

# Śaraṇagati

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## ON VAIṢṆAVA APARĀDHA

Gaura-krpā Swami motions to his young disciple to sit down and be silent. He wants to clear his thoughts.

**Gaura-krpā Swami:** Viśvambara, the only reason why someone cannot feel the mercy of the Holy Name is because he or she displeases the Holy Name by committing *aparādha*. When the Holy Name is displeased, it will immediately move into the distance, taking mercy with it. When the scriptures speak of the mercy of the Holy Name – what do they exactly mean? Listen carefully – when someone obtains the mercy of the Holy Name, it means that he gains faith that chanting the Holy Names can grant all spiritual perfection, give all protection and maintain the truthful devotee. Without that transcendental *śraddhā*, the chanter will again take shelter in material objects. If one does not correct the mistake, one's attraction to Kṛṣṇa will wane to the verge of extinction.

**Viśvambara:** You make me feel afraid! Does this also refer to unintentionally committed offenses?

**Gaura-krpā Swami:** Yes. See, just like all sins are uprooted when one does *kīrtana* of the Holy Names even unintentionally – similarly, even unintentional offenses extinguish one's love for Kṛṣṇa. Fire always burns. It doesn't matter if one touches it intentionally or not. Such is the power of offenses! [...] There are ten offenses against the Holy Name, but offending Vaiṣṇavas is the greatest. It is like a raging mad elephant who storms into the garden of the heart and totally uproots the plant of *bhakti*. Every devotee is dear to the Lord – because of having given up a lot to extricate himself/herself from the mud of material life and come to the Lord. In fact, – even if we do not always appreciate



all Vaiṣṇavas due to differences in our conditional natures – the Lord certainly overlooks their so-called faults. There is a saying: “In the heart of the Lord there is no place for His devotees' faults.” The Lord feels great pain when His devotees who rest at His feet are hurt. So much so that He accepts the pain as His own...

Gaura-krpā Swami's eyes filled with tears.

**Gaura-krpā Swami:** Oh Viśvambara – do you remember how Lord Gaurāṅga once turned around to show Haridāsa His back which was covered with the wounds of the caning, which He had accepted on His own soft skin to protect Haridāsa from death!? Never commit Vaiṣṇava-*aparādha*. Not even in your mind. Criticizing others is a character fault – but criticizing Vaiṣṇavas is a great offense.

The more Gaura-krpā Swami talks the more emotional he becomes. It seems he is thinking of something or someone he does not want to talk about – not yet.

**Gaura-krpā Swami:** Now, sometimes it is not so easy to determine who is a Vaiṣṇava and who is not – because *bhakti* often hides in the heart without being publicly displayed. Therefore – in order to play it safe – it's best to not criticize anyone at all. Is this 'sacrifice' too great to demand? I think in the light of what can be obtained by offenceless chanting, this is a small price. Therefore, Viśvambara – I tell you, from practical experience – protect the seed of *bhakti* in your heart so that it can grow. Don't allow the mad elephant of Vaiṣṇava-*aparādha* to enter and uproot it!

☪ excerpt from *Broken Names*. Śacīnandana Swami (in press).



# THE NATURE OF PRIDE

When Indra heard about the worship of Govardhana hill by the Vraja-vāsīs he became very upset. Not only had he been offended by the Vraja-vāsīs, Kṛṣṇa had directed their worship to a mountain! This is like first approaching an honorable person with a flower garland, but then giving it to an ant. Indra was severely tested – and there was a reason for this. Indra, like us sometimes, became proud. And the one thing which Kṛṣṇa never tolerates is when his devotee becomes proud. Kṛṣṇa feels protective towards each one of us and when he sees that we fall from the spiritual path, he who is called Kālātmā, the self of time, makes arrangements to take that pride away. Kṛṣṇa had purposely redirected the *yajña*, and purposely inspired the good-hearted Vraja-vāsīs to offend Indra with harsh words.

When a proud person hears something that belittles his own position, it is more painful to him than 500 scorpions biting him at the same time. When we talk to a proud person, we usually find that he thinks he is alright. This is called ‘the blind spot’. If you want to correct a proud person be prepared for an atom bomb – and he will think “I am humble” while he throws it at you. Indra had the same problem. He provided an amazing example how pride can cover one’s intelligence: “By giving up my shelter and taking refuge in Kṛṣṇa, these people have acted so foolishly as if they would have left an excellent boat to sit on a stone in order to cross the ocean. They will sink! They will sink! And I will show them how they will sink. I will... I will... I will send them the clouds of universal destruction.”

We might ask ourselves, “Isn’t it surprising that Indra became so enraged against Kṛṣṇa? Why didn’t he become so angry with Kaṁsa, who had forbidden all *yajñas*, including all the *yajñas* which were customarily offered to Indra. Why was he so particularly angry in this case?” And another question that we may ask is, “He thinks that these cowherd boys are insignificant, but why then is he becoming so outraged?” Normally, when the stronger faces the weaker he remains calm. We can just imagine a lion that gets all nervous when there is a mosquito in the room and he starts to jump at the mosquito like he would jump at an elephant. We would think, “This is disproportionate!”

The problem is deep. Indra could not accept the devotion of the Vraja-vāsīs towards Kṛṣṇa. He didn’t feel good in that atmosphere. It made him angry. This is why Indra reacted so disproportionately. Indra had one thousand eyes on his body but all of them were closed by pride so that he couldn’t see what was right in front of him: The highest form of love of Godhead, the love of



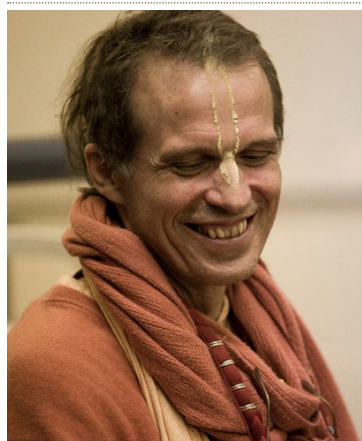
the Vraja-vāsīs for Kṛṣṇa, the most worshipable form of devotion. He went against it in an effort to destroy it.

This is what happens to all of us when we are overwhelmed by pride. Then we don’t feel good in the association of devotees. In fact, we cannot tolerate it. The origin of pride is the desire for fame called *pratiṣṭhā*. One feels, “Why should Kṛṣṇa be in the center? My interests should be in the center. I should sit on a throne and be worshipped.” This *līlā* with Indra is so important because it touches this primordial problem.

What can we do to eliminate the soil that pride needs in order to grow in our hearts? We can meditate on the question: Who is the one who knows everything? We will find that it is Kṛṣṇa. We can also think of ourselves as a pen – a pen never writes the book. It is always the person behind the pen. Or we can think of ourselves as a priest. When the priest comes before the altar and blows the conch shell, he would be foolish to think, “All these people have come here to look at me and hear my conch shell blowing.” It would be illusionary. He is there only because Kṛṣṇa is behind him. In this way we can always remember the Lord, the person behind us, the person who gave us our position – then we won’t be proud.

☪ from a seminar by Śacīnandana Swami in Goloka Dhama, Germany, December 30, 2012.

Photo by Mickey Shah



## MEET ŚACĪNANDANA SWAMI

upcoming seminars & events:

Apr. 11-14	Yoga Expo, Stuttgart, Germany
Apr. 20-21	Zukunft Erde Festival, Berlin, Germany
May 3-5	Sacred Space Retreat, Switzerland
May 9-10	Yoga Vidya Music Festival, Bad Meinberg, Germany

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