



BHĀGAVATA PRADĪPIKĀ

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Bask in the Illumination of the Bhāgavatam

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

Dedicated to
His Divine Grace
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International Society for
Krishna Consciousness

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THE GLORY OF BHAKTI-YOGA



One Stroke of Bhakti-yoga



Ātma-tattva

Ātma-tattva is the science of both God and the living entity. The Supreme Lord is called Paramātmā, and the living entity is called the *ātma*. Both the Paramātmā and the *jīvātmā*, being transcendental to the material energy, are called *ātma*. Generally people have many wrong conceptions about both of them.

Wrong Conception

The wrong conception of the *jīvātmā* is to identify the material body with the pure soul, and the wrong conception of Paramātmā is to think Him on an equal level with the living entity. But both misconceptions can be removed by one stroke of *bhakti-yoga*, just as in the sunlight both the sun and the world and everything within the sunlight are properly seen. In the darkness one cannot see the sun, nor himself, nor the world. But in the sunlight one can see the sun, himself and the world around him.

Understanding the Ātma-tattva

Except for *bhakti-yoga*, any method for realization of *ātma-tattva*, or the science of *ātma*, will prove deceptive in the long run. In the Bhagavad-gītā, the Lord says that only by *bhakti-yoga* can one know Him perfectly, and then one can enter into the science of God. The conditioned soul can regain his form of eternal knowledge and bliss simply by seeing the Lord by means of *bhakti-yoga*. Due to ignorance the conditioned soul is encaged in the temporary varieties of material forms. But the Supreme Lord has no such temporary form like the conditioned souls. He is always possessed of an eternal form of knowledge and bliss, and that is the difference between the Lord and the living entity. One can understand this difference by the process of *bhakti-yoga*.

Bhāgavatam Study is also Bhakti-yoga

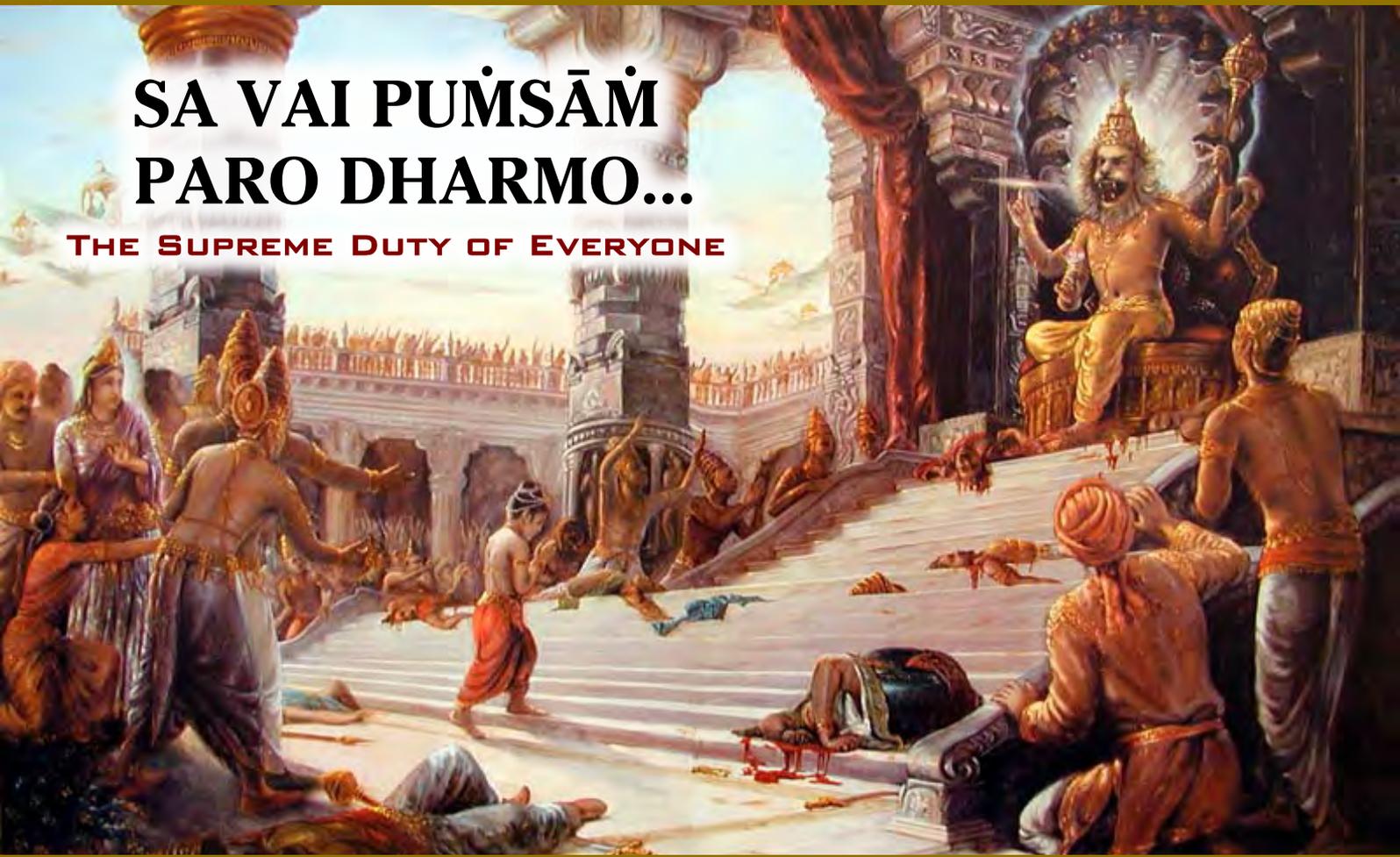
Brahmā was told by the Lord the gist of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in four original verses. Thus Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is not a creation of the mental speculators. The sound of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is transcendental, and the resonance of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is as good as that of the Vedas. Thus the topic of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the science of both the Lord and the living entity. Regular reading or hearing of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is also performance of *bhakti-yoga*, and one can attain the highest perfection simply by the association of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Both Śukadeva Gosvāmī and Mahārāja Parīkṣit attained perfection through the medium of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. ☀

(2.9.4 P)



SA VAI PUṂSĀM PARO DHARMO...

THE SUPREME DUTY OF EVERYONE



sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
ahaituky apratihātā yayātmā suprasīdati

Everyone is looking for happiness, satisfaction of one's self. However, how many of them know the way of happiness? Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.2.6) gives us the ultimate happiness formula – engagement in loving devotional service (*bhakti*) unto Lord Kṛṣṇa, which when rendered without any selfish motivations and interruptions, completely satisfies the self.

Universal Path

What does water, air and earth have in common? They're nourishing, essential and above all, for the benefit of everyone. Similarly, the scriptures say that the path of *bhakti* is also universal, as is indicated by the words *sa vai puṁsām*, 'certainly for all mankind.' Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "There are no distinctions permitting only a man or only a *brāhmaṇa* to offer devotional service to the Lord. Everyone can do so." (SB 7.5.23-24 P)

Eternal Disposition

"Kṛṣṇa is the central pivot of living beings, and He is the all-attractive living entity or eternal form amongst all other living beings or eternal forms. Each and every living being has his eternal form in the spiritual existence, and Kṛṣṇa is the eternal attraction for all of

them. Kṛṣṇa is the complete whole, and everything else is His part and parcel. The relation is one of the servant and the served." (SB 1.2.6 P). "Bhakti, devotional service, is meant only for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa, not for anyone else" (SB 3.29.11-12 P). Thus *bhakti* or *devotional service* to Kṛṣṇa is the eternal inclination of all living entities, although covered in the conditioned state.

Causeless and Ceaseless

Bhakti is not caused by any other external force, but is inspired by the *bhakti* in the heart of another devotee (1.2.6 V). Thus *bhakti* is causeless (*ahaitukī*). For example, the *bhakti* in the heart of Nārada Muni is the cause of *bhakti* of Prahlāda. Also, Prahlāda was not willing to accept any material benediction although Lord Narasimhadeva personally offered it. Thus *bhakti* is unmotivated (*ahaitukī*).

Bhakti is not hindered by any external material circumstances (1.2.6 V). Thus *bhakti* is ceaseless (*apratihatā*). For example, the *bhakti* in the heart of little Prahlaḍa was not interrupted by the death threats of his father, rather it shone so brilliantly that it made the Supreme Lord descend as Narasiṃha. “Instead of being disturbed by the torments of his father, Prahlaḍa influenced his classmates and cleansed their minds. A devotee is never contaminated by material conditions, but persons subjected to material conditions can become spiritually advanced and blissful upon seeing the behavior of a pure devotee” (SB 7.4.42 P)

Begin From Anywhere

Albeit, in general people may not have such pure desires to execute *bhakti*, due to the disturbances of material desires. However, the path of *bhakti* is so accommodative that it admits anyone from any background and uplifts them to perfection. Thus *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* recommends

*akāmaḥ sarva-kāmo vā
mokṣa-kāma udāra-dhīḥ
tivreṇa bhakti-yogena
yajeta puruṣam param*

A person who has broader intelligence, whether he be full of all material desire, without any material desire, or desiring liberation, must by all means worship the supreme whole, the Personality of Godhead. (SB 2.3.10)

Transformative Path

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “The waves of desire for material enjoyment are so strong that they cannot be stopped by any process other than *bhakti-yoga*. The *bhaktas*, by their transcendental devotional service, become so overwhelmed with transcendental bliss that automatically their desires for material enjoyment stop.” (SB 4.22.39 P). Little Dhruva became obsessed with an ambition to enjoy an exalted position superior to even Brahmā’s. However, after worshipping Lord Vāsudeva and receiving the supreme benediction of seeing Him within six months, he didn’t value his previous desire and even felt that it was like broken pieces of glass.

What Exactly To Do?

Prahlaḍa Mahārāja taught us the nine processes of *bhakti*: “Hearing and chanting the holy name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, remembering them, serving His lotus feet, worshiping Him, offering prayers, becoming His servant, considering Him one’s best friend, and surrendering everything unto Him. One who has dedicated his life to the service of Kṛṣṇa through these nine methods is the most learned person.” (SB 7.5.23-24) These nine processes can be performed anytime and at any place as per one’s capacity, indeed, these can be done as separate processes or even together. “When a devotee executes any one of the nine processes, this is sufficient; the other eight processes are included” (SB 7.5.23-24 P).



Realization of Relation

After all, by performing continuous *bhakti*, especially *śravaṇam* or hearing about Lord Kṛṣṇa, one revives the forgotten relationship of servant and served with Kṛṣṇa and over time this relationship becomes more perceivable. “This relation of servant and the served is the most congenial form of intimacy. One can realize it as devotional service progresses.” (SB 1.2.6 P). The process of hearing nourishes not only a practicing devotee, but an advanced devotee as well. The *Bhāgavatam* is filled with examples of great devotees like Dhruva, Pracetās, Pṛthu and so on who, after seeing the Supreme Lord, prayed for opportunity to hear about Him in the association of devotees.

No Expectations

Bhakti unto Lord Kṛṣṇa doesn't demand huge offerings and accomplishments of great magnitude from the practitioner, but simple service attitude with sincerity is sufficient and Lord Kṛṣṇa will be sold out to such a devotee. Kṛṣṇa says, even if He is offered a little water, flower, fruit or leaf with devotion, He would accept it happily (BG 9.26). The simple fruit seller woman offered fruits to Kṛṣṇa expecting nothing in return and she is bestowed such great wealth. The cowherd girls, the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana, selflessly served Kṛṣṇa with such simple devotion and are thus counted amongst the topmost devotees. ☀



VERSE OF THE MONTH

yat-pāda-paṅkaja-palāśa-vilāsa-bhaktiyā
karmāśayam grathitam udgrathayanti santah
tadvan na rikta-matayo yatayo 'pi ruddha-
sroto-gaṇās tam araṇam bhaja vāsudevam

SB 4.22.39

The devotees, who are always engaged in the service of the toes of the lotus feet of the Lord, can very easily overcome hard-knotted desires for fruitive activities. Because this is very difficult, the nondevotees—the jñānīs and yogīs—although trying to stop the waves of sense gratification, cannot do so. Therefore you are advised to engage in the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva. (Sanat-kumāra to King Pṛthu)

SCIENTIFIC DEVOTIONAL SENTIMENTS



Crying for Kṛṣṇa– An Art or Attitude?

“Those who consider devotional service to the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be something like material emotional affairs may argue that in the revealed scriptures, sacrifice, charity, austerity, knowledge, mystic powers and similar other processes of transcendental realization are recommended. According to them, bhakti, or the devotional service of the Lord, is meant for those who cannot perform the high-grade activities.” (1.2.7 P)

Superior and Easy

But this is not so. Bhakti is in fact transcendental to the material realm, which is prominent with the three modes of material nature. In addition, bhakti is actually the topmost of all transcendental activities for it's both superior and easy at the same time. Generally, if something is very advanced, or hi-tech, it's not so easily executable or obtained, but Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, “It is superior for the pure devotees who are serious about getting in contact with the Supreme Lord, and it is easy for the neophytes who are just on the threshold of the house of bhakti. To achieve the contact of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a great science, and it is open for all living beings.” (1.2.7 P) ☀





A handful of **real paddy rice** is more valuable than heaps of paddy skins without any substance within. Similarly, one should not be attracted by the jugglery of karma-kāṇḍa or jñāna-kāṇḍa or yoga, but skillfully should take to the simple performances of bhakti - kīrtanam, smaraṇam, etc., under a bona fide spiritual master, and without any difficulty attain the highest perfection. (SB 2.4.16 P)

An **iron rod** put into a fire becomes warmer and warmer, and when it is red hot it is no longer an iron rod but **fire**. Similarly, when a devotee constantly engages in **devotional service** and thinks of the Lord in his original Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he no longer has any material activities, for his body is **spiritualized**. (SB 7.7.36 P)

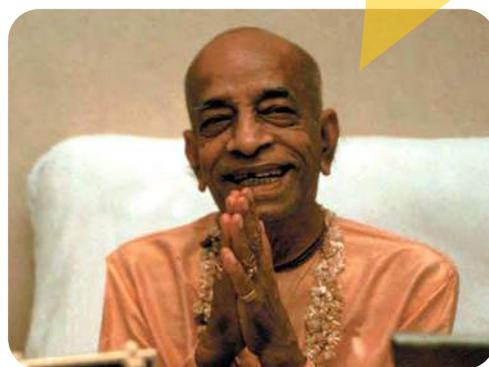
When a **coconut** becomes completely dry, the **coconut pulp** within the **coconut shell** separates from the bondage of the shell and the outer covering. By moving the dry coconut, one can hear that the pulp within is no longer attached to the shell or to the covering. Similarly, when one is fully absorbed in devotional service (bhakti-yoga), he is completely disconnected from the two material coverings, the subtle and gross bodies. (SB 4.12.18 P)

ANALOGY ARENA

A **grass worm** confined in a hole of a wall by a **bee** always thinks of the bee in fear and enmity and later becomes a bee simply because of such remembrance. Similarly, if the **conditioned souls** somehow or the other think of **Kṛṣṇa**, who is sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha [BS. 5.1], they will become free from their sins. (SB 7.1.28-29)

Since the **Supreme Personality of Godhead** has nothing to desire, He is **fully satisfied** with Himself. Similarly, a **devotee** who has no desire other than to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead is as **self-satisfied** as the Supreme Lord. (SB 4.22.49 P)

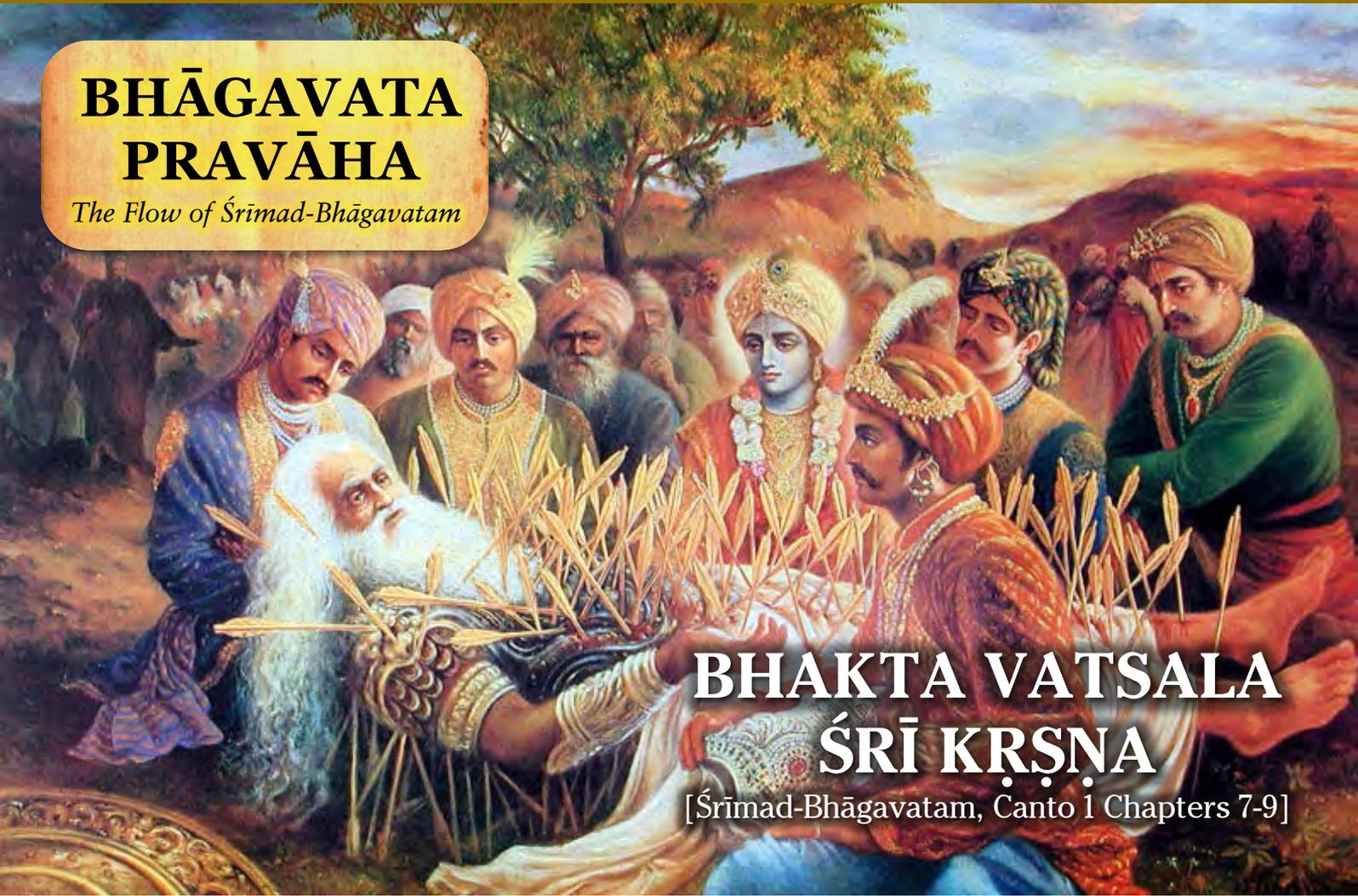
Just as indigestion caused by excessive consumption of **milk** preparations is cured by another milk preparation - **yogurt** mixed with black pepper and salt, similarly bondage caused by **fruitive activities** can be destroyed by performing the same activities for the **satisfaction of Krsna** (bhakti-yoga). (SB 4.30.19 P)





BHĀGAVATA PRAVĀHA

The Flow of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam



BHAKTA VATSALA ŚRĪ KṚṢṆA

[Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Canto 1 Chapters 7-9]

Sūta Gosvāmī begins answering the second question of the sages by narrating the birth and activities of King Parīkṣit. The story unfolds with the punishment of Aśvatthāmā, the son of Droṇa, who displeased everyone by murdering the sons of the Pāṇḍavas. Being persecuted by Arjuna and running in fear, he immaturely released a brahmāstra towards Arjuna who with the help of Kṛṣṇa, countered it.

Asvatthāma Punished

Having captured the foolish Asvatthāma, the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī were faced with an ethical dilemma of how to deal with him. While Bhīma commanded that he be killed, Draupadī out of compassion, asked that he be released instead, because he was a brāhmaṇa and the son of their teacher. Arjuna reconciled the opposing desires by cutting the jewel from the hair of Asvatthāma, thereby killing his reputation instead of his body. Thereafter, the sons of Pāṇḍu and Draupadī, overwhelmed with grief, performed proper rituals for the dead bodies of their relatives.

Second Attack

After performing the last rites for all their departed kinsmen, Lord Kṛṣṇa prepared to leave Hastinapura for His city Dvaraka, but just then, Uttarā, the daughter-in-law of Arjuna came running to Lord Kṛṣṇa, seeking protection for the embryo within her womb. Asvatthāma had thrown another *brahmāstra* to finish the last heir in the Pāṇḍava family. Lord Kṛṣṇa in a moment, took up His *Sudarśana* disc and saved the embryo. Thus saved from the radiation of the *brahmāstra*, Kuntī, the chaste devotee of the Lord, and her five sons and Draupadī addressed Lord Kṛṣṇa as He started for home.



Devotional Diversion

The child within the womb of Uttarā was King Parikṣit, of whom Sūta Gosvāmī was to narrate birth and activities, but now however, being caught up in the series of events, Sūta Gosvāmī begins describing other events that take place before continuing the narrations in Chapter 12.

Kuntī's Prayers

On that account, Kuntī in the prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa, first offered her obeisances, addressing Him as one who is beyond understanding, perception or influence of material qualities. Like an actor, He is unknown to His audience. Yet however, He now appeared as the son of a cowherd, giving pleasure to Devakī and enlivening the cows and senses in Vṛndāvana. She then expressed her good fortune by being able to see the lotus form of the Lord right now. She recalled how He saved Devakī from Kāmsa, and how He saved her along with her children from a series of dangers like - poisoned cake, great fire, cannibals, the vicious assembly, sufferings during their exile in the forest, in the battle where great generals fought and now, from the weapon of Aśvatthāmā. She prayed for those calamities to happen again, so that they'd continually get Lord Kṛṣṇa's darśana.

Lord's Bewildering Nature

Kuntī stated how the Lord is the property of those materially impoverished and not of those who are intoxicated by high birth, wealth, etc. Being eternal time, He is actually equal to all in distributing mercy. In addition, she glorified Lord Kṛṣṇa stating that His activities are bewildering, because although being unborn, He takes birth, and even descends among men, animals, etc. Although He is feared by fear personified, still, He becomes fearful when chastised by Mother Yasoda. Thereafter, Kuntī devī explained the various theories behind why the Lord appeared. Some say, it was due to Vasudeva and Devakī's austerities, or due to wanting to please King Yadu, while others reason that it was Brahmā's prayers, etc.

Persuading him to stay

Kuntidevī continued stating complete dependence on Kṛṣṇa, whose presence manifested all good things. Fearing Kṛṣṇa's departure, she asked for undistracted constant attention unto Him like the Ganges flowing towards the sea. Hearing her prayers, Lord Kṛṣṇa mildly smiled and prepared to leave. However, He was again stopped, this time by Yudhiṣṭhira.

Yudhiṣṭhira's lamentation

Deluded by affection, King Yudhiṣṭhira began to lament on how sinful he was for causing the great massacre for which there was no atonement. The aggrieved King, accompanied by others, then went to the scene of the massacre and found Bhīṣma lying there. Offering respects to the grandsire who appeared like a fallen demigod, they were welcomed by him with sweet words and hearty expressions, especially Lord Kṛṣṇa, of whose glories he knew in full.

Encouragement by Bhīṣma

In tears of ecstasy and affection, he spoke stating the good fortune of the Pāṇḍavas and Kuntī who survived multitudes of tribulations. Ultimately, it was all due to the inconceivable plan of the Lord. He then instructed Yudhiṣṭhira on essential principles of rulership and finally prepared himself for his final moment by fixing his eyes upon Lord Kṛṣṇa and prayed.

Bhīṣma's prayers

He said, "Let my mind be focused on that form of Pārtha-sārathi, by whose grace, all the opposing armies were vanquished." Remembering how the Lord was duly worshiped in the Rājasūya sacrifice, Bhīṣma left this world and everyone become silent and a shower of flowers fell from the sky. After performing the funeral rituals, everyone returned to their respective homes. King Yudhiṣṭhira although momentarily overcome by grief, returned to Hastināpura to console his uncle and aunt. He then executed his royal power strictly in accordance to codes and principles approved by Lord Kṛṣṇa. ☀

PARI-PRAŚNA

Question: Is Virata-rūpa material or spiritual? If it is spiritual, then why isn't it in the transcendental abode? In some places it is said that it is manifested from the Lord's internal potency (3.6.35)... (By Padma Sakhi Devi Dasi)

Answer: The virāṭa conception includes visualizing various planets, material creations, etc. as parts of the body of the Lord, which is correct in the sense that all energies (material and spiritual) are coming from the Lord. The Lord and His energies are non-different. Ultimately, everything stems from His internal potency, even the material worlds. The whole material creation, therefore, is one with and different from Nārāyaṇa, simultaneously, and this supports the acintya-bhedābheda-tattva philosophy of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. (2.1.39 P).

With one's material eyes or material senses one can neither see the Lord who is all spirit nor can one detect the spiritual spark which exists within the material body of the living being. But still one has to accept the living being's presence by the presence of his gross body. Similarly those who want to see the Lord with the present material eyes or perceive Him by the material senses, they are advised to see the Lord in His gigantic external feature called the virāṭa rūpa. For instance, when the President of the state goes out by his particular car, we say there is the president. Similarly for less intelligent men who want to see God immediately without the necessary qualification, they are shown first the gigantic material cosmos as the form of the Lord although the Lord is all-pervading. (SB 1.3.31 P).

Less intelligent men cannot conceive of the transcendental all-spiritual form of the Lord, but they are astounded by His different energies. Thus their meditation on the virāṭa rūpa, purifies them gradually to make them qualified to see the transcendental form of the Lord. (2.1.24 P).

The arcā-vigraha, or the worshipable Deity in the temple, is a similar manifestation of the Lord for the neophytes. But in spite of their material touch, such forms of the Lord as the virāṭ and arcā are all nondifferent from His eternal form as Lord Kṛṣṇa. (3.6.4 P).

As such, the virāṭa rūpa is not in the spiritual world, nor counted among the list of incarnations. ☀

Mail us at pradipika@vidyapitha.in your questions on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Answers to shortlisted questions shall be published in the next issue of Bhāgavata Pradīpikā.



