

Description is found
Srimad Bhagavatam
(Krishna Book)

Finding the lizard in the well

- ॐ Once the family members of Lord Kṛṣṇa, such as Sāmba, Pradyumna, Cāru, Bhānu and Gada, all princes of the Yadu dynasty, went for a long picnic in the forest near Dvārakā.
- ॐ In the course of their excursion, all of them became thirsty, and so they tried to find out where water was available in the forest.
- ॐ When they approached a well, they found no water in it, but, on the contrary, within the well was a wonderful living entity.
- ॐ It was a large lizard, and all of them were astonished to see such a wonderful animal.
- ॐ They could understand that the animal was trapped and could not escape by its own effort, so out of compassion they tried to take the large lizard out of the well.
- ॐ Unfortunately, they could not get the lizard out, even though they tried to do so in many ways.
- ॐ When the princes returned home, their story was narrated before Lord Kṛṣṇa.
- ॐ
- ॐ Lord Kṛṣṇa is the friend of all living entities.
- ॐ Therefore, after hearing the appeal from His sons, He personally went to the well and easily got the great lizard out simply by extending His left hand.
- ॐ Immediately upon being touched by the hand of Lord Kṛṣṇa, that great lizard gave up its lizard shape and appeared as a beautiful demigod, an inhabitant of the heavenly planets.
- ॐ His complexion glittered like molten gold, he was decorated with fine garments, and he wore costly ornaments around his neck.

The Story of King Nṛga

- ॐ How the demigod had been obliged to accept the body of a lizard was not a secret to Lord Kṛṣṇa, but still, for others' information, the Lord inquired,
- ॐ “My dear fortunate demigod, now I see that your body is so beautiful and lustrous.
- ॐ Who are you?
- ॐ We can guess that you are one of the best demigods in the heavenly planets.
- ॐ All good fortune to you.
- ॐ I think that you are not meant to be in this situation.
- ॐ It must be due to the results of your past activities that you were put into the species of lizard life.
- ॐ Still, I want to hear from you how you were put into this position. If you think that you can disclose this secret, then please tell us your identity.”
- ॐ Actually, this large lizard was King Nṛga, and when questioned by the Supreme Personality of Godhead he immediately bowed down before the Lord, touching to the

ground the helmet on his head, which was as dazzling as the sunshine. In this way, he first offered his respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord.

- ॐ He then said,
ॐ “My dear Lord, I am King Nṛga, the son of King Ikṣvāku.
ॐ If you have ever taken account of all charitably disposed men, I am sure You must have heard my name.
ॐ My Lord, You are the supreme witness.
ॐ You are aware of every bit of work done by the living entities—past, present and future.
ॐ Nothing can be hidden from Your eternal cognizance.
ॐ Still, You have ordered me to explain my history, and I shall therefore narrate the full story.”

- ॐ King Nṛga proceeded to narrate the history of his degradation, caused by his karma-kāṇḍa activities.
ॐ He said that he had been very charitably disposed and had given away so many cows that the total was equal to the number of particles of dust on the earth, stars in the sky or drops of water in a rainfall.

ॐ *According to the Vedic ritualistic ceremonies, a man who is charitably disposed is recommended to give cows to the brāhmaṇas. From King Nṛga’s statement, it appears that he followed this principle earnestly; however, as a result of a slight discrepancy he was forced to take birth as a lizard. Therefore it is recommended by the Lord in the Bhagavad-gītā that one who is charitably disposed and desires to derive the benefit of his charity should offer his gifts to please Kṛṣṇa. To give charity means to perform pious activities by which one may be elevated to the higher planetary systems; but promotion to the heavenly planets is no guarantee that one will never fall down. Rather, the example of King Nṛga definitely proves that fruitive activities, even if very pious, cannot give us eternal blissful life. As stated in the Bhagavad-gītā, the result of work, either pious or impious, is sure to bind a man unless the work is discharged as yajña on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.*

- ॐ King Nṛga said that the cows he had given in charity were not ordinary cows.
ॐ Each one was very young and had given birth to only one calf.
ॐ They were full of milk, very peaceful, and healthy.
ॐ All the cows were purchased with money earned legally.
ॐ Furthermore, their horns were gold-plated,
ॐ their hooves were bedecked with silver plating,
ॐ and they were covered with necklaces and with silken wrappers embroidered with pearls.

- ॐ He stated that these valuably decorated cows had not been given to any worthless persons but had been distributed to first-class brāhmaṇas, whom he had also decorated with nice garments and gold ornaments.
- ॐ The brāhmaṇas were well qualified, and since none of them were rich, their family members were always in want for the necessities of life.
- ॐ *A real brāhmaṇa never hoards money for a luxurious life, like the kṣatriyas or the vaiśyas, but always keeps himself poverty-stricken, knowing that money diverts the mind to materialistic ways of life. To live in this way is the vow of a qualified brāhmaṇa, and all of these brāhmaṇas were well situated in that exalted vow. They were well learned in Vedic knowledge. They executed the required austerities and penances in their lives and were liberal, meeting the standard of qualified brāhmaṇas. They were equally friendly to everyone; above all, they were young and quite fit to act as qualified brāhmaṇas. Besides the cows, they were also given land, gold, houses, horses and elephants. Those who were not married were given wives, maidservants, grain, silver, utensils, garments, jewels, household furniture, chariots, etc. This charity was nicely performed as a sacrifice according to the Vedic rituals.*
- ॐ The King also stated that not only had he bestowed gifts upon the brāhmaṇas, but he had performed other pious activities, such as digging wells, planting trees on the roadside and installing ponds along the highways.
- ॐ The King continued:
- ॐ “In spite of all this, unfortunately one of the brāhmaṇas’ cows that I had given in charity chanced to enter amongst my other cows.
- ॐ Not knowing this, I again gave it in charity, to another brāhmaṇa.
- ॐ As the cow was being taken away by this brāhmaṇa, its former master claimed it as his own,
- ॐ stating, ‘This cow was formerly given to me, so how is it that you are taking it away?’
- ॐ Thus there was arguing and fighting between the two brāhmaṇas, and they came before me and charged that I had taken back a cow I had previously given in charity.”
- ॐ *To give something to someone and then to take it back is considered a great sin, especially in dealing with a brāhmaṇa.*
- ॐ When both brāhmaṇas charged the King with the same complaint, he was simply puzzled as to how it had happened.
- ॐ Thereafter, with great humility, the King offered each of them 100,000 cows in exchange for the one cow that was causing the fight between them.
- ॐ He prayed to them that he was their servant and that there had been some mistake.
- ॐ *Thus, in order to rectify it, he prayed that they be very kind upon him and accept his offer in exchange for the cow. The King fervently appealed to the*

brāhmaṇas not to cause his downfall into hell because of this mistake. A brāhmaṇa's property is called brahma-sva, and according to Manu's law it cannot be acquired even by the government.

- ॐ Both brāhmaṇas, however, insisted that the cow was theirs and could not be taken back under any condition;
- ॐ neither of them agreed to exchange it for the 100,000 cows.
- ॐ Thus disagreeing with the King's proposal, the two brāhmaṇas left the place in anger, thinking that their lawful possession had been usurped.
- ॐ After this incident, when the time came for the King to give up his body, he was taken before Yamarāja, the superintendent of death, who asked him whether he first wanted to enjoy the results of his pious activities or suffer the results of his impious activities.
- ॐ Seeing that the King had executed so many pious activities and charities, Yamarāja also hinted that he did not know the limit of the King's future enjoyment.
- ॐ In other words, there would be practically no end to the King's material happiness.
- ॐ But in spite of this hint, the King, bewildered, decided first to suffer the results of his impious activities and then to accept the results of his pious activities;
- ॐ therefore Yamarāja immediately turned him into a lizard.
- ॐ King Nṛga had remained in the well as a big lizard for a very long time.
- ॐ He told Lord Kṛṣṇa,
- ॐ “In spite of being put into that degraded condition of life, I simply thought of You, my dear Lord, and my memory was never vanquished.”
- ॐ *It appears from these statements of King Nṛga that persons who follow the principles of fruitive activities and derive some material benefits are not very intelligent. Being given the choice by the superintendent of death, Yamarāja, King Nṛga could have first accepted the results of his pious activities. Instead, he thought it better first to receive the effects of his impious activities and then enjoy the effects of his pious activities without disturbance. On the whole, he had not developed Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The Kṛṣṇa conscious person develops love of God, Kṛṣṇa, not love for pious or impious activities; therefore he is not subjected to the results of such action. As stated in the Brahma-saṁhitā, a devotee, by the grace of the Lord, is not subjected to the reactions of fruitive activities.*
- ॐ Somehow or other, as a result of his pious activities, King Nṛga had aspired to see the Lord.
- ॐ He continued: “My dear Lord, I had a great desire that someday I might be able to see You personally.”

ॐ I think that this great desire to see You, combined with my tendency to perform ritualistic and charitable activities, has enabled me to retain the memory of who I was in my former life, even though I became a lizard.

ॐ *[Such a person who remembers his past life is called jāti-smara. In modern times also there are instances of small children recalling many details of their past lives.]*

ॐ My dear Lord, You are the Supersoul seated in everyone’s heart.

ॐ There are many great mystic yogīs who have the eyes to see You through the Vedas and Upaniṣads.

ॐ To achieve the elevated position of realizing that they are equal in quality with You, they always meditate on You within their hearts.

ॐ But although such exalted saintly persons may see You constantly within their hearts, they still cannot see You face to face.

ॐ Therefore I am very much surprised that I am able to see You personally.

ॐ I know that I was engaged in so many activities, especially as a king.

ॐ Although I was in the midst of luxury and opulence and was subject to so much of the happiness and misery of material existence, I am so fortunate to be seeing You personally.

ॐ As far as I know, when one becomes liberated from material existence, he can see You in this way.”

ॐ *When King Nṛga elected to receive the results of his impious activities, he was given the body of a lizard because of the mistake in his pious activities; thus he could not be directly converted to a higher status of life like a great demigod. However, along with his pious activities, he thought of Kṛṣṇa, so he was quickly released from the body of a lizard and given the body of a demigod. By worshiping the Supreme Lord, those who desire material opulences are given the bodies of powerful demigods. Sometimes these demigods can see the Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face, but they are still not yet eligible to enter into the spiritual kingdom, the Vaikuṅṭha planets. However, if the demigods continue to be devotees of the Lord, the next chance they get they will enter into the Vaikuṅṭha planets.*

ॐ Having attained the body of a demigod, King Nṛga, continuing to remember everything, said,

ॐ “My dear Lord, You are the Supreme Lord and are worshiped by all the demigods.

ॐ You are not one of the ordinary living entities;

ॐ You are the Supreme Person, Puruṣottama.

ॐ You are the source of all happiness for all living entities;

ॐ therefore You are known as Govinda.

ॐ You are the Lord of those living entities who have accepted material bodies and those who have not yet accepted material bodies.

ॐ *[Among the living entities who have not accepted material bodies are those who hover in the material world as evil spirits or live in the ghostly atmosphere. However, those who live in the spiritual kingdom, the Vaikuṅṭhalokas, have bodies not made of material elements.]*

ॐ You, my Lord, are infallible. You are the Supreme, the purest of all living entities.

ॐ You live in everyone's heart.

ॐ You are the shelter of all living entities, Nārāyaṇa.

ॐ Being seated in the heart of all living beings, You are the supreme director of everyone's sensual activities; therefore, You are called Hṛṣīkeśa.

ॐ "My dear Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, because You have given me this body of a demigod, I will have to go to some heavenly planet;

ॐ so I am taking this opportunity to beg for Your mercy.

ॐ I pray that I may have the benediction of never forgetting Your lotus feet, no matter to which form of life or planet I may be transferred.

ॐ You are all-pervading, present everywhere as cause and effect.

ॐ You are the cause of all causes, and Your power is unlimited.

ॐ You are the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the Supreme Brahman.

ॐ I therefore offer my respectful obeisances unto You again and again.

ॐ My dear Lord, Your body is full of transcendental bliss and knowledge, and You are eternal.

ॐ You are the master of all mystic powers; therefore You are known as Yogeśvara.

ॐ Kindly accept me as an insignificant particle of dust at Your lotus feet."

ॐ Before entering the heavenly planets, King Nṛga circumambulated the Lord, touched his helmet to the Lord's lotus feet and bowed before Him.

ॐ Seeing the airplane from the heavenly planets present before him, he was given permission by the Lord to board it.

ॐ After the departure of King Nṛga, Lord Kṛṣṇa expressed His appreciation for the King's devotion to the brāhmaṇas as well as his charitable disposition and his performance of Vedic rituals.

ॐ *Therefore, it is recommended that if one cannot directly become a devotee of the Lord, one should follow the Vedic principles of life. This will enable him, one day, to see the Lord by being promoted either directly to the spiritual kingdom or, indirectly, to the heavenly kingdom, where he has hope of being transferred to the spiritual planets.*

- ॐ At this time, Lord Kṛṣṇa was present among His relatives who were members of the kṣatriya class.
- ॐ To teach them through the exemplary character of King Nṛga, He said,
- ॐ “Even though a kṣatriya king may be as powerful as fire, it is not possible for him to usurp the property of a brāhmaṇa and utilize it for his own purpose.
- ॐ If this is so, how can ordinary kings, who falsely think themselves the most powerful beings within the material world, usurp a brāhmaṇa’s property?
- ॐ I do not think that taking poison is as dangerous as taking a brāhmaṇa’s property.
- ॐ For ordinary poison there is treatment—one can be relieved from its effects—but if one drinks the poison of taking a brāhmaṇa’s property, there is no remedy for the mistake.
- ॐ The perfect example is King Nṛga.
- ॐ He was very powerful and very pious, but due to the small mistake of unknowingly usurping a brāhmaṇa’s cow, he was condemned to the abominable life of a lizard.
- ॐ Ordinary poison affects only those who drink it, and ordinary fire can be extinguished simply by pouring water on it,
- ॐ but the araṇi fire ignited by the spiritual potency of a brāhmaṇa who is dissatisfied can burn to ashes the whole family of a person who provokes such a brāhmaṇa.
- ॐ *[Formerly, the brāhmaṇas used to ignite the fire of sacrifice not with matches or any other external fire but with their powerful mantras, called araṇi.]*
- ॐ If someone even touches a brāhmaṇa’s property, his family is ruined for three generations.
- ॐ However, if a brāhmaṇa’s property is forcibly taken away, the taker’s family for ten generations before him and ten generations after will be subject to ruination.
- ॐ On the other hand, if someone becomes a pure Vaiṣṇava, or devotee of the Lord, ten generations of his family before his birth and ten generations after will be liberated.”
- ॐ Lord Kṛṣṇa continued: “If some foolish king who is puffed up by his wealth, prestige and power wants to usurp a brāhmaṇa’s property, he should be understood to be clearing his path to hell;
- ॐ he does not know how much he has to suffer for such an unwise act.
- ॐ If someone takes away the property of a very liberal brāhmaṇa who is encumbered by a large dependent family, then such a usurper is put into the hell known as Kumbhīpāka;
- ॐ not only is he put into this hell, but his family members also have to accept such a miserable condition of life.
- ॐ A person who takes away a brāhmaṇa’s property, whether it was originally given by him or by someone else, is condemned to live for at least sixty thousand years as a miserable insect in stool.

- ॐ Therefore I instruct you, all My boys and relatives present here, do not, even by mistake, take the possession of a brāhmaṇa and thereby pollute your whole family.
- ॐ If someone even wishes to possess such property, let alone attempts to take it away by force, the duration of his life will be reduced.
- ॐ He will be defeated by his enemies, and after being bereft of his royal position, when he gives up his body he will become a serpent, giving trouble to all other living entities.
- ॐ My dear boys and relatives, I therefore advise you that even if a *brāhmaṇa* becomes angry with you and calls you by ill names or curses you, still you should not retaliate.
- ॐ On the contrary, you should smile, tolerate him and offer your respects to the brāhmaṇa.
- ॐ You know very well that even I Myself offer My obeisances to the brāhmaṇas with great respect three times daily.
- ॐ You should therefore follow My instruction and example.
- ॐ I shall not forgive anyone who does not follow them,
- ॐ and I shall punish him.
- ॐ You should learn from the example of King Nṛga that even if someone unknowingly usurps the property of a brāhmaṇa, he is put into a miserable condition of life.”
- ॐ Thus Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is always engaged in purifying the conditioned living entities, gave instruction not only to His family members and the inhabitants of Dvārakā but to all the members of human society.
- ॐ After this, the Lord entered His palace.