

Śaranagati

ISSUE NO. 01

JUNE 2011

FINDING ONE'S OWN TRUE PATH – EVEN IN THE MIDST OF DIFFICULTIES

One of the most difficult tasks life places before us is finding our true path, our authentic way, the one essential thing that gives meaning to everything else. This path has one essential element: acting according to one's *dharma*.

Often our own true path becomes revealed fully only when we start walking. It can't be planned "at home" at the "planning desk" – it becomes evident only in the classroom of real life.

Dharmic principles are therefore a good starting point for our search. At the very least, they set us walking quickly toward the right path. Yet ironically it is the starting point of *dharma* that gives us a hard time. *Dharma* requires living according to higher principles, but we live in an environment where selfishness is key. People are all too often found to betray their ideals and even their fellow human beings, when their own interests are at stake. We too are conditioned to think mainly of ourselves, and what we consider to be our well-being. To keep our integrity intact in an *adharmic* environment is a serious challenge.

Still, to encourage you to walk the path of *dharma*, I would like to tell you the story of Sītā Devī:

After the battle in Lanka, when Rāvaṇa had been killed by Lord Rāma's arrow, Hanumān was sent to bring back Sītā Devī to her Lord. When Hanumān arrived at the *aśoka* forest where Sītā Devī was being held captive, the female



Photo by Madhva Muni Dasa

demons still weighed on Sītā Devī to renounce Rāma. They criticized Rāma and threatened Sītā. Seeing this, Hanumān wanted to kill them, but Sītā forbade him. She said, "I have been a guest in Lanka. How, then, can I see my hosts slaughtered? I am not like that hunter."

Hanumān immediately wanted to know which hunter Sītā Devī meant. She explained, "Once there was a hunter who had killed many animals. As he was walking through the forest one day, he noticed that a large tiger was following him. Afraid, he quickly climbed a tree. Glancing up, he was terrified to discover that a dangerous bear was sitting on the branch above him. He was clearly in a dilemma: on the ground a hungry tiger and above him a dangerous bear. The tiger noticed the hunter's predicament and called out to the bear, 'Kick him down. Then I will have something to eat and leave you alone.' After giving it some thought, the bear, however, said, "I can't do it. He is my guest."

At this the tiger changed his strategy and addressed the hunter: 'I only need to eat something today. Human or bear, I don't care. If you kick the bear down, I won't harm you.' The hunter immediately climbed up and kicked the bear off his branch. The bear, however, managed to grab a lower branch and then climbed back to safety.

Again the clever tiger changed strategies. 'Don't you see what a rascal the hunter is? You should never shelter a



FINDING ONE'S OWN TRUE PATH (CONTINUED)

dangerous cobra. So kick the hunter down.' The bear, however, again said, 'No, the hunter may have acted wrongly – in fact, the whole world may act wrongly – but I do not have to give up my path. I never harm a guest no matter what he does.'"

Sītā added, "Hanumān, this is why I request you to spare the female demons. We always have to follow dharma. Dharma will protect us. Do not pay heed if others do not follow their dharma. Make sure you do!"

I was encouraged by this story because it so clearly illustrates how important it is to follow our own true path even when others around us choose to follow their interests and seem to act against *dharmā*. Those who do so are never troubled. But if we give up our true path just to please our whims or the whims of others, then many problems wait around the corner and we will surely meet them.

Śācīnandana Swami (May 2011)

THE HEART OF A SINCERE SĀDHAKA

Good chanting does not depend on our adherence to mechanical rules. It is not a matter of just doing the dos and avoiding the don'ts and then our job is done. No, not at all! Chanting is an offering of the heart – a heart filled with feelings of humility, a desire to surrender and a sincere service attitude. It is ultimately a loving call to Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This means we need to chant with a firm understanding of our relationship with Them (*sambhandha*). "My Lord, I have a relationship with You. I have lost my way in the world of temporary relationships, but my real life is with You. My real home is with You. You are my eternal safety."

To put our heart into chanting, in other words, we must feel separation from the Divine Couple. We want to be with Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa again and serve Them. And we pray for that through our chanting of the holy name. But how can we feel separation if our hearts are dry? If you cannot cry for Kṛṣṇa, cry to cry for Kṛṣṇa. That's all! We must understand all these things if, in due course, we wish to awaken the heart of a sincere *sādhaka* and then from there step toward advanced and affectionate chanting. Only affectionate chanting can lead us into deep



practice and only if we find shelter in the depths of the ocean of chanting will we be saved from the disturbing waves of offenses (*nāmāparādhā*) that can completely push us away from our goal.

Śācīnandana Swami (2008). *Nāma Rahasya*, p.37, Śaraṇāgati Publishing.

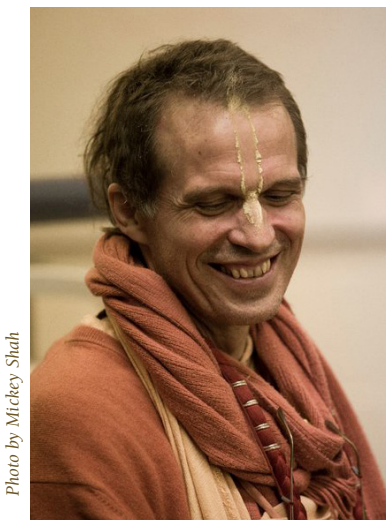


Photo by Mickey Shah

MEET ŚĀCĪNANDANA SWAMI

Important events over the next two months:

July 8th-17th	„Fruska Gouranga“ Summer Camp, Serbia
July 23th	Ratha-Yātrā, Berlin, Germany
Aug. 6th	Ratha-Yātrā, Cologne, Germany
Aug. 9th-13th	Śrī Balarāma Jayantī Festival, New Māyāpur Dhāma, Fr.
Aug. 22th-23th	Janmāṣṭamī Festival, Goloka Dhāma, Germany
Aug. 29th-Sep. 4th	First Worldwide Kīrtana Mela, near Chemnitz, Germany

You can find a more detailed schedule at www.saranagati.net