



तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

Fortnightly email mini-magazine from Gopal Jiu Publications

Issue No. 302

Śrī Aparā Ekādaśī

4 June 2013

Circulation 6,390

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His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

• **THE CAT BABA AND THE BLIND VULTURE**

Adopted from the Hitopadeśa of Sri Vishnu Sharma



IMPETUS FOR PROGRESS

His Divine Grace A. C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Each one of us should be ideal to the other so that everyone can get impetus to make progress more and more. ☞

— Letter to Satsvarupa. 9 April 1968.

THE CAT BABA AND THE BLIND VULTURE

Adapted from the Hitopadeśa
Of Sri Vishnu Sharma

On the side of the banks of the river Ganga was a cliff on which grew a great fig tree. In the hollow of that tree lived a vulture named Jaradgava, who due to misfortune had no eyes and no claws. Out of pity, the birds residing on that tree used to take out a little portion of their own food and give it to the vulture to keep him alive. Jaradgava lived on that tree and protected the young fledgling birds there. Once a male cat called Dirghakarna came there to eat the baby birds. Seeing him approaching, the fledglings began crying out of fear. Hearing their cries, Jaradgava asked, “Who is coming?”

Seeing the vulture, Dirghakarna became fearful, and thought, “Oh, I am dead. Now he is going to tear me to pieces.” Then he thought, “I am too close to him, I cannot run away. Let whatever has to happen, happen. I will try to gain his faith and go near him. Thinking like this, he approached the vulture and said, “Respected sir, I salute you.”



His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

The vulture said, “Who are you?”

Dirghakarna said, “I am a cat.”

“A cat? Go away or you will be dead.”

Dirghakarna said, “Please first listen my words, and then if I should be killed, kill me.

*jātimātreṇa kim kaścīd vadhyate pūjyate kvacit
vyavahāraṁ parijñāya vadhyaḥ pūjyo 'thavā bhavet*

Why should one be killed or worshiped simply based on caste or birth? First examine the behavior, and then decide whether to kill or worship. (Text 58)

The vulture said, “Why have you come here?”

The cat said, “I stay on the bank of the Ganga, where I take bath every day. I am vegetarian, observe celibacy, and I follow the *candrāyaṇa-vrata* [a difficult fast in which one's intake of food is diminished by one

mouthful each day as the moon wanes and increased in the same way as the moon waxes]. The birds constantly praise your honor as one wholly given to the study of morality. They have said that you are very religious, knowledgeable, and a very loving and trustworthy person. Therefore I have come to hear of religious principles from you who are advanced in both knowledge and age. You being such a knower of religion, still you are ready to kill me, your guest?”

The cat then began quoting more verses from *śāstra*:

*arāv apy ucitam kāryam ātithyam grham āgate
chettum apy āgate chhāyām nopasaṁharate drumah*

Even if an enemy comes to one's home, he should be treated like a guest, just like a tree does not refuse its shade to a person who goes to cut it. (59)

“Moreover,” Dirghakarna continued, “even if a guest is a young child, an old man, or a youthful person, he should be given all respect because a guest is worshipable like a guru for everyone. Saintry persons give their mercy even to those who have no good qualities, just as the moon does not refuse to give its moonlight over the house of a *caṇḍāla*. If a guest leaves someone's home dissatisfied then he takes away all the piety of the householder and, in return, the householder takes all the sins of the guest. Even if a man of a lower caste visits the house of a higher caste person, he should be well received because a guest is the embodiment of all the demigods.

Jaradgava said, “A cat likes to eat flesh. There are many infant birds living here. Therefore I spoke in that manner.”

Hearing this, the cat said, “Sir,” and as he spoke he first solemnly touched the ground as his first witness, then his two ears, and then, calling on Krishna as a second witness to his words, he said, “I am completely renounced. I have overcome lust and I observe the most difficult *candrāyana-vrata*. I am a knower of *śāstra*. Although various scriptures have different opinions on various topics, they all unanimously accept the principle that non-violence is the supreme religion.”

Dirghakarna then began quoting further statements from *śāstra*:

*sarva-himsā-nivṛttā ye narāḥ sarva-sahās ca ye
sarvasyāśraya-bhūtās ca te narāḥ svarga-gāmināḥ*

Those persons who are free from all violence, who tolerate everything, and who give shelter to all, are definitely candidates for attaining heaven. (66)

*martavyam iti yad duḥkham puruṣasyopajāyate
śakyas tenānumānena paro 'pi parirakṣitum*

The distress one feels when one's life is in danger should be used to understand the unhappiness of others in similar circumstances. Thus one should abstain from killing others. (69)

*svacchanda vana-jātena sākenāpi prapūryate
asya dagdhodarasyrthe kaḥ kuryāt pātakaṁ mahat*

One can fill his belly from the grass and leaves naturally found in the forest. What need is there to commit sins just to stuff the stomach? (70)

In this way, the cat gained Jaradgava's confidence. The vulture came to think that Dirghakarna was a great saint, and he allowed the cat to live in the hollow of the tree. Dirghakarna would daily, very quietly, catch a few baby birds, bring them to his place, and eat them. The birds whose babies were eaten began lamenting, and they started searching for their young. Knowing that the birds were searching for him, the cat came out from the hollow of the tree and ran away. Shortly after that the birds found bones spread around here and there in the hollow of the tree, and thinking that the vulture had eaten their babies, they killed him.

Just as the cat moved into the shelter of the tree and took advantage of the situation, there are many false pretenders who want to join religious movements, which they see as an easy way to maintain themselves. This goes on everywhere in the world. If the managers of the ashrams, temples, churches, mosques, and synagogues are materialistic persons, spiritually blind and powerless like the blind and clawless old vulture, they will easily be impressed by cat-like pseudo-spiritualists who want to join their ranks. Quoting some verses from scripture and acting like saintly persons, such cat *bābās* convince gullible leaders to give them access to the neophyte followers in their congregations. The innocent babies of spiritual movements are thus destroyed, and the movements are compromised.

Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya (19.59-60) describes:

*channa-paṅke sthala-dhiyā patanti bahavo nanu
baidāla-vratiko 'py evaṁ saṅga-sambhaṣaṇārccanaiḥ*

Just as many fall into quicksand along the riverbank, mistaking it to be dry land, similarly, many spiritual aspirants are doomed by following hypocrites, who are like the cat who recites a vow to be a saintly vegetarian in order to attract the worship of the mice.

*ātmanaivopahasitā-mithyā-dhyāna-samādhibhiḥ
nirlajjāvañcayantī maṁ lokam dambhena-vañcitāḥ*



Govinda

Although they make fools of themselves by pretending to perform meditation and trance, being without shame they cheat the people of this world through hypocrisy.

In his purport to *Caitanya-bhāgavata* (ādi 16.228), Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada has quoted the following verse:

*dharmadhvajī sadālubhaś chādmikoloka-dambhakaḥ
vaiḍāla-vratiko jñeyo himsra-sarvābhisandhikāḥ*

One should know that the *dharmadhvajī* (who makes a false show of being religious), the person who always desires other's wealth, the duplicitous person, the person who cheats, the envious person, and the person who blasphemes are hypocritical brahmins who follow *vaiḍāla-vrata*, 'the vow of a cat'. (*Manu-saṁhitā* 4.195)

The cat in the story posed himself as a sincere spiritual aspirant, but his actual purpose was to kill and eat the baby birds in the tree. In his article entitled "Putana", Srila Saraswati Thakur has similarly compared the witch demoness who tried to kill baby Krishna by offering him poison on her breast to a false guru whose real purpose is to kill those who are babies in spiritual life:

Putana is the slayer of all infants. The baby, when he or she comes out of the mother's womb, falls at once into the hands of the pseudo-teachers of religion.

These teachers are successful in forestalling the attempts of the good preceptor, whose help is never sought by the atheists of this world at the baptisms of their babies. This is ensured by the arrangements of all established churches of the world. They have been successful only in supplying watchful Putanas for effecting the spiritual destruction of persons from the moment of their birth with the cooperation of their worldly parents. No human contrivance can prevent these Putanas from obtaining possession of the pulpits. This is due to the general prevalence of atheistic disposition in the people of this world.

In his *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta* (3.2), Srila Bhaktinoda Thakur has warned that devotees should be careful of such persons:

The devotee should give up the association of the devotee-pretender, understanding him to be a materialist. Towards those who are sincere, the devotee should offer service and respect. Meeting a true *vaiṣṇava*, the devotee should associate with him and serve him with his heart; to the ordinary *vaiṣṇava*-inclined people he should show respect. This respect is an external service.

These *vaiṣṇava*-like people are of three types: those who fully accept the *vaiṣṇava* conclusions but are not practicing themselves; those who take up the *vaiṣṇava* signs and appearance, but are not real *vaiṣṇavas*, though they have respect for the *vaiṣṇavas*; those who are born in the families of great *vaiṣṇavas*, and wear the signs of a *vaiṣṇava* but are not real *vaiṣṇavas*.

A true *vaiṣṇava* is measured by the degree of purity and depth of devotion, and his capacity to inspire others. A person attains the status of a real *vaiṣṇava* as soon as a little pure devotion appears in his heart. If a person respects and takes association of the non-*vaiṣṇava* in the same way that he respects the true *vaiṣṇava* or the ordinary *vaiṣṇava*, then his devotion will decrease. Thus, amongst those who wear the *vaiṣṇava* marks and appear to be *vaiṣṇavas*, certain ones should be avoided. These people should be satisfied with the respect due to all human beings, which is part of the secondary rules, but they should not be accepted or respected as real *vaiṣṇavas*. If they happen to become pure devotees, then they are also qualified for association with other pure devotees.

False *vaiṣṇavas* are those who wear the *vaiṣṇava* marks for the purpose of cheating, those who identify themselves as followers of the *vaiṣṇava ācāryas* for the purpose of introducing *advaita* philosophy to the *vaiṣṇavas*, and those who advertise themselves as *vaiṣṇavas* to gain money, position or some other material enjoyment.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada and his disciple Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Prabhupada were not blind to such cat-like pseudo spiritualists, yet they welcomed everyone into the ranks of their movement. One may wonder why they did so. Upon contemplation, one can see that these powerful preachers took shelter of two “secret” weapons to overcome the demoniac tendencies of such *dharmadhvajī* followers — the holy name and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. They were both well aware of the supreme potency of these two items in purifying wrongs and establishing truth. As stated in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (8.23.16):

*mantrataś tantrataś chidraṁ deśa-kālārha-vastutaḥ
sarvaṁ karoti niśchidraṁ anusāṅkirtanaṁ tava*

There may be discrepancies in pronouncing the mantras and observing the regulative principles, and, moreover, there may be discrepancies in regard to time, place, person and paraphernalia. But when your Lordship’s holy name is chanted, everything becomes faultless.

Similarly, Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada once instructed the GBC body of ISKCON:

“This chanting should go on. Instead of meetings, resolutions, dissolutions, revolutions and then no solutions, there should be chanting.” [From *Lilāmṛta* Vol.6 p.182]

They understood that as long as the holy name and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* were prominent in their society then all mistakes would ultimately be corrected. As stated



Early Bengal School, 20th century

Radha Krishna with Lalita

in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (1.5.11), *tad-vāg-visargo janatāgha-
viplavo* — the nature of the transcendental words of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is that they will always bring about a revolution in the lives of the people in general. —MD

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SRI KRISHNA KATHAMRITA BINDU

A free bi-monthly service provided by:
Gopal Jiu Publications

c/o Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir
National Highway No. 5, IRC Village
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India, 751015

Phone: (0674) 2553250, 2557026

Email: katha@gopaljiu.org

Website: www.gopaljiu.org

Subscriptions: minimag@gopaljiu.org

Gopal Jiu Publications is a branch of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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