

**Lecture given by HH Suhotra Swami on Srimad
Bhagavatam 4.23.9, recorded on 19th December 1997 at
New Brahmakunda, Sweden**

Title: Risks in personal relationships

*sanat-kumaro bhagavan
yad ahadhyatmikam param
yogam tenaiva purusam
abhajat purusarsabhah*

TRANSLATION:

Thus the best amongst human beings, Maharaja Prthu, followed that path of spiritual advancement which was advised by Sanat-kumara. That is to say, he worshiped the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna.

PURPORT:

In this verse it is clearly said that Maharaja Prthu, practicing the *pranayama-yoga* system, engaged in the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead as advised by the saint Sanat-kumara. In this verse the words *purusam abhajat purusarsabhah* are significant: *purusarsabha* refers to Maharaja Prthu, the best amongst human beings, and *purusam* refers to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The conclusion is that the best man amongst all men engages in the service of the Supreme Person. One *purusa* is worshipable, and the other *purusa* is the worshiper. When the *purusa* who worships, the living entity, thinks of becoming one with the Supreme Person, he simply becomes bewildered and falls into the darkness of ignorance. As stated by Lord Krsna in Bhagavad-gita (2.12), all living entities assembled in the battlefield, as well as Krsna Himself, were also present in the past as individuals and would continue to be present in the future as individuals also. Therefore the two *purusas*, the living entity and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, never lose their respective identities.

Actually, one who is self-realized engages himself in the service of the Lord perpetually, both in this life and in the next. Indeed, for devotees there is no difference between this life and the next. In this life a neophyte devotee is trained to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and in the next life he approaches that Supreme Person in Vaikuntha and renders the same devotional service. Even for the neophyte devotee, devotional service is considered *brahma-bhuyaya kalpate*. Devotional service to the Lord is never considered a material activity. Since he is acting on the *brahma-bhuta* platform, a devotee is already liberated. He therefore has no need to practice any other type of *yoga* in order to approach the *brahma-bhuta* stage. If the devotee adheres strictly to the orders of the spiritual master, follows the rules and regulations and chants the Hare Krsna *mantra*, it should be concluded that he is already at the *brahma-bhuta* stage, as confirmed in Bhagavad-gita (14.26):

*mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena
bhakti-yogena sevate
sa gunan samatityaitan
brahma-bhuyaya kalpate*

"One who is engaged in full devotional service, unfailing in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman."

LECTURE BY HH SUHOTRA SWAMI:

Srila Prabhupada said that it is the nature of persons, their very nature, to exhibit what we take to be faults. And he said that this is even true of a Lord Krsna Himself. The Supreme Personality of Godhead also exhibits fault. Of course, as devotees we never consider these as faults. But that person whom Prabhupada termed a utopian idealist, would consider them to be faults. Prabhupada gave the example of Lord Krsna's trying to milk a bull in the mood of ecstasy for Srimati Radharani. Also he gave the example of the *gopis*. They exhibit faults. They sometimes are seen to quarrel with each other out of their love for Krsna, or they dress themselves in haphazard way. From the point of view of perfectionism, if one tries to make perfection in everything, perfection of behavior, perfection of appearance and so on and so forth, to be the absolute principle by which everything should be judged, then even Krsna and His topmost devotees, the *gopis*, would fall short of that idealized perfection. And so Prabhupada said, this was in a letter from 1973 to Jay Rsi prabhu, that this type of perfectionist - utopian perfectionist - he would not like to go to the spiritual world. He would not like to enter the abode of Lord Krsna. Rather he will make his goal the impersonal *brahman*. Because there everything is perfect in the sense that there is nothing to find fault with in the impersonal *brahman*. In that sense his mind will be pacified. It's very nice letter. Prabhupada in very detailed way explained how this utopian idealism leads one into impersonalism.

Therefore as it has been said, it has been known for thousands of years by philosophers, I am just speaking of Vaisnava philosophers or Vedic philosophers, but in philosophy in general there is always an element of risk in anything personal. We enter into personal relationships with human beings who are fallible, as Lord Krsna says in Bhagavad-gita, those living entities who live in this material world they are all *ksara*. *Ksara* means fallible. You cannot depend on them. Even though sentimentally, and this is what rules the personal relationships in the material world, it's sentiment. Even though sentimentally we feel that we love and have so much sympathy for this and that person, and we feel that our hearts are bound to this or that person. But it's extremely risky situation. Even when one comes to the transcendental platforms there is also, as we see, some kind of risk, even in transcendental personal relationships. Not ultimately, not for the devotee of the Lord. Because this is the devotee's quality that he loves Krsna, end of story. That's all. And that love will carry him through all the risks. But that risky element is there concretely apparent in Lord Krsna's pastimes. The example of the Govardana Puja. That's one very good example. Their tradition was to worship Lord Indra, and here is Krsna telling them, "Don't follow that tradition!" You can see when you read this that Maharaja Nanda was a bit in anxiety. "Of course we love you Krsna. Of course we want to do whatever you say, but Indra is very powerful demigod. The Vedas say that we should worship him." Krsna says, "Doesn't matter." (laughter) Because the residents of Vrndavana do love Krsna most of all, therefore they discarded Indra *yajna*. What happened as result was not like in some fairy story, everything was just happily ever after. (laughter) Indra did become angry, and Indra did cause a very severe disturbance for the residents of Vrndavana. They were in fear of their lives. Because they love Krsna most of all their devotion to Him was unshakable, and they took shelter of Him, and the Lord saved them.

When we study Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes we find this events of this kind happening again and again. You see that element of risk is there. Even now just comes to mind Rukmini when Lord Kṛṣṇa tested her. So here is Rukmini. She was to be going married to Sisupala. She was thoroughly afraid of that. She sent a letter to Kṛṣṇa, "Please save me. Please rescue me. I am Your devotee." So Kṛṣṇa did that. Such a fight it was. She was kidnapped in the assembly of *ksatriyas*. Lord Kṛṣṇa fought off her brother and the other *ksatriyas*. Finally she was safe at the Dvaraka with the Lord as His first queen. Then one day Kṛṣṇa comes and says, "OK! Rukmini! You can go wherever you like. You should get better husband. Why are you attached to me, anyway? I am just a wondering cowherd boy. I have no postilion in this world." This shocked her so much. She fainted. This is what it means (laughter) to enter into relationship with Kṛṣṇa. There is also some element of risk in essence, but the triumph is always *suddha-bhakti* pure devotional service.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is Supreme Lord. He is independent. He can indeed do whatever He likes. This is the fact about God. God can do whatever He likes, whatever you want to imagine. The philosophers and theologians sometimes ask, "Can God do this? Can God do that?!" They have debates about whether not God could do this or that, the most terrible thing they could ever imagine. Is it actually in God's power actually, perhaps cause the soul to cease to exist or something like that.

The fact is that anything is in God's power. But yet the Supreme Lord he does maintain an ultimate standard. He does protect and preserve an ultimate standard. As He tells Arjuna in the Bhagavad-gita that he protects and preserves His devotees. Whatever they have He preserves. Whatever they lack He provides. *Yoga-ksemam vahamy aham*. All of His unlimited power, ultimately, it is engaged in this way, in protecting, preserving and upholding His devotees. Therefore as we know in Bhagavad-gita where the Lord says that My devotee will never perish, *mad bhaktah na pranasyati*, this Prabhupada points out, He asks Arjuna to declare simply because again there is a risk (laughter) that if Kṛṣṇa says it, it may not be actually true. Therefore He said Arjuna that you tell the world that My devotee will never perish. Everyone has to believe that.

There is an ultimate reality which is always preserved by Kṛṣṇa. That is the reality of devotional service to Him. Bellow that everything is uncertain. That we have to understand when we approach the philosophy of Srimad Bhagavatam, the Vaisnava, the Vedic philosophy that everything is uncertain or we should say, to explain this point that the Lord is *acintya*. He is inconceivable, and His energies *acintya sakti*, they are inconceivable. When we try to understand things from point of view which is divorced from pure bhakti, pure devotion to the Lord then we enter into uncertainty. This is the so-called scientific mentality. Scientific mentality actually tries to understand things from an idealized or impersonal standpoint. This is because people with scientific, mathematical mentality, they have a problem with personal standpoint. That it's risky it's unsteady, You can't really trust it. Persons, their attitudes change, there is a motion, there is all kinds of things which makes the picture unsteady. They think then the thing we must do is to adapt an impersonal attitude.

There is one very famous mathematician, Roger Penrose, a contemporary mathematician who makes the statement that in science there is always the chance of error, but our protection against the error, this is the term he uses, "Our protection against error is an idealized impersonal standard. As we are fixed in impersonalism then we have a standard to measure everything else against." This is the system followed by all the modern, and ancient also, philosophers and scientists and thinkers who are not the devotees of the Lord. They may study

things which are personal but their ultimate standard against which they measure everything is impersonal. Because they think that the Truth, the Absolute, the Final Reality is impersonal, and everything should be measured against that, and then you can have an actual perspective.

There are also so-called practical material affairs of this world. You see everything is ultimately judged against some impersonal, idealized standard. Like in society there is even a saying about governments that we should have rule of laws and not rule of men. This is a very well-known saying. Rule of laws means we have to all the laws set down in a law book, paragraph 1, paragraph 2, paragraph 3. Everything nicely laid out, impersonal, not changing. Then you apply that, there is that famous symbol of justice, the goddess justice, I think in Greek Dicae [Themis], anyway, she has a blind fold, holding a scale. She is not seeing a person she is judging, whether they are beautiful or ugly, or whether they may be rich or poor. She is just judging from an impersonal standpoint.

This is their idea of ideal society. Those of you from this region, don't take offence, but the Balkan countries, which are very famous, they were formerly ruled by Turkey. There is a particular approach they have to governments that whoever is sitting in whatever official seat he is the law completely. (laughter) Some local village authority with the fat belly and fat mustache, he is a complete total law in and of himself. You can go to him for some permission he can say whatever he wants. Even though the law in the capital city is completely different, it doesn't matter. (laughter) The law is whatever he says. And if you somehow manage to get around him, and go to the next higher guy, you may get a different opinion. But if you can't do that and you think many times about trying to do that, because after all you live in the village with this guy. So once he finds out that you've gone to the higher guy then anything can happen. (laughter) Because he is the law in that village he can burn down your house or whatever he wants to do. This is how they view rule of men or rule of persons in this material world. It's all whimsical. It's all based on exploitation and all these things.

In this material world therefore people gravitate to the impersonal, because of their bad experience with the personal. But for a devotee *kaivavlyam narakayate*, this is the statement of Sri Prabhodananda Sarasvati, that impersonal ideal *kaivalya*, *kevala* means purity, but this word *kevala* is often used in the sense of impersonal purity, pure impersonalism in other words, this ideal is like hell for pure devotee. Pure devotee wants nothing to do with that. Why? Because in impersonalism there is no possibility for devotional service to Krsna. When you remove personalism, when you remove the senses, when you remove the possibility for relationship, when you remove the emotions then you've removed effectively our connection with Krsna. Therefore pure devotees, their definition of purity, their definition of the Absolute, their definition of ideal standard is personalism, but transcendental personalism, the eternal relationship between loving devotee and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krsna.

This is the background of this verse which says "Thus the best amongst human beings, Maharaja Prthu, followed that path of spiritual advancement which was advised by Sanat-kumara. That is to say, he worshiped the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna."

How is it that Maharaja Prthu is *purusarsabhah*, the best amongst human beings... actually in the utopian, ideal type of society that is something you don't say. You don't talk about anyone being the best among human beings, because to be a human being is to be a relative being. There can be no best. This is why the process of knowledge that is followed by materialistic

people, who are ultimately impersonalists, for them knowledge ultimately means fault finding. Knowledge means this type of criticism. It's like idealized fault finding. It's not just usual type of criticism, but it is very idealized, very precise and exact and investigative. But they spend their time just trying to prove that no human being can be ideal. They feel very secure in that. That gives their whole system meaning. If you have an actual ideal person then they're threatened, "Oh! What is this? We can't have that. No! We must find the faults in every human being and therefore our impersonal standard of truth will be pristine. We all have to bow down to it. Because you cannot depend on persons." Everything must be measured against their impersonal ideal. They can't have a talk of *purusarsabhah*, of ideal persons. They can't have this. Of course you can have great persons. You can have outstanding persons. But you cannot have perfect persons, not possible. Everybody has their fault. That is why we have to carefully preserve our impersonal standard by which everything must be ultimately judged.

This is a kind of intellectual conspiracy in the material world. What is the aim of it? They may offer so many idealistic reasons, political, social and finally philosophical reasons, they can offer. Why? It is so vital to preserve the impersonal standard of measuring everything. But ultimately that standard is separating us from Krsna. And that is the real motive. That is the real motive behind it.

The materialistic mentality wants to have its own little paradise here in the material world. They try to make that paradise as secure as possible so that we can all live together and we will all have some space to ourselves for our own sense gratification, and that space that you and I have should not be determined by any person, because that will be unfair, because he will have his interests. So it has to be settled in impersonal way, by impersonal mathematics or whatever. Everyone will get measured off very carefully to the exact micromillimeter your space and your amount of facility that you're getting, everything, yes, according how much work you do, and this and that. So everyone can feel secure in their little space here in the material world. But unfortunately that security is ephemeral. It's just the will-o'-the-wisp. It's just a hallucination, that security. Everyone's minds rush to it, because it sounds so reasonable. But actually in that reason they invested all their hopes and all their dreams for a successful life in this material world. That is why they find it so compelling, so attractive. But there can be no success.

Satsvarupa Maharaja wrote this book called *The Daily News*. You may have seen it. He wrote that book, wasn't so long ago he wrote, he mentioned in the introduction that many, many, many, many years ago Srila Prabhupada asked him to write a book like this. Prabhupada had given a different tittle that was to that any attempt to do anything will be a failure without Krsna. This is the actual fact. This is the actual state of affairs. This is the actual reality. As in much we have divorced ourselves from Krsna, whatever we do, however careful we try to measure things out against an impersonal standard, is sure to fail in the end. Whereas the devotees whom the sophisticate materialist consider to be very simple minded, foolish people, because they depend on this "person", Krsna. "Who is this Krsna, anyway? You cannot even see Him. What is this? It's ridiculous! Some imaginary personal God." Because this impersonal standard is all wrapped up in the false ego, the false ego conception of things. Therefore they look down upon the devotees of the Lord. The materialistic mind, or to put it more bluntly, the demoniac mind, it naturally works in that way to find faults in the devotees and in the Lord that the devotees has taken shelter of. Therefore, they will see so many faults, and speak these fault to one another so as to convince one another that this is nonsense, Krsna *bhakti* is nonsense, don't have anything to do with it, it's just stupidity, they're just misled. But

in actual fact - they are misled. This is the trick of material energy that she seems to create for them very promising facility. They get hope from the very complicated arrangements of material nature. They get hope from that. But ultimately it all collapses. It all fails in the end.

The devotees are much more advanced in knowledge. How is that? Simply, because they know this. Simply, because the devotees know that they cannot depend on material arrangement and that ultimately it will collapse, ultimately it will fail. This is one of the sources of irritation for the materialists. Because the devotees know this then very often devotees they don't care for material arrangements. (laughter) That can be a problem. But it's the nature of devotee to not care so much for complex material arrangements, to not try to invest their minds into it, to understand it in a systematic way, because after all it's going to fail, anyway. Of course in this mission of Krsna consciousness we are expected to create a *sanga*, an association, a society which is attractive to the conditioned souls. So there is need for some degree of systematization, some degree of rational planning, and all of that. It is required to do anything in this world. Of course someone who is on the level of Prthu Maharaja, a *maha-bhagavata*. The other day, we were speaking of Jada Bharata, very good example. He completely depended only on Krsna. From the material point of view, he was a madman. He couldn't get anything together. His father rejected him, because he couldn't teach him anything, not even the simplest thing. But he completely under Krsna's protection. This is *maha-bhagavata*.

It's to be understood that all of us who come to Krsna consciousness do not instantly assume that position of *maha-bhagavata*. We do not to be presume the best of human beings. Yes, it is for the mission sake, and also for our sake, that we do to a certain extent rely on this type of rational planning, using the impersonal standard of knowledge in Krsna's service. That is a fact. But ultimately, the difference between devotee and non-devotee is that devotee knows that these arrangements ultimately comes to nothing on their own.

Everything actually comes from Krsna, and the devotee understands that. Therefore, the devotee is the most advanced in knowledge, even though, he appears to be simple. But seeing that connection, that's *sambanda-jnana*. This *sambanda-jnana*, this knowledge is real knowledge. This is actually considered where knowledge begins, the *sambanda*, connection between this material world and Krsna. That is where actual knowledge begins, to see that. Someone may have so much intricate, detailed knowledge of the systems of this material world, but if fails to see the connection of all that with Krsna, he is completely in ignorance. He is a fool. And whatever he does, whatever leadership he may offer to others, all of that will fail. This is to be understood. Human being can become perfect by surrendering completely to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is being show here in the great example of Maharaja Prthu. Are there any questions?

Q: In the spiritual world, there is no need of organizing activities?

A: Everything is organized around loving devotional service. Everything is organized by *yoga-maya*. Her organization is to connect every devotee with Krsna, according to that devotee's mood of devotion to the Lord, she makes that arrangements. Yes, there is organization, obviously, in the spiritual world, because the spiritual world has form, the spiritual world has activities. The goal of all that is love, *bhakti*, loving exchange between the Lord and devotees. Therefore the basis is completely different that in this material world. In the material world everything is organized around selfishness, one's own self. That is why they like so much this impersonal standard, because then one can have so-called assurity that I

am not being exploited. Yes, it's completely different. In the spiritual knowledge devotees want to be exploited by Krsna. That's the qualification for entering the spiritual world, *sarva dharman parityajya*. Krsna is saying, "Give up all these *dharmas*" which are actually meant for self preservation in this material world, *dharma artha kama moksa*. This is *catur-varga*, the materialistic interests, those who follow the Vedas, the sum and substance of material society. And these four principles, what are they aimed at, self preservation. Krsna is saying, "Give that up, and just surrender to Me." Devotee wants to be exploited by Krsna, that is his happiness.

I remember seeing a play they staged in Vrndavana at one of our festivals, a play of Lord Krsna's pastimes. But there was one scene depicting relationship between Krsna and His devotee. There was a devotee who at one point got down on all fours and Krsna got on his back and the devotee was going around the stage like a horse. This was a traditional play, some traditional Vrndavana play. There was a one narrator with microphone, who was explaining, what this means. He was saying that Lord being the Lord, he exploits His devotee, but the devotee, this is his greatest happiness in life. So if the Lord comes and wants to use us as like an ass or like a horse, ride on the back, that is for the devotee the greatest ecstasy. He considers his life perfect if the Lord deals with him that way. This is in the material world just what is everyone afraid of. (laughter) Nobody wants to find out that they are being exploited by another person. But this is the goal of life of the devotee. *Yoga-maya*, she arranges for that, that's the arrangement, very nicely arranging that every devotee in the spiritual world will be exploited by Krsna. And if you don't like that, well, come live in the material world.

Q: So, *sadhana-bhakti* it's more like artificial rules and regulations.

A: What's artificial about them?

Q: I mean... very regulated schedule.

A: Why is that artificial?

Q: Because when somebody skips this level and try to be on this level just spontaneously serve Krsna, then he will be probably misled, misguided.

A: That's the reason why the rules and regulations are artificial?

Q: No. Because he has to be organized, it's imposed on the devotee, on the *sadhana bhakta*.

A: Yes, but I still haven't understood why you use this word artificial. Because artificial means not necessary. Artificial means something which appears to be real, but actually isn't, or appears to be required, but actually isn't. (pause) Ok. You think about this.

Any other questions?

Srila Prabhupada ki! Jaya!