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DON'T IMITATE THE BRIJBASIS

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Arjuna is an eternal devotee, so on the higher platform the devotee is so intimately related that he forgets Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But, in the lower stage of devotional service Krishna is looked upon with awe and veneration. When Arjuna saw the *virāṭa-mūrti* of Krishna, actually he came down one step below his position. Therefore he asked for forgiveness from Krishna. So this is a teaching to the common man that we should not immediately treat Krishna as intimately as the *gopīs*, cowherds boys and other advanced devotees treated Him. In the beginning we must treat the Lord with awe and veneration. Later on when we are perfectly on the spiritual platform we may treat Krishna more intimately and thus forget His exalted position. The *sahajiyās* imitate the Brijbasis from the beginning, but we don't do like that. In the beginning a devotee must strictly follow *viddhimārga*, regulative principles. When on the *svārūpa-siddha* stage the devotee can treat Krishna on an equal level, or sometimes become even higher than Krishna, just like Mother Yasoda treated Krishna as being completely dependent upon her. So these stages are appreciated in many advanced stages of devotional life. ❧

— Letter to Acyutananda 1 November 1973.

THE DEMON SHANKHACHUDA

*Adapted from Srila Rupa Goswami's
Lalita-mādhava-nāṭakam*

In the sixth shower, sixth current, of his book Śrī Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta, Thakur Bhaktivinode describes that Krishna's pastimes are of two types, *nitya* (eternal) and *naimittika* (occasional). He says that Krishna's *nitya* pastimes are the subject of meditation for qualified devotees who have attained transcendental greed for hearing the topics of the Lord. Krishna's pastimes of killing demons, however, are *naimittika*. Such pastimes are conspicuous by their absence in the spiritual world and truly manifest only here in the material sphere. Bhaktivinode describes that for *sādhaka* devotees who still harbor material desires or *anarthas* in their hearts, Krishna's pastimes of killing the demons are especially significant. By hearing these *naimittika* *līlās*, the heart becomes purified of material contamination. Bhaktivinode goes on to describe Krishna's various *naimittika* pastimes and the corresponding *anarthas* they purify. The eighteenth occasional pastime Bhaktivinode mentions is *ṣaṅkhacūḍā-vadha*, the killing of Shankhachuda. He states: *pratiṣṭāśā o strī-saṅga-sprḥā varjana* — "[By killing Shankhachuda, Krishna] dispels the desire for fame and inappropriate association with women." This pastime is described in the thirty-fourth chapter of the tenth canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Also, in Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā (8.27)

Bhaktivinode has described the Shankhachuda demon as follows:

pratiṣṭhāparatā bhakti cchalena bhoga-kāmanā
śaṅkhacūḍa iti proktaḥ ṣoḍaśah pratibandhakaḥ

The desire for gaining fame and sense gratification through bhakti is called Shankhacuda. This is the sixteenth obstacle. Those whose actions are motivated by a desire for fame are also proud, therefore vaiṣṇavas should always be careful of such persons.

Vaiṣṇavas pray to Krishna, who is famous as śrī-śaṅkhacūḍāntaka, the blessed destroyer of the demon Shankhachuda, to free them from the demon-like desires for fame and illicit association with women.

In the second act of Lalita-mādhava, Srila Rupa Goswami gives some interesting details about Krishna's pastime of killing the demon Shankhachuda which are not mentioned in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

Purnamasi once told Vrinda Devi, "Seeing the transcendental glories of Radha and Krishna, Kesi described it to King Kamsa. Kamsa then decided to invade and capture Gokula to obtain Radha."

Hearing this Vrinda Devi became frightened and asked, "Then? Then?"

Purnamasi replied, "Aristasura then advised Kamsa to marry Radharani, and the fearless Kamsa sent his intimate friend, the wicked yakṣa Shankhachuda, to kidnap her".

Vrinda Devi said, "If Radha is kidnapped by this demon, the entire world will burn with pain. Who will not burn with pain if beautiful girls that are sweetly scented with all virtues are scorched by a demon's touch? If wonderful unfortunate Radha is kidnapped that will bring constant unparalleled pain not only to me but also to the entire world."

Just then, Krishna's cousin Kundalata came running in and said to Purnamasi, "O noble lady, I have seen a great wonder, a great wonder!"

Purnamasi said, "What wonder is that?"

"Near Govardhana-malla's house I saw the brilliantly shining sun-god."

Hearing this, Vrinda Devi became blissful and said, "O noble Purnamasi, don't worry! Just see! Because of Radha's constant worship of Surya the sun-god, and because of that sun-god's friendship with Radharani's father Maharaja Vrishabhanu, he has come here to protect Her."

Purnamasi shook her head and replied, "This is not the sun-god. He must be the yakṣa sent by Kamsa."

Kundalata said, "How is that possible? This person is so effulgent that the light coming

from him pains the eyes and makes him very difficult to see. This cannot be any yakṣa."

Purnamasi said, "This light is not the natural effulgence of his body. It is coming from something else."

Kundalata asked, "From what other thing?"

"From the jewel on his crown."

Vrinda Devi asked, "Where did he get such a splendid jewel?"

Purnamasi replied, "He was the leader of the guards watching over Kuvera's treasury-building. He liked that jewel, so he stole it."

Vrinda then said, "Today is Sunday. Radharani will certainly go to the temple of the sun-god today. You should forbid Her to go."

Kundalata anxiously said, "O Vrinda, Radharani left to go to the sun temple some time ago."

Hearing this, Purnamasi said, "Kundalata, quickly bring Krishna to Radha's side. I will go to get Balaram." Purnamasi then hurried off with Vrinda Devi.

Searching for Lord Madhava, Kundalata found that Krishna and Srimati Radharani had already met in a secluded bower in the Vrindavan forest.

Unseen by anyone, the demon Shankhachuda quietly entered a nearby grove and hid among the vines. He said to himself, "This girl on the jewelled throne looks like the girl described by Govardhana-malla. Now is my chance to do my work."

Suddenly a voice came from the nearby forest path, "O granddaughter Radha, where have You gone for such a long time?"

Hearing the voice, Krishna said, "Kundalata, why is Mukhara [Radharani's nearly blind grandmother] complaining?"

Kundalata laughed and said, "O charming Krishna, of what importance is the poverty of old ladies' complaints to an amorous hero like You, who, enjoying pastimes in the forest groves, makes waves of playful sidelong glances?"

Suddenly Mukhara entered the *kuiñja*. Seeing Sri Sri Radha-Krishna before her, she said to herself, "Ah! What a great misfortune! Why has this *kalpalatā* creeper abandoned a sandalwood tree to rest on this castor-oil plant?" Then openly she said, "This is very bad. My child, You have become a pet-doe for this crest-jewel of debauchees."

Seeing the unexpected arrival of Mukhara, to tease Krishna, Lalita said, "O noble lady, this Krishna has tricked us and is making fun of us!"

Mukhara began chastising Krishna, “You debauchee! Stop! Stop!”

Seeing Mukhara’s angry mood, Krishna decided to hide amongst the trees.

Mukhara then became even more angry and said, “Lalita, chase Him! Chase that rascal!”

Lalita said, “Aha Krishna! Why do You flee?”

Mukhara quickly went after Krishna and began searching for Him in the forest. Seeing a shadow in the trees, she said in a menacing tone of voice, “By good luck we have caught You! O snake that attacks the does of the *gopīs*, by good luck we have now caught You!”

Hearing Mukhara’s angry words, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who relishes human-like pastimes, said to Himself, “How will this almost-blind old lady find Me in the dense darkness of this forest grove?”

Finding that it was only a shadow and not Krishna, Mukhara began turning her head, looking everywhere.

Krishna laughed and said to Himself, “The old lady has only seen an illusion.”

Mukhara said, “Ah, it is very dark.”

Krishna smiled to Himself.

Then going to another place, Mukhara saw a figure in the trees and said, “Aha! Now we’ve got You!” Getting a closer look she then became frightened. “O rascal! Purnamasi spoke the truth when she said You could assume many forms like those of Nrisimhadev and Varaha. Now You have assumed the form of a terrifying demon that is as brilliant as the sun. This form frightens me.”

Seeing Mukhara, the demon Shankhachuda moved past her, saying to himself, “By good luck I have escaped the gaze of that boy who was the personification of all powerful heroes.” Shankhachuda then went towards the *gopīs*.

Seeing the demon coming, the *gopīs* became afraid and said, “Noble lady! Save us! Save us!”

Still thinking that Shankhachuda was Krishna, Mukhara angrily said, “Dark Krishna, this is not right!”

Lalita said, “Foolish old woman! Do you think this terrible demon is Krishna in disguise?”

Shankhachuda said to himself, “Now, in order to fulfill the unfulfilled desire of my dear friend King Kamsa, I will grab the hair of the lotus-like girl on this throne and drag Her away.” He then grabs Radharani by Her hair and starts taking Her away.

Seeing this, all of the *gopīs* said, “O Krishna! Where are You?”

Hearing the *gopīs* frightened cries and seeing the situation, Krishna left the grove where He was hiding and began to lament to Himself, “O Radha! Eager with hundreds of desires, I brought You to this place deep in the Vrindavan forest, filled with the sweet fragrances. O beautiful one, why has cruel fate, appearing as this tricky demon Shankhachuda, now carried You far away?” Angrily walking about, Krishna said, “Noble lady, don’t fear. I will rescue Her.”

With tears in her eyes, Mukhara said, “O moon-faced boy, may victory be Yours!”

Krishna then spoke the following words full of chivalrous pride [2.2.104]:

*rādhāparādhini muhus tvayī yan na śāstim
śaknomi kartum akhilaṁ guru eṣa khedaḥ
sarvāṅgineyam abhidhāvati luṭṭa-dharmā
tvam mukti-kāla-rajānī bata kim kariṣye*

“Wicked demon, offensive to Sri Radha, I feel great pain because I cannot spend all of eternity torturing you. The wicked black night of death now chases you, covering you with all its limbs. How will I torture you forever if you merely die?”

Seeing Krishna coming fast behind him, Shankhachuda put Srimati Radharani aside and turned to fight with Him.

Seeing young Krishna fighting with the fierce and gigantic demon, the Vrajabasis began lamenting, “What is child Krishna, as handsome as Cupid and as delicate as a new sprout on a *tamāla* tree, in comparison to this degraded *yakṣa* giant, whose arms are like palm trees and whose chest is like a mountainside? Alas, Krishna does not even have an expert friend to help Him! O queen of Vraja, Yasoda, we cannot know how you must be suffering now!”

Hearing these words, everyone was overcome with grief.

Coming on the scene, Purnamasi said, “Daughter Lalita, don’t be unhappy. Know that this demon is a spark soon to be extinguished.”

With the strength of His arms, powerful Krishna attacked the hideous Shankhachuda demon, who had fearsome curling fangs in his horrible mouth. In the middle of the forest, Krishna, who wears a peacock-feather in His hair, struck Shankhachuda with millions of blows, stunned him, and then took from his crown the jewel as effulgent as the sun.

Seeing that the demon was now senseless, Paurnamasi delightedly said, “On the pretext of pulling out the jewel, Lord Krishna has pulled out the now fortunate Shankhachuda’s life. Today there will certainly be a great feast for the starving jackals of Vrindavan forest.” Looking again, she said, “Look! Look! Losing the jewel, the demon has lost his protection. Now he will accept death.”

With His fist, lotus-eyed Lord Krishna then playfully struck the sinful-hearted *yakṣa* and forcibly took from him the treasure of his life-breath.

Paurnamasi blissfully said, “Krishna, who ferociously attacked the demon and angrily threw his crown to the ground, and was then praised by demigods showering flowers, delights our eyes.

Vishakha said, “Noble lady, look! Balaram and all of Krishna’s friends have come here.

Lalita said, “In front of the *gopīs* and cowherd boys, Krishna gave the beautiful regal jewel He had taken from Shankhachuda to Balaram. Then, sending His friends away and now alone, Krishna approached Radha.”

Paurnamasi said, “O beautiful one, Look! Look! His face glistening with perspiration and His peacock feather crown moving in

the breeze, Krishna now finds Himself embraced by frightened Radha.

Her eyes restless with fear, Radha had called out in distress, “O Govinda, O prince of Gokula whose eyes rebuke the lotus flowers in the Yamuna, please protect Me! Please quickly protect Me!”

Paurnamasi came, embraced Radha-Krishna and said, “O son of Yasoda, You have removed the arrow of sufferings in My heart.

Mukhara also came forward, and with both her hands wiping the perspiration from Krishna’s brow, said, “By the will of providence, O hero, You have protected beautiful Radha.”

Madhumangal entered that *kuñja* and said, “O dear friend Krishna, look! Balaram has now given that regal jewel to Radha.”

Krishna replied, “This jewel is as good as the Kaustubha jewel. It is the best of jewels. It is only proper that it be placed in Radharani’s necklace.”

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*bhāgavata-tulasī-gaṅgāya bhakta-jane
caturddhā vighraha kṛṣṇa ei cāri sane*

*jīva-nyāsa karile śrī-mūrti pūjya haya
'janma mātra e cāri īśvara' vede kaya*

Lord Krishna appears in four forms: the scripture *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the *tulasī* plant, the river Ganges, and the Lord’s devotees. While the deity form of the Lord is worshipable only after the performance of certain rituals, the Vedas explain that these other four forms are directly the Supreme Lord Himself from the moment they appear in this world.

— *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata madhya* 21.82.

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