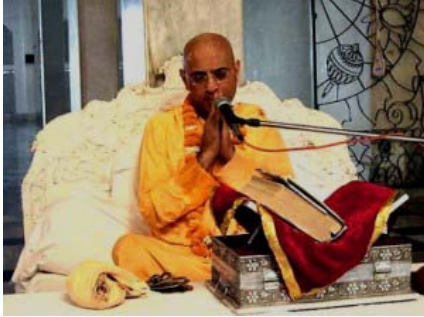


SEMINAR ON THE ART OF DYING : PART 2



THE FOLLOWING IS A SEMINAR CLASS GIVEN BY HIS HOLINESS BHAKTI CHARU SWAMI ON THE ART OF DYING PART TWO.

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Srila Prabhupada Ki Jai!

So, we are discussing about the art of dying – the way to immortality. Yesterday, we discussed quite extensively about how Srimad Bhagavatam is dealing with this topic. As a matter of fact, Srimad Bhagavatam begins with this problem. Parikshit Maharaj is about to leave his body and Parikshit Maharaja is considering he has only seven days left; now what should he do? And then, Sukadeva Goswami came and instructed him about what he should do, and in this way we can see that Bhagavatam is actually teaching us this specific topic.

The main purpose of Srimad Bhagavatam is actually this art of dying. Now, when one masters this art of dying, then he does not die; that’s the wonderful thing about this art. You master this art, but when you master this art of dying, then you do not die; you achieve immortality. So, immortality is actually the natural consequence of one’s spiritual situation.

When one becomes properly situated in his spiritual identity, then he becomes immortal. To begin with, the living entities are immortal, but we have become subjected to this cycle of birth and death, which is considered to be like a whirlpool. When one falls in a whirlpool, it is very difficult to come out of it – very difficult, I mean practically impossible. He is helplessly drawn into it and this is the whirlpool of “samsara” – “samsara” means the cycle of birth and death; birth and death is cycling constantly.

One is born to die and then one dies to be born again. In this respect, Krishna tells in the Bhagavad Gita that “jatasya hi dhruvo mrtyur dhruvam janma mrtasya ca”- “jatasya” means one who is born; for him, “dhruvo mrtyur”, for him death is inevitable. For him death is the absolute truth – one who is born must die.

Therefore, we see that the atheistic people try to be immortal, but they can't; they can never become immortal. No one will ever be; no one will ever become immortal in this material nature. They are trying in so many different ways. One classic example of this endeavour to attain immortality is Hiranyakashipu. Hiranyakashipu performed such severe austerities that his whole body was eaten up by termites and ants. They made an anthill around his body and his body was within this anthill; and there are many examples in the Vedic Scriptures, of such austerities.

There was another example that has been described in the Ninth Canto – Chyavana Rishi. Chyavana Rishi was performing such austerities that an anthill was created around him, and a princess who was with her father while he was hunting, came across this strange looking anthill. She saw these two holes and there were some bright lights coming out of them and out of curiosity, she poked that with a hairpin and then blood started to come out from there. So, the father was very worried when he came to know and realised that she had hurt some great saintly personality.

So, not only Hiranyakashipu performed great austerities in such a way that an anthill was created around his body. There are many examples of the performance of such austerities. Also, we come across the example of Narada Muni who, when he was travelling, came across a yogi who was performing such austerities that an anthill grew out of his body, not grew, an anthill was created around his body. And then this person asked Narada Muni, “When you go back to Vaikuntha, can you please ask the Lord when He is going to take me back?” So, when Narada Muni came back from Vaikuntha, this yogi asked him, “Did you ask Narayana when He is going to take me to Vaikuntha?” Narada Muni said, “Yes, Narayana said that you have to come back for another lifetime,” and this yogi was very upset. He said, “Another lifetime? How can that be? I performed such severe austerities.”

So, in this way we can see that through this kind of austerities, or this kind of materialistic endeavour, one can never achieve immortality. Same was the case with Hiranyakashipu. Hiranyakashipu's austerity was actually a classic example of austerity. His whole body was eaten up; only the skeleton was standing. That means his intestines, his lungs, his heart, his brains, everything was eaten up; there was nothing left and his life air was sustained within his bones, in the marrow.

Now, still then Hiranyakashipu could not attain immortality. He was performing such austerities in order to become immortal and then, as a result of his austerities, Brahma became perturbed and Brahma himself came down and asked Hiranyakashipu, “Hiranyakashipu, what do you want?” and Hiranyakashipu said, “Please give me the boon that I will become immortal.” Brahma said, “I can't give that boon because I, myself, am not immortal, so how can I grant you this boon?” So, this is the situation; even up to Brahma, everyone is mortal in this world – “Jatasya hi Dhruvo Mrityu”, “whoever is born must die” – there is no exception to this rule.

Brahma is born, but in a very special way. Brahma came straight from the Lord's navel; directly he came from the Lord through His navel. Still, because he was born, although directly from the Lord, in that sense Brahma is considered to be “aja”- unborn. But still, because he is in the Universe, he is in the material nature, he took birth. Although it is not an ordinary birth, but it is some kind of birth, therefore he must die.

And Brahma Samhita describes what is Brahma's life span; from our calculation, it may appear to be very, very long – but, what is the life span of Brahma? “yasyaika-nisvasita-kalam athavalambya jivanti loma-vila-ja jagad-anda-nathah” Jagad-anda” means “brahmanda” – the Universe and “jagad-anda-nathah” means the Brahmas, not just one Brahma; there are millions of Brahmas. And what is the lifespan of these Brahmas, apparently who live for such a long, long time? What is the duration of Brahma's day – one thousand chatur yugas. One day of Brahma is one thousand chatur yugas; one chatur yuga is 4.32 million years. And thousand, multiply by one thousand, what have you got – 4.32 billion years.

So, actually, we can't figure out the difference; at least I can't figure out the difference between a million and a billion. It's so big an amount, or big a number, that we can't figure out the difference. But that is the thing, like it is after all a huge lifespan. But compared to Krishna, not even Krishna – Vishnu, Krishna's expansion's expansion's expansion's expansion. So, “yasyaika-nisvasita-kalam athavalambya” – one breath of Vishnu is the duration of Brahma's life. One breath – he exhales and he inhales; that's it. And then it is said that “visnur mahan sa iha yasya kala-viseso” – he is an expansion of an expansion of Krishna, Govinda.

So, this is what material nature is like; it's a relative reality. We may think that our lifespan is so short, only a hundred years at the most, but consider if an ant is told, “You know human beings live for such a long time; this is the lifespan of a human being.” What will the ant think? He will say, “Come on, I have had enough of that. You know, just go and tell these fairy tales to someone else, not me.”

So, this is the meaning of relativity – relative. Now in relation to us, Brahma's life is very big, but when you go to Brahma, or Brahmaloaka (Satyaloka), there you will find they are lamenting, “Oh, we have got such a short span of life.”

So, therefore, a person situated in knowledge will not be affected by this consideration of life and death. He is not interested in attaining immortality; rather he says, “Yes, I will die, I will die – but let me master the art of dying.” A devotee does not want to avoid death, but he learns; he practises to die the right way. And when one dies the right way, then what happens? He goes back to Godhead, he goes back to Godhead. Like Parikshit Maharaj is one such example; when he found out that his life is going to come to an end soon, he just started to prepare himself for that moment. Another such example is King Khattanga. He fought with the demons on behalf of the demigods. The demigods were pleased with him and they asked him, “So, tell me, what do you want?” He asked, “Tell me, how much time do I have, how am I going to die?” They said, “You only have forty eight minutes left.” He said, “Fine, thank you very much for the information,” and he went and prepared himself for that moment. So, this is the real intelligence, this is the example of individuals who are situated in knowledge.

Another wonderful way of dying we see are the Pandavas. Pandavas, specially Yudhisthira Maharaj, when he got to know that Krishna left the planet, he felt, “Ok then, what's the use of staying on this planet any longer? Krishna left, so what am I going to do here?” So, although he was the king of the entire earth planet, when Krishna left, nothing really meant anything to him. Everything became totally insignificant and he decided and just made arrangements, coronated Parikshit Maharaj in the throne and he said, “Ok, I am quitting.” “Where are you going?” “I am

going out in Mahaprasthan.” “Mahaprasthan” means “a great departure” – “a great departure”. This is done in a way like one starts to walk towards the Himalayas and he keeps on walking and walking and walking without eating, without drinking, without sleeping – just to make this body totally, totally exhausted, so that the soul would leave the body. And when his other brothers said, “Ok, then we are also going to join you”, Yudhisthira Maharaj said, “Do whatever you want, you know, I am not interested. Don’t ask me for permission; if you want to do it then just do it.” Then Draupadi said, “Then, I’ll also join you all. You are all leaving, so what am I going to do here?” So, she also left and they started to walk. And one after another, their bodies fell. Draupadi was the first one to fall, then Sahadeva, then Nakula, then Arjuna, then Bhima.

And where did Bhima leave his body – high up in the Himalayan mountain, near Badrikashram. Even by car, it takes a good ten hours – ten hours means, of course it’s a windy mountain road, a very wonderful road. There is nothing on the side of the road, no railings, nothing. And sometimes, this goes five thousand, six thousand feet deep. And sometimes, some cars just go that way and anyway, it’s a long way and mind you, there was no road at that time. And they just kept on walking, they just walked and walked until their body fell. So, what are they doing while they are walking? They are simply absorbed in the thought of Krishna. So when the body fell, they left their body thinking of Krishna.

This is what happens when one masters the art of dying. And Krishna Consciousness is actually the art of dying, in reality; it teaches us how to die. And tomorrow, we will discuss how Prabhupada left his body. And how, many devotees are leaving their bodies. Anyway, today we are going to discuss about the different individuals, different personalities who mastered the art of dying, from Srimad Bhagavatam.

So, one beautiful example is Dhruva Maharaja. When we consider Dhruva Maharaja’s life, it is very interesting – a six year old boy, he wanted to sit on his father’s lap and the father was henpecked by his other wife, Suruchi, Dhruva’s stepmother. She was upset that he was letting him sit on his lap. So, she wanted that her son should become the favourite and although he was young, he should actually succeed the throne. So, she was making all the arrangements; since she was the favourite of the king, the king just listened to her words.

Dhruva was denied the right to sit on his father’s lap and his stepmother actually insulted him and said, “Look, if you want to sit on his lap, then you have to take birth through my womb.” Sometimes, some women can be vicious and she was hard – stepson, just a six year old boy, but she is so cruel towards him. Dhruva was a Kshatriya; although only six years old, he was very upset and he decided to take revenge. “Ok, you said that; I will show you.” He went back to his mother and told her that this is what happened and he was crying due to this insult, so Dhruva Maharaj’s mother, Suniti, told him, “Actually, Narayana can save you from this situation. He can fulfil your desire to become the king.” He said, “Ok, I will get a position from Narayana, even higher than that of my grandfather.” That is the situation which is even higher than the situation of Lord Brahma.

Apparently, Dhruva is so attached, but then we see how gradually he is becoming detached. He performs severe austerities; he went to the forest and he was searching for Narayana. He did not know who Narayana was and he was asking everybody, “Are you Narayana?” In the forest, who

do you come across – tigers, lions, snakes. And he was asking everybody, “Are you Narayana?” “Are you Narayana?” And then finally, Narada Muni seeing his intensity, seeing his sincerity, came over and told him how to get Narayana. He gave him the mantra and asked him to meditate on the mantra and Dhruva Maharaj was meditating on the mantra in such a way that here also we can see another kind of austerities, but this is a positive austerity – positive, because it is for the sake of Narayana.

Hiranyakashipu’s austerity was negative because it was for his own immortality. Now, this is the advantage of approaching Narayana. So, he approached Narayana; in order to find Narayana, he performed great austerities. He became so absorbed in meditating on the Lord that he stopped eating and he would just eat some dry leaves whenever he had to eat. But, that also, he stopped. He was sustaining himself just by drinking some water; that also, he stopped – stopped drinking, then he stopped breathing.

And then, Narayana came to him. But when Dhruva saw Narayana, then he realised the futility of what he was going to ask from Him and Dhruva said, “What I was actually hankering for and what I had been performing such great austerities and approached You for, appears to be just like some broken pieces of glass. I don’t want that, I simply want Your association. I simply want to be engaged in Your devotional service, I don’t want anything else.”

A six year old boy had such profound realisation. But, Narayana told him, “No, since that desire was there in the heart, go through it, go through it.” and he became the king. And not only a king, he became so powerful that he defeated the Gandharvas. He was slaughtering the Gandharvas in such a way that Kuvera became worried. He came and said, “Please, stop doing that. Why are you unnecessarily killing?” and that also we can see his younger brother, who was actually his rival to the throne, when that brother was killed by the Gandharvas, he became so angry that he started to wipe out all the Gandharvas. And then Kuvera came and gave him some advice and Dhruva desisted. And then Dhruva Maharaj retired from his household life and he went to the Himalayas to spend the rest of his time in the association of devotees of the Lord in Badrikashram, which is a very holy place and many saintly personalities were residing there.

Dhruva Maharaj went there and he spent his time in the association of those devotees. And then one day, the chariot came from Vaikuntha with two Vishnudutas, Nanda and Sunanda and they came and told him, “Please come, we have come to take you to Vaikuntha.” So, Dhruva Maharaj went, took a bath, bade farewell to everybody, circumambulated the chariot three times and when he was about to climb the chariot, he saw death standing with folded hands, “Please bestow your mercy upon me.” And how did Dhruva Maharaj bestow his mercy upon him – he put his foot on death’s head to climb the chariot. Now, this is the art of dying; death comes, but how does death come, not as an object of fear, not as someone who is something very, very undesirable but, he just took him in his stride, okay, put his foot on his head to alight the chariot from Vaikuntha. Now that is what actually happens for a devotee. It’s not that a devotee does not die, or we can say it seems that a devotee also dies, but how does he die; how does a devotee die? How does a devotee approach death? Death comes to him, but how – with folded hands. Therefore, it has been described that, “jagbiredhi swayam bhayam” – the personified fear actually is death and it is said that the personified death is afraid of Krishna. So, if we want to conquer death, what is the safest way, the easiest way to do that? Take shelter of Krishna – just

take shelter of Krishna, and death will be conquered, death will be overcome. So, this is actually the real art of dying.

Now, another very wonderful example is Prahlada Maharaj; his father wanted to kill him, but what did Prahlada Maharaj do? Did he make any endeavour to struggle against his father's onslaught? No, he just depended upon Krishna. His mood, or his attitude was, "Well Krishna, if You want me to die, that's fine." – as Bhaktivinode Thakur is describing, "marobi rakhobi jo iccha tohara" – "whether You want to keep me, or You want to kill me, it's simply up to You, because I am Your eternal servant," and the servant does not have any free will.

A servant is just sold out to his master; whatever the master wants, he will do that. In that respect, I heard one incidence that the king of Saudi Arabia went to France and they took him to a kind of a tour and showed him a guillotine; they explained how it works and he wanted to have a practical demonstration of how it works – he wanted someone to be placed there and chop his head off and they said, (whoever was taking him around, probably some big government official or minister) "how is it possible?" He said, "Well, in my country there won't be any problem because their understanding is the slave does not have his will; the master can do anything with the slave."

Of course, it's very brutal because the masters are not really genuine masters; they are a bunch of idiots – but, when you have a genuine master, he does not subject his servants to torture, or any kind of unpleasant situation; he rather takes care of him. He protects his servants like the Gopis are praying to Krishna in Gopi Gita, "We are Your unpaid maidservants – ashulka dasike – but see what You are doing to us. You are killing us by not appearing in front of us. Our separation from You is going to cause us to die and when we die, what will people say? They will say, "neha kin badha" – look at Krishna what He did; He killed some innocent young girls, who sold themselves up completely to Him without demanding anything in return, without any salary, without any payment." As it is, to kill a woman is bad and to kill a woman who has completely surrendered to oneself and who does not expect any price for that servitorship, to kill that woman is thousand times worse.

So, that is how they were actually provoking Krishna – actually, that was the feelings of their heart, "We are going to die due to Your separation," so in this way we can see that devotees do not want to become immortal; devotees do not want to become immortal – rather, they would prefer to die if necessary, "Krishna, we are dying due to Your separation," so, that is the attitude of a devotee.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is saying, "mama janmani janmanishware," – Mahaprabhu is not saying, "This life I will become Your devotee so please give me liberation," – no, Mahaprabhu is teaching us how to pray to Krishna, or in the mood of a devotee, Mahaprabhu is praying in a perfect way. Like, that life after life we can become your servants, we can be engaged in your service life after life. "Janmani janmanishware", not one life – "janmani" means many, many lives – plural. So that is the mood, that is the attitude for devotees. Like liberation or the prospect of not taking birth again is not at all desirable to a devotee; rather, a devotee is prepared to take birth again and again and again, in order to serve Krishna. So the art of dying actually is to become totally surrendered to Krishna; and then automatically, immortality is achieved – to

begin with, one does not die because as we explained or as we discussed yesterday, death is to the body; death is pertaining to the body.

The soul never dies, but actually through death, we change our situation. Like somebody is engaged in serving Krishna; now if Krishna wants him to become situated in another kind of service, Krishna knows what is the best way to serve. So if there is another kind of service, then Krishna makes the arrangement that he takes another birth – takes another birth – he becomes situated in another body, in another kind of environment, another situation. Just like in Bhagavad Gita, Krishna is telling Arjuna, “bahuni me vyatitani janmani tava carjuna” – “many a times I have taken birth and so did you,” “tany aham veda sarvani na tvam vettha parantapa” – “but I know about all those births; you don’t.” Now, that is the situation of a conditioned soul, spirit soul, not conditioned soul. The spirit soul’s perception is minute; so is his memory – when he changes from one body to another, he generally forgets about his past life. But a devotee simply surrenders unto Krishna; he does not worry about remembering the past. That is not a big deal for a devotee.

Like Bhaktivinode Thakur is saying, “Forget the past that sleeps, never future dream at all; live with the times that are with thee and progress thee shall call.” Forget the past because it’s gone, let it sleep. “Forget the past that sleeps, never future dream at all,” – don’t dream about your future – just live with the time, that is, what can I do for Krishna now? Not, tomorrow I will serve Krishna, or yesterday I served Krishna, and today let me take a holiday. No, that is not the attitude of a devotee; devotee considers that every single moment is a wonderful opportunity, a golden opportunity to render service unto Krishna, and that is how he actually continues with his life. “Be here now,” and only the devotees can properly situate themselves in that understanding.

People may talk about it, but they don’t know how to be here now; because the material platform – this is also an important consideration- the material platform is the platform of time, which is transient. Transient means fleeting – constantly moving. In the material nature, time exists in three phases: past, present, and future. But, when we analyse it carefully then we see that in material nature, time is actually existing in the form of past and future; present is just a fleeting concept. So that is how the time is in the spiritual world, because Krishna is absolute, time related to Krishna is absolute, and those who are related to that time, they are also absolute. Now, how is it possible – we won’t be able to figure out unless we go back to the spiritual world. It’s impossible for us to understand that.

But, that is how it is; in the spiritual world, time is eternal, so when time is eternal, everything and everyone in relation to the time is also eternal. So there is no past and future there; it’s all present because everyone is totally absorbed with Krishna. They are so absorbed with Krishna that they don’t have any time to think about the past, or dream about the future.

In a way, Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur is giving an understanding, some concept – he is saying that when one perceives Krishna, like when he sees Krishna, then all his senses become his eyes. He just sees and he doesn’t have any other senses; he doesn’t smell, he doesn’t taste, he doesn’t touch – all his senses become one sense: vision, eyes. And then the fragrance from the flowers from Krishna’s Lotus Feet somehow enters into his nostrils and then he becomes all nose. He is completely absorbed in just smelling the tulasi leaves, and the flowers at Krishna’s

Lotus Feet. Then the sound of Krishna's flute enters through his ears and he becomes all ears; then he does not see anything, he does not smell anything; so that is how one actually becomes completely absorbed in the present and he does not have any consideration for past and future. Like in the spiritual world, everyone becomes so absorbed in Krishna that he does not have any other perception whatsoever.

Anyway, to go back to our point, Prahlada Maharaj was subjected to the onslaught of his father. His father ordered to kill him. He gave many examples; one of the examples he gave to justify his killing his son – he said, “Disease generates from the body, a disease generates from the body, but one tries to get rid of that disease so that somebody born out of that body is not important. But what he does, that's what's important. He said look what this boy is doing; the person who killed his uncle, he is siding with him. He is a traitor; he is a disgrace to the family”, and he ordered his big, big generals – Shambhara, Namuchi – they are big, powerful generals; and he said, “Kill this boy,” and they immediately took their swords, their tridents, took their other weapons and attacked Prahlada Maharaj, shouting “Kill him, kill him”; just that shout must have been frightening.

Prahlada Maharaj was completely unperturbed and as a result of that, nothing happened to Prahlada Maharaj. Like, what could have happened – they were just trying to cut his body with these weapons, but the weapons went through his body and nothing happened to him; and some weapons just broke – the heavy metal weapons – just by touching Prahlada Maharaj's body, they just broke into pieces and they were completely surprised. And why they couldn't do anything to Prahlada Maharaj; because Prahlada Maharaj mastered the art of dying – isn't it? What is the mastery, what is the way to master the art of dying – meditate upon Krishna, just depend upon Krishna. And Krishna has given His promise that nothing will happen to His devotees, “mad bhakta na pranashyate” – My devotees will never vanish. So this is how Krishna takes care of His devotees; but of course sometimes we see that devotees die, but when we see that a devotee is dying we have to understand that death came to him like death came to Dhruva Maharaj – with folded hands, begging to receive his mercy – and the devotee put his feet on his head and stepped into the chariot to Vaikuntha.

Now, an interesting thing to note here is, “Have you ever seen a devotee leaving his, or her body?” “No, ok.” “Mark one thing, you will see that his or her face looks so, not only serene, but blissful, as if there is a smile on his face. He is completely unaffected; he left the body as if he was seeing Krishna standing in front. Now, as opposed to a devotee's body, watch a non-devotee's dead body and from that you know, you can make out who they had been seeing at that time. The non-devotees had been seeing the Yamadutas and the devotees saw Vishnudutas, or Krishna Himself. Now, how can one see Krishna at a time like that? Because one quality of Krishna is that He is grateful; Krishna is grateful.

Those who have dedicated their lives to Krishna, Krishna remembers that these devotees have offered everything to Me; they have sacrificed everything to Me, for My sake. So Krishna is so grateful and we also know that a friend in need is a friend indeed. So what is the greatest need for our friend; when do we need our friend the most? At that time, when we are about to leave this body.

So won't Krishna who is the friend of His devotees; in this respect, one important thing to remember is that Bhishmadeva is addressing Krishna at the time of leaving his body as a friend of Arjuna – "Vijayasakhi". Why he is addressing Krishna with that name, the "friend of Arjuna"? He is actually addressing that point; Krishna is friend; Krishna, You are a friend of Your devotee, so if ever I rendered any devotional service to You, then please become my friend and show Your friendship towards me at this very, very critical time. So this is how Krishna is established as "Vijayasakhi" – the friend of His devotee and Krishna is grateful; one of the qualities of Krishna is He is grateful. Like if we had done a little bit for Krishna, then Krishna will never forget that and He will reciprocate, He will reciprocate. And that's the advantage of becoming a devotee, and that is the art of dying, and that is the way to conquer death, and that is the way to attain immortality.

Now, another beautiful example of an individual who mastered the art of dying is Gajendra, an elephant; an elephant, he was attacked by a crocodile when he went to sport in the water. Although an elephant is very, very powerful but he was fighting on a foreign place – in water – whereas the crocodile belongs to water. So, although from the normal calculation, an elephant is much stronger than a crocodile, but in the water, the crocodile is stronger; and they fought and fought and fought for a long, long time and then the elephant realised that his strength is now waning and he realised he doesn't have any chance to rescue himself from this situation. So what did he do; at that time, when he realised now the time has come for me to leave my body, I am going to die, he realised this is the time to remember Krishna.

And as soon as the elephant remembered Krishna, what did Krishna do? As soon as Krishna realised that His devotee is in distress and he is remembering Him, Krishna immediately came there, riding on Garuda. He released the Chakra and chopped the head of the crocodile and rescued Gajendra. So this is another example of an individual who mastered the art of dying. Even an elephant can master, even an animal can master this art; and the result is – what is the result of this mastering this art – he attains immortality.

The benefit of remembering Krishna has been very wonderfully explained through the story of Ajamila. Ajamila actually did not remember Krishna at that time; he saw Yamadutas and he was scared – he was scared to death. He realised, "Well now my time is up; now I have to leave," and he called out to his youngest son, whose name happened to be Narayana; and as soon as he called his name, it was not a pure chanting of the holy name of the Lord – it was "namabhasa" – it was chanted in a clearing stage and as a result of that, immediately Vishnudutas came.

And Prabhupada said that Vishnudutas are actually patrolling around all over; Vishnudutas are flying around in their spaceships. And whenever they hear a devotee is remembering Krishna, immediately they come to their rescue and that is the potency of the Holy Name of the Lord – even if we chant unconsciously, unintentionally.

There is another such example; according to yavana language, a boar is called haram, a pig is called haram. So this guy had been attacked by a boar; he saw the boar coming and just called out haram and what did the Vishnudutas hear? They heard "Ha Rama" and came to his rescue. So this is how the Lord – the Supreme Personality of Godhead – made His divine arrangement to take care of those who have become His devotees.

Another wonderful example from Srimad Bhagavatam about a person who mastered the art of dying is Chitraketu, who became Vritrasura. Chitraketu was a king, a very powerful king and although he had everything, he was unhappy because he did not have a son. Angira Rishi was visiting him one day and noticed that the king was looking very morose, very unhappy; so he asked him, “What happened, you have everything, you are such a powerful king, you have subdued all your enemies and you have everything to enjoy – how come you are still unhappy?” Then Chitraketu confided in him that he didn’t have a son, he didn’t have a successor to the throne.

Although he married so many beautiful princesses, none of them could bear a son for him. So then Angira said, “Ok if that is what you want, I will fulfil your desire but be sure that while your son will be the cause of your joy, he will also be the cause of your distress.” And he thought you know just as sometimes children are naughty and cause some distress, but after all I’ll get a son, so he was very happy. In due course of time, he got a son, but Chitraketu became so attached to the son and the mother of the son, Kritaduti, that Chitraketu started to neglect his other wives and not only did he neglect his other wives, but he also started to neglect his royal responsibilities.

So, the queens became very envious, ministers became concerned about how the kingdom will go on like this. And then these envious queens one day decided to poison the boy and they thought that if we kill this boy, then the king’s attention will be reverted towards us, so they poisoned the boy and when the boy died, the king was submerged in an ocean of agony along with the queen, Kritaduti.

At that time Rishi Angira came along with Narada Muni and the king was begging, “Please do something, please bring my son back to life.” So, Narada Muni said, “Ok, I’ll do that,” and he went and called the boy, “Why are you leaving? Don’t you see that your parents are in such anguish?” Then the boy came back to life, he sat up and he asked Narada Muni, “Which parents are you talking about? I had so many parents, but which ones are you talking about?”

And just these words of wisdom from this boy enlightened the king. He realised the futility of material existence, we are here only for a short while. We take birth, stay here for some time, then we go and then again we come back and in this way it goes on and on and on, or it is going on since time immemorial. We all are travelling “yantrarudhani mayaya”; we are travelling in some machines that have been designed by maya.

This body is actually a machine, like a very wonderful motor car – far superior to a motor car. Motor cars are replicas of this machine. This human body has such incredible ability that no machine, no matter how sophisticated that machine is, will compare as nothing to this human body or any body as such. If we think about it a little deeply, we can see what a wonderful machine this is, and after all it is a machine. To give an example what a wonderful machine this is, the two machines get together and a third machine is produced, right? And in this way, it goes on and on and on.

Another kind of machine is the trees, one little fruit and inside the fruit there are thousands of seeds; like consider a fig and how many seeds are there in that fig and in each seed there is a tree,

there is a fig tree. In that tree, there are innumerable fruits and in each fruit there are thousands of seeds.

This is what Prabhupada told me once – Prabhupada had a prune and after eating the prune, Prabhupada held the seed in his hand and he told me, “Inside this, there is a tree, and in that tree there are innumerable fruits, and in each fruit there is a seed, and in that seed there is a tree, and in that tree there are innumerable fruits, and in those fruits there are seeds, and in that seed there is a tree,” and then Prabhupada said, “Can any scientist produce something like this, can they manufacture something like this – and still they want to compete with Krishna.”

So, anyway this is how wonderful Krishna’s creation is and this is how wonderful our bodies are and in these bodies the soul is situated and then the soul travels according to the modes of material nature, “*urdhvam gacchanti sattva-stha madhye tisthanti rajasah jaghanya-guna-vrtti-stha adho gacchanti tamasah*” – those who are situated in the mode of goodness they go up, those who are in the mode of passion, they remain here, and those who have become affected by the abominable mode of ignorance, they go down to the lower species of life.

So, in this way, living entities are constantly travelling – sometimes going up, sometimes going down, like in a Ferris wheel. So, Chitraketu realised that, that living entities are just travelling in this body, in different bodies, in this way and we, due to our ignorance, become attached to those bodies, thinking that they are our children, or relatives, friends; so Chitraketu begged Narada Muni to bless him with spiritual knowledge and Narada Muni gave him the mantra and Chitraketu started to meditate on the mantra and by chanting on the mantra, Chitraketu was so elevated that he became the king of the Gandharvas and then he was travelling. He had the ability to travel throughout the universe in his personal spaceship, not spaceship, personal travelling planet; he had a planet of his own and the planet was travelling around.

And then while he was flying around in that way on his own planet, one day he saw Lord Shiva sitting with Parvati, surrounded by all exalted personalities; very, very exalted sages and brahmanas. And Lord Shiva was naked and Parvati was sitting on his lap. So Chitraketu smiled and said, “Look at him, he is sitting in such an exalted assembly but look at his state.” Lord Shiva did not mind that Chitraketu thought that way because Lord Shiva knew Chitraketu’s exalted position, so he didn’t mind that, but Parvati couldn’t tolerate that. Parvati immediately cursed Chitraketu, “Look at that impudent fool, he dares to speak like that, so I curse him that he will become a demon.”

Of course before that Bhagavatam also explains that Chitraketu was actually so exalted that he could counter curse Parvati, because Parvati’s curse was not fair; because of the way Chitraketu perceived the behaviour of an exalted personality, from his point of view, he was right and that’s why Lord Shiva was silent; he didn’t say anything.

But Chitraketu, because he was a devotee of the Lord, just accepted it and that is the situation of a devotee – whether he is blessed, or he is cursed, he accepts both as the mercy of the Lord and then Chitraketu became a demon – Vritrasura – but he was so powerful a demon that he defeated Indra, he defeated Indra – took away his kingdom.

Now, Indra was in great distress and he wanted to do something to regain his kingdom, so he approached Vishnu Narayana and then Vishnu advised, “Ok, the only thing that can kill Chitraketu is thunder that can be made from the bones of a great sage called Dadhichi.” So Indra went to Dadhichi and asked him, “Will you kindly give me your bones because Vritra has to be killed and the only way he can be killed is by the thunder made out of your bones?”

This way we can see Indra, who was not actually adept in the art of dying, behaved in such a way, like his only concern was his own selfish benefit. But, Dadhichi was so exalted a personality (he actually was a person who knew the art of dying) that he said, “Well, after all this body is temporary and eventually this body will become the food for insects and worms, so what if this body can be used in some good cause, why not?”

So he gave his bones – that means he had to leave his body and with his body, thunder was made; Vishwakarma made the thunder and with becoming powerful with this thunder, Indra challenged Vritra to battle and Vritra knew that the Lord’s desire is that now he will die. But still as a Kshatriya, he accepted that situation, he came to the battlefield to fight with Indra, with his soldiers, his army and now becoming powerful with the thunder, the demigods became so powerful that their onslaught was unbearable for the demons – Vritra’s soldiers – and they started to run away from the battlefield and Vritra was standing alone in the battlefield still, ready to fight with Indra. And with his mace, he hit Indra so hard that Indra’s elephant, Airavata, took ten steps back and thunder fell out of Indra’s hand and Indra was completely baffled and embarrassed.

He was just standing there unarmed; Vritra could have killed him at that time but Vritra said, “It is not to be, like I know I am going to die in this battle, the thunder has been created to kill me. So Indra pick up the thunder; this is not the time to become baffled, pick up the thunder and come fight.” And then Indra picked up the thunder and the fight ensued and the fight was so terrible that Indra cut Vritra’s right hand; Vritra was fighting with his left hand – Indra cut off his left hand with his thunder. Then Vritra was fighting with his legs and Indra cut off the legs of Vritra; then Vritra assuming a huge form, swallowed up Indra and Indra from within Vritra’s belly, cut open the belly with the thunder and came out and then he applied the thunder to cut Vritra’s head.

It took thunder three hundred and sixty five days to cut Vritra’s head. Now Sri Vishwanath Chakravati Thakur makes the point here, he said, “Actually, Vritra didn’t die, it’s Indra who died.” When Vritra swallowed up Indra, then he considered, “Well my job has been finished so now let me leave my body,” so he left his body and went to the abode of Shankarshana in the spiritual sky. So, this is another wonderful example of an individual from Srimad Bhagavatam who mastered the art of dying.

Now, what is the result of mastering this very special art from all these examples, all these anecdotes – what did you learn – that when one masters this art, what happens to him? He becomes immortal. And what is this art ultimately – remember Krishna all the time and never forget Him; especially at the time of difficulties, remember Krishna. Now one may be practising devotional service, one may be practising the art of mastering this subject but if he practises properly then he will be able to practically apply this art when the time comes. Thank you all very much. Hare Krishna.

