

A guest should be treated with proper respect and honour



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Verse: Srimad-Bhagavatam 8.16.7

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[note: transcription is not verbatim]

grhesu yesv atithayo narcitah salilair api yadi niryanti te nunam pheruraja-grhopamah

TRANSLATION: Homes from which guests go away without having been received even with an offering of a little water are like those holes in the field which are the homes of jackals.

PURPORT: In a field there may be holes made by snakes and mice, but when there are very big holes, it may be supposed that jackals live there. Certainly no one goes to take

shelter in such homes. Thus the homes of human beings where atithis, uninvited guests, are not properly received are like the homes of jackals. [End of purport]

[Invocatory prayers, repeats verse and translation]

So Kasyapa Muni, who is one of the prajapatis, one of the progenitors, who procreated different species of living entities at the beginning of creation, is the father of the demigods. He is also the father of the demons and the serpents. So all these different species appeared from Kasyapa. He had several wives. One was Aditi, and from her the demigods were born and they are therefore known as Adityas. His other wife was Diti, from her the Daityas or demons were born, like Hiranyaksa and Hiranyakasipu. Another wife was Kadru, from her the serpents were born. Another wife was Vinata, from here Garuda and Aruna were born. Therefore Garuda is known as Vaineteya, the son of Vinata.

Kasyapa Muni was a self realised soul so he was absorbed in meditation on the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And in this way he spent a long time away from home. When he came back home a lot had happened. The Daityas, led by their king, Bali, invaded the heavenly planets and drove away the demigods. They were cousins in a way, not only that, they are stepbrothers, born from the same father but different mothers. Bali considered that we are children of the same father, so why the Adityas like Indra, Candra, Varuna, etc., have the higher planetary systems and we have the lower? The lower is not very nice, the facilities are higher in the heavens than in the lower planetary system, although they are also heavenly planets. Svarga is the heavens and the lower planets are known as the subterranean heavenly planets. In some ways the facilities there are superior.

Anyway, Bali was disappointed, “Why did we get an inferior place?” He was very powerful, he attacked the heavenly planets, defeated and drove away the demigods. So they were wandering around, hiding in disguise, being afraid of torture by the demons. Naturally the mother of the demigods was feeling very, very sad about this, that her sons’ enemies have occupied their home. She was feeling very distressed.

When Kasyapa came back, he found that the house was devoid of opulence and beauty. He considered what was the reason, there were various possibilities why Laksmidevi goes away. Laksmidevi is the giver of opulence, beauty and prosperity, that’s why she is known as Sri. When he saw the house devoid of Sri, sri-hina, he is asking his wife is it that you did not properly treat the guests? That is one of the reasons why Laksmidevi leaves the home. There are two types of guests, invited and uninvited. Uninvited guests are called atithi, ‘tithi’ means time and ‘a’ means no. These are guests who come unannounced, at any time they may come.

The Vedic culture is such that a guest should be treated with proper respect and honour. The first thing is that when a guest comes home, his feet should be washed. In ISKCON, we have that culture but somehow that has become exclusive for only gurus and sannyasis, but in Vedic culture that is for every guest who comes home. Then he should

be offered a place to sit down, then food and water, drinks and so on should be offered. Then he should be invited to rest and if they want to stay for some days, they should be given that facility too. When one follows that culture, then Laksmidevi resides permanently in that house, and when not then she goes away, Sri-hina.

Even for the demigods that is the case: when Laksmi goes away they too become devoid of opulence and prosperity. Once Durvasa Muni was insulted by Indra. He gave a garland to Indra who put it on his elephant, Airavata, who threw it away. Durvasa became very upset and cursed Indra that Laksmi will disappear from your kingdom. Then the demigods in the heavenly planets were again attacked by the demons and driven away.

So Kasyapa is considering here why the house is looking so ominous and why Aditi is looking so morose. That's why he is inquiring from her what actually happened. This chapter will describe what happened, that Bali drove the demigods away. Aditi begged her husband to please do something to reinstate her children to their rightful position. Kasyapa advised that you please the Supreme Personality of Godhead and perform this payo-vrata, sustain on milk only, and perform these austerities and as a result your sons will be reinstated.

As a result of Aditi doing that, Vamandeva appeared as the son of Aditi, and as you know he tricked Bali Maharaj and took the heavenly planet away from them and gave it back to the demigods. Bali was banished to the lower planetary system, Sataloka. Bali received two benedictions also, one is that the Lord will become his gate keeper. The Lord also had to stay there with him as his gate keeper. The Lord actually agreed and proposed that, "I will become your gatekeeper." In this respect there is another nice anecdote:

When Narada Muni was searching for the greatest devotee, he was told that Bali Maharaja is the greatest devotee. So Narada Muni went to Bali Maharaja and was praising him that, "You are so fortunate that the Lord resides here as your gatekeeper." Bali Maharaja replied that, "Actually it is not his favour—he is guarding me so I don't get out and make a disturbance." That's how he thought.

Another benediction was that in the next manvantara he was going to become Indra. There are 14 Manus in each day of Brahma so when the reign of Manu comes, which lasts for 71 catur-yugas, the whole structure, the whole system changes. In each reign of Manu the structure changes. In this manvantara Indra is the lord of the demigods, but in the next one Bali Maharaja will become king. That is the benediction he had. Since he had the desire he would rightfully become that.

That is the way to do things, if we want something but abide by the desire of the Supreme Personality of Godhead he will fulfill our desires. But if we go against the desire of the Lord, then we make a disturbance in society and suffer. The Lord will fulfill our desires. Even if we have some material desires for enjoyment, if we remain submissive to the Lord he will fulfill even those desires. Therefore there is no need to go against Krsna's will.

Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, can make any arrangement. He allows the atheistic demons to enjoy, so what to speak of his devotees? Of course he wants that his devotees will enjoy with him in the spiritual world. But if some devotee has some material desires then Krsna will fulfill that. The desires may be latent in the heart but if one remains Krsna conscious, then Krsna, who is the Supersoul in the heart, may fulfill those desires if he feels it is necessary for our spiritual advancement.

Spiritual life is not dry, it is full of joy, and it is also executed happily, *susukham*, the result of that is not just happiness, but bliss, spiritual joy. Happiness and joy are not the same thing. Happiness is material, joy is spiritual. This material nature is full of suffering and misery, when that is reduced to some extent we call it happiness. This is a material concept. Cessation of pain, reduction of misery is happiness. But bliss and joy is diametrically opposed to suffering.

For example if misery is considered to be darkness, then when the darkness is dispelled to some extent by lighting a lamp, that is happiness. But when the sun comes up and darkness is totally removed, that is joy. The state of joy is total absence of misery. In Sanskrit the expression is *atyantika duhkha-nivrtti*, the total cessation of suffering, not just temporary. This is the result of joy. When we are situated in a blissful state then there is no consideration of suffering, just as when the sun comes up there is no room for darkness.

So when we become stationed on the spiritual platform then suffering is totally removed and we become situated on *ananda*. Actually what we are craving for is joy or bliss or *ananda* and this is not available in this material world. As long as our consciousness is materialistic there is no room for joy. But on the spiritual platform it automatically happens, there is no separate endeavour. Three things automatically happen when we take to spiritual life: eternity, knowledge, and bliss. Immortal or eternal existence on the spiritual platform, full of knowledge of fully conscious, and full of joy, *sat-cit-ananda*. That is the identity of the spirit soul.

Not only is Krsna *sat-cit-ananda*, but Krsna's parts and parcels, when they become connected to Krsna, also become *sat-cit-ananda*. When a spark comes out of the fire it loses the fiery quality and become transformed into ash. That speck of ash does not have the light and heat inherent in fire. But when that speck that was a spark at one time and now became speck of ash, when it is taken back to the fire it again develops its fiery quality. That is the case with the *jiva*. When the living entity establishes his relation with the Supreme Personality of Godhead then he too becomes *sat-cit-ananda*, that his relative to his relation with Krsna. When he is separated from Krsna then he is *asat*, *acetana* and *nirananda*, temporary, unconscious and devoid of joy or miserable.

That is the living entity's situation in the conditioned state. He has become temporary. Since he lost his spiritual identity and identifies with the body, his body is temporary and he's identifying with it, when the body perishes he thinks that he also is finished. Since matter is unconscious and he identifies with it, then he becomes unconscious. And when

he is isolated and separated from Krsna, then he becomes miserable. We have become mortal, unconscious and miserable.

When you realise that this is what happened to us, but we are eternal, sat-cit-ananda, and that that state can be achieved only by being connected to Krsna, then we are inspired to practice the process by which we can come to that, the process of devotional service. Therefore the Vedic concept deals with three aspects: sambandha, abhideya, and prayojana.

What is our relationship with Krsna? It is the relationship of master and servant. Now is that relationship there or have we lost it? If we realise what we lost it then how to reestablish that lost relationship, sambandha? And the process to do that is abhideya, the means by which the goal can be achieved. Why do we need that, what we are searching for can be achieved only by developing our relationship with Krsna, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu came and gave this process very wonderfully.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu very wonderfully, in a sublime way, made us aware of our relationship with Krsna. Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and we are his eternal servants. Krsna is the supreme whole and we are his parts and parcels. That relationship can be established only by rendering pure devotional service. And the result of that is that we will receive the ultimate goal of existence, krsna-prema, prema pumartho mahan. So this is the instruction of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakur summed up Caitanya Mahaprabhu's gift, his most merciful offering to us, the gift is that he made us understand that Krsna, the son of Nanda Maharaja, is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the supreme worshipable personality. Aradhyo bhagavan, vrajesa tanaya, tad dhama vrndavanam, his abode is Vrindavan. Not Vaikuntha, not even Dvaraka or Mathura, tad dhama vrndavanam. And ramya kacid upasana vraja-vadhu, the way the cowherd damsels of Vrindavan worshipped him is the highest form of worship. And the proof of that statement is Srimad-Bhagavatam. And prema pumartho mahan, to achieve krsna-prema is the ultimate goal of life. This is the teaching of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, just accept it with absolute sincerity, accept it wholeheartedly. There is no need to accept anything else. Thus you will achieve the ultimate goal of life which is rare even for Lord Brahma and Lord Siva.

Therefore Lord Brahma appeared in Caitanya Mahaprabhu's pastimes as Haridas Thakur, as an associate of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Lord Siva appeared as Advaita Acarya, to get entry into the topmost region of the spiritual sky, Goloka Vrindavan.

Thank you very much, does anyone have any question or comment. Yes, Syamasundara.

Syamasundara Das: How can the Vedic principle of receiving guests that you mentioned be practically applied in today's day and age, because people will take undue advantage. .

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Maharaja: Yes, the society has become so degraded in a way it may be difficult to practice, but in the ideal situation Prabhupada is saying that after the offering is made, the householder would go out on the street and loudly announce that if anyone is hungry please come and be my guest. In a society like that there cannot be any scarcity, nobody can go hungry.

Prabhupada came to establish that standard. In ISKCON Prabhupada told us that every temple and even ISKCON centers should keep prasada for 20 people ready. The subji and halavah can be kept ready beforehand and the puri dough is ready and if some guest comes, you just fry the puris which takes only a minute or two, and serve. And when that batch is exhausted, cook another batch and if something is left over when the brahmacharis come back to the temple after sankirtana they can take care of the rest.

This is the standard that Prabhupada gave. And it's not a very expensive affair. And when guests are treated like that they appreciate and come forward to support. We take care of them and they will take care too. That's the standard Prabhupada gave. Individually for householders one may not be able to announce loudly like this, but at least when a guest comes, offer him a glass of water, and if there is some other prasada sweet or sandesh available, otherwise you can offer some potato chips or cookies. The main thing is by doing that we are establishing the proper culture in society, this is ISKCON's business, as a result of that real prosperity will prevail in human society.

Yes?

[Inaudible question]

Maharaja: The way he is guarding is in his Visnu form, not as Vamana.

OK. Hare Krsna, all glories to Srila Prabhupada. Gaura-premanade.