

Respectful Preaching to Dogs, Hogs, Camels and Asses!

*Practical Preaching Application in regard to Shaunka Rishi`s Statement`s found in SB 2.3.17-24
Essay for Canto 2 - VIHE Bhakti Vaibhava - by Krishna Premarupa Dasa*

„Excuse me, do you want to say, that everyone who is not a Hare Krishna or who does not believe in God is doomed?“ asks me a female student in a disturbed state of mind.

Alright, now I have to be very careful what I am saying! Today`s Bhagavatam Sloka appears in my mind: śva-vid-varāhoṣṭra-kharaiḥ - people not interested in Krishna are compared to dogs, hogs, camels and asses!¹ Maybe not the best answer right now! How did I end up confronted with such a question?

I am sitting in the temple room with about 30 students from the nearby university, after giving a tour of the temple. Now we are having a Question and Answers session. Someone asked me why we are preaching because the Monk at the Buddhist Centre said that they don`t do any missionary work since people will come on their own once they are ready. To answer this question I told the story of `The Sadhu and the Scorpion`.² That story very nicely illustrates the heart of a sadhu and the principle of compassion. But it broth up another challenge: „are you saying that I am suffering and that I am in need of your help? Are you saying that without believing in God one's life is wasted?“

Shaunaka Rishi condemns materialistic life - How to understand and apply his mood?

According to Shaunka Rishi this is certainly so! In his glorification of Hari Katha, the Rishi condemns materialistic life with very harsh words. This Essay deals with the preaching application of this verses and will show how to develop a proper understanding of this section of the Bhagavatam. The title of this Essay *Respectful Preaching to Dogs, Hogs, Camels and Asses!* seems to be a contradiction in itself: How can someone be respectful if he calls others dogs and hogs? Therefore we will try to understand why sadhus using such strong words and whether we should preach in the same way. The Essay will show how on one side we need to be convinced, that without Bhakti everything is useless, but at the same time, we have to respect everyones free will and maintain a proper mood of respect towards all living entities. In order to do this, the following points will be developed in this paper:

- Animalistic Person - A Brief Summary of Saunaka Rishi`s Statement in Chapter Three of the Second Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam
- The Potential Tension that is created by such Statements - with Negative and Positive Effects
- Understanding Shaunka Rishi- Sadhus Speak the Naked Truth
- I am a Hare Krishna - and you a two-legged Animal! - The Preaching of a Kanistha-adhikari
- Proper Respect - True Preaching means pracar *and* acar!
- Conclusion and my Answer to the Student`s Question

I hope the thoughts and conclusion drawn from this text will be of some use for the glorious preachers in our movement. Sharing Krishna Conciseness is certainly the highest welfare activity in this world because it is ignorance about one`s true nature that is the root cause of all of one`s misery in life. But this sharing should be done in the mood of our acaryas, who were strong as a thunderbolt (as far as philosophical conclusion is concerned) but at the same time also as soft like a rose (in personal dealings).

The Animalistic Person - A Brief Summery of Shaunaka Rishi`s Statements

In the first Canto, we learn how Suta Goswami, after hearing the great discourse between Sukadeva Goswami and Maharaja Pariksit, came to the forest of Naimisaranya where he meets the sages, headed by Shaunka Rishi. Originally they had gathered to perform fire sacrifices for the benefit of the people of Kali Yuga. But after hearing from the exalted Suta Goswami about the glories of Krishna, they became convinced that the real benefit is found in this sravanam-kirtanam process:

„We have just begun the performance of this fruitive activity, a sacrificial fire, without certainty of its result due to the many imperfections in our action. Our bodies have become black from the smoke, but we are factually pleased by the nectar of the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead, Govinda, which you are distributing.“³

After hearing about Maharaja Pariksit Shaunka Rishi and all the assembled sages became very enthusiastic to hear more and more:

„O learned Sūta Gosvāmī! Please continue to explain such topics to us because we are all eager to hear. Besides that, topics which result in the discussion of Lord Hari should certainly be discussed in the assembly of devotees.“⁴

Before Suta Goswami actually could continue to speak, Shaunka Rishi expresses his appreciation for Krishna Katha and the hearing process in an interesting way; He used very harsh words condemning those who have *not* developed a taste for such hearing and basically defining them as Animalistic Persons. What follows are some of his statements:

śva-vid-varāhoṣṭra-kharaiḥ
saṁstutaḥ puruṣaḥ paśuḥ
na yat-karṇa-pathopeto
jātu nāma gadāgrajaḥ

„Men who are like dogs, hogs, camels and asses praise those men who never listen to the transcendental pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the deliverer from evils.“⁵

Srila Prabhupada's Purport follows Shaunaka Rishi's mood and is not less straightforward:

The general mass of people, unless they are trained systematically for a higher standard of living in spiritual values, are no better than animals, and in this verse, they have particularly been put on the level of dogs, hogs, camels and asses.(..) So Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's categorization of the common man without any spiritual enlightenment into the society of dogs, hogs, camels and asses is not at all an exaggeration. The leaders of such ignorant masses of people may feel very proud of being adored by such a number of dogs and hogs, but that is not very flattering. The Bhāgavatam openly declares that although a person may be a great leader of such dogs and hogs disguised as men, if he has no taste for being enlightened in the science of Kṛṣṇa, such a leader is also an animal and nothing more.

In Verses 20 to 24 Shaunaka Rishi then gives a limb-by-limb description of an animalistic person. The Idea is that if a human being is not engaging his body and his senses in the service of the Lord, these senses do not actually fulfil their purpose they have been created for. Human life is specifically meant for spiritual realization. If this is neglected one acts on the level of an animal. In this mood Shaunaki Rishi speaks the following:

One who has not listened to the messages about the prowess and marvellous acts of the Personality of Godhead and has not sung or chanted loudly the worthy songs about the Lord is to be considered to possess earholes like the holes of snakes and a tongue like the tongue of a frog. 6

The upper portion of the body, though crowned with a silk turban, is only a heavy burden if not bowed down before the Personality of Godhead who can award mukti [freedom]. And the hands, though decorated with glittering bangles, are like those of a dead man if not engaged in the service of the Personality of Godhead Hari. 7

The eyes which do not look at the symbolic representations of the Personality of Godhead Viṣṇu [His forms, name, quality, etc.] are like those printed on the plumes of the peacock, and the legs which do not move to the holy places [where the Lord is remembered] are considered to be like tree trunks. 8

The person who has not at any time received the dust of the feet of the Lord's pure devotee upon his head is certainly a dead body. And the person who has never experienced the aroma of the tulasī leaves from the lotus feet of the Lord is also a dead body, although breathing. 9

These are some of Shaunak Rishi's very provoking statements, smashing materialistic life in pieces. Of course, we could explore each of these statements in great depth, but this essay is intended to focus on preaching application, therefore let's have a look on what effect such statements could bring about and when and how to preach strongly as the Rishi is doing.

Unwanted Tension - Don't disturb the ignorant!

Since time immemorial there has been a tension between those who believe in God and those who do not believe. That was always there. Krishna speaks in the Gita in a very poetic way about it:

yā niśā sarva-bhūtānām
tasyām jāgati saṁyamī
yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni
sā niśā paśyato muneḥ

What is night for all beings is the time of awakening for the self-controlled; and the time of awakening for all beings is night for the introspective sage.10

Srila Prabhupada in an equally poetic way explains in his purport: „There are two classes of intelligent men. One is intelligent in material activities for sense gratification, and the other is introspective and awake to the cultivation of self-realization. Activities of the introspective sage, or thoughtful man, are night for persons materially absorbed. Materialistic persons remain asleep in such a night due to their ignorance of self-realization. The introspective sage remains alert in the "night" of the materialistic men. The sage feels transcendental pleasure in the gradual advancement of spiritual culture, whereas the man in materialistic activities, being asleep to self-realization, dreams of varieties of sense pleasure, feeling sometimes happy and sometimes distressed in his sleeping condition. The introspective man is always indifferent to materialistic happiness and distress. He goes on with his self-realization activities undisturbed by material reactions.“

From this understanding, it becomes clear that the root cause of the tension lays in the different identification of the two. While the materialistic person identifies with his body and therefore is fully

convinced that sense gratification is the purpose of life, the spiritualist has realized that he is a spiritual soul, different from the body and that the true satisfaction is only found in the relationship to the eternal, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This differences between the worldly man and the awaked person will always be there since this world is the place of forgetfulness of God.

But it seems that especially nowadays religion has become more and more unpopular and the tension between atheists and theists has become greater. Nowadays a large number of people live a secular life in which religion has no place. Modern man in the age of scientific knowledge does not need religion anymore. „Religion is for those who are weak and need something they can believe in,“ they say. Others go even further and claim that a world without religion would be a more peaceful world since most of terrorism is done in the name of God!

Materialistic society feels disturbed by God. This is very clear. Some years back there was an Atheist Bus Campaign in London, and later in many other countries, where on hundreds of public buses there was a statement in big letters saying: "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life." ¹¹ In other words, if a God is there, we can't really enjoy life because we are always warned what to do and what not to do! Therefore God and also the devotees, the representatives of God, are really a disturbing factor for many!

Harsh words like those of Shanuak Rishi will be difficult to be digested by such already disturbed people and most probably seen as fanatic statements. Definitely, we don't want to be seen as another form of religious extremism. Even Krishna states in Bhagavad Gita that: „the ignorant fully engage themselves in material activities and become attached. But the wise should not unsettle them“. ¹² So, therefore, a preacher in Krishna Consciousness has to be careful by understanding the audience he speaks to and use words according to time, place and circumstances. So that's one aspect that emphasizes the need to avoid unnecessary tension.

Wanted Tension - This is our challenge, that 'You are all rascals'!

But on the other hand, how should a preaching movement like ISKCON go on, because tension seems to be unavoidable? Should we just stop preaching all together? Srila Prabhupada explains in his purport to the above-mentioned statement of Krishna in regards of not disturbing the ignorant: „Men who are ignorant cannot appreciate activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and therefore Lord Kṛṣṇa advises us not to disturb them and simply waste valuable time. But the devotees of the Lord are more kind than the Lord because they understand the purpose of the Lord. Consequently, they undertake all kinds of risks, even to the point of approaching ignorant men to try to engage them in the acts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which are absolutely necessary for the human being.“

A Devotee takes all risk and also creates tension. And some kind of tension is actually also needed or even important. Why? So that people understand that we do have a different way to look at life, that we actually offer an alternative lifestyle!

From the viewpoint of Sociology of religion, a certain tension between a religious movement and its environment is actually good to have. Dr. Rodney Stark ¹³, born 1934, Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University, in Texas USA, wrote a paper entitled "Why Religious Movements Succeed or Fail?" in which he lists ten sociological propositions, ten aspects characteristic of successful groups; that is, groups that survive and expand. Proposition Three is called 'Medium Tension (Strictness)': In order to grow, a religious movement must offer a religious culture that sets it apart from the general, secular culture. That is, movements must be distinctive and impose relatively strict moral standards. Stated as a proposition: New Religious movements are likely to succeed to the extent that they maintain a medium level of tension with their surrounding

environment – are strict, but not too strict. Strictness refers to the degree that a religious group maintains a separate and distinctive lifestyle or morality in personal and family life, in such areas as dress, diet, drinking, entertainment, uses of time, sex, child rearing and the like, or a group is not strict to the degree that it affirms the current mainline lifestyle in these respects.

So it is natural for a religious group to have a different way to see the world and to offer their followers an alternative lifestyle. Srila Prabhupada definitely was not a person who compromised, but who always spoke out the truth and established clearly how the world is seen through the eyes of sastra:

“I am not much fond of the idea of changing things to accommodate the public – better to change the public to accommodate us.”¹⁴

“So this challenge, that ‘You are all rascals,’ it is a very strong word, but actually that is the fact. That is the fact. It is a revolutionary movement. We are challenging everyone that ‘You are all set of asses and cows and animals because you have no knowledge beyond this body.’”¹⁵

A Sadhu speaks the Naked Truth

The Duty of a Sadhu is to speak the truth, the naked truth! This is important to understand when relating to Shaunaka Rishi's statements. Although heavy, these statements are meant to help the conditioned soul. They are meant to wake up the person in Maya to real sense! In Canto one we learn about this nature of a sadhu by hearing from the preaching of Vidhura to King Dhritarashtra:

„You are living just like a household dog and are eating remnants of food given by Bhīma.“¹⁶
Srila Prabhupada explains in the purport: „A sādhu should never flatter kings or rich men to live comfortably at their cost. A sādhu is to speak to the householders about the naked truth of life so that they may come to their senses about the precarious life in material existence.“

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur made a powerful statement in this regard: „There is no doubt that the words of the sadhus possess the power of destroying the evil propensities of one's mind. The sadhus in this way benefit everyone who associates with them. There are many things which we do not disclose to the sadhu. The real sadhu makes us speak out what we keep concealed in our hearts. He then applies the knife. The very word “sadhu” has no other meaning than this. He stands in front of the block with the uplifted sacrificial knife in his hand. The sensuous desires of men are like the goats. The sadhu stands there to kill those desires by the merciful stroke of the keen edge of the sacrificial knife in the form of unpleasant language. If the sadhu turns into my flatterer then he does me harm; he becomes my enemy. If he gives us flattery then we are led to the road that brings enjoyment but no real well-being.“¹⁷

In Vedic Culture and still today in India, people, in general, have a lot of respect for sadhus, the renounced saintly people who have completely surrendered to the Lord and live a pure life. In such a culture of respect, people understand that, if a Sadhu chastises me, it's for my benefit, and he has a right to do that because he is a sadhu. Of course in the west, we can't expect much respect from people and therefore in some situations, a more careful way of preaching might be needed.

Srila Prabhupada himself could be using extremely strong words while preaching to people regardless of the cultural background.

In Montreal, a Bengali gentleman inquired, "Swamiji, you are using very strong words 'fools and rascals.' Can it be explained otherwise?" And Srila Prabhupada replied, "No. These are the only words, that you are all rascals and fools."¹⁸

When in a public lecture at Glasgow in 1972, a young man stood up and declared „I am God!“ Srila Prabhupada, in a very strong way, loudly roared back: „You are not God! You are dog!“¹⁹

Bhakta Dasa from America shares an experience where Srila Prabhupada was addressing an audience of highly respected people, a group of religious leaders of the Catholic church. The speech started with the words: „Men is known by what he eats, and most men eat hogs!“²⁰

Srila Prabhupada never compromised and always spoke very boldly, whether his audience were Hippies, University Professors or Journalists - Srila Prabhupada always spoke straightforward Philosophy. Although on many occasions Srila Prabhupada did deal tactfully, he often chose to fight. For Srila Prabhupada preaching meant fighting against atheism. „We have to fight, otherwise what is the meaning of preaching? If you think that everything will be accepted very easily, then what is the necessity of preaching?“²¹

In the beginning days of Krishna Consciousness in the West, some young devotees complained to Srila Prabhupada, that he is speaking too heavy against all the impersonalists and other yogis. Srila Prabhupada responded: „A preacher must attack!“²²

And Srila Prabhupada not only fought himself but also wanted his followers to fight:

„You young boys should also preach strongly. You must learn the truth (...) and preach strongly, as I am doing all over the world. Preach the truth as Krishna is speaking in Bhagavad Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam, and do not compromise Krishna's words!“²³

Srila Prabhupada preached strongly and he wants us to do the same. But how to do that? We first have to understand the difference between following a pure devotee and imitating a pure devotee.

I am a Hare Krishna - and you a two-legged animal!

There is a great difference between following and imitating a pure devotee like Srila Prabhupada. To follow means to really deeply understand the heart of a sadhu, to very sincerely try to develop similar qualities of that sadhu understanding one`s own limitation, practicing devotional service with a lot of humility and patience, understanding that one can`t become a sadhu overnight.

Imitating a sadhu is a much cheaper process. It is more done on the external level. One just tries to behave like a sadhu, without actually understanding the mood of a sadhu properly and without having developed the qualities of a sadhu. While starting to behave like a sadhu the neophyte practitioner becomes intoxicated by what Visvanath Chakravarti Thakura calls Utsaha - mayi: false confidence or puffed up with enthusiasm. This is an enthusiasm of the beginner, who just made his first steps, but thinks he has already become very advanced.

In the Mahabharata there is a story about a crow who wanted to imitate the flying of the swans. The following commentary on that story is very instructive: „Sometimes it is seen that after becoming uplifted by receiving the mercy of great personalities, some k̄aka-janas, crow-like persons, become proud and forget the color of their feathers. After having a little association with swan-like parama-hasa devotees, they begin to consider themselves far superior to their peers and perhaps even equal to the parama-hasas. Instead of anus̄ara, following the instructions of the Lord`s dear devotees, they take up the cheap practice of anak̄ara, imitation. By taking shelter of swan-like persons we may cross the ocean of birth and death, but if we try to imitate them we will certainly fall down into the ocean and drown.“²⁴

Therefore new devotees have to learn from the very beginning how to develop a proper attitude in Krishna Consciousness. To be able to practice devotional service is a great blessing. Indeed it is the greatest blessing a human being can attain. Therefore deep gratitude is the right attitude as a response of having received this opportunity. Unfortunately, in the mind of an immature practitioner, instead of gratitude a kind of pride is manifesting. Such a neophyte practitioner is often still very weak and insecure in their spiritual understanding and conviction. In order to protect their little faith and in order to feel secure the false ego suggests ideas such as: „I am spiritual, and these other people are so fallen“.

If such a kanistha adhikari, a materialistic devotee comes across statements like the ones of Saunaka Rishi they get very enthused and thinks: „yes, dogs, hogs, camels and asses, that's right these people out there are so fallen. But I am so elevated!“

So while a Sadhu like Srila Prabhupada, who is pure, is completely free from false ego, possesses natural love and respect for every living entity and preaches strongly to the conditioned soul out of compassion, such a neophyte devotee is full of pride, does not possess any respect for others and preaches strongly, not out of true compassion, but just to feel better than others. Needless to mention that there will be a `day and night` difference in the result of the two kinds of preaching.

Proper Respect - True preaching means pracar and acar!

The main qualities missing in the kanistha adikari is humility and especially respect. Without respect one is not actually qualified to preach:

„According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, since a kaniṣṭha-adhikārī who cannot properly respect other devotees will certainly fail to offer respects to ordinary living entities who are not even devotees, a kaniṣṭha-adhikārī is useless for practical preaching work unless he comes to a higher platform of understanding. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says, *iyam ca śraddhā na śāstrārthāhvadhāraṇa-jātā*. Because the kaniṣṭha-adhikārī's faith is not actually based on the statements of Vedic literature, he cannot understand the exalted position of the Supreme Personality of Godhead within everyone's heart. Therefore he cannot actually manifest love of Godhead, nor can he understand the exalted position of the devotees of the Lord. Kṛṣṇa is so glorious that Kṛṣṇa's intimate associates must also be glorious. But this is unknown to a kaniṣṭha-adhikārī. Similarly, the essential qualification of a Vaiṣṇava, which is to offer all respects to others (*amānina māna-dena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ* [Cc. Ādi 17.31] is also conspicuous by its absence in a kaniṣṭha-adhikārī.“ ²⁵

In other words, the kanistha adikari needs to work on himself, develop some adhikara before his preaching actually can be effective. If one is convinced of Krishna Consciousness and also practices it sincerely, then one`s preaching will be successful.

Srila Prabhupada confirms this: „First of all you become really a preacher. Then go to preach. [Caitanya Mahāprabhu](#) never sent neophyte to go to preach. For neophyte the preaching is not their business. For neophyte, one should stick to the worship of Deity in the temple. And those who have understood the philosophy, applied the philosophy in his life, he should go for preaching. Otherwise, he'll preach wrongly (...) So Caitanya Mahāprabhu does not say like that, that "You remain a rascal and go to preach." No. Janma sārthaka kari. "Your first business is that you make your life perfect. Then go to preach. ²⁶

Of course, preaching work and self-realization can go on side by side. It is not that we all have to first do Bhajan for ten years before we can preach to someone. But if we are young in Krishna Consciousness we should be aware of our position, should take a humble mood and preach in this attitude. Therefore education and training is so important and of course personal example. If the

young devotees get the association of senior devotees, they will naturally also become more mature.

The ultimate preaching will always be our behavior much more than our words. As they say, `actions speak louder than words`. Srila Prabhupada often pointed out that to be a Devotee means to be a perfect Gentleman. „Devotee means very liberal and kind to everyone, always gentleman under all kinds of conditions of life.“ 27

In Caitanya Caritamrita we find a wonderful example of a first-class preacher. Sanatana Goswami was glorifying Haridas Thakur because he gave the perfect example of someone having both the good qualities and a strong preaching spirit:

āpane ācare keha, nā kare pracāra
pracāra karena keha, nā karena ācāra

“Some behave very well but do not preach the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whereas others preach but do not behave properly.“ 28

’ācāra’, ‘pracāra’,—nāmera karaha ‘dui’ kārya
tumi—sarva-guru, tumi jagatera ārya

“You simultaneously perform both duties in relation to the holy name by your personal behavior and by your preaching. Therefore you are the spiritual master of the entire world, for you are the most advanced devotee in the world.” 29

At the same time, Srila Prabhupada always encouraged everyone to preach with the understanding of just repeating the words of Krishna and the acaryas. H.H. Bhakti Vikasa Maharaja points out in his Book `On speaking strongly in Srila Prabhupada's service` that it would be very impractical to allow only pure devotees to preach: „Certainly, parents, police, and judges need to be of good character to properly discharge their responsibilities, but to demand that no one but an utter saint should accept such roles would be so unpragmatic as to be socially irresponsible.“ 30 Similarly to expect that every preacher in Krishna Consciousness must be completely pure before he is allowed to preach strongly would be against Srila Prabhupada's mood of expanding the Krishna Consciousness movement around the world.

Conclusion: Be convinced but also respectful

In this text, I have explained how there has always been a tension between atheists and theists. How on one hand we should be careful to not unnecessarily disturb the atheists and at the same time how some tension is necessary to show sincere seekers of the truth that we do offer an alternative lifestyle. We also heard about the nature of sadhus, how, out of their compassion, they speak the naked truth in order to destroy the conditioned soul's illusion. Saunaka Rishi`s statements are a wake-up call for the conditioned souls. We ourselves have to be convinced, that a life without Bhakti is useless. At the same time we should not become proud thinking ourselves better than others but actually have honest respect for all living entities trying to help them by sharing Krishna Consciousness in a respectful way. Although one might not need to become a pure devotee in order to preach strongly and present sastric conclusion as it is, it is recommended that such preachers are well trained and possess some level of maturity.

The Conclusion in a nutshell:

