



तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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DOLL DISPLAYS

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

We want to display doll exhibitions in every center of our society depicting some narration from the *Bhāgavatam*, *Mahābhārata*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, or *Bhagavad-gītā*, etc. Just like the picture of Arjuna's chariot driven by Krishna between the two groups of soldiers, the pictures are already there in our books, and they are to be demonstrated by doll exhibitions. (Letter to Rupanuga Das, 9 May 1973.)

You mention that Saptaratha Prabhu is in our Buffalo project making a nice doll display for the temple. You should tell him that others should also learn from him how to make these dolls. We have to make these doll displays for our temples all over the world on many different subject matters from the scriptures. It is a very nice way of attracting all people, especially in the West. (Letter to Rupanuga Das, 18 December 1974.)

So far as your future plans are concerned, you should understand that at every center there should be such doll exhibitions. Wherever it is suitable, you should take that up first. In the new New York building, one flat should be for this exhibition. (Letter to Baradraja Das, 18 November 1975.)

Upon seeing the pictures of the doll exhibit I thought it was some of our devotees play-acting! This boy Saptaratha Das has done the dolls very, very nicely. Now make a museum for the public. This doll making was one of the programs of my Guru Maharaja, and the



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

exhibit used to tour India. That same exhibit, although falling apart, is still touring India today and people are appreciating it. So develop this program. I am very pleased with this boy's work. Encourage him. (Letter to Rupanuga Das, 7 December 1975.)

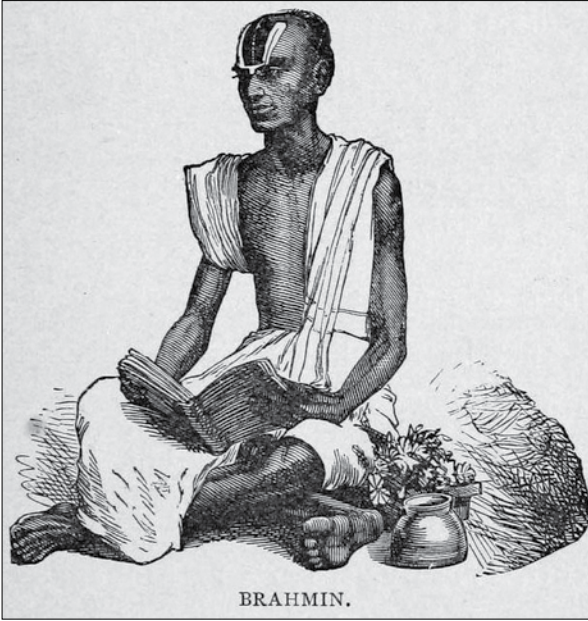
GENERAL RULES FOR CATURMASYA

*Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati
Thakur Prabhupada*

The rule for following *ūrjā-vrata*, or *caturmāsya*, is that one must avoid non-vegetarian foods, like urad dal, betel nuts, kidney beans, and stale foods. One must not deviate from following whatever resolution he has

made for that period, such as chanting a prescribed number of rounds or rendering some special devotional service. The general rule is that one should offer simple boiled vegetarian food to the Supreme Lord and honor the *prasādam*. One should also give up laziness, too much sleeping, non-*vaiṣṇava* behavior, and shaving the head or face, and one should take bath daily and practice celibacy. (Letter from Sri Bhaktivinode Asan, Ultadanga Junction Road. 10 January 1919.)

— Excerpted from *Patrāmṛta, Nectar from the Letters*, p. 21. Touchstone Media. Kolkata. 2012.



Unknown artist British illustration from 1876

WHO IS A BRAHMIN?

Adapted from the *Bhaviṣya-purāṇa*

King Shatanik asked Sumantu Muni whether caste is determined by birth or by actions, and Sumantu Muni replied by relating a conversation between Lord Brahma and all the great sages on the same topic.

The great sages asked Lord Brahma, “Seeing that Vishwamitra became a *brāhmaṇa* from the *kṣatriya* caste, our minds are in a great doubt. What exactly makes one a *brāhmaṇa*? Is it the nature of the soul, is it due to birth, to study of the Vedas, to bodily features, to previous *saṁskāras* and performance of Vedic rites — what exactly is the cause of one being a *brāhmaṇa*? If it is said that the soul is a *brāhmaṇa*, then it is seen that the soul migrates in a variety of species of life such as *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *sūdra*, *cāṇḍāla*, dog, hog, etc. How then can the soul be a *brāhmaṇa*? Unlike a horse that can be easily distinguished in a herd of cows, the *brāhmaṇa* cannot be

readily distinguished in a group of humans. Therefore, please tell us exactly what makes one a *brāhmaṇa*.”

Hearing their question, Lord Brahma replied, “O greatest amongst sages! Please hear the story of the seven hunters that was previously narrated by Manu, as it relieves all doubt regarding whether the soul is a *brāhmaṇa*:

“In the province named Dasharna there were seven hunters. In their next lives they became deer in the Kalanjar Hill, and in the next they became *cakravāka* birds in Sharadwip. In the life after that they became swans in Mansarovar, and then they became Vedic *brāhmaṇas* in Kurukshetra. Therefore the soul can never be termed as a *brāhmaṇa*.

“Unlike a *nīlagāya* cow, which can be differentiated from an ordinary cow by seeing the skin hanging from its neck, a *brāhmaṇa* cannot be distinguished from the other castes by any natural bodily features.

“If a *brāhmaṇa* becomes a caretaker of cows, buffaloes, goats, sheep, camels, donkeys, mules, horses, or elephants; if a *brāhmaṇa* consumes flesh, garlic, onions, camel milk, or liquor; if a *brāhmaṇa* sells meat, salty drinks, or milk; if a *brāhmaṇa* enters into a physical relationship with a woman who has been married twice, with a *sūdra* lady, a *cāṇḍālī*, or a servant girl; if a *brāhmaṇa* consumes grains cooked by a *sūdra* or from a funeral ceremony; if a *brāhmaṇa* becomes envious of the demigods, his parents, or his guru — then due to any of the above, even a *brāhmaṇa* who is well versed in the Vedas and its branches loses his status as a *brāhmaṇa*. Therefore, being a *brāhmaṇa* is not the permanent asset of a material body. Manu has already said that a *brāhmaṇa* who cultivates fields or who works as a servant or as a *vaiśya* becomes just like a *sūdra*. Similarly, one may also attain the position of a *brāhmaṇa* from the position of a *sūdra*.”

Lord Brahma continued, “O greatest amongst sages! By reading the Vedas one doesn’t become a *brāhmaṇa*. After all, Ravana and other demons also read the Vedas. Moreover, some who are by nature *sūdras*, *cāṇḍālas*, or fishermen manage to read the Vedas by fraud, but they can’t be termed as true *brāhmaṇas*. Many such *sūdras* migrate to other locations and disguise themselves as *brāhmaṇas* to read the Vedas and marry a *brāhmaṇa* girl. Or in the five countries known as *pañca-gauḍa* or *pañca-dravida*, some who have not even read the Vedas pretend to be *brāhmaṇas* and marry in a high lineage. Therefore, a mere recitation of the Vedas is not a proclamation of being of the nature of a *brāhmaṇa*. This is also true

because the previous great authorities say that one devoid of good character cannot even be purified by reading the Vedas along with all the six *vedāṅgas*. Reading the Vedas is the culture of the *brāhmaṇas*, but their character is what matters most.

“Even there are some *sūdras* who start carrying a *daṇḍa* (rod), deerskin, *mekhalā* (girdle), *brāhmaṇa* thread, etc., and nobody can stop them from doing so. *Sūdras* can also cast spells and mantras, and they too can perform austerities and please the demigods to attain their favor and to attain perfection in a *mantra*. The potency to be able to overcome curses also manifests in the *sūdras* through austerities. All these are common for both *brāhmaṇas* and *sūdras*. Even the *saṁskāras* (purificatory rituals) are not the cause of being a *brāhmaṇa*, for no one performed *saṁskāras* such as *garbhādhāna*, *sīmanta*, etc., for Vyasa and many other sages.

“The bodies of all humans are the same. On the contrary, the *mlecchas* and atheists of the other countries are seen to have stronger bodies. In terms of the body, soul, speaking capacity, happiness, prosperity, disease, giving orders, strength, bodily figure, activities of the sense organs, life, weakness, strength, fickleness, gravity, intelligence, detachment, religiosity, chivalry, beauty, unclean condition within the womb, effulgence, bones, flesh, bodily hair, skin and in terms of an interest in the goals of life, it is seen that in many ways *sūdras* are the same as *brāhmaṇas*. Therefore, even the demigods are unable to differentiate between a *brāhmaṇa* and a *sūdra* in all these regards. It is also not that the *brāhmaṇas* are white in complexion like the moon-rays, neither are the *ṣatṛīyas* reddish like the forest flame, neither are the *vaiśyas* yellowish like the yellow *haritāla* pigeon, neither are the *sūdras* blackish like coal. Their activities, speech, happiness, and distress are all the same, so why should they be distinguished by birth? All are created equal by the Lord and all are his sons and daughters. Just like all the fruits of a tree are the same, all the humans created by the Lord are the same.

Coming in lineages descended from Kaushik, Kashyap, Gautam, Kaundinya, Mandavya, Vasistha, Atreya, Kautsa, Angira, Garga, Maudgalya, Katyayana, Bhargava, Bharadwaj, etc. also does not the cause one to be a *brāhmaṇa*, for these lineages are also found even amongst the other castes.

If you say that the body is the *brāhmaṇa*, then you should determine first if any limb of the body is a *brāhmaṇa* or the entire body. If a single limb is a

brāhmaṇa then the amputation of that limb will be the end of one's being a *brāhmaṇa*. If the entire body is considered as the *brāhmaṇa* then after the demise of the body, he who burns the body will become the killer of a *brāhmaṇa*. If you say that by marrying the daughter of a *brāhmaṇa* one becomes a *brāhmaṇa*, then the same *brāhmaṇa* when later marries a *ṣatṛīya* girl should no longer remain a *brāhmaṇa*. It is enjoined in the scriptures that a *brāhmaṇa* can marry a girl from any of the four castes, so all these factors cannot be the cause of being a *brāhmaṇa*.”

Lord Brahma continued — “O great sages! Pride of beauty, wealth, knowledge and caste is useless, for the soul migrates continuously in different appearances, such as plants, aquatics, ants, bees, elephants, exactly like a professional actor. How then can one be proud of one's caste? Therefore an intelligent man should not be proud of his caste, for it is transitory. Neither does one become a *brāhmaṇa* by rituals such as *garbhādhāna*, *puṁsavana*, *sīmanta*, *jātakarma*, *anna-prāśana*, *yajñopavīta*, *vedādhyayana*, *samāvartana*, *vivāha*, because these *saṁskāras* are not seen to be the cause of one's increased lifespan or increased effulgence. Neither is it seen that those who are without these *saṁskāras* are of a decreased lifespan or effulgence. Both experience similar happiness and distress. It is seen often that those who have had all the good *saṁskāras* fall away from their good qualities and become rogues, whereas those who have no *saṁskāras* attain to the path of religious life and heaven. It is fully possible for a person with all *saṁskāras* to become addicted to gambling, prostitution and other vices, and it is equally possible for a person without *saṁskāras* to perform *japa*, austerities, charity, etc. Thus they attain the highest posts. Therefore, even *saṁskāras* are not the cause of being a *brāhmaṇa*.

“If it is said that high parentage leads to *brāhminism*, then Vyasa was born from a fisherwoman, Parashar was born from a *sūdra* woman, Shuka was born a parrot, Kanad was born from an owl, Rishyashringa from a deer, Vasistha from a courtesan, Mandapal from a bush lark, Mandavya from a frog, etc. In this way many were born in lower wombs and attained the position of a *brāhmaṇa*. All of them had no *saṁskāras*, but on the power of their austerities they attained the position of a *brāhmaṇa*. If one performs austerities and cultivates knowledge, proper

behavior and culture, then one born in a lower caste becomes a *brāhmaṇa*, and on the other hand if one who already has all these performs sinful activities then he become degraded from the position of a *brāhmaṇa*. Therefore being a *brāhmaṇa* is not a fixed characteristic but a fleeting one.”

Lord Brahma continued, “One should ask the proud so-called reciters of the Vedas how it is that this body, developed from sperm and a storehouse of nasty objects like stool, can be purified? There are some who are extremely well versed in Vedic rituals but become degraded to the worst extent. So called *brāhmaṇas* who exhibit cruelty, kill other *brāhmaṇas*, have sex with their guru’s wife, thieves, killers of cows, drunkards, have attraction to other’s wives, liars, atheists, those affected by *kali-yuga*, as well as vile persons who eat anything and sell anything cannot be purified even though imbued with all *saṁskāras* and Vedic studies. Whatever disasters happen to *śūdras* happen to *brāhmaṇas* as well. Therefore, reading the Vedas and performing animal sacrifices are not characteristics of being a *brāhmaṇa*. Widowhood, death, etc., are all equal to all castes. Bodily imbalances such as *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha* are present in all bodies, and everyone yearns for wealth. Those *brāhmaṇas* who make a pretense of

reading the Vedas and cheat the world and maintain themselves are worse than the *śūdras*.

“A *brāhmaṇa* can impregnate a *śūdra* woman and a *brāhmaṇa* lady gets impregnated by a *śūdra* man. How can the birth body therefore be a cause of difference? The body or birth is indeed a cause of difference in the animals such as cows, horses and elephants because it is seen that an animal of one category cannot produce a child in another animal. The bull cannot produce a calf in a horse. If an animal has intercourse with a woman, there will be no offspring due to biological incompatibility. Therefore, the word *jāti* (caste difference by birth) is applicable in the context of animals and not in the context of humans. The so called conception of caste by birth in humans is merely a mental speculation. It does not have factual existence.”

Lord Brahma concluded — “One who knows what should be accepted and what should not be accepted, who gives up dishonest means and aims for controlling the senses, who is both truthful and lawful as well as being fixed in good behavior, who thinks of the welfare of all, who knows well the Vedas and its six *vedāṅgas*, who is devoid of anger, envy, delusion, etc., who is attracted to the study of Vedas and other literature, who doesn’t associate with materialistic people, who stays in a clean place, who is equal in happiness and distress, who is true to religion, who is freed from the conception of I and mine, who is free from pride, who is charitable, a knower of *brahman*, and who is peaceful and austere — such a person is to be known as a *brāhmaṇa*. Such *brāhmaṇas* have been produced for the welfare of the world.”

Lord Brahma therefore concluded, *bhaktiāsaktāḥ prapannās ca brāhmaṇās te prakīrtitāḥ* — “Those who are sheltered in the absolute truth through devotion and attachment are known as *brāhmaṇas*.”

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