

I. Pastlife

II. The Pastime

The first forest fire

- ॐ Since it was almost night, and all the inhabitants of Vrndavana, including the cows and calves, were very tired, they decided to take their rest on the river bank.
- ॐ In the middle of the night, while they were taking rest, there was suddenly a great forest fire,
- ॐ Arose from the natural friction of bamboo
- ॐ It quickly appeared that the fire would soon devour all the inhabitants of Vrndavana.
- ॐ As soon as they felt the warmth of the fire, they immediately took shelter of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, although He was playing just like their child.
- ॐ They began to say, "Our dear Kṛṣṇa! O Supreme Personality of Godhead! Our dear Balarama, the reservoir of all strength! Please try to save us from this all-devouring and devastating fire. We have no other shelter than You. This devastating fire will swallow us all!
- ॐ Lord Kṛṣṇa, being compassionate upon His own townspeople, immediately swallowed up the whole forest fire and saved them.

III. The anartha

A. Kṛṣṇa Samhita

- ॐ We must be able to accept opinions different than our own
*The eleventh obstacle of the Vaiṣṇavas is **sectarianism**, which takes the shape of the forest fire. Due to sectarianism a person cannot accept anyone outside of his own group as a **Vaiṣṇava**, and as a result he faces many obstacles in **finding a guru and associating with devotees**. **Therefore extinguishing the forest fire is most important.***

B. Caitanya Sikṣāmṛta

- ॐ *The **Davāgni-vināśa-līlā**, the pastime of destroying the forest fire, represents subduing any type of **useless conflict**, such as **pointless argument**, **malicious disagreement with other sampradāyas and mathas**, **disrespect of the devatās**, and **angry fighting against another's opinion**.*

C. From Professor Sannyal

- ॐ *The eleventh obstacle has the form of **intra-communal discord**. **It is comparable to the wild forest-fire**. **The disposition bred by narrow sectarianism rendering its victim unable to recognize as Vaishnava one who does not assume the external marks of the theistic community, multiplies the obstacles on the path of attainment of the bona fide Guru and***

Comment [JSd1]: This reminds me of a kanistha mentality

Comment [JSd2]: Substance vs. Form

Comment [JSd3]: Is this referring to the idea of *jivera svarupa hoyo nitya kṛṣṇa dasa*? Or one who is practicing endeavoring to follow Vaisnavism.

Comment [JSd4]: Two of the most essential qualifications

Comment [JSd5]: But we also must be able to discriminate

Makes me think of faith vs. belief; temporal vs. eternal

How to understand some of Prabhupada's statements (women, brain size, etc.)

Comment [JSd6]: So this answers some of the previous concern. Useless conflict is what must be watched out for.

BVT lists them:

1. Pointless argument
2. Malicious disagreement w/ other sampradayas
3. Disrespect of the devatas
4. Angry fighting with another's opinion

Comment [JSd7]: Implies mal-intent, not disagreement for the sake of protecting the guru's mission

Comment [JSd8]: How about the way ISKCON devotees often view Siva, etc.

Comment [JSd9]: There is a place for anger

Comment [JSd10]: Fire within the matha wreaks havoc. Look at what happened to the Gaudiya Matha

the actual companionship of the true devotees. It is, therefore, obligatory on all persons to destroy the forest-fire by all means.

IV. Symbolism/ Notes

- ॐ Friction starts
- ॐ Closing eyes – blind faith
- ॐ This starts up following envy and cruelty
- ॐ Eliminated through the mouth (hearing and chanting) preaching

V. Commentaries of the Previous Acaryas

O best of kings [Parikṣit], because the residents of Vṛndāvana were feeling very weak from hunger, thirst and fatigue, they and the cows spent the night where they were, lying down near the bank of the Kālindī. (SB 10.17.20)

- ॐ SG: the same night, after the punishing of Kaliya. They were too far from the village to return, and too exhausted due to their sever lamentations during the day, so they took rest near where they had been.
- ॐ JG: although the people were weak from hunger and thirst, they did not drink the milk from the cows present there because they feared it had been contaminated by the serpent's poison. The residents of Vṛndāvana were so overjoyed to get back their beloved Kṛṣṇa that they did not want to go back to their houses. They wanted to stay with Kṛṣṇa on the bank of the Yamunā so that they could continuously see Him. Thus they decided to take rest near the riverbank.

During the night, while all the people of Vṛndāvana were asleep, a great fire blazed up within the dry summer forest. The fire surrounded the inhabitants of Vraja on all sides and began to scorch them. (SB 10.17.21)

- ॐ SG & VCT: perhaps a loyal friend of Kālīya had assumed the form of a forest fire to avenge his friend, or perhaps the forest fire was manifest by a demon who was a follower of Kāmsa's+

O Lord, we are Your true friends and devotees. Please protect us from this insurmountable fire of death. We can never give up Your lotus feet, which drive away all fear. (SB 10.17.24)

- ॐ SG: if we were to die now we would be separated from you, and that would be intolerable for us.

Seeing His devotees so disturbed, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the infinite Lord of the universe and possessor of infinite power, then swallowed the terrible forest fire. (SB 10.17.25)

- ॐ SG: He acted as though He drank it. There is no need to understand this by logical reason, because the potency which was the fire was also coming from Him. His parents and others would have been shocked if they had seen Him drinking the fire, so He drank it in such a way that they couldn't see what was happening.

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VI. Chaitanya Bhagavata, Antya 4: The Pastimes of Acyutānanda and the Worship of Mādhavendra Purī

If one sees two Vaiṣṇavas quarrelling, then one should never think that something is amiss, or that there is enmity and malice between them. Such quarrelling is in fact pleasing to the Lord and is transcendental. The arguments and abuses exchanged between Rukmiṇī devī and Satyabhāmā devī although sounding like serious fights are factually not so, because they are forever united in their service to their common Lord and master. There is no enmity between Vaiṣṇavas.

The Supreme Lord Himself induces these fights due to His frolicsome nature. Nevertheless, if anyone foolishly sides with one Vaiṣṇava against another, then he is doomed due to offending a Vaiṣṇava. The Vaiṣṇavas are the extensions of the limbs of the Lord, so how may one benefit by serving Him with one hand and inflicting pain upon Him with the other?

To become steady in devotional service, one should develop the vision that Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, the Vaiṣṇavas, are non-different and then immersed in this perception one should serve the Lord and His dear devotees. One can then easily cross the ocean of nescience. One who glorifies, hears, and understands these transcendental subject matters will always avoid vaiṣṇava-aparādha.

VII. Gaudiya Matha

The words daivera kāraṇa indicate that by dint of providence, or by God's will, the followers of Advaita Ācārya divided into two parties. Such disagreement among the disciples of one ācārya is also found among the members of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. In the beginning, during the presence of Om Viṣṇupāda Paramahansa Parivrājakācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, all the disciples worked in agreement; but just after his disappearance, they disagreed. One party strictly followed the instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, but another group created their own concoction about executing his desires.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, at the time of his departure, requested all his disciples to form a governing body and conduct missionary activities cooperatively. He did not instruct a particular man to become the next ācārya. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of ācārya, and they split into two factions over who the next ācārya would be. Consequently, both factions were asāra, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master. Despite the spiritual master's order to form a governing body and execute the missionary activities of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, the two unauthorized factions began litigation that is still going on after forty years with no decision.

Therefore, we do not belong to any faction. But because the two parties, busy dividing

the material assets of the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution, stopped the preaching work, we took up the mission of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura to preach the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu all over the world, under the protection of all the predecessor ācāryas, and we find that our humble attempt has been successful. We followed the principles especially explained by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in his commentary on the Bhagavad-gītā verse beginning vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana [Bg. 2.41]. According to this instruction of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, it is the duty of a disciple to follow strictly the orders of his spiritual master. The secret of success in advancement in spiritual life is the firm faith of the disciple in the orders of his spiritual master. (CC 1.12.18 purport)

ॐ The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is being propagated according to this principle, and therefore our preaching work is going on successfully, in spite of the many impediments offered by antagonistic demons, because we are getting positive help from our previous ācāryas. One must judge every action by its result. The members of the self-appointed ācārya's party who occupied the property of the Gauḍīya Maṭha are satisfied, but they could make no progress in preaching. Therefore by the result of their actions one should know that they are asāra, or useless, whereas the success of the ISKCON party, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which strictly follows guru and Gaurāṅga, is increasing daily all over the world. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura wanted to print as many books as possible and distribute them all over the world. We have tried our best in this connection, and we are getting results beyond our expectations. (CC 1.12.8 purport)

ॐ **Some of the disciples strictly accepted the orders of the ācārya, and others deviated, independently concocting their own opinions under the spell of daivi-māyā.**
PURPORT: This verse describes the beginning of a schism. When disciples do not stick to the principle of accepting the order of their spiritual master, immediately there are two opinions. Any opinion different from the opinion of the spiritual master is useless. One cannot infiltrate materially concocted ideas into spiritual advancement. That is deviation. There is no scope for adjusting spiritual advancement to material ideas. (CC 1.12.9)

VIII. We shouldn't criticize other religions

ॐ So dharma is so strong. Dharma means to abide by the order of Kṛṣṇa. That is dharma. If we remain faithful to Kṛṣṇa, and what Kṛṣṇa says, if we do that, that is perfect dharma. Sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje [SB 1.2.6]. That is first-class religious system. We do not decry any system of religion. We do not say that Hindu religion is better than Christian religion. In what way Hindu religion is better than Christian religion? The followers of so-called Christian religion, they're also set of nonsense, and so are the Hindus. Why we should give preference to one class of rascals and fools than the other class of rascals and fools? We have no such idea, "The Hindus are greater than the Muslims or the Christians," or "The Muslims or the Christians..." We do not con... We want to see, test how much he's devotee of God, how much he has developed his God consciousness. Then we accept that he is, here is dharma. That is the

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test. *Sa vai pumsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje.*

I told you sometimes, I think, in New York Airport. So seeing us, the sādhus, one young man came to me. So he introduced himself, "Sir, I am Christian. I faithfully discharge my religious principles." So I, I told him, "No, no. You do not faithfully discharge your religion." So he was surprised that without talking with him, immediately I charged that "You don't follow your Christian religion." "No, why do you say like that?" "Do you eat meat?" "Yes, sir." "Then you are not a Christian. You are not a Christian. Because in the Christian religion the first commandment is 'Thou shalt not kill.' So you are encouraging killing. How you are a Christian? You are not a Christian." The actually everyone is very proud of becoming Christian, Hindu, Muslim, but nobody is following. Nobody's following. All bogus.

Because if they would have followed... We don't say follow this religion, that religion. If actually they would have followed, then the symptom would have been they had become devotee of God, lover of God. And as soon as he becomes lover of God, he becomes fully qualified with all good qualifications. *Yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā sarvair gunais tatra samāsate* surāḥ. This is the test. He hasn't got to be trained up how to become honest, how to become clean, how to become this, how to become that. If he becomes a lover of God, Kṛṣṇa, then all the good qualities automatically reveal. Just like when you are out of diseased condition, all your healthy symptoms are revealed, manifest. It doesn't require to bring them separately, to bring them separately. It is already there. Because every living entity is part and parcel of God, Kṛṣṇa, he has got all the good qualities of Kṛṣṇa, very minute quantity. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.10.4 -- Māyāpura, June 19, 1973)

ॐ God is equally kind, equally merciful, but we fight. We, I mean to say, disagree in religious principle. That is due to Kali. Not this Kali. Kali means due to our fighting spirit. It is not God. God is equal to everyone. We fight because we have got misconception. So we think that this religion is better than that religion, or that religion is better than... Every religion must be good, provided one is God conscious. We say that. So many people question in the Western countries, "Whether one can attain perfection by following Christian religion?" Why not? You can also attain. But who is following? First of all, let me see who is following Christian religion. The Christian religion says in the beginning, first commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," and you are simply killing. So where is Christian? Christian religion is not bad. No religion is bad. But where is Christian? Where is Hindu? They are all godless rascals. Therefore there is misunderstanding. Otherwise, if everyone is God conscious, if everyone knows that God is present everywhere, "Whatever I do, He will see. He'll see as sunshine. He'll see as moonshine. He'll see as water..." *Raso 'ham apsu kaunteya.* No... Who can avoid water? Who can avoid sunshine? Who can avoid moonshine? Nobody can. So God says, "These things are I am." *Raso 'ham apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śasi-sūryayoḥ* [Bg. 7.8]. So how you can avoid God's vigilance? Then how you can commit sinful... They do not

believe in-godlessness. They do not believe in existence of God. They have been taught like that, and they do not know what is God.

This is the misfortune of the present civilization. Present godless civilization... Therefore they have created simply chaotic situation all over the world. Therefore the movement, Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, is very, very important and essential. Those who are sober, they are understanding it. Just like in Australia, the priestly class, they understood that this movement is trying to (?) people to see towards God, back to Godhead. You have advanced in civilization by so-called material advancement, scientific..., but what you have done? You have created simply chaos. Therefore we say... Our magazine is named Back to Godhead. "Now you have finished your business—now see back to Godhead." Just like if you do not see the sun, if you keep the sun backside, then you'll simply see a long shadow of your body, black shadow. That's all. But if you turn towards the sun, you'll not see the black shadow; you'll see all light. Simply you have to turn. So we have named this Back to Godhead very scientifically. You see towards God; then everything is light. "Where there is God, there is nonescience." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.8.28 -- Māyāpura, October 8, 1974)

ॐ Another important point mentioned in this connection is *anindayā*—we should not criticize others' methods of religion. There are different types of religious systems operating under different qualities of material nature. Those operating in the modes of ignorance and passion cannot be as perfect as that system in the mode of goodness. In Bhagavad-gītā everything has been divided into three qualitative divisions; therefore religious systems are similarly categorized. When people are mostly under the modes of passion and ignorance, their system of religion will be of the same quality. A devotee, instead of criticizing such systems, will encourage the followers to stick to their principles so that gradually they can come to the platform of religion in goodness. Simply by criticizing them, a devotee's mind will be agitated. Thus a devotee should tolerate and learn to stop agitation. (SB 4.22.24)

IX. In ISKCON we must beware of the fighting spirit

ॐ Now you are my elder disciples and both of you are sannyasis and also advanced in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, so these questions should not arise amongst you again and again. That means everyone is not conscientious. These things are not new to you, why do you continually ask these questions? The GBC authority must be accepted under all circumstances, not that there will be fighting amongst you. This fighting spirit will destroy everything, but what can I do, you American and European boys are trained up in this fighting attitude. Now put it aside and simply work cooperatively for spreading this movement all over the world. The standards I have already given you, now try to maintain them at all times under standard procedure. Do not try to innovate or create anything or manufacture anything, that will ruin everything. Simply do as I am doing and be always serious and sincere to serve Kṛṣṇa, and He will give you intelligence how

to do everything. (Letter to: Bali-mardana, Pusta Krsna — Los Angeles 18 September, 1972)

- ॐ Now all my disciples must work combinedly and with cooperation to spread this Sankirtana Movement. If you cannot work together then my work is stopped up. Our Society is like one big family and our relationships should be based on love and trust. We must give up the fighting spirit and use our intelligence to push ahead. You should accept help from your Godbrothers. (Letter to: Upendra — Los Angeles 6 August, 1970)
- ॐ Regarding general state of affairs at Amsterdam temple, I can understand there is some disturbance among you, but that is not to be taken very seriously. Real business is preaching work, and if there is full attention on this matter only, all other businesses will be automatically successful. Fighting amongst ourselves is not at all good, but if our preaching work is neglected, or if we fall down in following the regulative principles such as rising before four, chanting 16 rounds, like that, if these things are not strictly observed then maya will enter and spoil everything. So my best advice to you is to strictly observe these things yourself and be the example so that all others may follow. We should not criticize each other, as Vaisnavas, because there is fault in everyone and we may be ourselves subject to criticism. Best thing is to be above suspicion ourselves, then if we see discrepancies and make suggestion the others will automatically respect and take action to rectify the matters. That is cooperation. And we must exist on such cooperation, otherwise the whole thing is doomed if we simply go on fighting over some small thing. So try to organize things and preach together in this spirit, and that will please me very, very much. (Letter to: Madhumangala — Hyderabad 18 November, 1972)

X. How to engage the fighting spirit

- ॐ So this problem of fighting... We have to understand that fighting spirit is there in everyone. You cannot check it, you cannot stop it. We do not say stop. The Māyāvādi philosopher says that "You stop this thing," but that is not possible. You cannot stop. Because you are living entity, you have got all these propensities. How you can stop it? But it should be utilized properly. That's all. You have got the fighting spirit. How to utilize it? Yes. Narottama dāsa Thākura recommends, *krodha bhakta-dveṣī-jane*: "Those who are envious of God or God's devotee, you can utilize your anger upon them." You can utilize. The anger you cannot give up. Our business is how to utilize it. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Everything has to be utilized. We do not say that "You stop this, stop that." No. Kṛṣṇa says, *yat karoṣi, yaj juhoṣi, yad aśnāsi, yat tapasyasi kuruṣva tad mad-arpanam. Yat karoṣi*. Kṛṣṇa does not say that "You do this, you do that." He says, "Whatever you do, but the result should come to Me." (Bhagavad-gītā 2.6 -- London, August 6, 1973)
- ॐ The living entity is victimized, and in this life you can adventure to conquer over it. This is human life. The cats and dogs, they cannot fight with *māyā*, but a human being, he can fight. So if we don't fight, we don't take that adventure, then we remain cats and

dogs. The cats and dogs, they fight amongst themselves but not with the māyā. So aborigines, although they have got features of human being, they are no more than the cats and dogs. So they also fight amongst themselves. They do not know that the fighting spirit should be utilized to declare war against māyā. That is possible in human life. *Athāto brahma jijñāsā*. This fighting is philosophy. "What is the ultimate cause? What is Brahman? What I am?" Fighting against darkness, sleeping. *Kota nidrā jāo māyā-piśācīra kole*. Everyone is sleeping on the lap of māyā. Now, this human form of life is not for sleeping but for awakening and fight with māyā. That is human life. [break] You were reading the other day why the sun changes color after rising? (Morning Walk -- February 6, 1976, Māyāpura)