



Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

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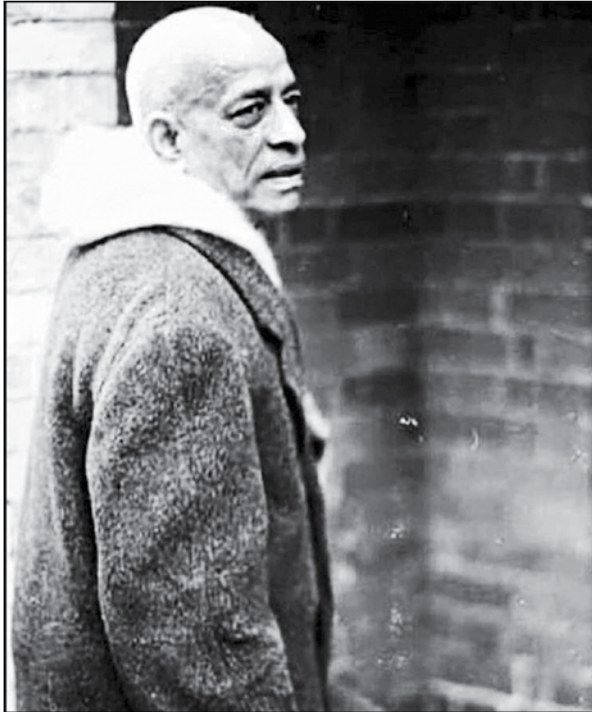
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FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTION

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Follow the instruction. Then you are secure anywhere. It doesn't matter. Just like I told you that I saw my Guru Maharaja not more than 10 days in my life, but I followed his instructions. 🙏

— Morning walk, Hawaii. 3 February 1975.

VAISHNAVA SEVA PLEASES GURU

From the life of Srila Ramanujacharya

A desire once arose in the heart of Ramanujacharya to see the holy shrine of Sri Saila. Thus a few days later he set off on the journey from Sri Rangam accompanied by his disciples, all chanting the holy name of Lord Hari together.

At the end of the first day of the journey, they stopped for the night in the town of Dehali. On the next day they walked as far as the village of Astasahasra. Here there lived two of Ramanuja's disciples, Yajnesha and Varadacharya. Intending to pass the night at the house of Yajnesha, who was a wealthy merchant, Yatiraj sent two of his followers ahead to convey the news of his imminent arrival.

When he learned of this from them, Yajnesha was delighted and immediately began to see to all the arrangements necessary for receiving the party of pilgrims. However, so absorbed was he in all these activities that Yajnesha completely neglected to see to the comfort of the two tired messengers, who were left alone without being offered so much as a glass of water. Becoming unhappy at this mistreatment, they returned to Ramanujacharya and reported to him everything that had taken place.

Being most displeased to hear how his disciple had failed to show proper respect to *vaiṣṇava* guests,

Yatiraj decided he would go instead to the house of Varadacharya. This second disciple was an extremely poor man but was noted for his pure heart and great devotion to Lord Vishnu. Every morning he would set out to beg alms, returning at noon to present whatever he had received as an offering to the Lord. Thus he passed his life in great contentment along with Lakshmi, his chaste and extremely beautiful wife.

Lakshmi's Dilemma

When Ramanuja and his party arrived at the house, Varadacharya was still out begging and they were all received with great respect by Lakshmi. Paying obeisances at the feet of her guru, she said, "My husband is still out begging alms. All of you please sit here and be merciful to me by accepting this water to wash your feet. Just nearby there is a lake where you may bathe, and in the meantime I will prepare the offering for Lord Narayan."

Having said this, she entered the kitchen. However, there was not a single grain of rice in the store. So poor were this couple that they had nothing at all in the house. In great anxiety Lakshmi began to consider how she could properly serve her guru.

In that same village there lived a rich businessman who had become attracted by Lakshmi's beauty. He had tried many times to tempt her through female messengers, offering her money and jewels, but she would never even speak to the rascal. Now, however, she began to consider that this might be the only way that she and her husband would be able to render proper service to their spiritual master. Eventually she concluded that, as service to one's guru transcends all other principles, she would surrender herself to that man in return for whatever was required to serve her guests.

Accordingly, she slipped out the back door of her house and ran quickly to the house of the businessman, which was not far from there. When she came into his presence, she said, "This evening I shall fulfill your desires. My guru and many of his disciples have come to my house as guests. Send to our house without delay all things necessary to receive them properly."

The merchant was surprised to hear this, for he had by now resigned himself to the fact that this chaste lady would never be allured by his entreaties. Greatly pleased by this unexpected turn of events, he quickly arranged for the most opulent foods to be sent to his neighbor's house.

Quickly then, Lakshmidēvi busied herself in preparing offerings for Lord Vishnu from the different things that were brought to her. When everything was completed and the offering made, she invited Ramanujacharya and his disciples to sit down and take *prasāda*. They were all most surprised to find such opulent foodstuffs available in a poor man's house, and they ate with great relish, praising the good lady for her excellent hospitality.

The Potency of Mahaprasada

When he returned home, Varadacharya was filled with happiness to see his guru actually in his own house. However, when he heard about the wonderful *prasāda* they had all been offered, he was astonished, knowing only too well the poverty-stricken condition in which they were living. When he inquired from his wife as to how she had been able to serve their guests in a manner so befitting, Lakshmidēvi bowed her head in shame and narrated to him all the arrangements she had made with the merchant.

Far from being angry, however, Varadacharya began to dance with joy when he heard what had happened and he cried out, "O, I am blessed! I am blessed!" Addressing his wife, he said, "Today you have shown the highest degree of chastity. Narayan, who is represented by Sri Guru, is the only *puruṣa* and thus he is the enjoyer of *prakṛti*. Only a great soul can fully realize this knowledge of devotional service. How fortunate I am to be married to such a lady who is the embodiment of religious principles."

Taking his wife with him, Varadacharya then went into the presence of Yatiraj and explained to his guru everything that had taken place. By Ramanuja's order they sat down and took *prasāda* in his presence. When they had finished eating, he told them to go to the businessman's house together and take all the remaining *prasāda* to offer to him.

When they arrived at the large mansion, Varadacharya waited outside while Lakshmidēvi was admitted to the merchant's rooms. She immediately offered him the *prasāda* they had brought, and he accepted it with pleasure. *Prasāda* is not ordinary food, and particularly the remnants left by pure devotees possess great spiritual potency. This *prasāda* began to affect the merchant at once and by the time he had finished eating he was a changed man.

All the sensual desires having been purged from his heart, he looked upon Lakshmi as he would his

Painting by M. Devadas



Srila Ramanujacharya

mother and spoke to her with tears in his eyes, “How sinful I am! My fate would have been the same as that of the hunter who was burned to ashes when he attempted to touch the chaste Damayanti. Only by your great compassion have I been saved. O mother, please forgive all of my offenses and have mercy upon me by showing me the feet of your guru.”

In great happiness Lakshmidēvi and Varadacharya returned to their house along with the merchant. In the presence of Ramanujacharya all three of them bowed down to the ground to offer their prostrated obeisances. When Yatiraj touched the merchant with his hand, all of the man’s miseries were removed and he begged for initiation from that great soul.

Desiring to make life easier for the devoted Brahmin couple, Ramanuja requested them to accept a large sum of money that the merchant offered. At this Varadacharya spoke to his spiritual master with folded palms, “O master, by your mercy everything that we

require is provided for us. Money is the root of all evil, for it distracts the senses and thus drags the mind away from service to the Supreme Lord. Please do not order me to become a wealthy man.”

Ramanuja was satisfied by these words, and he embraced the pure-hearted devotee, saying, “Today I have become purified by the association of such a great *mahātma* as yourself, devoid of all material desires.”

Yajnesh’s Repentance

At that moment Yajnesh, Yatiraj’s wealthy disciple, entered the house and fell down at the feet of his guru. Having waited expectantly for Ramanuja’s arrival, he had eventually learned that the party of pilgrims had gone instead to the house of the poor Brahmin, Varadacharya. Thinking that he must have committed some grave offense and displeased his guru, he had gone there feeling depressed at heart.

Gently and with affection, Yatiraj raised Yajnesh to his feet and said, “Is this unhappiness due to my not coming to your house? The reason for this was the offense that you made to two exalted *vaiṣṇavas* by neglecting them. There is no higher dharma than rendering service to the *vaiṣṇavas*, and in this you have failed.”

Being humbled by this chastisement from his spiritual master, Yajnesh replied in a voice choked with tears, “This thoughtless behavior of mine was not due to the vanity of wealth. Rather it was my exultation and eagerness to serve you that made me so neglectful.” Ramanuja then consoled this repentant and simple-hearted devotee by promising to be his guest on a later occasion. 🙏

— From chapter 5 of *The Life of Ramanujacharya*, by Naimisaranya Das. Rasbihari Lal & Sons. Vrindavan. 2005.

UNCONVENTIONAL GUIDANCE

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

The following article excerpt is a commentary on the above story.

The story of the wife who promised to offer her body to the lust of a neighbor in order to obtain alms of food for her guru and his associates when they

chanced to present themselves to her home during the absence of her husband who praised her for her conduct in doing so, may not be appreciated by those who do not believe the sequel of the story. We are told in the concluding part of the narrative that as the remains of the food which had been offered to the Lord were taken to the neighbor by the couple who expressed their gratitude for his help asking him to honor the same, there was a sudden change of mind of the amorously disposed trader. As he reverentially tasted the *mahā-prasāda*, all his former evil propensities left him for good and he fell down at the feet of the loyal lady whose mercy was the cause of his undeserved deliverance.

The above story is no exaggeration of the absolute submission to the guru that is insisted upon by Sri Ramanuja as the most essential condition for admission into the spiritual community. Equal reverence is required to be shown to the associates and all the disciples of the guru. They should all be offered unasked, unconditional and unlimited service. The only difference being that the guru and the associates of the guru are entitled to receive service without rendering it to the disciple.

No one except a *vaiṣṇava* is a real spiritual guide. The *vaiṣṇava* guru does not make his disciple follow any definable course. [Editor's note: Meaning, that in his dealings with his disciples a *vaiṣṇava* guru is

not bound to follow social dogma. While instructing disciples, such a guru may even apparently transgress mundane propriety for the sake of devotion.] He is found to act as an autocrat in relation to his disciple. Neither does he appear to pay the least attention to the letter of the scriptural injunctions in settling the duties of his charge. One who is on a visit to one of the numerous *maths*, or centers of training, established under the auspices of the Sri Viswa Vaishnava Raj Sabha all over the country, cannot fail to notice the absence of anything like conventionalism. The conventions themselves, to the extent that they are allowed to be practiced by particular inmates, are also found to be fully as natural expressions of a living faith in the absolute as the unconventional life prescribed to another inmate of the institution.

It is for this reason that the life led by the inmates of these *maths* has proved such a baffling enigma for the conventional understandings even of their genuine well-wishers. The guru alone really knows his disciple. The scriptures must not be supposed to be on a level with our blundering so-called rationalism. They never favor the creation of sect or dogma in their ordinary worldly sense. They want to set us free from the fetters of all worldly creed and dogma. They never prescribe any mechanical course to any individual. The formulation of general rules which are intended to be binding on the members of a community is the sorry device of our bankrupt rationalism for contriving the destruction of free individual functioning. 🙏

— From the article, “Sree Chaitanya in South India”. Published in *The Harmonist*. No 11. May 1932, Chaitanya-Era 446.



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DESTROYING DREADFUL DISTRESSES

From the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (1.17.44)

*dantā gajānām kulīśāgra-niṣṭhurāḥ
śīrnā yad ete na balaṁ mamaītat
mahā-vīpat-tāpa-vināśano 'yaṁ
janārdanānusmaraṇānubhāvaḥ*

[After Hiranyakashipu unsuccessfully tried to kill Prahlad by mowing him down with sharp-tusked elephants, Prahlad said to him:] “The tusks of these elephants were as sharp as Indra’s *vajra*, but they are now all broken and torn apart. This is not at all due to my strength. In actuality, all this is the effect of the constant remembrance of Lord Janardan. Such remembrance destroys the greatest calamities and distresses.” 🙏

— Translated by Hari Parshad Das from *Śrī-viṣṇu-purāṇam* with the *Viṣṇu-cittiyā* commentary by Sri Vishnuchitta. Printed at Liberty Press, Madras (Chennai). 1972 A.D.