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Srila Prabhodhananda Saraswati



ENVY, RIVALRY AND BICKERING

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

So far as envy is concerned, it can be used only upon the non-devotees. In the transcendental world a devotee is never envious of another devotee on account of his excellence. But on the contrary, if a devotee finds some excellence in another devotee he eulogizes that devotee, admitting his own subordinate position. Although in the spiritual world there is no such concept of subordination, still devotees, on account of being very humble and meek, think that way. In the material world the same thing is expressed in a perverted form. But in the spiritual world, to accept one's inferior position does not mean envious mentality upon the other. Unhappiness experienced by a devotee on account of feeling himself inferior is not unusual. Rather, such mentality is imperative to further development of devotional service. (Letter to Satsvarupa. 20 February 1969.)

So far your question about jealousy, spiritual jealousy means to think always that the service rendered by such and such devotee is so nice and pleasing to Krishna, so let me try harder to please Krishna. Then he will notice me also. (Letter to Sankarshana, 13 June 1972.)

Regarding your questions, you say that amongst the elder disciples there are still symptoms of greed, anger, strife, bickering, etc., but you are one of them! You are one of the old students, so you fall in that group. So the fighting is among that group, but not amongst the real workers. There was fighting amongst the *gopīs* also, so we cannot expect that there will be some utopia without fighting. Even in the spiritual sky there is transcendental greed, lust, envy, like that. But that is transcendental. Even if there is a little fighting, why should you go away? We should never give up our duty. My godbrothers always discouraged me, but I did not give up. I am doing my duty and always keeping my spiritual master in front. Even there is some difficulty or hardship, or even my godbrothers may not cooperate, or there may be fighting, still I must perform my duty to my spiritual master and not become discouraged and go away. That is weakness. (Letter to Krishna Das, 9 September 1972.)

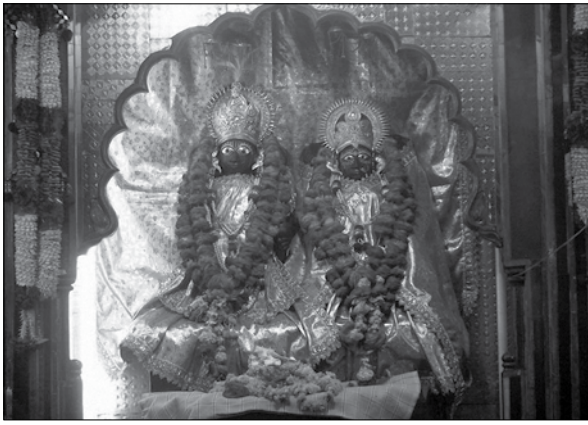
JANMASHTAMI IN A BROTHEL

*From chapter 21 of the Māgha-māhātmyam
Attributed to the Vāyu Purāṇa*

The devotee sage Shandilya narrates a history related to Janmashtami.

When one is not engaging in spiritual practices, one should invest one's mind in auspicious thoughts. One

Unknown photographer



Lord Benimadhav and his consort Laksmi. On Janmashtami day Benimadhav is worshiped as Krishna.

should avoid inauspicious thoughts by all means. By doing so, one will avoid all suffering in life. It is the mind which causes bondage and liberation for everyone. Therefore, without paying attention to its demands, one should conquer the mind. With great effort if one conquers the mind, one obtains all desired results, and if one does not do so then one gains nothing.

There is a narration in this regard of a Brahmin named Sushil who was a resident of the village named Nandivar. Sushil had two sons named Suvritta, who was the elder, and Vritta, who was the younger. Both sons were immensely learned and possessed many good qualities. They set out traveling throughout the country, and one fine day they came to the holy place named Prayag. As that day was Sri Krishna Janmashtami, a great festival was scheduled to be held that night at the temple of Lord Madhava.

[**Translator's Note:** Although the original text merely mentions “the temple of Lord Madhava”, it can be assumed that it is referring to the temple of Sri Benimadhava.]

The brothers decided to attend the festival at the temple. As they were on their way, rain started pouring down heavily. Due to the heavy showers, the brothers got confused and could not find their way to the temple. Seeing no other place nearby, the elder brother Suvritta took shelter of a brothel. Suvritta pleaded with his brother to also take shelter there, but Vritta continued walking, even in the face of the intense rain. Somehow, after a long ordeal, Vritta managed to reach the temple of Lord Madhava.

At the temple there were various festivities going on, but the troubled mind of Vritta kept going back to the brothel. He started regretting his decision of not taking shelter in the brothel. Vritta was lamenting within,

“Oh! How fortunate is Suvritta, for he took shelter of the brothel. The brothel is an auspicious place where a variety of love sports go on continuously. There, along with a soft-limbed girl, he must be sitting on a soft cushion. He must be enjoying great pleasure in talking to her. He will definitely spend his time with her while chewing betel-nut. Then undoubtedly he will hold her in a tight embrace and sleep with her on a wonderful soft bed. [Alas! I missed out!]”

Although the elaborate worship of Lord Madhava was going on, Vritta had no interest in those festivities. Although externally listening to the *kathā* of the Lord, he was not truly listening to it. Although paying obeisances externally, he was not investing his mind into the act. Uttering the various verses with his mouth, he actually was not thinking about those verses at all. At night, while dancing along with the other devotees he danced externally but in his mind he was in a different world altogether. Even though he was talking to them, his mind was absent from those conversations. Ever since his mind had gone far away to the brothel he was behaving more or less like a painting on a wall.

Far away in the brothel, the elder brother Suvritta was sitting all by himself and thinking, “What pious activities must have Vritta performed in his thousands of previous lives? All his piety has now borne fruit since he must have gone to the temple of Madhava. Oh! He must be giving water offerings at the foot of the deity at this moment. He must be seeing the elaborate worship of the Lord with his eyes. By seeing the *ārātrika* ceremony of the Lord, his eyes have attained the highest fruit. He will definitely offer flowers to the Lord in every quarter of the night. He will offer obeisances using his head and will offer praises through his mouth. He will hear the nectarean pastimes of the Lord of the spiritual world from the mouths of the great devotees. Thus his ears will receive great piety. He will dance with all the devotees and will joyously receive the lamp offered to the Lord. There is no one as fortunate as he.”

Like his brother, Suvritta also started lamenting, “Alas! How unfortunate I am that on such an auspicious appearance day of Lord Krishna, I am sitting here in a most inauspicious abode of all sins. My time is being wasted here. My ears are like useless holes. My eyes are becoming as useless as the eyes that appear on the plumes of a peacock, since they are unable to witness the great Janmashtami festival. My breathing nose is like the breathing of a blacksmith's bellows, since I am

unable to smell the aroma of the Lord's garland. My hands are more worthless than wooden ladles, since they are not offering obeisances to the Supreme Lord. Alas! The Supreme Lord was never worshiped by me! Without association of the saintly souls, each and every moment of mine is similar to a *yuga*.

“How many lives I must have passed committing sinful acts that today I am unable to see the enemy of Kamsa? Even after having arrived in such a wonderful liberating place as Prayag, I got caught in this ungodly situation. Both Vritta and I are born from the same father. We arrived here in Prayag together. How then is it that on this auspicious day of Janmashtami I did not offer water at the lotus feet of Krishna? I did not stay awake at night for his pleasure. Even after hearing all the Vedic scriptures, how come I did not develop tolerance for pleasure and pain? Indeed, those who are not strong at mind are easily caught by the strong *māyā* of Lord Vishnu.

“Glorious are those entities who can tolerate the dualities of pleasure and pain. Their destination is certainly the glorious lotus feet of the Lord, which are meditated upon even by the great yogis. Those who are attached to the body are good for nothing, and when the pious birth that they have achieved is finished, they fall down.”

Thus Suvritta and Vritta spent their nights absorbed in their respective thoughts. Early morning, as they set out from their respective locations, they happened to see each other on the way by the arrangement of providence. As soon as they saw each other, lightning struck from the sky and both of them died instantaneously.

At that very moment, two associates of Lord Vishnu and three associates of Lord Yamaraj came to that spot. The associates of Lord Vishnu made Suvritta sit on their airplane while the associates of Yamaraj bound up Vritta and prepared to take him with them. Extremely surprised at this, Suvritta said, “What sort of a strange justice system is this? Why is such an opposite result being bestowed on both of us? Such judgment I have never seen or heard of. This brother of mine spent his Janmashtami in Prayag! He was awake the entire night! He offered water at the feet of the Lord! He offered his obeisances and drank the nectar of the flowing *kathā* of the Lord! On the other hand, I was situated in a brothel and I did not perform any of these activities of devotion. I spent my time uselessly there! Why then are opposite results being bestowed on us?”



The current temple of Benimadhav constructed in 1916 on the site of the original

Hearing the words of the saintly Suvritta, the associates of Lord Vishnu smiled and replied:

*śrṇu dharma-rahasyam tvam vicitraṁ romaharṣaṇam
karmanām kṛti-mātraṁ tu na dadāti phalaṁ mahat
sarveṣāṁ api karmanām manaḥ śuddhir hi kāraṇam
manasā cañcalenaiva kṛtaṁ karma ca duḥkhadam
manasā cintito vā 'pi dharmah phala-vivardhanaḥ*

“O Suvritta! Hear from us the amazing secret of religiosity! Simply by carrying out activities of religiosity mechanically, one does not obtain their real fruit. In all activities, purity of mind is the actual cause of success. Activities performed with a fickle mind end up being distressful. On the other hand, if one performs acts of religiosity with a dedicated mind, the fruits are manifold.”

They continued, “Your brother committed many acts of sin through his mind, even though he was in an auspicious place. For this reason he now slides down to hell. You, however, engaged in auspicious thoughts even though present in a most inauspicious location. For this reason, you now go to the Lord's abode.”

Hearing this, Suvritta said, “O Lords! My mind does not wish to go anywhere leaving behind my brother. Either I stay here with him or please tell me some means by which he could be freed from the clutches of these associates of Yamaraj.”

The associates of Lord Vishnu replied, “Suvritta! If you wish to deliver him, then simply dedicate the piety of the *Māgha-snāna* that you performed mentally in your previous life. By doing so, your brother will ascend to the spiritual world along with you.”

[Translator's Note: *Māgha-snāna* is a ritual of bathing in the *trivenī-saṅgama*, the confluence of the three

rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, early morning each day during the month of Magha (January/February). Its glories are elaborately described in the *Padma Purāna*. Its piety is so great that Srila Rupa Goswami in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhuḥ* (1.2.60) says, *sarvādhikāritām māgha-snānasya* — All humans have the right to earn piety by taking holy baths during the early mornings of the month of Magha.

Moreover, by suggesting that Suvritta could dedicate the piety of a mental *Māgha-snāna*, the associates of Lord Vishnu simultaneously conveyed two things — the importance of *Māgha-snāna* as well as the fact that simply by doing a great act attentively in the mind one receives the desired result.]

Suvritta immediately dedicated the piety of the *Māgha-snāna* performed mentally in his previous life to his brother and both of them happily ascended to the spiritual world on the day of Krishna’s appearance.

Shandilya concluded:

*tasmād dānaṁ tapo homaḥ svādhyāyaḥ pitṛ-tarpaṇam
nityaṁ naimittikaṁ vā ’pi carec chuddhena cetasā
tena kāmān avāpnoti bhukti-muktī na saṁśayaḥ
avaśī-kṛta-cittasya kuto yoga-samādhayaḥ
mano nigrahaṇe tasmāt yatnaṁ kuryād vicakṣaṇaḥ
yac chāstra-śravaṇenaiva manaso nigraho bhavet*

*sampradāyajñā-guruṇā saṁśayac-cheda-śaktinā
śrotavyaṁ satataṁ bhaktyā sat-karma śruti-pūrvakam
antaḥ-karaṇa-kāluṣyaṁ tena yāti na saṁśayaḥ
guru-suśrūṣayā bhaktyā śraddhayā ca damena ca
yamena niyamenainaiva yogī yogitvam āpnuyāt*

“Therefore, all charity, austerity, sacrifices, self-study, oblations to forefathers, as well as all eternal and occasional Vedic duties should be carried out with a purified mind. By doing so, one obtains the fulfillment of all desires, worldly enjoyment, as well as liberation without a doubt. Without conquering the mind, how can one attain perfection in yoga? Therefore, an intelligent person will try to control the mind by all means. One should listen with faith to any spiritual literature that helps one in controlling the mind and any bona-fide *sampradāya* and guru that can resolve one’s doubts. One should perform good deeds, and in this way the dirt of the heart will undoubtedly be washed away. By serving the guru with devotion and faith as well as by practicing sense-control and the various rules and regulations, a yogi attains the perfection of yoga.” ❀

— Translated by Hari Parshad Das from the *Māgha-māhātmyam* of the *Vāyu-purāṇam*. Published and printed by Dauji Agnihotri at Siddhivinayak Yantralaya. Varanasi. Vikram Samvat 1940 (1883 AD).

ANYTHING FOR VRINDAVAN

Srila Prabodhananda Saraswati’s Vṛndāvana-mahimāmṛtam 2.15

*vṛndāraṇyaṁ tyajeti pravadatai yadi ko ’py asya jihvām chinadmi
śrīmad-vṛndāvanān mān yadi nayati balāt ko ’pi taṁ hanmy
avaśyam
kāmaṁ veśyām upeyaṁ na khalu pariṇayāyānyato yāmi kāmaṁ
caurye kuryām dhanārtham na tu calati padaṁ hanta
vṛndāvanān me*

If someone tries to falsely argue in order to convince me to leave Vrindavan, I shall cut out their tongue. If someone forcibly takes me away from Vrindavan, I will slaughter them. If needed I will associate with a prostitute, but I shall never leave Vrindavan to get married elsewhere. If needed I will steal in order to make a living, but I shall never step a single foot outside Vrindavan. ❀

— Translated by Hari Parshad Das from the Sanskrit available at Gaudiya Grantha Mandira (www.granthamandira.com).



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