

**Reading of Stories told by Srila Prabhupada
by H.H. Suhotra Swami
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This evening we're going to read from a collection of stories that were told by Srila Prabhupada on different occasions. So very lengthy file and some of the stories I have not seen before, so we can't go through all of them, obviously, but I've selected the ones which I consider to be for myself most interesting, namely the new ones. Some old ones too. So without further delay we can start.

The first story is entitled "**Close the door**". An employer advertised for an opening in his firm and received many applications. Based upon these, he selected two men and asked them to come for an interview. The employer then observed each man carefully during the interview. When the first man entered the room, he left the door open behind him. The employer spoke with him for about 15 minutes and then asked him to wait outside. When the second applicant entered, he shut the door behind him. After speaking with him the employer asked him to also wait outside and then called his secretary. "That first man I spoke to," he said, "has all the qualifications, but I've decided to give the job to the second man." "Why is that?" "Because the first man left the door open. It appears he is a lazy fellow. The other man shut the door. So while he may not be so qualified he will learn quickly."

Moral: even though one may be so-called qualified, if he is not trained in simple etiquettes like closing the door, what is the use of his learning?

This is very instructive. Especially for ISKCON devotees, because it seems that they often lack these basic etiquettes in life. They don't close the door and they also like to have all their meetings in doorways. Have you noticed that? Sometimes I think we should actually label some doorways somebody's office, because that's where he has all his meetings.

Here is another story called "**Increasing the fever**". There was once a doctor visiting a house to diagnose two patients. Rich house wife and a maidservant. The doctor said: "The maidservant's fever is 100,5." This is in Fahrenheit. So in Fahrenheit scale the normal body temperature is 98,6. So 100,5 is high. Doctor said: "This maidservant's fever is 100,5, so there is some anxiety. I will give her some medicine. But the landlady of the house is practically no fever, 99. So there is no anxiety for her." But when the landlady heard this she became angry and said: "This doctor is useless. I am the landlady, I've got only 99 and my maidservant has 100,5. The maidservant should have 98 and I should have 110".

The moral is the modern civilization is inclined to increase the degree of its fever up to 110. As in the human body, there is death as soon as the temperature reaches 107, so by the nuclear weapons modern civilization will come to the point of 107 and over. But devotees want to decrease the fever by living the highest ideal life and decreasing the demands of the body. So this increase of fever refers to increasing all the unnecessary paraphernalia for sense gratification, people are working so hard to accumulate more and more useless things just to enjoy their senses in an animalistic way. So the whole society is aimed at that and they think this is progress. So this story very nicely illustrates that that type of progress simply leads to death.

Now this is a very often quoted story, the next one is called "**The missionary and the coalminers**". This is a story Srila Prabhupada told many times, but I think that many of you have not heard this story before, am I right? The missionary and the coalminers, have you heard it? Ramananda Ray, you've heard it. Yes. All right. So because so many have not heard it, I will read it. Once there was a Christian minister who is preaching to the coalminers. You know, man who dig for coal in the mountainside. The missionary began a very fired up lecture telling the miners that a sinful person will have to go to hell and he can only be saved if he surrenders to Jesus Christ. On hearing the name of Jesus Christ one of the miners asked: "What is his number?" Because all of the coalminers, they have a number. So these miners were so ignorant, they've never heard of Jesus before, so the minister was saying: "Only Jesus can save you." One man said: "What is his number?"

So then the missionary he tried again, he thought: "Well, I have to preach to them from the different direction." So then he began to describe the misery of hell. He said: "Hell, this is a very dark hole, it goes deep under the earth and it's very dirty down there." So the miners they looked at each other and they looked at the minister. "What's wrong with hell, we're working there every day." So then this minister he could understand that he was preaching to people whose conception of reality was very very narrow. He couldn't give the examples he was giving, they couldn't understand. So then he thought a little more and then he said: "Ah." He said: "In hell there are no newspapers." And the miners said: "Oh, no!" They were very afraid: "We don't want to go to hell. Tell us more about Jesus."

The moral is that we have to preach according to kala, desa, patra, that means according to time, place and circumstances. We have to find out what level of consciousness the people we're speaking to are on and try to make Krishna conscious relevant to that level. If it is too high or also too low, they'll not be attracted.

And now here is a story about the lazy man. This is also an often-told story, but devotees appreciated very much. So we'll read it today. "**Only a**

lazy man cannot cook". This is the point that Prabhupada wanted to make with this story. Only a lazy man cannot cook, because cooking, what follows cooking? Eating. So everybody likes to eat – this is the point. Nobody is too lazy to eat. But sometimes we're lazy, we want others to cook for us. So there is a story: There was a king who announced: all the lazy men in this kingdom could come to the charity house and be fed. So hundreds of people came and they all said: "I am a lazy man." The background of the story is that the king was having a discussion with his minister and they were talking about this, who is really lazy, and the minister was saying: "Your Majesty, from what I have seen there are very few people who are actually really lazy. There are many people to say they are lazy, but when it's in their own interest, they can become very active and then you see they're not really lazy." So this whole arrangement was just to see who is really lazy. So it was announced: "All lazy men can come to the charity house and have a big feast. So many, many people came: "I am lazy, I am lazy, I am lazy". They were introducing themselves in that way. Then the king told the minister to set fire to the charity house. They all were sitting and eating and then suddenly the minister set fire to the wooden house. Then all these lazy people became very active to save their lives, they were all running, jumping out the windows.

Then after everyone had left, the king looked in and he saw two men, by this time the whole place was burning and there were two men who were sitting in the middle, fire all around them and they were still eating very slowly, like this, and the king was watching and he saw one of the man turn to the other and say: "My back is becoming very hot from the fire." The other one said: "Just turn your other side." From this the king could understand that here are two really lazy men.

This is another story often told by Srila Prabhupada "**Scissor philosophy**". This is to illustrate stubbornness. When someone is so stubborn, he won't give up his point of view. So two men were having an argument, they wanted to cut something and they argued about which is the best tool to use to cut. One was saying: "Knife, for this thing knife is better." And the other was saying: "No, scissors." So back and forth, one was saying: "Knife!" the other one: "Scissors." "Knife, scissors," and it became a very hot argument. Then finally the one who was advocating knife, he said: "If you don't agree, I'll throw you in the river". And the other one said: "I'll never change my mind". So then that man who is bigger, the knife man, he picked up the scissors man and threw him in the river. And the man, he couldn't swim so he was starting to drown and the knife man said: "Look, if you agree with knife, then I will save you." So the man was going down for the third time and he put his hand out of the water and went like this (showing scissors with his fingers).

The moral is – stubborn people like scientists or impersonalists will never accept defeat even though completely smashed, they still maintain that they're right.

And now "**The yogi's wager**". A servant of rich man came before his master one day and told him of an interesting yogi he had seen in the river. The servant said that this yogi claimed he could stay in the water all night, in the middle of the river without any outside heat. The yogi was willing to take a bet with anyone to prove that he could do it. When the rich man heard this he decided to bet against the yogi. The bet was made to see whether the yogi could stay in the water all night.

So, we want to say that this was in the cold season. Generally India is a warm country, but in north India in the winter it does get quite chilly, so this is in the cold season, so this is quite a feat to stay in the river up to one's neck all night. The yogi went into the water and the rich man and the servant went home. Of course, there were always some people going by who could make sure the yogi was there in the water. And the next day, when the rich man and the servant came back, it was reported to them that yes, this yogi, he has successfully stayed in the water all night. The rich man, he was thinking: "All right, so this yogi won the bet". But then the rich man had one clever friend and this clever friend said: "Wait a minute, you see that light?" And he pointed to a far away temple. On top of the temple there was a ghee flame burning. This clever man claimed that this yogi by his mystic power he drew heat from that far away light and brought it into his body and that's why he can stay in the water all night. Actually it's not that he's actually austere, it's not that he endured the cold. So then the rich man said: "Oh, that's a very good explanation, so why should I pay him?" Then he refused to pay. Now the servant, he was unhappy.

So the rich man went home followed by the servant and the rich man said: "My dear servant, now go to the kitchen and cook me my breakfast". The servant went into a kitchen and the rich man was waiting, waiting, waiting and he was sure to know by now there should be breakfast, so he was calling: "Where is my breakfast?" And the servant came out and said: "It takes a little time, just be patient". And he went back in the kitchen and again the rich man waited, waited. "Hey, where is my breakfast?" "Sorry, master, it takes a little more time". So he waited, waited, then he got very impatient, he came storming in the kitchen: "What's going on, where is my breakfast?" And he saw that the servant had made on the floor a very small flame and then from the ceiling he had hung a pot and the pot was two meters above the little flame. And the servant was standing there like this and the rich man said: "What are you doing?" And the servant said: "Oh, since you believed that this yogi was taking heat from that far away fire, so I am doing the same. I am cooking your breakfast in this way, but it's going very slowly." Then the rich man, he

could understand that he had been unfair to that yogi, so he went back and paid him.

Prabhupada told this story to illustrate that we should follow the process if we want to get the result. Just like if you want to have nicely cooked breakfast, then you have to put the pot of food to be cooked directly on the flame, you can't make such kind of foolish arrangement - two meters separating flame from pot. You'll never get the result. Similarly, when we take to the process of bhakti yoga, chanting the holy name to get the result of love of Godhead, we have to follow the process correctly. That means you cannot chant Hare Krishna and at the same time be doing all kinds of nonsense things in between and then be wondering: "Hey, where is my love of God?" You have to follow the process as it is.

Then the next story is "**The old lady's blessing**". Now, I know the background of this story. That Bhakti.... Maharaja and another devotee in Vrindavana they went to see a famous temple and at that temple the priest, the brahmana pujari, he said to them after they took a darshan, that: "You're such nice devotees that Krishna will surely reward you in your next life that you can take birth in the family of brahmanas like I did". They returned and Bhakti.... Maharaja informed Srila Prabhupada of this blessing of that brahmana. Then Srila Prabhupada in replay told the story:

During the time of the British raja, there was an old lady who lived in the remote village. One day the British district magistrate...they used the district officer, legal officer, who travels around to settle legal problems that might come up in his area. So one day the British district magistrate visited her town. This old lady had been entangled in the quarrel over possession of land, which some of her relatives had been trying to take from her. Friends advised that she see the British magistrate and present the matter to him for settlement. When she did so, this magistrate immediately ruled in her favor and made sure that the land was put in her name. The old lady was very delighted and she blessed the British officer. She said: "I bless you that in your next life you'll become a policeman". The reason that she blessed him to become a policeman is that in her village experience the policeman is the most important person. So this was the highest rank she could think of, but the thing is the officer, this magistrate, he's already so much more important than the village policeman, but the old lady couldn't understand that. In the same way a devotee, a vaishnava is already so much superior to cast brahmanas. So this blessing is like that, to bless a big district officer that he may become a policeman.

The next story is called "**The worthless worshipper of Kali**". You know the goddess Kali. She is very popular in India, especially in Bengal. Kali's form is dark, she is blackish deity and she is depicted with at least four hands, usually actually with ten and in every hand there is a different

weapon and she has a garland of human skulls, or, actually fresh human heads, freshly cut. And she has a long tongue and big sharp teeth. Goddess Kali is worshipped by materialistic people because she is actually the consort of Lord Siva, so she gives very easily, like Lord Siva does, material blessings. And the way of worshipping goddess Kali in these temples in Bengal is animal sacrifice. They sacrifice usually a goat. So an insensitive worshipper of the goddess Kali went to the temple and prayed to the goddess in a materialistic way – typical of the demigod worshipper he asked for a material blessing. After his prayers and a little puja he soon got his desired result, but part of the ceremony, a part of the offering that he had taken, the vow he has taken, was that after this result came he was supposed to go back to the temple and sacrifice a goat. But he didn't come back.

After some days he happened to come into the temple just to pay obeisances to the deity and while he was standing there in front of the deity after paying obeisances, the deity spoke to him and she asked him: "Where is the goat? You promised some days ago that after you got what you wanted you would come here and sacrifice a goat." So the man replied: "Oh, getting a goat, you know, that's very expensive. I don't have so much money." Then the goddess said: "All right, but you have to offer something, so you at least sacrifice a pig." He said: "All right." Then he went away and he didn't come back for many days. Then after sometime he returned and again just offered his obeisances and stood before the deity. This time the goddess asked: "Where is the pig? You said you'd offer a pig." The man replied: "I am sorry, but I couldn't find a pig anywhere, it's not so easy." So the goddess replied: "This is not very good, you've received your blessing and now you must give something in return. But just to make it easier for you I'll request that you just offer something that is very available, that you can get without any trouble. For instance why don't you offer me a fly?" So this lazy man, he replied: "But goddess, there are so many flies buzzing around here in the temple and you have so many hands. Why don't you just reach out and grab one?"

The moral is the demigod worship does not involve any love whatsoever. This type of worship is very selfish. And one who has his own interest at heart he approaches demigods.

The next story is "**Smoking ganja through a friend's hand**". You know, ganja is the Indian word for marijuana. Prabhupada told this story to illustrate this point: that if one has his own philosophy, then let him preach his own philosophy. But don't preach your own philosophy in the name of the Bhagavad-gita. This is our protest to all the interpreters of the Bhagavad-gita. If they do not believe in God, Krishna, and they don't want to surrender to Him, then let them preach atheism – everyone has got the right to do this, but why preach atheism in the name of the Gita? This is like the man who wants to smoke ganja, but he doesn't want to be caught by the police. So he sits next to a friend, who's not smoking ganja

and he puts the marijuana cigarette between his fingers and smokes from his hand. Then when the police come, they smell marijuana smoke and the way they check in India, anyway, they look at everyone's hand. "Who has been smoking ganja, show us your fingers." And because the ganja leaves a very significant yellow mark between the fingers, so when the police do that, then they catch this friend who wasn't smoking and they arrest him. So Srila Prabhupada mentioned the other day about this one mayavadi Ramana Maharishi. Prabhupada actually told this story in that connection, that he has his own philosophy. So why does he bother to introduce Bhagavad-gita? "Just preach your own philosophy and leave Gita alone," this Prabhupada said. This is like smoking marijuana through another person's hand.

Then we have the story of "**The Himalayas give birth**". Yes, this is a short story. Another story that Srila Prabhupada often told: When words spread that the world famous huge Himalayan mountain range was going to produce offspring, hundreds of people gathered at the foothills of the mountains. In anticipation great crowds waited and finally they saw in the side of the mountain a hole opened up and they were all waiting: now it's coming, there will be something wonderful and out from the hole run whole herd of rats, they came running out. And everyone ran away very disappointed.

Prabhupada told this story to illustrate that it is expected from then great universities of the world, you go to these universities, you see big buildings looking like mountains, that something wonderful will come out, but actually all that comes out are hippies and punks and rats, dogs and cats. So Prabhupada said: "Unless these young people become Krishna conscious, they will be like these rat offspring of the Himalaya mountains."

And now, here is the story called "**The cat in the basket**". When it was time for a daughter's marriage, one woman made many elaborate arrangements for a smooth wedding ceremony. However, in the middle of the proceedings a cat ran into the middle of the whole assembly. Now we should explain that in India, unlike the West, animals like cats and dogs are considered to be very filthy and inauspicious. People do not keep cats and dogs in their house, the cats and dogs stay outside and they just eat whatever scraps are thrown to them. The main reason for cats and dogs is that the dogs will bark if someone's coming and the cat will chase away the mice and rats, but otherwise Indian people don't make friends with these animals, they rather make friends with cows. Actually in many Indian houses the cow is the family pet, they keep the cow in the backyard and they come and pet the cow and talk to the cow, but not to cats and dogs.

So at this lady's marriage ceremony, this arrangement she made for her daughter, everything was set and the ceremony was being performed and suddenly a cat came into the middle of everything – this is considered

very inauspicious. The mother was afraid that people would notice this cat and start to comment that: "Oh, the whole proceedings have been polluted". What she did was she looked around and she saw one basket that has been used for flowers, weaker baskets. She took that and put it over the cat, kept the cat under the basket. Some years later that bride was grown up and she had her own family and then her daughter came to an age and a marriage had to be arranged for her. This mother, she did everything like she had seen her mother do and after everything was arranged and a marriage was just about to begin, she was looking and she was thinking: "But there is something missing, there is one more thing my mother did – oh, yes, I know what it is." So she found a cat and she put it under the basket.

The moral is that due to a poor fund of knowledge, people accept certain theories and practices as truth, but they never stop to question why those theories and practices exist. The story criticizes the tendency to follow blindly.

This next story is called "**The devotee who kept his tilak**". There was once a factory where all the workers were Hindus and mostly they were vaishnavas. The vaishnavas therefore had freedom to wear their vaishnava tilak to work and they also displayed other vaishnava paraphernalia like neck beads and so on. But after some time the new proprietor was a Muslim. So on taking over the business the Muslim owner declared that he would not allow the workers to come to work anymore wearing vaishnava tilak. Most of the workers obeyed and on the given date announced by the owner they appeared at the factory without their tilak. One employee however thought that he would take his chances and depend on Krishna. He went to work on that day still wearing very clear white vaishnava tilak. After seeing all the workers assembled together the new Muslim proprietor said: "This one devotee who is wearing vaishnava tilak is very courageous. He can continue to wear the tilak every day, but the rest of you are forbidden to wear it anymore."

The moral is we should not unnecessarily abandon our vaishnava culture.

The next story is called "**The Navab chandelier**". Navab means "rich one". There used to be a class of very wealthy men in Bengal who had this title. First they were Muslims, then later the British were also called Navabs when they became very wealthy plundering Bengal. So there was a Navab who had so much money that he didn't know what to do with it. This Navab had in his house a very beautiful crystal chandelier, very, very big and the crystals were actually real glass quartz crystal. So it was very expensive chandelier. I don't know about this one (showing on the ceiling), it maybe plastic. I don't know. Very often the chandeliers are made just plastic. But his was real.. This is also real, O.K. So, you can look at this chandelier and think about this story. So as the servant was cleaning the crystal chandelier one crystal fell off and it crashed onto the

marble floor. And as it crashed and broke into little pieces it made a very unusual tinkling sound. The Navab was sitting in the next room. He was just sitting, smoking his hookah, looking out the window, he's completely bored and when he heard the sound he came in. The servant very afraid and he was standing with folded hands, he was trembling and the Navab said: "What was that sound?" And the servant said: "I am very sorry, but while cleaning the chandelier one crystal fell and it broke, I am very, very sorry." And the Navab said: "It was a very interesting sound. Go up there and throw down another one. So he climbed up and he dropped another one and the Navab went: "Oh, I like the sound. Throw down another one." So one after the other, they were thrown down and then the whole chandelier was finished and the Navab was very happy. "Today my day was interesting". This also illustrates modern civilization, it is like that. They have so much opulence, but they waste it uselessly.

Next story is a story Srila Prabhupada told actually to describe himself, to define his own mission. This is called "**The ax and a tree**". Mayavadi gurus have ruined the whole world with their philosophy. But there was another Bengali who would destroy them, you see. The greatest mayavadi gurus in recent history were all Bengalis. Rama Krishna was a Bengali, Vivekananda was a Bengali, that Paramahansa Yogananda, who went to America in the early 50s, he was a Bengali, there is another one, Sri Chinmoy, who is very well known, he is a Bengali and there are others. So the real big mayavadis were all Bengalis. Srila Prabhupada said, all he said that Bengalis are very intelligent. So when a Bengali comes out of Bengal, especially if he comes to the West, where people don't know philosophy, it's very easy for a Bengali to cheat, because they're very clever. So Prabhupada said that it takes another Bengali, meaning himself, to defeat such clever Bengali mayavadis.

The story Prabhupada told to illustrate this was a story of an ax head, you know just the middle sharp part of an ax was lying next to a tree and the ax and the tree were talking. So this ax head said to the tree: "I will cut you down." And the tree replied: "You can't do that." And the ax said: "No, but I am very sharp, I can cut you down." And the tree replied: "You can't do anything unless I first give you one of my branches for a handle." The ax represents the western world, who were being cheated by the Bengalis. The tree represents Bengal or the Bengalis. So westerners, it is like Prabhupada said, when Vivekananda came to Chicago, there was a conference, big world religious conference in Chicago I think was 1898 or something like that, 1896. And Vivekananda came there and he stood up because it was a religious conference so there were all religions there and they all were expecting to hear different ideas about God. Then Vivekananda stood up, he had his big turban and he was very impressive and everyone was astonished when he came to speak and he said: "Why have you gathered here to speak about God, how to worship God in different ways? Don't you know you're all God?" And so they were astonished, they never heard anyone say something like that before. The

Christians, they wanted to protest, but this Vivekananda was so clever he was talking circles around him. They felt in their heart that this is wrong. How is it that we are all God, how he can say - this is mad, they couldn't believe they've heard this and they wanted to protest, but he was so clever and they couldn't defeat him.

This is the story to illustrate, that the tree represents Bengal and unless Bengal gives one of her branches to the ax no one can cut this tree down. Srila Prabhupada came from Bengal to deliver the actual Vedic philosophy of Krishna consciousness and defeat all the mayavadis. Therefore we pray Srila Prabhupada with that pranam mantra nirvisesa sunyavadi pascadya desa tarine. He has come to the lands where nirvisesa sunyavadi philosophy has spread and he's preaching the message of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Now, the next one, I find very humorous. Long, long ago a student took his final examination in the school. One of the questions that he had to answer was about the reign of one Indian king, whose name was **Hardwar Basta**. The student could not remember anything about Hardwar Basta, but it was an essay question, so he had to write the whole paragraph about Hardwar Basta. What he thought he would do is just to make up big words, big sounding words and write an essay about Hardwar Basta in that way. This is what he wrote, when Srila Prabhupada was telling the story, he spoke these words. Everyone was very surprised when Prabhupada was talking these words. "Hardwar Basta was a dobendi lectulise by the plactony of tsinda". And he filled up the whole page like that. The examiner could understand that this boy had simply manufactured words, but he saw this also requires intelligence so he gave him a passing mark.

The moral is that in the similar way, many books are published that are manufactured only out of nonsense, but because it takes some intelligence to juggle words in this way, people think that these books are very valuable. Actually people think like that, there is a big book and when they opened it up, they can't understand what it says. But everybody says "this is such a nice book, there are so many wise words in this book" and when anybody reads it, their mind just becomes puzzled "what does it mean?"

And now there is a story about sugar cane. Is it? No. We'll go on to the story about "**The man who wouldn't change his word**". Yes, this is a story to illustrate dogmatism. You know, when one becomes dogmatic, then he sticks to some argument even when their argument is no longer useful. He sticks to some philosophy or whatever when it's no longer valid. And although we as devotees, we must always preach from the Vedic scriptures and the Vedic scriptures never change, but that doesn't mean that we should not adjust our preaching as we heard before to time,

place and circumstance. So this is a story that illustrates this point very nicely.

There was a man who is an expert in some certain field and that field was very important in criminal investigation. You know, just like when there are criminal cases, they call experts on blood analysis or other such things to testify, to clarify the evidence. So there was such a man, he was always being called to the court to give his opinion. He was always sworn to tell the truth, you see, you must tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God, hold up your right hand. When he was sworn in like that the first time then the first question he was asked: "Could you please tell us your age for the record?" He said: "My age is 60 years." Then after that year after year whenever he was called to the court, even ten years later, he was sworn in and then asked his age: "Sixty years old". The judge after ten years said: "My dear sir, you've been coming in this court regularly for ten years and every time you say you're sixty years old, but it's now ten years later." And the man replied: „I have sworn the first day I came here that my age is sixty years old, I cannot change my word."

And the next one is the "**Deaf man**". A deaf man used to call for his wife. He would be in one room, she would be in the kitchen. So he used to call: "Wife please, come here." And she would reply: "I am coming, just a moment." But because he was deaf he couldn't hear that, so he used to think: "This woman is deaf, I am calling, but she doesn't come." Then when she would come he would accuse her: "What's wrong with you, you must be deaf." But the fact is that he couldn't hear. This is similar to the mass of people who are brainwashed by material illusion and they accuse the Krishna conscious devotees of being brainwashed.

Then this is a god one. Once at the hermitage of a venerated mayavadi guru a disciple became enlightened after years of penance and instruction at his masters feet. "Oh, master," he said, "I realize now what you have been saying all along. **God and I are one**. Only by the power of illusion have I been making distinction between myself and God. But now by your kindness I am awakened. I am in union with the formless, limitless and infinite Supreme." When the guru indicated that because the disciple had now understood he should go now and make pilgrimage. Then the disciple left and on his way he was walking through the middle of the streets, thinking about his realizations. After sometime he heard an elephant driver shouting from the top of his elephant: "Make way for the elephant. Move out of the road." He saw ahead of him all the people they were running to either side of the road and he could see a big elephant coming with the driver on his back. The man thought: "Why should I move out of the way for an elephant? That would be against my new realization. I am God now. The elephant should stand aside for me. When the elephant came up to him the man didn't move, he stood there holding his danda. The elephant grabbed him by his nose and threw him and he crashed into

some vegetable stand and potatoes and tomatoes went everywhere. And this man's arm was broken and he bruised very severely. The next day he returned to his spiritual master's hermitage and he was limping, he was holding his broken arm and he told his spiritual master the whole story and then asked: "Oh, master, just yesterday I thought that I completely understood your teachings, but look what happened when I applied them. How could such a misfortune happen to me and on the very day when I realized your instructions?" The master replied: "Yes, you said that you realized that God is one, so did you not hear God on top of the elephant telling you to move out of the way?"

This story demonstrates one of the severe flaws in the philosophy of monism which states that there is absolute oneness without differentiation of all beings including God. As the story shows, if everyone is elevated to the status of God, only calamity can result from the confusion right away, because conflict of interest arises.

And the next story is also very, very important. Once there was a **hunter chasing a fox** and he caught it and was just about to kill it when he saw the king approaching. This took place in the king's own forest preserve. The hunter could hunt other animals, but foxes were reserves for the king only. So the king was riding up with a party of soldiers and the hunter just had the fox in his hand, so when he saw the king, he put the fox under his coat. And then the king rode up and greeted him and said: "How are you today?" "Oh, I am very good, your majesty." Then the king discussed the weather and other different topics and the hunter was just standing there, he had a fox underneath his coat and he was saying: "Yes, your majesty, yes, oh yes, all right, yes," and he never even slightly acted like anything was wrong. Finally the king left. And as soon as the king was out of sight the hunter fell into two pieces on the ground because the fox had eaten right to the middle of his body.

The moral is that we should always reveal our minds and never keep problems to ourselves, masking them over, otherwise we will have severe difficulty in Krishna consciousness. It's a very nice story.

And the next story is also very funny. It's called "**The old man, the young boy and a donkey**". Once there was an old man and a young boy who were traveling with a donkey. The young boy was leading the donkey and the old man was riding on its back. When they passed through a small village, some of the town's people called out: "Look at this old man exploiting that poor young boy. What a rascal. That old man, he's riding very comfortably on the back of the donkey and the poor young boy, he has to walk. Very, very bad behavior." So when they passed through that village the old man said to the young boy: "I think we'd better swap over, otherwise when we come to the next village, they're going to abuse us again. So you get on the back of the donkey and I will walk." Then they came to that village, but there they were also criticized: "Look at that

selfish little boy, taking advantage of the old grandfather. The poor man has to walk while this healthy strong boy he is sitting on the back of the donkey." When they got out of that village, then they talked again and they thought: "Well, let's both walk. Then, certainly in the next village, they won't criticize us." So when they came to the next village, the people said: "Look at those two stupid people, they have a donkey, but they walk." Then the old man concluded: "Actually it doesn't matter what you do, people will always criticize." That's a fact.

Oh, I didn't write this down to read, but I like the story. It also illustrates an important point in Krishna consciousness. There were **two sadhus who were walking on the road, they came to a river** which was so deep, and there was no bridge and no boat to cross the river. Just as they were ready to wade through the water to get to the other side, a pregnant woman came up and asked them: "Please sadhus, could you help me get across to the other side, please carry me, because I am very heavy with child and not strong and if I enter that water something bad may happen to me." One sadhu looked at the other and his friend said: "Oh, don't do it, we are sadhus what do we have to do with women." The other sadhu said: "That's right, but this poor lady is pregnant." "Pregnant or not, it is no business of ours." Then the other sadhu who felt very compassionate said: "Anyway, I will help her." The other one said: "Well, if you want to be in maya, then I won't stop you." So that sadhu, he carried the lady on his shoulders across the river. And when he got to the other side, he put her down and they went their separate ways. For about two miles the two sadhus continued walking but they were not talking. Then finally that other sadhu, he couldn't contain himself anymore, he said: "It was very bad that you carried that lady across the river on your shoulder, very bad." And the other sadhu replied: "Look, I only carried her across the river, but you are still carrying her in your mind, why don't you drop her? We've already gone two miles. I forgot her when I put her down, but all this time we've been walking you just been thinking lady, lady, lady."

The next one is called "**The logical bull**". There was a logician, who went to purchase some flour from the miller. The miller asked him to kindly wait for a few moments, because he was just grinding it. The logician noticed that the miller had an ox for turning the millstone. That ox would walk in a circle and it was connected to the stone and thus the grains would be ground. And on the neck of the ox, there was a big bell. As the ox walked along the bell would ring. In the meantime the ox was walking miller went into the house. Then he returned and gathered some fresh ground flour into a sack and gave it to the logician. "I have one question for you," asked the logician. "A question for me?" the miller replied. "I am simply a farmer. What do I know of your scholarly questions". "No, no, this is a question about your line of work. Tell me, why do you keep this bell on the neck of the ox?" And the miller replied: "Oh you see, that way I can do other things. When that ox walks turning the stone in my house I can hear the bell. If I hear no bell, I come out and take the stick and give

him a whack and get him walking again. Otherwise if I just had to stay here and watch if he was walking or not, then so much other responsibilities would not be accomplished." Then the logician asked: "What if that ox would just stand still and shake his neck like this and ring the bell?" The farmer replied: "Oh, that's no problem, because he is a bull, he is not a logician like you."

The moral is: too much intelligence is dangerous sometimes, because it can be used for thinking how can I avoid work, or how can I avoid to surrender to Krishna, like that.

Here is a story called "**The brahmana who knew many languages**". There was one learned brahmana, who knew so many languages, so he came to a king's court and he spoke in so many languages and everyone was so impressed. And then he made a challenge. He said: "You try to find out what my own original language is." Because he was speaking so many languages so expertly without any accent, any trace of accent. Speaking so many languages, just like a native. He said: "This is my challenge to you, the pandits of this king's court. Find out which language is my original language." So all the pandits, they were perplexed. They'd hear him speaking and they said to the king: "There is no way. He's so expert in language, who can know?" But the king had one joker, one jester who just gives the king amusement. And this joker stepped and said: "I will find out what his real language is." The king said to him: "If you find out, I'll give you one thousand golden coins." The joker said: "Yes, I'll do it." That evening this great pandit who knew many languages he was walking through the royal garden. The joker, he crept into the garden and he covered himself with a big blanket and climbed up into a tree and when the pandit walked by the tree the joker jumped out of the tree and went : "Hoooooooooo!" and landed on the pandit. And the pandit in great fear he said in his own language: "Oh my God!" So the joker in this way he found out his real language.

The moral of this story is that philosophers may speak so much high philosophy, but when they get emotional or angry, then you can actually see the real motive, process behind all their big words. Just like I can remember Hridayananda Maharaja was having a debate with one big mayavadi, he was not actually such an important person, but he was posing himself to be. Big college professor in America who had been for some time a mayavadi sannyasi in India, but then gave up sannyas and just taught at school. But this mayavadi, he was very critical of Srila Prabhupada's books and the Hare Krishna movement. So a debate was arranged and this mayavadi philosopher would speak big words, quoting Upanishads and so on and so forth and he was always trying to argue that God is the impersonal absolute and Krishna is just an avatar of the impersonal absolute. So when Hridayananda Maharaja was speaking at one point, he was talking about chanting the Hare Krishna mantra, he was saying something about the holy name of Krishna. And so, he was saying

at one point: "Krishna, Krishna." And this big mayavadi, who is sitting by, he couldn't restrain himself and he went to the microphone and said: "Shiva, Shiva!" So he lost his cool and everyone was looking.

Now, this is a good story. Sometimes devotees they find themselves in some situation, which they think is hopeless. They are struggling, struggling, struggling and they seem to make no progress and then they start to think: "Oh, what is the use." And then they wonder they just give everything up, give up Krishna consciousness, go back home to mama, what's the use. Once there were **two frogs who by accident fell into a pot of milk**. So after struggling to keep afloat for some time one frog gave up hope: "Oh, it's useless." And just drowned down and was dead. But the other frog was more determined and he kept kicking and kicking and kicking despite the hopeless situation. Now, by doing all this kicking again and again and again because it was fresh milk, just came from the cow, the milk turned to butter. Then the frog could stand on the hard butter and jumped out.

The moral is that we should always be determined in our efforts to serve Krishna and never give up. Even if it seems hopeless just keep kicking.

And this is another nice story "**The boy who would not give up sweets**". A woman brought a child to see a saintly person. She told the sadhu: "The doctor informs me that my child is a diabetic and he must stop eating all kinds of sugary sweets. But in spite of what I tell him he won't stop. Since you are a saintly person I am sure that if you tell him to stop eating sugar and sweets, he will listen and his life can be saved." Surprisingly to that woman, the sadhu replied that he could not tell the child to stop eating sweets on that day. He said: "Bring the child back after four days." The mother was a little disturbed by this. "Why he can't tell my child right now? Four more days my child will eat sweets, this is not good. But anyway," she thought, "he is a saintly person, so I should do what he said". But she was really disturbed in her mind about this. Then after four days she brought her child back and then the child sat in front of the sadhu and the sadhu said to him in a very grave voice, very seriously: "You must stop eating sweets." And the child was very profoundly affected by these words and he bowed down at the sadhu's feet and said: "Yes, I promise from this day on, I will never eat sweets again. This is my promise to you." Then the mother was very surprised and she asked: "Please swamiji, tell me why is it, that four days ago you would not tell my child this and now today when I brought the child you were so speaking with such determination, so seriously that it completely changed my child's heart?" The sadhu replied: "You see, on that day you came - four days ago, I myself was eating sweets. Therefore I had to give up the sweets myself. Now I can tell this child with complete seriousness and no hypocrisy - don't eat sweets and it has effect".

So moral - example is better than precept. Precept means principles, speaking principles, but to set the example of those principles is more important. A leader cannot tell the public to stop smoking for instance, if he himself smokes. He should practice himself first. Then he becomes acharya.

There was once a **hunter who wanted to practice shooting**. He took some birds and released them. The birds flew away and all of them were shot, but one bird was very cunning and instead of flying away he placed himself down at the feet of the hunter. Being so situated the hunter could not shoot the bird without harming his own feet.

The moral is instead of flying away from Krishna and being shot down by maya, we should take shelter of Krishna's lotus feet and then maya cannot touch us.

Oh, this is a very good story. Sometimes devotees, they are maintaining wrong desires in their heart and they're serving superior devotees, serving the spiritual master and at the same time they're keeping these wrong desires in their heart. Actually that's very dangerous and we will see why. There was once a **man chopping wood in the forest**. He was splitting the woods stacking it in piles. It's a very exhausting work, he thought. So he sat down under one particularly very nice tree. This tree looked very attractive - it was giving such a nice shade. So he sat down and he was cooling off. And then he thought to himself as he was sitting there: "I just wish all this wood that I need to chop today would just be chopped by itself." Suddenly his ax jumped up and went to all the trees and very quickly chopped all the wood, split it and all the wood piled up into very nice stack. And he was surprised. And then he looked again at tree he was sitting under and he realized: "This is a kalpa-vrksa tree. This is a tree that fulfills all desires." So then he began to think of himself: "Oh, what do I want? I know I want a beautiful woman." So, puff - there was a beautiful woman. "And now I want a beautiful place to live in and I want many nice servants and I want an opulent feast and I want money." And in this way he went on and on and on and everything he was thinking about it all appeared there and he was so happy: "Oh, I have everything." Then he was still sitting under the tree, as it got very dark. Then he was looking as the sun went down, he thought: "Hmm, it's getting dark now. Now this is in the jungle. So watch out here in the dark, I know what can happen. A tiger will jump out and eat one." So just at that moment a big tiger appeared and jumped out and ate him.

The moral is when we bow down to the vaishnavas, we pray: vancha-kalpatarubhyas ca - we address the devotees as desire trees, and that's a fact. Every devotee is a desire tree and we are associating with devotees all around us, so we have to be very careful about what we desire. Because if we desire material things, then these desires may actually be fulfilled or they may increase more and more in our heart and become

very, very troublesome to our advancement. Since we are in association of devotees who are like desire trees, we should desire to advance in devotional service and that desire will come true.

Now, we shall read the story...this is a very nice story. Everyone here knows the story of Ajamila and how he was saved from the Yamadutas when he chanted the holy name. And this is a very similar story, but it is even showing greater mercy. In the Puranas, there is a **story of an old man who is addicted to sinful activity**. He was a very cruel person. But when he was on his deathbed, at the last minute he had a change of heart. He said: "Well, why not try it now, all my life I've seen these vaishnavas chanting Hare Krishna. I'm going to die anyway, so let me try it now." So he called his servant and told him: "Go to the market place and purchase some of those japa mala beads." And the servant was very surprised: "You want japa mala? What you'll be going to do with them?" Because everything the servant had ever seen was that this man was interested in sense gratification and he was always criticizing the saintly persons, so he was very surprised. "What do you want japa mala for?" The old man said: "I am going to chant Hare Krishna. Let me give it a try." So the servant went to the market place and he was looking around and he finally found the place where he could buy japa mala and he argued about the price and finally got some nice japa mala for cheap price and he came back to the house and found the old man had died. The old man was already dead. He died while the servant was in the market place.

At that time the Yamadutas came and they were just like in the story of Ajamila - they had their rope and they were just going to rope the old man's subtle body when suddenly the Visnudutas appeared. And the Yamadutas said: "Now, we remember the last time with Ajamila when you came, but you must understand this man he was so sinful and he did not chant the holy name, so now we will take him." And the Visnudutas said: "No, we have come to take this man back to Godhead simply because he had a desire to chant Hare Krishna." So how strong the holy name is.

The next story Srila Prabhupada told at one meeting. It's a short story. There was once a **man who was to get a heart transplant**. Just before the operation he was advised that there were three hearts available. He could choose a general's heart, a businessman's heart or a banker's heart. So he said: "I want the banker's heart." And the doctor asked: "Why you want the banker's heart?" And the man said: "I am quite sure it has never been used."

The next story is nice too. This is a story how **the beggar came to the house of a king**. The king was looking from his window and he heard knock on his door. So he sent the servant: "Go see who it is." The servant went down and he opened the door. "Who is it?" the king asked. "It's just some beggar," the servant called up, "he wants some food or something." The king said: "All right, let's have a laugh. Call him in here." So the

servant brought the beggar upstairs to the king's big room and the king said: "Al right beggar, what do you want?" The man very meekly asked: "I just want some prasadam, little food or something." The king said to the servant, whispered in his ear: "Just pretend to bring him some food." Then the servant sat the beggar down and the servant pretended to bring out big tray of foodstuff, he was holding his hand like this and setting it down and taking the cover off and the king said: "Just see, your very nice plate there, nice rasagulas, samosa, kitchori, fill yourself and be happy." Then just to humor the king, because he did not want to offend him, this poor beggar acted like he was eating. He reached, he was going like this. Then the king asked: "Is it good?" The beggar replied: "Oh, yes, it's very good. I especially like the samosas." Then the king said: "What else would you like?" And the beggar said: "Well, a nice wife." And the king said: "All right, bring on the dancing girls." Then the servant pretended to bring in some dancing girls and they were sitting down and as if they are watching the dancing. Then the king turned to the beggar and said: "Aren't they dancing nicely?" And the beggar said: "Yes, yes, very nicely." And the king said: "Which one do you want for your wife?" The beggar said: "The sixth one." The king replied: "Hah, there's only five. But you can take the fifth one." Then they arranged the whole invisible marriage ceremony and then the king said: "Now I give you a palace. You can move into a palace with her. You just go out the door down the road you see so many big palaces." The beggar went out the door down the road, of course there was nothing. But this man, this beggar was very humble and he said: "Yes, your honor, yes my lord, thank you very much" and he went out the gate and was going down the road and suddenly the heart of the king changed, he was touched by this man's submissive nature. He thought: "Actually I was really trying to make a fool out of him. I was really trying to insult him. But he's so good-natured that he played along. Any other person would have gotten angry: "What are you doing? Why are you insulting me like this?" But he was very submissive. He's a very nice person". Then he suddenly sent the servant: "Go bring him back." And when he came back, the king said to him: "I am very pleased with your attitude. You've gone along with this joke I was making. So, now, bring out the real prasad." So they brought out real prasad. "Now take yourself real wife and have a real palace."

The moral is, in this way just by his humble nature and just by humoring and cooperating with the king, he was blessed with so much opulence.

Once there was a **judge who was overseeing one court case**. The state prosecutor was making his arguments, big long arguments and then the defense lawyer he came forward and he presented his side and back and forth, back and forth they were arguing. After the judge heard the initial description of the case than he lost interest in the whole thing and he was sitting on the bench, he was just sleeping, like this he was sleeping. And these two lawyers they were arguing back and forth, so the court clerk he saw that the judge was dozing so he thought: "I'd better to

do something". So he walked up to the judge and gave him a little poke. He said: "Your honor, you're dozing off, you're not being attentive to this case." The judge turned and said to the man: "It's all right, I've already decided. They can say what they want but I know what my ruling will be." And then he went back to sleep.

The moral is that the defense and the prosecution could say what they want, but as far as the judge was concerned, the case was already decided. In the same way, Yamaraja has already decided what will happen to you after you die. No one can manipulate your karma. In other words, no amount of arguments, no amount of pleading: "But I meant to do better" is going to change Yamaraja's verdict.

"A man who tried to cheat Yamaraja". There is a popular story from India of a man who tried to cheat Yamaraja. He consulted an astrologer and found out the exact day when he was going to die. This man was a sculptor so he knew how to work with clay very cleverly, very expertly. He made nine clay images of himself. He painted them and dressed them expertly. They all looked exactly like him. At the moment that he was supposed to die by that astrological calculation, he stood in between these nine statues of himself. Yamaraja came and he became confused. He saw ten persons looking the same, all standing in a frozen posture like this, so Yamaraja was puzzled. And he was looking and he was thinking: "This man may be the first one to actually cheat death, he is so expert." But then Yamaraja, because he is mahajana, he is very intelligent, than he had a plan. So after looking at all these ten forms very carefully he said: "Actually whoever made these statues did a really lazy job. It's a bad work. I've seen much better sculptures than this. It shows very poor taste, looks so distorted." So the sculptor, because he was an artist, very attached, he couldn't stand this and then he stepped forward and said: "What do you mean? These are very good statues. I am expert." So the Yamaraja said: "All right, come on. Let's go."

The next one is called **"Gopal goes to the heavenly planets"**. Gopal is a famous joker, who was in the court of a king Krishna Candra. He was always considered very controversial person, because he was always making jokes, making trouble. Some ministers of king Krishna Candra wanted to get rid of Gopal, as he was just too cunning, too clever. So they devised a plan. They employed the local barber, as the barbershop is a place of gossip. And this barber was also the personal barber of the king. So when the king came to the barber, the barber asked him: "So king, how are your relatives doing in the heavenly planets?" It means the relatives who have left the world. And the king replied: "Well, I don't know." The barber said: "You should sent some up to the heavenly planets to find out." "Oh, that's a good idea," the king thought. But the barber continued: "It should be someone very confidential and close to you like your Gopal for instance." "Yes, that's a very brilliant idea, Gopal should go to the heavenly planets and find out how my relatives are doing."

The king went back and he consulted with these ministers who all wanted to get rid of Gopal. "What is the best way to arrange for someone to go to the heavenly planets?" And the ministers said: "Yes, we know, the sacrificial way is that this person must be burned in fire, be placed within a sacrificial fire, then he'll be carried up to the heavenly planets." Then the king called for a Gopal and said: "Gopal, it's time we send someone up to the heavenly planets to check on my relatives and my ministers tell me that the way that this can be done is that you have to be burned up in a sacrificial fire." Gopal is very clever so he said: "Of course Your Majesty, yes, I'd be very happy to do this." What he did was, because the fire was to be made the next day, he went that night to the yajna shala, the sacrificial arena and he built the trap-door at the place where the fire would be made.

Then the next day he came and there were brahmanas, and the fire was made, he stepped in the middle of the fire, reactivated the trap-door and just dropped between the flames. And he escaped through the trap-door and crawled through a tunnel to his house and he stayed there. And he stayed there for 6 months. The king was always wondering: "When will Gopal come back with news?" Meanwhile the ministers were thinking: "Hah, we've got rid of the guy, he burnt up in the fire." But after six months Gopal walked into the king's courtroom. All the ministers were astonished: "Gopal, you are back?" The king said joyfully: "How is everyone in heaven?" "They're all very well Maharaja," Gopal said "except for one small thing." "Oh, what was that?" "Well, Your Majesty, your relatives, they have weird hair cut. The whole time they are up there, they say they need to have a barber to be sent up to heaven." So you know what that meant, that meant that that barber who told this to the king would be put in the fire and sent to heaven.

Now there is a **story about the gurkas**. The gurkas are men from the country of Nepal, which is a Himalayan country. And they are very solid soldiers, they are very brave fighters. For a hundred years or so, the British army always has a division, or several divisions of these gurkas, they hire them specially, because they are very capable in warfare and they are always used as commandos, front line fighters. So in one war, I believe the second world war, the British general called an assembly of one division of gurkas and he said: "We have a very dangerous mission ahead of us, we need volunteers. What we're going to do is fly you in behind enemy lines in an airplane that is flying only 200 meters above the earth and you have to jump from this airplane behind enemy lines. It's very dangerous. So how many volunteer?" Knowing the gurkas the general expected they will all volunteer. But on this day only half of them stepped forward, the other half refused to step forward. The general was very concerned and he said: "All right". He said to those men who didn't step forward: "Now I've never seen this type of behavior before from the gurkas. Why are you reluctant to accept this mission?" And one of the

gurkas who didn't step forward, he said: "Well, I don't think that I can survive a fall of 200 meters from the airplane and what will be the use? To jump from the airplane and be dead and then I can't fight." Then the general said: "No, no, you will have parachute." And then they said: "Oh, oh." Then they all stepped forward. Then after that the general had great faith in the gurkas, because he could see that 50 % of the division was ready to jump from an airplane without parachute.

This is a modern story called "**The man who lost his hat**". A man in California was driving to his wedding when suddenly his hat blew off onto the highway. Tucking to the brim of a hat was a 100 dollar bill. So in the middle of traffic that man tried to break his car and jump out to rescue his hat. But just behind him there was a highway patrol police car and the officer, he spoke over the loud speaker and told the man: "Stay in your car, keep moving." The man obeyed. But on the next exit he turned off to a road side motel, parked his car and he ran out of the car, jumped the fence and ran across the highway through 4 lines of traffic and picked up his hat. Mission accomplished, he ran back into the traffic to go back to his car, so one car was coming and he very expertly dodged it, but he didn't see another car was coming which killed him.

The moral is, in human life we are meant to move straight on the road back home, back to Godhead. But maya, illusion is always trying to divert us, she grabs us by our senses and she pulls us. She gets us thinking about something other than Krishna and we get stock on that and then it's like when a fish bites the hook and is caught. Maya can just pull us in, pull us right off the path of the devotional service.

Then the next story is called "**Every man is too attached**". It's a funny story. The great emperor Agbar was touring through his kingdom with his minister Birbal. In one place they saw husband and wife arguing. At one point the wife, who is a very small lady, she slapped her husband's face, who is very big bodied. And the husband just tolerated it while the wife began to shout all kinds of chastisements at him and he was just listening with his head down. Agbar turned to his minister and said: "Why does he just stand there and take such abuse from his wife?" And Birbal replied: "That is because these men in your kingdom, they are just too much attached to their wives. They're very week." Agbar said: "I don't believe it." And Birbal replied: "Yes, it's true and I can prove it. You just let me call for all the married men in the whole country, have them gathered at one place and then we will see." So all the married men came to one big open area and Birbal the king was standing by and Birbal addressed them: "My dear fellows, the great emperor Agbar wants to know how many of you follow the commands of your wives. All those who obey their wives instructions should now move to that side of the field." So immediately there was a huge exodus of men, they all went to the other side of the field. There was only one man left standing on this side. And Agbar was very happy, he felt very relieved. He said: "At least there is one man who

does not obey his wife like a fool." Then Birbal asked that man: "When I called for all those others who obey the command of their wife to go to that side of the field, why did you not move?" The man replied: "Because my wife told me to stay away from crowds."

Here is the last story. This is again about Agbar and Birbal. Agbar had one Hindu minister, his name was Mahesh Das, but because he was serving the Muslim king, he had changed his name to Birbal. The stories about Agbar and Birbal are very famous in India. There was **one nice story about envious nature**. Birbal was very clever. All the other ministers were Muslim, Birbal was the only Hindu. These Muslim ministers were very envious of him. They wanted this Hindu minister would be sacked, be kicked out of his position. They wanted to know how to get rid of him. Without Birbal, Agbar would not be able to run the kingdom. The king was very attached to Birbal, he was always thinking: "I must have Birbal always by my side." Agbar and Birbal were always together and that's why these Muslim ministers were very, very envious. "We have to do something, we have to force this Birbal to quit. If we approach one of Agbar's wives, then she may be able to find out some way that we can force him to quit." One of the queens of Agbar had a brother whose name was Hussein Shah. He was a complete fool, everybody knew he was a fool but they thought: "If we go to the queen in praise of her brother, she may do something to help us." Because the idea is, because when you go to a lady in praise of her brother, than that will make her happy. So they approached the queen: "Your brother Hussein Shah is very intelligent. We feel sorry for him. We request you to convince Agbar that he should be the minister, not Birbal. He is unnecessarily carrying this Hindu on his head." The queen felt very happy: "Yes, my brother is very intelligent." Also actually she was a big fool. The queen got puffed up by all this praise and their plan was working. The Muslim ministers were very happy, they said: "We will definitely back your brother, he should replace Birbal." "Leave it to me", the queen said: "I'll work out some scheme, tomorrow Birbal will be sacked."

In the evening Agbar came and entered the queen's quarters and this particular queen, he approached her but she wouldn't talk to him. He came to say something and she just turned away, ignored him completely. He went to the other side and she turned to that side. Finally he stood in front of her and said: "What's the matter?" And she said: "Hmm, I don't want to talk to you." And he became a little desperate: "Come on, what's the matter, please tell me, whatever it is, whatever you want I'll do it." "No, you won't." In this way carried on. Finally, finally, after he practically had his head on her feet: "Please tell me, tell me, tell me." Then she replied: "It's my brother Hussein Shah." "What's the matter with your brother?" She replied: "He is so very intelligent." Agbar said: "Queen, with all due respect I must tell you, that he is a complete fool." Then she became very angry again and again she wouldn't talk to him, just turning away. And he was kept pleading and finally, finally he said: "All right, all

right, your brother is very clever, yes." And then she said: "Now that you know my brother is very clever, you should know, that all your ministers also tell me that he is so clever, that he should be the chief minister." And then Agbar said: "Well, you know, with all due respect to you and your brother, I must tell you, that without my chief minister Birbal I'll not be able to run this kingdom. He is the cleverest minister there is, even those other ministers, they cannot hold the candle to him, what to speak of your brother." Then the queen replied: "No, no, you've already admitted that my brother is the cleverest of all. So that means he's cleverer than Birbal, therefore he should be the chief minister." And he replied: "I tell you, that your brother is not so clever as Birbal." "No, no, you don't understand, listen to me", and so on.

Finally, finally, finally the king surrendered. "All right, but I just can't go tomorrow to the court and tell Birbal that he is sacked. There has to be some good reason." "You do as I tell you and you will find out the reason," the queen said. "Tomorrow you go to the court, you call Birbal and tell him that you are going to the vegetable market to buy vegetables." "Queen, you are mad. There are so many important things to be done. Why should Birbal and I go to the market? There are so many servants that we can send." "No, no, you just do as I tell you." "All right I will." "Then what is to happen. While going to the vegetable market you stop half way and then you tell Birbal to call me, because you want me to be with you, but I will not come. When he will return you say: "Simple job, you can't do it? Just getting the queen from the palace. How are you going to run the kingdom? And then you sack him." The king asked: "Are you positive that you won't come? Otherwise the whole thing will go wrong." "No, no, I am definitely not coming", she assured.

Then they put this plan into practice. Agbar the next day in the court, he said to Birbal: "Birbal, we have to go to the market to buy vegetables." Birbal said: "King, what's the matter? There are so many important things we have to do." "No, we have to go." Immediately Birbal thought: "Hmm, something fishy is going on here." And he knew that these other ministers are very, very envious. So he said to one confidant, one close friend that you follow myself and the king, but no one should see that you are following. So they went and in the middle of the road on the way to the market Agbar stopped and said: "Oh, by the way, you have to go back Birbal, to the palace and fetch my queen, she has to come with us." "All right," Birbal said. So now Birbal knew that had something to do with the queen. He didn't know what it was, but again, he stopped and told his friend to follow him and he went to the palace. He went to the queen's quarters and the queen was sitting there and he said: "Queen, Agbar is standing in the middle of the road waiting for you. We don't have much time, so please get ready and come. He wants you to go there." And she said: "I am not coming." Then Birbal could understand. He said to her: "No queen, don't do that, I will be in difficulty." And then he could see how the queen was becoming jubilant and she said: "No, no, I am not

coming." "But you must come because Agbar is waiting on the way." "No, no, I am not coming. You can just go tell him I'm very busy." "All right", Birbal said. In the meantime he called for his friend and he made some sign and the friend came in. The friend had a message from the king. There was no message, it was just this sudden plan of Birbal. He said: "But I can't give you this message loudly because it is only for you. The queen should not hear." Birbal was standing in the room, the friend came close to him and started whispering to his ear and he was just, in the ear, he just was going: "Pssss, pssss, pssss, beautiful, pssss, pssss, pssss very, very beautiful, pssss, pssss, pssss." All the queen could hear was the words beautiful, very beautiful, very young. Birbal looked at the queen and said: "It's all right, queen, you don't have to come." And then he turned and walked on. The queen was now very suspicious and she thought: "A minute ago, this fellow was very strong to invite me and after he got this message he just turns and goes away and says I don't have to come. All I could hear was 'very young' and 'beautiful'. What does this mean? This must mean that there is a beautiful girl there meeting with Agbar and that's why he doesn't want me to come now. What is this? I am going."

Agbar was going down the road and the queen was running up behind him. "Wait, wait, wait, I am coming with you." When Birbal arrived to Agbar, the queen was there and Agbar said: "So, Birbal, you remain my minister, you brought the queen!"

Srila Prabhupada ki jay!