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From Sri Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir!

Date: February 22, 2014

Speaker: HH Bhakti Vijnana Goswami

Verse: Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.7.53-54

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So today we are reading Srimad Bhagavatam Canto 1, Chapter 7 'The Son Of  
Drona Punished', Text 53-54

brahma-bandhur na hantavya ?atatayi vadharhanah  
mayaivobhayam amnatam?paripahy anusasanam  
kuru pratisrutam satyam?yat tat santvayata priyam  
priyam ca bhimasenasya?pañcalya mahyam eva ca

Translation: The Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna said: A friend of a brahmana is not to be killed, but if he is an aggressor he must be killed. All these rulings are in the scriptures, and you should act accordingly. You have to fulfill your promise to your wife, and you must also act to the satisfaction of Bhimasena and Me.

Purport: Arjuna was perplexed because Asvatthama was to be killed as well as spared according to different scriptures cited by different persons. As a brahma-bandhu, or a worthless son of a brahmana, Asvatthama was not to be

killed, but he was at the same time an aggressor also. And according to the rulings of Manu, an aggressor, even though he be a brahmana (and what to speak of an unworthy son of a brahmana), is to be killed. Dronacarya was certainly a brahmana in the true sense of the term, but because he stood in the battlefield he was killed. But although Asvatthama was an aggressor, he stood without any fighting weapons. The ruling is that an aggressor, when he

is without weapon or chariot, cannot be killed. All these were certainly perplexities. Besides that, Arjuna had to keep the promise he had made before Draupadi just to pacify her. And he also had to satisfy both Bhima and Krsna, who advised killing him. This dilemma was present before Arjuna, and the solution was awarded by Krsna."

HH Bhakti Vijnana Goswami: Hare Krishna. First of all I would like to seek blessing of all the senior Vaisnavas, devotees, assembled here especially Srila Prabhupada's disciples. It's very impudent of me to speak in front of such an august assembly, but somehow or other I was pushed into this strange situation. So please be merciful towards me.

And I was asked to speak about the qualities of a leader and I have chosen these verses from the Seventh Chapter of the First Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam because in my opinion, and from my own limited experience, the situation in which Arjuna is, practically a daily affair for a leader. [laughter] When he has to satisfy everyone and the opinions of different people are totally opposite to each other [smiles]. We have to understand that this will happen in our life all the time especially when we lead people, that people whom we have to lead, they will always have different opinions. And what are we supposed to do in such situations?

The perplexity which is described here is of course a very acute one, because depending on the decision of Arjuna, there will be either, in this particular case, it's a question of life and death. It's not an easy solution to make and as I said practically every day or at least weekly we'll have to make difficult decisions. But sometimes during our lifetime we will have to make very difficult decisions when it's really a question of life and death.

And it's unavoidable for a leader to make these decisions and we have to really clearly understand that other people who are dependent on us they depend on the decision which we make. And depending on how correct our decision, a lot is at stake when the leader comes to make such decisions.

So I wanted to speak a little bit about this and perhaps give something which I felt would be necessary to do in this situation and what Arjuna manifested in his behavior.

When we are in such situations there are different options which we could do, easy options, so to speak. You know one easy option when we are in such a perplexity and we don't know what to do you know would be to somehow or

other to follow the majority of people. It's a democratic approach to the solution, you know, and in this particular case there was a clear majority. It was not a vague majority; basically only Bhima was really against Asvatthama. He was saying, "Kill him! Kill him! Kill Him!"

Everyone else was on the side of Draupadi and even Krishna said, "Yes, yes she is right." Of course Krishna is always saying different things. So you never can trust Him [laughter].

So the clear majority was on the side of Draupadi and Yudhisthira, Nakula, Sahadeva, everyone was for sparing his life. But you know this is not always the right solution when we follow the majority. In fact often times it's not at all the right solution and in this particular case actually the wisest one was Bhima. From the practical sense of view, it was Bhima who was right because he said, you know, "If you spare his life, he will do it again." And sure enough he did it again.

Bhima's example, Bhima's rationale, or Bhima's logic was very simple. Bhima said that basically if you hit the snake you have to kill the snake because otherwise the snake will kill you. You cannot leave it half dead. So better to kill him, just to be on the safe side.

From the experience we can see that Bhima even though he was in minority, he was right. He was saying, "Kill him. Kill him! Just in case. You can never trust this guy. This guy is mean, he is heinous. You have to kill him."

You know then there is another option which sometimes we can entertain when we are in such a difficult situation. Sometimes we may opt not to make any decision. This is sometimes an easy way you know when we are perplexity, when the situation is very difficult you know, you have to take this and that. There is a temptation in the heart that, you know, let me abstain.

You know like sometimes when we vote in the GBC, there is abstention and usually it is a very easy way out especially if there is a very difficult decision to be made, "Better I abstain."

But we know this is not a solution, this is not an option, often times we cannot do this and even if we do this we will be guilty. We will be really guilty; we will be responsible for inaction. Inaction is not the way out.

Like in the Mahabharata, when Draupadi with tears in her eyes approached everyone including Bhishma and she said, "You are the elderly Kuru leaders. Please tell me if they are right or if they are wrong." What is the right decision in this case when she was about to be disrobed, she was approaching Bhishma for solution.

And Bhishma's choice was, "Oh! I don't know! Dharma is real subtle, so I don't know, I can't really say." Unfortunately, because he didn't say with all certainty, because he has chosen to be inactive in this very difficult situation, he was deemed guilty. He was basically killed because of this indecision.

And the same may happen with us if we are indecisive in the situations when we have to take a strong decision which may not be very popular.

And then there is another logic which we can adopt, having such a difficult situation. Another logic that we often hear is you can never please everyone.

Right, you know we know this, "you can never please everyone." So let me do something which will be pleasing to me, at least. [laughter] Or let me do something which will be pleasing to Krishna. But here Krishna Himself says

"You have to please both parties."

And as far as pleasing Krishna, how do you know what is pleasing to Krishna? He may say something and then He will say something else. How do you know that this will be pleasing to Krishna, anyway He smiles, He always smiles. [laughter]

You know in this particular situation Draupadi is crying and she is saying "Please, please save him. I cannot. . . my heart will break if you kill him because I know what is the pain which the mother of Asvatthama will experience, so don't do this."

And Bhima with his red eyes, "Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!" And what is Krishna doing in this situation? He is smiling, very nice. [laughter] and He manifests His four arms. Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura says why does He manifest four arms? Just to keep both Draupadi and Bhima away from this situation. [laughter]

And let Arjuna do this, "You have to do it! You have to do it! You have to do it!"

So this is a very difficult decision to be made. You don't know what is going on in the heart of Krishna because He is just smiling and don't trust Him when He says something because He never says something straight. You know, He is bent in three places so He is never straight, Krishna is never straight. You can't trust Krishna.

So what are we supposed to do in such situation? What is the right decision? Is there any other option which you could do?

You can search in the scriptures and see what the scriptures do but we know what is there in the scriptures-one scripture says something and another scripture says something else.

You know you can rely on the law, but there are different laws. Srila Prabhupada explains in the purport that in this particular case one scripture says 'you have to kill', another scripture says, 'no, don't kill.'

Because this is an exceptional case, he is without arms, the laws of Manu says he has to be killed, but another law says no don't kill him. So what to do? What are we supposed to do in such situations?

And there is of course only one solution. And this solution is not an easy one. And this solution is chosen by Arjuna himself. In the next verse Suta explains what he did and why he did what he did. And this is the reason which I wanted to cite to you to explain a very deep philosophical point which is behind this.

In the next verse it is said, harer hardam athasina (SB 1.7.55), the only right solution which is the most difficult one, but the only correct solution in this very difficult case, which will appear in our life for sure is, harer hardam athasina, to know the heart of Hari, of Krishna.

Don't believe His word, don't even try to find the solution in scriptures because you will be bewildered even more. We know if we are trying to find solution in the scriptures, srutayo vibhinna. Yudhisthira Maharaja says that, basically it's an ocean of different statements which often times contradict each other.

In this very difficult situation, there is only one way out, to know within your heart what is there in the heart of Krishna. And how do you know what is there in the heart of Krishna, and how you can be sure what is there in the heart of Krishna? This is a difficult solution.

I know that I am on very unsafe ground. What I am saying now is a very unclear thing. But still there is no any other solution to this dilemma or to this perplexity or these other problems because everything else would be completely wrong.

You know like sometimes the GBC will have to make difficult decisions. Usually the most difficult decisions are related to the lives of people. If you think that luckily enough we are harmless creatures, we don't kill anyone, we are not ksatriyas, no, it's not true! Sometimes the decisions which we make also kill people, sometimes even physically. We make some decision, some strong decision towards somebody and the person may die because of this decision.

Therefore Krishna is very emphatic here in this verse. He says you have to satisfy everyone because they are all devotees. Bhima is devotee, Draupadi is also a devotee, Yudhisthira is a devotee, and you have to satisfy them. Why? Again because lives of people depend on our decision. Sometimes we have to make these very difficult decisions and usually there is totally completely opposite views.

You know, some senior devotee does something which may not be exactly according to the rules of our society and we will have to make this decision what to do with him. Shall we reveal all his inappropriate behavior and there will always be very strong voices: "Let's punish him; this is what you are supposed to do. This is the law. Please abide to the law. This is very important. You are the ruler. You have to uphold the law." And then there will be the other party who will say, "No, no, no, be compassionate. This is the highest dharma. When it comes to the highest dharma, we know that compassion is the

highest dharma, he has done so much, he should be spared, nothing should be done to him. Please leave him alone."

And we know, we are absolutely aware that whatever decision will be it will affect the life of a particular person. What to do in these situations?

As leaders we also have to make similarly difficult decisions, not only on the GBC level, practically in any level we will have to do the decisions which will affect the lives of people under us. Sometimes somebody misbehaves, but at the same time he or she has some credits behind him or her. So what to do? He misbehaves or she misbehaves, some other people suffer. So what to do in this situation?

And as it is said in this difficult situation, there is only one solution, to search within our heart. And to search within our heart we have to be sure that our heart is clean, that the heart is clear. Otherwise if the heart is not clean, if the heart is not clear, then you may search within your heart, but the only thing that you will find within your heart is the dirty things which are there in the heart. You may ultimately come to a conclusion which will be the wrong conclusion.

So the point which I want to make here is that this is the prime duty of a leader is to clean one's own heart on a daily basis every time to make sure that its clean and besides that to make sure that its connected with Krishna so that when it comes to this difficult decision you know for sure within your heart that Krishna wants this.

There is a beautiful story in this regard in Mahabharata, when Maharaja Yudhishthira was supposed to make a very difficult decision. I will not go into the details of this story, but we all know that when Arjuna and the Pandava brothers came from Draupadi's svayamvara, they brought back Draupadi as a trophy, as a prize, and Arjuna was very happy.

When they came to Kunti, Kunti was in complete anxiety. Kunti was waiting and waiting and waiting, it was very late, it was dark already. So she was sitting there in complete anxiety: what will happen, what happened with them, maybe they were revealed, because in the svayamvara they went there disguised.

So when Arjuna appeared there and he said, "Mother, look such a prize we have, such a nice bhiksha we have today, we got a very nice bhiksha, very beautiful bhiksha."

She said, "Oh yes, right, very good, very good, just share it between you. Share it between yourself, whatever it is."

And then she sees what is supposed to be shared. And it's Draupadi. And she is shocked herself, "What did I say!"

And then she approaches Yudhisthira and says, "Please protect my word. Never ever in my life I said a lie! What shall we do in this situation? Please do something about it. Please protect my dharma. If I prove to be wrong, it would mean basically that I violated, broke my dharma. Please do something."

And Maharaja Yudhisthira he smiled and he said, "That's no problem. We will share her. What's the problem?"

She said, "How? How you can share her, she is one woman with five husbands?"

This seems to be a little Kali-yuga kind of arrangement [laughter], not exactly Dvapara-yuga I think. It sounds a little strange. [laughter] But anyway she was happy and all the Pandava brothers they were very happy about this decision because already they were attached to Draupadi.

But then after a couple of days, or may be next day they went to Drupada, the father. Actually the father of Draupadi sent a golden chariot to bring all the Pandava brothers. Drupada asked, they had a conversation. First they revealed who they are because Drupada was in complete anxiety, some unknown brahmanas took his daughter somewhere.

Maharaja Yudhisthira said "Be peaceful, we are Kshatriyas, and this is Arjuna."

He had been in complete anxiety and said, "This is the desire of my heart that my daughter will become the wife of Arjuna!"

And Maharaja Yudhisthira said, "No, how it is according to dharma? It is against dharma. Because I am the elder brother of Arjuna and Arjuna is not supposed to get married before me. So Draupadi should go to me."

Drupada said, "OK, let her go to you. You are elder, if you want to give her to somebody else, do it."

Yudhisthira said, "Yes, she will become the wife of the five of us."

Drupada almost fainted. "I have my chaste daughter and you want to make her into a prostitute. What's going on? How is it not sinful? What are you talking about?"

And Yudhisthira smiled and he said, "Well, my mother said this so we have to obey her order."

Drupada was not convinced at all.

And then Yudhisthira said-this is a very important thing which Yudhisthira said. He said, "Never in my life I have ever said untruth. So my heart is well trained. My heart knows what is truth and what is not truth. And it is capable of distinguishing one from another. It is capable of seeing what is really truth and what is not truth. When my mother pronounced this ruling, my heart didn't object. And when I said, 'Let her become the wife of all of us', my heart was very peaceful. My heart was very clean and I said, 'Yes, that's right.'"

Then he gave the confirmation from the scriptures and Vyasadeva came and it was confirmed. But his initial logic was, my heart tells me this. He doesn't say that my heart tells me this therefore I am right.

Our hearts tell us many things and if we always use this impeccable logic, 'my heart tells me this' and say that this is what we are supposed to do because my heart tells this, we are in trouble.

But what he did say was, "Never in my life did I act unjustly, unrightly. Therefore whatever my heart says now, whatever pleases my heart is according to dharma." So this is ultimately this is the highest expectation leaders have to fulfill, the highest expectation from the subordinates and from Krishna.

When our heart is clean then automatically it's according to the desire of Krishna. As here it is said very clearly in the next verse, harer hardam, the intention of Krishna. Ultimately this is the expectation which is there from Krishna that, and this is bhakti, this is what bhakti is all about. Bhakti is about knowing the heart of Krishna, knowing what is there in the heart of Krishna. Because this is the only thing which will please Krishna. If we do something which is against the heart or the intention of Krishna it will not be pleasing to Krishna. And bhakti as we know is anukulyena krsnanusilanam. This is the essence of bhakti, anyabhilasita sunyam.

So what I want to say is that we have to very conscientiously practice the devotional service again and again and again cleaning our heart. If the heart is not yet clean in such difficult situations the only thing which we can do is to completely surrender to the Lord begging Him to please give me within the heart the right intelligence.

And Krishna Himself says, dadami buddhi yogam tam yena mam upayanti te. He says, "I will give you the intelligence to come to Me."

But He gives a very important condition when He gives this intelligence, tesam satata yuktanam, if somebody is constantly engaged, yuktanam means connecting his intelligence with Krishna. Basically having real Krishna consciousness, if somebody is constantly engaged in this process of connecting, yukatanam means connecting, satatam constantly trying. Now because of the false ego we are separated from the Lord, we are totally deprived of understanding what is going on and what Krishna wants.

But there is a solution for this and this solution is obvious, should be obvious for us tesam satata yuktanam, always trying to be connected with Krishna within our heart and always trying to please Krishna. Then it will be very clear for us. Believe it or not it will be totally clear because Krishna Himself says, "Dadami buddhi yogam tam, I will give you the intelligence, I am your intelligence."

And therefore Srila Prabhupada he gives this beautiful statement at the end. He says that, "And he also had to satisfy both Bhima and Krsna, who advised killing him. This dilemma was present before Arjuna, and the solution was

awarded by Krsna." The solution in such cases is awarded by the Lord Himself, but only to those who are sincere at heart.

Therefore the point which I want to make during this presentation is that this is our prime duty, understanding the responsibility which we have, understanding the grave responsibility, gravest responsibility, that any mistake of ours can badly affect the lives of so many people. Understanding that this is the great responsibility of anyone who is in a position of leadership, no matter what kind of leadership.

Sivarama Maharaja gave the first class in this Leadership Sanga where he said, gurur na sa syat, sva-jano na sa syat, even if you are a husband or a mother or a father, you will have to make these difficult decisions. And to bring your subordinate towards Krishna you have to make right decisions in these difficult situations. What it means is you have to become Krishna conscious yourself. You have to consciously endeavor every day of your life to connect your intelligence with Krishna's intelligence and that's the most difficult thing.

I have to finish my class. The last thing I want to say is that bhakti is the most difficult thing of all the processes. Of course we are used to different statements from Srila Prabhupada-who I am to say something contradictory-Srila Prabhupada always says, "Oh, bhakti is so easy, so easy, just dance and eat and you will dance your way to Godhead, no problem."

And Krsna Ksetra Prabhu in the second beautiful lecture was saying that yes this is the beauty of a leader to make it look like it's very easy. [laughter] He said facilitate, this is the facilitation. Yes its true you have to make it look like its easy but bhakti is not easy, it's the most difficult process because if you go to the Himalayas and you are sitting there in a cave, nobody depends on you, maybe some spiders depend on you. Nobody else.

But bhakti means we are together, bhakti means, we are serving the people, we are serving the Supreme Lord and we have to serve them with this wisdom within the heart. Otherwise we will commit grave mistakes and we will go to

hell.

We will have to really pray in our heart and in our mind and this is the most difficult. Why it is the most difficult process because bhakti means pleasing the Lord and how we can please the Lord who is the most intelligent being than ourselves. Can somebody dummy be a real servant? No. To be a real servant you have to be more intelligent than your master. Because the master doesn't have to know what is there within your heart, you have to know what is there within his heart. You have to know his intentions better than he knows. It basically meant that to be a devotee you have to be more smart than Krishna Himself. Good luck! [applause] Basically that's what it is, this is what we are supposed to do, being devotees of the Lord, this is what bhakti means, anukulyena krsnanusilanam.

So we have to be really aware, responsible, what the responsible duty it is to be a leader and to conscientiously do all within our power to really fulfill our responsibility or to act accordingly.

So thank you very much. Srila Prabhupada ki jaya!

Any questions?

Mataji: Thank you, Maharaja, for your important points for a pure devotee leader in direct connection with Krishna which of course is where we all aim to be. I just want to mention that for the small group of devotees who are like me, who are not pure devotees, how important it is to not isolate ourselves in our prayers to Krishna, but to take good counsel of the devotees around us because we have seen that tendency happened and play havoc. And also you were saying when we have to take a decision that it's a faulty thing to take no decision but sometimes we have to step back and give it more time, sometimes we are forced into thinking that it's now or never, now we have to take the decision. But sometimes we don't have all the facts and we really need to. . . .

HH Bhakti Vijnana Maharaja: But sometimes we have to make decision now or never. Like in this particular case also, and I said Krishna luckily enough doesn't give such difficult tests to us every day but please be sure that he will give such difficult tasks to us sooner or later. We will have to make decisions.

And what you said is very much correct, we have to be listeners. There is a nice seminar which is given during this Leadership Sanga about the ability to listen by Vrajalila Mataji. How important it is for a leader to have very attentive ears and listen to others. But at the same time definitely we have to have

very attentive ears to listen Krishna within our hearts. Ultimately we have to really conscientiously try to develop this ear within our heart.

Jahnudvipa Das: When Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that by this process of bhakti yoga, you can know me beyond doubt, can we trust that statement? [laughter]

HH Bhakti Vijnana Maharaja: Well, if after this lecture you will start doubting everything which Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita I think I did the greatest disservice by telling what I told. (laughs) Absolutely, you know, but what I meant to say Krishna definitely gives straight statements in the Bhagavad Gita as well but He also says some statements which are not so straight in Bhagavad Gita

When Arjuna wants to know what shall I do, please tell me definitely what shall I do, you know, Krishna says well you can do this, you choose, this is good, this is also good, please do it and so and then He says at the end, yathecchasi tath? kuru (Bg 18.63), do whatever you like.

You know there was a nice little story from the life of Prabhupada. One man in India came to him and said you know my favorite verse of Bhagavad Gita, this is the favorite verse of mine, do whatever you like, Krishna says. This is the best verse. [laughter] Krishna says this, you do whatever you like, I told you, now you do whatever you like.

But at the end He says sarva dharman parityajya, man mana bhava mad bhakto mad yaji mam namaskuru.

So definitely Krishna says straight things there and Prabhupada is definitely very straight when it comes to this. So if you are in doubt, then listen to Prabhupada, he will say something. But then you know why Krishna says this because He wants to test us and the test will come, the test of our own intelligence and the intelligence will be developed enough to make the right decision. Therefore it's buddhi yoga, we have to really connect our intelligence, we have to develop our intelligence, that's the beauty. Srila Prabhupada says this is the buddhi yoga.

I guess I have to finish. Thank you very much.

Srila Prabhupada ki jaya!