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tam apṛcchad dhṛṣīkeśaḥ
praṇataṁ samavasthitam
dīpyamānena vapuṣā
puruṣaṁ hema-mālinam

[*SB* 10.34.10]

The Supreme Lord Hṛṣīkeśa then questioned this personality, who was standing before Him with his head bowed, his brilliantly effulgent body bedecked with golden necklaces.

Purport

The demigod was about to speak, and Lord Kṛṣṇa wanted to focus everyone's attention on his words. Therefore, He personally inquired from the worshipable Vidyādhara, who was standing before Him with his head bowed.

[*SB* 10.34.11]

Translation

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] My dear sir, you appear so wonderful, glowing with such great beauty. Who are you? And who forced you to assume this terrible body of a snake?

[*SB* 10.34.12-13]

Translation

The serpent replied: I am the well-known Vidyādhara named Sudarśana. I was very opulent and beautiful, and I used to wander freely in all directions in my airplane. Once I saw some homely sages of the lineage of Ańgirā Muni. Proud of my beauty, I ridiculed them, and because of my sin they made me assume this lowly form.

[*SB* 10.34.14]

Translation

It was actually for my benefit that those merciful sages cursed me, since now I have been touched by the foot of the supreme spiritual master of all the worlds and have thus been relieved of all inauspiciousness.

[*SB* 10.34.15]

Translation

My Lord, You destroy all fear for those who, fearing this material world, take shelter of You. By the touch of Your feet I am now freed from the curse of the sages. O destroyer of distress, please let me return to my planet.

Purport

According to the ācāryas, the word *āpṛcche* indicates that Sudarśana humbly requested the Lord for permission to return to his abode, where he might take up his duties again, certainly in a chastened state of mind.

[*SB* 10.34.16]

Translation

O master of mystic power, O great personality, O Lord of the devotees, I surrender to You. Please command me as You will, O supreme God, Lord of all lords of the universe.

[*SB* 10.34.17]

Translation

O infallible one, I was immediately freed from the brāhmaṇas' punishment simply by seeing You. Anyone who chants Your name purifies all who hear his chanting, as well as himself. How much more beneficial, then, is the touch of Your lotus feet?

[*SB* 10.34.18]

Translation

Thus receiving the permission of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the demigod Sudarśana circumambulated Him, bowed down to him, offer Him homage and then returned to his heavenly planet. Nanda Mahārāja was thus delivered from peril.

[*SB* 10.34.19]

Translation

**The inhabitants of Vraja were astonished to see the mighty power of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Dear King, they then completed their worship of Lord Śiva and returned to Vraja, along the way respectfully describing Kṛṣṇa’s powerful acts.**

[*mangalacarana*]

**Lecture Transcription**

Worshiping of Krishna completes all of one’s responsibilities

In this chapter of Srimad-Bhagavatam, we find the residents of Vrajbhumi going to the holy place of Ambikavan which is situated on the banks of the river Sarasvati, in order to worship Lord Shiva, Mahadev on the auspicious occasion of Shiva Ratri. In this regard, Srila Prabhupada explains, that when one worships Krishna, all of one’s responsibilities, all of one’s obligations to the demigods, to the great kings, to the forefathers is perfectly fulfilled.

devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇāṁ pitṝṇāṁ
na kiṅkaro nāyam ṛṇī ca rājan
sarvātmanā yaḥ śaraṇaṁ śaraṇyaṁ
gato mukundaṁ parihṛtya kartam

[*SB* 11.5.41]

[O King, one who has given up all material duties and has taken full shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, who offers shelter to all, is not indebted to the demigods, great sages, ordinary living beings, relatives, friends, mankind or even one’s forefathers who have passed away. Since all such classes of living entities are part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, one who has surrendered to the Lord’s service has no need to serve such persons separately.]

As putting water on the root of a tree automatically nourishes every part of the tree, by surrendering to Lord Mukunda, all one’s obligations are fulfilled. In fact, Sri Krishna explains in Gita, “That whatever worship you offer to the demigods, ultimately, the power of their benedictions is coming from me and ultimately your worship should be directed toward me alone.” So, the Brajvasis, simply by always remembering Krishna, by worshipping Krishna they had fulfilled the ultimate purpose of life.

One should offer respects to demigods

But devotees of the Lord they are not obligated to worship the various demigods, but they are obligated to offer all respects to them, because we should know that each of the demigods, especially such powerful souls as Brahma and Shiva who is a plon… plenary portion of Lord Vishnu himself, that they are great devotees of the Lord, they are empowered representatives of the Lord. Therefore, to disrespect the demigods is classified as Vaishnava aparadha. Sometimes, out of immaturity, because in the absolute sense we explain*, sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja* [*Bg.* 18.66] that simply by surrendering to Krishna there is no need to worship anyone else. Devotees they think that this means that they can criticize or minimize the greatness of Krishna’s empowered representatives, the demigods.

By watering the root of the tree every part of the tree is automatically satisfied

The Bhagavad-Gita explains, “That those who are less intelligence they worship the demigods for material benefits, but such people,” Krishna says, “Are fools.” Because such material benefits have a beginning and an end and they further bind them, one to the laws of karma. But of course, the Vedas do prescribe the worship of demigods for material benefits, because it is better to, at least accept higher authorities as the bestowers of material benefits and work under certain regulations to please those higher authorities than to simply think that everything is happening by your own egoistic endeavors. But this path of karma-kanda is for the less intelligent. But just because Krishna condemns worshipping the demigods for material benefits, he does not condemn the demigods. A devotee must very humbly offer all respect to these great personalities, but he should know that the greatest way he could satisfy all, the crores of demigods, is to worship Krishna. By watering the root of the tree every part of the tree is automatically satisfied and fulfilled. But sometimes devotees do worship great personalities like Lord Shiva. But they do it understanding his truest position, *vaiṣṇavānāṁ yathā śambhuḥ* [*SB* 12.13.16] he is an expansion of Sri Krishna. Sadashiva, is actually Lord Narayan, living in Vaikuntha, who is an expansion of Sri Sankarshan, Balaram himself. And that Sadashiva incarnates within material universe as the guna-avatar known as Shiva or Mahadev. And therefore, the devotees, they can worship Lord Shiva, but not for material benedictions, but to give them strength and purity, by which they could further increase their loving service to Radha and Krishna.

Brajvasis visited Ambikavan

So, obviously the Brajvasis, when they went to Ambikavan they had no personal motive for themselves. They did not care the slightest for life or death. Their only concern was to satisfy Krishna. So, when they went to Ambikavan for Shiva Ratri they were worshipping Lord Shiva in their yogamaya condition, to get blessings and benedictions, for the benefits and for the enjoyment of Sri Krishna. The first day they spent according to the Vedic rules, they fasted. Srila Prabhupada explains in this connection, that when one goes to a holy place, one should stay for at least three days, and the first day according to the prescribed rules of shastra, one has to fast, and then in the evening one can take little water. Of course, Srila Prabhupada also said, “These are the Vedic principles, but in Krishna consciousness which is the upasna kanda of the Vedas, fasting is feasting and feasting is fasting, because Krishna Prasad is transcendental.”

Nanda Maharaja being swallowed by a gigantic serpent

But the Brajvasis they fasted and they took water, and they took rest at night on the bank of the river Sarasvati. And to their great surprise in the middle of the night, they heard Nanda Maharaja screaming out, “Krishna! Save me! Save me!” And when they all awoke, they saw that Nanda Maharaja was being swallowed by a gigantic serpent. It is described in Srimad-Bhagavatam that this human form of life is very rare, it is meant for self-realization, it is meant to perform the highest welfare work to other living beings by spreading the message of Bhagavat dharma and propagating the holy name of Krishna. And therefore, by all means, as far as possible, it is the duty of a human being to maintain his life in health as long as possible, as far as possible. To neglect our body is to neglect the gift of the human birth that God has given us.

So, the Brajvasis they wanted to save Nanda Maharaja, because they loved him. He was not only their king, their leader, but he was like their father, he loved them, he cared for each one of the Brajvasis like his own children. So, it was a great, great crisis in everyone’s life. So, they picked up burning logs and they began to beat this serpent again and again and again, but despite all of their endeavors, the serpent continued, slowly but surely, to swallow the body of Sri Nanda baba. So, the Brajavasis were perfectly doing their duty. You have to work according to the particular necessity of the time. Devotees are not simply lazy. Devotees do not simply say, “Oh! Krishna will do it. I am not the doer; Krishna will do it.” Krishna taught in Bhagavad-Gita, “Arjuna, I will do it, but I will do it according to your surrender.” And what does surrender means? That you have to sacrifice your life as far as your capacity to do my will. You fight this war Arjuna, and you fight with everything you learned from Dronacharya, with all of your skills and all of your mi…mind. And you be willing to lay your life down for me, and I will do the rest.

Krishna is our only true friend - A friend in need is a friend indeed

In the same way, the Brajvasis, they tried their level best to save Nanda Maharaja. But Vidyadhara was the serpent of death. Death is compared to a serpent and just as Nanda Maharaja was slowly but surely being devoured by this serpent, in the same way, all of us are being slowly but surely devoured by the serpent of death, little by little. As Nanda Maharaja’s body was becoming smaller and smaller, little by little, our duration of life is becoming smaller and smaller and smaller. And we can endeavor by our means, to try to avoid being consumed by this serpent of death. It may be through exercise, it may be through good health, it may be through good sanitation, but ultimately, the serpent of death, moment after moment is consuming our life. There is only one resc…refuge and that is Krishna, to call out the name of Krishna, to take shelter of Krishna. Krishna says in Gita, “For those who surrender to me and always remember me, I am the swift deliverer from death, from all the sufferings and miseries of this material existence.”

So, Nanda Maharaja could see that all his beloved family members and all his beloved servants, friends, well-wishers they could not help him. *anta-kāle ca mām eva smaran muktvā kalevaram* [*Bg.* 8.5] when we are being… we are all being devoured by death, but at the last moment when our life is about to end, nobody but Krishna can save us. Therefore, he is our only true friend. A friend in need is a friend indeed. And the greatest need of life, is the time of death when everything is about to be stripped away from us. At that time, if we simply call out the name of Krishna with sincere devotion, he grants us eternal life, but if we remember anything else or anyone else, we are simply plunged into another suffering condition. Where it is? We do not know. Therefore, Krishna is only friend for the living entity and those who bring us closer to Krishna, they are truly our friends, because they are representatives of Krishna. Those who are not bringing us closer to Krishna, those who are giving us excuses to, to contemplate the energy of our mind and other thoughts, they are actually, spiritually our enemies. Whatever guise of relationship they may pose themselves in, they are taking us away from our only real true friend and refuge. Therefore, to take shelter of the association of sincere devotees, is to take shelter of Krishna. There is no difference.

Importance of attentively and submissive hearing

Krishna appeared and he placed his lotus foot on the head of that serpent and to the great astonishment of everyone, that serpent was transformed into a beautiful demigod. And here Lord Sri Krishna, is enquiring for everyone’s benefit. Because Krishna, who is the knower of past, present and future; who is the paramatma in everyone’s heart, he knew that the lesson to be learned by this particular serpent is most instructive for all living beings. And Krishna knew that if he personally asked this demigod - why he fell into the body of a serpent, he would bring complete attention of everyone’s minds to whatever words he spoke.

The process of attentively and submissively hearing is essential at every stage of our spiritual life. At the beginning stages, our whole spiritual life depends on attentively and submissively hearing the truth from the lips of Guru and the great Vaishnavas. And we must continue to regularly hear, *naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā* [*SB* 1.2.18] Srimad-Bhagavatam says, “Every day we must hear Bhagavat dharma.” Because this hearing keeps our vision, direction, keeps our hearts pure, keeps our aim in life always toward Krishna. Hearing regularly the word of God protects us and immunes us from the terrible sound vibrations that are constantly trying to bring our consciousness again to sense gratification in material life.

So therefore, Krishna, he wanted to establish the great necessity of hearing attentively, therefore, he personally asked this demigod, “Why is it that you are in the body of this terrible serpent?” And he explained, “That he was a very, very beautiful, wealthy Vidyadhara.” Vidyadhara is one of the groups of the demigods. They possess tremendous mystic power, incredible wealth, extremely learned, such a high birth, above any human specie of this world, but most of all, they are exceedingly beautiful in their bodily attributes. But as queen Kunti explains, that these four material qualifications, if they are not utilized in a humble frame of mind, in the service of Krishna, they are the greatest disqualifications for spiritual development.

Pride – A stumbling block

For two reasons, one is… the one reason is become as you be…, because you become proud. But there are two reasons why pride is a great stumbling block. One is, as long as you think that you are the doer, you cannot chant the name of God in a helpless and humble state of mind. And Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has taught us,

tṛṇād api su-nīcena
taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amāninā māna-dena
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ

[*Cc. Adi* 17.31, *Śikṣāṣṭaka* 3]

[“One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor yet is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord.”]

That, if you want to chant the holy name constantly, you must chant in a humble state of mind like a blade of grass with more tolerance than a tree, ready to offer all respect to others and to expect none in return. But those who consider, that I am better than other living beings because of my intelligence, my education, because of my high birth, because of my great wealth, my ability to earn, because of my physical beauty, I am better than others; I am in a superior position than others, then you cannot possibly, Krishna will not allow you to chant his name properly. That humility cannot be. Of course, we find in the scriptures there are so many people who possess all of these opulences, but because they recognize, *sarva loka maheshvaram* [*Bg.* 5.29], that it is all the property of Krishna, it is not mine, it is not my intelligence.

The fact is, if Krishna decided, he is the source of remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. *sarvasya cāhaṁ hṛdi sanniviṣṭo mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanaṁ ca* [*Bg.* 15.15] whatever intelligence, even if you have MA, PhD, if you are very learned in the scripture, very learned in every subject matter of this world; he is the source of that knowledge, not you. And if he wants within a second, he could make you forget everything and be a total imbecile. You have no power to prevent him from doing so. So why should we be proud of borrowed plumes? It is all the property of Krishna. He is entrusting us in our care for the purpose of using in his service.

Similarly, wealth, he is the husband of the goddess of fortune and it is the grace of the goddess of fortune, that we have anything in this world. We may think, that it is by our endeavor, but we have seen some of the most brilliant businessmen who work day and night, and beyond their abilities, there is some crisis in the stock market or some crisis that they cannot avoid and they become penniless beggars in bankruptcy. We have no power to earn nor that we have power to maintain what we have. Ultimately, we can try, but it’s all Krishna’s wealth. Lakshmi is chanchalam, she never stays in one place very long. Therefore, we find that great personalities who have wealth, who have knowledge, who have beauty, who have a high birth, they recognize that, I have nothing, I am akincana. I am simply a penniless beggar at the door of Krishna and whatever he gives me is his grace, his mercy. That is our eternal position. But those who have these opulences, under the illusion, *janasya moho ’yam ahaṁ mameti* [*SB* 5.5.8] That I am this body and these possessions, these opulences, these characteristics are mine. They are unfortunate, because of that pride they cannot properly call out the name of Krishna.

Committing offences – another stumbling block

And the second great obstacle to having these material opulences and becoming proud is, we have the tendency to commit offences to others. If we have more than something… somebody else, we are caught into the terrible illusion, that I am superior to that person because of my material condition. But spiritually we are all part of God; we are not superior to anyone. Our only position is, that we are insignificant before God and we are all meant to serve one another for the pleasure of God. But when we become infatuated in illusion to think that because of my physical prowess, I am better than you, then the tendency is, to commit offences. To commit offence against any living being is an offence to God, but to commit offence against a Vaishnava is a terrible offence that will cause the greatest disturbance to any spiritual progress in our life. It blocks our spiritual advancement.

There are so many examples in the Bhagavat, in the Chaitanya-caritamrita, of personalities who were very learned, very beautiful, very wealthy, coming from high, high Brahman caste, but when they offend Vaishnavas they have to suffer terribly. They lose the mercy of Krishna. What to speak of Sadhu-Vaishnavas, who are dedicating everything for the propagation of the Lord’s mission, who are accepting a penniless position simply for the benefit of others. To think that we are better than any of them, it is very… it is an unfortunate condition and this is the situation of this great demigod. Because of his beauty when he saw these great sages, Angira Muni’s descendants, he ridiculed them because their physical features were not beautiful at all. He laughed at them. He thought that he was superior to them because he had something material that they didn’t have. And those great sages out of their mercy they cursed him to lose everything.

Vidyadhara’s downfall and upliftment

Vidyadhara was such a popular person that he could fly in his airplane anywhere throughout the universe. And wherever he would go, people would just be so much attracted to him for his material qualities. But within moments, by the curse of these sages, he became the most abominable of all species of life, a serpent. Who is attracted to a serpent? Of all creatures, a serpent is the creature everyone wants to kill. Even kind, compassionate, loving people when they see a serpent, they often pick up a rock and smash its head. Why? Because they know that serpent is so dangerous that he will cause misery and pain to someone if he continues to live. So, from the most attractive person he became the most unattractive. And by nature, a serpent causes suffering to others. So, acting according to his nature he began to eat Nanda Maharaja.

But Vidyadhara is explaining that, “This is really my good fortune. Falling into a body of a serpent completely sobered me from all of my false pride and now just see, what a benediction I have received. Just by chanting your holy name, the whole world can be delivered. What to speak of directly obtaining the dust from your lotus feet upon my head? Now I am purified of all sins. At this time, I am surrendering my life completely to you.” He became a humble devotee. “My dear Lord!” Vidyadhara, Sudarshan is explaining, “Please, whatever you instruct me. I am your surrendered devotee. Now with your permission, I will return to my heavenly planet to perform my seva at your lotus feet.” Vidyadhara here, has come to the realization that it’s not his heavenly planet nor is it his service; everything is the property of Krishna. Therefore, he is very humbly asking permission, “May I serve you in this way? May I continue my duties for your pleasure? May I return to your planet to engage in your loving service?”

A devotee of the Lord, however great or powerful he may be, always receives permission of Krishna and the Vaishnavas before he engages in any important activity. Without the blessings of Krishna, without the blessings of Guru and without the blessings of the Vaishnavas, we cannot do anything in this world that is auspicious. Krishna gave his blessings and his permission and Vidyadhara returned with his beautiful heavenly form with all knowledge, all wealth. He was in the same material situation as he was previously but his consciousness was completely different. He no longer was proud thinking that I am the doer, but now he was performing his same duty, in the same body but he was converted; he had become truly a devotee by the blessings of these sages and by the causeless mercy of Krishna. He was humbly engaging all of his material assets as the humble servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord in pure devotional service.

Lord Shiva’s benediction to devotees

At this time Nanda Maharaj was rescued, and the Brajvasis, they performed their puja to Lord Shiva and then they returned to Vrindavan dham. How wonderful it is that Lord Shiva’s supreme blessings were really upon the Brajvasis. They went to Ambikavan to worship Lord Shiva and Lord Shiva who is Ashutosh, who easily fulfils the desires of those who approach him, they completely… he completely fulfilled their desires. Why? By coming to the feet of Lord Shiva to offer their love and devotion to him, he arranged the situation for them, by which, they were even more conscious of Krishna. And after worshipping Lord Shiva, when they left Ambikavan they were not chanting Shiva’s glories. After seeing what Krishna had done to save Nanda Maharaja and to transform and liberate this Vidyadhara, all the Brajvasis with, with even increased love, devotion and enthusiasm they were just chanting Krishna’s greatness and his glories. What was the result of going to worship Shiva on Shiva Ratri? That by his blessings, with greater enthusiasm, they were chanting the glories of Sri Krishna, remembering his beautiful pastimes and deepening their infinite love for him. *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare/hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*

**Questions and Answers**

Is there any questions?

[*devotee:*] Hare Krishna. These demigods in heavenly planets they enjoy so much. They have a long life and prosperity and even… but they have no opportunity of sat-sanga and to perform devotional service. Only they are enjoying the fruits of their pious karmas which they had performed on this earth. So even on this earth for the beasts and this trees they have also not any opportunity of sat-sanga or to perform devotional services. So, what is the difference between these demigods and this such low class yonis… species of this earth?

[*Maharaja:*] Comparing the demigods to who?

[*devotee:*] …the demigod, they have no opportunity to perform sat-sanga or perform devotional service. Similarly, on this earth also there are so many beasts and so many trees, they have also no opportunity of sat-sanga.

[*Maharaja:*] So many?

[*devotee:*] …trees, low class yonis, lower species they have no opportunity of performing devotional service. So what is the difference between these demigods and these species… low class species?

[*Maharaja:*] The demigods have the opportunity for sat-sanga, but often times they just become so carried away in their fruitive endeavors, although it’s a service to Krishna, and they become so proud and they become so infatuated by the enjoyments that they receive in that position, that they do not take advantage of the sat-sanga, but the opportunity is there. The great benefit of this earth planet is, that there is enough misery and pain by which we really seek shelter of the sat-sanga, of the Sadhus. We really feel ‘Without the mercy I am in a helpless and hopeless state.’ And therefore, we could come to the sat-sanga of the devotees really seeking refuge from the pains of material existence. The demigods have all opportunities for such sat-sanga, but they become oftentimes so infatuated that they just take it as a formality. They are not suffering; everything is nice. So therefore, they cannot really take shelter of the word of God. Therefore, this earth planet is the most suitable place in whole universe for self-realization. In the hellish planets there is so much misery, it’s practically impossible for an ordinary being to think of Krishna. You are just thinking of the misery. You cannot divert your attention or get away from the pain toward anything. And in the heavenly planets, there is so much pleasure that it’s very, very difficult to divert your attention away from the pleasures. But in this earth planet, there is enough pleasure that our mind is somewhat free to choose what we want to think of, but there is enough pain so that we become frustrated with material life. Therefore, this is a much better place for surrendering to Krishna than the heavenly planets, although the demigods are divinely pious, extremely pious. We find Jagai, Madhai, Valmiki Muni and so many terrible, terrible dacoits in this world, when they realized the miserable situation they are in, how they take shelter of the association of Sadhus? And they attained the perfection of life. Srila Prabhupada used to say that the demigods are standing in line to take birth in the Krishna consciousness movement because it’s the most perfect opportunity to perfect one’s life by coming to this earth and taking shelter of the holy name of Krishna under the auspicious blessings of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his devotees. Does that answer your question?

Is there any other questions?

Thank you very much!

Hare Krishna!

[*end*]