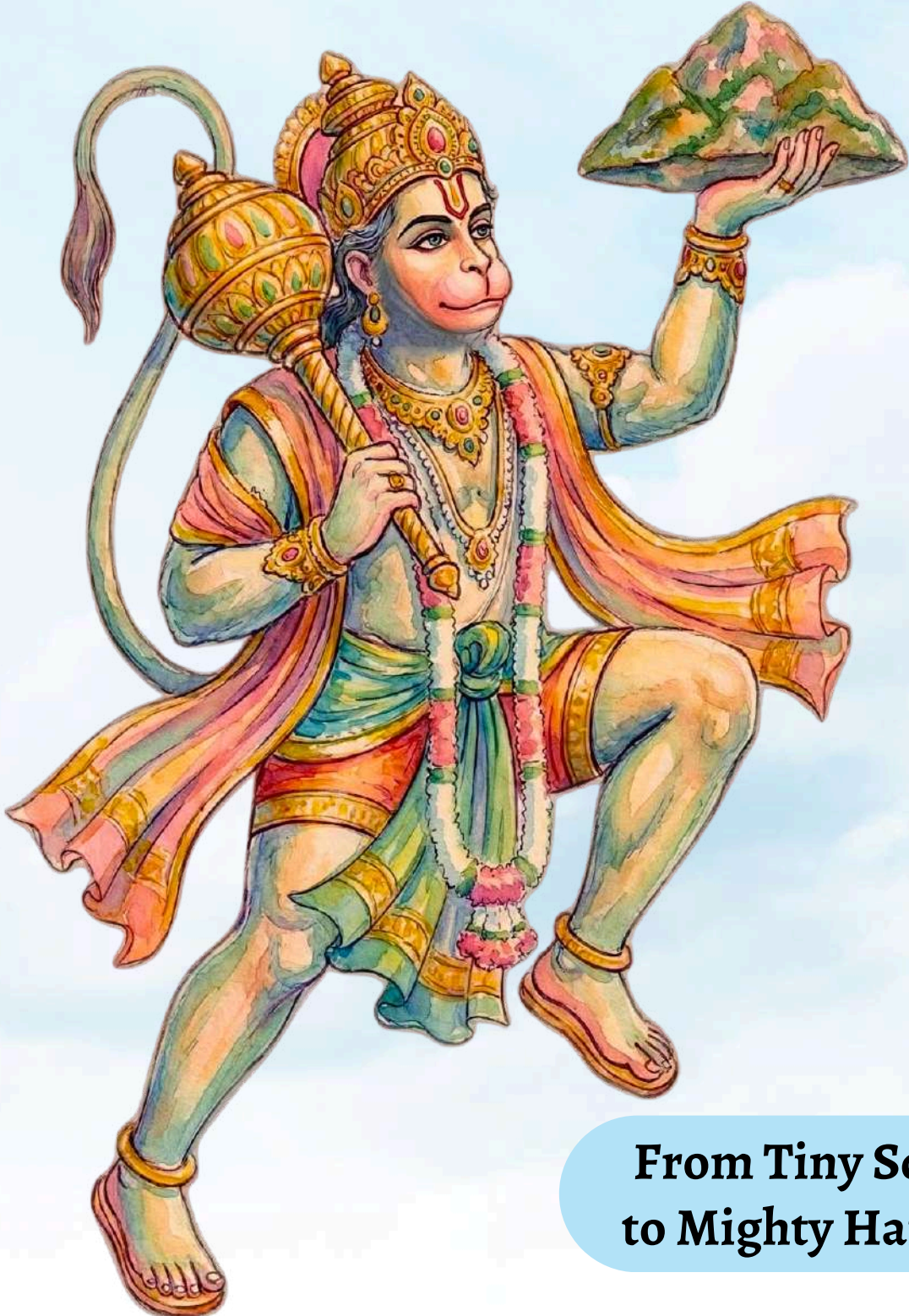




A Monthly E-Magazine from the Bhaktivedanta Vidyapitha with Illuminating Perspectives on the Srimad-Bhāgavatam

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



**From Tiny Squirrel
to Mighty Hanuman**



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FROM THE
DESK OF THE
FOUNDER
ĀCĀRYA



Light of Bhagavata

By A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

The small rivulets that almost dried up during the months of May and June now begin to overflow their banks, like upstarts that suddenly overflow the limits of expenditure.

One should learn gravity from the sea and the rivulet. The sea is always within its limits, in spite of the many rivers pouring water into it. Similarly, one should properly use the assets of life and not squander them for purposes that have no permanent value. Uncontrolled, sensuous persons play with the assets of the body and accumulate wealth. But the strength of the body should be used for self-realization, not for sense gratification.

Human beings have two kinds of temperament. Some are introspective, and the others are extravagant. Those who are extravagant are enamored of the external features of phenomenal beauty and have no insight into the whole manifestation. They are practically asleep to introspection, and thus they are unable to derive any permanent value from the assets of the human form of body. But one who has developed introspection is as grave as the sea. While those who are extravagant are calm and quiet in sleep, such grave persons use the full advantage of the human form of life.

Although the animal propensities of the body should be minimized, those who are extravagant temporarily overflow in material enjoyment. Nonetheless, as soon as the rainy season of life is over, they become as dry as dry river beds. Life is meant for the right cause, or *sat*—that which exists for all time. In the material world, nothing is *sat*, or eternal, but the bad bargain of the material world can be used for the best purpose. The mind dedicated to extravagance is a bad bargain, but one can make the best use of the mind by introspection.



From Tiny Squirrel to Mighty Hanuman

*Greatness in Devotional Service Is
Measured by Heart, Not Size*

By Gauranga Darshan Das

Who is truly a great devotee? Is greatness measured by the magnitude of one's service? Is the devotee who builds temples, manages institutions, makes followers, speaks eloquently, travels widely to preach, or donates immense wealth necessarily greater than the devotee who quietly cooks, cleans, distributes prasādam, washes pots, arranges shoes, or chants sincerely in a humble corner?

The scriptures certainly glorify extraordinary devotees who rendered monumental service to the Lord. Their contributions inspire generations. Yet the same scriptures repeatedly reveal another profound truth: the Lord is not merely attracted to the size of service, but to the heart behind it.

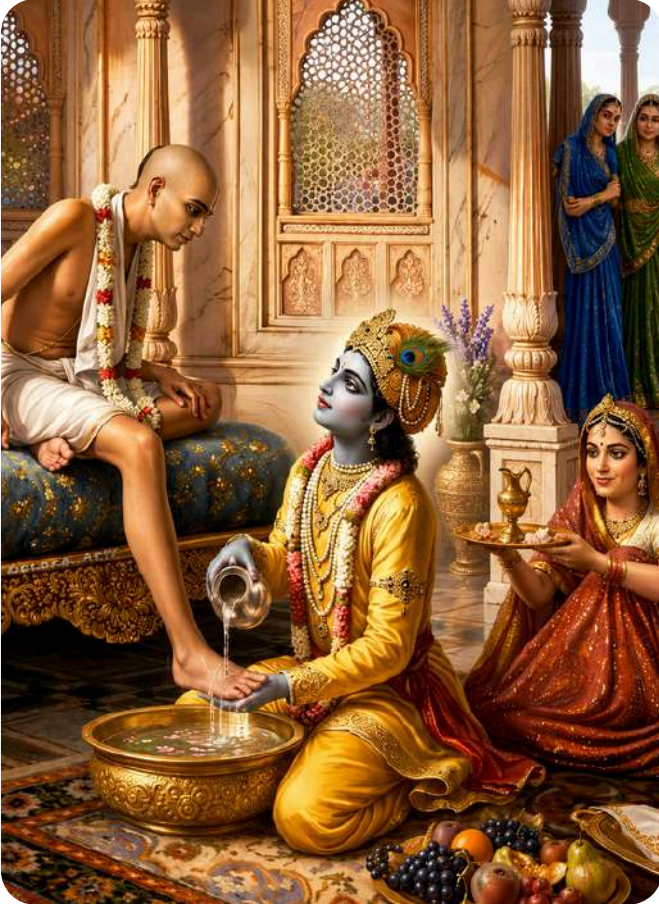


The Supreme Lord is called *Bhāvagrāhī Janārdana*—the Lord who accepts the devotion and intention behind an offering. Thus, from the tiny squirrel assisting in Lord Rāma's bridge construction to the mighty Hanumān leaping across the ocean, every sincere offering according to one's capacity has eternal value.

Bhakti is not a competition of visibility, influence, or accomplishment. Each devotee serves according to one's nature, capacity, and realization, and the Lord reciprocates accordingly.

If one judged only by dramatic external accomplishments, one might overlook the subtle greatness of devotees whose service appears less spectacular. But the Lord never overlooks sincere service.

Diverse Expressions of Friendship in Kṛṣṇa-līlā



Kṛṣṇa's friendships manifested differently in different settings. In Hastināpura, Arjuna's friendship expressed itself amidst warfare, politics, and responsibility. In Dvārakā, Uddhava served Kṛṣṇa through wisdom, counsel, deep conversations, and confidential exchanges. In Vṛndāvana, the cowherd boys like Śrīdāma and Sudāmā simply played, laughed, wrestled, and shared meals with Kṛṣṇa in spontaneous affection. In Ujjain, Sudāmā Brāhmaṇa associated with Kṛṣṇa as a fellow student in the service of their guru, loving Him with purity, humility, and simplicity. Yet when Sudāmā later visited Dvārakā, Kṛṣṇa personally embraced him with tears in His eyes. Although all these devotees were friends of Kṛṣṇa in different moods and flavors of friendship, Kṛṣṇa lovingly reciprocated with each of them.

Similarly, the Vrajavāsīs were not establishing kingdoms or writing philosophical treatises. Mother Yaśodā simply worried whether Kṛṣṇa had eaten properly. The gopīs churned butter, cared for their families, and loved Kṛṣṇa with complete absorption. Externally their lives appeared simple, yet their devotion was so exalted that even great sages aspire to understand it.

Thus, devotional greatness cannot be reduced to external scale or visibility. The Lord values not merely what we offer, but the love with which we offer it.

The Diversity of Excellence in Caitanya-līlā

The associates of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu beautifully demonstrate how devotional greatness manifests in different ways.

Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī wrote profound scriptures, excavated holy places in Vṛndāvana, established temples, and systematized Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology. Their contribution is immeasurable.

Haridāsa Ṭhākura's glory lies in unwavering attachment to constant chanting of the holy names with deep humility. He did not establish institutions or compose extensive philosophical works.

Similarly, Śrīdhara Kolāveca lived very simply, selling banana leaves and cups. Materially he appeared poor and insignificant. Yet Mahāprabhu personally visited him, affectionately joked with him, and even drank water from his worn iron pot because He saw the purity of his devotion.

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī exemplified renunciation and absorption in remembrance of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Rāmānanda Rāya and Svarūpa Dāmodara assisted Mahāprabhu in relishing the highest spiritual mellows. Govinda rendered intimate personal service to the Lord.

Their services differed externally, yet one quality united them all: sincere devotion filled with humility.

Diversity in modern times: Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Gaura Kīśora Dāsa Bābājī

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was highly active socially and spiritually. He wrote numerous books, preached widely, managed governmental responsibilities, rediscovered the birthplace of Mahāprabhu, addressed social misconceptions, and laid foundations for the future worldwide mission of Lord Caitanya.

His service was visibly dynamic, intellectual, organized, and historically transformative.

Gaura Kīśora Dāsa Bābājī, however, lived in extreme simplicity and detachment. He spent much of his life absorbed in chanting and bhajana, often unnoticed by society.

One transformed the world through organized preaching and writing. The other transformed hearts through pure absorption and renunciation.

Who was greater?

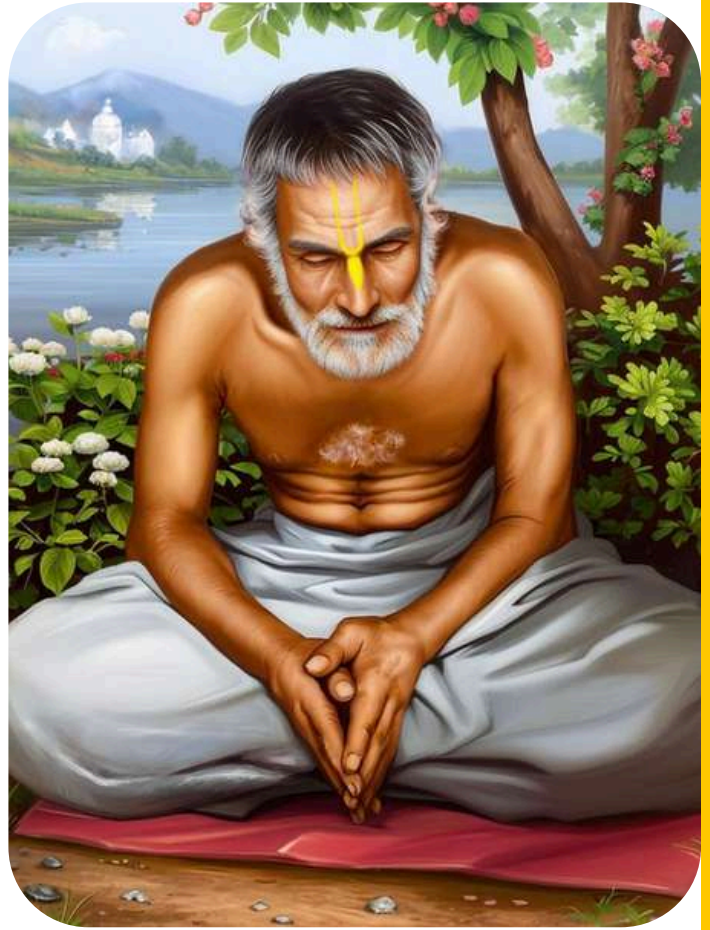
Such comparisons become irrelevant in the spiritual realm. Both deeply pleased Kṛṣṇa through wholehearted surrender expressed in different ways. We can extend the discussion for many other glorious acharyas too.

Greatness Is Not Always Loud

In spiritual communities, visible service naturally attracts appreciation. Dynamic preachers, organizers, scholars, singers, managers, and leaders of large projects become well known, and such devotees genuinely deserve respect for the immense responsibility they shoulder in the Lord's mission.

Yet sometimes an unconscious misunderstanding develops—that only visible service is important.

A devotee quietly cleaning the temple before maṅgala-ārati, cutting vegetables daily in the kitchen, distributing caraṇāmṛta, arranging shoes outside the temple hall, maintaining the gardens, making garlands, or simply chanting sincerely may never receive public recognition. Yet these services are not small in the eyes of the Lord.



The Lord's mission is sustained not only by visible heroes, but also by countless silent servants. Just as the body requires both the eyes and the feet, devotional communities flourish through many forms of service offered by many kinds of devotees united in one purpose. This is true unity in diversity.

One person may perform enormous service yet remain internally proud, while another may perform a simple service with deep humility and surrender. The Lord sees beyond externals.

Sometimes people evaluate devotion using measurable achievements, which are certainly important,

and reflect extraordinary devotion and sacrifice. But bhakti cannot be reduced to statistics.

A mother cooking for the Deities with affection, an elderly devotee quietly folding temple clothes, a child offering one flower to Kṛṣṇa with innocence, or a devotee sincerely chanting amidst struggles—all these offerings carry spiritual value beyond material calculation.

In bhakti, consciousness is central. As Kṛṣṇa explains in the Bhagavad-gītā, even a leaf, flower, fruit, or water offered with devotion is accepted by Him. The offering may appear small, but the devotion behind it may be immense.

Empowerment by the Lord: The Real Source of All Service



Another essential dimension of devotional service is understanding that the ability to serve does not ultimately arise from our independent strength, intelligence, wealth, talent, or influence. Whatever capacity a devotee possesses—whether great or small—is itself a gift from the Lord.

Some devotees are empowered to preach to thousands. Some are empowered to manage large projects, perform beautiful deity worship, write books, sing for the Lord, or chant constantly with deep absorption. Others are empowered to encourage devotees, cook, clean, organize, support quietly behind the scenes, or simply remain steady in their sādhana amidst difficult circumstances.

Different devotees are empowered differently because the Lord has unique purposes for each soul. Therefore, a devotee should neither become proud of “big” service nor discouraged by “small” service. The real mood of bhakti is: “I am simply an instrument.”

This truth is beautifully revealed in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. After Lord Kṛṣṇa departed from this world, Arjuna, who had defeated mighty warriors in the Battle of Kurukṣetra, suddenly found himself powerless. His extraordinary abilities seemed to vanish.

In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.15, Arjuna explains that all his strength, fame, and influence existed only because of Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Without the Lord, his celebrated bow Gāṇḍīva, his arrows, chariot, horses, and personal prowess had become useless.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in the purport of SB 1.15.5 that no one can be independently powerful without being empowered by the Lord. When the Lord descends to this world, He empowers His devotees with the specific abilities required to fulfill His mission. Once that purpose is fulfilled, those special powers may also be withdrawn. Thus, even Arjuna's astonishing heroism was not his independent achievement. It was divine empowerment meant for the Lord's service. Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, warns that no one should become proud of abilities borrowed from the Lord. A wise person feels grateful for such gifts and uses them in the Lord's service, knowing they can be withdrawn at any moment.

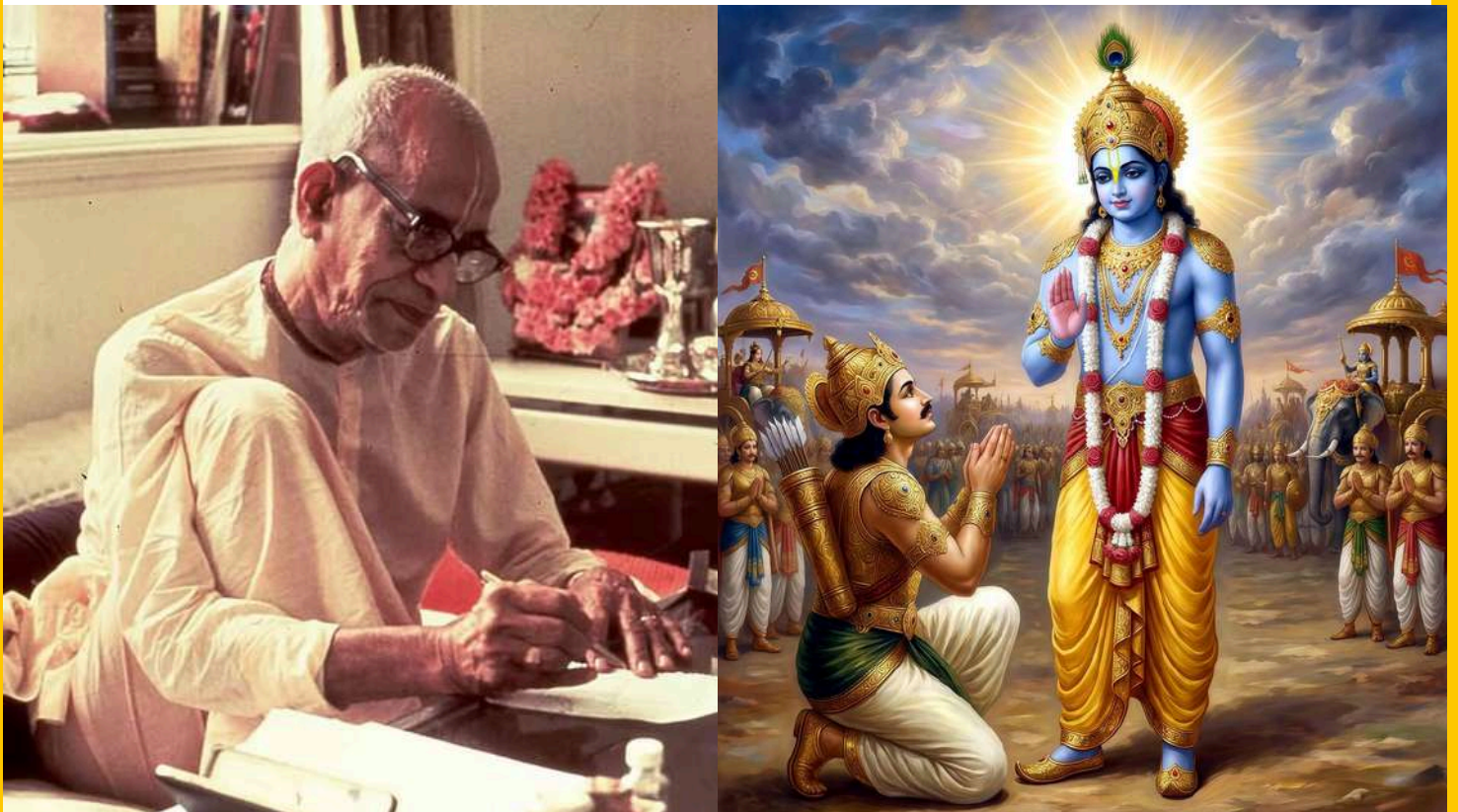
This realization protects a devotee from false ego.

A preacher may attract thousands, but that empowerment comes from the Lord. A manager may organize wonderful projects, but the intelligence and opportunity come from the Lord. A writer may produce profound books, but the inspiration comes from the Lord. A devotee may quietly clean the temple for decades with unwavering steadiness—that steadiness too is empowerment from the Lord.

Thus, every genuine service is actually a divine cooperation between the Lord and the devotee.

Later, Arjuna realized that although externally he appeared heroic, internally he was only an instrument in Kṛṣṇa's plan. Kṛṣṇa Himself had instructed him in the Bhagavad-gītā: "nimitta-mātraṁ bhava"—"Become merely an instrument."

This consciousness lies at the heart of genuine devotion.



Hanumān never thought, “I crossed the ocean by my own power.” He saw himself as an instrument of Lord Rāma’s will, like an arrow released from Rāma’s bow (yatha raghava nirmukta sarah). He constantly glorified Lord Rāma, never himself.

Similarly, the Gosvāmīs never considered themselves extraordinary despite transforming the spiritual history of the world. Haridāsa Ṭhākura remained profoundly humble despite being honored as the nāmācārya.

At the same time, a devotee engaged in simple service should never think, “My service is insignificant,” because the Lord may be deeply pleased by that offering. And a devotee engaged in enormous service should never think, “I am the doer,” because the power to serve comes from the Lord alone.

The Lord empowers different devotees differently, just as different instruments in an orchestra produce different sounds. A flute and a drum perform distinct functions, yet both contribute to the beauty of the symphony when played by the same master musician.

In the same way, devotional greatness lies not merely in the scale of service, but in the consciousness behind it: humility, gratitude, dependence on the Lord, and the sincere desire to serve as His instrument.

Thus, from the tiny squirrel to mighty Hanumān, from the unnoticed cleaner to the world-famous preacher, every devotee is a glorious instrument of the Lord engaged in His loving service.



The Danger of Stereotyped Spiritual Vision

One danger in spiritual life is developing a stereotyped understanding of greatness.

In today's culture of views, likes, shares, and followers, popularity is sometimes mistaken for spiritual depth. Genuine sādhus who quietly practice devotion without public recognition may be overlooked simply because they are not externally prominent.

But purity and popularity are not always the same. Everything pure may not become popular, and everything popular may not be pure. Sometimes purity and popularity coexist, but one should never judge spiritual purity merely by external popularity. Devotional life is not a corporate hierarchy of importance.

Kṛṣṇa intentionally creates diversity among devotees. Every role can become spiritually glorious when performed with devotion. Even within one community, devotees differ in psychology, talents, health, family situations, capacities, and spiritual inclinations. The Lord does not demand identical service from everyone. He asks for sincerity.

Some devotees are like blazing suns visible to the world. Others are like hidden lamps quietly illuminating a small room. Both give light. If every devotee tried to perform the same role, devotional society would become imbalanced. Diversity enriches devotional culture.

The Common Ornament: Humility

Whether one is Hanumān or the tiny squirrel, Bhīma or Sudāma, Rūpa Gosvāmī or Śrīdhara Kolāveca, one quality consistently adorns genuine devotees: humility.

Great devotees never think, “I am great.”

Hanumān saw himself only as the servant of Lord Rāma. Haridāsa Ṭhākura considered himself fallen despite being honored as nāmācārya. The Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana lived with deep simplicity despite their immense scholarship and influence.

True devotion softens the heart rather than inflating the ego. The more advanced a devotee becomes, the more they appreciate the service of others.

A mature devotee never mocks “small” service because they understand that devotion—not visibility—is the essence.

Human beings naturally notice externals, but the Lord sees the heart. The world may applaud the devotee on the stage, but Kṛṣṇa also notices the devotee quietly sweeping the floor after everyone leaves. The world may celebrate the eloquent preacher, but Kṛṣṇa also sees the devotee struggling to chant sincerely amidst personal suffering.



No service offered to Kṛṣṇa with devotion is ever lost.

Sometimes devotees engaged in quiet service develop deep dependence on the Lord precisely because they receive little external recognition. Their devotion becomes intimate and free from prestige. At the same time, some devotees perform massive service while remaining profoundly humble. Such devotees become especially glorious because they combine external accomplishment with internal surrender.

Thus, the real question is not whether service is “big” or “small,” but: Is it offered with sincerity and humility to please the Lord?

Comparison!? – Every Devotee Has a Place

In spiritual life, comparison is often unhealthy. Every devotee has a unique offering to make. The Lord accepts all sincere offerings.

Indeed, even when scriptures describe gradations among devotees or rasas, each devotee is fully fulfilled in their unique relationship with the Lord. The cowherd boys of Vṛndāvana do not aspire to become warriors like Arjuna. Sudāmā Brāhmaṇa does not seek political influence. Mother Yaśodā does not desire to become a philosopher. Hanumān does not aspire to become a gopī. That is the beauty of bhakti.

Devotional life is not a ladder of material promotion where one constantly seeks bigger titles, greater visibility, or larger influence. Rather, it is the deepening of one’s unique loving relationship with the Lord. So, let’s aspire for depth instead of height.

Whether one serves Kṛṣṇa on a battlefield, in a royal assembly, in the forests of Vraja, in a humble cottage, or in a quiet temple kitchen, perfection lies in offering sincere and loving service to the Lord.

Conclusion: From the Squirrel to Hanumān

The devotional world has room for both tiny squirrels and mighty Hanumāns.

We should deeply honor great souls who perform extraordinary service for the Lord’s mission. Their sacrifices sustain and expand devotional culture across the world. At the same time, we should never underestimate simple devotees performing humble service with sincerity.

In the material world, greatness is often measured by power, fame, influence, and scale. But in spiritual life, greatness is measured by love, surrender, humility, and sincerity.

Thus, whether one carries mountains like Hanumān or grains of sand like the squirrel, one’s offering becomes glorious when offered wholeheartedly to the Lord. The Lord who embraced mighty Hanumān also lovingly touched the tiny squirrel.

And perhaps that is one of the most comforting truths in spiritual life: not everyone must become Hanumān to please Lord Rāma. We simply need to become sincere in the service we are meant to offer.



REFLECTIONS ON AKRURA'S SINCERE MEDITATION

By Aritiri, Grade 6, Sydney



Have you ever wondered what the right mindset is when visiting a holy place? Akrura is a wonderful example of how one should approach such an opportunity. What valuable lesson can we learn from this touching pastime? Let's dive in!

First of all, one shouldn't take the opportunity to visit holy places of pilgrimage, such as Vrindavan or Mayapur, as ordinary. One must never assume that such a privilege results from one's own qualification. Such an experience is the result of the Lord's unconditional mercy, which is evidently greater than our own shortcomings.

Akrura depicts this lesson through his humility. Understanding the Lord as omniscient, he knew that the Lord would still lovingly welcome him, though he had been sent by the evil Kamsa.

He meditated on Krishna and Balarama embracing him and leading him to Their home. As Paramatma, Lord Krishna lovingly reciprocated almost exactly as Akrura had imagined.

As Sri Krishna Janmashtami approaches, just as Akrura meditated on how he would serve the Lord, we can also meditate on how we can serve Krishna and His dear devotees on the Lord's auspicious appearance day. We may not be able to reach Akrura's level, but we can do whatever little is within our capacity with sincere devotion, dedication, and Krishna's mercy. The Lord reciprocates with the endeavour put in by His devotees to please Him, according to their sincerity.

Finally, Akrura sets an excellent example of how to meditate on the Lord and always be able to see His hand in whatever merciful opportunities we are blessed with. Endeavouring to follow his example—perhaps not perfectly, but with genuine devotion and dedication—is the best gift we can offer the Lord on His birthday. So this Krishna Janmashtami, let's try to meditate on how we can best serve the Lord and His devotees because, ultimately, pleasing the Lord is the perfection of any festival.

LESSONS FROM THE DOG, HOG, CAMEL, AND ASS

By Om, Grade 6, New Jersey.



The Bhagavad Gita, as spoken by the Lord himself, clearly defines an "Aryan" as one who understands the spiritual values of life. Those who grasp these values naturally know how to attain and apply them. In contrast, those with an atheistic or materialistic temperament often disregard these values, engaging only in sense gratification. Such individuals lack a taste for hearing transcendental topics and instead praise those who share their material focus.

The Srimad Bhagavatam compares such degraded persons to four specific animals: dogs, hogs, camels, and asses. Srila Prabhupada and other great acharyas like Srila Jiva Goswami explain that regardless of one's social position or worldly education, if one's only goal is eating, sleeping, mating, and defending, they are effectively "two-legged animals."

The remedy is to take to devotional service, the ever-purifying process of dovetailing these natural habits in the service of Lord Krishna.

1. The Dog

A dog faithfully serves a master for mere scraps. Similarly, those who offer their service to worldly bosses or their own mind and senses without serving the Lord are compared to dogs in human disguise. As His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada describes in *The Second Chance*, we must practice Yukta-vairagya—using our education and energy in Krishna's service. By submissively approaching a bona fide spiritual master, as advised in the Bhagavad Gita (4.34), we can redirect our service from Maya to Govinda, the reservoir of all pleasure.

2. The Hog

The hog is characterized by its lack of discrimination in eating (consuming stool) and its indiscriminate sex life. A hoggish mentality is seen in those who do not restrict their diet or control their senses. Sri Rupa Goswami explains in *The Nectar of Instruction* that one must control the urges of the tongue, belly, and genitals. Instead of slaughtering animals for taste, we should offer vegetarian food to the Lord and partake in prasadam to purify our consciousness. Furthermore, we must overcome the laziness typical of this mentality by engaging in the Krishna consciousness movement to attain self-realization and liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

3. The Camel

A camel enjoys eating thorny bushes, even as they pierce its tongue, because it mistakes the taste of its own blood for enjoyment. Materialists share this "camel-ish" mentality, labeling their repeated suffering as happiness. Srila Bhaktivinod Thakur explains in *Bhajana Rahasya* that this is *Asat-trishna*—a taste for the temporary. The *Bhagavad Gita* (2.59) teaches that by experiencing a "higher taste" (*param drstva*) through the association of pure devotees, one naturally loses the desire for these inferior, painful pleasures.

4. The Ass (Donkey)

The donkey carries heavy burdens all day just for a morsel of grass, unaware that it could find grass elsewhere without the labor. This represents the conditioned soul burdened by karmic reactions, working tirelessly for meager material results. Donkeys also suffer kicks from the opposite sex yet continue to hanker for them. To be free from this "donkey mentality," one must practice *Buddhi-yoga* or *Bhakti-yoga*, offering service to Krishna to dissolve the burden of both pious and impious karma.

In conclusion, a human life should not be wasted in the habits of these four animals. By serving a spiritual master rather than the senses, honoring *prasadam*, associating with devotees to gain a higher taste, and practicing *Bhakti-yoga* to break the bonds of karma, we can transcend this material mentality. Through this process, we develop a genuine taste for hearing *Hari-katha* and ultimately attain the true values of life.



VERSE OF THE MONTH

Please give association of your devotees



ŚB 7.9.24

*tasmād amūs tanu-bhṛtām aham āśiṣo 'jña
āyuh śriyaṁ vibhavam aindriyam āviriñcyāt
necchāmi te vilulitān uruvikrameṇa
kālatmanopanaya mām nija-bhṛtya-pārśvam*

My dear Lord, now I have complete experience concerning the worldly opulence, mystic power, longevity and other material pleasures enjoyed by all living entities, from Lord Brahmā down to the ant. As powerful time, You destroy them all. Therefore, because of my experience, I do not wish to possess them. My dear Lord, I request You to place me in touch with Your pure devotee and let me serve him as a sincere servant.

ANALOGY ARENA



Sparks are beautiful as long as they are in the fire.

Similarly, we have to remain in the association of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and always engage in devotional service, for then we shall always be brilliant and illuminating. As soon as we fall from the service of the Lord, our brilliance and illumination will immediately be extinguished, or at least stopped for some time.

ŚB 8.6.15

If one is given a court order, he must accept it, whether it brings suffering or profit.

Similarly, everyone is under obligations to karma and its reactions. No one can change this.

ŚB 8.7.44



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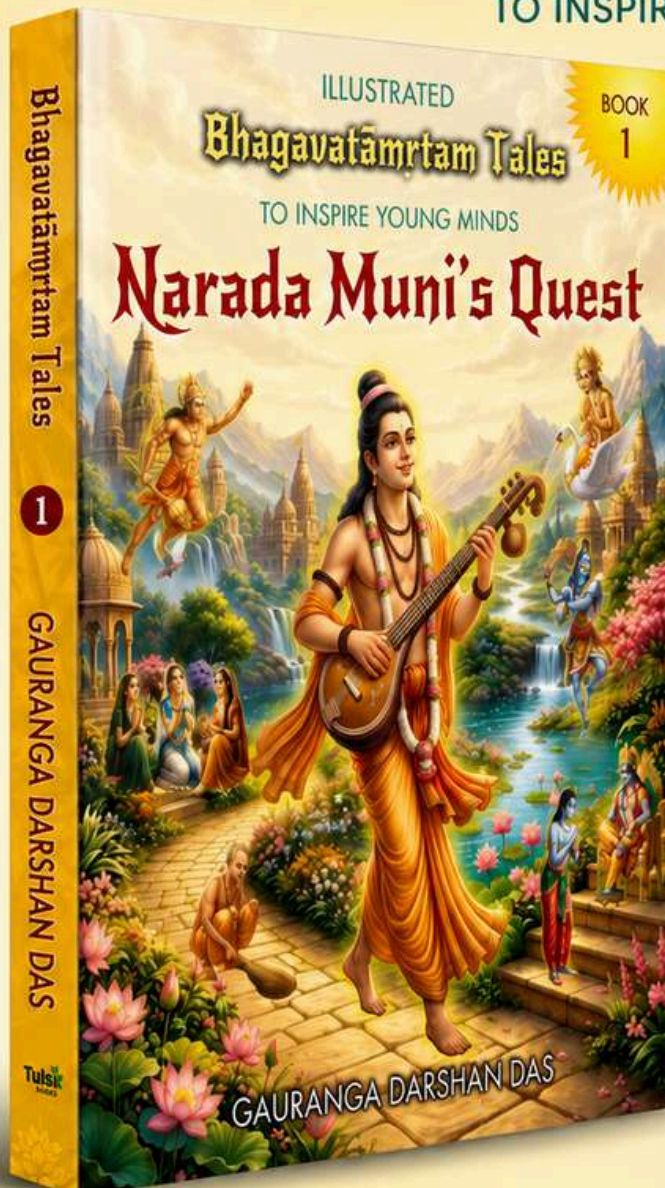
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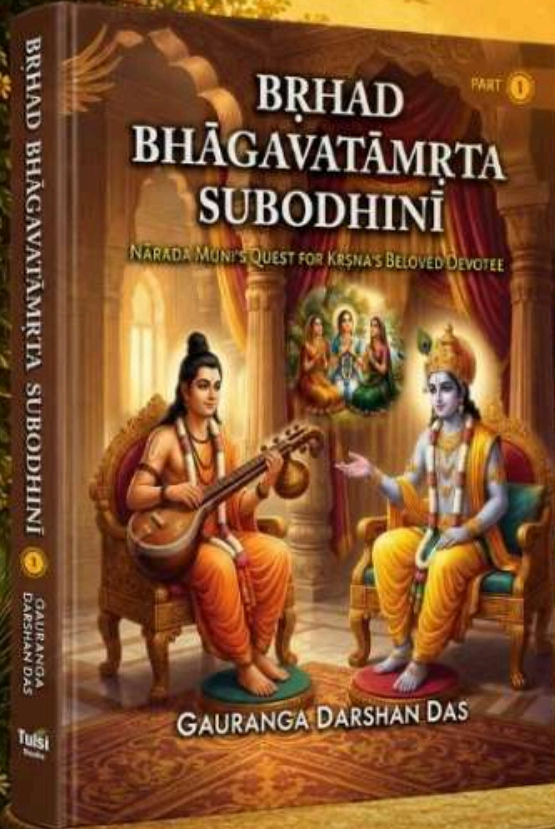
As Narada travels through kingdoms, heavenly realms, and sacred abodes, he meets remarkable devotees whose devotion and humility inspire him at every step. Yet each devotee points him toward someone else, revealing that true greatness lies not in power, fame, or position, but in selfless love and devotion.

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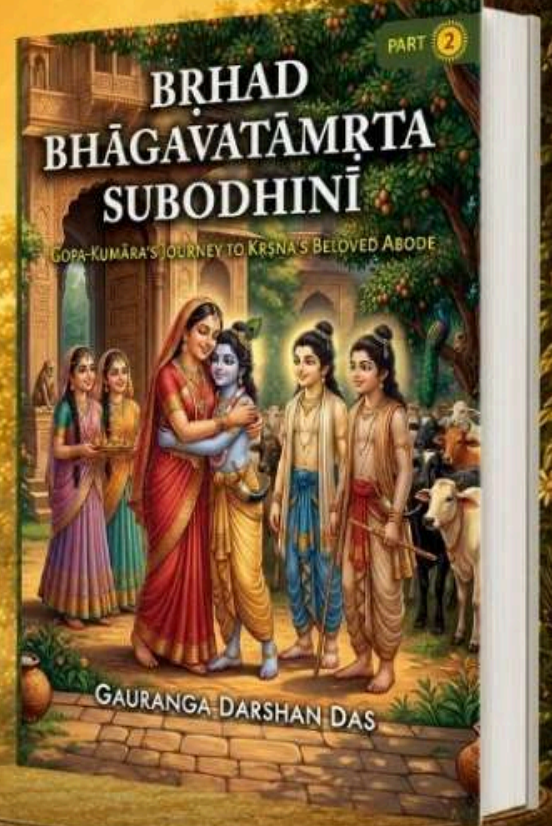
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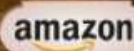
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