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From Sri Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir!

Date: February 24, 2014

Speaker: HH Devamrita Swami

Subject: S.B. 5.13.16

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The verse that we have been assigned continuing from before the ILS started is Firth Canto, Chapter Thirteen, "Rahugana converses with Jada Bharata" Text 16

prasajjati kvapi lata-bhujasrayas  
tad-asrayavyakta-pada-dvija-sprhah  
kvacitkadacidhari-cakratastrasan  
sakhyamvidhattebaka-kanka-grdhraih

Translation:

Sometimes the living entity in the forest of material existence takes shelter of creepers and desires to hear the chirping of the birds in those creepers. Being afraid of roaring lions in the forest, he makes friends with cranes, herons and vultures.

Purport:

In the forest of the material world there are many animals and birds, trees and creepers. Sometimes the living entity wants to take shelter of the creepers; in other words, he wants to be happy by being embraced by the creeper-like arms of his wife. Within the creepers there are many chirping birds; this indicates that he wants to satisfy himself by hearing the sweet voice of his wife. In old age, however, he sometimes becomes afraid of imminent death, which is compared to a roaring lion. To save himself from the lion's attack, he takes shelter of some bogus swamis, yogis, incarnations, pretenders and cheaters. Being misled by the illusory energy in this way, he spoils his life. It is said, harim vina mrtim na taranti: no one can be saved from the imminent danger of death without taking shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The word hari indicates the lion as well as the Supreme Lord. To be saved from the hands of hari, the lion of death, one must take shelter of the

supreme Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. People with a poor fund of knowledge take shelter of nondevotee cheaters and pretenders in order to be saved from the clutches of death. In the forest of the material world, the living entity first of all wants to be very happy by taking shelter of the creeperlike arms of his wife and hearing her sweet voice. Later, he sometimes takes shelter of so-called gurus and sadhus who are like cranes, herons and vultures. Thus he is cheated both ways by not taking shelter of the Supreme Lord.”

HH Devamrta Swami: You are in the midst of Jada Bharata’s instruction to Rahugana Maharaj. You know that in the Bhagavad Gita Krishna says, *evam parampara praptam imam rajarsayo viduh* (BG 4.2), this knowledge of Bhagavad Gita is meant for the rulers of society and it is passed down from one saintly ruler to another.

And in the purport Srila Prabhupada explains that the Bhagavad Gita knowledge is meant for the government heads because otherwise how can they give people protection. Protection from what? Especially protection from lust, anger, greed, madness, envy and illusion. That is the number one responsibility of the government.

Rahugana Maharaj has been humbled. A few chapters ago he thought that this personality Jada Bharat was an imbecile, suitable for carrying his palanquin. A few chastising ironic words from Jada Bharat and Rahugana Maharaj immediately understood - I am in the presence of an extraordinary person and he begged for shelter and that begging for shelter means begging for instruction.

In the course of Jada Bharat’s instructing Rahugana Maharaj he is going to give him an extended allegory, a forest of material enjoyment. And the allegory takes several chapters because Rahugana Maharaj wants clarification upon clarification. He wants to really get it. So in the preceding chapter Jada Bharat has introduced this wonderful allegory describing material existence as a forest of illusion. And Rahugana Maharaj is pressing him for more clarification. He wants to make sure that the case is nailed shut. He’s got it in his head and in his heart.

He sees, the king sees yes there is a forest of illusion but now I’d like to understand clearly the path through that forest and also I want not only vision but I want the dynamics, the motivation to make it through that forest. So based on Rahugana Maharaj’s head felt and heart felt investment, Jada Bharat is responding.

So Visvanath Cakravarti Thakur explains in that way, the outlay of the forest has already been given. Now Jada Bharat is going to be even more merciful, after doing the environmental scan, check out where you are residing, check out what's happening around you, now how are you going to make your way through. I'll tell you the path. I'll give you the vision and I'll impart to you the enthusiasm to progress on that path. So this is the glory of Srimad Bhagavatam.

Yet we may think that this chapter, if you read it with submission, the preceding chapter and the one that's coming, you may think this is very relentless, there is no, nothing in material existence is left untouched. All the material shelters are just tossed out, everything. You feel like you are just left with nothing. [chuckles] You feel like everywhere you turn in the material world Jada Bharat has criticized it, blown it up, [chuckles] incinerated it, so what are we going to do? [chuckles]

Material society is ripped apart, material family life is ripped apart, material desires are ripped apart. It is natural that the conditioned soul in this world wants shelter. Jada Bharat is not some kind of negativist. He is exposing that in your helpless condition there is only one real shelter. That is surrender at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

He is not simply saying that in a dogmatic, fanatical way, he is proving it. But the proofs that he is giving they can be a little terrifying to us because we feel like perhaps the very ground under us is being removed, you've got no material standing.

But actually that's a luxurious feeling. You can remember from the beginning of Sri Caitanya Caritamrita where Kaviraja Goswami says that Lord Caitanya is the property of those who are materially exhausted. Definitely by reading these chapters the instructions of Jada Bharat to Rahugana Maharaj you will feel material exhausted, where do I turn? And that is a great achievement. We should relish that opportunity.

One of the inconceivable characteristics of the conditioned soul in Maya is that its not only we cannot perceive the full extent of the forest of illusion. We also cannot perceive how helpless we are. We can't fully appreciate how tiny and helpless we are. Because we have surrounded ourselves with so much bad shelter. It's natural for us to want to take shelter.

The Bhagavatam is not attacking that. What the Bhagavatam is attacking and we may sometimes resent a bit subconsciously, is, it's

attacking the false shelters offered by material existence. This may be difficult for us to see because contemporary life means offering so many artificial and hallucinogenic shelters. That is called progress. You want a succinct definition of human progress from the mundane point of view, it's the proliferation of artificial shelters to make you artificially feel secure and to make you artificially feel hope in material existence and the advancement of human material prowess. Stripped of all that the human being becomes a different creature.

I'd like to explain that there are five basic myths that predominate the consciousness of human beings today and they call this progress and advancement. What are those five myths? Number one, money brings happiness. Now even the cutting edge of material social science knows that's not true. Nevertheless this world is so economically driven that even economics which is considered in the academic world as the 'dismal science' is now elevated to the platform of being the life and soul of human existence.

Top economists are treated like rock stars, the acaryas, the mahajans who can give you the complete necessities of life, not only physically but also psychologically. Economic growth has become the number one focus. That is the first myth that money brings happiness.

Myth number two, technology brings well-being. The more technology, the more prosperous and wholesome your society is, because after all that's what technology is all about, right?

Myth number three, weapons bring security. The more your country spends on weaponry the more secure the people are.

Then myth number fourth, the earth provides unlimited resources for you to exploit. You can depend on that.

And myth number five, after you exploit the unlimited resources that is provided by the earth, the earth provides unlimited room for waste disposal. [laughter]

So armed with these five myths you enthusiastically jump into the forest of material enjoyment and you are ready for action.

We look at the world today we see that, something bewildering has happened amidst all the usual bewilderment. The standard social theory for quite a long time was that any social upheavals are caused by the dispossessed, the poverty stricken people, who

because they don't have the basic necessities of life, they rise up and overturn governments.

Something else has happened in the past twenty years and social scientists are very shocked by this phenomenon. The uprisings, social disturbances in the world are caused by the middle class. They are the ones who are shaking everything up. For two reasons, as they become more prosperous and increase their consumer goods, they make more demands. Look at the transportation system around us, look at the educational system, what is government doing for us. This is the nature of material desire, the more you get the more you want.

The old theory was that to have a peaceful prosperous society you need a good middle class and they will make democracy. They want the good things in life and by being middle class they'll be peaceful, stable and they won't bother anybody. It's the low class you've got to watch out for. They have nothing and therefore they can turn everything upside down.

Anyone who reads Srimad Bhagavatam especially these chapters by Jada Bharat can see the holes in the middle class theory. There is no way that by increasing your material desires you are going to be satiated. Impossible. There's no way -ok now I have got this. My material desires are stable, I don't want anything more. No. The nature of illusion is that the more we get, the more we want. It's the endless quest for material security and stability

So there is no such thing as a stable middle class and many countries of the world are showing that. The uprisings are not the low class or dispossessed or poverty stricken people. The uprisings are caused by the middle class who want more.

Second part of this phenomenon is that when economic hard times come and middle class loses what they have gotten through such hard labor they become very angry. In the Tenth Canto of Bhagavatam Krishna uses this phenomenon in His explanation to His dear most devotees the Gopis, of why He disappeared from them. He points out a social phenomenon. He gives a material example. Someone's poor and may become well off, well established and then they lose all their wealth. They never stop thinking about it. This is the case with the middle class and their uprising.

When they see that we are falling back, our hard gains are being erased they become angry. What does Krishna explain the Bhagavad Gita, contemplating the object of senses, attachment

develops, then lust and from lust must come anger. This basic point is very mysterious for contemporary world. Lust should lead to lust and more lust. And then you feel fulfilled, you feel your life is worthwhile, you have a sense that life is good, my life is progressing nicely. This is the material conception that the expression of lust is beneficial.

Krishna explains in the Bhagavad Gita, as soon as there is lust there must be frustration, anger, there is no way around it because you are not the body, you are not the mind, your dedication to material desires must cause problems. So we can see that in the case of the phenomenon we are describing of the middle class being the ones who are shaking everything up, not the proletariats as Marx predicted, not the poverty stricken persons that we thought to be the constant source of trouble.

Srimad Bhagavatam gives a completely different picture of the human civilization, and it's a completely different picture that we should make sure we appreciate. Let us look at progress, rather than considering how money is supposed to bring happiness, or technology brings prosperity or weapons bring security, so on and so forth. The Bhagavatam is teaching us that real human progress begins when you feel tired of changing bodies. That is real human progress. I am tired of the samsara bija, that seed of material desire that causes me to change one body after another.

You start out with that samsara bija, that seed of material existence and then due to your association with material nature the seed becomes watered, as Krishna explains in Bhagavad Gita, *karanam guna-sango 'sya, sad-asad-yoni-janmasu*(BG 13.22), its not an innocent thing to make your way through life, through material existence. Its not normal, it is not without repercussion, it is not faultless, just by making your way through material existence things happen to you, you are making things happen.

The seed, the samsara bija is being watered just by your making your way through life and trying to have a meaningful life, a life in which you can feel content about. Just by that apparent innocent activity, the seed of material existence becomes watered and then fruit appears, the fruit of happiness and distress and by tasting those fruits you become further bound to material existence and subject to more reactions.

Jada Bharat is going to describe to Rahugana Maharaj that there is nothing wanted about material happiness, its simply captivates you. If you read Bhagavad-Gita what do you see? Krishna is always talking about - rise above happiness and distress, tolerate

happiness and distress, be equipoised amidst happiness and distress because the material happiness agitates the mind, produces false expectations and therefore it's a disturbance as much as material distresses.

So we are through the eyes of Bhagavatam looking at material existence in a completely different way. Just think, the definition of human progress. I got it from Srila Prabhupada, you give credit where credit is due, of course. [chuckles] When a human being feels tired of changing bodies that is real progress. So think about that. It totally redefines your vision of individual and society.

Our two great criticisms of human society today are, number one there is no concept of liberation, no concept of freedom from material existence, generally speaking, what to speak of a methodology of becoming completely free from material existence. Our second complaint is that there is no knowledge of what your next body is going to be. It is not considered a relevant subject matter. So based on these two criticisms, we present Srimad Bhagavatam.

Someone might say how is it that just by developing your consciousness, purifying your consciousness the whole world can become a better place. We look to the supreme example of the topmost devotee, Krishna Himself who came as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to show the full potential of bhakti. We cannot imitate but we are following in the footsteps.

When Lord Caitanya wanted to go to Vrindavan again. His first attempt resulted in His turning back. He took the advice of Sanatana Goswami –“You shouldn't go to Vrindavan with thousands of people. You should go alone or with very few other persons.” So as you know Lord Caitanya returned to Jagannath Puri. It was very important for Him to go to Vrindavan.

So therefore one day He took aside in confidence Svarupa Damodar and Ramananda Raya and explained to them –

“I would really like to go to Vrindavan and if you are happy about My going, then I can travel there in happiness. I don't want anyone going with Me and if you see someone trying to follow Me, please stop them.”

This is Mahaprabhu's request to His confidential associates. So as you know Svarupa Damodar said –

“ Well indeed if You say that our happiness is Your happiness (please listen to this), we are not going to stop You. You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You are independent. At the same time You have said this that, ‘your happiness is our happiness’, let us request that You take two persons with You. In this way Your trip will be properly executed.”

So Lord Caitanya agreed and the night before He departed He took the blessings of Lord Jagannath and the next morning He got up early before everyone woke up and slipped out. The devotees when they arose naturally they were looking for Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. They were searching for Him. But Svarupa Damodar as the confidential associate of the Lord dissuaded them - don't look, it's not necessary to look for Mahaprabhu. And the devotees understood He is gone.

Lord Caitanya enters the forest of Jharikhanda and there He shows the full potential of the bhakti sakti. He shows the full impact that an extraordinary devotee of the Lord can have. You know how the tigers, the rhinoceros, the boars, the elephants, all these fierce creatures gave way for Mahaprabhu.

His foot touched the tiger lying in the path and then He commanded the tiger “Chant Hare Krishna” the tiger jumps up dancing and chanting Hare Krishna. Mahaprabhu is bathing in the river, saying His Gayatri, a herd of wild elephants come and Lord Caitanya sprinkles the elephant herd with water and asks the elephants to “Chant Hare Krishna”. The elephants chant and dance in ecstasy, roaring, rolling on the ground.

Balabhadra Bhattacharya, Lord Caitanya's assistant, he is watching all this. At first he was afraid, and then he was amazed. The deer gather around Lord Caitanya as He proceeds to the forest causing Lord Caitanya to remember the deer in Vrindavan approaching the son of Maharaj Nanda. The peacocks, the birds, follow Him here and there.

Just by the consciousness of the top most bhakta the whole world changes. The trees, the plants become jubilant even though they are non-moving living entities. This is the effect of maximum Krishna consciousness. So Lord Caitanya is showing us that -

“All right, your chanting may not be as powerful to cause such a transformation in the animal kingdom. But at least you can deal with the unfortunate human beings of today.”



And by inoffensive chanting and lack of material personal motivation your affect can transform all society. It is not some kind of legend or dream or religious rah-rah talk. Caitanya Mahaprabhu is showing by His practical example the full potential of the bhakta and the effect of bhakti on the world.

So humbly following in those footsteps to our measure, certainly we can carry out the desire of the parampara and seek to transform all of human society and save them from such a pointless, meaningless life.

So many shelters are offered in the forest of material enjoyment. So we spoke in the beginning about how it is natural that the human being wants to take shelter. But what happens? Jada Bharat describes -

You are feeling overwhelmed by heat. What do you do? You jump in a river that's shallow and you break all your bones. You are thirsty for water, what do you do? You race out into the desert chasing a mirage. You are hungry and you want shade. What do you do? You approach an impious tree that has neither fruits nor flowers.

The acaryas point out that by taking improper shelter as evidenced by someone approaching a fruitless, flowerless tree for food and shelter, by taking an improper shelter, it's not an innocent thing. You get sinful reactions. So again this concept of - I am just innocently making my way through life having experience. It doesn't hold up.

Another example Jada Bharat gives. I want happy material home life. So I make a nice little home but what actually does it turn out to be? What does my material home life turn out to be? A forest fire! So verse after verse Jada Bharat goes on like this.

So again we may wonder what does he leave us to stand on. Jada Bharat is being true to the purpose of Srimad Bhagavatam. He intends to leave you only with shelter at Krishna's lotus feet.

In this way he rejects every other possible shelter, whether it is political leaders, whether it is material home life, whether it is material friends, material society. Jada Bharat exposes that all these shelters are the greatest harm.

Sometimes we may think that it's an exaggeration to consider the pitfalls of human society as Bhagavatam presents it, as Srila Prabhupada so dynamically presented. But if you indeed make an

analysis from the perspective of what is the real point of human life, it becomes obvious why our acaryas spoke in this way.

Yadubar prabhu once told me that he was in Calcutta with Srila Prabhupada and Prabhupada called him and some other devotees into the room and just speaking in a confidential yet open way said, "if you only knew how bad your leaders are in society. If you only knew."

So generally we think well we've got some bad leaders in the history of the world. Stalin. Stalin himself said, "Its very easy to govern people. I don't understand what the problem is. I don't understand why government leaders have such difficulty. Here is what you do. All you do is keep the people to the level of starving and then they will do whatever you want. What's the problem in being an executive head." So everyone recognizes that is the horrible extreme.

But then consider if you have taken responsibility for leadership and you don't know how the universe works, you don't know who you are, you don't know what is the goal of life, how can you actually benefit people?

So therefore Jada Bharathe'll rip you - you have no value. You are like the shallow river inviting people to jump in for shelter and they break every bone in their body.

Now you may say, well its not that bad! Leaders some of the time want to do good. But you see the viewpoint of Bhagavatam is that if you want to do good, you must know what is good. If you want to love, if you want to care, then take the trouble to be qualified. Otherwise you are held accountable by the laws of nature.

So generally we consider that well someone wants to love, someone wants to care, good enough. What the world needs now is more love. But without knowledge, without proper understanding, proper technique, how can you effectively love, how can you effectively care, how can you give shelter.

So to dramatize that point sometimes our acaryas they can upset us. Who are you to think you can help someone? I have a desire to care, to love. I want to be selfless. Who appointed you? [laughs] I am a nice person, I want to be nice to others. Who told you that you are the great helper?

Actually when you think about it it's quite liberating. Who appointed me? What do I know? That's the point that Jada Bharat

wants you to accept. What do you know? Who appointed you? Its actually an act of false ego that you want to appoint yourself as the big helper, yet you have no knowledge, you don't understand what is the point of life, you don't understand what is your relationship with Krishna, yet you have presented yourself as the big helper.

So this can be a little unsettling. Further more Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur would point out that by your offering material shelter you are distracting people from what is the real goal of life. So you think you are doing good by offering material remedies but you are actually creating a disturbance because you're clouding the situation and you are distracting people, offering again a shallow river.

These explanations are given to shake us, to wake us, so that we actually have a perspective to judge what is real human well-being and real human progress. And in this way we can actually use this world for the all round benefit of the human being. But without that overview, without that comprehensive holistic vision how can you really care for someone, how can you really help someone?

This is Jada Bharat's point and at the end of his instruction Rahugana Maharaj is completely grateful. He feels relieved. I offended you, I called you an imbecile and recruited you to carry my palanquin, but I can see you have forgiven me, you have bathed me with this transcendental knowledge.

Parkisit Maharaj was listening to Sukadeva Goswami say this and in his humility Parkisit Maharaj was thinking, Rahugana Maharaj got relief from his offence to Jada Bharat. What about me, I draped a sadhu with a dead snake and I was cursed, where is my relief, Rahugana Maharaj got relief, I don't have any relief.

But the acaryas point out that Sukadeva Goswami consoled him – "Don't you see what happening right now? Through me Srimad Bhagavatam is coming to you in the presence of all these sadhus. That means the curse has been nullified. You are humbly thinking that there is no relief for you as Rahugana Maharaja obtained but just look what is happening right now. The sound vibration of Srimad Bhagavatam has nullified every aspect of any material difficulty, any material complexity that you have."

So let us not be afraid to take the full impact of the Srimad Bhagavatam and tactfully explain it because without that full impact human beings have no perspective on what is actually good, what is actually beneficial. We can appreciate temporary material endeavors for help and betterment. But we should never think that

such endeavors have actually made a significant contribution to human progress. That is the point.

So please remember Srila Prabhupada's definition of human progress. When you start feeling tired of changing bodies, you have made human progress. When you understand what is liberation, when you understand what your next body will be then you have made human progress and you are capable of giving welfare upliftment for the world.

So we thank Jada Bharat for his totally destroying any kind of material shelter. He is not an annihilist. He is doing that to prepare you for what is the real shelter and rather than Rahugana Maharaj becoming upset and angry, Rahugana Maharaj is going to thank him – "you have saved my life, you have given me the best."

We were ordered to stop class by 8.45, so we'll stop here.

Thank you very much. Hare Krishna.

Suresvara das:

Maharaj about 20 years ago, there was a survey done of so called new religious organisations relatively, religious organisations that appeared on the American scene and many things were asked on the survey and two categories which one has the best philosophy and then another one was which one has the worst attitude. And we came out number one in both categories – best philosophy and worst attitude.

You are preaching in the trenches of urban modern society and I just visited you and I was happy to see what you are doing there. How can we start to turn around this attitude? Very often we are perceived as being very good at exposing the bad shelter of material life but still very often sometimes even by our own members we are perceived at not being very good at providing superior shelter. So can you, it's a big question but maybe you could just give a little direction.

HH Devamrta Swami:

My motto is that devotee care begins at the front door. Start caring for those who are approaching bhakti, those who are inquisitive, those who have some desire even in the slightest to understand spiritual life and then continue that care of course to our own devotees.

So my motto is that devotee care begins at the front door and I try to operate by a certain mission statement for presenting bhakti to

others. We make it easy, we make it easy to approach bhakti, we make it easy to organically grow in bhakti, and we make it easy to distribute bhakti to others. So in my humble tiny way I seek to let that mission statement define the methodology, define the attitudes, define the facilities.

Suresvara das: Thank you Maharaj.

HH Prahaladanandana Swami:

Just to confirm what you just said, in Brhad Bhagavatamrta when Gopa Kumar is on Brahmaloaka, he eventually becomes Brahma. But he says that the Goddess of fortune specially took care of him because he was a new person there. And that the Goddess of fortune especially takes very personal care of the new devotees in order to cultivate their bhakti, to keep them fixed in it.

HH Devamrita Swami:

Thank you Maharaj. We will end here. Thank you once again. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!