

# Śaranagati

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## HOW TO TURN INNER PAIN INTO GREAT GAIN

We have all observed, either through our own experiences or through conversations with others, that the pain arising from disappointment in interpersonal relationships distracts the mind like no other feeling. Even the feeling of being in love does not occupy our thoughts as much as the feeling of being slighted by another person! Again and again one helplessly thinks, “Why did she say that? Why did he do this to me? I don’t deserve such treatment...”

If one sits down for spiritual practice with such a mindset, one will quickly lose focus, become confused and uncomfortable.

Here is a simple tip for how to get over this type of mental block. Try it please – it works!

Please, never feel frustrated, disturbed, or annoyed by the miseries that are inflicted upon you by others. We all have some type of unavoidable karma coming our way. As you might know, there are three kinds of karma:

Karma that can be easily changed by some auspicious activity like chanting mantras or doing specific sacrifices.

Karma that cannot be changed so easily. Even though we do auspicious activities there is still a fifty percent chance that this second type of karma will stay with us. Despite our endeavors for piety and spirituality, it continues to stick around. But with “suitable practice and detachment” there is also a fifty percent chance that it goes away.

Karma that is bound to affect you as long as you have a material body. You can only learn to live with this karma by changing your perspective on what it is and why it is happening. It is this third (and second) type of karma that Kṛṣṇa minimizes for his devotees to teach them the lessons they still have to learn. But this karma still, nonetheless, is unavoidable. In this third category of karma come those sufferings that we get from other people.

But even in the case of these “interpersonal sufferings”, we still have our freedom! We can choose how to react. Do we want to be frustrated, angry or, even worse, vengeful? If we do so, we would only perpetuate the misery. It is best to calmly and patiently tolerate what comes with the understanding that it has to come – one way or another.

This suffering is not meaningless. It is meaningful because it motivates us to take full shelter at the lotus feet of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, who generously give their devotees the most precious jewel of *ātma-rati* – divine spiritual love for them.



How do we turn suffering inflicted by others into an asset for our spiritual advancement? We need to spiritualize our perspective:

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, we find the example of the Avanti *brāhmaṇa* who, upon reflecting about the miseries others had inflicted upon him, had an amazing realization. He could see how his suffering was all the mercy of the Lord coming in disguise. After he had been slandered, robbed of his patience and food, and even beaten, he thought to himself:

“Śrī Hari, who is the Lord of the demigods, must have been pleased with me. It is by His mercy that I have attained this present state of suffering, and have thus developed a sense of detachment, which is the boat that will carry me across the ocean of material existence.”

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura comments:

“When the *brāhmaṇa* realized that his suffering condition enabled him to become detached, he became joyful, understanding that his so-called misfortune was actually the Lord’s special mercy. Such detachment from materialistic life is a sure symptom of the Lord’s causeless mercy, and the *brāhmaṇa* considered it to be the boat for crossing over the ocean of material existence.”  
(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 11.23.28)

So, on a deeper level we find only gain...even in inner pain!

From Śacīnandana Swami (2010). *How to Turn Inner Pain into Great Gain: Change Your Perspective*, February 2010.

