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PRINCIPLES OF FRIENDSHIP

ŚRĪMAD BHĀGAVATAM 3.29.17

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY
HIS DIVINE GRACE

A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA

*mahatām bahu-mānena dīnānām anukampayā
maitryā caivātma-tulyeṣu yamena niyamena ca*

The pure devotee should execute devotional service by giving the greatest respect to the spiritual master and the *ācāryas*. He should be compassionate to the poor and make friendship with persons who are his equals. But all his activities should be executed under regulation and with control of the senses.

PURPORT

In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Thirteenth Chapter, it is clearly stated that one should execute devotional service and advance on the path of spiritual knowledge by accepting the *ācārya*. *Ācāryopāsanam*: one should worship an *ācārya*, a spiritual master who knows things as they are. The spiritual master must be in the disciplic succession from Krishna. The predecessors of the spiritual master are his spiritual master, his grand spiritual master, his great-grand spiritual master and so on, who form the disciplic succession of *ācāryas*.

It is recommended herewith that all the *ācāryas* be given the highest respect. It is stated, *guruṣu*

nara-matiḥ. *Guruṣu* means “unto the *ācāryas*”, and *nara-matiḥ* means “thinking to be like a common man”. To think of the *vaiṣṇavas*, the devotees, as belonging to a particular caste or community, to think of the *ācāryas* as ordinary men, or to think of the Deity in the temple as being made of stone, wood, or metal, is condemned. *Niyamena*: one should offer the greatest respect to the *ācāryas* according to the standard regulations. A devotee should also be compassionate to the poor. This does not refer to those who are poverty-stricken materially. According to devotional vision, a man is poor if he is not in Krishna consciousness. A man may be very rich materially but if he is not Krishna conscious he is considered poor. On the other hand, many *ācāryas* such as Rupa Goswami and Sanatan Goswami used to live beneath trees every night. Superficially it appeared that they were poverty-stricken, but from their writings we can understand that in spiritual life they were the richest personalities.

A devotee shows compassion to those poor souls who are wanting in spiritual knowledge by enlightening them in order to elevate them to Krishna consciousness. That is one of the duties of a devotee. He should also make friendship with persons who are on an equal level or who have the same understanding that he does. For a devotee, there is no point in making friendships with ordinary persons. He should make friendship with other devotees so that by discussing among

PRINCIPLES OF FRIENDSHIP *continued*

themselves they may elevate one another on the path of spiritual understanding. This is called *iṣṭa-goṣṭhī*.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* there is reference to *bodhayantaḥ parasparam*, “discussing among themselves”. Generally, pure devotees utilize their valuable time in chanting and discussing various activities of Lord Krishna or Lord Chaitanya among themselves. There are innumerable books, such as the *Purāṇas*, *Mahābhārata*, *Bhāgavatam*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Upaniṣads*, which contain countless subjects for discussion among two devotees or more. Friendship should be cemented between persons with mutual interests and understanding. Such persons are said to be *sva-jāti*, “of the same caste”. The devotee should avoid a person whose character is not fixed in the standard understanding, even though he may be a *vaiṣṇava*, a devotee of Krishna. If his character is not correctly representative then he should be avoided. One should steadily control the senses and the mind and strictly follow the rules and regulations, and he should make friendship with persons of the same standard.

THE QUALIFICATION TO HEAR

SRILA GOUR GOVINDA SWAMI MAHARAJA

The first and most important thing is *śravaṇam*, hearing. One should hear *bhāgavata-kathā*, *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, and that will purify one’s heart. But how are we hearing? Are we hearing for the pleasure of guru and Krishna or are we hearing because it will give us pleasure? And one who is doing *kīrtana*, a speaker, is he speaking for the pleasure of guru and Gauranga, guru and Krishna, or is he speaking for his own pleasure? If you can please guru and Gauranga, guru and Krishna, then automatically you will get pleasure. If you cannot please guru and Gauranga then is that service on the platform of love? If you do not render this service for *their* pleasure, how can *you* get pleasure? What you will get is something material, and the consequence will be unlimited suffering.

*ye hi saṁsparśa-jā bhogā duḥkha-yonaya eva te
ādy-antavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ*

An intelligent person does not take part in the sources of misery, which are due to contact with the material senses. O son of Kunti, such pleasures have a beginning and an end, and so the wise do not delight in them. (Bg. 5.22)

A genuinely learned *pandit*, someone who is proficient in *kṛṣṇa-tattva*, *bhāgavat-tattva*, *bhakti-tattva*, never runs after this material gain or profit. Any material gain or pleasure is temporary and fleeting and its consequence is unlimited misery. He only runs after eternal gain or pleasure, that is, the pleasure of guru and Krishna, guru and Gauranga. That is the first thing in *bhakti*, or *sevā*, that our service should be loving service.

In Whose Ear?

So the first item is *śravaṇam*, hearing, and one who hears is a disciple, but unless you surrender, unless you dedicate yourself, you cannot hear. The *kathā* will never enter into your ear. Whose ear will this *hari-kathā* enter? It will enter into the ear of one who is surrendered. First you must dedicate yourself and surrender, then you will develop *nava-vidha bhakti*, the nine processes of devotional service. Prahlad Maharaja says (*Bhāg.* 7.5.24), “In my opinion one who has developed *nava-vidha bhakti* has studied the best. He is the most learned person because he has acquired complete knowledge.”

Unless one surrenders he cannot hear. He will have some pride in him. “Oh, I know better!” Such a proud, puffed-up fellow! “What will he say that I should hear?” This *hari-kathā* will never enter into his ears, because he is running after his own name, fame and prestige, material gain or profit. He is not acting for the pleasure of guru and Gauranga, guru and Krishna, so his heart will not be purified.

MAHAPRABHU’S FREE GIFT

SRILA BHAKTISIDDHANTA SARASWATI THAKUR

It is of course no proof of the real success of any religious movement that it has been able to secure the allegiance of a large number of professed followers. The actual teachings of no prophet are followed by more than a very small minority of his professed followers.

Sri Gaurasundar teaches the all-sufficiency of the *kirtana* of the name of Krishna. The ritual is the simplest possible. The only condition that has to be fulfilled is that the name has to be chanted in the company of a saint. If there is no saint, there is no name — who only makes His appearance on the lips of His bonafide devotee. No person is likely to object to listening to a saint if he really is such, but there are those who may object to the name, “Krishna”. There may, of course, be persons who are prepared to object to the whole process as being too simple and puerile. But Krishna-talk may attract those who object to the chanting of the name. In the present age that is characterized by so much speculation, the talk should be universally acceptable. But no talk on the part of a conditioned soul will be effective unless it is held with a person who really serves Krishna.

The method of Sri Gaurasundar, accordingly, is that as soon as a person has found his spiritual nature due to the causeless mercy of the bonafide devotee, he should forthwith give up all other occupations and engage in the full-time chanting of the name of Krishna. He should go from door to door chanting the holy name with a loud voice so that he may be heard by everyone. Krishna is to be hawked as a free gift at the door of all the slumberers of this world so that Krishna may have a chance of being heard by the most graceless of egotists. In this way Krishna goes down on His knees, as it were, to obtain the slightest recognition of His existence. ❀

— Harmonist Magazine, January 1932, pp. 214-215.

EXCERPTS FROM THE LIFE OF SRI VIRCHANDRA PRABHU

Srimad Virchandra, also known as Virbhadrā Prabhu, appeared in this world on the ninth day of the dark moon in the month of *Kārtika*. He was the son of Nityananda Prabhu and Sri Vasudha, Nityananda Prabhu’s second wife. Nityananda Prabhu’s first wife Jahnava Mata initiated him.

Main Pillar

Srila Krishnadas Kaviraja Goswami has described Virchandra Prabhu in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta ādi 11.8-12*:

*śrī-vīrabhadra gosāñi — skandha-mahāśākhā
tāñira upaśākhā yata, asañkhyā tāra lekhā*

After Nityananda Prabhu, the greatest branch of Mahāprabhu is Virbhadrā Gosai, who also has innumerable branches and sub-branches. It is not possible to describe them all.

*īśvara ha-iyā kahāya mahā-bhāgavata
veda-dharmātīta hañā veda-dharme rata*

Although Virbhadrā Gosai was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He presented Himself as a great devotee. And although the Supreme Godhead is transcendental to all Vedic injunctions, He strictly followed the Vedic rituals.

*antare īśvara-ceṣṭā, bāhire nirdambha
caitanya-bhakti-maṇḍape teñho mūla-stambha*

He is the main pillar in the hall of devotional service erected by Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. He knew within Himself that He acted as the Supreme Lord Vishnu, but externally He was prideless.

*adyāpi yāñhāra kṛpā-mahimā ha-ite
caitanya-nityānanda gāya sakala jagate*

It is by the glorious mercy of Sri Virbhadrā Gosai that people all over the world now have the chance to chant the names of Chaitanya and Nityananda.

*sei vīrabhadra-gosāñira la-inu śaraṇa
yāñhāra prasāde haya abhīṣṭa-pūraṇa*

I therefore take shelter of the lotus feet of Virbhadrā Gosai so that by His mercy my great desire to write *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* will be properly guided.

Srila Prabhupada has commented on text eight as follows:

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur writes in his *Anubhāṣya*, “Virbhadrā Gosai was the direct son of Srila Nityananda Prabhu and a disciple of Jahnava-devi. His real mother was Vasudha. In the *Gaura-gaṇodeśa-dīpikā* (67) he is mentioned as an incarnation of Kshirodakasayi Vishnu. Therefore Virbhadrā Gosai is nondifferent from Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. In a village of the name Jhamatapura, in the district of Hugli, Virbhadrā Gosai had a disciple named Yadunathacharya [also known as Yadunandanacharya], who had two daugh-

ters, a real daughter named Srimati and a foster daughter named Narayani. Both of these daughters married [Virbhadrā Gosai]. They are mentioned in the *Bhakti-ratnākara* (thirteenth wave). Virbhadrā Gosai had three disciples who are celebrated as his sons — Gopijana-vallabha, Ramakrishna and Ramachandra. The youngest, Ramachandra, belonged to the *Śāṅḍilya* dynasty and had the surname Vatavyala. He established his family at Khadadaha, and its members are known as the Goswamis of Khadadaha. The eldest disciple, Gopijana-vallabha, was a resident of a village known as Lata, near the Mankara railway station in the district of Burdwan. The second, Ramakrishna, lived near Maldaha, in a village named Gayesapura.” Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur notes that since these three disciples belonged to different *gotras*, or dynasties, and also had different surnames and lived in different places, it is not possible to accept them as real sons of Virbhadrā Gosai. Ramacandra had four sons, of whom the eldest was Radhamadhava, whose third son was named Yadavendra. Yadavendra’s son was Nandakisora, his son was Nidhikrishna, his son was Chaitanyacanda, his son was Krishnamohana, his son was Jaganmohana, his son was Vrajanatha, and his son was Syamalala Goswami. This is the genealogical table given by Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur for the descendants of Virbhadrā Gosai.

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Marriage

The marriage of Virchandra Prabhu to the daughters of Yadunandanacharya has been described by Srila Narahari Chakravarti Thakur in his *Bhakti-ratnākara* (13.249-255):

Near Rajabol Hatta is the village known as Jhamatpura. Sri Jahnava Mata went there and stayed at the temple of one of her disciples. The brahmana Yadunandanacharya lived in that village. Receiving the mercy of Jahnava Mata, he was endowed with great devotion. Yadunandana had a wife whose name was Lakshmi. She was very religious and dedicated to her husband. Srimati and Narayani were their two daughters. Their bodily beauty was wonderful beyond compare. On Jahnava Mata’s wish, that fortunate brahman gave his two daughters in marriage to Virchandra Prabhu.

At the time of the great wedding festival Yadunandanacharya became the disciple of Virabhadrā Prabhu and with great jubilation both Srimati and Narayani were given initiation by Jahnava Mata.

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TROUBLES NOURISH LOVE

*loka-dvayāt sva-janataḥ parataḥ svato vā
prāṇa-priyād api sumeru-samā yadi syuḥ
kleśas tadāpy ati-balī sahasā vijitya
premaiva tān harir ibhān iva puṣṭim eti*

Troubles may come from the demigods, from one’s own kinsmen, from outsiders, from oneself, or from the beloved who is more dear than life itself, and such troubles may be as great as Mount Sumeru. But love is nourished by defeating such troubles, just as a lion is nourished by defeating many elephants. — Srila Visvanatha Cakravati’s *Prema-Samputa*, text 54.