

KARTIK INSPIRATIONS 2024

SNAKE DRAMA

Welcome to our *Kartik Inspiration!*

Today, I'd like to share with you a glimpse of Vrindavan life, and the lessons it offers.

For several days, I had been hearing noises in the little hut where I do my chanting *vrata*. One day, I caught sight of the source—a rat! But apparently, someone else had noticed my chubby little visitor. While I walked past my *bhajan* hut today, I saw a scene I'll never forget.

First, the rat jumped from a nearby tree—it was indeed “my rat.” Don't ask me how it got there! It leaped and ran for its life. And just a moment later, a beautiful yet terrifying snake came out from the same tree, its huge body hanging down while its tail remained curled around one of the branches. The snake was trying to catch the rat, which was now out of reach.

The next moment, the snake slithered onto the boundary wall and turned its gaze toward me as if thinking, ‘The rat escaped, but maybe this person won't be fast.’

I somehow pulled my eyes away and called the gardener. He took one look at the snake and dashed off—I had never seen anyone run so fast—running as if the snake was right behind him! He quickly returned with ten other men, each making a lot of noise. Finally, one of them used a special snake-catching tool and caught the snake with it. They brought the snake outside my little *kutir* and asked what should be done with it. I said, “Take it to the fields and whirl it around to disorient it so that it won't come back—just in case it likes japa chanting. But don't kill it!”

Later, when things calmed down, and the gardeners had put some “snake medicine” in all directions—a scent that snakes don't like—I sat and wondered, “What is it about snakes that makes them so feared?”

I remembered a very telling verse from the *Bhagavatam*. There, the serpent Kaliya reflects on its own snake's existence, “*Our very birth as a snake has made us envious, ignorant, and constantly angry. Oh, my Lord, it is so difficult for people to give up their conditioned nature by which they identify with that which is unreal.*”

Here, the Kaliya serpent says that we are conditioned by our very nature and act in harmful ways. It's a general statement, but specifically, it says, “We snakes are envious, ignorant, and constantly angry.”

I reflected further. Is there a way in which we can overcome the impulses born of our conditioned nature, or do we always have to act according to the body and mind that we have taken on? Are we bound to remain prisoners of our external identities, always reacting from our false nature?

And I reflected some more... No! Through the process of *bhakti*, especially through chanting, a true transformation of our personality is possible! Devotion can enter the heart and replace selfishness, leading to an experience of Krishna in place of mere sense perception and allowing detachment from the harmful influences that dominate our lives. Especially when we fully immerse ourselves in chanting a deluge of holy names, our true personality and nature are allowed to awaken.

See you for the next *Kartik Inspiration!*

Śacīnandana Prāṇi

ŚACINANDANA SWAMI

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