

# What's So Special About Puruṣottama Month?!

2018 is a very special year. Why is that? Wednesday, May 16<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 form a very potent and merciful month called Puruṣottama month. So what's so special about this month? Please read on and learn from the *Padma Purāṇa* about its inconceivable glories — you have nothing to lose and unlimited mercy to gain!

## The Glories and Potency of Puruṣottama Month (from the *Padma Purāṇa*)

Once upon a time, thousands of sages came together in the holy place called Naimiṣāraṇya to perform a sacrifice. To their very good fortune the great sage Sūta Gosvāmī, who had been traveling to different pilgrimage sites, arrived there along with his disciples. The sages present were very enlivened to see him. They all stood up immediately to pay their respects to the great sage, offered him a very nice *vyāsāsana*, and requested him with folded hands to sit down on it.

The sages of Naimiṣāraṇya said to Sūta Gosvāmī with folded hands, “O Sūta Gosvāmī! All of us are humbly requesting you to please tell us something about the wonderful activities and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. There are many thousands of such narrations but we want to listen to the most perfect one, by following which we can all be delivered from this material ocean and return back to Godhead.

Hearing the request made by these sages, headed by Śaunaka Ṛṣi, Sūta Gosvāmī began to speak, “O sages, please to listen me. I first went to Puṣkara tīrtha, then after visiting thousands of other holy places, I reached Hastināpura. There, on the bank of the Ganges, I saw thousands of sages sitting together with Parīkṣit Mahārāja. Just then the great sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī appeared, and all the sages present paid him proper respect by rising from their seats with folded hands. All the sages unanimously offered the lotus *vyāsāsana* to Śukadeva Gosvāmī, which was meant for the speaker who would speak *kṛṣṇa-kathā* to Mahārāja Parīkṣit.

Sūta Gosvāmī said, “O sages, I have just come from Hastināpura where I heard the whole *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from the lotus mouth of Śukadeva Gosvāmī, so now I will tell you about the all-attractive activities and pastimes of the Lord.

“Once, long ago, Śrī Nārada Muni reached Badrikāśrama, the residence of Lord Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi. The river Alakanandā was flowing down from His lotus feet. Nārada paid his obeisances to Nārāyaṇa and prayed, “Oh Lord of the demigods. Oh ocean of mercy! Oh master of creation. You are all truthful, the essence of all truths. And so I am paying my obeisances unto You.

**“Oh Lord! In this material world all living entities are busily engaged in sense gratification. They have all forgotten the ultimate goal of life. Therefore please explain**

**something which will be helpful both for householders and sages in the renounced order like me, something that will help us attain self-realization and return back to Godhead.”**

Hearing the sweet words of Nārada, Lord Nārāyaṇa smiled. He said, “O Nārada, please listen to narrations about the supremely pious pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, for they will diminish all sinful reaction. O Nārada, you already know of all the activities of the Supreme Lord, but for the benefit of others, you are asking Me again. So now I will tell you about the glories of the sacred **Puruṣottama month**, which is fully potent to grant not only all material happiness but also qualify one to return back to Godhead at the end of life.”

Nārada enquired, “O Lord, I have heard the glories of all months including Kārtika, Chaitra etc, but which month is this Puruṣottama month? O ocean of mercy, please tell me all about this sacred month. What is the way to glorify this month, what should I do in this month, how should I take bath, give in charity, etc.? What should I chant? Who should I worship? Should I observe fasting in this month? Please tell me everything in detail.”

Sūta Gosvāmī said, “O sages, after hearing all these questions from Nārada, Lord Nārāyaṇa began to speak from His moon-like lotus mouth. “O Nārada, I am going to tell you something which was previously explained by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira. Once Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira lost everything - his empire, his palace and even his chaste wife Draupadī - to Duryodhana in a gambling match. At that time Draupadī was insulted by Duśāsana in front of the whole royal assembly. But when Duśāsana had tried to strip Draupadī naked, she was saved from such a dangerous situation by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. After this incident, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja along with his brothers and wife left his kingdom and lived in Kamayaka forest.

“Once Śrī Kṛṣṇa, son of Devaki, visited the Pāṇḍavas in that forest. All the Pāṇḍavas, including Draupadī, were very happy to see their Lord, and they forgot their painful forest life immediately. They felt enriched with a new life just by taking Kṛṣṇa’s *darśana*. They paid their obeisances at their Lord’s lotus feet. Seeing the miserable living condition of the Pāṇḍavas, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa became very upset. And at the same time He became very angry towards Duryodhana. It appeared as if the Lord was going to destroy the whole universe, and so the Pāṇḍavas became fearful and all began to pray to the Lord in a humble mood. Listening to the humble prayers of Arjuna, the Lord composed Himself and said, “Oh Arjuna, being very pleased with all of you (Pāṇḍavas), and being controlled by your devotion and friendship towards Me, **I will now tell you about the wonderful history of Puruṣottama month.**

“Oh Arjuna! Once upon a time, by the arrangement of providence an extra month came to this world. Everyone took this month to be most inauspicious, and even saw it as a stool-like month. Just as one should not touch stool, so this month was also seen as untouchable. It was constantly unprotected and blasphemed, and rejected by everyone as an improper time for any religious and auspicious activities.

“Being so rejected by all human beings, and constantly hearing only bad words and blasphemy, this extra month became very sad. She came to Vaikuṅṭha to explain her sorrowful situation to the Lord. Seeing Lord Viṣṇu on His *śimhāsana*, she fell down at His lotus feet in a mood of sorrow and grief. Tears were falling profusely from her eyes. She started praying to the Lord, “Oh Ocean of mercy! I have come to You helpless. I have been rejected and blasphemed by all people of the world. Please protect me; please show me Your mercy. Please don’t be indifferent towards me.” Saying these words, the extra month continued crying in front of Lord Viṣṇu and sat down before Him in a dejected mood. Seeing the humble and pitiable position of the extra month, Lord Viṣṇu became very merciful towards her. He told her, “Do not lament, I shall give you protection from all of your miseries Please stop crying. It is not proper to lament after taking shelter at My lotus feet.”

Being so consoled by the Lord, the extra month began speaking in openhearted way. “Oh Lord, You know everything about my painful condition. No one is in a more miserable situation in these three worlds than I. First of all, all other months, years, days, nights, directions etc. are being protected by You, and so they are always moving fearlessly in their unique charming moods. But I (an extra month) don’t have any name, nor any protector, nor a husband to give me shelter. All the demigods and human beings have rejected me for any auspicious activities. For this reason, oh Lord, I want to die immediately.” Oh Nārada, this extra month repeatedly said, “I want to die! I want to die! I want to die!” Then she fainted at the feet of the Lord.

Being requested by Lord Viṣṇu, Garuḍa started fanning the personification of the extra month. And after sometime she got up and began to speak again, “Oh Lord of the universe, I am in need of Your shelter so please protect me.”

Lord Viṣṇu told the extra month, “Oh child, please don’t lament, all of your miserable conditions will be finished very soon. Get up and come with Me to Goloka Vṛndāvana, which is even unattainable to great *yogīs*. Goloka is the abode of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. There Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is in His two-handed form, surrounded by *gopīs* and enjoying His eternal pastimes. The Supreme Śrī Kṛṣṇa of Goloka will deliver you from all your miseries, please come with Me.” Speaking in this way, Lord Viṣṇu took *mala-māsa* (the extra month) to Goloka.

From a distant place Lord Viṣṇu and the extra month observed the effulgence of Goloka. This dazzling effulgence automatically forced *mala-māsa* to close her eyes. Therefore, keeping the extra month behind Him, Lord Viṣṇu proceeded farther until He reached the main gate. There the doorkeeper paid his respects to Him. Having reached the Supreme Abode, Lord Viṣṇu met Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa who was surrounded by many devoted *gopīs*. Lord Viṣṇu, who is the husband of Ramādevī, paid His obeisances to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Then He made the extra month also offer her obeisances at the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, even though she was crying loudly. Immediately Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked, “Why is she crying? She is in Goloka Vṛndāvana, why is she crying?” Hearing these words from Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Lord Viṣṇu started explaining the whole miserable condition of the extra month. He begged Him to please protect this unprotected month. “There is no one except You, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who can save this extra month from her

hellish condition and give her full protection.” Having said these words, Lord Viṣṇu remained standing in front of Lord Kṛṣṇa with folded hands.

Then Sūta Gosvāmī continued to speak, “Oh sages! Lord Viṣṇu took his seat, and Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke very confidential words to him. Listen carefully, for I am now going to share those words with all of you.

Then Lord Puruṣottama Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, “Oh Viṣṇu, you have done a very great deed by bringing this extra month to Me. You will become even more famous for performing this act. Because You have accepted this *mala-māsa*, I will also accept her. I shall make this poor extra month just like Me in quality, fame, opulence, realization, success, and in giving benediction to devotees. **This month will become equally potent to Me. I am bestowing all of My divine qualities in this abused month. Named after Me, this month will be famous as Puruṣottama month in this world.**

“Oh Janārdana, now that she has imbued My qualities, I Myself will become the husband and protector of this Puruṣottama month. And being equal to Me, this month will be the master of all other months. Now this month will become worshipable by one and all. Everyone should pay their obeisances to her, everyone should worship her. This month is equally as powerful as Me to give any type of benediction to its observer. I am making this month desire-free, unlike other months, which are full of some desire or another. **The worshiper of this month will be able to burn all his past sinful reactions to ashes**, and after enjoying a blissful life in the material realm he will return back to Godhead.

“Oh Garuḍadhvaja,” Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa continued, “**My Goloka is unattainable to the performers of austerities, mahātmas engaged in pious activities, to people who maintain celibacy, or to those who fast their whole life’s duration. But just by observing Puruṣottama month and becoming a devotee one can easily cross over this material ocean and return back to Godhead. Observance of this Puruṣottama month is the best of all austerities.** Just as a farmer produces a rich harvest by planting seeds in nicely cultivated land, so an intelligent man who practices devotional service towards the Supreme Lord in this Puruṣottama month will enjoy a blissful life while in this world and after leaving his body he will return back to Godhead. **An unfortunate ignorant man who does not perform any japa, does not give any charity, does not pay respect to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, does not behave properly to brāhmaṇas, makes enmity with others and who blasphemes the Puruṣottama month will go to hell for an unlimited period.** Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa continued, “How can a person make his life successful unless he performs devotional service in this Puruṣottama month? A person who is fully engaged in sense gratification and does not give any special importance to this sacred month becomes the best candidate for hell. **All human beings should perform some devotional service in this Puruṣottama month by:**

1. **Taking a bath in a holy river**
2. **Worshipping Me, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, by chanting My Holy Name (japa)**
3. **Giving in charity**



## **How Can I Take a Holy Bath When I Don't Live in a Holy Place?!**

**For we followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda, this question can be very easily answered. Śrīla Prabhupāda made it very clear that to sprinkle three drops of holy water on one's head is the same as taking a holy bath.**

***Lokanāth Swami:** Prabhupāda told the devotees that during the day the men should shave their heads and they should all bathe in the Gaṅgā. The men were on the banks of the Gaṅgā trying to shave up when Prabhupāda arrived with a big group of sannyāsīs. Everyone watched him walk to the edge of the Gaṅgā, crouch down, and sprinkle three drops of water on his head saying, “This is the same as taking a bath.” Then he walked back to the temple.*

**(The Māyāpur-Vṛndāvana Festivals with Śrīla Prabhupāda (1972–77))**



***Bhima das:** On Gaura Purnima morning, we went to the Ganges. In those days, in '74, the Ganges was a long way away from the temple. It was a good 15-minute walk to the Ganges. So we were down there shaving our heads, and then we were going to take bath. I remember that the devotee who was shaving my head was with this dull blade and my head was getting cut and so many things. Then Srila Prabhupada transcendently came down with the sannyasis to the bank of the Ganga. He squatted down, took three drops of water on his head and said that's the same as taking a bath. Then he walked back to the temple.*

**(Śrīla Prabhupāda – Memories)**

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Best to secure your bottle now!**



“A fortunate person who follows My instructions and observes this Puruṣottama month properly, and in a faithful way worships Me will attain fame, opulence and a good son in this very life. And after enjoying a happy life, he will return back to Goloka-dhāma. By following My instructions, everyone should worship this sacred month. I have made it the best among all other months. Oh husband of Ramādevī (Viṣṇu), give up all kinds of mental speculation about this extra month. Just take this Puruṣottama month with You to Your Vaikuṅṭha abode.”

After narrating this brief history of the Puruṣottama month, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa glanced very mercifully upon Yudhiṣṭhira and Draupadī, and then began speaking to Arjuna “Oh lion among men, can you now understand the reason why you Pāṇḍavas are suffering? You did not acknowledge or honor the presence of Puruṣottama month,

which has just recently finished. That month which is most dear to Vṛndāvana Candra has passed, but you Pāṇḍavas were in the forest and did not worship Puruṣottama month. So now you are suffering. You have been following the ritualistic principles given to you by Vyāsadeva, but **unless you worship Puruṣottama month you cannot perform pure devotional service to Me.**”

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa continued, **“Now I am going to narrate a famous historical event concerning the previous birth of Draupadī.** In her previous birth Draupadī was the daughter of a great *brāhmaṇa* sage called Medhāvī. Her mother died when she was a small child, and so she was under the care of her father. Day by day, she grew to full bloom youth. She was very beautiful, but her father was not interested in arranging her marriage. Seeing her other girlfriends with their husbands and young children she passed her days in a very miserable way. In the meantime, her father passed away from this material world while uttering the sacred name of Hari.

“This made his daughter even more miserable. Fortunately, the great sage Durvāsā Muni appeared in her *āśrama* shortly after her father’s death. Seeing the great sage, the girl paid her obeisances to him and respectfully worshiped him. She offered flowers and fruits to the great sage. When he expressed his pleasure with her reception, she began lamenting and crying before him. Concerned, the sage inquired about her lamentation. The *brāhmaṇa* girl began to speak, “Oh great saint Durvāsā, you know everything — past, present and future. I have no shelter in this world. I have lost all of my relatives. My parents have passed away, and I have no elder brother. I am also unmarried, and therefore there is no husband to protect me. Oh great sage, please do something, please help me! Please give me some advice to relieve me from this miserable condition.” After listening to her prayer, Durvāsā began to consider the unfortunate condition of the girl, and he decided to show mercy towards her.

Durvāsā Ṛṣi began to speak, “Oh beautiful one, three months from now the most auspicious Puruṣottama month will begin. This sacred month is most dear to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Just by taking a holy bath in this month a man or woman can become completely sinless. This Puruṣottama month is more glorious than all other months, including Kārtika month. The glories of all other months are not even equal to one sixteenth of the glories of Puruṣottama month. The merit of a person who takes a holy bath even once in this month is equal to the merit of taking bath in the Ganges for twelve thousand years, or the merit achieved by a person who takes a bath in holy water of Ganges or Godāvarī when Bṛhaspati (Jupiter) enters to Leo (lion). If you will take a holy bath, give in charity and chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa during this month all your miseries will go away, you will attain all kinds of perfection, and all of your desires will be fulfilled. Please follow my advice - please do not forget to worship the forthcoming Puruṣottama month very sincerely.”

After speaking these words, Sage Durvāsā remained silent. Unfortunately, the young *brahmaṇi* did not believe in his words, rather she became angry and started blaspheming, “Oh great sage, you are lying. How could this extra month, which is also called *mala-māsa* (stool month), be superior to other great months like Māgha, Kārtika and Vaiśākha. I cannot believe your words. You are trying to cheat me. This extra

month is known to be most abominable for any kind of pious activity.” Hearing these words of the *brāhmaṇa* girl, Durvāsā became very angry, his whole body started burning, and his eyes became red. But remembering the helpless condition of the girl, he consciously controlled himself.

Sage Durvāsā told the girl, “Oh unfortunate one, I am not going to curse you because your father was a good friend of mine. You are in such a helpless condition. Being an ignorant child, you cannot understand the śāstric conclusion. I am not going to take your offenses towards me seriously. But at the same time, I cannot and should not tolerate your offences towards Puruṣottama month. In your next life you will certainly reap the results of your offensive words.” The great sage Durvāsā then hurriedly left that place to perform his service for Lord Nārāyaṇa.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, “Oh sinless one, when Durvāsā Muni left that place the *brāhmaṇa* girl (Draupadī in her previous birth) lost all of her opulences in a moment. Being an offender to Puruṣottama month, her body began to look very ugly, and she lost all of her bodily effulgence. She then decided to worship Lord Śiva who is known as Āśutoṣa, one who is very easily pleased.

This young *brahmaṇi* then began to perform great austerities to please Lord Śiva, the husband of Pārvatī. She continued her austerities for nine thousand years. In the summer season, she would sit for meditation surrounded by fire and under the hot sun. In the winter season, she meditated under freezing cold water. Observing her great austerities, even the demigods became fearful. Lord Śaṅkara then appeared before the *brāhmaṇa* girl because he was pleased by her worship and austerities. When Lord Śiva appeared before the girl in his spiritual form, the girl immediately stood up rejuvenated. In the presence of Lord Śiva all of her bodily weakness disappeared and she again started to look beautiful. Seeing Lord Śiva in front of her, she started to worship him in her mind, and then began to recite nice prayers to please Him.

Being very pleased with the girl, Lord Śiva said, “Oh performer of austerity, all good fortune to you. Now please ask some boon from me. I am pleased with you I shall grant whatever you want.”

Hearing these words from the mouth of Lord Śiva, the girl said, “Oh friend of the poor, if you are pleased with me then please give me husband. Repeatedly speaking the same words - “give me a husband” — five times, the girl then fell silent. Then Lord Śiva replied, “Let it be. You have asked for a husband five times, and so you will get five husbands.” Hearing Lord Śiva’s words, the girl became very ashamed. She said, “Oh Lord, it is most abominable for a girl to have five husbands. Please retract your words.” Lord Śiva then spoke to her very gravely, “That is impossible for me. What you have asked from me will be granted. You will get five husbands in your next life. Previously you offended Puruṣottama month by not following the kind advice of sage Durvāsā. Oh *brāhmaṇa* girl, there is not difference between the body of Durvāsā and mine. All we demigods, including Lord Brahmā and all the great saints like Nārada, worship this Puruṣottama month in accord with the order of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. A devotee of Puruṣottama month achieves all good fortune in this life and at the end of his life he goes back to Goloka-dhāma, the abode of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Being an offender to this

sacred Puruṣottama month, you will get five husbands in your next life.” The girl became very remorseful, but Lord Śiva immediately disappeared from the place. After Lord Śiva’s departure, the young *brahmaṇi* became very morose and fearful about her future life. In this way, after few days, the girl left her body by the arrangement of providence.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa then said, “Oh Arjuna, in the meantime the great king Drupada had been performing an elaborate sacrifice. From this sacrificial fire, the young *brahmaṇi* took her birth. She appeared as the daughter of Mahārāja Drupada. Oh Arjuna, the same daughter of Medhāvī Ṛṣi has now become famous in the world as Draupadī — she is none other than your present wife. Because she blasphemed Puruṣottama month in her previous life, she was insulted by Duśāsana in front of the whole Kuru assembly in the presence of all her Pāṇḍava husbands. Fortunately she remembered Me (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) and took My shelter. Forgiving her offenses, I protected her from that most abominable condition and saved her from the hand of Duśāsana. Oh dear Pāṇḍava brothers, please don’t forget to worship the forthcoming Puruṣottama month. **A person who blasphemes Puruṣottama month and doesn’t worship her, and doesn’t worship Me, will never attain good fortune.** This Puruṣottama month is fully potent to fulfill all your desires and remove all miseries. Now your fourteen years of forest life are coming to an end. Please worship this Puruṣottama month sincerely, for it will bestow all good fortune upon you.” Giving full consolation to the Pāṇḍavas in this way, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa then left that place for Dvāraka.

After a few days, when Puruṣottama month appeared, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira reminded his younger brothers and wife Draupadī of the words of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. All of them followed the instructions He had given them. They worshiped Puruṣottama Śrī Kṛṣṇa in various ways during this sacred month. The merit they achieved by performing Puruṣottama *vrata* meant they regained their lost kingdom, and after enjoying a happy life, they all returned back to Godhead by the grace of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Sūta Gosvāmī then told the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya, “Oh sages, **now I am going to tell you another famous history in glorification of Puruṣottama month. It involves Mahārāja Hadadhanva of the famous sun dynasty.** Long, long ago, there was a religious king named Citradhanva, who was the ruler of Haihaya State. He had a very qualified son named Hadadhanva. Hadadhanva was famous and loved all over the world because of his good qualities like faithfulness and strict adherence to religious principles. At an early age Hadadhanva became a learned scholar by pleasing his Guru. He studied all the *Vedas*, including all the *Āṅgas* and *Upaniṣads*. After pleasing his Guru and paying him *dakṣiṇa*, Hadadhanva returned back to his father’s palace. His father Citradhanva was very old, and so he decided to go to the forest and live a renounced life to please Śrī Hari. Then Hadadhanva became the king of Haihaya State. In due time Hadadhanva achieved a beautiful daughter named Guna Sundari. He also had four famous sons named Citrabaka, Citrabāhu, Maniman and Citra-Kundala.

Once, this Hadadhanva began to think of all his material opulences. He could understand that by the influence of previous pious activities he had achieved an undisturbed kingdom, a chaste and beautiful queen, dutiful sons, etc. Thinking in this

way, the next day the king went to ride on horseback along with his army to hunt. In this forest, a deer which was being attacked by the arrows of the king ran for shelter in another neighboring forest. And the king followed her.

After following the deer for a long way, the king became very tired and thirsty. He began to look for water, and, a little in the distance, he saw a beautiful pond full of clean sweet water. He rode there, got down from the horse's back and tied it to a nearby banyan tree. After quenching his thirst he took rest under the banyan tree. While the king was relaxing in this way, a beautiful parrot which was sitting on the tree started to speak to him. The parrot recited a verse again and again, which meant as follows:

“Oh, deluded by your material opulences you are not even considering the real goal and achievement of human life. How then can you cross the material ocean, the cycle of birth and death?”

After hearing these words from the mouth of the parrot again and again, King Hadadhanva considered the advice very seriously. He started thinking that this parrot may be the great sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī himself showing compassion towards him. In the meantime his army reached that place, and the parrot disappeared. However, the king continued to ponder upon the words of the parrot.

When King Hadadhanva was thinking seriously about these words, the great sage Vālmīki came to his palace. The king immediately got up from his seat and paid his obeisances to him. Vālmīki asked, “Oh king, why do you look so morose. Please tell me everything about your dilemma, I shall try my best to solve your problems.” Feeling some consolation from the sage's words, King Hadadhanva explained the verse spoken to him by the parrot in the forest. After listening to the king, the great sage Vālmīki said, “Oh king, in your previous life you were born in a *brāhmaṇa* family, on the bank of the River Tamraparna in the state of Dravida. Your good name was Sudeva. You were a religious, truthful and self-satisfied *brāhmaṇa*. Your wife was Gautamī, the daughter of Gautama Ṛṣi. When you were in *gṛhasṭha-āśrama* you followed all the religious principles, but despite all these merits you had no child. One day you expressed your unhappiness to your wife. You told her, “Oh beloved one, our human birth is fruitless because we don't have a son who will deliver us from hell. Therefore I have decided to die immediately. Hearing your words, your wife advised you to worship Lord Jagannātha.

She said to you, “Oh dear husband, please don't speak like this. You are a Vaiṣṇava, so you should be more patient in dealing with such situations. If you desire a son, then just worship Lord Jagannātha and ask Him for a son as a benediction.” Following her advice, you performed great austerities on the bank of the River Tamrapani for four thousand years. The demigods became fearful seeing your austerities. But seeing your strong faith and devotion, Lord Hari appeared before you riding His carrier Garuḍa. Seeing the Lord in His four-handed form, you became very happy and paid your full obeisances at His lotus feet.

The great sage Vālmīki continued, “Oh king, after offering his prayers Sudeva *brāhmaṇa* sat down in front of Lord Hari. Hearing his prayers, Lord Hari said, “Oh Sudeva, you have done great austerities to satisfy Me. And I am satisfied. Please ask some boons of Me — whatever you want. Sudeva *brāhmaṇa* said, “Oh Lord, if You are pleased upon me then please give me a qualified son.” Hearing His *brāhmaṇa*’s words, Lord Hari told him “Oh Sudeva, by reading your forehead I can understand that because of your *prārabdha karma* you are not supposed to have a son for the next seven births. Therefore please ask for some other boon. Hearing these words from Lord Hari, the *brāhmaṇa* immediately fell unconscious. He fell down on the ground like a dry old tree. Seeing the condition of her husband, Gautamī, the wife of Sudeva also started crying loudly. Observing the most pathetic condition of this *brāhmaṇa* couple, Garuḍa, the carrier of Lord Viṣṇu, became sympathetic. He also requested Lord Hari to grant them a son. Hearing Garuḍa’s request, Lord Hari empowered him to give such a boon to the *brāhmaṇa* couple. So Garuḍa started fanning the unconscious Sudeva. Then he told the *brāhmaṇa* couple, “Oh fortunate ones, following the order of my master Lord Hari, I am giving a boon to you. You will get a son very soon, and he will be as qualified as me.”

In this way, after giving the boon, Lord Hari disappeared from that place on His carrier Garuḍa. After some time had passed Gautamī gave birth to a son named Śukadeva. From his very childhood, Śukadeva exhibited wonderful godly qualities and always satisfied his guru, and all of his superiors, and friends. Once, the great sage Devala, who was shining like the sun, came to their *āśrama*. Sudeva and his wife prayed to him and gave him a nice *āsana* on which to comfortably sit. Their son Śukadeva also paid his obeisances to the great sage.

Seeing the face of Śukadeva, Devala Ṛṣi became very happy. But then suddenly he became grave. He spoke to the *brāhmaṇa* couple, “This child Śukadeva has all the good qualities of a great person, but there is one serious disqualification. This boy will drown at the age of twelve.” The sage then left the place, and the *brāhmaṇa* couple became very unhappy. However, remembering the all-merciful Lord Viṣṇu, they continued on in their day to day life.

One day their son Śukadeva was taking bath in a nearby tank with his other friends. Following the dictates of unavoidable providence, the boy went into the deep water and drowned. The friends of Śukadeva informed his parents about the death of their beloved son. They started crying very loudly, and coming to the tank, they repeatedly kissed their dead son and lamented. Sudeva took the dead body of his son on his lap and started crying, “Oh son, get up! We are waiting for you. Unless you get up and talk to us, we are both going to give up our lives.” Speaking in this way, the *brāhmaṇa* started chanting the Holy Name of Lord Hari.

When the *brāhmaṇa* couple were lamenting and constantly chanting the Holy Name of the Lord, an untimely rain came along with a heavy wind. The whole world became filled with water, but the *brāhmaṇa* couple were oblivious to externals because of their lamentation for their son. They were constantly chanting the Holy name of the Lord. In this way, a whole month passed away. And that month was Puruṣottama month.

Unknowingly the *brāhmaṇa* couple had worshiped that most sacred month, the month most beloved to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Being pleased by their austerities, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared before them and then the rain immediately stopped. Seeing their Lord, the *brāhmaṇa* couple immediately paid their full obeisances keeping their son aside. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa was very, very pleased because they had worshiped Puruṣottama month (unknowingly). The Lord said, “Oh fortunate Sudeva, your son Śukadeva will live with you for twelve thousand years in this material world to give you all pleasure, and at the end of that time, both of you will return back to Me in Goloka-dhāma.”

As soon as Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, had finished His words, their son got up. It was just like he had been sleeping for a long time. Seeing their son alive again, the *brāhmaṇa* couple became extremely happy. In the meantime the demigods started showering flowers from heaven. Then Śukadeva paid his obeisances to his parents and Lord Śrī Hari. Garuḍa, the carrier of the Lord, also became very happy seeing the *brāhmaṇa* couple with their son. All these incidents seemed extraordinary to Sudeva *brāhmaṇa*, and so he asked Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa why He gave them back their son.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is controlled by His devotees, then spoke to Sudeva, “Oh fortunate one, don’t you know the reason why I am so pleased with you? Both you and your wife observed fasting and worship during the whole of Puruṣottama month — and that month is most dear to Me. When both of you were lamenting for your son by observing full fast and chanting my Holy Name, it was the Holy Puruṣottama month. You worshiped me throughout the entire Puruṣottama month, and that pleased Me very much. Once Lord Brahmā was measuring the value of Puruṣottama month against all the other pious austerities and religious activities mentioned in *Vedas*. However, the value of Puruṣottama month is far more valuable than all types of Vedic religious activities.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa continued, “**Any human being who observes My Puruṣottama month is ever the most fortunate one in all three worlds. At the end of his life, he will return to My abode Goloka.**” Saying these words, the Supreme Lord left that place riding His carrier Garuḍa.

Then Sage Vālmīki told King Hadadhanva, “Oh king, your question has now been answered. The parrot who advised you in the forest was Śukadeva, your beloved son in your previous life. Śukadeva achieved his perfection by the mercy of the Lord, but he was feeling some sympathy for you (Hadadhanva), his father in his previous life. Seeing you engaged in a materialistic way of life, he reminded you of your duty to worship Lord Hari in the forthcoming Puruṣottama month. By such merit you will return back to Godhead.”

Then King Hadadhanva eagerly asked Sage Vālmīki about Puruṣottama month “Oh sage, **please tell me how should one observe this most fortunate Puruṣottama month which is most dear to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa?** Who is the worshipable Lord for this month? What are the processes to worship this month and observe austerities? Please tell me all these secrets.

The great sage Vālmīki replied, “Oh king, one should get up early in the morning (in *brāhma-muhūrta*) thinking about the Supreme Lord Hari who is also known as the Param Brahman. Then he should finish his morning duties, take bath, do pranayama and offer prayers to the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. **Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa with His consort Śrī Rādhika are the worshipable Deities for this Puruṣottama month.** One should continuously chant Gāyatrī until the sun rises in the east. Then one should pay his obeisances and offer (*arghya*) water, flowers etc. to the sun-god, who is also known as Surya Nārāyaṇa. After finishing all of these morning duties one should start worshipping Lord Hari.

**A worshiper of Puruṣottama month should take a vow to remain truthful, not to speak any lie. He should remain very peaceful, and not be engaged in any violent activities.** He should collect some fresh cow dung and mixing it with some water, he should purify a certain area in the shape of a circle. Within that purified circular area, he should draw an eight-petal lotus flower with the help of some rice powder. Then he should place a new pot full of sacred water collected from different holy rivers, or he can call all the different *tīrthas* or river to enter that pot of water. The water pot may be made of gold, silver, copper or of earth, according to the worshiper’s financial ability.

After placing the Holy water pot properly he should call, “Oh river Ganges, Godāvarī, Kāverī, Sarasvatī, Yamunā, etc. please enter to this sacred pot and also purify my body and mind.” Then he should worship that water pot with the help of sandalwood pulp, different other scented things, flowers etc. He should place a copper plate covered with a new yellow cloth upon that water pot. Then one should place Deities of Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa upon that pot. After placing the Deities properly, one should start worshipping Them with faith and devotion.

The great sage Vālmīki continued to speak again, “He should purify the Deities by a fire sacrifice and establish Them with life through the Vedic process, otherwise the Deities made of metal remain a lump of metal only. A *brāhmaṇa* who is qualified with Vedic knowledge should perform these activities. First of all he should chant *Puruṣa-suktā*, starting from “*om tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam*”, followed by the *Vijaya mantra* of Puruṣottama. By placing his thumb on his heart, he should chant all these *mantras* to establish the Deities with life. He should take a vow that “I shall live for this Deity, or I shall die for this Deity.” He should chant many other mantras prescribed in Yajurveda adding ‘*svāhā*’ at the end of each mantra. In this way, he should meditate upon Lord Puruṣottama, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Then he should say this: “Oh Puruṣottama! I am offering this noble seat to Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa. The holy water brought by me from different holy rivers including Ganges is for Your pleasure. Oh Lord, please accept this water for washing Your feet.” Saying this, one should offer *padya*. Then one should offer *ācamana* to the Deities. Then one should bathe the Deities with *pañcāmṛta* and again offer *ācamana*. To fulfill one’s ultimate desire and attain perfection, one should offer new yellow silken clothes to the Deities. Then he should pray, “Oh Puruṣottama, please save me from this nescience, this cycle of birth and death.”

One should offer sacred threads with the new cloth also. Then he should chant, “Oh Lord! Please accept this sweetly scented sandalwood pulp which is prepared by me in

careful way.” Then he should offer sandalwood pulp to different parts of the bodies of the Deities. He should pray, “Oh Puruṣottama, please accept these scented and unbroken flowers carefully collected by me.” Then he should offer the flowers to the Deities. He should worship the different parts of body of the Lord by chanting the mantras consisting of twenty-four different names of Lord Viṣṇu starting from *keśavāya namaḥ*. In this way one should worship Lord Puruṣottama properly.

Then king Hadadhanva inquired, “Oh sage! **What should be the prescribed foods for a performer of Puruṣottama vrata? What should one not eat in this month? Please explain everything very clearly to me.**”

Sage Vālmīki said, “Oh King! Listen, I am now explaining everything to you in brief. In purified consciousness one should collect wheat, rice, sugar candy, sesame seeds, ginger, green leafs, banana, cucumber, rock salt, butter, ghee, curd, mango, potato, etc. and should cook them without oil. One should not eat meat, fish, etc. or any kinds of non-vegetarian things. One should not use mustard, or mustard oil, or any kind of intoxicant in his daily fare.

One should prepare one’s food in a purified way, in pure consciousness, and one should not cook in an iron pot. One should not speak any nonsense, nor think any nonsense, while preparing *prasādam*. One should avoid any type of contaminated food prepared in a contaminated or improper way. In Puruṣottama month, one should not blaspheme the demigods, the *Vedas* or any literature in pursuance of the Vedic version, *brāhmaṇas*, the spiritual master, cows, and a person (man or woman) who performs Puruṣottama *vrata*, the king and all other saintly people. One should try his best to please Lord Viṣṇu by performing various austerities to the best of his ability. A worshiper of Puruṣottama month should follow the above rules and regulations in the month of Kārtika and Māgha month as well; otherwise he will not get the full benefit from performing his Puruṣottama *vrata*. If possible one can worship Puruṣottama month by observing a full fast from food throughout the month. If he cannot observe full fast, he could live by drinking ghee or drinking some milk which he should collect by begging. If he cannot do this, he can simply eat some fruits. An intelligent person should take a vow according to his capacity to observe and follow it. One should not break his vow in the middle of it. If one worships the Lord in His Śāligrāma form, offering Him one lakh of Tulasī leaves, then he will achieve such unlimited merit and success that even Lord Brahma cannot describe it.

If one worships Puruṣottama month in this way, he will achieve more glories than performing one hundred horse sacrifices. The performer of Vedic *karma-kāṇḍa yajñas* achieves svarga-loka, but the worshiper of Puruṣottama achieves Goloka-dhāma. All the holy places of the world come to live in the body of a person who performs Puruṣottama *vrata*.

King Hadadhanva asked, “Oh great sage! **What are the benefits one achieves by offering a lamp to Lord Puruṣottama in this month?**” The great sage Vālmīki then began speaking enthusiastically, “There was king named Citrabāhu who ruled over the kingdom of Bhagyanagar. He was a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa, and possessed all good

qualities like truthfulness, nonviolence, forgiveness, cultured behavior, kindness, respect towards saintly people and *brāhmaṇas*, and knowledge of all the religious principles mentioned in the *śāstra*. Once the great sage Agastya came to his palace. Seeing the great Ṛṣi, the king paid his obeisances even though from a distance. When the sage came closer, he gave him a nice place to sit. He then worshiped him with great respect and very pleasingly said, “Today my life has become successful because a great devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa has entered my palace.” He sincerely tried his best to please the sage. The king then began to question Agastya Muni about his past life. He said, “Oh great sage, in my present life I am enjoying such an undisturbed kingdom, and I have a beautiful and chaste wife, and nice sons and daughters. What pious activities did I perform in my past life to give such an enjoyable result in my present life?” Agastya Muni replied, “Oh fortunate one, please listen carefully to me for I will now explain your previous life to you.

In your previous life your name was Maṇigrīva. You were the most cruel, non-believer of God and a person of very bad character. But your wife (who is also your present wife) was a very pious and religious lady. She was very chaste and beautiful, and always engaged to please you. Your bad character and cruel behavior meant no one in society liked you. Everyone broke their relationship with you. Even the king of your country took away everything from you — including your wealth and property. In this way, being rejected by society, you began to live in the forest with your chaste wife. Once when you were going to hunt for some food, you came across a man who had fallen down unconscious on the forest road. His name was Sage Ugradeva.

Seeing the *brāhmaṇa* Sage Ugradeva in such an unconscious and helpless condition, some mercy arose in your heart. Sage Ugradeva was on his way to Prayāga-tīrtha, but because of fasting and the influence of the unbearably hot sun he fell down unconscious in the forest. You brought him to your small cottage, and both you and your wife began to serve him by fanning him, giving him some water to drink and cooling his forehead. After a little time the sage came back to consciousness. He looked around in wonder. Then you described everything to him — how he had fainted, and how you had brought him to your cottage. You then offered some fresh water to the sage. He was very pleased with you and asked about your impoverished living condition. The great sage Ugradeva inquired, “Oh Maṇigrīva, why are you suffering so much here in the forest. Please tell me everything about your past situation, so that I can find some way to bring you good fortune in the future.” You then humbly explained your wretched life and asked him to find some solution to your miseries.

Ugradeva listened attentively and then said, “Oh great soul, you will definitely become famous in this world because you have served me so well as your guest. So to eradicate your previous sinful reactions, **I am now going to explain to you the simplest and easiest way for you to attain all good fortune.** In three months’ time, the sacred Puruṣottama month will begin. In order to please the Supreme Lord Puruṣottama, you should daily offer a lamp to the Lord. By doing this all your misfortune will vanish. The best lamp to offer is a ghee lamp, but because you are living in the forest you can offer a lamp made from sesame oil. When you attain some wealth, you must then offer a ghee lamp.”

Having spoken in this way, sage Ugradeva left that place for Prayāga, constantly chanting the Holy Name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Following the order of Sage Ugradeva, Maṇigrīva and his wife offered an oil lamp to Puruṣottama regularly though out that sacred month. After some time, the couple left their bodies and attained Svarga-loka due to the merit they attained from offering a lamp to Lord Puruṣottama. After enjoying many years in the heavenly planets, the same couple came back again to this material world and achieved a very glorious position in society as King Citrabāhu and his queen. Agastya Muni then said to King Citrabāhu, “Oh king, such was your previous life, and such is the glory of simply offering an oil lamp to Lord Puruṣottama in the sacred month of Puruṣottama. **A person who offers a ghee lamp to the Lord daily in this month receives unlimited merit. Oh king, please do not doubt that such great merits are achieved simply by offering a lamp to the Lord.**”

Then the great sage Vālmīki continued, “In this way, after explaining the previous life of King Citrabāhu, and being worshiped by him, Agastya Muni became very pleased and blessed the king. He then left the palace.

King Hadadhanva further inquired from Sage Vālmīki, “O saintly one, **please tell me how to perform *udyapana* — the bonafide way for breaking the Puruṣottama *vrata*.** Which rules and regulations should one follow? Which are the special days to finish one’s vow of worship to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Puruṣottama month?” The great sage replied, “In Puruṣottama month, one can break his worship and vows on the fourteenth day, ninth day or on the eighth day of the dark fortnight. Early in the morning one should leave his bed. After performing his morning duties, he should invite qualified *brāhmaṇas* and give them charity according to his ability. If it is not possible to invite thirty *brāhmaṇas*, one should invite five or seven according to his capacity. At mid-day one should purify a certain area with cow dung and water. Then he should draw a round circle with the help of rice powder. He should bring four new pots and place them in the four directions with a coconut upon each of them. The pots should first be filled with water. He should then establish Lord Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha in each pot serially, and invite four qualified *brāhmaṇas* to sit inside the circle and chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. By presenting new clothes, two sets for each *brāhmaṇa*, he should welcome them and humbly request them to chant the Holy Name. He should also present each of them a ring to wear. To purify himself, he should perform the purifying processes mentioned in the *śāstra*. When the invited *brāhmaṇas* are engaged in their chanting, one should start his worship to Lord Puruṣottama with his wife. He should engage the *brāhmaṇas* to separately chant the names of Caturbhujā (Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha) in the four corners of the circle. Four different lamps should be offered in the four directions. Then one should offer *arghya* (oblations). And while performing worship by giving *arghya*, one should chant the following mantra:

“O Supreme Lord! O Sanātana, O Puruṣottama, O Hari, I am paying my obeisances unto You. Please, along with Your beloved Rādhā, accept my offerings. I am paying my obeisances unto You, Śrī Śrī Rādhā Śyāmasundara, whose bodily color is like a beautiful dark blue cloud, and who wears effulgent yellow garments on His body most

gracefully.” In this way one should pay his obeisances to Lord Puruṣottama. Then he should offer flowers (*puṣpāñjali*) to Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa and pay his full obeisances to the Lord along with his wife. Next he should give some charity to the invited *brāhmaṇas* according to his ability. The *brāhmaṇas* should be pleased to the best of his ability. He should also offer some new clothes and ornaments in the name of Lord Śiva and goddess Pārvatī, and offer two pairs of new shoes to them.

**The best of all kinds of charity is to present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to a qualified *brāhmaṇa*.** By presenting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is the literary incarnation of Lord Puruṣottama, to a Vaiṣṇava devotee of the Lord, one can deliver one crore (ten million) generations of his forefathers. All his forefathers will attain Goloka-dhāma and live blissfully with Lord Puruṣottama.

After performing the above concluding ceremonies and worship, one should break his vows and worship.” Sage Vālmīki then said, “**Now I will explain how to avoid the reaction of offences committed during the Puruṣottama month.** One should feed some qualified *brāhmaṇas* and present them some gold to nullify his reactions at the end of the Puruṣottama month. If one has taken his meal on Amavasya day, he should present cows along with other *dakṣiṇa* to qualified *brāhmaṇas*. One who has not taken his bath properly in a holy place should present some milk and curd to *brāhmaṇas*. If someone eats fruits, oil or ghee during Puruṣottama month then he should give the same in charity to *brāhmaṇas* at the end of Puruṣottama month. If someone eats rice and wheat, he should give the same in charity at the end of the month. If someone sleeps on the floor during Puruṣottama month, he should break his vow by presenting in charity a nice bed along with a pillow to a worthy *brāhmaṇa*.

A person, who eats from leaf plates during Puruṣottama month, should feed some *brāhmaṇas* with ghee and sugar. One who did not cut his nails and hair during Puruṣottama month should give a mirror in charity to a *brāhmaṇa*. One who has offered lamps throughout the month should give some new lamps and new pots in charity to *brāhmaṇas*. A person who broke any of the rules during the Puruṣottama month should feed *brāhmaṇas* with different kinds of sweet juice. Anyone who thus observes Puruṣottama month in a faithful and devotional way will attain Goloka at the end of his life.”

Having narrated everything about Puruṣottama month, Sage Vālmīki then told King Hadadhanva, “Oh King, now I am going to the river Sarayū to take a bath.” The king then worshiped him in a very submissive way to please him. After blessing the king with all good fortune, Sage Vālmīki left that place for Sarayū. When Sage Vālmīki left the palace, the king along with his queen left his kingdom and started to live in a simple and peaceful way in the forest. When the sacred month Puruṣottama appeared, both husband and wife performed their worship exactly as they had heard of it from Sage Vālmīki. At the end of Puruṣottama month, a celestial airplane came to carry King Hadadhanva and his queen to Goloka.

Lord Nārāyaṇa then told Nārada, “Oh Nārada, in this world there is nothing equal to Puruṣottama month. The result or merit one gets from performing severe austerities

for one thousand births is in no way comparable to the merit of worshiping Puruṣottama month. There is a nice story in this connection. **The story of a monkey who was delivered from this material ocean and attained Goloka simply by taking a holy bath during Puruṣottama month.** The sins of his previous one crore of lifetimes were destroyed.”

Hearing these words, the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya asked Sūta Gosvāmī, “Oh great sage, please tell us in detail about this monkey’s past life. Who was that monkey? Where and how did he take his bath during Puruṣottama month? What was he eating during the month? What results did he receive by worshiping Puruṣottama month unknowingly?”

Sūta Gosvāmī then continued to recount what Lord Nārāyaṇa had said, “In the province of Kerala there was a greedy *brāhmaṇa*. His given name was Citra Sharma, but because of his greedy and cruel nature, people called him Kadarya (greedy). Being banished from his village, he went to the forest. There he made friendship with a pious gardener. After sometime, that gardener wanted to visit some holy places, and so he asked Kadarya to look after his fruit garden. The gardener was a simple person, and so he left everything under the care of his new friend, Kadarya. However, when the gardener left, Kadarya started eating all the best fruits in the garden. When the gardener returned and asked him about the situation, Kadarya told him that the monkeys and birds had destroyed all his best fruits.

In this way, Kadarya cheated his gardener friend. After sometime Kadarya died and was forced to accept the body of a monkey due to his previous sinful activities and cheating his gardener friend. Though he was a most sinful person, he had also achieved some merit in his previous life by seeing an *udyapana* (concluding ceremony of Puruṣottama month *vrata*) performed by a *vaiśya* merchant who had sincerely worshiped that sacred month. He (Kadarya) had also worshiped Puruṣottama month in his greediness, in the hope of acquiring some wealth from that same *vaiśya* merchant. By these merits, Kadarya, in his monkey body, took his birth in a holy place on the bank of a sacred lake known as Mṛga tīrtha.

Mṛga tīrtha was a very beautiful place. The trees were full of fruits and flowers. The water in the lake was very sweet and cool, and very good for health. That place was very beautiful and pious because of a boon given by Lord Rāmacandra, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. After conquering Lankā, He was very pleased with His monkey army, and so the Lord had given this sacred place to them for their enjoyment.

From the beginning of his birth Kadarya the monkey was suffering from various *pitta* diseases. Hence, blood was always coming out from his mouth. He could not eat anything. But due to his nature, he was jumping from one tree to another, picking fruits and then throwing them down. In the meantime, Puruṣottama month arrived. During that sacred month, the monkey’s suffering increased. He could not eat anything, and so he observed a full fast unknowingly during this month. One day, while jumping from one tree to another, the monkey fell down into the lake of Mṛga tīrtha. After five days, he died, and when he died, a celestial airplane came and took him to Goloka-dhāma. He received a very beautiful spiritual body and lived happily in Goloka.

Seeing the amazing good fortune of this monkey, all the demigods started to glorify Puruṣottama month. Then Nārada asked “O Lord, whatever You have explained previously in principle is meant to guide one’s activities for the first part of the day during Puruṣottama month. **Please elaborate on other favorable daily regulations and activities.**” Lord Nārāyaṇa then said, “After finishing his noon duties, one should welcome any guests who come to his door. A guest, who comes to him when he is engaged in milking his cows, should be worshiped very properly and fully satisfied by charity given according to one’s ability.

After satisfying one’s guests, one should take his meal (*prasādam*) very peacefully in a purified place facing the east. He should first chant the *mantra* “*svāhā om*” and then begin to honor his meal with the help of his tongue. Then one should eat any sweet items with peaceful mind. One should not eat any food that is in any way contaminated. While engaged in honoring *prasādam*, one should not discuss anything material, nor blaspheme anyone.

An intelligent person should then engage himself in listening to *kṛṣṇa-kathā* from a pure soul. In this way, one should always meditate on Kṛṣṇa and discuss his pastimes with other devotees. When evening comes, one should take a bath and perform his regular evening duties. After finishing his evening prayers and offering some oblations to the fire god, he should sit down and honor *prasādam* with his followers or family members. Some time shortly after this, he should take rest thinking of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa within his heart.

**If a gr̥hastha, he should perform his home duties in a truthful and peaceful way. He should not commit violence to others and should be merciful towards saintly people as well as the poor. Protection of animals, truthful speech, mercifulness, and nonviolence are some of the important principles a gr̥hastha should follow.**

Nārada then said, “O Lord, please describe something of the qualities and activities of a chaste wife in general, and of she who offers auspicious assistance to her husband in his performance of Puruṣottama *vrata*.” Lord Nārāyaṇa replied, “O Nārada, please listen carefully. I will now describe in general some of the good qualities of a chaste wife. Whether one’s husband is beautiful or ugly, has all good qualities or all bad, is healthy or diseased, peaceful or angry in nature, well-educated or illiterate, or even if he is a drunkard, a chaste wife should pay proper respect to her husband and other superiors like her mother-in-law, father-in-law, etc. She should co-operate with her husband in the performance of all sorts of religious and pious activities. She should save something from their family’s daily expenses for future emergencies. An ideal wife should be very intelligent in the performance of her daily duties and her dealings with family members. She should not give anything in charity to relatives or other people without the knowledge of her husband. She should not speak to any man other than her husband in a private place. All of the above principles should be followed by a woman who desires to be chaste. Lord Nārāyaṇa then continued, “There is no one more worshipable for a wife than her husband. By pleasing her husband, a woman achieves all perfection. Among men and demigods, one’s husband is most worshipable for a chaste woman.

Once upon a time goddess Pārvatī worshiped Puruṣottama month on the advice of her husband, Lord Śiva. She then asked her revered husband, **“What is the best thing to give in charity to conclude one’s worship of Puruṣottama month successfully?”** Lord Śiva replied that one should fill a bell metal pot with thirty *malpurās*, and then bind the pot with seven new threads. To conclude the Puruṣottama *vrata* successfully, one should give this bell metal pot to a worthy *brāhmaṇa*. If someone is very rich, he or she should give thirty such pots in charity to thirty qualified *brāhmaṇas*. Hearing these instructions from Lord Śiva, goddess Pārvatī became very happy. She concluded her Puruṣottama *vrata* by giving thirty bell metal pots full of *malpurās* to thirty qualified *brāhmaṇas*, and in this way became successful in observing her Puruṣottama *vrata*.

Sūta Gosvāmī then continued to relate this discussion between Lord Nārāyaṇa and Nāradaḥji to the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya. He said, “O *brāhmaṇas*, the great sage Nārada Muni became very pleased by hearing all about Puruṣottama month from Lord Nārāyaṇa. He paid his obeisances again and again to Him and began to speak, “Oh, this Puruṣottama month is the best of all months, it is best of all kinds of *vratas* and austerities. **Even if one just hears the glories of Puruṣottama month faithfully, he will achieve devotional service to the Supreme Lord Puruṣottama, and all of his sinful reactions will be immediately nullified. And one who performs the whole *vrata* and worships Puruṣottama month properly will achieve unlimited merit and thus attain Goloka.**

Nārada Muni then told Lord Nārāyaṇa, “O Lord, now I am fully satisfied and my heart and my mind are completely in bliss. Therefore I do not need to hear anything more on this topic. All glories to You!”

After so explaining these glories of Puruṣottama month, Śrīla Suta Gosvami asked permission from the assembled sages to take their leave, bathe in the Ganges and perform his other regular duties. They gratefully agreed, and he then paid them his humble obeisances and went to the Ganges. The sages of Naimiṣāraṇya then spoke among themselves, “Oh, this sacred Puruṣottama month is most glorious, and its history is ancient. It is so merciful that it fulfils all of a devotee’s desires just like a desire tree. How glorious is Puruṣottama month!”

**Thus end the glories of Puruṣottama month as recorded in the *Padma Purāṇa*.**

## **A Few Kind Words of Caution**

**Dear devotees, please be very careful and sensitive in the way you serve this sacred month — please don’t become preoccupied with *vratas* and numbers of *japa* rounds. Better to concern yourself with developing your loving service relationship with the Holy Name — and carefully keep in mind the wise words of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura:**

*dekho mana, brate jena na hao acchanna  
krsna-bhakti asa kori' acho nana brata dhorī',  
radha-krsne korite prasanna*

Be careful, my dear mind, that you don't become bewildered by mechanically following ritualistic vows. With an aim to please Radha-Krsna and make Them favorably disposed to you, you accept various types of austere vows. You consider that this will be conducive to your execution of devotional service.

*bhakti je sahaja tattva, citte ta'r ache sattva,  
taha samrddhi taba asa  
dekhibe bicara kori', su-katina brata dhorī',  
sahajer na koro binasa*

Devotional service is actually a very simple and easily understood truth, for it is the soul's natural, inborn tendency. Your desire is to enrich that devotion which is already existing in your heart. But you should be careful to consider that by undertaking unnecessarily difficult vows and austerities, you may well destroy the simplicity of the natural *bhakti* process.

— *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru*, Song 15



## **Suffering from Inattention While Chanting?**

— **It's A Killer!** —

**Chanting *japa* is an integral part of the Puruṣottama month *vrata*. Best to avoid preoccupation with numbers and take to heart Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's kind and very instructive words.**

He tells us, "Some people give up all the offenses and chant constantly, but still do not experience the awakening of *prema*. When I see this, I know that the offense of inattentiveness is interfering with their attainment of *prema bhakti*..... One who is careless cannot fix his mind. All people are conditioned to be attached to sense objects, so when meditating on the Holy Name, their minds flit from one object to another. When one's taste is for something else, one becomes indifferent to the Holy Name; thus even though he chants every day, his mind is not absorbed in the name of Hari. The mind goes off in one direction, while the Name is in another. How then can he benefit, O most virtuous Lord? He completes chanting a lakh of Names on his *japa mala*, but, he does not get a drop of ecstatic taste for the Holy Name. This is the result of inattentiveness while chanting. This flaw is difficult to eradicate from hearts attached to sense objects."

— Śrī *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* 12.4-15

# **So What Do I Do About it?!**

## **Consciously and Carefully Develop the Following Mindset:**

*I always take care not to neglect completing the number of Names to be chanted according to my vow. I see to this regularly, again and again.*

*I chant the Holy Names with great attention;  
free from the offense of inattentiveness, I engage in bhajana.*

*Giving up the ambition to simply increase my numbers, I constantly chant the Holy Name in the awareness that I can do so by Your mercy, O Śacīnandana*

*Please be merciful to me, O Lord, so that the offense of inattention in chanting never blocks my ability to relish the rasa of the Holy Name.*

*I should regularly spend a little time alone in a quiet place  
and practice concentrating deeply on the Holy Name.*

*Therefore I pray constantly at Your lotus feet to be able to always  
utter each Name distinctly and to experience emotion when meditating on them.*

***Simply by one's own effort, no one in this material world can overcome inattention.  
Such a victory can only come by Your merciful blessings.***

*I take great care to beg for Your mercy, my heart overcome with emotion,  
knowing that You are all-merciful and will always be generous with Your blessings.*

***If I make no effort to attain Your mercy,  
O Śacīnandana, then I will remain ever unfortunate.***

— Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi 12.43-51



**And last but certainly not least**  
**— Please Always Remember and Never Forget —**  
**In Essence, Successful Chanting Is All About Hearing!**

**No one has to purchase a tongue. We also have ears with which to hear the sound that the tongue vibrates. Therefore, we have all the instruments we need with us — a tongue and ears. We have only to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and use our ears to hear this vibration, and all perfection will be there. We don't have to become highly educated scientists or philosophers. We have only to chant and hear.**

**— The Path of Perfection**



**“You have to chant and hear. That is all.”**

November 7, 1972. Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple, Vṛndāvana, India

Devotee: “Śrīla Prabhupāda, it’s very difficult to control my mind when I chant. It wanders.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “So what is the controlling of mind? You have to chant and hear. That is all. You have to chant with your tongue, and the sound you hear. What is the question of mind?”

— Śrutakīrti Prabhu’s “*What is the Difficulty?*”



In the beginning we were curious about how to chant. “What do you do when you chant, and what do you think?” Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Two things. You don’t do anything, and you don’t think anything. You simply hear.”

— Malati Devī Dāsī in “*Memories*”, Vol. 1

**— All the very best for Puruṣottama month! —**