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INDRA OFFENDS HIS SPIRITUAL MASTER

Sriḷa Sukadeva Goswami

Maharaja Parikṣit inquired from Sukadeva Goswami: O great sage, why did the spiritual master of the demigods, Brhaspati, reject the demigods, who were his personal disciples? What kind of offense did the demigods commit against their spiritual master to cause this terrible misfortune? Please describe to me the entire incident.

Sukadeva Goswami said: O King, once in a previous time, feeling extremely proud because of his great opulence of mastership of the three worlds, the King of heaven Indra, transgressed the norms of Vedic etiquette. Seated on his throne, he was flanked by the demigods like the Maruts, Vasus, Rudras, Adityas, Rbhus, Visvadevas, Sadhyas, Ashvini-kumaras, Siddhas, Caranas and Gandharvas and by great saintly persons. Seated in his court also were the Vidyadharas, Apsaras, Kinnaras, Patagas and Uragas. All of them were offering Indra respect and service, and the Apsaras and Gandharvas were dancing and singing accompanied by very sweet musical instruments. Over Indra's head was held a white umbrella as effulgent as the full moon. Fanned by yak-tail whisks and served with all the paraphernalia of a great king, Indra was sitting with his wife, Sacidevi, who occupied half the throne. At that time the great sage Brhaspati arrived at that assembly. Brhaspati was the spiritual master of Indra and the demigods and was respected by the demigods and demons alike. Nevertheless, although Indra saw his spiritual master before him, neither did he rise from his seat nor offer a sitting place to his spiritual master. Indeed, Indra did nothing to honor him, neglecting to even offer him a respectful welcome. Seeing Indra's transgression of etiquette, the all-knowing sage Brhaspati easily surmised that Indra had become proud of his material opulence. Although competent to curse Indra, understanding what would

happen in the future Brhaspati did not do so. Instead, he simply left the assembly without saying anything and returned to his home in silence.

The King of heaven Indra, could immediately understand his mistake. Realizing he had disrespected his spiritual master, he condemned himself in the presence of all the members of the assembly saying, "Alas, what a regrettable deed I have committed because of my lack of intelligence and pride in my material opulence. I failed to show respect to my spiritual master when he entered this assembly, and thus I have insulted him. Although I am King of the demigods, who are situated in the mode of goodness, I was proud of a little opulence and polluted by false ego. Under the circumstances, who in this world would accept such riches at the risk of falling down? Alas! I condemn my wealth and opulence. If a person says, "One who is situated on the exalted throne of a king should not stand up to show respect to another king or a *brāhmaṇa*," it is to be understood that he does not know superior religious principles. Leaders who have fallen into ignorance and who mislead people by directing them to the path of destruction are, in effect, boarding a stone boat, and so too are those who blindly follow them. A stone boat is certainly unable to float and it sinks in the water along with its passengers. Similarly, those who mislead people go to hell, and their followers go with them. King Indra said: Therefore with great frankness and without duplicity I shall now bow my head at the lotus feet of Brhaspati, the spiritual master of we demigods. Because he is in the mode of goodness, he is fully aware of all knowledge and is the best of the *brāhmaṇas*. Now I shall touch his lotus feet and offer my obeisance unto him to try to satisfy him."

While Indra, the King of the demigods, thought in this way and repented in his own assembly, Brhaspati, the most powerful spiritual master, understood his mind.

Thus he became invisible to Indra and left home, for Brhaspati was spiritually more powerful than King Indra. Although Indra searched vigorously with the assistance of the other demigods, he could not find Brhaspati. Then Indra thought, “Alas, my spiritual master has become dissatisfied with me, and now I have no means of achieving good fortune.” Although Indra was surrounded by demigods, he could not find peace of mind. Hearing of the pitiable condition of King Indra, the demons, following the instructions of their *guru*, Sukracarya, equipped themselves with weapons and declared war against the demigods. The demigods’ heads, thighs and arms and the other parts of their bodies were injured by the sharp arrows of the demons. The demigods, headed by Indra, saw no other course than to immediately approach Lord Brahma with bowed heads for shelter and proper instruction. When the most powerful Lord Brahma saw the demigods coming toward him, their bodies gravely injured by the arrows of the demons, he pacified them by his great causeless mercy and spoke as follows.

Lord Brahma said: O best of the demigods, unfortunately, because of madness resulting from your material opulence, you failed to receive Brhaspati properly when he came to your assembly. Brhaspati is aware of the Supreme Brahman and fully in control of his senses and thus he is the best of the *brāhmaṇas*. Therefore it is very astonishing that you have acted impudently toward him. Due to your misbehavior toward Brhaspati, you have been defeated by the demons. My dear demigods, since the demons were weak, after having been defeated by you several times, how could you who were so advanced in opulence, be defeated by them? O Indra, your enemies the demons, were extremely weak because of their disrespect toward Sukracarya, but since they have now worshiped Sukracarya with great devotion, they have again become powerful. By their devotion to Sukracarya, they have increased their strength to such an extent that now they are even able to easily seize

my abode from me. Because of their firm determination to follow the instructions of their *guru* Sukracarya, the demons, are now unconcerned about you demigods. In fact, kings or others who have determined faith in the mercy of *brāhmaṇas*, cows and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, and who always worship these three are always strong in their position. O demigods, I instruct you to approach Vishvarupa, the son of Tvasta, and accept him as your *guru*. He is a pure and very powerful *brāhmaṇa* due to always undergoing austerity and penances. Pleased by your worship, he will fulfill your desires, provided that you tolerate his being inclined to side with the demons.

Thus advised by Lord Brahma and relieved of their anxiety, the demigods went to the sage Vishvarupa, the son of Tvasta. My dear King, they embraced him and spoke as follows.

The demigods said: Beloved Vishvarupa, may there be all good fortune for you. We, the demigods, have come to your *āśrama* as your guests. Please try to fulfill our desires according to the time held tradition, since we are on the level of your parents. O *brāhmaṇa*, the highest duty of a son, even though he has sons of his own, is to serve his parents, and what to speak of a son who is a *brahmacārī*?

The *ācārya*, the spiritual master who teaches all the Vedic knowledge and gives initiation by offering the sacred thread, is the personification of all the *Vedas*. Similarly, a father personifies Lord Brahma; a brother, King Indra; a mother, the planet earth; and a sister, mercy herself. A guest personifies religious principles, an invited guest personifies the demigod Agni, and all living entities personify Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Dear son, we have been defeated by our enemies, and therefore we feel very aggrieved. Please mercifully fulfill our desires by relieving our distress through the strength of your austerities. Please fulfill our heart’s prayers. Since you are completely aware of the Supreme



Brahman, you are a perfect *brāhmaṇa*, and therefore you are the spiritual master of all orders of life. We accept you as our spiritual master and director so that by the power of your austerity we may easily defeat our enemies who have conquered us. Do not fear criticism for being younger than us. Such etiquette does not apply in regard to Vedic *mantras*. Generally seniority is determined by age, but in relationship to Vedic *mantras* it is different. Thus, one may offer respectful obeisance even to a younger person who is advanced in chanting Vedic *mantras*. Therefore although you are junior in relationship to us, you may become our priest without hesitation.

When all the demigods requested the great Vishvarupa to be their priest, Vishvarupa, who was advanced in austerities, was very pleased. He replied to them as follows.

Sri Vishvarupa said: O demigods, although the acceptance of priesthood is decried as causing the loss of previously acquired brahminical power, how can someone like me refuse to accept your personal request? You are all exalted commanders of the entire universe. I am your disciple and must take many lessons from you. Therefore I cannot refuse you. I must agree for my own benefit. O exalted governors of various planets, the true *brāhmaṇa*, who has no material possessions, maintains himself by the profession of accepting *līloṣhana*. This means that he picks up grains left in the field and on the ground in the wholesale marketplace. By this means, householder *brāhmaṇas* who actually abide by the principles of austerity and penance maintain themselves and their families and perform all necessary pious activities. A *brāhmaṇa* who desires to achieve happiness by gaining wealth through professional priesthood must certainly have a very low mind. Thus how shall I accept such priesthood? All of you are certainly my superiors. Therefore although accepting priesthood is sometimes reproachable, I cannot refuse even a small request from you. I agree to be your priest and shall fulfill your request by dedicating to you

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my life and possessions.

After making this promise to the demigods, the exalted Vishvarupa, surrounded by the demigods, performed the necessary priestly duties with great enthusiasm and attention. The opulence of the demons, who are generally known as the enemies of the demigods, was protected by the talents and tactics of Sukracarya, but Vishvarupa, who was very powerful, composed a protective prayer known as the *Nārāyaṇa-kavaca*. By this intelligent mantra, he took away the opulence of the demons and gave it to Mahendra, the King of heaven. Vishvarupa, who was most liberal, revealed to King Indra the secret hymn that would protect him from attack and then Indra conquered the military power of the demons.

— Srimad-Bhāgavatam » Canto 6 » Chapter 7: Indra Offends His Spiritual Master, Brhaspati. » Verses: 1-40

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES
SHOULD THE GURU BE DISRESPECTED
His Divine Grace

A.C.BhaktiVedanta Swami Prabhupada

Lord Brahma recognized Brhaspati the spiritual master of the demigods as possessing brahminical qualifications because of his awareness of the Supreme Brahman. Brhaspati was certainly in control of his senses and mind, and therefore he was a most qualified *brāhmaṇa*. Lord Brahma chastised the demigods for not properly respecting this *brāhmaṇa*, who was also their *guru*. He wanted to impress upon them that one's *guru* should not be disrespected under any circumstances. When Brhaspati entered the assembly of the demigods, they and their king, Indra, took him for granted. Since he came every day, they thought, they did not need to show him special respect. As it is said, familiarity breeds contempt. Feeling very displeased, Brhaspati immediately left Indra's palace. Thus all the demigods, headed by Indra, became offenders at his lotus feet, and Lord Brahma, being aware

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of this, condemned their neglect. In an instructive song of, Narottama dāsa Thakura it is said, *caṅṣu-dāna dila yei, janme janme prabhu sei*: the *guru* gives spiritual insight to the disciple, and therefore he should be considered one's master, life after life. Thus, under no circumstances should the *guru* be disrespected. However, the demigods, being emboldened by their plentiful material possessions, were disrespectful to their *guru*. In this regard *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.17.27) advises, *ācāryam mām vijānīyān nāvamanyeta karhicit/ na martya-buddhyāsūyeta*: the *ācārya* should always be offered respectful obeisances; one should never feel envy towards the *ācārya*, considering him an ordinary human being.

— *Srimad-Bhāgavatam* » Canto 6 » Chapter 7: Indra Offends His Spiritual Master, Brhaspati. » Verses 21, purport

OUR PROGRESS LIES IN SERVING THE SPIRITUAL MASTER

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura

As long as we remain attached to family life or house and home, we are in trouble; but if we follow and serve the spiritual master, who is constantly absorbed in the service of Lord Krishna, we will no longer have any problems. There is no way to make our lives auspicious other than to follow the Lord's devotees. Service to the spiritual master who is most dear to the Supreme Lord, is more beneficial than service to the Supreme Lord Himself. Our progress lies in serving the spiritual master, because by such service the fallen living entities are delivered. Those who want actual benefit in life must serve the spiritual master and the devotees with love and devotion.

What does it mean to serve them? *Guru* and the Vaishnavas engage in no other activity but Krishna's service. To serve them means we should assist them in their service to the Supreme Lord and happily follow their orders without reservation.

Subordination to the spiritual master is required at all stages of life. To try to personally serve Krishna with pride and

without the *guru*'s guidance simply causes disturbance. By denying or disobeying the spiritual master, one certainly brings about his own ruination. To think that "I am independently serving Hari" is a symptom of pride. False pride is the first and main cause of downfall from spiritual life. By finding fault with *guru* and the Vaishnavas, one's ruination is inevitable. Without service to *guru*, the living entities cannot find benefit anywhere.

Being solely interested in one's material happiness brings misfortune on a living entity. Unless one is an unalloyed devotee of the Lord he cannot serve Krishna; and without serving *guru* one cannot become an unalloyed devotee. There is no other way for the conditioned souls to become delivered except through service to the spiritual master and the Vaishnavas.

—*Amṛta Vāṇī - Nectar of Instructions for Immortality, Adapted and Published by Īsvara dāsa. Translated from Bengali by Bhumipati dāsa*

WHAT IS THE SYMPTOM OF DISOBEYING THE SPIRITUAL MASTER?

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

"Those who consider that the spiritual master who bestows the holy names is conversant only with the scriptures dealing with the holy names and is thus inferior to the spiritual master who is well acquainted with *Vedānta* and philosophical literatures, are certainly offenders at the feet of the holy names. Actually there is no superior spiritual master than the one who knows science of the holy names. To consider such a spiritual master as insignificant is a great offense."

—*Jaiva Dharma, Chapter 24*

How should one treat his spiritual master?

"One should not think his spiritual master to be an ordinary human being. Rather one should respect him as a personal associate of Krishna empowered by His energy. To consider the spiritual master as identical with Krishna is also a philosophy of the Bhāgavata Mahāvidyālaya



impersonalists. It is not the philosophy of the pure Vaishnavas.

—*Harināma Cintāmani*

What Does A Bona Fide Spiritual Master Instruct His Disciple?

Pure spiritual knowledge is glorified everywhere in Vaishnava literature. In the teachings of Mahāprabhu, three topics are prominently discussed; they are knowledge of one's relationship with the Supreme Lord, the process of achieving the goal of life, and the goal of life. The first, *sambandha* means understanding the Supreme Lord, the living entity, the material world, and the relationships between them. Anyone who properly instructs his disciple in *sambandha tattva* and trains him in the process of achieving the goal of life is a bona fide spiritual master. Receiving this knowledge, a living entity needs no other knowledge. All kinds of scientific and theoretical knowledge of this world become automatically known to him.

—*Sajjana-toṣaṇī 11/10*

PASSING JUDGEMENT ON THE GURU?

Srila Jagadananda Pandita

*guror avajñā śruti-śāstra-nindanam
tathārtha-vādo hari-nāmni kalpanam
nāmno balād yasya hi pāpa-buddhir
na vidyate tasya yamair hi śuddhiḥ*

“The *guru* directs the conditioned soul to the Supreme Lord Krishna, reminding him of his forgotten kinship with Him. He also introduces him to the process of chanting the Lord's holy names. Such a perfect spiritual master is like the helmsman for the boat of conditioned soul's life for he guides him across the ocean of nescience. To disrespect and disobey such a benefactor is a serious offense against the holy name; *nāmāparādha*.

“Only a foolish rascal will try to pass judgement on the *guru* who initiates

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

people him into the chanting of Krishna's holy names, on the basis of material considerations such as birth in a low family or lack of expertise in the chanting of Vedic *mantras* etc.

— *Prema-Vivarta - Śrila Jagadananda Pandita, Translated by Sarvabhāvana dāsa*

HOW DID SRI RASIKANANDA SERVE SĀDHUS?

Sri Gopijanavallabha dasa

By the grace of his *guru* Sri Syamananda Pandita, the love and devotion of Rasika increased day by day. Indeed there was nothing but Krishna in his mind. Since the time of being in the womb of his mother he had knowledge and devotion but when his *guru* taught him the specific principles of bhakti he became mad in love of Krishna, and the sixty-four limbs of devotional service always reigned prominent in his heart. He had no attraction for family life, seeing which his family members lamented. After Sri Acyuta left this world for Vaikuntha, the brothers of Rasika fought among themselves for position but Rasika did not get involved. He would remain with devotees discussing topics of Krishna. Whenever guests would visit his home he loved to serve them, and if there was no food in his home he would go and beg it and then feed them. It was his habit to serve guests every day. He served Vaishnavas with the utmost love and he worshipped *sādhus* as if they were His Lord, Sri Krishna Himself. Every day he drank the water that had washed their feet. With his own hands he joyfully collected the leaf plates from which they had eaten, and with the greatest respect he would take the remnants of their food. This was the strict practice of both he and his wife and they did not make any distinction between class or creed. When his family members saw he and his wife taking their food after everyone else had eaten they became angry. They said that Rasika had become mad and that the whole family would suffer because of his behaviour. They argued that since he is the son of a great person such

behaviour would cause them all to lose face in society. In this and other ways they tried to coerce and ridicule Rasika but to no avail. Rather than following what they said Rasikānanda instead became more fixed in following his personal principles, and he also endeavoured to teach others about the importance of service to the *sādhus* along with service to Lord Krishna. Some listened to him and became purified but some were blasphemous and continued to belittle him. When he heard them deriding the *sādhus* Rasika could not tolerate it and in anger he told his wife, "I can no longer tolerate the derision of our friends. We can tolerate when they ridicule us in various ways, but when they are contemptuous of the devotees I cannot tolerate it. Vaishnavas are more dear to me than Krishna Himself and yet they are now being berated because of me. I cannot serve them without the risk of being criticised, so what is the use of wasting time by staying here? I will not stay here with them. You are my devoted wife and so if you want you can come with me. You may also stay here if you like, but I have to go." Hearing this, his wife Syama dasi said, "I shall remain with you wherever you go. What will I do here without you? Even if we remain under a tree or in a forest I will happily stay beside you wherever you go. You must take me with you for this house will be lifeless to me without you. Let a thunderbolt fall on that wealth of mine without you."

Thus they left the house and went to a place on the bank of Suvarnarekha river which seemed as beautiful as Vrindavana. The water of the river was as pure as that of the Yamuna and it was surrounded by mangoes and jack fruit groves. The place was so dry that even in the rainy season no mud could be seen there. In Mallabhuma Paragama there was a place named Coracitatapa and near to this place was Niryavasana. This place was concealed from others and yet it was favoured by even he gods and was considered as great as Vaikuntha. It was surrounded by forests and was full of pretty

groves where varieties of fruit and flowers blossomed. People knew this place as a hidden Vrindavana and it was here that Rasika made his home.

Rasikananda's elder brother Kasinatha dasa built a city known as Kasipura and he became the king there. Rasika went there and took the family Deity with him. Despite having a vast property Rasikananda took nothing with him. He left with only his wife, that Deity and the clothes they were wearing. In his absence Rasikananda's brothers became miserable and their property and wealth dwindled. Rasika, however, built a house in Kasipura and became famous there. As a favourite devotee of the husband of Goddess Lakshmi he had no scarcity of wealth. He continued to serve saints and Vaishnavas by personally washing their feet, cleaning the place where they ate and taking the remnants of their food. As his fame spread, more and more devotees of Sri Krishna began to visit his house. After a considerable time his *guru* Sri Syamananda paid a visit to his house. The delighted Rasika fell at his feet and then served his master as though he was greater than the Supreme Sri Lord Krishna. His wife Syama dasi Thakurani personally cooked for her *guru* and all the preparations were like nectar. After fully satisfying Syamananda they both relished the remnants of his food.

Rasikananda and his wife served Syamananda with the utmost care and respect and whatever instruction he gave them they earnestly tried to fulfill. Even if the request were impossible Rasika would endeavor to fulfill it with his heart and soul. He remained in the service of Syamananda without considering his own health. Even in his sleep he dreamt only of Syamananda Pandita. His devotion to his *guru* can only be compared to that of Krishna and Balarama to Sandipani Muni. Rasikanda remained always fixed in his service to *guru*, Krishna and the Vaishnavas and thus he received special favour from Syamananda.

—Excerpt from the book *Sri Sri Rasika-mangala* by Sri Gopijanavallabha dasa.



IF A MAHĀ-BHĀGAVATA IS OFFENDED?

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura

If one even accidentally commits the offence of vilifying a Vaishnava he must bitterly repent of his low behavior. Just as poison is counteracted by poison, similarly, having set aflame his spiritual life with blasphemy, the vilifier must be purified in the fire of repentant contrition. In order to counteract his offense he offender must go and fall at the feet of the devotee he reviled and repeatedly beg forgiveness until he is again able to please that Vaishnava. He must approach the offended devotee with trepidation in his heart and understand that he must satisfy the offended devotee by pleading, praising, offering repeated obeisance, or any means necessary. Yet, if for some reason he is unable to appease the devotee then the offender must continue to serve him for many days in any manner that will impress and satisfy him. If the offence is of such a serious nature that the Vaishnava's ire remains unpacified, then the offender must strongly condemn his abominable action and think, "Oh, how shameful it is that I have blasphemed a Vaishnava! I shall have to suffer millions of years in the fire of hell." With a heavy heart, the offender must then take complete shelter of the holy name and chant incessantly, knowing this to be his only hope and refuge. The holy name of Krishna is all-powerful and can absolve any offence, no matter how serious.

The offender may incorrectly think, "If this it is true that chanting will absolve one of offense, then why should I have to fall at the Vaishnava's feet in such a humble manner and demean myself? After all, the scriptures assure us that for one who commits *nāma-aparādha* chanting alone will clear all offences, hence I shall certainly be pardoned." Such thinking is incorrect. Instead, the offender becomes enmeshed in another heinous *nāma-aparādha*, that of committing sin on the strength of chanting the holy name.

The offender may once again try to
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nityam bhāgavata-sevayā

rationalize his misbehavior by saying, "According to the scriptures (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.11.29) only those who are compassionate, peaceful, and tolerant are called *sādhus*, or saintly persons. Therefore, the offence of blaspheming a devotee is applicable only when someone who possesses these characteristics is criticised, not for one who is not so mature. In reply, the scriptures state that even if reprobates, cheaters, hypocrites, pretenders, outcastes, and worse take up devotional service, they are still considered to be *sādhus*. They must not be criticized for their past- however terrible it may have been, and they cannot be barred from being accepted as Vaishnava devotees. Nor can their devotion be deprecated due to their past.

The sastra further declares that if a *mahā-bhāgavata*, or an elevated devotee, is offended, he simply brushes aside the entire episode because he possesses immense compassion, and will not acknowledge the behavior as an offence. However the guilty party must fall at the sadhu's feet and beg forgiveness so that his heart may be purified. We learn from the scriptures and the *sādhus* that even if the *mahā-bhāgavata* devotee effortlessly tolerates the foolish person's blasphemy, his followers cannot bear this atrocity against their *guru*; they mentally punish the offender by wishing him to suffer appropriately for his offence.

The pure devotees are incorruptible and independent in their thinking. They do not require a reason to shower their causeless mercy on any soul, however wretched he may be. Sometimes they display great magnanimity by showing profound mercy to a downright offender and harsh critic. At the same time they are not swayed by praise in order to make them act compassionately. The *Bhāgavatam*'s story of the elevated devotee Jada Bharat is a good example. King Rahugana once engaged Jada Bharat to carry his palanquin. After traveling some distance, the king began to rudely criticize Jada Bharata who responded by simply



showered him with mercy. In another incident, the atheistic Daityas were very offensive to Uparicara Vasu, the King of Cedi yet he still blessed them. A third example is that of the despicable Madhai who threw a stone at Lord Nityananda, causing His forehead to bleed profusely, yet the Lord showed him causeless mercy. So far we have discussed the first *nāma-aparādha*, that of offending a devotee. The same principle of sincere repentance is also to be applied to the offence against the holy name of disobeying the orders of the spiritual master.

—Madhurya-Kadambini - Srila Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura
 by Translated by Sarvabhāvana dāsa.



!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

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