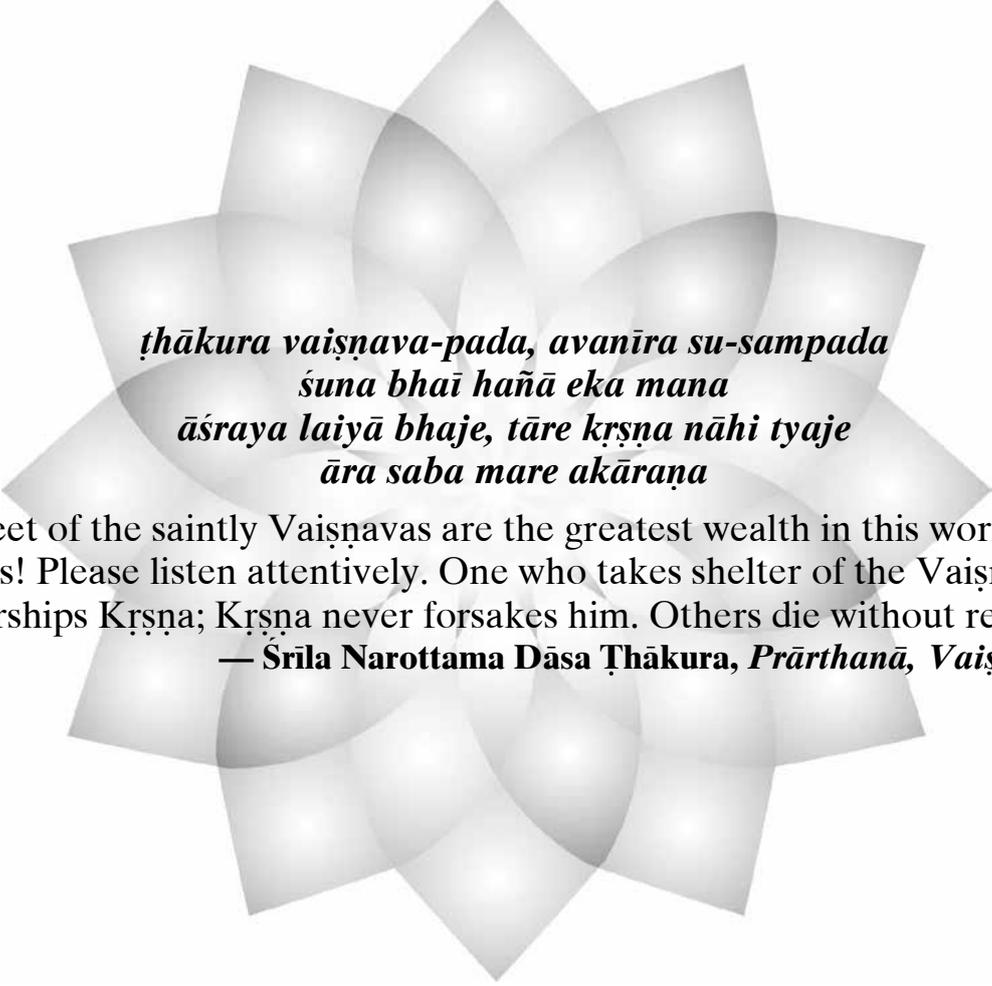


BEWARE OF THE MAD ELEPHANT!



**— Presented by Śrīmatī Dāsī and team
ISKCON, Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma**



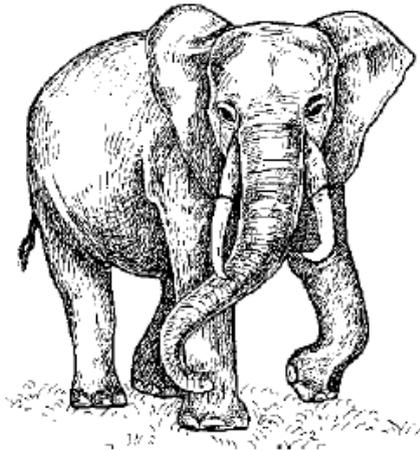
*ṭhākura vaiṣṇava-pada, avanīra su-sampada
śuna bhāi hañā eka mana
āśraya laiā bhaje, tāre kṛṣṇa nāhi tyaje
āra saba mare akāraṇa*

The lotus feet of the saintly Vaiṣṇavas are the greatest wealth in this world. O my dear brothers! Please listen attentively. One who takes shelter of the Vaiṣṇavas and worships Kṛṣṇa; Kṛṣṇa never forsakes him. Others die without reason.

— Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura, *Prārthanā, Vaiṣṇava-mahimā*

BEWARE OF THE MAD ELEPHANT!

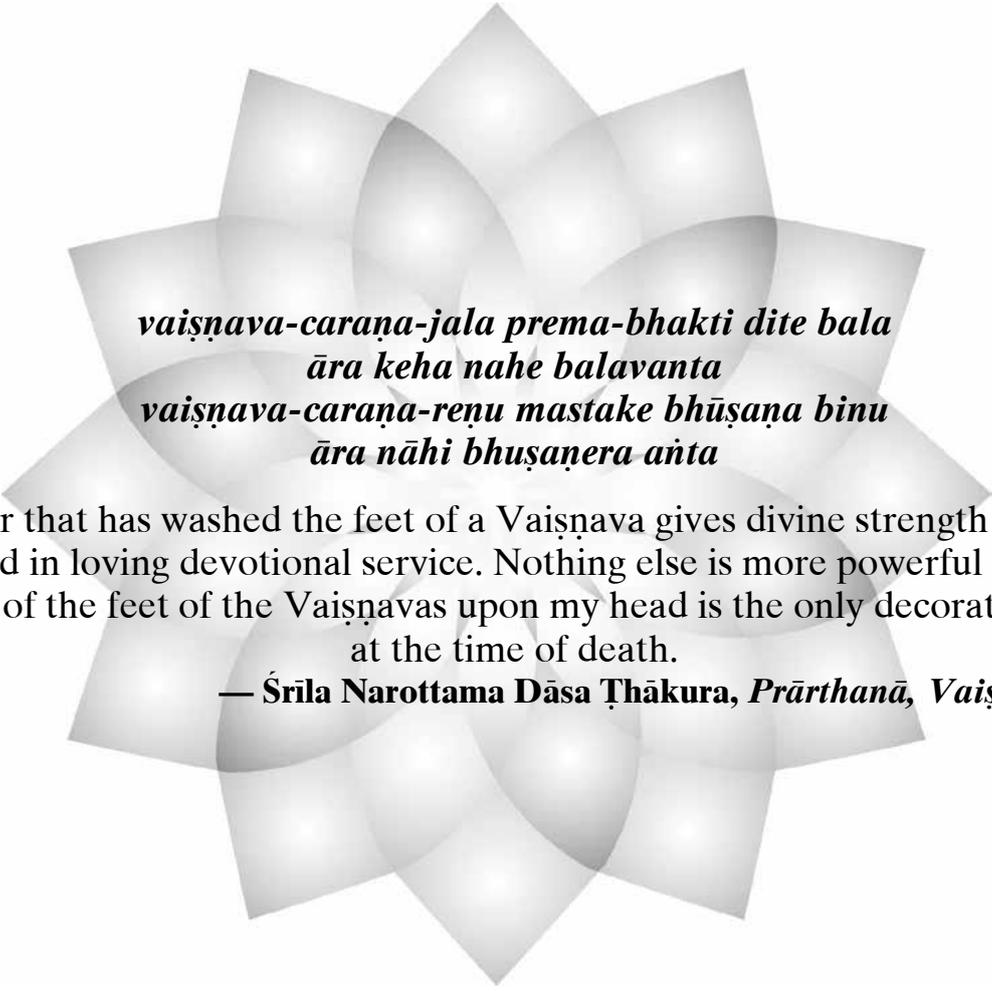
- * The Soul Destroying Nature of Fault-finding and Criticizing Devotees
— *If I'm an Object of Ongoing Criticism and Petty Politiking, What Should I Think? What Should I Do?*
- * *Vaiṣṇava-aparādhā* — Death Knell for the Soul
- * Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura: The Personification of Offenselessness
- * I Am an Offender: What Should I Do?
- * The Benefits of Not Blaspheming Devotees
- * The Safest Way to Prevent Offenses



Excerpts from the
Śrī Caitanya Bhāgavata of
Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura

If one living entity feels hatred or envy towards another, this is ultimately a reflection of his relationship with the Supreme Lord.

— CB Ādi 16



*vaiṣṇava-carāṇa-jala prema-bhakti dite bala
āra keha nahe balavanta
vaiṣṇava-carāṇa-reṇu mastake bhūṣaṇa binu
āra nāhi bhūṣaṇera aṅta*

The water that has washed the feet of a Vaiṣṇava gives divine strength to a person engaged in loving devotional service. Nothing else is more powerful than this. The dust of the feet of the Vaiṣṇavas upon my head is the only decoration needed at the time of death.

— Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura, *Prārthanā, Vaiṣṇava-mahimā*

The Soul Destroying Nature of Faultfinding, and Criticizing Devotees

Śrī Gaurasundara has advented specifically to deliver all the fallen souls, with the exception of those who find fault with Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Lord. Just to prove this point, Lord Caitanya ate and rested in a drunkard's home, but avoided the company of so-called learned Vedic *sannyāsīs*. One must be always careful to avoid the Lord's wrath and those who flout the Lord will suffer eternal punishment at the hands of Yamarāja, the God of Death.

(Madhya 19)



The *Vedas* clearly describe that if one hears criticism of a Vaiṣṇava devotee of the Lord, he loses all his accumulated piety and is cast into abominable conditions of life, birth after birth.

(Madhya 20)



Any person who sides with one Vaiṣṇava against another Vaiṣṇava and thus criticizes him is destined to be destroyed.

(Madhya 13)



Devotees who are narrow minded and bigoted start fighting over petty matters. This is a serious deviation from the path of spiritual realization and so a truly knowledgeable devotee will refrain from taking sides in such disputes.

(Madhya 17)



The instructions of the *Padma Purāṇa* are cited herein. When followed strictly, they will help one develop *kṛṣṇa-prema*:

“To criticize and find faults in pure devotees of the Lord is the most grievous offense against the Holy Name. O Holy Name! How can You bear criticism against Your pure devotees through whom Your glories are being propagated? You can never tolerate criticism against those who have dedicated their lives to propagating the Holy Name of the Lord. Such offenders are annihilated.”

(Madhya 13)



If a very elevated soul acts in a manner that appears offensive and he is ridiculed, or even just criticized, then the critic is surely doomed.

(Antya 6)



Generally, the sometimes extreme and even apparently harsh activities of exalted and self-realized Vaiṣṇavas are not understood by the common man, but if out of ignorance or envy they criticize these elevated Vaiṣṇavas such offenders pave their way of hell.

(Antya 9)



Anyone who offends a Vaiṣṇava and criticizes him has to suffer terrible consequences, life after life. A person's piety, education, and austerity are all rendered worthless by criticism of a Vaiṣṇava. And should the offender attempt to worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa, this will also be useless, for the Lord will certainly refuse to accept such offerings.

(Antya 4)



To make everyone understand that He was accepting the sinful actions of Jagāi and Mādhāi, Lord Caitanya's body became blackish in complexion.

The Lord inquired, "Why do you all look at Me in this manner? How do I look?"

Advaita Ācārya replied, "You look like Lord Kṛṣṇa."

Lord Caitanya began to laugh at Advaita Ācārya's words and all the Vaiṣṇavas became ecstatic and expressed their joy with jubilant sounds. Lord Caitanya then said, "Begin *kīrtana*, and this black shroud of sin will lift from My body and enter the bodies of those who criticize the devotees of the Lord."

(Madhya 13)



Lord Caitanya will deliver everyone with the exception of those who are critical of the Vaiṣṇavas and those who act against the teachings of the *Veda*.

(Madhya 13)



One never advances in spiritual life by finding faults in other Vaiṣṇavas. In fact, only sinful reactions are increased, so certainly give up all your fault-finding.

(Madhya 13)



The Lord has clearly described the horrific results of offending a Vaiṣṇava. In spite of hearing this, if a person is still so foolish as to indulge in criticism and blasphemy of the Vaiṣṇavas, then Śrī Caitanya will personally mete out the due punishment.

(Antya 4)



The scriptures instruct that spiritual goals are unattainable through criticism of others; the *dharma* expounded by *Bhāgavatam* is to respect everyone.

(Madhya 10)



Raising both His arms, Gauracandra declares to the world, "Give up the offensive attitude of criticizing Vaiṣṇavas and chant Lord Kṛṣṇa's Holy Name. Anyone who practices this will surely be delivered by Me."

(Madhya 19)

If I'm an Object of Ongoing Criticism and Petty Politiking, What Should I Think? What Should I Do?

— Powerful and Practical Insights from Śrīla Prabhupāda —

Be Realistic and Proactive

Tolerance means that one should be practiced to bear insult and dishonor from others. If one is engaged in the advancement of spiritual knowledge, there will be so many insults and much dishonor from others. This is expected because material nature is so constituted. Even a boy like Prahlāda, who, only five years old, was engaged in the cultivation of spiritual knowledge, was endangered when his father became antagonistic to his devotion. The father tried to kill him in so many ways, but Prahlāda tolerated him. So there may be many impediments to making advancement in spiritual knowledge, but we should be tolerant and continue our progress with determination.

— Bg 13.8-12 p



Suppose you are in this Kṛṣṇa conscious society. Now, you cannot expect that all the members of the society will be first-class men. How can we expect? We are collecting members of the society from all classes of men. So there may be a man in goodness, a man in the passion and a man in the ignorance. But if you think, "Oh, this man is not good. That man is not good," oh... No. You should be tolerant. You haven't got any connection with this man or that man. You are connected with the philosophy, with the process of life, and you are connected... Just like the same example: **suppose you are on the ship. You do not find just all men to your choice. There may be different kinds of men. But what is that to you? You have to cross the Atlantic Ocean, patiently cross. Just sit down tightly on the ship and take advantage of the opportunity. That is your business.**

—SPL Bg 10.4, New York, January 3, 1967

Recognize, Accept and Finalize the Karmic Entanglement

A devotee (does not) become his enemy's enemy; he thinks, "This person is acting as my enemy due to my own past misdeeds. So it is better to suffer than to protest." In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.14.8) it is stated: tat te 'nukampāṁ su-samīkṣamāṇo bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtaṁ vipākam. Whenever a devotee is in distress or has fallen into difficulty, he thinks that it is the Lord's mercy upon him. He thinks, "Thanks to my past misdeeds I should suffer far, far greater

than I am suffering now. So it is by the mercy of the Supreme Lord that I am not getting all the punishment I am due. I am just getting a little, by the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead." Therefore he is always calm, quiet and patient, despite many distressful conditions.

— **Bg 12.13-14 p**

Aim to Transcend All Dualities

A devotee is always free from all bad association. Sometimes one is praised and sometimes one is defamed; that is the nature of human society. But a devotee is always transcendental to artificial fame and infamy, distress or happiness. He is very patient.

— **Bg 12.18-19 p**



If others try to put a devotee into anxiety, he is not disturbed. It is by the grace of the Lord that he is so practiced that he is not disturbed by any outward disturbance.

— **Bg 12.15 p**

Forgive the Offenders!

Kṣamā, tolerance and forgiveness, should be practiced; one should be tolerant and excuse the minor offenses of others.

— **Bg 10.4-5 p**



The duty of a *brāhmaṇa* is to culture the quality of forgiveness, which is illuminating like the sun. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, is pleased with those who are forgiving.

— **ŚB 9.15.40**

*To err is human,
To forgive is divine*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: One should neither praise nor criticize the conditioned nature and activities of other persons. Rather, one should see this world as simply the combination of material nature and the enjoying souls, all based on the one Absolute Truth.



Whoever indulges in praising or criticizing the qualities and behavior of others will quickly become deviated from his own best interest by his entanglement in illusory dualities.

— **ŚB 11.28.1-2**

Vaiṣṇava-Aparādhā

Death Knell for the Soul

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said to Gadādhara Paṇḍita, “Be very careful that you do not commit any offenses to your *guru*, the one who instructed you in the *iṣṭamantra*. As long as your *mantra guru* is present, you cannot go elsewhere, not even come to Me. This would jeopardize the spiritual life of both you and Me.”

(Antya 10)



If the disciple commits *vaiṣṇava-aparādhā*, even the spiritual master cannot protect his disciple against the wrath of the Lord. Furthermore, even the *guru* is hard pressed to protect himself from the reactions of *vaiṣṇava-aparādhā* committed by his disciples. If the *guru* is in a very elevated stage of devotion, then he can protect himself alone and not his disciple, but if he is not so elevated, then along with the disciple, he sinks down into hell.

(Madhya 22)



Even if a personality of the stature of Lord Śiva commits an offense against a devotee of the Lord then, according to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.10.25 he soon meets his end: “Although I have committed an offense by insulting You, I know that there is no loss or gain for you due to my insult. You are fixed in your determination, but I have committed an offenses. On account of this, even though I may be as strong as Lord Śiva, I shall be vanquished without delay due to my offense at the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava.”

(Madhya 13)



Association where Vaiṣṇavas are offended may consist of highly pious persons. However, all their good fortune will be diminished by their *vaiṣṇava-aparādhā*. If even an assembly of renunciates and *sannyāsīs* offends Vaiṣṇavas, such an assembly is more irreligious than a group of drunkards. For the drunkards there is still a chance for salvation, but for those who are critical of Vaiṣṇavas there is no hope of liberation.

(Madhya 13)



Lord Kṛṣṇa said: “The consequences of ridiculing a devotee of the Lord are very severe. Even perfected yogis suffer heavily if they disrespect a Vaiṣṇava, what to mention about lesser humans. An offender of Vaiṣṇavas has to pay a heavy price, life after life. I am delving into this subject for your benefit so that you may learn from this and never insult a Vaiṣṇava. If a person worships Me and chants My name, but offends a Vaiṣṇava, he has to suffer severe setbacks in his devotional life. But for those who love and respect My devotees, I make Myself easily available to them.

(Antya 6)



Lord Caitanya spoke out in a voice that resembled a thunderclap. “Now listen to Me attentively, I say truly that those who worship Me directly, but neglect My servants and devotees are the most despicable wretches. They are cutting My body into pieces. “Their worship is like burning cinders on My body. He who criticizes and offends My devotee will be vanquished by My name. In this way, I show my compassion for him. Every living entity is My servant and I cannot tolerate violence to any of them. I destroy anyone who tries to hurt My servants.”

(Madhya 19)



To criticize a Vaiṣṇava devotee is a thousand times more sinful than offending an ordinary living entity.

(Madhya 5)



The scriptures are strong in condemning offences against the Vaiṣṇavas. An erudite scholar is not saved by his spiritual readings. Even a person engaged in chanting Lord Kṛṣṇa’s Holy Name is not spared punishment if he offends a Vaiṣṇava.

(Madhya 13)



If a person is well versed in all the four *Vedas*, but still maintains an offensive attitude towards the Vaiṣṇavas, he is eternally doomed to the worst kind of hell.

(Madhya 20)



Only the most wretched sinner will judge a Vaiṣṇava by caste, race or nationality, and for so doing, he suffers the pangs of repeated birth in the lower species of life.

(Madhya 10)



According to the scriptures, even the most powerful person is destroyed by *vaiṣṇava-aparādhā*. Thereby, if one disregards the instructions of the scriptures and commits *vaiṣṇava-aparādhā*, he has to suffer the hellish life of a sinner, life after life.

(Madhya 22)



The dacoit suffers but one lifetime of hell, whereas the Vaiṣṇava offender goes through endless miseries. Thus, the dacoit is far better than one who is offensive to Vaiṣṇavas and thereby offends Śrī Viṣṇu Himself.

(Madhya 20)



A proud ignoramus who mocks the devotees of the merciful Lord, considering them fools or people suffering in paucity, surely goes to the hellish region known as Kumbhīpāka. That is the inevitable punishment for his transgressions.

(Madhya 9)



One who disrespects a devotee who is fully surrendered to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Viṣṇu, commits a great offense at the very lotus feet of Lord Viṣṇu Himself.

(Madhya 5)



The Supreme Lord has advented as Śrī Caitanya to deliver all living entities with the exception of those atheistic, sinful reprobates who offend Vaiṣṇavas and commit sins on the strength of the Holy Name. Those who are inimical towards the Vaiṣṇavas will be deprived of the Lord's mercy. Lord Caitanya's name is so potent that even the demons have a change of heart by chanting His name and glories. Yet, the devilish reprobates do not accept this mercy, nor do they have faith in the power of His Holy Name.

(Antya 2)

Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura: Personification of Offenseless

Śrīla Haridāsa passed his time relishing the nectar of the Holy Name and giving his enlightening association to the *brāhmaṇas*. Those Muslims, who had tortured Dāsa Ṭhākura, and their families as well, were all eventually destroyed. Haridāsa left the village and moved into a cave on the banks of the River Gaṅgā, where he maintained himself on the sweetness of the Holy Name and the memory of the pastimes of the Supreme Lord.

Haridāsa is affectionate and compassionate towards all living entities, and he descends as the eternal servant of the Supreme Lord in each of the Lord's incarnations. He is free from any fault or offense towards the Supreme Lord or His devotees. Even in his dreams, he never commits an offense. A moment's association with Haridāsa can purify any living entity and assure him the eternal shelter of Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Even Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva constantly desire his association.

The demigods desire the touch of the pure and transcendental form of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, and Gaṅgāmātā also prays that her water will be sanctified by his presence.

However, one need not touch Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Simply by seeing him, one is automatically freed from the eternal cycle of birth and death. Furthermore, one who sees a devotee who has taken shelter at his lotus feet is also granted freedom from material bondage.

Indeed, from the moment a person speaks the name of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, his ascension to the supreme abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa is guaranteed.

(Ādi 16)

I Am an Offender: What Should I Do?

O my Lord, I have committed a grievous offense by criticizing a Vaiṣṇava. Kindly tell me how I may mitigate my sins.

Śrī Caitanya smiled benignly upon hearing the straightforward and honest confession of the *brāhmaṇa*. He said, “Please listen, O *brāhmaṇa*, if one who has taken poison is administered nectar, the drink of immortality, then gradually the effects of the poison weaken and the body becomes immortal. So now I will reply to your question and tell you how this nectar works. All the criticisms you made, although unwittingly, are equivalent to having drunk poison. So now you must drink the nectar of the name and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with that very same mouth. From now on, use the same tongue that offended Vaiṣṇavas to glorify them. Above all other activities, constantly glorify the Vaiṣṇavas through songs, poems or in any other way. The ambrosia of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes is transcendently blissful and can easily dissolve all the poisonous effects of the criticism of Vaiṣṇavas. I am telling you truly: Glorification of the Vaiṣṇavas and the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the method of purification for one who has criticized a Vaiṣṇava unknowingly. If one gives up such malpractices and offensive behavior and constantly glorifies the Supreme Lord and His unalloyed devotees, then one can destroy all sins. Otherwise, millions of pious activities and penances cannot counteract the offenses committed against a Vaiṣṇava. Therefore, go now and practice glorifying the devotees of the Lord and you will surely become freed from all sins.”

The devotees became very happy when they heard these wonderful instructions and they responded by chanting. “Hari! Hari!” The Lord had nicely explained the method of exoneration from the offense of Vaiṣṇava blasphemy. One who disregards these instructions of Śrī Caitanya and criticises a saintly person must drown in the ocean of grief and those who accept these instructions of Śrī Caitanya as Vedic truth can smilingly cross over the ocean of nescience.

(Antya 3)

The Benefits of Not Blaspheming Devotees

Those intelligent souls who avoid blasphemy of the saintly Vaiṣṇavas attain Lord Kṛṣṇa, and pure love and devotion for the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord.

(Madhya 9)



Blasphemy of the Vaiṣṇavas only brings the greatest sin. Those pious souls who do not blaspheme the Vaiṣṇavas and engage in the pure devotional service of the Lord certainly become very, very fortunate. Therefore, **the true devotees of the Lord never offend anyone.**

(Madhya 9)



If just once one calls out, “Kṛṣṇa!” without offense then certainly Kṛṣṇa’s sacred name easily delivers one. This is the Absolute Truth. This is the Absolute Truth. This the Absolute Truth.

(Madhya 9)



One who is not offensive and critical of others and who always chants Kṛṣṇa’s Holy Name will soon be able to captivate with his love the uncontrollable and invisible Lord Caitanya.

(Madhya 10)

The Safest Way to Prevent Offenses

The safest way to behave and prevent offenses is to be humble towards everyone and respectful to all. Take full shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and be mindful of the words spoken by saintly souls and elevated preceptors. This will attract the grace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the form of good intelligence, which will always protect one from all harm, and remove all obstacles on the spiritual path.

(Antya 9)



I offer my obeisances at the lotus feet of all the Vaiṣṇavas so that I may be cleansed of all sins and offenses.

(Madhya 6)

*svasty astu viśvasya khalah prasīdatām
dhyāyantu bhūtāni śivam mitho dhiyā
manas ca bhadram bhajatād adhokṣaje
āveśyatām no matir apy ahaitukī*

May there be good fortune throughout the universe, and may all envious persons be pacified. May all living entities become calm by practicing *bhakti-yoga*, for by accepting devotional service they will think of each other's welfare. Therefore let us all engage in the service of the supreme transcendence, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and always remain absorbed in thought of Him.

— ŚB 5.18.9

***Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare***