or politicians. Presumably, they are more dangerous than rivers, armed men, or clawed animals. Of the two dangers, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave more attention to the danger of women.

As a world preacher, Śrīla Prabhupāda saw the Westerner's proclivity to sex life. Therefore, to protect his disciples, he exposed the sly and dangerously attractive nature of women to them. These instructions sober us. We become careful not to consider ourselves above the rules and regulations. We become inspired to be more careful and aware in our dealings with women. And our skepticism toward hypocritical politicians is reinforced. As with all the Cāṇakya *ślokas*, we have faith in

them and how Śrīla Prabhupāda uses them in a Kṛṣṇa conscious context. We are not interested in Cāṇakya per se, but in Cāṇakya as taught by the pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

“We should be very vigilant,” Prabhupāda said. “Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says, *viśvāso naiva kartavyaḥ, strīṣu rāja kuleṣu ca*. Never trust a woman and a politician. He was a politician, and his wife was kidnapped. He had very bad experience with these two things, Cāṇakya Paṇḍita. Therefore he gave this injunction. . . . So Cāṇakya Paṇḍita writes not out of inexperience, he was very experienced. All the *śloka*s of Cāṇakya Paṇḍita are very useful for daily affairs.”¹

Cāṇakya Paṇḍita was such a great politician that the embassy quarter in New Delhi is named Chanakyapuri. Ironically, he tells us never to trust politicians. By this logic, a female politician is not recommended. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “In *Mahābhārata*, there is not a single instance . . . we had very, very great and qualified women. But were they in charge of the state?”²

The safe situation for a woman, according to *Manu-saṁhitā*, is to remain under the protection of her father as a child, her husband during her youth, and her sons in her old age. This system is meant to protect both women and men, and thus to protect the peace in society. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Women, especially beautiful young women, invoke the dormant lusty desires of the man. Therefore, according to *Manu-saṁhitā*, every woman should be protected, either by her husband, by her father or by her grown-up sons. Without such protection, a woman will be exploited.”³

For a *sannyāsi*, even to hear a woman singing is considered dangerous. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “*Sannyāsa* means giving up the company of women, but if a *sannyāsi* hears the voice of a woman and sees her beautiful face, he certainly becomes attracted and is sure to fall down. . . . To see a woman’s face and appreciate her beauty or to hear a woman’s voice and

appreciate her singing as very nice is a subtle falldown for a *brahmacārī* or a *sannyāsī*. . . . When a woman's bodily features are attractive, when her face is beautiful and when her voice is sweet, she is naturally a trap for a man. The *sāstras* advise that when such a woman comes to serve the man, she should be considered to be like a dark well covered by grass. In the fields there are many such wells, and a man who does not know about them drops through the grass and falls down."⁴

The depiction of women from the materialistic viewpoint is given by Kaśyapa Muni in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: "A woman's face is as attractive and beautiful as a blossoming lotus flower during autumn. Her words are very sweet, and they give pleasure to the ear, but if we study a woman's heart, we can understand it to be extremely sharp, like the blade of a razor. In these circumstances, who can understand the dealings of a woman?"⁵

In material life, the politician and woman are considered the epitome of self-interested persons. As soon as Kāṁsa saw that his self-interest was at risk, he forgot his affection for his sister and immediately became her enemy. "A king, a politician, or a woman cannot be trusted, since they can do anything abominable for their personal interest."⁶

The heavenly society girl, Urvāṣī, saw that King Purūravā had become completely infatuated by her. She advised him, "Be sober and don't allow the senses to overcome you like foxes. . . . You should know that the heart of a woman is like that of a fox. There is no use making friendship with women."⁷ Considering a man's attraction to a beautiful woman along with a woman's sly nature, the Vedic culture considers the protection of women a priority. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "To have good population, the women should be very chaste. That is the basic principle of Vedic civilization. And to keep the women chaste, it was the function of the responsible father, or in the absence of the father the older brother, to get the girl married. It is

compulsory. . . . But if the woman is not protected very strictly, it is very difficult.”⁸

Arjuna raised this same point as an argument against fighting in the battle of Kurukṣetra. Arjuna said that the war would disrupt society, irreligion would become prominent in the family, and the women would become polluted. Prabhupāda writes, “Good population depends on the chastity and faithfulness of this womanhood. As children are very prone to be misled, women are similarly very prone to degradation. Therefore, both children and women require protection by the elder members of the family. . . . On the failure of such *varṇāśrama-dharma*, naturally the women become free to act and mix with men and thus adultery is indulged in at the risk of unwanted population. Irresponsible men also provoke adultery in society, and thus unwanted children flood the human race at the risk of war and pestilence.”⁹

These statements are by nature volatile and controversial. Sometimes when Prabhupāda was challenged about his views on women, he said he was innocent. He was simply repeating the words of authority. It’s not that Prabhupāda was evading the issue or unwilling to give his own conclusion, but his mood indicates that it is not a matter of personal prejudice. Even though these statements may be hard for us to accept, we have to see that there is truth in this Cāṇakya *śloka* as Prabhupāda used it.

To apply it, however, is difficult enough that it should be wielded only by those with enough experience and wisdom. Verses like this should certainly not be used as a weapon to exploit women or to speak of women in a derogatory way. This verse only refers to the particular susceptibility of women in the materialistic context. The very fact that one says, “Don’t trust women” implies that they become dangerous because of a man’s lusty mentality. When women are exploited, they have to fall back on the feminine weapons of slyness and beauty.

Therefore, we can understand that anyone—whether it be a materialistic woman or politician—who is being forced to fight for survival, should not be trusted.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also made it clear that these statements about women apply to materialistic women. “Never trust the politician and women. Of course, when a woman comes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, that position is different.”¹⁰

Devotees should not be afraid to present Prabhupāda’s statements, although it should be done expertly. There is no need to apologize for or waffle on or interpret them. “Well, Prabhupāda didn’t really mean it.” Prabhupāda said he himself was innocent since he was quoting Cāṇakya as an authority. When Kṛṣṇa calls us *mūḍhas* in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and Prabhupāda repeats that, we can’t hold him responsible as if it is his personal opinion. Never trust a woman—it’s a difficult point to understand, and controversial—but Prabhupāda said it. We have to stand by his words, even if we are called chauvinists or worse.

To preach expertly on this point means recognizing its sensitive nature. It also means understanding its ramifications and not being simplistic about it. Neither does it always have to be brought into the forefront of our preaching. However, if others bring it forward, we shouldn’t deny what Prabhupāda said. It is good to practice preaching on these points among ourselves so that we are not embarrassed by them and can learn to apply them intelligently.

The main thing is, though, that Prabhupāda gave us these aphorisms to protect us from our unworldliness. If someone disbelieves this aphorism, for example, he may trust a woman in the wrong way and be cheated or hurt. Cāṇakya’s own wife was kidnapped, so he himself had experience of this point.

Therefore, these topics are not meant to be used only in preaching to add sparkle to our lectures, but to be followed. If

we follow them, we will be more aware of possible trouble on our path.

“Women have been compared to *sūdras* and *vaiśyas* (*striyo vaiśyās tathā sūdrāḥ*). On the spiritual platform, however, when one is elevated to the platform of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whether one is a man, woman, *sūdra* or whatever, everyone is equal.”¹¹ Still, men and women in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should be careful not to unleash their materialistic natures. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Kṛṣṇa conscious *gr̥hasthas* must be very careful of this sly fox woman. If a wife at home is obedient and follows her husband in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the home is welcome. Otherwise one should give up one’s home and go to the forest . . . and take shelter of the lotus feet of Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”¹²

We have already read in a previous *sloka* [Verse 9] that when a man and woman live peacefully in marriage, Lakṣmī resides in their home. Divorce is most often caused by either partner engaging in sex life outside the marriage. This tendency toward illicit sex can be checked if the husband and wife are always engaged in Kṛṣṇa conscious duties. As for the particularly weak nature of women, Prabhupāda writes, “By being engaged in various religious practices, women will not be misled into adultery.”¹³ No one—neither man nor woman—should consider themselves liberated from their tendency toward degradation. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “We should not trust our mind. Don’t think, ‘Now I have become liberated.’ We should always remember that liberation is not such an easy thing, but if we follow the rules and regulations, there is every possibility of becoming liberated.”¹⁴

Sometimes devotees say that because Western women are brought up practically like men and have their own independence, and because the competitive nature is encouraged, they are more masculine than Vedic women. Western women are

therefore more capable of being trustworthy and overcoming their lower natures.

It is probably true that women are more competent in the West to deal with the struggle for survival alongside men. When Śrīla Prabhupāda came to America, he saw that women were treated equally, so he engaged that equality in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This would be an example of Śrīla Prabhupāda giving credence to the fact that women in the West are different from Indian women and that an aphorism such as this one may have a different application.

That doesn't mean, however, that women in the West should abandon the feminine nature. Feminine qualities are preferable and more natural to women than masculine qualities. It would be better if our society spared women from having to learn how to cope as equals with men in order to become so-called trustworthy. When women are protected and left in a somewhat childlike state, that doesn't mean that their growth is stunted. Western women equate the Vedic ideal with immaturity and incompetence. They don't want to stay at home. They prefer to smoke and drink and do whatever the men are doing. It is a mistake.

A protected woman is more able to develop devotional qualities. If she engages her feminine qualities—her shyness, her soft-heartedness, her ability to love and feel compassion, her ability to mother, her natural piety—properly, not for sense gratification, but for spiritual development, that is an inspiration to the entire society.

For example, it is said that virgin girls create an auspicious atmosphere. Whenever there is a Vedic ceremony, if virgin girls are present along with cows and *brāhmaṇas*, it is considered auspicious. If women don't want to be considered untrustworthy, they should cultivate their feminine qualities in devotional service.

Prabhupāda accepted Western women as they were, although I don't think he liked finding them lounging around in T-shirts and jeans and sitting with the men. Still, he found a way to take the gold from the filthy place, and he did it wonderfully. The women he picked up also responded wonderfully.

Prabhupāda encouraged his women disciples to get married. Someone may wonder why Prabhupāda encouraged devotees to get married if women were not to be trusted. A woman can be trusted when she behaves properly.

Cāṇakya says that if a man sees every woman other than his wife as his mother, then both men and women will behave properly and can be trusted. Prabhupāda said, "Men are good and women are good, but together they are no good." When the relationship with a woman is based on sex life, the relationship itself is untrustworthy. When a woman is a mother, everyone trusts her with the lives of her children. Similarly, when she is engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, her husband can also trust her. In the material world, living with a woman is a liability and a danger, but as Prabhupāda said, none of this applies to a woman who has dedicated herself to spiritual life.

Cāṇakya has listed several persons or things in his *śloka* that cannot be trusted. The question could be raised whether there is anyone we *can* trust. Ultimately, a devotee's trust has to be placed in Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master. When Prabhupāda spoke about the deductive method of knowledge, he said that the only way to know your father is to ask your mother. There is no other way to get this knowledge. Hearing Prabhupāda say that, someone once challenged, "Now wait a minute, Swami. What if your mother cheats you?" Prabhupāda replied, "Yes, that is possible, but if your mother cheats you, then you are very unfortunate." There is no other way to know for certain who your father is. Sometimes we have no other choice but to trust.

Similarly, a devotee may ask how he can trust his spiritual master. After all, such-and-such spiritual master cheated his disciples, so how are we to know our spiritual master won't do the same? We can't know. We simply have to go forward on trust. We can't go to Kṛṣṇa directly. We have to trust our spiritual master to lead us to His lotus feet. If we become unfortunate, we can approach other spiritual masters, but we have no other choice but to find shelter in the guru. It is unfortunate when those who are meant to be trustworthy cheat us, but we can be sure that Kṛṣṇa will never cheat us.

Some of Cāṇakya Paṇḍita's aphorisms are witty and humorous. This makes them memorable. They are meant to make us aware of danger. When he says we should never trust a river, does that mean we shouldn't bathe in rivers or cross them, that we should hate rivers? Similarly, should we hate all animals with horns? What about the fact that cows have horns? His intention is to make us aware of possible danger. A cow is a gentle animal, but it may turn at any moment. We may be speaking to a man bearing weapons, but we should be aware that at any moment he could use those weapons against us.

Cāṇakya is not advising that we hate all women; he is warning us of the danger of their materialistic nature. Don't trust a woman also means don't trust the senses. Lord Caitanya didn't want to see King Pratāparudra because it would compromise his *sannyāsa* vows. "Since I am in the renounced order, it is as dangerous for Me to meet a king as to meet a woman. They are both just like drinking poison."¹⁵ That does not mean the woman or the king are particularly evil. It means that our response to those people, when seen as sense objects, is lusty and therefore dangerous to spiritual life.

We should look for those we can trust, who will not draw their guns on us or suddenly claw us or slice our hearts or cheat us when their self-interest is crossed. There *are* people we

can trust fully and we are fortunate when we can be with them and with Kṛṣṇa, the ultimate reservoir of trust. Kṛṣṇa says, “I promise you this,” and we can believe Him.

¹ Lecture, Vṛndāvana, November 24, 1976.

² Evening *darśana*, Hṛṣikeśa, May 9, 1977.

³ *Bhāg.* 8.9.9.

⁴ *Bhāg.* 6.18.41, purport.

⁵ *Bhāg.* 6.1.41.

⁶ *Bhāg.* 10.1.35.

⁷ *Bhāg.* 9.14.36.

⁸ Lecture, London, July 28, 1973.

⁹ *Bg.* 1.40, purport.

¹⁰ Lecture, London, July 28, 1973.

¹¹ *Bhāg.* 9.14.36, purport.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Bg.* 1.40.

¹⁴ Lecture, Vṛndāvana, November 24, 1976.

¹⁵ *Cc. Madhya* 11.7.

Seventeen

*mātā yasya gṛhe nāsti
bhāryā cāpriya-vādinī
araṇyam tena gantavyam
yathāraṇyam tathā gṛham*

mātā—the mother; *yasya*—whose; *gṛhe*—in the home; *na*—not; *asti*—is; *bhāryā*—wife; *ca*—also; *apriya-vādinī*—not speaking pleasing words (or speaking unpleasantly); *araṇyam*—to the forest; *tena*—by him; *gantavyam*—to be gone; *yathā*—like; *araṇyam*—the forest; *tathā*—so; *gṛham*—the home.

TRANSLATION

A man who has neither an affectionate mother nor a good wife at home should immediately give up that barren home and go to the forest. For such a man, living in the forest is no worse than living in such a home.

COMMENTARY

This *sloka* describes a negative home life, but if women are properly trained, such a home life can be avoided. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “Women should be trained up from the very beginning how to become a good wife and a good mother. We have many good examples, such as Kuntidevī and Draupadī. Women are soft-hearted. They can be molded in any way.” The woman’s influence in the home is so strong that when she behaves lovingly, family life is happy, and when she acts indifferently, then one is advised to leave home. “Actually, a woman is supposed to be the energy of the man. Historically, in the background of every great man there is either a mother or a wife. One’s household life is very successful if he has both a

good wife and mother. In such a case, everything about the household and all paraphernalia in the house becomes very pleasing.”²

Western civilization suffers from its lack of Vedic values. Speaking on what he called the ideal, happy Indian home, Śrīla Prabhupāda remarked, “But in your country it is very rare, you see. Yet this is the standard of happiness. So if at home one has no mother and if the wife is not very attached and does not speak very well—which means she does not like the husband on the whole—then *araṇyam tena gantavyam*, immediately he should give up that home and go to the forest. . . . For him either this home or the forest, it is the same.”³

One may wonder why a man is advised to leave home despite his marriage vows. Don’t the vows say that the couple should stay together in sickness and in health, in happiness and unhappiness? Why, then, does Cāṇakya recommend leaving instead of working the problems out?

Devotees should be careful to apply a verse like this properly. This verse does not refer to a whimsical abandonment of a marriage at the first sign of failure. It means that the home should be abandoned when the situation becomes irreversible. The conditions will be so bad that it is not simply a matter of a man (or a woman) abandoning the marriage, but of being driven out of it by unhappiness and hopelessness. In such a situation, there is nothing left to do but quit that so-called family as one might quit a burning house.

The obvious result of unhappy home life is divorce, whether provoked by the husband or provoked by the wife. Śrīla Prabhupāda cited a ready example. When he was in Chicago, a news item came to his attention telling about a movie star who had divorced two husbands in two weeks. Śrīla Prabhupāda remarked, “If the home is not peaceful, always disturbed in mind, and one has to adopt divorce twice in a week, then how can there be peace? This is not freedom, this is disturbance.”⁴

We might expect that even if we have a disagreeable wife, we could at least expect love from our mother, but motherly love is also jeopardized with the “advancement” of civilization. “Even mother is not reliable, what to speak of others. A small child sleeps very soundly on the lap of the mother because it thinks, ‘Now I am safe.’ And the mother is killing the child.”⁵

Śrīla Prabhupāda saw the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement as the only hope in the midst of such a degraded and unhappy situation. Not only is Kṛṣṇa consciousness meant to bring the individual soul to the platform of eternal bliss, but it is also meant for implanting a foundation for civilized life in this world. Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that Kṛṣṇa consciousness should not be misunderstood. It is not mere religious sentiment. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a program to make everyone happy.

Cāṇakya’s *śloka* describes the misfortune of a man who is bereft of good women in his life. A *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse describes how this misfortune can also fall upon a woman. “A wife who has no sons is neglected at home by her husband and surrounded by her co-wives exactly like a maidservant. Certainly such a woman is condemned in every respect because of her sinful life.”⁶ By the phrase, “because of her sinful life,” we can understand that unhappiness at home is a karmic reaction for previous sinful activity. In the purport, Prabhupāda writes, “For a woman who has no son, who is not cared for by her husband and whose co-wives neglect her, treating her like a maidservant, to go to the forest is better than to remain at home.”

Unhappiness is inherent in Kali-yuga and is always a reaction to past sinful activity. Devotees often wonder whether they should tolerate their karmic reactions and suffer through them as an impetus to get beyond the material world, or try to change their situations to happier ones.

As long as we are in the material world, we cannot expect everything to go right, but that doesn’t mean we have to be

fatalists. If we are unable to bring about auspiciousness in our lives in this world, how will we get to the spiritual world? We have to create auspiciousness here by making the best of a bad bargain. If we are too unhappy, we will not be able to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

For example, it is very difficult to be Kṛṣṇa conscious on the hellish planets due to the amount of suffering we would have to experience. Similarly, it is very difficult to be Kṛṣṇa conscious on the heavenly planets due to the amount of enjoyment available. The earth planet provides a balance of happiness and distress. If we can avoid unhappiness in order to pursue Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then we should do that. If our unhappiness is preventing us from practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we should escape the unhappy conditions and better situate ourselves. We are not all great saints who can think of Kṛṣṇa in materially intolerable conditions. That is the sense of this verse, that although the material world is an unhappy place, we should not subject ourselves to intense suffering if there is no hope for improvement and if our Kṛṣṇa consciousness is being compromised.

Another point that may be relevant to devotees in ISKCON is whether it is important that we did not have loving mothers. Do we need to heal that relationship? Cāṇakya is writing about essentials to *varṇāśrama-dharma*. This is Kali-yuga and it is likely that we will not have those amenities so easily. Therefore, we can simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We can make the *Vedas* our mother and have a loving relationship with them. It is not absolutely necessary to our spiritual life that we had a loving mother or that we have that relationship psychologically defined. If our mothers are nondevotees, or even more, opposed to our Kṛṣṇa conscious practices, we can simply close that chapter and take a new mother, Mother Veda.

Also, we have to understand what “going to the forest” means. It doesn’t necessarily mean going to live in an actual forest—we would be lucky to find such a forest at all these days—but Prabhupāda warned us that if we went to live in the forest, we would become like monkeys, having many girlfriends and “running around naked.” “Going to the forest” means leaving a material situation. The essence of it is to leave home and take *vānaprastha*. For us, that may mean going to live in a holy *dhāma* or a temple, or it may mean simply getting out of family life and finding an environment more conducive to spiritual life.

In the “forest” we are meant to engage in *śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam*: practicing the nine-fold process of *bhakti-yoga* in the association of devotees. If we are driven out of our homes by miserable conditions, we can take it as a benediction, take to spiritual life in earnest, and not get caught up in such conditions again.

Lord Caitanya had a different experience. He enjoyed both a beautiful and chaste wife and an affectionate mother. As good women create auspiciousness in family life, they also create attachment for living at home. Cāṇakya considered having to go to the forest a misfortune, but Lord Caitanya set a different example. He was perfectly happy at home, but He left His home to take *sannyāsa* and to preach. Prabhupāda writes, “If a man has a good mother or a good wife, there is no need of his taking *sannyāsa*—that is, unless it is absolutely necessary, as it was for Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.”⁷

A similar statement occurs in the Fourth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: “King Purañjana said, ‘I do not understand why my household paraphernalia does not attract me as before. I think that if there is neither a mother nor a devoted wife at home, the home is like a chariot without wheels. Where is the fool who will sit down on such an unworkable chariot?’ In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the word “*mātā*” or

“mother” is used in this verse in a symbolical way. “The real *mātā*, or mother, is devotional service to the Lord, and the real *patnī*, or devoted wife, is a wife who helps her husband to execute religious principles in devotional service. These two things are required for a happy home.”⁸

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s discussion of this Cāṇakya *śloka* brings out both the positive and negative results of family life according to the positive or negative influence of the women at home. Household affairs become difficult to maintain in the absence of qualified women. Furthermore, real happiness at home must be Kṛṣṇa-centered. “Because human life is meant for spiritual advancement only, one’s wife must be helpful in this endeavor. Otherwise there is no need of household life.”⁹

¹ Lecture, Vṛndāvana, October 3, 1976.

² *Bhāg.* 4.26.15, purport.

³ Lecture, Honolulu, May 9, 1976.

⁴ Room conversation, Philadelphia, July 13, 1975.

⁵ Morning walk, Denver, June 28, 1975.

⁶ *Bhāg.* 6.14.40.

⁷ *Bhāg.* 4.26.15, purport.

⁸ *Bhāg.* 4.26.15, verse and purport.

⁹ *Bhāg.* 9.4.29, purport.

Eighteen

*nakṣatra-bhūṣaṇaṁ candro
nārīṇāṁ bhūṣaṇaṁ patiḥ
pṛthivī-bhūṣaṇaṁ rājā
vidyā sarvasya bhūṣaṇaṁ*

nakṣatra—of the constellations; *bhūṣaṇaṁ*—the ornament; *candraḥ*—the moon; *nārīṇāṁ*—of women; *bhūṣaṇaṁ*—ornament; *patiḥ*—husband; *pṛthivī*—of the earth; *bhūṣaṇaṁ*—ornament; *rājā*—the king; *vidyā*—knowledge; *sarvasya*—for everyone; *bhūṣaṇaṁ*—ornament.

TRANSLATION

The moon enhances the beauty of the constellations, good government enhances the beauty of the earth, and the husband enhances a woman's beauty. But knowledge enhances everyone and all things.

COMMENTARY

Cāṇakya Paṇḍita was not only adept in moral wisdom, but in the rhetorical arrangement of his *śloka*s. Here, a series of examples leads up to a final one. The beauty of the scholar is the main point of this *śloka*, yet the examples that lead up to it are also filled with cogent advice. Thus they form a whole.

One day while taking his morning walk on Venice Beach, Śrīla Prabhupāda remarked that the ocean looks beautiful with its waves. This led him to recall this *śloka*. "Everything has some quality in beauty. Just as Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says: *nārīṇāṁ bhūṣaṇaṁ patiḥ*. A woman's personal beauty is not beauty, but when she has a husband, then she is beautiful. How scientific it is. All these girls in your country, without husband, they

are all morose, unhappy. They have no fixity of husband. Is it not? . . . Therefore, I introduced marriage in our society. Now in our society see all the women with children, how happy they are.”¹

Again in Los Angeles, Śrīla Prabhupāda introduced this *sloka* in his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture, and brought the analogy to its perfection in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The *Bhāgavatam* class was on a verse from the prayers of Queen Kuntī: “O Gadādhara, Kṛṣṇa, our kingdom is now being marked by the impressions of Your feet, and therefore it appears beautiful. But when You leave, it will no longer be so.”² Both in his lecture and in his written purport, Prabhupāda gives the example that “Everything looks beautiful when one is intimately related with it.” The sky is beautiful in relationship with the moon, even more than when the moon is not shining. The state becomes beautiful when it is decorated by a good king or president because then the people are happy. Women are especially beautiful when they are happy with their husbands. Similarly, even a physically unattractive *brāhmaṇa* is beautiful due to his wisdom.

The beauty of the scholar is his forgiveness born of wisdom. Prabhupāda described this in a Bhaktivedānta purport when he explained that each social order and each *āśrama* has a particular quality by which it becomes beautiful. “*Brāhmaṇas* are beautiful when they are forgiving, *kṣatriyas* when they are heroic and courageous in battle, *vaiśyas* when they enrich cultural activities and protect cows, and *sūdras* when they are faithful in the discharge of duties pleasing to their masters. Thus everyone becomes beautiful by his special qualities.”³

Queen Kuntī’s remark takes the analogy even further by stating that *everything* is beautiful as long as Kṛṣṇa is present. In the ultimate sense, therefore, the good government, the beautiful wife, and even the scholar who is beautified by his wisdom, are only beautiful when they are centered on Kṛṣṇa. If

there is no Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then nothing is beautiful. Therefore, Queen Kuntī says, “As long as Kṛṣṇa is with us, we Pāṇḍavas, our kingdom, Hastināpura, everything is beautiful.” The world is void in Kṛṣṇa’s absence.

Since this verse is about how two things in relationship bring out the innate beauty in each other, I would like to express this in a slightly different way. That is, that this verse is about true beauty. True beauty is manifest through a relationship.

True beauty is not defined by popular vote. A scholar’s learning does not make him beautiful if that learning is superficial or laced with hypocrisy. It must be coupled with forgiveness and other qualities which reveal that the learning has found root in his heart. Similarly, a woman may be physically attractive, but that is her skin beauty. The real quality of her beauty is brought out through her loving relationship with her husband. That love that she cherishes in her heart gives her a special quality. Cāṇakya has also said that when a woman becomes a mother, she becomes more beautiful. True beauty is never superficial.

It is also true that many people cannot appreciate the quality of true beauty due to their own superficiality. This verse points to the deeper essences of what it means to be beautiful, to qualities rather than physical attributes.

An even deeper understanding of true beauty is to see everything in relation to Kṛṣṇa. Then the whole world becomes beautiful. The relationship with Kṛṣṇa is what makes everything beautiful. That includes untrampled nature—the mountains, sky, sun, moon, rivers, seas, forests—all this is beautiful because it is Kṛṣṇa’s energy. By looking at His energy, we can understand that Kṛṣṇa is present. The material energy is just a tiny fragment of His splendor in the spiritual world.

If someone doesn't appreciate the beauty in Kṛṣṇa's creation, it may be a symptom of impersonalism, atheism, or nihilism. Śrīla Prabhupāda said:

Therefore the laws of God's nature are neither blind nor accidental as men with a poor fund of knowledge conclude. Behind the laws of nature is the living brain of God, just as there is always a lawmaker behind all the laws of the state. It does not matter whether or not we see the lawmaker behind the common laws; we must admit that there is a lawmaker. Matter can never work automatically, without a living hand, and therefore we must admit the existence of God, the supreme living being, behind the laws of nature.⁴

Of course, many people appreciate the beauty in nature, but don't see God behind it. Their response to the world's beauty borders on pantheism. Others have become so humanistic and nihilistic that they see only the apparent meaninglessness and cruelty of the material nature. They think the beauty in nature is just another phantasmagoria meant to drive us mad.

In Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we can appreciate nature's beauty without forgetting or denying its creator. A neophyte devotee may think that the forest and the seas are another kind of *māyā*, but they are not *māyā* if they are seen as Kṛṣṇa's energy.

Similarly, devotees can see the deeper beauty in ISKCON. It is present in ISKCON's relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. We shouldn't think that now that Prabhupāda has disappeared from our vision that ISKCON has lost its beauty. ISKCON is beautiful when we remember Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda and it becomes troublesome when we forget them.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja said, "Things that are very difficult to do become easy to execute if one somehow or other simply remembers Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. But if one does not remember Him, even easy things become very difficult."⁵ In our case, that means keeping Śrīla Prabhupāda in the center of

ISKCON and always remembering that ISKCON is his society. Prabhupāda wanted us to be idealists and to both work to fulfill the ideals and accept the troubles as *tapasya*. If we follow this advice, Prabhupāda said, our futures would be brilliant.

ISKCON is brilliant, the preaching field is brilliant, and the obstacles on the preaching field are brilliant. Just the existence of so many nondevotees is something to feel enthusiastic about—all this wonderful work awaits us in Prabhupāda's service. We are on the ground floor of a mission that is destined for success. We should always remember our fortune.

This is the positive outlook Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us and it is sacred. This is ISKCON's beauty. We don't need to dwell on the negative aspects that would be there even in the material world. ISKCON is not finished. When we hear these statements, we can recognize them as the words of those who can no longer see ISKCON's beauty. We can still see positively and make an effort to keep Prabhupāda in the center. Then ISKCON will be beautiful and we will be beautiful by our relationship with it.

¹ Morning walk, Los Angeles, April 30, 1973.

² Lecture, Los Angeles, May 1, 1973.

³ *Bhāg.* 9.15.40, purport.

⁴ *Light of the Bhāgavat*, Illustration 3, purport.

⁵ *Cc. Ādi* 14.1.

Nineteen

*dāmpatyē kalahe caiva
bāhvārambhe laghu-kriyā
āja-yuddhe muni-śrāddhe
prabhāte megha-dambhake*

dāmpatyē—in marriage; *kalahe*—when there is quarrel; *ca*—also; *eva*—indeed; *bāhu-ārambhe*—always starting; *laghu-kriyā*—made light of; *āja-yuddhe*—when there is battle between goats; *muni-śrāddhe*—when sages perform the *śrāddha* ceremony; *prabhāte*—at sunrise; *megha-dambhake*—when clouds bluff [by rumbling].

TRANSLATION

Husbands and wives quarrel frequently but those quarrels are quickly forgotten. They should be taken lightly, like fighting between goats, the *śrāddha* ceremony performed by sages living in the forest, or the rumbling of clouds at sunrise.

COMMENTARY

Again, Cāṇakya uses three examples to lead us to a fourth. This is his expertise in forming the aphorisms. We immediately agree with him that the three items are unimportant. We are also lead to agree that the quarrel between husband and wife is similarly unimportant.

After reading this verse a few times, and hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda speak it and write on it, we cannot escape the conclusion that he was adamantly against divorce. Consider the examples: two goats are intent on fighting, but a mere “Hut!” sends them running off. The morning sky is full of dramatic

rumbling, but after a little drizzle, the sun prevails. Forest sages advertise a festival, but all that is served is fruits and nuts. A husband and wife fight, but what is the result? The fight is inconsequential, but why do such fights end in bitterness and irreconcilable separation?

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained the situation to a guest in the Melbourne temple.

Prabhupāda: "Divorce should not be allowed. . . . Let them fight for some time; they will stop automatically. But nowadays when the husband and wife fight, as soon as he goes to the lawyer and gives incentive, 'Yes, come to court.' This is going on. So the first defect is the divorce law. Another defect is that there is no method how to train a man to become first-class. That is there in the Vedic civilization."

Śrīla Prabhupāda described how scientifically arranging marriages while the husband and wife were quite young contributed to a lifelong union. Both the boy and the girl would gradually develop the mentality that "she is my wife" and "he is my husband." The commitment to marriage was implanted into the psychology of both the boy and the girl. Prabhupāda said, "The love is so strong, they cannot dream even that 'I have to leave my wife,' 'I have to leave my husband'. . . The love was so strong. Even in Gandhi's life, he fought with his wife and pushed her out of the house: 'Get out, I don't want you.' And Kasturabhai began to cry on the street, 'Where shall I go? You have given me away?' Then Gandhi said, 'Come on.' Finished."²

Śrīla Prabhupāda admitted that he also fought with his wife, but, "My wife never thought of any other man; neither I thought of any other woman. Although we fought, there was no such thing. Fighting is natural, this is fight of love. Therefore Cāṇakya Paṇḍita has said, 'Neglect this fighting. Don't take it seriously.'"³

Śrīla Prabhupāda was aware of the poor situation in ISKCON. One time while explaining this *śloka* in the course of an initiation and marriage lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda demanded his audience's participation:

Prabhupāda: There may be a very great rumbling, but the result is very small, maybe some drizzling. Similarly, a husband and wife may fight, but if you don't give them any seriousness, they will mitigate. That is the process. But in the Western countries, in the name of liberty, so many family lives are dismantled simply by this divorce case. So according to Vedic civilization, there is no divorce. Once united, it cannot be disunited in any condition of life. That you should follow. That is our first. So I think you promise this. All of you? Say yes.

Devotees: Yes.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Thank you very much. That's all. Now you change. And you instruct them. . . . First of all accept that "I take charge of . . ." Why do you forget? So why don't you do that? I tell you. [Yelling] So why don't you do it? Do it! Do it.⁴

Now almost twenty years after Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, divorce is common in ISKCON. While writing a commentary on this *śloka*, I don't want to water down Prabhupāda's conclusion. It is easy to argue why divorce seems inevitable in so many marriages. There is even one case where Prabhupāda reluctantly gave permission to a devotee who asked if he could divorce his wife and marry another. Śrīla Prabhupāda's servant at that time, Śrutakīrti, was bewildered by Śrīla Prabhupāda's action in this case and he waited for an opportunity to inquire. Finally, in the evening, while massaging Śrīla Prabhupāda in his bed, Śrutakīrti asked.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda, this devotee who is asking about the divorce?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that he had told him he could do it.

“Yes, I know,” said Śrutakīrti. “But I was wondering. You always say that divorce is against Vedic society. There can never be any divorce.”

Prabhupāda replied that in “your society” these things are accepted.

“But in Western society,” said Śrutakīrti, “they also accept meat-eating, and they accept intoxication. So why aren’t any of these things allowed?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda then replied that whether he gave permission or not, the disciple in question was going to get a divorce. Prabhupāda explained it that if he had told his disciple no and the disciple had gone ahead and done it anyway, the offense would have been greater. Prabhupāda said that he had given permission since he knew the man was going to do it anyway. In this way the offense was not so great.

Prabhupāda’s policy on divorce remained firm. Devotees in ISKCON, however, have often been in a quandary about this topic. They don’t want to justify divorce and thus contradict Śrīla Prabhupāda’s policy, and yet they often understand why divorce seemed inevitable. At least we should understand the seriousness with which Śrīla Prabhupāda took the marriage vows. Later, Śrīla Prabhupāda washed his hands of marriages all together. Earlier in ISKCON, he used to perform the fire sacrifice and personally marry the couples. Because of so many divorces and separations, Prabhupāda stopped performing marriages.

I remember hearing in those days that Prabhupāda was against marriage, so I wrote to him and asked him about it. He said he wasn’t against marriage, but that the couples should take responsibility. ISKCON leaders should also be responsible and not arrange marriages just to keep devotees in their temples or without adequate care in assessing compatibility. If

marriages are worked out more personally and with more concern for the devotees as people, then it is likely that the divorce rate will not be so high.

According to Cāṇakya, if a marriage becomes so bad that either the husband or wife is forced to abandon it, then that person should go to the forest. Remarriage is out of the question. Prabhupāda's washing his hands of marriages does not indicate his approval of remarriage.

Separation is not expressly forbidden in Vedic culture. If a couple cannot live together, then the man and woman were allowed to live apart indefinitely. This is not exactly the same as divorce where one or both partners separate and seek new partners. Rather, marriage break-up is tragic. That tragedy should lead you to a more renounced position.

We may note Prabhupāda's statement that marriage break-up is often caused by the lack of qualified men. Usually we hear only about the importance of a woman's training in chastity, faithfulness, and tolerance. Prabhupāda states that men also need training to become qualified husbands and to prevent divorce.

For example, a man agrees at the marriage ceremony to protect his wife. If he engages her in illicit sex, how is he protecting her? Therefore, a qualified man is trained in celibacy as a *brahmacāri*. He should be trained in sense control so that he is not looking to engage in sex life with women outside his marriage either. The *Vedas* state that a woman does not have to serve a husband who is fallen. At least we can acknowledge that a man has an equal responsibility in maintaining his wife properly and avoiding divorce.

Also, it is important that relatives and society follow the injunctions in this *śloka* and do not take a couple's fighting seriously. We can imagine the scenario in a village setting:

An old couple is sitting outside their cottage. A loud fight breaks out between the younger couple next door. The neighbors

hear it all. They sit outside and shake their heads, “Oh, they’re having another fight.” They don’t take it seriously. One of them runs out, accusing the other. “Yes, yes, yes.” The old couple looks sympathetic. “I’m never going back!” “Oh, you can stay at our cottage tonight. Tomorrow, everything will be better.” They don’t take it seriously.

In Western society, friends and relatives tend to take the fights between husband and wife very seriously. They may even support and encourage a divorce where a couple might have been inclined to work out their problems. As Prabhupāda said, “Similarly a husband and wife may fight, but if you don’t give them any seriousness, they will mitigate.” Devotees should be careful not to encourage divorce by taking things too seriously. Often, the worst marriages turn out the best in the end.

I say that friends and relatives shouldn’t take the fighting between husband and wife too seriously, but it is also true that young couples have to be educated and supported so that their marriages can grow properly. Marriage shouldn’t be undertaken as a vehicle to legal sense gratification. Therefore, it takes training and culture in morality and responsibility. How this is to be done is beyond the scope of this book, but we should be conscious that no marriage will be entirely smooth. Therefore, couples have to learn tolerance and commitment and be willing to work things out. Ultimately, the only happiness in married life will be found by putting Kṛṣṇa in the center.

¹ Room conversation, Melbourne, May 21, 1975.

² Morning walk, Nairobi, November 2, 1975.

³ Morning walk, Bombay, March 27, 1974.

⁴ Lecture, Sydney, April 2, 1972.

Twenty

*sarpah krūrah khalah krūrah
sarpāt krūratarah khalah
mantrauṣadhi-vaśah sarpah
khalah kena nivāryate*

sarpah—serpent; *krūrah*—envious; *khalah*—wicked person; *krūrah*—envious; *sarpāt*—than the serpent; *krūra-tarah*—more envious; *khalah*—the wicked person; *mantra-oṣadhi*—by mantras and drugs; *vaśah*—controlled; *sarpah*—serpent; *khalah*—wicked person; *kena*—by what means; *nivāryate*—restrained.

TRANSLATION

There are two kinds of envious living entities, the snake and the man-snake, or the man habituated to snake-like qualities. Of the two, the man-snake is more dangerous because while a serpent can be subdued by mantra or herbs, the man-snake cannot be subdued.

COMMENTARY

This *śloka* points out the ugliness of human envy and how it can consume a person to such an extent that it is impossible to control. An envious person attacks even the most wonderful and saintly persons he meets. Reading this *śloka* makes me resolve not to become a victim of envy. I pray to Lord Nṛsimha-deva to please enter my heart and destroy my *anarthas*, particularly my envy. I want to seriously practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness and be free of this disease.

Using the example of the snake, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the cruel and the envious are the first to suffer. In the

forest fire, all the animals try to escape, but because snakes crawl on the ground and the dry leaves quickly catch fire, they are the first to die. “Similarly, when there is a catastrophe in the world, the persons who are like snakes, cruel and envious, suffer first.”¹

Śrīla Prabhupāda characterized a snake as a creature that would bite other living entities without provocation. “Why is a snake called so cruel? Because unnecessarily they bite. If somebody commits offense unto you, if you bite me, that is reasonable. But if I have no fault, still you are biting me. *Vṛścika*, scorpion, snake, they do that, without any offense.”² No one has to become a snake’s enemy; snakes are everyone’s enemy by nature.

An envious man is more dangerous than a snake. The human being has developed consciousness. If he uses his consciousness to practice envy and jealousy, there is no way to change his heart. Although in India, snake charmers can control snakes by music or mantra, there is no way to control a snake-like man. “A person who has become jealous and envious, cannot be controlled either by mantra or by bribe or this or that.”³

Even the devotees are not spared from the bite of an envious person. Nondevotees often appear civilized. “Here is a very nice educated man. He is very nice. But we say, ‘No. Because he has no Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he is as dangerous as if he is an ordinary man.’”⁴

Śrīla Prabhupāda refers us to another Cāṇakya *śloka*: “If you give good advice, a person will become angry.” And he also cited the example of Jesus Christ: “Jesus Christ was crucified by some envious persons. Even the Roman judge denied that this man should not be . . . there is no fault. But because they were envious, they were persistent, ‘Yes, he should be crucified.’”⁵

In a similar context, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* compares the nondevotees to poisonous snakes. “On the contrary, even

though full of all opulence and material prosperity, any householder's house where the devotees of the Lord are never allowed to come in, and where there is no water for washing their feet, is to be considered a tree in which all venomous serpents live.”⁶

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself experienced this envy against a *sādhū*. “We are preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So what is our fault? That we are trying to teach people—no illicit sex, no gambling, no meat-eating, no intoxication, but they take it otherwise. They take: ‘It is very dangerous.’ . . . No fault but still fault-finding and giving us trouble.”⁷

In the face of envy, a *sādhū* tolerates. That is one of his ornaments. A *sādhū* is tolerant, merciful, and a friend to all. Therefore, the preacher is favored by Kṛṣṇa.

Sādhūs also strictly follow the principles of nonviolence. They don't want to kill even an ant. Śrīla Prabhupāda describes how he was therefore surprised when his Guru Mahārāja ordered a snake killed:

“Long ago, in the year 1933, in this Caitanya Math, there was a big snake that came out of my front. I was taking bath. So everyone was looking what to do. Guru Mahārāja was on the upstairs. He immediately ordered, ‘Kill him.’ So it was killed. At that time, 1933, I was a newcomer. I thought, ‘How is that? Guru Mahārāja ordered the snake to be killed.’ I was a little surprised. But later on, when I saw this verse [in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*] I was very glad. *Modeta sādhuḥ api vṛścika-sarpahatyā*. It had remained a doubt, ‘How Guru Mahārāja ordered a snake to be killed?’ But when I read this verse I was very much pleased, that these creatures, or creatures like the snake, should not be shown any mercy.”⁸

What Śrīla Prabhupāda refers to is a statement in the Seventh Canto by Prahlāda Mahārāja after Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva killed Prahlāda's father, Hiraṇyakaśipu. At that time, Prahlāda Mahārāja said, “My Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, please, therefore,

cease Your anger now that my father, the great demon Hiraṇyakaśipu, has been killed. Since even saintly persons take pleasure in the killing of a scorpion or snake, all the worlds have achieved great satisfaction because of the death of this demon. Now they are confident of their happiness, and they will always remember Your auspicious incarnation in order to be free from fear.”⁹

Devotees are compassionate. Therefore, they are concerned for envious human beings. “Prahlāda Mahārāja is a typical Vaiṣṇava. He prays not for himself, but for all living entities, the gentle, the envious and the mischievous. He always thought of the welfare of mischievous persons, like his father Hiraṇyakaśipu. . . . This is the attitude of a Vaiṣṇava who always thinks of the welfare of the entire universe. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *bhāgavata-dharma* are meant for persons who are completely free from envy (*paramo nirmatsarāṇām*). Therefore, Prahlāda Mahārāja prays, ‘May all the envious persons be pacified.’”¹⁰

When by Kṛṣṇa’s grace a person becomes free of envy, he also becomes liberal and able to think of another’s welfare. “Therefore we should pray to Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva to sit in our hearts. We should pray *bahir nṛsiṃho hṛdaye nṛsiṃhaḥ*: ‘Let Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva sit in the core of my heart, killing all my bad propensities. Let my mind become clean so that I may peacefully worship the Lord and bring peace to the entire world.’”¹¹

Prahlāda Mahārāja set the example for this mercy. Although his father tried to torture and kill him, he asked the Lord to please be merciful to everyone, including his father, a most envious person.

We can judge the quality of a man by how much envy he has in his heart. An envious man can be purified of that envy if he practices *bhakti-yoga*. Although Cāṇakya states that there is no mantra to cure the envious, he may not have known the power of the *mahā-mantra*. “By mantra, a snake-bitten person

can be brought to life. There are still some snake charmers in the villages. In our Māyāpur there is a Mohammedan who can cure snake-bitten cases by mantra, still. . . . So we should take chance, and the most important mantra is *mahā-mantra*. We are sleeping, but this *mahā-mantra*, Hare Kṛṣṇa, if we hear somehow or other . . . therefore the greatest beneficial activity or welfare activity is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra so that others can hear.”¹²

By reading this *śloka* and studying Prabhupāda’s application of it, we come to see how envy is a pervasive problem. The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is the only cure. We should practice it ourselves and distribute it widely as the highest welfare work.

Someone may ask, “If someone is so envious, how will he be able to take the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra?” Devotees distribute the holy name widely through *harināma*, book distribution, and other forms of preaching, without discrimination. If they find they have lifted a rock and a poisonous snake has come out, then they may not continue preaching to him. Preachers concentrate on preaching to the innocent, but if their distribution is wide and indiscriminate, envious persons cannot help but hear the holy names and possibly be cleansed.

Prabhupāda told us that the whole society benefits by the performance of the *saṅkīrtana yajña*. Still, the most poisonous snakes won’t take advantage of the mercy. There is another Cāṇakya *śloka* that advises us not to even try to give such persons good instruction.

When we do meet up with such envious persons, we can practice tolerance. A devotee is *titikṣavaḥ kārūṇikāḥ*, both tolerant and merciful. Prabhupāda gave Jesus Christ’s prayer from the cross as an example of Vaiṣṇava tolerance: “Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.” Christ had power, but he did not retaliate against the persons who came to kill him.

A devotee can look at his meeting with such persons as his karma. When we face envy from another person, we can understand that that person is simply an agent to deliver us our sinful reactions. On the other hand, if the envious person is attacking other devotees or the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, then we may have to take steps to work against their poison.

When people attack or minimize ISKCON, devotees can present counter-propaganda either through the media or their own one-on-one preaching. In this way, devotees can be engaged in “warfare” in a way that is appropriate for them.

Prabhupāda often said that those who attack this movement are envious, and devotees have often repeated that phrase at the movement’s critics as a blanket condemnation of what they had to say. Even if their points were accurate, we would write it off as “simply envious.” Gradually, we have, as a movement, begun to admit that some of the things people said about us, although possibly motivated by envy, have also been true. This brings us back to the point that a man should take gold from a filthy place.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that envy comes originally from envy of God. We each have free will and are each spirit souls. Our constitutional nature is to be servants of Kṛṣṇa. By misuse of free will, we become envious and want to usurp Kṛṣṇa’s position as the supreme lovable object. All other envy stems from that original envy.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* describes the progression of falling into the material pool. When we contemplate the objects of the senses, we develop the lust to obtain them. That lust is part of the misuse of free will. From lust, anger arises. Then intelligence is bewildered and memory is lost. This original desire was created in the world from the beginning when Lord Brahmā created the six enemies of the conditioned soul: lust, anger, fear, illusion, madness, and envy.

Envy is fanned by bad association. Bad association is materialistic association—friends who teach us to be dissatisfied with what we have obtained through our karma. If we are not satisfied with what we have, we will hanker for what others have. The feeling can become so strong that we can actually wish the possessor of our cherished object harm.

A devotee should be vigilant against envy. It comes from not being satisfied in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which comes from wanting our lives to be based on sense gratification. It is inevitable that others will have more than what we have in this world. If we are motivated by envy instead of compassion, we will desire what they have rather than give them what we have—the gift of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

A real devotee will feel sorry for those who are enamored and burdened by too many possessions in the material world. A real devotee will not even envy the advancement of another devotee. Envy is childish and has nothing to do with the Vaiṣṇava mentality.

Why would one devotee envy another? If it is true that envy originates in envy of Kṛṣṇa, then we can be sure that it is living in the heart to some degree or other of anyone living in the material world who is still attached to being here. A devotee who is filled with Kṛṣṇa consciousness is often the object of other devotees' envy. "Why does he always talk about Kṛṣṇa? Why is he so Kṛṣṇa conscious? I don't mind devotees as long as they're not Kṛṣṇa conscious, but that devotee drives me mad." That envy comes from that same mean-minded assessment of seeing others as having more than we have ourselves.

It also means that our own motives aren't yet pure. We are still acting on the desire for fame, adoration, and distinction. We came to a spiritual movement to free ourselves from the rat race, but we may still be maintaining the desires that made us enter the rat race in the first place.

In the material world, getting ahead means doing it at the expense of others. In a spiritual movement, material ambition appears by taking on the trappings of a religionist—not eating too much, performing austerity, talking about Kṛṣṇa. We hope devotees will like us if we adopt these mannerisms, even if we are not really making advancement. Then we see another devotee *actually* making advancement. We might have thought, “Nobody is *really* making advancement, so I’m doing all right,” and then come face to face with someone who has learned how to surrender. Real Kṛṣṇa consciousness is discernible by its symptoms, and it does not look the same as superficial Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then the envy starts. It comes from material desire and it comes from frustration at our own failure.

Therefore, devotees have to cultivate honesty and humility instead of envy. Even a Western-born devotee can make advancement, we tell ourselves. Instead of wanting to pull someone down for his advancement, we should try to practice what he is practicing with humility. By such a friendly attitude, we will attain the Vaiṣṇava’s mercy and learn how to develop ourselves more and more as devotees.

It’s an interesting phenomenon that most of the envy generated toward devotees comes from other devotees. How could a nondevotee be envious of a devotee with his ragged clothes? It is true, however, that a nondevotee could envy a devotee’s happiness. Because such a person doesn’t believe in God, he is not able to understand the happiness that arises from spiritual life.

Prabhupāda tells the true story of a rich Indian man who was sitting on his porch with his wife. This man was morose, looking out at the street. His wife asked, “What’s the matter with you? Why are you unhappy? You have everything—wealth, power, sense gratification.” Just then, an old *sādhū* walked by dressed in rags. The rich man said, “I want to be like him.” The rich man was actually attracted to the renounced

life. Someone who desires renunciation but cannot attain it may find himself expressing his frustration through envy. He may mistreat the *sādhū*: “Get out of here, you good for nothing!”

Similarly, people sometimes envy the devotees for being so free of the anxieties they themselves feel. Therefore, they call the devotees escapists. Of course, the devotees invite the nondevotees to join them by giving up their illicit activities. Again they are frustrated. How can they give up the very basis of their lives? They prefer to remain frustrated and envious.

Prabhupāda sometimes dealt with the envy of those who came to see him. When he was in Paris giving a public lecture, the audience called out, “Get down, get down. Why are you on that big seat?” Prabhupāda later said that he shouldn’t lecture from a *vyāsāsana* in public.

Another time, he was being interviewed in Chicago by a reporter. Prabhupāda and the reporter were both sitting on the floor, although Prabhupāda’s *vyāsāsana* was behind them. When the reporter asked what the seat was for, Prabhupāda told him that it was his seat, “but if I sit on it, you will become envious.”¹³ Prabhupāda tried not to incite their envy, although he said and did the things he wanted to do regardless of who was in the audience. In one meeting in Australia, the audience almost became violent. At that time, he told his disciples he would no longer hold public meetings.

Prabhupāda tried not to expose himself to envious people, although ultimately, he told us he didn’t care for anyone’s opinion. He said he didn’t care for the opinions of envious Godbrothers and he didn’t care for the opinions of envious caste *brāhmaṇas* in India. He continued to give us a separate program where we could carry on our Kṛṣṇa conscious plans without their interference. “The dogs will bark, but the caravan will pass.” He always knew that Kṛṣṇa would protect us, despite the envy of others.

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- ¹ Lecture, Vṛndāvana, November 30, 1976.
 - ² Lecture, Bombay, November 21, 1974.
 - ³ Lecture, Māyāpur, February 21, 1975.
 - ⁴ Room conversation, Bombay, September 18, 1973.
 - ⁵ Lecture, Montreal, August 22, 1968.
 - ⁶ *Bhāg.* 4.22.11.
 - ⁷ Lecture, Vṛndāvana, November 30, 1976.
 - ⁸ Lecture, Māyāpur, February 21, 1976.
 - ⁹ *Bhāg.* 7.9.14.
 - ¹⁰ *Bhāg.* 5.18.9, purport.
 - ¹¹ Ibid.
 - ¹² Lecture, Bombay, December 29, 1974.
 - ¹³ Interview, Chicago, July, 1975.

Twenty-one

*āyusaḥ kṣaṇa eko 'pi
na labhyaḥ svarṇa-koṭibhiḥ
sa cen nirarthakam nitaḥ
kā nu hāniḥ tato 'dhikā*

āyusaḥ—of one's duration of life; *kṣaṇaḥ*—a moment; *ekaḥ*—single; *api*—even; *na*—not; *labhyaḥ*—to be acquired; *svaṇa*—gold; *koṭibhiḥ*—with tens of millions; *saḥ*—it (the moment); *cet*—if; *nirarthakam*—wasted; *nitaḥ*—so disposed; *kā*—what; *nu*—indeed; *hāniḥ*—loss; *tataḥ*—than that; *adhikā*—greater.

TRANSLATION

Time is so valuable that you cannot get back a moment of it, even if you pay millions of gold coins. What is lost is lost for good. If you spoil such valuable time without profit, just imagine how great a loser you are.

COMMENTARY

This is an impressive statement about the danger of wasting time. Śrīla Prabhupāda often quoted this *śloka*. He used to mention the exact time and date at which he was lecturing, and then say that this time and date would never come again. “Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says . . . a moment's time of your duration of life, a moment . . . what to speak of hours and days, but moments . . . he was considering moment to moment. Just like today, 15th March, 1968, now it is 7:35. Now this 1968, 7:35, gone, as soon as there is 7:36 you cannot bring back that 7:35, March, 1968 again. Even if you pay millions of dollars. . . . What is lost is lost for good. . . . If you such valuable time spoil for nothing, just imagine how much you are losing.”¹

Śrīla Prabhupāda also used to quote the business maxim, “Time is money.” He said that from the material viewpoint, it is a good maxim to live by. “But for spiritual advancement, we should be more accurate and strict, *avyartha-kālatvam*.”²

As with many statements from the *Nīti-sāstra*, this is common sense, something we already know. Hearing it stated succinctly, however, wakes us up. Cāṇakya has even given it a monetary value—time is more valuable than millions of gold coins.

Prabhupāda gave an example from his own experience: “One of our friends in India, he was at that time 54 years old, but was dying. So he was requesting the doctor: ‘Doctor, kindly give some medicine so that I may live for another four years. I have got many things to do.’ Just see, the crazy fellow. He does not know that what to speak of four years, the doctor cannot give me four minutes prolongation of life. . . . You cannot increase it by paying money, what to speak of four years. You cannot increase it four seconds. So just try to understand how much our life is valuable.”³

Sometimes devotees think that their life duration has been increased by their spiritual master taking their karma at initiation. The *Bhagavad-gītā* speaks on five different topics. One of them is time and another is karma. We are told that of the five, only karma is changeable. Therefore, it may be true that our karma can be changed and that our life duration will increase, but this is not the central meditation in a devotee’s life. Our real meditation is on becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious before death, regardless of when death will come.

The spiritual master or Kṛṣṇa may not adjust our life duration, but they do adjust our attitude toward time. They teach us that time is meant to be offered to Kṛṣṇa. They also teach us that while we are in the material world, we are still subject to time’s rule. It is not that a devotee avoids the six stages of

life—birth, growth, giving off of by-products, maintaining for some time, dwindling, and death.

For a devotee, time and death become personal exchanges with Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa can expand our lives or He can shorten them. We have no control over His decision. It's not that we can protect ourselves by living in a place where death is less likely. If Kṛṣṇa wants to kill someone, no one can stop Him, and if Kṛṣṇa wants to save someone, no one can kill him. Kṛṣṇa personally designates the time of death for each of us. Therefore, devotees do not have to worry about when death will occur. Death is not something impersonal for a devotee, and not only a result of karma. Neither is it an injustice, or a void, a ceasing to exist. Time is Kṛṣṇa's representative. Passing time reminds us to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness before it is too late.

Therefore, we have to ask ourselves what it means not to waste time. From the material point of view, not wasting time means filling every moment with sense gratification and enjoying "to the hilt." "You only live once, so grab all the gusto you can get." A devotee has a different idea. In order to realize the essence of this *śloka*, we have to approach a spiritual master to be schooled in the purpose of human life.

While teaching his young schoolmates, Prahāda Mahārāja made a similar point about how human life, which is at most a hundred-year duration, is wasted in frivolous pursuits. Śrīla Prabhupāda commented on Prahāda's statement in his purport: "Although a materialistic person is expert in calculating costs and doing business, he does not realize that he is misusing his costly life for want of knowledge. Even though such a materialistic person is always suffering threefold miseries, he is not intelligent enough to cease such materialistic way of life."⁴

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Kapiladeva says to Devahūti, "As a mass of clouds does not know the powerful influence of

the wind, a person engaged in material consciousness does not know the powerful strength of the time factor, by which he is being carried.”⁵ Cāṇakya’s *śloka*, therefore, impresses upon us with whom or what we are dealing when we test ourselves against time or are negligent of time’s power. It may superficially appear that we have controlled or defeated time, but that is never the case. Another *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* statement says that between sunrise and sunset, the sun takes away the duration of our lives. Our life duration is also limited by destiny, as outlined in our horoscope. Even a great philosopher or scientist cannot increase his life duration. The moment he is destined to die, he must die.

If this point is pressed upon anyone in an argument, he will have to concede that it is true, but Kali-yuga is such an unfortunate age that despite so many attempts and near successes in controlling nature, people are blind to their real purpose—the spiritual advancement of life. Prahlāda Mahārāja said, “One who is too attached cannot understand that he is wasting his valuable life for the maintenance of his family. He also fails to understand the purpose of human life—a life suitable for realization of the Absolute Truth, is being imperceptibly spoiled.”⁶ In terms of transmigration, if you waste your human life, then in your next life you can become a dog. Unaware of this danger, or how to utilize precious time, people waste it, even in their last days. “The human being has a fixed time, and it is so valuable, but they are finding out sporting, swimming and surfing—simply all programs of wasting time, especially in the Western countries. How much they have invented, I see only and laugh. . . . Old men are sitting hours and hours for capturing one fish. Just see their civilization.”⁷

Not only do old sportsmen waste time, but even the most intense young achiever. “Every moment is so valuable,” Prabhupāda said. “That means you are wasting your valuable life by the endeavor to improve your economic condition. It is

not possible. If you get distress without endeavoring for it, you will get happiness without endeavoring for it because that is destined.”⁸ Therefore all busy attempts in this world are like a car spinning its wheels on ice.

Yogīs are somewhat aware of the time factor, and therefore they attempt to increase their life duration by mechanical adjustment. “The whole process, mechanical process of yoga, mystic power, means to save time.”⁹ One way yogīs do this is to suspend their breathing. Life duration is measured in breaths, not days. Yogīs slow down their breathing, and thus extend their lives. They cannot, however, become immortal.

In order to not waste time, one first has to gain some recognition of its value. “Why do we keep valuable things, some jewel, very carefully? Because we know, if I lose this jewel, I will lose so much money.”¹⁰ A conditioned soul has to wait for many, many lifetimes before coming to the human form of life. The human form is rare and valuable.

The solution to the time problem is to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but even that has to be done carefully. Generally, people think that when they become old, they will take care of their spiritual lives. That is illusion. “Prahāda Mahārāja says, *dharmam bhāgavatam*, to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, or God conscious, is so important that we should not lose even a moment’s time. Immediately we shall begin.”¹¹ For a Kṛṣṇa conscious person to waste even a moment outside of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is dangerous. We cannot avoid death, but before our next death comes, we want to become fully Kṛṣṇa conscious. Then our life will be successful. Therefore, as Prahāda Mahārāja says, while we are stout and strong, we should begin our practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Within the small measurement of a human lifetime, we have to complete our Kṛṣṇa consciousness and get release from the influence of the time factor. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “My Guru Mahārāja used to

say, 'Why should you wait for another life? Finish Kṛṣṇa consciousness business in this lifetime.'"¹²

Devotees often ask whether taking care of their health is a waste of time since we cannot adjust the moment of death. Should we accept that death is coming and spend our precious time in active devotional service, regardless of our health?

The problem is, however, that we cannot engage in active devotional service unless we care for our health. When we are in good health, we gain time in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Of course, if we spend an over-abundance of time on our health and forget Kṛṣṇa, that is useless. Taking care of health and yet facing the inevitability of death are not contradictory as long as the search for health is based on a desire to serve Kṛṣṇa.

Those who are Kṛṣṇa conscious must weigh every moment, aware that they cannot add anything to their allotted time or bring it back once it's gone. We should use our time, therefore, to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even when we begin to practice *bhakti-yoga*, we make gains because we stop wasting so much time pursuing sex enjoyment and economic development.

Still, devotees tend to waste time due to their lack of urgency in spiritual life. One way they waste time is by speaking *prajalpa*. Prabhupāda compares *prajalpa* to the frog croaking, inviting the snake of death. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī compares *prajalpa* to a prostitute who steals the mind from Kṛṣṇa. If we find ourselves in a situation where others are engaging in *prajalpa*, we can excuse ourselves and then go and give ourselves more serious Kṛṣṇa consciousness. How much greater is our foolishness if we have learned about the goal of life and still waste time speaking nonsense?

I once asked Prabhupāda a question related to this topic. We were on a walk in Māyāpur and I asked, "Prabhupāda, on the one hand you say Kṛṣṇa consciousness is gradual, but you also say that we should be urgent about it and try to finish up our business in this one lifetime."

Prabhupāda replied that no one should ever think he is mature. He should think he has a long way to go in his advancement and very little time to achieve it. I was impressed by Prabhupāda's words, and I realized that it would be foolish of me to think that I had become so advanced that I could now coast.

As in all things, Lord Caitanya offers the supreme method for the best use of time. "Lord Caitanya says, '*kirtaniyaḥ sadā hariḥ*.' Your life is meant for chanting. Therefore you should simply chant, *always*, consistently. . . . This is proper using the moments of time."¹³

What about the fact that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a gradual process? We cannot immediately rush ahead and practice *kirtaniyaḥ sadā hariḥ* like Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Many devotees, for example, have to go through the *gṛhasṭha-āśrama* for thirty or forty years first. In one sense, wasting some time is inevitable in the *gṛhasṭha-āśrama*, but it seems required because we cannot immediately surrender and plunge into intense Kṛṣṇa conscious *sādhana* like the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

If that is the case for us, we should at least dovetail our propensities as much as possible in Kṛṣṇa's service and practice renunciation as far as we are able. And we should be vigilant that we are not going backwards. We shouldn't use the *gṛhasṭha-āśrama* as an excuse to indulge in nonsense. It is best to practice Rūpa Gosvāmī's edict: *utsāhān niścayād dhairyāt*—enthusiasm (don't waste time), patience (we may have to tolerate some wasting of time as we learn to develop urgency) and to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness with conviction. Śrīla Prabhupāda gives the example of a woman wanting to give birth to a child as soon as she is married. Her enthusiasm is welcome, but she cannot have a child immediately. If she lives the normal life of a wife, inevitably she will conceive, go through pregnancy, and then give birth. If Kṛṣṇa consciousness is gradual, then we should keep faith in the process and

continue living the normal life of a devotee while striving for increments of improvement.

For example, devotees caught in the middle years of their lives as householders usually have children and financial pressures. They sometimes say that they will practice more intense *sādhana* when they get older and the children are grown up. If it is true that they cannot maintain the intense *sādhana* their hearts desire, then they have to maintain a minimum *sādhana*. One devotee told me that she wanted to give her children love and not allow them to feel any shortcoming in her attention. Therefore, she decided to sacrifice her sixteen rounds because chanting took time away from her children. Who can say that when she gets older, she will actually be able to chant again?

We have to save our own souls first, even if we also want to help others. I remember another incident where a devotee loved to read, but sacrificed reading for work. When he retired from his job, his eyesight failed and he couldn't read. This is what time does. A whole life can pass by before we know it. There is no guarantee that we will be able to chant or hear or pray at a later stage in our lives. For a devotee, the struggle is not so much material, but to keep the material world from encroaching on our *sādhana*. We have to keep remembering Kṛṣṇa through everything, just as Arjuna had to remember Kṛṣṇa during the battle of Kurukṣetra.

In the advanced stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, utilization of time is one of the symptoms of *bhāva*. A devotee may be managing his time well, with preaching and inner cultivation, but that doesn't necessarily mean he is experiencing *bhāva*. *Bhāva* means more than good time management. Still, managing time well in Kṛṣṇa's service is a good sign of advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. *Bhāva* is characterized by Kṛṣṇa conscious emotion. A devotee who is always in anxiety that not a moment of his time is wasted in material pursuits, and that

all of his time is spent pursuing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is deepening his desire and attachment to Kṛṣṇa. When a devotee is sloppy with his time, he wastes so many precious opportunities to preach or chant or pray or remember Kṛṣṇa. “Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has recommended that one who is always anxious to see that not a moment of time is spoiled is advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. *Avyārtha-kālatvam*. A devotee should always think whether my time is passed uselessly. Then he will make advancement. Don’t be slow.”¹⁴

¹ Lecture, San Francisco, March 15, 1968.

² Lecture, Māyāpur, April 8, 1975.

³ Lecture, New York, July 26, 1971.

⁴ *Bhāg.* 7.6.14.

⁵ *Bhāg.* 3.30.1.

⁶ *Bhāg.* 7.6.14.

⁷ Lecture, Los Angeles, January 3, 1974.

⁸ Lecture, Vṛndāvana, December 5, 1975.

⁹ Lecture, Hawaii, January 20, 1974.

¹⁰ Lecture, Los Angeles, January 3, 1974.

¹¹ Lecture, San Francisco, March 1, 1968.

¹² Lecture, Vṛndāvana, December 7, 1975.

¹³ Lecture, Vṛndāvana, December 5, 1975.

¹⁴ Lecture, Māyāpur, April 8, 1975.

Twenty-two

*duṣṭā bhāryā śaṭham mitram
bhṛtyaś cottara-dāyakaḥ
sa-sarpe ca gṛhe vāso
mṛtyur eva na saṁśayaḥ*

duṣṭā—wicked or cheating; *bhāryā*—wife; *śaṭham*—false; *mitram*—friend; *bhṛtyaḥ*—servant; *ca*—also; *uttara-dāyakaḥ*—answering back; *sa-sarpe*—with a serpent; *ca*—also; *gṛhe*—in the house; *vāsaḥ*—living; *mṛtyuḥ*—death; *eva*—certainly; *na*—not; *saṁśayaḥ*—doubt.

TRANSLATION

If the wife is not chaste, the friend is a cheater, the servant unsubmitive, and your room harbors a snake, then you are doomed to die.

COMMENTARY

The problems Cāṇakya Paṇḍita lists are not mere inconveniences, but problems that can cause death. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “There have been many instances that a woman, being attracted by a paramour, has killed even her own son.”¹ Similarly, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* tells us that after Ajāmila married a prostitute, he ruined his life trying to please her.

Śrīla Prabhupāda takes the word “unchaste wife” further. “Our mind is like that, *puṁścalī*, unchaste wife.”² He sums up this *śloka* as follows:

So if somebody’s wife is *duṣṭā* and his friend is a hypocrite, and *bhṛtya*, the servant, does not obey but argues with the master . . . the master says, “Why did you not do?” The servant replies,

“Oh, I am this . . . “ No argument. *Bhṛtya* should be very silent. Then he is faithful servant. Sometimes master may be angry, but *bhṛtya* should be silent. Then master becomes kind. But if he replies on equal level, oh, then it is very bad. *Duṣṭā bhāryā śaṭham mitram, bhṛtyaś cottara-dāyakaḥ, sa-sarpe ca gr̥he vāso:* “And if you are living in an apartment where there is a snake.” If these four things are there or even one of them, then *mṛtyur eva na saṁśayaḥ*: “Then you are doomed.”³

Someone may ask, “If a friend can be a hypocrite, how can I avoid becoming cynical toward all friendship? What is a friend and how do I find one?” For a devotee, a real friend is a friend in Kṛṣṇa consciousness who knows that we are striving to serve Kṛṣṇa as He is. Kṛṣṇa has to be the center of our friendly relationships. Prabhupāda said that he could only be our friend in that sense, by telling us that Kṛṣṇa was our real friend (*suhṛ-dam sarva-bhūtānām*). None of us can help another the way Kṛṣṇa can help him. Therefore, when we remind others that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme friend, we also become a true friend.

Many noble sentiments about friendship have been expressed by thoughtful philosophers and poets, and some of those sentiments can be used and understood in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For example, we like our friends to accept us as we are. We like our friends to sympathize with our aspirations. We like our friends to be like-minded. We want them to care for us as we care for them. True friendship can be sublime. Friendship is perfected, however, only in spiritual life.

Similarly, if a servant is not submissive, it creates an unpleasant and awkward atmosphere. The word “servant” may seem odd to us in the context of our own lives. Does it mean a butler? Should anyone even have a servant? Isn’t that exploitation? Devotees tend to use the word “servant” only about themselves and others in relation to guru and Kṛṣṇa.

In the Vedic context, however, the *śūdra* is considered the serving class. Although in any society everyone is serving each

other, there is still a serving class in the context of an entire society. For example, *sūdras* are often engaged as assistants to the *kṣatriyas*. The virtue of a *sūdra* is his submission.

In the spiritual context, a servant is one who is serving the guru. If we are to call ourselves servants of our spiritual master, we have to adopt this virtue of submission. We shouldn't talk back to our guru or challenge what he says.

Submission is usually an acquired virtue and not one that comes naturally, especially in Kali-yuga. If the disciple is disrespectful to the guru, the guru may not reject such a disciple, but it will hamper the intimacy of their relationship. When a disciple becomes disrespectful toward his guru, it is usually a signal that the disciple is about to abandon his relationship with his spiritual master.

The guru-disciple relationship is voluntary. There is no force binding the relationship together. It is based on co-operation. If the servant refuses to act submissively, the guru-disciple relationship cannot exist. The disciple has to respect his spiritual master before the spiritual master can trust him enough to give instruction.

Similarly, an unchaste wife is one who does not respect her husband. Without respect, a relationship becomes impossible. An unchaste wife will also not respect her marriage vows and may go off with another man. Such a situation can be worse than death for the husband. Therefore, Cāṇakya says, "You are sure to die." Death can mean physical death or death by shame.

In the case of the spiritual master, he does not die if his disciple turns against him, but the relationship may die and that is death or shame to the disciple's spiritual life. In humility, sometimes great spiritual masters express a feeling of shame or loss when their disciples fail. When a *sannyāsi* disciple returned to his wife, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī shed tears and said, "I could not save that soul." When one of Śrīla

Prabhupāda's disciples repeatedly fell down despite Prabhupāda's care and instruction, Prabhupāda said to him, "You have shamed me too many times before Kṛṣṇa."

¹ Lecture, Vṛndāvana, November 26, 1976.

² Ibid.

³ Lecture, San Francisco, July 16, 1975.

Twenty-three

*a*putrasya *gṛham* *sūnyam*
diśaḥ *sūnyās* *tv* *abāndhavāḥ*
mūrkhasya *hṛdayam* *sūnyam*
sarva-sūnyā *daridratā*

*a*putrasya—childless; *gṛham*—the home; *sūnyam*—empty; *diśaḥ*—the [ten] directions; *sūnyāḥ*—empty; *tu*—but; *abāndhavāḥ*—without relatives; *mūrkhasya*—of a fool; *hṛdayam*—the heart; *sūnyam*—empty [purposeless]; *sarva-sūnyā*—the sum of all emptiness; *daridratā*—poverty.

TRANSLATION

Home life without children is vacant, and the ten directions are vacant when not filled with loving relatives. A fool's heart is vacant, and poverty is the sum of all emptiness.

COMMENTARY

According to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, as soon as a person engages in sex life, he or she will require a home (*gṛha*) and land (*kṣetra*) on which to produce food, and then children.

The attraction between male and female is the basic principle of material existence. On the basis of this misconception, which ties together the hearts of the male and female, one becomes attracted to his body, home, property, children, relatives and wealth. In this way one increases life's illusions and thinks in terms of "I and mine."¹

Children are the expected end product of family life. A *sannyāsī* may live in a house, but that does not make him a *gr̥hastha*. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave himself as an example: “So we are also living in a house. But we are not *gr̥hastha* . . . *Śāstra* says *na gr̥ham ity āhuḥ*: ‘Simply a house is not *gr̥ha*,’ There must be housewife . . . And another thing, Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says, *putra-hīnam gr̥ham śūnyam*. ‘You have got wife, but you have no children, that *gr̥ha* is also void.’”²

In a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse, King Citraketu expressed his anxiety that he had no sons: “Citraketu, the husband of these millions of wives, was endowed with a beautiful form, magnanimity and youth. He was born in a high family, he had a complete education, and he was wealthy and opulent. Nevertheless, in spite of being endowed with all of these assets, he was full of anxiety because he did not have a son.”³ Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in the purport, “If a family has no son, his home is no better than a desert.”

The sages of Vedic culture remind us that attraction to family life is illusion. “The misguided materialist does not know that his very body is impermanent and that the attractions of home, land and wealth, which are in relation to that body, are also temporary. Out of ignorance only, he thinks that everything is permanent.”⁴ Even if one has a wife, home, and children, he still has to change his body. Therefore, whatever he has attained during his life is taken away at death. “Your *gr̥ha*, your house, your land, your wife, your children, your friend, your reputation—everything is taken away. Then you have to begin another life. *Tathā dehāntara-prāptir*.”⁵

It is not merely out of infatuation or illusion that a man desires to have a son. It is also necessary according to Vedic culture, because the son can deliver a father’s soul after death. This is the purpose of the Vedic *śrāddha* ceremony, where the son offers a sacrifice to the departed father’s soul at Gaya. With this in mind, kings such as Aṅga, prayed to have a son.

When they could not produce a son out of their marriage, they considered themselves cursed. When King Aṇḍa approached the priests of his family and requested help in obtaining a son, the sages replied as follows: “O king, in this life we do not find any sinful activity, even within your mind, so you are not in the least offensive, but we can see that in your previous life, you performed sinful activities due to which, in spite of your having all qualifications, you have no son.”⁶ In the purport Prabhupāda writes:

The purpose of marrying is to beget a son, because a son is necessary to deliver his father and forefathers from any hellish conditional lives in which they may be. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says, therefore, *putra-hīnam gṛhaṁ śūnyam*: without a son, married life is simply abominable. King Aṇḍa was a very pious king in this life, but because of his previous sinful activity, he could not get a son. It is concluded, therefore, that if a person does not get a son, it is due to his past sinful life.

How does this statement affect devotees? Should devotees perform the *śrāddha* ceremony? Arjuna said that if the battle of Kurukṣetra was fought, family traditions would be disrupted and the ancestors of such corrupt families would fall down because the offerings of food and water would be stopped. Prabhupāda writes in his purport:

According to the rules and regulations of fruitive activities, there is a need to offer periodical food and water to the forefathers of the family. This offering is performed by worship of Viṣṇu, because eating the remnants of food offered to Viṣṇu can deliver one from all kinds of sinful reactions. Sometimes the forefathers may be suffering from various types of sinful reactions, and sometimes some of them cannot even acquire a gross material body and are forced to remain in subtle bodies as ghosts. Thus, when remnants of *prasādam* food are offered to forefathers by descendants, the forefathers are released from

ghostly or other kinds of material life. Such help rendered to forefathers is a family tradition and those who are not in devotional life are required to perform such rituals. One who is engaged in devotional life is not required to perform such actions. Simply by performing devotional service one can deliver hundreds and thousands of forefathers from all kinds of miseries.

Prabhupāda then quotes from the *Bhāgavatam* (11.5.41): *devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇām pitṛṇām*, if we take shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, then all other obligations are automatically fulfilled.

We should never minimize the power of full-time devotional service. We don't have time to go to Gaya and to perform the *śrāddha* ceremony because we are too busy serving Kṛṣṇa. Devotional service is so spiritually potent that it will take care of all other sacrifices and activities.

In this *śloka*, Cāṇakya Paṇḍita gives a list of things that are vacant, or purposeless, beginning with home life in the absence of children. ISKCON devotees frequently hear this line and are puzzled by it. "I heard Prabhupāda say that marriage without children is sense gratification. What does that mean?"

Prabhupāda did not apply this to devotees. It does not mean that literally any marriage without children is no good. Prabhupāda also encouraged renounced marriages where couples decide not to have children and instead engage themselves fully in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Another question that arises is whether there is any point to such a childless couple's home life. If two devotees are working together in spiritual life, then that is not an empty home. Specifically, it is more like the *vānaprastha* stage of life. Sex life is not a requirement of *gṛhasṭha* life.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda performed my marriage in 1968, I wrote him asking how to go about having children. He told me

we reach *prayojana*, our practice of *bhakti* is incomplete, but we should never think it is void.

After giving two other examples (the directions, when not filled with loving relatives, and a fool's heart), he then says that poverty is the sum of all emptiness. This means that even if the first three items are in your possession, it will be of no avail if you have no money.

Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted Cāṇakya's *śloka* in the course of a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture: "But if you are poor, then everything is zero. Your *vidyā* is zero, your home is zero, and your friend is zero because no one will care for you."⁸ Cāṇakya's *śloka* is an arithmetic calculation of assets. Without family, friends, or knowledge, one has no assets. Even if one has these assets, however, his life is zero if he has no money.

What is actual poverty? From the material point of view, if you have no money, you cannot be happy, but spiritual life is different. Transcendentalists often voluntarily accept vows of poverty in order to enhance their spiritual advancement. In the Tenth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Nārada Muni praises the advantages of poverty when he cursed Kuvera's two drunken sons. From the spiritualist's point of view, lack of money is not zero. Real poverty is lack of self-realization. At the time of death, all material resources will be stripped away and all we will be left with is our spiritual assets. "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his eternal soul?"

There is also such a thing as "spiritual poverty." The Christians have coined that phrase to describe a state of extreme, painful humility, whereby a devotee admits to himself that he has no good qualities. Then from that realization of his own poverty, the devotee calls out to Kṛṣṇa.

Another use of the term describes just the opposite. Someone may be considered spiritually impoverished if he is not par-

ticularly sorry about his spiritual shortcomings and is living in a low state of religious life.

When we consider the values of a transcendentalist and how they differ so completely from a materialist, we may wonder what the value of this *śloka* is. We have already discussed how Cāṇakya's sayings are based on worldly morality and that they can act as a basis from which we can step into spiritual life. In this case, we can understand that if one is too poor, he may be so harassed by his need to make money that he is unable to scrutinize his life and understand his need for self-realization. This *śloka* discusses the dilemma of a worldly person, but the fact that it doesn't apply to an advanced devotee doesn't negate its value as a preliminary instruction. It may also show us how binding material life is, and how difficult it is to obtain all these assets. It may help us to conclude that renunciation of material life, where the higher principles apply, is a better path.

¹ *Bhāg.* 5.5.8.

² Lecture, London, July 24, 1973.

³ *Bhāg.* 6.14.12.

⁴ *Bhāg.* 3.30.3.

⁵ Lecture, Bombay, November 10, 1974.

⁶ *Bhāg.* 4.13.31.

⁷ Letter, October 9, 1968.

⁸ Lecture, Māyāpur, October 6, 1974.

Twenty-four

*vidvatvaṁ ca nṛpatvaṁ ca
naiva tulyaṁ kadācana
svadeśe pūjyate rājā
vidvān sarvatra pūjyate*

vidvatvam—erudition; *ca*—and; *nṛpatvam*—political power; *ca*—and; *na eva*—certainly not; *tulyam*—equality; *kadācana*—ever; *sva-deśe*—in [his] own country; *pūjyate*—respected; *rājā*—the king; *vidvān*—a learned man; *sarvatra*—everywhere [in every country]; *pūjyate*—is worshipped.

TRANSLATION

There is no comparison between learning and political power. A king is respected in his own country, but a learned man is respected everywhere.

COMMENTARY

While introducing this *śloka* during a lecture at ISKCON's Dallas *gurukula*, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "On ordinary things, Cāṇakya's *śloka* is evidence. I think you can introduce Cāṇakya *ślokas* among the students."¹ We hope that this edition of Cāṇakya *ślokas*, as quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda, will fulfill his request to introduce them "among the students."

In this particular *śloka*, Cāṇakya explains that a learned man is more important than a politician. They cannot even be compared. "Comparison must be there when there are points of similarity. Just like we say, 'Your face is just like the moon.' If your face is actually similar to the moon, then we can say that. Analogy means there must be points of similarity. The more similarity, the more perfect the analogy. Cāṇakya says that

there is no comparison between a rich man and a learned man because they are in different categories. ‘*Svadeṣe pūjyate rājā vidvān sarvatra pūjyate*. A rich man, a king, may be respectable in his own country, among his own men, but a *vidvān*, a learned scholar, is respected all over the world.’ If one is respected all over the world, and another is respected in his own village, how can there be any comparison?”²

Of course, sometimes a *sādhū* is respected everywhere *except* in his home town. Lord Caitanya also experienced this phenomenon. As a *gṛhasṭha* and a school teacher, He was criticized by His own students when He chanted the *gopis*’ names in His ecstasy. “Seeing His anger, the foolish student, who was an ordinary atheistic *smārta-brāhmaṇa*, foolishly misjudged Him. Thus he and a party of students were ready to strike the Lord in retaliation. After this incident, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu decided to take *sannyāsa* so that people would not commit offenses against Him, considering Him an ordinary householder, for in India even now a *sannyāsī* is naturally offered respect.”³

Śrīla Prabhupāda initiated Westerners. When he felt they were qualified, he awarded them *brāhmaṇa* initiation and later, *sannyāsa*. He expected that these *sannyāsīs* and *brāhmaṇas* would be honored by those who were aware of Vedic culture. When caste conscious Hindus did not accept his Western disciples as *brāhmaṇas* and *sannyāsīs*, Prabhupāda defended his disciples’ rights:

Unfortunately, debauched, so-called *brāhmaṇas* in India neither offer them respect nor accept them as bona fide *sannyāsīs*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu expected the so-called *brāhmaṇas* to offer respect to such Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsīs*. Nevertheless, it does not matter whether they offer respect, nor whether they accept these *sannyāsīs* as bona fide, for the *sāstra* describes punishment for such disobedient so-called *brāhmaṇas*. The *sāstric* injunction declares: *devatām pratimām dṛṣṭvā . . .* “One who does not

offer respect to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to His Deity in the temple or to a *tridaṇḍī sannyāsī* must undergo *prāyaścitta* atonement.”⁴

It is true that devotees are not respected all over the world. They are not only rejected by caste conscious Hindus, but by all kinds of materialists and other religionists. But devotees are respected in the spiritual world and by the demigods who are aware of the activities on the earth planet. These souls are certainly in the majority. We sing in the “*Śrī Guru-vandana*” prayers that the spiritual master is respected all over the three worlds. Although we have such a small experience about what is going on outside our own world, we can be assured that the higher authorities are taking notice and not neglecting us. This is Kali-yuga. Everything is upside down from what it should be.

We can also understand that learned scholars are respected by other learned and respectable people, not by fools. Śukadeva Gosvāmī wandered around and the common people heckled and molested him. When he met Mahārāja Parikṣit, however, he was offered the highest seat.

Similarly, ISKCON devotees, although misunderstood and harassed by the common people, are respected for their knowledge and renunciation by those who know what those qualities mean. Wherever religious culture is practiced and respected—especially in countries like Italy, Ireland, in Eastern Europe, and of course India—devotees are offered respect.

Another difference between a king and a learned man is that the king gains respect by a show of force whereas the learned man gains respect by his culture, wisdom, and knowledge. A learned man deals in universals, whereas a king deals in national politics. That is why a learned man is more valuable than a king. If he is truly learned, he will offer the people something which no politician can give—the process to liberate

themselves from birth, death, disease, and old age. He can give them pure love of God. Under his guidance, a king may become a learned person, a *rājarṣi*.

The quality of a learned man is that he is not seeking respect. We can read about Keśava Kāśmirī, who was proud of having conquered in all directions. He was a professional debater who went around accruing rewards and accolades from those who witnessed his victories. One who thinks he is the most learned man is not actually a learned man. Learning leads to realization and makes one humble. The desire for popularity is an *anartha*. It has to be removed before the Lord will sit in our hearts. Therefore, we shouldn't think that we are learned and deserving of respect when we read this verse. We shouldn't think that we are better than any king. Rather, we should desire to serve a learned person.

What is a learned person? They call Ravi Shankar and so many politicians *paṇḍitas*. Prabhupāda once told us a joke about how to know a learned man:

“Are you intelligent?”

“Wait a minute. Let me look in my pocket.”

“Why are you looking in your pocket?”

“If I have money in my pocket, then I am intelligent.”

¹ Lecture, Delhi, May 21, 1973.

² Ibid.

³ Cc. Ādi 17.250, purport.

⁴ Cc. Ādi 17.265, purport.

Twenty-five

*dūrataḥ śobhate mūrkhō
lamba-śāṭa-ṭaṭāvṛtaḥ
tāvaca ca śobhate mūrkhō
yāvat kiñcin na bhāṣate*

dūrataḥ—from afar; *śobhate*—looks splendid; *mūrkhah*—a fool; *lamba*—hanging down; *śāṭa*—of garments; *ṭaṭa*—by the covering; *āvṛtaḥ*—covered; *tāvat*—that long; *ca*—and; *śobhate*—looks good; *mūrkhah*—the fool; *yāvat*—as long; *kiñcit*—a little; *na*—does not; *bhāṣate*—speaks.

TRANSLATION

A well-dressed fool looks good from a distance as long as he does not speak.

COMMENTARY

Following this principle, sages and yogīs sometimes take vows of silence in order to avoid foolish talk. By keeping the mind clear of foolishness, one is able to meditate on the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Kardama Muni, the father of Lord Kapila, adopted this principle when he went to the forest and accepted the renounced order of life. “The sage Kardama accepted silence as a vow in order to think of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and take shelter of Him exclusively. Without association, he traveled over the surface of the globe as a *sannyāsī*, devoid of any relationship with fire or shelter.”¹ Prabhupāda elaborates on silence in his purport:

Mauna means silence. Unless one becomes silent, he cannot think completely about the pastimes and activities of the Lord.

It is not that because one is a fool and cannot speak nicely, he therefore takes the vow of *mauna*. Rather, one becomes silent so that people will not disturb him. It is said by Cāṇakya Paṇḍita that a rascal appears very intelligent as long as he does not speak. But speaking is the test. The so-called silence of a silent impersonalist swami indicates that he has nothing to say. He simply wants to beg. But the silence adopted by Kardama Muni was not like that. He became silent for relief from nonsensical talk.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī lived in such a way as to give the impression of being a fool, but when he spoke, he revealed himself as enlightened. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “A sage is not, therefore, recognized by sight, but by hearing. One should approach a *sādhu* or a great sage not to see him, but to hear him.”²

Another example is Jaḍa Bharata, who covered his glories by acting as a dumb, retarded person. He finally revealed himself as a topmost transcendentalist when he spoke to King Rahūgaṇa.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa to describe the symptoms of one merged in transcendence. “How does he speak, and what is his language? How does he sit and how does he walk?” Prabhupāda writes, “Most important is how the man in Kṛṣṇa consciousness speaks, for speech is the most important quality of any man. It is said that a fool is undiscovered as long as he does not speak, and certainly a well-dressed fool cannot be identified until he speaks. But as soon as he speaks he reveals himself at once. The immediate symptom of the Kṛṣṇa conscious man is that he speaks only of Kṛṣṇa and matters relating to Him.”³

The real perfection of *mauna* is to refrain from *prajalpa* and engage in speaking about the Lord’s pastimes. In that way, one can chant and hear about the Supreme Lord to perfect his life.

Devotees are sometimes afraid of this. They want to speak about Kṛṣṇa naturally, from the heart, and not artificially. Even if we are trying to avoid artificial *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, we shouldn't think that we are completely without realization. To speak with faith in the *sāstras* takes conviction. Kṛṣṇa appreciates when we do that, even if we don't speak deeply about His pastimes at first. As with lecturing, speaking *kṛṣṇa-kathā* among friends takes practice and that practice will increase our realization.

While this is true, we should be careful to speak from our actual level of realization. In this way, we will be speaking from the heart right from the beginning and avoiding the theoretical talk that makes us feel our speaking is artificial. If we are speaking to an audience, we can admit our lack of realization on some topic, but then we must find the heart of our own realization and speak that.

Devotees always like to hear something heartfelt from another devotee, even if the realization isn't so advanced. Sometimes a simple devotee can get up and speak an homage and come out with a gem of sincerity. I remember how one devotee spoke at a Vyāsa-pūjā function—he was not a well-educated man—and said, “I just want to say that without my spiritual master, I'd be in the pub right now.” He went on to speak sincere realization and everyone was touched. “True eloquence is truth spoken concisely.” That true eloquence mixed with a good dose of sincerity will always appeal to honest devotees.

Another point that could be raised is that when we speak *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, we have to leave the world behind. Is it, therefore, not *kṛṣṇa-kathā* to speak about things only indirectly related to Kṛṣṇa? For example, if we are talking about the details of our service or our problems as devotees, does this fall into the category of *prajalpa* or *kṛṣṇa-kathā*?

Any speaking that is done in Kṛṣṇa's service—whether directly about Kṛṣṇa or directly about devotional service—can

be spiritual. Talking about our service usually leads up to *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. For example, if we are organizing a group of devotees to go out on *harināma* and then lecture in a hall, we have to do so much talking in order to arrange things. Who is going to bring the *mṛdaṅga*? Did you advertise the program? Are the cars ready? Without this talk, we wouldn't be able to have our program. Such talk leads up to *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. Technically speaking, it's not as good as *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, but in another sense, it's necessary so that the *kṛṣṇa-kathā* can go on. When there is an opportunity to lecture or broadcast the holy names, however, the talk should be direct *kṛṣṇa-kathā*.

Speaking about one's problems to a devotee-counselor is also short of *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, but sometimes necessary. It shouldn't be endlessly indulged in. Even while we are mentally (and physically) imperfect, and even if the arrangements and setting for *kṛṣṇa-kathā* are not perfect and complete, we should speak direct *kṛṣṇa-kathā* as soon as possible. It breaks the material "silence" of *māyā*, and brings ultimate relief.

¹ *Bhāg.* 3.24.42.

² *Bhāg.* 1.4.6, purport.

³ *Bg.* 2.54.

Twenty-six

*ekenāpi su-vṛkṣeṇa
puṣpitenā sugandhinā
vāsitam tad vanam sarvam
su-putreṇa kulam yathā*

ekena—by a single; *api*—even; *su-vṛkṣeṇa*—by a good tree; *puṣpitenā*—by the flowers; *su-gandhinā*—by the sweet fragrance; *vāsitam*—by residing; *tad*—that; *vanam*—forest; *sarvam*—entire; *su-putreṇa*—by a good son; *kulam*—family; *yathā*—as.

TRANSLATION

As the fragrance of the flowers of one good tree fill the forest with their scent, so does a good son bring fame to his family.

COMMENTARY

This *śloka* is reminiscent of another *śloka*, that by one moon, the whole sky is illuminated. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, when Lord Viṣṇu was pleased with the Pracetās' austerities, he blessed them to have a nice son "who will be in no way inferior to Lord Brahmā." In his purport, Prabhupāda explains, "The great politician Cāṇakya says that if there is a good tree within a garden or forest, its flowers will fill the forest with their fragrance. Similarly, a good son within the family makes the whole family famous all over the world. Kṛṣṇa took birth in the family of the Yadus, and consequently the Yadu dynasty is famous all over the world."¹

The reverse is also true. Fire in one tree can burn down a whole forest. The effects of fame and infamy are easily spread. One rotten apple can ruin the whole bushel. On the other

hand, a pure devotee can liberate fourteen generations of his family.

Of course, we should not seek fame for our families in a materialistic way. Prabhupāda has pointed out the futility of trying to make contributions to posterity with this mentality. Even if our family benefits after we leave, that does not answer the question as to where we will go next. If we become Kṛṣṇa conscious, however, then our families will become famous for the right reason. A devotee's family will be known as the source of benediction for the whole world. When Lord Caitanya quizzed Rāmānanda Rāya and asked about real fame, Rāmānanda Rāya replied that true fame occurs when one becomes Kṛṣṇa conscious. Everything else passing as fame is either flickering or is really infamy.

What constitutes a good son is not stereotyped in devotional service. We read in the *Bhāgavatam* how one family might produce both *kṣatriyas* and *brāhmaṇas*. Both of them are good. By psycho-physical nature, by karma, one son may be strong and protective and another son may be more brahminical. For example, Lord Brahmā had many sons. Svāyambhuva Manu was the progenitor of mankind and produced population. He was a good son. The Kumāras refused to have children. They were also good sons. Nārada left home to travel throughout the universe, broadcasting Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He was a good son. There is no one nature that constitutes a good son.

Similarly, in ISKCON, Prabhupāda has many good sons. He has *brahmacārī* book distributors, good *gṛhasthas*, and quiet, efficient, clean *pūjārīs*. He has managers and simple servants. Because they are all faithful to Prabhupāda, they are good sons.

A bad son takes vows and falls away or becomes insincere, breaks the principles, and disappoints his spiritual father.

Following the verse, since ISKCON is a spiritual family, if one devotee in ISKCON becomes a pure devotee, will we all

become liberated? No. Prabhupāda made fun of that idea. He said it implied impersonalism. If there is only one self, if we are all Brahman, then if one *jīva* got out of the illusion that he is an individual, why doesn't everyone merge into his liberation with him? But we are all individuals. Realization has to come to us one by one. We each have to surrender to Kṛṣṇa as individuals.

On the other hand, if one devotee becomes advanced, he will help the other devotees make progress. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda both said that they would consider their work worthwhile if they could make one pure devotee. The implication is that one pure devotee would do tremendous good for everyone.

¹ *Bhāg.* 4.30.12, purport.

Twenty-seven

*udyamena hi sidhyanti
kāryāṇi na manorathaiḥ
na hi suptasya simhasya
praviṣanti mukhe mṛgāḥ*

udyamena—by endeavor; *hi*—indeed; *sidhyanti*—succeed; *kāryāṇi*—activities; *na*—not; *mano-rathaiḥ*—by wishing or dreaming; *na*—not; *hi*—indeed; *suptasya*—of the sleeping; *simhasya*—of the lion; *praviṣanti*—enter; *mukhe*—in the mouth; *mṛgāḥ*—forest animals.

TRANSLATION

Works succeed by endeavor, not by wishing. The sleeping lion does not have animals walking into his mouth.

COMMENTARY

In the material world, the world of *avidyā*, ignorance, everyone has to work. Prabhupāda explained, “It is said that the lion is supposed to be the biggest animal, very powerful. So it is said in the *Hitopadeśa*, *na hi suptasya simhasya* . . . Even if one is a lion, if he thinks, ‘I am lion. Let me sleep and the prey will automatically come within my mouth,’ no, that is not possible. You have to work. Anyone, whoever you may be, you have to work.”¹ When quoting this verse on a morning walk, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that “if the lion thinks that I shall sleep and the animals will walk into my mouth, the animals will come and pass urine on his face. ‘Yes, sir, you sleep and we pass urine on your face.’”² He also referred to a verse in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*: “The material situation is so stringent, that without working you cannot live.”³

Vedic culture divides work according to *varṇa* and *āśrama*. One's individual duty is known as *sva-dharma*. Someone works as a *brāhmaṇa*, someone as a *kṣatriya*, someone as a *vaiśya*, and someone as a *sūdra*. Unlike modern civilization in which most people are forced to work in the factory, Vedic culture sorts a person's occupation according to his or her psycho-physical nature. Prabhupāda explained, "One must be fixed up in his own position. That is the perfect social system. But now here it is said *tyaktvā svā-dharmam*. Now the spiritual situation is different. I am a combination of matter and spirit. As far as my body is concerned there is a division. But when I come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness it is not like that."⁴ In Kṛṣṇa consciousness, although people may work externally as *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, and so on, the business is one, to serve Kṛṣṇa.

Everyone has to work. "Therefore there must be systematic work so that the whole society may develop Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the ideal or goal of life."⁵

The *karmīs* are so intent in their concept of work that they sometimes think the devotees in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are trying to escape work. Prabhupāda addressed this misconception: "The rascal says Kṛṣṇa conscious movement is teaching people to escape. No, that is not Kṛṣṇa's instruction. We do not allow any lazy man. One must be engaged. That is Kṛṣṇa's order. Arjuna was refusing to fight. He was trying to be a nonviolent gentleman. Kṛṣṇa did not allow him. . . . So don't think that those who are Kṛṣṇa conscious, they become lazy and imitate Haridāsa Ṭhākura . . . you just have to change your angle of vision. In the material conditioned life your aim is how to satisfy your senses. Kṛṣṇa consciousness means you have to work in the spirit, same vigor, but you have to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. That is spiritual life, not to become a lazy fellow."⁶

Ultimately, not only the devotees, but all souls, want to be free of the hard labor of the material world. Prabhupāda explained this while lecturing on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse

dharmasya hy āpavargyasya. He analyzed the grammatical construction of the word *pavarga*. “In Sanskrit grammar, there are five *vargas*. So *pavarga* means *pa*, *pha*, *ba*, *bha* and *ma*. Five letters. *Pa* means *pariśrama*, hard labor. And *pha* means foaming. Because when you work very hard, from your mouth foam comes out. *Ba* means *byarthata*, frustration. Despite working very hard, there is frustration in this material world. *Bha* means *bhaya*, fearfulness. Although I am working very hard, still I am fearful what will happen. I am not sure that things will be done properly in spite of my working very hard. *Pa*, *pha*, *ba*, *bha* and *ma*. And *ma* means *mṛtyu*, death. Working so hard day and night, and still there is death.”⁷

The opposite of *pavarga* is *apavarga*, or liberation. Liberation means to nullify hard labor, frustration, fearfulness, and death. No one can nullify these in the material world. Even the lion has to work hard to catch his prey. Ultimately, we are not meant for the soul-grinding labor which is so necessary in the material world. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is described as *na tasya kāryaṁ karaṇaṁ ca vidyate*—He has nothing to do. Since we are spirit souls, part and parcel of the Supreme, in our constitutional position, we also have nothing we have to do. It is only our ignorance that forces us to work. Prabhupāda described this in a delightful way and invited us to partake with Kṛṣṇa in His play in Goloka Vṛndāvana:

No one can say, “Without working hard I shall achieve something.” That is not possible. But our tendency is that we do not wish to work; therefore, at the end of the week, we take some leisure, go out of the city and try to forget all our hard labor throughout the week. But on Monday, again we have to come back. . . . A living entity by nature being part and parcel of God wants to enjoy life without work. That is his tendency. Just like Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is enjoying with the *gopīs*, with Rādhārāṇī, but He is not working. He hasn’t got the work. We don’t hear from *Bhāgavatam* or any Vedic literature that Kṛṣṇa has a

great factory and He has to go to office at ten o'clock and then bring money and then enjoy with Rādhārāṇī. No, we don't want that kind of rascal God. We want God who has not got to work anything. That is God. That is nothing to do.⁸

After saying this, we have to realize that while we are in the material world, even though we are engaged in spiritual life, we still have to work. Prabhupāda gave us a sample of the kind of work a devotee engages in which is not karmic, but devotional service. In the eighteenth chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa says that sacrifice, *tapasya*, and charity should not be given up. Prabhupāda mentions in the purport that Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees may still work in the factory, but because they give their money to Kṛṣṇa, they are performing devotional service and are therefore different from ordinary factory workers.

“Prescribed duties should never be renounced. If one gives up his prescribed duties because of illusion, such renunciation is said to be in the mode of ignorance.” From the purport: “Work for material satisfaction must be given up, but activities which promote one to spiritual activity, like cooking for the Supreme Lord and offering the food to the Lord and then accepting the food, are recommended.”

In his purport to the next verse, Prabhupāda writes, “One who is Kṛṣṇa conscious should not give up earning money out of fear that he is performing fruitive activities. If by working one can engage his money in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or if by rising early in the morning one can advance his transcendental Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one should not desist out of fear or because such activities are considered troublesome. Such renunciation is in the mode of passion. The result of passionate work is always miserable. If a person renounces work in that spirit, he never gets the result of renunciation.”

Then, “O Arjuna, when one performs his prescribed duty only because it ought to be done, and renounces all material association and all attachment to the fruit, his renunciation

is said to be in the mode of goodness.” Prabhupāda writes: “Prescribed duties must be performed with this mentality. One should act without attachment for the results; he should be disassociated from the modes of work. A man working in Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the factory does not associate himself with the work or the factory nor with the workers of the factory . . . There are many members of the International Society For Krishna Consciousness who work very hard in their office or in the factory or some other place, and whatever they earn they give to the Society. Such highly elevated souls are actually *sannyāsīs* . . .”

It is obvious from what Prabhupāda is saying in these purports that a devotee does not give up work, but gives up the karmic nature of work. The question remains, however: what is the relationship of our work and service in this world to the play that we engage in with Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world?

From the very beginning of our devotional lives, Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged us and said some remarkable things. He said that if someone is a poet in this world, he would become a poet in the spiritual world. Did he say that just to encourage beginners? Maybe. I do know, however, that by engaging in pure service to the spiritual master in this world, we will become eligible to go to the spiritual world. We will then play with Kṛṣṇa through this combination of endeavor and mercy.

This combination of endeavor and mercy is exemplified in the pastime of Mother Yaśodā binding Kṛṣṇa. She tried to tie Him to the grinding mortar, but the rope was always two fingers too short. Her endeavor was not enough. When Kṛṣṇa was moved and gave her His mercy, only then was she allowed to tie Him.

Another question devotees often ask about work is whether internal work is as valuable as external work. Prabhupāda said that there is no such thing as “external work” in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Everything a devotee does is internal, whether he is

washing pots or chanting *japa*. All devotional service is within the internal energy. If we conceive of things like building a temple or raising money as external because they are recognizable, tangible, and quantifiable work, then we may find ourselves trying to measure it against the internal work of deepening our *sādhana* or curbing our material desires. How can we say that one is more important than the other? Or perhaps we can say that—the internal work is more important because without an inner purity, the outer work remains on the platform of mixed devotional service. When we are purified, we will also do more “external” work.

¹ Lecture, Bombay, November 11, 1975.

² Morning walk, Teheran, August 12, 1976.

³ Lecture, London, September 13, 1973.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lecture, Los Angeles, August 17, 1972.

⁶ Lecture, Vṛndāvana, September 21, 1976.

⁷ Lecture, New Vrindavan, September 7, 1972.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bg. 18.7-11.

Twenty-eight

*sukhārthi cet tyajed vidyām
vidyārthi cet tyajet sukham
sukhārthinaḥ kuto vidyā
kuto vidyārthinaḥ sukham*

sukha-arthi—one who seeks happiness; *cet*—if; *tyajet*—one should give up; *vidyām*—[pursuit of] knowledge; *vidyā-arthi*—the seeker after knowledge; *cet*—if; *tyajet*—should give up; *sukham*—material happiness; *sukha-arthinaḥ*—for the seeker after happiness; *kutaḥ*—where is; *vidyā*—knowledge; *kutaḥ*—where is; *vidyā-arthinaḥ*—for the seeker after knowledge; *sukham*—material happiness.

TRANSLATION

If you want to make spiritual advancement, you should think that death will come in the next moment, but if you want to be materially happy, you should think you will never die.

COMMENTARY

Śrīla Prabhupāda once said that philosophy means to always keep death in front of you. Try to save yourself from birth and death.¹ Life's miseries are *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi*—birth, death, disease, and old age. An intelligent person always keeps these in mind. Furthermore, because of his Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he is not afraid of them. Prabhupāda says, "Death is coming, that's all right. What is wrong there? Provided he knows that after giving up his body I am going to Kṛṣṇa."² One who is not afraid of changing bodies is called *dhīra*. He is not disturbed even though there is cause for disturbance.

Cāṇakya's advice to the materialist is an ironic witticism. Material happiness is illusion. If one is so crazy as to try and enjoy material life, his best policy would be to forget about death. Of course, it's a false hope. Cāṇakya couldn't be seriously recommending it. Therefore, I say it's an ironic statement, presented with all deadpan seriousness.

A man who is told to think like that will automatically question, "Wait a minute, I *will* die."

"Well, you want to enjoy, don't you? Then better you forget about death and imagine you'll live forever." Cāṇakya is giving the materialist something impossible to think about, a false philosophy. A materialist is living in an illusory world. He needs a false philosophy to accompany him through it. It is hoped that the materialist will eventually realize that he would rather live by the truth than by a false doctrine.

What is most amazing, though, is that although it is a false hope, many people will grab onto it. They plan not to die. When death comes, they wonder where it came from and they realize their foolishness. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say that if a materialist accepts the facts of transmigration, he will shudder with fear. How can he face the truth that he will have to descend to the lower species and still continue to enjoy in this world? Therefore, the materialists prefer not to think about it at all. They prefer to think that transmigration is a concept discussed in some foreign religions, and that it has neither basis in truth nor any relevance.

No one is independent of the fourfold miseries of birth, death, disease, and old age. No one is able to solve these problems with more material life. Kṛṣṇa consciousness, however, can bring relief from these insurmountable problems. Prabhupāda told a large audience in South Africa, "So we are pushing on this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to solve the ultimate problems of life. Our request is that you take to the Kṛṣṇa

consciousness movement very seriously to solve the ultimate problems of life.”³

To live in the consciousness that death can come at any moment takes strength of mind. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa helps us to develop this realization more. For example, some devotees have had near-death experiences and many of us have known someone who has died. These events sober us. We can look around ourselves and see the signs of passing time and impending death. The *sāstras* are full of examples, but even right around us, we can look in the mirror and see the signs of old age coming on. We can watch the changing seasons and notice the birth, death, disease, and old age in the natural world. These phenomena can remind us of our own inevitable death.

The existential philosophers also face the inevitability of death, but because they are atheists, they have to face that inevitability as meaningless. Prabhupāda used to say death is a matter of fact, and for a devotee, going to Kṛṣṇa at death is also a matter of fact. The *sāstras* teach this and we can have faith in it because it is the truth. The atheist existentialist has faith in his doctrine, as taught by writers like Sartre and Camus. These philosophers teach that everything is absurd. The existentialist thinks that philosophy is better and more profound than any religious understanding. Such philosophers follow their “gurus” into absurdity and often suicide. Devotees follow Kṛṣṇa, who says that life does have meaning in the spiritual world. While the existentialist has realized something about the illusory nature of the material world, his philosophy leaves him hopeless. This is not the kind of meditation a devotee aspires for. Our facing death has to deepen our faith in and taking shelter of Kṛṣṇa.

¹ Morning walk, San Francisco, July 18, 1975.

² Lecture, Vṛndāvana, September 15, 1976.

³ Lecture, Durban, October 11, 1975.

Twenty-nine

*aho bata vicitrāṇi
caritrāṇi mahātmanām
lakṣmīm tṛṇāya manyante
tad-bhāreṇa namanti ca*

aho bata—how wonderful; *vicitrāṇi*—amazing; *caritrāṇi*—characteristics; *mahā-ātmanām*—of great souls; *lakṣmīm*—wealth; *tṛṇāya*—like a straw; *manyante*—consider; *tat*—of that; *bhāreṇa*—the burden; *namanti*—bow; *ca*—and.

TRANSLATION

How wonderful is the character of great personalities. They do not care much for wealth, but accept it as a burden of responsibility.

COMMENTARY

Prahlāda Mahārāja, Bhiṣmadeva, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, and many great Vedic kings were rich, but they engaged their money in Kṛṣṇa's service. The principle of receiving wealth in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is described in the story of Sudāmā Brāhmaṇa, who received his great wealth directly from Kṛṣṇa. In describing this pastime in the Kṛṣṇa book, Prabhupāda tells us that the Supreme Lord does not often give wealth to His devotees, even when the devotees ask for it. "Because a devotee in an immature stage of devotion may, if offered great opulence, fall from his position due to being in the material world, the Lord does not offer opulence to him. This is another manifestation of the causeless mercy of the Lord upon His devotee. His first interest is that the devotee may not fall."¹

Prabhupāda goes on to say that Kṛṣṇa is like a well-wishing father who won't give money to an immature son, but if he sees that the son is mature and knows how to spend money, then he will give him the whole treasury house. Sudāmā was given so much wealth that this once-poor *brāhmaṇa* could not even recognize his former home since everything was transformed into palatial opulence. When he saw this transformation, Sudāmā accepted it as Kṛṣṇa's mercy.

The learned *brāhmaṇa* thus concluded that whatever opulences he had received from the Lord should not be used for his extravagant sense gratification, but for the service of the Lord. The *brāhmaṇa* accepted his newly acquired opulence, but he did so in the spirit of renunciation, unattached to sense gratification, and thus he lived very peacefully with his wife, enjoying all the facility of the opulence as *prasādam* of the Lord.

We should follow in Sudāmā Brāhmaṇa's footsteps. If by Kṛṣṇa's grace, we obtain wealth—money, fame, power, education, beauty, or renunciation—we should consider them gifts from Kṛṣṇa and use them for His service. "Material opulence can be the cause of degradation and also the cause of elevation, according to the purposes for which it is used."²

The Vaiṣṇava scriptures describe that the devotees of demigods usually become rich, whereas the devotees of Viṣṇu usually remain poor. This does not mean that one has to be materially poor in order to be a Vaiṣṇava. Bali Mahārāja was extremely wealthy—he owned the three worlds—but he offered everything he owned to Vāmanadeva, the Lord's incarnation as a dwarf *brāhmaṇa*. In return, Lord Viṣṇu gave Bali Mahārāja rulership over an entire planet. In the conclusion of that pastime, the Supreme Lord explained to Lord Brahmā, "If the human being is born in an aristocratic family or a higher status of life, if he performs wonderful activities, if he is youthful, if he has personal beauty, a good education and good

wealth, and if he is nonetheless not proud of his opulences, it is to be understood that he is especially favored by the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”³

In his purport, Prabhupāda writes, “The conclusion is that one’s being deprived of his wealth is not to be considered the special mercy of the Lord. If one continues in his opulent position, but does not become unnecessarily proud, falsely thinking that he is the proprietor of everything, this is the Lord’s special mercy.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda goes on to make the distinction between material opulence achieved because of devotional service and that which is earned with another motive. “The Supreme Personality of Godhead never takes away material opulences achieved because of devotional service, although He sometimes takes away opulences achieved by pious activities. He does this to make a devotee prideless or put him in a better position in devotional service. If especially a devotee is meant for preaching, but does not give up his family life or material opulences to take to the service of the Lord, the Lord surely takes away his material opulence and establishes him in devotional service. Thus the pure devotee becomes fully engaged in propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”⁴

As a pure devotee can use money in the Lord’s service without becoming contaminated, so he can use education. “If he is educated, he tries to apply his educational qualification in describing Kṛṣṇa by so many literatures, so many publications. That is the proper use, *svanuṣṭhitasya dharmasya, saṁsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam*. . . . The test is when you will see that you have engaged your learning in the service of Kṛṣṇa, then it is successful.”⁵

¹ Kṛṣṇa, Volume 3, Chapter 12, p. 82.

² Ibid.

³ Bhāg. 8.22.26.

⁴ Bhāg. 8.22.28, purport.

⁵ Lecture, Montreal, July 12, 1968.

Thirty

*śarīrasya guṇānām ca
dūram atyantam antaram
śarīram kṣaṇa-vidhvamsi
kalpānta-sthāyino guṇāḥ*

śarīrasya—of the body; *guṇānām*—of [one's] qualities; *ca*—and; *dūram*—far [apart]; *atyantam*—exceedingly; *antaram*—between these two; *śarīram*—the body; *kṣaṇa*—in a moment; *vidhvamsi*—destroyed; *kalpa-anta*—up to the end of the millenium; *sthāyinaḥ*—remaining; *guṇāḥ*—qualities.

TRANSLATION

There is a gulf of difference between the temporary body and one's good qualities. The body may be destroyed in the blink of an eye, while one's reputation lives forever.

COMMENTARY

Śaṅkarācārya, Lord Caitanya, and Jesus Christ are all examples of persons who lived short lives, "but their philosophy and God consciousness is so important, they are still living."¹ That means that their activities are proclaimed by their glorious reputations. Lord Kṛṣṇa also advised Arjuna not to behave in a way in which he would lose his reputation. Of course, Arjuna's fame is not due to material heroism, but because he is Lord Kṛṣṇa's dear friend. Kṛṣṇa warned Arjuna, however, not to risk his reputation by not fighting in the battle of Kurukṣetra.

Each of the *mahājanas* and other great devotees whose histories are described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* acted in such a way that they live forever through their glorious activities.

“The transcendental activities of Dhruva Mahārāja are well-known all over the world and they are very pure. In childhood, Dhruva Mahārāja rejected all kinds of toys and playthings, left the protection of his mother, and seriously took shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu.”² In the purport to this verse, Prabhupāda writes:

It is said by Cāṇakya Paṇḍita that life is certainly short for everyone, but if one acts properly, his reputation will remain for generations. As the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is everlastingly famous, so the reputation of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s devotee is also everlasting. Therefore, in describing Dhruva Mahārāja’s activities, two specific words have been used—*vikhyāta*, very famous, and *viśuddha*, transcendental. Dhruva Mahārāja’s leaving home at a tender age and taking shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the forest is a unique example in this world.

In contrast to these great human beings who lived short lives, a tree may live for thousands of years. Since the tree displays no transcendental qualities, however, its long life is not much use. The *Bhāgavatam* declares, “What is the value of a prolonged life which is wasted in experience by years in this world? Better a moment of full consciousness, because that gives one a start in searching after his supreme interest.”³

Good reputation does not refer merely to being remembered for a few centuries for one’s good works in the world. A devotee, however, may continue to benefit others if he leaves behind him something that will continue after his death. For example, if a devotee builds a temple for devotees to live in or writes books that future generations may read and become Kṛṣṇa conscious because of, he will both be remembered and benefited in that way. Of course, there is a difference between a non-liberated devotee’s work and a liberated devotee’s work. In the case of the non-liberated devotee, the soul goes and starts a new set of

activities, but by the intricate laws of cause and effect, he will continue to receive the benefits from that service he left in his previous life.

The great *ācāryas*, of course, don't need the credit deposited into their Kṛṣṇa conscious bank accounts because they are already liberated. We hear how sages cross the ocean of birth and death in a boat, but miraculously leave the boat on the far shore for us to follow in. The boat is their instructions, and although the *ācāryas* have gone back to Godhead, we follow them by following their instructions. In either case, whatever works a devotee performs that last into posterity are always beneficial both to himself and to those who come after him. That is another example of the Vaiṣṇavas' mercy.

"Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says that the duration of the life will surely end, we know not when. But *kalpānta-sthāyino gunāḥ*, if you are Kṛṣṇa conscious, then your spiritual qualification will continue to eternity."⁴ Thus the short human life can be used for going back to Godhead. This is the ultimate goal, and whoever gains it will always be remembered by pious persons, and he himself will enjoy the supreme bliss of serving Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world.

From this *śloka*, we can also understand that devotees should help establish and maintain Śrīla Prabhupāda's reputation in this world. In one sense, we can say that Prabhupāda's reputation is not dependent on us. His greatness will stand regardless of what we do or what mistakes we have made after his disappearance.

I remember once reading an article praising the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in India. At the end of the article, the author wrote, "However, only God knows what will happen in the future." Prabhupāda told us we should take this as a warning. He said this author was giving us a "God-given warning." I asked Prabhupāda whether the author doubted that Prabhupāda's disciples would stay with him and Prabhupāda said that even

if all his present disciples left, his books would bring new devotees.

Book distribution, therefore, is an important way to ensure that people will know Prabhupāda in the future. From this exchange, I realized better that Prabhupāda's greatness doesn't depend on our being faithful to him. His books are so powerful that they will make devotees on their own.

I also realized that although Prabhupāda's reputation does not ultimately depend on his disciples' activities, his disciples should think that it does. We should be good sons, so that we can make the entire forest aromatic.

And it does appear that by our activities, we can spoil ISKCON's reputation. Lord Caitanya is eternally famous. People will always benefit from His *saṅkīrtana* movement and His teachings, but it is said that a few hundred years after His disappearance, people no longer honored His movement because of the *sahajīyās* misinterpretation of it. People came to think that Lord Caitanya's movement was a cheap excuse for sex. It wasn't until Bhaktivinoda Thākura and others took birth that the movement was revived. Therefore, it is true that the movement can become covered by misunderstanding and bogus followers. Śrīla Prabhupāda's reputation will remain stainless, but it can appear covered by our insincere or erroneous preaching.

¹ Lecture, Boston, May 8, 1968.

² *Bhāg.* 4.12.52.

³ *Bhāg.* 2.1.12.

⁴ Lecture, San Francisco, March 8, 1967.

Thirty-one

*dhanikaḥ śrotriyo rājā
nadi vaidyas tu pañcamah
pañca yatra na vidyante
na tatra divasam vaset*

dhanikaḥ—a wealthy man (who can lend money); *śrotriyaḥ*—the learned *brāhmaṇa*; *rājā*—a king (good government); *nadi*—a river; *vaidyaḥ*—doctor; *tu*—but; *pañcamah*—fifth; *pañca*—these five; *yatra*—where; *na*—not; *vidyante*—there are; *na*—do not; *tatra*—there; *divasam*—one day; *vaset*—live.

TRANSLATION

Don't live for even one day in a place that doesn't have these five: a moneylender, a learned *brāhmaṇa*, a king, a river, and a doctor.

COMMENTARY

In his writing and talks referring to this verse, Prabhupāda concentrated only on the river, the friend, the Deity and the *dhāma*. In modern society, people favor great cities for their amenities, but don't usually look for the ones mentioned here. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Cities and towns does not mean big, big slaughterhouse, cinema, brothel, and factories and all dirty things. This is not mentioned. Here Kuntidevī says, '*ime jana-padāḥ svṛddhāḥ supakvaṇṣadhi-virudhaḥ*.' She never said, 'These towns and cities are flourishing on account of having so many industries, slaughterhouses, brothels, cinema, clubs, night-clubs.' Not like that. There was no such thing in those days. These are modern inventions to make the whole world hellish."¹

Śrīla Prabhupāda often spoke of the importance of rivers, both materially and spiritually, and how he personally witnessed that almost all the world's rivers had become polluted. "They cannot keep clean because they have got so many dirty activities, enterprises, mills and factories. In Calcutta also. There are so many jute mills and factories on the riverside. All the night soil is thrown into the Ganges. But still the Ganges is so powerful that it keeps clear. Hundreds and thousands of people still take bath in the Ganges and they keep very good health."² Prabhupāda also praised the idyllic village life in India where people live on the bank of a river and bathe in it, consider it holy, and use it as transportation.

In the last few years, a controversy has arisen about the actual safety of bathing in the Ganges and the Yamunā. Sometimes devotees feel their faith tested as to whether they should bathe for spiritual purification or avoid it for health reasons. Those who are raising the controversy are scientists and environmentalists, and my response to them is that if the river is so dirty that it shouldn't be bathed in, then they should clean it. Everyone should take it seriously that such a sacred river has been polluted by the jute mills or other factories.

We have even heard reports that the government may be building factories along the river banks on purpose to discourage religion. Whether this is true or not, I don't know, but it wouldn't be so strange that atheists and secularists were purposely polluting a sacred river.

Whoever has a feeling for Vedic culture should clean the rivers. There has already been some work done in this regard, although the effort is almost fruitless in relation to the amount of dirt and contamination being pumped into them.

Beyond that, devotees can have faith that the river maintains its spiritual identity, regardless of how it is desecrated. To continue bathing in the river does take faith. It is similar

to having faith in the pure nature of *prasādam*. Acting without faith may cause us to get sick, even if we have an objective understanding of the river (or the *prasādam*'s purity). If devotees find that they cannot enter the river, they should at least honor the river by taking water on their heads. Those who are more daring will swim in it and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

According to the Indian system, when one tours or travels, he always visits temples and rivers. The two go together. Almost all the holy places in India are on the banks of the Ganges, Yamunā, or other sacred rivers. If one is serious about human life, then his friends also live in holy places on the riversides. One travels to see them and to share spiritual life, not to associate with nondevotees and nasty places.

Kṛṣṇa conscious preachers may travel and reside anywhere in the world, even where there is no river or even before a temple is established in the town. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was more interested in sending devotees to big cities like Bombay, rather than sending them to ideal places in the countryside. The devotee, therefore, lives in unattractive places out of compassion. He wants to tend to the spiritual needs of the congested population. In this way, a devotee may see the crowded city life as favorable—for preaching.

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself set this example. He left the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana, which is situated on the bank of the Yamunā and surrounded by the best friends, the Vraja-vāsīs. He went alone to America, where the rivers, city life, and people were all contaminated. By his compassionate example, we are now able to understand higher values and to seek out residence in a temple, to take advantage of the holy rivers, and to know who are our true friends in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

A river is holy because Kṛṣṇa or an incarnation of Viṣṇu had pastimes there. For example, Kṛṣṇa played in the Yamunā with the cowherd boys and the *gopīs*. Lord Caitanya played and

bathed in the Ganges and in other sacred rivers in India. Now that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has spread all over the world, can devotees have spiritual feelings toward any Western rivers? Can the rivers that have had some significance in ISKCON's activities be considered holy? For example, the Tuscarora creek near Gitā-nāgarī has been the scene of many devotees' meditations and has also watered Dāmodara's cows. Is it sentimental to think of this creek as holy?

Śrīla Prabhupāda always entered the spirit of turning the Western ISKCON temples and farms into *dhāmas*. He approved of us naming our temples after places in Vṛndāvana and even named some of them himself. There are now numerous lakes and ponds named Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa in the West, and many hills called Govardhana. Giving the *dhāmas* names has been part of the spiritualization of the land. Also, all the activities that are performed there are Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is what constitutes a *dhāma*.

Still, I don't think we can equate the Tuscarora creek with the Yamunā river, where Kṛṣṇa actually walked and performed His pastimes, and where devotees have performed their *bhajana* for thousands of years. When the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement goes on and on through thousands of years, as we hope it will in this material world, then perhaps devotees will be performing *bhajana* on the banks of the Tuscarora creek for thousands of years and it may become more spiritual. Prabhupāda did say, however, that New Vrindavan was as good as Vṛndāvana. Then he said, "Actually it is better because there are no Māyāvādis living there."

Despite the disqualification of Western places as eternal *dhāmas*, they can still be potent places where the Deity is installed and where there are friends gathered in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

¹ Lecture, Māyāpur, October 20, 1974.

² Ibid.

Thirty-two

daridra-doṣo guṇa-rāṣi-nāṣi

daridra-doṣaḥ—the fault of poverty; *guṇa-rāṣi*—of all one's good qualities; *nāṣi*—the destroyer.

TRANSLATION

One may have many good qualities, but poverty destroys them all.

COMMENTARY

As we have already discussed, the condemnation of poverty is a material consideration. There is an American expression, "If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?" It is an almost universal estimation that money is desirable and those who have it are in the best position. Money is also important to those who are trying to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda used to say, "No one will listen to a poor man." He said that if he advertised that A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami was going to give a lecture under a tree in a certain field, hardly anyone would come. Therefore, he constructed beautiful temples, especially in India, where the public would be pleased to come and worship Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was aware that Westerners are prejudiced against Indians, regarding India as a beggar's nation and her people crippled by poverty. He proposed a combination of the spiritual qualities of India with the material advantages of the West. "A country like America has got relatively great wealth, but poor spiritual vision. India, through Vedic literature and a tradition of saintly life, has great spiritual vision. But she is now poor due to invasion from foreigners over

centuries. So the two countries can be compared to a blind man and a crippled man. On their own, each of those are severely handicapped. But if the crippled man gets up on the shoulders of the blind man they can walk together and share their abilities. With the wisdom of spiritual India, and the wealth of America, Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be spread effectively all over the world.”¹

Poverty often drives one to low consciousness and sinful activity, such as stealing. It forces one to be fully concerned with material survival. Sometimes, however, poor people are more able to detach themselves from opulence and wealth and become more dependent on God. Poverty is just the opposite of wealth, so while a poor person may be driven to steal, a rich person may be more inclined to cheat out of greed for more wealth.

Nārada Muni spoke in favor of poverty when he saw Nalakūvera and Maṇigrīva acting shamelessly before him. He said that a person in the material world who is favored by wealth generally becomes addicted to intoxication, sex, and gambling. Wealthy people generally become merciless, which leads to killing animals in the slaughterhouse. Prabhupāda draws the distinction between a rich man and a poor man as follows: a rich man identifies strongly with his body and his sinful activity. A poor man, however, is able to see himself in relation to other bodies. “A poor man often does not wish to inflict injuries to other bodies because he can understand more readily that when he himself is injured he feels pain.”

A person who has a pinprick in his body does not wish others to be pricked by pins; a considerate man in the life of poverty does not wish others to be also put into that condition. Generally, it is seen that one who has risen from a poverty-stricken life and becomes wealthy creates some charitable institution at the end of his life so that other poverty-stricken men might be benefited. In short, a compassionate poor man may consider others’

pains and pleasure with empathy. A poor man may be seldom puffed with false pride, and he may be freed from all kinds of infatuation. He may remain satisfied by whatever he gets for his maintenance by the grace of the Lord.²

Nārada Muni also says that poverty is an austerity, and therefore, *brāhmaṇas* generally keep themselves in an impoverished condition “to save themselves from the false prestige of material opulence.” Because a poor man usually does not have enough to eat, his senses will not be strong and he will therefore not be inclined toward violence.

A poor man has a simple dwelling. A saintly person is able to visit him there and bestow mercy upon him. It is very difficult to enter a rich man’s house. We see in the West the “Beware of Dog” signs or the “No Trespassing” signs. Wealthy people often don’t want to see saintly people.

We have seen throughout the monastic Christian tradition how monks and nuns accept voluntary vows of poverty. St. Francis of Assisi worshipped poverty personified and began his religious order based on poverty and charity.

In our devotional service, we can both transcend our material condition—whether we are blessed with wealth or with poverty—and be sensitive to the needs and apparent limitations poor nondevotees feel. Śrīla Prabhupāda set the example in his own life of being transcendental to both poverty and wealth. He came to America with the equivalent of eight dollars in his pocket. Later, he was wealthy, as the Founder-Ācārya of a worldwide preaching movement. Whether poor or rich, however, he remained humble and pure and focused on giving the world Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Neither was he concerned with the material condition of those to whom he preached. He made Kṛṣṇa consciousness accessible to everyone, regardless of their bank account.

Devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement need not be overwhelmed either by poverty or by wealth. Better they re-

main simple and pure, as Prabhupāda did, in the face of either condition. Once, a temple president approached Prabhupāda and told him that he was going to purchase a big building for a temple. He described to Prabhupāda how high the mortgage payments would be and what other money would have to be spent in order to purchase the building. Prabhupāda was happy to hear the plans, but he told the temple president not to “purchase anxiety.”

It’s not necessarily true that if devotees are really favored by Kṛṣṇa, we will have money and facility. Kṛṣṇa may not give us great wealth to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Therefore, we can simply try our best with whatever we have been given. There is no point trying to analyze what *aparādh*as we must have committed to have become impoverished.

People come to our temples for spiritual instruction. If the devotees’ main focus is on moneymaking, it may affect the preaching. Many temples are trying to reach a stage where they are supported by their congregational members, but that stage may or may not be reached. Regardless, devotees can accept whatever they have been given, whether wealth or poverty, and preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the best of their ability. When money does come, we should be careful to use it in Kṛṣṇa’s service.

As a devotee should remain transcendental to wealth, so a devotee should become transcendental to, and not distracted by, poverty. We shouldn’t fanatically avoid wealth or material opulence. Prabhupāda taught us Rūpa Gosvāmī’s principle of *yukta-vairāgya*. In the history of Vaiṣṇavism, sages and saints have avoided any material opulence or wealth so as not to become entangled in the material world. There were rules: a renunciate shouldn’t wear any cloth that was sewn, a renunciate shouldn’t ride in a motorized vehicle, he shouldn’t cross the ocean, he should eat only what can be held in the palm of one hand, etc.

Śrīla Prabhupāda set a different example for us. He employed material amenities in Kṛṣṇa's service to further the preaching mission. Following the rules of renunciation may be useful for culturing purity, but Śrīla Prabhupāda demonstrated that we could remain pure while accepting amenities. Prabhupāda accepted this standard from his own spiritual master. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura reasoned that devotees should get the best things. Why should the non-devotees have the best buildings for their sense gratification and the devotees worship Kṛṣṇa in a hut? Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī also rode in a car and used printing presses. Devotees should understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's example and preach with the facility he has authorized for us.

If a devotee wants to personally accept a simpler standard, that is also all right. It may even be that a group of devotees who are more oriented toward accepting poverty come together in a community. They wouldn't necessarily be saying that everyone has to follow their standard or that they are against Prabhupāda's big temples, but there are instances where a simple standard is appropriate. For example, Prabhupāda advised Yamunā dāśī to accept a simple standard when she and some other women wanted to form a women's community. Prabhupāda told them not to do anything "grotesque." He said that we make a show of opulence to attract the public, but a devotee is satisfied with simple living and high thinking.

Often, however, Prabhupāda made the opposite statement. He said devotees should (and do) have everything. These statements show us a picture of a community where Prabhupāda was happy living with his disciples and liked to see them have nice things, such as 108 rose bushes for Kṛṣṇa, a clean temple, a chandelier, a pure leader. He said that in such a situation, devotees could use everything in Kṛṣṇa's service and not become contaminated by whatever opulence was being given.

He often asked why it was so difficult for people to accept the principle that they have a certain quota of opulence according to their karma. People are rich or poor regardless of their endeavor due to past sinful or pious activities. People think this philosophy is fatalistic. They think it promotes laziness and underdevelopment. They blame India's poverty on this fatalistic attitude. Of course, India is not spiritually poor. Prabhupāda explains that their material poverty is due to punishment from God for giving up Vedic culture. The Vedic culture has been lost because so many foreigners have invaded and conquered and overruled India with their own culture. Therefore, India has lost her material wealth and is fast losing her spiritual wealth as well. The Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy does not teach fatalism. It focuses on spiritual wealth as opposed to material wealth, and encourages people to work hard to attain eternal life rather than more tenure in the cycle of birth and death.

¹ Room conversation, Hyderabad, August 19, 1976.

² Kṛṣṇa, Volume 1, Chapter 10, p. 69.

Thirty-three

putrāṁś ca śiṣyāṁś ca

putrān—sons; *ca*—and; *śiṣyān*—disciples; *ca*—also.

TRANSLATION

Both the son and the disciple are equally eligible for the father's [guru's] hereditary rights.

COMMENTARY

Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned this *śloka* at least once, in describing the two kinds of disciplic succession, seminal and spiritual.

Formerly the spiritual master, the disciplic succession, there are two ways. One is called *śaukra* and another is called *śrautra*. *Saukra* means succession, means a seminal succession, like the son. . . . And the disciple is born by Vedic knowledge. . . . *Śrautra* means by hearing. In India there are still *gotras*. *Gotras* means coming from great sages. Our family belonged to the Gautama-gotra, from Gautama Ṛṣi. Similarly, disciplic succession is also *gotra*. There is no difference between *putra* and *chatra*. *Putra* means son and *chatra* means disciple. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says, *putrāṁś ca śiṣyāṁś ca*, they are equally treated. Both of them equally eligible for hereditary rites either he is son or disciple. Lord Brahmā distributed knowledge to some. . . . Practically everyone was a son because he was the first living creature. Later on, disciples also. In this way, Brahmā distributed Vedic knowledge, some to his sons, some to his disciples. So that is the process of disseminating Vedic knowledge."¹

More often, Śrīla Prabhupāda would describe the spiritual disciplic succession as superior to the seminal one. For example, those who claim to be seminal descendants of Lord Nityānanda are not accepted by the spiritual *paramparā*. At least no one can claim that because he is the seminal son of a great person, he therefore automatically inherits spiritual wisdom. Spiritual wisdom is not a birthright, not a matter of being a “caste *gosvāmi*.” The disciplic succession of spiritual masters is not one of sons and fathers, but of spiritual masters and disciples, of *dikṣā* and *śikṣā* relationships. Someone who wishes to claim his birthright as a son or disciple of a sage has to actually hear about Kṛṣṇa and practice *sādhana* under his direction. Then he can be a “spiritual son” in *paramparā*.

When the *varṇāśrama* system is perfectly intact, and society at large is in the mode of goodness, then it is more possible to equate seminal lines with disciplic lines. The father and mother are supposed to act as gurus for their children, but if one is not so fortunate as to have enlightened parents, then it is his duty to find a spiritual father who will accept him as a spiritual son. (This is the duty even of a person with enlightened parents. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was sent out by his father, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, to take shelter of Gaurakīśora dāsa Bābājī. Both Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda sought out gurus despite the fact that their fathers were pure devotees.) When I first met Śrīla Prabhupāda, I gradually began to understand that he was my true father. I wrote him a letter asking whether this was the proper way to look at my relationship with him. Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “Yes, I have accepted you as my eternal son, etc., etc. Spiritual master is the real father, the other father is ephemeral.” Śrīla Prabhupāda also said that he felt his disciples were his real children and that we were serving him much better than the children he had fathered in his family life.

For a materialist, “hereditary rites” means that they want to inherit their father’s property. Disciples are not interested in taking advantage of their spiritual father in that way. Rather, they prefer to inherit the burden of their spiritual master’s mission. Śrīla Prabhupāda asked his Guru Mahārāja only one question: “How can I serve you?” This is the difference between the material and spiritual attitudes in the father-son relationship. Ideally, both relationships can be spiritual and thus the son and the disciple can be equal recipients of the spiritually advanced father’s mercy.

A devotee also has a relationship with the Supreme Father, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa says that anyone who remembers Him, while patiently waiting for the Lord’s mercy, becomes the rightful heir to liberation.² Every *jīva* has an inherent right to go back to Godhead, and this verse gives the formula for all of us to claim our inheritance. The word *dāya-bhāk* means the right is ours by inheritance. Therefore, a person who remains submissive to Kṛṣṇa despite the reverses in his life, and who goes on worshipping Kṛṣṇa without resentment, receives the right to go back to Godhead automatically. This verse sets the standard for what we may inherit from our guru or father, and this is what the father or guru should stock up for his disciples so that they can claim their full inheritance when they become qualified. Otherwise, a father or guru should not have sons or disciples.

¹ Lecture, Los Angeles, July 8, 1971.

² *Bhāg.* 10.14.8.

Thirty-four

ari-prayatnam abhisamikṣate

ari—of an enemy; *prayatnam*—the effort; *abhisamikṣate*—watch carefully.

TRANSLATION

Don't look on enemies with lenience. Always think of them as dangerous.

COMMENTARY

Those who are against Kṛṣṇa consciousness (*āsuram bhāvam*) sometimes regard devotees as dangerous, even if there are but a small number of devotees in the world. King Kāṁsa's demoniac aides warned him in this way. When Kāṁsa experienced a change of heart and released his sister Devakī and Vasudeva from prison, Kāṁsa's assistants became depressed. They instructed Kāṁsa that he should retaliate against all devotees. They told Kāṁsa that they had nothing to fear even from great demigods like Lord Śiva, Lord Brahmā, or Lord Indra, because even Lord Viṣṇu was hiding Himself in the hearts of the living entities and could not obstruct their plans:

Therefore, you have nothing to fear from all these demigods. But we must not neglect them, for the demigods are our determined enemies. We must be careful to protect ourselves. To root them out from their very existence, we should just engage ourselves in your service and be always ready for your command.

. . . If there is some disease in the body which is neglected, it becomes incurable. Similarly, when one is not careful about restraining the senses and lets them loose, it is very difficult

to control them at all. Therefore, we must always be very careful of the demigods before they get too strong to be subdued.¹

Few devotees remain unafraid when powerful forces look upon them as dangerous. Śrīla Prabhupāda advised his disciples to go on preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to depend on Kṛṣṇa, despite opposition. While Śrīla Prabhupāda was preparing his translation and commentaries for the Tenth Canto, the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement was facing opposition from the anti-cult movement in the West and from envious persons in India who were obstructing the building of the Bombay temple. Prabhupāda's thoughts turned to his own movement, even while he prepared the commentaries on Kāṁsa's persecution of Devakī and Vasudeva. Prabhupāda even compared himself to Vasudeva, who became fearful that Kāṁsa might try to kill the newborn baby, Kṛṣṇa.

As Kāṁsa was not expected to kill the beautiful child of Devakī and Vasudeva, the uncivilized society, although unhappy about the advancement of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, cannot be expected to stop it. We must face many difficulties in many different ways. Although Kṛṣṇa cannot be killed, Vasudeva, as the father of Kṛṣṇa, was trembling, because in affection he felt that Kāṁsa would immediately come and kill his son. Similarly, although the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and Kṛṣṇa are not different and no *asuras* can check it, we are afraid that at any moment the *asuras* can stop this movement in any part of the world.²

Prabhupāda's fear was not material, but similar to Vasudeva's parental ecstasy in his anxiety to protect Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda informed us that since the beginning of creation, the demons and the devotees have opposed each other. The devotees don't see anyone as their enemies, but "the *asuras*

perpetually struggle to persecute the Vaiṣṇavas because they do not want Vaiṣṇavism to spread.”³

I remember another incident where Prabhupāda showed his fear for ISKCON in a mood of parental ecstasy. This happened at 26 Second Avenue. One boy, Don, used to sleep in the temple. He never got initiated and after awhile, he stopped coming. Then one day, he came back with marijuana in his pocket. He was telling the devotees about it. One of the more innocent, younger boys, who had never smoked marijuana, went up and told Prabhupāda that Don was downstairs and that he had marijuana with him. He also told Prabhupāda how Don and Gargamuni had argued and that Don hit Gargamuni in the face. When Prabhupāda heard all this, he said he would be right down and he would hit Don in the face. Prabhupāda was angry. He wanted to protect his son from this man’s attack. He also wanted to protect his fledgling movement from any possible legal implications arising from people coming into the storefront with illegal drugs. He told us we should not let Don back into the temple. Prabhupāda was so liberal about who could come to the temple—he even let bums come in—but he did not want Don there with his marijuana and his violence.

Prabhupāda was powerful in the face of opposition because he was able to remember Kṛṣṇa at all times. Devotees may be naturally afraid of powerful demons and what they may do, but anxiety over the demons should not replace Kṛṣṇa in our thoughts. In the prayers to Lord Nṛsimhadeva, different demigods came forward to speak. One group of demigods said that due to Hiraṇyakaśipu’s influence, their minds were filled with him instead of Viṣṇu. “Now that You have killed him, You can take Your place in our minds again.” We should not let our minds become absorbed in this way. We may assess an enemy’s strength and realize the danger, but then we have to turn to Kṛṣṇa. We certainly wouldn’t want to be thinking of our enemies at the time of death instead of Kṛṣṇa.

Devotees can also face our common enemies together. Sometimes it is said that the best unifying force is a common enemy. A common enemy can draw the devotees together, despite their differences. We saw that happen during the days when the anti-cultists were more actively attacking the movement. Devotees realized that they were children of the same spiritual master. They should give up their quarreling and join forces.

If we could always see the common enemy in the form of time and death, it would help us not to look at each other as enemies. Prahlaḍa Mahārāja teaches that we shouldn't have the philosophy of friends or enemies. If a devotee thinks that another devotee is his enemy, then that will hurt the preaching. We are one family. We may have different opinions about how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness and how to be devotees, but those opinions are not in themselves bad. Prabhupāda gave the example that there may be different political parties in a nation, but ideally they will have the same goal, the betterment of the nation. When politicizing becomes too intense or prominent in ISKCON, it becomes disruptive. Certainly devotees should not apply this verse to mean that they shouldn't be lenient with their "enemy" Godbrothers.

Like a general on the battlefield, and with all the assurance of a pure devotee aware of Kṛṣṇa's protection, Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged us: "The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has started a brahminical civilization. Yet especially when it is introduced in the Western countries, the *asuras* try to impede it in many ways. Nonetheless we must push forward this movement tolerantly for the benefit of human society."⁴

¹ Kṛṣṇa, Volume 1, Chapter 4, p. 53.

² Bhāg. 10.3.22, purport.

³ Bhāg. 10.4.42, purport.

⁴ Bhāg. 10.4.41, purport.

Thirty-five

kṣama-rūpaṁ tapasvinam

kṣama—by forgiveness; *rūpaṁ*—in such form; *tapasvinam*—one who performs austerities.

TRANSLATION

The measure of an ascetic is his ability to forgive.

COMMENTARY

Forgiveness is the wealth of the *brāhmaṇa*. As a preacher, the devotee must forgive even those who are ungrateful and reject or oppose the spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda gives the example of Lord Jesus Christ, Haridāsa Ṭhākura, and Lord Nityānanda, who were all attacked by envious persons. “But still they were tolerant because their mission was to deliver the fallen souls. One of the qualifications of a *sādhū* is that he is very tolerant and he is merciful to all fallen souls.”¹

In this aphorism, Cāṇakya Paṇḍita brings together the words “forgiveness” and “austerity.” It is not easy to forgive our enemies. The material tendency is to fight back, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” Revenge is nonexistent in the heart of a pure soul. Even if he is angry, he will still be forgiving, as in the case of Nārada Muni, who became angry to see the sinful acts of Kuvera’s sons. Although Nārada cursed them, he cursed them in a merciful mood, and arranged to give them Kṛṣṇa’s *darśana* in Vṛndāvana.

If we practice austerity, but without forgiveness, then our austerities tend to make us more hardhearted. The best austerity, therefore, is to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a for-

giving and tolerant mood. Lord Caitanya says, “One should chant the holy name in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than a straw in the street. One should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and ready to offer all respects to others without expecting any respect for himself.”²

To a devotee, forgiveness can mean different things. It can mean forgiving wrongs committed against us, forgiving wrongs committed toward others, or forgiving wrongs committed toward the environment. It can also mean forgiving ourselves. If a devotee can forgive others, why can’t he forgive himself? The person we are most able to help in this world is ourselves. By forgiving others, we extend to them the opportunity to again practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. By forgiving ourselves, we extend the same opportunity to ourselves.

Someone may ask, however, whether forgiveness is always justified. Forgiveness is a saintly quality, but it doesn’t replace justice. A devotee shouldn’t hate people for their wrongs. Even though a devotee is forgiving, he may still have to administer punishment or act in a way that the wrongdoer may not appreciate. We may have to take that role on the order of guru or *sāstra*.

Forgiveness also means that we are willing to accept a person who has rectified back into our company. An all-forgiving attitude is therefore not contradictory to also administering justice. Forgiveness does not mean that we see all behavior as equal and ignore the difference between right and wrong. Even if we see that someone is wrong, however, and is prepared to act against us, we can still maintain a non-malicious attitude and be quick to forgive as soon as that person relents from his wrongdoing.

Prabhupāda says that a father is like that. As soon as the son relents, the father immediately forgives him. A father is always ready to forgive his son and accept him back under his

shelter. As long as the son is rebellious, however, the father cannot accommodate him in the name of forgiveness. He cannot let his son spend all his money and/or ruin his property.

Similarly, forgiveness cannot become an excuse to avoid taking a strong stand against the demons. Kṛṣṇa ordered Arjuna not to forgive Aśvatthāmā after he killed the five sleeping sons of Draupadī. Arjuna was willing to forgive him, but Kṛṣṇa ordered otherwise. Arjuna, the devotee, may forgive, but Kṛṣṇa does not forgive those who offend a devotee, although He is also ready to forgive when they give up their bad mentality.

When Durvāsā Muni offended Mahārāja Ambariṣa, Lord Viṣṇu sent His *sudarśana-cakra* to kill the offender. While Durvāsā Muni was fleeing throughout the universe, Mahārāja Ambariṣa was meditating on how Durvāsā was being tortured by the *cakra* and he wanted to forgive him so he could be free of the torture. When Durvāsā finally reached Lord Viṣṇu, the Lord told him he would have to beg forgiveness at Ambariṣa's feet. Ambariṣa was in such a forgiving mood that he offered Durvāsā whatever pious credits he had attained to save him from the *sudarśana-cakra*. Durvāsā Muni responded:

My dear King, today I have experienced the greatness of devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for although I have committed an offense, you have prayed for my good fortune. For those who have attained the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the master of the pure devotees, what is impossible to do, and what is impossible to give up? What is impossible for the servants of the Lord? By the very hearing of His holy name one is purified. O King, overlooking my offenses you have saved my life. Thus I am very much obliged to you because you are so merciful.³

Śrīla Prabhupāda exhibited his quality of forgiveness many times. He was the ideal spiritual father because he always forgave his wayward sons and daughters. I remember going to

see Prabhupāda once in India in 1977. I traveled with a devotee who had been a *sannyāsi* but had since given up the *sannyāsa-āśrama* and his *sādhana*, and was coming back to see Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda showed no recrimination toward him. He received that devotee nicely and invited him to stay with us. He told him it didn't matter whether he was a *sannyāsi* or a *gṛhastha*, just that he stay with us and practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

On another occasion, a devotee who had been gone for many years met with Prabhupāda and Prabhupāda sat and recalled the days they had spent together with him. He was in a sweet, accepting mood, and gradually his children were coming back.

¹ *Bhāg.* 3.25.21, purport.

² *Sikṣāṣṭakam*, Text 3.

³ *Bhāg.* 9.5.14–17.

Thirty-six

*dhanāni jivitaṁ caiva
parārthe prājña utsṛjet
san-nimittaṁ varam tyāgo
vināśe niyate sati¹*

dhanāni—riches; *jivitaṁ*—existence; *ca*—and; *eva*—certainly; *para-arthe*—for the Supreme; *prājñaḥ*—a wise man; *utsṛjet*—should abandon; *sat*—for the eternal; *nimittaṁ*—such a cause; *varam*—better; *tyāgaḥ*—renunciation; *vināśe*—destruction; *niyate*—being led to; *sati*—so it is.

TRANSLATION

Whatever one has in his possession had better be spent for the cause of *sat*, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because one cannot take his possessions with him at death.

COMMENTARY

This point is elaborated on by Lord Kapiladeva in the Third Canto chapter, “Description of Adverse Fruitive Activities.”

He goes alone to the darkest region of hell after quitting the present body, and the money he acquired by envying other living entities is the passage money with which he leaves this world.²

In the purport to this verse, Prabhupāda explains that when a man earns money by unfair means, and then maintains his family with that money, his family members enjoy the money, but the man goes to hell alone. His family members may get a little reaction for their father’s illicit activities, but the father will be especially punished.

The result of material enjoyment is that one takes with him the sinful reaction only, and not the money. The money he earned is left in this world and he takes only the reaction. In this world also, if a person acquires the money by murdering someone, the family is not hanged, although its members are sinfully contaminated. But the man who commits the murder and maintains his family is himself hanged as a murderer. The direct offender is more responsible for sinful activities than the indirect enjoyer. The great learned scholar, Cāṇakya Paṇḍita, says, therefore, that whatever one has in his possession had better be spent for the cause of *sat*, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because one cannot take his possessions with him. . . . The best use of money as long as it is within our possession is to spend it to acquire Kṛṣṇa consciousness.³

Devotees usually ask the following questions whenever moneymaking is discussed: how do we spend money in Kṛṣṇa consciousness? How much of our income should be spent on spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

These questions are important for anyone who has to maintain himself and his family, and yet at the same time, who wants to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. No one wants to become entangled in sinful reaction.

These important questions are details and can be worked out one way or another. First, we have to accept the truth of this *Niti-sāstra* verse. If we have a desire to free ourselves from the karma of keeping material possessions, we will find a way to free ourselves. The spiritual masters in disciplic succession are practical and don't make impossible demands on their householder disciples. Individually, devotees can decide how to divide their earnings according to their family's needs, their ability to save for emergencies, and the needs of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Rūpa Gosvāmī set the example for how to

divide our earnings when he left his government service and went to meet Lord Caitanya.

I had my first experience of sacrificing for an eternal purpose when I met Śrīla Prabhupāda. First, I purchased the three volumes of the First Canto from him. Later, I continued working at the welfare office and gave him all my earnings. I also donated whatever savings I had, about \$600. I was not rich when I met Prabhupāda, but I learned to give up whatever I had. Not only did I give up the money, but I gave away my dream of using the money to leave the squalor of New York City life and to move somewhere green, maybe an island off the Canadian coast, and write. As soon as I met Prabhupāda, I could see that he needed money, and gradually, I began to give him some of mine, twenty dollars here, forty dollars there. Finally, I took out the remaining savings—about \$400—and brought it all to him. Reflecting on that later, I wrote a little *haiku* poem:

My life saved,
I gave him
my ticket to hell.

How did I realize that I had just given away my ticket to hell? I had already learned from Prabhupāda that although I was saving money to fulfill a pleasant dream, following that dream would have entangled me in more karma. Before I met Prabhupāda, I spent most of my money on marijuana. Marijuana would have been available just as easily on my island paradise. After all, it was just another material location.

Other devotees have had similar experiences. One devotee, who was on the verge of an up-and-coming music career, gave up everything, including his money, and surrendered to his guru. Keeping the material assets would have meant plunging into more sinful life and away from Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Therefore, we gave our money to the guru and put it into our spiritual bank accounts.

Another question: this *śloka* states that we become sinfully contaminated by “enjoying money earned by envying others.” Does a devotee who accepts a donation from someone and then uses it to maintain his family in Kṛṣṇa’s service, become implicated in the donor’s reaction?

Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed in certain letters that he didn’t like devotees to use *sankīrtana* techniques to earn money to support themselves. I remember one example where a devotee was living in a town where there was no temple. He was going out collecting money by asking donations and keeping the money to maintain his household. Collecting donations is an authorized function. In some countries, ISKCON is registered as a charity; all our fund-raising is supervised by the state and has to be done only for religious purposes.

Aside from the state, we should avoid all dishonesty in our moneymaking. Donations are being collected in service to guru and Kṛṣṇa. They should be used one hundred percent in the guru’s preaching mission. Of course, devotees may solicit donations to support themselves if they speak openly about why they want the money. If someone is sympathetic to a devotee and offers to give him or her some maintenance money, then it is all right to accept such donations, but no one should lie and say that the money is for ISKCON if it is not.

Someone may also ask what Lord Kapila means when he says “money earned by envying others.” Isn’t all money earned at the expense of others?

The *Bhagavad-gītā* says that all work is covered by fault. “Every endeavor is covered by some fault, just as fire is covered by smoke. Therefore one should not give up the work born of his nature, O son of Kuntī, even if such work is full of fault.”⁴⁴ The *kṣatriya* may have to kill. The *vaiśya* may have to lie to hide his profit or to deal on the black market. The *brāhmaṇa* may have

to sacrifice an animal. A *sūdra* may have to serve a bad master and engage in wrong actions in that service. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his purport to this verse:

... one should be determined to serve the Supreme Lord by his occupational duty in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is the perfectional point. When a particular type of occupation is performed for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord, all the defects in that particular occupation are purified. When the results of work are purified, when connected with devotional service, one becomes perfect in seeing the self within, and that is self-realization.

Devotees should be careful to work according to their natures. They shouldn't take on grossly sinful occupations, but they cannot expect that the nature of their work will be automatically karma-free. For example, someone may be working in a company that appears "karma-free," but find out that on the corporate level, their company is supporting cow slaughter or other grossly sinful activities. A devotee simply has to do his work and try to purify himself by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, keeping as clean and disentangled as possible. Neither should a devotee engage in *ugra-karma* as far as possible, but should save his time and energy and love for Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the process of self-realization.

¹ Because Śrīla Prabhupāda translated this verse with a slightly different emphasis than the one that appears earlier in this book [verse 5], we have included it again.

² *Bhāg.* 3.30.31.

³ *Bhāg.* 3.30.31, purport.

⁴ *Bg.* 18.48.

Thirty-seven

*kṛte pratikṛtiṁ kuryād
dhimsane pratihiṁsitam
tatra doṣaṁ na paśyāmi
yo duṣṭe duṣṭam ācaret*

kṛte—when [good] acts are done; *prati-kṛtiṁ*—responding in kind; *kuryāt*—one should do; *hiṁsite*—when attacked; *pratihiṁsitam*—counterattack; *tatra*—there; *doṣaṁ*—fault; *na*—not; *paśyāmi*—I see; *yaḥ*—whoever; *duṣṭe*—in dealing with the wicked; *duṣṭam*—[behavior of] the wicked; *ācaret*—one should adopt.

TRANSLATION

Repay kindness with kindness, attack with counterattack; there is no fault in this. In dealing with cheaters, one must adopt cheating methods.

COMMENTARY

The latter half of this verse is a confidential instruction. A devotee should not be naive or foolish and be taken advantage of by a more intelligent demon or nondevotee. He should protect his own interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness as well as the assets of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. He should also outsmart the demons when they try to obstruct his preaching. Śrīla Prabhupāda comments on this in his response to Hiraṇyakaśipu's plotting against the Vaiṣṇavas:

Hiraṇyakaśipu advised his assistants, “My dear demons, give complete protection to this boy at the *gurukula* where he is

instructed, so that his intelligence will not be further influenced by Vaiṣṇavas who may go there in disguise.”

Purport: The tactic of dressing oneself like an ordinary *karmī* is necessary, because everyone in the demoniac kingdom is against the Vaiṣṇava teachings. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not at all to the liking of the demons of the present age. As soon as they see a Vaiṣṇava dressed in saffron garments, with beads on his neck and *tilaka* on his forehead, they are immediately irritated. They criticize the Vaiṣṇavas by sarcastically saying, “Hare Kṛṣṇa,” and some people also chant Hare Kṛṣṇa sincerely. . . . The greater demons, like Hiraṇyakaśipu, are always prepared to chastise the Vaiṣṇavas, and they try to make arrangements so that the Vaiṣṇavas will not come to sell their books and preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Thus what was done by Hiraṇyakaśipu long, long ago is still being done. . . . Yet the preachers of Kṛṣṇa consciousness must go forward—in their Vaiṣṇava dress or any other dress—for the purpose of preaching. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says that if an honest person deals with a great cheater, it is necessary for him to become a cheater also, not for the purpose of cheating but to make his preaching successful.¹

Cāṇakya’s advice is for an honest person. This *śloka* cannot be applied by immature devotees or by those with impure motives. Neophyte devotees sometimes think they can whimsically break the law in the name of spreading God consciousness, but the only result is to bring infamy upon the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. We have seen this “cheating for Kṛṣṇa” policy backfire many times over the years.

The path of devotional service is like the razor’s edge and one can draw blood unless he is careful. How to apply this *śloka* is not known to one who is himself impure or inexperienced. Therefore, we need the qualified spiritual master to guide us. The spiritual master is himself guided by the wealth of knowledge coming down in the checks and balances system of guru, *śāstra*, and *sādhū*.

Referring to delicate situations in which a devotee has to act in this world, Prabhupāda said, “We have to catch the fish without getting wet.” How to be more clever than the clever nondevotees, and yet maintain one’s purity and brahminical reputation is a subtle art. It should be learned with care.

Kṛṣṇa is the most expert cheater. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa says, “I am also the gambling of cheats.” Prabhupāda writes in the purport: “There are many kinds of cheaters all over the universe. Of all cheating processes, gambling stands supreme and therefore represents Kṛṣṇa. As the Supreme, Kṛṣṇa can be more deceitful than any mere man. If Kṛṣṇa chooses to deceive a person, no one can surpass Him in His deceit. His greatness is not simply one-sided—it is all-sided.”²

Therefore, if someone tries to cheat Kṛṣṇa or His devotee, He will not only catch the cheater, but cheat him back. For example, Lord Buddha cheated the atheists. Śrīla Prabhupāda likes to give Lord Buddha as an example of how well Kṛṣṇa can cheat. Lord Buddha appeared at the time when the so-called followers of the *Vedas* were indulging in animal slaughter and claiming that they were doing so on Vedic authority. Buddha came to save the animals, but He also appeared at a time when people were inclined toward atheism. Therefore, He told the people they should follow Him and He appeared to reject the scriptures. He tricked the atheists, who did not want to worship God, into worshipping Him.

The Lord also cheated the demons when He appeared as the beautiful Mohinī-mūrti incarnation. She was so beautiful that She cheated the demons out of the nectar of immortality. This indicates that we can depend on Kṛṣṇa to out-cheat those who think that they have cheated Him.

¹ *Bhāg.* 7.5.7.

² *Bg.* 10.36.

Thirty-eight

arṇi ākhyavat

arṇi—free from debt; *ākhyavat*—like one who is [thus] known.

TRANSLATION

The man who does not leave home and who is not a debtor is happy.

COMMENTARY

It is intriguing to hear how happiness can be achieved by not leaving home. Prabhupāda frequently mentioned the plight of the daily commuters in India and America. He said it was unnatural and a symptom of Kali-yuga. In one lecture, Prabhupāda described how New Yorkers, whom he personally observed, sometimes traveled to work or school first on the train, then on a boat, and then on a subway. That exactly describes my own daily commuting for the many years I traveled from Staten Island to Manhattan and Brooklyn. In those days, we thought it was necessary, particularly if we wanted to live in the suburbs and still go to a decent school or have a decent job. Everything “decent” was located in the city. But when we think about it, how stressful it is to have to travel, in some cases for four hours a day, into the city and back. Is it really necessary?

Cāṇakya implies that happiness means satisfying our economic needs by staying home. The ideal way to do this is to live by the Vedic ideal—to live off the land in a Vedic village. Village life in India still resembles the Vedic version. There are farmers and others who carry on a trade or occupation in the village. Westerners, particularly Americans, are so at-

tached to their “mobility,” which they misidentify with freedom, but which is another name for restlessness. Americans think that unless they are constantly moving, they will stagnate. Still, they don’t find happiness in California or in New York or in Florida. They travel, but the goal escapes them, just as the ass is never able to capture the carrot dangling in front of him on a stick.

Americans have become so accustomed to leaving their homes to go to work or school that staying home is often not attractive to them. Most of them, however, maintain the idealistic notion that staying home is what they are working so hard to achieve. Few family people want to raise children in the dangerous cities. Therefore, they feel they are making a great sacrifice of their own time and energy for their families when they make the commute. In order to afford the house and lifestyle the suburbs offer, both parents have to work and the children are raised and educated by strangers from babyhood. In this way the closeness of family life is broken. Where is the home to return to after all that work? Thus people are in so much illusion, thinking that they must commute the long distances, and also thinking they are gaining something from it.

Preachers also travel, but they become enlivened by the increased opportunities to see people in various places in the world. Śrīla Prabhupāda was the first Vaiṣṇava to travel all over the world. One newspaper man dubbed him the “Jet Age Parivrajakācārya.” For his own convenience, Prabhupāda could have stayed in Vṛndāvana, but instead he traveled to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and he observed the harried and dangerous conditions of travel. For devotees, if we are not preaching, travel is a burden and a distraction from a peaceful, regulated life.

When you ride on a car, full of anxiety . . . At any moment there may be accident. It is not comfortable. If you are full of anxiety. Aeroplane may be. At any moment you can die. . . . As

soon as you get on the aeroplane, you are in full anxiety that at any moment there may be crash. Then where is comfort? Real comfort is without anxiety. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita has given, real comfort means . . . “One who is not out of home and one who has no debts, he is happy.” Nowadays people are going out of home, and everyone is debtor to the bank . . .¹

Travel and credit payments are seen as advantages in modern civilization, but Cāṇakya cuts beneath the surface and shows us that they are actually sources of anxiety. “In America, the bank canvasses that ‘You take money. You purchase motorcar from me. You purchase your house. And as soon as you get your salary, you give to me.’ You see? You take the card and purchase whatever you like and deposit your money in the bank. Then again you are without any money. Simply that card, that’s all.”²

ISKCON is a long way from attaining self-sufficiency. Becoming self-sufficient is difficult because we are surrounded by Kali-yuga influences that force us to travel and to remain in debt. If we can learn the essence of simple living and high thinking, we will be able to minimize our dependence on travel and be able to minimize all our debt-connected purchases.

I have already mentioned in relation to a previous *śloka* how Prabhupāda told a temple president not to purchase anxiety. He told another temple president that he had not liquidated his debts. “You were there, but you could not liquidate. But H. has come and he is liquidating. Cāṇakya has said that a happy man is he who lives at home and who has no debts. London temple was so much in debt that it was something shameful. I have not said anything until now, but I was very sorry to see in the temple that the chandelier was taken down. The temple was almost dark without the chandelier. I had told Śyāmasundara that I had wanted it and he had borrowed, but he could not pay and so it was taken away.”³

One devotee told me, after reading this Cāṇakya *śloka*, “I plead guilty. I have no defense.” He is a traveling salesman and has a tendency to play the American game of credit card spending. Each of us will find some vice or other exposed by these *ślokas*. This devotee thought that this one described him. He felt guilty, but then thought, “Wait a minute, I’m doing it for Prabhupāda.”

We each have to see through our activities whether they are making us happy and progressive in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Are the travel and the debt necessary? For the time being, we may have no other choice, but we should endeavor to find a way to get clear from debt and to stay home and chant as soon as possible.

¹ Room conversation, Vṛndāvana, June 18, 1977.

² Lecture, Vṛndāvana, October 29, 1972.

³ Letter, October 6, 1974.

Thirty-nine

*ādaṁ-mātā guroḥ patnī
brāhmaṇī rāja-patnikā
dhenur dhātri tathā pṛthvī
saptaitā mātaraḥ smṛtāḥ*

ādaṁ—first; *mātā*—one's own mother; *guroḥ*—of the guru; *patnī*—the wife; *brāhmaṇī*—the wife of a *brāhmaṇa*; *rāja-patnikā*—the wife of the king (queen mother); *dhenur*—the cow; *dhātri*—the wet nurse; *tathā*—also; *pṛthvī*—the earth; *saptā*—seven; *etā*—these; *mātaraḥ*—mothers; *smṛtāḥ*—remembered.

TRANSLATION

These seven are known as mothers: the natural mother, the wife of the teacher or spiritual master, the wife of the *brāhmaṇa*, the wife of the king, the cow, the nurse, and the earth.

COMMENTARY

Śrīla Prabhupāda used this verse to support his arguments against cow-killing. On this point, of course, *Niti-sāstra* agrees with the Vedic literature. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Dharma is personified in the shape of a bull. He inquires from the cow and addresses her as Amba, mother. Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized that this respect for the cow was offered not out of sentiment, but from a practical point of view. As early as 1958, he wrote to Harbanslal Ji: "According to the Indian way of life everyone is advised to do good to others, namely not only to the human society, but also to living beings other than human beings. The Indians are not cow worshipers as others wrongly

interpret, but the Indians are grateful to the species of cow for supplying milk to the human babies and the sentiment is so fine that simply for supplying milk the cow is accepted as one of the seven mothers.”¹

Knowing that Westerners take cow protection as a curious and irrelevant Hindu doctrine, Śrīla Prabhupāda established his argument for cow protection from many angles. “But cow is very important animal,” he said in a garden conversation in Los Angeles. “You get from its milk so many nutritious foods. Apart from religious sentiment, from economic point of view, cow-killing is not good. And from moral point of view it is not good because you drink cow’s milk, so cow is your mother.”²

When I first heard Prabhupāda say that the cow was my mother, it made sense to me. Anyone who supplies us milk from her body is our mother. How, then, can we kill our own mother? Śrīla Prabhupāda explained it to guests during an evening *darsana* in Washington, D.C.: “There are seven mothers. . . . So from that point of view, the cow is mother and you cannot kill, on any ground, the mother. That is not good reasoning. . . . So you are drawing the last drop of milk from the cow and sending her to the slaughterhouse. Is that a very good civilization?”³

Sometimes Śrīla Prabhupāda appealed to the nationalist sentiment and spoke about the earth under our feet as mother. He then linked that argument to his reason for not killing the cow. “*Pṛthvī* means this land. So they are taking care of the land, nationalists, and killing the other mother, *dhenu*. A rascal civilization. If they are taking care of mother, you must take care of all mothers. No, they are mad after the land, but killing the other mother, *dhenu*. This is called rascaldom.”⁴

When Lord Caitanya argued with the Chand Kazi in Nava-dvīpa, He introduced the concept of the bull as father and the cow as mother. “Since the bull and cow are your father and mother, how can you kill and eat them? What kind of religious

principle is this? On whose strength are you so daring that you commit such sinful activities?"⁵ Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his purport: "Everyone can understand that we drink the milk of cows and take the help of bulls in producing agricultural products. Therefore, since our real father gives us food grains and our mother gives us milk with which to live, the cow and bull are considered our father and mother. . . . In any civilized human society no one would dare kill his father and mother for the purpose of eating them."⁶

It is difficult to convince Christians on the strength of their own commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," that this should also apply to killing cows. Śrīla Prabhupāda never hesitated to make this point, however, especially to Christian clergymen. When Prabhupāda met with Cardinal Danielou in Paris, he said:

According to Vedic civilization, there are seven mothers. So you cannot kill your mother, that is not very good philosophy. And who can deny, "The cow is not mother"? Who has got this audacity? You are drinking milk in the morning. Christ says, "Thou shalt not kill. Wholesale killing stop." The Vedic literature is a little liberal. It doesn't say "Thou shalt not kill," but "You shall not kill at least cow." But the wholesale stop is not possible. The Vedic wisdom knows that. But you shall not at least kill the cow. That is civilization. And this Christians are maintaining thousands of slaughterhouses. Is that a very good proposal?⁷

Cardinal Danielou replied, "Yes, yes . . . I know this. I know this. And this is for us our difficulty."⁸

In Lord Caitanya's discussion with the Chand Kazi, the Lord challenged this system of Mohammedan religion as patricidal and matricidal. Observing the Christian religion, Prabhupāda thought that their scripture actually upheld cow protection, but that they were violating it. In a *Caitanya-*

caritāmṛta purport he writes, “In the Christian religion also, a principle commandment is ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ Nevertheless, Christians violate these rules; they are very expert in killing and opening slaughterhouses. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, our first position is that one should not be allowed to eat any kind of flesh. But we especially stress prohibition against cow’s flesh, because according to *śāstra* the cow is our mother. Thus the Mohammedan’s cow-killing was challenged by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.”⁹

The result of killing mother cow is that all who take part in it—the one who gives permission to kill, the one who does the killing, the one who transports the meat, the one who sells it, the one who prepares it as food, the one who serves it, and the one who eats it—all have to suffer a reaction. “But they are not taking care of mother [cow]. Therefore they are sinful. They must suffer. There must be war, pestilence, famine. As soon as people become sinful, immediately nature’s punishment will come automatically. You cannot avoid it.”¹⁰

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained why the earth is one of the mothers. “Earth is mother because she is giving us so many things, fruits, flowers, grains for our eating. Mother gives for eating. Cow gives us milk.”¹¹

He also pointed out how people refer to the country in which they are born as their *deśa-mātrika*, or motherland. Their language is usually called their “mother tongue.” Mother earth gives birth to all living beings, and then maintains them throughout life. “*Roti* is there, *kapara* is there, and *makan* is there. And where from it is coming? *Sarva-kāma-dughā mahi*. From earth. Why are you after factories? The mother earth is giving you everything. Therefore she is called mother.”¹²

Since most people readily accept the concept of “mother earth,” at least symbolically, Prabhupāda used that acceptance as a way to argue for the existence of the Supreme Father. For example, when Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke to a reporter in Los

Angeles, he said, “From *pṛthvi*, the earth, we are coming out. So earth is mother. There may be different varieties of sons, that doesn’t matter. But everything is coming out of the earth, and what comes out is the son. Then where is the father? There must be father. Is it possible a mother can give birth to a child without father?”¹³

Because the earth is the mother, and her sons are also present, it is not logically possible to deny that there is also a father. “I may not see my father, but there is father; there is no doubt of it.” That *pitā* is personally presenting Himself—*aham̐ bija-pradaḥ pitā*: “I am the seed-giving father.” God is there and there is no doubt of it, but due to our foolishness, we think there is no God, no father.”¹⁴

Sometimes New Age people wonder why, if the devotees consider the earth their mother, they don’t engage in more earth worship and environmental endeavors.

Devotees don’t worship the earth, just as we don’t worship the cow. Instead, we respect the earth because we always remember that Lord Kṛṣṇa walked on this planet and that the earth is His great devotee. Therefore, we try not to pollute the air or waters, and we try not to needlessly deplete the natural resources. We do this conservation as part of our natural Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We don’t have to engage in it separately.

Prabhupāda gives the example of how when we become devotees, we automatically become vegetarians and practice non-violence. We don’t have to take it up as a separate cause. Similarly, we see the earth as Kṛṣṇa’s servant. She supplies all our needs. The best thing we can do for the earth is to engage in the *saṅkīrtana-yajña*. When Prabhupāda held his first public *harināma* in Tompkins Square Park, a newspaper reported it aptly with the headline, “Save Earth Now.” By chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, we can save the earth from bombs, from the unnecessary killing of trees, from the effects of toxic waste, from the effects of unrestricted oil drilling (which Prabhupāda said could upset

the balance of the earth), and from whatever other forms of abuse the demons wreak on the earth. Everything is possible by the power of a Kṛṣṇa conscious life.

Prabhupāda referred to the other five mothers mentioned in the Cāṇakya *śloka* as evidence for the respectful way that a woman should be treated according to Vedic civilization. The relationship with the wife of the guru is explained in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, in the instructions for *brahmacārī* life at the *gurukula*:

If the wife of the spiritual master is young, a young *brahmacārī* should not allow her to care for his hair, massage his body with oil, or bathe him with affection like a mother.

Purport: The relationship between the student or disciple and the wife of the spiritual master or teacher is like that between son and mother. The mother sometimes cares for her son by combing his hair, massaging his body with oil or bathing him. Similarly, the wife of the teacher is also a mother (*guru-patnī*), and therefore she may also take care of the disciple in a motherly way. If the wife of the teacher is a young woman, however, a young *brahmacārī* should not allow such a mother to touch him.¹⁵

The wife of the *brāhmaṇa* is also one of the seven mothers. “Why the learned scholar? He is also guru, because from the learned scholar you learn so many things. Therefore he is father and his wife is mother. *Adau mātā guroḥ patnī brāhmaṇī rāja-patnikā*. *Rāja-patnikā* means the queen. . . . So queen is also mother because the king is the father. He is giving protection to the citizens.”¹⁶

Kṛṣṇa demonstrated how the nurse is one of the mothers and is given all respect. This is described in Kṛṣṇa book:

Because Pūtānā came to take Kṛṣṇa on her lap and offered her breast milk to be sucked by Him, she was accepted by Kṛṣṇa as

one of his mothers. That is considered to be another reason why He closed His eyes: He had to kill a nurse or mother. But His killing of His mother is no different from His love for His real mother, or foster mother Yaśodā. We further understand from Vedic information that Pūtanā was also treated as a mother and given the same facility. As Yaśodā was given liberation from the material world, Pūtanā was also given liberation.¹⁷

Beyond these seven mothers mentioned in the Cāṇakya *śloka*, other kinds of mothers are also sometimes mentioned in the *śāstras*. When Lord Kṛṣṇa entered the house of his father in Hastināpura, He was embraced by the mothers who were present and He offered obeisances to them all. In the purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes that “according to scriptures there are seven mothers. . . . All of them are mothers. Even by this injunction of the *śāstras*, the stepmother, who is the wife of the father, is also as good as the mother because the father is one of the spiritual masters. Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the universe, plays the part of an ideal son just to teach others how to treat their stepmothers.”¹⁸

In fact, every woman except one's wife should be seen as mother. “Any woman. It doesn't matter whether she is elderly or young. That is the way. Still in India, any woman is addressed by an unknown person as ‘Mother.’ The first relationship is mother. Now they have introduced sister, *bahinji*. No, that is not Vedic etiquette. . . . Except one's wife, all women should be addressed as mother. This is civilization. If you, from the very beginning, establish your relationship with other women as mother, there is no question of other relationship.” When men practice seeing women as mother, it will prevent unrestricted mixing between the sexes.

The scriptures are also mother. Śrīla Prabhupāda told his disciples that the *Vedas* were our mother and the guru was our father. I remember in 1966, there was one devotee who had been rejected by his mother because he had become a devotee. He took

solace in this idea that the *Vedas* were his mother. I remember him going around, cheerfully saying “My mother has rejected me, but my new mother is the *Vedas* and my new father is Swamiji. They will protect me now.”

Philosophically, we could say that the entire material energy is the mother of life. This is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya, mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ/ tāsām brahma mahad yonir, ahaṁ bija-pradaḥ pitā*, “It should be understood that all species of life, O son of Kuntī, are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I am the seed-giving father.”¹⁹ Thus the father is the seed-giving agent and the mother gives the body. Material nature is therefore our mother.

Śrīla Prabhupāda drew much preaching material from this *Cāṇakya śloka*, both to introduce cow protection and to introduce proper respect for women.

¹ Letter, August 2, 1958.

² Garden conversation, Los Angeles, June 24, 1975.

³ Evening *darśana*, Washington D.C., July 8, 1976.

⁴ Morning walk, Māyāpur, March 5, 1976.

⁵ Cc. *Ādi* 17.154.

⁶ Cc. *Ādi* 17.154, purport.

⁷ Garden conversation, Los Angeles, June 24, 1975.

⁸ Room conversation, Paris, August 9, 1973.

⁹ Cc. *Ādi* 17.155, purport.

¹⁰ Lecture, London, July 24, 1973.

¹¹ Lecture, Honolulu, May 22, 1967.

¹² Morning walk, Māyāpur, March 5, 1976.

¹³ Interview, Los Angeles, June 3, 1976.

¹⁴ Lecture, Bhuvanesvara, January 29, 1977.

¹⁵ *Bhāg.* 7.12.8, purport.

¹⁶ Lecture, Columbus, May 9, 1969.

¹⁷ *Kṛṣṇa*, Volume 1, Chapter 6, p. 45.

¹⁸ *Bhāg.* 1.11.28, purport.

¹⁹ Bg. 14.4.

Forty

*ekenāpi kuvṛkṣeṇa
dahyamānena vahninā
dahyate tad-vanam sarvaṁ
kuputreṇa kulam yathā*

ekena—by a single; *api*—even; *ku-vṛkṣeṇa*—by a bad tree; *dahyamānena*—being burnt; *vahninā*—by the fire; *dahyate*—is burned; *tad-vanam*—the forest that tree is in; *sarvaṁ*—all; *kuputreṇa*—by a bad son; *kulam*—the family; *yathā*—similarly.

TRANSLATION

Just as an entire forest is reduced to ashes by a fire burning in a single tree, so a family can be destroyed by one bad son.

COMMENTARY

Śrīla Prabhupāda often applied these kinds of verses by instructing his spiritual family, ISKCON.

There are two verses in the Cāṇakya *śloka* how a family or institution can be glorified or burned to ashes by one person. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says that if there is one tree in the forest producing nice aromatic flower, that one tree can glorify the whole forest by the flavor of its flower. Similarly, if there is one tree, in its cavity there is a little fire, that one tree can burn to ashes the whole forest. So this simile is applicable anywhere. In the family, if there is one good boy, he can glorify the whole family, and similarly, if there is a bad boy, he can turn the whole family into ashes. Similarly, in this institution if there is a bad disciple, he can burn the whole institution into ashes. The Governing Body Commission's duty is therefore to see that every member is following the rules and regulations and

chanting sixteen rounds regularly on the beads. I hope the GBC in cooperation with the *sannyāsīs* in their touring program will be able to keep vigilance systematically in order to keep the society as pure as possible.¹

This letter came from Prabhupāda at a time when his movement was undergoing internal difficulty. ISKCON continues to undergo purification in its struggle to work out relationships among its members, challenges to leadership, crises in faith, etc. By Prabhupāda's statement, however, we can see what affect each of us can have on the entire institution. Every disciple has a serious responsibility to always behave as a good son or daughter, and not as a bad one. We shouldn't think our contribution or example is of little value or influence.

Nor should we think that there are no good sons and daughters. Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged us to "Oil your own machine." Each member should make it his first priority to represent Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement in a way that will not degrade the institution—and in a way that will increase its reputation.

We may also note in Prabhupāda's letter that he focused on the importance of following the rules and regulations and chanting sixteen rounds daily on beads. If we don't keep our basic initiation vows, not only are we hypocrites, but it creates an impression that the movement is not serious. Therefore, Prabhupāda said that the first duty of the GBC and traveling *sannyāsīs* is to inspire devotees to maintain their vows.

¹ Letter, August 25, 1970.

Forty-one

*rūpa-yauvana-sampannā
viśāla-kula-sambhavāḥ
vidyā-hinā na śobhante
nirgandhā iva kiṁśukāḥ*

rūpa—beauty; *yauvana*—youth; *sampannā*—equipped with; *viśāla-kula*—a great [noble] family; *sambhavāḥ*—birth in; *vidyā*—knowledge; *hināḥ*—devoid of; *na*—do not; *śobhante*—look good; *nirgandhāḥ*—without fragrance; *iva*—like; *kiṁśukāḥ*—the flowers of the *kiṁśuka* tree.

TRANSLATION

Even persons who are born in a high family and who are endowed with youth and beauty do not appear splendid if they are devoid of knowledge, just as the beautiful flowers of the *kiṁśuka* tree are not very splendid if they are devoid of fragrance.

COMMENTARY

There are frequent references in the *Niti-sāstra* to the importance of learning. We may therefore ask, “What is meant by ‘learning’?” Śrīla Prabhupāda explained the distinction between culture and education to Dr. Patel and others on a morning walk in Bombay:

Prabhupāda: Just like Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says, *mātr̥vat para-dāreṣu*. This is culture, to see every woman as mother. . . . The modern meaning of education is rubbish, to learn ABCD. This is not education. Without culture, what is the meaning of education?

Dr. Patel: So culture is the background for all these things.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Education is required to help culture. Not that you take degrees from university and remain a dog. That is not education. Education is as Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says, *mātr-
vat para-dāreṣu*. . . . Here is the description of *paṇḍita*: first of all, learn how to see other women as your mother. There the culture begins. And they, from the very beginning of school and college life, are learning how to entice a girl. This is education.¹

A truly learned person is exemplary in his behavior. His knowledge is not merely academic. Even scholarship in the Vedic literature may not make one cultured unless one is actually following the tenets of brahminical culture, starting with sense control, cleanliness, austerity, religiousness, and so on.

Good qualities must be accompanied by transcendental knowledge acted out in one's life. Lord Kṛṣṇa exemplified this in His pastimes. "Śrī means beauty. He is so beautiful. Therefore His name is Kṛṣṇa. On account of His beauty He attracts everyone. Nobody can be more beautiful than Kṛṣṇa. *Aiṣvar-
yasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ*, and *jñāna*. Not only He is beautiful . . . just like a flower is very beautiful to see, but if it has no good smell or aroma it is useless. So Kṛṣṇa is not only beautiful, but He is the most wise. He spoke *Bhagavad-gītā*. Five thousand years ago He spoke. He spoke and still big, big scholars and religionists and philosophers are studying. This is called *jñāna*."²

Prabhupāda was aware that his Western devotees did not have any cultural training. He encouraged his leading GBC managers to go to India and learn culture. I remember hearing about this and discussing it with a Godbrother at the time. We were both appreciative that there was something called "culture." What passes for culture in the West has more to do with art and music appreciation than with moral standards or etiquette. We realized that we hadn't yet assimilated it.

Despite our hard work, our distributing books and running temples, we hadn't learned fully what Prabhupāda (and Cāṇakya) describe as culture.

Sometimes devotees wonder whether going to India to learn culture has any real value. They say that India is spiritually dead now, and the Vedic culture is gone. Prabhupāda responded to that by comparing India to an elephant. Even if the elephant is dead, its tusks and hide are still worth something. A spiritually dead India is still better than the West in terms of culture. Of course, we don't become cultured by going to India and dealing with the taxi *wallas*. India is being overcome by the modes of nature and the influences of Kali-yuga. Still, culture can be found in Vṛndāvana and in the way people behave, and in almost any Indian family where piety is important.

We can also learn culture by reading and assimilating what Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other Vedic literatures are full of culture. By reading, we can learn about *kṣatriya* codes and brahminical tolerance, and we can learn how to practice Vedic etiquette. We may sometimes appear to practice only the external trappings of Vedic culture, but real Vedic culture is Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the process by which a heart is softened and improved and brought to the human standard. That is not external.

Prabhupāda defined culture as *mātrvat para-dāreṣu*—seeing every woman except one's wife as mother. A cultured person also has other qualities. For example, a cultured person is non-violent. Prabhupāda appreciated that his disciples, seeing some ants on a table, didn't kill them, but carefully removed them. Prabhupāda said, "Formerly, you would have killed them. Now you are purified."

Another quality: cleanliness in every aspect of life—this has to be learned either through our upbringing or later when we join the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Worshipping the Deity is also culture. Deity worship is incomprehensible to the

nondevotee. He sees it as idol worship, but it is a practice that cultures spirituality. It also cultures qualities such as physical and mental cleanliness, punctuality, and selflessness. Honoring Vaiṣṇavas is also a form of culture. Honoring the guru is unknown in the West, but it is of great importance in Vaiṣṇava life.

When we examine the standard of ISKCON devotees, we will realize that we now take many of these cultural items for granted. By Prabhupāda's grace, we have assimilated many of these items. Being cultured means giving up sense gratification in favor of offering everything to Kṛṣṇa.

Another way we can learn culture is to examine Śrīla Prabhupāda's dealings with us. Everything Śrīla Prabhupāda did was cultured, even down to how he drank water. Prabhupāda was such an aristocrat and gentleman. He honored elderly people, even if they were nondevotees. He honored the devotees' parents. He was respectful to people in high positions. He did not accept anything for himself, but lived like a mendicant. He didn't take advantage of being the guru of wealthy disciples. He was a cultured *sannyāsi* mendicant, living under the care of his disciples. In return he gave them Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The ultimate culture is transcendental knowledge and to remain immersed always in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda encouraged his disciples to help people obtain this culture by using "cultural weapons" as a means of conquest. In that sense, he meant art and literature and beautiful ways to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He was even willing to take what passes for culture in the West and use it in Kṛṣṇa's service.

Developing Vaiṣṇava relationships is part of culture. We see examples of devotees apparently surpassing the rules of culture in books like *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. These devotees are on the spontaneous stage of devotion. When Lord Caitanya's devotees came to Jagannātha Purī, Mahārāja Pratāparudra observed them from the roof of the palace. He noticed that they

didn't shave their heads or go first to the temple, they didn't fast, but they went straight to Lord Caitanya and took *prasādam* from His hand. Because the devotees appeared to be breaking the etiquette for visiting a holy place, Gopīnātha Ācārya explained to the king that these devotees were on the spontaneous platform. When the Lord is giving them *prasādam* directly from His own hand, who would hesitate in favor of the rules?

That doesn't mean, however, that these devotees did not practice culture. They observed the proper etiquette toward women and related among themselves according to their status as seniors or juniors or peers. They were all *pakka* devotees, even if they could abandon the rules and regulations and act in spontaneous love toward Lord Caitanya.

Jagadānanda Paṇḍita is an example of this. He had taken a vow to remain a *kṣetra-sannyāsī* and to always stay in one place. When Lord Caitanya left Puri, Jagadānanda broke his vow and followed the Lord. Lord Caitanya expressed His disappointment that "out of sense gratification to live with Me," Jagadānanda had broken his vow. Jagadānanda replied, "To hell with my vow."

No one can say that these devotees didn't behave cultured, but there is the higher standard based on the fact that all culture is meant to direct us toward love of God. Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya was sitting in bed one morning when Lord Caitanya came and gave him *prasādam*. He had not yet washed his hands or chanted his morning mantras. Lord Caitanya was pleased to see him break the rules and honor the *prasādam*. That doesn't mean that Sārvabhauma would always have breakfast in bed, but when the Lord knocks on the door, who will say, "Sorry, I haven't washed my hands yet. Come back later"?

What about us simple devotees? We can learn to love Kṛṣṇa with our simplicity. We may not know many *śloka*s and we may not be so well versed in the scriptures, but we can still

know Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya sometimes played as if He was not a great scholar. When the proud Vallabha Ācārya approached Him and asked Him to hear his list of Kṛṣṇa's names, Lord Caitanya said, "I do not accept many different meanings for the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. I know only that Lord Kṛṣṇa is Śyāmasundara and Yaśodānandana. That's all I know. The only purport of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is that He is dark blue like a *tamāla* tree and is the son of Mother Yaśodā. This is the conclusion of all the revealed scriptures. I conclusively know these two names, Śyāmasundara and Yaśodānandana. I do not understand any other meanings, nor have I the capacity to understand them."³ Lord Caitanya's names were full of *rasa*, and He indicated that this is all anyone needs to know—a few sweet names of Kṛṣṇa known with devotion. He also indicated that Vallabha Ācārya was being proud of his knowledge.

Real knowledge means to serve and love Kṛṣṇa. If a simple devotee has actually captured that, then he is very dear to Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda recommended his disciples read his books because in this age, people are prone to argument and atheism. We should be knowledgeable enough to defeat them. He also said that if we couldn't read his books, if we weren't learned enough to understand the philosophy, we could simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

A devotee can be simple, but he has to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise, he is not practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even if we look around the world and find a pious nation, we can see that piety is easily overcome by Kali. Without piety, the people in such nations would be merely stupid; there is nothing attractive about ignorant people. Rather, ignorance is dangerous. Simplicity or lack of sophistication has to be coupled with God consciousness in order for it to be meaningful, and that is the meaning of establishing Vedic culture in the world.

¹ Morning walk, Bombay, December 19, 1975.

² Lecture, Nairobi, October 27, 1975.

³ Cc. *Antya* 7.85–7.

Forty-two

*payaḥ pānaṁ bhujaṅgānām
kevalaṁ viṣa-vardhanam
upadeśo hi mūrkhānām
prakopāya na śāntaye*

payah—milk; *pānam*—drinking; *bhujaṅgānām*—for snakes; *kevalam*—simply; *viṣa*—venom; *vardhanam*—increasing; *upadeśaḥ*—good instruction; *hi*—indeed; *mūrkhānām*—to fools; *prakopāya*—[inciting] to anger; *na*—not; *śāntaye*—making peaceful.

TRANSLATION

When snakes drink milk, it only increases their poison. Similarly, good instructions given to fools make them angry. It does not give them peace of mind.

COMMENTARY

In Rūpa Gosvāmi's *Upadeśāmṛta*, it is advised that devotees share love by revealing their minds in confidence and inquiring confidentially from one another. Śrīla Prabhupāda makes it clear that devotees should not have these intimate exchanges with impersonalists or atheists. "If a snake is given milk to drink, its poison simply increases. For a similar reason, we should not disclose our minds to the serpent Māyāvādīs and *karmīs*. Such disclosures can never help. It is best to avoid association with them completely and never ask them about anything confidential because they cannot give good advice."¹

Śrīla Prabhupāda had sufficient experience, both in India and in the West, with people becoming angry when hearing his Kṛṣṇa conscious instructions. He also had the good experience

of some rascals being changed. He explained this to devotees accompanying him on a morning walk in Vṛndāvana, in 1974: “The rascals, fools, if you give them good education, they will get angry. The snake, if you give him nice milk and banana, the result will be that it will increase his poison. *Payaḥ pānam bhujaṅgānām kevalam viṣa-vardhanam*. But by Kṛṣṇa’s grace, Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s grace, they are now being trained up. Now you be trained up and revise the whole edition of the Western civilization, especially in America.”²

Prabhupāda’s method for “de-fanging” the poisonous snakes was to give them practical engagement. Direct instructions will only provoke their anger, “but give him practical. ‘Come here. Sit down. Take *prasādam*. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. And help me by doing this.’ In this way we have to, just like with a child. The child does not want to go to school but you have to find out some means by which he will be induced. That is intelligence. He will be angry, naturally. He is a rascal. . . . If you feed a snake with milk it will increase its poison. So practically attract. That is the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, to practically attract the people.”³

The analogy to the snake is not a fanciful metaphor. Śrīla Prabhupāda remarked on this one day in Geneva, after a gentleman who had come to visit him went away as soon as Śrīla Prabhupāda began to speak of pious and sinful activities. Prabhupāda commented that if you give a foolish person instruction, he will be angry. He then described the habits of the snake. “A snake is very fond of drinking milk. Sometimes the snake-charmer mixes banana with milk and gives it to them for their satisfaction. But the result? The result is as soon as he becomes strong by eating, the poison teeth become filled with poison. Just like with your healthy body, different nerves and parts of the body become healthy. Similarly, the snake’s teeth are the most important part of the body. Within the pocket of the teeth there is venomous poison. When they

bite, from the hole of that teeth, the poison is admitted and the man or animal dies.”⁴

The same food, when supplied to a sage or saint, will develop his fine brain tissues by which he can contemplate spiritual life. “Thus the Lord is supplying everyone food, but according to the living entities’ association with the modes of material nature, the living entity develops his specific character.”⁵ With this in mind, sane persons conclude it is better that a snake starves. Prabhupāda says that therefore, providence sometimes arranges to deprive a snake-like person of the vital strength he needs to cause harm.

There are numerous *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verses similar to this *Niti-sāstra śloka*. When the sages became disturbed by the activities of the demoniac King Veṇa, they thought within themselves, “Supporting this mischievous king is exactly like maintaining a snake with milk. Now he has become a source of all difficulty.”⁶

Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva warned Lord Brahmā not to give benedictions to demons, such as he had offered to Hiraṇyakaśipu. “The Personality of Godhead replied, ‘My dear Lord Brahmā, O great lord born from the lotus flower, just as it is dangerous to feed milk to a snake, so it is dangerous to give benedictions to demons, who are by nature ferocious and jealous. I warn you not to give such benediction to any demon again.’”⁷

Nārada Muni also chose not to give direct instructions to King Prācīnabarhi, who was involved in materialistic sacrifices. Nārada Muni was well aware of the principle that good instruction given to a foolish rascal will simply make him angry. He will then turn against the instructions instead of taking advantage of them. “Because Nārada Muni knew this very well, he indirectly instructed the king by giving him the history of his entire life.”⁸

The same point was brought up during the churning of the milk ocean: “Demons are by nature crooked like snakes. There-

fore, to distribute a share of the nectar to them was not at all feasible, since this would be as dangerous as supplying milk to a snake. Considering this, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who never falls down, did not give a share of nectar to the demons.”⁹

King Kāṁsa was another snake-like person upon whom good instructions were lost. Therefore, Devakī knew that giving instructions to Kāṁsa would only increase his cruelty. As Cāṇakya Paṇḍita has stated in another *śloka*, a cruel person is even more dangerous than a snake, because a snake can be charmed by mantras or herbs whereas a cruel person cannot be subdued by any means. Kāṁsa finally had to be killed by Kṛṣṇa, and no one was sorry for that.

Similarly, when Vidura tried to instruct Duryodhana, he met with the same unfortunate result described in this *śloka*: “While speaking thus, Vidura, whose personal character was esteemed by respectable persons, was insulted by Duryodhana, who would foam with anger and whose lips were trembling.”¹⁰

The *Bhagavad-gītā* tells us that unsatisfied lust results in frustration and anger. Lust is based on false identification with the material body. Anyone who is striving to satisfy the senses despite religious codes will find himself filled with anger. Anger is the older brother of desire.

That is what a snake-like person is doing—working hard to satisfy the senses regardless of religious codes—and therefore, he is filled with frustration and anger. If we preach to such a person, “My dear sir, if you want to be happy, you should give up meat-eating. It is very sinful,” that will only anger him more.

There may be other reasons, however, why people become angry when they hear good instructions from the devotees. People feel angry when they are cheated. Prabhupāda mentions people becoming tired of hearing so much speculation about God. They are tired of hypocritical religionists. Therefore, they

become angry at anyone who claims to represent God and His laws. They have lost their faith. Others may even be inclined toward spiritual life, but are not willing to have what they consider their basic freedoms restricted.

From anger, envy develops. Anger is another side of fear. Both come from frustrated lust. To someone who has experienced the frustration of not having their lust satisfied, Kṛṣṇa consciousness appears as a threat. When people feel threatened, they are afraid, and fear makes them even angrier.

People in this age tend to be rebellious and disobedient by nature. They don't like to hear from authorities because they have been cheated so many times. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is all these things—authority demanding obedience, surrender, sense control, and a threat. We are a threat to the meat-eating industry, to the brothels, to the breweries and the smoking industry. If these things are stopped, how will people make money? Parents get angry when they think they have lost their children to spiritual life. The sectarian religionists get angry because they are losing their church members.

Faced with these facts, someone may ask, "Then should we not try to preach to snake-like persons?" No, we should preach to everyone. That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's order. But we should also be prepared for this reaction. "To give good instruction to a fool and rascal will increase his anger, that's all."¹¹ In order to accept this reaction, devotees have to become humble, humbler than a blade of grass. A person who preaches indiscriminately becomes very dear to Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda told us that *prasādam* distribution has so much potency that it is able to de-fang the snake-like people. All transcendentalists want to control their senses because the senses are like serpents, always ready to bite. If the snake can have its poison removed, however, then it becomes a harmless reptile. What the yogīs are trying to do in their meditation,

the devotees accomplish easily through *prasādam*. *Kṛṣṇa-prasādam* removes the poison from the snake-like senses.

This *śloka* says not to give milk to serpents or instructions to demonic humans. If the milk can be given to the human demons, instead of instruction, then *Kṛṣṇa* consciousness will be much easier to take for them and it won't increase their poison. We have all heard the demonic person say, "I have never had such a nice sweet. Thank you." *Prasādam* distribution is powerful. Whoever cannot take *Kṛṣṇa* consciousness through the ears can take it through *prasādam*. *Prasādam* can change their hearts because it's not just a nice sweet, but milk offered to *Kṛṣṇa*.

Although a preacher needs to be tolerant, he also needs to be intelligent. "We have to preach. But if you say directly you are *mūḍhas*, *māyayāpahṛta-jñānāḥ*, *duṣkṛtinaḥ*, they will be angry. Because *sattvaṁ mā sattvaṁ apriyam*. You have to speak the truth very cautiously. Otherwise, he will be angry."¹²

Prabhupāda explained Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī's tactic: we should first approach the nondevotee and flatter him with praise. The flattery will make him more inclined to hear. Then we can say, "My one request is that whatever you have learned, please forget. Whatever nonsense you have learned, please forget. This is my submission. Just submit yourself to Lord Caitanya. Then everything will be perfect. So our preaching is like that."¹³

Although Prabhupāda says we cannot give direct instruction to the snake-like persons, then you have to speak the truth very cautiously, he himself spoke strongly on many occasions and called people fools and rascals. Why, then, was he so successful in his preaching? Why did so many people accept Śrīla Prabhupāda's analysis of themselves?

This takes us back to our discussion of Prabhupāda as cultured. Prabhupāda was a gentleman. He was also elderly, so people more readily accepted his reproofs, even if they weren't

prepared to change their lives. Only rarely did someone talk back to Prabhupāda, even though they would argue with Prabhupāda's disciples.

I remember Prabhupāda's appearance on Allen Burke's television program. Allen Burke was known for insulting his guests. He would do things such as throwing his guest out in the middle of the show. Then while everyone was laughing, he would light his cigar and say, "Next?" Then another guest would come on stage.

The devotees were afraid that Prabhupāda would be insulted on his show, but Allen Burke was so respectful that he didn't even smoke in front of Prabhupāda. He had talked with Prabhupāda beforehand and liked him. He looked out at his audience and said, "Tonight, we have a real swami with us."

He challenged Prabhupāda on his statement that people shouldn't have sex outside marriage. Prabhupāda answered him so nicely that he accepted it, not in his own life, but as a valid principle. Prabhupāda checkmated him with logic. He had Burke stumped a few times on that show with his bluntness. Burke didn't know how to respond. How could he contradict an argument such as the fact that everyone has a father, and that lineage can be traced back through time to the original father? Prabhupāda's preaching was so simple. All Burke could say was that he thought it sounded all right. No objection.

One reason Prabhupāda was able to preach using strong words was because he was elderly and such a gentleman, but also because his arguments were so logical they were hard to contend. It reminds me of something Allen Ginsburg said. He said that even when he disagreed with Prabhupāda, he sensed Prabhupāda's overall sweetness borne from his total dedication to Kṛṣṇa. That sweetness charmed whoever Prabhupāda was talking to, and that sweetness was a stronger presence than the actual disagreement.

People don't meet someone like Prabhupāda practically ever in their lives. They would bathe in the sweetness of his presence. And there was so much to take in—his appearance, his disciples, their relationship, the objects on his desk, the philosophy, the *prasādam* he distributed. Everyone became filled with all these impressions and mostly by Prabhupāda's own sweetness.

Who had met a person so dedicated to God before? Prabhupāda would speak directly to them also, asking them why they are engaging in so much sinful activity. "You kill the children in the womb, you kill your mother? Is this very good that you kill your own mother? Why do you do this?"

"But I don't."

"Not you," Prabhupāda would respond. "I am saying in general." Still, he would be so personal about it that no one would want to be the sinful person he was describing.

His presence was authoritative and grave and fixed. People didn't want to disrespect him. To do so, they would have had to resort to name-calling. Prabhupāda was on a higher level, gentle and innocent, scholarly and sedate. He hardly met anyone who could not see his exalted position. Only those who remained at a distance were able to challenge him—"Get down from your seat!" If each member of that mob was brought one by one before Prabhupāda, they would probably have been skinny, little French revolutionaries, similar to the Naxalites Prabhupāda met in India.

If people tried to insult Prabhupāda back, he wouldn't have even understood what they were saying. They couldn't spar with him. When Nārada met Mṛgāri, the *Bhāgavatam* describes that because there was something special about Nārada, the hunter couldn't be his usual foul self.

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- ¹ *The Nectar of Instruction*, Text 4.
² Morning walk, Vṛndāvana, March 14, 1974.
³ Morning walk, Vṛndāvana, March 15, 1974.
⁴ Lecture, Geneva, June 1, 1974.
⁵ *Bhāg.* 4.18.22, purport.
⁶ *Bhāg.* 4.14.10.
⁷ *Bhāg.* 7.10.30.
⁸ *Bhāg.* 4.25.9, purport.
⁹ *Bhāg.* 8.9.19.
¹⁰ *Bhāg.* 3.1.13.
¹¹ Morning walk, Nairobi, October 28, 1975.
¹² Lecture, Vṛndāvana, November 17, 1976.
¹³ *Ibid.*

Bibliography

For most of the citations listed here, there are multiple references, especially to Ludwik Sternbach's comprehensive critical edition of *Cāṇakya*. Not all possible references or even sources are mentioned here, but have been dealt with authoritatively in the five-volume *Cāṇakya-nīti Text Tradition* by Dr. Ludwik Sternbach, published in 1968 by Vishveshvaranand Research Institute, Hoshiarpur, India (long since out of print).

Many of the verses in this book have close or identical counterparts in the *Hitopadeśa*, but those have not been included here unless no other reference was found. The word "Unknown" has been given for verses that have been reconstructed from transcriptions of Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures.

CN	<i>Cāṇakya-nīti-śāstra</i>
CND	<i>Cāṇakya-nīti-darpaṇa</i> (aka <i>Vṛddha-cāṇakya</i>)
CR	<i>Cāṇakya-rāja-nīti-śāstra</i>
CS	<i>Cāṇakya-sūtra</i>
CSS	<i>Cāṇakya-sāra-saṅgraha</i>
Hit.	<i>Hitopadeśa</i>
LS	Ludwik Sternbach's five-volume critical edition of <i>Cāṇakya</i>

One: <i>eko 'pi guṇavān putro . . .</i>	CR 7.59, LS 216
Two: <i>ṛṇa-kartā pitā śatrur . . .</i>	CND 6.10, LS 192
Three: <i>lālayet pañca-varṣaṇi . . .</i>	CND 3.18, LS 886
Four: <i>na kascit kasyacin mitram . . .</i>	CN 21, LS 525
Five: <i>dhanāni jivitaṁ caiva . . .</i>	CN "C," LS 506
Six: <i>lālāne bahavo doṣās . . .</i>	CND 2.12, LS 885
Seven: <i>kiṁ tayā kriyate dhenvā . . .</i>	CND 4.9, LS 273

A similar verse appears in CSS 7, LS 1392:

*ko 'rthaḥ putreṇa jātena
yo na vidvān na dhārmikaḥ*

kāṇena cakṣuṣā kiṃ vā
cakṣuḥ piḍaiva kevalam

What is the use of a son who is neither a learned scholar nor a religious person? Such a son is like a blind eye, which does not aid the vision but only gives pain.

Eight: <i>tyaja durjana-saṃsargaṃ . . .</i>	CND 14.20, LS 428
Nine: <i>mūrkhā yatra na pūjyante . . .</i>	CND 3.21, LS 783
Ten: <i>durjanaḥ parihartavyo . . .</i>	CN 23, LS 466
Eleven: <i>mātrvat para-dāreṣu . . .</i>	CND 12.14, LS 772
Twelve: <i>guṇair uttamatām yāti . . .</i>	CND 16.6, LS 350

A similar verse appears in *Hitopadeśa* (no verse reference):

yaḥ svabhāvo hi yasya syāt
tasyāsau duratikramaḥ
svā yadi kriyate bhogī
tat kiṃ nāśnāty upānaḥam

Whatever one's nature is, it cannot be easily transcended. You can offer a dog a sumptuous feast, but will he not still chew on shoes?

Thirteen: <i>ṛṇa-śeṣo 'gni-śeṣaś ca . . .</i>	CN 38, LS 193
Fourteen: <i>nirguṇeṣu api sattveṣu . . .</i>	CN "A," LS 611
Fifteen: <i>viṣād apy amṛtaṃ grāhyam . . .</i>	CND 1.16, LS 957
Sixteen: <i>nakhinām ca nadinām ca . . .</i>	CND 1.15, LS 527
Seventeen: <i>mātā yasya gr̥he nāsti . . .</i>	CN 42, LS 770
Eighteen: <i>nakṣatra-bhūṣaṇaṃ candro . . .</i>	CN 6, LS 526
Nineteen: <i>dāmpatyē kalahe caiva . . .</i>	Unknown
Twenty: <i>śarpaḥ krūraḥ khalah krūraḥ . . .</i>	CN 24, LS 1052
Twenty-one: <i>āyusaḥ kṣaṇa eko 'pi . . .</i>	CS 31, LS 1240
Twenty-two: <i>duṣṭā bhāryā śaṭhaṃ mitraṃ . . .</i>	CND 1.5, LS 477
Twenty-three: <i>aputrasya gr̥haṃ śūnyaṃ . . .</i>	CND 4.14, LS 72, Skanda Purāṇa
Twenty-four: <i>vidvatvaṃ ca nṛpatvaṃ ca . . .</i>	CN 1, LS 939
Twenty-five: <i>dūrataḥ śobhate mūrkhō . . .</i>	CN 13, LS 480
Twenty-six: <i>ekenāpi su-vṛkṣeṇa . . .</i>	CND 3.14, LS 212

Twenty-seven: <i>udyamena hi sidhyanti . . .</i>	Hit. Intro.37
Twenty-eight: <i>sukhārthi cet tyajed vidyām . . .</i>	CND 10.3, LS 1083
Twenty-nine: <i>aho bata vicitrāṇi . . .</i>	CND 13.4, LS 125
Thirty: <i>śarīrasya guṇānām ca . . .</i>	CN "F," LS 982
Thirty-one: <i>dhanikaḥ śrotriyo rājā . . .</i>	CND 1.9, LS 507
Thirty-two: <i>daridra-doṣo guṇa-rāśi-nāśi</i>	Unknown
Thirty-three: <i>putrāṁś ca śiṣyāṁś ca</i>	Unknown
Thirty-four: <i>ari-prayatnam abhisamikṣate</i>	CS 59
Thirty-five: <i>kṣama-rūpaṁ tapasvinam</i>	Unknown
Thirty-six: <i>dhanāni jīvitaṁ caiva . . .</i>	CN "C," LS 506
Thirty-seven: <i>kṛte pratikṛtiṁ kuryād . . .</i>	CND 17.2, LS 296
Thirty-eight: <i>arṇy ākhyavat</i>	Unknown
Thirty-nine: <i>ādau-mātā guroḥ patnī . . .</i>	CN "P," LS 139
Forty: <i>ekenāpi kuvṛkṣeṇa . . .</i>	CND 3.15, LS 208
Forty-one: <i>rūpa-yauvana-sampannā . . .</i>	CND 3.8, LS 876
Forty-two: <i>payah pānam bhujāṅgānām . . .</i>	CS 107, LS 186

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