



तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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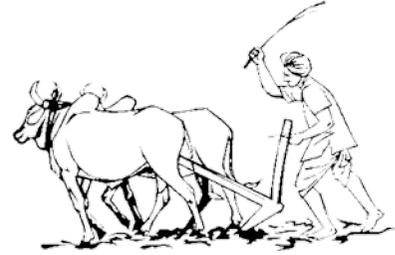
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CULTURAL BIRTH

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

The bird is also called twice-born. The bird's birth is first of all in the egg. Then the real bird comes out. Therefore, in Sanskrit language a bird is also called *dvija*, twice-born. Similarly, a man, unless he is twice-born, he is a *sūdra*. How is he twice-born? By birth, everyone has got a father and mother. Beasts also have fathers and mothers, and birds also have fathers and mothers. Similarly, a human being has a father and mother. So this birth by father and mother is not sufficient for becoming a *dvija*. He has to take his birth again.

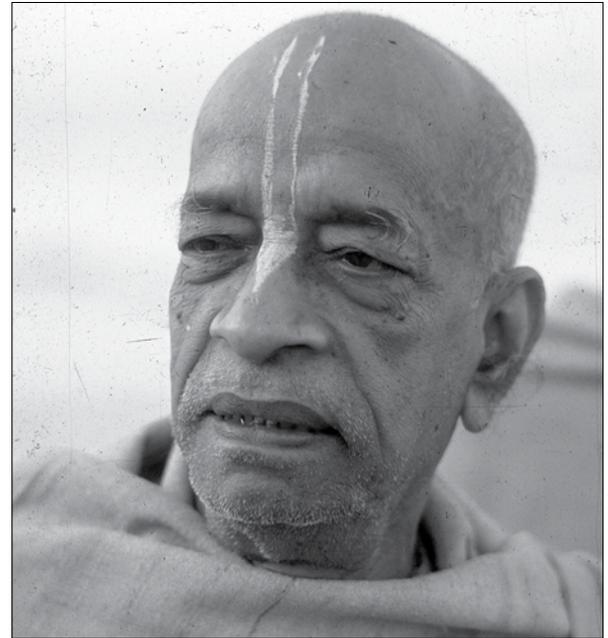
Therefore, *janmanā jāyate sūdraḥ saṁskārād bhaved dvijaḥ* [By birth everyone is a *sūdra*. It is only after undergoing the sacred rites that one becomes a *dvijaḥ*, a twice born *brāhmaṇa*.] Birth is not all, everything. *Saṁskāra* means culture. One has to take his rebirth by culture, by education, knowledge. That is called cultural birth. Unless one has a cultural birth he is to be considered a lower grade person, *sūdra*. ❧

— From a lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.12 – 13. New York. 29 July 1966.

THE ELIGIBILITY OF VAISHNAVAS

*Srila Sanatan Goswami's Commentary
on Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (5.454 – 455)*

[On certain occasions, restrictive statements are found in the scriptures against *sūdras* and other humans that are considered low-born. Here, Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami gives examples of such statements and Srila Sanatan Goswami clarifies in his commentary that these statements



His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

are not applicable to the *vaiṣṇavas* and that the *vaiṣṇavas* are on an equal or greater level than *brāhmaṇas*. The examples given are the two verses as follows:]

*brāhmaṇasyaiva pūjyo 'haṁ śucer apy aśucer api
strī-sūdra-kara-saṁsparśo vajrād api suduḥsahaḥ
praṇavocāraṇāc caiva śālagrāma-śilārcanāt
brāhmaṇī-gamanāc caiva sūdraś caṇḍālatām iyāt*

Translation: [The Supreme Lord says,] "I am to be worshipped [in my deity form] only by a *brāhmaṇa*, whether he is pure or impure. The touch of the hands of a lady or a *sūdra* is worse than a thunderbolt to me. By chanting the *praṇava* [om], by worshipping the *śālagrāma-śilā*, or by entering in a physical relationship with a *brāhmaṇa* lady,

the *sūdra* degrades himself further and takes his next birth as a dog-eating *cāṇḍāla*.”

Commentary by Srila Sanatan Goswami: These two verses are spoken in the *Nāradya Purāṇa*. It should be understood that *vaiṣṇavas* born in *sūdra* families have the right of worshipping the *śālagrāma-śilā*. Other *sūdras* and ladies who are not *vaiṣṇavas* are barred. That *vaiṣṇavas* born in *sūdra* families have this right is specified in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*:

*ayācaka-pradātā syāt kṛṣi-vṛtṭy-artham ācaret
purāṇaṁ śṛṇuyān nityaṁ śālagrāmaṁ ca pūjayet*

The *sūdra* should donate to the renunciates, work for agricultural and mercantile activities, listen to the Puranas regularly, and worship the *śālagrāma-śilā*.

Seeing the contradictions that the original verse has from the above statement given in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* as well as in other *purāṇas*, certain envious *smārta-brāhmaṇas* consider these Puranic statements to be interpolations. However, if the entire matter is considered with intelligence it will be understood that a non-*vaiṣṇava sūdra* or woman, even if fully knowledgeable in the rituals, is not to perform any deity worship. However, there is allowance for ladies or *sūdras* who are properly initiated in a *vaiṣṇava* line. Those who are *vaiṣṇavas* amongst people born in *sūdra* or outcaste families are not to be addressed as *sūdras*. This is given in the *Nāradya Purāṇa* as follows:

śvapaco 'pi mahīpāla viṣṇor bhakto dvijodhikaḥ

O King! A *vaiṣṇava* from a dog-eating family is greater than a twice-born *brāhmaṇa*.

Also, the *Itihāsa-samuccaya* says:

*na sūdrā bhagavad-bhaktaṁ niṣādanā śvapacaṁ tathā
vikṣate jāti-sāmānyāt sa yāti narakam dhruvam*

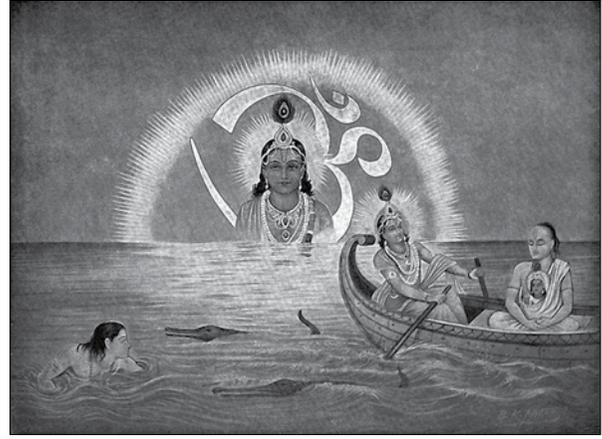
The devotees of the Lord are not *sūdras*, aborigines or dog-eaters. One who sees them with such an ordinary, caste-impelled vision certainly goes to hell.

The *Padma Purāṇa* says:

*na sūdrā bhagavad-bhaktās te tu bhāgavatā narāḥ
sarva-varṇeṣu te sūdrā ye na bhaktā janārdane*

Those who are devotees of the Lord are never *sūdras*. In fact, they are known as *bhāgavatas*. Those who are not *vaiṣṇavas* from all the four castes are to be known as the actual *sūdras*.

Similar glorification of *vaiṣṇavas* has been elaborately described previously in this book (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*).



Kalyana Kalpataru, c. 1940

The Lord personally carries his devotees over the material ocean.

It is proved therein that through *vaiṣṇava* initiation *sūdras*, etc., also attain the level of a *brāhmaṇa*. The verse *yathā kāñcanatām yāti kāṁsyaṁ rasa-vidhānataḥ* — just as bell-metal mixes chemically to produce gold, all men attain the status of a *brāhmaṇa* by the process of initiation — was included previously in the section describing the importance of initiation.

The following statement spoken by Devahuti in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* [3.33.6] is justified:

*yan-nāma-dheya-śravaṇānukīrtanād
yat-prahvaṇād yat-smaraṇād api kvacit
śvādo 'pi sadyaḥ savanāya kalpate
kutaḥ punas te bhagavan nu darśanāt*

To say nothing of the spiritual advancement of persons who see the Supreme Person face to face, even a person born in a family of dog-eaters immediately becomes eligible to perform Vedic sacrifices if he once utters the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or chants about him, hears about his pastimes, offers him obeisances or even remembers him.

The phrase “*savanāya kalpate*” here means that such a person becomes eligible to perform Vedic *yajñas*. Therefore, the *vaiṣṇavas* are counted on the same level as the *brāhmaṇas*. Furthermore, in the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya*, the Lord says:

*tīrthāny aśvattha-taravo gāvo viprās tathā svayam
mad-bhaktās ceti vijñeyāḥ pañca te tanavo mama*

Holy places, banyan trees, cows, *brāhmaṇas* and myself — these five forms are present in the body of my devotee.

Also, in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* [4.21.12], it is said regarding Maharaja Prithu:

*sarvatrāskhalitādeśaḥ sapta-dvīpaika-daṇḍa-dhṛk
anyatra brāhmaṇa-kulād anyatrācyuta-gotrataḥ*

Photo from San Francisco Examiner, 29 December 1969



Jayananda Prabhu (with upraised arms) and devotees do harināma in San Francisco in 1969.

Maharaja Prithu was an unrivalled king and possessed the sceptre for ruling all the seven islands on the surface of the globe. Other than saintly persons, the *brāhmaṇas*, and the descendants of the Supreme Personality of Godhead [the *vaiṣṇavas*], no one could disobey his irrevocable orders.

Here, the word *acyuta-gotra* indicates *vaiṣṇavas* who are on the same level as those sages who originated the other *brāhmaṇa-gotras* [family lines].

Also, Prithu Maharaja himself says in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* [4.21.37]:

*mā jātu tejaḥ prabhaven maharddhibhis
titikṣayā tapasā vidyayā ca
dedīpyamāneñjita-devatānām
kule svayaṁ rāja-kulād dvijānām*

The *brāhmaṇas* and *vaiṣṇavas* are personally glorified by their characteristic powers of tolerance, penance, knowledge and education. By dint of all these spiritual assets, *vaiṣṇavas* are more powerful than royalty. It is therefore advised that the princely order not exhibit its material prowess before these two communities and should avoid offending them.

Here, Srila Sridhar Swami comments, “Great material opulences and the royalty exhibited by those who are belonging to royal families should not be shown in front of those who are born in *brāhmaṇa* lineages, as well as the *vaiṣṇavas*, the worshipers of Lord Ajita. Even a slight show should not be made. Why so? For these personalities are effulgent even without great jewels and opulences simply on the strength of their tolerance and austerity, etc.”

Similarly, King Puranjan says in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* [4.26.24]:

*tasmin dadhe damam ahaṁ tava vīra-patni
yo 'nyatra bhūsura-kulāt kṛta-kilbiṣas tam*



Vishnujana Swami leads devotees in kīrtana in Golden Gate Park one day before the 1974 San Francisco Ratha-yātrā.

*paśye na vīta-bhayam unmuditaṁ tri-lokyām
anyatra vai mura-ripor itaratra dāsāt*

O hero's wife! Kindly tell me if someone has offended you. I am prepared to give such a person punishment as long as he does not belong to the *brāhmaṇa* caste. But for the servant of Mura-ripu [Krishna], I excuse no one within or beyond these three worlds. No one can freely move after offending you, for I am prepared to punish him.

Srila Sridhar Swami translates the verse in his commentary as follows, “O hero's wife! I shall punish whoever has offended you, except for a *brāhmaṇa* or a servant of Lord.”

Similar statements are plentiful in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. By this, the similarity of *brāhmaṇas* and *vaiṣṇavas* is proved. Moreover, the verse [7.9.10] of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* says, *viprād dvi-ṣaḍ-guṇa-yutād* — “A devotee is better than a *brāhmaṇa* endowed with good qualities.”

By this, it is indicated that the *vaiṣṇavas* born in castes lower than the non-devotee *brāhmaṇas* are greater than them.

Lord Hayagriva also says in the *Hayaśirṣa-pañcarātra, Puruṣottama-pratiṣṭhā* section, as follows:

*mūrtipānām tu dātavyā deśikārdhena dakṣiṇā
tad-ardhaṁ vaiṣṇavānām tu tad-ardhaṁ tad-dvijaṁmanām*

The worshippers of the deities should be given half of the donations, the *vaiṣṇavas* should be given half of that, and the *brāhmaṇas* should be given half of what the *vaiṣṇavas* have been given.

Therefore, all devotees are certainly worshipable. Furthermore, in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*, in the narration of King Priyavrata, we find that the hunter

Photo from San Francisco Examiner, 7 July 1974

Photo from San Francisco Examiner, 18 July 1972



1974 Ratha-yātrā in Golden Gate Park San Francisco

named Dharma also worshipped the śālagrāma-śilā. The verse is as follows:

tataḥ sa vismitaḥ śrutvā dharmā-vyādhasya tad-vacaḥ
tasthau sa ca samāniya darśayāmāsa tav ubhau

☞

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ninikta-vasanau vṛddhāvāsanasthau nijau gurū
śālagrāma-śilām caiva tat-samīpe su-pūjitam

Hearing their words with great amazement, Dharma the hunter stood still and saw his gurus. Both of them were aged, dressed in fine garments, and seated on an elevated seat. In front of them, Dharma the hunter carefully worshipped the śālagrāma-śilā.

Finally, a description of practical conduct amongst vaiṣṇavas — amongst the devotees in the central and especially in the southern parts of India, it is seen that all vaiṣṇavas have the right to recite the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam and other literature. No restrictions are seen there on the devotees of the Lord, since all of them are viewed under the privilege of the devaṛṣi-bhūtāpta-ṛiṇām-pitṛiṇām verse from Śrīmad Bhāgavatam [11.5.41] which says that the vaiṣṇavas are not servants of anyone. Moreover, they are not considered to be at fault for giving up their ordinary duties according to the following two verses from the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam [11.20.9 and 4.29.46]:

tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvataḥ
mat-kathā-śravaṇādau vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate

One should only engage in ordinary duties as long as one does not develop detachment, or as long as one does not develop taste in hearing, chanting, etc., of my (Krishna's) narrations.

yadā yasyānuḡrṇāti bhagavān ātma-bhāvitaḥ
sa jahāti matiṁ loke vede ca pariniṣṭhitām

When a person is fully engaged in devotional service he is favored by the Lord, who bestows his causeless mercy. At such a time, the awakened devotee gives up all material activities and ritualistic performances mentioned in the Vedas. ☞

— Translated by Hari Parshad Das from the Sanskrit available at Gaudiya Grantha Mandira (www.granthamandira.net)

HOW SHAMELESS I AM

Srila Prabodhananda Saraswati's
Vṛndāvana-mahimāmṛtam (5.70)

kāma-krodhāty-andho lobha-vaśo 'ham vasāmi rādhāyāḥ
keli-vane param icchur bhāvam aho nāsti me lajjā

Alas! I am blinded by lust, anger, etc., and controlled completely by mundane greed. Yet I reside here in Radha's sporting forest named Vrindavan and desire to attain the highest moods of devotion. How shameless I am! ☞

— Translated by Hari Parshad Das from the Sanskrit available at Gaudiya Grantha Mandira (www.granthamandira.net)