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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-Bhagavatam*

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

Ramanavami Special

## DIFFERENCES OF OPINION AMONGST DEVOTEES

**ALSO**

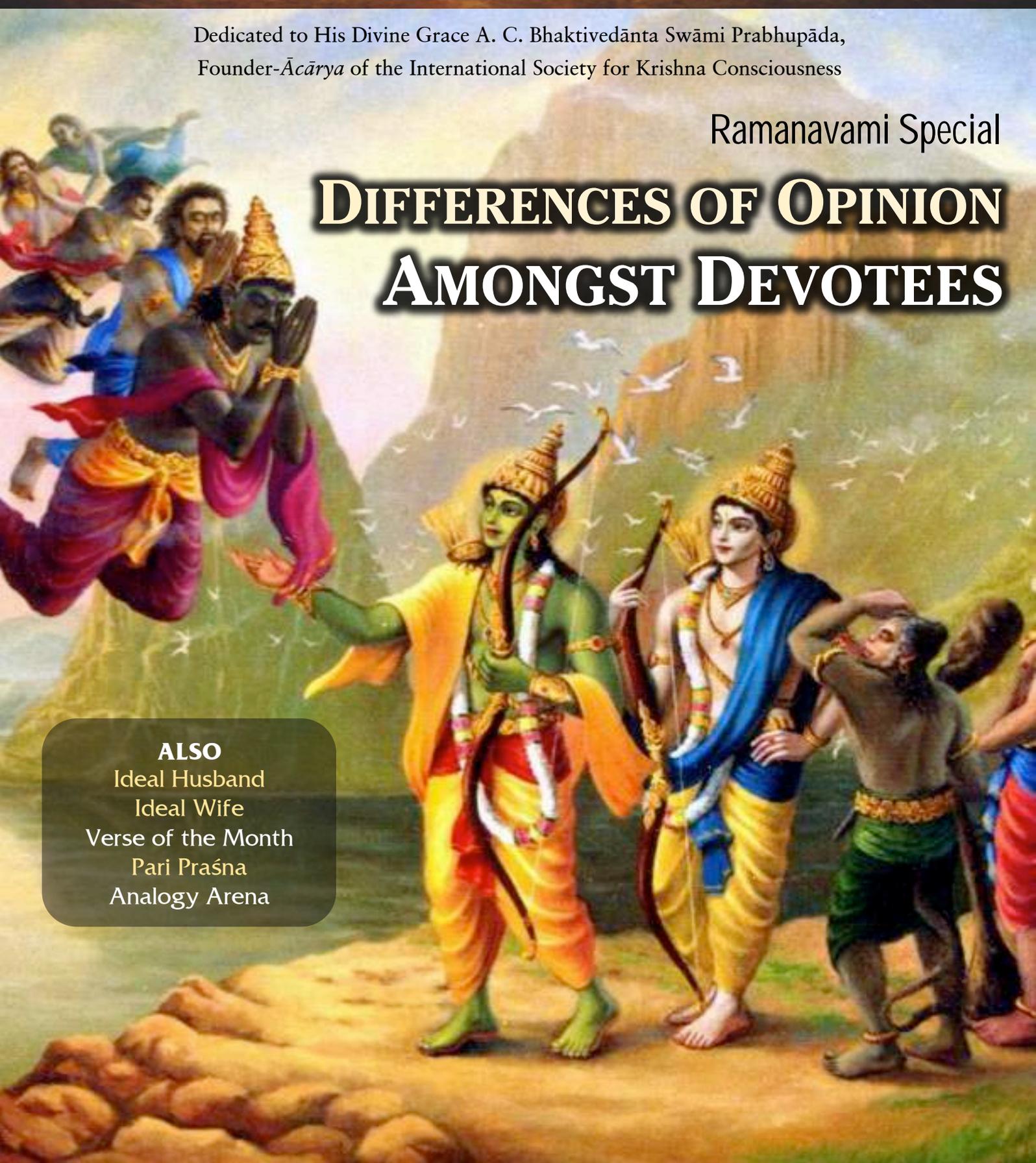
Ideal Husband

Ideal Wife

Verse of the Month

Pari Praśna

Analogy Arena





FROM THE DESK OF  
THE FOUNDER ĀCĀRYA

## IDEAL HUSBAND

By His Divine Grace  
A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī  
Prabhupāda

*eka-patnī-vrata-dharo rājarsī-caritaḥ śuciḥ*

*sva-dharmam grha-medhīyam śikṣayan svayam ācarat*

Lord Rāmacandra took a vow to accept only one wife and have no connection with any other women. He was a saintly king, and everything in His character was good, untinged by qualities like anger. He taught good behavior for everyone, especially for householders, in terms of varṇāśrama-dharma. Thus He taught the general public by His personal activities. (SB 9.10.54)

*Eka-patnī-vrata*, accepting only one wife, was the glorious example set by Lord Rāmacandra. One should not accept more than one wife. In those days, of course, people did marry more than one wife. Even Lord Rāmacandra's father accepted more wives than one. But Lord Rāmacandra, as an ideal king, accepted only one wife, mother Sītā. When mother Sītā was kidnapped by Rāvaṇa and the Rākṣasas, Lord Rāmacandra, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, could have married hundreds and thousands of Sītās, but to teach us how faithful He was to His wife, He fought with Rāvaṇa and finally killed him. The Lord punished Rāvaṇa and rescued His wife to instruct men to have only one wife. Lord Rāmacandra accepted only one wife and manifested sublime character, thus setting an example for householders. A householder should live according to the ideal of Lord Rāmacandra, who showed how to be a perfect person. Being a householder or living with a wife and children is never condemned, provided one lives according to the regulative principles of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Those who live in accordance with these principles, whether as householders, *brahmacārīs* or *vānaprasthas*, are all equally important.



**BHĀGAVATA  
PRADĪPIKĀ**

Bask in the Illumination of the Bhāgavatam

In the mundane field, an outlook of doing good to others in the form of society, community, family, country or humanity is a partial manifestation of the same original feeling in which a pure living entity feels happiness by the happiness of the Supreme Lord. (2.3.10 P)



# IDEAL WIFE



*preṃṇānuṛṭṭyā śīlena  
praśrayāvanatā satī*

*bhiyā hriyā ca bhāva-jñā  
bhartuḥ sītāharan manaḥ*

Mother Sītā was very submissive, faithful, shy and chaste, always understanding the attitude of her husband. Thus by her character and her love and service she completely attracted the mind of the Lord. (SB 9.10.55)

As Lord Rāmacandra is the ideal husband (ekapatnī-vrata), mother Sītā is the ideal wife. Such a combination makes family life very happy. Yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janah: whatever example a great man sets, common people follow. If the kings, the leaders, and the brāhmaṇas, the teachers, would set forth the examples we receive from Vedic literature, the entire world would be heaven; indeed, there would no longer be hellish conditions within this material world.





# Differences of Opinion Amongst Devotees

by Gauranga Darshan Das

*An incident from  
the story of Lord  
Rāma that depicts  
unity in diversity &  
diversity in unity*

Can two persons be alike in all respects? No! Everybody is an individual with unique thoughts, aspirations, opinions, mannerisms and lifestyles. Although birds of same feather flock together, every bird is an individual and unique. There are differences even within one community of people with multiple commonalities, led by one able leader.

### Same Goals – Different Styles

All the followers of a spiritual path have many things in common: (i) the object of their worship i.e., their beloved form of God, (ii) the aspiration and attempt to love and serve Him to the best of their ability, and (iii) the prescribed spiritual practices that enable them to achieve their spiritual goals. Despite these similarities in general, when it comes to minute details of spiritual practice, every spiritual seeker has a unique mood and style.

Devotees are not so faceless that they are fully same in all respects. Rather each one has a unique story. Humility, satisfaction, tolerance, compassion, gratitude, service attitude and many other such aspects of Vaiṣṇava character are common in all devotees of God, yet each devotee exhibits those qualities in unique ways. For instance, the way one devotee renders service to God could be quite different from another's way, although they both agree to the principle of service to God.





The following is an instance from the story of Lord Rāmacandra where some of His dear devotees exhibited differences in their opinions in their sincere intent and effort to serve the Lord's mission.

### Same Person – Different Perceptions

The king of demons Rāvaṇa abducted Sītādevī, the consort of Lord Rāma, and held her captive in his golden city Laṅkā. Unlike lusty and proud Rāvaṇa, his younger brother Vibhīṣaṇa was saintly and virtuous. Vibhīṣaṇa advised Rāvaṇa repeatedly to respectfully return Sītā to Rāma, for otherwise Laṅkā would soon see its destruction due to the tears of Sītā and wrath of Rāma. But egoistic Rāvaṇa wouldn't relent. Once he ruthlessly rebuked Vibhīṣaṇa with harsh words condemning his non-cooperative attitude. Pained at heart, Vibhīṣaṇa left Laṅkā and approached the camp of Rāma, who was then making His preparations with the monkey army to battle with Rāvaṇa, seeking His shelter.

Seeing Vibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva, the king of the monkeys became very suspicious. All the monkeys started picking up rocks and uprooting trees to attack Vibhīṣaṇa if needed, and they awaited Sugrīva's orders. It is natural for devotees to always be eager and alert to the best of their physical and mental abilities, in their attempts to serve the Lord. The ever-wise devotee Hanumān, however, didn't detect any deceit or ill motives in Vibhīṣaṇa.

Vibhīṣaṇa, of course, was free from duplicity and had no motive to harm any of the associates of Rāma. He humbly spoke to Sugrīva, explaining his intentions. But Sugrīva was doubtful. And Hanumān, who had the ability to read the minds of people, understood that Vibhīṣaṇa's speech and expression were genuine and believed that he sincerely desired to assist Rāma.

In this world, even a genuine person's purity is suspected due to his or her background and association. Yet the good news is that God reveals their glory to the world sooner or later.



### Same Intentions – Different Opinions

Sugrīva approached Rāma and said, "O Lord, a demon from the side of our enemies has arrived seeking Your shelter. He claims to have deserted Rāvaṇa." Sugrīva continued, presenting his opinion with a deep concern, "Yet, I think that he cannot be trusted. After all, he is a demon and must be a spy, who might attack us at the least expected moment." Being highly suspicious, Sugrīva added, "I suggest that Vibhīṣaṇa be killed immediately!"

With a sincere intention to serve Rāma, Sugrīva was apprehensive and honestly felt that it was harmful to entertain Vibhīṣaṇa. After all he was a Rākṣasa and further he was the brother of envious Rāvaṇa. Rāma, however, didn't give His verdict immediately. He asked the opinion of other monkey chiefs.

The monkeys replied, "Dear Lord, You are the knower of everything. Still You are inquiring from us just to honor us." But none of the monkey chiefs like Aṅgada, Saraba, Jāmbavān, Mainda etc could trust Vibhīṣaṇa. They either partially agreed with some condition or disagreed to welcome Vibhīṣaṇa. Ultimately, they all were concerned about what best serves Lord Rāma's interests.

Then wise Hanumān gave his opinion, "Vibhīṣaṇa's pleasant demeanor, mindful speech and facial expressions reveal the honesty of his purpose. A deceitful person cannot remain so composed. It is not possible for anyone to fully conceal his inner intentions. I think Vibhīṣaṇa came here in all sincerity and should be accepted as our ally."

Hanumān knew the fine art of speech and Lord Rāma was pleased by the eloquent and mature words of Hanumān. But Sugrīva objected, "Since Vibhīṣaṇa has deserted his brother in the time of adversity, he could betray anyone."



Although Sugrīva and Hanumān had opposite opinions, they both had the same intentions and a pure purpose of serving Lord Rāma to the best of their understanding. Sugrīva, with all his intelligence thought that not welcoming Vibhīṣaṇa would help Rāma better. Hanumān, with all his wisdom and sincerity, felt the opposite. So, the difference of opinion amongst devotees doesn't always indicate a difference in their motives and purpose.

### Same God – Different Reciprocations

Finally, Rāma said, "I believe that Vibhīṣaṇa has genuinely rejected Rāvaṇa. Let's welcome him as our ally." Still not convinced, Sugrīva meekly protested, "He may have been sent by Rāvaṇa. If we accept him, he may turn on us at any moment. To be safe we should capture and kill him."

Rāma understood Sugrīva's anxiety. He smiled and reassured Sugrīva, "Do you truly think this Rākṣasa could harm Me? With the mere tip of My finger I could kill all the Rākṣasas and demons." Emphasizing on the importance of protecting the surrendered, Rāma said, "The scriptures state that an enemy who arrives with folded hands must be protected by all means." As the all-merciful Supreme Lord, Rāma said, "Moreover, it is My solemn vow and eternal principle that if anyone takes shelter of Me, even once, saying, 'O Lord, I am Yours,' then I award that person freedom from all fear. What to speak of Vibhīṣaṇa, even if Rāvaṇa were to come here to surrender unto Me, I would give him all protection."

The Supreme 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 so-called 'enemies' as their own friends.

Thus, despite both Hanumān and Sugrīva trying their best to serve, Lord Rāma was impressed with Hanumān's opinion and didn't accept Sugrīva's opinion. But Rāma understood the hearts of both of His devotees. Despite rejecting Sugrīva's proposal, Rāma's loving reciprocation towards both of His devotees also remained the same.



### Different Treatments – Same Response

Upon hearing Rāma's sublime statements filled with mercy and sensitivity, everyone was fully satisfied. Sugrīva's heart became melted with love. Although Rāma didn't approve Sugrīva's opinion or analysis, Sugrīva wasn't offended. Moreover, he was impressed with the Lord's kindness. Ultimately what Sugrīva wanted was to serve and please Rāma, but if welcoming Vibhīṣaṇa pleases Him the most, why wouldn't Sugrīva do that? With tear-filled eyes, Sugrīva said, "O Lord, Your words and deeds are always just befitting Your supreme position. Let us invite Vibhīṣaṇa in our company and make friendship with him without delay."

Hanumān didn't develop any false pride or superiority complex. Sugrīva also didn't feel any envy or inferiority complex. The relationship between Sugrīva and Hanumān continued as it was. The differences of the opinion amongst devotees shouldn't lead to disruption in their relationships.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Everyone should be friendly for the service of the Lord. Everyone should praise another's service to the Lord and not be proud of his own service. This is the way of Vaiṣṇava thinking, Vaikuṅṭha thinking. There may be rivalries and apparent competition between servants in performing service, but in the Vaikuṅṭha planets the service of another servant is appreciated, not condemned. This is Vaikuṅṭha competition. There is no question of enmity between servants. Everyone should be allowed to render service to the Lord to the best of his ability, and everyone should appreciate the service of others. Such are the activities of Vaikuṅṭha. Since everyone is a servant, everyone is on the same platform and is allowed to serve the Lord according to his ability." (7.5.12 Purport)

## Unity in Diversity – Diversity in Unity

The Lord is *bhāva-grāhi*, or one who accepts the mood of His devotees. The attitude of service is more pleasing to the Lord than the magnitude or type of service. **Different devotees may be capable and experienced in a service in different ways. But any devotee who tries to sincerely serve the Lord certainly attracts His mercy.**

In this case of welcoming Vibhīṣaṇa, Hanumān's approach was proved to be better than Sugrīva's way. But sometimes different ways of doing a service could be equally valid and beneficial. It could just be a matter of individual choice rather than an absolute superiority or inferiority of one of the ways. For instance, one could offer either a rose or a jasmine to the Lord *with love*. It is often a matter of preference of the devotees rather than a comparison between the two flowers. Sensible devotees do not argue with each other to prove that their favorite flower is always the best of the two!

And according to their psycho-physical natures, different devotees prefer to do different services, all with an intent to please the Lord. Some devotees are in a profound missionary spirit, being deeply inspired by the compassionate mood of *ācāryas*, and get involved in preaching of spiritual science. And some devotees who have deep taste in chanting the Lord's holy names and are gifted singers, are more engrossed in the congregational chanting or *sankīrtana*. Some others are enthusiastic about building temples as centers for spiritual education. And yet others are deeply absorbed in the loving service of the Lord's deities. That is the variegatedness of spiritual life.

**There may be diversity in the tastes, styles and opinions of devotees, but there should be unity in their purpose and intention to serve the Lord.** Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Actually, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness there cannot be two opinions. There is only one goal: to serve Kṛṣṇa to one's best ability. If there is some disagreement over service, such disagreement is to be taken as spiritual. Those who are actually engaged in the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead cannot be disunited in any circumstance. This makes the Supreme Personality of Godhead very happy and willing to award all kinds of benediction to His devotees." (*Bhāgavatam* 4.30.8 Purport)



**If the differences of opinions, however, are egoistic and not based on sincere intentions to serve the Lord, they could lead to disunity amongst devotees.** Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Disunity between individual souls is so strong within this material world that even in a society of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, members sometimes appear disunited due to their having different opinions and leaning toward material things." (*Bhāgavatam* 4.30.8 Purport)

Thereafter, Lord Rāmacandra and the monkey chiefs heartily welcomed Vibhīṣaṇa, who then fell flat at the lotus feet of Rāma. With deep gratitude and in a mood of full surrender, Vibhīṣaṇa said, "Dear Lord Rāma, I have abandoned my home, family and possessions to serve You in unalloyed love. I now place my life in Your hands and beg You to bless me with Your causeless mercy." Rama gracefully accepted Vibhīṣaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa gratefully joined Rama's company. ☀

*Acknowledgement:* My sincere thanks to Dr. Shashwat Lohia for proofreading and editing the article.



# PARI PRAŚNA

**Question: What is the difference between the grief of Lord Rāma and any other man being separated from his wife?**

**Answer:** Lord Rāmacandra's grief at the news of Sītādevī's entering the earth (or her kidnap by Rāvana) is not to be considered material. In the spiritual world also there are feelings of separation, but such feelings are considered spiritual bliss. Such feelings are a sign of *tasya prema-vaśyatva-svabhāva*, being under the influence of *hlādinī-śakti* and being controlled by love. In the material world such feelings of separation are only a perverted reflection. (SB 9.11.16 P)

**Question: Can a pure devotee of the Lord has attraction for wealth?**

**Answer** A pure devotee may be attracted to accumulating wealth just like an ordinary man, but the difference is that a devotee acquires money for the service of the Lord, whereas the ordinary man acquires

money for his sense enjoyment. Thus the acquisition of wealth by a devotee is not a source of anxieties, as is the case for a worldly man. If a snake has its poison removed and bites a man, there is no fatal effect. Similarly, wealth accumulated in the cause of the Lord has no poisonous teeth, and the effect is not fatal. A pure devotee is never entangled in material worldly affairs even though he may remain in the world like an ordinary man. (SB 3.9.6 P)

**Question: Why are pure devotees averse to material enjoyment?**

**Answer:** Pure devotees are not desirous of any material enjoyment, nor are they averse to it. They completely dovetail their desires with the desires of the Lord and perform nothing on their personal account. Arjuna is a good example. On his own sentiment, due to family affection, Arjuna did not want to fight, but finally, after hearing Śrīmad Bhāgavad-gītā, he agreed to fight in the interests of the Lord. Therefore, the Lord is very much satisfied with pure devotees because they do not act for sense gratification but only in terms of the Lord's desire. (SB 3.9.12 P)

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

## VERSE OF THE MONTH



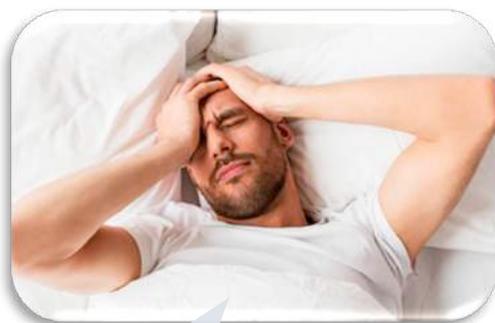
## Lord Rāmacandra, an ideal king

**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.

(SB 9.11.23 – Śukadeva Gosvāmī to Mahārāja Parīkṣit)





Even if one is liberated, he nevertheless accepts the body he has received according to his past karma. Without misconceptions, however, he regards his enjoyment and suffering due to that karma the way an awakened person regards a dream he had while sleeping. (SB 5.1.16)

A brāhmaṇa who is satisfied with whatever is providentially obtained is increasingly enlightened with spiritual power, but the spiritual potency of a dissatisfied brāhmaṇa decreases, as fire diminishes in potency when water is sprinkled upon it. (SB 8.19.26)

When the flame in a lamp burns the wick improperly, the lamp is blackened, but when the lamp is filled with ghee and is burning properly, there is bright illumination. Similarly, when the mind is absorbed in material sense gratification, it causes suffering, and when detached from material sense gratification it brings about the original brightness of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. (SB 5.11.8 P)

## ANALOGY ARENA

As one can derive fire from wood, milk from the milk bag of the cow, food grains and water from the land, and prosperity in one's livelihood from industrial enterprises, so, by the practice of bhakti-yoga, even within this material world, one can achieve Your favor or intelligently approach You. (SB 8.6.12)

If we massage a person's legs, we do not really serve the legs but the person who possesses the legs. All the demigods are different parts of the Lord, and if we offer service to them, we actually serve the Lord Himself. (SB 5.7.6 P)

The sense organs are certainly our greatest enemies, and they are therefore compared to venomous serpents. However, if a venomous serpent is bereft of its poison fangs, it is no longer fearful. Similarly, if the senses are engaged in the service of the Lord, there is no need to fear their activities. (SB 5.1.17 P)



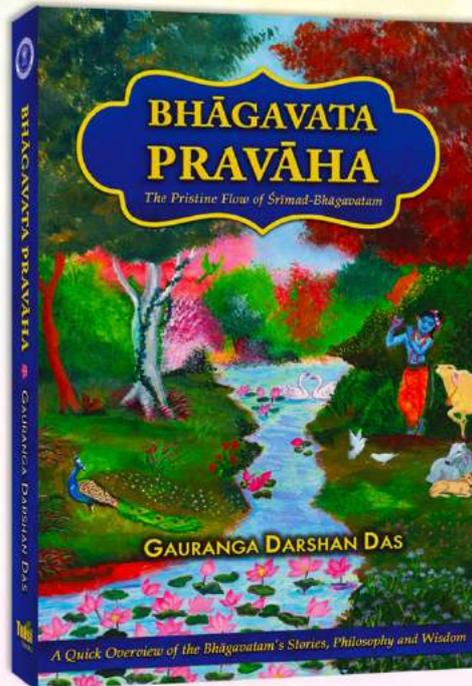


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### NOMENCLATURE

**SB:** Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

**CC:** Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta

**BG:** Bhagavad-gītā

**BS:** Brahma-sāṁhitā

**1.1.1:** Canto 1, Chapter 1, Verse 1

**1.1.1 P:** From Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport to SB 1.1.1 (If it is beyond Canto 10 Chapter 13, it is from the purport of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples)

**1.1.1 V:** From Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary on SB 1.1.1.

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**BHĀGĀVATA  
PRADĪPIKĀ**

Bask in the Illumination of the Bhāgavatam

If anyone desires to seek perfect knowledge of everything, he must seek the mercy of the Lord, and there is no other means. (SB 2.9.5 P)

EMPATHY

ACCOMMODATING

COMPASSION

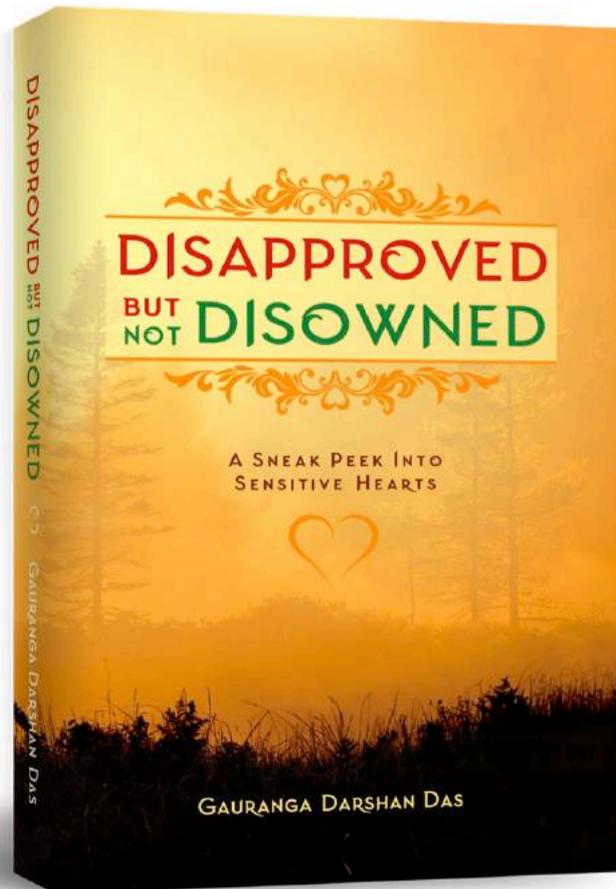
LOVE

FORGIVENESS

REPENTANCE

SENSITIVITY

HONESTY



*What would be your response to someone's mistake?  
Can you excuse him or her wholeheartedly?*

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