

SRI SRI RADHA GOPINATH MANDIR

ISKCON Chowpatty Temple

Serving and Pleasing Devotees

is Higher Than Serving Krishna

A Morning Bhagavatam Class

Spoken by

His Holiness

Srila Radhanath Swami Maharaj

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1. Opening Words

I extend my gratitude to all of the assembled devotees; thank you for gathering at Sri Sri Radha Gopinath community. Today we are reading from SB 3.16.7, a beautiful verse.

SRIMAD-BHAGAVATAM 3.16.7

“The Lord continued: Because I am the servitor of My devotees, My lotus feet have become so sacred that they immediately wipe out all sin, and I have acquired such a disposition that the goddess of fortune does not leave Me — even though I have no attachment for her — while others praise her beauty and observe sacred vows to secure from her even a slight favour.”

2. The Four Kumaras — Wisdom Beyond the World

The four Kumaras could travel anywhere they wished within the universe. They are among the oldest of all beings, elder brothers of Lord Shiva, born at the very beginning of creation directly from Lord Brahma. Brahmaji himself performs many services — he is the guru of the universe, having performed tapasya for the pleasure of the Lord; the Lord gives him the instructions of the Vedic literatures, and Brahmaji also carries out administrative service on behalf of the Lord as the secondary creator.

The four Kumaras observed with deep wisdom how entangled the world is, and how this entanglement is rooted in desire, anger and lust — the six enemies we so often speak of. When lust is unfulfilled there is frustration and anger; when we see others possessing more than we have, envy arises — more skills, wealth, fame, knowledge, even more renunciation. The soul is actually seeking loving service to Krishna and the experience of His limitless love; nothing in the world can ever truly satisfy us. From this comes greed — an insatiable desire for more and more.

Even one possessing all power and fame, such as Hiranyakasipu, remains unsatisfied and anxious, unable to control his mind and senses, caught in arrogance and illusion.

The Kumaras understood that passion, once it enters the mind, becomes an overwhelming distraction, very difficult to overcome. By their spiritual power they chose to remain as young children — unadorned, without even clothes — yet they were the wisest and most senior of anyone in the universe. In time, they became so exalted that

they are recognised as the founders of an authorised sampradaya on the path of bhakti; in Vrindavan, the Nimbarka Sampradaya traces its origin to the four Kumaras.

3. At the Gates of Vaikuntha

When the Kumaras arrived at Vaikuntha, they passed through six gates. At the final gate, two gatekeepers, Jaya and Vijaya — themselves great devotees — by their own free will enacted a wonderful, transcendental pastime. These are not ordinary stories; the Lord sends such pastimes so that we may learn essential lessons through them.

Jaya-Vijaya, thinking it their duty to ensure only the perfectly qualified devotee enters Vaikuntha, blocked the Kumaras' way. The Kumaras, eager to see the Lord, wished to teach them a lesson in return.

Jaya-Vijaya were themselves acting in a mood of service; but Vaikuntha is the realm beyond the duality of bodily conception — a place where everyone is the direct servant of the Lord, and only that mood which pleases the Lord belongs there. Because Jaya-Vijaya judged the Kumaras by bodily designation, they were cursed, so as to be purified and so that Vaikuntha would remain protected from any trace of a bodily, discriminating mentality.

Vaikuntha is the realm of supreme harmony where Krishna is always at the centre; whoever fails to act from that consciousness must first be purified by descending to the material world. Whatever situations we may fall into, let us never forget the Supreme Lord — this was the Kumaras' prayer.

Lord Vishnu, Narayana, then came out from Vaikuntha to the very gateway together with the goddess of fortune. The four Kumaras, immersed in the samadhi of ecstasy at the sight of the Lord, smelled the tulasi leaves that had touched His lotus feet and were completely transformed; love for Krishna awakened fully in their hearts, and they began offering beautiful prayers to the Lord as they beheld His darshan.

4. To Ignore a Devotee Is to Ignore the Lord

Jaya-Vijaya's error was, in truth, that they had committed an offense against the Kumaras by ignoring the Lord present within them — just as Durvasa Muni, in anger,

tried to harm Ambarish Maharaj, even though Ambarish had tried faithfully to honour the great sage.

When we offend a Vaishnava, even while believing we are engaged in Krishna's service, from Krishna's own perspective this can only happen because we are ignoring Him. To truly remember the Lord for His pleasure means to do what actually pleases Him.

Although Jaya-Vijaya were mistaken, they judged the devotee by bodily features rather than by inner qualities — a vital principle running throughout our scriptures. Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu honoured Haridas Thakur as Namacharya even though Haridas, born an outcaste, humbly never tried to enter the temple of Jagannath Puri; instead, Lord Jagannath would come to meet him every single day.

Haridas Thakur was so pure and so advanced that, though not permitted inside, Lord Jagannath personally visited him each day to feed him and to speak with him of Krishna. Lord Chaitanya told Haridas that merely by touching him He Himself became purified; anyone who chants the name of Haridas Thakur with devotion receives special bhakti from Krishna — and yet the majority of people judged Haridas only by his bodily condition.

If we do not recognise the Lord's own wish, we are ignoring Him. We may study vast Vedic literature, chant countless names, and perform elaborate worship, yet if we ignore those whom He loves, we are ignoring Him — we are ignoring His very wish. To ignore someone does not mean failing to acknowledge their existence; it means acting against their will. This is precisely how Jaya-Vijaya ignored the Lord — by failing to recognise the devotion within the Kumaras.

When Lord Chaitanya travelled through Jharikhand, He inspired such love in the hearts of tigers and deer that they danced and embraced one another. Deeply pleased, He cited the Bhagavatam verse describing this very quality of Vaikuntha and Vrindavan — a harmony of hearts that exists wherever Krishna is truly at the centre, wherever we remain conscious of what pleases Him.

Trinad api sunichena, taror api sahishnuna — to be more humble than a blade of grass, more tolerant and forgiving than a tree, and to find joy in offering respect to others — amanina manadena — in this spirit Lord Chaitanya taught the chanting of the holy names.

In the Chaitanya-charitamrita, Srila Prabhupada explains that Vrindavan and New Vrindavan are non-different — indeed, any temple where Krishna remains at the centre of the devotees' relationships with one another, where there is true harmony, is non-different from Goloka Vrindavan.

5. The Lord Takes Responsibility for His Servants

The four Kumaras perceived a disharmony rooted in judging others by external, physical designation. Yet Lord Chaitanya reveals a further, remarkable teaching: because Jaya-Vijaya are His own servants, when they err, the Supreme Lord Himself personally accepts the fault. Lord Vishnu asks forgiveness of the Kumaras for the mistake of His own servants.

A materialistic mindset might think: 'I wear tilak, I am a devotee, and if I make a mistake, the offense will simply fall upon Krishna.' This very attitude — committing sinful acts on the strength of chanting — is itself an offense against the holy name. The Bhagavatam requires proper attitude, guidance and education through the purports of the acharyas, so that we may correctly understand what this teaching truly means.

If we sincerely call ourselves devotees, and if we truly wish to love and please Krishna, we will be careful not to commit offenses — not merely from fear of our own suffering, but because we cherish Krishna and do not wish to cause Him pain. A neophyte, still under illusion, might say, 'Let Krishna ask forgiveness for what I have done'; but for a sincere devotee, nothing is more heart-breaking than causing pain to Krishna. The Bhagavatam takes us into the very heart of the Lord.

When we serve the Lord's devotees nicely and sincerely, Srimati Radharani Herself approaches Krishna and says: 'Please accept this devotee, for this devotee has given pleasure to My dear devotees — this devotee is better than Me.' Srila Prabhupada emphasises that She does not merely say this; She genuinely feels it, presenting such a devotee to Krishna in that very spirit.

When a devotee makes an offense, the Lord takes responsibility for His servant and asks forgiveness Himself. Understanding this spirit of the Lord should inspire in us a deep sense of responsibility — never to place Him in such a position. We are not Jaya-Vijaya,

yet there remains a lesson here that we are meant to apply in our own lives — one that should give many of us pause.

6. Selected Verses from Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.16

SB 3.16.5

“A wrong act committed by a servant leads people in general to blame his master, just as a spot of white leprosy on any part of the body pollutes all of the skin.”

Purport: A Vaishnava should be fully qualified. As stated in the Bhagavatam, anyone who has become a Vaishnava has developed all the good qualities of the demigods; twenty-six such qualifications are mentioned in the Chaitanya-charitamrita. A devotee should always ensure that his Vaishnava qualities increase with the advancement of his Krishna consciousness, remaining blameless, since any offense by a devotee is a scar upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A devotee's duty is to remain always conscious in his dealings with others, especially with fellow devotees of the Lord.

SB 3.16.6

“Anyone in the entire world, even down to the chandala who lives by cooking and eating the flesh of the dog, is immediately purified if he takes bath in hearing through the ear the glorification of My name, fame, etc. Now you have realised Me without doubt; therefore I will not hesitate to lop off My own arm if its conduct is found hostile to you.”

The Lord is showing how glorious and dear to Him are those devotees who sincerely hear and chant His glories. Srila Prabhupada explains that one who takes up Krishna consciousness with full seriousness should be understood as already purified, and Krishna stands ready to protect him by all means — even, as assured here, to the extent of cutting off part of His own body.

SB 3.16.7 (RECAP)

“The Lord continued: Because I am the servitor of My devotees, My lotus feet have become so sacred that they immediately wipe out all sin, and I have acquired such a disposition that the goddess of fortune does not leave Me, even though I have no attachment for her, while others praise her beauty and observe sacred vows to secure from her even a slight favour.”

Whatever ability, resource or compassion we possess comes to us by the grace of Krishna; we are but insignificant parts and parcels of Him — the complete whole, the intelligence of the intelligent, the ability within everyone, the strength of the strong. The quality of a Vaishnava is to recognise that the root of so much conflict in this world is

our desire to be enjoyer, controller and proprietor — our insatiable need to take credit, and how painful it becomes when another receives credit that we feel belongs to us. This is false ego.

Krishna gives us everything — we may become good cooks, good pujaris, good students, good parents or good scholars — yet a true devotee gives full credit to his gurus and to Krishna. Here, the Personality of Godhead Himself gives all credit for His exalted position to His devotees, speaking even of the individual devotee's glory.

For a sincere devotee, the Lord explains that the dust of His lotus feet wipes out all sin because He is the servitor of His devotees — this is the very nature of God: not merely all-powerful, but, beyond His power, possessed of the power of love. Srila Prabhupada teaches that as we advance in Krishna consciousness, it becomes necessary to develop Vaishnava qualities — at the heart of which lies not craving credit, but an eagerness simply to do our best. The Lord, though the creator, maintainer and annihilator of the material creation and the supreme object and giver of ecstasy in the spiritual world, feels that His power comes specifically from serving His devotees.

SB 3.16.8

“I do not enjoy the oblations offered by the sacrificers in the sacrificial fire, which is one of My own mouths, with the same relish as I do the delicacies overflowing with ghee which are offered to the mouths of the brahmanas who have dedicated to Me the results of their activities and who are ever satisfied with My prasada.”

SB 3.16.9

“I am the master of My unobstructed internal energy, and the water of the Ganges is the remnant left after My feet are washed. That water sanctifies the three worlds, along with Lord Shiva, who bears it on his head. If I can take the dust of the feet of the Vaishnava on My head, who will refuse to do the same?”

The Lord is so pure that the entire spiritual world remains under His control, and the Ganges purifies the world only because it has touched His feet — yet even He longs to take the dust of a Vaishnava's feet upon His own head. Who, then, would refuse to do the same?

7. Living This Teaching

For a devotee sincerely seeking, by the grace of Sri Sri Radha Gopinath, a genuine realisation of the spiritual world, an inseparable part of sadhana is to imbibe deep appreciation for how much we depend upon the Lord's mercy — and how that mercy flows to us according to our Vaishnava qualities, particularly in how we treat and deal with others, and specifically in never judging anyone by external designation.

Lord Vishnu speaks in the Bhagavatam of exactly the principle that Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to actually live: Mahaprabhu appeared in the mood of the servant of His own servants.

Vrindavan Das Thakur declares that he is non-different from the holy names, and that the holy name of the Lord holds the greatest power to purify anyone. Yet if someone speaks ill of a devotee dear to the Lord — speaking with the very same mouth that chants the holy names — then the holy name itself will punish him.

Lord Chaitanya proclaims that if we simply do two things, He will take us back to Godhead:

1. Always chant the holy names of the Lord.
2. Never commit offenses or criticise others.

Great acharyas do not criticise out of malice, though they speak the truth for our own benefit and at times chastise us — what matters always is the motive behind it. The false ego seeks to justify everything; where envy is present, even correction meant to be merciful from a great personality can become an offense. We should remain ever conscious of this distinction.

Thank you very much.
Hare Krishna