

Pratikūla Bhakti

Means BAD News

— But We Need to Hear About It! —

*tabe yāya tad-upari 'goloka-vṛndāvana'
'kṛṣṇa-carāṇa'-kalpa-vṛkṣe kare ārohaṇa*

Being situated in one's heart and being watered by *śravaṇa-kīrtana*, the *bhakti* creeper grows more and more. In this way it attains the shelter of the desire tree of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, who is eternally situated in the planet known as Goloka Vṛndāvana, in the topmost region of the spiritual sky.

*tāhān vistārita hañā phale prema-phala
ihān māli sece nitya śravaṇādi jala*

The creeper greatly expands in the Goloka Vṛndāvana planet, and there it produces the fruit of love for Kṛṣṇa. Although remaining in the material world, the gardener regularly sprinkles the creeper with the water of hearing and chanting.

*yadi vaiṣṇava-aparādha uṭhe hātī mātā
upāde vā chiṇḍe, tāra śukhi' yāya pātā*

If the devotee commits an offense at the feet of a Vaiṣṇava while cultivating the creeper of devotional service in the material world, his offense is compared to a mad elephant that uproots the creeper and breaks it. In this way the leaves of the creeper are dried up.

One's devotional attitude increases in the association of a Vaiṣṇava:

*tāndera carāṇa sevi bhakta-sane vāsa
janame janame haya, ei abhilāṣa*

By his personal example, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura stresses that a devotee must always remember to please his predecessor ācārya. The Gosvāmīs are represented by one's spiritual master. One cannot be an ācārya (spiritual master) without following strictly in the disciplic succession of the ācāryas. One who is actually serious about advancing in devotional service should desire only to satisfy the previous ācāryas. Ei chaya gosāñi yāra, mui tāra dāsa. One should always think of oneself as a servant of the servant of the ācāryas, and thinking this, one should live in the society of Vaiṣṇavas [Cc. Madhya 13.80]. However, if one thinks that he has become very mature and can live separate from the association of Vaiṣṇavas and thus gives up all the regulative principles due to offending a Vaiṣṇava, one's position becomes very dangerous. Offenses against the holy name are explained in Ādi-līlā, Chapter Eight, verse 24. Giving up the regulative principles and living according to one's whims is compared to a mad elephant, which by

force uproots the bhakti-latā and breaks it to pieces. In this way the bhakti-latā shrivels up. Such an offense is especially created when one disobeys the instructions of the spiritual master. This is called guru-avajñā. **The devotee must therefore be very careful not to commit offenses against the spiritual master by disobeying his instructions. As soon as one is deviated from the instructions of the spiritual master, the uprooting of the bhakti-latā begins, and gradually all the leaves dry up.**

— CC Madhya 19.154-156+p



**'niṣiddhācāra', 'kuṭīnāṭī', 'jīva-himsana'
'lābha', 'pūjā', 'pratiṣṭhādi' yata upaśākhā-gaṇa**

Some unnecessary creepers growing with the bhakti creeper are the creepers of behavior unacceptable for those trying to attain perfection, diplomatic behavior, animal-killing, mundane profiteering, mundane adoration and mundane importance. All these are unwanted creepers.

*There is a certain pattern of behavior prescribed for those actually trying to become perfect. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we advise our students not to eat meat, not to gamble, not to engage in illicit sex and not to indulge in intoxication. People who indulge in these activities can never become perfect; therefore these regulative principles are for those interested in becoming perfect and going back to Godhead. Kuṭīnāṭī, or diplomatic behavior, cannot satisfy the ātmā, the soul. It cannot even satisfy the body or the mind. The culprit mind is always suspicious; therefore our dealings should always be straightforward and approved by Vedic authorities. If we treat people diplomatically or duplicitously, our spiritual advancement is obstructed.All these obstructions have been described in this verse as unwanted creepers. They simply present obstacles for the real creeper, the bhakti-latā. **One should be very careful to avoid all these unwanted things.** Sometimes these unwanted creepers look exactly like the bhakti creeper. They appear to be of the same size and the same species when they are packed together with the bhakti creeper, but in spite of this, the creepers are called upaśākhā. A pure devotee can distinguish between the bhakti creeper and a mundane creeper, and he is very alert to distinguish them and keep them separate.*

**seka-jala pāñā upaśākhā bāḍī' yāya
stabdha hañā mūla-sākhā bāḍite nā pāya**

If one does not distinguish between the bhakti creeper and the other creepers, the sprinkling of water is misused because the other creepers are nourished while the bhakti creeper is curtailed.

The unwanted creepers have been described by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. He states that if one hears and chants without trying to give up offenses, one becomes materially attached to sense gratification. One may also desire freedom from material bondage like the Māyāvādīs, or one may become attached to the yoga-siddhis and desire wonderful yogic powers. If one is attached to wonderful material activities, one is called siddhi-lobhī, greedy for material perfection. One may also be victimized by diplomatic

or crooked behavior, or one may associate with women for illicit sex. One may make a show of devotional service like the *prākṛta-sahajiyās*, or one may try to support his philosophy by joining some caste or identifying himself with a certain dynasty, claiming a monopoly on spiritual advancement. Thus with the support of family tradition, one may become a pseudo guru, or so-called spiritual master. One may become attached to the four sinful activities — illicit sex, intoxication, gambling and meat-eating — or one may consider a Vaiṣṇava to belong to a mundane caste or creed. One may think, “This is a Hindu Vaiṣṇava, and this is a European Vaiṣṇava. European Vaiṣṇavas are not allowed to enter the temples.” In other words, one may consider Vaiṣṇavas in terms of birth, thinking one a brāhmaṇa Vaiṣṇava, another a śūdra Vaiṣṇava, another a mleccha Vaiṣṇava and so on. One may also try to carry out a professional business by means of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra or reading Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, or one may try to increase his monetary strength by illegal means. Also, one may become a cheap Vaiṣṇava by trying to chant in a secluded place for material adoration, or one may desire mundane reputation by making compromises with nondevotees concerning one’s philosophy or spiritual life, or one may become a supporter of a hereditary caste system. All these are pitfalls of personal sense gratification. Just to cheat some innocent people, one makes a show of advanced spiritual life and becomes known as a sādhu, mahātmā or religious person. All this means that the so-called devotee has become victimized by all these unwanted creepers and that the real creeper, the bhakti-latā, has been stunted.

— CC Madhya 19.159-160+p



*prathamei upasākhāra karaye chedana
tabe mūla-śākhā bādī’ yāya vṛndāvana*

As soon as an intelligent devotee sees an unwanted creeper growing beside the original creeper, he must cut it down instantly. Then the real creeper, the *bhakti-latā*, grows nicely, returns home, back to Godhead, and seeks shelter under the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

If one is misled by unwanted creepers and is victimized, he cannot make progress back to Godhead. Rather, he remains within the material world and engages in activities having nothing to do with pure devotional service. Such a person may be elevated to the higher planetary systems, but because he remains within the material world, he is subjected to the threefold material miseries.

— CC Madhya 19.161+p