

## Minding Our Own Business

**Caru Das:** Thanks to everyone for coming out this Sunday afternoon. I would like to thank those who download these Podcasts from iTunes, and invite them to correspond with us at utahkrishnas@Gmail.com. We also have a membership class on our website at utahkrishnas.org. Like to thank those that have taken the membership class to become members, we couldn't do what we do without your help and support.

Everything is inspired by the teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who is the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

We would like to talk about Minding Our Own Business. Too many people today are focused on all the things that are wrong, and they don't focus enough on the things that are right. We've got a habit, a lot of us, to see only the negative.

Some people can walk into a brand new, beautifully decorated sparkling house and overlook the thousands and thousands of things that they could favorably notice and favorably comment upon and say, "Did you know that you've got a scratch on your floor there?"

People don't see the rose, they see the thorn. Prabhupada talked about fly-like people and bee-like people. Flies like impure places and they are swarming in those particular areas. Whereas bees, they look for the honey.

There are people who are drawn to the negative, who have an eye not for the good, only a critical eye.

It's important to avoid this, especially in relationships. We can train ourselves to either see people's weaknesses or we can train ourselves to see their strengths.

You can focus on what you like about your spouse or you can focus on those annoying habits -- and we all have them -- those things that you don't like about your spouse.

Some people have taken the habit of not seeing anything good to the point that just like that house, they overlook the thousands and thousands of things that your spouse, your wife and husband does for you in the name of just one fault, and they harp on that fault, they can't let that fault go and it over shadows in their mind all the positives.

To the point they can't even remember why they got married to that person in the first place. They can't remember all the different points by which they were attracted to that person originally. They had forgotten the very reason why they've gotten married.

In the Bhagavad Gita, it tells us that this world is not an ideal world. This is like the hospital. The hospital is not a place where perfect healthy people go. Perfect people need not apply.

This material world is opposed to the spiritual. It is a place where souls go who have forgotten God and need rehabilitation. When we are looking for faults, we don't have to look very far to find faults in this material world.

If you were to go into the hospital and say, "Well, there's tuberculosis. There's whooping disease. There's smallpox." What new information have you given? Everybody knows there are sick people in hospitals. If you go to the hospital and you point out, "You're sick," what's the contribution there?

In this material world, we don't have to go very far to find imperfect people. Every endeavor is covered by some sort of fault as smoke is covered by fire. If you're looking for something wrong, you won't have much trouble finding it.

The real question is not whether we're going to see wrong things, not plucking out our eyes or being oblivious to things that are going on around us. The real question is based on the things that you see, what are going to magnify?

Are you going to, having seen the bad, magnify and get all wrapped up in the bad, or are you going to magnify the good? Are you going to see someone's strengths and build on those, or are you going to see and pick out someone's weaknesses and get all wrapped up in those?

Every one of us has habits that get on people's nerves. Nobody is immune from this. The key is what is it that we're magnifying?

When we are critical, when we nag, when we make a big deal out of small things, when we make a mountain out of a molehill -- "You never take out the trash. You're always late when we're supposed to meet." "The things I ask you to do, they go in one ear and out the other. You don't really listen to me." We're magnifying the wrong things.

There's part of the traditional Vedic marriage ceremony in which the priest asks the bride and groom to determine in advance to not magnify each other's faults.

We're going to observe faults but it's a choice whether we magnify the faults or whether we magnify the good qualities. Maybe your spouse has a habit of leaving their socks lying around. Maybe your spouse talks with a little bit of a nasal twang. We can't help but notice that, but why dwell on it? Why let it obscure all the good things and destroy the intimacy in the marriage?

Anyway, if you want your spouse to do things, it's easier to get them to be inspired by being nice and sweet and encouraging. It is said that more are caught by honey than by vinegar.

Instead of nagging your husband, "Why don't you mow the lawn? We're getting knee-high weeds. The neighbors are talking. You're lazy. Get off the couch." Try this for a change. "Honey, I love the way you look out there in the lawn, those shorts, with your bare chest. Mm! Boy, you don't know how many times I part the curtains and get an eye full of you."

Try that approach and I'll bet you he'll be out there mowing the lawn every day. All of his spare time he'll be out there mowing the lawn.

Where is the problem here, really? Is it in our spouse? Is it in our circumstances? Is the boss a problem? Are our co-workers the problem? Is the economy the problem? No. Actually, you've guessed it by now, we're the problem. The problem is actually with us.

I heard a story about a lady who had some neighbors move in next door. She's in her kitchen window looking in their backyard.

One or two mornings later, and she starts commenting to her husband, "This lady's washing is all grey and dingy. She's hung it out on the line to dry but it doesn't look like she's even used any detergent. What kind of person doesn't know how to wash? What kind of a person sends their kids to school in these dingy, dirty shorts and shirts and things like that?"

Day after day, she would get up and she would look out and see all the dirty laundry on the line. She would comment to her husband. This went on weeks and weeks. Negative, negative, negative.

One day, after a couple of months went by, she got up. She went in her kitchen. She looked into her neighbor's backyard and the wash was sparkling white and crisp and shining in the sun. She says, "Honey, come here. You won't believe this. Our neighbor has finally learned how to wash. I wonder what happened."

The husband comes rolling into the room and he says, "Honey, what happened was I got up early this morning and I washed the kitchen window."

The problem wasn't with her neighbor, with her lack of knowledge, with not putting in detergent, not respecting her family. None of that was a problem. The problem was the filter through which this lady was looking through. Her filter was dirty and that was the problem.

That's the problem with all of us. Some of us have a filter through which we look at the world and that filter is dirty. Like trying to see things through a dirty window, we're looking in a dusty mirror. It is said, "when looking for faults don't use a telescope, use a mirror."

If you see negatives on the freeway and traffic, if you notice the scratch on the floor, you're going to miss all of the beauty that God surrounds us with every day. The problem is not really external. The problem is internal. It's a heart problem.

Maybe it's not the world that needs a change or a spouse or a boss or a coworker, maybe we need to break the habit of seeing the bad rather than the good. Maybe we've trained ourselves to be critical and sarcastic, constantly finding fault. If so, it means that the way we look at the world itself is painted and everything we look at is going to be painted with the same brush.

I heard about a snooty lady of high society. She used to visit periodically this art museum

in her hometown. One day, she forgot her glasses and she was kind of looking around unfocusedly. She came before this one exhibit.

She says very condescendingly to the curator, she says, "My dear fellow, I have never seen this painting before. I find the image rather shallow and crude in appearance. What do you call this?" The curator answered her expressionless, "That, Madam, is a mirror."

If you have a tainted filter, that's going to follow you where ever you go. You may be having all kinds of trouble at work with your boss and your co-workers and speaking negatively and, "I don't like this company," and so on and so forth. Low and behold, when you change your jobs, and you get another job, all those same negatives are going to come.

There's nothing wrong with the job or there's nothing wrong the previous job, there's nothing wrong with the present one then you can deal with it if you have a positive attitude. The problem is you're taking your critical spirit with you.

You can have all kinds of complaints against your first wife and leave her and try to get another wife who's more perfect than your first wife and after a few years or few months, you're finding all the same faults in that second wife. It was the critical spirit that moves with you as you move.

We can go through our whole life like that unless we've learned to clean the window.

Many years ago, our spiritual master Prabhupada was having a conversation with one of the top men in the Catholic church in France. His name was Cardinal Daniélou. Cardinal Daniélou defended the practice of eating meat and participating in the wholesale slaughter of animals by saying that animals have no metaphysical sense. "We have a metaphysical sense, the animals have no metaphysical sense. That makes us superior. That gives a license to eat their flesh," he said.

Prabhupada took that same argument and he used it in favor of mercy and compassion. Prabhupada said, "what is the meaning of metaphysical? Physical is this physical world and meta means above. One who has a metaphysical sense should be able to see above the physical body. Should be able to see that that's only the covering, that's only the vehicle. If I have a metaphysical sense, I can see the animating driving that is an eternal spirit soul, part and parcel of God."

To say that the animals have no soul is the rationalization of the meat eater. It would be more difficult to eat the animal if we acknowledged that the animal, in fact, has a soul. When we say the animal has a soul we are in a sense repeating ourselves, because the word anima comes from the Latin animus, which means soul.

As soon as we cease the practice of eating meat, it becomes immediately apparent to us that the animals are spiritual beings just like we are. In fact, having a sense of the metaphysical sense should lead humans not to victimize or terrorize, but in fact to be stewards of the animals, as big brothers would be to little brothers.

As soon as we cease the practice of slaughtering animals, it's immediately apparent to us that they are spiritual beings very little different from us. We eat, they eat. We sleep, they sleep. We mate, they mate. We defend, they defend.

What is it that's different about us that the animal has no soul and we have a soul? Nothing, practically speaking. They also have the right to pursue liberty and happiness in their own way.

Here's a picture I threw in of one of our llamas. On sunny days like today -- I'm sorry the projector is kind of dull, and I may have to change the lamp. That picture there is of a llama lying on the back with front legs and back legs just spread out. No beach-lying bikini girl would be enjoying catching a few rays as much as this llama is.

Are you going to tell me that that llama doesn't have a soul? That it doesn't enjoy exercise? That it doesn't enjoy sunlight? That it doesn't enjoy relationships? That it doesn't enjoy a good meal? No.

One who realizes it, in fact, wherever there's life, there's spirit, there's parts of God. For that person, nobody is put into difficulty. No other living being suffers unnecessarily on account of a spiritually evolved person. If we going to err, let's err on the side of mercy rather than on the side of cruelty.

I heard a story of about a South Indian Brahmin, a young Turk who envisioned himself as being the head of the local temple in due course of time. He was rushing down the street in order to get to do his puja, his worship in time. There was a dog lying there and he viciously kicked the dog out of the way. Discounting the dog. Turns out that that dog was the head priest at the very same temple in his last life.

He had been condescending and insensitive and absorbed in his own self. As a result of his karma, he took his next birth as a dog. This new head priest of the temple kicked the dog, who, in fact, was the head priest of the temple in his last life.

What am I saying? We don't know the other person's whole story. He wanted to be the head of the temple and he kicked the former head of the temple. I don't know about you, but I'm going to keep my Windex handy, so that I see and respect every living being, whether in the body of a dog, or an ant, or a human being.

People are quick in this age to find fault, to be critical if someone's not just like them. Have you ever heard anyone talking, "if I were them?" You ever heard that catch phrase? Here's some of the things that would follow.

"If I were them, I'd never wear those clothes. If I were them, I'd never send my kids to that school. If I were them, I wouldn't drive that car. If I were them, I wouldn't take a vacation in this down economy." Here's the key. You're not them.

You don't know what you would do if you were them because you haven't walked in their shoes. How someone spends their money, what kind of a car they drive, what kind of a house they live in, when and where they take their vacation, it's none of my business.

I have a hard enough time trying to run my own life without trying to run someone else's life. It's said that one of the best ways to keep our minds clean is to mind our own business. Don't be nosy. Nosy people are critical people.

I heard this joke about three ladies in church. The preacher was giving one of the old fashioned fire and brimstone lectures. He started off saying anyone who smokes and drinks and takes drugs, they're going to hell. The ladies were back there, "tell it, preacher, tell it, preacher. Amen, amen."

Then the preacher said anyone who commits adultery and fornication, they're doomed. The ladies said, "amen, hallelujah. Tell it like it is, preacher." Then the preacher said, those who talk about people behind their backs, those who perform character assassination, who talk and spread untruths about people who are not present, they are also doomed. The ladies got very quiet.

They looked at each other and they said, "He stopped preaching and now he's just meddling."

We want all the details. We want the latest dope, the latest dirt. We want the scoop. Not so that we can find out what the problem is and render help or service to that person. No, we just want to run with it to our gossipy friends. Pssst, pssst, pssst. Did you hear about so and so, and so and so, and such and such?

If we're spiritual aspirants, if we want to become the best that God intends us to be, when someone asks the question, "have you heard the latest scuttlebutt?" Our answer should be, "No, I didn't hear, and I don't want to hear, because my ears are not trash receptacles, and my body is not a trashcan to be poisoned."

Someone says, "if I resist the overtures of my friends in that way, I'll be lonely. My friends will leave me." I'd rather be lonely than poisoned. I'd rather be lonely than miss the great things that God has in store for me.

If your friends are critics and fault finders and gossips, you need to find some new friends. You don't want that to rub off on you.

Well, if I walk out on my friends they'll talk about me. Let me tell you a secret. They're already talking about you. If they'll talk about someone else in your presence who is not there, I guarantee you, when you're not there, they're talking about you to other people.

God will never promote a critical spirit. God will never favor those who're nosy and talk about other people behind their backs.

I'll give you a little history about Hare Krishna movement. Things are not like this anymore. Devotees are much more mature. But I was present at the Berkley's San Francisco temple in 1975 to 1978. We had a number of successes and in fact we were known amongst all the temples in Americas having great spirit and great harmony. I had been sent some wonderful leaders, some mature people and we worked very synchronously together.

Now, somehow or the other, in 1977, our leadership at the time called GBC in its infinite wisdom decided that they would send the number one known troublemaker in the whole society to come and be in-charge of the Berkley temple and his name was Hansa Dhutta.

Hansa Dhutta had a history. He started out in Berkley actually and he had a history of fighting with the local people and then he moved to Montreal and he had a history of dissension and sowing discord, he went to England he'd sowed discord, he went to Germany, he went to India. And where ever he went, he always fought and sowed discord. He ended up in a little island on the other side of the world called Sri Lanka. In those days it was Ceylon.

Prabhupada told Hansa Dhutta, because you always criticize everyone, you always complain of everyone, Prabhupada told, "You go to Sri Lanka and no one will bother you there." Of course, the other side of that, the other meaning of that is you won't bother anyone else.

Anyway, after Prabhupada passed away, the GBC sent Hansa Dhutta to come and be in charge of the Berkley temple and immediately the backbiting, the betrayals, the back stabbing, the slander started. I wanted to work with him. I thought we were all on the same team, we work for the same team, we work for the God and help our spiritual master's mission.

But, no matter how much I exerted myself and how much I tried to co-operate, after about three months, I saw this wasn't going to work out.

So I went to him and said, "I can't stand it. I tried to cooperate with you but I cannot work in this atmosphere. I'm leaving." His answer was, "I'm surprised you stayed this long." He said, "Before I came, I already decided that your program is too successful, you're too well-known, you're getting too much power. I had already decided it was either going to be you or me."

I said, "Thanks. If you'd told me that three months ago, I would have saved lot of trouble, a lot of time and energy."

Soon after he caused havoc in the Berkeley temple, he had lost his high position, he was removed from his place. The latest news I got about him some years ago was that he had a major heart attack and he was living in a trailer park in Northern California.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that everybody that slanders gets a heart attack and lives in a trailer park. I'm not even saying it's a bad thing to live in a trailer park. But I'm just saying that anyone who has a critical and a judge-mental spirit, especially towards those who're doing what Krishna or God has called them to do, steps out of the circle of God's protection.

This is an instance 500 years ago. A Muslim born saint named Hari Das Thakur was chanting, "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare. Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare," 23 hours a day leaving only half hour to eat and half an hour to sleep, he chanted the names of God and he got great fame as a saint.

But another Muslim named Ramachandra Khan was envious why he should get so much fame for chanting a "Hindu" name of God. So he hired the most beautiful prostitute in the area to approach Hari Das Thakur, who was a young man, in the twilight hours and to seduce him and spoil his reputation.

Not only was Hari Das Thakur not seduced by the beautiful prostitute but she converted, she experienced a change of heart, and as you can see from the picture, she surrendered and asked him to be her guru. She gave up all her beautiful clothes, all her jewels. She gave up her former waywardness of lifestyle. She became his disciple.

When he quit the place, she sat on his dais with the japa bag in her hands and became known far and wide as a great Vaishnavi saint.

Ramachandra Khan who had conspired against the devotee of Krishna, he was discovered to be embezzling the funds, the tax funds that he was trusted to collect. His house, all of his wealth was confiscated by the government and he and his family was thrown to jail.

So, I don't know about you, but I have a difference of opinion with someone I'm not going to go around bad mouthing. I need God's protection. I need his wisdom to make good decision. I need his strength to overcome enemies.

Don't pick on people. Don't jump on other people's failure. Don't criticize their faults unless of course you want the same kind of treatment.

Everything we do, every act we do, it's like we're planting a seed. If we do acts of compassion and respect and helpfulness, we'll experience those same things coming full circle in our lives.

On the other hand, if we're critical, if we're judgmental, if we're fault finders, then we'll find that these things have a way of boomeranging back on us.

Some people build a whole movement on negatives. Have you noticed that the greatest acrimony is between married people, that the greatest bitterness and hatred is between different branches of the same religion. Because people have gotten so focused on one or two negative points, their perception is distorted. If we just change those one or two things, everything will be all right and they just completely discount thousands and thousands and thousand of good things.

I don't stand before you claiming to be perfect. Every speech I give, every talk I give is not perfect, every statement is not perfect, every deed I do is not all perfect, every thought, every mood I have they're not all perfect. But I do know this is that I'm serving God to the very best of my ability. I am trying to do what he has called me to do.

If we concentrate on the log in our own eyes rather than become preoccupied in the speck of someone else's eyes, we will have a lot less time to be critical and judgmental. We have got enough to do to get our own house in order without worrying about everybody else.

The reason that we are here in this material world. We've got fires here all over the whole



state of Utah is in a state of conflagration. I have got news for you. This entire world is described in the Sanskrit as samsara. We're living in a forest fire. Whether there's fires in the BLM Land or not, we're always in a fire. We're being consumed by the fire of time and we'll all come to the point where we'll burn to death by time and tide and circumstances.

If we'll realize that we came here in the first place, we left the eternal spiritual world, we left the association of God because of our fault finding mentality. Unlike this material world, there's no fault in God, and there's no fault in His world which is generated from his internal potency. But we managed to somehow rather find fault even with the kingdom of God.

Someone asks, "How did we leave the perfect spiritual world and come here?" Because we can develop such a habit of fault finding that even when there are no faults, we can find faults.

We even find fault with God. We blame our birth, we blame our parents, we blame the economy, we blame circumstances and ultimately we blame God. And folks, that's what puts us here in this material world.

Five-hundred years ago, Lord Chaitanya was an incarnation of God, the devotional incarnation of God, who appeared in Bengal. He assumed the role of a Sannyasi, a renounced monk, a celibate and everything He did was exemplary. He did not deviate from the codes of a Sannyas even one iota. He ate very little, he slept very little and according to the dictates of the order, he kept himself strictly celibate.

But one fault finder, his name was Ramachandra Puri -- we talked about one Ramachandra, this is another Ramachandra. He came to visit Lord Chaitanya and he noticed some ants in the room where Lord Chaitanya was staying.

So he immediately concocted a fault. "This Sannyasi, he puts on a show of eating unspiced kitcheri and simple foods in small quantities but he must be sneaking in and eating in secret sweets, because otherwise why are there ants crawling here and there in his room. [laughs] There was no fault on Lord Chaitanya's part but he managed to find a fault.

So, somehow or other, we manage to be discomforted, we manage to find some critical accusation to level at God on some subconscious level and so we had to come and live in this less perfect material world.

Now, we're not going to get back home back to the spiritual world unless we pay attention and turn around this fault finding mentality.

Although we criticize God and although we turned our back on him and cut ourselves off from his favors, He hasn't turned his favors from us, but we turn the faucet off when we turned away from Him.

God does not favor nosy, judgmental critical people. He doesn't bear us any grudge for

having left his ideal spiritual realm. He doesn't seek to pay us back in kind. He continues to seek to bless us, to redeem us and to bring us back into his eternal association in the spiritual world.

When we get ourselves right with him, the favors that we turn our back on, the faucet that we turned off will be turned on again and we'll experience unimaginable amazing blessings and a wonderful future.

So, let's be the same way as God and not try to pay back our critics and not to fall into the trap of our enemies. Let's be the well wishers of all living beings, even the animals, even our enemies.

Thank your enemies, thank your critics. The more they talk about you, the more that you have the opportunity to take the high role by not paying back. They're not stumbling blocks, but they're stepping stones.

We're asking you today not to have a critical spirit. Even if people are being critical to you, let's not be critical back to them.

Keep our hearts pure. Train ourselves to see the best. There's good in every situation. Learn to magnify the good things. I believe today that if we're resolved, we can wipe away off the windows of hearts such dust that has been holding us back for years.

Let's wipe away judgment, let's wipe away criticism, let's wipe away fault finding, let's make our minds up that these will no longer cloud our vision. Let's go out of here today with clean hearts believing the best, sowing the right seeds, seeing the good, minding our own business. If we do this, we're going to shake off the dust of this material world and go back home to Godhead where life is eternal, full of bliss and knowledge.

If you're inclined to chant with me, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare. Hare Ram, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare.

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