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From Sri Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir!

Date: February 24, 2014

Speaker: HH Bhakti Vinoda Swami

Subject: S.B. 1.2.16

HH Bhakti Vinoda Swami: We are reading today from SB, Canto 1, Chapter 2, text 16.

[śuśrūsohśraddadhānasya](#)

[vāsudeva-kathā-rucih](#)

syān [mahat-sevayāviprāh](#)

[punya-tīrtha-nisevanāt](#)

(Collective chanting and word to word meaning is read)

TRANSLATION

O twice-born sages, by serving those devotees who are completely freed from all vice, great service is done. By such service, one gains affinity for hearing the messages of [Vāsudeva](#).

PURPORT

The conditioned life of a living being is caused by his revolting against the Lord. There are men called [deva](#), or godly living beings, and there are men called asuras, or demons, who are against the authority of the Supreme Lord. In the Bhagavad-[gītā](#) (Sixteenth Chapter) a vivid description of the asuras is given in which it is said that the asuras are put into lower and lower states of ignorance life after life and so sink to the lower animal forms and have no information of the Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead. These asuras are gradually rectified to God consciousness by the mercy of the Lord's liberated servitors in different countries according to the supreme will. Such devotees of God are very confidential associates of the Lord, and when they come to save human society from the dangers of godlessness, they are known as the powerful incarnations of the Lord, as sons of the Lord, as servants of the Lord or as associates of the Lord. But none of them falsely claim

to be God themselves. This is a blasphemy declared by the asuras, and the demoniac followers of such asuras also accept pretenders as God or His incarnation. In the revealed scriptures there is definite information of the incarnation of God. No one should be accepted as God or an incarnation of God unless he is confirmed by the revealed scriptures.

The servants of God are to be respected as God by the devotees who actually want to go back to Godhead. Such servants of God are called mahātmās, or tīrthas, and they preach according to particular time and place. The servants of God urge people to become devotees of the Lord. They never tolerate being called God. [ŚrīCaitanyaMahāprabhu](#) was God Himself according to the indication of the revealed scriptures, but He played the part of a devotee. People who knew Him to be God addressed Him as God, but He used to block His ears with His hands and chant the name of Lord [Viṣṇu](#). He strongly protested against being called God, although undoubtedly He was God Himself. The Lord behaves so to warn us against unscrupulous men who take pleasure in being addressed as God.

The servants of God come to propagate God consciousness, and intelligent people should cooperate with them in every respect. By serving the servant of God, one can please God more than by directly serving the Lord. The Lord is more pleased when He sees that His servants are properly respected because such servants risk everything for the service of the Lord and so are very dear to the Lord. The Lord declares in the Bhagavad-gītā (18.69) that no one is dearer to Him than one who risks everything to preach His glory. By serving the servants of the Lord, one gradually gets the quality of such servants, and thus one becomes qualified to hear the glories of God. The eagerness to hear about God is the first qualification of a devotee eligible for entering the kingdom of God.

HH Bhakti Vinod Swami: Om Tat Sat.

*om ajnana-timirandhasya
jnananjana-salakaya
caksur unmilitam yena
tasmai sri-gurave namah*

*nama om visnu-padaya krsna-presthaya bhū-tale
srimate bhaktivedanta-svamin iti namine*

*namas te sarasvate deve gaura-vani-pracarine
nirvisesa -sūnyavadi-pascatyā-desā-tarīne*

*jaya sri-krishna-chaitanyaprabhūnityānanda
sri-adwaita gadadharashrivāsadi-gaura-bhakta-vrinda*

*hare kṛ ṣ ṇa hare kṛ ṣ ṇa
kṛ ṣ ṇa kṛ ṣ ṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma
rāma rāma hare hare*

*nama om visnu-padaya krsna-presthaya bhuta-tale
srimate Jayapathaka-svamin iti namine*

I am here sitting on this *asana* sitting with great nervousness and fear on the insistence of the organisers, especially Laxmimoni mataji, insisted several times that I should speak and I am seeking the blessings of many exalted stalwart Vaishnavas, senior Vaishnavas, who are my Spiritual Masters who are also here that I may be blessed to say, speak a few words in keeping with the wonderful spirit of the purports of Srila Prabhupada.

So this sloka is specifically selected to reflect something about leadership. Prabhupada is explaining so brilliantly in the purport, what is the meaning of respecting a servant of the lord. What is the meaning of taking advantage of the association of a pure servant of the Lord.

In the modern world, people have started speaking in leadership about servant leadership. Sometime back I gave a little session to some students in management. It was about servant leadership and I got to refer to somethings from big companies who offer this as courses. I was amazed to see an abstract that the first thing in the abstract said that servant leadership is built on self-awareness and selflessness. Then servant leaders know how to bring about unity in a diverse group. You name it, everything that Prabhupada has spoken about, asking us to focus, was there. I was wondering how there would be those type of servants, those type of servant leaders, because the central point is missing and the central point is, being Krishna conscious. Being centered on Krishna, being centered on Krishna's pure servant. These things were obviously missing and I doubt that they would make any great progress using servant leadership. Maybe they would get someother type of material benefit, but our whole philosophy and leadership, that Prabhupada gave us so closely intertwined with the Srimad Bhagavatam, you can see all these things revealed in the Srimad Bhagavatam so wonderfully. Prabhupada brings those things out in his purports so clearly, practically, that we could endeavor to do those things. He also exhibited that quality openly and this is the way to do it.

It is very challenging to be a servant, to have the mood of the servant and also adopt the mood of a leader. Sometimes we think, they are both anathema, they don't go together. In the world, people are all wanting to be leaders. They want to enjoy lordship. They want to enjoy mastership. They want to lord over people and many of them they do that for the sake of getting a subtle happy thrill of being able to control others and whatever servant leadership or whatever they may advocate, ultimately it is meant for them to enjoy leadership. But actually servant leadership as Prabhupada has mentioned here is sacrifice, is about giving yourself to others. First be a servant and leadership follows as a byproduct of it.

I am reminded of a small instance in Mukunda Maharaja's book, that Second Avenue book, in which there is a description of Prabhupada making his first break through. In America, when Mukunda Maharaja is Michael Grant, is arranging that beautiful musical show and all sorts of musicians are getting together and Prabhupada is very majestically walking on the stage. He asks Allen Ginsberg to lead the kirtan, Hare Krsna maha mantra, because he is their Guru, and then exactly when everybody is following he takes it over from him and leads the kirtan and has everybody listen to him. Then he gives a short talk on the holy name and sankirtan and then he goes off the stage and another music concert resume. Srila Prabhupada is happy, he has made his break-through.

The next day Srila Prabhupada is walking up the stairs in his little room and a person comes running, holding the balance rail, running up the staircase: Are you not Allen Ginsberg's Guru? Are you not Allen Ginsberg's Guru? And Prabhupada turns around very slowly in his very prestigious, majestic, dignified way and looks at him in the eye and he says I am nobody's Guru, I am everybody's servant and then he hangs his head lower, it is so difficult to be a servant. This is Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada before he started the movement. The Founder-Acharya saying I am no body's Guru, I am everybody's servant. And who is he saying this to? He is saying this to somebody insignificant, may be a reporter. I don't remember. And Mukunda Maharaja by that time has come close by and he is looking at Prabhupada saying this, hanging his head lower and saying, it's not easy to be a servant and he is amazed. This is Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. This is his understanding of being a leader. This is how he preached. This is the internal attitude he had before he started this movement. See.

So being a leader means first internally accepting that I am a servant and it means anything and everything you may have to do, whatever the situation demands.

I heard from another devotee here, very senior Prabhupada's disciple, that he said in the 22nd avenue, in the initial days there was only one bathroom and toilet. I don't know, because I am just recollecting what he told me. And he said that some of those residents were the early followers of Prabhupada and they also came to use the toilet and bathroom in the morning and Prabhupada stood in queue with his gamcha and his suchi kit waiting to use the toilet. After one or 2 days they realized that may be Swamiji should be going first and they said 'Swamiji, you can go ahead' and Prabhupada went. He is ready to do anything to train people. Being an amazing servant, sacrificing. This is the essence of servant leadership. And I don't think people in the outside world are going to do all these things. Servant leadership is apt, it actually befits what the Bhagavatam is saying, what Prabhupada has told us to do. And that's what our business is. Our business is first to become servants. And that is a difficult job. Because we are so conditioned to control, to lord over and internally there is a great war. It is easy to profess servant hood but to actually internally practice it and externally manifest it is a real challenge. That's why we are in this great movement which affords us that wonderful opportunity by associating with great souls, we'll be able to develop, it says here, *punya sravana kirtana*, where is it,

[śuśrūsohśraddadhānasya](#). [śuśrūsoh](#) means actually one is engaged in hearing and [śuśrūsoh](#) also means serving, very carefully serving and accepting that servant hood.

So being a leader is an essential ingredient of everybody in the movement. We are all invested with that mandate. We have to be leaders. See, this is Lord Chaitanya's instructions:

amara ajnaya guru hoi tara ei desa

And when you preach, when you give the message of godhead you get respect, you get honored automatically. In India at least anybody who speaks Bhagavad Gita, wears a little saffron cloth, he gets a lot of respect. Very easily you get respect, people bow down to you and then you have to adjust that very nicely, internally. Now, that people offer you respect it means that you are in a very responsible position. You have to offer leadership. Inherently when people offer respect, we have to offer them Kṛṣṇa consciousness, offer them instruction, offer them direction, be a leader.

Everytime somebody offers you respect we are reminded about our responsibility. This is the meaning of servant leadership. That's why, Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswathi Thakur, when his disciples paid obeisances to him, he said, Dasosmi. I am your servant. Really feeling like that. We heard how Prabhupada broke down when he spoke and he said actually all of you have been sent by my Spiritual Master to assist me. You are my Spiritual Masters. A genuine feeling. So that is why Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada, his instructions should be very carefully followed and he can pave the way for us going back to godhead. In fact, he can personally deliver all of us, if we simply follow his instructions.

There is an instance in Ramanuja Acharya's life. Want to share that with you, that he was speaking on the Ramayana and all his disciples, some of his key disciples sitting very close to him and he was speaking on the Ramayana he was speaking about how Vibhishana came for shelter from Lord Ramachandra. And Lord Ramachandra was with all his chief Vanara kings, Vanara leaders and he was finding out how he should actually cross the ocean and go ahead. At that time Vibhishana came and he had by his mystic powers suspended the sky with four others, who had departed from Ravana and they had come to surrender themselves to Lord Ramachandra, a great risk he had taken. Left, his treasury, left his house, left his relatives, left his brother, left his kingdom, left everything and came to surrender to Lord Ramachandra. But Lord Ramachandra kept him standing there and he discussed with others what should we do with this proposal. And as he was describing this, Ramanuja Acharya, one of his chief disciples, he is called (?), I think, he is otherwise called Kuresha, he got up hearing that and he started mumbling, there is no chance, he dusted his backside and he wanted to move out from the lecture. He was just mumbling and said no hope, no chance and he was just moving out, then Ramanuja stopped him and said 'Where are you going?' He said: I don't think I have any hope. Here is Vibhishana, he has taken a great risk, he belongs to the enemy camp, he is a demon and he is coming forward and saying I surrender to you and Ramachandra is considering it. He is not accepting him immediately. Then what is the hope for me? And then Ramanuja said, Lord Ramachandra is

the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He is Bhagavan, and He is in a position where He has to consult others. I don't have to. I can liberate you if you follow my instructions. This is the meaning of Founder Acharya, that, he can, carry out the order of the Lord, in him is invested the potency to actually deliver.

So wonderfully Ramanuja carried out his duty of liberating people, bringing them to understand who is Krishna, what are the teachings Krishna has given, and why you should surrender to Him that the Lord Himself became so amazed. In South India, you have a place called *Thirukkurungudi*, deep south. It is a place where a pastime happened wherein the Lord himself came in front of Ramanuja and said I am so happy and amazed. How is it that you are able to bring so many people to my lotus feet and make them surrender? I want to know and Ramanuja immediately got into the same mood; as though the Lord doesn't know, He knows very well, it's all happening by His mercy. So he also got into the same mood and said well if you want to know that then you have to follow the proper discipline. I'll tell you. He also got into the mood and immediately it is mentioned that the Lord accepted discipleship and in that temple, you will see there is a higher altar for Ramanuja and a lower altar for the deity. And the Lord heard from Ramanuja, the glories of Himself, and the relationship between His servant and Him, and how the Lord is so merciful. All this the Lord Himself heard from Ramanuja. So, this is the meaning of empowered Founder Acharyas.

So Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada also knew. He said, when his disciple asked him Lord Caitanya is the Supreme personality of Godhead, why He couldn't have liberated everybody all around the world and Prabhupada turned round, dug his cane into the ground and said because he wanted me to do it. I am that person. So Prabhupada, not only was an amazing spiritual leader, Founder Acharya, very unique, but he was an amazing servant, very deeply committed to the words and to the instructions of His Guru. So we have to carry out the mandate in that we should also be leaders. We don't have to be a Founder Acharya. We just don't have to be at all. We just have to be leaders in order to perpetrate these wonderful instructions given by Srila Prabhupada. So beautifully made practical by His own life and within the beautiful institution that he has crafted to perpetrate this into posterity, into the future. So, each one of us is a very important element that we have to accept internally leadership. We have to accept deeply, internally servitorship, understand it and execute Krishna Consciousness, preaching, collectively together with everybody. That's what I think is the most important thing. Our movement is *sankirtan* movement:

Bahubir militwa, kirtayante sankirtana ucyate

Bahubir militwa kirtayante

Many people get together and glorify. *Kirti* means fame. *Kirtan* means singing the fame and the glory of the lord. *Sankirtan* means, *San* means everybody together singing.

Bahubir militwa kirtayante

Many people get together and glorify. That's the essence. If we do *some* kirtan somewhere, don't do *some* kirtan, we have to do *sankirtan*. There is a difference between *some* kirtan, this phenomenon also we can see, that we know Prabhupadas books, we know His instructions, we use His institution, we use His resources, and get away, move on and do our own kirtan. *Some* kirtan—it won't work. It has to be *sankirtan*. In all these seminar and all these wonderful programs, that we heard, we heard repeatedly that it has to be done together. It has to be done together.

Bhakti Vijnana Maharaja was giving a very wonderful seminar on anartha nivritthi and how leaders have to atleast be in the stage of anartha nivritthi, clear in the heart and that he was saying that we must practice *Sadhana* in the association of devotee. If we practice *sadhana* on your own, we can get swept off your feet. We have to do that together.

Similarly I remember Ravindrasvarup prabhu, here once speaking, very long back, had an amazing realization. He said our movement is *sankirtan* and ours is not an individual enterprise. We are all going back to godhead together, not alone. We are facilitating each other's process of going back to godhead. So ours is *sankirtan* governance. Our leadership is together. We are not having one person whom we have to listen to like a monarchy. Ours is not even a democracy. It's not that our GBC men are democratic, actually ours is *sankirtan*, its not democracy. It's a *sankirtan* governance.

We are all pronouncing, sitting together and deciding, then pronouncing, that particular type of a resolution and then practicing it ourselves and jointly and having everybody else practice it, and let it flow down the rank and file. So everything we do is *sankirtan*. In our ILS we discuss about team work. Teamwork does not mean just ordinary teamwork. *Sankirtan* is something that gives you an affect that is greater than synergy, greater than symbiosis. It is *sankirtan* effect. Prabhupada wanted us to conquer the whole world, being together, performing *sankirtan* and conveying the message of Krishna to everybody. So we have to do things together, we have to lead together, we have to glorify Krishna together, we have to fight problems together. We have to take prasadam together, we have to read Prabhupadas books together it is all *sankirtan*. That's leadership. It's a new leadership with a new age, *sankirtan* governance. So, this is Prabhupadas great contribution and that is genuinely servant leadership and that is what is spoken about in this verse.

Krishna is saying my servants are very dear to me. They are worshipable. Prabhupada is saying here, it is through the servants that you can go back to godhead. If you are serious about going back to Godhead, you should serve these pure servants. That's our great fortune that we are all able to take part in service to Srila Prabhupada in his mission. That's the greatest fortune. That simply by serving Prabhupada, serving Prabhupadas mission, carrying out things that Prabhupada asked us to do, how evermuch of a struggle it may be, that's our success. Staying together and carrying out the instructions of Prabhupada. In it lies success.

So although we are all together here and we like that so much, then we go back to our individual places, then sometimes we feel lonely, sometimes we have difficulties and

problems, and sometimes we seek shelter, we seek association, we seek the help of others and it's difficult. It is difficult. Because the world is full of people who all want to be masters.

Like Niranjana Maharaja was saying in his seminars, that he recollected how in the purport Prabhupada said, the world is almost full of envious people and he said that if you are envious you can't take care of devotees, you can't take care of others. In this way, it is difficult. But then if we persevere and try our best Srila Prabhupada is very kind and his mercy is very expansive and if we struggle to execute some of the things that Prabhupada has told us, simply our desire to endeavor itself, is a successful beginning.

In this way we can show the world what really leadership means. I think all ISKCON followers, Prabhupadas followers have the great opportunity to become genuine leaders and Srila Prabhupadas movement should show the rest of the world what leadership really means and how leadership can never be executed without Krishna in the center and how we can all live together by serving each other, and jointly become leaders. It's participating management and that's what is sankirtan.

Om Tat Sat.

Srila Prabhupada ki jay!

Hare Krsna. I will take one or 2 questions and please be kind to me. Don't give me one of those stump the Swami questions. Please. No 1. Suresvar prabhu and No. 2 Prithu Prabhu and then. Is there a mike?

Question from Suresvar Prabhu: Maharaja, about how we should all become leaders, when I repeat that message in our Founder Acharya seminar, I find very often devotees are intimidated by that. They are intimated when Prabhupada says, "You must all become Guru, everyone of you," he said this many times. So why do you think we are intimidated by that, and what to do about it?

HH Bhakti Vinoda Swami: I think we are intimidated by that because of our...Oh, I am sorry, Suresvar prabhu said that in his seminars that he does on Founder Acharya-Srila Prabhupada, often he tells people that Prabhupada mentioned that you should all become Gurus, you should become leaders in the future and expand the movement and often he finds that people become intimidated by that. So I am saying that yes, a position of responsibility is always intimidating, number 1. In the material world the position of responsibility is something that people don't want. And many leaders, you'll see that don't have the second line of people enthusiastic about taking responsibility. True. And I think that it is partly because of the fact that we equate that type of responsibility with the type of responsibilities that we take up in the material world. To say flat, *un-Krishna conscious* leadership is intimidating. If we have full faith and if we are endeavoring to be as Krishna conscious as possible, this is Krishna's instruction to Arjuna:

cetasa sarva-karmani

*mayi sannyasya mat-parah
buddhi-yogam upasritya
mac-cittah satatam bhava*

Before that he said,

mac-cittahsarva-durgani
mat-prasadattarishyasi
athacettvam ahankaran
nasroshyasivinankshyasi

All obstacles that come in front of you, you will be able to tide over them by always being conscious of Me,

*cetasa sarva-karmani
mayi sannyasya mat-parah
mac-cittah satatam bhava*

Always remain in consciousness of Me, that is the factor. I think if we practice that and try to be Krishna conscious, then we can accept this responsibility. Another angle is we should accept the responsibility so we will think of Krishna. You know, if you don't it is difficult to actually take up the challenge of being Krishna conscious. We have to take up these responsibilities, be leaders, reciprocate, make mistakes, learn and then increase our Krishna conscious. Internally there is progress and externally there is benefit for the movement. Prabhu.

Question from HG Prithu Prabhu: There is a beautiful story in terms of Srila Prabhupada feeling himself, considering himself as a servant. In Sweden, in Uppsala, in a university, Srila Prabhupada gave a lecture to students and it was about the 4 classes of men. First class men, second class, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Sudra. So when Srila Prabhupada asked for questions, one student stood up and he said, 'Ofcourse you think you are first class, sitting on a high seat, being garlanded, surrounded by followers. You think you are first class. I was so angry, I would have liked to jump up and beat this man up. I was so angry. So, Prabhupada, he was shocked, I could see, he was shocked when he heard that somebody was thinking him to be in this mindset. Srila Prabhupada said, 'No, (like this: action), no, I am not first class, I am actually fifth class. There was dead silence in the room. And then Prabhupada said, his voice was faltering, he said because 'I am the servant of everyone' and then two big tears came down from his spectacles. It was awesome. There was dead silence in the room, the man was ashamed. He sat down. Everybody looked back to him as if he were demon. Srila Prabhupada put him to shame with his humility.

(Applause)

HH Bhakti Vinoda Swami: Thank you very much Prithu prabhu.

Question from audience: Thank you very much Bhakti Vinoda Swami Maharaja. Wonderful class you have given. First of all I glorify Jayapataka Swami Maharaja who is the servant of servant of Bhakti Vinod Thakur. I just wanted to understand what you said about Prabhupada said that Bhakti Siddhantha Saraswathi Thakur sent all of you, you are my spiritual masters. That I would like to get elaboration of the explanation.

HH Bhakti Vinoda Swami: I think some of the senior devotees over here will be able to give that much better. I am just a grand disciple but they may have a firsthand experience in this. We will hear from HH Kesava Bharati Maharaja.

HH Kesava Bharati Maharaja: Hare Krsna. In Oct 23rd 1972, Vrindavan, Srila Prabhupada was lecturing in the famous nectar of devotion series. And in that lecture, you can look it up in folio if you'd like, He said this: Spiritual Master is to be honored as much as Krishna then He gave the slokas because he is representing Krsna and then he said but Spiritual Master does not think of himself as Krsna. Spiritual Master thinks of himself as the servant of Krishna and all others. Then he said, he thinks, he considers his disciples as his spiritual masters. Reason being, he thinks that Krishna has sent these Spiritual Masters to be trained. My duty is to train them, therefore I am their servant. And then he said, in this way the advanced devotee knows how to treat other devotees, that's the reason because he is considering himself their servant because he has to train them according to Krishna's will.

HH Bhakti Vinoda Swami: Thank you very much.

Hare Krsna.

Srila Prabhupada ki jai.

Grantharaj Srimad Bhagavatam ki jay.

Nitai Gaur Premanande. Hari Hari Bol.