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Humility and Love of God





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THE HUMBLE DEMEANOR OF THE SAINTS



His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

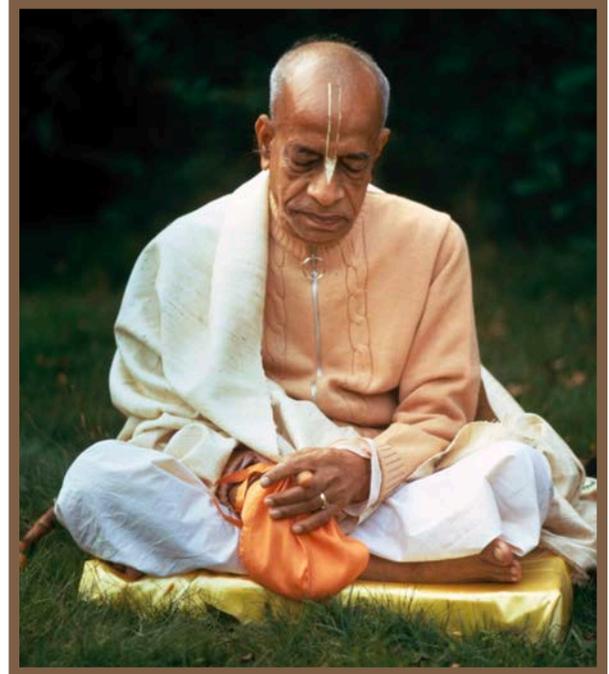
It is characteristic of advanced *vaiṣṇavas* following the principles of *bhakti* that they think themselves ordinary human beings. This is not an artificial exhibition of humility; a *vaiṣṇava* sincerely thinks this way and therefore never admits his exalted position. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 5.24.26.)

Revatinandan Das: You must be higher than the *paramahansa* stage, Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada: I am lower than you. I am lower than you.

Revatinandan Das: You are so beautiful. You are *paramahansa*, but still you are preaching to us.

Srila Prabhupada: No, I am lower than you. I am the lowest of all the creatures. I am simply trying to execute the order of my spiritual master. That's all. That should be the business of everyone. Try best. Try your best to execute the higher order. That is the safest way of progressing. (Lecture in Surat. 19 December 1970.)



I am very sorry that _____ has assumed such air of importance. We should always remember that we are on the path of perfection, but we are not perfect. If _____ or anyone thinks that he has attained perfection he will be wrongly directed. I have asked you all to address your godbrothers as *prabhu*. This *prabhu* means boss. If everyone of

Cover: "Hanuman, Sugriva, Jambavan and others worshipping Lord Ramachandra".
Unknown artist.



Painting by Kartika Viswas

Nimai Pandit offers respect to his teacher Gangadas Pandit

us thinks of his fellow worker as boss there is no question of misunderstanding. The mistake is that being addressed as boss or *prabhu* one thinks himself as actually *prabhu* or the boss. One should not forget himself as humble servant even though one is addressed as *prabhu*. The spiritual master is offered respects as they are offered to the Supreme Lord. Unfortunately, if the spiritual master thinks that he has become the Supreme Lord then he is doomed. A bona fide spiritual master always think of himself as the servant of the Lord. One should never forget to be humble in dealings. If everyone of us would conduct our business in that spirit of *prabhu* and servant then there is very little chance of being misunderstood. Sometimes misunderstanding may take place, but it should be adjusted in a spirit of service attitude to the *prabhu*. (Letter to Nandarani. 28 November 1967.)

REAL VERSUS FALSE HUMILITY



Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

Yet if instead of chanting the holy name we do something else – if we keep our bead bag hidden inside

our cloth or display artificial humility, advertising our meekness while internally maintaining a desire for name and fame, or if we want to make a show of *vaiṣṇavism*, even internally, or if we maintain a sense of “I” and “mine”, or if we accept non-*vaiṣṇavas* as *vaiṣṇavas* and consider *vaiṣṇavas* non-*vaiṣṇavas*, or if we commit *nāmāparādhas* like blaspheming saints, or if we glorify non-devotees and encourage the *nāmāparādha* of committing sinful activities on the strength of our chanting – certainly we will be deceived and will not attain the result. 🍌

— *Srī Vaktṛtāvalī*. Translated by Bhumiapati Das. From a lecture in Mayapur on 8 November 1925. Touchstone Media. Kolkata. 2014.

HUMILITY MEANS NOT CONCOCTING OUR OWN SYSTEM OF BHAJAN



Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

The devotee who chants the holy name offenselessly never rejects the devotional process he received from his guru nor introduces a new method, replacing the *mahā-mantra* with some concocted and imaginary rhyme. A *vaiṣṇava*'s humility cannot be doubted or challenged if he preaches the glories of the holy name and writes books, as long as he strictly adheres to the



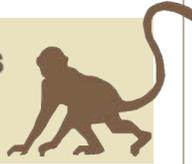
Unknown artist. Gita Press, Gorakhpur

Krishna loves his devotees

instructions of his guru. One who tries to cheat and deceive others by making a show of humility although he lacks it, just to gain cheap adoration, is not truly humble. The *mahā-bhāgavata* who is constantly chanting does not see the material world as something for him to exploit for personal gain, but as diverse paraphernalia for rendering service to Lord Krishna, his associates, and devotees. He does not think that this world is his to enjoy. Although he becomes proficient in chanting he never considers giving up the *mahā-mantra*. He is not interested in propagating new ideas and opinions. He realizes that to regard oneself as a guru of *vaiṣṇava* devotees strikes the death knell of his humility. 🍌

— *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka*. English translation by Sarvabhavana Das. From Bhaktivinode's commentary on text three. Rasbihari Lal & Sons. Vrindavan. 1999.

THE LORD PROTECTS THE SURRENDERED



Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

The Ramayana describes how Lord Rama built a bridge and crossed the ocean to Lanka. Before the battle with Ravana began, Ravana's youngest brother, Vibhishan, came to take shelter of Rama. Rama immediately gave him shelter. That is the duty

of a king, a *ksatriya*. If someone seeks shelter, you must give him protection. But the advisors of Lord Rama said, "No! Don't give him shelter. He's from the enemy's camp. He has come here as a spy."

Lord Rama then told his advisors a story. Once, a man was passing through a dense jungle. In that forest were many tigers, lions, and ferocious animals. One tiger came to attack that man, so he climbed a tree and saved his life. But the tiger had developed greed to drink human blood. So the tiger sat down underneath the tree to wait. The tiger then noticed a monkey in the tree. He told that monkey, "You are my brother. This human is your enemy. When you jump from one tree to another to get fruit, the human beats you and throws stones at you. And when you come down to the ground he sends his dog to catch you. Also, human beings cut down trees. So they are your constant enemy. You should understand this. You are very intelligent; you are my brother and my friend. Don't stay with such an enemy. It is very dangerous. Push that man down from the tree. I am hungry. If you do this then I'll get food. I'll satisfy my hunger and our friendship will remain forever. I'll be very, very grateful to you."

The monkey replied, "O my brother tiger, I understand what you have said. But the human being

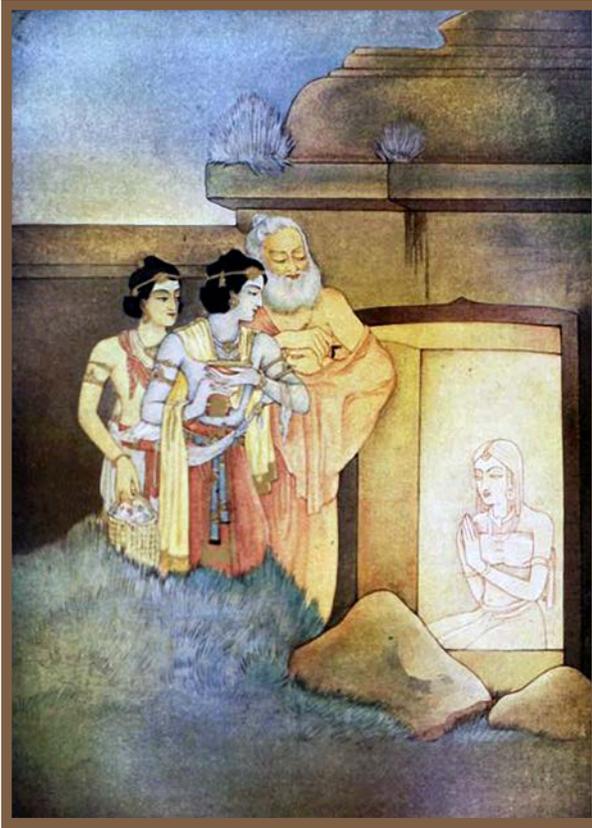


Vibhishan comes to surrender to Lord Ramachandra



Painting by Balasaheb Pandit Pant Pratimidhi

When Vibhishan came to take shelter of Lord Rama, Sugriva, Angad, and the other vanaras were against it.



Ahalya takes shelter of Lord Ramachandra

has *dharma*. Although I am an animal with no *dharma*, still my conscience says that it is wrong to put one in danger who is trying to save himself.”

Then the tiger thought of another plan. He gave assurance to the man, “O my brother, you have *dharma*, you are a human being. Is it not your *dharma* that you should give food to one who is very hungry? I am very hungry now, you must give food to a hungry *jīva*. You should push down this monkey, then I’ll get food. The man thought, “Yes, very good”, and he pushed down the monkey, who fell in front of the tiger. But the tiger didn’t eat him and the monkey climbed back up the tree. The tiger had developed greed to drink human blood, so he didn’t eat the monkey. No one eats the flesh of a monkey.

Then the tiger said, “O my brother monkey! You see, we are friends! I didn’t harm you. I spared you because we are friends. But see what that irreligious man did. He pushed you down right in front of me. So now you should push him down so that I can satisfy my hunger, and thereby he will get a good lesson.

The monkey said, “This man may be *adharmic*. Although I am only an animal, I am not *adharmic*. I cannot do this.”

It is considered that the human birth is a rarely achieved, superior birth. But they have a history of irreligiousness which is not even found in the society of animals.

Bhagavan Ramachandra told this story, and said, “This is my mission. I have come to establish ideal behavior in human society.” Therefore, he is known as *maryādā-puruṣottama*, the topmost example of and enjoyer of Vedic propriety. He never transgressed *veda-maryādā*, Vedic regulation and etiquette. Lord Ramachandra was the ideal king, father, son, friend, brother, and husband. He was ideal in every respect. Lord Ramachandra said, “If someone comes to take shelter of me, I never think of his past history. I immediately give him shelter. Vibhishan has taken shelter of me. I have given him shelter and he is our friend. No one should have any doubt about him. He has been made the commander-in-chief.” This is the nature of Lord Ramachandra. 🍊

— From a class on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Bhubaneswar. 6 February 1995.

LORD RAMA'S ASSURANCE

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddha-kāṇḍa, chapter 12

*mitrabhāvena samprāptaṁ na tyajeyam katham cana
doṣo yady api tasya syāt satām etad aqarhitam*

[Lord Ramachandra said:] I cannot refuse to receive under any circumstances one who has come to me in a friendly spirit. Even if there is wickedness in him, his acceptance is not reprehensible in the eyes of good people. (Text 3)

*sakṛd eva prapannāya tavāsmīti ca yācate
abhayaṁ sarva-bhūtebhyo dadāmy etad vratam mama*

It is my eternal principle that if any living being takes shelter of me, even once, saying, “I am yours,” then I award that person freedom from all fear. (Text 20)

— *Śrīmad Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa*. Gita Press. Gorakhpur, India. 1995.



FLIGHT OF THE CROW



Mahābhārata

The following story told by Salya to Karna from the forty-first chapter of the Karna-parva of Mahābhārata nicely illustrates the dangers of pride.

There once lived a wealthy vaiśya by the side of the ocean. He performed many sacrifices and gave generously in charity. He was quiet, observant of the duties of his order, and was pure in his habits and mind. The vaiśya had a number of sons all of whom were pious and kind to all living creatures. Living in a place that was ruled over by a pious king, the vaiśya was peaceful and free from anxiety.

There was a crow that daily came to the home of the vaiśya to feast on remnants of the family's food that the children gave him. After eating every day the opulent milk, puddings, yogurt, honey, butter and other foods, the crow became very arrogant and began to think little of all other birds.

One day, some great white swans, who were practically equal to Garuda in terms of speed and range of flight, came to the shore of the ocean. When the sons of the vaiśya saw the wonderful swans, they jokingly told the crow, "O ranger of the sky, you are superior to all of these big birds."

Intoxicated with arrogance and false pride, the crow considered these words to be true. That foolish crow then challenged the leader of the swans, saying, "Let us have a flying competition to see who is the best."

Hearing the words of the arrogant crow, those swans began to laugh. Those foremost of birds, capable of flying anywhere at will, said to the crow, "We are swans who live on the Manasa Lake. We traverse all over the earth, and amongst winged creatures we are always spoken highly of for the length of distances we fly. How can a crow like you hope to compete with a swan?"

The crow replied, "Great as I am, I tell you that before your eyes I shall fly for hundreds of *yojanas* [a *yojana* is eight miles] displaying a hundred and one varieties of motions in flight. Rising up, swooping down, whirling around, going straight, proceeding gently, going backwards, darting forward, and



Unknown artist.

moving with great velocity, I shall display my great strength and expertise in flight."

One of the swans said, "O crow, you may fly in a hundred and one different ways. I however, shall fly in only one way, which is the way all other birds know. For I do not know any other. O you of red eyes, you may fly as you like."

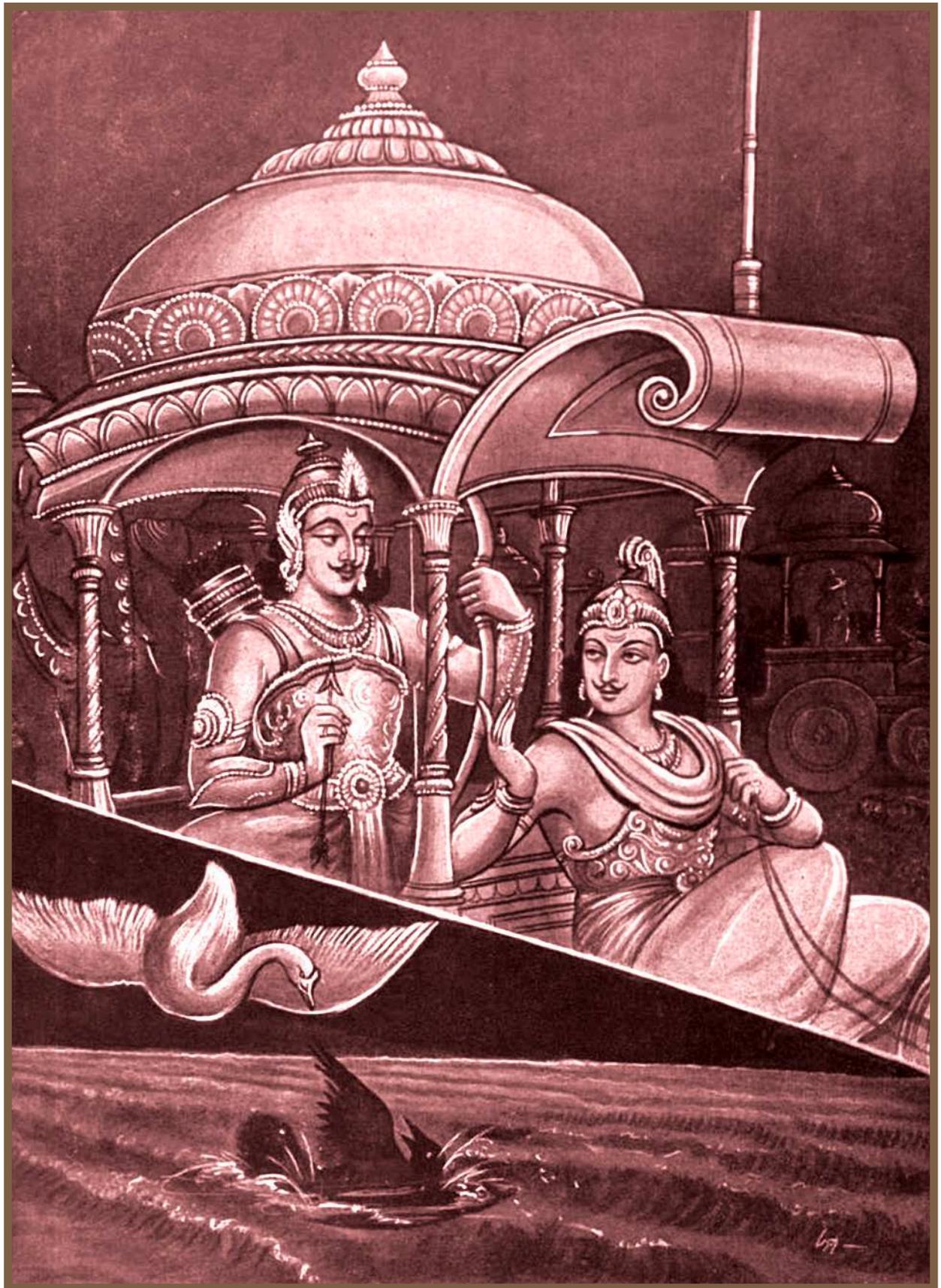
THE DESIRE FOR FAME

*sammānād brāhmaṇo nityam udvijeta viṣād iva
amṛtasyeva cākāṅkṣed avamānasya sarvadā*

*sukhaṁ hy avamataḥ śete sukhaṁ ca pratibudhyate
sukhaṁ carati loke 'sminn avamantā vinaśyati*

Throughout his life a *brāhmaṇa* should consider material prestige to be like poison and dishonor to be like nectar. After all, if one learns to tolerate dishonor, then his agitation will subside and he will happily sleep, happily wake, and happily move about. The person who insults him will as a result of his sin become embarrassed, and his happiness in this and the next life will be vanquished.

— *Mānu-saṁhitā* 2.162-163, quoted by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur in *Brāhmaṇa and Vaiṣṇava*. English translation by Bhumiapati Das. Vrajaraaj Press. Vrindavan. 1999.



Unknown artist. Gita Press. Gorakhpur

Salya told Karna the story of a proud crow who met a saintly swan

BHAKTI AND THE DESIRE TO BE IMPORTANT

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Anyone who has any desire or aspiration for satisfying his senses by becoming more and more important, either in the material sense or in the spiritual sense, cannot actually relish the really sweet taste of devotional service. (*The Nectar of Devotion*, chapter 3.)

Hearing this, all of the crows that had gathered there laughed and said, “Now we will see our brother crow defeat the swans.”

The crow and swan then rose into the sky, the swan flying in a simple straight motion and the crow making many elaborate movements. Seeing the variety of styles of flight he was exhibiting, all of the assembled crows were filled with delight and began to caw loudly.

For a moment it appeared that the crow had defeated the swan, then suddenly, with great velocity, the swan began to fly westwards towards the ocean. After following him for some time out to sea, the crow could no longer see any land or trees and became afraid. He thought, “When I become tired, where shall I rest on this vast ocean? The water is immeasurably deep and is inhabited by hundreds of monsters who will devour me.”

Covering a great distance in one moment, the swan looked back to see how the crow was faring. Seeing him far behind, exhausted, and barely able to stay above the water, the swan felt pity and went to his aid. The swan said, “O crow, what is the name of this special flight which you are exhibiting now? You are repeatedly touching the water with your wings and beak.”

Unable to see the limit of the ocean, and greatly fatigued by having flown so far, the crow replied, “O revered sir, we are crows. We move about here and there crying, ‘Caw! Caw! Caw!’ O swan, I seek refuge in you and place my life in your hands. Please take me back to the land.” Speaking thus, the crow suddenly fell exhausted into the ocean.

Seeing him fallen into the ocean, with a sorry heart the swan addressed the crow who was on the verge of death, “O crow, how is it that you were previously praising yourself so loudly? Remember, you said that you would

fly in a hundred and one different ways. How is it that you have become so tired and have fallen into the water?”

Overcome with weakness, the crow pleaded with the swan, “Eating the remnants of the family’s opulent foods, I thought myself equal to Garuda and did not care for the crows or any other birds. I now seek refuge with you and place my life at your disposal. Please take me to the land and save me from this calamity.”

Without a word, the swan picked up the crow, placed him on his back and began flying back to the land. Nearly at the point of death, deprived of his senses, drenched in water, trembling in fear, and hideous to look at, the melancholy crow was weeping. The swan speedily restored the crow back to the land where they had originally started. Placing him gently on the ground and comforting him, the swan then quickly flew away to return to Manasa Lake.

Salya then told Karna, “Just as that crow fed upon the remnants of the *vaiśya* children, became proud, and thus disrespected his equals and superiors, similarly, living on the remnants of Dhritarashtra’s sons you have become proud and now think yourself fit to fight with Krishna and Arjuna.”

Reflections:

Sometimes it is seen that after becoming uplifted by receiving the mercy of great personalities, some *kāka-janas*, crow-like persons, become proud and forget the color of their feathers. After having a little association with swan-like *parama-haṁsa* devotees, they begin to consider themselves far superior to their peers and perhaps even equal to the *parama-haṁsas*. Instead of *anusāra*, following the instructions of the Lord’s dear devotees, they take up the cheap practice of *anukāra*, imitation. By taking shelter of swan-like persons we may cross the ocean of birth and death, but if we try to imitate them we will certainly fall down into the ocean to drown. Bhaktivinoda Thakur sings:

garhita ācāre, rohilāma moji’,
nā korinu sādhu-saṅga
lo’ye sādhu-veśa, āne upadeśi,
e boḍo māyāra raṅga

Remaining absorbed in abominable activities, I never really kept company with *sādhus*. Now I adopt the dress of a *sādhu* and act out the role of instructing others. This is *māyā*’s big joke.

Conceit is a great stumbling block on the path of devotion. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (16.4), Krishna describes pride as a demoniac quality:

*dambho darpo 'bhimānaś ca krodhaḥ pārūṣyam eva ca
ajñānaṁ cābhijāṭasya pārtha sampadam āsurīm*

Pride, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness and ignorance—these qualities belong to those of demoniac nature, O son of Pritha.

Nārada Purāṇa (1.7.15) describes

ahaṅkāro mahān jajñe māsūyo lobha-hetukaḥ

Pride is the cause of destruction of all wealth, the source of false ego and all types of failure.

Suffering from the troubles caused by trying to compete with the swan, the crow finally had no other recourse then to give up his pretension and take shelter of the swan. Similarly, if we find ourselves in such a situation our only hope is to take shelter of the *parama-haṁsas*. In *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*, text 1, Srila Raghunath Das Goswami has compared our spiritual pursuits to travelling on a road where one is beset with thieves. Like the crow that was nearing death and cried out to the swan, Raghunath Das says that our only hope is to call out to the swan-like devotees of the Lord.

*pratiṣṭhā-rajjubhir baddhaṁ kāmādyair vartma-pattibhiḥ
chitvā tāḥ saṁharantas tān aghāreḥ pāntu mām bhaṭāḥ*

The highwaymen lust, greed and anger have captured me and bound me with the ropes of the desire for fame. I pray that the heroic devotees of Lord Krishna, the enemy of the Agha demon, may defeat my captors and cut the ropes that bind me.

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THREE CAUSES OF HUMILITY

Srila Rupa Goswami's

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 2.4.21

duḥkha-trāsāparādhādyair anaurjityaṁ tu dīnatā

Thinking oneself a low creature because of sorrow, fear or offense is called *dainyam* or *dīnatā*.

—Rupa Goswami. *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. With commentaries of Jiva Goswami, and Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur. English translation by Bhanu Svami. Sri Vaikuntha Enterprises. Chennai. 2006.

Srila Sanatan Goswami has advised us of the benefits of humility:

*yenāsādharaṇāsaktādhama-buddhiḥ sadātmani
sarvotkarṣānvite 'pi syād buddhais tad dainyam iṣyate*

Even if one is very exalted, he should be humble and think himself very incompetent and lowly.

*yayā vācehayā dainyaṁ matyā ca sthairyam eti tat
tām yatnena bhajed vidvāms tad-viruddhāni varjayet*

A wise man should try to be humble in his words, deeds, and thoughts. He should shun whatever is opposed to humility.

*dainyaṁ tu paramaṁ preṇṇaḥ paripākeṇa janyate
tāsāṁ gokula-nārīṇāṁ iva kṛṣṇa-viyogataḥ*

Humbleness comes from advancement in love for Krishna, as is seen in the example of the women of Gokul when they were separated from Krishna.

*paripākeṇa dainyasya preṇṇājasraṁ vitanyate
parasparaṁ tayor itthaṁ kārya-kāraṇatekṣyate*

Mature humbleness brings love for Krishna. It is seen that the two are in a relationship of cause and effect. — 2.5.221-225 — MD. 🍊

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