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VOTING AND VAISHNAVISM

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



The mass of people, especially in this age of Kali, are all born *śūdras*, basically lowborn, ill-trained, unfortunate and badly associated. They themselves do not know the highest perfectional aim of life. Therefore, votes cast by them actually have no value, and thus persons elected by such irresponsible votes cannot be responsible representatives like Maharaja Yudhisthir. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 1.9.49)

At the present moment, the world is inclined toward the democratic process, but the people in general are all contaminated by the modes of passion and ignorance. Consequently they cannot select the right person to head the government. The president is selected by the votes of ignorant *śūdras*; therefore another *śūdra* is elected and immediately the entire government becomes polluted. If people strictly followed the principles of *Bhagavad-gītā* they would elect a person who is the Lord's devotee. Then automatically there would be good government. Rishabhadev therefore recommended Bharat Maharaja as the emperor of this planet. Serving a devotee means serving the Supreme Lord, for a devotee always represents the Lord. When a devotee is in charge,

the government is always congenial and beneficial for everyone. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 5.5.20)

Because of the importance of the Krishna consciousness movement, people should be Krishna conscious and should not vote for anyone who is not Krishna conscious. Then there will be actual peace and prosperity in the state. When a *vaiṣṇava* sees mismanagement in the government, he feels great compassion in his heart and tries his best to purify the situation by spreading the Hare Krishna movement. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 6.2.3)

We don't very much like this so-called democracy. What is the value of this democracy? All fools and rascals. They vote for another fool and rascal and he becomes prime minister, or this or that. That is not good for the people. We are not for this so-called democracy because they are not trained. (Lecture in London, 24 July 1973)

The first teaching of *Bhagavad-gītā* should be taken by the persons who are going to be elected in the government service. The public should be aware of this. If somebody comes to canvass for votes, you should first inquire, "Have you read *Bhagavad-gītā*? Mahatma Gandhi read *Bhagavad-gītā*. Why shouldn't you? Do you know what is *Bhagavad-gītā*? If so, then I will give you my vote. Otherwise, get out." ... It is a great necessity that government men must study *Bhagavad-gītā*. Otherwise, don't give them vote. (Lecture in Bombay, 22 March 1974)

Devotee: Some of our devotees should run for office.

Prabhupada: No. If you can make the people Krishna conscious, then everything will come automatically. If they vote for a Krishna conscious person to be president and prime minister, then everything will be saved. So that means you have to create Krishna conscious voters. Then everything will be right. That should be one of the aims of the Krishna consciousness movement. The government is still under the control of the public. If the public becomes Krishna conscious then naturally the government will be Krishna conscious. But that is up to the public. (Lecture in Bombay, 6 November 1970)

If people are properly trained up, then they will vote for nice men and there will be nice government. Now, because the people are not trained, they are practically asses. What is the meaning of the votes of asses? If the majority are asses, then one ass will be elected. That's all. So when the executive head is an ass what benefit can he do for the people? (Room Conversation in Indore, 12 December 1970)

Educate the people. "Don't vote for the rascals. Just try to understand who is the real man, who is the real leader. (Morning walk conversation in Los Angeles, 11 December 1973)

The defect of the modern civilization is *vox populi*. People may be asses, but still their votes are accepted. (Room Conversation with Dr. Copeland, Professor of Modern Indian History, in Melbourne, 20 May 1975)

Interviewer: Do you think most of the Hare Krishna members will participate in the election in November? Do you think they will register and vote?

Prabhupada: Personally I never give votes.

Interviewer: Will they follow your example and not vote?

Prabhupada: I do not know, but our principle is that I vote for this man or that man if there is some spiritual benefit. That is our point. (Interview with the religion editor of the Associated Press in New York, 16 July 1976)

I have never given vote. Since we have got this *sva-rāj*, Indian independence, as soon as the vote question comes up, I go away. I think, "Why shall I give this nonsense person my vote? None of them are liked by me." So I avoid it. I don't believe in it. (Room Conversation in Bombay, 8 January 1977) ❀

THE PROSTITUTE IN THE HEART

Raghunath Das Goswami's
Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā, text 7

*pratiṣṭhāśā dhr̥ṣṭā śvapaca-ramaṇī me hr̥di naṣet
katham sādhuḥ-premā spr̥ṣati śucir etan nanu manaḥ
sadā tvaṁ sevasva prabhu-dayita-sāmantam atulaṁ
yathā tām niṣkāśya tvaritam iha tam veśayati saḥ*

O mind! How can the pure devotion to Sri Krishna ever appear in my heart as long as the shameless, low-born, dog-eating prostitute of the desire for prestige is flagrantly dancing there? Therefore, always remember and serve the incomparable generals in Sri Krishna's beloved army of unalloyed devotees. They will at once drive out this prostitute and initiate the flow of immaculate *vraja-prema* in my heart."

Excerpt from the Śrī Bhajana-darpaṇa commentary of Thakur Bhaktivinode: This verse indicates how one can extinguish any remaining doubt he may have if his repeated and exhaustive attempts to weed out deceit from his heart have failed. Hankering for honor is in fact a shameless prostitute who yearns to be worshipped. All other unwanted desires may be eradicated, but the hankering for honor and distinction is extremely difficult to uproot. It is like a seed which sprouts only later into a deceitful plant, a matrix from

Nāma-tattva

CHANTING GRANTS
FAR MORE THAN LIBERATION
Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.225

*mama nāma-sadāgrāhī mama sevā-priyaḥ sadā
bhaktis tasmai pradātavyā na tu muktiḥ kadācana*

[In the *Ādi Purāṇa* the Lord says:] "I give *bhakti* to the person who is always engaged in chanting my name and serving me as the goal in his life. I never simply give such a person only liberation."

Commentary by Jiva Goswami: *Sevā-priyaḥ* means to take one's service to the Lord as one's goal in life. In this context, *mukti* means "liberation devoid of *bhakti* (*sāyujya-mukti*)". ❀

— Translation by Sri Bhanu Svami. Sri Vaikunta Enterprises. Chennai. 2006.

which all the other *anarthas* stem. Thus it is called shameless, for it conveniently overlooks its own evil influence. Fame is like a dog, and one who runs after it is factually eating the flesh of a dog; thus the desire for material honor and distinction is compared to a low class prostitute who consumes dog meat. ❀

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QUESTIONABLE COLLECTION TACTICS AND SHOWS OF DEVOTION From the life of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

At the Cuttack *maṭha* there was one *sannyāsī* whose methods of collecting were not very pleasing to Saraswati Thakur. Sometimes this *sannyāsī* would tell people that the *maṭha* had thousands and thousands of *brahmacārīs*, that they also ran a leper colony which had one thousand lepers, that they ran a students' hostel, and that they fed the poor. All of this was, of course, untrue, and Saraswati Thakur did not approve.

On one occasion, the same *sannyāsī* went to the market and collected many things from Marwaris (a wealthy business community in India). He told one such businessman, "We have three hundred *brahmacārīs*, so give three hundred vests," which he got. Being very elated, and thinking that Saraswati Thakur would be pleased, when he arrived at the gate of the *maṭha*, he started calling out in a loud voice, to attract everyone's attention, "Jaya! Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaja *ki jaya!* However, Srila Saraswati Thakur was so upset that he fasted that whole day.

On another occasion the same devotee arranged for many *gṛhasthas* from the Midnapur district to take *hari-nāma* initiation. However, Saraswati Thakur said they were disciples of that *sannyāsī* and not his. "He is trying to have many people take *hari-nāma* from me, but actually they are his disciples. I don't need so many so-called disciples. He is bringing so many insincere people for show only," he said.

This same *sannyāsī* once went to the income tax officer and said, "Please help us to collect from the Marwaris," knowing that the Marwaris

were generally wealthy. The idea was that if the income tax officer went with him, they might be intimidated into giving good donations. However, the income tax officer refused, saying, "This is not proper." The *sannyāsī* then said, "Well at least let me take your car, now that I've come, so I can get back to the *maṭha*." The income tax officer granted this, but the *sannyāsī* went back to the *maṭha* via the bazaar, and, without the income tax officer's knowing, started collecting donations from the Marwaris. Seeing the income tax officer's car, they felt there was some kind of threat, and so they gave profusely, including money, *dhotis*, and so many other things. Then he returned to the *maṭha*. When Saraswati Thakur heard how he had made this collection he became angry like fire and arranged to have everything returned. He used to say, "*karilām sannyāsī hoy, gelo vilāsi* — I made them *sannyāsīs* but they've all become sense enjoyers." Of course, not all the *sannyāsīs* were like this. Some were and some weren't. ❀

— From an unpublished biography on Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati by Sri Srimad Bhakti Vikas Swami Maharaja.

GRADATIONS OF KRISHNA'S QUEENS Srila Rupa Goswami Prabhupada's Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamanī 3.7-12

*tās tu śrī-yadu-vīrasya sahasrānyasya ṣoḍaśa
aṣṭottara-śatāgrāṇi dvāravatyām suviśrutāḥ*

*āsām sakhyaś ca dāsyaś ca pratyekaṁ syuḥ sahasraśaḥ
tulya-rūpa-guṇāḥ sakhyaḥ kiñcin nyūnās tu dāsikāḥ*

*tatrāpi rukmiṇī satyā jāmbavaty arka-nandinī
śaibyā bhadrā ca kausalyā mādrīty aṣṭau gaṇāgrīmāḥ*

*tatrāpi rukmiṇī-satyē varīyasyau prakīrtite
aiśvaryaḍ rukmiṇī tatra satyā saubhāgyato varā*

It is very well known that Lord Krishna, the hero of the Yadu dynasty, had 16,108 wives at Dwarka. Each queen had thousands of girl friends and maidservants. The friends were equal to the queens in beauty and personal qualities, but the maidservants were a little inferior. Of all these queens, Rukmini, Satyabhama, Jambavati, Kalindi, Saibya, Bhadra, Kausalya, and Madri were the eight most qualified. Out of them, Rukmini and Satyabhama are said to be the best. Rukmini is exalted because of her transcendental opulence, and Satyabhama is exalted because of her extreme good fortune.

*kuṭumbasyeśvarī yāsīd rukmiṇī bhīṣmakātmajā
satyabhāmottamā strīṇām saubhāgye cādhikābhavat*

[It is said in the *Hari-vaiṣṇava Purāṇa*:] Rukmini, the daughter of King Bhishmaka, had the greatest opulence in Lord Krishna's palace, but Satyabhama was the most fortunate of Lord Krishna's wives.

*na me tvattaḥ priyatamā kācid devi nitambinī
ṣoḍaśa-strī-sahasrāṇām priye prāṇa-samā hy asi*

[Krishna says to Rukmini in the *Kārttika-māhātmya* of the *Padma Purāṇa* (6.88.28):] My queen, of all my 16,000 wives none is more dear to me than you. You are as dear to me as my own life-breath. ❀

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ODE TO MY WICKED HEART

Srila Govinda Das

For more about the poet Govinda Das, see the preface to the article “Krishna, the Sannyasi Beggar” in Bindu number 25.

(Pāhīdā-rāga)

*śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya balarāma nityānanda
pāriṣada saṅge avatāra
golokera prema-dhana sabāre yāciṅā dila
nā la-inu muṅi durācāra*



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Accompanied by their associates, Krishna and Balaram descended to this world as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu. They begged everyone to accept the great treasure of love they had brought from Goloka. However, I acted very badly and refused to accept it!

*āre pāmara mana marame rahala baḍa leśa
saṅkīrtana prema-bādale saba hiyā ḍubala
mohe vidhi vañcita kela*

(Refrain) O my wicked heart! A great javelin is now pushed into my chest! The chanting of the holy names has brought a great monsoon of ecstatic love. Every heart except mine has been plunged into that monsoon! Destiny has cheated me!

*śrī guru vaiṣṇava pada kalpa-taru-chāyā pāñā
saba jīva tāpa pāśarila
muṅi abhāgiyā viṣa- viṣaye mātiyā ra-inu
hena yuge nistāra nā haila*

Resting in the shade of the wish-fulfilling tree of the feet of Sri Guru and the *vaiṣṇavas*, every soul has forgotten his burning sufferings. But not I! I am very unfortunate! I drank poison and have become like a madman! Even after a *yuga* I will not be delivered!

*āgune puḍiyā maroṅ jale paraveśa karoṅ
viṣa khāñā maroṅ mo pāpiyā
ei mata kari yadi maraṇa nā kare vidhi
prāṇa rahe ki sukha lāgiyā*

I will throw myself into a fire! I will throw myself in the ocean! This sinner will drink poison and die. If in spite of all my efforts destiny does not allow me to die, then how can I be content to go on living and breathing?

*ehena gaurāṅga-guṇa nā karinu śravaṇa
hāya hāya kari hā hutāśa
hare-kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra mukha bhari nā la-ilāma
jīvan-mṛta govinda-dāsa*

I do not listen to the descriptions of Lord Gaurāṅga's glories. Alas! Alas! I burn in the flames of a fire! The Hare Krishna *mahā-mantra* does not fill my mouth! Govinda Das has become a walking corpse! ❀

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