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WHEN THE SPIRITUAL MASTER LEAVES

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

Just as a devoted wife becomes afflicted at the passing away of her husband, when a spiritual master passes away, the disciple becomes similarly bereaved. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 4.28.49)

The spiritual master, *ācārya*, is always situated in the spiritual status of life. Birth, death, old age and disease do not affect him. According to the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, therefore, after the disappearance of an *ācārya*, his body is never burnt to ashes, for it is a spiritual body. The spiritual body is always unaffected by material conditions. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 10.4.20)

Whenever an *ācārya* comes, following the superior orders of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or his representative, he establishes the principles of religion. Unfortunately, when the *ācārya* disappears, rogues and non-devotees take advantage and immediately begin to introduce unauthorized principles in the name of so-called *svāmīs*, *yogīs*, philanthropists, welfare workers, and so on. The *ācārya*, the authorized representative of the Supreme Lord, establishes these principles, but when he disappears, things once again become disordered. The perfect disciples of the *ācārya* try to relieve the situation by sincerely following the instructions of the spiritual master. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 4.28.48) ॐ



*His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupada conducting an initiation ceremony
at the Radha Damodar temple in Vrindavan, 1972*

DO NOT DOUBT

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

It is said that as long as your sinful reactions are not cleansed out, destroyed, you cannot put faith in the words of *sādhu*, *śāstra*, and guru. Those who are sinful people, they have no faith. They have doubts. Krishna says *saṁśayātmā vinaśyati* [*Bg.* 4.40] — a doubtful person perishes. The most crooked people are full of duplicity. They have no simplicity at all. Only externally they pose, they behave as if they are very simple, but they are not simple. Such crookedness is inside them!

You should understand that crookedness and duplicity are the monopoly of Krishna only. Krishna is the supreme duplicitous person. He is supreme in



Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami in France, c. late 1980s

all respects. He is the supreme cheater, the supreme thief, the supremely duplicitous person. Crookedness and duplicity are his monopoly. They are not the monopoly of the *jīvas*. Don't imitate. If you allow duplicity to enter your heart, then you are imitating him. Therefore it is said, don't be duplicitous. Don't allow duplicity to enter in your heart. Develop simplicity. Simplicity is *vaiṣṇavism*. Become simple, and then you come to *sādhu*, get his *darśana*, and thus you will get the mercy of the *sādhu*. *Sādhu* will cast his merciful glance on you, and then immediately all your sinful reactions will be cleaned up, purified, and then you will be able to put faith. ❀

— From a lecture, 2 January 1993. Bhubaneswar.

THOSE WHO DOUBT, PERISH!

Various Commentaries on Bhagavad-gītā 4.40

*ajñāś cāśraddadhānaś ca saṁśayaātmā vinaśyati
nāyaṁ loko 'sti na paro na sukhaṁ saṁśayaātmānaḥ*

“Ignorant and faithless persons who doubt the revealed scriptures do not attain God consciousness; they fall down. For the doubting soul there is happiness neither in this world nor in the next.”

[All of the below commentaries distinguish between the three categories of persons referred to in this Bhagavad-gītā verse. An *ajña*, an ignorant person, refers to someone who is unaware of the spiritual nature or how to attain it. An *aśraddadhāna*, a

faithless person, has information of the spiritual nature and the processes to attain it, but has no faith, and thus does not take up any spiritual process. And the *saṁśayaātmā*, the doubtful person, follows a spiritual discipline, but is unable to make advancement because inner doubts prevent him from making the necessary commitment.]

Srila Sridhar Swami [*Gītā-subodhinī*]:
*jñānādhikāriṇam uktvā tad-viparītam
anadhikāriṇam āha ajñāś ceti. ajño guru-
upadīṣṭārthānabhijñāḥ. kathāncij jñāne jāte 'pi
tatrāśraddadhānaś ca. jātāyām api śraddhāyām
mamedam siddhen na veti saṁśayaākrānta-cittaś
ca vinaśyate. svārhād bhraśyati. eteṣu triṣv api
saṁśayaātmā sarvathā naśyati. yatas tasyāyaṁ
loko nāsti dhanārjana-vivāhādy-asiddheḥ. na
ca para-loko dharmasyāniṣpatteḥ. na ca sukhaṁ
saṁśayenaiva bhogaśyāpy asam bhavāt.*

After describing the qualifications for attaining faithful knowledge [in the previous verse], in this verse the Lord speaks about the disqualified people.

The term '*ajña*' means, 'one who unacquainted with the instructions of guru'. Some people possessing knowledge understand these instructions but do not have faith in them (*aśraddadhānaḥ*). Doubtful people, *saṁśayaātmā*, who have some faith but do not understand my perfect nature, also perish, which means that they deviate from their real interest. Amongst these three — the ignorant, the faithless, and the doubter — the doubter completely perishes. By doubting, he neither attains perfection in worldly tasks such as earning money, marriage, etc., nor does he attain perfection in transcendence in the next world. He can't even enjoy this world properly due to his doubtful nature.

Sri Adi Shankaracharya [*Gītā-bhāṣya*]:
*ajñāś cānātmajñāś cāśraddadhānaś ca guru-
vākya-śāstreṣv aviśvāsavānīś ca saṁśayaātmā ca
saṁśaya-cittaś ca vinaśyati. ajñāśraddadhānau
yadyapi vinaśyataḥ, na tathā yathā saṁśayaātmā.
saṁśayaātmā tu pāpiṣṭhaḥ sarveṣāṁ. katham?
nāyaṁ sādharmaṇo 'pi loko 'sti. tathā na paro lokaḥ.
na sukham, tatrāpi saṁśayoḥpatteḥ saṁśayaātmānaḥ
saṁśaya-cittasya. tasmāt saṁśayo na kartavyaḥ*

The ignorant, those who lack self-realization, the faithless, the disbelievers of the statements of guru and scriptures, and the doubtful — all these perish. Even though the ignorant (*ajña*) and faithless (*aśraddadhānaḥ*) fall, they do not fall as badly as the

doubtful (*saṁśayātmā*). Thus, the doubtful person is most sinful amongst them all. Why? Because for him, there is neither attainment in the current world nor in the next. Neither is there happiness due to a constant flow of doubts. The word *saṁśayātmanaḥ* means one who is full of doubts. Therefore, we shouldn't entertain doubts.

Sripad Ramanujacharya [*Gītā-bhāṣya*]: *ajñā evam upadeśa-labdha-jñāna-rahita upadiṣṭa-jñāna-vṛddhy-upāye cāśraddadhāno 'tvaramāna upadiṣṭe ca jñāne saṁśayātmā saṁśayita-manā vinaśyati, naṣṭo bhavati. asminn upadiṣṭe ātma-yāthātmya-viśaye jñāne saṁśayātmano 'yam api prākṛta-loko nāsti, na ca paraḥ. dharmārtha-kāmādi-puruṣārthāś ca na siddhyanti, kuto mokṣa ity arthaḥ. sāstrīya-karma-siddhi-rūpatvāt sarveṣāṁ puruṣārthānāṁ sāstrīya-karma-janya-sirāś ca dehātirikātmaniścaya-pūrvakatvāt. ataḥ sukha-lava-bhāgitvam ātmani saṁśayātmano na sambhavati.*

The ignorant (*ajñā*), who is devoid of instructed knowledge; the faithless (*aśraddadhānaḥ*), who doesn't have faith in the means of increasing and applying such instructed knowledge; and the doubtful (*saṁśayātmā*), who are uncertain about such knowledge, perish. They are destroyed. Those who doubt this transcendental knowledge, which reveals the true nature of the soul, do not attain anything in this world or in the next. Their achievements related to religion (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), and sense-enjoyment (*kāma*), are incomplete. What then to speak of liberation (*mokṣa*)?

All four goals of life (*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, *mokṣa*) may be achieved only through actions prescribed in the scriptures, and such scriptural actions aim at providing happiness to the soul, which is different from the body. Therefore, a person who doubts the existence of the soul cannot attain even a small fraction of happiness.

Srila Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur [*Sārārtha-varṣinī*]: [*Since Srila Baladev Vidyabhushan has included all of the points made by Vishwanath in his commentary, we are only presenting Baladev's explanation below.*]

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhushan [*Gītā-bhūṣaṇa*]: *jñānādhikāriṇāṁ tat-phalaṁ cābhidhāya tad-viparītaṁ tat-phalaṁ cāha ajñāś ceti. ajñāḥ paśv-ādivac chāstra-jñāna-hīnaḥ. aśraddadhānaḥ sāstra-jñāne saty api vivādi-pratīpattibhir na kvāpi viśvastāḥ, śraddadhānate 'pi saṁśayātmā mamaitat siddhyen na veti sandihāna-manā vinaśyati svārthād vicyavate.*



Krishna and Arjuna on the chariot at the Kurukshetra battle

teṣv api madhye saṁśayātmānāṁ vinindati nāyam iti. ayam prākṛto lokaḥ paro 'prākṛtaḥ saṁśayātmanaḥ kiñcid api sukhaṁ nāsti. sāstrīya-karma-janyaṁ hi sukhaṁ, tac ca karma viviktātma-jñāna-pūrvakam. tatra sandihānasya kutas tad ity arthaḥ.

After speaking about the eligible candidates for knowledge and their attained results [in the previous verse], the opposite category [those unfit for knowledge] and their attained results are being spoken of in this verse. The ignorant (*ajñā*) are animal-like fools lacking in scriptural knowledge. The faithless (*aśraddadhānaḥ*), although knowledgeable in the scriptures, are hampered by various conflicting irreconcilable philosophers, and cannot put faith in any of them. And the doubtful person (*saṁśayātmā*), even if he has a little faith, does not come to understand my perfect nature due to being infected with a doubtful mentality, and thus he fails to achieve his real self-interest. Amongst these three, the doubtful (*saṁśayātmā*) is most severely criticized in this verse. He is riddled with doubts about both the material world and the spiritual world, and hence he cannot experience any happiness. Happiness is generated by acting according to the revealed scriptures, and such actions should be done with knowledge of the self. This verse says, 'How can happiness be attained for those who doubt this fact?'

Sri Madhusudan Saraswati [*Gūḍhārtha-dīpikā*]: *atra ca saṁśayo na kartavyaḥ, kasmāt? ajñā iti. ajñā 'nadhīta-sāstratvenātma-jñāna-sūnyaḥ. guru-vedānta-vākyārtha idam evaṁ na bhavaty eveti viparyaya-rūpā nāstikyā-buddhir aśraddhā tadvān aśraddadhānaḥ. idam evaṁ bhavati na veti sarvatra saṁśayākrānta-cittaḥ saṁśayātmā vinaśyati svārthād bhraṣṭo bhavati. ajñāś cāśraddadhānaś ca vinaśyātīti saṁśayātmāpekṣayā*

nyūnatva-kathanārtham cakārābhyām tayoh prayogaḥ. kutaḥ? samśayātmā hi sarvataḥ pāpīyān yato nāyam manuṣya-loko 'sti vittārjanādy-abhāvāt, na paro lokaḥ svarga-mokṣādi-dharma-jñānādy-abhāvāt. na sukham bhojanādi-kṛtaṁ samśayātmanaḥ sarvatra sandehākrānta-cittasya. ajñāś cāśraddadhānaś ca paro loko nāsti manuṣya-loko bhojanādi-sukham ca vartate. samśayātmā tu tritaya-hīnatvena sarvataḥ pāpīyān ity arthaḥ.

And in regards to this [transcendental knowledge], do not doubt. Why so? That is specified in this verse. The ignorant person (*ajñā*) is one who is devoid of the knowledge of the soul due to having not studied the scriptures. Even if the meanings of the words spoken by guru and the *vedānta-sūtras* are known, there are those who are faithless and infected with an atheistic mentality (*aśraddadhānaḥ*). And even if one has some faith, the doubtful (*samśayātmā*) cannot know in truth because of being infected with a sceptical nature, and thus they fall away from their real self interest. The word *ca* has been used only for the ignorant (*ajñā*) and the faithless (*aśraddadhānaḥ*) but the word *samśayātmā* is directly connected to the word *vinaśyati*, perishes. This is to show that the former two perish to a lesser degree than the doubtful person. Why so? The doubtful is the greatest sinner because he does not attain worldly goals such as earning money, etc., in addition to not attaining higher goals, such as heavenly pleasures, liberation,



knowledge, etc. For a person infested with doubts, even ordinary happiness such as relishing foodstuff is hindered by his tendency to doubt everything. The ignorant (*ajñā*) and the faithless (*aśraddadhānaḥ*) do not attain higher goals, but they at least have their share of worldly happiness, such as nice foodstuffs. The doubtful person is devoid of that, and hence is the worst amongst the three and the most sinful.

Sri Nilakanth [*Bhava-dīpa*]: *ajñā iti. ajñāḥ sukhena cikitsitum śakyaḥ. aśraddadhāno yatmena. samśayātmā tv-asādhyā eva. yato mitrādiṣv api samśayam kurvato 'syāyam loko 'pi nāsti, nāpi paraḥ, veda-vākye 'pi samśayāt. ata eva sarvadā samśayākulatvāt sukham api tasya nāsti. tasmāt samśayo na kartavyaḥ.*

The ignorant (*ajñā*) can be easily cured. The faithless (*aśraddadhānaḥ*) [can be cured] with great effort. However, the doubtful are incurable. One who doubts even his friends cannot attain anything in this world, nor can he attain anything in the next world, due to not having faith in the words of the Vedas. Therefore, since he is always perturbed by doubts, happiness also does not belong to him. Therefore, we shouldn't entertain doubts. ❀

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