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His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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PREACHING AND PURITY

*His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupada*



It is my firm conviction that this Krishna consciousness movement of Lord Chaitanya's will be successful in all parts of the world if our students kindly continue their enthusiastic endeavors to distribute this message freely to all persons. Our movement is now appreciated all over the world and is gradually coming to the attention of the important leaders of the present society. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to keep our spiritual strength by rigidly following the regulative principles. Then we can deal adequately with all facilities offered by the Lord for expediting his holy mission. I am confident that all our sincere, intelligent young devotees like your good self will carry this program to a fruitful conclusion, namely delivering the holy name to all the fallen souls suffering in varieties of conditional misery and material happiness. Therefore, please execute your program for distribution of literatures and *saṅkīrtana* with increased vigor, and may Krishna bless your sincere efforts to serve him faithfully.

It is very good news that you are introducing courses in Krishna consciousness in the universities and yoga institutes. As you know, this is the only real yoga, *bhakti-yoga*, and is the only practical means for God realization in this age.

Therefore, you are doing the greatest good for your countrymen and the world at large by introducing this sublime movement for regaining our lost position as eternal servants of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna.

Please continue to distribute our books; that is a very important business. Your idea for film distribution is also good, so do it nicely in cooperation with the GBC. I am very anxious that at the same time as you carry out all these outside activities you are maintaining a strict schedule of temple activities. Such regular activities, like attendance at *ārati*, chanting of rounds, and study of literatures in the class, will keep you fit for effective outside preaching work. We must maintain our standard of purity, otherwise there will be a loss of spiritual strength and subsequent fall down. You should all be thoroughly convinced of the power of the Hare Krishna mantra to protect you in all circumstances, and chant accordingly at all times without offense. Then advancement will be swift and you will gradually come to see everything clearly so that you may act for the pleasure of the Lord without uncertainty. When one is spontaneously engaged in this way, always in the service of the Lord and anxious to avoid all mundane activities, he is actually experiencing the taste of bliss in Krishna consciousness. ❀

— Letter to Damodara Das, 10 January 1971.

THE MOUSE, THE LAMP AND THE QUEEN

A Puranic History

Srila Jiva Goswami writes in Bhakti-sandarbha, anuccheda 153:

astu tāvat śuddha-bhakty-ābhāsasya vārtā,
aparādhatvena dr̥śyamāno 'py asau mahā-
prabhāvo dr̥śyate.

It is seen that the activities of pure bhakti when performed even without a devotional attitude are still very powerful.

He then cites an example from the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa of an ordinary mouse who became a devotee and a queen due to some superficial contact with the Lord. The same story is cited in Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 16.129. In his commentary on Hari-bhakti-vilāsa known as Digdarśinī-tīkā, Śrila Sanatan Goswami cites the story as being from Padma Purāṇa. The story is found in both the Viṣṇudharmottara and the Padma Purāṇa with somewhat different details. In the former (1.167), Markandeya Rishi relates the episode to King Vajra.

In the country of Vidarbha there lived a king named Chitraratha. He had one hundred-fifteen sons, but only one daughter, whose name was Lalitika. She was endowed with all good qualities and possessed matchless beauty. Her father gave her in marriage to the righteous king of Kashi. That law-abiding king of Kashi had three hundred wives, but Lalitika became his principal queen. Beginning from the dark half of the month of Āśvina (September-October), till the bright half of the month of Kārttika (October-November), it was Lalitika's daily practice to light thousands of lamps, both day and night, in the temple of Vishnu. She also sent lamps to the houses of brahmins, to crossroads of the streets, to various temples, at the bottom of holy trees, on the top of mountains, on the sandy banks of rivers, and on the surface of wells. Seeing her thus absorbed, her co-wives gathered together and asked her, "O fair eyed Lalitika, neglecting all other rituals, you always seem keen on lighting lamps in the temples of Vishnu. We are very curious to know why you do this. Please explain to us why you have so much faith in this activity?"

Lalitika replied: "O auspicious ladies! Listen carefully to my words, and I will tell you why it is that I have faith in the fruit of giving lamps. That worthy daughter of the lord of mountains, who is the beloved wife of Shiva, is famous in the country

of Madra in her form of the divine river named Umadevi. For blessing the masses of people, she was called by the brahmins to descend to the earth. On her banks there is a sacred place measuring eight miles in circumference. The water in that holy place is considered to contain waters from all the places of pilgrimage. Whoever dies there obtains an auspicious result. That goddess destroys sins whenever she is heard, wished for, or seen. Her holy place, named "Narasimha", destroys all sins. In the past, the Lord who has a combined form of a man and a lion had taken a bath there. In ancient times, the king of Sauvira constructed a temple of Lord Vishnu at that place. The priest there daily worshipped the Lord with flowers, fragrant scents, and the offering of lamps. One evening during the month of Kārttika, the lamp that had been offered to the Lord was almost extinguished. I was then living in that temple in the body of a female mouse. Thinking to eat the ghee-soaked wick, I seized it, but suddenly a cat came. I fled away out of fear with the wick in my mouth. My running made the flame of the lamp burn brightly as before. I then met with death and was later reborn as a daughter of the king of Vidarbha."

In the Padma Purāṇa version of this story (ut-tara-khanda, chapter 30), Lord Shiva relates the events to Narada Muni.

On the charming bank of the Saraswati River there was a hermitage known as Siddhashram. Formerly a brahmin named Kapila lived there. He was poor but learned in the Vedas, and maintained his family by begging. He worshipped Lord Vishnu by performing various vows and fasts. As part of his worship of the Lord, with great devotion he always lit lamps in his house for the pleasure of Vishnu.

A cat with sharp teeth was also living in the house. Day and night, the cat was searching for mice, and ate many in the house of the brahmin Kapila. One Ekādaśī day, that pure brahmin and his wife fasted and worshipped Vishnu. Singing and praying to the Lord and dancing in front of his deity, Kapila stayed awake. When it was midnight, the brahmin was finally overcome with sleep. Seeing that Kapila had fallen into a slumber, the cat quickly came there. He saw a small female mouse that had come to drink the oil in the lamp. He jumped and attacked, and the mouse ran away. While running away, the mouse bumped the lamp with its foot. Due to that contact, the lamp suddenly became bright. With the

suddenly increased light of the lamp, the brahmin woke up and continued his all-night vigil. The cat also stayed awake throughout that night. When the sun rose, the brahmin performed his daily duties and then broke the fast along with his relatives.

The magnanimous brahmin Kapila obtained many sons and grandsons, as well as grains, excellent health, and abundant riches. Finally, at the end of his life, Kapila was liberated from this material world due to his practice of offering lamps to the Lord.

In course of time, the female mouse also died and a wonderful divine airplane came and took her to the world of Vishnu. The cat also eventually met with death, and, ascending an excellent airplane surrounded by celestial nymphs, accompanied by hosts of Vidyadharas, and being praised with auspicious cries of victory, he also went to the world of Vishnu. After enjoying many pleasures there for hundreds of millions of years, that former cat took birth on the earth as a king named Sudharman. [In this connection, see "Prapanchika Vaikuntha", below.]

PRAPANCIKA VAIKUNTHA

One question arises here: How can someone attain the Lord's abode and then return to the material world? After all, Krishna says in the *Gītā* (15.6), *yad gatvā na nivartante* — "Once attaining my abode, one never returns to this material world." The permanent nature of residence in the spiritual world is also described by Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in a number of places in his writings. Some examples:

From Vedic scriptures it is understood that sometimes even Brahma and Indra fall down, but a devotee in the transcendental abode of the Lord never falls. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 3.15.48)

The conclusion is that no one falls from the spiritual world, or Vaikuntha planet, for it is the eternal abode. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 3.16.26)

However, the *Bhāgavatam* (8.5.5) and other *Purāṇas* describe an abode of Lord Vishnu within the material universe. That planet is sometimes referred to as Prapanchika Vaikuntha ["*prapañcika*" means "consisting of the five material elements"]. There are many descriptions of persons attaining that place and then returning to this material world.

Maharaja Sudharman was religious-minded. He regularly worshipped the Lord and the brahmins, and he was handsome, brave, and very strong. His dear wife was endowed with all auspicious marks, devoted to her husband, and was of good character. Her name was Rupasundari, and she was the most beautiful among all ladies. Many sons and daughters were born to them. While the couple was thus enjoying each other's company, the month of *Kārttika* arrived. During that month, lamps are lit by those who are devoted to Vishnu.

One day, the king said to the queen, "Today is the auspicious *Prabodhini Ekādaśī* [also known as *Haribodhini* or *Utthānā Ekādaśī*, it is the last *Ekādaśī* of the Vaishnava month of *Kārttika*, and marks the end of Lord Vishnu's four-month slumber known as *cātur-māsya*]. With my senses controlled by fasting, today I will bathe in the holy place Pushkar and worship the imperishable lotus-eyed Lord of gods along with his consort Lakshmi."

Hearing these pleasing words, Rupasundari, who was always engaged in the well-being of her husband, replied, "O king, I desire to go with you to the sacred place Pushkara."

Then the king and queen, accompanied by groups of elephants, horses, chariots, and the family-priests, came to Pushkar. The king took bath and worshiped the Supreme Lord Vishnu. Standing in a charming temple that was full of rows of lights everywhere, the king suddenly saw a drawing of a cat. Upon seeing that picture, the king remembered his former existence, looked at the lotus-like face of his beloved, and smiled.

Rupasundari said, "O lord, why did you smile after looking at me?"

The king replied, "In a previous birth I was a cat in the house of a brahmin. There I ate hundreds of mice. Even though my intention was to catch mice to eat, since the result was that I guarded the lamp in front of Vishnu, I got, O Queen, the fruit of that deed. I first attained the world of Vishnu and now have obtained a kingdom here on earth.

Rupasundari said, "I, too, have gained recollection of my former existence. I was that small female mouse in the house of the brahmin. Once, on the *Prabodhini Ekādaśī* in *Kārttika*, when the lamp had become dim, I came out of my hole to snatch the wick so I could eat it. Emerging from the hole, I saw the deity of Vishnu decorated with flowers and the brahmin overcome with sleep. I then grabbed the wick. You, in the body of a cat, jumped up to attack me. I saw you and ran back

into the hole. In doing this, my foot struck the lamp and it made the wick suddenly burn bright. O lord of great kings, since I brightened the lamp in that way, I have now secured excellent beauty, obtained you as my husband, and also gained a kingdom, sons, and great happiness. Due to my inadvertent brightening of the lamp, I secured knowledge that is extremely difficult to obtain. By the fruit of even unconsciously assisting offering a lamp to Vishnu, we have been blessed to remember our former existences and all our sins have perished.”

After this discussion, the king and queen, with great faith, properly performed the rituals of offering a lamp to Vishnu at the holy place of Pushkar. As a result, the two of them obtained salvation, which is difficult for even the demigods to attain.

Thus, bhakti is so powerful that even the slightest touch of it possesses great power. As Krishna says in Bhagavad-gītā 2.40:

nehābhikrama-nāśo 'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate
sv-alpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt

“In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear.” — MD. ❧

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KARTTIKA IN VRAJA Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, chapter 16

*mantra-dravya-vihīnam ca vidhi-hīnam ca pūjanam
manyate kārṭtike devo mathurāyām yad-arcanam*

“Even if it is performed without the proper mantras and offerings and without following the rules and regulations, Lord Krishna considers worship of him in Mathura during *Kārṭtika* to be the most perfect kind of worship. (Text 159)

*yasya pāpasya yujyeta maraṇāntā viniṣkṛtiḥ
tac-chuddhy-artham idaṁ proktaṁ prāyaścittaṁ su-niścitaṁ
kārṭtike mathurāyām vai śrī-dāmodara-pūjanam*

“Worship of Lord Damodar in Mathura during the month of *Kārṭtika* is the proper atonement for a lifetime of sins. (Text 160)

*yāni sarvāṇi tīrthāni nadā nadyaḥ sarāṁsi ca
kārṭtike nivasanty atra mathure sarva-manḍale*

“During the month of *Kārṭtika*, all holy streams, rivers, and lakes reside in the circle of Mathura. (Text 164)

*kārṭtike janma-sadane keśavasya ca ye narāḥ
sakṛt praviṣṭāḥ śrī-kṛṣṇaṁ te yānti param avyayam*

“They who once enter Lord Keshava’s birthplace in Mathura in the month of *Kārṭtika* will enter the spiritual world and meet Lord Krishna, the eternal Supreme Personality of Godhead. (Text 165)

*paropahāsam uddiśya kārṭtike hari-pūjayā
mathurāyām labhed bhaktiyā kiṁ punaḥ śraddhayā narāḥ*

“A person who as a joke worships Lord Krishna in Mathura during *Kārṭtika* attains the Lord’s supreme abode. What, then, can be said of they who worship the Lord during *Kārṭtika* with faith and devotion?” (Text 166) ❧

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