

— Text Two from Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's Śrī Upadesāmṛta —

*atyāhāraḥ prayāsaś ca
prajalpo niyamāgrahaḥ
jana-saṅgaś ca laulyam ca
ṣaḍbhir bhaktir vinaśyati*

One's devotional service is spoiled when he becomes too entangled in the following six activities: (1) eating more than necessary or collecting more funds than required; (2) overendeavoring for mundane things that are very difficult to obtain; (3) talking unnecessarily about mundane subject matters; (4) practicing the scriptural rules and regulations only for the sake of following them and not for the sake of spiritual advancement, or rejecting the rules and regulations of the scriptures and working independently or whimsically; (5) associating with worldly-minded persons who are not interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness; and (6) being greedy for mundane achievements.

— NOI 2

— Twilight Highlights! —

(1) **Jana-saṅga** — association with worldly-minded people

Every practicing devotee should know the various kinds of worldly people. Therefore we are hereby most unwillingly enumerating these people. These **worldly people are of seven kinds**: (1) Māyāvādīs and atheists, (2) sense enjoyers, (3) those who are fond of the sense enjoyers, (4) women, (5) womanizers, (6) the hypocritically devout, and (7) the ill-behaved foolish outcastes. Sense enjoyers and persons fond of sense enjoyers are both worldly-minded. There are two types of sense enjoyers — those who are extremely attached to sense enjoyment and devotees who are attached to sense enjoyment. Associating with those who are extremely attached should be totally rejected. The devotees who are attached to sense enjoyment are also of two types — those who have included the Lord as a part of their sense enjoyment and those who have kept the Lord in the center of their sense enjoyment. Association with the latter type is preferable to association with the former.

Do not associate with women. On the other hand, when a woman is engaged in *sādhana-bhakti*, she should not associate with men. Associating with the opposite sex is very inauspicious for the advancing devotee. When there is no marital relationship and one converses with a woman with evil intentions, then this is *strī-saṅga*. That is sinful and detrimental to devotional service. For a householder devotee, associating with his wife is not detrimental to devotional service; but for a renunciate there cannot be any type of talking or touching a woman, otherwise his practice of devotional service will be completely spoiled. Association with such a deviated person should be totally rejected.

— Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Śrī Bhaktyāloka*



By association with worldly people, one becomes devoid of truthfulness, cleanliness, mercy, gravity, spiritual intelligence, shyness, austerity, fame, forgiveness, control of the mind, control of the senses, fortune and all opportunities. One should not at any time associate with a coarse fool who is bereft of the knowledge of self-realization and who is no more than a toy animal in the hands of a woman. The illusion and bondage that accrue to a man from attachment to any other object are not as complete as that resulting from association with a woman or with men too much attached to women.

— CC Madhya 22.88-90

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura further explains that if a devotee engages in non-devotee association then gradually his material attachments will increase. And the more this attachment increases, the more his firm faith in the Supreme Goal will diminish.

Why is that?

If one associates with non-devotees, very quickly his intelligence will be polluted and his heart will be overcome by their propensities. If anyone desires to attain pure devotional service, he should carefully give up the association of non-devotees.

— *Saṅga-tyāga*, Śrī Bhaktyāloka

(2) Prajalpa!

Talking with one another is called *jalpana* or *prajalpa*. Nowadays in this world godlessness is so prominent that conversing with others means godless talk. Therefore it is not profitable for a practicing devotee to engage in *jalpana*. There can, however, be many kinds of *jalpana* in the cultivation of devotional service. They are all auspicious for the devotees. *Kīrtana*, offering prayers, and reciting the scriptures are all *jalpana*; and when these are performed with a favorable mood and devoid of material desire, they are all cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore the conclusion is this: All *prajalpas* that are unfavorable to Kṛṣṇa's service are adverse to devotional service. The practitioner should carefully give up such *prajalpa*.



Godless *prajalpas* are impediments to devotional service. They are of many types: Useless talks, arguments, gossip, debates, fault-finding in others, speaking falsehoods, blaspheming devotees, and worldly talk are all called *prajalpa*.

(1) Useless talk is extremely detrimental. Practicing devotees should discuss topics of Lord Hari in the association of other devotees and remember Hari's name, form, qualities, and pastimes in a private place without uselessly wasting time.

(2) Argument is a *prajalpa* that is adverse to devotional service. Useless arguments arise from envy or pride, aversion or attachment to sense gratification, foolishness or conceit. Quarrelsome people also become intoxicated by useless arguments. While discussing topics of the Lord and His devotees, the practicing devotee should always be careful to avoid useless arguments.

(3) Talking without reason about other people is extremely adverse to devotional service. Many people talk about others to establish their own reputation. Being envious, some people are accustomed to discuss others' character. The minds of those who are busy in

such topics can never be fixed on the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. Talking about others should be rejected in all respects.

However, when a guru enlightens his disciple on some topic, then unless he occasionally talks about others, his instruction may not be clear. When previous *mahājanas* have talked about others in this way, there is merit in such talk, not fault. Although Śukadeva Gosvāmī talks about the materialists in order to instruct his disciple, he is not considered a *prajalpī*. Therefore such activities should be considered beneficial.

If one discusses in this way the improper behavior current in a religious sect or amongst the general public, then such talk is not adverse to devotional service. Even if one sometimes talks about a particular person, there is no fault.

(4) Debate arises only from a desire for conquest. It is extremely abominable.

(5) Fault-finding arises only from imposing one's own bad habits on others. This should be given up in all respects.

(6) Speaking falsehoods is another form of useless talk. Worldly talk is completely rejected by renounced devotees. Householders may accept some worldly talk that is favorable to devotional service. If topics like archeology, zoology, astrology, and geography are devoid of God consciousness, they should be rejected.

(7) Speech in the form of blaspheming *sādhus* is the source of great inauspiciousness. If one wants to attain devotion to Lord Hari, then he should make a vow like this: "In this lifetime I will never blaspheme *sādhus*." Devotees are *sādhus*. By blaspheming them, all one's virtues are destroyed.



Conclusion: By giving up *prajalpa*, the urge to speak is permanently regulated. In order to pass one's life without sin, one should not speak anything more than whatever little is necessary. One need discuss only whatever is auspicious for oneself and others. If one wants to discuss topics of others, it will simply be useless speech. Therefore in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.28.2, Lord Kṛṣṇa instructed Uddhava as follows:

*para-svabhāva-karmāṇi
yaḥ praśamsati nindati
sa āśu bhraśyate svārthād
asaty abhiniveśataḥ*

“Whoever indulges in praising or criticizing the qualities and behavior of others will quickly become deviated from his own best interest by his entanglement in illusory dualities.”

— Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Śrī Bhaktyāloka*