



तवकथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

Fortnightly email mini-magazine from Gopal Jiu Publications

Issue No. 491

Śrī Putradā Ekādaśī

24 January 2021

Circulation 9,849

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FAKE GURUS AND QUALIFICATION

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Reporter: Have you ever had people come to you who had previously been involved with a fake guru?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. There are many.

Reporter: Were their spiritual lives in any way spoiled by the fake gurus?

Srila Prabhupada: No. They were genuinely seeking something spiritual, and that was their qualification. God is within everyone's heart, and as soon as someone genuinely seeks him, he helps that person find a genuine guru.

Reporter: Have the real gurus like yourself ever tried to put a stop to the false gurus—that is, put pressure on them to put them out of business, so to speak?

Srila Prabhupada: No. That is not my purpose. I started my movement simply by chanting Hare Krishna. I chanted in New York in a place called Tompkins Square Park, and soon people began to come to me. In this way, the Krishna consciousness movement gradually developed. Many accepted, and many did not accept. Those who are fortunate have accepted.

Reporter: Don't you feel that people are suspicious because of their experience with fake gurus? If you went to a quack dentist and he broke your tooth, you might be suspicious about going to another dentist.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Naturally, if you are cheated, you become suspicious. But this does not mean that if you are cheated once, you will always be cheated. You should find someone genuine. But to come to Krishna consciousness, you must be either very fortunate or well aware of this science. From the *Bhagavad-gītā* we understand that the genuine seekers are very few: *manusyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaścid yatati siddhaye* [Bg. 7.3]. Out of many millions of people, there may be only one who is interested in spiritual life. Generally, people are interested in eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. So how can we expect to find many followers? It is not difficult to notice that people have lost their spiritual interest. And almost all those who are actually interested are being cheated by so-called spiritualists. You cannot judge a movement simply by the number of its followers. If one man is genuine, then the movement is successful. It is not a question of quantity, but quality.

Reporter: I wonder how many people you think might have been taken in by fake gurus.

Srila Prabhupada: Practically everyone. [Laughter.] There is no question of counting. Everyone.

Reporter: This would mean thousands of people, wouldn't it?

Srila Prabhupada: Millions. Millions have been cheated, because they want to be cheated. God is omniscient. He can understand your desires. He is within your heart, and if you want to be cheated, God sends you a cheater. ❁

— From *The Science of Self-Realization*. Chapter 2.

SERVICE AND SHOW

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

That which gives pleasure to Lord Hari is service and that which gives pleasure to ourselves is enjoyment. Duplicitous people may worship the deity with sixteen ingredients in order to get sons and grandsons, but this cannot be called service because the purpose behind their worship is to get something from the Lord. There is so much cheating going on in the name of deity worship and chanting of the holy name.

Actually, serving the Lord and making a show of serving the Lord are two separate things. We should be extremely careful to make sure that we are rendering service to the deity. Not just anyone can become a servant of the Lord's deity. Simply paying twenty rupees does not allow us to hear the Lord's holy names or a discourse on *hari-kathā*. Such purchased recitations attract people because of the melodious singing and flowery language, but they have nothing to do with devotional service or *vaiṣṇava dharma*. Instead, these recitations are *karma-kāṇḍa*, material enjoyment. A Brahmin priest who has been hired for ten rupees cannot serve the Lord. Until we are firmly convinced that service to Lord Vishnu and the *vaiṣṇavas* is the highest attainment, we cannot benefit. 🙏

— From *Amṛta Vani*, collected teachings of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. Compiled in Bengali by Sri Bhakti Bhagavat Mayukha Maharaja. Adapted and translated into English by Bhumiapati Das and Isvara Das. Touchstone Media. Mumbai. 2004. Page 101.

PUTANA, FALSE GURUS, INSTITUTIONS, AND THE HOLY NAME PART 5

Reflections on Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's "Putana"

Why Did They Do it?

At this point a question arises: Why did Srila Bhaktisiddhanta do it? As author of the article "Putana", and as a scholarly *vaiṣṇava* aware of the pervasiveness of hypocrisy in organized religion, why did he start a formal religious organization? And similar questions can be asked about his disciples such as Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who after Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, created institutions such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Knowing that Putana would inevitably rear her head, why did they instigate formal institutions and encourage everyone to join and cooperatively

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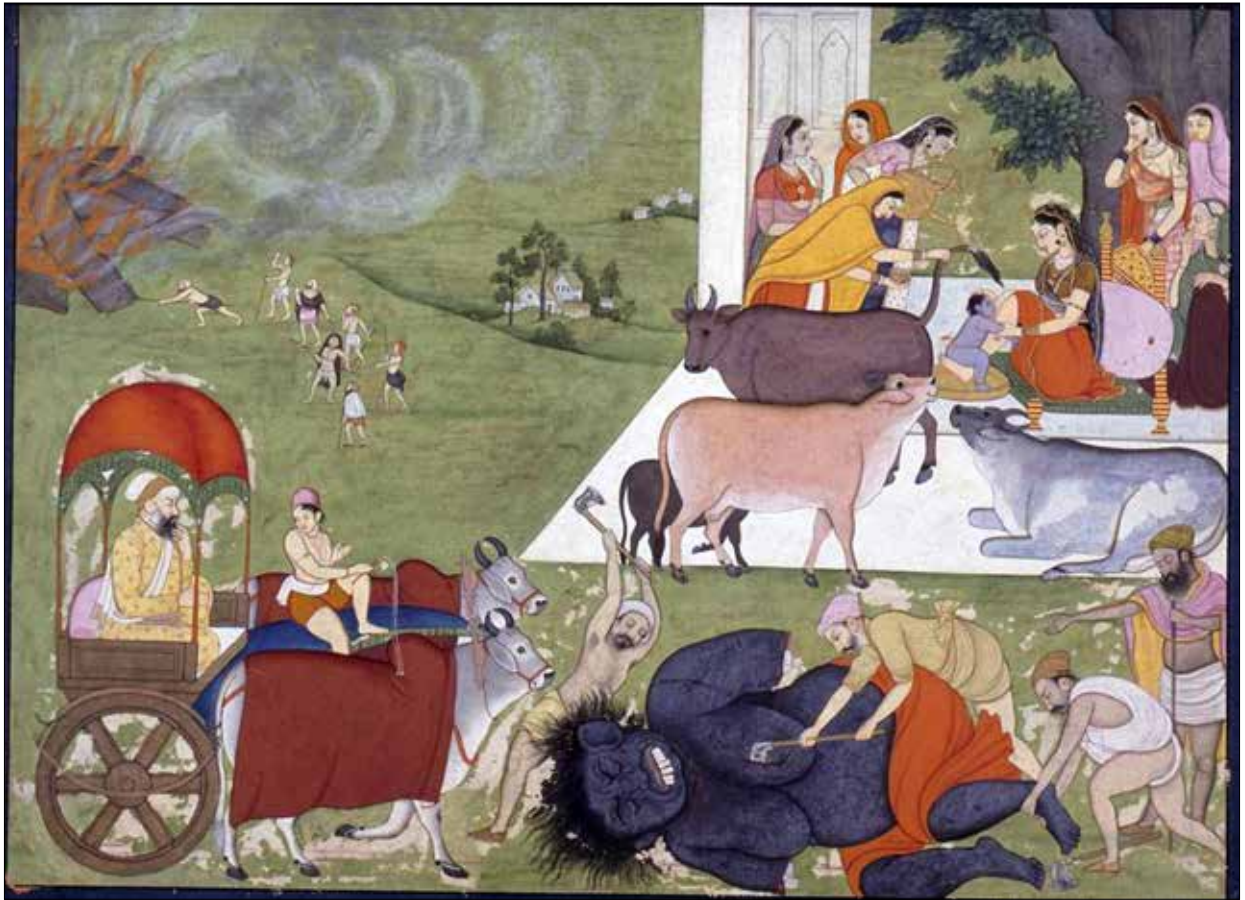
follow the authorities therein? Did they want to offer the members of their societies as sacrificial goats on Putana's bloodstained altar? What was their purpose?

Two Weapons

In "Putana", Srila Bhaktisiddhanta writes, "Regulation is necessary for controlling the inherent worldliness of conditioned souls." Srila Saraswati Thakur saw that the vast majority of persons in this degraded age of sense gratification need some form and regulation to help them be steady in their devotional practices. It is said that man is a social animal. Srila Saraswati Thakur saw that the natural tendency to want to identify oneself with a group could be dovetailed in a Krishna conscious institution where membership entailed following a strict schedule of devotional activities, thus helping the followers to become fixed in *bhajan*.

By analyzing the work of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, it is seen that they employed two secret weapons in the foundation of their institutions. They knew that as long as these two elements were present, in spite of Putana's inevitable arrival, their sincere followers would be safe. Those secret weapons were *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and Sri Krishna's holy names.

Every *vastu*, object, whether spiritual or material, has a particular *dharma*, intrinsic nature. The *dharma* of water is to be wet; the *dharma* of fire is to be hot, etc. These objects cannot be separated from their essential qualities. One of the essential and inseparable qualities of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is that it always creates a revolution. Text 1.5.11 says: *tad-vāg-visargo janatāgha-viplavo* — "This transcendental literature will bring about a revolution in the sinful lives of the world's misdirected civilization." If one sincerely reads *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, then the Putanas and Kamsas who inevitably arise within all religious institutions will be exposed. The second verse of the *Bhāgavatam* therefore describes, *dharmaḥ projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo* — "This *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* completely rejects all cheating religious activities which are materially motivated and propounds the highest truth." Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur and his followers such as Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada mandated for their institutions that there must be daily hearing and reciting of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Knowing that *kṛṣṇa-tulya bhāgavata* — the *Bhāgavatam* is non-different from Krishna (*Cc. madhya* 24.318),



Unknown artist. Pahari painting c. 1770

After the death of Putana, the Vrajavasi men burn her body while the ladies dote over Krishna

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta were, no doubt, confident that child Krishna in the form of the *Bhāgavatam* would safeguard sincere spiritual aspirants from Putana.

No Faults

The second secret weapon they employed was the chanting of Krishna's names. Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami was fond of referring to his society as the "Hare Krishna movement". Both he and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta knew that as long as the chanting of *kṛṣṇa-nāma* was present, sincere practitioners would be sheltered and purified. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 8.23.16 says:

*mantratas tantratas chidraṁ deśa-kālārha-vastutaḥ
sarvaṁ karoti niśchidram anusankīrtanaṁ tava*

There may be discrepancies in pronouncing the mantras and observing the regulative principles, and, moreover, there may be discrepancies in regard to time, place, person, and paraphernalia. But when your Lordship's holy name is chanted, everything becomes faultless.

Therefore Srila Prabhupada instructed the managers of his ISKCON society:

This chanting should go on. Instead of meetings, resolutions, dissolutions, revolutions, and no solutions, there should be chanting. (Statement to the GBC. *Prabhupāda Lilāmṛta*, volume 6.)

Faults are always present in religious institutions, especially in this age of Kali. However, the Gaudiya Vaishnava devotees have strong faith in *nāma*; they are *nāma-āśrayi*, those who take shelter of the holy name. They understand that any faults one may perceive in persons chanting the holy name are only temporary and apparent. Such *sāragrahi-vaiṣṇavas*, devotees following the essence, do not criticize members of other *sampradāyas*, camps, and institutions who are sincerely chanting the holy name. Rather, they feel transcendental ecstasy seeing the spreading of Mahaprabhu's mission. They have strong faith in the holy name as the quintessential panacea for all faults and troubles. Being non-different from his holy name, Krishna inspires and protects the devotee who sincerely calls upon him with love.



Unknown artist. Pahari painting c. 1770

The elderly gopīs of Vraja perform ceremonies for Krishna's protection after the killing of Putana

*teṣāṃ satata-yuktānāṃ bhajatāṃ prīti-pūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṃ taṃ yena mām upayānti te*

To those who are constantly devoted to serving me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to me. (Bg. 10.10.)



SRI KRISHNA KATHAMRITA BINDU

A free bi-monthly service provided by:

Gopal Jiu Publications
c/o Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir
National Highway No. 5
IRC Village
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India 751015



Email: katha@gopaljiu.org
Website: www.gopaljiu.org
Subscriptions: minimag@gopaljiu.org

Gopal Jiu Publications is a section of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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Per this promise, Krishna gives intelligence to the sincere devotee who is doing *nāma-bhajan*. Part of that intelligence is to reveal who is a *sādhu* and who is a cheater, just as baby Krishna exposed the true form of Putana to the inhabitants of Vrindavan.

Even after the disappearance of Sri Guru, if the disciple follows the instructions of his spiritual master and continues to chant the holy name, he can continue to associate with his divine master. In *Vāmana-kalpa* (quoted in *Bhakti-sandarbha* 237.8) Lord Brahma says:

*yo mantraḥ sa guruḥ sāḁsād yo guruḥ sa hariḥ svayam
gurun yasya bhavet tuṣṭas tasya tuṣṭo hariḥ svayam*

One's mantra is identical with one's guru. One's guru is identical with Lord Hari. When the guru is pleased, Lord Hari is also pleased. 🙏 (to be continued)

