

Description is found
Srimad Bhagavatam
(Krishna Book)

The Deliverance of Lord Śiva

- ॐ As a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa, King Parīkṣit was already liberated, but for clarification he was asking various questions of Śukadeva Gosvāmī.
- ॐ In the previous chapter, King Parīkṣit’s question was, “What is the ultimate goal of the Vedas?”
- ॐ *And Śukadeva Gosvāmī explained the matter, giving authoritative descriptions from the disciplic succession, from Sanandana down to Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi, Nārada, Vyāsadeva and then Śukadeva himself. The conclusion was that devotional service, or bhakti, is the ultimate goal of the Vedas. A neophyte devotee may question, “If the ultimate goal of life, or the conclusion of the Vedas, is to elevate oneself to the platform of devotional service, then why is it observed that a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu is generally not very prosperous materially, whereas a devotee of Lord Śiva is found to be very opulent?”*
- ॐ In order to clarify this matter, Parīkṣit Mahārāja asked Śukadeva Gosvāmī, “My dear Śukadeva Gosvāmī, it is generally found that those who engage in the worship of Lord Śiva, whether in human, demoniac or demigod society, become materially very opulent, although Lord Śiva himself lives just like a poverty-stricken person.
- ॐ On the other hand, the devotees of Lord Viṣṇu, who is the controller of the goddess of fortune, do not appear very prosperous, and sometimes they are even found living without any material opulence at all.
- ॐ Lord Śiva lives underneath a tree or in the snow of the Himalayan Mountains.
- ॐ He does not even construct a house for himself, but still the worshipers of Lord Śiva are very rich.
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa, or Lord Viṣṇu, however, lives very opulently, whether in Vaikuṅṭha or in the material world, but His devotees appear poverty-stricken.
- ॐ Why is this so?”
- ॐ *Mahārāja Parīkṣit’s question is very intelligent. The two classes of devotees, namely the devotees of Lord Śiva and the devotees of Lord Viṣṇu, are always in disagreement. Even today in India these two classes of devotees still criticize each other, and especially in South India the followers of Rāmānujācārya and the followers of Śaṅkarācārya hold occasional meetings for understanding the Vedic conclusion. Generally, the followers of Rāmānujācārya come out victorious in such meetings. So Parīkṣit Mahārāja wanted to clarify the situation by asking this question of Śukadeva Gosvāmī. That Lord Śiva lives as a poor man although his devotees appear very opulent, whereas Lord Kṛṣṇa, or Lord Viṣṇu, is always opulent and yet His devotees appear poverty-stricken, is a situation which appears contradictory and puzzling to a discriminating person.*

- ॐ Replying to King Parīkṣit’s inquiry, Śukadeva Gosvāmī said that Lord Śiva is the master of the material energy.
- ॐ The material energy is represented by goddess Durgā, and because Lord Śiva happens to be her husband, goddess Durgā is completely under his subjugation.
- ॐ Thus Lord Śiva is understood to be the master of this material energy.
- ॐ The material energy is manifested in three qualities, namely goodness, passion and ignorance,
- ॐ and therefore Lord Śiva is the master of these three qualities.
- ॐ Although he is in association with these qualities for the benefit of the conditioned soul, Lord Śiva is their director and is not affected.
- ॐ In other words, although the conditioned soul is affected by the three qualities, Lord Śiva, being their master, is not.

ॐ *From the statements of Śukadeva Gosvāmī we can understand that the effects of worshiping different demigods are not, as some less intelligent persons suppose, the same as the effects of worshiping Lord Viṣṇu. Śukadeva Gosvāmī clearly states that by worshiping Lord Śiva one achieves one reward whereas by worshiping Lord Viṣṇu one achieves a different reward. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gītā: “Those who worship the different demigods achieve the desired results the respective demigods can reward. Similarly, those who worship the material energy receive the suitable reward for such activities, and those who worship the pitṛs receive similar results. But those who engage in devotional service or worship the Supreme Lord—Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa—go to the Vaikuṅṭha planets or Kṛṣṇaloka.” One cannot approach the transcendental region, or paravyoma, the spiritual sky, by worshiping Lord Śiva or Brahmā or any other demigod.*

ॐ *Since this material world is a product of the three qualities of material nature, all varieties of manifestations come from those three qualities. With the aid of materialistic science, modern civilization has created many machines and comforts, yet they are only varieties of the interactions of the three material qualities. Although the devotees of Lord Śiva are able to obtain many material acquisitions, we should know that such devotees are simply collecting products manufactured by the three qualities. The three qualities are again subdivided into sixteen, namely the ten senses (five working senses and five knowledge-acquiring senses), the mind, and the five elements (earth, water, air, fire and sky). These sixteen items are extensions of the three qualities. Material happiness or opulence means gratification of the senses, especially the genitals, the tongue and the mind. By exercising our minds we create many pleasurable things just for enjoyment by the genitals and the tongue. The opulence of a person within this material world is estimated in terms of his exercise of the genitals and the tongue, or, in other words, how well he is able*

to utilize his sexual capacities and how well he is able to satisfy his fastidious taste by eating palatable dishes. Material advancement of civilization necessitates creating objects of enjoyment by mental concoction just to become happy on the basis of these two principles: pleasures for the genitals and pleasures for the tongue. Herein lies the answer to King Parīkṣit's question to Śukadeva Gosvāmī as to why the worshipers of Lord Śiva are so opulent.

ॐ The devotees of Lord Śiva are opulent only in terms of the material qualities. Factually, such so-called advancement of civilization is the cause of entanglement in material existence. It is actually not advancement but degradation. The conclusion is that because Lord Śiva is the master of the three qualities, his devotees are given things manufactured by the interactions of these qualities for the satisfaction of the senses. In the Bhagavad-gītā, however, we get instruction from Lord Kṛṣṇa that one has to transcend this qualitative existence. *Nistrai-guṇyo bhavārjuna*: the mission of human life is to become transcendental to the three qualities. Unless one is *nistrai-guṇya*, he cannot get free from material entanglement. In other words, favors received from Lord Śiva are not actually beneficial to the conditioned souls, although materially such facilities seem opulent.

ॐ Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: “The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, is transcendental to the three qualities of material nature.”

ॐ In the Bhagavad-gītā the Lord states that anyone who surrenders unto Him surpasses the control of the three qualities of material nature. Therefore, since Hari's devotees are transcendental to the control of the three material qualities, certainly He Himself is transcendental. In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam it is therefore stated that Hari, or Kṛṣṇa, is the original Supreme Personality. There are two kinds of prakṛtis, or potencies, namely the internal potency and the external potency, and Kṛṣṇa is the overlord of both. He is *sarva-dṛk*, or the overseer of all the actions of the internal and external potencies, and He is also described as *upadraṣṭā*, the supreme advisor. Because He is the supreme advisor, He is above all the demigods, who merely follow the directions of the supreme advisor. As such, if one directly follows the instructions of the Supreme Lord, as inculcated in the Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, then one gradually becomes *nirguṇa*, or above the interactions of the material qualities. To be *nirguṇa* means to be bereft of material opulences because, as we have explained, material opulence means an increase of the actions and reactions of the three material qualities. By worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead, instead of being puffed up with material opulences one becomes enriched with spiritual advancement of knowledge in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. To become *nirguṇa* means to achieve eternal peace,

fearlessness, religiousness, knowledge and renunciation. All these are symptoms of becoming free from the contamination of the material qualities.

- ॐ Śukadeva Gosvāmī, in answering Parīkṣit Mahārāja’s question, went on to cite a historical instance regarding Parīkṣit Mahārāja’s grandfather, King Yudhiṣṭhira.
- ॐ He said that after finishing the Aśvamedha sacrifice in the great sacrificial arena, King Yudhiṣṭhira, in the presence of great authorities, inquired from Lord Kṛṣṇa on that very same point: how is it that the devotees of Lord Śiva become materially opulent, whereas the devotees of Lord Viṣṇu do not?
- ॐ Śukadeva Gosvāmī specifically referred to King Yudhiṣṭhira as “your grandfather” so that Mahārāja Parīkṣit would be encouraged to think that he was related to Kṛṣṇa and that his grandfathers were intimately connected with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

ॐ *Although Kṛṣṇa is always very satisfied by nature, when Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira asked this question the Lord became even more satisfied because this question and its answer would bear a great meaning for the entire Kṛṣṇa conscious society. Whenever Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks about something to a specific devotee, it is meant not only for that devotee but for all devotees, and indeed for the entire human society. Instructions by the Supreme Personality of Godhead are important even to Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva and the other demigods, and if one does not take advantage of the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who descends within this world for the benefit of all living entities, he is certainly very unfortunate.*

- ॐ Lord Kṛṣṇa answered the question of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira as follows:
- ॐ “If I especially favor a devotee and especially wish to care for him, the first thing I do is take away his riches.
- ॐ When the devotee becomes a penniless pauper or is put into a comparatively poverty-stricken position,
- ॐ his relatives and family members no longer take interest in him,
- ॐ and in most cases they give up their connection with him.
- ॐ The devotee then becomes doubly unhappy.”

ॐ *First of all the devotee becomes unhappy because his riches have been taken away by Kṛṣṇa, and he is made even more unhappy when his relatives desert him because of his poverty. We should note, however, that when a devotee falls into a miserable condition in this way, it is not due to past impious activities, known as karma-phala; the poverty of the devotee is a creation of the Personality of Godhead. Similarly, when a devotee becomes materially opulent, that is also not due to his pious activities. In either case, whether the devotee becomes poorer or richer, the arrangement is made by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This arrangement is especially made by Kṛṣṇa for His devotee just to make him completely dependent upon Him and to free him*

from all material obligations. He can then concentrate his energies, mind and body—everything—for the service of the Lord, and that is pure devotional service. In the Nārada-ṣaṅkarātra it is therefore explained, sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam [Cc. Madhya 19.170], which means “being freed from all designations.” Works performed for family, society, community, nation or humanity are all designated: “I belong to this society,” “I belong to this community,” “I belong to this nation,” “I belong to this species of life.” Such identities are all merely designations. When by the grace of the Lord a devotee is freed from all designations, his devotional service is actually naiṣkarmya. Jñānīs are very much attracted by the position of naiṣkarmya, in which one’s activities no longer have any material effect. The devotee’s activities are freed from material effects, and so they are no longer in the category of karma-phalam, or fruitive activities. As explained before by the personified Vedas, the happiness and distress of a devotee are produced by the Personality of Godhead, and the devotee therefore does not care whether he is in happiness or in distress. He goes on with his duties in executing devotional service. Although his behavior seems to be subject to the actions and reactions of fruitive activities, he is actually freed from the results of action.

ॐ It may be questioned why a devotee is put into such tribulation by the Personality of Godhead. The answer is that this kind of arrangement by the Lord is just like a father’s sometimes becoming unkind to his sons. Because the devotee is a surrendered soul and is taken charge of by the Supreme Lord, whatever condition of life the Lord puts him in—whether one of distress or of happiness—it is to be understood that behind this arrangement is a large plan designed by the Personality of Godhead. For example, Lord Kṛṣṇa put the Pāṇḍavas into a distressed condition so acute that even grandfather Bhīṣma could not comprehend how such distress could occur. He lamented that although the whole Pāṇḍava family was headed by King Yudhiṣṭhira, the most pious king, and protected by the two great warriors Bhīma and Arjuna, and although, above all, the Pāṇḍavas were all intimate friends and relatives of Lord Kṛṣṇa, they still had to undergo such tribulations. Later, however, it was proved that this was planned by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, as part of His great mission to annihilate the miscreants and protect the devotees.

ॐ Another question may be raised: What is the difference between a devotee and a common man, since both are put into different kinds of happy and distressful conditions—the devotee by the arrangement of the Personality of Godhead, and the common man as a result of his past deeds? How is the devotee any better than the ordinary karmī? The answer is that the karmīs and the devotees are not on the same level. In whatever condition of life the karmī may be, he continues in the cycle of birth and death because the seed of

karma, or fruitive activity, is there, and it fructifies whenever there is an opportunity. By the law of karma a common man is perpetually entangled in repeated birth and death, whereas a devotee's distress and happiness, not being under the laws of karma, are part of a temporary arrangement by the Supreme Lord which does not entangle the devotee. Such an arrangement is made by the Lord only to serve a temporary purpose. If a karmī performs auspicious acts he is elevated to the heavenly planets, and if he acts impiously he is put into a hellish condition. But whether a devotee acts in a so-called pious or impious manner, he is neither elevated nor degraded, but is transferred to the spiritual kingdom. Therefore a devotee's happiness and distress and a karmī's happiness and distress are not on the same level. This fact is corroborated by a speech by Yamarāja to his servants in connection with the liberation of Ajāmila. Yamarāja advised his followers that only persons who have never uttered the holy name of the Lord or remembered the form, qualities and pastimes of the Lord should be approached by his watchguards. Yamarāja also advised his servants never to approach the devotees. On the contrary, he instructed his messengers that if they meet a devotee they should offer their respectful obeisances. So there is no question of a devotee's being promoted or degraded within this material world. As there is a gulf of difference between the punishment awarded by the mother and the punishment awarded by an enemy, so a devotee's distress is not the same as the distress of a common karmī.

ॐ Here another question may be raised: If the Supreme Lord is all-powerful, why should He try to reform His devotee by putting him in distress? The answer is that when the Supreme Personality of Godhead puts His devotee in distress, it is not without purpose. Sometimes the purpose is that in distress a devotee's feelings of attachment to Kṛṣṇa are magnified. For example, when Kṛṣṇa, before leaving the capital of the Pāṇḍavas for His home, asked Kuntīdevī for permission to leave, she said, "My dear Kṛṣṇa, in our distress You were always present with us. Now, because we have been elevated to a royal position, You are leaving us. I would therefore prefer to live in distress than to lose You." When a devotee is put into a situation of distress, his devotional activities are accelerated. Therefore, to show special favor to a devotee, the Lord sometimes puts him into distress. Besides that, it is stated that the sweetness of happiness is sweeter to those who have tasted bitterness. The Supreme Lord descends to this material world just to protect His devotees from distress. In other words, if devotees were not in a distressed condition, the Lord would not have come down. As for His killing the demons, or miscreants, this can be easily done by His various energies, just as many asuras are killed by His external energy, goddess Durgā. Therefore the Lord does not need to come down personally to kill such demons, but when His

devotee is in distress He must come. Lord Nṛsimhadeva appeared not in order to kill Hiraṇyakaśipu but to save Prahlāda and to give him blessings. In other words, because Prahlāda Mahārāja was put into very great distress, the Lord appeared.

- ॐ When after the dense, dark night there is finally sunrise in the morning, it is very pleasant; when there is scorching heat, cold water is very pleasant; and when there is freezing winter, hot water is very pleasant. Similarly, when a devotee, after experiencing the distress of the material world, relishes the spiritual happiness awarded by the Lord, his position is still more pleasant and enjoyable.
- ॐ The Lord continued: “When My devotee is bereft of all material riches and is deserted by his relatives, friends and family members, because he has no one to look after him he completely takes shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord.”
- ॐ Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has sung in this connection, “My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, O son of Nanda Mahārāja, You are now standing before me with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the daughter of King Vṛṣabhānu. I am now surrendering unto You. Please accept me. Please do not kick me away. I have no shelter other than You.”
- ॐ When a devotee is thus put into so-called miserable conditions and bereft of riches and family, he tries to revive his original position of material opulence. But although he tries again and again, Kṛṣṇa again and again takes away all his resources. Thus he finally becomes disappointed in material activities, and in that stage of frustration in all endeavors, he can fully surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such persons are advised by the Lord from within to associate with devotees. By associating with devotees they naturally become inclined to render service to the Personality of Godhead, and they immediately get all facilities from the Lord to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The nondevotees, however, are very careful about preserving their material condition of life. Generally, therefore, such nondevotees do not come to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but worship Lord Śiva or other demigods for immediate material profit. In the Bhagavad-gītā it is said, therefore, *kāṅkṣantaḥ karmaṇām siddhiṁ yajanta iha devatāḥ*: “The karmīs, in order to achieve success within this material world, worship the various demigods.” It is also stated by Lord Kṛṣṇa that those who worship the demigods are not mature in their intelligence. The devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, therefore, because of their strong attachment for Him, do not foolishly go to the demigods.
- ॐ Lord Kṛṣṇa said to King Yudhiṣṭhira, “My devotee is not deterred by any adverse conditions of life; he always remains firm and steady.
- ॐ Therefore I give Myself to him, and I favor him so that he can achieve the highest success of life.”

- ॐ *The mercy bestowed upon the tried devotee by the Supreme Personality is described as brahma, which indicates that the greatness of that mercy can be compared only to the all-pervasive greatness of Brahman. Brahma means unlimitedly great and unlimitedly expanding. That mercy is also described as paramam, for it has no comparison within this material world, and it is also called sūkṣmam, very fine. Not only is the Lord’s mercy upon the tried devotee great and unlimitedly expansive, but it is of the finest quality of transcendental love between the devotee and the Lord. Such mercy is further described as cin-mātram, completely spiritual. The use of the word mātram indicates absolute spirituality, with no tinge of material qualities. That mercy is also called sat (eternal) and anantakam (unlimited). Since the devotee of the Lord is awarded such unlimited spiritual benefit, why should he worship the demigods? A devotee of Kṛṣṇa does not worship Lord Śiva or Brahmā or any other, subordinate demigod. He completely devotes himself to the transcendental loving service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.*
- ॐ Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: “The demigods, headed by Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva and including Lord Indra, Candra, Varuṇa and others, are apt to be very quickly satisfied or very quickly angered by the good or ill behavior of their devotees.
- ॐ But this is not so with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu.”
- ॐ *This means that every living entity within this material world, including the demigods, is conducted by the three modes of material nature, and therefore the qualities of ignorance and passion are very prominent within the material world. Those devotees who take blessings from the demigods are also infected with the material qualities, especially passion and ignorance. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has therefore stated in the Bhagavad-gītā that to take blessings from the demigods is less intelligent because when one takes benedictions from the demigods the results of such benedictions are temporary. It is easy to get material opulence by worshiping the demigods, but the result is sometimes disastrous. As such, the benedictions derived from demigods are appreciated only by the less intelligent class of men. Persons who derive benedictions from the demigods gradually become puffed up with material opulence and neglectful of their benefactors.*
- ॐ Śukadeva Gosvāmī addressed King Parikṣit thus: “My dear King, Lord Brahmā, Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Śiva, the principal trio of the material creation, are able to bless or curse anyone.
- ॐ Of this trio, Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva are very easily satisfied but also very easily angered.
- ॐ When satisfied they give benedictions without consideration, and when angry they curse the devotee without consideration.
- ॐ But Lord Viṣṇu is not like that. Lord Viṣṇu is very considerate.

- ॐ Whenever a devotee wants something from Lord Viṣṇu, Lord Viṣṇu first considers whether such a benediction will ultimately be good for the devotee.
- ॐ Lord Viṣṇu never bestows any benediction which will ultimately prove disastrous to the devotee.
- ॐ By His transcendental nature, He is always merciful;
- ॐ therefore, before giving any benediction, He considers whether it will prove beneficial for the devotee.
- ॐ Since the Supreme Personality of Godhead is always merciful, even when it appears that He has killed a demon, or even when He apparently becomes angry toward a devotee, His actions are always auspicious.
- ॐ The Supreme Personality of Godhead is therefore known as all-good. Whatever He does is good.”

Vṛkāsura

- ॐ As for the benedictions given by demigods like Lord Śiva, there is the following historical incident cited by great sages.
- ॐ Once, Lord Śiva, after giving a benediction to a demon named Vṛkāsura, the son of Śakuni, was himself entrapped in a very dangerous position.
- ॐ Vṛkāsura was searching after a benediction and trying to decide which of the three presiding deities to worship in order to get it.
- ॐ In the meantime he happened to meet the great sage Nārada and consulted with him as to whom he should approach to achieve quick results from his austerity.
- ॐ He inquired, “Of the three deities, namely Lord Brahmā, Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Śiva, who is most quickly satisfied?”
- ॐ Nārada could understand the plan of the demon, and he advised him,
- ॐ “You had better worship Lord Śiva;
- ॐ then you will quickly get the desired result. Lord Śiva is very quickly satisfied and very quickly dissatisfied also.
- ॐ So you try to satisfy Lord Śiva.”
- ॐ Nārada also cited instances wherein demons like Rāvaṇa and Bāṇāsura were enriched with great opulences simply by satisfying Lord Śiva with prayers.
 - ॐ *Because the great sage Nārada was aware of the nature of the demon Vṛkāsura, he did not advise him to approach Viṣṇu or Lord Brahmā. Persons such as Vṛkāsura, who are situated in the material mode of ignorance, cannot stick to the worship of Viṣṇu.*
- ॐ After receiving instruction from Nārada, the demon Vṛkāsura went to Kedāranātha.
 - ॐ *The pilgrimage site of Kedāranātha still exists near Kashmir. It is almost always covered by snow, but for part of the year, during the month of July, it*

is possible to see the deity, and devotees go there to offer their respects. Kedāranātha is for the devotees of Lord Śiva. According to the Vedic principle, when something is offered to the deities to eat, it is offered in a fire. Therefore a fire sacrifice is necessary in all sorts of ceremonies. It is specifically stated in the śāstras that gods are to be offered something to eat through the fire. The demon Vṛkāsura therefore went to Kedāranātha and ignited a sacrificial fire to please Lord Śiva.

ॐ After igniting the fire in the name of Lord Śiva, to please him Vṛkāsura began to offer his own flesh by cutting it from his body.

ॐ Here is an instance of worship in the mode of ignorance. In the Bhagavad-gītā, different types of sacrifices are mentioned. Some sacrifices are in the mode of goodness, some are in the mode of passion, and some are in the mode of ignorance. There are different kinds of tapasya and worship because there are different kinds of people within this world. But the ultimate tapasya, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is the topmost yoga and the topmost sacrifice. As confirmed in the Bhagavad-gītā, the topmost yoga is to think always of Lord Kṛṣṇa within the heart, and the topmost sacrifice is to perform the saṅkīrtana-yajña.

ॐ In the Bhagavad-gītā it is stated that the worshipers of the demigods have lost their intelligence. As revealed later in this chapter, Vṛkāsura wanted to satisfy Lord Śiva for a third-class materialistic objective, which was temporary and without real benefit. The asuras, or persons within the mode of ignorance, will accept such benedictions from the demigods. In complete contrast to this sacrifice in the mode of ignorance, the arcana-vidhi process for worshipping Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa is very simple. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the Bhagavad-gītā that He accepts from His devotee even a little fruit, a flower or some water, which can be gathered by any person, rich or poor. Of course, those who are rich are not expected to offer only a little water, a little piece of fruit or a little leaf to the Lord; a rich man should offer according to his position. But if the devotee happens to be a very poor man, the Lord will accept even the most meager offering. The worship of Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa is very simple, and it can be executed by anyone in this world. But worship in the mode of ignorance, as exhibited by Vṛkāsura, is not only very difficult and painful but is also a useless waste of time. Therefore the Bhagavad-gītā says that the worshipers of the demigods are bereft of intelligence; their process of worship is very difficult, and at the same time the result obtained is flickering and temporary.

ॐ Although Vṛkāsura continued his sacrifice for six days, he was unable to personally see Lord Śiva, which was his objective;

ॐ he wanted to see him face to face and ask him for a benediction.

- ॐ *Here is another contrast between a demons and devotees. A devotee is confident that whatever he offers to the Deity in full devotional service is accepted by the Lord, but a demon wants to see his worshipable deity face to face so that he can directly take the benediction. A devotee does not worship Viṣṇu or Lord Kṛṣṇa for any benediction. Therefore a devotee is called akāma, free of desire, and a nondevotee is called sarva-kāma, or desirous of everything.*
- ॐ On the seventh day, the demon Vṛkāsura decided that he should cut off his head and offer it to satisfy Lord Śiva.
- ॐ Thus he took a bath in a nearby lake, and without drying his body and hair, he prepared to cut off his head.
- ॐ *According to the Vedic system, an animal to be offered as a sacrifice has to be bathed first, and while the animal is wet it is sacrificed.*
- ॐ When the demon was thus preparing to cut off his head, Lord Śiva became very compassionate.
- ॐ *This compassion is a symptom of the quality of goodness. Lord Śiva is called tri-liṅga, “a mixture of the three material qualities.” Therefore his manifestation of the nature of compassion is a sign of the quality of goodness. This compassion, however, is present in every living entity. The compassion of Lord Śiva was aroused not because the demon was offering his flesh into the sacrificial fire but because he was about to commit suicide. This is natural compassion. Even if a common man sees someone preparing to commit suicide, he will try to save him. He does so automatically. There is no need to appeal to him. Therefore when Lord Śiva appeared from the fire to check the demon from suicide, it was not done as a very great favor to him.*
- ॐ Lord Śiva’s touch saved the demon from committing suicide;
- ॐ his bodily injuries immediately healed, and his body became as it was before.
- ॐ Then Lord Śiva told the demon,
- ॐ “My dear Vṛkāsura, you do not need to cut off your head.
- ॐ You may ask from me any benediction you like, and I shall fulfill your desire.
- ॐ I do not know why you wanted to cut off your head to satisfy me.
- ॐ I become satisfied even by an offering of a little water.”
- ॐ *Actually, according to the Vedic process, the śiva-liṅga in the temple or the form of Lord Śiva in the temple is worshiped simply by offering Ganges water, because it is said that Lord Śiva is greatly satisfied when Ganges water is poured upon his head. Generally, devotees offer Ganges water and the leaves of the bilva tree, which are especially meant for offering to Lord Śiva and goddess Durgā. The fruit of this tree is also offered to Lord Śiva. Lord Śiva*

assured Vṛkāsura that he is satisfied by a very simple process of worship. Why then was he so eager to cut off his head, and why was he taking so much pain by cutting his body to pieces and offering it in the fire? There was no need of such severe penances. Anyway, out of compassion and sympathy, Lord Śiva prepared to give him any benediction he liked.

ॐ When the demon was offered this facility by Lord Śiva, he asked for a fearful and abominable benediction. The demon was very sinful, and sinful persons do not know what sort of benediction should be asked from the deity.

ॐ Therefore he asked Lord Śiva bless him with such power that as soon as he would touch anyone's head, it would immediately crack and the man would die.

ॐ The demons are described in the Bhagavad-gītā as *duṣkṛtīs*, or miscreants. *Kṛtī* means “very meritorious,” but when *duḥ* is added it means “abominable.” Instead of surrendering unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the *duṣkṛtīs* worship different demigods to derive abominable material benefits. Although the *duṣkṛtīs* have brain power and merit, their merit and brain power are used for abominable activities. Sometimes, for example, materialistic scientists invent a lethal weapon. The scientific research for such an invention certainly requires a very good brain, but instead of inventing something beneficial to human society they invent something to accelerate death, which is already assured to every man. They cannot show their meritorious power by inventing something which can save man from death; instead they invent weapons which accelerate the process of death. Similarly, Vṛkāsura, instead of asking Lord Śiva for something beneficial to human society, asked for something very dangerous to human society. Lord Śiva is powerful enough to give any benediction, so the demon could have asked something beneficial from him, but for his personal interest he asked that anyone whose head would be touched by his hand would at once die. Lord Śiva could understand the motive of the demon, and he was very sorry that he had assured him whatever benediction he liked. He could not withdraw his promise, but he was very sorry in his heart that he was to offer him a benediction so dangerous to human society. Devotees of the Personality of Godhead never ask any benediction from Lord Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa, and even if they ask something from the Lord, it is not at all dangerous for human society. That is the difference between the demons and the devotees, or the worshipers of Lord Śiva and the worshipers of Lord Viṣṇu.

ॐ While Śukadeva Gosvāmī was narrating the history of Vṛkāsura, he addressed Mahārāja Parīkṣit as Bhārata, referring to King Parīkṣit's birth in a family of devotees. Mahārāja Parīkṣit was saved by Lord Kṛṣṇa while in his mother's womb. Later, he could have asked Lord Kṛṣṇa to save him again, from the curse of a brāhmaṇa, but he did not do so. The demon, however, wanted to become immortal by killing everyone with the touch of his hand.

Lord Śiva could understand this, but because he had promised, he gave him the benediction.

- ॐ The demon, however, being very sinful, immediately decided that he would use the benediction to kill Lord Śiva and take away Gaurī (Pārvatī) for his personal enjoyment.
- ॐ He immediately decided to place his hand on the head of Lord Śiva.
- ॐ Thus Lord Śiva was put into an awkward position because he was endangered by his own benediction to a demon.

ॐ *This is an instance of a materialistic devotee's misusing the power derived from the demigods.*

- ॐ Without further deliberation, the demon Vṛkāsura approached Lord Śiva to place his hand on Lord Śiva's head.
- ॐ Lord Śiva was so afraid of him that his body trembled,
- ॐ and he fled from the land to the sky and from the sky to other planets, until he reached the limits of the universe, above the higher planetary systems.
- ॐ Lord Śiva fled from one place to another, but the demon Vṛkāsura continued to chase him.
- ॐ The predominating deities of other planets, such as Brahmā, Indra and Candara, could not find any way to save Lord Śiva from the impending danger.
- ॐ Wherever Lord Śiva went, they remained silent.
- ॐ At last Lord Śiva approached Lord Viṣṇu, who is situated within this universe on the planet known as Śvetadvīpa.

ॐ *Śvetadvīpa is the local Vaikuṅṭha planet, beyond the jurisdiction of the influence of the external energy. Lord Viṣṇu in His all-pervasive feature remains everywhere, but wherever He remains personally is the Vaikuṅṭha atmosphere. In the Bhagavad-gītā it is stated that the Lord remains within the heart of all living entities. As such, the Lord remains within the heart of many lowborn living entities, but that does not mean He is lowborn. Wherever He remains is transformed into Vaikuṅṭha. So the planet within this universe known as Śvetadvīpa is also Vaikuṅṭhaloka. It is said in the śāstras that residential quarters within the forest are in the mode of goodness, residential quarters in big cities, towns and villages are in the mode of passion, and residential quarters in an atmosphere wherein indulgence in the four sinful activities of illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating and gambling predominates are in the mode of ignorance. But residential quarters in a temple of Viṣṇu, the Supreme Lord, are in Vaikuṅṭha. It doesn't matter where the temple is situated; the temple itself, wherever it may be, is Vaikuṅṭha. Similarly, the Śvetadvīpa planet, although within the material jurisdiction, is Vaikuṅṭha.*

- ॐ Lord Śiva finally entered Śvetadvīpa Vaikuṅṭha.

ॐ *In Śvetadvīpa there are great saintly persons who are completely freed from the envious nature of the material world and are beyond the jurisdiction of the four principles of material activity, namely religiosity, economic development, sense gratification and liberation. Anyone who enters into that Vaikuṅṭha planet never returns to this material world.*

ॐ Lord Nārāyaṇa is celebrated as a lover of His devotees, and as soon as He understood that Lord Śiva was in great danger, He appeared as a brahmacārī and personally approached Lord Śiva to receive him from a distant place.

ॐ The Lord appeared as a perfect brahmacārī, with a belt around His waist, a sacred thread, a deerskin, a brahmacārī stick and raudra beads. (Raudra beads are different from tulasī beads. Raudra beads are used by the devotees of Lord Śiva.)

ॐ Dressed as a brahmacārī, Lord Nārāyaṇa stood before Lord Śiva. The shining effulgence emanating from His body attracted not only Lord Śiva but also the demon Vṛkāsura.

ॐ Lord Nārāyaṇa offered His respects and obeisances unto Vṛkāsura just to attract his sympathy and attention.

ॐ Thus stopping the demon, the Lord addressed him as follows:

ॐ “My dear son of Śakuni, you appear very tired, as if coming from a very distant place.

ॐ What is your purpose?

ॐ Why have you come so far?

ॐ I see that you are fatigued,

ॐ so I request you to take a little rest.

ॐ You should not unnecessarily tire your body.

ॐ Everyone greatly values his body because only with the body can one fulfill all the desires of one’s mind.

ॐ We should not, therefore, unnecessarily give trouble to the body.”

ॐ *The brahmacārī addressed Vṛkāsura as the son of Śakuni just to convince him that He was known to his father, Śakuni. Vṛkāsura then took the brahmacārī to be someone known to his family, and therefore the brahmacārī’s sympathetic words appealed to him. Before the demon could argue that he had no time to take rest, the Lord informed him about the importance of the body, and the demon was convinced. Any man, especially a demon, takes his body to be very important. Thus Vṛkāsura became convinced about the importance of his body.*

ॐ Then, just to pacify the demon, the brahmacārī told him,

ॐ “My dear lord, if you think that you can disclose the mission for which you have taken the trouble to come here, maybe I shall be able to help you so that your purpose will be easily served.”

- ॐ *Indirectly, the Lord informed him that because the Lord is the Supreme Brahman, He would certainly be able to adjust the awkward situation created by Lord Śiva.*
- ॐ The demon was greatly pacified by the sweet words of Lord Nārāyaṇa in the form of a brahmacārī, and at last he disclosed all that had happened in regard to the benediction offered by Lord Śiva.
- ॐ The Lord replied to the demon as follows:
- ॐ “I Myself cannot believe that Lord Śiva has in truth given you such a benediction.
- ॐ As far as I know, Lord Śiva is not in a sane mental condition.
- ॐ When he had a quarrel with his father-in-law, Dakṣa, he was cursed to become a piśāca (ghost).
- ॐ Thus he has become the leader of the ghosts and hobgoblins.
- ॐ Therefore I cannot put any faith in his words.
- ॐ But if you still have faith in the words of Lord Śiva, my dear King of the demons, then why don’t you make an experiment by putting your hand on your own head?
- ॐ If the benediction proves false, then you can at once kill this liar, Lord Śiva, so that in the future he will not dare give out false benedictions.”
- ॐ In this way, by Lord Nārāyaṇa’s sweet words and by the expansion of His superior illusion, the demon became bewildered, and he actually forgot the power of Lord Śiva and his benediction.
- ॐ He was thus very easily persuaded to put his hand on his own head.
- ॐ As soon as the demon did that, his head cracked, as if struck by a thunderbolt, and he immediately died.
- ॐ The demigods from heaven showered flowers on Lord Nārāyaṇa, praising Him with shouts of “All glories!” and “All thanksgiving!” and they offered their obeisances to the Lord.
- ॐ On the death of Vṛkāsura, all the denizens in the higher planetary systems, namely the demigods, the piṭṛs, the Gandharvas and the inhabitants of Janaloka, showered flowers on the Personality of Godhead.
- ॐ Thus Lord Viṣṇu in the form of a brahmacārī released Lord Śiva from the impending danger and saved the whole situation.
- ॐ Lord Nārāyaṇa then informed Lord Śiva that this demon, Vṛkāsura, was killed as the result of his sinful activities.
- ॐ He was especially sinful and offensive because he wanted to experiment on his own master, Lord Śiva.
- ॐ Lord Nārāyaṇa then told Lord Śiva,

- ॐ “My dear lord, a person who commits an offense to great souls cannot continue to exist.
ॐ He is vanquished by his own sinful activities, and this is certainly true of this demon, who has committed such an offensive act against you.”
ॐ Thus by the grace of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, who is transcendental to all material qualities, Lord Śiva was saved from being killed by a demon. Anyone who hears this history with faith and devotion is certainly liberated from material entanglement as well as from the clutches of his enemies.