

**Lecture given by H.H. Suhotra Swami
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Title: Don't be a cheap disciple

TRANSLATION

After this, the King took the water which had washed the lotus feet of the Kumaras and sprinkled it over his hair. By such respectful actions, the King, as an exemplary personality, showed how to receive a spiritually advanced personality.

PURPORT

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has said, *apani acari prabhu jivere jikhaya*. It is very well known that whatever Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu taught in His life as acarya, He Himself practiced. When He was preaching as a devotee, although He was detected by several great personalities to be the incarnation of Krsna, He never agreed to be addressed as an incarnation. Even though one may be an incarnation of Krsna, or especially empowered by Him, he should not advertise that he is an incarnation. People will automatically accept the real truth in due course of time. Prthu Maharaja was the ideal Vaisnava king; therefore he taught others by his personal behavior how to receive and respect saintly persons like the Kumaras. When a saintly person comes to one's home, it is the Vedic custom first to wash his feet with water and then sprinkle this water over the heads of oneself and one's family. Prthu Maharaja did this, for he was an exemplary teacher of the people in general.

LECTURE BY SUHOTRA SWAMI:

Acarya means one who teaches by example. Acarya does not assume the role of an avatara, or an avadhuta. Avatara means incarnation of Godhead and avadhuta means a transcendentalist, who does not follow any rules and regulations and standard scriptures. So both avatara and avadhuta are another tattva, or another level of existence than that of the jiva. Although we of course worship avadhuta, avatara we cannot follow them. So acarya by his extraordinary mercy, although he too is transcendentalist, but he comes among us and shows us directly how to ascend to the transcendental platform.

Once a sannyasi disciple of Srila Prabhupada came to him with a problem that, "My dear Srila Prabhupada, although I am in this sannyasa-asrama, I cannot help, but I think about my former wife. And I read in the *sdstra* that sannyasi should not do this." So Prabhupada replied that, "Well, the platform of the mind, the thoughts of the mind is very, very difficult to control..." There is thinking, but thinking is followed by willing, and then there is feeling the desire to do a thing. About thinking there is not so much we can do, when the mind becomes invaded by thoughts - you cannot turn the mind off. But what you can do is by determination stop this descending from thinking to feeling platform which is the platform where one actually begins to taste these thoughts - meditate on them and already anticipate the enjoyment that one would get from doing such a thing. By determination we should not fall down to the feeling platform, because once one goes to there, then one must come to willing

platform - actually performing that act.

So Srila Prabhupada - coming back to the point of thinking of the former wife - Prabhupada then told this sannyasi disciple, "Actually last night I had a dream about my former wife." We may be very surprised to hear that Prabhupada would in such a simple and humble way, in such a straightforward way just say that. We might wonder, "Then how is it that Srila Prabhupada, this maha-bhagavata, and yet he can have a dream of his former wife." But this means - if we are puzzled like this - this means we don't actually understand what is acarya. Acarya teaches us by example, so that we will know in our life what to do, what not to do. Our minds are always invaded by unwanted thoughts and unwanted dreams. So if you have a teacher and you go to your teacher and you'll say, "I have all these strange thoughts and dreams in my mind." And your teacher says, "Oh, what is that, I don't know what this is. This never happens to me." Then it's a little difficult to derive some lesson - what is the example that you follow then. So actually Srila Prabhupada having a dream of his former wife is his mercy upon us. That does not mean that Srila Prabhupada is an ordinary man, rather Srila Prabhupada is showing us what an ordinary man can do by completely surrendering to his spiritual master, to Sri Guru-parampara.

Srila Prabhupada used to give the example of the teacher in school. When the teacher is instructing little children how to spell simple words, he will write on the board for cat, C, A, T, and then he will ask the students, "What is this?" And then the students will very happily say, "Cat, cat." Now, does this mean that the teacher doesn't know what this word is? He is asking little children. Should we think if we see that, that "What kind of teacher is this? He doesn't even know what C, A, T spells." No, this is the way a teacher reaches his students, his disciples, to bring them up. Obviously, the teacher, his knowledge far, far surpasses that of these little children, but he seems to become one among them out of his kindness. But in doing this is very clear purpose - step, by step, by step bring them to the platform of full knowledge. And so it is with the acarya.

Acarya, he does not display mystic jugglery, he does not read people's inner thoughts, he does not have conversations with unseen entities, he does not make fantastic predictions of the future. The acarya teaches by example how one should serve Krsna, how one should conquer over all of his faults, how one should become pure and go back home, back to Godhead. Unfortunately, our habit is to cheat. Acarya is showing us very methodical process and it means a little work for us. And due to this unfortunate habit to cheat we may look for shortcuts. So this superstition, this so called mysticism of trying to make an avatara, or avadhuta out of one's spiritual master, this is an example of looking for a shortcut.

I'll give an example, true story from Bangladesh - this is Eastern Bengal - where there are a lot of sahajiyas. There was one brahmacari, renounced person, who was traveling through various villages in Bangladesh teaching hari-katha, speaking about Krsna, performing hari-kirtana, chanting of the holy name, and because he was regularly coming to these villages, he began to get the following. And this following increased more and more. So finally one day, when he had quite a number of followers, then somebody - older persons from among those followers - they came to have a talk with him that, "Gurudeva, now you are becoming very well known, very famous. You have so many disciples and followers. We think now is the right time for you to proclaim yourself an avatara."

So what is the intention here? These people are very unqualified. Actually although their guru had become a little prominent, still, he had not been able to lift them up to the standard platform of sadhana-bhakti. They were just still very ordinary people - fish eaters, smokers, drinkers. But their idea was that, "If guruji becomes avatara, if he is bhagavan, then we who are his associates - we are his followers - then that will make us maha-bhagavatas, that will make us automatically pure devotees." Then you don't have to do anything, because if your guru is God and you associate with him as disciple, as follower, then you are with God. And if someone says "But you are smoking, you are eating fish, you are drinking," "Oh, but this is all lila. This is also transcendental, you don't understand. You are looking at us with material vision." You can see, where this tendency is coming from. It's actually coming from cheating. Similarly if guruji is an avadhuta. So an avadhuta, he just does what he likes, he doesn't follow any standard sastric directions. That means, there is no example for an ordinary person. But if somehow we can associate with avadhuta, then by that association we can claim ourselves also, "Whatever we are doing, that is transcendental too."

Now, sometimes pure devotee of Krsna, he is in this mood of avadhuta - Gaurakisora dasa Babaji for example. And so there were people who used to try to associate with him to show everyone else "We are his follower, we are his disciple." They would simply imitate him. Of course he knew this, so then he used to... one time he took up his bhajana, his place of chanting the holy name, inside of a stool room, a toilette. That is considered to be very contaminated place - even in the West they think like that, what to speak of India. So here is a saintly person, he was actually - you know these, what they call outhouses, these little houses they build, just toilette is inside - so he was actually living inside one of that and chanting Hare Krsna. So then for most of these rascal followers that was too much for them, they couldn't come anymore, they couldn't hang around him, except for one. There was this - like there are always two out houses, one for man, one for ladies - so he moved in the one for ladies, then Gaurakisora dasa Babaji left.

So this also... they like, try to associate with avadhuta, because then there is no standard process there. Now, avadhuta... so one may ask, "Why doesn't he follow standard process?" Because he is fully absorbed in the holy name. One who is chanting Hare Krsna mahamantra constantly, actually he doesn't have to do anything else. But who is on that platform? Very, very, very rare thing. Ordinary people do not have the taste to chant Hare Krsna mahamantra twenty-four hours a day. On this path of bhajana, to become bhajanandi, then the bhakta-program, the bhaktas on that path, they have to chant, they start by chanting 64 rounds a day. That's the starting, that's the new bhakta. Then the platform of initiation, where you can get initiated, then one chants 196 rounds every day. This is like Namacarya Srila Haridasa Thakura. So one who chants 196 rounds a day, he can do what he likes. We don't have to question his activities at all, if he is actually chanting. If we had a devotee in this temple who is actually chanting every day 196 round, you would just offer your respects to him. But we also can understand how rare that must be. We don't see any devotee here chanting 196 rounds a day, we cannot imagine anyone here chanting 196 rounds a day.

People just imitate. The avadhuta, he is going here, he is going there freely, but he is always chanting. So they go here, they go there, they do any thing they like and when people are looking then they chant also. But otherwise in private their lives are full of so much pollution. People are adhama, they are fallen. Every morning we sing, sri guru-karuna-sindhu, adhama janara bandhu, that the spiritual master, he is an ocean of mercy, he is the friend of the adhama, the fallen souls. What does it mean to be a friend of a fallen soul? It means to help them, to show them the way to come out of that fallen condition. Above the adhama platform,

there is the kanistha platform. This is the beginning of the following the rules and regulations. Then beyond the kanistha, there is the madhyama platform. This is where one becomes a preacher. And then beyond that is the actual uttama platform, the factual first class platform of pure devotional service. The spiritual master, the acarya, his program is to lead people step, by step, from adhama, kanistha, madhyama to uttama. And this attempt to jump from adhama to uttama by some backdoor process, by some pretends, this is cheating. Unless one is actually following - the acarya has come to teach by example, acara - so unless one is following the acara, then he doesn't really have a relationship, a connection to the acarya.

Today we are seeing this participating in this Vaisnava Hari-nama-diksa, initiation into the chanting of the holy name. This means to accept the discipline - to become a disciple what does it mean? It means to accept the discipline. This acceptance of the discipline is the actual link. Just like in a chain there are those links, so the actual link to the chain of disciplic succession is this, to accept discipline, to follow the standard rules and regulations, to chant 16 rounds minimum daily, to engage oneself in sadhana-bhakti, service to Krsna, this is actually one's spiritual position. This actually brings one out of this adhama, this fallen position.

This initiation process, it is not like joining a guru fan club. Pop stars, they have fan club. So people, they are writing, "Oh, I am your devotee, I love your music. You look so nice. I am your fan." And in return they receive some official membership card: "You are now recognized as an official member of the Bob Crush fan club." Then you get a big official photo of Bob Crush to put on your wall. And you can go to Bob Crush club meetings. And you also receive every month a letter written by Bob Crush. In this way there is some kind of relationship there with Bob Crush. But there is no standard discipline given in the sastras. So it is all useless. The spiritual master is not to be accepted as a kind of transcendental Bob Crush. We have to actually understand what is the principle of connecting with our guru and with the guru-parampara. And that principle is this discipline.