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THE TRANSCENDENTAL QUALITIES OF VRTRASURA

Srila Sukadeva Goswami

Sri Sukadeva Goswami said: O King, the commander in chief of the demons Vrtrasura, advised his lieutenants in the principles of religion. However, the cowardly demoniac commanders who had resolved to flee the battlefield, were so disturbed by fear that they could not accept his words. O King Pariksit, the demigods, took advantage of a favorable opportunity presented by time, and attacked the army of the demons from behind and began driving away the demoniac soldiers, scattering them willy nilly as if their army had no leader. Seeing the pitiable condition of his soldiers, , the best of the asuras Vrtrasura, who was also known as Indrashatru, the enemy of Indra, was very much aggrieved. Unable to tolerate such reverses, he stopped and forcefully rebuked the demigods, speaking the following words in an angry mood.

O demigods, these demoniac soldiers have taken birth uselessly. Indeed, they have come from the bodies of their mothers exactly like stool. What is the benefit of killing such enemies from behind while they are running in fear? One who considers himself a hero should not kill an enemy who is afraid of losing his life. Such killing is never glorious, nor can it promote one to the heavenly planets. O insignificant demigods, if you truly have faith in your heroism, if you have patience in the cores of your hearts and if you are not ambitious for sense gratification, please stand before me for a moment.

Sukadeva Goswami said: Vrtrasura, the angry and most powerful hero, terrified the demigods with his stout and strongly built body. When he roared with a resounding voice, nearly all living entities fainted. When all the demigods heard Vrtrasura's tumultuous roar, which resembled that of a lion, they fainted and fell to the

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ground as if struck by thunderbolts. As the demigods closed their eyes in fear, Vrtrasura, taking up his trident and making the earth tremble with his great strength, trampled the demigods beneath his feet on the battlefield the way a mad elephant tramples hollow bamboo rods in the forest. Seeing Vrtrasura's disposition, Indra, the King of heaven, became infuriated and threw at him one of his great clubs, which are extremely difficult to counteract. However, as the club flew toward him, Vrtrasura easily caught it with his left hand. O King Pariksit, the powerful Vrtrasura, the enemy of King Indra, angrily struck the head of Indra's elephant with that club, making a tumultuous sound on the battlefield. For this heroic deed, the soldiers on both sides glorified him. Struck with the club by Vrtrasura like a mountain struck by a thunderbolt, the elephant Airavata, feeling great pain and spitting blood from its broken mouth, was pushed back fourteen yards. In great distress, the elephant fell, with Indra on its back.

When he saw Indra's carrier elephant thus fatigued and injured and when he saw Indra morose because his carrier had been harmed in that way, the great soul Vrtrasura, following religious principles, refrained from again striking Indra with the club. Taking this opportunity, Indra touched the elephant with his nectar-producing hand, thus relieving the animal's pain and healing its injuries. Then the elephant and Indra both stood silently. O King, when the great hero Vrtrasura saw his enemy and the killer of his brother Indra, standing before him thunderbolt in his hand, and his heart desiring to fight, Vrtrasura remembered how Indra had cruelly killed his brother. Thinking of Indra's vicious deeds, he became almost mad with lamentation and forgetfulness. Laughing sarcastically, Vrtrasura thundered as follows:

He who has killed a *brāhmaṇa*, his own spiritual master, indeed, he who has killed my own brother is now by

good fortune, standing before me face to face as my enemy. O most abominable one, when I pierce your stone-like heart with my trident, I shall be freed from my debt to my brother. Simply for the sake of living in the heavenly planets, you killed my elder brother who was a self-realized, sinless and perfectly qualified *brāhmaṇa* who had been appointed your chief priest. He was your spiritual master, but although you entrusted him with the performance of your sacrifice, you later mercilessly severed his heads from his body in the way one butchers an animal. Indra, you are bereft of all shame, mercy, glory and good fortune. Deprived of these good qualities by the reactions of your fruitive activities, you are to be condemned even by the man-eaters [*Rākṣasas*]. Now I shall pierce your body with my trident, and after you die with great pain, even fire will not touch you; only the vultures will eat your body. You are naturally cruel. If the other demigods, unaware of my prowess, follow you by attacking me with raised weapons, I shall sever their heads with this sharp trident. With those heads I shall perform a sacrifice to Bhairava and the other leaders of the ghosts, along with their hordes.

*atho hare me kuliśena vīra
hartā pramathyāiva śiro yadiha
tatrānṛṇo bhūta-balīn vidhāya
manasvinām pāda-rajaḥ prapatsye*

But if in this battle you cut off my head with your thunderbolt and kill my soldiers, O Indra, O great hero, I shall take great pleasure in offering my body to other living entities [such as jackals and vultures]. I shall thus be relieved of my obligations to the reactions of my *karma*, and my fortune will be to receive the dust from the lotus feet of great devotees like Narada Muni.

O King of the demigods, since I, your enemy, am standing before you, why don't you hurl your thunderbolt at me? Although your attack upon me with your club was certainly useless, like a request of

money from a miser, the thunderbolt you carry will not be useless. You need have no doubts about this. O Indra, King of heaven, the thunder-bolt you carry to kill me has been empowered by the prowess of Lord Vishnu and the strength of Dadhici's austerities. Since you have come here to kill me in accordance with Lord Vishnu's order, there is no doubt that I shall be killed by the release of your thunderbolt. Lord Vishnu has sided with you. Therefore your victory, opulence and all good qualities are assured.

*aham samādhāya mano yathāha nah
saṅkarṣaṇas tac-caraṇāravinde
tvad-vajra-rainho-lulita-grāmya-pāśo
gatim muner yāmy apaviddha-lokah*

By the force of your thunderbolt, I shall be freed of material bondage and shall give up this body and this world of material desires. Fixing my mind upon the lotus feet of Lord Sankarsana, I shall attain the destination of such great sages as Narada Muni, just as Lord Sankarsana has promised me.

Persons who fully surrender at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and always think of His lotus feet are accepted and recognized by the Lord as His own personal assistants or servants. The Lord never bestows upon such servants the brilliant opulence found in the upper, lower and middle planetary systems of this material world. When one possesses material opulence in any of these three divisions of the universe, his possessions naturally increase his enmity, anxiety, mental agitation, pride and belligerence. Thus one goes through much endeavor to increase and maintain his possessions, and he suffers great unhappiness when he loses them. Our Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, forbids His devotees to endeavor uselessly for religion, economic development and sense gratification. O Indra, one can thus infer how kind the Lord is. This unstinted mercy is obtainable only by unalloyed

devotees, not by persons who aspire for material gains.

aham hare tava pādaika-mūla-dāsānudāso bhavitāsmi bhūyah manah smaretāsu-pater guṇāṁś te gr̄ṇīta vāk karma karotu kāyah

O my Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, will I again be able to be a servant of Your eternal servants who find shelter only at Your lotus feet? O Lord of my life, may I again become their servant so that my mind may always think of Your transcendental attributes, my words always glorify those attributes, and my body always engage in the loving service of Your Lordship?

na nāka-pr̄ṣṭham na ca pārameṣṭhyam na sārva-bhaumam na rasādhipatyam na yoga-siddhīr apunar-bhavam vā samāñjasa tvā virahayya kāṅkṣe

O my Lord, source of all opportunities, I do not desire to enjoy life in Dhruvaloka, the heavenly planets or the planet where Lord Brahma resides, nor do I want to be the supreme ruler of all the earthly planets or the lower planetary systems. I do not desire to be master of the powers of mystic yoga, nor do I want liberation if I have to give up Your lotus feet.

ajāta-pakṣā iva mātaram khagāḥ stanyam yathā vatsatarāḥ kṣudh-ārtāḥ priyam priyeva vyuṣitam viṣaṇṇā mano 'ravindākṣa didṛkṣate tvām

O lotus-eyed Lord, as baby birds that have not yet developed their wings always look for their mother to return and feed them, as small calves tied with ropes await anxiously the time of milking, when they will be allowed to drink the milk of their mothers, or as a morose wife whose husband is away from home always longs for him to return and satisfy

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her in all respects, I always yearn for the opportunity to render direct service unto You.

O my Lord, my master, I am wandering throughout this material world as a result of my fruitive activities. Therefore I simply seek friendship in the association of Your pious and enlightened devotees. My attachment to my body, wife, children and home is continuing by the spell of Your external energy, but I wish to be attached to them no longer. Let my mind, my consciousness and everything I have be attached only to You.

— Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 6: Prescribed Duties for Mankind » Chapter 6.11: The Transcendental Qualities of Vṛtrasura » Verse: 1-27.

NO ONE CAN ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD WITHOUT BEING FAVORED BY A VAISNAVA

His Divine Grace
A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada

Sri Narottama dasa Thakura sings:

ei chaya gosāñi yāra, mui tāra dāsa tān' sabāra pada-reṇu mora pañca-grāsa

"I am the servant of the six Gosvāmīs, and the dust of their lotus feet is my five kinds of food."

A Vaisnava always desires the dust of the lotus feet of previous ācāryas and Vaisnavas. Vṛtrasura was certain that he would be killed in the battle with Indra, because this was the desire of Lord Vishnu. Thus he was prepared for death because he knew that after his death he was destined to return home, back to Godhead. This is a great destination, and it is achieved by the grace of a Vaisnava. *Chādiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra pāyeche kebā:* no one has ever gone back to Godhead without being favored by a Vaisnava. In this verse, therefore, we find the words *manasvinām pāda-rajaḥ prapatsye*: "I shall receive the dust of the lotus feet of great devotees." The word *manasvinām* refers to great devotees



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who think of Krishna constantly. Thinking of Krishna they are always peaceful, and therefore they are called *dhīra*. The best example of such a devotee is the sage Narada Muni. If one receives the dust of the lotus feet of a *manasvī*, a great devotee, he certainly returns home, back to Godhead.

— Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 6: Prescribed Duties for Mankind » Chapter 11: The Transcendental Qualities of Vṛtrasura » Verse: 19

How Do WE FIND A GENUINE SPIRITUAL MASTER?

Srīla Bhaktisiddhānātha Sarasvatī Ṭhākura

The first step in attaining spiritual perfection is to take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master. By the Lord's will, everyone receives a spiritual master according to his personal qualification, just as the Christians received Jesus Christ and the Muslims Prophet Mohammad. Moreover, according to their ill fortune, materialists remain attached to material life by accepting family priests as their spiritual masters. However, if we are fortunate and sincerely search for a bona fide spiritual master, humbly praying to the Lord to be graced by such a *guru*, then by the Lord's mercy we will certainly make contact with a bona fide *guru* in this very lifetime. Then, by taking shelter at his lotus feet, our life will become successful. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* states:

*brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva,
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*

Out of many millions of wandering living entities, a very fortunate soul, by the grace of Krishna gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master. Due to the mercy of both Krishna and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service.

—Madhya 19.151

*kṛṣṇa yadi kṛpā kare kona bhāgyavāne,
guru-antaryāmi-rūpe śikhāya āpane*

Krishna is situated in everyone's heart as the *caitya-guru*, the internal guide and spiritual master. When Krishna shows kindness to a fortunate conditioned soul, He personally facilitates his progress in devotional service by instructing that person both as the internal Supersoul and the externally manifest spiritual master.

—Madhya 22.47

*gurukṛṣṇa-rūpa hana śāstrera pramāṇe,
guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā karena bhakta-gane*

According to the deliberate opinion of all the revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is non-different from Lord Krishna. Krishna, in the form of the spiritual master, delivers His devotees.

—Adi 1.45

*yadyapi āmāra guru—caitanyera dāsa,
tathāpi jāniye āmi tānhāra prakāśa*

Although I understand that my spiritual master is a servitor of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, I know him also as a plenary manifestation of the Lord.

—Adi 1.44

*śikṣā-guru ke ta' jāni kṛṣṇera svarūpa,
antaryāmī, bhakta-śreṣṭha,—ei dui rūpa*

One should know the instructing spiritual master to be the Personality of Krishna. Lord Krishna manifests Himself both as the Supersoul and as the greatest devotee of the Lord.

—Adi 1.47

*jīve sākṣat nāhi tāte guru caitya-rūpe,
śikṣā-guru haya kṛṣṇa -mahānta-svarūpe*

One should know the instructing spiritual master to be the Personality of Krishna.

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Lord Krishna manifests Himself as the Supersoul and as the greatest devotee of the Lord. Since one cannot visually experience the presence of the Supersoul, He appears before us as a liberated devotee. Such a spiritual master is none other than Lord Krishna Himself.

—*Ādi 1.58*

“O Krishnacandra, please accept me as your servant. I will not continue to think of myself as an enjoyer and thus serve this temporary material world.” When a living entity sincerely and humbly prays to the Lord in this way, then the most merciful Krishna appears before him in the form of a liberated devotee. Unless we are fortunate enough to receive transcendental knowledge from a bona fide spiritual master, we cannot become qualified to engage in devotional service to the Supreme Lord. Since no human being or demigod is capable of awarding such transcendental knowledge, we must find shelter under a bona fide spiritual master

— *Amṛta Vāṇī: Nectar of Instructions of Immorality*, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, Compiled by Śrīpāda Bhakti Mayukha Bhāgavat Mahāraja, Adapted and Published by Īśvara dāsa.

How Does A VAISNAVA SHOW HIS MERCY AND WHY IS IT THE TOPMOST?

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

“On the spiritual platform there is only amiability whereas in the conditional state there are friendship, compassion and negligence according to the candidate. The following are the identifying symptoms of eternal, constitutional compassion. When compassion for the conditioned soul is in its budding state it is limited to one's own body. When this bud begins to develop it applies to one's family members; when it is further developed it applies to one's own caste and when it is more developed still it applies to one's countrymen. When compassion is further developed it applies to all humanity and when it is fully developed it blossoms

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into sympathetic feelings for all living entities. In English these last two stages are known as Patriotism and Philanthropy. The Vaisnavas cannot remain within the confines of narrow mindedness. Their natural mood is to show compassion to all living entities regardless of their caste, creed, nationality, or mental and physical condition.”

—Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta – 3/3

—*Bhaktivinoda Vāṇī Vaibhāva* Published and Adapted by Īśvara dāsa, Touchstone media.

HOW THE LORD BESTOWS HIS MERCY AND PURE BHAKTI?

Srila Visvanātha Chakravartī Ṭhākura

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.20.8) it is stated:

*yadrcchayā mat-kathādau
jāta-śraddhas tu yaḥ pumān
na nirviṇṇo nāti-sakto
bhakti-yogo 'sya siddhi-dah*

Here *bhakti* has been described with the word *yadrcchayā*, or “her own volition.” Again, in Sridhara Swami's commentary on this verse, he writes that Bhaktidevi is free to act according to her personal desire. The dictionary meaning of the word *yadrcchayā* is “spontaneous and independent”. Some persons interpret the meaning of *yadrcchayā* as “a sort of luck or fortune”. However, when explained in this way, apparent contradictions are bound to appear. For example, is this fortune because of pious activities? Then is misfortune because of impious acts? Or does it simply imply a lack of good actions? If we accept that the good fortune accrued by pious activities creates *bhakti*, then it makes *bhakti* dependent upon, and subservient to, pious activities. This cannot be accepted because this explanation infringes upon the principle of Bhaktidevi's free will.

If we agree to the other suggestion - that

lack of good fortune gives birth to *bhakti* - then we must admit that fortunes are capricious, unpredictable, and therefore imperfect. How can the imperfect produce anything that is perfect? Then again, if one says that the Supreme Lord's mercy is the ultimate cause of *bhakti* then one has to once more undergo tedious research to pinpoint the cause of His mercy.

It is certain that after much probing and speculation a single irrefutable cause will never be established. In following this line of thought, confusion reigns. On the other hand, if we agree that *bhakti* impregnates the devotee's heart as a result of Krishna's causeless mercy, then understanding become easier. Yet one may raise the question as to why the Lord's mercy often seen to be unequally dispensed. Is the Supreme Lord guilty of partiality? If the Lord's grace is causeless then He must shower it everywhere without consideration. Yet it is seen that His mercy is not freely given to all. Should we blame Krishna for being biased, or even unfair? The open discrimination the Lord practices against the demons by killing them, and the direct favor he shows towards His devotee does not tarnish the Lord's reputation. Rather is an embellishment in His character. Krishna's quality of *bhaktavatsalyata*; His protective affection towards the devotees, surpasses His other transcendental excellences.

It is frequently pointed out that the pure devotee's mercy is also the cause of devotion. Just as the Lord's mercy is known to be causeless, so His devotees who possess the same qualities as the Lord, also shower their mercy causelessly. Hence, when we declare that the devotee's causeless mercy is the phenomena which inspires *bhakti* a doubts arises. Since *bhakti* is not equally distributed, this will naturally be criticized as partiality. Though it is wrong to say that the causeless mercy of both the Lord and the pure devotee are prejudiced, we find the following in the *Śrimad-Bhāgavatam* (11.2.46),

The *madhyam adhikārī* offers his love to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is a sincere friend to all the devotees of the Lord, shows mercy to ignorant but innocent people and disregards those who are envious of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or His devotees.

These characteristics clearly indicate that the *madhyam adhikārī* devotee does not distribute his mercy equally to everyone. Another truth is that the Supreme Lord is subservient to His devotee's wishes; therefore He emulates His devotee in disbursing mercy. Based on this fact it is easy to see that if the *madhyam* devotee is mercifully inclined to someone the Lord automatically showers His mercy on that "fortunate" person. This conclusion is sound in all respects.

The sole cause which attracts the mercy of the Lord is the *bhakti* that permanently resides in the pure devotees' hearts. This means that Krishna's mercy will not be invoked without that *bhakti* within the heart of His devotee which inspires His mercy to manifest. Therefore, because *bhakti* is completely independent of every possible cause - including even previous piety and good fortune- it is undisputedly confirmed that *bhakti* is self-manifest. As mentioned earlier, devotion is the only cause of devotion (*bhaktyā sañjātā� bhaktyā*); *Bhakti-devi* does not require any cause or reason to appear, save and except for her own sweet will.

— *Madhurya-Kadambini* - Śrila Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura
Translated by Sarvabhāvana dāsa.

THE WORDS OF THE SPIRITUAL MASTER

Srila Narottam Das Thakura

*guru-mūkha-padma-vākyā,
cittete kariya aikya
ār nā kariha mane āśā
śrī-guru-carane rati,
ei se uttama-gati
je prasāde pūre sarba āśā*



Make the teachings from the lotus mouth of the spiritual master one with your heart, and do not desire anything else. Attachment to the lotus feet of the spiritual master is the best means of spiritual advancement. By his mercy all one's topmost desires are completely fulfilled.

Commentary

The spiritual master instructs one in the loving devotional service of Sri Krishna. The teachings of the spiritual master are always in accordance with all revealed scriptures which ultimately direct one to the lotus feet of Sri Krishna. Thus the instructions from the mouth of the spiritual master are very powerful, for they enable one to achieve Lord Sri Krishna. Therefore, those who are eager to attain Sri Krishna should take the words of the spiritual master into their hearts as their life and soul.

The word *vākya* here refers to the instructions on *prema-rasa-tattva*, the science of loving relationships with Krishna. The word *sakya* (an alternative form of *aikya*), refers to one's ability to obtain Krishna. *Uttama-gati* means the highest destination. *Uttama-gati* may also refer to the best out of all obtainable things; that is *prema-mayi-seva* or service to Krishna in pure love.

Another reading of *cittete kariya aikya* is *hṛdi kari mahā sakya*. This means that whatever instructions the spiritual master gives to his disciples about their eternal constitutional relationship (for example as that of a *sakhi manjari*) should be keenly concealed within the core of their hearts. The phrase *śarva āśā* indicates that one should be transcendently covetous to achieve the loving service of Sri Sri Radha-Krishna. Such service includes things like massaging Their lotus feet and offering Them a *cāmara* in, a Vrindavan grove decorated with jewels and pearls (*nikuñja*). Whoever invokes the satisfaction of the spiritual master simultaneously pleases Sri Sri Radha Krishna - *yasya prasāda bhagavat prasādah*. By the mercy of the

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spiritual master, one can attain the mercy of the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna. Therefore, only by the mercy of the spiritual master can one achieve loving service to Śrī Śrī Radha Krishna.

— Śrī Prema Bhakti-candrikā - Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura
Transaltions of the Bengali texts of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura
Bhūmipati Prabhu translation of the Sanskrit commentary of
Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravarti Ṭhākura by Vinode-Bihari dāsa
Brahmācāri.

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