

Sri Krishna Kathamrita



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Criticism and Vaishnavism





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Adapted from Mahabharata



MAYA'S BUSINESS AND THE DEVOTEE'S BUSINESS



His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

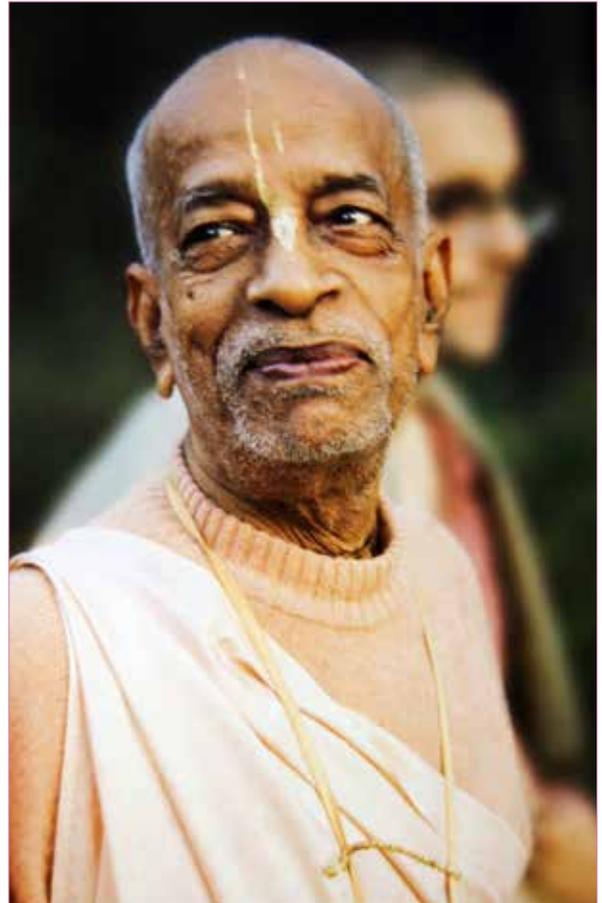
Māyā's business is kicking. And we are complaining, "Why you are kicking?"

[Māyā replies:] "Yes, I shall kick you because you are not Krishna conscious. I shall make you Krishna conscious by kicking, kicking, kicking. That's all. That is my business."

Our business is to implore, *ṭṛṇād api sunīcena*. Our preaching method is not kicking. Our preaching method is, *dante nidhāya ṭṛṇakam*, by taking a grass in the teeth, *padayor nipatya*, falling down at the feet, and *kāku-śataṁ kṛtvā ca, ahaṁ bravīmi* — flattering you hundred times, I'm just submitting one thing: "Become Krishna conscious." [Prabodhananda Saraswati's, *Caitanya-candrāmṛta* 8.90] That is our process.

Māyā's process is different. She'll say, "Why shall you become Krishna conscious? You just enjoy and I shall kick you very nicely. That's all."

And he accepts, "Yes, you kick me and let me enjoy, but I am not going to these Krishna conscious persons."



Cover: Lord Vishnu appears before Dhruva Maharaja
Unknown artist.

(laughter) You see? Practically, *māyā*'s business and our business is the same, but her process is different, our process is different. The people like her process. 🍌

— From a lecture in Seattle. 21 October 1968.

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE FIND FAULT IN THE VAISHNAVAS?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

Only those averse to Lord Hari and whose only assets are their defective material senses find fault with *vaiṣṇavas*. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Krishna states that his devotees never perish. Can those who worship the Lord without deviation ever fall down? They certainly achieve perfection. Since our vision is polluted, we find fault with others and thereby ruin ourselves. When we thus become materialists, we become bereft of service to guru and Krishna. We think of the trouble of others because we ourselves are in trouble. Because we are full of faults, we find fault with others. If we can correct ourselves then we will find that we have no time to find fault with others. 🍌

— *Amṛta Vani*. Excerpts from the teachings of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, compiled by Sri Bhakti Mayukh Bhagavata Maharaja. Translated by Bhumipati Das. Touchstone Media. Mumbai. 2004. p. 229

CHASTISING IS THE RIGHT OF GURU

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Gour Govinda Swami: To correct and criticize someone is the business of only such a person who is acting as guru. He has the right to inflict punishment on you, to catch hold of your ear and slap you, *guru-karṇa-dhāra*. He will correct you and criticize you, “You rascal, why are you doing this and that?”

... You have no right to chastise, no right to correct anyone. You are not guru. Guru has that right. If you see something and you have a good heart, “He is doing something wrong that is detrimental to his bhakti.” Then go to him, pay obeisances, and tell him confidentially, not in front of others, “O my brother, I see this thing and it pains me very much that you are doing this and this. This is a great impediment on the path of devotion. I fear you will not be able to make any advancement. Therefore, I am coming to you and telling you. O my friend, please don’t do it. Be serious about your *bhajana*.” Tell him in such a humble way. Speak to him confidentially, not in the presence of others.

If he is serious, he will admit, “You are my great friend. I am blind to my own faults. You pointed them out, so I will be careful.” He will accept it. But if you speak in the presence of others the reverse effect will be there....

Devotee: Sometimes I may want to correct someone, but I can see that the person won’t accept what I have to say.

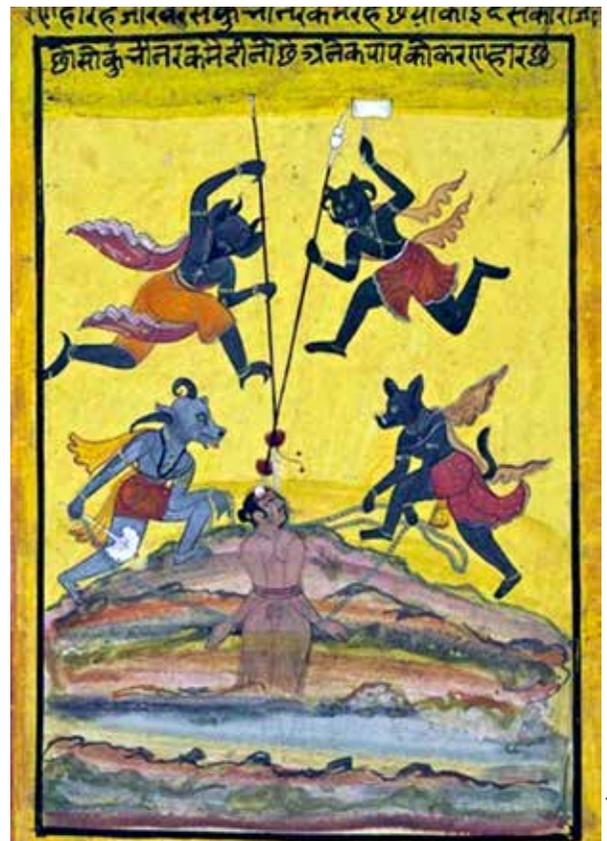
Gour Govinda Swami: So why shall you tell him? You should think, “He won’t accept it, so why shall I tell him? Let him go. As you sow, so shall you reap. What can I say to such a person?” 🍌

— *The Worship of Sri Guru*, p. 43, 48, 49. Evening program, San Francisco, 31 May 1994.

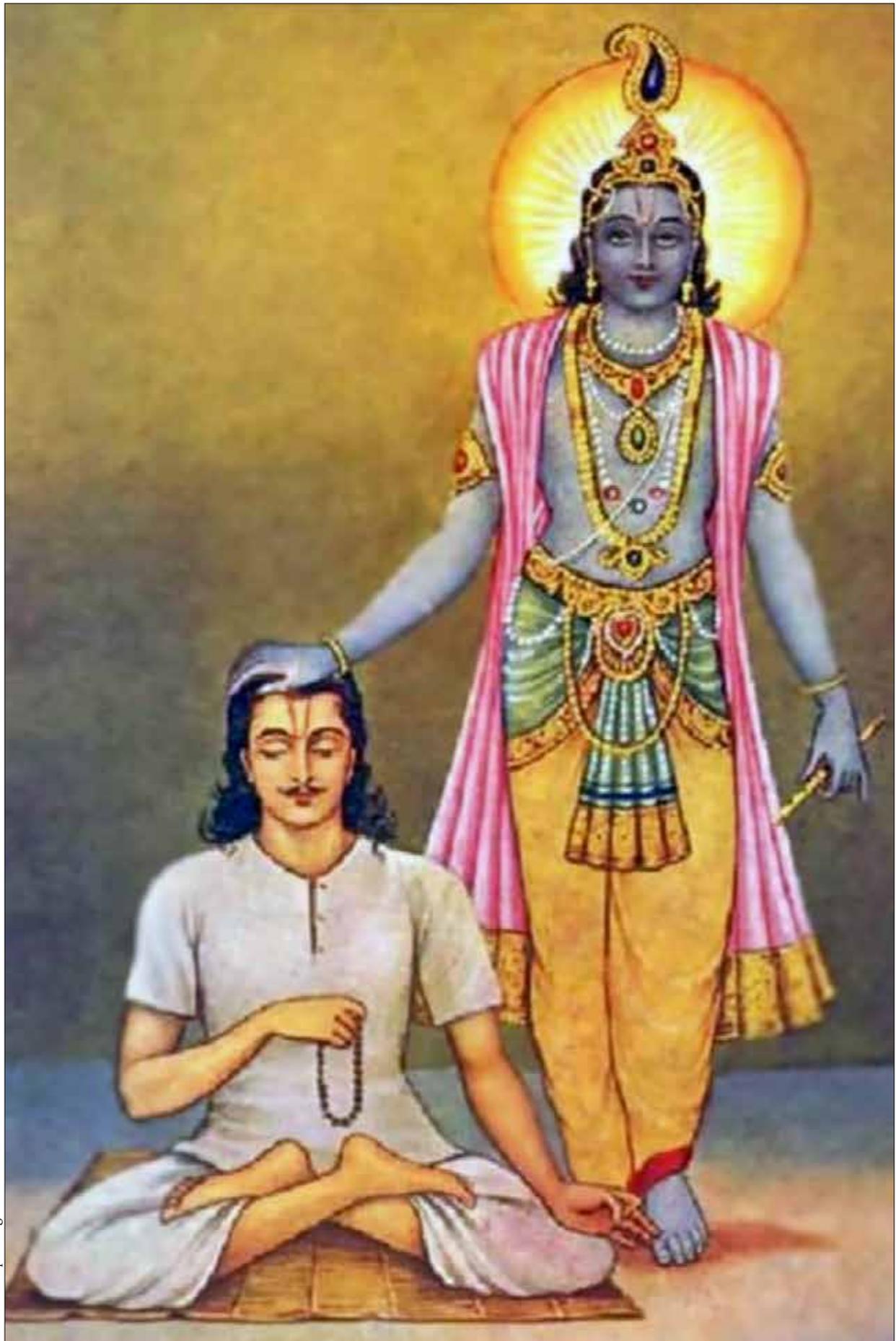
Of Saints and Critics

In his *Sārārtha-darśini* commentary on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 4.4.12, *Srila Viswanath Chakravarti Thakur* has described four types of saintly persons according to how they see good qualities and faults:

1) **Mahat** (“great person”) — A *mahat* has the ability to see some good in everyone. They also perceive faults in others, but they consider that those faults can be eventually transformed by



Demons harassing a devotee



Gita Press painting. Unknown artist.



Unknown artist. Pahari School. C. 1760.

Matsya Avatar kills the demon Shankhasura

certain methods into good qualities. Thus, if they feel that a person may be benefited by discussing that person's faults, they may, under appropriate circumstances, speak harsh words. Neem juice tastes very bitter, but it can cure diseases when administered appropriately. It should be noted that a *mahat* will never reject or condemn a faulty person but thinks only how that person may be benefited.

2) **Mahattara** ("greater person") — A *mahattara* also sees good and bad qualities in others but focuses on and praises the good qualities. Seeing a materialistic merchant, a *mahattara* will think, "Although he is a sense-gratifier, he takes good care of guests and is worthy of deliverance."

3) **Mahattama** ("especially great person") — A *mahattama* sees whatever good qualities others have and magnifies them, not seeing even the smallest fault. Viswanath describes their attitude, "This person has stolen my cloth because he is cold, and though he has a weapon, he doesn't attack me because he is merciful. He is virtuous."

4) **Ati-mahattama** ("extremely great person") — An *ati-mahattama* sees good qualities in others even where there are none. Their attitude is, "In this world there are no bad people. Everyone is good."

In the same purport, Viswanath also delineates four types of *asādhus*, wicked or bad persons, who are characterized according to their propensity for fault-finding:

1) **Asādhū** ("wicked person") — An *asādhū* sees some good qualities in others but presumes that eventually those good qualities will be overshadowed or spoiled by some fault. For example, upon seeing someone working for another person's benefit, the *asādhū* will conclude that eventually he or she will want to exploit the person whom they are helping. Simply put, *asādhūs* are not gentlemen.

2) **Asādhutara** ("very wicked person") — An *asādhutara* is even more improper. He or she sees only faults in others and overlooks others' good qualities. "This *sannyāsī* eats ghee rice to fill his stomach. He is lusty and should be considered fallen."

3) **Asādhutama** ("especially wicked person") — An *asādhutama* takes small faults and magnifies them, seeing no good qualities at all. Viswanath gives an example. An *asādhutama* will criticize and condemn a renunciate as being a "bogus rascal", for the fault of giving up the forest and living in the house of a married man. The *asādhutama* will conclude, "His obvious motivation is only to steal the money of that householder."

sohate sāyaker viddham vanaṁ paraśunā hatam
vācā duruktaṁ bībhatsaṁ na saṁrohati vāk-kṣatam

A forest, whether pierced by arrows or cut down by scythes, grows again, but a heart pierced with harsh and rude words never recovers.

karṇinālikanārācān nirharanti śarīrataḥ
vāk-śalyas tu na nirhartuṁ śakyo hṛdisāyo hi saḥ

Arrows and darts can be extracted from the body, but the darts of words cannot be extracted from the depth of the heart. 🌸

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CRITICISM AND VAISHNAVISM



In the last issue of Bindu, we printed a verse from the *Padma Purāṇa* (4.1.31-32), that among other points describes, *para-nindām na kurvanti vijñeyās te ca vaiṣṇavāḥ* — “Those who do not criticize others should be known as *vaiṣṇavas*.” The spirit of this statement is found in many places in *śāstra* and the writings of our *ācāryas*. Srila Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami, while describing the glories of Pandit Haridas, the dear associate of Gaura Nitai, writes in *Cc. ādi* 8.62:

vaiṣṇavera guṇa-grāhī, nā dekhaye doṣa
kāya-mano-vākye kare vaiṣṇava-santoṣa

“He always accepted the good qualities of *vaiṣṇavas* and never found fault in them. He engaged his heart and soul only to satisfy the *vaiṣṇavas*.”

Srila Prabhupada comments on this verse:

It is a qualification of a *vaiṣṇava* that he is *adoṣa-darśī*: he never sees others’ faults. Of course, every human being has both good qualities and faults. Therefore it is said, *saj-janā guṇam icchanti doṣam icchanti pāmarāḥ*: everyone has a combination of faults and glories. But a *vaiṣṇava*, a sober man, accepts only a man’s glories and not his faults, for flies seek sores whereas honeybees seek honey. Haridas Pandit never found fault with a *vaiṣṇava* but considered only his good qualities.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada has similarly stated:

No one should criticize or glorify others’ natures or activities. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* confirms this instruction. The *Caitanya-bhāgavata* states, *para carcakera gati*

Painting by Mani Shiv. 2013.



Worshipping Krishna with Tulasi

4) *Aty-asādhutama* (“extremely wicked person”)

— An *aty-asādhutama* sees faults in all others, even where there are no faults. “In this world, or in this society, no one is good. Everyone is evil.” They are the very worst. — MD 🌸

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HARSH WORDS

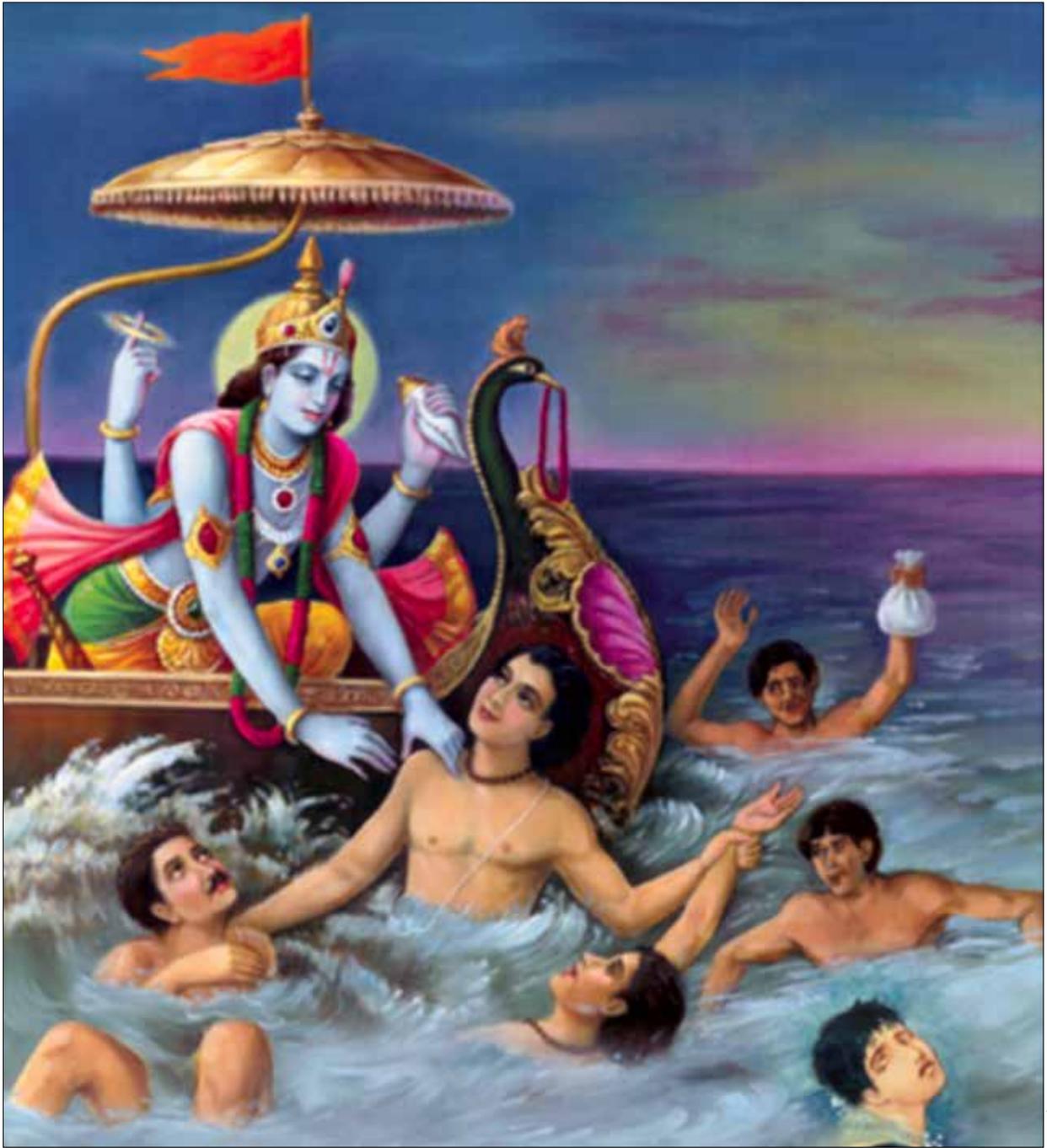


Mahābhārata, udyoga parva 34.73-77

Shortly before the battle of Kurukshetra took place, Vidura offered the following advice to Dhrtarastra:

abhyāvahati kalyāṇam vividham vāk subhāṣitā
saiva durbhāṣitā rājann anarthāyopapadyate

Words spoken sweetly bring many blessings, but the same words spoken harshly, O king, generate evil.



Unknown artist

The Lord delivers his devotees from the ocean of material existence

nāhi kona kale: a critic never attains benefit. Critics go to hell. Instead of criticizing others, one should rectify oneself. (*Amṛta Vani*, page 251)

The Nature of Non-devotees and Pretenders

Our Goswami *ācāryas* repeatedly define non-devotees as those who engage in the business of fault-finding. Srila Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has explained (in *Cc. ādi 17.260*)

*yata adhyāpaka, āra tāira śiṣya-gaṇa
dharmī, karmī, tapo-niṣṭha, nindaka, durjana*

The so-called professors and their students follow principles of religion, perform pious acts, and execute austerities, yet [by nature] they are blasphemers and rogues.

In *antya-līlā* (3.29) of his *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur has described the quality of *vaiṣṇavas* and false-devotees as follows:

*ei se vaiṣṇava-dharma-sabāre praṇati
sei dharmadhvajī, yāra ithe nāhi rati*

The *dharma* or nature of a *vaiṣṇava* is they offer respects to everyone. The



Unknown photographer

Devotees in New York City in 1968

dharmadhvajīs, hypocritical pretenders (literally, persons who advertise or wave the flag of their religiosity), are those who have no attachment for this.

Speak the Truth Frankly

However, one may have a doubt in this regard. One may point out that great *ācāryas* such as Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada and Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada often spoke strongly, pointed out faults in others, and encouraged their disciples to do the same. Indeed, *śāstra* instructs that if one has the strength to do so, it is a great fault to ignore sinful acts and not bring such offenders to justice:

*jānann api ca yaḥ pāpaṁ śaktimān na niyacchati
īśaḥ san so 'pi tenaiva karmaṇā samprayujyate*

A man who has power to punish sin but does not do so, who knows a sin has been committed, takes a reaction for that sin. (*Mahābhārata ādi 171.12*)

The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*madhya 5.90*) makes the same point:

jāni' sākṣi nāhi deya, tāra pāpa haya

A person who knows things as they are and still does not bear witness becomes involved in sinful activities

When commenting on the word “*satyam*” in his purport to *Bg. 10.4*, Srila Prabhupada speaks in a similar way:

According to social conventions, it is said that one can speak the truth only when it is palatable to others. But that is not truthfulness. The truth should be spoken in a straightforward way, so that others will understand actually what the facts are. If a man is a thief and if people are warned that he is a thief, that is truth. Although sometimes the truth is unpalatable, one should not refrain from speaking it. Truthfulness demands that the facts be presented as they are for the benefit of others. That is the definition of truth.

Again, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada has strongly declared:

There is no doubt that the words of the *sādhu* possess the power of destroying the evil propensities of one's mind. The *sādhus* in this way benefit everyone who associates with them. There are many things which we do not disclose to the *sādhu*. The real *sādhu* makes us speak out what we keep concealed in our hearts. He then applies the knife. The

Ślokāmṛta

DON'T AGITATE OTHERS

The following verse is quoted in Srila Rupa Goswami's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhuḥ* (1.2.117) as well as Srila Jiva Goswami's *Bhakti-sandarbha* (106). Both of them cite it as being from the *Mahābhārata*.

*piteva putraṁ karuṇo nodvejayati yo janam
viśuddhasya hr̥ṣikeśas tūrṇaṁ tasya prasidati*

Lord Krishna at once gives his mercy to a person who does not trouble others and who is as kind to them as a father is to his son.

— Jiva Goswami. *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbha*. English translation by Kusakratha Das. The Krishna Institute. Culver City, California.



very word “*sādhu*” has no meaning other than this. He stands in front of the block with the uplifted sacrificial knife in his hand. The sensuous desires of men are like goats. The *sādhu* stands there to kill those desires by the merciful stroke of the keen edge of the sacrificial knife in the form of unpleasant language. If the *sādhu* turns into my flatterer then he does me harm, he becomes my enemy. If he gives us flattery, then we are led to the road that brings enjoyment but no real well-being. (*Sri Chaitanya's Teachings*. Pp. 26-27)

Who is Qualified to Chastise?

Other questions arise at this point, “Who is the *sādhu* Srila Bhaktisiddhanta speaks of? And is the injunction to speak the plain truth in a bold way equally appropriate for all devotees in all circumstances?”

Some years ago, one of the chief politicians of a country came to visit a Hare Krishna center. That leader was a lady and was received with respect by senior devotees who began showing her around the project. Tagging along with them was a new *bhakta*. This new devotee had recently memorized a verse. Deciding to say something he felt was relevant and inspiring to the politician,

at an opportune moment he came close and told her, “Chanakya Pandit has advised, *viśvāso naiva kartavyaḥ strīṣu rāja-kuleṣu ca*: ‘There are two persons one should not trust — a politician and a woman.’”

Although the verse was one that was sometimes cited by Srila Prabhupada, it didn't seem to impress the lady politician, who after the exchange never came again to our center. It's clear that bold speaking needs to be tempered with wisdom.

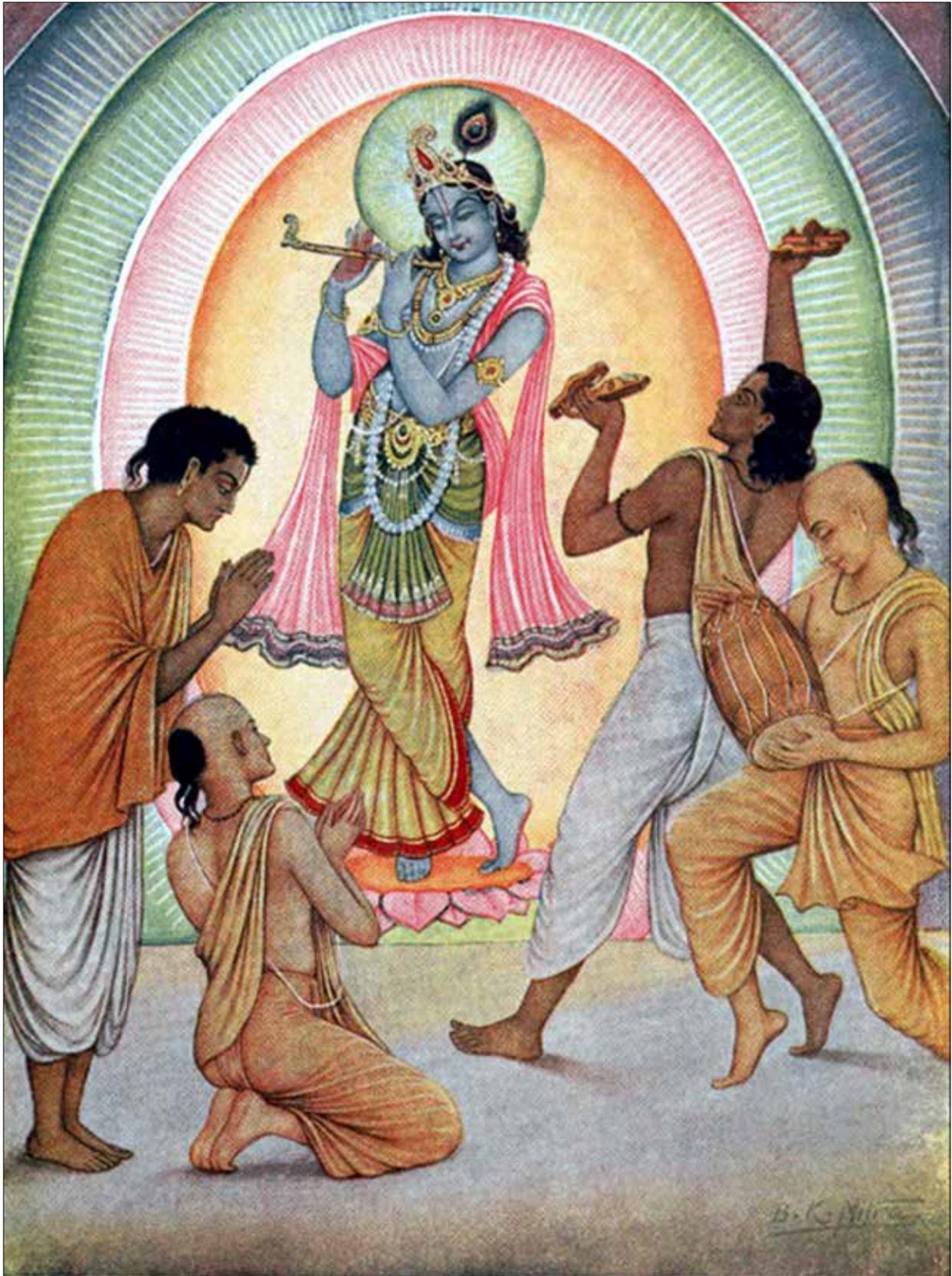
In an article titled, “*Vaiṣṇava-nindā*”, Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode has explained that *śāstra* does not forbid one from discussing others' faults if one has good intentions. He says those good intentions are of two kinds:

1. If some auspiciousness comes to a person by discussing their sins, then it is good to do so.
2. If the result is beneficial for the world, one may speak about sinners and their activities. Such an act is considered pious.



Unknown photographer

Devotees doing harinama in New York City



Painting by B. K. Mitra

Devotees doing kirtana for the pleasure of Krishna

In the same article, Bhaktivinode says that we should be careful speaking about the faults in a devotee:

To discuss the faults that may arise by chance in a *vaiṣṇava* is an offense. The main thing is that the discussion or even consideration of these faults in a *vaiṣṇava* is an offense to the holy name, etc.

Bhaktivinode then describes that finding fault with a *vaiṣṇava* for any of the following three reasons is an offense to the holy name:

- 1) Impurities that have come from the *vaiṣṇavas* past — *prag-utpanna*.
- 2) Impurities that are perishing — *kṣayāvaśiṣṭa*.
- 3) Impure activities that take place accidentally — *daivotpanna*.

The Thakur writes:

Criticizing a *vaiṣṇava* for any of these reasons prevents *nāma-sphurti*, the appearance of the holy name in one's heart, and keeps one from becoming a *vaiṣṇava*.

Therefore, Bhaktivinode instructs:

Unless one has a noble intention, one should never discuss about any previous faults that a *vaiṣṇava* might have had prior to the awakening of *bhakti*. Nor should a *vaiṣṇava* be criticized for any leftover impurities he or she may have. (*Sajjana-toṣaṇī* 5.3 and 5.5. Article entitled, “*Vaiṣṇava-nindā*”).

Business of Guru

Although devotees speak boldly and don't compromise when speaking on the principles of *bhakti*, they generally avoid speaking about the faults of any particular person and focus on the sin rather than the sinner. The *śāstric* principle as described in the *Padma Purāṇa* (*Brahma khaṇḍa* 25.17) is:

*aśraddadhāne vimukhe 'py aśṛṇvati
yaś copadeśaḥ śiva-nāmāparādhah*

It is an offense to the holy name to give instructions to those who are *aśraddhā*, without faith; *vimukha*, reluctant or opposed to our message; or *aśṛṇvati*, one who is not listening.

Guru is one whom we have faith in. In his purport to *Bhāgavatam* 8.17.1, Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada quotes and explains a verse from the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.23):

yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau — One should have complete faith in the guru, who helps the disciple make progress in spiritual life.



Krishna and Mother Yashoda

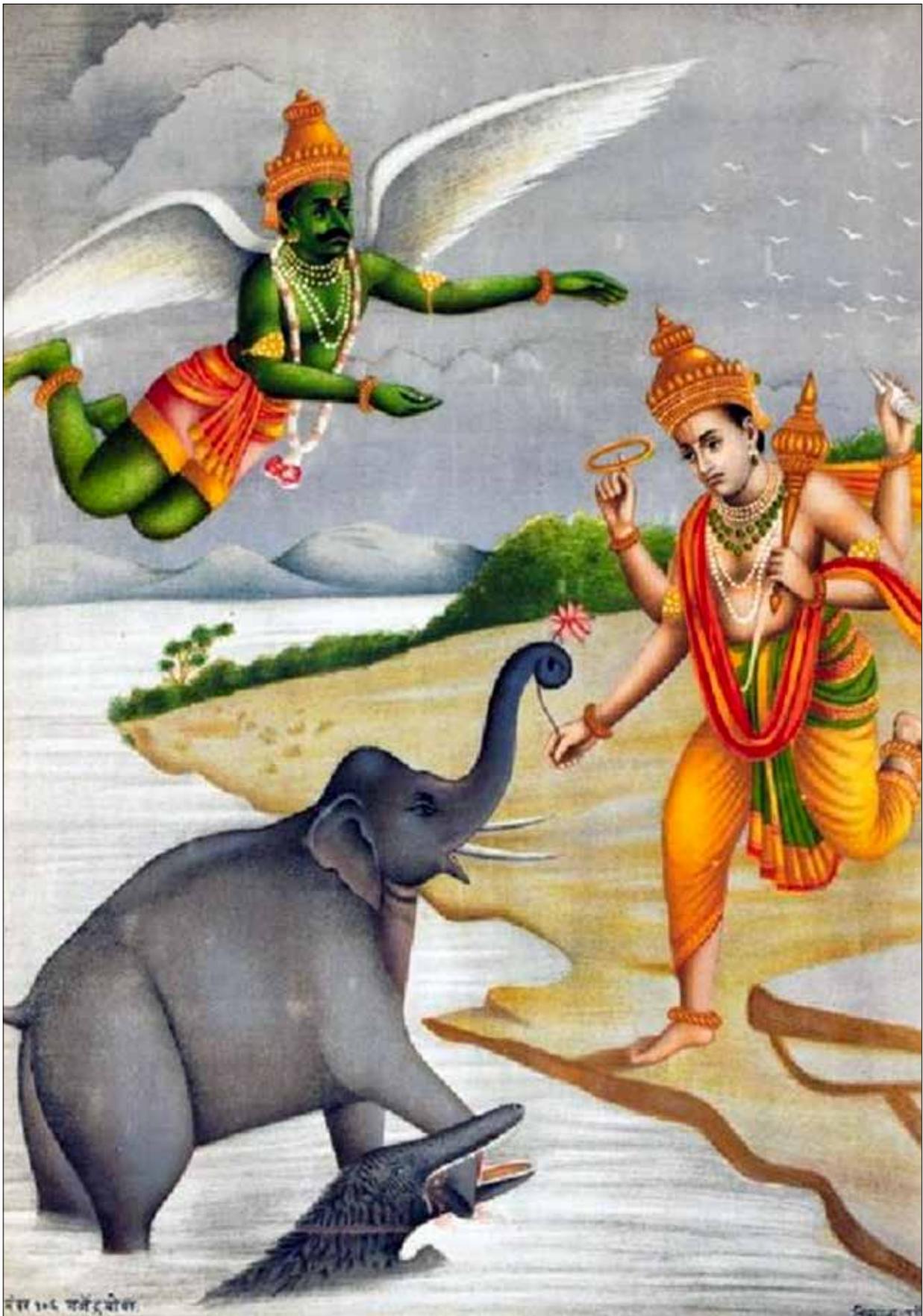
Instructing and chastising individuals is the business of guru. This is even more so in the case of devotees. Even the demigods do not attempt to chastise the *vaiṣṇavas*. In his *Bhakti-sandarbhā* (148), Srila Jiva Goswami quotes a verse from the *Skanda Purāṇa*:

*na brahmā na śivāgnindrā nāhaṁ nānye divaukasaḥśaktās tu
nigrahaṁ kartuṁ vaiṣṇavānām mahātmanām*

Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva, Agni, Indra, myself (Yamaraj), and other demigods are unable to chastise the broad-minded *vaiṣṇavas*.

If someone doesn't have faith in us it is an offense to try to instruct them. In that case we should teach by example. Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada wrote the following in a letter to a disciple:

I have noted your several complaints against the devotees, but it would be better to set the example rather than to criticize the defects of the devotees. We should always remember that we recruit members from people in general. It is not expected that every one of our members should be immediately to the standard qualification. The best thing for you is to



Unknown artist. Chitrasahala Press, Pune. Late 19th - early 20th century

The deliverance of Gajendra the elephant

set the example by your personal behavior and try to reform the others, not by criticizing but by friendly behavior. If sometimes there are any disagreements, we should try to forget such incidences and be always in friendship with each other. (14 October 1971.)

Necessity of Discrimination

For healthy material and spiritual life — in all things — including one’s eating and association — we must distinguish between good and bad, ripe and rotten, poison and nectar, pure and impure. The art of discrimination is a necessity. We are taught by guru, *sādhū*, and *śāstra* how to distinguish right from wrong. Yet publicly declaring someone’s fault is detrimental to *bhakti*. The famous *ācārya* Sridhar Swami in his commentary on *Bhāg. 7.1.22* has given the standard definition of *ninda*, offense, as: *nindanam doṣa-kīrtanam* — speaking of another’s faults is blasphemy.

The Guru Paradox

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta (as described in *Prabhupader Upadeśāmṛta*) has described an innate paradox in the principle of guru:

If the *vaiṣṇavas* do not play the role of spiritual master, then the transcendental family of *vaiṣṇavas* will dwindle and disappear. The problem is that as soon as one becomes guru, he ceases to be a *vaiṣṇava*. Therefore, it is not proper to act as guru if one is not qualified. This means only inauspicious results for the disciple and falldown for the guru. The spiritual master does not identify himself as a guru, because his inner self-identification as a servant of God is too powerful. If the spiritual master thinks of himself as guru, then the first vowel of his name changes and he becomes *goru*, a cow.

... A devotee of Krishna who knows the philosophy of Krishna consciousness can act as spiritual master. Those who are ritualists, impersonalists, or yogis can never be accepted as guru because they are not devotees. Only one who worships the Personality of Godhead can be guru.

On the other hand, someone who proudly thinks that he has become the servant of Krishna cannot be guru either. As long as one considers oneself a *vaiṣṇava*, he cannot be guru. For this reason, anyone who functions as a guru does not go around calling himself a guru or a *vaiṣṇava*. This is why my spiritual master never claimed to be a *vaiṣṇava*. Anyone who calls himself a *vaiṣṇava* is immediately branded a “non-*vaiṣṇava*.”

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta then cited and explained a few lines from a song written by his father, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur (*Kalyāṇa-kalpa-taru 3.2.8.2*):

āmi to' vaiṣṇava e buddhi hoile
amānī nā ho'bo āmi



Unknown artist. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust

Envious fools criticise Krishna's dear devotees

pratiṣṭhāśā āsi' hṛdoya dūṣibe
hoibo niraya-gāmī

If I think, “I am a *vaiṣṇava*,” then I will never become humble. My heart will become contaminated with the hope of receiving honor from others, and I will surely go to hell.

tomāra kīnkora āpane jānibo
guru-abhimāna tyaji'

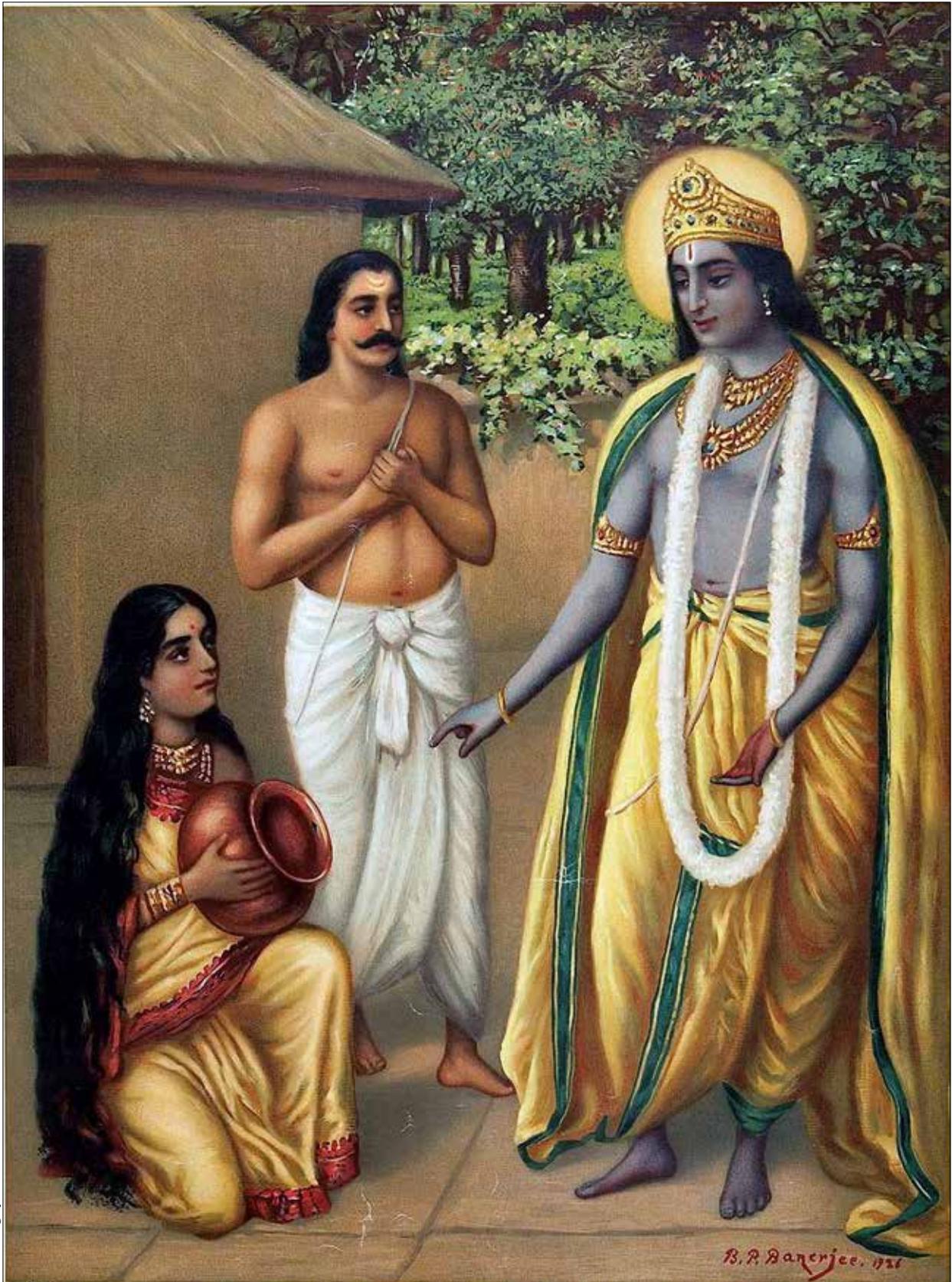
Give me the mercy that I can renounce the false conception of my being guru and can be your servant.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta further brought out this point in a letter wherein he addressed the misbehavior of one of his disciples:

My instruction to you is not to criticize others, but to correct and purify yourself. I am forced to criticize my own disciples and those who have come to me for instruction. I do not understand why you would go out of your way to try to perform such a difficult task. (Letter of 4 December 1931. From *Prabhupādera Patrāvalī*.)

Real Vs Self-appointed Reform

In an article in the *Harmonist* magazine (May 1932, issue 11) titled, “Sree Chaitanya in South India”. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada explains the hypocrisy of appointing ourselves as the



Painting by B. K. Mitra

Krishna with Yudhishthir and Draupadi

reformers of others if we have not first reformed ourselves. Ironically, it is only one who gives up the attitude of being guru and correcting others who can successfully correct others:

The world stands in no need of any reformer. The world has a very competent person for guiding its minutest happenings. The person who determines that there is scope for reform of the world, himself stands in need of reform. The world goes on in its own perfect way. No person can deflect it even the breadth of a hair from the course chalked out for it by providence. When we perceive any change being actually effected in the course of events of this world by the agency of any particular individual, we must know very well that the agent possesses no real power at any stage. The agent finds himself driven forward by a force belonging to a different category from himself. The course of the world does not require to be changed by the agency of any person. What is necessary is to change our outlook on this world. This was done for the contemporary generation by the mercy of Sri Chaitanya. It can only be known to recipients of his mercy. The scriptures declare that it is only necessary to listen with an open mind to the name of Krishna from the lips of a bona fide devotee. As soon as Krishna enters the listening ear, he clears up the vision of the listener so that he no longer has any ambition of ever acting the part of a reformer of any other person, because he finds that nobody is left without the very highest guidance. It is therefore his own reform that he is increasingly able to realize, by the eternally continuing mercy of the Supreme Lord. — MD 🍌

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KAUSIKA'S HONESTY



Adapted from

Mahābhārata, Karna-parva, chapter 3

Krishna tells a story to Arjuna regarding the subtleties of truth:

Once there was an ascetic named Kausika who did not have much scriptural knowledge. He lived a short distance from a village where several rivers met. Kausika made a vow to always speak the truth. He became famous as one who never told a lie. One day some innocent persons who were running in fear of a gang of cutthroat thieves entered the forest near the sage's dwelling. The thieves appeared there soon thereafter, searching for the men to rob them. Approaching Kausika, they inquired, "O holy one, we are searching for a group of men who recently came here. In the name of truth, tell us where they are." Kausika told the truth and said, "Those men have entered the woods just near here." The cruel thieves then slaughtered those innocent persons and took their wealth. For this sin, Kausika fell into hellish life and suffered greatly. 🍌

— *Mahabharata.* English translation by Kisari Mohan Ganguli. Published by Pratap Chandra Roy. Calcutta. 1896.