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BHĀGAVATA PRADĪPIKĀ

Bask in the Illumination of the Bhāgavatam

A Monthly E-Magazine from the Bhaktivedanta Vidyapitha with Illuminating Perspectives on the Srimad-Bhāgavatam

Dedicated to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmi Prabhupāda
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

Epitome of Forgiveness

Verse of the month | Honoring Sacred Days | Analogy Arena

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FROM THE DESK OF THE FOUNDER ĀCĀRYA

Lord Rāmacandra's Appearance Day

By A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

The Brahma-saṁhitā (5.39) states:

"Rāmādi mūrtiṣu kalā-niyamena tiṣṭhan..."

This verse explains that Lord Rāmacandra is among the innumerable incarnations of the Supreme Lord, appearing in different yugas. Like the endless waves of the ocean, these incarnations are beyond count, yet principal ones are mentioned in the scriptures.

Lord Rāmacandra appeared millions of years ago in Tretā-yuga, in the holy city of Ayodhyā. His divine pastimes are recorded in the epic Rāmāyaṇa, which, along with the Mahābhārata and Purāṇas, is considered Vedic history. His father, Mahārāja Daśaratha, planned to coronate Him as king, but due to a promise made to his wife Kaikeyī, Rāma was instead sent into exile for 14 years. This exile was not a mere political incident but part of the divine plan to uphold dharma.

Despite hardships, Lord Rāma remained steadfast in His duty, exemplifying the ideal king, son, and warrior. His banishment, the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa, and His ultimate victory in Lanka showcase His divine qualities of patience, justice, and unwavering devotion to righteousness.

The kṣatriya (warrior) class, to which Rāma belonged, had strict codes of conduct—never breaking promises, protecting the weak, and leading from the front in battle.

Lord Rāmacandra exhibited the quality how He renounced the whole kingdom simply on the order of His father, His obedience to father. He could have argued with His father, "My dear father, you, simply for keeping your promise and actuated by the dictation of a woman, you are doing this. Let us stop it. Everyone is expecting that tomorrow My coronation will be there, and they love Me so much."

Just like Kṛṣṇa was so much loved, similarly, Lord Rāmacandra was the life of the people. They were very much expecting that Rāmacandra was going to be enthroned tomorrow. So how they were celebrating, how they were decorating the whole city. Everything. He never argued. He accepted immediately: "Yes, father. I am ready."

So Rāmacandra's life, God's activities, pastimes, if we hear, that means we are associating with Rāmacandra . There is no difference between His form, His name, His pastimes, and Himself. He's absolute. Therefore either you chant the holy name of Rāma or you see the statue of Rāma or you talk of His pastimes, transcendental pastimes, everything, that means you are associating with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Let us take inspiration from His divine character and strengthen our devotion by chanting His holy name.

Epitome of Forgiveness

Vibhishana had wisely decided that Lord Rama's cause was superior to Ravana's. He abandoned his brother, crossed the ocean and sought the shelter of Rama. Rama asked the opinion of the monkey chiefs. Sugriva was highly suspicious, after all Vibhishana was a rakshasa and the brother of Ravana. Other monkey chiefs had reservations to place any trust on Vibhishana. But Hanuman had not detected any deceit or ill motives in the speech or expression of Vibhishana. He believed that Vibhishana was moral and desired to assist Rama.

Rama thanked the monkeys for their opinions and then gave His opinion, "This is My solemn vow. If anyone comes to Me saying, 'O Lord, I am yours' even once, then I shall give him all protection from all danger forever. Even if Ravana came to Me, I would not refuse him shelter." The Lord's speech deeply moved the hearts of all. Rama gracefully accepted Vibhishana and Vibhishana gratefully joined Rama's company.

- *The Lord doesn't refuse to accept a supplicant who sincerely seeks His shelter.*
- *While egoistic demons abandon their own people as enemies, God and godly people accept even 'enemies' as their own friends.*

Rama was willing to forgive all offenses of Ravana and give him mercy.

Although Rama disapproved Ravana's deeds, He didn't disown him at heart. But unfortunately Ravana wasn't willing to seek Rama's shelter, overwhelmed by lust. The conditioned soul's case is somewhat similar. The Supreme Lord is ready to forgive and forget the misdeeds of the living entities, if they surrender unto Him. But their insatiable lust and independent material desires keep them away from seeking the Lord's shelter.

Although God is ready to forgive, the conditioned soul is often not ready to beg forgiveness due to lust and false ego.

To reach Lanka, Rama's army had to cross the ocean. Rama fasted for three days in meditation, seeking the help of the ocean-god. But the ocean-god did not respond. Rama became angry and simply by His glance, the aquatics within the ocean were perturbed. The ocean-god then hastily came and fell at the feet of Rama and suggested Him to make a bridge with stones.

Merciful Rama forgave the ocean-god and commenced the construction of the historical bridge. Thousands of monkeys brought stones, big and small, and in a short time a magnificent bridge was made and the army reached Lanka causing astonishment and fear to the rakshasas. The monkeys surrounded the golden city awaiting encounter.

But Rama wanted to give another chance to Ravana. He sent Angada, Sugriva's nephew, to Ravana with a message to respectfully return Sitadevi. But proud Ravana ordered his servants to kill Angada. Angada, however, leaped onto the top of Ravana's palace and kicked the roof causing the dome to crumble. Amazed at Angada's prowess, Ravana looked on as Angada sored away. Thus this final attempt to stop the war also failed.

While virtuous people prefer peaceful coexistence, vile people prefer war only to exist alone.

Just as Lord Rama's message to stop the Lanka war wasn't agreeable to lusty Ravana who was attached to a woman, Lord Krishna's message to stop Kurukshetra war wasn't agreeable to greedy Duryodhana who was attached to the kingdom. Both were too proud and egoistic to submit.

Pride, attachment, lust and greed overpower people so much that they pay no heed to even God's words.

THE FINAL CONFRONTATION

The war was inevitable. The parties of Rama and Ravana confronted in the battlefield. Great heroes from both sides fought to the death day after day, with thousands of fatalities among the troops. One by one, Ravana's warriors and sons were dying, yet his infatuation and ego didn't diminish. The battle continued and eventually Ravana was killed by Rama's arrows in a fierce battle. His physical strength, skill in war, mystic powers, millions of followers, knowledge and even the boons that he received from great devatas didn't save him from his inevitable death. All this was due to his lust for a chaste woman, whose purity and tears ruined his race and very life.

When leaders are not self-controlled, the followers cannot prosper any more than sheep protected by a jackal.

'HATE THE SIN, NOT THE SINNER'

Maricha's good advice, Sita's rebuking warnings, Jatayu's opposition, Hanuman's caution note, Kumbhakarna's admonishment, Vibhishana's well-intended counseling,Angada's peace message

and so on – none of them could transform the lusty determination of stubborn Ravana. Thus he brought about his own destruction. Just as an efficient receiver catches signals from a good transmitter, an intelligent person grasps good counsel from a well-wishing source. But proud people can't do so.

Unfortunate are those who do not have access to a worthy advice. More unfortunate are those who care nothing for good advice even when available.

A chaste woman can understand the power of another chaste woman. Mandodari, the chaste queen of Ravana, lamented at his death, "O Lord! Although you conquered your senses, to win great boons by austerities, in the end you have been conquered by those very senses. Fallen prey to lust, you desired to enjoy the sinless Sita, although I was always your devoted consort. By tormenting that godly lady, the emblem of chastity and nobility, you brought destruction upon yourself and all your dynasty." Other ladies took her aside as she wailed.

Unfulfilled material lust captivates even powerful kings and learned scholars in its shackles, and ultimately leads to their ruination.

Vibhishana also mourned for the death of his brother who never listened to his good counsel. The very fate that he predicted for Ravana had come to pass. Although shunned by Ravana, Vibhishana always desired his welfare. Rama consoled Vibhishana, "Ravana has died a heroic death, the end sought by all warriors. Death has ended all animosity. Ravana is now the same to Me as you. Please perform his funeral." Vibhishana reflected a few moments. Although he loved his brother, he strongly disapproved his heinous sins. He told Rama that he was unwilling to do the funeral rites for a cruel and merciless person. Funeral would be an act of honor that Ravana didn't deserve and Vibhishana couldn't perform honestly.

Lord Rama smiled and said, "O Vibhishana, soul can never be hated. Ravana's sinful body is now dead, but his pure soul continues to live. And the soul is always worthy of respect. You should therefore carry out the rites for the eternal good of your brother's immortal soul."

The pure spirit soul is a fragmental part of the Supreme Lord who is eternally pure. With the material body comes the sinful contamination due to which the spiritual glory of the soul is not fully revealed. However, the temporary sinful disposition of the pure soul doesn't permanently deprive the soul of an opportunity to be situated in his eternal glory of being a loving servant of the Lord.

Though God punishes someone externally, He has only love and affection for all souls on a spiritual level. Ultimately all material experiences are only a temporary phase in the eternal life of the immortal soul.

Ravana's sins had ended with his body, especially as it had been slain by Lord Ramachandra Himself. Vibhishana, by Rama's inspiration, began the necessary rituals for Ravana's funeral.

This is an excerpt from the book "Disapproved but not Disowned" by Gauranga Darshan Das.

Wisdom Bites from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

The Power of Association

The company we keep influences our thoughts, actions, and ultimately our destiny. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam emphasizes that by associating with pure devotees, we naturally develop spiritual qualities and a deep love for Kṛṣṇa. Just as iron turns to gold when touched by a touchstone, a person becomes purified in the association of saintly personalities. The story of Nārada Muni illustrates this truth—born as the son of a maidservant, he attained the highest spiritual realization simply by serving and hearing from great sages.

On the other hand, bad association can drag us away from our true purpose. The Bhāgavatam warns against being influenced by materialistic company, which entangles us in illusion and selfish desires. A single moment with a true devotee is more valuable than years of worldly achievements. By regularly engaging in satsanga—discussions about the Supreme Lord—we develop clarity, inner strength, and unwavering faith.

Good association doesn't just mean physically being around devotees; it also includes reading scriptures, listening to spiritual discourses, and following the path shown by great saints. When we surround ourselves with those who inspire us toward Kṛṣṇa consciousness, our hearts naturally become purified, and we experience real peace and happiness.

Mind—A Friend or Enemy?

The mind is a powerful force—it can be our best friend or our worst enemy. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam explains that when the mind is controlled and focused on Kṛṣṇa, it brings peace and happiness. However, if left unchecked, it drags us into endless desires, worries, and confusion.

A classic example is the Avanti Brāhmaṇa, a wealthy man who lost everything due to his greed and attachment. When he was abandoned by his family and mocked by society, he realized that his real suffering came not from external circumstances but from his own uncontrolled mind. Accepting this wisdom, he surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and attained peace.
The Bhāgavatam compares the mind to a charioteer—if it is properly guided by intelligence, it leads us toward spiritual progress. If it is uncontrolled, it pulls us into illusion. The secret to a peaceful mind is to constantly engage it in devotional service—chanting, hearing, and remembering Kṛṣṇa. A person who masters their mind remains steady like a lotus in muddy water, unaffected by worldly distractions.

By making Kṛṣṇa the focus of our thoughts, we transform the mind into our greatest ally, leading us toward eternal joy and liberation.

VERSE OF THE MONTH

RESULT OF HEARING ABOUT LORD RAMA

ŚB 9.11.23

puruṣo rāma-caritaṁ
śravaṇair upadhārayan
ānṛśaṁsya-paro rājan
karma-bandhair vimucyate

O King Parīkṣit, anyone who aurally receives the narrations concerning the characteristics of Lord Rāmacandra's pastimes will ultimately be freed from the disease of envy and thus be liberated from the bondage of fruitive activities.

HONORING SACRED DAYS

Vishnu - Madhusudana (April)

27 April — Appearance Day of Sri Gadadhara Pandita

Sri Gadādhara Paṇḍita was Mahāprabhu's closest companion from childhood. His parents, Śrī Madhva Miśra and Śrīmatī Ratnavatī Devī, lived near Śrī Jagannātha Miśra's home in Māyāpura. Ratnavatī Devī saw Śacī Mātā as a sister, and their children, Nimai and Gadādhara, were inseparable. Gadādhara, an expansion of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī (Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā), was deeply attached to Mahāprabhu. Gadādhara Pandit was known for his pure love for Kṛṣṇa. He became Mahāprabhu's constant companion, offering śrīmad-bhāgavata-kathā in Purī. Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara glorifies him as non-different from Rādhārāṇī. Vasudeva Ghoṣa prays to eternally serve the divine pair Śrī Gaura-Gadādhara.

His life was a perfect example of devotion, surrender, and selfless love, embodying the mood of Rādhārāṇī in service to Mahāprabhu.

30 April — Aksaya Tritya – Candana Yatra Starts

Akṣaya Tṛtīyā, one of the most auspicious days in the Vedic calendar, marks the beginning of Candana Yātrā, a unique festival where Deities are adorned with cooling sandalwood paste to provide relief from the intense summer heat. This festival begins on the third lunar day (tṛtīyā) of the bright fortnight of Vaiśākha month and continues for 21 days.

At Jagannātha Purī, Lord Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā are taken in a procession to Narendra Sarovara, where They enjoy a boat ride while Their divine bodies remain covered in sandalwood paste. Other temples, including those of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Gaura-Nitāi, and Viṣṇu, also celebrate by anointing the Deities with candana and offering special prayers.

Akṣaya Tṛtīyā is not just the start of Candana Yātrā but also a highly sacred occasion in Vedic history. It is said to be the day Satya-yuga began and when several divine events took place, such as the appearance of the sacred Ganges on Earth and the writing of the Mahābhārata by Vyāsadeva. The word "Akṣaya" means "never diminishing", signifying that any pious activities performed on this day—charity, fasting, devotional service, or spiritual resolutions—bring eternal benefits.

ANALOGY ARENA

A dream becomes automatically known to a person as false and immaterial, and

similarly one eventually realizes that material happiness in this life or the next, on this planet or a higher planet, is insignificant.

(SB 5.11.3)

When a lamp burns improperly, it blackens with soot, but with ghee, it shines brightly. Similarly, a mind absorbed in sense gratification causes suffering, while detachment restores the brilliance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

(SB 5.11.8)

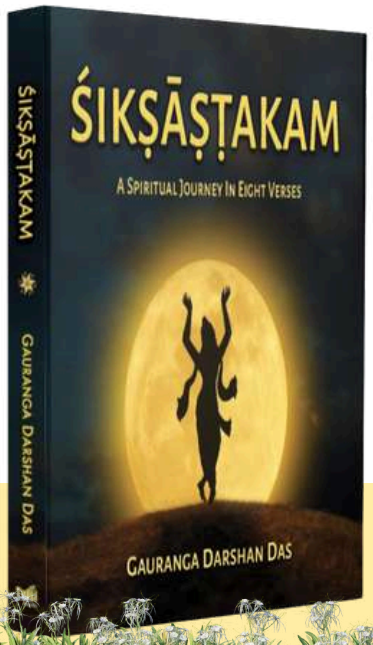
Upcoming Residential Courses

Link to register

Link for details

BOOKS

LINK TO PURCHASE



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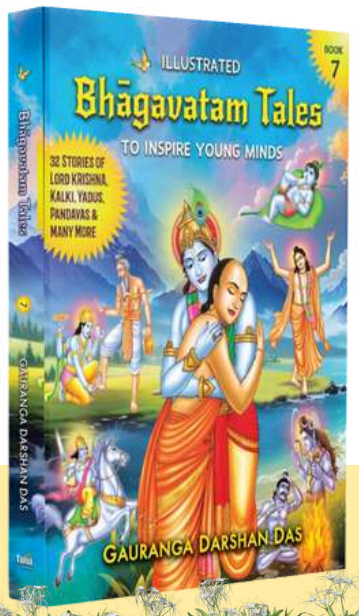

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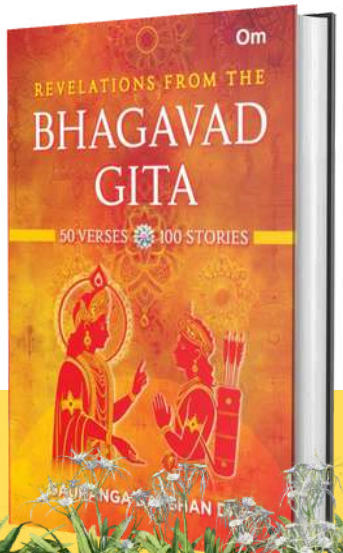
COMING SOON.....